

**Vesa Kurkela and Lauri Väkevä, eds. *De-Canonizing Music History*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. 210 pages. \$59.99. ISBN 978-1-4438-1391-4.**

TRAVIS D. STIMELING

**D**e-Canonizing Music History presents twelve essays that originated in an international symposium held at Helsinki, Finland's Sibelius Academy on November 29–December 1, 2007. As conference organizers and volume editors Vesa Kurkela and Lauri Väkevä suggest, these essays “describe, analyse, and problematise” canons in western concert music, jazz and popular music studies, and music education (p. vii). Both the symposium and its proceedings included pieces on a wide array of topics, ranging from Arnold Schoenberg's efforts to situate himself within the long history of western art music to an alternative history of progressive rock that accounts for previously underexamined developments on the European continent.<sup>1</sup> The essays in this volume reveal a common desire on the part of scholars from the United Kingdom, United States, and Finland to incorporate recent challenges to canonicity into their research and pedagogies, often in an effort to recuperate local, regional, and national music histories. But readers of this journal will be particularly interested in the three essays that investigate the extent to which critical methodologies from the “new musicology” of the 1990s have been assimilated into the pedagogy of music history at the undergraduate and graduate levels internationally, as well as the ways that these pedagogies been documented and theorized.<sup>2</sup>

1. Alexander Carpenter, “Stepping Down from the Pedestal: Arnold Schoenberg and Popular Music” (pp. 21–35); Chris Anderton, “Full-Grown from the Head of Jupiter? Lay Discourses and Italian Progressive Rock” (pp. 97–112).

2. These questions were also posed at the American Musicological Society Pedagogy Study Group session, “Reconsidering Narrative in the Music History Survey,” presented at the Seventy-Seventh Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, San Francisco, November 2011.

Christopher Wilkinson's essay, "A New Master Narrative of Western Musical History: An American Perspective," considers the role of historical narrative in student comprehension and retention of the material in a typical undergraduate survey course. Positing an alternative narrative for the post-1750 survey that acknowledges the complex relationships between European, West African, and American musical practices, Wilkinson notes that the prevalence of Eurocentric narratives in the various iterations of Donald J. Grout's classic music history text, *A History of Western Music* (first published in 1960), has led to an historical narrative that may not reflect the musical cultures in which contemporary American undergraduates participate.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, he challenges music history survey instructors to augment Eurocentric textbook narratives with listening assignments that offer a multicultural view of Euro-American art musics and "illustrate important developments in the formation of the complex contemporary culture, not merely the history of art music" (p. 45). To that end, Wilkinson details his efforts to create dialogue between the canonic repertoire found in the second volume of *The Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 7th ed., and a rich tapestry of parlor songs, shape-note hymnody, spirituals, work songs, and American symphonies.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, this new master narrative, he argues, "establish[es] an inclusive conceptual framework of understanding for my students: a vision of the past intended to enable them to locate almost all musical traditions cultivated in America within a larger framework" (p. 46). The adoption of such an approach has become all the more feasible in the past few years as recent editions of the core undergraduate anthologies have increasingly devoted more space to the contributions of American musicians.<sup>5</sup> Wilkinson's

3. Wilkinson has explored these issues further in "Deforming/Reforming the Canon: Challenges of a Multicultural Music History Course," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 259–77, and "Reinventing the Survey Course," paper presented at the Seventy-Seventh Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, San Francisco, November 2011.

4. The importance of such dialogue is exemplified in this volume in Derek B. Scott's masterful essay, "The Popular Revolution in the Nineteenth Century: A Third Type of Music Arises" (pp. 3–19), in which Scott argues that "the popular music revolution brought forth musical idioms whose difference in both style and meaning from the classical repertoire created insuperable problems for those who were unfamiliar with the new conventions and lacked the particular skills demanded by the new styles" (p. 3).

5. For example, see Mark Evan Bonds, *Anthology of Scores for A History of Music in Western Culture*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), which features expanded coverage of American vernacular musical traditions. Bonds has also explored the potential conversations that can arise between works published in anthologies in his recent essay, "Selecting Dots, Connecting Dots: The Score Anthology as History," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 77–91, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/18/30>.

model also offers rich possibilities for instructors working outside of the United States to develop locally-relevant pedagogies.

Sonya Lawson echoes Wilkinson's desire for new historical frameworks in her essay, "Defy(n)ing Categorization: Moving Beyond the Jazz History Canon," which applies recent neuroscientific research on the cognitive processes of categorization in order to problematize the musical canons and cultural essentialism found in many introductory jazz history textbooks. Lawson observes that recent research in jazz historiography has challenged essentialist understandings of jazz as musical and cultural practice,<sup>6</sup> yet jazz history textbooks frequently fail to account for these new understandings. Instead, she argues, most textbook authors create an ideal, or "classical," definition of jazz that is reinforced by limiting their discussions to "a narrowly defined set of 'classic' recordings as examples" (p. 57).<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, Lawson's analysis of these textbooks is couched in generalities and does not offer specific evidence from any commonly adopted texts, referring only to Marshall Stearns' *The Story of Jazz* (1956) and Hughes Panassié's *The Real Jazz* (1960).<sup>8</sup> Despite these significant weaknesses, Lawson's essay does offer a convincing model for the incorporation of current jazz historiography into textbooks. Lawson calls for a "descriptive" definition of jazz which captures the variety of ways that jazz tendencies have been expressed over time (p. 57). Such an approach, she argues, would effectively challenge the canonicity of key jazz artists and recordings by allowing room for "marginal" musicians—including jazz violinists and non-American practitioners—to be brought into the narrative (pp. 57–58).<sup>9</sup> Further, Lawson calls for a more deliberate effort to consider the full range of a musician's career rather than focusing only on a supposed golden age, such as Louis

6. See, for instance, David Ake, *Jazz Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

7. See also Kenneth E. Prouty, "Toward Jazz's 'Official' History: The Debates and Discourses of Jazz History Textbooks," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 1, no. 1 (2010): 19–43, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/4/4>.

8. Pekka Gronow explores the ideologies behind the work of Panassié in her essay in this volume, "Remaking Jazz History" (pp. 61–72).

9. This theme is taken up elsewhere in this volume. See, for instance, Paul Carr's "No One Had Ever Heard a Guitar Played Like That Before: The Redefinition of the Jazz Aesthetic in the work of Post 1970s [*sic*] Electric Guitar Composers" (pp. 83–93); Anderton's "'Full-Grown from the Head of Jupiter?'" (pp. 97–112); and Carpenter's "Stepping Down from the Pedestal" (pp. 21–35).

Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings.<sup>10</sup> Creative instructors will certainly find here numerous opportunities for new lectures, listening assignments, and research projects that engage students in activities to deepen their understandings of recorded and live jazz.

Finally, David G. Hebert's "Rethinking the Historiography of Hybrid Genres in Music Education" contemplates how alternative histories of music education that include critical discussions of hybrid musical genres might "contribute to a fundamental reconceptualisation of school bands" across the globe (p. 165). In an analysis of music education textbooks from Japan, New Zealand, and the United States, Hebert contends that music education textbooks have adopted a Eurocentric model of wind band history, despite the existence of pre-European wind traditions in Japan, the Maori Ratana brass band practices in New Zealand, and the development of jazz in the United States. Arguing that "hybrid music[s] . . . [are] sites of musical innovation and . . . potential wellsprings of new musical traditions" (p. 178), Hebert suggests that such ensembles deserve more careful treatment in music history and music education textbooks. Moreover, he challenges music education scholars to deploy ethnography and oral history in order to frame policy and curriculum within "a richer and more accurate depiction of lived reality" (p. 179), a portrait that would naturally require greater attention to the contributions of women<sup>11</sup> and hybrid musical genres to local, regional, and national music education. Hebert's model raises the question, however, as to how ethnomusicology courses—at the undergraduate and graduate levels—might be successfully harnessed to provide both the theoretical frameworks and fieldwork training to equip students and emerging scholars with the necessary tools for such research.

Taken as a whole, the essays in *De-Canonizing Music History* provide evidence that the implications of recent musicological critiques have begun to find their way into the music history classroom and into other subdisciplines of music studies, particularly music education, internationally. Yet the findings in the three pedagogy articles discussed above also imply that such integration has likely been slow and uneven, yet quantitative evidence exists to support such an assertion. Accordingly, these essays demonstrate the

10. The canonicity of these recordings has recently been confirmed by jazz history textbook author Brian Harker's *Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven Recordings*, Oxford Studies in Recorded Jazz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

11. The role of women in music education is addressed in Roberta Lamb's essay in this volume, "Ethnomusicology, Feminism, Music Education: Telling Untold Tales" (pp. 141–62). Unfortunately, the neglect of Judith Tick's *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) in her discussion of Seeger's music educational work undermines the credibility of Lamb's conclusions.

ongoing need for more thorough and sustained assessment and the development of best practices for the delivery of a music history pedagogy that more fully assimilates the current critical discourses of musicological research.