

"Historical Performance': The Journal of Early Music America" Paul C. Echols, ed.

George Houle

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Review of a Periodical

Historical Performance, The Journal of Early Music America. Edited by Paul C. Echols. New York, 1988- . (ISSN 0898-8587)

How refreshing it is, in these days of "authenticity"-backlash, to have it simply assumed that knowledge about performance practice is a good thing. As we know, there are all too many performances touted as "authentic" because of the use of old or replica instruments in which fast tempos, wispy sonorities, and an absence of inflection rob otherwise vital music of its substance.

"Authentic" seems to have become a catch word in marketing a musical product rather than a way of identifying performance based on stylistic knowledge. The study of performance practice is hardly to blame for these dehumanized representations and is, in fact, the route to take to transcend this stage of development.

Historical Performance, the journal of Early Music America, takes an implicitly positive stance on the study of performance practice, and is a mixture of enduring studies and ephemeral news for serious but not necessarily scholarly musicians. It is unique in combining information on the practical concerns of professional and amateur performers, teachers, concert sponsors, and enthusiasts with studies of historical performance. More than half of its space is devoted to surveys of early music activity and education in early music skills, news of workshops, festivals, conferences, performers, ensembles, and economic aspects of early music. Almost everything except reviews of performances and recordings are included.

Part of its space is given to scholarly articles and reviews, and includes valuable contributions by well-known historians. Neal Zaslaw's "Three Notes on the History of the Orchestra," (vol. 1, no. 2) is helpful to the performer because it offers information without bias towards a particular musical interpretation. H. Wiley Hitchcock's "Marc-Antoine Charpentier's Vocal Chamber Music," (vol. 1, no. 2) an excerpt from a forthcoming book, is more circuitously related to performance, but comments on some formerly obscure repertory. Katalin Komlós's

"Mozart and Clementi: a Piano Competition and Its Interpretation" (vol. 2, no. 1) contributes useful information on Mozart's improvisations and piano playing. The scholarly apparatus of articles is made less forbidding to non-scholars by providing a "List of Works Cited" in available modern editions and translations.

Reviews of books are prominent, and several are particularly thoughtful, for instance Jack Ashworth on Beverly Scheibert's *D'Anglebert*, Peter Urquhart on Karol Berger's *Musica ficta*, and Robert Garis on *Authenticity in Early Music*. The performance of medieval and Renaissance music, which seems to evoke less interest of late from early music lovers, is given attention only in book reviews. However, Lawrence Rosenwald's reviews of Christopher Page's *Voices and Instruments in the Middle Ages* and John Stevens's *Words and Music in the Middle Ages* reward the reader with as much insight on performance as most articles do. Frederick Neumann demonstrates his considerable scholarly abilities in his review of A. Peter Brown's *Performing Haydn's 'Creation'*, but (as Neil Zaslaw points out in his article on the history of the Orchestra) comes to the perhaps inaccurate conclusion that large orchestras, much as we know them today, were preferred for orchestral music of the late eighteenth century. Edward Roesner's review of Jeremy Yudkin's translation of Anonymous IV is concerned more with the precision of translation than the musical substance of the treatise, and so is less helpful. I hope that future issues of *Historical Performance* will include articles on medieval and Renaissance performance practices.

"Points of View," a column written mainly by Ben Peck, the president of Early Music America, addresses bread-and-butter concerns of early music performers in establishing an economic foundation and reaching a wider audience. Benjamin Dunham's contributions in "Marketplace" are well-informed and acute on the subjects of how to attract grants and establish support organizations. Oboist Stephen Hammer has written on the American recording industry and how performers might better compete with European artists through recordings, the key that often opens the magic door to making a living as a performer. Mark Kroll's excellent plea for the inclusion of harpsichord instruction as part of a comprehensive keyboard curriculum in universities and conservatories may be preaching to the already converted, and would be more useful if directed toward the members of the National Association of Schools of Music.

There are reports on early music activity in Paris (France), Washington D.C., Texas, Ohio, North Carolina, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

However, the comments on the San Francisco Bay Area, the area I know best, miss at least half of what is happening here. The report concentrates on San Francisco and Berkeley and leaves out most of the early music performances and instruction at Stanford, San José, and Santa Cruz. I don't know whether other reports are equally partial.

Although the name "Early Music America" echoes the title of the highly-successful English journal *Early Music*, *Historical Performance* bears little resemblance to it. The format and appearance is distinctive, 9" by 12" in size (it won't fit among the bound scholarly journals on the shelf). The designers should be complemented on the tasteful and neat appearance of the cover and interior, but the elegant illustrations of *Early Music* are absent, and *Historical Performance's* cartoons (illustrating "Krumbrella" and "Tennis Rackett" etc.) are high-school humor at best.

Historical Performance is well written and well edited. There is much valuable information in the articles and reviews, and many activities of the early music community are well documented. It is, at present, the only journal that addresses the economic interests of early music performers, impresarios, and instrument makers. The journal can help to improve music education for early music performers by considering curricula and teaching techniques, and also by critical examination of academic institutions. It is a useful addition to the journals that serve early music lovers and performers.

George Houle