

KERRY HOUSTON AND HARRY WHITE (EDS), *A MUSICAL OFFERING: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF GERARD GILLEN* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018). ISBN 978-1-84682-658-0, xiv + 400pp, €45.

Publishers can't stand them, only libraries buy them and (sensible) reviewers avoid them like the plague. Yet the *Festschrift* as a genre has made a remarkable comeback of late, following a fallow period when the pressures of modern academic publishing threatened to subdue it altogether. True, most contemporary *Festschrift* volumes lack the heft of their great twentieth-century precursors such as the *Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer* (593pp) and the *Festschrift Carl Dahlhaus* (826pp), often appearing in the guise of journal special issues or under titles that camouflage their true character.¹ The present volume—remarkably, the first *Festschrift* to honour an Irish classical musician—is a triumphant exception, offering a lavish and suitably titanic tribute to its dedicatee. What most impresses about the Gerard Gillen volume is not its length but the way in which its design mirrors the diversity and richness of its dedicatee's life in music. We may take it as read that no one has had a greater impact on the development of music studies within Irish higher education than Gillen; but what makes him unusual, in an age of increasing over-specialization, is that he combined his academic career—like a latter-day Stainer or Stanford—with pre-eminence as a practising musician. Appropriately, therefore, the first three sections of the book focus on church music and organ studies, while the final section nods at Gillen's work as an editor and encyclopaedist by addressing aspects of music and cultural history.

Festschrift volumes are not in general designed to be read from cover to cover. But the first section of *A Musical Offering* forms a tightly organized whole, presenting the history of church music in Ireland over the last two centuries from a range of different perspectives. Reading these chapters in tandem is a rewarding experience—a little like contemplating the same sculpture from varied angles—since similar protagonists, issues and dilemmas recur across them. The essays by Paul Collins, Darina McCarthy and Ite O'Donovan offer well-documented and readable accounts of the obstacles facing church music reform in nineteenth-century Ireland. It is all too easy to present this period through the lens of the rise of Cecilianism, but these essays take a more sophisticated approach; they reveal, on the one hand, the chasm between lofty ideals

¹ Heinrich Hüschen (ed.), *Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer zum sechzigsten Geburtstag am 7. Juli, 1962: Überreicht von Freunden und Schülern* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1962); and Hermann Danuser, Helga de la Motte-Haber, Silke Leopold and Norbert Miller (eds), *Das musikalische Kunstwerk: Geschichte—Ästhetik—Theorie. Festschrift Carl Dahlhaus zum 60. Geburtstag* (Laaber: Laaber, 1988).

and cash-strapped realities, while on the other, how a dependency on imported foreign organists impeded the training and professionalization of Irish church musicians. The extent to which many serious-minded musicians resisted Cecilian ideas and practices is evident not only from Collins's chapter, but from Frank Lawrence's thoughtful survey of the career of one of those imports, Alessandro Cellini. The latter's decision to abandon the post of organist at St Peter's, Rome in favour of a vaguely defined role at Dublin's Catholic University was motivated in part, according to Lawrence, by a reluctance to comply with the edicts of dogmatic reformers; yet his floridly operatic style was to meet with even greater hostility from the Irish Cecilians.

The extent to which Cecilianism came to constitute an invented tradition in Ireland is evident from Kieran A. Daly's chapter, which explores the impact of the liturgical reforms of the 1950s and 1960s within the Dublin archdiocese. No matter how laudable the Cecilian efforts to revive plainchant and Renaissance polyphony, they often resulted in practice in the use of worthy but characterless music by provincial Bavarian choirmasters such as Michael Haller and Ignaz Mitterer. It was this tradition—barely seventy years old by the time of the Second Vatican Council—that was so vehemently defended by Dublin church musicians in the face of the blandishments of reformist clerics and publishing houses; with an eye perhaps to more recent developments in Catholic church music, Daly notes how 'publishers with an eye to profit' led musicians to believe that their cherished repertory needed to be replaced by 'new copyright-protected versions of complete services' (113).

One wonders what earnest reformers like Heinrich Beyerunge and Nicholas Donnelly would have made of more recent developments in Irish church music and liturgical practice: the rise of the folk mass, say, or liturgical dance, or the phenomenon of the 'singing priest' Fr Ray Kelly. All might seem to be symptoms of the individualism and *à la carte*-ism that have helped transform Ireland into a post-Catholic country, yet such diagnoses risk drastically oversimplifying these developments. The idea of the folk mass, like the emphasis on 'full, conscious, and active' participation promoted following Vatican II, served initially to promote collectivity rather than individualism; similarly, advocates of liturgical dance tend to stress its communal, ritual dimension, emphasizing that it should not descend into 'performances or exercises in self-expression'.² The complex ways in which collective and individual impulses interact within the contemporary liturgy is evident from Adrian Scahill's essay on the place of traditional music in the Catholic church. While

² James L. Heft, *Catholic High Schools: Facing the New Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 165.

the essay represents work in progress rather than offering definitive conclusions, it presents a provocative exploration of the relationship between the funerary practices of earlier generations—such as keening—and the contemporary trend for personalizing funeral services.

Church and organ music are the focus of around half the remaining chapters. As a fellow organist and Reger devotee, I was particularly struck by David Adams's essay on the German organ crescendo, which dispels many myths about Reger and the use of the *Walze* pedal. British and Irish organists will be gratified to know that rather than introducing stops one by one, the *Walze* pedals known to Reger and his editor Karl Straube tended to add stops aggregatively, with the result that their crescendos would have resembled those obtained through the modern stepper system. No less enjoyable is Carole O'Connor's survey of compositional tributes to the composer Jehan Alain, killed during the Second World War at the age of 29. While the French organ tradition may be rather too hermetic for its own good, the self-referential nature of this repertory enabled composers to allude to the works of their colleagues and predecessors in the subtlest of ways, confident that players and listeners would get the message. Another highlight is Patrick Devine's contribution: not an academic essay, but rather a transcription for organ of the slow movement from Bruckner's First Symphony. While this transcription certainly succeeds in demonstrating the influence of organ registration practices on Bruckner's approach to structure, it also brings home the range of other influences shaping his musical materials (only the themes in the opening section, to my ears at least, truly suggest the organ).

Two recurring features of the book struck me while reading it. The first is the cosmopolitan richness of musical life in late-nineteenth-century Dublin, apparent from the crowds who flocked to Cellini's Italianate masses at the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church, and from Kerry Houston's evocative descriptions of 'Paddy's Opera', the Sunday evensong at St Patrick's Cathedral (180). This is the musical world of Joyce's *Ulysses*, a work invoked in passing throughout the book and in detail in Harry White's essay on Joyce, music and Catholicism. Even more pervasive, however, are references to the book's dedicatee, Gerard Gillen. Rather charmingly, almost all the authors manage to work him into their narratives, whether as holder of two of the musical posts mentioned in Joyce's novel (384), as organist at De Valera's funeral mass (153), as co-instigator of the Irish Church Music Summer School (64), as recitalist and recording artist (193), as organ teacher, lecturer and scholar or as a much-valued colleague and friend (*passim*).

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