

KATHARINA UHDE, *THE MUSIC OF JOSEPH JOACHIM* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2018). ISBN 978-1783272846, 532pp, £60 (hardback).

In different stages of his life, the composer, violinist, and violin teacher Joseph Joachim (1831-1907)—the subject of this detailed study by Katharina Uhde—lived in several musical and cultural centres including Vienna, Leipzig, Hanover, and Weimar. While in these centres, he met a number of people from diverse social, political, and cultural backgrounds who influenced his compositional processes greatly. Beatrix Borchard, in her substantial study of Joseph and Amalie Joachim *Stimme und Geige*, described this process of exchange and influence as ‘acculturation’ through the medium of music.¹ She mainly focused on uncovering biographical aspects of both musicians to contextualize their music, as well as the history of the music’s reception. However, missing from this account of the composer, performer, and teacher was a comprehensive look at his compositions that carried in mind those cultural and social circumstances discovered by earlier research. Katharina Uhde’s book provides a similar examination: a study centred around Joachim’s music and his life as a composer. While mainly analysing his compositions, the author also elaborates on the complex network Joachim lived in as a performer, composer, and teacher. Uhde thus uncovers relationships both external and regional, as well as personal influences and others resulting from the networks that developed during different phases of his life.

As a *leitmotif*, Uhde develops the notion of acculturation through music, without directly using Borchard’s concept. The author focusses on the influence of stylistic elements, supplementing and combining this music analysis with a narrative of Joachim as the eternal seeker. His constant search for new musical elements remains the focus of the narrative as well as the analysis in this book; Uhde portrays a person who spends his life searching for his ethnic, cultural and artistic identity. The author uses her analysis of Joachim’s compositions and the transformations he went through as a composer as evidence for this argument about his lifelong search. Two prominent themes emerge in the form of binaries that Joachim seems to have engaged with during his entire life: “‘serious’ art music versus nationalism’ and ‘art music versus virtuosity’.

¹ Beatrix Borchard, *Stimme und Geige. Amalie und Joseph Joachim* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2007).

Uhde's quest to interweave different phases of his life and work gives the book its basic structure; the chapters are mainly arranged around themes which illuminate the individual compositions she analyzes. The leading topics of the book are: 'Virtuosity Uncoiled' (Chapter 1, which analyzes two early fantasies); 'Between Uncoiled Virtuosity and Lisztian Temptations' (Chapter 3, which focuses on the Violin Concerto op. 3); 'Finding his Voice: Between *Vergangenheitsmusik* und *Zukunftsmusik*' (Chapter 4); 'Joachim Encoded, or "Psychological Music"' (Chapter 5); 'Joachim and the Art of Variation' (Chapter 8); 'Identities' (Chapter 9) and, as a conclusion, 'An Assessment of Joachim's Style'. However, there is also a chronological element underpinning the book's structure, as Uhde arranges the order of these topics according to their first appearance in Joachim's work. This clearly illustrates the author's arguments regarding the way in which Joachim recycles several (musical) ideas and also how he was a lifelong seeker caught between the two stools of the binaries mentioned earlier. Uhde uncovers developments in Joachim's compositional and aesthetic concepts, declaring these to be the principles structuring his work, but does not lose the connection and the relevance of these elements to his daily life. The main goal of the analysis is to connect these main ideas with his compositional efforts at that specific time. She does this by elaborating several threads which recur throughout the decades of Joachim's work as a composer.

In her analysis, Uhde shows immense musical and, in particular, technical expertise by exploring the structural and harmonic depth of Joachim's compositions from a violinist's point of view. However, she never loses track of the big picture. The reader benefits from her great knowledge not only of the compositions, but also of historical sources and cultural and social contexts, which allow the author to illustrate the essence and beauty of Joachim's compositions. Uhde's analytical approach does not seek to evaluate compulsively or upgrade the latter; it is not her aim to categorize normatively or inscribe Joachim's music within a (the) musical canon. On the contrary, she wants to throw light on the very individual characteristics of his music and compositional, teaching and performance practices, without losing sight of the multiplicity of influences affecting them.

For example, in order to reveal how different networks influenced his musical practices, she elaborates the connections between the *Otello Fantasy* op. 11 of Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (who was a close paternal friend of Joachim) and Joachim's *Hungarian Fantasy*. She presents similarities and differences between these compositions, taking into consideration both the general influences as well as the individual preferences of both violinists, their wider oeuvre, and their personal environment. This, on the one

hand, allows the author to draw well-founded conclusions about Joachim's concrete musical influences and motivations and also to elaborate (in this case) a line of tradition based in and representing the school of the Conservatoire de Paris, to which Joachim as pupil of Joseph Böhm was dedicated in his first period as an artist and composer. Tracking this goal in the chapters dealing with Joachim's first compositions, Uhde illuminates the significance of musical virtuosity for Joachim's compositions, a fact which is often neglected or even debased in analytical examinations of Joachim and his work. Using virtuosity as a framework in its own right, she gives very detailed insights into technical influences and reveals inspirations from virtuoso models leading to the conclusion that 'Ernst's *Otello Fantasy*, indeed, may have inspired Joachim's large-scale architecture, including choice of tempos and keys, and also the virtuosic treatment of the violin, including idiomatic writing for both the right and the left hand' (p. 50). Thus, Uhde looks at works from this early period, inspired by virtuoso models that have hitherto had little attention paid to them, without succumbing to a discourse that feels the need to apologize for the virtuoso tradition. Instead she posits different categories of valuation stating, 'As a corrective, we need to distinguish the established "German" mainstream *violinist* of the later nineteenth century from the nationally, ethnically, and compositionally peripheral or marginal *composer* of 1852' (p. 40).

Throughout the study, Uhde makes an effort not only to read what is written in the score, but as a violinist and teacher herself, she also reads between the lines to allow an approach that is as close as possible to the compositions. The musical processes Joachim went through in his compositions are not only presented in clear and interesting language, but key observations are also provided to the reader in the form of tables. These comparative tables provide an even clearer picture of the book's central concerns and leave room to make deviation and norm even more transparent.

At some points, the in-depth analysis gives a very special insight into the structures of the music that may be valuable to a professional violinist, though such analyses are perhaps a bit too detailed for a reader who is not familiar with the violin. Nevertheless, whenever such technical details appear in the text, the book's structure allows the reader to obtain the basic information by reading only the first sections of the chapters, allowing them to skim over passages where the analysis becomes too technical.

What makes this book recommendable is that although it utilizes categories such as 'national identity', Uhde does not take these categories as something rigid or fixed.

Rather she tries to grasp these categories by discussing them in terms of tropes and topoi central to Joachim's life such as 'Hebrew' or 'Hungarian'. As Uhde's aim is nothing less than to grasp Joachim's own notion of aesthetics, this critical approach helps the reader to understand Joachim's emotional predisposition in his early years. In addition to impressive music analysis, this 532-page book provides the reader with a detailed chronological catalogue of Joseph Joachim's work, including fragments, arrangements, cadenzas, and dedications. Finally, the book offers a detailed bibliography as well as a thorough general index, which simplifies the reader's search for persons and places.

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