

EVAN JONES (ED.), *INTIMATE VOICES: THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY STRING QUARTET* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009). Volume I: *Debussy to Villa-Lobos*, ISBN 978-1-58046-229-7; Volume 2: *Shostakovich to the Avant-Garde*, ISBN 978-1-58046-322-5; 295+338pp, £70 (hardback).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century one might have been forgiven for thinking that the era of the string quartet was coming to an end. While Wagner cast his spell over European music, this erudite conversation between four equal players seemed to belong to the past. As we move into the twentieth century, the writing of musical history latches easily onto works such as Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* and Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître* as examples of new and developing engagements with instrumental sonority; but the old medium of the string quartet writes its own parallel history, as the chronologically arranged essays in these volumes demonstrate. Perhaps in another way, the persistence of the string quartet is not so surprising. For European or North American composers schooled in the Western European traditions, this is the ultimate genre for exploring purely musical relationships. Many avant-garde composers have written string quartets and it 'is ironic that it falls to the only medium held over from the past, the string quartet, to provide a means of comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the music, technique, and aesthetics of this generation' (ii, 131). The string quartet is a medium for serious compositional statements. As such it is fertile ground for formalist analysts. Four equal parts are easier to work with than full orchestral scores, and the restriction in timbre (even given the range of extended techniques employed in twentieth-century scores) allows an emphasis on pitch, motive, rhythm and register that can be deeply satisfying to study. This is truly musicians' music.

The first part of the title of this two-volume collection of essays, 'Intimate voices', originates in the subtitle of Sibelius's only string quartet and the idea of intimacy resonates through the volumes as the quartet is a site for intimate compositional subjects and thoughts. (In the case of Ligeti and Shostakovich under Socialist Realism, it was the medium for the most private, even secret, musical thoughts.) There is also intimacy between players and between players and audience. The volumes comprise twenty analytical essays on twenty-one twentieth-century composers (Debussy and Ravel are discussed together), so there's nothing here, for example, on the challenges of performing twentieth-century quartets. Choosing the composers must have been an unenviable task for the editor and it is easy to criticize the selection. Debussy and Sibelius are included, Janáček not, despite his Second String Quartet of 1928 being a firmly twentieth-century work with a subtitle 'Intimate Letters' closely matched to the theme of the volumes. Those looking for accounts of major recent European contributions to the quartet repertoire, from James Dillon or Brian Ferneyhough perhaps, will be disappointed, but this is an American publication and five North American

composers feature strongly: Cage, Babbitt, Carter, Powell and Ran, but not Ives or Barber, nor Piston (who wrote five) or Perle (nine). The living composers are, with one exception, of very venerable age and white males. The single exception is the 'American/Israeli' Shulamit Ran, the only female composer and the youngest in the volume even if she is now in her sixty-first year. The only representative of music outside North America or Western Europe is Villa-Lobos. His inclusion is understandable, as he is the composer of seventeen string quartets. However, Eero Tarasti's essay on his quartets is distinctly unenthusiastic about these often attractive works; for example, he argues that the Tenth Quartet is merely 'held together only by a certain craftsmanship and technique in music making' (i, 245).

While some writers in this collection attempt an overview, focusing on interesting features here and there (Tarasti attempts to say something about every one of Villa-Lobos's quartets) others describe a particular work or movement. Joseph Kraus's essay on Sibelius says little about his early exploration of the quartet medium, choosing to consider just one work: the String Quartet in D minor, *Voces Intimae* (1909). Kraus presents a 43-page close analysis of Sibelius's quartet at the heart of which is an extensive Schenkerian analysis designed to reveal its teleological tonal and thematic processes. For the most part these underlying structures are of a conventional kind even if enriched by prolongations which involve modal, whole-tone and octatonic elements and parallelism. Kraus traces thematic processes spanning the work linking them to 'progenitor' shapes and to a recurrent 'alpha' motive. A detailed and clear consideration of formal structure is allied to the Schenkerian and motivic approaches. Kraus describes 'rotations'—recurrent sequences of themes in transformed forms—with the whole work being directed to the third and final rotation of the fifth movement where the 'Grand Telos' unfolds in three stages. Sibelius actually inscribed 'Voces Intimae' (which translates more literally as 'internal voices') in a friend's score over the three E-minor chords near the beginning of the third movement. Whether these chords, which interrupt the otherwise settled F minor, represent the unworldly or whether the 'disruption of the traditional sequence could be a metaphor for the emergence of the composer's *modernist* inner voice' (i, 48) is a point which seems beyond formalist analysis to solve, since these bars are not graphed in a Schenkerian manner. Kraus is typical of many of the contributors to this volume, most of whom are experienced American theorists/musicologists, and many of the articles would not be out of place in analytical journals. The content appears to be determined by their interests and often assumes a working knowledge of theory, whether Schenkerian, set, serial or, in one essay, neo-Riemannian.

Debussy and Ravel wrote only one string quartet each. These works came early in each man's career and similarities between them have often been noted. For these two composers the quartet might well have been seen as a genre from the past. In her

essay, the first in a group entitled 'New voices from the Old World', Marianne Wheel-don considers a very nineteenth-century characteristic which they share: the use of cyclic form, particularly evident in the final movements of each quartet. Debussy is (compositionally) virtuosic and sophisticated and his thematic transformations, particularly those that lead to the final dénouement, are clearer. They are also related to contrasts of timbre within the quartet. Ravel's themes are more concealed; restatements of the theme such as that in the third movement are almost unrecognizable. Their different approaches may reflect Debussy's closer relationship to Franck. Debussy witnessed first performances of significant cyclic works and attended Franck's improvisation classes.

As the extensive endnotes to Matthew Shafstel's essay make clear, Schoenberg's four quartets have been much analysed and discussed, even though they are less central to the string quartet repertoire than, say, Bartók's. Rather than attempting an overview, Matthew Shafstel analyses a single movement, the second, of Schoenberg's Third Quartet, Op. 30 (1927). Schoenberg aimed to innovate, but in a way that would allow 'comprehensible formal, thematic, and harmonic strategies of the classical "Viennese" quartet to shine through the twelve-tone lens ...' (i, 137). Shafstel uses a powerful visual metaphor to express Schoenberg's ability to vary and develop significantly while maintaining comprehensibility: Schoenberg's own striking and original design for a set of cards (a black and white plate in the main text, but shown in colour on the dust covers). The orientation, colours and designs for King, Queen and Knave in each suit differ, yet there is clear commonality of style and, even more important, the designs are comprehensible and usable. In Schoenberg, intelligibility comes from having opening shapes which are clear and which have almost endless possibilities for variation. In the serial Third Quartet, variation begins at the outset and is constant; comprehensibility comes not from perceiving the row, but from the way in which particular constellations of pitch classes and sets emerge, not only from the rotations of the row itself but from the aggregates formed. At the heart of Shafstel's analysis is consideration of the ambiguous formal structure of this movement. Is it variations on a kind of two-part theme? Is it sonata rondo? His analysis of the 'formal, harmonic and melodic layout' (Fig. 5.9, 155) comes down on the side of a set of variations.

Alban Berg used the quartet for his most intimate utterances while working out some of his most challenging technical ideas. His Quartet Op. 3 (1909–10) and *Lyric Suite* (1925–6) are separated by a considerable period and, typically, are characterized by intricate formal structures. At the level of the phrase and idea, formal structures may be articulated by techniques such as dissolution, where ideas seem to lose their individual character and dissolve into symmetrical (wedge) shapes converging on a note (or in the case of the sixth movement of the *Lyric Suite*, a reiterated third in the viola) or music may be controlled by 'systematic' patterns and cycles. Adorno, Berg's

friend and writer on his music, described Berg taking ‘defined thematic shapes and, in the course of developing them, calling them back to nothingness’—a ‘metaphor of vanishing’, as he called it (i, 162). All of these elements are already evident in the Quartet Op. 3 as illustrated in Dave Headlam’s essay on ‘process’ in the Berg Quartets, and he relates these qualities to other aspects of the music’s design, not least register and dynamic. The complex twelve-tone procedures in the *Lyric Suite* have been much analysed as have the (for many years hidden) programmatic elements that help us understand the work’s references to Zemlinsky and Wagner. The serial structure of the *Lyric Suite* is complex as it utilizes four different, if related, row forms. The most interesting part of the article is its final few pages where Headlam places the idea of dissolution in the context of the work’s serial structure, ‘astonishing for its algorithmic technique’ (i, 186) which controls the complex matrix of rows in bars 46–69 of the third movement.

David Clampitt’s essay on Webern’s string quartets raises the issue of radicality. Even after nearly a century, Webern’s atonal music is still demanding for some. Its modernism persists even though quartets such as the *Bagatelles*, Op. 9, have become an established part of the repertoire. This music has been the subject of a considerable amount of analysis, and Clampitt’s focus here is largely on register and symmetry. In his discussion of the twelve-tone quartet Op. 28, Clampitt provides a close analysis of serial structure, providing a list of the rows and their constituent tetrachords in the first movement. The row is built on three transformations of its opening tetrachord (the second tetrachord is a transposed (T4) retrograde of the first and the final tetrachord is a transposition of the first T8). This closely organized internal structure constitutes a GIS (Generalized Interval System) after the work of Lewin, the only time transformational analysis appears in these volumes.

In the second volume reference is made to Shostakovich’s Eighth Quartet as possibly being the most frequently played twentieth-century quartet. If so, it has stiff competition from several of the six quartets of Béla Bartók which have also been the subject of a great deal of analysis. Rather than offering yet another perspective or analysing a single quartet or movement, Joseph Straus embraces all six, rather in the manner of an exposition to a graduate class on the nature of Bartók’s pitch language. The choice of examples will be familiar to Bartók scholars, but this is an article all students studying these works should read.

Far less well known are the seven quartets of Hindemith. David Neumeyer considers the Fourth Quartet in detail, but only after an extensive contextualization of all the quartets supplemented by a useful table summarizing the formal and tonal design of each. The Fourth Quartet is one of the finest and one that pleased the composer. Certainly it has a distinctive sound, mixing quasi-fugal passages with boisterous

moments where open sounds ring out. Neumeyer's short analysis discusses the detachment of the structural levels in this work. Detecting an 'empty' middleground, he argues that while there are connections between the large scale design of this work and the foreground, the lack of organic connection between all three levels required the composer to insert 'climaxes with distinctive textures, sonorities and durations' as 'middleground anchor-points' (i, 126). Neumeyer argues that this looks forward to the later Hindemith where polyphonic voices are articulated at formal level by 'harmonic pillars'. The way in which these modes of construction evolved may have owed something to Hindemith's own playing of his quartets. More than that of any other twentieth-century composer studied in these volumes, Hindemith's knowledge of the quartet came from inside.

The final essay in the first volume and the first in the second both deal with music from Soviet Russia: Neil Minturn's essay on the two quartets of Prokofiev and Patrick McCreless on the fifteen of Shostakovich. Both composers looked back, as so many quartet composers did during the twentieth century, to the music of Beethoven. The influence of Beethoven is particularly evident in Prokofiev's First Quartet (1925) with the *Muss es sein* motive from Beethoven's quartet Op. 135 being alluded to. Beethoven, Minturn argues, provided a model of formal clarity for the already mature Prokofiev. In the quartet Op. 92, it is folk music that is borrowed and the use of stacked fifth collections. By this time (1941) Prokofiev had returned to Russia and was evacuated to the Caucasus and he drew on some of the music he heard there. At the core of Minturn's essay is the double meaning of the words 'appropriate tradition' in the essay's title. Prokofiev, a composer who thought deeply about musical traditions, leaned towards an Eliotic view, one in which the poet, or in this case composer, works consciously to gain his place in tradition, rather than wrestling anxiously with the weight of his ancestors in a Bloomian way. The influences he appropriates from Beethoven and folk music extend the past in original but unexpected ways while remaining appropriate to his musical structures.

In the darkest days of Soviet 'realist' controls of his music, Shostakovich turned to the quartet for his most intimate thoughts. Like Prokofiev, Shostakovich draws on the Classic and Romantic traditions. McCreless analyses perceptively the wonderfully skilful and original manipulations of motive, form and tonal centres that weave a particular narrative in each quartet. Shostakovich constantly plays with our expectations, eluding cadences, repeating or holding a pedal far longer than we would expect, twisting motives in unexpected ways and controlling texture and register masterfully. From the Fifth Quartet (1952) onwards, Shostakovich embraces cyclic writing and his motto DSCH begins to become evident, particularly after the death of Stalin in 1953. Quotation is a powerful tool in the quartets. The Fifth refers to a work by the composer Galina Ustvolskaya to whom Shostakovich was attracted both personally and pro-

fessionally; the Fourth (1949) refers to Jewish elements, the Second 'hearkens back in many respects to late Beethoven' (ii, 8) and 'the Eighth Quartet is a massive study in self-quotation.' (ii, 13)

Not to connect Shostakovich's quartet output with the social and political conditions under which they were composed is unthinkable. The First Quartet was written in 1938, the year after the momentous first performance of the Fifth Symphony. The move to quartet composition may well reflect Shostakovich turning to a more intimate, private, medium for his 'most original, most musically challenging, ideas' (ii, 4); it was written in Leningrad in the 'third year of the Great Terror' (ii, 5). But, precisely because the quartet is an abstract medium, the meaning of any particular quartet is elusive; these works seem to speak with more than one voice. 'The Eighth Symphony has been interpreted as depicting either the tragedy of the Great Patriotic War ... or political repression at home ... It is tempting to hear the Third Quartet as offering at least these two options ...' (ii, 10).

Many meanings can be ascribed to the Eighth Quartet. It was 'officially' viewed as a reaction to the horrors of Dresden, yet is also deeply self-referential. McCreless quotes David Fanning for whom the finale symbolized 'healing, or at least the longed-for healing of the rift between Shostakovich as Man and Shostakovich as Artist', whereas Sarah Reichardt views it as 'apocalypse' (i, 19). As with the Fifth Symphony, we seem to be able to read Shostakovich in opposite ways; another example is the Twelfth Quartet (1968) which seems 'strangely detached' but at other times 'deeply involved' in the events of the Prague Spring (ii, 24). Numerous 'multivoiced' interpretations of Shostakovich's music of his final years are possible, but the emphasis on death in the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Quartets is clear. McCreless manages to discuss all fifteen quartets in some detail in his essay; each is a masterpiece and reflects some aspect of Shostakovich's life and the one-by-one narrative approach is necessary. The discussion is necessarily dense, but rewarding.

Shostakovich was forced towards more traditional musical languages by the repressive political conditions in which he found himself. In Britten's case, tradition flowed naturally from a musical education in Britain of the 1930s, his attempts to learn more of the European avant-garde notwithstanding. Christopher Mark argues that the 'support' Britten gained from tradition is an essential part of his aesthetic. Britten composed three quartets, the first two of which are rarely performed. Mark considers all of the quartet output, even juvenilia, in some detail. Britten, like Shostakovich, showed how diatonicism could still be employed in an original way. His capacity to revitalize diatonicism through sonority is apparent from the very opening bars of the all too rarely heard First Quartet (1941) where the upper strings, high and quiet, gently reiterate a diatonic cluster against the cello's pizzicato D-major arpeggios. The figure of



Peter Grimes may lie behind the Second Quartet; the C major tonality links the opera and the quartet, perhaps 'representing some kind of purity' (ii, 52) and the work's contrasts and confrontations of material have been likened to Grimes's character. C diatonicism dominates the extraordinary seventeen-minute passacaglia that ends the work: Britten's longest outpouring in a genre that links him back to Purcell.

Competing points of view on the form of the first movements of the Second and Third Quartets occupy a significant portion of this essay. Britten's music seems more concerned with looser, episodic structures tempered with fantasy. So the first movement of the Third, despite Hans Keller's argument that sonata lies in the background, is as Evans puts it, a 'fluid succession of textural variants' (ii, 61) in line with its self-effacing title of this movement, *Duets with Moderate Movement*. The Third Quartet positions itself more toward the divertimento than the classical quartet, but its five-movement arch-like structure surely connects with Bartók. The quartet ends with a 'Recitative and Passacaglia' and Mark makes an almost apologetic reference to its final enigmatic progression: 'Britten's might not be the most ostentatiously modern music examined in this volume, but in this parting gesture his music asserts its quint-essentially modern sensibility' (ii, 70).

Only nine years separate Britten's Third Quartet (1945) and Ligeti's First (1953–4), but they are in different compositional worlds. While tradition may be less in evidence, the looming presence of Beethoven remains strong: Ligeti indicated that Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* was his secret ideal for his First Quartet. Once again we see a composer using the quartet as a vehicle for his most intimate musical thoughts. As Jane Piper Clendinning tells us, Ligeti wrote his single-movement First Quartet for the 'bottom drawer' where he kept works he could not hope to have publicly performed under Hungarian Socialist Realism. The work has a highly chromatic language and a complex formal structure that analysts have struggled with even if 'it follows the criteria of Viennese Classicism' (ii, 82). Bartók is clearly behind much of the writing (as may be the Stravinsky of *The Soldier's Tale*, though I have no knowledge of whether Ligeti had access to this score). The Second Quartet from 1968 is a truly avant-garde composition with microtonality, micropolyphony and *meccanico* writing much in evidence. Ligeti's shift to composing with sound, texture and complex rhythms demands a different approach which Clendinning's graphic analysis provides admirably. If Bartók and Stravinsky ring through the First Quartet, the striking Second is a more original statement: 'livid, hectic and freakish' as one commentator singled out by Ligeti described it.

As noted earlier, many of the essays in this collection attempt an overview, even if considering one or more quartets in detail. The essay on Berio by Richard Hermann—'Becoming Berio'—takes a different approach, however. Hermann chooses not to deal

with the late string quartets *Notturmo* (1993) and *Glosse* (1997) but to give two lesser-known quartets from the 1950s detailed treatment. The first is *Study* (1952), which is unrecorded; as such it might seem an odd choice for a substantial analysis in this book. As it turns out, however, the work reveals a 'heretofore unknown style, a particular kind of atonalism' (ii, 99). Hermann's analysis is one of the most intricate in the book, describing Berio's use of a restricted group of sets, interval cycles, an essentially ametric rhythmic organization and process-orientated formal structure.

Berio moved on to serialism in the *Quartetto per archi* (1956), receiving his introduction to the technique from Dallapiccola. Hermann argues that Berio may have seen in serialism a way to 'offer a systematic answer to the problems of sounding still too derivative of the past and also to dissolve the "quartet-as-conversation-among-equals" tradition' (ii, 120). Here, in the middle of the second volume, is the first hint of a challenge to one of the deep-seated orthodoxies of quartet writing. The language of this quartet is complex, with pitch series which are permuted and six different durations series, each of which has its own particular intensity. However, although these series provide 'limited set class consistency' and a reasonably even 'statistical distribution of the chromatic' (ii, 122), they do not seem to create 'direct and hearable' structures on the surface. Hermann is able to unravel the first six series used in the *Quartetto* which occupy the first 36 bars. In a sophisticated graphic analysis he reveals the symmetries that shape the surface of the work.

Evan Jones's own essay is on Xenakis's four quartets. In music of this kind the debate can often be as much about the process that leads to the work as the work itself. Here the focus is on the 'interaction of compositional and perceptual form' (ii, 156). The First Quartet *ST/4* (1955/62) was one of six 'stochastic' pieces derived from the same computer programme (the material was first used for a piece with ten instruments). Out of these apparently randomly generated materials, Xenakis shapes a composition. As part of the process he includes sectional demarcations in the score, but these contrast with the divisions that might be placed on the work by the listener or performer, resulting in an 'interesting dialogue between poietic and esthetic segmentations' (ii, 141). Oddly too, despite the stochastic origins of the materials, Xenakis manages to incorporate ideas as familiar as a descending chromatic scale in the cello (extended down an octave below the cello's lowest note by successive detunings) which arise not so much from the pitch material provided by the computer programme (the chances of which would be extraordinarily slim) but from the re-writing of a harp glissando in the ten instrument version of the work. In another apparent breach of the stochastic processes, study of the aggregate durations of notes given sustained articulation (i.e., ignoring staccato, *col legno*, etc.) in a substantial section of the work reveals a cycle-of-fifths hierarchy. As Jones points out, the likelihood of this biased distribution occurring by chance is extremely low. 'Whether



resulting from random process or from deliberate adjustment by the composer, this pivotal section provides a compelling musical meditation against which to contemplate the surrounding sea of activity' (ii, 145). Over twenty years later Xenakis turned to the quartet again with *Tetras* (1983), 'a whirlwind of textural contrasts' (ii, 146). *Tetora* (1990), the most accessible of the quartets, is built on a series of interrelated pitch collections, but the real interest for the listener often lies in what Xenakis described as the balance of order and disorder, states which are sharply juxtaposed, as Evans demonstrates (ii, Ex. 5.4). The final quartet, *Ergma* (1994), is notable for its passages of rhythmic union and sometimes almost jazzy sound.

A somewhat controversial figure, the Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi (1905–88) came to prominence in the 1980s. The extent to which the works since the late 1940s are actually the result of collaboration with Vieri Tosatti 'who served as a ghostwriter' (ii, 162), and who seems to have regarded Scelsi as something of a dilettante undeserving of the mystique surrounding his music, is shrouded in mystery. Scelsi is best known for works which emphasize a single pitch class and for a process of composition that involved transcribing and elaborating improvisations performed on a monophonic electronic keyboard capable of producing microtones. His string quartets are amongst his best works. Their tonal palettes are extremely restricted, but not literally to a single tone. For example, the First Quartet predates the single-note style, the Fourth Quartet unfolds a group of pitches (beginning on C and ending on A) extremely slowly, and the Fifth Quartet postdates his single-note style, but is nevertheless restricted in its materials: 'forty-three repetitions of the same basic gesture, a noisily attacked cluster that slowly decays' (ii, 185). One of the most extraordinary features of Scelsi's quartet writing is the notation of parts of the Fourth Quartet which allocates separate staves to individual strings of the same instrument!

David Bernstein has to deal with only one work in his discussion of Cage, the String Quartet in four parts of 1950, a work that paves the way for the new aesthetic in the works which will follow, in that the sounds are allowed to "'be themselves", a compositional attitude that would lead to his use of chance operations' (ii, 207). The work is highly constrained, perhaps owing something to Satie whom Cage championed. Cage described his work as devoid of harmony and counterpoint—'a line in rhythmic space' (ii, 207). Form is generated by 22 rotations of a 22-bar sequence of irregular phrase lengths and much of the work is constructed from a gamut of 43 sounds (mostly single pitches, dyads and trichords in particular registers). Bernstein concludes that 'the composition of a work for the time-honoured venerable medium of the string quartet paved the way for what was to become Cage's most revolutionary contribution to the development of musical style in the twentieth century' (ii, 207).

Milton Babbitt, the first composer represented in the book who was living at the time it was written (but is now deceased), wrote six quartets, the first of which was withdrawn. Andrew Mead makes a very deliberate effort to discuss the 'listening experience' rather than complex pre-compositional strategies which might draw attention away from the 'consequences of all the compositional choices their use induces' (ii, 214). Mead points out that in Babbitt, as in Ives and Carter, the string quartet is a 'colloquy of four (almost) equal voices, a play of personalities in which predominance, alliance, submission, and independence are constantly in flux' (ii, 214). In explaining Babbitt's music, Mead's emphasis is frequently on 'what they are playing, how and with whom' (ii, 220). Mead's metaphors help to bring this sometimes difficult music to life with mention of, for example, the 'Whee! factor' in the Second Quartet (ii, 216). This colourful language is balanced by discussions of trichordal procedures and duration series in this quartet that are clear and rigorous. The serial pitch 'arrays', 'lynes' and serially determined rhythmic attacks in the Third and Fourth Quartets bring further complexities. Sometimes there is a mismatch between the simplicity of the observations about the listening experience and the complexity of the 'underlying pitch-class and time-point arrays' (ii, 225) which give rise to it. Babbitt's Fifth and Sixth Quartets are also described; here the discussion focuses not so much on the presentation of the serial aggregates but on the way they are presented in systematic rotations of *arco*, *arco con sordino*, *arco sul ponte* and *pizzicato*.

Alongside Bartók and Shostakovich, the cycle of five quartets by Elliot Carter must rank among the twentieth century's most significant (and the possibility still remains that it will extend to six). As Jonathan Bernard describes, Carter came to quartet writing as a mature composer in 1951 with a lengthy First Quartet with a 'literal' three-part formal structure that seems at odds with the 'real' four-movement structure that the work actually unfolds. Carter's technique was well developed by the early 1950s and we find in the First Quartet, as in other works of this period, that structures are regulated and defined through duration and metric modulation, and that harmonic organization makes copious use of the all-interval tetrachord.

In the Second Quartet (1959) Carter takes to an extreme the idea that the four members of the quartet are individuals in their own right. Bernard rather wittily describes their characters: 'the first violin is given to flashy, virtuosic, ornate gestures; the second violin is an adherent to strict time ...', etc. (ii, 247). The Third Quartet (1971) finds the first violin and viola and second violin and cello appearing to play duets independently of each other in one of Carter's most demanding works. But as we would expect, despite the apparent independence of the duos there is a high degree of planning in their harmonic conjunction. With the Fourth Quartet (1986) the four voices relate more closely; indeed, Carter argued that he wanted to build on 'similarities

between different instruments ... even though each of them has its own rhythmic and intervallic features. The general idea was a kind of reconciliation' (ii, 259). What emerges is a work in which there is a sense of 'independent lines that bear some regular, if complex and nonobvious relationship to one another' (ii, 260). In the Fifth Quartet (1995) the idea of things going on simultaneously and Carter's fascination with the disposition of things in time result in a six-movement quartet interspersed with interludes in which the players appear to pause to discuss elements from several of the six movements. It is as though we hear them stop and rehearse.

Mel Powell is perhaps better known to American than European audiences. The penultimate essay in the second volume is a substantial account of his work by Jeffrey Perry, a pupil of this distinguished composer and teacher. Powell's career began as a jazz pianist, it was then shaped by Hindemith at Yale, before in the late 1950s he began to deploy serial structures under the influence of Babbitt and, as Perry puts it, he realigned himself 'with the Schoenberg lineage of American musical composition' (ii, 286). Although preceded by three earlier works, it is the String Quartet of 1982 that is Powell's finest work for the genre. Perry has the benefit of personal acquaintance with Powell's compositional methods, notably the idea of 'kineforms', a series of distinctions drawn between the expository and stable and that which is in motion. Drawn from Schoenberg, this may come down to the polarization of very basic musical elements: upbeat and downbeat, dissonance and consonance. These kineforms inform the serial String Quartet, representative of Powell's 'maturation as a composer [that] can be viewed as a quest for ... unification of dimensions. This meant finding a rhythmic, morphological and gestural vocabulary that was congruent with the pitch language bequeathed by Schoenberg' (ii, 305).

Shulamit Ran is the subject of the final and briefest essay. Ran has written three quartets and only the first is discussed in detail here. The essay convinces us that this is fine music (although I do not know this quartet and was not able to access a recording during the preparation of this review). However, Robert Peck's style tends to describe the progress of the work rather than leaving us with a sense of how Ran might contribute to a renewal of quartet writing for the twenty-first century: her third quartet, unrecorded so far, dates from 2002.

Given the work of ensembles such as the Arditti Quartet, there is every indication that the string quartet will continue to feature strongly in concerts and festivals of contemporary music in years to come. Recently, in October 2010, the Donaueschingen Festival devoted a day to new quartets, with eight first performances including Ferneyhough's Sixth Quartet and quartets by Ablinger, Adamek, Cassidy, Dillon, Hilario, Manory and Posadas, the players of this demanding repertoire being the Arditti Quartet, JACK Quartet and Quatuor Diotima. The Huddersfield Contemporary

Music Festival (November 2010) featured the Quatuor Bozzini in a European premiere by the Irish composer Jennifer Walshe as well as the two quartets by Kagel: a figure absent from these volumes.

Those who have the time and patience to work their way through these books will be rewarded with a magnificent sweep through many key works in twentieth-century musical history. Perhaps before too long there will be a further volume of essays on twenty-first-century quartets and the parallel history will continue. What is certain is that there will be as many, if not more, ways of writing about quartets as there are new composers to write them.

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