

Cyr, Mary. **Performing Baroque music**. Portland : Amadeus Press, 1992 [254 p. ISBN 0-931340-49-7]

Mary Cyr's Performing Baroque music provides a lucid, well-documented guide through salient issues in Baroque performance practice. Eight chapters are arranged according to clearly defined topics: a general introduction to performance practice and Baroque sound; tempo and spirit; dynamics; pitch, tuning and temperament; the basso continuo; articulation; rhythm and notation; and ornamentation. The second half of the book is devoted to scores for eleven works, many reproduced in facsimile, and two comprehensive bibliographies of primary and secondary sources.

Cyr's cogent synthesis of material from primary sources with late 20th-century interpretation is one of the important assets of this book. Quotations and treatise diagrams illustrate Cyr's points and she judiciously avoids paraphrasing where an example from a primary source will suffice. Comparisons with Donington's works in the field are inevitable but Cyr's approach differs enough to make this a necessary addition to an early music collection. While Donington uses several quotations from more than one source for emphasis, Cyr has an economic approach that results in a concise, manageable resource for specialists and novices alike.

Each chapter is divided into sub-sections according to geographical region and century, making this book easy to dip into according to one's interests. Chapters also include introductory or concluding summaries charting the course of 20th-century scholarship in each area through

key figures in the field. The strongest sections are those devoted to performance issues in the German and French repertoires. Of particular interest is Cyr's treatment of *inégalité*, an elusive quality referred to by many French composers and theorists. Cyr provides a useful discussion of notes *inégaies* as an aspect of both articulation and rhythm, broadening previous interpretations of *inégalité* as a purely rhythmic quality.

While Cyr's expert navigation of many complex issues cannot be undermined, there are a few points not included in the general discussion and bibliographies that are worth noting. Because the focus of this book is performance-oriented, I expected that the chapter "Pitch, tuning and temperament" would include references to the Parrott-Gardiner controversy surrounding clef transposition in early 17th-century Italian repertoires, specifically Monteverdi's Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610). Their ongoing discussion has affected performances and recordings of pieces by Monteverdi; since Cyr uses Monteverdi as a model for 17th-century tempo indications, dynamics, and continuo practices, a discussion of the performance issues of transposition in his music would not be out of place here. A section on instrumentation would clarify the potential confusion arising from two references to the "violone". On page 73 Cyr refers to the cello being called violone in early 17th-century printed sources; on page 74 she refers to a "cello, bassoon and violone" as part of Bach's continuo group. An explanation of whether the violone was

an instrument in its own right during the 17th century seems necessary. Finally, Cyr's discussion of the rhythmic alignment of dotted rhythms with triplets, on page 119, does not incorporate the testimonies of C.P.E. Bach and Quantz, who disagreed over the proper execution of such rhythmic inconsistencies. It might be interesting for the reader to know that some controversies have been unresolved since their inception during the Baroque period. The book is beautifully presented with generously laid-out tables and musical examples. The appendix of musical scores, many in facsimile, sets this

book apart from previous studies of performance practice. An accompanying tape is available with recordings of the pieces Cyr refers to in her text and Appendices.

Originally designed as a pedagogical work, Cyr's book would be appropriate for use as a textbook in university-level courses on performance practice. All collections which include Baroque music or have collections of music monographs should include this volume.

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