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Carlos Chávez: A Guide to Research [Book review]

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on their usefulness for research. The guide also includes a number of short chapters that provide bibliographic and other data on particular topics, types of materials, or works: "Discographies and Rollographies," "Maple Leaf Rag," "Treemonisha," "Television, Films, and Videos," "Ragtime Performers and Composers," "Performing Groups," "Periodicals," and "Ragtime Clubs and Societies." The last two sections of the book, "Festivals" and "Special or Annual Concerts," will be especially helpful for those looking for live performances of ragtime.

For the scholar doing research on ragtime or Joplin, locating source materials is fundamental. Particularly useful for this purpose are the two sections listing ragtime collections; here Ping-Robbins has helpfully provided a brief description of each collection and citations of secondary literature.

With a few exceptions noted by the author (such as the lack of an extensive discography), this is a thorough resource guide and an essential tool for ragtime research. It will be a valuable addition to any music reference collection supporting jazz, ragtime, or popular-music programs.

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Carlos Chávez: A Guide to Research.

By Robert Parker. (Composer Resource Manuals, 46.) New York: Garland Publishing, 1998. [x, 180 p. ISBN 0-8153-2087-6. \$46.]

The Garland series *Composer Resource Manuals* presents reference works that are equally useful to scholars, students, and music lovers. Now including composers as diverse as Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and Scott Joplin, the series aspires to provide in each volume a bibliographic guide to the writings on (and by) "significant composers" of the "Western tradition" (p. iii).

There is no doubt that Robert Parker's *Carlos Chávez: A Guide to Research* is an important contribution to music scholarship. A guide dedicated to the most important Mexican composer of this century has long been overdue. Chávez and Silvestre Revueltas are music's counterparts to illustrious Mexican artists like Diego Rivera, Frida

Kalho, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, and to notable writers like Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo. Yet, why is the music of Chávez and Revueltas seldom programmed and studied? A possible answer is that music requires a stable economic, social, political, and cultural infrastructure. Music can only be a universal language, as the cliché goes, as long as there are conservatories, orchestras, and choruses, as well as a broad, educated middle class to attend performances and pay for them; perhaps this explains why Mexican composers do not receive the same kind of attention as their counterparts in the visual arts and literature, where the creative solitude of the painter and writer are less dependent on such an infrastructure.

Nonetheless, Chávez is far from unappreciated. As Parker's research shows, there are hundreds of writings on the composer. Luminaries as diverse as Aaron Copland, John Cage, and Paul Bowles wrote about him, and the academy has produced a dozen or so doctoral dissertations. The periodic recording of Chávez's music attests to its growing popularity. There can be no doubt that Chávez's oeuvre (179 works, according to Parker's tally) is making a mark within both the concert repertoire and music scholarship.

All of this good news for Chávez's music is symptomatic of a larger phenomenon, namely, the strength of hispanist musicology in the United States. Although many scholars in this country have studied the music of Latin America since at least the 1940s, only recently has the field established itself as an unquestionable reality. Many universities currently have research centers or programs focusing on Latin American music (Catholic University of America, the University of Texas, UCLA, Indiana University, Dartmouth College, etc.). Journals with a long tradition continue to present first-rate research (*Latin American Music Review* and *Inter-American Music Review*), and Gilbert Chase's classic survey, *A Guide to the Music of Latin America* (2d ed. [Washington: Pan American Union, 1962]) has been reprinted (New York: AMS Press, 1972). In addition, the American Musicological Society hosts the International Hispanic Music Study Group, a forum for debate and ongoing research. In sum, the situation of hispanist musicology could hardly be better.

Parker's book is, therefore, a fitting contribution to a growing field of studies in which much work remains to be done. Parker has done a superb job of sifting through thousands of documents and organizing them in a coherent and useful manner. He has left no stone unturned at the main archives that hold Chávez materials (especially the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and the Fondo Carlos Chávez at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City). In addition to primary sources, Parker has cited extensive secondary literature, including scholarly writings and criticism in music journals. Excluded are master's theses, concert reviews, articles in magazines, and encyclopedia and dictionary entries. More difficult to justify is the exclusion of an up-to-date discography, which would have guided the student and musician to some seminal recordings and offered an overview of Chávez's place within the repertory and his popularity among music lovers.

In addition, I question the exclusion of a discography, because music history can no longer be based solely on written sources; recordings, taped interviews, radio and television broadcasts, and so forth are important traces that need to be examined. Parker names only a few unwritten sources. Item 230, for example, is a transcription of a radio and television interview, yet the fact that Parker cites the transcript of the tape, not the tape itself, indicates the bias of this study toward the written record. A difficult question with any research guide—a question that concerns both the series editor and the author—is how to define its boundaries. Obviously, Parker has chosen to limit his study to written materials—a valid choice, to be sure, though in my opinion one that impairs the usefulness of the work.

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EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's "St. John Passion." By Michael Marissen. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. [xii, 109 p. ISBN 0-19-511471-X. \$16.95.]

In his previous book, *The Social and Religious Designs of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), Michael Marissen showed how Johann Sebastian Bach managed to invoke and even transcend the fundamental hierarchies of early-eighteenth-century religion and society in a textless and hence most unlikely genre. Likewise, in his new study, Marissen rethinks a familiar work—the *St. John Passion*—and shows how it "problematizes" (his verb) the theology and worldview of an early-eighteenth-century German Lutheran composer. Responding forcefully to those who find in this work loud echoes of the Gospel writer's antipathy toward the Jews, Marissen effectively disposes of the most serious charges against Bach and his unknown librettist while offering compelling readings of several key passages. But to praise this study above all for its timeliness—as did James Oestreich, prominently, in a feature article in the *New York Times* (26

April 1998, sec. 2)—threatens to miss the author's larger aims. Consisting of an interpretive essay and an annotated literal translation of the libretto, *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's "St. John Passion"* is both a thoughtful apologia for and a compelling exegesis of the work. Intended for the scholar and the general reader, this slim but elegant volume will surely inspire many to reengage with the *St. John*, to hear anew its unique message.

A thirty-six-page essay examines the theology and history of the Gospel narrative and carves out a special place for Bach's *St. John Passion* within Lutheran practice. Marissen addresses the work's most controversial aspect—its unflattering characterization of the Jews—by asking first "whether or not Bach's music buys into the gospel's hostility to Jews, and [second] whether or not Bach's music appropriates Luther's [anti-Judaic] polemics" (p. 21). That Marissen offers negative answers to both questions is unsurprising; more striking are his diverse ruminations on the music, the libretto, and the work's theology. The rest of the volume is given over to the translation (the book's most practical feature and doubtless a useful selling point for choir