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Music For A Mixed Taste: Style, Genre, And Meaning In Telemann's Instrumental Works



Synopsis

Georg Philipp Telemann gave us one of the richest legacies of instrumental music from the eighteenth century. Though considered a definitive contribution to the genre during his lifetime, his concertos, sonatas, and suites were then virtually ignored for nearly two centuries following his death. Yet these works are now among the most popular in the baroque repertory. In *Music for a Mixed Taste*, Steven Zohn considers Telemann's music from stylistic, generic, and cultural perspectives. He investigates the composer's cosmopolitan "mixed taste"--a blending of the French, Italian, English, and Polish national styles--and his imaginative expansion of this concept to embrace mixtures of the old (late baroque) and new (galant) styles. Telemann had an equally remarkable penchant for generic amalgamation, exemplified by his pioneering role in developing hybrid types such as the sonata in concerto style ("Sonate auf Concertenart") and overture-suite with solo instrument ("Concert en ouverture"). Zohn examines the extramusical meanings of Telemann's "characteristic" overture-suites, which bear descriptive texts associating them with literature, medicine, politics, religion, and the natural world, and which acted as vehicles for the composer's keen sense of musical humor. Zohn then explores Telemann's unprecedented self-publishing enterprise at Hamburg, and sheds light on the previously unrecognized borrowing by J.S. Bach from a Telemann concerto. *Music for a Mixed Taste* further reveals how Telemann's style polonaise generates musical and social meanings through the timeless oppositions of Orient-Occident, urban-rural, and serious-comic.

Book Information

Paperback: 726 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Reprint edition (June 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0190247851

ISBN-13: 978-0190247850

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 1.8 x 6.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #471,630 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #177 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Blues #1458 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > History & Criticism #3338 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Theory, Composition & Performance > Instruction & Study

Customer Reviews

"If any music-lovers, performers, or scholars still doubt the beauty and richness of Telemann's music or the importance of his industrious life for the course of music history, let them now read this new study by Steven Zohn, which is extraordinarily well researched, meticulously argued, and original in both content and approach. In one bound, Zohn sets new standards not only for literature in English on Telemann, but also for Telemann scholarship worldwide."--Michael Talbot, Emeritus Professor of Music, University of Liverpool

"Steven Zohn's excellent and engaging study should put to rest, once and for all, any view that Telemann was a habitual composer of wallpaper music. Zohn gives us a comprehensive, nuanced, and discerning picture of the Telemann whose music Bach and Handel so greatly admired."--Michael Marissen, Professor of Music, Swarthmore College, and author of *The Social and Religious Designs of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos*

"Zohn takes Telemann well beyond Bach's shadow, revealing not only Telemann's original voice and uncanny fluency in any number of national styles, but also transforming our basic conceptions about music in eighteenth-century Germany. An invaluable contribution."-- Wendy Heller, Professor of Music, Princeton University

Steven Zohn is Laura H. Carnell Professor of Music Studies at Temple University. The recipient of grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, the American Musicological Society, and the German Academic Exchange Service, he has published widely on the music of the German late baroque. He is also a noted performer on historical flutes.

This dense but lively treatment of Telemann's instrumental music fills a real void. While many musicians of his era have entire shelves devoted to their work, the Telemann section in my college library contains exactly three books about Telemann's life and music, most of which are superficial. But this book does not skim across his oeuvre; instead, it spends 500 pages analyzing the forms and precursors of his prolific output, with many examples and excerpts. Yet a warning must be issued up front--this is not for the casual reader or even a serious amateur. The prose is thick with technical musical form analysis and terminology, including numerous French, German, and Italian terms that remain untranslated, and might even challenge a music major. And in a book with almost 200 pages of notes and bibliography at the end, the most needed end section of all for the interested layman, a Glossary, is almost laughably inadequate. There are often more obscure terms on ONE page of the text than can be found in the entire glossary. And yet, in spite of these caveats,

there are clearly interesting and tantalizing insights lurking just behind this veil of technical jargon, and a sense of a very good writer in complete control of his subject. As an amateur musician who loves and often plays Telemann, I intend to struggle through the entire book or die trying. While it is hard for any writer to please all audiences, I just wish the author had kept the many intelligent amateurs like myself in mind when he wrote this, instead of a small circle of academic experts.

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