



Reviews

The Los Angeles Heritage: Four Women Composers, 1918–1939. By SUSAN FINGER (University of California at Los Angeles, Ph.D. dissertation in historical musicology, 1986. 484 pp., bibl., music exx.)

Finger's pathbreaking dissertation notably augments the scanty scholarly literature dealing with pre-World War II American women composers and with western states music history. The author brings to her task not only musicological expertise, but also background as a European history major before making performance and musical research her chief domains. Her dissertation is happily infused throughout with broader perspectives than that of a localist or strident propagandist. Her choice of time period, 1918–1939, allows her to focus on the creative energy of native composers seeking a unique voice. Better still, she deliberately avoids the hackneyed immigrant figures whose influence muffled that voice. Her choice of composers—Carrie Jacobs-Bond (1862–1946), Fannie Charles Dillon (1881–1947), Pauline Alderman (1893–1983), and Elinor Remick Warren (b 1900)—highlights the tremendous variety that characterized Los Angeles musical life during her chosen time span. Also to Finger's credit, she weaves her exhaustive documentation into a skilful, flowing narrative that avoids the usual pitfalls of dissertation jargon.

Finger divides the work into four chapters—each offering a biographical section as well as analysis of a representative work—amply supplemented by documenting materials and thorough appendices of compositions. The biographical sections offer sympathetic sketches of four very determined, and yet quite different talents—Bond, the songwriter who soothed American sensitivities shocked by the First World War; Dillon, a beneficiary of German training, who supported herself by teaching public school while resolutely continuing to compose large orchestral works; Alderman, the pioneering University of Southern California professor of musicology

whose talent as a composer of light opera may take un-awares certain former students, but whose musical sense of humor will surprise none of them; and Warren, the only one of the four whose personal and financial circumstances happily permitted full-time devotion to the higher reaches of composition, and whose choral works are still frequently performed.

In addition to a wide net of archival investigations, Finger gathered a host of new data during personal interviews with Alderman and Warren. She also sifted Dillon's handwritten diaries that compare in value with Amy Fay's *Music-Study in Germany*. Bond's published autobiography proved as revealing for what she left out as what she included. As a result of Finger's exhaustive exploration of previously uncharted legacies of the composers themselves and winnowing of material in special collections owned by UCLA and by historical societies loyal to their native daughters, Finger's data corrects information circulating in current dictionaries. (Los Angeles radio station KUSC broadcast Warren's *Suite for Orchestra* recorded by the Oslo Philharmonic on her "eighty-first" birthday, whereas correctly the broadcast honored her eighty-sixth birthday.)

Finger usefully compares the opportunities for women based in Los Angeles during the inter-war years with what American composers based elsewhere could do to advance their careers. Of the four, Dillon was the one who faced most seriously a nationwide problem of her epoch: how to shake off the shackles of European training in the quest for local color. At various times she toyed with Indian tunes, composed scores for historical pageants, and found inspiration in western scenes. But the irony of the problem did not elude her. Finger quotes a 1919 article by Dillon—directed at critics who had faulted Josef Hofmann's (1876–1957) all-American piano programs that had contained one of her own works. While demanding a wholly new and original American musical vocabulary, they simultaneously judged every



work that he played by European contemporary standards. As justification for trouncing American works played at poorly attended all-American concerts, critics contrasted them with European works already passed through the colander of try-outs abroad. Dillon could speak with the voice of experience. Her suite *In a Mission Garden* was played at the Hollywood Bowl on August 9, 1928, Percy Grainger [1882–1961] conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic. But even though federally funded performances by WPA orchestras infused hope into the hearts of many local musicians, their quality could not compete with adequately rehearsed performances of works by the many immigrants from central Europe who began flooding into Los Angeles after Hitler's rise to power.

If being native born compromised any symphonic composer's chances for being played by an orchestra of repute, being a woman compounded difficulties. True, Bond never aspired to symphonic performance. However, even she suffered pigeonholing. In 1895, the best that any of the Chicago commercial publishers could ask of her was children's songs. Dillon was never a fiery feminist. Yet she had to confess that many of her more ambitious projects were passed over as fancies of a mere woman. Not on principle but because she saw no alternative she joined societies of women musicians. Famous male pedagogues accepted her as a composition student gladly enough, and praised her work highly to boot. But when performances by male artists were in question, she needed tiger aggressiveness to get them. Alderman did not complain of male indifference to her creative aspirations. But since her career was not built on composition, the availability of publication and performance was not as central a concern as it was to the others. Warren says that it never occurred to her at the beginning of her career that her sex might deny her serious consideration as a symphonist. But in retrospect, she now ponders the advantages she might have enjoyed had she begun publishing with the "Elinor Remick Warren" shortened to "Remick Warren."

The appendices of works-lists compiled by Finger forbid classing any of the four as mere genteel dilettantes. Bond's songs, although appealing to the multitudes, were all published in the most soigné manner. No mistakes of accidentals, wrong clefs, or any other telltale signs of self-publication mar any of her songs. From first to last she was meticulous in all that she did. Perhaps even too meticulous in private affairs. After divorcing her first husband, she married Dr. Frank Lewis Bond (1858–1895), whose death left her with the twelve-year-old son of her first marriage, Frederick Jacobs Smith (1882–1928). Her motherly love did not prevent him at age 46 from committing suicide.

Bond's published songs begin in 1895 with *Mother's Cradle Song* (Chicago: Carrie Jacobs-Bond) and continue

through her eighty-second year, with *Because of the Light* (text by Francis Carlin; Hollywood: Carrie Jacobs-Bond and Son, Boston Music sole selling agents in the U.S.A., 1944). She dedicated the latter to a singer then at the height of her career, Helen Traubel—thus continuing to show herself the astute businesswoman who recognized the value of celebrity performance long after she had herself reached Olympian heights of fame.

Like Bond, Dillon also recognized the value of well-placed adulation. Her dedicatees include Teresa Carreño (1853–1917), Percy Grainger, and Edwin Hughes (1884–1965). Again like Bond, Dillon indulged in self-publication when established outlets were denied her. However, Bond eventually found herself piloting a fully professional and lucrative venture, whereas Dillon's sporadic "Orchid Ms. Prints" looked cheap and petered out without beginning to do justice to her lengthy list of compositions that included no less than 118 numbered opuses for solo piano, organ, voice, chorus, saxophone and piano, violin and piano, piano trio, string quartet, band, and orchestra (as well as three scores for locally produced outdoor dramas). The self-evident quality of Finger's examples chosen from Dillon's oeuvre—the orchestral suite entitled *In a Mission Garden* and a set of *Eight Descriptive Pieces*, Op. 20, for piano—fully justifies their choice by Grainger and Hofmann for prestigious public performances.

Neither Bond nor Warren ever taught for a living. Both Dillon and Alderman had to teach—Dillon theory and composition, Alderman musicology. The latter's two light operas, six songs, and several arrangements for the USC recorder ensemble make a lean harvest. Excerpts from her *Bombastes Furioso*, written as an M.A. thesis (1930) for the University of Washington, reveal an Arthur Sullivan-like instinct for musical parody. None of her creative work ever echoes the grief caused in her girlhood by her father's having killed himself (after being discovered to have embezzled public funds). In 1941, Alderman shared an ASCAP prize with librettist Evelyn West for their operetta *Come on Over*. West hoped that their success would entice Alderman to abandon teaching for composition. However, Alderman's eclectic tastes, the invasion of Southern California by large numbers of experienced Europeans, her commitment to teaching, and above all, financial need kept her from making any such drastic change of career direction.

Vocal music is central in all four composers' output. Only seventeen of Warren's published and unpublished works exclude voice. The years that she spent as an accompanist are reflected in the extremely grateful piano, organ, and also orchestral counterparts to her songs, church music, and cantatas. In contrast with Dillon, whose sole works recorded were short piano pieces, Warren's *Abram in Egypt*, premiered at the First Los Angeles International Music Festival in June 1961, was recorded

by the London Philharmonic with the Roger Wagner Chorale, Roger Wagner conducting. Her *Suite for Orchestra*, the first large work by a woman composer premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Alfred Wallenstein conducting, was recorded by the Oslo Philharmonic conducted by William Strickland.

Finger's exhaustive bibliography, her collection of personal correspondence (including a letter from John Cage recalling Dillon as his piano teacher), her citations from friends of composers, genealogists, reference librarians, university archivists and other university officials, lend a dignity and overall accuracy to this dissertation not previously encountered in the dissertation literature on women composers.

BRENT MADDOX

Mary Carr Moore, American Composer. By CATHERINE PARSONS SMITH and CYNTHIA S. RICHARDSON (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987. xi + 287 pp. incl. genealogical charts, 9 pp. of music, catalog of compositions, endnotes, bibliography, index. 6 p. inset of photographs).

Smith—Professor of Music at the University of Nevada, Reno—and Richardson—a librarian at Western Washington University—offer an antidote to conventional music scholarship with this latest volume of the University of Michigan's "Women and Culture Series." Their preface correctly places this book outside mainstream music history, but inside a developing feminist theory of music history. They imply that historical methodology should now be rethought—perhaps broadened and restructured to encompass the kind of sociological approach taken in their own present study of west-coast composer Mary Carr Moore (1873–1957).

If the book falls into the field of feminist studies, it does so because any thorough study of a professional woman working at the turn of the century cannot escape some gender specific aspects of her struggle—just as any work on a black composer would necessarily belong within black studies. The authors raise the question whether in Moore a major American composer of the first half of our century has been overlooked because of both gender and geography, and they further question whether music history in our century has been so narrowly viewed as to exclude composers such as Moore. Moore put it most succinctly when she said that she had three "strikes" against her—because she was alive, an American, and a woman.

In the first chapters of this biography, Smith and Richardson offer a detailed picture of Moore's family and childhood, much of it told in Moore's own words taken from an autobiographical account of her first three

decades. Also included in the early chapters are excerpts from the published and unpublished writings of Moore's mother, Sarah Pratt Carr (1850–1935), selected to illustrate the family values, attitudes, and expectations that helped to shape Moore's character and continued to influence her throughout her life.

Moore received her musical training in San Francisco and pursued her creative career in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. She composed songs, operas, and vocal and instrumental chamber music. Descriptions of specific compositions from each period are woven into the chronological narrative, with particular emphasis on the operas. Moore's first and most ambitious grand opera, *Narcissa*, is based on the 1847 massacre of missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in the Oregon Territory. Because its composition and première (Seattle, 1912) and two revivals (San Francisco, 1925; Los Angeles, 1945), all conducted by the composer, mark pivotal points in Moore's life, *Narcissa* is discussed more thoroughly than any other work.

About midway through the book, Smith and Richardson veer from a chronological to a topical approach for their coverage of Moore's thirty years in Los Angeles. Chapter headings suggest the different professional and personal perspectives from which Moore is viewed: "The First Los Angeles School," "Teaching," "Promoting and Surviving," "The Federal Music Project," "The Ultra-Moderns," and "Musical Americanism." These chapters also furnish detailed accounts of organizations and personalities in Los Angeles, beginning with the composer's transfer to that city in 1926. While telling Moore's story, they shed light on a group of composers whom they call "The First Los Angeles School," and they for the first time recount the true saga of the maligned Society of Native American Composers (1939–1944). To obtain their data, they sifted through Moore's collected manuscripts, datebooks, music catalogs, and miscellanea—most of which material was originally bequeathed to Moore's four grandsons, but is now part of UCLA's Mary Carr Moore archive. They located over sixty former friends and students with whom they corresponded or conducted personal interviews. They consulted archives, even those containing but a single pertinent letter. Dissertations dealing with relevant background were considered.

Only when it is necessary to cover gaps in Moore's own accounts do Smith and Richardson hazard some careful speculation. Her personal testimony is sketchiest between 1907, the end of her typewritten autobiography, and 1928, the beginning of her datebooks.

Paradoxically, Moore's choice of texts during these years does not seem to reflect events that transpired. For instance, Moore's first foray [1915] into vaudeville slapstick writing came hard on the heels of her father's death