

Foreword

The title of my book comes from ancient Egypt. Much advice for the New Kingdom schoolboy has survived. He was recommended above all to set his heart on books (or rather papyrus rolls). Alternatives were dismal. He might take to wine, women, and song, beating time on his paunch, tumbling finally into the gutter. As an English schoolboy, I tended to follow the advice, though at the time I certainly did not know it. I have reviewed far more books than I have written, learning much along the way. But one of my books, concerning a Coptic monk, was written during a two-year period in Egypt. It was at that time I learned the wonders of the Internet, relying largely on its information for facts towards the making of an extensive foreword. Since then I have reverted exclusively to the printed book, of which the pleasures are indeed innumerable.

Turning the pages of a book is an excitement in itself. It is impossible to tell with certainty what may come overleaf. Momentarily the book may have to be laid aside, while a temporary hare has to be chased elsewhere, in some other book, a dictionary, encyclopaedia, *Britannica*, or indeed the *Dictionary of National Biography*. And then there is the wonder of a good index, either comprehensive as a unit or sectional. Delving recently as I have been into Ancient Egyptian Literature, I have been delighted with separate indices devoted to Divinities, Kings and Queens, Personal Names, Geographical and Ethnical Terms, Egyptian Words, and Some Major Concepts. Too often, however, an index has let me down. My heart sinks when I am faced with an index that is in any way exclusive; it should always be an omnium gatherum of delights and spur to further enquiry.

It was the juxtaposition during my time at Cambridge of the Music Library and Department of Egyptology that launched me on my professional reviewing career with a disc of J.S. Bach. Since then the contents of my own library can attest my gratitude to the various editors who have showered me with such a profusion of gifts. The composers covered in this particular book have all been of absorbing interest to me. Obvious gaps have resulted from the policy of my editors, as have any imbalances in the coverage. There is nothing on Handel, for instance, or Tchaikovsky, whereas the treatment of Delius and of course Wagner

may seem too generous. But Delius wrote two supreme masterpieces in *A Mass of Life* and *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, while there is now no excuse for questioning the towering genius of Richard Wagner. I have been unable to resist a few things by way of prelude and postlude to the 'Composers'. Kerman suggested that the book might be readable; Scholes and the Crystal Palace provide entertainment enough; for the rest, Shaw was head and shoulders above most music critics, Beecham was equally preeminent on the rostrum, as was the very youthful Jacqueline du Pré among cellists.

John Norris has already helped me so often in the production of a book that I have almost run out of ways to thank him. In extenuation I can only say that I try to the best of my ability to assist him in various editorial and proof-reading tasks, which are in any case themselves enjoyable. I trust that this book will not be so demanding in the making as others we have worked on. I know the result will give me much pleasure. If it acts likewise on John, to say nothing of its readers, I am content.

Robert Anderson
2015

Robert Anderson died in November 2015, while this book was in production. He did not have the chance to check it, so we must lay any errors at the door of the Great Reaper. His index remains as he intended, comprehensive – ranging from Allah to Zion (not overlooking Madonna non Virgo); but I have taken the liberty of omitting one or two excesses, having been invited to do so by the author in the last weeks of his life.

Seeing it published now, he would consider a duty fulfilled, provided I had made his acknowledgements to the journals in which these reviews first appeared, notably the *Musical Times* [MT] and *Music & Vision* [M&V]; and repeated his thanks – our thanks – to John Norris, who has played midwife to this book as to many others by the author, and to Dr Andrzej Sitarz of the Jagiellonian Press, who has honoured his promise to publish it.

Howard Davies
The Robert Anderson Trust
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