



Adkins, M. and Russ, M. (eds.), *The Roberto Gerhard Companion*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, ISBN: 9781409445159, 374 pp.

A Catalan-born composer of Swiss and French ancestry, the only Spaniard in Arnold Schoenberg's composition class, an exile in Cambridge after the Spanish Civil War, a late bloomer in the post-Webernian avant-garde, a pioneer of electroacoustic music in the UK, Roberto Gerhard (1896-1970) is, not surprisingly, an appealing figure for cultural

historians of music and music analysts alike.

In Monty Adkins and Michael Russ's *The Roberto Gerhard Companion*, the combination of these two perspectives guarantees a fully critical treatment of the composer beyond a survey of 'life and works'. Possibly because of his exile in Britain and his adscription to international serialist trends, Gerhard is one of very few Spanish twentieth-century composers to have attracted attention from English-speaking scholarship –including Bowen's edition of Gerhard's writings (2000), articles by White (1993 and 1996), Sproston (1993 and 2009), Moore (1995), Cholij (1996), and Llano (2011), and a handful of dissertations. Adkins and Russ are to be congratulated for having brought together in the first book-length study in English about Gerhard different strands of research happening in Spain, the UK and elsewhere in the world: *The Roberto Gerhard Companion* was indeed born of the first international Roberto Gerhard conference Adkins and Russ organized in Huddersfield in 2010, and there had been two further Gerhard conferences (Barcelona 2012 and Alcalá de Henares 2013) so far, which bodes well for future Gerhard scholarship.

The 13 chapters in the book are organized chronologically – from Gerhard's first works in the 1910s, to his sound compositions for the BBC in the 1950s and 1960s. Previous Anglophone research on Gerhard has often focused on analytical aspects of his work, and biographical details were sometimes routinely and summarily presented. A number of chapters in the book delve in scarcely

explored primary sources to explain not only what Gerhard was up to in different moments of his life, but also why it should matter to us: this is especially true of Diego Alonso's chapter on Gerhard's studies with Schoenberg, Julian White's on Gerhard's interest in Catalan folk music, and Samuel Llano's on Gerhard's works for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.

This cultural history approach is complemented by analysis of some of Gerhard's works, particularly of his serialist period (Rachel E. Mitchell's on the string quartets no. 1 and 2; Russ on the concerto for piano, Carlos Duque on the symphony no. 4 'New York', Darren Sproston on the symphony no. 2 'Metamorphoses'). The editors are aware that the breadth and depth of Gerhard's work have made it necessary to leave out analyses of particular works (in particular, they mention *The Duenna* and the late chamber works); there is also scope, however, for future research on other areas of Gerhard's wide-ranging activities, such as his work as a musicologist.

Gerhard was an exiled composer; this has made it possible for certain tropes to proliferate in our understanding of him and his music, even in academic circles. For example, it has been a rather common assumption that his commitment to serialist music led him to being forgotten and neglected in Spain under Franco and that it was only under democracy that his work started to be appreciated; another trope concerns the understanding of Gerhard as an avant-garde composer first and foremost, whose incidental works (ballet, theatre music) were just concessions to commercialism. Although it was puzzling to see traces of these tropes in one or two chapters in the book, it was most refreshing to see these tropes being challenged and problematized – particularly in the chapters by White, Llano and Russ.

Eva Moreda Rodriguez
School of Culture and Creative Arts
University of Glasgow

Works Cited

- Bowen, M. (ed.). 2000. *Gerhard on Music: Selected Writings*, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Cholik, I. 1996. 'Gerhard, Electronic Music and King Lear', *Tempo*, 198, pp. 28-34.
- Llano, S. 2011. 'Exile, Resistance and heteroglossia in Roberto Gerhard's ballet *Flamenco* (1943). In Buffery, H. (ed.), *Stages of Exile: Spanish Republican Exile Theatre and Performance*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Moore, A.F. 1995. 'Serialism and its Contradictions', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 26:1 (June), pp. 77-95.
- Sproston, D. 1993. 'Thematicism in Gerhard's Concerto for Orchestra', *Tempo*, 184 (March), pp. 18-22.
- Sproston, D. 2009. 'Serial Structures in Roberto Gerhard's First and Second Symphonies', *Tempo*, 248 (April), pp. 21-34.
- White, J. 1993. 'National Traditions in the Music of Roberto Gerhard', *Tempo*, 184 (March), pp. 2-13.
- White, J. 1996. 'Catalan Folk Sources in *Soirées de Barcelone*', *Tempo*, 198 (October), pp. 11-22.