



NABMSA Reviews

A Publication of the North American British Music Studies Association

Vol. 9, No. 1/2 (2022)

Thornton Miller, Editor

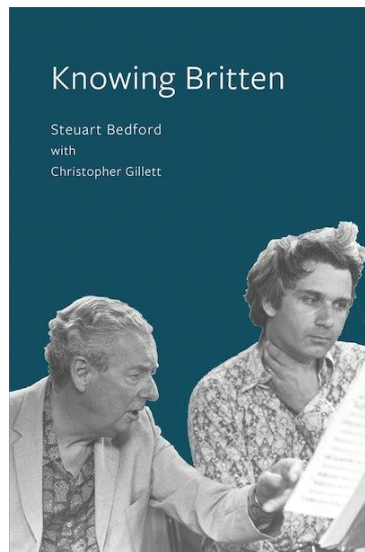
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[Knowing Bedford, Knowing Britten](#)

Steuart Bedford with Christopher Gillett. *Knowing Britten*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Bittern, 2021. 194 pages. ISBN 9780957167223 (paperback) and 9781800107991 (e-book).



As a sort of reviewer's purview, I would like to recount an especially meaningful memory having attended an event to mark the launch of *Knowing Britten* in June 2021 during the month that would normally have been the Aldeburgh Festival, were it not for the Covid-19 pandemic. The launch was as storied as the subject and its primary author, the conductor and superlative pianist Steuart Bedford (1939–2021). The memoir is co-authored by Christopher Gillett, an active operatic tenor and frequent collaborator with Bedford across his long career. Prior to a book-signing, Gillett arranged an impressive memorial recital as a celebration of Bedford's life, who passed away that spring. The recital itself was an otherworldly experience, with performances by mezzo-soprano Ann Murray, baritone Sir Thomas Allen, countertenor James Bowman, as well as Bedford's daughter, soprano Charmian Bedford, each accompanied by pianist Stephen Westrop.

The electricity in the Peter Pears Recital Hall at Snape Maltings was palpable. Gillett emceed the entire event, with images of Bedford onscreen, and a winning, heartwarming series of excerpts from the book, lovingly rendered. Allen sang the song made famous by Bedford's grandmother, Liza Lehmann: "There are fairies at the bottom of our garden." The rest of the program featured Benjamin Britten's compositions: Murray and Charmian Bedford sang a duet from *The Rape of Lucretia*; Murray later sang "Lullaby" from Britten's *Charm of Lullabies* cycle in a breathtaking and mystical rendition, her always-youthful voice and artistry was beyond moving; Bowman came well out of retirement at 79 to sing "I know a bank" from *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream, transporting everyone present through waves of memories associated with his interpretation of the role; and Sir Thomas closed the program with Britten's "O Waly, Waly," and suffice it to say there was not a dry eye in the hall.

The memoir is a slim one (and notably small on the shelf, as well, at 7-3/4" x 5"). It is comprised of thirteen chapters and an epilogue, in addition to forty-two illustrations or photographs. The chapter titles are taken from lines of text in Britten's *Death in Venice*. Yet the size of the volume need not diminish the substance of its content. The observations contained within its pages are lucid and thoughtful, and it elicits a voracious reading in one sitting! Bedford's recounting of Britten's interactions with him, his brothers David and Peter, and their parents offers an incredible first-hand description of a deeply personal aspect of the composer.

One of the visual conceits of the published book is the use of two fonts throughout: a slightly bold serif and an alternating light sans serif (the latter of which is, unfortunately, difficult to read). A strictly academic text would specify in a foreword statement *why* the visual distinction was made and how the reader can therefore anticipate engaging with it. The serif font is exclusively Bedford's voice writing in the first person. (Chapter breaks are marked by a diamond throughout.) However, there does not seem to be a pervasive benefit of this font choice, as it is never entirely clear the purpose it serves: if the serif is to represent Bedford's voice, then surely the sans serif is to reflect Gillett's narrative interjections? Alas, no. At times, this is the case. In other instances, the narrative continues on as a thread of either of the authors' voices. Elsewhere, it may appear as a commentary on other details, as an aside, or, frustratingly, as an indented excerpt from the journal of Bedford's mother. In total, it is never wholly coherent. That lack of consistency causes the difference in font to be more of an impediment than a benefit, which does not serve a clarifying purpose. That concern, however minor, is a shame for such a useful piece of memoir.

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The volume opens backstage at the Maltings Concert Hall in June 1973 immediately preceding the world-premiere performance of the first production of *Death in Venice*, in a chapter appropriately titled "My mind beats on" (Aschenbach's opening line of text in the opera). The tenor Peter Pears, Britten's spouse and the mouthpiece for a wealth of works written for his voice, was in his dressing room preparing for this last great role of Aschenbach. The Tannoy broadcasts the orchestra as it tunes, various calls for places, and calls for the conductor: the thirty-three-year-old Steuart Bedford. He had known Britten since he was a boy of seven years of age. His mother, Lesley Duff, was a soprano who sang in the first production of *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) and for Britten's English Opera Group (hereafter, EOG) for its first three seasons (1947–1950).

In a flashback to September 1952, Bedford takes the reader to a cricket pitch in Thorpeness, just north of Aldeburgh, and "an informal cricket match between Ben Britten's Eleven – his 'home side' – and a selection of locals and friends" (p. 2). Bedford is a spectator for the match, alongside his brothers Peter and David, and he provides something of a play-by-play of the action featuring bowler Peter Pears and the "storming batsman," Lord Harewood (George Lascelles, first cousin of the Queen and president of the Aldeburgh Festival). In short order, Bedford's remembrances move back a further five decades, laying out the relationships central to his family and introducing the characters of this memoir. He takes us through to finding his mother's private memoir, hidden away in a dressing table drawer and marked: "Just a diary, please destroy" (pp. 7-8). It obviously was not destroyed, nor was it, due to the style of the



writing he asserts, written exclusively for his mother's eyes alone. And in those pages, Bedford acknowledges a truth: "That she fell in love with Britten is totally without question and, while not a direct confession, it was clearly a secret she wanted both to keep and to share" (p. 8). Bedford further admits that his family might "feel embarrassed" by its contents, but nevertheless includes these salient details. From Lesley Duff's "diary," Bedford quotes from her recounting of her casting audition for *The Rape of Lucretia* for the composer, himself. However, Duff provides observations about Britten's interactions with children that are particularly meaningful: "His charm with children is well known but with mine he seemed to walk into their hearts and be immediately accepted as beloved and special" (p. 10). It was during this period when Stuart Bedford was affectionately called "Stewy" by Britten.

Interleaved between these first-person accounts and selections from his mother's diary, the reader learns of the 2017 diagnosis of Parkinson's disease that was increasingly affecting Bedford. With that diagnosis, he ceased his professional career. Here Gillett interjects: "He cannot bear to work and make mistakes, despite my protestations that history is littered with elderly conductors who can barely move, let alone tell you the day of the week, who are lauded for merely standing in front of the orchestra and wobbling a bit – 'Such mastery! Such insight!' – but Stuart is having none of it" (p. 15). It is at this point that the reader learns that it was Bedford's beloved wife Celia who impressed upon her husband the importance of writing his autobiography, "or, more precisely, write a memoir about his life working with Benjamin Britten" (p. 15). "But he needs some help," Celia states, and looks directly to Gillett. The first chapter concludes with the acknowledgment from Gillett, that, while flattered: "The problem is the disease. Can we complete the book in time, before Stuart's memory is too deeply locked within him?" (p. 16). With that, there is suddenly an urgency that is communicated throughout the ensuing pages that ushers the reader through the beautifully rendered series of recollections.

Across the next three chapters, a further series of Duff's diary entries (which end in October 1948) and correspondence with Britten and Pears depict the following years, replete with a handful of flashforwards into the 1990s. The diary excerpts provide additional firsthand accounts of several early EOG productions and tours, including Britten's realisation of *The Beggar's Opera* and Lennox Berkeley's *Stabat mater*, which was also written for the EOG; each of these otherwise benign events—which could too easily become a series of lists—reveal some fascinating aspect of Britten's personality as revealed through Duff or in the presence of the young Bedford. Of notable interest is an altercation with Eric Crozier after a rehearsal for *The Beggar's Opera*, when Britten was apparently very calmly expressing his dissatisfaction with the run-through. "Then Eric Crozier stepped forward and said, 'How can you expect good performances when you get your artists so strung up they can hardly face a performance?'" (p. 43). Britten, as Duff entered into her diary, was taken aback by this public inquiry by Crozier; so much so, that he later approached Duff to ask whether there was any truth to the assertion.

Gillett's interleaved asides afford the reader a welcome entrée to behind-the-scenes perspectives, to which we would never otherwise be privy, and provide a winning context for much of Bedford's writing. The Bedford–Gillett narrative recounts their work in the Britten–Pears Archive, during which time they would page through documents to provoke memories and crystallize dates, and frequently they did so with extraordinary peals of laughter and storytelling. (This reviewer must note the particularly unusual experience it is to recognize oneself in cameo in the book before them. It was a moment I distinctly remember from my own research in the Archive during a yearlong sabbatical.) Having been introduced to "an American academic who is writing a history of the Aldeburgh Festival," Bedford and Gillett were later chastised for such an outburst one morning by an earnest invigilator (pp. 51-52), commenting that they then "[made] faces at each other like scolded schoolchildren."



Bedford's parents bought a cottage opposite the Golden Key in Snape, and during the period from 1948 and 1953, there were frequent games of ping-pong at Crag House in Aldeburgh and country drives in Britten's open-top Rolls-Royce. Notes and postcards back to "Stewy" and the family from Britten's travels were *de rigueur*. The genuine affection is apparent in these communiqués, replete with replies from each of the Bedford family members. The letters serve as a framing device for a chronicling around Britten's compositions and several of his key premieres at the time, leading up through Bedford's 1961 graduation with his final diplomas from the Royal Academy of Music prior to taking up an organ scholarship at Worcester College. But it was outside the confines of the chapel's organ console that Bedford began to make his mark as a pianist—with a remarkably sizeable repertoire, at that—and he started to accompany the University Opera Club at Oxford. He played, among several other assignments, a complete performance of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* accompanied entirely on the piano. After several conducting engagements at Oxford, Bedford took up a summer on the music staff of Glyndebourne in 1965, a role he again undertook in 1966 before being offered a role with the EOG at twice the pay Glyndebourne had offered. (While neither Bedford nor Gillett comment on this, it must have secretly pleased Britten immensely to poach Bedford away from Glyndebourne.)

Bedford writes that joining the EOG "dictated the future course of [his] life" (p. 95). It was in this setting in which some of the most wonderful anecdotes of the volume are shared, notably a rehearsal for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In a coaching with the Rustics, Bedford noticed "that Owen Brannigan wasn't quite hitting the notes properly, so I sidled up to him and said that I thought he was a bit off the correct pitch. He just smiled and said, 'No, lad, them's not wrong notes. That's colouring!'" (pp. 96-7). It is equally interesting that the roles had changed finally, as this was a period when Bedford was no longer a child and this marked his first extended interactions with Britten and Pears as an adult. He felt assured that Britten always had confidence that Bedford would not only represent his best interests, but that he would do so in a way that gave Britten a deep satisfaction.

At varying points throughout the volume, Gillett communicates a handful of eyebrow-raising asides, several of which prompt the reader to want to know just what the implication is. At one point, he notes at an evening dinner with Oliver Knussen a general "wariness" between Bedford and Knussen (who were both Artistic Directors of the Aldeburgh Festival), until they settled on their shared contempt for Donald Mitchell, "who was inclined to make unilateral planning decisions for the Festival, even though the Festival wasn't his turf." Once Bedford reached adulthood and was an employee of and collaborator with Britten, Bedford and Gillett note twice in the volume that Britten never once referenced Bedford's mother again, nor did she ever talk about the composer to her son.

The balance of the volume examines Bedford's debut season at the 1967 Aldeburgh Festival, several more tours and recordings, EOG productions of the Church Parables and Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, *Owen Wingrave*, the revival of *Paul Bunyan*, and various new EOG premieres. Bedford also recounts a production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* for which he was an assistant to Britten, and he specifically draws our attention to the pianist Viola Tunnard, who had been chiefly important to the Church Parables. Like Eric Crozier, whom Bedford again references, Tunnard was discarded from Britten's employ (pp. 116-18). On balance, one thing these anecdotes never descend into is gossip; and none of them are in any way mean-spirited. This, it is clear, was not Bedford's personality. But several of these stories do raise questions



that Britten researchers will either be acquainted with, or that they will want to explore further; at the very least, Bedford provides still more corroboration of often-familiar accounts.

A special portion of Bedford's writing is naturally reserved for *Death in Venice*, the work that Britten specifically gave over to him as its conductor in the composer's stead. At the same time, we are provided with Bedford's recollections of suddenly stepping in at the last minute to replace the conductor Gennady Rozhdestvensky for the Covent Garden production of *Owen Wingrave*, which was to be his house debut. These pages are pivotal in *Knowing Britten* and they ring with Bedford's first-hand experience.

At the end—at Britten's death—we read a pair of letters to Pears in response to the loss. Bedford writes: "Tonight's performance of *Paul Bunyan* will be dedicated to his memory; not, on the face of it, the most obvious choice of work but one which I personally believe would particularly rejoice his heart" (p. 172). More poignantly, Duff wrote to Pears: "I wanted so much to tell you that for the 30 years that I knew Ben – though for many of those years I saw him seldom – he has been the major source of everything beautiful in my life. Even to have known and loved him and been in the influence of that dear personality would have been more than enough, but Stuart is the most precious thing in the world to me and what Ben gave to him is utterly beyond words to tell. I know that conducting those glorious works has made him the person he is, and I believe all his life the important thing will be to go on giving them to the world as he knows Ben would wish to hear them" (p. 173). Bedford then addresses the serious concerns of how the Aldeburgh Festival and the recently reorganized English Music Theatre Company would carry on after Britten's death. History tells us that only one of the pair would continue to exist, but the decade after Britten's death was every bit as dire for the Festival. Bedford's depiction of Pears's disposition surrounding the next Festival—and indeed a digression into various questions about Pears's presence (or absence) by Britten's side in his final weeks—is beyond poignant.

Tantamount to a coda in Bedford's final chapter is a focus on the Britten centenary and the now iconic "*Grimes on the Beach*" production (pp. 177–79). Gillett, who sang the role of Horace Adams, recalls his fascination with watching Bedford conduct the production—an orchestral track of which he had recorded in advance—from a steel hutch covered in corrugated iron and partially submerged in the shingle of Aldeburgh beach (a photo is found on p. 177). The volume concludes with an epigram from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—by now typically evident of Gillett's self-deprecating style—"No epilogue, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse." Gillett confesses that the book was to have ended with "*Grimes on the Beach*," and that Bedford saw the second draft of that chapter in August 2020, prodding Gillett "triumphantly" with the typos he had found. Gillett continued his final edits through 12 February 2021, hoping that Bedford, whose health was deteriorating by the day, would be able to hold a copy of the published book. "Three days later, Charmian Bedford rang to tell me her dad had died, peacefully, that morning" (p. 180). And so Gillett determined to add his own postscript to what he admitted had already been the "curious task" of co-authoring a memoir. In these closing pages, Gillett's undoubted affection for Bedford is palpable.

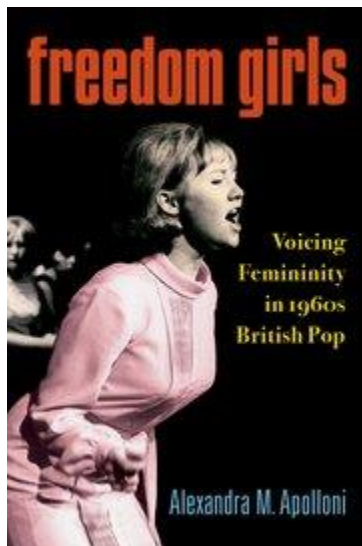
Knowing Britten is an important book—personal, insightful, witty, and tender—communicating selected moments of the lifelong familial relationship Bedford and his family enjoyed with Britten. Any reader who has an interest in the curiosity of the memoir genre will welcome this offering. Non-Britten specialists will certainly enjoy the volume. Although those who are fluent in the Britten biographies of Paul Kildea and Humphrey Carpenter, and who have absorbed Vicki P. Stroehrer, Nicholas Clark, and Jude Brimmer's essential *My Beloved Man: The Letters of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears* and Philip Reed, Mervyn Cooke, and Donald Mitchell's six



volumes of *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten* will revel in the subtleties awaiting them in this Bedford–Gillett gem. The shrewd use of pivotal lines of text from *Death in Venice* for the chapter titles amplifies Bedford’s own late-life struggle with memory (and thus working with Gillett as amanuensis). Given Bedford’s quintessentially soft-spoken presence, it is significant that Gillett captures a bit of Bedford’s personality: his sense of humor and sometimes curmudgeonly candor, and his openhearted embrace of those around him. Perhaps most importantly, *Knowing Britten* provides the reader an occasion we might not otherwise enjoy: the opportunity of knowing Bedford, however fleetingly.

JUSTIN VICKERS
Illinois State University

Alexandra M. Apolloni. *Freedom Girls: Voicing Femininity in 1960s British Pop*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 336 pages. ISBN 9780190879891 hardback, paperback, and e-book.



What is an “acceptable” voice? Alexandra M. Apolloni opens her book *Freedom Girls: Voicing Femininity in 1960s British Pop* with a discussion on the article “Voice Control,” which appeared in the February 1966 edition of the British young woman’s magazine *Petticoat*. The article shared tips for forming a pleasing speaking voice: “Let’s start with the pitch of your voice. Is yours squeaky high or gravelly low, or all-in-the-middle monotonous? Really shrill?” According to the writer, sounding the right way, and having a “good voice” could mean the difference between landing a good job and a great one. Thus, the act of speaking with the right accent or a proper tone had the capability to grant the orator greater class mobility, a concern which played on the aspirations of many young British women in the 1960s.

In addition to the example above, Apolloni examines the intersections of voice and agency in 1960s British popular music. She argues that, despite having thriving national and international music careers, stars like Sandie Shaw, Cilla Black, Millie Small, Dusty Springfield, Lulu, Marianne Faithfull, and P.P. Arnold were subject to the same highly enforced sonic gender roles as the readers of *Petticoat*. Drawing on the work of Laurie Stras, Katherine Meizel, Zeynep Bulut, and Nina Eidsheim, the author interrogates the contested relationship between “voice as sound and voice as self-expression” as a facet of the ways gender, race, sexuality, and class shaped and continue to shape the ways singers use their bodies. As Apolloni demonstrates, the careers and voices of these women both reflected and contradicted preconceived notions about what they could achieve in the worlds of rock and pop.

Apolloni’s book is separated into three distinct sections. Part 1 of *Freedom Girls*, “Ordinary, Extraordinary Voices,” examines the careers of Sandie Shaw and Cilla Black, who were marketed as ordinary girls next door. In this section, Apolloni focuses on gendered conceptions of genre and respectability, teasing out the ways these singers’ identities were consistently tied to whiteness. Part 2, “Transatlantic Voices,” examines how singers Millie Small and Dusty Springfield transformed ideas about genre, race, and gender through their engagement with genres such as soul and ska. Part 3, “Sex, Voice, and Rock and Roll,” reflects on the way



singers Lulu, Marianne Faithful, and P.P. Arnold were simultaneously incorporated into and marginalized by heterosexual rock culture by virtue of their perceived sexual availability.

Each chapter focuses on the career of one artist, and every one is a case study on how various issues of gender, race, age, and class connects with the voice and agency of the female popular musician. For example, chapter 2 explores the career of Sandie Shaw, focusing on the sound and reception of her voice in the “context of adolescent vocal change.” Apolloni engages with audiences’ reception of Shaw’s voice as “ordinary” and “weak,” drawing on perceptions advanced in popular British media at the time, of young white women as needing protection from outside influences. Issues of popular reception in conjunction with adolescent girls’ voices are likewise explored in chapter 6, through the career of Lulu, whose early media coverage asserted her respectability by emphasizing her youth and virginity. However, this youthful image became difficult for Lulu to shed when her career continued beyond her teenaged years.

Another example of Apolloni’s interwoven thematic structure includes her discussion of vocal production, and accent. In chapter 3, Apolloni examines the career of Cilla Black through the gendered discourses of class, and Liverpool authenticity. She discusses the ways “gendered notions of genre and respectability” shaped the reception of women’s singing voices in the 1960s, focusing on Black’s Liverpoolian, or Scouse, accent. Apolloni explores how Black used her accent to characterize herself as “down-to-earth,” despite her eventual fame. Vocal production and accent again come into play in chapter 4, as Apolloni traces Millie Small’s positionality as a Black Jamaican immigrant, and her simultaneous performances of “vocal discipline and vocal difference,” as she navigated audiences’ simultaneous expectations for her to assimilate, while also appearing “exotic, authentic, and different.” Because of *Freedom Girls*’ structure as an accessible series of case studies, this book would lend itself well to a popular music classroom or seminar. An instructor could easily assign several hand-selected chapters to their students, as each one discusses the monograph’s major themes within the context of an individual woman’s career.

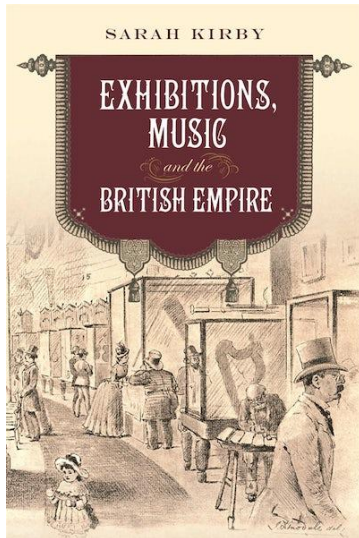
Apolloni’s text is exceptionally well-researched, featuring material drawn from the British Film Institute Special Collections, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives, as well as personal interviews with, and the written memoirs of her subjects. Of particular note is the attention Apolloni pays to popular magazines of the 1960s. She especially emphasizes publications marketed toward girls and young women, including the aforementioned *Petticoat* magazine, as well as the publications *Honey*, *Fabulous*, and *Boyfriend*. Readers may also appreciate the monograph’s companion website, which supplements the text with both auditory and visual examples and makes *Freedom Girls* an even more attractive prospect for the music classroom or seminar. The site is well-designed, easy to use, and greatly enhances the reading experience.

Freedom Girls is an excellent addition to scholarly literature at the intersection of popular music studies, vocality studies, and feminist thought. This wide-ranging book demonstrates the multifaceted ways young women pop singers struggled for agency, both utilizing and subverting the heteronormative social structures that framed their careers. Through her work, Apolloni encourages conversations that expand the present histories of rock and pop to reckon with the ways women and girls navigate the music industry and participate in music-making in both the past and present.

RACHEL BANI
Florida State University



Sarah Kirby. *Exhibitions, Music and the British Empire*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2022. 246 pages. ISBN 9781800104518 hardback.



Music is a notoriously difficult art to “exhibit.” And yet the silences of the exhibition hall often call out for musical sound. The question, of course, is what “kind” of sound, and what kinds of “values”—national, racial, and financial—that sound signifies. The Victorians were highly attuned to such conundrums, and had no clear answers for how to use, silence, or “sound” music as a part of international exhibitions. Perhaps for this reason, the ambiguous role of music within the vast networks of imperial exhibitions that covered the globe by the end of the nineteenth century has long been understudied, and Sarah Kirby is highly commendable for taking on the task of examining the fascinating, if at times elusive, role of music within these spectacles. *Exhibitions, Music and the British Empire* is thus a timely and welcome contribution to rising conversations about the significance of exhibitions to global cultural history. Kirby articulately approaches this topic from the perspective of historical musicology, using spectacular original

research from British and Australian archives to explore how music at imperial exhibitions was both pervasive and bewildering. The ever-present tensions between the dominant, conservative views of the musical press, and the commercial and imperial motivations of exhibition curators and organizers, demonstrates that music was never an easy or straightforward art to “export” or “exhibit,” and yet it was also something that exhibition attendees enjoyed and even expected to hear. Such tensions perhaps explain why this book tells a particularly compelling story: one that uniquely demonstrates the challenging place of music in “representing” the British Empire.

The nine chapters in Kirby’s study focus on the role of music at international exhibitions in Australia, India and the United Kingdom during the decade of the 1880s, covering primarily: the Sydney International Exhibition (1879), the Melbourne International Exhibition (1880), the Calcutta [Kolkata] International Exhibition (1883), London’s International Fisheries Exhibition (1883), London’s International Inventions Exhibition (1885), London’s Colonial and Indian Exhibition (1886), the Edinburgh International Exhibition of Industry, Science, and Art (1886), the Liverpool International Exhibition of Navigation, Commerce, and Industry (1886), the Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition (1887), the Glasgow International Exhibition of Science, Art, and Industry (1888), the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition (1888), and the Edinburgh International Exhibition of Electrical Engineering, General Inventions, and Industries (1890). The sociocultural themes of race, class, public education, economics, and entertainment are covered through the lenses of reception studies and historical musicology. While Kirby readily admits that these events are only a portion of the international exhibitions that occurred at the time (p.13), her emphasis on the 1880s already shifts the focus of scholarship away from the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace (Hyde Park, London) in 1851, which has usually been the primary focus of previous scholarship in this area.

What I found most interesting—and convincing—about the Introduction and first three chapters was the way that Kirby sets up music as an almost uncomfortable, if admittedly necessary, aspect of late-nineteenth-century exhibition culture. As music is never clearly an “object” for exhibiting—even if in the form of a debatably silent physical instrument—it straddled debates



about aesthetic value, commercialism, education and popular entertainment. Kirby deftly foregrounds these conceptual difficulties at the outset of the book, noting that at the exhibitions, “music was codified, ordered, and all-round ‘exhibited’ in multiple and changing ways”: sometimes it was used to “fulfil the educational remit of the exhibitions, as a rarefied symbol of the highest human achievements in art,” and at other times it was “engaged for commercial ends” that could “draw in a paying crowd” (p.1). Both music critics and exhibition organizers thus appear, in this study, inextricably caught up within unhelpful Victorian binaries between music as a vehicle of art vs. entertainment, nationalism vs. universalism, and self vs. Other. While Kirby is cognisant of these binaries, they never seem particularly resolved: music, at these exhibitions, functions in example after example as a way to polarize critics and audiences over the “enjoyment” of music, especially in relation to projections of national identity. While there are moments of musical resistance, such as the nineteenth-century “flash mob,” where visiting groups from local and provincial schools and factories marched “through the surrounding parks and gardens ... before giving unannounced performances within the building,” or when an impromptu Temperance demonstration in the Crystal Palace “erupted into violence when their singers ... performed one song in Welsh” (p.40), such instances seem relatively silenced by the musical press, which preferred to focus on curated performances that would morally enlighten (if not discipline) the crowds.

Chapters 4–6 cover a comprehensive range of themes around the role of music within such disciplining anxieties, including the idea of museums and the history of music, and wider Victorian concepts of “rational recreation” and “progress.” Prevalent here is a push for the idea of musical “value” being linked to “high art music” (p.109), which becomes heightened in colonial contexts, where (particularly in the Australian examples) musical concerts at the exhibitions became an opportunity for white settler colonists to hear “great” music from Britain and Europe. In these contexts, Western music was brought in as a way to enforce rational recreation for mass audiences who risked immoral behavior in crowd settings.

The final three chapters tackle more of these challenging and sensitive matters around nationalism, colonial identity and race more explicitly, although I did wonder why the relegation of “non-Western” musics to the end of the book, rather than the beginning, perhaps unwittingly reinforced some of the racialized hierarchies of the exhibitions themselves (such as in the discussion of the racialized floorplans (p.172), where marginalized peoples are tucked away in corners). The research here nevertheless reveals thoroughly engrossing case studies that undeniably nuance discussions of music as a way to exhibit non-Western cultures. From pejorative first-hand descriptions of a Chinese cultural exhibit as being too much like Wagner (p.200), we discover that a Chinese band also played “Western music on Chinese instruments,” and Kirby’s inclusion of “Rule Britannia” in Chinese notation (p.201) highlights that the binaries between self and Other in such exhibitions created some room for “shared histories of taste” (p.207), despite the clearly racist and voyeuristic frameworks within which the music was heard.

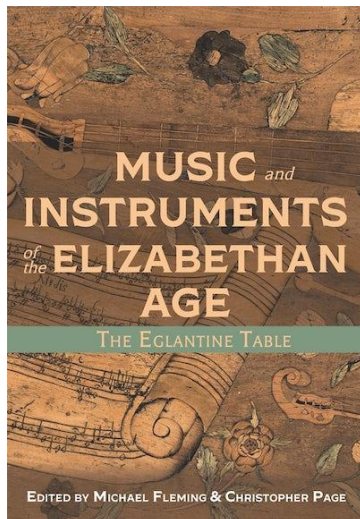
While the presentation of archival material is, at times, rather dense, Kirby’s clear and accessible writing style keeps the text engaging throughout. The use of thematic subtitles (rather than chronologies), and the captivating, visual images and figures that are interspersed throughout the book invites a level of interdisciplinary engagement that I think goes even beyond what the Introduction promises. To that end, I thought that Kirby could have been more ambitious in articulating the various interdisciplinary audiences that would undeniably find the book interesting and relevant: while the book reads as if written for a historical musicology readership, I think that its contents demonstrably go a lot farther than that (and, as such, I hope that the book is read, assigned and studied in non-music departments, despite being published within a music series).



I hope that Kirby's fascinating work paves the way for further studies of the legacies of these exhibitions, and, specifically, the resonances here with conversations today around decolonization and repatriation (themes that seemed to be elephants in the room by the Conclusion). The challenges of curating music, of course, and racialized narratives about aesthetic hierarchies, class, nationalism, and neo/colonialism, are still ever-present today at nationalist mass gatherings, whether these take place at museums, sporting events or state funerals. Many of the same debates, too, about the "difficulty" of music—which cannot be repatriated to former colonies as easily as a statue or other "exhibited" objects—also remain as contested today as they were in the Victorian era. Kirby's book undeniably lays the groundwork for such questions to be brought into current debates, and for the legacies of such questions to be traced more decisively back to the late nineteenth century, when discussions around how to control and "exhibit" music were as fractured and equivocal as the meaning of empire itself.

ERIN JOHNSON-WILLIAMS
Durham University

Christopher Page and Michael Fleming, eds. *Music and Instruments of the Elizabethan Age: The Eglantine Table*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2021. 309 pages. ISBN 9781783274215 (hardcover), 9781787447943 (Ebook EPDF), 9781800101319 (EBook EPUB).



I recently introduced the Eglantine Table to a group of keen early modern studies master's students. There are few objects I use in my teaching that captures imaginations quite like this piece. After a brief overview of the table's current home, Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, and an introduction to the table's owner, Bess of Hardwick, one student asked if this object was exceptional or part of a wider manifestation of cultural trends. This is not an easy question to answer. There is little doubt that the Eglantine Table is exceptional: its condition, detail, musical notation, placement *in situ* where it may have moved with its contemporary owners, its kaleidoscopic array of intriguing iconography and curious craftsmanship - a thing of practical use but also of beauty, meaningfully situated between a distinct "Englishness" and England's international networks of makers, tastes, and trends. It is a veritable "Where's Waldo?" of Elizabethan symbolism, and much more.

Representations of objects of domestic recreation dominate the table's intricate inlay. Decorating the upper and lower friezes are fifteen musical instruments, various music books and scrolls, a four-part harmonization of "O Lord, in thee is all my trust" by Thomas Tallis, board games and playing cards, and other items. Colored floral inlay dots the upper frieze. Prior to this volume's publication, much of the existing musicological scholarship on the table focused primarily on transcribing the notation and identifying the musical instruments. As the title of this book suggests, this kind of traditional musicological use of visual culture makes up the heart of this edition as well, but it also places such scholarship within the table's wider historiographical and iconographical contexts.



Editors Michael Fleming and Christopher Page rightly acknowledge that musicking in early modern England was a multi-sensory, and in particular, a highly visual experience (1). The collaborative effort of a collected edition is the ideal mode for exploring this multifaceted object, and Page and Fleming draw widely from experts in a variety of areas. The writing across chapters is carefully crafted for an interdisciplinary audience (with a useful glossary in the back). Chapters in Part I, "Silent Things" are dedicated to the table's non-musical iconography including the writing implements, gaming paraphernalia, botanical elements, and the construction and models for the table itself. The most robust section of the volume, Part II, is dedicated to a detailed examination of organology and the table's music notation, well beyond David Collins's 1976 *Early Music* article on these topics.¹ Part III is a shorter collection of three chapters stepping back to take broader views of the Eglantine Table within its potential social and musical milieu. The appendices include a hitherto difficult to come by report on the 1996 restoration of the Eglantine Table, a valuable inclusion, as well as a short essay on the table amongst the other furnishings at Bess of Hardwick's houses.

As someone currently researching music and interior decoration in terms of wider Elizabethan/Jacobean conceptions of domestic recreation, I was intrigued by a couple particular points. First, I appreciated the inclusion of a chapter on non-elite music making by Christopher Marsh, who considers that it was not only the privileged that viewed or thought about the table: "perhaps the people that saw it most frequently were the staff who kept Bess of Hardwick's great houses running" (205). Crucially, this "warns us against imagining the musical lives of [aristocrats] as somehow sealed against the influence of wider society" (205), reminding us to not forget the ways musicians in particular were able to traverse social strata. Marsh's approach to the table in this book requires the reader to value "possibility" with a nod towards evidenced imagination - an approach more familiar to those who study musics less often notated or documented. Within a volume that leans towards more time-honored approaches to materiality, notation, and iconography, this scholarly imagining of this object within its wider art world of viewers was a refreshing read. Marsh also raises a point I have thought about in detail—how does the received meaning of such an object or its iconography shift over time? The editors and Preston also raise this issue (14), but this kind of investigation is perhaps largely outside the aims of this specific publication.

Secondly, I was strongly convinced by John Milsom's suggestion that an aspect of the table's imagery refers to the Five Senses (83–84). My research on the Five Senses in Elizabethan/Jacobean interior decoration and song has seen how prevalent references to the senses were in all sorts of decoration (e.g. Knole's Grand Staircase, plasterwork at Blickling Hall, embroidered objects, including an *Auditus* cushion at Hardwick, etc). It seems reasonable that an object such as the Eglantine Table would engage with such on-trend imagery. Milsom observes a nod to each sense: Hearing through the musical items, Smell with the flowers, Taste through the notated drinking song and cherries, and Touch through the game pieces or plucked instruments. The table itself is one of Sight.² Surprisingly, however, Milsom's words are shrouded in caution: "Thus, a searching eye can find reference to all five senses in the Table, though almost certainly this is by accident rather than by design - and it was surely not deliberate if the panels accrued sequentially" (84). While this reading does further complicate the mystery surrounding the original construction of the table, I see no reason to be dissuaded

¹ David Collins, "A 16th-Century Manuscript in Wood: The Eglantine Table at Hardwick Hall," *Early Music* 4, no. 3 (1976): 275–79.

² Indeed, it was not unusual to have one sense missing, for example in an embroidered framed mirror of the Five Senses at Melford Hall, Suffolk, where Sight is missing purposefully, only hinted at in the viewer's reflection.



that references to the Five Senses would be a regular part of an artist or craftsperson's iconographical toolkit. Moreover, a Five Senses reading, regardless of intentionality on behalf of the maker(s) remains a possibility on the received end of those viewing the table.

Fleming and Page's title is apt for the priorities of the volume: *Music and Instruments of the Elizabethan Age: The Eglantine Table*. While there is certainly more to understand about the Eglantine Table in terms of what it might represent (or indeed do) within wider familial, cultural, or aesthetic practices of recreation and musicking, that will be left up to future scholars. This meticulous and carefully compiled collection of essays is approachable to readers from a variety of scholarly backgrounds and would indeed appeal to an interested lay audience as well. While it doesn't take any radical methodological leaps, it is beautifully conceived and executed (visually, as well as in content) and should be of lasting value to scholars, students, and heritage buffs alike.

KATIE BANK
University of Birmingham

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