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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Column Editor's Note: June means one thing in Charleston: *Spoletto Festival USA* (www.spolettousa.org), the world-renowned arts festival that brings together a unique and exciting blend of opera, theatre, music, dance, artwork, and more. How fitting that reviewer **Phillip Powell** offers commentary on two music books in this issue's *Monographic Musings*. Happy reading, everyone! — DV

Jones, David Wyn. ed. Haydn. Oxford Composer Companions. New York: Oxford UP, 2002.
0198662165. 848 pages. \$75.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian,
College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

As one whose fairly avid avocation is the collection and enjoyment of classical music recordings, this reviewer has never gravitated much toward **Joseph Haydn's** works. **Haydn's** contemporaries, or near contemporaries, **Mozart** and **Beethoven**, are well-represented in my collection, but **Haydn** is woefully missing with the exception of a symphony or two and his oratorio "The Creation." Having examined this most recent addition to the relatively new *Oxford Composer Companions* series, it just may be worthwhile to become more familiar with **Haydn**.

At first, **Haydn** appears to be a companion or handbook similar to so many others a reference librarian encounters. Nearly 450 pages of the volume are in typical encyclopedic order. Preceding the main body are approximately 20 prefatory pages of background information that rather set the stage for **Haydn's** life and travels. Two that interested the reviewer were the family trees of the **Haydns** and also the **Esterhazys**—the nobility under whom **Haydn** was employed. It is interesting to note **Haydn's** wife was not included in the family tree. In fact, it took some digging to realize that he ever married. The second item of interest was the map of Europe indicating the various towns and cities where **Haydn** either worked or visited. Not only was he in and around Vienna, he took two extended tours to England. Within the opening pages, too, the "Thematic Overview" serves as the closest thing to an index by listing entries under general subject headings. Even reading this list gives the reader an opportunity to get an indication of **Haydn's** milieu, both personal and professional.

Entries vary widely in length, dependent upon the topic. From a two-sentence paragraph about a lesser-known symphony to an essay about **Haydn's** quartets, each entry is signed, and if not signed, it is attributable to the editor. The list of contributors is a mix of Europeans and Americans mostly. Judging by their titles and their locations, they are almost entirely an academic or musically related group. One longer essay is about performance practice during **Haydn's** time. As an aside, performance practice is defined as "the condition in which **Haydn's** music was performed and the traditions that informed its realization..." Apparently, how they did it then and how it is done now are significantly different. All essays are written by different experts in the field. Following many entries, there are bibliographies of books and journal articles that lend themselves well to the topic.

Two appendices follow the main body of the volume. The first appendix is **Haydn's** complete oeuvre. It is arranged by **Hoboken** number. That is not **Hoboken** as in New Jersey, but rather, **Anthony van Hoboken** (who was the compiler of **Haydn's** catalog of music). Appendix two gives the "text incipits" by **Hoboken** number. It would appear only someone who is well versed in musicology will know what a "text incipit" is. The reviewer does not.

This is an excellent compilation of **Haydn's** life and work. It is very readable and, at times, engaging.

McCants, Clyde T. Opera for Libraries: A Guide to Core Works, Audio and Video Recordings, Books, and Serials. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003. 0786414421. 204 pages. \$45.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian,
College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

Upon first glance, the reader sees **Mr. McCants** is described as an avid opera lover and library patron. Also, he is a retired minister from South Carolina. Otherwise, nothing more is said about his background. The question arose if this would be another work written by someone whose love and admiration for a topic outweighs his ability to make a skillful, lucid analysis. It took searching through *Biography and Genealogy Master Index*, which led me to *Who's Who in America*, to find **McCants** demurring about his background. He was an English professor in North Carolina and later became a Presbyterian minister. It is this combination of being a man who communicates well, plus an all-consuming devotion to the art, that makes this book extremely readable and informative. This is especially the case for its intended audience of librarians intent upon starting a collection of opera recordings.

Over half of *Opera for Libraries* is devoted to the chapter titled "Core Collection." The reader meanders alphabetically by composer through mostly standard operatic repertoire. Most readers who have listened to opera on Public Radio have, at least, been exposed to the titles. A couple American operas are the exception for the reviewer. An annotation might include biographical information on the composer, a brief plot summary, critical reception, or noting a particularly important performance of the opera. Much of it is fairly subjective, but the author supports his statements. One knows immediately he has a significant knowledge of the art form. Additionally, **McCants** puts forth his recommendations of recordings (primarily) and videos he finds noteworthy. It is here where he is at his critical best.

There is a shorter chapter following titled "Beyond the Basics." It consists of less known and lesser-performed operas still worth consideration. By making this distinction, this is important for the potential collector, either in a library or for a personal collection. The annotations are noticeably shorter and the recommendations of recordings fewer. Beyond this, **McCants** leans more to the library and discusses printed sources appropriate for reference and periodical collections.

This is a very good book. Whether it is worth the \$45 price tag or not is probably determined by its usefulness to the reader. 🍀

A Testimonial of Library Leadership — Learning from the Past

A Book Review of: Eric Moon; the Life and Library Times

by **Eleanor I. Cook** (Serials Coordinator & Professor,
Appalachian State University) <cookei@appstate.edu>

Column Editor's Note: This is not a typical, formal book review — let me say this right up front. I was bushwhacked into owning this book, and that is a story worth telling. Here is where it all begins ... — EC

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