

the *Town's* version of a dream ballet. It starts with "Subway Ride and Imaginary Coney Island" and stretches across three numbers and two scenes that flow into one another to create a continuous, multi-movement piece. Oja maps out the form, "a montage structure" with fast-paced juxtapositions, and examines the roles in which Bernstein's music functions as narrative: "enhancing the drama, conjuring up sexual fantasies, and delivering comedy, often through gendered parodies" (p. 268). The rich descriptions of the music accompanied by music examples will no doubt please musicians among her readers without pushing away ambitious nonmusicians hoping to navigate the score and find out more about what they hear and the significance of those sounds. Here and elsewhere in the book, Oja's writing shares with Bernstein's score a thoroughly accessible style.

Oja paints such a favorable portrait of *On the Town* that her book may leave readers wondering why such a good show has hidden in the shadows for so long. *On the Town* has many strengths, and it helped establish dance as a viable component of musical comedy, just as de Mille had done for the musical play. And yet, its initial production lasted a modest 462 performances, and subsequent Broadway revivals in 1971 and 1998 fared worse, with only 73 and 69 performances, respectively. (The 2014 production has done somewhat better.) *Bernstein Meets Broadway* skims this lackluster production history (pp. 84–85) and neglects to unearth some of *On the Town's* underlying weaknesses. Why did the first production run for so few performances? Why has the show failed to find an audience ever since? Which elements of *On the Town* have limited its appeal? *Bernstein Meets Broadway* does not answer these questions about the show's shortcomings, which include its weak book and overreliance on story ballets as narrative. Examining these dramaturgical flaws and others would better balance Oja's praise for *On the Town* and the members of its soon-to-be star-studded creative team.

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The Mormon Tabernacle Choir: A Biography. By Michael Hicks. (Music in American Life.) Urbana: University

of Illinois Press, 2015. [xiii, 210 p. ISBN 9780252039089 (hardcover), \$29.95; ISBN 9780252097065 (e-book), various.] Illustrations, bibliographic references, index.

With this volume, academic interest in Mormon musical culture unquestionably signals its arrival. This is not to say that notable studies have not preceded this one. On the contrary, Michael Hicks's own *Mormonism and Music: A History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) still stands as the most sturdy and reliable resource on Mormon music to date. Hicks's latest book, however, arrives at a time when cultural fascination with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is at its highest ever. What journalists began calling the "Mormon moment" peaked during Mitt Romney's last bid for the White House, but the seemingly unstoppable force of *The Book of Mormon* both on Broadway and in international venues, and of fan-favorite Mormon YouTube sensations Lindsey Stirling and Alex Boye, suggests that a cultural rendezvous with Mormons continues strong. A fascination with this uniquely American religion hardly seems shocking; as *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir: A Biography* attests, it is nearly impossible to separate the study of Mormonism from the study of American culture. Indeed, one demonstrable premise undergirding Mormon scholarship today is that to understand Mormons is in large part to begin to grasp what is America, and vice versa. Hicks's book intersects neatly with this burgeoning preoccupation with Mormonism, not only telling the history of and anecdotes about the famed Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but also using the ensemble Richard Nixon famously dubbed "America's choir" to illuminate the shifting topography of the American cultural landscape.

Hicks tells the story of the Tabernacle Choir chronologically in eight tightly-written and eminently readable chapters. The first chapter, "Books and Angels," explains how and why choral singing emerged in early Mormondom. Here Hicks places the infancy of what would eventually become the Tabernacle Choir at the nexus of the paradoxical Mormon dichotomy between the spoken and written word. As a religion founded on new scripture, yet furthered by the utterances of prophetic lead-

ers, the place of the spoken and written word in Mormonism has often been contested. Rather than using this tension to theorize Mormon preoccupations with musical representation, Hicks patiently lays the foundation for a more straightforward and simpler historical account that privileges more traditional storytelling practices. Hicks uses this mode of traditional historical writing to position this chapter within the evolution of the Choir from purveyor of local musical needs to international cultural ambassador for the Church.

The remaining chapters detail the development of the Choir until the present day. Chapter 2 provides an interesting history of the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, home to the Choir for most of its life. Chapters 3 and 4 outline the changes and challenges the Choir faced while the Church was growing out of polygamy and into greater acceptance in the American values system. These two chapters span a remarkable period in the Church's developing relationship with the rest of American culture. Even more fascinating is how the Choir helped push the image of the Church from that of backward outlier to what Hicks calls "the putative spokespeople for mainstream U.S. Christendom in music" (p. 73). It is this kind of rags-to-riches narrative that places the Tabernacle Choir and its namesake Church squarely within that appreciable vein of Emersonian ideology considered so keenly American. It is also a story largely unknown, even among those familiar with Mormon history, and its appearance here makes for an exciting and enticing read.

Leadership changes within the Choir and increasing friction between that leadership and the general leadership of the Mormon Church occupy the rest of the chapters. The Church and Choir have rather successfully held differing notions of the Choir's autonomy and its purpose and relationship with the broader Church in balance over the years. Still, as Hicks recounts, this tension has pushed and prodded the Choir's repertoire, resulting in recordings that run the gamut of choral literature, from hymns to large-scale sacred pieces, and from world music to the biggest hits from Broadway musicals. With each change of leadership, the Choir likewise has reinvented itself to meet new challenges and expectations. As the Church faced allegations of racism in the 1970s, for example, the Choir re-

sponded with repertoire changes and the inclusion of black performers in its otherwise exclusively white ranks. Although Hicks does not say it in so many words, it seems fair to acknowledge the Choir's adaptability to changing social ideals whenever the Church itself was not able or ready to make such changes. For those reasons, the Choir has evolved into the Mormon vanguard, bearing the image of a Mormon faith open to and capable of adaptation when, unfortunately, that has not always actually been the case.

This is the first full treatment of the history of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but it is not an exhaustive account. Hicks uses the scarcity of available information on the Choir to his advantage, skirting past issues of sexual politics and racial discourse embedded within the history of the Church in order to focus on the subject at hand: the evolution of one of the most remarkable choirs in modern history. Bypassing issues that could quickly and easily take over his text (such as the apparent homosexuality of one of the Choir's early conductors), Hicks leaves those discussions for other studies and thereby keeps his book not only remarkably readable but commendably buoyant. This can be both a delight and a frustration for readers. Along with increased and largely unprecedented global attention, Mormons have also had to deal with a somewhat problematic history. As such, more than a few writers have been eager to point out social and political ironies within the Church's history. If readers pick up Hicks's book looking for more of such tales, they largely will be disappointed.

That is not to say this book is not critical at times. While he could scarcely be called an impartial writer, Hicks nonetheless demonstrates a candid evenhandedness with the material, occasionally even revealing disharmonious relationships within the idealized and revered Church hierarchy by placing the Choir and its repertoire squarely within the crosshairs of a Church constantly battling its image and its past. This book then fits somewhere between a critical history of the Mormon Church and a biography of the Choir. Hicks's deft navigating of these two positions makes the book work well, presumably appealing to a broad audience of choral enthusiasts, Mormon scholars, and musicologists interested in American culture. One note of

caution to readers is that the language and structure of the Mormon Church can be confusing and bumbling, and those unfamiliar with the particularities of the faith will not find much help with such things in this book. An appendix or brief overview of the hierarchical offices within the Mormon Church would have been a helpful inclusion for some readers, though such an absence should not preclude the inquisitive from picking up the book. The author's beautiful handling of the main text more than makes up for such perceived shortfalls.

While the Mormon Church struggles to find its place in a postmodern world, Mormon culture continues to demonstrate the rich outcome of such tension. In some ways, Hicks's book suggests that perhaps part of the greatness of the Tabernacle Choir comes from its place within the paradoxical atmosphere of the Mormon faith. As long as such contradictions continue in the Mormon tradition, then it seems readers and listeners likewise will have the great privilege of enjoying the fruits of Mormon scholarship and music for quite some time.

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Paul Simon: An American Tune. By Cornel Bonca. (Tempo: A Rowman & Littlefield Series on Rock, Pop, and Culture, 5.) Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. [xxxvi, 173 p. ISBN 9780810884816 (hardcover), \$40; 9780810884823 (e-book), \$39.99.] Timeline, further reading, further listening, index.

Paul Simon has written some of the most enduring pop songs of the twentieth century, incorporating an impressive variety of styles into his music during a nearly six-decade career. Though less popular than it once was, his music remains relevant for listeners spanning generations. Simon has earned his share of accolades from popular critics as well as the academy. In *Paul Simon: An American Tune* (part of Tempo: A Rowman & Littlefield Series on Rock, Pop, and Culture), Cornel Bonca offers an overview of Simon's output, situating each major album in its cultural and political context.

Bonca tells us early on that the first Paul Simon song to move him, "Mother and Child Reunion," touched upon his profound

feeling of longing as a teenager separated from his own mother. Already in the introduction, then, we get an example of the book's greatest strength: Bonca's personal—often deeply perceptive—readings of some of Simon's masterpieces. Alas, this preliminary discussion also highlights a significant downside for the music scholar: the at-best-superficial attention to musical detail.

The book's six chapters consist of a career overview (chapter 1) followed by a chronological survey that divides Simon's career into five periods ranging in length from five to sixteen years. Each "period" chapter opens with a briefer overview in which Bonca reviews politics, culture, and Simon's life during that time, after which he examines the albums of the period individually. The only exception to the individual album treatment is the pre-Simon and Garfunkel music, which was typically released as singles (if at all), and which Bonca considers briefly under the heading "1957–1962 recordings." Each of Simon's multimedia endeavors—a television special, a feature film, and a Broadway musical—is studied in the relevant chapter. The quantity of material covered in this small volume makes it an appropriate introduction to Simon in his cultural sphere, although Bonca's enthusiasm occasionally causes him to overwhelm the reader with detail.

Chapter 2 ("The Struggle for Originality: 1957–1970") treats all of Simon's early music and the entire Simon and Garfunkel career, including the duo's 1969 television special "Songs of America." Here and elsewhere, Bonca enriches his readings by comparing songs from different periods. For example, as he evaluates Christian references in folk cover songs on the first Simon and Garfunkel album (p. 23), Bonca draws comparisons with several later Simon originals, including "Blessed" (1966), "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (1970), and the entire albums *The Rhythm of the Saints* and *So Beautiful or So What* (1990 and 2011 respectively). The most valuable aspect of this chapter is Bonca's obviously thorough understanding of the poetic and cultural influences that the young Simon had not yet learned to conceal. Of the five Simon and Garfunkel albums, *Bookends* and *Bridge Over Troubled Water*—inarguably the strongest—receive Bonca's most thorough investigations. His discussion of the pre-Simon and Garfunkel music borders on dismissive.