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Leslie A. Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2013. xxiii + 280 pp. Figures, music examples, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. \$ 65.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9780520275300.

Review by Laura Hamer, Liverpool Hope University.

Leslie A. Sprout's new monograph, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, is an impressive achievement, which considers the competing forces for cultural and political authority in occupied France: the occupying German forces, the Vichy government, and those involved in Resistance networks. By examining the composition, performance, and reception of new musical works written during and immediately after the Occupation, Sprout's book probes one of the most hotly contested periods of French history. To interrogate both the forces competing for cultural authority, and how those adhering to the various vying political factions received and promoted new musical works for their own ends, Sprout adopts a case-study approach. These either focus upon specific works, or upon how particular composers negotiated the perilous contemporary political environment. Sprout chooses as the subjects of her case studies: Poulenc's wartime compositions, Honegger's postwar rehabilitation, Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* and Jolivet's *Trois Complaintes du soldat*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, and the reception of Stravinsky's latest American works in immediate postwar Paris. To investigate these, Sprout skilfully draws upon meticulous archival research, reception history, and close analytical readings of musical scores.

Contrary to what might reasonably be assumed, musical life was surprisingly well-developed in wartime France. State funding for music actually increased. In the occupied zone, the Germans, whilst actively promoting the (supposed) cultural superiority of the Austro-German tradition, also strove to restore a degree of normality to French musical life in order to reassure both the French and the outside world how good life in a Nazi-controlled Europe could be. In the unoccupied zone, the Vichy government urged French composers to contribute to their official programme of renewal--the National Revolution--through embracing their native heritage and rejecting the Modernist experimentation that had flourished during the interwar period.

By examining this rich, yet extremely complex, period of French music history, Sprout's monograph contributes to other recent scholarship on musical life in wartime France. Although Sprout situates this book amongst recent Francophone scholarship, particularly the 2001 collection of essays, *La vie musicale sous Vichy*--which published the findings of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) that Sprout first joined in 1994, and in which the origins of the present study lie [1]--there have also been a number of small-scale Anglophone studies of musical culture in occupied France. Nigel Simeone and Caroline Potter have both published on music in wartime France.[2] Although Simeone's, but not Potter's, work appears on her bibliography, Sprout's book, curiously, does not make extensive use of contemporary (Anglophone) scholarship on wartime France. This may be due to the fact that Sprout's study is primarily concerned with the reception of wartime works, not wartime institutions.

Sprout addresses the almost mythological status still granted to the music of wartime France in her illuminating preface, in which she dispels three commonly-held misconceptions. Firstly, she debunks the

idea that “French music and musicians played a negligible role in the cultural life of wartime France” (p. xi). As Sprout observes, this reality rubs against the “decades-long reluctance of the French to acknowledge that their compatriots played key roles in any aspect of life in wartime France” (p. xi). She makes perceptive use of Henry Rousso’s term “Vichy syndrome” to describe the “postwar French pattern of alternately repressing and obsessing about the traumas of Vichy and German occupation” (p. xii).<sup>[3]</sup> Secondly, Sprout questions the validity with which “we can now, nearly seventy years after the liberation, make definitive moral judgments about the activities of composers who lived and worked in wartime France” (p. xii). As she comments, it is very difficult to categorize definitely musicians as either *collaborateurs* or *résistants*. Living conditions in wartime France were extremely harsh. As Potter has remarked, “we should be wary of viewing the war years as a time where there were easy choices to be made for or against Vichy France and the Resistance.”<sup>[4]</sup> Thirdly, Sprout dismisses the myth that “the story of French music composed and performed during the Second World War is a story that belongs to the historical past” (p. xiii). Sprout’s reference to the angry denial which her previously published research referring to the origins of Duruflé’s *Requiem* in a Vichy commission drew from the president of the Association Maurice et Marie-Madeleine Duruflé illustrates the contention which still attaches to this period of France’s history.<sup>[5]</sup> The humiliation of France’s quick military defeat in the early stages of the Second World War cast a long shadow over the country’s sense of national pride. As the Vichy government has been accepted as unacceptably collaborationist, any public association with the regime has tended to be regarded as tainted with shame. Probing the actions of composers who were both struggling to survive and having to negotiate difficult, and powerful, contemporary political forces has remained a raw issue in France. In this new book, Sprout tackles this difficult topic with great sensitivity.

In chapters one and two, Sprout contrasts the wartime choices and postwar receptions of two of France’s most successful composers of the twentieth century: Francis Poulenc and Arthur Honegger. Poulenc and Honegger both chose to live and continue working in occupied France. Whilst Poulenc came out of the war without a stain on his character, Honegger’s wartime choices have been regarded as more problematic. In considering why Poulenc’s and Honegger’s choices have been understood in such different lights, Sprout interrogates not only their wartime activities but also the innermost secrets of their wartime compositions. As Sprout’s analyses skilfully reveal, the evidence for Poulenc’s sympathy for the resistance largely resides in his wartime scores. Sprout demonstrates that Poulenc’s wartime ballet, *Les Animaux modèles* (1940–1942), cites snatches from Debussy’s *La Mer* and the 1871 protest song, *Alsace et Lorraine*. Both of these musical citations had particular nationalist connotations within occupied France. Debussy had been embraced by members of the Resistance as a French cultural icon, and *Alsace et Lorraine* had been written in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War to protest against the loss of this part of France to Germany. Sprout comments that Poulenc’s other “resistance” compositions drew inspiration from banned poetry. The Sonata for Violin and Piano was dedicated to the memory of the banned Spanish poet Federico García Lorca; *Deux poèmes de Louis Aragon* and *Figure humaine* (on words by Paul Éluard) both set the work of Resistance Poets.

Poulenc’s serious and heartfelt resistance works are contrasted with Honegger’s only work that could be considered to fit within this genre, *Chant de Libération*. Unlike Poulenc’s settings of clandestine poetry, Honegger’s “resistance” song originated in a popular song written for a film project in 1942. Sprout’s recent rediscovery of a rare copy of the piano-vocal score amongst the papers of Bernard Zimmer (the song’s lyricist) at the Bibliothèque nationale reveals that the lyrics and modifications that appear to herald the liberation of France were added in April 1944. This painstaking archival work undermines the claim made for Honegger’s deep-seated resistance feelings—by several of his biographers—based upon a 1942 date, which would have meant that his song predated all other known resistance compositions.<sup>[6]</sup> As Sprout makes clear, “there is no evidence that Honegger was in any way sympathetic to the ideology of the German occupying forces” (p. 41), but his participation in German cultural propaganda—particularly his decision to join the French delegation to the 1941 Nazi Mozart Festival in Vienna—has been regarded as controversial. Although these activities drew criticism, and

resulted in an unofficial six-month boycott of his music at the end of hostilities, the speed with which he was rehabilitated “calls into question the seriousness of his wartime offenses,” as Sprout observes (p. xviii). As a German-speaker who had trained at the Zürich Conservatoire and whose work, for an honorary French composer, had always contained undeniable Austro-German influences, Honegger was ironically well-placed to represent French interests with German officials. Although tainted, Honegger’s wartime career has never elicited the same levels of suspicion or controversy as those of German and Austrian musicians who decided to remain, work, and participate in Nazi cultural propaganda within the Third Reich, such as Richard Strauss or Wilhelm Furtwängler.

In chapter three, Sprout examines music composed by soldiers. In addition to providing fresh insights into her two case studies, Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* and Jolivet’s *Trois Complaintes du soldat*, she also provides a wealth of information about the performance and reception of works by less well-known and amateur composers who had become prisoners of war, such as Maurice Thiriet, Jean Martinon, Henri Challon, Émile Damais, and Émile Goué, and music-making in the prisoner-of-war camps. As in previous chapters, Sprout’s meticulous archival research allows her to offer an alternative interpretation to a well-known musical story, in this case the genesis and first performance of the *Quartet for the End of Time*. She demonstrates that the familiar story, derived from Messiaen himself, of the quartet’s première before a mesmerized audience of five thousand cannot possibly be correct, as the capacity of the theatre at Stalag VIIIA was less than five hundred. She also queries the legendary story of the three-stringed cello, as Étienne Pasquier (the original cellist) claimed that it had the usual quota of four.

In chapter four, Sprout discusses the controversial origins of Duruflé’s *Requiem* in a Vichy commission. She comments perceptively on the irony that the qualities in the work that have frequently led to it being labelled as “timeless,” particularly the inspiration that he drew from plainchant, actually intimately connects it to Vichy France, as the Roman Catholic Church, and its liturgy, played an important role in the regime’s quest for national renewal. In chapter five, Sprout moves from the Second World War to the early Cold War era, as she re-examines the cultural, aesthetic, and political debates which the student protests at performances of Stravinsky’s American compositions in early 1945 sparked. In revisionist stance again, she challenges the oft-held view that a preference for serialism, at the expense of all other forms of expression, was the primary motivator for the disturbances, and also calls to account the inflated roles frequently accorded to Pierre Boulez and René Leibowitz.<sup>[7]</sup> As she adroitly observes, to position the abstraction of serialism (which would gain hold in the West) against the arguably more accessible language of neoclassicism as a flat choice for young French composers in 1945 is to erase the “range of possibilities that existed for modern music in postwar France before global concerns—in the form of the escalating tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union—overshadowed local ones” (p. 156). In addition to a lively discussion of the key themes and figures of the debate, Sprout underlines the key role played by Serge Nigg.

Taken as a whole, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* is a thorough and persuasive study. If I were to ask any more of it, I would personally have liked a deeper consideration of music written by composers known to have been more directly involved with the resistance. Although the Comité national du Front national des musiciens (FNM) is mentioned, a closer discussion of the resistance works written by some its members, beyond Poulenc and Honegger (who was expelled in 1943), may have afforded a more detailed view of those more directly (and dangerously) defying the occupation. Elsa Barraine’s *Avis* (1944, after poetry by Éluard) may have been an interesting case study. Suspected by the Germans of being a resistance agent, for which she was arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo (as Sprout acknowledges), and of Jewish descent on her paternal side—her father Mathieu Barraine lost his position as principal cellist at the Paris Opéra in 1941 as a result of the anti-Semitic laws—Barraine had already composed music in response to the emergence of terrifying European politics before the Second World War. Her orchestral work *Pogromes* was written in reaction to the rise of Hitler and Nazism in 1933, and her Second Symphony (1938), entitled *Voïna* (Russian for “war”), reflected her unease over the

ascent of Fascism and anti-Semitism and the imminence of the Second World War.[8] The other addition that I would have liked is a discrete conclusion that pulled the various disparate strands of the study together. As it stands, the book ends rather abruptly after a discussion of Nigg's works of the early Cold War period. My only other real quibble is that this book claims to address the legacy of the musical life of wartime France. As Sprout rightly asserts, it is "difficult...to separate postwar reception from historical narratives about...wartime genesis" (p. xiii). Beyond some discussion of the immediate postwar period and the controversial (though probably unknowing) decision to perform selections from Duruflé's *Requiem* at François Mitterrand's funeral, as his own youthful relationship with the Vichy regime had come under attack towards the end of his life, the majority of the main text of the book is focussed upon the years of the war and those immediately following it. The years between the early Cold War and Mitterrand's death in 1996 could have been given a greater consideration, as they were instrumental in cementing many of the familiar myths of musical life in wartime France which this book dispels.

These gripes aside, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* is a sensitive, challenging, painstaking, and perceptive study of the musical culture of one of the darkest periods of modern French history. It will make an important contribution not only to French music studies but, more generally, to scholarship dedicated to France during World War Two. Beyond those working specifically in French music studies, this book will also be of interest to those concerned more generally with the interplay between music and politics.

#### NOTES

[1] Myriam Chimènes, ed., *La vie musicale sous Vichy* (Brussels: Complexe, 2001).

[2] See Nigel Simeone, "Making Music in Occupied Paris," *The Musical Times* 147/1894(Spring 2006): 23-50 and Caroline Potter, "French Music and the Second World War," in Richard Langham Smith and Caroline Potter, eds., *French Music since Berlioz* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 281-301. See also Nigel Simeone, "Messiaen and the Concerts de la Pléiade: A Kind of Clandestine Revenge against the Occupation," *Music and Letters* 81/4(November 2000): 551-584.

[3] Henry Rouso, *Le syndrome de Vichy: De 1944 à nos jours*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

[4] Caroline Potter, "French Music and the Second World War," p. 299.

[5] Leslie Sprout, "Les commandes de Vichy, aube d'une ère nouvelle," in Myriam Chimènes, ed., *La vie musicale sous Vichy* (Brussels: Complexe, 2001), pp. 176-177.

[6] José Bruyr, *Honegger et son œuvre* (Paris: Corrêa, 1947); Harry Halbreich, *L'Œuvre d'Arthur Honegger: Chronologie, catalogue raisonné, analyses, discographie* (Paris: Fayard, 1992); Jacques Tchamkerten, *Arthur Honegger ou l'inquiétude de l'espérance* (Geneva: Papillon, 2005).

[7] Joan Peyser, *Boulez* (New York: Schirmer, 1976); Dominique Jameux, *Pierre Boulez* (Paris: Fayard, 1984); Jésus Aguila, *Le Domaine musical: Pierre Boulez et vingt ans de création contemporaine* (Paris: René Julliard, 1958).

[8] For a recent study of Barraine, see Odile Bourin, Pierrette Germain-David, Catherine Massip, Raffi Ourgandjian, eds., *Elsa Barraine: une compositrice au XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (Paris: Delatour France, 2010).

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