

Book Review

James Kennaway (ed), *Music and the Nerves, 1700–1900*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. xii + 236. £60. ISBN 978 1 137 33950 8.

Since antiquity, music has been a central metaphor for conceptualizing the workings of the mind. Philosophers and musicians alike have long accounted for the power of music with ideas borrowed from medicine, aesthetics and acoustics. The advent of mechanist understandings of nervous action in the eighteenth century heralded a new era of musico-medical interaction focused around the nerves, the subject of which is James Kennaway's new edited collection, *Music and the Nerves, 1700–1900*. Kennaway emphasises that the neuroscientific turn of the past few decades in the humanities has a long history.

Intending to foreground the degree to which 'the essentially medical neurological understandings of the body have long played a powerful role in thinking on music, its effects, and aesthetics' (p. 1) this rich volume provides a fresh window onto a history of which scientists, musicians and cultural commentators are all too seldom aware. The collection is ambitious and interdisciplinary in its scope, and includes contributions by historians of science, music scholars, an art historian and a neuroscientist. Taken as a whole, it provides an excellent introduction to some of the major ideas about music and the body.

Kennaway's introduction cogently lays out the stakes for studying the history of the relationship between music and brain science given the current intellectual climate of 'neuro-enthusiasm'. Tracing the latest manifestations of the present-day fetishisation of the neuroscientific, he deftly critiques pop culture phenomena ranging from Baby Mozart to Jonah Lehrer, situating them within a long history of music and the body from the Pre-Socratic philosophers through the nineteenth century. The book continues with an essay by the cultural historian George Rousseau, a pioneer of the application of historical neural science to literary analysis. Exploring the history of relating musical emotions to 'pictures in the mind', interspersed with his own first person account of musical development, Rousseau virtuosically surveys a range of philosophical and aesthetic issues clustering around the legacy of German Romantic ideas on Romantic 'neuroculture'. In a synoptic contribution characterised by both depth and breadth, musicologist Penelope Gouk lays out three intersections of music, physiology and natural philosophy in eighteenth-century English thought: music's effects on the body and soul, the role of sound in conceptualising models of nervous transmission, and tarantism. She further contextualises the emergence of eighteenth-century music therapy within the context of both Cartesian and Newtonian theories of nervous action. Another standout essay in this collection is a collaboration between music historian Amy B. Graziano and neuroscientist Julene K. Johnson, who discuss the role of music within medical discourse around aphasia and amusia between approximately 1745 and 1890. Focusing on a concise topic, the authors successfully illuminate the role of music as a diagnostic tool within shifting debates around brain localization, mental representation, and the nature of language.

The eighteenth century is well represented by two additional chapters: historian of medicine Pilar León Sanz surveys the influence of acoustics and music theory on Spanish medical thought, focusing in particular on three fascinating figures: Tomás Vicente Tosca

i Mascó, Pedro de Ulloa and Benito Jerónimo Feijóo y Montenegro. Art historian Aris Sarafianos lays out the social ramifications of music therapy in Richard Brocklesby's *Reflections on Antient [sic] and Modern Music* (1749) in order to uncover various musical influences in James Barry's portrait of the English physician Christopher Nugent. The transition into the early nineteenth century is the subject of Ingrid Sykes' contribution, which examines how new musical instruments reveal changing conceptions of the auditory body in France. Continuing in the nineteenth century, historian of science Alexandra Hui skilfully examines the influence of evolutionary thinking on the musico-theoretical thought of Ernst Mach, Eduard Kulke and Richard Wallaschek, while musicologist Wiebke Thormählen's stimulating contribution explores the performing (or composing) body across domains ranging from portraiture to music criticism. Overall, in gathering a range of thinkers from diverse disciplines, this collection represents an admirable—and vital—step in bringing the history of the interaction between the domains of music and neural science to greater public awareness. Yet given that much work remains to be done in this regard, certain parts of the volume occasionally reveal the very disciplinary isolation that they aim to address. Some essays might have benefited from further engagement with current discourses in music scholarship around critical organology and sound studies, as well as recent musicological work on nineteenth-century sensation and audition. I also wondered at the prominence accorded to Brocklesby, who appears in two of the contributions, perhaps at the expense of more familiar figures such as his near-contemporary Mesmer, who is absent from the volume altogether. The same holds true in the chapters on the nineteenth century, in which the ideas of Helmholtz, Charcot and Ribot appear only in passing. These critiques notwithstanding, Kennaway accomplishes much by asking his readers to engage with this material through the prism of music and the nerves, and this collection makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of historical studies focusing on music and neuroscience. The book will be of great interest to music scholars and historians of science, and will also appeal to neuroscientists and music cognition researchers.

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