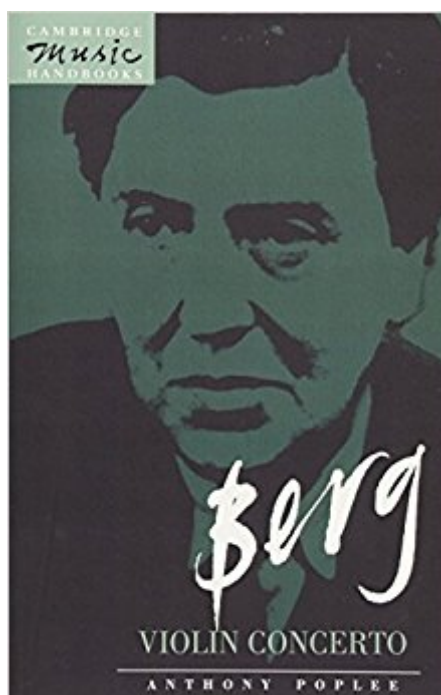


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Berg: Violin Concerto (Cambridge Music Handbooks)



Synopsis

Described by Aaron Copland as "among the finest creations of the modern repertoire," Berg's Violin Concerto has become a twentieth-century classic. In this authoritative and highly readable guide the reader is introduced not only to the concerto itself but to all that surrounded and determined its composition. The book puts the concerto in its cultural context, provides biographical information on the composers and others associated with the work, gives an accessible guide to the music, and provides scholarly discussion for specialists. The author's ability to combine musical anecdote with scholarly analysis makes this guide compelling reading for amateur and specialist alike.

Book Information

Series: Cambridge Music Handbooks

Paperback: 132 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press (June 28, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521399769

ISBN-13: 978-0521399760

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.3 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,481,327 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Forms & Genres > Violin Concertos #99 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Forms & Genres > Concerto #801 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Instrumentation > Violin

Customer Reviews

Berg's Violin Concerto has become a twentieth-century classic. The reader is introduced not only to the concerto itself but to all the factors that influenced its composition in this authoritative and highly readable guide.

Anthony Pople was Professor of Music at the University of Nottingham until his death in 2003. His publications include two Cambridge Music Handbooks - Berg: Violin Concerto (1991) and Messiaen: Quatuor pour la fin du temps (1998); he edited Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music (1994) as well as The Cambridge Companion to Berg (1997). --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Anthony Poole's study of Berg's violin concerto is one of the standouts of the Cambridge Music Handbooks series, exploring every facet of the work and giving a vivid picture of the society in which the book was written. If you love Berg's quirky yet moving masterpiece, or are trying to understand what all the fuss is about, this is a vital book to have. Note, however, that one must also have a copy of the score to fully use this handbook, as Poole makes frequent reference to rehearsal numbers. Poole's work consists of four parts. In the first, Poole presents the music scene of the 1930s, paying especial attention to the style of allusion used by Stravinsky et al. and the conservatism of Rachmaninoff and even some of Schoenberg's American works. Berg, writes Poole, elegantly balanced between the competing musical philosophies of the time. The second part of the book takes up this theme, showing the breakthroughs Berg made in the works written up to the violin concerto, such as the Three Orchestral Pieces, the "Lyric Suite", and parts of "Lulu". Yet it is the latter half of the book that will be most fascinating to many readers, getting as they do to the violin concerto itself. In the third part, Poole tracks the composition of the work, explaining how it was partially inspired by the death of Manon Gropius. A big bombshell is that parts of the work are inspired by a bawdy Carinthian folk song; a work often seen as of angelic purity (dedicated as it is "to the memory of an angel") has a rather risque subtext. Poole also mentions Berg's fathering of an illegitimate child by a servant girl in his boyhood home, memories of which, which he says, leave meaningful traces in the work. The next two chapters form the musicological analysis of the work. Some of it is accessible to everyone. For example, he goes step by step through the various portions of the concerto. The two movements break nicely into two sections each, and each section has several distinct parts of its own. Poole helps the reader follow these developments in a way that greatly enhances appreciation of the concerto. The discussion of tonality in the work, however, supposes some knowledge of music theory, and makes heavy use of Schenkerian/Neo-Schenkerian theory. Poole reveals the work to be much more traditional than is often let on--which, incidentally, vindicates Boulez, who over fifty years ago famously dismissed Berg as too bound by early notions of form and tonality. The final chapter of the work talks about the critical reception that the concerto met. An admirable handbook, and much more successful than most entries in the CMH series.

This book covers almost everything you could want to know about this concerto, which is difficult but full of powerful emotion. It explains the commission, the performance history, the program, and the tonality. I wish the book had more short musical examples in the program section, but that is a small

caveat. The discussion of tonality is much clearer than in the other works I have read on this concerto.

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