

EXCERPTS FROM THE LATEST REVIEWS  
(OF *MUSIC AND MEANING* AND *ANTONIO CALDARA*)

July 2009

“I due autori sono non soltanto due agguerritissimi musicologi ‘italianisti’ ... dalle conoscenze illimitate, ma anche ... con forte sensibilità simbologica”. “Il libro è potentemente organico e unitario”. (Quirino Principe, *Il Sole 24 Ore*).

“Herr Warren e Frau Ursula sono due dei massimi musicologi mondiali.” (Marcello Teofili, *Osservatore Romano*).

“Nella prestigiosa collana *Historiae Musicae Cultores* l’editore Olschki ha pubblicato due volume di assoluto riferimento nel panorama musicologico internazionale, a firma di Warren e Ursula Kirkendale, i due autorevolissimi studiosi americani”. “Il volume *Music and Meaning* ci dà il senso dell’ampiezza dei loro interessi”. “Di entrambi non si può che dire che la loro è una musicologia robusta, una ‘vecchia maniera’ nel senso più positivo del termine: l’approccio storico è sempre documentatissimo, accurato, meticoloso, ma poi c’è sempre il punto di vista trasversale sulle cose, interdisciplinare, che ci stupisce per l’ampiezza della ricerca, ma soprattutto per l’apporto di novità, di interesse, per quel taglio intellettualmente vivo che a ogni lettura avvince e sorprende”. “Il volume di Ursula Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara: Life and Venetian-Roman Oratorios*, ritengo sia uno dei saggi più importanti e luminosi di quella musicologia di grande tradizione che Warren Kirkendale vede ormai al tramonto”. (Marco Della Sciucca, *Oggi e Domani*).

“Una serie di studi che senza dubbio rappresentano il meglio del secondo Novecento”. “Il metodo consiste nella perfetta conoscenza di un testo e nell’assoluta fedeltà al documento, da investigare in tutti i risvolti possibili e mediante un bagaglio culturale vastissimo”. “Con tutto ciò, la musicologia dei signori Kirkendale è pressoché perfetta”. (Piero Mioli, *Nuova informazione bibliografica*).

“Of the twenty essays, several are major contributions in their innovative research and forceful expression”. “The articles are in many senses path-breaking”. “Commitment to these principles has yielded, in both authors’ work, a body of writings that illuminate the music in the plethora of its humanistic connections”. “A remarkable communion of minds”. “A magnificent selection of plates – fifty-two, ... from a wide range of sources (musical, literary, pictorial)”. (Don Harrán, *Notes*).

“A monumental manifestation of that which we at that time absorbed [at the University of Vienna]. ... It was the spirit of the tradition of the most demanding scholarly work which goes back to the 19th century. ... The visible demonstration of an understanding of research which today ... begins to recede into the background (which certainly and obviously is connected with the extreme demands of such scholarship, undeniably requiring the engagement of the entire personality). Here is presented a gleaming monument to a scholarly ideal which, it is hoped ..., will be received as a guideline also for future research and not as a tombstone for a finished epoch. ... With the Kirkendales [this principle of source-based research] is achieved with a consistency hardly to be found elsewhere. The continuous interaction and minute exploitation of all attainable factors for the origin of a work – drawing upon many areas beyond music, which prove to be indispensable for its interpretation – and the analysis based on this, reacting in turn on the discovery and utilization of new sources, result not in only profound perceptions, but represent for the reader ... texts which continually challenge his interest”. ... “An abundance of perceptions gained from an abundance of new sources”. ... “The scholarly work of the Kirkendales belongs without doubt to the best which our generation has

achieved in musicology. They represent herewith a certain direction with a concept of research which they have developed consistently and further pursued in a manner which has become rare. ... The Kirkendales are exceptional phenomena". (Theophil Antonicek, *Musicologia Austriaca*. Translated from the German).

The opulently designed and printed volume [*Music and Meaning*] appeared simultaneously with the equally representative volume 114 of the series, an extensively revised and version, translated by Warren Kirkendale, of Ursula Kirkendale's dissertation, *Antonio Caldara: Life and Venetian-Roman Oratorios* (dissertation version 1961, printed Graz/Cologne 1966). Both together are something like a heart of a (fortunately by no means finished) shared life-work of very exceptional consequence and quality. It was only appropriate that they in March 2008, shortly after the 75th birthdays of the couple, were presented at a celebration in the Papal Institute for Sacred Music. ... Many of the articles have long become classical texts of music historiography. ... The continuous reading of them demonstrates clearly and impressively how at what a high niveau is argued throughout, how broad and secure the foundations of the presentation are, and how much everything is carried by a profound humanistic culture. Connected with this, the texts have remained young and can be read with profit again and again. Also in this respect they are "classical" texts. Their everyday usefulness is heightened through correction of details and some extensive addenda to the original versions. ... It is a question of historical thought, the understanding, by means of historical method, of historically localized musical works of art of the European-Western tradition which have become historical objects. Central is the claim to understand such music in the sense of its own time, to contextualize it as consistently as possible, based (ideally) on all sources from all historical areas which are relevant for the author and the work, and in this way to comprehend its "meaning" as historical significance. This is obviously an extremely high claim, but it is again and again discharged in an impressive manner and measure. At the same time it explains why biographical documents, literary and art-historical sources are so important for the Kirkendales and why they insist so relentlessly on the foundation of sources for all music-historical work. ... It is of course also obvious that the concept of music historiography carried out here with so significant and rich results crosses almost all methodological developments, upheavals, fashions and catastrophes, which the discipline has experienced precisely in the decades in which the Kirkendales have worked so productively. This is pointed out clearly in an interview between Warren Kirkendale and Peter Halász from the year 1997, which was published hitherto only in Hungarian ("As a Historian I Live with the Past", pp. 581-595). It is a moving document, because it reveals the scholarly ethos of an important man of learning, and it is a refreshingly clear settling of accounts with many developments of the discipline which have struck out not only or not at all to its advantage, from the influence of Adorno to the 'new musicology', gender studies, *et al.* ... One is struck to read that these were already in 1979 the concerns of Paul Oskar Kristeller (p. 586, note 13). But whatever position one may take: that which will remain beyond the present diffuse-critical situation of the discipline are the articles collected here as the heart of a truly impressive life work. (Ludwig Finscher, *Die Musikforschung*. Translated from the German).

[The German-born Kristeller, professor at Columbia University, was one of the greatest scholars who ever lived in the U.S. Finscher, Professor emeritus of the University of Heidelberg, is the most prominent musicologist in Germany, former president of the German and the International Musicological Societies]