Lee Rothfarb and Christoph Landerer, *Eduard Hanslick's 'On the Musically Beautiful': A New Translation*, New York: Oxford University Press 2018 / Alexander Wilfing, *Re-Reading Hanslick's Aesthetics: Die Rezeption Eduard Hanslicks im englischen Sprachraum und ihre diskursiven Grundlagen* (= Wiener Veröffentlichungen zur Musikwissenschaft, Bd. 49), Wien: Hollitzer 2019

Schlagworte/Keywords: Eduard Hanslick; formalism; Formalismus; music aesthetics; Musikästhetik; On the Musically Beautiful; reception history; Rezeptionsgeschichte; translation; Übersetzung; Vom Musikalisch-Schönen

The Hanslick revival continues apace. Back in 2015 I quipped that Eduard Hanslick had never had it so good, following Mark Evan Bonds's *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea*.[1] In the wake of 2013's *Rethinking Hanslick*[2] such a jocular assertion seemed only mildly exaggerated (being "rethought" was, after all, an honor normally reserved for canonical composers, not their conservative critics). Now the appearance of two publications within a year – Lee Rothfarb and Christoph Landerer's new English translation of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* and Alexander Wilfing's *Re-Reading Hanslick's Aesthetics* – suggests that this claim would hardly be wide of the mark today. These two books are in fact closely linked: Wilfing worked on the FWF project *Hanslick im Kontext*[3] that gave rise to the new translation and contributes to the opening essay in the volume, while his own monograph (reworking a 2016 dissertation) is clearly informed by the project as well as by Landerer's earlier research. There is, in other words, much common ground between the two. Both seek to provide a more accurate and critical account of Hanslick's thought, going beyond the misleading and stereotyped viewpoint to which it has often been reduced, with a concentration on the understanding of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* in the English-speaking world. Both are valuable contributions to the ongoing resurgence in interest in Hanslick and his aesthetics.

A New Translation

On first impression, one is struck by how the actual text of Hanslick's treatise is almost overshadowed by the scale of Rothfarb and Landerer's accompanying essays and critical apparatus. As Lydia Goehr has pointed out in another review,[4] with the supporting contextual essays, a "Reader's Guide," appendix, glossary, and selected bibliography, this publication offers pretty much all that one might expect of a critical edition. Indeed, given the oft-remarked issues with translation, I did find myself wondering at times whether the editors could not have gone "full Hanslick," and given the reader parallel German-English texts to boot; this would have made the edition near unbeatable. Three substantial introductory essays set out the "Origins, Publication, and Translation History of the Treatise," an "Introduction to Hanslick's Central Concepts," and the "Philosophical Background." There

1 Bonds 2014.

2 Grimes/Donovan/Marx 2013.

3 FWF = *Austrian Science Fund* (*Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*).

4 Goehr 2020.

follows a "Readers' Guide," which offers four "Alternative Routes Through the Treatise," ranging from the whistle-stop (the central chapter 3) to the grand tour, here with an itinerary modified in light of what the editors consider both a more logical and probable chronological order of chapters (namely 6, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 7 – a succession that for them "seems obvious" (p. xix)). These contextual chapters occupy over eighty pages, the original treatise another 116, being followed by another twenty-odd pages of back matter.

We can start with the translation. After all, this is the third complete attempt to render Hanslick's treatise into English, after Gustav Cohen's 1891[5] version and Geoffrey Payzant's more recent 1986 edition.[6] Already one can ascertain from the differing titles given to these two versions – *The Beautiful in Music* and *On the Musically Beautiful* respectively – the questions and disputes that may arise in such an undertaking. The difficulties of translation have long been debated, and the editors of this volume are as aware as anyone of the issues involved, as well as the earlier specific solutions to this treatise. Not only do they raise the matter in the "Translator's Preface," but both the helpful glossary and portions of the introductory material (especially essay 2, the "Introduction to Hanslick's Central Concepts") serve tacitly as justifications for the particular policy adopted. Such circumspection is wise. In many ways, making a translation is being on a hiding to nothing: there is always something that might be criticized, and what one gains in accuracy or consistency one might lose in elegance or overall spirit. So why do we need a new Hanslick now?

The rationale for the present volume is clearly set out in the preface, albeit in a mildly awkward prose that is not untypical of the translation that follows it: "Considering the text's many subtleties, some of them vital to Hanslick's argument and in light of the lively academic debate addressing these subtleties, today's readers of his treatise must rely on a translation that is sensitive to characteristics of the German text." (p. x) Cohen's approach, in their view, "reads well, but at many places is not grammatically and rhetorically faithful to the German original" (p. xxviii):

> With Cohen's approach resulting, on the one hand, in a translation of high readability in English but at the expense of subtleties and key characteristics, and, on the other hand, with Payzant's translation less readable than Cohen's and with a fair number of inaccuracies, it is difficult to produce a new, improved translation that is as readable as Payzant's and simultaneously faithful to Hanslick's intended arguments (p. x).

It is this difficulty that Rothfarb and Landerer seek to overcome in their new version.

There is no doubt that accuracy is better here than in Cohen's freer rendering – and arguably more considered than Payzant's. A case in point is Hanslick's famous dictum, the tricky "tönend bewegte Formen," rendered here as "sonically moved forms." Payzant had "tonally moving forms" – for many scholars quite acceptable, but in the present translators' estimation liable to be linked too closely to the idea of the tonal system (pp. xl–xlii), while Cohen offers the more approachable but distinctly misleading "sound and motion." As Rothfarb and Landerer acknowledge, and as the title of Hanslick's treatise exemplifies, one need not expect verbal awkwardness in the original text to permit a trouble-free translation. Even normal German words, of course, lose something of their connotative flavour in translation. A case in point is the adjective "künstlich," for which Rothfarb and Landerer decide on "artifactual" (p. 96) to avoid possible misunderstanding if rendered as "artificial" or "artistic" (I would have been tempted to go with "artful," but each to his or her own).

The translators are nothing if not scrupulous. For illustration, the attentive reader might be taken aback by the early reference to Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelungs" in Hanslick's preface (p. lxxxv). Why "Nibelungs" in the plural – an elementary mistake sometimes made in English faced with the masculine singular genitive "des Nibelungen"? In fact, consulting the original German reveals that Hanslick uses the inverted formulation "Nibelungenring"[7] – which could be either singular or plural – so this is not technically wrong (although it makes rather less sense to render it plural). An alternative such as

5 Hanslick 1891 (Transl. by Cohen).

6 Hanslick 1986 (Transl. by Payzant).

7 Hanslick 1902, viii.

"Nibelung's Ring" might of course have made the point even more clearly, indicating to the reader the unusual inverted formulation. Nevertheless, the translators have conveyed what Hanslick wrote. On occasion, this literalness might even go too far. Keeping the German spelling 'Händel' in English is a conspicuous intervention and comes across as a little fussy (especially given that the composer's first name is given in the familiar anglicized form as 'George' – see the index, p. 132).

As my commentary above has hinted, the syntax and punctuation throughout the volume is not always exemplary. This is apparent as early as the first page of the first chapter. The second paragraph starts:

> Unphilosophical in themselves, in their application to the most ethereal of all arts, such aesthetic systems acquire something almost sentimental that, although utterly invigorating for gushers, offers the studious a bare minimum of elucidation. (p. 1)

Here the commas around "in their application to the most ethereal of all arts" are confusing: does this phrase refer to the preceding ("Unphilosophical in themselves") or to the following ("aesthetic systems")? Hanslick's text is clearer:

> An und für sich unphilosophisch, bekommen solche Ästhetiken in ihrer Anwendung auf die ätherischeste aller Künste geradezu etwas Sentimentales das, so erquickend als möglich für schöne Seelen, dem Lernbegierigen äußerst wenig Aufklärung bietet.[8]

The translation would be less ambiguous without the second comma. I was made more than ever aware of this feature when a conscientious copy editor, working on another book, queried with me a citation of the translated line on p. 23: "Whatever instrumental music cannot do, can never be said that music can do it […]." This is indeed awkward. The German original is "Was die *Instrumentalmusik* nicht kann, von dem darf nie gesagt werden, die *Musik* könne es [...]."[9] I see no ground to fault the translation in itself (though the crucial "vom dem" has gone slightly astray in the translation), but the English is not pleasant, and some readers may have preferred at least an additional "it" midway through, if not a more idiomatic circumlocution ("That which instrumental music cannot do, music can never be said to do," or "It may never be said that music can do something that instrumental music cannot do?"). Far more idiomatic, albeit slightly looser, is Cohen: "What instrumental music is unable to achieve, lies also beyond the pale of music proper" (p. 44).

In choice of vocabulary, Rothfarb and Landerer are resolutely contemporary and distinctly North American. The "gushers" in the quoted passage from p. 1 is a direct and not inapt choice, more contemporary than Hanslick's "schöne Seelen,"[10] though obviously missing the rich historical connotations of the latter. Translating "Herrschaft" in the following sentence as "hegemony" is also redolent of the wordiness of contemporary academic discourse.[11] Rendering "den Dingen selbst an den Leib zu rücken"[12] at the bottom of this page as "to the things themselves" brings out an unexpected Husserlian resonance to Hanslick's thought; turning "unvordenklichen Besitz"[13] into "squatters rights" (p. 31) is pleasingly wry; while "The other arts persuade us, music invades us" (p. 69) is a neat correlate to "andern Künste überreden, die Musik überfällt."[14] Stylistic purists, if they still exist, may be mildly disconcerted by the frequent split infinitives and redundant second prepositions ('outside of'), features that are admittedly common in present-day American English but which may come across as unrefined in scholarly writing. Most readers, however, are unlikely to care.

Another sensible choice is that Rothfarb and Landerer have chosen the last of the ten different editions of the German text published in the author's lifetime. As they observe, while Cohen's use of the seventh edition made sense at that time (it was the latest one available to him in 1891), the motivation for Payzant's choice of the eighth (rather than, say, the first or tenth) in 1986 is less clear. Nevertheless, significant textual changes from earlier editions are noted throughout, affecting not just the running text (for instance the note on p. 35, in which Hanslick

8 Ibid., 1–2.

9 Ibid., 41.

10 Ibid., 2.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 2.

13 Ibid., 56.

14 Ibid., 130.

replaced a reference to Wagner with one to Mozart from the sixth edition onwards), but especially the celebrated "aesthetic amputation" of the "music of the spheres" conclusion to the original 1854 edition, which can be found in the appendix.

This will no doubt be marketed as the "definitive" English translation of Hanslick, the one which Anglophone students should purchase. It is certainly the most useful of the three. While this most recent attempt does not offer the most stylish English and the text is in several places not as clear as it could (and probably should) be, Hanslick's argument is never misrepresented, and there is no shortage of guidance to the reader. If one seeks good English prose, one should return to Cohen. To understand Hanslick's treatise this new volume is a better bet.

Die Rezeption Eduard Hanslicks im englischen Sprachraum und ihre diskursiven Grundlagen

If the extent of the accompanying material in the translation suggests that Hanslick requires substantial contextualization, Alexander Wilfing's study shows why such tacit correction may be needed. "Hanslick-reception is a cliché," Wilfing arrestingly starts his study (p. 9), and with rhetorical aplomb circles back to this idea, explicitly and implicitly, across the following three hundred pages. As Wilfing notes, and his subsequent discussion amply bears out, what Hanslick actually said or formulated has often been less important than the (normally quite erroneous) function he has played for various causes (p. 11), above all as a straw man to knock down to bolster an ostensibly diverging position.

The study is designated as an account of Hanslick's English-language reception and its discursive foundations. It is much more than this, however. One way of conveying the contents is to say that it is formed as a pair of case studies (ch. 4 and 5) that treat two Anglophone traditions in which Hanslick has featured prominently (aesthetic formalism and analytic philosophical aesthetics), preceded by three substantial contextual chapters. The latter set out not only the historical context for and development of Hanslick's ideas in the English-speaking world (ch. 3) but also his German reception (predominantly ch. 1, though also fleetingly in ch. 3), along the way puncturing several of the myths that have accrued within each (ch. 2, and throughout). The book can thus be read, more generally, as a prolonged explication of and reflection on over a century and a half of critical errors, half-truths, and misreadings, justified only by their accumulated weight of repetition. In case anyone doubts how casually Hanslick has been treated, even by native speakers, they need look no further than the appendix to chapter 1. #tönendbewegteformen: it might be Hanslick's catchphrase, but few seem to get these three words right, even in German. Six pages are filled with misformed or inexactly remembered versions of the famous dictum, from Guido Adler and Alfred Einstein to Walter Wiora and Carl Dahlhaus (pp. 76–81). And then, when it comes to English translations, all bets are off (pp. 165–168). This is not merely hairsplitting over the most suitable translation. The most common mistake appears to be making Hanslick's plural (Formen) a singular form – a reworking also apparent in many of the German examples.

Much of the book serves to reveal the sheer scale of the misconception of Hanslick and his treatise's argument. The ahistorical formalist, the denier of emotion, the upholder of instrumental over vocal music – such erroneous clichés and more are ably dismantled across the course of Wilfing's book. One might wonder how anyone could impute these views to Hanslick, given that even a cursory reading of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* would give the lie to them. But one still encounters fine scholars today contending that Hanslick denied music was emotional. And misapprehension of Hanslick is not restricted to these points; it also transpires that the links to many of the terms, influences, and movements with which he has been associated are often more precarious than assumed (a point likewise made in the introductory essays to Rothfarb and Landerer's translation). For instance, the assumption that Hanslick was influenced by Immanuel Kant, while not exactly refutable, has slim evidence to support it either. The education Hanslick received in the Hapsburg realms of Prague, Klagenfurt, and Vienna would have given little weight to the Königsberg thinker (Wilfing, p. 29; Rothfarb and Landerer, p. lvi), and the disappearance (and possibly permanent loss) of Hanslick's Nachlass means that tracing the author's private reading and sources becomes little more

than speculation based on the appearance of superficially similar ideas.

Although similarities exist between Hanslick's reception in German- and English-speaking regions, the differences are nonetheless notable (pp. 128–129). Historically, German accounts were more likely to seize upon Hanslick as arch-conservative critic, his reputation as a tireless and (for some tastes) tiresome opponent of Wagner, whereas his English-language reception was slower to take off, but also more often positive in recognizing the seriousness of his contribution to music aesthetics. It is this latter facet that forms the core aim of the book. Some of the most interesting material in the monograph concerns the affinity of Hanslick's theories with British aesthetic thought from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, especially the long overlooked similarities with arguments proposed by Adam Smith in his 1795 "Of the Nature of that Imitation which Takes Place in What are Called the Imitative Arts"[15] (a work German scholarship seems to have picked up on earlier than English-language accounts). There follows a useful comparison with Edmund Gurney's 1880 *The Power of Sound*;[16] despite some similarities (alongside important differences when it comes to the value placed on emotion), there is little evidence that Gurney knew Hanslick's as yet only fragmentarily translated treatise, and indeed evidence points to the opposite conclusion (p. 148). The subsequent discussion of Clive Bell (*Art*, 1914) in chapter 4 continues this historical trajectory, the chapter exploring Hanslick's association with formalism, viewed in comparison with the supposedly similar stance of Kant and Bell. More than ever we see how the image of Hanslick became a caricature, a useful straw man for asserting the arguments of New Musicology in the 1990s. Wilfing reveals how the attribution of "formalism" to Hanslick requires substantial qualification (the term is many ways inapt, as Hanslick clearly collapses any distinction between form and content), just as Kant's aesthetic formalism is of a limited degree (pp. 183–205). Ultimately, not only do purported formalists such as Kant, Hanslick, and Bell have little in common, but none of them are really formalists, at least in the ways in which their critics have sought to characterize this position.

Like *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, much of the argument of Wilfing's study is negative, in the sense that it serves as a critical warning of what Hanslick's viewpoint has been taken to be, but in fact often isn't. This makes the one major positive thesis, outlined in the final chapter, all the more telling. This discusses Hanslick's use in Anglo-American analytic philosophy, especially the aesthetic turn from the 1980s onwards witnessed in the work of figures like Peter Kivy, Jerrold Levinson, Malcolm Budd, Stephen Davies, Aaron Ridley, and Jenefer Robinson. Many of the thinkers included in this broad designation have engaged critically but productively with Hanslick's aesthetic position. Even here, though, it is possible that Hanslick has been imperfectly understood. In fact, to my mind, Wilfing's most original contribution in the book is to argue that the "enhanced formalism" that Davies and Kivy introduce in order to rectify limitations in Hanslick's theories is arguably already there in well-developed form in the Austrian thinker (pp. 308–309). This is a significant contention that would reward wider exposure. There is much richness and much to ponder in this volume; my only regret is that some of the lessons that should be learned in English-speaking scholarship will probably not be imparted, owing to the longstanding linguistic divide.

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15 Smith 1795.

16 Gurney 1880.

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Taylor, Benedict (2021), »Lee Rothfarb and Christoph Landerer, *Eduard Hanslick's 'On the Musically Beautiful': A New Translation*, New York: Oxford University Press 2018 / Alexander Wilfing, *Re-Reading Hanslick's Aesthetics: Die Rezeption Eduard Hanslicks im englischen Sprachraum und ihre diskursiven Grundlagen* (= Wiener Veröffentlichungen zur Musikwissenschaft, Bd. 49), Wien: Hollitzer 2019«, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 18/1, 195–200. https://doi.org/10.31751/1114

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eingereicht / submitted: 04/06/2021

angenommen / accepted: 04/06/2021

veröffentlicht / first published: 28/06/2021

zuletzt geändert / last updated: 25/06/2021