

***Music Research: A Handbook.* By Laurie J. Sampsel. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. xxvii, 323 p. \$39.95 US. ISBN 978-0-19-517119-8¹**

This new book effectively reviews itself in the list of its “Features” (p. xix). It is indeed “a handbook,” “selective,” with “emphasis...on titles in English,” with annotations, and it encourages students to “develop critical evaluation skills,” includes suggested readings, and “stays current through updates on the companion website.” Its intended audience is upper-level undergraduates or new graduate students engaged in their first research projects. Its aims are admirable and its contents reasonable, but I think at times its tone is unsatisfactory.

Of the sixteen chapters, fourteen examine types of reference sources used in research, while the other two explain writing guides and style manuals. The appendixes offer guidance to the Library of Congress class M schedule, the RISM series, and three standard citation styles. There is a glossary of foreign language and other terms highlighted in the text (including ordinary language terms such as “abstract” and “periodical”) and an index of authors, titles and subjects.

Altogether there are 644 annotations. They give clear, concise and relevant descriptions of background, scope, arrangement, and indexing. A significant amount of space is also devoted to the citation of “the most detailed and informative” book reviews of each title, demonstrating to students that Sampsel’s opinions are part of a wider discourse.

The chapter introductions, particularly the explanations of the purposes, methodologies, terminologies and other complexities of uniquely musical resources, such as collected works editions and thematic catalogs, are written as kind and patient advice. Sampsel regularly offers practical assistance in the mastery of relevant library call numbers and subject headings. Chapter 9, “Music Histories, Source Readings, and Chronologies,” extends to making recommendations to graduate students, who often are also instructors of survey courses, of textbooks they could choose for teaching non-music majors.

Unfortunately, the introductions also have a prescriptive tone that eventually becomes tiresome. The reader is constantly admonished: “Keep in mind...” (pp. 12, 43, 57, 212, and elsewhere), “Also be aware that...” (p. 75), “Please note that...” (p. 105), “Be sure also to...” (p.75), “It is often important to utilize...” (p. 166), and “Remember that...” (p. 241). Such phrases are harmless as throat-clearings in familiar conversation or in magazine articles on self improvement. But in academic discourse they are inappropriate stumbling blocks to close or repeated study.

Chapter 4, “Library Catalogs,” is included as a gateway to reference resources. It is almost entirely descriptive, with few listings or suggested readings. The mysteries of standardized name forms, uniform titles, subject headings and format issues are expounded at length. “Most musicians would think the uniform title for Stravinsky’s *The*

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Rite of Spring would be the French *Le Sacre du printemps*, although it is actually the Russian...” (p. 40) Screen shots then illustrate the advanced search pages of seven major online library catalogs, demonstrating various integrated library software packages and a divergent array of design features. (Most musicians would think librarians could at least agree on a standard way in which they could look up *Vesna sviashchennaia!*) Students are offered tips and urged to experiment with search strategies both in their own local library and in others. They are even asked in the “Evaluation Checklist” to judge, “How good is the search engine and database design?”

The comments on quality are occasional in terms either of endorsement (3.45: “The most comprehensive and scholarly encyclopedia devoted to popular music,” 11.25: “The definitive discography of early jazz”) or caution (3.7: “There are problems with editing and accuracy”). Chapter 12, “Musical Iconographies,” has the largest number of negative comments. Sampsel explains the value and appeal of illustrations, and sympathetically describes the RIdIM/RCMI image-research projects. However, after pointing out the questionable methodology and variety of publishing formats in this “bibliographically challenging” field, she describes many of the listings in terms such as “contains errors” (12.12), “is not accurate” (12.14), “dated and inaccurate terminology” (12.16), and “is not scholarly”(12.19). She also often criticizes the technical quality of the illustrations.

Sampsel, who has been active in information literacy projects in MLA, has based the book on over ten years of teaching experience in bibliography and research classes as Director of the Music Library at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She hopes her audience will include anyone with an interest in the music of the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. With respect to the latter, she often provides one or two Canadian examples for a category. Although most of the entries are well chosen and described, there are some missteps.

The one-volume *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (entry 2.3) is carelessly included in the “Multivolume” section of Chapter 2, “General Music Encyclopedias and Dictionaries.” It also is evaluated as “similar to *Amerigrove* in its goals,” a misleading annotation for a title that in fact was the model for *Amerigrove*. The online version of EMC is oddly described as “similar to the second edition, in that its contributors are Canadian.” In the citation of 9.62, Helmut Kallmann’s name is given correctly, but becomes “Kallman” in the annotation. Sampsel also remarks, “There is a lack of current bibliographies of Canadian music” (p. 145). Only two Canadian music bibliographies are listed. The absence of Maria Calderisi’s important 1981 study of pre-Confederation imprints is noteworthy. But the most disappointing omission is the *Canadian Musical Heritage Series* from the “Examples of Musical Monuments by Place” (7.35-7.42). In contrast, both *Recent Researches in American Music* and its subseries, *MUSA*, are listed, as well *Musica Britannica*, in addition to some *Denkmäler*

The glossary is unsatisfactory. Some translations are unhelpful: *compte-rendu* and *procès-verbal* are more likely to be encountered in their general meaning of “account,” “review” or “report” rather than specifically “book report” or “proceedings,”

respectively. Too many French (and some Spanish) words have incorrect accent marks: the text gives *procés-verbal*, *table de matières*, and, worst of all, *bibliothèque*. The glossary also identifies only terms used in the text, so while readers are informed about *livro* (It., Span.) they are left on their own for “book” in German or French.

On a positive note, the companion web site, which is hosted by the publisher (<http://www.oup.com/us/musresearch>), is admirable. At “Links in *Music Resources*,” all of the Internet sites are listed by chapter, and there are also many updates of print listings (e.g., 13.15, the 2007 edition of *Music Directory Canada*). “Supplemental Links” lists, again by chapter category, many recent web sites, particularly reflecting the exponential growth of digital audio and score sources. The author’s ongoing industry and dedication is evident throughout.

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