

Review: Representing the Good Neighbor: Music, Difference, and the Pan American Dream. By Carol A. Hess. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II. By Annegret Fauser. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

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Representing the Good Neighbor: Music, Difference, and the Pan American Dream.
By Carol A. Hess. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II. By Annegret Fauser.
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The *Journal for the Society of American Music* includes as part of its mission statement the exploration of “all aspects of American music and music in the Americas,” thus recognizing the contested nature of the label “American music” and proposing a continental scope to its understanding.¹ The two books reviewed here – Carol Hess’s *Representing the Good Neighbor: Music, Difference, and the Pan American Dream* and Annegret Fauser’s *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II* – both contribute to our understanding of how transnational participation and negotiation are embedded in the classical music tradition of the United States. One of the most satisfying aspects of reading these two books is discovering their chronological and topical intersections while also uncovering how their constructions of historical narratives differ. Both books do much to destabilize notions of American music as bound neatly by geographical, temporal, or stylistic characteristics. Hess shows us that the study of music in the Western classical tradition cannot escape its intrinsic cosmopolitanism and that transnational dialogues are actually central to its expressive and discursive universes. Fauser asks us to attend to musical practices beyond the concert hall and that may involve musical actors peripheral to grand narratives of music.

Hess’s *Representing the Good Neighbor* provides a masterful reception history of works that attempted to represent Latin America musically and addresses the question “What do we in the United States know about Latin American art music, and how do we know it?” (3). Some readers might be looking in Hess’s book for a study on music and the official cultural diplomacy of the United States government towards Latin America, including the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) of the Division of Cultural Relations, or the Pan American Union, but this is not that study.² Rather, this impressively documented book focuses on the impact of Pan Americanist discourses that peaked in the 1930s and 1940s, around the time of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy (1933), and extends into the 1970s. Hess divides her attention between how U.S. critics and audiences received the works of three key Latin American composers – Carlos Chávez, Heitor Villa-Lobos, and Alberto Ginastera – and on how several U.S. composers – most prominently Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, and Frederic Rzewski – attempted to portray Latin America in their compositions. Hess’s central claim is that throughout the mid-twentieth century, there were radical shifts in the frames for reception of Latin American music in the United States and the collective imagination regarding what this music might sound like. Critics and composers moved from emphasizing a shared cosmopolitan universalism – as problematic as the term might be – to underlining an intrinsic difference often colored by the exotic. Rather than focusing upon the discursive polarity between nationalism and universalism, Hess asks the reader to focus on the processual and look at transnationalist and cosmopolitanist historical models to complement the discourses of nationalism and universalism that have permeated most academic writing on the subject.³

Representing the Good Neighbor begins with a discussion of the historical roots of Pan Americanism, presenting it as a complex and heterogeneous set of discursive practices. This fragmented view sets the tone for the rest of the book, where one learns how ideas about Pan

Americanism were both adopted and criticized by different and sometimes opposing factions, being used by leftists and defenders of U.S. imperialism, by diplomats in Washington and music critics, and by advocates of musical universalism and by those advocating a more folkloric approach to musical inspiration. After this introduction, Hess organizes the remaining chapters chronologically, so that those on Chávez roughly cover the late 1920s and early 1930s, those on Villa-Lobos cover the late 1930s to 1940s, the Ginastera chapters cover the 1950s and 1960s, and the Rzewski chapter covers the 1970s.

In chapter 2, Hess argues that some critics interpreted Chávez's work through a Pan Americanist lens as an example of an American "ur-classicism," a New World response to European neoclassicism. A crucial voice in this chapter is that of music critic Paul Rosenfeld, who discussed Chávez's music using primitivist tropes. American composers, Rosenfeld argued, need not gravitate towards Europe for classical values because they could be found already among pre-encounter societies south of the Rio Grande. Because of the shared Pan American geography, the expressive practices of these societies could become a usable past for the emergence of a U.S. musical identity.⁴ Chapter 3 focuses on Chávez's ballet *H.P. Horsepower*, which Hess labels as an "explicitly Pan Americanist ballet" framed by what she calls "dialectical Indigenism," which "affirms the coexistence of indigenous culture and machine technology in the modern age" (51) and ultimately argues for their interdependence. Chapters 2 and 3 engage in a compelling dialogue as the signifiers Hess labels as examples of musical primitivism – ostinato, driving rhythms, mixed meters, repetition, angular melodies, abrupt block juxtapositions, long pedals, melodic fragments of narrow intervallic range, and prominent percussion (53) – double as signifiers of machine technology, expanding the previous chapter's assertions about a shared American ur-classicism by indexically connecting modern age and indigenous cultural practices.

Chapter 4 of *Representing the Good Neighbor* situates the early reception of Villa-Lobos in the United States in relation to the goals of Pan Americanism and the cultural programs sponsored by the Brazilian government of Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945). By structuring the chapter around the concept of "unsublimated primitivism," Hess shows how, at critical points in his career, Villa-Lobos "played the 'savage' card, whether in his own relentless and often imaginative public relations campaign or through his music" (85). The reception of Villa-Lobos's works encapsulates the tension between the primitivism and savagery often associated with them, and the forward-looking, universalist modernism that he advocated. It is precisely during this period, on the brink of World War II, that Hess perceives a shift whereby not only intellectuals and artists were drawn to Pan Americanism, but also policymakers and diplomats.

The fifth chapter of *Representing the Good Neighbor* is perhaps the most successful, and it is one that could easily be assigned for course readings. Hess surveys how U.S. composers "effectively 'branded' Latin American music through their own Latin American-themed works, ensuring that the epithets such as 'travel music' or 'rum-and-coca-cola school' circulated in the United States even while many Latin American composers pursued cosmopolitan universalism" (112–13). Hess finds that during this period many critics stopped supporting music that relied on folkloric elements for raw material, and several claimed that only a refined and sublimated folklore could be central for universalism. There are significant overlaps here with Fauser's *Sounds of War* in terms of the composers and cultural mediators being discussed – Copland, Toscanini, Cowell,

and Carleton Sprague Smith, for example – and thus the differences between the two authors’ visions of U.S. music becomes evident. While Hess highlights the transnational nature of these composers’ activities, Fauser’s gaze focuses on their engagements inwards, even when related to international cultural policy, the State Department, and the Office of War Information.

In chapter 6, Hess examines the complex history of the reception of Ginastera’s second opera, *Bomarzo* (1967). The work was premiered in Washington, D.C., in 1967 to great acclaim, banned in Buenos Aires that same year, and had an unenthusiastic reception in New York in 1968, “where critics found little more than clichés in its modernist idiom” (143). Hess concludes that this incongruous reception was the result of *Bomarzo* being caught between two publics: those invested in Pan Americanism and cultural diplomacy and those who held a depoliticized viewpoint. The emphasis given by the press to the presence of prominent political figures at the Washington premiere suggests to Hess that “Washington *needed* to hear order, progress[,]” and even signs “of ‘ethical superiority’” (169). Throughout the chapter, Hess examines how historiography on Ginastera has changed. She problematizes the emphasis that has been placed on a teleological progression toward what Gilbert Chase and others called *sublimation*, a term that “reconciled the asceticism and objectivity of high modernism with subtle, perhaps even imaginary traces of folk music, thus purifying and refining nationalism” (154). Hess argues that Chase and several music critics, following Freudian psychoanalytical language in vogue at the time, saw musical nationalism as a drive. The perception, as Hess convincingly explains, was that “a composer must . . . work through his or her ‘neurosis’ . . . by sublimating the nationalist impulses to the higher goal of universalism, with its lofty promise of disinterest” (157). In other words, the aesthetic ideal was not to replace or repress nationalism in music, but to redirect this energy towards a more acceptable universalist ideal.

In the seventh chapter, Hess examines the conflicting agendas surrounding Rzewski’s 36 *Variations on “The People United Will Never Be Defeated!”* Turning from its complex reception history, the majority of the chapter focuses on an analysis of the work informed by Paul Ricoeur’s work on memory and trauma. While informative, this chapter feels disconnected from the analysis of the impact of Pan American discourses on classical music in the rest of the book. *Representing the Good Neighbor* closes with an epilogue that argues for including Latin America and Hispanic music-making in U.S. music histories (192). As Hess indicates, the historiographical privileging of the thirteen New England colonies has excluded other narratives and points of origin. She uses the example of H. Wiley Hitchcock’s seminal *Music in the United States*, which in its most recent edition (2000) “acknowledges the presence of a variety of these competing traditions, [but] nonetheless asserts that ‘we must still recognize’ the preeminence of New England in our heritage, musical and otherwise” (193). Firmly, Hess asks, “Why must we? And why, given the longevity of the Hispanic presence in music of the United States—and indeed in the Western canon—have we taken so long to give it its due?” (193).

While Hess expands our understanding of the very epistemology of U.S. music by acknowledging the participation of Latin American actors and soundscapes, Fauser’s *Sounds of War* does so by paying attention to the many ways in which classical music articulated various aspects of social life in the United States during World War II. Fauser acknowledges that her focus is on the East Coast, the region whose privileging Hess critiques; however, Fauser justifies this emphasis by noting that the region was where “so many of the institutions, concert halls, and

radio stations were located” (12). Proposing that this historical moment was crucial for the consolidation of U.S. national identity, in both “internal discourse and internationally oriented propaganda” (1), she investigates the role played by classical music in this process. Fauser organizes the book’s chapters in a manner that follows the structure of inductive thought, in sharp contrast to Hess’s book, where one finds clear outlines and objectives at the beginning of every chapter and a summary and forthright conclusion at the end. Rather than beginning with a thesis and road map, each chapter covers a large number of examples, all leading to stimulating conclusions.

The first and second chapters of *Sounds of War* work in tandem to give a picture of the individuals who created, performed, and listened to classical music during this period and the institutions that used it for propaganda, morale-building, education, musical diplomacy, and the rehabilitation of those involved in the war. In chapter 1 alone, one can sense that Fauser aims for breadth in her study as she discusses Copland, Samuel Barber, Marc Blitzstein, Lehman Engel, the Marine Band and Navy Band Symphony Orchestras, Kurt Weill, Harry Futterman and the Armed Forces Master Records, Deems Taylor, Paul Nettle, and Paul Henry Lang. The first chapter establishes an interesting counterpoint with the second, which focuses on institutions and agencies that participated in the war efforts – the Office of War Information (OWI), the State Department, and the Army – and even looks at the establishment of music therapy as part of the efforts to help those coming back from war.

In chapter 3, Fauser examines the works that were composed and performed during the war, centering her discussion on three key ideas about U.S. musical life during wartime: the beliefs that the United States was to be a custodian of classical music in a time of worldwide crisis, that folk songs were the music of the people and embodied U.S. cultural practices, and that contemporary patriotic works could represent the pluralistic musical voice of the nation. She begins by looking at how music from the American Revolution was adopted as a “usable past” for a folk heritage that both “homogenized diverse traditions into an all-American folk style, but also defined native music as bound to the land” (145), marginalizing practices emerging from urban centers, particularly jazz, as sources of inspiration for classical works. Among the works that are briefly explored in this section are Henry Cowell’s *Hymn and Fuguing Tune* (1944), *American Muse* (1943), *American Melting Pot* (1941), and *Philippine Return: Rondo on Philippine Folk Song* (1943); Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* (1944) and *Rodeo* (1942); Walter Kerr’s *Swing Out, Sweet Land!* (1944); and Richard Rodgers’s *Oklahoma!* (1943). The chapter ends with an examination of opera performance, which remained almost completely dominated by Axis composers such as Rossini, Verdi, Puccini, and Wagner. As Fauser points out, “American critics tended overall to defend the inclusion of Wagner and other operas from enemy nations, making it a point of pride that, contrary to Axis powers, the United States could rise above the pettiness of nationalist politics in music” (172). At the same time, there was an interest in Americanizing and democratizing opera. By way of example, she looks at the opera *Carmen Jones* (orchestrated by Robert Russell Bennett and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein, 1943), which adapted and translated Bizet’s *Carmen* for U.S. audiences and was performed by the National Negro Opera Company.

The attractively organized fourth chapter in *Sounds of War* explores the lives of musicians in exile, expatriates who had to leave Europe before and during the war years. Among the

composers coming from Allied countries, Fauser looks at Benjamin Britten, Bohuslav Martinů, and Darius Milhaud; she notices the numerous options they had when choosing distinguishing markers for their countries of origin—which in Martinů’s case she calls “music with an accent” (186). She contrasts this flexibility with the experiences of those coming from Axis nations, such as Bartók, Arnold Schoenberg, Ernst Krenek, Arturo Toscanini, and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. “Indeed,” says Fauser, “whether in the case of Allied exiles such as Milhaud or Martinů or in that of musicians who had fled from Axis countries, musical composition and performance were powerful means of negotiating the complex and competing demands of exile – between past and present, between the lost home and the new one, between the composers and their audiences” (223).

The final chapter explores works that were considered unapologetically nationalist, the anxieties about provincialism that they produced, and the wider cultural demand for patriotism during the war years. Fauser examines how typically such works engaged with aspects of American identity “by way of musical references or through a programmatic title, and very often both” (227). The first of three areas explored are the seventeen works commissioned by the League of Composers in 1943—including Martinů’s *Memorial to Lidice*, William Grant Still’s *In Memoriam*, John Alden Carpenter’s *The Anxious Bugler*, and Roy Harris’s *March in Time of War*. The second area follows works celebrating significant figures in U.S. political history, such as Randall Thompson’s *Testament of Freedom* (1943), Jaromír Weinberger’s *Lincoln Symphony* (1940), Morton Gould’s *A Lincoln Legend* (1941–42), Copland’s *Lincoln Portrait* (1942), and Roy Harris’s *Symphony No. 6 “Gettysburg”* (1944). Here, Fauser presents an insightful analysis of how the different ways Lincoln’s words were mediated through music and appropriated for non-patriotic goals resulted in contrasting receptions of Copland’s and Harris’s works. Fauser closes the chapter with a reflection upon the search for the “Great American Symphony,” particularly in relation to what became the point of reference for symphonists at this time: Dmitry Shostakovich’s *Symphony no. 7 “Leningrad”* (1939–40). The three works that Fauser explores in this regard are Roy Harris’s *Symphony no. 5* (1943), Marc Blitzstein’s *Airborne Symphony* (1946), and Aaron Copland’s *Third Symphony* (1946). A brief, final mention of John Cage’s *Credo in US* (1942) only underlines that the whole tradition of mavericks and experimental composers in U.S. classical music had otherwise been absent from the book. *Sounds of War* ends suddenly, leaving readers to draw their own conclusions about the book’s arguments as a whole.

As might be evident from these descriptions, the biggest strength of *Sounds of War* is also its weakness. In trying to provide a more comprehensive picture of how musicians in the United States – or at least those on the East Coast – composed for film, wrote patriotic music, participated in civilian and military operations to boost morale, and organized concerts, Fauser’s text sometimes reads as a whirlwind survey that proves both rich and disorienting. While Fauser’s and Hess’s books overlap significantly in their focus of U.S. music during the mid-twentieth century, their approaches could not be more different. Whereas Hess focuses her chapters on only a few of each composer’s works, their reception, and one or two main theoretical concerns, Fauser covers large amounts of repertoire and a multiplicity of actors. Differences aside, both books are fascinating, valuable additions to the scholarship on “American Music,” and both clearly illustrate the diversity, complexity, and messiness contained under that label.

Eduardo Herrera

¹ This was a shift from “music in America” as stated in the previous journal of our society, *American Music*. Michael Broyles’s letter, inaugurating the first issue of *JSAM* affirmed: “At SAM we also believe that the term American needs to extend far beyond the borders of the United States to embrace music in many areas of the Americas.” Michael Broyles, “Letter from the President,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 1, no. 1 (2007): ix–x.

² For studies in this direction see Stephanie Stallings, “Collective Difference: The Pan-American Association of Composers and Pan-American Ideology in Music” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2009); Jennifer Campbell, “Shaping Solidarity: Music, Diplomacy, and Inter-American Relations, 1936–1946” (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2009); Jennifer Campbell, “Creating Something Out of Nothing: The Office of Inter-American Affairs Music Committee (1940–41) and the Inception of a Policy for Musical Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 1 (2012): 29–39.

³ See, for example, Gerard Béhague, *Music in Latin America: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979). <http://journals.cambridge.org> Downloaded: 01 Mar 2016 IP address: 165.230.224.49

⁴ The concept of a usable past as source of musical identity in the United States goes back at least to Van Wyck Brooks, “On Creating a Usable Past,” *The Dial* 64, no. 7 (1918): 337–41.