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McGeoch, Alan. 1975. 'Review of *The Composer in the Market Place* by Alan Peacock and Ronald Weir'. *Contact*, 12. pp. 43-44. ISSN 0308-5066.

musicians often feel wary of engaging in research which touches on the social and economic problems of the composer, in case, as mere musicians, they are considered unqualified to judge these matters, or more seriously, in case their efforts are later ruled to be outside the bounds of good scholarly endeavour by fellow academics. Personally, I feel that this need not be the case nowadays, and I view with pleasure the unbending of certain institutions with regard to interdisciplinary studies, but I still feel that Peacock and Weir as economists in their own right have an advantage over the musician in that they really know what they are talking about. It is to their credit, also, that at no time in their book, does 'economics' stand in the way of the real subject: 'the economics of composing music in the 20th century'.

Although I cannot agree with Asa Briggs in his laudatory preface that "this book is essential reading for any one who wishes to trace the patterns of change", I nevertheless find it an interesting and useful addition to my library (as a researcher in music and social change), and I'm sure it will provide stimulating reading for others, including the merely curious amateur. Some 171 pages of text with occasional illustrations and informative tables are introduced by a meaty first chapter entitled 'The Economic Characteristics of Music Composition'. We are introduced to the central topics of the book here, and quite frankly I found the occasionally sudden use of a term from the world of economics confusing on a first reading: one can see the problems in converting a highly specialised area of knowledge into one easily accessible to the layman. Also, the rather tedious sentence constructions of the introductory chapter tend to cause semantic confusions. Professor Peacock obviously has a lot to say, however, and his meaning cannot be mistaken for long. The punctuation and spelling errors can be eliminated from future editions.

In particular, the results of a survey carried out on behalf of the Performing Right Society by the Economists Advisory Group in 1972 show at once completely new information on the nature of composers' earnings (in a table on page 23), and at the same time suggest that Peacock and Weir have collected a body of statistical data and analyses far too large for the scope of this publication. The acknowledgements mention that this book is a spin-off from "a wider investigation commissioned by the Performing Right Society", and if this reaches publication it will be of great interest. Meanwhile, our appetites whetted, we pass on to the central chapters, largely the responsibility of Ronald Weir, which deal with changes in the market for musical composition between 1900 and 1970. From the birth of the PRS in 1914, through the developments in the gramophone and radio in the 20s (the latter becoming the biggest single music market, providing in Broadcasting Royalties almost half of the PRS's domestic income by 1945), through the growth of Mechanical Recording Rights and the erosion of the traditionally powerful position of the music publisher, Dr. Weir has built up a comprehensive picture of a very complex field of studies. Perhaps one should forgive him for leaning so heavily on other writings, particularly those of E.D. Mackerness and of Asa Briggs. Especially revealing are his comments on the troubles highlighted by the notorious 'Tuppenny Bill' proposed in the late 20s, and the cut-price retailing of records during the inter-war period, predating the supermarket selling of records by many years with series such as Woolworth's 6d novelty records.

The growth of music 'while you work' and also the boom in serious music during the Second World War, the new patrons of the arts (the Arts Council etc.), the new improvements in records (LPs began in 1948) and the beginning of the chain of obsolescences in music hardware, BBC programme changes and the growth of TV, the new teenage music market — all are discussed and the relation of the composer to these developments is kept foremost in one's mind for most of the time. The concluding chapter, 'The Market for Musical Composition Today', takes us well into the early 70s, even mentioning some of the problems caused by relationship with the European Economic Community.

One or two reservations about this otherwise excellent piece of work must be voiced. This is a descriptive and historical work and the authors make no bones about it, but I find the information is presented in too fragmented a way for one to muster it and analyse it in any way other than that chosen by Peacock and Weir. For instance, the central chapters deal with three historical periods (1900-14, 1914-39, 1939-70) rather than following one aspect through all 70 years at a time, which would make the whole study more coherent. Also, I feel that the book suffers from diffuseness in its attempt to appeal to a wide readership. I would welcome the completeness of tabular information which is an important feature of such works as Baumol's *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma* (published in America).

All in all, however, this hardback Faber publication is full of ideas which may relate to or encourage other types of social study of

music (of this century and earlier), as well as providing a valuable insight into the ramifications involved in what might once have been thought of as the relatively simple process of displaying one's musical wares in public.