

Musical Biography

**National Ideology,
Narrative Technique,
and the Nature of Myth**

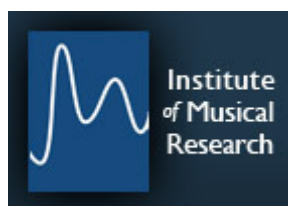


9–10 April 2015

Institute of Musical Research, University of London, UK



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Cover photograph by Toshiyuki imai, Kyoto

Thursday 9 April
Senate House

9:00–
9:15

Registration and Welcome

9:15–
11:15

Room 103

[A] Biographies Across Time

Chair: Clair Rowden

**Cristina Scuderi (Karl Franzens
Universität Graz)**

Verdi Biographies: Historical
Evolution and Perspectives

**Lorraine Byrne Bodley (Maynooth
University)**

Imagining Franz Schubert

**Matthew Werley (University of
Cambridge)**

Enigma's End

**Jun Zubillaga-Pow (King's College
London)**

The Geopolitical Resistance of
Beethoven Biographies

Room 104

[B] British Perspectives

Chair: Paul Watt

**Andrew J Cheetham (University of
Huddersfield)**

Biography, Mythology, and Narrativity
in English Music of the Seventeenth
Century

**Cheryll Duncan (Royal Northern
College of Music)**

Henry Purcell and the Construction of
Identity

Bruno Bower (Royal College of Music)

Grieg, Schubert, Beethoven: Varieties
of National Identity in the Programme
Notes of the Crystal Palace Concerts,
1865–1879

**Kirstie Asmussen (University of
Queensland)**

Politics in Musical Biography:
Reflecting Societal Trends of
Twentieth-century Britain

11:15–
11:45

Morning Tea

11:45–
13:15

Room 103

[C] Musical Biography: Identities, Constructions, Stereotypes

Chair: Joanne Cormac

**Joanne Cormac (Oxford Brookes
University)**

Taking Biography Back to the Source:
Biographical Constructions of
Musicians through Time

Room 104

[D] Biography and Music Analysis

Chair: Christine Mercer

**Lucy Hollingworth (Royal
Conservatoire of Scotland)**

How Biography Informs Musical
Analysis: A Reflective Process

Friday 10 April
Senate House

Anna Maria Barry (Oxford Brookes University)
An Opera Singer's Gothic Fiction: The Autobiographies of Sims Reeves

Marsha Siefert (Central European University, Budapest)
Tchaikovsky's Tatiana: A Crucible of Biography and Creativity

Rebecca Gribble (University of Southampton)
Using Sociology to Inform Musical Biographies: Benefits and Distractions

Christopher May (University of Oxford)
Crisis Averted? Arvo Pärt and Serialism

13:15–
14:15

Lunch

14:15–
15:15 **Invited Roundtable 1**
Simon Keefe (University of Sheffield) and Mark Evan Bonds (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Conversations on current research on musical biography

15:15–
15:45

Afternoon Tea

15:45–
17:00 **Room 103**
[E] Disciplinary Approaches to Biography
Chair: Lorraine Byrne Bodley

Mark Evan Bonds (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
Music as Autobiography

Verena Mogl (Hamburg)
Not the Music – but the Life: Biography as the Defining Mark of Socialist Realism

Room 104
[F] Addressing Mythologies
Chair: Chris Wiley
David Ferris (Rice University)
'While the Daylight Lasts': Schumann and the Myth of Madness
Ronit Seter (Jewish Music Research Centre, Hebrew University, Jerusalem), Uri Golomb (Tel Aviv University)
On Deconstructing and Reconstituting a National Myth: Mordecai Seter's Israelism

10:00–
10:30

Morning Tea

10:30–
12:30 **Room G34**
[G] Biography in relation to Specific Works
Chair: Paul Watt

Anna Stoll Knecht (Swiss National Science Foundation/University of Oxford)
On the Genesis of Gustav Mahler's Seventh Symphony: Compositional Biography and Myth

Nicola Montenz (Milan Catholic University)
Richard Strauss' Late Greek Operas and the Myth of Self: in Quest of Silence, Peace, Eternity

Emily MacGregor (University of Oxford)
'Unmistakably American'? Roy Harris's Symphony 1933 and the American West

12:30–
13:30

Lunch

13:30–
14:30 **Invited Roundtable 2**
Jonathan Cross (University of Oxford) and Rosamund Bartlett (Oxford)
Conversation on issues surrounding Russian biography

14:30–
15:00

Afternoon Tea

15:00–
17:00 **Room G34**
[I] Single-subject Studies: Writing the Lives of Lesser-known Personages
Chair: Paul Watt

Room G37
[H] Biography, Nationality and Musicology
Chair: Lorraine Byrne Bodley
Christopher Wiley (University of Surrey)
Myth-making and the Politics of Nationality in Narratives of J.S. Bach's 1717 Contest with Louis Marchand
Virginia Whealton (Indiana University)
Imagining a Nationalist Future through Polish Music: Franz Liszt, *F. Chopin*, and the Parisian Musical Press
Maria José Artiaga (Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
Joaquim de Vasconcelos, a Man of his Times Faced with a Peripheral Musicology

Room G37
[J] Methodological issues in the Writing of Auto/Biographies
Chair: Chris Wiley

Christine Mercer (Monash University)

Marie Hall (1884–1956): A Life Worth Recognition and Celebration

Frances Watson (Oxford Brookes University)

Difficulties of Japanese Musical Biography: A Case Study of Ōki Masao

Markéta Kratochvílová (Czech Academy of Sciences)

Involuntary Hero: Otakar Ostrčil and his Biographer

Richard Parfitt (University of Oxford)

‘The Soldier’s Song’ by Seamus de Burca: Celebrating Peadar Kearney

Martin Flašar (Masaryk University)

Twilight of Novelists: The Search for a Multidimensional Model of Contemporary Music Biography

Salvador Campos Zaldienas (University of Granada)

The Biographical Construction Process as Informational Feedback: The Case of Enrique Iniesta (1906–1969)

Juan Francisco de Dios (I.E.S. Cardenal Cisneros, Alcalá de Henares-Madrid)

Living composers: Biographies on the Edge

Verdi Biographies: Historical Evolution and Perspectives

Cristina Scuderi (Karl Franzens Universität Graz)

An imposing amount of writings on the figure of Giuseppe Verdi has been produced over more than a century, ranging from a widely popular character to the more strictly scientific. Is it possible to identify some trends in these writings today? What was their evolution in terms of historical perspective and depth of vision? And among omissions, errors of dating and/or transcription of the epistolary material, what is the level of historical truth in the outline of the figure of the composer?

The first biographies were written while the composer was still alive; these are particularly valuable for shedding light on what Verdi's contemporaries thought about him. After his death, the biographies began to advance a historical position in a more decisive manner. Since the 1930s have appeared a set of biographies drawn up from a chronological perspective: Carlo Gatti's important work is generally considered to be the first ‘modern’ biography of the composer due to the author's use of primary source material that had been unavailable to earlier scholars, while Frank Walker's *The Man Verdi*, was one of the first to call for a revisionary approach to Verdi's biography, eliminating inaccuracies and false traditions. In the aftermath of the first International Verdi Congress (1966) arose increasingly detailed and revisionary approaches that draw on both archival documents and on new and more detailed studies about every aspect of Verdi's music and career.

Imagining Franz Schubert

Lorraine Byrne Bodley (Maynooth University)

Since the nineteenth century Schubert has been subjected to considerable invention on the part of his biographers, acolytes and friends. Memoirs from some of Schubert's friends and contemporaries labelled him as a kind of cherubic idiot savant, – a ‘guileless child romping among giants’, as Robert Schumann famously remarked – a modest, relatively untutored *Schwammerl* who frequented coffee houses and effortlessly improvised dance tunes for a coterie of friends but who was unlucky in love, who died young, impoverished and neglected. This highly-sentimentalised image was reinforced by Schubert's first biographer, Heinrich Kreissle von Hellborn, in 1865 and was embroidered with colourful detail by George Grove in 1882. While Maynard Solomon's 1989 article, ‘Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini’, attempted to dispel the myth

of a divinely inspired composer, able to shake songs out of his sleeve in another sense it has been replaced by another aspect of the myth: that of a maverick artist, driven by malignant and demonic forces. Because these reactions are so extreme, and because other historical evidence contradicts them, we may want to relegate both images to the realm of myth. Like all good myths, however, they tell us something important and enduring about being human. They may not fully describe Franz Schubert but they do accurately portray aspects of the psychological realities with which he lived.

Lifting the veils of musical biography uncovers the sources of these myths, yet it also leaves us asking 'Who is Franz Schubert?' This paper will question what is true about Schubert's life and what has been taken for truth by those who were in the process of constructing an image of the composer.

Enigma's End

Matthew Werley (University of Cambridge)

No other composer divides opinion as sharply as Richard Strauss. A towering figure of his generation, Strauss's dizzying success throughout Europe and the Americas has elicited praise, envy and vitriol in equal measure. Even at his 150th anniversary, a deep-seated ambivalence about his legacy lingers despite several British and American critics having hailed him as the most important composer of the twentieth century.

Whether critical or apologetic, Strauss biographies exhibit an unsettling degree of consistency when approaching the relationship between his life and works as well as a tendency to gloss over the multi-layered complexities of his eight-decade-long career which traversed a dramatic sequence of political ruptures in European history, not least the Third Reich. Thinking beyond such configurations, what narrative strategies can the biographer draw upon to organise graphically the bios of this multifaceted and 'enigmatic' figure who – to echo Daniel Ender's monograph – was a *Meister der [Selbst-]Inszenierung*?

This paper critiques the methodologies of Strauss biographers from Ernest Newman (1908) onward and situates them within a spectrum of representational criteria catalogued by Melanie Unseld (2014). It then outlines a logic for subverting traditional time/space categories (Bakhtin's chronotopes) by exploring alternatives drawn from the work of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (1998; 2014) and Wilhelm Hemecker (2009; 2014), whereby epistemologies of specific

locations or structures of specific times can inform the presentation of a works–life–context relationality. It discusses the applicability of such ideas to Strauss, a figure whose prolific output and exceptionally long career pose unique biographical challenges.

The Geopolitical Resistance of Beethoven Biographies

Jun Zubillaga-Pow (King's College London)

This paper examines the Beethoven biography of the long twentieth century, and induces that biographies written with a nationalist agenda espouse strong imperialist leanings. Over the past century, writers from different nations have churned out countless versions of Beethoven's biographies. These include the French during the *belle époque*, the Germans during the Third Reich, and the Americans during the Cold War. Citizens from each of these nation–states attempt to politicise Beethoven's life and music as congruent to those of their own contemporary circumstances. Yet Beethoven's own vital and musical narratives persistently thwart the colonialist structure of a composer essentialised by national cultures. Relying on the Tuathailian theory of critical geopolitics, I argue that the Beethoven biography can be perceived as a formal episteme of geopolitical resistance. That is, the biographers are themselves pandering to the socio–political demands of their respective 'musically imagined communities', to use Georgina Born's turn of phrase. The final arbitrator of this thesis will lie in the transnational comprehensibility of these Beethoven biographies via their Chinese translations.

Biography, Mythology, and Narrativity in English Music of the Seventeenth Century

Andrew J Cheetham (University of Huddersfield)

The biographies of William Byrd (c.1540–1625) and Henry Purcell (1659–95) have long been documented and promoted, providing histories of English music with seventeenth-century composers whose musical achievements represent the finest this country has to offer. Such approbation has solidified and exalted the reputation of these composers to the extent that they eclipse other figures of the English Baroque who were active during the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Comparatively, little musicological interest has been taken in the period 1625–1660, which has often been disparaged for a decline in English musical standards.

Recent research, however, has revealed that a number of English composers were absolutely up-to-date with the latest Italian methods of composition, representing a definite 'progressive' musical culture. The chief pioneer of Italianate music in England during the 1630s–1660s was George Jeffreys (c.1610–85), who remains a shadowy figure of the English Baroque and is almost entirely absent from histories of English music. The inadvertent marginalisation of Jeffreys and, to a lesser extent, some of his contemporaries, is responsible for the perpetuation of traditional constructions of English music history.

I contend that past writers of English music history have unwittingly, but damagingly, skewed modern-day perceptions, and suggest that alternative narratives of English music of the seventeenth century are required to understand the music of our past more fully. If attention is turned to the researching and writing of biographies of overlooked composers, then alternative constructions of English music can be created, leading to more nuanced and complete understandings, and to a change in perceptions of English musical culture.

Henry Purcell and the Construction of Identity

Cheryll Duncan (Royal Northern College of Music)

Although Henry Purcell's various appointments as a church, chamber and court musician are fairly well documented, they tell us next to nothing about him as a person. Bearing in mind Thomas Carlyle's dictum that the work of biographers and historians draws most assistance from 'a good portrait if such exists', this paper explores what can be learned about Purcell the man from a deconstruction of the engraved frontispiece portrait that precedes his *Sonnata's of III Parts* (1683). Drawing on ideas from fields as diverse as iconography, heraldry, the law, paratextual studies and the history of clothing, I investigate how the choice of dress reflected deeply held views about the wearer's place in society and the ways in which s/he expected to be perceived. The value, reception and authority of any publication in the late Stuart period were heavily conditioned by the represented status of its author. The image of a fashionably dressed gentleman with a coat of arms therefore becomes a means of validation, asserting the gentry's prerogative of public voice and its broader cultural hegemony. The portrait also makes an unequivocal statement about Henry's position in the Purcell lineage that has gone unnoticed for over three hundred years; this can be used to supplement Maureen Duffy's biography of the composer and the article on him in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The discussion then

extends to Henry's wife Frances, whose ancestral background appears to connect her with the patronage of another great English composer, but of an earlier age.

Grieg, Schubert, Beethoven: Varieties of National Identity in the Programme Notes of the Crystal Palace Concerts, 1865–1879

Bruno Bower (Royal College of Music)

Much of the existing literature on nineteenth century programme notes has focused on history and contexts. As an example of the insights to be gained from close reading this material, we could consider the various approaches to national identity contained in the programme notes produced for the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts. Notes for the few appearances of Grieg openly stated his nationality, and imply that this information was useful for understanding his music. In contrast, the biographical passages on Schubert generally made no reference to his nationality. Instead, the descriptions of his life and music drew on a broad range of explanatory material and implications of universality. There were also a few non-British composers who were frequently treated as essentially British by historical association. Beethoven might seem like a surprising example of this type, as he had relatively little connection with England during his lifetime. However, frequent references to English poetry and extensive comparisons with Shakespeare in the programme notes seem to indicate (among other things) a subtle attempt to appropriate him for Britain. This raises interesting questions regarding the current understanding of biography, national identity and music in the Victorian period.

Politics in Musical Biography: Reflecting Societal Trends of Twentieth-century Britain

Kirstie Asmussen (University of Queensland)

In the first half of the twentieth century, the content of musical biographies altered with the political tides of Britain. For those editors, publishers, authors and broadcasters who had long played a central role in developing and disseminating the nation's contemporary composers, the event of World War II acted as a solemn turning point in their musical activities. Subsequently, many biographies of celebrated musicians were published in this new post-War culture.

In light of the changing political conditions, the production of biographies can be surprising in the messages they convey. One example is a Vaughan Williams

biography, written by Hubert Foss in 1950. Vaughan Williams and Foss had worked together between 1923 and 1942 as composer and publisher respectively. However, the biography produced by Foss lauds the traditionally pastoralist elements of Vaughan William's music and largely ignores the modernist exploration seen in Vaughan Williams' early works. Although this reflects the political situation of celebrating the most elegantly British music, is this consistent with a wider trend in British music biographies? Did World War II result in the loss of awareness for a time when British composition was pushing modernist boundaries and working closely with continental trends?

Taking Biography Back to the Source: Biographical Constructions of Musicians through Time

Joanne Cormac (Oxford Brookes University)

From the moment musicians began to be depicted in literature and art, composers and their work began to be associated with certain symbols, narratives and characteristics. These associations still inform the way we conceive of musicians and musical works today, particularly as they often appear in biographical constructions of composers.

Although recent research into musical biography tends to highlight national differences and ideologies, this paper argues that there are some frequently-occurring traditions that appear regardless of the nationality of the subject or author, or of the time period, genre or style in which the subject worked. It argues that these commonalities between biographies of a wide range of composers occur because we have inherited depictions of musicians from ancient sources: from folklore, mythology and the Bible.

In order to demonstrate this thesis, this paper identifies common motifs in a range of biographies of seemingly incongruous composers, placing Mahler alongside Palestrina, Wagner alongside Puccini, Stravinsky alongside Mozart. It will unpick the meanings behind familiar themes, such as the depiction of rivalries and contests, the use of motifs associated with chance and fate, supernatural themes, such as bargaining with the devil and beguiling or deceiving listeners, and hero narratives. It will trace these common tropes back to their sources in order to unpick the preconceptions we have about musicians and their work, which still influence our understanding of them today.

By providing an overview of the common themes, stereotypes and identities of musical biographies and identifying their origins, this paper lays the groundwork for the following two papers of the panel. These deal specifically with the supernatural, hero narratives, and mythologising strategies in biographies of nineteenth century opera singers.

An Opera Singer's Gothic Fiction: The Autobiographies of Sims Reeves

Anna Maria Barry (Oxford Brookes University)

Male opera singers occupied a uniquely problematic place in nineteenth-century society, especially in Britain where music was widely perceived to be a feminised pursuit. The identity of British singers was complicated further, as opera attracted much prejudice as a morally suspect and dangerously foreign art form. It therefore became imperative for British singers to find ways in which to assert their masculinity, their respectability and their Britishness. The autobiography offered these men a unique chance to do this, and several singers across the century seized this opportunity.

This paper will focus on the autobiographical efforts of British tenor Sims Reeves (1821–1900), a star of the Victorian operatic stage. Reeves wrote two memoirs, but this paper will focus primarily on his first, which represents an especially unusual example of musical biography. The majority of this memoir could more accurately be defined as gothic fiction; it consists of a number of peculiar and sensational short stories in which Reeves repeatedly casts himself as a hero.

This paper will unpick these highly unusual short stories, arguing that Reeves utilised a semi-autobiographical form of gothic fiction in order to defend his problematic status as a British male opera singer. By doing this, I will argue, he hoped to construct an identity for himself as a respectable artist. This paper will also consider the reception and impact of this unusual memoir, as well as exploring how other biographies of Reeves can inform our understanding of his own autobiographical efforts.

Using Sociology to Inform Musical Biographies: Benefits and Distractions

Rebecca Gribble (University of Southampton)

Biographies are a cornerstone of academia and thus have always been important objects to scholars. Musical biographies are many and varied and, as such, are invaluable to musicologists. Many biographies are written in a purely

chronological stance, following the subject throughout their life and discussing salient life events and, therefore, are rarely multidisciplinary. My current research has been based on a biography of Thomas Linley junior (an eighteenth-century violinist). I have not, however, approached the biography from a purely chronological viewpoint. Rather, I have split Thomas Linley junior's life into three main periods and I am investigating each of those periods as a single entity. I am using several sociological theories (such as Pierre Bourdieu's theories of capital, and Howard Becker's theory of 'art worlds') to help inform Thomas Linley junior's life and thereby, inform the life of other musicians in the eighteenth century. My paper will discuss the problems this has presented but also will discuss the benefits to this kind of biography.

The Ghost of the 'Alter Wiener Theatermann': Life-writing and the Men of the Theater an der Wien

Corrina Connor (Oxford Brookes University)

My study of the performance of masculinity in Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* involves the examination of the performers who created the male roles when this operetta opened at the Theater an der Wien in 1874. These men – Jani Szika, Ferdinand Lebrecht, Carl Adolf Friese, Carl Matthias Rott, Alfred Schreiber, and Hans Rüdiger – were significant figures in Viennese theatrical life: they performed in early Viennese productions of Offenbach's operettas, and contributed to the development of Viennese operetta, creating roles in a number of Johann Strauss's stage works. These artists participated fully in the diverse repertoire of the Theater an der Wien, performing in arrangements and pastiches of Rossini's *Otello* and Weber's *Die Freischütz*.

It is difficult to identify biographical and/or autobiographical material about the off-stage lives of Jani Szika et al. Austrian newspapers during the period 1865–1916 reveal that many of their names occur frequently in reviews of performances at the Theater an der Wien, as well as in general reports on daily theatrical life and in obituaries. The tributes, which appeared in the Austrian press after Szika's death in October 1916 discuss the career of this 'alter Wiener Theatermann' at great length, but many tantalising details about Szika and his colleagues remain obscure. My paper illustrates how the development of a clearer biographical picture of Szika and his colleagues involves analysing the hagiographical and ideological aspects of these newspaper contributions, The cultural differences between the operatic milieu in which the men of the nineteenth-century Theater an der Wien developed their careers, and that which

male singers occupied in Britain perhaps meant that the former group did not feel the need to create their own biographical mythologies: however, this apparent security in their own professional identities now means that they are almost more ghost-like than the supernatural entities created by Sims Reeves.

How Biography Informs Musical Analysis: A Reflective Process

Lucy Hollingworth (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)

New thinking in feminist musical analysis is bringing together biographical details of women composers and the technical understanding of their compositions to gain a better understanding of their work. In Ellie Hisama's 'Gendering Musical Modernism' she draws on Showalter's idea of a double-voiced discourse to show how an analysis of the third movement of Ruth Crawford's String Quartet of 1931 reflects her experiences as a women composer working in a modernist style which was male dominated at that time. Writers about Crawford's life disagree regarding the extent to which her experiences as a woman led to her abandoning modernist composition shortly after she wrote this piece. My own experiences as a woman composer share some similarities with Crawford's. By understanding Crawford through her biography and her music I aim to gain a better understanding of my own output, and as a result, to reflect back on what may have happened to Crawford. My paper will examine Hisama's thinking about the third movement of Crawford's String Quartet and consider how the biographers interpret the life events that surround this piece. It will also examine my String Quartet of 1985 and consider my own life events at that time. If Hisama's method throws new light on meanings in Crawford's music, can the same process shed new light on meanings in my own music? Do my reflections on my own life story and music generate new ideas about what may have happened to Crawford?

Tchaikovsky's Tatiana: A Crucible of Biography and Creativity

Marsha Siefert (Central European University, Budapest)

Writing to his brother Modest about his complete absorption in composing his opera *Eugene Onegin*, Piotr Tchaikovsky pens the paragraph from which so many portrayals of his life emanate: 'Even if my opera is not stage-worthy, even if it has little action to offer, the point is that I am in love with the image of Tatiana; I am enchanted by Pushkin's verses and am writing music to them because that's what I want to do. I am completely absorbed in the composition of my opera' (9/21 June 1877). Poznansky (1991, 211) further dissects this account, suggesting

that Tchaikovsky's 'infatuation with Pushkin's story was, at least in part, one of the effects of his growing preoccupation with Antonina Milyukova,' the conservatory student that he then married, rather than the other way around. Whatever the direction of causation, the correlation remains prime material for musicological interpretations and novelistic imaginings from the beginning of Tchaikovsky biography.

In this paper I use this biographical moment – and the composition of the opera *Eugene Onegin* – in the work of musicologists (e.g., Taruskin 1995, Nelson, Bullard in Mihailovic 1999; Gasparov 2005), biographers (Brown, Poznansky 1999), and literature from the 1930s (Berberova, Mann and Bowen & von Meck) to revisit 'the crucial question of biography's relevance to the analysis of works' (Wiley 2007, 217).

Crisis Averted? Arvo Pärt and Serialism

Christopher May (University of Oxford)

A common strategy in Pärt reception is to map mysticising descriptions of his music onto mysticised accounts of his life. 1976, in which Pärt wrote the first 'tintinnabuli' works, is a standard dividing line. Writers narrate the earlier oeuvre in terms of personal turmoil and an identity crisis leading ultimately to 'silence'; the tintinnabuli works are meanwhile cast as a creative rebirth – the free-flowing speech of a subjectivity stabilised by spiritual epiphany. This metaphorical discourse emphasises difference and rupture, neatly splitting Pärt's music into canonical tintinnabuli and some negatively valenced 'other'. In the Anglosphere, it has been abetted both by Pärt's commercial packaging (e.g. Hermann Conen's liner notes), and by the failure of high-visibility commentators (Paul Hillier, Wilfrid Mellers) to reflect much on critical method.

The problem of a circular hermeneutic, in which idealised conceptions of biographical and stylistic evolution each prop up the other, is familiar. In Pärt's case, Oliver Kautny and Maria Cizmiciu have started the task of critique. Yet the 2012 *Cambridge Companion* still assumes tintinnabuli as the primary site of value and interest, almost entirely omitting any serious discussion of Pärt's highly varied 1960s music. This paper uses structural techniques in Pärt's early serial works for orchestra – *Nekrolog* and the first two symphonies – to challenge the biographical assumptions underpinning the prevailing narrative of style-criticism, as well as that narrative's tendency to normalise repertoire. In particular, I argue

for important aesthetic continuities linking Pärt's idiosyncratic brand of 'Soviet serialism' with the later formalisation of tintinnabuli's 'grammar'.

Music as Autobiography

Mark Evan Bonds (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Any work of art necessarily bears some trace of its creator's personality. Yet not until the late eighteenth century did biographers, critics, and philosophers begin to wrestle with the question of how a composer's personal feelings and innermost self might manifest themselves in any given work of music. Enlightenment commentators had conceived of expression as the objective representation of an emotion or series of emotions, crafted to evoke a calculated response in listeners. The assumption that a composition might reflect its creator's personal experiences or innermost self did not take hold until the 1830s, driven by a convergence of philosophical, cultural, technological, and economic changes. New conceptions of the self, the rising prestige of the emotions, and the growth of a mass-market music culture all combined to foster the perception of music as a form of emotional autobiography. Beethoven provided a paradigm for this new mode of listening: the premise that his music projected not simply *an* emotion but *his* emotion took hold with remarkable speed in the years immediately after his death. By interpreting musical works as the outpourings of a unique individuality, the public could gain access to increasingly diverse and challenging idioms. Composer-critics like Berlioz, Schumann, and Liszt encouraged this approach by advocating an aesthetic of intense personal subjectivity in their own writings on music and in their strategies of self-promotion. Biographers, in turn, played a key role in this emerging concept of music not simply as an art of expression but as an art of self-expression.

Not the Music – but the Life: Biography as Defining Mark of Socialist Realism

Verena Mogl (Hamburg)

The question how to deal with music that has been composed in the Soviet Union and therefore under the realm of Socialist Realism has often been followed under the presumption that the doctrine must be understood as a explicitly defined term and furthermore instrument of repression, which from the governmental side was imposed on all art alike. Even if the application in music always proved to be especially difficult, the definition of Socialist Realism

has been accepted as fixed, and was used to draw general conclusions about music composed in the Soviet Union.

In the course of my research on the Polish–Jewish composer Mięczyński Weinberg, who fled from the Nazis in 1939 and until his death in 1996 lived and worked in Moscow, it became apparent, though, that the musicological perspective on Socialist Realism has to be reconsidered.

It showed, that more than the shape of the music itself, Weinberg's biographical background was crucial for the question, if a work was considered to satisfy the demands of Socialist Realism.

By the example of Weinberg's 3rd symphony op. 45 (1949/59) I can show how specific biographical factors – such as Weinberg's Polish origins and Jewish background – were pivotal for the destiny of the musical composition. And indeed they were more important than the music itself. It becomes obvious that Socialist Realism mustn't be understood as an established term, but rather as an umbrella term, consisting of various ideological postulates that were applied to the music according to the artist's biography.

The Bee Gees, Biography and Black Australian Jazz, Blues and Soul

Clinton Walker (Macquarie University)

I have long used biography in my work in popular music criticism and historiography. My PhD project is a cultural history of *Saturday Night Fever*, called 'Reverse Crossover', and while the biographies of the Bee Gees and their manager and the film's producer, Robert Stigwood, are integral to it, I thought this presentation would be of more value comparing the relative use of biography in my PhD with that in another project I am completing for publication in 2015, a graphic history of black women in Australian music called *Deadly Woman Blues*. I have written 'straight' biography and 'group biography', which overlaps with genre history, and all this experience informs my different approaches to the two projects at hand. In a way, they are both sort of group biographies, given that the idea of creative collaboration is at the heart of 'Reverse Crossover'. But there is a big difference that in turn necessitates a different approach to narrative: Where *Saturday Night Fever* groans under the weight of vast documentation, making data analysis the real key, *Deadly Woman Blues* is all but totally uncharted territory. Which is why it's had to become a *graphic* history, which I've illustrated myself after the model of Robert Crumb or

Rock Dreams: because so often all that survives of long-past black musicians in Australia is not a recording, or even a memory, but an image, sometimes just a single photo. And so while both projects explore ideas of national ideology, and while 'Reverse Crossover' aims to de-mythologise its subject, *Deadly Woman Blues*, quite literally a gallery of portraits, can only but try and recover and cohere the scattered, mythic fragments of its lost world.

'While the Daylight Lasts': Schumann and the Myth of Madness

David Ferris (Rice University)

Despite the recent flurry of revisionism in Schumann biography, the last months of his career are still misunderstood. Biographers usually portray the fall of 1853 as a period of gradual disintegration, but Schumann's diary reports contentment and good health. Schumann was earning more as a composer than ever before and had begun one of his most prolific and creative periods. And although it is generally assumed that he was forced out of his position in Düsseldorf, the evidence suggests that he decided to give it up himself, and to try his luck in Vienna. He was about to begin a new chapter in his life, one that promised even greater success. This is not the way things turned out, of course, and the narrative power of the actual ending — Schumann's descent into madness in February 1854 — has caused the story to be rewritten completely. This rewriting began shortly after Schumann's death, as his survivors re-remembered the events of these months and re-evaluated the compositions, in some cases suppressing or even destroying them. They were trying to save Schumann's reputation from the stigma of mental illness, but their efforts backfired. The shadow of madness gradually grew larger, until it covered the entire Düsseldorf period, and doomed the reception of his late music. Schumann's biography became the archetype of the myth of the mad artist. My paper will reconstruct the last months of Schumann's career, not in light of our knowledge of later events, but as they unfolded at the time.

On Deconstructing and Reconstituting a National Myth: Mordecai Seter's Israelism

Ronit Seter (Jewish Music Research Centre, Hebrew University, Jerusalem) and Uri Golomb (Tel Aviv University)

The stature of 'canonical' composers is frequently driven by 'myths' concerning their life and work – and by later attempts to deconstruct these myths. Myth-producers and 'myth-busters' are often united in their admiration for the music.

In Israel, a notable case in point is Mordecai Seter (1916–1994), one of the Five Founders of Israeli art-music.* Following the unprecedented success of his oratorio *Tikkun Hatzot* (*Midnight Vigil*, 1961), Seter acquired the status of a national treasure; later, he became known as a *different* composer. His music did not seem to adhere to the Mediterranean style practiced and preached by many of his contemporaries, but neither did it belong to the opposing ‘cosmopolitan’ style used by composers who opposed nationalism and folklorism. The mythical patina he acquired transported his music to an imaginary realm, where he became seemingly incomparable to his peers.

In preparing our biographical essay on Seter’s life and works, we seek to correct some of the inaccuracies and exaggerations at the heart of the Seter myth. However, the more polyvalent image we are constructing might well be regarded by outside observers as no less adulatory than the one we seek to deconstruct; indeed, one of our aims is to enhance his music’s presence in the active repertoire. This quest to move Seter, as it were, from one pedestal to another has parallels in the reception histories of many ‘canonical’ composers.

* See also Ronit Seter’s recent paper, “Israelism: Nationalism, Orientalism, and the Israeli Five”, *Musical Quarterly* (Summer 2014) 97 (2): 238–308.

On the Genesis of Gustav Mahler’s Seventh Symphony: Compositional Biography and Myth

Anna Stoll Knecht (Swiss National Science Foundation/University of Oxford)

Gustav Mahler’s account of the genesis of his Seventh Symphony tells of a composer searching for inspiration in the mountains. Rowing on a lake in the summer of 1905, the rhythm of the oars suddenly inspires an opening theme and, from this kernel, the entire symphony is completed in four weeks. This ‘Big Bang’ story suggests an archetypal organic work, while the reception history of the symphony tends to indicate the opposite. Indeed, the Seventh has progressively acquired the status of ‘problem child’ in the Mahlerian canon, and scholars have argued that its ‘lack of unity’ originates from a fragmented compositional process.

First, this paper examines how Mahler’s compositional narrative impacts our interpretation of the work, either by confirming or contradicting it. Second, I interpret the scholarly search for the ‘boat sketch’ as a quest for origins that can be related to Mahler’s focus, in his narrative, on the beginning of the Seventh.

Like Richard Wagner’s ‘vision’ in La Spezia, Mahler’s boat story seems to function as a myth of origins, meant to explain the work in its finished state. Seeing the beginning of the Seventh as a ‘key’ that unlocks both the composer’s creative process and our interpretative act (Mitchell 2007) reveals a linear and teleological conception that is challenged by the highly intertextual character of the symphony. In fact, I suggest that an intertextual hearing of the finished work can inspire a non-linear view of the Seventh’s genesis, which shows how genetic and analytic perspectives illuminate each other.

Richard Strauss’ Late Operas and the Myth of Self: Menelas, Morosus, Apollo and Jupiter

Nicola Montenz (Milan Catholic University)

The paper aims at analysing a peculiar form of fragmentary self representation Richard Strauss exploited in four of his late operas: *Die Ägyptische Helena*, *Die Schweigsame Frau*, *Daphne*, *Die Liebe der Danae*.

Composed after two stage works whose autobiographical content was heavy and consistent (*Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Intermezzo*), his last operas show on the contrary a poignant example of autobiographical narrative ‘in progress’, whose paths are branched and allusive rather than self-contained. Such a narrative technique seems to be a major outcome of Strauss’ maturity: exploited throughout his artistic career, shaded and alluring in *Die Ägyptische Helena*, self-ironic in *Die Schweigsame Frau*, Strauss’s autobiographical attempts reach in *Daphne* and *Die Liebe der Danae* a more faceted, shady, and pensive depth. Evil forces were in power when the jovial advocate of marriage and family, getting old as an irritable growler (Morosus), became suddenly aware of the deceitful duplicity of the political world around him – a world he had openly approved. *Daphne*’s vicissitudes and final metamorphosis then offered Strauss a wide range of possibilities both to consider his political and human weakness and to find a sure path to reach the inner pace he longed for. After so an effective artistic self-affirmation, the Jupiter of German music was ready to show himself for the last time on stage – precisely as Jupiter in *Die Liebe der Danae*. It is indeed in his last adventure that the old father of the gods eventually acknowledges with a typical mix of humour, grandeur and melancholy that it is now time to withdraw from the game: the twilight of German gods and culture is approaching, while Strauss’s operatic myth of self is achieved.

‘Unmistakably American’? Roy Harris’s *Symphony 1933* and the American West

Emily MacGregor (University of Oxford)

The initial reception of Roy Harris’s *Symphony 1933* consolidated Harris’s emergent reputation as authentic American composer from the West, a phenomenon Beth E. Levy has documented and termed the Harris ‘myth’. In the discourse surrounding *Symphony 1933*, composer biography, American identity, and landscape politics emerge as intimately entwined. The reviewers’ metaphors of masculinity and organicism embedded the symphony in an idealised Western landscape. The detailing of Harris’s birth in an Oklahoma log cabin, his family’s westward migration, and his farm-working, truck-driving youth spent in California only strengthened reviewers’ claims about the supposed authenticity of Harris’s voice and its ability to speak for the American people. Such narratives reinforced the hegemony of White subject positions, and were particularly urgent in depression-struck America, where economic collapse meant the mass dispossession and westward exodus of agricultural workers.

Yet the Harris-esque pioneer figure is arguably also the protagonist of a broader spatial narrative, that of American liberal ideology: an ‘abstract, infinitely expandable, and easily damaged “democratic social space”’ (Brückner and Hsu, following Philip Fisher). This paper argues that the mythologised West obfuscates the conflicts characterising this philosophy of space. It papers over tensions within the historical process of westward expansion under the banner of ‘manifest destiny’, where the impulse towards the West’s infinite and diffusive horizon, towards a boundless universal, is matched historically by a rationalist counter impulse to control, fragment, and bound. The ideology of landscape the Harris ‘myth’ advances, then, comes at the cost of the other subjectivities and narratives, both American and otherwise, that it silences.

Myth-making and the Politics of Nationality in Narratives of J.S. Bach’s 1717 Contest with Louis Marchand

Christopher Wiley (University of Surrey)

The early accounts of the keyboard contest that took place in Dresden in 1717 between J.S. Bach and Louis Marchand are widely divergent, despite Birnbaum (1739), C.P.E. Bach and Agricola (1750), Adlung (1758), Hawkins (1776), Marpurg (1786), and Forkel (1802) all claiming the authority of either Bach or his sons.

These discrepancies enabled later biographers to craft their narratives selectively according to their own allegiances. Throughout much of the nineteenth century Bach biography typically followed Bach-Agricola’s and Forkel’s retellings, in which Marchand fled Dresden on the day of the event before it could take place. However, in life-writing on Marchand the story instead appeared in Marpurg’s more sympathetic version, which held that one competition took place – with Marchand judged Bach’s equal – prior to his taking flight. This rendering was apparently favoured in France, where the episode’s potential for being appropriated to illustrate Austro–Germanic musical superiority against French philistinism would have generated significant unease. That may account for Fétis’s (1835–44) criticism of its treatment by German writers in his own retelling, or Schweitzer’s (1905) allusions to Italian musicians, which blurred the story’s national focus. Moreover, Spitta’s (1873) attempt to intervene in the mythologisation to which it had been subjected inadvertently introduced new embellishments that set the agenda for its subsequent development. Examination of variant narratives therefore reveals much about how national ideologies can steer a biographical episode in particular directions, as well as how an influential author’s endeavours to straighten the historical record can unwittingly send myth-making along fresh trajectories.

Imagining a Nationalist Future through Polish Music: Franz Liszt, *F. Chopin*, and the Parisian Musical Press

Virginia Whealton (Indiana University)

After the failed Polish uprisings of the mid-nineteenth century, Fryderyk Chopin and many other Polish musicians and intellectuals fled to Paris. These Polish émigrés were welcomed into the circles of prominent French citizens, such as Astolphe Custine. However, in French socio–political discourse, Poland continued to play a contested role, as it had since Voltaire and Rousseau. Was Poland a regressive, disorganised nation, justly deserving its foreign imperial rulers; or did Poland symbolise the struggle for nationalism facing all Europeans?

In this paper, I examine Franz Liszt’s generically hybrid *F. Chopin* (Paris, 1851/52) — part biography, part memoir, part travelogue — within the broader scope of biographic and autobiographic essays and travelogues about Poland published by contemporaneous Parisian musicians. I investigate how and why critics like Liszt used Polish music and musicians as evidence to claim that Poland offered a model for Europe’s aesthetic and political future. And I ask how these Parisian

musicians, in so doing, deployed and challenged the ideological conventions of travelogue, biography, and memoir.

For example, in *Chopin*, Liszt argued that Polish music reflected and verified the Poles' admirable national character by discussing his own Polish travels, Chopin's biography, and Polish compositions and music history. With such musical analyses, Liszt rebuffed specific arguments non-musical writers commonly used to denigrate Poland, such as that the nation was weak because of its overly powerful women. Through examining Polish music and Polish musicians, Liszt and other Parisian musicians championed Poland as a model for an aesthetic and political future based on nationalism.

Joaquim de Vasconcelos, a Man of his Times Faced with a Peripheral Musicology

Maria José Artiaga (Universidade Nova de Lisboa)

In 1870, the historian Joaquim de Vasconcelos published a work in two volumes titled *Portuguese Musicians (Os Músicos Portugueses)*. This led to him to be recognised by contemporary musicologists as the Founding Father of Portuguese musicology.

Extracts from Vasconcelos' work appeared in several publications like Arthur Pougin's 'Supplément et Complément' to the *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens et Bibliographie Générale de la Musique* by Fétis. In addition to its huge corpus, *Portuguese Musicians* was a unique and significant work due to: the interdisciplinary vision through which the author related music with other cultural and artistic modes of expression; its interaction between the Portuguese musical reality and that of other European nations; its analysis of historical facts drawing on the interdependence of social and human events. Through *Portuguese Musicians* and subsequent works the author aimed to introduce his compatriots and the rest of the world to a valuable heritage before it was lost, to stimulate the democratisation and knowledge of art, to liberate his nation from the isolation it had confined itself to and to revive tradition as a foundation for future creativity. These objectives reflected some of the nationalist ideals prevalent in his age.

Although Vasconcelos considered himself a critical thinker and objective historian, his work was also markedly ideological. This paper sets out to evidence how Vasconcelos' narrative of the work and life of Portuguese musicians, is de

facto a criticism of a whole social and aesthetic establishment and moreover, one from which we can infer the values which he advocated instead.

Marie Hall (1884–1956): A Life Worth Recognition and Celebration

Christine Mercer (Monash University)

The lives of many artists are shrouded in romantic mythology with events lost forever. Such is the case of virtuoso violinist Marie Hall (1884–1956), champion of British music, who lived an extraordinary life, but does not have a biography. This paper, divided into three sections, is a brief overview of her life.

Initially, Hall is presented on the internet as a 'Cinderella' rescued from her poverty by good fairies [benefactors], who educated and prepared her for the Prince's Ball [concert stage]. Generally, comments suggest this was the end of her story, but there is much more to Hall's lifetime achievements.

The second episode (1907–1914) covers Hall's extensive international tours including repertoire, which brought her fortune, fame and stardom status. The final section is complex when Hall balanced her endeavours as a humanitarian/philanthropist, educator, recording pioneer, anti-racist and worker in wartime auxiliaries bringing comfort to the wounded and their families. The latter years of Hall's life have not been previously documented. My aim is to bring Marie Hall's story to a wider audience as her work deserves national recognition and celebration.

Difficulties of Japanese Musical Biography: A Case Study of Ôki Masao

Frances Watson (Oxford Brookes University)

When Ôki Masao was studying composition with Ishikawa Yoshikazu in the 1930s, the self-taught composer walked for three hours every day to reach his teacher's house. During the War, he shut himself away in despair at the path Japan had taken, coming out of retreat only to compose triumphant symphonies for the wartime government. And afterwards, during a period of intense self-criticism, he finally began to compose for the socialist movement to which he had dedicated his entire life.

What, exactly, is wrong with this picture?

Ôki Masao exists at a particularly interesting intersection of Japanese biographical mythologies. He is the Artist, whose authenticity must be established beyond doubt; he is the Socialist, whose political rectitude must reveal no flaws; and, as a composer active both before and after the War, he provides an example of artistic rehabilitation through a process of re-inscription and forgetting. These myths combine into a paradoxical veil that shields both its own artifice and any semblance of truth from sight. This paper shall outline the various ways in which Ôki's life has been told, before demonstrating how approaching the composer through his compositions might provide some key to reading between the lines. I shall then demonstrate how lessons learned from the somewhat extreme example of Ôki might be useful when considering other Japanese composers, including Takemitsu, Ifukube or Akutagawa.

Involuntary Hero: Otakar Ostrčil and his Biographer

Markéta Kratochvílová (Czech Academy of Sciences)

The subject of my paper is Otakar Ostrčil (1879–1935), Czech composer, conductor and organiser of musical life. I will focus on how the reception of Ostrčil's work was influenced by his biographer Zdeněk Nejedlý and how through his biography an ideologically distorted myth was created.

Zdeněk Nejedlý – musicologist and politician – was the main promoter of Ostrčil from the beginning of his career, but his biography and numerous other texts about Ostrčil present considerably biased portrait of the composer. Ostrčil earned an important place in Nejedlý's interpretation of the development of Czech music based on the division of music into a progressive and a conservative stream, represented by Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák, respectively, and by their followers. Nejedlý regarded Ostrčil as Smetana's heir. Due to his position of a cultural authority as a professor of musicology at Charles University, Nejedlý's opinions were influential, especially after the year 1948, when he became the first communist Minister of Culture and Education.

Ostrčil was fairly moderate in the expression of his political or other opinions, which contrasts with the vocabulary of Nejedlý, who tended to present each piece of his music as a manifesto and a political proclamation. For example in Ostrčil's last opera, *Johnny's Kingdom* (1934), Nejedlý saw a model for the future structure of society. The death of Otakar Ostrčil shortly after its premiere prevented him from entering the discussion so that various interpretations and

speculations arose. Unwillingly, Ostrčil became a hero for the Communists, which influenced the reception of his work for years.

'The Soldier's Song' by Seamus de Burca: Celebrating Peadar Kearney

Richard Parfitt (University of Oxford)

In 1957, Seamus de Burca published a biography of his Uncle, Peadar Kearney, who wrote 'The Soldier's Song', which would go on to become the Irish national anthem. 'The Soldier's Song' was popularised among IRA volunteers, of which Kearney was one, before and during the Anglo-Irish War that would see an autonomous Irish dominion established in 1921. De Burca drew on his personal relationship and interviews with Kearney to produce a biography, titled after his Uncle's anthem, celebrating his role as songwriter, soldier and revolutionary. The idealised view of Kearney in the work, as in many of the initial responses, articulated the view that Kearney was a figure worthy of national reverence.

To date, however, Kearney has been largely ignored by historians and musicologists, and his commemoration remains relatively understated. Furthermore, when de Burca attempted to produce a new edition of the biography in 1973, it took several years of self-driven fundraising that substantially delayed publication.

This paper proposes an analysis of the writing of and reception to de Burca's biography, utilising the documents of Kearney and de Burca, various reviews of the book, and accounts of Kearney's contemporaries, to consider in what ways and to what extent it may be considered an act of national celebration. It will also draw on the numerous attempts made by de Burca to secure public commemoration of Kearney, so as to quantify and explain the impact of de Burca's work, if any, on the recognition of Kearney as a figure of national celebration.

Twilight of Novelists: The Search for a Multidimensional Model of Contemporary Music Biography

Martin Flašar (Masaryk University)

During the preparation of the biography of the exile Czech composer Jan Novák (1921–1984), the student of Aaron Copland and Bohuslav Martinů, a certain need appeared to revoke basic questions of the structure and function of musical biography in the early 21st century. For description of structures of recently

published biographies on classical music, models derived from space dimensions could be used. As it turns out, much of the present biographies is structured according to a zero- (closed chapters) or one-dimensional (linear narrative) structural model. At the time of standardised hypertext (rhizomatic) structure, however, such methods of content organisation cannot be considered of sufficient intellectual challenge. The contemporary reader cannot be satisfied with merely one-dimensional linear narrative, which hardly absorbs e.g. contextual ranges, axes of problems intersecting the production of a particular composer or detailed analyses. The architecture of contemporary biographies should respect not only competences of the author, but also the intellectual requirements of actual readers.

The Biographical Construction Process as Informational Feedback: The Case of Enrique Iniesta (1906–1969)

Salvador Campos Zaldienas (University of Granada)

The biographic genre is currently witnessing a new resurgence and it is postulated as valid way of approaching the musicological study. On many occasions it is discussed why a particular artist is worthy of a complete research, and the most accepted conclusion is due to his relationship with his context; one context or contexts influenced by the individual and an individual determined by the context. But, what happens when we don't know enough about the context? In this sense, if we put the focus on the construction process of a biography, we would see a feedback of information between these two realities, so it could be possible to rebuild that context from the individual.

This proposal aims to explain the biographical construction of the Spanish violinist Enrique Iniesta (1906–1969), who took part in the musical development of Spain and Chile, and how the knowledge of his figure could be useful in approaching these historiographical contexts. Iniesta was very present in Spanish musical life in an historical period, during a part of Francoism in which the institutionalisation of art was politically very important. Similarly, he occupied, for more than twenty years, the most relevant position in the musical Chilean dimension, becoming the main character of the musical reception in the Andean country.

Living Composers: Biographies on the Edge

Juan Francisco de Dios (I.E.S. Cardenal Cisneros, Alcalá de Henares-Madrid)

One of the most complicated tasks for a musicologist is being able to evaluate the paradigms of today's musical creations. When the project is not only to analyse but also to bring order to the memories, to appreciate the most significant contributions or even to contextualise the success of the aesthetic principles of a living composer, we are working on a slippery slope at the razor's edge.

Subsequent to two biographies published about living composers, Ramón Barce in 2008 and Leonardo Balada in 2012, this paper will analyse and solve some of the major problems related to this type of work. The methodology is really essential, but essential at the same time is the ability to deduce, from a first-person recollection, the basic elements of musical thoughts and creations. A biography is not an authorised autobiography; the musicologist is an exceptional witness not just to the external appearance but to the inner thoughts of the composer. A good biography must capture the personality of the composer but also has an obligation to step back to assess the timing and significance of those acts that are narrated.

The main objective of this paper is to expose my own experience as an author and explain in depth the difficulties and solutions that I have applied to the problem of biographies of living composers.

José Subirá's Autobiography

María Cáceres (Bern Universität)

José Subirá (1882–1980) was one of the most influential Spanish musicologists of the first half of the twentieth century. Although he was an engaged socialist during the Second Republic (1931–39), he collaborated with the main musicological institution of the Fascist government, the Instituto Español de Musicología, after having been purged by Franco regime. The personal library and archive of Subirá were dispersed, and partly were lost, after his death. The Spanish National Library has recently bought part of these materials in which there is an unknown and unpublished autobiography of the author. The changes of the manuscript, written in 1958 and revised in 1960, 1963 and 1970, highlight the auto-censorship processes and the evolution of the political system. In order to avoid censorship, Subirá carefully preserved this document and his 'genetic

dossier' for years at home, expecting to publish a definitive version under a democratic system. Although he never had high institutional positions either during the Second Republic or during Franco Regime, he had a powerful academic, political and social network during all his life. Hence, his autobiography is a testimony of a privileged witness of the turbulent twentieth century. This paper will discuss the challenges of making a genetic edition of José Subirá's Autobiography within the context of contemporary debates on historical memory. The genetic approach for this project allows the recovery of information on the creative process of the author, who himself wrote several musical biographies, and a better interpretation of the musical life of that time.