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Playing Before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn (Book Review)

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the deck without sinking the entire ship. The reason that Osborn's ideas should be considered is that the theodicy problem is all too real. Osborn adds a worthy challenge to a progressive research problem that could allow our understanding of this Christian doctrine to be refined or even reformed.

The last chapter is a powerful and convicting application of the meaning of the Sabbath in the Old Testament toward the health and well-being of animals. Here Osborn calls upon his own experiences growing up as a Seventh Day Adventist with the doctrine of the Sabbath. Osborn brings the non-Adventist reader into that unfamiliar world and relates his theological convictions about how Sunday Sabbath-keeping has resulted in the loss of elements of "rest," not only for humans but for the rest of creation, including animals. Osborn argues, and I very much agree, that modern evangelicals have an indifference to animal suffering, likely due to our emphasis on all suffering and death as solely the result of the fall. When we sin, we use Adam's sin as an excuse to overlook present needless suffering and thus some-

times ignore the present suffering of creatures other than ourselves. The result has been an abysmal track record of care for God's creation, since in a sense we don't feel that caring for a broken, temporary world is worth it. Osborn's perspective, if accurate, would also affect a Christian's views on biological conservation, global warming, and a host of other important ecological issues of our day.

Osborn packs a lot into the last third of the book and the insights there are well worth waiting for, if you choose to read the entire book. However, you could skip right to Chapter 10 without missing out on the substance of his main topic. You might still feel as I did when you finish: that you still don't know how to answer theological questions about suffering, pain, and death in the natural world. However, you will find enough material here to reflect upon and, agree or not with his central thesis, you will likely feel that you have come one step closer to understanding how the creation reflects the nature and glory of God.

Stapert, Calvin. *Playing Before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. 304 pages. ISBN 978-0802868527. Reviewed by John MacInnis, Assistant Professor of Music, Dordt College.

Calvin Stapert's *Playing Before the Lord* serves as both a substantive biography of Franz Joseph Haydn and a listening guide for much of his music. One of this book's strengths is Stapert's narration and explanations, both of which are articulate and forceful; indeed, he excels at communicating ways in which one may listen intelligently and emotively to Haydn's music. In the book's preface, Stapert acknowledges, rightly, that knowledge of Haydn's biography is not necessary to enjoy Haydn's music, but that it helps. This dyad is also invertible: enjoying an artistic creation quite naturally prompts us to consider its creator.

The book is organized chronologically, beginning with some comments about Haydn's ancestry and birth, in 1732, and concluding with his death, in 1809. Several black and white images are included, of Haydn himself, family members, and other people important to Haydn's life. Appended material includes an outline of Haydn's magisterial oratorio, *Creation*, and a glossary of terms. Stapert intends

that the glossary not be comprehensive, but serve as a help when questions of musical terminology arise in the course of his descriptions. In fact, he urges that readers not fear his technical vocabulary, for precise language adds specificity and concreteness to our thinking. Stapert says that "technical matters of form, texture, harmony, rhythm, phrasing, and the like are not merely technical. They usually, if not always, have an effect on the expressive, rhetorical, or dramatic character of the music. The language might seem cold and abstract, but the music it is describing is not. The purpose of the language is to guide the hearing, not to be a substitute for it. And sometimes the best language to guide our hearing is technical" (xii).

At times, *Playing Before the Lord* reads like a manifesto in which Stapert affirms the viability of discussing music in meaningful ways, beyond the merely subjective responses of individual listeners, and he explores various means by which the living, breathing sounds of music may be presented clearly

with words. In his discussion of Haydn's Symphony in D, No. 31 (Hob.I:31, "*Horn Signal*"), Stapert describes the major thematic elements and plots how and when they occur structurally, within each movement (61-64). And, while describing Haydn's *Salve regina* in E (Hob.XXIIIb:1), Stapert explains how each line of text is set musically (29-30). In short, readers of various backgrounds and learning styles are able to engage Stapert's descriptions, and the ability to read music notation, though helpful, is not necessary. Stapert aims at perceptive hearing, not score analysis; he intends that you, his reader, put down the book and listen to Haydn's music—a task easily accomplished with any quality recording found on the internet.

In his last chapter, "Music for Troubled Times," Stapert posits that nineteenth-century notions of progress are partly to blame for general preferences for later composers, who, it is thought, took the insights and techniques of Haydn and perfected them. Additionally, Stapert suggests that Haydn's commitment to creating music that is joyful, animated, and immediately appealing may have been misread as an inability to move beyond the simplistic and commonplace. Rather than viewing Haydn as a precursor to more advanced composers such as Beethoven and Schumann, one may assert that Haydn was realizing a creational norm for music (i.e., its potential to refresh and delight), by virtue of common grace and in his own time and way. To this point, in his *Lectures on Calvinism*, Abraham Kuyper acknowledges that "[t]he world of sounds, the world of forms, the world of tints, and the world of poetic ideas, can have no other source than God; and it is our privilege as bearers of his image, to have a perception of this beautiful world, artistically to

reproduce, and humanly to enjoy it."

In the context of this statement, Kuyper explains how music and all the arts point us to the beauties of God's creation, prompt us to rejoice in the redemption accomplished by Christ, and comfort and refresh us when faced with sin and brokenness. Kuyper goes on to emphasize the joy that the arts bring us and the way they constitute an essential aspect of our human existence because, by them, we are able to express and explore beauty, in fulfillment of our cultural mandate.

Generally speaking, Stapert conveys his love for Haydn and Haydn's music, without tending toward hagiography. Haydn's unhappy marriage, infidelities, and other indiscretions are all present, allowing us to truly understand the man, but are not dwelt on or described in a condescending tone. In fact, knowing Haydn, warts and all, tempers Stapert's broader claim, which is that Haydn's Christian faith was a motivating, creative influence and source of inspiration throughout his life. We are wise to remember that the brilliance of Haydn's music was not directly correlative to his faith, for beauty is found, all the time, in the context of fallenness.

Stapert does emphasize one of the central myths of Haydn's life: hard work and perseverance pay off—so stay in school, kids. (In reality, hard work paid off for Haydn and a host of other musicians, but it didn't for many others.) This myth is justified, not only because myths generally tell us something real but also because, by emphasizing the craft by which Haydn's music was made, Stapert directs our attention away from Haydn's success and toward his art. We are reminded that art is *poiesis*, a made thing, which is structured with purpose and requires appropriate reception.

Miller, John E. *Small-Town Dreams: Stories of Midwestern Boys Who Shaped America*. University of Kansas Press, 2014. ISBN 9780700619498. Reviewed by James Schaap, Professor of English, Emeritus, Dordt College.

In a wonderfully readable compilation of distinguished biographies, *Small Town Dreams: Stories of Midwestern Boys who Shaped America*, John E. Miller documents the shifts that emptied Main Streets throughout the Midwest, closed down schools and businesses, and left an abundance of ghost-town detritus on what has become, once again, a greatly

empty landscape.

That's not the story of Miller's book, however. The story is the stories of men whose childhoods were spent in the small towns all of them left behind but some of them never left spiritually. Miller's *Small Town Boys* is a museum of big men from small towns.

Today America's heartland, in actuality, is not the