

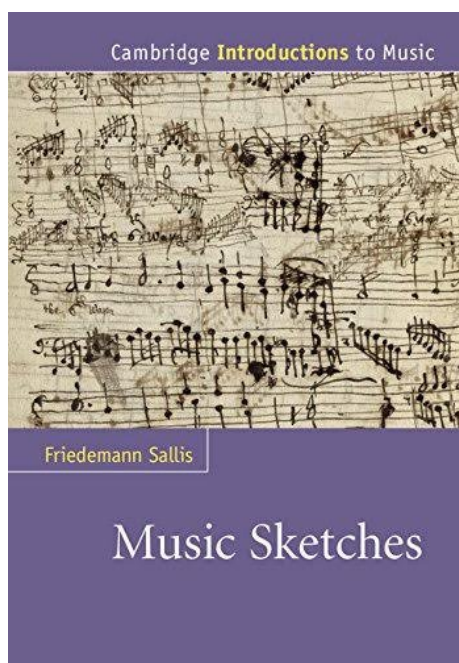
BOOK REVIEW

MUSIC SKETCHES BY FRIEDEMANN SALLIS: AN OUTSTANDING EDITORIAL RELEASE FROM CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Amongst the most consistently interesting publications appearing in print from Cambridge University Press in 2015 is Friedemann Sallis' volume, *Music Sketches*¹.

The author, who earned his doctoral degree under the guidance of Carl Dahlhaus in Berlin, is now Associate Professor at the Music Department of the University of Calgary, Canada. Sallis himself admits to having needed eight years to complete his latest work², despite its focus on one of his strongest areas of expertise: referencing source material.

His significant work with manuscripts resulted in a series of publications which are acknowledged nowadays as references in the musicological field³. His research grants



¹ Sallis, Friedemann, *Music Sketches*, (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

² Sallis, *Op. cit.*, p. xv. The author declares having worked on his book from 2006 to 2014.

³ Sallis, Friedemann, "Segmenting the Labyrinth: Sketch studies and the scala enigmatica in the Finale of Luigi Nono's *Quando stanno morendo Diario Polacco No. 2* (1982)", in *Ex tempore. A Journal of Compositional and Theoretical Research in Music*, 13/1 (Spring/Summer 2006) pp. 1-23;

Hall, Patricia and Sallis, Friedemann eds., *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004);

Sallis, Friedemann and Ouellet, Nelson, *The Sketchbooks of György Kurtág. A database of information extracted from 106 sketchbooks conserved in the György Kurtág Collection of the Paul Sacher Foundation*, (©Friedemann Sallis and the Université de Moncton, 2004);

Sallis, Friedemann, "György Ligeti (1923-)", in *The Twentieth-Century Music Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook*, Larry Sitsky ed. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2002), pp. 254-263;

from the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, as well as the grants awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada allowed him to access a multitude of primary sources such as valuable manuscripts, drafts, and sketches preserved in some of the most important archives in the world. His latest book is therefore to be viewed not only as the fruit of a convergent activity, but also as a justifiable initiative, considering the immense personal experience of the author in working with primary sources.

In his previous book⁴, Sallis had already shown how terminological confusion can limit the value of sketch studies. He remarks that “the terminology of sketch studies is complex. With regard to music, the vocabulary, which gradually came into place during the nineteenth century, consists of a hodgepodge of terms borrowed from art history and literary criticism that seems to defy clear definition. And yet, a good understanding of both the terms and the concepts we use to classify and qualify the composer’s working documents is indispensable if we are to make sense of the enormous quantities of manuscript material now being made available for research.”⁵ After more that a decade, this latest publication highlights the same aspect, as musical sketches are “a catch-all [term] for the vast variety of documents that have been used by composers to work out their ideas.”⁶

A significant assertion of the book is that in our digital era, the study of music sketches remains relevant in tracking the creative process. Yet in contemporary composition, handwritten musical drafts have given way to ephemeral earlier file versions on digital screens in the case of computer-assisted composition. This creative evolution requires an updated research methodology.

In a historical overview, Sallis traces the beginning of sketch studies back to the end of the eighteenth century -- precisely in 1799, the year when Mozart’s collection of autograph scores was sold by his wife, Constanze, to Johann Anton André (unfortunately, Constanze and Nissen destroyed approximately 90% of Mozart’s sketches). Then Breitkopf&Härtel published a multi-volume *Oeuvres completes* (sic) in the early years of the

Sallis, Friedemann, "Luigi Nono (1924-1990)", in *The Twentieth-Century Music Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook*, Larry Sitsky ed. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2002), pp. 329-338;

Sallis, Friedemann, "The Genealogy of György Kurtág's *Hommage à R. Sch.* op. 15d", in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 43/3-4 (2002), pp. 311-322.

⁴ Hall, Patricia and Sallis, Friedemann eds., *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁵ Sallis, Friedemann, "Coming to terms with the composer's working manuscripts", in Hall, Patricia and Sallis, Friedemann eds., *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 43.

⁶ Sallis, Friedemann (2015), p. 6.

19th century.⁷ This happened at a time when sketch study was neither analytical, nor critical; its purpose was simply to establish chronologies and to make order out of surviving drafts.

From that historically significant year onward, Sallis observes the development and evolution in the field of sketch studies up to present days. He emphasizes that “the impact of electronic technology on the composition, performance, dissemination and conservation of music, the crumbling of the Classical Canon, the weakening of the strong work concept and the concomitant rise of ‘performance studies’ are only a few of the factors that are having a strong impact on music cultures today, as well as on how we study them.”⁸

A survey of the field shows that this is a rather new branch, which has been critically approached for only a few decades; at a meeting of the American Musicological Society in 1981, sketch studies were acknowledged by Joseph Kerman as “a sub-discipline within musicology.”⁹ More recent titles have consolidated this area, such as those signed by Jessie Ann Owens¹⁰, William Kinderman¹¹, and more recently Lewis Lockwood and Alan Gosman¹², who brilliantly proved the important place of such a sub-discipline in serious research.

Viewed in retrospect, *Music Sketches* complements Friedemann Sallis’ list of publications, but also advertises itself as a piece in a complex net of thematic writings: “It picks up where Owen’s book leaves off and is intended to be complementary to the *Handbook to Twentieth Century*”¹³, Sallis declares in the Introduction.

This remarkable book helps us understand sketches as “avant-text”, or, as the author considers, as “a vast web of hermeneutic and theoretical information that provides the background against which texts are ultimately produced.”¹⁴

⁷ Sallis, Friedemann (2015), pp. 15-19.

⁸ Sallis, Friedemann (2015), p. xv.

⁹ Joseph Kerman: “Sketch Studies”, in *Musicology in the 1980s: Methods, Goals, Opportunities*, D. Kern Holoman and Claude V. Palisca eds. (New York, Da Capo Press, 1982), pp. 53-65.

¹⁰ Owens, Jessie Ann, *Composers at work: the Craft of Musical Composition 1450-1600*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹¹ Kinderman, William, *The Creative Process in Music from Mozart to Kurtág*, (University of Illinois Press, 2012).

¹² Lockwood, Lewis; Gosman, Alan eds.: *Beethoven's "Eroica" Sketchbook: A Critical Edition*, University of Illinois Press, 2013.

¹³ Sallis, Friedemann (2015), p. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

While in the volume *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches* the editors refer to a “methodological black hole”¹⁵, the new book offers instructions about how sketches should be scrutinised and hints about the readings that should be adopted.

In fact, manuscripts, sketches and drafts represent the “unseen” layer of a final musical product. As Kinderman states, “works of art have been compared to icebergs: what is visible is but a small part of the whole. An art work might seem to exist in splendid isolation, but that impression is misleading. Cultural products inevitably arise from a context, a submerged landscape that is often not easily accessible. It is an undertaking of research to bring such things to light, and studies of the creative process find their cutting edge by probing beyond the surface, opening new perspectives on the apparently familiar.”¹⁶

Sallis’ recent book teaches us to chart the “underwater” material with lucidity and precaution, bringing it to the fore and then to connect its information to what we see beneath the surface. In an engaging approach, he moves between what we call today “genetic criticism” (*critique génétique*), “musical archaeology”, and “forensic analysis”, in an attempt to explore the most intimate aspects of a creative laboratory and to prove how the work came into existence.

The goal-oriented strategy is reflected by the structure of the text. The book organises its content by the following framework, offering a multi-faceted insight on the topic:

1. Introduction
(Objects of study, scope and the ‘poietic fallacy’;
What are musical sketches and how are they produced?;
Philology and genetic criticism; Overview)
2. Sketch studies past and present
3. Tracking down evidence of the creative process
4. The physical objects of the compositional process
5. Studying loose leaves
6. Sketchbooks
7. Transcription and facsimile reproduction
8. Sketches and the critical edition of music
9. Dangerous liaisons: the evolving relationship between sketch studies and analysis
10. Musical palimpsest and authorship

¹⁵ Beard, David: “Patricia Hall and Friedemann Sallis, eds., *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)”, in *Twentieth-century music*, Vol. 5/2, 2008, p. 244.

¹⁶ Kinderman, William, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

A rich Appendix of Beethoven's sketchbooks list published between 1913 and 2013 complements the information, as do the Notes, a useful Glossary, and additional case studies of original manuscripts reproduced from various archives such as the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Chicago's Newberry Library, the Houghton Library at Harvard University, the Archivio Luigi Nono in Venice, etc.

The sensitive reader may detect the author's warnings for those who rely on primary source material in their research; even though sketches might look like transparent windows into the music pieces, "studying composers' working documents will not provide answers to all questions, or solve all problems /.../."¹⁷ Although, as Jessie Ann Owens mentions, sketches "try to pin down the imagination"¹⁸, they remain nothing more than fragmentary evidence – relics revealing only part of the truth. Sketches and drafts are not autobiographical reports and should not be considered by the researcher an invitation to speculation. What the musicologist finds in these documents are traces that were left, not the composer or the performer speaking to us.

Even if Sallis modestly defines his scholarly work as "neither an exhaustive history, nor a comprehensive theory of sketch studies"¹⁹, the book scrutinises and systematises the field. Therefore, it cannot be absent from the shelves of those who embark on complex research.

Music Sketches could be classified as an invaluable syllabus with immense pedagogical value and an outstanding critical consideration of the field. Therefore we warmly recommend this remarkable undertaking as compulsory reading for all enlightened musicologists (especially young ones), which will provide them with the necessary tools to deal with sketch material.

Indulging ourselves in an extra-musical comparison in order to ignite the interest of the reader, we could equate Sallis' newly-released book with an invaluable GPS device which helps the researcher navigate its way through this privileged, yet fascinating maze-like universe.

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¹⁷ Sallis, Friedemann (2015), p. 4.

¹⁸ Owens, Jessie Ann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Sallis, Friedemann (2015), p. 11.

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