

a significant contribution to the field, deepening our understanding of the theological issues at stake in modern Irish and Northern Irish poetry. One facet of which might be that the idea of a Protestant atheist or a Catholic atheist becomes more than an unfortunate joke or a lingering mark of difference but an intriguing religious position deserving of further study.

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Axel Klein, *O'Kelly: An Irish Musical Family in Nineteenth-Century France*. Norderstedt: BoD, 2014. 493 pages. €49.90 EUR.

Axel Klein is an independent scholar based in Germany who has made a significant contribution to the study of Irish art music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, notably in his capacities over the last decade or so as co-editor of *Irish Music in the Twentieth Century* (2003) and advisory editor to the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (2013). His most recent publication, *O'Kelly: An Irish Musical Family in Nineteenth-Century France*, therefore marks a departure from the domain of music in Ireland, strictly speaking. Yet, in tracing a story that begins with Dublin-born pianist Joseph Kelly (his sons officially changed their name to 'O'Kelly' in the 1850s), who left Ireland for France in the 1820s, Klein's monograph touches on issues of fundamental importance to anyone concerned with the status of music in Irish culture and society, especially around the time of the Celtic Revival.

From what Klein has discovered it is apparent that O'Kellys, across three generations of the French clan descended from Joseph Kelly, assimilated their Irish lineage into their musical identities. Hence, this book brings a vital new perspective to the discourse about Irish art music during the Revival period, insofar as it draws attention to a handful of O'Kelly compositions spanning c.1875–1920 which function as music *about* Ireland and, in one instance, music *for* Ireland. With Harry White defining the 'crucial [musical] paradigm' of that era as one of 'cultural polarization' between the art-music and native repertoires, it is also striking how at least one of these O'Kelly scores is sourced in the native folk tradition – it suggests, I think, that composers located at a remove from Ireland could comfortably oscillate between these spheres. The main Franco-Irish item in the O'Kelly family catalogue, however, is a cantata and is thus firmly

situated in the European art-music tradition. Joseph O’Kelly, eldest son of the Irish emigrant, composed *Cantate des irlandais de France au centenaire d’O’Connell* in 1875 to celebrate the centenary of Daniel O’Connell’s birth. It was performed that August in Dublin, with O’Kelly in attendance. O’Kelly was evidently highly regarded in the capital at this time, with journalists excited about ‘the prospect of some good music’ and his name appearing on a roll-call of foreign dignitaries who were present. Unfortunately, as Klein reports, the score is now lost, a disappointing outcome for what was by all accounts a work of ambitious patriotic scope. That politically meaningful concert music suffered an ignominious fate is not altogether surprising, considering what White has lamented as the ‘fragmented state of art music in Ireland during the nineteenth century’. It seems to me that the O’Kelly situation – needing to outsource appropriate art music for nationalist occasions – was not an isolated occurrence. Over twenty years later another landmark event in Dublin similarly relied on a French composer with Irish roots to supply music: at the inaugural *Feis Ceoil* concert in 1897, Augusta Holmès’s symphonic poem *Irlande* was the main attraction.

Another O’Kelly composition with explicit Irish links is the short instrumental score *Polyorgane* No. 64 by Henri O’Kelly *fils* (1920). Described as an Irish air, the timing of it implicates the growing momentum of nationalist politics as a plausible influence. The other major O’Kelly work inspired by the ancestral homeland is George O’Kelly’s opera *Le Lutin de Galway* (‘The Galway Goblin’, 1878). As the name suggests, this comic opera is set in the West, but with the score lost one cannot judge whether the music was imbued with local folk colour. Here, as elsewhere, Klein nonetheless wonderfully resurrects the spirit of the work through meticulous research, giving a sense of the opera’s comedy and popular acclaim. As he further shows, news of this obscure Hibernian opera staged in France reached Irish critics who treated it as a matter of minor national interest.

Certainly, the main strength of this book lies in the sheer amount of archival treasures it uncovers. Chiefly these comprise a vast amount of scores by the O’Kelly family, which Klein has comprehensively identified and catalogued in extensive appendices. Joseph O’Kelly was the dominant figure, having authored a number of operas that were staged provincially and one which made it to the Paris *Opéra-Comique*. His output spanned a range of other genres too but the collection of Victor Hugo song settings, judged to be amongst his best music, is perhaps the most likely to appeal to performers and researchers. O’Kelly was evidently keen to explore the dramatic, expressive potential of the voice, and to this end he dedicated his *Élegie dramatique* to the actress Sarah Bernhardt. Her performance of this

work in 1876 is a fascinating example of how the O’Kelly men were in the process of migrating from the peripheries to the centre of French artistic life. The other sons, and later grandsons and great-grandson, also integrated seamlessly into the Parisian music scene, whether in the publishing industry (Auguste O’Kelly), as a minor composer, pianist and teacher (George O’Kelly), as a church organist (Henri O’Kelly *père*), as a piano manufacturer (Gustave O’Kelly), or as a double-bassist and composer (Henri O’Kelly *fils*). Their progress up the ranks was undoubtedly tied in part to their proximity to the Paris Conservatoire, the training ground of the country’s brightest musical talent. A number of O’Kellys undertook instrumental studies here, but beyond that Auguste’s publishing company profited from business connections with the institution: he sold pedagogical manuals plus other scores by Conservatoire teachers such as Albert Lavignac and Georges Mathias. Both of the aforementioned taught Henri *père* alongside classmates such as Claude Debussy. Here, then, is another example of the O’Kelly family moving in the most rarefied musical circles. Auguste had input into the Conservatoire behind the scenes too, serving in a number of committee roles during the 1880s.

The material in this book is the result of Klein’s extensive research, which exhaustively mines digitised repositories of scores and newspapers, and supplements these with findings from archives in Boulogne-sur-Mer (where the émigré Joseph Kelly first settled) and the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, Paris. As the history of these musicians has been almost totally neglected up until now, a key function of this text must be to establish the details of their lives and careers, which Klein does superbly. Amid the wealth of factual information, however, I would have liked greater consideration of certain themes such as questions of national identity(ies) and the broad impact of Third Republic French society and politics on both the production and reception of the composers’ music. Such issues assume real importance in light of Klein’s statement that ‘none of “my” O’Kellys ‘was a “great” composer’. As he recognises, the musicologist’s purpose is not to venerate a canon of Western art-music geniuses; the more critical task is to untangle the networks of how music is created, disseminated, and understood. In demonstrating how the O’Kelly’s ‘ordinary’ work of publishing, administration, teaching, performing, and composing for amateurs constituted a vital element of French (and, to an extent, Irish) musical life, Klein is to be commended.

Still, it is curious that some matters are given scant contextual attention. The section on Joseph O’Kelly in the 1870s briefly mentions how the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) prompted an outpouring of fervent, French patriotism in O’Kelly’s output, but makes no reference

to the *Société nationale de musique*, which was founded in 1871 in order to champion new French music and strengthen spirits in the aftermath of the country's defeat. Another intriguing Joseph O'Kelly project from the 1870s is his one-act comic opera *Ruse contre ruse* (1873) which, with an all-female cast, was expressly written for pupils at a girls' school in Paris. Its message that girls were only destined for marriage appeared just a couple of years before the promiscuous protagonist of Georges Bizet's *Carmen* outraged Parisian audiences. Given how Klein stresses that *Ruse contre ruse* 'cannot be isolated from its context, the nineteenth-century boarding school' – plus its Spanish setting which further relates the work to *Carmen* – some commentary as to why French operas of this period seem so intent on policing women's behaviour would be welcome. From the perspective of the French music scholar, there are other problematic omissions. The discussion of how the Kelly/O'Kelly men established themselves in Boulogne-sur-Mer would surely benefit from Katharine Ellis's research on music in the provinces. Also, the disparate remarks on the various Kelly/O'Kelly attitudes towards their dual Franco-Irish identities could do with more sustained analysis – here, the work of Barbara L. Kelly and Deborah Mawer on Maurice Ravel could be instructive, for Ravel was roughly contemporary with the later O'Kelly generations and hailed from a Basque and Spanish background that complicated his French identity. Although the voices of current musicologists are often absent, those of nineteenth-century French critics are prominent. Sometimes they are invaluable as the sole sources about lost works, but more contextual insights into these reviews might illuminate matters further.

Notwithstanding these reservations, this is still a very useful book for anyone interested in Irish art music during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for even though all the O'Kellys were born and bred in France they maintained strong links with the country. Scholars concerned with French music of this era will also find much food for thought in the rich documentary evidence Klein has amassed of several, hitherto-forgotten musical lives.

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