

Grappling with Donald Jay Grout's Essays on Music Historiography

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I have finally gotten *A History of Western Music* adopted. I would not be surprised if it has driven all other music history texts off the shelves,”¹ wrote Rey Longyear to Donald Jay Grout in a letter dated 7 May 1961. Grout replied that his book “did pretty well its first year. It now remains to be seen how well it will hold up.”² *A History of Western Music* (*HWM* hereafter), received favorable reviews fifty years ago in the United States and England, despite complaints about content, mostly omissions of particular composers, compositions, and styles. Nineteen published reviews and numerous informal endorsements from university music history teachers of the first three editions (and also a shorter edition) bear witness to the success of these early

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1. Longyear to Grout, typescript letter, 7 May 1961, box 3, folder 17, Donald Jay Grout Papers, #14/20/998, Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collection, Cornell University Libraries (DJGP hereafter). Longyear apparently used *HWM* in his undergraduate music history course at the University of Southern Mississippi where he served on the faculty from 1958–63. He earned a PhD in 1957 from Cornell University where he was a student of Grout’s.

2. Grout to Longyear, typescript letter, 15 May 1961, box 3, folder 17, DJGP.

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versions.³ American reviewer Bruce Bray asserted, “A *History of Western Music* is the most practical, useful, inviting music history book for the general reader we have seen,”⁴ while prominent British musicologist Jack Westrup opined, “It is customary to say of works of this kind that they will always deserve an honoured place on our shelves. That is not the proper location for Professor Grout’s history. It ought to lie on the desk, or at any rate within arm’s reach.”⁵

Since its first edition in 1960, *HWM* has become the most widely used one-volume undergraduate textbook in the music history curriculum, with its third edition even appearing on the cover of *U. S. News and World Report* (**Figure 1**). Although this appears to be a random inclusion, the free publicity it received did not go unnoticed. Donald and Margaret Grout received a copy of this issue of *U. S. News and World Report* from Mrs. John Kirkpatrick and Margaret then wrote to Claire Brook, Norton’s vice president and music editor in 1984 to share the news:

Have you seen the cover of *U. S. News and World Report* for April 16th? I enclose a Xerox of the cover, which shows the free publicity for *The [sic] History of Western Music*. The cover, which is in color, shows the title and Donald’s name clearly. Mrs. John Kirkpatrick sent me the cover of their magazine.⁶

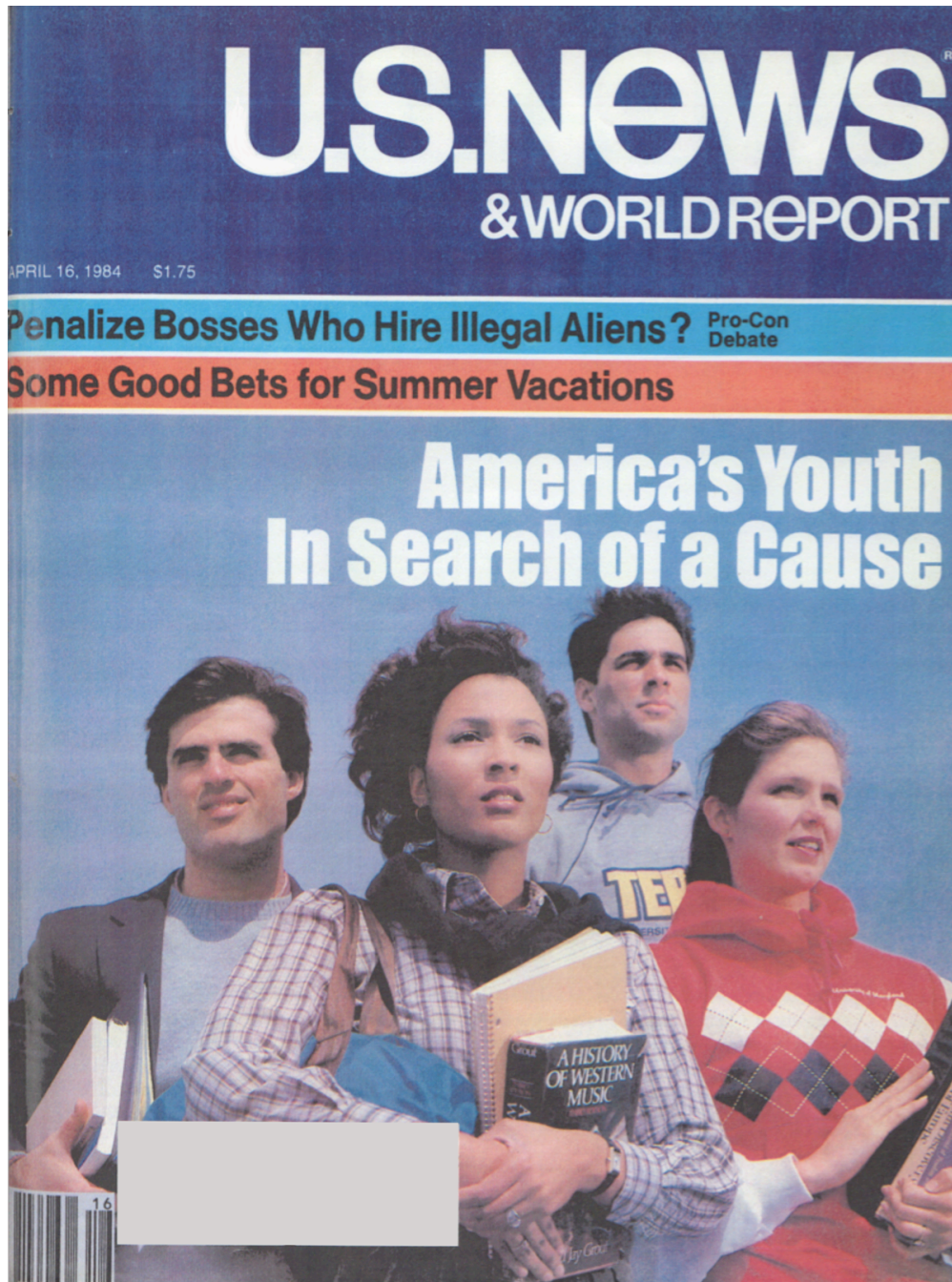
3. Because the focus here is Grout himself (and not his later collaborators), I have included reviews of only his three editions and the shorter edition. Published reviews of Grout’s first edition include (in alphabetical order): William Kay Archer, *The American Record Guide* 27 (1961): 508–509; Bruce Bray, *Music Educators Journal* 46 (1960): 78; Peter Dickinson, *Musical Courier* 161 (May 1960): 46; Quaintance Eaton, *Showcase* 40 (1960): 49–50; Harry W. Gay, *The American Organist* 43 (October 1960): 16; Richard Franko Goldman, *The Juilliard Review* 7, no. 3 (1960): 11; Christopher Grier, “Musical History at its Best,” *The Scotsman*, 11 August 1952; Alec Harmon, “One-Volume History,” *The Musical Times* 103 (1962): 845, 847; Albert T. Luper, *Notes* 18, no. 1 (1960): 47–48; Louise Rood, “An Invaluable Survey of Western Music,” *The Massachusetts Review* 2 (1960): 179–81; *The Instrumentalist* 14 (August 1960): 11; [S. J.?], *Music Educators Journal* 51 (1965): 174; Herbert Weinstock, “Music History for Advanced Students,” *The New York Herald Tribune*, 25 September 1960; Frederick Werlé, *Musical Courier* 163 (August 1961): 48; and Jack A. Westrup, *Music and Letters* 43 (1962): 363–65. Reviews of the Shorter edition include: Carl P. Sigmon, *Music Clubs Magazine* 44, no. 3 (1965): 28; and *Musical America* 84 (1964): 278. Reviews of Grout’s second edition include: Noël Goodwin, “Western Music,” *The Musical Times* 115 (1974): 40; Arthur Jacobs, “Western Music,” *The Musical Times* 115 (1974): 40–41; and Daniel T. Politoske, *Journal of Research in Music Education* 22 (1974): 321–23. Reviews of Grout’s third edition (and the Norton *Anthology of Western Music*) include: *Music Educators Journal* 67 (February 1981): 78; Nigel Simeone, “History Revised,” *The Musical Times* 130 (1989): 477; Edward Strickland, *Fanfare* 6 (1983): 326.

4. Bray, *Music Educators Journal* (1960): 78.

5. Westrup, *Music and Letters* (1962): 363–65.

6. Margaret Grout to Claire Brook, typescript letter, 24 April 1984, box 55, DJGP.

Figure 1. Cover of *U. S. News and World Report*, 16 April 1984 featuring the cover of Grout's textbook (3rd ed., 1980). Used with permission of *U. S. News and World Report* and Wright's Media.



Brook responded:

No, I had not seen the cover of *U. S. News and World Report* until your Xerox arrived. . . . Fortunately, we didn't have to contend with the legal questions that arose when a naked young lady in the centerfold of *Playboy* was posed with a clearly legible copy of *The Norton Scores*, some years ago. I liked this one a lot better. I am also absolutely amazed at how clearly the author and title emerge. Well, good for us!⁷

With or without the free publicity, *HWM* was a popular and well-established text by this time. Grout wrote the first two editions (1960 and 1973) and Claude V. Palisca helped him complete the third (1980); Palisca wrote editions four (1988), five (1996), and six (2001); and J. Peter Burkholder wrote seven (2005) and eight (2009).⁸

Today, most musicians still equate the name Grout with this authoritative textbook. Many musicologists know his other magnum opus, *A Short History of Opera*, and some may know his editions of Alessandro Scarlatti's operas. His historiographical essays, however, are relatively unstudied in the musicological literature, though these may well provide a key for understanding *HWM*. Grout's philosophy of writing history can be seen through the series of historiographical essays that he wrote between 1944 and 1972. Considering how that philosophy was applied to some of the choices he made for his first three *HWM* editions—specifically as they relate to Grout's shifting attitude towards popular music, African-American music, and music by women composers—suggests that Grout was a more progressive historian and historiographer than he is generally given credit for being. Still, as musicologist Stephen Hinton recognized in his perceptive 1999 "Report on Grout/Palisca," "One could argue endlessly about repertoire and bibliography. . . . such arguments about content are ultimately futile provided one is explicit about the criteria for inclusion and omission."⁹ I will therefore investigate not merely the content of *HWM*, but also its philosophical and ideological framework.

7. Brook to Grout, typescript letter 7 May 1984, box 55, DJGP.

8. Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960); Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, rev. ed. (1973); Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 3d ed. (1980); Claude V. Palisca and Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 4th ed. (1988); Claude V. Palisca and Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 5th ed. (1996); Claude V. Palisca and Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 6th ed. (2001); J. Peter Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (2006); and J. Peter Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 8th ed. (2009).

9. Stephen Hinton, "Report on Grout/Palisca," April 1999, p. 9, box 16, folder 352, Claude V. Palisca Papers, Gilmore Music Library, Yale University (CVPP hereafter). Hinton graciously gave me permission to cite his review in an electronic mail message of 12 August 2010. Seemingly a review of *HWM*'s treatment of twentieth-century music, particularly Kurt

A useful way of understanding the relationship between Grout's historiographical work and *HWM* is provided in historian Hayden White's groundbreaking 1973 book, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century History*, a work whose publication nearly coincides with the last of Grout's essays.¹⁰ Even though a history's foreword, preface, and introduction are external to its narrative, White surmised that fully grasping the history requires grappling with these.¹¹ Just as a map's legend, although located on its periphery, provides instructions for reading the map, Grout's essays serve as a kind of trope, shedding light on his iconic text and thus the shape of music history teaching over the past fifty years. In a similar vein, Hans Kellner advocated looking beyond the content of the finely tuned narrative. In his 1989 book, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked*, Kellner described what he called "the middleground" or middle level, the period between the background (sources) and the foreground (narrative) where the historian spends most of his time making decisions about content, explanation, and narration.¹² Grout's decisions in the middleground can be seen most clearly by comparing the ideas he espoused in his historiographical essays with the practical decisions he made in the creation and revisions of *HWM* as detailed in his papers and letters currently housed in the Cornell University Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. Although there is no evidence that either Kellner or White influenced Grout, we may use the metaphors of a map legend and a middleground as lenses through which to view Grout's ideas about history and his choices in the development of *HWM*, and as ways of placing those choices within the broader context of mid-late twentieth-century academia.

Weill and his music, in preparation for the sixth edition, the larger context is an elucidating essay arguing that *HWM* at that time was not a history of Western music but rather more properly a history of Western art music. After a section on "The Beethoven Paradigm" (pp. 4–5) comes a section titled "What is 'Art Music?'" (pp. 5–7) in which Hinton wrote on p. 6, "The challenge, then is to deal at once with the way music is in history and also how it transcends history as 'art.'" His proposal for meeting that challenge follows in the review.

10. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). The crux of White's work demonstrates through his sophisticated epistemological analysis that a historical narrative may be understood in ways other than strictly its content. His tropes and modes reveal the implications that are disclosed through a historian's use of language.

11. For White's analogy of a history's peripheral parts and a map's legend see his *Metahistory*, 142. Although the context is a discussion of Jules Michelet's *Histoire de France* (1833–67) and his *Histoire de la Révolution française* (1847–53), White's analogy is apt for modern histories and history textbooks as well.

12. See Hans Kellner's explanation of his middleground or middle-level theory in "The Deepest Respect for Reality," in *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 3–25.

To that end, this article will look beyond *HWM*'s narrative to first explore the challenges Grout deemed most difficult for music historians to grapple with as described in his historiographical essays: choosing a subject, exercising objectivity, and explaining and narrating through metaphor. Grout's essays can then be used to demonstrate that he was more forward-looking in his view of the Western art music canon than previously assumed by his critics. The practical application of his pedagogical and historiographical ideas can also be seen in his subsequent revisions of *HWM*. Finally, this essay will address a larger philosophical question that Grout believed most plagues musicologists: why write music history? Simply put, "Is not the music itself enough?"¹³ How can writing about a composition's history enhance what listeners hear?

Grout the Historiographer

Written between 1944 and 1972—nearly the entire span of Grout's career—his historiographical writings explored a wide range of topics including early French opera, German Baroque opera, editing Scarlatti's operas, Dutch church organs, Johann Sebastian Bach, eighteenth-century music, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Romantic opera, performance practice, musicology and the music library, music in William Shakespeare's plays, music's place in the university curriculum, concepts of Eastern and Western music, and writing music history.¹⁴ All of these shed light on his methods for constructing and narrating *HWM*, and the thirteen of them cited here deal specifically with the tasks of the music historian and with the purpose of writing music history. In particular, three of Grout's essays, *Principles and Practice of Writing Music History*,¹⁵ "Current Historiography and Music History,"¹⁶ and "Music History and Musical Reality"¹⁷ facilitate the establishment of a middleground and lend insight into his *HWM* narrative.

Principles and Practice of Writing Music History is a monograph while "Current Historiography" is an article in *Studies in Music History*, a Festschrift honoring Oliver Strunk. Along with "Music History and Musical Reality" these three essays were penned between the first and second editions of

13. Grout, "Music History and Musical Reality," 1966–72, box 24, folder 27, p. 1, DJGP.

14. See the concluding bibliography for a selected list of his historiographical essays.

15. Grout, *Principles and Practice in the Writing of Music History* (Brussels: Palais der Academiën, 1972).

16. Grout, "Current Historiography and Music History," in *Studies in Music History: Essays for Oliver Strunk*, ed. Harold Powers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 23–40.

17. Grout, "Music History and Musical Reality," box 24, folder 27, 1966–72, DJGP and "Music History and Musical Reality," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 21 (1968): 3–12.

HWM. A transcription of “Music History and Musical Reality” was published in the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, and a lengthier version is among Grout’s papers at Cornell University. In particular, “Current Historiography” is crucial for understanding *HWM* because it reveals Grout’s theories as steeped in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy of history. Between the 1940s and 1960s, Anglo-American philosophers began calling for critical historiographical methodology by considering not only history, but also the ways that historians think about thinking about history.¹⁸ In particular, British philosopher Robin George Collingwood, whom Grout cited, urged historians to think not only about history (first degree thinking), but also to think about thinking about history (second degree thinking), which for Collingwood signified philosophy.¹⁹ Accordingly, Grout adapted and applied this concept and other theories from philosophy and general history to the study of music as evidenced by his consideration of the first task he deemed crucial for music historians: choice of subject.

18. Robin George Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, rev. ed., with an introduction and additional material, ed. Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1. Also see the following works included as a footnote in Grout’s “Current Historiography and Music History,” 23 (in alphabetical order): Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961); Sir Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955); Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (New York: Knopf, 1953); E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: Knopf, 1962); R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); William Dray, *Philosophy of History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964); Patrick Gardiner, *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952); Arnold Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History* (New York: Knopf, 1959); Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (New York: John Day, 1943) and Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, repr., (New York: John Day, 1950); Maurice H. Mandelbaum, *The Problem of Historical Knowledge: An Answer to Relativism* (New York: Liveright, 1938); Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History* (New York: Scribner, 1957); Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961); Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); W. H. Walsh, *Philosophy of History: An Introduction*, repr., (New York: Harper, 1960) and W. H. Walsh *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (New York: Harper, 1951). Collected essays: Alan Donagan, ed., *Philosophy of History* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Herbert Feigl, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953); H. P. R. Finberg, ed., *Approaches to History, A Symposium* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Sidney Hook, ed., *Philosophy and History, A Symposium* (New York: New York University Press, 1963); Patrick Gardiner, ed., *Theories of History: Readings from Classical and Contemporary Sources* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959); Hans Meyerhoff, ed., *The Philosophy of History In Our Time: An Anthology Selected, and With An Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); Fritz Stern, ed., *The Varieties of History, From Voltaire to the Present* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1956).

19. Collingwood, 1.

Choice of Subject

Choosing a subject was Grout's first step for writing history. He inquired: "Given the potential material for a general history, on what basis does the historian select? Of the thousands of musical works that have been created in Europe and America since the early Middle Ages, which ones shall he select as the basic material for his history?"²⁰ His response was partially grounded in philosopher Edward Carr's and musicologist Arthur Mendel's theories concerning value judgments and aesthetics. In his 1962 book *What is History?*, Carr explained that at the outset the historians must recognize that they are the product of history, a process now referred to as self-reflexive.²¹ Grout, too, acknowledged this and further commented that the choices historians make stem from their biases, experiences, education, and nationality. In considering the past, Grout directed musicologists to observe the kinds of choices made previously. In other words, which repertoires, composers, works, genres, or styles occupy positions in narrated histories? Grout concluded that the subjects of existing editions of music, documents, or secondary scholarship suggested their importance and the scholarly community's interest in them. Such critical constraints would surely produce limited results; however, Grout advocated for the consideration of new and previously neglected repertoires as well.

How then did Grout choose his subjects? He identified possible topics and then framed his historical boundaries. He explained his ideas in a passage from his paper, "Music History and Music Reality," containing typescript and hand-written corrections. The latter is indicated by parentheses.

From this point on I shall use the term "history of music" in the same restricted and specialized sense that it had up to a generation ago, namely as meaning the history of European-American art music, excluding folk, popular, and commercial music and excluding the other great world musical systems. (Don't misunderstand: I know they exist.) This limitation is deliberate, (and I make it for practical reasons) because now I want to speak in some detail about the only field of music history in which I can claim any specialized knowledge or competence.²²

In *Principles and Practice in the Writing of Music History* (1972), Grout identified four principal criteria motivating the historian's choice of subject; taken either singly or collectively they are permanent value, influence, typical, or atypical. He gave the following examples of each: Johann Sebastian Bach's *St.*

20. Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 7.

21. Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Knopf, 1962), 48, quoted in Grout, "Current Historiography and Music History," 25.

22. Grout, "Music History and Musical Reality," 1966–72, box 24, folder 27, p. 8, DJGP.

Matthew Passion had earned permanent value; the operas of Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini illustrate significance, at least in part, in their exemplification of a new genre that held sway since the beginning of the seventeenth century thereby influencing later works; Robert Franz's lieder demonstrate typical nineteenth-century art songs; and Richard Strauss's late compositions were atypical of contemporaneous early twentieth-century works, showing a looking back to or a persistence of an older style.²³ Once the music to be studied has been chosen, Grout postulated that to some extent historians have also chosen the kind of history they will write.

While Grout's theories indicate his methods, they tell only part of the story. Pre-publication reviews of *HWM* bear witness to Grout's decision-making process—what Kellner referred to as the middleground of history writing. Letters and notes in Grout's archives show how the practical applications of his own theories of historiography served to get the story even more crooked. In his comments for Grout's second edition (1973), William Austin, a twentieth-century music specialist and colleague of Grout's at Cornell University, wrote to Grout in 1970: "Pop music. If there's anything you like in the Beatles and later developments, cite these. Even if you dislike all of it, consider what it does for your youngest readers with respect to modes, phrase structure, [and] relation between words and music."²⁴ In the margin beside Austin's remarks, Grout jotted, "omit."²⁵ This exemplifies Grout's focus on European and American art repertoires and his determination to include music that had been accepted by the scholarly community at that time. Incidentally, Austin did not include the Beatles in his *Music in the 20th Century*, whose dedication reads, "for Donald Jay Grout."²⁶ Neither did Austin and Grout's contemporary, Eric Salzman, include the group and their music in the first edition of his 1967 *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction*; however, he did allot four sentences to them in his second edition in 1974 in a section titled "New Pop Culture," which is slightly over three pages in its entirety.²⁷ In

23. Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 8.

24. William Austin, "Suggestions for a Revised Edition of Grout," May 1970, box 17, p. 5, DJGP.

25. *Ibid.*

26. William Austin, *Music in the 20th Century* (W. W. Norton, 1966).

27. Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967); Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1974), 190, 189–92. "The new pop music, the vogue for pop art and popular culture, and the social upheavals of the 1960s all were simultaneous events and the new rock—Dylan to San Francisco to the Beatles—made strong inroads on the 'classical,' the collegiate, and even the artistic, intellectual audiences," p. 189 and "A good deal of the impetus came from England and was pioneered by the Beatles: it continues there to some degree with Pink Floyd and Emerson, Lake & Palmer as well as John Lennon and Yoko Ono (currently resident

addition to a scarcity of the Beatles or any twentieth-century Western popular music in general textbooks at that time, few published monographs of the Beatles existed in 1970, among them one biography of the group and two general studies of their music, and these appeared in the popular, not scholarly, press.²⁸ Even if such scholarship had been widespread, Grout's remarks suggest that it is unlikely that he would have included popular music in his textbook. Western pop music and the Beatles did eventually earn a place in *HWM*, but not until 1996, in the fifth edition by Palisca.²⁹

Objectivity

Grout's second task for writing music history was objectivity. He posed the questions, "Is it possible to give a true account of the past?" and "can history be objective in the sense of 'value free?'" According to him, absolute objectivity is not possible, but relative objectivity, a term he readily acknowledged as oxymoronic, is "precariously achievable."³⁰ He arrived at this idea by recognizing human agency in general history and in music history—on the one hand people create, perform, analyze, study, and listen to music, and on the other hand people construct its narratives. All of these undertakings involve human pursuit, and therefore, all require making choices. Eliminating all value judgments, if that were even possible, would result in stringing together facts without imparting any meaning.³¹ Writing music history obligates the

and working in the United States). The Beatles, whose music is entirely adapted and syncretic, extended their range to include all forms of pop music from that of the English music hall to swing to rock-and-roll, mixed with elements of classical and chamber music as well as tape-and-electronic sound. They used recording technology to merge these styles, often in terms of larger works or concepts (*Sergeant Pepper*, *Abbey Road*), nearly always with great skill; indeed, technology and mass media were their real instruments, on which (with the help of producer George Martin) they played with such skill," p. 190.

28. Michael Braun, *Love Me Do: The Beatles' Progress* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1964); Brian Epstein, *A Cellarful of Noise* (London: Souvenir Press, 1964); and Hunter Davies, *The Beatles: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Dell, 1968).

29. Palisca and Grout, *HWM*, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 770–71. "An eclectic version of the idiom [Rock-and-Roll] developed by the British quartet the Beatles achieved unprecedented success starting in 1964, when they first toured the United States. The group included two creative song writers, John Lennon (1940–1980) and Paul McCartney (b. 1942), who continued on their own after the Beatles broke up in 1970."

30. Grout, "Current Historiography," 25.

31. For a discussion of the distinction between the annals, the chronicle, and the history proper and the inherent problems of "narrativizing," see Hayden White, "Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1987), 1–25 and Hans Kellner, "Narrating the 'Tableau': Questions of Narrativity in Michelet," in *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 102–23.

historian to choose a topic and to decide which facts to include and how to order them, the same process that scientists undergo in their laboratories. Imperative for historians, however, is the recognition of current values versus values of the time they are studying. Here, Grout concurred with Carr's position that historians recognize that values change from time to time and from place to place, and historians who are more aware of their particular situations may be less likely to be at the mercy of it.³² Music historians, though, have the added responsibility of settling value judgments about choice with regard to aesthetic judgments about a particular repertoire. The musicologist "is a critic before he is a historian."³³ In cultural studies in which music is used to exemplify or demonstrate something nonmusical or extramusical, a historian must decide how to represent a music's significance, and Grout saw no way to do this without "reference to its aesthetic qualities,"³⁴ an idea stemming from Mendel's warning about aesthetics. In his "Evidence and Explanation," Mendel observed that a music historian who has never grappled with the aesthetic value of a particular music has not even begun to understand it.³⁵ Grout explained that we study music because we are interested in it and that "our motives may not be purely aesthetic."³⁶ We may study music because we think it is good, or even great, or for some other reason entirely, perhaps because it reveals something about a particular culture or because it sheds light on some other music.

Although there is none in Grout's discussion of aesthetics and history, one might expect to find a reference to Carl Dahlhaus's famous essay, "The Significance of Art: Historical or Aesthetic?," particularly because Dahlhaus introduced his own essay by citing Grout's first *HWM* edition (1960).³⁷ Obviously Dahlhaus knew Grout's work and the two appeared together in a roundtable discussion at an International Musicological Society meeting in

32. Carr, *What is History?*, 163, quoted in Grout, "Current Historiography," 30.

33. Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 8. See also Stephen Hinton, "Report on Grout/Palisca," CVPP. Hinton aptly summarized Carr's position as, "E. H. Carr, writing on historiography, put this accurately, memorably and ever so slightly cynically, when he remarked that historians tend to find what they are looking for. What he meant applied to music history is that we should acknowledge the role played by contemporary tastes in our judgments about historical significance."

34. Grout, "Current Historiography," 28.

35. Arthur Mendel, "Evidence and Explanation" in *International Musicological Society Report of the Eighth Congress New York 1961*, ed. Jan LaRue (Basel: Bärenreiter, 1962), 3–18, quoted in *ibid.*

36. Grout, "Current Historiography," 27.

37. Carl Dahlhaus, "The Significance of Art: Historical or Aesthetic?," in *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 19–33, first published *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne: Musikverlag and Laaber-Verlag, 1967).

1977.³⁸ In his essay, Dahlhaus referred readers to the “Chronology” in the appendix on pages 699–719 where Grout listed various items according to year such as “1843, Richard Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*, Gaetano Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*, and Søren Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*.”

Grout explained, “This chronology is intended to provide a background for the history of music, and to enable the reader to see individual works and composers in relation to their times.”³⁹ Dahlhaus asked what readers are to glean from this chronological list? Are we to realize an internal or external relationship between the elements therein? Do Wagner, Donizetti, and Kierkegaard’s works share an inherent quality that would rationalize grouping them together—a *Zeitgeist*—or are they organized thusly to show connectivity and to represent something external?⁴⁰ At the risk of oversimplifying the issue, what do these items have to do with each other besides their manifestation in the same year? About Grout’s chronology Dahlhaus wrote:

However, it is unclear exactly what the reader is meant to conclude. Is there a subtle analogy between Wagner’s opera and Kierkegaard’s book? Or on the contrary, might it be that events, which are extrinsically contemporaneous, a conclusion made grotesquely and abundantly clear precisely when we use chronological tables in an attempt to illustrate the *Zeitgeist* that supposedly pervades all spheres of life at a given time? Does music mirror the reality surrounding a composer, or does it propose an alternative reality? Does it have common roots with political events and philosophical ideas; or is music written simply because music has always been written and not, or only incidentally, because a composer is seeking to respond with music to the world he lives in?⁴¹

38. Dragotin Cvetko (Chairman), “Some Remarks on the Question of East and West in Music History,” 287–88, Heinz Alfred Brockhaus, “Überlegungen zur Theorie der Musikgeschichte,” 274–79, Jaroslav Buzga, “Musical Sources and the Problems of Historical Research into the Music of the Czech Lands,” 288–93, Carl Dahlhaus, “Die Anfänge der Musikgeschichtsschreibung und die Idee des ‘relativ Schönen,’” 256–63, Kurt von Fischer, “Musikgeschichtliches Denken in Europe bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts,” 263–69, Donald Jay Grout, “Concepts of Music History in East and West,” 272–74, Boris Jarustovski (in absentia), “Some Problems of the Mutual Historical Influencing of the Musical Cultures of East and West (Summary),” 286–87, Akio Mayeda, “Gedanken über das Thema: Concepts of Music History in East and West, 279–86, Andrej Rijavec (Reporter), Walther Wiora, “Zwei Aspekte der erweiterten Musikgeschichte: ihr Beitrag zur Geschichte außereuropäischer Kulturen und ihr Beitrag zur Geschichte der Menschheit,” and “Discussion,” 293–97, in *Report of the 12th Congress of the International Musicological Society*, 256–97 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1977).

39. Grout, *HWM* (1960), 699.

40. Dahlhaus, 19.

41. *Ibid.* As a sidebar, the problem of chronological lists appeared again with regard to *HWM* in preparation for Palisca’s sixth edition. Stephen Hinton wrote on p. 6 of his “Grout/Palisca Report,” “The chronology chart on p. 772 [of the fifth edition] posits a connection between World War II and two compositions, Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* and Britten’s

Dahlhaus engaged Grout's *HWM* in this essay by employing the term "aesthetics" to indicate the study of art history whereas Grout employed it to mean how much value a historian places on a particular music. Dahlhaus used the term to indicate the study of art works as autonomous without consideration of their cultural context. He analogized this to studying musical compositions as individual self-contained works. Grout, on the other hand, used the term "aesthetics" to gauge a historian's assessment of a particular music. The historian must answer these questions: is this a great piece of music or even a good piece? Furthermore, what bearing does that have on its historical construction? For Grout, aesthetics and objectivity were bound together in terms of values whereas for Dahlhaus, aesthetics suggests a work's structure. In the end, Grout modified the question "Can history be objective?" to "Can stories be interesting?" Grounded in philosopher Christopher Blake's theory as explained in his essay "Can History Be Objective?," Grout's answer was yes, but some are more objective than others just as some stories are more interesting than others.⁴² Historians studying the same music, but emphasizing different aspects and producing quite diverse results, possess the potential to supplement rather than supersede one another.

Explanation and Narration

Explanation and narration, Grout's next tasks, go hand in hand for the music historian. For Grout, evolutionary, cyclical, or linear constructions of events proved insufficient. Histories from the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tended to follow theories of progress and evolution as if music developed in a continuous line with each new style or work representing an advancement from the previous. Charles Hubert Hastings Parry's 1894 book, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, represents one of the last of this dying breed in which Parry claimed, "The development of music is a continuous and

Peter Grimes." In the margin beside Hinton's comment Palisca wrote, "no." Hinton proceeded, "The chart is vague about the posited connection. The discussion of the Copland piece is unequivocal: there is no connection. The piece has transcended the Second World War and entered the imaginary museum of musical masterpieces. *Grimes*, if it were discussed in greater detail, could easily be linked to the Second World War, but that would require a fair amount of prose devoted to Britten's pacifism and a discussion of various interpretations of the work." It should be noted that the chart under discussion here also includes Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and all of the works are bound together by the year 1940. For more on twentieth-century music in the "imaginary museum of musical masterpieces" see J. Peter Burkholder, "Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years," *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (1983): 115–34 and "The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as a Museum" in *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Scribner, 1986), 409–32.

42. Christopher Blake, "Can History Be Objective?" *Mind* 64 (1955): 61–78, quoted in Grout, "Current Historiography," 27.

unbroken record. . . .”⁴³ Early on Grout subscribed in part to cyclical theories such as those espoused by Curt Sachs in his *The Commonwealth of Art* (1946);⁴⁴ however, he later changed his mind. Sachs had theorized that music history cycled between ethos and pathos, Apollonian and Dionysian, and classic and romantic, and posited that these styles alternated about every forty years. A cycle such as this also sets up a linear progression of history—a type of action and reaction. Grout grappled with this view in his essay, “The Irrational in Eighteenth-Century Music.”⁴⁵ He expressed this by establishing a dialectic, which he then debated with himself. He first stated, “The whole history of Western music may be regarded, from one point of view, as a cyclical process . . .” and “Moreover, the succession of classical and romantic, or Apollonian and Dionysian periods seems to occur in history in accordance with laws of action and reaction—an age of classicism provoking a reaction in the romantic direction, and vice versa.”⁴⁶ Then, as if his own devil’s advocate, within the same argument Grout explained, “Naturally, the contrast [between Apollonian and Dionysian or classical and romantic] must not be thought of as absolute; any such view would be a gross over-simplification of the facts” and then, “It is perhaps superfluous, but still it can do no harm to point out that any such general sketch as the foregoing of the course of music history necessarily neglects all sorts of details and disregards the inevitable counter-currents that exist in any age. No period, I repeat, is *purely* classical or *purely* romantic in its tendencies.”⁴⁷ Over the next ten years, he modified his opinion of Sachs’s view of a music history occurring in cycles.

As early as 1968 Grout put forth a claim of configurational explanations in which music evinces relationships with contemporary arts and culture. He advocated narrating music history through metaphor.⁴⁸ For him, this meant explaining music by comparing individual pieces and styles as well as associating music with the other arts. He maintained that “explanations of this sort frequently involve metaphor, which itself may have explanatory value.”⁴⁹ This view opposes any approach that connects music and events across centuries from the earliest known to the most recent. This suggests that for Grout,

43. Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (New York: D. Appleton, 1914), 333, quoted in Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 13 and Grout, “Current Historiography,” 38.

44. Curt Sachs, *The Commonwealth of Art: Style in the Fine Arts, Music, and Dance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964).

45. Grout, “The Irrational in Eighteenth-Century Music,” pp. 2–5, box 24, folder 16, Baltimore, 1959, DJGP.

46. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

47. *Ibid.*, 2 and 5.

48. White, *Metahistory*, 1–42.

49. Grout, “Current Historiography,” 36.

all the dots need not be connected. If studying Bach and Lutheranism or Beethoven and revolutionary themes proves fruitful, then pursue it. If not, then seek other explanations and interpretations. Although these examples treat past music in their historic contexts, Grout recognized and advocated for the importance of past music in the present as well. In other words, historians should consider music in its current context as well as its original one.

Grout the Critic

Palisca and Burkholder, *HWM*'s subsequent authors, concurred in their appraisal of the music history canon of the 1950s and 1960s as an agreed upon body of composers and works that should be studied. In the prefaces to his fifth and sixth *HWM* editions Palisca claimed, "To be sure, the scope of what we teach and study under the heading of music history has broadened since Professor Grout wrote the first version of this book. The limits of Western music were generally agreed upon then, and hardly anyone doubted the value of studying its history."⁵⁰ In his recent *College Music Symposium* article, "Changing the Stories We Tell: Repertoires, Narratives, Materials, Goals, and Strategies in Teaching Music History," Peter Burkholder concurred: "Fifty years ago, there was a widely shared consensus that musicians and music-lovers should know a certain body of music and that our job was to make sure that our students learned it."⁵¹ In regard to the canon, musicologists' opinions may have been more harmonious fifty years ago than they are today. However, evidence among Grout's papers suggests that at least forty years ago musicologists were not unanimous in their opinions of the canon and that not everyone recognized the value of studying music history. Documents among Grout's papers reveal that he was confronted with the challenge of delineating what students should know and defending the importance of studying music in historical contexts. He received requests for the addition of particular composers and repertoire with directives for representing both. Furthermore, in his essays he often defended the importance of studying music in historical contexts, which suggests that not everyone viewed this practice as a necessity.⁵² Some repertoire requests he fulfilled, such as Antoinette Handy Miller's call for the inclusion of African-American musicians, and some he rejected, such as Austin's appeal for the inclusion of Western popular music in *HWM*,

50. Palisca and Grout, *HWM*, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), xi and 6th ed. (2001), xii.

51. Burkholder, "Changing the Stories We Tell: Repertoires, Narratives, Materials, and Strategies in Teaching Music History," *College Music Symposium*, forthcoming, 12.

52. See Grout, "The University and the Art of Music," (1954); "Music History and Musical Reality" (1966–72); "Current Historiography" (1968); and *Principles and Practice* (1972).

particularly the Beatles. Despite *HWM*'s content, Grout's rejection of the notion of a discoverable fixed past and of an inflexible music history canon suggests that he remained open to change. In advocating a reconciliation of the past and the present, he revealed his philosophy. One of his main caveats derived from T. S. Eliot's observation, "The present changes the past,"⁵³ and therefore history must be rewritten anew by each generation to reflect the most current findings.⁵⁴ Further, Grout was skeptical of the notion of a discoverable fixed past:

History may be roughly defined as "a narrative account of past events." Music history therefore is a narrative account of past musical events. . . . [but] the past is not unchangeable; what we call "the past" is a largely imaginary entity . . . itself certainly both incomplete and inaccurate, which happens to be available to us at a given moment. As our information increases, or as our interpretations of the facts change, so the past (in the only sense in which "the past" may be said practically to exist) also changes.⁵⁵

He observed that as new works enter the music history canon, they do not simply replace older ones, but rather take their place beside them, thereby creating new relationships.⁵⁶ Similarly, sixteen years later in her groundbreaking book *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Marcia Citron called for a reassessment

53. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), 3–11, quoted in Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 7.

54. Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 7.

55. Grout, "Western Concepts of Music History," in *Report of the 12th Congress of the International Musicological Society* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1977), 272.

56. Also see J. Peter Burkholder, review of *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), *Notes* 63 (2007): 848. Interestingly, Burkholder seemingly shares this view that new works change the way we see the past at least in terms of twentieth-century music history. Burkholder offered his view, complementary to Grout's, in his review of the *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*. He asked the question, "What might a coherent view of twentieth-century music look like?" He outlined three things that it should do starting with studying "all the types of music included" in the Cambridge history. His second prerequisite was to include what was valued in the music and how the music functioned or function "in order to illuminate why its creators made it as it is and why it was received as it was." Burkholder's third requirement for a twentieth-century music history was that "within each tradition (classical, jazz, pop, and so forth) and across traditions, it would emphasize the relation of each new piece to the music currently in circulation, including music of the past, and the competition of composers and performers with the master musicians of the past and with each other to capture the flags of tradition, of critical esteem, and of popularity with audiences." Similar to Eliot, Grout, and Citron, Burkholder, then, also acknowledged that as new works appear they form connections with other works and potentially change the way we view the past.

of the musical canon. She astutely identified a problem, and offered a solution for it in a passage about *HWM*. In 1993 she wrote:

When teaching a survey course, for example, does the addition of “non-canonic” works mean the elimination of something previously present? . . . And it would seem that if a new work is introduced then something old would have to be replaced. . . . But . . . the incorporation of previously non-canonic works will probably modify many of the relationships among the repertorial examples being used and this does not equate with elimination. Thus pedagogical canonicity can be elastic; new members enrich rather than replace.⁵⁷

To be sure, Citron is calling for the addition of women’s contributions to music, something Grout never mentioned, probably because studies of women’s music were at best still nascent and prevailing attitudes toward women would not have encouraged him to do so.⁵⁸ While Citron’s answer—adding new works to the canon without replacing older ones—may present some practical challenges for textbook writers and publishers working with

57. Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 200. Here, Citron refers to the fourth edition of *HWM*, but credits only Grout. “Donald J. Grout’s *A History of Western Music* . . . has played a major role in structuring that emphasis and assisting in its [the Western art music canon] standardization”; “Grout’s *History* charts music history mainly through style”; and “Grout’s *History* is organized in discrete chapters.” Ultimately, however, responsibility for the fourth edition (1988) fell to Claude Palisca as revealed on its title page and because Grout died in 1987. Oddly, elsewhere Citron gives Palisca equal billing. “the Grout-Palisca *A History of Western Music*” (p. 117) and “the fourth edition of the Grout-Palisca *A History of Western Music*” (p. 42). On the other hand, one could argue that the fourth edition underwent fewer significant revisions in content than later editions, and therefore reflects Grout’s, more than Palisca’s, historiography and aesthetics.

58. Marjorie Hassen and Mark Germer, compilers, *American Musicological Society Index to the Papers, Bulletin, and Journal 1936–1987* (Philadelphia: American Musicological Society, 1990). This index of the *Papers of the American Musicological Society*, the *Bulletin of the American Musicological Society* (BAMS) and the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (JAMS) reveals few American Musicological Society publications devoted to women and music. Among them are Ellen Rosand’s article “Barbara Strozzi, virtuosissima cantatrice: The Composer’s Voice,” *JAMS* 31 (1978): 241–81 and Edith Woodcock’s 1948 “Women’s Participation in Music During the Early Christian Period,” *BAMS* (1948): 46–7. Extant also were Sophie Drinker’s *Music and Women: The Story of Women in Their Relation to Music* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1948) and Adrienne Fried Block and Carol Neuls-Bates’s *Women in American Music: A Bibliography of Music and Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979); however, such endeavors were atypical at that time in at least venues associated with the American Musicological Society, an organization for which Grout served as president from 1952–54 and 1960–62. His professional involvement extended beyond American musicology as he held offices—president (1961–64) and vice president (1965–67)—in the International Musicological Society as well.

limited print space, her philosophy of a flexible canon, one that welcomes the inclusion of previously neglected musics and their creators, remains quite persuasive. It should also be remembered that in 1993 musicologists such as Citron were still hard at work promoting a philosophical change within the discipline of musicology, not simply the inclusion of a few women composers and performers in textbooks. In terms of women's contributions, this work of course began prior to Citron's book and landmark histories devoted to women's contributions had already appeared, most notably Karin Pendle's extraordinary *Women and Music: A History*.⁵⁹ Scholars have since continued to study women's contributions and other previously neglected repertoires so that the process of constructing and reconstructing music history is ongoing. Although posing no practical solution, Grout agreed with the idea of a flexible canon, thus appearing ahead of his time because he answered at least part of Citron's question twenty-one years before she asked it. In 1972 Grout wrote:

... the history of music—and other kinds of history as well—has to be written anew for each generation. Not only are new discoveries constantly being made about the past, new works of music are constantly being created in the present; and this does more than [*sic*] simply add to the body of material with which the historian must deal. Every new work, if it is really new, tends to modify the way in which we perceive the older works. After Stravinsky, for example, we can no longer hear the music of Beethoven or Bach or Wagner or Palestrina in quite the same way as we did before. There has been a slight but perceptible change, a readjustment in the whole order and relationship of existing musical works. Such a change, like that wrought by new discoveries about the past, is a continuous process. The past, in short, is continually altered by the experiences of the present; and as the past in this way changes, so must its history change to conform.⁶⁰

Grout had again demonstrated his savvy in recognizing the canon as supple in his discussion of the results of a mid-1950s survey of the American Musicological Society. Members had been asked to list the most important composers. From the most to the least popular the list was ordered: Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johannes Brahms, and George Frideric Handel and those born since 1870 were Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, and Arnold Schoenberg. Fifteen years after the survey Grout hypothesized that the list would probably add

59. Karin Pendle, ed., *Women and Music: A History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) and *Women and Music: A History*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). To observe how this area has burgeoned, see also her most recent contribution, a collaboration with Melinda Boyd of 846 pages. Karin Pendle and Melinda Boyd, *Women in Music: A Research and Information Guide* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge Music Bibliographies, 2010).

60. Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 7.

Claude Debussy and Anton Webern and possibly omit Hindemith.⁶¹ This seems to contradict his philosophy about omitting composers as others are added; however, his point was that in the decades after the survey, interest shifted as Stravinsky and Bartók bypassed Hindemith in compositional importance or at least in popularity. Musicologists' changing values played a part in motivating the change, as did new research on and interest in Stravinsky and Bartók.⁶²

Although he never singled out Grout, Philip Bohlman in his 1992 “Epilogue: Musics and Canons,” like Citron, also took issue with Western art music historians. He accused them of being exclusive in constructing a canon of European and American concert music to hide racism, sexism, and colonialism in their “Great Men” and “Great Music” canon—one that belittled and impugned, and was not the music of women or people of color.⁶³ In essence, Grout responded to Bohlman at least twenty years earlier by justifying exactly how he constructed his Western art music canon. In *Principles and Practice in the Writing of Music History*, he explained that he identified the dominant style of music in any period as that which was favored by the prevailingly dominant social class, but that he equally valued all the other types as well:

What we agree to call the dominant musical style of a period is likely to be the style of music preferred by the dominant social group, as the Church in the Middle Ages, the Italian courts of the Renaissance, the aristocratic patrons of the time of Haydn and Mozart, or the large middle-class audiences of the nineteenth century. But every one of these periods had other types of music as well, and there was always more or less interaction and mutual influence among the several types. Due consideration of this diversity will serve to correct what might easily become an over-simplified version of musical history.⁶⁴

61. Grout, “Music History and Musical Reality,” p. 6, DJGP, and *Principles and Practice*, 8.

62. Any number of studies and editions of music could be cited, but I have included only a few: William Austin, *Music in the 20th Century, From Debussy Through Stravinsky* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966); Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); Stravinsky and Craft, *Memories and Commentaries* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960); Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: A Critical Survey* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948); Paul Henry Lang, *Stravinsky: A New Appraisal of His Work, With a Complete List of Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963); Agatha Fassett, *The Naked Face of Genius* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1958); and Halsey Stevens, *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

63. Philip Bohlman, “Epilogue: Musics and Canons,” in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 198.

64. Grout, *Principles and Practice*, 12.

Grout had also explained in “Spontaneity and Adaptation in the History of Music” (1963) that preferring one style of music, especially our own, over another does not equate to the superiority of that music.⁶⁵ Although he may have appeared to narrate a single history and its dominant musical canon, he fully admitted the existence, influence, relevance, and importance of many canons, many musics (both notated and non-notated) and many methods. He recognized a mutually inclusive relationship between historical musicology and ethnomusicology stating that each has much to learn from the other.⁶⁶ Those who agree with Bohlman may judge *HWM* and Grout himself as belittling and impugning, but Grout’s intentions for *HWM* intimate his main objective: to produce a pragmatic one-volume history of Western art music for students.⁶⁷

Grout the Pedagogue

Before writing *HWM* Grout had already established himself as a textbook author with *A Short History of Opera* (1947).⁶⁸ Thus it is not surprising that W. W. Norton and Company would woo him to author a greatly needed general textbook for undergraduate students studying music history and for instructors teaching it. Along with a written request from Addison Burnham, then vice president of Norton, Walter Piston, composer, and Paul Henry Lang, musicologist and author of *The History of Music in Western Civilization*, also published by Norton in 1941, urged Grout to write *HWM*. Although from different disciplines within the field of music—publishing, composition, and musicology respectively—Burnham, Piston, and Lang agreed on two points:

65. Grout, “Spontaneity and Adaptation in the History of Music,” p. 3, 1963, folder 20, box 24, DJGP.

66. Ibid. In his “The University and the Art of Music,” a 1954 paper for the Bicentennial Celebration of Columbia University, Grout had encouraged those in universities to study music of all times and all types including folk, popular, and non-Western music, and to avoid limiting consideration to only so-called Western art music. Because Grout states this view elsewhere in his writings, I refer to it in this essay as well; however, this paper is problematic because the instruction “not for duplication or quotation” and “Columbia University reserves all rights for publication” prohibits further comment.

67. See also Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” 1–25 and “The Politics of Historical Interpretation,” 58–82; *Meta-history*, “Explanation by Ideological Implication,” 22–29, and especially p. 24, “I should also stress that a given historian’s emplotment of the historical process or way of explaining it in a formal argument need not be regarded as a function of his consciously held ideological position.” This exemplifies the need to look beyond the foreground of the historical narrative and to consider its “legend” as well its epistemological implications, which I am currently undertaking in my dissertation.

68. Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947).

the need for *HWM* and the need for Grout to author it. Burnham solicited Grout to write a new history because the existing ones, in his opinion, fell short as textbooks for undergraduate students. Burnham wrote to Grout in 1950:

Paul's [Paul Henry Lang] book is wonderful, a superb accomplishment and one of the truly great histories, but generally it is too difficult and assumes somewhat too much knowledge on the part of the reader to serve well as a text for the undergraduate student, while the Einstein [probably *Geschichte der Musik* with the later English translation *A Short History of Music*] and Sachs [probably *Our Musical Heritage: A Short History of Music*] books present difficulties both of style and content. . . .

. . . As to the approach, it seems to me that your book should be based upon your lectures, which have been so well received and have been subject to a fairly critical audience over a considerable number of years.⁶⁹

Piston apparently recommended Grout to Burnham. He explained this in a letter to Grout: "I should have written long ago to warn you that I had said to Mr. Burnham of W. W. Norton that you would be the best one to do a general history of music for college use."⁷⁰ Lang echoed Burnham and Piston in his post to Grout:

As you no doubt know, there is no decent history of music on the market that would really serve the needs of the undergraduate. My book is doing well, but it is more in the nature of a cultural history than a technical chronological history. As Addison told you, neither the Einstein nor the Sachs books are good textbooks, and there is a wide field with great possibilities that you could annex with one stroke, even if that stroke means a few hundred pages.

I can tell you from personal experience that there is no outfit that can handle a musical book as well as Norton's. . . .

May I earnestly advise you to address yourself to the task as soon as you can; I would hate to see someone beat you to the gun with an inferior product.⁷¹

Once Grout committed himself to the task of writing *HWM* he formulated his objective for it, one that he would seemingly maintain for all three of his editions. At least by 1955 he framed the parameters of the task by identifying his intended audience, his scope, and his purpose for his first edition, which he

69. Burnham to Grout, typescript letter, 12 June 1950, box 55, folder "W. W. Norton," DJGP. The texts Burnham refers to are probably Alfred Einstein, *Geschichte der Musik* (Leipzig: 1917); English translation *A Short History of Music* (New York: Knopf, 1937) and Curt Sachs, *Our Musical Heritage: A Short History of Music* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948).

70. Piston to Grout, handwritten letter, 21 June 1950, box 55, DJGP.

71. Lang to Grout, typescript letter, 21 June 1950, box 55, folder "W. W. Norton," DJGP.

outlined in a letter to musicologist Nino Pirrotta and later for his second edition in a 1971 letter to noted Brahms scholar and Moravian specialist Donald McCorkle. To each he explained that his decisions were based on what he thought would most benefit students. It is important to remember the depth of Grout's practical experiences teaching music history (**Figure 2**). To Pirrotta he wrote: "it is intended for general music history and not for specialists. What I want to do is to present the principal features of the period in a comprehensive and well-rounded form without too much detail, but at the same time, of course, as nearly as possible free of errors of fact or misleading generalizations."⁷² While preparing the revised edition of *HWM*, Grout explained that his objective was to provide a sound and lasting history for students. In a 1971 letter to McCorkle he wrote:

Several colleagues have sent in suggestions for the improvement of those parts of the book which touch on their special fields. On the basis of what I have seen so far, may I ask you please to be *specific*? One advisor says this kind of thing: "This whole chapter should be completely rewritten to conform to the revolutionary new insights developed by" (here will follow a list of 8 or 10 books, in 2–4 volumes each, mostly in German, plus 10 or 12 volumes of modern editions of music, etc.).

This sort of advice obviously is not of much use to me. What I am trying to produce is a new *edition*, not a new book. I can't take much more space than in the present edition, but I want to make all the available space count to the utmost—to convey the essential information, suggest the most fruitful viewpoints, and keep the text simple and clear without being misleading or saying things that students will have to unlearn later. I am sure you understand, and I shall value your advice.⁷³

Grout demonstrated his flexible approach to the canon in his response to D. Antoinette Handy, who at that time was Assistant Professor of Music at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia. Handy wrote to Grout in 1970, urging him to consider black American composers and their music in his second *HWM* edition (1973).⁷⁴ The letter began:

72. Grout to Pirrotta, typescript letter, 20 April 1955, box 55, folder "W. W. Norton," DJGP.

73. Grout to McCorkle, typescript letter, 12 March 1971, box 17, folder 14, DJGP.

74. Handy-Miller was a jazz specialist and director of the National Endowment for the Arts music program from 1990–93. Her publications include *Jazz Man's Journey: A Biography of Ellis Louis Marsalis, Jr.* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999); *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, 2d ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998); *Black Conductors* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995); and *The International Sweethearts of Rhythm* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983).

Figure 2. Donald Jay Grout with two unidentified students (undated photo). Courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Libraries.



Dear Dr. Grout:

I am grateful for this opportunity to communicate to you some ideas and names concerning Black Music and Black Musicians, for consideration in your revision of the book *A History of Western Music*.

The following list of American Black composers—all “mainstream,” are most worthy of your consideration. For the most part, all are included in the various ASCAP Catalogues:

William Grant Still (“The Dean”), Howard Swanson, Ulysses Kay, William Dawson, Florence Price, Julia Perry

The Younger Set: Halesmith, Olly Wilson, T. J. Anderson, George Walker, David Baker, Arthur Cunningham, Noel Da Costa, Coleridge Taylor Perkinson, William Fischer, Frederick Tillis, Stephen Chambers, John Carter

Additional: Best known, for the most part, in the area of vocal music: Harry T. Burleigh (He & James Weldon Johnson, Charter Members of ASCAP), Will Marian (He & Burleigh, pupils of Dvořák), J. Rosamond Johnson, Margaret Bonds, Nathaniel Dett, Noah Ryder, Frederick Hall, John Work, Clarence Cameron White, Undine Moore.⁷⁵

Handy goes on to suggest several sources Grout might consult including an article in the *American Music Digest*, her own bibliography, *Black Music in Our Culture: Curricular Ideas on Subjects, Materials, and Problems* by Dr. Dominique-Rene de Lerma, and other writings (not specified by title) by James Monroe Trotter and Zelma George. Finally, Handy referred de Lerma and David Baker's work to Grout: "As you perhaps know, Indiana University at Bloomington (Dr. Dominique-Rene de Lerma & David Baker—Black Music Committee), is perhaps best equipped to provide immediate, up-to-date data on the subject of Black Music and Black Musicians."⁷⁶ In considering the letter, Grout jotted marginalia including some of the composers' birth and death dates. Although he added only three composers from Handy's list to his second edition of *HWM*—William Grant Still, Ulysses Kay, and James Bland, each receiving one sentence—at the very least, this shows Grout loosening the rein of his predominantly white male European narrative.⁷⁷ Austin reacted to Grout's mention of Still, "On Still, good—I can imagine this bland sentence results from many hours' study and thought. Kay would make a valuable contribution on p. 625. He's probably as near Piston's class [?] as Hanson is."⁷⁸ Handy insisted that Bland should be included in any discussion of Stephen Foster, who also, incidentally, occupies only one sentence in Grout's second edition. Bland and Foster are contextualized in a paragraph on the United States: "The material [American musical nationalism], to be sure, lay ready in profusion—old New England hymnody, rural revival-meeting songs, tunes from the urban popular minstrelsy of Stephen Foster (1820–94) and James Bland (1854–1911), Indian tribal melodies, above all the great body of black folk spirituals with their unique fusion of African and Anglo-American elements—but to no avail."⁷⁹ Such scant coverage could be read as merely token inclusion in the case of Bland and Foster. A comparison with two contemporary textbooks on American music, the second editions of Gilbert

75. Antoinette Handy (Miller) to Grout, typescript letter, 1970, box 17, folder 14, DJGP, pp. 1–2.

76. *Ibid.*, 2.

77. Grout, *HWM*, 2nd ed. (1973), 678 and 643.

78. Austin to Grout, handwritten remarks on Chapter 20 for the 2nd edition of *HWM*, 31 January 1972, box 17, folder 9, DJGP. Austin's remark may be read as facetious or sarcastic; however, his intent is unknown.

79. *Ibid.*, 643.

Chase's *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (1966) and H. Wiley Hitchcock's *Music in the United States* (1974) reveals varying treatment in these texts.

There is considerably more coverage of African-American music in general in Chase's book than in Grout's or Hitchcock's. Four chapters are respectively titled "African Exiles," "The Negro Spirituals," "The Ethiopian Business," and "America's Minstrel." These chapters focus on the white observers and collectors of this music, more than on its black creators. William Grant Still, who received two paragraphs, is introduced with the statement, "William Grant Still has been concerned mainly with depicting the backgrounds of the American Negro in music."⁸⁰ Harry T. Burleigh is also included, but in the context of the discussion entitled, "Dvořák in America."⁸¹ Hitchcock included Bland but not Still, Burleigh, or Kay in his history of American music. Discussions of minstrelsy, spirituals, jazz, ragtime, folk music, blues, be-bop, swing, and pop and rock are present and they are indexed as "American negro music."⁸² One wonders if this representation would satisfy Handy. Choosing a subject involves not only deciding who or what to include but also how to include them.

As Hinton pointed out, matters of addition and omission potentially perpetuate endless discussions about content, as do issues of constructing the content. One example is Grout's *HWM* portrayal of the seventeenth-century playwright Jean-Philippe Quinault and composer Jean-Baptiste Lully. Grout's consideration exemplifies his willingness to rethink and subsequently modify the reception of historical people. In a five-page letter dated 4 January 1970, Paul Henry Lang outlined revisions for Grout's second *HWM* edition (1973). Many of his comments address the use of language. While some of these may seem to be slight shadings of text, many of them represent a significant shift of values. To Grout, Lang wrote: "Quinault may be 'a minor poet' to us but in those days he was considered Racine's equal (Rousseau). This is important because it shows that opera was acceptable to them only when it was built on a recognized literary masterpiece. I think that you are a little hard on Lully; he was frosty, but 'no sentiment' is a little harsh."⁸³ Grout's assessment of early French opera evidenced quite clearly in his Harvard dissertation on *opéra comique* (1939) and in a pentalogy of articles, four of which were published shortly thereafter in 1941 with the fifth appearing sometime between 1958

80. Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 511.

81. *Ibid.*, 387–91.

82. H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 284.

83. Lang to Grout, typescript letter, 4 January 1970, box 17, folder, DJGP.

and 1961. These reveal him grappling with the complicated issue of constructing Lully's history.⁸⁴

In his five articles on seventeenth and early eighteenth-century aspects of French opera—exploring seventeenth-century parodies of French opera, forerunners of Lully, machine operas, the Italian theater in Paris 1682–97, and *opéra comique* and the Italian theater in Paris 1715–62—Grout emplotted Lully as the composer whose music established French national opera by combining dance, Italian opera, machines, and pastorales. Therein, Grout extolled Lully's artistry explaining that he wrote a “masterpiece” in the pastorale form, that his ballets with Isaac de Benserade after 1658 “represent the highest achievements in this form,”⁸⁵ and that “the creation of this kind of opera is the work of Lully.”⁸⁶ As described by Grout, the various parts—Italian operas, machines, pastorales, and ballets—were fairly mediocre when standing alone—but in the hands of Lully, the genius, they were brought together to create a national opera for France. In short, Lully's “shrewdness” and “determination” made French opera a success.⁸⁷ In these passages Lully is a hero in the romance of early French opera because of his ability to capitalize on and integrate all that came before him. This seems straightforward enough until the discussion turns from dramaturgy to the music itself. Grout opined that the value of Lully's music rested on its contribution to the drama, and that on its own the music, when compared to other composers' works such as those by German composer Dietrich Buxtehude [or Danish born, Diderik] and Italian composers Arcangelo Corelli and Francesco Provenzale, revealed that “Lully's musical gifts were scarcely of the first order.”⁸⁸ Still, Lully was

84. Grout, “The Origins of the *Opéra Comique*,” PhD diss., Harvard University, 1939; “Seventeenth-Century Parodies of French Opera,” *Musical Quarterly* 27 (1941): 211–19 and 514–26; “Some Forerunners of the Lully Opera,” *Music and Letters* 22 (1941): 1–25; “The ‘Machine’ Operas,” *Bulletin of the Fogg Museum of Art* 9 (1941): 100–103; “The Music of the Italian Theatre at Paris, 1682–1697,” *Papers of the American Musicological Society* (New York: American Musicological Society, 1946), 158–70; “The *Opéra Comique* and the *Théâtre Italien* from 1715 to 1762,” in “Collected Articles 1941–1975,” (1958–61): 1–9. This volume includes photocopies of articles written by Grout. One copy housed in the Sydney Cox Library of Music and Dance at Cornell University.

85. Grout, “Some Forerunners of the Lully Opera,” 24.

86. *Ibid.*, 2.

87. *Ibid.*, 25.

88. *Ibid.*, 2–3. It is hard to interpret exactly what Grout intended from what seems like a comparison of a composer of German organ music and cantatas (Buxtehude), Italian trio sonatas (Corelli), and Neapolitan operas (Provenzale). Although Provenzale was a famous teacher who adapted some of Cavalli's works, he was characterized in Grout's first edition of *HWM* along with M. A. Sartorio, Giovanni Legrenzi, Carol Pallavicini, Agostino Steffani, and Alessandro Scarlatti as one of “the most important Italian opera composers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.” Furthermore, “The qualities of Italian vocal style in arias

French opera's "guiding genius and its absolute master," despite the "page upon page of music void of imagination, pale in colour, thin in harmony, monotonous in invention, stereotyped in rhythm, limited in melody, barren of contrapuntal resource and so cut into little sections by perpetually recurring cadences that all sense of movement seems lost in a desert of clichés, relieved all too rarely by oases of real beauty." Then again, "the music is not really as bad as all that. Apart from the recitatives, there are many places of charm and even grandeur, as well as occasional passages of strong dramatic force."⁸⁹ Grout reconciled all of this in *HWM* by depicting Lully as "the first important composer" in French opera who "succeeded in blending elements from the ballet and the drama in a form which he called a *tragédie lyrique* (tragedy in music)."⁹⁰ In the second edition, Lully's music is no longer "monotonous in harmony and almost totally unrelieved by any flash of spontaneous feeling . . ." as it had been in the first edition, since this phrase was omitted per Lang's urging.⁹¹

As for early French opera, the other issue raised by Lang was the characterization of Quinault's abilities. Grout's answer to this was simple. From his first to his second *HWM* edition, Quinault went from a "minor dramatist of the period" to "an esteemed dramatist of the period."⁹² Perhaps in the scheme of things this revision appears trivial, but this behind-the-scenes look at Grout's middleground discloses the process and Lang's method—*Rezeptionsgeschichte*—by which a person in music history advanced from being an insignificant figure to a key player. In addition to details of content, Grout also pondered music history in a broader context: the very purpose of writing it.

Grout the Philosopher

Grout grappled with the philosophical question, why write music history? How does studying music history help us enjoy and understand music? Put another way, can what is said about music (music history) enhance what listeners hear (musical reality)? Grout's answer was "yes," because while all musics are unique creations, they are also events in the pageant of history, each with its own history. Grout maintained four ways to understand music: performing it, listening to it, analyzing it, and studying its history. The latter

that express strong feeling of sadness and pain are nowhere better exemplified than in the long melodic lines and expressive chromatic harmonies of "Lasciatemi morir" (Let me die) from Provenzale's opera *Il schiavo di sua moglie* (His Wife's Slave)." *HWM*, first edition, 1960, 310.

89. Grout, "Some Forerunners of the Lully Opera," 2–3.

90. Grout, *HWM* (1960), 315–18 and 2nd ed. (1973), 347–51.

91. Grout, *HWM* (1960), 315–16.

92. Compare Grout, *HWM* (1960), 315 and 2nd ed. (1973), 349.

involves at least two of the former, listening and analyzing. Grout postulated that historians must first be critics and surely seek the knowledge of what music sounded like to its first listeners. Music spoke to its first hearers and it speaks to us today, albeit in potentially very different ways. Recognizing this clarifies much in the history of music criticism and reception studies. Grout gives the example of the Bohemian composer Václav Tomášek who criticized Beethoven for his harsh shifts from motive to motive, which he claimed weakened his best compositions. Such a review is not surprising because Tomášek's frame of reference included Haydn and Mozart symphonies. Yet, it was reportedly these same daring innovations that astonished his audiences. In this way, listeners stand to benefit greatly from the fruits of historical inquiry.

Additionally, Grout advocated understanding the part music plays in culture, particularly its relationship to other media, including literature, poetry, architecture, and art.⁹³ For Grout, these connections revealed much about culture and values, and he challenged general historians to use music as a resource because he knew of no society devoid of music. In essence, he maintained that all people individually and collectively experience music in some way, and thus the historical approach aptly promotes enjoyment and understanding. He recognized that such an understanding required an effort to comprehend human behavior and the "complex issues of freedom and determinism."⁹⁴ In advancing this theory Grout posed a slate of questions for future historians:

In what sense, and to what extent, were creators of music at any specified time and place "free"? In what respects were they bound by limiting physical conditions? What possibilities were open to them? In what ways and by what means were their artistic intentions shaped by their economic status and by their social and intellectual environment? How much were they and

93. This view aligns in part with that of the French *Annales* school and their *histoire totale*, although Grout did not refer specifically to it or to them. Lucien Febvre urged historians to join with their colleagues in other disciplines in promoting an interdisciplinary approach: "History must cease to appear as a sleeping necropolis haunted by shadowy schemes. They [the historians]—imbued with a desire to do battle, covered completely with the dust of the fight and the crusted blood of the monster—must penetrate into the old silent palace where the princess slumbers, throw the windows open, relight the candelabra, bring back the world of sound; then they will with their own vitality, with their own bubbling and young vitality, awaken the suspended life in the sleeping princess," *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1953), 32 quoted in Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 370. For an excellent introduction see also Michael Roberts, "The *Annales* School and Historical Writing," in *Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline*, ed. Peter Lambert and Phillip Schofield (New York: Routledge, 2004), 78–92.

94. Grout, "Current Historiography," 40.

other people aware of such influences? What kind of originality, if any, was rewarded? Was the “rebel” an admired figure? More generally, to what extent had the history of music been shaped by outstanding individuals? How much of the greatness of a “great” composer was due to genius, how much to favorable circumstances, and how much to the luck of having “made his entry” into history at the right moment? Is there any objective sense in which his music (apart from a verbal text) can be said to “represent” or “embody” collective attitudes or aspirations of his time? And if so, what is the relation between any values so embodied and the aesthetic value of music?⁹⁵

He considered the answers to these complex questions anything but simple.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that there is much more to Grout’s historiographical contributions than was previously assumed. His essays on writing music history and archival letters reveal a musicologist well-versed in contemporaneous philosophy, and they posit the tasks he deemed most challenging for music historians: choice of subject, objectivity, and explanation and narration. Additionally, they reveal him pondering the purpose of writing music history and advocating for a flexible Western art music canon. When viewed through the lens of White and Kellner’s theories, they offer a legend for grappling with Grout and his *HWM*; they help establish a middleground, the place where the historian makes decisions; and they aid in “getting the story crooked.” White and Kellner’s theories enable us to look beyond *HWM*’s tidy narrative (the foreground) and its sources (the background) to establish the space in between, the middleground, which for Grout was often messy, chaotic, and difficult. Grout recognized this and he identified two factors in historical writing that contribute to this untidy process: unavoidable flaws in historical constructions and the swift rate at which knowledge itself becomes outdated. In a handwritten note, which appears to be part of a discarded version of *HWM*’s preface, he wrote: “In the course of writing this book I have encountered too many errors in the works of others to have any hope that my own will be free from such (revise wording) (I mean e.g., *HDM*! [presumably Grout is referring to Willi Apel’s *The Harvard Dictionary Of Music*]). Moreover, advance knowledge shortly or rapidly makes any formulation obsolete almost before it has time to escape in print.”⁹⁶ Scholarly developments and shifting values in musicology since Grout’s third *HWM* edition

95. Grout, “Current Historiography,” 39–40.

96. Grout, handwritten note, 1956, box 14, folder 38, DJGP.

likely rendered Palisca and Burkholder's middleground—where they made their choices and decisions—more complex than Grout's.

In the hands of Palisca and Burkholder, what began as a pragmatic history of Western music textbook for teaching undergraduates in the 1960s continues to be the most widely-read such volume. It is as Lang predicted thirty years ago in a letter to Grout, "This book [*HWM*] ought to remain in the lead, for while there will be new ones every year and they will cut into your sales, you should be able to keep the lead. No one else would do such a good job."⁹⁷

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