



Bartók and the Grotesque: Studies in Modernity, the Body and Contradiction in Music (Royal Musical Association Monographs)

By Julie Brown

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The grotesque is one of art's most puzzling figures - transgressive, comprising an unresolvable hybrid, generally focussing on the human body, full of hyperbole, and ultimately semantically deeply puzzling. In *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911), *The Wooden Prince* (1916/17), *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1919/24, rev. 1931) and *Cantata Profana* (1930), Bartók engaged scenarios featuring either overtly grotesque bodies or closely related transformations and violations of the body. In a number of instrumental works he also overtly engaged grotesque satirical strategies, sometimes - as in *Two Portraits: 'Ideal' and 'Grotesque'* - indicating this in the title. In this book, Julie Brown argues that Bartók's concerns with stylistic hybridity (high-low, East-West, tonal-atonal-modal), the body, and the grotesque are inter-connected. While Bartók developed each interest in highly individual ways, and did so separately to a considerable extent, the three concerns remained conceptually interlinked. All three were thoroughly implicated in cultural constructions of the Modern during the period in which Bartók was composing.

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Review

'This volume is a valuable contribution to the literature that provides thought-provoking material for future research, especially regarding the interpretation of bodily meanings. ... Julie Brown has opened up a hugely fascinating area of musical modernism that remains largely unexplored.' --Music and Letters

About the Author

Julie Brown is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Music at Royal Holloway, University of London, UK.

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