



Still Songs: Music In and Around the Poetry of Paul Celan

Axel Englund

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What does it mean for poetry and music to turn to each other, in the shadow of the Holocaust, as a means of aesthetic self-reflection? How can their mutual mirroring, of such paramount importance to German Romanticism, be reconfigured to retain its validity after the Second World War? These are the core questions of Axel Englund's book, which is the first to address the topic of Paul Celan and music. Celan, a Jewish Holocaust survivor who has long been recognized as one of the most important poets of the German language, persistently evoked music and song in his oeuvre, from the juvenilia to the posthumous collections. Conversely, few post-war writers have inspired as large a body of contemporary music, including works by Harrison Birtwistle, Gyorgy Kurtag, Wolfgang Rihm, Peter Ruzicka and many others. Through rich close readings of poems and musical compositions, Englund's book engages the artistic media in a critical dialogue about the conditions of their existence. In so doing, it reveals their intersection as a site of profound conflict, where the very possibility of musical and poetic meaning is at stake, and confrontations of aesthetic transcendentalism and historical remembrance are played out in the wake of twentieth-century trauma.

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