

Thoughts on Biography as a Research Problem with a Look at Current Estonian Music Biography

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to give a brief survey of the history of music biography, discuss some new approaches to writing musical lives and to look at the state of current Estonian music biographies. A heightened interest in music biography as a research problem emerged only in the late 20th century, and among some recent questions about life writing are (1) how to construct a chronologically ordered text while avoiding linearity in portraying the other's life, (2) how the biographer can choose and interpret facts of an individual's life, etc. One of central problems in the case of composer's biography is this: could the biography seek to illuminate the life of a composer in order to explain his works? In today's Estonian music biographies there are some different tendencies in writing lives: along with traditional biographies there are so-called polyphonically constructed portrait of an outstanding composer or musician, and we can find also some „autobiographical biographies“.