

# H-Net Reviews

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**Celia Applegate, Pamela Potter, eds.** *Music and German National Identity*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002. 296 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-226-02131-7.

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For those interested in German nationalism, Applegate and Potter have assembled a very valuable collection of essays. One of the interesting features of the book is the extent to which the vast majority of articles focus less on music *per se* than on printed matter. This focus reflects a theme introduced in the editors's introductory article, which continuously resurfaces in the articles that follow: that critics, educators, conductors, bureaucrats and audiences had at least as large a role as the composers themselves in defining the German musical canon and the characteristics that supposedly defined it. Thus, the articles in this collection focus on analyzing the debate about German music and what it reveals about German nationalism. It is the explicit aim of the editors not to focus on the Third Reich but to examine the connection between German nationalism and music from the initial development of German nationalism (and also the notion of German music) through to the current day. The time-span and genres of music considered in this volume—and the range of scholars that have contributed to it—allow it to provide a broad overview.

In their introductory essay Applegate and Potter place the interest in the “Germanness” of music within the context of broader trends of German nationalism. They trace the role of music in German nationalism from its initially minor position compared to language and literature in the eighteenth century through the development of the notion of the Germans as the “people of music” in the nineteenth century, and the utilization of German music by the state in the twentieth century. In doing so, they provide a background to the history of German nationalism and music as a whole, which will be of considerable use to readers approaching the field of German music and nationalism for the first time. (Another aid to the reader is the list of recommended further readings provided at the end of each article.)

Applegate and Potter argue that the central role of music in German nationalism was determined, in part, by the need to demonstrate a history of cultural unity in the absence of political unity. As such, there was intense interest in defining what exactly made German music German. The construction of a national music required the reinterpretation as German of composers from the pre-national period who did not themselves identify their music as German. From the nineteenth century music formed an increasingly important element in the broader project of *Bildung*. A further feature of this process was the close involvement of the state in German music. The relationship was not always comfortable, especially as Imperial Germany had some difficulty relating to a musical canon defined by *Grossdeutschum* and liberalism.

This introductory essay is followed by an article by Bernd Sponheuer, examining the continuing debate over that which is “German” in German music. Sponheuer identifies two recurring themes. On one hand German music has been represented as universalist, capturing the best qualities of the world's music and composing/performing it at a better standard than anywhere else in the world. On the other hand German music has been identified as particularist, possessing somehow a depth and meaning not found in the concrete, entertainment-oriented materialist music of Western Europe and America. Sponheuer provides examples of this theme in the discussion of German music from the mid-nineteenth through to the end of the twentieth century.

Sponheuer's article is followed by two articles considering the nationalism and music of the nineteenth-century composers Schumann and Wagner. John Daverio identifies a strong interest in liberalism in Schumann's work. However, he sees Schumann's music of the 1850s as more reflective and slightly dystopian, emphasizing the composer's disillusionment with the clash between unity and freedom re-

vealed by the revolution. Daverio is unusual in this volume in that he devotes as much time to contemplating the score of Schumann's work (in general terms) as to the libretto. Unfortunately, I am not a musicologist and thus I am not qualified to judge the accuracy of Daverio's analysis. Nevertheless, his conclusions are thought provoking. He argues that Schumann used various musical techniques to emphasize freedom, unity of action, and martial themes in his music, as symbols of liberalism and republicanism. Daverio argues convincingly that the role of music as a symbol of nationalism was more important than its explicit message.

Thomas Grey examines the evolution of Wagner's *Meistersinger*, from conception to its eventual status as a *Nationaloper*. Grey argues that although the *Meistersinger* began as a light-hearted comedy in Wagner's initial draft in 1845, it always contained strong nationalist influences. To some extent Wagner retreated from these ideas by the final version in 1865. Nevertheless, the closing address portrays the perfect microcosm of bourgeois German national life. Grey sees this as a reflection of the exclusivist ideal of German music, as discussed by Sponheuer, which Wagner saw as needing protection from the French without and the Jews within. Grey's work is one of many in this collection which are forced by the existing historiography to focus on the attitudes of the Third Reich. Despite the increasing importance of *Meistersinger* for German nationalists from 1871 to 1945, Grey argues that Wagner's *Weltanschauung* was the product of pre-Nazi nationalism, and that to put too much emphasis on it is to accept claims made upon it by National Socialism.

Philip Bohlman moves from high culture to consider the role of folk music in German national identity. He does so through an examination of the *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* project (1924-1972), which aimed to record in written form the folk songs of different German regions. The length of the program allows Bohlman to reach a number of conclusions about the continuing relationship of German nationalism to folk music. He notes that the interest in folk music was driven by a belief in the ability of folk music to encapsulate local identity, and that some kind of common German national identity could be captured in national collections of folk songs. This reflects trends in *Heimatkunde* as a whole. That is, folk music provided another form of capturing that which was "German" in German music. After the collapse of Germany following WWI, the study of folk

music also became a way of rewriting German history under the pretence of documenting tradition.

Bohlman identifies a changing focus for the project. During the 1920s, an emphasis was placed on collecting from areas within truncated Germany, or immediately adjacent. This changed under Nazi influences during the 1930s and 1940s, where there was an emphasis on collecting material from *auslandsdeutsch* communities often greatly distant from Germany. By this means, the project was contributing to the process of staking cultural claims on territories far from Germany. There was little interest in interethnic relations in those German settlements. Rather the aim was to "excavate" a solely German cultural landscape. After the Second World War, publications of the project were officially stripped of nationalist material, but continued the same ideals of the relationship between folk music and national identity. Bohlman's conclusions for the post-war period are difficult to support because of the infrequency of publications and thus the paucity of material. Nevertheless, this is a very interesting article for those readers interested in the notion of the *Heimat*, and especially those studying attitudes to Germans abroad.

The focus on folk music is continued by Bruce Campbell in his article on the *Spielschar Ekkehard*. Campbell examines the use of folk and other music in a political context by this far right nationalist musical group. This provides a further example of the importance of music for nationalism lying in its symbolism, as argued by Daverio, rather than its explicit message. Led by Gerhard Rossbach, the semi-professional musical group *Spielschar Ekkehard* actively engaged in the process of *Bildung*, hoping to change social attitudes through music and open the way for political revolution. Campbell argues convincingly that although Rossbach lost out to the National Socialists, his works and those of other groups like the *Spielschar Ekkehard* were of importance because of their undermining of popular support for liberalism in Germany.

Doris Bergen then goes on to examine the largely unsuccessful efforts of the *Deutsche Christen* movement to purge Protestant Church music of references to "Judaism" and the Old Testament, in the process of attempting to produce an "Aryan" Christianity. She argues that although the official nationalism of the National Socialists identified strongly with Wagner, for many (Protestant) Germans, national identity

was better reflected in Church music. She identifies a long-standing connection between Protestant hymns and German nationalism. As Bergen demonstrates, however, even the most radical anti-Jewish members of the *Deutsche Christen* movement often felt a continuing sympathy for familiar hymns. They felt that these hymns continued to represent the *Volksgemeinschaft* despite the “Jewish” references. Once again, music was more important as a symbol than in its explicit message. However, as Bergen notes, support for existing music in no way indicated opposition to the persecution of individuals identified by the regime as Jews.

Returning to the themes of universalism and localism in German music, as raised by Sponheuer, Hans Rudolf Veget then considers Thomas Mann’s changing views of German nationalism through his novel *Dr Faustus*. For Mann, a moderate German nationalist, music becomes the metaphor for German nationalism as a whole. Mann perceives the belief in the universalism of German music as disguising a broadly shared pretence to cultural hegemony. The primary character in *Dr. Faustus*, the composer Leverkühn, begins with universalist tendencies in music but becomes increasingly obsessed with isolating and reproducing that which is specifically German in music. Veget argues that Mann saw salvation for Germany in the pursuit of universalism without the quest for power. However, he argues, the big flaw in Mann’s work is its portrayal of Germany as being without anti-Semitism.

Michael Kater then charts the career of one of Mann’s strongest critics, composer and conductor Hans Pfitzner. Perhaps inevitably, this article offers little in a broad sense that is new about attitudes to music under the Third Reich. However, Kater uses Pfitzner’s strongly *voelkisch* views and his unsuccessful attempts to become the dominant figure in German music to illustrate the position of music and the conductor under Nazism. As Kater demonstrates, in the Third Reich even the most “respectable” ultra-right national credentials could be undermined by the suspicion of Jewish origins.

The following four articles deal with music in divided post-war Germany. Joy Haslam Calico examines the efforts of the GDR to develop a *Nationaloper* to help unite Germany culturally, and perhaps lay the groundwork for a future political reunification. She considers the influence of the USSR in imposing values of social realism at the expense of “formalis-

tic” abstract modernist works which were seen as the last gasp of bourgeois culture. Calico also identifies similarities between the national socialist pursuit of “natural” art and the interest of the GDR in socialist realism. Both were defined more by what they were not than what they were, and both treated modernism as “old fashioned” and clichéd, and promoted national art forms. However, Calico identifies a crucial difference in that the National Socialists were less interested in modernism than in whether the composer was Jewish. By comparison, although there was anti-Semitism in the GDR, the primary concern was style, and not the ethno-religious identity of the composer.

While the GDR embraced old forms with new content, Gesa Kordes argues that West Germany sought a new musical identity. She examines this search through the example of the experimental *Darmstaedter Ferienkurse*. In West Germany a strong emphasis on avoiding the “tainted” art forms of National Socialism was made in favor of something new, non-restrictive, non-political. However, because of the range of styles that had been permitted under National Socialism, as discussed by Calico, it was difficult to identify forms which were acceptable. Instead, Kordes argues, young composers chose abstract forms of music which had been most heavily opposed by National Socialism, and which were therefore seen as free from the “taint” of the former regime. In addition, abstract composition was perceived to be less susceptible to political pressures.

However, as Kordes argues, this “apolitical” music quickly received heavy sponsorship from the West German government, as a means of distancing German culture from national socialist cultural politics. This apparent contradiction in political sponsorship of apolitical music did not prevent the young composers from taking the money. This example provides another example of the continuing heavy influence of the state on music in Germany.

A further example of the influence of the post-war state on music is provided by Uta Poiger’s article on American Jazz during the German Cold War. Jazz won a measure of state support in West Germany by the end of the 1950s, and the grudging acceptance of the same music form in East Germany. Jazz was initially perceived as being morally and socially subversive in both West and East Germany. Poiger argues that for jazz to become acceptable required its reclassification as an intellectualized and,

above all, middle-class high culture art form. There were however differences in attitudes in the two Germanys, which mirrored attitudes to classical music. In West Germany, the state preference was for more intellectualized, abstract forms of jazz. It was hoped that jazz would provide a means of reducing support for socially subversive popular dance music and rock and roll. East Germany's socialist realist policies favored more traditional, concrete forms of jazz. East Germany was also deeply suspicious of the moral effects of dance music. The position of jazz was always less secure in East Germany, and this led to it being used as a propaganda tool by the United States and by West Germany.

Poiger's article is one of the few in this collection to examine connections between attitudes to music and to gender roles. Given the importance of anxiety about gender roles to nationalism, especially in the interwar period, and the ability of attitudes towards music and musicians to shed light on this, this is a surprising absence.

Following on from this, Edward Larkey examines postwar German popular music in the context of Americanization, the Cold War and the post-Nazi *Heimat*. This fascinating article considers the adoption of foreign (U.S.) music after 1945, as a series of waves introduced by the avant-garde, starting with jazz in the 1940s and following on with rock and roll in the 50s, beat and hippie culture in the 60s, and punk in the 70s and 80s. Larkey contrasts this to the maintenance of "traditional" German music forms such as *Schlager* and folk music, which gained "authenticity" through a sometimes dubious emphasis on *Heimat* influences. Larkey also identifies language, and the use of German instead of English lyrics, as a key element in the development of German forms of international music. He charts efforts in the 1980s and 1990s to create a German form of international music, which is socially, ethnically and territorially German. The emphasis on *Heimat*-related music as being authentically German provides an interesting comparison to attitudes to folk music identified by Bohlman in his earlier article. Larkey also briefly considers the division between "German" forms and those of Germans of ethnic non-German background, for example "Oriental Hip-Hop." The difficulty of including Germans of ethnic non-German background into a musical identity made authentic by its connection to the *Heimat* is an interesting one, which deserves further study. Sadly, there seems to have been little space for Larkey to expand on his brief

observations.

Up until this point, the articles in the collection follow an approximately chronological structure. The final three articles in the collection follow key themes across German history. The thematic approach helps to unify the book as a whole, by expanding on key themes highlighted by individual examples considered in the earlier articles. Jost Hermand examines the history of Hoffmann von Fallersleben's *Lied der Deutschen* from its creation in 1841 to present. The fortunes of the *Deutschlandlied* are indicative of German nationalism as a whole. Motivated by liberal, *grossdeutsch* views of the German nation, the song and its author were considered to be subversive by the Prussian crown. Nevertheless, it gained popularity before and during the First World War. The *Deutschlandlied* was instated as Germany's national anthem by the SPD only in 1922 as a means of bolstering the Social Democrats's nationalist credentials. The song also proved to be greatly popular with the Nazis, coming to stand for new peaks of imperialism and racism. Its retention as the national anthem of West Germany after 1945 was deeply popular in Germany. As a national anthem—a secular hymn—the *Deutschlandlied* has repeatedly taken on symbolic meanings which have little to do with the explicit message in its lyrics. In its current meaning, as Hermand argues, it has been perhaps permanently linked to the failure of German democracy. However, its familiarity gives it a popularity with the German population quite separate from ideological context. This sentiment is perhaps similar to the attitudes to Protestant hymns during the Nazi period, as highlighted by Doris Bergen.

In the following article Bruno Nettle examines the co-existing German, Czech, Jewish and Roma musical identities in the Czech lands. He argues that what gave the Germans in the Czech lands a unique musical culture within the broader German cultural nation was their interactions with their Czech, Jewish and Roma neighbors. He also highlights the flexibility of identity, as multilingual individuals moved from group to group. Of course, it was this very cultural interaction which *voelkisch* nationalists wished to disregard in the process of "excavating" German cultural landscapes in Eastern Europe, as discussed by Philip Bohlman earlier in this volume. Poignantly, Nettle concludes with the observation that the Second World War destroyed the cultural interaction which gave the Germans of the Czech lands their real claim to distinctiveness, first through the extermination of

Jews and Roma, and secondly through the deportation of Germans.

In the final essay, Albrecht Reithmueller provides a powerful summation in his examination of the arbitrary and deep-seated belief in German musical superiority. Through a series of examples he highlights the continuity of this belief throughout the period of German nationalism. He also examines the attempt to create a separate historicized Austrian national music, as an attempt by Austrian nationalists and tourist agents to position Austria as “the land of music.” This article provides a fitting conclusion to the collection.

The collection spans a wide period, deliberately avoiding a focus on National Socialism, although, perhaps inevitably in a book dealing with German nationalism, the Nazi regime is a subject of at least peripheral interest in most articles. This focus will, however, reflect the interests of many readers, and does not hinder the reader focused on other periods. More regrettable is the near absence of consideration of gender (with the exception of Uta Poiger’s contribution). However, overall this is an extremely useful collection. In the acknowledgements, Applegate and Potter thank the contributors for their willingness to

shape their contributions towards strengthening the volume as a whole. This extra editorial effort, so often lacking in collections of essays, has returned rich dividends.

The volume, for the most part, reads like a single unified text. While the majority of articles are case studies, often following the work of a single composer or music critic, and in some cases the reception of a single piece of music, they have been assembled together in such a way as to construct an overview of the history of music in German nationalism. However, each article remains freestanding, so that the reader can dip into a single essay if wished. The very small amount of repetition of some background material which is necessary to allow this is not an excessive price to pay.

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