

Sarah Zalfen, Sven Oliver Müller. *Besatzungsmacht Musik: Zur Musik- und Emotionsgeschichte im Zeitalter der Weltkriege (1914–1949)*. Bielefeld: Transcript - Verlag für Kommunikation, Kultur und soziale Praxis, 2012. 336 S. ISBN 978-3-8376-1912-6.

Reviewed by Yaron Jean

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (March, 2013)



## S. Zalfen u.a. (Hrsg.): *Besatzungsmacht Musik*

It is a tricky business to write about the interplay between music and history. In contrast to studies that tend to explore music and history as stand-alone disciplines, in this instance the major interest is the juxtaposition between them. However, it turns out to be much more complex when we observe this interplay within the context of Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Overshadowed by two world wars, torn by countless civil wars and facing mass extermination, ethnic cleansing and genocides in scales never known before, the story of Europe during the first half of the twentieth century is above all a story of a large scale human misery. Against this background, the history of war in the twentieth century is no longer only a matter for the military historian. It also suggests a broad historical terrain for exploring profound social, cultural and epistemological shifts of Europe as such. Within this context, the story of music and its social performance in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century can be understood as a field directly and indirectly influenced by mass violence and its avoidance. See for instance: Hansjakob Ziemer, *Die Moderne Hören. Das Konzert als urbanes Forum, 1890–1940*, Frankfurt am Main 2008.

Taking the multiple faces of war in the twentieth century as a point of departure, Sarah Zalfen and Sven Oliver Müller, both experts in the opposite poles of the twentieth century, accepted the challenge of analysing the interplay between music and history. In their well-edited volume titled “*Besatzungsmacht Musik. Zur Musik und Emotionsgeschichte im Zeitalter der Weltkriege (1914–*

1949)”, they attempt to explore this relationship through the epistemological lens of the history of emotions. Thus, instead of focusing on the “oppressors”, they centre the side of the “oppressed”. Building on the notion of war and occupation being not identical but tightly linked to each other (p. 12), the editors sought to observe the relationship between „Kriegsmusik“ and „Musik der Besatzung“ as “differenzierte Bestandteile eines musikalischen Kontinuums“ (p. 12).

The contributions to the volume are divided into three major perspectives on the topic. Beginning with the role of music as a “Besatzungsinstrument” (p. 31), the first part is well introduced by Jörg Echternkamp. In an illuminating article, Stephanie Kleiner examines the role of territorial occupation and the use of the politics of music during the Allied military occupation of the Rhineland after World War I. The thematic continuity is followed by a well-written article of Rebecca Wolf about the relationship between music and national feelings, as experienced by German soldiers during World War II. Focusing on the case of the Berlin Philharmonic, Sven Oliver Müller attempts to explore the political exploitation of music and its performance during wartime Nazi Germany. Examining the role of music as a “Besatzungsinstrument” also during the times of Allied military occupation of post World War II Germany, Andreas Linsenmann concentrates on the use of music as a means of re-education in Germany after the war.

The use and abuse of music as a political weapon in

times of war is the major focus of the second part of the volume prefaced by Claudius Torp. Giving weight to the use of music as a weapon during World War II, Hanns-Werner Heister generally explores the twofold use of music in the Nazi occupied territories. Juliane Brauer somehow polemically explores the role of music in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps by placing it on the spectrum between “musikalische Gewalt und Emotionsmanagement mit Musik” (p. 186). Derived from the wartime experience of the Polish population, Katarzyna Naliwajek-Mazurek contributes to the volume by addressing the different forms of the Nazi “musical occupation” (p. 207) in the Nazi occupied Polish territories during World War II.

The last part of the volume attempts to place the interaction between music, war and occupation within a broader historical context. In his insightful foreword to this part, Daniel Morat briefly points to the painful relation between global wars and global societies (p. 227). Continuing this standpoint, the contribution by Hermann Grampp focuses on the controversial reception of Richard Wagner in France during World War I. Gesa zur Nieden attempts in her article to place the story of the well-known Jewish born Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein within the broader context of interwar Europe. In sharp contrast to these, Michael Walter’s contribution sketches the success story of the German Schlager “Lilli Marleen” in wartime Europe. In the closing article of the volume, Anja Gallenkamp traces the founding story of jazz music in post war Germany using the example of the urban experience of Frankfurt am Main in the immediate post World War II period.

As a whole, most of the contributions are well written and well related to the major topics of the volume.

However, from a historical point of view, the volume exhibits a principle weakness. Its major focus on occupation as the leitmotif for explaining the multiple faces of music in the discussed period tends to overshadow the various and perhaps contradicting faces of occupation at that time. Consequently, throughout the volume the idea might emerge that the Allied military occupation of the Rhineland after World War I as well as the Allied military occupation of Germany after World War II are from the victims’ perspective to be placed on equal footing with the wartime Nazi occupation. Even without further developing this line of argument, it seems that there is a risk of losing the historical context in searching for a universal hermeneutics of occupation in the period discussed if it is solely analysed by means of one disciplinary framework: the history of emotions. In this sense, the volume gives the impression that, despite its transnational point of departure, it is still largely limited to the historical framework of the nation state.

Despite its historical limitations, the volume “Besatzungsmacht Musik” is a fresh contribution to the field. Within the exploding trend in the recent German speaking scholarship of observing the painful events of the twentieth century chiefly through the protective lenses of intellectual history, history of ideas and the Anglo-American tradition of cultural studies, the volume “Besatzungsmacht Musik” largely succeeds in remaining close to the events. Therefore, in their attempt to highlight one of the most disturbing aspects of music in the twentieth century, Sarah Zalfen and Sven Oliver Müller as well as the contributors not only assist further in shifting the discourse from the level of historiography back to the level of history, but also make the volume a worthwhile read.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

**Citation:** Yaron Jean. Review of Zalfen, Sarah; Müller, Sven Oliver, *Besatzungsmacht Musik: Zur Musik- und Emotionsgeschichte im Zeitalter der Weltkriege (1914–1949)*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. March, 2013.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=38654>

Copyright © 2013 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.