Musical activity in France during the First World War has been neglected in the scholarly literature, a period represented by some scholars as an artistic vacuum. Rachel Moore begins her monograph with a description of her struggle to obtain an archival file of concert programs between 1914 and 1918, a file that actually told the story of a rich and deeply interesting musical life. Her monograph, *Performing Propaganda: Musical Life and Culture in Paris during the First World War*, is a welcome addition to the growing bibliography of works on music during the First World War, alongside the work of Jane Fulcher, Regina Sweeney, Glenn Watkins, and Charlotte Segond-Genovesi.[1] Moore focuses on the musical activities in Paris between 1914 and 1918, using extensive archival material to demonstrate the ways in which music making during the war became synonymous with propaganda. She also examines the new performing spaces that emerged during this time. The ideas of “national identity,” “patriotism,” and “propaganda” are central throughout the book and Moore successfully draws from existing interdisciplinary work, combining it with her own research to provide considerable evidence. Correspondence, published memoirs, and concert and theater notices are used to demonstrate how the French government became a primary influencer in shaping a French national identity and sense of belonging and how propaganda, enabled by new technologies, was used on a mass scale to shape public opinion during the war.

In the first chapter, Moore paints an image of wartime Paris, illustrating the ways in which some of the main musical institutions were affected by the conflict between 1914 and 1918. After the summer of 1914, many theaters did not reopen for the new season in September, focusing instead on safeguarding the buildings and their contents. The closure of these establishments resulted in loss of work for many artists and theater personnel, and the urgent need for financial stability led to the reopening of theaters, concert halls, and musical establishments. New censorship restrictions on repertoire and programming, however, and a dramatically reduced workforce resulted in the need to adapt. Here, Moore uses a wide range of musical, literary, and political sources to survey how musical institutions such as the Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique responded to new ways of life during the war. She also discusses the moral duality that emerged around wartime music making: on one hand, the growing belief that entertainment was becoming increasingly incompatible with the tragedies happening on the front, and on the other, the idea that music making was a necessary distraction to raise the city’s morale and to increase a sense of solidarity.
After considering the ways in which society and musical establishments adapted to new ways of operating, in the second chapter Moore examines the idea of music as large-scale propaganda in wartime France. She discusses how music became used as a type of persuasion, used to boost morale and patriotism and to create a sense that all the suffering at the war front was for a greater cause. Prior to the First World War, propaganda had mainly been used by smaller-scale organizations but in October 1915, the formation of the Maison de la Presse—a governmental department in charge of analyzing all foreign press, diplomatic and military affairs, and propaganda—represented a new centralization of mass persuasion. As the war progressed, the French government gave increasing support to musical propaganda, organizing concerts devoted to French music in Paris and sending some of its musicians to neutral and Allied countries in an attempt to sway global opinion toward France. Fueled by political, social, and economic goals, propaganda was used to demonstrate France’s artistic superiority to the rest of the world, which, according to the author, was synonymous with cultural diplomacy.

In the third chapter, Moore scrutinizes composer Camille Saint-Saëns’s “Germanophilie,” one of five articles attacking German influence on French culture, as an early example of musical propaganda in written form. “Germanophilie” was a direct attack on the “infiltration” of the music of Richard Wagner in France at the time, in which Saint-Saëns called for more French music to feature in Parisian concert life. The text was part of a larger propaganda operation that appeared in the form of columns and articles, brochures, and transcripts of speeches disseminated to the larger public through the press, and sometimes even translated into other languages for overseas consumption. Moore aligns “Germanophilie” with the wider propaganda trends of the Institut de France (to which Saint-Saëns belonged), placing it alongside the work of many other intellectuals who were encouraged to pen such nationalist texts, and giving the text renewed importance. She also discusses the public reception of the text through examination of archival press material and personal correspondence, outlining the extensive debates that it triggered as well as the varying responses with which it was met in both musical circles and wider intellectual milieus. Examining the text through the lens of Oliver Thomson’s demarcation between rational and emotional propaganda, Moore demonstrates how Saint-Saëns’s exaggerated accusations and staunchly nationalistic claims ultimately resulted in its rejection by many musicians in Paris.

In the fourth chapter, Moore surveys the Matinées nationales concert series given by the Œuvre fraternelle des artistes, as well as the propagandist techniques created by combining music and text-based elements in their programs. Held on Sunday afternoons, these concerts served as emotional comfort and a distraction from the horrors of daily life, while also raising money for charitable causes. The programs from the Matinées nationales featured mostly French music and contained unusual combinations of chamber and orchestral music, plays, poetry, and propagandist speeches by French intellectuals. Moore’s discussion on the speeches included in these concert programs is particularly valuable, since the speeches themselves have mostly been overlooked in the current literature and are rare in musical archives. They were often written up to the last minute before the concerts, which meant that they were not restricted by the strict censorship laws and could include acute propagandist and nationalistic rhetoric, particularly interesting in the context of Moore’s work.

The fifth chapter details the ways in which the Paris Opéra adapted its performances during wartime, with emphasis on the matinées musicales at the Palais Trocadéro, which used music as a tool for showcasing French culture. The Opéra was
faced with the problem of trying to generate enough income, especially with the gap in Germanic repertoire and the shortage in materials for props and costumes. The reopening of the Opéra in late 1915 was a sign of return to normality but adjustments had to be made to program formats and repertoire, with smaller-scale scenery, props, and costumes. Moore draws parallels between the Opéra during the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War, discussing the similarities in patriotic repertoire and the tendency to find a sense of hope and identity in the past. Jacques Rouché, the head of the Opéra from 1914, actively promoted national culture and heritage via a series of concerts and musical celebrations of significant moments in French history, with the aim of connecting audiences to their own cultural heritage and thus promoting national identity and solidarity. In this chapter, Moore highlights the compromises made by the Opéra to participate in the war effort, as well as the key role of both present and past musical repertoire as propaganda.

In the last chapter, Moore examines the publishing industry in France during the war and the ways that some publishing houses joined forces to produce a series of French editions of German masterworks. The general unease about German products in wartime extended to musical editions, with Parisian bookstores now pressured to sell French editions rather than the Austro-German volumes, such as the popular ones by Peters or Litolff. Switching to French editions was, however, not easy for a public who mostly preferred the Austro-German editions, which were generally of better quality and had a more affordable price. Moore discusses publisher Alexis Rouart’s attempt at creating a firm that would publish one single, “national” edition, the Édition française de musique classique. She supports that the propagandist power of printed music became obvious during the war and that discouraging Austro-German musical editions became an issue of cultural rivalry, deeply rooted in the political conflict. Here, the author uses valuable archival records of the French government’s legal depository for musical editions, including a revelatory report from the 1917 Congrès national du livre.

Moore frequently uses well-researched and well-placed vignettes taken from an impressive array of archival sources, adding depth and nuance to her research. She is also able to skillfully identify the limitations of the archival collections with which she works. Her work examines the relationship that existed between the nationalist rhetoric of French press campaigns during the war and overall public sentiment in France, which, to quote her directly, “vividly highlights a divide between discourse and practice within wartime” (p. 218). She also warns that the case studies in her book should be interpreted on a case-by-case basis and considered individually. Her close attention to detail extends to the front cover of the book, taken from a 1918 musical periodical aimed at disseminating French musical works abroad, depicting Marianne spreading French musical editions around her. It must be noted that Moore’s case studies are focused on art music, more closely tied to musical institutions and government bodies rather than representing trends of popular or avant-garde music. Nevertheless, this book is a valuable addition to the shelves of scholars, students, and all those interested in France’s musical culture during the First World War.

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