

Applegate, Celia; Potter, Pamela (Hg.): *MUSIC AND GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2002. ISBN: 0-226-02130-2 geb.; 0-226-02131-9 TB; 296 S.

**Rezensiert von:** Ryan Minor, Department of Music, University of Chicago

Willi Apel, one of the deans of modern musicology, once defined nationalism in music as „a reaction against the supremacy of German music.“<sup>1</sup> Apel's comment comes as no shock insofar as it reflects the long history of placing Germany at the forefront of musical composition; but the fact that this was published in 1969 in the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* suggests the surprising extent to which the ideology of a Germanic musical nationalism continues to shape the values of Anglo-American musicology. Indeed, the notion that German music speaks to all nations—and does so in a way that other music cannot—has yet to be fundamentally challenged by either the classical music industry or the academicians whose historiographies systematically grant the Germanic canon a normative centrality.

It is against this backdrop that *Music and German National Identity*, a book of essays edited by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, makes a welcome appearance. Its subject is not German musical nationalism per se nor the place of German music within other musical cultures—although both of these topics demand future attention. Rather, as the title suggests, Applegate's and Potter's volume examines the centrality of music to German identity. Ranging from eighteenth-century aesthetics to jazz, and from the Hotel Don Giovanni in Prague to the NASA Voyagers somewhere in outer space, the book is an exploration of how, when, and even why German identity became so strongly associated with music.

The range of topics is impressive; this volume ventures far beyond the concert hall and its stalwart repertoire of the three „Bs“ (Bach, Beethoven, Brahms). In particular the twentieth

century is granted a rich treatment, with essays encompassing subjects as remote as church music in the Third Reich and the *Fantastische Vier* in the 1990s. The contributions spanning broader periods of time are also illuminating in their scope: the editors' excellent introduction and Bernd Sponheuer's historical survey illustrate both the lasting appeal of a German Sonderweg in music (if not, as Sponheuer admits, anything else) as well as the diverse meanings Germany's musiconational identity came to encompass at different times. Jost Hermand's level-headed history of the German national anthem—its evocations of both Vormärz liberalism and right-wing nationalism, the tainted beauty of Haydn's melody—is similarly sympathetic in its attention to the radically different ideologies one seemingly straightforward expression of German national sentiment could take.

But if the essays which open and close this volume provide a valuable contextual frame spanning three centuries of German musical culture, this frame belies a serious gap at its very heart: the nineteenth century. Only two of the sixteen essays focus on the century in which both German music and German national identity came into their own. And the two which are included—John Daverio's survey of Robert Schumann's patriotic choral music and Thomas Grey's consideration of Wagner's *Meistersinger* as the German national opera—limit themselves to the usual suspects of German musical nationalism.

This amounts to more than a chronological hole, for skipping the nineteenth century also means skipping most of the Austro-Germanic canon of instrumental music upon which a significant portion of Germany's musical identity was based; only German music which loudly announces its Germanness seems to have been considered. And this is a curious drawback, for in excluding German music which claims to be „only“ music—that is, the so-called absolute instrumental music from Bach to Schoenberg which forms the core of both concert and academic canons—the book both lightens its task by removing a sizable swath of music from its purview while simultaneously ensuring that the unique relationship between German music and German national identity it takes as its

<sup>1</sup> Willi Apel, „Nationalism,“ *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; rev. ed., 1969), 565, cited in Richard Taruskin, „Nationalism,“ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie and J. Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), XVII, 689.

---

subject can never be explicated. The volume implicitly reifies the old claim that Germanness is tangential to all but the most blatantly „national“ German music before the 1920s.

Indeed, both the editors and Sponheuer claim that any attempt to link particular music to an alleged Germanness is inevitably futile. True enough. But the absence of any strictly musical argumentation in the volume effects more than the choice of subject matter. Readers who can read music will sorely miss musical examples. And especially given the broad range of musical repertoire, the lack of musical examples (save for some illustrations in Philip Bohlman's study of the series *Landschaftliche Volkslieder*) renders the few discussions of actual music oddly silent. Undoubtedly many readers do not need help conjuring the familiar melodies of national anthems or *Die Meistersinger*. But those not familiar with Schumann's patriotic choral works, Pfitzner's musical lingua franca, or postwar German popular music may find themselves searching for some aural context.

Yet within the volume's limitations there is much to be recommended. Thomas Grey's contribution regarding *Die Meistersinger* and its sordid past is a model of engaged historical scholarship. Particularly valuable is his research into the work's reception history, noting for instance that the opera's nationalist tones do not seem to have mattered much to contemporary critics—German or otherwise. His footnote on pp. 97-98 concerning the work's possible anti-Semitism is the most balanced argument to date.

Hans Rudolf Vaget's essay on Thomas Mann and his *Doktor Faustus* is also exemplary. To my knowledge, it marks the first time some new research into the Munich campaign against Mann has been printed in English: most importantly, the fact that Pfitzner and Hans Knappertsbusch, not the Nazis, initiated the campaign. Furthermore, Vaget's essay is an excellent introduction to some of the aesthetic and political context of the novel's labyrinthine references and symbolism.

Some of the volume's most interesting contributions concern themselves with lesser-known subjects: Philip Bohlman on the series *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* and its emergence as a „simulacrum for national iden-

tity“ throughout the twentieth century; Bruce Campbell's study of the „*Spielschar Ekkehard*,” an amateur music and dance group whose völkisch repertory helped envoice attacks on the Weimar Republic; Michael Kater's account of Pfitzner's nationalism and anti-Semitism (the extent of which will surprise many readers who, based on North American music history textbooks, attributed to the composer at most a benign conservatism); and Joy Calico's research into the DDR and its attempt to promote a new national opera.

As one might expect in a collection of essays, not all of the contributions are of equal merit. Edward Larkey's account of postwar popular music has little new to offer, and in fact relies almost entirely on other sources for its description of artists and musical styles. Similarly, Gesa Kordes's study of Darmstadt and its participants' embrace of the 12-tone technique simply retells a narrative familiar from most textbooks. Kordes does make the interesting point that the Darmstadt composers ironically had to rely on the government for support of their „non-political“ music, and the fact that both the West German and occupying governments strongly encouraged this new music undoubtedly stands in marked contrast to current government support of avant-garde music. But she ignores the larger musical context: were Boulez and Babbitt, a Frenchman and an American working on the same musical frontlines, also distancing themselves from a Nazi past? Clearly not—Darmstadt was engaged in a larger modernist project in music only partly reducible to German history and aesthetics.

Finally, one might expect more of a sustained investigation into the status of German music and German musical identity outside Germany. Bruno Nettl's account of German musical culture in the Sudetenland points in this direction. But much of the volume seems to operate on the assumption that Germany's musical identity is entirely its own doing, the result of pride, patriotism, nationalism, ignorance, and habit. Yet as the Apel quote suggests, much of the Western world still shares most of the musical values this book defines as German-nationalist. Albrecht Riethmüller's assemblage of evidence pointing

towards a continuing musical nationalism in Germany could just as easily have been assembled from musical textbooks, library holdings, and concert programs in the US.

Still, this book has much to offer. Its firmly interdisciplinary scope will appeal to readers in many disciplines, the coverage of the twentieth century is excellent, its programmatic essays cover much ground, and readers will find some new narratives along with revisions of familiar ones. The absence of music itself in the volume introduces an odd discursive silence that to some extent undermines many of the essays' aspirations. On the other hand, given the ubiquity of German music throughout the West, perhaps its silence here offers a useful reminder of just how omnipresent it has become.

HistLit 2003-1-088 / Ryan Minor über Applegate, Celia; Potter, Pamela (Hg.): *Music and German National Identity*. Chicago 2002. In: H-Soz-u-Kult 14.02.2003.