

EDITORIAL



As a historian engaged with musicology, it seems to me that the discipline is in its golden age. The royal road from the musical past to the musical present built in the first century or so of its academic existence no longer contains all the traffic. But thanks to the earlier efforts at disciplinary definition, musicologists share an enormous amount of knowledge, understand what colleagues are doing and are able to face the challenge of understanding music-making outside of the Western cultures from which the field of musicology – and ethnomusicology – emerged. Rarely has a discipline been so well equipped for the task of deconstructing itself. But deconstruction (of canons, grand narratives and the like) accompanies construction: musicology has built and expanded, adding on more sources and more methods rather than abandoning the old ones. Given this happy state, it seems worthwhile to reconsider some of the cultural work that writing about music did before the discipline cohered in the nineteenth century, so that we can consider from a longer perspective why people tried to ‘discipline’ musical knowledge in the first place.

The practitioners of Big History, who take the longest possible perspective, tell us that words and writing set humans apart from every other living species because they allow us to evolve culturally, through the accumulation of knowledge and complexity (see, for example, David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)). For better or worse, cultural evolution has involved attaching national labels to music in order to differentiate one nation’s music from another’s. We cannot assume that such a development was an inevitable aspect of cultural change. Why should an art form that does not have to rely on words and is intelligible across linguistic and political boundaries carry national labels? If we regard these labels as something peculiar, then we can begin to understand how they became attached to music and stuck, at least for a while. Whoever made the first reference to German music or Italian music is not my concern here. By the start of the seventeenth century, national terms were present in musical discourses, though not frequent and not especially weighted with significance. By the end of the seventeenth century, they were both.

People who wrote about music around 1700 were working within two ancient traditions that had survived through the long afterlife of classical learning via renaissance humanism and that heady mixture of experimental science, medicine, alchemy, astrology and astronomy we call the Scientific Revolution. The first tradition was metaphysical and scientific; it concerned the nature of sound and the universe. The second concerned the nature of communication and persuasion; its focus was rhetoric and ethics. Neither was necessarily national. The two traditions overlapped in their understanding of music’s capacity to act in the world, for good or evil. The scientific tradition posited (and measured) the divinely created harmony of the spheres; the rhetorical tradition suggested that music’s revelation of God’s creation meant that it had a moral lesson to teach. All knowledge revealed the perfection of God’s creation and as far as humanly possible created it again through music-making. Musical learning had a powerful religious and ethical charge to it that no other art could equal. It was not mimesis but the sounding of creation itself. For many German writers on music (from Luther to Praetorius to Werckmeister), the right kind of music shaped people’s moral sensibilities and behaviour for the better.

This entire body of writing about music, scientific and rhetorical, a body of writing to which Germans (especially Protestant ones) made significant contributions, had little to say about Germany as such. This was not the case in other aspects of German life. Joachim Whaley, in his masterful history of the Holy Roman Empire, has argued that already in the fifteenth century a ‘rediscovery of national origins and identities’ had culminated in a ‘patriotic humanism’ that helped to create ‘a sense of unity of the German lands’ (Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), volume 1, 102–104). Music played no part in that unity. Tacitus’s *Germania*, rediscovered in 1471, had provided little to feed the



musical vanity of a people: music only enters his report in the form of songs they sing ‘on their way into battle’ and ‘use to kindle their spirits’ (*Germania*, translated by J. B. Rives (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 78). This was not music but noise, ‘a harsh sound and an uneven roar’. When Conrad Celtis in his famous ‘Ingolstadt Address’ of 1492 had called on German students to rival the Italians and ‘Assume, O men of Germany, that old spirit of yours with which you so often confounded and terrified the Romans’, he was urging them to become humanists, not musicians (Lewis Spitz, *Conrad Celtis: German Arch-Humanist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 47).

Nevertheless, by the seventeenth century humanistic musicians were joining patriotic language societies, and poets were writing German librettos for operas and German verse for secular and sacred song. Writers for the popular market were producing hundreds of chapbooks with musical characters in them, and a few learned musical men (Johann Ahle and Wolfgang Printz, for example) began marketing their instructional treatises to a broader public, not just cantors and other scholars. By the last decades of the seventeenth century, writing about music in the vernacular was becoming the forum in which the German identity of musicians and music took a discernible shape. The outlines of this identity first emerged in the work of a group of musician-novelists. Stephen Rose has written about this lost chapter of German literature, showing how musicians’ picaresque novels point to a shift in how people wrote about music and why (*The Musician in Literature in the Age of Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)). The novels defend music’s cosmic and social importance against its detractors, especially religious moralists. These were stories with their own moral lesson, and that was to practise one’s calling in an honest and upright manner, no matter what adventures and misfortunes came one’s way. As Rose has shown through meticulous research into the records of eighteenth-century libraries and estates, they were also very popular, read by everyone from schoolboys to wives of respectable merchants to learned scholars, and republished throughout the eighteenth century.

In the company of such people (writers and readers), musical writing entered an explicitly national milieu, that of German vernacular literary culture. This cultural space overlapped with, but was by no means the same as, what Anthony Grafton has called the ‘worlds made by words’, that cosmopolitan community of learned men (and a few women) in which writing, reading, exchanging information and critiquing tradition and society took place (*Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011)). German literary culture was more local and less learned, but it had the great virtue of giving its participants access to all literate inhabitants of the empire. The German book trade shows the shift from a largely Latinate Republic of Letters to a vernacular and quasi-national literary culture: in 1673 only forty-two per cent of books sold in Germany were in the vernacular; already by 1700, that figure was sixty-two per cent; by 1800, ninety-six per cent (James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 96–97). Those who wrote for this culture were a particular kind of German, who took the world as their object of study while at the same time focusing on what they perceived to be the moral and educational needs of their German readers. German literary culture was a social network of shared values and concerns that had the magical power of erasing, temporarily, the geographical, social and political barriers that divided one locality from another and the privileged aristocracy from all. It was the only forum for debate and discussion about German nationality. It was, in short, the public sphere about which so much has been written. To participate in the public sphere meant not to be free of external constraints but to stake out a new cognitive space outside of established institutional life for discussion of everything from agricultural practices to the nature of God.

Still, historians have had little to say about the participation of musicians in it or in the nationalizing project of early literary culture, and so the nature of that participation remains obscure. But musical matters were central to this nationalizing culture in ways that we need to understand better, and Johann Mattheson of Hamburg made them so. The first thing to note about him is a simple one: the fact that he wrote in the first, not the second, half of the eighteenth century. This fact confounds our expectation that everything changed in the decades around 1800, especially things having to do with nations and modernity. In the usual story, and I have told it myself, musical commentary underwent a paradigm shift during the lifetimes of Haydn,



Mozart and Beethoven. It began to celebrate music's emancipation from words: the results scholars have most emphasized are the work concept and the religion of art, or *Kunstreligion*. These in turn contributed mightily to Germany's musical superiority complex and ultimately to the premises on which musicology (*Musikwissenschaft*) was based. The narrative is compelling because it locates change where we expect to find it, at a time when revolutions were everywhere: industrial, political, reading, even musical.

But I have come to believe that to understand the confluence of music-making and nation-making, we need to go back further into the musical past and seek longer lines of continuity and development. For some things, change comes gradually, the metaphor of revolution is not helpful and models of paradigm shifts, like revolutions, tend to overstate the case. Before music was emancipated from words, musical writers were already beginning the work of emancipating it from the older social formations (court, church and town) of which it was a functional part and attaching it to new ones, whether locally in the form of convivial societies and commercial undertakings or supra-locally in the notional commonality of all Germans. Labelling music made in Germany by Germans as German seemed – paradoxically – to highlight music's capacity to develop autonomously, unrestricted by the need to satisfy this or that patron or institution. At the same time, it suggested a new role for music to play, as part of the lives of people whom Lynn Hunt has described as 'increasingly independent agents both legally and psychologically' (*Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007), 29).

Mattheson was certainly such a person and he wrote for such people. He began writing about music in 1713, when he was thirty-two years old, a worldly man, not a learned one, a diplomat with the English delegation in Hamburg as well as a music director and composer. By taking up the pen for the public, not his English employer, he joined a European debate in which writers were using pamphlets and periodicals to air their differences concerning music's place in society and its influence on human conduct. Mattheson thrived in this disputacious context (Holger Böning, 'Johann Mattheson: Ein Streiter für die Musik und sein Wirken als Hamburger Publizist', in *Johann Mattheson als Vermittler und Initiator: Wissenstransfer und die Etablierung neuer Diskurse in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Wolfgang Hirschmann and Bernhard Jahn (Hildesheim: Olms, 2010), 19–60). His first publication, *Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre* (The Newly Established Orchestra (Hamburg: Schiller, 1713)), began with an 'Introduction to the Decline of Music and Its Cause' in which he blamed, among other things, the tradition of learned writing about music for leading the public – so he claimed – to hold music in 'utter disregard' and for condemning German musical life to its current state of dreary isolation, inertia and enforced mediocrity. Starting with this treatise, the first in an unstoppable spate of polemicizing, Mattheson appointed himself the public advocate of modern, new music and proceeded to pursue all available practices of publicity. The more controversial his views – and some, particularly on the primacy of melody over harmony, were reliably the source of objections and polemics against them – the better. Controversy was good for public awareness, and a self-conscious public had the potential to provide a better foundation for independent musical activity than did the existing support of restlessly fashion-mongering courts on the one hand and hidebound churches and towns on the other. To this end, and throughout his long life, he founded periodicals, published scores of reviews, newspaper articles, pamphlets, book-length treatises and translations (mostly of English works) and produced two compendia – *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Herold, 1739; reprinted Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969, ed. Margarete Reimann) and *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (Hamburg: author, 1740; reprinted Berlin: Liepmannssohn, 1910, ed. Max Schneider).

Both these latter works may be regarded as manifestos of emancipation and reform. The first was a comprehensive treatise for would-be musical leaders of Germany, and the other an encyclopedia containing biographies and autobiographies of the 148 'most excellent' musicians of Mattheson's day and earlier, many of whom were German. Together they mapped out the terrain of music and accounted for all its parts, thereby making legible what was real, and imaginable what was to be realized. Reading between the lines, German music, like German life, emerges out of dispersion and multiplicity as something not yet achieved, united only in the act of gathering evidence of its existence. As he wrote these works, Mattheson was 'seeing like a state', which gathers information in order better to control, tax and legislate, or in Mattheson's case, to



improve German music (James Scott, *Seeing like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)). But he was also seeing like an artist, a Breughel perhaps, working on a very large canvas and trying to compose the whole so that the detail and variety would come into focus. Both books were widely read outside of Hamburg in their day and remained influential long after it. Both attested to an understanding of music as a vital part of European culture, in which German musicians could reform their musical life and thereby play a more prominent role in Europe.

More intriguing in its implications for the future of musical interpretation was Mattheson's strong emphasis on what literary historian Walter Martens has called the 'message of virtue' (*Die Botschaft der Tugend: Die Aufklärung im Spiegel der deutschen moralischen Wochenschriften* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968)). Virtue was the beating heart of music for Mattheson, and to foster individual and collective virtue was its essential and legitimating role in social life. As he explained in the *Vollkommene Capellmeister*, our strongest natural passions are 'not our best ones' and therefore must be 'clipped or reined in'; the 'fully competent musician' must master 'this aspect of ethics' in order to be able to represent musically both 'virtues and vices' and yet 'arouse in the listener love of the former and abhorrence of the latter'. For that, he concluded, 'is the true capacity of music, to teach a moral lesson' (chapter 3, paragraph 54).

To be sure, in this passage Mattheson was simply offering his own version of the *Affektenlehre*, the rhetorical practices that organized the 'effects of well-ordered sounds on the emotions and passions of the soul' (chapter 3, paragraph 49). But there was also a more modern edge to his musical moralizing. In 1713, he had published the *Vernünffter* (*The Reasoner*), the first instance of what came to be called in Germany a 'moral weekly'. It consisted mainly of his translations of large selections from Richard Steele's *Tatler* and Joseph Addison's *Spectator*, the acknowledged pioneers of this quintessential Enlightenment genre. In direct imitation of English models, a wave of moral weeklies washed through European literary cultures in the first half of the eighteenth century, from England to the Netherlands, France, Spain and German-speaking lands. In their heyday, there were more than a hundred of them in Germany. In Europe as a whole, their numbers tended to be highest in the Protestant north (though their network spread to Spain and Italy), and in urban rather than rural milieus. As a result of their high numbers, print culture became more secular and more diverse in its subjects. Their content, in plain language that narrated tales of everyday bourgeois existence, both entertained and morally instructed their broad readership. In them a sphere of sociability and moral action emerged, separate from politics and distinct from (and disapproving of) court mores. In them we see trends toward wholly secular literature as well as the accelerating privatization of piety and religious observance – eloquently expressed in the way they displaced older genres of devotional books and sermon collections at the great book fairs in Leipzig. Their distribution as weekly periodicals and the sites of their reception – coffee houses, convivial societies, salons – helped to create the Enlightenment public, and it was to this Enlightenment public in Germany that Mattheson addressed himself and his message of music as a lesson in virtue.

But there was also a national edge to his musical moralizing, and that was because individual virtue lay at the heart of German self-understanding in the eighteenth century. His view of German character – plain, forthright, easily deceived by foreigners of dubious moral character – was not so different from Addison and Steele's view of the English. The source of dubious influences was also the same – Italian musicians. Just as Mattheson composed German operas for Hamburg's German opera theatre, which he defended in print, so too were Addison and Steele (albeit briefly) caught up in efforts to encourage English opera. An emphasis on German virtuousness, in contrast to foreign immorality, had deep roots. Recently, it had characterized the musician novels. And long before Rousseau wrote of the noble savage or Herder of *Volkspoesie*, Mattheson suggested that the noble simplicity of German melody, found in songs and hymn tunes and made all the more beautiful in opera, was the outward sign of the inner virtue of German character (Beate Kutschke, 'Johann Mattheson's Writings on Music and the Ethical Shift around 1700', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 38/1 (2007), 23–38). Having proposed that, Mattheson began to move toward the fusion of music and the soul of a people – the creation of what Carl Dahlhaus called the 'ethnomusical' – which Herder would develop fully at the end of the century.



To put it differently, the German nation was not a political goal but an ethical conception – to cultivate this language and this music was to improve the moral character of collective life, to make it more upright, honest and excellent in all its works. Just as Hamburg's *Patriotische Gesellschaft* advocated reading good literature in order to develop 'responsibility for the conduct of one's own life', so did Mattheson's *Musicalische Patriot* (another of his periodical ventures) emphasize how good music could do the same (Gisela Jaacks, *Hamburg zu Lust und Nutz: Bürgerliches Musikverständnis zwischen Barock und Aufklärung, 1660–1760* (Hamburg: Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1997), 27; *Der Musicalische Patriot* (Hamburg: author, 1728)). All great states, he wrote in the *Vollkommene Capellmeister*, from the Greeks to the 'present-day wise Chinese', have understood the importance of music in structuring their 'manners and morals' so as to bring about a 'complete political body' (chapter 5, paragraphs 31–32).

Mattheson was in his day the most worldly musical writer who had ever appeared in the Holy Roman Empire. He was a fully public figure, engaged in all the happenings of his day, performing, publishing and politicking, more than any musician of stature before and probably since. But his writings had the greatest importance for music in German Europe in the long term, and in them one sees how music fitted into the many parts of German life. One also sees how shifting were the sands on which the edifice of German music-making had been built (courts and churches), fated only to become even more unreliable in the second half of the century. The foundations Mattheson was laying in musical writing (criticism, encyclopedism, pedagogy and musical moralizing) proved far more stable. Writing accompanied, encouraged, critiqued, sustained and interpreted the work of composition and performance that was the heart of musical life. Writing and the communities and networks made possible by it negotiated the great transitions in society that characterized the century after Mattheson's death. His contributions to written musical discourse ensured that the discussion of music in Germany for the next 250 years would also implicate nationality.

CELIA APPLGATE

<celia.applegate@vanderbilt.edu>