

Introduction

Rethinking Salon Music: Case-Studies in Analysis

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Nineteenth-century salon culture has received important attention in recent years with regard to examining the nature and function of the salon as an institution, together with notions of the salonesque. Social gatherings of this kind provided for the participants a semi-public, non-commercial and inclusive space. Typically music played a key role in the gatherings; however, the extent of its cultivation, and the compositional and technical degree of complexity involved, varied according to the individual circumstances.¹ While, on the one hand, Robert Schumann in 1841 dismissed ‘salon music’ as too sentimental and intellectually dull, on the other hand Johann Christian Lobe warned in 1853 that we should not generalize about the music performed in salons.² Lobe supported his plea by giving examples of salon music possessing more than ephemeral qualities: he instanced Schumann’s *Kinderszenen*, Beethoven’s *Bagatelles*, Weber’s *Aufforderung zum Tanze* Op. 65, Schubert’s marches for four-hand piano, and Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte*.³ Lobe’s list and Schumann’s concerns point to two problems: first, the definition of ‘salon music’ is far from clear; and secondly, the range of aesthetic and technical aspects related to musical performance in salons is diffuse. Ballstaedt attempted to capture the nuances of the ‘serious’ and the ‘popular’ within this context by differentiating between ‘music for the salon’, consisting of light-hearted music composed for the purpose of entertainment, and ‘music in salons’, encompassing all music which could be heard

¹ See Andreas Ballstaedt and Tobias Widmaier, *Salonmusik: Zur Geschichte und Funktion einer bürgerlichen Musikpraxis* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989): 257–72.

² See Robert Schumann, in a review of Robert Müller’s *Poésies musicales* Op. 5: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 30/15 (12 October 1841): 118; Johann Christian Lobe, *Fliegende Blätter für Musik: Wahrheit über Tonkunst und Tonkünstler*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1855): 156.

³ ‘Daß es unter Salonmusik gar mancherlei Erscheinungen giebt, die nichts bedeuten und völlig werthlos sind, wer wollte das läugnen? Aber um solcher Nichtigkeiten willen dürfen wir nicht sofort die ganze Art verwerfen’. Lobe, *Fliegende Blätter für Musik*, 155–6.

there.⁴ It is likely that Schumann thought of the former in his dismissal of Robert Müller's *Poésies musicales* Op. 5. In reality the boundaries between the two were as blurred as those between the private and the public, and between amateur and professional.⁵ In the light of the latter, it is important to note that the publishing business, review practice and marketing strategies surrounding salon culture challenge the concept of the salon as an entirely unbiased space of unlimited possibilities.⁶ While salons *per se* were not commercially orientated, commercial interests may have been implicated in the networking that took place: these gatherings enabled attendees to meet potential new students, and buyers, publishers or reviewers of their music.

The musical works considered by Schumann and Lobe varied in terms of their compositional aesthetics and possibly their purposes (primarily financial versus primarily intellectual), but they shared the performance contexts they served: regular social gatherings in private spaces. These settings range from high-calibre musical salons and sites for music (such as those of Fanny Hensel in Berlin and Elise von Schlik in Prague during the first half of the nineteenth century), to less music-specific gatherings in the homes of artists, writers, politicians and individuals holding other forms of social responsibility (as with the Gladstone salon in Victorian London, or the gatherings held at the painter Joseph Stieler's home in 1830s Munich).⁷ The literature on salons has tended to favour surveys of such private spaces in major European cities, or case studies of specific gatherings.⁸ These

⁴ Andreas Ballstaedt, 'Salonmusik', MGG Online, 2016; MGG2, 1998.

⁵ On Müller's *Poésies musicales* see n.2 above. See also Aisling Kenny, 'Tensions between the Serious and the Popular in Music: Josephine Lang's Compositional Environment', *Maynooth Musicology: Postgraduate Journal* 2 (2009): 71–87.

⁶ On salon music as a form of musical commercialism see David Gramit, 'The Circulation of the Lied: The Double Life of an Artwork and a Commodity', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, ed. James Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 301–14; James Deaville, 'A Multitude of Voices: The Lied at Mid Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, 142–67; Derek B. Scott, 'Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century Popular Song', in *Musical Style and Social Meaning*, ed. Derek B. Scott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010): 255–67; and Derek B. Scott, 'Music and Social Class in Victorian London', in *ibid.*, 205–18.

⁷ For Hensel see, for instance, Hans-Günter Klein, '*... mit obligater Nachtigallen- und Fliederbütenbegleitung*': *Fanny Hensels Sonntagsmusiken* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005) and, for an in-depth discussion of whether or not Fanny Hensel's gatherings can be considered a salon, see Hans-Günter Klein, ed., *Die Musikveranstaltungen bei den Mendelssohn-Ein "musikalischer Salon"?* (Leipzig: Mendelssohn-Haus, 2006), and Beatrix Borchard and Cornelia Bartsch, 'Leipziger Straße Drei: Sites for Music', in *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 4/2 (2007): 119–138. For Schlik, see, in chronological order, Milena Lenderová, 'Matka, dcera, vnučka (Filippina, Elisa, Tekla): dny všední i sváteční tří dam schlikovského rodu', *Z Českého ráje a Podkrkonoší: vlastivědný sborník* 15 (2002): 43–68, Jana Sekyrová, 'Eliška Šliková, život neprovdané hraběnky v první polovině 19. století' (diploma thesis, Jihočeská univerzita, České Budějovice, 2006), and Milena Lenderová, 'Portrét hraběnky Elišky Šlikové', *Z Českého ráje a Podkrkonoší: vlastivědný sborník* 2009 (supplement 13): 33–42. For Mary Gladstone's involvement in Victorian salon culture see Phyllis Weliver, *Mary Gladstone and the Victorian Salon: Music, Literature, Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). And for a study of Stieler's salon's influence on Josephine Lang's Lieder see Harald Krebs, 'Josephine Lang and the Salon in Southern Germany', in *Musical Salon Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Anja Bunzel and Natasha Loges (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2019): 199–210.

⁸ For example Petra Wilhelmy, *Der Berliner Salon im 19. Jahrhundert (1780–1914)* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989); Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens: Du salon au concert*

studies provide evidence that European salon culture was socio-culturally heterogeneous, and that the musical repertoire was by and large influenced by the tastes, economic means, and abilities of their hosts and visitors, an observation which encourages us to resist the forming of general conclusions as to the nature of music performed in these gatherings.

Not unlike 'salon music', the salon itself is challenging to define, in view of its diverse historical, socio-political, cultural and geographical facets. In the collection of essays that form this issue of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, the term 'salon' is read in its broadest possible sense: salons are social gatherings in private homes. The main characteristics are their regularity; the presence of a number of people including a host, together with a mixture of regular and some occasional visitors; and the possibility of informal artistic and intellectual exchange between all attendees. More often than not, the term 'salon' would not feature in the historical accounts documenting the gatherings, which were given specific names, or might be referred to as 'soirée', 'matinée', 'Kränzchen', or as tea and coffee parties, for example. Semi-public spaces are, by their nature, less likely to be formally documented than public ones (for instance with notices regularly featuring in the contemporary press, as public concert series would be), but are more likely to be illuminated by references and descriptions preserved in diaries, family documents, letters, memoirs and travel accounts. Clearly among the vital factors would be the role of the presiding host or hostess, whose input could cover a range of activities including performance and patronage. Also of importance is the evidence provided by those attendees who regularly and meticulously documented social activities from the perspective of a visitor. A volume developed from the 2015 Maynooth conference, 'The European Salon: Nineteenth-Century Salonmusik', was conceived along these sorts of lines, with a focus primarily on concepts and contexts of the salon.

An alternative and complementary lens through which salon culture can be viewed is that of the musical works themselves. The collection of articles assembled here approaches salon culture and the genres associated with it through an examination of music selected from repertoire that could be heard in nineteenth-century private (and semi-public) gatherings. In-depth analytical studies of specific pieces offer readings of artistic works as documents of cultural history. The articles include contributions that focus on music for a particular salon (see James William Sobaskie on Fauré's music for Pauline Viardot's salon), or for a cluster of salons and/or performers (on the latter, see Sam Girling's study on Daniel Steibelt's and Joseph Dale's compositions for tambourine players including Catherine Dale). They also encompass the idea of salon music as a genre that could exist independently of a specific salon location (as with Schumann's chamber music miniature and his song, discussed by Lauri Suurpää).

In preparing this collection, we found that different purposes emerged: among these was the uncovering of marginalized non-canonical repertoire (as with

à *Paris sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Steven D. Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Ulrike Müller, *Die klugen Frauen von Weimar* (Munich: Sandmann, 2007); Beatrix Borchard and Heidy Zimmermann, eds, *Musikwelten – Lebenswelten: Jüdische Identitätssuche in der deutschen Musikkultur* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009); and Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, eds, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁹ Anja Bunzel and Natasha Loges, eds, *Musical Salon Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2019).

Girling's article on Dale's sonata) and the shedding of new analytical light on works by composers enshrined in music histories and concert programming (as with Suurpää on Robert Schumann and Sobaskie on Gabriel Fauré). Both these categories generate new socio-cultural and aesthetic conclusions regarding musical concepts, foundations, and directions.

The articles that engage with specific pieces documented as performed in and composed for the salon provide a microcosm of some of the myriad ways in which the salon context impacted on such music. The authors here share a concern to tease out the nuances inherent within the music, while placing it in its particular salon context in ways that deepen the analytical insights they offer. They replace the worn but persistent stereotype of salon music as inferior to 'high art' – as ephemeral, shallow, even tasteless – by a more considered appreciation of the more lasting qualities and subtleties it may possess, thus furthering the project represented by the work of Ballstaedt and Widmaier, and others such as Gradenwitz, that leads in this direction.¹⁰ The topics addressed in what follows cover a variety of genres: the German Lied and its French equivalent, the *mélodie* (Suurpää, Sobaskie); chamber music (Sobaskie, Suurpää, the latter pointing out that Schumann's set of *Fantasiestücke* Op. 73 No. 1 for clarinet and piano was originally entitled *Soirée-Stücke*); and the novelty of keyboard music featuring the addition of tambourine (Girling).

Salon music proves responsive to a stimulating array of analytical aims and methods. These range from Girling's gender-sensitive analytical reading, geared towards the original performance contexts of Steibelt's and Dale's compositions for piano and tambourine, to Suurpää's Schenkerian graphing of two of Schumann's salon-style miniatures (in Lied form and in chamber medium respectively) with special focus on the elusive treatment of their tonic key. In the light of the intimate, creative and inspiring environment potentially offered by nineteenth-century salons, intertextuality is among the most intriguing and multi-faceted aspects of salon repertoire in relation to cultural issues. This phenomenon emerges in the intertextual relationships embedded in musical works, whether by one and the same composer (for instance, in Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* and his 'Meine Rose'; see Suurpää); or between musical works by different composers; or within a work, between music and text (as in Fauré's small-scale music performed in the salon of Pauline Viardot, as shown by Sobaskie). A characteristic of music performed in salons that is linked directly with the particularities of its performance space is the significant role of the listener, in terms of the combined activity that role might encompass as 'listener', 'performer', 'composer', and 'critic'. In this regard, the network of references and coded messages in the repertoire under discussion forms a core element in the understanding and interpretation of salon music. Besides the evidence of contemporary surprise, scepticism, and curiosity evoked by the challenging of social conventions in performing certain musical styles (as observed by Václav Jan Tomášek during Steibelt's visit to Prague, and decoded here by Girling), this is seen in Sobaskie's portrayal of female patronage apropos contrasting examples of Fauré's compositions for the salon; and in Suurpää's interpretation of Schumann through the lens of the prevailing Romanticist aesthetic of the time, in works belonging to salon genres.

¹⁰ Peter Gradenwitz, *Literatur und Musik in geselligem Kreise* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991); Andreas Ballstaedt and Tobias Widmaier, *Salonmusik: Zur Geschichte und Funktion einer bürgerlichen Musikpraxis* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1989). See also Jennifer Ronyak, *Intimacy, Performance, and the Lied in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), in which she devotes a chapter to 'serious' music in the salon.

As regards socio-cultural links between salon repertoire and the salon itself, numerous threads link all three individual articles and the music examined in them. These shared threads include nationalism as a pan-European phenomenon; aspects of class and gender interwoven in musical salon culture; aesthetic inspiration, with the salon as creative laboratory; female patronage, reflected in compositional processes and performance practices; intersections between music and text in composition, performance and reception, reflecting the mingling of music, literature and other arts in nineteenth-century salon culture and conversation; transnational mobility (both physical and stylistic), as a characteristic of salon culture; the merge of music and Romantic literary-philosophical topoi; the negotiation between public/outdoors and private/indoors; and overarching considerations regarding genre and repertoire.

While there are many links between the articles, each individual essay draws on specific qualities unique to the contexts relating to the genesis, reception and performance of the pieces scrutinized. To sum up the individual articles: in the first contribution presented here, Sam Girling's article, 'The Tambourine, Joseph Dale's *Grand Sonata* and Its Role in the Appearance of Women Musicians in the Salon', is devoted to works for piano and tambourine performed in European salons during the early nineteenth century. Investigating the performance history of these pieces, Girling ascertains that the tambourine parts were intended for private performances by females. With its focus on gender, performance practice, repertoire and patronage, the article sheds light on salon culture of the Habsburg Empire around 1800, as well as on organology, focusing on an unfamiliar salon instrument. Girling here adds a distinctive geographical dimension to this collection while also evoking transnational links with Sobaskie's article. Lauri Suurpää's 'Longing for the Tonic in Robert Schumann's "Meine Rose" Op. 90 No. 2 and *Fantasiestück* Op. 73 No. 1' scrutinizes the two works through the lens of such core Romantic characteristics as longing, dreaming and the fragment, all of which bear strong links with the salon and the salonesque. Suurpää broadens the discussion beyond salon limits, dealing with genres that became infused with a higher aesthetic. He provides fascinating evidence for the ambiguity of Schumann's view on music performed in salons: while Schumann voiced his disapproval of so-called *Salonmusik*, this apprehension did not mean that he devoted no compositional thought to small-scale genres altogether or, indeed, that he himself kept away from salonesque gatherings within his own circles. In the final article, 'Stylistic Duality in Fauré's Music for Pauline Viardot's Salon', James William Sobaskie offers a reading of Fauré's music with special consideration of its salon performance context in French gatherings, whose audiences expected genteel amusement on the one hand, and genuinely sophisticated art on the other. Sobaskie places selected vocal works by Fauré, and an example of instrumental chamber music, in the wider perspective of the composer's oeuvre as a whole, with a view to illuminating the role of Pauline Viardot and her family in relation to aspects of performance, patronage and creativity.

From these articles there emerges an important reminder that not all repertoire that formed an inherent part of nineteenth-century musical culture is well known and performed today. On the other hand, they encourage us to remember that music easily accessible now was not only new and challenging to audiences in its time but also bore a special relationship to its social context. The salon offered a safer space for the process of absorption than exposure to more public performance might create. It is our hope that this collection will invite reconsideration of the impact of salon culture on musical practice, together with new perspectives

on composers and works embedded in the canon. We hope that it may inspire further projects enquiring into the significance of the salon in both well-researched and lesser-known cultural centres and exploring analytical approaches to the music heard there.