



do we account for musical representation of the exotic in the context of political or economic relations that do not appear to be manifestly imperial, nor even to involve colonial domination? This common situation is particularly acute in the case of the German territories, where significant contributions to the development of scholarly approaches to non-European musics were made in the nineteenth century, yet which had practically no state-sponsored colonial enterprise until the 1880s. Agnew addresses this problem directly, writing:

The fact that the German states did not have formal commercial or territorial stakes in the exploration of the Pacific and were not directly affected by the encounter did not diminish Germans' concern over the nexus of music and power. If anything, German music scholars took such questions all the more seriously as they attempted to carve out their own spheres of cultural influence. (103–104)

Can 'cultural influence' be seen as a substitute for German empire? This seems plausible, yet the question remains of how to parse this particular relationship between the domains of politics and culture.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of *Enlightenment Orpheus* is as a prehistory of the German states' rise to musical dominance by the nineteenth century (14–15, 172), and this in itself makes it necessary reading for scholars of eighteenth-century music. Agnew's study does more than chart a new history of the music aesthetics and cultural ideals that preceded the apotheosis of Germanic music, which is well-trodden terrain. She gives a strikingly original account that emphasizes the transnational and even imperial matrix of this rise and, by implication, that of the period's most cherished ideals of music, which represents a high achievement indeed.

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KAROL BERGER

BACH'S CYCLE, MOZART'S ARROW: AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGINS OF MUSICAL MODERNITY

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pp. xi + 420, ISBN 978 0 520 25091 8

Karol Berger's book addresses one of the most interesting if not entirely novel topics in recent historiography: the fundamental change in the artistic understanding of temporality since the second half of the eighteenth century. This study examines a phase in history during which an awareness of being on the threshold of a new epoch and a forward-thinking intellectual outlook became prominent. These were based on the faster exchange of knowledge and the rapid increase of experience made possible through the mediums of printed music and music journals, leading in our case to the emergence of music historiography. The various phenomena termed 'pressure of experience' by the sociologist Wolf Lepenies, referred to as a 'horizon of expectation' by the historian Reinhart Koselleck and described as 'acceleration factors' by the philosopher Hans Blumenberg thirty years ago (in relation to the period around 1800) are no longer subjects of controversy in the field of musicology. Yet Berger's book on the transition from a cyclical to a goal-directed notion of time is nevertheless a highly fruitful reading experience, because of its thought-provoking contents, and it is necessary to explain why this is so.

Any readers who expect Berger's book to introduce them to its complex subject matter through a reflection on methods and conceptual critique will be disappointed. The question of why (and with what far-reaching consequences) music theorists set about dividing art into binary oppositions of old and new,



regressive and progressive, so that they could understand the increasing wealth of data as a meaningful coexistence and sequence of events, remains in the background. Nor is the question of why one should perceive Bach's music as 'cyclical' but that of Mozart as being like an 'arrow' examined in conceptual-historical or cultural-theoretical terms. In fact, Berger barely offers any explanation for his excellent idea of associating the study *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987) by the palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould with the title of his own book. Gould's description of one of the most dramatic episodes in modern natural research, the discovery of the earth's age and the radical change in human historical thinking, is only mentioned in a footnote (see pages 7 and 357, note 16).

The discovery of the immeasurability of our earth's prehistory and the consequent change of consciousness in relation to the fabric of time ultimately interest Berger only as aesthetic effects. Where Gould describes socio-historical processes, Berger examines aesthetic and metaphysical developments. He wants to show that in the eighteenth century European art music 'began to take seriously the flow of time from past to future' (9). He wants to create an understanding of a fundamental shift in the *Zeitgeist* in the fields of aesthetics and metaphysics and tie these directly to specific compositional insights. For Berger it is central that the 'premodern' world was shaped by a specifically Christian worldview which embedded the human lifetime ontologically within the temporal notion of God's infinity. In contrast, he views the 'modern' understanding of time as based on an 'autonomous' conception of humans in which the older idea became increasingly incomprehensible.

Berger draws less on structures and concepts than on intellectual-historical 'analogies'. Accordingly, he adopts the role of mediator between the great figures of Western thought from Augustine to Hegel, whom he places in dialogue with one another. These are connected to analyses of compositional 'masterworks', from Monteverdi's *Orfeo* – via Bach's St Matthew Passion, Mozart's Da Ponte operas and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – to Schubert's *Winterreise*. Cultural history thus derives from the interconnection of the pinnacles of Western art, whose nature is meant to reveal important facts about an epochal development. Using this approach, Berger offers convincing analyses: his observations are aimed at an understanding of intramusical connections; thus his detailed examinations of Beethoven's piano sonatas, *Don Giovanni* or *The Magic Flute* form some of the book's most original and subtle highlights.

Other connections, admittedly, are overlooked as a result of such a radically work-oriented approach. This situation of simultaneous gain and loss is already apparent from the criteria for selecting Bach and Mozart for examination. At the start, Berger emphasizes that he could equally have made Haydn or Beethoven the focus of his study instead of Mozart. But the fact that Berger *did* decide on Bach and Mozart implies anything but an arbitrary understanding of history. And because the reasons for Berger's choices, emphases and value judgments are not always clear, the reader is sure to object on more than a few occasions. Berger's method would leave no room for the widespread assertion that a musical history of the eighteenth century can dispense with mentioning Bach, while this would be inconceivable for an account of the nineteenth century. The author implies the opposite: the history of Bach's effect is tacitly presupposed, but the music's details are given great attention. One cannot quite shake off the feeling that Berger's astute observations on temporal understanding in eighteenth-century music are based on our 'modern' notion of time, namely the developmental view of history that was customary until a few decades ago and which does not pose critical questions, but which rather *knows* how changes between periods work and how the canon of music history came about.

All this is gleaned almost exclusively from the temporal structure of music, which, in addition, makes it all the more conspicuous that the geographical differences between England, central Germany, Vienna and south Germany that were applied in the Enlightenment discourse of the later eighteenth century are scarcely taken into account. This becomes especially clear in the choice of Mozart as an example of a 'fully developed modern approach to musical temporality', which in my view raises a number of questions. How geographically significant is the fact that Mozart spent his childhood travelling? How significant is it that Mozart knew Heinrich Christoph Koch's 'modern' method of composition only through hearsay? (Berger,



however, draws on Koch in his argument.) And why did Mozart instead study the writings of Joseph Riepel (whose thinking was indebted to the Baroque *ars combinatoria*) extensively? How important is it that Mozart grew up in an area where the reception of the English – north German and French Enlightenment was very limited? (One need only recall the restrictive censorship of Kant's or Hegel's writings in the Habsburg Empire – these were writings that Mozart naturally did not know.) Mozart was not part of Adam Smith's England, Rousseau's France or Kant's Prussia, but instead inhabited a world that was, in many respects, still indebted to the 'premodern' Christian understanding of time.

Perhaps a more critical evaluation of later history would have rendered certain questions, such as the following, unnecessary: is it not too easy to have the new notion of time in compositional discourse reach its 'full maturity' in the Vienna of the 1780s (see page 11)? Did a composer like Muzio Clementi, working in London at the same time, not realize the idea of a linear, developmental temporal framework more radically in his piano sonatas than Mozart ever did? Is it opportune in a book with this approach to speak of the 'evolution of music' (7) in the eighteenth century, or of the paradigmatic linear ambitions of the 'Viennese sonata genres' among the 'Viennese classics' (7), as if Parisian musical culture, which was considerably more deeply rooted in Enlightenment views (not least of temporality), had never existed? And finally: to what extent do the 'masterworks' to which Berger often refers (see, for example, page 183) enjoy that status only because our linear temporal understanding since the nineteenth century has made them part of a revered canon? Berger's conception contains little reflection on the history of canon formation to the present day, even though that history is an effect of the 'modern' (yet still relevant) historical view that he is attempting to present throughout his book. But if our current mode of listening, which has become goal-directed as a result of reception, is not taken into account in the analyses, is it even possible to perceive how far Mozart's 'modern' music was still influenced by the affective dramaturgy or the rhetoric of the 'premodern' era?

Berger's radical focus on the metaphysics of music is adventurous and risks shortcomings in other areas. But it is also important to note that Berger succeeds in presenting his intellectually rich book on an abstract subject in a very lively fashion. Instead of offering a scholarly theoretical lecture or a lifeless cultural history for historians, he draws the force of all his ideas from the music itself with noticeable passion. Hence the book's great strength lies in the individual observations about the musical and visual embodiments of political and philosophical principles – and not in its somewhat laboured overall thesis. The reader senses Berger's knowledge and love of music, the study is superbly written and presented in a commendably instructive fashion, with numerous illustrations and music examples. As a collection of interpretations of 'masterworks' from Monteverdi to Schubert, some of them quite brilliant, the text is a genuine achievement, but it is less so as a critical engagement with the question of how the change in people's understanding of time should be assessed in its historical context, and in what sense it still exists in us today.

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TASSILO ERHARDT

HÄNDELS MESSIAH: TEXT, MUSIK, THEOLOGIE

Bad Reichenhall: Comes, 2007

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This is simply the best book yet published on Handel's *Messiah*, and I expect it will remain so for a very long time. To be sure, its author has had the good fortune of being able to build on the work of superlative predecessors. Ruth Smith's revelatory study *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: