6. Music, Romanticism and Politics

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Call to mind the most familiar tendencies of Romantic aesthetics—the breaking of aesthetic conventions, nostalgia for the past, the highlighting of individual subjectivity, idolisation of wild nature—and you would be hard-pressed to extrapolate from them a characteristically Romantic political position. The pursuit of the ineffable, or the prizing of the unconscious, meanwhile, seems to shortcut this possibility altogether by suggesting a deliberate disavowal of the political world—and that is before you add music into the equation. Drawing parallels between aesthetics and politics is always a risky business, and with music *and* Romanticism particularly tricky. The themes of this chapter are thus best teased out by questioning their possible intersections. How did the political beliefs of Romantic musicians affect their creative endeavours? Can we speak of styles having political tendencies—and if so, what is/was the politics of 'Romantic' music? Which political tendencies contributed to Romanticism in music? Which Romantic political positions influenced musical life? Which Romantic elements of musical life influenced political life? What are the political implications of Romantic theories about music?

The first two questions raise thorny issues of musicological method. Composers' politics have received significant treatment in scholarship, not least because of influence of the Romantic hero on musicological historiographic models: the centrality of the individual as a structure for studying music (as well as other arts) has been long-lasting, if not unchallenged. The sizeable academic literature on Beethoven's politics, for instance, not to mention the stories circulating about him in musical culture more broadly, attests to the difficulties of pinning down the political beliefs of historical figures who were not prone to straightforward or consistent political statements. This is, in fact, one of the best places to observe both the pitfalls and the critiques of reading political positions onto musical choices, or—as is implied by my second question— political positions *from* musical choices: often Beethoven's music has been seen as a site of resistance.[1] But such approaches are now well problematised: connections that we might see between musical choices and contemporary politics were not necessarily intended by the composer nor legible to audiences at the time, and such connections have to be established as more or less plausible, based on the conventions and discourses of the time. Thus the second of my six questions should rather ask which political tendencies (if any) have been attributed *by whom* (whether composer, critics or audiences) to musical Romanticism or Romantic musical style.

For all these reasons, and for the purposes of showing the breadth of possible approaches to this topic, it is the remaining four questions that I'll explore in this chapter, outlining some of the ways that connections between music, politics and Romanticism can be drawn. This includes a brief discussion of Romantic theories of state governance or political organisation, and how they influenced Romantic conceptions of art, as well as exploring how Romantic aesthetics could be given different political spins in different political contexts; my focus on German lands and France is particularly instructive on this latter point, where the intersections of Revolutions and Romanticism vary considerably. In the second section, I look at the political mobilisation of

Romantic symbols in musical life, before ending with a brief consideration of politicised anti-Romanticism among music critics in 1848.

Romanticism and Revolution

While it is possible to trace proto-Romantic tendencies across the second half of the 18th century, in the cult of individual sensibility, for example, or in Rousseauvian reactions against the reification of rationality and reason, few would deny the impact of the French Revolution of 1789 in forming Romantic aesthetics. The failure of the Revolution—its descent into the Terror and disorder, its subsequent usurping by Napoleon—was seen by many to demonstrate the failure of reason itself, of attempts to order the world logically and systematically, which fed the Romantic emphasis on individual perception and interpretation over objective truths. The sense of rupture brought about by Revolutionary attempts to erase the *ancien régime*, not least the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and the turmoil of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (1792–1815) contributed to a longing to return to a simpler past, or to wild, unspoilt nature. Moreover, that sense of turmoil, of unstoppable social forces and violence, increased the salience of the category of the sublime in art (as opposed to the beautiful).

Romanticism can be seen as a response to the Revolution, then, but that does not mean that all Romantics were reactionary or anti-revolutionary. To be sure, many of the early Romantics in France, the German lands and England, after initial support, recoiled in horror at the violence unleashed in France. But their impulse was not to preserve a pre-Revolutionary status quo; if any single tendency among the early Romantics can be generalised, it is a critique of the 'mechanistic administration of society' (to use Novalis's term for Enlightenment rationality) that they saw as culminating in the Revolution.[2] For Friedrich Schlegel, the aesthetic provided a space to reverse this process: in his *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800), he presents the purpose of poetry (understood as a quality of all arts) as being to 'annul the progression and laws of rationally thinking reason and to take us back to the beautiful confusion of imagination, into the original chaos of nature'.[3] Such a statement might suggest the tension between the Romantic emphasis on individual imagination, not to mention chaos, and *any* system of political organisation. Elsewhere, though, Schlegel and others did contemplate alternative models of society in more concrete terms, emphasising the interdependence of the individual and the collective. Indeed, the Romantics sought to combat the perceived atomisation of a rationalised society through various sources of community, including religion, love, and art.

Novalis's *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (*Christendom or Europe*, 1799), for example, extols the unity of medieval Europe, when 'one Christendom inhabited this humanly fashioned part of the world; one grand common interest bound the most distant provinces of the wide spiritual realm'.[4] Love, meanwhile, was 'the completion of community' for Schlegel,[5] and the subject of Novalis's treatise *Glaube und Liebe* (*Faith and Love*, 1798), which advocated for the emotional bonds within family and marriage as the basis of society. Schleiermacher too argued that without love 'no individual life or development is possible…everything must degenerate into a crude, homogeneous mass',[6] and in his *Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens* (*Essay on a Theory for Social Conduct*, 1799) proposed intimate sociability and conversation as a way of developing

meaningful bonds that served both the individual and the wider society. For Schlegel, art could serve such a purpose, in a Romantic outgrowth of the Herderian idea of shared culture creating communities.[7] Romantic conceptualisations of the state emphasised *organic* bonds, in other words, rather than systemised relations or social contracts: Adam Müller, in *Die Elemente der Staatkunst* (*The Elements of Statecraft*, 1809), argued that 'the state is not a mere factory, a farm, an insurance, institution or mercantile society; above all, it is the inward association of all physical and spiritual needs, of all physical and spiritual riches, of all the inner and outer life of a nation into one great, energetic, infinitely moving and living whole'.[8] The prizing of organicism was of course apparent in Romantic approaches to artworks too: as Ethel Matala de Mazza has pointed out, 'The social models of the Romantics were aesthetic constructs in the most precise sense: they grounded their postulate of togetherness on the imaginative "evidence" of aesthetic experience'.[9] This should not lead us to read any trace of organicism in music as a political statement, however, but rather to see the power of the organic model in both spheres, the political and artistic, and the importance of such interconnection for the Romantics.

The German Romantics' political programme was not, therefore, a mere reversion to the pre-Revolutionary status quo, and indeed contained elements of radical anti-capitalism. It was nonetheless strongly hierarchical. With the idealisation of the medieval period came its feudal structures (explicitly advocated by Müller in his later work), and the elitist tendencies of Romantic political thought are latent in Schlegel's statement that 'A perfect republic would have to be not just democratic but aristocratic and monarchic at the same time: to legislate justly and freely, the educated would have to outweigh and guide the uneducated, and everything would have to be organized into an absolute whole.'[10] Moreover, many of the Romantics would ally themselves with restoration causes or employers: both Schlegel and Müller worked for the conservative Austrian politician Klemens von Metternich. But in their advocacy of medieval structures, the Romantics were in fact far more extreme than their reactionary overlords, and increasingly, the vintage of their political and social models (and their view of art's purpose) reflected an impulse to retreat from rather than transform contemporary society.

If the trajectory of many German Romantics is one of increasing conservatism and withdrawal, elsewhere the political tendencies of Romantic movements are more ambivalent. In England Wordsworth and Coleridge similarly recoiled inward in reaction to the Revolution, but the younger Shelley and Byron would continue to support republicanism. In France, Chateaubriand quickly turned against the Revolution and joined a royalist emigré army based in Germany; he published his defence of individual genius over convention, using the example of Shakespeare, in 1800 (*De la littérature*), followed by his paean to Christianity (*Génie du christianisme*) in 1802. Other French advocates of Romanticism in those early years—such as Madame de Staël, whose *On Germany* in 1813 was central in defining Romanticism for Europe as a whole—were politically liberal. De Staël, a moderate Revolutionary in the 1790s, opposed Napoleon's authoritarianism, and advocated instead a republican monarchy along a British model.[11] Common to both was a rejection of the rigid control and ordering of society (whether by utilitarian rationality or an authoritarian leader), which finds a parallel in their aesthetic stances.

Such a parallel should not be assumed. The Romantic principle of resistance to ordering or convention has often been divorced from its specific historical and individual contexts in ways

that have cast all Romantic art works and artists as politically progressive simply by virtue of the aesthetic experimentation and freedom they pursued. Certainly, the Romantics proposed the breaking of artistic conventions: Schlegel, advocate of the 'confusion of the imagination', also complained that 'All the classical genres are now ridiculous in their rigorous purity', and the celebration of individual subjectivity and genius was antithetical to abstract rules.[12] The political corollary of this aesthetic stance can vary, however. One of the reasons that the association between Beethoven and the Revolutionary has been so enduring, for example, is because of an (over-)easy equivalence drawn between aesthetic and political 'liberation', between the (artistically) revolutionary and the Revolutionary. This takes some unravelling. In the first place, French Revolutionary politicians in fact tended to be somewhat conservative in their aesthetic pronouncements in their concern for the wide legibility of art: official Revolutionary music was often far from artistically revolutionary.[13] But there are ways in which the ruptures of the Revolution did prompt musical experimentation that would become associated both with the Revolutionary and the Romantic: Sarah Hibberd has argued that attempts by composers such as Cherubini to reflect the power and sublimity of Revolutionary violence prompted harmonic and formal experimentation that was associated at the time with political radicalism, regardless of the political viewpoints of the composers generating it. François-Joseph Gossec, for example, heard clear (and to him, worrying) political connotations in the 'noisiness' of the music of Cherubini and others: '[M]elody, melody! That is the refrain of sensible men and the sane part of the public. Harmonic detours, barbaric transitions, exaggerated chromaticism, that is the truck of fools and fanatics'.[14]

Harmonic detours, barbaric transitions, exaggerated chromaticism: these sounds might be *of* the Revolution – but does that make them always an incitement to revolution, intended or perceived, whether in a French or other national context? Many of the features that appeared so dramatically new in Beethoven's music can be traced to Cherubini, whose influence the German composer was happy to admit. Indeed, Kaiser Franz was reported to dislike Beethoven's music because 'There is something revolutionary in the music'.[15] Some of the vocabularies and innovations now associated with musical Romanticism can be traced to French Revolutionary music, in other words—and their appeal to the Romantic sensibility to the disorder, sublimity or 'liberation' they conveyed: while Kaiser Franz may have perceived it as a threat, E. T. A. Hoffmann admiringly described Beethoven's music as a setting 'in motion machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain'.[16] But, again, we should be careful about drawing too easy a parallel between an aesthetic experience of, or references to, Revolution at one remove, and any desire to dismantle the political status quo; all the more so between those aesthetic innovations that are merely *revolutionary* (which have no connection to the sounds of the Revolution) and political radicalism. After all, the aesthetic experimentation that Beethoven pursued later in his life has more often been traced to a withdrawal from the world (because its esotericism rules out unambiguous political communication of any nature) or to conservative politics (aligned with the medievalism and mysticism of German Romantics such as Schlegel, Müller, et cetera).[17]

The parallel—between Romantic aesthetic experimentation and political liberation—has more obvious contemporary salience in a nineteenth-century French context, and this is partly because those rigid artistic rules that Romantics were so keen to transcend—classicism—were more deeply embedded in the 'establishment' in France, and more associated with the official culture

of the Bourbon monarchy; there was, in other words, a direct link between political control and aesthetic restrictions. Napoleon's regime (1799–1815) reinforced this association, propagating neo-classicism both as a way of legitimating his rule by referencing the aesthetic of the pre-revolutionary *ancien régime* and as a way of distancing Napoleonic society and art from Revolutionary chaos and experimentation. Thus de Staël's *De L'Allemagne* was censored for its suggestion that the Germans could rejuvenate the French, and its promotion of Romanticism at the expenses of the national tradition of classicism. From a figure who also opposed Napoleon politically (de Staël was banished from Paris in 1803), such a suggestion in the aesthetic sphere was considered both unpatriotic and anti-Napoleonic, and in 1814, the bonapartist journal *Le Nain Jaune* drew up a mock treaty of a 'Romantic Confederation' calling for the utter defeat of French literature and language, 'signed' by de Staël and others.[18]

That *Le Nain Jaune* was a liberal journal should again serve as a check to any easy equation between progressive politics and Romantic aesthetics: its anti-Romantic stance reflects an association between royalism and Romanticism at the time. But let us pursue a little longer the growing tendency for that equation in France, which takes some unexpected musical directions. While politicised disputes about Romanticism in literature were already underway in the 1810s, it was a little later that music got drawn in, by which point certain binary oppositions had become established in criticism with varying degrees of pejorative intent: liberal vs royalist; Romantic vs classical; freedom or anarchy vs order; French vs foreign. Although German music was not automatically classed as Romantic, German libretti with supernatural tendencies were: when Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* was performed in Paris as *Robin des bois* (1824), it was criticised for its 'Romantic devils'[19] by opponents, just as it was celebrated by Victor Hugo's Romantic circle.[20] The transferral of those binaries to musical characteristics came into focus more in the discourse around Italian opera in the second half of the 1820s, prompted, at least in part, by the publication of Romantic manifestos by literary figures in 1823–5 (Victor Hugo's *Nouvelles odes* and Stendhal's *Racine et Shakespeare*), Rossini's increasing dominance of the Parisian operatic scene, and a growing association of Romanticism with modernity and the present (this despite its affinity for the past!).[21] In 1825, Charles de Salvo's account of *Lord Byron en Italie et en Grèce* contained an anecdote in which Rossini himself (apparently) acknowledged his music's categorisation as Romantic, and linked this to its deliberate contemporaneity. Noting that he had been criticised for bringing together large forces, trumpets and drums, and the like (and labelled Romantic in doing so), he suggested that 'that if the war continued in Europe, I would have put the cannon in every finale, and I would have made music with guns'.[22]

Rossini's innovative noisiness—paradoxically—takes us back to the 1790s, and this aesthetic-political association is made explicit in the critic Louis Vitet's articles on Romanticism in the liberal paper *Le Globe* in 1825. Recognising the complicated history of the term, Vitet sought to consolidate the movement and its political resonances, declaring that 'Taste in France awaits its 14 July … Practical Romanticism is a coalition animated by diverse interests, but which has a common goal, the war against the rules, the rules of conventions.' The political language is not merely metaphorical: the restrictiveness of aesthetic institutions such as the royal opera house and the sterility of classical conventions are directly linked to absolute monarchy and its regulation of the artistic sphere. Rossini, moreover, is heralded as a genius, and Vitet also identifies musical features associated with Romanticism, namely, harmonic and orchestral

innovation.[23] The politicisation of Rossini's musical style is as apparent from its detractors. As Emmanuel Reibel has shown, the opera composer Henri-Montan Berton, declared by Stendhal the 'champion' of the 'counter-revolution in music',[24] associated musical rules with political stability, classicism with the *ancien régime*, and declared himself at war with those who praised Rossini for 'shaking the rules of the old musical regime'.[25] While Berton had come to prominence as a composer during the Revolutionary decade, he was by this point a solid establishment figure, having worked at the Opéra, taught at the conservatoire since its foundation, and been honoured as a member of the Institut de France (the prestigious national learned society). Back in 1821, seemingly in response to Rossini's success in Paris with *Otello*, he had published a serious of articles identifying the new decadence he detected:

> Ambitious modulations, extraordinary transitions, multiplicity of parts, incoherence of rhythms, pretentious searches for harmony, mannered turns of melody, and above all an immeasurable profusion of semiquavers … supported in their lead fire by that of the heavy artillery of the trumpets, trombones, timpani and tom-toms…[26]

As already suggested, though, these two opposing positions were not the only ones in this debate. It was perfectly possible to find liberals who were anti-Romantic, who saw the aesthetic as conservative in its mysticism or decadence, and maintained a commitment to clarity and rationality: thus *Le Corsaire* attacked Rossini as the 'sublime leader' of a school propagating 'hustle and bustle' and 'double gibberish'.[27] Similarly, it was possible to find conservative monarchists who remained attached to the mystical, nostalgic elements of Romanticism, in the vein established by Chateaubriand at the start of the 1800s. In fact, one of the reasons that Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829) was such a powerful symbol of Romanticism in 1820s France was its combination of 'modern' music by one of the figureheads of Romanticism, on a theme of Revolution, with an older, nostalgic Romanticism that revelled in the authenticity of folk culture and mountains.[28] Published that same year, Torienx's *Histoire du romantisme*, which singled out Rossini for his own chapter (Beethoven and Weber only had a chapter between them), described the composer as a 'true Romantic author', commending, along with his bold modulations, rich and varied orchestration, his capacity to paint 'local and historical colours'.[29] In this same history, Torienx himself wondered at the changing political fortunes of Romanticism—'at first…the defender of liberty. Then it was the accomplice of despots'—and describing the recent (re-alliance) of Romanticism with progressive politics as itself a 'revolution'.[30]

Romantic Isms

If the above section was structured around the relation between Romanticism and r/Revolution, it was also about the contrasting tendencies of Romantic liberalism and conservatism in the nineteenth century (or indeed liberal Romanticism and conservative Romanticism). This section develops those themes in relation to some other 'isms', particularly nationalism and dynasticism (or dynastic patriotism), within a Prussian and German context.[31] In the first half of the nineteenth century, 'Germany' did not exist as a political entity, but rather as an idea defined by shared language and culture, which the national movement sought to realise politically. The importance of Romantic aesthetics and symbols to both nationalist and dynasticist discourses lies in the way they contributed to narratives of political identity: appeals to the rightness of any particular grouping on account of a shared past or culture. As Matthew Gelbart has pointed out

elsewhere in this volume, any claim to a shared culture is strengthened by the evocation of its ancientness. Looking at these two political movements allows us to see the Romanticisation of the past as politically ambivalent (rather like Chateaubriand and de Staël): the nationalist movement in nineteenth-century German lands tended to be populated by those of liberal politics, who saw unification as a way to increase individual liberties; the cause of dynastic patriotism tended to be more conservative, preserving the status quo in terms of leadership and social organisation. To both, a Romanticisation of the past was useful to unite populations around a heritage, however mythologised, elaborated, and invented.

The rehabilitation of J. S. Bach provides one telling example of how Romantic aesthetics enabled a new appreciation of older artworks — and how such heritage could be a politically unifying force. The complexity of Bach's music, neglected in the second half of the 18th century in favour of Italianate 'noble simplicity', became once more appealing as qualities of profundity and complexity emerged as positives.[32] Carl Maria von Weber's celebration of Bach's 'most unexpected progressions' in part-writing and 'long successions of unusual rhythms in the most ingenious contrapuntal combinations' gives some indication of the points of connection with a an aesthetic of 'beautiful confusion', and his comparison of 'this sublime artist' with 'a Gothic cathedral' indicates the way that the aura of age fed the sense of profundity: Bach's 'individuality' was, according to Weber, both 'Romantic' and 'truly German'.[33] Indeed, the Romantic rehabilitation of Bach had a distinctly nationalist flavour, of which Johann Nikolaus Forkel's 1802 biography presents the most (in)famous example: 'this man – the great musical poet and the greatest musical orator that there has ever been and probably ever will be – was a German. Be proud of him, fatherland, be proud of him, but also be worthy of him!'[34]

Weber's own musical endeavours included a sustained attempt to create distinctively German artworks, particularly in the field of opera. His *Der Freischütz*, premiered in Berlin 1821, was only the most successful of early nineteenth-century efforts to define German music theatre through subject matter or self-conscious stylistic markers. Kotzebue's libretto *Hermann und Thusnelde* (1813), for example, had drawn on the myth of the warrior Arminius/Hermann, who united disparate tribes to defeat the Romans in 9 CE, as recorded by Tacitus. Intended as a grand opera with spoken dialogue, and containing a supernatural appearance from Germania herself, and the transfiguration of Thusnelde in Valhalla, the work was set by three composers, without either critical or popular success.[35] E. T. A. Hoffmann's opera *Undine* (1816), which sets Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's 1811 story, is set near the Danube in medieval times, but features a water nymph, combining the appeal of the national chivalric past with elements of fairy tale. The stage design thus presented both gothic architecture and the German (super)natural environment, while the costumes imitated the paintings of German masters from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[36] Weber reviewed the Berlin production for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, measuring Hoffmann's opera against the 'German ideal' of organic unity, though it has to be said that his vested interests led him to a more favourable opinion of its merits than many other critics.[37]

Der Freischütz is clearly in the *Undine* rather than *Hermann* mould. Set in the seventeenth century and featuring the forests, hunting, and hunting horns of German folklore and Romantic sensibility, this opera too combined the appeal of the natural and supernatural. Richard Wagner

would later testify to the significance of the forest to the German nation when he sought to explain *Robin des bois* to the French: the French word 'bois' could not capture it.[38] Whilst, as several scholars have now argued, there is much that is musically Italian and French in this depiction of German country life, Weber did attempt to mark it sonically as German through the use of folkish melodies, horns, male-voice choir writing. These musical elements were not exclusive to German musical traditions, but were increasingly defined as German musical symbols: in the case of the male-voice choirs, the association was not only to traditional hunting culture and masculinity but also to the contemporary student singing societies that acted as a cover for liberal political organisation. Certainly, *Der Freischütz* acted not only as a focus for pan-German efforts to create a German opera tradition, but also, in the context of Berlin, served as something of a covert rallying cry for those who opposed the monarch's traditionalism but were censored from overt statements of opposition.[39]

Although liberals saw in *Der Freischütz* a symbol of a pan-German community united by a Romanticised shared culture and past, dynastic monarchies opposing that vision could use similar tactics. The same year that he was writing *Undine*, for example, Hoffmann was commissioned to write a theatrical prologue celebrating the Prussian hereditary dynasty, the Hohenzollerns, on the anniversary of the beginning of their reign as Margraves of Brandenburg in 1415. *Thassilo* was performed in October 1815 with music also by Hoffmann. Set in the time of Charlemagne, with Thassilo, the first of the Hohenzollerns, credited with saving the Fatherland by uniting all Germans, the prologue thus tread the delicate tightrope of acknowledging the German cultural nation while amplifying the historic importance of the dynasty. In the years following the Napoleonic Wars, the need to shore up the identities of the German states that made up German Federation (the loose association that replaced the Holy Roman Empire, dissolved in 1806, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815) only increased as the movement for political unification, and thus the dissolution of the individual states, grew in strength. This movement would ultimately lead to the Revolutions of 1848, where the demands for a German nation of shared culture and history were allied with calls of individual liberty, in opposition to hereditary and autocratic rulers. Friedrich Wilhelm VI of Prussia (reigned 1840–61), like his Hohenzollern forebears, faced the challenge of uniting diverse and discontinuous territories, not all of them German-speaking, not all of them Protestant. Known as the 'Romantic on the Throne', he sought to locate his authority – and the integrity of the Prussian state – in the past: both the lineage of the Hohenzollerns, whose hereditary lands had historically been diverse and discontinuous, and which gave him a divine right to rule; and in a pre-Reformation Christian (Catholic) unity, which overcame the contemporary confessional and linguistic divides in Prussia. This strategy, in which we can see the influence of the German Romantics at the start of the century, was at least in part derived from his personal mysticism, aesthetic preferences and convictions, but was also a strategic, anti-Revolutionary 'monarchical project' which sought to preserve the political status quo.[40]

Friedrich Wilhelm's support for the reconstruction of the medieval, Catholic cathedral in Cologne (part of the Kingdom of Prussia since 1815) can be seen as part of this project, combining a specifically confessional statement of inclusivity with a monument to German medieval architecture: the completed building, begun in the thirteenth century, was inaugurated in 1842. The king's preference for historical repertoires such as Palestrina (the *Missa Papae*

Marcelli was apparently one of his favourites)[41] and his cultivation of historicist church music also reflect his conception of Prussia. To be sure, church music has historically contained references to earlier styles to a much greater extent than secular repertoires, and as James Garratt has shown, German Romantics of both Protestant and Catholic persuasions were drawn to Palestrina: E. T. A Hoffmann's 'Old and New Church Music' is a good example of the former.[42] But the self-conscious historicism of court-appointed composers writing for the Prussian Union Church (a Protestant body combining Lutheran and Calvinist churches, created in 1817), and the references to specifically Catholic repertoires of church music, suggests that this wider tendency could be politicized. Thus Laura Stokes has argued that choral settings of the *Deutsche Liturgie* for the Prussian Union Church in the 1840s use gestures to earlier church music to evoke either a harmonious 'pre-sectarian past', or the shared history of religious change: in the case of the settings of Eduard Grell (organist at the Dom from 1829 and later director of the *Singakademie*), and Wilhelm Taubert (Kapellmeister from 1841), a more or less strict evocation of a Palestrinian style; in the case of Mendelssohn (Kapellmeister from 1843–4), a more eclectic set of historical references, including chant, modalism, antiphonal and imitative writing, chorale structures, and strict treatment of dissonance, which combined could be interpreted as an evocation of the multiple historical and denominational elements making up Prussia's religious identity.[43]

The musical Romanticisation of Prussian dynastic identity can be seen in Meyerbeer's opera *Ein Feldlager in Schlesien*, performed in Berlin in 1844. The narrative of this opera revolves around the revered 18th-century Hohenzollern monarch Frederick the Great, accompanied by Enlightenment ideas about the assimilation of diverse groups into the state—which suited present-day Prussian needs, as well as Meyerbeer's own status as an assimilated Jew in Berlin. In many ways it is a typical patriotic work—containing pre-existing military music, an unambiguous narrative of loyalty and sacrifice to the state—but the central character of the gypsy woman Vielka, who can read the future, adds a mystic element to this retelling of Prussian history, and at the end of Act 3 she prophesies a glorious future for Frederick's house and his realm, presented in a series of tableaux vivants. The history of the Hohenzollerns is thus presented as a historical epic, including scenes from the life of Frederick the Great (one of his star opera singers, Madame Mara, singing an Italian aria by Graun), the Napoleonic wars (volunteer soldiers singing a patriotic song in 1813; Friedrich Wilhelm III's victorious return to Berlin in 1814), and the burning of the royal opera house in 1843. Rather like *Thassilo* and the *Deutsche Liturgie*, the tableaux folds non-German (cosmopolitan) and pan-German (volunteer songs) together with the figures of the Prussian monarchs, romanticising the dynastic alongside the national.

Romanticising the Politics out of Music?
Friedrich Wilhelm IV's commitment to dynastic monarchy, and his sense of his position as grounded in an older tradition of political organisation, was one of the reasons that he refused the crown of a unified Germany in 1848. At a stretch, we might say that Friedrich Wilhelm IV's Romanticism was one of the many reasons that the 1848 Revolutions, in which liberals sought to unite German states, failed. Certainly, at the time there were voices that directly criticised Romantic aesthetics for inhibiting political change, even when those aesthetics weren't allied with conservative politics: while the recourse to the past or to other worlds had the potential for radical critique of contemporary society, too often (so ran the criticism) it served to draw attention and energy away from the present. Music, considered the 'most Romantic of all the

arts' precisely because of its capacity to gesture towards other worlds or the ineffable by a relative absence of specific or stable content, was particularly susceptible to this criticism, not least because it was an art form considered to have remained Romantic, whilst others had begun to embrace new tendencies towards realism.[44] In fact, for some critics of Romanticism, music represented the worst of it, leading to a devaluing of this art form relative to other arts (a recursion to an 18th-century hierarchy), which naturally led others to a defence of music's role.[45]

1848 thus sees a debate—largely conducted between two differently orientated music journals, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (*AmZ*) and the *Neue Zeitchrift für Musik* (*NZfM*)—precisely about the themes of this chapter: the relationship between music, Romanticism and politics. Some sought to rescue music from politics (via Romanticism); others, to rescue music *from* Romanticism *for* politics. In an article on 'Relationships between Art and Politics' for the *AmZ*, Eduard Krüger defended music against its apparent political failings by declaring that it did not have anything to do with politics, but rather the 'contemplation of the beautiful'. C. Kretschmann in the *NZfM*, on the other hand—writing after the Revolution had clearly failed— distinguished music per se from Romanticism in music, which he characterised as an 'over-reliance on the feminine in artistic production' that had led to 'enervation, weakness, and disease': music must become masculine again, by becoming democratic.[46] As Sanna Pederson has pointed out, critics promoting a politically engaged, democratic music generally only contrasted it to the decadence of Romantic music, rather than defining it more explicitly. The one figure who historically had represented this political ideal seems – for several commentators – to have been none other than Beethoven: another *NZfM* journalist would claim that 'Beethoven was a democrat not only in his life but also in his art; he was filled with the spiritual forces [*geistigen Mächte*] of his age and attested to this in his works'.[47] This brings us full circle to some of the powerful legacies of the nineteenth century for our own received understandings of music, those enduring ideas that were presented at the start of the chapter for unpicking: that music is the least political by being most Romantic of the arts; and that Beethoven is a prime example of political progressivism in music. Neither of these truisms captures the complexity of the interrelations of music, Romanticism and politics: the political ambivalence of Romanticism as a movement; the adoption of Romantic aesthetics and music by opposing political movements; the fickle associations of political and aesthetic progress. Both Romanticism and music, and Romantic music, turn out to be rather unstable in their political meanings, but no less politically powerful for all that.

Further Reading

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[1] For recent discussion of these tendencies, see David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Leon Plantinga, 'Beethoven, Napoleon and Political Romanticism', in Jane F. Fulcher (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 484–500; and Nicholas Mathew, *Political Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[2] Novalis, *Glauben und Liebe* (1798), cited and translated in Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 170.

[3] Cited and translated in James Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 24.

[4] Cited and translated in Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon*, 18.

[5] Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 101.

[6] *Schleiermacher's Soliloquies: An English Translation of the Monologen*, ed. and trans. Horace Leland Friess (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 39.

[7] See F. Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, ed. and trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 53.

[8] Cited and translated in Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon*, 28.

[9] Ethel Matala de Mazza, 'Romantic Politics and Society', in Nicholas Saul (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 192.

[10] *Athenaeum Fragment*, No. 214, cited and translated in G. N. Izenberg, *Impossible Individuality: Romanticims, Revolution, and the Origins of Modern Selfhood* (Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press, 1992), 136.

[11] See Fabienne Moore, 'Early French Romanticism', in Micahel Ferber (ed.), *A Companion to European Romanticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 172–91; and Biancamaria Fontana, *Germaine de Staël: A Political Portrait* (Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press, 2016).

[12] *Lyceum Fragment*, No. 60, Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, 127.

[13] James H. Johnson, 'Musical Expression and Jacobin Ideology', in *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 1995), 137–54.

[14] Sarah Hibberd, 'Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 24/3 (2012), 293.

[15] Rhys Jones, 'Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution in Vienna, 1792–1814', *The Historical Journal*, 57/4 (2014), 950, 953.

[16] *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 238.

[17] See Rumph, *Beethoven Afer Napoleon*, 92–132.

[18] See René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750–1950*, volume 2: *The Romantic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 216.

[19] Emmanuel Reibel, *Comment la musique est devenue 'romantique': De Rousseau à Berlioz* (Paris: Fayard, 2013), 210.

[20] Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon, 1824–1828* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 124.

[21] In his *Histoire du romantisme* (1829), Toreinx defined Romanticism as 'everything that is new'. See *Histoire du romantisme en France* (Paris: Dureuil, 1829), 164.

[22] Charles de Salvo, *Lord Byron en Italie et en Grèce* (1825), cited in Reibel, *Comment la musique est devenue 'romantique'*, 382. For more on Rossini's reception in Paris—as Romantic or otherwise—see Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[23] Louis Vitet, 'De la musique moderne', *Le Globe* (15 January 2815), 269–71; and 'De l'indépendance en matière de gout', *Le Globe* (2 April 1825), 442–5 and (23 April 1825), 491–3.

[24] Stendhal, *Memoirs of Rossini* (London: Hookham, 1824), 58.

[25] Cited in Reibel, *Comment la musique est devenue 'romantique'*, 257.

[26] Henri-Montan Berton, 'De la musique mécanique et de la musique philosphique', *L'Abeille*, 3 (1821), 292–8. Reproduced in Reibel, *Comment la musique est devenue 'romantique'*, 377–81, at 378.

[27] Reibel, *Comment la musique est devenue 'romantique'*, 262–3.

[28] See Walton, 'Looking for the Revolution in *Guillaume Tell*', in *Rossini in Restoration Paris*, 257–92.

[29] Toreinx, *Histoire du romantisme*, 405. Other chapters by Torienx (including one on music) are excerpted and translated in Peter le Huray and James Day (eds.), *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1988), 406–19.

[30] Le Huray and Day, *Music and Aesthetics*, 408–9, translation modified.

[31] These are not the only 'isms' one might pursue, of course. One recent development has been the study of Romantic Cosmopolitanism: see the special issue 'Romantic Cosmopolitanism', *European Romantic Review*, 16/2 (2005); and Esther Wohlgemut (ed.), *Romantic Cosmopolitanism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[32] See Bernd Sponheur, 'Reconstructing Ideal Types of the "German" in Music', in Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (eds.), *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: Univeristy of Chicago Press, 2002), 48–52.

[33] Carl Maria von Weber, 'Johann Sebastian Bach' (1821), in *Carl Maria von Weber: Writings on Music*, ed. John Warrack, trans. Martin Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 296–9.

[34] Johann Nikolaus Forkel,*Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister & Kühnel, 1802), 69.

[35] Kaspar van Kooten, '"Ein dürftiger Stoff": Hermann and the Failure of German Liberation Opera (1815–1848)', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 16 (2018), 249–72.

[36] Francien Markx, *E. T. A. Hoffmann, Cosmopolitanism, and the Struggle for German Opera* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 238–68.

[37] Weber, 'Review of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Undine*', in *Writings on Music*, 200–5.

[38] Richard Wagner, '*Der Freischütz*. To the Paris Public (1841)', in *Pilgrimage to Beethoven and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 169–182, at 176.

[39] Stephen C. Meyer, *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[40] David E. Barclay, *Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the Prussian Monarchy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 10.

[41] James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination: Interpreting Historicism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 115.

[42] *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 351–76. See also James Garratt, 'Mendelssohn's Babel: Romanticism and the Poetics of Translation', *Music & Letters*, 80 (1999), 23–49.

[43] Laura K. T. Stokes, 'Mendelssohn's Deutsche Liturgie in the Context of the Prussian Agende of 1829', in Benedict Taylor (ed.), *Rethinking Mendelssohn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 346–75.

[44] See Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[45] See Sanna Pederson, 'Romantic Music Under Siege in 1848', in Ian Bent (ed.), *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 57–74.

[46] Cited and translated in ibid., 66–9.

[47] Cited and translated in ibid., 70.