Chapter 1
M-Words
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In his *Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, first published in 1976, Raymond Williams listed "dramatic" as one of a "group of words which have been extended from their original and continuing application to some specific art, to much wider use as descriptions of actual events and situations:"[1] his other examples included "picturesque," "theatrical," "tragic," and "role." Any update of Williams for the twenty-first century would surely have to include "melodramatic." There is no question that the word has currency far beyond any specific musical-theatrical art: not only is it commonly used in relation to a wide range of entertainment, from Hollywood films to Brazilian telenovelas, but it is also deployed in the context of political action and everyday life. Just within the academy, it can refer equally to art music and stump speeches, courtroom scenes and sporting incidents.[2] We are by no means the first to note this tendency. Already in 2000 Rohan McWilliam observed that "the uses of melodrama by historians have become so elastic that almost any form of modern culture is said to have a melodramatic dimension," draining the term of "its explanatory power and hence of its utility."[3] Without a sensitivity to the subjects and workings of actual performed melodramas, the melodramatic is always in danger of running away with itself. Faced with so much opening out and loose association, we want here to make the case for a strategic restriction of melodrama studies. In fact, we want to suggest that "melodrama studies" is in danger of over-reach. The vast literature that clusters around the M-word is fundamentally undisciplined; it is a meeting point, not a place of tenure, and it ought to be approached as such.

The present volume stages one such meeting, an encounter in which literary and theater historians, although present and of great importance, are outnumbered by musicologists. This weighting of interests reflects an ongoing attempt to "sonorize" the study of melodrama while maintaining a lively dialogue among disciplines.[4] Without wishing to downplay the insights of scholars who have looked for melodramatic acts outside the theater, we suggest that a return to the period of the genre's inception, and a close attention to the place of music therein, is an important and necessary contribution to a fuller understanding of

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[1] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 109.

[2] Elaine Hadley's *Melodramatic Tactics* (1995), which addresses "theatricalized dissent" in nineteenth-century England, is only one of the best-known examples of this phenomenon: identifying a list of characteristic features, based on the stage plays and printed stories of the period in question, Hadley concludes that "a version of the 'melodramatic' seems to have served as a behavioural and expressive model for several generations of English people." The tendency is not restricted to writing about England. Analyzing Robespierre's writings, David Andress concludes that "the lived revolutionary experience of Robespierre and his fellows … is best described as 'melodramatic' in its intensity." See Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 3; David Andress, "Living the Revolutionary Melodrama: Robespierre's Sensibility and the Construction of Political Commitment in the French Revolution," *Representations* 114, no. 1 (2011): 103-128 (122).

[3] Rohan McWilliam, "Melodrama and the Historians," *Radical History Review* 78 (2000): 57-84 (58).

[4] Emilio Sala used the verb "sonoriser" in "Mélodrame: Définitions et metamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique," *Revue de musicologie* 84, no. 2 (1998): 235-246 (243). Jens Hesselager later echoed Sala's phrase in "Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions: 'Reflexive Performance' as a Way of Approaching Nineteenth-Century French Melodrama," *Nordic Theater Studies* 23 (2011): 20-30.

melodrama's complex status in social and political life. Our focus is on the years 1790-1820, when popular melodrama first came to prominence in the metropolitan centers of northern Europe. It is these cities – chiefly London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin – that coordinate a busy, multi-layered account. What we are calling "the melodramatic moment" is, of course, already known by other names and staked by other claims: revolution, cultural nationalism, imperial ambition, Romanticism, and urban growth have been foregrounded in histories of European culture in this period; within musicology, the rise of the work concept is perhaps the most familiar recent frame of reference, albeit still less prevalent in the popular imagination than the much-criticized idea of the "Romantic Era." In renaming these decades we are not so much seeking to overwrite existing accounts as to engage them in conversation. The aim of this introduction, then, is not to locate the present book in an artificially discrete field of inquiry, despite our ambition to limit and restrict; on the contrary, we want to embrace our topic's many indiscretions and make sense of its multiplicity by insisting on historical specificity.

In what follows we outline a method informed by circulation and adaptation. At the largest level, this helps us build a picture of the continent-wide network of people, objects, and ideas that enabled the rapid spread of a new form of musical theater. At the same time, it gives fresh impetus to micro-histories of composition, performance, and reception that show how early melodrama functioned in particular times and places, within particular regimes of regulation and critical comment. Rather than posit a mode of address or action more or less separate from media history, we propose a history of melodrama that is intricately bound up with the aesthetics and circumstances of performance. Rather than advancing an abstract model of what melodrama is or how it works, we engage with the historical task of understanding how it was identified at the time and what its structure meant to those who made it and those who paid to see it. This is no easy undertaking. Anyone familiar with the topic will attest that early melodrama is a categorical nightmare.[5] Most obviously, there are two distinct myths of origin to take into account: one that proceeds from philosophy, the other from politics; one concerning Rousseau, the other Revolution. Before going any further, we should revisit these two myths, as well as the distinct traditions of performance and scholarship they have come to underwrite.

Origins

Rousseau comes first, at least chronologically. His *Pygmalion* was written in 1762, one year after the successful reception of his sentimental novel, *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, and the same year as the controversy surrounding *Du Contrat social*. His self-styled "scène lyrique," on the ancient theme of an idol brought to life, was overshadowed by the furore caused by his radical philosophy. Indeed, Rousseau would spend much of the rest of the decade in exile, his work censored and even banned for its perceived assault on religious and government authority. Only in 1770, after returning to France, did Rousseau turn once more to *Pygmalion*. It was at this point that he enlisted a silk merchant and amateur musician called Horace Coignet to prepare instrumental interludes for his text, the first performance then taking place in private rooms at Lyon's Hôtel de Ville. Despite the relatively low-profile premiere, *Pygmalion* became an object of international curiosity and a model for theatrical reform.[6] The key feature of the work – its frequent, small-scale alternation of speech and music – was

[5] Two of the most cogent attempts to disentangle the threads are Sala's "Mélodrame: Définitions et metamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique" and the introduction to Jacqueline Waeber's *En Musique dans le texte: le mélodrame de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris: Van Dieren, 2005).

[6] Ellen Lockhart has discussed the pan-European reception of *Pygamlion* in "Pimmalione: Rousseau and the Melodramatization of Italian Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26, no. 1 (2014): 1-39.

already implicit in the 1762 manuscript, which included asterisks as placeholders for something supplementary to language. These small stars on the page can be read as traces of Rousseau's aspiration to find a form of expression both ancient and modern: one both informed by theories of Greek declamation and suspicious of established theatrical convention. His goal was not song, opera, or pantomime, but something purposely alternative: an expressive medium that did not compromise textual expression by setting it to music (particularly problematic in French, Rousseau thought), nor limit musical expression, by setting text to it. Although Rousseau never used the word "mélodrame," that was the term that stuck.[7]

To the extent that *Pygmalion* constituted a point of origin for the history of melodrama, it was one that led to a series of intensely serious compositions. As Ellen Lockhart discusses in the second chapter of this volume, Rousseau's technique was a decidedly avant-garde affair. The constant interruption of the speaker by music was thought to suit only the most extreme subject matter, those points of high emotion that threatened to undo the efficacy of conventional language: life, death, madness and passionate suffering were the keynotes of early melodrama, without a hint of comic relief. The best-known examples modeled after Rousseau were by the Bohemian composer Georg Benda, who adapted classical subjects to eighteenth-century sensibilities. The titular heroines of his *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Medea* (both 1775) descend into states of manic distress: they struggle to express themselves under the burden of rapid, consuming emotions; speech and music falter, syntax is undone, the psychodrama of the modern self plays out in bursts and fragments. These were the hallmarks of early German-language "monodrama," as it was also known, which typically revolved around the tragic fate of a solo (generally female) protagonist. These monodramas featured some of the most idiosyncratic music of the day: their scores were packed with bold gestures, sudden gear changes, and prolonged harmonic uncertainty; they were also obliged to pass the baton back and forth between orchestra and orator, with music and text constantly interrupting or overtaking one another. As Thomas Betzwieser shows in his chapter here, late eighteenth-century monodrama was as much an experiment as an entertainment. It elaborated complex codes across multiple media, requiring specialist actors and sympathetic audiences. It was para-academic in its quest for emotional authenticity, and became, inevitably, an acquired taste.[8]

While Rousseauian melodrama enjoyed some thirty years of currency in German lands, with new melodramas composed up to the 1820s, there was ultimately a limited appetite for extended soliloquies of devastation. However, the temporary suspension of sung delivery promised a striking addition to the atmosphere of serious opera, and a number of opera composers inserted melodramatic scenes into their works at moments of heightened tension. These moments typically corresponded to either the hypernatural or the supernatural: in the first case, the broken breaths of a frightened protagonist might interrupt the ordinary passage of song (*Fidelio* and *La Caverne* are two examples discussed by Jens Hesselager in this volume); in the second, a similar interruption was caused by the appearance of the otherworldly (the Wolf's Glen scene in *Der Freischütz* is the classic case). Here we find old

[7] For more on this unique score, see Jacqueline Waeber, "'J'ai imaginé un genre de drame:' Une réflexion sur la partition musicale du mélodrame de Pygmalion," *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 18 (1998): 147-179.

[8] For more on the German tradition, see chapter 2, "Lieux terribles et femmes perdues," in Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*, 51-104 and chapter 2, "Monodrama," in Kirsten Gramm Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on Some Trends of Theatrical Fashion 1770-1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 40-109.

experiment put to new effect as the fractured, febrile atmosphere of the stand-alone monodrama found fresh purpose in the shiver-inducing moments of Romantic opera.

By this point, though, another sort of melodrama was taking Europe by storm. In the years after the 1789 Revolution, the portrayal of violent acts of virtue dominated many Parisian theaters. The ultimate boulevard incarnation of this phenomenon is now associated with one genre in particular – *mélodrame* – and even one author: the aristocrat-turned-playwright, Charles-Guilbert de Pixerécourt (1773-1844), who had proved exceptionally adept at navigating the choppy waters of post-Revolutionary cultural politics. Beginning with *Victor, ou L'Enfant de la fôret* in 1798, Pixerécourt would write a further 93 melodramas over the course of his career. Often adapting the plots of novels, often gothic novels, these melodramas tended to be historical, peopled by innocent maidens and evil tyrants, bravehearts and banditti, and were structured around stark moral certainties, historic injustices, bloody acts of vengeance, family reunions, and climactic tableaux. Pixerécourt and his peers combined these plot devices with pantomime techniques, spectacular scenery, the occasional song, and the extensive use of short music cues to accompany and characterize the actors' entrances and exits, and to underlie and express key moments, sometimes in conjunction with, sometimes between spoken textual statements.[9]

It was in Pixerécourt's "mélodrames à grand spectacle" that Peter Brooks famously located a "mode of excess."[10] Melodrama's excess lay, according to Brooks, in the "heightened dramatization:" the over-statement through overlapping media (text, music, gesture, scenery) of the character's deepest feelings and of the "basic psychic conditions" of the plot. This "mode of the bigger-than-life" was itself a function of the "cosmic ethical drama" that Brooks saw being played out explicitly on Paris stages: he read melodramatic texts not only as a response to the social and psychological trauma of the Revolution but also as an appropriation of the sacred at a time of shaken faith. What the boulevards staged, Brooks suggested, was an almost involuntary response to pain and upheaval. These works were spectacular and emotionally extreme because the world that made them was more so; they reveled in peril because that was the affective currency of the day. Compared with the monodrama practiced north of the Rhine, which grew out of an intellectual preoccupation with the aesthetics of human suffering, Brooks saw these Parisian spectacles as less a study in grief, more as shock therapy after the fact. The essence of *mélodrame*, according to this interpretation, was its cathartic function, which also served as a form of coercion: there was relief to be had in the villain vanquished; and an ideological message that order is best maintained.

Although Brooks was primarily concerned with later nineteenth-century literature and its debt to Pixerécourt's generation, his work has been influential in connecting the poetics of early Parisian melodrama with the Revolution and an emerging "popular" culture. Or rather, it has become a model for looking beyond questions of genre to questions of *mode*, and to the functioning of the melodramatic beyond the world of the stage. Brook's "melodramatic imagination" and "mode of excess" are at least in part responsible for the adjectival proliferation we observed above.[11] However, and more important for our purposes here, his

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[9] See Katherine Astbury, "Music in Pixérécourt's Early Melodramas," in Sarah Hibberd (ed.), *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 15-26 and Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, "Music in Melodrama: 'The Ineffable Burden of Expression'?" *Nineteenth-Century Theater and Film* 31, No. 1 (2003): 30-39.

[10] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination. Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, Revised Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), see especially 1, 36, and 54

[11] This is not to say that his study has not also been supplemented by others paying closer attention to the details of artistic practice and practitioners. Exploring a legal dispute of 1786 concerning the French nobleman and former army officer, the Comte de Sanois, Sarah Maza has described a

emphasis on the political and inter-personal conditions of post-Revolutionary Paris has been one of many factors that have maintained the scholarly separation of the twin traditions of "French" and "German" melodrama. One of the agendas of this book is to challenge such an assumption of difference. To borrow from Kofi Agawu, we prefer to proceed via a strategic "assumption of sameness."[12] We know that boulevard melodramas travelled beyond the city limits and jostled for room in the theaters of Berlin, Vienna, and London; there is also evidence that aspects of the monodrama tradition were influential well beyond the German-speaking lands.[13] But in order to understand the contemporaneity, if not the co-dependency of the two traditions in performance and discourse, we must first address in more detail the historiographical practices that have tended to keep them apart.

Disciplines

In the last two decades, melodrama and the melodramatic have been increasingly brought to scholarly attention, and a number of musicological publications have made the case for melodrama's historical importance and lasting influence.[14] Broadly speaking, the intellectual roots of these publications are twofold. On the one hand, we can trace the influence of continental scholarship, primarily in music and opera studies, which has seen discussions of the stage works of Benda et al since the first half of the twentieth century.[15] On the other, Anglophone studies of literature, theater, and film have addressed French and English "boulevard" melodrama on and off since the 1960s.[16] There is, then, a substantial body of

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narrative of the count's life as "a pure example of the genre Peter Brooks has called the 'mode of excess.'" However, she is quick to trace the origins of melodramatic writing, "with its hyperbolic language, strong emotions, and moral polarities" to dramatic forms in the mid eighteenth century. This sense of historical specificity in making links between art forms, and making space for the political concerns of those writing in one mode, style, genre as opposed to any other, makes a strong case for the cross-fertilization of historical and cultural inquiry, music included. See Maza, "Domestic Melodrama as Political Ideology: The Case of the Comte de Sanois," *American Historical Review* 94 (1989): 1249–64.

[12] The term comes from Kofi Agawu's rehabilitation of "sameness" in *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (London: Routledge, 2003), 171: "What I am arguing for … is not sameness, but the presumption of sameness … Indeed, such presumption guarantees an ethical motivation … strategic sameness declares an interest in political and ethical actions by reserving judgement for the end of a proceeding, not its beginning."

[13] See Jeffrey Cox, "Melodrama, Monodrama and the Forms of Romantic Tragic Drama," in Kalerisa V. Hartigan (ed.), *Within the Dramatic Spectrum* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 20-29 and A. Dwight Culler, "Monodrama and the Dramatic Monologue," *PMLA* 90, no. 3 (1975): 366-385.

[14] Among the most significant publications are: Emilio Sala, *L'opera senza canto : il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995); Waeber, *En musique dans le texte* (2005); Hibberd (ed.), *Melodramatic Voices*; and Michael Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theater in Nineteenth-Century London and New York* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

[15] One of the earliest examples is Edgar Istel, *Die Entstehung des Deutschen Melodramas* (Berlin und Leipzig 1906). One of the more influential texts is Jan van der Veen, *Le Mélodrame musical de Rousseau au romantisme, ses aspects historiques et stylistiques* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1955). One exception, in the form of an early French study of boulevard melodrama is Paul Ginisty, *Le Mélodrame* (Paris: Louis-Michaud, 1910).

[16] See, for example, Gabrielle Hyslop, "Deviant and Dangerous Behavior: Women in Melodrama," *Journal of Popular Culture* 19 (1985): 65-77; James Redmond (ed.), *Melodrama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Barbara T. Cooper, "Up in Arms: Defending the Patriarchy in Pixérécourt's Charles le Téméraire," *Symposium* 47 (1993): 171-187; Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou (eds.), *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); and David Worrall, "Artisan Melodrama and the Plebeian Public Sphere: The Political Culture

work that predates the current interest in the topic. As Brooks suggested in 1995, "the melodramatic mode no longer needs to be approached in the mode of apology."[17] Yet the fact that we can now be post-apologetic about our topic does not guarantee its mainstream status, perhaps especially within musicology.[18] Indeed, in part owing to the lack of modern editions for French and English repertoire, some of the most valuable recent work has been directed at enhancing our familiarity with melodramatic musical materials and practices.[19]

One of the more widespread and persistent assumptions that has been contradicted by the recuperation of musical scores is the idea that melodramatic music for boulevard theater was improvised or assembled during rehearsals of the text.[20] We now know that much of it was composed in advance of the rehearsal period, and was sometimes specified in great detail: in other words, the text and the stage action was designed with music in mind, often specific music. As well as shedding new light on the performance history of early melodrama, this new documentary material counteracts the persistent historiographical problem that underlay the idea of melodramatic improvisation, namely a reverse-teleological approach that extrapolated back to melodrama from early cinematic sound practices such as quasi-improvised accompaniment; this reverse teleology has also contributed to the relative neglect of early melodrama in favor of the more immediate predecessors of film music.[21]

When we look at the early nineteenth century, however, we find a lively debate regarding the definition and dissemination of melodramatic practices. This debate, which sometimes touched explicitly on the notion of parallel traditions, posed fundamental questions about the nature of music theater, the relations between various media, the place of the stage in shaping national character, and the emergence of categories of high and low art. In other words, melodrama was far more central than we have hitherto acknowledged in discussions about music's expressive potential and social function. Yet, we can make little sense of these primary sources without first addressing the disciplinary history of melodrama scholarship. For if the history of early melodrama can be read in terms of string of stubborn binaries – elite and popular, musical and literary, reflective and reactionary – the persistence of these binaries is partly a function of prevailing historiography. Not only have the German and the French/English traditions been treated as more-or-less unrelated phenomena, but they have also been addressed by different disciplines: the repertoire represented by Benda has been largely the preserve of musicology; that of Pixerécourt and Co. has been studied by scholars of literature, theater, and film. This disciplinary division is not unvarying: recent musicological work by Emilio Sala, Sarah Hibberd, and Michael Pisani address the latter tradition; and there has been some valuable German literary scholarship on melodramatic

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of Drury Lane and Its Environs, 1797-1830," *Studies in Romanticism* 39, no. 2 (2000): 213-227.

[17] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, xii.

[18] It has, of course, been a longstanding criticism of Brooks's book that despite emphasizing the overlapping of multiple media as fundamental to the genre of boulevard melodrama, he almost entirely neglected musical material. Brooks implicitly responded to this omission in his later essay, "Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera," in Mary Ann Smart (ed), *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 118-134.

[19] Sala's *L'opera senza canto* and and Pisani's *Music for the Melodramatic Theater* are important in this regard. The new editions of Pixerécourt's melodramas published by Classiques Garnier under the direction of Roxane Martin include the extant musical scores from Parisian premieres.

[20] See Sala, *L'opera senza canto*; Hibberd and Nielsen, "Music in Melodrama;" Hesselager, "Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions;" Astbury, "Music in Pixerécourt's Early Melodramas;" and Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theater*.

[21] For an account of the relationship between stage and screen melodrama, see Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

librettos in the Benda tradition.[22] But the divide was sufficiently entrenched for musicologist Christine Heyter-Rauland to refer to "the 'other' melodrama" in her work on German translations of French melodramas.[23] To this day, there is still very little interest in the Benda tradition among literary scholars of popular melodrama.[24]

This disciplinary distinction was grounded in the perception of one tradition as a literary or spoken genre, and the other as musical, a stance formulated in no uncertain terms by the Dutch scholar Jacques Van der Veen in 1955: "around 1800 melodrama ceased to be of interest to musical history; henceforth the genre belonged more to literary history."[25] It is not difficult to see the reasoning behind this: the German tradition as represented by Benda contains abundant music – in fact the constant alternation and sometimes superimposition of music and text – while the French and English versions typically contain discrete musical moments or sequences surrounded by longer sections with very little or no music. Reviewers did not comment in detail about French/English melodrama scores, whereas Benda's music received in-depth consideration in the German press (a factor that also reflects the relative state of music criticism, of course; the German press also commented on the music of translated French melodramas). Similarly, French melodrama librettos tended to circulate without music, leaving it to local composers to supply a score; French melodramatic music was rarely printed, while the English printing of melodrama scores only lasted a few years.[26] The music to Benda's melodramas, by contrast, circulated widely: it is certainly no coincidence that these works – "works" in the strong sense of the word – have long been more closely associated with composer than librettist.

While musicological attention to the boulevard genre is now well under way, the tendency to view the German/Rousseauian and French/English traditions as separate is nevertheless maintained, whether explicitly or by omission. Brooks is, once again, exemplary: he remarked in an endnote that he considered Rousseauian melodrama as "belonging to a separate history," although he conceded that it was "not entirely irrelevant" to the boulevard tradition.[27] The German literary scholar Wolfgang Schimpf was rather more emphatic, stating that it "is in no way acceptable to suppose a close connection between

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[22] The most important example here is Wolfgang Schimpf, *Lyrisches Theater: das Melodrama des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988). Also important are two dissertations from the University of Vienna – L. Pointner, *Das Drei,- Zwei, und Einpersonenstück* (1929) and I. Raffelsberger, *Das Monodrama in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1955) – as well as Sybille Demmer, *Untersuchungen zu Form und Geschichte des Monodramas* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1982).

[23] Christine Heyter-Rauland, "Das 'andere' Melodrama: Notizen über eine nahezu unbekannte Gattung," in Christine Heyter-Rauland and Christoph-Hellmut Mahling (eds.), *Untersuchungen zu Musikbeziehungen zwischen Mannheim, Böhmen und Mähren im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1993).

[24] One isolated example of Anglophone interest in the German melodramatic tradition is Culler's "Monodrama and the Dramatic Monologue," which uncovers English translations and imitations of German monodramas in the early nineteenth century. Culler considers these a possible influence on the later dramatic monologues of Browning and Tennyson, but goes on to damn his own topic with the faintest of praise, referring to "a minor but rather interesting phase of nineteenth-century literary history" (369).

[25] "On peut dire que vers 1800 le mélodrame a presque cessé d'intéresser l'histoire musicale; dès lors le genre appartient plutôt à l'histoire littéraire." Veen's statement rests on the tailing off of the composition of new German melodramas and the lateness of French Rousseau derivations such as Franz Beck's *Pandora* of 1789 (42-45).

[26] Pisani has pointed out, for example, that the British Library holds no melodrama scores published after 1826. See his *Music for the Melodrama Theater*, 62-3.

[27] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination,* 217 note 14 (from page 87).

melodrama of the eighteenth century and works called by that name in the nineteenth century."[28] Part of the problem is that Benda's works are in many respects unrepresentative of wider German melodrama practice c. 1800: we find texts published in journals, without musical settings; and a significant number of melodramas performed in German lands received multiple musical settings. Wolfgang Ritter von Kempelen's melodrama *Andromeda und Perseus* (1780), for example, was set to music by Anton Zimmerman for performance in Vienna in 1781, and then again by Benda for Munich in 1794.[29] The melodrama discussed by Nicholas Mathew in this volume does not even include a vocal part. Thus German melodrama was more flexible in its conception than we have tended to acknowledge. Conversely, even if the music for melodramas performed in Paris or London was not as fixed as those performed in Berlin or Vienna, its inclusion was undoubtedly central to contemporary understandings of the genre. In his 1806 *Dictionary of Music*, Thomas Busby defined "melo-drama" as "a modern species of drama in which the powers of instrumental music are employed to elucidate the action and heighten the passion of the piece."[30] On the other side of the Channel, in 1817, the famous *Traité du mélodrame*, which codified the genre in order to ridicule it, likewise made music an integral part of the whole effect.[31]

None of this removes the reasons why the two traditions have been held apart in scholarship. If some German commentators at the time saw continuity between the new Parisian import and venerable Benda melodramas, others were quick to distinguish between them. Reporting on Joseph-Marie Loaisel-Tréogate's *Roland de Monglave* in 1803, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, himself a composer of melodrama on the German model, poured scorn on the nature, placement, and overuse of music in the French import: *Roland* was "a complete parody of melodrama as it appeared on the small suburban theater in Berlin during the time that Benda defined the era for us with his masterly *Ariadne*."[32] In 1810, a reviewer for the German journal *London und Paris* began by stating that "the so-called mélodrame of the French is worlds apart from that of the Germans." The latter, according to the reviewer, is defined by spoken recitative accompanied by instrumental music, a simple narrative, and brevity; it is, furthermore, exemplified by Benda. The French tradition is instead compared to the medieval chivalric plays on the German stage, where the hero and heroine are constantly in moral and mortal peril, only triumphant at the final moment.[33] More pronounced still is Schlegel's famous remark from his lectures of 1809-11 on melodrama as the "miscarriage [Fehlgeburten] of the Romantics." With reference to the huge number of performances in Parisian boulevard theaters, Schlegel had to qualify that:

> By melodrama you should not understand, as with us, a theater piece in which monologues alternate in the pauses with instrumental music, but one in which in emphatic prose, the wonderful, the adventurous, or even the sensuous, are brought

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[28] Schimpf, *Lyrisches Theater*, 47-8.

[29] Schimpf gives an appendix of texts and their settings. See ibid., 200-243.

[30] Thomas Busby, *A Complete Dictionary of Music*, second edition (London: Gillet, 1806), no page numbers. Quoted in Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theater*, 42.

[31] MM. A!A!A! [Abel Hugo, Armand Maliturne, and Jean-Joseph Ader], *Traité du mélodrame* (Paris: Delaunay, 1817), esp. chapter 14, "de la Musique."

[32] ". . . so wär' es eine komplette Parodie des Melodrama's gewesen, wie sie zur Zeit, da Benda bei uns mit seiner Meisterhaften Ariadne Epoche machte, auf einem kleinen Winkeltheater in Berlin zu sehen war:" Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Vertraute Briefe aus Paris geschrieben in den Jahren 1802 und 1803*, vol. 2 (Hamburg: B. G. Hoffmann, 1804), 135.

[33] "Das sogenannte Melodrame der Franzosen ist von dem der Teutschen himmelweit verschieden": [Anonym], "Ueber das Melodrame der Franzosen, und das Théâtre de l'Ambigu Comique in Paris.- Das große Ballet." *London und Paris* 23 (1810): 115-124 (115).

> together with decorations and processions to form a spectacle; for unfortunately most melodramas are crude to the point of absurdity.[34]

It wasn't only outraged Germans who saw the differences between their established tradition and the newly emerging French upstart. In 1809, Armand Charlemagne linked "old" and "new" melodramas as two types of drama, or dramatic action, in which the words are "coupée" (spliced) by music, before distinguishing them: Rousseau and his imitators represent the old melodrama, while contemporary understanding of the word, Charlemagne suggested, relies on a magical or heroic plot, in which people do not move without music announcing entrances, exits, and the range of sensations felt. Unlike Reichardt, Charlemagne did not denigrate the "new" melodrama, but rather celebrated it as "l'opéra du peuple."[35]

Apart from the structural differences recognized in these contemporary responses, another perceived distinction emerges, that of social level. Charlemagne's nomination of melodrama as the opera of the people indicates the popularity of melodrama in Revolutionary era Paris, where it was available at the boulevard stages more cheaply than works performed at the opera house. Reichardt's term "parody" – a genre typically found on the suburban stages, which mocked more serious fare – also suggests a popular cast. Benda's melodramas, on the other hand, had been performed at court theaters, and Benda was already a canonical composer in the burgeoning German music histories of the period. This high-low split has been sustained by more recent scholarship. Christopher Smith, for instance, draws a line between the two traditions: "Though *Melodrama* was another contemporary name for the form, it will be best to avoid it here because the term is associated with sensational popular theater, the character of which was influenced, but by no means entirely determined, by late eighteenth-century developments in music."[36] Even Sala, who focuses on the boulevard tradition, describes it as a "contamination" of the Rousseauian model.[37]

Perhaps, like Reichardt, musicologists have been keen to shore up Benda's status as a composer. The implied defense of "good" music may also explain why musicologists have been slow to consider the surviving scores of boulevard melodramas: in general, musicologists have been slower than literary and theater scholars to attend to the histories of popular culture. Whatever the scholarly motives, the division of the two traditions is hard to

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[34] "Unter Melodrama versteht man nicht, wie bei uns, ein Schauspiel, worin Monologe mit Instrumental-musik in den Pausen abwechseln, sondern wo in emphatischer Prosa irgend etwas Wunderbares, Abenteuerliches, oder auch sinnliche Handlungen nebst den dazu gehörigen Decorationen und Aufzügen zur Schau gebracht bauen; den leider sind die meisten Melodramen bis zur Abgeschmacktheit roh, und gleichsam Fehlgeburten des Romantischen." August Wilhelm von Schlegel, "Lecture 24," in *Ueber dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1846), 147.

[35] Armand Charlemagne, *Le Mélodrame aux Boulevards* (Paris: Imprimerie de la rue Beaurepaire, 1809), 14. The terms "Old" and "New" were also used by the self-styled arbiter of worthy musical culture, Adolph Bernhard Marx, who in 1828 repeated the exercise of delineating all the musico-theatrical genres for his own newspaper, the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. This time old melodrama and new melodrama were separate categories, with the latter presented in particularly scathing terms: its diverse whole is "straddled by music in all its modes of meaning," and for Marx "Schlegel's severe statement about today's melodrama as an absurdity and miscarriage of Romanticism . . . featuring no body, only repugnantly scattered limbs – appears rather too mild." A. B. Marx, "Uebersicht der verschiednen wesentlichen Gattungen des musikalischen Drama" *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, no. 25 (18 June 1828), 195-197.

[36] Christopher Smith, "The Monodramatic Experiment," *Comparative Critical Studies* 5, no. 1 (2008): 21-33 (25).

[37] "Ma in realtà, nonostante il conservatorismo di Pandore e del melologo neoclassico, il modello della 'scène lyrique' alla Rousseau incominciò ben presto a contaminarsi con altre forme teatrali capaci di renderla meno statica e monotona." Sala, *L'opera senza canto*, 31.

maintain in the face of historical evidence regarding the local conditions of performance, particularly in this early period, when the German model remained an active feature of theatrical programs. In short, many of the rationales for treating boulevard and German traditions separately are at the least debatable. In itself, that justifies an experiment in thinking them together. But there are also more positive reasons: Sarah Hibberd, for instance, has modeled the relationship between traditions as one of two lineages, both descendants of Rousseau, which she sees combining in Chelard's opera *Macbeth* (1827).[38] In similar vein, in his book *L'opera senza canto* Emilio Sala has shown how melodrama becomes one technique among many on the boulevard stage, mixed with pantomime and *ballet d'action* in order to relieve the monotony of Rousseau's model. Sala concludes that both the original notion and the later bricolage are non-canonical experimentations with word-text relations.

We might also seek to deepen our awareness of the "German" tradition beyond Benda, who has, to a certain extent, distorted and limited perceptions of monodramatic practice. This is not just in terms of the unrepresentative status and circulation of *Ariadne* and *Medea*, but also in terms of form, including plot/dramaturgical structure: Benda's later melodrama *Theone* (1780) was conceived with an aria for the heroine and a chorus interspersed; the publication of Reichardt's *Cephalus und Prokris* (1781) came with an appendix containing songs to replace certain sections of melodramatic setting, while his *Der Tod des Herkules* (1802) was a "melodrama with chorus;" and Gerstenberg's *Minona oder die Angelsachsen* (1785) was a "melodrama in four acts," which included both incidental numbers and melodramatic (monodramatic) episodes by Johann Abraham Peter Schulz, with a historical plot rather like those identified by German critics in French melodramas.[39] This last example might seem very similar to the lineage that established itself in France, but the point is to demonstrate the parallel experimentation with the melodramatic technique in both traditions.[40] In each case we find that melodramatic technique is employed to convey extremes of emotional experience; melodramatic episodes within German and French stage works often coincide with the presence of the supernatural or the imaginary (such as the *Egmont* dream sequences). Jacqueline Waeber has convincingly argued that this is one of the closest points of contact between (German) "musical melodrama" and (French) "theatrical melodrama," with "the use of music as a mark of irrationality" becoming a "mark of the extraordinary: the supernatural, but also situations of excess."[41] In order to proceed from these isolated observations of common practices, the next section of this introduction advocates a rubric of transnationalism and translation in order to gain insight into the historical interdependence of traditions that have for too long been treated in isolation.

Crossings

Let us consider a close-up: the premiere of *Salomons Urtheil* at the Berlin Nationaltheater in 1808. These performances marked the arrival in the city of the first boulevard melodrama, an

[38] Sarah Hibberd, "'Si L'Orchestre seul chantait:' Melodramatic Voices in Chelard's *Macbeth* (1827)," in Hibberd (ed.), *Melodramatic Voices,* 85-102.

[39] Albert Geer, for example, has argued that Schiller's historical dramas were received as akin to melodramas in Paris. See "Zwischen Tragödie und Melodram: Schiller Theater im Frankreich des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel der *Wilhelm Tell*-Bearbeitungen," in Detlef Altenburg and Beate Agnes Schmidt (eds.), *Musik und Theater um 1800: Konzeptionen - Aufführungspraxis – Rezeption* (Sinzig: Studiopunkt-Verlag, 2012), 255-269.

[40] In *L'opera senza canto*, Sala shows how melodrama becomes one technique among many on the boulevard stage, mixed with pantomime and ballet d'action in order to relieve the monotony of Rousseau's model. Sala concludes that both the original notion and the later bricolage are non-canonical experimentations with word-text relations.

[41] Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*, 112.

adaptation of Louis-Charles Caigniez's *Le Jugement de Salomon*, first performed at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-comique, Paris in 1802. One prominent Berlin journal greeted the event with studied insouciance: "Voltaire says somewhere: 'In literature I welcome every genre with the exception of the boring.' But now among all genres of drama there is none more boring than melodrama."[42] Considering all the complaints that could be (and were) made about the genre, monotony seems one of the more unlikely. As we have already seen, boulevard melodrama was more typically accused of providing excessive stimulation in the form of spectacular stage effects and costumes, frequent moments of moral or physical peril, and sudden plot twists. Indeed, just two years later, that very same Voltaire epigram would be derided elsewhere in the German-language press for its over-employment in defense of melodramas emanating from Paris.[43] Equally puzzling is the fact that the reviewer assumes his readers will know what he is talking about. There is no acknowledgement that *Salomons Urtheil* was a new kind of dramatic work for the city, even though its faults were laid squarely at the door of the "suburban stages of the Paris boulevards" (*Pariser Winkelbuhne der Boulevards*) from whence it came (via Vienna). Instead, the reviewer seems to suggest a continuity between this latest import and German melodramas already known to Berliners.[44] The latter sort of melodrama had been associated with boredom for decades, and was famously described by Goethe as "a play in which a person acts with himself, to the tedium of the spectators."[45]

If the local theatrical context helps explain the Berlin journalist's statement about melodramatic monotony, it is worth observing that *Salomons Urtheil* displayed a dramatic construction that was some distance from the Benda model: it featured multiple characters, three acts, and two grand stage processions. The connection made between the twin styles of melodrama is all the more remarkable in that the translation of the Paris mélodrame by Viennese writer Matthäus Stegmayer was advertised in Berlin as a "historical-musical drama with dance in 3 acts" and not, explicitly, as a melodrama. But the reviewer, clearly aware of French *and* German genre designations, chose to group the two versions of melodrama together, even as other commentators continued to hold them apart. Another reviewer even

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[42] *Vossische Zeitung* (19 March 1808). Voltaire's quip comes from the preface to his 1736 comedy *L'Enfant prodigue*.

[43] "Ueber das Melodrame der Franzosen, und das Théâtre de l'Ambigu Comique in Paris," *London und Paris* 23 (1810): 117-119. "Begebenheiten müssen sich auf Begebenheiten häusen, Wunder über Wunder geschehen, Waffen müssen klingen, Palläste einstürzten oder der Wuth der Flammen Preis gegeben warden … wenn man sie einladet zu dem, was ewig schön bleiben wird, zurück zu kehren, und die Gattung des Melodrama's von der Bühne vertilgen zu helfen, so sagen sie zu ihrer Vertheidiung mit Voltaire: Tous les genres sont bons hors le genre ennuyeux." After attending *La Citerne*, Meyebeer noted on 6 July 1815 in his diary: "ein Gewebe von Unwahrscheinlichkeiten u. Trivialitäten; demohnerachtet wird das Interesse bis zum letzten Augenblick erhalten." Quoted in Heyter-Rauland, "Das 'andere' Melodrama," 307.

[44] In 1807, for example, Benda's score to a translation of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* had been performed in the city; two years before that, his *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

[45] See Goethe's 1778 satirical play *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*. For Johann Martin Miller, too, a "conversation with oneself" couldn't be more boring than Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, which he saw in Weimar in 1774 with Schweitzer's music (letter dated 2 November 1774 to Johann Heinrich Voß, cited in Laurenz Lütteken, *Das Monologische als Denkform in der Musik zwischen 1760 und 1785* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 310. See also a review of "Sapho, ein Melodrama, nebst andern Gedichten von J. F. H-b-r" in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 108, no. 1 (1792), 138: "Nach Brandes Ariadne und Gotters Medea hat mancher unglücklicher und langweiliger Klagen ein Melodrama genannt."

linked the use of music "breaking in" to the dialogue of *Salomons Urtheil* to recent local discussions of (Benda-derived) melodrama technique.[46]

Notions of circulation and adaptation provide both a description of events on the ground and a methodology for a more nuanced understanding of the complex international marketplace of early melodrama as well as the varied expressive multimedia vocabularies employed. *Le Jugement de Salomon*, for instance, not only became the historical musical drama *Salomons Urtheil* in Vienna (1804) and Berlin, but also a two-act play with chorus and new music by Kapellmeister Peter Winter in Munich (1808); by this point it had also crossed the Channel as *The Voice of Nature*, a play in three acts translated by James Boaden and performed at the King's Theatre, Haymarket (1802); and from there it crossed the Atlantic in William Dunlap's version for the Park Theater, New York (also called *The Voice of Nature*, 1803, with music by Victor Pelissier). These variations on a theme attest to far more than the dissemination of Parisian drama; they hint at the over-layering of diverse influences and practices across a range of performance contexts. Common to *Le Jugement de Salomon* in Paris and *Salomons Urtheil* in Vienna and Berlin was the small-scale alternation of words and music that is often used as a shorthand definition of melodramatic technique. In London, however, *The Voice of Nature* featured only incidental music, although it retained other dramaturgical similarities.

This case study demonstrates how such a mode of inquiry might serve to challenge the series of binaries that have come to characterize melodrama scholarship: *Solomons Urtheil* was, for example, performed in Berlin for the Crown Prince's birthday; contrary to received wisdom, this suggests that its Parisian boulevard origins posed no barrier (at this time) to a prestige location and occasion in Berlin. Such moments invite us not only to think about the commonalities of the two traditions from the perspective of the present day, but also to pay attention to those moments when they were brought together by historical actors. In practice, this means tuning in to the movements of plays and performance techniques around the theaters of Europe, as well as to responses by the local press to imports and adaptations. Of course, there has already been a good deal of work in this direction: a collection of essays on "Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer" in nineteenth-century Paris, edited by Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist, draws attention to "the fluidity and complexity of artistic and administrative agency, aesthetic meaning, and legal frameworks."[47] Although the focus here is on a single city – in an attempt to undo the partitioning of operatic history that had long held the Palais Garnier apart from the Opéra-Comique (never mind the Porte Saint-Martin where Pixerécourt consolidated his career) – the editors explain that the status of Paris as a standard-bearer for fashionable modernity made the business of music in the French capital of more than local significance.

Indeed, one of the principal insights of recent work in music and cultural transfer has been to stress the importance of "hubs" in or through which ideas and practices are passed on and debated. Paris is an obvious example, but by no means the only one. A more recent study by Christina Fuhrmann unpicks the intricacies of British responses to continental imports.[48] What comes through clearly is not only the depth of contact between urban centers (Paris to London and on to New York) but also an often rich local awareness of where new shows originated. At times, Fuhrmann identifies the sorts of xenophobic reactions to the foreignness of opera in London that lead us back to national models of music history; but she also

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[46] *Haude und Spenersche Zeitung* (19 March 1808).

[47] Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (eds.), *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3.

[48] Christina Fuhrmann, *Foreign Opera at the London Playhouses: From Mozart to Bellini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

reminds us of the nuances at play. In London (as in Berlin and Vienna), objections to Italian opera were as often directed towards local class enemies as towards a presumed foreign foe. And even when we do detect aesthetics arguments drawn along national lines, it is often unclear how these lines correspond to political or military divides: France, not Italy, was the opponent across the sea that set London teeth chattering; yet throughout the long period of the Napoleonic Wars we find a regular stream of stage shows from Paris. Clearly, the meaning of these works – and their composers and performers – was not reducible to any notion of simple national identity.

One theoretical point of reference here is the notion of "histoire croisée" (entangled history) put forward by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann.[49] In the broadest terms, they advocate a perspective that is not just comparative, but is also attentive to the processes of cultural transfer: one that engages not just with the modification of the intercrossed parties, but with the novel and original elements thrown up by such intersections. From the perspective of tangled history and cultural mobility the 1789 Revolution unsurprisingly offers a watershed. Clearly, the motives and resources for moving around in Europe did not remain the same through the various coups, campaigns, and Continental wars of the period up to Napoleon's final defeat in 1815. This was a time in which travel and trade were more than usually affected by diplomatic and military maneuvers. As the historian of migration Robin Cohen observes, the revised French constitution of 1793 contains "a ringing declaration inviting those 'escaping tyranny' to find a haven in the territories of the French republic."[50] While this call was taken up by some, there were many who went in the opposite direction. London in the 1790s was home-in-exile for many French aristocrats, who naturally frequented opera at the King's Theatre. The same was true for musicians whose employment met the same fate as the aristocratic institutions in Paris: the violinist, Giovanni Battista Viotti, one of the most celebrated instrumentalists of his day, left the French capital to find work at London's Hanover Square Concerts and in that city's opera orchestra.[51] The theatrical world Viotti entered was well accustomed to talent from across the Channel: both the scenic designer Jacques-Philippe de Loutherbourg and the balletmaster Jean-George Noverre, to name two of the best-known exemplars of their respective trades, were working in London in the 1790s after having launched their careers on the Continent.

The figures named above rubbed shoulders with social and cultural elites, but there were others with less freedom of movement: recent research at the University of Warwick has documented the activities of French prisoners of war, held in detention in England, who arranged their own theatricals, including performances of melodrama.[52] In the course of this book, further examples will suggest how melodrama was subject to the opportunities as well as the limits of wartime mobility. As George Taylor sets out in his essay on Thomas Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery* (Drury Lane, 1802), commonly considered the first commercially-

[49] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Penser l'histoire croisée: entre empirie et réflexivité," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58, no. 1 (2003): 5, 7-36. An English-language summary of the same ideas is given in Werner and Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006): 30-50. We might also note another book edited by Werner, on the concert life of the long nineteenth century: Hans Erich Bödeker, Patrice Veit, and Michael Werner (eds.), *Le Concert et son public: mutations de la vie musicale en Europe de 1780 à 1914 (France, Allemagne, Angleterre)* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2002).

[50] Robin Cohen, "Migration in Europe, 1800-1950," in Robin Cohen (ed.), *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 123-141 (123).

[51] Theodore Fenner, *Opera in London: View of the Press, 1785-1830* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 248.

[52] Devon Cox, PhD diss. (University of Warwick: in progress).

produced melodrama performed in England, the play was adapted from Pixerécourt's Parisian original during the Peace of Amiens, when hostilities between England and France were temporarily suspended. Whether Holcroft could have so easily reached Paris (without political censure from home) prior to this moment is a matter for conjecture, but the fact that his importation of French melodrama coincided with a pause in international hostilities surely merits our attention. By a similar token, Barbara Babić considers the case of biblical melodramas transplanted from Paris to Vienna at a time when Austria was under Napoleonic rule. What both studies demonstrate is the importance of considering the circumstances under which particular melodramas travelled to particular locations, and why melodramatic techniques seemed appropriate for certain occasions. This last question is particularly important in the Nicholas Mathew's chapter, which deals with a score designed for private performance in memory of a public commemoration, one that in turn remembered a victorious battle. Matthew Head similarly asks the question of why melodrama was appropriate for a stagework planned as a charitable response to the suffering engendered by recent floods. The aim, in all cases, is not simply to chart the abundance of melodrama on European stages, but to ask how this musical-theatrical phenomenon played into broader patterns of human and cultural mobility, voluntary or otherwise.

To continue with the example of London: we know that the eighteenth century witnessed an increased reliance on foreign musicians, especially high-profile singers from Italy who attracted virulent condemnation in the contemporary press. Yet there was an equally significant trend for bringing instrumentalists from the German-speaking lands.[53] Handel and Haydn are well known cases, but hardly unique: according to the historian Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, musical performance and instrument-making was one of three fields in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England in which Germans were particularly well known, the other two being sugar refining and pork butchery.[54] This is a more striking fact to reconcile with the patterns of melodrama circulation than the migrations from France. In the years after Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery* made its debut there was an exponential increase in melodramatic imports from Paris. The same cannot be said regarding melodramatic imports from the German-speaking lands. Indeed, another reason why French and German melodrama have traditionally been held apart is that the former seems to have travelled far more than the latter.

Yet, there may be clues concerning an English reception of German ideas and techniques that allows for a more complicated picture. We know, for instance, that as early as 1777 – only seven years after the premiere of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* – there was an attempt by the English author Edward Jerningham to create a "historical interlude" with alternating speech and music. The result, *Margaret d'Anjou*, was successfully staged at Drury Lane. Although the score does not survive, the play text leaves asterisks indicating points of instrumental interjection. Many years later, in 1812, we find a letter to a London periodical that both testifies to the prevalence of boulevard melodrama on British stages and hints at a broader knowledge of the German tradition.[55] "Some days ago," the correspondent begins, "I

[53] F. Anne M. R. Jarvis, "German Musicians in London, c.1750-c.1850," in Stefan Manz, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, and John R. Davis (eds.), *Migration and Transfer from Germany to Britain, 1660-1914* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2007), 37-48.

[54] Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, trans. Cynthia Klohr, *The Forgotten Majority: German Merchants in London, Naturalization and Global Trade, 1660-1815* (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 22. See also Panikos Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain during the 19th Century, 1815-1914* (Oxford: Berg, 1995).

[55] Eumelistes, "On the Origin of the Melodrama, with Biographical Notices and Anecdotes Relating to the Composer Benda, Its Inventor," *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashion, Politics* 8, no. 43 (July 1812): 6-11

had the resolution to risk my life in fighting my way through a brutal pit-door mob, in order to *see* the performance of a horse-drama. I am correct in the expression 'to see;' for, had I been deaf, I really believe my gratification would have been infinitely greater, so wretched were both dialogue and music." We then read of "an elderly gentleman" who shared the same sense of exasperation: "his notion of a melodrama . . . was derived from the miserable exhibitions announced under that title in our play-bills; he had . . . no idea of the proper melodrama, that beautiful and original species of theatrical production, which owes its being to Benda."[56] While the dominant tone here is one of contempt for Parisian melodrama and preservationist adoration of the Benda model, the letter does indicate an awareness in England, however limited, of the German tradition: an awareness, moreover, that would be entirely consistent with the significant number of German musicians active in London throughout the period.

Like Berlin, the British capital offers a distinctive perspective on the melodramatic moment. What we find is a city already marked by decades of musical migration. The lure of London for German musicians is a function of differences in size and cultural economy between European cities, although most were expanding dramatically, fueled not only – indeed, not mainly – by migration across national borders, but by internal migration, especially in the wake of reforms to agricultural production. Much of the Irish population in London, for instance, was a result of changing labor patterns. And much of the audience for melodrama, especially in the so-called "illegitimate" theaters, were new arrivals to the city.[57] According to theater historian Frederick Burwick, London's population increased from 700,000 in 1700 to 958,863 in 1801, and thereafter by roughly 20 percent each decade: by 1821, it was at 1,378,947.[58] This boom occasioned a marked increase in the number of metropolitan theaters. In Paris the expansion of the theatrical economy was all the more noticeable for its relative suddenness: the relaxation of licensing laws in 1791 led to both the proliferation of venues (as many as 51 at one point) and to the establishment of new genres. Vaudeville and low pantomime, which had been found mostly in temporary fair theaters, became fixtures of Parisian theatrical life, along with a whole range of apparently hybrid genres: Fournier's *Les Français à Java, ou Bantam sauvé* (Théâtre de la Gaîté, 1805), for instance, was described as a "Mélodrame héroïque en 3 actes, à grand spectacle, orné de chants, danses, combats, evolutions militaires, explosion, etc."

As the term "grand spectacle" would indicate, it was not only the number of theaters that increased in this period. Burgeoning audiences led to larger spaces in which to perform. While it would be simplistic to posit a direct correlation between the population of cities and the volume of their auditoria – not least because this would sidestep important questions about the increased sub-division of audiences in the nineteenth century, and the desire for spaces of intimacy amid the urban mêlée – the overall trend is significant. The theater most associated with Pixerécourt is the Porte Saint-Martin, built in 1781 for the Paris Opéra. Partly because of the Revolution, the company only remained in the building until 1794, at which point it moved to the newly built Théâtre des Arts. If the Porte Saint-Martin was a large venue, with a capacity of over 2000, the Théâtre des Arts was even larger, with an extra 500 seats. We find a similar upscaling in the case of London's Covent Garden theater, which was rebuilt first in the late eighteenth century and again in 1808 – both times after destruction by fire. The conventional account of the expansion of theater auditoria c. 1800 is that it

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[56] Ibid., 6-7.

[57] See Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theater in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[58] Frederick Burwick, *British Drama of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.

facilitated – even demanded – a more spectacular mode of address as well as a more visually striking approach to staging. The correspondent cited above complained that there was much to see in melodrama yet little worth listening to. Recent work in theater history has sought to complicate any narrative that pits sight against sound, and spectacle against the august tradition of spoken drama.[59] A number of the chapters in this volume – particularly those by Thomas Betzwieser and Sarah Hibberd – similarly seek to add new layers to our understanding of the relationships between text, music, and gesture in early melodrama.

However, at the turn of the nineteenth century there was certainly a strong vein of criticism, in cities across Europe, that associated spectacle with a degrading form of popular culture. Indeed, critics and authorities alike were anxious to address both the artistic and political status of contemporary performance. In 1806-7, Napoleon reintroduced strict regulation of the theatrical economy by distributing particular genres between only eight theaters: the rest were closed. His desire to protect the *privilège* of classical tragedy at the Comédie française and *tragédie lyrique* at the Paris Opéra was closely bound up with the emergence of "mixed" forms such as melodrama that threatened (by sheer popularity) the aesthetic hierarchies of the ancien régime. In Berlin, some critics were even more alive to the amorphous threat of the popular on account of everything appearing on the same stage, at the city's Nationaltheater; Vienna, on the other hand, like Paris, attempted to enshrine a hierarchy of genres by venues, using the suburban theaters to put distance between the activities of the court and the performance of melodrama.

A similar anxiety can be observed in London, although obviously under different political circumstances. The declining status of the British patent theaters and the "legitimate" repertoire they were expected to represent was a flash point for social tension no less than the more directly political equivalents across the Channel. The clearest example of popular politics in the London theater was the Old Price Riots following the reopening of Covent Garden in 1808. The riots were ostensibly an expression of outrage at the new ticket prices and the increased presence of private boxes in a public theater – boxes apparently marketed to wealthy foreigners during a time of Continental conflict. Yet, as Jane Moody and others have shown, they were also a response to changing notions of legitimacy in both its political and aesthetic senses.[60] On the one hand the theater stood accused of vested interests and its manager was pilloried as a partisan Tory. On the other, the repertoire programmed at Covent Garden seemed so far removed from the "national drama" – a term that emerged in this period and was indelibly linked to Shakespeare – that it could not be justified on merit either. Once again, we find melodrama in the middle of this story. As Diego Saglia sets out in his contribution to this volume, British critics were deeply conflicted about this fashionable import taking over British stages, not least because of its apparent hybridity and "monstrosity." Nevertheless, the management at Covent Garden sought to appease the rioters by programming works much closer in style to those found at the illegitimate theaters south of the Thames. In a revival of George Colman's *Bluebard* and in the horse spectacle *Timour the Tartar*, the theater found temporary success but eventual terminal decline – at least in terms of any claim to special status among the capital's theaters. Looking beyond the local context, the case of Covent Garden invites us to consider melodrama not only as a set of shifting cultural practices, but also as a more stable sort of assemblage or genre, one with the potential to provoke fierce reactions and affect long term change.

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[59] See, for example, Shearer West, "Manufacturing Spectacle" in Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theater* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 286-303.

[60] Moody, *Illegitimate Theater*, 63-8.

Readings

Given our emphasis on destabilizing scholarly narratives by showing historical and geographical variability as well as processes of contestation and (re)definition, it seems timely to ask whether a history of this genre is possible without making claims about essential characteristics and influential developments. If contingency is the watchword, then why invoke genre at all? The challenge, we suggest, is to pursue a *genre-sensitive* history that avoids the reductive, teleological traps of old-fashioned histories of genre evolution. One means of doing this is to trust further in the vocabulary of our historical informants: if repertoire or techniques were routinely identified as "melodramatic," then we can assume that the word meant something to those who used it. At the same time, we might consider the prevalence of genre as a framing device for discussions about all kinds of theater in this period. The Napoleonic regulations of 1806-7, for example, famously designated particular genres to particular institutions, with the Porte Saint-Martin dedicated to the "genre known as melodrama, to pieces with grand spectacle." However, if this appellation gives the impression of a neat distribution of performances practices, we would do well to remember that one of the commonest complaints against melodrama was its apparent mixing of genres. This brings us to one of the central paradoxes of early melodrama: on the one hand, it was accused of combining elements from multiple genres; on the other, it was decried as predictable and formulaic. To take the first point: the idea of melodrama as a generic transgression was apparent in the reception of the earliest melodramas, from Rousseau onwards. When Benda's setting of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* arrived in Berlin in 1797, almost twenty years after its composition, the travesty of the technique was expressed by at least one review in terms of genre: "Melodrama is a play that should be lyric, and isn't; it seeks to replace the lack of tragic power with the magic of music, and destroys this magic, in that it avoids song; it doesn't have the passionate conviction of tragedy or opera."[61]

Clearly melodramatic technique, already a "media-bastard," as one recent collection has called it, is not the only type of music found in the range of stage works called melodrama in the period covered by this volume.[62] We have already shown how this was the case even within the German tradition of Benda's imitators: attempting to vary the monotony of pure melodramatic technique, Reichardt, Schulz, and even Benda introduced arias and choruses. In England, without such regulation, melodrama found the greatest musical eclecticism. The young Meyerbeer's diaries, for example, record him in London, on Sunday, 16 December 1815, attending a "melodrama with song." This formulation would have been unremarkable for English audiences, who were used to melodramas that maintained many of the conventions of ballad opera, with the addition of musical cues along the lines of the French or German models.[63] But such hybridity was distasteful to many critics. The *Monthly Mirror* opined that melodrama was "an olla potrida [Spanish stew] of tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, and pantomime, partaking more or less of any of the qualities of these as the whim and judgment of the writer pleases."[64] In a volume on *Modern British Drama*, edited by Walter Scott, melodrama's eclecticism is linked to the decline of a more elevated tradition: "The

[61] Johann August Eberhard, "An den Verfasser des Aufsatzes Pygmalion," *Jahrbücher der preußischen Monarchie* 2 (1798): 151-2.

[62] Daniel Eschkötter, Bettine Menke, and Armin Schäfer (eds.), *Das Melodram. Ein Medienbastard* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2013).

[63] Pisani actually compares Thomas Busby's score for *The Tale of Mystery* with Benda's scores on account of its through-composed melodramatic writing. See *Music for the Melodramatic Theater*, 59.

[64] "Theatre Royal, Covent Garden," *Monthly Mirror* 2 (December 1807), 441. Quoted in Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theater*, 41-2.

English Opera seems now in its wane before a still more unregulated anomaly, the modern Melo-Drama, in which all that can mingle, may."[65]

But if melodrama has always been considered by some a bastard of mixed origins, how did it also come to be considered so excessively generic and conventional? The *Traité du mélodrame*, for example, takes as it premise that the genre can be entirely codified, like a recipe, since it contains no internal logic, but is merely an assemblage of shopworn elements. But by now any simple dismissal of repertoire as "formulaic" should make us suspicious. As Emanuele Senici has observed, "mere" conventionality is an accusation wielded in defense of a high-art canon sustained by Romantic claims of exceptionalism.[66] Early melodrama – particularly the boulevard variety – is a case in point. However, we can benefit from recent scholarship addressing the uses of musical formulae: Nicholas Mathew has shown that it is as possible to find off-the-peg tropes in Beethoven's *Eroica* as it is in his *Wellingtons Sieg*, despite the fact that the former has long been valued much more highly than the latter.[67] Jens Hesselager's chapter in this volume seeks precisely to complicate the high/low divisions that have often prevented us from seeing the musical formulae shared between *opéra comique*, *mélodrame* and German language opera (in this case, *Fidelio*); he further suggests that quotations and stock devices may have been used ironically as part of a complex intertextual web of reference and allusion. His examples might go some way to suggest how melodrama could be both mixed and formulaic: if the conventions came from a variety of genres, the "olla potrida" of not only *opéra comique*, but pantomime, chivalric drama, farce and, as Sarah Hibberd suggests, *spectacles d'optique*.[68]

If we were to claim that melodrama *did* function as a particular stabilizing force in relation to musical meaning, we might look again at the description of music in the *Traité du mélodrame*:

> If the whole orchestra, acting together, produces muted lugubrious sounds, it is the tyrant who approaches and the whole auditorium trembles; if the harmony is sweet and soft, the unfortunate lover will appear before long, and all hearts become tender; but if the movement becomes lively and playful, the naïf is not far away…. In fights, it is the orchestra that makes some of the loudest noises. In effect, when the heroes come to blows all the instruments thunder, whistle or roar in unison: in massed fights, the sounds deliver, as it were, battle; in individual fights, the clashing of arms is heard under the bows of the musicians.[69]

This employment of clichés of musical meaning could of course be explained by modes of production. Like Italian opera, melodrama scores were often produced quickly, with composers relying on musico-dramatic conventions; as in Italian opera, melodrama scores sometimes recycled material. For Pixerécourt's *Robinson Crusoé* (1805), for example, the music for the Parisian premiere was a collaboration between Louis-Alexandre Piccinni and Gerardin-Lacour. In Act 1, at the point when Friday is reunited with his father, the cue reuses music from the Parisian score of Pixerécourt's *La Femme à deux maris* (1802) – music by

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[65] Walter Scott, "Remarks on English Opera and Farce," *The Modern British Drama in Five Volumes*, vol. 5 (London: Printed for William Miller, Albermarle Street, 1811), iii-vi (iv).

[66] Emanuele Senici, "Genre," in Helen Greenwald (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook to Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 41-43.

[67] Nicholas Mathew, *Political Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. chapter 1, "Music between myth and history."

[68] The author and stage manager, Richard LeGalliene, in his memoires from 1900, looked back on melodrama as "a play which combines the intensity of tragedy with the construction of farce and the dénouement of a fairy-tale." Quoted in Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theater*, 43. Thus in literary terms, too, the hybridity of melodrama is identified by the generic markers of other genres.

[69] A! A! and A!, *Traité du mélodrame*, 54–5.

Geradin-Lacour.[70] Following Hesselager, we could make a case for deliberate intertextuality here: the recycled musical cue came from an analogous situation of filial/parental emotion in *La Femme à deux maris*: the entrance of the main character, Eliza's son, from a previous marriage, whom she cannot acknowledge. Was it Gerardin-Lacour's intention in *Robinson Crusoé* to refer directly back to this earlier moment? And/or did the re-use provide grist to the mill of melodrama's critics, indicating that scores were an assemblage of conventions, moments of generalized semiotic content rather than dramatically specific ones?

We might also think about the stabilizing of musical meaning within melodrama from another perspective, by viewing melodramatic technique as an extreme of a more general form of small-scale, short-term musical communication, whether with text or gesture. This is the territory explored by Waeber in her study of melodrama from Rousseau to Schoenberg. Although Waeber's argument is primarily addressed to the German tradition of melodrama, her concern for the existence of music and text on the same communicative plane may nonetheless be instructive when considering the "other" sort of melodrama. One of Waeber's principal contributions is to dislodge the expectation that analysis should address thematic processes of development; more important, she says, is to consider how musical communication relied on the associations of instruments, melodic figures, and harmonic effects. When we abandon the expectation that a work should be viewed as a unified, organic whole, the musical language of melodrama – boulevard melodrama included – could in fact be thought of as avant-garde, released from the formal rationales and conventions of a "closed work."

Conversely, we might do more to acknowledge how the German tradition of melodrama was – like its boulevard cousin – sometimes criticized for being over-determined in relation to textual or dramatic content. In his 1808 *Der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer*, for example, Weber used the orchestra to accompany declamation as well as to alternate with speech. In the weeks after the premiere in Berlin (and just before the premiere of *Salomons Urtheil*) the work became the object of intense discussion in two of the main Berlin papers. Even for admirers, Weber's employment of "musikalische Mahlerei" – a category increasingly mentioned in relation to Benda's works – was problematic.[71] With some special pleading, the sound of the hammer portrayed by the orchestra was claimed by one reviewer to be an expression of the Count's passion; as an alternative strategy, while admitting that the work contravened the "rules of aesthetics," the same reviewer excused Weber on the basis that geniuses should not be rule-bound, and that such effects had been well received by the audience.[72] Another critic asked what the words were doing, if the music was following the narrative so exactly.[73] A third was prompted two weeks later to weigh in with a three-page article about text-setting, genre-mixing, and melodrama.[74] Arguing against the musical setting of poetry beyond simple strophic composition, and against melodramatic setting in particular, this last writer found it "intolerable" that instrumental music should accompany speech in

[70] The score for *Robinson Crusoé* is held in Lille but marked as being by Piccinni (that is, a Parisian rather than a local version); the presence of Gerardin-Lacour's music from the Paris premiere of *La Femme à deux maris* in the Lille score for *Crusoé* would support the idea that this score did originate in Paris.

[71] At the performance of *Ariadne* in 1805, for example, the tone-paintings of lions and heartbeats, which originally "delighted" audiences, were now considered to be "petty games." See *Haude- und Spenersche Zeitung* (24 December 1805): "Die Tongemälde, welche Löwengebrüll, Herzklopfen u. dergl. figürlich nachzuahmen streben, die bei ihrer ersten Erscheinung entzückten, sieht ein philosophisches berichtigtes Urtheil als kleinliche Spielereien an."

[72] *Haude- und Spenersche Zeitung* (3 March 1808).

[73] *Haude- und Spenersche Zeitung* (27 February 1808).

[74] *Haude- und Spenersche Zeitung* (17 March 1808)

order to "translate one art into the other;" this was hardly better than the "musicalization of paintings." Melodrama, he concluded, "is quite out of fashion, although Benda was a splendid musical translator."[75]

The leaking of the respective roles of the musical, visual, and textual into each other – so that neither could fulfill their roles adequately – was a large factor in the Berlin reception of Benda and Rousseau's *Pygmalion* in 1797/8. Many in the press responded not so much to the particular melodrama as to the genre itself, and to aesthetic problems from twenty years earlier. But objections to the constant switching between text and music now take on a particular inflection, one reviewer arguing that the interruption of music by speech takes the audience away from the "ideal world" into which they had been transported, returning them to their own presence, and into the conversation of the auditorium.[76] Another evoked similar terms, remarking that: "the actor speaks in poetic prose … only the orchestra sounds in language of the ideal and dances in the beautiful rhythms of passion."[77] Here we find a familiar thread of German musical rhetoric c. 1800, spun against melodrama's formal construction: the subordination of musical logic, and specifically musical communication in melodrama, sits uncomfortably with the increasing emphasis on music's capacity to reach beyond, to express profoundly rather than directly. It seems possible that objections to melodramatic music's formulaic structures and devices were objections to a specificity or directness of musical meaning that was already falling out of fashion by the end of the eighteenth century.[78]

But to listen for the meanings of early melodrama music only through the critical commentary of a select group of aesthetic modernizers is to take one of various sides in an extremely complex debate. As Waeber has shown, the "excessive" media play of the Rousseauian tradition did not entirely lose its luster in the nineteenth century: on the contrary, her study traces the afterlives of a particular technique in the "imaginary theater" of Berlioz and the "speaking bodies" of Auber. By the end of the century, when Zdeněk Fibich was working in the melodramatic tradition, it was unclear whether his debt was to Benda (a fellow Bohemian) or to Pixerécourt, whose plays had become so popular that they were, by the long process of cultural osmosis, part of the stage vocabulary of the day. What the Berlin critics do underscore, however, is the importance of music in the production of melodramatic meaning. Rather than taking this as a cue to berate the shortcomings of boulevard composers, or to redraw a line between the high art tradition of Benda's followers and the hack work undertaken by sub-Piccinnian arrangers, we might instead consider how a focus on melodrama music allows for alternative readings of expressive culture in general. Instead of assuming that all nineteenth-century audiences recoiled from the dead hand of instrumental mimesis, we might pursue the contours of an inherently multimedia aesthetics of music.

The critical pitfalls are, once again, familiar – we know how later generations of elite musicians (Wagner is the best known) detested the apparent redundancy of melodrama, in which lighting, sound, text, and gesture seemed to repeat one another without any synthesis or transcendence of their brute effects. But the distaste of a few should not lead us to write off the experience of the many. Following Waeber, we might explore the formal fixation on the

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[75] Ibid.

[76] [Anonym], "['M'], 'Pygmalion von Rousseau, Benda und Iffland," *Jahrbücher der preußischen Monarchie* 1 (1798), 76.

[77] Johann August Eberhard, "An den Verfasser des Aufsatzes Pygmalion," *Jahrbücher der preußischen Monarchie* 2 (1798), 150.

[78] For a musicological treatment of this phenomenon in nineteenth-century Italian opera, see Mary Ann Smart's *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

momentary and the transitory, without necessarily relating this to any overarching structure. Musicologists have become used to reading the c. 1800 moment in terms of increasing concerns for cohesion, increasing complaints about pastiche, and increasing expectation of novelty in musical language. But in many ways melodrama appears to be a contradiction of this model: even the supposedly "high" German examples are strangely fragmented and old-fashioned in their affective vocabulary. Perhaps the problem is not so much with melodrama as with our models of historical inquiry.

By suspending or resisting existing historical narratives (melodramatic and otherwise) we can reopen the question of what early melodrama might have meant to audiences and others at different times and different places. This, in turn, allows us to lead from local questions to broad reflections on music theater and early nineteenth-century aesthetics. If the period was supposedly one in which the work concept became regulative, when the authority of genius gained a decisive foothold, and the fixed text began to organize beneath it a hierarchy of actors and audiences, the melodramatic narratives contained in this volume reveal a more complex set of stories. Since there was so much concern surrounding melodrama, and so much written in the wake of its popular and academic success, the genre presents a unique opportunity to think again about the musico-theatrical sphere during a pivotal moment in the history of European art.