IRASM 55 (2024) 2: 267-281

Music, Poetry, and Modernity: Shaping a Musical Public in Early Nineteenth-century Germany

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UDC: 78.01:111.852(430)"18"
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.21857/ydkx2cvx39
Original Scholarly Paper
Izvorni znanstveni rad
Received: 22 March 2024
Primljeno: 22. ožujka 2024.
Accepted: 1 October 2024
Prihvaćeno: 1. listopada 2024.

Abstract – Résumé
By the early nineteenth century, the meaning of aesthetics had become hotly debated in the context of a rising bourgeois public sphere and the adjudication of public taste. In Germany, especially, the rise of a new aesthetic evaluation of absolute music was linked importantly to contemporaries' understanding of their own modernity, boosting its status as an art form, and raising the stakes for its public consumption. This paper examines how early 19th-century critics and essayists appropriated and expanded upon an earlier critical tradition that linked poetic expression with the sublime to argue that absolute music, as a symbol of modernity, was uniquely positioned to realize the universal aesthetic self.
Keywords: aesthetics of music • instrumental music • nineteenth-century music • music criticism • public sphere • sublime

Introduction

As schematized in Habermas' celebrated work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the first phase of an emerging bourgeois public sphere roughly spans from the early eighteenth century to the early nineteenth. It was during this decisive period that an expanding bourgeois class elaborated different social and cultural practices with which to recognize, confront, and as a result constitute itself.[1] The rational subjectivity of the individual could only start to make claims for a political and social autonomy once it was engaged within a wider social context of public reason, as the prerequisite gesture towards redefining the structures of power relations that would enable a bourgeois class to submit itself to the »standards of reason and forms of law« that

[1] Jürgen HABERMAS, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

could emanate from within the public sphere itself.[2] In practical terms, Habermas conceived the first phase of the structural transformation as taking form importantly through modes of cultural consumption, animated by what he termed the »institutionalization of an audience-oriented private subjectivity« centred around the consumption of commodifying cultural artefacts.[3] This meant that the private consumption of such cultural goods in the »intimate family domain« is also a public consumption, both as an awareness that individual consumption is collectively constitutive of the wider audience for those goods, as well as the confrontation of individual instances of private consumption in fora where that wider audience of consumption becomes visible.

The critical moment for this development occurs when cultural production escapes the confines of aristocratic and ecclesiastical institutional monopoly to reemerge in proto-commodity form inside an incipient cultural marketplace. While this expanded the potential embrace of a cultural capital linked to the consumption of cultural goods, it also meant that previous sources of imprimatur to mark aesthetic and artistic value were correspondingly compromised. As part of the unfolding of the cultural phase, Habermas identifies the rise of »institutional art criticism« as playing a key role in the formation of a bourgeois public identity, starting during the second half of the eighteenth century and gathering pace through the nineteenth. The need for an institutionalized art critical discourse arises in part from the need for a space in which to create a shared understanding of art and ideas as a public activity, a process which Habermas characterizes as the »critical assimilation« of art, culture, and philosophy.[4] But it also was a source for formulating a kind of continuous authority capable of arbitrating complex issues of aesthetic merit and taste, especially as both aristocratic monopolies over taste dissolved, and as philosophical debates about what constituted aesthetics, and the kinds of judgments that followed, were intensifying.[5] Together these implicit mandates place such publications at the nexus of those debates with the increasing public consumption of cultural goods, and made them central to Habermas' conception of how the Kantian imperative for the public use of reason operated as the mechanism whereby this expanding mode of cultural consumption by a rising bourgeois class helps it to actualize itself into its own modernity.

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[2] J. HABERMAS, *Strukturwandel*, 87. See also David INGRAM, »Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the project of Enlightenment,« *New German Critique*, 53 (1991), 67–103, esp. 67–76.

[3] J. HABERMAS, *Strukturwandel*, 107.

[4] *Ibid*., 101, 105.

[5] On the general background, see: George DICKIE, *The Century of Taste: The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Stefanie BUCHENAU, *The Founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment: The Art of Invention and the Invention of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Paul GUYER, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, vols. 1 & 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). I cite additional literature where relevant below.

The rise of an institutional art critical discourse was thus a response to an emerging market need for structured commentary about taste, aesthetics, and judgment created by a shifting cultural landscape.

In this article, I wish to consider a specific aspect of how this discourse worked to help shape an emerging public by focusing on the music-related journalism that served a German readership at the turn of the nineteenth century. During this period, the status, role, and importance of musical consumption was undergoing dramatic changes, especially in Germany. Starting in the last years of the eighteenth century, perceptions and preferences of a German musical public shifted to embrace so-called »absolute music« – that is non-vocal music – as having greater aesthetic merit and emotional force.[6] The perception that instrumental music had a higher, or even the highest, aesthetic value, not just within a corpus of musical goods, but indeed within that of all the fine arts, was the subject of much contemporary commentary. While this sentiment found detailed theoretical expression in numerous tracts regarding aesthetics, such as Wackenroder and Tieck's *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der Kunst* (1799) or Herder's *Kalligone* (1800), it was more in the pages of contemporary German journals, both specialized and general, that the negotiation of music's role and significance as a cultural *practic*e was playing out.[7] Most tract-length theoretical discussions of aesthetics, even when specifically about music, offered almost no concrete examples by way of illustration or engagement. Contemporary readers might have consulted, for instance, *Dialogues on Music* by the popular novelist Wilhelm Heinse (author of *Hildegard von Hohenthal*), a work of juvenilia originally written in the 1770s and published posthumously in 1805 to profit from the public's newfound interest in the aesthetics of music. But they would have come away without knowing a single specific piece of actual music that Heinse's interlocutors had engaged with or listened to; nor could such abstract efforts help guide consumers in determining what newly-published music did or did not have aesthetic merit, nor why.[8] In the context of a changing consciousness spurred by ongoing debates over the true aesthetic value of instrumental music, it was the regularly-published reviews and commentary of art-critical journalism which offered the more

[6] John NEUBAUER, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-century Aesthetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Carl DAHLHAUS, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Mary Sue MORROW, *German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mark E. BONDS, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); M.E. BONDS, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[7] Ludwig TIECK, *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der Kunst* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1799); W.G. HERDER, *Kalligone. Von Kunst und Kunstrichterei*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1800).

[8] Wilhelm HEINSE, *Musikalische Dialogen* (Leipzig: Gräff, 1805). A single unspecified trio by Salieri is referenced in the last dialogue.

decisive venue for helping shape the cultural practices for an emerging musical public, and where, as Mary Morrow has observed, the »evolution of this consciousness occurred.«[9] Specifically, I wish to look at how a discourse developed around the aesthetic merits of absolute music that was reliant upon an existing intellectual architecture that had been elaborated to engage the broader aesthetic problems of the fine arts, and especially of poetry. This strategy, I suggest, was designed to shape or guide the evolving consciousness of a musical public, and was backdropped against the broader and self-conscious idea of what was at stake in how the public went about defining itself in the context of its own modernity. Thus, this art-critical approach not only tackled the problem of where, for example, the sublime was to be found in music in terms of compositional craft, but importantly engaged a public responsibility for their own choices in a commodity market, which then required, as a condition of an effective consumption that was in sympathy with the goals of modernity itself, that those commodity choices be made in the »right« way and for the right reasons.

The Problem of Intelligibility

The evolution of both aesthetic-theoretical arguments for, and a public consciousness of, instrumental music's aesthetic value revolved around the larger core question of the intelligibility of art, from which sprang its emotional consequence and hence its purpose. Outside of obvious figures (thunderclaps, hunting motifs) or expressive devices (the Mannheim Rocket is a good example), the mimesis of instrumental music was problematic. Vocal music (including opera) – since it has words – made an entirely different set of claims upon its audience than purely instrumental music, which consequently faced a challenge of intelligibility outside of any accompanying dramatic markers (such as the programmatic or characteristic symphonies of the late eighteenth century) that could attempt to provide a meaning to the music and thereby fulfill what Kant termed the purposefulness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) that art was understood as requiring generally.[10]

Where was the possibility of creating an equivalent intelligibility out of a purely instrumental work? As an 1804 essay published in the Berlin-based periodical *Die Freimüthige* by the theologian and philosopher Friedrich Köppen, who had trained under Fichte, put it:

> It is more difficult in music than in other fine arts to judge with certainty and determination. The painting is in front of one's eyes and can be contemplated at leisure; the

[9] M.S. MORROW, *German Music Criticism*, 2.

[10] See Richard WILL, *The Characteristic Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

> poem can be read, reread and subjected to criticism at will; all music, however, is passing in time: by the time we grasp it, by the time we want to comprehend it, the notes have already faded away. … The difficulty is increased by the lack of a musical language.[11]

This problem of intelligibility implicated not just the role of instrumental music in the cultural practice of an emerging bourgeois musical public, it also had consequences for the aesthetic merit of »pure« music as an art form.[12] In 1790, Kant had dismissed music in his *Critique of Judgment* as the least worthy art form, since it »merely played with emotions« and »judged by reason, has less value than any other of the fine arts,« which, through their aesthetic effect, operate at what he termed »the level of ideas.«[13] As repeated grousing found in the music-critical journals of the period against Kant's seemingly unequivocal judgment suggest, the dismissal stung.

And how could it not? A concert-going and music-playing bourgeoisie that was ambitious to acquire and demonstrate good taste and cultural prestige would hardly want the experience to be denigrated within a prevailing view that such activities were, in fact, culturally unambitious. The frequent rebuttals against the Kantian relegation of music to the »merely pleasant« (as it was frequently epitomized in contemporary journals) testifies to the degree to which an ever-emerging musical public, increasingly distinguishable through the growing commodification of musical cultural artefacts which was opening up new and different modes of music consumption, created at the same time a space for sharper and more definitive contestation against larger socio-cultural perceptions of music's limited aesthetic worth. In 1795, the 25 year-old Christian Friedrich Michaelis had published *Ueber den Geist der Tonkunst* (On the Spirit of Music), in which he gamely tried to elevate the standing of music as a fine art within the larger intellectual framework that Kant had elaborated in his *Critique of Judgment*.[14] Well-received

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[11] Friedrich KÖPPEN, »Briefe über die Musik. Zweiter Brief«, *Die Freimuthige*, 2/18 (Jan. 26, 1804), 69. Republished in F. KÖPPEN, *Vermischte Schriften* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1806), 269–70.

[12] O.K. BOUWSMA, »The Expression Theory of Art,« in *Philosophical Essays* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 21–50; M.S. MORROW, *German Music Criticism*, 5–7; M.E. BONDS, *Music as Thought*, 30–37.

[13] Immanuel KANT, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlisch Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1913), § 53 (218–220). See also: Giselher SCHUBERT, »Zur Musikästhetik in Kants 'Kritik der Urteilskraft'«, *Archiv fur Musikwissenschaft*, 32/1 (1975), 12–25; Luc FERRY, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 83–89, explores the significance of the »idea« in Kant's aesthetic scheme. For the suggestion that Kant's arguments around music are more nuanced than a contemporary reception would suggest, see Samantha MATHERNE, »Kant's Expressive Theory of Music,« *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 72/2 (2014), 129–45.

[14] C.F. MICHAELIS, *Ueber den Geist der Tonkunst mit Rücksicht auf Kants Kritik der Aesthetischen Urtheilskraft* (Leipzig: Schäferische Buchhandlung, 1795); C.F. MICHAELIS, *Ueber den Geist der Tonkunst mit Rücksicht auf Kants Kritik der Aesthetischen Urtheilskraft. Zweiter Versuch* (Leipzig:

when it was first published, by the time he substantially revised it in 1800 (a »second attempt« as he put it), the climate had palpably changed.[15] An 1801 review of the work that appeared in the leading music journal of the day, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (hereafter *AmZ*), suggested »it really does seem time to expose the inadequacy of [Kant's] views [on music] freely and without equivocation [*ohne Hinterhalt*]. For in fact, Kant's merits, as the creator of a genuine philosophical spirit in his contemporaries, are too well-recognized and striking that one should feel the need to maintain his reputation through the petty protection and defence of individual sentences.«[16] As many of music's defenders against the perceived Kantian snub liked to point out, the philosophers knew little about the technique and craft of musical composition; moreover, they tended to lump all types of music together. Both were irksome: »It is said,« wrote one essayist in 1803 about philosophical approaches to music, »that since the Kantian period, commentators have provided more comment than *commentatio*. If, however, an amateur [*Layen*] were allowed to have a say in philosophical matters, I would like to ask whether it is not the same in philosophical as in musical composition?«[17] And the composer and music-historian Ernst Ludwig Gerber, writing in the same journal in 1804, observed:

> perhaps it was Kant who first suggested that the art of music, by its very nature, drags down its admirers and performers to sensuality. … However, in my opinion, not only a spirit that is skilled in speculation, but also a great deal of experience is required in order to be able to judge with certainty about the essence and effects of the art of music; and it is precisely the great scholar who would be most forgiven for making a mistake in this respect. For at the age favourable to the study of music, he is usually far too preoccupied with other sciences to be able to attain proper insight into the art.[18]

The task of assigning to music its proper standing as an aesthetic experience, in other words, was too serious a business to be left to non-musical philosophers. A different kind of expertise was therefore required, one that lay beyond the purview of most contemporary philosophers. Instead, those with musical training,

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Schäferische Buchhandlung, 1800). On Michaelis, see Keith M. CHAPIN, »Classicist Terms of Sublimity: Christian Friedrich Michaelis, Fugue, and Fantasy,« *Ad Parnassum*, 4/8 (2006), 115–39; Volker KAPP, »Le sublime selon Kant et Schiller et la théorie musicale de Michaelis,« in *À la Croisée des Arts: Sublime et musique religieuse en Europe (xvii^e^-xviii^e^ siècles)*, ed. Sophie Hache and Thierry Favier (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015), 427–42; M.E. BONDS, *Music as Thought*, 25–26.

[15] Cf. Matthew PRITCHARD, »Music in Balance: The aesthetics of music after Kant, 1790–1810,« *Journal of Musicology*, 36 (2019), 39-67, at 50–51.

[16] »Recension, 'Über den Geist der Tonkunst,'« *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 3/22, col. 380. (Critiques and reviews during this period were by convention typically anonymous.)

[17] »Aufschlüsse über die Musik aus den Werken der Philosophen,« *AmZ*, 5/8, col. 130.

[18] J.L. [sic] GERBER, »Bemerkungen über eine Stelle im Intelligenz-Blatte der Jenaischen allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung, 1804, No. 3, pag. 99,« *AmZ*, 6/33, col. 550. (The authorship, attributed to »J.L. Gerber,« is surely a typographical error.)

sensibility, and understanding, which Enlightenment discourse had come to designate as the *Kenner* – the connoisseurs (but literally, the »knower«) – needed to weigh in to emend contemporary perceptions of music's value.[19]

There was a twofold process at work in this business, which was unfolding during the first years of the nineteenth century. The first was to advance, using both the language and logic from prevailing aesthetic models, the true achievement of contemporary music. And here the stress was not simply on what contemporaries often termed the »genius« of creation, that is, to elevate the standing or role of individual composer as a »true artist« and their body of work as »true art.« Additionally, this exercise implicated a model of consumption and different modes of cultural practice. These efforts were interconnected: the »right« kind of music needed to be promoted to create, in turn, the »right« kind of musical public. This latter follows from what Michael Steinberg has termed »the fiction of music as a listening subjectivity,« which can create a »mutuality between the aesthetic viability of a music's subjectivity and the cultural, political, and indeed aesthetic possibility of subjectivity *and intersubjectivity* in modern life.«[20] Thus the second task was to build up a critical discourse inside of art-critical publications which could then be directly translated into specific kinds of cultural practice that implicated the status of a musical public which was constituting itself in ever greater number through the wider availability of commodified musical products, be they (among others) tickets to individual or subscription-series concerts, or the purchase of published scores or sheet music to peruse or play in domestic or intimate settings.

The approach found in the era's new art-critical journalism corresponded more effectively to the needs of its modern audience by offering a direct engagement of these questions as they could be considered in light of specific musical-commodity choices: the programming of concert series, the appearance of new works by active composers or the republication of older works, the quality of performances, or the merits of instructional literature for learning an instrument, for instance.[21] In other words, the praxis of this general critical revaluation was found at the intersection of an informed commentary drawing upon a familiar lexicon surrounding aesthetic ideas with the ongoing business of providing, week-to-week, month-by-month, informed guidance on the choices available in an active and dynamic marketplace for music-cultural commodities.

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[19] Carl DAHLHAUS, »Der Dilettant und der Banause in der Musikgeschichte,« *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 25/3 (1968), 157–72; Erich REIMER, »Kenner-Liebhaber-Dilettant,« in *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie*, ed. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974); Matthew RILEY, *Musical Listening in the German Enlightenment: Attention, Wonder and Astonishment* (London: Routledge, 2016), 88–92.

[20] Michael P. STEINBERG, *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-century Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 9–10. My italics.

[21] Gudula SCHÜTZ, *Von dem Richterstuhl der Kritik: die Musik in Friedrich Nicolais Allgemeiner deutsche Bibliothek, 1765-1806* (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 2007).

Poetry, Music, and the Sublime

»Poetry is infinitely more versatile than painting and sculpture, which, even at their highest level, can only ever excite reflection,« wrote the dramatist Franz Horn in a long serialized essay from 1802 gnomically entitled »Musical Fragments«:

> But not only poetry, music too claims this superiority over the other arts. Take, for example, Mignon from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, conceived with the highest vitality, the most charming mysticism and the most consistent tenderness. One must concede that even the most excellent sculptors and painters would summon up their art in vain to create for us a thoroughly adequate representation of her, perhaps for the very reason that by defining her appearance in a specific moment, it would make the depiction of that mysticism, which seems to satisfy itself only through its unrestricted motion, impossible. Music alone will be able to solve this challenge just as perfectly as poetry, for there is no aesthetic idea for which it does not have the purest form. To the external senses, music may always seem to be changing. But for the inner senses, it will only always be the eternal and original unity [of the idea], a unity which it could not have were it not for the manifold variety that can emerge from music.[22]

Horn's essay is a precocious example of what Dahlhaus identified as the application of a Romantic approach to aesthetics generally to the specific problem of music's aesthetic worth.[23] Dahlhaus' traces the emergence of what he calls the »aesthetic paradigm of German musical culture« in the early nineteenth century to an emphasis on music as a »language above language,« drawn from the *Empfindsamkeit* approach of the late eighteenth century, but extended to make an argument for music as an aesthetic of the sublime.[24] This impinged upon existing perceptions of the aesthetics of poetical expression, as seen in Horn's argument; and indeed a widespread, central preoccupation of the newfound assertiveness for the true aesthetic value of music being formulated at the turn of the century was precisely the relationship between poetry and music, often referred to in contemporary music-critical commentary as the »sister arts.« Given the Kantian view that music could aspire (at most) to the beautiful, whereas poetry was sublime, it was a consciously tendentious assertion, crafted from the very-same

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[22] Franz HORN, »Musikalische Fragmente,« *AmZ*, 4/49, col. 787.

[23] C. DAHLHAUS, *Absolute Music*, 11–12. Dahlhaus' discussion is in the context of E.T.A. Hoffmann's celebrated 1810 review of Beethoven's 5th symphony, of which Horn's essay is a clear thematic precursor.

[24] C. DAHLHAUS, *Absolute Music*, 60. See also: Georgia J. COWART, »Sense and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Musical Thought,« *Acta Musicologica*, 56/2 (1984), 251–66; M.E. BONDS, *Absolute Music*, 58–69; J. Colin McQUILLAN, »Baumgarten, Meier, and Kant on Aesthetic Perfection,« in *Kant and his German Contemporaries*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2, 13–27.

theoretical constituents that had given rise to the problematic of the aesthetics of music in the first place. »It is an almost universal prejudice that music cannot exist by itself, and that itself alone is not enough,« noted Horn, adding »music is [understood as] a beautiful (not merely pleasant) art only because it serves as a vehicle for poetry.«[25] And it is against this perception that he positions his essay's main argument.

Enlightenment concerns regarding the importance of poetry to human aesthetic sensibility had been a core preoccupation of aesthetic philosophy at least since Baumgarten had singled out its role in his 1735 dissertation *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*. Within the Enlightenment tradition, the view that poetry stood above all other fine arts as the closest to capturing nature in its essence instead of merely copying it in its form verged on dogmatic.[26] »Where reason,« wrote Herder in his *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, »often puts an end to the role of feeling and the artificial language of society to that of natural sounds, do not the … mightiest strikes of poetry … still often come close to this language of nature, through imitation?«[27] And Kant, even as he had dismissed the aesthetic value of music, had argued:

> the art of poetry (which owes its origin almost entirely to genius and will be guided least by precept or example) claims the highest rank of all [the arts]. It expands the mind by setting the imagination free and presenting, within the limits of a given concept and among the unlimited variety of possible forms that agree with it, the one that connects its presentation with a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate, and thus elevates itself aesthetically to the level of ideas.[28]

Thus, any elaboration around the deserved standing or true aesthetic worth of instrumental music was necessarily confronting an entire critical corpus elaborated from Baumgarten and Lessing through to Kant, Schlegel, and Schiller (among many others) that had consistently extolled poetry for approaching the aesthetically sublime, even if there was disagreement over some of the details.[29]

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[25] F. HORN, »Musikalische Fragmente,« col. 436.

[26] Kai HAMMERMEISTER, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18; Stephen HALLIWELL, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 9.

[27] W.G. HERDER, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73.

[28] I. KANT, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 53 (215).

[29] In addition to the literature cited above, see: Meyer Howard ABRAMS, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Andrew CUTROFELLO, »Kant's Debate with Herder about the Philosophical Significance of the Genius of Shakespeare,« *Philosophy Compass*, 3/1 (2008), 66–82; Mirko M. HALL, »Friedrich Schlegel's Romanticization of Music,« *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42/3 (2009), 413–29.

In January 1813, the *AmZ*'s editor Johann Rochlitz thought it fitting to inaugurate the new year by digging up part of an essay from Herder for his readers and printing it on the first page:

> »Nations, times, and people judge music and poetry so differently!« it read in part, … but the rules of agreement lie nevertheless … in the human feeling that enjoys these arts. The proportions of harmony are the same among all peoples; the receptivity of our organ can be exercised in degrees, thus also calculated and compensated: consequently, a general standard of measurement, an agreement, is possible. And even if the masters of art from different times and peoples did not deny their peculiarity, the musical ear of understanding nevertheless orders them all by appreciating each in its peculiarity and raising it from the particular into the universal … like a sun of humanity that shines over all peoples and times.[30]

Rochlitz no doubt figured Herder's lofty claims that music, like poetry, was an art that reconciled the particular with the universal would surely resonate with the journal's readers. This appeared after more than a decade's worth of accumulated critical commentary, which, as with Franz Horn's essay, had been engaging head-on a comparison of the aesthetic characteristics of music with those of poetry. And as that commentary accumulated, it had become increasingly clear that the very formulation of that intellectual-aesthetic discourse, which permitted hierarchical assessment and the ranking of the different fine arts, had, in fact, created an ideal space into which a proto-Romantic music-critical discourse could sidle. »Poetry represents the content of feeling,« noted the rather critical review of Michaelis' revised treatise in 1801, »… and allows the form of feeling to arise freely in the subject. Music represents this form in itself, and leaves the free generation of the content to the subject.«[31] Perhaps Michaelis took the review to heart, for his own thinking was moving away from his earlier efforts to characterize music within a Kantian aesthetic paradigm to enfold it instead within the kind of aesthetic idealism linked to figures like Herder or Schiller. In an 1805 essay, published in the *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung*, he noted that:

> where words are no longer capable of anything, where they can no longer reach, the tones and harmonies [of music] express the inexpressible and raise the spirited listener [*Begeisterten*] far above himself. The most perfect poetic structure and meter only receive their highest power and effect through the addition of musical rhythm; only united do they by turns transport, enrapture, lift the soul to the highest divine ascent, and lower it into the abyss of destruction.[32]

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[30] W.G. HERDER, »Begebenheiten und Charaktere des vergangenen Jahrhunderts,« in *Adrastea*, 1 (1801), 81–82. Reprinted in *AmZ*, 15/1, col. 1.

[31] »Recension, 'Über den Geist der Tonkunst,'« col. 384.

[32] C.F. MICHAELIS, »Vermischte Bemerkungen über Musik,« *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung*, 1/4 (1805), 13.

Michaelis' argument is characteristic of the aesthetic claims being advanced by the music-critical discourse of the period, in which an artful substitution of the musical for the poetical could be made.[33] As the sentiment from the »Werden« brothers' *Musikalisches Taschenbuch* of 1803 put it: »pure, instrumental music is the only genre of music that exists for itself; in it, therefore, appears art – music alone in its complete purity. Unconcerned about poetry or sculpture, music goes its own way, independently and freely it writes poetry for itself, alone and unconnected it reaches and fulfils art in the highest.«[34]

Since the intelligibility of poetry was simply an inherent characteristic of the genre itself, the problem of an intelligibility in the context of »pure music« could be resolved through this idea of music as a »poetry for itself,« yet freer, more immediate, and with greater affect for the listener than any poetic work, lyrical or dramatic, could achieve. Indeed, the utility to early nineteenth-century proponents of instrumental music of this prefabricated discursive architecture concerning poetry's merits was that it had *already established* the frame of its own aesthetic heights. Equating music to poetry, or, even better, substituting music as a *superior kind* of poetry, meant that the problem of intelligibility now could be conceived outside of mimetic, textual, characteristic, or programmatic terms. Köppen's 1804 efforts to articulate a theory of music for the readers of *Die Freimüthige* was linked specifically to his criticism of Haydn's two Oratorios, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, as being misplaced examples of what modern music should be. Noting themes from the *Seasons* that are »excellently executed« for an instrumental ensemble, he observes »I would like it very much in a *symphony*, but to my mind it has no effect at all in *vocal music*.« Channeling Kant, he declared »modern composers … should prescribe for themselves a musical categorical imperative: compose according to such a maxim as you can wish to be valid for all times and among all people who possess taste.«[35] That meant, in his view, discarding the Oratorio form as a démodé musical vehicle, inappropriate for the »musical categorical imperative« of modern times. Although contemporary *Kenner* did not widely share Köppen's distaste for Haydn's late Oratorios (indeed, very much the reverse), this was nonetheless reflective of a gathering view that music was not the handmaiden of poetry, but poetical in and of itself. Its aesthetic value could hence be asserted in almost exactly those same terms that Kant had singled out as the signal achievement of the poetic: »it strengthens the mind by letting it feel its capacity to consider and judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of deter-

[33] On Michaelis' contribution to the question of aesthetics in music during this period, see M. PRITCHARD, »Music in Balance,« 58–66.

[34] *Musikalisches Taschenbuch* 1 (1803), 77. The »Werden brothers« were in fact pseudonyms for Johann Gottlieb Winzer and Carl Theodor Mann. See H. PATSCH and B. STAUBER, »Sehnsucht nach dem Tode,« *Archiv Für Musikwissenschaft*, 76/1 (2019), 28–55, at 31.

[35] F. KÖPPEN, »Briefe über die Musik. Fünfter Brief,« *Die Freimuthige*, 2/18, 138. (Also in F. KÖPPEN, *Vermischte Schriften*, 312–13). My italics.

mination by nature.…«[36] This brought the concept of a sublime in music within analytical and philosophical reach. Frequent claims in the musical-critical discourse for music as sublime (»*erhabende*«) instead of merely delightful (»*reizende*« – Kant's descriptive term for music in the *Critique*) or beautiful reflect this appropriation to underscore the ambitions for a modern recognition by contemporary readers of what music both could and should achieve.[37]

There was a further subtlety in this commandeering of the aesthetic high ground, one that not only helped elevate music as an art form, but also helped elevate the *consumption* of such music as a gesture both of general enlightened self-actualization and of asserting more precisely a self-conscious idea of what was »only possible for us moderns through the medium of music,« as Horn had expressed it in his »Fragments.«[38] Schiller had famously picked up on Herder's preoccupation to distinguish between what he termed the »naïve« and »sentimental« forms of poetry, which had helped clarify the problem of art mediated by culture (i.e. civilization) as a kind of confining artifice: »Nature makes man one with himself, art separates and divides him; through the ideal he returns to unity. But because the ideal is an infinite one, which he never attains, the cultivated man can never become perfect in his own way, as the natural man is able to become perfect in his.«[39] An ineluctable opposition in poetry, the boundary between the naïf and sentimental, between ancient and modern, between nature and artifice, could be resolved through pure (instrumental) music, since it was through the intrinsic (i.e. non-contingent) ordering of the intellect – what Herder, recall, termed »the musical ear of understanding« – that actualized the aesthetic at the level of the self, which could then be understood and recognised as a kind of universal subjectivity. Based on the very intellectual arguments constructed to grapple with the true meaning of the aesthetic in the eighteenth century, the full possibility of an enlightened cultural modernity could now be postulated as a gesture of musical-public self-constitution in the nineteenth. If the problem identified in the late-Enlightenment thinking of a Herder, Kant, Schiller or Schlegel

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[36] I. KANT, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 53 (215).

[37] See Wye J. ALLANBROOK, »Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?,« *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 7/2 (2010), 263–79, esp. 263-67. To be clear, claims in the music-critical press for the sublime lack the kind of philosophical apparatus built around the concept in the works of figures like Kant (*Critique of Judgment*) or Schiller (*Of the Sublime*). See Emily BRADY, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 67–89; K. HAMMERMEISTER, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 32–37. On the other hand, they could and did point to specific instances of the sublime in ways that eluded any philosophical treatment.

[38] F. HORN, »Musikalische Fragmente,« *AmZ*, 4/27, col. 433.

[39] Friedrich SCHILLER, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, in *Schillers Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Conrad Höfler, 22 vols. (Berlin: Propyläen, 1910-1926), 12, 81. See also: M. E. BONDS, »Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,« *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 50/ 2-3 (1997), 387-420, at 399–401; P. GUYER, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, 1: 492–94.

was that of the self separated from nature, divided and disunited by the institutions of culture and civilization, yet in the case of instrumental music it was the very artefacts of that culture that served to actualize the infinite unity and ideal of nature within the self. For what was the highest form of musical expression? Not songs, nor operas, nor compositions for chamber ensemble or solo instrument; rather it was

> symphonies [which] are the triumph of this art. Unlimited and free, the artist can conjure up a whole world of feelings in them, exude dancing merriment and jubilant joy, sweet longing of love and deep pain, gentle rule and wanton whim, playful jest and terrible seriousness, and appeal to the sympathetic strings of the heart, feeling and imagination; the whole mass of instruments is at his disposal.[40]

An orchestral group of musicians, dressed in pseudo-courtly finery, playing in a concert hall setting in front of an audience was the very picture of cultural artifice. Yet, as the music-making began, the result would be (when done right) exactly that which Schiller had imagined as what poetry itself was striving to achieve:

> … to give humanity its fullest possible expression. In the state of natural simplicity, where man still works with all his powers simultaneously as a harmonious unity, where the whole of his nature is fully expressed in reality, the most complete imitation of the real is possible – whereas, here in the state of culture, where that harmonious working together of his whole nature is merely an idea, the elevation of reality to the ideal, or, what amounts to the same thing, the representation of the ideal, must be the task of the poet.[41]

For the proto-Romantic approach being worked out in the music-critical discourse, music could turn this formulation on its head, since pure music's claims to »the representation of the ideal« were a direct result of that state of culture, accomplished through the modernity of a rational, enlightened, and culturally-enabled, collective, public-facing (inter-)subjectivity: musicians playing modern instruments, listened to by modern audiences, performing modern instrumental music. This was the aesthetic paragon of the »newest times,« as critics often called it, promising, as Mark Bonds has put it, »a kind of totalizing synthesis with implications that reach far beyond the walls of the concert hall.«[42]

Under this reading of the aesthetic value of instrumental music, any tensions between the naïf and sentimental simply dissolve away. The symphonic form thus offered a remarkable juxtaposition of form and purpose, a polyphonic

[40] *Musikalisches Taschenbuch*, 1 (1803), 78.
[41] F. SCHILLER, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 79–80.
[42] M.E. BONDS, *Music as Thought*, 70.

synthesis whose meaning lay – or should lie – outside the mimetic, whether programmatic, descriptive (e.g. musical painting), or vocal music. In his famous 1810 review of Beethoven's fifth symphony, E.T.A. Hoffmann would make the distinction clear between a pure, »romantic« music and the limitations or inadequacies of earlier mimetic approaches, when he termed such latter efforts as »laughable aberrations« and declaimed they should never again be performed.[43] And he also noted in the context of Beethoven's achievement, the inadequacy of music tied to the poetical (i.e. vocal music):

> Beethoven is a purely romantic (and precisely for that reason truly musical) composer, and this may be the reason that he has been less successful with vocal music, which does not allow for unspecified yearning, but only represents *those affects that are indicated by the words* as they are experienced in the kingdom of the infinite.[44]

The true autonomy of the self, understood as an individual, subjective transcendence, not guided by words but instead operating freely at the level of ideas (»unspecified yearning«), was at the same time forged from its apparent opposite: the collective, the artificial, and the modern.

The point was that music, when both practised and consumed in the right way, could demonstrate that culture was not something to overcome to approximate nature to attain aesthetic enlightenment; it was something to embrace to allow the listener to unify with nature. One way to move a musical public to where it needed to be was to take a corpus of self-edifying ambitions developed for one art (poetry), appropriate it to another (music), and energize, intensify, and elevate its significance within the very concept of the public itself.

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[43] »Ernst Theodor Amadeus HOFFMANN, 'Review,'« in *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by his German Contemporaries*, ed. Wayne M. Senner, trans. Robin Wallace, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 2, 96.

[44] *Ibid.*, 97. My emphasis.

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Sažetak

Glazba, pjesništvo i modernost: oblikovanje glazbene publike u ranom 19. stoljeću u Njemačkoj

Do početka 19. stoljeća o značenju estetike počelo se vatreno raspravljati u kontekstu rastuće građanske javne sfere i prosuđivanja javnog ukusa. Od svih lijepih umjetnosti koje su bile obuhvaćene ovom raspravom nijedna se nije energičnije bavila većim pitanjima koje je postavljala estetička filozofija od glazbe, posebice u Njemačkoj gdje se mišljenje kritičara ubrzano kretalo ka vrednovanju instrumentalne ili apsolutne glazbe ponad svih drugih oblika. Osobito na stranicama tadašnjeg tiska posvećenim glazbenoj kritici uspon novog estetičkog vrednovanja apsolutne glazbe bio je uvelike povezan s razumijevanjem suvremenikâ o vlastitoj modernosti, pomažući jačanju statusa apsolutne glazbe kao umjetničke forme, a s time i povećanju očekivanja o tome kako bi javnost trebala konzumirati glazbenu robu. Ovaj članak istražuje taj razvoj s posebnim fokusom na način kako se ovaj diskurs odvijao u prvom desetljeću 19. stoljeća. U njemu se pokazuje kako su suvremeni glazbeni kritičari i pisci o glazbi preuzeli i proširili raniju tradiciju kritike koja je povezivala poetski izražaj s uzvišenim kako bi poduprli ideju da apsolutna glazba, kao izraz te modernosti, ima jedinstveni položaj da aktualizira neku vrstu univerzalne subjektivnosti, razrješavajući napetosti u poetici između naivnog i sentimentalnog, ili prirodnog i umjetnog. Stoga se apsolutnu glazbu može predložiti kao jedinstveno sposobnu da se sjedini s prirodom, utjelovljujući ideal beskonačnog jedinstva te kao idealno sredstvo za pokretanje neke vrste kulturne modernosti.