

secretary Jean Savoye, but even more so in a breakdown of the statutes' authority, a situation that was several years in the making.

In a single meeting the very structure of the Société des Concerts, suggested the violinist Fontalirand, had unraveled. In truth it had been unraveling for some time, largely through the routine ignoring of the statutes that wartime had engendered, and resultant transfer of administrative and artistic power from the musicians to the conductor and general manager. Münch had no intention of recognizing a contractual obligation to the Société des Concerts. (p. 466)

The rift between Münch and the Société lasted several years, and it was only under a complete change of leadership that the organization stabilized.

While Holoman's work has excellent narrative continuity, it also exhibits a great ease of use for the scholar interested in a specific period, a specific conductor, or even a specific episode in the Société's history. The clear chronological organization helps this, as does the index, which is excellent, covering not only major personalities and concert works, but also some of the recurring issues that Holoman excels at highlighting: touring, unions, salaries, repertoire or recording, to name a few. The notes, too, are a model of documentation. The bibliography is something of a curiosity: the book contains only a select bibliography but points the reader to a web-based full bibliography. Holoman also includes some useful general information appendices outlining the chronology of the various governments of France during the Société's existence, the administrative leadership of the Société, and the tenure of its various conductors. Apart from a small smattering of typographical errors, mostly of the type that escapes the attention of a modern spell-checker, this book shows an impressive attention to detail. What is ultimately more impressive, however, is how coherent and well-told a tale these details serve, and the enthusiasm and love Holoman displays for his topic.

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Stephen C. Meyer, *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003). 253 pages. \$39.95

Historically, Germany has been the country most identified with Western classical music and, consequently, music has been the art form perceived to have the most potential to help define German nationalism. Stephen C. Meyer's book *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* explains the relationship between music, opera and the social construct of German national identity as it developed in the early nineteenth century. The interrelatedness of the search for both a German opera and nation is explored through the description and explanation of the music, plot and reception of Weber's *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, along with Winter's *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* and Méhul's *Joseph*. This study is reinforced by the use of writings by Weber's contemporaries on music criticism and German nationalism, which is Meyer's original contribution to this subject area.¹ The

¹ This book is probably based on the author's dissertation 'Performing Identity: The Search for a German Opera in Dresden, 1798–1832' (PhD dissertation, SUNY, Stony Brook, 1996), although this is not stated in the Acknowledgements.

author emphasizes it is the contradictory nature of the relationship between theory and practice, as 'manifested in Weber's *Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, that forms the subject of this book' (p. 4). In other words, it was Weber's innovations in *Euryanthe*, which were intended to make it a German national opera, that made the work unappealing to the public. Meyer's tome supplements other recent works on German nationalism and opera.²

The author divides his book into five chapters, each of which has subheadings that facilitate the reader's ability to follow along, enhancing the comprehensible and flowing writing style. Chapter 1, 'Introduction: Inventing German Opera', locates Herder's reference to German opera and ties it in with the operatic reform movements of the eighteenth century.³ Opera was seen as something that needed detersion from foreign influence, which would in turn improve the morals of society. In Germany, this idea ran parallel with the call for a German state, in that the purging of foreign elements (read French and Italian opera, as well as the German aristocracy – which supported foreign opera and lost the Napoleonic war) in German society would lead to its redemption and nationhood (German opera, as well as the improvement of political circumstances for the bourgeois). Simplistically then, a country/opera in German without foreign characteristics would be a German nation/opera. But despite German critiques of Italian opera and the fear of Napoleon, there was much cross-fertilization in the establishment of the idea of both a German nation and a German opera from Italy and France, which Meyer addresses through the exploration of operatic form, German opera and society, and German opera and national identity,⁴ his point being that '[t]he same tensions and polarities that inform the critical writings of this period – between vice and virtue, the inner and the outer, authenticity and falsehood, and the native and the foreign – also find their way into the musical and dramatic structures of the operas themselves' (p. 20). Meyer is sensitive to the fact that no single composer could embody the wishes of a nation, but he gives his reasons

² For example, Meyer's book could be described as the 'missing' chapter in Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds, *Music & German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), although the thesis of the latter emphasizes that it was not the composers who connected music and German nationalism but writers and other intellectuals. John Warrack's *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) explores the impact of French operatic style on the German, but provides much less detail on Weber's works and the Italian operatic influence.

³ Although Herder's use of the term *Deutsche Oper* (*sic*) appears in a work published only in 1877, Meyer uses an essay Herder published in 1801 in which he described how opera could embody both the body and spirit in a kind of unity of the arts that the poet found lacking in operas of his time.

⁴ It was just as difficult to find the borders of the German nation as it was to define German opera. The first subject deals with German critiques of both foreign and German opera, to reveal that a through-composed opera that included recitatives in German (as opposed to dialogue opera) was desired so that the libretto and music would be merged together as a dramatic whole. The second subject addresses the segregation of theatre audiences according to social class and operatic genre. In other words, aristocratic opera was foreign and performed in the centre of town, while bourgeois opera was German and performed in the suburbs. The third subject outlines the difficulties that lay in the way of finding a national identity, despite the discovery of a vocal outlet for this discussion in the increase in bourgeois literacy and in the creation of musical journals that provided the sounding board.

for selecting Weber over Spohr as the topic for his book: *Der Freischütz's* success made Weber an overnight sensation, he participated in the literary group *Liederkreis*, he desired to create a new audience via music criticism, and he headed a major German opera company.

Chapter 2, 'The Native and the Foreign: Models for the German Opera', presents two representative works that influenced Weber to create his operas. Meyer chooses Peter von Winter's *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* (1796) and Etienne Méhul's *Joseph* (1807) because they exemplify the German and *opéra comique* repertory in Dresden during Weber's directorship and allow for the discussion of issues related to performance language and drama. The opera classification system of A.B. Marx explains the oppositional terms used at the time (elevated/serious versus popular/comic), but also demonstrates that the desire to define the genre was itself indicative that opera was in a period of structural flux. For example, Italian operas were successfully translated into German and vice versa.⁵ Winter's use of musical style to determine personality was manipulated by Weber in his revisions for the opera's performance in Dresden to polarize characters into good and evil, something he adopted in both *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*.

Méhul's *Joseph* is crucial to Meyer's thesis as this opera was Weber's first production in Dresden, and best illustrates the concept of 'resistance and emulation' necessary to understanding the complexities and ironies of the cross-fertilization of foreign elements into both the German nation and its opera.⁶ Ernst Moritz Arndt's thesis of 'innocence, betrayal, and redemption' at the hands of France is used to mirror the tale of *Joseph* and its three musical styles.⁷ Although Meyer confesses that there is no direct connection between Arndt's and Méhul's works, and Weber produced *Joseph* as much for practical reasons as anything else, this discussion reveals the author's technique in putting operas into the context of German writings and thought of the time. The parallel with Peter Cornelius's fresco, *Joseph gibt sich seinen Brüdern zu erkennen*, is particularly effective in demonstrating the resonance this story had in the German artistic world.

Despite its strengths, this chapter reveals one of the weaknesses in the book overall, namely the use of musical examples. For example, 'The Brother's ensemble' has its beginning labelled as Ex. 2.3 and its middle portion as 2.4, but both examples have bar numbers starting at 1. Bar 97 is the only reference made to a specific bar number, but is not illustrated in either excerpt. The author writes about 'the contrast between Simeon's romance and the rest of the ensemble, a contrast that informs the entire opera' (p. 66), but provides a musical example for only the romance. There is a choral excerpt provided as Ex. 2.5, but it is from 'The Morning Prayer of the Hebrews'. It is not clear whether this excerpt is like 'The

⁵ For example, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* became *Don Juan* and Winter's *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* became *Il sacrificio interrotto* for its first performance in Dresden – Meyer describes this transformation. Weber's production of Winter's opera in 1819 was a German revision based on an Italian revision (1798) and a previous German one (c. 1811), without Winter's original comic characters. The resulting stratification of characters as to class 'elevated' the work into the realm of the 'serious' and emphasized dramatic flow.

⁶ For example, it was Napoleon's armies that purged the old Germany and served as a model of liberalism.

⁷ Arndt's nostalgia for the German Middle Ages is reflected in the simple and innocent music of the two romances. The music of the dramatic and emotional through-composed scenes represents betrayal. Redemption is symbolized by the ceremonial music of the Hebrews, the society (read chorus) to which Joseph is re-admitted through the confession of his brothers.

Brothers' ensemble' in musical style or not. It would make more sense to show the choral sections that contrast Simeon's romance.

In Chapter 3, '*Der Freischütz* and the Character of the Nation', there are no musical examples at all, nor an appendix with a plot synopsis as supplied for each of the other three operas. Surely the author could have either supplied this information or referred the reader to other sources, especially as the analysis of Agathe's and Max's arias is crucial to the author's case about their structural parallels in the Wolf's Glen scene. The introduction of the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich provides an effective parallel with the opera in describing the relationship between nature (landscape) and the characters' struggle (inscape), yet there is no reference to the picture provided in the text.⁸

The strengths of the chapter lie in the use of the term *Charakter* as described by H.C. Koch and I.F. Mosel to help define German national opera in the early nineteenth century, which is rounded off with a discussion of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's study on the definition of the 'work' itself. Meyer determines 'that the national character of *Freischütz* is both the topic and the result of a dialogue between "acts of composition" and "acts of interpretation and perception"' (p. 115). *Der Freischütz* was successful because of the consonance between these acts, whereas *Euryanthe* failed due to their dissonance.

The study of *Charakter* is widened to include grand romantic opera in Chapter 4, '*Euryanthe*: Reconfiguration and Transformation'. The similarities and differences to *Der Freischütz*, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of its music and plot, are analysed and considered along with gender issues.⁹ The irony of the failure of *Euryanthe* is that Weber's innovations to create a romantic German national opera (continuous music, more recitative, attention to declamation of the text, and unusual rhythms, metres, harmonies and timbres, as well as organic structure) were the very ones that made it complicated and unappealing for the average audience, although many recognized that the music was beautiful. Meyer concludes that Weber was still tied to too many operatic conventions. To create a really new German opera, one had to be much more radical, as Wagner was to be. The weakness of this chapter lies again in the extensive sections of musical description without examples – there are not enough of them to fully illustrate both the conventions and innovations of this work (three examples in 42 pages).

The aptly named final chapter, 'Epilogue: Institutions, Aesthetics, and Genre after Weber's Death', is exactly that: an epilogue rather than a denouement. Meyer describes the post-Weber Dresden, Reissiger's succession, as well as *Oberon*'s success, and entertains ideological concepts such as 'the mythology of conflict' between Morlacchi (director of the Italian opera troupe in Dresden) and Weber, the opera and Semper Oper as museum pieces, and the change in national ideology about German national opera. Once the Dresden Italian opera house was closed, there was no longer a foreign foe, and with the installation of the bourgeois as chief patrons the search for a German opera became the opposite – a nostalgic journey to find and establish a German operatic canon, which Wagner managed to do when he was municipal *Kapellmeister*.

⁸ I did not realize the painting was duplicated in the book until after I had read its description. It would make more sense to refer to the painting's reproduction in the text so the reader can see it first before reading about it.

⁹ These issues pertain to the idea that a natural, stable and virtuous woman (such as *Euryanthe*) was perceived as being the foundation of society.

What I value most in this book is how Meyer weaves the words of Weber's contemporaries into the description of how Winter's and Méhul's operas, as well as Dresden's opera production practices, influenced Weber's creation of German romantic operas. Meyer does succeed in showing the interconnectedness between opera and society, the genre's role in the creation of first a national identity and then a national canon, and, finally, of demonstrating the ironies of putting into practice the theory of German national opera. The book will appeal to anyone interested in German nationalism, although a thorough knowledge of the repertoire and access to scores is essential.

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