

Certainly Beethoven's Ninth has a strong presence in the consciousness of the writer of this book, as anyone can see. For that reason alone a more intensely personal account of the work by Sachs, who clearly knows a great deal about performance, would probably have been more convincing. Sachs' discussion of particulars in the four movements contains a number of handsome turns of phrase and moments of perception that carry personal conviction, and his emotional attachment to musical experience is manifest. Extended and developed, they might have brought a better outcome.

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William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). *xiv* + 334pp. \$99.00.

For over 20 years, William Weber has used the analysis of concert programmes as a vehicle for his study of musical taste in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His pioneering approach has since inspired various ongoing research projects involving systematic collection, including those by Christina Bashford, Rachel Cowgill and Simon McVeigh (*Concert Life in 19th-Century London*), Patrick Taïeb and Hervé Lacombe (*Répertoire des programmes de concerts en France*), and Ruppert Ridgewell (*Concert Programmes in the United Kingdom and Ireland*). William Weber's recent book, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, can be said to offer a synthesis of his preceding work, in both the approach and the methodology used, without, however, repeating its exact content given that he now aspires to broader conclusions. Based on the study of more than 100 concert programmes (from among the thousands he has consulted), Weber seeks to understand the 'great transformation of musical taste' between 1770 and 1900: 'This book', he explains, 'attempts to show specifically when, and in what kinds of concerts, a macroscopic division between supposedly "light" and "serious" music arose, related to the notions of "popular songs" and "classics"' (p. 4).

The concert programmes that punctuate the entire work are analyzed according to different criteria: the ratio of living to dead composers, the proportion of vocal to instrumental music, the genres performed, the number of musicians involved, the degree of 'seriousness' of the pieces – from where the concert's degree of 'miscellany' is derived. Weber thus identifies change and permanence over time, as well as practices specific to time and place, building up a global panorama of the public concert in Europe, from its historical beginnings, based on a great many samples.¹ However, the interest of his work does not lie in his sources alone. The concert programmes are just a point of departure, sometimes a point of arrival, for an in-depth study of numerous issues related to the period in question (sometimes linked to political history). Using specific methodology, Weber presents nothing less than a general history of musical taste and musical life where almost all genres rub shoulders in no apparent order, to an era when concert programmes became highly homogeneous, and, on the contrary, exclusive in terms of genre.

¹ A reading of William Weber's book may be complemented by consulting the case studies he suggests on the website <http://www.cph.rcm.ac.uk/Programmes1/Pages/Index.htm>.

The miscellany concert of the end of the eighteenth century was still a rare event, involving every type of musician and audience. Each listener satisfied their personal tastes, but also had to accommodate the tastes of others. William Weber explains that the concept of the miscellaneous concert, by nature multiple and open, gradually began to oppose the concept of self-contained and indivisible work (or integral artwork). The opening pages of his work provide the author with an opportunity to deal with the terminological issues: classical, institutionalization, canons, survival, latency, museum culture, iconic, hegemony, musical idealism and popular, to cite just the principal notions. The reader might regret that these terms are only infrequently reused with regard to the different repertoires and contexts encountered throughout the rest of the study: their periodic return would have strengthened the book's conceptual substance (except for the terms 'classical' and 'popular', which are developed to great profit). Perhaps a point on the definition of the term 'taste', which appears in the title of the work, would also have been useful.

Beginning between 1810 and 1820, it appears that a taste for high or 'serious' music developed, for example with chamber concerts, which naturally rule out vocal music and light music (it is indeed impossible for a programme to manage to combine a string quartet with an opera aria or a *quadrille*). Weber emphasizes the figure of the 'connoisseur', an educated but non-professional amateur, the only judge of music in the early nineteenth century. But an intelligentsia subsequently established its authority and among its front ranks emerged the music critic, dictating his views and defining an aesthetic hierarchy which was to be decisive: on this point like many others, we see the entire nineteenth-century musical system falling into place (we might cite, for example, the advent of silent listening, also discussed by Weber). From then on, the miscellany concert could neither include the growing number of musical genres, nor reflect the tastes of wider and more socially diverse audiences. In the 1830s, then, the specialization of tastes led to a gradual fragmentation of repertoires, and hence the appearance of different types of concerts, often linked to places, practices and specific social classes. Besides chamber music concerts, Weber distinguishes virtuoso concerts, symphony concerts and promenade concerts (about which we learn a great deal). Each is treated globally, but also according to national characteristics. The most studied cities are Paris, Leipzig, Vienna and London, and the author demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of the specificities of each country as well as the corresponding source materials. The middle of the century is, according to Weber, a watershed: the arrival of 'classical' music in programmes, that is to say music composed by dead composers – and this is one of the most important themes of the book.

In the second half of the century, programmes became more serious and homogenous: their level of taste rose, the number of performers and the genres performed became more coherent, the historical period covered by the works gradually lengthened. Canonical repertoires appear, a musical idealism is born and dictates its ideas to the musical world. The first chapter of Part II ('Musical Idealism and the Crisis of the Old Order') provides a passionate summary of this subject (it is also one of two chapters in the book, along with the first, not to focus on the analysis of concert programmes.) We should note, however, that the notion of 'crisis' is used by William Weber several times (it also appears in the title of Part II), but this notion does not seem very effective. Indeed, one of the book's strengths is its emphasis on a process of slow and progressive evolution, rather than suggesting predefined categories replacing each other in

successive 'crises'. In this respect, the analysis of the evolution of symphonic concerts is very clear (Part II/Chapter 4, 'Toward Classical Repertory'). We also note (along the same lines, in our opinion) that William Weber casts doubt on the notions of 'canon' and of 'canonization' that he has so often used in his previous works, sometimes slightly glossing over the issue, as he admits: 'Wariness about these terms has led me to look more widely for concepts that adapt the concept of canon productively to historical needs' (p. 30). Thus, he prefers to regularly replace them with the notions of 'ancient music' and 'classical music'.

In the final chapter, William Weber deals with 'Opera galas', 'Ballad concerts', London's music hall, and Paris's *café-concerts*: light and popular music are not forgotten. On the contrary, the place they occupy in the author's study forms another of the work's main themes, painting a particularly complete picture of the nineteenth century, allowing us to evaluate the degree of 'classical' music's hegemony all the better. If a slight criticism could be raised here, we would say that the book's formal structure, despite its logic and clarity, might have benefited from being a little more balanced: Part I ('Miscellany and Collegiality, 1750–1800') and Part III ('Founding a New Order, 1848–1878') each contain two chapters, while the central Part II ('Crisis and Experiment, 1800–1848') contains five. The overall structure could probably have been organized slightly differently. For instance, the chapter 'Musical Idealism and the Crisis of the Old Order' might have served well as the conclusion of Part I, enabling Part II to focus on the more 'serious' categories of concerts, and permitting the chapter 'Promenade Concerts: Rise of the "Pops"' to appear at the start of Part III, which is quite diverse in the repertoires discussed. Of course, this is only one possibility (and certainly not the only or best possible), which would better balance the book's structure and emphasize its lines of force. Finally, an epilogue deals with the state of the musical community at the beginning of the twentieth century. Weber notes a definitive opposition between 'classical' and 'modern' music. Such an opposition is probably less radical in reality than he suggests, but the demonstration allows us to successfully grasp his overall reasoning, and opens the way for reflection on the twentieth century's own relativism and postmodernism.

Weber's work, written in clear language, focuses on quite numerous and varied sources, as much on recent modern studies as well as the newspapers of the age, which are frequently quoted. Regarding the latter, perhaps because of their number, unfortunately they are not gathered and presented in the bibliography. This reservation, like the others mentioned earlier, is very minor and should not cast any doubt over the importance and the interest of Weber's study, which is particularly rich and stimulating. All readers will find material to document and to reconsider their approach to the history of music during the period 1770 to 1900.

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