

## 10 | Music in Early German Romantic Philosophy

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What was the Romantic view of music? And where did it come from? To ask those questions in the singular – as if there were just one, unchanging view of music, shared by all Romantic thinkers – is to betray the variety, multiplicity, and constant change at the heart of the Romantic movements that first arose in late eighteenth-century Europe. Yet it is also to recognise that, amidst this diversity, there was a remarkable unity. For it is indeed possible, if only at the broadest level, to isolate a distinctively Romantic view of music.

According to the dominant view of music throughout the eighteenth century – the conception held by most thinkers of the so-called Enlightenment – the purpose of music is to move the affects (or the emotions) of its listeners, in a somewhat mechanical fashion, for their pleasure, for their moral improvement, for the betterment of their physical or spiritual health, or for some combination of these. In the closing years of the eighteenth century, however, this view was rejected by the leading figures of the movement now known as early German Romanticism. In its place, they developed a wholly new – and characteristically Romantic – conception of music. According to this new conception, the purpose of music is to provide non-linguistic knowledge or insight, most usually into one's inner self or, especially, into the fundamental nature of reality. Though initially confined to a small circle of Romantic thinkers, this new view of music spread far and wide over the subsequent decades – to the extent that its consequences continue to reverberate through to the present day.

What could possibly have driven such a turnaround? Most commentators have assumed that a change so dramatic could only have been inspired by an equally dramatic change in the music of this time. A closer examination, however, shows that this new view of music arose not in response to changes in contemporary composition or performance, but rather in response to – indeed, as part of – changes in contemporary philosophy. More precisely, a revolution in philosophical epistemology – that branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge – led to a wholesale re-evaluation of what and how human subjects can know. As part of this

re-evaluation, thinkers of this period came to believe that music itself could offer a distinctive route to knowledge.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how early Romantic thinkers came to this belief. In what follows, I start by charting some key moments in the philosophical background of the 1780s and '90s. Building on this, I trace the emergence of the Romantic view of music in the works of the two philosophers most closely involved in its earliest formulations: Friedrich Schlegel and Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg (better known by his pen name Novalis). I conclude with brief examinations of the ways in which this view was elaborated by two now-canonical philosophers of this era, Friedrich Schelling and Arthur Schopenhauer, and with a reflection on its subsequent influence.

## The Philosophical Background

The starting point for Schlegel and Novalis – and indeed Schelling and Schopenhauer – was a radically new epistemology proposed by Immanuel Kant in his groundbreaking 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason* (also published in a significantly revised second edition in 1787).<sup>1</sup> The central insight of this work is that the subject – that is, the individual searching for knowledge – can know things only as they appear, rather than as they are in themselves. As such, Kant's philosophy is a form of idealism: the view that the world around us (or our knowledge thereof) is in some fundamental way dependent on the shape of human thought. The *Critique of Pure Reason* is now widely regarded as a masterpiece. Initially, however, it was a bit of a damp squib: long, counter-intuitive, and very badly written, its main effect on its first readers was to confuse them. Kant's fortunes changed only when his younger contemporary, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, took it upon himself to publish a series of public 'letters' that aimed to popularise the Kantian philosophy. These letters, published in the leading literary journal *Der teutsche Merkur* (*The German Mercury*) in 1786–7, met with remarkable success, and catapulted Kant's philosophy straight into the popular imagination.<sup>2</sup>

Reinhold, however, was not content to stop at popularisation. Rather, he took Kant's philosophy as the starting point for a new Idealist philosophical system that he called the *Elementarphilosophie* ('elementary philosophy' or 'philosophy of elements'), and that he set forward in a series of works from the years 1789–91.<sup>3</sup> And 'system' is very much the right word here: Reinhold believed that it should be possible to derive, systematically, the

whole of philosophy from a single, self-evident fact. Reinhold's work quickly brought him not just fame, but also a steady income, in the form of the first ever professorship in critical philosophy at the University of Jena, starting in 1787. Stemming in part from Reinhold's appointment, Jena became at this time a hotbed for the latest developments in German philosophy, and was to be the main home of the early German Romantic movement.

In 1794, however, Reinhold gave up this post for a better-paid position at the University of Kiel. His successor was to be the young Kant enthusiast, Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Fichte believed Kant to be correct in his overall orientation to knowledge, but placed even greater emphasis than had Kant on the activity of the thinking subject. And he agreed with Reinhold that philosophy should be wholly and systematically derivable from a single, self-evident proposition, but pursued this goal with even more fervour than had Reinhold. This approach, which can be called *epistemological foundationalism*, was set out by Fichte in a series of lectures and writings from the mid-1790s, known collectively as the *Wissenschaftslehre*, or the 'Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge'.<sup>4</sup>

## Friedrich Schlegel

In his early work from 1793–6, Schlegel accepts wholeheartedly Fichte's epistemological foundationalism. In particular, in his essay 'On the Study of Greek Poetry', written in 1794–5, Schlegel states his intention to expand Fichte's philosophical system to include the realm of aesthetics, something that Fichte himself had failed to address in any depth.<sup>5</sup> Around the summer of 1796, however, Schlegel came to reject Fichte's foundationalism. Reacting specifically against Fichte's foundationalist epistemology, Schlegel established a distinctively *anti-foundationalist* alternative. Specifically, against Fichte's belief that all philosophy can be derived from a single proposition, Schlegel argued that philosophy must start from multiple principles, each of which occupies a place in a system that is coherent, but that has no single foundation.

Against Fichte's belief that philosophy can reach irrefutable and complete conclusions, Schlegel sees philosophy as an infinite task.<sup>6</sup> The task is infinite in two senses: first, it is a quest to search for the infinity of total knowledge; second, as such, it is an endless quest that will never be complete. The human longs for the infinity of knowledge, but this longing will never be fulfilled. There will, rather, be a constant 'longing for the

infinite' (*Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen*), which will itself forever spur further investigation. Because the nature of the human quest for knowledge is now characterised as longing, that which provides the most insight into the human condition is now, for Schlegel, that which provides the most insight into longing.

Subsequently, Schlegel begins to develop a view of art as equal or superior to philosophy. Years before he came to his post-Fichtean characterisation of the human quest for knowledge as a longing for the infinite, Schlegel had characterised modern poetry (as opposed to ancient poetry) in terms of longing.<sup>7</sup> In his early work, Schlegel had seen this as a weakness of modern poetry, for its restless striving meant that it could not find a stable place in a systematic aesthetics. As Schlegel rejected Fichte's epistemological foundationalism, however, he came to see the longing inherent in modern poetry as a strength, for it allows insight into the epistemological longing that is at the core of the human condition.

With this move, Schlegel also started to refer to modern poetry not simply as modern, but as 'romantic' poetry (*romantische Poesie*). In a fragment from a collection first published in the journal *Athenaeum*, which ran from 1798 to 1800, Schlegel writes that romantic poetry is

in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize its ideal. It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas for the early Schlegel, the endless striving of modern poetry leaves it inferior to ancient poetry (whose striving is complete), for the anti-foundationalist Schlegel of 1796 onwards, the longing of romantic poetry joins it to the human quest for knowledge and, as such, is a mark of its superiority.

So what has this to do with music? The answer is simple: for the anti-foundationalist Schlegel, music is poetry. There has been much debate as to the exact nature of Schlegel's *romantische Poesie*, but for several generations of scholars, the presumption has been that it refers to some kind of literature. Drawing on the work of the historian of philosophy Frederick Beiser, however, I would suggest that *romantische Poesie* refers not only to literature, but to all the arts, and indeed to creative work in general.<sup>9</sup> The conclusion that music should be included within *romantische Poesie* is given confirmation by a passage from Schlegel's *Dialogue on Poetry* of 1799–1800, in which three characters discuss the nature of poetry:

AMALIA: If it goes on like this, before too long one thing after another will be transformed into poetry (*Poesie*). Is, then, everything poetry?

LOTHARIO: Every art and every discipline that functions through language, when exercised as an art for its own sake and when it achieves its highest summit, appears as poetry.

LUDOVICO: And every art or discipline which does not manifest its nature through language possesses an invisible spirit: and that is poetry.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, in his most famous discussion of *romantische Poesie* – the *Athenaeumsfragment* 116 – Schlegel writes that:

Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry . . . It embraces everything that is purely poetic, from the greatest systems of art, containing within themselves still further systems, to the sigh, the kiss that the poeticising child breathes forth in artless song.<sup>11</sup>

In this definition, *romantische Poesie* includes music both implicitly (by including all the arts) and explicitly (by making reference specifically to artless song). Music, however, is more than just one more art within the broad spectrum of romantic poetry, for Schlegel also conceives of music as a distinctive, independent art form. Just as was the case with his broad view of romantic poetry, his thought on music in particular derives from his epistemological anti-foundationalism.

It should be noted that Schlegel's ideas about music at this time are not wholly consistent. Such a situation does not indicate philosophical amateurism on Schlegel's part, but rather reflects Schlegel's general philosophical stance, which, after rejecting the possibility of a single, fixed system of knowledge, embraces contradiction and paradox. Yet Schlegel is decidedly not, as some postmodern interpretations would have it, an anti-systematic thinker. Rather, he aspired to complete systematicity, but also recognised that all human systems will be forever provisional and improvable. As he famously put it: 'it is equally fatal for the mind (*Geist*) to have a system and to have none. It must decide to combine both.' With that in mind, I set out in what follows a systematic overview of Schlegel's thought, yet retain within that overview the deliberate unevenness that characterises Schlegel's reflections on music, art, and philosophy at this time. More precisely, I identify three key themes running through Schlegel's view of music in the years around 1800.

First, Schlegel repeatedly characterises music as a form of longing. This characterisation is especially apparent in his novel *Lucinde* of 1800, in which music is described as becoming 'a dangerous and bottomless abyss of longing and melancholy'. Here, the bottomlessness of music's abyss

recalls the infinity of the human subject's longing for knowledge.<sup>12</sup> In what is perhaps the most important reference to longing in the novel, Schlegel uses auditory metaphors to describe his hero's awakening from a deep sleep: 'when with childlike timidity he strives to escape from the mystery of his existence and, sweetly curious, seeks the unknown he hears (*vernimmt*) everywhere only the resonance (*Nachhall*) of his own longing (*Sehnsucht*)'.<sup>13</sup> This passage is a literary paraphrase of Schlegel's philosophical position on knowledge. Just as the philosopher seeks final and certain knowledge of the world as it is in itself but finds only longing, the character at the centre of this passage seeks the unknown but finds only longing. Significantly, this longing is not seen, but heard.

Second, Schlegel believes music to be itself a philosophical art form. Manfred Frank has noted that, with the phrase 'longing for the infinite', Schlegel and his contemporaries believed themselves to have found a new translation of the Greek *filosofiva*, root of the modern word 'philosophy' (in German: *Philosophie*).<sup>14</sup> If music is an embodiment of longing, then music is also, implicitly, an embodiment of philosophy. Schlegel makes this connection explicit at several points, including in a fragment from the *Athenaeum*:

Many people find it strange and ridiculous when musicians talk about the ideas in their compositions; and it often happens that one perceives they have more ideas in their music than they do about it. But whoever has a feeling for the wonderful affinity of all the arts and sciences will at least not consider the matter from the dull viewpoint of a so-called naturalness that maintains music is supposed to be only the language of the emotions (*Sprache der Empfindung*). Rather, he will consider a certain tendency of pure instrumental music toward philosophy as something not impossible in itself. Doesn't pure instrumental music itself have to create a text? And aren't the themes in it developed, reaffirmed, varied, and contrasted in the same way as the subject of meditation in a philosophical succession of ideas?<sup>15</sup>

This passage explicitly rejects the idea that music should be only a 'language of the emotions', a clear reference to the older, Enlightenment view of music. Rather, the themes in music are 'developed, reaffirmed, varied, and contrasted in the same way as the subject of meditation in a philosophical succession of ideas', even while the passage leaves open the possibility that music might also remain effective at moving the emotions of listeners. The suggestion that there might be a correspondence between musical and philosophical ideas is developed in an entry from the notebooks that Schlegel kept at around this time, in which he associates musical variations

with the philosophical thesis, because they involve repetition of a theme, but describes counterpoint as the philosophical antithesis.<sup>16</sup> Schlegel does not provide an association between music and synthesis, the expected third term of the triad, for, he believes, there is no final synthesis, no completion, hence music's longing will never be fulfilled.<sup>17</sup> He does, however, think that there is a unity of being that lies beyond human consciousness but that can occasionally be intuited in finite syntheses that never align fully with each other. Schlegel refers to these syntheses as instances of wit, a term that is often presumed to refer only to a literary device, but which Schlegel explicitly associates with music, writing that 'All wit is musical.'<sup>18</sup>

Third, and most simply, whereas music had long been considered the lowest of the beautiful arts, Schlegel at this time comes to believe, on occasion at least, that music is the highest of the arts. This claim appears in a fascinating fragment from his notebooks:

... beauty ... is the essence of music, the highest among all the arts. It is the most general. Every art has musical principles and, insofar as it is perfected, is music alone. This applies even to philosophy and probably to poetry too, perhaps even to life. Music is love – it is something higher than art.<sup>19</sup>

This brings us back full circle to the observation that music was, for Schlegel, part of romantic poetry. Indeed, Schlegel's remark that poetry probably has musical principles makes clear that not only is music, for Schlegel, contained within romantic poetry, it is also sometimes deemed to be *the essence of* romantic poetry.

## Novalis

In his works from around the same time, Novalis puts forward a position on music that is certainly distinct from that of Schlegel but also remarkably similar. As with Schlegel, Novalis's philosophical development grew directly out of his engagement with, and rejection of, Fichte's epistemological foundationalism. In place of this epistemological foundationalism, Novalis developed – as did Schlegel – a notion of philosophy as an infinite task. He built on this notion, however, to develop a unique philosophical position of his own. Novalis was certainly receptive to the idealism of Kant, Reinhold, and Fichte, but sought to combine this idealism with a realism – a belief in the reality of the external world – that he associated with the earlier philosopher Baruch Spinoza. He called the resulting approach to philosophy *magical idealism*, the term 'magical' denoting here the traditional goal

of magic to gain control over nature, rather than any adherence to traditions of the occult in particular.<sup>20</sup>

Novalis explains how idealism and realism can be united in a programme for magical idealism given in his unfinished encyclopaedia, the *Allgemeine Brouillon* (1798–9):

if you are unable to transform thoughts into external things, then transform external things into thoughts. . . . Both operations are idealistic. Whosoever has both completely in his power, is a *Magical Idealist*. Shouldn't the perfection of each of these two operations be dependent on the other?<sup>21</sup>

The ability 'to transform thoughts into external things' is a reference to Fichtean idealism, which had suggested, on some readings at least, that the thinking self might somehow create the external world out of itself. Novalis, however, counters this with its polar opposite, the ability to 'transform external things into thoughts'. Novalis refers to this latter operation as 'idealistic', because it is based on the subject's active engagement with the external world. Its philosophical underpinning, however, is thoroughly realist, for it posits a natural world whose existence is not predicated on the subject.

The internal and the external, the ideal and the real, the Fichtean and the Spinozistic all have a distinct meeting point: the human body.<sup>22</sup> As such, the body is at the centre not only of Novalis' philosophy in general, but also of his new, Romantic view of music in particular. In what follows, I present a systematic overview of this new view of music while refusing – mirroring my strategy with that of Schlegel – to iron out the unevenness of Novalis's deliberately fragmentary writings. I identify again three key themes, this time dwelling on the first in particular: a close relationship between music and the body.

The idea that music engages closely with the human body was not new to Novalis. It was indeed foundational for the older, Enlightenment view of music, for theories of musical affect tended to draw specifically on mechanical understandings of the body.<sup>23</sup> One particular way in which they did so was with reference to music's medical potential: to the ways in which music's affective power could prove useful for the treatment of various ailments. Yet Novalis explicitly rejects this older view of music. With regard to art in general, Novalis writes that 'Affects . . . belong to a *lack of virtue (Untugend)*.'<sup>24</sup> With regard to music in particular, Novalis rejects another idea that had been closely tied up with the older view of music: the idea that music should imitate nature. According to Novalis, 'the musician takes the essence of his art from within himself – not even the slightest suspicion of imitation can apply to him'.<sup>25</sup>



Novalis posits instead a wholly new relationship between music and the body, a relationship that shows itself in a new conception of medicine itself. Drawing on his understanding of the body as meeting point for the internal and the external, Novalis complains that ‘common medicine is handiwork. It only has what is useful in mind.’ In contrast, ‘true therapeutics’ forms ‘a prescription for the preservation and restoration of [the] special relation and exchange between the [internal and external] stimuli or factors’.<sup>26</sup> Novalis also reconceives death in corresponding fashion, seeing it as ‘nothing but an interruption in the *exchange* between the inner and outer stimuli – between the soul and the world’.<sup>27</sup> By preserving the right balance of stimuli, Novalis believes, one could, in principle, extend life indefinitely. The physician who could do this would be an artist:

The artist of immortality practices higher medicine – infinitesimal medicine. – He practices medicine as a higher art – as a synthetic art. He constantly views both factors [internal and external stimuli] simultaneously, as one, and seeks to harmonize them – to unite them into one goal.<sup>28</sup>

At one point, the musician becomes for Novalis the epitome of such an artist. ‘Every illness’, writes Novalis, ‘is a musical problem – the cure is a *musical solution*. The more rapid, and yet the more complete, the solution – the greater the musical talent of the doctor.’<sup>29</sup> The general goal of ‘the artist of immortality’ – to harmonise inner and outer stimuli – is now the specific goal of the musician. The whole of life is thus figured as musical. Of the traditional elements of music – harmony, melody, and rhythm – harmony would seem to be most closely related to this perceived goal. Novalis, however, stresses not harmony, but rhythm. Seeing the effect of stimuli on the body in terms of ‘excitability’ (or ‘irritability’, *Reizbarkeit*), Novalis writes of an ‘all-encompassing constitution’, that is ‘capable of an infinite maximum and infinite minimum of irritability’.<sup>30</sup> This constitution is ‘*infinite rhythm*’ (*unendlicher Rhythmus*). The difficulties of pinning down such a proposition are clear in Novalis’s decision to cross out this entry, which occurs in a draft of his *Allgemeine Bouillon*, in a later revision of the same manuscript. Nonetheless, this link raises the question of the role of rhythm in Novalis’s philosophy.

The second theme that I wish to identify in Novalis’s view of music is, then, an emphasis on rhythm. A few decades before Novalis was writing his *Allgemeine Brouillon*, Enlightenment stalwart Johann Georg Sulzer had developed a new theory of rhythm. Earlier theories of rhythm had believed it to be formed from the combination of discrete units. Sulzer, by contrast, thought rhythm to arise from the breaking down of a continual flow.

This was achieved, thought Sulzer, by placing accents on certain notes.<sup>31</sup> Novalis draws on this understanding of rhythm to develop a broader philosophical position that opposes movement (*Bewegung*) and inertia (*Trägheit*). Inertia functions for Novalis as does the rhythmic accent for Sulzer, punctuating continual movement.<sup>32</sup> Novalis also comes to believe, however, that movement is the essence of all that is, hence all that is becomes rhythmical.

This leads straight into my third theme, a close connection – as we found also in Schlegel – between music and philosophy. The rhythmical outlook identified here certainly suggests such a close connection in itself. This outlook is, however, only one aspect of Novalis's magical idealism, which seeks to combine realism and idealism. In particular, it highlights the idealist side of this pair. In a telling passage from the *Allgemeine Brouillon*, Novalis associates music with (Fichtean) idealism, sculpture with (Spinozistic) realism. Novalis writes that:

Sculptors or atomists require a thrust [*Stoß*] (moving force [*Bewegende Kraft*].) – musicians a modifying body – a check [*Anstoß*]. Fichte belongs among the *musicians*.<sup>33</sup>

Here Novalis sees the essence of sculpture and atomism as being rest, whereas the essence of music and Fichtean idealism are movement. (Atomism in Novalis' time was a wide-ranging school of thought whose essential feature, for our purposes here, was that it was thoroughly realist.) Both music and sculpture, however, and both atomism and idealism, take shape only through their contact with their opposing force or body. Fichte had claimed that the thinking subject needs a 'check' against which to strive. Novalis balances this claim by suggesting that matter is equally in need of 'thrust'. Music, however, is associated with the Fichtean, idealist side of the equation, hence Novalis claims that 'Fichte has done nothing else than discover the rhythm of philosophy, and expressed it in a verbal acoustic manner.'<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere, in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1800), Novalis also establishes a clear connection between music and longing.<sup>35</sup>

Both Schlegel and Novalis, then, develop their new views of music out of an engagement with – and ultimately a rejection of – Fichte's philosophy. For Schlegel, the key point was the rejection of Fichte's epistemological foundationalism, to be replaced by an infinite longing for knowledge. Novalis, too, rejects Fichte's epistemological foundationalism, but his view of music rests equally on a new philosophical position – magical idealism – that sought to combine Fichtean idealism with a more

common-sensical realism. There can be no denying that Schlegel and Novalis differ in many ways in their conceptions of music, but they agree on two key points. The first is that they both reject the older, Enlightenment view of music, according to which the purpose of music is merely to move the affects of listeners. For sure, they do not deny music's emotional power, or the uses to which this power might be put – but such uses are no longer music's primary purpose. The second key point is that, in response to a shared awareness of the limits of philosophical discourse, they agree that music is able to provide some kind of knowledge or insight that mere philosophy alone cannot provide. This latter belief is the essence of the Romantic view of music.

## Schopenhauer and Schelling

Schlegel and Novalis were central to the early German Romantic movement. As such, they can be considered archetypically Romantic thinkers. Their new, Romantic view of music, however, soon spread to thinkers who were less easily straightforwardly 'Romantic' in orientation, yet whose development of the Romantic view of music was to prove of immense historical importance. Two of the most essential of these were Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling and Arthur Schopenhauer.

Schelling was an associate of Novalis and Schlegel in Jena and accepted some of their core philosophical ideas, yet retained the systematic impulse that had been so central to Reinhold and Fichte. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, Schelling put forward a view of art in general as the synthesis of the real and the ideal.<sup>36</sup> In his lectures on the *Philosophy of Art*, first delivered at the University of Jena in the academic year 1802–3, Schelling developed this position and applied it specifically to music. Here, Schelling makes systematic what was fragmentary in Schlegel and Novalis. '*The forms of music*', writes Schelling, '*are the forms of the eternal things . . . the forms of music are necessarily the forms of things in themselves.*'<sup>37</sup> The reference to 'things in themselves' is a reference to that which Kant believed to be unknowable: reality apart from its perception in human thought. Music, thinks Schelling, can tell us about the universe as it really is.

Schopenhauer was famously dismissive of his immediate philosophical forebears. Both Fichte and Schelling, for example, are 'windbags'.<sup>38</sup> Yet his view of music comes straight from the work of Novalis, Schlegel, and, especially, Schelling. In his seminal work *The World as Will and*

*Representation* (1818), Schopenhauer suggested that behind all appearing reality lay a will (*Wille*), a blind striving that remained ever unfulfilled. This is a creative suggestion, but it is also just one more attempt to solve a problem that had lingered since Kant: how to describe reality as it really is, apart from human perception. By naming this more fundamental reality 'will', Schopenhauer thought that he had penetrated the essence of the universe itself. And Schopenhauer believed that music could offer access to this will, in a way that words could not. Hence, he claims that music has a 'serious and profound significance, one that refers to the innermost essence of the world and our self'. Indeed, music is unique amongst the arts in offering 'a direct copy of the will itself'.<sup>39</sup>

As with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* was something of a sleeper hit: it was only with the publication of a volume of short essays, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, in 1851 that Schopenhauer was launched into the philosophical firmament, and interest in his earlier, lengthy tome truly ignited. Schopenhauer's place in musical history was cemented when Wagner first read *The World as Will and Representation* in 1854, a reading that was to have a famously dramatic effect on Wagner's musical and intellectual development.<sup>40</sup>

Schelling and Schopenhauer may not, strictly speaking, have been Romantics. But their views of music grew out of and in dialogue with those of their Romantic contemporaries, and had a mutual impact on more straightforwardly Romantic thinkers. Indeed, to make such blunt distinctions between inside and outside, Romantic and non-Romantic, is itself inimical to the Romantic predilections for multiplicity and universality. (Recall, for example, Schlegel's definition of Romantic poetry as 'forever in a state of becoming' yet a 'universal poetry'.) Whether or not they themselves were Romantics, these two thinkers played a pivotal role in developing and disseminating the Romantic view of music.

There are also other, more typically Romantic, thinkers who could have been given a place in this story. Central amongst them is Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, widely considered to be one of the founders of literary Romanticism, and a famously florid writer on musical affairs. For all the magniloquence of its presentation, however, Wackenroder's core conception of music is more reminiscent of the older, Enlightenment view of music – according to which its purpose is to move the affects of listeners – than it is to the Romantic view discussed in the present chapter. Hence Wackenroder's fictional composer Joseph Berglinger, for example, believes that music is 'created only to move the human heart'.<sup>41</sup>

Another thinker who could have merited attention is the theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, whose *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* of 1799 suggested that art had an 'inner affinity' with religion – and that it could penetrate to the depths of infinity.<sup>42</sup> Unlike that of Schlegel, Novalis, and Schelling, Schleiermacher's work in the years around 1800 had no specific focus on music in particular. In lectures delivered in 1819, 1825, and 1831–2, Schleiermacher discussed music in more detail, setting forward a position that combined affective and epistemological perspectives in unique and pleasantly perplexing ways. The texts of these lectures, however, were available only in limited form until the twentieth century, and so Schleiermacher's discussions of music were of limited historical influence in the later nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

## The Romantic View of Music

This, then, is the story of the rise of the Romantic view of music. The view first arose in the aphoristic cogitations of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis in the second half of the 1790s. It was systematised rigorously in Schelling's lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* in 1802–3 and presented in novel form in Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* of 1818. Along the way, Wackenroder presented the older, Enlightenment view of music in Romantic clothing; and in the wake of Schopenhauer, Schleiermacher offered a view of music that was both quintessentially Romantic and unreservedly bound up in a rethinking of music's affective power.

This new, Romantic view of music spread like wildfire through nineteenth-century Europe. It was quickly developed by other philosophers, notably G. W. F. Hegel, and formed a foundational point of engagement for numerous and quite diverse later nineteenth-century thinkers, notably Richard Wagner, Franz Brendel, Eduard Hanslick, and the young Friedrich Nietzsche. This was the case even when these thinkers might have sought to modify this view, or even to reject it altogether. This Romantic view of music infiltrated music criticism with equal speed, underpinning – amongst much else – E. T. A. Hoffmann's famous 1810 review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Further, since many of the figures involved in its creation were also novelists, poets, or essayists – indeed, several were all of these – it swiftly fermented itself in the popular literary imagination of the day. It did not, of course, remain uniform – there were as many variations on this view of music as there were discussions of it – yet at its core remained a rejection (or, at least,

a weakening) of the older, more mechanical Enlightenment view of music and the embrace of the belief that music could, and should, offer some kind of knowledge or insight, especially into the fundamental nature of reality.<sup>44</sup>

Even more striking is that this Romantic view of music remains with us to the present day. For sure, few concert audiences are likely to think of music precisely as embodying the philosophical striving that results from epistemological anti-foundationalism. But performers, composers, and audiences across genres retain the belief that music can offer some kind of insight into life's mysteries – insight that simply cannot be put into words. This is a belief that motivates, if not exclusively, so much of contemporary musical life: from the silent listening still customary at classical concerts, to the rapturous critical praise of leading popular musicians, to the practice of music therapy. Perhaps most pertinently of all, this belief helps to underpin the educational and scholarly desire better to understand music, a desire embodied in the time taken by students and scholars to read essays such as this.

## Notes

\* For extremely helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter, my thanks go to Mark Evan Bonds, Alexander Wilfing, Elizabeth Swann, and Benedict Taylor. I am grateful also to Anika Babel for invaluable practical assistance in preparing the final version.

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
2. Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, trans. James Hebbeler, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
3. For a remarkably clear overview of the *Elementarphilosophie* in the context of Reinhold's own philosophical development, see Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 226–65.
4. The key text of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* in this period is his 1794 *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, a work even more badly written than Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. *Wissenschaftslehre* is a notoriously untranslatable term – to the extent that the best English translations simply leave it in the original German. 'Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge' is the closest English rendering, but 'scientific knowledge' must be taken here in the broadest possible sense, to encompass all branches of (rigorous) learning and scholarship. For an authoritative and remarkably lucid discussion of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, see Daniel Breazeale, *Thinking Through the Wissenschaftslehre: Themes from Fichte's Early Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

5. Except for references to the *Literarische Notizen*, all references to Schlegel's works are to Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler (Munich: Schönigh, 1958–), and are given in the form division: volume, page. I also note the name of the work or fragment collection and, where applicable, the fragment number as given in the collected edition. References to the *Literarische Notizen* are to *Friedrich Schlegel, Literarische Notizen 1797–1801*, ed. Hans Eichner (Frankfurt: Ullstein Materialien, 1980), and are given in the form fragment number (page). Here, the citation is from I: 1, 357–8 / *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, ed. and trans. Stuart Barnett (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 90.
6. The key English-language works on the development of Schlegel's and Novalis' philosophy, in the context of philosophical Romanticism more generally, are Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003); Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche, Music*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).
7. In *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, for example, Schlegel writes that modern poetry contains a 'restless, insatiable striving after something new, piquant, and striking despite which, however, longing persists unfulfilled'. I: 1, 228 / *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, 24, translation modified.
8. *Athenaeumsfragmente* 116, I: 2, 182 / *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 175.
9. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 6–22, especially 9–11. It is worth noting in this context that the German word *Poesie* is something of a false friend for English speakers: though 'poetry' is its closest English translation, it naturally indicates a broader sense of 'poetry' than does its English equivalent.
10. I: 2, 304 / *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 76.
11. *Athenaeumsfragmente* 116, I: 2, 182 / *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 175.
12. I: 5, 46 / *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 89.
13. *Ibid.*, 60 / 105, translation modified.
14. On this, see Frank, *Philosophical Foundations*, 2.
15. *Athenaeumsfragmente* 444, 1:2, 254 / *Lucinde and the Fragments*, 239, translation modified.
16. Schlegel, *Literarische Notizen*, 859 (101).
17. The terms thesis, antithesis, and synthesis taken together as a philosophical procedure are commonly associated with the work of Hegel, but Hegel himself did not use them. Rather, it was Fichte who, building on Kant, first used them

- in their now-customary sense. See Gustav E. Mueller, ‘The Hegel Legend of “Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis”’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19 (1958), 413.
18. I: 18, 265.
  19. Schlegel, *Literarische Notizen* 1417 (151).
  20. Beiser, *German Idealism*, 425.
  21. All references to Novalis’s works are to Friedrich von Hardenberg [Novalis], *Novalis Schriften*, 6 vols., ed. Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel, Heinz Ritter, Gerhard Schulz, and Hans-Joachim Mähl (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960–2006). As with Schlegel, I also note the name of the work or fragment collection and, where applicable, the fragment number, as well as the English translation where available. The citation here is from *Allgemeine Brouillon* 338, 3: 301 / *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, ed. and trans. David W. Wood (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), 51.
  22. See, e.g., *Allgemeine Brouillon* 399, 3: 314 / *Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 61.
  23. On this, see Tomás McAuley, ‘The Enlightenment’, in Tomás McAuley, Nanette Nielsen, and Jerrold Levinson, with Ariana Phillips-Hutton (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Western Music and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 181–206.
  24. 2: 393 / Novalis, ‘Kant Studies’, trans. David Wood, *The Philosophical Forum*, 32 (2001), 338.
  25. *Logologische Fragmente* 226, 3: 572 / Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (New York: SUNY Press, 1997), 71.
  26. *Allgemeine Brouillon* 399, 3: 315 / *Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 62.
  27. *Ibid.*, 3: 314 / 61.
  28. *Ibid.*, 3: 315 / 62.
  29. *Allgemeine Brouillon* 386, 3: 310 / *Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 58.
  30. *Ibid.* 3: 310 / 58.
  31. The theory is first presented in Sulzer’s *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (Leipzig, 1771, 1774). On this theory and its later influence in Schelling, see Tomás McAuley, ‘Rhythmic Accent and the Absolute: Sulzer, Schelling and the *Akzenttheorie*’, *Eighteenth Century Music*, 10/2 (2013), 277–86.
  32. Novalis writes: ‘Sound seems to be nothing but a broken movement, in the sense that colour is broken light. . . . Sound is connected with movement as if of itself.’ *Fragmente und Studien 1799–1800* 43, 3: 561 / *Philosophical Writings*, 154.
  33. *Allgemeine Brouillon* 634, 3: 382 / *Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 115, translation modified.
  34. *Allgemeine Brouillon* 382, 3: 310 / *Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 57.
  35. 3: 214 / Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen*, trans. Palmer Hilty (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1964), 36.
  36. F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978).
  37. F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, ed. and trans. Douglas Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 115–16.



38. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14.
39. *Ibid.*, 290.
40. For a more detailed treatment, within a broader Wagnerian context, see Julian Young, *The Philosophies of Richard Wagner* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).
41. See Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's Confessions and Fantasies*, trans. Mary Hurst Schubert (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971). See also Holly Watkins's essay on 'Music and Romantic Interiority' in the present volume (Chapter 12).
42. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), quotation from 69.
43. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Ästhetik (1819/25). Über den Begriff der Kunst (1831/32)*, ed. Thomas Lehnerer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984). On the reception history of Schleiermacher's thought on music, see Gunter Scholtz, 'Schleiermacher', in Stefan Lorenz Sorgner and Oliver Fürbeth (eds.), *Music in German Philosophy: An Introduction*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 47–68, at 64–5.
44. Many of the developments in this view of music are discussed elsewhere in this volume. See also Mark Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

## Further Reading

- Beiser, Frederick. *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
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- Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
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- Pritchard, Matthew. 'Music in Balance: The Aesthetics of Music after Kant, 1790–1810', *Journal of Musicology*, 36/1 (2019), 39–67.
- Sorgner, Stefan Lorenz, and Fürbeth, Oliver (eds.). *Music in German Philosophy: An Introduction*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).