

History As Identity Politics: The Case of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Germany *

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Most historians—and musicologists—will probably agree that the concepts of ‘history’ in general, and of ‘music history’ in particular, as we understand them today, are the result of seismic epistemological shifts that took place mostly during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Concerning ‘music history,’ one might further agree that the dominant, Austro-Germanic master narrative of ‘music history’ that fills our introductory music text books only reached a point of crystallization during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, suggesting a somewhat more fluid situation in preceding decades.¹ ‘History’ and other late eighteenth and nineteenth-century constructions have undergone manifold and substantial critiques since the 1960s and 1970s; most significantly for the following discussion, post-structuralism pointed to the nexus between discourse and power.² If we apply this premise to the discourse of ‘music history,’ the question of the relations between the origins of music history in nineteenth-century Germany, and the contingent political interests, needs to be reconsidered.

Musicology, probably due to its intimate connection with these very issues, has been slow in tackling the question, notwithstanding the fact that a considerable body of research on ‘historicism’ and ‘canon formation’ is currently available. If interest in ‘historicism’ was first voiced by German scholars around Walter Wiora, most prominently among them, Carl

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¹ For a detailed exploration supporting this view, see my forthcoming monograph on *The ‘Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung’ (Leipzig, 1863–1882)*.

² See, as the starting point for much of what follows, Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). For an application of these ideas to, for example, the area of justice, see Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). For a fundamental critique of historiographical writing, with special emphasis on the nineteenth century, see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973); see also Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987).

Dahlhaus, more recently, relations between power and discourse have been a major area of concern for Anglo-Saxon and North American musicologists.³ Despite all this activity, it remains a fact that almost all research in the area tends to focus on the early nineteenth century (up to 1848/9), or the late decades of the nineteenth century (from ca. 1880 onward); perhaps subconsciously emulating the structure of the symphonic canon, the 'barren' years (to paraphrase Dahlhaus's now sufficiently challenged claim)⁴ from around 1850 to 1880 continue to attract relatively little attention. They seem to me, however, to sit at a crucial juncture in the evolution of the modern notion of 'music history.' In the following, I propose to trace a few previously unacknowledged links between writing music history, ideology, and politics in the German-speaking lands during the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s. I hope to show that the decisive move from a 'Romantic' pre-1848 view of music history toward the prevailing 'modernist' one was first made in the early 1850s by a small and select elite, and I aim to elucidate a few of the political and ideological premises that underlie this seemingly autonomous discursive shift in the approach to history at large, and the history of music in particular.

Defining Historicism

Before launching into the details of such an inquiry, it may be useful to pause for a moment to reflect on the changing definitions and resulting meanings of the terms 'history' and 'historicism,' and their respective implications, as far as they apply to the nineteenth century and, in particular, the German-speaking parts of Central Europe.⁵ Unlike in previous centuries, 'history,' since the Enlightenment, increasingly came to be conceived as a full and verifiable reconstruction of the past, to be achieved (as much as possible) by the tools of critical scholarship, as opposed to a narrative, conditioned by the selective and whimsical qualities of individual and collective memory. The result of this epistemological shift was not only a transformed, 'historicist' awareness of the world, now seen as the changeable product of historical processes as borne out by the documentary record, but also a relativised notion of the future, usually framed within the two opposing metanarratives of progress or decay. Such a notion of history begets a revised sense of awareness, whose consequences for music history I intend to spell out below, as well as the politically subversive quality of the new historicism when used as a revisionist tool by a politicised middle class.

³ See, for example., Walter Salmen, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Musikanschauung im 19. Jahrhundert*, Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts 1 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1965); Heinz Becker, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Musikkritik*, Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts 5 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1965); Carl Dahlhaus, 'Historismus und Tradition,' *Zum 70. Geburtstag von Joseph Müller-Blattau*, Saarbrücker Studien zur Musikwissenschaft 1, ed. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1966) 46–58; Walter Wiora, ed., *Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über die Musik*, Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts 14 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1969); Carl Dahlhaus, 'Traditionszerfall im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,' *Studien zur Tradition in der Musik: Kurt von Fischer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht and Max Lütolf (Munich: Katzschichler, 1973) 177–90; Carl Dahlhaus, *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte*, Musik-Taschen-Bücher Theoretica 15 (Cologne: H. Gerig, 1977). For examples of the discussion among Anglo-Saxon and North American musicologists, see, for example, Joseph Kerman, 'A Few Canonic Variations,' *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983): 107–26; Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, eds, *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992); Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1992), Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), to name but a few.

⁴ See Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft 6 (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlags-Gesellschaft Athenaion, 1980) 220.

⁵ For the following, see Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983) 498–500.

Competing Views of (Music) History, up to ca. 1850

Turning now to the specific development of music historiography since the eighteenth century, three major epistemological stages may be distinguished.⁶ The first one may be called the 'encyclopedic' one: a brainchild of the Enlightenment, it perceives history as a sequence of events from Antiquity to the present which the historiographer attempts to record with the greatest possible accuracy and completeness. In order to do so, techniques of antiquarian scholarship are used (that is, source materials from the past are consulted and interpreted according to the prevailing epistemological system). The resulting data are then systematised and classified in a linear, progressive scheme. The present day and its music are seen as the best result yet of a continuous evolution towards ever greater perfection.

A prime example of this approach is Charles Burney's *General History of Music* (London, 1776-1789), which ends with the conclusion that no music really worth hearing was produced until the present day, that is, the late 1700s, and 'that mankind was delighted with bad music before good was heard.' A later Continental representative of this technique of knowledge production is Raphael Georg Kiesewetter's *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik* (Leipzig, 1834), which in turn perceived the period from 1800 to the 1830s—dubbed by Kiesewetter the 'epoch of Beethoven and Rossini (1800-1832)'—as the crowning achievement of music history.⁷

A second stage of historical consciousness I refer to as the 'Romantic view.' Unlike encyclopedic accounts, which perceived music of the past as either 'barbarous relics,' or a precursor at best to the contemporaneous relative perfection of the art, the 'Romantic' view, in a fundamental reversal, elevated older music to the embodiment of artistic perfection, consequently re-interpreting the music of the present as a product of at least relative decay. As William Weber has shown, however, the nineteenth-century appreciation of older repertoires has precursors in eighteenth-century France and England (and, to a lesser degree, Prussia). The 'historicist' thinking that first emerged in the early 1800s in Germany differs from the eighteenth-century concept of 'ancient musick' insofar as it revisits the past not in the context of an affirmative ritual, but with a sense of loss, holding it up as a mirror to the tarnished present. The 'Romantic view' may thus be understood as a reaction to the upheavals of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era; for these very reasons, it quickly aligned itself in Germany with a sister development: the new, exclusionary nationalism that had also been engendered in the German states by the Wars of Liberation.⁸

⁶ See Bernhard Meier, 'Zur Musikhistoriographie des 19. Jahrhunderts,' *Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über die Musik*, Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts 14, ed. Walter Wiora (Regensburg: Bosse, 1969) 169–207.

⁷ '... in the present epoch, there have been produced many excellent works of every kind, the authors of which may worthily take their rank beside the greatest masters of past times; and that music has made rapid progress, particularly in bringing to perfection the appliances of the art, and the knowledge of their use, whereby much advantage may be anticipated for the opera, as well as for instrumental music, in the future.' R.G. Kiesewetter, *History of the Modern Music of Western Europe*, trans. Robert Müller (London: T.C. Newby, 1848; reprinted New York: Da Capo Press, 1973) 248. Charles Burney, *General History of Music*, vol. 4, ed. Frank Mercer (New York: Dover, 1935) 1025.

⁸ See Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1968). See in particular Chapter II: 'The Origins of German Historicism: The Transformation of German Historical Thought from Herder's Cosmopolitan Culture-oriented Nationalisms to the State-centered Exclusive Nationalism of the Wars of Liberation,' 29–43.

Representatives of the 'Romantic view' include Johann Nikolaus Forkel's Bach biography (Leipzig, 1802), E.T.A. Hoffmann's famous article on church music ('Alte und neue Kirchenmusik'), published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1814, and Carl von Winterfeld's books on Palestrina (1832) and Gabrieli (1834).⁹ Starting from different, but not entirely dissimilar premises, the work of Alexandre Choron in Restoration France and the beginnings of the chant revival at Solesmes under the July Monarchy might also be subsumed under the same category.¹⁰ More importantly, however, the phenomenon was by no means exclusive to music. A striking case in point is offered by the evolution of German-language studies ('Germanistik'), where the sudden availability of sources, often spoils from secularised ecclesiastic libraries, in combination with the reforms of the Prussian University system brought about in reaction to the defeat by Napoleon, fostered research in and the production of the first philologically sound editions of medieval German-language texts such as the *Nibelungenlied*. This was done, among other objectives, in a deliberate effort to strengthen the sense of German nationhood in a politically fragmented country through the study of cultural history.¹¹

From around 1850, a third way of conceiving music history began to emerge. I call it 'the philological view.' In a truly paradigm-shifting way, it consists of the application of the same philological techniques first developed in Classical and Patristic studies and transferred earlier, for example, to ancient German literature, to the production of musical 'texts.' I quote from the 'Aufforderung zur Stiftung einer Bach-Gesellschaft,' the signal document circulated by Breitkopf & Härtel to a select group of 'worshippers of genuine, unquestionably German music [*Verehrer wahrer, ächter deutscher Tonkunst*]' around the one hundredth anniversary of Bach's death (28 July 1850), that subsequently led to the publication of the Bach Complete Works edition: 'an edition satisfying the needs of the sciences and the arts by means of completeness and critical treatment [*eine durch Vollständigkeit und kritische Behandlung den Anforderungen der Wissenschaft und Kunst genügende Ausgabe*] is now being envisioned. For the first time in music, editorial principles are specified in detail in the announcement, including the use of the autograph [*Urschrift*], the first edition [*der vom Componisten selbst veranstaltete Druck*] or, failing that, the best possible tools available [*die besten vorhandenen Hilfsmittel*]. Through this procedure one aims to 'construct the genuine shape of the compositions as attested by a critically reviewed transmission process [*um die durch die kritisch gesichtete Ueberlieferung beglaubigte ächte Gestalt der Compositionen herzustellen*].' Finally, 'any arbitrary judgement in relation to alterations, omissions and additions is excluded [*jede Willkür in Aenderungen, Weglassungen und Zusätzen ist ausgeschlossen*].'¹²

⁹ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Über Johann Sebastian Bach's Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister und Kühnel, 1802); Carl von Winterfeld, *Johannes Pierluigi von Palestrina. Seine Werke und deren Bedeutung für die Geschichte der Tonkunst* (Breslau: G.P. Aderholz, 1832); von Winterfeld, *Johannes Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter* (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1834). Forkel's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1788 and 1801) belongs to the 'encyclopedic type.'

¹⁰ On Solesmes, see Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments: The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes*, California Studies in 19th Century Music 10 (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).

¹¹ Klaus Weimar, *Geschichte der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: W. Fink, 1989) 210–53. On the deliberate structuring of the Prussian (and later, German) university system by Wilhelm von Humboldt in antithesis to the French system of the *Grandes Écoles*, see Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 192–93.

¹² Quoted according to the reprint of this text in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of 26 July 1850, 37–38 (original orthography retained).

The announcement's text uses a great deal of heavily charged words and therefore would deserve a close reading of its own (which due to the scope of this essay cannot be given here). The word *Willkür*, for instance, was a favorite term denoting the abuse of political power by the pre-Revolutionary and the restored princely regimes in the German political discourse of the time. From the musical point of view, to propose the complete (re-)construction of a dead composer's works using strict techniques of textual criticism, however, was equally revolutionary. Moreover, this remarkable project was, once again, clearly tied to the political objective of building a German sense of nationhood by means of strengthening cultural coherence: 'the return of this day [the anniversary of Bach's death] sends the admonishment to all worshippers of true, genuine German music to erect a monument for the great man [*die Wiederkehr dieses Tages nach hundert Jahren richtet an alle Verehrer wahrer, ächter deutscher Tonkunst die Mahnung, dem großen Manne ein Denkmal zu setzen*].' The foreword to the first volume (1851) even calls the reconstitution of Bach's works a 'duty of honour [*Ehrenschild*]' of the German people.

Shortly thereafter, Otto Jahn's *Mozart* (Leipzig, 1856–59) offered the first biographical study of a musician that deliberately attempted to reconstruct a life in the Rankean sense ('how things really were [*es eigentlich gewesen*']'), again using philological methods to differentiate between 'fact' and 'hearsay.'¹³ Jahn's book, too, was received in the musical press as a momentous contribution toward building a German nation/state. The reviewer of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, for example, despite several points of criticism, showed no hesitation to claim that 'Jahn's work does honour to the German nation ... may the whole nation thank him for it [*Jahn's Werk gereicht ... der deutschen Nation zur Ehre ... Dafür werde ihm der Dank unserer ganzen Nation*].'¹⁴ To give a third example, Gustav Nottebohm's studies of Beethoven's sketches, first published in Leipzig in 1865, undertook a painstaking investigation of materials previously considered mere detritus, thereby not only converting waste into valuable historical evidence but also enabling an entirely new way of aestheticizing music that was emphatically divested from the act of performance. Other projects conceived and carried out along these lines include, for example, the Beethoven *Gesamtausgabe* (Leipzig, 1862–65), Ludwig von Köchel's thematic catalogue of Mozart's works (Leipzig, 1862), and the complete edition of Handel started by Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Siegfried Dehn, and the young Friedrich Chrysander (Leipzig, 1858–94).

Authors and Projects

Who were the people behind these projects? Otto Jahn, for example, was the son of a lawyer; his mother was the daughter of a law professor—both textbook representatives of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the university-educated upper German bourgeoisie. Between 1831 and 1839, Jahn studied Classical Philology at Kiel, Leipzig, Berlin, and Copenhagen, then taught as Professor of Classics at the Universities of Greifswald (1842) and, from 1847, at Leipzig. Jahn was a long-time friend of the historian Theodor Mommsen, one of the leading luminaries

¹³ Gernot Gruber, 'Otto Jahns Bedeutung für die Mozart-Forschung,' in William M. Calder III, Hubert Cancik and Bernhard Kytzler, *Otto Jahn (1813-1868): Ein Geisteswissenschaftler zwischen Klassizismus und Historismus* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991) 144–50.

¹⁴ P. L. [presumably P. Lohmann], 'Bücher, Zeitschriften. Otto Jahn, W. A. Mozart. Vierter Theil. Mit dem Bildniß des vierzehnjährigen Mozart, sieben Notenbeilagen und einem Namen- und Sach-Register. Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel ...,' *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 53.3 (13 July 1860): 21.

of the field in his time, and, together with the representatives of the so-called 'Prussian School' of Historicism (for example Heinrich von Sybel and Heinrich von Treitschke), one of the principal exponents of a new kind of historicist writing that subtly managed to link keenly researched historical narratives with implicit support for political objectives pertinent to the present. Not surprisingly, then, in 1851, Jahn was dismissed from the University, together with Mommsen, for seditious activities. It was in the wake of his dismissal that Jahn, who had maintained a lifelong private interest in music, began seriously to research the lives of Beethoven and Mozart, leading to his *Mozart* biography. In 1855, he resumed teaching at the University of Bonn in his home discipline of Classical Studies. He died at Göttingen in 1868.¹⁵

Georg Gottfried Gervinus, born in 1805 in Darmstadt, was the son of an innkeeper and leather merchant, thus enjoying a less *bildungsbürgerlich* upbringing. After a short and frustrating career as a cloth merchant, he studied aesthetics, philology and philosophy at Gießen. A move to Heidelberg University stimulated Gervinus's interest in history. In 1835, he published the first volume of his *Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen*, one of the earliest histories of German literature. This book earned him a professorship at Heidelberg and later at Göttingen, where he came in close contact with the Grimm brothers. In 1837, a political crisis precipitated by the King of Hanover's arbitrary rescinding of the Constitution prompted Gervinus and six of his colleagues, including the Grimms ('Göttinger Sieben'), to write a protest manifesto, leading to their immediate dismissal. Gervinus returned to Heidelberg, and became more and more involved in the political activities of the *Vormärz*. In 1847, he co-founded one of the leading liberal journals of the time, the *Deutsche Zeitung*. 1848 saw him as a Deputy in the Paulskirche Parliament. The 'Einleitung', published separately in 1853, of his *Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1855-56) led to another trial, this time for high treason, which definitively ended Gervinus's career as a University professor. Like Jahn, it was during his period of dismissal that Gervinus, who died in 1871, became seriously involved with Handel, and with music history.¹⁶

Rudolf von Köchel was a lawyer and served as Imperial Councillor and judge in Vienna and Salzburg until 1852, when he, too, resigned from office due to his political convictions. Siegfried Dehn had studied Law in Leipzig and worked in the Swedish legation at Berlin prior to his appointment as custos of the Music Section at the Royal Library in Berlin. The largely self-taught Friedrich Chrysander and Gustav Nottebohm in turn are early examples of independent scholar-entrepreneurs (Chrysander, for example, supported himself and the Handel edition by planting fruit and vegetables for the Hamburg market.)¹⁷ Among the signatories of the subscription call for a Bach *Gesamtausgabe* we find further political and

¹⁵ On various aspects of Otto Jahn's biography, see, recently, Calder et al., eds, *Otto Jahn (1813–1868)*; a quick biographical sketch ('Lebensdaten Otto Jahn') is given there by Gerson Schade on pages 287–88. Concerning the enmeshment of political objectives in historicist discourse, see Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866*, 518–19.

¹⁶ On Georg Gottfried Gervinus, see, recently, Wolfgang Ebling, *Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805–1871) und die Musik*, Beiträge zur Musikforschung 15 (Munich: Katzschichler, 1985). The *Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen* consisted of five volumes altogether, and was published in Leipzig between 1835 and 1842. It received five printings; from the fourth printing (1853) on, the title was changed to *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*.

¹⁷ See, most recently, Richard Schaal, 'Chrysander, (Karl Franz) Friedrich,' in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd rev. ed., Personenteil 4 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000) 1064.

intellectual notables such as the Prussian representative in London, Ritter von Bunsen, Eduard Krüger, head of a teacher's seminar in Emden and later Director of University Music at Göttingen, Adolph Bernhard Marx, another lawyer who had turned his interest in music into his profession, and the lawyer and judge [*'Geheimer Obertribunalrat'*] Carl von Winterfeld, in addition to musicians of the calibre of the violinist Ferdinand David, the Weimar *Hofkapellmeister* Franz Liszt, or the Leipzig *Thomaskantor*, Moritz Hauptmann.

The Role of Liberalism in German Politics, and the Writing of History in Germany

The leading intellectuals, then, behind the drive towards historicising music were lawyers and University professors, rather than musicians; as such, they were typical representatives of German Liberalism. Between 1815 and 1848, Liberalism had been at the forefront of bourgeois political emancipation; Liberals were the largest individual group in the Paulskirche Parliament of 1848. The failure of the Frankfurt Parliament, however, and the ensuing period of princely 'Reaction' caused a deep crisis for German Liberals, which was often exacerbated by severe career problems resulting from punishment for earlier political activities. At the same time, the increasing industrialisation of Germany gave rise to another potential threat, as a new underclass susceptible to Socialist—or in the German parlance of the time, 'Democratic'—ideas emerged. As a result, the Saint-Simonian Liszt as well as the 'Democrat' Richard Wagner were viewed with considerable suspicion by Liberals. In turn, Wagner's 'Judentum in der Musik' (1850) can be read as an expression of the composer's revulsion with Liberalism which, incidentally, also strongly championed the cause of Jewish emancipation.

One reaction of Liberals to the debacle was to devote themselves even more zealously to the kind of scholarship that, since early in the 19th century, had successfully linked historicism with the creation of a German national identity and, as a result, a nation state. As music, and in particular instrumental music, lieder, and large choral works were deeply embedded in the self-image and the social practices of the German upper bourgeoisie, it was a natural consequence of these circumstances for at least some Liberals to apply their skills to the study of historical music. To propel the field forward by applying philological methods to music and music history would have seemed an obvious thing to do.

Consequences

If Liberalism as a political, if not an intellectual force, went into a kind of self-imposed internal exile during the 1850s, the 1860s saw a renewed flourishing of Liberal politics, at first centered on German-speaking Austria and its capital, Vienna. After 1863 and even more so after 1866, Liberals—often reluctantly, at least in the beginning—increasingly supported the Lesser German solution under Prussia and Bismarck (Gervinus was a well-known exception).¹⁸ The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 sealed the political alliance between Liberalism and the

¹⁸ This ambivalence was largely caused by the *Verfassungskonflikt* between the conservative (aristocratic) and the middle-class (Liberal) forces in Prussia during the years between 1860 and 1866. Essentially an internal affair concerning parliamentary vs monarchic control of the military within Prussia, the weakening of the bourgeois forces and the concomitant strengthening of the neo-absolutist and militarist element within the Prussian body politic that resulted from the Constitutional Conflict nonetheless were to have a severe impact on the character of the overall German nation-state in the decades from 1870/71 onward, given the dominance of Prussia within the Wilhelminian Empire. See Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866*, 749–68.

Conservative forces within the new Greater Prussian, German nation state. By the 1880s, however, Liberals and Conservatives again found themselves increasingly at odds; the rise of the Social Democrats and of the Catholic *Zentrum* gave cause for new political constellations that by the 1890s had prised open the earlier tight alliance between Conservatives and Liberals, replacing it with a precarious balance of power and an increasing distance between the German state apparatus and its citizens.

The study of history, throughout the 1850s, '60s and '70s, continued to play a major role in shaping the ideological background for these events. History, and historicism, served as a critical political tool to stake the *Bildungsbürgertum's* claim to a share of power within the German nation state; in the process, a standard of intellectual achievement was created at German universities that remained unchallenged until the forced exodus of 1933. The role of the *Geisteswissenschaften* in general, and of history in particular in this process was during all that time inseparably intertwined with the inherited objective of establishing German superiority in matters cultural and, as now had become conceivable, political as well.

The same line of reasoning applied, naturally, to constructing a history of music. While achievements such as the Bach *Gesamtausgabe* were universally hailed as national feats, serious problems nevertheless arose in relation to the response of wider audiences to historical music as well as the reactions of professional musicians: Introducing historical works into day-to-day musical life required a radical reshaping of musical tastes, which tended to prefer the new over the old. Moreover, composers and performer alike (insofar as these can be differentiated during the period) were wary of a resuscitated repertoire which potentially might diminish their own creative opportunities, at the same time degrading them aesthetically by claiming that the works of the past were better than the works of contemporaries, and forcing performers to familiarise themselves with esoteric concepts and playing techniques, such as textual accuracy and figured bass. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, therefore, the resistance against 'older music [*ältere Musik*]' remained strong. It is reflected, for example, in the split between the so-called 'musical parties.' The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, with its writers and readership mostly drawn from the ranks of music professionals such as Kapellmeisters and composers, in particular engaged in a lively battle against historicism, advocating its use in only the most sparing manner, resisting the concept of original texts, and denying its relevance for music except when integrated into contemporary compositions, as exemplified in the works of Liszt and Wagner. Older music was generally claimed to require excessive adaptation to contemporaneous ears, and while the brilliance of historical scholarship was readily acknowledged for the sake of the national cause, its practical applicability to music was steadfastly challenged. The on the other hand, serving as the platform of the Liberals in music, went as far as questioning even the possibility of contemporary composition of the level of geniuses such as Beethoven, Handel and J.S. Bach, at the same time championing the reconstitution of older music by means of philological scholarship.

In the long run, these incompatible positions needed to be brought into an agreement. The first Bayreuth festival (1876) might be seen as a milestone; the presence of the Kaiser and assorted national and international aristocrats immediately confirmed the Liberals' worst suspicions about Wagner having joined the dreaded alliance between the Conservatives and the 'democratic' masses. However, at the same time, the establishment of a new *extraordinarius*

position in Musicology at Strasbourg (Gustav Jacobsthal, 1875) or the foundation of the Königliche Hochschule für Musik in Berlin highlighted the integration of Liberal culture into the fabric of the new state, albeit in a less dramatic, yet arguably even more effective way. By the 1880s, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* had significantly relaxed its opposition to the historical repertoires; J.S. Bach in particular was now firmly part of the national cultural heritage and the musical curriculum. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, in turn, ceased publication in 1882, being replaced by musicological journals such as the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*. By the death of Wilhelm I in 1888, the canon of musical masterworks from Bach to Schumann as we know it today was well established, with Wagnerian opera taking its place in the repertory next to the symphonies and chamber music works of Brahms and Beethoven.

We may thus conceive of the shape of the canon, as well as of 'music history' today, at least in part as a legacy of nineteenth-century Liberalism. This legacy, however, resembles Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter: it is so obviously in front of our noses that it requires a concerted effort to reincorporate it into our collective consciousness as a historical development rather than a fact of life. A careful archeology of 'music' and 'music history' may thus clarify not only the political roots of historicism in music and of the Austro-Germanic canon in general, but also help us to understand the function of historicism as a tool of nineteenth-century German politics.