

Sounding Values

Selected Essays

Scott Burnham



Ashgate Contemporary Thinkers on Critical Musicology Series

SOUNDING VALUES

For several decades, Scott Burnham has sought to bring a ready ear and plenty of humanistic warmth to musicological inquiry. *Sounding Values* features eighteen of his essays on mainstream Western music, music theory, aesthetics and criticism. In these writings, Burnham listens for the values – aesthetic, ethical, intellectual – of those who have created influential discourse about music, while also listening for the values of the music for which that discourse has been generated. The first half of the volume confronts pressing issues of historical theory and aesthetics, including intellectual models of tonal theory, leading concepts of sonata form, translations of music into poetic meaning, and recent rifts and rapprochements between criticism and analysis. The essays in the second half can be read as a series of critical appreciations, engaging some of the most consequential reception tropes of the past two centuries: Haydn and humor, Mozart and beauty, Beethoven and the sublime, Schubert and memory.

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Sounding Values

Selected Essays

SCOTT BURNHAM
Princeton University, USA

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Introduction

‘The habit of art is the habit of enjoying vivid values.’

Alfred North Whitehead*

Sounding Values is a collection of writings spanning almost two decades. The title should be read in a double sense, taking the word *values* as both object and subject: sounding values, the way one sounds out a friend; sounding values, values that manifest themselves as sounds. The essays gathered under this title have in common a preoccupation with listening, in at least two senses: Listening for the values—esthetic, ethical, intellectual—of those who have created influential discourse about music; and listening for the values of the music for which that discourse has been generated.

To listen well is to hear someone out before intervening. I like to entertain the fantasy that I have done that for the subjects of my essays. Thus to a great degree, these writings may be considered appreciations, critical appraisals in which I try always to understand why someone would do the thing they are doing rather than point out the degree to which they fail to do some other thing. My focus remains on what values are put into play and how they are put into play.

One way to get right to this level of engagement is to stage a freighted question about a composer, a critic, or a theorist. Some of the questions posed in this collection include: Why does Schubert repeat himself so often? Why does Hugo Riemann insist on dualism? Why does A.B. Marx invoke gender to elucidate what he thought was the most crucial thematic interrelationship in the age of Beethoven? Why do we continue to be so preoccupied with sonata form, such that we are still coming up with theories about it?

When addressing specific musics, as in Part II of this collection, I’m less inclined to ask what a piece means than to ask how it means, or how it makes its most consequential effects. How is it that we have come to value beauty in Mozart, or wit in Haydn, or sublimity in Beethoven?

I have lingered exclusively in a single—and singular—stretch of the Western musical mainstream, seeking, as I did in my book *Beethoven Hero*, to hear and to describe what all the fuss has been about. Reaching from Haydn to Schumann, this segment of musical history could be characterized as the Viennese Classical Style and its immediate aftermath. The musical events of this era created cultural waves that continue to lap the shores of twenty-

* Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 287. I ran across this quotation in Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), p. 89.

first century criticism and analysis. Moreover, the circumscribed time span of the repertoire at issue lends these essays a common set of preoccupations.

Part I Theories and Practices

The essays of Part I engage leading discourses of theory and aesthetics and concomitant practices of analysis and criticism.

The two essays under ‘Romantic Aesthetics’ are among my earliest publications and treat some of the ways in which kindred spirits E.T.A. Hoffmann and A.B. Marx confronted the music of Beethoven. Among other things, their related approaches helped elevate Beethoven as the most important composer of a new age of musical significance. And for me, working on Marx in particular led to a more comprehensive interest in Beethoven reception, an abiding fascination with the ways in which strong critics have chosen to characterize his music.

The essays under the heading ‘Interpreting Historical Theory’ deploy a hermeneutic approach to historical theory that I spell out in ‘Musical and Intellectual Values: Interpreting the History of Tonal Theory’ (part of a special issue of *Current Musicology* entitled ‘Approaches to the Discipline’). My bearing here owes much to Allan Keiler, who advised my PhD dissertation at Brandeis University. Keiler enjoyed a successful career as a linguist before turning to music theory, and he brought a new and consequential rigor to the close reading of historical music theory as a branch of intellectual history. Keiler’s work is characterized by a steady emphasis on what theorists *do*—not so much what they say they are doing but what they actually do when analyzing or otherwise engaging music. Once a theorist’s praxis can be characterized systematically, it can then be collated with available intellectual models. Doing so often reveals tensions in a theorist’s work between competing intellectual impulses, such as deductive and inductive approaches in the work of Rameau.

I try to implement this kind of approach in ‘Method and Motivation in Hugo Riemann’s History of Harmonic Theory’. Whereas Riemann shapes his history of tonal theory as a ‘developmental history’, in which earlier theories evolve through something like natural selection toward the present-day paradigm, a close reading of what he sees and doesn’t see in the work of Rameau reveals that he has actually created a ‘discovery history’, in which an underlying set of natural laws is gradually discovered by theorists all assumed to be asking the same questions. (Thus Riemann’s *Method*.) And these natural laws turn out to be the underlying precepts of the Viennese Classical style, which had become a crucial bulwark in the preservation of German spiritual nationalism in the nineteenth century. (Thus Riemann’s *Motivation*.)

The following two essays deal with influential historical approaches to sonata form. ‘A.B. Marx and the gendering of sonata form’ seeks to establish a more complete context for Marx’s well-known characterization of first and second theme (*Hauptsatz* and *Seitensatz*) as masculine and feminine. The complex and dynamic relationship between *Hauptsatz* and *Seitensatz* stands at the heart of Marx’s sense of sonata form, and his gendered metaphor emerges as a striking economy, shorthand for a highly ramified thematic interface. Our reaction today to Marx’s metaphor may say more about our own notion of sonata form than about his. The section on Historical Theory closes with broader strokes: ‘Models of Music Analysis: Form’, a chapter in Thomas Christensen’s compendious *Cambridge History*

of *Western Music Theory*, charts modernity's fascination with sonata form by means of a historical survey of approaches to sonata form.

The first two essays in 'The State of Play' date from my willing conscription into the polemical arena. At a time when our discipline was increasingly riven with its own version of the culture wars, as 'new musicologists' and 'music theorists' interrogated each other's agendas, these essays largely defend theory-based analysis but also ask us to examine our shared assumptions about musical materiality. They can serve as time capsules from the early 1990s, showing some of the battle lines as well as strategies both for differentiating the predominant views and interfacing between them. Schenkerian analysis was a lightning rod for earlier debates between analysts and critics (as in Joseph Kerman's 1980 critique of Allen Forte's reading of a song from *Dichterliebe*¹), and Schenker continued to loom large in the contentions of the 1990s. 'The Criticism of Analysis and the Analysis of Criticism' was commissioned by the editor of *19th-Century Music* as a response to an article by Lawrence Kramer, in which he engages Schenkerian analysis in the context of a fresh interpretation of 'The Representation of Chaos' from Haydn's *Creation*. To read this response in the present volume, now bereft of Kramer's original essay as well as his subsequent response to the response, may seem like deciphering one of those one-sided dialogues from Beethoven's Conversation Books. But I am emboldened to risk this effect, because I believe that my essay can be read separately in its attempt to get at the nature of theory-based analysis as encountered in a burgeoning postmodern context.² The essay concludes with a call to recognize and critique some of the "standard pedagogical generalizations" about musical materiality that continue to underwrite the work of both music theorists and new musicologists.

'Theorists and "The Music Itself"' swims in similar waters, which by 1995—the year of the paper's debut—had grown more perilous. The paper was originally delivered at what had to be the high-water mark of the polemic between music theory and new musicology, a plenary session of music theorists at the joint AMS-SMT meeting in New York City, entitled 'Contemporary Music Theory and the New Musicology'. Three ballrooms were opened up for this event, and hundreds of eager partisans (from both sides of the debate) were on hand. After Patrick McCreless's introductory remarks, I gave the first paper, naively hoping that my message about shared assumptions would be taken as a bridge-building gesture. I even tried to poke gentle fun at both sides, as a *captatio benevolentiae* (both for my own sake and for that of my fellow panelists). But as my late colleague Harry Powers informed me afterwards, 'When you made fun of the musicologists you were funnier'. No wonder, then, that I found myself—for the most part—embraced by theorists and scorned by musicologists.

'How Music Matters' was written around the same time as the other two essays in this section (despite its later publication date). And like the others, it too locates a shared impulse in opposed camps, suggesting that poetic criticism and technical analysis—often pitted against each other—have much in common. My engagement in this essay with the act of

1 Joseph Kerman, "How We Got Into Analysis, and How to Get Out," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980): 311–31.

2 That being said, I strongly encourage readers to take in both of Kramer's essays, which can be found in the Summer 1992 issue of *19th-Century Music*. The contrast in style and intent between Kramer and myself still feels bracing to me, though I sometimes wonder if our respective contributions from 1992 will begin to look more similar to each other as they continue to recede into the past.

translating music into metaphorical language may well have set a course for much of my own subsequent work as a critic. When immersed in this work, I like to imagine that I am partaking of the same joy that is felt by those who translate poetry: finding within one's native thought, one's native language, ways to convey the effects of another potent mode of thought, feeling, gesture.

Part II Impact and Effect: Critical Takes on Canonic Composers

The essays in the second half of this collection stand more on the praxis side of the ledger, being less about discourse per se than about music and its impact. The emphasis throughout is on specific canonic composers and what we tend to listen for in their music. Thus I engage some of the most common reception tropes of the past two hundred years: Haydn and humor, Mozart and beauty, Beethoven and the sublime, Schubert and memory.

The first section contains essays pertaining to the music of the primary composers of the Viennese classical style. 'The Second Nature of Sonata Form' asks why we have made sonata form work so hard as a cultural construction all these years, and uses symphonies by Haydn and Beethoven to argue that sonata form is as much about renewal as about resolution. The last sentence of the essay betrays the time of its composition, near the dawn of the new millennium. In 'Haydn and Humor' I show how Haydn teasingly manipulates classical-style conventions of return and closure, allowing him to embody Enlightenment values while appearing to subvert them. It's fun to write about Haydn, and I tried to do so in these essays with a modest share of tweaks and twinkles.

Both essays on Mozart take up the trope of beauty. 'Mozart's *felix culpa*' asks why Mozart would invest the most deceitful scenes in *Così fan tutte* with his most beautiful music. As the essay's title implies, the answer involves nothing less than the loss of human innocence and the concomitant onset of human consciousness. 'On the Beautiful in Mozart' treats the theme of beauty in Mozart's music in a more systematic manner, addressing issues of sonority, dissonance, and tonal practice as they arise in a variety of his compositions. At the end of this latter essay I try to characterize why and how Mozart still speaks to us today. The essay was written in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in September, 2001, a circumstance that no doubt sharpened the sense of melancholy I was drawing out of Mozart's beautiful music.

Today's sense of the past also informs the two essays on Beethoven—both deal with the ongoing critical reception of the composer. 'The Four Ages of Beethoven' tells a two-hundred-year story of the fate of the canonic composer, who passes from magus to Redeemer to law-giver to cultural product. 'Our Sublime Ninth' reviews two important books on the Ninth Symphony and discusses the fate of the musical sublime in our own age.

The second section of Part II contains two essays on Schubert and one on Schumann. In the Schubert essays, I again explore prominent reception tropes: the trope of memory (how Schubert's music is often heard to invoke memories), as well as the question of the notable amount of literal and near literal repetition in Schubert's music (often brought up as a disparagement). As a commissioned response to four excellent critical studies on the theme of Schubert and memory (by Walter Frisch, John Daverio, Charles Fisk, and John Gingerich), "Schubert and the Sound of Memory" attempts to understand why Schubert's music is so often heard to embody a recollective impulse. In the next essay, I argue that

repetition, far from being a ‘make do’ strategy of a song composer attempting to create large-scale instrumental forms, is in fact a powerful existential condition of Schubert’s art. A final essay on Schumann’s orchestral music listens for elements of drama and popular style and weighs in on the troubled reception of his symphonies.

Acknowledgments and Apologia

I am extremely grateful to Claire Jarvis of Ashgate Press for the invitation to gather some of my previously published essays in one place—and proud to find myself in the company of all the remarkable authors who have filled the foregoing volumes of this series.

Ian Bent and Walter Frisch were almost unbelievably generous to me during my first years in the fields of musicology and music theory. They each invited me to participate in important and engaging events as well as to contribute writings to various publications they edited. I look up to them both as role models in the art of fostering academic fellowship and creating intellectual opportunities. The only way I can hope to thank them adequately is to attempt to emulate their generosity.

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Even in the full flush of gratitude, I must admit to having felt uneasy about the prospect of gathering previously published essays into one volume. During the initial planning stages of this project, I was often haunted by the sneering music from the last song of *Dichterliebe*, in which the poet fills a gargantuan coffin with his ‘alten bösen Lieder’ and implores a team of giants to drop it into the Rhine. While my own collection of old ditties will make no such splash when it hits the water, I have come to relish the gesture of letting go of the things I have done up to now, in order to step into the things I may do from now on with a somewhat lighter tread. On the other hand, no one ever truly says ‘goodbye to all that’. But the fantasy remains potent, and the gesture of collecting past deeds is a bit like moving house—there is an implicit invitation to settle into a new, freshly demarcated realm.

Revisiting these essays was not unlike attending a family reunion: all those former selves crowding round, the younger among them somewhat more strident, the older somewhat more settled, and one’s own place in the throng always in question. For better or worse, I have rarely been tempted to remake these family members, to revise them in accordance with whoever or wherever I am now. Thus there are doubtless many errors of commission and omission in these essays, errors that will have to stand uncorrected, transmitted without alteration from their original setting to this volume. And yet there is one translation error that I simply must redress (not least because I have been brooding about it for years!). This occurs at the outset of ‘A.B. Marx and the gendering of sonata form’. To my considerable mortification, I managed to mistranslate one of the most cited passages in all of Marx, in

which he distinguishes between *Hauptsatz* (main theme) and *Seitensatz* (subsidiary theme) by means of gendered language. He does not, as I put it, claim that the *Seitensatz*, ‘by contrast, is that which serves [i.e. is servile]’. Instead he says that the *Seitensatz* ‘serves as contrast’ to the *Hauptsatz*. I will leave it to the reader to determine how the correction of this error bears upon the argument of the essay. Ralph Locke deserves my gratitude for bringing this error to my attention in the most diplomatic terms imaginable.

And if I may linger within the penumbra of Apologia for yet another paragraph, there is a general matter I would like to address. I have been chided at times for my use of the pronoun ‘we’ in essays and talks (the objection usually takes some form of ‘what do you mean *we*, Kemosabe?’). I like to think of my use of ‘we’ as inclusive and invitational. Moreover, I have never been inclined to qualify who ‘we’ are at every turn, because how can I know? For some readers, this may well register as a potent sign of my ideological allegiances, a kind of Devil’s cleft foot, dragging itself through much of my criticism. I like to think, as we all do (there’s that ‘we’ again), that my own take on any given musical value is not just solipsistic but does in fact resonate beyond myself (and not just among some blunted hegemonic collective). Of course I will let others be the judge of that, a perhaps safe strategy at this point: those whom my ‘we’ has fatally offended are not likely to be reading any of this anyway.

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Part One

Theories and Practices



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CHAPTER 1

Review Essay

E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings

E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism. Edited, annotated, and introduced by David Charlton. Translated by Martyn Clarke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. xvi, 476 pp.

Judged by its cover alone, David Charlton's edition of E. T. A. Hoffmann's musical writings is immediately prepossessing. A detail from the seventeenth-century artist Jacques Callot's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* portrays the piously steadfast saint surrounded by fantastical demons of Boschian invention. The name of the artist is familiar from Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*; the style represents a central aspect of Hoffmann's musical and artistic thought. In the prefatory essay to the *Fantasiestücke*, Hoffmann explains his fascination with Callot:

No master has known so well as Callot how to assemble together in a small space such an abundance of motifs, emerging beside each other, even within each other, yet without confusing the eye, so that individual elements are seen as such, but still blend with the whole . . . his drawings are but reflexes of all the fantastic apparitions called up by the magic

of his exuberant fantasy. . . . Even the commonest subjects from everyday life . . . appear in the glow of a certain romantic originality, so that one's thoughts are surrendered to fantasy, and engaged in the most amazing way. . . . Callot's grotesque forms . . . reveal to the serious, deeper-seeing observer all the hidden meanings that lie beneath the cloak of absurdity (pp. 76–77).¹

Anyone even passingly familiar with Hoffmann's Beethoven criticism will recognize here the same apotheosis of abundant and engaging variety, overarching unity, hidden meaning, and preternatural fantasy. Hoffmann continually sought these qualities in the art and music of others; together they form the essence of Romanticism, which he understood more as a synchronic mode of all art than as a historical development peculiar to his own age. These were the same qualities Hoffmann strove to embody in his own work as writer, artist, composer, conductor, and critic—for there was no one domain within which this irrepressible scribbler could give complete rein to his imagination. Add to these endeavors his vocation as a successful member of the Berlin legal establishment, and the result is a character whose very life seems to have been composed by a Callot. The music, drawings, tales, and essays of E. T. A. Hoffmann form the myriad antic traces of a bifocal and twilight existence tethered between the myopic daylight of the Prussian judiciary and the sweeping night vision of German Romanticism.

As the author of the first chapter of Romantic music criticism and the charter member of the musico-literary coalition which created the mythologization of Beethoven, Hoffmann also exercises an unsurpassed fascination for all those who attend to Western musical culture in the early nineteenth century. German scholars have long held sway in the continuing critical engagement with this aspect of Hoffmann's work, the perceptive interpretations of Carl Dahlhaus and, more recently, Klaus-Dieter Dobat, being but the present face

of a rich tradition of exegetical studies.² With the appearance of the present volume we may well expect a resurgence—for which Charlton's work cannot fail to be the starting point—of English-language scholarship on the subject of Hoffmann the musical thinker.

Contained in this volume are translations of *Kreisleriana*, *The Poet and the Composer* (from *Die Serapionsbrüder*), and most of Hoffmann's critical reviews.³ In addition, Charlton provides introductory essays to *Kreisleriana*, *The Poet and the Composer*, and to the general subject of Hoffmann as a writer on music. As we shall see, these essays reveal Charlton's broad familiarity with the most important and influential strains of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literary production and a no less impressive command of the musical life of the time. He also offers a helpful, if not especially comprehensive, bibliography at the end of the volume, referring readers instead to Gerhard Kaiser's *E.T.A. Hoffmann* (1988) for a more recent and complete critical bibliography.

I

The presence of the translator, Martyn Clarke, is curiously downplayed in the prefatory materials to the volume. The only references to him outside of the title page are found in Charlton's claim that "the translations in this book are the result of collaborative work between the translator and the editor" and in a line in the acknowledgements. I would like to bring him out of the shadows somewhat and walk a piece of his way with him, by looking closely at a representative sample of his work. The following paragraph may serve not only as a demonstration of some of the problems and triumphs of this type of translation but will also initiate a line of thought about Hoffmann's music aesthetics. Taken from Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's *Mass in C*, op. 86, the ex-

²Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago, 1989), esp. pp. 42–57. Klaus-Dieter Dobat, *Musik als romantische Illusion: Eine Untersuchung zur Bedeutung der Musikvorstellung E. T. A. Hoffmanns für sein literarisches Werk* (Tübingen, 1984).

³Those omitted include certain reviews of unfamiliar scores, the review of Kotzebue's *Opern-Almanach*, some brief reviews of performances in Berlin, and a portion of Hoffmann's lengthy article on Spontini's *Olimpia* (see pp. x–xi).

¹Charlton includes this brief essay in order to provide some idea of the original context of *Kreisleriana*, which appeared as part of the *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* (1814–15).

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cerpt proceeds from a simile claiming that the old church music of the Italians is to modern German church music as St. Peter's of Rome is to the Strasbourg Cathedral:

Die grandiosen Verhältnisse jenes Baues [St. Peter's] erheben das Gemüt, indem sie kommensurabel bleiben: aber mit einer seltsamen, inneren Beunruhigung staunt der Beschauer den Münster an, der sich in den kühnsten Windungen, in den sonderbarsten Verschlingungen bunter, phantastischer Figuren und Zieraten hoch in die Lüfte erhebt; allein selbst diese Unruhe regt ein das Unbekannte, das Wundervolle ahnendes Gefühl auf, und der Geist überlässt sich willig dem Traume, in dem er das Überirdische, das Unendliche zu erkennen glaubt. Nun, und eben dies ist ja der Eindruck des Rein-Romantischen, wie es in Mozarts, in Haydn's phantastischen Kompositionen lebt und webt!

The magnificent proportions of St Peter's elevate the spirit while preserving a balanced relationship, but it is with a strange inner disquiet that the observer stares at the cathedral rising high into the air with its audacious convolutions and extraordinary interplay of fantastic figures and flourishes. This very unease, however, arouses presentiments of unknown wonders, and the spirit willingly surrenders to the dream in which it seems to recognise celestial infinities. Now this is precisely the impression given by the pure romanticism living and moving in Mozart's and Haydn's fantastical compositions! (p. 328).⁴

Clarke's translation alters the exclamatory nature of Hoffmann's rhapsodic observations by replacing the superlatives "kühnsten" and "sonderbarsten" with the Latinate adjectives "audacious" and "extraordinary," and by translating the verb "anstaunen" (to gape at with astonishment) with "stare." A literal rendering of these superlatives in conjunction with a verb denoting astonishment would sound somewhat overwrought in English: "but with a strange inner disquiet the astonished observer gapes at the cathedral rising into the heavens with the boldest convolutions and the most singular interplay of fantastic figures and flourishes." Although it is true that German superlatives are more easily swallowed within the flow of a sen-

tence than their English equivalents, Hoffmann's use of them generally goes beyond even ordinary German usage. This accords not only with his own rhetorical disposition but with that of his age. The attenuation of this feature in translation is not a decision to be taken lightly, and it points to one of the many treacherous passes in an always difficult crossing.

This is not to claim that Clarke ignores entirely the effect of Hoffmann's superlatives. His word "audacious" certainly has more bite than "bold." But its Latinity bespeaks a certain quality of thoughtfulness, of the chosen word; this effect is approximately the same in German as in English (notice the retarding effect of Hoffmann's term "kommensurabel"). The upshot is that Clarke's translation, while protecting the English reader from a rhetorical enthusiasm that may indeed seem childish, distances itself from the impassioned blatancy of the original. Much of the force of Hoffmann's rhetoric depends on the contrast between the stately, unperturbed language used to describe St. Peter's—"grandiose," "Verhältnisse," "Gemüt," "kommensurabel," "bleiben"—and the Gothic proliferation of clauses and superlatives reaching into "das Unendliche."

Clarke's rendition of this latter part of the paragraph also deserves comment. His phrase "unknown wonders" is a tidy and not unpoetic way of accounting for those weighty abstract nouns, "das Unbekannte" and "das Wundervolle," especially since they appear in Hoffmann's original as embedded objects of the adjectival gerund "ahnend." But when this same strategy merges "das Überirdische" and "das Unendliche" into "celestial infinities" at the end of the sentence, the entire thought seems to be trivialized just at that point in the passage where Hoffmann's original reaches its final term, its *non plus ultra*. For what kind of infinity can be pluralized? In the original, the balanced apposition of the four abstract concepts stands out in relief: "das Unbekannte" and "das Wundervolle" are revealed as "das Überirdische" and "das Unendliche." Can we feel the same resolution between "unknown wonders" and "celestial infinities?" No, because such commonplace adjective-noun constructions are so smoothly worn as to let the reader slide right over them. In contrast, Hoff-

⁴The German original is taken from E. T. A. Hoffmann. *Schriften zur Musik. Aufsätze und Rezensionen*, ed. Friedrich Schnapp (Munich, 1977), p. 156.

mann's abstract nouns stand as monoliths which give the reader pause. Each adds, as with an intake of breath, to the general feeling of astonishment elicited by the Gothic grandeur of the cathedral.

Yet even this interpretation is offered from an English-speaking point of view. The German language traffics incessantly in such nouns; normative literary discourse makes no ceremony in its use of such conceptual portmanteau words. And it would no doubt be ludicrous to carry such an interpretation over into a translation; there's simply no way that English can bandy about such intractable concepts and maintain the ease of expression exemplified in Hoffmann's prose. Here is a possible solution which preserves the adjectival genesis of these nouns yet does not link them into harmlessly smooth adjective-noun combinations: "yet this very unease arouses a presentiment of things unknown and wondrous, and the spirit surrenders willingly to the dream in which it seems to apprehend that which is supermundane [celestial] and eternal."⁵

Some of the words used in the passage above appear repeatedly in Hoffmann's writings about music. Perhaps the most telling is *Verschlingungen*, which Clarke translates here as "interplay." In the essay on Beethoven's instrumental music, the term is rendered as "intricacies."⁶ Later in the same essay Clarke transforms Hoffmann's "Wendungen und Verschlingungen" to "twists and turns" (p. 100). Although a compilation of these and similar instances would no doubt allow us to construct a multidimensional understanding of the word "Verschlingungen," Clarke's differing, contextual readings hide from the reader the talismanic effect such rich words have for an author like Hoffmann. From

this one word alone we can tease out an entire nexus of related concepts: the ornamental convolutions of the arabesque, rich contrapuntal textures, pleasing confusion, Gothic intricacy, playful intertwining, and music as a life form—as a winding, vinelike continuity (that which "lebt und webt").

Through familiarity with a large amount of the author's writings, the translator must decide which words have this kind of importance. S/he is then faced with the dilemma of either repeatedly using the nearest (and undoubtedly inadequate) equivalent, or, as Clarke has done, of picking that facet of the word which seems most relevant to the given context.⁷ What Clarke gains through his approach is readability; this is a professional translation designed to make the reader forget about the original. That is to say, the original is not always disturbingly perceptible in the background, like a backstage parent prompting a stammering child—the fate of so many translations which attempt to stay too literal. One can read pages of Clarke's work without remembering that it is in fact a translation; this is rare, and commendable.

II

The Gothic imagery of the passage I have been belaboring emphasizes the role of the fantastic and the ornamental. More often than not, Hoffmann makes the same emphasis with imagery suggesting prodigious vegetation. Contrapuntal musical textures are subject to metaphorical interpretation, appearing as strangely proliferating growths and mosses;⁸ the continuity of Beethoven's instrumental music is likened to the labyrinthine pathways of some fantastical park.⁹ Such imagery represents something of an aesthetic category in Hoff-

⁵My solution is, of course, spoiled by the pedantic construction "that which," an all-too-mundane piece of syntactical business. Yet I select it for now as the lesser of three evils: "things supermundane and eternal" would be too clankingly repetitious and would trivialize (by pluralizing) the concept of infinity, while using the phrase "the supermundane and the eternal" would simply ape the German and would smell like a translation.

⁶Clarke matches Hoffmann's phrase "welche wunderbare kontrapunktische Verschlingungen verknüpfen sich hier wieder zum Ganzen!" with "what wonderful contrapuntal intricacies are woven into the overall texture again here!" (pp. 99–100).

⁷Considered apart from the issue of the treatment of key words, Clarke's method would not be at all objectionable if it weren't for instances such as that mentioned above, where the technical sobriety of a term like "intricacies" robs the original word of its sense of irrepressible life, thus negating the organic element so vital to Hoffmann's notion of musical continuity.

⁸Hoffmann makes this comparison in a heavily ironic vein in "Thoughts about the Great Value of Music," *Kreisleriana*, part I, p. 94.

⁹In "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," *Kreisleriana*, part I, p. 100.

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mann's musical thought and, it has been argued, forms a central pattern in his work as a whole.¹⁰

Hoffmann glories in the apparent chaos of visual, musical, or literary artworks, a chaos which manifests itself in crowded surfaces teeming with life. And he invests such ingratiating chaos with a higher significance than that of mere sensory delectation; this type of art is somehow associated with the "spirit-realm," a magical domain revealed most directly by Romantic music. For Hoffmann, the fantastic convolutions of a Romantic musical work symbolize this realm of the unknown, which in turn symbolizes the infinite. This is the progression which he makes explicit in the paragraph cited above. How is such a progression conceivable for Hoffmann?

One approach to this problem is suggested by David Charlton's scrupulous annotations. Charlton rarely fails to point out parallels between Hoffmann's writings and other literary and philosophical staples of the age. In the case of the passage quoted above, Charlton first refers us to another occasion when Hoffmann used the simile of church architecture, in an essay from the first part of *Kreisleriana*. In a footnote to that discussion, Charlton draws our attention to the tie between Hoffmann's comparison and Goethe's similar glorification of Gothic architecture in his early essay "Von Deutscher Baukunst" (1772). Compare Hoffmann's description of the Strasbourg cathedral with Goethe's prescription for the cathedral builder:

Variagate the imposing wall that you are leading to the heavens so that it climbs like a lofty, far-spreading tree of God, a tree which heralds the glory of the Lord its Master throughout the region with a thousand limbs, millions of branches, and leaves as innumerable as the grains of the ocean's sands.¹¹

¹⁰Erwin Rotermond, "Musikalische und dichterische 'Arabeske' bei E. T. A. Hoffmann," *Poetica* 2 (1968), 48–69.

¹¹"Vermännigfaltige die ungeheure Mauer, die du gen Himmel führen sollst, dass sie aufsteige gleich einem hoherhabenen, weitverbreiteten Baume Gottes, der mit tausend Aesten, Millionen Zweigen, und Blättern wie der Sand am Meer, ringsum der Gegend verkündet die Herrlichkeit des Herrn, seines Meisters." *Goethes Werke*, vol. XII (Hamburg, 1953), p. 10 (translation mine).

Hoffmann adopts Goethe's image of a Gothic complexity teeming with life which rises to the heavens and naturally serves as a portal to things eternal, transferring it to music, where the eternal is suggested without the intervening concept of a church as the "tree of God." From Hoffmann's organic convolutions of fantastical figures issues an intimation of unity and of the eternal – without the original stimulus of religious belief. For the duties of faith are no longer paid to the heavenly throne of God but to the wondrous realm of human imagination.

Even if Hoffmann's architectural simile was in fact inspired by Goethe, it would be limiting to conclude that this kind of displaced spirituality informs the entire range of Hoffmann's fascination with the Gothic imagery of wondrous chaos and exuberant variety. The idea of a "beau désordre" has been associated with the aesthetic work of Friedrich Schlegel, in particular with his concept of the arabesque.¹² Schlegel characterized the arabesque as an "indication of endless abundance" (*unendliche Fülle*). The portrayal of such abundance in a work of art, whether visual or literary, engenders a "premonition of heaven."¹³ If the appearance of the arabesque, which Schlegel formulated as both a local technique and a structural principle, was indeed felt to be suggestive of the presence of the infinite, then artists could use this technique as a way to solve the typically Romantic aesthetic problem of representing the eternal with finite means.¹⁴ A music whose surface somehow manifested the vinelike convolutions of the arabesque or whose large-scale organization suggested a highly varied and episodic structure might then be felt to evoke the eternal.

Hoffmann argued that musical works of Romantic sensibility, particularly those of

¹²See Karl Konrad Polheim, *Die Arabeske: Ansichten und Ideen aus Friedrich Schlegel's Poetik* (Munich, 1966); Rotermond, *Musikalische und dichterische 'Arabeske'*, 53; and more recently, John Daverio, "Schumann's 'Im Legendenton' and Friedrich Schlegel's *Arabeske*," this journal 11 (1987), 150–63.

¹³Polheim, *Die Arabeske*, pp. 56–58.

¹⁴Without specifically mentioning the concept of the arabesque, Arthur O. Lovejoy relates the principle of plenitude to Romantic aesthetic thought in *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 288–314.

Beethoven, also emanate a deep-seated continuity and unfailing sense of unity, even amidst an astonishingly abundant variety. The association of a unified art work with intimations of eternity can be linked to the aesthetic speculations of Karl Philip Moritz, as is most recently pointed out by Dobat.¹⁵ Moritz's thesis depends simply on the comparison of the unified art-work with the unified cosmos: the most profound unity is one which cannot be demonstrated, but can only be apprehended through the same mystical faculty which divines the unity of nature. The activation of this faculty brings with it the intimation of eternity.

III

Perhaps the single most pervasive metaphor for music in Hoffmann's writings is that of a distant and fantastical realm. Such an idea is central to Hoffmann's first published story, "Ritter Gluck," which appeared in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1809. The mad protagonist of this tale describes a dream world within which he communes mystically with the spirit of music. Hoffmann's theme of a utopian *Märchenwelt* was to remain pervasive throughout his tales; he often associates this other world explicitly with music. In the late novella *Klein Zaches*, for example, the realm of the magus Alpanus is a place where music sounds from the very trees. Compare Hoffmann's description of his experience when listening to Beethoven's trios:

like someone wandering along the labyrinthine pathways of some fantastic park, hedged in by all kinds of rare trees, shrubs, and exotic flowers, and becoming more and more deeply absorbed, I am still unable to extricate myself from the extraordinary twists and turns of your trios (p. 100).¹⁶

But Hoffmann's distant spirit-realm is not merely one of innocent fascination. On the contrary, it can inspire fear, and it is often inhabited by demonic forces. A little over a year after the publication of "Ritter Gluck," Hoffmann was to write the following oft-quoted sentences:

Beethoven's instrumental music unveils before us the realm of the mighty and immeasurable. . . . [It]

sets in motion the machinery of awe, fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism (p. 238).¹⁷

In *Kreisleriana* we read: "There are moments . . . at which the numerical proportions of music and the mystical rules of counterpoint arouse in me a profound horror. Music! It is with secret trepidation, even with dread, that I utter your name!" (p. 105). The protagonist in "Ritter Gluck" speaks of the horrors of the dream-world, and Hoffmann's most famous musical creation, the Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler, was capable of improvising himself into "a dark abyss of inconsolable lamentation" (p. 135).¹⁸ The most imminent danger lurking in this other world was madness; throughout Hoffmann's literary *œuvre*, the figure of Kreisler embodies most potently the confrontation with this danger.¹⁹

In his critical introduction to *Kreisleriana*, Charlton discusses the theme of insanity in Hoffmann's work and cites a fascinating series of articles written by Rochlitz for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1804, comprising a detailed case-study of an insane musician.²⁰ As Charlton points out, Hoffmann's Kreisler shares many of the same preoccupations as Rochlitz's madman, "Karl." This connection gains significance when one considers that Johannes Kreisler, perhaps more than any other fictional character of the age, helped to insure the association of artistic genius with madness in the popular imagination.²¹ Of course, it is difficult to separate the

¹⁷From the review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

¹⁸From "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," *Kreisleriana*, part II.

¹⁹Hoffmann envisioned writing a series of essays concerning Romantic music philosophy, to be presented from the point of view of Kreisler; these were to carry the title "Lucid Intervals of an Insane Musician." It is likely that some of the projected essays coincide with those which eventually found their place in *Kreisleriana*, pp. 47-48.

²⁰Entitled "A Visit to the Asylum," Rochlitz's case-study was serialized in issues 39 through 42 of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. One of the installments contains Rochlitz's transcription of a brief piano fantasy improvised by the patient.

²¹Balzac, for example, could only have had Kreisler in mind when he noted that the possessed composer of his novella *Gambara* was a hero "digne d'Hoffmann." The great French author once claimed to have read all of Hoffmann, whereupon he made a generally disparaging pro-

¹⁵Dobat, *Musik als romantische Illusion*, p. 63.

¹⁶In the essay "Beethoven's Instrumental Music."

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figure of Kreisler the musician from Hoffmann himself, for Hoffmann's extant letters and diary entries allow us to assume that he felt some of the same conflicts as his fictional creation.²² Yet one cannot help but speculate on the extent to which the way we continue to regard genius in music was conditioned by a single "madman" in a German asylum of the early nineteenth century.

The work that reveals most explicitly the central role of madness in Hoffmann's aesthetic thought is the collection of dialogues and stories published in 1819–21 as *Die Serapionsbrüder*. Just as Tieck had done several years earlier in his *Phantastus*, Hoffmann framed a variety of fictional works within the ongoing meetings of a group of aesthetically minded friends. This group takes its name from the fictional hermit Serapion, whose outrageous visions are superseded only by his absolute faith in their veracity. Inspired by this striking figure, Hoffmann's brotherhood swears to uphold what they call the Serapiontic principle: they will only relate those things that they have experienced with the vividness of reality. This type of inner vision is thus posited as the fundamental source of all artistic production. By making the foundation of his aesthetics a condition which is tantamount to psychosis, Hoffmann sets the stage for the tenacious paradigm of the possessed artist.²³ Madness becomes a *sine qua non* of great art.

Preoccupation with madness was a prominent characteristic of the Romantic artistic temperament; the central position of this theme in Hoffmann's writings can provide the basis for an investigation of the provenance of such a tendency. Like many artists of his generation, Hoffmann was keenly aware of the

nouncement: "il est au-dessous de sa réputation; il y a quelque chose, mais pas grand chose; il parle bien musique; il n'entend rien à l'amour et à la femme." Cited in Honoré de Balzac, *Le Chef-d'œuvre Inconnu*, *Gambara*, *Massimilla Doni*, ed. Marc Eigeldinger and Max Milner (Garnier-Flammarion, 1981), p. 251.

²²As an example, Charlton cites the diary entry of 6 January 1811: "Why, sleeping and waking, do I think so often of insanity?" (p. 47). Hoffmann's interest in madness extended to a familiarity with the leading clinical literature of his age on the subject. See Theodore Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (Princeton, 1990), pp. 206–17.

²³Compare Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism*, p. 214.

often painful relationship of the creative artist to society.²⁴ His frequent characterization of true art as a separate mental realm may well have to do with the insecurity inherent in his own circumstances, for he was living what amounted to a double life: by day he was an exemplary professional citizen (at the height of this aspect of his career he worked as a respected judge); by night he was a writer and musician. Hoffmann's portrayal of such figures as Ritter Gluck and Johannes Kreisler and the sometimes forced tone of his apotheoses of the true realm of art betray a certain measure of bad faith in the sanity of any creative artist. This bad faith may in turn indicate an underlying investment in the solid values of the bourgeoisie, resulting in a deep-seated distrust of the creative enterprise. Thus the presence of the demonic in Hoffmann's spirit-realm most likely symbolizes the fears attending his own involvement in this realm. Perceived against the backdrop of a basically sane professional world, these demons breed the fear of insanity, a fear which both haunted and fascinated Hoffmann throughout his career.

If insanity courts ambivalence in Hoffmann's world, perfect sanity is nevertheless utterly abhorrent. Hoffmann is at his most wickedly satirical when seized with contempt for the ever-present philistine, understood as that comfortable, self-important class of burgher who would presume to display critical judgement in the affairs of art while spurning as mad all those who truly possess such judgement. In his untiring crusade against this numberless foe, whom he once fetchingly described as "dummklug,"²⁵ Hoffmann is quite able to sustain entire essays with a mocking spleen that borders on the brutal. Not even Schumann, who so gleefully took up these very cudgels, could match Hoffmann's ironic endurance, which carries several essays of *Kreisleriana* and informs the entire structure of his late novel

²⁴The complex interrelationship of artist, society, madness, and music in Hoffmann's writings is richly explored by Christa Karoli in her study "'Ritter Gluck.' Hoffmanns erstes Fantasiestück," in *E. T. A. Hoffmann*, ed. Helmut Prang (Darmstadt, 1976), pp. 335–58.

²⁵In the novella "Don Juan," from the *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, in *E. T. A. Hoffmann Poetische Werke*, vol. I (Berlin, 1957), p. 81.

Kater Murr, in which the memoirs of a philistine tomcat are conflated with a fragmentary biography of Kreisler. It is tempting to associate Hoffmann's manic tirades against philistinism with his fear of insanity: ambivalent insecurity works to structure his world into two antagonistic factions, neither of which he could join without qualms. The everyday world of the bourgeois philistine faces (and defines) the nighttime existence of the creative artist, a heroic figure who strives to inhabit a Utopian realm of the imagination which either eludes or destroys him.

Incapacitating madness is not, however, the inevitable outcome of trafficking in the spirit-realm for Hoffmann; the composer who is able to control the magical elements of music can attain undisputed mastery. The foremost example of such control is of course Beethoven, whom Hoffmann characterizes as the master of the realm of instrumental music. Like many of Hoffmann's magus, or fairy-king, characters, Beethoven is endowed with special powers; he becomes a wizard, ruler of a nocturnal realm of the colossal and immeasurable, within which the listener's emotions are reduced to one primarily intense feeling: "the pain of infinite yearning" (p. 238).²⁶ The idea of a self-empowered ruler of the realm of artistic creation does not sit comfortably with the Romantic conception of the artist as the passive transmitter of some divine voice. For Dobat, one of the chief problems of Romantic aesthetics is the ambiguous relationship between a conception of artistic genius as the organ of a higher power and a conception of the artist as a ruling force.²⁷ Hoffmann's work, as perhaps no other's, lives in the shadowy middleground of this distinction.

How may the artist become a ruling force? Hoffmann characterizes the power of a creative musician as a controlling "presence of mind" (*Besonnenheit*), and he locates this quality in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Faced with the impassioned extravagance of

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Hoffmann feels the need to vindicate this music by appealing to the composer's *Besonnenheit*:

It is usual to regard his works merely as products of a genius who ignores form and discrimination of thought and surrenders to his creative fervour and the passing dictates of his imagination. He is nevertheless fully the equal of Haydn and Mozart in rational awareness [*Besonnenheit*], his controlling self detached from the inner realm of sounds and ruling it in absolute authority (p. 238).²⁸

The wizard or magus is he who can keep his mind in the world of magic, he who can maintain daytime sanity in the dreamy night of fantasy, in short, he who can integrate the two realms that Hoffmann so adamantly separates in his own life and work.

Hoffmann's hero is an idealized being who becomes a demi-god by virtue of his ability to live in the other realm as if it were reality. Such a figure is perhaps mad, by the standards of the philistine, but supremely unaware of and untroubled by such an assessment. He knows his own truth, as it were, and is not hampered, as Hoffmann himself clearly is, by the bad faith in that truth which results from an ambivalent involvement in everyday bourgeois existence. Because of his own splintered viewpoint about art and reality, Hoffmann cannot represent Beethoven as a human being but only as a superhuman, magical genius; he thus sows the irrevocable seeds of a mythology. And the possibility that Beethoven was in fact mythologized for possessing those most unromantic of traits—presence of mind and conscious artistry—reveals a paradox which may well lurk near the heart of Hoffmann's aesthetic thought and that of his age.

IV

Unlike his spiritual predecessors Wackenroder and Tieck, Hoffmann is fully capable of

²⁶From the review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Arnold Schmitz characterizes Hoffmann's Beethoven as a magician; see *Das romantische Beethovenbild* (Berlin, 1927), pp. 6–7.

²⁷Dobat, *Musik als romantische Illusion*, p. 66.

²⁸Notice that Clarke translates *Besonnenheit* with the phrase "rational awareness." The adjective "rational" is a term encumbered with far too many intellectual liens to stay solvent in this particular context. The word *Besonnenheit*, however, is occasionally employed in the eighteenth century to distinguish human mental activity from that of the animal world; such usage aligns well with the notion of *ratio*.

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addressing the technical aspects of music, and it is primarily this combination of man of letters and composer/critic which makes him such an irresistible figure in Romantic music aesthetics. Charlton, perhaps wisely, indulges in very little interpretive commentary regarding music theoretical issues involved in Hoffmann's criticism. Outside of referring to the *New Grove* article on J. P. Kirnberger or mentioning the terminological conventions of Heinrich Christoph Koch, he does not engage the work of other specifically musical writers and thinkers as they impinge on Hoffmann's work. Yet the sheer number and range of technical observations found throughout Hoffmann's musical writings demand a critical assessment which can explore the unique relationship of music theory and Romantic aesthetics his work embodies. This is, in fact, the area of Hoffmann research that beckons most urgently, for the infiltration of Romantic aesthetics into the theoretical understanding of music created what is surely one of the most tenacious and influential paradigms in Western musical thought: the organic conception of musical coherence, most cogently exemplified by the thematic development of Beethoven's heroic style.

Research on Hoffmann's technical understanding of music has tended to eschew the issue of thematic development in favor of the parameter of harmony and, to a lesser degree, counterpoint.²⁹ Such an emphasis is not surprising, as Hoffmann's critical and literary writings repeatedly attest to a preoccupation with harmony and counterpoint. As early as "Ritter Gluck," Hoffmann ascribes mystical properties to triadic harmony, as did Rochlitz's insane musician Karl. Kreisler's improvisations are generally described as a series of harmonies (as were those of Karl). And Hoffmann the critic cannot resist citing his favorite harmonic pro-

gressions in Beethoven's instrumental music, which he does by means of figured bass notation. The passages cited by Hoffmann are often transitional and many contain enharmonic modulations; these he treats as magical, when used at the right time and in the right fashion. This latter qualification is clarified in a review of Spohr's First Symphony, where Hoffmann cautions against rapid modulations and the use of enharmonic digressions in any section other than the second part of a sonata form (p. 277). Not even Beethoven escapes Hoffmann's critical gaze in this regard; a passage containing several rapid modulations in the Kyrie of his Mass in C is cited by Hoffmann with the words: "The reviewer cannot recommend this modulation as an example to be copied" (p. 332).

Counterpoint is treated as the element of music most directly amenable to metaphorical comparisons with the organic growth of plant life. Hoffmann enjoys pointing out dense polyphonic textures in the music of Beethoven; he understands such passages as natural outgrowths of a unified thematic complex:

A simple but fruitful and lyrical theme, susceptible of the most varied contrapuntal treatments, abbreviations, etc., forms the basis of every movement. All the secondary themes and figures are closely related to the main idea, and everything is interwoven and arranged so as to produce the utmost unity between all the instruments (p. 303).³⁰

Hoffmann's notion of counterpoint is far more general than that which we might understand as "strict counterpoint." In fact, Dahlhaus goes as far as to claim that Hoffmann's concept of polyphony is subsumed within his concept of harmony.³¹ Whether or not we accept the full ramifications of such a claim, it seems clear that Hoffmann understands counterpoint not so much in some narrower sense of imitative

²⁹Nora Haimberger, for example, has written an entire monograph on Hoffmann's conception of the chord, *Vom Musiker zum Dichter: E. T. A. Hoffmanns Akkorvorstellung* (Bonn, 1976); and Rotermund's work *Musikalische und dichterische Arabeske* concentrates on the nature of counterpoint. An exception is Peter Schnaus, who attempts to address a greater number of musical parameters in his *E. T. A. Hoffmann als Beethoven-Rezensent der Allgemeinen musikalischen Zeitung* (Munich, 1977), esp. pp. 89–102.

³⁰From the review of Beethoven's piano trios.

³¹Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, p. 44. Dahlhaus's supposition is hard to substantiate when one considers the arguably metaphysical aura which enveloped and marked the concept of counterpoint in the age of Beethoven, establishing its importance as a separate aesthetic category in early nineteenth-century musical thought; see Richard Kramer, "Gradus ad Parnassum: Beethoven, Schubert, and the Romance of Counterpoint," this journal 11 (1987), 107–09.

polyphony but rather in the sense of texturally dense thematic development and manipulation. Counterpoint is a fundamental element of his conception of musical coherence because it facilitates the prolific and unified arrangement of thematic material.

This brings us to one of the most intriguing aspects of the interface between music theory and Romantic aesthetics in Hoffmann's criticism: the translation of aesthetic unity into specifically musical terms. Addressing this problem most directly in his reviews of Beethoven's instrumental music, Hoffmann claims that it is "the close relationship of the themes to each other which provides the unity that alone is able to sustain *one* feeling in the listener" (p. 100).³² In his review of the op. 70 piano trios, Hoffmann characterizes Beethoven's thematic development with what has since become perhaps the most banal cliché of Beethoven criticism, yet one which is still the object of demonstration in essay after essay, book after book: "It evinces the master's boundless wealth of invention and his penetration of the harmonic depths, *that from a single idea a few bars long so many motives are generated, springing from it like the luxuriant blossom and fruit of a fertile tree*" (p. 315, italics mine).

Elsewhere Hoffmann explains that this type of coherence relies on explicit and demonstrable thematic similarities. Yet he goes on to claim that there is "often a deeper relationship that is not demonstrable in this way [and that] speaks only from the heart to the heart" (p. 251). As an example of this latter sense of unity, Hoffmann offers the relationship between the subjects of the two fast movements and the scherzo of Beethoven's Fifth. The distinction Hoffmann makes here would seem to imply that the unity felt within a movement is subject to demonstration whereas thematic coherence between movements is detected by intuition alone. With this in mind, may we not read the work of Rudolf Réti, Hans Keller, and others on motivic analysis and thematic process as a belated footnote to Hoffmann's Beethoven criticism? For reductive analysis has found ways to make

technically explicit aspects of musical coherence that were initially the object of intuition only. Whether or not this type of analysis actually answers such intuitions or merely provides a means of recording their presence is of course another matter.

Formulations of musical coherence and unity in Hoffmann's reviews of Beethoven's instrumental music are generally associated with the assertion of an intense psychological involvement on the part of the listener. Much of the critical rhetoric of Hoffmann and the subsequent generation of German critics describes the music of Beethoven in terms of a deep and almost disturbing engagement. One instance from the review of the Fifth will suffice here: "the whole work will sweep past many like an inspired rhapsody. The heart of every sensitive listener, however, is certain to be deeply stirred and held until the very last chord by *one* lasting emotion, that of nameless, haunted yearning" (p. 250). This feeling of engagement, of a music that disturbs rather than entertains, combined with the technical notion of thematic development, led to the almost universal critical concept of the anthropomorphic subject, the musical theme that acts as a dramatic protagonist whose tribulations and triumphs comprise for the listener a deeply engaging psychological process. The continuing presence of this scenario in analytical and critical thought about music is one measure of our debt to Hoffmann.

V

Thanks to Charlton's efforts, English-speaking scholars and students now have a convenient window on the activities of one of the most influential figures in the history of modern musical thought. Charlton's editorial presence permits the reader to assume a relaxed yet purposeful gait, somewhere between the systematic crawl of the scholarly reference work and the serendipitous meandering of a suggestive anthology. The texts are not burdened with a suffocating mass of obsessive scholarship; the annotations are generally just enough to stimulate further thought and to point in interesting directions. Although specialists will perhaps wince at the inevitable discussions of the influence of Wackenroder,

³²From "Beethoven's Instrumental Music."

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Novalis, and Diderot's *Neveu*, and readers of German will be initially affected by a curious feeling of decompression when reading Hoffmann in English, there is no doubt that any and every peruser of these pages will carry home some valuable new insight into musical life and thought in the early nineteenth century.³³

Perhaps the most important service Charlton performs as critical editor is the cross-referencing of ideas from Hoffmann's musical writings with those which arise in his literary works—particularly in the novellas on musical themes, such as "Don Juan," "Ritter Gluck," "Rat Krespel" and "Die Fermate." These supremely imaginative works should really be read in conjunction with the musical writings, and Charlton has fashioned an edition of these writings which is readily compatible with Hoffmann's literary output. Students of this edition will know what to read and why.

The case of E. T. A. Hoffmann demands a balanced assessment of his critical, aesthetic, and literary writings; all of these modes of discourse work together in his musical thought. Hoffmann's *œuvre* also stands as a microcosm of the leading pattern of the entire age, for, as Dahlhaus has argued, the prehistory of Romantic music aesthetics emerged in German novels of the late eighteenth century.³⁴ For Dahlhaus, there is no evidence that such novels merely expressed an existing, if tacit, aesthetic; they in fact created the aesthetic. "In other words: literature about music is no mere reflection of what happens in the musical practice of composition, interpretation, and reception, but rather belongs, in a certain sense, to the constituent forces of music itself."³⁵ As critics, we can no longer afford to consider music as an independent language, especially in the age of Hoff-

mann, when, paradoxically, the idea of music as an independent language first took hold.

German literature's glorification of music found a leading figure in E. T. A. Hoffmann, the Romantic poet/composer. Yet he proved to be more a will o' the wisp than a guiding beacon, appearing at times amidst his seething fantasies as a desultory caricature of the Romantic artist.³⁶ His life embodied that unlikely alliance peculiar to the German character—the paradoxical combination of officious *Gründlichkeit* with the capacity for boundless fantasy and abstraction. In the fairy tale worlds of his stories, as well as in the musical thought of Johannes Kreisler, childlike wonderment cringes with the fear of insanity, and the artist brushed with the presence of the divine returns to brutalize the stay-at-home philistine. Hoffmann clearly offers enchantment with an edge; the man who to a large degree created the role of the musical genius fashioned a fantastical realm for this brave new figure out of his own sharp loss of a sense of place.

³³Some other areas of interest in these writings which I have not discussed include early nineteenth-century performance practice, the role of the critic, and the tremendously important part played by Hoffmann in the formation of Romantic opera and its critical reception. Charlton's copious annotations to Hoffmann's *The Poet and the Composer* make it abundantly clear that the writings of Hoffmann can help reconstruct this particular chapter of the history of operatic theater.

³⁴Dahlhaus singles out Karl Philip Moritz's *Andreas Hartknopf* and Jean Paul's *Hesperus* in this regard; see Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, p. 63.

³⁵*Ibid.*



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CHAPTER 2

Criticism, Faith, and the *Idee*: A. B. Marx's Early Reception of Beethoven

We owe to Adolph Bernhard Marx perhaps the most self-effacing words Beethoven ever directed to a music critic. In a letter dated 26 September 1825, the composer asks his Paris publisher, Maurice Schlesinger, to remember him to Herr Marx in Berlin and then playfully entreats Marx, through Schlesinger, to "let him off the hook once in a while."¹ Earlier in the same

year, Beethoven had written to Maurice's father, the renowned Berlin publisher Adolph Martin Schlesinger, expressing his fervent hope that Marx would continue to reveal the higher aspects of the true realm of art.²

These enthusiastic acknowledgements of Marx's critical writings come only a year and a half after Marx was hired by Schlesinger *père* to act as editor-in-chief of the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, a new periodical which the publisher hoped would offer a serious challenge to the then popular *Leipzig allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. Schlesinger's selection of Marx was an inspired gamble, as the young legal practitioner and would-be composer had no journalistic experience whatsoever and had

I would like to thank David E. Cohen, Tina Muxfeldt, Allan Keiler, and James Hepokoski for their kind attentions and helpful observations along the course of this study.

¹"Bey dieser Gelegenheit ersuche ich Sie mich bey H. Marx in Berlin zu emphelen, daß er es ja nich[t] zu genau mit mir nehme u. mich zuweilen zur Hintertür hinausschlüpfen laße" (26 September 1825, to Maurice Schlesinger). In addition to its inclusion in the standard collections of Beethoven's letters, this letter is found in *Ludwig van Beethoven und seine Verleger: Ihr Verkehr und Briefwechsel*, ed. Max Unger (Berlin, 1921), p. 92.

²"Ich wünsche, daß [Marx] stets fortfahre, das Höhere und Wahre Gebiethe der Kunst immer mehr u. mehr aufzudecken, diess dörfte das blossе Silbenzählen wohl nach u. nach in Abnahme bringen" (19 July 1825, to A. M. Schlesinger). *Ibid.*, p. 89.

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published only one substantial essay, an appreciation of E. T. A. Hoffmann as a musician.³ Inexperience notwithstanding, Marx was responsible for a number of impressive achievements during the seven-year run of the Berlin periodical, not the least of which was the confident foundation of an ambitious new program for music criticism, one which was to demand a more spiritual reception of musical artworks. This aspect of Marx's criticism brought him the attention and approval of Beethoven himself, who saw in Marx's approach an antidote to those less imaginative strains of criticism which insist on "counting syllables."⁴

Already in the essay on E. T. A. Hoffmann, Marx sounds the theme that was to provide the basis for his critical agenda: the need for a subjective and artistic mode of criticism, in contrast to scientific and/or philosophical approaches. Marx lauds Hoffmann as a fearless pioneer in this direction and characterizes the latter's critical method as an artistic rebirth of the artwork in the soul of the interpreter, who then gives out an image of the work as he sees it.⁵ The criterion for understanding an artwork is therefore some sort of spiritual communion, and Marx would later conclude that the scientific demonstration of a work's technical features is only a lower stage of artistic understanding.⁶ The new seat of judgement is the spirit in its totality, and artistic understanding thus makes a claim for autonomy in an intellectual environment that had long been convinced of the sovereign power of scientific understanding. But the autonomy Marx claims for artistic judgement is not to be confused with the various philosophical attempts to establish a basis for aesthetic judgement or for the aesthetic response, despite Marx's language and the powerful influence of Prussian idealism.

Ever since Eduard Krüger's assessment of Marx's composition treatise in the *Neue*

Zeitschrift für Musik of 1842, it has been assumed by many critics that Marx's musical thought represents a specialized appendix to the aesthetics of Hegel.⁷ In this paper I will attempt to show that Marx's early aesthetics are motivated by contemporary philosophical thought only to a limited extent, and that Marx's conception of artistic understanding, the core of his critical program, is based largely on his personal identification with the dramatic coherence of the music of Beethoven. Marx attests to the strength of this identification by framing the critical act in terms not unlike those of a religious experience. On the other hand, it will be seen that his self-styled explication of the spiritual basis of music, embodied in the much discussed concept of the *Idee*, is directed in part by the aesthetic assumptions of German Romanticism and by the moral aspirations of the age.

I

A large part of Marx's critical program may be gleaned from the writings of 1824 alone, the initial year of the Berlin periodical. In fact, almost all of the major issues which were to concern Marx throughout his career are already present in these early writings, and while Marx believed he was heralding the critical stance of a new music periodical in 1824, he was at the same time enunciating the program for his own career as a musical thinker. Marx's introductory article, entitled "Concerning the demands of our age on music criticism," indulges in the declamatory rhetoric of the manifesto.⁸ Its title alone implies a basic shift in thinking from that prevalent in late eighteenth-century music aesthetics: works now make demands on critics, instead of vice versa. Marx was convinced that music was finally coming of age in the early nineteenth century and that the badge of this belated maturation was music's new found ability to express ideal content.

According to Marx, the so-called ideal period of music formed the highest stage of a three-stage process of musical development whose earlier stages were culminated by Bach and Mo-

³This essay was solicited by Marx's friend Julius Eduard Hitzig as an appendix to his publication of the poet's *Nachlaß* ["Zur Beurtheilung Hoffmann's als Musiker," E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Leben und Nachlaß*, 2 vols. [Berlin, 1823], II, 358–75].

⁴See n. 2.

⁵Marx, "Zur Beurtheilung," pp. 368ff.

⁶Marx, "Etwas über die Symphonie und Beethovens Leistung in diesem Fache," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (hereafter *BamZ*) 1 (1824), 183.

⁷Eduard Krüger, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 17 (1842), 25ff. See n. 22 below for some recent critical appraisals of Marx which involve Hegel.

⁸Marx, "Über die Anfo[r]derung unserer Zeit an musikalische Kritik" *BamZ* 1 (1824), serialized in the first three issues, 2–4, 9–11, and 17–19.