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Review Article

Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist, eds. *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

A perennial problem for scholars of music that is not part of the great Germanic tradition is the long-standing dominance in musicology of Germano-centric discourse. This is an especially sensitive point in studies of music and spectacle in France, for German criticism of Gallic productions as 'light', 'frivolous', 'pleasant' – and hence inconsequential and unworthy of study – is a tradition that dates back to the first stirrings of a German Romanticism set in opposition to the vision-centred concerns of French Enlightenment aesthetics. Already in 1775, Christoph Martin Wieland's Weimar periodical *Der Teutsche Merkur* inveighed against 'französischer Schaum' (French fluff) on the German stage.[1] Migrating through the works of Jean Paul, where it was set in opposition to 'deutsche Hefe' (i.e. the organic metaphor), the idea of German 'depth' was constructed against a superficiality that was markedly French.[2] The concept entered the realms of music criticism more directly in 1827, when Carl Friedrich Zelter alerted Goethe that he had detected 'französischer Schaum' floating on the surface of Bach's otherwise thoroughly German music.[3] When pressed by Goethe, who asked Zelter to explain how to separate the inner Germanness (*deutschen Grundelement*) from the outer Frenchness, Zelter retracted his accusation, explaining that it was impossible to skim the French foam from Bach's music, for Bach's genius had so transformed it that it had become 'like the ether, omnipresent, yet ungraspable' – and therefore sublime. Any recognisable Frenchness was merely a by-product of the constraints of Bach's time; as Zelter told Goethe, 'all men had to be French then, if they wanted to live'. Bach might have been a victim of his context, but he managed to rise above it. However, the seeds of the idea that French music (or indeed, anything that was not expressive of German aesthetic values) was superficial had been sown, only to flourish across the nineteenth century and beyond.

I begin with this tale because it underscores many of the themes present in these three volumes. Benjamin Walton's *Rossini in Restoration Paris* examines the moment at which German Romantic thought (such as that expressed by Goethe and Zelter) entered the Parisian imagination, affecting not only the status and conception of French music, but the historiographical position of Rossini. Sarah Hibberd's *French Opera and the Historical*

[1] The phrase was applied to G. F. W. Grossmann's 1775 *Wilhelmine von Blondheim*. *Der Teutsche Merkur*, 11 (1775), 173. Notably, Grossmann had been raised in the Francophile environment of Berlin and eventually settled in Hanover, a city that had long enjoyed French theatre.

[2] Jean Paul [Johann Friedrich Richter], *Freiheitsbüchlein* (Tübingen, 1805), 76. For a fuller discussion of these ideas, see Holly Watkins, 'From the Mine to the Shrine: The Critical Origins of Musical Depth', *19th-Century Music*, 27 (2004), 179–207.

[3] The exchange is related in Dominik Sackmann, '"Französischer Schaum und deutsches Grundelement" – Französisches in Bachs Musik', *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, 28 (2006), 81–2.

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Imagination focuses on the new genre of the July Monarchy, *grand opéra*, and its place within a world inflected by transformations in historiographical concepts imported from Germany. The essays of *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer* illustrate the ways in which studies of the French lyric stage have moved beyond viewing it as a mere by-product of an unfortunately French context, opening up such studies even further through the application of a critical term that was the product, not of Franco-German antagonism, but (for a change) of cooperation.

The idea of 'Rossini'

Heinrich Heine, reflecting in 1837 on the relationship between music, society and politics in France, mused that 'the Restoration was the moment of triumph for Rossini, when even the stars in the sky, at that time with leisure and scarcely concerned with people's destinies, listened to him with delight' (quoted by Walton on p. 3). The contours of Heine's account have remained in place ever since, Walton notes in *Rossini in Restoration Paris*, and are easily observable in later scholarship on the period and its foremost composer (4–5). The lethargic Restoration – the only regime under which Rossini could have flourished in Heine's opinion – was but an unfortunate detour on the road to French modernity. As such, Rossini's undeniable popularity was easily attributable to the shallow tastes of the era, and therefore unworthy of serious study. Rossini, constructed by Heine as merely a seductive melodist, was nothing but an ear-tickler who spoke no universal truth.

For Walton, Heine's comment serves as a productive starting point, as it encapsulates both what the idea of 'Rossini' was and what it became – a symptom of Adornian Zeitgeist and the negative end of the Dahlhausian 'twin styles'.[4] Rossini's music was indeed an expression of Restoration society, Walton's primary thesis tells us; however, the composer's popularity derived not just from pretty melodies or frivolous audiences, but 'from the perception of his music as an audible symbol of romantic modernity at a time when the nature of this modernity was strongly contested' (5). Walton self-reflexively notes that

> for such an argument (like most arguments about the relationship between music and society) to move beyond the platitudinous, it is necessary to recapture the types of historical detail that can offer hints of how the idea of 'Rossini' – as man, musical experience, compositional voice and symbolic presence – functioned within the second half of the 1820s, the period that saw the transformation of Rossini's style and the consequent 'revolution' of French opera, marking the beginning of the *grand opéra* tradition. (5)

Detailing the paradigm shifts that occurred over the course of the 1820s, Walton sheds new light on the struggles to define this modernity musically, on the professionalisation of music criticism, and on an emerging distinction between audiences of musically educated connoisseurs and the 'rabble'.

In order to reconstruct the moments before the common image of Rossini solidified – in other words, to challenge a master narrative – Walton devotes one chapter to each of the composer's six years in Paris. Such a temporally narrow focus allows Walton to

[4] According to Adorno, 'music will be the more true and substantial the further it is removed from the official zeitgeist; the one of Beethoven's epoch was represented by Rossini rather than by him.' Theodor Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, 1998), 46; quoted by Walton on 4. On the 'twin styles', see Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), 8–15.

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explore in great detail the rapidly shifting patterns of Rossinian reception in order to 're-conceive the relationship between opera and life outside the opera house at the time', thereby 'collapsing notions of "text" and "context" into a kaleidoscope of moments that together define the creation of a recognisably modern musical culture in Paris' (9).[5] Kaleidoscopic, too, is the range of sources Walton draws upon to construct his tale, from published reviews to police reports, censors' comments to caricatures. His insistence on narrating 'in the present tense' (21) means that Walton avoids the trap of causal histories that search for the backgrounds to a pre-defined end goal. Indeed, the vagueness of his central thesis combined with an eclectic (and hence, judicious) approach permits a variety of alternatives to the master narrative of Rossini to emerge.

One overall arc of Walton's narrative is the changes in French Romanticism – and hence in notions of modernity – over the course of the later 1820s, and how these played out in the reception of Rossini's music. Around the time of Rossini's arrival in Paris in 1824, there was a shift from nostalgic royalism to 'a coalition of liberal politics and romantic innovation brought from Italy by Stendahl' (11). As Walton shows in his first chapter, when Stendahl declares 'Il vivo lampo' to be 'perfectly new', this 'newness' is but a substitution for 'modern', and hence (in Stendahl's view) 'romantic' (63). This same 'newness' returns in Walton's second chapter, which details the gulfs between the two Frances – one nostalgically royalist, the other modern, republican and romantic – that come into view at the musical celebrations for Charles X's coronation. Here, Walton stresses the aesthetic standard of 'truth', the criterion by which the coronation celebration was judged (see esp. 86–92). 'Truth' became gradually more significant as Parisian audiences were confronted with ever noisier and extreme forms of music and representation, as in Rossini's *Moïse* (Chapter 4). The perceived failure of the visual aspects in *Moïse*'s staging, in Walton's assessment, opened up a space in which music was revealed 'as if for the first time, as an expressive power in its own right' (208). But critics and audiences lacked the words with which to describe this music; reviews described its physical effects on its hearers, acknowledging the power of the music, yet troubled by its confusing modernity (207–8).

The story of how people acquired that critical vocabulary, and how it eventually led to the crystallisation of the rift between Beethoven and Rossini (Dahlhaus's famous 'twin styles'), is the subject of Walton's fifth chapter, and may be the most significant contribution of this book to wider music scholarship. François-Joseph Fétis's bold statement that the 1828 performance of 'Eroica' at the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire* would be 'remembered as a great day for the splendour of French music, the moment of its rebirth' (quoted on 213) has often been uncritically accepted as a description of the moment when the French finally learned to be serious. But performances, performance style and public opinion did not change overnight. Walton argues that it was because Parisian audiences' ears had been 'shaped by the music of Rossini', specifically, the challenging music of Rossini's latest productions at the Opéra, that Beethoven's music was so successful in 1828, when it had previously made little headway (219–20).

[5] Walton is clearly aware of what is at stake behind 'contextualisation', a concept inherited from the philologically-centred musicological past. One critical difficulty that might be perceived in 'text vs. context' (though Walton does not state it as such), is that it is a false binary, and from there it is but a small step to other, more familiar binaries of inner vs. outer, work vs. world, aesthetics vs. society, Self vs. Other. Additionally, if a musical work can be seen as a text that is meaningless until it is contextualized, it follows that the work is indeed autonomous.

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Referring to a wide variety of accounts, Walton demonstrates that audiences for Beethoven's Fifth favoured the symphony's finale because it 'sounded like' the immensely popular Act III finale of Rossini's *Moïse*; for example, the transition into the last movement 'works much like a reimagined Rossini crescendo' (222). And, despite Beethoven's later role as the great hero of absolute music, most of the concerts in Beethoven's first Paris season featured his vocal music, thus establishing another clear link with the Rossinian world (226). In this way, the concerts at the Conservatoire in 1828 devoted to the music of Beethoven do not appear as the 'sudden symphonic triumph of Beethoven Hero', as the story is most often told, but rather as the 'triumph of exciting performances of certain works by Beethoven when they sounded most like recent Rossini' (227).

If for a brief moment Beethoven and Rossini sounded alike, the fine balance between them would not last because of the 'changed institutional context in which their music was heard' (234). Walton traces the triumph of the Beethovenians through A. B. Marx's application of Hegel's world spirit to German music (as constructed against Rossini), to the ideas of Kant and Hegel transmitted to Paris by Victor Cousin's immensely popular lectures at the Sorbonne, to the translation of works by Weber and Hoffmann that finally provided a metaphysical musical vocabulary (247ff.). It is this development of a musical-critical language which Walton signals as having contributed most to the cementing of the difference between the two composers (255). The professionalisation of music criticism in the 1820s would lead to aesthetic experience becoming codified, fixed, predetermined, sanctified and controlled. The metaphysical filter of Romanticism (or *Romantik*) removed Rossini from the realms of the 'emotionally shattering', leaving behind only the popular Rossini 'of catchy tunes and bouncy melodies', the negative end of the 'twin styles' (235).

While Walton's overall aim is to defamiliarise a master narrative of music history, one of the successes of this book is that he does not replace it with another, thus avoiding the substitution of 'Rossini as uncriticisably great' for 'Rossini as trivial' (301). This book's success depends in part, of course, on there having been a master narrative in the first place, a fact which Walton recognises (see 9–10 and 300–1). But this should not prevent his readers from appreciating the new kinds of understanding that obtain from Walton's comprehensive approach. The level of detail Walton presents, his careful explanation of historical events, societal trends and listening practices, his close readings of musical moments, his clear positioning of individual actors, all make for satisfying reading and a new perspective on a 'forgotten decade'.

Spectacular politics

While Heine had suggested in 1837 that the grands operas of Zelter's student Meyerbeer provided a fitting soundtrack to the inclusive aspirations of the July Monarchy because they represented 'the suffering and joys of all humanity' (quoted by Walton on 3), by 1851 Wagner had famously condemned the genre as 'effects without cause'. Wagner's dismissal, originating in an anti-Semitic (and jealous) polemic against Meyerbeer in *Oper und Drama*, has coloured reception of the genre ever since, largely through uncritical repetition of the phrase and replication of its attendant values by scholars and laymen alike. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the genre's maturity and 'perfection' has been attributed to Meyerbeer, but only because certain elements of his composition have been judged to gesture forward to the works of Wagner or Verdi. The compositions of others, such as Daniel Auber or Fromental Halévy, continue to be seen as so derivative and

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backward-looking that it is not even necessary to examine their scores, for the highlights 'are sufficiently well displayed by analysis of their librettos'.[6]

Another feature of the genre that condemned it to the dustbin of (canonical) history is its preoccupation with historical subjects, often interpreted as expressive of political realities. Traditionally, as Hibberd tells us in *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*, the genre's staging of history has been read as 'symptomatic of the precariousness of post-Revolutionary monarchical legitimacy' and an inability to come to terms with the recent past (6). The genre was thus constructed as simultaneously unable to rise above its own historical present while providing a spectacular diversion from it – and so doomed as incompatible with dominant notions of Great Art. Later attempts to justify grand opera's historical presence tended to focus on 'establishing an intended – singular – political "meaning", reconciling any interpretative ambiguity' (6).[7] Because of the assumed institutional profile of the Opéra as a bastion of conservative elites, this singular message has usually been constructed as supported by traditional aristocrats or challenged by the new bourgeois constituency (or by librettists themselves).

Hibberd's study works against such inherited preoccupations by re-centring musical and visual elements as essential to the creation of diverse and often competing meanings, paying particular attention to the end-of-act tableaux and melodramatic (often cataclysmic) conclusions. She thus builds on recent scholarship which challenges one-way political interpretations by studying the divergent social profiles of grand opera's creators and audiences, as well as the multiple significances of staging, gesture and costume.[8] And rather than dismissing the historical aspects of the genre, she embraces them, in what is arguably the most novel feature of this book. Hibberd's overall goal is to deepen knowledge of the genre's engagement of history by placing it into dialogue with emergent trends in French historical writing of the time.

History, or at least the telling of it, is indeed the primary point of departure for her own readings, for, as she insists, 'the most important tool in creating and accessing such "meanings" in this period was the example of history' (12). In 1825 alone, she notes, an estimated 40 million pages of history were printed in Paris, written by historians whose own political opinions diverged ever more significantly as the 1830s progressed (13). What both the left and the right recognised, she explains, was that history writing must appeal to the imagination. Her primary interlocutor is historian Jules Michelet, whose rhetorical strategies and choice of subjects she sees as being strikingly parallel to those of the creators of grand opera (16). She notes that Michelet, like the architects of opera, was criticised for his panoramisation of the past; his reliance on visual imagery in his writing was seen as an overtly populist move that diminished the 'seriousness' of the historical profession. By contrast, Hibberd sees Michelet (and by association, grand opera's authors), as 'determined to produce a history that was truly "engagée", that had a function in a modern society arguably founded on a "politics of memory" rather than on a shared political culture' (16). She relates this imaginative quality to her chosen genre by positing

[6] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago, 1998), 15–16; quoted by Hibberd on 3. Hibberd notes that Gerhard's study, first published in German in 1992, has been seen as the most influential book on the genre to appear in the recent decades.

[7] On this point, see also Fauser and Everist's introduction to *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer*: 'the music of the French lyric stage came to be validated on the basis of its historical place, especially when it could be interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as a metaphor for the state' (3).

[8] See her overview of recent scholarship, 6–9.

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that grand opera 'sought to bring the past alive not only by embracing the emotional impact of music and *mise-en-scène* – its affect – but also by a self-conscious mode of representing history' (12). Nevertheless, at times it is not clear where the agency which she attributes to the operas under discussion (including in the sentence just quoted) comes from.

Each of her chapters focuses on a particular opera and explores an attribute of the genre through its manner of presenting history and its engagement with a topical political event or issue (summarised on 17), supported by close readings of moments in the works, reviews (though unfortunately quotations are given only in translation), and especially illustrations of the spectacular scenes so often considered to be at the heart of grand opera. Thus, Auber's *La Muette de Portici* occasions reflections on popular voice and revolution in a manner that presents history as unfolding events; the suspended moment of the ball scene in Auber's *Gustave III* engages with memories of regicide; Niedermeyer's *Stradella* enacts the sonic experience of history amidst discourses of religion and authenticity; popular song in Halévy's *Charles VI* leads to the linking of patriotism with a view of history as cyclical; and Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* spectacularly stages the prophetic (and utopian) side of socialism.

Particularly enlightening is Hibberd's discussion of the complicated nature of critics' responses to the potentially political features of works. Hibberd's first chapter, on the critical reception of *La Muette de Portici*, engages with the wide variety of discourse about revolution that accrued to this work. Discussing not just the work's premiere in 1828 but also an 1837 revival allows Hibberd to consider 'both the intensity of revolutionary experience and more pragmatic reflection on its aftermath', and so illuminate 'France's evolving relationship with the past' (21). Hibberd shows that critics of *La Muette*'s pre-July Revolution premiere were extremely reluctant to engage with any potential political dimension of the work, and yet when the opera was revived in 1837, the opera's perceived revolutionary overtones were the primary focus of discussion. Some critics even 'remembered' a politicised response to the premiere (51). Later commentators further collapsed the distinctions between the time of the opera's premiere and the revolution of 1830. This 'revolutionary' construct of *La Muette* resulted in a shift of focus on the part of critics from adoration of Fenella – who was by far the most discussed character of the opera in 1828 – to fascination with Masaniello, reconceived as a revolutionary hero.

The need for, and value of, acknowledging multiple and often conflicting possible political interpretations of historical grand opera is amply illustrated in Hibberd's chapter on *Gustave III*.[9] Eugène Scribe and Auber's self-consciously styled *opéra historique* of 1833 provided a vision of an historical event with political, revolutionary overtones that staged history in a way that resonated with audiences of all political persuasions. As Hibberd demonstrates, critics at the time – and modern scholars as well – identified a myriad of allusions to French history in their writings on the opera, from the *ancien régime* right up to the July Monarchy. More tellingly, Hibberd emphasises the fact that the Parisian critics were 'generally agreed that the political resonances were forgotten in the unprecedented magnificence of the ball scene that was the highlight of the opera' (58). The dissolving of politics into spectacle not only marks what Hibberd identifies as a defining characteristic of Auber and Scribe's aesthetic, but also underscores the complicated nature of the relationship between politics, history and spectacle in the Paris of 1833, a time when the nature of historical 'truth' itself was being questioned.

[9] This chapter is an expansion of her essay in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer*.

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The implication that spectacle somehow negates politics certainly challenges widely held views about political interpretations of works, perhaps returning the genre, disturbingly, to the vapidity of which some critics have accused it. But it may be that such a quality was necessary for the varied audience of the Opéra, and for the shifting nature of French alliances at the time. For example, *Charles VI*, a libretto by the famous patriot Casimir Delavigne and his brother Germain set by Halévy, was censored for being *too* patriotic, and thus a potential threat to fragile Anglo-French diplomatic relations at the time (121). Despite such governmental interventions to tone down the rhetoric, some critics still insisted on seeing *Charles VI* as a rallying cry against the British. Hibberd attributes such reactions in part to Halévy's striking use of historical and patriotic *chansons*, which she argues can be understood as promoting 'a collective (national) spirit, revealing the influence of history and politicizing it' (129). *Charles VI* thus establishes an emotional connection with the past (151) which neither foregrounded nor denied the gulfs among various segments of Parisian society in 1843. In fact, the very social ambiguity of *Charles VI* may be seen as a 'promotion of a broader sense of French identity' (151).

But was the audience of the Opéra homogenously French? One might think so, given Hibberd's attention to domestic French struggles. While her discussion of the details of historical writing during the July Monarchy is colourful and interesting, she might have given further indication of how the identity politics of the time informed what happened on the stage, and how real individuals with different agendas reacted to and engaged with these environments. In reading Hibberd's chapter on Niedermeyer, Deschamps and Pacini's *Stradella*, for instance, I learned much about the struggles of the Gallican Church and Rome, but came away with the feeling that all France must have been somehow Catholic (certainly not true, for one of the great outcomes of the first revolution was religious freedom for Protestants, and in fact the new generation of liberal historians discussed by Hibberd – including Michelet – often came from Protestant backgrounds). Also, though Hibberd does make an excellent case for reincorporating music into discussions of grand opera, her own analyses of her lavish musical examples are sometimes frustratingly brief.[10] One has to conclude that Hibberd's book is best read by specialists in the field. For other readers, the book could have been much longer than its 183 pages (not including endnotes) in order more fully to explain the important, but too densely packed, points that she makes.

Rethinking institutions

The initial impetus for *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer* was a conference entitled 'The Institutions of Opera in Paris from the July Revolution to the Dreyfus Affair', co-organised by Annegret Fauser and M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet in 2004 (Mark Everist assumed the mantle of co-editor for this volume of essays after Bartlet's untimely death in 2005). The basic problem the editors identify, and which is apparent in the conference title itself, is that the default mode in nineteenth-century opera studies, and particularly those dealing with France, had been a highly centralised model, in which Paris with its great institutions was seen as attracting, acting on and shaping operatic raw material from other places. The seeming incompatibility of institutional convention and transcendental artistic creation led

[10] See, for example, the five musical examples at the centre of Chapter 3, which receive approximately one sentence apiece.

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the works of the French lyric stage to be judged as 'imprisoned by the conventions of their institutional context', as Fauser and Everist note (2).[11]

This is not to say that studying institutions is not a legitimate project; rather, Fauser and Everist advocate an approach (developed over the last thirty years) which recognises the interfaces, not the isolation, of institutions, musical production and reception. Such work has proved that 'institutional history can be pushed beyond the boundaries of the institution as a fixed context', revealing 'the fluidity and complexity of artistic and administrative agency, aesthetic meaning, and legal frameworks' (3). In particular, the editors argue for a focus on the people – the critics, censors, audience members, personnel and lastly (for a change) composers – who shaped the cultures of institutions and legitimised their actions by virtue of institutional authority. This focus on individual agency is indeed a refreshing feature of the volume's fifteen essays, as is the novel inclusion of a wide variety of theatres and genres.[12]

Two essays highlight the important roles performers played behind the scenes. Olivier Bara's essay on Jean-Baptiste Chollet and the Opéra-Comique, for example, insists on the centrality of the company of actor-singers in institutional studies, for performers were essential in shaping both genre and convention. This track is explored further by Steven Huebner, who demonstrates that the factor which soldered the link between *Carmen* and verismo was Emma Calvé. Calvé, who first sang Carmen just two years after the resounding success of *Cavalleria rusticana*, significantly altered Carmen's appearance and actions, introducing details and gestures that struck contemporary observers as particularly realistic (371). To enhance the sense of realism and authenticity, Calvé claimed that her performance was based on fieldwork she had conducted in Spain and emphasised her own Mediterranean roots. Such strategies did not merely ensure her fame and inspire composers to create veristic roles for her; Huebner speculates that Calvé's success in promoting her authenticity enabled her to continue taking great liberties in performance in an age when score-fidelity was on the rise, for her freedoms were 'justified by at least some critics with an aesthetic of realism, a combined quest for authenticity and originality' (376).

Diana R. Hallman, in her study of Halévy's administrative positions at the Opéra, reveals that work behind the scenes was both productive and counterproductive to his compositional efforts: productive, in that he achieved greater knowledge of the company's abilities and solidified his relationships with the artistic staff; counterproductive, in that he was accused of using his insider connections to ensure performance of his operas. The frequency with which Halévy's works appeared at the Opéra, despite governmental stipulations against such perceived favouritism, resulted in complaints from the interior ministry and negative criticism of Halévy in the press. Rather than further compromise his position as a composer, Halévy chose to resign his backstage posts.

The important mediating role played by music critics in the reception of works informs the essays of Peter Lamothe and Fauser. Lamothe highlights the agency of critics in making works comprehensible to audiences by ascribing genre – and hence generic expectation. Fauser reconsiders the critical reception of Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in Paris 1861, resoundingly demonstrating that it was Wagner's very foreignness that made him the perfect target for the poisoned pens of Parisian critics. As she shows, the overwhelmingly negative reception of *Tannhäuser* had much more to do with internal debates about

[11] Fauser and Everist implicate Carl Dahlhaus in particular; see his *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne, 1977), especially 12–33 on 'aesthetic presentism'.

[12] Space constraints will not enable me to discuss all of the essays here.

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the nature of French opera and the future of French music than it did with Wagner. Because Wagner was decidedly *not French*, he became a convenient whipping-boy for critics, who could lash out against what they perceived as negative trends in French opera without the risk of offending any French composer (and thus undermining the image of French music). In this way, Fauser illustrates that the debate about *Tannhäuser* 'became itself a performance, self-consciously styled as a key debate similar to the famous eighteenth-century *querelles*' (240), except this time the French and Italian styles, by virtue of their conversion into emblems of clarity and elegance, were united against a German invader. Yet, as Fauser stresses, the very vituperation of the French critics, with their near-hysterical denunciations of Wagner, discredited their own positions, and resulted in their damaging rather than preserving the tradition of French grand opera.

Another major theme of this volume is the ways in which theatrical agents negotiated governmental regulation – the infamous *cahiers des charges* which are often seen as an unquestioned example of the French government's power over the stage. Everist's essay explores Jacques Offenbach's clever manipulation of both his musical criticism and his theatrical licence in order to promote his Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens. Offenbach appealed to a sense of tradition and authority in his writings on music of the past, writings that displayed a bias towards works that fell just within the terms of his *cahier*. Particularly fascinating is Everist's account of Offenbach's attempts to perform Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Le devin du village* in 1856 (87–9). Various civil servants groped about for just about any reason to deny Offenbach's request, despite the fact that the work appeared to fit the theatre's licence perfectly. Everist reads the equivocal nature of the response Offenbach eventually received as demonstrative of the breakdown of the system, which encouraged Offenbach to further transgress his contract and broaden the repertory of his theatre, resulting in financial success.

The idea that governmentally subsidised institutions were anathema to artistic creation is roundly trounced by Katherine Ellis. Despite claims by composers and music critics that the highly touted *liberté des théâtres* introduced in 1864 would lead to a regeneration of French opera, the real effect was quite the opposite. Deregulation resulted first in a turn towards the classics and then toward *opéra bouffe*, defying the hopeful expectations of what *liberté* would mean for the French opera composers and high-brow music critics who had agitated for it. Government subsidies and the 'constraints' of the *cahiers* actually enabled the creation of new operas, Ellis finds, for such experiments were too financially risky in the deregulated zone.

Musicologists are mediators too, and this is nowhere more obvious than in Ralph Locke's essay on the transformation of Spanish materials in *Carmen*. Clearly establishing the sources for the Act IV *entr'acte* and then analysing Bizet's use of them, Locke demonstrates that the composer 'borrows not just motives and bars, but entire phrases and underlying musical processes, from Spanish music' (352). This evidence allows Locke to counter Susan McClary's charges of Orientalism in *Carmen* and give credence to James Parakilas's assessment that the score 'uses all the Spanish stereotypes and gives them all a serious twist', thereby 'putting real "soul" into the put-on Spain' (quoted on 351 and 353).[13] Curiously, Locke then makes a move that would seem to undermine his project. After proposing another reading of the *entr'acte* based on Bizet's sources, Locke breaks off to remark, 'This and other interpretive options I must leave hanging in the air. Other

[13] Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet: Carmen* (Cambridge, 1992), esp. 52; James Parakilas, 'How Spain Got a Soul', in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston, 1998), esp. 163–6.

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observers may propose equally valid readings, perhaps coloured by performances they have experienced of the entr'acte or of the opera as a whole' (353).

One might ask what makes a reading 'equally' valid – or valid at all – since Locke has just spent a considerable amount of effort into proving that McClary's was not. An answer might be found in his final statement within this section: 'when we find ourselves sensing the presence of a human soul – or *alma* or *âme* – in a work of art, are we not coming within hailing distance of the German *Geist* that, we are told, reveals itself in the greatest works of the Austro-German classicists?' (353) Are we to assume that Locke is here speaking tongue-in-cheek? Or is this a somewhat ambiguous attempt to justify his love for *Carmen* by referring to an ageing (and threatened) canonical mode in musicology, and thereby retrieve the master narrative as well? Or an effort to reclaim the very practice of multivalent close readings of musical works?[14]

Locke's move, though it might seem disingenuous, serves to draw further attention to the slipperiness of signification, interpretation and meaning-construction highlighted by the diverse essays of *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer*, and encapsulated by the critical construct in the title. 'Cultural transfer' is rather broadly defined by Fauser and Everist in their introduction as 'the transport of cultural materials from one domain to another', which 'seeks to explain the migration of sets of practices from one geographical position to another' (6). They identify a number of key themes in studies of cultural transfer: 'the focus on individuals rather than texts; the concept of *métissage* (cross-breeding) rather than confrontation; the disassociation of cultural-historical events from traditional political or military ones; and the idea that identity and difference are not contradictory but complementary' (6). Working against the 'now orthodox view of cultural transfer', which they characterise as applying 'only to regional culture' (6–7), they open out the term to include all kinds of transfers, between artistic domains, disciplines, institutions and even temporal locations.[15]

To aid their readers – especially those who have never heard of it before – in further exploring what 'cultural transfer' might mean, Fauser and Everist list a number of previous studies, though they do not note the position of those writings in the development of the concept. In fact, its development is worth addressing: the term is generally attributed to a German-French working group at the CNRS in the late 1980s led by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, which formulated this *problématique* as a means to avoid the foregone conclusion of 'influence' in comparative literary studies, as well as to shift scholarly attention away from nationally determined materials and modes of enquiry.[16] 'Transfer'

[14] See, for example, Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist's preface to *Rethinking Music* (Oxford, 1999): 'Multivalency – the acknowledgement of the possibly equal validity of multiple interpretations, adumbrated for the first time [in unpublished research] by Harold Powers in 1984 – itself seems almost to have emerged as a passing phase, to be replaced by the next critical position' (ix).

[15] In this, they echo the introduction to another recent collection of opera studies: Andrea Fabiano, ed., *A travers l'opéra. Parcours anthropologiques et transferts dramaturgiques, XVIIIe–XXe siècle. Études en l'honneur de Gilles Van* (Paris, 2007).

[16] The project was announced in Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, 'Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des CNRS', *Francia*, 13 (1985). First fruits were published in Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, eds., *Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle)* (Paris, 1988). A competing origins claim for the concept comes from linguistics: Mary Snell-Hornby points to a lecture given by Hans J. Vermeer in 1984, 'Übersetzen als kultureller Transfer' (published 1986). See her *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2006), 53.

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appealed because the word, in Espagne and Werner's evaluation, did not have 'a predetermined value'; rather, 'it implies the material displacement of an object in space'.[17] On a more practical level, as they note, 'transfer' proved useful because it did not present a translation problem between German and French.[18] The concept underwent further adaptation across the 1990s, particularly in the work of Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, whose text is now a classic in German scholarship on cultural transfer, and perhaps represents the 'now orthodox view' that Fauser and Everist mention.[19]

Fauser and Everist highlight the possibilities 'cultural transfer' opens up for exploring transformations of practices and works by real people (present in their own discussion, which uses words like 'transport', 'migration' and 'mediation' – terms which have their own bodies of literature), but it is not an unproblematic concept. Despite the success with which it has been deployed to disarm imperialism, the term has been criticised for not doing justice to a critical understanding of 'culture' (as noted by Fauser and Everist on 7).[20] Additionally, 'transfer' implies that one culture gives and another receives, suggesting another sort of complicated power dynamic and potentially leaving the door open to judging one culture as dominant.

This point may seem somewhat belaboured, but when a critical term appears in the title of a collection of essays, the reader tends to feel obliged to discover how the term is defined and applied throughout the collection. In the case of this volume, one is left with the impression that this sufficiently vague (but somehow meaningful) term was retroactively chosen in order to draw together a very diverse range of studies, most of which are marked by the institutional theme of the initial conference. Arguably, however, 'cultural transfer' does do what the editors presumably hoped it would: move studies of French lyric stage music further away from nationalistically-determined categories and toward considerations of the circulation of works and musicians throughout Europe which recognise the varying aesthetics of different locales. It just seems that these scholars had already achieved this goal without a need to appeal to the higher power of the *problématique*.

In reading (and re-reading) these volumes, I was struck by the sheer diversity of methods and materials brought to bear on a range of genres in multiple social and political environments, across a wide swathe of the nineteenth century (and beyond). Certain concerns were shared, however – most notably the continued engagement of spectacular studies with judgements and values inherited from a musicological past which valorised works of the Austro-German tradition above all others, and saw the composer's input as the only proper object of study. Politics, too, is an ever-prominent concern; the continued move

[17] Espagne and Werner, eds., *Transferts*, 5.

[18] Espagne and Werner, eds., 12.

[19] In German studies of *Kulturtransfer*, the now-classic text is Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, eds., *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1997). For its use in opera studies, see especially Arnold Jacobshagen, *Opera semiseria: Gattungskonvergenz und Kulturtransfer im Musiktheater*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft (Stuttgart, 2005), 71ff. This book is a revision of the author's *Habilitation* from 2002. Surprisingly, though Jacobshagen contributed to Fauser and Everist's volume, his work on 'cultural transfer' is not mentioned.

[20] Fauser and Everist cite Espagne's *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris, 1999) as a work that 'self-consciously reviews much work of the 1990s' (6n15). A more recent overview of criticism may be found in Béatrice Joyeux, 'Les transferts culturels. Un discours de la méthode', *Hypothèses* (2002). Joyeux, though in the end an apologist for the concept, argues for dropping 'culturel' from the equation, and simply discussing 'transferts' (158). She also notes the term's resemblance to current configurations of microhistory.

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away from attempting to ascertain political allegories in French opera (in particular) promises a wealth of scholarship in the future, for discourse begets discourse. Myth-busting and paradigm-shifting remain happy occupations for musicologists.

And yet, there is still a certain uneasiness – the latent residue of *Schaum*, perhaps – that troubles the surface of some of these studies, particularly those that deal with unfamiliar repertory or unknown agents. Walton seems immune to such twinges, perhaps because Rossini's place in the canon is now guaranteed; unforgettable *Carmen* can be assured to stir passionate response from Locke and others with little need for excuse. At other moments, though, one gets the sense that there is still some embarrassment about the desire to study the forgotten repertories of the French lyric stage, about the point of 'bringing the past to life', an unease that plays out in the repetition of tired metaphors, or the appeal to higher critical powers (especially those emanating from the land beyond musicology's misty borders), or even an eagerness to discover 'subversion' where it is only another version that exists.

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