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Recommended Citation

Dennis, David B.. "Honor Your German Masters": The Use and Abuse of "Classical" Composers in Nazi Propaganda. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 30, 2: 273-295, 2002. Retrieved from Loyola eCommons, History: Faculty Publications and Other Works,

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**“HONOR YOUR GERMAN MASTERS”:¹
THE USE AND ABUSE OF “CLASSICAL” COMPOSERS
IN NAZI PROPAGANDA**

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Journal of Political & Military Sociology, 2002, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter):273-295

*Recent scholarship on Nazi music policy pays little attention to the main party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, or comparable Nazi publications for the general public. Most work concentrates on publications Nazis targeted at expert audiences, in this case music scholars. To think our histories of Nazi music politics are complete without comprehensive analysis of the party daily is premature. Perusing articles and images that described every phase of Hitler's rise to power and the world war from the perspective of committed party members, one learns what Nazi propagandists wanted average party members and Germans in general, not just top-level officials and scholars, to think—even about music. Therein, we see how propagandists placed a Nazi “spin” on music history, musicology, and composers' biographies. Using heretofore untranslated materials, I have detailed the terms by which Nazi propagandists incorporated the tradition of eighteenth-century German music into their system of cultural symbolism. Specifically, this article surveys the *Völkischer Beobachter's* reception of Bach, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart. Above all, National Socialist reception exaggerated the proto-Romantic components of eighteenth-century music. In their view, everything led to the “Iron Romanticism” they conceived as the cultural basis for uniting the volkish community and girding it for battle against enemies both internal and external. Implicitly, this outlook constituted a rejection of the ideals of the Enlightenment, but it was nonetheless communicated in terms designed to use the music greats of the period for National Socialist propaganda.*

In recent years, much work has been done on the connections between music and politics in modern Germany. Particularly in the area of National Socialist culture, historians and musicologists have been investigating how music practices were associated with party and state propaganda. However, hampered partly by what some term a “conspiracy of silence” among persons who

¹ This exhortation, *Ehrt eure deutschen Meister*, from the finale of Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, was often inserted into articles about music in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

propagandists considered his music an important part of their program but I also learned why they considered it so and how they made it part of their campaign. Still, surveying recent literature on Nazi music policy, I notice a relatively low number of references to the *Völkischer Beobachter* and comparable Nazi publications for the general public; most work concentrates on publications targeted at expert audiences, in this case music scholars. To think our histories of Nazi *Musikpolitik* are complete without comprehensive analysis of the party daily is premature. Perusing articles and images that described every phase of Hitler's rise to power and the world war from the perspective of committed party members, one learns from this resource what Nazi propagandists wanted average party members and Germans in general, not just top-level officials and scholars, to think—even about music.

To insert more of these materials into our coverage of National Socialist music policy, I have examined every page of the *Völkischer Beobachter* from January 1920 through April 1945 in search of each major article it published on "serious" music.⁵ Based on these articles, one can survey the terms in which the *Völkischer Beobachter* discussed every famous composer in the European music tradition, highlighting the ways in which it related them to Nazi ideology and policies. To be sure, much writing about music in the *Völkischer Beobachter* was free of explicitly political content; many innocuous concert reviews appeared in its pages. In the sections I have given prominence, however, we see how propagandists could place a Nazi "spin" on music history, musicology, and composers' biographies in Weimar and then Nazi Germany. The conceptual pattern of this process was consistent: the composer was first demonstrated to have been of legitimate German racial stock and defended against suggestions to the contrary; the biography of each was assessed for signs of general *Deutschtum* (Germanness) or even better, *Volkstümlichkeit* (folksiness); specific anecdotes were presented to demonstrate the artist's patriotism, militarism, anti-Semitism, Francophobia, Anglophobia, or "support" of other Nazi principles; the music of each was assessed for its *Deutschtum* or *Volkstümlichkeit*, and above all, its inspirational power; finally, the *Völkischer*

⁵ I use the term "serious music" as a translation of the German *Ernstmusik* to indicate my focus on what is commonly known in American English as "classical" music, as opposed to *Unterhaltungsmusik* that would include more popular forms. By "major articles," I mean feature articles that assessed music or musician in some depth, not just concert reviews unless these treated a composition or composer in a unique way or described performances associated with landmarks such as birth or death anniversaries or pivotal events in German history.

confirms Wagner's enormous impact on National Socialism; virtually no major area of Nazi policy — cultural, social, economic, military, or racist — was addressed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* without some accompanying reference to Wagner's views on the matter.⁹

Besides Wagner's large profile, a second theme evident in the statistics above is the amount of attention given "Romantic" composers in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Setting Beethoven aside for the moment (as a "transitional" figure in the shift from classicism to romanticism in music), six of the "leading" composers in the list (Wagner, Bruckner, Schubert, Brahms, Weber, and Liszt) can be generally associated with the Romantic or Late-Romantic phases of music history, with four (Mozart, Bach, Handel, and Haydn) from the eighteenth century. This imbalance validates general assumptions about Nazi culture as having constituted, in large part, a Wagner-inspired neo-romanticism. That historians of National Socialist music politics have highlighted Nazi references to Wagner and other Romantic composers as models for an "Iron Romanticism" intended to fortify the Third Reich is fully justified. However, we should not overlook the fact that, as George L. Mosse articulated in his path-breaking work on volkish nationalism as a secular religion, "the classical tradition and romanticism did not merely confront each other within the rising spirit of national consciousness: [t]hey combined into a loose synthesis, or indeed co-existence, which was to determine the way Germans expressed their national spirit and its worship."¹⁰ Here, Mosse was addressing "classicism" as manifested in monuments and festivals originally designed for the "new politics" of the French Revolution. These cannot, of course, be correlated with so-called "classical" compositions of eighteenth-century music, but his statement does remind us not to underestimate the importance of pre-romantic music in Nazi culture. In order to explore this "loose synthesis, or indeed co-existence," therefore, I will present my findings about the *Völkischer Beobachter* reception

Rochester Press, 1998); and Lydia Goehr, *The Quest for Voice: Music, Voice, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁹ For more on Wagner reception in the *Völkischer Beobachter* specifically, see David B. Dennis, "The Most German of all German Operas: *Die Meistersinger* Through the Lens of the Third Reich" in Nicholas Vazsonyi, ed. *Wagner's Meistersinger: Performance, History, Representation* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, forthcoming).

¹⁰ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975) 33.

Fundamental to National Socialist implementation of Bach was the desire to transform him into a national hero, and this involved playing down his religious significance: "People have often referred to his work as the musical incarnation of Protestantism. In this way, it came to represent the musical component of the culture of Friedrich the Great's Prussian state. But it achieved much more outside the musical context. It provided the best proof in all Western musical history for the [possibility of] overcoming of artistic cosmopolitanism through the creed of nationalism."¹⁸ Referring to Bach's cantatas, the Nazi paper asserted that while they are "essentially liturgical," it would be a mistake to assume that their effect is "relevant only to church services." According to this appropriation of Bach's work for the secular religion of Nazism, the "tremendous impact of the cantatas is felt deeply," whether they are performed as part of Protestant liturgy or not.¹⁹

In a related point, the *Völkischer Beobachter* held that the Bach revival of the mid-nineteenth century was above all a nationalistic phenomenon. "The German Wars of Liberation, and the victorious emergence of a volkish view of life," brought about a "conscious aesthetic return" to Bach: "nationalist that he was, the effort to revive the works of a master so clearly German was natural during the era of the Karlsbad decrees."²⁰ It was certainly not Mendelssohn's involvement with the Bach revival that interested Nazi cultural politicians. Instead, they highlighted the Bach interpretation of their preferred nineteenth-century master, Richard Wagner, which prefigured many of their favorite themes. "If you want to grasp the wonderful originality, force, and significance of the German spirit in an incomparably eloquent image," Wagner wrote and the *Völkischer Beobachter* reprinted, "you should look long and hard on the otherwise almost inexplicably puzzling phenomenon of the musical *Wundermann*, J. S. Bach." His story alone constitutes a history of the "innermost life of the German spirit" during a "dreadful century in which the German Volk was completely extinguished." Out of nowhere, there appeared this "German head," though "hidden under a ridiculous French wig." It took almost a century to save his work from oblivion—and even then, "only in superficial terms, as a supposedly 'perfect' symbol of his era: dry, stiff, pedantic—like wigs and pigtailed represented in musical notes." But now, Wagner closed, one finally sees what a "world of inconceivable greatness" Bach formulated: "I can do no more than direct your attention to these creations, because *it is impossible to convey*

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Wilhelm Hitzig, "200 Bachkantaten im Rundfunk," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 8 December 1937.

²⁰ Buchner, Bach.

musicians were providing “power necessary to fulfill the duty of reconstructing our fatherland in the spirit of Bach and his time.”²⁷

According to Nazi interpreters, Bach was very conscious and explicit about the use of his works in political culture, especially “national festivals.” In Bach’s view, they maintained, “it belongs among the political duties of a good composer to ‘accommodate oneself to the conditions of the time, the place, and the audience.’” To justify claims about Bach’s political purposes, the *Völkischer Beobachter* reminded readers that the Brandenburg Concertos were “contributions to court concert music,” that the cantata *Du Friedensfürst, Herr Jesu Christ* arose “amid terrible wartime conditions in 1745,” and that “Bach’s *Musikalisches Opfer* owes its existence to the festive occasion of a visit by King Friederich [II].”²⁸

Thus did the *Völkischer Beobachter* deem Bach’s music a legitimate instrument for propaganda use, including performances of his Double Violin Concerto on the occasion of Hitler’s birthday in 1933 and at numerous festivals marked by commentary from Nazi leaders.²⁹ The most prominent of these were observances in 1935 of Bach’s two-hundred-and-fiftieth, Handel’s two-hundred-and-fiftieth, and Schütz’s three-hundred-and-fiftieth birthdays. For this celebration of the “Three Old Masters” (*Drei Altmeister*), Joseph Goebbels spoke at the Berlin Philharmonie as President of the *Reichskulturkammer*. Flanked by party banners, Goebbels used the occasion to convey his paradoxical goals of upholding the German music tradition while at the same time stimulating new music for the Third Reich. Insisting first that members of this trio were “German” not just because they “shared the blood of the German Volk” but because “their whole lives were a struggle to master the best forces of their Germanness,” Goebbels admitted that “it cannot be our job to return to the styles determined by the conditions of past centuries.” But, he held, “we must work every day to refresh the forces out of which our great masters created” while simultaneously “laying the foundations for every sort of musical development.” The “forms” of classical mastery were outmoded, but “their spirit lives”; external conditions change, “but the essence of Germanness remains constant—as long as the German Volk survives.” The “duty of every generation

²⁷ Josef Klingenberg, “Musik von Heldentum und Seelengröße,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14 July 1939.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ “Morgenfeier,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 19 April 1933.

composers and poets of the last century," the "phenomenon of creative exchange between peoples of nordic blood manifests itself in Handel." 34

To support these claims, the *Völkischer Beobachter* delved into the record of Handel's life abroad. Despite his forty-seven year stay in London, the newspaper reported, he "never became an Englishman," which is clear in the fact that he did not "trouble himself to master anything more than the barest essentials of the language of the land" and "only started using English texts for his oratorios in the last ten years of his life." A 1941 wartime article put these themes in stronger terms. Titled "Handel's Martyrdom in England," this broadside associated the composer with present-day Germans who had been living in foreign lands but were making their way back to the Fatherland during the conflict: "Along with the millions now returning to the Reich, there is one that we do not want to forget—one who, after a heroic half-century long battle at his lost outpost of German culture, fell. . . . Never has an artist of such brilliant, indisputable greatness had to fight his whole life against so much premeditated evil as Handel did in London—to the point of despair." 35

The *Völkischer Beobachter's* approach to Handel's music emphasized its potential as nationalistic propaganda for the Nazi community: "Handel always speaks to the community, to the *Volks-gemeinschaft*. If we are striving today to achieve a new ideal of a *Gemeinschaftsmusik*, we find the model in Handel and indeed already possess [examples] in his great orchestral works and oratorios." 36 Specifically and most intensively, the *Völkischer Beobachter* sought to wrench Handel's *Messiah* from its ostensibly British origins and transform it into a German nationalistic instrument. With the *Messiah*, the *Völkischer Beobachter* held, Handel "returned to the artistic sources of his homeland, to his memories of youth in Halle: to his experience of German chorales, cantatas, and passions during his earliest, most impressionable years in Halle, Weissenfels, and Hamburg. Thus did he construct the *Messiah* out of forms which arose from German tradition alone." Most importantly, the

34 Waldemar Hartmann, "Georg Friedrich Händel und England: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte nordischer Kulturverbundenheit," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 22 January 1935.

35 Friedrich Baser, "Händel's Martyrium in London," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 17 May 1941.

36 Mayer, Händel.

anthem, his attitude toward German lands during visits to England, and his "patriotic" death.

"The powerful German national consciousness of Haydn, which he always worked to preserve, becomes most clear in the fact that fate chose him to be the creator of the German national anthem. To be sure, he never dreamed of this when in 1796 he put the little tribute poem, *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser*, to music. But it was his singable and warm-hearted melody that later induced the poet Karl Wilhelm to give it a new text which disassociated it from any individual and—in short—encompassed the totality of Germanness, making out of it the German Volk hymn, *Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles*."⁴¹ Though written a dozen years beforehand, the *Völkischer Beobachter* perceived Haydn's *Volkshymne* as a "spiritual weapon against Napoleon's triumphant advance." For this reason it was, of all Haydn's creations, "his most significant work: whenever we are inspired by it, we should also think of the immortal genius whose greatest source of pride was always to be a *recht deutscher Mann*."⁴²

As further proof of Haydn's "powerful national consciousness," the *Völkischer Beobachter* printed a fictional account of the composer under the title "Haydn's Happy Hour." In conversation, Haydn pines for his *Heimat*: "My life is now like a deep, golden day in autumn. Now I would like to be home among Germans. . . . Yes, it first became apparent to me here in England how much I depend on my homeland." After saying this, according to the *Völkischer Beobachter* story, Haydn sat down at his piano and began to play: "This was not him, not his will, not his music: this was Germany. He lost himself in the sound that flowed over him as if from another world, . . . playing over and over the melody which insured his immortality," by which the *Völkischer Beobachter* meant, naturally, the tune of *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser*.⁴³

To his end, according to the Nazi view, Haydn proved himself a patriot and the *Völkischer Beobachter* supported this—its central claim about the composer—by underscoring the following anecdote. In the middle of May 1809, "as Napoleon occupied Vienna for the second time, sadness and anger filled [his] heart." On 26 May, he called all of his servants into his room, had himself taken to the piano, and "played his Volk hymn three times with an expressive

⁴¹ Paul Zschorlich, "Deutsche Komponisten aus dem Burgenland," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 8 January 1936.

⁴² Ludwig K. Meyer, "Ein recht deutscher Mann: Zum 125. Todestage Joseph Haydns," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 31 May 1932.

⁴³ Gustav Christian Rassy, "Die glückliche Stunde Joseph Haydns," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 August 1938.

of the ultimate wisdom." Mozart saw "beyond the borders that were set for his 'Italianate endeavors,' conceiving himself as a German musician in the best sense of the word."⁴⁷

In addition to its Germanic and supposedly patriotic origins, the *Völkischer Beobachter* perceived at least two further components of Mozart's music that made it relevant to National Socialist culture. The first was an underlying volkish quality: "What strikes us above all is its singability, its melodic character." Grounded on this "primal basis of music,"—melody—"Mozart's music stirs even the simplest people; it is not in the least addressed to experts." Nazi efforts to draw Mozart from the domain of elite culture opened with reference to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Therein he formulated a "refined German song style despite the Italian *buffo* element and in spite of the apparent influence of French *opéra comique*." This volkish tendency in Mozart's art was said to have culminated in *Die Zauberflöte*, where "the German-national thrust of the work," especially Papageno's melodies, were "dominated by the Volk tradition of the Vienna Singspiel, and strongly colored by local influences."⁴⁸

Second were his contributions to the development of Romanticism in music, which the *Völkischer Beobachter* emphasized to counter views of his art as a pinnacle of musical neo-classicism. Since he referred to composing as his "sole joy and passion," during which "ideas came in streams," Mozart represented a "prototype for the creative genius—and at the same time as a serious admonishment against our 'productive' times: music should be taken as a gift from the Godhead, not as a product of cool reflection or frantic intellectual work." Clearly this opinion of Mozart corresponded with the anti-intellectual, volkish themes of National Socialism in general. Moreover, Nazis perceived in their version of Mozart a counter-example to trends in modern music which they despised: "Our era"—the Nazi era—"which has just left behind an unfortunate period of horrible confusion in the areas of art, confesses itself with open heart to Mozart: whenever again art loses its sanity, it will return to health under the sign of Mozart." Instead of works from the New Viennese school, "produce Mozart's operas and you will commit not only a volkish, fatherlandish deed, but also fulfill an artistic need that is today greater than ever."⁴⁹

Above all, Mozart's patriotic impulse faced the challenge of promoting a National Opera. High Viennese culture—the center of "German" music life—

⁴⁷ Nobbe, "Mozart's Bluterbe."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Junk, "Genie." See also, H. B., "Zum Münchener Mozartfest," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 24 May 1923.

doing such a dastardly thing). Beyond this, the *Völkischer Beobachter* simply assessed Da Ponte's work as substandard—as the weak link in Mozart's creative process which the "German" composer had to overcome: "Mozart did not slip and fall on Da Ponte's shiny *Glitz*. He ennobled the frivolous text of *Figaro* by applying to it the reserve, refinement, and soulful depth of German music. Thereby did he provide the librettist a sort of unearned renown, in the shadow of his immortal genius."⁵⁵ It was concerns like these about Da Ponte that ultimately led to the establishment of the *Reichsstelle für Musikbearbeitung*, an office partly devoted to replacing the texts of "German masterworks" which happened to be written by persons of Jewish descent.

Written in Italian and set in Spain, *Don Giovanni* also required nationalistic rehabilitation for use in the Third Reich: "There is a tendency to misconstrue this work as 'European' or 'above nationality,' and yet it could only have arisen from a German nature."⁵⁶ In the pages of the Nazi paper, *Don Giovanni* was a proto-Romantic work—meaning, of course, German: "With firm grip," Mozart "seized hold of the darker motives of human passion"; thence, it was "only a short step to the Romantic." Here "strikes the first storm of the 'music drama,' which one Richard Wagner was destined to perfect";⁵⁷ *Fidelio*, *Freischütz*, and *Tannhäuser* "go forth on the path broken by *Don Giovanni*."⁵⁸

Ignoring that they also attributed this achievement to Handel, Karl Maria von Weber, and Wagner, *Völkischer Beobachter* writers commended Mozart for writing the "first German opera."⁵⁹ "Over night, as if out of nowhere, German opera emerged in its most perfect form: German above all is its tonality (*Tonsprache*), for all its sublimity, simple and richly sensitive; German is the *Lied* form making its first appearance in opera; German is the magically romantic impact of the music; German is the musical representation of

⁵⁵ Dr. B., "Festspiele im Münchener Residenztheater: *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 1 August 1928.

⁵⁶ Heinrich Stahl, "Geniale Männer über das Genie Mozart: 150 Jahre *Don Giovanni*," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 29 October 1927.

⁵⁷ "Festspiele im Residenztheater: *Don Giovanni*," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 17 August 1928.

⁵⁸ Dr. B., "*Don Giovanni*," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 6 August 1927.

⁵⁹ Mössmer, "Geburt." *Die Zauberflöte* was, according to their essays, "the work with which Mozart secured a place for his operatic art on every stage in the world. With it Mozart fixed his place in music history, and, as a German, gained victory over Italian opera which still dominated in his day" (G. A., "*Die Zauberflöte*," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 31 December 1929).

und Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels." On Mozart's *Todestag* proper, the main commemorative ceremony took place at the Vienna Staatsoper. After the Vienna Philharmonic performed a Mozart overture, Goebbels rose to give a speech which was later published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* under the title, "The German Soldier Is Also Protecting Mozart's Music." One could ask, Goebbels opened rhetorically, whether an official function marking Mozart's one-hundred-and-fiftieth *Todestag* is "appropriate in light of the brutal events of our day." He responded in the affirmative, "for Mozart's music belongs along with all of those things which our soldiers are defending against assault." More than any other works of art, it has "passed into the possession of the widest masses of our Volk." This, Goebbels continued, is why "we don't see any contradiction between the world of sound in which he lived and worked and the hard and threatening world we are experiencing, the chaos of which we want to transform into discipline (*Zucht*) and order." The Nazis' arch-propagandist closed by underscoring the composer's volkish qualities: "Mozart's importance is not confined to the fact that he was master of perfect musical form, only for privileged classes and art music experts to enjoy: he is a Volk artist in the truest sense of the word. . . . Volkish spirit thrives in all of his music." Like scarcely any other, Mozart "fulfilled the great mission of art: to raise the spirits of a tormented humanity and remove it to a better world." 64

On the day after this ceremony, another ritual in Vienna brought out Nazi luminaries again. In front of St. Stephan's Cathedral, representatives from eighteen nations gathered with the *Großdeutsch* leadership to lay another wreath. As reported in the *Völkischer Beobachter*: "By order of the Führer and Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, the *Reichsstaathalter* of Vienna, *Reichsleiter* Baldur von Schirach presented an olive wreath for the foot of a catafalque and memorial flame, expressing the reverence that the German Volk has for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart." Göring, Goebbels, von Ribbentrop, and von Schirach then placed the wreath, "while the sound of all the church bells of Vienna vibrated over the city in praise of a national immortal." Finally, fanfares derived from *Die Zauberflöte* sounded over the Stephansplatz "on which the population of Vienna had gathered under national flags—thus did [the Volk] pay homage to Mozart." 65

Of course, all ceremonies in Austria were represented by the *Völkischer Beobachter* as signs of "*Großdeutsch*" culture: "With the homecoming of the

64 Joseph Goebbels, "Auch Mozarts Musik verteidigt der deutsche Soldat," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 6 December 1941.

65 "Ein Kranz des Führers zum Gedenken Mozarts," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 7 December 1941.

intended to associate the N. S. D. A. P. with the highest strains of German and European culture. This endeavor can be related to the general goal of representing the Nazi leadership as a group capable of constituting a new political and social elite in Germany. In his book on art theft perpetrated by the Nazis both before and during the war, Jonathan Petropoulos detailed the motives driving the "gift and pillage" culture that operated at the leadership level of the Third Reich. In brief, acquiring art masterpieces was a means for Hitler's circle to establish stature both *vis à vis* the traditional elites of German society and also *vis à vis* other representatives of the "new order," supposed "comrades" with whom they were in constant, ruthless competition, especially for the Führer's attention.⁶⁹

Because the option of actually "possessing" musical compositions was less open to them (I have not read of Nazis stealing autographes or first editions, although this may have occurred), it is difficult to establish the personal motives of those interested in appropriating the German music tradition as clearly as Petropoulos did regarding art thievery. Histories of the competition among those who vied to control German music institutions demonstrate that personal status was a motivating factor. But in the matter of manipulating meanings ascribed to musical compositions themselves, motives of greed and conspicuous consumption are less evident than broader intentions of improving the reputation of the party as a whole. We encounter in these sources the interpretive equivalent of pillaging the German music tradition, but this is mainly done in the interest of the party, its Führer, and its ideological program broadly conceived. Appropriating the significance of musical masterworks was a means by which the *Völkischer Beobachter* increased the self-worth of anyone who was, or might be tempted to become, a member of the party.

This point may be plainer if we consider the populist tone of most *Völkischer Beobachter* music reception. In articles that blatantly politicized German composers, very little music analysis appeared. Even where discussion of technical issues is unavoidable, for instance in the cases of Bach's fugues or Haydn's contributions to sonata style, *Völkischer Beobachter* articles countered that, in the end, issues of "production" (a term the paper used in a derogatory way, apparently related to the "productive" thrust of late capitalism) were less significant than the "passionate" aspects of music composition, real or romantically imagined. This decidedly anti-intellectual approach to music correlated with other important themes of Nazi culture. On the one hand, criticism of formalist approaches to the arts as a lamentable tendency of

⁶⁹ Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press), 1996.

Semitism, duty, the Führer principle, rejection of modernism, militarism, justification for German hegemony, Anglophobia, Francophobia, and finally, national redemption after defeat in the Great War.

Let me close with a few comments about *Völkischer Beobachter* reception of composers associated with the “classical” era of music history in particular, defined here as running from Bach through Mozart. Regarding the creations of masters active mainly up to the nineteenth century, the sources indicate that—in comparison to “standard” views of the age—National Socialists either ignored or censured religious content (especially in Bach’s work), rococo “frivolity” (as in the music of Haydn and Mozart), any “international” themes (for instance extra-German influences on Handel, Haydn, and Mozart), and all “Enlightenment” aspects of eighteenth-century classicism. Clearest in the *Völkischer Beobachter*’s treatment of the Masonic aspects of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, the latter omission also seems related to Nazi tendencies to minimize the formal aspects of music and maximize its soulful, passionate, mystical—in a word, volkish—elements.

Above all, National Socialist reception exaggerated the proto-Romantic components of the eighteenth-century heritage—at least as represented in music. Throughout these articles and reviews, Nazis insisted on continuity between classical masters and the nineteenth-century Romantic composers whom they clearly preferred, especially Richard Wagner. Accepting Wagner’s own line wholeheartedly, they promulgated the claim that all paths of German musical development led to his formulation of music drama, the pinnacle of the tradition. Everything led to the Iron Romanticism they visualized as the cultural basis for uniting the *völkish Gemeinschaft* and girding it for battle against enemies both internal and external. Implicitly, this outlook constituted a rejection of the ideals of the *Aufklärung*, but it was nonetheless communicated in terms designed to salvage the masterworks of the period for National Socialist propaganda use.