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Review of Michael Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and their Music in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

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Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Pp. xv, 327. Cloth \$35.00.

Historians of music culture in the Third Reich often have to double as private eyes, responsible for extensive background checks when studying compositions, criticism, promotion, or scholarship from the period. Accurate and just assessment of such texts requires spadework as standard biographical sources covering the German music scene mysteriously pass over the National Socialist era. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* entry on composer Carl Orff, for example, omits that he produced major works between 1933 and 1945, including music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1939) to replace Mendelssohn's banned masterpiece. Similar omissions blur other records in *The New Grove Dictionary* and especially its German counterpart, *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.

Such gaps, which some attribute to a "conspiracy of silence" among scholars implicated in Nazi *Musikpolitik* yet influential since, have hindered efforts to survey the field. Kater's book rectifies this. Having already contributed important work on jazz in the Third Reich, he has painstakingly researched the personal histories of leading German purveyors of "classical" music and the conditions faced by less celebrated musicians. Indeed, one is tempted to copy Kater's portraits and paste them into the relevant sections of *The New Grove Dictionary* and *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Short of this, anyone interested in delving into the music history *noir* of the Nazi period must adopt this book as a reference tool. I can think of no other place in the secondary literature to ascertain that cellist Paul Grümmer dined with the Führer "at least once" or that bass-baritone Hans Hotter imitated Hitler's voice at a 1933 *Sylvesterabend* party (70).

Like a good detective Kater takes nothing at face value. He has sifted through all the pertinent information on each of the main musicians he covers -- including revelatory financial records -- before evaluating their complicity. Where possible, he has let individuals speak for themselves by eliciting direct interviews, contacting family members and friends, or opening personal papers. To be sure, Kater has probed institutions as well as individuals, in sections on music economics; anti-Semitic, family, and school policies; the Hitler Youth, the academies, the Protestant Church; and resistance. But his book's main strength is its scrutiny of personal archives like those of Richard Strauss, Hans Pfitzner, Carl Orff, Hans Rosbaud, Arnold Schönberg, Paul Hindemith, Kurt Weill, and many others.

Above all, Kater communicates the futility of applying black and white standards when judging cooperation with cultural policy by ostensibly non-political artists. Echoing a major theme of Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, Kater repeatedly points out that shades of gray run between the darkness of enthusiastic collaboration and the gleam of courageous resistance. Few of the figures Kater covers committed themselves to the Nazi mob wholeheartedly, as did pianist Elly Ney, or even joined the party, as did conductor Herbert von Karajan (twice). Some who wished to take part in the racket were rejected, Hans Pfitzner because he was too tradition bound, Anton Webern because he was too modern. Others were drawn into the gang despite relative indifference, Clemens Krauss and Hans Hotter because Hitler adored them. Jewish heritage usually had immediate consequences, but not always. Some musicians suffered on racial and political grounds, others for purely personal reasons. If any theme seems common in the stories of those who stayed and succeeded, it is ambition. Here is the link between the murky cases of Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, Wilhelm Furtwängler, and Richard Strauss.

In his introduction, after harshly reviewing other literature on the subject, Kater poses a number of questions that this field must ponder: "Writ large, does classical music matter in a Nazi cosmos of totalitarianism, fascism, dictatorship? If . . . aesthetically pleasing music had a logical place in the cosmos . . . where was this place? Where and how did serious music fit into the pattern of culture in the Third Reich, and what kind of culture was it? Most puzzling of all, who were the people that generated it? Were they SS troopers? Were they saints?" (4) This book concentrates mainly on the last three of these queries, and Kater's "just the facts" response is the appropriate one.

Whether these cases, even taken as a whole, close the book on Kater's overarching investigation is another matter. In my own reading of *Twisted Muse* I did not notice that it discloses music's function in the totalitarian system as much as it does that of musicians. It seems to me, though, that musicians generally have less to do with the uses made of music than do promoters, administrators, critics, and scholars. Performances occur within widely varied contexts, and these largely determine their meanings. Sometimes composers and players are aware of this; sometimes they collaborate in the effort -- but not always. For most, a gig is a gig, regardless (perhaps irresponsibly) of what audience members want to make of it. It is important to learn which musicians were and weren't committed to the policies of the Reich. But this insight does not quite complete Kater's agenda. We must complement his excellent case work with equally thorough inspection of performance and reception if we are to understand why the musical component of the *razzia* scene in Spielberg's *Schindler's List* seems so terribly apt.

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