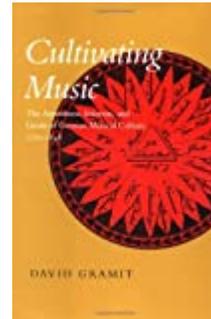




David Gramit. *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770-1848.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002. xi + 272 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-22970-9.



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Bourgeois Musical Culture in Germany: A Critical Social History

David Gramit has written a well-researched and highly informative study exposing the ideological assumptions of German musical culture during the early nineteenth century. The importance of the book lies primarily in its examination of the “place” of nineteenth-century German music in current scholarship. It uncovers the values that contributed to forming the idea of “high” art music which not only remained unchallenged at the center of the musicological canon well through the twentieth century, but also represents that which many consider to be “classical music” or “art music” today. Notions such as universal appeal and the autonomy of instrumental music, the essential role of music as part of *Bildung*, and the perceived superiority of German music are carefully examined and viewed critically from a new perspective. Although the re-evaluation of the musicological canon and traditional musicological methodology has featured prominently in scholarship during the past two decades, Gramit’s study does make a particularly valuable contribution in that he not only uncovers some of the ideological assumptions of German art music but also provides a successful alternate approach to the topic.

Gramit endeavors to write a critical social history of music instead of one that is based around individual musical works or composers. Central to his study is the premise that “talk about music invokes and constructs social categories,” a premise that, as Gramit acknowledges, is deceptively simple (p. 3). In order to fully appreciate the novelty of Gramit’s approach, it is necessary to further contextualize his work. Previous musicological studies related to this topic typically discuss a transition from the eighteenth-century composer employed by an aristocratic court, composing “functional music,” to the “free” nineteenth-century composer working for the public, composing autonomous “musical works.” The critical social history that Gramit contributes is one that acknowledges the multitude of social relations involved in cultivating music during this shift in music history. In order to accomplish his task, Gramit draws on what he terms “musical discourse”: contemporary music-specific journals and newspapers that fuelled the cause of bourgeois music cultivation. Additionally, he considers a number of other publications—textbooks, pamphlets, and prefaces—but omits for the most part writings directed to a general public. While it is necessary to limit the param-

eters of one's study, which the author does clearly and with reasonable justification (p. 6), readers interested in further research on this topic should bear in mind that contemporary journals and newspapers aimed at a more general audience contain equally important and sometimes highly specialized articles related to music, and are well worth examining. From the perspectives within musical discourse, the book proceeds "as a series of four case studies focused on a selection of social relations, moving from the perceived outer limits of music to the very center of musical culture" (p. 23).

The first case study explores the social relations involved in a scholarly "stance" (p. 23) of music critics towards various foreign musical cultures. Gramit argues that discourses exploring the music of other cultures and concepts of distinctive national identities assisted critics in defining German music with increasing clarity. Drawing on a wealth of entries devoted to music of other cultures in Gustav Schilling's *Encyclopaedie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst* (1835-42), Gramit shows that a strong need for the cultivation of music was articulated by German writers resulting from the perception that music contributes uniquely to the development of humanity. Furthermore, the author demonstrates using various contemporary sources that Germans were believed to have contributed uniquely to the development of humanity by means of their (superior) autonomous instrumental music, which in turn contributed to a perceived need for the cultivation of German music. The second case study continues to trace the need for cultivating music by exploring the social relations involving composers and "the people"—a theme involving the dilemma of popular and folk music. From the outset, the author views the so-called "popular" as a social category and emphasizes its social significance. This results in a highly complex but fascinating assessment of the uncertainties surrounding the role of the *Volkston* (literally, song in the manner of the people) in music scholarship. On the one hand, the *Volkston* was used to define the boundaries of art music and, on the other hand, composers were encouraged to make use of folk music because of its universal appeal. Gramit demonstrates that this ambivalence towards the *Volkston* from eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century criticism also shaped early German musicology and carries through into current musicological scholarship.

The third case study is a well-documented investigation of music educator Naegeli and demonstrates his attempts (among those of others) to universalize high musical culture through systematic music education in the

school system. The chapter is one of very few examinations of music education in Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century and is therefore valuable new research in its own right. The dynamics of teaching vocal music to children in a classroom setting are vividly portrayed and various aspects of domestic music education, including the role of women as music educators, are discussed. Toward the end of the chapter, Gramit makes a very interesting remark regarding the transition of importance of instrumental music over vocal music, suggesting that it is in part a social shift. He claims that for Naegeli, "the ordering of instrumental music above vocal was essentially social and required the plausibility that the latter no longer be immediately associated by his readers with prestigious, aristocratically supported opera" (p. 121). Given the importance of instrumental music in the German tradition, evidenced also by the author's opening scene describing an amateur musician playing the piano in a domestic setting in the introduction to this book, one might have hoped for a more elaborate discussion, extending Gramit's unique perspective on this significant transition.

The final case study considers the various processes through which the concert hall was secured as the ideological core of high music society (p. 126). Gramit argues that the concert's value was defined above all by the worthiness of the music performed there (p. 128). Since concerts were essentially designed to separate out the values of the middle class, the genre of opera was distanced as it was too readily associated with the frivolity of aristocratic leisure, and dance was discounted in light of its entertainment of "the masses." In exposing the process by which concert music was declared worthy, Gramit reveals the limitations inherent in the German concert music tradition: its very attempts to become transcendent and universal also imposed strict boundaries of exclusivity. The author investigates the various social relations involved in a concert performance by drawing on various metaphors of the concert as a model of interaction. These metaphors highlight both the achievements and limitations of the concert tradition and also place the composer and his works at the focal point of the discussion.

Overall, Gramit's book is well organized, clearly presented, and, as it requires no technical knowledge of music, it is well suited to both a general audience as well as a specialist. Of particular value are a large number of lengthy quotations from German periodicals in translation with the original texts appended as notes. Finally, *Cultivating Music* successfully draws attention to the cultural and social context that has shaped so many of our

everyday assumptions about “classical music” practices. study–this is evidence of the tremendous success of his
In the end, the combined scope and nuance of Gramit’s approach to the topic.
study is one that is best achieved by a social critical

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