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Bryan Gilliam, ed. *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xiv + 220 pp. $34.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-02256-9.

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Unaltered Reprint of an Interesting Collection

This collection of essays brings together eight articles that cover different aspects of music and performance during the Weimar Republic. The choice of topics promises an interesting overview of some crucial developments, some of which had repercussions a long time after the Weimar Republic had ceased to exist.

The first thing that strikes the reader is that this book is an exact reprint of its 1994 first edition. There is no new preface and no updated bibliography. Although the publisher states the fact that it is a re-issue on the back sleeve, it is unfortunate that the present volume has not been revised and updated.

In the preface, the volume's editor, Bryan Gilliam sets the scene and stresses the importance of emerging new musical styles during the Weimar Republic. Gilliam fails to distinguish, however, between audiences in Berlin and a selected number of regional centers, where new music found audiences (albeit small) and the provinces, where the vast majority remained not only conservative but even outspokenly anti-modern in their musical tastes. Opera repertoires at municipal theaters (as well as programs of orchestras and music societies) did not change fundamentally after 1918.[1] The failure to be aware of this important distinction runs like a red thread through many contributions in this volume (Robinson's article on jazz is a notable exception) and makes it difficult to contextualize and appropriate many findings.

The other underlying problem–at least of Gilliam's introduction but also of some of the articles–is the assumption that the arts in Weimar were characterized by distinct cultural aims and that these aims were largely pro-Weimar. Gilliam claims that with the Nazi takeover "the Weimar constitution–as well as the cultural aims of the era–would be systematically dismantled" (p. xiv). With this claim, he seems to assert that the prevalent cultural aims were not only easy to subsume under a general heading but also that they were supportive of the Weimar Republic and its democratic principles. With most works of art produced during the period and especially regarding the most popular pieces, however, the opposite was the case.[2]

Gilliam's own article on "Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s" starts the volume off. Gilliam explores the relationship between cin-

ema and theater and argues that while many commentators and practitioners regarded the cinema solely as a danger to live theater and opera, some influential directors and composers successfully tried to incorporate the new medium in their work. Erwin Piscator, for example, experimented with different media–including film–on stage, and Kurt Weill deliberately employed cinematic techniques in his operatic work. Gilliam convincingly links this trend to the rise of German cinema (both in quantitative and qualitative terms) during the period.

Christopher Hailey in his contribution on music and radio in Weimar Germany explores live and recorded sound and its implications for performance and composition. After outlining the remarkable rise of radio in Weimar Germany, Hailey concentrates on some major trends followed by contemporary composers such as Franz Schreker and Paul Hindemith and stresses the importance the new technologies of sound recording and wireless transmission had on this younger generation of composers. Although–as Hailey convincingly argues–the poor sound quality of early radio recordings did not work well with the symphonic repertoire, it crucially influenced an upsurge in chamber music composition and performance. In fact the rapid development of the new medium created its own specific "radio repertoire."

Robert Hill's article on the modernization of twentieth-century performance practice under the headline "overcoming romanticism" tackles the question of changing perspectives towards musical texts, both regarding performers and audiences. Hill claims (and laments) that the anti-romantic values still prevalent today were shaped during and after the First World War and helped to define what we today regard as "good" musicianship (that is, being "faithful" to the original work in contrast to late romantic subjectivity in interpretation). He paints a fascinating picture of the evolving attitudes towards "authenticity" in performance going back to the eighteenth century.

Stephen Hinton in his article on the *LehrstÃ¼cke* opens up new questions and provides interesting insights in an in-depth analysis of this new type of musical theater. For example, Hinton makes clear that the Nazis in their *Thing* plays drew on principles of the *LehrstÃ¼cke*. Hinton's claim that the *LehrstÃ¼ck* "perhaps more than any other artistic genre" embodied the political spirit of the Weimar Republic (p. 73) raises the question of what this political spirit might have been. In no other period in German history does it seem more difficult to pin down *one* prominent political spirit. And if we were to name the most influential and prevailing attitudes between 1918 and 1933, they were certainly much less democratic, much less avant-garde and much less experimental than Hinton might want us to believe.

Kim Kowalke confronts another performance issue under the title "Singing Brecht vs. Brecht Singing." Kowalke is particularly interested in the often misunderstood concept of Brechtian performance practice in the context of epic dramaturgy, where text, music and stage events enter into new relationships. Kowalke makes clear that music not only played a crucial part in Brecht's artistic output but also that he was seen very much as "musical dramatist" by contemporary commentators–a fact which all too often has been overlooked by research so far. Kowalke draws an intriguing parallel between the Berliner Ensemble after Brecht's death and Bayreuth to illustrate the danger of imposing an orthodoxy allegedly taken from the masters' theory rather than practice–ultimately leading to what Peter Brook has called "deadly theater."

In her contribution on "German Musicology and Early Music Performance, 1918-1933," Pamela Potter looks at the troubled development of musicology, particularly in relationship to the remarkable rise of the amateur music movement and its popular appeal. She illustrates that the driving forces behind this rise were calls for a repertoire within the technical reach of amateur ensembles, which was found in folk as well as early music. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this essay is something Potter might have wanted to put more emphasis on: nationalism as one of the most important undercurrents of musicology during the Weimar Republic. In her brief allusions, Potter is able to show that the early music movement was not only used to bring classical music to a broader audience, but was also characterized by strong nationalistic overtones.

J. Bradford Robinson, in his insightful article on jazz reception in Weimar Germany, asserts that the so-called "Jazz Age" was largely a product of the media and that–crucially–what was understood as jazz was often far removed from the original model. As a starting point of his intriguing line of argument, he chooses Ernst Krenek's opera *Jonny spielt auf*, which had a signature song and rhythm meant to embody typical characteristics of a jazz tune but which, in fact, had little to do with the American original. Despite this fact, Krenek's tune and its rhythm entered popular music and discourse, and became to be seen as archetypical *jazz* and influenced a whole generation of composers and musicians in Germany.

Finally, Peter Williams's essay on "The Idea of *Bewegung* in the German Organ Reform Movement" relates to the underlying nationalism in German society, too. He observes that the musicological interest in early organs was largely limited to German instruments and had an unmistakable nationalist agenda lurking beneath the surface.

Despite some points of criticism, Gilliam's volume offers interesting insights into music and performance during the Weimar Republic and draws a fascinating picture of its vibrancy and variety. Although these developments might not have reached every corner of Germany, they mark a stark contrast to the situation after 1933, when many of its protagonists were forced into exile.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Erik Levi's work on music during the Third Reich and before. With respect to opera in the Weimar Republic, he clearly states that repertoires were much more traditional and conservative than some commentators have claimed. The chief reason for this cautiousness was financial in terms of falling subsidies, particularly in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Eric Levi, "Opera in the Nazi Period?", in *Theater under the Nazis*, ed. John London (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 136-186, in particular pp. 137-139 and 143-144).

[2]. In most theaters, and especially in the large number of regional theaters, the repertoires remained conservative and conventional. Some avant-garde plays and operas reached provincial stages in the late 1920s, but their share in the programs never came close to the successes of the emerging nationalistic and *vÃ¶lkisch* playwrights, such as Hanns Johst, Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer and Paul Joseph Cremers.

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