An Introduction to MUSIC STUDIES

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1 Music history

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Chapter preview

This chapter asks what we mean by music history and why we study it. It considers some of the different kinds of history that can be, and have been, written, ranging from the stylistic history of musical works to the social history of how those works came to be written. It looks at the different strategies demanded by the study of music in different periods, in different places, and for different audiences. It looks at some of the tools, methods, and sources historians use to learn about musical practices in the past, and it considers some of the conventional categories they employ in order to create an order in history. They often refer to musical "traditions," for example, and they invoke period terms such as "Baroque" and "Classical." The chapter also addresses some of the overt and hidden agendas found in different types of historical writing, it queries whether some aspects of music history have been neglected in favor of others at different times, and it asks how much we can learn by considering the reception of music through the centuries. It further considers how the study of music history is supported by, and may in turn illuminate, some of the other categories of musical study discussed in this book.

Key issues

- How can we do historical justice to works of music, given that they are part of our present?
- Is music history shaped primarily by composers and scores, or by the cultural conditions which demanded and/or enabled musical performances?
- What kinds of evidence can we use to construct histories of oral traditions?
- What is a "fact" of music history (Dahlhaus 1983)? How do historians create a network of stories around their particular interpretations of these so-called facts?
- How useful is it to divide music history into geographical regions (including nations) and into temporal periods?

- What do music histories tell us about the time and place of their provenance? How might we rewrite music history for today's world?

Art versus history

Think about the differences between a history of music and a general history: let us say a history of Reformation England, or a history of the American Revolution. We could make a list of such differences, but I just want to draw your attention to one of particular importance. Among the principal objects of study in a music history are musical works. We might take Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony (No. 3) as our example. Now the "Eroica" was composed at a particular time and in a particular place; we can assign to it a fairly precise completion date (summer of 1803). Despite this, it cannot quite be consigned to "the past." On the contrary, as you surely know from your own experience, the "Eroica" is still very much an active, living part of our present. The same could not be said of political events, nor even of more long-term socio-economic transformations. These have their repercussions, of course, and they often play a major role in shaping later political and social realities, but of themselves they belong clearly to "the past," as "events" of greater or lesser duration.

This difference has major implications for our understanding of music history, or indeed of the history of any art. If the work is really part of our present, it is rather difficult to do historical justice to it; hard, in other words, to see how the work "for today" can be related to the work "in its time." All history is concerned with a dialogue between now (the present) and then (the past). One of the main reasons we study it in the first place is because "then" can maybe inform us about "now." This is a bit more complicated than it might seem. History is written in the present, but even in general histories it is hard to say quite where the past ends and the present begins. I hope you can see that in art histories the dialogue between the two is even more complicated. And actually, if you really are interested in the qualities of the "Eroica" as a work – a work "for today" – you might learn more by examining it analytically rather than historically (see chapter 2 on this). That is the real point of my subtitle "Art *versus* history." It highlights one of the reasons why it is not always very easy to decide how best to make history out of musical works.

On the other hand it is rather easier to see how we can make history out of the **reception** of musical works. Not only is the "Eroica" alive and well amongst us today; it was no less alive and well in early twentieth-century Paris, in mid-nineteenth-century Leipzig, and of course in the Vienna of Beethoven's own lifetime, though, importantly, it tended to mean rather different things in each of these cases. We might say that it exerted a different kind of power in each of those "thens." You can trace how the "Eroica" threaded its way through different social and cultural formations, attaching itself to them in

different ways, adapting its own semblance and in the process changing theirs. In a word, you can note how it was heard "with different ears" at different times and in different places. In his monograph on the work, Thomas Sipe outlines some of the stages in this process of reception (Sipe 1998). I have tried to present these side-by-side (inevitably at some cost to the subtlety of Sipe's argument) in Box 1.1, but it is important to realize that responses of this kind are not created afresh by each generation; the earlier categories of response linger on in later periods.

Box 1.1 Beethoven's "Eroica": some patterns of reception

- Revolutionary propaganda. The dedication to Napoleon Bonaparte and the subsequent withdrawal of that dedication, together with the association of its finale with Prometheus, inevitably associates the work with an "Age of Revolution"
- Programmatic interpretations. Growing from the above, we have early nineteenth-century accounts based on battlefield imagery, links with Homeric and Virgilian epic, and portraits of Bonaparte
- Psychological interpretations. These stem mainly from the later nineteenth century, and are usually biographical readings, stressing Beethoven's putative German nationalism, his "clairvoyant" insight, his victory over adversity (deafness), and so on
- Structural and historical interpretations. These include twentieth-century analytical approaches designed to demonstrate the "unity" of the work through motive or harmony, as well as accounts that seek to recover its original historical meanings

Now there is nothing particularly new about looking at how music was received, but modern reception histories, many of them really quite specialized, do tend to raise some larger questions. They often suggest – explicitly or implicitly – that contemporary readings (the reception of the "Eroica" by audiences of Beethoven's time) have no particular privilege, and that the meaning of the work is something that unfolds and develops throughout its subsequent reception right down to the present. You might want to think about that issue, as it is rather central to historical study and throws up a number of related questions that I will just leave hanging. Is a reception history of the "Eroica" really about changes in musical taste and the social factors that influence those changes (in which case music history arguably collapses into social history), or can it reveal something about the work itself? And what is it, anyway, that elevates a work like the "Eroica" to the status of a masterwork, a component of the **canon**? Is the answer to this last question to be found exclusively in qualities of the work itself, to be revealed perhaps by analysis? Or is it in part ideological? In other words, is the canon largely a construction by people who exercise cultural power? And if that is the case, do we need to ask ourselves why certain groups (women, for example) and regions (Greece, for example) have been excluded from, or marginalized by, music histories?

Stylistic or social history?

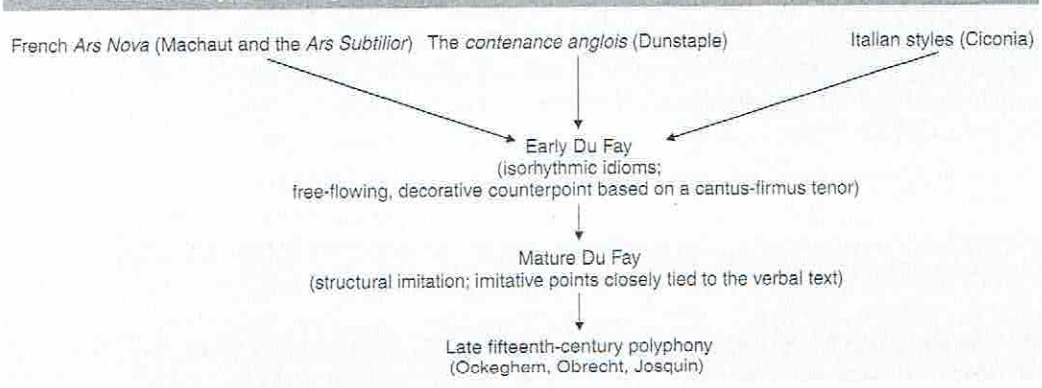
Historical questions look very different from the kinds of analytical questions that will be discussed in chapter 2. Given a common object of study, analysts

might ask: "how does it function in musical terms?," whereas historians would be more likely to ask: "where does it come from?," or "what made it possible?," or perhaps "how did it shape later developments?" If we stick for the time being with musical works as primary documents of a music history, then we might ask those historical questions from two rather different perspectives. The first would address purely musical, or stylistic, influences, while the second would look at the shaping role of social, political, and intellectual contexts.

Let us take a step back in time from our Beethoven example and consider the works of Guillaume Du Fay from the early Renaissance period (in music history, roughly the first half of the fifteenth century) as a collective case study. We might answer our historical questions here by discussing Du Fay's indebtedness to major predecessors and contemporaries. Such historical trajectories might then be extended to embrace evolutionary developments within his output, allowing for differences of idiom between sacred and secular, and between mass and motet, and perhaps also for an individuality of idiom we might not immediately associate with music before Du Fay. And we might go on to note that Du Fay's mature idiom functioned in its turn as a principal model for later fifteenth-century composers. Now all of these answers are based on comparisons of musical **style**. We locate Du Fay within a narrative that reaches back to the fourteenth-century ***Ars Nova*** and forward to Josquin des Prez (born *c.*1450–5). He becomes a pivotal figure, in other words, in the transition from medieval to Renaissance music, though we need to be rather careful about reading this story as a kind of "progress," and therefore labeling Du Fay as a "progressive" figure. He was that in one sense, but maybe the term "progressive" has taken on some modern meanings that would not have been appropriate in the fifteenth century (we should be careful anyway about assuming that music history describes a progression from simple to complex forms and materials). See Box 1.2 for a very rough indication of the kind of stylistic history I mean here.

Of course we might equally find answers to our questions by considering the context in which Du Fay worked. Many factors would come into play here.

Box 1.2 Patterns of stylistic history



There are the constraints imposed, and the opportunities afforded, by the liturgy (Du Fay was a church composer employed for much of his life as a papal singer: many early "composers" were in fact employed principally as performing musicians). There are the specific demands made by particular patrons (he was also a court composer working at various times at the Savoy court) and particular commemorative occasions (court weddings, deaths, rededications of churches, and ceremonial occasions of other kinds). There are the contrasted ambiences of different cultural centers (Renaissance Florence as against Burgundian Cambrai). And there are the effects of a wider climate of ideas (the strengthening individualism we associate with an age of humanism, for example). This is what I meant when I referred to "the shaping role of social, political, and intellectual contexts" at the beginning of this section. We are evoking here a rather different perspective on Du Fay's music, revealing in effect how musical styles respond to social imperatives. But we should note all the same that this perspective still places musical works right at the center of our story. These days musicologists sometimes speak of a **work concept** to describe this foregrounding of musical works (Goehr 1992), and you will encounter that term elsewhere in this volume. It is discussed in chapter 11, for example, and there is it contrasted with alternative ways of thinking about how we might begin to define what music actually is. These alternative readings naturally have a bearing on how we construe the subject-matter of a music history, and I want to reflect a bit more on them now. Have a look at Dahlhaus's question in the fourth of our key issues above. What, indeed, is a "fact" of music history? There is more than one kind of answer.

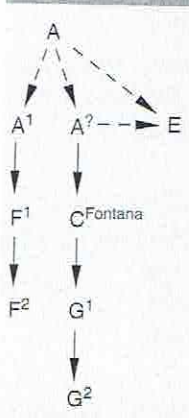
It is worth reminding ourselves, obvious though this may seem, that music is a performing art, and that its history includes the history of music-making as a cultural practice. The subject-matter of a music history, then, might include all the many and varied practices involved in making music, promoting music, listening to music, and thinking about music. Performance, teaching, and manufacturing sites and professions would form the heart of this story, but in the later stages of music history, taste-creating institutions such as journals and publishing houses, and eventually broadcasting and recording companies, would enter the narrative as important subplots. This all adds up to what we might call a "social history" of music (see chapter 3 for further commentary on this), as distinct from the stylistic history illustrated in Box 1.2, a move that parallels that found in some general history away from study of kings and queens and towards "ordinary people." The primary concern of a "social history of music" would be with the role that music played in people's lives, so it would not be unduly interested in questions of aesthetic value (Chartier 1988). Contrast that with a history based on musical works, which is more likely to reinforce our sense of that canon of masterpieces I referred to earlier. Indeed these two histories can rather easily tend in opposing directions, separating out the "popular" repertory that engaged most of the people most of the time and the "significant" repertory that

catered for the (usually socially privileged) minority. You should note that these days so-called "popular music" is increasingly part of the study of music history at tertiary level, which is why we have devoted a chapter to it in this volume (see chapter 11).

Oral histories

It is obvious that different repertories and periods of music history will respond better to some approaches than to others, and may indeed require different historical tools. In studying what is often called "early music," for instance, we may find that little biographical information is available even for some of the most highly valued composers, and that part of the historian's task is akin to a kind of detective work, combing the archives to establish the authorship or chronology. In such contexts, the study of genre (mass, motet) or medium (choral, keyboard) may well take precedence over the study of individual composers (see chapter 7). And like style, both genre and medium have acted as major controlling concepts in music histories, as a glance at randomly selected book and chapter titles will quickly show you. When we reach late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music, on the other hand, our approach often becomes more composer- and work-centered. This explains the prominence not just of biography, but of philological approaches. In contrast to early music, there is often a wealth of manuscript and early printed sources available for musical works in these later periods, and this has promoted a whole industry of philological study dedicated to the production of reliable texts. Take Chopin, for example. When you pick one of the Nocturnes off the library shelf you may be quite unaware of the mountain of sources relating to just that one piece. There may be sketches, autograph manuscripts prepared for the engravers (the music was typically published simultaneously in three different countries to avoid piracy), scribal copies, proof copies, the three first editions (which often disagree), later impressions of those editions (that's not the same as later editions), student copies with autograph glosses, and so on. Box 1.3 illustrates a typical source chain, or *stemma*, for a Chopin piece (here the Two Polonaises Op. 40), where **A** = autograph, **C** = a copy made by Julian Fontana.

Box 1.3



F = first French edition, **G** = first German edition, and **E** = first English edition

Now we need to remember that all of this concerns only the notated art music of what is usually called the Western tradition, just one corner of the world's music (see chapter 6). How, you might ask, are we to make historical sense of those traditions of art music where there are no scores and where improvisation is an important constituent of music-making? Or for that matter the various kinds of so-called "folk music," these days more often described by the less loaded term "traditional music"? To begin with, we should be wary of making too clean a separation between oral and literate traditions, and in particular of equating the former with simplicity and the latter with complexity. After all, the products of literate traditions, usually associated with composers, works, and complexity, still depend heavily on oral transmission, and on a body of performative insight that is largely unwritten (Treitler 1992). And conversely, the fact that a composition does not exist in notated form, but lives rather in the minds of performers, does not disqualify it as a "work," and as "complex." That said, there are very real difficulties facing historians of oral culture, given that there is often little primary evidence prior to the phonograph. This has the effect of privileging early recordings as documents that are presumed to inscribe some sort of primary state of the music in question rather than a particular stage of its evolution. And it can also encourage the reassuring but questionable belief that prior to the sea-changes of modernity, rural "folk music" (as distinct from urban "popular music") existed in much the same form for centuries. In fact, "folk music," as we normally understand it, is something of a construction, by no means to be equated with ritual song and dance that might be observed or recorded in the field.

So in tracing the history of oral traditions we have to be careful about finding evidence where we can, while at the same time avoiding the temptation to place undue weight on what just happens to have survived. Iconography is one way into reconstructing oral practices, especially of the ancient world. Passing references in histories and chronicles are another. Inventories of musicians and pieces can also be instructive for some practices, as can theoretical treatises. In the case of some Persian and Arabic art music, for instance, scholars have found it helpful to set medieval treatises alongside contemporary practices, allowing history and ethnography to work together to mutual benefit. In the case of Ottoman (Turkish) classical music, where some notations do exist, historical accounts given by travelers both from the east and the west have proved illuminating. And in the case of Roma (gypsy) music from central Europe, we can learn a good deal by studying the appropriation of popular idioms by art music. I will elaborate on this last point by way of a more concrete example. When in early seventeenth-century England music was written (probably by Robert Johnson) for a gypsy dance in Ben Jonson's masque *Gypsies Metamorphosed*, the rhythm was the same 9/8 pattern (2 + 2 + 2 + 3) – needless to say, hardly typical of art music at that time – heard in performances by Roma in Turkey and the Balkans today. In other words, we can learn from this appropriation something of the antiquity of these oral traditions.

In the end, though, we have to accept that with many "non-Western" (note, by the way, how loaded that term is) and traditional repertories, historians quickly come up against what Oliver Strunk once called the "impenetrable barrier of oral tradition." Even with the recorded and transcribed repertories that became available from the early twentieth century onwards, there are challenging questions to ask about practices and products, about stability and change, about the meeting-points between musical styles, and (conversely) about the effects of cultural isolation. There are questions too about how changes of musical idiom map onto underlying social changes, about just when an accumulation of such changes amounts to a break with tradition (many would say that the effect of modernity on traditional music – meaning folk music – constitutes just such a moment), and about how we can (or whether we should) draw what is often an endemic diversity of local styles into anything like a synthesis. And all this before we get to questions of subject position (what ethnomusicologists call "insider/outsider" or "emic/etic" perspectives, as discussed in chapter 6). It is perhaps not so surprising that many students of folk music and popular music choose to deal more with social context than with the music itself.

Narratives in history

In trying to make sense of the past, we sometimes use tactics that are closer to narrative fiction than we might like to think. We create stories about the past, and that means constructing plots that enable us to select and then order what seems important (you will note the inescapable chicken-and-egg dilemma here). Many of these plots are really about place. They focus on geography, and above all on geographical difference: north and south, east and west, and most importantly center and periphery. Historians very often refer to a mainstream **tradition** (it might be Burgundian polyphony, Italian opera, or German symphonism), and then arrange everything else around the edges of these traditions. But we need to bear in mind that traditions are constructed after the event, and that they can function a bit like distorting lenses through which we look back at events and practices. In other words, they carry covert (and often overt) values, and can even encourage a kind of chauvinism. When we construct a genealogy of German symphonists (we are back to the canon), we at the same time push other composers and other places into the margins. The key word here is "other."

You might be familiar with Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, in which he argued that Europe constructed the orient to its (that is to Europe's) own specifications (Said 1979). Well, there is a rather obvious "other" in this case, but arguably the same approach is at work elsewhere. In discussing Russia, for example, Richard Taruskin suggests that European musicians have constructed their own Russia,

and he goes on to demonstrate that our evaluations of Russian music are not at all congruent with those of Russian musicians (Taruskin 1984). This has some bearing too (though the issue is less clear-cut) on constructions of eastern Europe, and also of northern Europe. What we often get is a kind of assimilationist history. You might look at two rather specialized commentaries on Sibelius: one by the British writer Tim Howell and the other by the American scholar James Hepokoski (Howell 1989; Hepokoski 1993). They have very different takes on Sibelius, but they both seem agreed that to discuss him as a Finnish or even a Scandanavian musician is to court provincialism. In these analyses Sibelius is claimed, as it were, by a canon of pan-European modernism. He is no more Finnish than Stravinsky is Russian. This is a defensible position, but it may not be the whole story. We can learn a great deal from Hepokoski and Howell, but perhaps we need to read them with Taruskin's cautionary remarks in mind.

All of which brings me to one of the most common plots underlying music histories, the tendency to write them as national narratives. In some European countries, music history courses in academies and universities are cleanly divided into two streams, one focused on the national history and the other on the wider European history. Much of this is a legacy of nineteenth-century **nationalism**. It is undoubtedly true that music played a major propaganda role for political nationalism in the nineteenth century, partly picking up on ideas promoted by the German writer Johann Gottfried Herder (very roughly, Herder took the view that the "spirit of a people" is embodied in its language and culture). So we often find nineteenth- and early twentieth-century composers committing to nationalist agendas by turning to the history and mythology of the nation, and also to its folk music. (We might note here, by the way, that although the folk music in such cases may play a legitimate symbolic role, it is rather doubtful that it can be taken as a real emblem of the nation. Folk culture in general is invariably regional or social rather than national in impulse. It is no respecter of political borders.)

It may be helpful to consider two brief case studies, beginning with Germany. We can trace the gradual forging of German musical nationalism partly through symbols and institutions. Cologne is a good starting point. The completion of the cathedral in the early 1840s inaugurated a powerful musical symbolism centered on the Rhine, leading to a vast outpouring of Rhinelieder ("Rhine songs"), to works like the "Rhenish" symphony by Schumann, and ultimately to Wagner's tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Porter 1996). The folk ethos and nature worship here is central to one strand of German nationalism, particularly when opposed to its "others" (Robertson 1999). If we then move to Leipzig, we encounter a rather different strand. Here, at around the same time (the mid-century), the German canon was steadily consolidated through the Conservatory syllabus, the Gewandhaus concerts, the music journals, and the publishing house Breitkopf and Härtel, which began issuing collected editions of the great German masters. Not long after, in neighboring

Weimar, yet another strand was forming. Here we see the beginnings of a rhetoric of German modernism that was associated with Liszt and his circle, including the critic and historian Franz Brendel. It was Brendel who coined the significant term "Neue Deutsches Schule" (New German School).

Our second short case study takes us to the Czech lands. If we examine music and musical life in Prague, we find a significant change of orientation around the 1860s. Again, this was partly to do with institutions: the Provisional Theatre, dedicated to Czech-language productions, and later the National Theatre (Tyrrell 1988); the Žofín Academy concerts with their modern programs; the choral societies and wind bands promoting popular Czech music. But partly it was a deliberate and sustained attempt by the highly valued composer Bedřich Smetana to build a national music based on an alliance between national images and symbols and the most progressive trends in European music, thus creating a store of devices and associations on which his later compatriots would draw. You may not know his operas, but you will probably be familiar with his tone poem *Vltava*, from the cycle *Má Vlast* ("My Country"). It remains to this day a classic of Czech musical nationalism.

There is, then, some explanatory value in creating national narratives for nineteenth-century music, at least from the mid-century onwards. But when we turn to earlier periods, we can rather easily succumb to what some philosophers have called a retrospective fallacy. By that I mean that we assign national labels to composers and repertories as though present-day political borders had some kind of permanent meaning. Events, people and practices are all claimed for the nation, when in reality they belonged to rather different socio-political structures. We might at this stage turn the pages all the way back to Renaissance music and unpick terms such as "Franco-Flemish," but it will perhaps make more sense to look at the immediate pre-histories of our two case studies. I should probably have placed "Germany" in quotes in my earlier discussion, since it only became a nation state in 1871. Prior to the Congress of Vienna in 1815 "Germany" (known as the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation") consisted of numerous small courts and archbishoprics, reduced at the Congress to a confederation of thirty-eight and then thirty-nine. Indeed the gradual transformation from court to city to nation is one way to read German music history in the nineteenth century, with the cultural nation preceding the political nation. As to the Czech Republic (as we call it today), this was part of the multinational Habsburg Empire in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the musical life of its courts and cultural capitals reflected this. Leading Bohemian composers, such as Dussek, Tomášek and Voříšek, and even Smetana in his early years, were cosmopolitan figures, as much at home in Vienna or London as in Prague.

I want to turn finally to a rationalization of music history that has to do with temporality rather than place. This is the periodization of history. Terms like Baroque, Classical, Romantic, etc. are certainly familiar to you, at least in principle, even if you cannot supply dates! It is easy of course to dismiss

periodization as a kind of naive reductionism – or even as a mere strategy of presentation. But think for a moment about your own biographies. Probably you translate your experienced life into constructed history in just this way. You might mark off your elementary school years, for instance, or that part of your life you spent in a particular part of the country, or even a vacation somewhere. In all these cases you are combining classificatory convenience (a well-defined unit) and interpretative coherence (a strongly characterized unit). And this raises just the same questions about continuity and rupture that are raised when we periodize music history.

Consider a term such as "Romanticism." It was only around the mid-nineteenth century that Romanticism in music was first identified as a definable period term in something like our modern sense (by the way, much the same is true of the formal archetype known as "sonata form"). It was in 1848, for instance, that Kahlert defined a modern, "Romantic" music (meaning post-Beethoven, around 1830) through its separation from a Classical golden age (Kahlert 1848). And early in the twentieth century that separation of Classical and Romantic periods was made even cleaner by Guido Adler (Adler 1911). Yet contemporary (early nineteenth-century) perceptions were really very different, with Beethoven and even Mozart described by writers such as E. T. A. Hoffmann as "Romantic" composers (Hoffmann 1809–13). I will return to the tension between these two perspectives in a moment, but first I will outline in Box 1.4 some of the competing periodizations of Classical and Romantic music. Note, by the way, the congruence with key dates in the political history of the "long nineteenth century," inaugurated by the French Revolution (1789), subdivided by the 1830 and 1848 Revolutions and ending with the outbreak of World War I (1914).

The Kahlert view here suggests that the periodization is applied only when a period-defining theme has been identified. The whole process, then, is developmental or evolutionary, with the climax of the development represented as a kind of ideal, a "point of perfection." This ideal in turn allows us to generate an essence – in

Box 1.4 Periodizing Romanticism

1. In the early nineteenth century, E. T. A. Hoffmann identified Romantic tendencies in the music of the late eighteenth century. Here Romanticism is a "movement" concurrent with Classicism.
2. In the mid-nineteenth century, K. A. Kahlert made a period division between Classicism and Romanticism; here Romanticism meant the post- Beethoven generation. This became the conventional view, confirmed by the stylistic history of Guido Adler in the early twentieth century. The Romantic Age, then, began around 1830 and extended through to the modernism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
3. In the twentieth century, historians such as Carl Dahlhaus and Peter Rummenhöller located the end point for Romanticism at the middle of the nineteenth century (as in literature and the visual arts), and sometimes coined the term "Neo-Romanticism" as a description of the second half of the century (Dahlhaus 1980; Rummenhöller 1989).
4. Also in the twentieth century, Friedrich Blume identified a single Classic-Romantic era reaching back into the eighteenth century and extending well into the twentieth, thus recovering something of the early nineteenth-century sense of the term as a movement or tendency running concurrently with Classicism (Blume 1972).

this case "Romanticism" – that is taken to characterize the period as a whole. Returning to your biography, you might want to ask if something similar happens there. Are the "periods" of your life similarly characterized retrospectively? The other perspective is rather different, focusing more on the moment of change itself, and apparently seeking to recover more directly the experience of that moment. To flog our analogy to death, this latter approach would be concerned with the moments of change in your biography, and on the sense of rupture they created. There is perhaps a debate to be had about these two approaches to historical method, the first focusing on structures (a kind of rationalization after the event), the second on experience and agency (an attempt to recover the historical moment).

Hidden agendas?

You have probably heard of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Since it first appeared in four volumes in 1879–89, this has been revised roughly every twenty-five years (the latest version, the second edition of *The New Grove*, appeared in 2001 and is effectively the seventh edition). It is remarkably interesting to look at the changes that have taken place over the life of this dictionary. Entirely new terms came into play in the 2001 edition. Some are perhaps not so unexpected: technical terms associated with theory and analysis ("golden number," "deconstruction"); terms concerned with popular music, which had a lower profile in earlier editions ("cantopop," "techno"); and terms reflecting the recent evolution of our discipline in the direction of contextualism ("narratology," "gay and lesbian music"). Others are more surprising. "Canon," in the sense I have used it in this chapter, appeared for the first time in 2001; likewise "genre," and – wait for it! – "music." But even more interesting are the changes that have taken place in the meanings of terms that have been there from the start. It is fascinating to track the shifting meanings of a term such as "analysis," for instance. It has now all but lost touch with the definition attempted by Grove himself way back in 1879. What all this illustrates is that there is nothing absolute about the subject-matter of music history. It is influenced by the climate of ideas in any given era, and it therefore betrays – often unwittingly – the prejudices of its time and place.

This is no less apparent if you look through the various histories of music with a detached and critical eye. One might even write a history of the histories; indeed an early attempt to do just that was W. D. Allen's *Philosophies of Music History* of 1939. Some of the early histories of what we usually call Western Classical Music (Johann Nikolaus Forkel and Charles Burney in the late eighteenth century, François-Joseph Fétis in the mid-nineteenth) do at least pay lip service to the value of music from other cultures, but with Franz

Brendel's late nineteenth-century volumes the typical model of a European canonic history was established, and it lived on right through to well-known later histories such as the much-used, not to say over-used, study by Donald Grout of 1960. Guido Adler challenged Brendel's model when he proposed a history of musical styles rather than of "great composers" in his *Der Stil in der Musik* of 1911 and *Methode der Musikgeschichte* of 1919. So, rather later, did Walter Wiora when he turned to folk music as an important shaping influence on music history (Wiora 1957). And so, in different ways, did twentieth-century historians such as Ernst Bücken and Georg Knepler, both of whom were symptomatic of the swerve towards context, though interestingly they approached their social history from very different political perspectives (of the right and left, respectively; note the dates of their books, and the fact that Knepler was working in Communist East Germany (Bücken 1937; Knepler 1961)). What I am suggesting here is that the histories tell you a great deal about their authors, and, more widely, about the time and place in which they were written. This goes for present-day histories too.

It may be worth ending this chapter by drawing attention, however briefly, to three areas in which the subject-matter of music history seems to be undergoing something of a revision. The first concerns gender, and in particular the coverage of women, which has been found wanting both in its extent and in its depth, notably by commentators such as Marcia Citron (Citron 1993). A variety of perspectives has enriched our understanding of the importance of women in music history in recent years: in-depth historical-biographical work (on Fanny Hensel, for example), detailed music-analytical work (on Josephine Lang), performance history (the activities, creative as well as performative, of singers such as Henrietta Sontag and Maria Malibran), and social-historical research (especially the history of patronage, where the women played a key role, not least through their involvement in that complex and much misunderstood institution, the salon). Such work has gone a long way towards demonstrating just how seriously undervalued women have been in conventional narratives of music history.

I mentioned performance history. Musical performance is the second of my three neglected areas, and actually it is related to the first. If we rewrote music history in such a way that we placed performance closer to center stage, a number of other things, including gender balance, would also shift around a bit. So too would our understanding of the geography of music history. London would emerge as the musical capital of Europe during the age of Beethoven and Schubert, for example. Our instincts as historians (and also as analysts, though that is a different issue) have been by and large to value composers rather than performers, even to the point of disguising the rather basic condition of music as a performing art. To do justice to performance, however, we may first need to emancipate it from the paradigm of interpretation. Musicians often seek to recover original meanings (of the composer) when they perform. Yet it is questionable how far this is really possible. I want to suggest to

you that they are more likely to create new meanings. And that simple shift of orientation has the potential to liberate our discussions of performance, as Nicholas Cook and others have recognized. It enables us to speak of "performance in" rather than "performance of" a work. If you go along with that, you will perhaps agree that performers can make an essential claim on our reading of music history (see chapter 13).

My third lacuna returns us to an earlier point about geography. Music histories have tended on the whole to concentrate their discussion in just a handful of locations, most obviously in Italy, Germany, and France. A reasonable question then might be how to give a voice to those regions that have been represented as peripheral, if only by omission. You can, of course, choose your own periphery. But some of my own work at the moment concerns music in the Balkans (south-east Europe), a region that seems to exemplify periphery in an especially interesting way. I will pose directly some of the questions that concern me here. What does a study of music history in the Balkans tell us about the construction of cultural traditions, east and west, and about the consequent relationship between cultural politics and aesthetic value? What is the role of different musics in defining national, regional, social, and cultural identities in the Balkans? How do Balkan "others" illuminate European projects of modernity? And what has been the impact of westernization and modernization (and, conversely, of orientalization) on the Balkans themselves? I will not attempt answers here. But as you can see from the questions, the idea is to investigate how cultural traditions (west European and Ottoman-Turkish) are shaped, supported, and promoted through symbiotic processes of marginalization and canon formation; the two are after all mutually dependent.

As I say, you can choose your own periphery. The Balkan peninsula is hardly prominent in existing narratives of music history. But then, neither are the Baltic States; nor Spain; nor Portugal; nor Sweden. It is at least worth asking if the way we have constructed so-called "mainstream" traditions might not have as much to do with chauvinist politics as with art, and whether this may in turn have colored our view of so-called peripheral cultures. That we have identified little of value in some of these traditions is as often as not because we know little about them. We need to ask, in other words, if the neglect of some of these repertories is attributable to inferior music or ignorant listeners. At least there are plenty of indications these days that we may be ready to recognize chauvinism for what it is.

Chapter summary

- Music histories differ from political and social histories in that works of music still live in our present, creating a tension between art and history.

- Stylistic histories and social histories tend in opposing directions, the former towards an affirmation of the canon, the latter towards its deconstruction.
- Oral repertories can be all too easily misconstrued as "simple" and/or ahistorical, when compared with notated traditions.
- Music historians, like all historians, make sense of the past by constructing narratives based on geographies and temporalities.
- Music histories have covert, or overt, agendas. There is no neutrality in scholarship.

Discussion topics

- This chapter reflected on the difficulty in relating Beethoven "in his time" to Beethoven "for today." Try a similar exercise first with Machaut, then with Debussy.
- Reflect on the challenges of writing a history of either British or American pop music since the 1960s. What approaches would you take? How would the task differ from other forms of music history?
- Consider the usefulness of invoking nationality in writing music history. Does the picture change from one period of history to the next?
- In his history of nineteenth-century music, Carl Dahlhaus set up an opposition between Beethoven and Rossini. These days Beethoven is regarded as the central figure of early nineteenth-century music. Could you make a case for Rossini?