

Nationality vs Universality. Musical Historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe. Ed. Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek. Newcastle upon Tyne 2016 Cambridge Scholars Publishing pp. 249. ISBN 1-4438-8578-9, 978-1-4438-8578-2

In reference to New Musicology, challenging supposedly reliable or even universal concepts such as “work of art”, “style”, “musical development”, etc., the editor Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek emphasises in her preface the importance of critically investigating national nar-

ratives (and their counter-narratives) in Central and Eastern Europe, a region mostly neglected by Western music historiography.

In his paper “The Musical Work-Concept as Discourse and Consumption” (pp. 1–13), Reinhard Strohm tries to salvage the concept of the

work by not reducing it to Western music. His point of departure is Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, according to which every discourse is underpinned by certain principles and rules determined by social and political interests. According to this theory, a work of music becomes "national" more through the debates in which it is integrated than through its intrinsic qualities.

The geographic framework of the book is established by Irena Poniatowska ("Central and Eastern Europe in History and Musicology", pp. 14–28). She defines Central Europe as comprising Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Bukovina, Transylvania, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and "possibly also Trieste" (p. 14), with Eastern Europe comprising Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Besides mixing old names (like "Bukovina") and new (like "Czech Republic") and not including Serbia in one of the two categories, Germany is considered only with regard to geography, not in terms of cultural belonging. The author expresses justified reservations about the older concept of "Mitteleuropa" (which, since Friedrich Naumann in 1915, has often denoted the domination of German culture) and about the simple division into Eastern and Western Europe (according to the "logic" of the Iron Curtain). More light could have been shed on the concept of "Central Europe" (clearly congruent, in the eyes of the author, with "Central-Eastern Europe") through several publications by Moritz Csáky;<sup>1</sup> his only work cited here (p. 23 n. 32, with the wrong spelling "Csáki") does not refer solely to Hungary, as the author suggests. Also erroneously mentioned on page 23 is the *Musikgeschichte Österreichs*, in a non-existent third (instead of second) edition in supposedly two (instead of three) volumes. In the light of on-going political developments in several (most?) Central(-Eastern) European countries, the "openness to their neighbours, without na-

tionalism or antagonisms between the region's states and in relation to ethnic minorities" (p. 28) still seems to be a utopian claim.

Of the following thirteen papers, dealing with different forms of national narratives referring to music, seven concentrate on the notion of musical "heroes". Paweł Gancarczyk ("The Greatest Before Chopin": In Search of the Heroes of Early Polish Music", pp. 29–39) focuses on the reception of two Polish composers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century: Mikołaj Gomółka and Mikołaj Zieleński. Whereas Gomółka was seen as truly "Polish", with the argument of his striving for freedom invoked (which prevented him from following strictly the rules of counterpoint), as well as his mysticism and his use of national themes (it was not until 1969 that observers realised that the latter aspect was actually a mere fantasy on the part of earlier authors), Zieleński was admired for his excellent craftsmanship, bearing international (in the words of Gancarczyk "universal") features. Both examples allowed the author to conclude that "Poland had a great need for heroes, of both a national and a universal character" (p. 39).

Marc Desmet addresses the once keen controversy about the national origins of Jacobus Handl-Gallus ("Constructing the Figure of a National Composer: The Case of Jacobus Handl-Gallus (1550–1591) in Central European Music Historiography of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", pp. 40–64). Handl-Gallus was undoubtedly born in the Duchy of Carniola, and from the late 1850s there was heated debate over whether he was of German or Slovenian nationality. He was initially perceived only as a "German" composer, but then Kamilo Mašek made an assumption of serious consequence: that the name of Handl-Gallus had originally been "Petelin" (as "Handl", in the sense of "rooster"), although Mašek (as well as his successors) had no archival evidence. Subsequent years provided clues in the form of an oral tradition referring to a musically gifted family named "Petelin", and Handl-Gal-

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *Das Gedächtnis der Städte. Kulturelle Verflechtungen – Wien und die urbanen Milieus in Zentral-europa* (Vienna 2010).

lus became a Slovenian national hero. Desmet sees the research and editing work carried out by the Carniolan scholar Mantuani in the *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (ed. Guido Adler) as a step towards a more “legalist approach” (p. 62), although Mantuani sticks to the “Petalin-assumption” (cf. p. 57 ff.) and does not approve of Adler’s choice of the Bohemian Emil Bezceny as co-editor (instead of another Carniolan<sup>2</sup>). Minor mistakes take the gloss off the otherwise excellent presentation: Schilling does not refer to “German composers”, but to German authors writing about Handl-Gallus (p. 47). In using the term “Vicentiner Meister”, A.W. Ambros means a composer from Vicenza and not Venice (p. 51). In general, the German quotations are lacking accuracy (e.g. “Pakrte” instead of “Markt”, p. 59).

The role of Chopin in music histories by predominantly Polish and German authors is the topic chosen by Zofia Chechlińska (“Changes in Music Historiography in Relation to Chopin”, pp. 65–72). Lacking any deeper analysis, the paper highlights exaggerations on the Polish side, such as Józef Reiss’s assertion in 1920 that Chopin – himself without any predecessors – influenced all later composers, and attempts at absorption (Franz Brendel, Emil Naumann) and marginalisation (Eggebrecht) on the German side.

After Chopin, it was Moniuszko who was established as the most important Polish composer, in an emphatic sense which is shown by Agnieszka Topolska in her contribution “Stanisław Moniuszko as a National Prophet: Facts and Myths” (pp. 73–89). The author points to some narrative strategies employed by Aleksander Walicki (1873) and Bolesław Wilczyński (1900) that helped to turn the composer into a mythical-like national hero (beginning with the composer’s grandfather, who appears as a “biblical” figure). Later authors stressed more his unrewarding status as an epigone.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Elisabeth T. Hilscher: *Denkmalpflege und Musikwissenschaft*. Tutzing 1995 p. 84 ff.

Michael Fend offers a critical, though more essayistic, view of “The Nationalist Effect of Wagner’s Operatic Charisma” (pp. 89–98), seriously challenged by Frank Castorf’s *Ring* at the Bayreuth Festival in 2013, putting the story into an international context (the curse of gold replaced by oil). Exploiting Max Weber’s concept of “charismatic authority”, Fend contrasts the self-ascribed “legacy” of Wagner and Bayreuth, including its persistent nationalistic ideology, with the director’s “anarchic streak”, capable of disempowering “Wagner’s operatic charisma” (p. 98).

Miloš Zapletal examines the narrative structure of the early works on modern Czech music by Zdeněk Nejedlý (“From Tragedy to Romance, from Positivism to Myth: Nejedlý’s Conception of the History of Modern Czech Music”, pp. 99–124). Basing his arguments on the ideas of Hayden White,<sup>3</sup> Zapletal analyses the “deep narrative and figurative patterns” (p. 101) underlying Nejedlý’s music history and identifies three levels of conceptualisation (using different forms of “emplotment”, argumentation, ideologies and tropes): the first focusses on musical style against the background of a progressive versus a reactionary line of Czech composers, the second on the essence of Czech music and the image of the “Great Czech Composer”, represented by Smetana, the third – by comparing Smetana with Jesus – lends his music the status of a national (instead of religious) revelation.

The situation of musicology in Hungary since 1948/49 is the topic addressed by Lóránt Péteri (“The Question of Nationalism in Hungarian Musicology during the State Socialist Period”, pp. 125–144). Though none of the leading figures – first of all Zoltán Kodály, then Bence Szabolcsi, László Lajtha and Dénes Bartha – was a reliable supporter of the Communist Party, all four gained high positions within the newly established musicological institutions at the Liszt Academy of Music (Department of Musicology)

<sup>3</sup> *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. London 1973.

and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Committee of Musicology, Folk Music Research Group, Bartók Archive or Institute of Musicology). With a degree of freedom regarding projects and people, they created an intense network of music research. Péteri gives a magnificent overview of that research, together with the shifting paradigms (from folk and national music aligned with the Zhdanovshchina to more international topics, from essentialist “Hungarianness” to a more historical perspective etc.)

Whereas German music was very often considered to be a mighty and feared counter-concept to national music in Central Europe, Vesa Kurkela (“National or Universally Germanised? The Formation of Musical Life in Twentieth-Century Finland as a Transcultural Process”, pp. 145–154) shows that the Finnish nation was eager to introduce musical culture after the German model and with the help of a significant number of German musicians. The author sees this as a catching-up process and as the reason for Finland’s now outstanding position within international musical life.

During the nineteenth century, the new independent Greek State sought to establish its own national music tradition. As Spiridoula Katsarou demonstrates (“The Significance of the Ancient Greek, Byzantine and Modern Greek Folk Music Traditions in the First Music Historiographies of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century and the Period up to the Second World War in Greece”, pp. 155–174), music histories of that time emphasise the Greek “triad” of antiquity–Byzantium–folk music (the first element being preserved in the subsequent two), painstakingly avoiding any possible Western influence. This perspective also determined discussions about the “National School of Music”, strongly dominated by Manolis Kalomiris, one of the consequences being that not until 1980 did Dimitrios Chamoudopoulos show any appreciation of pro-Italian Ionian composers.

Another article about Nejedlý focuses on his history of pre-Hussite chant in Bohemia, from 1904. Hana Vlhová-Wörner (“Zdeněk Nejedlý’s Historical Narrative and Ideological Construction of Czech Medieval Music History”, pp. 175–195) impressively deconstructs Nejedlý’s argumentation to the effect that the decadent “foreign” (Latin) musical culture dominating at that time had to be overcome by Hussite spiritual vernacular songs, which were truly Bohemian music. Despite many incorrect and biased passages, that book set the standard for decades, thanks to Nejedlý’s post-war career (he became Minister of Education in the communist government and re-published his book in 1955 without any alterations).

Janka Petőczová reflects on “Richard Rybáříč’s Theory of Music Historiography in the Context of Central European Musicology” (pp. 196–211). Rybáříč’s commitment to the examination of primary sources of music in Slovakia, their understanding as part of a musical culture (instead of an essentialist concept of “Slovak” music), as well as their interpretation within a (Central) European context remain – according to Petőczová – the main topics of the Department of Music History at the Institute of Musicology at the Slovak Academy of Sciences still today.

Andrzej Tuchowski investigates “Racism in Nazi Historiography and Concepts of Music Theory” (pp. 212–238). After giving some simplistic descriptions of authors like Langbehn, Gobineau and Chamberlain, the author turns to music writings by such authors as Heinrich Berl, Hermann Matzke, Karl Blessinger and Joseph Müller-Blattau, mostly variations on Wagner’s anti-Semitic argumentation in his infamous *Das Judentum in der Musik*. Tuchowski’s belittling estimation of Müller-Blattau seems as incomprehensible as his conclusion that these writings “may paradoxically focus our attention on the enormous, although not well known and appreciated, impact of people of Jewish origin.” (p. 237 ff.)

## ARTYKUŁY RECENZYJNE

An instructive example of national essentialism is given by Krzysztof Stefański (“The Historiography of Border Regions: From the National to the Palimpsestic View. The Case of Silesia”, pp. 239–249). Whereas in 1830 a lexicon included as a matter of course German, Bohemian, Polish and Jewish musicians,<sup>4</sup> around 1900 music histories were dominated by a German perspective, then after 1945 by a Polish perspective. After 1989, that was gradually superseded by a multicultural approach. A comparison of the respective entries on “Breslau” and “Wrocław” in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1st and 2nd editions) and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001) is very instructive in this respect.

---

<sup>4</sup> Carl Julius Adolph Hoffmann: *Die Tonkünstler Schlesiens. Ein Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte Schlesiens vom Jahre 960 bis 1830*. Breslau 1830 G.P. Aderholz.

To sum up, this book brings an interesting abundance of papers, which mostly explore varieties of national music histories since the nineteenth century, culminating in recent examples of multi-ethnic, -cultural and -perspective research. Minor flaws concern editorial standards, such as faulty quotations in German (cf. pp. 40, 52, 59, 73, 242) and the inconsistent presentation of quotations (only sometimes in English) and bibliographical references (only sometimes in the original language). Although it seems clear that the extent of such a book is limited, contributions from Croatia, Bosnia or Serbia would have been highly welcome, particular since Finland and Greece are represented. Yet such remarks should not cloud the merits of a book that gives precious insights into a distinctly topical subject.

*Barbara Boisits*  
Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften