



to edit, engrave and proofread. Together with a highly informative Introduction and a Critical Report that is awe-inspiring in its command of detail, this edition represents musical scholarship at its best.

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SARAH CLEMMENS WALTZ, ED.  
*GERMAN SETTINGS OF OSSIANIC TEXTS, 1770–1815*  
 Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era 100  
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Ossian hat in meinem Herzen den Homer verdrängt.  
 (Ossian has replaced Homer in my heart.)  
 Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*

Even with reasonably reliable historical testimony, forging ironclad links between past trends in literature and the poetics of musical composition (or vice versa) can be a frustratingly difficult process. Temptations to try one's hand at such critical metallurgy are everywhere – who hasn't been struck by the casual affinities between a novel and the canonical soundtrack of its time? – but unequivocal causal relationships are rare, found mainly among the ranks of the formalist-modernists. Schumann chronicled his efforts to imitate the labyrinthine narrative poetics of Jean Paul in musical form; Strauss's collaboration with Hofmannsthal produced a series of so-called *Literaturoperns*; James Joyce and Thomas Mann attempted to replicate baroque musical structures in their novels. But all too often anatomizing how literature has shaped musical composition slips into passive, agentless rhetoric wherein one genre's developments are said to mirror, resonate with or simply correspond to the developments of another.

With this selection of German settings of texts purportedly written by the third-century Gaelic bard Ossian, editor Sarah Clemmens Waltz identifies a rare agent whose writings measurably influenced proto-romantic movements in both literature and music. 'Were it not for Ossian', she writes, 'there might have been no Sturm und Drang; there probably would have been none of Herder's Volkslieder and perhaps no *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*' (ix). For the Germans, the allure of Scottish poetry rested in the sense that 'a national spirit could be found in works of natural, native, untutored genius' (xiv), an enlightened primitivism that would directly inspire collections of national folksongs and ballads such as Gottfried August Bürger's 'Lenore' and Goethe's 'Erkönig'. Not only did the roughly hewn prosody of Ossianic poetry fuel a rise in through-composition, but without Ossian it is also likely, Clemmens Waltz argues, that 'the impetus to break away from French neoclassicism and *galanterie* would have been insufficient for many more years' (ix).

If at first blush these claims appear to border on hyperbole or indemonstrable speculation (how many years is 'many', exactly? Were not anti-Enlightenment sentiments already being nurtured by figures such as Hamann before the first German translations of Ossian appeared in 1764?), it is worth recalling a few details about the pan-European Ossian-mania. For almost a century after their initial publication in 1760 – and long after doubt had been cast on their authenticity – the poems enchanted readers with their accounts of an ancient people whose heroism played out against the fog-mantled and moonlight-bathed wilds of the North. Germans were particularly eager to appropriate Ossian as an alternative to the Mediterranean classical and epic traditions, and the bard's transalpine admirers included some of the most distinguished intellectuals of the age. Goethe, Herder and Klopstock all enthusiastically embraced this *Homer des Nordens*, and an Ossianic influence can be seen equally in the work of Novalis, Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Hölderlin, as



well as several major poets associated with the lied. That Ossian's influence was wide-ranging and enduring cannot be doubted – as late as 1854 a child was given a name as ostentatiously Ossianic as Oscar Fingal Wilde – and his role as catalyst for the literary angst of the 1770s is now commonly recognized.

This recognition has come relatively recently, however, and as Clemmens Waltz notes, it counters over a century and a half of criticism and waning enthusiasm that gradually pushed Ossian into the margins of history. Not long after their publication, doubts about the authenticity of the poems arose both in Scotland and abroad, and posterity has sided with Samuel Johnson in remembering James Macpherson, the Scottish collector and poet who 'translated' Ossianic poetry, as an unqualified fraudster. As Ossian-mania receded into the past, changes in literary fashion made it difficult to imagine how so many readers found an antidote to their melancholy in mannered descriptions of Celtic primitivism. A cynical critic might even have sensed a tinge of embarrassment that Germany's most laureled philosophers could fall under the spell of some fireside stories dressed up in ancient costume by a Highland schoolmaster. This edition joins the chorus countering the long tradition of trivializing Ossian, and invites musicologists to expand their appreciation of his impact beyond the few footnotes in the catalogues of Schubert and Brahms.

The thirteen works included in this edition tell a compelling story about Ossianic musical influence, one in which several composers – including Karl Siegmund Freiherr von Seckendorff, Johann Rudolf Zumsteeg, Johann Friedrich Reichardt and Carl Friedrich Zelter – embraced the possibilities of bardic poetry to produce a new musical grammar that was quickly naturalized in the many stormy and melancholic instrumental works of the 1770s and the decades that followed. The predominant musical features – what Clemmens Waltz calls 'a rather specific lexicon of illustrative conventions and key associations' (xiv) – include hallmarks of the musical *Sturm und Drang*, *empfindsamer Stil*, fantasia style and *ombra* style: in other words, all the features that would come to shape musical romanticism. Confronted with the poetry's wild irregularity and frequent narrative digressions, many composers experimented with through-composition in their settings (as Herder had explicitly recommended), allowing episodes of plaintive recitative to adjoin moments of turbulently vivid text-setting. Efforts to evoke the imagined storms, wind and rain driving across the wastes of Ossian's Scotland tested the limits of the eighteenth-century fortepiano through thundering tremolo figures and torrents of scales and arpeggios. Such shifts in atmosphere also encouraged unexpected and frequent modulations to distant keys, the topical associations of which often align with the advice of contemporary aestheticians such as Schubart. Clemmens Waltz draws attention to the prominent role of music in the poems themselves, to which many composers fittingly responded with arpeggiated, harp-like accompaniment to conjure images of heroic bards. Bare octaves, ostinatos, pedal points and the cold nobility of the *stile antico* are also frequent features of these Ossianic settings, two of which even include an obbligato violin part.

All of these effects are on full display in Zumsteeg's treatment of 'Colma', the first of the *Songs of Selma* translated by Goethe for *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (translations that are prematurely interrupted by the 'Strom von Tränen' (stream of tears) cascading down Lotte's cheeks). Zumsteeg's setting spans a remarkable 516 bars as it tracks the rapidly shifting state of mind of the eponymous heroine. Colma's anxieties about the fate of her lover, Salgar, are matched by an extended depiction of a storm, which momentarily breaks to allow beams of pale moonlight to illuminate the desolate vale. Zumsteeg's limpid, pastoral depiction of this scene is fleeting, however, as Colma discovers – through gasping, developmental recitative – the bodies of her brother and lover, who have slain each other in a duel. Her mourning oscillates between elements of a rage aria and a lullaby, and the setting ends with a fragment of haunting recitative. New keys are established and dispensed with at a vertiginous rate, the whole scene forming an ambitious monodrama that, as Josef von Spaun attested, made a strong impression on the young Schubert.

Colma's compact and affecting depiction of heroic stoicism in the face of grief proved to be attractive for several composers, and this edition also contains settings by Reichardt and Zelter that illustrate the variety of responses that such nobility of spirit could inspire. In order to accommodate the dramatic requirements of the poetry with the strophic model favoured by so many (most notably, Goethe), Reichardt relied on a versified translation comprising three discrete set pieces of three poetic strophes each, a translation later taken up by Schubert in his own setting (D217). This strophic structure allowed Reichardt to forgo excessive



madrigalisms and instead showcase the narrative qualities of the text; the strum of Ossian's harp prevails with relatively restrained feints toward expressive keys. Zelter's setting, by contrast, returns to the expansive, through-composed style of Zumsteeg, albeit with more recurring melodic material and the unusual addition of several 'stage directions' for the performer.

Published in 1813, Zelter's 'Colma: Ein altschottisches Fragment' is the last setting included in this volume and thus crowns a series of works that, through their range of idiom, offer musical traces of just what caused so many readers to flock to Ossian's Scotland in search of emotional and expressive liberation. This edition offers persuasive evidence that Ossian should be taken seriously by anyone interested in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music, and in addition to providing insightful commentary, notes on performance and English translations for each setting included in the edition, Clemmens Waltz's introduction also helpfully synthesizes recent work on Ossian and his popularity in Germany. For their testimony to the complex processes of literary influence, it is a pleasure to see these songs emerge from the mist.

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## RECORDINGS

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JOHANN ADOLPH HASSE (1699–1783), JOHANN WILHELM HERTEL (1727–1789), CARL PHILIPP  
EMANUEL BACH (1714–1788)  
*CELLO CONCERTOS*

Musica Viva / Alexander Rudin (soloist and conductor)  
Chandos o813, 2016; one disc, 70 minutes

In seventeenth-century Europe the cello was by no means the 'default' bass-line instrument that it later became in the eighteenth century. As Michael O'Loughlin explains in the liner notes to this disc, the four- to six-string violone was ubiquitous in Italy and Germany, and the basse de violon still reigned supreme in France. It was Stradivarius who standardized the violoncello, subsequently launching it on its career as the most common bowed bass in classical music. These growing pains, however, had set the solo cello behind its already established cousin the violin, which was building a repertory of virtuoso solo music almost from the moment of its sixteenth-century birth. And so it was another Italian, Vivaldi, O'Loughlin writes, who first 'emancipated' the cello from role of bass line, and began writing solo music that would surely have eluded even the finest violone players (7).

This disc is a document of that 'emancipation', specifically of the time when eighteenth-century German composers first began writing virtuoso concertos for the cello. Included are the greatest of these first-generation concertos, as well as several modern premieres prepared from autograph manuscripts. It is not surprising that this would be a task undertaken by the cellist and conductor Alexander Rudin, who has led Musica Viva (the Moscow Chamber Orchestra) for two decades. The project is ideal for Rudin, who happens to be an excellent cellist – but even more to the point, he is a music director with a passion for little-known music and a commitment to championing it. These qualities come together here to shine light on unknown cello concertos from northern Germany. It seems that soloist and orchestra are not using period instruments (and the liner notes offer no clues on the matter). None the less, they play with such vigorous style and rhetoric that the disc still stands as a more than useful document of these works.