

EDITORIAL



At some point in my graduate-school years, I had a small moment of panic: how would I know what to do once the dissertation was done? How would I choose my next research project? As it turned out, finding topics was never a problem – one thing always led to another – but as I think back, what strikes me most is the question that I never asked myself: not once did I think about how I might write history. My musicological paradigm revolved around research topics: find one, collect the archival and scholarly data, look for patterns and present the results. Even when I was tracing the chronological development of German aesthetic criteria during the late eighteenth century, I was not consciously thinking about writing history, odd though that may seem. Not until I was well into co-editing *The Eighteenth-Century Symphony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012) – the first volume of *The Symphonic Repertoire*, a five-volume series initiated by A. Peter Brown – did I realize that, at least on a small scale, that was precisely what I wanted, and needed, to do. Brown had never intended to write a history of the symphony as a genre (his original proposal to Indiana University Press makes that clear); his purpose was to analyse the symphonic repertoire in all its glory, and his one-page outline for this volume, which we mostly adopted, gave no indication he was planning a concluding chapter. In fact, two of the chapters that I contributed – ‘Historiography of the Eighteenth-Century Symphony’ and the concluding ‘Sketch for a History of the Eighteenth-Century Symphonic Repertoire’ – were not in his original outline. My ideas for those chapters grew out of my love of teaching and were influenced by several chance events that shaped my intellectual outlook and ultimately my interpretation of the historical data. To explain my interpretative choices, I would like to offer an auto-history of my professional development, highlighting the personal and contingent elements that guided my thinking and concluding with a few thoughts on the intersection of research and teaching.

After completing my MM in music history, I drifted for a year, uncertain whether I should opt for law school or continue in musicology. An unexpected offer of a faculty position at a small college in Arkansas helped me make that decision: from the moment I first set foot in a classroom I knew that I wanted to teach, and specifically to teach music history. Thus I was not disappointed that – by chance – the music history teacher at Loyola University New Orleans moved into administration the year I finished my PhD, opening up a position in an institution that focused on teaching. But ‘*the* music history teacher’ is the operative phrase in that last sentence, for I was indeed the only musicologist in Loyola’s relatively small, mainly undergraduate music school. That meant, of course, that I taught not only the complete survey course, but also more specialized classes in all areas of Western music history. One of my favourites turned out to be the class on contemporary music, a subject that can be a hard sell to traditionally minded, classically oriented undergraduates. In trying to find a way to coax my students into an appreciation of music many of them hated, I abandoned discussions of matrices and interval vectors and instead focused on listening. When we studied Schoenberg’s Op. 25 Piano Suite, I had them listen for the insistent rhythmic motives in the Gavotte and the recurring G in the Musette; when it was time for Penderecki’s *Threnody*, we listened for the ways in which the musical walls of sound shift and modulate. I tried to get them to see that if they approached Schoenberg and Penderecki with expectations shaped by Beethoven or Verdi, they were going to miss most of the interest and excitement of twentieth-century music, and found that if I showed them new ways to listen, their resistance to the music began to crumble just a bit. Although I am not sure how successful I was in increasing the fan base for modern music, that approach had by then lodged itself in the pedagogical part of my brain. Fairly quickly I began to realize that the same stumbling-block affected my students’ appreciation of much eighteenth-century music, and that I needed to start teaching them how they might listen with something more like eighteenth-century ears.



Loyola's relatively small size also made it easy to get to know faculty in other divisions, and I became good friends with an English professor who specialized in eighteenth-century literature and taught rhetoric and writing. We spent a great deal of time discussing our teaching and scholarship, and our conversations led me to explore theories and methodologies in history and literature – none of which had featured in my graduate education in musicology. My exploration of the work of scholars such as Thomas Kuhn and Kenneth Burke as well as the literature on historiography (Hayden White, Lawrence Stone, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Eric Hobsbawm, to name only a few) rearranged my intellectual universe: it showed me the myriad ways in which history could be written and introduced me to the concept of history as a construction, rather than a bare recitation of facts. I had simply never thought about how we came to have the narrative of music history that I had learned, and this literature opened my mind in a way that has had profound implications for both my teaching and my scholarship, making me question the received musical narrative, particularly its treatment of the eighteenth century.

While I was thus broadening my intellectual and scholarly horizons, my research trajectory took an unexpected turn, in large part because of a chance remark I made to a local archivist. I had gone down to the Historic New Orleans Collection hoping to find documents and information on concerts and musical life in eighteenth-century New Orleans. The archivist immediately informed me that two major fires in the French Quarter during the eighteenth century had pretty much destroyed any hopes for such a project, but in the course of our conversation I happened to mention that I had spent two years in Vienna and could speak German. He perked up at that bit of information and explained that they had a large and completely unexamined collection of material from the German male choral societies that flourished in nineteenth-century New Orleans, much of it handwritten in old German script (which explained its still-unexamined status). It sounded interesting, so I dug into the material – local newspapers in English and German, concert programmes, club records and minutes – and began to see that, in addition to singing songs and drinking beer (not necessarily in that order), the societies actively cultivated their German identity and often took an antagonistic stance vis-à-vis other immigrant communities, particularly the Irish. The same trends emerged when I began to examine similar clubs in New York City, which started me thinking about the relationship of music and German national identity (at a time when musical nationalism was most commonly associated with countries on the European periphery).

The emergence of a similar trend in my next research project – the investigation of eighteenth-century German reviews of instrumental music – led to yet another foray into non-musicological theoretical literature, this time into sociology and theories of nationalism, such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983). It became increasingly clear to me that many eighteenth-century German intellectuals thought that music should be one of the building-blocks of German national identity. When devising a course on music and national identity in the eighteenth century, I expanded my inquiries to include France and Italy and was thinking about a possible book on the topic when the sad news of A. Peter Brown's too-early death arrived in April of 2003.

Peter had been my dissertation advisor at Indiana University, and when I agreed to co-edit, with Bathia Churgin, a collaborative volume to serve as the first volume of *The Symphonic Repertoire*, I did so mostly out of respect for him, his scholarship and his legacy to the field. Bathia and I initially conceived of my role as mainly editorial, with writing responsibilities limited to the introductory chapters, for, although I had been active in eighteenth-century studies for two decades at that point, my research had never focused on the symphony. To fill in the gaps of my knowledge of the genre, I embarked on a period of intense study and began offering courses on various parts of the repertoire we were going to cover. Using Peter's collection of eighteenth-century symphony CDs as well as others that our sympathetic music librarian (an eighteenth-century enthusiast) found and ordered for me, I began my survey. I listened and listened and listened – at home, as I walked to school, in my car. (I remember thinking at one point that I was surely the only driver on Interstate 71 listening to symphonies by Ignaz Holzbauer.) I listened with increasing fascination, drawn in by the sheer variety of compositional procedures, the clever disruptions and unexpected harmonic turns of one composer, the colourful orchestration of another. In short, I was hooked, though I



did wonder if I might have gone round the bend when I found myself smiling and swaying whenever a composer slid into a circle-of-fifths progression: what I had formerly heard as another rote technique used to fill up musical space now became hypnotic and intensely satisfying. Whenever someone would ask me why we should bother studying and listening to ‘minor’ eighteenth-century composers, I was ready with all sorts of good scholarly reasons, but soon realized that for me, part of the reason was that I was just flat-out enjoying the music.

I began my reading by immersing myself in the spate of post-World War II dissertations on the subject (mostly about German composers) and by examining the entries for ‘symphony’ and ‘overture’ that Peter had collected from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music dictionaries. In the process, I became fascinated with the way the dictionary definitions described the genre’s roots and history, and the way that many (though not all) of the dissertations seemed to accept their interpretation. This reading piqued my own historiographical interests, so I started trawling through nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories of music, making my own collections and analyses of eighteenth-century-symphony narratives. At this point I began to realize that the fact that I had not been involved with research on the symphony gave me an advantage: I had no personal scholarly stake in any aspect of the symphonic story, and thus could more easily see the genre from a fresh perspective. Because I was reading so intensely in such a short span of time, it was also easier to spot patterns and trends, easier to see who was discussed and who wasn’t, easier to see what was valued and what dismissed. In the process, I came to the conclusion that the genre was ill served by the narrative that we all, myself included, had been teaching for years. But as Carl Dahlhaus observes in the Introduction to his *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Laaber: Laaber, 1985), proposing a different interpretation of the past (in his case arguing for a long eighteenth century instead of one bifurcated by the death of Bach) requires a critique of the prevailing one. So, for the book’s second chapter, I set myself the task of examining and critiquing the historiography of the eighteenth-century symphony.

As I traced the sources of the received narrative, it became clear that German-speaking writers predominated (no real surprise there), and that Italians like Francesco Galeazzi (in 1796) and French writers like Michel Brenet (in 1885) had effectively ceded the main strand of symphonic development to German and Austrian composers. Thus, in the hands of Gustav Schilling, Franz Brendel, Hugo Riemann and others, the story acquired its Germanocentric character, settled on its Great Men and adopted (with much indebtedness to E. T. A. Hoffmann) the narrative strategy of the romance (à la Hayden White), with the triumphant figure of Beethoven at its climactic conclusion. It was a narrative that did not match or explain the material and arguments that the book’s essays on composers and regions were providing, nor did it accord with what my ears were telling me or my own study of innumerable symphony scores was showing. It would – I think – have been a serious dereliction of scholarly duty not to make a stab at least at providing an alternative narrative that might shed a more productive light on the astonishing variety of symphonic possibilities the eighteenth century enjoyed, including all the delightful roads and byways that did not directly lead to Beethoven’s particular interpretation of the genre. So, for the first time in my scholarly career, I was intentionally writing history, and I was doing so from a perspective influenced by my experience of teaching twentieth-century music and my study of issues of historiography and nationalism.

My methodological choice was to look in the music for patterns and common practices, but also to be sensitive to any absence of musical consensus about particular compositional procedures – for both things can tell us what eighteenth-century composers and listeners understood as possible within the symphonic genre. But, though identifying and describing those practices and variances would lead to an informative chronicle of the changes in the genre throughout the century, it would not result in a history. A history requires some form of explanation that links events in the narrative, something that demands that the writer interpret the sequence of those events, guided by her or his intellectual framework. Thus, once I had identified a conventional practice, I sought to explain it first in terms of its musical effectiveness (for example, that crescendos, string tremolos and sequences can increase musical tension and excitement in transitional passages) and then how it might also reflect practical considerations (omitting all repeats in an opening fast movement might keep it short enough to be an effective curtain raiser for a concert) or



even social constraints (string parts might need to be easy enough for noble amateurs). In a nutshell, I concluded that by the middle of the century the larger-scale conventions had coalesced – for example, movement number and type, preferred texture, typical orchestration and use of sonata structures. With this musical scaffolding in place, late eighteenth-century composers could turn their attention to the exploitation of more local-level conventions, with the shock value of an audacious moment woven into an audible structural pattern. It was music that was instantly understandable, yet continually surprising. My narrative tells the story of the emerging and fading of these conventional practices, as manifested in the works of a variety of composers (including Haydn and Mozart), but it does not create a chain of Great Men leading to Beethoven.

If I then step back and analyse my own methodology in investigating and constructing this particular story of the symphony, I find a *mélange* of approaches. My narrative rests on a mass of historical data collected and arranged by generations of scholars whose often-derided positivist orientation nonetheless managed to produce extremely useful results and interpretations. Its engagement with the music responds to Joseph Kerman's call for criticism to be the pinnacle of musicological scholarly excellence – though perhaps not in the manner he envisioned – but it also seeks to explain symphonic phenomena in terms of societal preferences, support and constraints. It avoids the causal explanation of positivist history by focusing on composers' choices, using Leonard Meyer's theories about the stylistic rules and strategies that govern those choices. Though it does not embrace the type of interpretative criticism practised most famously by Lawrence Kramer and Susan McClary, it does attempt to interpret historical data from the perspective of eighteenth-century musicians (as far as that can be recovered), always focusing on what the symphony was instead of what it was not. My choice of such a mixed methodology partly reflects my own temperament: I am not by nature a radical and have always been puzzled by the 'either-or' quality of much of the discussion about proper musicological methods. It seems to me that the more paths we can use in approaching a historical object, the more comprehensive and nuanced our understanding of it will be. I also believe that a similarly multipronged pedagogical method, combined with the interpretative and narrative strategies I have described above, can help our students to develop their own capacity for critical thought about the music they perform and study.

So now I've circled back to teaching. Although I had never actually written a historical narrative, I had been teaching one for a quarter of a century. At the beginning of my career I simply adopted the one I had been taught (like most new teachers, I suspect). But after I accepted a position as a 'classical-period' specialist at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) and began offering courses that included relatively unknown and definitely non-canonic composers, I encountered a pedagogical stumbling-block. If my Loyola students had found Schoenberg and Penderecki to be ugly and incomprehensible, a number of my CCM students confessed to having always thought that 'classical-period' music was just boring, unless it was by Mozart or – perhaps – Haydn. In part, their attitude seemed to stem from the (misconceived) notion that eighteenth-century compositional procedures – especially with regard to sonata practice – were determined by rigid conventions that restricted originality, making the music predictable and not terribly original. In part it may have stemmed from the simple fact that up until fifteen or so years ago, it was nearly impossible to find high-quality recordings of composers such as Baldassarre Galuppi or Wenzel Pichl (and I never figured out how to convince students that the music might be good even if the performance was dreadful). But mostly they didn't know how to listen.

In the eighteenth-century music classes I now teach, I have reconfigured the overall narrative to resemble the one I constructed for the symphony, folding Haydn and Mozart into the picture and helping students to see the power of convention, how it can guide and enrich their listening. I teach them to listen for the techniques eighteenth-century composers use to create tension and motion, how they prepare for cadences, how they distinguish thematic sections from transitional passages, how they create expectations that they can fulfil, delay or subvert. I teach them to listen for the small things, and once I start to see them smile when a drive to a cadence is derailed by a slip to ♭VI, then I know they have begun to recalibrate their ears and are getting closer to meeting the music on its own terms. I've been helped enormously in my task by



the flexible sonata theory of James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy (*Elements of Sonata Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)), which clearly disabuses the reader of any idea of sonata form as a rigid mould. I have also had success with the schema theory of Robert Gjerdingen (*Music in the Galant Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)). In a seminar on ‘Convention and Originality in Eighteenth-Century Music’, each member of the class had to compose a short piano piece using at least four different schemata. For one student (who had never particularly liked eighteenth-century music), it was a eureka moment: he finally ‘got it’, finally had a way to listen and enjoy the music we were studying. Over the course of the term, the students began to think critically about the qualities that separate excellent eighteenth-century works from the rest and about how the best eighteenth-century composers were able cleverly to exploit convention (both Haydn and Mozart made abundant use of schemata, for example). They began to fit Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven into the picture, instead of assuming that they determined the picture. With that, they were not just learning to appreciate all the Galuppi and Pichls of the eighteenth-century musical world, they were gaining a deeper understanding of the big three as well. What more can we hope for – in both our teaching and our research?

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