SONGS TO SHAPE A GERMAN NATION: HILLER'S COMIC OPERAS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

ESTELLE JOUBERT

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ABSTRACT

In this article I assert that our modern understanding of the singspiel as a genre has been shaped not by eighteenth-century principles but rather by nineteenth-century notions of 'romantic' German opera. In contrast to a later through-composed ideal, Johann Adam Hiller's comic operas, often viewed as the prototype of the German comic genre, were designed precisely in order that the songs might easily be detached from the spoken dialogue, disseminated outside of the public opera house and sung by audiences in various other contexts. The express purpose of these songs, as articulated by librettist Christian Felix Weisse, was to promote communal singing in social circles across Germany. The genre was thus designed for circulation within what Habermas describes as the public sphere: a conceptual space between the State and the private home in which texts, ideas and musical works were circulated and debated.

Composed in what was called the German Volkston *(in the manner of the* Volk*), Hiller's melodies are recorded as being sung and played throughout the streets and parks of major German cities and became so popular that they became known as folksongs. This idea of the* Volk *as a collective entity and of the* Volkston*, however, was rooted in a deeper sense of the public as nation. Inspired by* Le devin du village *and J. J. Rousseau's writings on politics, language and the fine arts, Weisse and Hiller's operas employ the pastoral mode, in which idealized peasants sing in the manner of a folksong. The idyllic simplicity of these early German-language comic operas appealed to a diversified German audience by affirming their roots, the public use of their language and their morally upright character as a nation. Thus comic opera as a genre was circulated within the public sphere with the intention of transcending the boundaries of social class to unite the German nation in song.*

The ideal of the through-composed romantic German opera has long occupied a place of prominence in histories of European opera and indeed within the broader German historical tradition itself. Indicative of the substantial influence of this ideal is its role as yardstick against which other operatic genres and traditions

have historically been discussed and defined.[1] Notable in this regard is our modern understanding of singspiel: an eighteenth-century German comic operatic genre distinguished by its mixture of spoken dialogue and song.[2] Within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century histories of opera, the singspiel is viewed as a generic prototype, the seed from which a long lineage of German operas emerged. Commencing with Johann Adam Hiller's *Die Jagd* (1770), which is characterized by its spoken dialogue and song, this evolutionary narrative continues through operas such as Carl von Dittersdorf's *Doktor und Apotheker* (1786) and Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821), which feature increased participation between composer and librettist, and finally culminates in the crowning achievement of Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* (1868).[3] In fact, some authors believe that Wagner himself established this pattern in operatic history, as he is said to have envisaged an operatic season featuring the development of German comic opera as a genre.[4]

Viewed within the political and ideological contexts from which they emerged, it becomes increasingly apparent that these histories are based on nationalistic motivations rather than any explicit generic similarities among the operas. As Jörg Krämer remarks, 'in Wagner's construction of history, [Hiller's] *Die Jagd* thus gained a pioneering status as the beginning of a specifically German comic opera, which consequently determined the assessment of the work up until the time of nationalist socialist Germany'.[5] While the ideological underpinnings of this tradition of scholarship gradually faded, a value judgment of the singspiel as a lesser predecessor of a more fully developed through-composed ideal remained prevalent in early and mid-twentieth-century scholarship. The author of the entry on singspiel in the 1954 *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* claims that

> Nowadays . . . the singspiel has fallen into a well merited oblivion; for the German operas of Mozart, Beethoven, and Weber, though containing spoken dialogue, are musically too highly organized to be considered typical. . . . In any case, the singspiel was not well suited to the romantic aspirations of 19th-century Germany. Yet Mozart had shown how it could be transformed, and in

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1 The predominance of through-composed romantic German opera, particularly the Wagnerian music drama, and its central place in the German historical tradition have resulted in the marginalization of most other operatic genres. For a discussion of the effect of the Wagnerian model on the history of opera, particularly Italian opera, see Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, *Opera Production and Its Resources*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (London: Chicago University Press, 1998), i–xvi, and Elvidio Surian, 'Musical Historiography and Histories of Italian Opera', *Current Musicology* 36 (1983), 167–175.

2 Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the terms *Oper* and *Singspiel* were used interchangeably by composers and critics to denote an opera. Hiller referred to his operas as *komische Opern* and not *Singspiele*; see Thomas Bauman, 'The Eighteenth Century: Comic Opera', in *The Oxford History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 67. For a discussion of the changing meaning of singspiel throughout the eighteenth century see Alfred A. Neumann, 'The Changing Concept of the Singspiel', in *Studies in German Literature*, ed. Carl Hammer, Jr, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 63–71.

3 For early histories of German comic opera see Robert Eitner, 'Die deutsche komische Oper', *Monatshefte für Musik-Geschichte* 92/2 (1892), 37–92, and Ludwig Schiedermaier, *Die Deutsche Oper: Grundzüge ihres Werdens und Wesens* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1930).

4 Included in Wagner's planned series were Hiller's *Die Jagd*, Dittersdorf's *Doktor und Apotheker*, Lortzing's *Zar und Zimmermann* and, finally, Wagner's own *Die Meistersinger*. This series is referred to in the Introduction to Georg R. Kruse, *Die Jagd: Komische Oper in drei Aufzügen von J. A. Hiller* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1904); Bernard Naylor, 'Albert Lortzing', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 58 (1931–1932), 5; and Jörg Krämer, *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater im späten 18. Jahrhundert: Typologie, Dramaturgie und Anthropologie einer populären Gattung*, 2 volumes (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998), volume 1, 130–131.

5 Krämer, *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater*, volume 1, 130. One of the most extensive works excavating 'Germanness' in Hiller's operas under this regime is Gerhard Sander's 1943 dissertation (Berlin), published as *Das Deutschtum im Singspiel J. A. Hillers* (Würzburg: K. Triltsch, 1943).

so doing had laid the foundations for later German opera – for Beethoven, for Weber, and through them for Wagner.[6]

More recent scholarship pertaining to the singspiel is much more nuanced, including a number of fruitful studies of the repertory and of Hiller's comic operas. Thomas Bauman has contributed a landmark study on German-language opera of the period, Jörg Krämer's more recent investigation of the repertory features a subtle account converging around *Die Jagd*, and John Warrack's history of German opera from its inception to Wagner skilfully situates Hiller's comic operas within a broader context.[7] These represent considerable new research, giving accounts of performance history (particularly the involvement of travelling troupes) and musical and poetic features of the genre, as well as investigating the aesthetic milieu of Hiller's operas. And yet within these studies devoted to a particular repertory, and indeed within generic histories that are narrowly construed, it is difficult to contextualize and elucidate the seemingly incidental nature of Hiller's songs within librettist Christian Felix Weisse's spoken drama.

It is important to recognize that the separation of dialogue and song – the integral element on which our modern definition of the genre hinges – was initially highlighted in order to distinguish a selection of eighteenth-century comic works from their nineteenth-century counterparts. In short, eighteenth-century singspiel was defined by not yet having achieved the through-composed ideal that was sought after almost a century later. In effect, the predominance of the nineteenth-century German operatic ideal has significantly (mis)shapen our understanding of eighteenth-century German comic opera as a genre. For it is precisely the flexibility of the singspiel as a genre, allowing for the detachment of songs from their dramatic context and their subsequent mass dissemination, that contributed to the immense popularity of one of its first collaborative efforts during the 1760s and 1770s: that of librettist Weisse and composer Hiller.

In effect, then, one of the most important aspects of the singspiel which has thus far been overlooked is the tremendous facility with which the genre was spread throughout the public sphere: a conceptual space between the State and the private home in which texts, ideas and musical works were circulated, discourse flourished and institutions such as the public opera house were founded.[8] Ironically, it was this facility that allowed it to play a central role in the initial stirrings of a German national consciousness that early historians attempted to trace. Hiller's songs, separated from their dramatic context, travelled via oral transmission and in print throughout German-speaking Europe,[9] and Hiller gained popularity as 'the favourite German

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6 'Singspiel', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, fifth edition, ed. Eric Blom (London: Macmillan, 1954), volume 6, 815 and 818.

7 Thomas Bauman, *North German Opera in the Age of Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Krämer, *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater*, 130–201; John Warrack, *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

8 The public sphere is typically viewed as a conceptual space in which public opinion is voiced, and the public is generally viewed as an educated and literate group of individuals combining to form arguably one of the most powerful cultural forces during the eighteenth century (for a discussion of the social makeup of the public, see note 32 below). Since the public was first and foremost a reading public, the primary means of communication in the public sphere was through printed materials: periodicals, newspapers, novels and so forth. The public sphere also included institutions such as coffeehouses, salons, museums and, in the case of music, the public concert hall and opera house. For literature on the rise of the public sphere see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), 14–56; Timothy C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103–181; and James van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Further see Anthony J. La Vopa, 'Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe', *Journal of Modern History* 64/1 (1992), 79–116.

9 The issues of music printing and dissemination are central to my argument. The songs from Hiller's comic operas were printed (in piano-vocal score only) by Breitkopf very shortly after the premiere of each opera. The firm, having made substantial improvements to movable type in 1754, was one of the leading music publishers in German-speaking Europe. For a discussion of Breitkopf's improvements see Anik Devriès-Lesure, 'Technological Aspects', in *Music*

composer', one who wrote for the German people and in the manner of the German people. Separated from the context of the drama, his songs became known not as opera songs but as folksongs. Although it is impossible to know how many copies of his music were sold, or to whom, to say nothing of the exact scope of oral transmission, it is clear that the generic features of eighteenth-century comic opera were designed to circulate within the public sphere and thus allowed it subsequently to play an essential role in constructing a German national identity. In this article I shall examine Hiller's comic operas as a genre, their suitability for use within the Enlightenment public sphere and their role in shaping the early formation of a German national consciousness.

GERMAN COMIC OPERA AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Mid-eighteenth-century German comic opera as a literary and musical genre exhibits unique attributes that facilitate circulation within the public sphere: the overall structure of spoken dialogue and detachable songs, poetic features of individual song forms and their melodic simplicity enable widespread dissemination. In fact, the genre selected by Weisse and Hiller reflects their aim of promoting the singing of the lied in particular groups of German society. Although these songs were initially performed in a public theatre, Weisse's 1778 preface to his *Komische Opern* indicates that they were intended for use outside their dramatic context:

> Doch der besondere Zweck, den ich mir dabey vorsetzte, war, das kleine gesellschaftliche Lied unter uns einzuführen . . . Kein Mittel aber kann kräftiger seyn, den Gesang allgemeiner zu machen, als die komische Oper. Gefällt bey der Vorstellung ein Liedchen, so kann man darauf rechnen, daß es bald von dem ganzen Publikum gesungen wird. Meine Erwartung hat mich auch hierin nicht getäuscht, und ich darf mich kühn auf diejenigen Örter berufen, wo diese komischen Opern gespielt worden. Alle Gesänge, die bey der Vorstellung gefielen, waren bald in aller Munde, machten einen Theil des gesellschaftlichen Vergnügens aus, und giengen so gar zu dem gemeinen Volke über. Man hörte sie auf den Gassen, in den Wirthshäusern und auf den Hauptwachen, in der Stadt und auf dem Lande, von Bürger- und Bauernvolk singen.[10]

> Yet the particular purpose which I myself had in mind [for comic opera] was to introduce among us the little social song . . . No medium can, however, be more powerful in making song more universal than comic opera. Once a song has been deemed pleasant in performance, one can count on the fact that soon it will be sung by the entire public. My expectation has not disappointed me, and I can boldly point to all the places where these comic operas are being performed. All the songs which were well liked in performance were soon sung by all, at first bringing enjoyment to social gatherings, and then even going over to the ordinary *Volk*. One heard them in the lanes, in taverns and at the guard station, in the city and in the countryside, sung by burgher and farmer alike.

Evidently the presence of detachable songs and their melodic suitability for public consumption was a driving force behind Weisse and Hiller's comic operas. Although collections of opera arias for domestic use

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10 Christian Felix Weisse, *Komische Opern* (Carlsruhe: C. G. Schmieder, 1778), volume 3, 2v–3r. All translations are my own.

were not unheard of during the eighteenth century,[11] the distinguishing feature of Weisse and Hiller's songs is their stated intention to be communally singable.[12] Importantly, Weisse and Hiller were relatively uninterested in producing a through-composed, fully staged music drama; their interest lay, rather, in creating operatic songs in order that they might be sung by an amateur audience outside the theatre.

The poetic form of Hiller's songs also plays a critical role in allowing the genre to circulate within a public sphere. The song types include simple through-composed songs, numerous strophic songs and, among strophic songs, usually one *Romanze*[13] per opera. The *Romanze*, a strophic form, is of particular interest, since it is essentially self-reflexive:[14] a character in the drama tells an ancient tale, usually a thinly disguised microversion of the drama. For instance, in *Die Liebe auf dem Lande* (1767) Lieschen, the female protagonist, tells of an evil nobleman who comes with his horse in an effort to lure away a young peasant girl with his riches. Because of her moral character traits and perspicacity, the girl outsmarts the nobleman and escapes. Although Lieschen sings this 'ancient tale' to her lover Hännschen as though it has nothing to do with herself, the audience is well aware that this is not the case. Thus once the *Romanze* has been detached and is sung outside the theatre, it is possible to know the basic plot and moral of the story without having attended the performance.

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11 For an excellent account of opera arrangements for domestic use see Thomas Christensen, 'Public Music in Private Spaces: Piano-Vocal Scores and the Domestication of Opera', in *Music and the Cultures of Print*, ed. Kate van Orden (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 67–93. See also Klaus Hortschansky, 'Formen populärer Musikrezeption im Deutschland des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Bühnenklänge. Festschrift für Sieghardt Döring zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Thomas Betzwieser and others (Munich: Ricordi, 2005), 457–469. For a localized study of the domestication of Italianate operatic genres (primarily the Italianate cantata) by adding song-like comic arias and the association of the Enlightenment lied with a so-called German national style see Ann Le Bar, 'The Domestication of Vocal Music in Enlightenment Hamburg', *Journal of Musicological Research* 19/2 (2000), 97–134. While collections of lieder composed for domestic use formed an essential part of Enlightenment music cultivation, and Hiller's songs were in fact musically very similar to the song collections of his contemporaries within the genre of opera, Hiller and Weisse's incorporation of the lied as one of the main song-types sung outside the theatre just as it was on stage seems to be an endeavour preceded only by the works of J. C. Standfuss.

12 This aim of communal singing was articulated in both the second and third editions of Weisse's *Komische Opern* (1777 and 1778). Hiller concedes in his autobiography that this was not his initial intention in composing comic opera. For Schiebeler's *Lisuart und Dariolette* (1767), he was interested in composing more challenging Italianate and da capo arias for the singers. The theatrical impresario Heinrich Gottfried Koch, however, disagreed, and suggested instead that he fashion light and simple songs in order that everyone in the audience could sing along; see Johann Adam Hiller, *Mein Leben: Autobiographie, Briefe und Nekrologe*, ed. Mark Lehmstedt (Leipzig: Lehmstedt, 2004), 24. Hiller seems to have taken this advice seriously, since in the Preface to his very next opera, *Lottchen am Hofe* (1767), he states first of all that 'Ausführliche Arien, Arien mit Da Capo, mit öfterer Wiederholung des Textes, mit langen melismatischen Ausdehnungen und Figuren finden dießmal die Liebhaber nicht' (Enthusiasts will not this time find detailed arias, da capo arias with frequent repetitions of the text and long melismatic prolongations and ornaments); see Johann Adam Hiller, *Lottchen am Hofe* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1769). Thus the aim of including short songs for everyone to sing, rather than Italianate arias for virtuosos, seems to have been established by Hiller, Weisse and Koch relatively early on in their collaboration. It should be noted, however, that Weisse's articulation of this ideal of furthering communal singing in the preface to the 1777 and 1778 editions of his *Komische Opern* was of course self-serving in that it fuelled the (already established) popularity and tremendous commercial value of the songs; they sold a great number of copies of the piano-vocal scores of the operas (for statistics see notes 19 and 20 below).

13 The seminal study of the operatic *Romanze* is Daniel Heartz, 'The Beginnings of the Operatic Romance: Rousseau, Sedaine, and Monsigny', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 15/2 (1981–1982), 149–178.

14 For the idea of self-reflexivity in opera see Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 63–118. For comments on self-reflexivity in opéra comique see David Charlton, 'The Romance and Its Cognates: Narrative, Irony and *Vraisemblance* in Early *Opéra Comique*', in *Die Opéra comique und ihr Einfluß auf das europäische Musiktheater im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herbert Schneider and Nicole Wild (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1997), 74.

Strophic songs such as the *Romanze* are perhaps best suited for public singing, since once the melody is mastered, it can easily be repeated with subsequent verses of text. In the context of the staged production, however, Weisse indicates that strophic songs were by no means performed in their entirety. Rather, the director (in Leipzig, Heinrich Gottfried Koch) was entrusted with the decision as to how many stanzas were appropriate; frequently one stanza would suffice:

> [Ich habe] oft die Lieder in mehr Strophen verfertiget, als sie auf dem Theater brauchen gesungen zu werden. Hier ist oft Eine genug, und die Direktoren thun wohl, wenn sie sich hierinn nach den Umständen richten. Das Lied hält immer die Handlung auf: denn oft ist eine bloße Empfindung ausgedrückt, und die Melodie muß vorzüglich schön seyn, wenn man sie zu wiederholten malen hören soll.[15]

> [I have] often composed the songs in more strophes than necessary for sung performance in the theatre. Here, often one is enough, and the director does well to adjust according to the circumstances. The song always slows down the plot, since frequently a single emotion is expressed, and the melody must be exquisitely beautiful if one is to hear it repeated several times.

The practice of omitting many of the song stanzas during a staged performance while publishing songs with all the stanzas reinforces the central purpose of communal singing for this genre. In order to facilitate rapid dissemination and communal singing by members of the public, pamphlets containing all of the stanzas to the song texts were distributed to audience members at performances. These pocket-sized prints, on thin, relatively inexpensive paper, only occasionally contain information such as the date of the performance, the name of the publisher or printer, or the print run.[16]

Publication data and contemporary reviews also indicate that Hiller's piano-vocal editions of these operas were extremely popular. According to Arthur Loesser, *Lottchen am Hofe* and *Die Liebe auf dem Lande* went through four print runs totalling 2,750 copies within fifteen years,[17] and according to Hermann Hase *Die Jagd* underwent three print runs in the five years following its first performance, totalling more than 4,000 exemplars and earning Hiller 1,383 Reichsthaler.[18] Reviews of the piano-vocal editions in various journals were extremely positive and included brief descriptions of the arias as well as advertisements for the next available opera in this format. Judging from numerous reviews of the scores[19] advertised for a price of 1 Reichsthal 12 groschen,[20] it is almost certain that the songs were widely distributed and used by members of the public. Copies of the librettos were sold at semi-annual book fairs in Leipzig and Frankfurt[21] and were

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15 Weisse, *Komische Opern*, volume 3, 3r.

16 Several of these pamphlets survive in the Stadtbibliothek Leipzig – Musikbibliothek: *Arien und Gesänge aus der Comische Oper: Lottchen, oder Das Bauermägdchen am Hofe* (shelfmark B69); *Arien und Gesänge aus der Comischen Oper: Die Liebe auf dem Lande* (shelfmark B85); *Arien und Gesänge zur komischen Oper die Jagd* (shelfmark PT1462); *Arien und Gesänge zur comischen Oper: Der Aerndtekranz* (shelfmark PT213). It is unclear whether these pamphlets were distributed free or sold to the audience (thereby contributing to the commercial aspects of Hiller and Weisse's project), since there is no indication of price.

17 Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Dover, 1990), 153–154.

18 Hermann Hase, 'Johann Adam Hiller und die Breitkopfs', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 2 (1919), 1–22. Cited in Krämer, *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater*, volume 1, 130.

19 Johann Friedrich Agricola, 'Lottchen am Hofe, Die Liebe auf dem Lande', *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* 13/1 (1770), 84–90; Anonymous, 'Arien und Gesänge aus der comische Oper: Lottchen, oder das Bauermädgen am Hofe', *Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen* 1/48 (1767), 376–377; Anonymous, 'Die Jagd, Der Aerndtekranz', *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* 17/2 (1772), 564–568; Anonymous, 'Leipzig', *Unterhaltungen* 5/4 (1768), 368–370; Anonymous, 'Leipzig', *Unterhaltungen* 4/1 (1767), 650–651.

20 *Lottchen am Hofe* was advertised for this price, as was *Lisuart und Dariolette*.

21 Anonymous, 'Leipzig' (1768), 368.

available in local bookshops. In fact, Weisse's librettos were pirated, printed and sold before he had a chance to publish them himself.[22]

Finally, in addition to the detachable nature of the songs and the accessibility of the song types used, the melodies themselves were easy to sing and to recall. One reviewer praises Hiller's operas for their lack of da capo arias and Italianate style:

> Von der Musik des Hrn. Hillers können wir nichts als gutes sagen; sie hat uns zu allen Empfind-
> ungen hingerissen, die sie verlanget und Kenner haben uns versichert, daß sie noch mehr
> Verdienste, ein vortreffliches unterstützendes und neues Accompagnement, schöne Wendungen
> und charakteristische Züge in der Melodie, und eine reine Harmonie hätte. Von den Rasereyen
> des italiänischen Theaters haben wir nichts bemerkt, keine einzige Arie hatte einmal ein Dacapo.[23]

> Regarding the music of Herr Hiller, we can make nothing but positive comments; it has enrap-
> tured us with all the affects that are called upon, and the connoisseurs have assured us that it has
> still more merits: a splendid new supporting accompaniment, beautiful turns of phrase and
> characteristic features in the melody and a pure harmony. Of the recklessness of Italian theatre we
> have not noticed anything; not a single aria contains a da capo.

Hiller's melodies were known for their simplicity. J. F. Reichardt notes in his extensive publication on German comic opera, 'the song is such that I can sing along the second time round'.[24] Moreover, Weisse's Preface to the comic operas indicates that Hiller's melodies were specifically designed for public singing and not for virtuoso singers on stage: 'uns lag mehr daran, von einer fröhlichen Gesellschaft, als von Virtuosen gesungen zu werden'[25] (for us, it was more important that our songs be sung by a merry society than by a virtuoso). In essence, generic structural features of German comic opera – the detachment of songs from the spoken dialogue, various song types and a simple melodic style – are indicative of a deliberate design for ease of dissemination and communal singing by the public. Inextricably bound to the public sphere, however, is the question of audience: who constituted the public and why was it important for them to sing?

QUESTIONS OF AUDIENCE

In a lengthy Preface to the *Komische Opern* explicitly stating his intended social function for the lied, Weisse at the same time reveals his intended audience for these songs. His description of the *gesellschaftliches Lied*[26] used in particular sociable spaces such as *Gesellschaften*, salons, reading societies and similar gatherings gives a reasonably clear idea of the kind of audience present. This initial audience Weisse aptly refers to as *Publikum*,[27] and so his concept of *Publikum* is first of all an educated and reading public. Although Habermas describes the public as substantially bourgeois,[28] more recent political historians have revised his essentially

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22 See Krämer, *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater*, volume 1, 131–132.

23 Anonymous, 'Vermischte Nachrichten, die schönen Künste betreffend', *Unterhaltungen* 5/4 (1768), 368–70.

24 Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Über die deutsche comische Oper* (Hamburg: Carl Ernst Bohn, 1774), reprinted in *Schriften zur Musik, Facsimilia* 2 (Munich: Emil Katzbichler, 1974), 11.

25 Weisse, *Komische Opern*, volume 3, 3r–3v.

26 The early repertory of the *Gesellschaftslieder* as social songs sung by the educated public is documented in Hoffmann von Fallersleben's 1860 *Die deutschen Gesellschaftslieder des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, 2 volumes (reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966). For a discussion of the *Gesellschaftslied* and Salieri's contribution to the genre see Rudolph Angermüller, 'Salieris Gesellschaftsmusik', in *Studien zur italienisch-deutschen Musikgeschichte* (*Analecta Musicologica* 17), ed. Friedrich Lippmann (Cologne: Volk, 1976), 146–193.

27 Weisse, *Komische Opern*, volume 3, 2v.

28 Habermas states that 'the authorities addressed their promulgations to "the" public, that is, in principle to all subjects. Usually they did not reach the "common man" in this way, but at best the "educated classes". Along with the apparatus of the modern state, a new stratum of "bourgeois" people arose which occupied a central position within the "public".'

Table 1 Reconstruction of Weisse's description of audiences and dissemination processes of the opera songs, taken from the 1778 preface to his *Komische Opern*

Sphere 1	Sphere 2	Sphere 3
• Public opera performance	• Society meetings	• Singing of songs on streets, in parks and in workplaces
• Spoken dialogue and songs	• Communal singing of songs	
• Paid admission	• Open to members of 'public'	• Oral transmission of songs
• 'Public' audience	• Song texts, piano-vocal scores and librettos available	
• Song text distributed	• Semi-private spaces	• Singing *Volk* as particpatory audience
• Public theatre as space		• Open-air spaces and work spaces

Marxist view of the rising bourgeoisie and now describe the public as 'socially heterogeneous and politically multi-directional',[29] thereby consisting of both aristocracy and bourgeoisie.[30] This, however, is not the only audience for which Weisse intended his opera songs. He subsequently claims that 'these songs first bring pleasure in social gatherings, and then they even go over into the ordinary *Volk*'.[31] Although his process of diffusion is described in several stages or spheres, the audiences in the several spheres are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Using Weisse's vivid description of the circulation of the opera songs, it is possible to reconstruct the process as in Table 1. The first and second spheres of operatic distribution are ones with a specific target audience: the literate public (of varying social strata) who had the financial means of purchasing cultural commodities and who met within already established spaces of sociability. These spaces vary from meetings in private homes to discussions in numerous *Gesellschaften* and reading societies. Various types of texts were used in these contexts, and one might presume that the song texts handed out at performances would resurface in these settings. But although piano-vocal scores were used in domestic spaces, the practice of

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He goes further to clarify that the 'bourgeois' were not burghers in the traditional sense (craftsman and shopkeepers), but that the bourgeoisie (merchants, bankers, entrepreneurs) were from the outset a reading public. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 22–23.

29 Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 15. For a discussion of the revisions made to Habermas's view see Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 8–15, and Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 12. For an eighteenth-century perspective on the use of the term 'public', especially with reference to Kant's famous essay 'What is Enlightenment?', see John Christian Laursen, 'The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of "Public" and ' "Publicity" ', in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 253–269.

30 It is important to note that the public cannot be understood as being synonymous with the middle class. Political historians such as Blanning describe the public sphere as a 'neutral vessel, carrying a diversity of social groups and ideologies'. Regarding public concerts during the eighteenth century he notes that often 'it was not the middle classes who took the initiative in organizing concerts but the nobility . . . Moreover, it was aristocrats just as much as bourgeois who were the beneficiaries of this new cultural space, for they now had the opportunity to emancipate themselves from both the hegemony previously exercised by the court and the isolation of their rural estates.' Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 15 and 170. Regarding Hiller and Weisse's comic operas, Friedrich Rochlitz, too, notes the mixture of social class when referring to the 'public': 'Weit beliebter und allgemein bekannt sind Hillers Operetten; auch sind sie von weit mehr Einfluss auf die Bildung des *gemischten Publikums* für Musik, und auf die Erweckung der Liebhaberey am Gesange bey demselben gewesen.' (Hiller's operas were widely loved and universally known; they were also of far greater influence in the cultivation of music for the *mixed public*, and for the awakening of the fondness for singing for the same [public].) Rochlitz, 'Zum Andenken Johann Adam Hillers', in Hiller, *Mein Leben*, 151.

31 Weisse, *Komische Opern*, volume 3, 3r.

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reading (books) aloud and playing for a small audience in reading rooms (semi-private spaces) should not be underestimated. Evidence exists of music rooms being part of reading and lending libraries.[32] Importantly, members of the public sphere were individuals who had the financial means to attend comic opera performances and to purchase and read literary and musical texts, and who had access to a keyboard instrument and a basic training in music. The success of opera dissemination within this sphere was dependent on a group of individuals that were able to cultivate themselves, take leisure time and enjoy leisure activities.

Extending his final sphere far beyond this limited concept of 'public', Weisse claims that his opera songs were so popular that they even 'went over to the ordinary *Volk*. One heard them in the lanes, in taverns and at the guard station, in the city and in the countryside, sung by burgher and farmer alike'. Thus Weisse's final sphere of dissemination is characterized by widespread circulation and includes a large group of individuals – the ordinary or common *Volk*. Taken literally, Weisse, in this particular instance, is referring to the lower classes or rural peasants. The inclusion of this final sphere allows him to claim that just about everyone is singing these songs; in effect, it serves to complete his image of widespread participation and enables him to speak of a collective audience that includes both burgher and farmer, singing in the city and in the countryside. Within this seemingly idealized image of an all-encompassing audience singing opera songs, Weisse's claim invites an important question: did rural peasants actually sing these songs?

Even though it is impossible to reconstruct the scope of circulation, particularly through oral transmission, it is possible to glean some evidence regarding various arenas in which these songs were sung or played and whether rural peasants might have sung them. Another account of the widespread diffusion of Weisse and Hiller's opera songs in everyday spaces is found in a 1772 review in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*:

> Die Arien aus diesen beyden Operetten, werden hier bey uns so gut als die aus irgend einer Oper in Wälsch=land, in allen Straßen gesungen, oder bald mit diesen bald mit jenen Instrumenten gespielet.[33]

> Die Romanze S. 49. Als ich auf meiner Bleiche u.[s.w.], in Berlin wenigstens, die Hälfte der Einwohner auswendig, sie wird in allen Straßen, auf allen Spaziergängen auf allen Wasserfahrten, auf allen Paraden gesungen und gespielt.[34]

> The arias from both of these operettas [*Die Jagd* and *Der Aerndtekranz*] are as popular with us as those of any opera in Italy, are sung in all the streets or are soon being played with this or that instrument.

> The *Romanze* on page 49, 'Als ich auf neiner Bleiche' etc. – in Berlin, at least, half of the residents know it by heart, and it is being sung and played in all the streets, on all walkabouts and boat trips, on all parades.

In view of the open-air spaces mentioned by the reviewer above, it appears that for the most part these songs were heard in bourgeois spaces of leisure or popular entertainment. Buskers playing on the streets were considered professional musicians earning a living in rapidly growing urban centres, and walkabouts, boat trips and parades were open-air entertainments closely associated with eighteenth-century pleasure gardens and fairgrounds. It begins to appear more likely that this audience overlaps with the audiences attending the staged performance and singing in societies than with rural peasant farmers.

In fact, urban contexts noted by reviewers could provide a clue as to the motivation behind Weisse's inclusion of the ordinary *Volk*. Rapidly growing urbanization during the mid- to late eighteenth century contributed to an increase in rural sentimentalization – a sense of loss of an idyllic past in response to urban

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32 Reinhard Wittmann, 'Was There a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?', in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 308.

33 Anonymous, 'Die Jagd, Der Aerndtekranz', 565.

34 Anonymous, 'Die Jagd, Der Aerndtekranz', 566.

individuality and isolation. Bourgeois constructions of the idealized peasant and of the *Volk* as a collective community were widespread in German literature, painting and opera during the 1760s.[35] The notion of a folksong, too, was constructed for and by the bourgeoisie as they yearned for the former simple lifestyle in rural areas. Collections of folksongs published and sold were not authentic folksongs heard in rural areas; rather, they were constructions by and for an ever-increasing urban middle class, appealing to the memory of a lost Arcadia.[36]

Similarly, during the height of their popularity in the 1770s and 1780s Weisse and Hiller's songs became known not as opera songs but as folksongs. In his autobiography Weisse describes the success of *Lottchen am Hofe* and *Die Liebe auf dem Lande*: 'the composition of these pieces from the splendid Hiller was so catchy and easily comprehensible that the songs of both of these operas soon became folksongs'.[37] In places as far away as South Germany and Switzerland Hiller's songs were described as folksongs. Schwab remarks that these songs of Hiller did indeed find their way across the walls of Leipzig and across distant borders. Jean B. Laborde wrote down the song 'Ohne Lieb und ohne Wein' in 1780 as a supposed Strassbourg folksong; in Erk-Böhme's 'Liederhort' this same song exists, with a different text and musical variants, as a folksong from Hesse-Darmstadt. These songs were even encountered by a travelling Saxon in remote Switzerland.[38]

Finally, in his retrospective account describing the tremendous popularity of their opera songs, Weisse connects the idea of the folksong with that of the *Volk*, this time, however, not only the ordinary *Volk*, but the *Volk* as a collective entity:[39]

> Weißens Lieder waren ihrem Inhalte und ihrer Faßlichkeit nach, wie Hillers Melodien, für Leute von einer mittlern Bildung geeignet, und deren ist die größere Anzahl. Hiller sagte einmal bey Erscheinung der Schulzischen Volkslieder: 'Jetzt werden Volkslieder herausgegeben, welche das Volk nicht kennen lernt, nicht singt und nicht singen kann. Weiße und ich haben nicht mit diesem Titel geprahlt, aber unsere Lieder sind wirklich von der Nation, dem Volke der Deutschen gesungen worden.' Und er hatte Recht. In wie viel geselligen Zirkeln, wo man vorher nicht ans Singen gedacht hatte, wurden die Lieder der Weißischen Operetten gesungen, wenn diese an einem Orte gegeben worden waren. Die Lieder: Ohne Lieb' und ohne Wein u.[s.w.] Schön sind Rosen und Jesmin u.[s.w.] Die Felder sind nun alle leer u.[s.w.] Schön ist das Feld zur Frühlingszeit u.[s.w.] Was noch jung und artig ist u. nebst mehreren andern – wer konnte sie nicht vor einigen zwanzig Jahren auswendig, und wer sang sie nicht?[40]

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35 For a discussion of the idealization of the peasant in literature and painting as it relates to music see Tilman Seebass, 'Idyllic Arcadia and Italian Musical Reality: Experience of German Writers and Artists (1770–1835)', *Imago Musicae 7* (1990), 149–188.

36 Perhaps the best known collection is *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, compiled during the early nineteenth century by Clemens Brentano and Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Eighteenth-century collections of songs in the manner of the *Volk* include J. A. P. Schulz's tremendously popular *Lieder im Volkston* (Berlin: G. J. Decker, 1782) and numerous collections by J. F. Reichardt.

37 'Die Compositionen dieser Stücke von dem vortrefflichen Hiller war so einschmeichelnd und faßlich, daß die Gesänge dieser beyden Operetten sehr bald zu Volksliedern wurden'; Christian Felix Weisse, *Christian Felix Weissens Selbstbiographie, herausgegeben von dessen Sohne Christian Ernst Weisse und dessen Schwiegersohne Samuel Gottlob Frisch, mit Zusätzen von dem Letztern* (Leipzig: Georg Voss, 1806), 104.

38 Heinrich W. Schwab, *Sangbarkeit, Popularität und Kunstlied* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1965), 100.

39 The concept of a *Volk* is notoriously difficult to define. As David Gramit notes, 'the identity of the *Volk* was by no means self-evident – did it refer to all the people of a nation, or to the common, unspoilt people, or to the ignorant in need of the cultivation that *Volkslieder or Lieder im Volkston* might provide?'; see David Gramit, *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770–1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 65. In this instance the opaqueness of the definition works to Weisse's advantage; it enables him to speak of a collective audience in which individuals of all backgrounds could stand united.

40 Weisse, *Selbstbiographie*, 325–326.

> Depending on their content and comprehensibility, Weisse's songs, like Hiller's melodies, were suitable for people of a moderate cultivation, which are the largest in number. Hiller once said upon the occasion of the new publication of Schulz's *Volkslieder*: 'Now folksongs are being published which the *Volk* does not get to know, does not sing and cannot sing. Weisse and I did not boast of such a title, but our songs really were sung by the nation, by the German *Volk*.' And he was right. In how many social circles, where previously one would never even have thought about singing, were the songs of the Weisse operettas sung. The songs 'Ohne Lieb' und ohne Wein [etc.]', 'Schön sind Rosen und Jesmin [etc.]', 'Die Felder sind nun alle leer [etc.]', 'Schön ist das Feld zur Frühlingszeit [etc.]', 'Was noch jung und artig ist [etc.]', among many others – who did not know them by heart some twenty years ago, and who did not sing them?

From this it is evident that Weisse's audience comprises an emerging bourgeoisie, singing these songs within their social circles. Simultaneously, however, the notion of the *Volk* and the German nation carries a universal appeal in which seemingly everyone is singing these *Lieder im Volkston* (songs in the manner of the *Volk*). Thus there appears to be a discrepancy between Weisse's actual audience and his ideal audience. In fact, the ideal of a *Volk* – a seemingly indistinguishable and faceless mass of individuals – served as a construct in which individuals of various classes and educational backgrounds could be united.[41] Weisse's invocation of the *Volk* – a collective entity in which burgher and farmer could ideally sing side by side – forms a part of a larger Enlightenment ideal of universal brotherhood. Even though the peasant farmer may or may not actually have joined the burgher in singing these songs, within the articulated ideal of a German *Volk* they certainly stood united.

NEGOTIATING THE PASTORAL

Strangely absent from Weisse and Hiller's Enlightenment ideal of uniting the German people in song is the aristocracy; within the dramatic context of the operas, however, they do play a role. Displayed through the lens of the pastoral mode, the corruptness and artificiality of the courts typically form the backdrop within which pastoral inserts reveal the idyllic surroundings and virtues of the idealized peasant.[42] The very use of the pastoral mode to construct a favourable image of the *Volk*, a concept which Weisse and Hiller borrowed from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Le devin du village* and writings concerning politics and the fine arts,[43] is in itself an ideological statement. While pastoral operas previously featured nymphs and shepherds, typically thinly veiled representations of ruling families and the aristocracy, the pastoral mode in Hiller's operas serves to amplify the merits of the rural peasant. Moreover, these peasants sing songs in the manner of the *Volk*. This melodic simplicity, emulating a folksong, was Hiller's hallmark, and the basis of his popularity. Within the pastoral mode, however, this melodic style necessarily exists in opposition to the highly ornamented Italian opera seria style, court culture and the aristocracy. The presence of the pastoral mode effectively

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41 For a discussion of the *Volkston* as cultural construct and Enlightenment ideology see Margaret M. Stoljar, *Poetry and Song in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1985), 149.

42 Weisse and Hiller's operas are not explicitly pastoral operas in the sense of a drama set in Arcadia containing nymphs and shepherds. Instead they are in the pastoral mode, containing isolated instances or 'insets' of the pastoral. For a description see 'Pastoral Insets' in Andrew V. Ettin, *Literature and the Pastoral* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 75–95. Typically these pastoral insets are 'suspended' in contemporary society; the tension between these two spheres results in irony. For a description of pastoral suspension see Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 68.

43 Hiller published a collection of writings concerned with morality, politics and the fine arts which was not a direct translation of Rousseau's works but, in accordance with established eighteenth-century practice, was Hiller's translation and interpretation of Rousseau's thinking; see J. A. Hiller, *J. J. Rousseau: Auserlesene Gedanken über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Politik, und den schönen Wissenschaften* (Danzig: Daniel Ludwig Wedel, 1764).

amplifies the virtues of the idealized German peasant but also serves to construct an ideological connection between this peasant and the essential (morally upright) character of the German *Volk*. Consider, for example, the portrayal of the female protagonist Lottchen as a quintessentially virtuous peasant girl.

The opening scene in *Lottchen am Hofe* (1767) is set in the countryside with farmers' huts in the background. Lottchen, a young farm girl, is spinning thread and singing about the joys of daily work while her lover Gürke picks cherries. Soon the audience is made aware of Astolph (the local Duke), his present unhappiness with his chosen partner Emile and his intention to pursue Lottchen instead. The two worlds converge for the first time (in Act 1 Scene 4) when Astolph sees Lottchen singing merrily in the fields; he approaches her regarding marriage.

Astolph: Ist es möglich, mein schönes Kind, daß man in dieser Dunkelheit so heiter, so zufrieden sein kann?

Lottchen: Diese Dunkelheit? Warum Dunkelheit? Die Sonne scheint bey uns so heiter, als an irgend einem Ort: keine hohe Mauern verschließen uns den Tag, und wenn es ja jene Gebüsche thun, so sind es bloß willkomme Schatten, die uns vor den Strahlen der Sonne beschützen.

Astolph: Ich meine die Niedrigkeit deines Standes, mein liebes Kind.

Lottchen: O nicht doch! diese Niedrigkeit verbirgt uns vor allen fremden Sorgen. Weder Neid noch Mißgunst schleicht sich in unser friedsames Thal, unsere Sorgen sind unsre Arbeit. Diese erhält uns gesund, und wenn man gesund ist, ist man immer froh.

Astolph: Aber was habt ihr denn hier für Freuden?

Lottchen: Was für Freuden? Wenn wir mit unserer Arbeit fertig sind, so haben wir deren unzählige.

Astolph: Is it possible, my beautiful child, that one can be so cheerful, so content in this darkness?

Lottchen: This darkness? Why darkness? The sun shines as brightly here for us as it does in any other place. No high walls shut out the day from us, and if these shrubs do so, they just make welcome shadows that protect us from the rays of the sun.

Astolph: I mean the lowliness of your social class, my dear child.

Lottchen: Oh, but no! this lowliness protects us from all foreign cares. Neither envy nor misfortune creeps into our peaceful valley; our cares are our work. It keeps us healthy, and when one is healthy, then one is always happy.

Astolph: But what sort of pleasures do you have here?

Lottchen: What pleasures? When we're finished with our work, then we have innumerable possibilities.

Rather than continuing the discussion in spoken dialogue, Lottchen responds in song, singing about the delights of living in the rustic countryside (see Figure 1).

Bald pflück ich mir Rosen zu Kränzen;
Bald laden zu lüsternen Tänzen
In bunten fröhlichen Reihn
Mich meine Gespielinnen ein.
Bald singen wir zärtliche Lieder:
Es singet das Echo sie wieder,
Und was im Scherze dieß sprach,
Das schwatzen im Scherze wir nach.

Bald hüpf' ich durch blühende Wiesen,
Die Bäche geschwäßig durchfließen,
Zum Hayn, wo Zephyr mir rauscht
Und wo mich mein Schäfer belauscht
Und bin ich des Lachens nun müde,

Then will I pick roses for wreaths
Then I will be summoned for pleasurable dances
In colourful bright rows
By my [female] companions
We'll then sing tender songs
That will be sung by the Echo again
And that which it [the Echo] says in jest,
We'll repeat with jest once again.

Then I'll be hopping through blossoming meadows
Through which the bubbling streams flow
To the grove, where Zephyr rustles around me
And where my shepherd listens in on me
And once I am tired of laughing

Figure 1   Lottchen's song 'Bald pflück ich mir Rosen zu Kränzen' from J. A. Hiller, *Lottchen am Hofe*, Act 1 Scene 4 (1768 piano-vocal edition, exemplar in the Stadtbibliothek Leipzig – Musikbibliothek, 4 III 74, pages 24–25). Used with permission

So wiegen mich Unschuld und Friede | Then innocence and peace
In Schlaf, der schmeichelnd und leicht | Will lull me to sleep, which disappears
Früh mit Auroren entweicht. | gentle and light, early with Aurora.

The intersection of Lottchen's and Astolph's spheres in this scene embodies the central pastoral opposition: the simplicity and purity of the peasantry in opposition to the complexities and artificiality of court life. Lottchen's simple folk melody – a lilting tune in 6/8, set syllabically and free of excessive ornamentation – is most obviously interpreted as portraying her rural simplicity. While accurate in essence, this realist reading is arguably a one-dimensional view of the collaborative musico-dramatic forces at work, both in this specific scene, and more broadly, in these operas.

In the case of Lottchen, her naivety and rural simplicity are evident in her manner of speech and comprehension in conversation with Astolph. Certainly, when confronted with the metaphor of 'darkness' for her social position, Lottchen is unable to think or to respond in terms of literary metaphor. However, as

soon as she speaks through song there is an abrupt change in her literary ability.[44] The poetic language of her song invokes imagery and mythological references far beyond the education of a peasant girl: Zephyr, the god of the gentle west wind; Echo, from the tale of Echo and Narcissus; and Aurora, goddess of the dawn. Lottchen's song embodies numerous pastoral themes. She belongs, for instance, to a larger community who meet one another for the purpose of singing songs, playing games and dancing. Their songs are conceived and sung in a natural landscape; moreover, this natural landscape participates by echoing back their music. Love is a central theme in her song. Her lover is referred to as a shepherd; she meets him in idyllic pastures. This landscape also serves as a habitat for numerous classical mythological gods – she and her community dwell in their presence. At the end of each day she is completely content; her basic sustenance comes from nature alone.

Yet it seems unreasonable within the context of the opera for a peasant girl to be singing of her experiences with classical mythological figures and meeting her shepherd in an idyllic landscape. Accordingly, the scene is not just a straightforward 'realistic' depiction of Lottchen as a naive and simple farm girl. While her folk-like melody speaks of a naive and idyllic simplicity, combined with the text and within the context of the scene the overall musico-dramatic effect is complex. In fact, it appears that there is irony at work: it is not Lottchen but Astolph who is 'living in darkness', figuratively speaking. While demonstrating the innocence and simplicity of peasant characters, the use of the pastoral mode simultaneously contends for the moral superiority of the rural folk.

The natural singing style for which Hiller was renowned is one that is associated primarily with morally upright peasant character types such as Lottchen. In discussing his choices of character types, Weisse indicates that it is far more natural to have peasants sing a simple and agreeable song than the grotesque *commedia dell'arte* characters of Italian opera buffa:

> Sie suchten nicht, wie die meisten Italienischen durch Possenreißereyen und groteske Carrikaturen lautes Lachen zu erregen, sondern stellten in Ausführung einer artigen Fabel, meistentheils auf dem Lande lebende Personen auf, in deren Munde der Gesang eines kleinen, leichten Liedchens der Natur ziemlich angemessen war. Diese Chansons waren von so faßlicher und singbarer Melodie daß sie von dem Publico sehr geschwind behalten und nachgesungen wurden und das gesellschaftliche Leben erheiterten.[45]

> They did not seek, like most Italians, to create laughter through buffoonery and grotesque caricatures. Instead, they presented a pleasant tale consisting mostly of rural persons in whose mouths a small, light song sounded quite natural. These songs had melodies that were so easily grasped and so easily sung that the public swiftly retained them; they were repeated and provided entertainment in social circles.

Weisse thus connects the simple songs sung by the moral peasants in the opera,[46] noting that their style (in the manner of the *Volk*) was simple and pleasant so that the public could sing them, with benefits to the community as a whole.

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44 This sudden change in literary ability of a character of a lower social class, signalling knowledge beyond her socially expected abilities and to be understood with reference to the pastoral mode, occurs later in the character of Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*; see Edmund J. Goehring, 'Despina, Cupid and the Pastoral Mode of *Così fan tutte*', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7/2 (1995), 107–133.

45 Weisse, *Selbstbiographie*, 103.

46 The issue of song forms and musical styles associated with particular character types is relatively consistent for the virtuous peasant, but for noble characters such as the king or local duke, it is much more varied. For a discussion of the reception of Italian aria forms, particularly the da capo aria in Hiller's singspiels, see Estelle Joubert, 'Public Perception and Compositional Response: The Changing Role of the Da Capo Aria in Hiller's Singspiele', forthcoming in *Musica e Storia*.

The ideological implications of a literate audience singing songs in the manner of idealized German rural peasants are inextricably bound to the idea of a German *Volk*. A duality exists within the character of the idealized peasants. On the one hand, they exemplify ancient shepherd-poets, singing 'folksongs' with and to one another. On the other, they are generic representatives of the German *Volk*. Characters named 'the honest Michel', Töffel, Hännschen, Lieschen or Lottchen are at once members of an anonymous and faceless mass of individuals comprising the *Volk* and intimately known examples of the German *Jedermann* (everyman). Thus there was a strong connection between the portrayal of morally upright peasant character types in the operas and the German people.

Moreover, in capturing this *Volkston*, Hiller was perceived to have also captured the collective essence of the German people while affirming the moral superiority of the working classes and bourgeoisie. This connection between Hiller's ability to write in the manner of the *Volk* and its subsequent connection with the German people is evident in Schubart's discussion of the composer's success:

> *Hiller* . . . der Lieblingscomponist der Deutschen. So sehr Hiller den welschen Gesang studierte; so studierte er doch noch weit mehr den deutschen, daher schneiden seine Gesänge so tief in unser Herz ein, dass sie durch ganz Deutschland allgemein geworden sind. Welcher Handwerksbursche, welcher gemeine Soldat, welches Mädchen singt nicht von ihm die Lieder: 'Als ich auf meine Bleiche u.s.w.' Ohne Lieb und ohne Wein u.s.w., und verschiedene andre? Im *Volkstone* hat Hiller noch niemand erreicht. Er ist der erste, der nach Standfuss komische Opern in deutsche Sprache auf die Bühne gebracht hat. Sein *lustiger Schuster* – seine *Jagd*; sein *Dorfbarbier*; sein *Erndtekranz*, und mehrere andere Opern, haben allgemeine Sensation in Deutschland hervorgebracht. Es gibt kein Theater unter uns, wo sie nicht mehr als einmal aufgeführt worden wären.[47]

> *Hiller* . . . the favourite composer of the Germans. As intently as Hiller studied Italian song, he studied German song even more so. Hence his songs cut so deeply into our hearts that they became universal in all of Germany. Which journeyman, which ordinary soldier, which girl does not sing his songs 'Als ich auf meiner Bleiche etc.', 'Ohne Liebe und ohne Wein etc.' and various others? In capturing the *Volkston* Hiller has not been equalled. He is the first since Standfuss to bring the comic opera in German onto the stage. His *lustiger Schuster*, his *Jagd,* his *Dorfbarbier*, his *Erndtekranz* and many other operas created a universal sensation in Germany. There is no theatre among us where they were not performed more than once.

In effect, when composing *volkstümliche Lieder* (songs in the manner of the *Volk*) Hiller's ideal audience was that of a united German people finding their identity in German song. Even though the operas did not incorporate folksongs, by virtue of being in the style of folksongs they were perceived as intended for all Germans; the idea of the *Volk* had become synonymous with that of a nation. Hiller's opera songs were crafted to resonate with the ideals of the German bourgeoisie. To reciprocate, it was this same public, soon viewed as a nation, that judged the songs worthy of embodying a German national identity.[48]

AFFIRMING THE GERMAN NATION: HILLER'S SONGS AND THE GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

> I write as a citizen of the world who serves no prince . . . From now on all my ties are dissolved. The public is now everything to me – my preoccupation, my sovereign and my friend. Henceforth I belong to it alone, I wish to place myself before this tribunal and no other. It is the only thing I fear

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47 Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Vienna: J. V. Degen, 1806; reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969), 106–107.

48 For an excellent study pertaining to a German national identity in music, highlighting also the crucial role of the public sphere, see Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

and respect. A feeling of greatness comes over me with the idea that the only fetter I wear is the verdict of the world – and that the only throne I shall appeal to is the human soul.[49]

The rise of the public as a cultural entity serving as the single most important patron and audience for which poets and composers write was an essential aspect not only of Schiller's but also of Weisse's and Hiller's social, cultural and artistic milieu. This idea of the public as a collective entity judging the merits of works of art, however, soon gained nationalistic import: with respect to Weisse and Hiller, it was not just the public but also the German nation that assessed the merits of their opera songs. The concept of the nation as arbiter of taste is evident already in 1774, when Reichardt describes the tremendous popularity of Hiller's *Romanze* 'Als ich auf meiner Bleiche' from *Die Jagd* as a collective national pronouncement:

> The entire German nation has already decided that [the song] is completely as songs of this type ought to be. For every man, from highest to the lowest, sings and plays it and whistles it, and I might almost say drums it, so widely is it used in every possible way throughout Germany.[50]

Reichardt speaks of the German nation as a single unified cultural concept, possessing the ultimate authority and ability to judge whether or not a song is worthwhile. Moreover, reference is made to a range of social status – from highest to lowest – representing the Enlightenment ideal of a nation uninhibited by social or educational barriers, and this nation is united by one of Hiller's most popular songs; every man is said to have sung or whistled it.

Not only was the nation viewed as the ultimate arbiter of taste: for Hiller, national fame and acclamation were seen as the most worthy achievements for a composer.

> Von dieser Seite betrachtet, halte ich Herr H. in der Musik . . . für das, was Gellert in der Poesie war; und auch dasselbe Schicksal, dieselbe Belohnung, hat H. H., die Gellert hatte: denn er ist der Lieblingscomponist seiner Nation, so wie ihr Gellert der Lieblingsdichter war. Welche Belohnung! Nicht Geld und Titel der Großen, ja selbst das würdige Lob des Kenners, belohnen so angenehm, als die Stimme einer ganzen Nation.[51]

> From this perspective, I hold Herr H[iller] to be that in music which Gellert was in poetry; and also, H[err] H[iller] had the same destiny, the same reward, that Gellert had: for he is the favourite composer of his nation, just as Gellert was the nation's favourite poet. What a reward! Not the money and title of the great, not even the worthy praise of the connoisseur, is as pleasing a reward as the voice of an entire nation.

Former values of wealth and title esteemed by court culture seemingly faded as the bourgeoisie began not only to assert themselves within the public sphere but also began to sense the collective force of a German national consciousness. As readers and listeners across a geographic area were able to read the same journals and newspapers, and play and sing from the same Hiller piano-vocal score, such a collective force was strengthened. For some, reading and singing the opera songs would have been sufficient, while for others the opportunity to express one's view in public debates, both in social gatherings and in print (which was then disseminated across a wide geographic area), was a novel but empowering experience. Even though the political features of a nation state were nowhere yet in sight, a sense of 'imagined community' – to use Benedict Anderson's term[52] – was greatly facilitated by the workings of the public sphere.

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49 Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 211 (Schiller, in 1784, cited in Helmuth Kiesel and Paul Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1977), 78).

50 Reichardt, *Über die deutsche comische Oper*, 60: 'Die ganze deutsche Nation hat schon darüber entschieden, daß es [das Lied] völlig so ist, wie Lieder von der Art seyn müssen. Denn jeder mann, vom hohen bis zum niedrigsten, singt und spielt es und pfeift es, und fast sollte ich sagen und trommelt es, so sehr wird es in ganz Deutschland auf alle nur mögliche Art gebraucht.'

51 Reichardt, *Über die deutsche comische Oper*, 23.

52 Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1991).

Without the political features of a nation state in place, the unifying element within this emerging sense of national community was overwhelmingly that of the German language. Johann Christoph Adelung defined 'nation' as 'the native inhabitants of a country in so far as they have a common origin and speak a common language, whether they constitute a single state or are divided into several'.[53] Johann Gottlieb Fichte is famous for furthering the notion of language defining the boundaries of a national community, having claimed that 'wherever a separate language can be found, there is also a separate nation which has the right to manage its affairs and rule itself'.[54] Both Rousseau and Herder produced their famous essays on the origins of language,[55] investigating the ontological connections between linguistic community (particularly with regard to spoken language) and national identity. Herder's thought on language, however, is not limited to discussions of the origins of human sounds; rather, his writings, more broadly conceived, are concerned with the use of the German language by the German public.[56] Mid-century discussions of the use and merits of the German language by the public and particularly within German courts were often reactions against the preoccupation with French fashion, culture, literature and, of course, the use of the French language in polite society. Johann Christoph Gottsched, a fervent defender and reformer of the German language, complained that German princes could hardly speak their own language.[57]

Within eighteenth-century musical discourse, the ultimate display of a nation's language and musical taste is of course in opera. Debates concerning the supremacy of French and Italian opera are well documented throughout the century[58] but occurred alongside ongoing struggles to legitimize the idea of a German-language opera. Mid-century reformers such as Gottsched strongly agitated against opera as a genre, although Gottsched sought to cultivate a German theatrical tradition and translated French tragedies into the German language.[59] Johann Adolph Scheibe, on the other hand, was much more sympathetic towards opera as a genre and wrote his *Thusnelde* (1749) to demonstrate good operatic taste, though his opera libretto was never set to music. Prior to Hiller, attempts at a German-language opera had met with only limited success.[60] From this point of view it is not difficult to see why Hiller was hailed as the German nation's favourite composer in 1774: he provided the nation with opera songs both in the style of the *Volk* and in the language of the German people. Weisse and Hiller's use of the language in their operas was viewed as proof of its worthiness:

> Es ist noch nicht lange, daß wir eigentlich comische Opern haben. Dem Herrn Weiße in Leipzig, ist unser Theater dieses Geschenk vorzüglich schuldig. Er hat es versucht, ob unsre Sprache dazu fähig wäre, und wir haben gefunden, daß sie es sey, wenn ein großes Genie sie bearbeitet.[61]

53 Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 17.

54 Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 164.

55 *On the Origin of Language. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Essay on the Origin of Languages. Johann Gottfried Herder: Essay on the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (London: Chicago University Press, 1966).

56 For a discussion of the public use of the German language in both Herder's and Kant's philosophy see Anthony J. La Vopa, 'Herder's Publikum: Language, Print and Sociability in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29/1 (1996), 5–24.

57 Eric A. Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language, 1700–75* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 117.

58 The initial and perhaps best known debate on the merits of the French and Italian languages as suitable for opera was the Querelle des Bouffons in Paris during the 1750s.

59 For a discussion of early German theatre, including original German librettos but primarily translations of French tragedies by Racine, Corneille and Destouches, see Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Die deutsche Schaubühne nach den Regeln und Exempeln der Alten*, 6 volumes (Leipzig: Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf, 1741–1745).

60 Johann Georg Standfuss's *Der Teufel ist los*, performed in Leipzig in 1752 by the Koch company, represents one of the first successes of the comic genre in the German language.

61 L. M. N., 'Schreiben über die comische Oper, aus dem Hannöverischen Magazin 56tes Stück', *Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen* 3/12 (1769), 93.

It has not been long that we have actually had comic opera. Herr Weisse in Leipzig is responsible for this gift to our theatre. He was the one to try whether our language was capable and worthy of the task, and we have found that it is worthy when a great genius works with it.

'Es ist für einen patriotischen Deutschen eine allzu angenehme Sache, den deutschen Gesang sich bisweilen der Schaubühne bemächtigen zu sehen, von welcher ihn bisher der italiänische gänzlich verdrungen zu haben schien; wir sind daher auf alles aufmerksam, was die Ehre der deutschen Sprache zu retten die Absicht zu haben scheint, und uns immer noch mehr Gutes in der Folge verspricht, wenn Dichter und Componisten ohne Stolz und Eigensinn einander die Arbeit erleichtern, und in gewissen Stücken einer dem andern mehr zu Gefallen thun werden.[62]

For a patriotic German it is a very pleasant affair to see German song occasionally take hold of the theatre; until now it seems to have been entirely suppressed by Italian song. Hence we pay attention to everything that seems to have the intention of saving the honour of the German language and promises us still more good as a result, when poets and composers, without being proud or obstinate, make one another's work easier, and in certain respects do more for the benefit of others.

Weisse and Hiller's comic operas thus affirmed one of the defining features – language – that assisted in the formation of national identity during the mid- to late eighteenth century.

Finally, these German-language comic operas did not simply affirm an emerging national consciousness; the genre was seen as actively edifying and cultivating the German people. They functioned as part of an already existing project to educate the bourgeois public. Gellert produced morally edifying poetry for bourgeois domestic use, Lessing had stated already in 1769 that the theatre should be viewed as a school and Schiller delivered his famous statement on theatre as a moral institution in 1784. In the Schillerian spirit, Weisse remarks on the universal beauty and good of singing as part of the education of a nation:

Daß es aber Gewinn für die Bildung einer Nation ist, wenn das Singen anständiger, feiner, die Empfindungen für das Schöne und Gute belebender Lieder allgemeiner wird, bedarf keines Wortes zum Beweise.[63]

No word of proof is needed that it is profitable for the education of a nation when the singing of these songs, which are respectable and fine and enlivening of the sentiments for the beautiful and the good, becomes more universal.

In cultivating communal singing of German songs by various members of the public, comic opera as a genre was a unique contribution to the furthering of national ideology. The very limitations of a novel, poem or stage play – that they are being performed by individuals – are overcome by comic opera with its potential to unite the community in song. Indeed, the image of uniting a nation in communal song is one that lasted well into the nineteenth century, including the famous choral finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, based on Schiller's *An die Freude*. Early historians' placing of Hiller at the beginnings of the history of German comic opera shows that they recognized the nationalistic impact of his opera songs. It is, however, only by affirming the essential defining feature of the genre – spoken dialogue interspersed with simple songs – that the importance of German comic opera comes fully alive.

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62 Anonymous. Arien und Gesänge aus der comische Oper: Lottchen, oder das Bauermädgen am Hofe', 376.

63 Weisse, *Selbstbiographie*, 326.