

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AS A MUSIC-HISTORICAL PERIOD?

JAMES WEBSTER



ABSTRACT

Period concepts and periodizations are constructions, or readings, and hence always subject to reinterpretation. Many recent scholars have privileged institutional and reception history over style and compositional history, and periodized European music according to the ‘centuries’; but these constructions are no less partial or tendentious than older ones. Recent historiographical writings addressing these issues are evaluated.

*If we wish to construe the eighteenth century as a music-historical period, we must abandon the traditional notion that it was bifurcated in the middle. Not only did the musical Baroque not last beyond 1720 in most areas, but the years c1720–c1780 constituted a period in their own right, dominated by the international ‘system’ of Italian opera, Enlightenment ideals, neoclassicism, the galant and (after c1760) the cult of sensibility. We may call this the ‘central’ eighteenth century. Furthermore, this period can be clearly distinguished from preceding and following ones. The late Baroque (c1670–c1720) was marked by the rationalization of Italian opera, tragédie lyrique, the standardization of instrumental genres and the rise of ‘strong’ tonality. The period c1780–c1830 witnessed the rise of the ‘regulative work-concept’ (Goehr) and ‘pre-Romanticism’ (Dahlhaus), and the Europe-wide triumph of ‘Viennese modernism’, including the first autonomous instrumental music and a central role in the rise of the modern (post-revolutionary) world, symbolized by Haydn’s sublime in *The Creation*.*

A tripartite reading of a ‘long’ eighteenth-century in music history along these lines seems more nearly adequate than either baroque/classical or 1700–1800 as a single, undifferentiated period.

In recent years the traditional historical interpretation of eighteenth-century music, namely that it comprised the late baroque and classical periods, has come to seem increasingly problematic. Hence it seems appropriate to enquire in what sense, or senses, this century can be understood as a music-historical period in its own right. As early as 1985 Carl Dahlhaus used the same title as mine (albeit without the question mark) for the first section of his superb introduction to his collaborative volume on the eighteenth century, still untranslated.¹ However, his account raises as many questions as it answers, and I shall raise others that he

During the final proof stage of this study Richard Will kindly brought to my attention the special number of *Modern Language Quarterly* (62/4, 2001) entitled *Periodization: Cutting Up the Past*, ed. Marshall Brown. Particularly relevant to my discussion are Brown’s introduction, ‘Periods and Resistances’, 309–315 (with a welcome scepticism regarding the possibility of doing without periods); Srinivas Aravamudan, ‘The Return of Anachronism’, 331–353 (on Vico); and especially Robert J. Griffin, ‘The Age of “The Age of” is Over: Johnson and new Versions of the Late Eighteenth Century’, 377–391.

1 Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Das 18. Jahrhundert als musikgeschichtliche Epoche’, in *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Dahlhaus, *Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, volume 5 (Laaber: Laaber, 1985), 1–8; trans. (inadequately) by Ernest Harriss as ‘The Eighteenth Century as a Music-Historical Epoch’, *College Music Symposium* 26 (1986), 1–6. A translation of Dahlhaus’s entire seventy-page introduction (along with his other contributions to the same volume) would be an important contribution to knowledge. For an insightful critique see Eugene K. Wolf, ‘On the History and Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Music: Reflections on Dahlhaus’s *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*’, *Journal of Musicological Research* 10/3–4 (1991), 239–255. Other authorities questioning the traditional division will be cited below.



does not address. As will become clear, my question-mark is not mere coyness; it signals a fundamental aspect of my historiographical orientation.

This study has two parts: some reflections on periods and periodizing in general, and a survey of various ways of construing the music-historical eighteenth century. In my discussions of periodization and the years around 1800 I take the liberty of summarizing portions of two earlier studies on which my argument depends.² Nevertheless, they appear here in a different context, and the sections devoted to the eighteenth century as such and to the years around 1700 are entirely new.

I

The unease regarding the history of eighteenth-century music invoked in my opening sentence has been manifested primarily in specialized publications and under the surface; there has been little principled or fundamental reflection on these matters. This is not surprising, insofar as issues of periodization altogether have been little discussed either by general historians or by musicologists during the last quarter-century. This inhibition has multiple causes: the apparently simplistic, over-generalizing character of most period-designations, the desire for objectivity in historical writing following World War II, the preference for ‘thickly textured’ history and cultural studies as opposed to the traditional ‘grand narratives’, the attractions of metahistory and the anti-foundationalist orientation of postmodernism.³

However, this marginalization of period concepts is based on illusion or self-deception. Notwithstanding the ostensible sophistication of the arguments raised against them, they remain central, even in the work of those who might wish to deny it. The fact that most histories instantiate older or more fundamental world views, literary genres and rhetorical tropes (a thesis associated especially with Hayden White⁴) only confirms their organizational and rhetorical dependence on underlying concepts of temporal organization – that is, their status as narrative, the primary means by which we organize all temporal experience.⁵ And in the long run even metahistory is likely to be a less effective ‘cure’ for outdated periodizing than robustly revisionist

2 James Webster, ‘The Concept of Beethoven’s “Early” Period in the Context of Periodizations in General’, *Beethoven Forum* 3 (1994), 3–27; ‘Between Enlightenment and Romanticism in Music History: “First Viennese Modernism” and the Delayed Nineteenth Century’, *19th Century Music* 25/2–3 (2001–2002), 108–126. A more narrowly focused German version of the latter appeared as ‘Die “erste Wiener Moderne” als historiographische Alternative zur “Wiener Klassik”’, in *Wiener Klassik. Ein musikgeschichtlicher Begriff in Diskussion*, ed. Gernot Gruber (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002), 75–92. A version of the present essay was delivered in October 2002 as the inaugural address of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music.

3 This paragraph is based on Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. anon. (New York: Pantheon, 1970); Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); Philippe Carrard, *Poetics of the New History: French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); William A. Green, *History, Historians, and the Dynamics of Change* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), chapters 2, 9; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

4 *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), Introduction and chapters 2–3; *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). A striking music-historical example is Adolf Sandberger’s account of Haydn’s compositional development, based (unconsciously) on a fairy-tale or quest archetype; see Webster, *Haydn’s ‘Farewell’ Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 341–347.

5 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 53–62; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 volumes, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988), volume 1, part 2; volume 3, part 4, § 2; Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984); Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story*, chapter 2.



periodizations that acknowledge, rather than repress, our need to understand the past in terms of meaningful temporal successions. In the words of Fredric Jameson, ‘We cannot not periodize.’⁶

A historical period is a *construction*. Periods don’t just happen; still less are they given objectively in the historical record, as Guido Adler, the founder of style analysis in musicology, believed.⁷ A periodization is not true or false, but a reading, a way of making sense of complex data; periodizations serve the needs and desires of those who make and use them. In a late article, also untranslated, Dahlhaus offered a sustained meditation on music-historical periods. His conclusion reads as follows:

The analysis of the methodological structure of music-historical period concepts . . . implies that a period concept

- 1 belongs primarily but not exclusively to music history [as opposed to the ‘present’ of the time-interval in question], as reconstructed in retrospect by the historian;
- 2 represents a coherence of significance and functionality [*ein Sinn- und Funktionszusammenhang*], which is interpretable as an ideal type in Max Weber’s sense;
- 3 can be described as a network of relationships within which, without its having a centre, one can move directly or indirectly from any given point to any other;
- 4 is a congeries [*Konnex*] of features, of which the foundational relations [*Fundierungsverhältnisse*], although indeterminate as a matter of general principle, can [nevertheless] be determined on a case-by-case basis [*kasuell*];
- 5 entails the expectation that – in anticipation of a unified coherence [*geschlossener Zusammenhang*] – at least a portion of the constructed or reconstructed coherence of significance and functionality [compare point 2] can be gradually tracked down in the documents that pertain to the past, through patient efforts of empirical research into detail. Between the ideal type, which as an assumption-in-advance [*Vorausnahme*] remains to be realized, and the historical document, which as a (possibly misleading) testimony to reality [*Wirklichkeit*] requires interpretation, the outlines of that which is unknown, past reality [*die vergangene Realität*], ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen’, gradually emerge.⁸

Thus Dahlhaus agrees that (music-)historical periods are constructions, indeed retrospective reconstructions, which we interpret as conceptually coherent even though they can scarcely have seemed so in their own time. Weber’s ‘ideal type’ (point 2), with its characteristic combination of empirical research and generalizing speculation, was a central aspect of Dahlhaus’s historiography.⁹ (In other contexts, in my view more plausibly, he uses the concept ‘coherence of significance and functionality’ to characterize individual artworks.) Point 3, with its image of a ‘network’ without a ‘centre’, relates interestingly to his preferred metaphors for the analysis of musical material, especially the late Beethoven’s so-called ‘subthematicism’ and Wagner’s leitmotivic techniques.¹⁰ Point 4 means that, as a generalization applying to all periods, no

6 *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 29, 94.

7 Adler, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, second edition (Berlin: Keller, 1929–1930), volume 1, 69.

⁸ Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Epochen und Epochenbewußtsein in der Musikgeschichte’, in *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewusstsein*, ed. Reinhard Herzog und Koselleck (Munich: Fink, 1987), 96; reprinted in Dahlhaus, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hermann Danuser and others, volume 1 (Laaber: Laaber, 2000), 319. ‘Wie es eigentlich gewesen’ (as it actually was) is the famous characterization of the goal of historical understanding propounded by the nineteenth-century German historian Leopold Ranke. Dahlhaus’s primary example in this article is ‘Wiener Klassik’; for a similar discussion oriented towards the nineteenth century, see *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 144–150.

⁹ It remains useful notwithstanding the critique in Philip Gossett, ‘Carl Dahlhaus and the “Ideal Type”’, *19th Century Music* 13/1 (1989–1990), 49–58.

10 Regarding Beethoven – we may ignore Wagner in this context – see Webster, ‘Dahlhaus’s *Beethoven* and the Ends of Analysis’, *Beethoven Forum* 2 (1993), 212–216.



assertion can be made to the effect that a given domain (aesthetic ideas, compositional practice, musical institutions, economic and social circumstances and so forth) is foundational with respect to others, but that such a determination can nevertheless usually be made in a given individual case. Point 5, finally, amounts to Dahlhaus's thesis, which derives from the tradition of Germanic historiography associated with Theodor Droysen and Weber: the historical 'truth' of a period emerges, if at all, through dialogue between empirical investigation and speculative reflection: in other words, a historiographical version of the hermeneutic circle.¹¹

The traditional 'style periods' in music – medieval, renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic, modern – received their most influential formulations in Germanic writings of the first half of the twentieth century, by Adler and his school and in Ernst Bücken's series *Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*.¹² However, little attention was devoted to the problematics of such constructions. Among other things, they uncritically conflate two fundamentally different modes of investigation: the stylistic and the historical, or the synchronic/generalizing and the diachronic/particularizing. It is not easy, in the thesis of René Wellek and Austin Warren often paraphrased by Dahlhaus, to write a *history* of music that is also a history of *music*.¹³

After World War II, especially in continental Europe, the perspective began to shift. Jacques Handschin's *Musikgeschichte im Überblick*, published as early as 1948, and most of the relevant volumes in Dahlhaus's *Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft* proceed on the ostensibly objective basis of the 'centuries', as determined by the calendar.¹⁴ Handschin's sceptical comments on the traditional style periods have in many ways never been surpassed.¹⁵ Dahlhaus's organization stands in conscious opposition to Bücken's; in place of style periods, he emphasizes the social and organizational 'systems' that shaped musical production and reception, as well as broader aesthetic and cultural issues. Lorenzo Bianconi's influential *Music in the Seventeenth Century* likewise rejects 'Baroque' as a governing concept.¹⁶ The correlation in these works between organization by centuries rather than style periods, and increased attention to institutional history at the expense of compositional history, is no coincidence.

In an orientation towards style periods the course of a given period is usually understood in terms of the organic narrative of growth–maturity–decay, often symbolized (actually or notionally) by a smoothly rising and falling sine wave or curve of 'normal' distribution. The generalizing and idealizing tendencies of organicist thinking induce us to think of a style period in terms of any discoverable unity within it (even Dahlhaus speaks of 'unified coherence', in his fifth paragraph), as well as whatever is conceptually most distinct from the preceding and following periods. This synchronic unity corresponds to the diachronic high

11 See Dahlhaus, 'Fragmente zur musikalischen Hermeneutik', in *Beiträge zur musikalischen Hermeneutik*, ed. Dahlhaus (Regensburg: Bosse, 1975), 159–172; trans. Karen Painter as 'Fragments of a Musical Hermeneutics', *Current Musicology* 50 (1992), 5–20. On Droysen's importance for Dahlhaus see *Foundations of Music History*, 1.

12 Adler, *Handbuch*; Bücken, ed., *Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, 13 volumes in 11 (Postdam: Athanaion, 1927–1931). Bücken's and his colleagues' allegiance to the style periods is evident from the titles alone; for example, Heinrich Bessler, *Die Musik des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (volume 2, 1931); Robert Haas, *Die Musik des Barocks* (volume 3, 1928); Bücken, *Die Musik des Rokoko und der Klassik* (volume 4, 1927).

13 On Dahlhaus's manifold references to this concept (including the emphases), see James Hepokoski, 'The Dahlhaus Project and its Extra-Musicological Sources', *19th Century Music*, 14/3 (1991), 234–235. (In all the citations I have seen, the term 'art' is used rather than 'music'; this does not affect the point.)

14 Handschin, *Musikgeschichte im Überblick* (Lucerne: Räber, 1948); Dahlhaus, ed., *Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, 13 volumes (Wiesbaden: Athanaion; Laaber: Laaber, 1980–1995); Werner Braun, ed., *Die Musik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (volume 4, 1981); Dahlhaus, ed., *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts* (volume 5, 1985); Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (volume 6, 1980), trans. J. Bradford Robinson, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Hermann Danuser, *Die Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (volume 7, 1984).

15 *Musikgeschichte im Überblick*, 15–27 (especially 18–23 on the Baroque), 273–276 (the latter passage is the introduction to the single (!) chapter entitled 'The 17th and 18th Centuries').

16 Bianconi, *Music of the Seventeenth Century*, trans. David Bryant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); for the critique of 'Baroque' see viii–ix.



point of maturity (everything foreign is minimized); conversely, the zero point from which the style emerges and towards which it decays signifies the effective absence of the constituents of that unity, compared to characteristics proper to the preceding and following periods. Hence even a nominalistic period construction according to the ‘centuries’ is scarcely objective or value-free. During the post-Reformation transition to the modern world, the traditional sense of a century as a mere marker of chronology gradually turned into a signifying substantive (the French equivalent to ‘the Enlightenment’ was, and is, *la siècle des lumières*).¹⁷ But any period understood substantively, as manifesting ‘a coherence of significance and functionality’, is subject to the organic narrative, which is as value-laden as anything in our culture, perhaps especially when it functions covertly.¹⁸ Indeed, Dahlhaus’s ideal of a music-historical century as a neutral site where we may hope to discover *wie es eigentlich gewesen* was not realized in his own practice. For example, in his eighteenth-century volume he interprets the years 1789–1814 as the ‘pre-Romantic’ period (*Vorromantik*), a ‘term of embarrassment’ (*Verlegenheitsterminus*) whose effect is to appropriate them for the following century.¹⁹ Probably the ideal cannot be realized at all.

Furthermore, a given period must also be understood in terms of its relations to its temporal neighbours, as an element in a periodization or ‘multistage narrative’ (Carrard). But periodizations are no less value-laden than single periods; most depend on one of three, ideologically charged world views, each of which valorizes one of the three possible positions within a ternary periodization: beginning, middle, end.²⁰ Successive periods tend to be conceived and represented as overlapping, rather than being merely juxtaposed. Even with respect to generally accepted period divisions, for example Renaissance to Baroque, every teacher of music history explains that the latter did not commence precisely on 1 January 1600, but arose out of a complex, decades-long process of change. These overlappings doubtless relate to the most pervasive organic periodizations we know, the stages of a human life and the rhythm of the seasons, in which the boundaries cannot be precisely determined: no single year marks the change from maturity to old age, no single day (despite the solstice) the onset of winter. Often it is precisely the metaphorical ‘seeds’ produced during the maturity of the preceding period that are thought to generate the new period’s growth. All this may explain why we often construe the transitions between periods as subsidiary periods in their own right. A familiar, if contested, example in music history (borrowed, like so many, from art history) is the notion of a ‘mannerist’ phase linking Renaissance and Baroque.²¹

A final methodological issue involves the notion of *Zeitgeist*. Although its cruder forms are now generally rejected, it is still common to interpret different domains as having developed in temporally congruent patterns, preferably related to a coherent general tendency – for example, modernism around 1900 or postmodernism in the late twentieth century. And the allied concept of ‘structural history’ is very much alive: the belief that, at least within a given area or culture within a given period, events and institutions in the various domains of human activity – politics, economics, *mentalités*, the arts and so on – were governed by a relatively small number of fundamental, mutually determining relations, a ‘structure of structures’.²² More attractive in many ways is what Eugene K. Wolf engagingly called ‘contrapuntal’ history; one might also

17 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 246–247.

18 On ‘covert values’ in musicology see Janet Levy, ‘Covert and Casual Values in Recent Writings about Music’, *Journal of Musicology* 5/1 (1987), 3–27.

19 *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 62–68, 335–345 (‘Verlegenheitsterminus’, 63); compare *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 19–20, 55–56.

20 On periodizations in general see Webster, ‘Beethoven’s “Early” Period’.

21 Tim Carter, in *Music in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1992), retains, even while problematizing, the two style periodical terms; he explicitly rejects ‘mannerist’ (page 7), although his historical narrative is likewise organized ‘across’ the watershed of 1600.

22 Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, chapter 9; on *Zeitgeist*, 141–144; on nineteenth-century central European music as a ‘structure of structures’, 144–150. For a musicologically oriented critique of *Zeitgeist* thinking see William Weber, ‘Beyond *Zeitgeist*: Recent Work in Music History’, *The Journal of Modern History* 66/2 (1994), 321–345.



suggest ‘multivalent’, in analogy to a leading current orientation in music analysis.²³ The thesis is that events in different domains do not necessarily run parallel: they may differ in character or ‘value’, or represent different ‘systems of discourse’, at a given place and time; they may develop differentially, regarding both the dates of their beginning, middle and end stages and their rates of development; and these differences apply both within a given region and across different ones.²⁴ The ‘watersheds’ between periods can occur at different times, whether in different arts in the same geographical area (for example, the Renaissance in music both began and ended later than in the visual arts and literature – and this is not a problem,²⁵ but an opportunity) or in the same art in different areas (for example, the musical Baroque persisted longer in the Habsburg lands than in France, Italy or Berlin).

A consequence of historical multivalence – to come to this obvious point at last – is that a ‘century’ need not coincide with the calendar. Depending on which characteristics are taken to be defining, a century can be construed as having either begun or ended before or after the centenary, and also as having been shorter or longer than one hundred years. Many general historians have written of the ‘long’ nineteenth century, beginning with the French Revolution (or even earlier) and lasting until the outbreak of the First World War, and the ‘long’ twentieth has recently made its appearance.²⁶ The same holds for European music: for example, in Dahlhaus’s parsing of music history the seventeenth century lasted from around 1600 to around 1720; the nineteenth, oddly (or interestingly), exactly one hundred years, from 1814 to 1914. (I shall discuss his treatment of the eighteenth century below.)

A further consequence is what German historians call the ‘contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous’ (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*).²⁷ As a generalized methodology it encourages historians to consider events from different times and domains as fundamentally related. A simple example in the arts is the common notion that a radical work is ‘ahead of its time’ (which admittedly makes less sense the longer one ponders it). Although the concept is clearly useful – there are advantages as well as disadvantages in treating the Renaissance in music together with those in art and literature, despite its later date – it tends to preserve *Zeitgeist* thinking after all, because it privileges the notion of an ‘essential’ relatedness across diverse domains and decades. (And it is relatedness that is valued: the ‘non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous’, the ‘real’ diversity underlying chronological coincidence, as was discussed in the eighteenth century under the pressure of encounters with other parts of the world,²⁸ is scarcely mentioned today, despite its equal degree of logic.) A relevant example is Dahlhaus’s absurd assertion that ‘the revolutionary stance of the “Eroica” [Symphony] has never been denied: in the inner chronology of world history, the work cries out to be backdated to 1789’.²⁹ Indeed, notwithstanding his theoretical meditations, Dahlhaus often ends up reifying traditional watersheds of political-military history.³⁰ The ‘relative autonomy’ of music history, which he repeatedly emphasized in theoretical contexts,³¹ apparently had its limits.

23 For ‘contrapuntal’ see Wolf, ‘History and Historiography’, 240. For multivalence, see Webster, ‘The Analysis of Mozart’s Arias’, in *Mozart Studies*, ed. Cliff Eisen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 103–104, 122–169; and ‘The Form of the Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony’, *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992), 25–62.

24 Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 36–39; Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

25 Although Carter still sees it thus (*Music in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy*, 7).

26 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (Cleveland, OH: World, 1962), 1; George Macaulay Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century (1782–1901)* (London: Longmans, Green, 1922), viii; Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long 20th Century: Money, Power, and the Origin of our Times* (London: Verso, 1994).

27 Ernst Bloch, ‘Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics’, *New German Critique* 11 (1977), 22–38; Dahlhaus, “‘Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen’”, *Musica* 41 (1987), 307–310; Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 92–105.

28 Koselleck, ‘Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert’, 279.

29 *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to his Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 16; a more nuanced version of this notion is offered in *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 336–338.

30 For example in *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 1, 54.

31 See *Foundations of Music History*, chapter 8.



II

The musical nineteenth and twentieth centuries are often equated with romanticism (or chromaticism) and modernism (or non-tonal writing); that is, they are treated as substantives that harbour ‘real’ content. This has rarely been the case for the seventeenth or eighteenth. For example, in North America neither the Society for Seventeenth-Century Music nor the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music was founded in a belief that ‘its’ century was a coherent music-historical period or on the basis of conscious historiographical reflection.³² Their founders were persons researching non-canonical composers, institutions, genres and regions; the intent was to foster the exchange of information and ideas, as well as to counteract a condition of intellectual isolation. Similarly, the editors of this journal did not attempt to characterize substantively the years covered by its projected remit, either in the original prospectus (except for a welcome scepticism regarding the concept ‘classical’) or in the announcement published in the inaugural newsletter of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music.

As we have seen, the music-historical eighteenth century need not assume 1700 and 1800 as terminal points and can be construed as having been shorter or longer than a hundred years. Dahlhaus, who was relatively little interested in the seventeenth century, was correspondingly uncertain as to when it shaded into the eighteenth; he estimated this date variously as ‘around 1720’, ‘in the 1720s’, ‘around 1730’ and even ‘around 1740’.³³ But he was vitally interested in the nineteenth century, and his sense of the end of the eighteenth was correspondingly precise and stable: the year 1814 (which I would gloss as 1814–1815), defined by the collapse of the Napoleonic empire and the founding of a new European order at the Congress of Vienna. His division points within eighteenth-century music history also derive from watersheds of political history: 1740 (the death of Charles VI and the accessions of Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great), 1763 (the end of the Seven Years War) and 1789.

If we wish to construe the eighteenth century as a music-historical period, our first task must be to abandon the traditional notion that it was bifurcated in the middle, by the end of the baroque and the rise of the classical period. Among academic historians, in fact, this notion is already passé.³⁴ It derived primarily from a nineteenth-century Germanic hypostatization of J. S. Bach as a teleological culmination – in ignorance of the chronology of his church cantatas (which were thought to be primarily late works) and without regard for the atypicality of his music and his relative isolation during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, while on the other hand overlooking the many progressive aspects of his musical orientation and style.³⁵ In addition, of course, it excluded everything west of the Rhine and south of the Danube. Symptomatic of the latter blind spot is its ambivalent treatment of Handel: although a canonized master and a German to boot, his residences in Italy and England and his composition of secular vocal music rendered him suspect in any Germanocentric reading. In Manfred F. Bukofzer’s classic study, for example, while Bach achieved a ‘fusion’ of national styles, Handel merely managed their ‘co-ordination’; the descriptions of the latter’s accomplishments are repeatedly qualified by references to

32 For the seventeenth-century society (founded 1992), I base these remarks on private communications from Jeffrey Kurtzman (the first president), Margaret Murata and Kerala J. Snyder, whom I thank for their cooperation; regarding the eighteenth-century society (founded 2001), the early discussions (in which I participated) were led by Paul Cornelison, Sterling Murray (the first president) and Bertil van Boer.

33 1720: *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 1; 1720–1730: *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 2; 1730: ‘Epochen’, 81; 1740: ‘“Neue Musik” als historische Kategorie’ (1969), trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton as ‘“New Music” as Historical Category’, in *Schoenberg and the New Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1–13.

34 Handschin questioned it as early as 1948 (*Musikgeschichte im Überblick*, 273); compare Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 1–2.

35 Robert A. Marshall, ‘Bach the Progressive: Observations on his Later Works’, *The Musical Quarterly* 62/3 (1976), 313–357; Stephen A. Crist, ‘Beyond “Bach-Centrism”: Historiographic Perspectives on Johann Sebastian Bach and Seventeenth-Century Music’, *College Music Symposium* 33/34 (1993–1994), 56–69.



borrowing, improvisation and other habits not compatible with Bukofzer's image of the highest art.³⁶ The difficulties were not removed by the addition of a transitional 'rococo' or 'pre-classical' phase around the middle of the century;³⁷ these constructions enjoyed neither the chronological scope nor the 'unified coherence' of a strongly profiled period, and were inevitably vehicles for overt and covert marginalization.

In fact, there are good reasons to consider not only that the musical Baroque did not last beyond 1720 or so, but that the years roughly from 1720 to 1780 constituted a period in their own right. Certainly the 1720s can be understood as a threshold phase; I give merely three indications. Opera seria now assumed its definitive form (Metastasio's first original libretto, *Didone abbandonata*, was premiered in 1724) and consolidated its domination throughout Europe (except in France) through the international 'system' of court opera. Musical styles were simplified in many respects: melody, phrase construction, harmony and texture. And longstanding concerns with distinctions of style became codified into two complementary and universally acknowledged tripartite divisions, most obviously in the writings of Mattheson from the second to the fourth decade of the century: according to venue (church, theatre, chamber), and to nation (Italian, French and 'mixed' [German]; Couperin's *Les goûts-réunis* and 'apotheoses' to Corelli and Lully were all published in the mid-1720s).

All these developments (to which others could be added) remained decisive for much of the remainder of the century. The period 1720–1780 also coheres according to broader criteria: intellectually, the Enlightenment; aesthetically and stylistically, the twin ideals of neoclassicism and the galant. Neoclassicism here refers to the intended renaissance of the values and ideals (not any supposed reality) of classical antiquity, as manifested for example in *tragédie lyrique*, opera seria and Gluck; it has been argued plausibly that these repertoires incorporate classical ideals far more than does the Haydn–Mozart instrumental style after 1780.³⁸ The galant is understood in a broad sense that encompasses not only 'easy listening' (as described above) and social grace, but Rousseau's ideal of melody 'speaking' directly to the listener; eighteenth-century writers routinely used 'galant' as a general term for free (as opposed to strict) styles.³⁹ As of the 1760s a third ideal, sensibility, became equally important; it was manifested especially in an entire subgenre of opera buffa from Goldoni's and Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* (1760) to *Figaro* and beyond,⁴⁰ and in the individualized sentiment of keyboard music by both the *empfindsamer* C. P. E. Bach and later composers.

The sixty-year slice 1720–1780 is long enough to qualify as a distinct period (it is at least as long as the traditional 'classical' period). More importantly, with respect to all the criteria named above these years differed fundamentally from both the preceding and following ones. Such distinguished (and different) authorities as Dahlhaus, Leonard G. Ratner and Daniel Hertz have urged various aspects of this interpretation,⁴¹ and on the whole it seems persuasive to me as well. To be sure, Dahlhaus's espousal did not prevent his co-editor Werner Braun from extending the seventeenth century forward until 1740 or so: Bach and

36 Bukofzer, *The Music of the Baroque Era* (New York: Norton, 1947), titles of chapters 8–9, 345–349.

37 On historical transitions see Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 76–81. It is noteworthy that Bukofzer, who devotes an entire chapter to the watershed between Renaissance and Baroque, does not even mention a comparable one around the middle of the eighteenth century.

38 Hertz, 'Classical', in *The New Grove Dictionary*, second edition, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), volume 5, 924–929.

39 Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music. Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), xv; David A. Sheldon, 'The Concept Galant in the 18th Century', *Journal of Musicological Research* 9 (1989–1990), 89–108; Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 2–4, 24–32.

40 Mary Hunter, "'Pamela": The Offspring of Richardson's Heroine in Eighteenth-Century Opera', *Mosaic* 18 (1985), 61–76; Stefano Castelvaggi, 'From *Nina* to *Nina*: Psychodrama, Absorption and Sentiment in the 1780s', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8/2 (1996), 91–112; Jessica Waldoff, 'Sentiment and Sensibility in *La vera costanza*', in *Haydn Studies*, ed. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 70–119; Mary Hunter, 'Rousseau, the Countess, and the Female Domain', in *Mozart Studies* 2, ed. Cliff Eisen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1–26.

41 Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 3–8 (with the variant –1789 rather than –1780); Ratner, *Classic Music*; Hertz, 'Classical'.



Handel 'brought developments to a close that had begun around 1680; not until the end of their lives did a change occur that was comparable to that around 1600. Hence the music-historical seventeenth century actually lasted from 1600 to 1740.'⁴² In everything but name this is merely the old Germanocentric baroque period.

Admittedly, even among the votaries of the period 1720–1780 there is no consensus as to what to *name* it – and it is the musicologist's task, no less than Adam's, to name the constructions in his world. Were it not for the fear that brevity equates with insignificance, one could simply call it the 'short' eighteenth century in music history; perhaps 'central' would have fewer negative connotations. I suggest instead 'Enlightenment–galant', notwithstanding the manifold historiographical problems associated with the former concept⁴³ and the fact that it was more a scientific-humanistic movement than an artistic one; as for the latter, Ratner states that the music even of the last quarter of the century, if named according to the views then prevalent, should be called 'late Franco-Italian [that is, 'mixed'] galant'.⁴⁴ The conjoined term at least conveys central aspects of both the intellectual-social and the artistic tendencies of the period.

Might we be able to construe a 'long' eighteenth century in music history, from late in the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth, with 1720–1780 at its centre? In principle, this would be no more radical than the widely accepted long nineteenth century in general European history. The 'central', enlightened galant eighteenth-century period, 1720–1780, if accepted, guarantees continuity across the former baroque/classical divide at mid-century. But this is merely a prerequisite; for a period c1670 to c1815, three additional conditions must be satisfied: 1) there must have been a watershed in the later seventeenth century, a network of newly arisen and pervasive conditions that persisted well into the eighteenth; 2) analogously but oppositely, there must have been a comparable watershed after – not around – 1800; and 3) the resulting continuities across 1700 and 1800 must be sufficiently strong to override, or at least to complement, the putative divides *within* the eighteenth century around 1720 and 1780, as posited for the 'central' eighteenth century.⁴⁵

With respect to point 1, Alexander Silbiger has emphasized the new efflorescence of music everywhere north of the Alps in the later seventeenth century.⁴⁶ This was owing to the restoration of political stability following the Thirty Years War, based on the continent-wide acceptance of absolutism and a new *modus vivendi* between Protestantism and Catholicism, which in turn fostered the economic resurgence on which a revitalized musical life depended. From this political-institutional perspective, a period-division seems entirely plausible. In addition, a number of crucial and long-lasting musical developments also occurred during the last third of the century. I shall name four:

- i The increasing 'rationalization' of Italian opera, as we may characterize it, in comparison with its heterogeneous state in mid-century.⁴⁷ This process affected aesthetic theorizing, the dramaturgy of

42 Braun, ed., *Die Musik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 2.

43 Weber, 'Toward a Dialogue', 13–14; Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story*, 225–226.

44 Ratner, *Classic Music*, xv.

45 Marshall has argued for the calendrical century, 1700–1800; see 'The Eighteenth Century as a Music-Historical Epoch: A Different Argument for the Proposition', *College Music Symposium* 27 (1987), 198–205. His criteria, developed in part in explicit opposition to Dahlhaus, are the perfection of a viable instrumental music, the dominance of diatonic major-minor tonality, the increasing importance of the bourgeoisie in musical life, and the rise of a desire for a 'universal' musical style and of the sense of the composer as genius. The construction seems unpersuasive: the rise of instrumental music and tonality are better placed in the late seventeenth century (see below), while the two remaining criteria do not characterize the eighteenth century as a whole, but only its last twenty or thirty years, and they persisted through the nineteenth century.

46 Silbiger, 'Music and the Crisis of Seventeenth-Century Europe', in *Music and Science in the Age of Galileo*, ed. Victor Coelho (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), 35–44.

47 Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, 196–197, 202–208.



individual works and the development of stable generic traditions, city by city. The last quarter of the seventeenth century witnessed the triumph of the dramaturgical principle of a rigid division between recitative and aria; concomitantly, the length and elaboration of individual arias increased, and the ‘star system’ of castratos and prima donnas began to flourish. More generally, the works were now purged of comedic and other ‘impure’ elements, a prerequisite especially for those destined for performance at court, where the storylines of high personages trapped in tragic conflict served as self-glorifying and edifying representations of the rulers. These and related trends culminated in the so-called ‘reforms’ of Zeno and others in the early eighteenth century and led directly to the international ‘system’ described above. (This interpretation stresses the continuities across 1720, as opposed to the one given above in which the crystallization of Metastasian opera (and so forth) serves as a watershed. As argued in Part I, either is viable, depending on the criteria emphasized.)

- ii The creation of the *tragédie lyrique* by Lully and his colleagues in the last third of the seventeenth century. It dominated French music and aesthetics until at least 1720 (notwithstanding the infiltration of Corellian style shortly after 1700 and the ensuing *querelles*) and in any case dominated stage music and ballet until after 1750.
- iii The rapid standardization of important instrumental genres between 1660 and about 1700. These included the suite for keyboard, the solo melody–bass sonata, the trio sonata (in both church and chamber versions), the solo concerto and perhaps even the concerto grosso. In all but the suite, the standardization affected the number, types and ordering of movements; the *concertato* principle, at once technical and aesthetic, of complementary opposition between featured and accompanimental players; the adoption and codification of a system of affects drawn originally from vocal models but increasingly autonomous; and much more. Hence these qualify as genres in the emphatic sense of an interrelated set of practices governing most if not all relevant aspects of musical works, and entailing corresponding expectations among listeners – the first widespread case of its kind in instrumental music.
- iv Allied with this (indeed in one sense a prerequisite for it), the emergence of strongly functional harmony as the basis not merely for local progressions but for overall organization as well – in other words, of ‘Schenker-friendly’ tonality. Notwithstanding the continuing insistence on mimesis and ‘topics’, the means (and the desire) to organize works coherently in this domain were now well-nigh universal, and such organization was carried out on an increasingly large scale. The rise of tonality in this sense has plausibly been associated with the music of Corelli or, more generally, the assertively triadic concerto-sonata style that developed in Italy towards 1700.

These developments – to which others could be added – fundamentally affected music and musical life in all major aspects during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, such that we may posit a watershed generically and compositionally, as well as economically and institutionally. The question then becomes whether it was powerful enough not only to have inaugurated a medium-length period lasting until around 1720 (which seems to me indisputable), but to have ‘trumped’ the latter one as well.

With respect to point 2, a watershed after 1800: the period 1720–1780 itself implies that a subsequent period began around 1780 – again, if we refuse to call it ‘classical’, one that has no name. The idea of a longish period bridging 1800 suggests renewed attention to Friedrich Blume’s advocacy of a single ‘Classic–Romantic’ period, stretching all the way from the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth.⁴⁸ Certainly the coherence of structural music history from 1780 (if not earlier) to at least 1900 is incontrovertible: see the steady expansion of both bourgeois musical life and institutions and the canon of masterworks, as well as the strong continuities affecting most genres (except opera), form- and movement-types, multimovement

⁴⁸ Blume, *Classic and Romantic Music: A Comprehensive Survey*, trans. M. D. Herder Norton (New York: Norton, 1970), vii–viii. The main sections originally appeared as ‘Klassik’ and ‘Romantik’ in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, first edition.



cyclic patterns, tonality, thematically based ‘logic’, underlying narrative paradigms and so on.⁴⁹ The aesthetic continuities were equally strong. Dahlhaus’s interpretation of the years 1789–1814 as ‘pre-Romantic’ is based on four aesthetic criteria – the ‘organism’ model, the ‘originality postulate’, the sublime, and historical consciousness of past music – which together amount to a near-equivalent of Lydia Goehr’s ‘regulative work-concept’, likewise seen as having originated between 1780 and 1800.⁵⁰ These concepts dominated musical aesthetics throughout the nineteenth century (and remained regulative during much of the twentieth as well). Thus systemic, stylistic, generic and aesthetic factors all favour a music-historical period that bridges the turn of the century, rather than an arbitrary watershed around 1800.

Nevertheless, my construction is rather different from either Dahlhaus’s or Blume’s. It proceeds under the rubric ‘First Viennese–European Modernism’, from c1740/1750 to c1815/1830. By this I understand the style that originated in the Habsburg realm around mid-century and remained dominant there well into the nineteenth, but that also became predominant throughout Europe towards 1800. (Admittedly, within this period the phase beginning around 1780 has a special status, which I shall describe later.) I have recently outlined this thesis in detail and therefore give only a bare summary here.⁵¹

The conditions for this new music began to emerge around 1740: politically with the death of Charles VI and the accession of Maria Theresa, musically with the deaths of Caldara and Fux and the (at least notionally related) emergence of an indigenous galant instrumental music.⁵² (This division-point is later than the general European style change in the 1720s; indeed it corresponds more nearly to the otherwise discredited Baroque/Classical division around 1750. As mentioned earlier, Baroque styles and institutions maintained themselves longer in the Habsburg realm than in most other regions.) The period can be seen as having extended to either c1809–1815 or c1827–1830. In the first case, the watershed constitutes the politically unstable years from the French occupation of Vienna in 1809 to the new European system ratified by the Congress of Vienna, marked musically by the collapse of the noble patronage system, the beginnings of institutional concert life, Beethoven’s temporary retreat into silence and the adumbration of his late style, and the rise of the Romantic lied. The later watershed, 1827–1830, is defined on the basis of the deaths of Beethoven and Schubert and Vienna’s eclipse as a centre of composition. Indeed, it may make the most sense to construe the entire span 1809–1830 as the long final phase of this period, a phase during which Viennese musical life assumed an entirely new character, marked by the duality ‘Beethoven versus Rossini’ (German versus Italian–French, symphony versus opera, art as *Kultur* versus art in culture).⁵³

Although this music began as a primarily local and outwardly modest affair and its reception elsewhere was initially contested, its long-term effects were Europe-wide and historically decisive. It developed seamlessly at least until the putative watershed beginning in 1809, generating not only increasingly impressive examples in the new instrumental styles but also radical works such as (to name only symphonies) Haydn’s times-of-day trilogy of 1761 and the ‘Farewell’ (1772), Mozart’s ‘Prague’ and final three

49 Dahlhaus objects that two important new genres, the lied and the characteristic piano piece, struck a fundamentally ‘new tone’ after c1815 (*Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 65); this strikes me as an insufficient basis for abandoning the construction as a whole.

50 Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 62–68, 335–345; Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

51 I first adumbrated this construction in *Haydn’s ‘Farewell’ Symphony*, 356–357, 372–373; for a fully worked-out version see Webster, “‘First Viennese Modernism’”, 117–121.

52 Similar readings are found in Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School, 1740–1780*, xvii–xviii; and in *New Grove*, second edition, under the entry ‘Vienna’, volume 26, 554–555 (from a section written by Derek Beales, the distinguished biographer of Joseph II).

53 This duality was marked by Raphael Georg Kiesewetter already in the early 1830s: *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1834), 107. See Dahlhaus, ‘The Twin Styles’, in *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 8–15. Critiques of Dahlhaus’s associated value judgments, as by Lawrence Kramer in *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 46–51, do not compromise this duality’s music-historical significance.



(1786–1788), and the ‘Eroica’ (1803), as well as humanistically uplifting vocal works on the largest scale, such as *The Magic Flute*, *The Creation* and *Leonore/Fidelio*. Beyond that, its reception – as ‘romantic’, that is, as modern music – became increasingly positive and enthusiastic until, around 1800, it culminated in a pan-European triumph, symbolized by the reception of *The Creation* (and of Mozart, after his death), and soon thereafter by its being raised to the status of ‘classic’.⁵⁴ It is this double aspect – compositional excellence and subsequent canonization – that justifies making this music the basis of a Europe-wide historical period, despite its local origins and what might otherwise seem an excessive ‘Austrocentrism’ of the construction.

As for the modernism of late eighteenth-century Viennese music, at least four aspects are critical. The first three I shall merely mention here: its initial reception (whether positive or negative) was in terms of novelty and originality; it is the first major repertory to have enjoyed an unbroken tradition of performance from its own time to the present day; it represents the first major repertory of quasi-autonomous instrumental music.⁵⁵ But the final aspect requires a brief discussion. This music coincided with the beginning of modern, post-revolutionary history: the supplanting of faith by reason and the final dying-out of medieval *mentalités* under the pressure of the Enlightenment and the Industrial and French Revolutions;⁵⁶ Foucault’s age of ‘normalization’;⁵⁷ the establishment of the historical concepts of modernity and the ‘public sphere’ in their present guise;⁵⁸ the beginning of literary modernism.⁵⁹ Similarly, Kant’s ‘critical’ philosophy and its subsequent dialectical historicization by Hegel, whose joint foundational role into our own day is undeniable, spanned precisely the fifty years 1780–1830.

During those years music became valorized as the highest and most romantic of the arts, while yet, in distinction to genuine Romanticism, maintaining its traditional aesthetic function as mimesis; the age of ‘absolute music’ dawned only later.⁶⁰ Music’s role here was not a matter of mere contemporaneity, but of cultural deeds no less significant – and no less public – than those of Kant and Hegel, Goethe and Schiller;⁶¹ of these the most important was arguably its realization of Kant’s ‘dynamic’ sublime, apotheosized in Haydn’s *The Creation*.⁶² And, to repeat, the triumph of this music was pan-European; the Haydn–Mozart style was imitated virtually everywhere until the rise of musical romanticism, which occurred only after 1810;

54 On its status as ‘classic’ see Webster, *Haydn’s ‘Farewell’ Symphony*, 349–351, and the references given there.

55 For more detail see Webster, “‘First Viennese Modernism’”, 121–124.

56 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1954); Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, trans. Oscar Burge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1963), 19–24, 585–596; Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

57 *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 170–194.

58 Koselleck, Introduction to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner and others, volume 1 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), xv; Koselleck, ‘The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity’, in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Presner and others. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 154–169; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Friedrich Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). For an example of the interpretation of music in these terms see Mary Hunter, ‘Haydn’s London Piano Trios and his Salomon String Quartets: Private vs. Public?’ in *Haydn and his World*, ed. Elaine Sisman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 103–130.

59 Jauss, ‘Der literarische Prozess des Modernismus von Rousseau bis Adorno’, in *Epochenschwelle*, 243–268.

60 Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), chapter 2.

61 Theodor Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), chapters 4, 7; Peter Gülke, ‘Nahezu ein Kant der Musik’, *Musik-Konzepte* 41 (1985), 67–73; Thomas Tolley, *Painting the Cannon’s Roar: Music, the Visual Arts and the Rise of an Attentive Public in the Age of Haydn, c. 1750 to c. 1810* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

62 Webster, ‘*The Creation*, Haydn’s Late Vocal Music, and the Musical Sublime’, in Sisman, ed., *Haydn and his World*, 57–102. On the sublime in music see also Elaine Sisman, *Mozart: The ‘Jupiter’ Symphony* (Cambridge: Cambridge



the vast majority of Field's and Dussek's romantic piano music and of Weber's lieder and piano works originated in the second decade of the century; and the lied is commonly regarded as having become a romantic genre with Schubert's works of mid-decade. Then Beethoven's works, although scarcely imitable until much later, secured the reputation of this music during the century-plus from 1830 until into the second half of the twentieth century, when Haydn and Mozart could not have been canonized on their own.⁶³

Hence within the Viennese-modern period 1750–1830 I construe the years 1780–1815 as a sub-period in its own right. It emerged out of the Enlightenment, which – Vienna still changing later than other centres – remained a decisive force at least up to 1800, as *The Magic Flute* and *The Creation* abundantly testify.⁶⁴ Again like Kant's philosophy, this music linked the Enlightenment with romanticism, rather than dividing them. The traditional division of a 'classical' period in music history from a 'romantic' one, Dahlhaus's 'pre-Romanticism', a straightforward periodization according to the centuries – none of these can do justice to the character and effects of music between 1780 and 1815. It was only after 1809–1815, with the decline of the social and economic practices and musical institutions that had sustained Viennese modernism until its European triumph, or just before 1830, with the deaths of its last two great figures, that the music-historical nineteenth century could commence.

In conclusion, let me spell out what is implied by the foregoing as to how one might parse the 'long' eighteenth century in European music history – including a comment on the hitherto ignored third prerequisite, that of 'overriding' plausible watersheds *within* the century. I see the century as having comprised, or participated in, the three periods discussed above: 1) the late Baroque (if no better term should be found), from the late seventeenth century through the early eighteenth, dominated by the emerging political-musical genres of opera in Italy and French *tragédie* and by the establishment of long-lived instrumental genres and the major–minor tonal system; 2) the central eighteenth century, roughly from 1720 to 1780, dominated by the international system of Italian opera, Enlightened-galant aesthetics and, later, the culture of sensibility; and 3) 1780–1815 or –1830, when the Viennese-modern style conquered the continent, and the dynamic sublime (and the Revolution) transformed a fading Enlightenment into the dawn of romanticism.

This European perspective does not negate the importance of artistic achievements or significant institutions that do not 'fit', but it does place them in context (and conversely). The towering musical works of J. S. Bach after 1723 were historically significant not so much in their own time – Telemann's music was far more so – as in terms of earlier and later continuities. On the one hand, they represented the final stage (not necessarily a 'culmination') of a vital German Protestant tradition reaching well back into the seventeenth century; in this limited regional-generic context one may indeed regard 1675–1750 as a coherent period. On the other hand, as a phenomenon of reception beginning at the close of the eighteenth century with Forkel and especially in the nineteenth, they not only entered the canon but became a decisive element in grand historical narratives that have only recently been relativized (see among other things the revival of interest precisely in Telemann). The Habsburg realm was similar, in that until 1740 it was characterized by continuity rather than change (it remained baroque both stylistically and institutionally), but it was also different, in that it boasted no comparably great figure who could establish its historical reputation after the fact; to this

University Press, 1993), chapter 2; Michela Garda, *Musica sublime: Metamorfosi di un'idea nel settecento musicale* (Milan and Lucca: Ricordi, 1995).

63 Webster, 'Between Enlightenment and Romanticism', 124–126.

64 On the Enlightenment orientation of these works see Waldoff, 'The Music of Recognition: Operatic Enlightenment in "The Magic Flute"', *Music & Letters* 75/2 (1994), 214–235; Herbert Zeman, 'Von der irdischen Glückseligkeit: Gottfried van Swietens *Jahreszeiten*-Libretto – eine Utopie vom natürlichen Leben des Menschen', in *Die Vier Jahreszeiten im 18. Jahrhundert: Colloquium der Arbeitsstelle 18. Jahrhundert Gesamthochschule Wuppertal*. . . 1983 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986), 108–120, especially 108–110.



day no music produced in Vienna between 1680 and 1740 has entered the canon. By contrast, events there after 1740, which seemed at first of merely local significance, turned out to constitute the initial phase of a major period of continental scope. In fact the Viennese scene, if regarded for its own sake, would make more sense divided simply into two longer periods, 1680–1740/1750 (baroque) and 1740/1750–1815/1830 (galant/modern).

As these comments imply, I don't see a potentially 'long' eighteenth century, c1670–1815, as cohering into a single period in European music history. In particular, this span seems to me to lack the unifying characteristics (Dahlhaus's 'retrospective coherence') required of a strong period concept. If one nevertheless desired a period of approximately a hundred years, one could combine the central eighteenth century with either contiguous period. This would yield in the one case an 'early' eighteenth century, c1670–1780, late baroque/galant, dominated by Italian opera and the affects, and bridging the watershed of the 1720s; in the other case, a 'late' eighteenth century, c1720–1815 or –1830, galant/Viennese-modern, bridging the watershed around 1780. But it is not clear what would be gained thereby; in these cases as well the requisite coherence would seem to be lacking. It is worth reiterating that 'centuries', whether those defined by the calendar or in the sense of privileging spans of approximately one hundred years, have no special status as the basis for periodizations; they make sense only when there are substantive grounds for thus construing them and better criteria are not available. Indeed the watershed around 1670 implies a complementary short seventeenth century ending then, and the short, high-modernist twentieth century from 1900/1914 to c1970 is now prominent in music historiography.⁶⁵ By contrast, each of the three periods mentioned above does appear to exhibit a sufficient degree of coherence; this succession therefore seems to me the most satisfying reading of eighteenth-century music currently under discussion.

An important feature of this periodization is that all three periods are of the same order of magnitude, fifty to sixty years (admittedly, this requires running the final one to c1830). Although (again) no authority can require that periods of comparable 'weight' be of comparable length, it would seem curious if they were seriously disproportionate. A successful historical narrative addresses our needs and desires as well as the record; it will not only conform to the data insofar as we know and understand them and illuminate the relevant historical 'structures', but satisfy our aesthetic sense as well.

65 On the end of musical modernism around 1970 see Webster, 'Between Enlightenment and Romanticism', 119–120.