Introduction

Why did Richard Wagner and other nineteenth-century musicians devote so much attention to social reform, if the dominant artistic principle of the age demanded art's detachment from social and political concerns? This question, and persistent frustration with the standard answers to it, is what led to this book. The issue at stake is crucial to our received view of nineteenth-century German music, culture and aesthetics: the assumption that musicians and other artists – as a result of the idea of aesthetic autonomy – regarded the artistic sphere as polarized from the social and political fields, indeed that art's freedom demanded such polarization. This viewpoint, I argue, not only misunderstands aesthetic autonomy, but drastically exaggerates its authority over musical thought and culture. In order to understand the social meanings and functions of music in this period, therefore, we need to overhaul our picture of how artistic and social imperatives interacted. Far from governing nineteenth-century musical discourse and practice, the concept of aesthetic autonomy and the aesthetic categories bequeathed by Weimar classicism were persistently challenged by alternative models of music's social role. The book explores these competing models and the socio-political projects that gave rise to them. It interrogates nineteenth-century musical discourse, exploring numerous manifestos championing musical democratization or seeking to make music an engine for the transformation of society. In addition, it explores institutions and movements that attempted to realize these goals, and compositions – by Mendelssohn, Lortzing and Liszt as well as Wagner – in which the relation between aesthetic and social claims is programmatic.

For politically progressive musicians in the nineteenth century, repudiating aesthetic autonomy involved rejecting not only a particular conception of art but a way of viewing the individual and society too. Crucial here therefore is an investigation of the contrasting political projects that animated the fields of autonomous and social aesthetics. Although aesthetic autonomy has often been stigmatized as a conservative or apolitical creed, its politics from its emergence until the mid nineteenth century were in general emancipatory and oppositional. Chiming with the individualistic,

rights-based liberalism of the years around 1800, it elevated art's freedom as a symbol of individual liberty, and the art world as a model community of free individuals. Rather than simply identifying aesthetic autonomy with liberal individualism, I explore how the distinct strands of thought within liberalism – and the tensions between them – shaped the forms of autonomy that vied for dominance within aesthetic and musical discourse. Pluralizing our understanding of autonomy, however, is just a starting point: the main aim is to reveal the diversity and importance of nineteenth-century alternatives to it. These alternative models – identified here by the umbrella term 'social aesthetics' – represent a series of endeavours to counter or supplement aesthetic autonomy, not a cohesive body of thought or movement. Broadly speaking, the relationship between autonomous and social aesthetics reflects the tensions between liberal individualism and socialism or communitarianism. Each model of social aesthetics aimed to redress what it perceived as the asociality of art and of the individual under autonomy, seeking to embed them instead within the community; much of the book, therefore, engages with texts, institutions and compositions offering communitarian perspectives on art. Rather than giving primacy to individual self-realization, they aimed to democratize and collectivize music's potential for emancipation.

Such ideas were at their zenith in musical discourse in the years surrounding the revolution of 1848–9, and much of the book focuses on this immediate period or on the decades surrounding it. Understanding the ideas of this time, however, requires us to engage with a broader range of texts in aesthetics and social theory as well as music. In the mid nineteenth century, liberal perspectives on the social functions of art and music continued to draw inspiration and ideas from Friedrich Schiller. Accordingly, I take Schiller's conception of aesthetic autonomy as my point of departure, exploring how it was his conception of autonomy – rather than the anarchic or isolationist forms of autonomy presented by the Romantic circle – that were the prime model for nineteenth-century discussions of music's social efficacy. Schillerian autonomy conceives aesthetic experience as a vehicle for socialization and self-realization; through helping to raise individuals to full humanity, aesthetic cultivation makes them fit for liberty and capable of living harmoniously. Some aspects of Schiller's aesthetic education – his view of art's contribution to cultivation, and his idea of the aesthetic realm as envisioning a future body politic – were compatible with more radical political programmes. Less appealing for radical and socialist commentators, however, were Schiller's elite individualism, his focus on socialization rather than empowerment and his neutering of art's capacity for more

direct forms of socio-political intervention. As a result, those dissatisfied with Schiller's perspective argued that it was art itself that needed to be socialized, dragged out of its sequestered realm and put to work in the construction of a genuine community.

While the term 'social art' – appropriated from early French socialism – crops up occasionally in mid nineteenth-century texts on music, both it and the phrases 'social aesthetics' and 'socializing art' serve a broader function in this monograph. Here, they cover a range of challenges to the claims and values of autonomous aesthetics: the critique of the asocial nature of art under autonomy, the elitism of artistic institutions and the self-interested individualism of artists; the rejection of the exclusionary strategies and dualisms that underpinned autonomous aesthetics, such as the polarization of autonomous art and political service art; and the demand that art be made accessible to the masses and attuned to their interests, serving as the expression of the collective rather than the individual subject. Several nineteenth-century programmes for democratizing art grew out of aesthetic perspectives that Schiller had sought to displace: (i) enlightened moralism, that is, the notion that art could have a direct, instrumental effect on morals; (ii) the *volkstümlich* aesthetic, the ideal of a literature or music for the people, propagated by Johann Gottfried Herder among others; and (iii) the politicized view of art's social function presented by German Jacobins such as the writer Georg Forster. In addition to tracing the long-term impact of these viewpoints within the musical field, I examine the new forms of social aesthetics that emerged in the 1830s and 1840s, and the role of anti-aestheticism in mid-nineteenth-century musical texts. Finally, I explore the competing aesthetic perspectives upheld in the German workers' movement: crucial here is an investigation of how, in the musical sphere, the appropriation of Schillerian ideals interacted with the emergence of the ideal of a proletarian form of art.

As will be apparent by this point, it is not my goal simply to critique aesthetic autonomy or to construct a monumental counter-movement to offset it. Rather, my aim is to explore the complex ways in which autonomous and social aesthetics interacted within musical discourse of this period. There would be little point in conceiving Romantic aesthetic separatism, Schillerian autonomy and the various forms of social aesthetics simply as coexisting strands, since this approach risks confirming our received idea of a mainstream regulated by the norms of autonomous aesthetics and a sub-artistic zone governed by functional criteria. Instead, I seek to show how the conflict between these different strands of thought animated musical discourse, culture and composition. On the one hand, I show how

these tensions are present in the writings of key musical thinkers of the nineteenth century, such as Hans Georg Nägeli, Franz Brendel and Wagner, exploring how they attempted to reconcile autonomy and sociality within their aesthetic and political thinking. On the other, I trace the impact that these tensions had on musical institutions, genres and compositions; a crucial aspect of the book is its exploration of how stylistic pluralism within individual compositions relates to the aesthetic pluralism described above. My aim throughout is to show the relationship between aesthetic discourse and everyday music-making, and to help transform our understanding of both these spheres.

It would be impossible for one book to provide an exhaustive survey of social aesthetics in the age of Wagner, or to explore the multiplicity of ways in which music functioned in society in this period. Rather, my concern is with musical discourses, cultures and compositions at the interface between autonomous and social aesthetics. The first two chapters explore the interaction of autonomous and social aesthetics prior to 1848. Subsequent chapters relate concepts, issues and debates raised earlier to specific musical institutions, movements and repertories. Each of these chapters combines a broad overview of its topic with a group of interrelated case studies of events and organizations, providing a framework for examining musical compositions that themselves contribute to the discourse on music's social role. Particularly important here are comparisons between pairs of works that engage with the relationship between art and society: Mendelssohn's and Liszt's settings of Schiller's *Die Künstler*; and Lortzing's and Wagner's operatic representations of Hans Sachs. As the focus on Lortzing's operas and on male-voice choruses attests, I have deliberately chosen works which musicology habitually consigns to the nether regions of occasional or functional art. The discussion of the role of music in the workers' movement serves a similar function; in exploring such marginalized works and cultures, my aim is to show how their study can alter perceptions of the supposed mainstream.

Chapter 1, 'Liberalism, autonomy and the social functions of art', offers a reappraisal of the significance and function of the idea of aesthetic autonomy at the time of its emergence in the 1790s and early 1800s. In addition to giving an accessible introduction to some of the key issues and concepts probed throughout the book, the chapter has three main functions. First, it counters our received picture of aesthetic autonomy as a uniform and uncontested doctrine, stressing the multiple conceptions of autonomy that vied within literary and musical aesthetics from the years around 1800. Second, it offers a new interpretation of the politics of autonomy, arguing

that these different strands of thought reflect competing agenda within liberalism. Drawing on the political as well as aesthetic writings of its protagonists, the chapter contrasts Kant's liberal individualist understanding of autonomy as liberty with Schiller's perfectionist view of it as human development (contrasting both perspectives with the anarchist and isolationist forms of autonomy that emerge with the Romantic circle). Third, it explores resistance to the claims and values of autonomy within literary and musical discourse, revealing the persistence of pre-autonomous conceptions of art's social function (enlightened moralism and the ideal of *Volkstümlichkeit* or popularity).

The second part of the chapter explores some of the attempts around 1800 to apply Schiller's form of autonomy in the musical field. On one level, this discussion aims to offset the musicological tradition of equating aesthetic autonomy with absolute music. On another, it counters the recent scholarly tendency to homogenize – under the heading of 'serious music' – competing musical tendencies around 1800, or to assume that viewpoints conceived with vocal music in mind can be applied to instrumental music too. Rather, for commentators applying Schiller's ideas in the musical field, it was vocal music alone that could contribute to socialization and aesthetic education. The final section compares the aesthetic and political stances of two of the most prominent champions of music as a vehicle for socialization – Carl Friedrich Zelter and Hans Georg Nägeli – contrasting the eighteenth-century model of elite sociability that underpinned Zelter's activities with Nägeli's democratizing agenda.

Chapter 2, 'Radical and social aesthetics in the *Vormärz*', introduces and compares the dominant strands of social aesthetics within literary and musical discourse of the 1830s and 1840s. Its main concern is with exploring how left-liberal, radical and socialist commentators countered earlier conceptions of autonomy, aiming to transform the relationship between art and society and between the individual and the community. Rather than attempt a comprehensive survey of German social and political theory in the *Vormärz*, the chapter explores how musical commentators engaged with the key phases and figures within radical literary aesthetics (Young Germany, Left Hegelianism and early socialism). It also probes the divergences between literary and musical thought in this period, in particular, the factors that inhibited the politicization of musical discourse prior to the mid 1840s.

The chapter opens by examining the oppositional aesthetic and political agenda of Young Germany, before briefly tracing some of the ways in which musical discourse and Wagner's *Tannhäuser* – or rather,

Tannhäuser – embody similar contradictions. I then discuss the relationship between the aesthetic and political theories of the most prominent Left Hegelians of the 1840s (Arnold Ruge, Robert Prutz and Friedrich Theodor Vischer), before examining their impact within the musical sphere (A. B. Marx and Franz Brendel). The chapter concludes by exploring early socialist conceptions of 'social man' and 'species being', and examining how socialists – like the Left Hegelians – continued to rely on Schiller's aesthetics in conceiving the free community of the future. While socialism had little impact on musical discourse prior to 1848, exploring its chief representative, Theodor Hagen, provides an opportunity to engage more broadly with *volkstümlich* and anti-aesthetic tendencies in the musical field.

Chapter 3, 'Speaking for the *Volk*: music, politics and *Vormärz* festivals', explores the primary forums for public musical participation in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and beyond: music festivals, singing festivals for massed male voices, and politicized events commemorating national heroes and artists. It presents detailed discussion and comparison of the aesthetic and political claims of such events, of their social make-up and functions, and of the debates prompted by individual events. Much of the chapter focuses on the differing degrees to which these types of festival projected communitarian aesthetic and political ideals. The second section, however, innovates by exploring how festivals commemorating artists – in particular, the Stuttgart and Leipzig Schiller festivals – appropriated the rituals and rhetoric of royal festivals, installing the genius as the people's true representative.

The central portion of the chapter examines the Leipzig Gutenberg Festival of 1840, discussing the ways in which the works premiered at the event (Lortzing's *Hans Sachs* and Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* and 'Gutenberg' *Festgesang*) thematize or engage with the goal of 'speaking for the *Volk*'. The final sections of the chapter examine the debates stimulated by the singing festivals of the 1840s. These events, involving thousands of singers, provided the primary practical exemplar in this period of the pros and cons of musical democratization (an ideal that remained largely limited in practice to middle-class males). The debates surrounding these festivals are highlighted through an exploration of Mendelssohn's setting of Schiller's *An die Künstler*, which engages directly with the aesthetic claims of the movement.

The immediate impact on German musical thought and culture of the 1848–9 revolution is examined in Chapter 4, 'Revolutionary voices: blueprints for an aesthetic state'. The main focus is on the politicization of

musical discourse in the revolutionary year, in particular, the ways in which musical reformers aimed to reshape the relationship between art and society. Its chief concern is with the competing aesthetic ideologies underpinning programmes for musical reform: while the ideal of social art was in the ascendant, many professional musicians sought to preserve the status quo. An important innovation is the exploration of how the aesthetic and political perspectives of individual musicians developed over the course of the revolution. Wagner's radicalization, as its turns out, was by no means unique, yet many musicians, such as Lortzing, were to recoil from their initial revolutionary fervour. The chapter concludes by exploring how Lortzing's opera *Regina* enacts the struggle between liberal and radical ideals (a struggle mirrored musically through its juxtaposition of political songs and the forms of French grand opera).

The last two chapters examine how aesthetic and social imperatives interacted in the work of musical reformers from the second half of the nineteenth century. Drawing extensively on comparisons with trends in contemporary literary aesthetics and social theory, both chapters offer new perspectives on musical thought and culture in the *Nachmärz*, exploring how revolutionary musical ideals fared in a period in which aesthetic autonomy increasingly defined musical thought and practice.

Chapter 5, 'Music and the politics of post-revolutionary culture', presents new perspectives on the cultural politics of the 1850s and 1860s, untangling the conflicting goals of Liszt, Wagner and other musicians aligned to the New German School. Rather than treating this faction's statements and theories as a cohesive agenda, I tease out the tensions between its aesthetic and socio-political aims. The initial focus is on Wagner's Zurich essays, approached via critiques of his ideas in the liberal journal *Die Grenzboten*. I then look more broadly at how autonomous and social aesthetics interact in Liszt's writings and compositions from his Weimar period. The chief concern here is with the relation between his impulse to democratize and politicize music and the opposing influence of Weimar classicism, two strands that collide in his symphonic poem *Héroïde funèbre*. The Weimar classicist strand within Liszt's aesthetics is also to the fore in one of the most important artistic manifestos of the Weimar years, his setting of Schiller's *An die Künstler*; here, Liszt's impulse to hymn artistic progressivism leads him to repudiate musical democratization, and to critique Mendelssohn's setting in doing so. The chapter concludes with a discussion of another programmatic treatment of the relationship between the artist and society, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, returning to themes explored in Chapter 4 in connection with Lortzing's *Hans Sachs*.

The final chapter, 'The song of the workers: idylls and activism', presents an introduction to the aesthetic perspectives animating the musical culture of the workers' movement in the 1860s and beyond. It focuses in particular on music's role in the cultural mission of Ferdinand Lassalle's *Allgemeine deutsche Arbeiterverein* (1863) and August Bebel's *Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei* (1869), exploring the debate stimulated by Hans von Bülow's *Bundeslied des Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeitervereins* and the views of other leading musicians in the workers' movement. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive account of music's place in this movement, but rather to reveal how Schiller's ideals were appropriated by those seeking to create a distinct musical culture for the proletariat.

1 Liberalism, autonomy and the social functions of art

The musical culture and discourse of nineteenth-century Germany has often been viewed through the lens of an all-pervading binary: the distinction between autonomous high art and functional low art, or between a music conceived from the standpoint of aesthetic autonomy and that viewed in instrumental or operative terms. This perspective, at once reductive and constraining, drastically impedes our understanding of the social and political roles of music in this period, casting the aesthetic and socio-political spheres as irreconcilable opposites. This dualism, like a straitjacket, tends to strengthen itself with every turn; indeed, in recent decades – as scholars endeavoured to purge such aestheticist thinking from musicology – the discipline's bad conscience was often projected onto the past, reinforcing the notion that such binaries and exclusions governed nineteenth-century musical thought and culture. The approach taken in this and the next chapter goes beyond simply revealing the self-interest and ideological manoeuvring that shaped some of the canonical aesthetic texts of the period. In showing how aesthetic and socio-political concerns were interlocked, I pursue two different strategies. One approach is to reappraise the political dimensions of aesthetic autonomy, demonstrating the ways in which variant forms of autonomy reflect different aspects of liberal ideology. Another is to construct a counter-history to it, exploring the alternative aesthetic models that coexisted with and countered autonomy from the 1790s onwards. Some of these alternative models were grounded in the ideas of the Enlightenment, while others emerged later, inspired by French and home-grown varieties of socialism; all, however, set out to supplement or displace autonomous aesthetics.

Exploring such competing views of music's social functions requires us to engage with a range of discourses on art, aesthetics and social theory. Some figures within music – one thinks immediately of Nägeli as well as Wagner – had a major impact on broader conceptions of how the arts could contribute to social reform. Yet for the most part, the traffic was in the other direction; it is crucial, therefore, to gauge the continuing impact that reformers such as Schiller had within the musical field. As Schiller's name suggests, it was the discourses of literary theory and aesthetics that

provided the dominant forum for discussions of the social functions of art. In addition, literary journals – as a result of tight government censorship and surveillance for much of the period – served as the main front for liberal and more radical political expression and debate. This is not to suggest that politically aware musical writers simply appropriated ideas from literary discourse, and Chapters 1 and 2 provide examples of disjunctions between the two fields. Literary discourse nonetheless provides a vital means to understand the different conceptions of the social functions of art that we will encounter in musical contexts. Music's capacity to contribute to social reform was dictated by its own particular strengths and limitations, yet commentators exploring its social efficacy focused on the same broad areas as their literary counterparts: (i) art's role in socializing individuals, transforming them into rational, sociable beings and preparing them for emancipation; (ii) how the gulf between art and the majority of people might be bridged; and (iii) how art might articulate the social and political concerns of the age, and help bring about the ideal society of the future.

Liberal individualism, perfectionism and aesthetic autonomy

Aesthetic autonomy, in the versions encountered in this study, diverges in key respects from later conceptions of it. We are not dealing here with the Aunt Sally found in some anti-aesthetic tirades, nor with the considerably more subtle version of the concept presented by Theodor W. Adorno, who equated autonomy with subversion, asociality and severance from reality.[1] The idea that art might offer a mute social protest – or, in Lydia Goehr's formulation, be 'resistantly social through its purely musical form' – was surely foreign to most nineteenth-century musicians, as was the cultural and political pessimism that fuelled such conceptions of autonomy in the twentieth century.[2] As Dave Beech and John Roberts note, we misapprehend nineteenth-century takes on autonomy if we equate them with modernist notions of art's social alienation and estrangement.[3] Just as unhelpful is another form of back projection, associating all forms of autonomy with the politically quiescent aestheticism that became important in the late nineteenth century. While some Romantic writers, such as Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, were to flirt with a similar form of aesthetic separatism, this perspective is by definition of marginal relevance to art and social reform. Far more important were the other forms of aesthetic autonomy that emerged in the 1790s, chiefly those of Immanuel Kant (1790),