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THE LITERATURE OF MUSIC

General Editors: John Stevens and Peter le Huray

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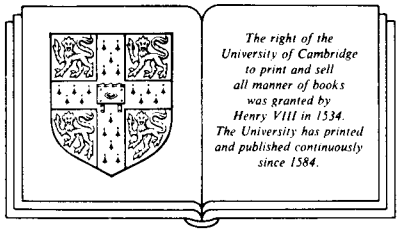
Abridged edition



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521234269

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First published 1981
This abridged edition first published 1988
Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Music and aesthetics in the eighteenth and
early-nineteenth centuries.
(Cambridge readings in the literature of music)
Bibliography
Includes index.
1. Music – 18th century – Philosophy and aesthetics.
2. Music – 19th century – Philosophy and aesthetics.
I. Le Huray, Peter II. Day, James, 1927–
III. Series.
ML3845.M97 1987 780′.1 87–13183

ISBN 978-0-521-23426-9 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-35901-6 paperback

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Preface to the abridged edition

We are delighted to have the chance to paperback from our original hardback volume – *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge 1981) – this core collection of readings. In slimming our selected authors down from more than eighty to fifty we have tried as far as possible to represent all the principal issues that were covered in the original volume. We have ensured, moreover, that the major authors are retained, together with such background information as may serve to place them in context. No anthology, however comprehensive, can possibly satisfy all needs. We hope nonetheless that this pocket edition may serve to highlight the more important aesthetic issues that were being debated during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and that it may suggest to the reader further avenues to explore. If it does this the volume will have served its purpose.

Cross references which are asterisked refer to the full hardcover edition.

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Preface to the first edition

'In music as well as in literature', as Leon Plantinga has observed in his admirable study of *Schumann as Critic*,[1] 'the word "romantic" is too firmly entrenched in our vocabularies to be rooted out; what we ought to do instead is to clarify what we mean by it. Literary historians have made extensive studies showing what the word has meant, and particularly what it has meant to the romantics themselves. Historians of music have not looked into this matter with comparable thoroughness, even though the word was in regular use in a musical context almost as early as it was in literature. Now there is no reason to think that we should accept on faith the romantics' notion of "romantic", once we find out what it is. But their testimony surely ought to be taken into consideration in any attempts we make to clarify our understanding of the word and the artistic phenomena it designates.'

Our purpose is indeed just that: to present a body of 'evidence' that will serve as the basis for an appreciation of early 'romantic' attitudes. This first collection of materials is designed to illustrate some of the main aesthetic issues that were so hotly and continuously debated during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The second – which is to follow – will contain as it were the evidence of the ways in which aesthetic attitudes were given practical expression – evidence in many forms, ranging from the musical novella to evaluations of individual composers and analyses of specific compositions.

Although there have been periods of reaction against an accepted tradition, at no time has there been such a thing as total revolution in the arts. Each age has built, consciously or otherwise, upon the achievements of its immediate past, no matter how vigorously it has protested otherwise. In fact, the more familiar we become with the literature that concerns music – the profusion of articles on aesthetics and criticism in the music journals and dailies, the burgeoning repertory of instruction books, the ever more numerous dissertations in which music is allied to philosophical speculation – the less obvious do the distinctions between historical periods become, and the more we are driven backwards to seek the origins of an idea in an earlier age. Thus, while some commentators have seen the romantic age as one in which emphasis was placed on emotional content rather than form, we find that if there was one point on which every eighteenth-century writer was agreed, it was that music was the art that most immediately appealed to the emotions. Music that failed to engage the emotions, they felt, was of

[1] *Yale Studies in the History of Music*, 4 (New Haven and London 1967), p. 102.

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little or no consequence. 'Expression', therefore, was the central theme around which the debate revolved, and against it were measured such time-honoured concepts as 'beauty', 'sublimity' and 'unity'.

It has been argued that aesthetics can never be a proper subject of scientific study. This may or may not be true. The fact remains that it was then considered to be real enough: indeed, it is to Baumgarten that we owe the term aesthetics, in its modern usage.[2] During the course of the eighteenth century, books on aesthetics came from the presses in ever increasing numbers, books written not by remote academics but by intellectuals, many of whom, like André, Du Bos, Beattie, Michaelis, Schopenhauer and Twining, had a very practical understanding and love of music. To read them is to draw a little closer to an appreciation of the impact that music had on the informed musical public of the day.

It would be wrong, moreover, to imagine that such matters went unnoticed by the professional musician. A glance for instance at William Crotch's Oxford lectures (see p. 281) will quickly show how widely a first-rate teacher ranged through the arts and how interested he was in aesthetic ideas of a general nature. Thomas Gray may have contemptuously dismissed the average professional instrumentalist as little more than a 'common lackey', but many of the leading musicians of his day were in fact highly literate and informed. And as time went on the musician took an ever-widening interest in the world around him. Beethoven's declared interests in the idea of freedom have been well documented. As the conversation books show, too, he was aware of the work of his great literary contemporaries: Goethe, Schiller, Lessing and even Kant, if only at second-hand.[3] Weber and Mendelssohn were gifted artists. Mendelssohn attended Hegel's lectures in Berlin and was able to discuss these with Goethe when he visited Weimar in 1830. Berlioz was swept off his feet by Shakespeare, Goethe (and Miss Smithson), and was a master of prose. Schumann, one of the founders of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (Leipzig 1834–), kept a firm editorial grip on the journal for almost ten years; and although he professed a distrust for aesthetic speculation, it was during the term of his editorship that Gelbcke's important article 'Classic and Romantic' was published (see p. 356); his letter, too, to Clara (see p. 490*) suggests that he was very much alive to everything that he encountered and highly susceptible to external influences. Liszt allowed his name to be associated with a quite extraordinary quantity of prose, whilst on the first page of the newly founded *Gazette musicale* (Paris 1833) his name is coupled with those of Chopin, the writer Janin and the publisher Schlesinger, the implication being that together they formed some kind of editorial board. There was in

[2] A. G. Baumgarten adopted it as the title – *Aesthetica* – of his study, first published at Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, in 1752.

[3] See for instance, Robert L. Jacobs, 'Beethoven and Kant', *Music and Letters*, vol. 42 (1961), p. 242; W. Kirkendale, 'New Roads to Old Ideas in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*', in *The Creative World of Beethoven*, ed. P. H. Lang (New York 1971); and Frida Knight, *Beethoven and the Age of Revolution* (London 1973).

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fact no lack of opportunity for theory and practice to meet in the world of the arts, and for common beliefs and attitudes to be shared.

In this first part of our 'testimony' we have chosen to arrange the materials in strictly chronological order. Initially we were to assemble them in 'subject' divisions, but this proved to be less than satisfactory, as few of the chosen extracts centre exclusively on one idea: although for example the first twenty-two paragraphs of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* come under the general heading of 'Analytic of the beautiful', and paragraphs 23 to 54 'Analytic of the sublime' these are best seen for our purpose in juxtaposition and not in divisions devoted separately to 'The beautiful', and 'The sublime'. The detailed subject index will however, we hope, serve to delineate the various strands in the eighteenth- and early-ninteenth-century debate.

The task of translation has not been an easy one, for the weightier speculations (notably those by German authors) do not readily arrange themselves in fluent English prose. As far as possible our aim has been to strike a balance between stylistic fidelity and readability. We hope of course that in no case we have misrepresented an original; we have, however, taken certain liberties with syntactical structure where the sense of the original would otherwise be impaired, e.g. by subdividing extended sentences and by substituting for indeterminate personal and impersonal pronouns the objects or people to which they refer. Where the meaning of the text is ambiguous the original word or phrase in question is given in the printed text, in brackets.

The anthology is designed not only to represent the various arguments that were put forward in the debate on aesthetics and music, but also to convey something of the flavour of that debate and to indicate the manner in which information and polemic were transmitted. Thus we have chosen, for example, to publish much of Fétis's lengthy survey of music and aesthetics which he published in the Paris *Revue musicale* during the 1830s (see pp. 336–50), rather than briefly to summarise the information that it contains. Thus, too, we have included in full the relevant sections of Lichtenthal's bibliographical dictionary,* which gives a particularly clear idea of the extraordinarily comprehensive range of source materials that had at that comparatively early stage been assembled. As a general rule we have chosen wherever possible to quote extended extracts and to avoid making cuts within the quotations: in many cases, cuts would certainly have made for easier reading but they would have tended to falsify the originals, giving them a spurious intensity and even logic that they may not in fact possess.

As the protagonists were in the main English, French, German and (to a lesser extent) Italian, we have largely limited our anthology to a survey of books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, periodicals and newspapers in these languages. Most of the important publications on aesthetics in fact reached an international readership; French was of course the language of much of 'civilised' eighteenth-century Europe.

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Our thanks are due to the interest of many kind friends and colleagues. We are particularly indebted to Dr Nicholas Boyle, Dr Roger Scruton and Professor John Stevens for their comments on the structure and contents of the anthology, and to Mrs Jennifer Day, Mr James Wright and Dr J. M. Wilkins for their help with the knottier points of translation. Our grateful thanks are due too, to Miss Erika Weiss and Mrs Eileen French for so cheerfully typing and retyping the translations as they gradually took shape. We cannot fail, too, to acknowledge the patience of the Cambridge University Press, and Mrs Rosemary Dooley in particular for all the thought and care that has gone into the production of the book.

PETER LE HURAY

St Catharine's College
Cambridge

JAMES DAY

Selwyn College
Cambridge

November 1979

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