Introduction

This study explores historicism in nineteenth-century German music, focusing on the reception of Renaissance church music, in particular the works of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (*c.* 1525–94). It explains how and why the works of a sixteenth-century composer came to be viewed as the paradigm of church music, assessing and interpreting the relationship between the idealization of his style and contemporary composition. The approach taken is threefold in nature. First, it confronts and offers solutions to an aesthetic problem, establishing why nineteenth-century composers sought to relate their works to the music of Palestrina and how they were able to justify such relationships in the face of Romantic postulates of originality, authenticity and contemporaneity in the artwork. Second, it addresses a historical problem, examining the complex differing natures of the Protestant and Catholic Palestrina revivals, and comparing the compositional responses to Palestrina by north German Protestants and south German Catholics. Third, it addresses a theoretical problem, exploring how relationships to earlier musical styles and materials in nineteenth-century compositions can best be discussed and understood, proposing a new model for interpreting compositional historicism.

The Palestrina revival – a phrase used throughout the study to indicate both the reawakening of interest in Palestrina's music and its emulation by nineteenth-century composers – has not been entirely neglected by modern musicology. Even so, outside Germany and Austria this topic has had a marginal role within musical scholarship: it has often been treated as an esoteric oddity, merely an episode in the epic tale of the decline and fall of church music, of little or no relevance to the mainstream of nineteenth-century music or modern musicology (the sole contact that many anglophone readers will have had with the issues raised by the Palestrina revival is through occasional, gnomic remarks in the translated works of Carl Dahlhaus). In recent years, however, German

and Austrian scholars have devoted increasing attention to aspects of the Palestrina revival: in particular, two collections of papers edited by Winfried Kirsch have provided much information on the critical reception of Palestrina's works in Germany, the liturgical backgrounds to the Palestrina revival and the relation between it and the works of individual composers (especially those associated with the Catholic revival in Bavaria), while Peter Lüttig has explored the role of the Palestrina style in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century counterpoint treatises.[1] The present study builds on and challenges ideas that have emerged in recent German studies: in particular, the three problems outlined above represent a response to what is absent or underdeveloped in previous discussions of the topic.[2] It is the first modern publication to provide an overview and interpretation of the relation between the Palestrina revival and nineteenth-century composition, and aims to establish the importance of this topic to the wider field of nineteenth-century music, thought and culture; in short, I hope to demonstrate that the Palestrina revival was just as significant as parallel trends in the other arts, most notably the Gothic revival and the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The picture that emerges is complicated and multifaceted, a complexity that stands in a paradoxical relationship with the self-conscious simplicity of much of the music examined. Such contradictions, however, are fundamental to the Palestrina revival and to nineteenth-century church music in general.

Of crucial importance in discussing the relation between Palestrina and nineteenth-century music – both in terms of establishing the intentions of composers who engaged with the ideal that Palestrina represented and in interpreting their works – is disentangling the meanings and associations of the term *Palestrina-Stil*. My concern is primarily with relationships to the style of Palestrina as evinced in his works, with nineteenth-century perceptions of that style and with the compositional reception of specific Renaissance pieces, not with the use of the abstract and supposedly timeless rules of the 'Palestrina style'. The employment of such universal laws of composition is discussed here only in so far as they were conceived as an accompaniment to and means of more accurately replicating the style of Palestrina and his contemporaries. A central problem in previous discussions of this topic is that the distinction between Palestrina's style and the 'Palestrina style' is even less easily apprehended in German than in English. While the English phrase 'Palestrina style' generally refers to the body of contrapuntal techniques that became, in part through the mediation of Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741), a timeless corpus of rules applicable within a variety of styles, the term *Palestrina-Stil*

can refer in nineteenth-century and more recent usage to a wider range of idioms:

(i) The style of Palestrina as evinced in his works.
(ii) The style of Palestrina and his Roman contemporaries (from now on, for the sake of clarity, 'Palestrina's language'), or of late sixteenth-century choral music in general.
(iii) The language of Palestrina's Roman successors or 'school', in particular Felice Anerio (*c.* 1560–1614), Giovanni Francesco Anerio (*c.* 1567–1630), Francesco Soriano (*c.* 1548–1621) and Gregorio Allegri (1582–1652).
(iv) The Palestrina tradition, the continuation in Italy of *stile antico* composition as an alternative liturgical idiom throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
(v) The *strenge Satz* ('strict style') of counterpoint outlined in Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725) and subsequent treatises.
(vi) The *stylus a capella* described in Fux's *Gradus*, the combination of components of the *strenge Satz* with later musical elements that remained in use in south Germany and Austria well into the nineteenth century.

In exploring the relationships between Palestrina and nineteenth-century compositions, it is vital that these categories be differentiated, since they have very different aesthetic implications. It will become clear not only that these distinctions are ignored in some critical discussions, but that some nineteenth-century composers relied on this ambiguity as a means of justifying their cultivation of Palestrina's language.[3]

An appreciation of these distinctions is essential in discussing the aesthetic problems raised by nineteenth-century church music: crucially, the question of how composers were able to reconcile the cultivation of Palestrina's language with contemporary aesthetic norms. An adherence to the rules of the *strenge Satz* need not, of course, result in the imperatives of originality, authenticity and contemporaneity being contravened; similarly, the perpetuation of the Fuxian *stylus a capella* does not suggest the intention to replicate or even emulate Palestrina. But the presence of compositions that were intended to replicate Palestrina's language demands that the aesthetic frameworks underpinning them be scrutinized. It cannot be assumed that such compositions were somehow exempted from these imperatives, that church music was not subject to aesthetic criteria operative in other fields. In addition, the notion that such replication was justified by a continued adherence to otherwise outmoded aesthetic conceptions – eighteenth-century doctrines of imitation – does

not provide a plausible explanation of the compositions of the Palestrina revival.

Chapter 1 provides a broad-based introduction to nineteenth-century historicism and to the ideational foundations underpinning the critical, historiographical and compositional reception of early music. In idealizing Palestrina and elevating his works as a model for modern church music, critics and musicians deployed a complex range of ideas derived from many extra-musical sources. As a consequence, it is vital to locate compositional historicism within broader artistic trends. While in Chapter 1 the relationship between the historicism and originality in nineteenth-century art is explored in general terms, the ideas discussed here are applied more directly to the Palestrina revival in Chapter 2, via an examination of E. T. A. Hoffmann's essay 'Alte und neue Kirchenmusik'. The purpose here is not to treat the essay to a minute exegesis, but rather to use it as a point of access to the views of the wider body of writers who contributed to the idealization of Palestrina. Hoffmann's complex answer to the question of how modern composers should respond to this model provides a point of entry to the diverse types of compositional response examined subsequently.

The second problem outlined above concerns the differing natures of the Protestant and Catholic Palestrina revivals. Hitherto, the majority of discussions of this topic have approached it via the works of a single composer, or by concentrating solely on the Catholic Palestrina revival. Neither approach is capable of doing justice to the complexities of the phenomenon as a whole: any attempt to interpret the ramifications of the idealization of Palestrina for nineteenth-century music must take into account the activities of both Protestant and Catholic composers, since to fail to do this would result in a distorted picture of the revival. At the opposite extreme, to attempt to provide an exhaustive historical survey of the revival in Germany and Austria would run the risk, given its widely pervasive nature, of becoming drowned in minutiae of little interest to the non-specialist. In striving to provide a more balanced approach, this study does not attempt to present an encyclopaedic survey of the revival in Germany and Austria, or undertake thoroughgoing comparisons with similar trends elsewhere in Europe (most notably in France and Italy).[4] Rather, it focuses on the high points of the Protestant and Catholic revivals: in north Germany, primarily Berlin, from the mid-1840s to the mid-1860s; and in south Germany and Austria, primarily Regensburg, from *c.* 1870 to *c.* 1890. Further, since it is impossible to explore the relevant works of all composers active within these periods,

the discussions focus primarily on Protestant composers associated with the Berlin *Domchor* and *Singakademie* (especially Mendelssohn, Nicolai, Grell and Bellermann), and Catholics associated with the *Allgemeine Deutsche Cäcilien-Verein* in south Germany and Austria (especially Witt, Haller, Liszt and Bruckner). With regard to genre, the liturgical music discussed is in general restricted to motets and other single-movement compositions. For both Catholic and Protestant musicians, the replication or emulation of Palestrina was, in part, associated with specific seasons of the church year; since motet texts are explicitly linked with particular seasons and feasts they provide a means of establishing whether, within one centre or composer's output, the cultivation of Palestrina was universal or seasonally restricted. Furthermore, it is in such pieces that the tension between aesthetic and functional imperatives fundamental to the Palestrina revival is most pronounced.

Although the two central chapters are devoted primarily to examining and comparing compositional responses to Palestrina, and to exploring how individual composers justified the use of earlier artistic materials, the broader implications of these works are also discussed. Each subsection introduces either an issue that was crucial in encouraging compositional historicism, or one of the features that distinguishes the Palestrina revival from similar contemporary movements, or a problematic factor characterizing the reception of Renaissance music. The Palestrina revival touches on a huge range of aesthetic, historical and theoretical issues: the problems surrounding music and moral education, objective versus subjective historicism, music and politics, value judgement, the sublime, the process of secularization in nineteenth-century society, and many others. It should be borne in mind that the discussions of these topics approach them from the perspective of compositional historicism, and are not intended as comprehensive interpretations of these wider issues in and of themselves.

Chapter 3 explores the institutional and ideological frameworks sustaining the Protestant Palestrina revival. In addition to discussing how the ethical concerns of the north German choral societies encouraged composers to disregard aesthetic criteria, it explores the importance of quasi-liturgical music as a vehicle for the emulation of Palestrina, exemplified in the works of Nicolai and Spohr. At the heart of this chapter is an exploration of Mendelssohn's engagement with old Italian music; his output serves to epitomize the aesthetic and stylistic tensions present in church music from the first half of the nineteenth century, and illustrates how composers and their critics wrestled with the problem of authenticity.

In the 1840s and 1850s, perceptions of Palestrina's language gradually changed as a result of the proliferation of editions of Renaissance music, while ideological factors encouraged Protestant reformers to shift their attention to German music of the Reformation era. These developments are explored through a consideration of the views of the historian Carl von Winterfeld and through a survey of the repertory of the Berlin *Domchor*. Finally, this chapter discusses how the emulation of Palestrina was stimulated by the rejection of aesthetic norms: the activities of Grell and Bellermann represent a counter not only to the idea of absolute music, but to aesthetic autonomy.

Chapter 4 explores the diverse ideological, liturgical and aesthetic factors animating the Catholic Palestrina revival. In contrast to the historicist revival of Renaissance music in north Germany, the activities of south German musicians exhibit a tension between tradition and reform: in the first half of the century, the revival and emulation of Palestrina coexisted with the perpetuation of the Fuxian *stylus a capella*. The central focus is the work of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Cäcilien-Verein*, the most influential nineteenth-century movement for church music reform. In addition to examining the compositions and polemical writings of its first president, Franz Xaver Witt, the tensions within this organization are discussed: of particular interest are the views of those, such as Haller, who advocated the literal replication of Palestrina's language. The chapter culminates with a discussion of the wider influence of the movement, examining the relation between the most significant composers of Catholic church music – Liszt and Bruckner – and the Palestrina revival.

While Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned solely with liturgical and quasi-liturgical music, the wider ramifications of the idealization of Palestrina for nineteenth-century composition are discussed in Chapter 5. Here, the problems involved in interpreting references to Palestrina's music or language in secular and non-liturgical religious works are discussed. In addition to delineating the specific associations that such references can access, works by Mendelssohn, Loewe, Liszt and Wagner serve as test cases for exploring their function and significance.

The third problem addressed – how relationships to Palestrina's language in nineteenth-century compositions can fruitfully be interpreted – is discussed empirically throughout the study, and a framework for exploring such relationships is formulated in the final chapter. It will become apparent that the traditional concepts with which this topic is discussed, imitation and historicism, prove inadequate for understanding the complex varieties of stylistic pluralism that are encountered. On the

other hand, while critical interpretations of this repertory need not be wholly couched around the intentions of the composers concerned, to ignore the historical and aesthetic context of the works by approaching them via critical ideas conceived around later music or other art forms will not prove satisfactory either. Kevin Korsyn, for example, has approached the music of Brahms from such a perspective: 'What appears modern – or rather postmodern – in Brahms is his recruitment of a plurality of musical languages. By mobilising a number of historically differentiated discourses, Brahms becomes "both the historian and the agent of his own language". Thus he knew the very modern anxiety . . . of having to choose an orientation among languages.'[5] In Korsyn's analysis, Brahms's compositional confrontation with earlier musical languages is an act of clairvoyance, a sign of 'the extent to which Romanticism anticipated our problems'.[6] But viewing concern with and employment of historical discourses as something peculiar to modernism downplays the importance, even centrality, of stylistic pluralism to Romanticism, a phenomenon clearly apparent in the repertory discussed here. While it could well be argued that one justification for studying how nineteenth-century composers were able to use the music of the past and reconcile themselves with such use is its relevance to the issues and problems of our postmodern age, it will become clear that the reverse is not necessarily the case. The stylistic pluralism in the works examined is the product of the specific context under discussion; this cannot be disregarded in interpreting this repertory.

Finally, it is necessary to justify the central premiss behind this study: the conviction that studying the relation between sixteenth- and nineteenth-century music can contribute significantly to our understanding of both. This is not the place for a thoroughgoing discussion of the aesthetics of reception or of competing reception theories; it would, however, invite misunderstanding if some fundamental issues are not rendered explicit. The main justification for discussing the engagement of one group of musicians with another is, as with any study of such distant or remote reception, the light that it sheds on the recipient. Accordingly, it will be evident that this study is intended primarily as a contribution to our understanding of nineteenth-century music, aesthetics and culture. But a further crucial task for reception history is its potential for mediating between past and present perceptions of a body of art; that is, its use as a means of understanding present-day conceptions and interrogating their foundations. Indeed, any discussion of the analytical, critical or historiographical reception of Renaissance and Baroque compositions

will broach matters fundamental to how we discuss them today. In addition to acknowledging the potential of reception studies as a means of redefining the relation between nineteenth-century and modern conceptions, it is vital to recognize the extent to which these matters impinge on our perceptions of Palestrina, his works and his place in history. It is often still contended that the reception of sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century compositions in the nineteenth century need bear no relation to our engagement with this music: that it is the task of the music historian to strip away the distortions and misconceptions accrued in the course of history. But instead of viewing these successive responses to Palestrina and his music as redundant detritus, to be stripped away in order to access original truths, we should recognize that his cultural significance and the meanings of his works subsist in a dynamic interplay between past and present. We should recognize – following Hegel's dictum that 'every work of art is a dialogue with all who confront it' – that these successive responses ineluctably constitute part of the essence of his music.[7]

1

Historicism in nineteenth-century art, aesthetics and culture

ORIGINALITY: CONSENSUS OR CONTROVERSY?

The relation between nineteenth-century compositions and Palestrina's music presents an intractable aesthetic problem: how were composers and their audiences able to reconcile the compositional use of the music of the past with the Romantic imperatives of originality, authenticity and contemporaneity? This discussion approaches the wide range of relationships to Palestrina that are distinguished in the rest of the study in more general terms: here, the implications of such relationships for these three postulates – and thus for aesthetic value – are more important than their specific configurations. But, given the existence of compositions whose totality is defined by their relation to Palestrina's language, it is necessary to explore contemporary aesthetic frameworks which not only justify the partial or transformed use of historical styles in modern art, but also legitimize or condone the literal replication of an earlier style. While the composers discussed in later chapters justified their engagement with the music of the distant past in a variety of ways, one factor is constant: they conceived the problem of compositional historicism not in isolation, but in the context of broader artistic trends. Accordingly, in exploring how art historians, critics and philosophers confronted artistic historicism, the aim is not to construct a spurious Zeitgeist as a background to contemporary musical activities. Rather, it is to seek provisional solutions to this aesthetic problem from a wide range of sources, solutions which will be refined subsequently in relation to specifically musical debates.

The centrality of the concept of originality to post-Enlightenment aesthetics is indisputable. This concept – uniting the categories of individuality, novelty and spontaneity – stands diametrically opposed to imitation and copying: the artist is permitted to learn from, and to be inspired by the works of the past 'by a sort of noble contagion', but must avoid at all costs any kind of 'sordid theft'.[1] In describing the

status of originality in Romanticism, Leonard B. Meyer comments that 'geniuses are natural innovators (the "Walters", not the "Beckmessers", of the world). And this innate proclivity was encouraged by an ideology that not only placed a premium on originality and change, but highly prized individual expression.'[2] But to speak of a Romantic ideology of originality is misleading, if it implies that all contemporary writers, artists and composers subscribed to a monolithic and unquestioned doctrine. In early nineteenth-century Germany, conceptions of originality were the subject of debate rather than consensus.

The ideas of Schopenhauer and Goethe represent two different stances regarding originality, and a consideration of their views not only reveals the wide divergence of these opinions but clarifies the issues involved. Schopenhauer emphasizes the difference between the genius who, although steeped in tradition is cut off from the world and creates the original, and the imitator, who – being dependent on the achievements of others rather than his own instincts – lifts elements of previous works whole, producing nothing more than collections of undigested material. The genius, in the moment of inspiration, is able to surrender himself to the representation of the archetypal forms of nature, becoming 'the clear mirror of the inner nature of the world'.[3] In contrast, the artist not possessing the gift of genius can only represent what he has earlier experienced in concrete form, in nature or in art.[4] For Schopenhauer, there is seemingly no middle ground between originality and imitation; artists lacking the inspiration and spontaneity of genius inevitably produce reflective, contrived fabrications:

> Imitators, mannerists, *imitatores, servum pecus* [imitators, the slavish mob] . . . note what pleases and affects in genuine works, make this clear to themselves, fix it in the concept, and hence in the abstract, and then imitate it, openly or in disguise, with skill and intention. Like parasitic plants, they suck their nourishment from the works of others; and like polyps, take on the colour of their nourishment. Indeed, we could even carry the comparison farther, and assert that they are like machines which mince very fine and mix up what is put into them, but can never digest it, so that the constituent elements of others can always be found again, and picked out and separated from the mixture. Only the genius, on the other hand, is like the organic body that assimilates, transforms and produces.[5]

Schopenhauer's conception of originality, while influential and indicative of the changing status of the artwork in the early nineteenth century, was not shared by all his contemporaries. Goethe repeatedly dismissed the idea of originality, arguing that no artist could rely solely on instinct and inspiration: 'Even the greatest genius would not get far if he wanted