What does it mean to say that music is deeply moving? Or that music’s aesthetic value derives from its deep structure? This study traces the widely employed trope of musical depth to its origins in German-language music criticism and analysis. From the Romantic aesthetics of E. T. A. Hoffmann to the modernist theories of Arnold Schoenberg, metaphors of depth attest to the cross-pollination of music with discourses ranging from theology, geology, and poetics to psychology, philosophy, and economics. The book demonstrates that the persistence of depth metaphors in musicology and music theory today is an outgrowth of their essential role in articulating and transmitting Germanic cultural values. While musical depth metaphors have historically served to communicate German nationalist sentiments, Watkins shows that an appreciation for the broad connotations of those metaphors opens up exciting new avenues for interpretation.

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Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought

From E. T. A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg

Holly Watkins
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Note on the text

In dealing with the large volume of German-language sources at the center of this study, I have tried to strike a balance between practicality and consistency. Most German titles I give in English, except for titles of musical works, names of journals, and book titles more expediently left in German (such as A. B. Marx’s *Allgemeine Musiklehre*). The majority of translations are my own; English translations that I have consulted appear in the bibliography but generally not in the notes (the exception is Chapter 6, previously published in a format that referred to English translations where available). However, when adopting existing translations more or less verbatim in consultation with German sources, I cite only English sources for reasons of economy.

Finally, since my approach to translation in this book is fairly literal, I have kept in-text citations of original German phrases at a minimum so as not to interrupt the flow of the prose. Readers should rest assured that what I render as “depth” in English almost always corresponds to *Tiefe* in German, “deep” and “deeply” to *tief*. I include the German in parentheses where I depart from this practice, for example where the context justifies translating *Grund* as “depth.”