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052158227X - German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music

Mary Sue Morrow

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Music aesthetics in late eighteenth-century Germany has always been problematic because there was no aesthetic theory to evaluate the enormous amount of high-quality instrumental music produced by composers like Haydn and Mozart. This book derives a practical aesthetic for German instrumental music during the late eighteenth century from a previously neglected source, reviews of printed instrumental works. At a time when the theory of mimesis dominated aesthetic thought, leaving sonatas and symphonies at the very bottom of the aesthetic hierarchy, a group of reviewers was quietly setting about the task of evaluating instrumental music on its own terms. Two threads run through the over 1,300 reviews dating from 1760 to 1798: a rhetorical thread in which reviewers identified the “true German style” (especially as seen in C. P. E. Bach and Haydn) and an aesthetic thread. Reviewers first focused on correct compositional technique, but rapidly expanded their horizons to include genius and originality, non-mimetic expressivity, and unity based on purely musical elements. In doing so they laid the foundation for the aesthetic theories of the nineteenth century.

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, United Kingdom

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1997

Typeset in 10/13 pt Monophoto Sabon by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Morrow, Mary Sue, 1953–

German music criticism in the late eighteenth century : aesthetic issues in instrumental music / Mary Sue Morrow.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 58227 X (hardback)

1. Instrumental music—Germany—18th century—History and criticism. 2. Musical criticism—Germany. 3. Music—Germany—18th century—Philosophy and aesthetics. 4. Nationalism in music.

5. Music and rhetoric. I. Title.

ML499.3.M67 1997

781.1'7'094309033—dc20 96-41039 CIP MN

ISBN 0 521 58227 X hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

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In Memoriam

Virginia Sue Williamson Morrow

1920–1989

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## *Acknowledgments*

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a scholarly community to produce a book, and I am indebted to more people than I will be able to thank in this small space. Loyola University granted me a sabbatical leave in 1991-92; a concurrent twelve-month research fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung enabled me to spend that entire year in Germany. With their support, I was able to travel to the many libraries and archives that house the sources I have used in writing this book. I wish to thank the staff of those institutions for the assistance they provided. In alphabetical order by city, they are: *Berlin*: Deutsche Staatsbibliothek Unter den Linden, Bibliothek der Humboldt-Universität, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ratsbibliothek der Berliner Stadtbibliothek, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz; *Copenhagen*: Det Kongelige Bibliotek; *Dresden*: Sächsische Landesbibliothek; *Erlangen*: Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg; *Göttingen*: Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek; *Hamburg*: Commerzbibliothek der Handelskammer, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky, Staatsarchiv; *Kiel*: Bibliothek der Christian-Albrechts-Universität, Landesbibliothek; *Leipzig*: Bibliothek der Karl-Marx-Universität; *Lübeck*: Bibliothek der Hansestadt; *Munich*: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Stadtbibliothek – Monacensia und Handschriftensammlung; *Nuremberg*: Bibliothek des Germanischen Museums, Stadtbibliothek; *Stanford, CA*: Stanford University Library; *Vienna*: Stadtbibliothek; *Würzburg*: Universitätsbibliothek.

For advice and encouragement in the early stages of my research, I wish to thank the faculty and staff at Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel, particularly Heinrich Schwab, who sponsored my application for a Humboldt fellowship, Bozena Blechert, and Carmen Debryn. At various times I have benefitted from discussions with Axel Beer, Thomas Cornell, William Horne, Howard Irving, Laurenz Lütteken, Roberta Marvin, Doris Powers, Janna Saslaw, and Gretchen Wheelock. In this regard I owe a special debt to

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my colleague in the field of rhetoric here at Loyola, Katherine Adams. We spent many lunches discussing eighteenth-century issues and the process of writing; every time I came away with renewed energy and at least one good idea. A number of people were kind enough to read portions of the manuscript: Katherine Adams, Hans Adler, David Beveridge, A. Peter Brown, Leslie Ellen Brown, Austin Caswell, Dane Evans, and Howard Irving. For their comments, suggestions, and encouragement, I am most grateful. I would also like to thank Corie Roberts for checking sources and running innumerable errands, and Craig McCollough for preparing the musical examples. A special word of appreciation goes to my graduate assistant, Jodi Dunnick McWilliams, for her eagle-eyed help in checking the final manuscript and to Penny Souster and Alan Finch of Cambridge University Press for their editorial patience and assistance.

I would never have been able to finish this project without the unfailing love and support of both friends and my extended family. Father, brother, sister-in-law, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, college friends, and my colleagues here at Loyola – all have kept me sane and reminded me continually of the World Beyond the Book. Finally, my deepest gratitude is to my mother, who was my first piano teacher and the one who suggested that I pursue a career in musicology. Though she did not live to see this project, she has been with me in spirit every step of the way. I dedicate this book to her memory.



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## *Author's note*

The eighteenth century would probably have agreed with Emerson that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds, at least with regard to the spelling of names. Sometimes it seems as if no one spelled a name the same way twice, and German composers often used French or Italian versions of their names. In the interests of intelligibility, I have standardized all names to the preferred form listed in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* or *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. (For Czech names, I have used the most common Germanized spelling.) Only in direct quotations have I retained any eccentric versions.

I have reproduced spelling and capitalization in the titles of compositions exactly as they appeared in review headings, but will warn the reader not to expect precise conformity to the piece's actual title page. Most journals did not reproduce titles exactly, frequently shortening them, nearly always omitting diacritic accents in French and Italian, and sometimes changing spellings to conform to the house style. That house style also affected the review texts themselves; for example, some publications preferred *Stük* to *Stück*, *vortrefflich* to *vortrefflich*, or even *kan* to *kann*. I have retained these variations without comment, indicating only obvious typographical errors with a *sic*. Finally, a number of the journals changed their own titles several times. All the versions are listed in the bibliography, but I have used only the earliest in my text and citations. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.