

WESTERN MUSIC AND RACE

This contributory volume, the first book of its kind, provides a snapshot of the ways in which discourse about Western music and race overlapped and became intertwined during the period from Wagner's death to the rise of National Socialism and fascism elsewhere in Europe. At these two framing moments such overlapping was at its most explicit: Wagner's racially inflected 'regeneration theories' were at one end and institutionalised cultural racism at the other. The book seeks to provide insights into the key national contexts in which such discourses circulated in the interim period, as well as to reflect a range of archival, historical, critical and philosophical approaches to the topic. National contexts covered include Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Great Britain and North America. The contributors to the volume are leading scholars in the field, and the book contains many illustrative music examples and images which bring the subject-matter to life.

JULIE BROWN is Senior Lecturer in Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. She publishes on early twentieth-century music and film music, and is author of *Bartók and the Grotesque* (2007).

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For my mother

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Introduction
Music, history, trauma: Western music
and race, 1883–1933

Julie Brown

The aim of judgment in historical or literary-critical discourse, a forensic rather than juridical sort of inquiry, is not that of determining guilt or innocence. It is to change history into memory: to make a case for what should be remembered.¹

Audiences of today understand a wide range of musics in terms of race. ‘African-American Music’ is a catch-all label for a variety of musics for which historical, cultural and biological identity are assumed to be irreducible constituent elements. The popular version, ‘black music’, is even more starkly racial. But concert and operatic music may also have racial meanings for contemporary audiences. The arts media have given wide coverage to recent scholarship about Wagner’s anti-Semitism. Decca’s ‘Entartete Musik’ series and related exhibitions have highlighted the fate of Jewish music and musicians under the Nazis, a development that has coincided with the reappearance of music by composers such as Franz Schreker, Erik Wolfgang Korngold, Viktor Ullmann and others in concert programmes. Israeli pianist-conductor Daniel Barenboim’s 2001 personal challenge to the exclusion of Wagner from Israeli concert halls has also received wide media coverage, as has his co-founding with Edward Said of the Israeli–Arab peace ensemble, West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, and more recently a centre in Jerusalem for the study of Arab music.² Yet if we ask how wide a perspective professional academic work has offered on the matter, the answer is that its perspective has generally been limited. As Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman note in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, the ‘specter of race’ has until recently largely been erased from historical and musicological writing.³ Of the historical, ethnographic and theoretical work done, most has concentrated on three broad areas: the anti-Semitic and so-called regeneration theories of

¹ Geoffrey H. Hartman, ‘Judging Paul de Man’, in *Minor Prophecies: The Literary Essay in the Culture Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 148.

² ‘Barenboim’s Hopes for Mid East Peace’: BBC interview, 27 April 2006. Accessible in the UK only: search for ‘Barenboim’s hopes for Mid East peace’ under BBC Audio and Video at <http://search.bbc.co.uk/>.

³ Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Wagner,⁴ music and cultural policy of the Nazi period,⁵ and African-American music⁶ – that is, on repertoires and discourses about music whose claims to racial meaning are overt.

The present volume explores the waters separating the first two of these areas of professional interest and asks how those topics could have remained islands for so long. In seventeen chapters manifesting a range of archival, historical and critical approaches, the contributors to this book focus on discursive entanglements between Western art music and race in the years (roughly) 1883 to 1933, that is, between Wagner's death and the rise of National Socialism. If the general absence of 'race' from musicology is in itself surprising, perhaps more surprising is its absence from analyses of Western music during a period framed by some of the most explicit discussions of the relationship available to us, and whose framing moments are subject to the most intense scrutiny of the music–race connection to be found in recent scholarship: at one end, Wagner's anti-Semitic and 'regeneration theories'; at the other, the institutionalised cultural racism of Nazi Germany and other European fascist regimes, a racism which, among far worse terrors involving the mass murder not only of Germany's 'inferior races' but also its own 'degenerates', such as homosexuals, the handicapped and the aged, demonised both Jewish and African-American musical influences as degenerate, and sometimes even conflated the two – as in the famous poster for Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*, which depicts a black

⁴ See for example Jacob Katz, *The Darker Side of Genius: Richard Wagner's Anti-Semitism* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1986); Dieter Borchmeyer, 'The Question of Anti-Semitism', in Ulrich Müller and Peter Wapnewski (eds.), *Wagner Handbook*, trans. and ed. John Deathridge (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 166–85; Barry Millington, 'Nuremberg Trial: Is There Anti-Semitism in *Die Meistersinger*?', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/3 (1991), 247–60; and Millington, 'Wagner and the Jews', in Barry Millington (ed.), *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 161–4; Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁵ See for example Albrecht Dümmling and Peter Girth (eds.), *Entartete Musik: Dokumentation und Kommentar zur Düsseldorfer Ausstellung von 1938*, rev. and exp. edition (Düsseldorf: DKV, 1993); Fred K. Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1982); Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theatre, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996); Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (eds.), *Driven Into Paradise: The Musical Migration From Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁶ See for example Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Ronald Radano, *Lying up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (University of Chicago Press, 2003); Radano, 'Denoting Difference: The Writing of the Black Spirituals', *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1996), 506–44; Radano, 'Hot Fantasies: American Modernism and the Idea of Black Rhythm', in Radano and Bohlman (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination*, pp. 459–80; Ingrid Monson, 'The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions of Jazz Historical Discourses', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48 (1995), 396–422; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Ramsey reviews some important literature in his chapter in the present volume.

American saxophone player wearing a Star of David. It seems astonishing that so little could have been written about the interim period.

This book serves to demonstrate that in key Western centres the issue of race was very much alive during this interim period. Contributors analyse racially inflected musical discourse relating to a variety of geographical centres and language contexts: Austria-Germany (Potter, Deathridge, Brown), France (Pasler, Fry, Fulcher), North America (Frogley, Ramsey), Spain (Pérez-Zalduondo, Christoforidis), Britain (Ghuman, Móricz), Italy (Illiano and Sala). Case studies of individual composers reveal a variety of ways in which the language of race and its associated concepts were co-opted (Christoforidis, Gillies and Pear, Móricz, Fulcher, Ghuman); as do case studies of particular centres of performance activity, such as the *revue nègre* (Fry), and whole spheres of cultural activity (Currid, Bohlman). Several authors trace mutations that Wagner's regeneration theories underwent in the hands of others (Levi, Brown, Móricz). Given this evidence of the variety of ways in which the concept of 'race' circulated in musical discourse during our period, one might legitimately ask why this is the first volume to treat the period in this light.

One explanation for the scholarly silence is the fact that critical and theoretically informed engagement with the way music has, and does, figure in the racial imagination is a relatively recent development in musicology. Radano and Bohlman's book is the first major collection of essays to ask a variety of questions about the discursive category of race in connection with a range of musics. However, another explanation is that for the period tackled the topic amounts to a type of taboo. The largely self-imposed suppression of Wagner's music by Israeli orchestras and concert halls, the anguished and angry responses of some Israelis to Barenboim's breaking of that musical and cultural taboo, and Barenboim's implied and actual challenge that they begin to renegotiate a position for Wagner in their cultural lives are a version of what I am referring to. This sequence of events in the recent cultural life of Israel is a very public expression of the fact that for many Israelis Wagner's music remains indelibly linked with the trauma of the Holocaust. It is not just that Wagner also generated anti-Semitic writings of his own; it is that his legacy came to be directly associated with Nazi ideology by virtue of the ideological and personal embrace that his widow and heirs offered Hitler and National Socialism generally; many Holocaust survivors will also have listened to Wagner as background music to Nazi propaganda, watched footage of Hitler arriving in Bayreuth and being greeted by the Wagner family, and so on. It is not for those of us who have not been through the same experience to seek to deny or underplay the lasting psychological effects of these sorts of memories and associations on Holocaust survivors, even if Barenboim and indeed some other Israelis clearly feel that it may be time to try, tentatively, to move on. Notwithstanding the particularity of the Wagner problem for

Israel, the cultural dynamics to which reappearance of his music in its concert halls has given rise might tell us something about the erasure of other race-linked topics from early twentieth-century music history. In a more muted way the whole musical history of race, and especially the musical history of race in the early decades of the twentieth century – mainly, though not exclusively, in Europe – seem marked by a similar type of trauma.

The idea that a psychoanalytic concept such as trauma might be useful when elucidating the relationship between the present and the past is one that Dominick LaCapra and others explore in their work on the Holocaust.⁷ LaCapra feels that a number of the issues arising from such work have broader historiographical import: the significant heightening of the effect of canonisation which occurs when a historian effectively sacralises an historical event is one; another is the tendency, not limited to attempts to represent the Holocaust, to repress deeply unpleasant events when writing history. For him the rhetoric of the unspeakable attaching to the catastrophic events in Germany and Poland serves as a pointer to other levels of historical repression, and ultimately to what he identifies as the return of the repressed in connection with the Holocaust. Recording and processing historical events in memory and writing mimics, in the case of such catastrophic events, the psychological mechanism of repression. We need to recognise the terrible effects of traumatising events such as these on immediate victims and survivors above all; however, we should acknowledge that there can also be a ‘transferential relation between the historian or theorist and the object of analysis’:

Victims of severely traumatizing events may never fully escape possession by, or recover from, a shattering past, and a response to trauma may well involve ‘acting-out’ (or emotionally repeating a still-present past) in those directly affected by it and *at least muted trauma in attentive analysts and commentators*.⁸

The role played by canons in history and historiography has a bearing on this effect – not only canonical texts, but canonical events, and canonical readings of canonical texts and events. It is partly because the Holocaust is not only a canonised, but also a sacralised, event in twentieth-century history that certain issues attaching to it ‘tend to be avoided, marginalized, repressed, or denied’.⁹ The two processes – canonisation and marginalisation – are mutually reinforcing for LaCapra, because ‘In the case of traumatic events, canonization involves the mitigation or covering over of wounds and creating the impression that nothing really disruptive has occurred.’¹⁰

⁷ Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). See also LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁸ LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, p. xii. Emphasis added. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The notion that a type of ‘muted trauma’ has characterised post-war discussions of music from this period strikes me as a persuasive explanation for the extent to which race has been absent from post-war discussions of music. Its historical repression therefore adds to Philip Bohlman’s detailing of ways in which race is displaced in discourse and otherwise erased from history (this volume). The Holocaust is the point of rupture between a period of discursive openness about race as a determining feature of cultural and specifically musical production on the one hand, and of silence about it on the other. In order to understand the relative absence in the second half of the twentieth century of discussions of music and race emanating from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European musical imagination, it is important, I would argue, to consider the Holocaust’s traumatising effects.

Our subject in this book is admittedly not the limit case that historiography of the Holocaust is: no contributor engages directly with the Holocaust – composers who survived the concentration and death camps, for instance, or music-making within the camps.¹¹ The cultural issues at stake here are of a different order. They are questions of historiography. To what extent can we ever know how discourses of a period considerably distant from our own were understood by its contemporaries? – a question raised long ago by Gary Tomlinson and others, including Michael André Bernstein in the specific context of pre-Holocaust histories.¹² (Bernstein is critical of the misuse of hindsight in historical writing: the tendency to regard as portentously foreseeable events that we know proved significant. In our historical accounts we are in danger of denying the situation of actors at the time: their own sense of an unknown future, their lacking of our wisdom of hindsight.) To what extent should the reputation of a particular composer and his or her legacy be affected by knowledge of his or her subscription to an odious ideology (Fulcher on Honegger)? Is it possible or desirable to ‘rescue’ the ‘purely musical’ from non- or extra-musical elements now considered ‘tainted’ – a long-standing preoccupation of Wagner studies confronted here again by John Deathridge. In her book *The Quest for Voice* Lydia Goehr examines some of the philosophical justifications of this discursive move.¹³ Here Philip Bohlman considers the ‘purely musical’ to be a notion which positively displaces culture and ‘race’. Notwithstanding the different order of magnitude between our issues and those of Holocaust scholars, it remains that

¹¹ On this subject, see Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹² See especially Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University Press, 1993); Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

¹³ See Lydia Goehr, *The Quest For Voice: On Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

networks of racist ideas linked political agenda and cultural practice in complicated ways, such that discussions about music remain linked in the historical imagination, albeit sometimes distantly, with those that led to the extermination of the Jews and Gypsies. The catastrophic events of the Nazi era remain a communal wound, to borrow Lawrence Langer's words; and its repercussions can be traced in many aspects of post-war life and culture and scholarship.

Engaging a range of archival, historical and critical approaches, contributors to the present volume consider a number of mid- to late nineteenth-century developments that played a part in the convergence of racial and musical discourses during the period roughly 1883–1933. Principal among these nineteenth-century developments were global encounters whose imperial desires and racial fears often stood in tense opposition, burgeoning nationalist movements within and beyond continental Europe, and the emerging biologies of race which fascinated nation-builders; there was also the immense shadow cast over Western art music by racially inflected Wagnerism, not only during Wagner's life but perhaps even more so in the decades following his death. Contributors are less concerned with asserting essential links between music and race than with examining ways in which others, including composers themselves, have done so during the period in question. As such, Radano and Bohlman's understanding of 'race' as a discursively unstable signification ('not a fixity, but a signification saturated with profound cultural meaning and whose discursive instability heightens its affective power'¹⁴) remains relevant to the approaches to the topic here. Guthrie Ramsey's tripartite conceptualisation of race is likewise enabling: he suggests (in this volume) that one might think in terms of 'social race' ('the social experience of being a racialised subject'), 'cultural race' ('the performative dimensions of the social experience') and 'theoretical race' (the 'dense academic (and deliciously speculative) treatments of race in contemporary cultural theory').

Racial categories created primarily by Europeans as a result of their contact with, and subordination of, non-European peoples through colonialism and imperialism vary significantly during this time; sometimes they reflect very closely race science's focus on physical difference, at others they co-opt the term to signify less specific identities; often they move smoothly from one to the other. As the essays in this book clearly demonstrate, 'race' was an extremely malleable category during this period, and for this reason the approach to race taken in this book emphasises the process of racialising. Pamela M. Potter describes much of the language used by writers and composers in German contexts as 'race jargon'; 'race' as 'buzzword'. Gemma Pérez-Zalduondo traces a similar sort of discursive

¹⁴ Radano and Bohlman, 'Music and Race, Their Past, Their Presence', in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, p. 5.

looseness in connection with the term 'Raza', whose slippage from one meaning to another served its figural use in explorations of Spain's internal nationalist debates. Alain Frogley describes a similar slippage in the use of racialising terminology in the promotion of Anglo-Saxon music over 'black music' or Jewish influences as an appropriate source for North American art music. Nalini Ghuman attempts to deconstruct a composer's own internalisation and application to himself of a very loosely conceived and quasi-metaphysical notion of race. And as Mórícz shows in the case of Ernest Bloch, even if they are understood in such vague terms as a 'feeling', broadly understood concepts of 'racial identity' gave rise to powerful modes of musical creativity.

At the other end of the spectrum Bohlman and Potter discuss the systematic biological applications of racial science in comparative musicology; Potter focuses on the race constructs that German musicology took from the new biologies, noting that applications of craniology to musicology were nevertheless explicitly discredited in the 1920s. The two key conceptions of race, monogenesis (the idea that all races were descended from one) and polygenesis (the idea that there was a separate origin for each human race), as well as the adaptation principle of 'acclimatisation', are all discussed by Jann Pasler, who detects these principles in the methods used to categorise French *chansons populaires* collected in the 1880s and 1890s. A pseudo-philosophical 'cultural race' construct is found in the systematic, but nevertheless non-biological, account of Jewishness found in Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (Brown); racial Jewishness is displaced, with gender, into characterology, and ultimately presented within a Kantian philosophical framework as 'type J'. A similar Weininger-like 'typological' or cultural approach to race, whereby 'race' is a set of characteristics that can be 'overcome', is also an idea that Percy Grainger toyed with, though as Gillies and Pear show, he ultimately passed on to explicitly physiological accounts.

It is worth stressing that music was not a passive recipient of processes of racialising. Discursive influence was sometimes in the other direction. As both Potter and Deathridge point out, it was Wagner's interest in the racial theories of Joseph Arthur de Gobineau which seems to have fuelled a Gobineau revival in 1880s Germany. Wagner's influence on the development of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's influential *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* is well known; his impact on Otto Weininger's staggeringly widely read anti-Semitic and anti-feminist characterology is less well known (Brown). Futurist artists and musicians likewise influenced the development of racism in 1930s Italy under Mussolini (Illiano and Sala). Mutual influence is traced by Brian Currid, who argues that musicality came to be considered a positive 'natural' trait of both 'gypsy' and 'black' identity via modern discourses of race, while representations of this musicality in opera, operetta and minstrel figures in turn came to be determining for the actual gypsies and black musicians.

For Bohlman, it is also important to think about how racial thinking has resulted in the displacement of peoples and their music. The case of the Romani exemplifies for him several ways in which music and writing about music enact processes of erasure and displacement. Mindful that making use of Romani music and culture to illustrate a scholarly point about music and race is itself an act of discursive displacement, he chooses to open and close his chapter with attempts 'to return some measure of voice to Romani musicians'. Like several other authors here (Pasler, Fry, Brown (introduction)), he also brings his chapter into the present day in an effort to deny us the comfort of speaking only about the music and race in a long-distant past, as if it were somehow separate from us. He closes with the lyrics of a song lamenting the murder of four young Roma in Oberwart, Austria, in 1994.

Nevertheless, questions of personal motivation inevitably come into play when the topic is another person's or another period's stand on what seems, from the present perspective, a morally dubious position. As Guthrie Ramsey notes, those scholars among us prepared to talk about matters of race may have our own secrets to reveal. This observation touches upon the important matter of the subjective content of historical commentary, something which assumes particular significance when moral and ethical issues are at stake – as when an atrocity, or cultural events linked with an atrocity are involved – and is a key concern for LaCapra; acts of reception and interpretation are highly complex, and for a variety of reasons can easily misfire. Yet articulating the ways in which anyone's scholarship and life interact raises its own issues; it would be as unjustifiable to reduce scholarship, as it would be to reduce art and music, to the mere symptom of a life, for instance. However, I would like to suggest that this book, and others like it, mark the beginnings of a scholarly process of working through this collective trauma. For LaCapra, 'Working-through requires the recognition that we are involved in transference relations to the past in ways that vary according to the subject-positions we find ourselves in, rework, and invent.'¹⁵ As a white country Australian of miscellaneous Anglo-Saxon migrant and convict stock, I have neither Jewish nor Austrian ancestry, and therefore no cultural purchase on the topic of my chapter in any inherited sense, and my links with the Second World War come via a grandparent taken prisoner during the war in the South Pacific, not in Europe. Yet given Australia's painful colonial and penal past and white Australia's lamentable historical relationship with its indigenous peoples I am prepared to accept that I may be working through some other aspects of my identity; I am certainly working through the reasons for my temporary withdrawal from work on Schoenberg's Jewish identity.

¹⁵ LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, p. 64.

The book is arranged into three sections, not in order to suggest a reading strategy, but as a workable arrangement for such a diverse collection of individual chapters. Though initially attractive, a grouping arrangement based on geography seemed to me less satisfactory than the present progression from a number of ‘issues’-based contributions, via several close-focus individual case studies, through to a series of more broadly based studies. The majority of the essays collected here were presented, in an earlier form, at an international conference entitled ‘Western Music and Racial Discourses, 1883–1933’ that took place on 11–12 October 2002 at the Institute of Romance Studies, University of London. I would like to express my gratitude to all the contributors for their willingness to participate in this project from beginning to end and for their patience, prompt and willing assistance, and general forbearance during the preparation and publication process. I am also indebted to a number of organisations for their generous support of the 2002 conference: the British Academy, the Jewish Music Institute, the Institute of Romance Studies, University of London, and my own Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London for their support both of the conference and of the preparation of this book. Sincere thanks also to Penny Souster, Vicki Cooper and Rebecca Jones at Cambridge University Press for their guidance and support. Above all I thank Štěpán, who has sustained me throughout.