

Interwar Symphonies and the Imagination

The symphony has long been entangled with ideas of self and value. Though standard historical accounts suggest that composers' interest in the symphony was almost extinguished in the early 1930s, this book makes plain the genre's continued cultural dominance, and argues that the symphony can illuminate issues around space/geography, race, and postcolonialism in Germany, France, Mexico, and the United States. Focusing on a number of symphonies composed or premiered in 1933, this book recreates some of the cultural and political landscapes of an uncertain historical moment – a year when Hitler took power in Germany and the Great Depression reached its peak in the United States. *Interwar Symphonies and the Imagination* asks what North American and European symphonies from the early 1930s can tell us about how people imagined selfhood during a period of international insecurity and political upheaval, of expansionist and colonial fantasies, scientised racism, and emergent fascism.

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Interwar Symphonies and the Imagination

Politics, Identity, and the Sound of 1933

EMILY MACGREGOR
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In memory of Philip MacGregor

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Preface

Note on the Structure

By way of initial orientation, I offer the following overview of how the book is structured. Chapter 1 is both the introduction to the tight frame around 1933 and a case study, Kurt Weill's Symphony No. 2 (1933–4). Composed as Weill made his escape from Nazi Berlin to Paris and premiered in Amsterdam and New York, it sets up the transatlantic scope of the book. I return to Weill's symphony in light of where the book has been in Chapter 6. In the meantime, Chapter 2 takes us back to Berlin to examine the context for Weill's exile and the fast-changing political and musical terrain precipitated by Hitler's rise to power. Chapters 3 and 4 are primarily set on the other side of the Atlantic, dealing with the legacies of Germanic ideals associated with the symphony in the United States and Mexico. Coming full circle, Chapter 5 then returns to Europe to trace in reverse the journey of Weill's symphony, spotlighting a Parisian symphony premiered in Berlin. In Chapter 6, after, as promised at the outset, revisiting Weill's symphony at its New York premiere, the book arrives at the present day. It argues for the remarkable persistence of the symphonic genre in conferring cultural and political agency. Focusing on the contemporary revival of Florence Price's Symphony in E minor (1931–2), it also suggests the potential of symphonies from the turbulent years around 1933 to invigorate a differently dynamic symphonic landscape.

Translations

Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

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Two chapters of this book present revised versions of material first published elsewhere. A version of Chapter 2 was previously published as 'Listening for the *Intimsphäre*: Recovering Berlin 1933 through Hans Pfitzner's Symphony in C-sharp Minor', in *The Musical Quarterly* 101 (2018): 35–75. Material in Chapter 3 previously appeared in a different form as 'Roy Harris's *Symphony 1933*: Biographical Myth-making and Liberal Myth-building in the American West', in *Journal of*

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Abbreviations

Berlin Philharmonic Archive	Stiftung Berliner Philharmoniker, Berlin
Chávez Correspondence	Correspondence and scores belonging to Carlos Chávez, JOB 93–4, New York Public Library Music Division, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, New York
Coolidge Collection	Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Copland Collection	Aaron Copland Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Harris Papers	Roy Harris Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Slonimsky Collection	Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Weill-Lenya	Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York