The Musician in Literature in the Age of Bach

Using novels and autobiographies from Bach’s Germany, Stephen Rose suggests new ways of interpreting the lives and social status of musicians. The study focuses on satirical novels written by musicians that describe the lives of performers and composers, as well as the autobiographies of Bach’s contemporaries. These narratives represent musicians variously as picaresque outcasts, honourable craft-workers, foolish bunglers and respected virtuosos. They probe the lives of musicians considered taboo or aberrant in the period, such as street entertainers and Italian castratos. The novels and autobiographies also reveal two major debates that shaped the mindset and social identity of musicians: was music a sensual or rational craft, and should musicians integrate within society or be regarded as outsiders? Quoting from an array of little-known novels, this book shows how an interdisciplinary approach can transform our understanding of Bach and his contemporaries.

Stephen Rose is Senior Lecturer in Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research explores German music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in its social, material and performing contexts. He has contributed to The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music (2005), The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music (2009) and An Introduction to Music Studies (2008), all published by Cambridge University Press. His articles and reviews have appeared in many publications including Early Music, for which he is also Reviews Editor, and Journal of the Royal Musical Association. He is active as an organist and harpsichordist.
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Bibliographical note

Throughout this book, references are given to the original editions of novels and other primary sources. At the time of writing, access to the first editions of German Baroque literature is being transformed by the digitisation programmes under way at such libraries as the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel (www.hab.de). Links to these digitised editions are generally given in the German union catalogue of seventeenth-century literature, Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts (VD 17) (www.vd17.de). Modern editions of the novels, where available, are listed in the Bibliography; these usually indicate the original pagination.
Abbreviations
