Review
Author(s): Sanna Pederson
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Source: *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 50, No. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 1997), pp. 483-490
Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the American Musicological Society
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/831843
Accessed: 15-04-2015 14:13 UTC

It "sounds so good." Was it not this fact, in Burnham's terms the sheer visceral experience of Beethoven's music, that hooked "us" on Beethoven? Before "we" began to dream of philosophy? Is this not reason enough to keep listening? Need we share Burnham's pessimism about our attachment to Beethoven's music? With his own ideas and his discussion of the ideas of others, he has given us many good reasons to listen; they override the doubts expressed in his conclusion. Surely *we* need not see Beethoven—or hear him—as a hero, but for *one* who does, the personal experience of a heroism defined by the highest human and utopian ideals is an unimpeachably legitimate experience of his art.

GLENN STANLEY

Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989 by David B. Dennis. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996. xii, 251 pp.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 functions as both the beginning and the end of David Dennis's historical survey of Beethoven's role as a political symbol in Germany. He opens with a description of the celebratory concerts in Berlin, including the famous Christmas performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as an "Ode to Freedom" with Leonard Bernstein conducting an orchestra of musicians from nations that had fought in the Second World War. "Why was the music of Beethoven played on these occasions?" Dennis asks. "Why did the audiences at these performances consider the music of Beethoven so appropriate?" (p. 3). He proposes to answer these important questions by showing how "German political leaders have consistently associated Beethoven with ideologies they promote and actions they undertake" (p. 3). The professed goal of this minimally revised dissertation[1] is modest: "to evaluate the history of the reception of Beethoven's music in political cliques more thoroughly than has been done to date, and to show that historians may employ music-related sources to study the political development of a nation" (p. 6). While Dennis certainly achieves this objective, he leaves the greater questions unanswered.

As a historian, Dennis disclaims at the outset any intention of encroaching on the music "itself." He aims to address only " 'extramusical meaning' " and upholds the " 'purist' conception of [Beethoven's] works" (p. 7), though he himself puts skeptical quotation marks around these terms. In describing his approach as "cultural-historical, not musicological. . . .

1. David B. Dennis, *The Indoctrination of a Muse: Myths of Ludwig van Beethoven and His Music as Evoked in German Political Culture from 1789 to 1989* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1991).

Rather than music history, . . . a history of music criticism and policy" (p. 7), Dennis explicitly declines to investigate the relation between the music "itself" and its political interpreters—something that presumably lies at the very heart of his opening question of what it is about Beethoven's autonomous art music that makes it "political."

This strategy contrasts significantly with Steven Aschheim's recent book *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990,* which has a very similar project.[2] Seeking to answer why Nietzsche has inspired the most diverse political movements, from the radical to the reactionary extremes, Aschheim emphasizes that "Nietzsche's historical legacy must be understood as a product of the dynamic interaction between the peculiar, multifaceted qualities of his thought and its appropriators" (p. 2). Rather than leaving the work itself unviolated, he argues polemically that "aspects of the Nietzschean corpus itself" have encouraged such contradictory interpretations that Nietzsche's writings cannot "be said to have a single and clear authoritative meaning" (pp. 7, 3). The idea of a single, clear meaning in Beethoven does not need to be destabilized; the very medium of music does this already. But Dennis avoids discussing the extent to which this basic quality of music is responsible for the range of interpretations of Beethoven's work.

Like Nietzsche, Beethoven has been enlisted in the ideological service of almost every group aspiring to political control of Germany. Focusing on the "extramusical" Beethoven, Dennis devotes several pages of his introductory chapter to considering Beethoven's political actions and statements, and how these have been appropriated for different purposes. Because "throughout his life Beethoven was confused about politics" (p. 31), conflicting interpretations have been grounded in what he actually did and said.

> Beethoven was a supporter of enlightened despotism; Beethoven was a revolutionary idealist. Beethoven was an admirer of Napoleon; Beethoven was an enemy of Napoleon. Beethoven was a composer of revolutionary music; Beethoven was a composer of patriotic military music. Beethoven was all of these things, but not any one of them. (p. 31)

In subsequent chapters Dennis traces the political use of Beethoven in Germany during the Second Reich, the Weimar era, the Third Reich, and the Cold War era. He draws from a rich and varied assortment of "scholarly works, newspaper articles, political speeches, school textbooks, concert programs, radio transmissions, feature films, commercial advertisements, and television broadcasts" (p. 6), and uses to advantage more esoteric publications such as the *Deutsche Militär-Musiker-Zeitung.* These sources are

2. Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1992).

accompanied by twenty-four illustrations. In each chapter Dennis characterizes approaches to Beethoven within a left-center-right political framework.

The book's starting date of 1870, with its fortuitous coincidence of German unification and the centenary of Beethoven's birth, offers many examples of right-wing, nationalistic interpretations. One spectacular case of political distortion from this period is the play *Ludwig van Beethoven: Ein dramatisches Charakterbild,* in which the plot of *Fidelio* is superimposed on a portrayal of Beethoven in Bonn during the French Revolution. The great irony here is that the play aims to vouch for Beethoven's "nationalistic, counterrevolutionary, and Francophobic credentials" (p. 34): thrown into a prison dungeon on suspicion of revolutionary activities, Beethoven insists he cares only for artistic integrity and nothing for political freedom, whereupon he is dramatically rescued. This chapter also recounts the more famous but equally ludicrous story of Hans von Bülow "rededicating" the *Eroica* Symphony from Bonaparte to Bismarck in 1892. The right-wing, conservative approach to Beethoven thus took shape during this time as the portrayal of a patriot who was above politics; of a quintessential German who hated everything French; and of a lonely genius alienated from and misunderstood by the masses. During the First World War, Beethoven was invoked in peculiarly German ways to inspire courage and determination at home and at the front: in 1918, for instance, Hugo Riemann reported in the preface to his book on the Beethoven piano sonatas the heartening news that soldiers were analyzing these works in the trenches.[3] At the end of the war, however, Beethoven emerged miraculously untarnished from aggressive nationalistic propaganda to figure momentarily as a symbol of peace and humanity.

In the succeeding years of the Weimar era, anti-romantic leftists such as Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler characterized Beethoven as a revolutionary in both his political sentiments and his treatment of musical form. Starting in 1925, the Association of German Working-Class Singers annually marked the anniversary of the November Revolution of 1918 with a performance of the Ninth Symphony. Political centrists countered the view of the composer as the champion of the proletariat with the image of Beethoven as the embodiment of the Protestant work ethic. Newspaper articles with such titles as "Beethoven as Capitalist" and "Beethoven and Inflation" emphasized the composer's stoicism, iron self-discipline, and sense of responsibility to his art. Centrists also favored a more personalized approach to his

3. "Daß unsere Feldgrauen in den Unterständen Beethovens Klaviersonaten analysieren, ist ein nicht zu verachtender Beitrag zur Psychologie der Deutschen" (Hugo Riemann, "Vorwort zur zweiten Auflage," *Ludwig van Beethovens sämtliche Klavier-Solosonaten: Aesthetische und formal-technische Analyse mit historischen Notizen,* 3d ed., vol. 1 [Berlin: M. Hess, 1919]). Dennis's account of this passage erroneously puts Riemann himself in the trenches analyzing the sonatas with his fellow officers (p. 76).

music. For example, an article in the *Berliner Tageblatt* criticized the many public celebrations of the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death in 1927 and instead suggested reading through a score at home: "Such a festival would be best celebrated by each in the quiet of his own room and in his own way" (p. 114).

Dennis distinguishes, at the right end of the Weimar-era political spectrum, between "right-wing" and "extreme right-wing" visions of Beethoven. Among the right-wingers proper are musicologists such as Arnold Schmitz, Hans Joachim Moser, and Adolf Sandberger, who defended Beethoven against what the *Wiener Reichspost* identified as the "red musicology" of the "Marxist music-ignoramuses" (p. 123) and argued for portraying Beethoven as an aristocratic, anti-French genius. Extreme right-wingers such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain used Beethoven as the perfect embodiment of the "spiritual mystery" of the German essence and an inspiration to build a new and more powerful Germany (p. 128). The *völkisch* writer Richard Benz fashioned Beethoven into a Nordic prophet who "prepares souls for world domination by the German spirit" (p. 130).

Moving on to Nazi propaganda, Dennis emphasizes two aspects that distinguish it from earlier kinds: it focused on Beethoven's racial purity, and, during the Third Reich, it "had complete control of every medium of communication within Germany and used all of them to promote its version [of Beethoven]" (p. 146). The fact that Beethoven was a brown-eyed, swarthy man was considered problematic, and extensive research was devoted to reconciling his racial characteristics with his musical legacy. In 1927 it was suggested that he had gray-blue eyes and a tanned complexion; by 1934 the journal *Volk und Rasse* had concluded that his eyes were entirely blue (p. 148). To illustrate his second point, Dennis describes Nazi films and radio programming. Every year Hitler's birthday was commemorated by live performances and radio broadcasts of Beethoven's music, particularly the Ninth Symphony and *Fidelio.* It would have been revealing had Dennis analyzed here the significance of Beethoven in the context of the Führer's associations with the music of Wagner and Bruckner, for as he intriguingly notes, the last Nazi-sponsored concert (on 11 April 1945) before the Russians took Berlin consisted of music from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung,* Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, and Beethoven's Violin Concerto (p. 173). On 20 April 1945 Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was broadcast to commemorate Hitler's birthday. Five days later the radio announcement of Hitler's death was followed by the Funeral March from the *Eroica* Symphony (p. 174).[4]

4. The radio announcements of the deaths of other National Socialist "heroes" were accompanied by Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung.* See Wilfried van der Will, "Culture and the Organization of National Socialist Ideology, 1933 to 1945," in *German Cultural Studies: An Introduction,* ed. Rob Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 135.

In the aftermath of the war some Germans, including, most prominently, Thomas Mann, insisted that Germany had lost its right to identify with Beethovenian ideals. Others countered that in order for Germany to recover and rebuild, it needed, in the words of the music critic Karl Laux, to be "on the lookout for those forces of the past that should remain a part of our being." Laux declared, "Scarcely any other name shines so brightly, with such an unbroken gleam, as that of *Ludwig van Beethoven*" (p. 176). Once again, in barely the blink of an eye, the image of nationalistic Beethoven was refocused as the universal Beethoven. In 1949 the first president of West Germany, Theodore Heuss, referred to Beethoven and Goethe as men who had "developed world values from which we can proudly derive strength and comfort in the convulsions of time" (p. 195). As Dennis notes, however, this speech clearly sought to claim Beethoven and Goethe not for the world but for the Western part of the now divided state.

The Cold War era of course presents the most exemplary case of opposing left- and right-wing interpretations of Beethoven. Interestingly, while Dennis describes the propaganda of earlier periods in carefully neutral terms, he leaves clues as to his own views in this section. He emphasizes repeatedly that the total control of the German Democratic Republic over every medium, reminiscent of Nationalist Socialist propaganda techniques, enabled the government to barrage citizens with a Marxist version of Beethoven. This is contrasted unfavorably with the Western approach, which aimed to "de-ideologize" Beethoven by focusing not on politics but on "objective musicological study of his compositions and close psychoanalysis of his character" (p. 191). Dennis evidently judges that the rigorous dissociation of Beethoven from politics was not itself a political act. This belief leads him naively to recount how

> the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra continued after the war to perform German music, including Beethoven's compositions, throughout the world. Unlike earlier manifestations of this policy, however, these tours were not meant to vaunt the superiority of German art over the host cultures; the intent behind them was plainly to establish warmer international relations. (pp. 195–96)

He further concurs with the pronouncement of a West German politician that the performance in Moscow of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in 1969 by the Berlin Philharmonic was "a victory of the music over politics"; it was not intended, Dennis declares, to be "a victory of German music over Russian culture" (p. 196). Thus, though Dennis summarizes this era as a raging competition between an Eastern political Beethoven and a Western nonpolitical one, he nevertheless seems to accept that the insistence of the West on its version of the composer as a universal artistic treasure was not political.

The story this book recounts does have a telos: with the fall of the Berlin Wall all Germans find themselves in agreement, and Beethoven finally does become universal. Astonishingly, Dennis shows no historiographical self-consciousness about his "happy ending." He legitimates the history of the political use of Beethoven by having it lead up to Germany's ultimate embrace of Beethoven's universal message. He does not consider it problematic that Beethoven's "universality" was celebrated in the name of German unity.

"Interviews conducted at these concerts confirm that Germans in attendance did consider Beethoven's music the finest expression of the emotions they were feeling at the time" (p. 202). Dennis presents the results of his interviews as straightforward and uncomplicated, and he concludes his study with a single paragraph expressing the hope that Germans will be inspired by the Beethoven of 1989 to become brothers with the rest of the world. This return to the "Ode to Freedom" performance could have functioned as the culmination of the book, as the historically informed consideration of the questions this spectacle raises about the powerful combination of aesthetics and politics. Unfortunately, Dennis gathers testimony of the strong emotions experienced during the performances without comparing or contrasting it to the way Beethoven's music has previously enhanced political sentiments. Since he is content to document rather than analyze the enduring historical significance of Beethoven for Germany, his answer to the question "why Beethoven" becomes by default: because it has always been Beethoven.[5]

Despite the rich complexity of its topic, then, this is not a profound book. Assuming a gently ironic, detached tone, Dennis obviously means to traverse heavy ground as lightly as he can. He does not regard his study as an occasion to engage with recent debates raised during the *Historikerstreit* of the late 1980s: that is, he does not treat German nationalism as different from that of other countries; he does not address the important role of the cultural nation in German history; and he does not remark on continuities of earlier uses of Beethoven with Nazi propaganda.[6] This strategy can be judged either as a prudent and pragmatic avoidance of issues that probably will never be laid to rest, or, more harshly, as an irresponsible refusal to

5. Dennis thus avoids any confrontation with those who maintain that Beethoven's significance cannot be attributed solely to historical factors. For instance, Scott Burnham's recent book *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) answers the question "why Beethoven" by positing a "fundamental sense of identification" that enables the music to function "as a metaphorical translation of something fundamentally meaningful in human experience" (pp. 24, 26). In other words, Burnham claims that Beethoven gives access to an ethical/aesthetic essence that is universal, not historically contingent.

6. For a discussion of current issues in German historiography, including the "methodological timidity" of German historians in the United States, see Michael Geyer and Konrad H. Jarausch, "Great Men and Postmodern Ruptures: Overcoming the 'Belatedness' of German Historiography," *German Studies Review* 18 (1995): 253–73.

confront the problems that define the historiography of this period in German history. Since Dennis is unwilling to draw conclusions or even to ask questions that arise from his accumulation of material, I would like to suggest briefly what makes the case of Beethoven and politics a particularly complex and crucial one.

Though Beethoven has always been considered the special property of Germany, other countries have made counterclaims. Dennis describes three instances in which the very music associated with Germany inspired resistance to that country during the Second World War. First, the tones with which the British Broadcasting Corporation began its wartime transmissions came to be associated with the opening notes of the Fifth Symphony (p. 170). The Russians transmitted Beethoven's music over gigantic speakers on the eastern front as part of propaganda to convince German soldiers to defect (pp. 170–71). And, as an inmate of Auschwitz, the French singer Fania Fénelon led a performance of the Fifth Symphony for camp guards and found great joy and inspiration in performing German music for the Germans (p. 173). This recognition of Beethoven by the wartime enemy adds a compelling dimension to the question of why Beethoven, more than any other composer, has been associated with the struggle for freedom in the most abstract as well as the most concrete ways.[7]

Beethoven can evidently accommodate a whole range of political ideologies and competing nationalisms at any given time; furthermore, he remains untainted by the uses to which he has been put. Unlike Wagner, for example, Beethoven has emerged from every propaganda campaign as pure and universally valid as ever. Dennis emphasizes the continuity of Beethoven, "how his music and life have been denoted as symbolic of the German condition *throughout* the modern history of the state" (p. 5), but he does not remark how unusual, perhaps even unique, this continuity is, particularly in light of the changes that high art underwent during this time. Beethoven's position has remained largely unaffected by the vicissitudes suffered by art in modern society. Serving as the hero of all, including those who fought against high art in the Weimar Republic and the German Democratic Republic, Beethoven appears to transcend not only the category of nation but also that of bourgeois art music.

Beethoven in German Politics gives those who do not read German access to clear evidence—uncomplicated by historiographical and methodological scruples—of how important Beethoven has been to the political identity of

7. Beethoven's treatment of musical technique, form, and material as a struggle for freedom was developed in all its historical, aesthetic, and philosophical complexity by Theodor Adorno. For an introduction to this line of thought, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style: Early Symptom of a Fatal Condition," in her *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 15–41.

Germany.[8] If it offers few contributions to the fundamental question of the relation between aesthetics and politics, it nevertheless provides a starting point for approaching the question where it can be most fruitfully engaged.

SANNA PEDERSON

The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality edited by William Kinderman and Harald Krebs. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996. ix, 279 pp.

The title of this volume is somewhat misleading in that "practice" implies a common set of compositional strategies, while the nine essays chart a great diversity of tonal procedures among mainly Austro-German composers from Beethoven to Schoenberg. (Chopin is included—an honorary German, as always—but French, Russian, and other repertories are not treated, an omission that the editors acknowledge and reasonably defend.) The conference at which most of the essays originated, held at the University of Victoria in 1989, was called "Alternatives to Monotonality," which, though clearly less sexy than the Monteverdian conceit now in the title, may reflect better the actual contents of the resulting book.

The central questions occupying the authors are: What happens in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the principle of a single tonality governing a piece of music? And when, where, and how does this principle begin to break down? *The Second Practice* is remarkable not least for getting between two covers music historians and theorists—they are in about equal measure here—who focus on issues that up to now have not been adequately addressed by either *Fach*. As would be expected from a multiauthor volume, the result is not unified or consistent, not a "second practice" of tonal theory, but a stimulating collection of analyses, ideas, and hunches.

Even formulating the questions has been difficult in this area. What is "tonality" really? Does the term imply the centrality of a single key, and is it as such really synonymous with "monotonality"? Or is monotonality itself a chimera, given how complex, compositionally and perceptually, even works that begin and end in the same key can be?

8. The German-language literature on this topic is formidable (Dennis does not provide a bibliography). Two recent, wide-ranging and thought-provoking studies are Martin Geck and Peter Schleuning's reception history of the *Eroica, "Geschrieben auf Bonaparte." Beethovens "Eroica": Revolution, Reaktion, Rezeption* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989); and Ulrich Schmitt's *Revolution im Konzertsaal: Zur Beethoven-Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Schott, 1990), which proposes a history of the "psychology of perception" to account for the ability of Beethoven's music to incite political sentiments.