

Jim Samson

Hearing the Nations in Chopin

The premise underlying this paper is that some of the music composed by Chopin in 1830 represents the first canonical repertory of European nationalism. Building on that premise, the paper will reflect on agendas, on musical materials, and on reception, all three of which are relevant to constructions of nationhood in music.

As to agendas, evidence will be gleaned from Chopin's education at the High School of Music in Warsaw, part of the University of Warsaw, to suggest that he was responsive to a current of idealist literature on music and nationhood associated above all with Kazimierz Brodziński. This will be articulated within a larger thesis that the shaping influence of pedagogy has been underrated in Chopin studies and in 19th-century musical scholarship more generally.

As to materials, the paper will seek to expose the space separating the rhetoric of 19th-century nationalism in music from the reality of its musical materials. Some rock-face evidence will be presented from autograph sources to reveal this space in the particular case of Chopin. But this will open a window to more generalised observations on the musical materials of so-called "national schools".

These observations will take us to Chopin reception and to the claims made upon his music by several national traditions, to use a term that will be interrogated. While these claims might suggest that the text tends to "vanish" before such diverse constructions of meaning, this paper will counter that Chopin was multiply claimed only because he was worth claiming in the first place.

Florinela Popa

Politico-ideological Distortions of Writing About Music in Romania.

Case Study: Local Perception of Sergey Prokofiev

This paper follows the twists and turns of the way that Prokofiev's music was perceived in Romania during the 20th century as influenced by the various political regimes and their respective position towards Moscow. We can distinguish between several stages, the paper being mainly concerned with the first three:

1) The interwar period, when a West-oriented Romania had chilly relationships with Moscow;

2) Romania's sovietisation after the World War II (1945 – c. 1960);
3) Romania's relatively relaxed political state at the end of the 1960s and the distancing from Moscow after 1965;

4) The aggressive nationalism instituted by Ceaușescu after 1971;

5) The post-1990, anti-Communist (at least at a declarative level) period.

After the cultural isolation of the 1970s and 1980s and its emphasis on Romanian music, a renewed, albeit moderate, interest in Prokofiev would be shown by Romanian musicologists in 1991, the year marking the composer's 100th birth anniversary.

Without involving detailed musical analyses or in-depth musicological comments, the texts discussed in this paper are written by music critics (from Miron Grindea to Alfred Hoffman), composers (Zeno Vancea, Sergiu Sarchizov), or historiographers (Ovidiu Varga, Octavian Lazăr Cosma).

Laura Otilia Vasiliu

The Story of Creative Resistance: Pascal Bentoiu, the Man and His Music

Through the present study, we attempt to decipher a few dilemmas that have arisen in the process of understanding the creative destiny of Pascal Bentoiu. We wonder, first of all, what the impetus in building a career as a free-lance musician devoid of compromise was in a period when were encouraged circumstantial works, subservient politically through themes, title and/or source of inspiration. At a more general level, we try to uncover the relation between his own aesthetic views, born along the connection between the traditional-modern expression and musical thinking, and the needs of a composer's career depending upon the acceptance and success of his works. By following the ascent of his career up to international recognition and full professional appreciation – 1968, the year when he was elected to a position of leadership in the Union of Romanian Composers –, we focus our research on key moments in the making of his resistance to political pressure and manipulation: the period of cultural Stalinism (1948-1956) and the years of a violent reprise in the political repression of Gheorghe-Gheorghiu Dej's regime (1959-1963). We discover his acceptance of forced solutions and a subtle game with the political censorship.

Anna Dalos

Dissidence, Neo-avant-garde, Doublespeak. On the Context of the New Music Studio Budapest in the 1970s

The first Hungarian experimental compositional workshop – called New Music Studio – was established in 1970 in Budapest within the frame of the Art Ensemble of the Youth Union of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party. The official background helped young composers such as Zoltán Jeney (1943), László Sály (1940) and László Vidovszky (1944) to perform Western European and American new music and make musical experiments as well. However, the ruling power followed their activity with suspicion, as their starting point in experimenting was the music of John Cage. First mentioned in the Hungarian musical press in 1959, Cage served as a symbol of imperialistic libertinism in the official discourse about new music, which was incompatible with the freedom concept created by the “benign” communist regime and accepted by the majority of the Hungarians. Thus, the composers of the New Music Studio, typical representatives of the 1968 generation, became members of the newly formed neo-avant-garde circles in Budapest, and got in contact with the democratic political opposition even though they were supported by an official organization. My paper focuses on the discourses about the appearance of the New Music Studio, scrutinizing written documents, such as criticism, interviews, self-explications and oral history sources. I seek to interpret the technique of “doublespeak” to reveal the ideological debates about modernism and experimentalism in Hungarian music.