



The Necessity of Music: Variations on a German Theme.
By Celia Applegate. Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
2017. xii, 402 pp. ISBN 978-1487500689.

<https://utorontopress.com/ca/the-necessity-of-music-4>

Reviewed by: David Gramit, University of Alberta

Despite a long-established disciplinary habit of complaining that scholars in other fields slight music when they consider culture and its history, musicologists have in fact found a number of kindred spirits among social and cultural historians. Even if we consider only the long nineteenth century, historians like William McGrath, Carl Schorske, James H. Johnson, and William Weber have written work that has become essential

foundational reading for students of the European music of that period. That list, however, conspicuously omits one name, as the volume under review here demonstrates: for some twenty years, Celia Applegate has been writing insightfully and engagingly on the culture of music in German-speaking Europe from the eighteenth through the twentieth century. *The Necessity of Music: Variations on a German Theme*, published in 2017 by the University of Toronto Press, collects more than a dozen of Applegate's essays, written between the late 1990s and the present. Most have appeared in print elsewhere, although some are new or based on previously unpublished presentations, and—as befits genuinely interdisciplinary scholarship—they have appeared in diverse enough venues that few readers indeed will have been aware of all, or even most, of them. While some such collections of scholars' essays offer little beyond the convenience of easy reference—a function considerably less compelling than it was before most periodicals and many books became easily accessible online—this one provides considerably more. Because of the clear focus of Applegate's work on issues of music and nationhood, and because within that area, she has explored German-speaking culture from a remarkably diverse variety of perspectives, the volume as a whole effectively offers a kaleidoscopic history of the culture of German music, or perhaps better, a cultural history of Germany from a music-centric perspective, and an argument for why that perspective is essential, perhaps more for this time and place than for any other.



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The book is carefully structured. It begins with an introduction succinctly situating the author's work within the broadly defined "new cultural history of music" (p. 6), recalling the title of historian-editor Lynn Hunt's influential collection of historiographic essays of 1989. The volume itself is divided topically, with four essays focusing on "Places," four on "People," and six in a looser grouping called "Public and Private." But this overt structure is only part of the story. Because the first section opens with an essay ("How German Is It?") focused on modernization and the meaning of nation as understood in the Napoleonic era before moving on to studies of later topics including Bayreuth as place (prefaced by a thoughtful discussion of how place might more effectively figure in considerations of music history), the international mobility of musicians, and the place of music in nationalistically conceived world's fairs, it opens out both geographically and chronologically. The collection as a whole does much the same thing, because the second section focuses on four significant mid-nineteenth-century figures (Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and less predictably but informatively, the theorist, editor and pedagogue Adolph Bernhard Marx), while the last deals primarily with topics dating from the beginnings of the German Empire through the Third Reich and beyond, closing with a thoughtful consideration of the vicissitudes of the idea of German musicality after World War II.

Within this progression, the first essay of the last section, "What Difference Does a Nation Make?" functions as a kind of centerpiece—not because of its conclusion (that the nation *per se* only made much difference from a few rather limited perspectives) but rather because it gives a concise, concentrated perspective on the breadth of German musical activities and institutions before and after the formation of the German Empire. This is not, however, only an institutional history; as important as the structures of musical life—whether wind bands and amateur choirs or professionalizing orchestras and the theatre-cum-pilgrimage-destination of the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus*—are the attitudes that informed and grew from those institutions and the activities they supported. So, for instance, Applegate is repeatedly occupied with teasing out implicit conceptions of regional loyalty and diversely conceived cosmopolitanisms in contexts where others have been inclined to see little other than increasingly bellicose nationalism—this, in fact, is the central theme of the first essay, with its careful and nuanced assessment of the career of the mason turned choral director, and confidant of Goethe, Carl Friedrich Zelter. But matters of state are by no means the only concern, either: "Women's Wagner" operates on a much more intimate level, exploring the responses to that composer recorded by women of several nations and varied occupations, including musicians, authors, and educators; and "*Hausmusik* in the Third Reich" cautions against the dangers of assuming that the obligatory rhetoric of National Socialism fundamentally changed deeply ingrained musical practices, however much it revealed the fragilities and insecurities that led to conformity with official positions.

If we consider *The Necessity of Music* as a cultural history, then its essayistic nature is revealed as a real strength, for it allows recognition of common features without subsuming geographically, socially, and musically varied phenomena into a single developmental narrative. Another such strength is the sheer quality of Applegate's prose. In her hands, complex ideas are clearly explained, and nuances dealt with carefully but often vividly. So, to single out only a few examples among many, the complex and changing social situation of German musicians around 1800 receives a remarkably succinct exposition (pp. 30-31); the beleaguered state of musical institutions in early imperial Germany is memorably encapsulated with the remark that "the institutions . . . [of musical life] had hardly reached adolescence when they came under attack as hidebound and conservative" (p. 207); and with an aptly light touch, we learn that George W. Stewart, the musical impresario of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, "managed to bag an actual living European composer, though an elderly one: Camille Saint-Saëns, about to turn eighty" (p. 105). Amid such riches, it may seem churlish to note an unsurprising but unfortunate omission: books of essays rarely include comprehensive bibliographies, but the sharp focus and depth of research that characterize this one means that such a bibliography would have been a valuable resource for anyone working in this area, whether in history, musicology, or area studies. But overall, both the author and the press merit our thanks for this important and well-produced book—it makes an enduring contribution, not only to the history of German music, but also to our understanding of how to study the place of music in modern society.