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Alexander Lotzow

Das Sinfonische Chorstück im 19. Jahrhundert. Studien zur einsätzigen weltlichen Chorwerken mit Orchester von Beethoven bis Brahms.

Kieler Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft, 55

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The present book is a slightly revised version of Lotzow's dissertation which was accepted by the Philosophical Faculty of Christian-Albrechts-University, Kiel, in 2014. It investigates the important role of music for choir and orchestra in the 19th century with focus on the smaller dimensioned genre, the symphonic 'Chorstück'. The importance of music employing the combined resources of choir and orchestra in terms of text and music was immense in the 19th century. The 'Sinfonische Chorstück' is part of this pattern in musical life.

The book's central question is what happens aesthetically when symphonic composing with its distinct musical implications meets the poetry of Goethe, Hebbel, Geibel, or Hölderlin – however, in a smaller, more concentrated format as in selected symphonic pieces with choir by Beethoven, Hiller, Schumann, Gade, and Brahms. A broad spectrum of relations between musical composition and poetic text becomes visible: from the sonic clothing of a text over the partial transformation of poetic specifications to multi-layered installations in which music staged itself as a libellous instance.¹

The object of study is secular music ranging from symphonic pieces with choir by Beethoven to Brahms. Regarding historiography and methodology, the book takes as its point of departure the concept of *Strukturgeschichte* and genre-oriented reflection. It is well known that this musical genre was of immense importance in the 19th century. Therefore, an in-depth study of musical works that are both representative and individually characteristic as in the present volume is welcome. In a Danish musicological context, the study is of special interest as it includes a chapter on Niels W. Gade's

1 Cf. the original German formulation: 'Zentrale Frage ist, was ästhetisch entsteht, wenn das sinfonische, auf spezifisch musikalischen Sinn abzielende Komponieren von Beethoven, Hiller, Schumann, Gade und Brahms im konzentrierten Format auf die eigenwertige Dichtung Goethes, Hebbels, Geibels oder Hölderlins trifft. Sichtbar wird ein breites Spektrum: vom klanglichen Einkleiden eines Textes über die partielle Umformung dichterischer Vorgaben bis zu mehrschichtigen Anlagen, in denen Musik sich selbst als vortragende Instanz inszeniert.'

Frühlings-Botschaft, op. 35 (1858), promoting fruitful musicological reflections on and insight into aspects of the national versus international character of Gade's music.²

The volume may generally be characterized as anchored broadly and profoundly in the German musicological tradition. It deals with historiographic discussions including exhaustive musical analyses and discusses aspects of the history of genres employing 'Fallstudien' of a selection of works. The analyses of the scores are neither autonomous nor what is referred to as 'case studies' in social science, psychology or anthropology for instance, but rather studies of musical works including their implications. In addition to music analyses, the methodological approach also seeks to reconstruct the circumstances of the genesis of the works as far as they are known. Sources illuminating the reception of the works are reproduced and evaluated, and interpretational aspects are dealt with, too. An important social place ('Soziale Ort') for musical formation in the 19th century was the emergence of numerous choral associations.

The structure of the book is as follows: chapter 1: Einleitende Aspekte (Introductory Aspects), 15–30 (15 pp.); chapter 2: Soziale Orte der Musik für Chor und Orchester im 19. Jahrhundert (Social Places of Music for Choir and Orchestra in the 19th Century), 31–64 (33 pp.); chapter 3: Gattungsgeschichtliche Einordnung (Classification according to History of Genre), 65–111 (46 pp.); chapter 4: Fallstudien (Case Studies), 112–439 (327 pp.), comprises Beethoven's *Meeres Stille und Glückliche Fahrt* (1815), Hiller's *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern* (1847), Schumann's *Nachtlied* (1849), Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* (1858), Brahms' *Schicksalslied* (1871), Hiller's *Es fürchte die Götter das Menschengeschlecht* (1881), and Brahms' *Gesang des Parzen* (1882); chapter 5: Zusammenfassungen und Ausblick (Recapitulation and Outlook), 426–39 (13 pp.), consists of 'Ergebnisse der Fallstudien, Anschlussperspektiven – Ein Repertoirepanorama' (Results of the Case Studies, Connected Perspectives – a Panorama of the Repertoire). This final section includes a comprehensive and exhaustive registration of sources, literature, editions of the music, and CD recordings. An index of names of persons and compositions adds to the book's qualities.

The repertoire of music for choir and orchestra achieved an aesthetic status (*Stellenwert*) of the highest order, and for a composer to be recognized in the public sphere with a musical work of this type may potentially lead to the highest esteem. Niels W. Gade is, among others, a case in point: He established himself in front of the audience primarily with his shorter 'Konzertstücke' such as *Comala* and *Elverskud*, the fame of which crossed the waters between Denmark and Germany. In general, the potential of the genre for exciting the public was an international phenomenon. The combination of choir and orchestra was seen as an aesthetic paradigm unfolded in several formats of musical works.

One important point in the book – not entirely new, of course, but stated with emphasis, thoroughness and stringency – is that the audience of the 'Konzertstück'-genre

2 Cf. Alexander Lotzow, 'Niels Wilhelm Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* op. 35 and the Art of Musical Idyll', *Danish Yearbook of Musicology*, 42 (2018), 3–23. Gade's Op. 35 is forthcoming in *Niels W. Gade Works / Werke* vol. IV:3–4, ed. Finn Egeland Hansen, autumn 2019.

was not only forced to attend and witness the music. It was also encouraged to manifest itself as active members of bourgeois choir-associations: Singing made this music accessible and valuable in a way that hitherto was unprecedented. In terms of social history, the individual works of music for choir and orchestra therefore become an abundant source of information for understanding musical culture of the 19th century.

Another essential aspect is that the genre in the 19th century did not lead to an intensive historiographical study of it. This is contrary to what one might have expected considering the genre's high aesthetic rank and its huge social significance. Furthermore, in the second half of the 20th century the attention to and awareness of the genre was strikingly small, thus causing a musicological lacuna that only recently has been filled in as musicology began to show a greater interest in the social history of music.

According to the author, the reason was historical: It was the above-mentioned bourgeois choir-associations that came under pressure and retreated. The older repertoire was not present anymore and the need for renewal of it faded. It disappeared into the archives without a practical presence in musical life and hence no possibility of a revival. The sacred repertoire did significantly better as far as presence was concerned.

Lotzow states that there are many works of varying levels of quality. He also argues that, as far as this music is concerned, a situation of music-historiographical 'no man's land' prevailed. Thus, it is fair to say that this particular field is underexposed, and that more recent research has been reluctant in thematizing the question of genre: Studies of music for choir and orchestra avoid the question of differentiation of genre rather than making use of it in a productive way. Either, they deal entirely with individual works (such as with the field of choir/orchestra music of an individual composer), or with different formats of music for choir and orchestra viewing it in a broader discourse framework derived from the history of ideas.

Investigations that thematize diachronic and non-individual similarities in specified subareas of music for choir/orchestra may hardly be found. The field is heterogeneous. On the one hand, the author finds it dissatisfying to write catalogue-like surveys and, on the other, to write mere presentations of works directed towards the performance of the music. His basic concern as author is to develop 'Trennschärfe der Darstellung' as it is formulated (p. 23). The neologism in the title of the book, 'Symfonisches Korstück', represents the effort to examine this music in a more differentiated way than what previously has been achieved. Thus, the common aspects of the repertoire may be developed, and different pieces may be analysed in detail solving both collective and individual compositional and aesthetic problems so as to make them accessible for further discussion. The book achieves this successfully.

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