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By David B. Dennis. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. [xii, 251 p. ISBN 0-300-06399-7. \$30.00.]

An unusual number of historians, especially those at the start of their careers, have taken up subjects in music history recently. The formidable range of approach, from intellectual to cultural to political and social history, and often considerable imagination of method, coupled with the significance of the issues the authors raise, should be a stimulant to musicologists. (See my "Toward a Dialogue between Historians and Musicologists," *Musica e storia* 1 [1993]: 7-21, for a summary of the burgeoning interest.)

David B. Dennis has written a work that adds an important dimension to the study of how Ludwig van Beethoven's music was received over a long period of time. He charts the history of a specific musical and political phenomenon: eulogy to Beethoven as a symbol of Germany, from the founding of the German Empire in 1871, to the fall of the Berlin Wall on 12 November 1989. From unification to reunification, the name of the composer born in Bonn who moved to Vienna has repeatedly been celebrated in ideological literature, concert programs, and public ceremonies. While the composer's name stands as one among several that served such purposes, Dennis shows him as the leading cultural hero in modern Germany. Traditional humanists would normally see Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in this role, but because music provided important means of public celebration Beethoven had considerably more "visibility" than any writer.

How much did Beethoven know or care about politics? Dennis offers a balanced assessment of the question, showing the seeming contradictions—"Shifting ideological stance" (p. 23), as he puts it—in the composer's utterances about the French Revolution, Napoleon, the nobility, and so on. He comes to the conclusion that "insane or not, it is clear throughout his life Beethoven was confused about politics" (p. 31). That may have been more common than not, however. Since we scholars are mostly interested in political writings of the sophisticated sort, we have a hard time assessing the opinions of an ordinary citizen, which might often have been riddled with contradictions, especially before the time politics became open to a broad public.

Dennis has dug deeply into the writings and public events of a great variety of political groups, and in so doing shows how diverse were the places where Beethoven was eulogized. Appropriated by groups from the far Right to far Left, there were both similarities and differences in the treatment his music received. If the rightwing Wagnerians of the 1880s such as Hans von Wolzogen drew upon Richard Wagner's writings on Beethoven, so did Social Democrats such as Hanns Eisler. The latter's use is probably less known than the former's. The German Social Democratic Party, the first left-wing party to establish a parliamentary plurality, in 1912, achieved its strength in large part from the deep social and cultural roots it sank within the working classes and the emerging structure of unions. Between about 1871 and 1945 most workers oriented their lives around social groups and organizations sponsored by or related to unions or the party—choral and instrumental ensembles prominent among them. These groups, together with the concerts by professional musicians they stimulated, exposed Beethoven's music to a far wider public than it had faced before.

The ways by which Beethoven's music was interpreted were also quite diverse. Romantic principles did not serve as the foundation of all discussion of Beethoven.

Social democrats such as Eisler defined the context of listening to Beethoven's music not as an individual matter, as romantic thought generally did, but as a social experience bound up with the united working classes. Romantic ideas of Beethoven that began with E. T. A. Hoffmann indeed came under widespread criticism in the 1920s.

Dennis spends a little time profitably investigating the discussion of Beethoven in France, showing how much the cult for him was an international phenomenon. During World War I "French newspapers charged that Germans had 'lost the right' to play and listen to Beethoven because they were behaving immorally" (p. 73). Thus did Beethoven become a powerful and lofty moral symbol that could be used rhetorically throughout Europe, and in a variety of contexts.

Dennis interprets the Beethoven cult as part of Germany's evolution into a self-conscious, unified nation-state. What happened in music, he argues, figured within a much wider cultural movement by which national symbols emerged. "The disparate political and regional groups consolidated under the abstract notion of a German nation found common ground in mutual linguistic, literary, visual, and musical dispositions" (p. 2). The unification of the long-standing sovereign kingdoms into an empire did not happen overnight; historians now think that German nationalism did not take root until after unification. The idea of the Empire indeed did not make all hearts swell; Wagner, for example, remained hostile to it. Dennis cites a concert in Berlin in 1892 where Hans von Bülow declared that the Chancellor Otto von Bismarck should be regarded as the person to whom Beethoven's Third Symphony might be dedicated—after which many members of the audience booed.

What Dennis shows about the Nazis fits recent historical perspectives on that movement. During the Weimar Era the party's ideologists kept their distance from Beethoven because of the lingering belief in his mixed racial origins. Once Hitler came to power, they dropped such reservations, just as they eliminated their critique of big business and modern culture, and made Beethoven a prominent part of their glorification of the German past. Dennis is wise to point out that, even though the Nazis manipulated music to an unusual extent ideologically, they were by no means the first to do so.

Dennis does not develop the argument as extensively as one might like. He elucidates the variety of political groups and ideas involved in the Beethoven cult clearly and smoothly, which is no easy task, considering the long time period he covers. But he tends, at points, simply to list examples and does not ask enough questions about how ideology of this type functioned within the context of the time. It would appear that the composer served as a kind of neutral vehicle through which different factions could advance ideological causes or perspectives, and indeed—as in the French cases cited above—conflict with one another.

ADDED MATERIAL

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