

THE CAMBRIDGE
HISTORY OF

NINETEENTH-
CENTURY
MUSIC

EDITED BY
JIM SAMSON

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This comprehensive overview of music in the nineteenth century draws on the most recent scholarship in the field. It avoids mere repertory surveys, focusing instead on issues which illuminate the subject in novel and interesting ways. The book is divided into two parts (1800-1850 and 1850-1900), each of which approaches the major repertory of the period by way of essays investigating the intellectual and socio-political history of the time. The music itself is discussed in five central chapters within each part, amplified by essays on topics such as popular culture, nationalism, genius, and the emergent concept of an avant-garde. The book concludes with an examination of musical styles and languages around the turn of the century. The addition of a detailed chronology and extensive glossaries makes this the most informed reference book on nineteenth-century music currently available.

JIM SAMSON has been a Professor of Music at the Universities of Exeter and Bristol and is now Professor of Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has published several books on Chopin including the *Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (1992), as well as books on Szymanowski, late Romantic music, and music of the early twentieth century.

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
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The Cambridge History of Music comprises a new group of reference works concerned with significant strands of musical scholarship. The individual volumes are self-contained and include histories of music examined by century as well as the history of opera, music theory and American music. Each volume is written by a team of experts under a specialist editor and represents the latest musicological research.

Published titles

The Cambridge History of American Music

Edited by David Nicholls

The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory

Edited by Thomas Christensen

The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music

Edited by Jim Samson

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Editor's preface

Single-author histories of nineteenth-century music are probably no longer tenable in light of today's specialised knowledge. The last credible contender may well turn out to be the challenging study by Carl Dahlhaus, frequently cited in our volume. Yet existing multi-authored histories present their own problems. Putting it baldly, they tend either to define their subject-matter too narrowly in terms of genres and styles, or to sacrifice thematic penetration to geography. Of course it is easy to criticise. However you approach a task like this, you will be wrong. But we hope to be wrong in the right sort of way. In general our approach is thematic, or topical. We try to offer explanations rather than assemble information, and that usually means focusing selectively on key areas that seem to illuminate our subjects rather than presenting straightforward repertory surveys. How, anyway, can such surveys be anything other than partial and arbitrary? More to the point, what do they really say about music history? So we are moderately (though not completely) relaxed about our coverage of repertory. Lacunae will not be hard to find for those who seek. But then what is the framework of certainties that allows them to be identified as lacunae in the first place?

To evaluate just how topics might be selected is the task of our first chapter, which reflects generally on historiography and on the competing claims made on us as historians of music within the Western tradition. In the process two very broad issues are raised, and they in turn feed into the structure of the book as a whole. One is the relationship between the components of music's 'double history', compositional and contextual: between, in other words, works and practices. Our hope is that aesthetic values are properly respected in this volume, but that they are at the same time integrated within broader social and intellectual contexts. That is easily said. In practice it amounts to a perilous balancing act between the demands of the text – 'the music itself' – and the claims of its context. The second issue concerns periodisation. And here (for reasons that will be argued out in the first chapter) we feel that a history of nineteenth-century music has some obligation to bring into focus the caesura separating the two halves of the century, since this is obscured by conventional

periodisation. (Paradoxically a history of eighteenth-century music should arguably do the reverse, i.e. highlight continuities between late Baroque and Classical periods.) Hence, at some risk of overstating the case, we have divided our volume into two parts, with parallel structures in each part. This layout bears some of the marks of a structural history, except that we make no easy assumptions about the 'spirit of the age', nor about the interconnectedness of its constitutive activities, events and products. Nor do we deny the explanatory power of chronology.

Very broadly, the tendency within each part is to proceed from context to music, though it need hardly be said that this separation of function is anything but watertight; contextual chapters occasionally discuss notes, and repertory chapters frequently invoke context. Thus there are two accounts of music and intellectual history: chapter 2, which looks at the changing status of music within German Idealist and Romantic aesthetics, and in particular at its liberation from an integral association with language; and chapter 12, which extends this to debate understandings of the 'autonomy character' of music in the later nineteenth century, embracing Schopenhauer reception, the influential position established by Hanslick, and the watershed between Idealism and Positivism. Likewise there are two social-historical commentaries: chapter 3, which examines the several professions of music associated with the emergence of a middle-class musical culture; and chapter 13, which documents the consolidation of the practices and institutions associated with that culture during the second half of the century. The repertory itself is then examined in central blocks within each part – chapters 4–8 and 14–18 respectively. But it should be emphasised that even in these chapters none of the authors is involved in mere survey; each of them, without exception, takes an angle on their repertory, elaborating positions which at times overlap with, and even occasionally contradict, the positions adopted by other authors.

These chapters provide central information on the 'great music' of the period, a focus which is entirely defensible, not least because this was an age which thought of itself in precisely these terms. At the same time we remain alive to the ideological dimension of that perception, and we foreground it explicitly in chapter 10, which addresses the nineteenth-century preoccupation with genius, while at the same time relativising that concept by discussing the development of what would later be called the culture industry. We are mindful, after all, that most of the music enjoyed in the nineteenth century was by no means 'great', and that point is usefully developed in chapters 9 and 19, which examine music in the marketplace, including what might loosely be called the 'popular music' of the time. Chapter 11, in contrast, turns to the debates of the 1850s: debates about the new, about absolute music, and about

music and the poetic. These debates, centred on Weimar, were of major importance. Not only did they set the compass reading for a great deal of later nineteenth-century thinking about music; they fed directly into compositional praxes. Then, as the new century loomed, they made room for insistent questions concerning the musical expression of a prevailing nationalist ideology. Our penultimate chapter addresses these questions, but it closes by arguing that the differences promoted by nations and nationalism were ultimately subordinate to those generated by the major shifts in musical syntax that took place around the turn of the century. These shifts are addressed in our final chapter.

Our hope is that this constellation of contrasted approaches will light up the history of nineteenth-century music in novel and interesting ways. At the same time, we are aware of our obligation to provide a source of basic and necessary information – to allow the Cambridge History to serve as a major work of reference. Hence the balancing act referred to earlier. We hope that the central chapters on repertory can pass muster in this respect. But given the general thrust of the volume, it has seemed to us important to provide unusually full and ambitious reference material, comprising a chronology (offering a kind of skeletal ‘narrative’ history of music), a select list of institutions (publishing houses, conservatories, opera companies, music societies, and the like), and a personalia (including composers, performers, patrons and publishers). In contrast, we have been more sparing with bibliographical information. In general, the bibliographies for individual chapters record the major sources used in the preparation of the chapter, though in most cases they extend beyond that role to provide a modest indication of useful further reading.

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