

Dreams of Germany – Music and (Trans)national Imaginaries in the Modern Era

German Historical Institute, London, 5.-7. February 2015

Keynote Speakers: Celia Applegate (Vanderbilt); Berthold Hoeckner (Chicago).

Convenors: Andreas Gestrich (GHIL) Neil Gregor (Southampton), Tom Irvine (Southampton)

A little over a decade ago Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter's groundbreaking collection of essays on 'Music and German National Identity' sought to map both the historical terrain on which the notion of Germans as 'the people of music' was constituted and an intellectual terrain on which that trope might be fruitfully historicised. Their emblematic introduction registered both the constructed nature of the central proposition – an idea called forth by writers, critics, pedagogues and philosophers, cemented in literary genres such as journals, catalogues, and critical editions, institutionalized in university departments, conservatoires and concert associations, and monumentalized in statues and commemorative culture – and, at the same time, its longevity, its power, and its capacity to transcend the specific politics of time and place. Animated by a critical spirit which drew not least on the then guiding inspiration of Benedict Anderson, it placed music at the centre of an ongoing process of imagining national community throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. In doing so, it simultaneously recognised the real effects this invented tradition had on the wider culture of which it was part and cautioned against overemphasizing its historical importance in retrospect.

In the intervening decade, inspired not least by the questions Applegate and Potter raised, a significant volume of work has been undertaken which explores further the promise and the limits of thinking about musical cultures in Germany within that national frame. Significant new approaches have emerged within the discipline, which permit the exploration of those same questions from different perspectives. Our understanding of identity politics has moved further beyond the consideration of ideology as inscribed in literary or material culture, and more in the direction of exploring the emotional and the visceral qualities of German, as well as other, subjectivities, and seeks to understand better the imaginaries which lie anterior to discourse; our habits of thinking 'nationally'

about the histories we seek to explore have been challenged by the turn towards transnational histories; at the same time, a considerable amount of work has been done on the many regional varieties of national thinking and feeling, emphasizing the existence of multiple, sometimes competing but often co-existing, cultural imaginaries.

In this conference, we seek to revisit the questions asked by Applegate and Potter, take stock of the scholarly literature as it now stands, and explore the problem space further in the light of approaches which have emerged in the meantime. In taking the modern era, broadly understood, as the time-frame we not only wish to acknowledge the modern qualities of national thinking and feeling, but also to explore the ways in which particularly modern economic, social and political frames – institutional exchanges, cultural diplomacy, tourism, international study visits, experiences of exile – have served to co-constitute national imaginaries from outside, and thus to insert an overtly transnational aspect to the account. In working with the rubric of ‘dreams’, meanwhile, we seek to acknowledge both the visceral qualities of a set of imaginaries that cannot be reduced to a corresponding set of politics, but work as often as not independently of them, and also the presence of a recognizably German set of histories for which the vocabulary of dreams – of fantasies, projections, recollections, nightmares – provides an equally recognizable metaphorical language.

We invite papers on all aspects of modern musical culture which would sit meaningfully inside the rubric ‘Dreams of Germany’, for example:

- How does class function in relation to musical Germanness? Is the dream of a musical Germany a dream of *Bürgerlichkeit*? How do national feeling and *Bürgerlichkeit* interact with and inform each other? To what extent do dreams of German music change when conceptions of *Bürgerlichkeit* do (for instance in 1918, 1933, 1945 and 1968?)
- How, similarly, might Germany as a musical construct be inflected by gender? Where are women in the ‘Land of music’?
- To what extent do declarations of musical Germanness exclude or embrace registers other than ‘art’ or ‘E-Musik’ (operetta, Tanzmusik, jazz diasporic and otherwise, Rock ‘n Roll and specifically German forms like the *Neue Deutsche Welle* and Techno/House?)

- How did young people (for example the *Jugendmusikbewegung*, the generation of the 'Stunde Null' and the '1968ers') imagine German music?
- More broadly: How did the upheavals of 1918, 1933, 1945 and 1968 and their attendant aesthetic echoes (modernism, expressionism, avant-gardes) inflect ideas of German national identity in music?
- How did emigrants and other outsiders from Edward Dannreuther to Theodor W Adorno to (the Austrian) Falco ('Rock me Amadeus') imagine German music and musical culture?
- How did music play into conceptions/dreams of the German colonial mission How did music, and inscriptions of Germanness in discourses about music play in specifically German colonial and post-colonial contexts (SW Africa, China)?
- How did the idea of Germany as a musical nation play in non-colonial contexts such as Britain, Japan, Latin America, the United States and Israel/Palestine? Did, for instance, musical emigrants in the early twentieth century United States or dream 'their' Germany in music?
- To what extent are signal developments in postwar German culture such as the Darmstadt School and the Historical Performance movement re-statements and/or challenges to German national feeling in music?
- To what extent were cultural politics post-1989 inflected by ideas of a specifically German national musical identity (multiculturalism, *Leitkultur* debate etc)

For further details or queries please contact Neil Gregor or Tom Irvine at dreamsofgermany@gmail.com

Closing Deadline for Proposals: 30th April 2014.