

**Friedrich Geiger: Conducting the Masses: State Propaganda and Censorship**, in: *Musicking in Twentieth-Century Europe. A Handbook*, ed. by Klaus Nathaus and Martin Rempe, Berlin 2020, S. 303-323

DOI: 10.1515/9783110651966-015

## **Musicking in Twentieth-Century Europe**

# **Contemporary European History**



Edited by  
Corinna Unger and Matthias Middell

## **Volume 2**

# Musicking in Twentieth- Century Europe



A Handbook

Edited by  
Klaus Nathaus and Martin Rempe

**DE GRUYTER**  
OLDENBOURG

Published with kind support of the Gerda Henkel Foundation, Düsseldorf; German Research Foundation, Bonn; Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo.

ISBN 978-3-11-064808-9  
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-065196-6  
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-064821-8  
ISSN 2627-0366

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2020945024**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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Cover image: Robert Delaunay: Rhythm, Joie de vivre, 1930. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris. Donation Sonia Delaunay et Charles Delaunay 1964. Photo taken by Guillaume Piolle.  
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

Friedrich Geiger

## 14 Conducting the Masses: State Propaganda and Censorship

“Propaganda” is a dazzling term that has eluded all attempts to define it succinctly since its emergence in the seventeenth century—it “can bring the best of us down,” sighed media scientist Neil Postman in 1979.<sup>1</sup> A quarter of a century later, Thymian Bussemer therefore proposed a catalog of characteristics, which represents the intersection of previous definitions. This catalog should help to distinguish propaganda from related and neighboring phenomena such as indoctrination, immersion, advertising, public relations, or even religious mission. According to Bussemer, propaganda should be understood as “a special form of systematically planned mass communication” that does not argue but manipulates.<sup>2</sup> It aims at short- or long-term “changes in people’s subjective construction of reality.” The goal is to persuade them “to take a certain stance on a specific question and to act according to this conviction. Often it is also about encouraging people in an existing attitude.” Propaganda is “dependent on a media system” that allows it to “spread its messages” on a mass scale. It is “usually oriented towards gaining or retaining power” and works with the threat of negative consequences if its messages are not followed. Complementary to this is “integration propaganda,” which rewards the stabilization of the desired norms within a community with the feeling of belonging.

From a music-historical perspective, this catalog of characteristics appears not only as a highly reasonable explanation but also as an invitation to describe in more detail the important role that music can play in a conceptualization of propaganda understood in this way. The essential tasks that this conceptualization of propaganda poses—demonstration of power, overwhelming the mind, emotionalization, mass appeal, removal of reality, and community building—are genuinely aesthetic tasks, which are fulfilled particularly effectively by music. In addition, words, images, and movement, on which propaganda research has so far concentrated, can be amplified with music in such a way that these media gain a multiple effect.

As the earliest surviving aesthetic testimonies regarding music suggest, the reflection on the psychological power of music can be traced back thousands of years. In ancient Greece, the doctrine of ethos emerged in the late sixth century BCE. It is based on the Pythagorean idea that music has the greatest effect on the human soul among the arts because its interval proportions correspond to those of the cosmos. Music is therefore capable not only of reflecting psychological

phenomena but also of evoking them. From this perspective, music becomes an important tool for education. According to the doctrine, appropriate music should be used in education to achieve the desired results. In contrast, music that causes undesirable effects, like sexual arousal or sluggishness, must be removed from the educational repertoire.

Since this purposeful handling of the great potential of music to influence people requires extensive control over its dissemination, it is no coincidence that the doctrine of ethos was formulated in detail in the writings of Plato and Aristotle on state philosophy. As is well known, music thinkers in many European countries received these thoughts and passed them down continuously through the generations. That a unified “European music” would be a construct hardly needs to be emphasized, given the innumerable regional phenomena that would have to be taken into account. But it cannot be denied that certain beliefs that developed in Greco-Roman antiquity continuously influenced the musical thinking of the countries where these beliefs were adopted. This is why especially in Europe philosophers, pedagogues, and politicians attributed such great power to music on the human psyche that this power had to be declared a state affair. That a state should make it its business to steer this power in the right direction is by no means self-evident, but it is a direct and widely accepted legacy of ancient musical thinking. For this reason, in most European cultures the notion of the power of music is almost reflexively linked to questions of media control and state censorship.

Against this background, this chapter examines musical propaganda and musical censorship as two directions in which state control can act. Both directions are based on certain goals that were pursued by the state. If one looks at the states of twentieth-century Europe, four effects in particular emerge, which were frequently intended by musical propagandists as well as by musical censors: representation, integration, mass communication, and mobilization. These objectives will now be examined in more detail. After that, I will try to summarize the development that the constellation of musical propaganda, censorship, and media control underwent in the twentieth century. As no overall studies in this field are available to date, the present chapter is a preliminary sketch that draws on a number of well-documented, exemplary cases.

## 1 Representation

Musical genres associated with large ensembles and festive spaces—for example, symphony concerts as well as the opera—are excellent for representing political power. Rulers are staged and exalted by the music. Their strength, which remains

abstract in everyday life, becomes present, tangible, and impressively aestheticized. Even the power of a community abstracted by individuals can be represented by sound, as national anthems or military music show.

The fact that music can have this effect has been used by different leaders all over the world. But the musical history of many countries in Europe, with its vast number of both great and small rulers, has formed a particularly comprehensive and rich heritage of representative and affirmative music. The relationship between music and representation shaped the history of entire genres: in France, for example, the emergence of an opulent opera tradition is intimately linked to the ambitions and desires for recognition of Louis XIV. This representative function has deeply ingrained itself in music history and is reflected in the festive style of numerous works. Characteristic of the latter is, for instance, the instrumentation topos of timpani and trumpets, which is still proverbial today and can be easily deciphered by listeners as a sounding symbol of worldly power. Percussion and brass, together with fanfare-like motifs are therefore often heard when dominance is marked acoustically. Also, adoption of church music elements underlines the sacrosanct claim to power; for instance, in Russian opera, where the appearance of the tsar is often announced by the ringing of bells. Similar to church music, affirmative sounds can also be used to represent positive utopias such as the glory of the kingdom of heaven—a tradition that was directly adopted in the sonic repertoire of socialist realism, whose task was to portray the glory of a future socialist world.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, in the wake of nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism, many works such as Johannes Brahms's *Triumphlied* (1872) had ingrained the vocabulary of powerful music deeply in the consciousness of the listeners. With the First World War, composing in this musical idiom and performing respective works reached their first peaks in the twentieth century, especially with the colonial powers Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy. Glorious music resounded everywhere, from troop deployments to concert halls, and was distributed through all channels, from picture postcards to gramophone records. The totalitarian regimes in Italy and Germany were then able to follow on seamlessly from this nationalist charge and take the propagandistic exploitation of the corresponding repertoire to extremes. This also led to significant changes in the works, which were not only usurped but sometimes also deliberately prepared for the regimes' own purposes. Such cases indicate how closely related propaganda and censorship are, since both can lead to interventions in the music itself.

Significant in this regard, for instance, is Franz Liszt's symphonic poem *Les Préludes*. The composer had prefaced the orchestral work, composed between 1848 and 1854, with a text in which he explained the content that the music

was to reflect. To the main musical theme, with its well-known fanfare, he had attributed the following meaning:

Nevertheless, the man does not long carry the comforting peace in the midst of soothing natural moods, and “when the trumpet storm signal sounds,” he hurries, whatever the name of the war may be, which calls him to join the ranks of the warring factions, to the most dangerous post, in order to regain full consciousness of himself and to come into full possession of his power in the crush of the battle.<sup>3</sup>

Liszt had already given this main theme an emphatically martial character, in which, however, the aspects of disquiet and danger mentioned by the composer still resonate. Almost hundred years later, German Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels personally selected this fanfare at the beginning of the Russian campaign in June 1941 in order to announce the special reports of the Wehrmacht High Command on the radio. Liszt’s score was specifically edited, and a new version with significantly reduced strings was recorded especially for this purpose. This made the timpani and trumpets stand out particularly clearly, and the sounding result, robbed of all subtlety, disquiet, and danger, produced exactly the effect Goebbels wanted: blaring, in brutal brilliance, it radiated sheer certainty of victory.

Such usurpation of music was flanked by contemporary representative works, some of them dedicated by composers to those in power. Often, these pieces had been commissioned by the regimes or emerged from specially advertised competitions. Commissions and competitions can be understood as attempts to exploit both the representative musical heritage and the cultural reputation of the commissioned composers. For example, on the occasion of the Double Centenary commemorations in Portugal, which, in 1940, simultaneously celebrated the founding of the Portuguese state in 1140 and the regaining of independence from Spain in 1640, the Salazar regime initiated a whole series of compositions that glorified the Portuguese nation and its rulers. Among these compositions, the *Solemn Overture 1640* (1939) by Luís de Freitas Branco is particularly revealing. In December 1938, the prominent composer received a commission from the National Board of the Centenaries for “a symphonic piece that should be entitled *1640* and express the heroic spirit of the 1 December rebellion.”<sup>4</sup> This is remarkable in that Freitas Branco was not close to the regime, but its representatives had a strong interest in the composer because of his reputation as the greatest national authority in the field of music. It seems that Freitas Branco felt so uncomfortable with the commission that he deliberately overfulfilled it: he wrote a symphonic poem that was quite atypical of his modern style at the time and so massively anti-Spanish that even the committee feared

diplomatic repercussions and placed the work at the very margins of the program.

However, the representative function not only extends political power but also the repeatedly asserted superiority of a national cultural and musical tradition. Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven in Germany, Mikhail Glinka and Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in Russia, and Antonio Vivaldi and Giuseppe Verdi in Italy—all these composers had to serve time and again to culturally legitimize the leadership claims of the nations concerned. This function of music to represent cultural superiority also dates back to colonial times. It then played a particularly important role for Germany under Adolf Hitler and Italy under Benito Mussolini. Nationalists in both countries proudly claimed to be leaders in music and developed fierce competition in this field. But in other countries, too, nationalism showed itself preferentially in the field of music. In Scandinavia, for example, many listeners considered music the most direct expression of the “Nordic,” which is why they stylized composers such as Hugo Alfvén in Sweden, Christian Sinding in Norway, Jón Leifs in Iceland, and Jean Sibelius in Finland as national artists.

The goal of musical propaganda—to represent the regime, the nation, and its cultural excellence—corresponds to censorship measures against music that was unsuitable for these purposes, perhaps even threatening to undermine them through ambivalence and ambiguity. The hatred of musical modernity that all dictatorial regimes, whether in Russia, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Austria, Portugal, or Spain, displayed to varying degrees in the first half of the century was essentially triggered by the fact that the protagonists of this modernity pursued aesthetic goals that were incompatible with national pride, serious pathos, and a superior will to represent. The deliberately unsentimental music of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), the critical humor of the antibourgeois Dada composers, the activities of the International Society for New Music, and the enthusiastic reception of jazz by European musicians were only the most visible tendencies that these regimes thought had to be fought to maintain power in the long term.

Numerous sources therefore accused composers of being deliberately agitative with their music and “hurting national feelings.” Nazi journalists, for example, constantly polemicized against the “impertinence” of a modern music, which “knowingly and intentionally [...] despised healthy feeling and wanting, as it is lived in a strong, self-confident people, and possibly also openly disparaged and ridiculed it through its own means of expression.”<sup>5</sup>

Under Joseph Stalin, composers like Dmitri Shostakovich saw themselves attacked in a similar way. In the editorial article “Hypocrisy as Ballet,” which appeared in *Pravda* on 6 February 1936, Shostakovich’s new ballet *The Bright Brook*

op. 39, which was about a collective farm with the same name in the Kuban region, received a devastating critique. Further performances became impossible as a result of this semiofficial criticism. It was directed above all at the depiction of the *kolkhoz* (collective farm), which, as a symbol of “the present life of the Soviet people” and its new forms of communalization, “deserved the greatest respect, care, and conscientious study.” Shostakovich’s music, on the other hand, “has nothing whatsoever to do with our collective farms or even with the Kuban region,” the critics complained. Rather, they went on to accuse, the composer showed a “disdainful attitude” towards the “folk songs of this region.” According to the critics, the music testified to “an absolute indifference of the composer towards his subject.”<sup>6</sup>

The music-political parallels between fascist and communist regimes, which may at first seem surprising given the diametrical ideologies, can thus be explained to a large extent by the fact that both fought the same opponent—namely musical modernity. In the Soviet sphere of influence, the defence of “socialist values” against music remained fundamentally unbroken even after Stalin’s death, with varying intensity depending on time and place. The ideologists of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, for example, considered rock music a constant provocation, as musicians and their listeners regularly made fun of the state’s inability to provide consumer goods for young people such as jeans or records. Until its collapse in 1989, the regime therefore carried out intensive propaganda in the media against rock artists and censored their music, for example by banning them from performances and broadcasting.

Meanwhile, the ideas of the representation of state values through music and protection against its musical destabilization took a back seat in post-1945 European democracies. By no means did they disappear completely, however. In Germany, for instance, the idea that German music was superior remained unbroken in the occupied country. For many Germans, it became a substitute for lost political power, especially in relation to the USA. With reference to Bach and Beethoven, the increasingly successful popular music from America was dismissed both in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and even more so in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as “inferior” and demonized as a symptom of “Americanization.”

Continuities become particularly apparent when one looks at the prototype of musical representation, namely the national anthem. The degree to which music is considered capable of national representation is evident in this field. Many citizens firmly believe that these hymns have the potential to represent characteristics of the nations concerned not only through their texts but explicitly also through their melodies. It is therefore not surprising that the anthem of a country is almost sacred to many living there. This representative aura of the na-

tional anthem is still today protected by laws in several countries. In Greece, for instance, Article 188 of the penal code stipulates that disrespectful behavior during performances of the national anthem can be punished by a fine or imprisonment for up to two years. In Germany, too, anyone who grossly disparages the national anthem commits the criminal offence of “disparaging the state and its symbols,” which is punishable by imprisonment for up to three years. Just how sensitive this terrain remains was demonstrated in 1998, when the composer Bardo Henning was commissioned to write the music for the official ceremony on the occasion of German Unity Day. When word got out that Henning had quoted not only the anthem of the FRG in his work but also—albeit only briefly—the national anthem of the former GDR, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen* (composed by Hanns Eisler), a storm of indignation broke out. Edmund Stoiber, the Bavarian minister president at the time, demonstratively stayed away from the ceremony, and a lawyer from Lower Saxony filed a complaint against the composer, citing the “disparaging” paragraph. Apparently, the conservative forces that took credit for German reunification saw the propagated image of history endangered by the fact that the GDR was also represented musically.

## 2 Integration

Besides having a representative function, national anthems also show that music is regarded as the community-building art par excellence. Feelings of belonging could easily be evoked through music: “A great rush of enthusiasm has captured people. Horst Wessel’s song sounds faithful and strong in the evening sky,” Goebbels noted enthusiastically in his diary entry about the May Day celebrations in 1933.<sup>7</sup> As he knew very well, the sense of community helped rulers achieve reach, influence, and homogeneity. Many sources show how the integrative potential of sharing aesthetic experience through music was propagandistically instrumentalized in twentieth-century Europe.

This instrumentalization could take place, for example, in the context of not only factory or open-air concerts, festivals, rallies, or mass marches but also music venues such as opera houses or concert halls. Such events were often put into an ideological context, for instance by decorating them with party emblems. Even nonmusical aesthetic experience—such as the experience of light spectacles, parades of weapons, choreographies, and the like—was guided and intensified by music just as soundtracks amplify and direct the effect of moving images in films. The combination of musical performances with pithy speeches and addresses is also characteristic. This was based on the mutual enhancement of sound and speech. In this process, the communal perception of music was

supposed to be ideologically guided, and the ideology was supposed to be solemnly exaggerated by the emotional impact of the sounds and therefore become a communal experience.

Such a use of music not only is specific to dictatorships but also is known from other contexts—for example, in the areas of the church, the military, or sport. Democratic states also practice it frequently, especially for celebrations. In the European dictatorships of the twentieth century, however, it reached a new dimension both quantitatively and qualitatively, and it was reflected very carefully and used with calculation. For the Third Reich especially, it is possible to trace exactly which music the regime intended for which occasions, often down to the order in which it was to be played. The Main Cultural Office of the Reich Propaganda Administration, the department responsible for the organization of festivities, issued several publications for this purpose, most importantly the series *Die neue Gemeinschaft: Das Parteiarchiv für nationalsozialistische Feier- und Freizeitgestaltung* (The New Community: The Party Archive for National Socialist Celebrations and Leisure Activities), starting in 1934. In addition to the party, government agencies such as the Reichsmusikkammer (Reich Chamber of Music) also initiated corresponding reference works, such as the compendium *Musikalische Feiergusaltung: Ein Werkweiser guter Musik für die natürlichen und politischen Feste des Jahres* (Organizing Musical Celebrations: A Guide to Good Music for the Natural and Political Holidays of the Year), presented by Wilhelm Ehmann in 1938. These sources not only show how communal singing or listening was supposed to integrate participants into a “community” through collective aesthetic experience but also reveal lesser-known strategies for using music for propaganda purposes. For example, Ehmann elaborates on how celebrants should be positioned in space and how a celebration could achieve a dramaturgy through music. All this advice was based on the premise that “the bearers of political action are at the same time the bearers of musical action.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, musical action is political action here.

The overall aim of this propagandistic use of music is to form a mass following that is as homogeneous as possible according to the respective ideological standards. The shared aesthetic experience of music gives the community presence. Through the feeling of community, this mass can then be easily influenced in the desired direction. In this way, the propaganda of the twentieth century again drew on topoi of musical genres that were popular in the respective European countries. The emphasis varied according to the regional music culture. While in Italy, for example, opera played the most important role in creating a sense of community, in Germany it was mainly symphony. In 1918, the German music writer Paul Bekker characterized the nature of the symphonic genre, as it had existed since Beethoven, as follows:

The cause of symphonic creation lies [...] in the artist's need to speak to a *mass audience*, in the compulsion to communicate with a large circle. [...] The symphony is thus, by its very nature, the object of a far-reaching general interest, and the performance of a symphony is equivalent to a popular musical assembly, an assembly in which a common feeling expressed through music is alive and active.<sup>9</sup>

For most European nations, the genre of the mass song, in particular, has played an important role in the creation of a sense of musical community. This led to lively transfers between individual countries. The mass song goes back to the French Revolution and reached Italy and Germany during the period of national unification. The German workers' movement developed the genre further, from 1917 in an intensive process of exchange with the Soviet Union, but also with other countries of the Communist International. Subsequently, the fascist dictatorship's "thefts from the commune"—as called by Ernst Bloch—also included several mass songs with new lyrics. After 1945, mass songs like *Die Partei*—"The party, the party, is always right" was written and composed in 1949 in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by Louis Fürnberg but was especially popular in the GDR—lived on in the socialist states of Europe, while the whole genre of mass song had a bad reputation in the democratic countries because it had been used in dictatorships. Therefore, in democratic countries it appeared rather in apolitical forms like football songs. In addition, from the 1960s onward (at the latest), international mass concerts of pop artists, at which the audience could sing along loudly, took over the function of community and identity building.

That music is able to increase the reach of community sense through the media was systematically exploited especially by the Nazi regime. Inexpensive radio sets (*Volksempfänger*) and broadcasting formats with a wide stylistic range (*Wunschkonzert*) promised to appeal to and integrate social classes and generations. Other states copied this approach. For example, music was prominent when the Spanish Franco regime celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1964 with the biggest propaganda campaign the country had ever seen. At the heart of the campaign was a monumental concert on 16 June, for which the state commissioned renowned contemporary composers such as Cristóbal Halffter. Conducted by Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, the concert was broadcast live on radio and television. On the following day, an enthusiastic review appeared in the Madrid newspaper *Ya*, highlighting the community-building effect of the concert event. The nationwide broadcast, the writer claims, had brought the nation together in a common musical experience:

Everyone: the scholar, the cosmopolitan, the peasant and the intellectual; all remained obsequiously silent while Frühbeck's magisterial baton kneaded the crystalline calm of our screens. [...] In the most remote of hamlets, lost in a faraway valley, it did not smell of stable

and thyme: it smelled like a concert evening, while the oboes celebrated the wide smiles on our ladies' faces. Blessed TV and blessed Spain in God's peace!

This dithyramb on the community experience via media seems all the more significant because it was largely pure wishful thinking: at the beginning of the 1960s, neither had all parts of Spain access to TV nor did the concert receive an exclusively positive response where it could be heard. On the contrary, the Ministry of Culture received several angry anonymous letters complaining bitterly about the modernity of the music: "My dear sir, the concert was appalling. The orchestra seemed to be made of hooligans or lunatics escaped from the asylum," one of these letters said.<sup>10</sup>

This clearly shows that not all music is suitable for achieving the desired sense of community. In order to avoid such mishaps with the audience, censorship usually was suspicious of music that could run counter to the homogeneous experience. What this experience actually meant depended very much on the ideological orientation of the respective regime. Strict care was taken to exclude music that was, according to the ideological definition, "alien" to the community. For example, censorship under Stalin aimed particularly at the so-called "class enemy," that is to say, music that was in some way related to the bourgeoisie or the "West." This allegation could be levelled at musical genres, for example the string quartet, which was suspected of being an elitist art of connoisseurship due to its bourgeois history, or jazz, which was considered an outgrowth of American capitalism. But it could also be aimed at a composer's person. The career of Vsevolod Zaderatsky, for example, was massively impaired by the fact that he came from Russian nobility and had taught the tsar's son Alexei Romanov as a piano teacher before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Concomitantly, censorship in the Third Reich targeted primarily so-called "non-Aryans," who were to be banned from German musical life. This dominant anti-Semitic accent of Nazi music censorship is illustrated by the *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik* (Lexicon of Jews in Music), edited by musicologists Theo Stengel and Herbert Gerigk, which first appeared in 1940 and had brought out four editions by 1943. The reference work was compiled, as it says on the title page, "on behalf of the Reich leadership of the NSDAP, on the basis of officially verified documents" by employees of the Hauptstelle Musik im Amt Rosenberg, an administrative unit in Alfred Rosenberg's organization that declared itself responsible for the formulation and implementation of the National Socialist music ideology. "With the claim to the greatest possible reliability," as the foreword says, the encyclopedia contains about 320 pages of names and data of Jewish composers, interpreters, music teachers, and music journalists, supplemented by a "Title Index of Jewish Works." The book should be a "sure guide," Gerigk claims in the foreword, "for

cultural politicians, for stage managers and conductors, for the radio, and for the leading personalities in the offices of the party organizations” as a “means of quickly eradicating all erroneous remnants from our cultural and intellectual life.” Vigorousness was required because, as the book asserts, “individual Jews, as masters of camouflage, even now manage to slip through the net unrecognized here and there.”<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the exclusion of undesirable groups and images of the enemy, censors in European dictatorships of the first half of the century mistrusted “subjectivism” and “individualism” in general. They used these terms to denigrate music that aimed at the individual and the special and was therefore fought as harmful to the desired mass formation. It was only legitimate to give aesthetic expression to individuals if the figures in question were suitable for mass identification with the regime’s goals—such as the little boy Peter in Sergei Prokofiev’s most famous composition from 1936. People all over the world love *Peter and the Wolf* op. 61, but few know that its draft was titled *How Pioneer Peter Caught the Wolf* and that its aim was to make children familiar not only with orchestral instruments but also with the fight against “greedy capitalism,” namely Hitler’s Germany.

From the 1950s onward, a large part of the community-building function of music was taken over by popular music, which the younger generation did not suspect of being ideologically motivated, unlike the compromised “classical” music. Great musical mass events, above all the legendary Woodstock Festival in February 1969, created a countercultural sense of community. In Europe, the festival format was embraced enthusiastically, and watched suspiciously by the respective authorities. In the early 1970s, a wide spectrum of festivals were held: in Germany the Love and Peace Festival on Fehmarn, in the Netherlands the Pinkpop Festival in Landgraaf, in Denmark the Roskilde Festival, in Yugoslavia the BOOM Festival, and so on. How nervously the state initially reacted to these countercultural events is shown, for example, in Great Britain, where the Isle of Wight Festival has been held since the summer of 1968. After the number of visitors had risen enormously in 1970, the British parliament passed a regulation in 1971 that banned open-air overnight stays of more than 5,000 people on the island without special permission. But the more rock and pop music developed from counterculture to mainstream in the decades that followed, the more government bodies put aside their reservations and recognized that there were excellent opportunities to borrow the popularity of this music and use its community-building potential for their own purposes. An early example of this is the Republic of Malta, where the social democratic Malta Labour Party (now Partit Laburista) ruled from 1971 to 1984. This party had already relied heavily on musical folklore in the 1970s to achieve national unity and solidarity

among workers. However, when Maltese folk music began to lose its place among the general population to rock music, the party adapted its policy to this development. In 1982, it initiated the rock opera *Ġensna* (Our Nation), for which the most famous Maltese pop musicians of the time were signed. With a libretto in Maltese, this monumental work celebrates the most important stages in the country's history, highlighting the struggles for liberation from foreign rule and drawing parallels to the party's concerns with the workers' struggle for self-determination. *Ġensna* became an overwhelming success, which ensured the fame of the participants that has lasted until today. The songs literally became folk songs that every inhabitant of Malta knows.

### 3 Mass Communication

In research, propaganda has often been described as a communication technique. Although this communication tends to be much more controlled by the sender than by the receiver, recent analyses nevertheless point out that propaganda cannot be effective if it does not take into account the attitudes and feedback of its audiences. These have to be addressed regarding their already existing opinions and views. This is why prejudice plays such an important role in successful propaganda. It forms the ground in which messages can be anchored. As is well known, the essence of strong prejudice is that those who harbor it are unaware that it is an adopted view. Rather, they think that they have formed their opinion autonomously. Consequently, they feel acknowledged, taken seriously, and valued when these "opinions" are confirmed by propaganda. On this basis, propaganda messages can be conveyed very effectively.

Against this background, music has a double function as a propaganda medium. On the one hand, states, by using music that is capable of attracting a majority, can aesthetically create an atmosphere of familiarity among a large number of people that is conducive to communicating the desired content. By addressing listeners with sounds that suit their taste, the readiness of recipients to adopt messages grows. On the other hand, music itself is an object that is ideally suited for making populist statements. Due to the forcefulness of the sense of hearing, through no other art form is the identification with the preferred aesthetics so strong, and no other art form evokes such vehement rejection if it does not correspond to one's own taste. To praise music that corresponds to the taste of the majority and to condemn music that deviates from it are therefore effective ways to gain popularity. By acting as advocates of majority taste and a "healthy popular judgement," regimes enhance the value of the majority, therefore securing sympathy and approval.

A work that deliberately fulfilled both communicative functions of propaganda was composed by Shostakovich in a phase of his life in which he was in great danger—after the so-called “February decision” of the Central Committee in 1948, which had outlawed him by name as a representative of formalism. *Song of the Forests* op. 81, first performed in November 1949, is an oratorio for tenor, bass, boys’ choir, mixed choir, and orchestra that lasts just over half an hour. In terms of subject, it deals with a project of the Stalin regime that was current at the time, namely a massive reforestation campaign. The lyricist Yevgeniy Dolmatovskiy praises the “great gardener” Stalin as the almighty designer of nature. The oratory celebrated the reforestation, promoted it, and exaggerated it to religious dimensions—in short, it communicated the current concerns of the regime effectively. The musical language that Shostakovich chose is masterful, but in style, it differs markedly from his independent works. The idiom is populist in the sense that the composer often draws on elements that were familiar to the audience from national Russian heritage: echoes of Glinka’s *A Life for the Tsar*, Modest Mussorgsky’s *Khovanshchina*, Rimsky-Korsakov’s *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*, or Tchaikovsky’s *The Queen of Spades*, for example, cannot be missed. Shostakovich’s calculation worked out, and the oratorio was applauded by the highest leadership. Mikhail Suslov, successor of Andrei Zhdanov as the supreme ideologue of the Soviet Union, wrote about the work: “Good. A beautiful Russian melody. On the transformation of nature”<sup>12</sup>—a characteristic formulation that connects the content to be disseminated (“transformation of nature”) with the medium of musical populism (“beautiful Russian melody”).

The functions of music as a means of mass communication explain why the censors often became active. In the first place, music is undesirable if its style and aesthetics make it unsuitable for mass taste. This is frequently the case with complex, dissonant, experimental, or any other kind of music that causes difficulties or even provokes the average listener. Propagandists labeled such music dismissively as “l’art pour l’art,” “elitist,” or music from the “ivory tower.” This shows how music policy took advantage of existing popular resentments against musical innovation. In this respect, the possibilities of propaganda in the twentieth century were greatly expanded by developments in both music and media technology. The progressive and provocative currents that took hold in music after the turn of the century created a feeling of insecurity among traditional listeners, not least due to their novel mass media presence, which propaganda sought to capitalize on. “Progressive” music not only offered a projection screen for political, racist, and aesthetic animosity but also made the counterimage of an accessible “music for all,” anchored in the “people,” shine all the brighter. African-American music took up a significant intermediate position here. As popular music, it was undoubtedly music that appealed to a

broad range of listeners. But its non-European origins made it suspicious to many who reserved “popularity” for members of a particular ethnicity.

As far as progressive music is concerned, regimes used powerful popular aversions against unfamiliar aesthetic to win the approval of the masses. They ostentatiously shared their resentments, made the average taste absolute, and instrumentalized it in service against the respective enemy images. The scheduled premiere of Luigi Dallapiccola’s opera *Volo di notte* in Braunschweig in 1938, for example, was banned by the Ministry of Propaganda because “such music, which goes too much into the atonal, would be rejected by German theater audiences.”<sup>13</sup> What is telling here is that atonality was not condemned for aesthetic reasons but for its unsuitability to reaching the masses.

A second important cause for repressive censorship is when a message effectively propagated through musical works suddenly contradicts a changed ideological line. The problem here is not the medium but the content of the communication. This was the case, for example, in Moscow in 1948 with Mieczysław Weinberg’s orchestral composition *Sinfonietta* no. 1 in D minor, op. 41, whose deliberately accessible music was initially received very positively by the authorities. As late as December 1948, Tikhon Khrennikov, the general secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers, publicly and effusively praised Weinberg’s *Sinfonietta* as a “brilliant, joyful work dedicated to the theme of the joyful, free life of the Jewish people in the land of socialism.”<sup>14</sup> However, after Stalin’s anti-Semitic “anticosmopolitan campaign” had begun in 1949, the reference to Jewish folklore in Weinberg’s music was anything but opportune. Although the *Sinfonietta* could continue to be performed, other works by Weinberg, in which the connection to Jewish music was even more obvious, were put on the index.

## 4 Mobilization

As early as 1922, the German national sociologist Johann Plenge defined propaganda as “the spreading of intellectual impulses that are intended to trigger action.”<sup>15</sup> Not only the manipulation of attitudes but also of the concrete actions that resulted from it belong to the central goals of propaganda. Its importance becomes evident in the case of the regimes in twentieth-century Europe, which are often described as “mobilization dictatorships.” Music deserves special attention regarding this aspect—considering the fact that music’s triggering or influencing of human action was already one of the basic assumptions of the doctrine of ethos. This reputation drew a high level of attention to music from the authors of propaganda. Depending on the cultural and historical contexts, opin-

ions diverge, but almost all societies share common ideas—for example, music tempts people to move, and it is possible to synchronize the movements of large groups of people through rhythm. That is why music has always been of great importance in the military field, since it could serve both to bring people into line when marching and to awaken and support martial impulses. Still in 1978, the *Handbook for Political Work* of the National People's Army of the GDR states:

The promotion of marching songs, the cultivation of the socialist soldier song, the workers' fighting song, and the workers' youth song must be the concern of all leaders. Here it is possible to use the mobilizing and disciplining power and effectiveness of the song, the specifically consciousness-forming and collectivity-enhancing power of the music and the lyrical content as potentials for conscious military action.<sup>16</sup>

In the aggressively charged context of expansive regimes, heroic features of music are particularly desirable. In his programmatic speech at the opening of the Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture) on 15 November 1933, Goebbels emphasizes the “heroic view of life” of National Socialism. He describes it, in a formulation that since has become infamous, as “a kind of romanticism of steel that has [...] the courage to face the problems and to look them firmly and without flinching into their pitiless eyes.” Artists must be “willing and unresistingly fulfilled” by this attitude. Only then will their work “last and win the future.”<sup>17</sup> Musicians were particularly eager to accept this ideological postulate because they were able to fall back on long-proven models. Beethoven's music from his so-called “heroic period” was declared paradigmatic for the music Goebbels had in mind. An explicit reference is the *Sinfonia Eroica* op. 55, from which the ideas of “heroism” and “romanticism” could be combined in a way that came quite close to Goebbels's “romanticism of steel.” From there, Nazi ideologues, like Alfred Rosenberg, drew a “heroic-romantic” line of German music through Richard Wagner to the present day of the Third Reich, with its plethora of heroic music, and backwards at least to George Frideric Handel.

Heroism, dynamism, and energy were virtues that the Nazi regime needed to achieve its political goals. At the beginning, music that featured these properties served the mobilization for the National Socialist “movement,” but with the war, the “heroic” aspect took on a new relevance. Music played an important role in warfare, especially with the Nazis but also with other war powers. For example, between the declaration of war on 10 June 1940 and the Allied invasion in September 1943, the Italian state radio produced and broadcast 128 complete operas, almost exclusively by Italian composers and with first-class performers. In Great Britain, the British Broadcasting Corporation developed an intense anti-National Socialist propaganda through popular music programs, such as “Workers' Play-

time,” “Music While You Work,” and especially “Desert Island Discs” (the last with the musical comedian Vic Oliver, the son-in-law of Winston Churchill). But the efforts of the National Socialist state exceeded all other such initiatives by far. Measures ranged from meticulous program planning on the radio by Goebbels himself to the gigantic enterprise of musical *Truppenbetreuung* (troop care) at the front. In the volume *Lebendige Musik* (Living Music), which was published in 1943 by the German air force as a vademecum for soldiers, music critic Edwin von der Nüll describes the program conference of an ensemble, providing insight into the mobilizing function of the concerts. The “music adviser of the air force command staff, where the responsible decision lies,” rejects a suggested piece by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. It is “not able to inspire the soldier,” he laments and goes on to complain that it “has too little melodic content, too little immediate conviction, too little gripping rhythm, it is too much attached to the world of thought.” Instead, the choice falls on “a minuet from Beethoven’s Sonata in E flat major,”<sup>18</sup> which seems to the advisers to be more suitable for the purposes of the desired conditioning—certainly also because of the key of E flat major, to which the character of heroism was ascribed.

Here it is already becoming apparent which music was considered unheroic in the Nazi state, but also in other regimes, and was therefore censored in a preventive and repressive manner. Ideologists like Goebbels in Germany or Andrei Zhdanov in Soviet Russia regarded the “world of thought” as a dangerous, disintegrative opponent to the instinctive “world of action” and affiliated musical styles that appealed to the intellect with the former. They also opposed music that allegedly fostered “defeatist” sentiments. At the beginning of the war, Peter Raabe, the president of the German Reich Chamber of Music, stated: “Anything that, according to its attitude, is not compatible with the greatness of the time does not belong in the concert program now.”<sup>19</sup> Such unheroic music included works that did not follow the pattern of the familiar “per aspera ad astra” or “through night to light” dramaturgy. In this desired model, of which Beethoven’s Symphony no. 5 in C minor is the classic example, the musical development leads to a radiant, bright, and optimistic finale in a major key, after having had to go through dark phases beforehand. This dramaturgical tradition corresponded perfectly to the cultural and political demand to express optimism. Works, however, that refused an affirmative conclusion and faded away like Gustav Mahler’s Ninth Symphony could not hope for any applause in “mobilization dictatorships.”

However, it was crucial that mobilization through music was done for the right purposes. In many cases, danceable popular music also fell victim to censorship, especially when it was of African-American origin. This practice was rooted in racist resentment as well as was driven by deep-seated fear of the mo-

bilizing potential of these musical genres. By encouraging people to dance, African-American music in the eyes of the censors appealed to “low,” that is to say, physical and sexual instincts, and thus threatened to lead the youth down the wrong path. In the worst case, censors thought the impulse of movement would turn into open revolt. Still, in the early 1980s in Bulgaria, for example, the regime’s law enforcement agencies were so concerned about the mobilization potential of rock music that a concert by the band Signal in February 1982 in Burgas caused turmoil that led to a general ban on the group. The singer of Signal, Yordan Karadzhev, describes the events in an interview published by the Bulgarian news provider Novinite on 26 November 2013, almost thirty years later:

The kids started jumping and having fun. [...] The security took out the police batons and started beating everybody, because the kids were enjoying themselves. I stopped the concert, saying we were not used to [singing] under militia violence. [...] On the very next day, “Politburo” became engaged with us [...] we were banned from performing for a year, all our records in the stores were confiscated, we were blocked from radio and TV —they took us off the face of the earth.

Karadzhev describes a scene from a repressive state that, just a few years before the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, still violently attacked an enthusiastic rock audience. Characteristic of the regime, however, is only the timing of police violence, not the use of force against pop fans itself. For about 25 years earlier, very similar incidents had also occurred in democratic countries when rock ‘n’ roll was celebrated by European youth. During Bill Haley’s famous tour in 1958, for example, there were riots in several German cities, the climax of which was a brawl in Berlin’s Sportpalast, where the police vehemently attacked the youthful audience with truncheons. Four years later, Haley went on tour again, which was peaceful not least because there was no massive police presence. This shows that democratic societies learned to deal with the mobilizing potential of popular music. This process happened much slower in totalitarian states. The fear of losing control over the masses was also deeper in such states because the regimes attributed to music a strong mobilization potential, which they themselves used for their own propagandistic practice.

## Conclusion

Summarizing key trends in state musical propaganda and censorship in twentieth-century Europe, we see both phenomena reaching new heights in that period. Two world wars, the expansion of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes over almost the whole of Europe in the first half of the century, and the Cold War in

the second half of the century coincided with a massive increase in propaganda and censorship. Music played a central role in this. It was predestined because European thinkers and state theorists from Plato and Aristotle to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Nietzsche ascribed great power over the human psyche to music. But the fact that propaganda and censorship were particularly prominent in the field of twentieth-century music, however, is also due to certain developments in music history—which, certainly, did not occur independently of general history. Three developments should be emphasized here:

Firstly, we need to mention the formation of a European musical modernity, which, already at the turn of the twentieth century and on a broad basis after the First World War, increasingly questioned the traditional aesthetic standards of music. This musical modernity's conspicuous internationality as well as its critical and mocking rejection of bourgeois norms encouraged a concept of nationalistic culture oriented on national categories. In the first half of the century, dictatorships therefore fought this musical modernity vehemently through censorship. At the same time, they used it as a welcome image of the enemy, to which they built up a musical counterworld in their propaganda. Since this counterworld sounded more accessible to most ears than the progressive currents, it was used intensively to arouse sympathy among the population. In the second half of the century, this continued in the Soviet-controlled part of Europe, albeit with varying intensity, which decreased continuously since the mid-1970s. In democratic countries, oppositely, musical modernity after 1945 enjoyed the demonstrative support of the state, which was thus able to distance itself from its totalitarian past.

Secondly, the media dissemination of music has constantly increased since the beginning of the twentieth century through records, radio, sound film, television, and finally the World Wide Web. The rapid development of media technology gave the well-known effects of music a tremendously broad impact that no state power could ignore. From the perspective of music history in particular, it is easy to see how in the first half of the century the dissemination and development of media was often directly related to the propaganda interests of the regimes.

Thirdly, popular music of African-American origin spread widely in two phases: once after the First World War and then again, much more strongly, after the Second World War, when many European states saw danger in "Americanization" through jazz, rock, and pop. Especially the second phase radically changed the music scene in Europe and forced the cultural policies of its states to position themselves against the background of the Cold War, but also against the background of generational conflicts and not least commercial interests. Generally, propaganda oscillated between ostracism and appropriation of Afri-

can-American music. In both the first and second half of the century, the respective turning point came when the popularity of the genres in question became so great that propaganda could no longer pass them by. In that situation, leaders tried to appropriate them for their own purposes and to use the popularity of the genres to spread their messages. In the second half of the century, it was favored by the generational change in the political leadership as well as the gradual realization that pop music could also be used to advertise the state.

In this way, conditions in Europe, relating to specific music history as well as general contemporary history, developed dynamic interactions that made the twentieth century not only one of political but also of musical extremes.

## Notes

1 Neil Postman, "Propaganda," *Et Cetera: A Review of General Semantics* 36 (1979): 128.

2 So the simplified basic formula in Thymian Bussemer, "Propaganda: Theoretisches Konzept und geschichtliche Bedeutung," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* (2013): 2, <https://docupedia.de/zg/Propaganda> (accessed 28 March 2020). Similar in id., *Propaganda: Konzepte und Theorien* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2005), 31–32, also for the following citations.

3 Franz Liszt, *Musikalische Werke: Serie I, Band 2* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1908), 1.

4 Manuel D. Silva, "Salazar's Dictatorship and the Paradoxes of State Music: Luís de Freitas Branco's Ill-Fated *Solemn Overture 1640* (1939)," in *Composing for the State: Music in Twentieth-Century Dictatorships*, ed. Esteban Buch et al. (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2016), 144–167, also for the following quotations.

5 Walter Abendroth, "Kunstmusik und Volkstümlichkeit," *Die Musik* 26 (1934): 413–414.

6 Quoted after "Volksfeind Dmitri Schostakowitsch": *Eine Dokumentation der öffentlichen Angriffe gegen den Komponisten in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion*, ed. Ernst Kuhn and Günter Wolter (Berlin: Ernst Kuhn Verlag, 1997), 10.

7 Quoted after Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches: Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (Munich: Hanser 1991), 215.

8 Wilhelm Ehmann, *Musikalische Fei ergestaltung: Ein Werkweiser guter Musik für die natürlichen und politischen Feste des Jahres* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1938), 16.

9 Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1918), 12–15.

10 Igor C. Zubillaga, "El Concierto de la Paz (1964): Three Commissions to Celebrate 25 Years of Francoism," in Buch et al., *Composing for the State*, 178–179.

11 *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik*, ed. Theo Stengel and Herbert Gerigk (Berlin: Bernhard Hahnfeld Verlag, 1940), 8.

12 Marina Frolova-Walker, "A Birthday Present for Stalin: Shostakovich's *Song of the Forests* (1949)," in Buch et al., *Composing for the State*, 115–116.

13 Quoted after Friedrich Geiger, *Musik in zwei Diktaturen: Verfolgung von Komponisten unter Hitler und Stalin* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004), 108.

14 Quoted after Verena Mogl, "Juden, die ins Lied sich retten": *Der Komponist Mieczysław Weinberg (1919–1996) in der Sowjetunion* (Münster: Waxmann, 2017), 118.

15 Johann Plenge, *Deutsche Propaganda: Die Lehre von der Propaganda als praktische Gesellschaftslehre* (Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag, 1922), 13.

16 Quoted after Manfred F. Heidler, *Musik in der Bundeswehr: Musikalische Bewährung zwischen Aufgabe und künstlerischem Anspruch* (Essen: Die blaue Eule, 2005), 522.

17 *Goebbels-Reden, Volume 1: 1932–1939*, ed. Helmut Heiber (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1971), 131–141.

18 Edwin von der Nüll, *Lebendige Musik* (Leipzig: Schwarzhäupter Verlag, 1943), 65, probably referring to the Piano Sonata op. 31, 3, the third movement of which is entitled “Menuetto.”

19 Peter Raabe, “Über den Musikbetrieb während des Krieges,” *Zeitschrift für Musik* 106 (1939): 1029–1030.

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