

Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France. By Jann Pasler

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understandable since the ready availability of photographs based on new technology rivalled any artistic representation of the day-to-day struggle, and artists gave place to photographers in the portrayal of the war.

The Bolsheviks' seizure of power, however, was no abstraction. Taking stock of the legacy of the Silver Age, Bowlt is right to stress the importance of the emigration rather than the new world of Soviet culture. The avant-garde flourished for a while within Russia, but the artists and writers who settled in Paris and elsewhere were logically more comfortable with the inspirational wellsprings of the Silver Age. Looking back on the era, Bowlt shows renewed and justified interest in the Silver Age after the fall of the communist regime.

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Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France. By Jann Pasler. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2009. pp. 780. \$60.00. ISBN 9780520257405.

The relationship between music and politics – once spiritedly dissected by the British music critic and composer Constant Lambert in *Music Ho!* (1934) – has been enjoying a striking revival of interest in recent scholarship. American musicologist Jann Pasler makes the usefulness of music the leitmotiv of *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France*, conceived as the first volume of a trilogy. Pasler describes herself as a modernist raised on the 'musical trinity' of Debussy, Ravel and Fauré (p. 28), yet chooses here to reject the focus on avant-garde composers characterizing some of her own previous work, and that of other musicologists. Instead, she spotlights the music of mass culture – concerts in zoos, parks and department stores, at exhibitions and festivals – and the government rhetoric and policies that promoted its development. The result is an impressive overview of a relatively unexplored field and a valuable contribution to the cultural history of the period, as well as a very personal tribute to French state patronage of the arts.

To elucidate the political concept of public utility, Pasler opens her four-part narrative not with the Third Republic but with the First Republic of the 1790s – a regime so committed to art's political value that the National Convention was prepared to offer a subsidy of 460,000 francs to the Opéra in the midst of the most violent upheaval. The republicans of the 1870s, the conscious descendants of these eighteenth-century revolutionaries, dominate the second part of the book, where Pasler examines their notion of art as education, a means of turning Frenchmen into citizens. Music, they believed, could both refine judgement through the practice of aural comparison and also encourage the imagination of a new, republican world. Thirdly, Pasler investigates the expansion of musical education and performance in the 1880s, identifying the eclectic music of café-concerts, zoos and exhibitions of colonial culture as symbolic of the more confident Republic's acceptance of diversity and competition.

The final section charts the reactions against this widening accessibility of music: the emergence of modernism and the growing perception of music as a matter of individual pleasure and practice rather than collective identity.

There is much to be admired in Pasler's work, not least her ability to sustain a lively style and strong sense of direction throughout this substantial volume. Both her focus on governmental rhetoric concerning the arts and her consideration of the many and varied contexts of musical performance offer an original and important contribution to the history of the period. The concomitant breadth of her source material is considerable, ranging from ministerial publications to private archives, from speeches and pamphlets to photographs, engravings, scores, concert programmes and the musical press. There is also a broad overview of recent scholarship on the Third Republic. Pasler's claim to take 'the history of this concept of public utility seriously' (p. xiii) is thus well justified. Yet the reader may sometimes wonder if she has taken republican discourse a little too seriously, blurring the distinction between political rhetoric and reality in her enthusiasm to present this case study as a model for contemporaries. The republican politicians seem consistently altruistic rather than pragmatic, desiring 'everyone to hear great music and benefit from the self-growth encouraged by musical practices' (p. 202), while more cynical conservatives fretted over popular predilections for the salacious pleasures of the cabaret. There are, moreover, frequent moments when Pasler moves from the assertion – genuinely present in contemporary rhetoric – that music *could* have demonstrable political consequences to the assumption – rather more difficult to justify – that it did. Pasler is optimistic (p. 155) that 'revolutionary music broke down the barriers of class and politics. It reminded everyone of a tradition the French shared as a nation, infusing a sense of fraternity, albeit limited, among elites, bourgeois and workers.' In her view, active listening led directly to active citizenship, encouraging concert-goers to 'make better choices in the voting booth' (p. 230) – even if only some of them were enfranchised. Yet, more evidence is needed to demonstrate that listening to music in nineteenth-century concert halls, where seating and ticket arrangements tended if anything to reinforce existing social hierarchies, necessarily broke down class or political barriers, encouraged the performance of a 'shared identity' (p. 627), or determined voting patterns. As Pasler herself admits, 'it is difficult to know whether these attitudes to music took hold among ordinary people' (p. 205), while mixed programmes, rather than refining critical judgement, could sometimes be 'incoherent juxtapositions leading to dizzying effects rather than enlightenment' (p. 584). One feels, therefore, that the argument would benefit from a clearer distinction between the discussion of music's political potential and the analysis of its political effects, as well as from a more detailed documentation of the 'active listener'. But perhaps some of this documentation is to come in the subsequent volumes of the trilogy. In all, *Composing the Citizen's* focus on music and politics has the merit of shedding light on a rich and fascinating field, and Pasler's continuing exploration of the theme should be well worth reading.

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