Eva Eggli
Probleme der musikalischen Wertästhetik im 19. Jahrhundert: ein Versuch zur schlechten Musik

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In this compact and interesting study Dr. Eggli searches for the criteria according to which music was adjudged poor in the 19th century and also for criteria of this kind that can be considered applicable in any musical epoch. The bulk of her dissertation is understandably devoted to a history of the origin and spread of poor music and to the critical reactions it provoked. Finally, there is an aesthetic analysis of four indisputably offensive examples that are printed in a musical appendix.

In using the term "bad music," the author intends to designate collectively many different kinds of inferiority, but she specifically excludes music that is poorly made as somewhat apart from the problem. Nineteenth-century concepts and definitions of poor music do in fact reveal various kinds of evaluation, making it evident at once that purely aesthetic considerations are often not in question, but social, ethical, stylistic, or cultural categories instead. We are accustomed to evaluate music according to feeling, Dr. Eggli points out, at least as far as the 19th century is concerned; but evaluation of this kind is strongly dependent upon personality and could usefully be supplanted by a more definite procedure.

What is musical value? the author asks at the outset. In what does it reside? She reviews various answers to the question. It has been regarded as objective, as depending—to take a major instance—on complexity of structure or on obstructions to a smooth and predictable course. The smallest value would accordingly inhere in music that was composed of a regular and simple flow of elements. But then most music for a larger public, and even many works of Mozart, Dr. Eggli holds, would be judged poor. It has been said, with perhaps more justice, that musical value will inhere chiefly in the most conspicuous element of the work under consideration, which is usually melody (especially in 19th-century homophony). Melodic value, furthermore, will rest largely on rhythm. But these principles only direct us towards our goal, they do not enable us to reach it. Even if we keep them in mind when we conduct our analysis, we shall again be confronted eventually with the insufficiency of objective criteria. Indeed, if music presents import or contains significance, its value would seem to be undefinable in terms of its objective properties alone. As a minimum our musical habits, experience, education, and understanding must be involved, as well as some stylistic frame of reference, and even the qualities of the performance of the work. Historical awareness and aesthetic attitudes are also brought into

play, and there are more transient factors of relevance in our state of health and readiness to listen. The composition itself may contain text, dance, or drama—components that certainly influence its value—while external larger factors of importance are its suitability to its social role, its place in furthering historical trends, its reflection of the personal style of its composer, and its individual distinctiveness.

After thus considering value in general, Dr. Eggli proceeds to the notion of *kitsch*, doubtless the most comprehensive designation for the various kinds of lesser value found in the 19th century. Again she considers several definitions of the concept: *kitsch* is described as inauthentic, shallow, or seductive. Most interestingly, it is said to lack autonomy, to arise through the consumer, so that its history is the history of its public. It is in particular a product of bourgeois leisure, a reaction to the demands and central importance of workday activity. In the sentimentality that characterizes *kitsch*, any feeling produced by the music becomes simply a means to incite or further a self-perpetuating process in which the listener is affected by his own sentiment. Accordingly, there is no music that can escape utilization; any composition is susceptible of being transformed into *kitsch*. To the uncultivated *kitsch* is not known as such, and it can be recognized only by historical sensitivity and comparative evaluation. Typically it will reveal itself in hackneyed, pretentious, or inflated motifs, in the combination of large means with trivial material, or in the attempt to achieve a grand effect with such material. If disproportion of this kind can be discovered by objective procedures, other properties—saccharinity, insinuativeness—can be detected only by aesthetic feeling. Finally, *kitsch* can be produced by synesthetic correspondence, exoticism, or even by the environment of a work when it is used in conjunction with a drama, for example, or placed in a novel setting such as a coffee house.

All these theoretical considerations are made more precise by the following historical section of the dissertation, while at the same time, other kinds of "badness" are subjected to examination, notably the empty mechanical quality connected with virtuosic piano music. Dr. Eggli arranges her historical discussion in seven divisions which succeed one another logically and seem to cover all of the important aspects of the problem: the bourgeois musical culture of the 18th century with its demands of simplicity, universality and naturalness and its interest in mechanical techniques of composing; the crisis and decay of musical taste in the 19th century; the influence of the piano and its superficial literature on musical taste; the low quality of piano instruction and methods; the decline of salon music with its interest in effect and its unmotivated titles; the dependence of piano music on opera; and the influence of virtuosity on music and on public taste. In her summary the author concludes that most criteria of value are relative to the era but that there also exist absolute criteria. Poor music will always contain or involve some kind of disproportion, produced characteristically by a change of environment or by an incongruence of means and purpose such as the emphasis of externals over import. There will thus be a destruction of unity: one of the elements within the work will predominate, or the environment or public will change, producing a stylistic, interpretive, or sociologic dislocation that will lessen or destroy the original value.

To complete the logical progression in concreteness from theory to history to analysis, the dissertation closes with an examination of the *Gebet einer Jungfrau* by Badarczewska, an *Air Suisse* of Adam, the Bach-Gounod *Méditation*, and the Liszt transcription of Schumann's *Widmung*. The illustrations are well-chosen and produce an interesting composite reaction—in the modern listener—of irritation, amusement, and incredulity.

Certain features of Dr. Eggli's book are rather too obviously reflective of the schoolroom: the regular alternation of statements and supporting citations, for example, and a heavy reliance on the opinions of others (which are presented in turn with little comment or evaluation) instead of the independent organization of ideas or the clarification of basic issues. But these perennial properties of dissertations possess at least the virtues of honesty and accuracy and are hardly to be considered serious blemishes. For the rest the present study is an excellent example of what musicology should more often be: it has a broad social perspective, it expands the traditional subject matter of musical history from elevated types of music to more humble kinds, and it turns our attention to matters of value in addition to those of style. This is a course most highly to be recommended, both for its own sake and for the light it casts on the very greatest achievements of art. How much more actual the world of Mendelssohn, Chopin, or Schumann becomes when we have read a study of this kind; and how much more we know of these composers of the first rank. For to know their artistic and social world fully, as Dr. Eggli's work will demonstrate, is also to understand their music more completely.

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James Tenney
Meta (+) Hodos: a phenomenology of twentieth-century musical materials and an approach to the study of form

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John R. White

The *Met-hod* of this paper may be called Martian. Examining the audible fabrications composed, executed, and heard down here, Tenney reports back on our present peculiar habits in disposing sound phenomena, perceiving their arrangements, and as we say we do, making "sense" of them. His descriptions are accurate and insightful, though on the whole he has to take our word that it all means what we say it does.

This is the phenomenological approach: to assume a naive, know-nothing stance and to describe anew and in great detail the factors of a par-