

# Knapp, Raymond. 2018. *Making Light: Haydn, Musical Camp, and the Long Shadow of German Idealism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Reviewed by Jon Churchill

A rich and timely study, Raymond Knapp's *Making Light: Haydn, Musical Camp, and the Long Shadow of German Idealism* bridges the work of Haydn and New World vernacular musics against the backdrop of German Idealism's durable influence. Knapp engages musical scores and abstract theoretical frameworks alike, and their dynamic cooperation illuminates overlooked features of, and similarities between, popular genres and the art music canon. This monograph offers a rich complement to the edited volume *Music & Camp* (Moore and Purvis 2018), though *Making Light's* unique aims and investigative depth require appreciation on their own terms.

The volume first establishes the genesis of German Idealism and the scope of its influence, which it accomplishes with lucid concision. In Knapp's formulation, music's divorce from its social groundings in the late eighteenth century yielded an environment ripe for the emergence of idealist thought. Beginning with the Kantian paradigm adopted by the Weimar-Jena intelligentsia, the author traces the rise of German Idealism and its conception of music as a sort of categorical imperative. In its examination of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century German musico-intellectual history, *Making Light* occupies a similar investigative space as Berthold Hoeckner's *Programming the Absolute* (2002), Melanie Lowe's *Pleasure and Meaning in the Classical Symphony* (2007), and Mark Evan Bonds' *Music as Thought and Absolute Music* (2015) (Knapp 2018, 295). However, Knapp does not dwell in German traditions. He seeks to understand the consequences of German Idealism, especially as expressed outside the German-speaking world (296).

Having outlined music's emergence as the art form *par excellence*, *Making Light* relates the shifting conceptions of music to contemporary nationalist currents. Engaging most heavily with Fredrich Schiller and Johan Gottfried Herder's theorizations, Knapp states that music—with its newfound status as a means of idealist expression—could place an individual in dialogue with larger entities, including the state and national consciousness (25). Public genres, which included the symphony, oratorio,

concerto, and opera, were especially adept at effecting such a communion. With this expansion into nationalism, German Idealism continued its musico-cultural entrenchment.

While this abstract discussion could have been transacted in broad theoretical terms, more tangible issues anchor Knapp's consideration of German Idealism's sedimentation in wider cultural and intellectual currents. Overlooked issues such as the rise of public concerts and even audiences' location within concert halls provide a refreshing foil to the density of intellectual histories. Furthermore, they inspire a reconsideration of listeners' roles in solidifying the influence of German Idealism.

Against this intertwined background of idealism and nationalism, Haydn emerges as an Aristotelian entertainer who engages his audiences through the musical surface. This decidedly social approach challenges the core of the German Idealist project, collapsing the distance between the subject and the infinite through inward contemplation (78). Rather than concerning himself with the infinite, Haydn connects with audiences through formal and syntactical manipulation. Knapp perceptively encapsulates this interpersonal dynamic as an "interactive dimension that involves not only...interplay with the other performers but also a heightened difference in perspective between the performers and any listeners who might be present" (53). He concludes that Haydn's works, and especially his chamber music, "entertains' more according to the word's historical derivation ('to hold mutually') than according to modern usage ('to engage')" (53).

Turning to Haydn's symphonies, chapter two introduces the composer's "dynamic of accommodation," which combines with tone to challenge German Idealism's expressive norms. This dynamic concerns musical elements at odds with features of musical order. Despite localized differences, listeners still assume that these composed irregularities will eventually align with the argument of the larger work (53-54). Tone, meanwhile, refers to the interplay of "dramatic" and "musical" narrative modes, where dramatic narrativity consists of the arrangement of performed musical events. Musical narrativity concerns the work's engagements with musical convention (55). Such methodological passages demand careful readings, but they provide invigorating lenses with which to appreciate established repertoires.

Knapp then applies this bipartite framework to Symphony No. 100 ("Military"), considering the interaction of dramatic and musical narrativity and their relation to the symphony's Janissary topic. Semiotic analyses of Haydn appear throughout the scholarly literature, but Knapp's narrative contributions yield an especially dynamic appreciation of the symphony.

The author notes that comic exaggeration causes a disjunction between narrative and tone, or the steady intrusion of the Janissary topic versus its lighthearted presentation. Despite this opposition, Knapp concludes that any friction between tone and narrative must eventually favor tone. To that end, the final resurgences of Janissary music index a coexistence between Turk and European (76).

Chapter three turns to the composer's later string quartets, specifically intricacies of their "social dynamic...and the subtle alteration of [that] dynamic that began to appear...soon after" (103). The chapter's opening frames the social dynamic of Haydn's quartets in terms of an inside/outside binary, with special attention to the musical interaction of the four quartet players. Knapp does not suggest a simple scenario in which the performers present material for listeners' appreciation, however. Instead, he proposes that the musicians establish distance between themselves and the audience. They also react separately to the music, which allows the audience to discover musical intricacies for themselves (110). Haydn turned this distance to his advantage and manipulated musical convention in a way that allowed the players to "entice and manipulate" their audience (120).

The Op. 64 quartets receive especially close analyses in terms of this inside/outside dynamic. Throughout the discussion of these works, Knapp engages specific musical features, like the belated entrance of the 'lark' melody in op. 64, no. 5, to articulate his theoretical framework. In this wide-ranging and often challenging project, Knapp again affirms a laudable balance between the music as written, listener experience, and the contexts in which the works emerged.

More generally, the third chapter interacts especially thoughtfully with theorizations of audience/performer/composer interactions in string quartet performance. Though engaging a variety of previous scholarship on the matter, Knapp dwells longest on the work of Gretchen Wheelock (1992) and Joseph Kerman (1994). In the end, *Making Light* strikes a balance between framing the quartet as a genre centered on performers and one reflecting the genre's broader social condition. Its framework allows the separate, but related, audience and ensemble to retain their respective agencies.

Having investigated the social aspects of Haydn's compositions, Knapp then explores the means by which sociability was surmounted by a dynamic that "imitated and fostered the demanding intensity of German Idealism's inwardness" (xiv). While Beethoven initially mimicked Haydn's musical openness, he later amplified the quartet's tendency for interiority. Brahms and Bartók would later build upon Beethoven's advancements through rhythmic complication and localized disjunctions, respectively (120).

In Beethoven's Op. 18 No. 6, Knapp explains, the scherzo is impossible for the audience to comprehend from their "outside" position, due to a severe rhythmic disjunction between the cello and upper voices. These complications also require significant attention to perform, turning the individual performers inward and further distancing them from each other and the audience (120). *Making Light's* exploration of quartet inwardness here adds a new—and more localized—appreciation of Beethoven's interiority, which is often inextricably linked with his "late period" despite the underlying problematics of the three-period model. The following explorations of Brahms' and Bartok's quartets deserve a special note, however, as they link aesthetic yields to technical features and thoroughly account for the features of a work within its cultural context.

While post-Haydn quartets embraced and amplified the tendency toward idealist interiority, New World genres such as minstrelsy and theatrical camp often challenged such inwardness. In chapter four, Knapp asserts that camp tastes in these idioms emerged from their challenges to German Idealism's paradigms, though such defiance cooled as popular styles courted authenticity. While the author makes a substantial contribution to the already robust Haydn literature, these final chapters are especially thought-provoking. Beyond investigating the overlooked camp sensibilities of popular genres, Knapp suggests an intriguing link between art music and popular music, long viewed as discrete entities. In this way, his project extends Steven Baur's (2001) explorations of the popular/art music divide in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America.

He begins by detailing minstrelsy's rebellion against German Idealism, which, like Haydn's music, is rooted in its social tendencies and emphasis on surface phenomena. Its accessible façade requires no interpretation by the audience, and digestibility replaces the idealist paradigm's focus on listener contemplation as a gateway to greater truths. Onstage, minstrelsy's resistance emerges from the performers' arrangement: the emcee figure ("Mr. Interlocutor") stands at the center of a long, curved "lineup" bookended by two percussionists. Whereas the interlocutor represents authority, the so-called "end men" constantly undermine him as the ensemble presents spoofs of canonic works (144-145). While minstrelsy is commonly, and rightfully, decried as racially insensitive by modern standards, Knapp does not dwell on well-rehearsed critiques. He provides a fresh appraisal of a fraught but culturally significant genre as theorized and practiced.

Camp's resistance is less overt, as it often lacks the performative strictures of minstrelsy. Like minstrelsy, however, it emphasizes surface elements and frames interpretation as something inauthentic and "put on" (142-143). Knapp identifies two main camp traditions: one rooted in the

“persona and aesthetic predilections of Oscar Wilde” and the other based in depictions of pirates, especially those in operetta (165). Several subtypes exist (high, unintentional, intentional, etc.), however, and the author’s discussion of their intricacies greatly enriches the conceptual vocabulary for future research. At some point in this chapter, a concise primer on camp would have benefited those unfamiliar with the concept. Readers will be able to follow the text’s arguments regardless, but some may find themselves overwhelmed as the monograph quickly delves into camp’s minutiae.

A study of pirate camp concludes the chapter, with a special focus on Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879) and Vincente Minelli’s *The Pirate* (1942). Knapp’s examination continues to use the earlier inside/outside dichotomy, and casts pirate camp as an amplification of the blatantly artificial (“outside”) that diverts from the work’s essential features (“inside”). This superficiality arises from a “flamboyant...version of masculinity through makeup, dressing up, acting up, and otherwise indulging the theatrical,” (210). In the end, however, pirate camp draws attention to the work’s significant core. The pirates in *Penzance*, for example, are eventually unmasked as “noblemen who have gone wrong”—they are simply “playing at pirates” (211). With this fact exposed, the camp element of piracy is revealed to be woven into the story. True to the author’s framework, it becomes content and surface alike.

Taking pirate camp as a starting point, the author concludes that operetta and musicals are essentially camp, as their underlying dramatic content chooses theatricality over existing reality (216). Knapp’s appreciation of camp elements in operetta contribute a valuable new perspective to Gilbert and Sullivan studies, even those works without pirates at their center. His project complements the more concrete aspects of other examinations, including Robert Fink’s (1990) influential “Rhythm and Text Setting in ‘The Mikado.’”

Theatrical music provided a basis for American 20<sup>th</sup>-century popular genres, and it used its camp elements to challenge German Idealism’s focus on interiority. More specifically, it “celebrat[ed] the human through humor and shared predilections and prejudices” (218). While such sociability brought popular music into the lives of everyday people, popularity came at the expense of respectability.

Chapter five explores the attempts to rehabilitate such popular music as “authentic,” a process that involved a distancing of vernacular genres from their social roots. Knapp notes that musical authenticity typically involves connections to larger conditions and self-expressivity (251) but is buoyed by sincerity and serious intention. Throughout the chapter, then, the author illustrates how authentic, sincere, and serious popular music

emphasizes its creator's inner vitality and therefore aligns more closely with German Idealist paradigms (223). In addition, Knapp claims that such elevated idioms make for better study in the academy. Advocates for genres without such overt aspirations—perhaps punk and hip-hop—may take exception to this last point, though it still encapsulates a broad scholarly tendency in new terms.

In service of the fifth chapter's larger aims, *Making Light* investigates two sub-areas of popular music's striving for authenticity. He first traces the roots of authenticity itself, citing Marshall Berman's claim in *The Politics of Authenticity* (1970) that authenticity's political goals originated in the Enlightenment-era foregrounding of individual freedoms. Such thought naturally led to an emphasis on individuality, a feature more in line with art music's Romanticism, German Idealism, and substantial popular genres. Knapp recognizes that the politically charged popular music of the 1960s gained authenticity through the same means (224) and acknowledges the mutual utility of frameworks for understanding the two musical idioms.

The second investigation concerns the performance of "covers," which according to 19<sup>th</sup>-century sensibilities constituted a merger of subjectivities between the composer and player. This fusion was emphasized by the performer's stoicism, a sort of anti-theatrical pose that was actually theatrical in itself (226). When faced with such a description, readers cannot help but understand this performance practice as campy, given the text's earlier descriptions of camp's "put on" and theatrical elements. While focused on 19<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire, Knapp's discussion of covers will surely inspire a reconsideration of their role in popular music and performance conventions more broadly.

With these three investigative foci—the rehabilitation of popular music, the intellectual history of authenticity, and the performance of covers—the fifth chapter stands as the densest and farthest-reaching portion of the text. In it, Knapp also examines authenticity relative to large ideas of sincerity and serious intent, categories of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, and the relationship of the individual to society. Knapp's discussion of authenticity in jazz and the several "fault lines" around it (genre, gender, class) stands out as especially provocative and sure to inspire further interest. For these diverse examinations and their depth, readers will likely count this chapter's explorations of intersecting cultural currents among the monograph's most challenging portions.

The sixth and final chapter examines the ethical implications of German Idealism's "formidable incursion into musical esthetics..." (253), but also serves as an exceptionally lucid recapitulation. A review of high camp's tenets begins the chapter and highlights its potential manifestation

as aesthetic failure. Such failure may appear as discrepancies in tone or sensibility, as when a work makes light of serious subject matter or vice versa. Such is the case of “Springtime for Hitler” in Mel Brooks’ *The Producers* (1967), the subject of the volume’s culminating analysis. Knapp applies the concepts accrued throughout the book to a thorough assessment of “Springtime for Hitler,” which perceptively includes the audience and resultant social dynamic in its appreciation of the song’s high camp.

Knapp concludes that, while Haydn’s symphonies and quartets do not fit directly into histories of high camp, his music shares many of its aesthetic features (263). Its inside/outside dynamic prefigures camp’s tiers of receptive environments and Haydn’s privileging of surface detail is also common in camp expressions. Additionally, both Haydn and camp “insist... on a perspective broad enough to encompass both laughter and seriousness...as appropriate responses to music” (265). Haydn disappears from the monograph for stretches of time, somewhat surprisingly re-emerging in these final pages, and his music could ostensibly be used to illustrate camp concepts more regularly. Still, Knapp’s final syntheses bring the monograph to a satisfying conclusion, and the titular composer’s occasional disappearance is more a byproduct of the text’s breadth.

Incorporating passages of tremendous critical theoretical depth and analyses of musical features, *Making Light* considers instrumental music, musical theatre, and film from various and often provocative perspectives. Its smaller sub-studies require considerable intellectual engagement, but greatly enrich the monograph’s grand narrative, itself notable for its perceptive exploration of a once-liminal space between musical traditions. In sum, readers interested in fresh approaches to Haydn’s catalogue or camp in American musical culture will find *Making Light* an intriguing study of marginalized musical features across canonic boundaries.

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