

SHORT LOAN

Between Romanticism and Modernism

*Four Studies in the Music of the
Later Nineteenth Century*



Carl Dahlhaus

Translated by Mary Whittall

Includes the Nietzsche fragment,
"On Music and Words,"

translated by Walter Kaufmann

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Nationalism and Music



The history of ideas is held in suspicion by materialists, on the grounds that it is liable, either intentionally or innocently, to turn reality upside down. Even the most orthodox of Marxists, however, can hardly deny that there are some ideas which are not exhausted by the function of being a reflection and a vehicle of economic and social structures and processes. While they may be reducible, in the final analysis, to economic and social terms, such ideas are imbued with an independent existence and significance which may be illusory but nevertheless gives them the power to intervene positively in historical developments. Although an outside observer (as opposed to one whose understanding and interpretation have been formed from within) can see the associations between ideas and particular interests, that is, can recognize their "ideological" tendency, that does not justify condemning them as conceptual phantoms which must be expelled from a history based on facts. Ideas are historical facts too. A historian who distrusts "ultimate" causes and single explanations, because they obviously have more to do with the explainer's desire for simplicity than with the true nature of the matter in hand, need not suffer any methodological twinges of conscience if he confines

himself to describing nexuses instead of attempting reductions. He can perfectly well expound the relations between economic, social, aesthetic, and technical musical factors and the ideas current at the time, without being obliged in addition to commit himself, as a matter of principle, to adopting any particular hierarchy of points of view—to an affirmation of the invariable primacy of cultural history over sociological interpretations, or vice versa. The notion that he must make a metaphysical confession of some kind—for this is what it amounts to—is an imposition that he has every right to refuse. (If he holds aloof from the battle over “ultimate” principles, it naturally does not mean that he abrogates the right to ascribe greater importance to one factor rather than another, when he has arguments rather than axioms to support his view: eclecticism has always been the philosophy of historical studies and no historian need be ashamed of it.)

1. The “*Volksggeist*” hypothesis

There is hardly a historian left, whether bourgeois or socialist,¹ who still resists the view that the concept of nationality—in music as in other fields—is not an invariable constant but something which alters in response to historical factors. But one of the factors in the nineteenth century which influenced the expression of nationality in music was the idea of nationalism, an idea for which it can be claimed without exaggeration that it not merely created a concept out of existing elements—things that separately could be defined as national—but that it also intervened in the existing situation and changed it (instead of merely interpreting it). Like historicism, a theoretical approach to music which influenced its historical development, nation-

1. Z. Lissa (“Über den nationalen Stil in der Musik,” in *Aufsätze zur Musikästhetik*, Berlin, 1969, p. 239) exaggerates when she claims that Marxist historians are the only ones to have placed nationalism in its historical context; some liberal bourgeois historians, such as Hans Kohn, are also in no doubt as to the historical circumstances limiting and affecting the phenomenon.

alism had a retroactive effect on the facts of which it was, or purported to be, the reflection. Adoption of the theory that nationality, the collective spirit of a people, was the most profound motive force in history was partly responsible for creating the phenomenon on which the theory was based—as the example of the “national” interpretation of folk music will show. (There is more to a musical fact than its physical foundations, its acoustic substratum. It has always been formed categorially; and in the nineteenth century the categories that influenced the constitution of the facts of an aesthetic case included the idea of nationalism, which can therefore be said, without turning reality upside down, to have assisted in creating musical facts.)

The word “nationalism” is not being used pejoratively but simply descriptively, as in works of political history. It designates a belief which, in the course of the nineteenth century from the French Revolution to the outbreak of the First World War (or, in the history of music, from the *Eroica* to *Das Lied von der Erde*) became the governing idea without always being held by those in government: the belief that it was to his nation—and not to a creed, a dynasty, or a class—that a citizen owed the first duty in a clash of loyalties.² (The socialist nationalism which has gradually displaced bourgeois nationalism since the Mexican revolution of 1910 is an ambiguous phenomenon, if one postulates a clearcut hierarchy of loyalties.)

In the bourgeois nationalism of the nineteenth century, the political element—the claim to the citizen's first loyalty—mingled with the idea, originally formulated by Johann Gottfried Herder, that it was “the spirit of the people” (*der Volksgeist*) which formed the truly fundamental, creative, and stimulating element in art as in other human activities. According to this idea, for instance, it was the spirit of the people of Norway that demanded musical expression in and through Edvard Grieg, and not Grieg (as an

2. H. Kohn, *Die Idee des Nationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1962), pp. 17f.

individual rather than as the representative of his nation) who first created what is thought to be quintessentially Norwegian in music.³ Do individual characteristics proceed out of the national substance, or is the concept of what is national formed by generalization on the basis of individual characteristics? (In the latter case, the concept is necessarily formed at a secondary stage, but it is no less an "aesthetic fact" for that.)

It would be a grave distortion of the role that the "Volksgeist" hypothesis played in the history of music to allow an unbalanced emphasis to fall on folk music and the interest that the folklorists began to show in it. What is far more characteristic of the nineteenth century is the idea that the national spirit which manifested itself in folk music at an elementary level was the same spirit which finally produced classicism—a national classicism. The musical classicism of the late eighteenth century was regarded primarily as German, not as a universal style embracing French and Italian composers as well. The enthusiasm for folk music and the aspiration to classicism were complementary, not contradictory. Classicism was seen as the final, perfect expression of something which first took shape in folk music; the *noble simplicité* of the classical style represented the simplicity of folk music, renewed and transformed.

Nationalism in fact underwent a profound alteration during the nineteenth century. In the first half of the century the "nationalist" was also, perhaps paradoxically, a "cosmopolitan," a "citizen of the world." But after 1849 nationalism adopted a haughtily exclusive or even aggressive stance, and although it was the oppressors who initiated this unhappy change and were the primary offenders under it, the attitude of the oppressed was equally affected by it. So long as nationalist movements supported the aspirations of

3. A. Einstein (*Die Romantik in der Musik*, Munich, 1950 [*Music in the Romantic Era*, New York, 1947], p. 349) inclines to the view that a national style is, to a considerable extent, an individual style appropriated *a posteriori* by national feeling.

every other nation to the freedom from internal and external tyranny that they sought for their own, their horizons were cosmopolitan; Polish nationalism was a "matter of European concern," and Michelet, the "high priest" of liberalism, even spoke in terms of a "*fraternité des patries*."⁴ In its later guise, nationalism was introverted and xenophobic, and fostered policies favoring national aggrandizement—policies that were regarded as "realistic" by comparison with the "idealistic" fancies of "cosmopolitanism." In the second half of the nineteenth century nationalism did not draw support and encouragement from the development of other nations, but regarded it as a threat.

In the sphere of music, late Wagner has been accused of aggressive nationalism; although there are some grounds for the charge it is not altogether a just one. (Some particularly sensitive critics have even believed that they could detect in certain passages in his work a musical expression of *Machtpolitik* and an affinity between what is aesthetically overpowering in his music and the use of force in spheres far removed from aesthetics.) But in 1851, in *Opera and Drama*, Wagner was still arguing against the "nationalist trend," which in his view was inimical to "the general human lot" (*das Allgemeinmenschliche*) and served the interests of the old order.⁵ In the terminology of Wagner's cultural and philosophical writings, "national," "historical," and "conventional" formed a grouping which he compared unfavorably with "natural" and "original."

Most nineteenth-century composers tried to effect a compromise between cosmopolitan ideas, which had not faded altogether, and their own sense of national identity, which was something that none of them could ignore in the climate of the times. Even after the mid-century, and in spite of the inducements to support the more aggressive form of nationalism, the "national schools" in general pre-

4. H. Kohn, "Begriffswandel des Nationalismus," in *Merkur* 198 (1964):704.

5. Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3:259ff.

served a cosmopolitan outlook, insofar as they had no intention that the national music which they created or felt themselves on the way to creating should be excluded from universal art (a difficult thing to define); on the contrary, the national character of their music was what would ensure for it a place in universal art (rather as Hegel's "spirits of the peoples" partook of the "world spirit"). The national substance of Russian or Czech music was a condition of its international worth, not an invalidation. And it would surely be inappropriate to say "coloring" instead of "substance" and "commercial success" instead of "worth"; of course the charms of the foreign and the picturesque played a part, but unless there is nothing more to those charms than a passing novelty—and that is hardly a suitable term to use of nineteenth-century Slavonic music—they must partake to some minimal degree in the basic elements of a common world understanding, that is, they must be "substantial." At first sight the foreign and the familiar would seem to exert diametrically opposite attractions, but in fact they contradict and counteract each other far less than they support and enhance each other: an exotic setting and coloring only afford clearer definition and vividness to the familiar common elements. The German prehistory which Wagner chose as the setting for his representation of "the general human lot" is just such an exotic locale.

It was not the principle of reconciling a national with a cosmopolitan outlook that caused contention between nineteenth-century composers (at least, not as long as they were writing music), but merely the precise relationship between the two. Schumann, for instance, in a review he wrote in 1836, praised Chopin's "strong and original nationality"; he meant that the national character expressed in Chopin's music was authentic, because it was the composer's own ("original") nationality, not assumed, as if a non-Pole wrote "in the Polish manner." But he also said that "the little interest of his native soil has had to be sacrificed to the cosmopolitan interest, and the overly special Sarmatic physiognomy is

already less pronounced in his more recent works."⁶ It is not that Schumann would have thought of the universal and the national as mutually exclusive alternatives (and the accuracy or otherwise of the statement as a judgment of Chopin is beside the point). Rather than paraded as a "little interest," as something isolated and insular, national traits should be absorbed into the universal, the cosmopolitan, but they should by no means be extinguished. His national origins ("original nationality") should constitute a source of energy, a substance on which the creative artist can feed, but they should not be his ultimate aesthetic authority. In other words, nationality as such, which is perfectly reconcilable with cosmopolitanism, is not what Schumann would have wanted to see "sacrificed," but the narrow nationalism that through fear or arrogance is incapable of looking further than itself.

Nationalism, the belief in the spirit of a people as an active creative force, is an idea with a character and a function which it is simplistic to identify with the phenomenon of a national style: in other words, they will not be successfully pinned down by the mere act of describing tangible musical characteristics. Distinct national styles can be discerned in polyphonic music from the thirteenth century onwards, although the outlines are dim to begin with and although the concept of nationality has undergone some changes. But it was only during the nineteenth century, only after the French Revolution, that nationalism came to dominate Europe as a mode of thought and a structure of feeling.

If applied rigorously, however, a distinction between national style as a musical fact and nationalism as a creed imposed on music from without is far too crude to be an accurate reflection of the historical and aesthetic reality. For a musical fact is not something pieced together from precise, unambiguous components but the result of the categorical formation of an acoustic substratum, a formation which

6. R. Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, ed. H. Simon (Leipzig, 1888), 1:188.

presupposes or includes aesthetic and ideological elements as well as structural and syntactical factors. Nothing gives a historian who does not subscribe to any particular aesthetic dogma the right to declare an ideological factor, such as nationalism in music, to be *a priori* "non-aesthetic." If a piece of music is felt to be characteristically national, that is an inseparable feature of the work, not something extraneous.

It is no doubt possible to distinguish between central and peripheral elements in the complex which it is convenient to call the "aesthetic features," but nothing would be gained by denying the peripheral elements any part at all in the whole. Moreover the criteria according to which the distinctions are made are not fixed and immutable—the assumption that what is structural is central and what is affective is peripheral is misleading—but are dependent on changing historical, regional, and social circumstances. In a national anthem such motivic work as exists is of slight aesthetic significance and the most important element is the expression of national pride and emotion. But one would be on slippery ground if one described that element as something "extra-musical," because "extra-musical" is not a descriptive term, as it may seem, but a normative one which implies a negative judgment made from the standpoint of a one-sided aesthetic—Hanslick's aesthetic theory of the "purely musical." The concept of what constitutes music is a historically changing category, and it is a principle of historical justice that phenomena should be measured by their own standards, not alien ones. If program music is judged according to the formalistic concept of music, the verdict has been pronounced before the case has even been argued; the implications of the terminology have already condemned it. Much the same applies to the idea of nationalism as an aesthetic factor; if a composer intended a piece of music to be national in character and the hearers believe it to be so, that is something which the historian must accept as an aesthetic fact, even if stylistic analysis—the attempt

to "verify" the aesthetic premise by reference to musical features—fails to produce any evidence. There is no line of argument which would make it permissible to leave ideological "appearances" out of account in assessing the aesthetic "reality."

The national significance or coloring of a musical phenomenon is to no small degree a matter of the way it is received by audiences,⁷ and that too is a relevant "fact." A piece of folk music, interpolated in a context of polyphonic art music, is by no means essentially "national"; the hearers may well receive it in the light of a primarily social or regional point of view, as a picturesque example of the art of the lower classes or of the population of some faraway place. It was not until the age of nationalism that folk art came to be regarded as a national, rather than a regional or social, phenomenon. But although the interpretation put on the work of art is a secondary consideration it has to be taken into account as one of the aesthetic features: to separate the "facts" of the music, the work "in itself," from the spirit in which it is received under the influence of nationalism would require an act of metaphysical violence.

On the other hand a national style cannot usefully be defined as the sum of the common attributes of all the works written by composers who belong to the same nation—especially in view of the number of composers whose musical nationality is a matter for debate (in cases like Liszt and Handel, it is not necessarily the same as their ethnic nationality).⁸ Mechanical inductive processes are already of questionable value in the definition of stylistic epochs (is musical classicism nothing more than a compendium of the common characteristics of the works of Haydn and Pleyel, Mozart and Koželuch?) and they are completely inadequate when it comes to national styles. It seems rather—although there has to be some basis in stylistic fact—that what does

7. Z. Lissa, "Über den nationalen Stil in der Musik," p. 230.

8. A. Einstein, *Nationale und universale Musik* (Zurich, 1958), pp. 236ff.

and does not count as national depends primarily on collective opinion.

In the nineteenth century this opinion was affected by the idea of nationalism insofar as the "Volksgeist" hypothesis influenced people, without their being very conscious of it, firstly to inject national sentiments into what were originally neutral stylistic means (e.g. characteristics of musical landscape painting common to all European music), secondly to replace or transform the previously primarily regional or social character of folk music by receiving and interpreting it in a national spirit, and thirdly to single out national traits—which were discernible in music in earlier centuries too, without receiving any special attention—as the essential and fundamental qualities. Taken to its logical conclusion, though in fact no nationalist ever went so far, this process might have led to the self-evidently absurd assertion that the differences between Chopin's ("national") mazurkas and his ("non-national") waltzes are far more important than their similarities.

Thus the phenomenon of national musical style is so closely fused in the nineteenth century with the idea of nationalism—with the hypothesis of the spirit of the people as an active and creative substance and source of energy—that any attempt to enforce a rigid separation of "stylistic" and "ideological" elements would be not only impossible but also inappropriate.

It is customary among students of the period to restrict the concept of musical nationalism to the so-called national schools, which consciously sought to separate themselves from the Italian, French, and German traditions and put themselves on an equal footing.⁹ (The strength of the French and Italian influences is generally underestimated in this re-

9. D. J. Groux, *A Short History of Opera*, 2d ed. (New York, 1965), pp. 454ff.; A. Einstein (*Die Romantik in der Musik*) summarizes the development of the German, French, and Italian traditions as "universalism within a national framework" (pp. 234ff.), while he assembles the "national schools" under the umbrella heading of "nationalism" (pp. 343ff.).

spect.) It is a restriction which does not really stand up to scrutiny, for in spite of all the different degrees and variations in its manifestations, the bourgeois nationalism of the nineteenth century was a pan-European phenomenon, and there is as much justification for including *Der Freischütz*, *La muette de Portici*, and *Nabucco* in a list of works whose conception or reception were influenced by nationalism as there is for including *Ivan Susanin*, *Halka*, and *Bánk bán*. And it is precisely Russian, Czech, Hungarian and Norwegian historians of music who should be particularly sensitive about the concept of a "national school," for the very expression implies, tacitly but unmistakably, that "national" is an alternative to "universal" and that "universal" was the prerogative of the "central" musical nations. The term "national school" is a covert admission that the phenomenon it describes is peripheral. (The word "school" is in any case ill-chosen, because the school of the "national" composers was in point of fact not a national one, but the German one, insofar as they did not, like some of the Russians, do without schooling altogether.)

On the other hand serious consideration should be given to the possibility that the different manifestations of musical nationalism were affected by the types of political nationalism and the different stages in political evolution reached in each country: by the difference between those states where the transition from monarchy to democracy was successful (Great Britain, France) and unsuccessful (Russia), or between states formed by the unification of separate provinces (Germany, Italy) and those formed by the secession of new nation-states from an old empire (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Finland).¹⁰ It is uncertain whether there are any correlations, and, if so, whether they are at all significant; as yet hardly any attention has been paid to the possibility of their existence, since musical

10. T. Schieder, "Europa im Zeitalter der Nationalstaaten," in *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart, 1968), p. 24.

nationalism has been approached almost exclusively from the point of view of writing national histories of music, which have emphasized what is nationally unique or distinctive rather than what is common to many or all European nations. The fact is, however, that as long as descriptions of the unique, distinctive character of the music of one nation do not include comparisons with other manifestations of musical nationalism, the outlines remain imperfectly drawn. The discovery (or the construction, as the case may be) of a national musical character, which was felt to distinguish a nation from the pan-European tradition, was itself a pan-European phenomenon. And the delineation of a national style should begin not by considering how it stands out against the background of a universal European style (which was to no small degree simply a school style) but by comparing it with other national styles and other concepts of what constitutes a national style. National styles differ not only in their substances but also in the ways in which they are national, as well as in the aesthetic, social, and political functions they fulfill.

2. Nationalism and folk music

The concept of nationality, as one of the aesthetic attributes of music, was affected in two ways by nineteenth-century nationalism and the "*Volksgeist*" hypothesis. In some cases interest and attention were focused upon it but in others nationalism actually created it or at the very least moulded it by reinterpretation of existing traditions. In the eighteenth century—a period in which the merits and failings of French and Italian "taste" were the subject of vehement debate—a national musical style was still not so much the ethnic character which a composer inherited at birth as a convention of writing which he could select and exchange for another at will. (There is no justification for calling Hasse's music in the Italian style "imitative," that is, for judging him according to the principle that musical nationality must not be assumed but "original," as Schumann

put it; and even Meyerbeer is best grasped according to eighteenth-century categories.) As a convention, with its own recognized repertory of techniques and traits, a national style in music was something defined and comprehensible.

Things were different in the nineteenth century. As the idea that "original nationality" was something that should work in music "from the inside outwards" gained acceptance, the progress it made was exactly matched by the growth in the aesthetic significance of national characteristics and by a simultaneous loss of definition. Berlioz was felt to be a characteristically French composer; but it proved almost impossible to summarize his national traits in terms of recognizable concepts—at all events it was far more difficult than finding appropriate means to describe the "French manner" of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries (the elements of which had originated with the Italian Lully).

One possible way of escape from the labyrinthine difficulties of finding adequate definitions of what constitutes national "substance" in music is offered by the hypothesis that in the nineteenth century—that is, in the age in which it received more emphasis than ever before—the concept of nationality related not so much to substance as to function (though this is contrary to the nationalist interpretation itself, which regarded nationality as a "substantial" element). The difference can be illustrated by the analogy of Bach's sacred cantatas. There are few features (such as the use of quotations from chorales) to distinguish them from his secular cantatas either stylistically or in melodic substance; this is the condition that makes parody possible. Their liturgical function was almost entirely independent of style, as long as the composer did not actually adopt the idiom of the streets; their "operatic" quality gave rise to some criticism but was not prohibited, and although the tendency to equate the spiritual with archaism exercised some influence it never gained the upper hand.

It is possible to regard nationality in a similar light, as a

quality which rests primarily in the meaning invested in a piece of music or a complex of musical characteristics by a sufficient number of the people who make and hear the music, and only secondarily, if at all, in its melodic and rhythmic substance. To express it summarily: so long as gypsy music in Hungary was regarded as authentically Hungarian, it was authentically Hungarian; the historical error has to be taken at its face value as an aesthetic truth, for it takes a collective agreement to stamp certain traits as national ones, and in the nineteenth century the agreement was influenced by a collective national consciousness represented by the will to assert a national identity. (Distinguishing between the melodic and rhythmic "substance" and the national "function" of a piece of music does not imply that the national element is something "extra-musical" imposed on the "reality" of the music from without. Function is another aesthetic fact whose narrowly formalistic definition by Hanslick is by no means valid for the age as a whole.)

The hypothesis that the "semantic" interpretation of the national element in nineteenth-century music must be based on a "pragmatic" interpretation (in the terminology of linguistics) is not intended to deny or diminish the importance of folk music, which composers might invoke by allusion or by integration into their own style. The clearest expression of musical nationalism was folklorism. However, it is not clear how far the "ethnic raw material" in which nineteenth-century nationalism purported to discover the roots of national musical styles belongs of its original nature in the category of national at all. The assumption that folk music is always and above all the music of a nation—a view which was taken to be self-evidently true in the nineteenth century—is questionable and ill-founded (which has not prevented it from invading the musical history books).

In the uses to which the expression "the people" is put, referring variously to the lower strata of the population and to the nation as a whole, the concept of the lower classes

mingles with the idea of nationality.¹¹ This is a source of further confusion, insofar as nineteenth-century nationalism was not at all an expression of self-awareness on the part of the lower classes but a bourgeois phenomenon, while for the nobility dynastic loyalties counted more than national ones. The appropriation of folk music by the bourgeoisie, in order to reassure themselves that their national feelings had roots and that their own existence therefore had authentic "originality," was an appeal across the social barriers. The view of the life of the "people" as picturesque, as it was seen in the age of Enlightenment, showed an awareness of the barriers, but they were ignored in the romantic evocation of folk ways and folk art as the expression of a deeper layer of human life and experience which had been overlaid by civilization.

According to Walter Wiora the melodic types of European folk music were transmitted and circulated "not among ethnic groups, for the most part, but among cultural and occupational groups such as shepherds or minstrels."¹² Thus the national element (the equation of which with the popular is a misconception that prevents clear understanding) would be in large measure only secondary in importance. It could, of course, be objected that national musical character is hard to define because it is frequently manifested in traits—such as tone-colors or subtle rhythmic and agogic variations—which are very difficult to describe or notate and therefore in academic studies often fail to receive their due weight. (If this were correct, then the impression that nationality has only a small part to play in older folk music might owe less to the true nature of things than to the man-

11. The same applies to the German *das Volk*, which cannot even allow the distinction English makes between "people" in this double sense and the now primarily technical, adjectival "folk," so that the association between terms like *Volksgeist* and *Volksmusik* is even more compelling than that between "the spirit of the people" and "folk music" [*Translator*].

12. W. Wiora, "Über die sogenannten nationalen Schulen der osteuropäischen Musik," in *Historische und systematische Musikwissenschaft* (Tutzing, 1972), p. 340.

ner in which it has been researched.) On the other hand, there is little doubt that until the late eighteenth century, as has been said, it was not national differences but regional and social differences that mattered in folk music, and this is how it would have seemed to the people who made the music as much as to external observers. National consciousness was an exception, even in politics; particular circumstances, such as the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century, might engender it, but otherwise it was a prerogative of the educated and was not found, in particular, among the classes where folk music had its roots. It never entered anyone's head to look upon national characteristics, in the idealized form of "the spirit of the people," as the source and substance of every "authentic" intellectual and artistic activity.

It was the nineteenth century which chose to believe—on very shaky grounds—that national character was the primary and essential quality of folk music (the equation of "primary" with "essential" was a notion of the romantics) and that folk music expresses the spirit of a people (understood as the spirit of a nation, first and most clearly manifested in the culture of the lower classes). At all events these beliefs were not established facts supporting nationalism but pious hopes created by nationalism itself. What is taken to be the premise and substance of nationalism is in fact its consequence and corollary.

Although the national character of folk music is—at least partly—the result of a latter-day, "sentimental" reinterpretation, that does not mean that the feelings and associations linked with it are in any way invalid or unfounded. To treat a feature that emerges at a secondary stage as immaterial is to fall into the trap of assuming that the essence of a thing derives exclusively from its original state. But there is no reason to regard the exterior appearance of a thing as disposable simply because it formed later.

If on the one hand, as it appears (the problems have by no means yet been solved but at least they have been posed,

after certain false assumptions have been cleared away), folk music is to no small degree regional or even local in its character and coloring, on the other hand some of the traits which were felt to be specifically national in the nineteenth century actually stretch far across national boundaries. This is a fact which remained concealed because the study of folk music was carried out only on a national level. But to write off the nationalist interpretation of folk music as an aesthetic error which is now being set right by empirical research would also be a mistake: a misuse of the categories. Aesthetically it is perfectly legitimate to call bagpipe drones and sharpened fourths typically Polish when they occur in Chopin and typically Norwegian when they occur in Grieg, even if some historians are irritated by the paradox of something which is common to national music generally and yet is felt to be specifically national in the consciousness of the individual nations. Firstly the national coloring does not reside in separate, isolated traits, but in the context in which they are found. Secondly the aesthetic element, the validity, has to be distinguished from the history of the origin and growth, the genesis: if there is a class of people among whom the music is transmitted and who recognize a body of characteristics as specifically national, regardless of the provenance of the separate parts, then those people constitute an aesthetic authority. Archaisms which diverge from the norms of the universal classical style—like the bagpipe drone and the sharpened fourth—are accepted as national features; the archaic and the national are linked by two things, the "Volksgeist" hypothesis and a denial of the universal. Local reinterpretation in this fashion is a historical process and creates its own aesthetic legitimacy.

3. On the aesthetics of national expression in music It is by no means so self-evident or inevitable that the course of developments in music should be affected by the predominant ideas of the age as has been supposed by historians of ideas (and by some Marxists, who may have "turned the his-

tory of ideas the right way up" but nevertheless remain substantially dependent on it). Neither the spirit of the period of political ferment preceding the outbreak of revolution in 1848 nor the naturalism of late nineteenth-century literature left any perceptible traces behind in German music, other than a few quotations of the *Marseillaise*. Besides, the idea that all areas of life are permeated to an exactly equal degree by the spirit of an age comes to grief on the erroneous implication that wherever common or analogous traits recur they are, as a matter of principle, more significant than distinguishing or divergent features. It is easy enough to discover features of Jugendstil or art nouveau in music written around 1900, but they are peripheral not central elements. Contrary to the assumptions of the historians of ideas, the linking, associative elements may be merely epiphenomena. "External" and "internal" circumstances, general and specifically musical conditions had to coincide in the nineteenth century in order to make it possible for the idea of nationalism to have musical consequences which belong to history, rather than merely to the spoil-heaps of the past. If the technical and aesthetic conditions had not been ripe for it, nationalism would have played no part in the history of music, however great its influence in politics and society. The style of music can be dictated but not its quality.

It is true that at first glance the stage reached in the evolution of compositional technique seems to have been extremely unfavorable. Nationalism took its stand on folk music—and in the nineteenth century, except in Norway, that meant a monodic tradition.¹³ How then could it have any significant effect on compositional development in an age when musical progress was regarded as a condition of

13. I. Bengtsson ("Romantisch-nationale Strömungen in deutscher und skandinavischer Musik," in *Norddeutsche und nordeuropäische Musik*, ed. C. Dahlhaus and W. Wiora, Kassel, 1965) rightly stresses that the study of musical nationalism would have to take as its starting point the conception of folk music that was entertained in the nineteenth century, and not the insights gained from modern ethnological studies.

artistic authenticity and was understood before all else as ever greater subtlety of harmonic elaboration? It was only in the twentieth century, with Bartók and Stravinsky, that rhythm and melody were taken as the starting points in mediating between folk music on the one hand and art music's search for novelty on the other. This apparent drawback was in fact an advantage. Folk music was integrated into the context of nineteenth-century harmonic writing, but because it was originally monodic (or performed in heterophonic variants) it resisted assimilation into the well-worn formulas of major-minor tonality; for that very reason it challenged composers to invent unusual harmonies, to make experiments which in turn affected harmony in music unconnected with folk music, and so influenced the mainstream of developments. The experimentation had the advantage, moreover, of having a goal, of being undertaken in response to a specific, well-defined problem.

If harmony which purported to be in the spirit of folk music stimulated musical "progress," it was precisely because it was at odds with the predominant musical tendency, as represented by Wagner. (The same is true to a lesser degree of the "historicist" style of harmony which grew out of the fashion for harmonizing plainsong, a process which left its mark on some of the works of Saint-Saëns.) It provided an alternative, which also had in it the seeds of future development rather than leading up a historical blind alley. The harmonic style of *Tristan*, governed by the dominant and colored by a chromaticism which derives from harmonic ambiguity, is confronted, in works like Grieg's *Slåtter*, with a modally based harmonic style and with a chromaticism determined primarily by melodic, contrapuntal features.

The second precondition which enabled nationalism to intervene in the development of music was aesthetic. The pre-eminent aesthetic principle of the nineteenth century was the dogma of originality, an ideal which gave

rise to a constant search for novelty.¹⁴ The seal of aesthetic authenticity was placed only on what was unfamiliar; imitation was no longer, as in the past, applauded as a pious honoring of tradition, of what was "old and true," but condemned as epigonism, the products of which were intellectually disreputable, however faultless they might be technically. (Social historians explain the search for originality in terms of the artists' need to attract attention in the market-place. This has a tempting simplicity but it is hardly the whole truth. When the market-place is catering for mass consumption it requires not only eye-catching originality but also the ceaseless repetition and quarrying of ideas which have already proved successful, whereas the art music of the nineteenth century universally acknowledged the aesthetic principle that a composer must not become his own epigone, something for which social history has not yet provided an explanation.)

But the French Revolution cast a long shadow over the nineteenth century, and art music was also confronted with the obligation to abandon aristocratic and esoteric goals and become democratic and popular. At least in principle—even though it failed to take effect in reality—opera, from Méhul and Cherubini onwards, and the symphony, in Haydn's last works and in Beethoven, addressed themselves to "the people" or "human kind." This lofty and humane principle, enjoining the blending of the significant with the popular, was of course utopian, but that does not alter the fact that it reflected the aesthetic, social, and moral intention which informed both the symphony and revolutionary and romantic opera—genres of musical mass appeal. (There is no reason why Germany should have a monopoly of operatic composers to whom the term "romantic" in the wider sense may properly be applied: as well as Weber, Marschner, and Wagner, their number includes Bellini, Donizetti, and Meyerbeer.)

14. K. von Fischer, "Versuch über das Neue bei Beethoven," in *Kongressbericht Bonn 1970*, pp. 3ff.

This ideal of popularity was obviously in direct opposition to the search for constant novelty enforced by the doctrine of originality; something for which the listener is unprepared, and which requires a certain amount of application to understand, is not simultaneously capable of being appreciated and welcomed by a wider public—or so it would seem. But musical nationalism offered a way of escape from the dilemma, and this is what gave it the power to intervene in the aesthetic situation. Music which was prompted to harmonic experiment by procedures or material originating in folk music was on the one hand technically progressive, thus meeting the requirement of novelty; on the other hand its appeal to national sentiment—or, for foreigners, its picturesque charm—could make it immediately popular. Tinged with folk hues and yet uncompromised in its artistic pretensions, this kind of music seemed to suspend or resolve the conflict between the avant-garde and popular taste. (An idea which was closely associated with the expression of nationality in music and at the same time tried to reconcile artistic integrity with popularity was that of the "appearance of familiarity.")

Nevertheless, the popularity so achieved remained confined to the bourgeoisie: the "spirit of the people" that was thought to speak in the music of the "national schools" was heard only by the educated, not by the "people" themselves. The artistic character of this music was separated from the folk music it invoked by a social gulf which amounted sometimes to a ravine. If Smetana had the tact and sensitivity to refuse to plunder the arsenal of folk music in his search for a "national" style of musical expression, this was probably in part because he was conscious that the "native" folk music of his own country was "alien" to the bourgeoisie and could be invoked only across the social barriers. But when it comes to invoking or imitating a model, folklorism—though nationalist in inspiration—is no different in principle from the exoticism or historicism of the nineteenth century. The process of gathering heterogeneous

material from exotic sources and incorporating it into the here and now in art is aesthetically and technically exactly the same whether the remoteness of the sources is regional, social, or historical in kind. (Chauvinist criticism did not prevail upon Bartók to reduce the scope of his exploration of folk music, which went beyond the frontiers of Hungary.) Admittedly it was generally held that the emotions and association generated by one's "own" folk music went "deeper" than those aroused by the exotic and alien; yet there is reason to doubt whether patriotism was a more powerful emotional force in the nineteenth century than the craving for the exotic.

The only logical conclusion to be drawn from the Herderian thesis of the creativity and active historical influence of the "*Volksgeist*" is that the seal of aesthetic legitimacy and authenticity can be conferred solely when the composer uses the folk music of his own nation. To assert, however, that Glinka is "authentic" when he writes pieces of a Russian character, but "inauthentic" when the stimulus is Spanish, would be absurd (and the musical nationalists always avoided making any such claim). In spite of Nietzsche's eloquent argument in its favor, the concept of "authenticity" is a questionable aesthetic category¹⁵ (though admittedly this was not realized until the concept began to lose ground in moral philosophy too). It is no bar to aesthetic success if a composer invokes the musical idiom of a nation other than his own—"from without," so to speak—just as in the eighteenth century, when pieces "in the French style" or "in the Italian manner" were popular. In music, unlike language, work of significance can be created in "broken" Spanish or Hungarian. Aesthetic "rightness" is almost completely independent of folkloristic purism.

Despite this it cannot be denied that the practice of invoking folk music and the routine use of national musical idioms merely to provide coloring were gradually discon-

15. T. W. Adorno, "Goldprobe," in *Minima moralia* (Berlin and Frankfurt am Main, 1951), pp. 287ff.

tinued or sank to the level of entertainment music, and this obviously happened under the influence of the principle of originality, which embraced not only the requirement of novelty but also the idea of spontaneity, of "authenticity" (as opposed to the exploitation of ideas, or idioms, originating elsewhere). National character was something to be produced "from within" and not introduced "from without."¹⁶ A national style, embodying the spirit of a people in musical sound, was conceived of as the expression of a form of existence, not merely as something which a composer could arbitrarily adopt and exchange, like a "popular manner," a "conversational manner," or a "salon manner." (The "popular manner," as it was understood in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reflected detachment, not identification—by contrast with national style in the positive sense.) One of the differences between the nineteenth century and the age of Enlightenment was that the category of "style" took on "existential" significance. A composer did not choose a style—a convention of writing—but expressed himself in it. Thus the concept of "authenticity," questionable though it may be, changed music history.

16. B. Bartók, "Vom Einfluss der Bauernmusik auf die heutige Kunstmusik" (1920), in *Musiksprachen* (Leipzig, 1972), pp. 155ff.