1 Traditions

One of the main ideas in this book is that music is embedded in discourses and surrounded by ideas that contribute to its meaning. Musicology, therefore, is as old as music: you cannot have one without the other because musicology is simply a category for some of the discourses and views held about music. Having said this, however, it is true that certain forms of knowledge have to be in place before musicology emerges as a distinct domain. Musicology as a recognized academic discipline is quite young, and a celebrated exposition of its purpose is found in Guido Adler's 'Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft' of 1885 (Musicology's Scope, Method and Aim).

A product of the nineteenth-century German enthusiasm for encyclopaedic knowledge, Adler's new discipline of *Musikwissenschaft* (science of music) draws on positivist influences from the social sciences and literary philology, with a view to categorizing and summarizing all existing knowledge about music.[1] In doing so, it divides the study of music into two main areas: historical musicology and systematic musicology, the former concerned with Western art music, the latter turning to acoustics, psychology, sociology, aesthetics and comparative musicology (the term used for what later became ethnomusicology). Adler acknowledges that all cultures with music also have theories about music, but this awareness does not stop him from expecting his own systematic categories to have applications to all types of music, not just to the European tradition. Here begin some of the problems that have vexed later musicology, since even though Adler fails to theorize the historical location of his own ideas, he nevertheless considers the scholarly tools derived from a European, specifically German, culture applicable to all traditions. The result, despite broad-minded intentions, was that history-based study of European music, with the

Austro-German tradition at its heart, came to constitute the centre of musicology.

That canon is a central concern for all three of the figures discussed in this chapter (namely Kerman, Adorno and Dahlhaus), but they also share a willingness to examine the methodologies used to study this music and to question the claims made on its behalf. It is this reflexivity that makes them significant figures and which (directly in Kerman's case) leads into debates in current musicology.

Kerman

Historical study of European art music was formative in the development of musicology in North America (which was heavily influenced by German émigrés), notwithstanding the efforts of Charles Seeger to establish an American musicology that exemplified the inclusive aspect of Adler's systematic musicology while breaking away from European repertoire.[2] The subsequent struggle to create a more inclusive practice of musicology partly derives from a desire to recognize American traditions, including folk, popular, art and indigenous musics. It is also a reflection of a post-cold war Europe trying to re-evaluate its cultural inheritance. Nevertheless, when Joseph Kerman (1924–) wrote his landmark study of post-war musicology in America and Britain (published as *Musicology* in Britain and *Contemplating Music* in the USA), he was still able to make distinctions between the historical study of Western art music, theory and analysis, and ethnomusicology, reserving the term musicology for the first one only, thereby placing its concerns dead centre. In so doing, he reflected a divide between a mainstream historical musicology and what was traditionally called systematic musicology. (Formalist analysis would definitely fit into the systematic category, though Adler himself saw it as an adjunct to the history of style.)

This slicing of music's research areas articulates distinctions in repertoire, and in historical, structural and anthropological methodologies, but little is gained by reserving the term 'musicology' for one repertoire and methodology only. This is because historical musicology, analysis and ethnomusicology can all be placed under the rubric of musicology; indeed Kerman acknowledges this on one level by arguing that they all suffer from the baleful influences of modernism. Furthermore, a clear division between musicology and ethnomusicology now looks increasingly shaky, since it rests on premisses of musical ownership and suggests that the study of

Western music need not be concerned with ethnicity. Far better, then, to think of musicology as a general field that turns its attention to particular repertoires, using a variety of methodologies.

Kerman's book is often considered to be a watershed, marking the divide between old and new musicologies in a schema that usefully reflects a change in orientation, but can lead to exaggerated claims. The 'before and after' pattern is encouraged by his tendency to attribute musicology's most rigid paradigms to modernist ideology. Despite differing preoccupations, he argues, both analysis and positivist musicology share an interest in employing quasi-scientific methodologies to jettison Romantic aesthetics and to slough off woolly associations between musical meaning and the composer's biography. Specious though the claims to scientific objectivity made on behalf of the old-style positivist musicology may be, Kerman acknowledges that reliable editions of music are a necessary preliminary to the critical commentary he hopes will ensue. Since musicology lagged behind the editorial projects of literary philology, much work was needed and musicologists were trained diligently to carry out these tasks.

The rationale for this activity, argues Kerman, was provided by Arthur Mendel, a Bach scholar and Professor of Music at Princeton University, in a paper entitled 'Evidence and Explanation', delivered in 1961 at the New York Congress of the International Musicology Society. Following models developed in analytical philosophy, Mendel sought to establish laws for the causal deduction of musical facts, asking how one can be derived from another. His paper suggested that one could generate a continuum between the establishment of a fact such as the date of an autograph, and more general ideas such as the influence of one composer on another. In practice, however, scholars were reluctant to progress beyond factual detail to interpretive schemes. Lamenting this state of affairs and suggesting that musicology should move a step up the interpretive ladder, Kerman opens a distinction between scholarship and criticism, arguing that the former should become more like the latter. His hope is that musicologists will become more engaged with music as experience rather than as object, with a view to assessing (like literary critics) the value of music and demonstrating its cultural importance.

Kerman's model for criticism is literary in origin, but it turns to theory and analysis for specific guidance. Less interested in theoretical

models of tonality, for example, than in analysis of particular pieces, Kerman (writing in the early 1980s) regards analysis as the area most likely to achieve the prestige that criticism enjoys in literature, even though his enthusiasm is driven more by its potential than actuality. Princeton also proved to be a dominant force in this field, with Mendel's colleague the composer and theorist Milton Babbitt exerting huge institutional influence. His work binds composition and theory together in a search for the development and understanding of new musical techniques. Under the auspices of a quasi-scientific model of composition, the theory and production of new music became established in universities as research activities to be communicated to a specialist, informed audience. (Earlier, positivist musicology had likewise found a place in the academy by aligning itself with the established historical and philological concerns of other humanities disciplines.) Babbitt's ideas were eventually given a specifically theoretical turn away from direct compositional application by Allen Forte's set theory (explained in the next chapter), which sought to apply high modernist discoveries about the ordering of pitch-class sets to the analysis of earlier twentieth-century music, particularly that by Schoenberg.

The other main field in theory and analysis, in which Forte was again a leading player, was the formulation and institutionalization of ideas devised by Heinrich Schenker (also discussed in the next chapter) for the analysis of tonal music. Schenkerian methodology, with its structural preoccupations, is intimately linked to the values built into the reception history of the Austro-German canon. In a circular process, it prizes music characterized by structural coherence, and by honing analytical tools to find these features reaffirms the prestige of the same music, placing Bach and Beethoven at the centre of its orbit. Geared to a particular repertoire, the values built into the technique not only enhance this canon, but serve to exclude musics that fail to meet these criteria, typically musics more firmly rooted in performance than in text. This key distinction is put, in slightly different terms, by Dahlhaus (of whom more later), who talks of the twin styles in nineteenth-century music, referring to the German, instrumental style of Beethoven and the Italian opera style of Rossini.[3] If Beethoven claimed for his music the strong concept of art rooted in text, argues Dahlhaus, Rossini's style uses the score as a recipe for performance, understanding music as an event rather than text. A canon based on authorial intention and textual accuracy will, then, automatically value Beethoven's model above Rossini's. In this respect, analytical methodology shares with positivist musicology a tendency to fetishize the text, as if it were the only dimension in which music exists.

This shared tendency led Kerman to conflate positivism and formalism in a confusing manner.[4] Both contribute to canonic prestige and both seek scientific rigour, but there are important differences. Preparing manuscripts and studying sources are, or were, exercises dependent on the idea of authorial intention, with editions allegedly representing the design of the composer and eliminating the contingencies that occur in performance. Such activities do not presume a direct link between autobiography and music, but they may well pay attention to details of the composer's life as a way of accumulating more factual information about a particular score, such as when it was completed or first performed. Schenkerian analysis and set theory, by contrast, seek internal structure rather than authorial intention (as we shall see in the next chapter) and are not especially concerned about historical detail. For although Schenker was clearly influenced by extraneous factors and was a champion of the *Urtext*, his primary interest was the way deep-rooted properties of tonality (expressed in the *Ursatz*) present themselves in a score. Set theory, meanwhile, seeks underlying governors that facilitate particular permutations from the whole range of possible pitch-class combinations. Removed from time, both approaches pursue fundamental principles, a preoccupation that passed from nineteenth-century notions of autonomy and unity to modernist aesthetics. The underlying coherence that formalism values is, therefore, not directly comparable to the historical data sought by positivism. Analysis, according to Kerman, is potentially nearer the criticism he envisages because it involves active engagement with the music and demands decisions on matters of primary and secondary importance. Even though editing might entail interpretation and judgement, standard practice tried to minimize their range rather than explore their creative potential.[5]

Kerman's critique of the text-based obsessions of positivist musicology and formalist analysis is now a common theme in musicology. It has received particular attention from Richard Taruskin, who detects in the efforts to objectify texts a downgrading of the human subjectivity (including performing traditions) in which music is always suspended. The search for a pure text, he suggests, is like cleaning a revered painting, stripping away the dust and

accumulated restorations. By removing the 'dirt' from music, he maintains, musicologists destroy what other human beings have made of the music.[6] A comparable desire to understand texts as events in which human participation is transparent can be found in the frustrations of ethnomusicologists with positivist musicology. For a musicology less fascinated by the prospect of science-like objectivity, however, the gap between music as event and as object need not be severe. Notation, like sounding music, is a configuration of subjectivity. When this dimension is understood to contribute to, rather than control, musical experience, it need not inhibit more obviously participatory forms of subjectivity.

Kerman hopes that historical musicology and analysis can leave behind their objectivizing tendencies and form an amalgam that will lead to what he calls a 'musicology oriented towards criticism'.[7] This model, though he does not say so, is very close to the vision that tantalizes Dahlhaus, namely a history of music that is both capable of standing up to historiographical scrutiny and has something to say about the actuality of music. As we shall see, Dahlhaus's pursuit of this goal led him into considerations of historiography, sociology and hermeneutics that are largely untouched by Kerman.[8] The model Kerman envisages derives from literary criticism, a field fully aware of the theoretical concerns, amongst others, that Dahlhaus addresses. *Musicology* mentions developments in semiotics, deconstruction and feminism in literary studies and expects them to impact on musicology,[9] but does not take its lead from then recently published books such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* or Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction*. Despite noting Culler's call for an end of interpretation in literary studies,[10] Kerman goes on to say that there is plenty of scope for interpretation in the less extensively mined field of musicology; by doing so he underestimates the impact a theoretically empowered reader exerts on traditional interpretation, even in an uncrowded discipline. The type of criticism Kerman recommends is more like what used to be mainstream literary criticism – a patchwork of analysis, criticism, history and, possibly, aesthetics that would link music to underlying human values.

Writing at the beginning of the 1990s, and contemplating developments since the publication of *Musicology*, he shifts his emphasis. Kerman now acknowledges that the paragraph in the Introduction about musicology travelling some distance behind modern theory would have to be rewritten in the light of contemporary

developments.[11] He then argues that such transformations should not be understood as a splintering of musicology since they are increasingly becoming the central concerns of the discipline. By making this point, he acknowledges that what he had envisaged as a turn to criticism heralded a full-scale application of postmodernist theory to musicology; a process that is changing the discipline permanently and enabling it to participate in important debates beyond the conventional borders of musicology. With expanding, multiple canons and changing methodologies, the fluid boundaries of musicology merge into other disciplines, enabling more interdisciplinary work. This state of affairs does not make traditional fact-finding missions obsolete, since newly opened repertoires create plenty of work of this type. It does, however, demand that such projects push beyond the mechanical application of a methodology towards interpretive conclusions. Musicology has taken the turn that Kerman called for, therefore, though in not quite the manner he envisaged. His study remains a valuable document for its inside knowledge of people involved in the field and for its demand that musicology understand its own institutions.

Most of the present book, particularly the later chapters, is concerned with the directions musicology has taken after the publication of Kerman's appraisal; nevertheless it is important to understand that many of the so-called new themes were in currency well before the 1980s. Adorno and Dahlhaus are mentioned by Kerman, but due to his explicit Anglo-American axis they receive only limited attention. Both figures deal with major themes such as canon and autonomy in sophisticated ways that, in varying degrees, still have relevance today. Turning to Adorno first, we find a leading theorist of modernity investigating musical subjectivity in the context of significant intellectual debates.

Adorno

Theodor Adorno (1903–69) was a member of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research (better known as the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory), which sought to extend Marxian ideology critique beyond the confines of economics to areas such as psychoanalysis and, especially in Adorno's case, cultural analysis. Adorno's ideas have relevance on two fronts for musicology: on one he is a major twentieth-century cultural critic; so as musicology becomes part of wider cultural debates, his views on culture in conditions of

modernity become part of the reservoir from which musicology can draw.[12] Adorno is also of relevance to musicology in the second, more obvious, sense that over half his huge output is devoted to music criticism. Music was of huge importance to him and many of his ideas on aesthetics were formulated in this medium. The two sides of Adorno create a dilemma for musicologists: those wishing to access his opinions of, say, Berg (with whom he took composition lessons) are drawn into a philosophical labyrinth, while those primarily interested in his methodology become entangled in musical polemics. The two strands are not easily separated since his ideas characteristically tend to pull in several directions. Knowledge of both sides is necessary for full appreciation of Adorno's ideas, since one cannot understand what he has to say about music without being towed into major debates about modernity.

It might be gleaned from the above discussion that Adorno occupies an ambiguous position in relation to the methodologies discussed in this book, since (despite continuing interest in his work) awareness of how his ideas relate to current musicology is patchy. Acceptance in Anglo-American musicology of the critical methodology that informs Adorno's music writings has been slow for a number of reasons: its resistance to positivist and formalist approaches; the difficulty of his style; and the limited availability (until recently) of translations. Adorno is now read more widely, but his writings still resist assimilation, whether by traditional or newer musicologies. Too subjective for formalist analysis and too modernist for the 'new musicology', Adorno is vulnerable to critique from many positions. With his adherence to the Austro-German tradition, he can be accused of defending an elitist canon that excludes other musics and identities, of showing intolerance towards popular music, and of possessing little inclination to consider non-European musics. In short, he laments the decline of European culture as if it were the only culture worth discussing.

Espousing so many of the values that the new musicology has challenged, he might seem a paradigm of the bad old ways – a tortured Tovey with little to offer current musicology. But at the same time – and Adorno is all about simultaneous contradictions – he pioneered the application of critical theory to musicology and his understanding of music as encrypted subjectivity anticipates current thinking. The problem is that his most old-fashioned beliefs and most prescient insights often stand side by side. It is hard to digest what is

useful and move on because, as a theorist with interests that extend well beyond musicology, he remains awkwardly ahead of the field, providing a critical legacy from which to understand the postmodernist dysfunctions that extend to musicology. More precisely, he uncovers the contradictions of bourgeois aesthetics, but uses its rational core to expose the paradoxes of using market forces as a measure of cultural value.

Before addressing Adorno's aesthetics of music in particular, it would be useful to consider what the Frankfurt School means by the term 'ideology critique'. 'Ideology' is a confusing term used in a variety of ways, and in some current parlance it simply functions as a synonym for opinion – for whatever one happens to believe. Such casual usage is hugely at variance with the classical Marxist concept of false consciousness: the idea (which has some similarities to Freudian notions of the unconscious) that people absorb the conditions of material and social production in a way that obscures how the latter serve the interests of a minority at the expense of the majority. Thus, the argument goes, it is only when people are able to understand the forces that shape their lives on a conscious level that they will possess the means, and will, to change them. This argument is often criticized for making blanket assumptions about ideological delusion, even so we can retain from it the core idea that ideology contains a degree of mystification, and resist simplistic reductions of the term to mean personal opinion.

The Marxist model of ideology critique is most evident in Adorno's work on popular music, functioning to unmask social constructions that are presented as natural, disinterested beliefs or procedures. Understood thus, ideology critique remains a vital concept for current theory, clearly seen in, say, feminism's analysis of the way patriarchal attitudes are built into accepted social institutions. Consequently, it is also of relevance to recent approaches in musicology, since so many of them endeavour to show the assumptions at work in traditional musicological beliefs. Ideology critique aims to socialize ingrained attitudes not because it believes that human beings have no essential attributes, but because it is convinced that most of these are encountered in historically specific ways. Socialization does not immediately dissolve entrenched standpoints, but it does render them susceptible to contestation and transformation. When, for example, we examine the ways musicological beliefs are assembled, they do not automatically collapse – they become porous to different outlooks.

Ideology critique in Adorno's music aesthetics draws on an intricate network of (mainly German) sociological, philosophical and critical traditions, which are often unacknowledged and seldom explained. At the end of his life, however, Adorno did formulate many of the ideas to be found in his music criticism in *Aesthetic Theory*, a posthumously published manuscript that he was still editing at the time of his death. One cannot pretend that this sophisticated theory of modernist art is easy to understand, nevertheless with perseverance it does provide a clarifying framework for the music writings. The title itself is significant because 'aesthetics', with its elitist connotations, is not a widely used term nowadays in the fields of critical and cultural theory, since it evokes a rarified branch of philosophy concerned with the appreciation of art and nature. Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, a core text in the study of aesthetics, is concerned with the disinterested contemplation of beauty and taste, with little to say on the production or meaning of art. In Adorno's hands, these categories are modified so that they become social constructions rather than universal categories. From the perspective of Frankfurt critical theory, categories of beauty and taste contribute to the discourses of art rather than remaining neutral concepts.

Like aesthetics, music, for Adorno, is a social medium through and through. The explanation he fomulates for this thesis is that musical material is a sedimentation, or mediation, of subjectivities and social practices. Musical material congeals and shapes an ensemble of social practices in a medium with its own characteristics. Consequently, when we encounter music we encounter socialized energies.[13] These forces are frequently obvious in popular music, but remain more encrypted in Western art-music traditions. In the latter case, social absorption can lead to abstract results (a Schoenberg string quartet, say), encouraging us to talk about material in a self-referential manner, however socialized it might be. Nevertheless, all music is socially situated in more direct ways, since it is maintained by institutions such as concert halls, orchestras, arts management and audiences, and meanings arise from intersections of these various currents. In popular music, it may well be the social context of its performance and reception that is of prime importance. The message or mode of subjectivity, that is to say, may be carried less in the notes and more in the environment associated with various genres.[14]

This conclusion is indebted to Adorno even though it is somewhat at variance with his own negative view of popular music as a form of

industrialized deception. In his popular music criticism at least, he remained too dependent on the idea of a socialized material and paid little attention to the more obviously social elements of its environment. Popular music, for him, is an administered culture governed by a system that cannot fulfil the desire it generates. Because his aesthetics (especially of new music) is so reliant on advanced material – a material that offers a critical perspective on socio-historical conditions – he is often blind to the possibility of popular practices being at any variance with standardized modes of production. This limitation is a reflection of his theory of social mediation, which assumes that a single set of social configurations will find their way into material, and is on a larger scale symptomatic of an undifferentiated application of ideology critique. Because contemporary societies are too stratified for their forms to be embodied in a particular type of material, the idea of mediation needs to be adjusted to accommodate multiple social groups with different aesthetic aspirations. This said, however, the larger steering mechanisms of modernity traverse many social groups and can perhaps be projected into problems of musical form.

Even though Adorno places a high premium on artistic autonomy, he does so in a dialectical construction that is far removed from social transcendence. He both defends and breaches autonomy because he believes that musical material possesses its own dynamics, makes its own demands, and can be understood in its own terms; but simultaneously argues that the ideal of self-containment and self-determinacy is an illusory projection of the bourgeois subject. Holding in tension two opposing views that are nevertheless dependent on each other is typical of Adorno's dialectical method, which differs from classical Hegelian dialectics in not seeking a synthesizing progression. By allowing incompatible views of musical material to tug at each other, Adorno is able to argue that when experience is distilled through material it can generate a dynamic of its own that enjoys some critical distance from the prevailing instrumental rationality.

As a theorist of modernity, one of Adorno's main themes is that all aspects of our lives are increasingly dominated by a form of reason – instrumental reason – bent on administering and measuring the world to such an extent that the process becomes self-perpetuating. The consequence is that subjects become alienated from both the world and from each other, losing sight of the human goals that such

practices are supposed to serve.[15] In the light of such tendencies, he values music's claim to autonomy because the lack of social purpose it gains is not immediately compatible with instrumental aims. And this distance, however illusory it may be, enables music to pursue social codes in directions blocked by the prevailing imperative. Adorno's sensitivity to what is suppressed and dominated in the name of reason does not, however, lead him to advocate music as a realm of irrational release, since it offers instead a domain in which sensuous detail can share the same space as formal coherence.

This dialectical reading of bourgeois music resists a brand of cultural studies that can only find in the canon an array of distasteful ideologies. The latter view labours under the misapprehension that music, because it is a carrier of social forms, is somehow tainted, and provides a mirror image of the equally untenable belief that music is a realm of pure sonic relationship unburdened by referentiality. Adorno's point is that while music cannot float free of ideological baggage, it can expose such attitudes to experiences that would normally be expelled by their patterns of exclusion, since formal coherence is not equivalent to the hegemonic imposition of a single idea. This view finds more concrete realization in recent forms of musicology. Lawrence Kramer, for example, has examined the constructions of subjectivity that inhabit Schubert's songs, placing particular emphasis on the articulation of gender.[16]

Having established the framework in which Adorno's music criticism takes place, while noting that particular aspects become malleable when confronted with his own preferences, we can now turn to his writings on music. The main monographs are on Beethoven (a posthumous collection of essays and fragments), Wagner, Mahler, Berg, Stravinsky and Schoenberg (the last two, combined, make up *Philosophy of Modern Music*). In each of these studies Adorno attempts to crack the social codes of the music: to show how the subject is represented in conditions of modernity. In middle-period Beethoven he finds an embodiment of the self-determining subject and a distillation of a society in which the reconciliation of the part and the whole, of individual aspirations and social organization, briefly seemed an attainable goal. Adorno particularly values the compatibility of motivic identity and larger formal functions in this music – the balance, that is to say, between the particular and the whole. In the late style, Adorno argues – and with particular relevance for subsequent modernist developments – the ultimately illusory nature

of such a dialectical synthesis becomes apparent, and consequently the musical language becomes less compatible with established forms. A more interiorized music, which glows from within, indicates a subjectivity withdrawn from the instrumental world.

In the case of Wagner, Adorno detects a contradictory situation whereby the bourgeois subject is inflated to mythological proportions by an art-form that bears witness to the industrial processes of its day. Wagner anticipates not only the technical possibilities pursued by modernism but also, through an all-engulfing art-form, the mass culture that accompanied them. In contrast to the polemics born of admiration that mark the Wagner monograph, Adorno's study of Mahler, written late in his life, is a sensitive portrait of a composer with whom he clearly felt deep empathy. This admiration stems from the capacity of Mahler's symphonies to reflect on their own procedures.[17] It enabled Adorno to modify some of the principles that he rigorously applies elsewhere, notably the insistence on advanced material, which is here softened by arguing that Mahler releases new latency from apparently obsolete devices. Adorno's Mahler stands on the cusp of modernism, but retains nostalgia for the illusion of symphonic synthesis. Likewise, this figure's relations with the autonomy principle are also awkward: he makes symphonic form an environment of its own, while including elements such as folk and café musics that would normally lie outside the domain of this genre, rubbing against the symphonic logic.

Written in exile from Nazi Germany, *Philosophy of Modern Music* remains Adorno's most famous polemic. In stark terms it portrays Schoenberg as the embodiment of an alienated, modern subject, with Stravinsky as its depleted, mechanized antipode. When this book is read as a dialectic of modernity, with Schoenberg and Stravinsky representing irreconcilable strands,[18] it remains of great interest (despite Adorno's obvious prejudices) because it addresses the fate of the bourgeois subject and its cultural forms in an increasingly mechanized age. Schoenberg's response to this predicament, according to Adorno, is that the subject, so as to avoid complete subjugation, becomes immersed in material procedures, finding a certain freedom in the objectified forms of technical procedure. Stravinsky's answer, by contrast, is to separate material from tradition, organizing it externally in a search for novel, unexpected configurations. Adorno detects a potential critical trace in this approach, especially in the surrealist proclivities of *The Soldier's Tale*, but his overwhelming opinion is that

such detachment, particularly in the neo-classical works, is symptomatic of a drained modern subjectivity. Even in the Russian works, notably in the unforgiving narrative of *Petrushka*, he finds the faceless steering forces of modernity, with no human impulse to offset them. Whatever we make of this reading – and the cruelty of the puppet play cannot be dismissed – its message is that the codes of modernity have an insidious habit of always being present in one guise or another.

This capacity to understand music as encrypted subjectivity, even as a carrier of ideology, makes Adorno's significance for musicology immense. While we may disagree with some of his judgements and regret his tunnel vision, much that is deemed new in current musicology is to be found in Adorno's music criticism. It is true that the specific routes through which subjectivity is now explored, such as gender and ethnicity, are not central themes in his work, but they are commensurate with his insistence that generalized procedures should heed the needs of the particular. It is also true that Adorno remains faithful to a philosophy of consciousness, with its language of Subject and Object, whereas contemporary theory follows the linguistic turn, understanding discourses in semiotic terms (as explained in the next chapter). But the positions can communicate because what Adorno calls a concept, the synthesis of Subject and Object, is comparable to what semiotics calls a sign-unit, the synthesis of signifier and signified.[19] Moreover, it is possible in both traditions to resist mechanisms that impose uniformity. Nevertheless, the politics of identity have changed since Adorno's era. By exploring the particular in more concrete ways and by rejecting the limitations of the age in which Adorno lived, musicology has overtaken some of his preoccupations. His fear of an administered society retains substance, but his analysis of its manifestations underestimates the complex differentiation of society and its capacity to produce unpredictable cultural forms. In another sense, however, he remains as important as ever, particularly in the age of globalization, for his determination to think though the social totality, for his insistence that abstract procedures should not eliminate individual needs, and for his willingness to value affinities as well as differences.[20]

Dahlhaus

Carl Dahlhaus (1928–89) and Adorno were acquaintances and shared a penchant for wide reading. While trying to steer musicology away from overtly sociological concerns, Dahlhaus nevertheless built on

Adorno's achievements. Before returning to Dahlhaus's engagement with Adorno, it is worth sketching the components of what James Hepokoski has called 'The Dahlhaus Project'.[21] This undertaking is rooted in the intellectual climate of German cultural debates in the 1960s and 1970s, and shares the now prevalent willingness – if not the values – of a musicology keen to participate in mainstream humanities concerns. The focus of Dahlhaus's prolific output is the European canon, and its associated discourses. Such themes form the basis of *Foundations of Music History*, which is generally taken to be the key text regarding his methodological concerns and provides a standard against which more practical projects such as *Nineteenth-Century Music* can be assessed.

By interrogating historical methodology, Dahlhaus challenges traditional attempts to make musical meaning a function of its composer's biography and develops a healthy wariness of so-called objective historical data. The so-called neutral fact is in his view already situated in a network of assumptions, and only really derives meaning from the narrative context in which it is embedded. Consequently, were the sentence 'On 19 October 1814 Franz Schubert composed his "Gretchen am Spinnrade" ('Gretchen at the Spinning-Wheel') to occur at the beginning of a chapter in a music history, he argues, it would convey more information than this fact, since 'it expresses a view as to the origins of the romantic lied'.[22] The construction of history is therefore a selective process whereby certain facts are given more priority than others, producing a narrative flow in the process. Because the linking of occurrences in the mind of the historian will never mirror what he calls an 'actual sequence of causes', the same facts can be accommodated by conflicting value judgements.[23] Therefore, Dahlhaus argues, the historian has no option but to engage methodological problems, since they will always plague positivist research. However, he is aware that such complexities can paralyse scholarship and offsets methodological reflexivity with a pragmatism willing to adapt strategies to particular situations. For this reason, what may sometimes look like a lack of consistency or conviction is upheld by his belief that a single method is not appropriate for all historical problems.

His theoretical approach to music history is matched by an interest in music aesthetics. Classical aesthetics has been attacked by recent musicologies, but Dahlhaus's work in this area informed his view, now widely shared, that perceptions of music are heavily influenced

by (sometimes invisible) discourses. Adopting a position closer to ideology critique than he might have acknowledged, Dahlhaus argues that those who dismiss aesthetics as idle speculation divorced from the realities of music frequently, unknown to themselves, espouse views shaped by an aesthetic discourse with a specific historical derivation. He was able to open *The Idea of Absolute Music*, written in the mid-1970s, in this vein by showing how 'common sense', accepted views on music derive from what he calls a music-aesthetic paradigm of absolute music. Those reluctant to read the programme associated with a tone poem or the plot of an opera, he maintains, are governed by an aesthetic belief that music transcends verbal interpretation; a judgement directly indebted to the aesthetics of absolute music (and hotly contested by current musicology).[24] Dahlhaus does not overturn this inherited opinion, but he certainly destabilizes it since there is an inherent contradiction in the idea that absolute music, which is supposed to inhabit a realm untroubled by the material world, should be dependent on a historically located aesthetic. By studying music from the perspective offered by its time and by addressing subsequent developments, he both inhabits and critiques the aesthetic of absolute music.

This in-between status is also characteristic of Dahlhaus's work on two ideas closely related to the aesthetics of absolute music: autonomy and the canon. Linking autonomy to the institution of the bourgeois concert, which crystallized in the eighteenth century,[25] he is fully aware of the mechanisms by which such conventions arose, but also committed to justifying their claims. His compromise is what he calls 'relative autonomy' – the belief that music possesses its own procedures but is also open to various historical processes.[26] He is also keenly aware of the procedures by which canons are assembled, noting that it was the nineteenth-century fascination with autonomy that secured a prime place for Bach.[27] But this circumstance, though it came about through historical interpretation, is not something that can be reversed, according to Dahlhaus, since the canon reaches us with the authority of tradition, and is therefore something we receive rather than make.

In order to take Dahlhaus's view on the canon (and much else) further it is necessary at this point to examine the intricate connections between his ideas and theories advanced by Hans-Georg Gadamer and his student Hans Robert Jauss. Grappling with similar problems, these two theorists sought a path between the twin poles of positivism

and sociology by working in the tradition of hermeneutics (the study of interpretation). Gadamer is discussed in *Foundations of Music History*, but neither the summary nor the following critique indicates how firmly the central planks of his *magnum opus*, *Truth and Method*, are lodged in Dahlhaus's writings. Like Dahlhaus, Gadamer discredits the objective claims of positivist historicism, bringing two factors into play: historical distance (the gap between then and now) and the particular perspective from which the past is viewed. When we encounter history, he suggests, we engage with an entity other than ourselves, with a temporality of its own, and enter into something like a conversation, where we discover 'the other person's standpoint and horizon'.[28] But we do not just transpose ourselves onto this horizon because 'readers' have horizons of their own, complete with opinions (Gadamer calls them prejudices) that determine the position from which we meet history. The testing of such opinions constitutes the continual formation of the present in a loop that is itself dependent on the tradition we encounter from the past. Gadamer describes the situation as follows: 'There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.'[29] We are, then, in a hermeneutic circle whereby we encounter ourselves in tradition and tradition in ourselves. The questions we ask of artefacts derive from our own horizon, but we also respond to questions generated by works themselves. Dahlhaus also talks of the past and present forming an indissoluble alloy, commenting, in the language of Gadamer, that 'the past is what has survived from the past, and hence is part and parcel of the present'.[30] The derivation is similarly obvious when he comments that the canon 'is transmitted by tradition: historians do not compile it so much as encounter it'.[31]

Jauss's critical modification of Gadamer's ideas can also be found in Dahlhaus, including the reproach that Gadamer universalizes to a general condition of art the classical humanist tradition, thereby applying the same criteria to both medieval and modern art.[32] In a similar, though not identical vein, we find Dahlhaus arguing that Gadamer's position is not appropriate for a good deal of twentieth-century music.[33] Taken a bit further, this objection threatens the fusion of horizons supposed by Gadamer, since the relationship between classical and modern ideas of music involves conflict and negation as well as transition. Pushed further still, it creates problems for

Dahlhaus as well as Gadamer, since it opens the prospect of competing horizons that cannot be reconciled with the notion of a single tradition. The consequences of multiple horizons can be pursued later; for now we can stay with overlapping themes in Dahlhaus and Jauss. The main idea shared with Jauss's influential essay 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory' occurs in a footnote in which he quotes from René Welleck's and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* the following sentences: 'Most leading histories of literature are either histories of civilization or collections of critical essays. One type is not a history of *art*; the other, not a *history* of art.'[34]

Derivatives of this idea, translated from a literary to a musicological context, occur abundantly in Dahlhaus's writings; indeed the prospect of a methodology that is both historical and musical is something of a preoccupation.[35] This fixation stems from a desire to avoid what Dahlhaus regards as the twin pitfalls of music history: dissolving music into a general social history or stringing together critical/analytical assessments of particular works with no linking historical thread. His remedy is to propose a methodology that would address the specifics of music while recognizing the impact of wider social processes, without collapsing one into the other. Jauss offers reception theory as a resource for such scholarship, since it is capable of theorizing the identity of a work by exploring the shifting interactions between the historical unfolding of its understanding and the changing horizons of its historical readers. Dahlhaus accepts this idea, and finds it assists in explaining why Bruckner's symphonies had their maximum impact in the 1920s, while the 1970s mark the high-water mark for Mahler's *oeuvre*.[36] But he is also aware that reception history opens space for interpretive horizons that may clash with those deriving from established tradition. The consequence is that Dahlhaus tends to uphold the structural claims of established masterpieces, while, in Hepokoski's words, admitting 'Jauss's ideas of reception history, social interaction, and the like only to those musical works whose status as art was disputed'.[37]

Alongside the hermeneutic currents in the Dahlhaus project runs a sharper dialogue, sometimes bristling into dispute, with Marxist methodology. Because Dahlhaus lived and worked in a divided Berlin, Marxism was a constant presence in his life. Major disputes erupted in West German universities during the 1960s and 1970s, with the most hard-line voices condemning the bourgeois tradition and Adorno's elitism. Dahlhaus's responses to these debates range from building on

the subtlety of Adorno's ideas to lambasting Marxist orthodoxy for applying inappropriate criteria to art criticism. His most general complaint derives from his familiar insistence that music should not become absorbed into social history, especially one that understands the economic base to be the final, determining factor. This view of economic structure, he argues, 'implies that the tangled skein of technical, aesthetic, psychological, social and economic factors open to empirical investigation must always be interpreted on the basis of one single, unalterable hierarchy'.[38] He is also suspicious of ideology critique, since he feels that it tries to reduce historical analysis to underlying dogma, offering a choice between overt or covert bias. Such a suspicion, he comments, cannot be allayed; it must simply be borne.[39] This attitude is pragmatic to the extent that it resists the capacity of ideology critique to jam any project, even so Dahlhaus's stoicism is also rather defensive. Hepokoski is surely right to conclude that in such an environment Dahlhaus clearly felt the need both to shore up musicology as an academic discipline and to assert the German canon.[40]

Dahlhaus's comments on Adorno are scattered throughout his writings, offering analysis of particular problems but little in the way of thoroughgoing critique (a characteristic of his work, which can seem like a network of problems that avoids substantial statements). Some already familiar suspicions of Marxism resurface in this context, and inform the charge that Adorno imposes a preformed philosophy of history on music, rather than examining particular historical currents. The claim that social content is sedimented in the material form of music generates particular interest, since this is a way of tackling Dahlhaus's favourite problem: how to write a history of *art* (of, that is, specific works, and not merely of materials and forms) which is nonetheless a *history* of art (and not therefore a museum catalogue). Despite the lure of Adorno's theory of socialized material, Dahlhaus concludes that it is 'an attempt to overcome a contradiction which seems almost incapable of being bridged'. He adds that this may be an example of a problem that is more likely to become obsolete than to be solved;[41] a surprising judgement since the prospect of connecting music's technical and social dimensions remains of urgent interest.

Apart from practical concerns, Dahlhaus's suspicion of ideology critique stems from a desire to protect the Austro-German canon from sociological scrutiny, a propensity that renders him vulnerable to the

kinds of criticism levelled at Gadamer. By talking of the canon as something one encounters, despite elsewhere contemplating the different rhythms of music history,[42] Dahlhaus speaks as the inhabitant of a particular canon with universal pretensions that tends to exclude those who prize other canons or ask other questions. Hepokoski describes the dilemma as follows: 'Dahlhaus's eleventh-hour attempt to stave off the collapse of the work-immanent integrity of Germanic "great works" seems fully, if grudgingly, aware of its own unfolding in a pluralistic, postmodern, and aesthetically entropic world'.[43] From studying historiography, aesthetics and reception history, Dahlhaus was well aware that music is embedded in a range of discourses that are not easily separated. But at the same time he was dedicated to a particular tradition, and was not prepared to let it collapse into sociology. His work is marked by a constant tension between unravelling and bolstering this tradition. If the result can at times seem something of an unproductive logjam, Dahlhaus's willingness to examine musicological methodology nevertheless has relevance beyond the limitations of his own horizon.

It would be foolish to attempt a synthesis of three figures as diverse as Kerman, Adorno and Dahlhaus, but from their differing perspectives we can identify themes and tensions that preoccupy current musicology. They have in common a concern with demonstrating how knowledge is dependent on often unstated assumptions that can be analysed, contested and possibly modified. The historical and sociological forces that construct the values of musical autonomy are another underlying interest, leaving as a residue the question of how the specific actuality of music can be understood alongside the social forms it embodies. A shared sense of crisis in the values enshrined in classical music is also central. We can ask, like Adorno, how these fare in a mechanized world, or contemplate how they adapt to different traditions and subjectivities. How music is affected by the global march of modernity and how it responds to and contributes to changing social environments are of course issues that are not restricted to the domain of classical music. Indeed all forms of music play a decisive role in the way people locate themselves in and between traditions. In short, music is one of the processes by which human subjects establish identities and generate affinities.

2 Discourses

Structuralism

The scientific turn Kerman describes in positivist and formalist musicology repudiates a more general musicology that is reluctant to declare its method or purpose, preferring to assume that one absorbs a particular mindset and learns the rules by association. Put another way, traditional musicology encloses music within a set of codes, but would prefer to transmit normative values than to acknowledge this frame. This model mysteriously blends biographies and music, inferring that composers operate in a historical continuum of evolving styles and create works that recognize standard forms, but deviate from them sufficiently to demonstrate originality. It assumes that musicians acquire knowledge of musical syntax by undertaking pastiche exercises and studying form, both imitative forms of transmission.

More conscious of its own procedures (though not without its own unstated assumptions), technical analysis seeks to understand music as a rigorous, logical process and is willing to apply tough methodology. Theory and analysis are the interdependent terms used to describe a field concerned both with establishing generalized procedures for understanding tonal and post-tonal music and with explanation of individual pieces. (Readers may wish to be reminded at this point that I take music theory to be a special branch of 'theory' as understood in more general parlance.) Normally analysis will take its lead from theoretical opinion, and theory will be reciprocally modified by the particular insights of analysis. With their shared belief in systematic explanation, they overturn some traditional views, while bolstering other conjectures by providing explanations in place of comfortable assumptions.

It is necessary to examine structuralism and poststructuralism as