Transposition

Musique et Sciences Sociales

8 | 2019

Musique : patrimoine immatériel ?

Rachel Moore, *Performing Propaganda: Musical Life and Culture in Paris during the First World War*

Suffolk, The Boydell Press, 2018

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/3033>

DOI: 10.4000/transposition.3033

ISSN: 2110-6134

Publisher

CRAL - Centre de recherche sur les arts et le langage

Electronic reference

Jillian Rogers, « Rachel Moore, *Performing Propaganda: Musical Life and Culture in Paris during the First World War* », *Transposition* [Online], 8 | 2019, Online since 15 September 2019, connection on 16 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/3033> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/transposition.3033>

This text was automatically generated on 16 December 2020.

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REFERENCES

Rachel Moore, *Performing Propaganda: Musical Life and Culture in Paris during the First World War*, Suffolk, The Boydell Press, 2018, 256 p.

- 1 Rachel Moore's *Performing Propaganda: Musical Life and Culture in Paris during the First World War* offers a persuasive and detailed account of how wartime propaganda shaped French musical institutions in Paris between 1914 and 1918. Through extensive archival research, read through the lens of theories and histories of propaganda, Moore sheds new light on how concert series at home and abroad, major musical institutions like the Opéra and the Société des Concerts, and French musical publishing firms shaped and were shaped by newly developing ideas about music's abilities to promote French culture in France and Allied nations. This cogent, convincing, and illuminating book will be a crucial source for researchers working on musical life in Paris during World War I, while also affording a series of critical readings for students in courses on music in France, music and nationalism, and music and war, just to name a few.
- 2 In Moore's first chapter, she provides an evocative account of Paris in the immediate aftermath of the French mobilization on August 1, 1914. She considers the general spirit in Paris in the wake of the war's onset, the debates on the morality of music making that the beginning of the conflict engendered, and the closures and re-openings of theatres in the French capital. Throughout this chapter Moore emphasizes that for many, a revival of music-making and concert life importantly signaled a "return to normalcy." Through detailed archival work, Moore also points out how the

war affected concert programming, noting for instance the frequency with which “potpourri” style concerts appeared during the war years, especially in theatres that had been known for large-scale productions before the war, such as the Palais Garnier.

- 3 In Moore’s second chapter she begins to delve more deeply into how music came to be understood as a viable form of propaganda. She shows how performances of French music, as well as French musicians’ performances of music by composers of various nationalities, allowed music to be understood as a form of cultural diplomacy that became “an ideal medium both for displaying France’s artistic talents to the world and demonstrating the superiority of French culture to that of the enemy” (p. 46). Moore points out that at the beginning of the war music wasn’t considered a very powerful tool of propaganda. Yet the centralization of propaganda efforts that emerged with the government’s realization of how international public opinion could affect the war effort and government policy led to more organized efforts at musical propaganda that allowed it to become “an official part of the French war strategy” (p. 51). Moore demonstrates this last point by paying attention to how music came to be instrumentalized as propaganda by figures like pianist Alfred Cortot, the first head of the music division of the artistic propaganda wing of the Maison de presse, as well as through concert programs and French musicians’ travels throughout Europe and the United States during the war. In addition to concerts devoted to French music in Paris and abroad, Cortot’s musical propaganda efforts included sending French musicians from Charles-Marie Widor and Vincent d’Indy to Blanche Selva and Pierre Monteux to tour neutral and Allied countries in order to try to sway global public opinion towards France. Moore notes that this cultural ambassadorship not only succeeded in wartime support for France, but also frequently led to post-war opportunities and alliances, including American composers’ interests in studying in France during and beyond the 1920s.
- 4 In her third chapter, Moore scrutinizes what she considers one of the war’s most inflammatory pieces of written propaganda on musical politics: Camille Saint-Saëns’s *Germanophilie*. Whereas in other chapters Moore focuses on how music performance tended to succeed (at least in part) as propaganda, here she concentrates on how this piece of propagandistic music discourse more or less failed, at least amongst musicians. Significantly, she points out that *Germanophilie* is a more important text than has often been acknowledged, especially if understood as an essay directed at the general French public, and as an extension of the propaganda and politics of the Institut de France. Saint-Saëns’s text attacks the music of Richard Wagner, a controversial but nevertheless popular composer up until August 1914. In Saint-Saëns’s formulation, the “infiltration” of Wagner into France’s musical life led to the demise of what Saint-Saëns considered the distinctly French genre of *opéra-comique*. Moore points out that Saint-Saëns’s framing of Wagner’s influence on French musical culture since the late nineteenth century aligned with understandings of Germans and German culture as “barbaric” that proliferated in wartime France. This context proved useful in Saint-Saëns’s diatribes against those who continued to listen to Wagner’s music – those who, like malingerers, were unwilling to sacrifice their self-interests for the greater French good. But this, Moore argues, was precisely where Saint-Saëns went wrong. By reading *Germanophilie* through the lens of Oliver Thomson’s distinction between rational and emotional propaganda, Moore underlines that Saint-Saëns’s appeals to people’s emotions – through overblown accusations of Germanic culture’s influence, attempts at making people feel guilty for their lack of sacrifice, and generally hyperbolic claims

regarding the immediate need to completely do away with all Austro-German influences – led many musicians to reject his treatise and the staunchly nationalistic ideology that informed it. For many musicians, Saint-Saëns's *Germanophilie* was not only far from factual; it also revealed the outdated nature of his views and those of other Institut members, while also underlining a gap in Saint-Saëns's ability to consider the repercussions, accessibility, and limitations of his ideas in wartime musical practice.

- 5 While Saint-Saëns's written efforts at propaganda failed, the performed propaganda efforts of the *Matinées nationales* concert series flourished, at least during the first two years of the war. As Moore details in her fourth chapter, this Sunday afternoon concert series, begun in November 1914 by the *Œuvre fraternelle des artistes*, featured musical performances combined with patriotic, often nationalistic speeches. With skilled orators and musicians from the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, the *Matinées nationales* offered spaces for “comfort, mourning, and homage,” while also raising funds for wartime charities (p. 119). Moore points out that these concerts offered important modes of distraction for Parisians, and paid tribute not only to French composers who were fighting on the front lines or had died during the war, but also to Allied nations' composers and losses. Although Moore asserts that these concerts were important spaces for collective mourning, she discerns this more from the concerts' organizers and the programs themselves than from engagement with audience members' or performers' accounts.¹ Nevertheless, this concert series' repertoire focused more on French composers than most concert series had prior to August 1914, although older Austro-German composers like Mozart and Beethoven continued to appear on programs. Perhaps Moore's most significant contribution in this chapter is that the speeches given at these performances often contributed to their success. She notes that these speeches have often been overlooked for their contributions to propaganda efforts, in part due to their ephemerality; as Moore points out, few of these speeches exist in French archives. And yet, these were significant because they weren't subject to the same censorship as the musical programs, allowing their writers to compose them up until the last minute. This made them a useful form of propaganda for nationalist members of the Institut and other members of the French intelligentsia. While the *Matinées nationales* concerts were successful for the first few seasons of war, Moore observes that by 1917 Parisian audiences were beginning to question the war's necessity. With this shift in the Parisian public's feelings came a disinterest in the patriotism and nationalism that the *Matinées nationales* had been selling from the first season of the war.
- 6 Moore follows her chapter on musical propaganda at the *Matinée nationales* with a chapter that examines how Jacques Rouché staged propaganda at the Opéra during the war. As she explains, the Opéra was one of the musical institutions most affected by the war: between the lack of performers and ticket buyers caused by the war effort, the charity tax imposed on French musical and theatrical institutions, and the exorbitant costs of creating the sets and costumes necessary for fully staged opera and ballet productions, it was difficult for Rouché to continue the Opéra's normal peacetime activities. In the Opéra's first season after reopening in December 1915, Rouché adhered to public sentiment on the home front by refusing to perform works by Austro-German composers, focusing instead on new and older works by French composers, as well as pieces by composers in Allied countries. In addition, Rouché used the Opéra as a means to stage French musical history through performances of excerpts from operas and ballets by French composers active in the seventeenth through early

twentieth centuries. Although not all of these performances were successful – critics frequently complained that staging complete operas would have been preferable – Rouché’s historically-focused series underlined “the role of both the past and present as part of musical propaganda” (p. 171).

- 7 In her final chapter, Moore zeroes in on the role of music publishing in wartime French propaganda. Like other Parisian musical institutions, publishing houses and booksellers suffered financially during the war, in large part because German editions of musical scores were stockpiled, preventing income from what had been low-cost top sellers. In response to this crisis, and due to the need for quality French editions of music by classic Austro-German composers, several of Paris’s top music publishers began creating new French editions, including Durand, Senart, Enoch, and Rouart, Lerolle et Cie. The latter publisher established a consortium of music publishers in an effort to create a national *Edition française de musique classique*. While most French music publishers were happy to join Rouart’s consortium, Durand, with his views that such an edition was unachievable, alongside his realization that, as already one of the most prolific publishers in France, he had little to gain financially from this venture, refused to join – an action that led to his patriotism being questioned, and to pressure to join from Cortot and other government propaganda agents, especially after Rouart’s consortium received governmental support in 1916. Here Moore reads Rouart’s failure in musical propaganda as an instance of “compromised nationalism,” in which music publishers’ “willingness to support patriotic sentiment seems to have only stretched so far as it was beneficial to themselves” (p. 206). However, Moore argues that despite Rouart’s inability to create a national edition, his efforts engendered debate about as well as no small amount of support for a more national approach to publishing, as demonstrated by the conversations at the 1917 *Congrès du livre* concerning “a rethinking of the traditional *modus operandi*” of national publishing.
- 8 As someone who has spent the last decade studying musical life in France during World War I, I found that Moore’s reading of home front musical activities between 1914 and 1918 resonated with my own understanding of musical life and politics at this time. The nationalism of Paris’s musical institutions during World War I is a key feature of musical life in this period, evident not only in primary sources, but also in most music scholars’ accounts of the war. This is part of what makes Moore’s book rather brilliant: utilizing archival resources, the Parisian press, and memoirs and diaries, Moore provides readers with an immense amount of detail about the inner workings, successes, and failures of nationalism and the propagandistic motivations of musicians and musical institutions in wartime France. Moore sheds light on how this propaganda worked, as well as when it didn’t, and provides a wealth of supporting evidence in the process. She also delivers some important revisions to the music-historical record, for instance when she locates the founding of the *Edition française de musique classique* with Rouart, rather than with Durand, as previous scholars had suggested,² and when she addresses the important role of the spoken word in the early success of the wartime *Matinées nationales* concert series.
- 9 In focusing on wartime home front musical institutions, Moore offers a fascinating account of how civilian musicians contributed to the war effort, while also contributing to a sizeable body of literature that includes Jane Fulcher’s *The Composer as Intellectual*, Roger Nichols’s *The Harlequin Years*, Barbara Kelly’s *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*, and Michel Duchesneau’s *L’Avant-garde musicale et ses sociétés à Paris de 1871 à 1939*.³ While

the stories Moore tells in *Performing Propaganda* are important, I wonder if her focus on musical institutions may have at times obscured the complexity of how individuals, or smaller, not quite so institutionalized collectives engaged with or resisted propaganda in their musical activities or productions. Indeed, one of Moore's main aims in this book is to demonstrate "the extraordinarily complex nature of early attempts at musical propaganda" (p. 220), and though she certainly accomplishes this aim, there were nonetheless a few voices that I was surprised to see absent in her text.

- 10 For instance, I wished Moore had sought out the voices of more women who participated in wartime propaganda. Given the misogynistic culture of early twentieth century France, women have already tended to be marginalized in music-focused histories of World War I. And yet women were extraordinarily important bearers of musical culture on the French home front at this time, especially since so many male musicians were absent. For instance, Lili and Nadia Boulanger were central figures in the development of the Comité Franco-Américain du Conservatoire National de Musique et de Déclamation, an organization founded by the sisters with the patronage of Whitney Warren in 1915. This largely woman-run organization rivaled Alfred Cortot's efforts with the Œuvre fraternelle des artistes to provide aid for musicians and their families during the war, as well as his endeavors in pro-French propaganda abroad. The Comité Franco-Américain spawned concerts in the United States in support of French musicians and the French war effort, but also laid the groundwork for the Conservatoire at Fontainebleau, which would serve in the decades following World War I as a haven for young American composers who wanted to study with French musicians. Another important woman whose efforts Moore overlooked was soprano Jane Bathori, who took over organizing performances at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in 1917 after Jacques Copeau left on a lecture tour in the United States in the same year.⁴ In addition to Bathori, singers Emma Calvé and Claire Croiza performed in concerts in Paris and abroad, often in precisely the ways Moore describes in her book – as patriots in Paris, and as cultural ambassadors abroad.⁵ Although Moore indeed mentions Claire Croiza as a performer who participated in the dissemination of French soft power in her second chapter, she doesn't pay much attention to how Croiza – as well as other female performers – may have contributed to French wartime propaganda in ways that were similar to though perhaps distinct from those of their male counterparts. Attending to these women's voices, performances, and contributions to the war effort would have given Moore the opportunity to address how and to what extent gender played a role not only in the types of propaganda utilized in World War I-era France, but also how audiences received propaganda by women.
- 11 Although Moore turns from time to time to French musicians' letters, diaries, and memoirs in addressing music as propaganda, I felt that more attention to sources like these, as well as to other, more personal archival sources, would have provided her accounts with even more nuance and depth. It may be that Moore's focus on the home front prevented her from looking at sources that would have been quite helpful to her project, especially since the home front and the front lines were – especially for musicians – often far more permeable than has been acknowledged. For instance, sources like the *Gazette des Classes du Conservatoire* – a journal founded and edited by Nadia and Lili Boulanger as part of their work for the Comité Franco-Américain that is housed at the Département de la Musique at the BnF – would have provided Moore with a wealth of accounts of how soldiers understood the propaganda that was happening on

the home front, and how they engaged with it in moments when they were in Paris on leave.

- 12 But these omissions feel small considering the extent to which Moore's book makes a lasting and unique contribution to scholarship on music in World War I-era France, especially given her focus on propaganda. Drawing on contemporary theorists of propaganda such as Harold Lasswell, as well as on historians of propaganda like Joseph Nye, Oliver Thomson, and David Welch, Moore illustrates how music came to function as a form of propagandistic soft power engaged in promoting a positive image of France, French culture, and French people.⁶ In the age of Trump and the global spread of right-wing nationalism, when "alternative facts" and fake political ads on Facebook signal an increased need for more incisive media literacy, *Performing Propaganda*, in shedding light on propaganda tactics used by composers, concert and theatre organizers, holds the potential to inform readers about the mechanics of propaganda in ways that might enable them to strengthen their skills in discerning propaganda's aims and factuality. Thus Moore's book offers a valuable new take on musical production and performance in wartime Paris, while also presenting a thought-provoking and rather timely account of how governments and individuals garner the power to sway public opinion through the written word, the spoken word, art, and music.

NOTES

1. To be fair, it may be that few people were very open about what these concerts meant for them, in large part due to then-dominant constructions of heroic masculinity that prevented people from speaking about their grief. See ROGERS Jillian, *Grieving through Music in Interwar France: Maurice Ravel and His Circle, 1914-1934*, PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2014; and ROGERS, *Resonant Recoveries: French Music and Trauma Between the Wars*, New York, Oxford University Press, forthcoming, especially chapter 1. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to say with any certainty how these pieces tended to function (versus how they were intended to function) without including more of these voices.

2. In chapter 6, Moore revises Jane Fulcher's argument about this in *The Composer as Intellectual*. See MOORE, *Performing Propaganda*, p. 192, n.54.

3. FULCHER Jane, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914-1940*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005; NICHOLS Roger, *The Harlequin Years: Music in Paris 1917-1929*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003; KELLY Barbara, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913-1939*, Suffolk, Boydell and Brewer, 2013; DUCHESNEAU Michel, *L'Avant-garde musicale et ses sociétés à Paris de 1871 à 1939*, Sprimont, Mardaga, 1997.

4. LAURENT Linda, TAINSY Andrée, LEE Sonia, et al., "Jane Bathori et le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, 1917-1919," *Revue du musicologie*, vol. 70, n° 2, 1984, p. 229-257; KELLY, Barbara, "World War I and the Parisian Avant Garde: New Music, Patriotism, and Narratives of Rupture," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Milwaukee, 7 November 2014.

5. For information about Emma Calvé's propaganda efforts, see FUCHS Sarah, "Emma Calvé's campagne de propagande," paper presented at the conference Creative Women at the End of the First World War: Endings and New Beginnings, University of Guelph, 7 October 2018.

6. LASSWELL Harold, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, London, Kegan Paul; New York, Alfred Knopf, 1927; THOMSON Oliver, *Easily Led: A History of Propaganda*, Sutton Publishers Ltd., 1999; NYE Joseph, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York, Basic Books, 1990; NYE, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs, 2004; WELCH David, *Propaganda, Power, and Persuasion*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2013.

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Jillian Rogers is an Assistant Professor of Musicology at Indiana University, Bloomington. Before coming to IU in the fall of 2019, Jill taught at University College Cork, Indiana University, and the University of California at Los Angeles, where she received her PhD in musicology in 2014. Her research centers on music and sound as embodied phenomena, as well as on how people have historically experienced, processed, and performed grief and trauma through music. Her interests in French modernism, affect and psychoanalytic theory, sound studies, and trauma and performance studies coalesce in her current book project, *Resonant Recoveries: French Music and Trauma Between the Wars*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press. Jill has published articles on French music and mourning during and after World War I in *Transposition* and Étienne Jardin's edited volume *Music and War From French Revolution to WWI*. In addition to currently co-editing and contributing to special issues of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* and *Women and Music*, Jill was a co-organizer with Fanny Gribenski, Nicolas Donin, and François-Xavier Féron of a 2018 seminar series and a 2019 conference at IRCAM on intersections between music, sound, science, and technology in French historical contexts.