

intressant och lärorik, men den stora behållningen är sättet att både ifrågasätta och förnya det centrala begreppet. Då de teoretiska diskussionerna öppnar för liknande studier i andra delar av världen innefattar de också de mest användbara aspekterna för fortsatt forskning. ■

This volume is the outcome of a two-day symposium about “East German music and its connection to the Cold War” (Introduction, p. 2) that took place in 2019. Contributors of this volume are musicologists, ethnologists and historians from Germany and Sweden. The topics of the nine essays in this volume cover a wide array of music phenomena. Each one will be presented briefly before looking at the entire volume’s structure, aims and perspectives.

The first section, *The Political Function of Music*, consists of one essay with the title “Folksongs of Our Time. Song Production in the GDR at the Beginning of the Cold War” written by Meredith Nicoll. It has two parts. The first presents an overview about the various meanings of the polysemantic German term *Lied*. The second part focuses on a particular form of this music genre: the political mass Lied. This term has more than one meaning as well. *Massenlieder* were written for political mass events and to be performed by all participants. But the term was also used for new songs that were supposed to become widely known, like a folksong. This essay offers many valuable insights into the complicated history and function of the *Lied* in a political context and the genre of political mass song that, at least in Germany, ceased to exist after 1990.

The second section *Musical Individuals in a Political Context* consists of three essays. Stefan Weiss’s article “How to be Useful: The Songs of Andre Asriel” presents one of the central agents in the GDR’s music life. From his output as a composer Weiss chooses Asriel’s mass songs for analyzing his relation to jazz, a genre treated with suspicion by the Communist state. Hence, Asriel’s songs with jazz elements provoked negative reactions from reviewers despite his prominent position. The title of Lars Klingberg’s essay is a summary of its content: “Marianne Gundermann alias Johanna Rudolph. Communist – Emigrant – Traitor – Auschwitz Survivor – Guardian of the Cultural Policy of the GDR”. Her biography, which is full of frictions and contradictions, serves as the base for a study that exemplifies the strong influence that certain individuals had in the cultural politics of the GDR. As Klingberg argues, her musical competence was rather limited – except for the works of Georg Friedrich Händel – which did not inhibit her to interfere in music affairs of different kinds. The only thing that appears to have qualified her for such a powerful position was the fact that she engaged herself in the German Communist party early on, even though she had collaborated in Nazi Germany with the Gestapo leading to the killing of her Communist comrades. She did exert her influence in a dogmatic manner as the appendix illustrates, a speech in which she tried to denigrate Western musicologists as fascists. Matthias Tischer’s essay “Composing Back and Forth the Iron Curtain. The Friendship of Paul Dessau and Hans Werner Henze” presents the exceptional relation between these well-known German composers and how it becomes manifest in their musical works and their humoristic letters. In them, they

BOOK

The Cold War through the Lens of Music-Making in the GDR

Political Goals, aesthetic paradoxes, and the case of neutral Sweden.

Petra Garberding &
Henrik Rosengren (eds.)

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wrote about future projects, musical inspiration and the challenges they met. They collaborated and quoted each other in their work until the end of their friendship which – perhaps not accidentally – coincided with the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Two essays make up the section *East German Choirs and Cultural Diplomacy*. Andreas Lueken's "Sacred – Secular – Ideologic? The Repertoire of the St. Thomas Choir of Leipzig in the GDR" gives a statistical overview about the repertoire of this choir during the years from 1949 to 1991, that is, during the entire time of the GDR's existence. Changes in the repertoire appear to have been clearly politically motivated, for instance, the raise of secular works in the 1960s. But the political elite was also keen to exploit the "trademark" of this choir, which had been led by Johann Sebastian Bach two centuries before, for promoting the GDR as a state that respected and maintained the German classical music heritage. Henrik Rosengren's essay "Cultural Heritage and Political Propaganda: East German Boys' Choirs in Sweden" explores the more or less hidden political aims of guest concerts of the Kreuzchor from Dresden and the Thomanerchor from Leipzig. Both choirs have a long and honorable history and started touring Sweden and other Western countries already in the late 1940s. During these journeys they did not only operate as a mediator of a positive cultural image of the GDR through their performances. Implicitly, the singers and staff of these choirs had the task to establish individual contacts with Swedish families which often hosted them privately. Beside from this potential for influencing public opinion abroad, the tours did not come without a risk. Some choir members seized the opportunity and defected to the West. This overview takes only in account the historical period before the erection of the Berlin wall and works as a link to the final section of the book.

GDR and Neutral Sweden consists of three essays written by the editors. Petra Garberding looks at the career of a singer who often performed in Sweden. "Politics is as important for me as art'. Gisela May in Sweden" evaluates May's relatively frequent guest appearances. May was not only well-known as an actress and singer, but was also a high GDR cultural functionary. Her repertoire was contemporary and representative for the music 'canon' of East Germany. In her statements in the Swedish press, she emphasized her loyalty to the GDR authorities. Despite that she was classified as not entirely reliable by the Stasi. The last two essays deal with the musicologist Gerd Schönfelder who played an important role in GDR cultural politics and had good contacts to Sweden. Petra Garberding's "Gerd Schönfelder. Musicologist and Stasi Employee in Sweden" starts with a biographical note and investigates his role as an ambassador for the ideology of the GDR. In his reports to the Stasi, he classified his Swedish counterparts according to their political standpoints and their sympathies for Communist Germany. He succeeded in getting into the inner circle of Swedish music politics when getting elected as a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. A concrete example of his organizational binational work is presented in Henrik Rosengren's "Gerd Schönfelder and the Opera *Gustaf Wasa*". In the late 1980s, he initiated a collaboration of the Semperoper in Dresden and the Royal Swedish Academy with the aim to edit and perform this opera commissioned by the Swedish king Gustav III, and written by the Dresden composer Johann Gottlieb Naumann two centuries earlier. The premiere

in Stockholm took place after the end of the GDR in 1991 and got negative reviews. At this time rumors about Schönfelders Stasi affiliation had started to spread and the cultural contacts between Sweden and the GDR, which had been close in some sectors, was re-evaluated critically.

The volume provides the reader with a fascinating panorama of the music life in and the cultural contacts of the GDR. The essays process a lot of archival material; in some cases – for instance, the essays written by the editors –, this material has some brisance because some Stasi files that are quoted concern persons in Sweden and Germany who are still alive and had a career even after 1989. All essays are original and convincing contributions about actors and individuals who often have not yet been addressed in non-German research communities. All essays are well-structured and rich in hard facts and figures. The multifaceted interplay between politics and musicians or music officials becomes visible and the hypotheses and conclusions that are drawn rest on a solid empirical basis. For the international research community that investigates the cultural politics of totalitarian states this volume is without doubt very valuable. For music researchers engaging with East Germany's music history it is an interesting cross-section through a material whose quantity is enormous and that has yet to be analyzed. However, for a number of reasons, the volume may not work as an introduction to GDR music politics.

First, it lacks an overview about the history of cultural politics in the GDR. Since it disappeared as a state more than three decades ago, its cultural politics may not be well known outside Germany. A table or timeline with some important events and dates might have made it easier for readers who are not familiar with the history of the GDR to understand and interpret the observations and statements of the authors. For instance, the Biermann expatriation and its wide-ranging reverberations in international affairs or the different turns in GDR music politics, which shifted away from the Bitterfelder Weg of the 1950s, would have been relevant coordinates. Moreover, a systematic overview about the existing research about East German music politics – e.g. the regime's futile attempts to fight Western "Beatmusik" – and how this volume fits into, challenges or expands existing research would have given the reader guidance through the material which appears to be narrow and disparate at the same time.

This leads to the most fundamental issue with the book, namely that it has no central topic or thread running through it. Despite the 22 words of the overlong book title, the common denominator of the essays remains unclear. Also, the title is not summarizing all articles and somewhat misleading. For instance, the three essays about Schönfelder and Rudolph do not address *Music-Making in the GDR* but the activities and biographies of two music functionaries who tried to interfere with music life abroad. The term "music-making" suggests that this volume is about music as a cultural practice which exceeds the traditional generic restriction to composed music. But this is not the case. On the contrary, it deals exclusively with composers, performers and organizers in the art music sector (with the partial exception of Gisela May). Major genres like popular music, film music or folk music are absent. Also, the research methods that the contributors choose are rather traditional which is of course not a flaw. But the content

of the book is more conventional than a reader with a background in recent music research might expect when reading the title. As a consequence, the lack of a central topic makes the structure of the book unsteady. Dividing the essays in four sections does not help because their titles do not address the content of the essays concisely. The title of the first section – *The Political Function of Music* – is way too broad because it consists of only one single article that focuses on a very specific genre of song. The title of the second section – *Music Individuals in a Political Context* – would even work with the three essays in section 4, about two music individuals, May and Schönfelder, and their political activities. This does not affect the high quality of the individual articles but makes the whole volume appear to be a collection of case studies, rather than a coherent publication that puts forward an argument or thesis. Finally, it would have needed more editorial care. There are many typos – in some articles on almost every page – and the bibliographical style is not consistent. In some essays, more than one standard for quoting research literature can be found, for instance by changing between English and German name of cities or by indicating the same source in different bibliographical manners. In some essays not all quotations are given in their German original in the footnotes and in a few cases the source of a quote is missing entirely.

In short: Although this collection of essays does not give a complete picture of the GDR and its external and internal cultural politics it provides the reader with valuable insights into details of the GDR's music life and its relation to Sweden. To make information about East German actors, structures and relations accessible to a larger international audience through multifaceted detail studies is the biggest merit of this book. It enriches the international research and discussion about music in totalitarian countries substantially. The variety of objects addressed, of which all belong to the genre of art music, and the plurality of methods employed, stretching from music analysis over statistics through close examination of archival material, show the different strategies of the East German Communist regime to gain and maintain influence on its own and other nation's populations through the creators, performers and organizers of music. In which respects this influence still matters and whether Sweden did maybe play a more active role in establishing relations with the Eastern bloc than hitherto ascertained remain two big and controversial questions for further research. ■