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MUSICAL MOMENTS AND THE MOMENT OF GERMAN MUSIC



Language of Music. Music speaks a universal language, through which the spirit is freely, indefinitely animated; this makes the spirit feel so well, so familiar, so fatherlandish; in these short moments it is at [its Indian] home. All the love and goodness, future and past stir in it, hope and longing. [Attempt to speak *definitely* through music.] Our language was originally more musical; it has only gradually become prosaic [so *toneless*]. It has become now more a reverberation [*Schall*], if one wants to debase this beautiful word: It needs to become song again. Consonants transform tone into *Schall*.¹

In an early issue of his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Robert Schumann had printed the above fragment, which derived from Novalis's *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798–99), a poetic encyclopedia of more than a thousand entries of notes, responses to readings, and sketches. It was perhaps the most ambitious, if unfinished, project of early German Romanticism associated with the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Friedrich von Hardenberg, alias Novalis. But the grand effort to poeticize the world was thwarted not only by Novalis's early death in 1801, but also—like Friedrich Schlegel's notion of a *progressive Universalpoesie*—by its utopian universality. If they had sought to capture the universe in the form of the literary fragment, a masterful miniature of pithy prose, Novalis's unedited notes are elliptical and cryptic by comparison. Yet like the shards and splinters in Hölderlin's drafts, they often reveal more poignantly the greater philosophical ideas and poetic vision behind them. In this entry on “Music,” Novalis contemplates music’s relationship both to language and to the moment. While music is a universal language that animates the spirit indefinitely, there is the “attempt to speak *definitely* through music.” And while music grants us short moments in which we feel at home, these moments may encompass “*all* the love and goodness”: our past and future, as well as our maternal “Indian home” and our paternal

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Vaterland. Even if Novalis did not mean moments *in* music, but moments *of* music, both those musical moments matter: not only were they made (and taken) to *speak* for the whole, but they were also made (and taken) to speak for *the whole*.

Novalis's fragment formulates the link between the two principal concerns of this book as encapsulated in its title. "Programming the Absolute" and "Hermeneutics of the Moment" refer to the interpretive practice of seizing on moments in music that seem ineffable, and nevertheless of putting their meaning in words.² This meaning may range from a fleeting emotion to a broad historical category; from a private and personal memory to what I will call "the moment of German music." The latter requires some explanation. Framed by Viennese Classicism and the Second Viennese School, the moment of German music, as a primarily cultural category, is an extension of what David Blackbourn has called the "long nineteenth century" in German political history: "the period between the 'double revolutions' of the late eighteenth century (the French Revolution of 1789, the Industrial Revolution in Britain) and the First World War"; or between the fall of the Holy Roman Empire and the fall of the *Kaiserreich*.³ The moment of German music thus does not reach back as far as Schütz and Bach (though it includes them through their romantic reception), but expands Blackbourn's period until the fall of the Third Reich (thereby treating the Weimar Republic as an overlapping segment belonging to the twentieth century). This is to emphasize the continuity of an important strand of post-Enlightenment bourgeois culture, framed by Beethoven's coming of age and Schoenberg's death, or by Goethe's *Faust* and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. It begins with the conception of the lyric moment as the beginning of modern, romantic, subjectivity that David Wellbery has located in the poetry of the young Goethe; and it ends that subjectivity in the condensed lyricism of Webern's last works.⁴

The present book articulates this historical frame in the first and last chapters, which offer two different hearings of Beethoven from the perspective of 1945. The four middle chapters are more loosely connected to this framework, exploring different analytical and historical aspects of the hermeneutics of the moment. In chapter 2, it is Schumann's struggle to define the historical significance of "new music" in his public appreciation of Schubert and to communicate private thoughts through the programmatic use of Beethoven's music. In chapter 3, it is Wagner's claim to establish himself as Beethoven's heir by trying to reenact, in *Lohengrin*, the ultimate moment of programming the absolute—the word *Freude* in the last movement of the Ninth—as the momentous birth of music drama. In chapter 4, it is Liszt's project of the symphonic poem, combining the Beethovenian symphonic tradition with the heritage of

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European literature, in order to reconcile the aspirations of art religion (*Kunstreligion*) with those of religious art. And in chapter 5, it is Schoenberg's attempt to secure the hegemony of German music through the revolutionary creation of a new method of composition and a conservative recovery of music's spiritual message. More chapters, to be sure, could be added: on Mendelssohn, on Brahms, on Bruckner, on Strauss, on Mahler, each of whom has blurred the line between absolute and program music; and all have a more or less problematic place in German culture.

The central values associated with absolute music—the identity of the bourgeois subject, the aesthetic autonomy of art, and the intrinsic worth of high culture—have been widely criticized for their mandarin conservatism, nationalist ideology, and neglect of social and political concerns. Today, however, the idea (and ideology) of absolute music has finally lost its privileged position in Western art music and it is no longer a dominating paradigm in the scholarly study thereof. Absolute music has become relative. The point may be blunt, but it expounds the critical impulse behind the conjunction of absolute music and hermeneutics in this book. On the one hand, absolute music has been central in advancing the idea that German music could transcend its Germanness and become universal (which was then, of course, taken to be a prime virtue of its Germanness). On the other hand, the “moment of German music” is nevertheless no more than a moment in the history of music, in the way Adorno quoted Eduard Steuermann as saying that “the concept of great music, which has today been passed on to radical music, belongs itself only to a moment in history.”⁵ Indeed, the twofold legacy of German music has been that the ecumenical claims of both great and radical works became associated both with the catastrophe of a fascist dystopia and the promise of a communist utopia. While Wagner took the C♯ in measure seven of the *Eroica* to be the note that “represents all modern music” (also meaning, of course, *German* music), the C♯ in the final statement of the Arietta theme in the last movement of op. 111 became, for Mann, the last modern note. And while the *Eroica*'s C♯ established, as Scott Burnham has shown so well, the program of musical heroism, the Arietta's C♯, as I will show, was “programmed” by Adorno to pre-echo the end of such heroism.⁶

Thus this book is not a history of the relationship between absolute and program music, but rather an essay on musical and historical hermeneutics.⁷ Since the question of musical meaning has remained the crux of modern musicology (which came into being during the nineteenth century), “programming the absolute” is no less than a trope for our field, expressing that the link between music and *logos* is the lifeline of musicology. Although the standard historical narrative states that

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music emancipated itself to become a language in its own right during Romanticism, this new musical language remained, nevertheless, inseparable from the language *about* music.⁸ Romantic musical aesthetics and modern musicology are predicated not only on the difference between language and music, but also on the mediation of that difference. Around 1800, the indefinite nature of the musical language was, as Mark Evan Bonds incisively put it, no longer considered a “liability” but an “asset.”⁹ Music cannot be considered apart from its interpretation, the work apart from its listener, autonomy aesthetics apart from reception aesthetics. The absoluteness of absolute music has never been an obstacle, but is the very condition of its meaning.

Moment, in German, means both instant (*Augenblick*) and part (*Bestandteil*). The former is a temporal category, the latter a material one. The former refers to a point in time, the latter to a particular detail. The paradox of the musical moment is its place at the intersection between part and whole in the material realm, and between instant and process in the temporal realm. However short the instant, it may touch eternity; and however minute the detail, it may encompass all. As such, therefore, moment is also used in this book as a conceptual category. In the theory and practice of interpretation, it operates not only on the level of musical history and culture, but also touches on broader concerns in the phenomenology and philosophy of music.

When Hermann Kretzschmar set out to develop a systematic musical hermeneutics in the early twentieth century, he sought to reconcile what Ian Bent (following Carl Dahlhaus) identified as the “two opposing principles of music analysis” in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Whereas the scientific principle was driven by the impulse to *describe* musical phenomena, the hermeneutic principle was concerned with the impulse to *interpret* musical content. Though Bent has treated the descriptive and the interpretive modes as an intrinsic part of music analysis, the rift between analysis and hermeneutics, as distinctly separate genres in the writings about music, had become more pronounced in the nineteenth century. Even if analytical and hermeneutic modes of speaking about music are both essentially metaphorical, the difference between technical and nontechnical language still has had wide-ranging social and institutional implications. Despite Kretzschmar’s hope to close the gap between *Kenner* and *Liebhaber*, there continues to be a distinction between those who read music and those who do not. The professional terminology of close reading remains remote from the jargon used to bring music close to a nonprofessional audience. The dubious reputation of musical hermeneutics stems not only from its penchant for purple prose and its predilection for individual passages, but also from the

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combination of the two. If Wackenroder's art-loving friar exclaimed that "certain passages in music appeared to him so clearly and vividly that the tones appeared like *words*," then the most common critique of hermeneutic criticism has been that those words, as Dahlhaus put it, were "abused as a vehicle for reaching a state, in which the sentiment itself—and not the music—becomes the object of attention and pleasure."¹¹ To avoid the critical mode that Friedrich Schlegel diagnosed as the "declaiming enthusiasm about individual passages," Hans-Georg Nägeli stipulated that the future critic of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* "must never utter more rapture than in the moments of immediate consumption of art. In such moments, one does not review. He may never break out into exclamations. That suits him badly. Judgment counts for more than enthusiasm."¹²

Thus the isolated particular became a potential problem precisely when the whole came into view. While Schlegel, in the early era of German literary criticism, observed that there was a tendency "toward beautiful moments and single images," he noted that "[i]t was Herder, who first knew to grasp a whole with an emphatic imagination and to express this feeling in words."¹³ In music criticism, understanding the relationship between part and whole was also a measure of musical education and social status. Consider Jean Paul's striking observation that "[t]he folk, like cattle, only hear the present, but not the two poles of time; only musical syllables, no syntax."¹⁴ Quite apart from the phenomenological problem of whether we hear moments as part of a local chain of events or as part of a larger whole, the social implications of a listener's musical competence persists through Adorno's sociological analysis of regressive, or "atomistic," listening as the mere consumption of culinary moments: "No longer do the partial moments serve as a critique of that whole; instead, they suspend the critique which the successful esthetic totality exerts against the flawed one of society."¹⁵ Where Jean Paul identified a "good hearer" as the one who "memorizes the antecedent of a musical period, in order to grasp beautifully the consequent," Adorno's "structural listener" retains the ability to discern, in aesthetic synthesis, the promise of a social order in which the individual is reconciled with the whole. Still, Adorno was more ambivalent, asserting in his radio broadcast "Beautiful Passages" ("Schöne Stellen") that "musical *Bildung* in a humanly dignified sense" not only meant the ability to perceive music as "a meaningful whole," but also that "[t]he light of beauty from particulars, once perceived, cancels the illusion with which *Bildung* suffuses music," namely, "that it would already be the happy whole that humanity denies itself until today." The image of that whole would be captured "rather by a scattered measure than by a victorious totality."¹⁶

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Adorno's paradoxical use of the whole as a foil for the fragment has its roots in the romantic reception of idealist philosophy where "particular" and "whole" enter into a dialectical relationship (chapter 1 will treat this in greater detail). "Even the greatest system," Friedrich Schlegel noted succinctly, "is still only a fragment."¹⁷ Yet inasmuch as the idea of the absolute can be reduced to a fragment, the fragment may in turn aspire, again, toward the absolute. Thus Schlegel also defined that "[a] fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog." Hence Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has pointed out that just as "absolute" means "detached" or "set free," "the detachment or isolation of fragmentation is understood to correspond exactly to completion and totality."¹⁸ If all "critical reading . . . is cyclical," argued Schlegel, such "cyclization is like a totalization from below."¹⁹ Because the initial conception of the whole is provisional, the particular offers the most concrete and tangible entry into the hermeneutic circle, which binds the word into a sentence, the sentence into a work, the work into an oeuvre, the oeuvre into an epoch, and the epoch into all of history. The inherent contradiction in what Hölderlin called "the *apriority* of the individual over the whole" is nowhere, perhaps, more pronounced than in one of Novalis's definitions of the Romantic: "Absolutization—universalization—*classification* of the individual moment, the individual situation etc. is the true essence of romanticizing."²⁰ From this perspective, the critical intent behind the notion of a moment of German music also runs the risk of detaching that moment and making it absolute once more.

Since romantic hermeneutics brought the particular into consideration together with the totality *and* vice versa, the issue was not only where interpretation should begin, but also where it should end. Thus, Wilhelm Dilthey noted that "all understanding remains only relative and can never be completed. *Individuum est ineffabile.*"²¹ Dilthey used Goethe's famous dictum to capture the premise of modern hermeneutics as established by Friedrich Schleiermacher: the inexhaustible meaning of an artwork makes interpretation an infinite process. It was Kant's notion of the aesthetic idea that "no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it."²² Schleiermacher's two hermeneutic axioms—that "understanding is an unending task" and that it is possible to "understand the author better than he understood himself"—stand in the liberal tradition of moral individualism.²³ In music criticism, this shift from rule-bound textual hermeneutics to what might be called an emancipated hermeneutics occurred when (according to Mary Sue Morrow) the "importance of being correct" ceded to the "reign of genius."²⁴ Because obscure passages were no longer wrong, but enigmatic, they stimulated a quest for multiple, and potentially conflicting, interpreta-

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tions. What Peter Szondi identified as the “displacement of the hermeneutics of the individual passage” with the notion of “*spiritual understanding*” meant a reevaluation of the particular.²⁵ The old hermeneutics of the individual passage became, as the new hermeneutics of the moment, the very passage to the individual.

Every artwork is a moment; every successful artwork is an instant, a momentary suspension of its process, as that process reveals itself to the persistent eye.²⁶

Intentional language wants to mediate the absolute, and the absolute escapes language. . . . Music finds the absolute immediately, but at the same moment it becomes obscured, just as too powerful a light blinds the eye which can no longer see what is completely visible.²⁷

In combination, these two passages by Adorno create a variant of the fragment by Novalis quoted at the outset. They assert not only the totalization of the moment (*every* artwork is a moment); but also music’s superior grasp of the absolute in comparsion to language. Like Novalis, Adorno treated the two claims as two sides of the same coin: the musical absolute appears in the moment. Adorno’s aesthetics of the moment is rooted in romantic idealism not only because of Romanticism, but also because of its modernity. The experience of suddenness and the sudden experience, especially, are central to modern aesthetic consciousness: the infinite irony in Schlegel, the diagnostic astonishment in Kleist, the demonic appearance in Kierkegaard, the abrupt aphorism in Nietzsche, the aesthetic ecstasy in Pater, the involuntary memory in Proust, the pure instant in Woolf, the experiential epiphany in Joyce, the “other state” in Musil, the constellation in Benjamin, and, of course, the celestial apparition in Adorno.²⁸ If modernist aesthetics crystallizes in Adorno’s aesthetics of the (musical) moment, it calls for a hermeneutics of the (musical) moment. Thus Adorno claimed not only that “as in music what is beautiful flashes up in nature only to disappear in the instant one tries to grasp it,” but also that “appearing nature wants silence at the same time that anyone capable of its experience feels compelled to speak in order to find a momentary liberation from monadological confinement.”²⁹ What Schopenhauer called the “short hour of celebration” where art succeeds in “freeing us momentarily from the service of the will” pertains to the art of interpretation as well.³⁰ Yet the paradox of all music, for Adorno, is that it is a “sphinx” that “mocks the one who contemplates it, in that it relentlessly promises meanings, and even intermittently offers them, while all the time such promised meanings are actually, in the truest sense, contributing to the death of meaning, and hence it will never be exhausted in these meanings.”³¹

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This paradox is also reflected in the influential distinction between symbol and allegory, which Paul de Man associated with two different modes of temporality that are fundamental to modern consciousness. “Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification,” wrote de Man, “allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes a language in the void of its temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self. It is this painful knowledge that we perceive at the moments when early romantic literature finds its true voice.”³² Clearly, the *éminence grise* behind de Man’s essay was Benjamin, who had claimed, in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, that time was the decisive category romantic thinkers had brought to the distinction between symbol and allegory. Benjamin referred to Friedrich Creuzer’s seminal *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (1819) which held that “[i]n the symbol an idea appears momentarily and entirely, and seizes all our spiritual powers. It is a ray that reaches our eye in a straight line from the dark bottom of being and thinking, and it passes through our whole essence. Allegory entices us to glance up and pursue the path the idea takes, hidden in the image. In the former there is momentary totality; in the latter progress occurs in a series of moments.”³³

Symbolic experience, then, is simultaneous; allegory works in succession. While in the symbol “the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption,” allegory exposes the “historicality” of the particular that is doomed to die.³⁴ And while the symbol mystifies meaning, allegory uncovers its conventional constructedness.³⁵ Yet for Benjamin, romantic symbol and baroque allegory converge in the mode of sudden appearance: one to show unity, the other to show difference. The “mystical now” of symbolic experience is not unlike the allegorical clash between “cold and ready-made technique” and “eruptive expression.”³⁶ While Creuzer had compared symbolic recognition with a “ray that reaches our eye in a straight line from the dark bottom of being and thinking” (see above), Benjamin saw the *sententia* in the baroque tragedy—like the light effect in baroque painting—“flash from the darkness of allegorical entanglement” and thus produce “the intermittent rhythm of constant arrest, jerky reversal, and renewed petrification.”³⁷ The rhythm of modern reading pulsates between the symbol’s systolic contraction into the mystical moment of the whole, and allegory’s diastolic dissipation into a series of momentary particulars—in other words, between the identical and the nonidentical. Its inherent hermeneutic, as Rolf Tiedemann put it, is marked by its modern morality: “The interpretive immersion in inherited texts, which Adorno supported and practiced, is

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nuance nonetheless aiming at the whole; naturally, postmodernism wants to know nothing of this, and so knows nothing. Still other concepts essential to Adorno's philosophy are also missing in postmodernism. The whole merely one of them, history yet another, utopia together with its theological archetype of reconciliation a third. Not inappropriately, postmodernism has been defined as a modernism that has taken its leave of history and emerged without utopia.”³⁸

It is tempting to defend Adorno (as he defended Bach) against one of his devotees—not because of Tiedemann's unflagging support of Adorno's modernism, but because of his acrimonious critique of postmodernism. Recalling that Jürgen Habermas had noted in 1960 the “minimal exchange value of utopia” upon the occasion of the appearance of Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*, Tiedemann bemoaned bitterly that today utopia is “traded on the stock markets of neither science nor society.”³⁹ Such diagnosis seems overly grim. If the postmodern residues of modernist utopia are apocryphal at worst, it is precisely their minimal exchange value that might keep them from being sold out as a commodity. Adorno would have wanted it no other way. In light of the routine charge against his elitism we should keep in mind that the opposition between high and low art is an essential aspect of his dialectics between integral whole and nonidentical particular. Otherwise he would not have claimed in his monograph on Mahler that “the power of the name is often better protected in kitsch and vulgar music than in high music that even before the age of radical construction had sacrificed all that to the principle of stylization.” Where Mahler “picks up the broken glass by the roadside and holds it up to the sun so that all the colors are refracted,” the total spectrum reflected in the part stands for the lost whole that only art might recuperate—if only momentarily.⁴⁰ This is why, for Adorno, the “moment” of the traditional artwork was constituted by “the sudden fusion of its particular moments into a totality”; and this is why “[a]s an expression of that totality art lays claim to the dignity of the absolute.”⁴¹ Modern art, by contrast, had to shrink that totality into a fragment, a shard, a relic, or a splinter. At the moment of crisis, the modern subject reconstitutes itself through moments of intense experience that may be triggered by the trivial. Thus for Hofmannthal's Lord Chandos a “watering can, a harrow left standing in a field, a dog in the sun, a run-down churchyard, a cripple, a small farmhouse, any of these can become the vessel for my revelation. Each of them, or for that matter any of a thousand others like them that the eye glides over with understandable indifference can all at once, at some altogether unpredictable instant, assume for me an aspect so sublime and moving that it beggars all words.”⁴²

Adorno had learned from Benjamin that this physiognomic gaze at

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the detail might turn up the absolute: that “the eternal is in any case rather a frill on a dress than an idea.”⁴³ Writing about the horn calls at the end of the first movement of the *Les Adieux* Sonata, he noted that here “the eternal attaches itself precisely to this most transient moment.”⁴⁴ At the very end of *Negative Dialectics*, the whole of philosophy depends on detail: “The smallest traits of this world would be of relevance to the absolute, for the micrological view cracks the shells of what, measured by the subsuming cover concept, is helplessly isolated and explodes its identity, the delusion that it is but a specimen. Such thinking shows solidarity with metaphysics at the moment of its fall.”⁴⁵ In light of such philosophical pathos the critique Adorno leveled at Benjamin’s *Arcarde Project* must, at least partially, be applied to himself. “If one wanted to put it rather drastically,” he wrote to Benjamin, “one could say that your study is located at the crossroads of magic and positivism. This spot is bewitched. Only theory could break this spell—your own resolute and salutarily speculative theory. It is simply the claim of this theory that I bring against you here.”⁴⁶

It is a claim that we also may well bring against Adorno. His unfinished *Aesthetic Theory* is nothing less than the attempt to reconcile the physiognomic gaze with a theoretical gaze, and to mediate between the process of materialist history and the sudden advent of messianic time. The result is an aesthetization of theory, or musicalization of philosophy. As a “song without notes” (to adopt a trenchant phrase by Christine Eichel), Adorno’s aesthetics followed, like the music it championed, the double impulse toward the total and the particular.⁴⁷ What Ernst Bloch valued in music as the “coincidence of expressive truth and constructional truth” has its equivalent in Adorno’s aesthetics in the coincidence of what Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht called the “logic of imagination” and “logic of construction.”⁴⁸ Adorno’s voice is caught between both the objective claims of philosophy and the subjective expression of the artist. While Andreas Huyssen has noted that today “the discourse of subjectivity has been cut loose from its moorings in bourgeois individualism,” the narrative or mimetic impulse of Adorno’s subjective voice—however parallel with the postmodern—could never be cut loose from its moorings in the modernist utopia of a reconciled whole.⁴⁹ Despite Adorno’s postmodern “repudiation of system and the commitment to the fragmentary and the occasional, to a freedom in the instant that eschewed the traditional Germanic longing for the *Hauptwerk* and the architectonic truth” (Fredric Jameson), a sense of the whole is nevertheless preserved in his ongoing commitment to truth.⁵⁰ Lambert Zuidervaart has highlighted this commitment as the primary motivation of *Negative Dialectics*: “the need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth.”⁵¹ Hence Adorno’s claim that music which is “com-

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pressed into a moment . . . is true as a reflex of negative experience. It pertains to real suffering.”⁵² The ideal of such a voice of suffering emerges in the Webernesque fusion of utmost rationality and pure sound. That is the only music we hear when Adrian Leverkühn himself performs the *Lamentations of Doctor Faustus*: a dissonant chord that represents the twelve-tone system and “at the same time” an expressive wail that represents the sound of nature. And that is the particular moment of German music that could transcend the moment of German music as a whole.⁵³

This tortured dialectic of the moment, I will argue in the last chapter of the book, is a symptom of modern melancholia. What Max Pensky has identified as Benjamin’s “melancholy dialectics” affected not only writers such as Mann and philosophers such as Adorno, whose condition was endemic to the generation that lived through the German catastrophe and the Jewish Holocaust; it also affected, as Eric Santner has shown, the *Nachkriegsgeneration*.⁵⁴ The melancholic condition of Mann, Adorno, and Benjamin has proven to be an ineluctable cultural and intellectual legacy. As a reflex of such melancholic dialectics, the totalizing and particularizing impulses in the present book, its calculated constructions and expressive gestures, are in plain sight. This is also the dilemma of an essayistic musicology, stranded in the no-man’s-land between scholarship and criticism. The tensions between rational logic and emotional whim accord with Freud’s diagnosis of the melancholic individual, who, instead of suffering from “a loss in regard to an object” projects “a loss in regard to his ego,” so that “one part of the ego sets itself over against the other, judges it critically, and, as it were, takes it as its object.”⁵⁵ Despite the narcissistic identification with, and critical disdain for, my substitute object of absolute music, however, I would agree with Dominique LaCapra that melancholy has traditionally been not only an obstacle to, but also a condition for, true mourning.⁵⁶ Freud’s prognosis that “when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again” is nothing less than a clinical vision of utopia.⁵⁷ Coupled with hope, however, melancholy is part of the human condition. Although Adorno’s agenda is not mine, but mine to understand, one may well understand my book as a reaction to the ending of his *Negative Dialectics*: as a gesture of solidarity with the metaphysics of German music at the moment of its fall.