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CONSUMING MUSIC: INDIVIDUALS, INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITIES, 1730-1830

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For a book that invites its reader to look beyond the content of printed artefacts and appreciate their paratexts, packaging and allure as desirable commodities, it seems only appropriate to peruse the volume's attractive cover. We are treated to a coloured reproduction of a print from 1786, showing a crowd outside the shop of the publisher and art dealer Artaria, in Vienna. The portion of the image shown here is magnified to occupy the full front cover, but is only a detail of the original print, which is some twenty times bigger and boasts a panoramic view of the whole street. This zooming-in on the people flocking to Artaria's shop and gazing intently at the display (one impatient onlooker at the back, too far away to browse comfortably, resorts to his opera glass) illustrates the editors' intended focus for the book. Both the short Introduction (only seven pages of text) and the volume's 'online supplement' (an interview with co-editor Catherine Mayes, available at consumingmusic.lib.utah.edu) posit that this spectacle of window shopping and other practices to do with selling and publicizing music in this period have a story to tell about the consumers. Bringing to mind James H. Johnson's *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), which features on its cover Eugène Lami's drawing of a group of listeners, the cover of *Consuming Music* advertises this edited collection as proposing a similar shift of perspective: from a traditional musicological focus on music's production to its clientele.

Yet although the same broad questions about the clientele resound emphatically in the introduction and back-cover blurb – who bought music? How did consumers' tastes come into shape and how did they, in turn, shape the composition of music? (1) – the approaches surveyed in this book address them somewhat obliquely. Across the nine chapters, the consumer of music is almost never given centre-stage. There is no contribution dedicated, say, to an eighteenth-century collector of engraved portraits of musicians, to a depiction of concert-goers in literature of the time, or to the members of an institution such as the Viennese Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. This is already evident from the book's four parts, all titled with verbs suggesting the agency and perspective someone on the side of production rather than consumption, strictly speaking: *Selling Variety*, *Edifying Readers*, *Marketing the Mundane* and *Cultivating Communities*. The mismatch between the viewpoint implied in these headings and the verb chosen as the book's title is perhaps a residue of the conference at which most of the contributions collected here were first presented (*Consuming Music, Commodifying Sound, 1750-1850*, Yale University, 5-6 October 2012, organized by Emily H. Green and Erin Johnson-Williams). The conference, however, also gave space to histories told explicitly from the perspective of collectors, readers, performers and listeners (for a summary of the papers read there, see the report by Catherine Mayes in this journal, 10/2 (2013), 314-6). In the book, the editors have evidently chosen to narrow the original focus, but this is not apparent from the volume's paratexts and packaging.

What is inside the package, then? Green's chapter, the first, sets the agenda. The perspective she proposes is a systemic blurring of boundaries between producers and consumers. Following this blueprint, the book explores music publishing and publicity c1730-1830, disrupting traditional distinctions between authors, publishers and purchasers of 'musical wares', from sheet music and theory books to celebrity singers and operatic experiences. For instance, Green discusses publishers as music's most conspicuous consumers in the late eighteenth century. Aside from practical advertising purposes, their catalogues could be read as displaying the publishers' own tastes as highly educated

individuals selecting which music to buy (and resell), thus functioning as a model for customers with limited musical abilities or interests. Via these endless lists of printed music for sale, publishers portrayed themselves as – and encouraged others to be – consumers who ‘are never finished buying music’ (22). Further addressing the agency of music publishers, Steven Zohn uses the case of Germany’s first journal of sheet music (issued by Telemann in 1728-29) to highlight the close interdependence of producers and consumers in shaping the latter’s musical experiences. Telemann’s selection of pieces that aimed to balance agreeable instruction and diversion is a case in point, and consumers were encouraged to become part of the community of musicians featured in the miscellany. The journal called on subscribers to contribute their own compositions, and the less experienced were assisted in their first steps as musical authors with dedicated contrapuntal exercises. The overlap of producers and consumers was mostly aspirational, Zohn admits. But its promotion was an essential drive for early musical consumerism: one still evident today, say, in the urge YouTube users experience to upload their own (however premature) musical efforts.

The Introduction makes an appeal for focusing on the widening market for arts and leisure between 1730 and 1830. Increased access to music practices for a growing pool of customers dictated new directions in the creation, packaging and distribution of musical goods, well before the age of mass consumption. An exploration of these makeovers can yield fresh perspectives on those consumers’ experiences traditionally associated with the later nineteenth century and beyond. In one of the book’s standout essays, Roger Mathew Grant recasts the invention of the metronome (patented in 1815) as the ultimate failure of a previous system of deducing musical tempos from meter signatures and note values. Examining how musical examples were included and glossed in books about music, Grant traces the increasing anxieties of eighteenth-century theorists in assuming a shared level of know-how from their readers. The later wide implementation of metronome markings, in this light, seems less a sudden statement of the composer’s controlling authority (over the performer’s shrinking freedom of interpretation), and rather an ‘event in the history of mediation’ (102): the end of a century-long struggle to overcome the limits of a notation that relied heavily on previously acquired musical competencies. While other authors in the volume lament the paucity of documentary evidence available to track processes of consumption during this period, Grant’s chapter suffers no such disadvantage. His subtle application of a media-studies approach to music’s material cultures in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries proves it to be ultimately a matter of choosing sources wisely and finding creative ways to interrogate them.

A less successfully developed theme in the book is the attempt to map the interdependence of consumers and producers in shaping a ‘mundane’ musical style, by which the editors mean ‘a simplification of music destined for a wide market’ (5). Both Marie Sumner Lott and Catherine Mayes tackle repertoires that flooded publishers’ catalogues in the early nineteenth century: collection of dances, popular tunes and chamber music designed to appeal to the performers themselves more than concert hall listeners (hardly the majority of music’s consumers in this period). Yet to generalize about consumers’ musical abilities and infer what they may have found pleasant to play may be asking too much from score analysis. According to Lott, middle-class men valuing self-improvement saw string chamber music as an ideal leisure activity. It may be more problematic, however, to intimate that they shared the same level of technical proficiency or the taste for a stylistic ‘middle ground [between the familiar and the progressive] during the early decades of musical Romanticism’ (150. Lott’s use of the term ‘Romantic’ is ambivalent, at times simply standing for ‘early nineteenth century’). To explain commercial success as merely a result of this music’s lack of sophistication may also be voicing an anachronistic viewpoint. As Matthew Head reminds us in *Sovereign Feminine: Music and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 2013), aesthetic hierarchies based on the notion of compositional progress began devaluing amateur-driven repertoires on a large scale only from later in the nineteenth century. Chopin's 1831 complaint that in Vienna 'only waltzes get printed' (quoted in Mayes' title), just as Schumann's 1834 opposition to inartistic creations or Liszt's 1835 condemnation of musicians as entertainers, belonged to an ongoing debate on the nature of the musical profession. The voices of these canonic composers have surely shaped traditional narratives of the history of music, but it would be misleading to read them as representing general attitudes in consumption. Ease and musical repetitions by themselves were not necessarily experienced as a separate category from high art. (Lott's suggestive claim that – just as readers of novels – amateur quartet players were after the repeated pleasure of recurring structures could have benefited from an actual comparison of narrative strategies between the genres.) Trying a different approach, Glenda Goodman convincingly proposes a rich contextual study of the musically unexceptional and its market in this period. Much in the spirit of challenging artificial divisions, Goodman considers the consummate professional singer together with the amateur purchasing her songs, and shows how the former's celebrity became entangled with mundaneness in the attempts to engage effectively a diverse pool of potential consumers.

If the book's thought-provoking stance is to look for the consumer in sources traditionally held to pertain the producer, the closing chapter brings this approach further into focus. Retracing the commodification of opera c1830, Peter Mondelli depicts market trends not as shaped by consumers' preferences, but in 'a capitalist dialectic of taste in which nobody really knew what anybody else wanted' (235). While Paris-based publisher Maurice Schlesinger strove 'to make the public want what he was selling', on the consumer's side, knowing what one ought to buy was a statement of status, of belonging to an imaginary community sharing similar values. No single agent could control, author or ultimately own such complex and highly networked 'expectations defined and redefined en masse' (235-36). This final point, towering from the volume's last page, invites reflections on what is likely to be our next scholarly challenge. I read it as an invitation to avoid organizing individuals according to typologies (or degrees) of control over musical commodities, as if these historical agents deserved separate histories. Before the age of mass consumption, after all, categories such as that of composer, performer, publisher, promoter, spectator, listener or subscriber to music journals could easily overlap in the same individual. Even when they did not, their different interests and agendas intersected via the musical commodity. And it is in an archaeology of these encounters that musicologists may find an opportunity to retrace what Mondelli calls the 'relational values' of musical commodities and the vicarious experiences of enjoying them.

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