David Wyn JONES,
*Music in Vienna – 1700, 1800, 1900*

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The Professor of Cardiff University, eminent specialist of the Viennese Classical Period, author of several volumes on Haydn and Beethoven, David Wyn Jones presented an important and timely volume to the reading public interested in European cultural history. An interdisciplinary volume that introduces the course of music history in the mirror of sociological and political events, and, at the same time, demonstrates clearly the decisive role of the patronage and the active cultivation of music in the history of an imperial center. Vienna, the Musikstadt, is of course an ideal choice for this investigation, but the historical survey of the musical life of Paris, Berlin, London, or Rome would presumably produce similarly valuable results.

The reason why the subject of the book is not a mere “case study” follows from the distinguished music historical position of Vienna. The city of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, the Strauss family, Brahms, Bruckner, Wolf, Mahler, Lehár, Schoenberg, Webern has a pedigree that probably stands alone in the world. In the introductory chapter of his book ("Telling Tales of Music in Vienna") the author ponders about this as follows:

Nearly one hundred years ago, at the end of the First World War, Vienna lost its place as the capital city of one of the oldest empires in Europe. While the legacy of Habsburg times is still evident in the city, from the Schönbrunn palace to the popular dessert of Kaiserschmarrn, musical history is even more central to its continuing identity. The new baggage hall in Vienna airport greets its arrivals with a large-scale mural of the Blue Danube waltz, more than forty composers...
and performers are remembered in its street names (from Albrechtsberger to Zemlinsky), the state opera house commands a physical location in the centre of the city, and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the great orchestras of the world, celebrates the New Year with a morning concert of music by the Strauss family that is broadcast to an international audience of millions.

The three round dates in the title of the book are chronological signposts: they mark three different periods, three historical segments of the relationship between music and society. (Naturally, the dates imply no single years, but an overlap of a few decades around the turn of the century.) The first epoch contains the time from the 1683 siege of Vienna to the consolidation of the 1720s; the second from the death of Joseph II to the Congress in Vienna (1814–1815); the third from the end of the 19th century to the First World War. Patronage, the social/political function of music, and the class and role of the audience are discussed in the framework of three constructs: musical style (Baroque; Classical; Modern), patronage (Imperial; Aristocratic; Bourgeois), and the gradual development of the Viennese identity (Habsburg; Austria; Vienna).

Part I (1700), the remotest in time from our age, explores the era of the reign of the emperors Leopold I, Joseph I, and Karl VI, with rich details. Leopold I was a person of considerable musical gift, a fine composer as well, therefore it is not surprising that in his magnificent court representation music played a prominent part, in religious and secular sphere alike. We can read about spectacular opera performances, and the musical as well as ceremonial splendor of the big feasts of the Catholic liturgy. Several aspects of the musical practice are revealed (activity of the Hofkapelle; the number of musicians employed; musical instruments used) thanks to accurate documentation based on the primary research of the author. As for the repertory, under the title “Music and Habsburg identity,” we get acquainted with works, dedications, and illustrations that grant almost divine attributes to the Habsburg dynasty. Through the Catholicism of the pietas austriaca we can experience the devout cult of the Virgin Mary, the blessed saints, and the Eucharist. Readers interested in Austrian Baroque music can follow the work of the composer Schmelzer, the highly respected J. J. Fux, or the Italian-born Draghi and Caldara.

An advance of one hundred years into the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars brings a drastic change. The ceremonial and representative manifestations of music, none the less, still observe a good deal of the Habsburg traditions. Mozart’s opera for the coronation of Leopold II in Prague, La clemenza di Tito (1791), offers a tribute to the Habsburg monarch through the character of the humane Roman emperor, just like many operas did in earlier times. The yearly obligation of the aged Joseph Haydn to Prince Esterházy is the composition of a grand mass for the name day of Princess Maria Hermenegild (8 September, 1796–1802), which is linked to a Marian feast as well: it continues the tradition to
celebrate the name days and birthdays of the high aristocracy with appropriately festal music. The *Te Deum* (Hob. XXIIIc:2), written for the Empress Marie Therese, with its C-major brightness, trumpets and timpani, recalls the aura of the old Habsburg rituals and processions, so familiar for Haydn.

For all this, the profile and the basic structure of Vienna’s musical life went through a major change in one hundred years. Although the consumption of music could not be compared to the democratic climate of Paris or London, music – due to the generous patronage of the high aristocracy – became an issue of central importance, and not only for representative ends, but for itself. The patronage of Prince Lichnowsky, Prince Lobkowitz, or Count Razumovsky, familiar from Beethoven biographies, determined musical taste and private concert life. Emperor Franz himself, as a capable violinist, played frequently in string quartets; his wife, the music enthusiast Marie Therese, sang the soprano solo in the court performance of Haydn’s *Creation* in April 1801.

At the same time, Austrian middle classes gained new status by the end of the 18th century: a reasonably well-to-do bourgeoisie became an active participant in the social as well as cultural life of the imperial city of Vienna. It was a golden age for chamber music and *Hausmusik*, when keyboard playing, string quartet playing, Lieder singing was the favored pastime of cultured salons and bourgeois homes. The author emphasizes the role of ladies in the musical life of this period. Beyond well-known data (lady dedicatees of the works of the greatest composers; the one-third proportion of lady members in the 210 Viennese musicians, “Virtuosen und Dilettanten,” listed in the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*, 1796), the fresh research of David Wyn Jones informs us about the charity concerts organized by a new society, founded by a group of aristocratic ladies. The *Gesellschaft der adeligen Frauen zur Beförderung des Guten und Nützlichen* organized important concerts in the Burgtheater, Kärntnertortheater, and other venues, between 1811 and 1823.

The closing chapter of Part II of the book (“Music, War and Peace”), a paraphrase of Tolstoy’s great historic novel in its title, makes perceptible the shadow that is cast on all activities of life in the times of war. This shadow adds a new dimension to our understanding of music history: Haydn’s *Missa in tempore belli*, the patriotic solemnity of his “Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser,” the idea of the rescue opera and the *Fidelio*, Beethoven’s “Battle symphony” for the military triumph of General Wellington, and several other works appear in the foreground of a great historical tableau before our eyes.

This period marks the foundation stone of the future musical life and international position of Austria and Vienna: the institution of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*, founded in 1812 by Joseph Sonnleithner. The archive and library of the Society has been one of the major centers for musicology up to this day; its splendidly decorated great hall in the impressive building of the *Musikverein*
(built in 1870) is one of the most prestigious concert halls in the world, with exceptional acoustics.

The city plan of Vienna, as we know it today, which determines the location of its musical institutions as well, had developed gradually from the middle of the 19th century, from the reign of the young Emperor Franz Joseph. The decisive step was the demolition of the old city walls and, following this, the construction of the spacious Ringstrasse. The impressive institutional buildings erected along the length of the Ringstrasse (Rathaus, Parlament, Justizpalast, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Naturhistorisches Museum, Staatsoper), and the friendly parks (Rathauspark, Volksgarten, Hofgarten, Stadtpark) leave their characteristic mark on the memory of the visitors of Vienna.

Part III leads the reader into this new world, the dual monarchy that followed the Ausgleich of 1867. David Wyn Jones offers the widest panorama of musical life again: he discusses the role of Guido Adler in the establishment of modern musicology (Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich), the tendencies of Wagnerism and anti-Wagnerism in music criticism (Eduard Hanslick), the new generation of conductors and composers in the rather conservative atmosphere of Vienna (Hans Richter, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg). But he dedicates at least as much attention to the music that is the most Viennese: the vogue of the “Wiener Walzer,” the activity of the Strauss family, especially the bewitching music of Johann Strauss (son), and the genre that characterized an epoch: the operetta.

One might stop here for a moment to ponder about the fact that “popular” music sometimes tells more about the Zeitgeist of a period than the “elite” art, reserved for the select. Of course, the present case is exceptional in many respects, as the musical genius of Johann Strauss, comparable to the greatest, ranks him essentially to the classics. His masterpieces, Die Fledermaus und Der Zigeunerbaron, to be regarded by operatic standard, set a mirror to the society of Vienna and the Monarchy in general on the one hand, and express the very nostalgia that stems from the illusion of reality on the other. (It is not without reason that the great conductor of Habsburg origin, Nikolaus Harnoncourt [1929–2016] dedicated special attention to these two operettas in the course of his epoch-making pioneer work.)

The last chapter of the book (“From Johann Strauss to Richard Strauss”) leads to another Strauss, the Bavarian composer, who, through his congenial librettist, the truly Viennese Hugo von Hofmannsthal, also takes his residence – figuratively speaking – in the aura of the imperial city, at least up to a single opera. Der Rosenkavalier (1911), evoking the era of Maria Theresia and the operas of Mozart, together with the daze and waltz-apotheosis of its own time, succeeds in condensing the essence of the old and the Secessionist Vienna in one historic moment: the unity of past and present is there before us, in the last days of the Monarchy, a few years before the onset of the First World War.
David Wyn Jones created an essentially new genre with his eminently readable, yet strictly scholarly book. As the tendencies of international scholarship move more and more towards specialization (due partly to the ever-increasing number of doctoral dissertations), and focus on isolated particulars of a subject, the greater is the need for comprehensive works, which place the details into historical context, in an interdisciplinary manner. Surveys that connect the history of arts and culture with the simultaneous events of political and social history are probably missing from our education as well. The book of David Wyn Jones – according to the informations of the Preface – was born exactly from the research that formed the basis of his postgraduate course at Cardiff University. The higher education of our time would need many such courses in its curriculum.

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