

*Aesthetics of
Baroque Music
in France*



Second Edition

AESTHETICS OF MUSIC
VOLUME 7

David Whitwell

Aesthetics of Music

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DAVID WHITWELL

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AESTHETICS OF BAROQUE MUSIC IN FRANCE

EDITED BY CRAIG DABELSTEIN

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FOREWORD

WE DEFINE MUSIC to be that form of music performed live before listeners. We define Aesthetics in Music to be a study of the nature of the perception of music by the listener.

We believe the performance of music in actual practice falls naturally into four classes. These are Art Music, Educational Music, Functional Music and Entertainment Music.

I. ART MUSIC

Art Music we believe is defined by four conditions, *all* of which *must always be present*. These are:

1. *Art music is inspired.* Art music is music in which it seems evident that the composer has made an honest attempt to communicate genuine feelings. Feelings, which may range from lofty and noble to superficial and vulgar, must be presumed to be generally recognizable in music, as they are in any other art form, including painting, sculpture, dance, and architecture. In Art Music, lofty and noble feelings are paramount.
Due to the common genetically understood nature of emotions, it must also be understood that in music emotions or feelings cannot be 'faked.' They will always be recognized as such by any contemplative listener.
2. *Art Music has no purpose other than the communication of its own aesthetic content.* Art Music is free of any purpose or function, save the spiritual communication of pure beauty.
3. *Art Music is that which enjoys a performance faithful to the intent of the composer.*
4. *Art Music must have a listener capable of contemplation.*

If any of these conditions are missing, the performance must result in a lesser aesthetic experience. For example, the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven played in a stadium, during the half-time of a professional football game, would fail for the lack of the presence

of Condition Number Four. The same Symphony heard in a concert hall, but in a poor performance, not faithful to the intent of the composer, would fail for the lack of the presence of Condition Number Three.

II. EDUCATIONAL MUSIC

Educational Music may or may not have the same conditions as Art Music, excepting Condition Number Two; it may or may not occur within an educational institution. Educational Music is didactic music, music which has the specific and *additional* aim to educate. In the strictest sense, if the *primary purpose* of Music is to educate, it cannot be Art Music—for Art Music has no purpose.

III. FUNCTIONAL MUSIC

Functional Music is music put at the service of something else. We include here, for example, all kinds of religious music, music for weddings, music for the military, and occupational music. Functional Music may share the same conditions as Art Music, excepting Condition Number Two.

One may ask, How can a Mozart Mass be called Functional Music, and not Art Music? If the observer were not contemplatively listening to the music, but were rather contemplating religious thoughts, then the Mozart Mass becomes merely a very high level of Functional Music. If, on the other hand, the observer is a contemplative listener of music, forgetting about religion, then the Mozart Mass is Art Music, but has failed in its purpose as church music.

Military and wedding music are examples of music in which the contemplative listener is missing entirely. How about airport, supermarket and elevator music where there is no listener at all? According to the definition we have given above, recorded music without listeners is not to be considered music at all.

IV. ENTERTAINMENT MUSIC

Entertainment Music is music with no object other than to please. It will always be missing Condition Four, the contemplative listener. For this reason, Entertainment Music may be inspired music, but the composer is unlikely to be inspired by lofty and noble emotions, knowing there will be no contemplative listener. Entertainment Music and Art Music can never be the same thing because of Condition Number Two: Art Music has no purpose other than the communication of its own aesthetic content. It is inconsistent with the nature of great art to have any extrinsic purpose, including the purpose to entertain.

The first philosopher to address the impact which Art has on an observer was Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, as part of a discussion of Tragedy, which like music has both a material, written form and a live performance form. In this treatise, Aristotle first considers the nature and contribution of each of the specific components of the written form of the Tragedy in his typically methodical style. His great contribution, however, comes when he has completed this discussion, for he then goes beyond the material form of the play itself to discuss the observer. He makes it clear that not only is the end purpose of the elements of the play to produce a specific experience in the observer, but that the nature of this experience is what distinguishes Tragedy from other dramatic forms, such as Spectacle. It was in this moment that he created a new branch of Philosophy which we call 'Aesthetics.'

Our purpose is to provide a source book of representative descriptions of actual performances, observations by philosophers, poets and other commentators which contribute insights to our understanding of what music meant to listeners during the early Renaissance. It is for this reason that when discussing contemporary treatises on music that we concentrate on those passages which offer insights relative to the aesthetics of music and musical performance rather than the usual technical subjects such as scales, modes and counterpoint which fill most books on Renaissance music.

Since traditional musicology has focused almost exclusively on sacred and secular vocal music of the Renaissance, we have also

included numerous references which we hope will reveal a much wider world of music during this period.

We are also interested in contemporary views on the physiology of knowing, especially with regard to the relationship of the senses and Reason, and related psychological ideas, such as Pleasure and Pain and the Emotions, which might offer a frame of reference for their perspective on the perception of music.

This is the seventh volume in a series of eight, ranging from the music of the ancient civilizations through the Baroque Period.

David Whitwell
Austin, Texas

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David Whitwell
Austin, 2013

1 THE MUSICAL SCENE IN FRANCE

FRANCE BEGAN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY on the fast track to a modern society.¹ Under Henry IV's minister, Sully, an honest, intelligent Calvinist, the privileges of the nobility were restricted and worthy members of the middle class were given important new opportunities. Tax abuses were ended, the economy was restored, industries were strengthened, civil engineering projects modernized France while explorers claimed new colonies in Canada. All this ended with the assassination of Henry IV in 1610.

Control now returned to Catholic kings and although the two chief ministers, Richelieu and Mazarin, were effective administrators, the state reverted in many ways to an old-fashioned monarchy.

MUSIC OF THE COURT

The Baroque arrived in France under the reign of Louis XIII, a weak man who suffered in equal measure from physical problems and doctors.² Inclined toward the male sex, when the worried government officials pointed out that he had not visited the bed of his wife in thirteen years, he relented and produced his greatest contribution to France—Louis XIV.

Louis XIII was remembered by his contemporaries as being very fond of music, for sometimes joining his singers and for having actually composed a *ballet de cour*.³ Under his Chapelle there were only fourteen singers, two choirboys, a cornettist and a lute instructor was engaged for the education of the choirboys. The musicians of the *Chambre* included another five singers, two lutanists, a spinet player and a flautist.

The larger instrumental ensembles were organized under the *Écurie*,⁴ the most important of which were the *24 Violins du Roi* and the distinguished *Les Grands Hautbois*. The latter ensemble had been formed under François I and consisted of an expanded *Hautboisten*

1 Our purpose here is not an attempt to summarize the technical development of Baroque music itself in France, and its composers, but rather to present a brief overview of the environment in which the music was performed and its general aesthetic nature. At the same time, we take the opportunity to include important material not found in general music history texts.

2 In a single year they bled him forty-seven times and gave him two hundred and fifteen enemas!

3 Catherine Massip, 'Paris, 1600–61,' in *The Early Baroque Era* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994), 225.

4 This was an ancient title meaning 'stable,' but now included not only musicians, but riding masters, heralds of arms, sword bearers and officers of the royal household. It might have been better named the Department of Ceremony.

ensemble of two shawm and two cornett players playing dessus (treble), four alto or tenor shawms playing haute-contre and taille parts, two trombones playing basse-taille, and the bass shawms playing a basse part.⁵ These larger ensembles provided the music for the *ballet de cour*, the principal large-scale musical entertainment of the early seventeenth century and a form similar to the English masque, and for Italian Opera when it reached the court in 1645.

Louis XIV developed a court bigger and richer than any in the history of modern Europe. Many German dukes sent their eldest son on a sabbatical to Versailles to learn how to do it right! When Frederick the Great in Potsdam once wondered why he was sitting on French furniture, in a French-styled palace, speaking French and eating French food, the answer was the influence of the court of Louis XIV.

Louis XIV himself was also an extraordinary man, as kings go. He was an effective and hard-working administrator, in addition to having strong personal qualities. He created the most extensive musical establishment known until his time, organized under four separate administrative branches: the Écurie, the Chapelle, the Chambre and the Maison Militaire.

The musicians of the Écurie enjoyed high prestige, having the right of *commensaux* (meal companions of the king), exemption from many taxes and obligations to church-wardens and civic officials. They received gifts of food, clothing and financial bonuses and they were allowed to live and do extra work in Paris. At this time the members appear to have been hired more on the basis of recommendation, than by audition. It follows that study with a current member was the most promising route to success for a young musician. The importance of such teacher–pupil relationships can be seen in a typical contract drawn up between Jean Baptiste Desjardins, a member of the *Les Grands Hautbois*, and a student named François Gillotot. The modern teacher might feel reluctant to assume some of the responsibilities expected of the seventeenth-century teacher.

Today it has appeared in front of the notary of Paris that the undersigned Jean B. Desjardins ... is obligated to François Gillotot, a servant of M. the Abbey Bouchart ... to show him how to play the oboe, flute and instrumental music which this entails. Gillotot may be free to obtain this goal and do his profession without being obligated. Mr. Desjardins will furnish him with instruments. This contract entails the sum of 185 livres ... [The final payment] is made when Mr. Desjardins succeeds in placing Gillotot in a quality position as an oboist. Desjardins must try to place Gillotot ... Gillotot must go precisely all the days to take his lessons with Desjardins.⁶

Although the *Les Grands Hautbois* consisted of musicians who were primarily wind players, it is clear that by this date they were actively doubling on other instruments as well. In the case of one member, Jacques Danican Philidor, the inventory taken after his death in 1708 revealed that he owned fourteen oboes [shawms] (dessus, quintes and tailles), twenty-one

5 Jules Écorchville, 'Quelques Documents sur la Musique de la Grand-Écurie du Roi,' in *Sammelbande des Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* (1903), III, 608ff.

6 Dated October 3, 1701, quoted in 'Documents du Minutier Central,' in *Recherches sur la Musique française classique* (Paris: Picard, 1968), 245.

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At the California State University, Northridge, which is in Los Angeles, Dr. Whitwell developed the CSUN Wind Ensemble into an ensemble of international reputation, with international tours to Europe in 1981 and 1989 and to Japan in 1984. The CSUN Wind Ensemble has made professional studio recordings for BBC (London), the Köln Westdeutscher Rundfunk (Germany), NOS National Radio (The Netherlands), Zürich Radio (Switzerland), the Television Broadcasting System (Japan) as well as for the United States State Department for broadcast on its 'Voice of America' program. The CSUN Wind Ensemble's recording with the Mirecourt Trio in 1982 was named the 'Record of the Year' by The Village Voice. Composers who have guest conducted Whitwell's ensembles include Aaron Copland, Ernest Krenek, Alan Hovhaness, Morton Gould, Karel Husa, Frank Erickson and Vaclav Nelhybel.

Dr. Whitwell has been a guest professor in 100 different universities and conservatories throughout the United States and in 23 foreign countries (most recently in China, in an elite school housed in the Forbidden City). Guest conducting experiences have included the Philadelphia Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Radio Orchestras of Brno and Bratislava, The National Youth Orchestra of Israel, as well as resident wind ensembles in Russia, Israel, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, England, Wales, The Netherlands, Portugal, Peru, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Canada and the United States.

He is a past president of the College Band Directors National Association, a member of the Prasidium of the International Society for the Promotion of Band Music, and was a member of the found-



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Dr. Whitwell's publications include more than 127 articles on wind literature including publications in *Music and Letters* (London), the *London Musical Times*, the *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (Salzburg), and 39 books, among which is his 13-volume *History and Literature of the Wind Band and Wind Ensemble* and an 8-volume series on *Aesthetics in Music*. In addition to numerous modern editions of early wind band music his original compositions include 5 symphonies.

David Whitwell was named as one of six men who have determined the course of American bands during the second half of the 20th century, in the definitive history, *The Twentieth Century American Wind Band* (Meredith Music).

A doctoral dissertation by German Gonzales (2007, Arizona State University) is dedicated to the life and conducting career of David Whitwell through the year 1977. David Whitwell is one of nine men described by Paula A. Crider in *The Conductor's Legacy* (Chicago: GIA, 2010) as 'the legendary conductors' of the 20th century.

'I can't imagine the 2nd half of the 20th century—without David Whitwell and what he has given to all of the rest of us.' Frederick Fennell (1993)

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