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Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen. Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2009. xxii + 789 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendices, index. \$60.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-5202-5740-5.

Review Essay by Barbara Kelly, Keele University.

Jann Pasler's *Composing the Citizen* is a remarkable achievement and represents decades of detailed research in numerous French archives. It is a book the scholarly community has long anticipated, and we have not been short changed; its 789 pages contain a wealth of insight into music's function and purpose in relation to republican values, ideals, and artistic policies during the first part of the Third Republic. Pasler contributes to current debates in musicology concerning the connections music has with politics, class, gender and race. But the work's significance will be felt well beyond musicology. Pasler's grasp of political and cultural history is stunning. Whereas musicologists have often drawn on and collaborated with other scholars in French studies, art historians, and historians of France, Pasler combines these roles and approaches in her study, yet avoids the danger of too broad an historical sweep—often unsatisfactory—with her detailed study of primary source and archival material. Her book will make a contribution in a number of respects, not only by placing music at the centre of discussions of the formation and consolidation of the Third Republic, but also by illustrating its centrality in inculcating values, taste, and consensus, not just among the artistic and intellectual elite, but much more broadly. Its study of the popularization of mainly classical music gives the work a relevance and immediacy with which to examine the status and function of music in our various national cultures today.

A review could not summarize and account for the whole of *Composing the Citizen*, so I won't attempt it. Rather, I wish to examine selected strands that are either fundamental to an understanding of the book or are close to my scholarly interests.^[1] I will start with Pasler's idea of utility, which is a central focus of the book. She discusses the nascent Republic's recognition of music's potential, with its connections to beauty, moral purpose, educative possibilities, pleasure, commerce, and health. Although the particular purpose to which music could be deployed changed over the decades from 1870 to the 1900s, the idea of its ability to create a sense of community, and, by extension, national identity, is important. Whereas Anglo-Saxon culture struggles to appreciate the utility of music in making, shaping, and uniting citizens, Pasler reveals the privileged position music holds in French culture, not only during the Third Republic, but even today. This role goes some way toward explaining the ongoing commitment of the French state to subsidize artistic institutions, while other nations struggle to make the case for non-commercial music's broader purpose and appeal. Pasler's emphasis on music's potential to fashion *l'esprit public* leads her to important discussions about musical taste and *moeurs*, which are shared not simply among the elite, but also by the French public. The state, in its desire to secure a republic in the early years of the Third Republic, regarded music as useful in spreading a commitment to democratic ideals.

Pasler discusses how taste and specific values were influenced by artistic policy and the political climate as well as by fashion and commercial success. *Composing the Citizen* demonstrates how musical consensus is achieved by focusing on particular operatic works and composers and the extent to which

they reflected significant and timely values. The successes of Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*, Charles Gounod's *Faust* and *Jeanne d'Arc*, and Léo Delibes's *Lakmé* were due in considerable measure to the values they projected through their subject matters, plots, characterization, and such musical attributes as simplicity, clarity, and charm.

An important way to define and bolster a collective and individual sense of national identity was to improve France's international profile and participation. First, France looked to strengthening its status in Europe after the demoralizing defeat in 1870. Pasler discusses the perceived need to create a culturally strong nation with music able to play a role in cultural diplomacy. Continued support for national artistic institutions and display of the nation's musical assets were vital in achieving this role. Second, for successive governments debating France's position and policy as a colonial power, chief among them Jules Ferry and *républicains opportunistes*, colonization signaled progress and power. Pasler discusses the Paris Exhibitions, particularly the 1889 World's Fair, building on Annegret Fauser's groundbreaking contribution.^[2] Beyond the exhibition displays, she links the musical penchant for exoticism to colonial policy and to issues of race and nationality. Productions of Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* (1880) and Delibes' *Lakmé* (1883) receive special emphasis for the way they "addressed colonial situations" in their subject matter and musical treatment. In exploring colonial attitudes towards universality, assimilation, and racial inequality, Pasler draws on Darwin's theories of natural selection. Her ideas on acclimatization are particularly interesting and could also be explored in relation to French traditions of natural history (in the writings of Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and Georges Cuvier), which tended to place emphasis on adaptation, geography, and climate.

In working out how to build a nation, the governments of the Third Republic had to negotiate and come to terms with its complex and often troubled past. Building on Katharine Ellis' work on early music in this period, Pasler explores the different French pasts and how they were rethought during this period.^[3] Music's role in this construction was central in projecting and negotiating a more unified sense of the past that combined the republican achievements by André Grétry with the glories of the *ancien régime* in Jean-Philippe Rameau and François Couperin. She discusses competing ideas about the relationship between the past and present, contrasting the evolutionary ideas of composer and Director of the Conservatoire (1896-1905) Théodore Dubois, and one could add Claude Debussy and Darius Milhaud, with Vincent d'Indy's notion of the spiral, where the past periodically revisits and revitalizes the present. Her introduction of a third category, based on the work of post-colonial critic Homi Bhabha, sets up a reciprocal relationship between past and present, with the present acting and reshaping the past, thereby recalling T.S. Eliot's and Igor Stravinsky's non-linear understanding of the past after World War One. For Pasler, the performance of *musique ancienne* alongside *musique moderne* reflected a dynamic relationship between past and present, which informed how the past was understood as well as how French traditions and identity could be shaped.

Central to the book's purpose is an exploration of music's diffusion among French citizens, not just the elite. Pasler challenges musicology's obsession with the musical canon and with elitist culture, showing musical activity in performance and concert attendance throughout the populace, thereby justifying her emphasis on musical utility and citizenship. Her main focus on classical music and its popularization and mass consumption is illustrated by her discussion of such popular symphony orchestras as the Lamoureux, Colonne and Padeloup societies. Democratization, competition, and market forces led to the demise of Padeloup while the distinctive marketing prowess of Lamoureux, with its concentration on Wagner for the wealthy, contributed to its success. Pasler explores new ground in revealing the plethora of unconventional music making, from the mass concerts in the department stores (Le Bon Marché) and the Jardin zoologique d'Acclimatation, to musical scores published in the press and fashionable magazines, including *Le Figaro* and *Paris-Piano*. Making music more accessible resulted in greater participation by workers and women. Yet musical hierarchies remained; while more people could participate and earn money through music, the Opera and opera singers retained their privileged status, with operatic stars earning inflated wages.

Pasler discusses elitist tendencies, illustrating how they resisted or reworked aspects of music's utility. The avant-garde, including the Symbolists, espoused art for art's sake, which she considers to be a "reconception, an appropriation of music's utility for nonrepublican purposes" (p. 498). She cites Debussy, Ravel, and Erik Satie as examples of composers who appeared to work against the *esprit public*. Both Debussy and Ravel sought out private networks of intellectual support and artistic exchange, Debussy in the Mallarmé circle and Ravel in his group of sympathetic friends called the Apaches.^[4] Pasler's perspective clarifies Ravel's often tense relationship with the state, which I would like to apply to the reception of his *Histoires naturelles* in 1907. Performed at the prestigious and "useful" Société nationale, it was attacked by the conservative critic Auguste Sérieyx in *Le Courrier musical* as *fumiste*, for focusing on the habits of animals, and more worthy of the degenerate café-concert than the concert hall in its radical treatment of French prose. In describing the work as musical decomposition, Sérieyx, who was a disciple of d'Indy, remarks pointedly: "La Société Nationale n'est pas un Music-Hall."^[5] Yet, in other respects, Ravel reflected important republican attitudes, such as the emphasis on form and clarity and a patriotic desire to "act as a Frenchman" during World War One. Moreover, his belief that national consciousness is formed by education, language, and culture rather than race reflects one strand of republican thinking on the entangled questions of race, which Pasler considers in detail. For Ravel, foreign influences, such as jazz, were acclimatized to new conditions, filtered through his French sensibility, and transformed into French music. Looking beyond World War I, Ravel increasingly becomes useful to the state as an exportable aspect of cultural diplomacy, particularly on his American tours. After his death in 1937, there was tension between those who wanted to retain him as an elitist figure and those who embraced his official status and recognized that the meaning of his work had gone well beyond the control of his intimates. Similarly, Debussy, after his death in 1918, became an important and contested symbol for French achievement at home and abroad.

Composing the Citizen makes a timely and vital contribution to discussions about the links between music and politics. Rather than simply looking at the politicization of individual composers, the intended political meaning in particular compositions, or at moments of heightened national crisis, such as war, Pasler takes this debate to a more fundamental level by considering how music could be galvanized by the state for public good and for nation building. The book has already begun to stimulate scholarly debates in creative and productive ways. Indeed, it will provide a rich reference point for subsequent musicological and historical studies of the early Third Republic and beyond for a generation to come.

NOTES

[1] See for example, Barbara Kelly, ed., *French Music, Culture, and National Identity* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2008) and Kelly, "Re-presenting Ravel: Artificiality and the Aesthetic of Imposture," *Unmasking Ravel: New Perspectives on Ravel's Music*, ed. Peter Kaminsky (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, in press)

[2] Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005)

[3] Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

[4] See Jann Pasler, "A Sociology of the Apaches: 'Sacred Battalion' for *Pelléas*", in Barbara L. Kelly and Kerry Murphy, eds. *Berlioz and Debussy: Sources, Contexts and Legacies* (Aldershot: Ashgate University Press, 2007): 149-166

[5] *Le Courrier musical*, 10/3, 1 February, 1907

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