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Militarisation, Industrialisation and the growth of the Symphony Orchestra in the Nineteenth Century

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Paper presented at Conference on 'The Symphony Orchestra as Cultural Phenomenon', Institute of Musical Research, London, July 3rd, 2010

Abstract: The Marxist writer Hans G Helms presented, in his article 'Zu den ökonomischen Bedingungen der neuen Musik', a theoretical model for the growth of the 19th century orchestra, by which the large-scale militarisation of European society during the period of the Napoleonic Wars provided a template for industrialisation, with the factory owner taking the role of the general, the workers that of ordinary soldiers. This model, according to Helms, was then adopted for the symphony orchestra, which grew in size and accorded a new type of quasi-dictatorial role for the conductor, culminating in the massive orchestral concerts organised by Berlioz in Paris in 1844 as part of the Exhibition of Industrial Products, in literal co-operation with the makers of musical 'machinery' such as Adolphe Sax. He also draws attention to the slower growth of the symphony orchestra in German-speaking lands due to the continuing prevalence of a form of society structured around many feudal principalities rather than fully developed industrial bourgeois society, at least prior to unification. In this paper, I present a sympathetic but critical examination of Helms's model, drawing upon other of my own recent research into the orchestra in the 19th century. Measuring Helms's model against a brief selection of documentary evidence of a few select examples, I argue that whilst the orchestra under Beethoven and Berlioz in particular does in large measure accord with his paradigms, the wider phenomenon was more diffuse, and in particular the more democratic ideals which informed the foundation of the Vienna Philharmonic and to some extent also the Berlin Philharmonic require a more flexible and nuanced model.

It is quite remarkable, considering the sheer quantity of musicological research which has been undertaken into nineteenth-century music, how little, relatively speaking, has been written investigating the development of the symphony orchestra during this period. There are a number of specialised histories of specific institutions¹, and more specialised studies such as those of Christoph Hellmut Mahling on the lives and social statuses of orchestral musicians in eighteenth and early-nineteenth century German lands, Daniel Koury on orchestral sizes and seating arrangements, William Weber on concert programming, or Rebecca Grotjahn on the role of the symphony and the institutions dedicated to its propagation². To date, however the most comprehensive

¹ For example Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); D. Kern Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828-1967* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); Clemens Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige: Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker* (Zürich, Vienna and Mainz: Schweizer verlagshaus, Kermayr & Scheriau & Schott, 1992); Richard von Perger and Robert Hirschfeld (eds), *Geschichte der K.K. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Wien*, two volumes (Vienna; Adolf Holzhausen, 1912); Peter Muck, *Einhundert Jahre Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester*, three volumes (Tutzing; Hans Schneider, 1982); Irmgard Scharberth (ed), *Gürzenich-Orchester Köln 1888-1988* (Cologne: Wienan Verlag, 1988); *Historie en kroniek van het Concertgebouw en het Concertgebouworkest 1888-1988*, two volumes, edited H.J. Van Royen et al (Zutphen: De Walburg Pres, 1989).

² Christoph-Hellmut Mahling, 'Orchester und Orchestermusiker in Deutschland von 1700-1850' Habilitation (Saarbrücken: 1971), also Mahling, 'The Origin and Social Status of the Court Orchestral Musician in the 18th and early 19th Century in Germany' in Walter Salmen (ed), *The Social Status of the*

treatment of the history of the orchestra in general during this period remains Adam Carse's 1948 book *The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz*³, which can be supplemented by the aforementioned and other similar literature⁴, together with related articles in collections compiled by Colin Lawson and Joan Peyser⁵. There is not yet a book on the nineteenth-century orchestra comparable to John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw's monumental work on the orchestra up to 1815, though their own wider history of the orchestra in the most recent *Grove* suggests ways in which a second volume could be extremely fruitful.

Of particular interest to me is the social, economic and ideological history of the orchestra during this time, a subject which is a feature if not a central concern for Carse. The subject is hardly mentioned in many major histories of 19th century music⁶ despite the fact that many of these do attempt to varying degrees to situate music and music-making of that period within a wider social context. Reginald Nettel wrote a reasonable social history of the English orchestra in 1846⁷, whilst Henry Raynor's history of the orchestra, published in 1978, does attempt such a venture in international terms⁸. Both certainly presents some interesting insights, though not really constitute thoroughgoing scholarly investigations and lack reference to many of the detailed micro-studies which have been produced since.

I do not propose to lay down a whole new social history of the nineteenth-century orchestra in a 20 minute paper, but would like merely to consider some interpretive

Professional Musician from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century, annotated and translated Herbert Kaufman and Barbara Reisner (New York: Pendragon Press, 1983), pp. 219-264; Daniel J. Koury, *Orchestral Performance Practices in the Nineteenth Century: Size, Proportions and Seating* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986); William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).; Rebecca Grotjahn, *Die Sinfonie im deutschen Kulturgebiet 1850 bis 1875: ein Beitrag zur Gattungsgeschichte und Institutionengeschichte* (Sinzig: Studio, 1998).

³ Adam Carse, *The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz: A history of the orchestra in the first half of the 19th century, and of the development of orchestral baton-conducting* (Cambridge: . Heffer & Sons, 1948).

⁴ For example Siegfried Borris, *Die großen Orchester. Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Hamburg: Claassen, 1969) and Henry Raynor, *The Orchestra: A History* (London: Hale, 1978).

⁵ Joan Peyser (ed), *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986); Colin Lawson (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶ For example Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era: A History of Musical Thought in the 19th Century* (New York: Norton, 1947); Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, translated J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989); Leon Plantinga, *Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York and London: Norton, 1984); Georg Knepler, *Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, two volumes (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1961); Friedrich Blume, *Classic and Romantic Music: A Comprehensive Survey*, translated M.D. Herter (New York: Norton, 1970); Arnold Whittall, *Romantic Music: A Concise History from Schubert to Sibelius* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987); or Rey M. Longyear, *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music*, third edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988). Richard Taruskin, in *The Oxford History of Western Music. Volume 3: The Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) – a book which is far more conventionally about 'composers' and 'works' than, say, the more socially-oriented book of Dahlhaus - has a small amount to say in the context of Mendelssohn (pp. 172-173), Berlioz (pp. 323-324), Gottschalk (pp. 382-383), Liszt (pp. 418-419), Verdi (pp. 563-565), Johann Strauss II (p. 647), Brahms (pp. 690, 730), and a more extended section in the context of discussing the growth of concert halls (pp. 676-680). [Also check in Volume 4 for Elgar, etc.]

⁷ Reginald Nettel, *The Orchestra in England: A Social History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946).

⁸ Henry Raynor, *The Orchestra: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1978).

models and strategies, drawing upon a mixture of Marxist theory and other histories and historiography of the period, which might be pursued in the course of so doing, and test these against a few selected case studies.

I just want to say something very briefly about historical method, and the categories of historical materialism which I favour and which are fundamental to the work I will be analysing. These are simply the *Base*: the economic structure of society and the relationships of different classes of individuals to the means of production, and the *Superstructure*, which incorporates most aspects of society such as institutions, laws, ideologies, culture, religion, etc. Marx and Engels first outlined these concepts in *The German Ideology* of 1845 as fundamental to bourgeois society, such that the base is the ultimate determinant of the superstructure, social organisation evolves out of production and commerce. One does not have to be a Marxist to believe that the 'base' can have a profound effect upon all aspects of society – indeed that type of thinking can be found in radically politically opposed figures such as Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith⁹. However, Marx warned on several occasions against an over-reductive approach, pointing out that both aspects might develop at different rates, with the superstructure lagging somewhat behind the base¹⁰.

Engels, in various letters from the 1890s explaining further the theory of history that he believed Marx had never got round to articulating in full, poured scorn on those who adopted an un-nuanced one-way cause-and-effect model (suggesting that the superstructure can also impact upon the base), as well as emphasizing that 'All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined individually before the attempt is made to deduce them from the political, civil law, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc., views corresponding to them'. This is a comment I try to bear in mind when studying historical subjects like that under investigation here.

[O]ur [Marx and Engels'] conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever for construction after the manner of the Hegelian. All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined individually before the attempt is made to deduce them from the political, civil law, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc., views corresponding to them. [...] In this field we can utilize heaps of help, it is immensely big, anyone who will work seriously can achieve much and distinguish himself. But instead of this too many of the younger Germans simply make use of the phrase historical materialism (and *everything* can be turned into a phrase) only in order to get their own relatively scanty historical knowledge — for economic history is still as yet in its swaddling clothes! — constructed into a neat system as quickly as possible, and they then deem themselves something very tremendous.¹¹

Numerous 20th century Western Marxists, including Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno and Louis Althusser, have theorised at length about 'relatively autonomous'

⁹ As pointed out in Rob Beamish, 'Base and Superstructure', in George Ritzer (ed), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007),

¹⁰ The most important passages in question are the passage 'Civil Society and the Conception of History' in *The German Ideology* (1845), the Introduction to the *Outline of the Critique of Political Economy* (or *Gründrisse*) (1857) and the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Marx's wider thoughts on 'vulgar political economy' can be found in the *Theories of Surplus Value* (1871). For an outline of the process leading from this concept to that of 'vulgar Marxism', see A.P. Lerner, 'From Vulgar Political Economy to Vulgar Marxism', *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (August 1939), pp. 557-567.

¹¹ Engels to Conrad Schmidt, August 5th, 1890. See also Engels to Joseph Bloch, September 21st, 1890 and Engels to Walter Borgius, January 25th, 1894.

components of the superstructure. But the German Marxist Hans G Helms in a relatively little-known but to my mind very important essay from 1971-72 entitled 'Ökonomische Bedingungen der musikalischen Produktion' ('Economic Conditions of Musical Production')¹², takes a different reading which places greater emphasis upon the conditioning of the superstructure by the economic base, whilst emphasizing that the two might be 'out of step'. Helms is a German-Jewish writer, composer and theorist, who studied initially with Roman Jacobson, Max Horkheimer and Siegfried Kracauer, becoming involved in the Cologne musical scene in the late 1950s, and a founder member of the *Sprache als Musik* movement. From the 1960s, under the influence of Adorno, he became more focused upon Marxism, and investigated the roots of Nazism in 19th century German thought, in particular that of Max Stirner, as well as writing a Marxist critique of the *Bundesrepublik*¹³.

The essay in question looks broadly at many ways in which economic conditions might have impacted upon musical production in the 19th and 20th centuries, , including questions of modernism and indeterminacy, or the 'proletarianisation of musicians', but I wish to focus on just a few sections relating to the history of the 19th century orchestra. The sub-text extracted here could be, I believe, potentially fruitful towards a wider social history of the orchestra, though is also in need of significant modifications and nuancing.

Drawing upon a letter of Engels in which he speaks about philosophy and literature¹⁴, Helms derives a model for music whereby economic influences are ultimately the primary determinant, but within a field of musical material inherited from the past. (here the influence of Adorno's conceptions of the historical development of musical material, almost independently of the whims of particular musicians, would seem to very strong). He uses this to explain the predominance of the German states in the early 19th century, basing it upon a certain type of arrogant assumption of God-given musicality inherited by the Germans and Austrians, which in itself attracted composers from Spontini to Berlioz to German lands. As he puts it 'Beethoven and Gluck – in addition to economic considerations – attracted Berlioz to Germany, and Berlioz similarly acted as an attraction for Wagner to establish himself in Paris'. Helms also adds in the consideration of an 'international division of labour in the arts, which depends upon the economic conditions' and particular dynamics and laws within particular superstructural categories, as well as influences across the borders of such categories, as for example between literature and music.

Beethoven and the Military as precursor of the Industrial

It is with this in mind that Helms arrives at his first memorable historical analysis, of Beethoven's *Wellingtons Sieg* of 1813. This is a piece which has invited re-consideration, not least in terms of its role within Beethoven's output, by a wide variety of recent scholars, but Helms's interpretation is quite unusual:

¹² Hans G Helms, 'Ökonomische Bedingungen der musikalischen Produktion' (1971-72), in Helms, *Musik zwischen Geschäft und Unwahrheit* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2001), pp. 27-82.

¹³ Hans G Helms, *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft: Max Stirners "Einziges" und der Fortschritt des demokratischen Selbstbewußtsein von Vormärz bis zum Bundesrepublik* (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1966) and *Fetisch Revolution: Marxismus und Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1969)

¹⁴ Engels to Conrad Schmidt, October 27th, 1890.

On June 21, 1813, the English army, led by Wellington, defeated at the Battle of Vitoria the bulk of the French army under Joseph Bonaparte, who his brother Napoleon had appointed to be King of Naples in 1806 and King of Spain in 1808. Wellington's victory was the beginning of the end of Napoleonic domination over Europe. Wellington's victory also removed the last obstacle for the ascent of the bourgeoisie to control of the modern class society. Napoleon's regime collapsed together with his continental blockade imposed against England, behind which the financial system on the continent had sheltered from England in the manner of a conservation park. The Industrial Revolution, which had already for decades in England transformed feudal society into a capitalist class-based society, could in 1814, after Napoleon's downfall, spread relatively unhindered and explosively through mainland Europe. This won for the bourgeoisie the economic basis for their future political domination.¹⁵

I find that rendition of history rather simplistic. First of all, it is a very narrow reading of the transformation of Europe under Napoleon to concentrate exclusively upon the blockades. Napoleonic rule itself brought new legal, constitutional and economic systems to much of Europe and played a significant role in weakening if not eliminating feudal power. Conversely, various analyses of societies in post-Napoleonic continental Europe demonstrate that feudal princes were able to recapture some (though by no means all) of their power¹⁶. Also in many ways the English liberal economic model was never fully implemented in large swathes of continental Europe after 1815¹⁷, an issue to which I will return. But let me first return to Helms. He goes on to draw attention to the fact that Beethoven originally wrote the work not for live players but for the panharmonicon, which made sounds imitating military bands, invented by Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, who soon afterwards developed the first metronomes¹⁸. From this Helms notes Beethoven's desires for a permanency and mechanical reproducibility, but also that to portray very experience of war required

¹⁵ Helms, 'Ökonomische Bedingungen', p. 30. All translations my own

¹⁶ For some important recent scholarship on these subjects, see Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), especially pp. 19-33. This book synthesises various important earlier works such as Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), Clive Emsley, *The Longman Companion to Napoleonic Europe* (Harlow: Longman: 1993); Philip Dwyer, *Napoleon and Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

¹⁷ See Ray Kiely, *Industrialization and Development: A comparative analysis* (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 25-31 for a critique of the view of Britain serving as a 'model' for other industrialising countries. Following Eric Hobsbaum (in *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1962), pp. 45-47, 218, Kiely points out how French and Germans were ahead of Britain in terms of science, technology and education in the early 19th century., whilst the development of a mass market was limited in France, whose industry was more centered around luxury goods. Kiely argues from this that particular social relations, rather than simple entrepreneurship and technological innovation, made the British situation possible. Jeff Horn, in *The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1830* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), pp. 2-11, 211-248 makes a very strong case against Anglocentric models of industrial development, which see divergences from a market-based route as detours. Amongst the many factors Horn points out are that France remained the largest industrial nation until 1820 at least in terms of gross output, despite having to pay war reparations and having most of the eastern part of the country occupied. By contrast, an earlier study such as Christopher Harvie, Graham Martin and Aaron Scharf, *Industrialisation & Culture 1830-1914* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970) is almost entirely Anglocentric in its choice of materials, omitting almost any primary sources such as might make a comparative analysis possible, whilst Tom Kemp, *Industrialization in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, second edition (London and New York: Longman, 1985) follows a model in which Britain is seen as a norm against which other countries are measured.

¹⁸ See Alice M. Hanson, *Musical Life in Biedermeier Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 142-149. Hanson also draws attention to the number of military-inspired works of Schubert (most obviously the *Marches militaires* D733), and later the many works for military band by Johann Strauss Sr. and Jr.

the introduction of elements of chance and contingency into the work and, more importantly for this discussion, argues for the phenomenon of the militaries of the Napoleonic era, unprecedented in size through the introduction of mass conscription, as a precursor of industrialization¹⁹, which to the best of my knowledge is an unusual view even within traditions of Marxist thought.

One could say that Beethoven learned the principles of industrial mass production indirectly via bourgeois warfare, and indirectly through via the negative production and devastation, and reflected upon this musically, even though it hardly affected his feudal environment. This process was in keeping with the reality. As a harbinger of the Industrial Revolution in pre-industrial continental Europe, the instrument of power of the future dominant bourgeois class had already been established: the mass army created by Napoléon, against which the feudal mercenary armies of the European Princes were unsuccessful, until they had been converted into mass armies on the Napoleonic model by officers such as Gneisenau and Clausewitz. Two such mass armies, with their inherent coarse division of labour and inherent contradictions, meet one another in Beethoven's composition, at least if one realizes the score and does not stick to a false, clichéd, conception.²⁰

During the wartime years the army of the Austrian Empire had become one of the largest in Europe, peaking at 650 000 men²¹, and it also developed military bands on the model of those employed by Napoleon²²; Beethoven had written six works for military band in 1809-10, and would go on to write a further two after the Congress of Vienna.

As a model for the orchestra, John Spitzer has traced how the use of army (and battle) metaphors can be traced well back into the eighteenth century, yet they receded in the early nineteenth²³. But this, I would argue, says more about the way that the distinction between the military and the wider society had become blurred in an age of mass mobilisation. Helms does not however see this development in Beethoven as a fundamental break with the past – he argues that the music continues to proceed harmoniously, that the pre-established harmony and motivic working of German classicism are preserved and uses a metaphor of ‘apprentices and journeymen serving under the omniscient direction of the Master’ for the orchestras; even the division into two orchestras does not appear that radical to Helms, and cannot be interpreted in terms of industrial division of labour.

The chief criterion is the coarse division of labour. Not only does Beethoven keep everything going on harmoniously; the pre-established harmony of German classicism is preserved; also the motivic working maintains a classical character, and the division of labour in the orchestra is still from the old craft, whereby all the apprentices and journeymen serving under the omniscient direction of the Master file into an internally coherent work, until it is successful. Similarly, the division of the orchestra into two groups is only a doubling of the basic scheme, and is not a product of the division of labour in an advanced stage of industrial development. Hence there is a distinctive dichotomy between a circuitous

¹⁹ On the roll of mass militarisation of a whole society under Napoleon, and the role this had in creating the legend of the ‘nation-in-arms’ in France, lasting right up until the end of conscription in 1996, see Alan Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The Nation-in-Arms in French Republican Memory* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 9-50. Hanson, *Biedermeier*, pp. 142-149, considers the relationship between the militarisation of Austrian society and the music produced during this period.

²⁰ Helms, ‘Ökonomische Bedingungen’, p. 31.

²¹ Edward Sealsfield, *Austria as it is: Or, Sketches of Continental Courts* (London: Hurst, Chance, and Co, 1828), p. 224.

²² Hanson, *Musical Life in Biedermeier Vienna*, pp. 142-149.

²³ John Spitzer, ‘Metaphors of the Orchestra – The Orchestra as a Metaphor’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (1996), pp. 234-264.

insight into the statistical connections of industrial production and its repercussion upon the whole of society, and reflex responses to immediate experience in a pre-industrial environment, whereby the imaginary play with Mälzel's machines – the masterful skill of the craftsman taken to absolute perfection, so to speak – that should have led atemporal and ahistorical immutability to an end.²⁴

Helms concludes from this the immanent self-development of the superstructure – in this case music – is therefore corrected by economically conditioned processes, whilst on the other hand the economic crisis in the directly experienced environment feeds a purely ideological evasion, namely to free from the arbitrary performance conditions by means of machines, but which itself in turn is also dependent upon the economic relations, which are experienced as a corrective.²⁵

Despite the problems in Helms' somewhat over-simplistic historical model, the combination of industrial and military metaphors are powerful in this case, bringing together in a relatively clear form that which is approached elsewhere by others²⁶. And this is all explored in the context of a work which, whilst now often derided, was very significant within Beethoven's career: *Wellingtons Sieg* lifted Beethoven's fame to an unprecedented level and he became rich from the proceedings of performances of this and other works in 1814 alone – a year which contained half of all the public performances held for Beethoven's benefit throughout his lifetime²⁷. As Barry Cooper has pointed out, in the years following the Congress Beethoven was apt to draw upon military metaphors to describe himself and his work, even comparing himself to Napoleon, his music fulfilling a similar conquering role throughout Europe as had Napoleon's army²⁸. With this would come an expansion of instrumental resources and orchestral sizes, a new degree of compositional control expressed through ever-more specific notation, and to some extent a more intensely mechanistic approach to tempo

²⁴ Helms, 'Ökonomische Bedingungen', pp. 31-32.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 32.

²⁶ William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 167. Kinderman goes on to describe Beethoven during this period as appearing to be 'a pioneer of kitsch at the dawn of the age of mass production and commercial propaganda' (p. 169). Tomachek had expressed dismay at the fact that in *Wellingtons Sieg*, 'Beethoven, whom Providence has perhaps endowed with the loftiest throne in the realm of tone' was 'among the crassest of materialists', though also recalled that 'he himself has called the work a stupid thing' (Sonneck, *Beethoven*, p. 107). As late as 1823 Beethoven continued to exploit the political implications of *Wellingtons Sieg*, sending an engraved copy of the score together with a gushing letter to King George IV of England (Beethoven to King George IV of England, [February 24, 1823], in Anderson, *Letters 3*, pp. 1004-1005/*Briefe 4*, pp. 56-58), having earlier sent a copy to the same individual when he was Prince Regent (Barry Cooper, *Beethoven*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 256 – the Prince did not acknowledge this, but did pass it on to Sir George Smart, who organised the first London performance on February 10, 1815).

Beethoven had hoped to present this score himself during a trip to London which never materialised – see Wegeler & Ries, *Remembering Beethoven*, pp. 133-137. For a balanced consideration of the role of *Wellingtons Sieg* and *Der glorreiche Augenblick* in terms of Beethoven's work and reputation as a whole, see Nicholas Cook, 'The Other Beethoven: Heroism, the Canon, and the Works of 1813-1814', in *19th Century Music*, Vol. 27 No. 1 (2003), pp. 3-24.

²⁷ David Wyn Jones, *The Life of Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 118-124; Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (New York: Norton, 2003), pp. 192-193.

²⁸ Barry Cooper, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), *Beethoven*, p. 255. See also Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (London: Granada, 1980), pp. 296-322, Nicholas Mathew, 'History Under Erasure: *Wellingtons Sieg*, the Congress of Vienna, and the Ruination of Beethoven's Heroic Style', *Musical Quarterly* 89 (2006), pp. 17-61, and Thomas Röder, 'Beethovens Sieg über die Schlachtenmusik Opus 91 und die Tradition der Battaglia', in Helga Lühning and Sieghard Brandenburg (eds), *Beethoven. Zwischen Revolution und Restauration* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1989), pp. 229-258.

and rhythm through the use of the metronome. Furthermore, the approach to orchestral writing in *Wellingtons Sieg*, in which the inner components are generally subjugated towards a totalizing, even terrifying, vision, is developed further in parts of the Seventh Symphony, especially the finale, and also the Ninth, with a degree of raw aggression that is rarely to be witnessed in earlier orchestral works, including the *Eroica* and Fifth Symphonies (the Storm movement of the *Pastoral* Symphony really belongs in a different category).

There are other ways in which one might trace the development of militaristic elements within the nineteenth-century orchestra: military (sometimes Napoleonic) metaphors were employed to describe various conductors including Spontini, Berlioz and von Bülow²⁹. Various instruments were increasingly incorporated into the orchestra from military bands, such as the E-flat clarinet, numerous percussion instruments and in general the use of larger, more prominent and unified wind and brass sections, such as became a major feature of works of Beethoven, Berlioz, Rimsky-Korsakov and Bruckner amongst others³⁰ – all of whom were exposed to military bands from a young age and/or regularly throughout their lives. Though this is not the whole story – in the distinct tradition of orchestral writing to be found in Mendelssohn, Schumann and later Brahms (excepting occasional and unrepresentative works such as the *Triumphlied*), not to mention Fauré, Saint-Saëns or Franck, there are much fewer of these types of elements.

Berlioz

The second interpretation provided by Helms I wish to consider concerns the relationship between Berlioz's use of the orchestra and the industrial conditions of the time, but first I would like to give some background. From a relatively early age Berlioz developed a romantic fascination with Napoleonic militarism, possibly fed by memories of the 'Hundred Days', Napoleon's return from exile in 1815, when the Emperor had passed near to Berlioz's childhood town. In the 1820s, following the posthumous publication of Napoleon's memoirs, a new cult of the Emperor emerged in France and elsewhere in Europe, seeing him as a figure epitomising pride, republicanism and the people, in opposition to corrupt monarchies and regimes which

²⁹ José Antonio Bowen, 'The rise of conducting', in Bowen (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Vladimir Stasov, 'Musical Events of the Year 1847', in *Selected Essays on Music*, translated Florence Jonas (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1968), p. 25; (on Berlioz); Richard Pohl, 'Beatrice und Benedikt' (1862), in Pohl, *Hektor Berlioz: Studien und Erinnerungen* (Leipzig: B. Schlicke, 1884), pp. 177-178; Michael Rose, *Berlioz Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), pp. 124-135, 170, 176-177, 283-285; Macdonald, *Berlioz's Instrumentation Treatise*, p. 363 (for Berlioz's thoughts on conducting); David Cairns, 'Berlioz and Beethoven', in Peter Bloom (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 231-232; Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, *Musikalische Interpretation Hans von Bülow* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1999), p. 86.

³⁰ David Cairns, *Berlioz: 1803-1832: The Making of an Artist* (London: Deutsch, 1989), pp. 77-81; Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *My Musical Life*, translated Judah A. Joffe, with introduction by Carl van Vechten (London: Eulenburg, 1974); pp. 135-136, 269; Gerald Abraham, *Rimsky-Korsakov: A Short Biography* (New York: AMS Press, 1945), pp. 49-50; Werner Wolff, *Anton Bruckner: Rustic Genius*, with introduction by Walter Damrosch (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1942), p. 45; Crawford Howie, *Anton Bruckner: A Documentary Biography. Volume 1: From Ansfelden to Vienna* (Lewiston, Queenston & Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), p. 122, 172, 194, 230-231.

had emerged after the Congress³¹. During various travels to Italy in the early 1830s Berlioz rhapsodized about Napoleon in various letters, and contemplated writing a symphony portraying the triumphant return of Napoleon's army from Italy³². In the end he did write his cantata *Le Cinq Mai* in 1835 to commemorate the death of Napoleon, and would probably have written a piece to celebrate the return of Napoleon's ashes in 1840 if he had been given more time. Berlioz had also heard and been impressed by military bands from a young age and was later deeply taken by hearing an arrangement of his *Francs-Juges* overture for 320 wind and brass players by combined bands in Berlin in 1843³³.

But at around this time remarks which Berlioz wrote about Ferdinand Hérold's opera *Zampa* in the *Journal des Débats* in September 1835 make clear that he was far from wholly enamoured by the industrial productions of the time in Paris. He said that Hérold's music was:

just like those industrial products manufactured in Paris on foreign models and adapted with minor modifications. It is Parisian music. That is why it goes down so well with the Opéra-Comique audience, which in our view represents the middle class of the inhabitants of the capital, and why those artists and music-lovers whose radically different nature and taste and intelligence set them apart from the multitude think so little of it.³⁴

But Berlioz's attitude was to change on this subject.

Helms argues that Berlioz, whose music was made in earnest with the principles of industrial mass production, was the only composer able to transform economic conditions in the base into conditions of production in the superstructure³⁵. Through his collaboration with instrument builders such as Adolphe Sax, Berlioz was able to ensure his workers got exactly the machines which enabled optimal work. But there was a difference – as Berlioz did not produce marketable goods, but simply superstructural phenomena, contents of consciousness, he still had to operate upon that narrow economic base defined not by supply and demand, but the rise and fall of public and private subsidies, and thus indirectly upon the cyclical movements of the economy³⁶. Helms thus concludes that it is no coincidence that many of Berlioz's most extravagant conceptions were written in the 1830s, when economic conditions appeared stable in the bourgeois France of Louis-Philippe³⁷.

On only one occasion, according to Helms, did Berlioz achieve an optimal correspondence between his work and the economic base – this was on August 1st 1844. Here he employed over a thousand musicians (around half of which were

³¹ See Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars*, pp. 73-75; Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta Books, 2004), pp. 135-136.

³² See various letters in Hector Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale I: 1803-My 1832*, edited Pierre Citron (Paris: Flammarion, 1972); see also David Cairns, *Berlioz: 1803-1832: The Making of an Artist* (London; Deutsch, 1989), pp. 31-33, 468-474; and D. Kern Holoman, 'The Berlioz Sketchbook Recovered', *19th-Century Music* Vol. 7, No. 3 (1984), pp. 282-317.

³³ Michael Austin and Monir Tayeb, 'Berlioz in Germany' at <http://www.hberlioz.com/Germany/berlin.htm>.

³⁴ Berlioz, articles in *Journal des débats*, August 22nd and September 3rd, 1845, as cited in David Cairns, *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness 1832-1869* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), p. 65

³⁵ Helms, 'Ökonomische Bedingungen', p. 34.

³⁶ Ibid. pp. 34-35

³⁷ Ibid. p. 35.

instrumentalists) for a performance of his *Hymne à la France*, and similar forces for movements from the *Symphonie fantastique* and *Sinfonie funébre et triomphale* on August 1, 1844 as part of the Exhibition of Industrial Products in Paris³⁸. By this time the economic situation had already begun to worsen, and would culminate in the revolution of 1848-49, but at the beginning of the recessions existing profits were used speculatively rather than productively. Berlioz took advantage of this situation to organize this event privately, at huge financial risk to himself. In the event, the composer wrote rapturously afterwards of how the orchestra played like a unified whole, and the collective efforts of himself the other seven conductors (for the wind, percussion, and five for the choirs) worked in harmony, and the whole spectacle amazed the audience. For Helms, this was the closest a concert could get to the working of a mass factory, with various ‘plants’ coming together in the concert for the first time to produce the final product³⁹.

This is a brilliant and persuasive metaphor, but it is important to contrast this sort of spectacle with other orchestral developments during the periods of late Beethoven and Berlioz. First of all, the Philharmonic Society of London, founded by a group of musicians in 1813. This had no independent financial backers, and was funded entirely through subscriptions at the outset. In the first few years, members would not draw any salary, though this soon changed. There were various highly talented foreign players resident in London at the outset, having come there during the Napoleonic Wars, but many of these left after peace in 1815. From then onwards it was harder to obtain good players without paying more. Rehearsals were kept to a minimum, often just a play-through, and the results patchy. The orchestra did not receive any government subsidy. But it was profitable, and profits were invested in stock⁴⁰. However, when a rule was passed in the 1820s to use some dividends to provide death benefits to dependants, rather than reinvest them in the Society, it was attacked in the press as akin to ‘Broker’s Alley’⁴¹, and was rescinded soon afterwards.

In 1828 was formed the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire* in Paris, after the Viscount Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld had lobbied the minister⁴². It was set up on a firm legal basis with a constitution that was fully ratified early into the July Monarchy period. All members had to be of French nationality and demonstrate ongoing or past affiliation with the Conservatoire. They elected officers annually, and divided profits amongst members⁴³. These were generally low, and the conductor only received twice as much as others⁴⁴. Furthermore, he had to submit numerous decisions for ratification by the members, including choices of repertoire⁴⁵. The orchestra was also relatively conservative in terms of adopting new instrumental developments, little influenced by advances promoted in exhibitions and fairs⁴⁶.

³⁸ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, pp. 298-306.

³⁹ Helms, ‘Ökonomische Bedingungen’, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁰ Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic*, pp. 2-30.

⁴¹ ‘Remarks on the Philharmonic Society’, *The Harmonicon* (1828), p. 147, cited *ibid*.

⁴² Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, pp. 12-14.

⁴³ *Ibid*. p. 24.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*. p. 37. The ratio of the conductor’s salary to that of the players would however increase significantly in later times.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*. pp. 166-168. For more on the repertoire of the *Société*, see Jeffrey Cooper, *The Rise of Instrumental Music and Concert Series in Paris 1828-1871* (Epping: Bowker Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 28-36.

⁴⁶ Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, pp. 117-119.

After the first concert, François-Joseph Fétis described the students' playing as being 'like the young draftees of the Empire, proud to fight beneath the gaze of the old veterans of the Revolution, and rivaling them in audacity and valor'⁴⁷, and thought the concert would put an end to attacks on the Conservatoire in the press.

And in Vienna in 1842, the *Philharmonische Akademie* was formed, drawing together players from the court opera orchestra (later the Vienna State Opera Orchestra).

1. All members must also be members of the court opera orchestra (later the Vienna State Opera Orchestra).
2. The orchestra is artistically, organisationally and financially autonomous; all decisions are reached on a democratic basis during the general assembly of all its members
3. An administrative committee deals with the day-to-day management.⁴⁸

None of these three institutions can easily be accommodated within a model that views this period primarily in terms of entrepreneurial capitalism. The orchestras in Paris and Vienna in particular reflect something of the far-from-laissez-faire principles which applied across much of Europe, with complexes of tariffs, regulations, subsidies and protections for producers⁴⁹. Conversely, one might observe in such orchestras as those from the Philharmonic Society of Liverpool (founded 1840)⁵⁰, Philharmonic Society of New York (founded 1842)⁵¹, or the Hallé Orchestra (founded 1857)⁵² a much greater degree of reliance upon external private funding and consequently lesser possibilities for internal democracy. Helms' allusion to Berlioz in 1844 is in itself appropriate, but his wider model does little to incorporate these diverse possibilities. However, he does begin to approach such complexities in the context of Brahms.

Brahms and Late 19th-Century Germany

Helms goes on to argue that the nature of the progressive bourgeoisie in the last third of the 19th century consisted of 'Rationally organized mass actions, from which result a homogenous sound, well-ordered and distinctive within itself, from which occasionally a solo voice comes to the fore like a human genius'⁵³. It is from this perspective that he considers Brahms's *Ein deutsche Requiem*, with the completion of

⁴⁷ François-Joseph Fétis, 'Rebirth of the Royal School of Music: Société des Concerts', *Revue Musicale* 3 (1828), pp. 145-153, cited in Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der König*, pp. 9-34.

⁴⁹ Kiely, *Industrialization and Development*, pp. 25-31; Horn, *The Path Not Taken*, pp. 241-246; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage, 1996), pp. 247-249; Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800-1914*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 137-148, 275-277

⁵⁰ See Darren Henley & Vincent McKernan, *The Original Liverpool Sound: The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 13-35.

⁵¹ James Gibbons Hunecker, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Retrospect* (New York and London: Novello, Ewer and Co: 1917), pp. 1-14; John Erskine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), pp. 1-40

⁵² Michael Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition: A Century of Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960), pp. 29-30

⁵³ Helms, 'Ökonomische Bedingungen', p. 36.

which Helms argues that ‘bourgeois music had already found its ultimate manifestation’ (*endgültige Ausgestaltung*)⁵⁴.

Following the Franco-Prussian War, Helms argues that material conditions and bourgeois consciousness developed apart from each other – specifically the bourgeoisie surrendered its determining influence upon political-economic development to individual capitalists, and capital began to focus on monopolistic projects. Thus the necessarily false consciousness of the bourgeoisie underwent a further ideological falsification.⁵⁵

Adopting a model somewhat akin to the *Sonderweg* or ‘special path’ theory of German history⁵⁶, Helms traces an unholy alliance between reactionary and noble-birth large landowners and rising monopoly capitalists, who found their requisite political-economic concept in imperialism, and in the First World War literally used the proletariat to ‘fuel’ their portions of the world market⁵⁷.

Identifying a correspondence between bourgeois art and the situation of the bourgeoisie as a class by the 1860s, when Brahms was establishing himself, Helms asks why did such a phenomenon not occur in the 1830s or 1840s, through Berlioz or Charles Dickens? He answers that:

As long as Germany was politically splintered and progressive bourgeois tendencies were obstructed by a reactionary politics of large and small minor princes and their noble entourages, then the typical apparatus of musical production remained the Meiningen-style court orchestras, with which Hans von Bülow himself struggled. After the bourgeois disaster of 1848-49, nominal bourgeois Prussian Ministers [Gottfried Ludolf] Camphausen [Minister of State at Berlin] and [David] Hansemann [Minister of Finance] were not able to win through against the reactionary East-Elbe Junkers. Those who should have encouraged the development of bourgeois culture remained embroiled within princely ceremony. The artistic avant-garde – Richard Wagner, George Weerth [writer and friend of Marx and Engels], Ferdinand Freiligrath [writer who like Weerth wrote for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* under Marx’s editorship], George Herwegh [revolutionary poet who was involved in the 1848 revolutions] – were driven out from German lands. Those who stayed in the country – like William Raabe, Emanuel Geibel, Theodor Storm or Fritz Reuter – withdrew to remote places such as Husum, Stavenhagen and Eiseniach or idylls such as the *Sperlingsgasse*. Still in the 1860s and 1870s, when the frankly not indiscreet diaeris of the early bourgeois [Karl August] Varnhagen von Ense were published, there was a huge political scandal.⁵⁸

I will return to Helms’s allusion to Bülow and Meiningen presently.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. pp. 36-37.

⁵⁶ Key modern texts expounding this view are Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, translated Hajo Holborn and James Joll (London; Chatto & Windus, 1967) (originally published in German in 1961); and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871-1918*, translated Kim Traynor (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985) (originally published in German in 1973); one of the strongest critiques of these was David Blackbourn and Geoff Ely, *The Peculiarities of Germany History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). An important critical summary of the debate is Richard J. Evans, 'The Myth of Germany's Missing Revolution', in Evans, *Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich* (London; Unwin Hyman, 1987), pp. 93-122. In many ways Helms’ work on Max Stirner fits this historical model.

⁵⁷ Helms, ‘Ökonomische Bedingungen’, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 37.

Helms goes on to describe the process by which the Junker Otto von Bismarck engineered a concordance between the bourgeoisie and the state through a sense of shared economic interests, leading to the wars against Denmark in 1864 and against Hannover and Austria in 1866, which he interprets as being about gaining territorial profits from territories west of the Elbe. He further argues that Brahms's home town of Hamburg benefited from the elimination of competition from the former Danish and Hanoverian cities of Altona and Harburg in terms of transit of goods, and points out that the Berlin-Hamburg and Cologne-Minden railways could only be completed when control was established over lands contested in these wars. All of this helped to consolidate Hamburg's position as the primary German port and commercial centre.

But in terms of the relationship to Brahms and *Ein deutsches Requiem*, this is clearly not to do with Brahms writing a piece to celebrate the opening of a railway line (as Berlioz once did). Helms' hypothesis is as follows:

Bourgeois consciousness, bolstered by its economic potential, also searched in music for means and methods to enable its self-manifestation to be independent and distinct from that of the aristocracy. According to the model that had already produced the Viennese *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in 1812 - whereby in economically-underdeveloped Austria the aristocracy had earlier, as elsewhere, provided openings for the economically potent young bourgeoisie - in the second half of the century privately-financed bourgeois orchestras developed everywhere, which displaced the traditional court orchestras or forced them to adapt themselves.⁵⁹

From such ventures, argues Helms, a distinctive spectrum of tone became the standard, such as Berlioz had found wanting during his concert tours in the 1830s and 40s in Germany. Also, reparations after the Franco-Prussian War allowed a great number of these types of German orchestras to emerge.

Helms overstates the situation in terms of privately-funded orchestras, I believe - equally important was the emergence of partially or wholly civically organised or funded orchestras such as those in Düsseldorf or Dresden. In terms of the early performances of the *Requiem* (which was performed a whole seventy-nine times between 1869 and 1876), it is difficult to generalise about the type of orchestras employed - it was as likely to be the scratch orchestra employed at Bremen for the first two performances or the statutory orchestras in Cologne or Leipzig who performed the work soon afterwards⁶⁰, just as his symphonies might equally well be performed by the court orchestras in Karlsruhe and Meiningen, or the professional and democratic Vienna Philharmonic.

It is generally dangerous to enter into over-essentialising conceptions of a whole class; nonetheless the picture given by Helms does concur with various evidence of Brahms's own self-consciousness. As early as 1858 he had written to Clara Schumann:

Art is a republic, you should take that as your motto. You are too aristocratic. I cannot expatiate on this, or at least only by word of mouth . . . Do not place one artist in a higher rank, and expect the lesser

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 38-39.

⁶⁰ Michael Musgrave, *Brahms: A German Requiem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 63-64.

ones to regard him as their superior, as dictator. His gifts will make him a beloved and respected citizen of the above-mentioned republic, but will not make him consul or emperor.⁶¹

[Die Kunst ist eine Republik, des solltest Du mehr zu Deinem Spruch mochen. Du bist viel zu aristokratisch. Ich kann Dir das nicht lang ausführen, aber mündlich einmal . . . Weise nicht einem Künstler einen höhern Rang an und verlange nicht von Kleinern, sie sollen ihn als Höhern, als Consul ansehen. Durch sein Können wird er ein geliebter und geachteter Bürger der besagten Republik, aber kein Consul oder Imperator.]

This probably reflected his dissatisfaction at the appointment he held at that point at the Court of Count Leopold III in Detmold, which he had taken up the previous year; in October 1859 he described the choral society as being 'larded with nobility, without a necktie'⁶² whilst speaking fondly of the women's chorus in Hamburg which 'still exists as a small republic'⁶³. It is clear from various of Brahms's correspondence from this time that he felt considerably more at home in the bourgeois city-state of Hamburg, which adopted a republican constitution in 1860, the year Brahms re-settled there, than in the principality of Detmold.

But I find Helms's model less convincing when considering the Meiningen Orchestra, who achieved a whole new level of musicianship and renown under the directorship of Bülow, who became *Kapellmeister* from 1880 to 1884⁶⁴. Bülow established what he called the 'Meiningen principles'⁶⁵, involving as many as six rehearsals per concert (thus *decreasing* productivity in sharp distinction to, say, English practice) and achieved a new level of synchronization of dynamics, bow strokes and articulation amongst the players, and taking the orchestra on numerous tours. This was all possible with a *court orchestra*. Bülow was granted favourable working conditions by Crown Prince Georg II; he led them to a level of renown which matched that of its touring theatre⁶⁶. The touring practices did generate discontent amongst players, who were thus unable to obtain further secondary income for their families, leading to a planned strike which was only avoided through an intervention on the part of the Crown Prince (with Bülow's wholehearted approval), who sacked the principal flautist, identified as one of the ring-leaders⁶⁷. Yet it was this orchestra which had an influence arguably exceeding that of many of those privately-funded institutions which emerged during the same period.

⁶¹ Brahms to Clara Schumann, June 25th, 1858, in *Letters of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms, 1853-1896*, (London: E. Arnold & Co, 1927), p. 85.

⁶² Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work*, in collaboration with Irene Geiringer, third edition (New York: Da Capo Press, 1981), p. 54

⁶³ Brahms to August Brandt and Bertha Proubsky, October 25, 1859, in Styra Avins (ed), *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, translated Josef Eisinger and Styra Avins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 203.

⁶⁴ On Bülow's time in Meiningen, see above all *Südthüringer Forschungen. Beiträge zur Musikgeschichte Meinings* (Meiningen: Staatliche Museen Meiningen, 1991), and also Fritjhof Haas, *Hans von Bülow. Leben und Wirken* (Wilhelmshave: Florian Noetzel, 2002), pp. 199-227.

⁶⁵ These were laid down in an 1880 article,, reproduced in part in Hans von Bülow, *Briefe*, Volume 3, edited Marie von Bülow, (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1898), p. 36 n. 2, and Haas, *Bülow*, p. 204.

⁶⁶ John Osborne, *The Meiningen Court Theatre 1866-1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 15-16.

⁶⁷ Alfred Erck, Inge Erck & Herta Müller, 'Hans von Bülow's Meiningen Jahre', in *Südthüringer Forschungen*, pp. 24-26.

From the Bilesche Kapelle to the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

One of these was the Bilesche Kapelle founded in the same year (1868) as Brahms completed his *Requiem*. Benjamin Bilse was conductor, manager and owner of the orchestra he had founded in 1868 and put on a very large number of concerts in Berlin – three to four a week – with a mixture of popular and more 'classical' music, even doing dance music on some evenings. He conducted mechanically, paid his musicians a pittance whilst expecting many hours of work from them, whilst showing them little respect, and would even turn his back to them during concerts⁶⁸. Nonetheless the orchestra was very successful and its playing held in high regard by many. In January 1882 Bülow visited Berlin to give several concerts with the Meiningen Orchestra, which impressed many of Bilse's players in contrast to what they were used to. After Bilse made clear he expected them to travel fourth class on long train journeys to East Prussia and Poland, a group of players protested. Bilse would not budge, so 57 of the players left to form their own orchestra, at first called the 'former Bilesche Kapelle', soon afterwards, soon afterwards *Philharmonische Konzerte*, later the *Berliner Philharmoniker*. They continued in direct competition with Bilse's outfit, but eventually won out⁶⁹.

The Berlin Philharmonic created their own board of directors, would use box-office receipts to pay themselves, and created a constitution in which each player would assume personal financial liability for the orchestra; they could also hire and fire conductors. The generally young players were prepared to play up to six concerts a week for a salary of 150 marks per month⁷⁰.

After early financial problems, the new orchestra paid off debts through touring, and garnering private contributions from the von Mendelssohn and von Siemens families. They also found a fine manager, Hermann Wolff, who managed to persuade von Bülow to take over the position of conductor. He did so on condition he could pare down the repertoire to be more select, have shorter concerts, and more time for rehearsals – developing the principles he had established at Meiningen. Long concerts were popular, but Bülow wanted to put his own musical preferences first. He was able to further exploit the platform and audience afforded him through his directorship of the orchestra to give didactic political speeches (on vaguely nationalistic and republican themes) from his podium to the audience⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Wolfgang Stresemann, *The Berlin Philharmonic from Bülow to Karajan: Home and History of a world-famous orchestra*, translated Jean Stresemann (Berlin: Stapp Verlag, 1979), pp. 37-40; Peter Muck, *Einhundert Jahre Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester, Erster Band: 1882-1922* (Tutzing; Hans Schneider, 1982), pp. 3-56. On the Bilesche Kapelle in 1870, see Fay, *Music Study in Germany*, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁹ See the sources in the previous note, and also Jon Tolanski, 'International case studies', in Colin Lawson (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷⁰ Muck, *Einhundert Jahre Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester*.

⁷¹ Stresemann, *Berlin Philharmonic*, pp. 47-56. These were not only on musical matters; in a performance of the 'Eroica' Symphony during the 1891-92 season, Bülow lectured the audience on how whilst Beethoven's hero at the time of writing was Napoleon, today the work should be dedicated to Bismarck (ibid. pp. 54-55).

And this history coincides with the massive industrial and other growth of Berlin, whose population increased from 400 000 in 1848 to four million in 1914⁷². And furthermore, during the 1880s, Bismarck was able to introduce some limited social reforms aimed at quelling wider socialist yearnings, including sickness benefits, accident insurance, disability allowances and pensions, a considerable amount of time before equivalent measures were introduced in much of the rest of the developed world⁷³. They were extremely modest by contemporary standards, but nonetheless paved the way for late-20th century social democratic reforms in Germany and elsewhere after the calamities and fascist horror that resulted from world economic collapse. And similarly a variety of models for the orchestra as civic institutions, funded in large measure by public subsidy, have become the norm from the second half of the 20th century in Germany and elsewhere in continental Europe, as distinct from the Anglo-American models which rely to a much greater extent upon private sponsorship and box-office receipts. These institutions stand outside of the dichotomy between court orchestras and privately-funded bourgeois groups as posited above by Helms, just as did the Vienna Philharmonic. A model which cannot satisfactorily account for these is in need of significant modification, as is the conception of post-Napoleonic Europe from which such a model arises.

Conclusion

The models provide by Helms are to my mind compelling and provide a good basis for the development of a wider social history of the 19th century symphony orchestra. Nonetheless, they need to be balanced against other evidence (and sometimes against slightly less didactic readings of the history of the period) suggesting modified and regulated forms of industrial capitalism, elements of something approaching 'workers' democracy' within orchestras, and a view of industrialisation which does not necessarily centre around the Anglo-Saxon model. The result of such a nuancing process would provide a strong foundation for a new approach to writing the social and economic history of the orchestra during this time, a task which is long overdue.

⁷² Golo Mann, *The History of Germany since 1789*, translated Marian Jackson (London: Pimlico, 1996) pp. 200-201.

⁷³ See E.P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850-1914: Social Policies Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).