

- sketches is impressive and significantly exceeds the published ones’.
- 3 Protohristova has authoritatively and copiously commented on the texts of Shishmanov’s published lectures, and this ‘close reading’ of his text on Sterne proposes opportunities for further analysis and research as well as attempting to identify potential references.

Sterne Reception in the Austro-German Musical Tradition

Sterne’s reception in Austro-German musical circles is not a very obvious topic and (with a few exceptions) it is not an area that has received very much critical attention at all so far. Sterne’s relation to music in general is already long established as a theme, and from several perspectives – whether they be tracing the explicit role of music in Sterne’s fiction, as in recent essays by Deborah M. Vlock, Pierre Dubois, John C. Leslie and Erica Miao,¹ or more indirect treatments of the ‘musicality’ of Sterne’s writing, most notably William Freedman’s pioneering study *Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel* (1978).² As far as Sterne’s musical reception is concerned, at the Sterne bicentenary conference in 1968 which yielded the collection *The Winged Skull*, J.C.T. Oates considered ‘Maria and the Bell: Music of Sternian Origin’,³ but it is significant that only one of the thirteen songs cited here is set to music by an Austro-German composer.⁴ After all, *Lied* composers needed German-language poets, not a translated English-language fiction writer, so there are no songs on Sternean themes within the German-language *Lied* tradition. Franz Schubert had no apparent interest in Sterne, for example; nor is Sterne even listed at the comprehensive online ‘Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Archive’.⁵ The main Austro-German composers simply chose other writers for their inspiration. Thus Robert Schumann – perhaps the most literary of all German composers – apparently read some Sterne, but preferred his comic inspirations to be homegrown and was passionate about E.T.A. Hoffmann (whose character Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler inspired the *Kreisleriana*, op. 16) and Jean Paul (whose novel *Flegeljahre* inspired the early piano cycle *Papillons*, op. 2).⁶ Christoph Beck’s recent two-volume study of *Jean Paul in der Musik* emphasises just what an important inspiration Jean Paul would prove to be over the course of the nineteenth century (his novel *Titan* inspired Mahler’s First Symphony in 1888, for example);⁷ Jean Paul is of particular interest, for not only was 2013 also an important Jean Paul anniversary (the 250th of his birth), but his debt to Sterne was immense. Through Jean Paul, then, Sterne evidently had an indirect, mediated influence on Austro-German musical life in the nineteenth century, but given how great the interest was among German-language

writers, philosophers and intellectuals generally in Sterne himself, it would perhaps be surprising if there *wasn't* interest in Sterne among composers, too. And indeed there was.

musical Sterne-reception in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Let us begin with the contemporary reception. We know that Sterne attended some of the pioneering Bach-Abel subscription concerts in London in the mid-1760s, one of which he described in a letter as 'the best assembly, and the best Concert I ever had the honour to be at' (*Letters*, 523). There has been a minor flurry of interest recently in Sterne's relation to the Köthen-born virtuoso of the viola da gamba (Sterne's own instrument), Carl Friedrich Abel (1723-87), in the pages of the *Viola da Gamba Society Journal*, *The Shandean* and in Peter Holman's monograph on *The Viola Da Gamba in Britain*.⁸ As Holman points out, not only does Sterne appear to have been an admirer of Abel's playing, but the feeling was mutual: 'there is a description of Abel improvising on the gamba using as a subject the famous deathbed scene of Lieutenant Le Fever in *Tristram Shandy*, bringing 'Tears into the Eyes of his Hearers'.⁹ Moreover, on Abel's death in 1787 one of his obituarists wrote: 'Sensibility is the prevailing and beautiful characteristic of his compositions. – He was the *Sterne* of Music. – The one *wrote*, and the other *composed* to the *soul*.'¹⁰ The Bach with whom Abel set up the concert series was Johann Christian Bach (1735-82), youngest son of J.S. Bach, known as the 'London' Bach or 'English' Bach.

Much more interesting for the purposes of this article, however, is this Bach's second-oldest half-brother, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-88). C.P.E. Bach is nowadays generally acknowledged as the most original musical talent among J.S. Bach's sons, who played a crucial role in the development of sonata form and the establishment of the Classical Style. In Hamburg C.P.E. Bach was a friend of Johann Joachim Bode, the most distinguished of the early German translators of Sterne,¹¹ and several commentators have argued that Sterne's influence was instrumental in his development of what came to be known as '*empfindsamer Stil*' or 'sentimental style', which sought to express varying emotions through sudden, often turbulent contrasts of mood, and which deliberately applied the principles of rhetoric and drama to musical structures (what Arnold Schering has called '*das redende Prinzip*' or 'the principle of speech').¹²

In an important recent contribution on 'C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, and the Art of Mixed Feelings' (2008), the Dutch musicologist and composer Lodewijk Muns argues persuasively for the influence of C.P.E. Bach

on Joseph Haydn's (1732-1809) keyboard sonatas of the late 1760s, and establishes a series of analogies to the rhetoric and sentimentality of Sterne's writings in both men's compositions.¹³ The link between Haydn and Sterne is actually already the strongest in the literature, not least because in this case there is physical proof of their relation, since Haydn owned a copy of *A Sentimental Journey* in English (in Sammer's Viennese edition of 1798).¹⁴ The link between Haydn and Sterne is first attested as early as 1782, when an anonymous biographer of Haydn in the *Musikalischer Almanach* describes him as a '*musikalischer Spassmacher [...] so wie Yorik*' ('a musical jokester [...] like Yorick'), and it was already a critical commonplace by the turn of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by this comment from a correspondent to the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in 1800:

I cannot tell you enough what a sense of pure comfort and well-being comes over me when I listen to Haydn's works. To me, it is something like the feeling I get when I read Yorick's writings, after which I always have a particular desire to do something good [my translation].¹⁵

These examples are cited in the most comprehensive comparative treatment of Haydn and Sterne, the 1991 article 'Haydn, Laurence Sterne, and the Origins of Musical Irony' by the American musicologist Mark Evan Bonds, who builds on earlier studies by Gretchen A. Wheelock and Howard Irving.¹⁶ All these critics draw attention to the elements of joking and surprise in Haydn's work, such as his false recapitulations, sudden modulations and changes of dynamics, but Bonds goes further, and writes:

The repeated comparisons during Haydn's own lifetime between his music and the prose of the English novelist Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) point to qualities that go beyond essentially local devices generally described as 'humorous' or 'witty.' Both Haydn and Sterne were acknowledged masters at fusing serious and comic elements in a single work, and both were strongly associated with the quality of *Laune*, by which the artist's disposition will inevitably be perceptible in his works. Like Sterne's prose, Haydn's music frequently calls attention to its own structural rhetoric. By openly subverting formal conventions of the day, Haydn drew attention to the craft of his art, thereby making the listener all the more aware of the very artificiality of that art, just as Sterne had consistently drawn his readers' attention toward the act of reading. The resulting subversion of aesthetic illusion led, in both instances, to a sense of ironic distance between the artist, his work, and his audience. And while techniques that fostered ironic distance had already enjoyed a long tradition in literature, they represented a new,

and to many critics objectionable, aesthetic of music in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁷

For those interested in following up the link between Sterne and Haydn there is also an entertaining Gresham College lecture on the subject, with musical examples, by Chamber Domaine available online.¹⁸ Before we leave Haydn, though, I must say a word about the 1783 song ‘Yorick’s fille de chambre’ – the one relevant song cited by J.C.T. Oates – which was published in several contemporary editions and set to Haydn’s music (the Minuet from his Symphony no. 53), but not by Haydn himself.¹⁹

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Haydn’s greatest pupil, Beethoven, has also been compared to Sterne on account of the quality of his musical wit, especially in the piano sonatas. Here the leading critic is William Kinderman, who sets out the arguments in his 1995 biography of the composer and his 1996 article ‘Beethoven’s High Comic Style in Piano Sonatas of the 1790s, or Beethoven, Uncle Toby, and the “Muckcart-driver”’.²⁰ Kinderman concedes that there is no evidence that Beethoven actually read Sterne,²¹ but he bases his argument rather on parallels and inferences. ‘As early as 1795, in the scherzo of the C major Piano Sonata op. 2 no. 3, for example,’ Kinderman writes, ‘he produced a resourceful play of paradox comparable to the most brilliant literary devices in Laurence Sterne’s comic masterpiece *Tristram Shandy*.’²² On the opening *Allegro* in Beethoven’s piano sonata no. 6, op. 10 no. 2, he writes, similarly: ‘like Laurence Sterne’s character Tristram Shandy, he could revel in the unexpected, the incongruous, and the grotesque, and, as in this movement, exhibit a coyish, good-natured capacity for just getting lost.’²³ Not only does Kinderman pursue Sternean parallels with Beethoven’s music, but in Beethoven’s letters he also finds a ‘Shandean streak’ of verbal wit, and even plausibly characterises Beethoven’s use of an aposiopetic dash in a late letter to Stadler as Sternean.²⁴ Exuberant, indeed scatological epistolary style is the one respect in which I have found Mozart compared to Sterne, too (by Philippe Sollers).²⁵

After Beethoven, the direct influence of Sterne on the Austro-German musical tradition wanes to some extent, just as his presence in German-language letters is less overt after Heine. However, he continues to be at least a reference point, required reading, for many composers over the remainder of the nineteenth century. Shortly after Beethoven’s death, Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47) read *A Sentimental Journey* on Goethe’s recommendation and was inspired to record impressions of his Grand Tour (1830–2) – ‘with great verve’, as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* puts it.²⁶ Like his French contemporary Hector Berlioz, Mendelssohn took his inspiration

from English literature mainly from Shakespeare, although it is perhaps not too great a stretch to discern in his gossamer *scherzi* the influence of the figures his biographer Heinrich Eduard Jacob calls ‘his beloved Englishmen, Swift and Sterne’.²⁷ Like Schumann, Johannes Brahms was intensely fond of E.T.A. Hoffmann, and indeed – as a homage to Clara Schumann – signed his first published chamber work (the B-major Trio op. 8) ‘Kreisler jun.’ at the age of 20 in 1853. Two years later, however, Brahms’s violinist friend (and Mendelssohn’s protégé) Joseph Joachim gave him Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* in German translation as a present, and we know that Brahms’s library also contained a three-volume early 19th-century German edition of *Tristram Shandy* (translated by Johann Lorenz Benzler), which features some markings – although as Brahms’s bibliographer Kurt Hofmann points out, these are mostly to the first volume.²⁸

Richard and Cosima Wagner began reading *Tristram Shandy* in December 1869 (probably at Nietzsche’s instigation).²⁹ Richard Wagner was orchestrating *Siegfried* and sketching out *Götterdämmerung* (‘Twilight of the Gods’) during the day, so he clearly turned to Sterne’s novel by way of light relief (the couple read it directly after *Don Quixote*). Initially their impression of the novel is favourable, as one can read in Cosima’s diaries: ‘In the evening much enjoyment with *Tristram Shandy*’, for example, on 20 December. In the new year the Wagners begin to tire of Sterne (7 January: ‘In the evening *Tristram Shandy*, pleasure alternating with dissatisfaction. Talent, but no genius’), before finally giving up, on 9 January 1870: ‘In the evening finally laid *Tristram Shandy* aside with a feeling of aversion, and began on *Vita nuova* (pedantically mystical, says R.)’.³⁰ Wagner’s disciple Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) would persist with Sterne, however, and counted him among his favourite writers from the moment he first discovered him, in the summer of 1880.³¹ Wolf’s library contained the Gelbcke translation of *Tristram Shandy*,³² and he recommended Sterne to Henriette Lang in a letter of 26 April 1881.³³

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) concludes this brief overview of Sterne reception among Austro-German musicians and composers. Mahler’s favourite writer was Jean Paul; nevertheless, his friend the conductor Bruno Walter reports that ‘Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* was among his favourites’³⁴ and indeed Mahler called it an ‘indispensable antidote to the poisons of existence’. Tantalisingly, Henry Louis de la Grange reveals that Mahler’s wife Alma’s library contained a copy of Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* in the original, annotated with numerous translations that appeared to be in Mahler’s hand, and speculates that Mahler used it to help him learn English before he went to London in 1892, but unfortunately it has not survived.³⁵

conclusion

I started with A for Abel and have reached M for Mahler, which is perhaps as good a way as any of indicating that (alphabetically as well as chronologically) my musical survey still has some ground to cover. For now, though, let me try to draw a few conclusions from the musical material I have just been analysing. I began by looking at what one might call 'second-hand Sterneanism' through German-language writers influenced by Sterne (predominantly Jean Paul). Parallels with Sterne himself were advocated already in the eighteenth century for a number of composers, and they were generally prompted by the perception of a shared interest in conveying sentimentality and/or wit. In the absence of a corpus of musical settings of Sterne's words, the focus was initially on keyboard works, but in the cases of Haydn and Beethoven more recent treatments have also drawn on quartets and orchestral works for their analogies. After Beethoven, Sterne remains a cultural reference point within musical circles, if not perhaps a direct inspiration, but we must also recognise that even before Beethoven an interest in Sterne among Austro-German composers was not universal, and I have not been able to find any evidence for an interest in Sterne on the part of Mozart or Schubert, for example. Similarly, for the moment my trail has run cold after Mahler, and I've not been able to unearth any Sternean interest among composers of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, even among likely candidates like Richard Strauss (who perhaps remains in this respect, as ever, more of a Mozartian). There is certainly no contemporary composer in the Austro-German tradition to rival the British composer Michael Nyman, who has been working on a *Tristram Shandy* opera since 1981. Nevertheless, I hope to have demonstrated that Sterne reception in the Austro-German musical tradition is fairly substantial, and warrants further enquiry beyond the 'usual suspects' (Haydn and Beethoven) at the turn of the nineteenth century.

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NOTES

- 1 See Deborah M. Vlock, 'Sterne, Descartes, and the Music in *Tristram Shandy*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 38:3 (Summer 1998), 517-36; Pierre Dubois, 'Sterne et la musique, ou l'harmonie impossible', *Anglophonia*, 11 (2002), 263-76; John C. Leslie, 'Music's Sentimental Role in *Tristram Shandy*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 41:1 (Winter 2005),

- 55-66; Erica Miao, 'Music and Sound in *Tristram Shandy*', *The Shandean*, 18 (2007), 88-107.
- 2 William Freedman, *Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978).
- 3 J.C.T. Oates, 'Maria and the Bell: Music of Sternian Origin', A.H. Cash, J.M. Stedmond, eds., *The Winged Skull: Papers from the Laurence Sterne Bicentenary Conference* (Methuen, 1971), 313-15.
- 4 See also the many songs on Sternean themes by English and Irish composers (Arne, Thomas Billington, William Carnaby, John Moulds) cited in George Watson, ed., *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, vol. 2 (1660-1800)* (CUP, 1971), col. 953.
- 5 See Emily Ezust, ed., *The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Archive*, <www.recmusic.org/lieder/>.
- 6 See Erika Reiman, *Schumann's Piano Cycles and the Novels of Jean Paul* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004); Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann*, 2nd edn (OUP, 2012), 46-53.
- 7 On the musical reception of Jean Paul, see especially Christoph Beck, ed., *Jean Paul in der Musik: Vertonungen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols (Berlin: Hochroth, 2012).
- 8 See Peter Holman, 'Laurence Sterne the Musician', *Viola da Gamba Society Journal*, 2 (2008), 58-66 and *The Shandean*, 20 (2009), 83-93; Claire Berget, 'Laurence Sterne, Charles Frederick Abel and the Viol', *Viola da Gamba Society Journal*, 2 (2008), 67-75 and *The Shandean*, 20 (2009), 94-105; Peter Holman, *Life After Death: The Viola Da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).
- 9 Holman, *Life After Death*, 233.
- 10 Holman, 208, cites an anonymous obituary.
- 11 See Stefan Kunze, 'Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach – Zeit und Werk', Hans Joachim Marx, ed., *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach und die europäische Musikkultur des mittleren 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1990), 27.
- 12 Arnold Schering, 'C. Ph. E. Bach und das redende Prinzip in der Musik', *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters*, 45 (1938), 13-29. On C.P.E. Bach and Sterne, see also Annette Richards, *The Free Fantasia and the Musical Picturesque* (CUP, 2001), 140-41.
- 13 Lodewijk Muns, 'C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, and the Art of Mixed Feelings: 'Empfindsamkeit' and 'Wit' in the Keyboard Works', <<http://lmuns.home.xs4all.nl/Empfindsmkt.html>> (2008), 7.
- 14 See Maria Hörwarthner, 'Joseph Haydn's Library: Attempt at a Literary-Historical Reconstruction', trans. Kathrine Talbot, Elaine Sisman, ed., *Haydn and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University

- Press, 1997), 419. Originally in *Joseph Haydn und die Literatur seiner Zeit* / hrsg. v. Herbert Zeman (Eisenstadt: Selbstverl. des Inst. f. Österr. Kulturgeschichte, 1976), 157-207.
- 15 'Ich kann Ihnen nicht genug sagen, welch eine reine Behaglichkeit und welch ein Wohlseyn aus Haydn's Werken zu mir übergeht. Es ist mir ungefehr so dabey zu Muthe, als wenn ich in Yoricks Schriften lese, wonach ich allemal einen besonderen Willen habe etwas Gutes zu tun.' *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 3/8 (19 November 1800), 130.
- 16 Mark Evan Bonds, 'Haydn, Laurence Sterne, and the Origins of Musical Irony', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 44:1 (Spring 1991), 57-91.
- 17 Cf. Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture: The Classical Era through the Present*, 3rd edn (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2010). On Haydn and Sterne, see also: Howard Irving, 'Haydn and Laurence Sterne: Similarities in Eighteenth-Century Literary and Musical Wit', *Current Musicology*, 40 (1985), 34-49; Gretchen A. Wheelock, *Haydn's Ingenious Jesting with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer, 1992); Ludwig Finscher, *Joseph Haydn und seine Zeit* (Laaber: Laaber Vlg., 2000), 294.
- 18 Chamber Domaine, 'Laurence Sterne and Joseph Haydn', Gresham College, London, 28 February 2006, <<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/laurence-sterne-and-joseph-haydn>>.
- 19 *Yorick's Fille de Chambre: Adapted to a favorite Minuet composed by Sigr Haydn* (London: Longman & Broderip, 1783); *Yorick's fille de chambre; adapted to a favourite air by Haydn* (Dublin: J. Lee, c. 1790).
- 20 William Kinderman, 'Beethoven's High Comic Style in Piano Sonatas of the 1790s, or Beethoven, Uncle Toby, and the 'Muckcart-Driver'', C. Reynolds, J. Webster, eds., *Beethoven Forum*, 5 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 119-38.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 120. Cf. Glenn Stanley, 'Beethoven at Work: Musical Activist and Thinker', Glenn Stanley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven* (CUP, 2000), 14-31, 29-30.
- 22 William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (OUP, 1995), 214.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 327, 328.
- 25 Philippe Sollers, *Mysterious Mozart*, trans. Armine Kotin Mortimer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 49. Cf. Charles Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment in Mozart's 'Figaro', 'Don Giovanni' and 'Così fan tutte'* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
- 26 Cf. W.R.R. Pinger, *Laurence Sterne and Goethe*, ed. Lawrence M. Price (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918), 26.

- 27 Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and His Times*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), 212.
- 28 Kurt Hofmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms: Bücher- und Musikalienverzeichnis* (Hamburg: Karl Dieter Wagner, 1974), 111.
- 29 See Duncan Large, 'Sterne-Bilder': Sterne in the German-Speaking World', *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe*, Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer, eds. (Continuum, 2004), 68-84, 288-96.
- 30 Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries: An Abridgement*, ed. Geoffrey Skelton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 46-47.
- 31 Frank Walker, *Hugo Wolf: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 104.
- 32 2 vols (Hildburghausen: Bibliographisches Institut, 1869). Cf. Wolf, *Briefe*, IV, 40.
- 33 Wolf, *Briefe* I, 85.
- 34 Bruno Walter, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Lotte Walter Lindt (Hamish Hamilton, 1958), 119.
- 35 Henry Louis de la Grange, *Gustav Mahler: Chronique d'une vie, vol. 1*, 2nd edn (Paris: Fayard, 1979).