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Robert Hatten, Raymond Monelle

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THE SEARCH FOR TOPICS

[Les sons] n'ont point de murmure si furtif, qu'ils ne provoquent un jugement de notre raison et à mesure qu'ils persistent et s'organisent, ils captivent l'intelligence aussi bien que les sens.

(*André Pirro, L'esthétique de Jean-Sebastien Bach*)

ICON AND TOPIC

THE THEORY OF THE MUSICAL *TOPOS*, developed in Leonard Ratner's masterpiece *Classic Music* (1980), is a refinement of previous semantic theories which have appeared from time to time. It is undoubtedly an important key to musical signification, and it has been taken up by a number of writers (for example, Kofi Agawu 1991, and Elaine Sisman 1993). Of course, the idea that music should be appropriate to its subject, either in the setting of words or in the instrumental portrayal of scenes, is universal. Ratner's mission was to show that certain portrayals are conventional, and that musical figures can therefore suggest objects that are not merely contingent, but are part of a semantic universe within which the music is composed. Thus, no text or title is necessary for musical topics to carry signification.

In other words, the American master showed that signification, at its most effective, was symbolic as well as iconic, in Peirce's sense of these terms. Iconic signs *resemble* their object, as a silhouette of a man with a spade may mean "road up", or a portrait may look like its sitter. Symbolic signs depend on learned cultural codes; thus, the word "tree" has nothing in common with a tree, but is understood by a speaker of English to carry this signification.

Previously, music had often been considered uniquely iconic; writers on *musica reservata* or the *Affektenlehre* often seemed to suggest this view. It is for this reason, perhaps, that C. S. Peirce himself, as well as Charles Morris, imagined that musical signification was chiefly iconic; and the temptation to ascribe iconism to music has haunted the science of music semantics since its inception.

In fact, it is comparatively hard to find examples of pure iconism. Peirce believed that most signification depends on habit (Greenlee 1973, pp. 91–92); and Eco surmised that most icons have to be interpreted with reference

to symbolic features (1979, pp. 191–217). This is a fortiori true in music. The point is well made by Karbusicky; he introduces the third Peircean concept of *index*, a sign that signifies by virtue of contiguity or causality, as when a hole in a pane of glass brings to mind the bullet that passed through it and caused it.

The qualities separated by category never appear “pure”, but in numerous interchangeable expressions. Let us choose . . . the simple example of the the cuckoo’s cry: it is an acoustic picture of the bird, and thus an *icon*. However, it can also be understood as an *index*: ‘Spring is here!’ In another context it can *symbolize* the whole of nature; in . . . the first movement of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony no. 1 the iconic quality is exceeded in this manner. (Karbusicky 1986, pp. 60–61)

Apparently, the musical imitation of a cuckoo is the most literal icon of all. Yet the symbolic ramifications of this sign are apparent, not only in the Mahler symphony, but even in Delius’s orchestral piece *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, with its literary-sounding title and its nostalgic use of a Norwegian folk tune, and in the *Coucou au fond des bois* in Saint-Saens’s *Carnival of the Animals*, where the double meaning of “cuckoo” is exploited to make ridicule of alternating passages of over-solemn Beethovenian harmony.

The distinction of symbolism and indexicality is a weighty issue which will be addressed later. For the moment, the characterization of topics as culturally enshrined icons or indices is the vital point. In its most typical form, expression is interpreted with reference to a convention, which is either a rule effective for the whole contemporary culture or a trait of the composer’s idiolect. When no conventional signs are present the music becomes “abstract”, and its expression then proceeds along indexical lines. This helps to elucidate the rather surprising comment made by Willi Apel: “To regard an organum by Perotinus, a conductus of the 13th century, a motet by Machaut, an echo-fantasia by Sweelinck, or even Stravinsky’s octet for wind instruments as expressive would simply render the term meaningless” (Apel 1970, p. 301). Apel presumably meant that such musical items do not signify or stimulate “feelings”; he was not looking for indexicalities (the ecclesiastical implications of Sweelinck’s abstruse techniques, the sophisticated detachment of Stravinsky’s neoclassicism).

Musical topics are general types, capable of being represented by particular tokens. There is a common resistance among musicians to ideas of generalized meaning. According to the popular view, each musical piece, each melody and figure, is essentially unique. This is to envisage a kind of signification in which everything—the sign, the code, the signified—is irreplicable, and every detail of the signifier is mapped on to the signified. Umberto Eco called this process *ratio difficilis* (he did, in fact, find it exemplified in music; Eco 1976, p. 239).

There is a case of *ratio difficilis* when an expression-token is directly accorded to its content, whether because the corresponding expression-type does not exist as yet or because the expression type is identical with the content-type. In other words, there is a *ratio difficilis* when the *expression-type coincides with the sememe* conveyed by the expression-token . . . One could say that in cases of ratio *difficilis* the nature of the expression is motivated by the nature of the content (p. 183; his emphasis).

Ratio difficilis is opposed to *ratio facilis*, in which signification is governed by conventional codes and items of expression are referred to items of content according to learned rules. Undoubtedly, much music is illustrative of signification by ratio *difficilis*. But the musical topic, as described by Ratner, clearly signifies by ratio *facilis*, since it is governed by learned codes; the system and code of Classical music make it possible for Mozart to write a horn call or a sarabande which is immediately interpreted as indicative of a whole class of expressions corresponding to a complex world of content.

The traditional view of musical meaning seems to betoken a rearguard action against ratio *facilis*, a desire to defend music's standing as "invention" rather than "stylization", using Eco's terms. A musical semantic unit is conceived to be the sememe which uniquely explicates a given syntagma; it cannot be a token of a type since no such type exists. Thus, the content of a musical expression can only be known from the expression itself, which it perfectly motivates; and for this reason, it is senseless to speak of musical content, since at every point it coincides with musical expression.

Eco sees, however, that there is an irresistible interpretive landslide from ratio *difficilis* toward ratio *facilis*. Through habit, complex signs become "stylized". For example, when we perceive "the King of Spades or an image of the Virgin Mary", though such a sign may contain many unique features, "we immediately recognize this large-scale configuration as if it were an elementary feature . . . the expression is recognized as being conventionally linked to a certain content" (pp. 238–39). Through stylization, "*ratio difficilis* may, by force of continuous exposure to communication and successive conventions, become a *ratio facilis*". Since music theorists are usually concerned with repertoire music ("classical" music), the defence of ratio *difficilis* may seem like a battle against the Philistines, against a threat to lower all music to the level of a radio call sign or signature tune. Such a defence easily turns into fundamentalism, an anxious blindness to obvious aspects of musical expression.

If there were such a thing as a "pure" icon, then it would be governed simply by ratio *difficilis*. Its every detail would be motivated by aspects of the content, not by relation to an expression type. We imagine that such a situation obtains in the case of portrait painting, for example (though it is clear that certain conventions must be understood for a portrait to be in-

terpreted; for example, its two-dimensionality must be overcome). The commonest musical icons—portrayals of waves, clouds, storms, horses—are not at all “pure”, but are dependent on well-known conventions. In a few cases, like Arthur Honegger’s representations of a steam locomotive and a sporting contest (in *Pacific 231* and *Rugby*), the composer sets out to portray phenomena for which no expressive convention exists. There are evidently musical icons which are not yet topics, and it is necessary to fix the distinguishing feature of these two kinds of sign.

The topic is essentially a symbol, its iconic or indexical features governed by convention and thus by rule. However, topics may be glimpsed through a feature that seems universal to them: a focus on *the indexicality of the content*, rather than the content itself. This important feature must be approached with some caution, for the indexicality of musical contents is sometimes mistaken for musical indexicality itself, the kind of simple indexicality which gives meaning to “abstract” syntagmas like Apel’s Pérotin and Sweelinck. Thus, it is possible for a musical syntagma to signify iconically an object which itself functions indexically in a given case; the example given above of the cuckoo’s call (cited by Karbusicky) is such an item, for the heralding of spring is an indexical function of the cuckoo itself, not of its musical representation. However, if it is culturally prescribed that the imitation of a cuckoo by an orchestral instrument *inevitably signifies the heralding of spring*, then this icon has been transformed into a topic. It is not at all clear that this is the case; the cuckoo must be considered a prototopic.

As an example of an iconic topic, we may consider the *pianto*, which is described more fully in the next chapter. This, the motive of a falling minor second, has represented a lament since the sixteenth century. At first it always accompanied the textual idea of weeping—words like “pianto” or “lacrime”—but it soon began to signify merely grief, pain, regret, loss—in other words, the indexicality of its immediate object. During the eighteenth century the related idea of the *sigh* replaced that of weeping. For this reason Riemann, finding this figure in early Classical music, called it the “Mannheim sigh”. It was present equally in vocal and instrumental music.

The *pianto*, then, is iconic with regard to its object, because it originally imitated the moan of someone in tears; it is indexical with regard to its ultimate signification (the “indexicality of the object”), because it came to mean the emotions associated with one kind of weeping. This brings us to a delicate distinction. Many topics are in the first place not iconic, but indexical; the dance measures listed by Ratner and Allanbrook, the “fanfare” motive, the topics of “French overture” and “Turkish music” do not signify by virtue of resemblance, but because they reproduce styles and repertoires from elsewhere. Insofar as the slow movement of the “Jupiter” Symphony is in sarabande meter, it presents the dance measure itself rather than an imitation of it, and thus signifies indexically. Indeed, Chabanon considered

iconic topic**indexical topic**

Figure 2.1

that this was the only true basis for signification: “Imitation in music,” he wrote, “is not truly sensed unless its object is music. In songs one can successfully imitate warlike fanfares, hunting airs, rustic melodies, etc.” (from *De la musique considérée dans elle-même et dans ses rapports avec la parole*, 2nd ed., 1785, quoted by Powers 1995, p. 26).

But this is not the level of indexicality which marks a topic; as Ratner comments, the dance had “a deliberate, serious character which represented the high style” (Ratner 1980, p. 12). We might add, with H. C. Koch, that it was thought to have had a Spanish origin (Koch 1802, column 1289); perhaps it made people think of the Spanish court, and thus of lofty decorum. Mozart’s signification in the “Jupiter” is *seriousness* and *decorum*, not merely “sarabande”.

In the case of the *pianto*, the object of the sign is signified iconically; the lament is the signification of the object-as-sign, and is signified indexically. In the case of the sarabande measure, both object and signification are signified indexically (Figure 2.1).

A musical icon, like Honegger’s picture of a Rugby game, in which the indexicality of the topic is not at issue, conforms to a simpler pattern (Figure 2.2). However, the nexus of icon and object is dependent solely on the composer’s title, and is thus apparently weaker.

Even in the latter case, expressions become so strongly attached to their content that other composers tend to take them up; presumably this is the

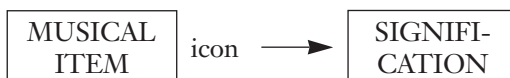
icon

Figure 2.2

means whereby idiolectic expressions are converted into topics. In all these cases, topics, being by their nature symbols, “come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols” (Peirce 1940, p. 115).

MUSICAL CODES, SOCIAL CODES, LITERARY CODES

Music does not signify society. It does not signify literature. And most of all, it does not signify “reality”. Musical codes are proper to music, as the other codes are proper to their respective spheres. Codes signify each other, however; between literature and society, reading and life, there are the sorts of semiotic relations that permit each medium to make sense. Thus, in relating musical topics to literary topics, for example, we are not “translating” them; this would imply the priority of one medium over the other, as though the literary or social topic were the “true meaning” and the musical topic were merely a rather inefficient pointer. This kind of error has led to the idea that music is a poor and imprecise signifier. But music is perfectly transparent; it is admirably efficient in signifying its own semantic level.

However, the codes of music and poetry are brought together in song. We are quite accustomed to hearing the complex semiosis of words and music. The relations of codes are themselves culturally established; semiosis jumps the wires from code to code, and the “meaning” of a given musical syntagm always casts shadows in literature, society, and the world. A kind of general signification is generated, which is why Greimas was able to describe signification as “simply human” (Greimas 1983/1966, p. 10). In the musical setting of words, appropriateness is attained by matching musical and poetic topics in a more or less valid way, either to place music and text in unison, to allow the music to reflect ironically on the text, to contradict the text, or merely to enclose the text in an aura of rhetoric, eloquence, or persuasion. Topics in different media are never wholly synonymous, so there is always a residue of discrepancy between music and text; the relation is metonymic. Nevertheless, the compound semantics of poetry set as music forms a new level of signification, a sort of universal rhetoric.

In the case of instrumental music, the relation to social and literary codes is complex. When music reflects a social code, the society evoked is not always contemporary with the music. For example, the topic of the military fanfare, ubiquitous in eighteenth-century music, appears to combine traditional heroism, the medieval association of warfare, with a slightly theatrical and unreal flavor proper to the age; this is explained below. When the spirit of warfare changed during the French Revolution, the music topic nevertheless preserved its unreality. In Boieldieu’s opera *La dame blanche* (1825) we still encounter a “toy” aria about military life, with fanfares (no.

2 in the score, “Ah, quel plaisir d’être soldat”), although the wars of the nineteenth century were earnest and horrifying. By the time of Holst’s *Mars, the Bringer of War* (1914) and Britten’s *War Requiem* (1962) the change in the social code has brought about a new kind of musical representation and a new fanfare.

Literary codes, similarly, may be noncontemporaneous with the musical topics which reflect them. The topics of the *noble horse*, and the *dance of death*, both aspects of nineteenth-century music, reflect medieval literary topics. The first of these also, perhaps, evokes a contemporary social topic, that of the headlong cavalry charge; so there is a more complicated relation of music topic, literature, and social life. The noble horse is analyzed below; the dance of death is discussed by Robert Samuels (1995 pp. 119–31) and Esti Sheinberg (forthcoming).

EARLY TOPIC THEORISTS

Several writers present theories of musical topics. Johann David Heinichen (1728, pp. 1–94) offers a schema for the imbrication of musical and poetic topics in the composition of Italian arias. For example, he identifies a literary topic, the fire of passion, in the following text:

Non lo dirò col labro,
Che tanto ardir non hà.

Forse con le faville dell’avide pupille
Per dirche gia tutt’ardo,
Lo sguardo
Parlerà.

[I say it not with my lips, that I burn so.

Perhaps my looks will speak for me, with the sparks of eager eyes that say I am all afire.]

He notices in the middle section of this aria (the last four lines; the main section occupies two lines only) that the “fire” in question is that of loving eyes. “The words ‘faville, pupille, l’ardore, lo sguardo’ give our fantasy an opportunity for pleasant and playful inventions. You can, for example, base it on the burning fire of love” (p. 51).

In the setting, the musical signs of fire are apparent; rushing violin figures, a fanfare-like bass part, a rapid triple time. Figures of this kind had represented fire since the sixteenth century; they are found, for example, in Weelkes’s madrigal “Thule, the Period of Cosmography” (in *The English Madrigal School*, vol. 12, pp. 44–59) and in the little monody “Occhietti amati” by Falconieri (the latter quoted by Ivey 1970, p. 127). However,

the orchestra is marked “piano,” and the flutes play with the violins. This fire is nothing more than the sparkling eyes of the lover; but the topos of fire is present both in text and in music, as a conventional literary symbol of passionate emotion and a madrigalian portrayal of flickering flames (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3



More recently, Albert Schweitzer has proposed a theory of topics for the music of Bach. His famous book (Schweitzer 1923/1905) provoked much controversy and opposition, largely because the idea of musical representation conflicted with the received aesthetics of the day.

In spite of this, Schweitzer's book presents a genuinely original semantic theory of music, not founded on baroque theorists (who were often preoccupied with unfruitful rhetorical theories) but on careful attention to the music itself, linked to a close knowledge of the texts set by Bach and their context in Lutheran piety. His work is distinguished by its refusal to abide by the expressionist theories of his own time, especially in the form articulated by Wagner. Schweitzer is aware that there is an intermediate stage in the representation of emotions, the stage of the object and its indexicality.

As composers, Bach and Wagner are distinguished from each other in that the older composer is a “painter”, the later a “poet” in music. “Poetic music deals more with ideas, pictorial music with pictures; the one appeals more to the feeling, the other to our faculty of representation” (p. 21). Language, from which poetry is constructed, is able to deal in concepts and invisible ideas. In painting, on the other hand, emotional expression must proceed via the representation of natural objects. Nevertheless, a painting signifies more than the objects it presents. “In this way there comes into painting, in the place of the naive ‘This is’, the noteworthy ‘This signifies’ of artistic speech. It will be learned and assimilated by familiarity” (p. 16). This seems an admirable summary of topical signification through the indexicality of the object. Schweitzer attributes to Wagner a capacity to appeal directly to feeling; Bach, on the other hand, has to evoke some physical object, the wind, footsteps, clouds, which in their turn possess a conventional signification that leads to an emotional interpretation.

This seems to limit Wagner to old-fashioned expressionism, the crude indexicality of emotion. But as I shall suggest in the next chapter, Wagner, like Bach, commonly expressed emotion through conventional topics, many of them based on natural sounds. He was thus more similar to Bach

than Schweitzer realized. In fact, what Schweitzer was noticing was not a pictorial tendency in the older composer, but the process of expression through the indexicality of a conventionally represented object—in other words, the operation of musical topics. He might have noticed this in the music of Wagner, or almost anyone else.

But Schweitzer was neither clear nor consistent in working out this theory. It is well known that he proposed motives of “grief” and “joy”, without explaining whether these were symbolic (in the Peircean sense)—that is, remnants of icons or indices which had become conventionalized—or directly indexical in the crude expressionist sense. In some cases, however, he is well aware of the passage to the indexicality of the object.

The “step” motive (see especially pp. 60–63 and 86–90) is an example of an iconic motive carrying an indexicality that is sometimes operative, sometimes not. Thus, in its complete form this motive iconically pictures physical footsteps, which indexically suggest “strength and confidence”. But sometimes it may merely picture steps, without any emotional implication—indeed, with contrary emotional meanings; and elsewhere it may appear in the absence of any mention of footsteps in the text, portraying strength and confidence through the indexicality of its implied representation.

It appears, for example, in the solo of the Daughter of Zion in the second part of the St. Matthew Passion, “Ach! nun ist mein Jesu hin”; her theme resembles a bass motive in Cantata no. 25, “Es ist nichts Gesundes an meinem Leibe”, where the evocation is the same (Figure 2.4; p. 224). But here it is a simple icon, picturing “some one rushing about distractedly” without any suggestion of “strength and confidence”.

Figure 2.4



There is a very distinct step figure, without its indexicality, in Cantata no. 125, “Mit Fried’ und Freud’ fahr’ ich dahin” (p. 361). The bass of the first chorus suggests “the weary uncertain steps of the pilgrim of heaven” (Figure 2.5), while the meter, which generates florid triplets, conveys the idea of a pastoral paradise.

Figure 2.5



When step motives appear without mention of walking in the text, the indexicality of the figure operates. The organ prelude on “Wir glauben all’

an einen Gott” expresses faith as “absolute confidence”, with a typical bass step motive (p. 60). When such a motive is played on the organ, a different kind of indexicality obtrudes, for of course the notes are played alternately by the left and right foot (Figure 2.6). In the cantata “Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ”, no. 33, the meaning is “steadfast faith” (p. 371).

Figure 2.6



The most triumphant of the step motives occurs in the *Sanctus* of the B minor Mass. Isaiah’s vision of angels suggests the idea of paradise, and again the choral polyphony is full of triplets, but this time there is no hesitancy; the believer responds, “Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6: 8). The bass descends in terrific octave steps (Figure 2.7, p. 322).

Figure 2.7



Schweitzer is even able to discern an instance in which the motive functions both as a simple icon, and as a topic that passes through iconicity to indexicality—in which there is both simple walking, and the indexicality of confident faith. In Cantata no. 159, “Sehet, wir gehen hinauf nach Jerusalem”, we hear Jesus walking towards Jerusalem, and pausing to remind his disciples of his approaching death; but the topical supplement is irresistible—Jesus walks with a “step” motive, that is, with firmness and confidence (Figure 2.8; p. 234).

Figure 2.8



Since Schweitzer has very little theoretical basis for his analysis, he does not see the distinction between simple iconism and topicality. Some of the other iconic topics—those of “waves”, “bells”, “wings”, for example—have uncertain associations; the author seems to think it enough that they are suggested by musical figures, without associative content. Such naive representationalism would group Bach with the naively pictorial Kuhnau, whom Schweitzer despises, just as the notion of “joy” and “grief” motives would group him with Wagner (in Schweitzer’s terms). It is precisely at the level of the topic—the expressivity of a musical figure through the conven-

tional indexicality of a represented object—that Schweitzer’s analysis is revolutionary.

RATNER: HISTORY AND THEORY

There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind that topic theory, as it is discussed today, was brought to our attention by Leonard Ratner. However, as I have suggested above, Ratner’s mistake was to announce a basis in the writings of contemporaries, that is, a *historical* basis for his ideas. If theoretical ideas have any real interpretive force, it is unlikely that they will have been proclaimed by contemporaries, for contemporaries are engaged in the *justification* of their music and thus in concealing vital features.

Ratner’s argument, which is surely impeccable, is put as follows:

From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of *characteristic figures*, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as *topics*—subjects for musical discourse. (Ratner 1980, p. 9)

His isolation of music topics in the scores of Haydn and Mozart seems entirely convincing. However, if the description of topics is compared with the sources, several things become apparent. The exposition of this vital—indeed revolutionary—idea takes almost no space at all, a mere twenty-one pages in a book 437 pages in length. In many cases the extraordinarily rich accounts of contemporary writers have been abridged almost to nothing. In other cases, the translations presented are heavily tendentious or even wrong; passages are omitted, either because they fail to support the argument or for no apparent reason. Some of the most important topics find no support at all, though sources are given which lead nowhere. Even odder, texts which strongly support certain aspects of the theory are ignored. Yet there is at least one topic that is fully what it seems, though it was first researched by another scholar.

When Ratner summarizes accurately and offers clear translations, he is usually discussing uncontroversial matters which have little to do with topics. Most writers of the late eighteenth century propound some variety of expression theory; when H. C. Koch says that music’s object is to “stir the feelings” (Ratner, p. 3; Koch 1802, column 533), he is just echoing a contemporary platitude. Similarly, authors of the period liked to speak of the “high, middle and low styles” (Ratner, p. 7; Scheibe 1745, pp. 125–29). The church style, chamber style, and theater style are listed by many authorities, but Meinrad Spiess’s (Ratner, p. 7; Spiess 1745, pp. 161–62) does as

well as any other (see also Koch 1802, column 1453). The idea is already in Christoph Bernhard (see Müller-Blattau 1963, pp. 19, 71, 82–83).

When it comes to the exposition of the theory itself, oddnesses begin to creep into the translations. Johann Kirnberger, for example, does not find that the descending augmented fifth is “frightening only when it appears in the bass” (Ratner, p. 5); he says, in fact, that this interval *only* occurs in the bass (*kommt nur im Bass vor*, Kirnberger 1771, p. 103). C.F.D. Schubart does not consider pantomime to be “actually the interpreter of the music” (Ratner, p. 17), but on the contrary he thinks that the “pantomimic style” of music is the interpreter of the mime: “[Der pantomimische Styl] ist eigentlich der Dollmetscher, oder wenn der Tonsetzer sehr stark ist, der Ausleger der Mimik” (Schubart 1806, p. 350). Ratner is apparently keen to associate dance music with movement and gesture, which he stresses more strongly than do his sources. It can hardly be said that Kirnberger “relates the note values in dances to various kinds of movement, step, and gesture” (p. 17); he actually writes:

Every dance piece has its special movement [*Taktbewegung*], which is expressed [*bestimmt*] though the meter [*Taktart*] and note values . . . Actually, every passion and every feeling, in its inner working just as in the speech which expresses it, has its own quick or slow, vigorous or tranquil movement. (Kirnberger 1771, p. 106)

Ratner makes very little attempt to improve on contemporary accounts of the various dance measures. These seldom go further than “bien cadencé, brillant et gai” (Rousseau on the contredanse, 1768, p. 121) or “von langsamer Bewegung und von ernsthaftem Charakter” (Koch on the sarabande, 1802, column 1289). Several authors describe the rhythmic character of these dances with considerable perspicuity, but the social and symbolic content, brilliantly analyzed by Allanbrook, is not discussed much by eighteenth-century writers.

However, the sources occasionally provide pearls of information which Ratner ignores. For example, the musette, siciliano, and pastorale were related as pastoral types. Koch defines the pastorale thus:

A dance piece of a rustic simplicity and tenderness, in which the songs of an ideal shepherd-world are expressed. It is generally in a moderately slow 6/8 time, . . . [it] has many similarities to the musette and the siciliano, except that it is played slower than the former, and has fewer dotted eighth-notes than the latter. (Koch 1802, column 1142)

Of course, the musette has bagpipe drones, *die man einen Orgelpunkt nennen*. It seems a shame, however, to overlook the essential 6/8 rhythm of pastoral music (it was commonly double-barred in 12/8) and this rather delicate distinction between the pastoral types (fully treated by Jung 1980).

The march is mentioned in an appendix to the section on dance measures.

“Many first movements,” Ratner comments, “have march rhythms” (p. 16). This is clearly correct. He might also have recorded an essential feature of the march: its tendency to articulate in dotted figures and triplets, which continued well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and is mentioned by a theorist (Marx 1841, part 3, p. 56). Different categories of march were recognized; rustic, civic (*Bürgerlich*), church, military, funeral (p. 57).

There is a significant omission in the short paragraph on the “singing style” (p. 19). Koch and Daube are both cited; the term “indicates music in a lyric vein, with a moderate tempo and a melodic line featuring relatively slow note values and a rather narrow range”. The sources agree with this, but Koch distinguishes the singing from the “flowing” (*fließend*) style; for him, there is a second kind of “singing” music.

The singing style has much in common with the flowing style, but the two seem to be distinguished by the fact that the flowing style consists largely of narrow intervals, which are played smoothly rather than accented [*die bey dem Vortrage mehr zusammengezogen, als abgestossen werden*]. The singing style must, on the other hand, be affirmed in those melodies that contain many leaping intervals and many stressed notes, and in which the notes as it were stream out. (Koch 1802, column 1390)

Ratner ignores this other kind; apparently, Koch merely meant to say that the voice could portray dysphoric feelings as well as lyrical, and thus instrumental music might be “singing” even if it was extremely dramatic. The American master’s example of this style is an odd aberration, since it is not an instrumental piece at all, but on the contrary Gluck’s “*Che farò senz’ Euridice*” from *Orfeo*, of which he quotes the words in German and English, both languages foreign to the aria (it was, of course, also sung in French). However, his chief purpose is to isolate the “singing allegro”, a modern term for the sort of instrumental melody first found in the concertos of J. C. Bach and familiar from those of Mozart. Koch’s descriptions do not seem to support this; he illustrates the “flowing” style, for instance, from the works of Carl Heinrich Graun (column 582). Nevertheless, the “singing allegro” is a topic of real theoretical interest, although it is not recognized by contemporaries.

After the singing style comes the “brilliant” style, which is another modern perception, weakly supported by contemporary writers. Ratner refers to Daube, Türk, and Koch (p. 19). These passages are all definitions of the Italian direction *brillante*: “schimmernd oder hervorstechend”, brilliant or striking, is the whole extent of Koch’s comment (column 272). Actually, the strongest support for taking the “singing” and “brilliant” styles as topics is to be found in Johann Friedrich Daube (1789, pp. 9–10), a passage quoted elsewhere in Ratner’s book; here the use of contrasting styles is illustrated as a way of constructing a *Gang*. A figure is “lengthened by means of repe-

tion and shifting, and leads into the next-related key". It can be prolonged more easily if there is a selection of styles, using "the singing style, the rushing (*rauschend*) or brilliant and the mixed styles". Daube's music example is photocopied by Ratner on pages 96–97, long after his discussion of topics. Daube mentions this matter again on his page 14, where he presents a short passage of slow values and sixteenth notes and comments, "You must alternate the singing and rushing styles".

This Daube passage demonstrates that the purpose of brilliant passages in eighteenth-century music is hardly ever the expression of "intense feeling", as Ratner says on page 19. Their purpose is generally to indicate a shift of temporality or a *Gang*, as Daube maintains, and as I suggest in Chapter 4; this is undoubtedly the case in the section of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet quoted by Ratner (p. 20). Since shifts of temporality are a vital part of the indexicality of Classical music, the identification of the "brilliant style" is a matter of importance.

The topics which are vital to Ratner's argument—sensibility (*Empfindsamkeit*) and storm and stress (*Sturm und Drang*)—receive no support whatever from contemporaries. The first of these is typified by the keyboard fantasias of C.P.E. Bach, which have "rapid changes in mood, broken figures, interrupted continuity, elaborate ornamentation, pregnant pauses, shifting, uncertain, often dissonant harmony" (p. 22). This description is based on an observation of the music, not on a reading of the books, which is surely the right way to do music theory. One authority, H. C. Koch, is quoted; "Classic musical criticism," comments Ratner, "constantly refers to *Empfindungen*, feelings and sentiments." This is correct, of course, but has nothing to do with *Empfindsamkeit*. Here is Koch:

The theory of sentiments is of great importance for every musician, and even more important for the composer, since the expression of sentiments and passions is the aim of music. Sentiment and passion seem to contain each other like tree and branch, for as soon as the consciousness of the pleasant and unpleasant, or the desire for the former and a horror of the latter, gains sway, this we call passion. But above all, while a knowledge of the nature of the various types of sentiment, and of the way in which each one can be changed and modified, is necessary to the composer, it is hardly a matter for the present work to go into this many-sided subject, which really belongs to aesthetics, through which such a knowledge may be sought. (Koch 1802, column 534)

This passage contains some interesting points; the distinction of euphoric and dysphoric is fundamental for Koch, and there is another distinction adumbrated, that between passion and sentiment. But it clearly says nothing about the style of "sensibility"; indeed, it seems to imply that no purely musical account can be given of the subject, which is the preserve of aesthetic philosophy.

The idea of *Sturm und Drang* as a musical topic may have been sparked by Théodore de Wyzewa, who wrote in 1909 of a “crise romantique chez Haydn” during the 1760s (on this issue see Kolk 1981). It has become a modern myth to associate the Haydn symphonies of this period with the literary movement thus named, though the play by Klinger called *Sturm und Drang* was not seen until 1776. The reference to Koch which Ratner furnishes is to a single comment in the article on “singing style”; this style “must not avoid the unpleasant, or necessary harshness, in the expression of stormy passions (*stürmender Leidenschaften*)” (column 1390). This has little to do with Haydn or Klinger, and makes no claim that “storminess” is a distinct musical style.

Finally, the theoretical idea itself—the notion that certain musical styles and figures were understood to signify particular cultural units, wherever they occurred—is almost specifically denied by the authors. Koch, for example, in discussing the use by Classical composers of dance measures, occasionally asserts that certain measures are “*ausser Gebrauch gekommen*” (the courante, column 398), and on one occasion he makes it clear that a particular dance, the sarabande, is not used in ordinary instrumental pieces. It is “now only used occasionally in ballets” (column 1289). He means, of course, that composers do not nowadays *entitle* works “sarabande”, except in ballets. Presumably he would not have been aware of hearing a sarabande in the slow movements of Mozart’s “Jupiter” Symphony and Haydn’s Sonata in D, Hob. XVI/37, Ratner’s examples (p. 12), or indeed in the slow movement of Beethoven’s Sonata in E flat, Op. 7.

On the other hand, Ratner’s assumption that instrumental movements were often composed in dance measures, even when not so declared by the composers, is endorsed by Kirnberger.

Each of these dance styles has its own rhythm, its passages of the same length, its accents on particular positions in each measure; one thus easily recognizes them, and becomes accustomed, through playing them often, to attribute to each its particular rhythm, and to mark its patterns of measures and accents, so that one recognizes easily, in a long piece of music, the rhythms, sections and accents, so different from each other and so mixed up together. One learns, furthermore, to give each piece its special expression, for each type of dance melody has its own characteristic movement and value. If, on the other hand, you neglect to use [*üben*] characteristic dances, you will hardly, or not at all, attain to a good melody. (Kirnberger c. 1783, p. 2)

This passage is referred to by Ratner on page 9. It is, however, almost unique in supporting the idea that instrumental works—sonatas and quartets—were heard by contemporaries as being in conventional dance measures.

One of Ratner’s topics has been fully researched in a model survey that

follows its theme, in its literary, cultural, and musical embodiments, from ancient times until the eighteenth century. This is the topic of the pastoral, admirably described by Hermann Jung (1980). It is a vast and many-sided issue. The few words written by Ratner, or for that matter Heinichen, Mattheson, Koch, Rousseau, and the rest, do not begin to elaborate the complexities of this topic, which embraces the musette and the siciliana among eighteenth-century dance measures, and is reflected throughout the libretti of *opera seria*. Its roots lie deep in the literary traditions of Italy and France as well as the ancients.

In what form can Ratner's theory be retained? The identity of dance measures, both those still danced and those which were obsolete in the late eighteenth century, is easily established, and was perfectly understood at the time. The two inferences necessary for this fact to contribute to a theory of topics are, first, that these rhythmic characters were transferred into "abstract" instrumental works, retaining their semantic character; second, that each dance carried a level of content, social, historical, and associative. Allanbrook's definitive account of eighteenth-century dance measures (1983, pp. 31–70) is based on contemporary writings, though the social content of these is slight; the aristocratic provenance of the minuet and sarabande, the popular or bourgeois nature of the contredanse, are agreed by everyone, but these connections do not take us very far. More interesting are the associative contents of some measures; the pastorale and siciliana are not really dances at all, though they may have been danced at some remote period, but rather meters evocative of the pastoral tradition. The "rustic" character of the siciliana, therefore (so named by Koch), was a different kind of rusticity from that of the gigue, which, if Allanbrook is right, reminded people of a quite recent "vulgar origin". Like Ratner, Allanbrook interprets her sources rather generously.

The different "styles"—strict and free, church, chamber, and theatrical—were fully acknowledged by contemporaries, but they refer usually to social purpose rather than signification. Thus, the church style, and indeed the "strict" style, were simply the styles most appropriate to church music. Koch, dealing with the strict style (*strenger Styl*, columns 1451–53), says that it "is also called the fugal style, and for this reason is dealt with under *counterpoint* . . . the strict style has a specially serious character, so that it is particularly appropriate to church music". His painstaking description of the style makes it clear that *stile antico* polyphony, in *alla breve* measure, is in question. The identification of strict style in string quartets (Ratner gives Beethoven's Quartet in A, Op. 18, no. 5) is a modern inference; an important one, it must be said. The finale of this quartet presents a rapid dance measure as its first subject, with a "strict style" second subject, in long notes, in the dominant key. However, Ratner also finds a "pictorial flavor" in this movement, perhaps evoking "the merrymaking of an improvised rustic com-

edy, interrupted by a procession of priests” (Ratner, p. 24). This goes much further than is licenced by Koch, though, paradoxically, it is a perfectly plausible contemporary interpretation, as we see from Momigny’s childish “analyse pittoresque” of Haydn’s Symphony no. 103, first movement (Momigny 1806, pp. 600–606). But Momigny is a million miles from a systematic topic theory, which must eschew the supplanting of musical syntax with literary narratives in the manner of program music.

The topics which seem most characteristic of Ratner’s theory—march, military and hunt music, French overture, singing allegro, storm and stress, *Empfindsamkeit*—have variable foundations in contemporary writings; what is most important is that all of them break the bounds of the eighteenth century and affect much recent, not to speak of older, music. The solemnity of a slow dotted rhythm (the “French overture”) is exploited by Schubert in the First Symphony; by Beethoven, in the opening of the Choral Symphony; by Britten, in the opening Kyrie of the *War Requiem*; by Shostakovich, in the Fifth Symphony (Figure 2.9). Military fanfares, which are found throughout the eighteenth century, also survive into the nineteenth and twentieth. The dashing fanfares of Rachmaninov’s First Symphony, or the spectral calls of Mahler’s Third, show the topic still full of life.

Figure 2.9a



Figure 2.9b



Figure 2.9c



Figure 2.9d



Hunt music may be found in the hunting *sonneries* quoted by Bach, as well as in Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Franz, and Wagner. The 6/8 meter of hunting calls may have contributed to the next century's standard evocation of the horse, which might, among other things, be a hunter. Both of these matters are discussed at length later in this chapter and in Chapter 3.

The style of *Empfindsamkeit* is founded largely on the affective *appoggiatura*, as Mozart makes clear in the extract from the Fantasia in D minor, K. 397, quoted by Ratner (p. 22). The signification of the *appoggiatura*, a component of the *pianto* topic, is discussed below. Undoubtedly the keyboard fantasias of C.P.E. Bach exerted much influence in their day, but it is, perhaps, better to see this style in the context of a long history of emotional styles, beginning two centuries before. The topic of the *pianto* is clearly related to that of Sensibility, in spite of its great antiquity; and it is hard to hear C.P.E. Bach in the *Adagietto* from Mahler's Fifth Symphony, for example, yet this is a typical example of affective melody built on *pianti*.

There is a characteristic of "singing allegro" themes which could scarcely have been noticed by such as Daube or Koch. If one examines the opening melodies of Mozart piano concertos—of K. 453, K. 488, K. 595, and many others—it is clear that they are not obviously vocal themes at all. If they were, they would more closely resemble the style of comic opera; the juxtaposition of a singing allegro with a *buffo* tune, in the second group of the "Jupiter" Symphony, demonstrates the difference (Figures 2.10a and b). The second of these themes was, in fact, a preexistent aria called "Un bacio di mano" (K. 541). It typifies the short, symmetrical phrases of *buffo* style, with few pauses on long notes.

Figure 2.10a

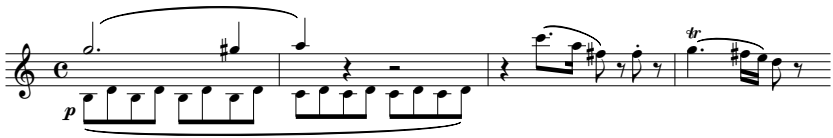


Figure 2.10b



This style is well illustrated by the duet of Monostatos and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, "Du feines Täubchen" (Figure 2.11a). Even in a dramatic aria, with some longer values, the phrases remain short and symmetrical, two

measures each, though repetition of a phrase of text may give a three-phrase sentence; the first aria of the Queen of Night (Figure 2.11b) seems halfway between the vocal and instrumental “singing” styles, and also possesses the pulsating accompaniment which is characteristic of instrumental singing al-legros. This aria apparently displays a first phrase of four measures, though there is a clear division in measure 2; its following two phrases are each of three measures, exhibiting a structure, both at measure and at phrase level, that is influenced by *seria* style. In spite of its melodic similarity, this contrasts with the opening of the contemporary Piano Concerto in B flat, K. 595 (Figure 2.11c), with its enormous first phrase: five measures, if one counts the short answering fanfare, with no subdivision in measure 2. The succeeding phrases of four and three measures are not symmetrical. This is singing style, but not in the sense of an imitation of vocal music; it is an instrumental song, indexical of the salon rather than the theater.

Figure 2.11a

Allegro molto

Monostatos Pamina

Du fei-ner Täub-chen, mir he-rein. O wel-che Mar-ter! wel-che
pein! Ver-lo-ren ist dein Le-ben. Der Tod macht mich nicht be-ben,

Monostatos Pamina

Figure 2.11b

Allegro moderato

Du, du, du wirst sie zu be-frei-en ge-hen, du wirst der
Toch-ter ret-ter sein, ja, du-wirst der Toch-ter Ret-ter sein!

Figure 2.11c

The image shows three staves of musical notation in F minor (two flats) and 3/4 time, marked 'Allegro'. The top staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic for violins and a forte (*f*) dynamic for wind. The middle and bottom staves are also labeled 'violins' and 'wind' respectively. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing triplets and accents.

It may be that the style of *Sturm und Drang* was particular to the Classical period—paradoxically, for contemporary authors do not notice it. There seems good reason to hear the currently fashionable style of grim sincerity in Haydn’s Symphony no. 49 (“La Passione”), with its four movements in F minor, perhaps also in a work like Mozart’s Piano Concerto in D minor, K. 466, and even in the Overture to *Don Giovanni*. Whether this could be extended to the first movement of Brahms’s First Symphony or Strauss’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* is open to doubt; it seems that a greater topic is in play in these later works, linking minor tonality, chromatic progressions, and stormy rhythms with ominous presentiments, tokens of somber reality, *stürmende Leidenschaften*.

Ratner should not be blamed for offering a fruitful idea without doing his homework properly. His musical instincts are true, and he must be thanked for bringing this idea to our notice. But contemporary writers are no good as buttresses of topic theory. Each topic needs a full cultural study. There is much work here for future doctoral programs. But let us attempt the merest sketch of such an enterprise.

HUNTING AND SOLDIERING

Ratner has a paragraph on “Military and hunt music” (p. 18). He gives no evidence to show that triadic figures in instrumental music, even where there was no text or program, evoked military fanfares for the contemporary listener. However, there *is* a shred of evidence, which he ignores: Kirnberger, in the same collection of specimen dances from which the preface has just been quoted (c. 1783), composes a piece in *rondeau* form entitled “Fanfare”. Its rhythm evokes a rustic dance; only its triadic contour might suggest any military connection (Figure 2.12).

Figure 2.12



Figure 2.13



Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the hunt from the parade ground, as Koch implies (1802, column 554). But clearly, the fanfares which open Mozart's youthful Symphony no. 1 in E flat, K. 16, or the Sonata in D, K. 576, reflect a different repertoire from the horn bicinia of the Quintet in E flat, K. 614, quoted by Ratner. Strictly speaking, the military trumpet signal should not be called "fanfare", though eighteenth-century writers are as guilty in this matter as modern. The real fanfare "originally signified in France a small musical piece of brilliant character for trumpets and drums, meant for military use, which can also be imitated on other instruments used by the military" (1802, column 554). For Koch's account of the trumpet signal, we must look in his dictionary under "Feldstück", where we find a long article, mostly derived from S. Altenburg's *Heroische Trompeter und Paukerkunst* (1795). This work analyzes the calls in great detail but unfortunately gives very few music examples, apparently because Altenburg wished to retain a copyright on these and expected trumpeters to write to him with payment. Some idea of contemporary trumpet calls may be gained, however, from other sources (see Schünemann 1935 and 1936; Titcomb 1956; Tarr 1970).

The various figures, none of which go above two-line C, were used by the cavalry as command signals. They were divided into four separate figures called "posts": the high and low post, the break-off (*Abbruch*), and the call (*Ruf*). The low post used only two notes, low C and G; the call or *Ruf* was triadic (Figure 2.13). These figures were combined into five types of signal: (1) the *Portés selles*, which preceded the striking of camp; (2) *A cheval*, comprising five posts, sounded in front of the camp, or outside the accommodation of the commander; (3) *Le marche* (sic), four posts and an *Abbruch*, to stow side arms; (4) *La retraite*, three calls and three high and low posts, sounded at nightfall; and finally (5) *A l'Etendart*, three calls and three high and low posts, for the fall-in. Altenburg (and Koch) add a few extra calls, used both in the field and socially: the *alarme*, *appel*, *ban*, *charge*, *touche*, *guet*, the *Tafelblasen* (sounded to call to table), and the *Fanfare* itself, described as:

The usual parade call, with three or four trumpets and a couple of drums; its prelude, called *Intrade*, is improvised by the trumpeters. (Koch, column 560)

Again we learn that the fanfare was an ensemble piece, not simply a signal. But contemporary writers used the term loosely, and we shall follow them in this.

The names of these various calls demonstrate that the systematization of military music was a French achievement. But apparently, what is significant about the military topic in Classical times was not the faithful quotation of contemporary trumpet calls, but the adaptation of the field trumpet signal to expressive chamber music. In many respects—the military ethos was aristocratic, repertoire music bourgeois; literary warfare was dominated by idealistic heroism, chamber music by sensitivity and the comic spirit—it might seem unsatisfactory or impossible to bring the trumpet call into the salon.

If we observe manifestations of this topic, however, we perceive that “real” soldiering or warfare is not at issue. The musical topic relates poorly to bellicose themes or to the realities of battle, because it presents an image of the military that is neither heroic nor violent. The opening of Mozart’s late Piano Concerto in B flat, K. 595, for example, seems at first to be framed on the topic of the “singing allegro”. The texture is unequivocally intimate and domestic; there is a rippling accompaniment figure, with a cantabile melody above it that begins in long notes and flowers exquisitely into an elegant arabesque. Everything is soft and flowing, lightly orchestrated, the tune played by unison violins (Figure 2.11c).

The charm of this concerto opening does not, however, lie only in its urbane theme. The easy sequence on which it is built is curtailed into the cadence, and the resulting rhythmic hiatus is filled with a tiny wind figure, still soft and very slightly ironic, which is evidently a military fanfare. But the moment this wry little soldierly gesture offers itself, a new slant is given to the opening motive. It, too, was built on a fanfare, a rising triad that was disguised by its gentle intimacy. In case the point is missed, the music continues with the same triad, a little quicker; when the winds interrupt again, the strings respond with an unmistakable whole triad, falling away at last in an access of triads that leave the point in no doubt. Just as Robert Hatten finds a “pastorally inflected victory” in Beethoven’s Op. 101 Sonata (1995, p. 383), so we may envisage a *militarily inflected salon* in this concerto.

The inflexion is maintained. The finale is a military gigue (Figure 2.14a); and the slow movement is articulated in dotted patterns which are signs of the march rhythm, according to A. B. Marx (1841, part 2, p. 56). The march is the other main component of the military topic (Figure 2.14b). The whole work is a *concerto guerriero*, a chamber piece touched with warlike sentiments that are lighthearted and ironic.

Figure 2.14a



Figure 2.14b



One is led to think of “Non più andrai” from *Figaro*, also a lighthearted piece built on fanfare motives, some of them actually played on trumpets, though always discreet and diminutive. This aria is, of course, specifically military, though nothing is in earnest: Cherubino would make a poor soldier, and in any case he will not go off to war at all.

The military topic has the longest history, perhaps, of any topic in our musical literature. It is already to be found, in the form of fanfare figures, in Jannequin’s chanson “La guerre”, which represents the battle of Marignano of 1515, and “Non più guerra” from Monteverdi’s *Fourth Book of Madrigals* of 1603 (see Cotterill 1989), and it is still to be heard, though in dysphoric form, in Mahler’s Third Symphony.

During this whole period, literary writing about war was dominated by the classical epics and by medieval narrative poems. For example, the two greatest war poems of the sixteenth century, Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* and Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, are respectively a retelling of the story of the French hero Roland and an emulation of the *Aeneid* (Brand 1989, p. 94). The keynote of writings about war was the element of heroic virtue, the quality of “*pious* Aeneas, Chaucer’s ‘verray parfit gentle knight’ [and] Spenser’s exemplary protagonists” (Rutherford 1978, p. 3). This theme was taken up again by the Romantics, with Wordsworth’s view of manly heroism (in *The Character of the Happy Warrior*), Tennyson’s hero-king, and Scott’s medieval novels. And indeed, the admiration for Roland as chief emblem of French military courage surfaces again and again in the nineteenth century (see Redman 1991).

Mozart’s concerto dates, however, from a period like our own, in which traditional heroism was not much written about. The soldiery reflected in Mozart’s themes is merely a picturesque fable of the salon, but also reflects a development in the social and technological history of warfare, not very much chronicled in literature.

Actually, the myth of the chivalric knight had been out of date for several centuries. The introduction of firearms rendered the cavalry partly redundant, or at least marginal. Until Frederick the Great’s cavalry began to

charge at the full gallop—a revolutionary innovation—eighteenth-century battles were won by squadrons of foot, bearing muskets and firing in volleys. Because the weapon was complicated to manage—the oldest muskets required ninety-six separate actions in firing—and because the profuse gunsmoke made it hard to see across the battlefield, armies developed precise systems of drill to avoid firing against their own side. This included marching forward in step, preserving a dressed line. The military march commemorates this.

The introduction of strict order was linked to the rise of the regiment, a body of men raised and commanded by their local nobleman and responsible to the king. Uniform was introduced on the model of civilian livery, to indicate the allegiance of each soldier within a regiment. The command of a body of troops was a symbol of noble rank, and the military instruments, trumpets and drums, also took on this secondary signification. Baroque soldiering was, one might say, musical and lyric, based on unison cyclic rhythms learnt by continual practice (most of this information from Ropp 1959, and Keegan 1993).

At the same time, warfare in the eighteenth century lost some of its brutality; armies in the field were comparatively small, battles often marked by avoidance tactics, defeated enemies were allowed to escape, and fortresses were not defended beyond the limits of reasonable decency. Lazare Carnot, a general of the Revolution, commented that the old military schools had not taught “the art of defending strong places, but that of surrendering them honourably, after certain conventional formalities” (quoted by Nef 1950, p. 157).

The eighteenth-century army was a suitable repository for tiresome young men like Cherubino. Its relatively refined life—the military academies taught literacy and manners as well as military science—and its splendid uniforms made it seem picturesque to the cultivated middle-class onlooker. Its officers were not great heroes, Bayards and Rolands; at their best they were dashing young men, like Lieutenant George Brown in Boieldieu’s opera *La dame blanche*. In this world a *concerto guerriero*, a military piece for the bourgeois concert-room, with its fanfares adapted to chamber-music sentiment, is not a contradiction in terms, as it might have seemed.

Young men entering the army had no intention of getting into unreasonable danger or of inflicting terrible slaughter. Beautiful uniforms were designed and worn even while on campaign. War was “profaned”. “In place of sacred chivalry, ascetic, bloody, and barded with iron, there arose . . . an army commanded by courtiers in lace cuffs, who, since they were libertines, did not intend to jeopardize the refinements of life” (Rougemont 1956/1940, p. 257).

This was the sort of military service to which Cherubino was sent, indicated by the ironic fanfares of “Non più andrai”; this was the world in which a squadron of cavalry—real soldiers—could appear on stage to lend real-

ism to Davide Perez's opera *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1749; see Chegai 1998, p. 31). The good-mannered, small-time bonhomie of the eighteenth-century army reflected a kind of compromised masculinity somewhere between heroism and playacting. This helps to explain the diminutiveness, the toy-like quality, of many manifestations of fanfarism.

It must also be recorded that trumpets and drums, since they were warlike instruments, became the special prerogative of the nobility in medieval times. With the founding of the Imperial Guild of Court and Field Trumpeters and Court and Army Kettledrummers (*Reichszunft der Hof- und Feldtrompeter und Hof- und Heerpauker*) by the Emperor Ferdinand II in 1623, trumpeters were restricted to "the households of emperors, kings, electors, dukes, princes, counts, lords and others of noble and knightly rank".

The use of trumpets and kettledrums was forbidden to those who were not members of the Guild, such as the city-pipers, tower-blowers, tavern minstrels . . . [Guild members] were specifically forbidden to provide music at such affairs as middle-class and peasant weddings, annual fairs, festival, public dances and theatre performances, and the like. (Titcomb 1956, pp. 57–58)

Members were described as "honorable" (*ehrlich*), and their profession was an "*edle Kunst*", a noble art. They were given the rank of officers and wore magnificent uniforms.

Thus, the identification of military service with noble rank was enshrined in the dual significance of the trumpet fanfare. This was clearly sensed by Ernst Toch when he discerned the "masculine type" and "feminine type" of melody; the masculine melody, based on the notes of the triad, is particularly shown in "motifs of knights and heroes . . . , in songs of masculine spirit such as marching, drinking, hunting, fighting, patriotic songs" (Toch 1977/1948, pp. 106–7). He cites William Boyce's "Hearts of Oak", Fischer's "Im kühlen Keller," and John Stafford Smith's "Star-Spangled Banner" among his examples. Of course, the masculine character of the military topic has nothing to do with political correctness or its opposite; within the tradition, this topic, like that of the noble horse, discussed below, was specifically male, since warriors were always men.

The hunt topic, when it can be distinguished from the military, has firm foundations in eighteenth-century history and musical writing. It is analyzed by Alexander Ringer (1953), in a short article that demonstrates, in sketch form, how topical analysis should be conducted; topics cannot be simply transcribed from contemporary theorists, but must be researched in cultural history, one by one. Ringer shows that "hunting" figures are often quotations, or near quotations, from actual hunting calls, of which many collections have survived.

The noble lineage of the hunt begins in the twelfth century, when St. Louis made it a royal institution. Early horns could play no more than a sin-

gle note, but as the instrument developed, composers began to echo it; the caccia “Tosto che l’alba” by Ghirardello da Firenze shows that the fifteenth-century horn could perform elaborate figures. Horn calls appear in many pieces, vocal and instrumental, of the sixteenth century, by composers like Alessandro Striggio, Senfl, Othmayr, Farnaby, Bull, and Byrd; these imitations continue in the next century in the works of Ravenscroft, Cavalli, Lully, and Purcell. With the beginning of the eighteenth century, collections of hunting calls begin to appear in print. One of these, assembled and partly composed by André-Danican Philidor the elder (father of the composer), contains a call named the *Sourcillade*, which was sounded “when the animal is first spotted” (Ringer 1953, p. 150). This was used, with several others from this collection, by Morin in his *La chasse du cerf* (1708), from which Figure 2.15 is taken. This figure appears in a slightly different form in Haydn’s Symphony no. 73, “La chasse”, of which the finale was originally the prelude to Act 3 of the opera *La fedeltà premiata* (1780). It was also partly because of Morin’s influence that 6/8 became established as the characteristic hunting meter.

Figure 2.15



The French hunting horn in D was developed in the final decades of the seventeenth century; a little later, the Marquis de Dampierre composed what became the standard collection of *sonneries*, which was plundered by many composers including Leopold Mozart, in the *Sinfonia di caccia* (sic) of 1756. “Our topic,” comments Ringer, “faithfully accompanied every general trend in eighteenth-century music”. It was commonly in 6/8 time and in D. In the “Peasant Cantata” J. S. Bach used the same call that later attracted Leopold Mozart; and Hiller quoted Dampierre’s most celebrated figure, the “Halali” (sounded when the beast is cornered; see Figure 2.16), in his singspiel *Die Jagd*. The 6/8 meter became so thoroughly established as the hunting measure that Gossec’s *Sinfonia da caccia* of 1774 was entirely in this time, except for the menuet.

Figure 2.16



It would be wearisome to list the many works which contain horn calls, real or imaginary. Haydn may be mentioned again; his *Jahreszeiten* uses Dampierre's "Halali", "Vol ce l'est", and other calls in the section entitled "Autumn", confirming an association with the time of the fall that had been recognized long before, though Haydn's calls are predominantly in E flat, which had become the normal key for German hunting horns. It is possible that a much earlier work, the Symphony no. 6 in D ("Le matin"), may reflect the fact that the hunt usually took place during the morning in the courts of Europe, for its first theme, after the introduction, is a horn call, played on the flute, later reprised on the horn just before the start of the recapitulation, a procedure copied in the famous witticism of Beethoven at the same point of the *Eroica*.

A key work is the sinfonia, *La chasse du jeune Henri*, from Méhul's opera *Le jeune Henri* (1797). It begins with a slow introduction, atmospherically evoking the forest, then continues with a sonata-form allegro in which the first theme is "suggestive of galloping horses and impatient dogs", while the second subject is an established *sonnerie*. This work was praised by E. T. A. Hoffmann in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (14/46, November 1812, p. 743): "Certain horn melodies place one instantly in forest and grove," he wrote, because "the horn is the instrument of the hunters who live in the forest". Clearly, Hoffmann was beginning to realize the force of musical topics, which signify indexically through their objects. The horn call evoked the woodland, and thus mystery, romance, the unknown, as well as merely the hunt.

Ringer's article is a thoroughly laudable piece of cultural research, though it concentrates largely on the expression plane of hunting music. It would be illuminating to have a full cultural study of the hunt; its many associations—with royalty, nobility, adventure, danger, the forest, the season of the fall—are evidently reflected in much of the music that echoes horn calls.

The eighteenth-century topic seems to have contributed two important themes to the Romantic period; first, the mysterious symbolism of the forest turned the horn into an agent of magic and romance, leading it to evoke "the horns of elfland faintly blowing" (from Tennyson's *The Princess*); second, the established meter of the *sonnerie*, compound duple, came to stand for the galloping horse. And horses galloped, not only the sooner to catch the quarry, but also for semiotic reasons. This point is elaborated in the next chapter.

A large field of cultural studies is foreshadowed by Ratner's seminal insight. There are also, however, types of musical topic to which he does not refer, either because they were not present in Classical music, or because they were not mentioned by contemporary theorists. Western music has signified through topical reference throughout its history. To illustrate this, it will be necessary to turn to a coherent body of topical figures from the nineteenth century, some of which appear to be firmly within the system described by Ratner, others beyond it, either because he chooses to ignore them or because they had not yet come into being in the Classical period.