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A Very Socialist German Culture?: The GDR's Use of German Classical Music Heritage for Domestic and International Legitimacy under Honecker (1971-1989)

Yundi Guo

Abstract

In recent decades, with the growth of scholarly interest in GDR social and cultural history, the complexities and contradictions of GDR society have been unveiled. As a result, the conceptualisations of the GDR as, for instance, a 'participatory dictatorship' (Fulbrook) and 'consensus dictatorship' (Jaraus) emerge to debunk the totalitarian characterisation of GDR society. This thesis complicates the GDR as a 'participatory dictatorship' by looking at the practices of German classical music heritage during the Honecker era. It asks how the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) endeavoured to manipulate the heritage domestically and in the GDR's trans-bloc cultural exchange with Britain for its political legitimacy and assesses the outcomes. In tracing the interactions between all involved social actors (i.e., state authorities, cultural institutions, the classical music intelligentsia, journalists and critics, and the public), this thesis demonstrates the complexities of all the actors' relations to the heritage practices. As the thesis shows, significant to the complexities were factors such as the *de facto* existence of capitalism within GDR socialism, the SED's reliance on the classical music intelligentsia's contribution for its power consolidation, the non-state actors' pursuits of their *Eigensinn* and hidden transcripts in navigating their relations with the SED government. In summation, this thesis proves that German classical music heritage's policymaking and implementation in the GDR's domestic scene and its trans-bloc cultural exchange cannot be understood as solely 'top-down' constructs. Instead, they were subject to changing dynamics and shaped by conflict and contradictions, cooperation and reconciliation between all the social actors involved.

**A Very Socialist German Culture?: The GDR's Use of German Classical
Music Heritage for Domestic and International Legitimacy under
Honecker (1971-1989)**

Yundi Guo

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History, Durham University

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Künstler-Agentur (Artists Agency)
AC	Arts Council
ADN	Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst (General German News Service)
ATO	Allied Travel Office
BA	Bundesarchiv Berlin
BC	British Council
BE	Berliner Ensemble
BGS	British German Society
BPO	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
BRD/FRG	Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Federal Republic of Germany)
BRIDGE	Britain-Democratic German Information Exchange
BRSO	Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra

BSO	Berlin Symphony Orchestra
BStU	Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic)
CEMA	Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DDR/GDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic)
DPO	Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra
DS	Deutsche Schallplatten
DSOB	Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin
DTO	Direktion für Theater und Orchester (Management for Theatre and Orchestra)
EEC	European Economic Community

ENO	English National Opera
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FDGB	Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Trade Union Federation)
FDJ	Freier Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth)
FO	Foreign Office
HF	Hidden Flower
HSO	Hamburg State Opera
HVA	Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (Main Directorate for Reconnaissance)
IM	Informelle Mitarbeiter (Unofficial collaborator)
JHS	Juristische Hochschule des MfS (Academy of Law of the Ministry for State Security)
KO	Komische Oper
LGO	Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra

LO	Leipziger Oper
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft (Agricultural Production Association)
MfAA	Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (Ministry for Foreign Affairs)
MfK	Ministerium für Kultur (Ministry for Culture)
MfS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NÖS	Neues Ökonomisches System (New Economic System)
NSW	Nichtsozialistische Welt (Non-socialist world)
PAAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (Political Archives of the Foreign Office)
PGLSC	Palace Green Library Special Collections

PRC	People's Republic of China
ROH	Royal Opera House
SaL	Staatsarchiv Leipzig
SED	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
ShB	Schauspielhaus Berlin
SkB	Staatskapelle Berlin
SkD	Staatskapelle Dresden
SMAD	Soviet Military Administration in Germany
SoB	Staatsoper Berlin
SoD	Semperoper Dresden
SPO	Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra
SW	Sadlers' Wells
TTD	Temporary Travel Document
US	United States

USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VAU	Visiting Arts Unit
VDK	Verband Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler (Association of German Composers and Musicologists)
VKM	Verband der Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler der DDR (Association of Composers and Musicologists of the GDR)
WNO	Welsh National Opera

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

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For my grandfather Zhitang Guo (郭致堂)

INTRODUCTION

When village clubs are built in GDR villages, when the circulation numbers of our socialist belles-lettres have risen to heights that are rarely achieved in capitalist countries, when theatre performances are pre-sold for months, then one thing can no longer be denied: the cultural needs of all GDR social strata have increased immeasurably, and our artistic activities are beginning to take on proportions that are only possible under socialism.¹

--'Goethe and the Worker-writers', *Neues Deutschland* (1961)

Introduction

On 5 February 1961, *Neues Deutschland*, one of the most influential official GDR organs with a circulation of over 1,000,000,² published an article entitled 'Goethe and the Worker-writers' to proclaim GDR socialism's cultural supremacy over the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The article claimed that whereas the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) had succeeded in bringing humanist works of the 'progressive bourgeoisie' to all GDR citizens, the FRG government did not do the same for all its citizens.³ Unlike modern pluralist western societies, where the practices of cultural life largely depended on personal preference with minimal state intervention, the SED government elevated cultural practices to the level of national importance and endeavoured to regulate such practices. Moreover, the SED believed that the prosperity of high culture in the GDR would be able to prove socialism's cultural superiority over the capitalist West, thus consolidating the Party's domestic and international legitimacy. Driven by such logic, the SED made the democratisation and revival of high culture under socialism the centrepiece of its cultural politics.⁴

¹ The original German text: 'Wenn sich in den Dörfern der DDR Dorfklubs bilden, wenn die Auflagenziffern unserer sozialistischen Belletristik in Höhen stiegen, die in kapitalistischen Ländern nur in seltensten Fällen erreicht werden, wenn Theatervorstellungen auf Monate hinaus vorverkauft sind, dann läßt sich eins nicht mehr leugnen: Die kulturellen Bedürfnisse aller Schichten in der DDR sind unermeßlich gestiegen, die eigene künstlerische Betätigung beginnt Ausmaße anzunehmen, wie sie eben nur im Sozialismus möglich sind. [n.a.], 'Goethe und die schreibenden Arbeiter', *Neues Deutschland*, (5 Feb, 1961), p. 1.

² Randall Bytwerk, '*Neues Deutschland* after the *Wende*', (conference paper, the New Hampshire Symposium on the GDR, 1990), p.32; accessed via: <https://www.bytwerk.com/papers/ND-in-Transition.pdf> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

³ [n.a.], 'Goethe und die schreibenden Arbeiter', p. 2.

⁴ Elaine Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic: Narratives of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford & New York, 2014), p. 6.

This thesis focuses on German classical music heritage, exploring the SED's policies on the heritage in the GDR and GDR-British cultural relations during the Honecker era for political legitimacy. In this thesis, the term 'German classical music heritage' is relational, and by no means strictly fixed and defined. This term is deployed for distinguishing the western musical tradition, which is generally considered 'highbrow' and traditionally viewed as a bourgeois and intellectual pursuit different from jazz, popular and rock music traditions. An investigation into this topic is of significance to, in one respect, debunking the understanding of the GDR as a 'totalitarian' state, complicating Mary Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' analysis; and in another respect, to enrich the growing scholarship that moves Cold War international power relations away from the axis of the USSR-USA model. In tracing the interactions between all involved internal and external social actors of GDR society (i.e., state authorities, cultural institutions, classical music intelligentsia, journalists and critics, and the public), this thesis evaluates the results of the Honecker government's manipulation of the domestic and trans-bloc uses of German classical music heritage for the ends of power consolidation. In order to approach this issue, the thesis focuses on the following themes within a Cold War trans-bloc context:

- Policymaking (Chapter One & Two): Governmental policymaking on the uses of German music heritage inside the GDR and in GDR-British relations.
- People (Chapter Three): The musical intelligentsia's privileges, difficulties, and voices.
- Artistic productions (Chapter Four): The production and reception of Joachim Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978) at the Komische Oper (KO) in East Berlin and the Welsh National Opera (WNO) in Cardiff.
- Anniversaries (Chapter Five): The conception and reception of SED policies on German classical music heritage during Berlin's 750th anniversary.

In unveiling the complexities of all the social actors' relations to German classical music heritage, the central argument of the thesis is that the heritage practices are exemplary for Mary Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' conceptualisation of GDR society. This argument is demonstrated through the following arguments. The first argument is that in both domestic

and international scenes, the SED's policymaking and implementation of German classical music heritage involved the contributions from other East German social actors. The second argument is that the GDR's domestic and international practices of German classical music heritage facilitated the classical music intelligentsia's realisation of their *Eigensinn* (Alf Lüdtke) and hidden transcripts (James Scott). In their interactions with other social actors, the intelligentsia endeavoured to maximise their own interests with varying results. The third argument is that the SED's use of German classical music heritage for power consolidation produced contradictory results. On the one hand, the heritage assisted the consolidation of SED legitimacy, as it helped promote the supremacy of GDR socialism among the East German populace and elevated the GDR's reputation across the Iron Curtain and attracted the inflow of capitalist currency. On the other hand, the heritage contributed to the generation and intensification of GDR social problems that eroded SED legitimacy. In summation, the thesis shows that the practices of German classical music heritage inside the GDR and in the GDR's trans-bloc Cold War interactions cannot be understood simply as 'top-down' constructs. Rather, they were subject to changing dynamics and shaped by conflict and cooperation, compromises and reconciliation between all the social actors involved.

The introduction sets out the framework of the thesis. Section I considers the historiography concerning GDR society and the GDR's international relations with the western bloc, particularly with Britain. It starts by presenting how the totalitarian conceptualisation of GDR history was challenged and replaced by conceptualisations such as Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship'. The aim is to show the complexity which lies between the bi-polar 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' construct. After this, the section turns to international dimensions, focusing on the GDR's relations with Britain. It positions the GDR-British relationship in a Cold War trans-bloc context, presenting how it differed from the GDR's relations with other major Western countries. Section II presents the existing scholarship's research on German classical music heritage practices in the GDR and GDR-British relations, pinpointing the research avenues worth further investigation. Finally, section III introduces the thesis' research methods.

Section I: Historiography

Reading GDR history: from 'totalitarian state' to 'participatory dictatorship'

Approaches to GDR society

Although proclaiming itself as 'the workers and peasants' state', the GDR did not convincingly sustain its image as a state directed from the grassroots. Instead, given the government's intention and efforts to monopolise every aspect of daily life, the GDR has been persistently labelled either as a totalitarian state or a dictatorship. In the years immediately following the *Wende* and the demise of the GDR, the unveiling of the extent of the Ministry for State Security (MfS)' notorious mass surveillance and its infiltration into people's private lives has particularly stimulated the revival of the totalitarianism paradigm in conceptualising the GDR. With such a conceptualisation, the GDR was either typified as an example of 'red totalitarianism', or, in Schroeder's description, 'a late totalitarian patriarchal and surveillance state'.⁵ However, the totalitarian characterisation of GDR society was criticised for inadequately capturing the complexities of the evolving reality of the changing interactions between the 'totalitarian' rulers and the grassroots, since it confused the ruling party's intention and its actual achievement of total power. One telling example in this regard, which Corey Ross and Fulbrook address, is the totalitarian theorists' reluctance to sufficiently explain dissenting culture and the SED's accommodation of the Church in the GDR.⁶ In addition, the wave of *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for an East German past) shared by East Germans, but also by some West Germans after German reunification,⁷ cast substantial doubt on the totalitarian conceptualisation of the GDR — if the GDR was a totalitarian state utterly ruled by terror and

⁵ Jürgen Kocka, 'The GDR: a special kind of modern dictatorship', in Konrad Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York & Oxford, 1999), pp. 17-26; Jürgen Kocka, 'Die Geschichte der DDR als Forschungsproblem: Einleitung', in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Historische DDR-Forschung: Aufsätze und Studien* (Berlin, 1993), p. 17.

⁶ Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London, 2002), pp. 32-36; Corey Ross, 'Zwischen politischer Gestaltung und sozialer Komplexität - Überlegungen zur Debatte über die Sozialgeschichte der DDR', *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung*, 2003, p. 142; Mary Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies, 1945-1990: Problems of Interpretation* (Basingstoke, 1992), p. 27; Mary Fulbrook, 'The limits of totalitarianism: god, state and society in the GDR', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7 (1997), pp. 48-52.

⁷ Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven & London, 2005), pp. 17, 313.

indoctrination from above, how could it provoke its former citizens' nostalgia after its demise?

Deficiencies of the totalitarian conceptualisation encourage some scholars to not only look beyond the dichotomous binary of 'rulers versus the ruled', 'repression and opposition', 'power and obedience' in the GDR, but also extend their focus from political practices to socio-cultural history and *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday history). For instance, Ross views the construction of socialism from the bottom-up, investigating how SED functionaries below the central-government level and the population responded to the policies dictated from above in the first two decades of communist rule. Similarly, Christian Rau examines GDR political practices at the grassroots, pondering whether Western Europe's concept of *Kommunalpolitik* (municipal politics) can also be applied to the GDR.⁸ The adoption of a bottom-up perspective offers insight into the existence of limited autonomy in GDR political practices shared by the policy-executive functionaries and the populace at the grassroots level. As a result of the exercise of human agency in the policy-delivery process, the central government's policies never effectively materialised at the grassroots level. In the meantime, the central power authority learned to adopt some 'soft' approaches (e.g., tolerance, negotiation, compromise) in addition to the 'hard' ones (e.g., demotion, imprisonment, expatriation, military forces), making peace with the population in order to sustain its authority. Therefore, as Ross notes, the construction of GDR socialism was a 'multi-way' communication process, including not just the imposition from above, but also challenges, negotiations and compromises for all social actors involved in the construction.⁹ Likewise, Christian Rau's attempt to examine local politics (*Kommunalpolitik*) reaches the conclusion that the local political authorities and academics acted on their initiative and thereby grew in self-confidence rather than simply following the commands from above in developing GDR socialism. Given that these local and personal initiatives were not allowed to endanger the central governmental monopoly over the entire GDR society, Rau discusses the importance of local political elements in the SED's policymaking and implementation within the centralised GDR socialist model.¹⁰

⁸ Christian Rau, *Socialism from below: Kommunalpolitik in the East German dictatorship between discourse and practice*, *German History*, 36.1 (2018), p. 60.

⁹ Corey Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots: The Transformation of East Germany, 1945-1965* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 3-4, 8-9, 204-07, 210.

¹⁰ Rau, 'Socialism from below', pp. 76-77.

In addition, many studies pay attention to micro-level actions, tracing the wide range of behavioural patterns (e.g., 'bargaining, compromise, limited reciprocity, and shared interests'¹¹) within the bi-polar governmental-people relationships in the GDR. The incorporation of *Eigensinn* and 'hidden transcripts' into contextualising the everyday life history of the GDR is highly relevant to unveiling human agency in the bottom-up approach. Such incorporation importantly unveils the existence of a certain degree of 'self-autonomy' of non-governmental protagonists. Coined by Alf Lüdtke for discussing the existence of 'passive loyalty' revolving around shop-floor politics atypical of socialism,¹² *Eigensinn* can be translated as 'the determination/stubbornness to pursue one's own interests'. Thomas Lindenberger deploys this concept to articulate ordinary East Germans' pursuit of their interests in dealing with governmental directives. The rationale lying behind this concept is that for the East German populace, it was the fulfilment of their own interests rather than the bipolarity of obedience/opposition to the governmental rule that was their aim in government-population relations. In order to maximise their interests, they interacted with the government, making efforts to work within and against GDR socialism. Their interests could contradict, partially overlap, or wholly accord with that of the government.¹³

While the behaviour patterns of *Eigensinn* can vary from amicable to hostile to following the system in everyday living practices, the notion of 'hidden-transcripts' tends to indicate more subversive behaviours occurring in everyday power politics. In his anthropology of the politics of domination and resistance in various historical and social settings, James Scott puts forward the concepts of 'public transcripts' and 'hidden transcripts'. According to him, the 'powerless'

¹¹ Thomas Lindenberger, 'Creating state socialist governance: the case of the Deutsche Volkspolizei', in Konrad Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York & Oxford, 1999), p. 125.

¹² See for instance, Alf Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg, 1993); Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis: historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien* (Göttingen, 1991).

¹³ Thomas Lindenberger, 'Die Diktatur der Grenzen. Zur Einleitung', in Thomas Lindenberger (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne, 1999), pp. 13-44; Konrad Jarausch, 'Beyond uniformity: the challenge of historicizing the GDR', in Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience*, p. 9; Andrew Port, 'East German workers and the "dark side" of *Eigensinn*: divisive shop-floor practices and the failed revolution of June 17, 1953', in Hartmut Berghoff & Uta Balbier (eds.), *The East German Economy, 1945-2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 111-12.

adopts a double technique, consisting of 'public and hidden transcripts' to react to the 'powerful' ruler. Whereas public transcripts suggest 'the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate', hidden transcripts 'represent a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant'.¹⁴ The dominated' hidden transcript behaviours vary from 'anonymous threats, gossip, rumours, to millennial religions'. The idea of 'hidden transcripts' plays a crucial part in Jan Palmowski's development of his research on the role of *Heimat* (homeland, or local heritage) for the central government, regional authorities and the population, and these social protagonists' interactions revolving around it. As Palmowski argues, in the government's efforts to construct a socialist GDR *Heimat* and attract the population's attachment to the *Heimat*, the 'public transcript' was appropriated, vitiated, and sometimes subverted through local authorities and the population's practices of 'hidden-transcripts'. As a result, these 'hidden-transcripts' undermined the SED's use of *Heimat*.¹⁵ In unveiling non-governmental East German social actors' pursuits and the realisation of their agency, scholars' unveiling of the existence of *Eigensinn* and 'hidden transcripts' debunks the totalitarian conceptualisation of the GDR.

With its wide applicability, Fulbrook's 'normalisation' approach captures the complexity and ambiguities of GDR history. Fulbrook proposed this approach in her 2009 edited volume to characterise the middle decades of GDR society.¹⁶ A key point for supporting this perspective, as Fulbrook puts it, is that the GDR's four-decade existence witnessed not only confrontations between the people and the state but also their cooperation for socialist construction and consolidation. Fulbrook defines the concept of 'normalisation' in a Weberian sense, noting that its 'relational and comparative' nature is deployed as an analytical tool for comparative and interpretative purposes other than describing a society's normalcy. Considering GDR history, its 'normalcy' lay in its 'relative stabilisation of domestic political structure and process,

¹⁴ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven & London, 1990), pp. 2, 4-5.

¹⁵ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. xii, 198; Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 12-13. See also, Jan Palmowski, 'Citizenship, identity, and community in the German Democratic Republic', in Geoff Eley & Jan Palmowski (eds.), *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth Century Germany* (Stanford, 2007), p. 89.

¹⁶ Mary Fulbrook, 'The concept of "normalisation" and the GDR in comparative perspective', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The 'Normalisation of Rule'?* (New York & Oxford, 2009), pp. 1-30.

the degrees of routinisation and predictability of everyday practices', particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. According to Fulbrook, the application of 'normalisation' is of significance in tracing the changing dynamics of the following complexities of GDR history:

- 'The links between "structural" changes in the political, economic, and social spheres';
- 'changes in mentalities, patterns of behaviours, and discourses';
- 'the "degree of fit" between the demands of the external world and the perceptions and experiences of the inner life among people in different social and general groups, in those longer, slower, "less memorable" times following the periods of major upheaval and historical turmoil that have visible implications for people's experiences and perceptions of their 'private lives'.¹⁷

Thus, although it appears rather abstract, Fulbrook's 'normalisation' approach unveils the complexity and ambiguities of different social actors' interactions through all aspects of everyday life and political practices. It should be noted that the 'normalisation' perspective encourages the combination of normalisation with other models (e.g., *Eigensinn*, hidden-transcripts, comparative, bottom-up, top-down) in its analytical discourse. Scholarly works with their reference to or indication of the 'normalisation' concept are not limited to the 2009 volume edited by Fulbrook, but extend far beyond this volume's collection with all possible aspects of living practices and topics being explored.¹⁸

Unveiling the complexities and contradictions of GDR society

In adopting multiple approaches beyond the paradigm of totalitarian models, recent scholarly

¹⁷ Fulbrook, 'The concept of "normalisation" and the GDR in comparative perspective', pp. 3, 13,15-16, 28.

¹⁸ A considerable number of scholarly works can be related in this regard. Here are few examples, Katherine Pence & Paul Betts (eds.), *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor, 2008); Mary Fulbrook & Andrew Port (eds), *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities After Hitler* (New York & Oxford, 2013); Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford, 2010); Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise and Participation in the GDR* (New York, 2009); and Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990* (Cambridge, 2009).

research tends to unveil the complexities and contradictions that evolved during the forty years of existence of the GDR. Many scholars point out that multiple issues contribute to such complexities and contradictions. One is the blurred distinction between 'the rulers and the ruled'. As scholars such as Fulbrook, Simone Barck, Christoph Classen and Thomas Heimann show in their research, the equation of SED government and the population with 'the rulers and the ruled', despite appearing theoretically valid to some extent, is unable to hold in practice. The intelligentsia, professionals, churchmen, middle and lower-level SED functionaries, and representatives in the Free German Trade Union Federation (*Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB) - all these groups of social actors below the central government level acted as both rulers and the ruled in the process of socialist construction and consolidation. At the same time, they played a part in influencing the authority's policymaking and in the GDR's demise.¹⁹

Another aspect is the wide range of micro-actions in between the power paradigm of dominance versus compliance/resistance. As research into social actors' behaviour patterns suggests, each group of these actors interacted with the other to maximise its advantages while mitigating the disadvantages. Because of the asymmetrical power sharing between the central government and social actors below the governmental level, groups and individual actors at the grassroots level could employ Orwellian 'doublethink', *Eigensinn* and hidden transcripts to navigate their relationships with state power. Knowing that it could not hold its absolute power without the contribution of non-governmental social actors (e.g., the intelligentsia, the professionals, the youth, and groups of sub-cultures), the SED government approached its relations with these actors with both soft and hard measures. Notably, the SED's dependence on these social actors indirectly endowed them with a degree of agency to bargain with the state power.²⁰

In addition, the fact that the GDR was not a 'closed' society and its system was a 'shortage

¹⁹ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 29-30; Simone Barck, Christoph Classen & Thomas Heimann, 'The fettered media: controlling public debate', in Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience*, pp. 213-14.

²⁰ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 208-267; Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots*, pp. 9, 61-62, 202-03.

economy (*Mangelwirtschaft*)' also contributed to the complexities and contradictions of GDR society. As scholars such as Ross put it, the GDR's interactions with historical Germany and the USSR did not only apply to the sphere of high politics, but were also deeply immersed in people's everyday living practices.²¹ Moreover, as the GDR was constantly characterised by the disparity between demand and supply, the shortage economy generated and intensified the contradictions between the SED's socialist claims and actual practices.²² Therefore, in line with Fulbrook's conceptualisation of GDR society as 'the people's paradox', the complexities and contradictions in GDR society can be presented through the interactions not just among all social actors, between the rhetoric and practices of GDR socialism, but also between the GDR and the world outside during its whole existence.²³

Scholars' conceptualisations of the GDR as a 'participatory dictatorship' (Fulbrook),²⁴ 'welfare dictatorship' (*Fürsorgediktatur*) (Konrad Jarausch),²⁵ 'modern dictatorship' (Jürgen Kocka),²⁶ and 'consensus dictatorship' (Martin Sabrow)²⁷ have emerged with the unveiling of GDR society's complexities and contradictions. Fulbrook, for instance, approaches the GDR from the perspective of social relations, characterising it as a 'honeycomb' society that was substantially maintained by multiple micro-relations of a vast majority of its social actors. As she presents, a degree of internal consensus was able to be reached between the government and a vast majority of the East German population throughout the GDR's existence. While most East Germans recognised and were dissatisfied with various shortcomings of GDR socialism, they also made efforts to adapt to and play the system to their own advantage. At

²¹ Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots*, p. 210.

²² Regarding research on the disparity between demand and supply in the GDR, see for instance, Burghard Cielas & Patrice Poutrus, 'Food supply in a planned economy: SED nutrition policy between crisis response and popular needs', in Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience*, pp. 143-162; Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge & London, 2005). Regarding the contradiction in GDR monetary system, see for instance, Jonathan Zatin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (Cambridge, 2007).

²³ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 16-38.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Konrad Jarausch, 'Realer Sozialismus als Fürsorgediktatur. Zur begrifflichen Einordnung der DDR [1998]', *Historical Social Research*, 24 (2012), pp. 249-272; and Jarausch, 'Care and coercion: the GDR as welfare dictatorship', in Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience*, pp. 47-69.

²⁶ Kocka, 'The GDR', pp. 27-45; and Kocka, 'Die Geschichte der DDR als Forschungsproblem', p. 23.

²⁷ Martin Sabrow, 'Dictatorship as discourse: cultural perspective on SED legitimacy', in Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience*, pp. 195-211.

the same time, because the SED government relied on various groups of social actors' intellectual and physical labour support for its power legitimisation and consolidation purposes, these groups were endowed with a degree of institutional and human agency to bargain with the state power. In interacting with other actors, including state power, all the actors participated in constructing and consolidating GDR socialism.²⁸ Differing in matters of detail, all of these conceptualisations reject the dichotomy of 'black-and-white' characterisations of the GDR and point to the intricacies entwined with all social actors and social practices within GDR socialism.

The GDR on the international stage: contextualising GDR-British relations

The particular geopolitical position of the GDR on the Cold War international scene resulted in its somewhat ambiguous and intricate relations with the western bloc. Situated on the periphery of the bi-polar US-USSR superpower axis as a Soviet satellite, the GDR remained on the frontline of the confrontation and rapprochement between the eastern and western blocs throughout the entire Cold War era. In terms of politics, the GDR appeared to be distanced from the western-eastern bloc diplomacy. Under the influence of the Bonn government's Hallstein doctrine, the GDR was diplomatically isolated from the western world before the arrival of *détente*.²⁹ Even after the launch of its diplomatic relations with western bloc countries since the early 1970s, the disputed legitimacy of East Berlin as the capital of the GDR constantly loomed over the GDR-western bloc relations. In contrast to the GDR's belated diplomatic relations and political discord with the western bloc, its economy was more involved with the capitalist European Community from the late 1950s than any other socialist country. Under the GDR-FRG's special trade relations under the Treaty of Rome, the GDR was,

²⁸ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 330-332; Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots*, p. 210; Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, pp. 62-64.

²⁹ The Hallstein Doctrine, named after West German diplomat Walter Hallstein, was a key FRG foreign policy for preventing the international community's recognition of the GDR's legitimacy between 1955 and 1970. From its inception to 1970, the GDR only opened its diplomatic relations with twenty-six countries. None of these countries were from the western bloc. See Klaus Larres, 'Britain and the GDR: political and economic relations, 1949-1989', in Klaus Larres & Elizabeth Meehan (eds.), *Uneasy Allies: British-German Relations and European Integration since 1945*, (New York, 2000), p. 72.

in fact, a hidden member of the European Economic Community (EEC).³⁰

The GDR's paradoxical relations with the western bloc led to the SED's complex position in formulating and implementing its foreign policies towards it. On the one hand, the socialist GDR denounced the ideological-political basis of capitalism in the west. On the other hand, the SED considered building up and enhancing the GDR's western connections, excluding with the FRG, to consolidate the Party's domestic and international ruling legitimacy. The reasons were, as David Childs suggests, that improving the GDR's credibility in the western bloc would not merely discredit the capitalist FRG and weaken NATO, but also boost the GDR's economic and industrial performance.³¹ Thus, despite its secure position inside the eastern bloc, the GDR aspired to be recognised as a sovereign state and even be held in high esteem by the western bloc.

In the minds of the SED, building up and consolidating its connections with Britain would not only help undermine the FRG's international standing, but also economically benefit the GDR. Despite Britain's declining status, it was still considered a leading international power in the post-war era. In addition, Britain's role as one of the initiators of the western bloc's non-recognition policy towards the GDR in 1949, an ally to the FRG, a protecting power of West Berlin, a leading presence in NATO with a nuclear deterrent and the leader of the Commonwealth with influence over its former colonies, were all indicative of Britain's continuing influence over international politics.³² Moreover, the GDR also saw Britain as an important trading partner from the western bloc, because intensified GDR-British relations could tangibly weaken the GDR's trading dependence on the FRG, improve the GDR's

³⁰ The signing of the Treaty of Rome by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the FRG in 1957 signalled the foundation of the EEC (later renamed the European Union in 1993). In the hope of German reunification under the FRG's reign, the FRG considered its trade with the GDR as a domestic issue when the FRG signed the Treaty. Thus, the GDR was a *de facto* member of the EEC since 1957. Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies*, p. 54; Larres, 'Britain and the GDR', p. 92.

³¹ David Childs, 'East German foreign policy: the search for recognition and stability', *International Journal*, 32.2 (1977), pp. 346-47.

³² Henning Hoff, 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Großbritannien 1949-1973', in Arnd Bauerkämper (ed.), *Britain and the GDR; Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World* (Berlin & Vienna, 2002), p. 267.

economic performance, and raise the GDR's international credibility.³³

Despite its stronghold as an anti-communist power and alliance with the FRG, the British government was aware of the GDR as a state which could assist Britain's realisation of its international agendas. On the surface, Britain's alliance with the FRG, its adherence to the western bloc's non-recognition policy regarding the GDR before 1973, along with its prominent role in the western bloc, appeared to suggest its antipathy towards the GDR. When the GDR was established in 1949, the British government denounced it as an illegitimate state, calling for the western world to isolate the GDR diplomatically. In 1955, with the FRG's entry into NATO, Britain and the FRG became formal allies. In the same year, the British responded to the USSR-granted GDR sovereignty and the FRG's Hallstein Doctrine by officially reaffirming its support for the FRG.³⁴ In 1961, Britain embarked on entering the EEC. This increased Britain's reliance on the FRG, especially considering de Gaulle's vetoes of the British applications in 1963 and 1967. Immediately following the Berlin Wall's erection, Britain stood alongside the rest of the NATO world, imposing Allied Travel Office (ATO) travel restrictions on GDR citizens and forbidding the GDR's political presence in NATO countries. Despite the normalisation of its relations with the GDR after 1973, Britain's political and ideological antipathy towards socialism remained unchanged.

However, beneath the surface of support for the FRG and its condemnation of the GDR on the international stage, Britain, in fact, had its own agenda that largely contradicted what it publicly declared. Unlike the US, whose strong international power and geopolitical remoteness from the GDR meant it had little interest in developing relations with the GDR, Britain believed a tactical manipulation of GDR-British relations would help secure its position in the European capitalist world. While falling from its global position after World War II, Britain held on to its ambition to sustain the leading role in western Europe. If Cold War international politics, as Ken Aldred and Martin Smith observe, 'placed Europe in the middle

³³ Arnd Bauerkämper, 'It took three to tango, the role of the Federal Republic of Germany in the relationship between Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990', in Stefan Berger & Norman LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations* (Augsburg, 2005), p. 45.

³⁴ Hoff, 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Großbritannien', pp. 267-68.

of the US-USSR stand-off',³⁵ then, in the eyes of Britain, its place in this stand-off would be between the US and capitalist continental Europe. When the war ended, Britain enjoyed a high international reputation as a key anti-fascist power. But the war had battered the nation's economy, dragging it close to bankruptcy. Despite receiving a massive loan from its American ally for recovery, Britain did not only experience slower economic growth than France and the FRG did in the 1950s, but its currency's world ranking was also challenged.³⁶ Moreover, the process of de-colonisation, the Suez crisis, followed by Britain's decision to apply for EEC membership, indicated its declining global status.³⁷ Facing all these developments and conscious of its lack of 'hard power' to compete with the USSR, Britain hoped to secure its leading role in the European capitalist world.

In the mind of the British political authorities, the GDR as an international power would potentially promote Britain's international agendas. One underlying reason was that the British government considered the GDR's existence would impede the FRG's rise as a global power, which would assist Britain in securing its leading role in capitalist Europe. As Anne Deighton notes, the fear that German reunification would threaten world peace and challenge Britain's international standing led the British political authorities to hope for a continuous division of Germany. The British anxiety about the FRG's revitalisation notably increased in the 1950s, the period when Britain experienced rather slow economic growth in contrast to the 'economic miracle' achieved by the FRG.³⁸ Thus, Britain considered the GDR's *de facto* existence helpful in hindering the FRG's global power.

France was another concern for the British. The closeness between the French and FRG governments and the development of Franco-GDR unofficial relations during the non-recognition era worried the British political authorities. Apart from the rising FRG, France was

³⁵ Ken Aldred & Martin Smith, *Superpowers in the Post-Cold War Era* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. vii.

³⁶ Anne Deighton, 'British-West German relations, 1945-1972', in Larres & Meehan (eds.), *Uneasy Allies*, pp. 31-32.

³⁷ David McCourt, *Britain and World Power since 1945: Constructing a Nation's Role in International Politics* (Ann Arbor, 2014), pp. 2-3.

³⁸ Deighton, 'British-West German relations', pp. 32-34.

also seen by Britain as a key competitor in its pursuit of hegemony in capitalist Europe. To be sure, Britain's special relationship with the US³⁹ and its performance in politics and economy appeared to put Britain in an advantageous position above France. Nonetheless, France had its own advantages that Britain lacked. As Deighton puts it, France's relationship with the FRG at the governmental level was 'the most trumpeted European bilateral relationship' during the GDR's non-recognition era due to France's active involvement in the FRG's rehabilitation project and its role as a critical stakeholder in the EEC.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, given its strong communist community, France was also ahead of Britain in developing intensive non-governmental links with the GDR.⁴¹ Britain, unwilling to be left behind by France in this regard, valued the GDR as an international factor for retaining its leadership in capitalist Europe.

Apart from framing the GDR within the context of the British outlook on Western Europe, Britain was also, to some degree, in need of the GDR to expand and deepen UK-USSR links, especially during the non-recognition era. As Arnd Bauerkämper points out, as the Cold War developed towards the early 1960s, British political authorities tended to view the Hallstein Doctrine as impeding Britain's global development. Thus, voices in favour of the GDR's recognition, either *de facto* or *de jure*, grew inside the Eden and Macmillan governments. In addition, the noticeable progress of GDR-UK trade relations in the 1960s suggested to the British government a profitable GDR market.⁴² Thus, given the overlap in some respects of their national interests, the GDR and Britain viewed each other as 'friendly enemies' according to Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte.⁴³

Section II: Literature review

³⁹ Jim Buller & Charlie Jeffery, 'Britain, Germany, and the deepening of Europe: the role of domestic norms and institutions', in Larres & Meehan (eds.), *Uneasy Allies*, p. 134.

⁴⁰ According to Deighton, Franco-FRG relations worsened in 1954 and 1966. See Deighton, 'British-West German relations', p. 35.

⁴¹ Stefan Berger & Norman LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990* (New York, 2010), p. 322-23.

⁴² Bauerkämper, 'It took three to tango', p. 46.

⁴³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 301.

Although decoding the complexities and contradictions of GDR society through social-cultural history has been well acknowledged by the existing scholarship, research on German classical music heritage is a relatively new research area. This is particularly the case when comparing research in this area with that on other artistic and cultural practices such as literature, jazz, popular and rock music.⁴⁴ Several factors explain this. The first factor is the view that classical music is always imagined to be the 'other' against which the more exciting 'modern' musical developments rebels in assessing different voices in GDR society. As GDR dissenting culture is highly relevant to the scholarly assessment of popular opinion in conceptualising the state-people relations in the GDR, GDR literature, popular, and rock music offered ample sources of 'different voices'.⁴⁵ In contrast, German classical music heritage, having often been viewed as conservative, less revolutionary, and often in tune with the Party line, did not appear to be highly involved in the GDR dissenting scene. The second reason is that due to the post-*Wende* trend of devaluing the aesthetic value of GDR artistic products endorsed by the SED, these products did not appear to attract much scholarly attention. As Elaine Kelly and Amy Wlodarski point out, in the immediate years after the *Wende*, that the GDR was a communist state permitted a somewhat unjustified generalisation of its artistic culture. This generalisation held that all East German artistic works of this kind were unfortunate outcomes of the SED's 'monolithic' and 'totalitarian' cultural politics.⁴⁶ A result of such generalisation is that the heritage was viewed as a merely top-down construct, which underestimates the research

⁴⁴ Regarding scholarly research in the non-classical music fields, see for instance, David Robb, 'Censorship, dissent and the metaphorical language of GDR rock', in Ewa Mazierska (ed.), *Popular Music in Eastern Europe: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm* (London, 2016), pp. 109-28; Georg Mass & Hartmut Reszel, 'Whatever happened to...: the decline and renaissance of rock in the former GDR', *Popular Music*, 17.3 (1998), pp. 267-77; Jeff Hayton, 'Crosstown traffic: 'punk rock, space and the porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s', *Contemporary European History*, 26.2 (2017), pp. 353-77; Edward Larkey, 'GDR rock goes West: finding a voice in the West German market', *German Politics and Society*, 23.4 (2005), pp. 45-68; Jeff Hayton, 'Härte gegen Punk: popular music, western media, and state response in the German Democratic Republic', *German History*, 31.4 (2013), pp. 523-49; Jeff Hayton, 'Crosstown traffic: punk rock, space and the porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s', *Contemporary European History*, 26.2 (2017), pp. 353-77; Toby Thacker, 'The fifth column: dance music in the early German Democratic Republic', in Patrick Major & Jonathan Osmond (eds.), *The Workers' and Peasants' State: Communism and Society in East Germany under Ulbricht, 1945-1971* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 227-43; David Tompkins, 'Against "pop-song poison" from the West: early Cold War attempts to develop a socialist popular music in Poland and the GDR', in William Risch (ed.), *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc: Youth Culture, Music and the State in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Lanham, 2015), pp. 43-54; Sven Kube, 'Music trade in the slipstream of cultural diplomacy: western rock and pop in a fenced-in record market', in Mario Dunkel & Sina Nitzsche (eds.), *Popular Music and Public Diplomacy: Transnational and Transdisciplinary Perspectives* (Bielefeld, 2018), pp. 197-208.

⁴⁵ See footnote 44.

⁴⁶ Elaine Kelly & Amy Wlodarski, 'Introduction', in Elaine Kelly & Amy Wlodarski (eds.), *Art Outside the Lines: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture* (Amsterdam & New York, 2011), p. 3.

value of the heritage from a bottom-up perspective. The third reason is that the heritage's research value for accessing GDR society from a top-down perspective appeared to decrease in parallel with the growth of the relatively diverse GDR music scene after the GDR's middle decades. Particularly after Honecker came to power, his promise to satisfy the population's diverse cultural needs, to some extent, demoted German classical music heritage's privileged status in the SED's cultural work (*Kulturarbeit*). Influenced by all these reasons, the relevance of German classical music heritage in interpreting GDR society has not attracted as much scholarly attention as literature, popular and rock music.

Beginning from the early 2010s, German classical music heritage's research value in decoding the complexities and contradictions of GDR society attracted the attention from scholars. there has been a rise in scholars' efforts to evaluate the complexities and contradictions of GDR society by concentrating on German classical music heritage. Given that this heritage served as a tool of the SED for power legitimisation and consolidation, there are some relatively well-established research areas in relation to the relevance of the classical music heritage in understanding GDR social-cultural history: the SED's *Kultur* myth-building project (e.g., Alan Nothnagle⁴⁷), state-endorsed cultural appropriation of past musical luminaries,⁴⁸ commemorations, and anniversaries⁴⁹. At the same time, some newly developed research areas worth particular attention have emerged. Kelly and Wlodarski's 2011 edited volume *Art Outside the Lines: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture* and Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell's 2015 edited volume *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic: Production and Reception* are particularly innovative. For instance, Matthias Tischer unveils the complexity of

⁴⁷ Alan Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989* (Ann Arbor, 1999), pp. 39-92.

⁴⁸ See for instance, Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*; Toby Thacker, "'Renovating" Bach and Handel: new musical biographies in the German Democratic Republic', in Jolanta Pekacz (ed.), *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms* (London & New York, 2006), pp. 17-42; Nicholas Baumgartner, 'Currents in Bach interpretation in contemporary Germany', *Bach*, 30.2 (1999), pp. 1-26; David Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870-1989* (New Haven & London, 1996), pp. 175-204; Andrew Demshuk, 'A mausoleum for Bach? Holy relics and urban planning in early communist Leipzig, 1945-1950', *History and Memory*, 28.2 (2016), pp. 47-88.

⁴⁹ See for instance, David Zell, *Major Cultural Commemoration and the Construction of National Identity in the GDR* (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2017); Beth Snyder, 'Once misjudged and banned: promoting the musical heritage in the GDR and discourse surrounding the 1959 Felix Mendelssohn Festwoche', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 16.2 (2019), pp. 319-52; Joy Calico, "'Jüdische Chronik": the third space of commemoration between East and West Germany', *Musical Quarterly*, 88.1 (2005), pp. 95-122.

GDR musical life by adopting Foucault's discourse theory.⁵⁰ Joy Calico addresses two influential GDR directing schools, i.e., Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre (*episches Theater*) and Walter Felsenstein's realistic music theatre (*realistische Musiktheater*), presenting their relevance to their contemporary western and post-*Wende* stage.⁵¹ Nina Noeske and Laura Silverberg draw on gender discourse in GDR music history and alternative voices in musical institutions, respectively.⁵² Finally, in her article on GDR musical life, Tatjana Böhme-Mehner considers the factors of provincialism and administrative structure.⁵³

More recently, scholars have tended to approach GDR complexities from a transnational cultural perspective. Over the last two decades, studies of Cold War international relations have expanded from traditional perspectives of high politics to trans-bloc cultural and everyday interactions and from a US-USSR focus to consideration of the 'periphery' states. In 1989, Joseph Nye coined the term soft power to describe 'one's ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants' by using non-coercive methods in international politics. According to Nye's categorisation, soft power indicates resources which can help a country to achieve its foreign agenda by using its intangible attractions and persuasion, including culture, political values and policies. Throughout the Cold War era, political authorities from each bloc wielded their soft power on the other side to promote their international agendas.⁵⁴ As an important soft power resource, culture was heavily exploited by political authorities from each bloc to advance their political agendas on the international stage. Accordingly, the study of the Cultural Cold War has increasingly attracted considerable scholarly attention since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Simo Mikkonen, Jari

⁵⁰ Matthias Tischer, 'Music and discourse', in Kelly & Wlodarski (eds.), *Art Outside the Line*, pp. 155-73.

⁵¹ Calico, 'The legacy of GDR directors on the post-*Wende* opera stage', in *ibid.*, pp. 131-54.

⁵² Nina Noeske, 'Gender discourse and musical life in the GDR', in *ibid.*, pp. 175-91; Laura Silverberg, "'Monopol der Diskussion?': alternative voices in the Verband Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler", in *Art Outside the Line*, pp. 193-211. Regarding more scholarly works on the heritage and gender, see for instance, Johanna Yunker, 'Marxism and feminism in Ruth Berghaus's staging of *Don Giovanni*', in Kyle Frackman & Larson Powell (eds.), *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic: Production and Reception* (Rochester & New York, 2015), pp. 119-34; Johanna Yunker, *Socialism and Feminism in East German Opera: The Cases of Director Ruth Berghaus and Composer Ruth Zechlin* (PhD thesis, Stanford University, 2012).

⁵³ Tatjana Böhme-Mehner, 'Provincialism, modernity, and the classical heritage: the administrative structure of the GDR and the situation of music production', in Frackman & Powell (eds.), *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 20-33.

⁵⁴ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004), pp. 2, 5-6, 10-11; Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft power: the evolution of a concept', *Journal of Political Power*, 14.1 (2021), pp. 199, 202.

Parkkinen, and Giles Scott-Smith noted that the Cultural Cold War expands Cold War studies from the traditional political perspectives (i.e., foreign policy, national and international security), to 'the arts, everyday life, education, and social activities'.⁵⁵

Given the two superpowers' pivotal role in influencing Cold War international politics, the study of the Cultural Cold War has been directed heavily towards the US-USSR axis.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as recent scholarship has increasingly noticed, it is also essential to take a pericentric perspective, evaluating the 'cooperative and multilateral developments' of Cold War politics through tracing the interactions between 'periphery' states.⁵⁷ As Kelly suggests, recent scholarship unveils that rather than following the dictates from superpowers, Cold War periphery states played their own roles on the international stage.⁵⁸

Despite the GDR's active participation in the Cultural Cold War having long been overshadowed by the roles of the US and USSR, the significance of German classical music heritage in the SED's policymaking directed at the international world has been recognised by scholars.⁵⁹ Most existing scholarly works on the GDR-western bloc's classical music diplomacy focus on the two German states' competition towards cultural supremacy.⁶⁰ Recently, following the pericentric perspective trend, there has been a steady increase in scholarly

⁵⁵ Simo Mikkonen, Jari Parkkinen & Giles Scott-Smith, 'Exploring culture in and of the Cold War', in Simo Mikkonen, Giles Scott-Smith, Jari Parkkinen (eds.), *Entangled East and West: Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War* (Berlin & Boston, 2019), p. 2.

⁵⁶ There is a proliferation of scholarly works on the Cultural Cold War between the US and the USSR. See for instance, Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, 1997); Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Berkeley, 2015).

⁵⁷ Tony Smith, 'New bottles for new wine: a pericentric framework for the study of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 24.4 (2000), pp. 568-69; Elaine Kelly, 'Performing diplomatic relations: music and East German foreign policy in the Middle East during the late 1960s' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 72.2 (2019), pp. 494-95; Mikkonen, Parkkinen, & Scott-Smith, 'Exploring culture in and of the Cold War', p. 1. See also, David Engerman, 'The Second World's Third World', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 12.1 (2011), pp. 183-211; Theodora Dragostinova, *The Cold War from the Margins: A Small Socialist State on the Global Cultural Scene* (Ithaca & London, 2021).

⁵⁸ Kelly, 'Performing diplomatic relations', p. 495.

⁵⁹ See for example, David Cauter, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford, 2005); Emily Ansari, *The Sound of a Superpower: Musical Americanism and the Cold War* (Oxford & New York, 2018). Clayton Koppes, 'The real ambassadors? The Cleveland Orchestra tours the Soviet Union, 1965', in Simo Mikkonen & Pekka Suutari (eds.), *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War* (London & New York, 2016), pp. 69-87; Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945-1958* (Ithaca & London, 2015).

⁶⁰ See for example, Elizabeth Janik, *Recomposing German Music: Politics and Musical Tradition in Cold War Berlin* (Leiden, 2005).

research on the GDR's cultural, trading, and sporting interactions with the opposite bloc.⁶¹ In the realm of German classical music heritage specifically, scholars have tended to divert their focus from the role of the heritage in the two German states' relations to broader geographic areas and topics. Kelly, for instance, takes a pericentric perspective, assessing the SED's utilisation of Western art music for promoting the GDR's foreign policy in the Middle East in the late 1960s⁶². Focusing on the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (LGO)'s services in cultural diplomacy, Jonathan Yaeger considers the touring intelligentsia's use of their artistic talent and international reputation as bargaining chips to negotiate with the SED for a better salary rate.⁶³ Sven Kube looks at how the SED attempted to realise the commercial potential of the GDR recording industry in trading with the western bloc.⁶⁴ It is worth noting that while acknowledging the SED's initiatives and efforts to manipulate these trans-bloc classical music exchanges, these recent scholarly works also consider non-state social actors' role in promoting and navigating the exchange for their advantages. In doing so, their works help decode the complexities of state-people relations in the GDR.

The existing scholarly works provide important insights into cultural practices of German classical music heritage in the GDR and abroad. Recent works, in particular, prove that the SED government did not monopolise these practices despite its efforts to do so. Rather, these practices overlapped with conflicts and compromise, negotiation, and cooperation between all involved domestic and international social actors. At the same time, it is worth noting the following aspects specifically:

1) German classical music heritage in trans-bloc mobility: the porous Iron Curtain

⁶¹ See for instance, Heather Dichter, "'A game of political ice hockey': NATO restrictions on East German sport travel in the aftermath of the Berlin Wall', in Heather Dichter & Andrew Johns (eds.), *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington, 2014), pp. 19-52; James Smith, 'Brecht, the Berliner Ensemble, and the British government', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 22.4 (2006), pp. 307-23; John Bull, 'Trumpets and drums in the night: the 1956 Berliner Ensemble season in London and its aftermath', in Rudolf Weiss, Ludwig Schnauder & Dieter Fuchs (eds.), *Anglo-German Theatrical Exchange: 'A Sea-change into Something Rich and Strange?'* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 43-65; Stephen Wagg & David Andrews (eds.), *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War* (London, 2007); Larres, 'Britain and the GDR' pp. 63-89.

⁶² Kelly, 'Performing diplomatic relations', pp. 493-540.

⁶³ Jonathan Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the wages of diplomatic service', in Rebekah Ahrendt, Mark Ferraguto & Damien Mahiet (eds.), *Music and Diplomacy: From the Early Modern Era to the Present* (New York, 2014), pp. 68-82.

⁶⁴ Kube, 'Music trade in the slipstream of cultural diplomacy', pp. 197-208.

Recent research on the GDR's classical music interactions with the western bloc has debunked the traditional perception which viewed the Iron Curtain as impermeable. As scholars such as Mikkonen, Parkkinen, Scott-Smith and Gordon Johnston suggest, within the larger framework of Cold War East-West interactions, 'the Iron Curtain was more porous than was initially thought' through looking at non-state actors and periphery states.⁶⁵ The GDR's classical music diplomacy with Britain is a case in point. German classical music exchanges have been mentioned in many scholarly works on GDR-British relations. Particularly in the recent decade, there has been a rise in assessing the role of some prominent musical personalities in GDR-British cultural diplomacy, along with the GDR operatic exports to Britain during the post-recognition era. For instance, Toby Thacker's research deals with Ernst Hermann Meyer's efforts in promoting musical exchange centring around J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel, along with the Cold War musical personalities influential in the exchange (e.g., Georg Knepler, Percy Young, and British communist composer Alan Bush).⁶⁶ Yaeger's research on the LGO's diplomatic services for the GDR offers insights into the interplay between the SED and British policymakers on GDR cultural diplomacy.⁶⁷ In addition, Tom Sutcliffe evaluates several GDR-British operatic collaborations featuring Wagnerian repertoire directed by East German directors Ruth Berghaus and Joachim Herz.⁶⁸

2) The complexity of the relations between state power and the musical intelligentsia

⁶⁵ Mikkonen, Parkkinen, Scott-Smith, 'Exploring culture in and of the Cold War', p. 6. See also, Idesbald Goddeeris (ed.), *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982* (Lanham, 2010), Annette Vowinckel, Marcus Payk & Thomas Lindenberger (eds.), *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York, 2012); Simo Mikkonen & Pia Koivunen (eds.), *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York, 2015); Cauter, *The Dancer Defects*; Sarah Davies, 'From Iron Curtain to Velvet Curtain? Peter Brook's *Hamlet* and the origins of British-Soviet cultural relations during the Cold War', *Contemporary European History*, 27.4 (2018), pp. 601-26.

⁶⁶ Toby Thacker, "'Something different from the Hampstead perspective': an outline of selected musical transactions between Britain and the GDR", in Berger & LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany*, pp. 211-24. See also Julie Waters, 'Alan Bush, the *Byron Symphony* and the German Democratic Republic: a Cold War musical collaboration', *Musicology Australia*, 33.2 (2011), pp. 201-11; and Julie Waters, 'Marxists, manifestos, and "musical uproar": Alan Bush, the 1948 Prague Congress, and the British Composers' Guild', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 30 1 (2011), pp. 23-45.

⁶⁷ Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the wages of diplomatic service', pp. 68-82.

⁶⁸ Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (London, 1996), pp. 125-64, 355-76.

Different from the traditional assumption which viewed the musical intelligentsia who got involved in the GDR's German classical music heritage practices as mere conveyors of Party-mindedness, recent research has unveiled a much more complicated and ambiguous role of the intelligentsia. As Tischer remarks, the musical intelligentsia had, rather than being 'for and against', more ambiguous relations with the regime in GDR music life.⁶⁹ Describing them as 'uncomfortable comrades', Fulbrook demonstrates that the SED relied on the cultural intelligentsia's intellectual input for socialist construction and stabilisation while fearing such reliance would turn into their empowerment undermining the SED's governing authority. Thus, the group of the cultural intelligentsia supports Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' argument.⁷⁰ This 'participatory' element is manifested in various scholars' research into GDR musical life. For instance, Silverberg debunks the presumption of the musical intelligentsia's marginal position in GDR musical life policymaking by providing the case study of the Association of Composers and Musicologists of the GDR (*Verband der Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler der DDR, VKM*).⁷¹ David Tompkins relates Fulbrook's argument to his research on concert life in the early GDR years by tracing the interactions between the central government, regional and local cultural functionaries, state-owned concert agencies, private concert organisers, musicians and the general concertgoers. He argues that despite the central SED authorities' efforts to dominate the practices of concert life nationwide, such aspiration was never fully realised. He attributes the reasons to the Party's weakness and other social actors' exercise of *Eigensinn*.⁷²

Aside from looking at the intelligentsia's role in shaping the practices of German classical music heritage, some scholars trace how these practices affected the intelligentsia. For example, scholars such as Yaeger emphasise the exceptionally privileged status some leading East German musical institutions and talents enjoyed in the SED's cultural politics. Within the context of GDR socialism, their privileges included not only the discernible (e.g., generous governmental funding, highly celebrated social status in GDR public life) but also the

⁶⁹ Tischer, 'Music and discourse', p. 157.

⁷⁰ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 241-45.

⁷¹ Silverberg, "'Monopol der Diskussion?'" p. 193-211.

⁷² David Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity, concerts for the masses and the shaping of East German society', *German History*, 30.3 (2012), pp. 412-13, 427.

undisclosed (e.g., relative artistic, administrative and travel freedom) for the realisation of their *Eigensinn*.⁷³ The musical intelligentsia's use of their artistic talent to bargain with the SED for their advantages is more widely addressed in Thomas Zintl's 2009 documentary *Classical Music and Cold War: Musicians in the GDR*. Many interviewed East German musicians, including Peter Schreier and Kurt Masur, mention that being aware of their economic and cultural value to the SED, they negotiated with the political authorities to gain more transnational artistic commitments and increase their salary rates.⁷⁴

3) GDR music heritage productions: their 'adventurousness'

Given the SED's rather conservative 'classical realist aesthetic' and its endeavours to use the art for nation-building, GDR artistic productions pertaining to German classical music heritage were often viewed as currying favour with the official GDR rhetoric, thus possessing minimal aesthetic value outside the context of GDR socialism. Scholars such as Kelly and Calico challenge such a view in their research. In her assessment of the socialist canon of German Romanticism in the late GDR, Kelly shows that it served as a site for artists' articulation of dissenting opinions.⁷⁵ Concentrating on East German operatic productions, Calico re-evaluates the two GDR theatrical principles: Felsenstein's 'realistic music theatre (*realistisches Musiktheater*)' and Brecht's 'epic theatre (*episches Theater*)', along with the second generation of East German directors who were under the influence of these two principles. In investigating the two principles' relationship with the state-imposed socialist realism, the directors' artistic interactions with their western contemporaries, and the principles' influence over the post-*Wende* stage, Calico demonstrates the GDR opera productions' clear contemporary relevance and influential role in the 21st-century operatic world.⁷⁶

There is now a considerable literature on decoding GDR society through German classical

⁷³ Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the wages of diplomatic service', pp. 68-82; Jonathan Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany, 1970-1990* (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2013).

⁷⁴ Thomas Zintl (dir.), *Classical Music and Cold War: Musicians in the GDR* (Arthaus Musik, 2009).

⁷⁵ Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Calico, 'The legacy of GDR directors on the post-*Wende* stage', pp. 131-54.

music heritage. My thesis addresses particular issues which have not been adequately covered. Firstly, I have chosen the Honecker period as my research focus. As is pointed out by Kelly in her book published in 2014, regarding German classical music heritage, the existing scholarly works have focused intensively on the early decades of the GDR.⁷⁷ By contrast, the late GDR era did not attract much scholarly attention.⁷⁸ Secondly, I focus on GDR-British classical music interactions during *détente*. Similar to the reasons for scholars' lack of enthusiasm for the classical music heritage in the GDR, research on the GDR-British classical music interactions is overshadowed by works on other exchanges (e. g., popular and rock music,⁷⁹ theatre,⁸⁰ church⁸¹ and sports exchanges⁸²). Thirdly, I consider how the classical music intelligentsia's trans-bloc mobility influenced their relations with the SED. Admittedly, this topic, to a varying extent, is addressed by scholars such as Esther von Richthofen,⁸³ Fulbrook, Tischer, Yaeger and Kube. However, the diverse emotions and behaviour patterns of the intelligentsia's discontent and disaffection towards the official SED rhetoric, particularly relating to the intelligentsia's trans-bloc mobility, are much neglected by scholars.⁸⁴ Fourthly, I choose a non-Wagnerian opera as a case study for investigating GDR operatic production and GDR-British cultural exchange. The existing literature focuses heavily on Wagner's operas in GDR socialism as far as the classical opera repertoire is concerned.⁸⁵ Understandably, the

⁷⁷ Regarding scholarly works on German classical music heritage in the early GDR era, see for instance, David Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (West Lafayette, 2013); Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', pp. 412-28; Daniel Zur Weihen, *Komponieren in der DDR: Institutionen, Organisationen und die erste Komponistengeneration bis 1961* (Cologne, 1999).

⁷⁸ Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, p. 22.

⁷⁹ See footnote 44.

⁸⁰ See for instance, Smith, 'Brecht', pp. 307-23.

⁸¹ See for instance, Merrilyn Thomas, *Anglo/GDR Relations and the Role of Christian Idealism in Cold War Politics, 1961-1965: A Case Study of the Coventry/Dresden project* (PhD thesis, University College London, 2002).

⁸² Nicole Sparwasser, *The Image of the German Democratic Republic in the British Press 1972-1989* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2016), pp. 224-56.

⁸³ Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses*.

⁸⁴ It is worth noting that the existing scholarship on the cultural intelligentsia's dissenting voices and *Republikflucht* has heavily directed towards GDR writers, popular and rock musicians. See for instance, Laura Bradley, *Cooperation and Conflict: GDR Theatre Censorship, 1961-1989* (Oxford, 2010); Robb, 'Censorship', pp. 109-28.

⁸⁵ See for instance, Elaine Kelly, 'Art as utopia: *Parsifal* and the East German left', *Opera Quarterly*, 30. 2-3 (2014), pp. 246-66; Elaine Kelly, 'Realism and artifice: innovation, Wagner's *Ring*, and theatre practice in the German Democratic Republic', in Esti Sheinberg (ed.), *Music Semiotics: A Network of Significations in Honour and Memory of Raymond Monelle* (London & New York, 2012), pp. 197-210; Joy Calico, 'Wagner in East Germany: Joachim Herz's *The Flying Dutchman* (1964)', in Jeongwon Joe & Sander Gilman (eds.), *Wagner & Cinema* (Bloomington, 2010), pp. 294-311; Patrick Carnegie, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre* (New Haven & London, 2006), pp. 310-353; Marion Benz, *Die Wagner-Inszenierungen von Joachim Herz. Studie zur theatralen*

composer's infamous antisemitism, his posthumous association with National Socialism, and his influential role in German and western music history made him crucially significant for assessing music and politics in the GDR. Yet, this does not indicate that the GDR directors' interpretation of other classical operas possesses minimal research value. Fifthly, I present the case study of German classical music heritage during Berlin's 750th founding anniversary in 1987. Festivals, anniversaries, and commemorations are not newly developed research areas for scholars to decode GDR society. However, there is little research on German classical music heritage practices in the state anniversary events in late GDR socialism from a trans-bloc perspective. Lastly, I specifically trace the interactions between the top decision-makers and the rest of the social actors, i.e., institutions, individuals and the public, particularly regarding these social actors' role in the process of GDR-British classical music exchange. The reason is that this less-researched area offers an excellent arena in decoding the complexities and contradictions of GDR society, thus debunking the bi-polar 'top-down'/bottom-up' understanding of GDR socialism.

Section III: Research methods

Conceptual approaches

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this research topic, this thesis draws on social, political and cultural history and adopts sociological and musicological approaches. As this thesis supports Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' conceptualisation, understanding social relations remains a key aspect of the research. Drawing methodological inspiration from scholars such as Fulbrook and Tompkins regarding the network of actors, the thesis adopts both top-down and bottom-up approaches to present the conflicts and cooperation, negotiation and compromise between actors involved. Importantly, the research utilises the concepts of *Eigensinn* and 'hidden transcripts' in investigating the range of emotions and behaviour patterns of non-governmental actors' responses to the SED mandate. In addition, the thesis borrows Albert Hirschman's model of 'exit and voice' in evaluating the musical

Wagner-Rezeption in der DDR (PhD thesis, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1998).

intelligentsia's involvement in the Republikflucht and the GDR dissenting episodes.⁸⁶ At the same time, this thesis also borrows concepts from the political sciences, applying ideas of soft power (Nye), national identity building, and Cold War international politics to the discussion. In addition, the concepts of the GDR *Kultur* myth, the official GDR cultural doctrine –socialist realism– and the application of musicological and theatrical concepts, particularly the school of Walter Felsenstein's 'realistic music theatre' (*realistische Musiktheater*) are adopted and discussed in the thesis.

Choosing the subject: German classical music heritage

The term 'German classical music heritage' in the thesis is relational and loosely defined, encompassing a broad range of areas. It refers to both the music genre of Western art music and the cultural symbols and popular dissemination of Western art music (e.g., musical research and performing institutions, venues, events, publishing houses, radio and television). It is important to note that in the context of this thesis, the term classical music refers to music that was characterised by tonality and produced during the Common Practice Era (1650-1908). The reason for such clarification is that while it is relatively simple to distinguish classical music from the music of popular culture (e.g., jazz, popular and rock music), a precise definition of classical music is still under scholarly discussion. Based on different approaches within the field of musicology, media and cultural studies, western art music's definition differs.⁸⁷ While the research acknowledges that music works of the avant-garde, New Music, serious music written by modern composers, and the theatre on the avant-garde (e.g., Brecht) can also contribute to the classical music repertoire, they are not included in the thesis' research scope on German classical music heritage.

⁸⁶ Albert Hirschman, 'Exit, voice and the fate of the German Democratic Republic: an essay in conceptual history', *World Politics*, 45.2 (1993), pp. 173-202.

⁸⁷ Regarding scholarly discussion of western art music's definition, see for instance, Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (New York & Oxford, 2002), pp. 6; 22; Alison Latham (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Music* (London, 2002), pp. 253-64.

The paradoxes of 1971-1989

The thesis focuses primarily on the Honecker period (while also considering the Ulbricht era where necessary). The rationale for choosing the Honecker era is the following: first, as already mentioned, there is far less research addressing German classical music heritage under Honecker than Ulbricht. The second reason is the somewhat paradoxical situation that the SED was trapped under Honecker into what appears to offer an ideal site for exploring the complexities and contradictions revolving around the GDR's practices of German classical music heritage within a trans-bloc context. Factors contributing to the paradox were: (1) the Honecker government's demarcation (*Abgrenzung*) policy versus the GDR's ever-growing hard currency debt to the West. (2) The seemingly permanent presence of the Berlin Wall versus the increased East-West mobility in terms of people and information during the post-recognition period. (3) The Honecker government's promise and efforts to satisfy people's cultural and material demands versus the state's ailing economy. (4) The GDR's relative domestic stability after the 1953 Uprising versus the sudden and dramatic *Wende* on the night of 9 November 1989. Thus, an assessment of the GDR's cultural practices of German classical music heritage on both the domestic and international stages under Honecker is expected to provide an insight into the relative social stability, the fall and the collapse of the GDR.

Geographic approach: GDR cities, Britain and the factor of the FRG

The considerable quantity of available primary sources on the GDR's practices of German classical music heritage have limited myself to the following GDR cities: East Berlin and three towns in Saxony: Dresden, Leipzig, and Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt). The rationale for choosing them is as follows:

- **East Berlin:** the GDR's political and cultural centre. This municipal city was not only the place where the SED central government was seated, but was also at the very frontline of the East-West cultural competition throughout the Cold War era.

- **Leipzig and Dresden:** the GDR's musical towns and regional capitals of GDR districts (*Bezirke*) Leipzig and Dresden. Both of them were historically renowned for their highly developed musical tradition which was particularly associated with influential German composers such as Heinrich Schütz, J. S. Bach, Mendelssohn, and Wagner, and musical institutions, e.g., the Semperoper Dresden (SoD), the LGO, the Thomanerchor, and the Dresdner Kreuzchor. During the Cold War era, these two cities' German musical tradition continued to flourish with the SED's endorsement. In particular, some of these two cities' elite music performing institutions, such as the Staatskapelle Dresden (SkD) and the LGO, played a significant role in the GDR's cultural diplomacy with the western world. Starting from Monday Demonstrations in September 1989 in Leipzig, both cities saw big crowds of East Germans' participation in the 'Peaceful Revolution' leading to the *Wende*.
- **Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt):** an important GDR industrial centre and the capital of GDR district Karl-Marx-Stadt. The city was renamed after Karl Marx in 1953 after the replacement of *Länder* (states) by *Bezirke* (districts) in the GDR's administrative division in 1952. Its cityscape was re-designed during the GDR period to represent the ideal of a modern socialist town. Less known for its German classical music tradition than Dresden and Leipzig, though, Chemnitz had its regional opera house, concert venues and performing companies.

This thesis focuses on GDR-British relations to explore how the SED deployed German classical music heritage to achieve its foreign policies directed at the western bloc and the reception of such policies. The rationale for choosing Britain is: (1) to contribute to the currently less-developed research on GDR-British classical music diplomacy; (2) the research value to recent scholarship in examining the Cultural Cold War away from the US-USSR axis; (3) the important role of the heritage in GDR-British cultural relations; (4) Britain's tangible intervention in both German states after World War II. It is important to note here that as the thesis' central topic revolves around the GDR's domestic and international uses of the classical music heritage, the issues of how GDR-British interactions on the heritage influenced British society cannot be explored.

The thesis also addresses the SED's consideration of the FRG in its policymaking on German classical music heritage. The inclusion of this point in the thesis does not collide with the investigation into GDR-British relations. The following reasons explain why. First, as the existing literature has demonstrated, the FRG was crucially important for both the GDR and Britain's policymaking directed at each other. Second, as will be shown in the following chapters, the factor of the FRG played a significant role in the SED's domestic policymaking. Thus, this thesis assumes that, without referring to the FRG, an investigation into the domestic and international practices of the GDR's German classical music heritage would likely result in only a partial understanding of the research topic.

The use of primary sources

Selecting archival resources

This thesis is based on archival materials from governmental publications at the central and regional levels, cultural and musical organisations, newspapers and magazines, and television and radio programmes. It is worth noting that this research project uses 150 MfS documents related to musical elites and institutions in East Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, and Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt) from the Honecker period. Compared with the massive stock of MfS documents, the body of sources used for this research analysis may appear insignificant. Nevertheless, as these documents cover a wide range of areas (e.g., the SED's general policymaking, the MfS's selection and assessment of unofficial collaborators (*inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*, IMs), and the MfS records of individual musicians), an analysis of these documents while referring to existing literature can provide an insight into the complexities of governmental-intelligentsia relations and the inner contradictions of GDR socialism.

Three issues relating to the access and analysis of archival resources should be noted. First is the lack of primary documents regarding the opinions of East German concert and opera-

goers and the public. The shortage of unofficial documents showing the East German population's actual experiences of GDR musical life is an issue neither specific to this research nor has it not been registered by the existing scholarship. Kelly points out the phenomenon of a one-dimensional narrative in writing about GDR musical life resulting from the disproportionate quantity of government documents compared with unofficial sources.⁸⁸ In this research this is problematic when evaluating the public response to East Berlin's celebrations of Berlin's 750th anniversary and the East German audience's reception of Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978). Therefore, this thesis has had to analyse documents from the SED and cultural institutions critically in understanding the East German population's participation in shaping the GDR's German classical music heritage and the GDR-British cultural exchange

The second issue is the problem of understanding the East German musical intelligentsia's practices of *Eigensinn* and hidden transcripts through the intelligentsia's MfS records. These records provide a crucial resource in analysing how the intelligentsia negotiated with or 'deceived' the SED authorities in pursuing their own agendas. However, as the Stasi reported the intelligentsia's behaviour patterns through specific lens, MfS records should be analysed critically to understand the intelligentsia's expression of their *Eigensinn* and hidden transcripts.

The third issue is the access to primary documents relating to British regions, institutions and individuals due to the closure of some archives and the inconvenience of travel during the Covid-19 pandemic. I use archival resources (e.g., from the National Archives at Kew, the WNO in Cardiff, the Palace Green Library in Durham) and online newspaper and magazine resources to investigate the British involvement in the cultural exchange. While I believe that these resources offer sufficient materials for my investigation, I am also aware that the following documents stored at some institutions would have been potentially helpful: 1) the Sadler's Wells Theatre Archive held at Islington Local History Centre for understanding how the theatre

⁸⁸ Elaine Kelly, 'Reading the past in the German Democratic Republic: thoughts on writing histories of music', in Nina Noeske & Matthias Tischer (eds.), *Musikwissenschaft und Kalter Krieg: das Beispiel DDR* (Cologne, 2010), pp. 120-21.

negotiated with the British Council (BC) for an exchange programme with the KO in 1971;⁸⁹ 2) production records of the WNO at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth for more information about the opera company's staging of Joachim Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978);⁹⁰ 3) Alexander Roy Ballet theatre's performance documents at the Victoria and Albert Museum for this British ballet company's touring performances in East Berlin's celebrations of the 750th anniversary of Berlin.⁹¹ During the pandemic, I could not access all these materials due to the closure of these institutions and travel restrictions.

Issues with oral history interviews

I abandoned the initial project of conducting oral history interviews with classical musicians and audience members during my research. Oral histories were planned for addressing the topics of musicians' navigation of their relations with the SED (Chapter Three: People), the audience reception of Herz's *Madam Butterfly* and Berlin's 750th Anniversary in 1987 (Chapter Four: Artistic Productions & Chapter Five: Anniversaries). However, this project was abandoned after I conducted a few informal chats with potential interviewees. Instead, the thesis incorporates published interviews featuring the former East German intelligentsia. The rationale for not conducting oral history interviews in this research comes from mainly two reasons. First is the consideration that conducting oral history interviews would have overstretched my research time for this PhD project. Admittedly, given the lack of archival resources regarding the East German population's reception of German classical music heritage practices, undertaking oral history interviews might have been valuable. In order to have a better understanding of the population's attitude, both a quantitative survey and focused interviews are needed. However, based on my experience in identifying potential interviewees and conducting informal chats with them at the beginning of my PhD, I conclude

⁸⁹ Chapter II addresses the issue of the planned exchange programme between the Sadlers' Wells and the KO in 1971.

⁹⁰ Chapter IV addresses Herz's *Madam Butterfly* at the WNO.

⁹¹ Chapter V addresses Alexander Roy Ballet Theatre's visit to the anniversary celebrations in East Berlin in 1987.

that it was unrealistic to undertake an enterprise of oral history interviews within the timeframe of my PhD study.

Second is the concern that oral history would blur the line between fact and sentiment, thus weakening the accountability of this research. Richthofen highlights her wariness of people's GDR hindsight that developed during their post-*Wende* experiences, thus eliminating oral history interviews from her work.⁹² As will be shown in this thesis' conclusion chapter, immediately after German reunification, the federal government's reallocation of state funding in the arts tended to intensify some leading East German musical elites' rosy retrospection of their GDR experiences.⁹³ Their previously privileged social status and celebrated artistic products, the SED's generous funding for elite performing institutions, along with their uncertainty about their career in the reunified Germany, resulted in some musical elites' *Ostalgie*. Other musical elites, who believed that their artistic careers were hindered by the SED policies and advanced after the *Wende*, saw the GDR in a negative light. Thus, oral history interviews do not appear to have as great a reliability as archival sources.

I therefore have utilised published interviews of the involved musicians. Given that some former East German musicians, together with some leading orchestras, remained highly active on the post-*Wende* stage, there are documentaries, newspaper, radio and television programmes featuring their East German past.⁹⁴ The incorporation of these materials into my thesis brings the advantage that these interview materials foster a multi-dimensional narrative for understanding the musical intelligentsia's behaviour patterns before the *Wende*. For example, the problem of MfS records can be, to some extent, offset by the intelligentsia's recollections of their GDR past. In addition, as most of these interview materials feature those musicians who were internationally celebrated both before and after the *Wende*, the factor

⁹² Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses*, pp. 20-21.

⁹³ See for instance, Joachim Herz, 'Art and Revolution', *Opera Now* (July 1990), pp. 20-23; Joachim Herz, 'Victim of the Revolution', *Opera Now* (January 1991), p. 13.

⁹⁴ See for instance, Zintl (dir.), *Classical Music and Cold War*; Philip Kerr & Karen Leeder (presented), 'East and West Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall', *Proms Interval Talk* (20 August 2016), accessed via: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p046b9jt> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

of *Ostalgie* and the opposite sentiment is unlikely to play a significant role in influencing these musicians' narratives of their GDR experiences. Furthermore, for most musicians (e.g., Kurt Masur, Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, Götz Friedrich, Joachim Herz) featured in the interview materials, there are also MfS records used in this research. Considering both published interviews and MfS records on these musical figures helps improve the credibility of this research analysis of musicians' behaviour patterns under GDR socialism.

The Introduction has set the framework of the thesis research on German classical music heritage in the SED's domestic and international cultural politics. In general, it has presented how an investigation into all social actors' relationship with the heritage practices can contribute to Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' conceptualisation of GDR society. In the following chapters, this thesis will approach the relations from looking at various themes relating to the heritage practices. Chapter One and Two will concentrate on the general policymaking, presenting the SED's politics directed towards the heritage evolved as the result of the interplay between all social actors. Afterwards, Chapter Three, Four and Five will offer case studies with the themes of people, productions and anniversaries. Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion and an epilogue. Apart from summarizing the thesis, the latter will also touch upon the topic of how the heritage practices in the GDR contributed to the *Ostalgie* discourse after *Wende*.

CHAPTER ONE

The SED's German classical music heritage policy inside the GDR

The founding of the German Democratic Republic marks a decisive turning point in developing a peaceful and democratic culture. For the first time in German history, the conditions were in place for the visions of the great masters of sound to become a reality.⁹⁵

- Verband der Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler der DDR (VKM), 1974

Introduction

This chapter investigates SED policy with German classical music heritage in the GDR's domestic scene. The following issues will be traced throughout this chapter: why did the SED consider the heritage important for establishing and consolidating the Party's legitimacy among the East German populace? How did the domestic and international context influence Honecker's policymaking concerning the heritage? Finally, how did Honecker formulate and instrumentalise his German classical music heritage policy?

The central argument of this chapter is that while the SED endeavoured to dictate the heritage practices for the Party's political legitimacy, it collided, negotiated, and cooperated with other involved non-state actors. Meanwhile, it also had to consider both the domestic and international environment. Thus, within the construct of the GDR's top-down German classical music heritage policymaking, there were bottom-up and outside-inside elements. More specifically, this chapter makes the following claims regarding the Honecker era. Firstly, Honecker considered the development and revival of the heritage in the domestic GDR scene as significant for his cultural and economic demarcation policies. Secondly, in order to attract

⁹⁵ The original German text: 'Die Gründung der Deutschen Demokratische Republik kennzeichnet einen bedeutenden Wendepunkt in der Entwicklung einer friedlichen und demokratischen Kultur. In diesem Staat waren zum ersten Mal in der deutschen Geschichte die Voraussetzungen gegeben, die Visionen großer Meister der Tonkunst Tat werden zu lassen.' Berlin, Akademie der Künste (AdK), Verband der Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler der DDR (VKM), 55/01, 'Referat: zur außerordentlichen Delegiertenkonferenz 1974'.

the populace's loyalty to the greatest extent, Honecker's preservation and revitalisation of the heritage were in parallel with his accommodation of a rather diverse music scene within GDR socialism. Unlike Ulbricht, whose early years' promotion of the heritage was often accompanied by his denunciation of popular music culture (e.g., jazz, Anglo-American rock), Honecker adopted a relatively tolerant approach to different music genres. Third, while Honecker's attitude towards the GDR's musical scene was considerably relaxed, his aspiration to keep a grip on the practices of musical culture to consolidate the SED's governing legitimacy remained unchanged. In summation, this chapter argues that the formalisation and development of the SED's German classical music heritage policy was not a mere top-down process. Rather, it was influenced by the interactions between the government from above, the international environment, the cultural intelligentsia, and the East German populace.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents how German classical music heritage is linked inextricably with the SED's ruling legitimacy inside the GDR. It starts by demonstrating the rationale behind the SED's ambition to monopolise all cultural practices in the GDR. Subsequently, it shows why SED stressed the significance of German classical music heritage for GDR nation-building. The chapter then traces the SED's cultural endeavours in appropriating the heritage. The second section looks at Honecker's German classical music policymaking. Firstly, it considers Ulbricht's political legacy, the broader Cold War historical context, and the domestic GDR environment that influenced Honecker's agendas behind the heritage's policymaking. Secondly, it investigates how Honecker's responses to these influences were presented in his German classical music heritage policymaking.

The relevance of this chapter to the thesis comes from the following two aspects. First, it proves the SED's German classical music heritage policy as an outcome of a participatory dictatorship. Thus, this chapter deconstructs the merely 'top-down' conceptualisation of GDR society. Second is that it provides a context for the following chapters' exploration of the SED's policymaking on the heritage in the GDR's trans-bloc relations (Chapter Two), along with the case studies concerning the classical music intelligentsia, artistic productions, and anniversaries (Chapter Three, Chapter Four, Chapter Five).

Section I: German classical music and the SED's legitimacy to rule

Culture and politics in the GDR

In the mind of the SED, regulating the state's cultural practices was pivotal to the Party's ruling authority. The SED's rationale for this originated from at least two factors. One factor is that the SED believed its monopoly of cultural practices to be essential to the national identity-building project. Following Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as 'an imagined political community'⁹⁶, national identity can be understood as a human construct of consciousness which refers to the people's self-recognition of belonging to an imagined political community. In addition, noted by scholars such as Fulbrook and Anthony Smith, a national identity should be both collectively shared and individually acknowledged by people in a national community.⁹⁷ Moreover, owing to the features of (1) a specific territory, (2) shared common myths and historical past, (3) a shared public culture, (4) 'common legal rights and duties', and (5) 'a common economy with territorial mobility for members',⁹⁸ a national identity brings the functions of territory-defining, economic control, and legitimatising/delegitimising a ruling political power, along with tying up different social groups inside a national community.⁹⁹

The application of such features and functions to the GDR brought to the fore the challenging situation in which it was trapped. This process furthered an understanding of the SED's emphasis on steering the population's cultural practices. The GDR's foundation in 1949 did not merely symbolise a political turnaround in German history but also for German national identity. For the new-born state, issues regarding the construction and exercise of its national identity were by no means straightforward. The first issue is that, as a state which was built on defeat and was forged into existence by a foreign power for purely political reasons, the

⁹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York, 2006), p. 6.

⁹⁷ See for instance, Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 1; Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991), p. 4.

⁹⁸ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 4; David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford, 1997), 5.

⁹⁹ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 17.

GDR could neither inherit its national identity from the German historical past nor simply borrow the Soviet identity to bind together the population. The second issue is that, given that the SED government came to power under the auspices of Soviet power and not by public election, it needed a robust national identity to gain substantial visibility among the population. The third issue, which made the case of GDR national identity stand out from other Eastern European countries in the Soviet bloc, was the challenge from the FRG. Situated in the opposing Cold War camps, the two German states shared the same language, historical past, and culture before the *Stunde Null* (Zero hour). Since having the same ethnicity, shared history, public culture, language was crucial to the formation of a shared identity,¹⁰⁰ the FRG's existence haunted the GDR's national identity building. Thus, the SED endeavoured to create a socialist GDR cultural system and hold its grip on the state's cultural life.

Another factor is that the SED's preoccupation with the cultural field was linked closely with the SED's dependence on the GDR *Kultur* (culture) myth and the *Heimat* ideal for national identity-building for social control. The existing scholarship has addressed this field extensively. For instance, David Miller points out that all national identities are, to some extent, mythical.¹⁰¹ As Nothnagle notes, the GDR was not an exception. Core to the GDR's myth-building was its *Kultur* myth. As a powerful German concept which reached its culmination with the German cultural pessimists in the early twentieth century, *Kultur* was adopted and carefully crafted by the communist authorities for GDR myth-building since 1945. The SED's motive for doing this was, according to Nothnagle, the use of 'bourgeois *Kultur* as a stepping stone to a higher socialist *Kultur*' for the Party's power legitimisation and consolidation.¹⁰² In addition, as Palmowski suggests, the SED adopted the German tradition of *Heimat*, which 'expressed notions of community and belonging through a physical, geographical sense of place' in its construction of national identity.¹⁰³ Proclaiming the GDR to represent the second German Enlightenment, the SED characterised *Kultur* (culture) in the GDR as the heir to the German humanist heritage, the representative of 'the best of world culture', along with the

¹⁰⁰ Miller, *On National Identity*, pp. 10, 30; and Smith, *National Identity*, p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Miller, *On Nationality*, p. 35.

¹⁰² Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth*, pp. 39-41, 200.

¹⁰³ Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, pp. 3-4.

argument for making culture accessible to workers and peasants.¹⁰⁴ As Richthofen puts it, the SED-designated GDR cultural discourse was deeply embedded in:

- The Marxist-Leninist ideology of equipping the proletariat with ‘intellectual and cultural pursuits’ for their empowerment.¹⁰⁵
- The SED’s belief that culture, which ‘had to be rooted in the humanist tradition and in socialist realism’, had its educational function in imbuing the population with ‘socialist personalities’.
- The SED’s belief that culture can function as a ‘weapon’ for socialism’s fight against western capitalism, presenting socialism’s supremacy over class societies.
- The SED’s belief that the population’s engagement in cultural activities could indirectly boost their productivity in their working life.

Thus, in the state of ‘workers and peasants’, the SED was at pains to engage the population in state-organised cultural activities and intellectual pursuits, investing in building and renovating cultural facilities, and providing subsidised tickets for cultural events. In its endeavours to bring culture to the population and steer the state’s cultural life, the SED hoped to fulfil its social control by legitimatising and consolidating the Party’s rule.¹⁰⁶

Socialist realism as the GDR’s cultural doctrine

Lying at the heart of the SED musical policy was the doctrine of socialist realism based on the Soviet model. Promulgated by Joseph Stalin, Maxim Gorky and others in the early 1930s, socialist realism was elevated as the guiding principle of all cultural practices in the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc.¹⁰⁷As Calico and Marina Frolova-Walker put it, Stalin decreed the socialist realistic works to be ‘national in form and socialist in content’ and superior to all

¹⁰⁴ Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁰⁵ Regarding scholars’ research on Marx and culture, see for instance, Louis Dupré, ‘Marx’s critique of culture and its interpretations’, *Review of Metaphysics*, 34.1 (1980), pp. 91-121. Regarding Lenin’s view on culture, see for instance, Vladimir Lenin, ‘On Cooperation (6 January 1923)’, accessed via: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/06.htm>, and Lenin, ‘On Revolution (17 January 1923)’, accessed via: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/16.htm> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

¹⁰⁶ Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses*, pp. 3-7, 30.

¹⁰⁷ Heather Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism: Television and the Cold War in the German Democratic Republic* (Ann Arbor, 2014), p. 48.

bourgeois cultural and artistic products.¹⁰⁸ Although socialist realism was never clearly defined, in the most general terms, ‘the doctrine called for “a realist style” in works that portrayed socialism in a positive light, showing signs of progress for people under the Soviet state and celebrating revolutionary ideology and its heroes’.¹⁰⁹

Socialist realism was by no means a static doctrine when applied to assess music. As a highly politicised cultural doctrine without a clear and detailed definition, socialist realism evolved much in accordance with communist authorities’ political vision. Noted by Calico, lying at the core of socialist realism are the concepts of ‘ideological commitments’, ‘Party-mindedness’, and ‘national/popular spirit’. For communist authorities, the doctrine functioned as an ideal tool for manipulating cultural life to achieve political goals. The reason is that, as Calico further explains, the asymmetrical power sharing between Communist authorities and non-state actors endowed the authorities with the maximum powers to establish and adjust the parameters of socialist realist works according to their own will. In contrast, non-state actors had minimal power to challenge the parameters decreed by the authorities.¹¹⁰ Given that music is a non-visual art form, the parameters of socialist realism in music were particularly intractable.¹¹¹ Lenin and Stalin, for instance, with their ‘classical realist aesthetic’, had a rather conservative taste in classical music. Chiefly under their aesthetic influence, Western art music

¹⁰⁸ Joy Calico, “‘Für eine neue deutsche Nationaloper’”: opera in the discourses of unification and legitimation in the German Democratic Republic’, in Celia Applegate & Pamela Potter (eds.), *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago & London, 2002), p. 192; Marina Frovlova-Walker, “‘National in form, socialist in content’”: musical nation-building in the Soviet Republics’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 51.2 (1998), p. 331.

¹⁰⁹ J. Burkholder, Donald Grout & Claude Palisca (eds.), *A History of Western Music* (New York & London, 2010), p. 886. Regarding more scholarly definition of socialist realism, see for instance, Stephen Brockmann, ‘Resurrected from the ruins: the emergence of GDR culture’, in Karen Leeder (ed.), *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 46; Alexander Ivashkin, ‘Who’s afraid of socialist realism’, *Slavonic and East German Review*, 92.3 (2014), pp. 430-48; Richard King, ‘Cultural revolution’, in Stephen Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, pp. 546-49; Julie Waters, ‘Proselytizing the Prague Manifesto in Britain: the commissioning, conception, and musical language of Alan Bush’s “Nottingham” Symphony’, *Music & Politics*, 3.1 (2009), accessed via: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/proselytizing-the-prague-manifesto-in-britain.pdf?c=mp;idno=9460447.0003.102;format=pdf> (last accessed 09 August 2023); Kelly, ‘Communist nationalisms, internationalisms, and cosmopolitanisms: the case of the German Democratic Republic’, in Elaine Kelly, Markus Mantere & Derek Scott (eds.), *Confronting the National in the Music Past* (London & New York, 2018), p. 80.

¹¹⁰ Calico, “‘Für eine neue deutsche Nationaloper’”, pp. 192-93.

¹¹¹ Kyle Frackman & Larson Powell, ‘Introduction: music and heritage in the German Democratic Republic’, in Frackman & Powell (eds.), *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, p. 4.

from the Common Practice Period (1650-1908), the music that is characterised by the tonal system, was favourable among those dominant within the movement of socialist realism.¹¹²

In contrast, tonal music, those classical music works that were considered by the Soviet authorities dissonant, atonal, twelve-tone, or cacophonous did not fit into socialist realism. In Soviet political and cultural authorities' minds, musical works represented by the Second Viennese School and Igor Stravinsky, artistic movements such as futurism, impressionism, and constructivism were accused of alienating arts from the people, surrendering to capitalism and imperialism.¹¹³ Perhaps the most telling story illustrating how the rise and fall of artistic works were at the mercy of the Soviet leadership was the fate of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Composed by one of the state's most domestically and internationally celebrated composers – Dmitri Shostakovich, the opera failed to meet Stalin's aesthetic taste. In 1936, a *Pravda* statement which was supposed to be authored by Stalin, criticised the opera as an example of 'vulgar naturalism' and 'formalism'. This criticism resulted in a public ban on the opera on the Soviet stage in the following three decades.¹¹⁴ As Johanna Yunker shows, with the issue of the Zhdanov Decree and the Prague Manifesto in the 1940s, socialist realism furthered its influence on the making and interpretation of music across the eastern bloc. While artistic and cultural practitioners were encouraged by the doctrine to dedicate themselves to promoting socially engaged music through various styles, they were also required to conform to the Party line. In the following two decades, the doctrine equated formalism and modernism to western imperialism and capitalism, thus attacking musical works categorised into these groups.¹¹⁵ After a brief period of practising cultural pluralism in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany, the communist authorities followed Stalin's footsteps, elevating socialist realism to the official GDR cultural doctrine for directing and regulating all aspects of cultural life.

¹¹² Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, p. 8.

¹¹³ Robert Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama: das 'realistische Musiktheater' Walter Felsensteins* (Tübingen, 2002), pp. 56-57; Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ Calico, "'Für eine neue deutsche Nationaloper'", pp. 192-93.

¹¹⁵ Yunker, 'Socialism and feminism in East German opera', pp. 19-20.

Reconstructing German classical music heritage in GDR socialist realism

The SED's rationale behind heritage promotion

Like all the other aspects of GDR cultural life, the SED's German classical music heritage policy was essentially directed by socialist realism. The SED perceived that the preservation and revival of German classical music heritage within the framework of socialist realism was crucial for legitimising and consolidating the Party's political power. The SED's logic behind this can be explained in various ways. First, the SED viewed classical music education as an important catalyst for imposing 'socialist personalities' upon the population. As Celia Applegate notes, from the early nineteenth century onwards, owing to the advocacy of Carl Friedrich Zelter and his fellow German intellectuals (e.g., Goethe, Schiller, and Wilhelm von Humboldt), the value of 'serious' music for developing a cultivated person's education (*Bildung*) and nation-building (*Nationalbildung*) gained increasing favourability from the Prussian kings. Thus, music gained a central role in the state-patronised nation-building project.¹¹⁶ In terms of Soviet influence, Lenin did not specifically address the significance of classical music for developing socialist personalities. However, culture, for Lenin, indicated 'humanity's greatest artistic and scientific achievements,'¹¹⁷ thereby demonstrating his theoretical approval of classical music's educational function. In addition, there were also psychological and emotional elements. The general psychological impact and emotional feeling from listening to classical music, as both the composer Carl Zelter and the scholar Jessica Gienow-Hecht describe, generate people's sense of 'order, structure, and control, where each man found his place, and where out of cacophony, harmony was born', thus making one 'realise his/her complete existence and become nobler'.¹¹⁸ Such psychological and emotional impacts of classical music on people can find their expression in the aim of socialist education devised by the SED. As Richthofen points

¹¹⁶ Celia Applegate, 'What is German music? Reflections on the role of art in the creation of the nation', *German Studies Review*, 15 (1992), pp. 21-22, 25, 30; Celia Applegate, 'How German is it? Nationalism and the idea of serious music in the early nineteenth century', *19th-Century Music*, 21.3 (1998), pp. 292-95; Celia Applegate & Pamela Potter, 'Germans as the "people of music": genealogy of an identity', in Applegate & Potter (eds.), *Music and German National Identity*, pp. 6, 15-17.

¹¹⁷ Peter Kenez, 'Lenin's concept of culture', *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989), pp. 360-61.

¹¹⁸ Carl Zelter, 'Zweite Denkschrift (December 1803)', in Cornelia Schröder (ed.), *Carl Friedrich Zelter und die Akademie. Dokumente und Briefe zur Entstehung der Musik-Sektion in der Preußischen Akademie der Künste* (Berlin, 1959), p. 82; Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850-1920* (Chicago & London, 2009), p. 34.

out, the SED hoped that socialist education could foster East Germans' 'morally upright behaviours' and their willingness and efforts to 'lead a fulfilled and humanely dignified life'¹¹⁹. Therefore, as believed by the SED, adapting and incorporating classical music into socialist culture could transform East Germans into 'socialist personalities'.¹²⁰

The second issue is the SED's reliance on the heritage for claiming the GDR's cultural inheritance of historical Germany's humanist tradition for the purposes of legitimatising the GDR and delegitimising the FRG. In this regard, as noted by Silverberg, the SED's work on socialist music culture stood somewhat apart from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Throughout the GDR's existence, the SED made strenuous efforts to incorporate the GDR's preservation and development of German classical music heritage into East German music identity.¹²¹ From the seventeenth century onwards, Germany developed its musical culture by producing many luminaries, such as J. S. Bach, G. F. Handel, Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, along with many orchestras and musical groups of international renown, e.g. the Staatskapelle Dresden (SkD), the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (LGO), the Thomanchor, the Dresdner Kreuzchor. Given that the production and appreciation of classical music bore a significant cultural weight in German history, music has been reputed to be 'the most German of the arts'.¹²² The role of this heritage as the embodiment of German culture, furthered by the fact that some music towns and institutions from historical Germany were within the GDR border, made the SED consider exploiting the heritage's cultural capital for legitimatising the GDR and delegitimising the neighbouring FRG.

The third issue is the SED's consideration of German classical music heritage as a potent soft

¹¹⁹ Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses*, p. 4; Kanzlei des Staatsrates der DDR (ed.), *Materialien der 12. Sitzung der Volkskammer der DDR und das Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungswesen* (East Berlin, 1965), p. 88.

¹²⁰ Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 19-20.

¹²¹ Laura Silverberg, 'East German music and the problem of national identity', *Nationalities Papers*, 37.4 (2009), p. 518.

¹²² Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven & London, 1998), p. ix.

power resource in presenting the population with GDR socialism's supremacy over the capitalist system. Although Nye initially introduced the soft power concept for understanding international politics, it is equally employable in comprehending a government's exercise of its non-coercive power directed at its population. In the GDR context, the SED viewed the heritage's revitalisation and its accessibility to all as soft power resources for the Party to demonstrate GDR socialism's supremacy and win the population's 'hearts and minds'. This logic can be demonstrated by the VKM's delegate conference report in 1974. In this report, the GDR was described as the first state in German history where all social strata could enjoy the bourgeois tradition of enjoying classical music due to the government's endorsement.¹²³

It is important to note that, confronted by the same problems as the GDR regarding its artificial foundation and a rival German state as a neighbour, the FRG went down a similar path as the GDR in its early years. The Bonn government sought the FRG's cultural legitimacy by claiming its inheritance of historical Germany's humanist heritage. The state celebrations of historical Germany's cultural luminaries, the restoration of historic buildings and medieval towns, the popularity of state-favoured homeland films (*Heimatfilme*) relating to the pre-twentieth century German history in the 1950s, and the authorities' efforts to minimise the American cultural influence before the mid-1950s, all suggested the Bonn government's cultural vision of building up the FRG's cultural continuity with Germany's humanist past.¹²⁴ Given that neither the GDR nor the FRG recognised each other's legitimacy before Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in 1969, combined with each side's ambition to unite the two German states under its system in the short term,¹²⁵ each German state included the agenda of delegitimising the other side in its nation-building project. Thus, each government of the two German states hoped to imbue

¹²³ AdK, VKM, 55/01, 'Referat'.

¹²⁴ Fulbrook, *German National Identity after Holocaust*, pp. 82-83. See also, Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 2000), pp. 68, 104-05, 120-22.

¹²⁵ In his research, Grieder notes that not long after the GDR's foundation, Ulbricht did not see the prospect of a German unification in the short term, intending to make efforts to consolidate the GDR socialism separate from the FRG, whereas other leading SED and Soviet officials insisted on the vision of an 'all-German conception.' See Peter Grieder, 'The leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany under Ulbricht', in Major & Osmond (eds.), *The Workers' and Peasants' State*, pp. 27-28. Whereas in Bange's research, Ulbricht's goal was to create a united Germany under socialism. See Oliver Bange, 'Onto the slippery slope: East Germany and East-West détente under Ulbricht and Honecker, 1965-1975', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 18.3 (2016), p. 62.

its citizens with the musical identity of 'all-Germanness', declaring its state the only legitimate representative of historic Germany's humanist tradition.

The SED's collaboration with the cultural intelligentsia for reconstruction

The cultural intelligentsia's intellectual contribution to the SED's decision-making on socialist realistic inheritance and promotion of German classical music heritage was essential. As scholars such as Tompkins and Kelly show, SED officials and the cultural intelligentsia co-worked on the interpretation of Soviet articles and held discussions over whether German classical music heritage could be adopted under GDR socialism. The thought of Andrei Zhdanov was particularly influential, along with the debate between Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács and some leading East German cultural intellectuals represented by Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler and Ernst Bloch. Andrei Zhdanov, the Soviet cultural ideologist under Stalin responsible for 'Zhdanovshchina', advocated the revival of classical music heritage within Soviet socialist realism. After the war, the discussion of developing the parameter of socialist realism was held among Communist cultural elites in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany. In the discussion, Lukács' idea that classical heritage could be evolved under GDR socialism won over Brecht's revolution argument.¹²⁶ As noted by Kelly, the SED and cultural elites finally located the theoretical grounding of preserving the heritage within GDR socialist realism in that the transition from feudalism or capitalism to communism could be realised by evolution rather than revolution.¹²⁷ Thus, influenced by the Soviet Union and shaped by historical and international background, GDR socialist realism decided to adopt German classical music heritage.

Influential East German musicologists and composers' contribution to developing GDR socialist realistic music rhetoric regarding German classical music heritage was evident

¹²⁶ East German musical intelligentsia's debates and input into appropriating the heritage within a socialist German state are well researched by the existing scholarship. Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 8-10; Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line*, pp. 15-16; Snyder, 'Once misjudged and banned', pp. 319-352.

¹²⁷ Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, p. 8.

throughout the GDR's existence. Among all the musicologists and composers who participated in the canonisation, the most influential were Ernst Hermann Meyer,¹²⁸ Harry Goldschmidt, Georg Knepler,¹²⁹ Nathan Notowicz, and Eberhard Rebling. As Silverberg puts it, these five musicologists established the principles of music history in the GDR.¹³⁰ Importantly, composer and musicologist Ernst Herman Meyer, who served as the chairman of the VKM, articulated his viewpoints on socialist realist music in his book *Music in Current Event (Musik im Zeitgeschehen)* in 1952. The book was regarded as 'the Bible for socialist realism in East Germany'. In line with the Soviets, Meyer's criteria included the embrace of the working class, the condemnation of imperialism, the manifestation of a happy life in socialism, an uplifting attitude, and the expression of national spirit.¹³¹

Following the SED's cultural policy, the cultural intelligentsia worked on not only the compositional aspect of classical music, but also composers' biographies. Throughout the GDR's existence, re-writing musical figures' past and exploiting their political capital for legitimatising and consolidating the SED's political power lay at the core of the canonisation project. As observed by scholars such as Kelly and Thacker, past musical masters' biographies were under extensive research and re-interpreted by Marxist scholars to be fitted into a socialist context. Through the state-sponsored biography re-writing project, composers such

¹²⁸ Ernst Hermann Meyer (1905-1988): born in Berlin, Meyer was a Jewish communist German composer and musicologist with academic expertise in seventeenth-century English chamber music. In the 1930s, he became a pupil of Hanns Eisler and joined the Communist Party. In order to escape from National Socialism's persecution, he emigrated to the UK in the 1930s. After the war, he returned to the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany and latterly served the president of VKM. Regarding scholarly works on Meyer, see for instance, Golan Gur, 'Classicism as anti-fascist heritage: realism and myth in Ernst Hermann Meyer's *Mansfelder Oratorium* (1950), in Frackman & Powell (eds.), *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 34-57; Zur Weihen, *Komponieren in der DDR-Institutionen*; Toby Thacker, *Music after Hitler, 1945-1955* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 152-56.

¹²⁹ Georg Knepler (1906-2003): born in Austria, Knepler was a Jewish communist pianist, conductor and musicologist. In the 1930s, he was one of the German-Austrian communist exiles who emigrated to Britain in order to escape from National Socialism's persecution. After the war, he returned to Vienna and served as the cultural adviser for the Communist Party of Austria. Invited by the SED in 1949, he moved to East Berlin and took the directorship of musicology at the Humboldt University. While working in the GDR, he kept his Austrian citizenship. Regarding scholarly works on Georg Knepler, see for instance, Lars Fischer, 'Positioning Georg Knepler in the musicological discourse of the GDR', in Frackman and Powell (eds.), *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 58-74.

¹³⁰ Laura Silverberg, *The East German Sonderweg to Modern Music, 1956-1971* (PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), p. 79; Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, p. 81.

¹³¹ Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line*, pp. 20-21. See also, Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 8-9, 36.

as J. S. Bach and Beethoven were renowned as the ‘prototypes of socialist personalities’ and ‘progressive humanists’, representing the very soul of historical Germany’s humanist tradition. Richard Wagner, seemingly challenging socialist canonisation due to his antisemitic background and the close association of his music with the Nazi past, was soon incorporated into the GDR music discourse of socialist realism in the early 1950s. The SED’s primary rationale for this was Wagner’s active involvement in left-wing politics in his early years.¹³² Given the GDR’s anti-fascist myth-building, characterised by the official portrayal of communists as the victims and anti-fascist heroes on East German soil, socialist realism was relieved from sharing the historical burden of German music heritage role in the Nazi ideology myth-building.

The lack of a precise definition of socialist realism endowed not only key political figures but also influential cultural intellectuals with the flexibility to incorporate their aesthetic tastes and individual interpretations into the socialist realistic canonisation of German classical music heritage. For instance, tangibly shaped by his academic background of researching German and English Baroque music, Meyer was an enthusiastic advocate for promoting Handel and Handel’s contemporaries in GDR socialism.¹³³ On the other hand, conductor, and musicologist George Knepler’s interpretation of Bruckner as a reactionary figure, based on his pessimistic mood in music and Catholic background, led to Bruckner’s exclusion from the GDR socialist music canon in the early GDR years.¹³⁴

Constructing an ‘un-socialist realistic’ music repertoire

In parallel with promoting the socialist canon of classical music, the SED, with the assistance of some party-line cultural intellectuals also endeavoured to construct an ‘un-socialist realistic’ music repertoire. The SED’s logic behind this was by labelling music with the discourse of ‘formalism’, ‘elitism’, and ‘American entertainment kitsch/boogie-woogie (e.g., jazz, popular,

¹³² Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 41-52; 64-65; Thacker, “‘Renovating’”, p. 38.

¹³³ Thacker, “‘Something different from the Hampstead perspective’”, pp. 212-16.

¹³⁴ Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 41-52; 64-65.

rock 'n' roll)' and relating it to the Party-portrayed musical culture in the FRG, the socialist German state legitimacy as 'the people's state' could be reinvigorated. In the early GDR years, in particular, the SED's endeavours in this regard were firm given that both of the two German states' competition for the 'only true heir' of historical Germany's humanist tradition. Tompkins presents a detailed narrative of GDR musicologists' and composers' debates and discussions in developing the GDR's 'anti-formalist' discourse in the early era. The founding conference of the Association of German Composers and Musicologists (*Verband Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler*, VDK) in April 1951,¹³⁵ which gathered leading political and musical authorities from the GDR and the Soviet Union, including Ulbricht, Meyer, Hanns Eisler, and the leader of the Union of Soviet Composers Tikhon Khrennikov, was key to the GDR's official construction of un-socialist realistic music discourse. Central to the conference was Meyer's speech. In his speech, formalism, cosmopolitanism, twelve-tone music, and Stravinsky were condemned mainly for distancing themselves from the people as they were avant-garde, elite, and abstract, and American entertainment kitsch was characterised as a form of degeneracy and barbarism.¹³⁶

The SED's articulation of its abhorrence of American entertainment kitsch revealed the Party's anti-American cultural endeavours. Meyer's denunciation of American entertainment kitsch as degeneracy and barbarism essentially represented and contributed to the SED-encoded anti-western bloc discourse. The SED's officially declared rationale for such unattractiveness built on the theoretical grounding of orthodox Marxist-Leninist viewpoints about capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism and the communist anti-fascist rhetoric under Stalin. In particular, according to Uta Poiger, the exposure of 'the evil powers' of the FRG and the US lay at the heart of the SED's Cold War endeavours in presenting the western bloc's unattractiveness.¹³⁷ In the bi-polar Cold War power system, the United States' status as a superpower and world power rivalling the USSR, coupled with the GDR's peculiar geopolitical location rivalling the capitalist German state, resulted in the SED taking no less stringent measures than the Soviet Union in promoting its anti-American rhetoric. In her research, Poiger demonstrates how the

¹³⁵ In 1973, the association changed its abbreviation from VDK to VKM.

¹³⁶ Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line*, pp. 49-52; Thacker, 'The fifth column', pp. 107-08.

¹³⁷ Poiger, *Jazz*, p. 195.

Ulbricht government made strenuous efforts to prevent the East German populace from being 'contaminated' by American influence in its hope of consolidating socialist German identity. Since the Occupation period, American popular culture, including Hollywood movies, jazz, and rock 'n' roll, made an unprecedented appeal to East and West German youth. The East German authorities' fear of American cultural invasion and the escalation of tensions between the two Cold War blocs made the authorities associate jazz and rock 'n' roll with Americanism since 1948. Labelling such music with fascism, imperialism, western decadence, barbarism and sexual deviance, the SED asked East Germans to reject such an 'American way of life' and took repressive actions against these musical practices in the domestic cultural scene.¹³⁸ For the East German authorities, such efforts served as the consolidation of 'Germanness' among East Germans and the GDR's anti-American rhetoric.

While the SED took actions to repress jazz and rock 'n' roll, it also made efforts to present the success of American entertainment kitsch in 'contaminating' the FRG. Following the SED's proclamation, such 'successful contamination' resulted in the FRG's cultural betrayal of historical Germany's humanist tradition. It is important to note that the SED's incorporation of the FRG into the official GDR's anti-American rhetoric composed a significant part of the Party's delegitimising of the FRG and anti-American projects at the same time. As Poiger shows, by exploiting the Bonn government's military, political, and economic closeness to the US and the West German rebellious adolescents' obsession with American popular culture, the SED portrayed and advertised the image of the Americanised-FRG to the East German populace and the international world. As can be shown by the Free German Youth (*Freier Deutsche Jugend*, FDJ) 'Manifesto to German Youth' published in 1951, in which FRG youth was described as being contaminated by American barbarian culture.¹³⁹ Notably, the SED deliberately accused American entertainment kitsch of generating West German adolescents' fascist expression, equating German fascism to American imperialism.¹⁴⁰ Apparently, in portraying the destruction of German classical music heritage in the Americanised-FRG, the SED hinted at the exclusion of the FRG from the conception of 'Germanness'.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 1-2, 44, 51, 55, 107, 158, 186, 193-97, 203, 208; see also Thacker, 'The fifth column', p. 228.

¹³⁹ 'Manifest an die deutsche Jugend', *Dokument und Beschlüsse der FDJ*, vol. 2 (East Berlin, 1951), p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Poiger, *Jazz*, pp. 51, 107.

Indeed, American entertainment kitsch was not the only SED highlight of the western bloc culture's 'unattractiveness', Beat music was also attacked. As the GDR entered the 1960s, the spread of the Beatles' hits from Britain among the GDR youth worried the Ulbricht government. As a result, the SED authorities focused on presenting the image of Beat music as associated with western militarism and fascist imperialism, suppressing the Beat groups' demonstrations and emphasising the Beat music contamination among the FRG youth.¹⁴¹ Thus, in constructing an un-socialist music repertoire and denouncing it, the SED aspired to consolidate the socialist German state cultural supremacy and legitimacy and present the FRG cultural betrayal of historical Germany's humanist tradition.¹⁴²

Making the heritage accessible to all East Germans

Multiple factors demonstrate the communist authorities' determination to revitalise German music heritage on East German soil and promote state-approved activities around the heritage among all social strata. Especially before the mid-1950s, as Tompkins puts it, most households' lack of access to television and the cinema as a merely occasional entertainment in the GDR made the authorities view music as playing a unique role in shaping East Germans' socialist personalities.¹⁴³ In terms of cultural facilities, almost immediately after the *Stunde Null*, musical venues which had been destroyed in the war were rebuilt, and new concert halls and cultural houses were renovated and established in both urban and rural districts. Up to 1970, GDR theatres, including music venues and playhouses, surged from around seventy-five in 1949 to nearly 200 in 1970. Cultural houses (*Kulturhäuser*), equivalent to community centres in the FRG, amounted to 944 all over East Germany. Noticeably, till the early 1970s, the GDR exceeded the FRG in providing more theatre seats for every 100 inhabitants and had an average of 150 concert attendance per 1,000 inhabitants.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Regarding the Ulbricht government's policymaking on Beat music and groups, see for instance, Mark Fenimore, 'The limits of repression and reform: youth policy in the early 1960s', in Major and Osmond (eds.), *The Workers' and Peasants' State*, pp. 171-89.

¹⁴² Poiger, *Jazz*, p. 195.

¹⁴³ Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', p. 412.

¹⁴⁴ Hanns Schwarze, *The GDR Today: Life in the 'Other' Germany* (London, 1973), pp. 46-47.

In addition, the authorities established and sponsored many cultural organisations at central and local levels. In June 1945, the Soviet Ministry Administration in Germany, claiming to involve the cultural intelligentsia in the 'spiritual and cultural renewal of Germany', approved the founding of the Cultural Association (*Kulturbund*) in the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany. The association soon founded many 'clubs of intelligence' (*Klubs der Intelligenz*) in many East German cities to organise artistic, cultural, and social events for the population.¹⁴⁵ In 1951, the VKM was founded under the umbrella of the Cultural Association, specifically responsible for East Germans' musical life. The Cultural Association and VKM had central and local branches for organising and delivering cultural events at all social levels.

At the same time, the authorities invested hugely in establishing and expanding performing music groups. In order to reach every East German, the authorities developed a relatively dense orchestral network across the state. The number of professional orchestras, including top national orchestras, regional symphony orchestras, and district cultural orchestras (*Kreiskulturorchester*), doubled to eighty-eight from 1949 until the end of the Ulbricht era.¹⁴⁶ In addition to these professional ones, there were many community training orchestras with voluntary musicians. According to Tompkins' observation, the number of district cultural orchestras and community training orchestras exploded under the authorities' encouragement in the first half of the 1950s. Moreover, such a rapid explosion even resulted in hundreds of orchestral positions remaining unfilled due to the shortage of musicians. As he puts it, 'the growth was so rapid that even cultural officials had trouble keeping count.'¹⁴⁷

With a vast number of cultural organisations, facilities, and performing groups, the authorities organised significant music events at all social levels across the state. In encouraging, to the highest degree possible, East German participation in classical music cultural practices, the

¹⁴⁵ Regarding scholarly works on the Cultural Association during the Soviet Occupation period and the GDR era, see for instance, Andreas Zimmer (ed.), *Der Kulturbund in der SBZ und in der DDR: eine ostdeutsche Kulturvereinigung im Wandel der Zeit zwischen 1945 und 1990* (Wiesbaden, 2019).

¹⁴⁶ Berlin, Landesarchiv Berlin (LaB), C Rep. 132 Nr. 8, A brochure under the title '40 Jahre DDR' (May 1989).

¹⁴⁷ Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', pp. 414-16.

SED aspired to imbue every East German with a socialist German state identity. Musical events, ranging from formal concert halls and opera houses in big cities to factories and farms in rural areas, were frequently given by all tiers of performing music groups. In addition, under the government's mandate, internationally established East German orchestras and district cultural orchestras emphasised outreach beyond traditional music venues and experienced audience groups in cultural centres. Through cooperating with schools, musical agencies, the trade union and the Agricultural Production Association (*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften*, LPG), regularly gave in-house and touring concerts targeting audiences from these social sectors.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, the inherent disdain for money found in Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the SED's view of music for socialist education, reinforced by the communist authorities' utopian vision of 'making intellectual pursuits accessible to all', led to the SED's subsidies to concert and theatre tickets. On top of this governmental-subsidised ticket system, there was a system of workplace and school subscriptions of cultural events for their employees and students.¹⁴⁹ Although music programmes varied according to occasion and themes, the socialist canon of works by historical composers featured most prominently. According to Tompkins' observation of the GDR music agency's programming guidelines, 50 per cent of a concert programme should be music by past masters, followed by 25 per cent by contemporary (East) German composers and world composers (preferably from the Soviet Union), respectively.¹⁵⁰ With such strenuous efforts from political and cultural authorities, musical agencies, cultural institutions, and involving administrators from different social sectors, concert life and relevant cultural activities exploded in Ulbricht's GDR. In the 1955/57 concert season, the number of GDR concert-goers reached 2.2 million.¹⁵¹ According to the SED records, there were 300,000 events in the GDR arts centres and an average of 125 concert visitors per 1,000

¹⁴⁸ Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', pp. 419-20; Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany', pp. 21, 43, 251-52.

¹⁴⁹ Laura Bradley, 'East German theatre censorship: the role of the audience', *Theatre Journal*, 65.1 (2013), p. 42.

¹⁵⁰ Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', pp. 421-22.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

inhabitants.¹⁵²

The pursuit of artistic excellence

Parallel to investing heavily in establishing and expanding performing music groups, organising musical events, and engaging the population's participation, the SED also aspired to pursue the East German performing arts' artistic excellence on the international stage. Much like the SED's strenuous efforts to support elite sports, the pursuit was driven by both international and domestic propaganda purposes.¹⁵³ Outwardly, the GDR musical troupes' and talents' success on the international stage showcased the socialist German state's artistic achievement, assisting the GDR's international image-building project. Inwardly, such international success boosted East Germans' sense of national pride, thus consolidating the SED's legitimacy among the populace.

Such a pursuit is evidenced by a large quantity of state-subsidised professional music schools and a series of governmental policies and efforts in cultivating and promoting top-level musical talents and performing groups to excel on the international stage. Apart from the general music education starting from children's pre-school years, the GDR ran a total number of 206 conservatories and music lesson cabinets, with four special schools for music (i.e., Hochschule für Musik „Hanns Eisler“ Berlin, Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber Dresden, Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar, Hochschule für Musik und Theater „Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy“ Leipzig) for promoting exceptional talents.¹⁵⁴ In particular, artistic

¹⁵² LaB, C Rep. 132: Nr. 8, A brochure under the title '40 Jahre DDR'.

¹⁵³ Regarding scholarly works on GDR sports for the SED's national propaganda, see for instance, Mike Dennis, 'Sports, politics, and "wild doping" in the East German sporting "miracle"', in Robert Edelman & Christopher Young (eds.), *The Whole World Was Watching: Sport in the Cold War* (Redwood City, 2019), pp. 126-42; Annette Timm, "'The most beautiful face of socialism': Katarina Witt and the sexual politics of sport in the Cold War', in *ibid.*, pp. 143-60; Mike Dennis & Jonathan Grix, 'Behind the Iron Curtain: football as a site of contestation in East German sports "miracle"', *Sport in History*, 30.3 (2010), pp. 447-74; Kay Schiller, 'Communism, youth and sport: the 1973 World Youth Festival in East Berlin', in Alan Tomlinson, Christopher Young & Richard Holt (eds.), *Sport and the Transformation of Modern Europe: State, Media and Markets 1950-2010* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 50-66; Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 101-03.

¹⁵⁴ LaB. C Rep. 132, Nr. 8, 40. Jahrestag der DDR, a brochure entitled '40 Jahre DDR' (May 1989); Leipzig, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (DNB), Archiv des Musikinformationszentrum, Berlin-Ost (AMzBO), 015 A21/219.1-Musikleben allgemein.

talent was vital to student recruitment and promotion in these special music schools. Moreover, the authorities were keen on sponsoring national and international music events, such as competitions, seminars, conferences, and festivals. In addition to acquiring a positive presence in the international community, the logic of advancing East German musical pedagogy and adjusting technique skills to international standards was another motivation.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, the SED's pursuit of artistic excellence can also be seen in the grading system for music graduates' employment and performing institutions. For music students, the allocation of their jobs in East German performing institutions was based on their technique proficiency assessed by the centralised Management for Theatre and Orchestra (*Direktion für Theater und Orchester*, aka: DTO) upon their graduation.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, East German performing institutions were graded into Class A, B, and C in descending order based on their international reputation and importance to the state's cultural life.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, musicians' and performing institutions' artistic achievements were subject to the Ministry for Culture (MfK)'s regular assessment, especially during their international performances. Usually, an artistic assessment of performances abroad was based on audience reception, the feedback from international partner institutions, and critics' reviews.¹⁵⁸ The assessment result was essentially linked to the musicians' career development and the allocation of financial and human resources of the performing institutions. These efforts served as a testament to the authorities' pursuit of artistic excellence in GDR musical culture.

¹⁵⁵ Berlin, Bundesarchiv (BA), Berlin-Lichterfelde, DR 1/10460, 'Bericht über die Studienjahresanalyse und über die Ergebnisse in der Ausbildung und Erziehung an den künstlerischen und kulturpolitischen Hoch- und Fachschulen im Studienjahr 1973/74', ff. 14-15.

¹⁵⁶ Yaeger, 'Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany', p. 64.

¹⁵⁷ For instance, the Komische Oper, the Staatsoper Berlin, the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Leipziger Oper, the Staatsoper Dresden, the Staatskapelle Dresden were in the Class A category. Dresden, Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit (BStU), MfS, BV Dresden, KD Dresden-Stadt, Nr. 92810, 'Information zur gegenwärtigen Lage in der Dresdner Philharmonie'.

¹⁵⁸ See for instance, Berlin, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the German Democratic Republic (Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Demokratischen Republik, MfAA C:122/70, 'Auszug aus dem Bericht über die Reise des Bachorchesters nach England vom 30.09-10.10. 1967'; MfAA C: 150, 'Bericht: über die Konzerttournee der Berliner Staatskapelle vom 9.-19. November 1967 durch Groß-Britannien, (Berlin, den 30. November 1967)'.

Section II: Honecker's German classical music heritage policy

Honecker's 'real-existing socialism' as the demarcation (*Abgrenzung*) policy

In 1971, having been succeeded by Erich Honecker, Walter Ulbricht stepped down from the GDR's top leadership after serving in this role for two decades. By the end of his rule, the GDR turned out to be a socialist German state with notable domestic and international achievements accompanied by challenges. In terms of achievements, the most notable perhaps were the highest standards of living achieved by the GDR among Eastern Bloc countries¹⁵⁹ and a foreseeable East-West *détente* with Brandt's introduction of *Ostpolitik* in 1969. In the minds of the SED, such achievements undoubtedly consolidated and promoted its legitimacy in the GDR and outside. However, leaving aside the positive aspects, problems revolving around the GDR's politics, economy, culture, and international relations confronted the SED. Domestically, rifts between the East Germans' expectations of a socialist German state and the SED's actual achievements emerged and grew. Regarding politics, the USSR and SED's suppression of the 1953 Uprising and the erection and presence of the Berlin Wall challenged ordinary East Germans' perception of an ideal socialist German state claimed by the SED authorities. Despite the GDR's economic development and the raise in living standards, they lagged far behind the affluent FRG. In order to improve national productivity, Ulbricht fervently promoted economic reform —the New Economic System (*Neues Ökonomisches System*, NÖS) from 1963 onwards. The reform featured a series of SED economic endeavours, including an endorsement of limited market freedom under a socialist planned economy, a reduction of governmental subsidies, and increased economic cooperation with the FRG for modernising GDR technologies and machinery. However, the reform failed to win support from Moscow and some senior SED members, including Honecker, who were in the government during its implementation. By the end of Ulbricht's rule, the reform was dismantled.¹⁶⁰ As with the GDR's international environment, while the erection and presence

¹⁵⁹ William Jones, 'East Germany under Honecker', *World Today*, 32.9 (1976), p. 341.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1963-1973* (Chapel Hill & London, 2001), pp. 18-19; Patrick Major, 'Introduction', in Major & Osmond (eds.), *The Workers' and Peasants'*, p. 11; Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: the Divided Nation* (Chichester, 2015), pp. 168-70; André Steiner, *The Plans that Failed: An Economic History of the GDR* (New York & Oxford, 2010), pp. 105-140.

of the Berlin Wall and Brandt's introduction of *Ostpolitik* secured a relatively stabilised environment for socialist development, the growing grassroots contacts between the GDR and the western bloc with the arrival of *détente* potentially challenged the SED's power consolidation among ordinary East German population. Honecker, as the GDR's new leader, was expected to tackle all the pressing problems unsolved by his predecessor and bring positive changes to GDR society.

Central to Honecker's domestic politics was his demarcation policy in the era of East-West *détente*. In the Party leader's mind, developing a 'real-existing socialism' with high socialist welfare played a crucial role in the demarcation. As Jonathan Zatlin observes, such a priority of Honecker's marked a core difference from Ulbricht. Whereas Ulbricht's rhetoric for socialist construction could be summarised as 'the way we work today is the way we will live tomorrow', Honecker's emphasis was on 'a renouncement of future utopias in favour of present plenty.' Some key policies included renovating and expanding housing facilities, increasing average wages and government subsidies for essential consumer goods, an emphasis on developing consumer socialism (*Konsumsozialismus*), and an expansion of shops for providing western consumer goods (e.g., Intershops, Exquisit and Delikat stores) to those with western currency. At the SED's Eighth Party Congress in June 1971, Honecker emphasised the government's priority in developing a socialist welfare state by satisfying East Germans' material and cultural needs.¹⁶¹

The logic behind Honecker's promotion of a high welfare socialist state during East-West *détente* for the demarcation purpose came from two directions. One direction was, knowing that the normalisation of the GDR's relationship with western bloc countries, particularly with the FRG, would inevitably lead to more East-West grassroots contacts, Honecker recognised the necessity of 'buying' the population's loyalty to GDR socialism for the demarcation. As Zatlin notes, the other one was that Honecker believed that satisfying the population's cultural

¹⁶¹ BA, DY 30/2049, Bd. 3, 'Reden von Erich Honecker auf Parteitag der SED'; and 'Zur Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse des VIII. Parteitags: von der 4. Tagung des Zentralkomitees des Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands'.

and material needs in the short run would motivate them to devote themselves to socialist construction, thereby increasing national productivity in the long run. Moreover, Honecker believed that the GDR would experience its economic prosperity via taking advantage from its FRG loan, trading relations with the western bloc, and the Soviet supports. All these, in the Party leadership's mind, would finally realise his demarcation aspiration for consolidating the SED's ruling authority among the population.¹⁶²

Cultural diversity and art of no taboos?

The legacy of Ulbricht's German classical music heritage policy

At the Eighth Party Congress, Honecker promised to cater to the population's cultural needs and declared 'no taboo in art and literature'. This move appeared to denote the SED's formal adoption of cultural relaxation. Before Honecker, Ulbricht had already tended to make gradual, however, fluctuating concessions to the popular music demands since the mid-1950s. At the Bitterfeld Conference in April 1959, SED authorities called for artists' deep engagement and connection with the working class, fostering the development of a socialist national culture.¹⁶³ While the authorities denounced western hits, the conference also highlighted the need for artistic production to satisfy the taste of the working and peasant classes. Key to understanding this was the political rather than aesthetic drive that underlay all SED policymaking in musical culture. However, Ulbricht's tendency to relax his cultural policy appeared to reverse following the outburst of the Prague Spring, when the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia attracted criticism from the GDR theatrical world.¹⁶⁴

In its strenuous endeavours to make the state-endorsed German classical music heritage embraced by every East German and denounce 'Americanised' unculture, Ulbricht

¹⁶² Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 68, 73.

¹⁶³ Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, p. 66, 72; Poiger, *Jazz*, p. 195; Anja Klöck, 'Acting on the Cold War: imperialist strategies, Stanislavsky, and Brecht in German actor training after 1945', in Christopher Balme & Berenika Szymanski-Düll (eds.), *Theatre, Globalisation and the Cold War* (Cham, 2017), p. 250.

¹⁶⁴ As Bradely points out, some figures from GDR theatrical world who criticised the invasion included Marianne Wünsch, Rolf Ludwig, Helmar Stöß, Werner Piontek. Bradley, *Cooperation and Conflict*, pp. 76, 109.

acknowledged the impossibility of realising such ambition and admitted the mass appeal of popular music culture since the early 1960s.¹⁶⁵ In order to attract active participation from the population, particularly the youth, to state-organised musical activities, the SED began to step towards music genres which were outside of the GDR socialist realistic canon. In addition, as Poiger shows, in the mid-1950s, on the grounds that West German *Halbstarke* could be seen as West German youth's expression of resisting the FRG political authorities and rearmament, voices within the SED authorities suggested a relatively tolerant attitude towards the FRG *Halbstarke*. Moreover, the development of socialism in the GDR and the GDR's international environment also encouraged Ulbricht to impose some relief on GDR musical life from the mid-1950s. Following the 1953 Uprising, some leading SED officials intended to invest more in importing consumer goods from the FRG to 'buy' East Germans' loyalty and endow them with some space for cultural entertainment.¹⁶⁶ Apart from all these incentives, after the establishment of the Berlin Wall, the sealed border gave Ulbricht more confidence in the GDR's socialist development.¹⁶⁷ Considering the international environment, as noted by Poiger, the emerging 'thaw' in the Soviet Bloc countries following Stalin's death in 1953 also contributed to Ulbricht's intent to relax his stringent music policy.¹⁶⁸

Efforts were made by the Ulbricht government to accommodate the entertainment music, including lighter entertainment music (*Unterhaltungsmusik*) and jazz, and emphasise developing socialist popular rock 'n' roll. For instance, as Mark Fenemore shows, the FDJ recognised the international youth jamboree *Deutschland-Treffen's* popularity among the youth in 1964, and there was a particular radio station created for catering to GDR youth's interest in Beat.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, while the SED still clung to its indictment of American popular culture, the dispute over whether jazz music could be characterised as American kitsch signifying Western imperialism or an anti-fascist and anti-racist expression emerged among the SED cultural authorities. Rather than reaching a definite official stance, the dispute

¹⁶⁵ Major, 'Introduction', p. 12.

¹⁶⁶ Poiger, *Jazz*, pp. 65, 91; Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany, June 17, 1953* (Ithaca & London, 1972), pp. 98-102.

¹⁶⁷ Grieder, 'The leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany under Ulbricht', p. 32.

¹⁶⁸ Poiger, *Jazz*, p. 92.

¹⁶⁹ Fenemore, 'The limits of repression and reform', p. 181.

confused the SED attitudes towards jazz. As a result of such confusion, jazz clubs and record production in the GDR cultural scene experienced a revival.¹⁷⁰ The SED also conceded to adding light music repertoire to the state-endorsed concert life. Although socialist realism did not oppose light music, the SED's ideal of music for socialist education resulted in light music being less desirable than serious music in the GDR concert life according to the official taste. In the socialist practice, as Palmowski observes, regional and local cultural officials constantly faced difficulty attracting a large audience to serious music concerts. Light music, such as operettas and dance music by Johann Strauss II, appeared much more popular than serious music among county Hagenow residents in *Bezirk Mecklenburg*.¹⁷¹ Tompkins addresses a similar issue in his investigation of the GDR concert life at regional and local levels. Faced with the problems of an underfunded state budget and the lack of artistic competence, some lower-tier orchestras and musical agencies had to add light music to their concert programmes to accommodate the popular demands.¹⁷² In all, as pointed out by Fulbrook, despite his initial ideal of implementing total ideological indoctrination, Ulbricht relaxed his cultural policies after realising the impossibility of total control.¹⁷³

Honecker's conditional relaxation of GDR music scene

The SED's further cultural relaxation in the field of music under Honecker was reflected by its active role in fostering relatively diverse music genres within GDR socialism and accommodating music previously outside of the socialist realistic music repertoire. In its annual delegation conferences following the Eighth Party Congress, the VKM emphasised the encouragement of all musical genres.¹⁷⁴ In particular, the VKM acknowledged the popularity and importance of rock music among the GDR youth. In order to win the hearts and minds of the youth, it sponsored more East German rock musicians, and the bands received

¹⁷⁰ Poiger, *Jazz*, pp. 154-62; Janik, *Recomposing German Music*, pp. 271-73.

¹⁷¹ Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 28; Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', pp. 417-18.

¹⁷³ Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁴ See for instance, AdK, VKM 55/01, 'Referat: zu außerordentlichen Delegiertenkonferenz 1974'; VKM 75, 'Rechenschaftsbericht des Zentralvorstandes an die Delegiertenkonferenz (11.-12. Mai 1977)'.

governmental sponsorship.¹⁷⁵ Not just classical music and contemporary socialist music, but also jazz and popular music were performed at elite GDR music venues. For instance, the Palace of the Republic, which hosted the People's Chamber and the party's congresses since its opening in 1976, held events such as jazz nights, international jazz works, and swing, electronic and rock music events alike at a regular basis.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, with the approval of the state, the Palace hosted the GDR's first rock festival, 'Rock for Peace', in 1982. One year later, it hosted the concert of West German rock star Udo Lindenberg.¹⁷⁷ Following its reopening in 1984, the Friedrichstadtpalast hosted a wide array of mass entertainment which were either inspired by or imported from the western bloc, ranging from ballet, acrobatics to the revue. As stated by the assistant director Jürgen Nass of the Friedrichstadtpalast after the *Wende*, the logic behind the government-endorsed mass entertainment in western style at the Palast was that the Party intended to bring the splashiest entertainment to East Germans without 'bothering' them to travel to the West.¹⁷⁸

In addition, some top East German musical festivals, such as *Berliner Festtage* (Berlin Festival Days) and *Weltmusiktag* (World Music Day), expanded their programmes to wide genres, including, jazz, and electronic music.¹⁷⁹ In 1987 a rock music festival was organised as part of East Berlin's celebration programmes for Berlin's 750th anniversary. The SED's endeavour to hold a kaleidoscopic music landscape was not exclusive to the GDR capital, as the regional districts also tried to follow suit. For instance, the requirement of providing the working class with music of different genres and entertainment in order to satisfy their cultural needs was put onto the agendas of the Concert and Guest Performance Executive (*Konzert- und*

¹⁷⁵ BA, DC 4/693, 'Beziehungen des Publikums zu ausgewähltem Musiker und Interpreten von Musik'; Dan Wilton, 'The "societalisation" of the state: sport for the masses and popular music in the GDR', in Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR*, p. 117.

¹⁷⁶ BA, DC 207/489, a collection of jazz programmes at Palast der Republik (1978-1990), ff. 652-71, 685.

¹⁷⁷ 'Udo plays East Berlin', *The Berlin Wall, a multimedia history*, accessed via: <https://www.the-berlin-wall.com/videos/udo-lindenberg-plays-east-berlin-747/> (last accessed 09 August 2023); Regarding scholarly works on the Palace of the Republic, see for instance, Deborah Barnstone, 'Transparency in divided Berlin: the Palace of the Republic', in Philip Broadbent & Sabine Hake (eds.), *Berlin: Divided City, 1945-1989* (New York & Oxford), pp. 100-111.

¹⁷⁸ 'Friedrichstadtpalast opens', *The Berlin Wall, a multimedia history*, accessed via: <https://www.the-berlin-wall.com/videos/friedrichstadtpalast-opens-688/> (last accessed 09 August 2023). See also, BA, DY 30/18975, 'Friedrichstadtpalast in Berlin'.

¹⁷⁹ See for instance, LaB, C Rep. 960, Nr. 62, 'Rechenschaftslegungen zu den Ausstellungen anlässlich der *Tage der Musik, der Fotografie, der Bildenden Kunst und des Theaters der Bezirksleitung Berlin* (1980)'.

Gastspieldirektion) in Karl-Marx-Stadt.¹⁸⁰ Likewise, in Palmowski's observation of cultural life in Thüringen, the local cultural authorities organised both 'high' and 'low' cultural activities to meet the people's cultural interests.¹⁸¹ All of these seemed to evidence Honecker's endeavours to impose a cultural relaxation, satisfying the cultural needs of the East Germans, especially the East German youth, in developing the 'real existing socialism'.

However, Honecker's 'no taboo in art' declaration was soon appeared to be more rhetoric. After the Eight Party Congress, GDR artistic circles, especially the literary scene, responded actively to Honecker's cultural liberation' policy. Some writers, including Christa Wolf and Reiner Kunze, tried to express their dissonant views with the aim of improving GDR socialism. For the cultural intelligentsia, however, disillusion ensued and exploded when dissenting folksinger and songwriter Wolf Biermann was somewhat unexpectedly deprived of his GDR citizenship and expelled from the GDR during his concert tour in the FRG. Believing in the supremacy of socialism over capitalism and a committed communist himself, Biermann had relocated from the FRG to the GDR in the early 1950. In the eyes of the SED, however, Biermann never fitted comfortably into GDR socialism. The SED rejected Biermann's application for SED membership, perceiving his criticism of the Party's censorship policy and socialist inadequacies in public both in the GDR and the FRG as political opposition. When Biermann applied for travel documents to start his concert tour in the FRG in 1976, the SED saw this as a chance to expel this dissenting songwriter from the GDR permanently. The logic behind the SED's tactic of expelling dissenting artists, as observed by David Large, was not only that these artists' drive for criticising the SED would recede when they were no longer living in the GDR but also that their dissenting voices would barely affect the ordinary East Germans. Soon after Biermann received his travel documents and arrived in the FRG, the SED made a statement, labelling Biermann as a class enemy of GDR socialism and depriving him of his GDR citizenship. This official action attracted protest from East German cultural circles. Forty-one writers and artists signed an open letter to the Honecker government, expressing their

¹⁸⁰ Chemnitz, Staatsarchiv Chemnitz (SaC), 30425, Nr. 10, 'Arbeitsordnung und Status des Konzert- und Festspiel-direktion Karl-Marx-Stadt'.

¹⁸¹ Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, p. 115.

solidarity with Biermann.¹⁸² While this letter was banned in the GDR media, it was published in the western media via Reuters, thus attracting widespread international attention and criticism of the Honecker government. Following the case of Biermann's expulsion, Honecker semi-withdrew his 'no taboo in art and literature' proclamation. He did not revoke the cultural plan of enriching the GDR cultural scene, though, only for as long as these cultural practices did not challenge the SED's ruling authority.

While Honecker made efforts to accommodate a relatively diverse music culture within the government-approved scope, the fear of western cultural infiltration among East Germans compelled Honecker to focus on socialist political and ideological indoctrination in everyday life. In the official GDR rhetoric, particular emphasis was placed on class struggles in the capitalist system and the irreconcilability between socialism and capitalism. For instance, Honecker articulated his antipathy towards capitalism in describing the countries in the capitalist world as imperialist aggressors at the Eighth Party Congress.¹⁸³ Even after the international community formally acknowledged the GDR's legitimacy, Honecker frequently stated that 'the ideological struggle between capitalism and socialism is ever-growing' on GDR public occasions.¹⁸⁴ Articles related to the criticism of imperialism and capitalism appeared in the three major GDR newspapers — i.e., *Neues Deutschland*, *Berliner Zeitung*, and *Neue Zeit* with an average of five times a day from 1971 to 1989.

Such indoctrination appeared in all kinds of state-organised musical and cultural events without much exception. At the VKM's delegation conference in 1974, for instance, Meyer made a speech highlighting the inequality and class struggles of the capitalist system. As he

¹⁸² David Large, *Berlin* (London, 2001), pp. 508-10; Christa Wolf, et al., "'Wir protestieren': Offener Brief prominenter Künstlerinnen und Künstler", (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft, 2019), accessed via: <https://www.jugendopposition.de/node/145376> (last accessed 09 August 2023). See also, Rolf-Bernhard Essig & Reinhard Nickisch (eds.), *'Wer schweigt, wird schuldig!': Offene Briefe von Martin Luther bis Ulrike Meinhof* (Göttingen, 2007); David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln, 1995), p. 27.

¹⁸³ BA, DY 30/2049/Bd. 3, 'Die Haupttendenzen der internationalen Entwicklung und die außenpolitische Linie der SED'.

¹⁸⁴ See for instance, Berlin, PAAA, MfAA C 161/77, 'Verhältnis DDR-Großbritannien nach Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen', f. 40.

stated, ‘we are saddened by the suffering of the oppressed people by the counter-revolution and inhumanity of imperialism, our anger and hatred directed against imperialist aggression and injustice, we feel solidarity with all people’s fight for freedom, national independence and social progress.’¹⁸⁵ In a VKM discussion over music culture in 1977, the VKM blamed capitalism for failing to guarantee the western citizens’ fundamental human rights ranging from work, education, and social security to the freedom of political and ideological viewpoints, and confidently declared that it was socialism that nurtured real art.¹⁸⁶ In the 1983 *Berliner Festtage*, an event was sub-titled ‘The people’s art and culture, the people who that have freed themselves from imperialism (*Kunst und Kultur der Völker, die sich vom Imperialismus befreit haben*)’.¹⁸⁷ It is important to note that such events were not uncommon during festivals in GDR history. As the festival committee documents show, the utilisation of music culture in East Berlin as an effective weapon to oppose the class enemy who appreciated cultural life in West Berlin was a critical recurring cultural-political agenda of the festival.¹⁸⁸ Other GDR districts also saw the importance of emphasising class struggles and the doom of imperialism during *détente*. For instance, when the GDR made the reopening of the SoD in 1985, an international event for commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Dresden bombardment by the US and UK Air Forces in WWII and the victory over Hitler’s fascism, Gerd Schönfelder, artistic director of the opera house, wrote that imperialism was a threat to humanity in his article published by *Die Wahrheit*.¹⁸⁹

It is reasonable to say, therefore, that Honecker’s call for GDR music scene diversity by no means suggested his intention to give up the Party’s monopoly in dictating this field, nor did

¹⁸⁵ The original German text: ‘Schmerz empfinden wir über das Leid der durch Konterrevolution und Unmenschlichkeit des Imperialismus unterdrückten Menschen, unser Zorn und Hass richtet sich gegen imperialistische Aggression und Ungerechtigkeit, wir fühlen uns solidarisch mit allen um Frieden, Freiheit, nationale Unabhängigkeit und sozialen Fortschritt kämpfenden Menschen.’ AdK, VKM 56/01, Meyer’s speech at Außerordentliche Delegiertenkonferenz (14 September 1974).

¹⁸⁶ AdK, VKM 76, ‘Musikkultur in der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft (1977).’

¹⁸⁷ LaB; C Rep. 721, Nr. 13, ‘Fragen der Zusammenarbeit der “Berliner Festtage” und des Ministeriums für Kultur der DDR’.

¹⁸⁸ LaB, C Rep. 721, Nr. 36, ‘Konzeption für die Weiterentwicklung der “Berliner Festtage” in den nächsten Jahren’.

¹⁸⁹ Dresden, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (HsaD), 11454, 3.57/1: Berichterstattung ausländischer Massenmedien anlässlich der Wiederöffnung der Semperoper, a *Wahrheit* article under the title ‘Kunst hat Frieden zur Bedingung’ by Gerd Schönfelder, f. 7.

it signify his willingness to foster the East Germans' affinity for the people and culture from Western Bloc countries. Instead, in providing the population with a relatively prosperous musical life, the ideological-political message that Honecker aimed to deliver was to exhibit the supremacy of GDR socialism over the 'deprived' capitalist West. That meant, unlike people in the capitalist world, who were miserably exploited by the bourgeois capitalist ruling class and had little access to cultural entertainment, ordinary East Germans could easily access a wide range of them under GDR socialism.

German classical music heritage under Honecker

The question of whether the preservation and development of German classical music heritage played an essential part in Honecker's domestic cultural policy ensues. However, rather than demoting the heritage to a lower rank in his cultural politics, Honecker considered the heritage crucial for successfully implementing his demarcation policy. If the enriched East German music scene could be considered Honecker's endeavours towards cultural demarcation by focusing on the diversity of the state's musical life, his continued promotion of German classical music heritage would then shoulder the responsibility of providing the population with high-quality cultural life and pursuits. As put by Nothnagle, historic preservation, with German classical music heritage being included, was the most important cultural area in Honecker's consolidation of the GDR *Kultur* myth.¹⁹⁰

The heritage's further revival under Honecker can be shown in at least three aspects. Firstly, the Party leader's aspiration of exploiting the heritage's cultural capital to present the GDR as a better Germany — 'a land of high culture' over the 'Americanised' FRG remained unchanged despite *détente*. With the GDR's economic performance and living standard noticeably lagging far behind the FRG and the increasing human and information contact between the two German states, Honecker's dependence on the rhetoric of GDR socialism's cultural superiority grew. At the VKM delegation conference in 1977, the cultural heritage was described as 'a land

¹⁹⁰ Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth*, p. 87.

for the creation of socialist culture in the present (*ein Boden für sozialistisches Kulturschaffen in der Gegenwart*).¹⁹¹ The quote ‘the socialist national culture of the German Democratic Republic included the careful cultivation and appropriation of all humanistic and progressive cultural achievement of the past’ frequently appeared in concert programme brochures and publications.¹⁹² Unlike his predecessor in the earlier GDR years, Honecker had less of an intention to incorporate the passion for heritage into every East German’s public and private life. Nevertheless, he needed the populace’s acknowledgement and pride in the GDR’s cultural excellence in preserving and revitalising the heritage. As noted by Fulbrook, it is especially the case when relating Honecker’s support of the heritage with the international world in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the wave of heritage industry boom across the western bloc in the era, Honecker held the SED’s intention to compete with the FRG in their heritage industries.¹⁹³

Secondly, since the early 1970s, the wave of state-endorsed re-appropriation of the German historical past, which viewed the GDR as the product of German history in its entirety, promoted the heritage’s further revival. In the national identity-building project, one of Honecker’s efforts to culturally demarcate the GDR from the FRG in *détente* was replacing the ‘all-German concept’ with East German nationhood. His articulation revealed his intention that it was the social-economic rather than historical-cultural tradition lying at the centre of national identity at the Eighth Party Congress.¹⁹⁴ In 1974, Honecker replaced the 1968 constitution with a new one. Regarding the description of the GDR, whereas the 1968 one described it as ‘a socialist state of the German nation (*ein sozialistischer Staat deutscher Nation*)’, it was modified into ‘a socialist state of workers and farmers (*ein sozialistischer Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern*)’ in the 1974 constitution.¹⁹⁵ East German historians were involved in the state-supported re-assessment of German history for the aim of the GDR identity

¹⁹¹ AdK, VKM 76, ‘Musikkultur in der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft (1977)’.

¹⁹² The original German text: ‘Die sozialistische Nationalkultur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik schließt die sorgsame Pflege und Aneignung aller humanistischen und progressiven Kulturleistungen der Vergangenheit ein.’ See for instance, BA, DC 207/327, a concert programme brochure under the title ‘Orchester der Welt’ at Palast der Republik on 29 April 1976.

¹⁹³ Fulbrook, *German National Identity after Holocaust*, p. 90.

¹⁹⁴ Marcus Colla, ‘The politics of time and state identity in the German Democratic Republic’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 29 (2019), p. 229.

¹⁹⁵ Dietrich Müller-Römer (ed.), *Der neue Verfassung der DDR* (Cologne, 1974) p. 78; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014*, p. 180.

demarcation. Significant to the re-formalisation of the official GDR narrative of German history was the contribution by East German historians Walter Schmidt and Alfred Kosing. Based on the historical analyses of Schmidt and Kosing, the official GDR narrative of the historical German past deserted the previous declaration of the GDR as the representative of the positive German past, whereas the FRG represented the negative past. Apart from rehabilitating the past in general, the official GDR's *Kultur* myth also added some ambiguous and flawed historical figures (e.g., Martin Luther, Bismark and Fredrick the Great), which previously did not fit well into the progressive values of socialism.¹⁹⁶ The state celebration of Martin Luther's 500th anniversary and the revival of Prussian culture (e.g., the re-installation of the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great by Christian Rauch on Unter den Linden) on Unter den Linden) are some examples.

Thirdly, Honecker also had an economic motive. His aspiration to improve the GDR economy drove him to invest in developing the German classical music heritage industry. Apart from the rationale of exhibiting GDR socialism's cultural superiority over the West for cultural competition and consolidating the Party's legitimacy,¹⁹⁷ Honecker also hoped to boost the popular consumption of the heritage via domestic tourism, cultural events, and selling records. For one, Honecker planned to develop socialist consumerism in the domestic GDR scene. Admittedly, the Party's emphasis on the heritage's value for tourism was not a Honecker-era invention. Since the late 1960s, as explained by Marcus Colla, cultural tourism and visiting historical sites were among the East Germans' leisure activities with the official introduction of a five-day working week and increased car ownership.¹⁹⁸ By the end of the 1970s, according to Fulbrook, tourism was among the top leisure pursuits among East Germans.¹⁹⁹ For the other, Honecker intended to sell off the heritage directed at the western bloc market for the GDR's hard currency revenue. Guided by the logic that the GDR could temporarily depend on

¹⁹⁶ Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth*, pp. 186-88; Colla, 'The politics of time and state identity in the German Democratic Republic', pp. 236-37; Fulbrook, *German National Identity after Holocaust*, p. 89; Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies*, pp. 70, 89-90; Palmowski, *Building an East German Nation*, pp. 117-20, 168.

¹⁹⁷ Anne Gorsuch & Diane Koenker, 'Introduction', in Anne Gorsuch & Diane Koenker (eds.), *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca, N. Y. & London, 2006), p. 12.

¹⁹⁸ Marcus Colla, 'Memory, heritage and the demolition of the Potsdam Garnisonskirche, 1968', *German History*, 38.2 (2020), p. 307.

¹⁹⁹ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 45.

western intellectual loans (e.g., technology, machines, and equipment) and consumer goods for long-term economic success and domestic stability, Honecker viewed the expansion of trading with the western bloc as a contribution to his demarcation policy.

As a result of all factors above, the Honecker era saw a further flourishing of German classical music heritage in the domestic GDR context. Multiple aspects reflected this. The first aspect is the expansion of classical music concert programmes supported by socialist realism. For instance, the Bruckner oeuvre was added to the socialist realist canon. As has been demonstrated in the previous section, having been identified as reactionary, pessimistic, and religiously devoted to Catholicism by the doctrine of socialist realism, Bruckner was excluded from the socialist realistic canon in the early decades of the GDR. However, during the Honecker period, the composer, while remaining an ambiguous figure who hardly fitted well into the doctrine of socialist realism, found his works programmed more frequently in the domestic GDR concert venues. The concert programme notes of Bruckner Symphony No. 7 by the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1982, for example, noted that despite the composer's music being 'tainted' by religious elements, it showed 'ordinary Austrian people's naive-religious optimism with an expression of healthy realism of ordinary people's thinking and feeling'.²⁰⁰

The second aspect is the SED's further exploitation and promotion of the regional and local districts' musical past. One example is Karl-Marx-Stadt regional district's (*Bezirk*) retrieval of its musical tradition in history. This regional district, renamed after Karl Marx in 1953 from the original Chemnitz, experienced a retrieval of its *Kulturerbe* under Honecker. Since the mid-1970s, the regional district held Robert-Schumann-Tage. For instance, to celebrate composer Robert Schumann and the district's German music past, Robert-Schumann-Tage was held across the district (e.g., Karl-Marx-Stadt, Plauen, Zwickau, Plauen, Freiburg) since the mid-1970s.²⁰¹ In 1983, the regional district renamed its regional orchestra after Robert Schumann,

²⁰⁰ BA, DC 207/460, Bd. 6, Programme notes of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra (6 June 1982).

²⁰¹ SaC, 32678, 32/2, a newspaper clipping under the title 'Robert-Schumann-Tage 1980' from *Sächsische Neueste Nachrichten* (5 June 1980).

the composer whose birthplace was Zwickau, a suburban district of Karl-Marx-Stadt. Along with this, other aspects of the district's historical musical resources, e.g., the pioneering role of Plauen, Zwickau, and Freiberg in the development of civic music culture in history, baroque composers Johann Hermann Schein (born in Grünhain) and Johann Rosenmüller (born in Oelsnitz), were explored and experienced a revival.²⁰²

The third aspect is building and renovating modern and historical music venues specialising in performing classical music. Some large projects included building the Gewandhaus concert hall in Leipzig and the reconstruction of the Schauspielhaus Berlin (ShB) and the SoD. Much owing to the efforts of its *Kapellmeister*, Kurt Masur, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra gained 50 million Ostmark from the state to erect a new concert building. The hall was opened in 1981 after a 57-month construction period and has become one of the leading symphonic halls in Europe. Furthermore, as part of the Honecker government's efforts to revive the cityscape of Prussian Berlin, in October 1984, the ShB, after seven years under faithful reconstruction according to its original architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel's German neo-classical design of 1821, reopened to the public as a concert hall.²⁰³ Likewise, between 1976 and 1980, the central government's budget for the Semperoper Dresden (SoD) reconstruction was 90 million Ostmark, more than half of all budget for the Dresden region's cultural facilities.²⁰⁴

The fourth aspect is the state and regional celebrations and anniversaries of German classical music luminaries. Among all such events, perhaps the most noteworthy was the year-long Bach-Handel-Schütz anniversary in 1985. Given that this year marked the 300th anniversary of the birth of J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel, the 400th anniversary of the birth of Heinrich Schütz, along with the the SoD's reopening, the GDR held mega concerts, cultural activities, and

²⁰² SaC, VKM, 32/4, a concert programme brochure under the title 'Musikalische Reverenz an das 750-jährige Berlin'.

²⁰³ Adalbert Behr & Alfred Hoffmann, *Das Schauspielhaus in Berlin* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 7-8, 92; Florian Urban, *The Invention of the Historic City: Building the Past in East Berlin, 1970-1990* (PhD thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), p. 252; Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin, 1987), pp. 187-88.

²⁰⁴ BA, DR 1/10460, 'Programm materiell-technische Basis der Kultur-Bezirk Dresden 1976-1980'.

academic conferences.²⁰⁵ For instance, in February, the 34th Handel Festival included forty-seven concerts in Halle, Handel's birth town and its nearby cities, and the 60th Bach Festival in Leipzig in March was programmed with sixty-six concerts directed for around 40,000 spectators. In addition, Schütz Festival Days were held in Dresden in October with the highlight of the composer's tribute event.²⁰⁶ Finally, it is worth noting that as part of the anniversary programmes, Händel-Haus in Handel's birthplace Halle and Bach-Museum Leipzig opened in 1985.

The fifth aspect is the SED's further efforts in developing the GDR's recording industry for economic ends. Mainly driven by the East German recording company's profitability in the international markets, in 1973, the MfK planned to increase the production of music records from eight million to 20 million units by 1985. As a result, *Eterna*, the flagship of East German state-owned music recording enterprise *Deutsche Schallplatten* (DS) specialising in classical music, was funded by the SED with four million Ostmarks to update its recording facilities and technology in 1984. This state-owned enterprise's success in the GDR's international trade and its cultivation of the GDR's artistic excellence were good reasons for the SED's generous sponsorship. As Kube notes, through offering very affordable prices in Western currencies, the DS attracted partnership from Western bloc countries. By the end of 1980s, the DS generated two million Valutamarks to the state's hard currency income.²⁰⁷

The sixth aspect is the Honecker government's continued efforts to improve leading East German institutions and insist on the excellence of performers. In addition to its generous sponsorship, the SED also appeared to impose stricter artistic criteria to assess the leading East German musical institutions. A telling example was the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (DPO)'s degradation from the Class A list to the Class B in the mid-1980s. According to the MfK

²⁰⁵ See for instance, BStU, MfS-ZOS, Nr. 3685, 'Bachfest', f. 14; DNb, AMzBO, Konzertpläne Spielzeit 1984/85, 'Bach, Händel und Schütz im internationalen Musikaustausch. Gespräch mit Dr. Gerd Belkuis, Leiter der Abteilung Internationaler Musikaustausch beim Staatlichen Komitee für Rundfunk'.

²⁰⁶ DNb, AMzBO, 016/1 A 21/218.1, a newspaper clipping under the title '88 staatliche Orchester: Hochentwickeltes Konzertleben in der DDR' from *Der Morgen* (21. August 1985).

²⁰⁷ Kube, 'Music trade in the slipstream of cultural diplomacy', pp. 202-03.

account, the orchestra's drop in artistic quality and falling popularity internationally compared with the Staatskapelle Dresden.²⁰⁸ Such assessment standards helped create a competitive environment encouraging music institutions and musicians to pursue artistic excellence. In addition, the Honecker government continued to endorse East German musical talents to participate in national and international music competitions. For instance, aware of the East German candidates' failure to present individual styles and interpretations during their performances at the sixth International Schumann Competition in Zwickau, the MfK emphasised improving the East German musical talents' proficiency at elite music schools to develop internationally competitive East German musical artists.²⁰⁹ Moreover, benefiting from its relaxed international environment during *détente*, the Honecker government was keen on attracting international music talents and performing music groups in the GDR classical music scene. For instance, some internationally renowned western conductors, including Andre Rieu Sr., and Herbert Blomstedt, were among the GDR artistic imports from the western bloc, taking a leading role in the elite East German music institutions. Thus, rather than suffering from a decline, German classical music heritage in the GDR experienced a further revival under Honecker.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the usefulness of Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' paradigm for understanding the GDR's classical music heritage practices by looking at the policymaking aspect. It has shown why the SED maintained its aspiration to promote the heritage within GDR socialism, the SED's reliance on the cultural intelligentsia in reconstructing the heritage's socialist realist repertoire, and the SED's endeavours in promoting the heritage. Importantly, it has shown that throughout the GDR era, the SED's musical policies did not remain static according to the Party's own will. Instead, the policies evolved under the influence of the SED's interactions with not only non-state social actors inside the GDR but also the international world. With its ambition and efforts to construct a

²⁰⁸ BStU, BV Dresden AKG PI, Nr. 22/86, ff. 2-3.

²⁰⁹ BA, DR 1/10460, ff. 14-15.

solely top-down music culture practice and make the state-imposed German classical music heritage all-embracing, the SED met with difficulty in realising this ambition. In order to win, to the highest extent possible, the population's hearts and minds for consolidating its governing legitimacy, the SED learned to accommodate, facilitate, and encourage a relatively diverse music culture scene.

After 1971 Honecker was at pains to promote the heritage among the East German population. However, unlike Ulbricht in the early GDR years, Honecker did not strive to imbue every East German with a passion for the heritage. The SED's belief in that the flourishing of the heritage was an embodiment of the socialist GDR's cultural supremacy over the capitalist FRG, together with the SED's economic exploitation of the heritage industry, consolidated the heritage's pivotal role in Honecker's domestic cultural policies. These developments contributed to Honecker's aspiration to demarcate the GDR culturally and economically from the FRG. Moreover, given the wave of SED-endorsed re-appropriation of the German historical past under Honecker, the GDR's German classical music heritage repertoire experienced further expansion and prosperity. In particular, the Honecker government's attitudes towards the heritage practices in the domestic GDR cultural scene revealed its facilitation of cultural demands from below. The SED's expansion of its criteria for government-supported music culture from education (*Bildung*) to entertainment, the SED's less restrictive policy on the musical intelligentsia's selection of musical styles and historical musical figures in the GDR musical life, along with the prosperity of a more diverse music scene in the GDR, all notably demonstrate the 'participatory' factor in the GDR dictatorship.

It should be noted that the SED's tendency to concede to popular musical demands did not suggest any SED intention to withdraw from steering the GDR's musical life. Throughout the GDR's existence, the SED never gave up its aspiration to dominate the GDR's cultural life and promote German classical music heritage practices for the purpose of power consolidation. This can be particularly evidenced by the case of Wolf Biermann's expatriation. Under the influence of the GDR's domestic and international environments, the Honecker government considered that as long as musical practices did not openly challenge the SED legitimacy, they

had their space in the GDR's musical life. All SED policies on the heritage in the domestic GDR cultural scene, which included cooperation and conflict, reconciliation, and compromise between all social protagonists, were driven by the SED's political ends of power consolidation.

CHAPTER TWO

Policymaking in the GDR-British Classical Music Exchange

Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed the relationship between the SED's domestic policymaking and the Party's legitimacy. Singling out Britain from the western bloc, this chapter investigates the SED's policymaking in the GDR's classical music diplomacy directed towards Britain and Britain's responses. The following questions will be tackled throughout this chapter: how did the GDR and Britain relate to each side's pursuit of its national interests? How did each side's political authorities formulate and develop policies in their classical music exchange? What role did non-state social actors play in the policymaking?

This chapter makes the central argument that the interpretation of the GDR as 'participatory dictatorship' can be seen in the SED's policymaking in GDR-British classical music diplomacy, as the SED's formation and promotion of its policy was the result of the interplay of all involved domestic and international social actors. Below this central argument, this chapter also makes the following claims. The first argument is that the SED's GDR-British classical music exchange policies essentially served its purpose of power legitimacy inside the GDR and on the international stage. Secondly, the SED pursued the GDR's image cultivation (*Imagepflege*) through its promotion of the exchange. While Ulbricht was preoccupied with his aspiration to exploit the exchange's cultural capital for undermining the Bonn government's Hallstein Doctrine and winning Britain's diplomatic recognition, Honecker expected the exchange to continue to counter the GDR's negative international image and achieve the SED-claimed legitimacy of East Berlin in Britain. The third argument is that the SED had the intention and made efforts to monetise the GDR's German classical music heritage on the British market. Compared with Ulbricht, Honecker focused more on exporting the heritage to the British market to increase the GDR's hard currency revenue and demarcate the GDR from the FRG.

Fourthly, the British political authorities had far less interest in fostering the GDR-British classical music exchange than their East German counterparts during the post-recognition era. Britain's reduced interest was due to the GDR's loss of its special importance as Britain's bargaining chip with the FRG, and the British political authorities' discontent with the SED's political and economic exploitation of government-funded exchange. In addition, Britain's decreased interest in recruiting foreign nationals due to the growth of its domestic unemployment rate also played a role. The fifth argument is that non-state social actors, i.e., the classical music intelligentsia, musical and cultural institutions and the population on both sides played an active role in governmental policymaking in the exchange. In order to fulfil their agendas, these social actors cooperated, negotiated, disagreed, and reconciled with the policymakers, influencing both East German and British political authorities' policies. The sixth argument is the exchange's noticeable development in the post-recognition era. Despite the British government's non-active engagement, the normalisation of GDR-British relations, reinforced by the efforts from the GDR side and British non-governmental actors, promoted the exchange.

This chapter has two sections. The first section starts by demonstrating why the SED found the GDR's German classical music employable in realising its international agendas directed at Britain. It then looks at the SED's policymaking in GDR-British classical music exchange during the non-recognition era and the responses from British political authorities. The second section moves into the interactions between the Honecker and British governments' policymaking in the exchange during *détente*. First, it shows Honecker's policy on using the heritage for the GDR's image-building (*Imagepflege*) and hard currency maker in British society. Then it explores the British political authorities' responses. The exploration is divided into two phases: (1) Between Honecker's accession and the launch of GDR-British diplomatic relations (1971-1973); and (2) from 1973 to the Berlin Wall's fall (1973-1989).

This chapter complicates Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' model, as it demonstrates the SED's dependence on the non-state GDR social actors' international networking for promoting the Party's agendas in Britain. Moreover, this chapter enriches the existing research on GDR-

British policymaking in classical music exchange. Firstly, in presenting the policymakers' attitudes, this chapter offers a macro-view of GDR-British classical music diplomacy. Importantly, it demonstrates a broad picture of the historical context in which the following case study chapters are located. Secondly, as there are few scholarly works exploring the interactions between policymakers and the classical music intelligentsia in policymaking regarding GDR-British classical music diplomacy, this chapter's investigation enriches the existing scholarly research and demonstrates the presence of *Eigensinn* of non-policymakers in the governments' policymaking process. Thirdly, this chapter offers an example of the GDR as a participatory dictatorship.

Section I: Before *détente*: the matter of recognition (*Anerkennung*)

The agenda of the SED's classical music diplomacy in Britain

Image cultivation for diplomatic recognition

Before the arrival of *détente*, the priority of the SED's foreign policy towards Britain was relatively straightforward: promoting GDR international legitimacy and discrediting the FRG. Especially when the Soviet Union officially granted the GDR sovereignty and the Bonn government's issue of the Hallstein Doctrine in September 1955, Ulbricht's motivation to win his British counterpart's diplomatic recognition grew significantly. According to Henning Hoff, in 1955, Ulbricht systematically formulated his foreign policy on Britain. Inside the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten*, MfAA), the 5th European Department was responsible for the GDR's policies towards Britain.²¹⁰ Given that the GDR's hard power (e.g., military, and economic resources) was neither considered internationally influential nor compared to the FRG by leading countries in the western bloc, the SED viewed the employment of soft power as an alternative for advancing the GDR's international agendas in Britain. Confronted with the diplomatic isolation from the western world, Ulbricht knew that it was unlikely to shift his British counterpart's attitude directly from official governmental

²¹⁰ Hoff, 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Großbritannien', pp. 268-69.

contacts. Therefore, he emphasised non-governmental links, sparing no effort in institutionalising all existing GDR-British contacts and creating new ones to overcome the British non-recognition policy. Hoff notes that such intent can be seen in Ulbricht's interview with the famous British broadcaster and newspaper editor William Haley in 1959. In the interview, Ulbricht expressed his hope to normalise GDR-Britain's diplomatic relations and stressed the significance of the ongoing economic and cultural relations for softening the ideological-political boundaries between the GDR and Britain.²¹¹

Ulbricht's deployment of the cultural capital of German classical music heritage in GDR-British relations chiefly served the Party need to promote the GDR's international legitimacy. Indeed, ample reasons suggest the heritage's potential competence in this regard. The first reason is that the heritage had long been appreciated in British society. Compared with German literature, classical music was able to transcend linguistic barriers. Although the influence of German literature and philosophy over the international world has been profound since the eighteenth century, their reception beyond the German-speaking world requires readers' understanding of the German language or, at least, relying on translation. Classical music, however, overcomes the problem of transnational cultural communication. It is particularly the case when German classical music is considered. Beginning from J. S. Bach to the nineteenth century, German classical music increasingly showed its hegemonic power over classical music more broadly for its dual quality of 'Germanness' and 'universalism'.²¹²

Originating and flourishing in western Europe, western classical music is a tradition shared by both the GDR and Britain. Moreover, Britain had been one of the most fervent admirers of Austro-German European music since the eighteenth century. Some of the most important German musical figures of all time had, either through residing or travelling, left their footprints in Britain or were celebrated in British society. For instance, born in Halle, a Saxon town which became part of the East German territory during the Cold War, Handel was

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 267.; BA, DY 30/3632, 'Stenografische Niederschrift des Gesprächs des Genossen Walter Ulbricht mit William Haley, Chefredakteur der *Times*', im Hause des ZK der SED' (22 April 1959).

²¹² Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy*, pp. 1, 8-9, 41; and Applegate & Potter, 'Germans as the "People of music"', p. 2.

naturalised as British during the reign of George II and became a cultural icon in Georgian England (and has been ever since). Another example is Beethoven's ninth symphony which was commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London. In addition to musical figures, some leading German orchestras, and groups, e.g., the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (LGO), the Staatskapelle Dresden (SkD), the Thomanerchor, the Dresdner Kreuzchor built their prestige among British audiences long before the foundation of the GDR.

Moreover, some East German musical elites' established contacts with Britain before the foundation of the GDR were also seen by the SED as useful. Between the 1930s to the end of the war, many German communists took political exile in Britain. According to Hoff's observation, there were around 300 exiled members in London at the beginning of the war. When the war ended, some exiled members, including Kurt Hager, returned to the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany, and were elevated to the power centre of the SED government in the GDR.²¹³ Within the field of music, prominent figures in this exiled group included Ernst Hermann Meyer and George Knepler. While working for the BBC's wartime German service, they set up and developed various musical and personal contacts with British musical circles. Particularly noticeable was that, together with British Marxist composer Alan Bush, they played an essential role in the foundation of the Workers' Music Association in 1936. After the foundation of the GDR, both Meyer and Knepler became influential figures in the SED's policymaking on GDR musical life and endeavoured to exploit their British contacts (e.g., Alan Bush) to promote GDR-British classical music exchange.²¹⁴ Thus, the SED saw these wartime musical communist interactions as valuable resources for facilitating the Party's cultural policy directed at Britain.

In addition, the communist ideal of 'high culture accessible to everyone' appeared particularly

²¹³ Hoff, 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Großbritannien 1949-1971', pp. 269-70.

²¹⁴ Alan Bush (1900-1995) was a British composer, conductor and pianist. As a committed communist, he often represented his political view in his musical works. In the 1930s, he engaged in the workers' choirs. Moreover, since the late 1930s, he engaged actively in promoting British-USSR relations. Thacker, 'Something different from the Hampstead perspective', pp. 212-16; Waters, 'Alan Bush', pp. 201-11; Pauline Fairclough & Louise Wiggins, 'Friendship of the musicians: Anglo-Soviet musical exchanges 1938-1948', in Mikkonen & Suutari (eds.), *Music, Art and Diplomacy*, pp. 30-38.

attractive to British musical elites and concertgoers. It should be noted that during the Cold War, state investment in classical music for promoting a state's soft power was by no means exclusive to the GDR and countries in the eastern bloc; the same was the case for many countries in the western bloc. The FRG, for instance, also regarded German classical music heritage as its soft power resource for culturally delegitimising the GDR on the international scene, thus making state endeavours for this cultural competition with the GDR.²¹⁵ Leaving aside its efforts in preserving the heritage and ensuring the sustained excellence of East German music groups and artists, the SED believed that what made the socialist GDR culture exceptionally superior to the FRG on the international stage was its efforts in bringing classical music to the masses. During the Minister of Culture, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann's official visit to Austria in 1978, he claimed GDR operatic culture's superiority over the FRG in this regard. He attacked Herbert von Karajan, the Austrian conductor leading the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO), as a representative of classical music's exclusiveness to the elite group in the FRG. He claimed that opera in the FRG was for entertaining the elite group instead of the mass population.²¹⁶ In practice, contemporary western observers of the GDR lauded the SED's cultural policy. One example is West German radio journalist and writer Hanns Schwarze's remark on GDR cultural life in his 1970 book *The GDR Today*. As he put it, the GDR exceeded the FRG in providing more theatre seats for its mass population and successfully attracted the younger generation to attend opera events.²¹⁷ This book was translated and adapted to English by John Mackinnon Mitchell in 1973, reaching the English-speaking world.²¹⁸ The Anglophone world's acknowledgement of the GDR's German classical music heritage achievements somewhat proved the allure of GDR cultural life to the western bloc.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Janik, *Recomposing German Music*, p. 267.

²¹⁶ BA, DR1/10460, 'Über die Reise des Ministers für Kultur, Genossen Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, von 15.-21.1. 1978 in der Republik Österreich, f. 3.

²¹⁷ Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, pp. 46-47.

²¹⁸ John M. Mitchell made two visits to the GDR before translating this book. According to him, this book was not for propaganda purpose. Rather, it provided the westerners with an informative outlook on GDR life. John M. Mitchell's political affiliation is unknown. John M. Mitchell, 'Translator's preface', in Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, p. 12.

²¹⁹ Janik, *Recomposing German Music*, p. 265; Leslie Colitt, 'Escape from East Berlin', *Guardian* (16 August 2011), accessed via: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/16/escape-from-east-berlin> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

As in most western countries, the perception of associating classical music with elite cultural entertainment was traditionally held by British society. During the war, the idea of government subsidies for museums, theatres and concert halls began to gain increasing support from the British cultural intelligentsia.²²⁰ This idea coincided with the communist model of transforming classical music into an egalitarian culture accessible to the mass population, thus building a certain degree of mutual appreciation between the British and GDR cultural circles. For example, Lord Mayor of Coventry, Kenneth Benfield, a conservative activist who served as the president of the Coventry branch of the British German Society, praised Dresden's concert and opera life in people's everyday living practices after his visit in the 1980s.²²¹ Thus, the GDR's German classical music heritage, along with other organisations and groups in favour of promoting the GDR's international legitimacy (e.g., the Communist Party of Great Britain, trade unions, sports and literature),²²² was exploited by the SED in wielding the GDR's soft power in Britain.

In practice, Ulbricht applied his rather 'two-way' classical music exchange to promote the GDR's international legitimacy in Britain. One way was that the GDR was keen on inviting British music troupes, non-governmental GDR-British friendship groups²²³ and personalities to

²²⁰ In 1940, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) was established for supporting and preserving British culture during the wartime. Regarding scholarly works on the CEMA, see for instance, Catherine Pearson, 'State support, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), in Suzanne Keene (ed.), *Museums in the Second World War: Curators, Culture and Change* (London & New York, 2017), pp. 89-99.

²²¹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 259-60.

²²² Regarding scholarly works on the SED's use of other non-official GDR-British links for promoting the international legitimacy project, see for instance, Sparwasser, *The Image of the German Democratic Republic in the British Press*, pp. 224-61; Stefan Berger & Norman LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990* (Augsburg, 2005); Arnd Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World* (Berlin & Vienna, 2002).

²²³ For instance, the GDR-Great Britain Friendship (*Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Großbritannien*), the mass organisation under the League for International Friendship (*Liga für Völkerfreundschaft*), was set up specifically for carrying out Ulbricht's public diplomacy in Britain. In 1963, the German-British Society (*Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft*) was founded primarily for the same purpose. Several friendship societies were established in Britain in favour of the diplomatic recognition. A revival of the Communist-controlled British Council for German Democracy founded in 1942, the Britain-Democratic German Information Exchange (BRIDGE) was set up on 9 January 1965. In the same year, the All-Party British-GDR Parliamentary Group, with most members Labour MPs, was founded to influence the British government in favour of recognition. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), although not wholeheartedly supporting the SED government, did actively forge various cultural exchanges during the non-recognition era. Sheila Taylor, 'A view from the inside', in Berger & LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany*, p. 316.

participate in GDR musical events and often dispensed patronage to those activities.²²⁴ The other way was sending prestigious East German music troupes to give touring concerts in Britain. According to the SED, political publicity was necessary for all such musical activities. As documents from the MfAA suggest, SED cultural officials were usually assigned to exhaust all possible resources to maximise the political achievements in each East German musical troupe's concert tour in Britain. Such political activities included: left-wing British press would be contacted to report the concert; the GDR's national flag, emblem, the state name (i.e., GDR/German Democratic Republic, DDR/Deutsche Demokratische Republik, or East Germany) would be expected to make their presence in public space and publications; political statements praising the GDR would be delivered to the public, the GDR's national anthem and socialist music composed by East German composers would be played during concerts.²²⁵ In addition, as Sheila Taylor presents, such GDR musical exchanges were often facilitated by non-governmental GDR-British friendship groups in Britain.²²⁶ In using these non-governmental links, Ulbricht hoped to engage the British public's awareness of the GDR's positive image to the greatest extent for the purpose of international legitimacy.

Ulbricht's awareness of the commercial potential of German classical music heritage on the British market

Although Ulbricht's overriding concern was the exploitation of the heritage for legitimatising the GDR state in British society, he also had an economic motive. As noted in Chapter One, since the early 1960s, Ulbricht ardently promoted his *Neues Ökonomisches System* (NÖS) to improve the GDR's national productivity. Because the realisation of this goal partly required replacing the outdated industrial stock with a more advanced model from the West, Ulbricht needed hard currency to import western technology and equipment.²²⁷ In Britain, concert-

²²⁴ The MfAA kept considerable documents regarding the MfK's arrangement of such activities. See for instance, PAAA, MfAA C: 122/70; 'Notiz', MfAA C: 150, 'Händel-Festspiele'.

²²⁵ PAAA, MfAA C: 122/70; 'Notiz'. The GDR's national anthem - 'Risen from Ruins' (*Auferstanden aus Ruinen*) was composed by Hanns Eisler with lyrics by Johannes Becher. It was used as the GDR's national anthem between 1949 and 1990. Regarding scholarly works on GDR state symbols, see for instance, Margarete Feinstein, *State Symbols: The Quest for Legitimacy in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (Boston & Leiden, 2001).

²²⁶ Taylor, 'A view from the inside', p. 316.

²²⁷ Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p. 94.

goers' general acknowledgement of the artistic excellence of German-speaking countries (e.g., the FRG, the GDR, Austria) in classical music and the established prestige of some elite East German music institutions equipped Ulbricht with a solid audience base for his classical music diplomacy.

Moreover, compared with the FRG and Austria, the competitive prices of East German musical troupes and performers for impresarios, and East German tourism for consumers from the capitalist world also brought Ulbricht a commercial prospect of the heritage. Soon after the LGO's first British touring concerts in April 1958, record shops placed newspaper advertisements showing their Gewandhaus collections.²²⁸ Since the mid-1960s, Berolina Travel Ltd, the GDR's travel agency, regularly advertised through the British market to attract musically-minded tourists to visit the GDR.²²⁹ For instance, in the Berolina advertisements published in *Sunday Times* and *Times* in 1968 and 1967, the Komische Oper (KO), the Staatsoper Berlin (SoB), the LGO and the Thomanerchor were highlighted in various GDR touring packages.²³⁰ Likewise, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra's concert programme at the Royal Festival Hall in March 1971 stated, 'The G. D. R. is the country for Musical Lovers', and featured the low-cost pleasures of visits to East Germany [see figure 1].²³¹

²²⁸ See for instance, 'GT. Universal Stores to sell records', *Financial Times* (21 July 1958), p. 8.

²²⁹ Taylor, 'A view from the Inside', p. 315.; Childs, 'The changing British perception of the GDR: a personal memoir', in Bauerkämper (ed.), *Britain and the GDR*, p. 381; Hoff, 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Großbritannien', pp. 272-73. In terms of scholarly works regarding GDR's relations with the Labour Party during the non-recognition era, see, for example, Darren Lilleker, 'The British Left and Eastern Europe', in Berger & LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany*, pp. 27-43; Henning Hoff, 'The GDR and the Labour Party', in *ibid.*, pp. 125-39; Marianne Howarth, 'The business of politics; the politics of business. The GDR in Britain before and after diplomatic recognition', in Christopher Hall & David Rock (eds.), *German Studies towards the Millennium: Selected Papers from the Conference of University Teachers of German, University of Keele, September 1999* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 9-26.

²³⁰ [n.a.], 'Berolina Travel Limited: there's something for everyone in the GDR', *Sunday Times* ((21 January 1968), p. 56. See also. Heinz Wenzel, 'Excellent conditions for tourism and leisure travel', *Times* (18 December 1968), p. 8.

²³¹ Durham, Palace Green Library Special Collections (PGLSC), Graham Whettam Archive, WHE C 35, Part I, a concert programme of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall (29 March 1971).



(Figure 1: The Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra's concert programme at the Royal Festival Hall, March 1971)

In addition, the growing success of the East German recording enterprise – the *Deutsche Schallplatten* (DS), in the international markets, also made Ulbricht contemplate exporting *Eterna* to Britain. As Reimar Bluth (manager of *Eterna*) and Christoph Schmökel (vice president of *Deutsche Grammophon*) noted, western recording companies valued *Eterna*'s competitive rate and artistic standards, thus cooperating with this East German music recording company.²³² According to Kube, the DS was among the few GDR cultural organisations able to make an economic profit for the state's hard currency revenue.²³³

²³² Reimar Bluth & Christoph Schmökel, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 33'35''-34'05'', 34'57''-35'06''.

²³³ Kube, 'Music trade in the slipstream of cultural diplomacy', pp. 200-01.

It is essential to note that Ulbricht's economic motive did not override the political one. His desperation to gain the recognition of GDR legitimacy from British society and statesmen led to his concession on economic profit for political gain. James Smith's research on the internationally established GDR theatre company – the Berliner Ensemble (BE)'s diplomatic service in Britain during the unrecognition era can offer a case in point. Smith argues that, to counteract the Hallstein Doctrine's influence over the BE's touring performances in Britain, the SED almost fully subsidised such tours and provided British promoters with all the profits from ticket sales.²³⁴ Although the BE did not belong to the classical music institutions, it can be presumed that the SED instrumentalised the same strategy behind his classical music troupes' touring concerts in Britain. Therefore, it should be noted that with the economic motive though, Ulbricht was willing to sacrifice the financial profits of his classical music troupes for the end of political recognition in Britain.

The British political authorities' responses to Ulbricht

Characteristic of Britain's official attitude to Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy was the BC's absence. From its inception in 1934, the BC has been dedicated to cultivating Britain's international cultural and educational links. Although it operated at 'arms-length' from government, its role as a government-funded institution meant that every international activity, to some extent, represented the attitude of the British government. As there was no formal diplomatic relationship between Britain and the GDR, coupled with the British adherence to the FRG's non-recognition policy, the British government found no motivation to devote time and governmental revenue to East German cultural links.²³⁵ However, even without the BC in place, it is by no means suggested that the British governmental response to Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy was a complete rejection. It should be noted that lying at the heart of Ulbricht's musical diplomacy was not the exchange of the two countries' cultures nor people on an equal scale. Instead, it was the transmission of the message of the GDR as the true heir of Germany's humanist tradition to British society for the GDR's

²³⁴ Smith, 'Brecht', p. 312.

²³⁵ It was not only until 1973 that the British Council opened its East German office in East Berlin. For works regarding the BC, see, for example, Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London, 1984).

recognition purpose that mattered to Ulbricht to the most significant degree. Given this consideration, from Ulbricht's perspective, the issue regarding whether British political authorities would fund such intercultural exchange activities played an insignificant role in influencing the fulfilment of his political agenda. Therefore, crucial to British policymaking was the problem of how to respond to the incoming East German music troupes and voices raised within British society. In this sense, British political authorities knew how to play the game of politics well. In oscillating between loosening and tightening its policy towards GDR-British musical exchanges, they endeavoured to maximise British national interest to the most considerable extent.

1955-late 1961: Britain's tendency towards the recognition — tolerating East German music troupes' political activities

Britain's tendency to tolerate the political presence of East German music troupes was apparent between 1955 and 1961. Following the two German states' entry into NATO and the Warsaw Pact, respectively, along with the FRG's release of the Hallstein Doctrine in 1955, the British government saw the impossibility of German unification in the short run. At that time, the voice in favour of recognising the GDR's international legitimacy was raised within the Eden ministry. The government, considering Britain as a significant international power superior to the FRG, thought of the possibility of developing relations with the GDR without strictly conforming to the FRG's Hallstein Doctrine.²³⁶

A visible step taken by the British political authority towards the rapprochement during this period was its lenience with East German musical troupes' political activities. With the imposition of the Hallstein Doctrine, GDR political publicity was disallowed in NATO countries. To provide further detail, activities relating to GDR political publicity included: (1) the playing of the GDR's national anthem, (2) the public presence of the GDR's national symbols (e.g., flag, emblem, and the words 'German Democratic Republic', 'GDR', 'DDR'), (3) the national origin

²³⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 77-8.

of East German delegations or musical troupes should be shown as 'Germany', (4) press conferences which related to GDR political activities.²³⁷ With the ban in place, however, some East German musical ensembles succeeded in retaining political activities and symbols, showing the GDR's political presence in Britain. For instance, when the LGO made its first UK tour in 1958, according to Yaeger, not only was the GDR national anthem played at the beginning of each concert and broadcasted through airwaves in its London performance but also a report in *Times* mentioned the premiere of the GDR national anthem. In addition, local promotional materials noted the national origin — 'the German Democratic Republic' of the orchestra.²³⁸ Moreover, when the GDR Sorbian choir participated in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod Festival in 1960, the then newly adopted GDR national flag was raised at the festival venue.²³⁹

Late 1961-mid 1960s: Britain's tendency to revise -travel restrictions from the Allied Travel Office (ATO)

However, Britain's plan to further relax GDR-British relations came to halt in late 1961. The Berlin Wall's erection further confirmed the British government's ideas about Germany in the division, which motivated it to develop some links with the GDR. Nonetheless, the US, other than Britain, had a decisive role in formulating and implementing NATO policy towards Ulbricht.²⁴⁰ With the US-led western reaction to the erection of the Wall and the increasing British need for FRG support in entering the EEC, the Macmillan government imposed a ban on East German political activities in Britain. Within the realm of musical exchange, East German musical troupes were prohibited from conducting any activities that might suggest British sympathy towards the GDR regime.

²³⁷ PAAA, MfAA C:122/70, 'Auszug aus dem Bericht über die Reise des Bachorchesters nach England vom 30.09-10.10. 1967'.

²³⁸ Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the wages of diplomatic service', pp. 72-73; [n.a.], 'The Gewandhaus Orchestra', *Times* (17 April 1958), p. 3.

²³⁹ [n.a.], 'DDR-Flagge weht in Wales (Llangollen)', *Neues Deutschland* (09 July 1960), p. 5; Rhian Thomas, *Wales and the German Democratic Republic: Expressions and Perceptions of Welsh Identity during the Cold War* (PhD thesis, University of South Wales, 2014), p. 81.

²⁴⁰ Martin McCauley, 'British-GDR relations: a see-saw relationship', in Bauerkämper (eds.), *Britain and the GDR*, p. 47.

Even worse, because the ATO complicated the application and issue process of Temporary Travel Documents (TTDs) for East Germans before 1965, East German musicians' difficulty in getting the TTDs usually resulted in the cancellation of their performances in Britain. Before the 1970s, East Germans had to provide two kinds of travel documents to enter any NATO country. One was the TTD issued by the ATO, which was governed by the tripartite American, French, and American powers in West Berlin. The other one was a travel visa, which was granted by the destination country of the applicant.²⁴¹ As Marilyn Thomas shows, the ATO's non-recognition of GDR passports and its requirement that East German applicants make two visits to its West Berlin office to apply and obtain the TTDs made it much harder for ordinary East Germans to travel to the Western Bloc following the Berlin Wall erection.²⁴² Undoubtedly, such an ATO act was seriously detrimental to Ulbricht's musical diplomacy directed at Britain.

The case of the second exhibition of the *Börsenverein der Deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig* in London in December 1961 offers a telling example of how Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy in Britain was seriously affected by an ATO travel ban immediately after the erection of the Berlin Wall. With the theme of music from Germany, this free exhibition exhibited books, sheet music, scores, and records by the GDR. Relevant documents kept at the Staatsarchiv Leipzig (SaL) suggest that the exhibition shouldered at least three responsibilities assigned by Ulbricht. Perhaps the most crucial responsibility was to improve the British public's awareness of the socialist German state as the legitimate heir of historical Germany's humanist tradition. The design of the exhibition's English poster can vividly capture this (see figure 2): for one, the title 'Music from Germany' was highlighted in the typography of Fraktur. There is a lack of curatorial documents explaining the selection of the Fraktur script. However, the script's symbolic association with German cultural tradition and identity possibly explain the GDR

²⁴¹ Dichter, "A game of political ice hockey", p. 29.

²⁴² Marilyn Thomas, "Aggression in felt slippers": normalisation and the ideological struggle in the context of détente and Ostpolitik', in Fulbrook, *Power and Society in the GDR*, p. 39.

designers' rationale for choosing it.²⁴³ For the other, the words 'German Democratic Republic' was presented on the poster to mark the GDR's political presence in Britain.

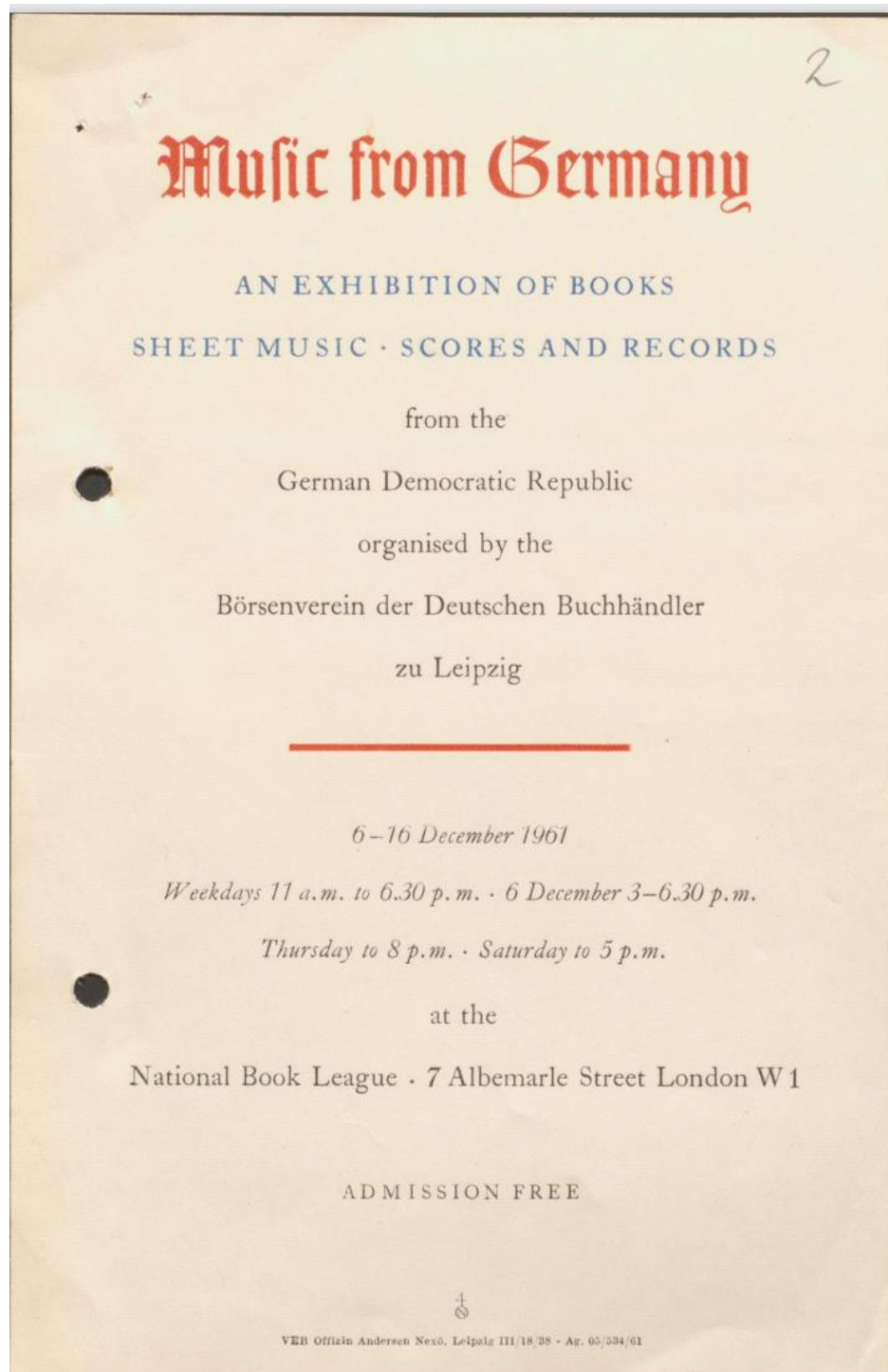
Another responsibility was to showcase the GDR's cultural achievements in developing classical music. For example, musical and operatic programmes were borrowed from some elite East German opera houses such as the SoB, the KO, the Leipziger Oper (LO), and the Staatstheater Dresden (Staatsoper and Staatskapelle Dresden). In addition, a talk featuring multiple celebratory events of the newly built LO House was to be delivered at the exhibition's opening reception.

The third responsibility was the fastening of the GDR-British musical tie. At the opening reception, there would have been a presentation of the KO's operatic production of Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is worth noting that the event highlighted East German author Arnold Zweig's praise of British musical culture. In his comment, he refuted the idea mocking Britain's underachievement in classical music. As he wrote, 'the buzzword of England as the "land without music"' is pure nonsense, as measured by the all-time high culture of English folk and choral music.'²⁴⁴ Zweig's comment also praised Britten, stating that he was a legitimate successor of British high culture and using his *Peter Grimes*, an opera featuring a Suffolk coastal village, to label him as a passionate patriot. Moreover, free entry

²⁴³ As Pascal Michelberger suggests, the German-speaking world's widespread adoption of the Fraktur script in printing from the sixteenth century onwards made it a part of German cultural tradition. Moreover, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars, Fraktur functioned as a patriotic symbol of German nationalism, demarcating Germany from the rest of Europe. After enjoying its status as a German national symbol in the early Third Reich years, the Fraktur was abruptly 'criminalised' as 'Jewish' by Nazi official Martin Bormann on behalf of Hitler in 1941, thus being banned. Pascal Michelberger, 'Decoding Fraktur: complex meanings of a "German" typeface', in Abhimanyu Acharya, Laila Zaitoun, Marziyeh Ghoreishi, & Victoria Jara (eds.), *The Scattered Pelican* (Western University, 2020), pp. 40-43. See also Gerhard Augst, 'Germany: script and politics', in Peter Daniels, & William Bright (eds.), *The World's Writing Systems* (New York & Oxford, 1996), pp. 769-70; Stephen Eskilson, *Graphic Design: A New History* (London, 2007), p. 94; Steven Heller, *Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design* (New York, 2014), p. 109; Simon Loxley, *Type: The Secret History of Letters* (London, 2006), p. 103; Gerald Newton, 'Deutsche Schrift: the demise and rise of German black letter', *German Life and Letters*, 56.2 (2003), p. 200; Hans Willberg, 'Fraktur and nationalism', in Peter Bain & Paul Shaw (eds.), *Blackletter: Type and National Identity* (New York, 1998), pp. 40-41.

²⁴⁴ The original German text: 'Das Schlagwort von England als dem "Land ohne Musik" ist, gemessen an der zu allen Zeiten hohen Kultur der englischen Volksmusik oder der englischen Volksmusik oder des englischen Chorwesens, purer Unsinn.' Leipzig, Staatsarchiv Leipzig (SaL), 21766, 2962, *Ein Sommernachtstraum* programme notes by the Komische Oper, f. 2.

implied that the exhibition intended to attract the British public to the broadest spectrum.²⁴⁵



(Figure 2: the English poster of 'Music from Germany' at the *National* Book League, 1961)

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

However well planned, this event was badly timed. This exhibition was held between 6 and 16 December 1961, at the height of the ATO's retaliation against the SED's erection of the Berlin Wall. Due to the suspension of their entry permits, the GDR representatives could not travel to the UK. At this point, the British musicologist and organist Percy Young²⁴⁶ and some British music elites sympathetic to the GDR decided to step into the breach so that the exhibition could take place against the adverse circumstances. The exhibition was subject to the British government's political ban, so it hardly had much publicity. It was not until 12 December that year that *Financial Times* allotted a tiny space to a report regarding this event. This report suggests that the exhibition's name, 'Music from Germany', perhaps was replaced by 'Music from East Germany'.²⁴⁷ Apart from this, there is no further evidence of how many of the British public saw it.

In subsequent years, voices against the ATO travel ban arose from the GDR and within the western bloc. Under such pressure, the ATO tended to impose a less restrictive travel ban on East Germans.²⁴⁸ Apart from refusing applications from East Germans whom the ATO identified as SED cultural functionaries,²⁴⁹ it also turned down many applicants who planned to undertake cultural activities because the SED's communist propaganda likely accompanied them. Consequently, East German applicants who intended to travel for cultural activities sometimes failed to be granted the TTDs. For example, in 1963, in contrast to lifting its travel ban for medical, scientific, and sporting exchange, the ATO refused to grant artists from the BE TTDs to participate in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.²⁵⁰ According to the account of Lord Kennet (Wayland Young), a Labour politician in the House of Lords, the reasons were, to some extent, linked with the communist background of the ensemble's founder Bertolt Brecht and his closeness to the regime. Nevertheless, the ATO documents show that the ensemble somehow knew that its travel application would be refused, thus withdrawing it before the

²⁴⁶ Percy Young was a close British contact for the GDR's musical circles and was a supporter of the 'Handel Prize' in Halle and wrote English bibliography for Ernst Meyer. See, for example, Thacker, 'Something different from the Hampstead perspective', p. 214.

²⁴⁷ 'Multiple Arts and Entertainment Items', *Financial Times* (12 December 1961), p. 20.

²⁴⁸ Thomas, 'Aggression in felt slippers', pp. 38-40.

²⁴⁹ Ian Wallace, 'The GDR's cultural activities in Britain', *German Life and Letters*, 53.3 (2000), p. 396.

²⁵⁰ Regarding scholarly works on the ATO's refusal of travel documents to the Berliner Ensemble members for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1963, see for instance, Smith, 'Brecht', pp. 307-23.

FO decided.²⁵¹ Like the BE encountered, some East German music-related activities in Britain, including members of an East German children's choir, failed to obtain their TTDs to Britain.²⁵² Among the 195 East Germans whose TTD applications were turned down by the ATO between 1961 and 1964, nineteen were musicians and actors.²⁵³

The Mid 1960s-1969 (Brandt's Ostpolitik): Manipulating the GDR in British-GDR relations

Considering the pressure from both within and outside Britain, along with its international interest, the British government gradually approached a further relaxation on issuing TTDs to East German cultural troupes. Apart from disallowing political activities which would indicate the GDR sovereignty, it did not add additional requirements to East Germans who applied for TTDs to enter the UK. Smith notes that Britain's rejection of travelling applications from the BE to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival brought the Macmillan government into its publicity crisis. While British theatrical circles published newspaper articles to criticise the government's 'hypocrisy of punishing the GDR's travel restrictions by enforcing new travel restrictions of their own', foreign correspondents in East Berlin praised the artistic excellence of the BE in the British press. The result was that although the BE's 1963 British tour did not materialise, it played a crucial role in pushing the British government and the ATO to loosen their restrictions on issuing TTDs to East German cultural practitioners.²⁵⁴ In addition to the pressure, Britain intended to use the GDR as a bargaining counter in negotiating with the FRG over Britain's EEC membership. Aware of the importance of distancing itself from Ulbricht to win the FRG's goodwill, the British government decided to keep its adherence to the non-recognition policy. The decision resulted in Britain's prohibition of political activities by East German musical troupes. At the same time, as pointed out by Bauerkämper, Britain also intended to 'exploit West German fears of a collapse of its non-recognition policy' for the same ends.²⁵⁵ Translating this governmental intent into practice suggests that while Britain still held its non-recognition

²⁵¹ Kew, The National Archives (TNA), FO 1060/4616, f. 1238, Lord Kennet's remark on 'Visa for East German Scientists and Artists' (21 March 1963).

²⁵² Manfred Arndt, *Allied Travel Office: Barrier against Relaxation and Cooperation* (Dresden, 1966), p. 6.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁵⁴ Smith, 'Brecht', pp. 317-20.

²⁵⁵ Bauerkämper, 'It took three to tango', p. 46.

policy, non-British state actors (e.g., GDR cultural officials, musical troupes, local British authorities, GDR-British friendship societies, British impresarios, and artists) had a certain degree of agency to navigate the touring performances according to their pursuits.

Two cases were the Bach Orchestra of the Leipzig Gewandhaus and the Staatskapelle Berlin (SkB)'s tours of Britain in 1967. Despite their awareness of the ATO ban on political presence, the SED authorities assigned some cultural functionaries from the Ministry for Culture (MfK) and travel management (*Reiseleitung*) department of the orchestras to plan, conduct, and monitor the political activities of the British tours. Before the tours started, the British music agency turned down the GDR's request to have the orchestra's national origins acknowledged, stating 'it is obviously not in English concert life to indicate the country of origin as part of the advertising campaign'. However unwillingly, the GDR side compromised on this issue in the hope of developing long-term cultural collaboration with Britain. On 1 October 1967, the Bach Orchestra started its British debut in Eastbourne, followed by Sunderland and finished in London on 9 October. Their repertoire included some German classics by J. S. Bach. W. A. Mozart, J. Haydn, as well as contemporary socialist works by East German composer Peter Hermann. One month later, the SkB, led by conductor Kurt Masur, made its ten-day British touring performances in London and some cities in northeast England where the local councils were dominated by Labour.

According to reports from the MfK cultural functionaries, while the British audience warmly received these two East German music groups' artistic excellence, there was dislike for GDR socialism. As the functionaries noted, the discrimination was presented in the following aspects. The first aspect was that because of ATO restrictions on playing GDR music, works by contemporary East German composers could not be played in most of these touring concerts.²⁵⁶ The second aspect was that the SkB suffered minimal British media coverage.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ PAAA, MfAA C: 122/70, 'Bericht über die Reise des Bachorchesters des Gewandhauses nach England, vom 30.9.1967-10.10. 1967', and, MfAA C/150, 'Bericht: über die Konzerttournee der Berliner Staatskapelle vom-9.-19. November 1967 durch Groß-Britannien (Berlin, den 30. November 1967)'.

²⁵⁷ Regarding some examples of the British press reports of the Staatskapelle Berlin (SkB)'s British performances in 1967, see for instance, [n.a.], 'Berlin Staatskapelle', *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (10

The minimal coverage somewhat resulted in the SkB's performance at the Royal Festival Hall in London attracting only 900 spectators while the concert hall's audience capacity was 2,900. Even worse to the SED, among the very few British newspaper reports, the SkB was described as an orchestra from Berlin instead of East Berlin. As the functionary pointed out, such treatment from the British press would mislead the British audience to think that the Staatskapelle Berlin was from West Berlin instead of the East (see figure 3).²⁵⁸



(Figure 3: the concert announcement of the Berliner Staatskapelle in Newcastle, *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 10 November 1967)

It is worth noting that despite political publicity conducted by the SkB tour, the outcome did not appear to satisfy the SED officials. In exploiting the SED's connections with the local CPGB and the Labour Party, the SkB conducted some political activities regardless of Britain's non-recognition policy. In the orchestra tour in Newcastle, for instance, some orchestra members were introduced to the Lord Mayor of Newcastle at the concert reception. In addition, at a press conference, the GDR representation spoke to around eight representatives from the British press. In London, during the orchestra's reception at the Royal Festival Hall, the GDR representation made a closing speech. However, to the SED authorities' disappointment, the 'inaction' of some touring members led to the underperformance of the orchestra's political

November 1967); Mosco Carner, 'Brass Pride of Berlin', *Times* (18 November 1967), p. 19; Edward Greenfield, 'The Berlin State Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall', *Guardian* (18 November 1967), p. 4.

²⁵⁸ MfAA C:150, 'Bericht: über die Konzerttournee der Berliner Staatskapelle vom -9.-19. November 1967 durch Groß-Britannien, (Berlin, den 30. November 1967)'; MfAA C:122/70, 'Gastspiel der Berliner Staatskapelle vom 9.-19. 11. 1967 in Großbritannien'.

publicity. As written by the functionary who did the assessment report regarding the orchestra's touring performances, three members were to be blamed. The first person was the MfK functionary, who was responsible for organising the political activities of the tour. This functionary arrived in Britain few days before the tour started, thus having no sufficient time for the preparation. The second person was conductor Kurt Masur, who refused to make a political statement at a press conference. The conductor's excuse for refusal seemed adequate. As Masur explained to the SED cultural official, a political statement would possibly result in Britain's cancellation of the forthcoming GDR musical troupes' performances in Britain.²⁵⁹ The third person to be blamed for the SED authorities' disappointment was Hans Pischner, director of Staatsoper Berlin. The functionary who wrote the report did not consider the director's participation in this tour necessary, thus accusing him of not contributing to the political publicity project and wasting the governmental-funded travel expense for him and his wife.²⁶⁰

Britain's intent to juggle the two German states to sustain its power in capitalist Europe provided the framework of its responses to Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy. British political authorities were aware the importance of keeping away from engaging in public support for Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy. The reasons were not only Britain's alliance with the FRG and the Hallstein doctrine, but more importantly, Britain's reliance on the FRG's support for its EEC membership. At the same time, Britain was aware that its tactical manipulation of Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy could function as a bargaining chip in British-FRG relations.

Section II: The Honecker Era: the matters of image cultivation (*Imagepflege*) and hard currency

Honecker's British agenda

Two years after the Bonn government released its *Ostpolitik*, Honecker stepped into the top

²⁵⁹ Kurt Masur's interactions with the SED during the 1967 tour is also addressed in Chapter III.

²⁶⁰ PAAA, MfAA C: 150, 'Bericht: über die Konzerttournee der Berliner Staatskapelle vom 9.-19. November 1967 durch Groß-Britannien, (Berlin, den 30. November 1967)'.

position at the GDR in 1971. At the SED's Eighth Party Congress in June, while saying that the socialist system constantly faced ideological aggression from capitalism and imperialism, the new Party leader expressed his confidence in socialism's final triumph over capitalism. Nonetheless, he positively remarked on the talks between the Bonn government and the Brezhnev government regarding East-West rapprochement.²⁶¹ Honecker's speech at this congress indicated his pursuit of a peaceful co-existence between the two German states.²⁶² Knowing that his accession would attract notable attention from western bloc policymakers, Honecker required his party officials to collect international mass media reports on the Eighth Party Congress.²⁶³ For the new GDR leader, the prospect of *détente* seemed promising in bringing his international aspirations and domestic rule advantages. Indeed, the settlement of *détente* indicated that the SED's aspiration of a united socialist Germany was unlikely to succeed in the short term. Nevertheless, it helped the GDR enter the international community as an independent state or even, as Mary Sarotte puts it, a nation separate from the capitalist FRG.²⁶⁴ In addition, given that Honecker's ambition of developing a socialist welfare society with an emphasis on higher living standards undoubtedly placed a higher expectation on the national economy, a better international trading environment, and a relaxed relationship with the West helped fulfil the Party's economic ends. In Honecker's mind, the GDR's progressive economic performance and high living standards would attract and strengthen the populace's loyalty to GDR socialism, thereby sustaining domestic stability.²⁶⁵ Given these considerations, Honecker could hardly view *détente* with hostility.

One year after signing the Basic Treaty (*Grundlagenvertrag*) by the two German states, the GDR eventually won its formal recognition from Britain in 1973. Honecker's classical music diplomacy directed towards Britain during the post-recognition era did not differ much from Ulbricht's. Image-cultivation (*Imageflege*) and attracting hard currency inflow continued to

²⁶¹ BA, DY 30/2049, 'Bericht des ZK an den VIII. Parteitag'.

²⁶² Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C., 1994), p. 138.; Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 9; Large, *Berlin*, pp. 496-97; Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p. 110.

²⁶³ BA, DY 30/2049, 'Bericht des ZK an den VIII. Parteitag' & 'Pressemeldungen über die Rede von Erich Honecker (15 June 1971)'.

²⁶⁴ Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p. 118.

²⁶⁵ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 63.

motivate the SED's promotion of the heritage in GDR-British cultural exchanges. While Ulbricht made winning international legitimacy his overriding priority, Honecker's need to capitalise on the heritage in trans-bloc cultural exchanges drastically increased with the progression of GDR socialism.

Image-cultivation

Despite the launch of formal diplomacy, the image-cultivation project still played a crucial role in Honecker's orchestration of GDR-British classical music diplomacy. The arrival of East-West *détente* changed neither the ideological-political antagonism between the two Cold War blocs nor the two German states' competition for cultural supremacy. Elite East German musical institutions, artists, and high-performance sports athletes shouldered Honecker's international aspirations to present GDR socialism's supremacy. Moreover, Honecker emphasised the urgency of the ideological push of socialism in planning the GDR's cultural exchange with Britain, requesting that all means of foreign information (*Auslandsinformation*) work should serve the Party's ideological and political ends.²⁶⁶ In doing so, Honecker hoped to counter the long-accumulated negative GDR image in the public eye from the western bloc as a repressive and underdeveloped regime, presenting instead GDR socialism's supremacy over the capitalist system.²⁶⁷

Moreover, Honecker's intent to claim East Berlin as the GDR capital in GDR-British relations motivated him further to exploit the cultural capital of German classical music heritage. Despite the arrival of *détente*, East Berlin's somewhat ambiguous international status remained unchanged. In September 1971, the four occupation powers signed the Berlin Agreement (the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin). Although the agreement paved the way

²⁶⁶ PAAA, MfAA, C: 161/77, f. 39.

²⁶⁷ For some SED documents regarding the image-cultivation project in the western bloc, see for instance, BA, DR 1/10460, 'Jahreseinschätzung der Arbeit mit den internationalen Organisationen auf dem Gebiet der Kultur-1973', ff. 30-31; and 'Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit Genossen Dr. Fautz, Leiter der HA Internationale Beziehungen, und Genossen Hermann Falk, Generaldirektor der Künstler-Agentur der DDR (13 March 1974)', f. 3.

for the two German states' mutual diplomatic recognition and the end of the GDR's diplomatic isolation, it left East Berlin's legal status as the GDR's capital and the SED's governing authority over East Berlin disputable. Based on the agreement, whereas the GDR and Soviet Union believed that East Berlin was the GDR capital and the SED government had its ruling authority in his city, the western bloc opposed such an interpretation. The western bloc insisted that East Berlin remained a part of the Greater Berlin area, governed by the four wartime allies. Under the interpretation, East Berlin was officially under the governance of the Soviets, and the SED government only had administrative power.²⁶⁸ Given Britain's role as one of the three protecting powers in West Berlin, Honecker endeavoured to insert his political claim of East Berlin's legal status into GDR-British classical music diplomacy in the post-recognition era.²⁶⁹

Capitalising on the heritage

Throughout his rule, Honecker's intent and efforts to export the GDR cultural heritage to the western bloc considerably grew parallel with the GDR's accumulation of western debt. As Zatlin observes, Honecker's presentation of the GDR as the 'real-existing socialism' into his economic policy was 'the renunciation of a future utopia in favour of present plenty. Guided by the logic that the GDR could temporarily depend on western intellectual loans (e.g., technology, machines, and equipment) and consumer goods for long-term economic success and domestic stability, Honecker viewed the expansion of trading with the western bloc as contributing to his demarcation policy.'²⁷⁰

Honecker's intent to translate the heritage into hard currencies through trading with Britain was among his economic endeavours to balance the GDR's trade deficits and foreign loans to the western bloc. Whereas Ulbricht was willing to sacrifice financial profit to win British society's recognition of GDR legitimacy, Honecker had much less concern over this issue. Well

²⁶⁸ Large, *Berlin*, p. 497; TNA, FCO 33/5550, 'Anglo/GDR cultural programme negotiations, 27-30 April, background brief: GDR political'.

²⁶⁹ BtSU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künftlerausstausches', f. 15.

²⁷⁰ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 3, 61.

aware of the relatively low cost and artistic excellence of East German classical music commodities on western markets, Honecker saw the normalisation of GDR-British relations as potentially beneficial to the exportation of the heritage to the British market. When the GDR progressed into the 1980s, Honecker also intended to prevent the outflow of hard currencies to Britain through the musical exchanges. Documents from the GDR's Artists Agency (*Künstler Agentur, AA*)²⁷¹ show that especially struck by the oil crisis, the government increasingly found it difficult to pay hard currency to the incoming guest performances from the western bloc under the cultural exchange agreement. For instance, the GDR side was reluctant to pay hard currency to the Welsh National Opera (WNO)'s guest performances at the Dresden Music Festival, thus considering settling the debts with cultural assets — sending East German cultural troupes and talents to perform on the stage of the WNO.²⁷² In doing so, Honecker hoped to maximise his financial gain from trading with the British music market.

Britain as a platform for the GDR demarcation

For Honecker, the expansion of the British classical music market was significant to his prevention of the FRG's political, cultural, and economic exploitation of the two German states' cultural exchanges. As the GDR progressed through the 1980s, Honecker's attitude towards its FRG debt and trading relations became ever more self-contradictory and complicated. Throughout the Cold War, the FRG was the GDR's most generous creditor and active trading partner from the western bloc. As Zatlin shows, given that the GDR import far surpassed its export in international markets, the GDR had to rely significantly on the capitalist currency debt from the FRG to cover its international trading deficits.²⁷³ Honecker knew well that the acceptance of the FRG's financial generosity was at the cost of the SED's political independence from the Bonn government. Thus, Honecker had the intention to reduce the GDR's financial dependence on the FRG.

²⁷¹ The Artists Agency was an SED governmental apparatus with the main tasks of 'planning contractual security, the preparation, and organisation of the business trips of artists and ensembles'. BStU, MfS-HA XX/AKG Nr. 6086, f. 35.

²⁷² BStU, HA-XX, Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künftler austausches', f. 8.

²⁷³ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism.*, p. 71.

Honecker was pleased with the GDR's trade surplus in performing arts exchange with the FRG. Especially during *détente*, the FRG actively engaged in the trade, importing more guest performances from the GDR than it exported to the GDR. Between 1976 to the first half of 1980, there were 314 guest performances by ensembles, 1,575 performances by soloists, directors, and stage directing works, and 353 performances by entertainment groups from the GDR taking place in the FRG. In 1979, GDR guest performances in the FRG generated 1,049 thousand Deutsch Marks for the GDR hard currency revenue, occupying nearly one-third of GDR touring performance income in the non-socialist world (NSW). While the GDR kept introducing considerable ensembles and talents to the FRG cultural scene, it did not import as many FRG ensembles and talents as the FRG did.²⁷⁴ Such a trade surplus pleased the SED authorities.

However, Honecker perceived the GDR's intensive and extensive performing arts activities in the FRG as potentially threatening to destabilise his domestic rule despite their commercial profitability. In the early 1980s, when the AA and the Ministry for State Security (MfS) evaluated GDR ensembles and talents' touring activities in the FRG, they concluded that these activities spoiled the GDR's image-cultivation project due to the absence of political messages and touring musicians' practices of subversive behaviours. Firstly, SED authorities did not consider these activities making auspicious political presence of the GDR. According to some MfS records, given that a significant number of East German intellectuals immigrated to the FRG before 1961 and citizens of the two Germanies shared some family ties, a substantial portion of SED-endorsed East German guest performances in the FRG started with personal contacts. While these non-governmental efforts played an active role in boosting the GDR's hard currency income, they hardly planned any GDR political presence activities in those guest performances. Among SED elites, the idea was commonly shared that, through their guest performances in the FRG, East German elite cultural troupes contributed to the flourishing of the FRG cultural scene rather than claiming GDR cultural supremacy over the FRG.

²⁷⁴ BStU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 13779, 'Überlegungen zum weiteren Austausch von Ensembles, Konzertsolisten sowie Ensembles und Solisten der Unterhaltungskunst DDR-BRD (4 August 1980)', ff. 2-3; DY 30/18818, a letter from Hans-Joachim Hoffmann to Kurt Hager (23 November 1983).

Consequently, this would reinforce the 'all-German conception' of the FRG on the cultural plane. As the AA put it, the FRG exploited the East German intellectual capital for its political ends.²⁷⁵

Secondly, Honecker was concerned about touring East German cultural intellectuals' subversive behaviours in the FRG. From the SED authorities' perspective, while performing arts institutions and individual artists could use their unofficial contacts to promote East German guest performances in the FRG, it was highly likely that they would 'abuse' these performances to conduct subversive activities against the interest of the SED. Ranging from hiding currency income from the AA, to taking privately arranged work commitments to defections, the FRG provided East German touring artists with a more fertile seedbed for such 'subversive' activities than other western bloc countries. Thus, the SED had to invest more MfS human and financial resources to counteract East German touring performances in the FRG. Given all these considerations, in the 1980s, the AA included the following task as one of its international priorities: expanding East German performing arts ensembles and talents' performances in the non-FRG western world while reducing and regulating these performances in the FRG.²⁷⁶ Apparently, Britain offered Honecker an FRG's alternative classical music market.

Parallel to Honecker's endeavours in image-cultivation and earning capitalist currency projects was his implementation of demarcation through cultural exchanges with Britain. It is important to note that although the SED pursued the opening of diplomatic relations with Britain, its intention was the exchange at the top level. Instead of promoting GDR-British

²⁷⁵ BStU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 13779, 'Überlegungen zum weiteren Austausch von Ensembles', ff. 5-6; Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künstleraustausches', ff. 1-6; 'Einschätzung: der Situation auf dem Gebiet der Entsendung von Ensembles und Solisten der Unterhaltungskunst der DDR in die BRD (6 October 1987)' f. 95.

²⁷⁶ BStU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künstleraustausches', ff. 15; 'Information über eine Kontrolle der Reisevorbereitung und Auswertung von dienstlichen Reisen in der Künstler-Agentur der DDR (16 April 1987)' f. 93; Nr. 13779, 'Überlegungen zum weiteren Austausch von Ensembles', ff. 1, 3-4; HA XX/AKG Nr. 6086, 'Information über die Arbeit der Künstleragentur der DDR bei der Vorbereitung, Organisation und Durchführung kommerzieller Reisen auf dem Gebiet der Kultur in das NSW (26 May 1983)', f. 40.

exchanges at the grassroots level, which might potentially destabilise his ruling authority, Honecker was keen on showcasing a positive GDR image by sending world-class GDR artists and athletes to Britain. His determination to prevent British cultural infiltration into GDR society can be evidenced by his refusal to allow a British cultural centre in the GDR. According to the recollection of Reiner Oschmann, a former General German News Service (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst*) correspondent based in Britain, the SED often regretted permitting the opening of the French cultural centre, believing that the centre's cultural activities to some degree fostered some East Germans' disloyalty to GDR socialism. Considering the general East German public's interest in mainstream British culture (e.g., rock and roll and sports) and the English language, Honecker firmed up his decision to disallow the opening of a British cultural centre in the GDR.²⁷⁷

The British political authorities' responses to Honecker

Response before 1973

Honecker's speech at the Eighth Party Congress regarding his *Westpolitik* attracted close attention from British society, both beneath and at the government level.²⁷⁸ The focal point of British interest was how Honecker responded to Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and his view on the ongoing East-West negotiation on Berlin's legal status. According to the SED central committee's record of Reuters' view of Honecker's speech at the congress, while Honecker's intention to weaken West Berlin's status as a political entity was clear, he held a favourable view of the normalisation of GDR-western bloc relations.²⁷⁹ Documents from the Foreign Office in Britain suggest that British political authorities viewed Honecker's *Westpolitik* positively. The view that granting the GDR British diplomatic recognition would inevitably happen soon was widely shared inside the Tory government led by Edward Heath. Less than three months after Honecker's speech at the party congress, the four occupation powers

²⁷⁷ Reiner Oschmann, 'The unknown and unsolved Germans from the East: memories of a GDR foreign correspondent in the Thatcher years', in Berger & LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany*, p. 310.

²⁷⁸ Regarding the reports from the British press, see, for instance, [n.a.], 'People first', *Economist*, (19 June 1971), p. 39; Gretel Spitzer, 'Hint from East Germany of new line on détente', *Times*, (21 June 1971), p. 6.

²⁷⁹ BA, DY 30/2049, 'Pressemeldungen über die Rede von Erich Honecker (15 June 1971)'.

signed the Berlin Agreement, confirming the British government's belief in establishing diplomatic relations with the GDR.

However, the Heath government did not intend to speed up the recognition process. To him, the best timing for the launch of British-GDR diplomatic relations rested on the following two factors. The first factor was the question of how the other two big western powers, namely, the United States and France, responded to Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and Honecker's *Westpolitik*. The second factor was the question of when the two German states established their diplomatic relations. Considering why the Heath government was so cautious about approaching the GDR recognition, it is clear that Britain's application for the EEC membership played a substantial part. That is to say, Britain should not only show sensitivity in its relations with the FRG, on whose support it counted, but also keep its eye on France, a senior EEC member who vetoed Britain's application twice. Under this condition, the Britain-Democratic German Information Exchange (BRIDGE), without receiving any governmental subsidy, set up the Committee for the Recognition of the German Democratic Republic in March 1971. In addition to this, the Heath government did not take any visible step towards the recognition.²⁸⁰

The BC's dealings with two funding applications for GDR-British musical exchanges demonstrate the Heath government's cautious steps towards GDR recognition during this era. In July 1971, composer Graham Whettam, chairman of the Composer's Guild of Great Britain, applied to the BC for £76.75²⁸¹ for his visit to the Berlin Festival Days (*Berliner Festtage*) in East Berlin subject to the VKM's invitation. Although Whettam knew the lack of formal diplomatic relations, he believed the BC would sponsor his visit considering the foreseeable diplomatic normalisation. In his letter to Anthony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Whettam highlighted that to prepare for the normalisation of FRG-GDR relations, an official West German delegation made its visit to East

²⁸⁰ TNA, FCO 34/207, a draft letter to B. Weatherall, House of Commons, and FCO 34/304, 'East German friendship organisations: 1941-1973'.

²⁸¹ This is equivalent to around £ 1,060 in 2021 according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate.

Berlin. In the hope of persuading the authorities, he also mentioned that the GDR-French cultural relationship at the state level progressed more quickly than the GDR-British one.²⁸² Aside from political consideration, Whettam reminded the BC of its duties in promoting Britain's international cultural activities, especially considering that the festival would start with a British repertoire. In addition, the Sports Council's sponsorship of a British team for a match in the GDR, reinforced by the match's high media coverage in Britain, boosted Whettam's confidence in his application. It is worth noting that, knowing that Prime Minister Edward Heath loved classical music as a pianist, Whettam wrote a letter to Heath on 3rd March 1971, to gain support.²⁸³ After receiving no positive reply from the British authorities, Whettam published his letter in *Times*, expressing his dissatisfaction. As he wrote, 'one can but marvel, Sir, at the twist of administrative logic which refuses to send a musician to a country which diplomatically does not exist and then send a whole team of athletes to the same place'.²⁸⁴

After holding Whettam's application for three months, the BC turned it down on the following grounds. First was the lack of diplomatic relations between Britain and the GDR at this stage. As the BC's response stated, if it granted Whettam's GDR visit, this 'could cause embarrassment with the press, Parliament, or the FRG', thus impairing the peaceful recognition between the two German states. It is interesting to note that documents held at the National Archives show the BC's endeavours in 1971 to collect France and FRG's official cultural contacts with the GDR to use as reference. Learning that neither of the two countries officially sponsored cultural activities in the GDR, the BC confirmed its decision to refuse Whettam's application. The second reason for rejecting his application was the tight funding budget of the Council in 1971. In its reply, the BC expressed that although it had a budget of £257,000 for drama and music during this year, it was heavily committed to other transnational cultural activities, thus unable to fund Whettam's GDR visit. Moreover, the BC's reply to Whettam noted that even if he applied for a visit to a western country, the BC would still be unable to fund him because of its tight budget. The third ground was the BC's difficulty

²⁸² TNA, FCO 13/433, a letter from Whettam to Royle (21 Oct 1971).

²⁸³ Ibid., Whettam's letter to Prime Minister (3 March 1971).

²⁸⁴ Graham Whettam, 'Exchange with E Germany', *Times* (16 March 1971), p. 15.

in monitoring how Whettam might spend his funding. As the Council put it, given that no BC representative was appointed in the GDR, Whettam's funding expenditure could not be adequately monitored. Meanwhile, the BC and the FO suggested to Whettam that, while the BC could not provide him with the funding, he could seek private sponsorship from other sources.²⁸⁵

Parallel to Whettam, the BC also turned down the Sadler's Wells ballet's funding application for an exchange programme with the KO. In 1971, this internationally renowned British ballet company, which had been actively playing a role in thawing Cold War tensions between Britain and the Soviet Bloc,²⁸⁶ proposed a funding application to the BC for an exchange visit to the KO. This planned exchange was part of the KO and Sadlers' Wells' 's co-celebration programme for Felsenstein's 70th Birthday. Documents kept at the National Archives show that the BC's refusal letter to the company's application was issued immediately after the closure of Whettam's case in October 1971. Apart from explaining the BC's tight funding budget, the Foreign Office clarified that the main reason for the refusal was the ballet company's quasi-official character due to the Arts Council (AC)'s substantial subsidy. Fearing that the GDR would exploit this exchange for propagandistic ends, this application had to be aborted.²⁸⁷

The above two cases demonstrate how the Heath government cautiously did not step at all its GDR counterpart at the dawn of *détente*. Much like its attitude in the 1950s and 1960s, the British political authorities would admit Britain's cultural exchanges with the GDR at the non-state level while keeping their distance from these exchanges before the eventual launch of formal diplomatic relations. For the British political authorities, Britain had many other international priorities above its GDR relations, all of which appeared to have some uncertain factors: i.e., its EEC membership and special relations with the United States. Nevertheless, soon after the launch of the normalisation of the two German states' relations in 1972, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) designated an amount of £75,000 to initiate

²⁸⁵ TNA, FCO 13/433, 'Mr Whettam's visit to the Berliner Festtage'.

²⁸⁶ Donaldson, *The British Council*, pp. 149-50.

²⁸⁷ TNA, FCO 13/433, 'Exchange between Sadler's Wells and Opera in East Berlin (10 November 1971)', and 'Sadler's Wells and Komische Oper'.

Britain's cultural exchanges with the GDR in 1973/74.²⁸⁸ This action could be seen as a significant step in the Heath government's approaching cultural relations with the GDR.

Responses after 1973

I. Harmony

The participation of the BC and the Visiting Arts Unit (VAU) was characteristic of the GDR-British classical music exchange in the post-recognition era. One month after officially entering the EEC on 1 January 1973,²⁸⁹ Britain launched its official diplomatic relations with the GDR.²⁹⁰ On 15 March, nearby the FRG embassy, the GDR opened its embassy at 34 Belgrave Square in London.²⁹¹ On 16 April, the British Embassy opened on Unter den Linden in East Berlin.²⁹² In September 1973, a BC delegation arrived in the GDR, which marked the normalisation of the two nations' cultural relations.²⁹³ GDR-British cultural exchange at the state level experienced a drastic increase since then. In their cultural negotiations in 1976, both the GDR and Britain agreed to encourage and facilitate musical exchange activities, competitions, festivals, and events for groups and individuals.²⁹⁴ Apart from this, as a positive response to the GDR's willingness to expand cultural communications, Britain promised to increase 'the volume of exchanges in financial terms by about 100 per cent in 1977'.²⁹⁵ In 1979, the GDR and Britain finally reached a Cultural Agreement, seemingly forecasting a more harmonious and vigorous GDR-British cultural relationship.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 'Cultural contacts with China and East Germany (14 November 1972)'.

²⁸⁹ Deighton, 'British-West German Relations', p. 42; Julie Smith & Geoffrey Edwards, 'British-West German Relations, 1973-1989', in Larres & Meehan (eds.), *Uneasy Allies*, p. 45.

²⁹⁰ Regarding GDR Foreign Office's record on the establishment of Anglo-GDR relations, see: PAAA, M1C: 2.409, MfAA C: 161/77.

²⁹¹ [n.a.], 'GDR Embassy in London Opens', in John Peet (ed.), *Democratic German Report* (28 March 1973), p. 36.

²⁹² [n.a.], 'British Embassy Opened', in Peet (ed.), *Democratic German Report* (9 May 1973), p. 63.

²⁹³ TNA BW 32/43, 'Divisional Policy meeting to discuss the German Democratic Republic on 2 July 1975'.

²⁹⁴ TNA, BW 32/47, 'Anglo-GDR Cultural Negotiation'.

²⁹⁵ PAAA, MfAA B: 4.715, 'Vermerk über ein Gespräch des stellv. Ministers für Kultur, Gen. Dr Rackwitz, und des Botschafters, Gen. Kern, mit Mr. Scrivener, Assistant Undersecretary of State im britischen Außenministerium (12 December 1975)', ff. 2-4.

²⁹⁶ Taylor, 'A View from the inside', p. 3.

Moreover, the VAU also helped foster GDR-British classical music exchange. In 1977, as a British cultural authority's response to the Helsinki Final Act's advocacy of free international mobility, the BC, together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the AC, and the Gulbenkian Foundation,²⁹⁷ established the VAU. Functioning as an independent British organisation providing advice to cultural organisations from the Soviet Union and East European countries for placing and regulating cultural events and activities in Britain, the VAU assisted East German classical music troupes in arranging visiting performances.²⁹⁸ According to the BC accounts, the GDR actively utilised the service provided by the VAU.²⁹⁹

Given that 1985 marked not only the 40th anniversary of the end of WWII and the Bombing of Dresden by the British and American air forces but also the Bach-Handel-Schütz jubilee, both the British and GDR sides made efforts to facilitate a series of classical music exchanges for the commemorations. For instance, GDR cultural activities in Britain included visiting touring concerts, and the GDR Embassy laid a wreath on Handel's grave at Westminster Abbey. In addition, an exhibition featuring these three composers was held at the Royal Festival Hall in London, universities in Sheffield and Leeds, and Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.³⁰⁰ Furthermore, some British ensembles, including Opera North, the Royal Ballet, Academy of St. Martin in the Field, the Schütz Choir of London, the Monteverdi Choir, and English Baroque Soloists made touring performances in the GDR that year.³⁰¹ According to the SED records, the town twinning between Dresden and Coventry and the connection forged through paying respect to Handel substantially persuaded the British Council to increase its subsidy in 1985.³⁰²

²⁹⁷ Founded in 1956 with its headquarters in Portugal, the Gulbenkian Foundation is an international charitable organisation aiming for 'improving the quality of life through art, charity, science and education.' See 'Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation: the foundation', accessed via: <https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/about-us/the-foundation/> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

²⁹⁸ TNA, FCO 33/5550 Part B, 'Anglo-GDR cultural negotiations, 7-9 December 1982', ff. 5-6; *The Helsinki Process and East West Relations: Progress in Perspective* (Washington, D.C., 1985), p. 201; Hannah Horovitz, 'The Visiting Arts Unit', *Stage and Television* (31 January 1980), p. 134.

²⁹⁹ TNA, BW 32/47, 'Sir John Llewellyn's lunch for the GDR ambassador, Mr Karl-Heinz Kern on 11 April: brief on cultural relations with the GDR', ff. 2-3.

³⁰⁰ PAAA, MfAA ZR: 328/10, 'Bach-Händel-Schütz-Jubiläum'.

³⁰¹ BStU, MfS-HA XX, Nr. 20574, 'Übersicht über Gastspiel ausländischer Ensembles im Jahre 1985 in der DDR', f. 31; LaB, C Rep. 721, Nr. 11, 'Über eine Beratung mit dem Büro der Berliner Festtage 1985'.

³⁰² PAAA, MfAA, ZR: 328/10, Bach-Händel-Schütz-Jubiläum.

With the relaxation of political tensions, the post-recognition era saw the commercial success of GDR classical music troupes on the British stage. From the early 1970s, the development of the cultural heritage industry in British society offered the SED an ideal western market to export high culture products. Moreover, unlike the previous decade, the 1970s saw a rising nostalgia in British society towards its historical past, manifested in Edwardian TV dramas, vintage fashion, and the increasing popularity of classical music.³⁰³ Meanwhile, Britain experienced a ‘top-down’ promotion of high arts under the community arts movement. To ‘make arts accessible to all’, the AC increased its subsidy to the British cultural industry and intensified its cooperation with local authorities.³⁰⁴ Thus, many cultural festivals and venues emerged and developed at the central and local levels, and multiple performing arts institutions adopted a touring policy to develop regional cultural links.³⁰⁵ Moreover, in 1967, Sir Harold Beeley, a British diplomat and historian, was invited by the BC to conduct a review of the Overseas Information Services. His review called for expanding Britain’s international exchange programme on high culture.³⁰⁶ As a result of all these factors, impresarios and cultural venues in Britain were active in inviting world-class classical music groups and talents for artistic collaborations.³⁰⁷

The GDR classical music industry’s competitiveness on the international stage attracted British musical agencies, impresarios, and venues. As elaborated in Chapter Four, there was an East German wave in the British operatic world since the mid-1970s. Some leading East German opera directors were loaned by the GDR to Britain, cooperating with their British counterparts. Perhaps more remarkable was the music recording industry. As Kube shows, recording companies from Britain were one of *Eterna’s* essential trading partners from the western

³⁰³ Laurel Forster & Sue Harper, ‘Introduction’, in Laurel Forster & Sue Harper (eds.), *British Culture and Society in the 1970s: The Lost Decade* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010), p. 1.

³⁰⁴ Oliver Bennett, ‘British cultural policies: 1979–1990’, *Boekmancahier*, 9 (1991), p. 296; John Storey, ‘Expecting rain: opera as popular culture’, in Jim Collins (ed.), *High-Hop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 45.

³⁰⁵ Rod Risher & Andrew Ormston, ‘United Kingdom/1. Historical Perspective: Cultural Policies and Instruments’, *Cultural Policies*, accessed via: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/unitedkingdom.php> (last accessed 19 August 2022)

³⁰⁶ Donaldson, *The British Council*, pp. 237-38.

³⁰⁷ John Myerscough, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (London, 1988), pp. 16-17.

bloc.³⁰⁸ In 1979, the BC published its evaluation report on Britain's cultural relations with the GDR. According to the report, GDR performing arts' marketability in Britain allowed the majority of such events to take place 'through impresarios with little or no official help.'³⁰⁹ Given the lack of statistics on the GDR classical music industry's revenue in GDR-British trading relations, Yaeger's reference to East German ensembles' capitalist currency income from touring in the western bloc perhaps can offer a glimpse of it: between 1970 and 1979, GDR ensembles generated 14,339 thousand of Valutamarks³¹⁰ through trans-bloc touring performances.³¹¹ In 1980 alone, the annual revenue reached an unprecedented 4,473 thousand. In the GDR performing arts exchange with the non-socialist world under Honecker, the GDR sent more than twice as much as it received.³¹² All of these facts above can somewhat indicate the commercial success of the GDR classical music industry in western markets.

II. Discord

However, parallel to the expansion of an increase in classical music exchanges, some problems did not have an easy solution. Despite the normalisation of relations, the basis of their ideological-political antagonism remained unchanged. Worse still, the conflict between the GDR's planned economy and Britain's market economy accelerated with Honecker's efforts to exploit the British music market for his economic and political ends while having little intention to open the domestic GDR market to Britain. Thus, while the recognition brought GDR-British classical music exchange to the state level, it witnessed more political, cultural, and economic clashes revolving around the exchange.

The concern over Honecker's push for socialism in British society drove British political

³⁰⁸ Kube, 'Music trade in the slipstream of cultural diplomacy', pp, 202-03.

³⁰⁹ TNA, BW 32/47, 'Brief on Cultural Relations with the GDR (3 April 1979)'.

³¹⁰ The Valutamark can be seen as equivalent to Deutsche Mark.

³¹¹ Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra and the wages of diplomatic service', p. 74; BA, DY 30/18818, a letter from Hans-Joachim Hoffmann to Kurt Hager (23 November 1983).

³¹² BStU, MfS-HA XX 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen K nstler austausches', ff. 2, 5.

authorities' efforts to lead non-communist-oriented cultural exchanges with the GDR.³¹³ In the mid-and late-1970s, as Berger and LaPorte note, the rise of the Left in the Labour Party and the Labour government, to some extent, promoted GDR-British relations in multiple respects. Nevertheless, there was no indication suggesting a shift of British foreign policy directed at the Honecker government within the East-West *détente* framework.³¹⁴ For instance, according to the SED account, on 12 December 1975, at a meeting between the cultural officials of the GDR and Britain held in the GDR embassy in London, Scrivener, the assistant of Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, indicated the British side's intention to block the GDR's ideological invasion to British society while welcoming the expansion of cultural and economic exchanges, as well as the development of state relations.³¹⁵ With Thatcher's government coming to power in 1979 and drawing near to the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the anti-communist sentiment rose within British political authorities. As noted by Berger and LaPorte, Thatcher and Reagan's success in the UK and US general elections marked the 'second Cold War'.³¹⁶ When the British Embassy in the GDR noticed that 'art is [a] weapon' was set up as the theme of the Free German Youth Conference in Leipzig on 15 October 1982, it immediately asked the FCO to take actions to prevent the upcoming GDR-British cultural exchange activities, suspicious of serving the SED's propagandistic ends.³¹⁷

Discord also occurred in their dispute over East Berlin's legal status. Britain's opposition to the SED's interpretation of East Berlin's legal status – East Berlin as the GDR capital and the SED government's governing authority over East Berlin-, led to its efforts to counter Honecker's political exploitation of cultural exchange activities. On the ground of Britain's non-recognition policy towards the SED-alleged East Berlin legitimacy, the BC refused the GDR's request to include East Berlin in the GDR-British cultural agreement. Moreover, as shown in more detail in Chapter Five, when the Thatcher government knew that Honecker put '[East] Berlin as the

³¹³ TNA, FCO 34/304, ff. 21, 32.

³¹⁴ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 214-18.

³¹⁵ PAAA, MfAA, B: 4.715, 'Vermerk über ein Gespräch', f. 2.

³¹⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 225.

³¹⁷ TNA, FCO 13/1432, ff. 23-24.

capital of the GDR' into the GDR's celebration of Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987, it officially boycotted GDR celebration events.³¹⁸

Issues regarding grassroots contacts and the GDR's international standing also drove British authorities to respond to Honecker's cultural diplomacy with disinterest and distrust. After the normalisation of their relations, Britain realised that Honecker did not have the slightest intention of opening the exchange to the grassroots contacts. In addition, Honecker was a firm supporter of the Soviet actions regarding the Soviet-Afghan war and the Soviets' suppression of the Polish trade union movement, Solidarity. In this regard, the Honecker government shared no common ground with British foreign policy. Moreover, whereas Honecker saw Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR negatively and was unwilling to follow the Soviet leader's suit, Britain supported Gorbachev. Moreover, the British agenda of using the GDR as a bargaining chip with the FRG diminished almost immediately after the normalisation of the two German relations and Britain's gain of its EEC membership.³¹⁹ As a result of all these factors, British authorities did not appear to have urgent need to pursue deep bilateral cultural and political relations with the Honecker government in the post-recognition era.

Honecker's exploitation of the British market to attract the inflow of hard currency while restricting the opening-up of the domestic GDR market to Britain raised discontent among British political authorities. In the post-recognition era, Britain failed to access the domestic GDR market and experienced a trade deficit in its trade relations with the GDR. As Berger and LaPorte note, the deficit was £107 million in 1984 and £98 million in 1987.³²⁰ Although there is a lack of statistics on music exchange, Honecker's efforts to take advantage of the cultural exchange agreement and the 'bargaining value' of East German high-performing arts products in the British market for his economic ends contributed to the British trade deficits, thus raising complaints from British authorities.

³¹⁸ TNA, BW 32/48, 'UK/German Democratic Republic cultural co-operation programme 1987-1989: negotiations'.

³¹⁹ TNA, FCO 33/5550, 'Anglo/GDR cultural programme negotiations. Background brief; GDR political'; Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 221, 233-35, 260, 303, 318,

³²⁰ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 233.

There were also problems relating to Britain's disadvantaged position regarding musicians' travel costs and payment under the GDR-British cultural agreement and the East German AA's monopoly over sending and receiving ensembles and artists. In 1974, the two governments reached a consensus regarding the exchange payment, deciding that 'delegations and individuals visiting either country under the programme will pay their own expenses, including travel between the United Kingdom and the German Democratic Republic, international travel and the cost of maintenance in the receiving country.'³²¹ However, soon after the policy was implemented, Britain realised it was financially handicapped by the policy. While the SED monopolised all GDR-British classical music exchanges, the British government could not monopolise the exchange from the British side. Moreover, the FO realised that the GDR side gained more financial advantages from the cultural agreement due to the different costs of living and travel, royalties, and marketing between the GDR and British sides. As remarked by the British Embassy in 1976, the GDR artists 'could often afford to tour the UK, paying for their trip[s] from the commercial proceeds. In contrast, our own coming to the GDR would be in the monopoly hand of the AA and would need to be heavily subsidised from the UK.'³²²

Britain's economic dissatisfaction also came from the GDR's method of paying royalties to the musicians. According to the AA policy, artists from the non-socialist world would receive royalties in both Ostmark and hard currencies (usually in Deutsche Mark). The Ostmark often composed three-quarters of the total payment, and one-quarter was paid in capitalist currencies.³²³ Because the Ostmark only had official monetary value inside the GDR and was disallowed to be converted into hard currencies for export by the SED government, visiting British musicians had to spend all the Ostmarks on buying goods before leaving the GDR. By contrast, East German musicians who came to work in Britain would receive royalties in either British pounds or Deutsche Mark. As these capitalist currencies were convertible to Ostmark

³²¹ TNA, FCO 34/256, f. 26.

³²² TNA, FCO 34/355, 'UK/GDR cultural relations (31 August 1976)', f. 2.

³²³ TNA, FCO 33/5550 Part B, 'Anglo-GDR cultural negotiations, 7-9 December 1982', f. 3.

(the official exchange rate between Ostmark and Deutsche Mark was 1:1),³²⁴ these forms of payment indirectly assisted the GDR's trade surplus and aggravated Britain's trade deficit.

In order to counteract Britain's disadvantaged trading position in the high-performing arts exchange with the GDR, British political authorities took two measures. First was the BC's reduced subsidy in high-performing arts exchange with the GDR since the late 1970s. According to the BC, its curtailment decision was based on its evaluation report on the existing GDR-British cultural exchanges in 1979. As the report shows, due to the GDR performing arts' marketability in Britain, the majority of such events were able to take place 'through impresarios with little or no official help'.³²⁵ Moreover, under the financial pressure from the Thatcher government, the BC had to budget its spending on Britain's foreign cultural and educational exchange activities.³²⁶

Second, Britain's working permit scheme for overseas nationals disadvantaged East German applications. In 1973, the Heath government put the Immigration Act 1971 into legal force to replace the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968. The new Act introduced its work permit scheme, which required citizens who were not from the Commonwealth, the UK and its Colonies and the EEC to apply for work permits for their employment in Britain. Britain's logic behind this scheme was to protect the British domestic labour force and 'promote a supply of labour from overseas where the domestic supply is inadequate'. Thus, not only did work permits have special requirements (e.g., qualifications, wage standards) for their applicants, but the application process was also often complicated.³²⁷ Given that the cultural industry was

³²⁴ Although the official exchange rate between Ostmark and Deutsche Mark was 1:1, the SED's restriction of Ostmark's export and the limited convertibility of Ostmark to capitalist currencies made Ostmark to be of no official value outside the GDR. On the black market, the exchange rate between Ostmark and Deutsche Mark was much higher than the official rate. In general, the rate fluctuated between 1:5 (OM:DM) and 1:10 (OM:DM). Silke Tober, 'Monetary reform and monetary union: a comparison between 1948 and 1990', in Stephen Frowen & Jens Hölscher (eds.), *The German Currency Union of 1990: A Critical Assessment* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 238.

³²⁵ TNA, BW 32/47, 'Brief on cultural relations with the GDR, 3 April 1979'.

³²⁶ TNA, BW 32/48, 'CXP Talks in East Berlin'.

³²⁷ Regarding a more detailed account of work permit policy under the Immigration Act of 1971, see Tom Rees, 'Immigration policies in the United Kingdom', in Charles Husband (ed.), *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London, 1982), pp. 84-85. Callum Williams, 'Patriality, work permits and the European Economic Community: the introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act', *Contemporary British History*, 29.4 (2015), pp. 509-538.

not included in the British industries with a labour force shortage,³²⁸ East German classical musicians who planned to make their artistic engagements in Britain had to be subject to the work permit scheme.³²⁹ Even worse, as Rees notes, with the growth of unemployment, the number of work permits declined at a historically low level in the 1970s and 1980s.³³⁰ Admittedly, the British working permit policy for foreign nationals was neither directed explicitly at the GDR nor the classical music industry. However, the implementation of this policy impeded Honecker's aspirations to export his artistic talents to Britain on a large scale for attracting a lucrative capitalist currency revenue for the GDR. As noted by the AA in the 1980s, Britain and some capitalist countries in western Europe increasingly controlled the reception of foreign artists, thus resulting in East German artists' growing difficulty in obtaining working permits.³³¹ Indeed, when remarking on his WNO's *Madam Butterfly*, Joachim Herz addressed the disadvantaged position of East German artists in securing work opportunities. As he put it, because the British trade union law prioritised citizens from Britain, EEC countries and member countries of the Commonwealth in the domestic labour market over those from other countries, he had to choose a British singer instead of an East German one for the supporting role of Suzuki (Cio-Cio-San's maid).³³² Therefore, all the tensions with the regulation of travelling artists hindered positive responses from British authorities to Honecker's music diplomacy in the post-recognition era.

Conclusion

This chapter has approached GDR-British classical music exchange through policymaking. As the GDR faced diplomatic isolation from the western world during the non-recognition era, Ulbricht's principal concern was to build affinity with Britain to gain GDR recognition through cultural exchange. In addition, it must not be neglected that Ulbricht was also aware of the

³²⁸ According to the Immigration Act of 1971, British industries which had a shortage of labour force supplies included hotel and catering industry, nursing, seasonal agriculture. See Rees, 'Immigration policies in the United Kingdom', pp. 85-86.

³²⁹ It should be noted here that the work permit scheme only applied to East German artists who planned to have working contracts with British companies. East German cultural troupes' touring performances in Britain were not affected by the scheme.

³³⁰ Rees, 'Immigration policies in the United Kingdom', pp. 85-86.

³³¹ BStU, MFS-HA XX Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künstleraustausches', ff. 5-6.

³³² AdK, Herz 924, Herz's letter to Friedrike Wulff-Apelt (17 December 1979).

commercial prospect. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the British political authorities' policymaking towards Ulbricht's cultural diplomacy fluctuated far more than that of the SED. They weighed up all the possible advantages and disadvantages that arose from the triangular British-GDR-FRG relations and voices from within British society (e.g., pressure groups campaigning for and against the GDR's recognition, musical and cultural institutions, as well as individuals). After the British political authorities decided to align with the FRG for Britain's EEC membership, they switched from pro-recognition to non-recognition, remaining indifferent to, and at times, giving negative responses to, Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy. It is worth noting that while Ulbricht exploited Britain's pluralist system to promote his British agendas, the system was simultaneously utilised by British political authorities to manipulate the Bonn government.

Honecker continued to actively promote the GDR's musical diplomacy in GDR-British relations in the same vein as his predecessor. Moreover, in Honecker's mind, developing the GDR-British classical music exchange would help reduce the GDR's dependence on the FRG, which would benefit his demarcation policy. Within cultural-political terms, despite the normalisation of relations, he still relied on the GDR's cultural achievement in preserving and reinvigorating German classical music tradition to show GDR socialism's supremacy over FRG capitalism, asserting the legitimacy of the SED-claimed East Berlin and countering the socialist regime's negative image on the international stage. In terms of the economy, as the GDR's dependency on hard currency revenue grew dramatically with Honecker's pursuit of 'real-existing socialism', the monetisation of GDR's classical music heritage in the British market was believed by Honecker to serve not only economic ends but also reduce the GDR's financial dependence on its classical music exchange with the FRG. However, British political authorities had much less interest in fostering the music exchange than Honecker. Whereas such an exchange at state level experienced a drastic growth from virtually nil, the British political authorities had no interest in boosting the exchange on a more frequent basis. From the perspective of the British authorities, the GDR's importance in Britain's international politics decreased, as the GDR did not serve as a bargaining chip for Britain's negotiation with the FRG. As the British political authorities considered the GDR as a Soviet satellite state within the

eastern bloc during the post-recognition era, they lacked motivation to develop a special relationship with the GDR. If the British government ever had an expectation of expanding and deepening relations, such an expectation would have been undoubtedly extinguished by Britain's realisation of Honecker's reduced intention of opening up grassroots contacts. Moreover, multiple factors such as the arrival of the second Cold War, the GDR as a Soviet hardliner regarding the issues associated with Afghanistan and Poland, Honecker's unwillingness to follow Gorbachev's reform, and Britain's constant trade deficits in economic relations with the GDR, added to the lack of interest shown by the British authorities in strengthening the classical music exchange with the Honecker government.

It is worth noting that non-state East German actors' use of their international networking for promoting GDR-British classical music diplomacy complicated the 'participatory dictatorship' of GDR socialism. As shown in this chapter, the SED's promotion of classical music diplomacy with Britain, especially in the early decades, relied on some leading GDR classical music elites' existing contacts with musical circles in Britain. Moreover, the interactions between the GDR and the British authorities, the influence of the FRG and the broader Cold War international environment all intertwined, impacting the policymaking of the GDR-British classical music exchange. Although Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy neither played an active role in accelerating Britain's official recognition of the GDR nor substantially boosted the GDR-British music trade, it helped, to some extent, elevate the GDR's image in British society. Importantly, Ulbricht's classical music diplomacy in Britain essentially paved the way for the prosperity of the commercially based GDR-British classical music exchange under Honecker. However, for Honecker, although the exchange increased the GDR's international reputation and attracted the inflow of hard currency to the GDR, the actual scale of contacts was far less than Honecker's expectation. Even worse, as will be shown in the next chapter, GDR socialism lost its credibility among the population with Honecker's growing financial dependence on the classical music intelligentsia's diplomatic service in the western world.

CHAPTER THREE

Making a musical deal: the classical music intelligentsia and the SED

There have always been artists who could not have cared less under what political conditions they could make music. Some of them joined the Party to have their peace. However, they did so to be able to make music.

-- Helmut Schmidt³³³

Introduction

The previous two chapters have approached the SED's utilisation of German classical music heritage for its legitimacy from the perspective of the Party's domestic and international policymaking. This chapter focuses on a group of non-state actors – the classical music intelligentsia who did not directly participate in the SED's decision-making process. The key questions concern how the SED, particularly the Honecker government, attempted to utilise the intelligentsia in its pursuits of domestic and international legitimacy and how the Party consolidated its power legitimacy among this group of social actors. This chapter addresses in greater detail the topic of whether the government-intelligentsia relations can be generalised as bi-polar in terms of either 'dominance-compliance' or 'repression-objection'. In tracing the intelligentsia's reactions to the orders from above, this chapter asks if active support and open objection to the government were the two most extreme behaviour patterns by the intelligentsia, or whether there were any other patterns in between the bipolarity?

This chapter sets out the following arguments to tease out the complexities of the government-classical music intelligentsia relationship in the GDR, particularly under Honecker. The first argument is that the Honecker government had difficulty in manipulating this relationship. The SED's growing dependency on the intelligentsia's intellectual input for its

³³³ The original German text: 'Es hat immer Künstler gegeben, Gottseidank, denen das völlig wurscht war, unter welchen politischen Umständen sie Musik machen konnten. Manche sind zum Beispiel in die Partei eingetreten, um Ruhe zu haben, in Wirklichkeit, um ihre Musik machen zu können. Heutzutage gibt es dann Leute die ihnen das vorwerfen, die haben aber unrecht.' Helmut Schmidt, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 26'30-26'50''.

economic and image-building ends empowered the intelligentsia, thus potentially boosting their independence from governmental control and destabilising the SED's legitimacy. Secondly, the classical music intelligentsia's discontent towards the SED within a Cold War trans-bloc context was not unusual. As a relatively privileged professional group in the GDR, the classical music intelligentsia may not have necessarily dissented from the SED. However, affected by their international working environment, they were more prone to understand that the SED's claims of the GDR as an egalitarian society and GDR socialism's supremacy over the West were an illusion. Their experiences abroad generated and fostered their disaffected mood, potentially leading to their exit from the GDR. Third are the intelligentsia's practices of *Eigensinn* and 'hidden transcripts' in expressing their disaffection with the SED. The intelligentsia did not only acquire the ability to manipulate the system; moreover, they utilised their professional expertise and international reputation as bargaining chips to negotiate with the SED in order to advance their agendas. Fourthly, in general, the relations between the government and the intelligentsia of classical music can be seen as mutually beneficial. Despite each social actor's awareness of the defects of the other, both made efforts to maintain the frail harmony of their relationship. Fifthly, the SED's endeavours to maintain its relationship with the classical music intelligentsia endangered its governing legitimacy among the East German populace. Given that some privileges enjoyed by the intelligentsia were negotiable and hidden from the GDR's official transcript, these privileges generated and widened social inequalities within a state that claimed to prioritise the elimination of social inequalities.

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents the importance of the classical music intelligentsia in the SED's domestic and international politics and the Party's policymaking efforts in fostering the intelligentsia's loyalty to GDR socialism. The second section demonstrates the irreconcilable tensions between the SED and the intelligentsia regarding their income and trans-bloc mobility issues. Finally, the third section focuses on individual music elites. It investigates the SED's interactions with Walter Felsenstein, Götz Friedrich and Joachim Herz, the three opera directors who did not appear to fit well within the framework of GDR socialism. In illustrating how they utilised their artistic excellence and international reputation to bargain with the SED, this section presents a multi-

dimensional understanding of the complexity of SED- classical music intelligentsia relations.

There are limitations to the scope of the research presented in this chapter. The first one, although this chapter intends to present the complexities of the SED-intelligentsia relationship, is that it cannot encompass every form of such complexity. In addition, the cases investigated in the chapter are exclusively elite musical institutions and practitioners from Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, and Karl-Marx-Stadt. The second limitation is that this chapter mainly focuses on the classical music intelligentsia's international engagement with the FRG and Britain. Other countries in the western bloc and the socialist world are not included in this chapter's research scope. The third one is the lack of non-Stasi records when analysing the classical music intelligentsia's practice of *Eigensinn* and 'hidden transcripts'. The Stasi records provide a crucial source for understanding how the intelligentsia navigated their relations with the SED to their advantage. However, given that the Stasi reported the intelligentsia's behaviour patterns through the SED's political lenses, the investigation results of the intelligentsia's practices of *Eigensinn* and hidden transcripts are somewhat inevitably affected by the province of these records.

This chapter's relevance to the thesis lies in the following aspects. First is that the complexity of SED-intelligentsia relationship complicated Fulbrook's 'participatory model'. The reason is that this chapter presents not only a certain degree of mutual dependency between state and non-state actors but also the classical music intelligentsia's use of their western contacts to bargain with SED authorities. Second, this chapter unveils the paradox revolving around the SED's pursuit of governing legitimacy in manipulating the classical music intelligentsia. Thus, this chapter contributes to the existing literature that unveils the complexity and contradiction of GDR socialism. Third, it refutes the SED-intelligentsia relations' bipolar generalisation by presenting the multiple-dimensional relations between the SED and classical music intelligentsia. In doing so, this chapter enriches the recent research which addresses the complicated role of the cultural intelligentsia in GDR socialism.

Section I: Setting the standards, SED policymaking for the classical music intelligentsia

The classical music intelligentsia as the SED's 'uncomfortable comrades'³³⁴

The classical music intelligentsia's intellectual assets, along with their political and ideological inclinations, were constantly of great concern to the SED. On the one hand, the SED highly valued the intelligentsia's intellectual input into the Party's political and economic ends. According to Fulbrook, GDR social theorists deployed the term 'socialist intelligentsia' in rationalising the existence of professional groups, as the communist authorities perceived that the realisation of the socialist utopia depended on the contribution of not only factory and agricultural workers' physical labour but also on the intelligentsia's intellectual assets. Throughout the GDR's existence, the socialist intelligentsia emerged as the *de facto* educated middle class, equivalent to their counterparts in the capitalist system.³³⁵ As with the classical music intelligentsia in particular, they were considered by the SED to serve an essential role in enhancing the East German populace's cultural identity to the GDR socialism in the domestic GDR scene and cultivating a positive GDR cultural image on the international stage. Especially during the Honecker era, the classical music intelligentsia's artistic excellence functioned as an East German commodity to generate highly sought-after commercial profit derived from the capitalist world. For instance, the GDR's price of lending an opera director to the FRG for production started from 20,000 Deutsch Marks.³³⁶ As was noted in Chapter Two, East German ensembles generated 14,339,000 Valutamarks of GDR hard currency revenue through touring abroad between 1970 and 1979.³³⁷ In 1980 alone, the annual revenue reached 4,473 thousand Valutamarks.³³⁸ All of these statistics showed that the intelligentsia was a valuable human source of capital assisting the SED's fulfilment of its political and economic expectations.

³³⁴ Fulbrook uses the term 'uncomfortable comrades' to describe the cultural intelligentsia. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 241.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³³⁶ BStU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 13779, 'Überlegungen zum weiteren Austausch von Ensembles', ff. 5-6.

³³⁷ See footnote 310.

³³⁸ BStU, MfS-HA XX 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künstleraustausches', f.2.

On the other hand, the SED never considered the classical music intelligentsia ideologically and politically trustworthy, fearing that the dissenting elements would threaten the Party's legitimacy. Multiple factors contributed to the SED's concern over the population's loyalty to GDR socialism. The first factor is the fragility of the socialist system in avoiding the expression of discontent from below. Scholars such as Ross, Carol Mueller, and Patrick Major introduce Albert Hirschman's 'exit, voice, and loyalty' model in examining East Germans' reactions to the SED power. According to this model, 'voice and exit' forms two basic options for individuals expressing their discontent with a social, economic, or political entity. In the capitalist system, individuals or groups' discontent with the political authorities rarely fundamentally challenged the system's legitimacy, given the existence of general elections, open markets and the practice of pluralism. Meanwhile, in the socialist system, the absence of a general election, the relatively closed market, and the government as the representation of the system escalated the fragility of political authorities' governing legitimacy when discontent was raised within the system. Therefore, compared with the capitalist system, socialist governments saw the expression of discontent as far more politically threatening to their power system.³³⁹

The second factor contributing to the SED's fear of threat is the challenge of the western bloc, particularly the FRG. To the SED, the FRG represented a contrasting social system and appeared as a more prosperous society. Particularly under Honecker, given the GDR's increasing human and information mobility with the FRG, the people living in the GDR realised the extent to which their living standards differed from those living in the FRG. In addition, the Honecker government's legalisation of the circulation of western currency and commodities on the GDR market since the 1970s³⁴⁰ indirectly admitted the government's governing incompetence to the public. In this regard, the FRG, to a large extent, offered the East German populace the version of a better German state, thereby likely evoking their discontent towards the SED governing authority. Moreover, the FRG offered the discontented

³³⁹ Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power*, (Oxford, 2009), pp. 10-11; Carol Mueller, 'Escape from the GDR, 1961-1989, hybrid exit repertoires in a disintegrating Leninist regime', *American Journal of Sociology*, 105.3 (1999), pp. 701-03; Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations, and States* (Cambridge & London, 1970), pp. 15, 33-36, 47, 78; Hirschman, 'Exit, voice and the fate of the German Democratic Republic', pp. 73-202; Corey Ross, 'Before the Wall: East Germans, Communist authority, and the mass exodus to the West', *Historical Journal*, 45.2 (2002), pp. 471-72.

³⁴⁰ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 3.

East German groups an ideal physical space to exit from the GDR. The term *Republikflucht* ('flight from the Republic') was deployed explicitly to describe those East Germans who left the GDR to the non-socialist world without the SED government's permission. In the 'voice and exit' model, although the cost of individuals' voice and exit were both high, exit appears to be the most plausible individual reaction to socialist governments.³⁴¹ Prior to the erection of the Berlin Wall, with the open border, there were around 3.5 million *Republikflucht* cases, which suggested that one in six East Germans left for the other side of the Iron Curtain. Among them, around 2.7 million went to the FRG. Furthermore, between 1962 and 1988, the FRG received a significant influx of East German refugees. The number was 173,065,000 in total. In 1989, the number of East German migrants to the FRG, including refugees, authorised migrants, and political prisoners, rose to 343,854.³⁴²

The FRG offered East Germans an ideal place to relocate after exiting from the GDR. The factors such as the shared border between the two German states, shared collective memory before 8 May 1945, common language, and the ties of family and friends certainly were certainly counted as the reasons for East Germans' mass exodus to the FRG. In addition, the Bonn government also had policies in favour of helping East Germans' relocation in the FRG. For instance, East Germans were automatically entitled to West German citizenship after their arrival.³⁴³ Furthermore, as Major suggests, in order to undermine the SED's governing legitimacy on the international stage, the Bonn government adopted the policy of identifying *Republikflucht* as a form of defection rather than emigration and East German escapees as asylum-seekers instead of immigrants.³⁴⁴ Thus, to the SED, discontented East Germans' choice of *Republikflucht* led to the drain of the workforce for the development of the national economy and exposed the Party's governing incompetence to the international community.

³⁴¹ Ross, 'Before the Wall', p. 472.

³⁴² Mueller, 'Escape from the GDR', pp. 714-17; Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, p. 57

³⁴³ Mueller, 'Escape from the GDR', p. 712; and Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, p. 58.

³⁴⁴ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, p. 57. Regarding the Bonn government's refugee policy, see for instance, Patrice Poutrus, 'Zuflucht im Nachkriegsdeutschland: Politik und Praxis der Flüchtlingsaufnahme in Bundesrepublik und DDR von den späten 1940er bis zu den 1970er Jahren', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft, Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft*, 35.1 (2009), pp. 135-75; Patrice Poutrus, 'Asyl im Kalten Krieg-eine Parallelgeschichte aus dem geteilten Nachkriegsdeutschland', *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, 2 (2005), pp. 273-288.

Apart from the above two factors that could be applied to all East Germans, the classical music intelligentsia's lack of political-ideological commitment to GDR socialism and the aftermath of their 'voice and exit' worried the SED authorities. Here, it is essential to clarify that, as Fulbrook notes, the cultural intelligentsia, ranging from hard-liners of the Party to dissenters, were composed of diverse opinion groups and individuals. While there were figures like Brecht and Meyer devoting themselves to the socialist cultural building for the Party's ends, there were also 'troublemakers' like Wolf Biermann who brought 'disgrace' to the Party.³⁴⁵ It would be an oversimplification to generalise the classical music intelligentsia's political-ideological identity. As noted by Tompkins, despite the copious endeavours of SED cultural officials, less than 35 per cent of district orchestras responded to the fortnightly seminar on music and socialism organised by the Party in 1955.³⁴⁶ Fulbrook's observation of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (DPO) in the early 1970s shows that while merely 10 per cent of the orchestra members had SED membership, the self-identity as 'just-a-musician' instead of a member of the working class promoting a progressive GDR socialism was commonly shared among members of the orchestras.³⁴⁷ Similarly, the MfS cadre reports of the Hochschule Carl Maria von Weber Dresden in 1980 and 1982 show that out of all the teaching staff, only two of them had identified as having a clear political stance on socialism. In addition, according to these reports, principal subject teachers of this music academy focused merely on improving students' artistic skills, encouraging them to become top soloists working at internationally established Class A orchestras while neglecting socialist education.³⁴⁸ Even more worrying to the SED was that the teaching staff's inaction on socialist education not only resulted in students' disinterest in developing their socialist personalities but also fostered their 'false' world views. As a MfS report mentioned, some students who applied for SED membership faced social isolation and mockery from their peers.³⁴⁹

There is little doubt about the SED's concern over the classical music intelligentsia's lack of

³⁴⁵ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 242.

³⁴⁶ Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', p. 416.

³⁴⁷ Yaeger made the same claim about the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra musicians in this research. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 243; Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, pp. 60, 64-65.

³⁴⁸ BStU, BV Dresden AKG PI, Nr. 44/80, 'Information über die politisch-ideologische Situation der Hochschule für Musik 'Carl Maria von Weber' Dresden (HfM) (24 March 1980); BV Dresden AKG PI, Nr. 74/82, ff. 3-5.

³⁴⁹ BStU, BV Dresden AKG PI Nr. 74/82, f.4.

political-ideological commitment to GDR socialism when taking their international working environment into consideration. An investigation into the MfS records of musicians at the three Class A institutions — the Staatsoper Dresden (SoD), the Staatsoper Berlin (SoB) and the Komische Oper (KO) – in the 1980s shows that a substantial number of musicians who were to be employed by the Artists Agency (AA) for the GDR's trans-bloc cultural exchanges neither actively took part in the Party's organised activities nor were committed to GDR socialism. At the same time, these records show that very few of these musicians also expressed dissenting ideas and that most led somewhat politically detached lives.³⁵⁰ Roland Kuntz, a former East German cellist, who engaged in the GDR's trans-bloc cultural exchanges, articulates such political disinterest shared by the music intelligentsia based on his experiences in a documentary interview, 'I think that musicians very rarely are political. All they care for is music. They did not want to care about other things.'³⁵¹

Several reasons explain the classical music intelligentsia's lack of loyalty to GDR socialism within an international context. Firstly, this inactivity links to their professional development. As establishing a distinguished international profile was crucial for a musician's success, this required active artistic engagement with the international world. More precisely, not only should the musician's professional training keep up with international standards, but also one's career trajectory. Activities such as foreign touring performances, artistic collaboration with top-ranked world performing companies, and receiving positive media coverage from the international world, bolstered and signified a musician's international success. Importantly, given that an individual musician's international success also primarily overlapped with the SED's international cultural agendas, and this motivated the Party's efforts to ensure such success. Secondly, the classical music intelligentsia's relative freedom of international mobility and working contact with the western world also contributed to their lack of loyalty to GDR socialism. These experiences gave them more practical knowledge about lives on both sides of the Iron Curtain, thus likely generating and reinforcing the disparity between their perceptions and the official GDR narrative. Thirdly, this links to their employability in the

³⁵⁰ Regarding the MfS investigation of political backgrounds of musicians at elite music institutions, see for instance, BStU, MfS HA VIII Nr. 2508, Teil 2: Auftragesersuchen-Ermittlung; HA VII 2409, Teil 1,2 von 3; HA VIII, Nr. 2499, Teil 2 von 2; HA VIII Nr. 3357, Teil 1 von 2; MfS-HA XX, Nr. 14826.

³⁵¹ Roland Kuntz, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 26'19-26'28''.

western world. The factors of classical music's status as an embodiment of German culture, the GDR's artistic excellence in this area, and its universal appeal, considerably enhanced the East German musicians' employability in the international world. While all three aspects directed the intelligentsia towards a transnational setting, they were also likely to foster the intelligentsia's perception of the drawbacks of GDR socialism and offer them better alternatives.³⁵²

Even more worrying to the SED regarding the classical music intelligentsia was the aftermath of their practices of voice and exit. As some prominent cultural intellectuals' dissenting opinions and defections were often widely publicised and hit the headlines in the Western media (e.g., Wolf Biermann's expatriation case in 1976), the SED's governing incompetence was exposed to the international community to a great extent. As music journalist Burkhard Laugwitz remarked on East German musicians' use of international touring performances to defect to the West, 'they [musicians] travelled to the West as a showcase of the East. But then ten of the singers or musicians stayed in the West. This was humiliating for the East.'³⁵³ Moreover, according to MfS records of defecting East Germans from the cultural and arts industry, more than 60 per cent of them held university degrees and worked at Class A performing institutions.³⁵⁴ Their *Republikflucht* certainly brought a tangible intellectual loss to the state. While the SED was aware of the German classical music intelligentsia for building and enhancing the GDR's progressive cultural image, it feared that dissenting ones would threaten the government's legitimacy.³⁵⁵ The SED's perception of the intelligentsia perhaps can be best described by Fulbrook as 'uncomfortable comrades'.³⁵⁶

Moulding the 'good' classical music intelligentsia within GDR socialism: 'carrot and stick'

³⁵² The topic of the classical music intelligentsia's discontent about GDR socialism within a trans-bloc setting will be revisited in more detail in Section II of this chapter.

³⁵³ Burkhard Laugwitz, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 42'27"-42'44".

³⁵⁴ BStU, MfS-ZKG, Nr. 21207, 'Hinweis zum vollendeten ungesetzlichen Verlassen der DDR seitens Angehöriger aus dem Bereich Kunst und Kultur/Gebiet Musik durch Nichtrückkehr von genehmigten Gastspielreisen nach nichtsozialistischen Staaten und Westberlin im Zeitraum 1. Januar bis 20. Juli 1984', ff. 32-35.

³⁵⁵ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 241; Simone Wesner, *Artists' Voices in Cultural Policy: Careers, Myths and the Creative Profession after German Unification* (Basingstoke, 2018), pp. 119-20.

³⁵⁶ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 241.

The intelligentsia's socialist political and ideological education

To the SED, imposing GDR socialism's ideological and political education was vital to winning the loyalty of the classical music intelligentsia. Although musicians did not need to join the SED party if they wanted to work in performing institutions, the Party's insistence upon art's inseparable link to politics demanded these practitioners' active participation in building GDR socialism and subjection to the Party leadership.³⁵⁷ Given that military education became an obligatory course in GDR schools under Honecker, the promotion of Marxist-Leninist military education grew during the 1970s, as demonstrated by the teaching plan devised by the *Spezialschule für Musikziehung 'Gerog Friedrich Händel'*.³⁵⁸ Moreover, East German musical troupes and individuals received special ideological-political education before commencing international business trips. As shown in documents from the *Staatskapelle Dresden (SkD)*, the political-ideological education for its 1987 touring concerts in Britain included SED cultural politics, Gorbachev and Honecker's efforts in maintaining world peace, but also the GDR-socialist perspective on Britain's political, cultural and economic problems.³⁵⁹

A student's dissertation from the Academy of Law of the Ministry for State Security (*Juristische Hochschule des MfS, JHS*) shows the rationale of the Honecker government behind its growing emphasis on the political-ideological education of its music elites. Noted by the author, the western world intended to contaminate East German artists with anti-socialist thoughts. Thus, the enormous increase in East German artists' trans-bloc travels since the recognition would potentially make the SED government more vulnerable to the western world's ideological and political attacks.³⁶⁰ To the SED, it was therefore imperative to pay special attention to the music intelligentsia's ideological-political loyalty to GDR socialism.

³⁵⁷ Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses*, p. 4; BA, DY 30/2049, 'Die Herausbildung der sozialistischen Persönlichkeit, eine Hauptaufgabe der Partei bei der Gestaltung der sozialistischen Gesellschaftordnung'. AdK, VKM 66, 'Ziel und Aufgaben der Musikkonferenz der DDR 1972 und ihre Vorbereitung (3. 8. 1971)'; VKM 76, 'Musikkultur in der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft (1977)'.

³⁵⁸ See LaB, C. Rep 704 Nr. 1, Nr. 2, Nr. 5, Nr. 7.

³⁵⁹ HsaD, 11454, 5.056, 'Vorlage für das Gastspiel der Staatskapelle Dresden in Großbritannien vom 27. Feb. bis 14 März 1987'.

³⁶⁰ Potsdam, MfS JHS GVS, Nr. 127/75, 'Auf Grund der Bedeutung von Kunst und Kultur für die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung stehen Kunst -und Kulturschaffende seit Jahren in der Hauptangriffsrichtung der politisch-ideologischen Diversion des Feindes'. See also, Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 241-42; Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, p. 67.

Identifying 'foes' and 'friends'

Apart from ideological-political education, the SED also emphasised the use of disciplinary measures in order to curtail and prevent the classical music intelligentsia's space of 'voice and exit.' At the core of all SED measures in this regard was the MfS service. Functioning as the SED's 'sword and shield', the MfS invested considerable human, technological and financial resources in identifying the 'foes' of the state among the classical music intelligentsia, especially those who engaged in the GDR's trans-bloc cultural activities.³⁶¹ Instrumental in the MfS policies under Honecker was the operational subversion (*Operative Zersetzung*), which focused on preventing the possibility of targeted individuals' 'misconducts' rather than retrospective prosecution.³⁶² As Paul Betts notes, the appearance of the GDR's tendency towards a more liberal society under Honecker, in essence, was built on the ever more intensified state surveillance on people's private lives operated by the MfS.³⁶³ In infiltrating into the classical music intelligentsia's public and private lives, the MfS promoted the trustworthy intelligentsia and selected them for trans-bloc business travel, scrutinised the suspicious ones, and imposed disciplinary measures on the untrustworthy ones.³⁶⁴

Regarding the intelligentsia's trans-bloc business travel, the MfS worked particularly closely with the AA. While the MfS prioritised security, the AA had cultural and economic considerations. Crucial to their operations was the admission of the Travel Cadre (*Reisekader*) – the musicians who had the Party's approval to their business travel outside the GDR. The following procedure demonstrates the SED's standard practice of confirming a travel cadre member. After the AA initially pencilled an East German ensemble's international tour, the

³⁶¹ BStU, MfS-HA XX, Nr. 19971, 'Dienstanweisung'.

³⁶² Mike Dennis, 'The East German Ministry of State Security and East German society during the Honecker era, 1971-1989', in Paul Cooke & Andrew Plowman (eds.), *German Writers and the Politics of Culture: Dealing with the Stasi* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 6; Mike Dennis & Norman LaPorte, *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany* (New York & Oxford, 2011), pp. 7-8; Hubertus Knabe, 'Die feinen Waffen der Diktatur. nicht-strafrechtliche Formen politischer Verfolgung in der DDR', in Heiner Timmermann (ed.), *Die DDR-Erinnerungen an einen untergegangenen Staat* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 191-219.

³⁶³ Betts, *Within Walls*, p. 40.

³⁶⁴ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, p. 242.

management department of the ensemble provided a list of planned travel candidates to the Agency for the MfS' investigation. In case any candidate failed to pass the investigation, the ensemble management often reserved a list of ten per cent more candidates, who functioned as a backup. The MfS then vetted each candidate. The candidate's political and ideological affiliation, personality, western contacts, international travel history, family and friend connections, marital status, social activities and habits, and all life facets of the candidate needed to be known by the MfS.³⁶⁵ In order to collect the most comprehensive information about the candidate, the MfS not only relied on the candidate's public record but also developed a net of unofficial collaborators (*informeller Mitarbeiter*, IMs) to monitor the candidate's daily life.³⁶⁶ Collecting the information was only part of the whole operational process. More critical was the analysis. Multiple factors, such as links to religious and dissenting groups, western connections, inharmonious or single marital status, and opposition to the military service, were viewed as ambiguous indicators of the candidate's disloyalty or loose association with GDR socialism. Finally, the MfS documented the investigation details in the reports 'Commitment Application Investigation (*Antragsersuchen-Ermittlung*)' and decided whether the person could be added to the travel cadre.³⁶⁷

Faced with the significant increase in East German music troupes' trans-bloc performances during *détente*, the AA expanded its stock of permanent travel cadre members. In the minds of the MfS and AA, these permanent members should meet the following standards: ideological-political reliability, a low possibility of subversive behaviours (e.g., defection, speaking negatively about the GDR to the western media) during their stays abroad, artistic excellence, and having market appeal on the international stage. Compared with non-permanent travel cadres, their requests for trans-bloc business travel were processed more quickly. However, they did not have the complete freedom of trans-bloc mobility and the

³⁶⁵ BStU, MfS, JHS VVS, Nr. 738/77, 'Die Anforderung an die Vorbeugungsüberprüfungen zur Durchführung von Dienstreisen der Künstler der Hauptstadt der DDR'; MfS-ZKG, Nr. 21207, 'Ungesetzliches Verlassen der DDR durch Angehörige aus den Bereichen Kunst/Kultur im Zeitraum 1. Januar 1982 bis 20. Juli 1984', f. 14.

³⁶⁶ Regarding the MfS recruitment and assessment of IMs, see for instance, BStU, MfS-HA XX/AKG, Nr. 6086, f. 38. MfS JHS GVS, Nr. 133/77, ff. 14-17; MfS BV KMS, AIM, Nr. 1789/89, Teil I.

³⁶⁷ See for instance, BStU, MfS HA VII, Nr. 2490, Teil 1 von 3; MfS-HA VIII, Nr. 3357, Teil 1 von 2; Nr. 2507, Teil 1 von 3, ff. 1-8; MfS-HA VIII, Nr. 2499, Teil 2 von 2; Nr. 2508, Teil 2; Nr. 2498; Teil 1 von 2; BVfS Leipzig, KDFs Leipzig-Stadt, Nr. 00042/03; ff. 15-16, 94-97; MfS-HA XX, Nr. 20797 A, ff. 35-36.

exemption from further MfS security checks.³⁶⁸

The MfS and AA took further measures to ensure the travel cadre members' compliance with the Party rule before and during business trips abroad. Before each trip, travel cadre members' eligibility for travel would be re-assessed by 'cadre political preparation (*Kaderpolitische Vorbereitung*).³⁶⁹ In addition, in order to prevent and minimise travel cadre members' non-official permitted activities (e.g. privately arranged working commitments, anti-SED political activities) during their abroad stays, the SED authorised minimal days per business travel for most members.³⁷⁰ If a delay in return to the GDR would occur, the ensemble or individual artist were to ask for the SED authorities' permission for the extra stay. In addition, as required by the SED, travel cadre members' passports were subject to the Party management under the performing institutions' control. According to the MfS policy, it was not until immediately before the international business trip that members could get their passports back. After the end of the foreign trip, the passport was required to be returned to the Party management no later than ten days after the member's return to the GDR.³⁷¹ Certainly, travel cadre members' activities during their abroad stays were also monitored and documented by the unofficial collaborators and SED functionaries. In the mind of the SED, all these measures could effectively prevent travel cadre members' subversive behaviours in their international business travels.

It is worth noting that the implementation of operational subversion tangibly reduced the SED's prerequisite for the travel cadre member's SED membership. To some extent, the operational subversion created an impression on some music elites about the 'normality' of their artistic career and life. For instance, believing that musicians' artistic excellence overrode whether they belonged to the SED in determining promotions, tenor and conductor Peter

³⁶⁸ BStU, MfS ZKG, Nr. 19973, 'Hinweis zum vollendeten ungesetzlichen Verlassen der DDR durch Personen aus dem Bereich Kunst und Kultur im Zeitraum 1. Halbjahr 1985', ff. 4-25.

³⁶⁹ BStU, BVfS Leipzig Abt. XX, Nr. 00490, ff. 30-44.

³⁷⁰ As will be shown in later section, the SED sometime made exception for some top artistic talents. MfS-HA XX/AKG, Nr. 6086, 'Information über die Arbeit der Künstleragentur der DDR bei der Vorbereitung, Organisation und Durchführung kommerzieller Reisen auf dem Gebiet der Kultur in das NSW', f. 40.

³⁷¹ BStU, MfS-HA XX, Nr. 7991, 'Verbesserung von Ordnung und Sicherheit im Umgang mit Pässen in Übereinstimmung mit der Dienstanweisung des Ministers für Kultur vom 01. 05. 1983'; MfS ZKG, Nr. 19973, f. 21.

Schreier spoke about his opinion of an opera singer's career promotion in the GDR classical music world in an interview with *Spiegel* in 2018.³⁷² Indeed, Schreier's testimony can be explained by his background as a non-SED East German artist who frequently travelled to perform on the western stage and enjoyed his stardom inside and outside of the GDR. In addition, as Yaeger argues in his case study of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (LGO), the Party's political pressure played a minor role in musicians' recruitment, promotion, and censure at the Gewandhaus.³⁷³ Apart from the implementation of operational subversion by the MfS, Yaeger and Tompkins point out the factors of the labour shortage of top musicians due to the intellectual drain before the Berlin Wall's erection and the SED's aspiration to present the highest East German artistic achievements to the international world lying behind the SED's political compromise.³⁷⁴

Elevating the living standards: the de facto middle class in the GDR

The SED's endeavours to prevent the intelligentsia's 'voice and exit' also included offering them incentives. In assessing classical musicians' life and work in professional symphony orchestras in the GDR, the FRG, the UK, and the US, Jutta Allmendinger, J. Hackman and Erin Lehman use 'Player Recognition' to measure how strongly musicians' felt that 'excellent playing is recognised and rewarded'. Compared with the three western states, as their research has shown that the score of Player Recognition in the GDR (approx. 5.2) was slightly lower than that in the FRG (approx. 5.3) and higher than that in the US (5.0) and the UK (approx. 4.6).³⁷⁵ These statistics can offer a glimpse of GDR classical music intelligentsia's feelings of reward in working in this cultural industry. The inherited notion of status, intellectual background, pursuits, incomes, and professional expertise helped them lead more

³⁷² Alexander Osang's interview with Peter Schreier, 'Der Weltsachse', *Der Spiegel*, 52 (22.12.2018), p. 89.

³⁷³ Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, pp. 64-65.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64; Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', p. 416.

³⁷⁵ The data were collected by Allmendinger, Hackmann and Lehman in 1990 and 1991, which was after the *Wende*. Three reasons explain the use of their research finding here. First, there is no empirical research with data from before the *Wende*. Second, most musicians employed in East German orchestras remained the same between the late 1980s and 1990/1991. Third is the assumption of musicians' feeling rewarded is a long-term cumulative, rather than short-term sense. Jutta Allmendinger, J. Richard Hackman & Erin V. Lehman, 'Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras', *Musical Quarterly*, 80.2 (1996), pp. 199-200.

socially prestigious lives than the workers.³⁷⁶

In terms of the non-material aspects, the classical music intelligentsia remained at the centre of the mainstream East German cultural lives and gained social respect. This was mostly due to the historical notion of classical musicians as the cultural intelligentsia, the SED's endorsement, and the public's acknowledgement. For instance, the SED set several national awards (e.g., the National Prize and the Art Prize)³⁷⁷ to encourage and bestow artists' contributions to GDR cultural life. On a more frequent basis, the often-spectacular stage presentation of concerts and operas and the environment (e.g., the formal attire, musicians as the central focus of the spectator, ovations) added to the musicians an aura of charisma in the audience's perception. Furthermore, the growing televised classical music performances (e.g., concerts, operas, and ballets) since the mid-GDR era and such performances' close association with the regime's high-profile national events (i.e., founding anniversaries, festivals, and commemorations) popularised classical musicians outside the traditional concert halls and theatres. Moreover, the East German mass media's efforts in heroizing its music troupe' and individuals' success on the stage of the capitalist world also tangibly elevated the status of classical music practitioners in GDR society.

For the classical music intelligentsia, the rewards did not merely come from the non-material aspect but also the material. At a basic level, in a state with the highest density of professional symphony orchestras globally,³⁷⁸ East German classical musicians were secured by state-sponsored music education and job allocation. At an elite level, the salary rates and welfare benefits of working at those Class A institutions were above the national level. For instance, in 1961, the basic salary rate of the four major East Berlin orchestras, i.e., the Staatskapelle

³⁷⁶ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, pp. 226-27, 243-45.

³⁷⁷ The National Prize and the Art Prize were established in 1949 and 1959 respectively. For some archival resources regarding National Prize and the Art Prize, see for instance, BA, DC 20/7461; DY 30/IV 2/2/11; DY 30/J IV 2/2/720, 849, 1195,1244, 1414, 2294, 2349. Regarding scholarly works on the National Prize, see for instance, Dietrich Herfurth, *Der Nationalpreis der DDR: Zur Geschichte einer deutschen Auszeichnung* (Berlin, 2006).

³⁷⁸ According to the statistics collected by Allmendinger and Hackmann in 1990, in the GDR, every professional symphony orchestra served 218, 945 East German citizens. Compared with the GDR, the rates in the FRG, the US and the UK were, 691, 011; 1,839, 098; 4,046,285 respectively. Jutta Allmendinger & J Hackman, 'Organizations in Changing Environments', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41.3 (1996), p. 347; Allmendinger, Hackman & Lehman, 'Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras', p. 197.

Berlin (SkB), the Komische Oper (KO), the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra (BRSO), the Berlin Symphony Orchestra (BSO) started from 1,050 to 1,200 Ostmark, and the rates in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (LGO) and Staatskapelle Dresden (SkD) was 1,150 Ostmark.³⁷⁹ However, the rate of choir members in the above institutions was relatively lower, which ranged between 665 and 900 Ostmarks. While in the same year, the average monthly rate of a worker was 558 Ostmarks.³⁸⁰

The low cost of living also tangibly ensured that the classical music intelligentsia had comfortable material lives in the GDR. While their profession was generally well-paid, their living costs in the GDR remained low. Particularly during the Honecker era, the period which was marked by the government's efforts of 'ensuring a high social wage by fixing prices', such an advantage for these music elites became more noticeable. As Zatlin shows, as part of its effort to create a socialist welfare GDR state, the Honecker government implemented the policy of raising social wages and fixing consumer goods' prices by increasing state-subsidies. As this policy subsidised the prices of goods rather than people, those social groups with higher incomes primarily benefited from this policy.³⁸¹ With their relatively high income, the classical music intelligentsia belonged to the social group that benefited from this policy.

Even better material living standards were generally enjoyed by the travel cadre (*Reisekader*) musicians, especially those who engaged in GDR musical exchanges with the non-socialist world. The reasons are that although these touring musicians, especially those on collective contracts, had a disproportionately small share of their international touring revenue,³⁸² they were relatively better paid through their foreign working commitments than the non-travel cadre musicians. For another, their material living was enhanced somewhat by the relatively easy access to western consumer goods, as these goods were generally viewed as luxuries in the eyes of ordinary East Germans. Benefiting from their trans-bloc travel opportunities and hard currency incomes, these musicians could purchase highly sought-after western goods on

³⁷⁹ BA, DC 20/7641, 'Vergütung der führenden Orchester und Chöre der DDR'.

³⁸⁰ 'East Germany: wages and prices (data of July 1987)', accessed via: <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-5082.html> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

³⁸¹ Zatlin, *The Currency for Socialism*, pp. 10, 54, 67-68, 219.

³⁸² Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the wages of diplomatic service', p. 75.

both western and domestic markets. In theory, for East German musicians on collective contracts (e.g. newly graduated students, orchestra and choir members), except for receiving an amount of per diem payments in hard currency from the AA to cover their expenses, they were not entitled to have hard currency income from their working commitments in the non-socialist world.³⁸³ On the other hand, freelancers and those on individual contracts (e.g. conductors, directors, soloists) were required to report their hard currency income to the AA and hand in a certain amount of administration fee. However, it was not a rare practice that some travelling East German musicians undertook extra artistic commitments during their state-permitted working abroad period and did not report their hard currency income to the AA. The MfS documents show that the authorities recognised the existence of this problem. However, apart from intensifying political-ideological education, the Party was unable to provide an effective solution considering the multiple ways of musical elites 'smuggling' their hard currency income into the GDR (e.g. through their western colleagues, friends and relatives), which were difficult to detect for the *Stasi*.³⁸⁴ Thus, benefiting from such 'grey income' of hard currency and their experiences of working in the capitalist world, the classical music intelligentsia was able to pursue better living standards than the general East German populace.

The *Stasi* records of candidates and members of the travel cadre from the KO and the SoB can provide a glimpse of East German musical elites' relatively comfortable living standards. By the mid-1980s, most middle-level musicians in these two institutions lived in relatively comfortable housing conditions with modern facilities and furnishing. Moreover, few of them were supposed to have a high price range of furniture in their houses and apartments. For instance, the *Stasi's* record of a freelance opera director who worked at the Staatsoper Berlin showed that the director owned a four-room apartment furnished with valuable antique

³⁸³ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁸⁴ BStU, MfS-HA XX, Nr. 1204, 'Verpflichtung', f. 37; Nr. 20574, 'Information über eine Kontrolle der Reisevorbereitung und Auswertung von dienstlichen Reisen in der Künstler-Agentur der DDR', f. 93.

furniture. Paul Dessau and Ruth Berghaus,³⁸⁵ one of the most celebrated East German couples in the GDR and international musical scenes, had a substantial number of US dollars through their international artistic collaborations.³⁸⁶ Apart from generally good housing conditions, owning automobiles can also indicate these musical elites' comfortable material conditions. As noted by Zatlin, by the end of the 1980s, owning an automobile was still considered a luxury to most East Germans. The reasons were not only that most East German families could not afford automobiles, but more importantly, the waiting period for car allocation could usually last for years.³⁸⁷ As these musical elites' *Stasi* records show, it was not uncommon for middle-level musicians to own automobiles (such as Trabant 601, Lada, Mazada), and some upper-level individuals owned Volkswagen Golf. All these, therefore, indicate the classical music intelligentsia's relatively better living standards than the majority of East Germans in the GDR.

Assessing the outcomes

The classical music intelligentsia's defection rates and engagement in the GDR dissenting scene can provide a glimpse of the extent to which the SED controlled the intelligentsia's 'voice

³⁸⁵ Paul Dessau was an East German composer and conductor who was known for his artistic collaboration with Bertolt Brecht and influence in the construction of GDR socialist realism in musical culture. Before moving to the Soviet Occupation Zone of Berlin in 1948, Dessau emigrated to France in the 1930s and later to the US in the 1940s. During his stay in the US, he wrote film music for Hollywood films and established an artistic reputation. In the GDR, he served as the vice-president of the Academy of Arts between 1957 and 1962. Ruth Berghaus was an East German choreographer, opera and theatre director who established her artistic reputation both in the GDR and on the international stage. She was known for her artistic inheritance of Brecht's epic theatre. She married Paul Dessau in 1954. For more scholarly works on Paul Dessau and Ruth Berghaus, see for instance, Matthias Tischer, 'Exile—emigration—socialist realism: the role of classical music in the works of Paul Dessau', in Frackman & Powell (eds.), *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 183-94. Martin Brady & Carola Nielinger-Vakil, "'What a satisfying task for a composer!'" Paul Dessau's music for *The German Story (... Du und mancher Kamerad)*, in *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 195-218; Yunker, 'Marxism and feminism in Ruth Berghaus's staging of Don Giovanni', pp. 119-34; Calico, 'The legacy of GDR directors on the Post-Wende Opera Stage', pp. 138-39; Nina Noeske & Matthias Tischer (eds.), *Ruth Berghaus und Paul Dessau: komponieren-choreographieren-inszenieren* (Cologne, 2014).

³⁸⁶ As their *Stasi* files show, the SED knew that the couple owned a considerable sum of US dollars and presumed that some of them were 'illegal'. Nevertheless, the Party leadership turned a blind eye to this issue given greater consideration to its relatively harmonious relationship with the couple and the couple's international reputation. BStU, MfS-AP, Nr. 68.131/92, 'Kaderauftrag Nr. 84: Dessau-Berghaus, Ruth (25 January 1974)', f. 29.

³⁸⁷ Regarding research on GDR's automobile problem, see, for instance. Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 203-42; Werner Abelshauser, 'Two kinds of Fordism: on the differing roles of the automobile industry in the development of the two German States', in Haruhito Shiomi & Kazuo Wada (eds.), *Fordism Transformed: The Development of Production Methods in the Automobile Industry* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 269-96; [n.a.], 'Der Mangel wird verwaltet: DDR-Automarkt in den 1970er-Jahren', accessed via:

<https://www.mdr.de/zeitreise/stoebern/damals/artikel106566.html> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

and exit'. Regarding voicing different opinions, compared with writers, religious groups, academics and popular and rock musicians, voices from classical music circles against the SED governing authority remained rare. This milieu's low interest in the GDR dissenting scene could be somewhat shown by their public responses to Biermann's expatriation from the GDR in 1976. In contrast to other groups of the cultural intelligentsia, their voice in support of Biermann remained relatively obscure. Among those forty-one East German writers and artists who signed the open letter expressing their solidarity with Biermann, the singer Gisela May was the only artist associating with the classical music circles.³⁸⁸ As part of the SED's response to this open letter, the Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst (ADN) published articles that collected more than a hundred intellectuals' statements which claimed their loyalty to GDR socialism and denounced Biermann's 'subversive' behaviours. Some prominent classical music personalities, including Berghaus, Dessau, Wolfgang Schottke, Meyer, Dieter Zechlin, Gerd Natschinski, Gustav Schmahl, Siegfried Kurz, Hans Pischner, Siegfried Köhler, and few music elites from the Hochschule für Musik Weimar and Leipzig, were among that cultural intelligentsia who signed the declaration.³⁸⁹ It is worth investigating whether the SED's long-term generous support for the classical music industry and classical musicians' aesthetic tastes for music influenced the choice of this group of the intelligentsia. Moreover, as Betts suggests, East Germans' practice of 'double life' was not uncommon, given the fear of political persecution.³⁹⁰ Thus, there was the possibility that these intellectuals signed the declaration due to the political pressure from above. Nevertheless, their public responses somewhat suggest that the classical music circle was less critical and even supportive of the SED in the public sphere.

Even among those classical musicians who voiced dissenting opinions, their relationship with the SED government remained complicated. One case was stage producer Horst Bonnet's arrest and imprisonment following his active role in supporting the Prague Spring. Before the

³⁸⁸ See footnote 182.

³⁸⁹ [n.a.], 'Überwältigende Zustimmung der Kulturschaffenden der DDR zur Politik von Partei und Regierung: für die weitere kontinuierliche Fortsetzung der Politik des IX. Parteitages der SED', *Neues Deutschland* (22 November 1976), pp. 3-5; [n.a.], 'Unmißverständliche Antwort auf die Hetze Biermanns gegen unsere Republik', *Berliner Zeitung* (22 November 1974), p. 4; [n.a.], 'Mit ganzer Verantwortung für unsere Gesellschaft: Stellungnahmen und Erklärungen von Künstlern und Kulturschaffenden zur Aberkennung der DDR-Staatsbürgerschaft Wolf Biermanns', *Neue Zeit* (22 November 1976), p. 3.

³⁹⁰ Betts, *Within Walls*, p. 39.

arrest, Horst worked as Felsenstein's assistant director at the KO. During the Prague Spring, he expressed his solidarity with the reform movement and distributed leaflets criticising the Warsaw Pact. This resulted in his arrest and sentence of two-and-a-half years' imprisonment. Bonnet's SED membership and his association with the KO made his arrest attract western media attention.³⁹¹ Because of the lack of primary resources showing whether his imprisonment experience negatively affected his artistic career and whether he publicly repented of his action, the assessment of these issues had to rely on his post-imprisonment career trajectory and the GDR press report on him. Relocating to the Staatsoper Berlin as the stage producer, Bonnet produced several acclaimed stage and film productions, including the 1973 DEFA opera film *Orpheus in der Unterwelt (Orpheus in the Underworld)* by Offenbach.³⁹² In 1979 *Berliner Zeitung* published an article celebrating Horst's thirtieth stage anniversary without mentioning his imprisonment.³⁹³ In this regard, his dissenting experience did not affect his career pursuit negatively.

Kurt Masur's relationship with the SED is another case showing such complexity. During the nationwide mass demonstrations in October 1989, Masur took courageous action to support the Leipzig protesters at the risk of his career, playing a significant role leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. With the internationally artistic eminence of Masur and the LGO, Masur's dissenting action in the October event has attracted enduring media and scholarly attention for decades after the *Wende*.³⁹⁴ However, Masur's relations with the SED before the October event appeared relatively harmonious. Especially during his tenure as the Kapellmeister of the LGO, he maintained good contacts with some senior members of the Central Committee, including Honecker. Some birthday greeting cards to Honecker from Masur on behalf of

³⁹¹ Bonnet's wife, Sabine Bonnet was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for abetting Horst. His imprisonment led to the western media and some prominent musical elites' (e. g. Benjamin Britten and Yehudi Menuhin) campaign for his release. As a result, Horst was released after thirteen months' imprisonment. For British and American media reports on Horst's issues, see for instance, PHS, 'The Times Diary', *Times* (11 December 1968), p. 8; [n.a.], 'E Berlin Opera Man Goaled', *Times* (11 October 1968), p. 6; Gilbert Lewthwaite, 'Moscow Liberals Face Exile in Siberia', *Daily Mail* (11 October 1968), p. 2; [n.a.] 'And Yet It Moves', *Economist* (2 November 1968), p. 36; [n.a.], 'East Berliners Sentenced', *New York Times* (11 October 1968), p. 18; Michael Randle, April Carter, et al., & others, *Support Czechoslovakia* (London, 1968), p. 17.

³⁹² Sebastian Heiduschke, *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History* (New York, 2013), pp. 87, 109.

³⁹³ 'Bühnenjubiläum von Horst Bonnet', *Berliner Zeitung* (25 August 1979), p. 6.

³⁹⁴ For scholarly works regarding Kurt Masur and the Leipzig peaceful demonstration in October 1989, see for instance, Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, pp. 328-29; Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, pp. 297-98.

himself and the Gewandhaus members kept at the Bundesarchiv,³⁹⁵ together with the government's longstanding support of the building of the Gewandhaus concert hall, marked such harmony.

At the same time, Masur's efforts to avoid being exploited by the Party leadership for merely political ends which would endanger his musical pursuits while putting his musical pursuits were apparent. One example demonstrates that he refused to follow the Party's command in making a political statement during his British tour with the SkB in 1967, when the ATO imposed a ban on the political presence of GDR delegations in NATO countries. Pinning its hopes on Masur's established artistic profile among British concertgoers, the SED asked Masur to make a political statement at a press conference during this tour. However, Masur refused to do so on the ground of the ATO political ban. As Masur explained to the SED, a political statement would possibly result in Britain's cancellation of the forthcoming GDR musical troupes' performances in Britain.³⁹⁶ In addition, as Masur recollected, when Stasi officials approached him in the hope of developing him into an unofficial collaborator (*Informelle Mitarbeiter*, IM), he refused their collaboration offers by saying that 'I cannot play your game'.³⁹⁷ It was not until 2 October 1989 that, when an FRG television journalist interviewed Masur, he appealed to the Honecker government for a peaceful dialogue with the protesters.³⁹⁸ That was the first time Masur's political attitude was revealed to the public.³⁹⁹

Given the lack of statistics regarding this cultural intelligentsia group, it is hard to evaluate the success of the SED's measures against classical musicians' exits. Some statistics about the cultural intelligentsia in general, elite musical institutions perhaps can provide a glimpse of how SED endeavours to prevent classical musicians' exits were received by classical musicians. In the era of détente, a large number of classical musicians undertook trans-bloc travels for artistic activities. For instance, in the first half of 1977 alone, thirty-five ensembles and 2,000 soloists from East Berlin took part in foreign performances.⁴⁰⁰ Between 1 January 1982 and

³⁹⁵ BA, NY 4167/41, 'Glückwunschsreiben von Persönlichkeiten aus der DDR, 1979'.

³⁹⁶ See footnote 256.

³⁹⁷ Kurt Masur, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 44'19"-44'32".

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48'46"-48'54".

³⁹⁹ Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, pp. 297.

⁴⁰⁰ BStU, MfS JHS VVS, Nr. 738/77, 'Einleitung'.

20 July 1984, 142 East German citizens from the arts and cultural sectors unlawfully left the GDR to the West.⁴⁰¹ As the record did not single out classical music practitioners from the total number, it is impossible to know how many classical musicians were among the non-returnees. Yaeger's research into the LGO shows that between 1967 and 1990, nineteen members defected to the West, which composed merely 6 per cent of the whole orchestra members. As Yaeger comments, this suggests a low defection rate of musicians from this orchestra.⁴⁰² Thus, the SED's policies could, to some extent, reduce rather than prevent the classical music intelligentsia's discontent.

Section II: The problems of international mobility and incomes

Despite the SED's endeavours to control the classical music intelligentsia's 'voice and exit', these endeavours could hardly eliminate their discontent. Even for those elites with minor political demands, issues regarding the inflexibility of international business travel and lack of income were highly likely to generate and intensify their discontent towards the SED, thus leading to their choice of 'voice and exit'.

The inflexibility of trans-bloc business mobility

Both internal and external factors to the GDR impeded the classical music intelligentsia's access to their trans-bloc business mobility, thereby feeding their discontent towards the GDR socialist system. As shown in the previous section, the SED's policies of selecting travel cadre members and controlling travel documents essentially minimised the chances for disaffected music intelligentsia's subversive activities during their abroad stays. However, the practices of these policies, which entailed a lack of transparency, the highly complicated and bureaucratic procedure, the AA's monopoly, and the SED's double standard in treating musicians, potentially created GDR 'foes' among the classical music intelligentsia.

⁴⁰¹ BStU, MfS ZKG, Nr. 21207, 'Ungesetzliches Verlassen der DDR durch Angehörige aus den Bereichen Kunst/Kultur im Zeitraum 1. Januar 1982 bis 20. Juli 1984 (25 July 1984)', and 'Hinweis zum vollendeten ungesetzlichen Verlassen der DDR seitens Angehöriger aus dem Bereich Kunst und Kultur/Gebiet Musik durch Nichtrückkehr von genehmigten Gastspielreisen nach nichtsozialistischen Staaten und Westberlin im Zeitraum 1. Januar bis Juli 1984', ff. 11-19.

⁴⁰² Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, p. 316.

For instance, the lack of transparency in selecting and confirming travel cadre members led by the MfS' operational subversion policy was likely to generate and fuel musicians' disaffected mood. Because the policy was used for prevention rather than punishment, it was possible that some musicians, although having no intention of conducting subversive activities, were denied international travel because they were identified as 'high-risk offenders'. An examination of travel cadre applications under Honecker kept at the *Stasi* archive shows that the following factors were likely to result in a failed travel cadre application: 1) political disinterest, 2) addiction to alcohol, 3) criminal records, 4) 'guilt by association' (the application's friends or family members had illegally left the GDR).⁴⁰³ However important, these factors did not determine whether a business exit visa would be issued. The decision to approve a travel cadre application was at the discretion of SED officials. In addition, as the applicants' personal information collection was often conducted in secret, failed applicants always had to guess the reasons behind their refusals.⁴⁰⁴

The factor of 'guilt by association' offered a case in point. According to the MfS Leipzig branch's record, a freelance musician was denied his travel cadre membership mainly because of his wife's involvement in a criminal case.⁴⁰⁵ In contrast, for some more artistically elevated musicians, this factor did not appear to affect them negatively. According to Schreier's account, despite his son's defection to the West when the two travelled to the Salzburg Festival in 1982, his artistic career in the GDR and on the international stage did not appear to be negatively affected.⁴⁰⁶ Likewise, conductor Horst Neumann, whose son was sentenced to imprisonment for refusing military service and later moved to the FRG, kept his double-working commitments at the Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia Chorus in

⁴⁰³ BStU, MfS HA XX Nr. 20798, 'Bestätigung der Reiselisten des Gewandhausorchesters/Bachorchester Ihr Schreiben vom 29.7.1976-Tgb. Nr. XX/AG RV 10 689/76 (20 August 1976)', ff. 19-21; Nr. 20805, 'In der Anlage erhalten Sie die Reiseliste der Dresdner Philharmonie zur Konzertreise nach der BRD und nach England (11 September 1974)', ff. 2-5; BVfS Leipzig, KD, 03052, 'Ablehnung: des Einsatzes als Reisekader NSW'.

⁴⁰⁴ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, pp. 201-02.

⁴⁰⁵ Because this musician's identity was blackened out by the Stasi archive for personal information protection purpose, it is impossible to know this musician's reaction to the travel cadre refusal. It is also unknown whether he succeeded in securing this membership. BVfS Leipzig, KD, 03052, 'Ablehnung: des Einsatzes als Reisekader NSW'.

⁴⁰⁶ Osang, interview with Peter Schreier, p. 90.

London.⁴⁰⁷ Their exemption from these disciplinary measures can be explained by the reasons such as their highly celebrated artistic profile on the international stage, the capability to generate hard currency revenue for the SED, and friendships with some high-ranking officials. To be sure, failed applicants could write a petition letter to the SED officials to plead for a reassessment of their travel applications.⁴⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the issue of whether to approve these petitions was at the discretion of SED authorities, which indirectly led to SED officials' abuse of their power in processing these petitions. Thus, from the lenses of musicians who suffered from the travel ban for the same reasons, the government's lack of consistency and transparency in imposing its policies on musicians' foreign opportunities undermined the governing authorities.

The SED's lack of efficiency in processing exit travel permits, which was likely to result in the cancellation or postponement of musicians' trans-bloc artistic commitments, also created and intensified musicians' disaffected mood. Admittedly, driven by the aspiration to maximise the economic gain of East German music exports to the western bloc, the Honecker government made efforts to simplify the processing period for musicians' business travel applications. For instance, the AA and the MfS created a pool of travel cadre candidates, recording artistically talented musicians' personal information. For candidates already in the pool, this policy helped reduce the processing time of business exit visas to between four to eight weeks.⁴⁰⁹ Unfortunately however, this policy was usually applied to some leading East German performing institutions that frequently engaged in the GDR's trans-bloc cultural exchange. Thus, freelancers or members of small performing groups who were first-time travellers still had to experience all the complicated and bureaucratic security procedures. Thus, even with the SED's human and financial investment in speeding up the time for issuing travel documents for the musicians, the inflexibility of trans-bloc business travels for East German musicians remained unchanged.

⁴⁰⁷ 'Masterly touch in a great tradition', *Times* (11 November 1986), p. 15.

⁴⁰⁸ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁹ BStU, MfS HA XX/AKG Nr. 6086, 'Information über die Arbeit der Künstleragentur der DDR bei der Vorbereitung, Organisation und Durchführung kommerzieller Reisen auf dem Gebiet der Kultur in das NSW', ff. 38-39.

Conductor Wolf-Dieter Hauschild's relocation to the West shows that in addition to the SED's complicated and bureaucratic procedure for issuing travel documents, the monopoly of the AA over musicians' trans-bloc working commitment also fed into the musicians' disaffected mood. Before moving to the FRG in 1985, Hauschild's artistic profile was well established in the GDR and on the international stage. Serving as the Principal Conductor of the Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, he appeared in many highly profiled GDR cultural events. Notably, he conducted *Der Freischütz* on the grand reopening night of the Semperoper in the state commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Dresden bombings on 13 February 1985. Deployed as a permanent travel cadre member in the GDR's international cultural exchange, he not only toured with East German ensembles but also received invitations to conduct guest orchestras in the western world. In 1984, the SED acknowledged his contribution to GDR culture by awarding him the National Prize. However, the harmonious government-artist relationship collapsed with Hauschild's defection to the FRG two months after his high-profile Semperoper appearance in February 1985. Despite an early promise to permit Hauschild to take the role of the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra (SPO)'s chief guest conductor, the SED authority was reluctant to make good on its promise after Hauschild signed the contract with the SPO.⁴¹⁰ Four months after his defection to the FRG, he was interviewed by Horst Wenderoth on a radio programme. When Wenderoth asked why Hauschild, a well-respected East German conductor who enjoyed multiple privileges (i.e., free mobility of international travels) unavailable to most East Germans, left the GDR, the conductor said that he was fed up with the monopoly of the AA and the need to flatter and wrestle with the SED authorities for international business travels. As he said,

Before every guest performance that I did in a western country, I had to get permission from the SED authorities. There were also [guest performance] requests that I have never received at all, which would be declined by the Artist Agency. There were also other extreme situations that I was noticed about a guest performance shortly before my departure. But I was not sure whether I could go or not. And you will understand that in the long run this is more than exhausting. If I add the time that I have spent making phone calls, going to the Ministry [MfK] in [East] Berlin, to the radio in order to get these guest performances, then I have to say that it is too much for me. Actually, I need much more time for [making] music. And it is about not only time, but also nerves and a certain degree of humiliation. A musician's opportunities of getting guest performances [abroad] were not at the hands of people who directly work in the

⁴¹⁰ BStU, MfS HA XX, Nr. 20373, 'Chefdirigent des Rundfunk Sinfonie Orchester Leipzig, Prof. Hauschild, Wolf-Dieter', ff. 3-6.

arts, but in the administration instead. I could not bear that anymore. This is the main reason why I took this very difficult step [exit from the GDR]. The costs are, firstly, I had to leave my home country. Secondly, I had to leave an orchestra and a choir that I was very proud of.

In addition, in that interview, Hauschild also addressed how some East German soloists he knew well (e.g., Baroque virtuoso Ludwig Güttler and singer Roswitha Drechsler) had to keep struggling to secure their international guest performances through making tremendous efforts to negotiate with, and sometimes even to plead for the mercy from, the SED authorities. As he put, 'these artists [East German soloists] had to struggle for many guest performances. It was often that they received refusals from the GDR authorities.'⁴¹¹

Apart from all the factors specific to the music intelligentsia' trans-bloc business travels, the GDR's signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Helsinki in 1975 (aka the Helsinki Accords) also played a substantial role in boosting the intelligentsia's discontent about the SED's restrictions on the East German population's international mobility within the context of East-West *détente*. While the signing of the Accords further enhanced the GDR's international legitimacy, Honecker was reluctant to follow the Accords' request for citizens' free international mobility, which was already inscribed on the GDR's 1974 Constitution. As a result, the freedom of trans-bloc mobility, including personal and business travels, was still a highly selective process under the directive of the Honecker government. Therefore, the German classical music intelligentsia, like other ordinary East Germans who intended to travel abroad, might be disappointed by the government's non-conformity with the Accords.⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ BStU, MfS ZKG, Nr. 244, Horst Wendroth's radio interview with Hauschild in the programme *Tatsachen und Meinungen* (13 August 1985), ff. 266-69.

⁴¹² Regarding scholarly works on the impact of Helsinki Accords on Honecker's international mobility policies, along with East German emigration, see for instance, Norman Naimark, "'Ich will hier raus': emigration and the collapse of the German Democratic Republic", in Ivo Banac (ed.), *Eastern Europe in Revolution* (New York, 2019), pp. 77-79; Dennis, 'The East German Ministry of State Security and East German society during the Honecker era', pp. 5-8; Betts, *Within Walls*, pp. 176-188; Bange, 'Onto the Slippery Slope', pp. 82-94; Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 172-73; Carol Mueller, 'Escape from the GDR', pp. 714-17; Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, pp. 203-14; Oliver Bange & Stephan Kieninger, 'Negotiating one's own demise? The GDR's Foreign Ministry and the CSCE negotiations: plans, preparations, tactics and presumptions', access via: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/negotiating-ones-own-demise-the-gdrs-foreign-ministry-and-the-csce-negotiations> (last accessed 09 August 2023); Daniel Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, 2001).

The western world's policy towards foreign nationals' incoming touring performances and their work with the home institutions were the external factors for the travelling East German music elites' disaffection with international business mobility. During *détente*, major countries in the western world did not impose a harsh entry ban for visiting artists as they did in the immediate years after the erection of the Berlin Wall.⁴¹³ Nevertheless, the receiving country's processing period for issuing East German nationals' visiting visa applications and its working restrictions for foreign nationals in the domestic market raised their awareness of trans-bloc travel inflexibility as East Germans. The case of the Suhl folklore ensemble's planned visiting tour to France in 1983 offers an insight into this point. Because the AA arranged the touring performances on short notice, they thus asked the Foreign Travel Department about the possibility of speeding up the processing period for the artists' travel permits. Although the Travel Department agreed to speed up the processing time, it told the AA that the planned trip was still unlikely to be consummated on the planned date because of the following two reasons: 1). The minimum processing time for the French embassy for entry visa applications was twenty-one days; 2) There was a low chance for the French Embassy to accelerate their process time on this case because France did not prioritise the cultural exchange of amateur groups in its GDR cultural relations.⁴¹⁴

Some western countries' working restriction on foreign nationals at the local labour markets was another external factor. Rather than referring to the policies imposed by the western governments, some elites were prone to relate their disaffection directed at the SED. A document under the title 'Status and Problems of the International Exchange of Artists' (*Stand und Probleme des Internationalen Künftlerausstausches*) by the MfS in the mid-1980s shows that this problem was well-registered by SED authorities. As noted, some western countries (i.e., Italy, the UK, Switzerland, the USA, Greece, and the Scandinavian region) imposed policies regulating foreign artists' visiting artistic engagements, complicating foreign nationals' working permit applications. Finding the difficulty in obtaining these western countries' entry visas and working permits, as the MfS put it, bureaucratic system of the GDR authorities and

⁴¹³ Regarding NATO-imposed entry restrictions for East German cultural workers in the 1960s, see chapter II.

⁴¹⁴ BStU, MfS-HA XX/AKG, Nr. 6086, 'Beispiel für die Problematik, die im Zusammenhang mit der Entsendung eines Folkloreensembles entstehen: Gastspiel des Folkloreensembles Suhl vom 21.07.—2.08.83 in Frankreich (geplant)', f. 42.

the AA.⁴¹⁵

All these internal and external factors to the SED tangibly accentuated the classical music intelligentsia's awareness of the inflexibility of trans-bloc mobility. Even those politically disinterested musicians who did not oppose GDR socialism, impeded by such inflexibility in pursuing their career development, developed their likelihood of disaffection towards the SED government. Moreover, disadvantaged by their East German nationality in pursuing their career in the western markets, they were likely to develop an inferiority complex to their FRG counterparts, thus doubting the official rhetoric of GDR socialism's supremacy over the capitalist system.

Income dissatisfaction

The income dissatisfaction also accentuated the classical music intelligentsia's disaffected mood towards the GDR government within the Cold War trans-bloc framework. As demonstrated in the previous section, the classical music intelligentsia generally lived materially comfortably as a *de facto* middle class in the GDR. Despite this, multiple issues generated dissatisfaction with income. The first was their low salary rates compared with those of their counterparts working in the western bloc. As Tompkins reveals, FRG orchestra musicians' general salary rate was around 30 per cent higher than the GDR in the 1950s.⁴¹⁶ Allmendinger and Hackmann's research shows that musicians in any top West Berlin orchestra's salary rates were four times higher than their counterparts in East Berlin in 1990.⁴¹⁷ Soloists presented a much more noticeable income contrast. For a leading role in an opera, whereas the royalty rate for an opera singer was 3,000 Deutschmark per performance in a modest West German opera house, the rate at a top East German opera company was only 300 Ostmarks.⁴¹⁸ According to Stasi records, such noticeable income disparity generated the musicians' discontent. Typical in this regard was the case of an equipment engineer working in the Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra. The MfS records about the engineer

⁴¹⁵ BStU, MfS-HA XX, Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künftlerausstausches', ff. 5-6. See also, Chapter Two.

⁴¹⁶ Tompkins, 'Orchestrating identity', p. 416.

⁴¹⁷ Allmendinger & Hackman, 'Organisation in Changing Environment', p. 348.

⁴¹⁸ Della Couling, 'Semperoper Dresden', *Opera Now* (July 1990), p. 18.

documented that he frequently complained about his modest monthly income in the GDR, believing that he would earn much more with his professional expertise if he moved to the FRG.⁴¹⁹ His monthly income of 2,000 Ostmarks was considered high by East German standards. However, within a transnational context, such a rate was dwarfed by his counterparts in the FRG.

The second dissatisfaction was due to local East German classical musicians' generally inferior income status compared to their western colleagues within East German performing arts institutions. In terms of their employees, East German performing arts institutions were far less international than their western counterparts, especially after the Berlin Wall's erection. Nevertheless, there were still a small number of western musicians working at some top-ranked institutions in the long-term. The SED government's intention of keeping some elite western musicians to boost the GDR's artistic and international profile resulted in income inequality between western and local musicians. Inequality can be presented in both the payment methods and salary rates.

The difference in the methods of their salary payments generated inequality between local and western musicians. While local musicians were paid in Ostmark, western musicians were paid in both Ostmarks and hard currencies (usually in Deutsche Marks). The difference in paying methods was not initially designated for generating income inequality. Because the Ostmark was a purely domestic currency, western musicians could not use Ostmark to support their living outside the GDR. It was thus reasonable for them to be paid partially in hard currency. However, as western currency was also circulated in the GDR market since the 1970s, the purchasing power of local musicians' East German salaries inside the GDR became weak.⁴²⁰ In addition, whereas hard currency had strong purchasing power on the international markets, Ostmark had none. As a result, compared with their western colleagues, local musicians' intellectual labour was indirectly devalued by the difference in currency payment.

The inequality also lay in western musicians' generally higher salary rates than the locals. East

⁴¹⁹ BStU, MFS-HA XX/AKG, Nr. 6279, 'Einleitungsbericht zum Anlegen der OPK "___" (20 January 1988)', ff. 1-3.

⁴²⁰ Zatlín, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 3, 167.

German music institutions deployed collective and individual contracts regarding musicians' contracts. Collective contracts suggested a relatively fixed salary rate, whereas individual contracts varied in different cases. For those on individual contracts, their salary rates were based on generally fixed criteria such as position, working experiences, and years of service, as well as their negotiation with the MfK. For western musical elites, their non-East German nationalities always tended to bring them advantages in such negotiations. In addition, aware of the western world's high salary standards, the SED knew the importance of accommodating these western musicians' salary demands. The salary rates of East German conductor Rolf Reuter and Dutch conductor Andre Rieu Sr. in the GDR can offer a glimpse of western nationals' relatively advantageous income rates. When Rolf Reuter was appointed as the General Music Director at the KO in 1981, his monthly salary was 5,000 Ostmarks.⁴²¹ In the same year, when Rieu came to the same role at the Leipziger Oper, his salary rate was 6,500 Ostmarks plus 2,500 Deutschmark.⁴²² Offering exceptional musical talents varied salary rates based on individual negotiations was common in the capitalist system, as it followed the market forces. Whereas such practice was embedded in the public transcript of the open market, it contradicted the GDR socialist ideology of equating money with social inequality and created the *de facto* system of 'capitalism in socialism'.⁴²³ Furthermore, in contrast to western musicians, who were eligible to pursue their careers in international markets with little governmental intervention, the international careers of East German musicians were essentially in the hands of the SED government. Therefore, the inequality of salary status fuelled East German musicians' income dissatisfaction, potentially delegitimising the SED government's governing authority.

The third reason for dissatisfaction was their financial treatment by the SED regarding their diplomatic service in the non-socialist world. The dissatisfaction resulted from the somewhat high agency fee requested by the AA and East German musical elites' 'bargain value' on western markets. As analysed in the previous section, the AA regulations did not allow artists

⁴²¹ BA, DC 20/1/4/4705. 'Beschuß über Maßnahmen zur Stabilisierung der Leitung der Komischen Oper (22. Dezember 1980)', ff. 3-4.

⁴²² BA, DC 20/1/4/4712, 'Beschuß über den Abschluß eines Einzelvertrages mit Herrn Professor Andre Rieu, Niederlande, als 1. Dirigent an der Leipziger Oper'.

⁴²³ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 7.

to make their working arrangements abroad, requesting that all arrangements, such as programming and payments, be processed by the agency first before allocating to specific groups or individual artists.⁴²⁴ According to Yaeger's observation of the LGO touring members' diplomatic services, in contrast to the profoundly commercial success East German classical music talents brought to the GDR, the touring members themselves hardly financially benefitted from such success. Given that the majority of the touring members were on collective contracts, apart from receiving a small amount of per diem in hard currency form from the AA to cover their basic living expenses in the non-socialist world, they did not earn extra income on top of their fixed salaries from such trans-bloc touring performances. Even worse, the allowance of musicians' daily expenditure when touring in the FRG remained the same over the entirety of the 1970s regardless of a rise in local inflation, and the standards of their transport and accommodation were kept minimal. Outraged by their poor treatment, the orchestra's touring musicians voiced their discontent.⁴²⁵ Given the LGO's top-notch status in the GDR cultural world with extraordinary artistic and commercial success on the international stage, it can be presumed that musicians at other elite East German performing institutions possibly had similar discontent.

Such discontent about diplomatic services was not exclusive to those musicians on collective contracts, it was also shared by those on individual contracts. Better than musicians on collective contracts, they were allowed to earn their own income from their foreign working commitments. Nevertheless, they needed to report their income and pay a certain administration fee to the AA. According to Schreier and countertenor Jochen Kowalski, the agency fee percentage varied in different cases. First-time travellers and church musicians' administration fee was the highest, ranging from 40 to 50 per cent. Frequently travelling artists with an international reputation could apply for a reduction of their agency fee down from 30 to 20 per cent.⁴²⁶ Despite the existence of the agency fee, these musical elites appeared to be granted more financial privileges by the SED government than those on collective contracts.

⁴²⁴ For the account of Hermann Falk, director of the Artists Agency (1972-1990), see Hermann Falk, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 39'23''-39'34''; BStU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künstlertaustausches', f. 13; MfS HA XX, Nr. 1204, 'Information zu Stimmungen und Meinungen unter der Bevölkerung der DDR (04 September 1989)', ff. 36-37.

⁴²⁵ Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Wages of Diplomatic Service', p. 75.

⁴²⁶ Jochen Kowalski and Peter Schreier, *Classical Music and Cold War: Musicians in the GDR*, 40'38''-41'29''.

Nevertheless, East German classical musicians' generally lower royalties than their western counterparts around the same artistic level on the international markets,⁴²⁷ coupled with the high charge of the agency fee, likely stimulated these elites' income discontent.

The financial exploitation of the music intelligentsia engaging in the GDR trans-bloc music trade came not only from the SED government but also western markets. The competitive value of East German artists in western markets potentially laid the ground for musicians' income dissatisfaction in the long term. To western impresarios and agencies, the generally lower cost of hiring musical ensembles and musicians from the GDR than the western world for guest performances increased East German classical music elites' economic value.⁴²⁸ To those musicians undertaking such commercially based trans-bloc activities, their income inferiority to their western counterparts around the same artistic levels would possibly trigger their inferiority over their East German identity.

Section III: Bargaining with the SED— three Komische Oper (KO) directors

Case I: 'Bourgeois humanist allied with the working class'— Walter Felsenstein

Western music elites in the GDR cultural scene: capitalism in socialism

Despite occupying a small percentage of the GDR classical music industry's employees, musical elites from the western bloc played a particular role in the SED's musical politics. Concerning its employees' composition, the GDR classical music industry was far less international than its western counterparts, particularly the FRG. According to Allmendinger, Hackmann and Lehman, while foreign players composed only one per cent of members in major GDR (state) orchestras, the rate in the FRG was 21 per cent.⁴²⁹ Regarding the composition of western musical talents in GDR orchestras, the rate was even lower immediately after the erection of the Berlin Wall. As explained in Chapter One, with the arrival

⁴²⁷ BStU, MfS-HA XX Nr. 20574 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künftler austausches', f. 6.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Allmendinger, Hackmann & Lehman, 'Life and work in symphony orchestras', p. 198.

of *détente*, Honecker was keen on engaging some top-level western music elites to either guest or join East German performing institutions. The SED's rationale for attracting these elites to the domestic GDR cultural scene was its artistic, ideological-political, and commercial incentives. Artistically, the SED considered that these elites' artistic engagement helped elevate the artistic excellence of the GDR classical music industry. On a more ideological-political ground, such engagement served the Party's inward and outward propaganda purposes. Among the East German population, these western music elites were tagged as 'socialist friends' from the western world, serving the SED's rhetoric that the GDR socialism had possessed a cultural magnetism for the western world. On the international stage, these musicians' western background, the western world's recognition of their artistic excellence, and their contacts were expected by the SED to be beneficial to the elevation of the GDR's international profile and the economic performance of the GDR music heritage industry. These musical elites, motivated by their diverse pursuits, from artistic aspirations and financial incentives, chose to work behind the Iron Curtain in the GDR classical music industry.

These western musicians, aware of their political and cultural value to the SED, knew that their background endowed them with a more considerable agency and prestige than local musicians under the SED directive. While recognising the GDR system's constraints and advantages, they navigate their relations with the SED to advance their agendas. Their success in pushing the SED to adjust its relatively strict policies in favour of their interest brought advantages to their affiliated East German performing institutions and colleagues. At the same time, their privileges and success in exercising their agency also potentially fuelled other social actors' discontent about the SED's differentiated treatment between capitalist westerners and socialist locals.

The privileged few: Felsenstein and the KO under 'monument-protection (Denkmalschutz)'

One telling example concerning western music elites' privileges is Austrian opera director Walter Felsenstein, founder, and the Intendant at the KO. Two years before the foundation of the GDR, Felsenstein, at the invitation of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (*Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland, SMAD*), founded the KO based on his

directing aesthetics of 'realistic music theatre (*realistisches Musiktheater*)' in the eastern zone of Berlin and remained at the helm of the opera house till his death. With Felsenstein's dedication to enhancing opera works' aesthetic accessibility to a non-specialist audience via choosing canonical opera repertoire, realistic stagings, and the use of vernacular language in singing, the KO built up its distinct artistic profile among the three major opera houses⁴³⁰ in the Great Berlin area.⁴³¹ Moreover, together with Wieland Wagner's New-Bayreuth style, Brecht's epic theatre and Felsenstein's realistic music there played a pioneering role in defining modern 'Regietheater' [director 's theater],⁴³² the directing aesthetic that has revolutionised the world of opera directing scene since WWII.⁴³³ In view of the SED authority, it regarded the KO as highly representative in the artistic excellence of GDR culture, given that Felsenstein's realistic theatre was in close aesthetic proximity to socialist realism decreed by the communist authority.⁴³⁴ In addition, the SED government considered Felsenstein's western background to be of propagandistic use in promoting his public image as 'a bourgeois humanist allying with the working class' and helpful in cultivating the GDR's image on the international stage. These factors, enhanced by Felsenstein's close association with some senior officials of the SMAD and the SED's aspiration to win the cultural war over the FRG on the battleground of the Great Berlin operatic scene, made the SED government's generous support of the KO's artistic development. Under Felsenstein, the KO became synonymous with his realistic music theatre and developed into the GDR's operatic flagship. The SED government's deep reliance on Felsenstein for its cultural-political ends endowed Felsenstein with privileges in the GDR. The SED acknowledged that Felsenstein's Austrian citizenship and the western operatic world's admiration of his artistic excellence considerably exempted him

⁴³⁰ The other two major houses in the Great Berlin area were Deutsche Oper zu Berlin (West), and the Staatsoper Berlin (East).

⁴³¹ Elizabeth Janik, 'The symphony of a capital city: controversies of reunification in the Berlin music community', in Carol Costabile-Heming, Rachel Halverson & Kristie Foell (eds.), *Berlin: The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital* (Berlin & New York, 2004), p. 157.

⁴³² Beginning in the German-speaking countries from the early twentieth century onwards, the tradition of Regietheater, as scholars such as Cristina Radu-Giurgiu put, gives directors' 'the unlimited freedom' to interpret works without the necessity of adhering to the creators' ideas. Cristina Radu-Giurgiu, 'Regietheater-the challenge for the opera of our times', *Studia Ubb Musica*, LXVI.2 (2021), p. 185; Ulrich Müller, 'Regietheater/Director's Theater', in Helen Greenwald (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Opera* (New York, 2014), pp. 583-84.

⁴³³ Calico, 'The Legacy of GDR directors on the Post-Wende Opera Stage', p. 131; Müller, 'Regietheater', pp. 586. Carnegie, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre*, pp. 314-15.

⁴³⁴ Regarding the relationship between Felsenstein's realistic music theatre and socialist realism, see Chapter IV.

from the SED's political pressure. Thus, the SED tried to please him and sometimes compromised to keep him.

The SED highly valued and recognised Felsenstein's cultural contribution inside the GDR, celebrating him as a living cultural icon. The Central Committee marked Felsenstein's 50th birthday in several ways, holding semi-official events and publishing birthday greeting articles. In his newspaper article published in the *Neues Deutschland* celebrating Felsenstein's 50th birthday in 1951, Ulbricht praised Felsenstein's contribution to making opera become a form of the people's art.⁴³⁵ On Felsenstein's 70th birthday in 1971, the Central Committee's greetings to Felsenstein appeared the front page of the *Neue Zeit*, demonstrating the importance of the director in the GDR's cultural politics.⁴³⁶ During his Intendant-ship at the KO, Felsenstein also served as the vice-president of the Academy of Arts. Having been awarded the National Prize five times, Felsenstein was celebrated as a living cultural giant in the GDR society with the official SED endorsement.

Apart from awards and honours, the SED government endowed him with more privileges than local East German artistic elites. On a personal level, Felsenstein enjoyed the free mobility between two halves of Berlin even after the Berlin Wall's erection. Thus, he could reside in West Berlin and work in the East. At the same time, he was among the few artists in the GDR who could ask the SED authorities not to exploit him for the Party's propagandistic ends if he disagreed. This privilege can be evidenced by his successful request to withdraw his previous statements in welcoming Nikita Khrushchev from the press in 1960.⁴³⁷ In 1962, the Central Committee detected Felsenstein's inclination to leave the KO due to the reasons of generous offers from the FRG and US operatic circles, some western media and senior SED members' aspersions on Felsenstein's artistic achievements, and his wife's opposition to his work at the KO. Fearing losing Felsenstein, the Central Committee raised Felsenstein's salary rate to the highest level among all theatre directors and conductors in the GDR (14,000 Ostmarks monthly,

⁴³⁵ Walter Ulbricht, 'Glückwunsch des ZK der SED an Intendant Felsenstein', *Neues Deutschland* (30 May 1951), p. 2.

⁴³⁶ [n.a.], 'Überzeugendes Vorbild: Gratulationen für Prof. Felsenstein zum 70. Geburtstag', *Neue Zeit* (30 May 1971), p. 1.

⁴³⁷ BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.026/70, a letter from S. Wagner to Norden (19 May 1960), f. 23.

including 7,000 Deutschmarks). In addition, Ulbricht also arranged a personal meeting with Felsenstein, promising to give him and the KO more support to offset the SED's incapability of offering a comparative salary rate as in the West.⁴³⁸

Indeed, Felsenstein's privileged status in the SED cultural politics also extended to the KO. The SED authorities acknowledged that Felsenstein's deep attachment to the KO was the fundamental reason he worked in the GDR.⁴³⁹ Thus, the SED government had to take special care of his relationship with the KO, supporting the opera company generously and sometimes even compromising on political grounds. In terms of artistic direction, the KO resisted its opera repertoire's Sovietisation under Felsenstein.⁴⁴⁰ On a more administrative ground, although it is impossible to assume that the KO was immune from the SED authorities' interference,⁴⁴¹ it enjoyed a greater extent of autonomy undisturbed from the Party's interference than other East German performing institutions. The high degree of independence perhaps can be best presented by the KO's nickname 'the third German state', a KO joke widely circulated among its employees and in the western world during Felsenstein's time.⁴⁴²

In this regard, the most telling example was the KO's success in retaining most of its western musicians following the Berlin Wall's erection compared with the situation at the Staatsoper Berlin. Prior to the erection of the Berlin Wall, the number of western musicians at the KO and the SoB was considerable. As cellist Roland Kuntz and dramaturge Günter Rimkus, who worked in the SoB before the *Wende*, recalled, more than half of the company's musicians were from West Berlin.⁴⁴³ Immediately after the Wall's erection, these western musicians could still travel across the Wall to work in these institutions and were paid half in Western currency and half in Ostmark if they wanted. However, the SED then changed its mind, terminating the recruitment of Western musicians in these institutions for better national security control.

⁴³⁸ BA DC 20/7711, a letter from Hans Bentzien to Willi Stoph (11 October 1963), and 'Aktennotiz' (22 January 1964).

⁴³⁹ BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.026/70, a letter from Hans Bentzien to Alfred Kurella, the manager of Kommission für Fragen der Kultur beim Politbüro des Zentralkomitees der SED (25 October 1962), ff. 59-60.

⁴⁴⁰ Calico, 'The Legacy of East German directors on the post-*Wende* stage', p. 135.

⁴⁴¹ For instance, in 1958 the Party management of the KO decided to dismiss some western members of the KO against Felsenstein's will. BA, DY 30/IV 2/2/026/70, letters between Alexander Abusch and Friedrich Ebert Jr. (March 1958), ff. 1-2.

⁴⁴² Paul Moor, 'Felsenstein and Proteges', *Times* (6 November 1972), p. 16.

⁴⁴³ Roland Kuntz and Günter Rimkus, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 27'00''-27'34'', 23'08''-23'24''.

In contrast to the SoB, where western musicians were notified that the company would not pay them in hard currency, which led to the drain of western musical talents in this company, the KO kept all its western members.⁴⁴⁴ The western KO members' western currency share in their salary increased even more. As part of the SED-Felsenstein agreement in renewing the director's contract starting from 1964, the SED government not only significantly increased its financial support for the reconstruction of the opera house, the salary rates of choir members, supporting actors and soloists, but also agreed to keep all the KO's western employees and even improve their salary treatment.⁴⁴⁵

While Felsenstein and the KO enjoyed the privileges endorsed by the SED, it undermined the SED's egalitarian claims. Inside the SED Central Committee, voices against the government's constant special treatment of Felsenstein occurred. For instance, Kurt Blecha, the Head of the Press Office of the Chairman of the Ministers, once said, 'We have to put an end to the fact that Felsenstein is under 'monument protection (*Denkmalschutz*)'.⁴⁴⁶ In addition, outside of East Berlin's opera scene, Felsenstein's 'bourgeois' lifestyle raised ordinary East Germans' doubt about GDR socialism. In May 1961, the GDR border police and political administration reported to the Central Committee that Felsenstein's Mahogany timber-built donkey stable on the Island of Hiddensee raised widespread criticism from the local population. As noted by the locals, 'today, in the workers' and peasants' state, the intelligentsia can afford even greater things by building a donkey stable made of high-quality precious wood. In contrast, the (local) Agricultural Production Cooperative does not even get rubble wood to construct a cooling system.'⁴⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the SED government's determination to keep and reward Felsenstein remained unaffected. The SED's attitude towards Felsenstein possibly can be best shown by Minister of Culture Alexander Abusch' statement in 1958: 'Felsenstein's resignation would be

⁴⁴⁴ Kurt Masur, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 29'00''-29'10''.

⁴⁴⁵ BA, DC 20/7711, 'Aktennotiz (22 January 1964)', ff. 2-5.

⁴⁴⁶ The original German text: 'Man muß doch schlußmachen damit, daß Felsenstein unter Denkmalschutz steht. Auch für Felsenstein kann es keine Ausnahmen geben'. Ibid., f. 2.

⁴⁴⁷ The original German text: 'Heute, im Arbeiter - und Bauernstaat, kann sich die Intelligenz noch grössere Dinge erlauben, indem sie aus hochwertigem Edelholz einen Eselstall baut. Auf der anderen Seite bekommt die LPG für den Bau einer Kühlanlage in der FGS nicht einmal Rüstholz.' BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.026/70, Abusch's letter to Friedrich Ebert Jr. (3 March 1958), ff. 31-32.

not only a serious artistic loss, but more importantly, a serious moral loss to the GDR.⁴⁴⁸

Case II: The SED and the ‘compliant’— Götz Friedrich’s *Republikflucht*

Friedrich as a ‘good’ East German artist

On 26 August 1972, Götz Friedrich, the KO’s Head of Play (*Oberspielleiter*), sent a telegram to Felsenstein at the KO on his business trip in Stockholm, asking for the permission for a late return due to his ill health.⁴⁴⁹ Within the next few months, this delayed return developed into a *Republikflucht*. Friedrich, the KO opera director who had worked there for two decades, resided in the FRG and accepted the offer as the Hamburg State opera’s chief director. The SED authority was furious, attributing this *Republikflucht* to his ‘false world view’ and condemning his act as a ‘treachery’.⁴⁵⁰ It appeared somewhat ironic to relate his defection to the heated ideological debate between eastern and western audiences centred around Friedrich’s *Tannhäuser* at the Bayreuth Festival a few months earlier. In the production’s ‘Pilgrims’ Chorus’, Friedrich arranged for the choir members to wear blue jeans and shake clenched fists. The western audience accused Friedrich of invading the shrine of Wagner with the ‘evil’ of communism, as they associated this arrangement with Friedrich’s attempt to propagate socialist ideology. In contrast, the GDR media lauded Friedrich for presenting the progressiveness of socialist art to the western audience.⁴⁵¹

Prior to his defection, Friedrich appeared to the SED not only as a rising star capable of representing East German artistic achievements on the international stage but also as a loyal citizen with the Party’s trust. Almost immediately following his study at the Theatre Institute Weimar, Friedrich joined the KO as Felsenstein’s assistant in 1954 and rose as a representative of Felsenstein’s realistic music theatre. Having won several GDR artistic medals, including a

⁴⁴⁸ The original German text: ‘Ich würde es aber nicht nur für einen schweren künstlerischen, sondern noch mehr für einen schweren moralischen Verlust für unsere DDR halten, wenn wir Felsenstein verlieren.’ Ibid., Abusch’s letter to Friedrich Ebert Jr. (3 March 1958), ff. 1-2.

⁴⁴⁹ BStU, MfS AP, Nr. 1596/92, f. 73.

⁴⁵⁰ BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX: Nr. 6172, ‘Vorschlag zur vorl. Einstellung eines BV gem. § 150, 2 StPO (07 February 1973)’, ff. 36; ‘Operative Information Nr. 184/73: Einige aktuelle Hinweise zur Situation in der Komischen Oper Berlin (01 March 1973)’, f. 151.

⁴⁵¹ ‘Götz Friedrich führte Regie in Bayreuth’, *Neues Deutschland* (27 July 1972), p. 4.

GDR Art Prize and a National Prize, Friedrich was considered an artistically accomplished successor of Felsenstein in realistic music theatre. In the summer of 1972, he became the first East German director to stage a production at the Bayreuth. However controversial the production was, it immediately brought Friedrich to international prominence. In the eyes of the SED, his political reliability assessment by the MfS was positive. Knowing that his first wife and son lived in West Berlin, the MfS did not detect anything negative about Friedrich during his several guest trips in the capitalist world in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the MfS identified Friedrich as a loyal citizen of GDR socialism and supported his trans-bloc business trips.⁴⁵²

'It takes three to tango': a tri-negotiation between Friedrich, Felsenstein and the SED authorities

It was not until Friedrich's telegraph informing the Komische Oper of his late return arrived on 26 August 1972, much to Felsenstein's displeasure, that the tension between them unfolded. The maestro, who claimed to cancel Friedrich's contract if he continued to be absent from the KO, demanded Friedrich's quick return. Friedrich refused to do so. Given Friedrich's rise to international prominence after his Bayreuth *Tannhäuser* and Felsenstein's long-established international reputation, the SED feared that a continued tension escalation between these two directors would cause a GDR scandal on the international stage. In order to prevent the worst-case scenario, the Party took part in the negotiation between Felsenstein and Friedrich.

By conducting an investigation and contacting both directors, the SED believed the following reasons made Friedrich make use his chance of a foreign business trip to 'blackmail' Felsenstein and the SED to his advantage. The first reason was the artistic disparity between Felsenstein and Friedrich. According to Friedrich's narrative, Felsenstein constantly undermined and criticised his artistic directing. Although he owed Felsenstein a debt of gratitude for fostering his artistic development and career, his feeling of facing artistic oppression by Felsenstein had grown significantly in recent years. The second reason was Friedrich's dissatisfaction with Felsenstein's treatment of his artistic career at the KO. As

⁴⁵² BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX: Nr. 6172, 'Auskunftsbericht (25 Feb 1970)'; and 'Götz Friedrich (23 September 1968)'; MfS HA XX/AKG-RK, Nr. 2161-2190, 'Reisekader-Nr. 2186/K'.

Friedrich mentioned, he was disappointed by Felsenstein's temporary suspension of his newly planned production, together with a reduction in salary and work at the KO⁴⁵³ The third reason was Friedrich's feeling of uncertainty about his career development in the GDR. Werner Rackwitz, at the time the GDR Deputy Minister of Culture, suspected that Friedrich might intend to blackmail Felsenstein and the SED into appointing him to be the next Intendant of the KO after Felsenstein's retirement. As Rackwitz pointed out, there was a possibility that Friedrich had heard of the inner circle of the MfK's consideration of appointing Joachim Herz as Felsenstein's successor and have him succeed Hans Pischner at the Staatsoper Berlin. However, because there was also a rumour mentioning Werner Rackwitz as Pischner's successor, Friedrich may have felt uncertain about his career prospect in the GDR.⁴⁵⁴ The fourth reason was that Friedrich's promising artistic career in the capitalist world loosened his attachment to the GDR. As the IM's report emphasised, although Friedrich's Bayreuth *Tannhäuser* sparked an operatic scandal, the western world's opera circles highly valued Friedrich's artistic talent. When East Berlin received his telegraph on 26 August, he had already secured several guest productions at some of the top opera houses in London, Amsterdam, Vienna, and Hamburg for the next two years. It was thus possible that, while making an excuse about his ill health, he was currently bargaining with both the GDR and opera companies in the West to his advantage.⁴⁵⁵

The SED was furious about Friedrich's 'blackmail'. However, when it realised the futility of imposing more pressure on Friedrich for his return, it sought Felsenstein's compromise to avoid Friedrich's Republikflucht. Because of his ill-health and the theatre's holiday season, Friedrich asked permission from the Party to allow his new wife, a KO dancer, to join him in Stockholm beforehand.⁴⁵⁶ Thus, the MfS could not take his close family member 'hostage'. 'Handicapped' by Friedrich, the SED attempted to persuade Felsenstein, hoping that the

⁴⁵³ BStU, MfS AP, Nr. 1596/92, 'Bericht: Friedrich, Götz (29 August 1972)', ff. 30; 'Vermerk: im Ergebnis einer Rücksprache am 29. 8. 1972 zwischen Genossen Prof. Kurt HAGER; Genossen Minister für Kultur Gysi sowie dem stellv. Minister für Kultur Dr. Rackwitz; wurde zur Person Prof. Götz, Friedrich, Komische Oper Berlin', ff. 69-70; 'Operative Information Nr. 1013/72 (11 September 1972)' ff. 73, 77; MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX: Nr. 6172, 'Bericht über das Gespräch mit Professor Friedrich in Stockholm am 16.9.1972', ff. 156-57.

⁴⁵⁴ BStU, MfS AP 1596/92, 'Operative Information Nr. 1013/72', f. 76; MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX: Nr. 6172, 'Bericht', f. 155.

⁴⁵⁵ BStU, MfS AP 1596/92, 'Abschrift', f. 43; 'Operative Information Nr. 1013/72', ff. 79-81.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., a letter addressing to Major Müller (VK/3111/72).

maestro could adopt a tolerant attitude towards Friedrich's behaviours.⁴⁵⁷ At the same time, the SED extended Friedrich and his wife's business visas until December 1972 to reach an agreement with Friedrich. It is worth noting that the MfS possibly adopted the measure of defaming Friedrich in the western media. In a letter from Friedrich to Gysi dated 28 October, the director mentioned that some FRG newspapers, including one entitled 'Succumbed to Temptation' (*Der Versuchung erlegen*) in *Stuttgarter Zeitung* on 26 October, published anonymous reports that were supposed to defame him. As Friedrich put it, these newspaper reports stated that he blackmailed Felsenstein, asking for an early succession to Felsenstein at the KO as a condition for his return to the GDR. He wrote in the letter, 'anyone who knows or can see my letters to you and Intendant Prof. Felsenstein knows that informers who spread such things are guilty of defamation.'⁴⁵⁸ Available MfS documents do not show whether the SED envisaged this defamation. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that the SED took a role in it, given that spreading rumours to discredit the targeted object within a group was part of the MfS' operational subversion.⁴⁵⁹

On 28 October, the Hamburg State Opera (HSO)'s announcement of Friedrich as the company's new chief director marked the failed tripartite negotiation among the SED, Felsenstein and Friedrich. From the perspective of the SED, neither Felsenstein nor Friedrich acted cooperatively towards an agreement. Felsenstein did appear to compromise, agreeing to allow more days for Friedrich's health recovery. Apart from this, he made no further compromises despite the MfK's appeals. According to the MfS accounts, Felsenstein knew his privileged status in GDR cultural politics, exerting pressure on the MfK to terminate Friedrich's contract at the KO based on the GDR labour law. At the same time, Friedrich, who had the advantage of his stay in a western country and the western operatic circles' acknowledgement of his artistic excellence, was also reluctant to compromise. In his letter to Gysi, he made it

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., f. 69.

⁴⁵⁸ The original German text: 'Daß sich Informanten, die derartiges verbreiten, der Verleumdung schuldig machen, weiß jeder, der meine Briefe an Sie und Herrn Intendant Prof. Felsenstein kennt bzw. einsehen kann.' Ibid., a letter from Friedrich to Klaus Gysi (28 October, 1972); and, a copy of the article 'Der Versuchung erlegen: Götz Friedrich nicht in die DDR zurückgekehrt' from *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, Nr. 248 vom 26.10. 1972, ff. 107-08.

⁴⁵⁹ Dennis, 'The East German Ministry of State and East German Society during the Honecker Era', p. 7; Dagmar Hovestädt, 'Secret Space and the Stasi: A Conversation with Dagmar Hovestädt and Joe Segal', *Radio Broadcast, Wende Museum*, accessed via: <https://soundcloud.com/wendemuseum/secret-space-and-the-stasi-a-conversation-with-dagmar-hovestadt-and-joes-segal> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

clear that it was not he who abandoned the KO, but that Felsenstein had dismissed him instead. Because of this, he had no choice except to accept the offer from Hamburg, an offer already long sent to him before his 'breakup' with Felsenstein.⁴⁶⁰ For the SED government, regardless of whether Felsenstein's 'persecution' of Friedrich led to Friedrich's resignation or Friedrich simply used this fact to justify his 'pursuit of capitalism, it was incapable of demanding neither the two protagonists' compliance to the Party line. Discontented with Felsenstein and Friedrich, the SED government was trapped in this tri-negotiation due to the shift in power dynamics.

The Aftermath

Despite the failed negotiation, the SED and Friedrich reached a high degree of reconciliation in dealing with this *Republikflucht's* aftermath. Firstly, both sides appeared to share an agreement of diverting the western media's attention from the political to the artistic sphere. On 28 October, Friedrich announced his leave from the KO to the HSO in a statement broadcast by Hesse Radio (*Hessischer Rundfunk*). In addition to defending himself against the blackmail rumour, he emphasised that his relocation to the FRG was merely artistic motivated with no political issues involved. Furthermore, he expressed his profound gratitude to Felsenstein and the KO and his interest in contributing to the future FRG-GDR cultural exchange.⁴⁶¹ This statement possibly convinced the western media within the context of the newly launched FRG-GDR diplomatic relations. *Die Zeit* even published a report titled 'No Political Case-Opera (*Kein politischer Fall-Oper*)' to detach public imagination of Friedrich's political disagreements with the GDR.⁴⁶² Friedrich's statement was in tune with the SED government's intention to mitigate the political consequences of this *Republikflucht*. An MfS operational record regarding Friedrich shows that the SED fiercely condemned him, stating that 'in order to conceal his treacherous conduct, Prof. Götz F. also endeavoured to move the focus on the

⁴⁶⁰ BStU, MfS AP 1596/92, a letter from Friedrich to Klaus Gysi on 28 October 1972, ff. 14-15; 'Operative Information Nr. 1147/72 (19 October 1972), ff. 105-06.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., a letter from Friedrich to Kranz (23 October 1972), f. 13.

⁴⁶² BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX, Nr. 6172, a clipping from *Der Spiegel* under the title of 'Tragikomische Oper', ff. 158-59; MfS AP 1596/92, a clipping under the title of 'Götz Friedrich verläßt Ost-Berlin' from *Die Welt* on 28 October 1972), f. 103. Mainstream British press' immediate reports on Friedrich's leaving from the KO remained minimal, here is one of the few: Moor, 'Felsenstein and Proteges', p. 16.

term of his alleged artistic disagreement with the director of the KO, who was also his teacher.⁴⁶³ At the same time, the SED appeared to be satisfied with Friedrich's explanation. Thus, the SED decided to take no further action to combat Felsenstein's statement. In assessing Friedrich's *Republikflucht*, a MfS officer referred to a journal article by a well-known West German writer Peter Hacks at the beginning of 1973.⁴⁶⁴ The official said that Hacks' positive comment on realistic music theatre under socialism could mitigate the negative impact of Friedrich's resignation on the GDR's international image.⁴⁶⁵

Secondly, both Friedrich and the SED appeared to endeavour to make peace with each other following this *Republikflucht*. In his letter to Gysi on the same day of his Hesse Radio statement in 1972, Friedrich asked for a way of transferring to the AA the administration fee he earned from his guest performances in the western world during his KO contract period. In addition, Friedrich also expressed his regret, saying that he did not initially intend to end the dispute with Felsenstein by leaving the KO and the GDR.⁴⁶⁶ Until the *Wende*, Friedrich neither criticised the SED nor revoked his 1972 statement. An IM report shows that when two KO directing assistants turned to Friedrich for jobs after their defections in 1980, the director refused as he did not want to irritate the SED government.⁴⁶⁷

The SED's attitudes, despite fluctuating and hostile more than those towards Friedrich, showed a tendency of reconciliation following the *Republikflucht*. In 1973, accusing Friedrich of illegal border crossing based on § 213 of the GDR criminal code, the SED imposed a travel ban on Friedrich and his wife.⁴⁶⁸ From Friedrich's *Republikflucht* to the *Wende*, the MfS continued

⁴⁶³ The original German text: 'Um diese verräterische Handlungsweise zu verdecken, war auch selbst der Prof. Götz F. bemüht, seine angeblichen künstlerischen Meinungsverschiedenheiten mit dem Intendanten der Komischen Oper, der ja auch sein Lehrmeister war, über Gebühr in den Mittelpunkt zu rücken.' BStU, MfS BV Bln Abt. XX, Nr. 6172, 'Operative Information Nr. 184/73: Einige aktuelle Hinweise zur Situation in der Komischen Oper Berlin (01 March 1973)', f. 151.

⁴⁶⁴ Peter Hacks, 'Oper und Drama', *Sinn und Form*, 6 (1973), pp. 1249-50.

⁴⁶⁵ BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX, Nr. 6172, 'Operative Information Nr. 184/73', ff 151-52.

⁴⁶⁶ BStU, MfS AP 1596/92, Friedrich's letter to Kranz (23 October 1972), ff. 10-11; Friedrich's letter to Gysi (28 October 1972), ff.14-16.

⁴⁶⁷ BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX, Nr. 6172, 'Inoffizielle Information (18 July 1980)'.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 'Vorschlag zur vorl. Einstellung eines NV gem. § 150, 2 StPO', ff. 35-36.

to assign IMs to spy on Friedrich's life.⁴⁶⁹ Noticing that Friedrich did not speak negatively about the GDR and expressed his wish to normalise his relations with the GDR, the SED considered extending an olive branch. But, as one MfS document dated 1980 shows, 'since Prof. Friedrich is one of the few internationally important opera directors, it is appropriate to decide whether and how he can be used for the GDR in two to three years.'⁴⁷⁰ However, the SED dropped this idea after knowing Friedrich's move from the Hamburg State Opera to the Deutsche Oper zu Berlin (West) in 1981. Two factors mainly drove the SED rationale behind this decision. One was, given Friedrich's aesthetic link to Felsenstein's realistic music theatre, the SED feared that Friedrich would develop the Deutsche Oper zu Berlin into an artistic rival with the KO, which would challenge the KO's distinguished artistic profile as the shrine of Felsenstein's 'realistic music theatre.'⁴⁷¹ Another was the SED's fear of the FRG's exploitation of the 'all-German-conception' if Friedrich was used in FRG-GDR cultural exchange. In the mind of the SED, such an 'exploitation' potentially undermined the GDR's sovereignty in the international world.⁴⁷² Thus, till the *Wende*, Friedrich's wish of artistic collaboration with the GDR operatic stage did not materialise. Nevertheless, after several years of negotiation, he did obtain the permission to visit East Berlin to undertake archival research for his staging materials at the KO in 1988 on the condition of making no public appearance.⁴⁷³ Therefore, the reach of this reconciliation was driven much by both Friedrich and the SED's motivations in mitigating this *Republikflucht's* consequences to their own advantage.

Friedrich's career on the western stage was successful after his *Republikflucht*. He stayed as the Hamburg State Opera chief director for nearly a decade. From 1981 until his death in 2000,

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 'Operative Information: Friedrich, Götz-weitere Personaldaten bekannt-Intendant der Deutsche Oper Berlin (WB), (31 May 1983), ff. 2-8, two newspaper clippings: Dietmar Polaczek, "'Aida"-ein Zirkus ohne Elefanten: Götz Friedrichs Inszenierung der Verdi-Oper in Amsterdam', *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (4 July 1973); and [n.a.], 'Die Ohnmacht und die Verhältnisse: Götz Friedrich inszeniert "Aida" beim Holland-Festival', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (28 June 1973), ff. 127-31; 147-148; MfS HA XX, Nr. 22737, 'Auskunft: Götz Friedrich (4 April 1988)', ff. 168-69.

⁴⁷⁰ The original German text: 'Da Prof. Friedrich einer der wenigen international bedeutenden Opernregisseure ist, sind Überlegungen angebracht, ob und wie er für die DDR in 2 bis 3 Jahren genutzt werden kann.' BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX, Nr. 6172, 'Inoffizielle Information (18 July 1980)'.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., f. 4.

⁴⁷² BStU, MfS-HA XX, Nr. 20574, 'Stand und Probleme des internationalen Künstleraustausches', f. 6.

⁴⁷³ BStU, MfS HA XX, Nr. 13542, a letter from Hans-Joachim Hoffmann to Kurt Hager (18 March 1986); BStU, MfS AP 1596/92, A letter from Hans-Joachim Hoffmann to Kurt Hager (21 March 1988); BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX: Nr. 6172, 'Operative Information Götz Friedrich-Generalintendant WB (20 April 1988)'.

he served as the Intendant of the Deutsche Oper zu Berlin (West). His other vital posts included the Chief Producer at the Royal Opera House (1977-1981), the director of the Theater des Westens in West Berlin (1984-1993), and the Principal Guest Director of the Royal Opera Stockholm. Among all these duties, he frequently guested internationally and was recognised as a leading protagonist of the *Regietheater* with his inheritance and development of Felsenstein's realistic music theatre.⁴⁷⁴

Felsenstein's privileged status in the SED's cultural politics did not appear to be noticeably affected by Friedrich's *Republikflucht*. However, there was a tendency for him to step closer to the SED. The SED government's upper circle reached the verdict that Friedrich utilised his artistic disparity with Felsenstein as an excuse for his *Republikflucht*. Because of this, Felsenstein did not appear to receive the SED blame for Friedrich's *Republikflucht*. It is interesting to note that not long after the Friedrich affair, Felsenstein expressed his interest to the SED in participating in a public Party event.⁴⁷⁵ This action was possibly an expression of his appreciation of the SED's support in the incident. Alternatively, Felsenstein felt compelled to do so in fear of further repercussion from the affair. Available KO documents kept at the Landesarchiv Berlin show that Felsenstein appeared to move closer to the SED in his final years. For instance, on the occasion of the GDR's 25th anniversary in 1975, he described the rapport between the SED government and the KO as 'the caring relationship, interest and understanding of the younger mother [the SED government] for the older child [the KO]'are, unaffected-for one difficulty or another, this is unique.'⁴⁷⁶

Following Friedrich's *Republikflucht*, the SED realised the necessity of fastening the KO's political control. Thus, appointing a politically reliable artist as Felsenstein's successor became a SED priority. In this regard, in the SED view, director Ruth Berghaus, an internationally accomplished East German director and a SED member, proved suitable for this role.⁴⁷⁷ However, as the next case will show, the SED finally followed Felsenstein's final wish,

⁴⁷⁴ Calico, *The legacy of GDR directors on the Post-Wende opera stage*, pp. 136-27.

⁴⁷⁵ BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX, Nr. 6172, 'Operative Information Nr. 184/73', f. 152.

⁴⁷⁶ The original German text: 'Das Fürsorgeverhältnis, Interesse und Verständnis der jüngeren Mutter für das ältere Kind sind-unbeschadet der einen oder anderen Schwierigkeit - einmalig', Landesarchiv Berlin, C. Rep. 902-02-04, Nr. 248, Felsenstein's speech on the occasion of the GDR's 25th anniversary in 1974.

⁴⁷⁷ BStU, MfS BV Berlin, Abt. XX: Nr. 6172, 'Operative Information Nr. 184/73', f. 152.

appointing Joachim Herz, who was artistically ideal but perhaps not politically suitable, as Felsenstein's successor of the KO. Unfortunately, the SED government would again find itself trapped in a rather embarrassing situation in its dealings with an empowered artist.

Case III: The SED and the 'unruly' — Joachim Herz's departure from the Komische Oper (KO) to the Staatsoper Dresden (SoD)

Herz at the Komische Oper (KO)

In 1976, Herz succeeded Walter Felsenstein, heading up the KO after serving the Leipzig Oper (LO) for nearly two decades. At the time of his appointment, Herz had already achieved quite a distinguished artistic profile as a representative of Felsenstein's realistic music theatre in the East German operatic world and beyond.⁴⁷⁸ Born in Dresden, Herz stepped inside the world of opera directing with Heinz Arnold. His earliest theatrical encounter with Felsenstein's directing aesthetics can be dated back to the early 1950s, when he assisted in staging a Felsenstein production at the Dresden-Radebeul Touring Opera. In 1953 Felsenstein invited Herz to be his assistant director at the KO, and the two collaborated on productions like *The Magic Flute* (1954). Herz then went to the FRG, working at the Cologne Opera for two years. He returned to the GDR in 1957 and remained the LO's chief producer before being promoted to the opera company's director in 1959. During his tenure as the LO, he cultivated his artistic reputation, particularly through his historically realistic approach to Wagnerian productions. The *Flying Dutchman's* success (1963) earned him an invitation from Moscow, leading him to become the first foreign director to stage a production at the Bolshoi Theatre. Moreover, the opera was adapted into the first filmed Wagner opera by the DEFA (*Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft*). In addition, his *The Ring of the Nibelungs* (1973-1976) at the LO inspired Patrice Chéreau's 1976 production at Bayreuth for its centenary.⁴⁷⁹ While keeping the LO as

⁴⁷⁸ Regarding a more detailed explanation of Herz's directing aesthetics, see Chapter IV.

⁴⁷⁹ As scholars such as Müller and Carney note, both Herz's and Chéreau's productions highlighted the ideological and social contexts of the opera story and presented 'the Shavian view of the tetralogy as an allegory of nineteenth-century capitalism'. Whereas Herz's Leipzig *Ring* kept its fidelity to the historical and social context in the nineteenth century, Chéreau's personal political message of anti-capitalism influenced by the Protests could be easily discerned in his 1968's Bayreuth *Ring*. Müller, 'Regietheater', pp. 594-95; Calico, 'Wagner in East Germany', p. 294; Carney, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre*, pp. 323-29, 331, 355-64; Manuel Brug, *Opernregisseure heute mit ausführlichem Lexikonteil* (Leipzig, 2006), pp. 41-43.

his residence from 1957 to 1975, Herz regularly guested the KO.

In parallel with Friedrich's increased artistic tensions with Felsenstein before 1972, Felsenstein's preference for appointing Herz as his successor grew. The MfS' collection of Friedrich's post-*Republikflucht* activities included several newspaper and journal clippings relating to critics' positive reviews of Herz's stagings between 1972 and 1973. These clippings can be seen as evidence showing the SED's consideration of Herz's artistic competence for the next KO Intendant after Felsenstein.⁴⁸⁰ Moreover, as theatrical critic Eckart Schwinger mentioned in 1994, Felsenstein made a will on his deathbed to support Herz's succession.⁴⁸¹ In the MfK's decision letter of Herz's appointment, the reasons for Herz's artistic legitimacy to Felsenstein, his established artistic profile in the Soviet and Capitalist blocs, his contribution to the development of the LO, together with his compliance with the GDR's national politics, led to his succeeding Felsenstein.⁴⁸²

During his time leading the KO, Herz helped the company maintain and develop its artistic excellence in the domestic and international opera scene. Particularly noticeable was his contribution to promoting several GDR-British operatic exchange programmes, including *Madam Butterfly* (1978) with the English National Opera (ENO) and the Welsh National Opera (WNO), and *Peter Grimes* (1981) with the WNO.⁴⁸³ On a personal level, Herz's artistic excellence gained more recognition from the western world. On a state level, Herz's contribution to the development of GDR operatic trading with the western world, to some extent, assisted the SED's cultural and economic demarcation projects from the FRG.⁴⁸⁴ In 1981, after merely four years serving as the KO's Intendant, Herz was relocated to Dresden State Opera (DSO), serving as the company's chief director. In 1981, the MfK published heart-warming articles in major GDR newspapers showing its acknowledgement of his contribution to the KO and announcing his new role at the DSO in order to prepare for the grand re-opening

⁴⁸⁰ BStU, MfS BV Bln Abt XX, Nr. 6172, 'Verheissungsvoller Auftakt mit Wagners 'Rheingold' im Leipziger Opernhaus'.

⁴⁸¹ Eckart Schwinger, 'Absurdes unter bösen Zwängen', *Neue Zeit* (14 June 1994), p. 15.

⁴⁸² BA, DC 20/1/4/3531, 'Beschluß: über die Besetzung der Funktion des Intendanten der Komischen Oper, Berlin'.

⁴⁸³ For more detail regarding Herz and GDR-British operatic exchange, see Chapter IV.

⁴⁸⁴ Regarding a more detailed explanation of Herz and the KO's artistic exchange with the British operatic world, see Chapter IV.

of the Semperoper in 1985.⁴⁸⁵ At the same time, it awarded Herz the National Prize in 1981. This was his fourth time receiving the award, having already received it in 1961, 1971, and 1977.⁴⁸⁶

Herz as a 'troublemaker' for the SED

Herz's Intendant-ship at the KO was unusually short-lived compared to that of his predecessor Felsenstein at the KO and his previous directorship at the LO. Behind the facade of his 'honorary' resignation from the KO were the complexities of the relationships between the SED, Herz and the KO musicians, and the SED's aspiration to tighten the Party leadership at the KO while maintaining the company's international artistic profile.

In the eyes of the SED leadership and the KO members, Herz was by no means a Party man and good at interpersonal relationships. Herz's Stasi files show that, in his case, 'real political commitment to our state was certainly not visible'.⁴⁸⁷ The Party had reasonable grounds for making this judgement. From a Catholic background, Herz never outspokenly committed himself to communism; he was, in fact, well-known for his non-socialist and dictatorial management style with his opera companies. Since his time at the LO, the SED had already identified Herz as having no visible political commitment to the GDR state, possessing a pro-western attitude and being slippery to his advantage.⁴⁸⁸ To some extent, his illegal departure from the GDR to work at the Cologne Opera between 1956 and 1957 suggested his lack of loyalty to the GDR.⁴⁸⁹ Even worse, in 1977 and 1979, the MfS received accusations against Herz due to his underestimation of the SED's leading role at the opera company, his indifference to the celebrations of the GDR's 30th anniversary and his enthusiasm for inviting

⁴⁸⁵ BStU, MfS, AP, Nr: 646/92, 'Information über eine Beratung in der Komischen Oper am 25. 8. 1980 im Zusammenhang mit der Abberufung von Prof. Joachim Herz als Intendant', f. 103; an attachment of Ursula Ragwitz's letter to Erich Honecker (1 August 1980), f. 109.

⁴⁸⁶ BStU, MfS-ZAIG, Nr. 16648, 'Operative Information (Erstmeldung): Ungesetzlicher Grenzübertritt gem. § 213 (2) StGB unter Ausnutzung einer Ausnahmereise beim Minister für Kultur in die SFR Jugoslawien und einer Dienstreise in die BRD (17 September 1980)', f.8.

⁴⁸⁷ The original German text: 'ein echtes politisches Engagement zu unserem Staat sicher nicht sichtbar [wurde]' BStU, MfS, BV, Ddn, AOPK, Nr. 410/86, 'Übersichtsbogen zur operativen Personenkontrolle', f. 8.

⁴⁸⁸ BStU, MfS AP: Nr. 80.409/92, 'Kaderauftrag Nr. 1725 (12 February 1976), f. 19; MfS, BV, Ddn, AOPK, Nr. 410/86, 'Übersichtsbogen zur operativen Personenkontrolle', f. 9.

⁴⁸⁹ BStU, MfS, BV Ddn, AKG, Nr. 8598, 'Operative Auskunft zur Person: Prof. Herz, Joachim', f. 41; MfS AP, Nr. 80.409/92, 'Kaderauftrag Nr. 1725', f. 20.

non-socialist artists and foreign tours whilst overlooking his in-house artists.⁴⁹⁰ The KO members were not the first and would not be the last to raise such accusations against Herz to the SED. Before coming to the KO, a similar accusation from LO members regarding Herz's dictatorial managerial style had already reached the Party leadership.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, the SED felt dissatisfied with Herz's actions. Particularly learning from the lesson of Friedrich's *Republikflucht*, the SED's incentive to end the KO's status as 'the third German state' for advancing the Party's ideological and political control grew ever stronger after Felsenstein's death.

However, given the importance of the KO's artistic excellence to the GDR's cultural politics, the SED had no confidence in sustaining the KO's internationally acclaimed standards without intellectual support from exceptional artistic talents like Herz. The SED highly valued Herz's artistic talent, considering that his productions did not oppose the GDR and represented the GDR's cultural achievement on the international stage.⁴⁹² Therefore, faced with all the accusations against Herz and knowing Herz's lack of personal commitment to GDR socialism, the SED initially adopted a somewhat tolerant attitude towards Herz's un-socialist behaviours.

In 1980, five KO members defected to the FRG during the company's business trip abroad. This event triggered the SED's decision about Herz's dismissal from the KO. In the MfS' investigation of these defection cases, it believed that the main reason for one defector, who served as the KO's assistant director, was partly due to Herz's act of long-term verbal attack on this assistant director's professional performance.⁴⁹³ This discovery, together with the SED's dissatisfaction concerning the ideological-political work implemented at the KO under Herz and its discontent with Herz, made the Party decide to impose restrictions on Herz's 'total' power at the KO. When the Minister of Culture Hans-Joachim Hoffmann approached Herz, proposing

⁴⁹⁰ BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, AKG, Nr.1297, 'Information über Leitungstätigkeit des Intendanten der Komischen Oper-Professor Herz'; Nr. 1354, 'Information über einige Probleme, die die derzeitige Situation an der Komischen Oper betreffen', ff. 1-3; MfS BV Dresden AKG, Nr. 8598, 'Operative Auskunft zur Person', ff. 41-42; and 'Information über einige Probleme, die derzeitige Situation der Komischen Oper betreffend'.

⁴⁹¹ BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, AKG, Nr. 1297, 'Information über Leitungstätigkeit des Intendanten der Komischen Oper-Professor Herz'; Nr. 1354, 'Information über einige Probleme', ff. 1-2; MfS BV Dresden AKG, Nr. 8598, 'Operative Auskunft zur Person', ff. 41-42.

⁴⁹² BStU, MfS, BV, Ddn, AOPK, 410/86, 'Übersichtsbogen zur operativen Personenkontrolle', f. 9; and MfS, XX. AGK-RK, Nr. 3351-3400, 'Reisekader-Nr. 3368/K (13 February 1969)', f. 100.

⁴⁹³ BStU, MfS ZAIG, Nr. 16648, 'Operative Information (Erstmeldung)', f. 8.

the motion of Herz stepping down from Intendant to Chef Director, which focused mainly on stagings, Herz refused. As Herz said, 'the KO has me as the Intendant or nothing at all.'⁴⁹⁴ As this negotiation failed, the SED's decision of Herz's dismissal was confirmed.

Herz knew his value to the SED well, thus using his artistic talents as a negotiating asset to follow his pursuits in a show of *Eigensinn*. This can be particularly seen in his negotiation with the MfK regarding his dismissal from the KO. In the process of the negotiation, Herz participated in drafting the MfK's public announcement about his departure. He explicitly expressed his wish to use the wording that 'the MfK entrusts Herz with new directing tasks' (*ihn hätte der Minister für Kultur mit neuen Regieaufgaben betraut*) instead of 'due to health reasons' (*aus gesundheitlichen Gründen*) or 'due to personal wishes' (*auf persönlichen Wunsch*) to explain his departure. He also requested to finish his tenure at the KO with Britten's *Peter Grimes*, an artistic collaboration between him and the Music Director of the WNO, Richard Armstrong. He also sent his plan of artistic collaboration with other GDR opera companies to the MfK, hoping to be permitted by the authorities, and communicated with Hoffmann during his business stay in Buenos Aires. In a letter with the letterhead of the hotel he stayed in Buenos Aires, Herz, writing in a rather humble tone, emphasised that his leaving would adversely affect his further artistic cooperation with some western artists affiliated with the KO. In addition, he also wrote about his planned artistic commitment in the Soviet Union and working visa applications in some non-socialist countries, mentioning the success of his productions during his four years of Intendant-ship at the KO in the letter.⁴⁹⁵ Instead of showing his obedience to the Party's decision, Herz's initiative appeared to bargain with the Party; if it was not possible to change the Party leadership's mind, he could, at least, 'sell' his KO Intendantship at a 'good' price. Especially when Hertz was abroad, the Party's fear of his non-return to the GDR possibly led to a compromise.

⁴⁹⁴ The original German text: 'Die Komische Oper hat mich als Intendanten oder gar nicht', BStU, MfS AP, Nr. 646/92, 'Kurzgefaßte Darstellung der Ergebnisse eines Gesprächs zwischen dem Intendanten der Komischen Oper, Prof. Joachim Herz, und dem Minister für Kultur, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, am 26. Juni 1980', f. 133; MfS HA XX, Nr. 2899, a letter from Kurt Hager to Erich Mielke (18 June 1980), ff. 16-17.

⁴⁹⁵ BStU, MfS AP, Nr. 646/92, a letter from Herz to Hans-Joachim Hoffmann (4 August 1980), ff. 118-19; 'Entwurf: Kurzgefaßte Darstellung der Ergebnisse eines Gesprächs zwischen dem Intendanten der Komischen Oper, Prof. Joachim Herz, und dem Minister für Kultur, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, am 25. Juni 1980', ff. 134-35.

Herz's departure from the KO did not negatively affect his career on the western stage. In August 1980, when the FRG media detected the SED's plan to replace Herz with Werner Rackwitz, they perceived such replacement as a very signal of the Honecker government's action of imposing more Party control on the GDR cultural life, given Rackwitz's previous role as the Head of Music in the MfK. Thus, they lamented the KO's loss of its political autonomy and magnified Herz's image as an artist who resisted cheering up the communist authorities. However, no form of western media mentioned that Herz's hot-tempered personality was partly responsible for his resignation. Herz's narrative of his departure from the KO in western media also indirectly confirmed the western perception. In an FRG radio interview in 1982, Herz described himself as 'a specialist idiot (*Fachidiot*)', laying out his troubled relations with the SED's bureaucratic management at the Komische Oper before the western public.⁴⁹⁶

In the following years, while the SED was relieved from dealing with Herz's conflicts with his KO colleagues, it was dragged into a series of new conflicts between this artistically accomplished artist and his Staatsoper Dresden colleagues. In November 1982, the District Administration of MfS Dresden noticed the escalation of tension between Siegfried Kurz, the opera company's general music director and manager, and Herz, regarding their different artistic viewpoints on the company's stagings. In an open letter signed by 64 soloists, eight members of the Cultural-Economic Council and seven members of the Department Union Management of the opera company, both artists were criticised for their behaviours. Compared with Kurz, Herz appeared to receive fiercer criticism. His un-socialist worldview, two years of leaving the GDR to work in a West German opera in the FRG, his Catholic background, his friendship with two previous GDR citizens – stage designer Rudolf Heinrich and Götz Friedrich, along with his tensions with the Party leadership management and musicians during his time at the LO and KO, were brought up again to form the DO members' accusations against Herz. While Kurz was relocated to SoD as the *Kapellmeister* after the conflict, the SED kept Herz at the SoD, considering Herz's artistic talent and excellent

⁴⁹⁶ BStU, MfS-HA XX ZMA, Nr. 4047 Teil 2, a Staatliches Komitee für Rundfunk record of Horst Wenderoth's comments on Herz's leave from the Komische Oper (26 August 1980), ff. 1-2; a newspaper clipping under the title of 'Siegt, wer ausharrt? Zum Ende der Ära Herz in Ostberlin: Bibers Oper "Arminius"' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (4 February 1981), ff. 13-14; a Staatliches Komitee für Rundfunk record of Horst Wenderoth's interview with Herz's on 4 February 1982, ff. 19-20.

relationship with some influential journalists in the FRG and the problem of ‘not knowing where to relocate him’. Two years later, a few months before the state celebration of the reopening of SoD in 1985, the tension between Herz and the soloist ensemble of the SoD escalated to a high level again. In addition to the discontent about Herz’s choleric personality, the SoD musicians accused Herz of his ‘double-standard’ treatment regarding invited western musicians and residing local musicians. Soon after the success of Herz’s *Der Freischütz* at the re-opening ceremony of SoD in February 1985, the SED implemented disciplinary measures on Herz, including a reduction of his stagings and undermining his influence at the DO. In 1986, the SED stopped implementing disciplinary measures on Herz, as the Party were under the impression that the previous measures had succeeded.⁴⁹⁷

Conclusion

The chapter has illustrated the complex relationship between the SED and the classical music intelligentsia. It complicates Fulbrook’s ‘participatory dictatorship’ model by adding the factor of western influence to the discussion. In addition, this chapter has advanced the following arguments. Firstly, burdened with the necessity of taking political, artistic, and financial management of the German classical music heritage industry, the SED increasingly found difficulty in manipulating the intelligentsia. The government desperately depended on the intelligentsia’s trans-bloc mobilisation and reputation for economic and image-building ends. Nevertheless, it acknowledged that such dependence reinforced their independence from governmental control, possibly destabilising the SED’s legitimacy. As a result, it had to increase its human and financial investment in state surveillance, improve some musical elites’ welfare, and sometimes compromise on its political-ideological standard for economic reasons.

The second argument concerns the classical music intelligentsia’s exercise of *Eigensinn* and ‘hidden transcripts’ in this relationship. From building up their personal artistic profile on the international stage, increasing their hard currency income to escape from the GDR, the

⁴⁹⁷ BStU, MfS HA XX ZMA Nr. 4047 Teil 1, a Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Dresden record of the dispute between Siegfried Kurz and Joachim Herz (19 November 1982), ff. 4-6; ‘Zwischenbericht zur OPK “Abneigung”’ Reg. Nr. XII 2588/84 f. 8; ‘Sachstandsbericht zur OPK “Abneigung”’, ff. 10-15; See also, BV Dresden-KD Dresden-Stadt, Nr. 90113, Bd. 1.

intelligentsia were acquainted with the rules of how to maximise their advantages in dealing with the SED's demands. It is worth noting that under Honecker, it became more of the case that the success of the intelligentsia's practices of hidden transcripts, such as grey currency income, was not because the practices were undetected by the *Stasi* but because the authority was incapable of providing an alternative solution.

Thirdly, both the SED government and the classical music intelligentsia endeavoured to mobilise western actors (i.e., the mass media, the intelligentsia who worked in the GDR, and a network of contacts) to minimise the disadvantages of this relationship. Particularly noticeable were both actors' acquaintance with the western media's preconceived sympathy for individuals rather than a 'totalitarian' communist state. Thus, the individual artistic elite, particularly musical defectors, used the platform of western media to make peace or intensify the tension with the Honecker government. Likewise, the voice of the western media formed an important factor affecting the SED's approach to this relationship.

The fourth argument is that the SED and the classical music intelligentsia's relationship can generally be regarded as mutually beneficial. Despite each actor's knowledge about the defects of the other, both of them made efforts to maintain the frail harmony of their relations after weighing all the internal (e.g., the Party's power stabilisation inside musical institutions and among the East German populace, the musical practitioners' considerations of their professional and living prospects and that of colleagues, friends and family members) and external (the opinion of the western media and the Cold War international environment) factors. Moreover, some musical defectors' post-defection relationship with the Honecker government also shows both actors' intentions to avoid extreme tension.

The last argument is the SED power's loss of legitimacy in maintaining the stability of the government-people relationship. In its process of controlling the classical music intelligentsia's 'voice and exit', the SED generated and intensified the intelligentsia's discontent and eclipsed its legitimacy among the East German populace. While the official rhetoric states that the GDR was an egalitarian utopia, there were only a 'privileged' few and an 'underprivileged' many. Even the relatively 'privileged' classical music intelligentsia, while they enjoyed the privileges

endorsed by the SED, were also aware that their privileges were dependent on the SED's political power. As both the 'privileged' few and 'underprivileged' many increasingly experienced the contradictions between the official SED rhetoric and living reality, however omnipotent the SED power may have appeared to be, GDR socialism lost its credibility among its populace.

CHAPTER FOUR

Joachim Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978) and its Journey from the Komische Oper (KO) to the Welsh National Opera (WNO)

'Opera is an inseparable part of a people's national culture.'⁴⁹⁸

-*Neues Deutschland* (19 December 1952)

Introduction

In July 1969, Hansjürgen Schaefer, an East German musicologist and chief editor of GDR magazine *Music and Society* [*Musik und Gesellschaft*], published an article to praise the thriving operatic scene in East Berlin under socialism. In order to demonstrate the truthfulness of the socialist rhetoric in the GDR of an egalitarian opera culture accessible to all in 'the workers' and peasants' state', he quoted the statement of Hans Pischner, artistic director of 'the People's Own Theatre'-the *Deutsche Staatsoper* on Unter den Linden (SoB), at the opera house's re-opening ceremony in 1955. As in Pischner's words, 'opera is one of the most democratic art forms. The extent to which it becomes effective as such depends on the living democracy of a political system.'⁴⁹⁹

By looking at official policymaking with reference to German classical music heritage and the classical music intelligentsia in the GDR's domestic and trans-bloc scenes, the previous chapters have demonstrated the SED's firm aspiration to utilise the GDR's German classical music heritage for its legitimacy domestically and internationally. Focusing on the case study of the staging of Joachim Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978) at the KO in East Berlin and the WNO in Cardiff, this chapter approaches the GDR's domestic and trans-bloc practices of the heritage through cultural products.

⁴⁹⁸ The original German text: 'Die Oper gehört als untrennbarer Bestandteil zur Nationalkultur eines Volkes.' 'Zu den Aufgaben der Deutschen Staatsoper', *Neues Deutschland* (19 December 1952), p. 3.

⁴⁹⁹ The original German text: 'Die Oper ist eine der demokratischsten Kunstformen überhaupt. Wie weit sie als solche wirksam wird, hängt ab von der lebendigen Demokratie eines Staatswesens.' Hansjürgen Schaefer, 'Weltstadt der Oper Berlin: Musiktheater in der Hauptstadt der DDR', *Neues Deutschland*, (19 July 1969), p. 11.

There are at least two reasons for choosing an opera case study for investigation. The first reason is operatic culture's importance in the SED's German classical music heritage politics. As Calico suggests, 'Opera has traditionally played a role in generating myths of nationhood, and it was the centrepiece of the SED's cultural-political agenda to appropriate high culture as a public mediator for political legitimation.'⁵⁰⁰ The second reason is that opera, as a multimodal art form encompassing musical and verbal languages, dramatic plot and visual presentation,⁵⁰¹ provides a rich resource for understanding the aims of all evolved social actors in GDR culture-making.

Regarding the choice of Joachim Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978), the reasons are as follows. Firstly, since the production came on stage, there has been a debate over whether Herz's unsympathetic approach to the character of Pinkerton aimed at currying favour with the SED at the cost of his fidelity to Puccini's conception. Thus, examining this production can give us an insight into how GDR opera directors dealt with the complexity of their relations with composers' conceptions and the official GDR rhetoric. The second reason is that the production's staging teams in the GDR and Britain were reputed for their artistic excellence and actively participated in the GDR-British Cold War cultural diplomacy. The KO was the East German operatic world's flagship and enjoyed prestige outside the eastern bloc. The WNO, in turn, has considerably elevated its artistic profile by importing international producers since the 1970s and was the first British opera company to tour in the GDR. Herz, the production's director and Intendant (artistic director) of the KO when the production was made, was regarded as an internationally established East German director of the Felsenstein school. Mark Elder, who was on loan from the English National Opera (ENO) for this production at the KO, has been viewed as an established figure in the classical music industry. Brian McMaster, managing director of the WNO for this production of *Madam Butterfly*, is famously known as a proponent of importing foreign talents to raise its artistic profile. The third reason is that not only did this production's KO and WNO staging involve both GDR and British artists'

⁵⁰⁰ Joy Calico, *The Politics of Opera in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1961* (Ann Arbor, 1999), Abstract.

⁵⁰¹ Michael Hutcheon & Linda Hutcheon, 'Opera: forever and always multimodal', in Ruth Page (ed.), *New Perspectives on Narrative and Multimodality* (New York, 2009), p. 65.

engagement, it was also put on both GDR and British stages. Thus, this production offers good source material to investigate the GDR and British artists' aesthetic input and different audience groups' reception.

Finally, this production offers a good case study to disprove a previous generalisation that viewed all East German artistic works permitted by the SED as unfortunate outcomes of the 'monolithic' and 'totalitarian' cultural politics of the Party and detached from the western world. Over the last decade, research works by scholars such as Calico and Kelly debunk such generalisation by looking at the field of GDR opera. Through their investigation into some GDR operatic exports to the western stage, they prove that instead of being 'monolithic, backwards, and isolated', some East German operatic products had clear contemporary relevance and influence on the twenty-first-century stage.⁵⁰² Furthermore, it is worth noting that Herz's *Madam Butterfly* involved trans-bloc artistic collaboration and audience reception and even survived the *Wende*. An investigation into this production thus helps contribute to the recent scholarly studies in this regard.

This chapter intends to make the following claims. The first claim is that Herz's restoration of Puccini's original conceptions of *Madam Butterfly* appeared to stand in the official SED line. At the same time, he adopted thoughts outside the official GDR rhetoric to inspire his musicians. The second claim is that this production had clear relevance to its contemporary western stage. The third claim relates to the GDR and British music intelligentsia's practices of *Eigensinn* in this production's staging and following its performances. Fourthly, all the social actors' interactions in this production's staging and performances formed a changing dynamic that overlapped with the interdependence, cooperation, conflicts, negotiations, and compromises of their agendas. Moreover, this dynamic influenced and directed the practices of GDR operatic culture and GDR-British operatic exchanges under Honecker.

This chapter contains three sections, each dealing with a specific issue regarding Herz's *Madam Butterfly*. The first section concentrates on Herz's aesthetic input. The second section

⁵⁰² Kelly & Wlodarski, 'Introduction', pp. 1-3; Calico, 'The legacy of GDR directors on the post-*Wende* stage', pp. 131-54.

situates Herz's *Madam Butterfly* in institutional and transnational contexts, tracing the production's staging at the KO and the WNO. The third section looks at this production's influence and addresses the heated ideological debate around Herz's approach to the character of Pinkerton and this project's influence on the artists, institutions, and governments involved.

This chapter's relevance to the whole thesis and the existing research on GDR cultural products are as follows. First, Herz's *Madam Butterfly* demonstrates the complexity of all social actors' relations involved GDR cultural products and GDR-British cultural relations. Thus, this chapter's investigation supports Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' characterisation of and 'normalisation' approaches to GDR history, debunking the totalitarian analysis. Second, this chapter contributes to the recent scholarly works proving that some East German directors' aesthetic ideas and staging had contemporary relevance to the international art world and played an influential role in the twenty-first-century operatic stage.

At the same time, the limitation of this chapter's research should also be noted. Because the Covid pandemic impeded archival research, the analyses of the artistic input of Mark Elder to this production's KO staging, this production's reception among its GDR audience, and the WNO's role in promoting GDR-British operatic exchange could not be pursued further. In addition, due to the lack of source materials regarding the KO audience's social composition for this production, it is hard to evaluate whether Herz's *Madam Butterfly* reached a wider East German social group.

Section I: Herz's fidelity to Puccini's original *Madam Butterfly*, within and beyond the official GDR rhetoric

Herz's theatrical realism and its fit with the socialist realist doctrine

Herz defined his directing aesthetic as 'theatrical realism' or '*realistisch-komödiantisch*'⁵⁰³ as he sometimes called it. Central to Herz's aesthetic is the commitment to Felsenstein's hyper-

⁵⁰³ Carnegie, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre*, p. 315.

realism. As Fuchs puts it, Felsenstein's hyper-realism meant 'the psychologically truthful adherence to the plot, and this truth must become evident in every detail of the production.'⁵⁰⁴ The purpose was, as Felsenstein stated in 1963, 'to turn music-making and singing on the stage into a convincing, truthful, and utterly essential communication.'⁵⁰⁵

Herz loyally followed Felsenstein's directing principles in his approach to the director's relations with the creators (i.e., author and composer), the texts (i.e., libretto and score), actors' staging presentation, and audience communication. Like his mentor Felsenstein, Herz thought that a director should undertake meticulously extensive and in-depth research for the best possible restoration of the creators' intentions.⁵⁰⁶ Furthermore, Herz was dedicated to delivering 'a thoroughly realistic plot' to the audience. In practice, this required that without distorting the creators' intentions, the director must perfect the plot to fulfil the work's dramaturgical precision and consistency. In addition, Herz thought that people onstage should be engrossed in the 'prototype, likeness, or idea-carriers (*Urbilder, Gleichnisse oder Ideenträger*)' in acting.⁵⁰⁷ To opera actors, this was realised through: 1) the unity of 'opera singing' and 'acting' – 'the truthfulness of action' through the implementation of Stanislavski's psychological and emotional realism in opera performance;⁵⁰⁸ 2) the theoretical directorial approach of 'from the human origin to the sound'. In defining opera singers as 'the singing human being', Herz pursued opera singers' performance on stage as a convincing and realistic human statement.⁵⁰⁹

Additionally, Herz aspired to improve opera's aesthetic accessibility to inexperienced audience members. This aspiration was achieved via working on the following four aspects: 1) the use of a hyper-realistic approach to an opera; 2) the intensification of the opera plot's dramatic

⁵⁰⁴ Peter Fuchs, 'Foreword', in Peter Fuchs (ed.), *The Music Theater of Walter Felsenstein: Collected Articles, Speeches, and Interviews* (New York, 1975), p. xi.

⁵⁰⁵ Felsenstein, 'Method and attitude', in *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁰⁶ Joachim Herz: 'On the reality of the singing human being', in *ibid.*, pp. 146, 151.; and Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama*, p. 68.

⁵⁰⁷ Joachim Herz, 'Von der Realität des singenden Menschen: zur Ästhetik der Oper in Werk und Aufführung', in Ilse Kobán (ed.), *Theater: Kunst des erfüllten Augenblicks: Briefe, Vorträge, Notate, Gespräche, Essays* (Berlin, 1989), p. 84.

⁵⁰⁸ Laurence Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 274.

⁵⁰⁹ Herz, 'On the reality of the singing human being', pp. 147-151; Götz Friedrich & Joachim Herz 'Musiktheater-towards a definition (1960)', *Opera Quarterly*, 27 (2012), pp. 300-01.

conflicts through highlighting the story's social, historical and political background;⁵¹⁰ 3) staging the canonical opera repertoire;⁵¹¹ 4) the use of vernacular language in opera productions. With the focus on the 'partnership with the audience', particularly the non-specialist, both Felsenstein and Herz aspired to engage wider social strata in enjoying operatic culture.⁵¹²

Although Herz is regarded as one of Felsenstein's most faithful artistic descendants, this by no means suggests that Herz did not innovate his theatrical practices. As Braunmüller suggests, in contrast to Felsenstein's idealism, Herz was keen on uncovering and visualising an opera's historical and social context in his productions 'without ostensible politicisation (*ohne vordergründige Politisierung*)'. In addition, Herz borrowed aesthetic ideas from Brecht's epic theatre, using films and projections in his productions.⁵¹³ Above all, directed by the aspiration of 'among all the arts, theatre mirrors life the most faithfully',⁵¹⁴ Herz concluded his theatrical realism as 'faithfulness not to the letter, but the spirit' (*Werktreue nicht dem Buchstaben, sondern dem Geist nach*).⁵¹⁵ Herz's theatrical realism and socialist realism enshrined by the communist authorities bear the hallmarks of the pursuit of realistic staging, a liking for the canonical repertoire, and the aspiration to attract the audience from a wide range of social strata. Thus, these commonalities ensured that Herz's directing aesthetic fit the official GDR art rhetoric.

Puccini in the GDR operatic canon

Having been celebrated as the most well-known exponent of the post-Romantic operatic

⁵¹⁰ Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama*, p. 64.

⁵¹¹ Senelick shows that Felsenstein initially had the intention of staging contemporary and experimental works when he first started the KO. However, the fear of breaching the Soviet art policy made him modify his aesthetic principles in choosing repertoire. Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture*, p.273.

⁵¹² Calico, 'The legacy of GDR directors on the post-Wende opera stage', p. 134.

⁵¹³ Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama*, pp. 182-83, 185-86.

⁵¹⁴ Herz, 'On the reality', p. 146.

⁵¹⁵ Eckart Schwinger, 'Opernregie als szenische Komposition: Joachim Herz zum 65. Geburtstag', *Neue Zeit* (15 June 1989), p. 5.

movement in Italy – *verismo* ('realism'),⁵¹⁶ Puccini left an operatic legacy valuable for his canonisation within the socialist context. His language was harmonic and tonal in terms of music, exemplifying the key features of the 'common-practice tonality'. Theodor Adorno uses Puccini's music as the most prominent example in his theorisation of background music, the music which was 'quoted from the unconscious memory of the listeners, not introduced to them.' Furthermore, as he describes the melodies of background music, 'the greater the ecstasies, the more perfect the emotional calm of the hearers over whose heads they drift.'⁵¹⁷

Puccini followed the *verismo* tradition regarding subject matter, preferring ordinary people's stories in the real world and addressing his contemporary world's social problems.⁵¹⁸ From the lens of socialist realism, this preference coincided with the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic of artistic works' social relevance.⁵¹⁹ Admittedly, his operas' recurring theme of love with a tragic end and the description of human nature's dark sides did not seem to meet the criterion of progressiveness of socialist realism. As pointed out by an article in *Neues Deutschland* in 1961, despite its humanistic features, Puccini's oeuvre lacked progressiveness as the composer 'preferred "'little things"' of everyday life other than "'great"' action' [*Puccini liebt mehr „die kleinen Dinge“ des Alltags denn die „große“ Aktion*].⁵²⁰ However, as his opera stories were usually set in the nineteenth century, this offered communist cultural authorities the chance to ascribe the protagonists' tragedies to the decadence of bourgeois society.

Equally important was the reach of Puccini's operas among wider social groups. As Adriana

⁵¹⁶ Regarding scholarly works on *Verismo*, see for instance, Arman Schwartz, 'The *verismo* debate', in Arman Schwartz & Emanuele Senici (eds.), *Giacomo Puccini and His World* (Princeton & Oxford, 2016), pp. 261-72; Adriana Corazzol, 'Opera and *verismo*: regressive points of view and the artifice of alienation', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 5.1 (1993), pp. 39-53.

⁵¹⁷ Theodor Adorno, 'Music in the background', in Richard Leppert (ed.), *Essays on Music* (Los Angeles & London, 2002), p. 509.

⁵¹⁸ Corazzol, 'Opera and *verismo*', p. 48.

⁵¹⁹ One example of the socialist emphasis on operatic works' social relevance can be shown by Werner Otto's *Neues Deutschland* article in 1965. As Otto, at the time the chief dramaturge of Staatsoper Berlin, puts it, 'Opera has never been an escape from time. Instead, precisely because of its immediate social relevance, it is the ideal location for major political events and human conflicts based on a social background, and the most festive and richest reflection of humanistic concerns.' Original German text: 'Die Oper ist in ihren bedeutenden Zeugnissen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart nie Flucht aus der Zeit gewesen, sondern gerade schon aus ihrer unmittelbaren gesellschaftlichen Bezogenheit idealer Darstellungsort großer politischer Ereignisse, menschlicher Konflikte vor sozialem Hintergrund, festliche-reichste Widerspiegelung humanistischen Anliegens gewesen und ist es noch.' Werner Otto, 'Die Oper im Blickfeld', *Neues Deutschland* (8 September 1965), p. 4.

⁵²⁰ Joachim Scholz, 'Was ist das kulturelle Erbe?', *Neues Deutschland* (1 March 1961), p. 4.

Corazzol puts it, verismo opera functions as a form of mass culture in its contemporary world.⁵²¹ Puccini's success, particularly in his contemporary world, was tangibly secured by his willingness to adapt his operas to reach the widest audience.⁵²²

Moreover, Puccini was also canonised in the Soviet operatic repertory. Influenced by his early years' experiences of visiting a local opera house during his study at Tbilisi Spiritual Seminary, Stalin had an aesthetic preference for Puccini and other classical and Romantic opera composers.⁵²³ Although the Soviet government orchestrated the wave of de-Stalinisation after his death, Puccini's position in the repertory did not appear to be negatively influenced.⁵²⁴ These factors made Puccini easily fit into the GDR's socialist realist repertoire. The composer's centenary in 1958 led to governmental-mandated celebrations in the GDR to commemorate Puccini. An article published in *Neue Zeit* that year, which praised Puccini's dedication to bringing harmonic melodies and realism to the opera stage, his close bond with the people, as well as his roots in his *Heimat* Italy, can provide a glimpse of the composer's image portrayed by the GDR cultural authorities.⁵²⁵

Choosing the *Ur-Butterfly*

Herz's approach to *Madam Butterfly* is of particular significance, as it embodies the convergence of Herz's aesthetic principles, Puccini's original conception of the opera, and the aesthetic taste of socialist realism. Still, more importantly, it represents the affinity between director, composer and state rhetoric in artistic productions to a high degree. Based on John Luther Long's short story which was influenced by Pierre Loti's autobiographical novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), *Madam Butterfly* narrates an ill-fated love tragedy of a Japanese geisha's temporary marriage to an American naval officer in the Meiji-Japan treaty

⁵²¹ Corazzol, 'Opera and verismo', p. 52.

⁵²² Leon Botstein, 'Music, language, and meaning in opera: Puccini and his contemporaries', in Arman Schwartz & Emanuele Senici (eds.), *Giacomo Puccini and His World* (Princeton & Oxford, 2016), pp. 187-88.

⁵²³ Ivashkin, 'Who's afraid of socialist realism?', p. 438.

⁵²⁴ Regarding scholarly works on opera in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, see for instance, Hannah Schneider, *Opera after Stalin: Rodion Shchedrin and the Search for the Voice of a New Era* (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2021); Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: Enlarged Edition, 1917-1981* (Bloomington, 1983), pp. 271-416.

⁵²⁵ Adrian Holck, 'Zauberer der Opernbühne: Giacomo Puccini zum 100. Geburtstag', *Neue Zeit* (21 December 1958), p. 3.

harbour — Nagasaki in the late 1800s. Cio-Cio-San, a teenage geisha, enters into an arranged marriage with the pleasure-seeking American naval officer Pinkerton on a disposable contract. Pinkerton soon leaves Nagasaki for the States, telling Cio-Cio-San that he will one day return. Convinced by Pinkerton’s promise, she devotedly waits for his return for three years, despite the economic hardship of raising their child. In contrast, Pinkerton believes that his disposable Japanese marriage is invalidated by his leaving, marrying an American wife after returning to the States. The story ends with Cio-Cio-San’s suicide after learning the painful truth and surrendering her child to the Pinkertons. During his visit to London in 1900, Puccini was captivated by the story after seeing David Belasco’s theatrical play *Madam Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan*, a dramatised version of John Luther Long’s one. Immediately after returning to Italy, Puccini co-worked with librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa to turn the play into an opera.⁵²⁶

In a marked difference from all the preceding directors, Herz was the first director after Puccini to stage the opera according to its long-forgotten original version. The original version’s unsuccessful Milan premiere at *La Scala* in 1904 led Puccini to withdraw it from the opera house for substantial revision. The rediscovery of the original version by Herz and Klaus Schlegel, planning director of the KO, in the mid-1970s led them to compare the original version and the revised ones. Surprisingly, they found that the cultural collision between the West and the East, particularly the criticism over American-represented imperialism and colonialism, was much sharper in the original than in the revised ones.

Act	Synopsis	Original version	Later versions
	Goro, the Japanese marriage broker, introduced Cio-Cio-	Pinkerton: ‘Foolishly chosen nicknames! I will call them scarecrows!’ ⁵²⁷ Scarecrow first,	Removed

⁵²⁶ Nicholas John (ed.), *Opera Guide 26: Madam Butterfly/Madama Butterfly* (London & New York, 1984), pp. 12-44. Regarding scholarly works on the opera’s story, texts, and music, see for instance, Jonathan Wisenthal, Sherrill Grace, Melinda Boyd, Brian McIlroy and Vera Micznik (eds.), *A Vision of the Orient: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts of Madame Butterfly* (Toronto, 2006).

⁵²⁷ This is translated from ‘muso’ in the original Italian text by librettists Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica. The English translation provided here is by R. H. Elkin. See Nicholas John (ed.), *Opera Guide 26: Madam Butterfly/Madama Butterfly* (London & New York, 1984), p. 70.

	San's servants' names to Pinkerton before the wedding.	scarecrow second, and scarecrow third!	
Act I	At the wedding, Pinkerton asked the Japanese servants to serve the food to the guests.	Pinkerton: 'Call my scarecrows to hand round candied flies and spiders, preserves and pastry and all sorts of curious liquors, and most peculiar delicacies that they fancy in Japan.'	Removed
	Pinkerton talks to Sharpless (US consul at Nagasaki) before the wedding.	Pinkerton: 'And here's to my wedding day when I will marry a real wife from America.'	Removed ⁵²⁸

Act	Synopsis	Original version	Later versions
Act III	Pinkerton's return to Nagasaki: Pinkerton came to Cio-Cio-San's house but decided not to see her. He thought it was too painful to say goodbye. So instead, he asked Suzuki (Cio-Cio-San's maid) to tell Cio-Cio-San the truth.	The original version does not have this aria.	The addition of Pinkerton's aria (' <i>Addio, fiorito asil</i> ') in the later versions: 'Farewell, the sanctuary of flowers and home of love. I will be haunted forever by my atrocious guilt... I cannot bear my guilt. Ah! I cannot stay in this squalor! I must flee, I must flee, I am vile! Farewell, I cannot bear my guilt.' ⁵²⁹

As the above examples have demonstrated, Pinkerton's verses of complaints about Japanese cuisine and throwing insults at Cio-Cio-San's servants and intentions to marry a real American woman were deleted in the revised versions. In addition, the revisions added some sentimental arias to Pinkerton's role, including the famous one, 'Farewell, the sanctuary of

⁵²⁸ The English translation is given by Elkin, in John (ed.), *Opera Guide 26*, pp. 77-78; and Cardiff, Welsh National Opera (WNO) Archive, *Madam Butterfly: A New Translation by Peter Hutchinson*, pp. 1-2.

⁵²⁹ The English translation is based on Burton Fisher (ed.), *Madama Butterfly: Translated from Italian and Including Music Highlight Transcriptions* (Coral Gables, 2001), pp. 53-55.

flowers' [*Addio, fiorito asil*]. These alterations, according to Herz, were to soften Pinkerton's somewhat disagreeable colonial arrogance and jingoistic behaviour.⁵³⁰

Alterations were also made to other roles in the revised versions, but on a smaller scale than for Pinkerton. Taking Cio-Cio-San as an example, in the first act of the original version, Cio-Cio-San confesses to Pinkerton that she thought he was 'a white stranger, uncouth and rough, relatively uncultured barbarian' before she met him.⁵³¹ This verse was deleted in the revised versions. This deletion was supposed by Herz to reduce the sharpness of East-West cultural clashes and misunderstandings. The revised versions also gave Kate's verse of 'I am the innocent reason for the pain we must cause you' to Sharpless, which Sharpless sang as 'She is the innocent cause of your trouble. Forgive her'.⁵³² Dramaturgically, this change was possibly aimed at mitigating Kate's patronising characteristics.

Given Herz's theatrical realism, there is little wonder about his preference for the original version over the revised ones. His aesthetic principle of operatic reproductions as the best possible restoration of the creators' intentions could indeed find expression in *Madam Butterfly's* original version, as this version has its legitimacy as Puccini's original conception of the opera. Moreover, Herz's aesthetic pursuit of intensified social, historical, and political conflicts in operas can be well presented by the original version, given that this version highlights issues such as Cio-Cio-San as a victim of the East-West conflicts, her ill-fated tragedy as a result of the painful clash between 'two nations, two civilisations' [*zwei Nationen, zwei Welten*],⁵³³ and its criticism of western colonialism and eastern decadence.⁵³⁴

Additionally, Herz thought that the original version outshone the revised ones in dramatic precision and credibility. In his essay entitled 'Puccini was right' in 1978, Herz used the example of Pinkerton's aria 'Farewell, the sanctuary of flowers' in the revised versions to show why he thought this aria fitted oddly with Pinkerton's inner world and the external situation

⁵³⁰ AdK, Herz 1149, Herz's letter to Mr. Nicholas Peine from the Welsh National Opera, October 1978.

⁵³¹ WNO Archive, *Madam Butterfly*, p. 15.

⁵³² Fisher (ed.), *Madama Butterfly*, pp. 57-58.

⁵³³ Herz, 'Überraschende Begegnung mit einer wohlbekanntten Dame', in Kobán (ed.), *Theater*, p. 259.

⁵³⁴ Arthur Groos, 'Lieutenant F.B. Pinkerton: problems in the genesis of an operatic hero', *Literature & Opera*, 64.4 (1987), p. 622.

in which he was situated. As he wrote:

Would not Pinkerton feel embarrassed when he sang this romantically sentimental aria under the supervisory glare of his American wife, Kate? Moreover, how could Pinkerton sing his aria and, at the same time, feel how shabbily he has behaved and what a figure he must present? He had been received here [Nagasaki] like a god. Now he wants to fob off his former sweetheart with money, urging the consul to be so kind and do the necessaries for him. So he rushed off in an agonised mixture of compromising insight into his shallowness and a grotesque attempt to save his face?⁵³⁵

Thus, in Herz's mind, the original version was more psychologically and logically realistic than the revised ones, which enhanced the whole story's believability.

Therefore, following his research on the opera's different versions, Herz concluded that Puccini initially planned to provide a sharp criticism of American-represented colonialism and imperialism and highlight the intense East-West cultural clashes, thus directing the whole opera towards harsh social criticism. However, Puccini had to compromise as his contemporary Milanese audiences could not stomach his political thoughts.⁵³⁶ As Klaus Schlegel put it, 'the composer's misplaced determination to please has mutilated the work in essential phases and thus blurred its social criticism'.⁵³⁷ Herz was thrilled by this 'sensational discovery' of the original version, as his thoughts coincided with Puccini's original ideas even before he had even seen this version. He wrote: 'all my life I did hate this opera-not knowing, that, what disturbed me, was the result of revisions, made late(r) on'.⁵³⁸

Not only did Herz prefer the original version, but the SED authorities did too, as the emphasis on anti-Americanism in Pinkerton's aggressive, uncultured, jingoistic manner certainly stood in closer affinity with the official line.⁵³⁹ Particularly noticeable was that, given the context of the GDR's anti-American campaign during the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, the original version's sharp criticism of American-represented colonialism and imperialism over

⁵³⁵ Adk, Herz, 1149, Herz 'Puccini was right (1978)'.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., Herz's letter to Mr. Nicholas Peine.

⁵³⁷ Klaus Schlegel, 'Foreword', trans. by George Baurley, in Joachim Herz & Klaus Schlegel (trans.), *Madam Butterfly: japanische Tragödie in drei Akten* (Leipzig, 1975), pp. X-XII.

⁵³⁸ Adk, Herz 1004, 'Herz's letter to Elder (17. August 1977)'; WNO Archive, Herz, 'The making of *Madam Butterfly*: an East-West story' (11 December 2011).

⁵³⁹ Regarding GDR government's anti-American efforts, see Chapter I.

the Far East appeared to coincide with the SED's official preference.⁵⁴⁰ Therefore, in stating that 'Puccini is our man', 'Puccini belonged to Chekhov and (George Bernard) Shaw', and 'this opera is a tremendous critical realism', Herz therefore chose to stage the original version of *Madam Butterfly*.⁵⁴¹

Researching the characters' milieus

By thoroughly researching the opera story's historical, social and political background, Herz identified the complex milieu of the main characters, highlighting the opera's criticism of American-represented colonialism and eastern decadence. Importantly, by underscoring the opera's social-historical context and dramatic conflicts, the director presented Cio-Cio-San's victimhood as the consequence of the broader social milieus rather than merely her foolishness. In addition, his emphasis on the subject of the meeting between two cultures which were both condemned by GDR socialism satisfied the official GDR rhetoric's taste.

Nagasaki in Meiji Japan

In Herz's view, Nagasaki, the Japanese treaty port with a large crowd of American merchant ships and warships, provided a place for the meeting between the East and West cultures. Importantly, it was a microcosm of a corrupted Japanese port that had lost its way by adapting to the USA.⁵⁴² Aware that it was left far behind by the western powers after being forced to re-open its ports for diplomatic and trading relations with the US in 1854, Meiji Japan was eager to transform itself into a vital world power by learning from the West in politics, technology, culture, and science. The US, the nation that imposed its treaty port system⁵⁴³ and exerted political, economic, and militaristic pressure on Japan, also set one learning

⁵⁴⁰ For scholarly works on the SED's anti-American rhetoric and efforts, see Poiger, *Jazz*, pp. 193–197; Rainer Schnoor, 'The good and the bad America-perceptions of the United States in the GDR', in Junker, Detlef; et al (eds.), *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945–1990: A Handbook* (New York & Cambridge, 2004), pp. 618–626.

⁵⁴¹ AdK, Herz 1001, 'Einführung des Regisseurs Prof. Herz in die Inszenierung *Madam Butterfly* für das Ensemble am 18. Oktober 1977'; Herz 478, '*Madam Butterfly*: programme note 1982/83'; Hilde Hähnel, 'Warum Pinkerton die Arie nicht singen darf', *Berliner Zeitung* (2 September 1978), p. 10.

⁵⁴² AdK, Herz 1001, Herz, 'Einführung *Madam Butterfly*'.

⁵⁴³ Treaty ports were those port cities in East Asian, mainly in China and Japan that were forced to open to foreign trade with Western powers under unfair treaties. Regarding scholarly works on the treaty port system in Japan, see for instance, William Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 14–26.

example for Japan's modernisation. Therefore, as Herz's dramaturge Hans-Jochen Irmer pointed out, one layer of the social background of the original version was 'the downright terroristic Americanisation of the non-American world' [*die geradezu terroristische der Amerikanisierung nichtamerikanischen Welt*].⁵⁴⁴

Ordinary people's complex towards an 'alien' culture

According to Herz, the somewhat conflicted complex of the local Japanese population and the visiting Americans towards each other also played a crucial role in intensifying the opera's dramatic conflicts. Constant conflicts between the American ship crews and the local population and the Americans' privileged status in Nagasaki led the local Japanese population to hold a somewhat conflicted attitude towards Americans and American culture. As Hans-Jochen Irmer and Herz noted, on the one hand, the Japanese adored American technological and economic power because the Americans brought them money; on the other hand, the Japanese knew they were inferior to the Americans and considered them intruders.⁵⁴⁵ Meanwhile, in the opera, the Americans demonstrated no less complicated psychology in viewing their counterparts than the Japanese. While exhibiting their fascination with Japanese culture, characterised by distinct woodblock prints and obedient Japanese women, they, with a colonialist arrogance, thought of the locals as uncivilised barbarians.⁵⁴⁶

Women and geishas in Japan

In Herz's view, women's oppressed status in the patriarchal Japanese society and as represented by the geishas also played their part in forming the broader historical and social milieus surrounding Cio-Cio-San. As the dramaturgical team's reference to the research of British Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain indicated, women in traditional Japanese society were constantly constrained by the highly patriarchal order throughout their life. Therefore, there is no wonder how the western world fascinated them when hearing about western

⁵⁴⁴ Adk, Herz 1000, Hans-Jochen Irmer, 'Madama Butterfly-von der Novelle zur Oper (1 September 77)'.
⁵⁴⁵ Adk, Herz 119, 'Rundköpfe, Spitzköpfe, Japan, Amerika oder was?'

⁵⁴⁶ AdK, Herz 1000, Irmer, 'Madame Butterfly'.

women's liberated status.⁵⁴⁷ In addition, Herz's romanticising reading of geisha as a respected occupation linked to the artist, rather than prostitution in traditional Japanese society, also intensified dramatic conflicts in the opera plot. As a directing document from director's notes under the title of 'Japanese studies' puts, 'even in ancient Kyoto, geishas were just artists: not allowed to be approached on the street, famous geishas with an entourage of young girls on the street. [But] what is offered today [in Nagasaki] under this name are prostitutes.'⁵⁴⁸

Temporary marriage

In Herz's mind, the phenomenon of temporary marriages between white American men and local geishas reflected the collision of the two diseased cultures — American-represented colonialism and Nagasaki-represented eastern decadence, the meeting of residents and visiting Americans' self-contradictory complex towards the other. In Cio-Cio-San's Nagasaki, it was not uncommon for a Japanese geisha to have a temporary marriage to an American naval officer arranged by a marriage broker. As concluded briefly by Herz, this practice was more or less like a service for tourists. For an American man, this kind of 'marriage' was supposed to be a pleasurable experience to enjoy the 'exotic' Oriental culture, while for a local geisha, the marriage could save her and her family from poverty.⁵⁴⁹

Identifying the complexity of the main characters

Likewise, Herz's efforts in developing the opera's characters also manifest his aesthetic consistency with the official rhetoric. In Herz's view, all the social and historical influences were vividly projected onto every character in the story. Moreover, this unequal East-West relationship was sharpened by the presentation of the two main characters, Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San, together with their story.

⁵⁴⁷ Basil Chamberlain, 'Allerlei Japanisches-Notizen über verschiedene japanische Gegenstände für Reisende und andere, 1912', in Stephan Stompör (ed.), *Programme notes for Madam Butterfly* (East Berlin, 1978).

⁵⁴⁸ The original German text: 'Gar im alten Kyoto sind die Geishas wirklich nur Künstlerinnen: Dürfen nicht auf der Straße angesprochen werden, berühmte Geishas mit einem Gefolge junger Mädchen auf der Straße. Was heute angeboten wird unter diesem Namen, sind Prostituierte.' AdK, Herz 1001, 'Japanologie'.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., Herz, 'Einführung Madam Butterfly', and 'Japanologen'; Herz 119, 'Rundköpfe'.

The character of Pinkerton

In Herz's view, the imperialist American-colonial arrogance was typified by the character of Pinkerton, the white naval officer who sought a temporary marriage with a Nagasaki geisha. As Herz noted, '[Pinkerton] does not just want the girl in his bed, he wants to get into the mood. By bringing all Cio-Cio-San's relatives to the wedding and seeing all the strange clothes and foreign ceremonies, he enjoyed experiencing this exotic culture that was entirely new to him and different from his own culture'.⁵⁵⁰ At the same time, Pinkerton also displayed his jingoistic behaviour, thinking of himself as hailing from a superior race to the Japanese. He made Cio-Cio-San believe that they married for love, telling her that, unlike in Japan, women in the US enjoyed a high social status being respected by their husbands and that marriage in the States is a life-long commitment by God's will. However, Pinkerton did not tell her what he said did not apply to her. However disagreeable and intolerable Pinkerton's manner was, he was 'justified' by this Japanese contract which permitted his right to cancel it whenever he wanted and the usual practice of such marriage among his fellow officers. Viewed from this angle, from the start to the end of this story, Pinkerton was the 'rule-abiding' party of the marriage contract. Moreover, his attempt to compensate Cio-Cio-San for his leaving (Act II) possibly situates him in a morally better place than some of his American fellows. Core to Pinkerton's provocation of the audience's disagreement and anger was his adherence to this 'morally corrupted' marriage contract while creating the illusion of true love for Cio-Cio-San. When the opera ends with Cio-Cio-San's tragic suicide and the Pinkertons' successful adoption of the child, the audience's condemnation of Pinkerton aggravates.

The character of Cio-Cio-San

More complicated was the character of Cio-Cio-San, who represented her Japanese milieu and fascination with American culture and the East-West cultural collision. Herz identified her as being alienated from her own identity. She accepted the marriage arrangement mainly to help her deprived family. In thinking that she married a barbarian, Cio-Cio-San had a low

⁵⁵⁰ The original German text: 'Er will nicht nur das Mädchen auf dem Bett, sondern er will in Stimmung kommen. Indem er alle die Verwandten holt, unbekannte Kleidungsstücke und fremde Zeremonien sieht, was er zum grossen Teil possierlich findet und worüber er dann auch prompt dumme Bemerkungen macht, was ihn aber doch alles irgendwie animiert.' AdK, Herz, 119, 'Rundköpfe'.

expectation of her 'husband-to-be' before meeting Pinkerton. However, she fell in love with him at first sight. As the KO programme brochure put it, in the mind of Cio-Cio-San, 'the Americans are the enemies, but this American damages the beloved image of enemies'.⁵⁵¹ Her devotion to marriage and fascination with the US encouraged her to emancipate herself from the traditional Japanese constraints on women. Thus, she attempted to behave and dress like an American woman and even converted to Christianity. Her actions, especially the change of faith, irritated her relatives and made them think she was an enemy. Her tragedy was that everything she had done had been for an undeserving man.⁵⁵² Disillusioned by her fascination with the United States, she turned to the traditional Japanese ritual suicide-Seppuku to end her life. Under her negative social-historical background, Cio-Cio-San's unwavering trust in her American husband, some of her virtues inherited from the good old Japan, and her enlightened idea of liberating herself from old Japan's constraints on women, combined with her victimhood, considerably raise the audiences' sympathy for Cio-Cio-San. Moreover, the more compassion the audiences would hold for the heroine's misfortune, the more intense condemnation would be given to the patriarchal milieu and Pinkerton, which leads to her death.

Herz's treatment of the two main characters not only accorded with his aesthetic principles but also was in line with the SED's official artistic and political discourse. From the director's viewpoint, this treatment developed opera singers' understanding of the characters' complexities. Moreover, his emphasis on characters' fates as the products of their specific social-historical milieux also manifested Herz's aesthetic preference for sharp dramatic conflicts. Finally, through the lens of the SED political authority, Herz's approach to the characters reflects Engels' aesthetic idea of realism⁵⁵³ and, importantly, presents the official image of the US within the SED anti-American discourse.

⁵⁵¹ The original German text: 'Die Amerikaner sind die Feinde, aber dieser Amerikaner beschädigt das liebgewordene Feindbild.' Schlegel, 'So könnte es zwischen Pinkerton und Butterfly angefangen haben...' in Stompor (ed.), *Programme notes for Madam Butterfly*.

⁵⁵² AdK, Herz 1000, Irmer, 'Madam Butterfly'.

⁵⁵³ Georg Lukács, 'Marx and Engels on aesthetics' in Arthur Kahn (ed.), *Writer and Critic: and Other Essays* (London, 2005), p. 77.

Herz's manipulation of contemporary references: (1) within the GDR rhetoric

In order to inspire his fellow artists and communicate with his East German audience, Herz tactically used contemporary references. While these references manifest his theatrical realistic principles, they are also prone to be perceived as his intention to curry favour with the official anti-American rhetoric at the expense of his aesthetic pursuits.

Herz's reference to the Hidden Flower (HF) by Pearl Buck

The KO programme brochure contains an excerpt from American writer Pearl S. Buck's novel *The Hidden Flower (HF)*.⁵⁵⁴ There are good reasons for suggesting that Herz's directing principle of theatrical realism made this decision. Herz's pursuit of successfully delivering the creators' concepts to the audiences is crucial. As Herz once explained, 'We [the KO] respect the authors' intentions, but we also do not intend to deny our current knowledge, our findings.'⁵⁵⁵ In terms of their plots, both *HF* and *Madam Butterfly* narrate failed inter-racial marriages between Japanese women and American soldiers stationed in Japan due to cultural collision. It was possibly Herz's belief that the East German audience in the 1970s would be more familiar with the social context of the post-War era than in the late 1800s. Thus, Herz's choice of *HF* can be viewed as a tool for intensifying the audience's empathy with Puccini's dramatic concept in *Madam Butterfly*. In addition, the excerpt presents the characters, especially the male protagonist Allen, in a much more favourable light. Unlike his counterpart – the love-tourist Pinkerton in *Madam Butterfly*, Allen takes his Japanese marriage seriously and marries for love, thinking of sacrificing his career in the army to stay with his Japanese wife. With Buck's detached watchful narration, Allen's character makes this excerpt less suitable for the SED's anti-American ends.

However, it is undeniable that Herz's choice of *HF* in the programme brochure endorses the official anti-American discourse. Firstly, by relating *HF* to *Madam Butterfly* without addressing

⁵⁵⁴ 'Eine amerikanisch-japanische Liebe aus der Nachkriegszeit', in Stompor (ed.), Programme notes for *Madam Butterfly*.

⁵⁵⁵ The original German text: 'Wir respektieren die Intentionen der Autoren, gedenken aber auch nicht, unser heutiges Wissen, unsere Erkenntnisse zu verleugnen.' Hans-Joachim Kyna, 'Erneuernder Geist auf der Opernbühne', *Neues Deutschland* (23 December 1977), p. 5.

the US' anti-fascist role and Japan's membership in the Axis during WWII, Herz and his dramaturgical team indirectly identified the American occupation power in post-War Japan as the continuation of American imperialist power in Japan during the Meiji era. Secondly, in narrating how Allen's relatives strongly oppose his interracial marriage, this novel addresses the issue of racial segregation in American society. Thirdly, Buck was generally acknowledged by the GDR public for her opposition to the US policies on geographic dominance and occupation in Japan.⁵⁵⁶ These helped fortify the US' negative image in the GDR as portrayed by the SED government. Given the similarly negative image of the US in the original *Madam Butterfly* story and East Germans' everyday encounters with the officially promoted anti-American sentiment, Herz's choice of this excerpt from *HF* was highly likely to consolidate the negative image of the US in the minds of the audience.

'Nagasaki' by Jürgen Berndt

Another example of anti-American discourse in the opera's KO programme brochure can be detected in Herz's inclusion of East German Japanologist Jürgen Berndt's essay 'Nagasaki'. Beginning with a recollection of Nagasaki's atomic bombing in 1945, the essay then, in a sentimental tone, traces the Japanese harbour's historical encounters with western powers from the sixteenth century onwards.⁵⁵⁷ Berndt used a poetic tone to emphasise Nagasaki's victimhood of the atomic bomb. Viewed through Herz's aesthetic lens, Berndt's writing was educational in helping the audience understand the opera and stay coherently in tune with the opera, provoking the audience's sympathy for Japan. While Berndt's writing does not address Japan's role in the Axis powers relating to this devastating atomic bomb, thus connoting the American power as a 'warmonger'.

The marriage broker Goro & sex trafficking in the FRG

Another aspect of Herz's *Madam Butterfly* worthy of attention is his attempt to associate the

⁵⁵⁶ Buck was moderately popular in the GDR. When she died in 1973, all three official SED organs (*Neues Deutschland*, *Neue Zeit*, and *Berliner Zeitung*) announced the news and briefly introduced her literary achievements. See [n.a.], 'DDR-Erstaufführung', *Neue Zeit* (8 March 1973), p. 4; [n.a.], 'Pearl S. Buck gestorben', *Berliner Zeitung* (8 March 1973), p. 6; [n.a.], 'Kulturnotizen', *Neues Deutschland*, (8 March 1973), p. 4.

⁵⁵⁷ Jürgen Berndt, 'Nagasaki', in Stompor (ed.), Programme notes for *Madam Butterfly*, pp. 22-24.

trade of the marriage broker Goro with the human and sex trafficking of Thai women in the FRG. Herz's directing materials contain a clipping from *Berliner Zeitung* that details the arrest of a West German trafficker in Bangkok and how Thai women were forced into prostitution in the FRG's sex trafficking industry.⁵⁵⁸ An article entitled 'Goro's Grandson' in the KO programme brochure suggests Herz's use this report to communicate with his KO audience. In a pseudo-journalistic tone, this article vividly narrates four scenes about the trading of Thai women in the FRG:

A description of the Thai prostitution industry in Bangkok.

A former tax consultant from Gelsenkirchen relocated to Bangkok and set up a successful brothel in Bangkok for his West German compatriots.

A person from Hamburg does the business of trafficking girls from Thailand to the FRG, the Netherlands, and Denmark.

A company in Frankfurt am Main does a lucrative business of renting out Thai women monthly.⁵⁵⁹

The article identifies all the locations, companies, and even the three West German traffickers' names. Unlike other articles in the programme brochure, whose source of information is usually listed, this article has no attribution. Thus, it is plausible that it is a literary composition based on some factual accounts about the Thai-FRG sex trafficking industry. Given that associating the FRG with US imperialism and colonialism played a crucial role in the official GDR strategy of delegitimising the FRG, the article's presentation of the sex trafficking industry in the FRG provided a particularly emotionally effective subject of attention for those intending to delegitimise that system. Thus, Herz's arrangement of the article for his East German audience can be seen as his intention to espouse an anti-imperialist standpoint and cast the FRG as part of an imperial power bloc in order to curry favour with the SED authorities. At the same time, Herz's theatrical realism can also explain the rationale behind this article. Under the SED's mandate, GDR reports on the FRG's social problems should not have been unfamiliar to the East German populace. Thus, for the audience's better understanding of Goro's image in *Madam Butterfly*, Herz's adoption of such a contemporary reference seems polemical.

⁵⁵⁸ AdK, Herz, 1000; [n.a.], 'Schmutziger Handel mit Thai-Mädchen in der BRD', *Berliner Zeitung*, (12 October 1977), p. 5.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Goros Enkel', *Programme notes*, in Stompor (ed.) *Programme notes for Madam Butterfly*, p. 32.

Herz's manipulation of contemporary references: (2) beyond the official GDR rhetoric

In contrast to all the above contemporary references used by Herz, his attempt to draw a parallel between Cio-Cio-San's Japan and the GDR in terms of their social and economic inferiority, along with xenophobia and racial discrimination, was certainly not part of the official GDR rhetoric. A directing document shows that Herz tried to acquaint his KO orchestra musicians with the theme of 'alienated identity' in *Madam Butterfly* by telling them the following story:

A US-American, an African, or an Arab, working in West Berlin during the day travels to the GDR's capital in the evening, after midnight. He takes a girl who cannot be had so cheaply where he earns his money. He brings coffee, brandy, and jeans to show off. For instance, if he is a builder, he says he is an architect. He raises the hope that he will always come back, marries her one day and takes her out into the free world of transferable currency. The GDR girl, an activist by day, would like to have something from the [free] world in the evening or at least from the Intershop. She picks up her foreigner in the *Tränenpalast* at Friedrichstraße station. Since her belly swells, she often waits in vain. His visits become much rarer. One day she gets a letter from Chicago or Damascus. The marriage with the free world will probably come to nothing. She runs to the consul. Unfortunately, he cannot help her. A GDR man is out of the question for her. She is not allowed to see her relatives with the dark-skinned child. Everywhere, she gets accusations and 'good' advice. She wants to live on for the sake of the child — new apartments, kindergarten etc.⁵⁶⁰

Given that West Berlin is portrayed as a microcosm of the Americanised FRG, Herz's choice of West Berlin appears to embrace the official GDR's anti-American rhetoric. However, his description of West Berlin as a representation of the free world, the omnipotent western currency versus the impotent Ostmark, the superiority of western goods over the East, and

⁵⁶⁰ The original German text: 'Entweder ein US-Amerikaner oder ein Afrikaner oder Araber tagsüber in Berlin-West arbeitend, reist abends, so nach null Uhr, in die Hauptstadt der DDR ein, nimmt sich ein Mädchen, das so billig dort, wo er sein Geld verdient, nicht zu haben ist. Er bringt mit: Kaffee, Kognak, Jeans. Spielt sich auf. Wenn er z. B. Maurer ist, sagt er, er sei Architekt. Er nährt Hoffnungen, dass er immer wiederkommt. Sie eines Tages heiratet und herausholt in die freie Welt der frei transferierbaren Währung. DDR-Mädchen, tagsüber Aktivistin, möchte am Abend was haben von der Welt oder wenigstens aus dem Intershop. Sie holt ihren Ausländer im Tränenpalast des Bahnhofs Friedrichstr. ab, da ihr Bauch anschwillt, wartet sie oft umsonst. Seine Besuche werden seltener. Eines Tages kriegt sie einen Brief aus Chicago oder Damaskus. Wird wohl nichts werden aus der Heirat mit der freien Welt. Sie läuft zum Konsul. Der kann ihr leider nicht helfen. DDR-Mann kommt für sie nicht in Frage. Bei den Verwandten darf sie sich nicht sehenlassen mit dem dunkelhäutigen Kind. Sie bekommt überall nur Vorwürfe und gute Ratschläge. Um des Kindes willen lebt sie weiter. Neubauwohnung, Kindergarten usw.' AdK, Herz 1001, Joachim Herz, 'Einführung des Regisseurs Prof. Herz in die Inszenierung *Madam Butterfly* für das Ensemble am 18. Oktober 1977.'

people's fascination with the lives on the other side of the Wall suggest the GDR's social inferiority to the West.

Equally salient is Herz's mention of the lack of social acceptance of the mixed-race child by the East German girl's relatives, which contradicted the official SED rhetoric of the GDR as an anti-racist state. Given the SED policies for supporting single mothers and women's high employment rate,⁵⁶¹ the GDR had the highest rates of birth and childbearing outside wedlock in Europe, which amounted to 33% of all birth-bearing in 1989.⁵⁶² Thus, the East German girl's act of giving birth outside marriage and her status as a single mother played a minor role in her alienation from her relatives.

Compared with this, the key reason for her alienation is her child's mixed-race identity. As Dennis and LaPorte note, East German society displayed 'racism and sexism towards East German women who befriend[ed] male foreigners.' Regarding people of colour in particular, a stereotype of these people's lack of morality was not uncommonly shared by the East German populace; negative comments and ridicule were also often directed at those East German women who developed romantic relationships with foreigners of colour, mainly if such relationships produced illegitimate children.⁵⁶³ In official GDR discourse, xenophobia and racism were the exclusive products of capitalist societies, whereas xenophobia and racism had no grounds to exist in the socialist system because of socialist internationalism and Marxism-Leninism's class analysis. Thus, as proudly claimed by the SED government, the socialist GDR had superiority over capitalist FRG because it had eliminated these.⁵⁶⁴ In practice, the SED government appeared to commit to realising its declaration of the GDR as a socialist internationalist and anti-racist utopia. Particularly considering the SED's foreign policies in

⁵⁶¹ Regarding scholarly works on the SED's supporting policies on single mothers, see for instance, Dirk Konietzka & Michaela Kreyenfeld, 'Non-marital births in East Germany after unification', *Max-Planck-Institut für demografische Forschung* (2002), pp. 3-5, accessed via: <https://www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/working/wp-2001-027.pdf> (last accessed 09 August 2023); Jürgen Cromm, *Familienbildung in Deutschland: soziodemographische Prozesse, Theorie, Recht und Politik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der DDR* (Opladen, 1998); Poiger, *Jazz*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁶² Konietzka & Kreyenfeld, 'Non-marital births in East Germany after unification', p. 3.

⁵⁶³ Dennis & LaPorte, *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany*, p. 105.

⁵⁶⁴ Jonathan Zatlin, 'Scarcity and resentment: economic sources of xenophobia in the GDR, 1971- 1989', *Central European History*, 40.4 (December 2007), p. 693. See also Waltraud Böhme et al., (eds), *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch* (East Berlin, 1988), p. 802.

developing friendships with previously colonised states in the Middle East and South Africa,⁵⁶⁵ shoring up its solidarity with communist North Vietnam during the Vietnam War and supporting the civil rights movements in the States.⁵⁶⁶ Moreover, as Dennis and LaPorte point out, the GDR accommodated refugees despite its non-membership of the UN Convention on Refugees of 1951. All these efforts demonstrate the SED government's determination to build an anti-racist utopia.

However, the sense of racial-ethnic diversity and equality failed to be integrated into ordinary East Germans' everyday life practices. The GDR population could wholeheartedly admire personalities from different ethnic and racial groups. For instance, when African American civil rights activists and cultural figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Angela Davis and Louis Armstrong visited the GDR, they received an overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception from the GDR population.⁵⁶⁷ In contrast, with the growing inflow of Polish consumers and migrant workers from developing countries such as Vietnam, Cuba, and Mozambique from the 1970s onwards, local East Germans at times perceived these incoming foreigners as their competitors for the already limited living resources.⁵⁶⁸

Moreover, such public hostility, mostly directed at migrant workers of colour, was aggravated by the Honecker government's incompetence or unwillingness to tackle this issue. As scholars such as Zatlin, Dennis, LaPorte and Saunders point out, the reasons are: first, the Honecker

⁵⁶⁵ Zatlin, 'Scarcity and Resentment', pp. 704, 709; and Dennis & LaPorte, *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany*, pp. xv, 87-89.

⁵⁶⁶ Elaine Kelly, 'Music for international solidarity: performances of race and otherness in the German Democratic Republic', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 16.1 (2019), p. 135. Regarding more scholarly works on the GDR and international solidarity, see for instance, Patrice Poutrus, 'Die DDR als „Hort der internationalen Solidarität“: Ausländer in der DDR', in Thomas Großbölting (ed.), *Friedensstaat, Leseland, Sportnation? DDR-Legenden auf dem Prüfstand* (Bonn, 2010), pp. 134-54.

⁵⁶⁷ Schnoor, 'The good and the bad America: perceptions of the United States in the GDR', pp. 619, 624; Patrice Poutrus & Katharina Warda, 'Ostdeutsche of Colour: Schwarze Geschichte(n) der DDR und Erfahrungen nach der deutschen Einheit', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 12 (2022), pp. 19-20. Catrin Lorch, 'Angela-Davis-Ausstellung: "Sie eignete sich perfekt"', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (12 July 2020), accessed via: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/angela-davis-ausstellung-sie-eignete-sich-perfekt-1.4964683> (last accessed 09 August 2023); Kevin Gendre (presented), 'Cold War in Full Swing-Louis Armstrong in the GDR', BBC Radio 3, (14 July 2019), accessed via: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0006swg> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

⁵⁶⁸ Zatlin, 'Scarcity and Resentment', pp. 694, 703, 719; and Dennis & LaPorte, *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany*, pp. 112-13, 116.

government was reluctant to publicly acknowledge the migrant workers' contribution to solving the problem of the underperformance of GDR industrial productivity. Instead, it preferred to adopt a patronising tone, claiming to its population that the governmental rationale for importing migrant workers was to selflessly help its socialist allies from the developing world. The second reason is the SED government's measures to discourage migrant workers' integration into the GDR society. As most migrant workers were 'rented' by the GDR from its partner countries in the third world, neither the SED government nor its counterparts in the countries of origin intended the workers to stay in the GDR after finishing their contracts. Third, the Honecker government tended to divert East Germans' dissatisfaction with the government onto hostility towards migrant workers and people from some unpopular ethnic groups, for example, Romani people, Muslims and Jews.⁵⁶⁹ These governmental measures, reinforced by inadequate GDR mainstream media reports on migrant workers, encouraged local East Germans' identification of foreigners, especially those easily distinguished by their appearance, as 'the unwelcome others'.

Herz's metaphor reflects several grim GDR realities and sentiments that were well registered by the public but beyond the official GDR rhetoric. Importantly, these inconsistencies between the state rhetoric and the shared perceptions by the East German populace, ranging from the questions of whether the GDR was superior to the FRG to whether the GDR was an anti-racist utopia, corroded crucially to the credibility of GDR socialism. Although Herz did not tell his musicians that his story about the East German girl was based on a true story, Herz's overriding concern in telling this story was the musicians' familiarisation with the theme of *Madam Butterfly*. Thus, this story's subject and the plot were supposed to be highly relatable to the orchestra members' everyday lives. Even if the orchestra members did not personally have such experiences, they would have at least heard of similar stories. Unfortunately, no evidence suggests whether Herz's story succeeded in inspiring his KO musicians. Nevertheless, considering the KO's active engagement in the GDR's trans-bloc cultural exchange (Chapter Three), it is reasonable to say that Herz's story about the East German girl was believable to the musicians because of its closeness to their perception of GDR life. Interestingly, Herz knew

⁵⁶⁹ Zatlin, 'Scarcity and resentment', pp.704-5, 707-9.; Dennis & LaPorte, *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany*, pp. 91-92, 108-11; Anna Saunders, 'Ostdeutschland: Heimat einer xenophoben Tradition?', *Berliner Debatte Initial*, 14.2 (2003), p. 53.

well that this story was outside of state rhetoric and that publicising it would undoubtedly irritate the SED political authorities. After telling the story to his KO musicians, Herz added, 'Do not worry, we will not play it [the story about the East German girl]. It only meant to evoke association'.⁵⁷⁰

Section II: *Madam Butterfly* flies over the Wall

The 'KO-mania' in the British operatic circles starting from Felsenstein's days

Although it was not until the 1970s that the GDR established diplomatic relations with the western bloc, western audiences and operatic practitioners recognised the artistic excellence of KO much earlier. Before the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, a substantial number of the KO audience came from West Berlin. Starting from Felsenstein's days, the KO became a cultural legend of GDR 'behind-the-Wall', creating a kind of mystique around the KO in British operatic circles. Peter Heyworth, for instance, described the KO as 'one of Europe's most remarkable opera houses',⁵⁷¹ and Kenneth Pearson praised Felsenstein as 'the doyen of opera producers'.⁵⁷² When Felsenstein died in 1975, his obituary in *Times* revered the maestro as the most extraordinary theatrical genius since Stanislavsky, writing that: '[I]n the post-war operatic world, only Wieland Wagner wielded an influence comparable to him [Felsenstein]'.⁵⁷³

In the British operatic circles, some personalities, including Alan Bush, Benjamin Britten, George Lascelles (Lord Harewood) and Jack Donaldson (Lord Donaldson of Kingsbridge), endeavoured to promote institutional and individual exchange with the KO during the non-recognition era. For instance, Lascelles, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival's artistic director, planned to invite the KO to the festival as early as 1965. In 1971, Donaldson, a member of the House of Lords and a board member of the Sadler's Wells company at the London Coliseum, proposed a funding application to the British Council for exchange visits between Sadler's

⁵⁷⁰ The original German text: 'Keine Sorge, so spielen wir es nicht. Es soll nur Assoziationen hervorrufen'. AdK, Herz 1001, Herz, 'Einführung *Madam Butterfly*'.

⁵⁷¹ Peter Heyworth, 'Master producer: East Berlin opera', *Observer* (7 October 1956), p. 14.

⁵⁷² Kenneth Pearson, 'The perfection man', *Sunday Times* (16 May 1971), p. 29.

⁵⁷³ [n.a.], 'Obituary, Professor Walter Felsenstein: creator of the *Komische Oper*', *Times* (10 October 1975), p. 17.

Wells and the KO.⁵⁷⁴ However, due to Britain's non-recognition policy, none of the two planned exchange visits was realised. Nonetheless, several British newspapers' enthusiastic reports about the KO's likely visits to Britain, followed by reports about the cancellation, tangibly raised the British audience's interest in this East Berlin opera house.⁵⁷⁵

There are at least four reasons for the 'KO mania'. Firstly, the attraction of Felsenstein's theatrical innovation. Felsenstein's realistic music theatre offered a sharp contrast with Wieland Wagner's 'mythical, 'timeless', and 'allegorical' New-Bayreuth style in the FRG.⁵⁷⁶ Secondly, for many British operatic practitioners, Felsenstein's KO offered a utopia for artistic creation – the pursuit of artists' aesthetic ideals without compromising the budget. As Braunmüller puts it, 'The fact that Felsenstein's theatrical practice became a model for many directors outside the GDR was not due to the politically directed attempts at the aesthetic field, but to the highest artistic quality of the performances and the exceptional care of dramaturgical preparation and theatrical reflection in the operatic field'.⁵⁷⁷ Indeed, nearly all KO advocates in Britain lauded this respect. For instance, British journalist Paul Moor used the example of the 150 rehearsals of Felsenstein's *The Magic Flute* (1954) at the KO to praise the master's perfectionism.⁵⁷⁸ Moreover, what also intrigued Felsenstein's western counterparts was his expansion of artistic perfectionism to each performance to the extent of at the expense of cancelling a performance if a singer, even just a supporting choir member, felt ill.⁵⁷⁹ *Times* once commented on the KO that 'in no other opera houses in the world has the art of theatrical production been raised to such a consistently sublime pitch of perfection.'⁵⁸⁰ Notably, the director's costly pursuit of perfectionism was generously backed up by the government. Although state funding for the culture industry had become a growing trend in

⁵⁷⁴ See Chapter Two.

⁵⁷⁵ [n.a.], 'Komische Oper for London?', *Times* (30 April 1970), p. 8; [n.a.], 'No Komische Oper for London', *Times*, (13 January 1971), p. 8; G. W., 'Komische Oper', *Financial Times* (15 January 1971), p. 3.

⁵⁷⁶ Regarding scholarly works on Wieland Wagner's directorial style and its difference from Felsenstein's realistic music theatre, see for instance, Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama*; Brug, *Opernregisseure heute*, p. 59; Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre*, pp. 264-309. See also, footnote 432.

⁵⁷⁷ The original German text: 'Daß Felsensteins Inszenierungen zum Vorbild vieler Regisseure auch außerhalb der DDR wurden, verdankten sie nicht den politisch gelenkten Versuchen ästhetischer Gängelung, sondern der hohen künstlerischen Qualität der Aufführungen und der im Opernbereich bis dahin unüblichen Sorgfalt der dramaturgischen Vorbereitung und theoretischen Reflexion.' Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama*, pp. 74-75.

⁵⁷⁸ Paul Moor, 'Felsenstein and the Komische Oper', *Financial Times* (26 June 1963), p. 24.

⁵⁷⁹ Braunmüller, *Oper als Drama*, pp. 74-75.

⁵⁸⁰ [n.a.], 'East Berlin opera for Edinburgh next year?', *Times* (4 November 1964), p. 16.

Britain since the War, a production budget and box office sales were still of great concern to its creative team. Thus, Felsenstein's practice of perfectionism at the KO, where the highest artistic quality overrode financial concerns, provided British operatic practitioners with an ideal vision of the artistically creative environment.

Thirdly, the KO's geopolitical location in Cold War East Berlin substantially reinforced its cultural allure to British opera-goers. Due to the War-time western allies' military and political presence in West Berlin and the two German states' relations, whereas the KO enjoyed noticeable western media coverage, it was inaccessible to most western audiences during Felsenstein's days. Britain's role as a protecting power of West Berlin motivated major British media companies to station their correspondents in West Berlin for regular news reporting. Especially before 1961, given that these stationed correspondents enjoyed relative freedom of mobility between the two Berlins, they had many opportunities to partake in experiencing and comparing the two Berlins' cultural life.

Fourth is that Felsenstein's western background and efforts to keep the KO politically undisturbed by the SED interference, to the greatest extent, helped the KO cultivate considerable ideological-political affinity with the western world. Felsenstein's profile as a non-communist westerner leading an elite East Berlin opera house, coupled with his 'bourgeois' lifestyle in a state of workers and peasants, attracted noticeable media interest in the West. In his interview report of Felsenstein, British journalist Pearson was keen on presenting the director's image as a 'bourgeois' westerner, who by no means led a modest 'socialist' life and enjoyed the luxury of driving a Mercedes280.⁵⁸¹

Perhaps what intrigued western observers most about the KO under Felsenstein was the legend of the KO as 'the third German state' — a KO joke circulated among its employees, illustrating the high degree of independence that the KO enjoyed in a socialist state.⁵⁸² Given the western world's idea of 'art for art's sake', the British media often lauded the KO's autonomy. For instance, in his newspaper article published in 1960, Pearson lauded the

⁵⁸¹ Pearson, 'The perfection man', p. 29.

⁵⁸² Moor, 'Felsenstein and Proteges', p. 16.

Felsenstein-led KO for 'not confusing propaganda with art'. Moreover, Moor noted that the SED government made a rare exception for the KO of keeping its 100 or so western employees by endowing them with free mobility between the two Berlins and increasing the western currency share in their salaries following the Berlin Wall's erection. In addition, Moor also wrote that all these western employees considered Felsenstein the greatest producer ever and were determined to remain loyal to him.⁵⁸³ To western observers in the Cold War, Felsenstein's KO offered an exemplary case showing that the arts could transcend the ideological and political barriers and make an autocratic communist government make compromises.

Transnational efforts behind *Madam Butterfly's* staging at the Komische Oper (KO) and the Welsh National Opera (WNO)

Almost immediately after his succession to Felsenstein, Herz put the staging of *Madam Butterfly* on the schedule of the KO. As the GDR opera world's flagship with high international prestige, the KO offered Herz not only the best staging resources in the GDR, but also the best conditions internationally for the productions. According to Herz's recollection, there was a decades-long 'war' between Casa Ricordi, Puccini's Italian publisher, and the GDR over the use of Ostmark for paying the royalties of Puccini's operas. Thus, Herz did not obtain the original version's complete scores until the very late during the production's rehearsals at the KO. Hearing about Herz's difficulty with the scores, Sarah Caldwell, Felsenstein's artistic disciple in the United States and the founder of the Opera Company of Boston, sent Herz a vocal score of the first version with other source materials. Furthermore, with the help of a close friend of Felsenstein, Herz made the acquaintance of Dr Scherle, who was in charge of Casa Ricordi's Munich branch. This contact gave Herz access to the complete scores of the original version stored in Casa Ricordi's headquarters in Milan.⁵⁸⁴ Thus, in terms of the scores, the international operatic circles provided essential support for the production's staging.

The long-established KO mania in Britain during the non-recognition era paved the way for the

⁵⁸³ Moor, 'Felsenstein and the Komische Oper', p. 24.

⁵⁸⁴ The WNO Archive, Herz, 'The Making of *Madam Butterfly*-an East-West Story,' (11 December 2011).

British operatic world's enthusiastic response to Felsenstein's artistic disciples after the normalisation of GDR-British diplomatic relations. With Felsenstein's death in 1975, the British opera world's hope of inviting Felsenstein for staging a production remained unfilled. Acknowledging Herz as an aesthetically accomplished inheritor of Felsenstein, Lord Harewood asked Herz to stage *Salome* at the ENO in 1976, making Herz the first East German opera director to appear on the British opera stage. This experience put Herz into contact with two personalities essential to his *Madam Butterfly* production: Mark Elder, the conductor of Herz's ENO *Salome* and Brian McMaster, the managing director at the ENO.

When Herz decided to stage *Madam Butterfly* at the KO, he immediately invited Elder to be the conductor. For Elder, this invitation offered him a chance to have 'very close contact with the Walter Felsenstein legacy of staging opera' by living in East Berlin and working at the KO.⁵⁸⁵ Having studied music with one of Puccini's pupils and received the original piano score, which contained many entries by Puccini during the original version's rehearsals at *La Scala*, Elder's engagement certainly enhanced the production's musical fidelity to the composer.⁵⁸⁶ Correspondence between Herz and Elder shows that they two began to work on the staging in 1976.⁵⁸⁷ On 3 January 1978, Herz's *Madam Butterfly* premiered on the KO stage under the baton of Mark Elder. The premiere was the first time the original version returned to the stage since its scandalous Milan premiere in 1904. The KO premiere ended with a standing ovation.

With McMaster's move to the WNO in 1976, Herz's British operatic link reached Wales. As Richard Fawkes shows, believing that the contemporary audience was most attracted to seeing a director's conception on stage, rather than hearing top singer's voices, McMaster was keen on importing leading foreign opera directors. In addition, given that the WNO is a touring opera company and that a significant portion of its audience are, therefore, potentially new opera-goers, McMaster proposed a policy of reaching non-specialist audiences.⁵⁸⁸ Thus, for its 1978 opera season, the WNO invited two East German directors of the Felsenstein School

⁵⁸⁵ Ashutosh Khandekar, 'Dramatic Revelations', *Opera Now* (May/June 2004), p. 13.

⁵⁸⁶ Hans Pölkow, 'Butterfly-Partitur wie dichte Kammermusik: Interview der Woche mit Mark Elder', *Neue Zeit*, January 1978, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁷ AdK, Herz 1004 1.3, a letter from Herz to Elder (28 August 1976).

⁵⁸⁸ Richard Fawkes, *Welsh National Opera* (London, 1986), pp. 185-86.

— Harry Kupfer and Herz – for Richard Strauss' *Elektra* in March and Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* in November respectively.

The decision to stage *Madam Butterfly* at the WNO occurred for various reasons. According to Herz's recollection, McMaster showed an interest in this production when Herz was still preparing for the KO one.⁵⁸⁹ However, in Fawkes' account, the decision mainly stemmed from Herz's insistence, as the WNO's production team was reluctant to stage an opera that was already in the company's repertory and, at the same time, required considerable rehearsals before the formal performances.⁵⁹⁰ A letter written by Herz corroborates Fawkes' account, as it shows that, when he had difficulty obtaining the original version's complete scores, he learned that the WNO's chorus master Julian Smith was asked by Casa Ricordi to undertake some research on *Madam Butterfly*. Thus, he sought help from Smith for the scores.⁵⁹¹ Therefore, it is plausible that this rationale may have partly guided Herz's insistence upon staging *Madam Butterfly* in Cardiff. However, two other reasons helped Herz gain his ground. Firstly, the stage props and scenery of the WNO's previous *Madam Butterfly* production were destroyed in a devastating blaze in the company's main scenery store on 29 July 1976. Secondly, the £15,000 grant from the National Westminster Bank (NatWest) to rescue the WNO from going bankrupt after the blaze gave it sufficient funds for the production. As it was the first time that the WNO received funding from a commercial body, Herz's production appeared to be a low-risk choice because of its attraction to both new and experienced opera-goers.

At the end of August 1978, Herz and the core of his KO's *Madam Butterfly* team (soprano Magdalena Falewicz for Cio-Cio-San, stage designer Reinhart Zimmermann, and costume designer Eleonor Kleiber) travelled to Cardiff to prepare. Unlike the KO, the production at the WNO was sung in English. The WNO provided the conductor, orchestra, and other opera singers for the WNO production. In terms of dramaturgical stage design and costume, the WNO kept its fidelity to the KO production. Another difference between the two productions

⁵⁸⁹ The WNO Archive, Herz, 'The Making of Madam Butterfly'.

⁵⁹⁰ Fawkes, *Welsh National Opera*, p. 208

⁵⁹¹ AdK, Herz 1246, Herz, 'Zu den beiden Kritiken über Butterfly 78/02 auf Tournee (12. 12. 2002)'.

was the programme brochure. The KO brochure draws heavily on the contemporary references and addresses the opera story's imperialist and colonialist background. On the other hand, the WNO one, with an article contributed by Herz to explain his rationale in choosing the original version of Puccini's *Madam Butterfly*, concentrates more on the creative background. Moreover, much like a prelude to the production's British performances, the WNO produced an event entitled 'An Evening with Puccini' to tour some small towns in Wales in October.⁵⁹² This production launched on the stage of Cardiff New Theatre in Cardiff on 1 November, and it was a success.

Section III: Herz's *Madam Butterfly*'s reception and influence

The Komische Oper (KO) production in the GDR and on the international stage

Measuring how the production was received by audiences in the GDR is by no means straightforward. The factors of the lack of unofficial press and audience reviews, the production's reception rate on GDR television and the phenomenon of the 'dead-souls-quote' (*Tote-Seelen-Quote*) affected the measurement. Particularly, the consideration of the SED policy of workplace and school subscription of theatre tickets is essential when evaluating the KO production's popularity among the GDR audience. As Chapter One has shown, in order to promote culture among all social strata, the SED practised the policy of allocating a tangible amount of opera tickets to the mass organisation, factories, schools, media groups and the government apparatus. However, as Laura Bradley points out, with the popularity of televisions in East German households, the general public's interest in going to theatres fell despite governmental-subsidised tickets and workplace ticket subscriptions. Thus, the dead-souls-quote phenomenon was not uncommon, even in some GDR cultural centres.⁵⁹³ Moreover, as Herz's *Madam Butterfly* fits into the official GDR rhetoric well, this might have motivated the SED to spend more on promoting this production among the GDR public for socialist educational ends. Thus, while it is important to look at GDR publications and the ticket

⁵⁹² Fawkes, *Welsh National Opera*, pp. 208, 294.

⁵⁹³ Within the context of GDR theatrical and musical world, the term 'dead-soul-quote' suggests the phenomenon of non-turnout of ticket holders in the performances under the system of workplace subscriptions of tickets of cultural events. See Bradley, 'East German theatre censorship: the role of the audience', p. 55.

sale performance for evaluating the production's reception in the GDR, we should consider that the information provided by these sources cannot be taken at face value.

According to GDR records, the production appeared to receive positive reception and attract a wide range of audiences. Available GDR critic reviews and newspaper reports of the productions were positive. A *Neues Deutschland* article mentioned that the performances drew enthusiastic applause from the auditorium.⁵⁹⁴ In addition, the praise of Herz's realistic approach to the opera's original Milan version, Mark Elder's artistic excellence, the production's embrace of critical realism remained the central points of GDR press and magazine reviews.⁵⁹⁵ In terms of audience reach, the KO premiere was recorded and regularly broadcast on GDR television, which helped the production reach wider audience groups outside the opera house. The KO also regularly put the production back on stage in the following years till 1986.⁵⁹⁶ According to the KO records of the production's second season (1979/1989) in-house, most of the fifty performances were well-attended. Six nights were sold out, and five nights had an average low theatre attendance of 40-50 per cent. On most nights, the audiences appeared engaged in the performances, developing deep empathy for the opera plot and enthusiastically applauding after each act. These records stated that some performances successfully attracted a wide range of GDR audience groups, particularly East German youth and visitors from the FRG. These records' credibility for assessing the production's actual audience reception should be high, as their content suggests they were used for the production team's plans for artistic development rather than flattering the SED authorities. For instance, problems with opera singers' singing techniques and technique operations, the spectators' expression of their disinterest on some nights, and the phenomenon of 'dead-soul-quote' were all detailed in these records. In addition to this is the trait of de-politicisation in these records. Apart from recording the attendance of the GDR ambassador in Toyko in one performance, these records do not show partisanship

⁵⁹⁴ 'Noch einmal "Butterfly" in der Behrenstraße: die zweite Premiere der Puccini-Oper', *Neues Deutschland*, (24 January 1978), p. 4.

⁵⁹⁵ For some GDR press reviews, see for instance, Eckart Schwinger, 'Überraschungen bei Puccini "Madame Butterfly" in der Urfassung an der Komischen Oper', *Neue Zeit* (6 January 1978), p. 5; Manfred Schubert, 'Großer Beifall für Herz-Inszenierung', *Berliner Zeitung* (4 January 1978), p. 1; Dieter Fritzsche, 'Geträumte Emanzipation: Urfassung der >>Madam Butterfly<< in der Komischen Oper', *Theater der Zeit*, (4 January 1978), pp. 11-12.

⁵⁹⁶ [n.a.], 'Fernsehen, Funk und Berliner Bühnen am Wochenende', *Neues Deutschland* (5 April 1986), p. 15.

(*Parteilichkeit*) to the SED.⁵⁹⁷

Likewise, the evaluation of how widely the KO production reached audiences when touring abroad also needs to consider the factor of governmental intervention. In the following years, Herz's *Madam Butterfly* with the KO reached a broader audience group via touring to international festivals and opera houses within and outside the Soviet Bloc (e.g., Leningrad, Warsaw, Bratislava, Wiesbaden and Ludwigshafen). Due to the lack of primary materials showing whether these international tours were government-funded and the audience attendance rate, the extent of the KO production's popularity on the international stage is worth pondering. However, it is important to note that the likelihood of governmental intervention in the KO production's performances by no means suggests that this production's success in audience reach was exaggerated. Rather, the purpose is to point out factors which complicated the evaluation of GDR cultural productions' achievement in its audience reach in a general sense, thus avoiding the possible romanticisation when assessing this production's popularity among its audience.

Thus, while it is important to look at GDR publications and the ticket sale performance for evaluating the production's reception in the GDR, it should be remembered that the information provided by these sources cannot be taken at face value. Available GDR critic reviews and newspaper reports of the productions were positive. For example, a *Neues Deutschland* article mentioned that the performances drew enthusiastic applause from the auditorium.⁵⁹⁸

The WNO production in Britain and on the international stage

Compared to the KO production, the WNO version's reception in Britain appeared much more straightforward due to its direct link to the market. While the KO premiere was recorded and televised, the WNO's production was broadcast by BBC Radio 3 on 31 March 1979.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Adk, Herz 1035.

⁵⁹⁸ [n.a.], 'Noch einmal "Butterfly" in der Behrenstraße, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁹ 'Madam Butterfly', *BBC Genome Project, Radio Times 1923-2009, Issue 2890* (20 March 1979), p. 28, accessed via: <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/e3f793782ed06a66029f11c22af22aa2> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

According to the WNO programme brochure in 1981, this production attracted over 40,000 spectators in its twenty-six performances in eight British cities during its first two seasons. On average, the paid audience occupied 94 per cent of the seating capacity.⁶⁰⁰ As a programme brochure can serve a production's marketing purpose, the number of the audience presented in the brochure should not be taken at face value without further investigation. Compared to the information in the brochure in 1981, the WNO production's longevity can more convincingly suggest its popularity among the British audience. In 2017 the WNO celebrated its production's 40th anniversary with a series of touring performances within the UK. Over the last four decades, this production has been the most sold-out opera in WNO history. Herz took pride in the success of his *Ur-Butterfly* with the WNO. As he wrote to Italian conductor Ino Turturo in 2004, 'because there is no longer an opera lover in South Wales or Wales who has not experienced this production in English at least twice, the WNO sometimes performed this production in Italian now.'⁶⁰¹

Influence over involved social actors

The success of his *Madam Butterfly* not only helped Herz cultivate his prestige on the international stage but also added to his bargaining power in navigating his relations with the SED. Herz kept his *Madam Butterfly* link to the WNO till the last years of his life, as the opera company invited Herz for consultation whenever a revival production was in preparation. Notably, given that the WNO has been a touring company, this production's audience attracted a nationwide audience. Apart from *Madam Butterfly*, Herz also directed Verdi's *The Force of Destiny* at the WNO in 1981. In the same year, he invited Richard Armstrong, artistic director of the WNO, to stage Britten's *Peter Grimes* at the KO. Particularly following *Ur-Butterfly*'s British success, Herz became one of the 'behind-the-Wall' cultural figures favoured by the British press. Considerable media attention was placed on his *Fidelio* at the ENO in 1980 and *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1982. Furthermore,

⁶⁰⁰ The WNO Archive, Brian McMaster, 'NatWest and Madam Butterfly', in Nicolas Payne (ed.), Programme brochure for *Madam Butterfly* (Cardiff, 1981), p. 13.

⁶⁰¹ The original German text: 'Die Welsh National spielt einige Spielzeiten die Aufführung auf Italienisch, Begründung: Es gäbe wohl keinen Opernliebhaber mehr in Sündengland oder Wales, der diese Aufführung nicht wenigsten 2mal auf Englisch erlebt habe und also nun weisse, was los ist.' AdK, Herz 1849, Herz's letter to Dr. Turturo on *Madam Butterfly* (30. 5. 2004).

the British media's interest in Herz extended to his GDR career and even after the *Wende*. In 1981 Moor published a newspaper article to announce Herz's departure from the KO, lamenting the end of Felsenstein's tradition at this East German opera flagship.⁶⁰² Separate from the KO and WNO, Herz was invited by other international opera companies and venues, such as Zürich Opera House, Vancouver Opera, and the Great Festival House in Salzburg, to stage the original version of *Madam-Butterfly*.⁶⁰³ In addition, as it has been demonstrated in Chapter Four, acknowledging Herz's contribution to presenting the GDR's artistic achievement on the international stage and attracting hard currency income to the GDR, the SED endowed Herz with more autonomy in his personal life and artistic career.⁶⁰⁴

The production's staging in 1978 at the KO and the WNO also provided a platform for other artists to advance their agendas following this collaboration. Following this production, Kleiber and Zimmermann worked with Herz for the ENO's *Fidelio* (1980) and the WNO's *The Force of Destiny* (1981). Moreover, they extended their artistic career in Britain after the *Wende* (e.g., Dvorak's *The Jacobin* at the Scottish Opera in 1991). As for the British artists, Mark Elder mentioned the Felsenstein School's influence on his philosophy in opera conducting, remarking: 'The work of Joachim Herz came as a revelation: there was an awareness that what was happening on stage could illuminate the music.'⁶⁰⁵ In addition, as Herz's artistic collaboration with the WNO was part of a wave of British opera companies' import of leading foreign producers, Herz, Harry Kupfer, Ruth Berghaus and the erstwhile East German Götz Friedrich were marketed by the British media for their pro-Marxist interpretation in their productions and established their distinctively artistic profile in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁰⁶

At the institutional level, the artistic prestige of East German opera companies and the WNO registered well in their counterpart societies following such artistic collaborations. In 1980, the WNO became the first British opera company to perform in East Germany, sponsored by

⁶⁰² WNO Archive, Paul Moor, 'End of Era at Komische Oper', *Times* (20 January 1981).

⁶⁰³ AdK, Herz 1849, Herz's letter to Dr. Turturo on *Madam Butterfly* (30. 5. 2004).

⁶⁰⁴ See Chapter Three.

⁶⁰⁵ Khandekar, 'Dramatic Revelations', p. 13.

⁶⁰⁶ [n.a.], 'Marx Brothers at the Opera', *Daily Telegraph* (14 September 1981), p. 14.

both the GDR and British cultural authorities. Meanwhile, the LO did a series of touring performances in Britain, including Handel's *Xerxes* directed by Herz. Newspaper reports from both the GDR and British show that this opera exchange programme received considerable media coverage and the audiences' warm reception.

Seeing that East German opera directors and their productions were of monetary value and assisted the GDR's image-building (*Imageflege*) project, the Honecker government was motivated to promote more commercial-based operatic exchanges with the non-socialist world, both in terms of renting individual operatic practitioners and sending large troupes. More frequent working commitments of East German operatic directors on the western stage and the AA's expansion of members on its travel cadre directing at the non-socialist world since the late 1970s can prove the SED government's efforts in this regard.⁶⁰⁷

Ideological debates over Herz's *Madam Butterfly*

Since its premiere, Herz's *Madam-Butterfly* has been dragged into ideological battles over its criticism of American imperialism, chiefly for its unsympathetic representation of Pinkerton. During the Cold War era, while the East German press and magazine reviews praised the production for Herz's faithful restoration of Puccini's initial opera conception and emphasis on social antagonism, western critics and audiences tended to read Herz's Pinkerton as an example of the SED's monopolistic political-ideological permeation into the arts. Interestingly, the western view of associating Herz's interpretation with his commitment to the East German discourse of anti-Americanism rather than viewing it in terms of his fidelity to Puccini's original conception appeared to target the KO's production more than the WNO, even though they are the same production (except from the programme brochure). At a symposium held at Bayreuth University in 1979, Herz disagreed with equating Pinkerton's behaviours to the United States' national traits. Instead, he referred to them as the idea of colonialism, which, as he said, could affect many nations.⁶⁰⁸ Regardless of Herz's clarification, the western audience preferred to interpret the production to their own liking. According to Herz's

⁶⁰⁷ See Chapter Three.

⁶⁰⁸ AdK, Herz 119, 'Rundköpfe, Spitzköpfe, Japan, Amerika oder was?'.
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recollection, when the KO presented the opera at the *International Maifestspiele Wiesbaden* in 1980, some audiences said to Elder: 'We understand that Herz from the GDR stages in this way against the Americans. But you, as a Briton, surrender to it?'⁶⁰⁹ Moreover, during the production at the 1981 Bratislava Festival, West German music critic Carl-Heinz Mann accused Herz of distorting Puccini's intentions and blamed this on the social constraint of the KO under the monopolistic SED government. He wrote that 'their social commitment turned Pinkerton, who was completely not the full character according to Puccini, into a camera-carrying ugly American.'⁶¹⁰ Yet when the WNO presented the same production to the British and international audiences, western critics spoke about Herz's interpretation more positively. For instance, Peter Stadlen, a British musicologist, described this production as an example of 'ideological and musicologist zeal'.⁶¹¹ Although the British critics tagged this production as Marxist, they also emphasised that Herz's radical interpretation was a reversion to Puccini's 1904 Milan conception.

In the post-*Wende* era, the dispute over whether Herz's *Madam Butterfly* was a SED-endorsed, anti-American, propagandistic work seemed to end. After that, however, the discussion about the association with post-Cold War anti-Americanism, which was characterised by the fear of American dominance and the anti-globalisation movement, appeared to rise. In 2002, after the 11 September attacks, when Herz was asked to comment on his staging of *Madam Butterfly* in Toronto, he stated:

Nothing was further from our intentions than an anti-American production! However, the fact that the play gives parallels to today's world situation and exposes them in this production for those who are able to read them strengthens my opinion: one should consider the audience to be competent to find out the parallels that are in there.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁹ The original German text: 'Dass der Herz-DDR so inszeniert (so inszenieren muss?), gegen die Amerikaner, dass verstehen wir ja-aber dass Sie als Briten sich dazu hergeben.' AdK, Herz 1246, 'Zu den beiden Kritiken über *Butterfly*'.

⁶¹⁰ Carl-Heinz Mann, 'Die Stadt mit der großen musikalischen Tradition', *Hamburger Abendblatt* (8 December 1981).

⁶¹¹ Peter Stadlen, 'WNO present zealous *Madam Butterfly*', *Daily Telegraph* (17 December 1979), p. 11.

⁶¹² The original German text: 'Nichts lag uns ferner, als eine anti-amerikanische Inszenierung! Dass jedoch das Stück Parallelen zur heutigen Weltlage hergibt und in dieser Inszenierung freilegt für den, der sie herauszulesen imstande ist, bestärkte mich in meiner Meinung: Man soll das Publikum für mündig erachten, es wird die Parallelen herausfinden, die drinstecken!' AdK, Herz 1246, 'Zu den beiden Kritiken über *Butterfly*'.

Conclusion

This chapter has approached Herz's 1978 *Madam Butterfly* by investigating the director's aesthetic input, its staging trajectory from the KO in the GDR to the WNO in Britain, and its influence. In terms of the aesthetics, Herz's interpretation shows coherence between Puccini's original conception of the opera and socialist realism endorsed by the SED authority. Importantly, Herz's directing demonstrates his navigation of the relations between his theatrical realism and the official GDR rhetoric – his interpretation appeared to conform to the official line, whilst he espoused ideas outside the official rhetoric in inspiring his musicians and hid the ideas from the public eye. Therefore, rather than saying that Herz's interpretation served the SED's political and ideological ends, it is fairer to conclude that he employed the SED's cultural, political, and ideological discourse to realise his aesthetic pursuits.

Herz's *Madam Butterfly* also helps debunk the idea that the GDR operatic audience did not actively influence operatic practitioners and policymakers. The SED's devaluation of market influence in its practices of operatic culture in the domestic scene should not be seen as equivalent to the practitioners' and policymakers' indifference to the audience's feedback in making cultural products. Admittedly, for GDR opera practitioners, their income was much less associated with ticket sale performance than that of their counterparts in the western bloc. However, this does not mean they did not care about the audience attendance rate and the feedback. This is particularly the case when considering Herz's *Madam Butterfly* at the KO. The reasons were not only because the hallmarks of both Herz's theatrical realism and the KO were making operas understandable even for in-experienced opera-goers and popularising operas in society, but also because the KO and East Berlin, at the frontline of East-West competition, were tasked by the SED to present the best of GDR socialism. Moreover, given the relatively more diverse possibilities for cultural entertainment during the Honecker era, the KO production team had to know the difficulty in securing its audience, thus working hard on its audience reception. As those KO records of the production's second season in-house show, the production team considered the factors of ticket-sale performance, the actual rate of theatre attendance, and the immediate audience reception of each act. As the sponsor of operatic culture's practices in the domestic GDR scene, the SED government undoubtedly

aspired to attract the largest possible East German audience. In its mindset, a high audience participation rate not only, to some extent, contributed to its financial investment in this regard but also was highly relevant to the SED's power consolidation among its population.

In addition, this case study demonstrates the GDR and British musical intelligentsia's practice of *Eigensinn* in this staging and following its performances in 1978. This analysis shows how social actors used high culture as a platform to advance their own agendas, whilst the SED's reliance on cultural contributions empowered the intelligentsia and gave them more authority in the GDR. Relating Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' argument to the understanding of this case study, the operatic intelligentsia, to some extent, functioned as the SED government's co-authors in producing GDR operatic discourse. In the GDR-British operatic exchange, social actors interacted with each other in order to serve their own interests. The interactions formed a changing dynamic that overlapped with the interdependence, cooperation, conflicts, negotiations, and compromises of the social actors' agendas. Significantly, the development of the GDR opera culture and Anglo-GDR operatic exchanges, rather than merely dictated by the above policymakers, were under the influence of the intelligentsia's personal esteem and networks.

Moreover, the staging and performances of Herz's *Madam Butterfly* within a trans-bloc context show GDR cultural products' clear relevance to its contemporary world outside the Soviet Bloc. As a production representing a very distinct directing tradition that emanated from and flourished in the East German operatic world, the popularity of Herz's *Madam Butterfly* on the British stage suggests the influence of East German artistic works beyond the Iron Curtain and after the *Wende*. Furthermore, the staging of this production at the KO and WNO involved artistic collaboration from both the GDR and British operatic worlds. Thus, Herz's *Madam Butterfly* (1978) helped to debunk the view of GDR operatic productions' backwardness and detachment from the world stage.

At the same time, this case study also provides an example of the porous Iron Curtain argued by recent scholarship.⁶¹³ As the staging and reception of Herz's *Madam Butterfly* demonstrate, one should not neglect the role of foreign actors involved in shaping East German operatic practices, along with East German actors' role in shaping Britain's operatic scene. Furthermore, given the favourable international environment during the post-recognition era, the flourishing of GDR-British operatic exchange programmes since the late 1970s owed much to the social actors' efforts below the governmental level.

Returning to the opera of *Madam Butterfly* itself, it is interesting to note that among multiple reasons which were believed to contribute to Puccini's original *Madam Butterfly*'s negative audience reception in its La Scala premiere in 1904, one reason relates to Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War which happened nine days before the premiere. Given that Japan's entry on to the international scene as a modern imperialistic power in winning this war raised western anxiety, Puccini's Milan contemporaries could hardly relate to his presentation of an old, weak and backward Japan, the one which they perceived in their real life.⁶¹⁴ Relating this to the debate about Herz's interpretation in *Madam Butterfly* of the SED's political authority and post-Cold War anti-Americanism interestingly manifests how closely art, politics, and our living world connect – something that never changes.

⁶¹³ See the Introduction chapter.

⁶¹⁴ Mari Yoshihara, 'The flight of the Japanese Butterfly: orientalism, nationalism, and performances of Japanese womanhood', *American Quarterly*, 56.4 (2004), p. 975.

CHAPTER FIVE

East Berlin' 87: the 750th Anniversary of Berlin

[East] Berliners are cheerful and happy.⁶¹⁵

--Käthe Milk (1987)

Introduction

In 1987, Berlin turned 750 years old. Both the walled-in West and the walled-out East Berlin held mega celebrations to commemorate this anniversary. In the East, the year-long festive anniversary celebrations started with a grand gala concert at the Schauspielhaus Berlin (ShB) on 1 January 1987. The Staatskapelle Berlin (SkB) and its choir, along with some of the most celebrated GDR opera singers, under the batons of five leading GDR conductors, played musical pieces closely associated with this playhouse and Berlin's musical heritage. In order to enable the visual and musical celebrations to reach the widest audience, the concert was not only broadcast by GDR radio and television but was also transmitted to fourteen eastern bloc countries and recorded by *Eterna*.⁶¹⁶ After the ceremonial playing of the GDR national anthem, the concert started with the overture of Weber's *Der Freischütz*, the opera which was considered the foundation of German national music.⁶¹⁷ On 18 June 1821, the inauguration of this erstwhile Königliches Schauspielhaus had witnessed the premiere of this opera.

Whilst the music was playing, a sequence of images in succession emerged on the screen. First was the bust of Carl Maria von Weber on the Great Hall's sidewall, which was followed by an

⁶¹⁵ LaB, C. Rep. 124, Nr. 02, a letter from Käthe Milk, a resident from district Cottbus to the Organisation Committee '750 Years of Berlin (*Organisationsstab '750 Jahre Berlin'*) on 5 January 1987, f. 14.

⁶¹⁶ BA, DY 30/J IV 2/2/2248, 'Abschlussbericht über die Verwirklichung des Beschlusses des Politbüros vom 22. Januar 1985 zur Vorbereitung und Durchführung des 750 Jahrestages von Berlin'; [n.a.], 'Festliches Konzert im Schauspielhaus gab den Auftakt zur 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins', *Neues Deutschland* (2 January 1987), p. 1.

⁶¹⁷ Michael Tusa, 'Cosmopolitanism and the national opera: Weber's "Der Freischütz"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 36.3 (2006), pp. 483-84. Regarding more scholarly works on *Der Freischütz* and German national identity, see for instance, Stephen Meyer, *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2003).

original poster of *Der Freischütz*'s premiere in 1821 at the same playhouse. Subsequently, the landscape and architect painter Johann Hintze's drawing of the playhouse and New Church on the Gendarmenmarkt square in 1833 appeared on the screen.⁶¹⁸ Then the camera gradually zoomed in on the ornamental figures of Apollo and griffins standing on top of the playhouse in the drawing. After the image dissolved, a photo of the playhouse by night, possibly taken before this new year concert, appeared on the screen. In this photo, people either stood on the square with their eyes looking towards the playhouse or made their way to the building via its front staircase. In the photo, a streetlamp of neo-classical design appeared to illuminate the night and somehow create an enchanted feel of glamorous tranquillity.⁶¹⁹ Although people dressed in a different fashion from the pre-war period, the playhouse looked the same as before the war. Hardly can one relate this scene to the playhouse's catastrophic experience in WWII, during which the Allied air raids severely damaged the building. It was not until 1984 that this playhouse, a very representative building of German neo-classicism, was restored to its former glory after seven years of faithful reconstruction according to Schinkel's design of 1821.⁶²⁰ Then the camera moved back to the glittering concert hall. The rest of the concert included music from Mendelssohn, Otto Nicolai, Richard Strauss, Emil von Reznicek, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Albert Lortzing, Paul Lincke, Jean Gilbert and Walter Kollo. Historically, these figures each played a tangible role in enriching Berlin's musical life. Via both visual and musical presentation, the concert vividly brought Berlin's music and cultural glamour from the late eighteenth century to the Weimar Republic to the audience inside and outside the concert hall. Electrified by the concert after watching its television broadcast, Käthe Milk, a resident from Bad Muskau, wrote a poem to the anniversary committee, sending her best wishes for this Berlin jubilee.⁶²¹

Facing the NATO countries' official boycott of the anniversary, and aspiring to trump West Berlin's celebratory events, Honecker took great pains to make the 750th anniversary of Berlin

⁶¹⁸ The drawing had the title 'Royal Theatre and New Church (*Königliches Schauspielhaus und neue Kirche Berlin*) according to J. Vincent Barber's engraving of this drawing.

⁶¹⁹ LaB, C Rep 132: Nr. 1; The concert video can be accessed via: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6yd1Y_mio8 (last accessed 09 August 2023)

⁶²⁰ Behr & Hoffmann, *Das Schauspielhaus in Berlin*, pp. 7-8, 92; see also, Urban, *The invention of the historical city*, p. 252; Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin*, pp. 187-88.

⁶²¹ LaB, C Rep. 124: Nr. 02, f. 14; see also, Urban, 'The invention of the historical city', p. 218.

a socialist extravaganza attracting worldwide praise. On 23 October 1987, the GDR's state ceremony of Berlin's 750th anniversary reached its peak at the Palace of the Republic with the playing of the GDR national anthem and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Before the music, Honecker gave a speech highlighting East Berlin as the indisputable capital of the GDR and the artistic centre of the world. Notably, he proudly announced that this anniversary came with an overwhelmingly international blessing from the artistic world and succeeded in showcasing the GDR as an international hub for artistic excellence and passionate audience. As he stated:

[East] Berlin's reputation as a traditional and attractive centre of art and culture brought artists from many worldwide cultural centres to our riverbanks of the Spree. Four hundred and sixty-seven artistic ensembles and soloists from 44 countries will have performed by the end of this year. They all congratulated Berlin's 750th-anniversary celebrations with outstanding artistic performances and returned home with lasting impressions of the hospitable atmosphere and the enthusiastic audience. Many of them said goodbye with the promise to be guests on the local stages again soon. On the occasion of this anniversary, the artists of our republic made an outstanding contribution with their performances to the city's reputation as a city of the arts.⁶²²

Focusing on the case study of German classical music heritage in the GDR's celebrations of Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987, this chapter traces the conception, practice, and reception of Honecker's anniversary politics revolving around the heritage in domestic GDR and GDR-British relations. The following questions will be addressed throughout this chapter. Firstly, what factors made this anniversary year special to Honecker's domestic rule and GDR-British relations? Secondly, what did Honecker want to achieve through this jubilee? Thirdly, how were German classical music events embedded in Honecker's politics of this jubilee? Fourthly, in terms of GDR-British relations as a case study, how did Honecker attempt to overcome the NATO countries' official boycott of this jubilee? Fifthly, what were the voices of non-government social actors, i.e., cultural institutions, artists, the mass media, and the audiences

⁶²² The original German text: 'Der Ruf Berlins als traditionsreiche und anziehende Wirkungsstätte von Kunst und Kultur brachte im Jubiläumjahr Künstler aus vielen Kulturzentren der Welt an unsere Ufer der Spree. Am Jahresende werden es 467 künstlerischen Leistungen zur 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins und kehrten mit bleibenden Eindrücken von der gastfreundlichen Atmosphäre und dem begeisterungsfähigen Publikum in ihre Heimat zurück. Viele von ihnen verabschiedeten sich mit dem Versprechen, bald wieder Gast auf den hiesigen Bühnen zu sein. Unsere Hauptstadt hat also ihrem Ruf als Stadt der Künste anlässlich dieses Jubiläums besondere Ehre gemacht, wozu die Künstler unserer Republik mit ihren Leistungen einen hervorragenden Beitrag erbracht haben.' BA, DY 30/2569, 'Ansprache Erich Honeckers aus dem Staatsakt anlässlich der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins on 23 Oktober 1987', ff. 15-16.

from the GDR and Britain regarding this jubilee? Finally, what was the aftermath of the GDR's celebrations of the anniversary?

This chapter shows the contrast between two scenes in the GDR during the anniversary year. One scene was the thriving German classical music scene showcased by the Honecker government. The other scene were the unsettling and battered living practices experienced by ordinary East Germans and witnessed by international visitors. This chapter makes the following claims. The first claim is that the SED's cultural achievements in revitalising the Germanic music heritage to the East German populace and the international world remained at the core of Honecker's politics on Berlin's 750th anniversary. The second claim is that Honecker exhausted all possible domestic and international resources for German classical music heritage events revolving around the anniversary. The third claim is that the British government's official boycott of East Berlin's celebratory events in 1987 was limited. The official boycott remained feeble in restricting British artistic bodies and talents' participation in East Berlin's anniversary events. However, the official boycott and West Berlin's anniversary endeavours succeeded in undermining the anniversary diplomacy of GDR artistic troupes among British musical performers. The fourth claim is that despite the state's endeavours to make the anniversary a showcase project of GDR socialism, the SED could hardly conceal the grim reality of the GDR. The GDR's weak economy, the fall of people's living standards, and the exposure of the official GDR rhetoric and people's perception in this anniversary year greatly undermined the Honecker government's credibility not only among its general public but also its regional and local authorities.

This chapter contains three sections. The first section examines Honecker's concept of German classical music heritage directed at the domestic scene and GDR-British relations on the occasion of Berlin's 750th anniversary. This section shows how the SED formulated its German music heritage policy in pursuing the Party's domestic and international ends in this anniversary year, given the GDR's domestic and international environment since the 1980s. The second section delves into policy implementation. It illustrates the SED's efforts to exhaust all possible regional, institutional, international, and intellectual resources to showcase the

prosperity of the GDR capital's German classical music scene and undermine the NATO countries' official boycott over East Berlin's anniversary. The third section evaluates the reception of this anniversary among its target audience: the East German populace, British guests to the anniversary, and the general British public. The evaluation does not focus on activities revolving around German classical music heritage but on all events associated with the anniversary. The media coverage of the anniversary and the participants' perception will be investigated. In addition, it explores the reception of German classical music troupes from the GDR and FRG to Britain in this anniversary year, as well as the media's coverage of East and West Berlin's celebratory events in Britain.

Although Berlin's 750th anniversary has been a research hotbed since 1987,⁶²³ scholarship specifically on the GDR's domestic and international politics on German classical music heritage centred around this anniversary is yet to be developed. This is especially the case when comparing the recently growing number of works on East Berlin's historic monuments and urban design in the anniversary year.⁶²⁴ The lack of research on the anniversary's classical music activities somehow appeared to be a strange omission. In one respect, as Honecker emphasised Berlin's historical character in the anniversary, there is little doubt that classical music-related activities, including concerts, operas, ballets, playing classical music pieces at

⁶²³ The existing scholarly research on this anniversary has mostly taken a comparative approach, comparing the anniversary politics between East and West Berlin. Regarding scholarly research in this regard, see for instance: Peter Jelavich, 'The Berlin jubilee: which history to celebrate?', *German Politics & Society* (October 1987), pp. 11-17; Christiane Lemke, 'Berlin West-Berlin East: a mirror of the German search for identity', *German Politics & Society*, 12 (1987), pp. 3-11; Krijn Thijs, 'Politische Feiernkonkurrenz im Jahre 1987. Die doppelte 750-Jahr-Feier in Ost-und West-Berlin', *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* [online], 49.1 (2017), accessed via: <http://journals.openedition.org/allemande/523> (last accessed 09 August 2023). In addition, Stanoeva chose to locate this anniversary within the scope of the socialist world, comparing Bulgaria's 1,300th anniversary to East Berlin-celebrated 750th Berlin Anniversary. See, Elitza Stanoeva, 'Bulgaria's 1,300 years and East Berlin's 750 years: comparing national and international objectives of socialist anniversaries in the 1980s', *CAS Working Paper Series*, 9 (2017), pp. 1-40. There is also research focusing on the anniversary and national identity aspect, see for instance, Jennifer Redler, *Compulsory Fun: Creating Legitimacy through Anniversary Commemorations in the GDR* (PhD thesis, University of Waterloo, 2019).

⁶²⁴ Regarding works on historic monuments and urban design centred around the anniversary year, see for instance, Florian Urban, *The invention of the historic city*; Florian Urban, 'Friedrichstraße, 1987: neo-historical urban design in the German Democratic Republic', *Planning Perspectives*, 23.1 (2008), pp. 1-28; Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990* (London, 2016); Florian Urban, 'Designing the past in East Berlin before and after the German reunification', *Progress in Planning*, 68.1 (2007), pp. 1-55; Florian Urban, *Berlin/DDR-neo-historisch: Geschichte aus Fertigteilen* (Berlin, 2007); Biljana Arandelovic, *Public Art and Urban Memorials in Berlin* (Cham, 2018), pp. 211-240.

ceremonial events, music forums, publications, and even renovating musical venues, were essential components in this anniversary. In another respect, scholars have generally agreed that classical music has long been closely associated with anniversaries, especially within the East German context. Johnston suggests that classical music has been favourably adopted in state-sponsored anniversary events because ‘music is the most international of all arts’.⁶²⁵ This is particularly the case when considering Germany. As noted by Janik, Applegate and Potter, the German tradition of using music in official ceremonies has long been established, even before the imperial era.⁶²⁶ Moreover, Martha Sprigge points out that music played a crucial part in East German commemorative events.⁶²⁷

This chapter’s investigation of the GDR’s celebrations of Berlin’s 750th anniversary is relevant to the whole thesis in the following ways: the first is that as an essential part of all celebration events on the anniversary, the German classical music heritage repertoire reflected Honecker’s efforts to rescue the legitimacy of GDR socialism among East Germans and boost East Berlin-centred GDR’s international legitimacy. The second is that the anniversary, as one of the most important state celebration projects in the late GDR era, offers a study site for understanding the complexity and contradictions of GDR society. While the complexity and contradictions contributed to the GDR’s collapse, they also somewhat explained the sentiment of *Ostalgie* after the *Wende*. The third is that all social actors involved in the heritage practices on this anniversary contributed to Fulbrook’s ‘participatory dictatorship’ characterisation of the GDR society. Moreover, this chapter helps fill the research gap regarding the anniversary’s German classical music heritage in the GDR’s domestic scene and GDR-British classical music exchange.

It should be noted that the following two points need further development in terms of data

⁶²⁵ William Johnston, *Celebrations: The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today* (New Brunswick & London, 1992), p. 24.

⁶²⁶ Janik, *Recomposing German Music*, p. 11.; Applegate & Potter, ‘Germans as the “People of Music”’, p. 6.

⁶²⁷ Martha Sprigge, ‘Hearing the Nazi past in the German Democratic Republic: antifascist fantasies, acoustic realities, and haunted memories in Georg Katzer’s *Aide-Mémoire* (1983)’, in Neil Gregor & Thomas Irvine (eds.), *Dreams of Germany, Musical Imaginaries from the Concert Hall to the Dancing Floor* (New York & Oxford, 2019), p. 249.

and resources. The first point is that regional responses to the anniversary are worth further investigation. While the anniversary showed that Honecker mobilised GDR regional German classical music heritage resources for his political ends, political authorities, cultural institutions, and residents at the regional level also attached their incentives to the anniversary. Especially considering that Dresden, Leipzig, and Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz) had their distinct Saxony cultural treasures and identity, it is worth investigating how these regions received the anniversary policy from the central government in their regional 750th anniversary celebration events. However, due to the inconvenience of international travel affected by the 2020-21 pandemic, this chapter lacks primary resources to help unveil regional responses. The second point is that this chapter analysis does not track the statistics showing the financial investment and revenue of this anniversary.

Section I: Honecker's aspirations for the anniversary

An anniversary with a socialist extravaganza

1987 marked Berlin's 750th foundation year. Given its long existence, Berlin did not appear to be celebrated for its birth in history very often. It was not until 1937 that Berlin's foundation was celebrated in a grand style for the first time. Driven by the incentive to restore Germans' national pride, the Third Reich authorities accepted Ernst Kaeber's proposal to mark the year 1237 as Berlin's foundation and used the 700th founding anniversary to stage a full Nazi propaganda bonanza. During the anniversary, the whole city was decorated with the flags of the Third Reich, and the bands played military music on the streets. Moreover, the Olympic Stadium, the arena of the extravaganza of the 1936 Olympics, became the main venue hosting numerous mass celebrations for the 700th anniversary. As Gerhard Weiss comments, all these high politicised spectacles centred around the theme of 'Berlin as the capital of a newly awakened Germany'.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁸ Gerhard Weiss, 'Panem et Circenses: Berlin's anniversaries as politics happenings' in Charles Haxthausen & Heidrun Suhr (eds.), *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis* (Minneapolis & Oxford, 1991), pp. 243-44.

In 1987, both halves of Berlin decided to celebrate the city's 750th anniversary separately. Driven by the motivation to claim East Berlin as the GDR capital, present to the international world and East German population GDR socialist achievements and beat West Berlin's celebration events, Honecker was determined to spare no expense to present socialist extravaganzas in the GDR's celebrations of Berlin's 750th anniversary. In order to showcase GDR socialism's achievements in the most favourable light, Honecker set up 'the GDR Committee for Berlin's Foundation [*Komitee der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zum 750-jährigen Bestehen von Berlin*] for systematically planning and implementing the anniversary activities and events. Honecker directly chaired the committee, with East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack and Secretary of the MfK Kurt Löffler acting as deputy chairmen. It was noticeable that, below the level of the top decision-makers, the committee had a think tank comprising of 156 intellectuals and representatives from all walks of life. They included artists, academics, directors of Berlin cultural institutes, doctors, engineers, athletes, scientists, architects, representatives of mass organisations, worker veterans and representatives from the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg.⁶²⁹ Florian Urban suggests that these committee members did not influence Honecker's decision-making. Nevertheless, they could help him locate helpful anniversary resources, ensuring that the celebration events were carefully planned and successfully delivered.⁶³⁰

The anniversary committee's inaugural meeting on 14 January 1985 decided on multiple motifs crucial to the 750th Anniversary repertoire. In the meeting, Honecker articulated that all the events and activities should demonstrate the GDR capital's progressive, humanistic and revolutionary character while claiming that this jubilee should be of national and international significance.⁶³¹ In addition, the meeting highlighted works on the following aspects:

- All the projects and activities should follow and represent Marxist-Leninist ideology.
- It should demonstrate the GDR's anti-fascist tradition and stress the tyranny of fascism.
- East Berlin developed into prosperity under communist rule, particularly under

⁶²⁹ BA, DY 30/2569, 'Konstituierende Sitzung des Komitees zur Vorbereitung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (7. Feb. 1985)'.

⁶³⁰ Urban, *The invention of the historical city*, p. 213.

⁶³¹ BA, DY 30/2569, 'Entwurf der Ansprache Erich Honeckers auf der konstituierenden Sitzung (14. Jan. 1985)'.

Honecker.

- The city is linked closely with the peasants and workers.
- The East German capital is a city of peace, art and culture, a city with high production and advanced science, and a city full of people's zest for life. It is worth noting that the committee stressed this point in the GDR's international politics during the anniversary.⁶³²

By the end of 1985, the committee published a book of *750th Year Berlin Theses* and selected the most important part of the theses to publish in the *Berliner Zeitung*. Unlike in previous GDR anniversary publications, the 750th anniversary theses stressed neither the close GDR-USSR relationship nor the USSR's contribution to the defeat of National Socialism and the foundation of the GDR. This can be explained by Honecker's disdain for Gorbachev's liberal reforms in the USSR.⁶³³ Centring around presenting GDR socialist achievements, the Theses focused on the Marxist-Leninist narrative of German history and glorified how East Berlin-centred GDR developed into prosperity under the SED rule. Some leading East German scholars, including Marxist historian Ernst Diehl, played a significant role in the Theses' project of history. In implementing the Marxist dialectic materialistic standpoint, the history re-telling extensively referred to Berlin's past being constantly pushed forward by the conflicts between the ruling and the opposed classes, between progress and reaction. Moreover, it emphatically underscored Berlin's historical status as the centre of the German Enlightenment and its status as Germany's capital from 1871 onwards.⁶³⁴ All these, noted by Peter Jelavich, led to the central idea that the Honecker government intended to deliver — 'only as of the "Hauptstadt der DDR" can Berlin truly be a capital worthy of its inhabitants'.⁶³⁵

The wide range of celebratory themes, the abundance of festive events, and the Party's mobilisation of all possible domestic and international resources showed Honecker's

⁶³² BA, DY 30/2569, "Rede des Oberbürgermeisters von Berlin (Ost) Erhard Kracks über die Vorbereitung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins"; DY 30/J IV 2/2/2154. 'Information über den Stand der Vorbereitung der Veranstaltungen zum 750. Jahrestag von Berlin'.

⁶³³ Redler, *Compulsory Fun*, pp. 99-100.

⁶³⁴ [n.a.], '750 Jahre Berlin Thesen', *Berliner Zeitung*, (14 December 1985), pp. 9-14.

⁶³⁵ Jelavich, 'The Berlin Jubilee', p. 12.

determination to spare no expense to present socialist extravaganzas in the anniversary year. Sub-themes for the anniversary celebrations ranged from science and technology, art and culture, urban planning and housing, and environment to social welfare. The anniversary events and activities included exhibitions and conferences, festivals and mass parades, theatrical plays and musical concerts, reconstructed historical buildings and monuments, sports and balls, artisan markets and open-air restaurants, and newly renovated residential houses.⁶³⁶ Moreover, the committee made efforts to encourage the participation of East Germans and international tourists. For example, anniversary souvenirs, the Berlin anniversary lottery, commemorative medals, anniversary guidebooks in various languages, an expansion of hotel capacity, and the increase in the frequency and the running hours of public transport during the summer season were programmed by the committee.⁶³⁷ As the anniversary committee documents show, this year-around anniversary had around 2,200 celebratory events, with 1,304 guest performances from the GDR districts and the international world. About 40,000 performers from East Berlin and all GDR districts and 469 artistic ensembles with internationally renowned soloists from 44 countries engaged in the anniversary. In addition, the GDR travel agency planned to serve 165,009 international tourists to have multi-day stays in East Berlin and around 230,000 tourists from the non-socialist world using cross-broader traffic to visit East Berlin from West Berlin.⁶³⁸ All these efforts served Honecker's ambition to showcase the GDR capital as a glittering socialist metropolis in this anniversary year.

The GDR's cult of anniversaries

For a state with a mere four decades of existence, the GDR appeared to be loaded with a bustling calendar of state-directed anniversaries, commemorations, and festivals dedicated to

⁶³⁶ BA, DY 30/2565, Bd.1, ff. 52-56; DC 20-I/3/2480, 'Bericht: über Verlauf und Ergebnisse der "Internationalen Treffens der Bürgermeister"' vom 1.-5. Juni 1987 anlässlich des 750 jährigen Bestehens von Berlin (Beschluss) (11. Juni 1987)'.
⁶³⁷ BA, DC 20-I/3/2317, 'Beschluss über den Beitrag der Bezirke der DDR im Rahmen der Aktivitäten anlässlich des 750-jährigen Bestehens von Berlin 1987'; DY 30/2565, Bd. 1.'Plan der Veranstaltungen 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins'.

⁶³⁸ BA, DY 30/J IV 2/2/2248, 'Abschlußbericht über die Verwirklichung des Beschlusses des Politbüros vom 22. Januar 1985 zur Vorbereitung des 750. Jahrestages von Berlin'.

a wide range of themes. For instance, the celebration of the GDR foundation in 1949 -- *Tag der Republik* -- was especially marked by its grand scale of spectacles such as military parades, special issues of commemorative stamps and publications, gala concerts, and the People's Festival (*Volksfest*) every five years. The mode of such mega celebrations also applied to those state-endorsed historical events relating to the GDR's revolutionary traditions (i.e., the French Revolution, the October Revolution, and the Liberation from Fascism). There were also anniversaries and commemorative GDR events in honour of the birth and death of socialist canonised communist figures (e.g. Karl Marx anniversary year in 1953, 1963, 1968 and 1983, Engels and Lenin anniversary year in 1970), cultural and church luminaries in the socialist canon (e.g., Beethoven in 1952 and 1970, Goethe in 1949, 1969, 1982, J. S. Bach in 1950 and 1975, Handel in 1959 and 1984, Bach-Handel-Schütz Tribute in 1985, Albrecht Dürer in 1971, Martin Luther in 1983). In addition to these commemorative events, the GDR was also keen on holding mass festivals directed at domestic and international audiences (e.g., the 1973 World Youth Festival in East Berlin).⁶³⁹

The question arises: why was the GDR obsessed with anniversaries, commemorations, and festivals alike? The SED's pursuit of its legitimacy inside the GDR and on the international stage answers this question. As it has been demonstrated in the Introduction and Chapter One, due to the GDR's artificial foundation with a government imposed by an outside power and the existence of the FRG as another German state, the SED emphasised building and consolidating the GDR's national identity. In the mind of the SED, such special collective ritual events provided ideal sites for strengthening national identity, thereby fulfilling its purpose of legitimacy. Here, what needs to be clarified is that using collective ritual events for political authority's legitimacy is neither exclusive to a one-party dominated regime nor historically conditioned. Such use, as Rolf puts it, exists in all political systems.⁶⁴⁰ However, as noted by Kay Schiller, while general elections were regarded as the core of proving the ruling authorities' legitimacy in democratic societies, they had no place in a one-party-dominated communist society. Therefore, to make up for the 'election-to-legitimacy' deficiency, the communist

⁶³⁹ Regarding scholarly works on this festival, see for instance, Kay, 'Communism', pp. 50-66.

⁶⁴⁰ Malte Rolf, 'Die Feste der Macht und die Macht der Feste, -Fest und Diktatur-zur Einleitung', *Journal of Modern European History*, 4.1 (2006), p. 45.

governments elevated special collective ritual events in their ruling strategy, endowing such events with great political responsibility in supporting the governments' legitimacy.⁶⁴¹

On a fundamental level, political authorities saw special collective ritual events as opportunities to exhibit national identity, as analysed by various scholars. David Knottnerus defines 'special collective ritual events' as 'a type of social occurrence [...]', 'separated from everyday social life and behaviours' and involves 'ritualised manner, stylised activities and multiple actors [social protagonists]'. He continues that events such as anniversaries, commemorations and festivals belong to the 'special collective ritual events' category, inseparable from collective memory and ritualised practices.⁶⁴² As noted by Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is a socially framed construct that reconstructs 'the past in the light of the present'.⁶⁴³ Considering special collective events with historical reference, in particular, Johnston puts that they, in fact, 'commend the new' rather than 'hallowing the old'.⁶⁴⁴ As with ritualised practices, they can be framed within Hobsbawm's concept of 'invented tradition', which plays a substantial part in shaping the public's national identity.⁶⁴⁵ In the context of the GDR, there is little doubt of the SED's need and preference for special collective ritual events for displaying the GDR's national identity.

Apart from displaying national identity, other advantages are attached to well-staged collective ritual events that attract political power authorities. The first advantage is the reinforcement of national identity shared among the participants. As William Johnston suggests, anniversaries involve commemorating ancestors or past events, and so they help

⁶⁴¹ Schiller. 'Communism', pp. 53-54.

⁶⁴² David Knottnerus, 'Collective events, rituals, and emotions', in Shane Thye & Edward Lawler (eds.), *Advances in Group Processes*, 27 (2010), pp. 40-41. See also, John Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, 1994).

⁶⁴³ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 22, 34. See also, Jeffrey Olick, 'Collective memory, the two cultures', *Sociological Theory*, 17.3 (1999), p. 336; Alon Confino, 'Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method', *American Historical Review*, 102.5 (1997), p. 1386; John Gillis, 'Introduction', in John Gillis (ed.), *Commemoration*, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁴ Johnston, *Celebrations*: p. 119.

⁶⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: inventing traditions', in Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1, 4.

bridge gaps between different generations.⁶⁴⁶ Moreover, as Knottnerus notes, these events potentially bolster the participants' feeling of solidarity and pride in belonging to a collective community by generating emotional intensity.⁶⁴⁷ Thus, in the minds of political authorities, collective ritual events provide unparalleled occasions to strengthen the subjects' national identity. The second advantage is that such events potentially help national image-building on the international stage. Events which engage international participants and attract the attention of international media provide venues for authorities to present a positive national image in the international arena. It is worth noting that given all the considerations, the cult of anniversaries, commemorations and festivals were by no means exclusive to the GDR. Malt Rolf shows that political authorities' obsession with such collective events was common in dictatorship countries, such as Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries.⁶⁴⁸

The 1987 Anniversary: Honecker's attempt to rescue GDR socialism's credibility

Honecker's Berlin anniversary can be seen as the summit of many GDR celebrations. In the SED' mind, there were good reasons for its strenuous efforts to make the anniversary a socialist extravaganza. Directed at the East German population, Honecker loaded this anniversary with his hope of rescuing the credibility of GDR socialism. In the late 1980s, the legitimacy of GDR socialism among its population was in a profound crisis. While the Party leader proclaimed the GDR 'the existing socialism' where the government was dedicated to satisfying and improving the population's material comfort and living standards, the population experienced a noticeable drop in their living standards as the GDR progressed into the late 1980s.⁶⁴⁹ The shortage of basic consumer goods was not uncommon to ordinary East Germans. In the late 1970s, ketchup became a luxurious commodity in East German households. Later, the GDR had difficulty in offering its population not only animal food but

⁶⁴⁶ Johnston, *Celebrations*, pp. 100-01.

⁶⁴⁷ Knottnerus, 'Collective events', p. 41.

⁶⁴⁸ Rolf, 'Die Feste der Macht und die Macht der Feste', p. 58.

⁶⁴⁹ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 156.

also milk, butter, fruit and vegetables for some time.⁶⁵⁰ Noted by Steiner, even shops like *Exquisit* and *Delikat* where supplies of quality and quantities were supposed to offer to the population, could not meet the consumers' demands. People had to wait an average of 12.5 to 17 years for a new motorcar after registering their interest, and the price of used cars in the black market could cost more than two or three times more than new cars.⁶⁵¹ Public infrastructure also deteriorated. More than half of the toilets of GDR stores and restaurants were substandard. Worse still, many residents had no heating in their houses during cold winters, even in big cities like Leipzig.⁶⁵²

Relating Honecker's economic plan of reliance on western loans to improve people's material comforts to the people's actual experience appeared strikingly contradictory, as the majority of the GDR's western loan was used for importing consumer goods rather than updating the GDR industrial stock.⁶⁵³ As shown in the previous chapters, Honecker's translation of the GDR as the 'real-existing socialism' into his economic policy was 'the reunification of future utopia in favour of present plenty'. This was guided by the Party leadership's logic of short-term reliance on consumer goods and western intellectual loans (e.g., technology, machines and equipment) to improve people's living standards and update industrial stock. In doing so, the Party leadership hoped that people would feel more devoted to the socialist building and that the productivity of the GDR industry would subsequently be boosted in the long run.⁶⁵⁴ However well-planned, the outcomes dismayed Honecker. If there would be a long-term benefit, the GDR went to the verge of state bankruptcy before the benefit finally arrived. Since the mid-1980s, not only did the GDR economic productivity experience a declining growth, which suggested the decline of the GDR's economy;⁶⁵⁵ but the population's living standard also dropped accordingly. They had to take the constant shortage of daily consumer goods as

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 74; Jonathan Zatin, 'Making and unmaking money: economic planning and the collapse of East Germany', *Occasional Papers* (University of California at Berkeley, 2007), accessed via: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/44h5r8sz> (last accessed 09 August 2023), p. 5; Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*, p. 186.

⁶⁵¹ Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*, pp. 186-87.

⁶⁵² Zatin, 'Making and unmaking money', p. 12; Zatin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 63-9.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ See Chapter One and Two. See also, Zatin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 3, 61-63.

⁶⁵⁵ Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*, p. 171.

everyday normality.

Multiple factors explain how Honecker's western loan project fatally resulted in the plunge of the population's living standards in the late GDR years. The fundamental factor was, as André Steiner puts it, 'the socialist economic system's immanent incapacity to produce structural and technological or innovatory change' to improve the GDR's economic productivity in its attempts to benefit from trading with the international world for consolidating the Party's legitimacy.⁶⁵⁶ In more detail, such incapacity sprang from problems of the GDR's interactions with its international world in many respects. One respect was that Honecker's western loans considerably outpaced the growth of the GDR national economy, thus making it difficult for the GDR to pay the loans back. Moreover, in trading with the western world, the GDR constantly faced trade deficits due to its products' lack of competitiveness and Honecker's dependence on importing western consumer goods for domestic stability. Thus, as Zatlin puts it: 'it [the GDR] had to take out of loans to cover its trade deficits, which only increased its net foreign indebtedness.'⁶⁵⁷ In addition, Zatlin points out that Ostmark's weak association with the international monetary system exacerbated the GDR's financial problem since the 1970s. Given that Ostmark was a soft currency in international markets and the GDR had to use U.S. dollars to import oil from non-Soviet countries, the GDR missed the chance of profiting from the devaluation of U.S. dollar in the 1970s to 'cushion the impact soaring oil prices' like the FRG.⁶⁵⁸

At the same time, influence from the international community exacerbated and amplified Honecker's failed implementation of his economic policy, leading to the exposure of the noticeable drop in people's living standards from the mid-1980s. The Soviet Union, for instance, did not play a supportive role in rescuing the GDR from its battered economy. Suffering from its stagnation under Brezhnev and dragging itself into the Soviet-Afghan war since the late 1970s, the Soviet Union had little capacity to support the GDR.⁶⁵⁹ Moreover,

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 193.

⁶⁵⁷ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 71, 186-87.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

⁶⁵⁹ Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*, p. 171.

Steiner shows that the blow of the 1970s oil crises and the Comecon's delayed response to the world market regarding oil prices resulted in the GDR paying thirteen times more for importing crude oil from the Soviet Union since 1975.⁶⁶⁰ Even worse, as noted by Zatlin, based on the GDR-Soviet Union commercial agreement in 1968, the GDR was obliged to use capital and consumer goods to pay for its oil and raw materials imports from the Soviet Union. Thus, the increased oil prices from the Soviet Union to the GDR suggested that the GDR had to use more capital and consumer goods in exchange for oil from the Soviet Union. Given that the GDR industry could not significantly improve its productivity due to its outdated industrial stock, this led to the shortage of the GDR's consumer goods for domestic use.⁶⁶¹ The liquidity crises of eastern bloc countries in western credit markets also negatively impacted the Honecker government's sustainability of East Germans' living standards. After the exposure of Poland and Romania's insolvency to their western creditors in 1982, Western banks' credit boycott against Eastern Bloc countries made the GDR desperately in need of hard currency cash to pay for its western debts.⁶⁶²

Faced with all the stated financial burdens, the GDR had to seek ways to offset its foreign debts and technological innovation. However, it appeared to be too late for Honecker to make a change in the hope of rescuing the GDR from its economic crisis. Honecker's exhaustion of foreign debts from importing consumer goods not just heightened the population's expectation of relatively better living standards but also ensured that factory equipment was more modernised, which further impeded economic performance. Even worse, as Stein puts it, the GDR's investment policy did not prioritise the development of the domestic consumer goods industry. Thus, when the Party leadership had to reduce the GDR consumption of consumer goods to pay for its foreign debts and the domestic industry could not provide the locals' demands for consumer goods, the population's living standards accordingly suffered a

⁶⁶⁰ In 1949, under the leadership of the Soviet Union, Comecon (The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) was established for promoting economic cooperation between Eastern Bloc countries. Its full membership countries included the Soviet Union, the GDR, Albania, Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, and Vietnam. The organization was disbanded in 1991. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁶⁶¹ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 74-75.

⁶⁶² Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, p. 164-65; Ralf Ahrens, 'Debt, cooperation, and collapse: East German foreign trade in the Honecker years', in Hartmut Berghoff & Uta Balbier (eds.), *The East German Economy, 1945-2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 142, 171.

plunge.⁶⁶³

Such disparity between the state's rhetoric and people's living conditions had material and ideological implications— the SED's self-undermining of socialist ideology in the practice of GDR socialism. While the ideological-political foundation of the GDR socialism was essentially built on the Marxist-Leninist claims of diminishing social inequality and turning the workers and peasants from the oppressed class to the masters of the country, the SED's actual practice went increasingly against these ideological claims. For instance, as Chapter III has shown, the privileges enjoyed by the Western cultural intelligentsia over the GDR intelligentsia and that of the GDR intelligentsia over GDR workers and peasants in the actual practice of GDR socialism contradicted not only the SED's promise of social equality but also the declaration of the GDR as the state of workers and peasants. This two-tier mentality was ubiquitously shared among the public during *détente*, as argued by Major.⁶⁶⁴ Particularly after the credit crises of the eastern bloc countries on the western market and the Soviet incapability to give the GDR further financial support, the GDR deepened its reliance on the FRG loans. While the FRG loan tangibly relieved SED from its financial burden, the SED had to make more political concessions to the FRG. The relaxation of travel restrictions for family reunions, and 'selling' political prisoners to West Germans were some examples of the SED's concessions.⁶⁶⁵ However, such practices challenged ordinary East Germans' perceptions of GDR socialism. In their minds, those with relatives residing in the West not only had higher chances of travelling trans-bloc than those without but also had more access to Western goods and currency. As most of these relatives belonged to the pre-Wall mass exodus to the West, they were denounced for betraying GDR socialism. Thus, those East Germans with no relatives in the West were disadvantaged by their 'loyalty' to GDR socialism in their everyday living practices.⁶⁶⁶ In addition, on the one hand, the SED claimed the supremacy of GDR socialism over capitalism, but on the other, the general public found that western currency had stronger purchasing power than Ostmark in domestic legal and black markets and that Western

⁶⁶³ Zatlin, 'Making and unmaking money', p. 7; Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 156; Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, pp. 173-74; 185-86.

⁶⁶⁴ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, p. 197.

⁶⁶⁵ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 140-41; Stein, *The Plans That Failed*, pp. 172-73.

⁶⁶⁶ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, pp. 223-24.

consuming goods had better quality than East German products. Moreover, given the scarcity of consumer goods, the problems of corruption and nepotism were not uncommon in the late GDR years.⁶⁶⁷ Therefore, as Zatlin shows, under Günter Mittag's economic policy of subordinating 'all economic activity to the goal of earning capitalist currency', the actual existence of capitalism within socialism in the GDR undermined the SED's political legitimacy.⁶⁶⁸

Not only did the legitimacy of socialism in the GDR tremble, but it did so in all eastern bloc countries. Whereas the USSR's top leadership attempted to make a bold reform to save socialism, Honecker remained still. Since the 1980s, in countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, communist rule faced unprecedented challenges from domestic opposition movements. Ascending to the top position in the Soviet Union in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev made complex and daring reforms to reconstruct the Soviet economy and promoted a more liberal political and cultural environment and hoped the leaderships of the Soviet satellite countries follow suit to save socialism from a possible collapse. However, Honecker, taking pride in the GDR's economic achievement as the world's tenth-largest economy, the domestic stability preserved since the 1953 Uprising and the financial help from the FRG, disapproved of Gorbachev's reforms. The much-quoted words from Kurt Hager in 1986 can best illustrate the Honecker government's response to Gorbachev: 'just because your neighbour puts up new wallpaper, does that mean you would feel obliged to do the same?'⁶⁶⁹ Thus, confronted with the bankruptcy of both the economy and socialist morale, Honecker placed his hope on the anniversary, aspiring to re-boost his population's confidence in GDR socialism.

Moreover, given the geopolitical status of Berlin in the context of Cold War *détente*, Honecker imbued the anniversary with his international ambitions. The anniversary was a demonstration of East Berlin as the GDR's capital and East Berlin as the political, cultural, and

⁶⁶⁷ Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*, p. 189; Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 175.

⁶⁶⁸ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 106.

⁶⁶⁹ Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, p. 131; Large, *Berlin*, pp. 518-19; Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, p. 77.

economic centre of a prosperous GDR state. In fulfilling these ambitions, Honecker hoped to prove GDR socialism's supremacy over the West. Fulbrook uses phrases such as 'awkward anniversaries' and 'contested commemorations' to describe the problem faced by the two German states regarding anniversaries. In addition, she puts that anniversaries in the two states were characterised by their political significance. Moreover, they were often 'in contradistinction to one another and entailed competition and contested interpretation'.⁶⁷⁰ Such awkwardness and contestation were particularly manifested in Berlin's 750th anniversary, the anniversary celebrated by the FRG and GDR separately in the two halves of Berlin. Like the National Socialists, who viewed the 700th anniversary in 1937 as a valuable political asset, political authorities from each side of Cold War Berlin were determined to use the 750th anniversary for proving the superiority of the ideological-political system in which the city was located.⁶⁷¹ More importantly, facing the Western Bloc's official boycott of the anniversary in East Berlin,⁶⁷² Honecker had ambitions for his East Berlin-centred celebrations to hog the limelight of the international world, thus attracting and securing international approval of GDR nationhood. In summation, as the SED chief ideologist Kurt Hager wrote to Konrad Naumann, a senior member of the Central Committee of the SED, this anniversary was expected to fulfil the consolidation of the socialist homeland on East German soil, strengthen the people's national consciousness, advance the GDR capital's international reputation as a socialist metropolis and prevent the Western Bloc's 'all-Berlin history' view.⁶⁷³

Section II: Honecker's mobilisation of German classical music heritage resources for the anniversary

As a GDR cultural asset, the German classical music heritage played a significant role in Honecker's politics for the anniversary. The directly responsible government apparatus for drafting, coordinating, and implementing all music celebration events for the anniversary was

⁶⁷⁰ Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, p. 84.

⁶⁷¹ Thijs, 'Politische Feierkonkurrenz im Jahre 1987'; Arandelovic, *Public Art and Urban Memorials in Berlin*, p. 211.

⁶⁷² See Chapter Two.

⁶⁷³ BA, DY 30/38791, 'Kurt Hager an Konrad Naumann (1981)'; Thijs, 'Politische Feierkonkurrenz im Jahr 1987'.

the MfK, which was in the hands of Hans-Joachim Hoffmann.⁶⁷⁴ In addition, this inner circle included the following of GDR musical personalities who had their membership in the anniversary committee. They were: Claus Peter Flor (chief conductor of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra), Prof. Dr Wolfram Heicking (vice-president of the VKM and a member of the ADK), Prof. Olaf Koch (headmaster of Hanns Eisler College of Music), Wolfgang Lippert (director of the Office of Berliner Festtage), Gisela May (East German chanson singer, a member of the AdK), Ernst-Hermann Meyer, Martin Putikin (director of Berlin State Ballet School), Prof. Dr Werner Rackwitz (Intendant of the Komische Oper Berlin) and Günter Rimkus (Intendant of the Staatsoper Berlin).⁶⁷⁵ These personalities, who were either leading figures in their specialised musical areas or led some of East Berlin's most prominent musical institutions, all involved themselves deeply in East Berlin's classical music scene through their careers.

Resources from the historical German capital

In a society directed by a monolithic government, it is more straightforward for the ruling government to mobilise society's resources for organising a national collective ritual event, which somewhat bore the feature of window-dressing. The planned German classical music heritage celebration scheme for the anniversary was grand and ambitious. Berlin's historical status as a German capital and a European music centre from the eighteenth century onwards offered the committee ample resources. In their research on the functions of a country's capital, Bowling and Gerhard suggest that a country's capital should not only host the official seat of the central government, but it also ideally needs to be the cultural centre of the nation, 'a multidimensional reflection of national identity and a repository of a nation's memory. As a historical German capital, Berlin particularly benefited from its growing political influence and its rulers' generous patronage of art and culture.⁶⁷⁶ Moreover, given the revival of Prussian culture in the wave of state-endorsed re-appropriation of the German historical past since the

⁶⁷⁴ BA, DY 30/J IV 2/2154, 'Information über den Stand der Vorbereitung der Veranstaltungen zum 750. Jahrestag von Berlin'.

⁶⁷⁵ BA, DY 30/2569, 'Konstituierende Sitzung des Komitees zur Vorbereitung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (7. Feb. 1985)'.

⁶⁷⁶ Kenneth Bowling & Ulrike Gerhard, 'Sitting federal capital: the American and German debates', in Andreas Daum & Christof Mauch (eds.), *Berlin-Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation, and National Identities* (Washington, D. C., 2005), pp. 31, 39.

1970s, the anniversary committee identified valuable music resources from Berlin's past. In general, these resources were as follows: 1) Berlin played an active role in producing and nurturing German music featured by universal values and nationalistic characteristics. 2) Berlin provided a favourable atmosphere for musicians and musical groups worldwide to realise their artistic aspirations and exhibit music treasures from other musical centres. 3) Weimar Berlin showed its openness to musical diversity in popular and avant-garde music. 4) Berlin's urban landscape had rich historical music and cultural venues. 5) Since the early 20th century, Berlin's music-making and appreciation scenes engaged groups from the working class.⁶⁷⁷

Resources from Cold War East Berlin

As the GDR capital hosted multiple elite performing institutions and venues relating to German music heritage, all East Berlin music resources were mobilised to celebrate the anniversary. Documents kept by the Bundesarchiv Berlin, the Landsarchiv Berlin and major East Berlin musical venues reveal that, although the MfK was in charge of organising all musical events, it did not mean that the MfK dictated all the details of these activities. Instead, East Berlin musical venues and organisations were encouraged to utilise their expertise in their specialised areas, including their artistic and cultural assets and domestic and international network with institutions and musicians, in formulating and developing their anniversary events proposals. The proposals were submitted to the MfK and responsible members of the anniversary committee for review. The main criterion for making the decision was whether the event appeared able to claim the GDR capital's inheritance of the treasure of the historic

⁶⁷⁷ BA, DY 30/2565, Bd.1, ff. 99-1-2; DY 30/2567. Regarding scholarly works of historical Berlin's music scene, see for instance, Janik, 'The symphony of a capital city', pp. 143-163; Janik, *Recomposing German Music*, pp. 1-72; Sanna Pederson, 'A. B. Marx, Berlin concert life, and German national identity', *19-Century Music*, 18.2 (1994), p. 96; Applegate, 'How German is it', p. 278, Applegate & Potter, 'German as the 'People of Music'', pp. 9-11, 17; Andreas Schulz, 'Der Künstler im Bürger: Dilettanten im 19. Jahrhundert', in Dieter Hein & Andreas Schutz (eds.), *Bürgerkultur im 19. Jahrhundert: Bildung, Kunst und Lebenswelt* (Munich, 1996), p. 35; Hermann Pundt, 'K. F. Schinkel's environmental planning of Central Berlin', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 26.2 (1967), pp. 116-17, 120-21.; Steven Moyano, 'Quality vs. history: Schinkel's Altes museum and Prussian arts policy', *Art Bulletin*, 72.4 (1990), pp. 585-608; Gary Catchen, 'Gedächtnis and Zukunft, remembrance and the future: a photo essay', in Costabile-Heming, Halverson, & Foell (eds.), *Berlin*, p. 33; Celia Applegate, 'Saving music: enduring experiences of culture', *History and Memory*, 17.1 (2005), p. 220.; Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts*, pp. 6-9.

East Berlin musical tradition, thus presenting a positive image of the GDR capital's music landscape.⁶⁷⁸

Documents from the Politbüro of the Central Committee show that the anniversary committee put on an emphasis on organising world-famous concert programmes by East Berlin orchestras, art academies, and relevant music institutions. The purpose was to create attractive musical highlights to bolster the GDR capital's image as an art centre and expand the public awareness of Berlin's glorious musical history. Among all musical venues, the recently opened ShB, which hosted the new year concert of the 750th anniversary, was promoted as the most emblematic physical site representing the SED's achievement in preserving the city's music tradition. The Staatsoper Berlin (SoB), with its newly renovated building, programmed a repertoire of thirty-eight operas and six ballets for the anniversary year. The highlights of its programmes included the premiere of Weber's *Euryanthe*, Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* directed by Ruth Berghaus, Christoph Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Richard Strauss' *The Silent Woman*, and the ballets *A Midsummer Night's Dream* composed by Mendelssohn and *Ondine* by contemporary composer Hans Werner Henze. The Komische Opera Berlin, which celebrated its 40th founding anniversary together with the Berlin jubilee, staged fifteen operas and four ballets, including Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and *The Magic Flute*, Handel's *Giusto*, Albert Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz*, Offenbach's *Ritter Blaubart* (a revival of Walter Felsenstein's 1973 production), Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, contemporary East German composer Siegfried Matthus' *Judith*, and the ballet premiere of 'a Berlin Ballet'.⁶⁷⁹ It is necessary to note that the selection of these anniversary programmes was by no means random. They were all supposed to be firmly attached to the music venues' distinct musical past. Given Honecker's intention to disassociate the anniversary from the Soviet Union, works by Russian and Soviet Union composers were not included in these highlights.

⁶⁷⁸ Regarding some East Berlin performing institutions' documents relating to this, see for instance, BA, DY 30/2565, Bd 1, pp 99-121; DR 105/159, DC 207/1128; DC 207/388; LaB, C Rep 132: Nr. 1, Nr. 205; C. Rep 721, Nr. 66.

⁶⁷⁹ BA, DY 30/J IV/2/2/2154, Nr. 7/86. 'Information über den Stand der Vorbereitung der Veranstaltungen zum 750. Jahrestag von Berlin', and DY 30/2565, Bd. 1. 'Vorhaben der Berliner Theater zur 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins'.
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Meanwhile, for the most prestigious anniversary performances, East Berlin performing venues and companies were mobilised to work closely with others in order to showcase the solidarity of the East Berlin music world. Usually, a performing company with its own music venue and a residential performing group would perform on its own stage unless the company toured outside its residential city. As with the anniversary, evidence shows intensive cooperation between East Berlin musical institutions. A telling example is that the SkB guested the new year concert at the ShB instead of the venue's residential orchestra Berlin Symphony Orchestra (BSO). Likewise, the SoB-produced opera *Erwin und Elmire* was also staged at the ShB.⁶⁸⁰ In addition, the SoB and the Komische Oper (KO), the two prestigious opera houses which were usually in a competing relationship, were assigned by the MfK to organise an opera gala during this anniversary year jointly.⁶⁸¹

Mobilising resources from GDR regions for East Berlin

The influx of music ensembles from the regional districts to East Berlin was unique to the inter-institutional and regional music exchange in the 1987 commemorations. In order to present the artistic excellence of the GDR's German classical music heritage industry to the international audience, the committee mobilised Class A institutions from East German music towns to the East Berlin anniversary scene. Music ensembles and orchestras such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (LGO), the Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Bach Orchestra Leipzig, the Thomanchor Leipzig, the Staatskapelle Dresden (SKD), the Dresden Baroque Soloists, the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (DPO), the Dresden Kreuzchor, were all invited to guest at the ShB. Moreover, these guest ensembles were encouraged to perform works by the most representative composers from their regions or those connecting both the guest musical groups and the host venues in Berlin. For instance, the LGO's concert featured repertoire by Mendelssohn and Schumann, and DPO's programme included music by

⁶⁸⁰ LaB, C Rep. 132: Nr. 205, 'Vorhaben und Programmvorschläge zur Gestaltung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (Schauspielhaus Berlin), and 'Erste Überlegungen zur Sommerspielen 1987: Schauspielhaus Berlin. (23. 6. 1986)'.
⁶⁸¹ BA, DY 30/2565. Bd. 1. 'Vorhaben der Berliner Theater zur 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins', and 'Anfertigung von Spitzenschule für PdR-Eigenproduktion bzw. Co-Produktion (19. 3 87)'.
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Mendelssohn and Carl Maria von Weber.⁶⁸²

Music ensembles from other regional districts joined East Berlin's celebrations to present their regional German music treasures. Some regional orchestras such as the Kammermusikvereinigungen-Staatskapellen from Weimar and Schwerin, the Robert Schumann Philharmonic Orchestra from Karl-Marx-Stadt, the Hallesche Philharmonie from Halle were invited to participate in the open-air concerts series 'Sommerliche Serenadenkonzerte' taking place on the Gendarmenmarkt outside the Schauspielhaus. It is worth noting that the Robert Schumann Philharmonic Orchestra's performances in East Berlin emphasised linking the Karl-Marx-Stadt to this its German classical music past, including Plauen, Zwickau, and Freiberg's role in civic music culture and historical music figures such as Robert Schumann.⁶⁸³

Celebrations in regional districts

Outside of East Berlin, music celebrations with their special tribute to the 750th anniversary were also held in GDR regional districts. For instance, the Dresden Musical Festival, Festtage des Theaters und der Musik Karl-Marx-Stadt, the Kulturtage in Karl-Marx-Stadt, the Bachfest in Leipzig, the Gewandhaus Festival with the theme 'International Orchestras', the Weltmusiktag in Karl-Marx-Stadt, Internationale Robert Schumann Tage in Zwickau, Vogtländische Musiktage, the Gottfried Silbermann Days, the 750-Jahrfeier in Gera, were all organised by the regional authorities and cultural organisations in dedication to the East Berlin anniversary.⁶⁸⁴ Moreover, the anniversary invited and attracted considerable international

⁶⁸² LaB, C Rep. 132: Nr. 205, 'Veranstaltungsprofil des Schauspielhauses Berlin 1987 (monatliche Schwerpunktveranstaltungen)', and 'Vorhaben und Programmvorschlage zur Gestaltung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (Schauspielhaus Berlin, 1 Feb 1986)'.

⁶⁸³ See Chapter One, and LaB, C Rep. 132, Nr. 205, 'Vorhaben und Programmvorschlage zur Gestaltung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (Schauspiel Berlin)'; SaC, 30425, 13, 'Einschatzung der Erfullung des Planes der Aufgaben 1987', 32678, 32/4, a programme brochure 'Musikalische Reverenz an das 750-jahrige Berlin'.

⁶⁸⁴ BA, DR 105/83, 'Touneeplanung fur Gastspiele auslandischer Ensemble 1987-88 in der DDR (Stand vom Dezember 1986)'; SaC, 30425: Nr. 10; 32678: 24, 32/4.

artistic troupes and members of the elite to perform not only in East Berlin but also in GDR regional districts.⁶⁸⁵

Mobilising international resources: the case of the GDR-British classical music exchange

Compared with the mobilisation of German classical music heritage resources in the GDR for the anniversary celebrations, Honecker's ambition of engaging western music troupes in East Berlin's celebration scene appeared difficult. The reason was because of the western bloc's official boycott of the anniversary in East Berlin led by West Berlin's three protecting powers, i.e., the U.S., the UK, France and the FRG. When the Thatcher government learned that the Honecker government set '[East] Berlin as the capital of the GDR' as the anniversary theme, it saw this SED act unfriendly to the FRG and undermining Britain's role as a political presence in West Berlin. Given the rapprochement between the two blocs and the planned exchange of senior political representatives between the Bonn and East German governments in 1987, the UK government did not impose a ban on East Berlin-British exchange. Instead, the British Foreign Office (FO) made the following guidelines to prevent the Honecker government's political exploitation of the East Berlin-British cultural exchange in 1987:

- An avoidance of participation in state ceremonial celebrations in East Berlin.
- A curtailment of British Council-funded cultural activities in East Berlin.
- Limited public funding was only available to British groups and individuals who would agree to do a similar event in West Berlin in addition to East Berlin.
- Encouraging British artists who gave commercial-based performances in East Berlin to also find opportunity to perform in West Berlin.
- British flight travellers were not allowed to land at Berlin Schönefeld Airport (East Berlin). Instead, they should land at Tegel Airport (West Berlin) and make their way to East Berlin via West Berlin.
- The reduced public-funded exchange applied only to East Berlin. Therefore, Britain's cultural exchange with other GDR regions would not be affected by the above

⁶⁸⁵ Vernon Kidd, 'Festival highlights', *New York Times* (3 May 1987), p. 19.

restrictive terms.⁶⁸⁶

Attracting British music ensembles and talents to the anniversary events in the GDR

Despite the Thatcher government's non-encouragement policy, Honecker appeared quite successful in mobilising many British artistic groups and personalities to perform in the East Berlin anniversary scene. Documents from the anniversary committee and the Artists Agency (AA) suggest that within the section of music performances of high arts solely, there were 15 British artistic companies and bands with over 1000 touring members, conductors and soloists making their presence in the anniversary scene in East Berlin. These British troupes included: Alexander Roy London Ballet Theatre (14 persons), Bournemouth Sinfonietta (41 persons), Academy of St. Martin in the Fields (41 persons), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (120 persons), BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra (120 persons), Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet (95 persons), London Symphony Orchestra (110 persons), The Philharmonia Orchestra, London (115 persons), Scottish Ensemble Edinburgh (35 persons), Monteverdi Choir, Monteverdi Orchestra and English Baroque Soloists (80 persons), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (105 persons), Ballet Rambert (40 persons), London Philharmonic Orchestra (90 persons), Vocal group the Scholars (6 persons). In addition, some British conductors and soloists such as conductor Sir Alexander Gibson, organists Christopher Herrick and John Scott, lutenist Jacob Lindberg, and violinist Tasmin Little were invited to give guest performances with leading East German orchestras such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Berlin Symphony Orchestra.⁶⁸⁷

The British music troupes' active participation in the anniversary scene in East Berlin suggests the limited success of the guidelines issued by the Thatcher government. There are at least three reasons explaining the limited success. The key reason was Honecker's determination

⁶⁸⁶ TNA, BW 32/48, 'Main Paper (for NATO, EC, ETC) — The 750th Anniversary of Berlin', f. 2.

⁶⁸⁷ BA, DR 105/37, 'Übersicht über ausländische Solisten und Ensemblégastspiele'; DR 105/83, 'Gastspiele: Ausländischer Opernhäuser, Kammeroper, Tanztheater und Ballettensembles, Schauspielhäuser und Puppentheater, Pantomimengruppen, Sinfonie – und Kammerorchester, Chöre sowie Folklore – und – Revue-Ensembles in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Ihrer Hauptstadt Berlin im Jahre 1987'; LaB, C. Rep. 132: Nr. 205, 'Vorhaben und Programmorschläge zur Gestaltung der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (Schauspielhaus Berlin)'.

to mobilise his international guests to the East Berlin anniversary scene for his political ends despite the high financial investment. In the Party leader's mind, the engagement of elite western ensembles in the anniversary celebrations helped him not just promote the claim of the GDR capital on the international stage, but also serve the inward propaganda purpose. Through such engagement, Honecker hoped to show to the East German population that GDR socialism had strong cultural appeal to the western world, thereby boosting the population's national pride. It is particularly the case when the population's distrust of the SED's governing legitimacy grew in parallel with the drop in their living standards and the growth of their suspicion of the SED's claim of the GDR as an egalitarian socialist state. Thus, displaying the overwhelming western desire to celebrate the anniversary was considered by the Party leadership of GDR socialism's undimmed appeal.

The second reason was the growing independence of the GDR-British classical music exchanges from the British Council's funding since the late 1970s. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, given the commercial success of the GDR's German classical music heritage products on the British market following the normalisation of GDR-British relations, the majority of such exchange was organised by private impresario and commercial agencies with minimal financial support from the British government.⁶⁸⁸ Given the well-established contacts with non-governmental musical agencies, institutions and musicians before the anniversary, Honecker did not necessarily need his British counterpart to arrange such cultural exchanges for this anniversary. The third reason is that the guidelines mainly focused on cutting official funds rather than banning British cultural troupes' participation in East Berlin's celebrations. In the age of East-West *détente*, particularly when the Bonn government offered Honecker a state visit invitation in 1987 as a symbol of further rapprochement of two German states, it is understandable that the FCO had no intention to take extreme measures against East Berlin's celebrations.

It is worth noting that as non-East Berlin GDR regions' cultural exchange with Britain was not

⁶⁸⁸ See Chapter Two.

negatively affected by the BC's funding, this enabled Honecker to mobilise regional districts' British guest performers to East Berlin in a reasonably economical way. Among the fifteen British high-performing arts groups which performed in East Berlin's anniversary scene, Bournemouth Sinfonietta, BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra, Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and Scottish Ensemble Edinburgh combined their touring performances in other GDR regional districts with East Berlin.⁶⁸⁹ Except for Alexander Roy Ballet, whose performances in East Berlin were fully funded by the East German Artists Agency according to Christina Gallea Roy's recollection,⁶⁹⁰ there is a lack of evidence identifying the funding source for the rest of the British artistic groups in the East Berlin anniversary.

Sending GDR classical music troupes to Britain

In contrast to British music groups' active participation in the East Berlin-centred GDR anniversary scene, East Berlin classical music groups were absent from the British music scene in 1987. To Honecker, the playground of the anniversary celebrations should not be limited to the East Berlin-centred GDR but extended to the international stage. With the ambition of sending elite East German artistic troupes abroad, Honecker expected that the general public across the geopolitical border could taste the thriving festivities in East Berlin, thereby promoting the SED-claimed East Berlin legitimacy. While the official British guidelines had little impact on discouraging British music troupes' presence in the anniversary scene in the GDR, they appeared somewhat more successful in limiting East Berlin artistic troupes from performing in Britain. Apart from one theatrical company — the Berliner Ensemble's presence at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe—, there is a lack of evidence suggesting that leading East Berlin classical music troupes performed in Britain in 1987.

Despite the absence of East Berlin classical music troupes on the British stage, Honecker succeeded in sending the SkD and the LGO to give touring performances in Britain. These two

⁶⁸⁹ There is a lack of evidence concerning whether these groups' touring performances in regional GDR districts were funded by the BC. BA, DR 105/83; DR 105/37; DR105/80, 'Terminübersicht'.

⁶⁹⁰ Christina Roy, *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: A Life in Dance* (Sussex, 2012), p. 248.

GDR classical music troupes' British tours were arranged by the British music agency Harold Holt, also responsible for West Berlin classical music troupes' touring concerts in Britain. Led by its principal conductor Hans Vonk from the Netherlands, the SkD gave eleven concerts in nine cities during its thirteen-day stay in Britain with a German classical and romantic canon repertoire.⁶⁹¹ The orchestra's London concert at the Royal Festival Hall on 13 March was guest led by British conductor Sir Colin Davis and London Symphony Chorus for Beethoven Symphony No. 9.⁶⁹² The Leipzig Gewandhaus' British presence was comprised of two troupes: the Bach Orchestra led by Gerhard Bosse and the LGO by Kurt Masur. Like their Dresden counterpart, their concert programme did not include socialist music works.⁶⁹³ There is a lack of evidence to suggest that they conducted political activities in dedication to the anniversary celebrations. In mobilising the most possible domestic and international classical music resources to the GDR's celebrations of Berlin's anniversary, Honecker ambitiously aspired to showcase the best of GDR socialism to both the domestic and international audiences.

Section III: the anniversary in the media and people's perceptions

The GDR media reports & people's experiences

The anniversary in the GDR state media

Honecker knew well how to instrumentalise his state media for maximal political gain among his subjects. The anniversary celebrations in the GDR state media were presented as a spectacular and overwhelming international blessing. In order to show this, the SED tactically exploited the diverse origins of the international music ensembles and soloists in the press. Starting from January 1987, programmes of the anniversary celebrations in East Berlin and regional districts were extensively publicised by the GDR radio, television, and newspapers. In

⁶⁹¹ The orchestra's touring cities included: Leeds, Northampton, Portsmouth, Cardiff, Swansea, London, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Coventry.

⁶⁹² HsaD, 3.300, 'Vorlage für das Gastspiel der Staatskapelle Dresden in Großbritannien vom 27. Feb bis März 1987'; 5.056, 'Bericht über die Konzerte der Staatskapelle Dresden in Großbritannien vom 27. Februar bis 14 März 1987'.

⁶⁹³ [n.a.], 'Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Bach Orchestra', *Times* (7 February), p. 12; [n.a.], 'Bach from Leipzig', *Daily Telegraph* (22 January 1987), p. 10.

the programmes published in the *Neues Deutschland*, the *Berliner Zeitung*, and the *Neue Zeit*, apart from listing the events schedules, the national origins of all international guest performing groups and soloists were explicitly noted. In so doing, Honecker hoped to boost the East Germans' national pride by delivering them the message that as a cultural centre of the world, the East German capital's anniversary enthusiastically enjoyed international blessings from countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Interestingly, the GDR state media re-told some international guest performers' pre-Wall *Republikflucht* past to fulfil the Party's GDR nation-building agenda. The GDR media's coverage of Alexander Roy and his ballet company offers a case in point. Roy, a former GDR ballet dancer who started his professional career at the Leipziger Oper (LO) and later served as a soloist at the KO and the SoB, left the GDR for good before the construction of the Berlin Wall. In the late 1960s, he became the director of the Alexander Roy Ballet Theatre Company in London.⁶⁹⁴ Invited by the KO for the anniversary, his ballet company gave four performances, one televised by the GDR and broadcast in the eastern bloc countries. Abstaining from mentioning Roy's 'unlawful' leave, the GDR press depicted him as an artist rooted in East German soil and attributed his artistic success in Britain to his East German artistic upbringing.⁶⁹⁵ As recalled by Christina Roy, Alexander's wife and also his dancing partner, on this anniversary, Alexander Roy's photo was put on the front page of a GDR newspaper under the headline 'Back to his roots'. In addition, in an interview before a performance at the KO, Alexander was encouraged by an East German television journalist 'to reminisce about his time in the theatre [the K.O.] and, in particular, his work with Walter Felsenstein, the legendary director.'⁶⁹⁶

At the same time, the GDR state media was also keen on presenting how East German classical music troupes spread the festivities of the anniversary in the East Berlin-centred GDR to the

⁶⁹⁴ Roy, *Here Today*, p. 87.

⁶⁹⁵ Günter Martin, 'Exzellente Tanzschöpfungen voller Anmut und Poesie: Das „Alexander Roy London Ballet Theatre', *Neue Zeit*, (27 January 1987), p. 4.; Uwe Günter, 'Der "Sommernachtstraum" ohne romantischen Zauber: Gastspiel des britischen Alexander Roy Ballet Theatre', *Neues Deutschland* (23 January 1987), p. 6.; Sigrun Kirstein, 'Impressionen von Ulk und Tragik: Alexander Roy Ballet Theatre aus London', *Berliner Zeitung*, (20 January 1987), p. 7. [n.a.], 'Internationale Gäste im Palast der Republik: Rock für den Frieden und Gastspiele aus drei Ländern', *Berliner Zeitung* (16 January 1987), p. 2.

⁶⁹⁶ Roy, *Here Today*, p. 251.

international world. Reports on GDR music troupes' performances in West Berlin and the rest of FRG can be found in East German newspapers. Instead of stating that these troupes were there for the West side's anniversary celebrations, the GDR depicted them as East Berlin anniversary ambassadors.⁶⁹⁷ Likewise, the GDR state media also reported how the East German music troupes' performances in Britain in this anniversary year were welcomed by the British audience and sometimes tended to depict these performances as part of the anniversary celebrations programmes in collaboration with British society.⁶⁹⁸

Parallel to its fervent reports of the grand East Berlin-centred anniversary celebrations was the GDR media's efforts to undermine the anniversary celebrations held in West Berlin. Despite being aware that his East German citizens, particularly East Berliners, had an accurate, or at least had their own view about the festivities in West Berlin, Honecker had not the slightest intention to portray the anniversary scene positively to his East German citizens. Proof of this can be found in the official tourist guidebook *Das Buch zum Fest* of the East Berlin anniversary published by the Tourist Publishing. The guidebook attached two maps of East Berlin – one showed all the anniversary event venues and cultural attractions, and the other showed the city's public transport. On both maps, West Berlin was not only placed on the periphery but also remained a blank spot.⁶⁹⁹ In addition, East German state media's reports on West Berlin mainly focused on the negative aspects. For instance, on 4 June 1987, *Berliner Zeitung* gave a brief report on the unemployment rate in West Berlin, stating that based on West Berlin's official account till May, 91,000 West Berliners were jobless. The news about a student demonstration in Düsseldorf followed this report.⁷⁰⁰ On 12 June, 24,000 West Berliners marched down Kurfürstendamm to protest American President Ronald Reagan's official visit to West Berlin, followed by violence between the protesters and the police. Unsurprisingly, this event did not fail to capture the headlines of GDR news, as it offered

⁶⁹⁷ Ernst Krause, 'Ergreifender Zyklus für Sophie und Hans Scholl: Udo Zimmermann als Gastdirigent in Berlin (West)', *Neues Deutschland* (25 February 1987), p. 4.

⁶⁹⁸ [n.a.], 'DDR-Orchester mit erfolgreichen Gastspielreisen', *Neues Deutschland* (11 May 1987), p. 4; [n.a.], 'Dresdener Orchester auf Tournee in Großbritannien', *Neues Deutschland* (28 February 1987), p. 4; [n.a.], 'Tournee-Erfolg für Bach-Orchester in Großbritannien', *Neues Deutschland* (18 February 1987), p. 4; [n.a.], 'Leipziger Bachorchester konzertiert in England', *Neue Zeit* (10 February 1987), p. 2.

⁶⁹⁹ *750 Jahre Berlin: Das Buch zum Fest* (Berlin, 1986).

⁷⁰⁰ [n.a.], 'Auf einen Blick', *Berliner Zeitung* (4. June 1987), p. 6.

Honecker an ideal propaganda site for presenting the militant and American-dominated Bonn government to the East German population.⁷⁰¹

Perceptions from below

Below the level of the SED central government, other social actors' reception of the anniversary was mixed. As shown at the beginning of this chapter, there were East Germans like Ms Milk who felt genuinely elated about the anniversary spectacles, thus further confirming their loyalty to GDR socialism.⁷⁰² Moreover, western guest performers were impressed by their East German counterparts' enthusiasm for artmaking during the anniversary celebrations. As Christina Roy from Alexander Roy Ballet company remarked about the artists from the K.O., 'the stage crew were excellent and fired with enthusiasm to make this unique theatre festival [the K.O.'s 40th founding anniversary in 1987] a memorable one.'⁷⁰³

At the same time, the anniversary aggravated the mood of discontent among East Germans. As all state resources were exhausted by Honecker for the showcase project, ordinary East Germans' everyday life practices were more neglected. As Major puts it, Leipzig, an important GDR economic and industrial centre that hosted the international Leipzig Fair twice a year, drained its resources for the anniversary celebrations. While local residents read and watched the GDR news about the anniversary extravaganza in the GDR capital, they were surrounded by the 'wasteland of worked-out lignite mines' and relied on much-outdated infrastructure.⁷⁰⁴

In East Berlin, the experiences of local East Berliners and visitors from the rest of the GDR and the western world were also not all positive. Although Honecker was desperate to use the

⁷⁰¹ Regarding GDR newspaper reports of this event, see for instance, [n.a.], 'Machtvolle Friedensmanifestation. Westberliner Polizei jagte Demonstranten', *Neue Zeit* (13 June 1987), p. 4; [n.a.], 'Bürgerkriegsähnliche Zustände in Schöneberg', *Berliner Zeitung* (13 June 1987), p. 2.

⁷⁰² See the beginning of this chapter.

⁷⁰³ Roy, *Here Today*, p. 250.

⁷⁰⁴ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, p. 244.

anniversary to showcase the prosperity of the GDR capital in all regards, he could hardly hide the reality — a GDR state in bankruptcy from his anniversary audience. Running out of money, Honecker could not even promise to pay the royalties to his British guest performers in hard currencies.⁷⁰⁵ The KO, the flagship of the East German operatic world whose building was renovated not long before the anniversary, was remembered by its British guest performers as having poor stage facilities. As recollected by Christina Roy, whereas ‘the auditorium was in a fairly good condition, the state of the stage was disastrous, with a huge gap in the floorboards which even the dance floor could not disguise’. Moreover, she also remembered the gloomy cityscape of East Berlin, that everything, even the prestigious opera houses, were deteriorating.⁷⁰⁶ Indeed, even endeavouring to mobilise all possible resources, Honecker did not seem to convince his international guests about a prosperous GDR capital. His ambitious project of restoring historic East Berlin landmarks and buildings to their historical authenticity, which aimed to impress international visitors in this anniversary year, disgraced the Party leadership in its presentation instead. Due to the lack of construction resources, the facades of these historical buildings had to be compromised by prefabricated concrete slabs. As Large states, while Western visitors condemned these restored buildings as ‘pretentious Communist kitsch’, visitors from the rest of the GDR were furious about Honecker’s lavish spending on the showcase project at the expense of basic living standards.⁷⁰⁷

The anniversary in the British media and among the British audience

The British reception of the incoming East German music troupes

Despite the positive media presentation and audience reception, East German classical music troupes did not appear to succeed in promoting the festivities of East Berlin festivities or the SED claim of East Berlin as the GDR capital to the British public. The performances of all three East German musical troupes (i.e., the SkD, the Bach Orchestra of the Leipzig Gewandhaus,

⁷⁰⁵ According to Christina Roy, Sadlers’ Wells was paid full in Ostmark which created this British company’s discontent. Roy, *Here Today*, p. 250.

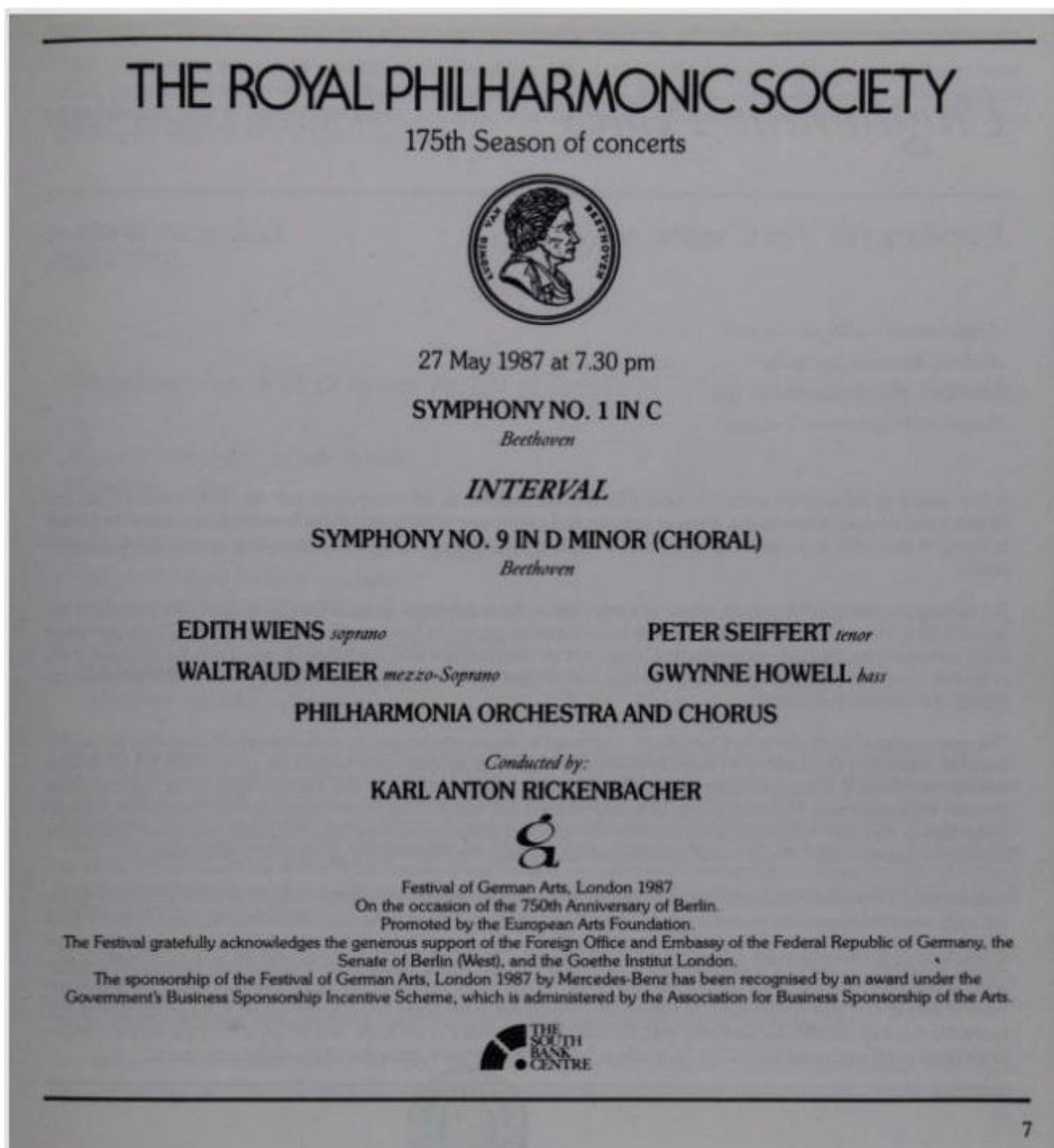
⁷⁰⁶ Roy, *Here Today*, p. 250.

⁷⁰⁷ Large, *Berlin*, pp. 500-01.

and the LGO), were announced in major British newspapers such as *Times*, *Financial Times*, *Guardian* with their national origin being credited. According to the SkD, the orchestra's concerts in Leeds, Northampton, Middlesbrough, Coventry, and the second night in London were sold out. The orchestra's British tour attracted a total number of 20,000 people in the audience.⁷⁰⁸ Noticeably, the SkD's first performance in London was broadcast via radio, and the first half of its concert in Cardiff was televised. In addition, the concert of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in Northern Ireland was televised on BBC One. The newspaper reviews of these concerts were positive. However, the British media did not refer to the anniversary celebrations in East Berlin. It is doubtful that the SED was satisfied with the British media's treatment of his classical music troupes.

Even worse for Honecker, his ambition of using his top music troupes to spread East Berlin's anniversary festivities in Britain was smashed by the FRG-British artistic collaboration programme for West Berlin's celebrations for the 750th anniversary. In June, when West Berlin's BPO, led by its legendary conductor Herbert von Karajan, made its rare touring performances in Britain, the orchestra and the maestro immediately became the headlines of most mainstream British newspapers and received incredibly high media coverage. Following the BPO's huge success, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (DSOB)'s Wagner repertoire on the British stage also achieved overwhelming success. Moreover, supported by the FRG and British government, the Festival of German Arts held a series of British-FRG concerts in dedication to the anniversary (see figure 4). Such an act considerably overshadowed Honecker's political message that he was desperate to send to Britain through his elite music troupes: that East Berlin, a culturally prosperous GDR capital, shared its anniversary festivities with British music lovers.

⁷⁰⁸ HsaD, 5.056, 'Bericht über die Konzerttournee der Staatskapelle Dresden in Großbritannien von 27. Februar bis 14. März 1987'; [n.a.], 'Regional', *Guardian* (29 March, 1987), p. 30.



(Figure 4: a concert programme of the Royal Philharmonic Society in dedication to the 750th Anniversary of West-Berlin in 1987)⁷⁰⁹

The British media reports about the anniversary scenes in two halves of Berlin

The British media paid somewhat unequal attention to both halves of Berlin's anniversary

⁷⁰⁹ *The Royal Philharmonic Society, 175th Season of Concerts (27 May 1987)*, p. 7.

celebrations in the field of German classical music heritage. On 2 January 1987, Patricia Clough, an *Independent* correspondent in Bonn, published a news report about the New Year concert at the Schauspielhaus Berlin. Clough described the concert as ‘star-studded, VIP-packed’.⁷¹⁰ Apart from this aspect, the festivities of East Berlin did not seem to catch the British media’s attention. Berger and LaPorte attribute the lack of anniversary reports from the British press to the shortage of British correspondents based in East Germany in the 1980s.⁷¹¹ Although the London-Berlin Committee, the sub-organisation of the British-GDR Society in Britain, encouraged some influential British newspapers to cover the celebrations in East Berlin, these efforts produced little result.⁷¹²

In contrast to the minimal positive media coverage of the anniversary celebrations in East Berlin, the British media focused on the anniversary celebrations in West Berlin. Britain’s role as a protecting power of West Berlin certainly motivated the British media to follow all the anniversary celebrations in West Berlin closely. Notably, the royal dignitaries Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip’s official visit to West Berlin for the anniversary celebrations attracted high media coverage from the British side in May.⁷¹³ Moreover, in June, when East Berlin rock fans attempted to listen to the three-day open-air music festival performed by leading rock and popular stars and bands, including David Bowie and Genesis, at the Reichstag in West Berlin behind Brandenburg Gate, violence emerged between the East Berlin police and the fans. Reports about the police’s violent repression and arrest of the youth occupied the headlines of the British press (see figure 5).⁷¹⁴ This event further promoted the SED regime’s international image as a totalitarian police state. In September 1987, Richard Owen published an article in *Times*, describing the GDR as ‘a police state under Soviet control’.⁷¹⁵ Honecker’s

⁷¹⁰ Patricia Clough, ‘E Berlin Throws a Capital Party’, *Independent* (2 January 1987), p. 8.

⁷¹¹ Berge and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 231-32.

⁷¹² The London-Berlin Committee was founded in 1986 with the aim of fostering the friendship between London and East Berlin. According to Howarth, promoting Berlin’s 750th Anniversary in East Berlin was a key founding reason for the committee. See Marianne Howarth, ‘The Berlin Triangle. Britain and the two German states in the 1980s’ in Bauerkämper (ed.), *Britain and the GDR*, p. 188.

⁷¹³ Regarding British newspaper reports on the queen’s visit to West Berlin, see for instance, John England, ‘Rousing Birthday Cheer and a Walkabout for the Queen’, *Times* (28 May 1987), p. 24; Campbell Ferguson, ‘Berlin salute for Queen’s birthday’, *Daily Telegraph* (28 May 1987), p. 8.

⁷¹⁴ Michael Seamark, ‘Berlin Wall rock fans in the worst riot yet’, *Daily Mail* (9 June 1987), p. 15; [n.a.], ‘Children of the Berlin Wall’, *Times* (11 June 1987), p. 15.

⁷¹⁵ Richard Owen, ‘Overtones of Fatherland’, *Times* (5 September 1987), p. 8.

lavish spending on this anniversary showcase project helped promote neither a positive image of the GDR nor the claim of a prosperous East German capital to Britain.



(Figure 5: a graphic describing the riot by David Ace, *Daily Mail*, 9 June 1987)

Conclusion

This chapter has approached Honecker's endeavours to consolidate the Party legitimacy inside the GDR and promote the claim of East Berlin as the GDR capital on the international stage. It has focused on the practices of German classical music heritage in the GDR and GDR-British cultural exchange on occasion of the 750th anniversary of Berlin in 1987. On this anniversary, the heritage was employed by Honecker as a tool for his political ends to showcase the GDR capital's achievement in making the city's historic music tradition prosper under socialism. In formulating and implementing his anniversary policies regarding the heritage, Honecker relied on the intellectual input from the cultural intelligentsia and cooperation from cultural

institutions in central East Berlin and regional districts. It is worth noting that although confronted with the official boycott from the Thatcher government, Honecker succeeded in mobilising a good number of British music ensembles and artists to participate in the anniversary in what the SED claimed was the capital of the GDR, thus serving his propaganda purpose. In his efforts to exhaust all possible domestic and international resources which were considered capable of presenting the SED's success in preserving and revitalising German classical music heritage, Honecker aspired to demonstrate the cultural and political supremacy of GDR socialism over the West to the East German populace and international guests.

However, in Britain, Honecker's agenda of spreading the 750th anniversary festivities and promoting the claim of East Berlin as the GDR capital through his top music troupes did not seem successful. The British government's official boycott of the East German anniversary and its promotion of the anniversary held by West Berlin considerably disadvantaged Honecker's pursuit of his anniversary agenda in Britain. Even worse, despite the artistic and commercial success of East German music troupes' touring performances on the British stage, their success was overshadowed by the performances of the top West Berlin music troupes in Britain. Thus, Honecker did not defeat West Berlin on the anniversary battleground in Britain.

In September 1987, Honecker, as the head of the GDR state, made his first and only state visit to the FRG, meeting Helmut Kohl in Bonn. This historical visit appeared to mark the further development of FRG-GDR relations and the confirmation of the GDR's international legitimacy. However, in GDR society, the anniversary further exacerbated the SED's credibility crisis among the East German population. While all anniversary efforts made by Honecker were directed at boosting the East German populace's pride and confidence in GDR socialism, his exhaustion of the state resources for this anniversary showcase project at the expense of people's living standards produced the opposite outcomes. In the next chapter, the thesis will focus on the GDR's 40th founding anniversary in 1989, which took place shortly before the *Wende*. It will show the final bankruptcy of GDR socialism among the East German population and present how classical music was linked to a series of events which lead to the final collapse of the state.

CONCLUSION

1989: the GDR's 40th anniversary – classical music and the revolution

Take home with you the certainty that our Republic will continue to be a significant, reliable factor for peace in the centre of Europe in the fifth decade of its existence. Let our friends all over the world be assured that socialism on German soil, in the homeland of Marx and Engels, stands on unshakeable foundations... I ask you to raise your glass with me and drink to:

- the international solidarity and cooperation,
- the peace and freedom of the people,
- the 40th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic.⁷¹⁶

— Erich Honecker, 7 October 1989

In October 1989, Honecker had to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the GDR amidst the revolutionary upheavals spreading across socialist bloc countries, including the GDR itself. In June, the Polish People's Republic witnessed the end of communist rule following the success of its Solidarity movement in a partially free election. In the Hungarian People's Republic, mass demonstrations asking for people's political rights peaked in Heroes' Square in Budapest on 16 June 1989. The demonstrations were followed by a series of national round table negotiations between the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party and the opposition parties, leading to the end of communism in Hungary. Similarly, battered by years of social and economic malaise, communist authorities in other Eastern bloc countries, such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, also left power.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁶ The original German text: 'Nehmen Sie die Gewißheit mit nach Hause, daß unsere Republik auch im fünften Jahrzehnt ihrer Existenz ein bedeutender, zuverlässiger Friedensfaktor im Zentrum Europas sein wird. Unsere Freunde in aller Welt seien versichert, daß der Sozialismus auf deutschem Boden, in der Heimat von Marx und Engels, auf unerschütterlichen Grundlagen steht. Ich bitte Sie, mit mir das Glas zu erheben und zu trinken auf: Die internationale Solidarität und Zusammenarbeit; den Frieden und das Glück der Völker; den 40. Jahrestag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.' [n.a.], 'Festlicher Empfang im Palast der Republik', *Neues Deutschland* (9 October 1989), p. 7.

⁷¹⁷ Wolfgang Mueller, Michael Gehler & Arnold Suppan (eds.), *The Revolution of 1989: A Handbook* (Vienna, 2015).

The GDR was not isolated from the revolutionary trend in its Eastern bloc surroundings. Since the early 1980s, politically disaffected groups rose particularly under the umbrella of the Protestant Church. Observing Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and disaffected by the growing disparity between the state rhetoric and people's everyday perceptions, those groups hoped to voice their concerns for reform in dialogue with the SED government. Noted by Major, the results of the communal elections on 7 May 1989 triggered more intensive political disaffection by East Germans. Despite attacks by the Stasi, civil rights activities continued to make regular protests in the following months.⁷¹⁸ Indeed, the protesters' success in Poland and Hungary that summer motivated disaffected East Germans to take action. Since early September, mass demonstrations which asked for democratic reforms (e.g., the freedom of travel and free election) regularly took place across major GDR towns. While some disaffected East Germans chose 'voice', many opted for 'exit'. Since May 1989, the Hungarian government's dismantling of the Iron Curtain with Austria opened up the possibility to relocate to the FRG by crossing the border. On 10 September, Hungary officially opened its western border for East Germans. In the following three days, the figure of East Germans who crossed to the West rose to 18,000.⁷¹⁹

Some people did not need to wait until September. On 14 August 1989, an exclusive report entitled 'Red Opera Six Grab Freedom' occupied the front-page headline of the British tabloid newspaper *Daily Express*: six members of the Komische Oper (KO) defected to the West after the company's two-week guest performances at the Royal Opera House (ROH) in London.⁷²⁰ The defection dealt a blow to the East German flagship's first visit to Britain, which had carried the Honecker government's high aspirations to present a positive GDR image to the British public. Before this visit, the KO's reputation as 'behind-the-Wall' legend had long prevailed in the British operatic world.⁷²¹ Thus, when the ROH announced the KO troupe's guest

⁷¹⁸ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, pp. 238-39.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 240; see also, Hans-Hermann Hertle, 'The October Revolution in East Germany: from mass exodus and mass protest to the fall of the Wall and German Unification', in Mueller, Gehler & Suppan (eds.), *The Revolution of 1989*, pp. 124-25

⁷²⁰ Jack Lee, 'Red opera six grab freedom: defections after Covent Garden triumph', *Daily Express* (14 August 1989), p. 1.

⁷²¹ Chapter Four presented a relatively detailed analysis of the KO as a behind-the-Wall legend in Britain society.

performances with more than 300 touring members, this visit immediately became a magnet for British media attention, music critic Paul Driver called it 'a historic visit'.⁷²² The tickets sold out quickly, the opera house was packed, and critics' reviews were extremely positive.⁷²³ The KO troupe's historic visit to the most prominent London opera stage was a triumph. However, the drama unfolded when six touring members were found missing before the KO troupe boarded coaches to the airport before flying back to East Berlin on 13 August. *Daily Express* reported the defection the next day, proudly announcing its assistance for one of the six defectors - Fred Spodzieja. A large photo featuring Spodzieja holding a beer to celebrate his new life appeared in *The Daily Express* on 15 August. Thrilled by this success, Spodzieja said that he had been planning this escape for a year and added,

I don't like the Berlin Wall. I want to be in the West. ... This is my first taste of freedom and the most exciting moment ever for me ... I have left my family behind in the East, but I wanted to spend my life in a country where you are free to talk to whom you like, and travel wherever you want.'⁷²⁴

On 15 August 1989, the Main Directorate for Reconnaissance (Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung, also known as 'HVA') in East Berlin received a telegraphic report from its officer in London regarding these KO defections. The report highlighted the artistic success of the KO's ROH performances and, in a somewhat comforting tone, noted that these defections received minimal media coverage in Britain. As the officer put it, '[This] "flight from the republic" was sensationalised by *The Daily Express*... Other mass media only briefly noted or did not mention [the defection] at all.'⁷²⁵ The officer did not lie to the SED authorities. Apart from *Daily Express*, major British press and magazine reports about the KO defections were brief.⁷²⁶ With the

⁷²² Paul Driver, 'The art of matching opera to the market', *Sunday Times* (6 August 1989), p. C8.

⁷²³ For British newspaper reviews on the KO performances at the ROH, see for instance, John Higgins, 'Missing the master's touch', *Times* (2 August 1989), p. 19; Robert Maycock, 'The travelling minstrels', *Independent* (3 August 1989), p. 12; Michael White, 'dirty lyre in a mean street', *Independent* (8 August 1989), p. 12; Arthur Jacobs, 'An end of bourgeois boredom', *Times Literary Supplement* (18-24, August), p. 896.

⁷²⁴ Lee, 'Red opera six grab freedom', p.1; Graham Dudman & Peter Hitchens, 'Free, now my life begins again', *Daily Express* (15 August 1989), p. 3.

⁷²⁵ The original German text: 'Republikflucht wird hochgespielt von *Daily Express* (s. Presse 14. und 15. 8). Andere Massenmedien nur kurz Notiz, in meisten gar keine Erwähnung.' BStU, MfS ZKG Nr. 15915, 'Republikflucht sechs Ensemble-Mitglieder Komsische Oper', f. 1.

⁷²⁶ [n.a.], 'Singers flee', *Daily Mirror* (15 August 1989), p. 12; 'Opera group defects', *Times* (15 August 1989), p. 2; [n.a.], 'Portrait of the week', *Spectator* (19 August 1989), p. 4; Seumes Milne 'Five opera defectors go west', *Guardian*, (15 August 1989), p. 3.

removal of Hungary's border fence with Austria in May and the Honecker government's attempt to ease the emigration policy, the East German exodus to the West amounted to over 100,000 till September.⁷²⁷ Compared with this 'six out of 300' KO defection, the British media were far more interested in reporting the news, such as the East German exodus from the Hungry-Austria border and the temporary closure of the FRG's East Berlin 'permanent representation' due to the overflow of East German asylum applications.⁷²⁸

Was the Party leadership aware of the political events inside the GDR and in the GDR's socialist brother states? Of course it was but Honecker was determined to celebrate socialism's grandeur on the GDR's 40th founding anniversary via a series of spectacular events in East Berlin and nationwide. Without doubt, presenting the forty years of cultural achievements in GDR socialism was one of his highlights on the anniversary. An anniversary brochure entitled '*40 Jahre DDR*' issued by the MfK in May 1989 presents to the readers the flourishing of GDR cultural life under the 40 years of SED leadership. The brochure claimed that the GDR was a state characterised by the SED's strenuous efforts to bring culture to the citizens and revitalise historic Germany's cultural heritage. More than half of the GDR's 88 professional orchestras were established after the GDR's foundation in 1949. Important state projects in renovating and building cultural venues included the Dresdner Zwinger, the Deutsche Staatsoper Unter den Linden, the Kulturpalast Dresden, the Stadhalle Karl-Marx-Stadt, the new Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra building, the Schauspielhaus Berlin, the Semperoper Dresden and the Sankt Nikolai-Kirche Berlin. In addition, according to the figures in the brochure, East Germans loved culture and participating in activities in GDR cultural life. For instance, according to 1988 statistics, the GDR's 213 theatres, 88 orchestras and 206 music schools and cabinets had

⁷²⁷ Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, pp. 240-43; Mueller, 'Escape from the GDR', p. 717; Milne, 'Five Opera defectors go west', p. 3.

⁷²⁸ For British newspaper report about this, see for example, [n.a.], 'Bonn tries to bar embassy refugees', *Independent* (9 August 1989), p. 10; Karen Breslau, 'Restless tide breaches the Berlin Wall', *Sunday Telegraph* (13 August 1989), p. 12; Ian Murray, 'Refugee tide forces Bonn to close East Berlin office', *Times* (9 August 1989), p. 10.; Leslie Colitt, 'E German refugees given safe passage to West', *Financial Times* (25 August 1989), p.2; Leslie Colitt, 'Bonn to receive thousands of E Germans', *Financial Times* (31 August 1989), p. 2; Leslie Colitt, 'East Germans flee through newly open Hungarian border to west', *Financial Times* (15 July 1989), p. 3; [n.a.], 'Exodus to Austria', *Times* (1 August 1989), p. 6; [n.a.], 'Refugee tide swamps Bonn envoys', *Financial Times* (10 August 1989), p.2; Judy Dempsey, 'More escape through Hungary', *Financial Times* (11 July 1989), p. 2; Imre Karacs, 'West Germans let in embassy squatters but warn: "no more"', *Independent* (25 August 1989), p. 8; [n.a.], 'Night travellers cross East bloc's freedom frontier', *Times* (28 August 1989), p. 8.

attracted 220 million visits by East Germans. On average, every GDR inhabitant paid 13.2 visits to state cultural institutions and borrowed 7.1 books from libraries. Moreover, the GDR had more than 31,000 professional artists (12,500 working in theatres and orchestras, 8,000 entertainers, 6,400 painters, and 2,000 working in the radio and television sectors, 1000 writers, 750 film makers and 500 composers). Moreover, the brochure also included a photo of conductor Kurt Masur and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra as an example to show the artistic achievement of GDR classical music orchestras on the international stage.⁷²⁹

On 6 October, Mikhail Gorbachev arrived at Schönefeld Airport in East Berlin for the GDR's state celebrations of the founding anniversary. Despite the crowd welcoming the Soviet leadership having been handpicked by the SED, the shouts of 'Perestroika! Gorbachev! Help us!' still reached him. Aware of the dissatisfaction in GDR society, Gorbachev said to Honecker that 'Life punishes those who respond too late,'⁷³⁰ and was horrified by his East German fellow leader's unrealistic socialist vision. Gorbachev recalled, 'I talked with him [Honecker] for three hours... And he kept on wanting to convince me about the wonderful achievements of the GDR'.⁷³¹ Gorbachev was confused about how Honecker was unaware of the mass dissatisfaction that was so obvious even to him as a leader from abroad. Gorbachev was uncertain whether Honecker genuinely believed in his socialist dream or whether he just pretended to.⁷³²

Date: 7 October 1989

Location: Palast der Republik, Marx-Engels-Platz, East Berlin

On 7 October 1989, Honecker invited Gorbachev, delegations from the international world,

⁷²⁹ LaB, C Rep. 132: Nr. 8, 40. Jahrestag der DDR, 40 Jahre DDR (May 1989).

⁷³⁰ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Mikhail Gorbachev: Memoirs* (London, 1997), p. 677.

⁷³¹ 'Chronicle 1989', *Chronik der Mauer*, accessed via: <https://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/ year1989/ month10/?moc=1#anchornid176410> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

⁷³² Gorbachev, 'Goodbye DDR': *Erich und die Mauer*, directed by Christian Frey & Mario Sporn, premiered on ZDF (20 September 2005), 0'58"-1'00, accessed via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xed0KEjLyUc> (last accessed 1 January 2023)

and representatives of all sections of GDR society to a celebratory state concert at the Palace of the Republic. After the playing of 'the Music for the Royal Fireworks' by G. F. Handel, with the visual presentation of laser light, festive works by G. P. Telemann, J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Johann Strauss II, Schubert, Wagner and Tchaikovsky were played. The cast of the concert included the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, the Thomanerchor, the Staatsoper Berlin, and some of the most celebrated soloists of the GDR (e.g., Peter Schreier and Theo Adam). In his speech at the state dinner before the concert, Honecker confidently proclaimed the success of GDR socialism, assuring that the GDR would also celebrate its 50th anniversary.⁷³³

Location: outside Palast der Republik, East Berlin

Parallel to the festivities inside the Palace, what was happening outside provided a contrasting scenario. At the same time when the state dinner and concert took place, thousands of outraged protesters chanted 'We are staying here', 'no violence', 'New Forum', 'freedom', and sang the famous left-wing anthem — 'the International', walking on the Marx-Engels-Platz where the Palace was located and demanding democratic reforms. It was impossible that Honecker and his special guests were unaware of what was happening outside. As recalled by Jochen Kowalski, a mezzo countertenor who was at the state dinner and sang in that night's concert, 'we stood next to the large windows, and I could see a huge crowd of people. What would happen, I thought if they stormed the Palace? I truly feared for my life.'⁷³⁴

The mass demonstration outside the Palace that evening was not unfamiliar to those communist authorities inside the Palace. In June, four weeks after Gorbachev's historic state visit to Beijing, outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the Chinese communist authorities ended the Tiananmen Square Protests with military repression. The SED expressed its support for the actions of the Chinese government. Under the title 'In the Struggle of Our Time, the GDR and People's Republic of China (PRC) stand side by side (*In den Kämpfen unserer*

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Jochen Kowalski, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 49'32"-49'45".

Zeit stehen DDR und VR China Seite an Seite), the SED published an article in *Neues Deutschland* on 30 September, sending its congratulations to the 40th founding anniversary of the PRC and stating its solidarity with the PRC government.⁷³⁵ On 1 October, Egon Krenz, who would soon replace Honecker at the top of the SED, joined the state ceremony of the 40th founding anniversary of the PRC in Beijing on the SED Central Committee's behalf. A photo showing Xiaoping Deng greeting Krenz occupied the front page of the *Neues Deutschland* and *Berliner Zeitung* on 2 October.⁷³⁶ During the state dinner and concert at the Palace of the Republic on 7 October, Yilin Yao, the then First Vice Premier of the PRC who took part in the Tiananmen Square repression, was among Honecker's special guests at the Palace state dinner and concert.

Date: 7 October 1989

Location: the Semperoper Dresden (SoD) and Dresden city centre

Outside Berlin, mass demonstrations took place in big GDR cities such as Leipzig, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Potsdam, Arnstadt, and Dresden on 7 October. For instance, around 30,000 local residents joined the demonstration in Dresden, gathering in the city centre.⁷³⁷ Inside the SoD, a newly staged Beethoven's *Fidelio* by director Christine Mielitz made its premiere. Narrating a story of a woman's efforts to rescue her husband imprisoned by his political enemies, *Fidelio* centred on love and sacrifice, power and persecution, freedom and peace. As the company's opera singer Rolf Wollrad recalled, while the production was specially staged in dedication to the 40th founding anniversary of the GDR, the creative team attached their appeal for democratic reform in the GDR to the production.⁷³⁸ When the choir sang 'the Prisoners' Chorus':

⁷³⁵ [n.a.], 'In den Kämpfen unserer Zeit stehen DDR und VR China Seite an Seite', *Neues Deutschland* (30 September 1989), p. 1.

⁷³⁶ [n.a.], 'Volksrepublik China feierte den 40. Jahrestag ihrer Gründung', *Neues Deutschland* (2 October 1989), p.1; [n.a.], 'Volksrepublik China beging 40. Jahrestag ihrer Gründung', *Berliner Zeitung* (2 October 1989), p. 1.

⁷³⁷ David Childs, *The Fall of the GDR: Germany's Road to Unity* (Harlow, 2001), p. 68.

⁷³⁸ Rolf Wollrad, *Classical Music and Cold War, 49'59''-50'28''*.

English translation:

Oh, what a pleasure once again
Freely to breathe the fresh air!
In Heaven's light we live again;
From death we have escaped.

...

Oh, liberty! Oh, salvation!
Oh, God, upon our miseries have pity!

...

Silence! Make no noise!
Pizarro's eyes and ears are o'er us!
Oh! What a pleasure once again!
Freely to breathe the fresh air!
In Heaven's light we live again;
From death we have escaped.⁷³⁹

the audience's emotions exploded. Mielitz recalled what happened after the chorus in the opera house as the most exciting thing of her life when 'people shouted and wept for minutes'.⁷⁴⁰

The people's expression of their disappointment and anger on this special occasion apparently embarrassed Honecker. Unsurprisingly, he responded to them with repression. The police deployed physical violence against the protesters across the state, and injuries occurred. According to Childs, given the presence of western media crews in East Berlin to report the state anniversary, the police's use of force on the protesters in East Berlin only began in the late evening when darkness fell. In other GDR towns, the police employment of force to repress the mass demonstrations began much earlier during the day. There were over 3,000 protesters across the GDR arrested.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁹ Ludwig Beethoven, *Beethoven's Opera Fidelio. German Text, with an English Translation* (Boston, 1805), p. 14.

⁷⁴⁰ Christine Mielitz, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 50' 52''-50' 54''.

⁷⁴¹ Childs, *The Fall of the GDR*, p. 68.

The western media captured the moments of the mass demonstrations and the police's forceful response to the protesters, whereas the GDR media did not. Due to the state celebrations of the anniversary and weekends, the three major GDR newspapers did not publish issues on 7 and 8 October. Over that weekend, East Germans learned about the demonstration news by watching Western TV channels and listening to Western radio broadcasts. If any East German expected to read news of the demonstrations through any of the three major GDR newspapers on Monday, 9 October, they would have been undoubtedly shocked. Photos of the smiling and confident-looking SED top leadership, happy-looking East German teenagers in the official FDJ parade, the celebratory fireworks, and the splendour of the concerts were shown. News articles about how the GDR was congratulated by political authorities from the world and the GDR's socialist achievements were displayed. The GDR press was full of positive news about the anniversary celebrations and happy lives under GDR socialism. If there had not been reports by the western media and people had not witnessed or joined them, it might have seemed that the nationwide mass demonstrations did not happen at all.

Date: 9 October 1989

Location: Karl Marx Square, Leipzig

While Gorbachev returned to Moscow after the anniversary, outraged and disillusioned East Germans continued their peaceful protests despite the police's violent repression. On 9 October, an unprecedented number of 70,000 to 100,000 participants joined the Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig. Protesters marched on the streets and gathered at the Karl Marx Square outside the building of the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Dating back to eight years ago, on 8 October 1981, Leipzigers gathered on the same spot, watching Honecker making his speech at the opening ceremony of the Leipzig Gewandhaus hall. In the speech, Honecker stated, 'With us, in socialism, there is neither crisis nor unemployment' [*Im Sozialismus, gibt es weder*

Krise noch Arbeitslosigkeit].⁷⁴² Receiving the order from the Central Committee to make no concession with the protesters and adopting 'the Chinese solution' where possible, local police, soldiers and Stasi were ready to deploy violence in protecting GDR socialism and combating the 'enemies' of the state.

There was a possibility that the mass demonstration would turn into bloodshed. Kurt Masur, the conductor who enjoyed his stardom on the domestic GDR and international music scenes and whose career success largely benefited from the SED's music policy, decided not to let music be his escape from the unsettling and burning social realities.⁷⁴³ The conductor, together with five prominent Leipzig personalities within the local church, cultural and SED ruling circles (i.e. Peter Zimmermann, Bernd Lutz-Lange, Kurt Meyer, Jochen Pommert, and Roland Wötzel), broadcast the following statement through the radio airwaves, making their efforts to prevent the worst from happening:

Our common worries and responsibilities have brought us here together today. We are concerned about the developments in our city and are searching for a solution. We all need the chance of a free discussion of socialism in our country. Therefore, we urge you to remain level-headed to enable a peaceful dialogue. This is Kurt Masur speaking.⁷⁴⁴

What followed the statement in the demonstration was regarded as a 'Leipzig miracle'. While the massive crowd of candle-lit protesters peacefully proceeded with their demonstration and chanted the slogans of 'no violence' and 'we are the people', the 6,000-armed police did not use physical force on the protesters. As Pfaff puts it, the Leipzig demonstration on 9 October marked the first triumph of the people in the Peaceful Revolution.⁷⁴⁵ More large-scale

⁷⁴² Honecker, *Classical Music and Cold War*, 46'55"-46'59".

⁷⁴³ Yaeger, 'The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany', p. 307.

⁷⁴⁴ The original German text: Unsere gemeinsame Sorge und Verantwortung haben uns heute zusammengeführt. Wir sind von der Entwicklung in unserer Stadt betroffen und suchen nach einer Lösung. Wir alle brauchen einen freien Meinungs-austausch über die Weiterführung des Sozialismus in unserem Land. Deshalb versprechen die Genannten heute allen Bürgern, ihre ganze Kraft und Autorität dafür einzusetzen, daß dieser Dialog nicht nur im Bezirk Leipzig, sondern auch mit unserer Regierung geführt wird. Wir bitten Sie dringend um Besonnenheit, damit der friedliche Dialog möglich wird. Es sprach Kurt Masur.' Ekkehard Kuhn, *'Wir sind Das Volk!': Die friedliche Revolution in Leipzig, 9. Oktober 1989* (Berlin & Frankfurt am Main, 1999), pp. 126-27. See also, Yaeger, *The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in East Germany*, p. 311.

⁷⁴⁵ Steven Pfaff, 'Collective identity and informal groups in revolutionary mobilization: East Germany in 1989', *Social Forces*, 75.1 (1996), p. 108. See also, Childs, *The Fall of the GDR*, pp. 69-70.

peaceful demonstrations took place nationwide in the following weeks. On the night of 9 November, the Berlin Wall fell after 27 years of existence.

Complicating the GDR as a 'participatory dictatorship' through German classical music heritage

In studying the GDR's practices of German classical music heritage domestically and in trans-bloc classical exchanges (with GDR-British classical music diplomacy as an example) during the Honecker era, this thesis has traced the endeavours all involved social actors made in pursuing their agendas. In presenting the conflicts and cooperation, compromises and reconciliation in the heritage's policymaking and implementation, this thesis has demonstrated not only the complexity of these social actors' relations but also the complexity and sometimes contradictions of these relations' outcomes.

Importantly, the factor of the western world in both state and non-state East German social actors' dealings with their relations within the realm of the heritage practices complicate Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' conceptualisation of GDR society. The 'participatory dictatorship' conceptualisation can be shown in the SED's policymaking and implementation of its classical music heritage politics. With the ultimate purpose of consolidating its governing legitimacy, the SED emphasised the socialist preservation and revitalisation of German classical music heritage and endeavoured to dictate the heritage practices inside the GDR and in the GDR's international relations. Well aware that the Party could not achieve its political ends single-handedly, the SED depended on other social actors' contributions to the heritage's policymaking and implementation. The contribution of the classical music intelligentsia was essential in this regard. The SED relied on not only their intellectual input in constructing and developing the socialist classical music canon but also their cooperation in promoting the heritage among the East German population and on the international stage. Moreover, this thesis' unveiling of the classical music intelligentsia's mobilisation of their international esteem and western contacts (e.g., the FRG and Britain) navigate their relations with the SED complicate Fulbrook's 'participatory dictatorship' model. Especially during the Honecker era,

when the Party desperately needed hard currency to pay for the GDR's foreign debts, its reliance on the intelligentsia in generating the state's substantial hard currency revenue grew.

In addition, the East German population also impacted the SED's policymaking and implementation regarding the heritage's practices. The logic of winning the population's loyalty to the Party's ruling authority through engaging their participation in and appreciation of the state-organised cultural activities underlay the Party's promotion of the heritage. Because of this, the fear of losing the population's hearts and minds to GDR socialism pushed the SED to adjust its German classical music policies. As has been demonstrated in the thesis, the expansion of the socialist German classical music canon and the inclusion of a more light-hearted classical music repertoire in concert programmes demonstrated the population's role in influencing the SED's political minds. Within a larger spectrum in the SED's musical policy, the population's influence was obvious in the SED's efforts to accommodate a more diverse musical scene within GDR socialism, particularly under Honecker.

However, despite the role of the classical music intelligentsia and the population in the SED's policymaking and implementation, this by no means suggests that the SED's practice of its German classical music policies took place within a democratic structure. One reason was that the SED never gave up its intention to make every aspect of cultural and living practices under the Party's control throughout the GDR's existence. The other reason was that power was shared asymmetrically between the SED, the classical music intelligentsia, and the GDR population. Thus, the SED's cooperation with and concession to the voices of other social actors were built on the premise of its legitimisation and consolidation of power.

The classical music intelligentsia's practices of *Eigensinn* and 'hidden transcripts' within the participatory dictatorship is worth noting. In the eyes of the SED authorities, they were the Party's human capital in formulating and implementing German classical music heritage policies for building up and consolidating the SED's legitimacy among the GDR population and on the international stage. The SED thought that the intelligentsia should serve the following

two roles. One role was that of the cultural functionaries. Domestically, the intelligentsia took over the responsibility of enhancing the East German populace's cultural belonging to and pride in GDR socialism. On the international stage, they were GDR socialism's cultural ambassadors. They were meant to help the SED establish and develop international contacts beneficial to the Party's political agendas and represent the SED's achievements in preserving and revitalising German classical music heritage for the GDR's image-building project. The other role was that of hard currency earners for the GDR, as their artistic excellence functioned as a commodity in generating highly sought-after commercial profit in the GDR's classical music trade with the international world. Although the GDR dictatorship did not put the intelligentsia in an advantageous position in dealing with state power, this does not suggest that the intelligentsia were powerless in the government-intelligentsia relations. On the contrary, the SED's need for their intellectual contribution to the Party's ends endowed them with a certain degree of agency, which made the intelligentsia's reactions to the SED's command far more complex and complicated than the dichotomous binary of 'for and against'.⁷⁴⁶ While helping the SED fulfil its political and economic agendas, they also used the platforms built by state power to pursue their agendas. Their agendas could overlap or contradict the SED's agendas, ranging from artistic and career development, international travels, the increase of incomes, defections, and gaining more bargaining chips to negotiate with state power. The intelligentsia's process of pursuing the maximisation of their agendas in navigating their relations with the SED, along with the results, show their *Eigensinn* and hidden transcripts.

In addition to unveiling the complexities of all involved social actors' relations as evident in the heritage practices, the thesis also has shown the contradictory results of the SED's exploitation of the heritage for the Party's legitimacy inside the GDR and on the international stage. With reference to GDR socialism's contradictions, one can quote the following lines from the German TV series *Deutschland 86*:

The GDR is expensive. This is not because we are greedy. This is because equality is expensive. Our ideals are expensive. It is up to the government organs such as ours to support these ideals

⁷⁴⁶ Tischer, 'Music and discourse', p. 157.

efficiently.

— Barbara Dietrich from *Deutschland 86*⁷⁴⁷

In the series, the character of Barbara Dietrich, a financial consultant in the HVA, said the above words when she asked her colleague to make all possible efforts to earn hard currency. This included secretly selling West German weapons to apartheid South Africa and uninformed East German hospital patients to Western pharmaceutical companies for drug tests. In order to rescue socialism, the GDR turned to capitalism. However, as noted in Chapter V, such desperate endeavours seemed to neither save the GDR from bankruptcy nor consolidate the SED's political legitimacy. Until the end of Honecker's reign, the GDR's foreign debt amounted to 49 billion Valutmarks (26.5 billion dollars).⁷⁴⁸ Worse still, the socialist utopia of 'a state of workers and peasants and social equality' depicted by the SED collapsed in East Germans' minds.⁷⁴⁹

To Honecker, the heritage's function for cultivating the SED's legitimacy appeared highly paradoxical. On the one hand, the SED did gain credibility among the East German populace and on the international stage via exploiting the cultural and commercial value of the heritage. In contributing to the SED's *Kultur* myth-building project, the heritage's role in manifesting the GDR as 'a land of high culture's accessibility to everyone' was apparent. Aside from this, the hard currency revenue generated by exporting East German musical groups, talents and *Eterna* records to the western world, to some extent, helped the SED pay for the GDR's mounting foreign debt.

However, concert and opera-goers' appreciation of government-subsidised tickets and the GDR's musical achievements, along with the musical intelligentsia's acknowledgement of the government's support in their professional development and privileges were far from enough

⁷⁴⁷ The original German text: 'Die DDR ist teuer. Und zwar nicht, weil wir den Hals nicht voll genug bekommen, sondern weil Gleichheit teuer ist. Unsere Ideale sind teuer. Und es liegt an Regierungorganen, wie dem unsrigen, diese Ideale effizient zu unterstützen.' Anna Winger & Jörg Winger (creator), *Deutschland 86, Episode 1: Tar Bay*, accessed via: Channel 4, 5 March 2019.

⁷⁴⁸ Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*, p. 192.

⁷⁴⁹ Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*, pp. 77-78, 105, 106.

to offset their awareness of GDR socialism's defects on a daily basis. The shortage of consumer goods of good quality, the state restriction on trans-bloc travel, and the weaker purchasing power of Ostmark compared to western currencies on the GDR domestic market challenged the official GDR rhetoric of socialism's supremacy over capitalism. Outside of the GDR, while the SED cultivated its positive image through East German musical groups and its stars' presence on the western stage, it received, more widely, blame for violating human rights in other aspects of GDR life. Although the GDR's German classical music heritage attracted noticeable income through western currency, this was just a drop in the ocean compared to what was needed. The general under-performance of East German industry, the Honecker government's ever-growing reliance on the FRG's loans to import daily consumer goods to maintain domestic stability, along with the huge investment in state security, bankrupted the GDR.⁷⁵⁰ However successful the GDR's German classical music heritage industry was, it was impossible to save the GDR from the state of bankruptcy.

On the other hand, the heritage played a role in accelerating the SED's loss of legitimacy. With the Honecker government's growing reliance on top-level East German music institutions and talents' commercial value to the state economy, the government had to endow these institutional and individual actors with more privileges. This act eclipsed the official GDR rhetoric of Marxist-Leninist egalitarian claims. As a result, whereas the Honecker government claimed that the GDR embodied 'real-existing socialism', discontented socialist supporters perceived the GDR as 'capitalism in socialism'. Although the music intelligentsia appeared to benefit from the system, having more privileges than most East Germans, they also shared the mood of discontent. Thus, some disillusioned and discontented musicians chose to exit the GDR when opportunities were available. To the Honecker government, musicians' illegal escape to the western bloc during their trans-bloc career engagements undermined its governing legitimacy in a Cold War international environment.

⁷⁵⁰ See for example Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism*.

Epilogue

Classical music for celebrating the unification

In the immediate months following the historic *Wende*, all types of celebrations were held by Berliners, East and West Germans, and people who saw the light at the end of the tunnel of the Cold War division between East and West Blocs. Western art music was an essential part of all celebrations as a symbol representing German national identity and speaking a universal language.⁷⁵¹ Three days after the *Wende*, Daniel Barenboim led the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, holding a special concert for the GDR citizens at the Berliner Philharmonie concert hall. The concert tickets were free to East Germans. In an interview, Barenboim recollected that after the concert, a woman and her son gave him flowers and told him their story about the Wall, which deeply touched the conductor. According to Barenboim's recollection, the woman said:

Thirty years ago, I got married in East Berlin, and shortly afterwards, I had a child. Some months later, my husband left me, taking the child with him. I tried to contact him, but we remained out of touch for 29 years. Every day I lit a candle at home and prayed that I might one day be allowed to see my son again. And yesterday, just imagine it, the doorbell rang. And who should be standing there but a young man, my son, now 29 years old. We wondered how we could celebrate our reunion. And what could be more appropriate than a concert with you and the Philharmoniker?⁷⁵²

As Barenboim shared his perception of the *Wende*, 'it was not just liberation from a political system with which people were very unhappy, but it was a coming together of the two halves of a nation... It was "now we can come all together!"'⁷⁵³

⁷⁵¹ Janik, 'The symphony of a capital city', p. 145.

⁷⁵² Daniel Barenboim, interview under the title 'Daniel Barenboim on the concert celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall', accessed via: <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/interview/22093-4> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

The GDR's classical music scene in reminiscence

'Everywhere, the theatres are crumbling. It is an open question who bears the responsibility, [and] unclear where the money is to come from in future.'

– Joachim Herz (July 1990)⁷⁵⁴

While East Germans celebrated the success of the Peaceful Revolution, elated by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the future of the GDR's classical music heritage industry appeared uncertain. In his article in *Opera Now*, Herz, the chief director of the SoD, shared his concern about opera in the GDR and his worry for the future of the East German operatic institution in unified Germany. While praising the triumph of the revolution, the opera director emphasised some bright sides of Opera under the GDR regime from his perspective. As an artist whom the SED saw as undermining the Party leadership in his affiliated cultural institution and manifesting a pro-western attitude throughout his long artistic GDR career, he thought highly of the SED government's endeavours in bringing Opera — an expensive high art form, to the ordinary people. In addition, he deeply appreciated the non-materialistic spirit shared by practitioners in GDR opera-making. As Herz noted, the practitioners devoted themselves to pursuing perfectionism in art, showing their loyalty to art instead of money. Moreover, such a spirit attracted some top western artists' engagement in the GDR opera-making scene, although these western artists only earned one-tenth of their standard royalties in working at the Semperoper. At the same time, while he was confident that the opera house could engage more top artists from the western world for artistic collaboration with the Ostmark changeover into Deutschmark, he was deeply concerned about how the SoD could secure its funding from the state in the unified Germany.⁷⁵⁵

Herz's worry was not groundless. As Janik notes, with the GDR cultural industry's integration into unified Germany, East and West cultural institutions competed for limited state funding and different patterns of public funding between the two German halves emerged.⁷⁵⁶ In the

⁷⁵⁴ Joachim Herz, 'Art and revolution', *Opera Now* (July 1990), p. 22.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁵⁶ Janik, 'The symphony of a capital city', p. 146.

GDR, while the state economy lagged far behind the FRG, its German classical music heritage industry prospered with government endorsement. Even though the Federal Republic government intended to preserve the rich cultural infrastructure of the GDR in unified Germany, the state budget for cultural development did not allow it. Soon after German unification, Herz became the victim of such integration. Facing a substantial reduction in government funding, the Semperoper's new director, Christoph Albrecht from the Hamburg Ballet, had to abolish several senior leadership positions in this previous East German opera company to survive. Unfortunately, Herz's position as the chief director was among them. Herz's reaction to the decision of the opera company's new leadership was the following, 'I had to tell Herr Albrecht that, unfortunately, in comparison to him, Herr Schönfelder [the pre-revolutionary head of the Staatsoper] was a Gentleman.'⁷⁵⁷

In 1995, Masur shared his view of music life during the communist era and after the Cold War in a television interview. While he believed that the Peaceful Revolution and German unification were on the right historical track, he missed the GDR music environment — classical music as an egalitarian culture accessible to all. He mentioned that in the GDR, scores and instruments were sold at a low price, and people could go to a chamber concert in every GDR village. The maestro, who made courageous actions in the 1989 Leipzig demonstration for freedom, was somewhat disappointed by how freedom spoiled people's cultural life in the post-*Wende*. As he said, 'in Stalinist Russia, there was a booming cultural life. At the moment, there's not. Freedom doesn't always mean that there is stability in culture.'⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁷ 'Victim of Revolution', *Opera Now*, January 1991, p. 13.

⁷⁵⁸ In this context, Masur's reference to cultural life in Stalinist Russia mainly suggest the prosperity of classical music. Kurt Masur profile (March 1995), accessed via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GelTm6veMaE> (last accessed 09 August 2023)

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ZKG: Nr.:244, Nr.15915, Nr. 19973, Nr. 21207
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