

Monod, David. 2005. *Settling Scores: German Music, Denazification, and the Americans, 1945–1953*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

**Reviewed by David Tompkins**

When thinking about America's role in the cultural life of postwar Germany, the uncouth and philistine character of Major Steve Arnold from Ronald Harwood's play *Taking Sides* immediately comes to mind. Recalling either Ed Harris in the 1996 Broadway production or Harvey Keitel in the 2001 film version, this supposedly typical American officer embodies crude insensitivity as he hectors and insults the great German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler. The historiography of the period also frequently faults the occupier for widespread policy failures, incompetence, cultural clumsiness, and even the hindering of a nascent democratic awakening in Germany after Hitler.

David Monod's engaging and thorough monograph offers a largely convincing if at times overstated rebuttal to such negative assessments of the American role in the musical realm of postwar Germany. Through his focus on classical music, he argues that American influence helped to lay the foundations for a new and democratic cultural life. Perhaps most controversially, Monod claims that the modest cultural regeneration of the early postwar years was possible because of the "revolutionary and transformative" power of denazification, the policy to remove Nazi influences from public life (9). While he agrees with most scholars that denazification was implemented poorly and ended too quickly, he nonetheless maintains that American influence was positive in limited but essential ways, through the actions of individual cultural officers as well as in the structural reform of arts administration. Although many individual initiatives failed, he maintains that the denazification policies—both those designed to remove Nazis from public life as well as those intended to punish and rehabilitate individual Nazis and sympathizers—indeed implemented core democratic values and that, as a result, German musical life changed for the better.

Monod pursues a thematic and chronological approach to the postwar decade, first examining the key phase of US control in 1945–46, when the American authorities purged cultural institutions and blacklisted those artists closely linked to the Nazi regime, replacing them with others who were expected to create the new musical milieu. He then looks at the relaxing of this influence over the next several years, as denazification was turned over to the Germans, who permitted traditional—and tainted—elites to return

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to prominence. A final section deals with the gradual abandonment of denazification in favor of a focus on anticommunism, as American personnel were ordered to advise rather than control the musical world so as to win the loyalty of both German musicians and the population in the context of the intensifying cold war. These developments, combined with the crunch of the 1948 currency reform that drove up the prices for concert tickets and consequently increased audience demand for familiar music, caused a conservative restoration in the musical realm.

In the first section of his book, Monod examines why Americans chose to attempt a reorientation of Germany's "high" culture rather than its popular culture, where the United States clearly would have had an advantage. American officials felt they had to change the views of the elites, who were convinced of the superiority of German *Kultur*, a conviction many viewed as one of the roots of Nazism. Thus American officials sought to punish classical musicians for their actions under the Nazis, while at the same time lay the foundations of a fresh, democratic musical life. As the military government confronted the thorny question of how to disentangle Nazism from the classical musical world, three general positions developed among the American occupying authorities. Many leading officials, including the commander of the military administration, General Lucius Clay, simply felt that culture was too unimportant to bother with compared to feeding a hungry population and dealing with the aftermath of war. Unsurprisingly, these officials make scant appearance in the book, except where their indifference stymied initiatives or blocked resources. The second group, the hardliners or "revolutionaries," as Monod terms them, were represented by the officers of the Intelligence Section of the Information Control Division (ICD), led by General Robert McClure. These men wanted to eradicate all traces of Nazism by severely punishing the Germans through purges and blacklists of those compromised during the Third Reich. They intended to cleanse society of tainted individuals through a comprehensive, unequivocal denazification policy. The officers of the Music Branch of the ICD advocated a third, more moderate approach as they encouraged reform with a lighter hand and sought to influence the Germans by positive and subtle means. They intended to determine guilt on a case-by-case basis, clearing individuals for minor infractions or punishing them if necessary, rather than denazifying all of society by banning entire groups of people because they had connections to Nazism. The music officers often found themselves in conflict with McClure and the "revolutionaries," in turn creating confusion among the German musicians who were targets of American policy.

Monod examines a number of contexts where the American administration had a hand in German musical life. These include the appointment

of key individuals to important musical positions, the limiting of state authority so as to preserve autonomy and protect artistic freedom, and the expansion of the concert repertoire to include American and modern music. One of the most direct ways of effecting change was to remove those conductors, performers, and music administrators whom the Americans felt had been compromised by their relationship with Nazism. Such a policy was fraught on many levels, as individuals sought to obscure their pasts and the Americans faced difficulty finding untainted replacements. The Intelligence Section often clashed with the more moderate music officers, as in the fairly typical case of the conductor Hans Knappertsbusch, who was cleared to conduct by the Music Branch officers but then blacklisted by the Intelligence Section; cases like these undermined American authority. In 1946–47, as Germans assumed increasing responsibility for their own affairs, including denazification, they pushed out many of the recent American appointees and reappointed their pre-1945 predecessors. The more lenient policies of the French, British, and Soviets, which allowed many dubious individuals to keep or attain important positions in the musical world, further complicated denazification. The Soviet authorities in particular wanted to reactivate musical life quickly to satisfy the population and curry favor, even as their longer-term goals were to dominate cultural organizations. As a result, the Americans found themselves forced to compromise their more restrictive objectives.

American officials also sought to influence the relationship between musical institutions and local or state governments. After the strict control of the arts under the Nazis, the US wanted to decentralize power and limit state interference. To that end, American officials reduced the responsibilities of individuals in the most powerful positions and, more importantly, set up various committees that would provide a system of checks and balances. Monod argues that these reforms were largely successful, although in Bavaria officials were able to block some of these initiatives. He cites this process as one of the major accomplishments of the American administration, asserting that these seemingly minor changes had significant and far-reaching effects as the state's influence was indeed reduced and institutions operated more independently. Even during the belt-tightening following the currency reform, when state officials tried to cut costs by limiting the repertoire to more popular works, Monod argues that the American principles of checks and balances mitigated these incursions and preserved a measure of artistic freedom. He writes that the Germans appreciated many of these reforms (127), though he provides little evidence for this, instead offering many examples of German resistance that weaken his argument. Furthermore, his overarching and strong claim for the far-reaching effectiveness of American

policy is hard to fully accept given the considerable meddling by local governments and the return of blacklisted individuals to important posts. Here as elsewhere, Monod's broad claims about the positive effects of American influence are undermined as much by sparse and somewhat vague examples as by strong evidence of German ability to stymie American policy.

Another key American initiative encouraged the expansion of the repertoire to include more non-German, and especially American and modern compositions. (Interestingly, the Americans also encouraged the performance of works by the Soviet composers Shostakovich and Prokofiev, though Monod fails to remark on this rather curious fact.) The Americans theorized that exposure to other great works would help to combat German nationalist arrogance. Such efforts proved particularly difficult, as German musicians generally showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for performing this music, and audiences as well were not especially interested. Monod concludes that, despite some successes, this aspect of American policy largely failed, as more conventional modern works by composers such as Britten and Copland alienated conservative listeners but bored those who wanted more cutting-edge programming.

The denazification of Wilhelm Furtwängler, the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, became a key symbolic moment in the transition from direct control in 1945–46 to a more advisory role for the Americans. Monod uses this well-known case to illuminate a number of issues and conflicts in the transitional year of 1946. Like most scholars, Monod considers Furtwängler to have been deeply compromised through his cooperation with the Nazi regime, and hence Furtwängler stood as an important test-case for denazification. The hardliners around McClure prevented the conductor's denazification in early 1946, as they saw him as the preeminent symbol of German music. Since he had worked so closely with the Nazis, the hardliners wanted to both punish him individually as well as demonstrate to the population that Nazi sympathizers would not be tolerated in post-fascist Germany. This position garnered significant dissatisfaction from many Germans, who saw in Furtwängler the representation of an untainted tradition of musical excellence; Germans generally considered his compromises with the regime minor and harmless, while the American hardliners viewed him as a clear example of the many leading musical figures who had supported Hitler. Both the British and especially the Soviets were eager to clear his name, which made the Americans look particularly intolerant. The difficulties and negative publicity in this case were likely a catalyst for General Clay to gradually turn over responsibility for denazification to the Germans in early 1946, a moment that coincided with American efforts to create an independent and democratic political system in their zone. McClure and

the Intelligence Section continued to try to block the denazification of Furtwängler and many others, but the tide had turned as the Americans relinquished control throughout 1946 and German tribunals cleared most musicians of significant guilt. In late 1946, the conductor's denazification hearing revealed troubling information about his complicity with the Nazis, but after much confusion and anguished wrangling, he was cleared in April 1947. In the winter of 1946–47, German authorities overturned dozens of blacklist cases, including those of the pianist Walter Gieseking and conductor Karl Böhm, symbolizing the definitive end of the revolutionary phase of denazification. German authorities abandoned the blacklist itself in 1947, and musicians returned en masse to their former positions in institutions around the country, sometimes replacing individuals appointed by the Americans. The Germans took full control of musical life beginning in 1947 and used their control to whitewash the Nazi past, as the primary task of American music officers became the promotion of American culture inside Germany.

In his final section, Monod examines these more subtle attempts to influence German musical life by recruiting American performers, something that various bureaucratic obstacles had prevented before 1948. A new generation of music officers, filled with drive and imagination, had arrived in 1947–48, and they saw themselves as promoters of American culture and transatlantic understanding in the context of the struggle against communism. Here as elsewhere, numerous problems, especially in securing funding, plagued these efforts. This generation of officers also showcased American artists of dubious quality, who neither attracted nor impressed German audiences. Nonetheless, Monod does credit the Music Branch with some limited achievements, including German audiences' appreciation of some American performers and the reorientation of German musical life. Concerts at the Amerika Häuser were a modest success, as were some of the musical aspects of the Berlin Festivals of the early 1950s, but overall the Americans did not convince Germans of the enduring value of American musical culture.

Monod specifically tests the effectiveness of music as a tool for reorienting German perceptions by looking at two key musical events. George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* was a sensation at the Berlin Festival in 1952; despite its controversial story line, American officials felt it had shown Germans a positive cultural artifact from the United States. Monod, however, claims German audiences largely perceived *Porgy and Bess* as an unsophisticated work that nonetheless demonstrated praiseworthy energy, including sexual energy. At the same time, these very qualities reinforced anti-American sentiments and perceptions of German musical superiority. A rare success

proved to be a visit by the young American conductor Leonard Bernstein in 1948. He brought a fresh method of conducting, leading the performance in a seemingly improvisational manner. Monod argues Germans subsumed him into their pre-existing views of America as energetic but unrefined, and asserts that Bernstein helped to drive a wedge into German notions of music by introducing concepts of novelty and flair. Audiences were overwhelmed by the dynamic young American composer, so different from his rehearsed and formal German peer, Herbert von Karajan. Monod attributes some positive effect to *Porgy* and especially to the Bernstein visit, as they introduced positive aspects of American cultural difference and portrayed the United States as an artistically energetic place. More discussion of the reception of these events, particularly the visit by Bernstein, would have strengthened Monod's arguments here, but his conclusions are broadly convincing.

Overall, Monod paints a complicated picture of mixed success and failure. Confusing policy statements, the lack of a clear sense of ultimate goals, conflicting lines of authority, clashing bureaucracies, poor organization, insufficient staff, and inadequate funding all hindered the Americans' efforts. After nearly a decade, Germans still believed in their own cultural superiority in the realm of music. The Americans failed to demonstrate the value of their own musical culture or even to convey that Germany and the United States shared similar cultures. Musical elites continued to harbor anti-American attitudes, despite some exceptions.

Ultimately, Monod maintains, the Americans' greatest service was to emphasize the "new," which caused German musicians to realign themselves and reject or hide their Nazi pasts, thus providing a fresh start for German culture and making the new musical life seem to break with the Nazi era. But there is a dark side to this as well, and Monod's monograph ends on a disturbingly somber, and altogether too-brief note. He faults the Americans for allowing German musicians to cover up their tainted activities pre-1945, which he calls "not a psychologically healthy development" (263), and one that troubles both him and other music lovers. The implications of such a statement should have been explored more fully. I wonder if he would agree with the thesis of Tony Judt's recent book, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (2005), in which Judt argues that an initial process of obscuring and forgetting was necessary for stability and growth, but that an acknowledgment of and confrontation with the Nazi era decades later was essential to overcome the tainted past and fully realize democratic, European ideals. Although outside the bounds of his study, it would be interesting to know if Monod tracks developments in the musical world along Judt's trajectory for German and European society more broadly.

Monod interviewed a number of the real-life counterparts to the Major Arnold of *Taking Sides*, and these oral histories help to bring his story to

life. At times, however, his obvious and understandable esteem for these individuals seems to lead him to larger assertions about their influence than are warranted. Surely, as he writes, many were respected and served as positive models for individual Germans. That the essential goodness of a few men had the impact Monod claims is not borne out fully by his evidence, however. A brief mention of American officials' abuse of power also calls for greater analysis: Monod hints at numerous infractions like arrogating the right to conduct an orchestra or demanding music lessons, and it is unclear that such actions were really so inconsequential.

Monod's book is filled with excellent illustrative anecdotes, which often frame the chapter or section to follow. Although he treads ground explored by other scholars, he enhances our understanding of well-known cases like that of Furtwängler. His consideration of the American occupation zone in Austria is instructive; as Nazism's supposed first victims, the Austrians denazified themselves quickly and with minimal American interference. Monod has admirably mastered the complicated bureaucratic structure of the American military government, though a chart or appendix of the various entities and individuals staffing them would have helped the reader. In sum, *Settling Scores* is a thorough and valuable work that complicates the existing picture of the early years of American influence on the musical world of postwar Germany.

*References*

Judt, Tony. 2005. *Postwar: A History of Europe after 1945*. New York: Penguin Press.