

## Theodor Adorno's Musical Monographs: Challenging the Genre and Creating Historical Narratives

Theodor Adorno's monographs on Wagner, Mahler, Beethoven, and Berg give insight into how Adorno approached and transformed the idea of a monograph, a genre so important to the discipline of musicology. Yet these monographs are often regarded separately, in the secondary literature, analyzed for the philosophical and sociological concepts. They are frequently criticized by musicologists for their style or lack musical analysis. His four books, naturally, have different approaches to the musicological genre. While he does address the life and works aspects, traditional to musicological monographs, in each book Adorno presents a historical narrative, through philosophical analysis, that develops a sense of continuity for each composer.

In this paper I will, for the first time, examine all four works together to understand how Adorno's music criticism challenged the genre of musical monograph while retaining traditions of the genre. I argue that in Adorno's musical monographs philosophical analysis serves as the method by which Adorno creates historical narratives. For each composer he orients their life and works in time, often by a given composers' relationship to other styles. This approach serves to develop a sense of continuity within the composers' oeuvre, stabilizing their given respective identities. Crucial to Adorno's musical aesthetics is understanding any given work, or composer, for their own sake, not in relation to others. These monographs further that agenda, while providing new narrative models for musicological texts. Adorno's monographs are critical to the changing perceptions of what a monograph, and musicological inquiry, could be in the middle of the twentieth century and beyond.

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