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**Title:** “All Over the World, We Hear the Sounds of Home”: Bohemian Musicians and the Politics of Cultural Mobility around 1900

**Abstract:**

Between 1850 and 1914, scores of musical ensembles from the Bohemian Ore Mountains embarked on tours ever farther beyond the Habsburg Empire’s eastern borders. These troupes—ranging from harp-guitar duos to small orchestras and including both men and women—became familiar in cities from Moscow to Yokohama. At home, newspapers reported, the musicians were impoverished borderland-dwellers, forced into labor migration by their lack of other prospects. Abroad, however, these German-speaking Bohemians became ambiguous cultural ambassadors, their performances representing local, imperial, and broadly “European” identities at turns. Attitudes toward these musicians’ mobility transformed over the second half of the nineteenth century: while mid-century critics celebrated performances in distant venues as evidence of musical excellence, by 1900 similar routes sparked anxieties about human trafficking, exploitation, and poor musical ability. Drawing on newspaper coverage alongside government records and travel diaries, this paper traces the contours and motivations of that shift. A look at these unusual migrants reveals changing Central European attitudes not only toward artistic mobility but also toward Asia, gender, and the role of culture in an increasingly connected world.

## Alfred Roller and Wagner's *Parsifal*: Vienna, Bayreuth, and Beyond

Anthony J. Steinhoff, Université du Québec à Montréal

Around 1900, three individuals powerfully shaped the reception of Richard Wagner and his operas in Vienna. On the one hand, Eduard Hanslick, the *Neue Freie Presse's* chief music critic and a noted Wagner detractor. On the other, the conductor Gustav Mahler and the stage designer Alfred Roller, who starting with their landmark 1903 production of *Tristan und Isolde* made the Vienna Hofoper into a leading center of Wagnerian interpretation. Although both men resigned their leadership roles at the Hofoper, respectively in 1907 and 1909, Roller continued to design new productions there, most notably the house's première of Wagner's *Parsifal* in 1914. Thus began a connection between designer and opera that speaks both to operatic culture in the Habsburg lands, but also Austro-Habsburg influences on Wagnerian production to the north.

This paper focuses on Roller as designer of *Parsifal*. It starts in Vienna, where his production remained in repertory (with minor modifications executed in 1933) until 1944. Then, in 1933, Adolf Hitler persuaded Winifred Wagner to give Roller a highly prestigious (and controversial) assignment: designing the Bayreuth Festival's new 1934 *Parsifal*, which would replace the inaugural 1882 production. Roller's work on Bayreuth's *Parsifal* was hampered by health problems and by increasingly tense relations between Austria and Germany, which explains its mixed success and the decision to retire the production already after the 1936 Festival. Nevertheless, Hitler remained entranced by Roller's scenic imagination. During the war, he proposed establishing artistic guidelines to ensure worthy performances of *Parsifal* throughout the Reich, which would be based on Roller's 1914 Vienna production. While Hitler ultimately abandoned the idea, the episode points to an ongoing Austro-Viennese influence on a key area of his cultural politics.

## ***Musicians as Voters***

*How military bands and their enemies politicized musicians and music practices in Austria around 1900*

Competition-based conflicts between civil musicians and military bands significantly intensified towards the end of the 19th century, both in the Habsburg Monarchy and internationally. In the Habsburg Monarchy, however, this conflict differed in many respects from the conflicts elsewhere, and this seems to me being important to be discussed in depth as I consider it as particularly relevant for a politically and socio-economically informed music history of the Habsburg monarchy in its last decades.

Being one of the very few mutually administrated matters by Austria and Hungary, the army was a favorite target of political groups and parties which were strongly critical against the *Gesamtstaat* (and thus the monarchy). In the course of their political agenda, these groups payed, since 1867, also increased attention to the “off-duty activities” (“außerdienstliche Tätigkeiten”) of military bands (by which they severely rivalled civil musicians). As a result, these military bands’ activities were regularly subject of debates in the *Reichsrat*. At the same time, the representatives of civil musicians – broadly incorporated in the 1897-founded professional association *Oesterreichisch-Ungarischer Musikerverband* [*Austrian-Hungarian Musicians’ Association*] – strengthened collaborations with politicians located at the left and right poles of the political spectrum. Music practice became thus political in a very concrete sense. And this also led to increased politicization among musicians – which can be considered as all the more important in view of the massive expansion of the general (male) suffrage in 1907, when large parts of (male) musicians became voters.

In my paper, I will at first provide a brief overview on the competitive situation between civil and military musicians in the late Habsburg monarchy. I then will analyse and discuss specific collaborations between musicians and political groups by discussing two questions: To what extent were a) musicians and b) music practices impacted by these collaborations? And with what consequences for the political tendencies of music life in Austria?

Fritz Trümpi is associate professor for musicology at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna mdw. His main research foci include music culture(s) in the late Habsburg Empire; music & politics; music in the context of industrial history and labor movements; history of music institutions. His most recent book is *Musik als Arbeit. Der Oesterreichisch-Ungarische Musikerverband als Gestalter des Musikbetriebs in der späten Habsburgermonarchie (1872-1914)*, Vienna: Böhlau 2024 (= *Wiener Veröffentlichungen zur Musikgeschichte* 18).

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