

work. Bademsoy thus skillfully complicates the idea of life writing's democratic potential as advertised in the introduction by Herges and Krimmer: "All too often," Bademsoy writes, "the ability of the oppressed to participate in literary discourse is falsely equated with an actual realization of democratic ideals" (268). This idea translates to the field of artistic discourse the conflict that has been accompanying the discussion of the democratic potential of social media from the beginning.

Social media, incidentally, are not tackled by any of the contributions in this volume; obviously, social media are hard to handle—harder still than the hundreds of letters, diaries, and memoirs which several contributors have carefully worked through. It will be a challenge for future studies of life writing to include digital spaces as they keep exploring the "democratic potential of life writing, its availability to those who do not possess the cultural capital or the self-confidence to embrace more traditional literary forms," as Herges and Krimmer write in their introduction (29). The contributions to *Contested Selves* demonstrate most impressively that there is a strong nexus between life writing and politics. Neither politics nor life writing nor the nexus between the two will vanish any time soon; it is to be hoped that books such as *Contested Selves* will continue to shed light on them.

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Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Lands of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms.

By Kira Thurman. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021. 368 pages + 30 b/w images. \$32.95 hardcover, \$15.99 e-book.

"Black people have been part of German-speaking Europe's musical history all along. We simply had to listen" (280). So writes historian Kira Thurman to end this defining work on the history of Black classical musicians in Central Europe from the nineteenth century through the construction of the Berlin Wall, and in this concluding statement are contained the monograph's main arguments *in nuce*. (Full disclosure: While I have corresponded with the author generally about her work and am mentioned in the acknowledgments, I have not been involved closely in any way with this project.) To begin with, artists of the African diaspora were never not active within German music and its institutions and culture—as Thurman repeatedly documents through original and extensive use of archives across Germany, Austria, and the United States. Her study, however, not only uncovers this history, but reveals how it had been actively and intentionally silenced in the first place. Thurman's two great contributions in this work are therefore, first, an understanding of the contribution of Black people to German-speaking Europe's music history, and second, demonstrating a method for how to listen to this history against more than a century's worth of silence.

To organize this immense material, Thurman divides *Singing Like Germans* into three recognizable chronological eras, each encompassing three chapters. Part I covers 1870 through 1914, Part II 1918 to 1945, and Part III 1945 to 1961. While one could well imagine Thurman having written a book on any one of these individual periods, the extended range of time covered in the work allows the force of her argument to build in compelling ways. The first chapter reconstructs the largely untold

reception of German music culture within Black America at the end of the nineteenth century. Though mostly excluded from white institutions, in particular elite conservatories, Black musicians sought out and received training in the Austro-German classical canon from German-born teachers at HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) like Spelman, Howard, and Fisk, as well as some unique majority-white institutions like Oberlin College. Thurman argues that such training was not about accommodation to white American values, but rather that it “allowed Black Americans to envision a musical world beyond the United States” (26). An important step toward this musical new world was represented in travel to Germany and Austria, the subject of Chapter Two. African American musicians like Will Marion Cook, Elmer Spyglass, Bertha Hansbury, Hazel Harrison, and many others enrolled at conservatories across Germany and in their writings home and later travel narratives spoke of the transformative nature of their experiences abroad. Such writings reveal as much as they conceal about life in Germany for Black people, and in Chapter Three, Thurman investigates how German critics racialized Black musicians in imperial Germany. In this chapter, she lays out a further central argument of her work, namely that the racialization and racialized reception of German music and Black musicians in the nineteenth century prefigured and framed the reception of Black musicians for the next century. She shows that because Black people could not be German under an exclusionary, racist conception of (white) German music and culture, Black musicians could never be accepted as authentic producers of this music. Amongst many, many other effects, Thurman shows how this pretzel logic led to repeated acts of forgetting, i.e. of erasure, of Black musicians’ presence on the part of German critics.

If Thurman’s account sets the record straight on many of these accounts, her uncovering of the racist ideology at the core of German music and music criticism is at least as significant an achievement. That said, one of the most important corrections offered by Thurman is the recognition of the predominant role played by women vocalists, and she recounts not only relatively well-known appearances by Sissieretta Jones in Berlin in the mid-1890s, but those of Marie Selika, Abbie Mitchell, Jenny Bishop, and others. Unlike the Fisk Jubilee Singers or later Black vocalists from the 1920s, the pre-war tours of these women included Italian arias and Swiss echo songs to the exclusion of the spirituals that would later be expected of Black performers. For Thurman, the Black performance of classical music is uniquely capable of making the unspoken silence of classical music’s whiteness resound. “Racially unmarked for so long,” she writes, “classical music became an audible signifier of a white, European culture (against a supposedly primitive, non-European one) only when listeners were forced to think about classical music’s racial alternatives” (92). At other times of course, white German listeners could choose not to think out loud about these matters, for example, by declining to publish reviews of Black musicians.

One long-lasting effect of this willful erasure of Black musicianship in the classical arena is that in successive eras white critics will repeatedly invent the Black artist as something new for them, as Thurman shows in the next section of her book on the period between 1918 and 1945. Chapter Four considers the activities of Black singers in a post-World-War I era that not only witnessed “some of the most hateful tropes and rhetoric in Central European history,” but also Black artists traveling to and performing in German-speaking countries at an unprecedented level, in the pro-

cess forming “powerful networks and allies to launch their careers” (101). Thurman’s discussion focuses again on Black singers, especially Roland Hayes and Marian Anderson. Each of them became a celebrity within the European concert circuit and due to their heightened visibility and strong networks of support, they and other Black musicians from this era could not as easily be ignored. The reaction of German audiences to Hayes and Anderson is the subject of Chapter Five. These two singers were towering figures within the history of twentieth-century music and major performers of the lied. In her analysis of the responses to their performances of this iconically German genre, Thurman notes that ultimately “both Anderson’s and Hayes’ Blackness [. . .] posed a stumbling block to many listeners enjoying these performances of German lieder. However entranced some critics were by their stunning renditions of Schubert lieder, they nonetheless could not imagine Anderson and Hayes as both Black and capable of expressing the German spirit” (150). Black singers were either lauded as having adopted white qualities and thus achieved “perfection,” i.e., Germanness, or were seen as having retained their Blackness and deemed “deficient.” The immoveable contradiction between German and Black identities continued in the 1930s, whether in Germany or Austria, the geographic focus of Chapter Six. What the 1930s bear witness to for Thurman is less a discursive turn than an amplification and realization of the threats of violence that had always accompanied Black musicians’ performances in the 1920s. For complicated reasons that Thurman describes, this violent shift was slow to be acknowledged within the African American community itself, even by such lauded figures as W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, with the author concluding: “The downplaying or dismissal of Anti-Black racism by African Americans in Central Europe was rampant” (170). To counter this falsehood, Thurman documents the widespread departure from German-speaking Europe by Black musicians in response to the threats and reality of violence against Black people. The sixth chapter thus appropriately concludes with a consideration of Marian Anderson’s residence in and eventual departure from Vienna. Anderson’s performances in this city “represented the aspects of German music that nationalists wished to see buried: its universalism, its ability to bring musicians of different races together for the purpose of performance” (177–78). Moments like this—and there are many within *Singing Like Germans*—represent key reminders of the transcendent potentialities contained within the history of Black classical musicians in Central Europe, even if they were but ephemeral pauses in the *longue durée* of exclusion and violence.

The third and final part opens with a chapter on Black classical musicians in the framework of denazification. It is here, in the final section of the work, that Thurman brings the full weight and impact of her argument to bear, showing how there was hardly a hint of a *Stunde Null*, neither in terms of the presence of Black classical musicians nor in the intractability of the racialized framework of their reception. Thurman opens the chapter by considering Rudolph Dunbar, who in 1945 became the first Black man to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic. Unlike so many other figures presented in this work, Dunbar’s story is not unknown, but Thurman’s deep contextualization provides an exceedingly rich understanding of the history behind this moment. The penultimate chapter investigates how Blackness figured in opera in the Federal Republic of Germany. In the aftermath of the Second World War, West German opera houses featured numerous Black singers such as Grace Bumbry, Leontyne Price, and others. In the context of denazification, Black opera singers were a

way for these institutions to “pursu[e] new audiences and [. . .] cultivat[e] new legacies for themselves” (224). Due to continuing racist fears over Black male masculinity, however, Black men faced tremendous obstacles in being cast in any role that would place them in proximity to a white female. And while Black women had greater access to roles, they faced stereotyped casting in exotic roles and/or having cosmetics applied that lightened or hid their skin tone—all done, as Thurman notes, “for the sake of making the audience more comfortable” (230). The final chapter turns to the situation of Black classical musicians in the German Democratic Republic. While the GDR publicly declared itself an agent of antiracism, Thurman shows that the GDR’s staging of race and Blackness was “capable of performing racism and anti-racism” (257) at the same time. A particularly important case in point here is the East German career of singer Aubrey Pankey, who after being granted asylum by the GDR had a highly productive career there across the post-war era. He was also, Thurman notes, one of the few musicians vocal about calling out the racism of white Germans. Thus when in 1959 the singer was invited to perform the non-singing part of a Black preacher in a concert of American music, Pankey refused and wrote a scathing letter that eventually reached the culture ministry. Connected criticisms—e.g. that he should not sing so many lieder and instead showcase spirituals—dogged Pankey’s career in the GDR, but he did not stop. “Pankey’s performance of German lieder,” concludes Thurman, “illuminate[s] two different levels of thinking at work: the socialist anti-racism that the state promoted, and the ongoing depictions of African American identity rooted in the pre-1945 era” (269).

Thurman’s work is undoubtedly more than the sum of its parts. It contests and lays bare modes and manners of thinking that were not only formative within the era of her study but continue to structure our world today. The antimonial relationship between Blackness and white Germanness remains. Studies of Black music and musicians in Germany, for example, have until now focused almost exclusively on the more comfortable perspective of African American popular music (ragtime, jazz, rock-n-roll, and hip hop). That said, there are times at which this reviewer felt the significance and critical potential of Black popular music in the German-speaking context to have been unduly downplayed. Regardless, Thurman’s study of Black musicians is an indispensable and foundational achievement. For *Singing Like Germans* is as much about the overdue recognition of Black classical musicians in German music history as it is about understanding, first, that the idea of German music exists to a large degree by dint of its exclusion of others, and second, that Black musicians have always been a part of this music. By listening to its sounds as well as its silences, Thurman’s work represents a monumental and necessary step towards rewriting the history of German music.

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Gespenstische Souveränität. Zur politischen Einbildungskraft zwischen 1910 und 1920.

Von Sebastian Haselbeck. Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2021. 248 Seiten + 17 Abbildungen. €29,90 gebunden, €23,99 eBook.

Die Herren, die im deutschen Kaiserreich und in der frühen Weimarer Zeit die deutsche Politik steuerten, hielten sich einiges zugute auf ihren klaren Blick für die großen