

Fliegende Blätter für Musik (1855-1857)

The journal *Fliegende Blätter für Musik. Wahrheit über Tonkunst und Tonkünstler* [Musical leaves. Truth about the art of music and artists. FBM] was published in Leipzig by Baumgärtner's Buchhandlung from 1855 to 1857 and printed there by F. A. Brockhaus. According to the journal's introduction, its purpose was "to foster and spread knowledge of the sources of and solutions to problems in music, by bringing an understanding of music to a wide audience."¹ Volumes one and two of FBM contain eight issues each, which are usually sixty-four pages in length. Volume three consists of only two issues. Volume one is dated 1855, and both volumes two and three, 1857.²

The editor and sole contributor,³ Johann Christian Lobe (1797-1881), identifies himself only as "Der Wohlbekannte" [The well-known person] and as the editor of his earlier serial publication, the *Musikalische Briefe*⁴ [Musical letters]. Mostly self-trained, Lobe worked as flutist, violist and composer before turning his focus to writing about music. From 1846-48, Lobe was editor of the renowned journal *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in Leipzig and taught there at his own music institute.⁵ Lobe's stature and influence in the German musical world is reflected in his essays about talks with eminent composers of the time, such as Weber, Mendelssohn and Zelter, as well as with Goethe. An essay about a talk with Albert Lortzing has long served as an important source of information about the composer's aesthetics on opera.⁶ All of Lobe's articles in FBM are written in the first person, thus emphasizing the subjectivity of his perspective.

Articles, some of which are titled "Briefe" [letters] treat various musical subjects and account for the bulk of the journal. Often the "Briefe" appear in series devoted to a single subject. These letters may be printed as a continuing series, or in a single issue. The

¹ Johann Christian Lobe, "Programm," in FBM 1, no. 1 (1855): 1-4.

² In the microfilm copy of FBM available to us, the issues have been stripped of cover pages and appear bound and published as volumes, with new cover pages for the volumes. The only indications for the start of an issue are small roman and Arabic numerals at the bottom of the first page of every issue and a reference to F. A. Brockhaus as the printer on every last page.

³ Except for a number of quotes from other journals, books or conversations, which are always marked as such.

⁴ Johann Christian Lobe, *Musikalische Briefe. Wahrheit über Tonkunst und Tonkünstler. Von einem Wohlbekannten* [Musical letters. Truth about music's art and artists. By a well-known person], 2 vols. Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1852.

⁵ *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1st ed., s.v. "Lobe, Johann Christian."

⁶ Petra Fischer, *Vormärz und Zeitbürgertum. Gustav Albert Lortzings Operntexte*. Stuttgart: Metzler & Poeschl, 1996.

articles are followed by a small *Feuilleton* section, containing anecdotes, aphorisms, and quotes from other journals.

In the introduction, Lobe announced seven topics for these letters, but not all of them were treated before the demise of the journal. The first series of six letters is titled “Technische Konstruktion der Instrumentalwerke” [Technical construction of instrumental compositions]. Here, Lobe explains the use of motives and themes and the larger structure of cadences and periods and then encourages the readers to apply this knowledge to every piece of music they hear. Examples used are the finale to Haydn’s Symphony No. 2 and a Beethoven string quartet and quintet.

In his “Ästhetische Briefe” [Letters on aesthetics], Lobe gives an historic overview of the idea of “the beautiful” and then defines the beautiful in music as being: clarity of form, naturalness of content and realism of expression. These criteria reflect a standpoint combining Classical and early Romantic ideals; the composers most referred to by Lobe are Haydn, Mozart (especially his operas), Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Carl Maria von Weber (his operas *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*). Lobe also writes approvingly about Spontini’s opera *Die Vestalin* [*La Vestale*], Berlioz’s overture to *Die Vehmrichter* [*Les Francs juges*], Auber’s opera *Maurer und Schlosser* [*Le Maçon*], Joseph Weigl’s opera *Die Schweizerfamilie*, and Méhul’s operas *Je toller, je besser* [*Une Folie*] and *Joseph und seine Brüder* [*Joseph*].

In the series “Dramatische Briefe” [Letters on drama], Lobe discusses the techniques of writing a play, including the motivation of characters, the structure of the plot and the scene layout. Lessons in harmony, part writing and voice leading are presented as a series of letters on the writing of four-part compositions for men’s choirs. Lobe makes abundant use of musical examples in all his theoretical writing in the journal. When discussing specific passages of a composer’s work, Lobe often supplies alternate versions of his own for comparison.

In his “Briefe über Rich. Wagner an einen jungen Komponisten” [Letters on Rich. Wagner to a young composer], Lobe writes sympathetically about Wagner’s operas *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*.⁷ He also attempts to clarify the structure of Liszt’s symphonic poems in the article “Briefe über Liszt’s symphonische Dichtungen.”⁸ Critical remarks by Lobe against the “Zukunftspartei” [Party of the future] are generally not aimed at its most prominent figures, Wagner and Liszt, but instead at supporting music critics and lesser composers. Lobe’s polemics against those who would ride on the wave of someone else’s success and use the idea of “music of the future” as an excuse to write incomprehensible compositions is best expressed in his satire “Ein neuer Prophet der Zukunft” [A new prophet of the future].⁹ Lobe also analyses phrases and catchwords

⁷ FBM 1, no. 7 (1855): 411-23; FBM 1, no. 8: 444-65; FBM 2, no. 1 (1857): 27-48.

⁸ FBM 2, no. 7 (1857): 385-416.

⁹ FBM 2, no. 5 (1857): 314-19.

frequently used in the press, in his column “Revue der Zeitphrasen auf dem Gebiete der Musik” [Review of contemporary sayings in the field of music].

Of great interest is Lobe’s response to Eduard Hanslick’s famous essay “Vom musikalischen-Schönen” [On the beautiful in music].¹⁰ Lobe writes, “Just as I am about to summarize my analysis on the use of every musical element for the expression of feelings, and as I want to explain how they [the elements] can work together to this end, a little pamphlet comes my way with the assertion: that music should not and can not express any feelings. If this is true, then the preaching in my letters on aesthetics was misguided, and the continuation of them must naturally cease.”¹¹

Lobe’s article is later followed with an unexplained fugue,¹² perhaps to make the case that instrumental music can speak louder than words.

The final issue contains a statement by Lobe, dated November 1857, about a sudden sickness that forces him to relinquish work on FBM.¹³ Here, Lobe also mentions a note on the cover page of the penultimate issue, in which he had promised faster succession of issues.

This RIPM publication is based on a microfiche copy of the journal produced by IDC in Leiden (Netherlands).

¹⁰ FBM 2, no. 2 (1857): 65-106.

¹¹ “Eben als ich die Resultate meiner Untersuchungen über das was jedes einzelne musikalische Element zum Ausdruck der Gefühle beiträgt, zusammenfassen und erklären will, wie sie vereint dafür wirken mögen, kommt mir ein Schriftchen mit der Behauptung entgegen: Daß die Musik gar keine Gefühle ausdrücken solle und könne. Wenn das wahr ist, so haben meine ästhetischen Briefe nur Irrtum gepredigt, und die Fortsetzung derselben muß natürlicherweise unterbleiben.” Op. cit.

¹² FBM 2, no. 3 (1857): 183-89.

¹³ “Abschied” [Farewell], in FBM 3, no. 2 (1857): 49.