



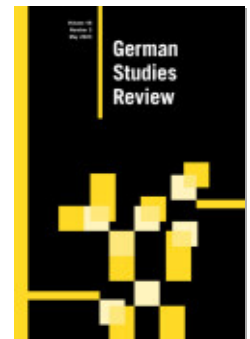
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*Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach,
Beethoven, and Brahms* by Kira Thurman (review)

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eventually to children as an incentive, are about the badges' ability to show allegiance.

The chapter "Trash or Treasure" shifts from focusing on the collectors to how an object transitions from transient, to rubbish, to something durable. The chapter reminds us of the value of material objects and how, especially for a historian, it is the "everyday objects most likely discarded that had the greatest potential to show how a given society functioned" (131). While many symbolic objects were destroyed out of revenge, several soldiers took objects as souvenirs, which were then passed down in the family, inspiring future collectors. The chapter ends with how the symbols were appropriated by various groups over the years, beginning in the 1940s with the Hell's Angels, and then various bands such as the Rolling Stones or the Sex Pistols. Though, by that time in the 1970s, the collection of symbols was used as a provocation rather than an allegiance to fascist ideology.

Hughes presents the ethical considerations in collecting controversial historical artifacts and postulates how to preserve such artifacts in a responsible way. Namely, by placing them in public institutions rather than private hands where they can be used to incite racism. He reminds us that there is still capacity for "Nazi symbols to wreak havoc within present-day democratic societies" (114). This book fills a gap that the public was probably unaware of was missing, but one which should be filled immediately by a wide readership. *The Anarchy of Nazi Memorabilia* is a well-written and thoroughly researched study offering valuable connections between the present and the past that will appeal to all historians, social scientists, those interested in collecting and in material culture, and likely many more.

Melissa Etzler, *Butler University*

Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. By Kira Thurman. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021. Pp. 368. Hardcover \$32.95. ISBN 978-1501759840.

In the field of musicology, several key studies have examined how categories of "Germanness" and "Otherness" have been constructed and negotiated in musical discourse, ranging from such topics as the musical practice of Martin Luther's aesthetic reform, or the revival of J. S. Bach's work under the auspices of the Enlightenment-era German Jewish patron Sarah Levy. The rise in antisemitism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found its way into music criticism, with composers and music critics—such as Rudolf Louis and Richard Wagner—frequently attacking German Jewish composers such as Felix Mendelssohn and Gustav Mahler for the supposed aural "tainting" and eastern "accents" of their music. The Third Reich escalated racist musical stereotypes by defaming certain music as "*entartet*," including Jewish composers, African American jazz, and Roma traditions. Now, musicologist

Kira Thurman brings attention to another important but heretofore overlooked topic in the history of the construction and policing of “Germanness” in German classical music, specifically the prominent role that Black classical musicians have played in the performance of that music from the late nineteenth century to the recent past.

In *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms*, Thurman follows a chronological three-part trajectory: Part I: 1870–1914; Part II: 1918–1945; and Part III: 1945–1961. In Part I, Thurman conveys that the “music of Reinecke and other German composers floated freely out of the windows of chapels [and] concert halls in the 1890s [America]” (22). Black Americans’ drive to educate themselves in the music of Reinecke and others, in addition to other academic approaches, was a mass movement that “promised to cultivate new generations of politically minded, culturally sophisticated, and socially aware Black citizens to advance their rights in a nation that still refused to recognize them” (23). German classical music, in its own immigrant journey to America, found a place in the lives of African Americans. But there was also movement in the other direction. Thurman presents a series of case studies on Black migration to, and venture within Germany—including Will Marion Cook, William H. Tyers, J. Elmer Spyglass, and Portia Washington—to name a few. Thurman is careful to explain the unique components of each individual’s transatlantic travel. Even across the ocean, Thurman unveils how Jim Crow still haunted African American lives in Germany, predominantly at the hands of white Americans who also found themselves in Germany. Thurman dedicates an entire chapter to a discussion of how transatlantic notions of race influenced white listening experiences of Black classical musicians in German, emphasizing the *aesthetic* component of this construction, which forced white listeners to confront the juxtaposition of the visual and aural.

In Part II, Thurman emphasizes the heightening of racial propaganda that led toward starker forms of discrimination in the 1920s, specifically the “Black Horror on the Rhine” campaign. The author tracks how these racial slurs then impacted the reception of Black musicians in Germany. Despite the exceptional mastering of the German Lieder by Black musicians in this period, Thurman finds, in her scrutiny of the archive of German music reviews, that critics “revisited their definitions of Blackness and whiteness in response to Black performers’ musical erasures of the Black-white binary” (158).

Part III focuses largely on the process of denazification and the role that Black musicians played in it. Thurman shows that the US State Department saw in them the “best asset in the reorientation of Germans” (196), a role that I view as far more nuanced and difficult than Leonard Bernstein’s “Mahler revival” in Vienna. In her closing chapters, the author demonstrates the continuation of racial discrimination and the push for Black musicians to carry an agency that was simultaneously denied to them by their own government.

As a scholar of the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism, I personally see a counter-narrative within Thurman's work, one that highlights a "trade" of sorts between America and Germany, with German Jews coming to America and becoming leading composers and scholars in Hollywood, Broadway, and the academy, and African Americans engaging in the inverse and finding their success in Europe. At the core of all of this is the systemic discrimination that drives our colonial heritages. Thurman's work is especially timely when music academics such as Philip Ewell and Justin London consider the current state of our field fraught with questions of music theory's "white racial frame," gender, and race. In Justin London's recent article in *MTO: A Journal of the Society for Music Theory*, "A Bevy of Biases: How Music Theory's Methodological Problems Hinder Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" (March 2022), he asks how we can expand the canon while simultaneously avoiding tokenism and a rhetoric of "exception" or "uniqueness." Thurman's historiography is one answer to this question: demonstrating that history has a bountiful number of examples that, on their own, exhibit the "qualifications" deemed necessary for access into the canon.

A "great" composer's work is only as good as its performance (yes, contrary to long belief). The Black classical musicians that Thurman showcases are just a few of the strong individuals who conveyed musical greatness, a greatness that defied the systemic challenges with which their own country continues to affront them. To quote Thurman, "[*Singing Like Germans*] encourages us to consider what happened when Black classical musicians defied [white] expectations, to linger in those moments when [Black classical musicians] sang music that did not supposedly 'look like them,' when they performed brilliantly and under considerable scrutiny" (18).

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Affective Spaces: Migration in Scandinavian and German Transnational Narratives. By Anja Tröger. Cambridge: Legenda, 2021. Pp. xi + 181. Cloth £79.99. ISBN 978-1839540134.

Anja Tröger's 2021 monograph *Affective Spaces: Migration in Scandinavian and German Transnational Narratives* examines twelve novels whose fairly recent publication dates are bookended by Vigdis Hjorth's *Snakk til meg* (2011) and Zeshan Shakar's *Tante Ulrikkes vei* (2017). The novels are written in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and German, take place in the respective countries, and are all transnational narratives, populated with characters who are in transit or have already arrived in one of the respective countries. The study is organized into five chapters that thematically follow the chronology of the "migratory journey" (4), from examining personal motivations and circumstances of migrants' decisions to leave their home countries (chapter one);