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Taking the Provinces Seriously*

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Abstract

Using France as a case-study, this essay calls for enhanced recognition of cultural variegation within nation states in the era of European Romantic nationalism. It outlines a new, integrated and comparative approach to the study of provincial music in a context where national centralisation is the norm. The situation in France, especially during the height of the "provincial awakening" around 1900, is analysed in light of the ideas of Ivo Strecker and Joep Leerssen on regionalism and ethnic nationalism, and alongside broader questions of cultural decentralisation. Particular attention is drawn to the challenges posed by borderlands, by the intersection of cultural and political ideas, and by the dangers of false separations between high and low cultures at local level.

Keywords: France, provincial awakening, Ivo Strecker, Joep Leerssen, borderlands

I have done it myself on numerous occasions: publishing under titles that mention "France" when I really mean "Paris". And amid new sensitivity among French researchers to such unthinking assimilation of the capital to the nation, this historiographical *faux pas* has even gained a name: "Parisianisme". It was in response to the dominance of capital-centric work that one of the main strands of the Belgrade conference *The Future of Music History* involved the "liberation of regions from their charismatic capitals" and a concomitant "denationalising" of research. The link between capital city and nation was key, the point being either that within current music-historical tradition the capital and its government are seen to determine what happens within the boundaries of the nation state, or that the capital somehow represents and subsumes the nation. There are of course exceptions to this mania of the single

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capital. No historian of music is going to prioritise Washington over New York or Boston or New Orleans just because it is the capital of the USA; and no one is going to deny that both Moscow and St Petersburg were equal centres of musical authority in nineteenth-century Russia. Spain, Italy and Germany each have multiple former capital cities relating to former duchies and kingdoms – and those cities, together with their respective regions have retained much of their cultural status and distinctiveness despite unification of various kinds.

There is a general principle at stake in the idea of "denationalising music history". It is that of ceasing to take monolithic notions of the nation state as the "natural" point of reference to categorise styles, movements or cultural trends. There have been two responses to this clarion call, especially within the musicology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which is what concerns me here. One is to think globally about music history and to open up pan-European or imperial and postcolonial perspectives alongside transatlantic, transmediterranean and other kinds of trans-oceanic study. The other is to think regionally and comparatively about diversity *within* the nation state. Both give voice to underrepresented groups (the colonised, the provincial). And although the second of these ways of thinking remains focused on the territory of the nation state, it does a lot to decentre the capital and to prevent the study of such cities as a short cut to understanding the culture of an often heterogeneous polity.

Concomitantly, it means we must be ready for a more bottom-up consideration of musical life – of 'musicking' and its role in ordinary lives – and not just of music as an elevated art form. Since capitals attract the vast majority of the composers whom posterity values, there is a musicological logic to focusing on them; but if we treat capitals as though they are normal, we shall conflate music history in its broadest sense with monumental musicology. Not only that, but we risk committing errors of scalability through unjustified extrapolation from capital to region, while underestimating questions of mobility and displacement among musicians most of whom are nomadic freelancers. If we wish to be better historians, we should be widening our purview and thinking about how people's lives were lived, musically and otherwise – not just in the capital, but elsewhere.

Put together, the binary of capital/region and the term "liberation" I cite above perhaps suggest that in a new music-historical order, nation and locality would exist in an either/or relationship defined more or less antagonistically. But that word "liberation" also suggests that alternative or overlapping geographical groupings might be possible, defined by a combination of historical links, borderland affinities, or ethnic or linguistic community. Depending on the political space, relationships with capital cities and their dominant cultures do not have to be reduced to a brute either/or. Rather, it is beneficial to look for dialogue and negotiation of different kinds – patterns that are messy, and which change over time. Neither is it necessarily useful to consider every cultural conversation as self-evidently including the capital as a reference point: there are regional power centres, region-specific patterns of immigration, neighbourly rivalries or alliances, and international relationships with religious power-bases to take account of too. Belonging and identity are both layered and intersectional.

Broadly speaking, it is no coincidence that those nations with multiple focal points for musicologists are themselves federations (Germany, Spain, the USA), while those with a single, magnetic, capital, are more centralised (France, the Soviet Union). Neither is it a coincidence that different forms of the nation state should catalyse different kinds of regionalism—to which musicologists need to be sensitive. In 1994, the anthropologist Ivo Strecker wrote a short think-piece on the two main types of regionalism he saw emerging in his own lifetime: a 'soft' version characteristic of affluent and federal societies insisting on their distinctiveness in the face of the homogenisation brought by internationalism (we would now call it globalisation); and a 'hard' regionalism underpinned by resistance to the conformity brought by colonial oppression and its legacy. The first is more cultural than political; the second reverses those priorities and leads to active struggles for independence (Strecker cites examples within the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, the UK, and Ethiopia) (Strecker 1994: 47–52). Because he connected it with resistance to big industry despoiling the local, Strecker concluded that "soft regionalism" dated from the 1960s (Strecker 1994: 48). Yet with very few tweaks, both extremes of his binary (and the continuum we must be careful to recognise within it) have resonance for the study of France during the "réveil des provinces" [the provincial awakening] – a decades-long process covering much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At this point it becomes useful to think of them in combination with the work of Joep Leersen on Romantic ethnic nationalism, where a 'soft' version is characterised by celebratory initiatives regarding museums, heritage, folk culture and language-conservation, but where political weaponisation turns those same initiatives into the cultural preconditions for independent nationhood (Leerssen 2006: 559–578, esp. 572).

To return to Strecker: he makes no mention of France, perhaps because it does not present itself as a clear case. But that is my point. For while Strecker seems to assume that each nation state of the late twentieth century will provoke a single variety of regionalism, France during this earlier period covers the whole range. Politically and culturally, the Départements created out of the provinces in post-Revolutionary France can be equated to colonies or protectorates (the analogy was current in the 1860s, at the very least), leading to instances of Strecker's hard regionalism; on the other hand, concerns about the homogenising, alienating and dehumanising effects of industrialisation, together with the highly effective spread of urban cultures from Paris, led to the softer version, which was wrapped up in morality (and often Catholicism) more than in politics. As Jennifer Millar has noted, the cultural regionalism of Provence from the 1850s under the poetic leadership of Frédéric Mistral equates to Strecker's soft regionalism (and the celebratory end of Leerssen's ethnic nationalism), while the more antagonistic and ethnically-defined regionalism of Brittany appears considerably harder.[2] In fact, the spectrum of debate about relations between Paris and the French provinces is even wider, since in parts of industrialised France the issue is neither soft nor hard regionalism, but decentralisation – essentially a plea

2 Without foregrounding the specifics of the French case, Jennifer Millar makes this connection in her PhD distinctiveness (Millar 2010: 10–11).

to be taken seriously in (often conformist) matters of local governance and cultural provision.

How, then, does French musical life work in practice? In this short essay I aim not to provide comprehensive answers but to show how routes towards those answers can help clarify the utility of thinking musically about a centralised but internally heterogeneous country from provincial or regional perspectives. I want to think about ways that we can fruitfully approach questions of regional difference and local authority within a country whose national institutions promoted centralisation, hierarchy, uniformity and assimilation whenever possible, the rationale being that regional difference and/or local decision-making would threaten French claims to 'universality' and, at its extreme, undermine the integrity of the State itself. To do so I propose to use centralisation and the reactions it provokes as analytical categories, before addressing borderlands, comparativism, and the beneficial collapsing of traditional binaries that can come with working on smaller-scale centres.

Centralisation

The most common reference point for any study of regional France in the long nineteenth century is the 1789 Revolution. France had known centralisation since the Academies of Louis XIV, but the dual Jacobin need for a *tabula rasa* and a rationally-ordered unity led to wholesale change. The Revolutionary calendar started again from year 1, decimalisation included a 10-day week, French was instituted as the sole national language, and in an attempt to neutralise historic power-bases, the provinces were replaced by Départements with new boundaries, new administrations, and anodyne new labels. It was the erasure of language and province, along with secularisation (including closure of all France's choir schools), that sealed the notion of France's new Départements as colonial territories. Moreover, new systems of local control involved establishing the all-important Préfecture, the office where the Préfet, as representative of the State, acted as overseer of mayors on behalf of ministers. Amid the artistic destruction or sequestration of anything Catholic, the Jacobins created Paris institutions such as the Louvre or the Conservatoire, intended respectively as showcase and training ground of the best the country had to offer. Monumental Paris became the heart of France, drawing in talent, oxygenating it and sending it nationwide and empire-wide, in re-energised form. Hence the spread of local versions of the Opéra, the Comédie-Française, the Louvre, and perhaps also the École des Beaux-Arts and the Conservatoire. All on a small scale, and usually managed via the three-tier hierarchy of town hall, Préfecture, and government ministry. It is a paradigm within which the child must perforce look like its mother, but according to which that child will never achieve maturity or – heaven forbid –independence.

The success of French centralisation – which extends even to minutiae such as the identical cataloguing systems of most of its local archives – has encouraged those of us who work on the French nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to absorb and re-inscribe this sense of Paris as the inventor and purveyor of all things French. We

have looked at Parisian sources and written about 'national pride', 'national identity' and what 'the French' thought. We have not, in other words, necessarily considered whether other parts of France might show evidence of disagreement with Paris, or evidence of the building of alternative systems of culture. Paris is itself multi-faceted, but too often that fact is used as a way of bolstering the argument that as a microcosm of France it is therefore all we need.

Historiographically, the centrist legacy, which maps neatly onto the rise and stabilisation of Republicanism across the nineteenth century, offers a French version of 'whig history' – a history of winners who conceptualise a national narrative as a teleological and inevitable progression towards the embedding of their own now-insuperable position. The ramifications of whig history are not hard to discern: history with hindsight, a deterministic approach to the definition of progress, and a high level of discomfort with any form of resistance, which must necessarily be placed on the wrong side of history and branded traditional or reactionary. Wittingly or not, and quite apart from the manner in which it has occulted the regions as a subject unworthy of study, the adoption within French musicology of Parisianism has encouraged precisely these whiggish tendencies, especially in studies of the Third Republic (1870–1940), where continuity with the present helps consign the legacies of monarchy and Bonapartism to the past.[3]

The end result of such asymmetries of cultural power can be seen in a pioneering book to which I find myself turning frequently despite disagreeing profoundly with its research premises: François Lesure's *Dictionnaire musical des villes de province*, which is organised as an entry on each of France's major cities and towns. As Lesure himself says (wryly it should be noted – the book is in many ways a call to action), French centralisation enabled the entire book to be researched from Paris, and he concentrated on a synthesis of the secondary literature combined with perspectives from the Parisian press (Lesure 1999: 7). Yet working in this way risks becoming complicit with the whiggish view if, as in the case of Lesure's extended Introduction, it entails giving voice only to those who disparage the quality of local activity or audience response. Lesure does not ignore the structural effects of institutional centralisation in the nineteenth century, especially in relation to opera; but his focus on artistic quality and appreciation in the provinces, or the lack of it, sets up a more important, silent, and misleading comparison of Paris as unfailing paragon, especially since it is at precisely these moments of quoted derision that his often densely factual account comes alive.[4] Moreover the combination of a monumental musicological approach with Paris-centric research leads him to a final reckoning in which he laments how few major composers emerged from *la France profonde* without either studying priva-

3 For a feisty analysis, see Mayr 1990: 301–309. In France the regions are not the only victims: the mix of Republicanism and anticlericalism has left the history of sacred music as another historiographical poor relation.

4 See, for instance, his account of sociétés philharmoniques of the 1820s and 1830s and their Beethoven concerts. Lesure 1999: 30.

tely or completing their training in Paris at the Conservatoire (Lesure 1999: 37, 41). It is, then, entirely possible to write about the French regions in a manner that aligns squarely with centralist narratives that takes as read their backwardness and lack of refinement. And all this without mentioning compositional regionalism from the 1870s onwards, which constituted a challenge to official culture whatever the identity or provenance of its authors.

It would be naïve and futile to try to counter such narratives with 180-degree revisionism. Much of what Lesure recounts cannot be gainsaid. But his world view, doubtless exacernated by the dictionary format, obscures the richness of French musical life while under-reporting resistance and negotiation. Moreover, it minimises the extent to which the hierarchical nature of French centralisation had the capacity to hobble local creativity, which accordingly needs to be studied as a phenomenon existing permanently against the odds. This entails close study, at a local level, of the way centralisation works, and an appreciation of why music suffers its effects more than other arts.

A comparison with the visual arts, for instance, illustrates how a history of musical composition in educational institutions across regional France during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries could only ever report limited success. In 1905 Paris hosted the first art show of student work from the regional Écoles des Beaux-Arts. It encompassed drawing, sculpture, painting, architectural design, and applied arts, and the ministerial intention was to tour it regionally as a model of student excellence at all levels.[5] Such an 'exhibition', to continue the Louvre metaphor, was unthinkable in music, because it would have implied concerts of student compositions. And although performance teaching was regionally institutionalised, composition teaching was not – because within the hierarchy of music-theoretical training it was perceived by the centre as too advanced for regional study. I have already used the term 'oxygenation' to describe the official role of Paris for provincials coming to train, or to be inspired; but the corollary is that centralisation left artists in the regions gasping for air, and this situation was itself institutionalised through a system whereby regional branches of the Conservatoire were legally defined from the outset (i.e. from the 1820s) as feeder-schools serving a Parisian finishing school.

This situation produced an inspection regime from Paris that amounted at times to a perverse dialogue of the deaf. For instance, in 1909 the Nancy conservatoire, directed from 1894 to 1919 by the Breton composer Guy Ropartz, was criticised for teaching at the same level as Paris and accepting pupils who were too advanced. He was effectively told to stop having ideas above his station.[6] Within the Nancy inspection reports we find more openness only a couple of decades later: in 1930 Raoul Laparra complimented Ropartz's successor, Alfred Bachelet, on a harmony class that showed the "decentralist character of the institution" [caractère décentraliste de l'institution]: this, he wrote, was a conserva-

5 Prospectus in *Journal des débats*, 26 August 1905, 3.

6 Archives Départementales Meurthe-et-Moselle (Nancy) 4 T 157.

toire "where one can prepare effectively for Paris or complete one's training *in situ*" [où l'on peut se preparer efficacement pour Paris ou se former entièrement sur place].[7] Nevertheless, even in the 1930s the teaching of composition at a level that might prepare a musician for direct entry to the Prix de Rome was a pipe dream, whether here or in other major provincial conservatoires such as Toulouse or Lyon. Only the conservatoires of Bordeaux, Strasbourg and Metz, all of which were either privately run and thus outside the official and centralised system, or retained the legacy of their pre-1919 German curricula, came close.

The kind of history I am advocating thus weaves into its premises the structural limitations that affect musicians' artistic choices and horizons, here using the centralising power of the state as an analytical tool. It is a history of the possible in the knowledge of what is impossible. And it also helps us understand the way the regions related to Paris itself.

Decentralisation

It might be surmised that decentralisation is simply the obverse of centralisation; but the reality is more complex. In a general sense, the term simply means that on an administrative level, local historical actors have the right to run their own local affairs, with budgets and regulations drawn up to meet local needs. It involves a transfer of power from the capital to local government and institutions. Musically, the term decentralisation referred to a wish for enhanced opportunities for musicians, enhanced provision for audiences, and respect for local ambitions and initiatives that might or might not deviate from those handed down by Paris. In central major towns, such as turn-of-the-century Lyon, decentralist initiatives were aimed at challenging the capital on its own terms; in borderland areas such decentralist impetus was likely to be overlaid by regionalist content of some kind.

There is, however, a further wrinkle, in that the term, which was in regular use in France from the 1830s, often meant what we would now define as 'deconcentration': not a handing-over of power but its dissemination to local level (notably via the Préfecture) in order to facilitate centralist objectives. The French conservatoire system, with its inspection régime, its approved teaching methods and its ministerially-appointed Directors, is a good example. As early as 1834 we find an editorial in *Le Ménestrel* advocating a very similar system whereby Paris graduates might populate new provinicial conservatoires; but it is titled "Décentralisation musicale".[8] What I would term properly decentralist activity, then, has more to do with independent initiatives, adaptation of Parisian norms, or attempts to secure a transfer of power and status.

7 Ibid.

8 See, for example, a *Ménestrel* editorial of 12 October 1834, 1–4, "Décentralisation musicale", on the need to set up a nationwide network of conservatoires in place of the then-current teaching of plainchant.

The city of Lyon is decentralist territory par excellence, its anti-Parisianism militant from the 1830s and still in evidence today (See Bruno 1996: 491–509). Lyon was the first town to lobby for its opera house to be designated 'national' (actually, imperial – it was 1865); the first to secure national subsidy to mount an operatic world premiere (Saint-Saëns's *Étienne Marcel* in 1879; and true to its moniker of the "French Bayreuth" it put on the French premiere of *Die Meistersinger* in 1896 and the first complete French *Ring* cycle in 1904. Finally, Lyon's symphony orchestra, the Société des Grands Concerts, was to my knowledge the only French regional orchestra to be invited to perform at a Paris Exposition Universelle – in 1937. The *Die Meistersinger* coup resulted from Cosima Wagner's refusal to let the Paris Opéra premiere it because her agent regarded the Palais Garnier chorus as too feeble to cope (See Ellis 2013: 133). Moreover, it was mounted with the most unusual of singers in the role of Eva: a foreigner, the Danish soprano Louise Janssen, who had made Lyon her permanent home since the early 1890s and who introduced the Lyonnais to so many of the major Wagnerian heroines as a principal or guest in successive Lyon opera companies that she came to define the town's identity as a Wagnerian centre (See Ellis 2018: 214–236). This was decentralisation by happy accident and audience consensus – there was no local policy behind it – and it was highly effective.

It will not go unnoticed that in each of these cases bar the Wagner, Paris acts as a validating force. From the regional point of view, this is the crucial weakness of much decentralisation: even when it extends beyond deconcentration, it is rarely a case of clean breaks; and like many minority causes, it succeeds only when those in power in the capital recognise, and accede to, the need for change. Thus is the history of decentralisation in this period peppered with requests, demands, and pleas for Paris to support, to facilitate and even to act as a clearing-house for local initiatives. As such it is also vulnerable to reversal if the capital withdraws its support – which is what seems to have happened with the 1865 Lyon 'national' opera house, which soon returned to calling itself merely 'municipal'. However, 'this story contains another twist'. In the brief intervening period the Lyonnais had spoken, and they did not choose decentralisation. The opera manager so anxious for imperial recognition used his new status to stop holding public auditions for his company – a nationwide requirement for all except the 'national' theatres and one of the few opportunities for audiences to express their views about the Director's own competence. Unwilling to trade national status for local power over the Director's casting, the Lyon audience rioted and ran him out of town.[9] Examples such as these, which cluster in areas where musical life was most closely regulated, illustrate how resistance to centralisation could itself be contested when it entailed other sacrifices.

9 Archives Municipales Lyon 88 WP 006 (folder 20). The manager was Raphaël Félix, brother of the great tragic actress Rachel. See also Ellis 2011: 327–352.

Regionalism

By contrast with decentralisation, which carries no specific associations of musical content, musical regionalism celebrates difference through the enacting of local cultures in performance or through composition. Both the hard and soft versions I cited earlier constitute resistance to official Paris. It is also useful to disentangle them from the monolithic or touristic picturesque of *couleur locale* as found in opera especially: as Gilles Saint-Arroman puts it, there is a movement, across the French nineteenth century, from opera that contained regional scenes and settings, to regionalist music drama (Saint-Arroman 2012). The same distinctions apply to rhapsodies and suites by eclectics such as Saint-Saëns or Massenet, in contrast to the instrumental music of Bordes (Basque country), Erb (Alsace), Séverac (Languedoc and French Catalonia), Ropartz (Brittany), and a host of younger Bretons including Ladmirault and Le Flem. From this perspective it is the 'ist' in regionalist that counts. Yet there are also inevitably grey areas and works where subsequent appropriation takes them from one category to another. In different ways, Gounod's Provençal opera *Mireille* (1864), Bizet's corollary, his incidental music to *L'Arlésienne* (1872), and Lalo's Breton myth of *Le Roi d'Ys* (1888), are bellwethers of this process.

In terms of French hotspots we could cite pre-1870 Alsace, or Flanders, or French Catalonia, or Provence and the Languedoc. Equally we could point to the tensions, in Toulouse (Languedoc) between centralists who ran the opera house and conservatoire, and regionalists such as Séverac, who assimilated folk cultures into his style and deplored those who simply tried to equal Paris. There is a rural/urban divide at work here—also overlaid with social division in the case of working-class Marseille's fractious relationship with Mistral's more patrician, and rural, *félibrige*. Moreover, the urge to preserve local customs, whether through festivals, museums or operatic diegesis quickly turns folk tradition into folklore that risks folding back into the very *couleur locale* from which it originally distingished itself. Once tourism gains traction at the end of the century, the circle is all but closed.

In terms of composition the *locus classicus* of musical regionalism is Brittany, which started gathering its folksongs early, with the famous and partly invented collection *Barzaz-Breiz* first published in Paris in 1839, and where the closest France came to a regionalist school of composition flowered from the 1890s onwards. Their stylistic relationship to Brittany varied, from the evocation of landscape, to music suggestive of folk music, to the arrangement and transformation of authentic (or at least recognisable) melodies. Among their most prolific members in the early twentieth century was Paul Ladmirault, whose *Variations sur des airs de biniou trécorois* of 1905 transforms dance melodies transcribed from the traditional playing of pairs of *sonneurs* – bagpipe and shawm – still practised today. Moreover they indicate the same regionalist determination to assimilate folk music into art music that the Russian 'Five' – with which Ladmirault compared himself – had achieved several decades earlier. Is such regionalism, though, soft or hard, and what are the implications?

The historical stakes turn out to be as high as the levels of political-cultural variegation. Ladmirault was part of the Association des Compositeurs Bretons, a regi-

onal composers' association – very rare in France – set up in 1912 under Maurice Duhamel, a 'semi-hard' regionalist composer committed to the idea of Brittany as an autonomous region within France. As recounted by Marie-Claire Mussat, its origins do indeed indicate a kind of 'blood and soil' ethnic nationalism that rejects the assimilation of outsiders. It was a rearguard action by eight ethnic Bretons against the Italian Sylvio Lazzari, who had married into a Breton family and whose opera *La Lépreuse*, a Breton tale into which the composer had integrated various folksongs, had been a success at the Opéra (Fauquet 2003: 180). Alongside Duhamel, Ladmirault also joined visual and decorative artists as part of the *Seiz Breur*, founded in 1923 to promote Breton art as Celtic rather than French, and as bringing together modernism and the traditional.

This group was symptomatic of a wider pan-Celticisation of Brittany, already detectable in Ladmirault's 1900s compositions based on Scottish and gaelic themes.[10] Breton regionalists had long harboured aspirations – not always successful in practice – to a Celtic internationalism of the Atlantic seaboard, territorially irrelevant to France.[11] Politically, the autonomist Duhamel was firmly on the left; Ladmirault was much further to the right, but not, it seems, an autonomist.[12] But it was at the right-wing extreme that hard regionalism within the *Seiz Breur* became treason: the architect Olier Mordrel also founded the Breton National Party, which supported the German war effort in the hope of gaining Breton independence in the event of a Nazi victory.

Far-right extremism, and perhaps a need to forget it or a fear of discovering it, helps explain why musical regionalism has been sidelined as anti-whiggish for so long. There are more active complementary movements in cultural history, where revisionism, and demonstrating regionalism's independence from the far right, loom large.[13] In musicology, the "réveil des provinces" intensifies at precisely the period when the cultural counter-power of Vincent d'Indy is at its most influential, and when a shift of emphasis from religion to regionalism within his Schola Cantorum of the early 1900s seems merely to prove a right-wing and anti-Republican point. A half-century later, Vichy is a major obstacle, given its early embrace of soft regionalism as a national creed and the State collaboration of a Schola regionalist such as Canteloube (who published folksong for the Vichy government under the direction of Alfred Cortot). However, as the study of the "années noires" is progressively and sensitively unblocked after decades of taboo, and as left-wing sources of Vichy regionalism

10 Notably the Chevauchée on Scottish reels, and the orchestral Rhapsodie gaelique.

11 On the mutual misunderstandings of one such encounter, at the 1899 Cardiff Eisteddfod, see Kathryn N. Jones, 'Celtic fairytale or Cardiff comic opera? The 1899 Eisteddfod through Breton eyes' unpublished paper on www.academia.edu.

12 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Musique: l.a. Ladmirault. In letters of the 1920s to his wife (letters 7–22) he is casually anti-Semitic (she censors at times) and proud of the subversive fervour of his Catholicism. But I have yet to find talk of Breton politics.

13 See Peer 1998; Thiesse 1997; Wright 2003.

become better understood, study of musical regionalism of the earlier period, especially from within France, is becoming a progressively less anti-hegemonic act.

Borderlands

Mention of the Atlantic seaboard brings me to consider the importance of borderlands as a way of decentring capitals and rethinking where other centres might lie. Unsurprisingly these coincide with many of the regionalist territories I mentioned earlier; but they are joined by other meeting points relating to prior history, immigration, regular cross-border travel, and collaboration. Hence the importance of Italian and Russian constituencies in Nice, or the English in Normandy and Picardy. For historical reasons, however, some of the most important questions are raised by the borderland regions of Alsace and Lorraine, parts of whose present geographical terrain switched between France and Germany four times between 1870 and 1944. Here, questions of regionalism quickly become complicated by those of competing national allegiances and – at the same time – a wish to rise above them.

On the French side, the balance of musicological work on the Franco-Prussian War has emphasised the sense of French loss and the *revanchist* desire to level scores – achieved temporarily with the 'liberation' of Alsace-Lorraine and its return to France in 1919; elsewhere, the popularity of the cartoonist Oncle Hansi (Jean-Jacques Waltz), a celebrated voice of Alsatian anti-Germanism, lives on as ubiquitous tourist merchandise. The first risk here is to extrapolate the borderland situation of the 1910s and indeed the 1920s from that of the 1870s. What began as one of the spoils of war had, by 1914, become a semi-autonomous region enjoying more administrative independence than any French counterpart. And intermarriage had fundamentally changed its nature. Strasbourg had become a bi-lingual musical crossroads for Europe and many Alsatians, in particular, had no wish to be asked to choose between one nationality or another.[14]

The French 'liberation' meant the splitting up and exiling of families, musical and otherwise, across the whole of Alsace-Lorraine. Hence this plea from Charles Dewald, the half-German interim Conservatoire director at Metz, to keep his job as leader of the theatre orchestra and as violin teacher. In a desperate attempt to stay in newly French Lorraine in 1919 he described himself as "indigenous", noted how he taught students from the area in French, and how his maternal grandfather was a "veteran of the Second Empire".[15] It was no use: he and his son, a student at the conservatoire, respecively lost their job and their town council study grant. They were too German, and that was that.

It is in this light that we can try to understand the internationalism of musical life in Alsace-Lorraine in the 1920s. Let me take the case of the trouble in Strasbourg

14 See Roth 2010, and, for an explicitly autonomist perspective on later developments, Wittmann 2016.

15 Archives Municipales Metz 1 R 637d.

over Guy Ropartz's concert programming with the Conservatoire orchestra, when his own committee rebelled against the French nationalist project he had been hired to deliver. Ropartz began his directorship in 1919 and also became conductor of the professional orchestra attached to the Conservatoire. He programmed a restricted menu of French music from 1870 onwards – 150 works across a decade – to howls of disapproval in the German-language portion of Strasbourg's bilingual press. In 1922 we read the following: "Why deprive us of contemporary masterpieces as a matter of principle? Playing Ravel only confirms the rule. Honegger, Florent Schmitt and other Parisian artists are certainly not 'boches'. […] Strauss, Pfitzner, Schrecker, Busoni have long been names from another world. As for the newest moderns, they are beyond the pale."[16] By 1926, when matters came to a head on the committee of oversight at the Strasbourg Conservatoire, Ropartz was served with a list of composers its members wanted to hear, and which they were confident would reverse falling audience numbers. The list, especially in its final section, is notable for its internationalism and its eclecticism, taking in modern Romantics such as Rachmaninov and the new Catalan *sardanes* of Juli Garreta, alongside Schoenberg and the young tearaway Sergei Prokofiev.[17] The internationalism of this selection had nothing to do with imitating Paris. What was important here was to be neither French nor German, but a proper border town: the very crossroads of European musical culture that Strasbourg had been in 1914.

Comparativism

It will have become clear already how important to a musical history of provincial France is the question of comparativism. It is a need that is increasingly recognised in France itself, where the majority of studies, starting with those of local historians, have focused on a single town.[18] This is more than an old chestnut about breadth versus depth; it is about what is common and what is not, about benchmarks, local rivalries, regional power centres, and – ultimately – a holistic approach that is necessary even though true holism is unattainable. A study of a single centre does not necessarily imply a static view, since the personalities working in that centre will have brought with them the experience of working elsewhere. It is hard to track where they go, and to build up thereby a sense of the patterns of itinerant musical life; but the internet, including the mass digitisation of local newspapers, is swiftly

16 "Pourquoi nous priver, de propos délibéré, des chefs-d'œuvre contemporains ? D'avoir joué du Ravel ne fait que confirmer la règle. Honegger, Florent Schmittt et d'autres artistes parisiens ne sont certes pas des boches. […] Strauss, Pfitzner, Schreker, Busoni, Schoenberg sont depuis longtemps pour nous des êtres d'un autre monde. Quant aux tout modernes, il n'en est même pas question". [translated by Pierre de Bréville], n.l.a Ropartz, 177.

17 AM Strasbourg 5 MW 89. 3 August 1926.

18 See the discussion of "multipolaire" research by Joann Élart and Yannick Simon (2018: 10–11).

transforming the research landscape in this respect. Comparativism via archival sources is also challenging because evidence from different centres is rarely equivalent, and a comprehensive picture therefore difficult to construct. Nevertheless, if history from a regional perspective is to have any meaning, it must go some way towards mapping and explaining the relationships between centres, the importance of the relationships often being more important than instances of individual activity.

In repertorial terms, opera and concert life can reveal copycat behaviour that ushers in a new and widespread phenomenon that might or might not extend to Paris. One such is the Wagner steeplechase of 1891 about which both Yannick Simon and I have written – where successive and riot-free regional performances of *Lohengrin* between February and June purged Wagner of anti-French poison.[19] Here, seven municipal opera houses – those miniature versions of the Opéra – were instrumental in enabling Paris to put his works on a public stage. While their theatre managers and conductors did not work as a team (save for Angers and Nantes), cumulative solidarity emerges from the news, preview and review literature of each town's newpapers, which have to be read alongside those of Paris for the complexity of relationships between productions, and between regional ventures and initiatives in the capital, to become fully apparent. It was these regional stagings that ushered in the supremely belated Wagner craze in Paris. In the process, they illustrated both the maturity of France's operatic public, and (especially important for local critics) its level-headedness in relation to Parisian firebrands. The test, then, was as much about responsible citizenship as it was about music.

Comparativism also yields rewards in thinking about one of the major instances where provincial France built an alternative musical culture: open-air opera. This started at the ancient theatre of Orange in 1869, temporarily faltered there, but returned at the turn of the new century as part of a regionalist and nationalist surge in the use of Roman arenas, theatres and their modern imitations for opera and plays, right across the south of France. Despite a lack of institutional structure, these performances developed a momentum that fundamentally changed the dynamics of massed musical spectacle in France. There were over 50 regular outdoor venues by the 1920s, reaching ever northward within France; and they blurred the traditional operatic separation between professional and amateur, the generic boundaries of play and opera, of opera and cinema, and even the boundaries of music and sport. The most famous examples, with newly-commissioned music and breathtakingly complex walk-through stage-sets, took place in the Languedoc, at Béziers; but after Béziers stopped functioning (the mid-1920s), the phenomenon continued with repertoire opera elsewhere. Lacking both dependable weather and the right venue, Paris was neither the leader nor a major player – indeed when Béziers commissions were tried out in Paris, they usually suffered in the process because Paris could not contain them (see Ellis 2019: 178–194).

19 See Ellis 2013: 121–137, and Simon 2013. Since then, a documentary history by Michał Piotr Mrozowicki has also dealt with the subject via press sources (Mrozowicki 2016: vol. 2, 943–994).

Yet the main venues of open-air opera were not all the same, and to conflate them as uniformly regionalist would be to mistake surface for substance. As Christopher Moore has noted, Béziers was more French nationalist than regionalist because its funder, the wine-merchant Castelbon de Beauxhostes, was a staunch republican. The mainly ancient classical themes of his commissions allied perfectly with national imagery in use since the time of Louis XIV and newly intensified since 1870 (see Moore 2014: 211–241). Orange was a more official 'national' venue, part-funded by government money and organised from Paris. Led by the poet Paul Mariéton those Parisians were, however, *félibres* whose interpretation of *latinité* had as much to do with local pride as it did with the more official idea of creating an outpost of the Comédie-Française and the Opéra in a spectacular southern venue – which explains why Orange became a site for *félibre* pilgrimage in a way never experienced by Béziers (see Mariéton 1908).

Elsewhere, from 1898 Mistral nearly succeeded in consecrating Gounod's *Mireille* as an open-air opera of soft regionalism; but the manner of its contestation among local critics in Arles, Nîmes and Marseille, many of them *félibres* or otherwise invested in regionalist culture, underscores the fallacy of assuming that regionalists agree simply because they represent the same area (see Ellis 2012: 463–509). At the same time, critics with loud voices are not necessarily representative of the tens of thousands of audience members who climbed the terraces to take in the specacle of an outdoor performance, or who walked to some of the woodland clearings and in-the-landscape venues of open-air opera. The combination of drink, food and socialising, together with a tradition (in Arles at least) that an opera's last act, like the last bull of a bullfight, should be offered free of charge, take the visceral experience of such events well away from middle-class newspaper chatter. The collective reactions of such crowds, and the longevity of the institution itself, demand our attention.

High/Low

Mention of these blurrings of class and region brings me to my last proposition: that the study of music at a regional level helps us avoid some of the binaries and polarisations that otherwise characterise discussion of music in capital cities. There is at root a simple reason for this: the spreading of local musicians across a smaller number of entertainment venues, and the consequent need to be versatile. While the point of deconcentration was to create lots of miniature Parises, there came a point where it was no longer possible to scale down. Even in large centres where pre-1864 laws allowed more than one theatre (usually one for opera and one for plays), the luxury of generic separation, as found in Paris, was impossible. On the musical side a single resident company had to be able to cope with opera and opéra-comique, and increasingly with operetta. In the pit, contracts frequently included a time-share between service at the conservatoire (and possibly also its symphony orchestra) and the theatre orchestra. When things went wrong, performer flexibility was at a premium: in 1867, in the wake of the 1864 legislation deregulating theatres in the provinces, opera in Marseille

collapsed because the town council refused to continue its subsidy, but its orchestra and dancers were soon spotted at local café-concerts.[20] Elsewhere in France, a high-low continuum did not need to wait for disaster; it was woven in to normal musical life. This is the case with the *cobla* – a hybrid of folk and popular music – in French Catalonia, its oboes and its oboe players.

The *cobla* oboe, in two sizes of *tible* and *tenora*, was adapted in the 1850s to orchestral standards – but still for popular use – by the addition of Boehm-system keys. This was the brainchild of Andreu Toron, himself an orchestral oboist and *tenora* player, wind-instrument maker and dealer in the Roussillon town of Perpignan (Francès 1986: 142–151). Composers of *cobla* music were frequently attached as classical musicians to the opera, or to the conservatoire, or both; and Perpignan was also, with Aix-en-Provence before it, one of the only two known towns in France to authorise a class for folk or popular music within its municipal music school.[21] In Aix from 1868 to 1872, the instrument was the *galoubet* with *tambourin*;[22] in Perpignan in 1881 it was the *tible* and the *tenora*. These ventures did not survive long, if at all (four years in Aix was exceptional, and a bid for 'national' status for the conservatoire seems to have quashed the Perpignan venture),[23] but their importance as cultural indicators is none the weaker for that.

Emblematic of its malleable nature was the cobla oboe's deployment by Séverac in his Béziers spectacular of 1910, *Héliogabale*. Within an orchestration based on massive blocks of instrumental timbre, its closing Act III contained a 'mascarade' into which Séverac introduced three *cobla* oboes, played by friends from his adopted town of Céret. The idea was to present the outdoor nature of the Midi at scale, in a score often referred to as a 'fresco' (de Séverac 2002: 341) – the specifically Roussillon provenance of the *cobla* oboes being less important than their broader regional and folk character. Moreover, it was this mixture of the folk/popular with art-music of the open-air tradition that cemented the Languedoc-born Séverac's adoption by Roussillon musicians. For local *cobla* historian André Cortada, it was not a case of Séverac's having appropriated or travestied a tradition, but of having elevated it by bringing it to wider attention, including in Paris when *Héliogabale* was presented there in 1911 (Cortada 1989: 67–68).

Conclusions

This series of categories and cases underscores the fundamentally lateral nature of the task of taking the provinces seriously. It encourages such thinking in terms of geography, repertoire and personnel, and it presses as much against the traditional

20 Around 60 employees were transferred (Bondilh 1867).

21 AM Perpignan, 1 D 3/17 Délibérations du conseil municipal, pièces à l'appui, 16 November 1881.

22 Reported in *L'Avenir national*, 26 August 1867; Le Ménestrel, 25 August 1867, 312.

23 Perpignan gained national status in 1884 and sported an entirely Paris-conformist Règlement.

borders of musicology in general (borders with history, with popular music studies, or with historical ethnomusicology) as against those of the recent musicology of France. A concentration on works, rather than on performances, events, or the lived experience of music-making and listening, allows the bypassing of provincial life – or at most a belittling of it. But the more that historical musicology becomes historical, the less satisfactory is such an approach. Understanding cultures involves understanding the ebb and flow of subcultures, the effects of mobility on musicians' careers, and the layering of multiple modes of belonging within any one person. It involves analysing power relations and thinking about musical life as a set of dialogues and negotiations rooted in the desire of different communities for meaningful education, leisure, and art. Music becomes a conduit for all those things; and the ways composers facilitate that cultural work, together with later appropriations, are a crucial component of the story. But the first step is to reverse the point of view: to look back at the capital from a new provincial normal.

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Кетрин Елис

Озбиљно схваћене провинције

(Резиме)

Користећи пример Француске, у овом раду заговарам потребу за јачим признањем културне разноликости унутар националних држава у раздобљу европског романтичарског национализма. У раду је исцртан пут за нов, интегрисан и компаративан приступ проучавању музике настале у провинцијама, у контексту где национална централизација представља норму. Ситуација у Француској, посебно на врхунцу „буђења провинција" око 1900. године, анализирана је у светлу идеја о регионализму и етничком национализму које су изложили Иво Стрекер и Јоеп Лерсен, као и у паралели са ширим питањима везаним за културну децентрализацију. Посебно скрећем пажњу на изазове које постављају пограничне области, затим, пресеци културних и политичких идеја, као и на опасности од лажне поделе на елитну и нижеразредну културу на локалном нивоу.

Кључне речи: Француска, буђење провинција, Иво Стрекер, Јоеп Лерсен, пограничне области