

# Music and Protest in 1968

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### **Anti-authoritarian agendas in East and West Germany in the 1960s**

The consensus among historians is that the period of '1968' lasted approximately two decades from the end of the 1950s until the middle of the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> In this framework, each nation's '1968' revolves around different key events. In West Germany, the student protests, which had been intensifying since the beginning of the 1960s, reached their climax in the summer of 1967 and the spring of 1968. On 2 June 1967, the student Benno Ohnesorg was – accidentally or intentionally – killed by the police during a student demonstration directed against the Iranian Shah who was visiting West Berlin. On 10 April 1968 a mentally disturbed worker shot the charismatic student leader Rudi Dutschke, who only just survived the assassination attempt.<sup>2</sup> In response, Dutschke's combatants and supporters accused the leading right-wing publishing house in West Germany, the Springer Press, of having indirectly caused the attack by stirring up hatred against the student and protest movements. In the view of the students, they did this by depicting Dutschke and the student protesters as dirty, lazy hooligans.

The Springer Press was, no doubt, biased: it spread the image that the New Leftist movement was an anti-social mob. Additionally, they repressed the fact that many of the protesting students, intellectuals and artists, especially their leaders, were driven by serious and justified social critiques that were not just directed at the Springer press. It also included the West German education system, the National Socialist past, the values of the older generation and the passing of the emergency acts by the government. What was the nucleus of these critiques? Although the phenomena that the New Leftist protesters targeted appeared to be rather diverse, they were united by the fact that their agents and institutions were all characterised by authoritarian modes of behaviour. Thus, the New Leftists connected the Third Reich's authoritarian

<sup>1</sup> For further detail on the historical debates about '1968' see Rehm 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Dutschke was shot three times and one of the bullets entered his brain and damaged the cerebral speech area. As a result he suffered epilepsy and died in 1979 after a seizure in the bathtub (Dutschke 1996).

regime with the behaviour modes of contemporaries in power: parents, pedagogues and state officials. Lastly, the rhetoric of the Springer Press reflected the authoritarianism of both the past and the present.

While the New Leftists' aversion to the manifestations of authoritarianism in West German society and its link to National Socialism reflected personal experiences, their views were indirectly supported by psychological theories developed since the 1930s. These theories related authoritarian modes of behaviour in social relationships, especially within the family, to the willingness of an individual to submit to fascist ideologies. The former was the cause of the latter. German and American psychologists and philosophers – particularly Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno and the so-called 'Berkeley group'<sup>3</sup> – maintained that individuals who had been the victims of authoritarian and repressive pedagogy during childhood were most likely to develop an authoritarian personality, i.e. a personality susceptible to serving the needs of an "authoritarian state".<sup>4</sup> In light of such socio-psychological theories, the protesters – students, intellectuals and artists – predicted a dystopian scenario.

They believed that the Federal Republic of (West) Germany (FRG), founded in 1949, was constantly threatened by the reemergence of the Third Reich and by the possibility of a new world war and genocide. The passing of the emergency acts in May 1968, which permitted the government to limit constitutional rights, was considered to be a clear symptom of these tendencies.<sup>5</sup> The students and protesters that Rudi Dutschke baptised as an 'anti-authoritarian movement' felt obliged to oppose these tendencies by fighting everybody and every institution that represented authority: the state, state officials (e.g. police, judges and prosecutors)<sup>6</sup> and academics.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, they encouraged anti-authoritarian modes of social behaviour and teaching methods. Unsurprisingly, the anti-authoritarian impetus also spread to the musical field stimulating composers, performers and music students to contribute to the New Leftist goals by identifying and counteracting authoritarian institutions involved in music production and management.

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, in East Germany, '1968' connotes quite different historical events. Nonetheless, they were also intertwined

<sup>3</sup> See Reich 1946 (1933); Fromm 1936, 1980 (1941); Horkheimer 1978 (1940/1942); and Adorno 1950. The Berkeley group comprised the psychologists R. Nevitt Sanford, Daniel J. Levinson and Else Frenkel-Brunswik.

<sup>4</sup> Horkheimer 1978 (1940/1942), p. 102. <sup>5</sup> See Anonymous 1998 (1962), pp. 158–9.

<sup>6</sup> For example, at their trial in July 1967 in Berlin-Moabit, student rebels Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans ridiculed the judges and prosecutors (Langhans and Teufel 1968).

<sup>7</sup> See the students' humiliation of Adorno in 1967 (Müller-Doohm 2003, p. 689).

with authoritarian phenomena. Authoritarianism manifesting itself in the state's control over its citizens was omnipresent. In this light, the (East) German Democratic Republic (GDR), which existed from 1949 to 1990, can be considered as, if not a totalitarian dictatorship, then at least an authoritarian one. This manifested itself most clearly in August 1968 when Warsaw Pact troops (among them soldiers of the East German National People's Army) invaded Czechoslovakia and the East German state robustly repressed its people's protests against the invasion.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas in West Germany authorities only sporadically made rather futile attempts to intimidate the youthful protesters who impertinently confronted society with their dissent, in the authoritarian political climate of the GDR, state officials vigorously repressed protest. Their repression extended to include peaceful independent, self-guided activities such as the East German youth's autonomous emulation of the Western capitalist youth culture and its musical styles. To the authorities, those activities were suspected of hiding anti-authoritarian impulses.<sup>9</sup> And, in fact, the state officials' suspicion was not entirely unjustified. For many young people in East Germany, the performance of Western-capitalist lifestyles served to implicitly articulate their longing for the rights of self-determination and autonomy that the GDR government denied its citizens, including the right to free speech and the freedom of the media, as well as the right to travel and to strike.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the general socio-political climate of authoritarianism in the GDR, the cultural climate in the GDR was relatively liberal and relaxed after the government had stopped the 'brain drain' by building the wall between East and West Germany in 1961. Thus, in the early 1960s, youth culture and individual modes of musical expression were able to emerge in the GDR and in the Eastern bloc as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Once initiated, the further development of youth culture could not be suppressed by official restrictions any more – neither by means of authoritarian interdictions nor by ostensibly liberal offers for alternative cultural modes of expression. The tedious dance 'Lipsi', for instance, that was artificially created in 1959 in order to restrain the propagation of rock music, was without effect.

It is the struggle against authoritarianism in both parts of Germany which distinguishes the German '1968' from the student and protest movements in other countries. How did the different development of youth and protest cultures of '1968' in West and East Germany shape the musicians' response to authorities and matters of authority? To what degree did

<sup>8</sup> Mitter and Wollé 1993. <sup>9</sup> For further information see Brown 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Mitter and Wollé 1993, p. 430. <sup>11</sup> Brown 2008.

the authoritarian movement affect institutions and music ensembles and manifest itself in musical practices and styles?

### Anti-authoritarian revolt by musical means

In both Germanys as elsewhere, rock music epitomised the sound of the revolt of '1968'. The musical event that represented the West German protest song and emerging rock music scene was the first International Essener Songtage (IEST), which was held on 25–9 September 1968. With over 40,000 participants, IEST was the largest popular music festival in the world at the time.<sup>12</sup> The West German bands invited to perform at IEST '68 reflected various types of 'krautrock', by featuring bands such as Amon Düül (I and II), Tangerine Dream, Can and Floh de Cologne. Alongside krautrock, the IEST '68 programme included the singer-songwriters Franz Joseph Degenhardt, Dieter Süverkrüp and Hanns Dieter Hüsch, and international bands such as the Fugs and Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. Because the initiator and organiser of IEST, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, dedicated the festival to articulating the politics of the New Left, lectures and panel discussions on political music, especially political song, were also part of the programme.<sup>13</sup>

All the German bands invited to IEST '68 had an anti-authoritarian impetus in one way or another. The bands Amon Düül I and II, emerging from a Munich commune that emulated the Berlin Kommune I, promoted a way of music-making that resembled their lifestyle.<sup>14</sup> Like communal social life that was independent of traditional family hierarchies, Amon Düüls' free improvisation reflected an anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian ethos. The bands performed without a conductor and/or a composer, i.e. without figures they considered as authoritarian because they 'told' the other musicians what to do. Promoting free improvisation, Amon Düül I and II had similarities with the international avant-garde ensemble Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV)<sup>15</sup> who had been organising free-improvisation concerts, 'soundpools', in Europe and North America since 1966. Furthermore, like the soundpools, Amon Düül I's events subverted

<sup>12</sup> Siegfried 2006, p. 608.

<sup>13</sup> For the complete programme of IEST see Mahnert and Stürmer 2008, pp. 88–92.

<sup>14</sup> Other bands that combined the performance of music with the ethos of the commune were Bröselmaschine (from Duisburg), Lord's Family (from Altmühltal) and the Free Music Group (from Frankfurt) (Siegfried 2006, p. 648; see also Sohar 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Curran 1995.

distinctions between socio-cultural classes by permitting everybody, regardless of their musical knowledge, to contribute to its performances.

Whereas Amon Düül I and II were by-products of an alternative style of living, the Cologne band Can emerged from a kind of artistic patricide. Partially trained as professional classical and avant-garde musicians,<sup>16</sup> Can desired to detach from the highly stylised aesthetics of the Western avant-garde. At the same time, however, they did not eschew them entirely. Like Amon Düül whose members were intimately familiar with the avant-garde art scene, the musicians of Can fused stylistic characteristics of rock and avant-garde music. Rock's beats, grooves, short loop-like harmonic sequences and melodic patterns were combined with what has been called the 'aesthetics of the fragment' in aesthetic discourse.<sup>17</sup> Influences of the latter were evident in Can's use of *objets trouvés* such as recordings of demonstrating French students<sup>18</sup> and distorted chunks of voices speaking and singing.<sup>19</sup> By connecting rock and avant-gardist styles, these bands were unintentionally engaged in a postmodern collapsing of the boundaries between high and low culture.<sup>20</sup>

Krautrock bands emerged not only from communes and the avant-gardist/classical music scene, but also from political cabaret which has per se an anti-authoritarian impetus. Here music was not a purpose in itself, but served as vehicle for satirical critique of politicians and the state. For instance, when Floh de Cologne performed at IEST '68, they presented a spectacle that poked fun at West German prudery. In this comic 'happening', music played only an accompanying role, but it increasingly became an integral aspect of the band's performance style when it transformed into a politrock band in 1969.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to Floh de Cologne, other 'politrock' bands, which were known for their highly politicised and critical lyrics, soon developed. The band Ton Steine Scherben, or Scherben for short, emerged from the musical theatre troupe Hoffmann's Comic Theatre in 1970.<sup>22</sup> In comparison to Amon Düül, Can and Floh de Cologne, Scherben's identity was shaped not so much by the music's primary parameters – melody and rhythm – as

<sup>16</sup> Irmin Schmidt, Holger Czukay and David Johnson of Can were all classically trained (Von Zahn 2006, p. 9).

<sup>17</sup> See Adorno 1973 (1969); Dällenbach and Nibbrig 1984; and Kutschke 2007a, ch. "Fragmentarizität".

<sup>18</sup> Von Zahn 2006, p. 22.      <sup>19</sup> See Can's *Monster Movie* (1969).

<sup>20</sup> Fiedler 1969. On the close relationship between the anti-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian spirit of '1968' and postmodern pluralism in music see Luckscheiter 2007; Hentschel 2008; Kutschke 2007a, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Klemm and Enxing 2010.      <sup>22</sup> Seidel 2005, p. 48.

by performative aspects. For instance, the voice of Ralph Möbius (alias Rio Reiser), the singer and songwriter of the Scherben, varied between actor-like text declamation, on the one hand, and the internally frozen, paralysed yelling of an ‘angry young man’ on the other.

Scherben’s lyrics resonated with changes in the West German anti-authoritarian movements. In the 1970s, New Leftists felt a need to add weight to their socio-political demands by means of violence. The song “Macht kaputt was euch kaputt macht” (“Destroy what destroys you”) mirrors the radicalisation that culminated in the left-extremist terrorism of the Red Army Faction (RAF) in the 1970s. It reflects the appetite for violence that the terrorist group justified as a need for self-defence against the oppressive, tyrannical state.<sup>23</sup> The vast majority of people involved in the anti-authoritarian movements, however, did not pursue extreme violence. Rather they shifted focus from the all-embracing goal of abolishing the entire West German ‘authoritarian’ state and the capitalist system to local and regional struggles and forms of direct action, which included squatting and action against the construction of nuclear plants. The “Rauchhaus Song”, for instance, commemorates the 1971 occupation by squatters of a part of the shut-down Bethanien hospital in Berlin-Kreuzberg. The civil disobedience resulted in a positive outcome; it stimulated the Berlin government to lease the building to a youth centre. Three years later, there were further disputes, this time over the main building of Bethanien. The Berlin government’s plan to transform the building into an artists’ centre, including an urgently needed electronic studio for avant-garde music, provoked protests by New Leftist activists who believed that a children’s clinic would serve the inhabitants of Kreuzberg much better. Remarkably, among the activists were also musicians such as the avant-garde composer Erhard Großkopf who would have profited most from the state-subsidised artists’ centre. For several years, Großkopf had tried to convince the Berlin cultural administration to finance an electronic studio in Berlin.<sup>24</sup> Now, Großkopf joined the “battle committee” for the clinic and delivered speeches against the artists’ centre and the studio.<sup>25</sup> So also did the British experimentalist Cornelius Cardew, who spent the year 1973 in Berlin financed by a fellowship of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). His “Bethanien Song”, which was performed during the protests, well exemplifies that the anti-authoritarian struggle did not always inspire new artistic ways of expression. In the “Bethanien Song”, socio-political pragmatism clearly ruled out aesthetic considerations (Figure 11.1).

<sup>23</sup> Colvin 2009, pp. 31ff. <sup>24</sup> Großkopf 1974.

<sup>25</sup> The speech of Großkopf has been printed in Großkopf 1974.

Bethanien Lied

C7

KINDERPOLIKLINIK KEIN KUNSTLERZENTRUM, KINDERPOLIKLINIK KEIN KUNSTLERZENTRUM

1. HÖRT UNS ZU IHR ARBEITER KOL- LEGEN GEH'N WIR DER SACHE AUF DEN GRUND  
 2. UNSER NÄCHSTES ZIEL IST DAS BE- THANIEN WEG MIT DER BÜRGERLICHEN KUNST  
 3. DIESE KLINIK IST FÜR UNSRE KINDER UNSER KAMPFGEFÄHRE BESSERE WELT  
 4. UM DEN SOZIALISMUS ZU ER- KÄMPFEN STÜRZEN WIR DIE BÖNIGEN VON DEM THRON

KRANK IST NUR DERJENIGE DER ZU- SAMM'BRICHT. WER ARBEITEN KANN DER IST GESUND  
 UNSRE KRANKEN KINDER BRAUCHEN HILFE DOCH DIE'S, P. D. HAT UNS VERHUNZT  
 WAS GESTIERT WIRD HERT DOH KONN EN BLINDE NICHTS MEHR KANNES GEBEN DAS UNS HÄLT  
 AUSLÄNDER UND DEUTSCHE STEIN ZU- SAMMEN EINHEITSFREIHEIT DER REVOLUTION

UND DIE BÄNDER LAUFEN IMMER SCHNELLER IMMER WENIGER WERT IST UNSER LOHN  
 TAUSENDFACH BETRÜGT SIE UNS MIT WÖRTERN WO KOMMT DENN UNSER ELENDE HER?  
 GEGEN TEILUNG LOHNRAUB UND ENT- RECHTUNG GEGEN IMPERIALISMUS UND DEN KRIEG  
 FÜR DIE TIEFE FREUNDSCHAFT ALER VÖLKER ALLE MACHT IN UNSRE HAND

UND DIE AUSICHT WIRD VON SELBST NICHT HELLER WENN WIR SETZ NICHTS TUN  
 IHRE POLI- TIK IST DIE DER REICHEN UNS TÄUSCHT SIE NICHT MEHR  
 GEGEN JEDD AUSBEUTUNG UND KNECHTUNG UNSER IST DER SIEG  
 FÜR DIE GESELLSCHAFT OHNE KLASSEN GLÄNZEND WIRD DAS LAND

REFRAIN

F

1.2.3. BETHA NIEN GEHÖRT UNS BETHAN NIEN GEHÖRT UNS WIR  
 4. ES WIRD UNS GEHÖR- EN ES WIRD UNS GEHÖR- EN

WERDEN ES UNS ERKÄMPFEN GEGEN JEDEN WIDERSTAND WIR WERDEN ES UNS ERKÄMPFEN MIT BETHANI TEE

Figure 11.1 Cornelius Cardew, "Bethanien Song" © reproduced by kind permission of Horace Cardew.



## Anti-authoritarian music in an authoritarian state

In the GDR, the fans of 'beat music', as rock music was referred to until the mid-1970s, did not initially intend to make a statement that attacked the authorities. However, the intolerant reaction of the state towards rock turned the reception of rock music into an anti-authoritarian act. This was due to the mechanisms that ruled the authoritarian pseudo-socialist system. In light of the goal to implement a true socialist society, the state felt impelled to control the minds and deeds of its citizens. It examined all cultural activities as regards its ideological message and attributed political meanings to them even if they were *not* intended to be political.<sup>26</sup> This politicisation "from above"<sup>27</sup> also embraced rock music. Since rock music was an import from North America and Western Europe, it logically represented the capitalist enemy for East German officials; and the young people who listened to it were considered to be agents of the enemy's value system. Moreover, the autonomous modes of production of rock bands (as well as the rise of the songwriters' scene in the 1960s) subverted the state's cultural and aesthetic monopoly.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, the state made some efforts to assert control over both the beat and songwriters' scene. For instance, the Hootenanny Club – which was founded in East Berlin in 1966 and whose members were influenced by North American singer-songwriters involved in the civil rights movement and the folk music revival<sup>29</sup> – was taken over by the socialist Free German Youth (FDJ) and renamed Oktoberklub in 1967.<sup>30</sup> Under the FDJ, Oktoberklub adopted socialist music aesthetics marked by an optimistic and 'clean' style of collective singing.

In contrast to the more subtle appropriation of the Hootenanny Club, rock musicians became subject to rigid containment. Although the GDR was officially a workers' and farmers' state and the bourgeoisie was the class enemy, petit-bourgeois living styles and aesthetic preferences prevailed. Thus, reports by East German officials often pointed out that the aesthetics of rock – both in terms of its musical style and uninhibited style of performance – expressed an anti-social attitude. According to a Leipzig police department report, "'hot music' provokes youth to commit antisocial acts. Performing

<sup>26</sup> Poiger 2000, esp. pp. 107 and 128ff. <sup>27</sup> Siegfried 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Wicke 1997, pp. 34, 35 and 37.

<sup>29</sup> The Hootenanny Club was founded by the Canadian singer-songwriter Perry Friedman together with Bettina Wegner, Uta Schorn, Reinhold Andert and Jörn Fechner (Böning 2004, p. 201).

<sup>30</sup> Robb 2007, p. 231.

music too loudly creates an atmosphere that inevitably leads to rioting [...] Order and security cannot be assured at any dance party.”<sup>31</sup> Evidential support for such assertions by the police was not difficult to find as there were violent incidents in 1964 and 1965. In September 1964, a Soviet soldier was attacked during a concert of the popular band Klaus Renft (until 1965 called The Butlers)<sup>32</sup> and on 15 September 1965 Waldbühne, the West Berlin woodland stage, was demolished after a concert by the Rolling Stones.

In the wake of such violence, the Central Committee (ZK) – the highest administrative body of the Socialist Union Party (SED) that ruled the GDR till the fall of the Berlin Wall – demonstrated their power by banning almost 80 per cent of the fifty-six registered amateur beat bands in the district of Leipzig, including Renft, The Shatters, The Guitarmen and The Towers.<sup>33</sup> This demonstration of authority was immediately answered by a demonstration *against* authority: a protest gathering on 31 October 1965 by several hundred young beat fans culminated in a confrontation with the Leipzig police.<sup>34</sup> The interdictions against rock bands as well as various other producers and products of culture were subsequently backed up at the “11th Plenum” organised by the ZK on 16–18 December 1965. This Plenum is now considered as the official end of the thaw, the more liberal cultural climate that prevailed in East German society in the early 1960s. After the Plenum, the state sought to maintain tight control over rock bands through requiring them to attend official auditions, which enabled censorship of their repertory.<sup>35</sup>

In light of the state’s authoritarian intrusion, little space was left for the free development of individual or radical styles of rock music – even though the state’s grip loosened again in the lead up to the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students in East Berlin in 1973.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to ‘ecstatic’ British rock bands of the time such as Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, the songs by bands like Renft (from Leipzig) and The Puhdys (a band from East Berlin) kept ‘both feet on the ground’: passages of escalation were quickly negated

<sup>31</sup> Report of VPKA Leipzig, Abt. K, Kommissariat I/2, 5 March 1965, in: BStU, MfS, Lpz. AOG 1822/68-I, p. 27, quoted in Rauhut 1998, p. 774.

<sup>32</sup> Rauhut 1998, p. 773.

<sup>33</sup> Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StA-L), BDVP Leipzig, 236, pp. 133–5. See also Liebing 2005, pp. 66ff.

<sup>34</sup> This resulted in the arrest of 329 beat fans (Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StA-L), BDVP Leipzig, 236, p. 63).

<sup>35</sup> See Rauhut 1997, p. 579. The auditions basically intensified the execution of a directive of 1958, according to which performers were obliged to play at least 60 per cent GDR-compositions (Rauhut 1997, p. 575).

<sup>36</sup> Through the organisation of this festival the authorities aimed to promote an international image of the GDR as a progressive and liberal state.

by the return of calmer, innocuous refrains or interludes. The general appearance of East German rock was conformist. In Renft's "Wer die Rose ehrt"<sup>37</sup> ("Who Honours the Rose") of 1973, for instance, the diligently performed scales by the flute resonated with the East German music-cultural policy that theoretically required even rock musicians to possess an elementary musical education. The lyrics appeared to be similarly tamed and innocuous, at least on the surface. They touched on sensitive socio-political topics such as the stultifying closeness of East German everyday life,<sup>38</sup> the deceptiveness of the officially propagated climate of love and security,<sup>39</sup> and the state's fear that Anglicisms were incursions by capitalist class enemies.<sup>40</sup> In doing this, they participated in a cat-and-mouse game with the government. Inverting the government's practice to politicise art works that were *not* intended to be political by their creators, musicians presented socio-political critique in the disguise of apolitical fairytale-like narratives. The singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann later described this practice of which he had availed himself in dialectical terms: "what appeared to be really political was the apolitical".<sup>41</sup> In the mid-1970s, however, when the government reasserted tighter control over the public sphere, artistic struggles became more intense and explicit. Starting in 1974, Renft's lyricist Gerulf Pannach increasingly provoked state officials by publicly criticising the GDR in his song lyrics.<sup>42</sup> This led to Pannach and then Renft being officially banned.<sup>43</sup>

The career of Biermann anticipated Renft's fate. Believing to follow the legacy of his Jewish and communist father who had been murdered in Auschwitz, Biermann had voluntarily relocated from Hamburg to East Berlin in 1953. From 1960 onwards his poems pointed out the GDR government's shortcomings. "Soldat, Soldat"<sup>44</sup> ("Soldier, Soldier") (1963) and "Was verboten ist, das macht uns gerade scharf" ("What is forbidden makes us hot") (1964), for instance, criticised East German militarism and authoritarian behaviour. Biermann's fate is particularly tragic because, by criticising the reality of socialism, he was trying to carry out what the state propaganda suggested should

<sup>37</sup> Renft 1973. <sup>38</sup> See the lyrics of Puhdys' "Türen öffnen sich zur Stadt" (Puhdys 1974).

<sup>39</sup> See the lyrics of Renft's "Kinder ich bin nicht der Sandmann" (1972) (Renft 1973).

<sup>40</sup> See the lyrics of Renft's "Baggerführer Willi" by Kurt Demmler (Renft, Panta Rhei, Electra Combo *et al.* 1972).

<sup>41</sup> Biermann 1997, p. 23. Biermann's observation is obviously built on the famous sixties slogan "the private is the political".

<sup>42</sup> The "Rockballade vom kleinen Otto" ("Rock ballad of little Otto"), for instance, revolves around the desire to leave the GDR. In the GDR, leaving the country for a life in West Germany or another capitalist country was criminalised under the label "flight from the republic".

<sup>43</sup> For an account of Pannach's professional and political career see Rauhut 1998.

<sup>44</sup> Anti-militaristic lyrics can also be found in Renft's song "Nach der Schlacht" ("After the Battle") (Puhdys 1974).

be done, that is stimulating the progress and development of the socialist state. Officials of the authoritarian state, however, generally understood idealist, engaged critique as a form of anti-authoritarian revolt. Similarly, the state did not appreciate the engaged criticism of the 1965 film *The rabbit is me* (*Das Kaninchen bin ich*), which revealed the arbitrariness of East German criminal justice especially in regard to suspected dissidents. Not coincidentally, it was a former West German citizen, Reiner Bredemeyer, who composed the music to the film. Like Biermann, he moved to the GDR in the mid-1950s and believed that the film (including his music) would be welcomed by the state. Like many of Biermann's songs, however, the planned premiere screening of *The Rabbit is Me* was not permitted.

A characteristic of the East German government was that it constantly oscillated between 'carrot and stick'. The first performance interdiction for Biermann was instituted in 1963, connected with the rejection of Biermann's application for membership of the SED.<sup>45</sup> A year later, however, his performance ban was annulled and he was even permitted to tour outside the Eastern Bloc. Thus, at the end of 1964, he toured West Germany having been invited by the Socialist Democratic Student Union (SDS) that, from the mid-1960s onwards, was propelling the West German student protests.<sup>46</sup> After the tour, Biermann was banned again, around the 11th Plenum of the ZK, and this ban was only rescinded eleven years later. It was not until September 1976 that Biermann performed publicly, first at a protestant service, then, two months later, he again did a tour of West Germany organised by the workers' union IG Metall. At the end of this tour, however, Biermann was expelled from the GDR because East German government officials judged that the tour programme went against the ideology of the state. Renft's lyricist Pannach and their keyboard player Christian Kunert were also expelled nine months later.<sup>47</sup> In brief, all autonomous engagement, for a musical style such as rock music or a fairer society and state, failed because state authorities classified them as anti-authoritarian revolt.

### Class struggle and music for a better world

Although separated by the Berlin Wall after August 1961, young intellectuals and artists in both East and West Germany developed an interest in

<sup>45</sup> In the GDR, such a rejection meant that the individual rejected was *persona non grata* for the East German state officials.

<sup>46</sup> Hippen 1980, p. 173. <sup>47</sup> Rauhut 1998, p. 781.

music centred on a singer with guitar accompaniment. In West Germany, in connection with the New Leftist climate and anti-authoritarian spirit, this interest grew into a strong fashion for political song.<sup>48</sup> Politicised singer-songwriters expressed the same critical attitude towards the authoritarian National Socialist past and authoritarianism in general as the political movements. The musical aesthetics of singer-songwriters – simple, relaxed, playful, non-kitschy and anti-solemn – were considered to be particularly well suited to the anti-authoritarian impetus. It contrasted with those aesthetics that authoritarian dictatorships, including National Socialism, favoured: (German) folk song and unison singing, on the one hand, and optimistic, cheerful pieces with huge orchestration and choir, on the other.<sup>49</sup>

With the increasing politicisation of the New Leftist music scene in the second half of the 1960s, song aesthetics also changed. The music performed at the annual Waldeck Festivals from 1964 to 1969 is indicative of this transformative process. In the festivals of 1968 and 1969, singer-songwriters like Reinhard Mey, who propagated a rather soft and friendly musical style, were marginalised and heavily criticised by more radical colleagues and listeners<sup>50</sup> who preferred more aggressive performance styles and lyrics that complied with the emotional tension and the subliminal inclination towards violence. As the influential singer-songwriter Degenhardt put it, “nuances only cramp the class struggle”,<sup>51</sup> by which he meant that differentiation (for the sake of fairness for instance) was to be neglected because it prevented activists from efficient class struggle. Correspondingly, Degenhardt’s vocal style is marked by a rather rough timbre and a slightly aggressive, cynical tone, which is more spoken than sung. This style perfectly suited his lyrics, which attacked petit-bourgeois values and ridiculed the clichés used to demonise the New Left. Other singer-songwriters who performed at the Waldeck festivals, such as Süverkrüp and Walter Mossmann, employed similar musical and verbal means.<sup>52</sup>

Whereas the West German singer-songwriter scene hankered after radically changing the state and society, classical musicians targeted the field of classical music. In doing this, they decisively contributed to its institutional

<sup>48</sup> See Holler 2007.

<sup>49</sup> This aesthetic was also propagated in the GDR. See, for instance, the music of the Oktoberklub and Paul Dessau’s *Lenin* (1969) respectively. Its Beethovenian from-night-to-light dramaturgy displays the victory and splendid future of the dictatorial system.

<sup>50</sup> Radical leftists like Rolf Schwendter interrupted Mey’s performance in 1969 (see Burg Waldeck Festivals 2008 (1964–1969), CD 10, Track 1).

<sup>51</sup> See the refrain of Degenhardt’s song with the same title (Degenhardt 1992, Track 6).

<sup>52</sup> See Mossmann’s “Lied von den neuen Jakobinern” (1968) and Süverkrüp’s “Erschröckliche Moritat vom Kryptokommunisten” (1965).

renewal. Music students became particularly active. In line with the policy of the anti-authoritarian political movement, they publicly unmasked former National Socialist musicians<sup>53</sup> and criticised educational methods, including what they saw as the repressive and profit-oriented aspects of the music education system. Their critique was supported by the composer and writer Konrad Boehmer, who had moved to the Netherlands in 1966. Boehmer described the education of musicians at West German conservatories as “drill and coercion [...] that aims to make musicians ceaselessly reproduce a reactionary ideology and musical values”.<sup>54</sup> Seeking support, at the prestigious world premiere of Hans Werner Henze’s oratorio *The Raft of the Medusa* in Hamburg in December 1968,<sup>55</sup> music students called on Henze to help them develop “models of music making that cannot be manipulated by state subsidies”.<sup>56</sup>

The New Leftist critique of the institutions of classical music and music education was complemented by the development of new art production modes. Like krautrock musicians, music students and avant-garde musicians founded ensembles dedicated to free improvisation<sup>57</sup> which, as mentioned above, favoured anti-authoritarian performance modes that involved neither a conductor nor the use of a score.<sup>58</sup>

### The year 1968 resonating in music

Whereas in West Germany the shooting of Rudi Dutschke marked the climax of the protests in 1968, in the GDR the salient event was the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops on 20 August that terminated the Prague Spring and the hope for “socialism with a human face” connected with it. Numerous East German citizens responded with spontaneous, courageous protests.<sup>59</sup> The ensuing repression of these protests in the

<sup>53</sup> For instance, during a choir recital dedicated to the composer Philipp Mohler in spring 1969, students at the conservatory in Frankfurt distributed a flyer informing the audience about Mohler’s political opportunism during the Nazi era (Sohar 2003).

<sup>54</sup> Boehmer 1970, p. 71. <sup>55</sup> Kutschke 2007b.

<sup>56</sup> Arbeitskreis Sozialistischer Musikstudenten 1968. For more on avant-garde music and 1968 in West Germany see Kutschke 2007a.

<sup>57</sup> Such ensembles were Hinz und Kunst (from Hamburg) and the Free Music Group (from Frankfurt am Main).

<sup>58</sup> Sohar 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Many GDR citizens courageously protested against the invasion by means of anonymous flyers and political messages on walls, to which the East German authorities responded by severe sanctions such as imprisonment, workplace intimidation and expulsion from the SED (Mitter and Wolle 1993, pp. 430–81).

GDR resulted in a mental attitude marked by a loss of trust in the state, which the historians Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle have dubbed “graveyard peace” (“Friedhofsruhe”).<sup>60</sup> In the long run, this graveyard peace turned out to be the beginning of the decline of the GDR ultimately leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Not surprisingly, the events of 1968 resonated with songwriters and composers. Biermann, for instance, wrote a utopian song called “Noch” (“Still”) that noted the graveyard peace and hinted at open revolt. The vocal melody of the verse is a stagnant Phrygian recitative and the harmonies slowly oscillate between unresolved chords: E minor (with an added ninth or seventh) and F major with a diminished fifth and minor seventh.<sup>61</sup> The song’s refrain, however, suggests change and revolt with fast cadential chord progressions that counteract the ‘graveyard peace’ of the verse. Biermann also commented directly on the events of 1968 in West Germany with his song “Drei Kugeln auf Rudi Dutschke” (“Three Bullets for Rudi Dutschke”). This song accuses the then-incumbent West German chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger of being at least partially responsible for the assassination attempt against Dutschke.

Comparison of Biermann’s “Noch” with another musical response to the crushing of the Prague Spring, Christfried Schmidt’s *Kammermusik I. Von Menschen und Vögeln* (*Chamber Music I. For People and Birds*), reveals the difference between the more or less open critique of Biermann’s songs and the subtlety and concealment of ‘new music’ by East German composers like Schmidt. Schmidt dedicated the third and last movement “Phönix” (“Phoenix”) of his *Kammermusik I* to the Czechoslovakian student Jan Palach who immolated himself on 16 January 1969 as a protest against the Warsaw Pact troops’ invasion of Prague five months earlier. The sequence of pitches A-A-A-C-B, which is repeated in various forms throughout the movement, is identical with those letters of the student’s full name which are also used as pitch names (in German the pitch ‘B’ is referred to as ‘H’): (J) A (N) (P) A (L) A C H.<sup>62</sup> (See, for instance, the beginning of bar 41, performed by the flute, in Figure 11.2.) So, Schmidt was obviously reluctant to unequivocally demonstrate solidarity with the Czechoslovakian people. Instead, he employed subtle, masked and non-verbal musical ways of expressing solidarity.

In contrast to the solitary responses of individual artists to the Czechoslovakian invasion, performances at the Oktoberklub, which were

<sup>60</sup> Mitter and Wolle 1993, p. 480. <sup>61</sup> See the score of “Noch” in Biermann 1968, p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> See Schmidt 1969.

Figure 11.2 Christfried Schmidt, *Kammermusik I. Von Menschen und Vögeln*, score, bars 40 and 41 of “Phönix” © reproduced by kind permission of Christfried Schmidt.

a vehicle for official governmental opinion, encouraged East German citizens to remain on the socialist-communist path. Five days after the invasion, for instance, Oktoberklub performed, for the first time, the song “Sag mir, wo du stehst” (“Tell me what your politics are”) at a FDJ concert in Lenz.<sup>63</sup> Clearly drawing on Pete Seeger’s protest song “Which side are you on?”, the strophes of “Sag mir, wo du stehst” not only commanded its listeners to resolutely devote themselves to the official political purposes (including the support of the invasion of Czechoslovakia), it also urged closet sceptics to denounce themselves; obviously with the goal of indoctrinating them more intensely afterwards.

### The fight against musical authorities

The policy of the anti-authoritarian movement manifested itself not only in the fight against living musical authorities, but also dead ones, especially the ‘great masters’ of the art-music canon. In the context of the anti-authoritarian political climate, the hegemonic discourse about the ‘great master’ and the ‘musical canon’ almost inevitably invited critique.

The anti-hagiographical and anti-canonical impetus was especially evident at the Beethoven Bicentennial celebrated in West Germany in 1970.<sup>64</sup> Unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, when West German avant-garde composers had on the whole abhorred references to non-avant-garde styles, the pieces composers wrote for the Bicentennial demonstrated a vital interest in the practice of musical quotation. Whereas, in the classical mainstream, composers had shown respect for the ‘great master’ Beethoven, the references

<sup>63</sup> Robb 2007, p. 230. <sup>64</sup> See Kutschke 2010.



to his music and person in avant-garde pieces in the 1970 Bicentennial were decidedly irreverent. Mauricio Kagel's *Ludwig van* and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Shortwaves for Beethoven* presented Beethoven's music in an ironic, fragmented and distorted collage, which seemed to ridicule the 'great master'. In the same vein, Wilhelm Dieter Siebert's piece *Our Ludwig* made fun of the composer's deafness by quoting from the master's conversation books. By doing this, the musicians clearly indicated that they no longer considered Beethoven to be a "sacred cow",<sup>65</sup> as various music journalists put it, who supported the anti-authoritarian revolt against the canon.

In the GDR, quoting the music of the great composers of the past had always played an important role in contemporary composition. According to the official agenda promoted since the GDR's foundation in 1949, artists were expected to support the building of a socialist state by appropriating from the heritage of their predecessors in a progressive and reverential manner.<sup>66</sup> In this light, it is all the more striking that, from the late 1960s till the turn of the 1970s, compositions of a cheeky and rebellious character came to the fore that indicated a sense of liberation from the achievements of the past. For instance, *Battaglia Alla Turca* (1967) by the East German Tilo Medek split Mozart's "*Alla Turca*" into various fragments and rearranged them in a new, anti-logical and anti-organic order. The result was, as with the West German Beethoven Bicentennial pieces, an overall disjointed, fragmentary character. Similarly, *Bagatellen für B* (*Bagatelles for B[eethoven]*, 1970, for orchestra) by Reiner Bredemeyer, the East German by choice, consists of unmediated bits and pieces of Beethoven's *Bagatellen* for piano, op. 119 and 126.<sup>67</sup>

The rebellious, anti-authoritarian attitude, however, was soon replaced by a rather depressive, resigned mindset, which was likewise anti-authoritarian but, at the same time, reflected the dystopian 'graveyard peace' that had spread over the GDR after the crushing of the Prague Spring. Unlike the rock musicians who flourished during the short period of liberalisation between 1971 and 1973, contemporary composers seemed to withdraw from their officially expected role as optimistic promoters of socialist culture. Engagement was replaced by disinterest.<sup>68</sup> This is most apparent in the

<sup>65</sup> See Koch 1970, p. 124. For further discussion of the connections between postmodernism in music and irreverent quotation practices by the avant-garde see Kutschke 2010.

<sup>66</sup> One of the models for these sanguine and optimistic pieces is Paul Dessau's *Bach-Variationen* of 1963.

<sup>67</sup> For an in-depth analysis and interpretation of Bredemeyer's *Bagatellen für B* see Noeske 2007, pp. 147–67.

<sup>68</sup> In her monograph, Nina Noeske (2007) has argued that the East German contemporary composers aimed at deconstructing the GDR by musical means.

*Sensible Variationen um ein Thema von Schubert* (*Sensible Variations on a Theme of Schubert*) (1972) by Medek as the piece is tame and lacks strength and substance. The elaborate orchestral texture of Schubert's popular theme, the entr'acte music from *Rosamunde*,<sup>69</sup> is reduced to a trio for flute, violin or alto flute and violoncello – an orchestration that, especially if performed with an alto flute instead of a violin, makes the composition's Alberti bass resemble the mawkish, mechanistic sound of a street organ. The variations revolve around insipid sequential repetitions and scale-segments, complemented by the allusion to a 7-6-syncopation chain that is based on a sequence of fifths, pop-like off-beat rhythms and etude-like formulas, which make the variations seem trivial.<sup>70</sup> The music does not convey confidence, belief in the future or the sophistication of the source material, as was required by the discourse on respecting musical heritage, neither does it demonstrate anti-authoritarian playful provocation or mockery as the *Battaglia* and *Bagatellen* did before and briefly after the crushing of the Prague Spring. Like Pannach and Kunert discussed above, Medek left the GDR in 1977, a year after Biermann was expelled.

Like the oppositional climate of '1968' in general, anti-authoritarianism was primarily an upheaval *against* the *status quo*, i.e. 'negation' in the jargon of Adorno. In the music scenes of both East and West Germany, however, the anti-authoritarian spirit, despite its negative impetus, also sparked dynamic change and reform. The anti-authoritarian impetus led to the creation and diffusion of new genres and styles such as beat music, krautrock, politrock, the protest songs of the singer-songwriter scene, free improvisation and new styles of contemporary art music based on ironic quotation. Nonetheless, the anti-authoritarian struggles of East and West German musicians and audiences were clearly dissimilar. In East Germany the permanent control of the state over cultural expression generated a continuous tug of war between musicians and state forces, which ultimately resulted in resignation on the two sides. These differences also manifested themselves in the music. In East Germany, potential for creativity was cut off; it only developed in subversive niches, whereas in West Germany, the anti-authoritarian protest succeeded in initiating the transformation of not only the music, but also musical institutions.

<sup>69</sup> Franz Schubert, *Zwei Entr'actes zu dem Drama „Rosamunde“*, Nr. 2, B-Dur, Andantino, D 797.

<sup>70</sup> For more details see Kutschke 2012.