

Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St Matthew Passion



Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the "St. Matthew Passion" by Celia Applegate

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Felix Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion in the 19th century was a cultural event of great significance. It helped to shape the way Germans thought about their national identity and their cultural heritage. This article explores the relationship between nation and culture in Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion, and the wider implications of this event for German culture and society.

The St Matthew Passion and German National Identity

The St Matthew Passion is a sacred oratorio by Johann Sebastian Bach, first performed in 1727. It tells the story of the Passion of Christ, according to the Gospel of Matthew. The work is widely regarded as one of Bach's greatest compositions, and it has been performed and recorded by countless musicians over the centuries.

In the 19th century, the St Matthew Passion became a symbol of German national identity. This was due in part to the work's association with the Lutheran Church, which was the dominant religion in Germany at the time. The St Matthew Passion was also seen as a reflection of the German people's deep spirituality and musical talent.

Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion in 1829 helped to solidify the work's status as a national symbol. Mendelssohn's performance of the work was widely acclaimed, and it helped to bring Bach's music to a new audience. Mendelssohn's revival also helped to inspire a new generation of German composers, who were influenced by Bach's music and Mendelssohn's own interpretation of it.

The St Matthew Passion and German Culture

The St Matthew Passion is not only a symbol of German national identity, but it is also a reflection of German culture. The work is full of references to German history, literature, and music. For example, the chorale "O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß" is based on a hymn by Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran Church. The chorale "Erbarm dich, mein Gott" is based on a poem by Paul Gerhard, a German poet and theologian.

Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion helped to shape German culture in a number of ways. First, it helped to revive interest in Bach's music. Bach's music had been neglected for many years, but Mendelssohn's performance of the St Matthew Passion helped to bring it back to the forefront of German musical consciousness. Second, Mendelssohn's revival helped to inspire a new generation of German composers. These composers, such as Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms, were influenced by Bach's music and Mendelssohn's own

interpretation of it. Third, Mendelssohn's revival helped to create a sense of national unity among Germans. The St Matthew Passion was seen as a symbol of German culture and heritage, and its performance helped to bring Germans together.

The Wider Implications of Mendelssohn's Revival

Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion had a profound impact on German culture and society. It helped to shape the way Germans thought about their national identity, their cultural heritage, and their place in the world. Mendelssohn's revival also had a wider impact, helping to inspire other national revivals of classical music. For example, the revival of Handel's Messiah in England in the 19th century was inspired in part by Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion.

Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion is a reminder of the power of music to shape culture and society. Music can bring people together, inspire creativity, and help us to understand our place in the world. Mendelssohn's revival of the St Matthew Passion is a testament to the power of music to do good.

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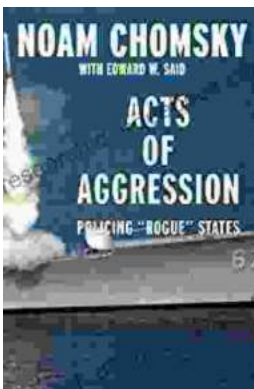


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