'Ihr Augen weint!' Intersubjective Tears in the Sentimental Concert Hall

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The eighteenth century has often been referred to as 'the weeping century'.¹ Abundant tears are shed in both secular and religious literature and music of the mid-eighteenth century. Crying was a social activity in the sentimental culture of the time. By shedding tears in public, the emotional soul demonstrated its sensibility to its peers. Musical performances and concerts acquired an emphasised social dimension: while the musicians could show their sensitivity by weeping during the performance, the audience could demonstrate theirs by shedding tears in response. This public display of emotion had its roots in the early eighteenth century and the works of Johann Sebastian Bach; it culminated in the musical culture of *Empfindsamkeit*, based around the music of composers such as C. P. E. Bach and C. H. Graun.

In this article, I will propose a re-evaluation of German *empfindsam* tears from a performance-theoretical perspective, drawing mainly on Erika Fischer-Lichte's approach to performance and performativity.² I will investigate the role of music in the context of sentimental weeping. Although sensitivity was stirred by private emotions, its tearful expression took place in the new bourgeois public sphere as described by Jürgen Habermas. The mid-eighteenth-century concert hall functioned as a public arena for the display of individual and collective emotions;

- Karl August Ragotzky mockingly speaks of 'this weepy epoch' in his article 'Ueber Mode=Epoken in der Teutschen Lektüre', Journal des Luxus und der Moden 7 (1792), pp. 549--58. Cf. also the (twentieth-century) book title Das weinende Saeculum. Colloquium der Arbeitsstelle 18. Jahrhundert Gesamthochschule Wuppertal Universität Münster, Schloß Dyck vom 7.–9. Oktober 1981 (Arbeitsstelle Achtzehntes Jahrhundert. Heidelberg: Winter, 1983).
- ² Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetische Erfahrung. Das Semiotische und das Performative* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2001); Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004). In this article I consider a cultural performance to be a culturally or socially staged act of communication between two (groups of) people. A cultural performance acquires historically and locally contingent meanings through the interactive interpretation of *mise-enscène*, embodiment, perception and appropriation. I define performativity as the illocutionary and reiterative power of discourse, staging and embodiment, the force that interactively shapes and transforms the contingent meanings of cultural performance. Cf. John L. Austin, *How to do things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), chapter 4.

it can be seen as the stage on which music enabled the boundaries between the private and the public sphere to be crossed. Musical excerpts from the oratorio *Der Tod Jesu* (1755) by Carl Heinrich Graun will illustrate that *empfindsam* music caused its audience to weep, and that these tears performed a social function, as many tears were shed and shared during the performance.³

I *Empfindsamkeit*, virtue and tears in eighteenth-century Germany

In Carl Wilhelm Ramler's libretto for the oratorium *Der Tod Jesu*, the suffering Christ, the Apostles, other biblical figures and the intended concert audience cry many times. The recitative 'Jerusalem voll Mordlust', for instance, describes Christ's flagellation. Seeing and feeling this, the emphatic bystander weeps:

Nun kann kein edles Herz

Die Wehmuth mehr verschliessen,

Die lang verhaltnen Thränen fliessen.

Er aber sieht sich tröstend um und spricht:

Ihr Töchter Zions, weinet nicht, weinet nicht.

In this text, Ramler shows himself to be typical of the *Empfindsamkeit* in German poetry.⁴ Seeing Jesus falling under the cross, the believer, whose feelings the poet expresses here, can no longer restrain himself and sheds 'long held-up tears' of compassion. The capacity to weep from empathy was considered one of the most important virtues in German sentimentalism; such compassion for the suffering and dying Christ was the culmination of such virtue.

Sentimentalist ethics were based on knowledge of the inner self and all its emotions.⁵ The theorists of the *Empfindsamkeit* regarded a thorough knowledge of one's own heart and feelings as the highest degree of virtue. Sensitivity was the only means by which such virtue could be achieved; spiritual development could be reached through introspection and emotional experience. Human behaviour should only be guided by genuine feelings, because these could lead to inner wisdom.⁶ The gentler emotions such as love, tenderness, friendship, empathy and melancholy were especially valued for their social character.⁷ A contemporary German encyclopaedia therefore defines *Empfindsamkeit* as the sensitivity which is necessary for development towards virtuee. The arts and sciences should support people in this self-development:

- ⁴ Ramler was one of the most celebrated and widely read *empfindsam* poets. He was personally befriended by, among others, Lessing, Gleim, Moses Mendelssohn and Kleist.
- ⁵ See Peter Michelsen, Laurence Sterne und der deutsche Roman des 18. Jahrhunderts (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, <^{2?}>1972), ch. 3.
- ⁶ Cf. Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele', Schriften zu Philosophie, Literatur, Kunst und Altertum 1774–1787, Johann Gottfried Herder Werke in zehn Bänden (Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), vol. 4, p. 378.

⁷ See Frank Baasner, Der Begriff 'sensibilité' im 18. Jahrhundert. Aufsteig und Niedergang eines Ideals (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1988), p. 318f.

³ The title of this article has been taken from choral 24 from Ramler's *Der Tod Jesu*-libretto.

Empfindsamkeit [...] indicates a facility to arouse tender moral sentiments [Empfindungen]. [...] A certain degree of Empfindsamkeit for the beautiful and the good is absolutely necessary for the moral improvement of a person [...] [The arts and sciences] are not a mere pastime, their ultimate goal is moral sensitivity, which is guided by reason and wisdom.⁸

Through aesthetic beauty, the arts could evoke emotions that led to virtue, because 'the beautiful' was at the same time considered to be 'the good'.⁹ In his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste und der Ästhetik* (1771–1774), Johann Georg Sulzer argues that sensibility has both a psychological and a moral dimension: an emotion is a psychological experience, which can subsequently lead to a moral knowledge of good and evil.¹⁰ Sulzer stresses that the arts can and should operate on both levels. The artist should employ this influence over the human emotions to reach a higher goal:

Since the real job of the artist is to depict the emotions [Empfindungen] and that which stirs them as lively as possible, and both can have an important influence on the education of the soul, therefore it is natural that he should aim at stirring them. [...]. The artist, therefore, who takes his profession seriously and feels his powers, should consecrate himself to being the teacher and guide for his fellow citizens.¹¹

Crying was a vital part of sentimental morality. Tears flowing from a moved heart identified emotional experiences and made them tangible. Tears marked the beginning of the road to virtue.¹² Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* describes tears originating from genuine emotions as dignified, since they are the result of virtuous emotions: 'How can tears dishonour a great man, when the sensitivity that caused them is a virtue?'¹³ Sadness and crying demonstrated that the heart was sensitive and the spirit noble; tears were a tangible sign of virtue.¹⁴ Shedding tears could also soothe the tormented soul – which is why Goethe tells the reader of his Werther to feel comforted by the young man's suffering.¹⁵

As well as fashionable sensibility, tears could demonstrate religious virtue. In seventeenth-century Lutheran theology, the importance of crying to the effectiveness of penance is highly emphasised, and the devotional role of tears increased with the rise of pietism.¹⁶ Pietist rebirth, like *empfindsam* virtue, is the

- ⁹ See Gerhard Sauder, 'Der empfindsame Leser', Das weinende Saeculum, p. 14.
- ¹⁰ Johann Georg Sulzer, Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste und der Ästhetik (Leipzig: Weidemann, 1771–1774), p. 1210ff.
- ¹¹ Johann Georg Sulzer, Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste, p. 1221.
- ¹² Cf. Siegfried Jüttner, 'Weinende Herzen. Die Natur der Tränen in der Nouvelle Héloise von Rousseau', Das weinende Saeculum, p. 51ff.
- ¹³ Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers* (Par une Société de Gens de Lettres Berne/Lausanne 1780), Tome Vingt-Sixième (PLA-POR), p. 218.
- ¹⁴ See Baasner, *Sensibilité*, p. 172.
- ¹⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1774), motto.
- ¹⁶ Regarding the emotional aspects of Lutheran penitential theology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see my article "Let tears of blood run down your cheeks." Floods of blood,

⁸ Deutsche Encyclopädie oder Allgemeines Real-Wörterbuch aller Künste und Wissenschaften (Frankfurt/Main: Varrentrapp und Wenner, 1783), vol. 8, p. 341.

result of introspection and emotional self-development, and, like the sentimentalist, the pietist must suffer to develop morally. Pietist theologians emphasise that 'divine sadness' is a sign that God has implanted true repentance in the heart of the sinner. Philipp Jacob Spener frequently states that the believer's heart should be susceptible to 'empfindliche ängste' so that it can melt in genuine remorse.¹⁷ Such an anxious heart must express itself in tears; seventeenth and early eighteenth-century penitential treatises invariably contain page-long descriptions of the remorseful sinner's floods, rivers, 'head-fountains', baths, lakes or rain of often bloody tears. These metaphors were inspired by biblical imagery taken from the (penitential) psalms, Job's and Jeremiah's Lamentations, Peter and Mary Magdalene's contrition, and others. Theologian Ahasver Fritsch, whose texts were set to music by Dieterich Buxtehude among others, urges the believer to cry rivers of tears, even to 'let tears of blood run down [his] cheeks', as if the heart were weeping blood in ultimate repentance.¹⁸ This metaphor was often used as an expression of true contrition. In a penitential treatise, the early pietist preacher Christian Scriver describes the sighs and tears that characterise true remorse implanted by divine sadness:

[Penitents] break down in crying and wailing / in sighs / in tears / in wailing words and gestures / [...] they mostly find no peace / and even wet their beds with tears / they withdraw from every worldly company / lock themselves into a little chamber / fall to their knees / fall to their faces / and lie in dust and ashes / they forget to eat their bread / and torment themselves with sad thoughts [...].¹⁹

Penitential crying can also be found in devotional music of the early eighteenth century. If we think of J. S. Bach's oeuvre, many titles regarding penitential tears spring to mind. In the text of 'Buß und Reu', mvt. 6 from the *St Matthew Passion*, for instance, the repentant sinner expresses the hope 'that the drops of my tears may be a pleasant spice for thee, Jesus', and similarly, in mvt. 39, 'Erbarme dich, um meiner Zähren willen', the believer begs God for mercy for the sake of the tears wept bitterly by his heart and eye. The aria 'Blute nur, du liebes Herz', mvt. 8 of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, has the *Herzenstränen* mentioned above as its theme; an even stronger example is Bach's cantata for soprano solo *Mein Herze schwimmt in Blut* (BWV 199), which is conceived in the shape of a penitential prayer.

tears and love in German baroque devotional literature and music', Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio (ed.), *Blood in History and Blood Histories* (Florence: Sismel, Micrologus Library, 2005), pp. 193–214.

- ¹⁷ Philipp Jakob Spener, Theologische Bedencken / Und andere Brieffliche Antworten auf geistliche / sonderlich zur erbauung gerichtete materien [...] (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1713), vol. 2, p. 685ff. Cf. Schings, Melancholie und Aufklärung, p. 77.
- ¹⁸ Ahasver Fritsch, Andachten / Uber das vergossene Blut und die Thränen des gecreutzigten JESU [...] (Pirna: Stremel, 1687), pp. 6–7.
- ¹⁹ Christian Scriver, Seelen=Schatz / Darinn Von der menschlichen Seelen hohen Würde / tieffen und kläglichen Sünden=Fall / Busse und Erneuerung durch Christum [...] (Leipzig/Helmstedt/Magdeburg: Süstermann & Seidel, ³1704), p. 170. Scriver's Seelen=Schatz, which was originally published in 1675, was widely read in pietist circles until the early nineteenth century.

In both a secular and religious context, crying was considered a sign of virtue and sensitivity. It was not regarded as a passive reaction to emotion, but as an activity indicative of self-expression and self-development.²⁰ Worldly and religious reasons to cry could overlap and reinforce each other, as Ramler's text shows: the believer expresses compassion, one of the preferred milder emotions, via tears. The experience of empathy for a fellow human being leads to spiritual development and a noble heart, and the context of the Passion gives this self contemplation a religious moral. The sensitive believer, who appears several times in Ramler's libretto as 'gerührter Sünder' thus unifies two types of virtue; the tears wept at the Passion are tangible proof of both.²¹

Sentimental tears also had a social purpose. Contempory ideas of morality were explicitly linked to sociability,²² and tears – originating from individual emotions – gained meaning and importance when shed in public. The nearly endless enumerations of when, where, why and how much the hero of an eighteenth-century novel or diary cries – often while writing, Werther is again a typical example – are a manifestation of the desire to validate tears through public recognition.²³ Crying was a social activity, as the *Zedler* (the German Diderot/D'Alembert) confirms:

Only man – who has reason – can cry, and the fact that he has this faculty originates from an extraordinary providence. For since divine providence has created him for sociability, he should move others to compassion through crying, to shared joy through laughing; he can thereby create the opportunity to increase the love among people so that the ties of sociability can be enforced.²⁴

A capacity for tears and a sombre demeanour were important social skills. Reading out sentimental poetry in a fashionable salon allowed both reader and audience to demonstrate and share their sensitivity through dramatic declamation, expressive physiognomy, sighs and, most importantly, tears.²⁵

From this perspective, sentimental weeping can be considered both proof and enactment of sensitivity. Crying was often a studied demonstration of sensitivity

- ²² See Andrejs Petrowski, Weltverschlinger, Manipulatoren und Schwärmer. Problematische Individualität in der Literatur des späten 18. Jahrhunderts (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2002), p. 14ff.
- ²³ Cf. Wolfgang Herrlinger, Sentimentalismus und Postsentimentalismus. Studien zum englischen Roman bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), 75ff.; Hans von Trotha, Angenehme Empfindungen. Medien einer populären Wirkungsästhetik im 18. Jahrhundert vom Landschaftsgarten bis zum Schauerroman (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1999), p. 232ff.
- ²⁴ Lemma 'Weinen', Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste, verlegt durch J.H. Zedler (Halle/Leipzig 1732–1754), vol. 54, p. 703.
- ²⁵ Anne Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears. Sensibility and Sentimentality in France* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1991), p. 8ff.

²⁰ Regarding the similarities between sentimental and pietist morality see my article "Gij zult op mijn zerk wenen". Sentimentele, metafysische en performatieve tranen in Elisabeth Maria Posts *Het Land'*, *De Achttiende Eeuw*, 38 (2006), pp. 1-19.

²¹ On the 'gerührter Sünder' in the Der Tod Jesu libretto see Herbert Lölkes, Ramlers Der Tod Jesu in den Vertonungen von Graun und Telemann. Kontext – Werkgestalt – Rezeption (Kassel etc: Bärenreiter, 1999), p. 69ff.

that gained performative meaning through its explicitly public character.²⁶ Weeping was a cultural performance in Fischer-Lichte's definition, working through *mise-en-scène*, embodiment, perception and appropriation.²⁷ This cultural performance could take various shapes, from publishing a sentimental book or diary to sensitive conversation, from the sombreness of the pietists to the tears of the *empfindsam* concert audience.

Cultural performances depend on interaction with an audience for their effect; they are given meaning by an audience's perception and recognition. Sentimental tears were attributed meaning in a similarly interactive way: the weeper's social environment recognised the emotions behind the tears and thus acknowledged the weeper's sensitivity. The audience also recognised its own emotions and, consequently, its own sensitivity in public tears. The audience's sensitivity could then in its turn be made public, validated and shared through tears. Through such identification processes, shared sentimentality often led to collective weeping. The numerous literary and literal imitations of Goethe's Werther and Miller's Siegwart can be ascribed to exactly this performative effect.²⁸ Through various forms of emotional and aesthetic identification with the protagonist or author of a book, readers could internalise the sentiments described. Such processes of identification allowed them to share in the tears and even the death wish of the novel's characters.²⁹ The cultural performance of sentimentality through crying was therefore an important factor in the manifestation of fashionable social identities in the culture of Empfindsamkeit.

The social functionality of crying is part of a development that has been described by Jürgen Habermas as the genesis of a 'publikumsbezogene Privatheit' in the eighteenth century.³⁰ Habermas argues that the public reflection of personal intellectual and emotional experiences in bourgeois literary culture became part of a new political ethos. The public character of bourgeois life was to a certain extent paradoxical, because it was shaped by the emphasis on introspection and individual emotions.³¹ The explosive growth of literary self-reflection in the shape of epistolary novels and *Bildungsromane* contributed to the

- ²⁶ The explicit nature of this sensitivity simultaneously aroused much international criticism of sentimentalism. Cf. Jüttner, 'Weinende Herzen', p. 53. Goethe's play *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit. Eine dramatische Grille* is a satire on these aspects of *empfindsam* culture. Elisabeth Le Guin has described such performative aspects of crying in eighteenth-century French musical culture in her article "One Says that One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep": Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini's Chamber Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* vol. 55, no. 2 (2002), pp. 207–54.
- ²⁷ Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetische Erfahrung*, 287f. Cf. Christian von Zimmermann, 'Verinnerlichung der Trauer – Publizität des Leids. Gefühlskultur, Privatheit und Öffentlichkeit in Trauertexten der bürgerlichen Aufklärung', Achim Aurnhammer et al., *Gefühlskultur in der bürgerlichen Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004), pp. 47–74, p. 73ff.
- ²⁸ Regarding the literary influence of *Werther* as well as the suicides of its readers, see Ingrid Engel, *Werther und die Wertheriaden. Ein Beitrag zur Wirkungsgeschichte* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 1986), pp. 87–93.
- ²⁹ Gerhard Sauder, 'Der empfindsame Leser', p. 15ff.
- ³⁰ Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, <9?>1990), p. 248.
- ³¹ Cf. Zimmermann, 'Verinnerlichung der Trauer', p. 52, 73.

birth of a new public sphere, in which emotionality was deprivatised and became paradigmatic for sentimental intersubjectivity: the sharing of personal feelings became the basis of *empfindsam* public communication.³² The public staging, performance and sharing of such emotions formed part of the reading culture described by Habermas. Besides in new public spaces such as coffee houses and salons, it also took place in the confessional and the concert hall.

The compulsive sharing of individual emotions and the collective weeping of sentimentalism can be reinterpreted in this light. The validation of sensitivity depended on its public demonstration, which made personal emotions collective. The highly valued emotion of compassion was thought to reflect the shared feelings (com-passion) of a sensitive soul and its explicitly emotional social environment.³³ Tears, the physical and visible result of violent emotions, played an important part in this intersubjective communication. Seeing someone cry made one cry. Wherever tears flowed, personal emotions were made public, recognised, and shared, often in collective weeping. Dieter Hildebrandt has described the tears in and evoked by Lessing's plays as an 'active stage prop, [...] an emotional weapon, [...] a material, tangible pearl of communication'.34 Sentimental crying actively disturbed and redefined the borders between the private and public, and so functioned as one of the factors in the creation of a new public sphere.³⁵ The secular and religious tears which appear in literature and music from the early eighteenth century, although often similar in their discursive shape, did not have this overtly public function; although listeners to J. S. Bach's penitential perceived his music as a devotional exercise, their tearful expressions of remorse took place in private.³⁶ The theory of human affections in such earlier works, moreover, was based on a Christian-stoic notion of Affektbeherrschung, rather than on the sentimental, public expression of such emotions.37

II Empfindsam music speaking from heart to heart

Theorists of the *Empfindsamkeit* considered music to be the most emotionally effective art because it was an unfiltered expression of the moved heart. Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg argues in his *Historische-kritische Beiträge zur Aufnahme der Musik* (1754–1778) that music is the natural language of the heart. The essence of

- ³³ Cf. Trotha, Angenehme Empfindungen, p. 216.
- ³⁴ Dieter Hildebrandt, 'Die Dramaturgie der Träne', Das Weinende Saeculum, p. 84ff. Cf. Vincent-Buffault, History of Tears, p. 11ff.
- ³⁵ Cf. Le Guin, 'One Says that One Weeps', p. 210ff.
- ³⁶ Theologian Johann Jakob Rambach advises that a thorough self-examination should best take place in 'a hidden place, where one can cry sufficiently'. Johann Jacob Rambach, *Betrachtung der Thränen und Seufzer JESU CHRISTI / In zweyen Predigten Am X. und XII. Sonntage nach* Trinitatis, 1725, *in der Schul=Kirche in Halle angestellet* (Halle: Waysenhaus, <4?>1731), 47.
- ³⁷ Regarding affect in baroque poetics see Rüdiger Campe, Affekt und Ausdruck. Zur Umwandlung der literarischen Reden im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1990); Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, Wollust und Grausamkeit. Affektenlehre und Affektdarstellung in Lohensteins Dramatik am Beispiel von 'Agrippina' (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986).

³² *ibid.* p. 60-61; vgl. Trotha, Angenehme Empfindungen, p. 215.

this art is the expression of emotions: 'Therefore, the emotions [Empfindungen] in their purest and most natural form, expressed only in sounds, are the first foundation of music.'³⁸ The composer or musician should therefore ensure that the music springs directly from the heart. Music critic Johann Friedrich Reichardt praises the way in which Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach 'does not search troublesomely for his new and rare thoughts or fetch them from far, but lets them spring spontaneously from his soul'.³⁹

The spontaneous emotionality expressed by composers or musicians was thought to affect directly the heart of the sensitive listener. The composer or musician must be touched by the emotion he wanted to express, so that one sensitive heart could speak directly to another through music. In a famous passage from his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach explains that the musical sharing of emotions leads to compassion:

Since a musician cannot move others unless he is moved himself; therefore he must necessarily arouse all the affects in himself that he wishes to evoke in his listeners; he offers them the insight of his own *Empfindungen* and in this way moves them most effectively to shared emotions [*Mit=Empfindung*].⁴⁰

The close connection between music and the human soul was thought to give music educational powers. Performing and listening to music were regarded as virtuous exercises which stimulated the mild emotions necessary to develop natural moral insights. Gottfried Krause describes the ethical workings of music in his treatise *Von der musikalischen Poesie*. It is clear from his argument that the milder emotions are as important in music as in the other arts:

The gentle *Empfindungen* of stimulating tones refine the virtues, make the judgment more flexible and the heart more sensitive. Their impressions encourage the ability to feel love, goodness and compassion, and offer our passions that most useful moderation which is the true essence of virtue.⁴¹

Marpurg takes this line of thinking a step further in his reviews of contemporary German concert life. He frequently argues that music which touches the heart but has no moral lesson is useless.⁴² Performers of such 'contentless' music make a double mistake: 'the double failure to move us without bettering us, and to let us make a great noise which does not mean anything'.⁴³

- ³⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Historische-kritische Beiträge zur Aufnahme der Musik* (Berlin: Schütz, 1754, reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1970), vol. 1, p. 521. Regarding music as 'language of the heart' see also Engel, *Werther und die Wertheriaden*, p. 368ff.
- ³⁹ Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden die Musik betreffend* (Frankfurt/Main and Leipzig 1774, reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1977), vol. 1, p. 121.
- ⁴⁰ Bach, Versuch, 122. Bach is referring to a passage from Horatius' Ars Poetica which is also quoted by Sulzer: 'Wenn du mich willst zum Weinen bewegen, sagt Horaz, so weine du selbst; dieses ist der eine Weg. Der andre ist die lebhafte Darstellung oder Vorbildung der Gegenstände, worauf die Empfindung unmittelbar geht; wer Mitleiden erweken will, muß den Gegenstand des Mitleidens uns lebhaft fürs Gesichte bringen.' Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste, p. 314.
- ⁴¹ Christian Gottfried Krause, Von der musikalischen Poesie (Berlin: J.F. Vosz, 1753), p. 39.
- ⁴² Marpurg, *Historische-kritische Beiträge* 2, p. 157ff.
- ⁴³ *ibid.* p. 158.

Music was equally valued in religious circles, for the same reason: it expressed the innermost emotions of the musician and could arouse the most subjective sentiments in the heart of the listener, consequently leading to virtue.⁴⁴ Apart from the *empfindsam* critics, Lutheran and pietist theologians and preachers ascribed this function of music to the workings of the holy spirit rather than to human capacities. One result of this secular and religious appreciation of music's moral and educational value is that the libretti of church cantatas, oratorios and passions from the *empfindsam* period often express theological themes in sentimental imagery.⁴⁵ Ramler's text for the recitative 'Auf einmal fällt der aufgehaltne Schmerz' in the *Tod Jesu* libretto illustrates this stylistic merger:

Auf einmal fällt der aufgehaltne Schmerz, des Helden Seele wütend an: Sein Herz hebt die gespannte Brust. In jeder Ader wühlet ein Dolch. Sein ganzer Körper fliegt am Kreuz empor. Er fühlet des Todes siebenfache Gräuel. Auf ihm liegt die Hölle glanz. Er kann ihn nicht mehr fassen, den Schmerz, der ihn allmächtig drückt; Er ruft: Mein Gott! / wie hast du mich verlassen.

This detailed description of the crucified Christ's feelings gives him a distinctly human face. Such 'humanised' Christology is typical of eighteenth-century Lutheran and pietist theology. During the seventeenth century, Christ was increasingly described as a divine human, rather than a human God. As a result of this changing perspective, the crucifixion was interpreted as the loving selfsacrifice of a human being who showed his divine nature in his willingness to make the ultimate love sacrifice.⁴⁶ The soteriological application in line 2 of the 'hero'-metaphor from the Old Testament (Gen. 49:10b, Ps. 89:20, Jes. 9:5, Jer. 20:11) was also common to eighteenth-century Lutheran devotional literature. The 'sevenfold' horror of death in line 7 refers to another theme in Lutheran theology, the seven last words of Jesus on the cross. The theological themes of this recitative could thus have appeared in every baroque passion libretto. Unlike earlier passions, however, this text was not written from the perspective of the guilty witnesses of the crucifixion, but from that of the suffering Christ himself. The emphasis is on Jesus' experience of fear, pain and doubt, which makes him a sensitive, noble soul according to empfindsam philosophy. The imagery in the recitative is accordingly emotional, but more subtle than the violent effects in baroque passion texts (compare, for instance, the violent arioso 'Erbarm es Gott!' from J. S. Bach's St Matthew Passion): the milder emotions are the theme here. The enjambements form a stylistic expression of the subtle, human emotions in the

⁴⁴ Cf. Christian Bunners, 'Musik', chapter J, Hartmut Lehmann (ed.) *Geschichte des Pietismus* 4: *Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2004), p. 430.

⁴⁵ Bunners, 'Musik', p. 445.

⁴⁶ Elke Axmacher has illustrated how this Christology lies at the basis of Picander's libretto for J. S. Bach's St Matthew Passion. 'Aus Liebe will mein Heyland sterben.' Untersuchungen zum Wandel des Passionsverständnisses im frühen 18. Jahrhundert (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1984) (Beiträge zur theologischen Bachforschung) vol. 2, p. 206.

text. In view of the close connection between music and the human heart, Graun's musical setting of this simultaneously religious and *empfindsam* text could only strengthen its emotionally educational effect.

The interest in music in sentimental and religious circles had an effect on concert programming, with the result that the performance of religious music became less restricted to liturgical occasions. During the second half of the eighteenth century, religious genres such as cantatas and oratoria were also performed in concert halls and salons;⁴⁷ although Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* was composed for the Good Friday liturgy and performed in the Berlin Dome, it was performed in opera houses and concert halls as well. Since both secular and religious concert repertories played a large role in sentimental culture, this oratory had a public function from its premiere.⁴⁸

III Tears and social borders in *empfindsam* music culture

Empfindsam music lovers were often moved to tears during concerts. The musical experience could be so overwhelming that it led to a direct emotional response. The tears wept by the the sensitive concert audience can be seen as a remarkable category within the cultural performance of sentimental public crying.

The musical concert unites many aspects of cultural performativity. First, music is a performing art, involving a physical staged performance and an equally physical audience. Concertgoing itself, moreover, can also be interpreted as a cultural performance. The concert-goer's behaviour is prescribed by cultural traditions: clothing, reactions to the music and social behaviour create a cultural *mise-en-scene*.⁴⁹ Anyone visiting a concert experiences a double performativity: not only the staged music, but also the physical presence in the audience and the active participation in ritualised reactions to the performative layers of the concert it is necessary to distinguish the musical performance on the stage from the cultural performance in the concert hall.

Simon Frith has argued that the strong performative effect of music can largely be explained by the strong connection between the subjective and the collective in

- ⁴⁹ Regarding concert audience rituals see Wolfgang Gratzer, 'Alter Umgang mit neuer Musik', Barbara Barthelmes and Helga de la Motte-Haber (eds.), *Musik und Ritual* (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1998), pp. 41–56.
- ⁵⁰ Regarding the performative aspects of (rock) concert audiences see Roy Shuker, 'Dance to the Music', Public Performance', *Understanding Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 198– 224.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hans-Günter Ottenberg, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., <2?>1987), p. 157ff.

⁴⁸ Cf. Max Becker, Narkotikum und Utopie: Musik-Konzepte in Empfindsamkeit und Romantik (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996), pp. 66–71; Gerhard Sauder, 'Die empfindsamen Tendenzen in der Musikkultur nach 1750', Hans Joachim Marx (ed.), Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach und die europäische Musikkultur des mittleren 18. Jahrhunderts. Bericht über das Internationale Symposium der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg 29. September – 2. Oktober 1988 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), pp. 60–64.

musical experiences.⁵¹ Music induces individual and shared emotions and memories, with the result that the listener can identify both with the admired musician and the admiring audience.⁵² During an *empfindsam* concert the sentimental soul recognises its own – idealised – sensitivity in the music, the musician or the weeping audience, is moved by those admired emotions, and expresses itself in tears. Physicality and (inter)subjectivity are entwined in the musical identification process. The *empfindsam* emotions are perceived and expressed through the ears, eyes and heart of the individual listener, but their expression and validation can only take place in the public sphere. Reichardt's appreciation of Graun's musical expression of 'the soft and moving' is based on exactly its physical and intersubjective aspects:

Graun [...] is so simple and simultaneously so moving in such songs, that every moved listener – and who is not moved to tears listening to him – that everyone believes that he himself is singing, and that his own compassion, that he feels for the sorrow of the acting person, is dictating him the tones.⁵³

The listener identifies with the sensitivity enacted on stage and demonstrates that same sensitivity by shedding tears. These tears are noticed, recognised and shared by the rest of the audience. Tears shed in the concert hall were thus simultaneously self-expression, enactment of sensibility, and intersubjective communicative medium.

Both the on and offstage aspects of this cultural performance gained explicit attention. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's and Johann Joachim Quantz's treatises, for instance, describe elaborately how the instrumentalist should express and perform musical emotions. Physiognomy was an important aspect of sensitive musical performance. The passage from Bach's *Versuch* quoted above ends with urgent advice to the pianist to choose a facial expression to correspond with the emotions he is expressing musically: 'During weak and sad passages, he becomes weak and sad. One can see and hear it.'⁵⁴ In doing this, the musician not only performs sensitive music, but enacts his own sensitivity.

Explicit emotion on stage in turn evoked emotions in the audience. Johann Nikolaus Forkel describes how, during a private concert in Paris, the tears of a violinist moved the complete ensemble as well as the audience to tears:

The amateur concert in Paris recently started with a symphony by M. *le Duc*, which had a remarkable effect. At a very tender passage in the middle of the adagio, the well-known gentleman of St George was so violently moved by the thought of a deceased friend that his bow fell from his hand and tears were flowing onto his violin. This intense

⁵¹ Simon Frith, 'Music and Identity', *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.) (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 108–27.

⁵² Cf. Simon Frith, *Performing Rites. Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 271–77.

⁵³ Reichardt, Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden 1, p. 17. Cf. Becker, Narkotikum und Utopie, p. 118.

⁵⁴ Bach, Versuch 1, p. 122.

emotion then became so generally felt that all who played with him put their instruments down and surrendered to their sadness.⁵⁵

Such collective crying was considered a sign of success: the emotional reactions of concert audiences play a remarkably important role in concert reviews of this period. An excerpt from Reichardt's famous twenty-page review of Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* oratorio in Berlin illustrates the performative dimensions of sentimental concerts:

But how could I tell you all that I have felt on this wonderful night? [...] my joy starts to verge on the painful. Never, never have I felt such a thing! [...] This great man occupies the soul of his audience, and can fill them with every *Empfindung*. [...] And just as the song of this lovely, heart-moving singer makes us shed hot tears over Abel's death and melancholy tears over the initial happy innocence of humankind, just so he fills our hearts with nostalgia and yearning, and he also pours innocent, sweet joys into our hearts. [...] Every sensitive listener has to sigh along whole-heartedly with all this, and even now tears obstruct my words.⁵⁶

Reichardt's account demonstrates the role played by concerts in sentimental culture at various levels. First, the reviewer measures the success of the concert by the number and intensity of emotions called forth in the audience. Music was considered the ultimate vehicle for the expression of the mild emotions. As emotions could only be validated in interaction with their social environment, the cultural value of music was assessed by its effect on the audience. The more explicit the signs of emotion shown by a concert audience, the more successful the musical communication; Reichardt asserts that the visible emotional reaction of 'every sensitive listener' to Handel's music is a self-evident recommendation of the composer's talent and quality. Secondly, Reichardt gives his concert reviews the shape of personal letters. Strictly speaking, the reviewer's emotions rather than the concert itself seem to be the theme of these letters. Reichardt uses the published music review to demonstrate his sensitivity, as the audience demonstrated theirs in the concert hall. The two performances - on- and offstage - merge and reinforce each other during the sentimental concert, and here the concert review adds a third layer of performance. Finally, Reichardt's review demonstrates the role of music in the intersubjective dimension of sentimental weeping. The collective tears evoked by Handel's music blur the borders between the composer's, musician's, audience's, and even reviewer's emotions. This direct involvement in publicly expressed emotion is characteristic of the 'publikumsbezogene Privatheit' (Habermas) of the Empfindsamkeit.

These aspects of sentimental concert life prompt the question of the extent to which 'the music itself' was of interest to concert-goers. Reviews such as these arouse suspicion that the music was secondary to the actual purpose of sentimental concert audiences—shared sensitivity and collective weeping. For this reason, François Genton calls sentimental theatre a form of group therapy

⁵⁵ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Musikalisch-kritische Bibliothek* (Gotha: Carl Wilhelm Ettinger 1778, reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1964), vol. 1, p. 314.

⁵⁶ Reichardt, Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden 1, pp. 82–93.

during which both performers and audience experienced a catharsis through crying floods of tears.⁵⁷ Not all music had this effect, however, and not every concert ended in collective crying: audiences wept extensively over Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's music, but did not shed a tear over his father. There were certain criteria, then, which must be fulfilled for a composition to be effective emotionally. One piece which was always an *empfindsam* success was Carl Heinrich Graun's setting of Ramler's *Der Tod Jesu*, and I would like to look briefly at some excerpts from it.

C. H. Graun's *Der Tod Jesu*: what made one weep?

Ramler's libretto *Der Tod Jesu* was set to music by a number of composers. Other than Telemann's version of this oratorio, the most famous setting is that by Carl Heinrich Graun, *Kapellmeister* to Frederick the Great of Prussia. Graun's *Tod Jesu* was much admired from its first performance in 1755, and remained the most popular work for the Passion week throughout the nineteenth century; only in the early twentieth century did J. S. Bach's *St Matthew Passion* start to appear more often on concert programmes.⁵⁸ The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 1809 describes *Der Tod Jesu* as a 'masterpiece of German art' in which the composer deeply moves the heart of the listener.⁵⁹ The oratorio is interesting in the context of this article because it takes as its theme both sentimental and religious tears and, moreover, seems to have evoked extensive crying at each performance.

Peter's remorse receives much attention in Ramler's libretto, and its poetic expression corresponds both with contemporary theology of penance and sentimental emotionality. The apostle's denial and his tears are described in a recitative, followed by a tenor aria and a tutti choir addressed directly to the compassionate audience.

The recitative 'Nun klingen Waffen' describes Jesus' arrest and Peter's betrayal. After the denial, Christ looks Peter in the face, thereby immediately stirring heavy remorse in the apostle's heart. This addition to the Gospel story in the oratorio libretto is in line with *empfindsam* poetic traditions: Peter does not *see* Jesus look, but *feels* it, so his emotional experience is emphasised:

Doch siehe! Jesus wendet sich, Und blickt ihn an. Er fühlt den Blick, Er geht zurück, Er weinet bitterlich.

⁵⁷ François Genton, 'Weinende Männer. Zum Wandel der Empfindsamkeit im 18. Jahrhundert', A. Aurnhammer et al., *Gefühlskultur in der bürgerlichen Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004), p. 211.

⁵⁸ Regarding the reception of Graun's oratorio see Lölkes, Ramlers Der Tod Jesu, p. 211ff.

⁵⁹ Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung XI (1809), col. 468, quoted from Howard Serwer's foreword to his edition of Carl Heinrich Graun's *Der Tod Jesu*, Collegium Musicum II, V (Yale University, Department of Music: Madison: A-R Editions, 1975), p. ix.

The words 'er weinet bitterlich' are set in delaying dotted notes. Peter's crying is expressed melodically in minor third motifs, which are accompanied by *suspiratio* figures in the b.c. part:⁶⁰



Example 1: C. H. Graun, Der Tod Jesu, recit. 8 'Nun klingen Waffen', bars 30-32.61

In his review of *Der Tod Jesu*, Reichardt expresses his admiration for this passage. He is particularly impressed by the delaying dotted notes, which the singer emphasises in *tempo rubato*:

At the words which end the third recitative, where it says about Peter: he weeps bitterly; which Graun has expressed very beautifully becausebesides the beautiful expressive harmony – he has extended the second syllable a whole long bar, in which one note is repeated several times; at these words [the singer] used the so-called *Tempo rubato*, which means that she added a strong emphasis that it actually should not have to the note, in such a way that it resulted in truly frightened sobbing.⁶²

The movement from E flat minor to E flat major which concludes the recitative is continued in mvt. 9, the tenor aria 'Ihr weich geschaffnen Seelen'. The key E flat major, it must be noted, is described in contemporary sources as a key which is specifically able to evoke the sentimental gentle emotions.⁶³ This emotionally intense aria is directed immediately to the listeners, cautioning them not only to sympathise with Peter's remorse, but also to contemplate their own involvement in this scene:

Ihr weich geschaffnen Seelen, Ihr könnt nicht lange fehlen; Bald höret euer Ohr das strafende Gewissen, Bald weint aus euch der Schmerz. Ihr thränenlosen Sünder, bebet! Einst, mitten unter Rosen, hebet Die Reu den Schlangenkamm empor, Und fällt mit unheilbaren Bissen Dem Freyler an das Herz.

⁶⁰ The *suspiratio*, which consists of a quaver or semiquaver pause on a heavy moment followed by immediate (semi)quavers or syncopating quarters, was used from the Italian Renaissance onwards as an expression of sadness and crying.

⁶¹ I thank Norbert Bartelsman for the digital processing of my musical examples.

⁶² Reichardt, Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden 1, p. 41ff. Marpurg was equally enthusiastic about Graun's setting of this passage. Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, Kritische Briefe über die Tonkunst (Berlin: F. W. Birnstiel, 1762), vol. 2, p. 263ff.

⁶³ See for instance Reichardt, *Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden* 1, 60.

By identifying with the apostle, the moved listener could share in his penitential tears. As in the *Judas Maccabeus*-performance described by Reichardt, this identification and its expression in tears lead to a blurring of the emotional borders between composer, *dramatis personae*, singer and audience. They all share in public remorse, public sensitivity and therefore public virtue. Charles Burney's account of a performance of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *Passionskantate* shows that the corresponding passage from this work had exactly the same effect on its audience: 'An adagio aria in which Peter cries fervently when the cock moves him to repentance was so profoundly moving that almost all the listeners accompanied the apostle with their tears.'⁶⁴

While the text explicitly invites the listener to weep, Graun makes the aria musically effective by employing a number of musical means expressing sadness and tears. The aria was described in *empfindsam* music theory as a genre particularly fit for the expression of emotions. Marpurg specifies that the 'whining and weeping' of the sad, especially when expressed in aria form, deeply moves the heart of the listener.⁶⁵ Like the opening and closing choirs, this aria is composed in E flat major, a key that was considered particularly empfindsam.66 Graun employs chromaticism intensively, which according to Sulzer was an adequate means of communicating sad emotions. Sulzer argues that chromaticism was an adequate means to express 'those passions that put the heart in trepidation and have something sad about them'.⁶⁷ The melody to 'bald weint aus euch der Schmerz' in bars 28-29 illustrates the double affective power of chromaticism. Harmonically, it marks a shift from major to minor; it simultaneously forms a melodic *plorant semitonum*, the rising semitone expressing sorrow. The descending melody on these words covers the lamento tetrachord in all vocal and instrumental parts.⁶⁸ Musical tear motifs such as parallel thirds and sixths and sigh figures can also be found in J. S. Bach's compositorial treatment of the same theme in his Passions and penitential cantatas.⁶⁹ Finally, rhythmical expressions of contrition and tears are the descending syncopations causing sharp dissonance in bars 31–32. The accumulation of penitential affections ends in bar 37 with a painfully postponed cadence on E flat major. A frantic admonition to the 'tearless sinner' (who therefore knows no true remorse) in the b part of the aria, consisting of a 3/8 vivace rhythm and a modulation via G major to c minor, serves to sharpen the affective contrast between the remorseful and the ignorant sinner.

The following tutti choir movement, 'Unsre Seele ist gebeuget', represents the remorseful sinners' response to the emotional plea for contrition in the aria

⁶⁴ Charles Burney, *Tagebuch seiner musikalischen Reisen*, vol. 3 (Hamburg: Schaal, 1773, reprint Kassel: Bärenreiter 1959), p. 193ff. (letter of 10 October 1772).

⁶⁵ See Marpurg, *Historische-kritische Beiträge* 2, p. 86ff.

⁶⁶ See for instance Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, p. 1374; Reichardt, *Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden* 1, p. 60.

⁶⁷ Sulzer, Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste, p. 815.

⁶⁸ See Ute Ringhandt, Sunt lacrimae rerum. Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Weinens in der Musik (Sinzig: Studio, 2001), pp. 155–59.

⁶⁹ Cf. Van Elferen, 'Let tears of blood run down your cheeks', pp. 209-14.



Example 2: C. H. Graun, *Der Tod Jesu*, aria 9 'Ihr weich geschaffnen Seelen', bars 27–37.

before; its sole text is a repeated 'Our soul is bent down to the earth, for we have sinned so much'. The extreme dissonance of the homophonous exclamation on a diminished seventh chord on the words 'O weh!' are clearly meant to move the listener violently.⁷⁰ Here, too, the religious concert audience are 'moved sinners', as well as the biblical witnesses of the Passion. The passage is concluded by a choral representing the religious community, which has the same structuring function as the chorals in J. S. Bach's Passions.

The stately closing choir 'Hier liegen wir gerührte Sünder' involves the audience in the staged drama one last time. Ramler has designed the text from the viewpoint of the emphatic listeners, who are filled with remorse as they speak to Jesus:

Hier liegen wir gerührte Sünder, O Jesu, tief gebückt, Mit Thränen diesen Staub zu netzen, Der deine Lebensbäche trank: Nimm unser Opfer an!

After all the direct emotion in the dramaturgical development of the oratorio, the sensitive concert-goer will identify with the 'gerührter Sünder' in this text. In order to reinforce the intersubjective performativity of this text, Graun employs musical means that have a collective effect. The expressive octave leaps in the orchestral and vocal parts, the dotted rhythms of the instrumental parts, and especially the tutti choir accompany the progress from individually felt to collectively expressed emotions. The E flat major key and the descending bass line show that these emotions are sad (see Example 3). Reichardt's review of the oratorio confirms that the musical setting of the closing choir did indeed lead to shared remorse in the concert audience: 'Who does not feel touched into the deepest layers of his heart, bent down deeply into the dust when listening to the choir: Hier liegen wir gerührte Sünder?'⁷¹

In conclusion, the libretto of Graun's *Tod Jesu* unifies the virtues of penitential tears and those of *empfindsam* weeping. The musical emphasis on sad emotions and the highlighted tear motifs underline and reinforce this theme. The combination of direct emotion in the texts and effective musical expression allowed the performance of this oratorio to cross the borders between individual and shared emotions. Thus, a second cultural performance could take place within the *mise-en-scène* of the offstage concert performance: the religious and sentimental virtuousness performed on stage gave the audience an occasion to demonstrate its spiritual nobility in public tears. Music, the ultimate *empfindsam* art, was not only able to express and provoke tears, but to enforce their intersubjective functionality on the public stage of the sentimental concert hall.

⁷⁰ The diminished seventh chord was already used as an expression of sadness and crying in the baroque. Regarding this element of J. S. Bach's vocal work see Ringhandt, *Sunt lacrimae rerum*, p. 152.

⁷¹ Reichardt, Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden 1, p. 56.



Example 3: C. H. Graun, *Der Tod Jesu*, closing choir 'Hier liegen wir gerührte Sünder', bars 1-8.