

No Room at the Inn: Class, Gender, and Vernacular Music in Enlightenment Vienna

Ample evidence and research have demonstrated that an individual's access to music in the eighteenth century was often correlated to other forms of privilege, as it continues to be today. Most "public" opera houses and concert venues, for instance, were within reach only of relatively socio-economically advantaged individuals, as were domestic musical instruments, notated music, and the time and resources necessary to learn how to read and play or sing it. As David Gramit has explored, eighteenth-century efforts to define music considered elite depended on establishing it as the exclusive purview of individuals of a particular nation, class, gender, or level of education.¹ In contrast, the broad accessibility of vernacular music has been an integral part of its definition.²

In this talk, I consider how class and gender limited access to venues featuring vernacular music in Enlightenment Vienna—inns, taverns, beer houses, and wine cellars. I argue that privileged Viennese women typically experienced vernacular music through written accounts rather than personal encounters and that this mediation contributed to their circumscribed position in the public sphere. One of the main concerns of the Enlightenment was a fuller understanding of humanity by means of the same detailed observations used to study the natural world. Scientific travel led to the birth of anthropology as a discipline, but in Vienna, whose "mixture of so many nationalities [...] distinguish[ed] [it] from all other European cities" (Johann Pezzl, *Sketch of Vienna*, 1786), firsthand encounters with various cultures and their vernacular music were potentially at one's doorstep, as was the authority that personal experience conferred upon written descriptions. Yet literate Viennese women were routinely denied that authority and rendered passive recipients of knowledge.

¹ David Gramit, *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770–1848* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

² See for instance Philip V. Bohlman, "Vernacular Music," in *Grove Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 13 February 2020).