EXPRESSIONISM AND THE SEARCH FOR MODERN OPERA IN WEIMAR GERMANY

by

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ABSTRACT

In the first half of Germany's Weimar Republic (1918–1933), composers Paul Hindemith, Alban Berg, Kurt Weill and Ernst Krenek each used expressionist theatre pieces as libretti for their early operas. This thesis explores how contemporary critics welcomed these works amidst a perceived opera crisis in post-war Germany. I use expressionism primarily as a heuristic tool, a discursive device to build an impression of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture from the ground up. Direct discussions of expressionism as an aesthetic, therefore, take on greater importance in some chapters more than others. Chapter One reconsiders the backlash to Hindemith's triptych—*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, *Das Nusch-Nuschi* and *Sancta Susanna*—in Stuttgart (1921) and Frankfurt (1922). As art critics proclaimed expressionism's 'death', I show how oppositions to the triptych were fuelled largely by the operas' provocative subject matters and that these denouncements were quite separate from contemporary discourse surrounding expressionism. Chapter Two revises the genesis of Berg's *Wozzeck*. I explore how the premiere of *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck* at the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein's Tonkünstlerfest in 1924 whetted the appetites of critics for the complete opera—something the *Bruchstücke* continued to do so at later performances. Chapter Three reframes Weill's *Der Protagonist* (1926) as the latest instantiation of a broader pantomime renaissance within European modernism. This chapter argues that *Der Protagonist* fulfilled Weill's earlier desire to incorporate pantomime into a modern stage work and shows how critics at the opera's premiere saw the inclusion of pantomime as hinting towards a new form of opera. The final chapter uses the reception of Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* (1926) to suggest how critics saw Kassel to be situated at the periphery of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture. I highlight the assumptions towards the landscape of Germany's opera culture at the time of the premiere and how these came to light when the whole system was seemingly turned on its head.

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Sections of the thesis are soon to be published. An earlier draft of Chapter One is in press with *The Musical Quarterly* as 'Reclaiming Expressionism: Hindemith's Operatic Triptych'. I would like to thank the anonymous readers of my article, whose comments have greatly informed the final chapter which appears in this thesis. A shorter version of Chapter Three is forthcoming as 'Kurt Weill, Pantomime and Operatic Reform: The Case of *Der Protagonist* (1926)' in the edited collection *Diskontinuitäten. Zur Historiographie der Oper zwischen der Weimarer Republik und früher Bundesrepublik*. Thank you to the collection's

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FIGURES

MUSIC EXAMPLES

All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise

INTRODUCTION

In the first half of Germany's Weimar Republic (1918–1933), a group of up-and-coming composers—Paul Hindemith, Alban Berg, Kurt Weill and Ernst Krenek—turned to expressionist theatre pieces as the basis for their early operas. Contemporary critics welcomed these works amidst a perceived *Opernkrise* (opera crisis) in Germany and marked Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek as forces to be reckoned with for new opera. In March 1922, Hindemith's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, *Das Nusch-Nuschi* and *Sancta Susanna*, based on texts by Oskar Kokoschka, Franz Blei and August Stramm respectively, were framed by critics as clear departures from Richard Wagner's music dramas. Berg's *Wozzeck*, adapted from a play by Georg Büchner, was premiered in Berlin in December 1925 and was celebrated by the press as an expedition into unchartered operatic territory. Just a few months later in March 1926, Weill's *Der Protagonist*, after a play by Georg Kaiser, was hailed by critics as a clear sign of opera's future. Later that year in November, Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*, also adapted from one of Kokoschka's plays, received countless curtain calls at its premiere in Kassel, with critics confident that Krenek would play a seminal role in the future of German opera.

The initial buzz and excitement surrounding these works quickly dissipated. Bar *Wozzeck*, performances of these operas have been scarce since their premieres. Early ventures into expressionist theatre from Hindemith, Weill and Krenek were soon overshadowed by their later achievements in the operatic genre. In studies of modern opera in Weimar Germany, scholars have tended to focus on a later trend taken up by all three composers: *Zeitoper*. The first *Zeitoper*—Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*—premiered at the Neues Theater in Leipzig on 10 February 1927 and was the most commercially successful opera of the Weimar Republic. It received 421 performances in Germany and 42 productions at different

institutions globally during its first season.[1] Initial reviews of *Jonny spielt auf* were overwhelmingly positive. According to the highly influential German music critic Oskar Bie, Krenek's new opera was 'one of the most fantastic works of all opera history'.[2]

Zeitoper was closely aligned with what has since been regarded the most distinctive artistic movement of Weimar culture, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (translated roughly as New Objectivity).[3] At its first exhibition in Mannheim in 1925, the painter Gustav Hartlaub framed *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a departure from expressionism.[4] That same year, Franz Roh positioned *Neue Sachlichkeit* as expressionism's antithesis:[5] whereas expressionist art was characterised by themes of individualism, subjectivity and extremes of emotions, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* was recognisable for its themes of collectivism, objectivity and rationality. If expressionism by and large stood for a rejection of increased industrialisation, *Neue Sachlichkeit* embraced Germany's new urban landscape, both to celebrate and critique it. Studies since have held expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* as the two primary and opposing pillars of Weimar culture. Peter Gay, for instance, in his landmark study *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (1968), narrates Weimar culture as a story of how expressionism fell out of fashion to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* around 1925.[6]

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[1] Charlotte Purkis, 'Jonny spielt auf ('Jonny strikes up')', *Grove Music Online* (2002) https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O003163 (accessed 21 July 2023).
[2] Quoted in Susan C. Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The* Zeitopern *of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010) [1988], 103, see 237 fn. 60. Original source: Oskar Bie, '*Jonny spielt auf*', *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 12 February 1927.
[3] For more on the connection between *Jonny spielt auf*, *Zeitoper* and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see Nils Grosch, 'Zeitoper als populäres Medium des Musiktheaters', in *Die Musik der neuen Sachlichkeit* (Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 1999), 101–180. See also Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 27–33.
[4] Gustav Hartlaub framed *Neue Sachlichkeit* as post-expressionist art, though this did not necessarily mean expressionism was dead: 'Simply because evidence is displayed here of artistic endeavours that became recognizable *after* expressionism, and which, in a certain sense, appear to represent a reaction against the latter, does *not* mean that a position is being taken against expressionism and the generation of artists adhering to it'. Hartlaub, 'Introduction to "New Objectivity": German Painting since Expressionism', in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 491–492.
[5] See Franz Roh, 'Post-Expressionist Schema', in ibid., 493.
[6] In *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001) [1968], Peter Gay marks the election of President Paul von Hindenburg in 1925 as the turning point of 'the revenge of the father', with the son representing expressionism and the father New Objectivity, see page 118.

Expressionist theatre and *Zeitoper* were similarly antithetical from an aesthetic standpoint: expressionist theatre featured nameless characters whose language was abstract and highly symbolic, and often featured a Nietzschean-inspired *Übermensch* figure who has come to deliver the masses from the oppression of modern society. *Zeitoper*, on the other hand, mirrored contemporary modern life on the stage, which often included portrayals of domestic life and all its challenges, a showcase of new technology such as radio and film, as well as jazz-inspired scores. Just as Gay saw expressionism giving way to the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, musicologists have likewise framed expressionist theatre in opera as a stepping stone to the later *Zeitoper*. The role of expressionism in Weimar Germany's modern opera culture has remained largely unexplored, with the unprecedented success of *Jonny spielt auf* drawing further attention away from earlier pivotal moments in German opera's history.

This thesis reconsiders the background and reception of Hindemith's, Berg's, Weill's and Krenek's turns to expressionist theatre and presents expressionism as a seminal component of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture. If *Jonny spielt auf* has until now been regarded as the watershed moment in alleviating anxieties towards the opera crisis, this thesis shall move that yardstick back several years and argue expressionist theatre and *Zeitoper* were seen by contemporary critics as alternate routes for the future of German opera. While my case studies on the one hand will collectively highlight expressionism as an all-pervasive component in Weimar opera, I use expressionism primarily as a heuristic tool. Each opera, therefore, acts as a springboard for exploring some of the common attitudes towards modern opera in Weimar Germany and how these discussions intersected with wider, ongoing cultural debate.

Literature Review

Studies on Weimar music theatre, and music generally, have tended to appear in the form of edited collections, such as *Aspekte des modernen Musiktheaters in der Weimarer Republik* (2004), edited by Nils Grosch. Grosch's collection offers insights into an array of genres during the Weimar period, with essays on operetta, cabaret, epic theatre, the relationship between theatre and technology, as well as opera. The volume, however, gives little to no attention to expressionism. One of Grosch's primary editorial concerns for this volume is to explore how music theatre adapted to an increasingly urban world that relied on technology more than ever. In his introduction, Grosch notes how traditional music theatre had to adapt to the growing influence of the media. Those working in the theatre increasingly embraced new technology both behind the scenes and on stage. This ultimately led to a range of new approaches to theatre at the expense of older traditions being called into question.[7]

Similar questions to Grosch are posed in other related collections. In *Music, Theatre and Politics in Germany: 1848 to the Third Reich* (2006), edited by Nikolaus Bacht, the three essays under 'Interwar Germany' focus on urban consciousness, the radio and epic theatre.[8] In *Musikkultur in der Weimarer Republik* (2001), edited by Wolfgang Rathert and Giselher Schubert, the main essay on music theatre by Arne Langer focuses on America's influence on

[7] 'Das moderne Unterhaltungstheater machte es den traditionellen Theatergattungen vor: Es stellte den klassischen Vorstellungen von Theaterdramaturgie nonlineare Alternative zur Seit, spielte mit den neuen Medien, indem es sich etwa mit ihnen (z.B. mit dem Rundfunk und der Schallplattenindustrie) vernetzte, sich mit der Medienrevolution auf inhaltlicher Seite auseinandersetzte, Medienpräsentationen auf die Bühne brachte oder mediale Dramaturgien adaptierte. So wurden neue Theaterkonzepte realisiert und die existierenden Institutionen in Frage gestellt. Die Strömungen sollten sich auf unterschiedliche Weise auf Modernisierungstendenzen von Oper (Stichwort: „Zeitoper"), Epischem Theater, Produktions- und Aufführungsstil sowie auf die Theatertheorie auswirken'. Grosch, 'Einführung', in Grosch, ed., *Aspekte des modernen Musiktheaters in der Weimarer Republik*, (Münster: Waxmann, 2004), 6.

[8] See Peter Tregear, ''Stadtluft macht frei': Urban Consciousness in Weimar Opera', Alexander Rehding, 'Magic Boxes and *Volksempfänger*: Music on the Radio in Weimar Germany' and Egon Voss, 'Socialism and the 'Free Development of Art': Karl Amadeus Hartmann's Opera *Simplicius Simplicissimus*', in Nikolaus Bacht, ed. *Music, Theatre and Politics in Germany: 1848 to the Third Reich* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 237–254, 255–272 and 273–288.

opera in Germany at the time.[9] Like Grosch's, these two collections give no substantial attention to expressionism in German music theatre. One other notable collection is *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic* (1994), edited by Bryan Gilliam. Gilliam's own essay for his collection primarily frames operatic reform in Weimar Germany in relation to film, and from the outset of the volume he emphasises how composers, performers and audiences all wished to swiftly move on from their immediate past, including from expressionism.[10] In their side-lining of expressionist theatre in Weimar opera, these edited collections have resulted in a narrow definition of what modern opera was at this time, one that typically excludes expressionism from the conversation.

One of the only single-authored studies of Weimar opera is Susan C. Cook's monograph *Opera for a New Republic: The* Zeitopern *of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (1988), which has contributed greatly to scholarly interest in *Zeitoper*. At the time of writing, Cook argued for the need of a reappraisal of *Zeitoper* in light of the term's casual usage, 'with little care for its historical or aesthetic context'.[11] *Zeitoper* translates roughly to 'opera of the times', though as John Gabriel has since noted, it does not translate directly to English and could also be seen as 'topical opera' or 'timely opera', each with different connotations.[12] Cook's definition of *Zeitoper* is fairly comprehensive: '*Zeitoper* was firstly a comic genre and typically relied on parody, social satire, and burlesque as dramatic tools. As most writers

[9] See Arne Langer, 'Das Amerika-Bild in der Oper der Weimarer Republik', in Wolfgang Rathert and Giselher Shubert, eds., *Musikkultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Mainz: Schott, 2001), 166–179.
[10] See Bryan Gilliam, 'Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s', in Gilliam, ed., *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–12. On the move away from expressionism, Gilliam writes: '[Artists and intellectuals'] belief in a brighter future was accompanied by an equally powerful distrust of the immediate past, for post-romanticism, and ultimately expressionism, served as symbols of the bygone Wilhelmine era. Composers, performers, and audiences sought to ignore – even negate – their recent past in various ways: by affirming modern technology (electronic and mechanical music, sound recordings, radio and film), exploring music of a more remote past (principally Baroque music), and celebrating popular music (particularly jazz)'. Gilliam, 'Preface', in ibid., xi.
[11] Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 4. Cook notes how 'the *Zeitoper* emerge[d] as a musical manifestation of a spirit which permeated German cultural life'. Ibid., 27.
[12] John Gabriel has commented on the difficulty of translating *Zeitoper* to English, suggesting 'opera of the times' as 'a clear reference to the Hegelian *Zeitgeist*', 'topical opera' to denote its 'up-to-date quality', or even 'now opera', which he argues 'has something of Zeitoper's pithiness'. Gabriel, 'Opera After Optimism: The Fate of Zeitoper at the End of the Weimar Republic', (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2016), 1.

acknowledge, *Zeitopern* were obvious expressions, even celebrations of modern life'.[13] She goes on to explain how the settings for these operas were familiar places from everyday life, such as 'office buildings, elevators, train stations, cabarets, and private family dining rooms'.[14] Musically, *Zeitoper* was recognisable for its infusion of jazz tunes, taking its lead from broader Weimar interest in American culture (*Amerikanismus*). The key tropes of *Zeitoper* are all present in Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*. The opera follows the titular character, Jonny, a Black jazz violinist and three other main characters, each representing a different musical world: Anita the opera singer, Max the composer, and Daniello the virtuoso violinist. Much of the action takes place in Paris, but the sounds of American jazz are everywhere, with the New World being a symbol of fascination. *Jonny spielt auf* also celebrates new technology, with a car and train on stage and the characters listening to the radio.

In her study of *Zeitoper*, Cook carries out 'an excavation of its various contextual layers', namely the opera crisis, the aesthetics of *Zeitoper*, the influence of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the reception of these operas.[15] After introductory chapters on Weimar Germany's opera culture, *Neue Sachlichkeit* and jazz, the remainder of Cook's book has chapters on *Jonny spielt auf* and two other *Zeitopern*: Weill's *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* (1928) and Hindemith's *Neues vom Tage* (1929). Both of these works contain tropes characteristic of *Zeitoper*. *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* is, as the title suggests, about a Tsar having his photograph taken. While in the twenty-first century taking a photo is a seemingly everyday act, at the time of Weill's operas this was still a particularly novel and modern experience—as was playing music through a gramophone, which also takes centre stage in the opera. The opera's focus on political assassination was also topical: the early years of the Weimar Republic witnessed numerous attacks and murders of politicians. *Neues vom Tage*, on the

[13] Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 4.
[14] Ibid., 4.
[15] Ibid., 7. Cook notes how 'Composers and critics justified the creation of the *Zeitoper* on aesthetic grounds as a solution to the perceived crisis of opera'. See ibid., 27.

other hand, focuses on marriage. It opens with a scene of a couple throwing plates at one another, and in a later scene, the wife sings to herself in the bathtub of a hotel room.[16] Cook's book, in turn, creates the impression that the *Zeitoper* was the prime example of Weimar opera, that this was the peak of excitement for modern German opera in the 1920s. This idea has been echoed by later musicologists: Peter Tregear, for instance, has marked the short-lived *Zeitoper* as the 'Weimar operatic form par excellence',[17] while Richard Taruskin later described it as 'where all of these Weimarish notions intersected and reached their peak'.[18]

Cook acknowledges expressionist theatre in opera as a key forerunner to *Zeitoper*.[19] Her discussions of expressionism, though, primarily serve her broader aim of reinforcing the contemporaneity of *Zeitoper*. She sees Weill's turn away from expressionism after *Der Protagonist*, for example, as him 'keeping with the twenties spirit'.[20] Cook also highlights how expressionism by the time of *Zeitoper* was a source of parody, fuelling the idea that it was unfashionable and not to be taken seriously. In her analysis of *Jonny spielt auf*, she notes how Max's opening line 'Du schöner Berg', which he sings while in the Alps, can be read as a pun on the expressionist name par excellence Schoenberg (written as Schönberg in German).[21] She also suggests that the dressing of the chorus in *Der Zar lässt sich*

[16] Other notable examples of *Zeitoper* include Max Brand's *Maschinist Hopkins*, premiered in Duisburg on 14 April 1929, in which the machine is transformed from just an object of fascination to becoming its own character entirely. *Zeitoper* was also not just restricted to this young generation of composers. Richard Strauss's *Intermezzo* could be described as a *Zeitoper*, though this was composed and performed before *Jonny spielt auf* on 4 November 1924. Arnold Schoenberg's *Von heute auf morgen*, a later example not performed until 1 February 1930 in Frankfurt, is perhaps more unexpected in the way it relies on twelve-tone technique, as opposed to the usual influence of jazz. Several months later on 8 June 1930, Ernst Toch's *Der Fächer* was premiered, which Gabriel positions as 'one of the last optimistic Zeitoper that made prominent use of surface topicality'. See Gabriel, 'Opera After Optimism', 35.
[17] Tregear, ''Stadtluft macht frei'', 238.
[18] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 529.
[19] 'During the later years of the 1920s, all three composers [Krenek, Weill and Hindemith] abandoned the expressionist musical and literary influences which characterized their early dramatic works and sought new musical and literary resources which surfaced in their *Zeitopern*'. Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 13.
[20] Ibid., 117.
[21] Ibid., 85.

photographieren in black suits and top hats at the Leipzig premiere was a parody of expressionist theatre.[22]

Cook's key framing for the book—that drawing on expressionist theatre in opera was out of fashion by the time of *Jonny spielt auf*—can be traced back to Gay's *Weimar Culture*. According to Gay, Weimar culture can broadly be divided up into three periods.[23] First, 'The Revolt of the Son' between 1919 and 1924. These 'sons' were the young radicals, the expressionists, those seeking Utopia. The founding of the Republic, as Gay stresses, ushered in the most productive years for Germany's expressionists.[24] Then came 'The Revenge of the Father', which itself is divided into two periods. Between 1924 and 1929, the more conservative 'fathers' championed the sobriety of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, while 1929 to 1933 saw Weimar culture become a reflection of the dark clouds forming across Germany and a vehicle for right-wing, nationalist propaganda.

Gay's model presents expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* as the two primary opposing cultural forces in Weimar culture and suggests that the former surrendered to the latter between 1924 and 1925. Expressionism on the operatic stage, though, continued well into 1926 and was still received enthusiastically by critics and the public. Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*, for example, did not premiere until the November of that year. Gay's *Weimar Culture*, despite having such a broad term as 'culture' in the title, in fact deals with opera (and music generally) only rarely.[25] It has, nonetheless, influenced attitudes towards modern opera in Weimar Germany by the way it encourages a discrete, dialectic relationship between

[22] Ibid., 130–135. This is an example of typification, through which, as Cook notes, 'characters were costumed to represent their social function or communal identity, thereby eliminating the need for personal names or individual traits' (132). The absence of personal names was a common trait in expressionist theatre.
[23] See Gay, *Weimar Culture*, 120.
[24] Gay notes: 'The Expressionists were a band of outsiders. But they were determined and active. The Republic would add to their lives nothing but success'. Ibid., 4.
[25] The applicability of Gay's thesis for framing trends in opera at this time has been challenged elsewhere by Alexandra Monchick, who points out that later works such as Berg's *Lulu* and Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* also have expressionist qualities. See Monchick, 'Silent Opera: The Manifestation of Silent Film Techniques in Opera During the Weimar Republic' (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2010), 8.

expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, rather than one in which they co-existed. This dialectic has centralised *Jonny spielt auf* and pushed expressionism into the background in our focus on what was deemed fashionable or modern for opera at this time.

In recent years, *Zeitoper* has been given new scholarly attention. This has come chiefly from John Gabriel, who has attempted to broaden our understanding of the genre in terms of its subject matter, time frame and geography.[26] Cook established how *Alltäglichkeit* (topicality) was central to *Zeitoper*, but Gabriel has since deepened our appreciation of the genre by arguing for two kinds of topicality. He argues that there was both *surface* topicality, 'an up-to-date quality that can be based on current events, even ripped from headlines, or the everyday-ness [*Alltäglichkeit*] of Cook', which has typically been placed at the foreground, and *structural* topicality, which 'refers to the ways that composers and their collaborators sought to embody modern times and their modern condition beyond the "props" of surface topicality'.[27] In tracing the continuation of structural topicality after interest in surface topicality waned—at which point optimism towards the 'modern' world was increasingly sceptical—Gabriel has extended *Zeitoper*'s lifespan into the 1930s.[28]

Gabriel's revisionary work on *Zeitoper* intersects with other reappraisals of early twentieth-century opera in Germany. The symposium *Dis|continuities: Opera and its Historiography between the Weimar Republic and Early Post-War West Germany* at the Bonn Opera House in May 2023 is particularly noteworthy in this regard and forms the basis of a new edited collection due for publication in 2024.[29] The aim of the conference was to

[26] Gabriel has loosened the ties between *Zeitoper* and Weimar Germany by focusing on *Zeitoper*'s transatlantic status as part of what he sees to be 'an essential component of the search for a new, uniquely American style of opera'. Gabriel, 'There and Back Again: *Zeitoper* and the Transatlantic Search for a Uniquely American Opera in the 1920s', *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13/2 (2019): 195–215 (195).
[27] Gabriel, 'Opera After Optimism', 8–9.
[28] Gabriel notes that *Zeitoper*'s typical expiration date is around 1930. Ibid., 15.
[29] For the full programme of the symposium, see https://www.theater-bonn.de/en/symposion_en (accessed 10 July 2023). An edited collection from the conference is forthcoming and will be published by Campus Verlag as *Diskontinuitäten: Zur Historiographie der Oper zwischen der Weimarer Republik und früher Bundesrepublik*, edited by Tobias Janz and Benedetta Zucconi. The importance of historical continuities has also been flagged

recognise the historiographical weight important dates such as the founding of the Weimar Republic and Hitler's appointment as Chancellor have had on our approach to these periods of history, and how rigid political periodisation has masked continuities of style and programming in opera across these caesuras. There were several presentations on Weimar opera at the symposium, with critiques of *Zeitoper* from myself, Gabriel and Max Erwin. In musicology more broadly, there has been increased attention to continuities between the Weimar era, Third Reich and West Germany in recent years,[30] with notable works by Emily Richmond Pollock and Nicholas Attfield.[31] Elsewhere, Pollock has demonstrated continuities of opera across the *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour); as Germany tried to come to terms with the immediate past and move away from it, opera was faced with what Pollock summarises to be 'the problem of tradition and the possibility of renewal'.[32]

In their accounts of German opera, musicologists have paid less attention to the 1918 caesura than those of 1933 and 1945. Expressionism in opera has in turn received limited attention, as this was most prominent in the immediate years before and after the end of the First World War. One reason for this neglect is arguably the difficulty scholars in other disciplines have faced in defining and containing expressionism as an aesthetic, whether that

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recently by Nadine Rossol and Benjamin Ziemann. See, 'Introduction', in Rossol and Ziemann, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 2.

[30] The idea of continuities has long been a source of contention in historical and political studies of the Weimar Republic. Critics in the aftermath of the Second World War were quick to question whether the republic's demise was inevitable, and since then more attention has been paid to how Weimar related to the Third Reich and even later into the Federal Republic. For an overview of studies, albeit now slightly dated, that deal with the inevitability of Weimar's collapse, see Peter Fritzsche, 'Did Weimar Fail?', *The Journal of Modern History* 68/3 (1996): 629–656. See also Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008). Graf tries to 'conceive of the Weimar Republic stronger as a period of possibilities with open horizons for the future' ('… wird im Folgenden versucht, die Weimarer Republik wieder starker als Möglichkeitsraum mit offenen Zukunftshorizont zu begreifen'). Ibid., 15. For the continuities between Weimar and West Germany, see F. K. Fromme, *Von der Weimarer Verfassung zum Bonner Grundgesetz*, Third Edition (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999).

[31] See Emily Richmond Pollock, 'Opera by the Book: Defining Musical Theater in the Third Reich', *The Journal of Musicology* 35/3 (2018): 295–335 and Nicholas Attfield, 'Epilogue: Working towards the Third Reich', in *Challenging the Modern: Conservative Revolution in German Music 1918–33* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2017), 175–211.

[32] See Pollock, *Opera After the Zero Hour: The Problem of Tradition and the Possibility of Renewal in Postwar West Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

be in the visual arts, music or opera. Most broadly, expressionism has been used to describe all German art in the first two decades of the century.[33] Interrogations of expressionism from a range of perspectives can be found in *Expressionism Reassessed* (1993), edited by Shulamith Behr, David Fanning and Douglas Jarman. This multidisciplinary volume reconsiders the fundamental concepts of expressionism and its geography, and includes essays related to the visual arts, music, dance and theatre. From the outset, Behr, Fanning and Jarman are keen to note how challenging it is to discretely define expressionism: 'Was Expressionism, unlike the other more easily definable '-isms' of twentieth-century art, anything more than an attitude and the word itself any more than a vague portmanteau term indicating, at the most, a set of superficial similarities[?]'.[34] Expressionism's vagueness, though, does not deter Behr, Fanning and Jarman from recognising its relevance:

> But to speak of Expressionism as being 'dead', or to attempt to limit its chronological span, is, in any case, to misrepresent the power and the influence which this amorphous, theoretically ill-defined movement has had. Not only was it the single most important artistic movement in northern Europe during the first decades of the century, dominating all the arts in Germany, Austria and (as Marit Werenskiold demonstrates) Scandinavia but, through its influence on painting, stage design, music and cinema, it has permanently affected the whole of twentieth-century art and culture.[35]

Expressionism's inability to be neatly defined is a point of contention in the collection's three essays on music. In his essay for the volume, Christopher Hailey writes: 'The appealing analogies that seem to link musical Expressionism to the other arts are at best superficial similarities. As a category, musical Expressionism may be a useful 'adjective', but it is bad history'.[36] Peter Franklin, in his essay makes no distinction between staged works such as

[33] Peter Lasko takes this approach in *The Expressionist Roots of Modernism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.
[34] Shulamith Behr, David Fanning and Douglas Jarman, 'Introduction: Expressionism reassessed', in Behr, Fanning and Jarman, eds., *Expressionism Reassessed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 1–2.
[35] Ibid., 2.
[36] Christopher Hailey, 'Musical Expressionism: the search for autonomy', in *Expressionism Reassessed*, 104.

Franz Schreker's *Der ferne Klang* and Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, and non-staged musical works; his enquiry is primarily a musical one.[37] All are conflated under the broader banner of musical expressionism with little consideration for operatic performance practice. To put it another way, expressionism has received little to no attention regarding its relationship to discourses specific to opera, such as the opera crisis in Weimar Germany or the trajectory of German opera more generally.

In instances where scholars have attempted to define expressionism in opera, definitions have either been too broad or too narrow. Elaine Padmore's article, 'German Expressionist Opera, 1910–1935' (1968), spans twenty-five years of opera and a whole array of styles, *Zeitoper* included. Padmore writes: 'The word 'Expressionist' as applied to opera is commonly used as a convenient generic term to cover the operatic output of Germany and Austria from roughly 1910–35. Few of these works are total products of Expressionist philosophy, but since opera is a composite art form, the use of Expressionist text, or music, or subject matter, is generally sufficient to flavour the whole with the unmistakeable quality of the movement'.[38] Fanning, on the other hand, maintains the idea that Schoenberg was central to the expressionist movement in music (including opera). He acknowledges, though, how such a Schoenberg-centric attitude creates issues when relating expressionism to operas by other composers. He writes how particular stage works by Hindemith, Krenek and Weill are problematic in the way 'they retain strongly expressionistic textual and visual aspects while their musical language has moved on to different aesthetic principles'.[39] Hinton, like Fanning, also takes Schoenberg as his starting point for addressing expressionism in opera, as

[37] Peter Franklin, ''Wilde Musik': composers, critics and Expressionism', in ibid., 112–120. John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford similarly consider opera under the broader banner of musical expressionism in their monograph *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).
[38] Elaine Padmore, 'German Expressionist Opera, 1910–1935', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 95/1 (1968): 41–53 (42).
[39] David Fanning, 'Expressionism', *Grove Music Online* (2001) https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09141 (accessed 24 July 2023).

evidenced by the title of his essay 'Defining musical Expressionism: Schoenberg and others' in *Expressionism Reassessed*. The essay's title is also a direct reference to Franklin's *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others* (1985), in which Franklin explore how Schoenberg, as well as his pupils Berg and Anton Webern, have been centralised in the history of music in the twentieth century.[40] Hinton also considers Hindemith and Weill's association with expressionism somewhat problematic, in comparison to Schoenberg. At the conclusion of his essay, Hinton echoes Fanning by posing the question: 'Where does this leave Hindemith and Weill?'.[41] Hinton notes how, although Hindemith does explore atonality in his early works, referencing 'Du machst mich traurig – hör' from 8 Lieder (1922), the composer's style is more melancholic than *espressivo*, and how his setting of Blei's *Das Nusch-Nuschi* (to be explored in Chapter One) was parodic.[42] As for Weill, Hinton argues that the composer's use of atonality in *Der Protagonist* is closely tied to the titular character's emotional state, and that, if anything, the opera is critical of expressionism.[43]

In more recent years, expressionism has once again gone through several reassessments. Through their edited collection *Women in German Expressionism: Gender, Sexuality, Activism* (2023), Anke Finger and Julie Shoults have created what they see to be a long overdue response to Barbara D. Wright's article 'Intimate Strangers: Women in German Expressionism' (2005), which calls for greater attention to women in German expressionism and draws upon gender theory to do so.[44] Another recent study of expressionism is Kathleen

[40] Franklin writes: 'What it is my purpose to suggest is that they [Schoenberg, Berg and Webern] have received an acclaim that dangerously has come almost to deny the possibility of critical scrutiny. This is the inevitable result of the propaganda basis of their reputation, which has had the curious effect of awarding other, equally important composers (if for different reasons) within the same tradition merely ancillary roles to the highly esoteric achievements of the Second Viennese School'. Franklin, *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others* (London: Macmillan, 1985), xiii–xiv.
[41] Stephen Hinton, 'Defining musical Expressionism: Schoenberg and others', in *Expressionism Reassessed*, 127.
[42] Ibid., 127.
[43] Ibid., 128.
[44] Finger and Shoults, 'Introduction: Flipping the Prostitute: German Expressionism Reexamined after One Hundred Years', in Finger and Shoults, eds., *Women in German Expressionism: Gender, Sexuality, Activism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023), 1.

G. Chapman's *Expressionism and Poster Design in Germany 1905–1922: Between Spirit and Commerce* (2018). Chapman examines the similarities between expressionist art and commercial posters in early twentieth-century Germany, both of which 'registered a crucial phase in the shift to an increasingly visually oriented society'.[45] Chapman argues that like posters, expressionist art 'relied on a visual rhetoric designed to persuade viewers that their lives would be significantly improved if they embraced the ideas that such images communicated'.[46] Her crucial intervention, though, and the one that is most pertinent for the rest of this thesis, is her attempt to see expressionism as being 'far more than a descriptive art historical category' and to treat it more as a discourse:

> [Expressionism] can also be understood as a discursive formation where concepts of art, form, style, consumerism, kitsch, national identity, and political affiliation initially collided and then coalesced.[47]

Chapman goes on to write that:

> it is perhaps more fruitful to think of Expressionism as a series of historically specific pictorial strategies for addressing and in some ways managing the rapid social, political, and cultural changes that affected the meanings of art and images in Germany during the years before and after World War I.[48]

In this thesis, I employ a similar approach to Chapman by seeing composers' turns to expressionist theatre as strategies for overcoming Germany's opera crisis. Expressionism, in other words, is an entry point into the broader landscape of modern opera culture in Weimar Germany. Where scholars have previously grappled with the inability to define expressionism as a discrete aesthetic and pin down its relationship to opera, I embrace its fluidity, treating it not as the be-all-and-end-all, but rather as a way into addressing broader

[45] Kathleen G. Chapman, *Expressionism and Poster Design in Germany 1905–1922: Between Spirit and Commerce* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 14.
[46] Ibid., 14.
[47] Ibid., 21.
[48] Ibid., 50.

questions about modern opera's position within Weimar culture. This study thus stands as a point of departure from previous attempts to define expressionist opera as a fixed, discrete category. Working towards a new definition of 'expressionist opera' through my case studies would ultimately be porous. The operas discussed in depth in this thesis exhibit a range of compositional approaches from orchestration to harmony and tonality. They also vary dramaturgically from emphasis on the erotic and psychological torment, to pantomime and to Greek tragedy. My case studies take place in the following settings: prehistoric times, Burma, a nunnery, a small German town, Elizabethan England and Hell. In using expressionism as a starting point, then, this thesis seeks to uncover some of the underlying components of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture that were not limited to a particular style or aesthetic, in turn, dismantling the dominant expressionism-*Zeitoper* dichotomy.

The Weimar Republic and its Opera Culture

The Weimar Republic is the main political context for this thesis. Following the announcement of Kaiser Wilhelm II's abdication on 9 November 1918, Germany's first republic was declared not once, but twice: first by Philip Scheidemann, a member of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD) and shortly after by Karl Liebknecht, leader of the Spartakusbund (Spartacus League). At the time of these declarations, Germany was in social chaos. Millions of citizens had died fighting on the front line and the country's economy was crippled. Civil unrest, therefore, was particularly high and morale was at an all-time low. Several weeks prior to the declarations of Germany's republic, sailors at the Bay of Kiel had mutinied. Their actions triggered a series of uprisings from military groups across Germany that quickly spread across the country. A bloody revolution followed, since becoming known as the November Revolution.

Following the Kaiser's abdication, there was the possibility for a new parliament in the Reichstag, and there was fierce competition, among other parties, between the SPD, the Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, USPD) and the newly founded Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany, KPD) for office. The Republic's first federal elections took place in January 1919 and returned a majority for the SPD. Shortly after, the new National Assembly met in Weimar to draft a constitution for the Reich; Berlin was still in turmoil. This was signed on 11 August by the Republic's first President, Friedrich Ebert.[49]

The first few years of the Weimar Republic were tumultuous with numerous political assassinations. Germany had been forced to accept blame for the cause of the First World War and had to abide by the harsh conditions of the Treaty of Versailles set out by the allies. As well as having to significantly reduce the size of its army, the country was also burdened with a heavy set of reparations. This put huge financial strain on the country and contributed to unprecedented hyperinflation in 1923.[50] Once Germany's economy stabilised, a period of relative economic and social stability followed that has become known as 'The Golden Twenties', like that of 'The Roaring Twenties' in the United States. Germany's Golden Twenties, though, came to a sudden end with the financial crisis of 1929. The final few years of the republic have since been characterised as a downward spiral, with increased conservatism in politics and culture, and, fuelled by these, the dramatic rise of National Socialism. Germany's Weimar Republic ended on 30 January 1933 when President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler as chancellor.

[49] An English translation of the constitution can be found in Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 46–50. For the original German, see *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 11. August 1919*, 7th edition (Leipzig, 1930).
[50] For more on Germany's inflation and later hyperinflation, see Martin H. Geyer, 'The Period of Inflation, 1919–1923', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Weimar Republic*, 48–71.

Notwithstanding the political and economic chaos of the twenties, Weimar Germany was culturally rich and diverse. The Golden Twenties was a booming time for the arts, especially in Berlin. During this period, the Bauhaus radically reconsidered the relationship between art and architecture, Berlin cabarets celebrated the sexual liberation of women, and the new cinema offered Germany's growing middle class, who now had money to spend at their leisure, new forms of entertainment. Music in the Weimar Republic was especially vibrant. Besides its strong roots in the Western classical tradition, composers increasingly introduced elements of jazz into traditionally western forms of composition in tandem with the country's wider fascination with American culture.[51] In the Finale of his *Kammermusik No. 1* (1922), for instance, Hindemith included a foxtrot. As Kira Thurman has recently explored, there was a crucial musical and cultural exchange at this time between Europe and America that did not just involve the former consuming traditionally Black music, but also that Black musicians from the States championed the music of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms in Germany during this time.[52] *Gebrauchsmusik* (literally 'music for use') was another one of the key musical buzzwords of the day. Closely linked with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, *Gebrauchsmusik* was a reaction against the self-indulgent nature of the late-romantic tradition and expressionism, promoting the idea that music should always have a social purpose—a

[51] The literary critic Rudolf Kayser criticised *Amerikanismus* for being more of a buzzword and noted that it actually had more to do with European attitudes than American values. Speaking on typically American things—'trusts, highrises, traffic officers, film, technical wonders, jazz bands, boxing, magazines, and management'—he questions whether these in and of themselves actually constitute Americanism: 'Are these phenomena not much more than the external and revealed symptoms of a more secret, spiritual, soulful essence? Is Americanism not a new orientation to being, growing out of and formed in our European destiny?' Kayser, 'Americanism', in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 395. Originally published as 'Amerikanismus', *Vossiche Zeitung* 458 (27 September 1925).

[52] 'What my book demonstrates is that by virtue of what they performed, where they performed, and how they performed it, Black classical musicians consistently challenged their audience's ideas of Blackness, whiteness, and German national identity. White German and Austrian listeners frequently assumed that the categories of Blackness and Germanness were mutually exclusive. Yet Black performers of German music suggested that these typologies were not as fixed as listeners had been conditioned to expect'. Kira Thurman, *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021), 4–5.

rejection of the modernist notion of the autonomy of art.[53] As noted by Pamela Potter, the working middle class increasingly used music for entertainment. There was a rapid increase in the number of amateur music groups in Weimar Germany, especially choirs, fuelled by the growing middle class, and leading to what Potter terms 'The Amateur Revolution'.[54] Germany's middle class were also able to consume music in new ways with the aid of technology. Developments in radio meant that, for the first time, they could enjoy a variety of music in a much wider range of places than before. A symphony orchestra, for example, could now be heard in the comfort of one's own living room. Due to the technical difficulties and relatively primitive recording and broadcasting equipment, composers often had to adapt their compositional approach to ensure their music was suitable to this new medium, leading to simpler textures associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit* music.[55]

The Weimar Republic was one of the most fruitful times for opera in German history and was not limited to expressionism and *Zeitoper*. One of the earliest successes in new opera was Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* (1920) which, based on *Bruges-la-Morte* by the Belgian Symbolist poet Georges Rodenbach, attracted enough attention to necessitate a double premiere in Hamburg and Cologne. Weimar Germany was also a time when composers and theatre practitioners were seen to shy away from labelling works for the stage as 'operas'. Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht were at the forefront of this. Their *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera, 1928), for instance, is technically a 'Play with

[53] Inspired by Martin Heidegger, the musicologist Heinrich Besseler developed the idea of *Gebrauchsmusik* most fully as a distinction from *eigenständige Musik*, i.e., autonomous music.
[54] See Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 4–9.
[55] Hailey notes: 'Music with full textures, a succession of dense chordal sonorities, or timbrally differentiated melodies' were unsuitable for recording due to the limitations of recording technology (25). Hailey compares Schreker's *Kleine Suite* (1928)—'a satisfying debut for the new compositional genre of *Rundfunkmusik*'—to his earlier *Vorspiel zu einem Drama* (1913) to illustrate how the composer had adapt to recording, in this case by simplifying their musical textures (27). This was not, however, 'an accommodation to the limitations of the radio microphone; it is a creative response to a new medium' (32). See Hailey, 'Rethinking sound: music and radio in Weimar Germany', in *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, 13–36. For more on *Neue Sachlichkeit* music, see Grosch, *Die Musik der neuen Sachlichkeit* (Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 1999).

Music', though, as the title suggests, opera still plays an important role in this piece. Weill himself remarks how opera is the subject matter of the work and Hinton has later described it as 'opera turned inside out'.[56] Nonetheless, *Die Dreigroschenoper* distances itself from traditional opera in the way it features popular tunes, most famously the 'Mack the Knife' ballad, and non-standard orchestral instruments such as a banjo.

That Weill and Brecht turned to John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) for *Die Dreigroschenoper* reflects a more widespread resurgence of operas from the past in Germany's Weimar Republic. The Göttingen-based German art historian Oskar Hagen, for example, was responsible for a Handel revival in Germany. His adaptation of *Rodelinda* (1725) in 1920 is recognised to be the beginning of this revival, which occurred in tandem with his foundation of the Göttingen International Handel Festival the year before.[57] The 1920s also witnessed the so-called 'Verdi renaissance'; as Gundula Kreuzer puts it, 'intellectuals and musicians quite suddenly discovered the dramatic qualities of the once-despised 'um-pa-pa' composer'.[58] The expressionist playwright Franz Werfel played a decisive role in instigating Germany's new appreciation of Verdi. Werfel's translation of *La forza del destino* (1862) served as the basis for a performance in March 1926 at the Dresden Staatsoper. Under the assured guidance of Fritz Busch—one of Weimar Germany's most eminent conductors—the event was a remarkable success and instigated other new productions and translations of Verdi's operas.[59]

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[56] Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 111.
[57] Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 10.
[58] Gundula Kreuzer, *Verdi and the Germans: From Unification to the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 139. Kreuzer is somewhat cautious over the term 'renaissance'. She notes how, by this time, Verdi's 'canonisation was incomplete…. The question is not what made Verdi 'suddenly' enter German minds after the turn of the century, but how and why he retained—and then expanded—his appeal'. Ibid., 140.
[59] During his time as music director in Dresden, Busch premiered many notable works by some of the most prominent and promising composers, including Strauss's *Intermezzo* (1924), Weill's *Der Protagonist* and Hindemith's *Cardillac* (1926). Busch also directed the first performance of Ferruccio Busoni's *Doktor Faust* in 1925, which was completed posthumously after Busoni's death in 1924.

The Weimar Republic was also a period of significant structural change for Germany's opera industry. Prior to the end of the First World War, most opera houses in Germany were sponsored by the state or patrons. In the new republic, most opera houses were now being privately owned and would subsequently rely far more on the commercial successes of the operas they staged.[60] The opera house, though, was not the only place were modern stage works were being produced. Some of the newest works premiered as part of one of Germany's numerous music festivals. Krenek's *Der Sprung über den Schatten*, for instance, premiered as part of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein's 1924 Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt, which also showcased Berg's *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*. The Baden-Baden Festival in 1927 (originally held in Donaueschingen between 1921 and 1926 as a showcase of contemporary music) is also particularly noteworthy for its staging of four short operatic works: Darius Milhaud's *L'enlèvement d'Europe*, Weill's *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, Ernst Toch's *Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse* and Hindemith's *Hin und Zurück*.[61]

Crisis and Anarchy: German Opera after Wagner

Despite the range of innovative approaches to the genre during the Weimar Republic, the notion of an opera crisis was prominent in operatic discourse at this time, especially during the republic's later years.[62] Cook notes how Weimar's opera crisis, which she describes as more of a 'catchword', was largely a question of how opera, by then an over 300-year-old tradition, was supposed to stay relevant in the wake of new forms of mass entertainment such

[60] Grosch, 'Einführung', 1.
[61] On the original honorary committee for the Donaueschingen festival were Ferruccio Busoni, Richard Strauss, Siegmund von Hausegger, Max Pauer, Hans Pfitzner and Franz Schreker.
[62] Examples include: Hans Mersmann, 'Probleme der gegenwärtigen Operndichtung', *Anbruch* 9 (January–February 1927): 15–19; Erik Reger, 'Die Krise des Opern-Repertoire', *Die Musik* (October 1929): 22–26; Paul Riesenfeld, 'Der Kampf um die Oper', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 88 (1930): 357–360; Hans Stieber, 'Die Krise im deutschen Opernschaffen', *Rheinische Musik und Theater-Zeitung* 27 (1926): 8–9; Henrich Strobel, 'Krise der Oper—Krise der Kritik', *Melos* 9 (1930): 191–193; Hermann W. Waltershausen, 'Die Krise der zeitgenössischen deutschen Oper', *Schweizerische Musikzeitung und Sängerblatt* 68 (1928): 41–42, 56–57.

as radio and cinema.[63] In 1922, *Die Musik* published an article by the conservative Emil Petschnig titled 'Die deutsche Oper'. In it, Petschnig expressed his concerns over how, in comparison to older works that had stood the test of time and reached what we would nowadays term canonical status, new operas lasted only a few performances.[64] Additionally, there were major economic challenges in the wake of Germany's defeat in the First World War that were exacerbated by the hyperinflation of 1923. The music critic Adolf Aber expressed these concerns in an essay published in *Melos* in 1920:

> At this hour it is difficult to speculate as to whether our opera theatres will remain viable. Every day still brings news of a million-dollar deficit that no one is able to cover because ticket prices have long since reached, if not exceeded, their maximum limit and neither the cities nor the state are able to step in. The only way to keep the stages viable is perhaps to found large theatre communities, as has now been initiated in many cases. Be that as it may! In any case, only one thing is certain: that our stages will be forced to be extremely economical.[65]

The notion of an opera crisis at this time resonates with wider calls of a culture of crisis during the Weimar period.[66] Gay famously wrote how Weimar was 'a precarious glory, a dance on the edge of a volcano', and that '[it] was born in defeat, lived in turmoil, and died

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[63] Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 10.
[64] See Emil Petschnig, 'Die deutsche Oper', *Die Musik* 15/3 (December 1922): 184–194.
[65] 'Zu dieser Stunde läßt sich kaum eine Vermutung darüber ausstellen, ob unsere Opernbühnen lebensfähig bleiben werden. Noch bringt jeder Tag fast die Nachricht eines Milliondefizits, das zu decken niemand in der Lage ist, da die Eintrittspreise längst ihre Höchstgrenze erreicht, wenn nicht überschritten haben, und weder die Städte noch der Staat einzuspringen vermögen. Der einzige Ausweg die Bühnen lebensfähig zu halten, ist vielleicht die Gründung großer Theatergemeinden, wie sie jetzt vielfach in die Wege geleitet worden ist. Wie dem aber auch sei! Ganz sicher ist auf jeden Fall nur eines: Daß unsere Bühnen zu größter Sparsamkeit gezwungen sein werden'. Adolf Aber, 'Zukunftsaufgaben der Operninszenierung', *Melos* 1/11 (1920): 250–253 (250).
[66] See, for example: Herbert Krauss, *The Crisis of German Democracy*, edited with an introduction by William Starr Myers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932); Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (London: Penguin Books, 1991); Arthur Jacobson and Bernhard Schlink's *Weimar: A Jurisprudence of Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf, eds., *Die „Krise" der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2005); Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Ordnungen in der Krise: Zur politischen Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands 1900–1933* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2007); Todd Herzog, *Crime Stories: Criminalistic Fantasy and the Culture of Crisis in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Rüdiger Graf, 'Either-Or: The Narrative of "Crisis" in Weimar Germany and in Historiography', *Central European History* 43/4 (2010): 592–615; Graf and Föllmer, 'The culture of 'crisis' in the Weimar Republic', *Thesis Eleven* 111/1 (2012): 36–47.

in disaster'.[67] Even Weimar's Golden Years, Detlev Peukert notes, teetered on the edge of crisis and are only seen to be stable in comparison to their immediate past and future; '[the] cracks in the fabric of the Republic remained fully visible'.[68] The notion of everything being in crisis was so commonplace that the term 'crisis' in itself became a kind of a buzzword, one that in fact sparked a great sense of urgency for the arts and that led to unrivalled creativity. Reactions to the modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation of Germany were particularly pressing, as was the polarisation of politics. According to Wolfgang Hardtwig, crisis in Weimar existed in two ways: first, there were literal crises, such as hyperinflation, the stock market crash and the republic's collapse; second, there was crisis as a rhetorical term in the discourse.[69] Weimar Germany's opera crisis exhibits both characteristics. The country's economic conditions had a real impact on its opera industry, as expressed by Aber. Yet, at the same time, creativity was at an all-time high, as evidenced by the divergent array of styles on offer.

That German opera was seen to be in some sort of crisis, though, was not unique to the 1920s.[70] From its earliest days, German-language opera struggled to be taken seriously. Unlike its main rivals—Italian and French opera—German-language opera had its origins not in the courts, but among *Wandertruppen* (Wandering troupes) across the Holy Roman Empire in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. While Italian companies dominated the courts, German troupes would at best be granted one-off opportunities to appear before the crown, while they spent the rest of the time having to find opportunities at local, smaller-

[67] Gay, *Weimar Culture*, xiv, 2.
[68] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 4.
[69] 'Die Allgegenwart des Redens von „Krise" zwischen 1918 und 1933, aber auch schon in den beiden Jahrzehnten vor dem Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs, spiegelt nicht einfach nur faktische Krisen und deren Wahrnehmung wider, sie reflektiert vielmehr ein Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster, das sich vielfach verselbständige und gerade in seiner rhetorischen und argumentativen Funktion für die Selbstwahrnehmung und politisch-gesellschaftlich-kulturelle Ortsbestimmung wichtiger Gruppen der deutschen Gesellschaft überaus aufschlussreich ist'. Hardtwig, 'Einleitung', in *Ordnungen in der Krise*, 12.
[70] Nor was it unique to Germany. Harriet Boyd-Bennett, for example, explores similar discourses of opera crisis in post-World War Two Italy. See Boyd-Bennett, *Opera in Postwar Venice: Cultural Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

scale events in provincial towns.[71] Due to the political structure of the Holy Roman Empire, there was not a unified political, social or artistic style across this region of Europe, and opera likewise developed here in a somewhat haphazard way through a complex network of municipal theatres.[72] There were also issues with the German language itself. Through opera, Italian had come to be seen as 'the music language of high society' and there would need to be a complete overhaul of resources and expectations for a distinctly German style of opera to emerge.[73] German-language opera eventually came into its own in the late eighteenth-century with the *Singspiel*, and strong contenders in Romantic opera soon followed with E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Undine* (1816) and Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821).[74]

One individual who dominated operatic discourse and contributed to the sense of an opera crisis in Weimar Germany was Richard Wagner. With his epic opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (first complete performance in 1876) Wagner had taken German opera to new heights in terms of its scale. The founding of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus (opened in 1876 to stage the first performance of the ring cycle) and particularly Wagner's final opera *Parsifal* (1882)—subtitled 'Bühnenweihfestspiel', literally 'festival play for stage consecration'—had also given him and his output a quasi-religious position in German culture and society. Wagner had also pushed functional tonality to its limits; as noted by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, the opening of *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) is harmonically unsettling for the way one dissonant chord revolves to another, 'as if a question has been

[71] John Warrack, *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 63.
[72] See Austin Glatthorn, *Music Theatre and the Holy Roman Empire: The German Musical Stage at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
[73] Richard Engländer, 'The Struggle Between German and Italian Opera at the Time of Weber', *The Musical Quarterly* 31/4 (1945): 479–491 (479).
[74] For more on Hoffmann and *Undine*, see Francien Markx, *E. T. A. Hoffmann, Cosmopolitanism, and the Struggle for German Opera* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). For more on German Romantic Opera, see Edward J. Dent, *The Rise of Romantic Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) and Aubrey S. Garlington, Jr., 'German Romantic Opera and the Problems of Origins', *The Musical Quarterly* 63/2 (1977): 247–263. Weber's opera was one of the greatest commercial successes in German opera amidst what Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker frame as 'The German Problem'. See Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last 400 Years* (London: Penguin Books, 2015) [2012], 167–187.

answered by another question'.[75] Beyond the confines of the opera house, Wagner had also established himself as a deeply divisive figure whose influence reached into politics, philosophy and German culture more broadly. Subsequent German opera composers, therefore, could not ignore him. The particular economic and cultural challenges that characterised Weimar Germany's opera crisis, then, intersected with the ongoing question of how composers were supposed to deal with Wagner's legacy.

Following Wagner's death, critics saw German opera to be in chaos, as some composers continued in his style, while others sought out new directions. The critic Oskar Bie recognised the chaotic array of approaches to opera in the post-Wagner era both in Germany and abroad in his book *Die Oper* (1913), which surveyed trends from the Baroque to the present day. *Die Oper* concludes with a chapter titled 'Die Anarchie der Oper' (The Anarchy of Opera).[76] Bie opens the chapter with the following:

> Operatic style is dead; long live operatic styles! Anarchy reigns. The theoretical paradox became an experience in Wagner and has been a fact ever since. Modern opera is the practice of paradox. Nothing binds, everything is allowed. Everything contradicts itself, it is composed restlessly side by side. Faith is lost. Maybe it's the end.[77]

Ironically, the very thing that most scholars have since seen as worth celebrating—that German-language opera was so diverse in the Weimar era—was actually a great concern to Bie only a decade earlier.

Two composers who were inspired by Wagner and demonstrated contrasting responses to him—and to whom Bie pays considerable attention in 'Die Anarchie der Oper'—were Engelbert Humperdinck and Hans Pfitzner. Humperdinck had been closely

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[75] Ibid., 368.
[76] Oskar Bie, *Die Oper* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1923), 484–555.
[77] 'Der Stil der Oper hat aufgehört, es herrschen die Stile. Es herrscht die Anarchie. Die theoretische Paradoxie wurde in Wagner Erlebnis, seitdem ist sie Tatsache. Die moderne Oper ist die Praxis der Paradoxie. Nichts bindet, alles ist erlaubt. Alles widerspricht sich, es wird ruhelos nebeneinander komponiert. Der Glaube ist verloren. Vielleicht ist es das Ende'. Ibid., 485.

associated with Wagner. The two met on 9 March 1880 in Naples, and it was during this trip that Wagner invited Humperdinck to assist him with the upcoming premiere of *Parsifal*.[78] Humperdinck's *Märchenopern* (fairy-tale operas)—*Hänsel und Gretel*, first performed in Weimar on 23 December 1893, and *Königskinder*, first staged on 28 December 1910 in New York City, with its Berlin premiere following shortly on 14 January 1911—contain colourful orchestrations that evoke the sound world of Wagner. Pfitzner's *Der arme Heinrich*, first performed in Mainz on 2 April 1895, is another important work in the immediate post-Wagnerian age. Regarding the opera's music, Franklin describes *Der arme Heinrich* as 'a landmark of 1890s intellectual Wagnerism' by the way Pfitzner's approach to harmony is refined, adventurous, but not decadent.[79] In *Die Oper*, Bie wrote how *Der arme Heinrich* was a 'Tristan-branch, just like *Hänsel und Gretel* is a Meistersinger-branch'.[80] Like Wagner's use of Norse mythology for *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Pfitzner turned to an adaptation of medieval German narrative by Hartmann von Aue, who was one of the most representative writers of this period next to Wolfram von Eschenbach, the author of *Parzival*. *Der arme Heinrich* also has similarities of subject matter to Wagner, it too being an *Erlösungsdrama* (redemption drama).

Bie's idea of the anarchy of German opera was echoed by another important music critic, Paul Bekker. In *The Changing Opera* (*Wandlungen der Oper*, 1934), Bekker referred to Richard Strauss's operatic oeuvre as 'a series of style experiments, feeling its way from one model to the next, surprisingly successful at two points, but permitting of no continuation along a straight line in the direction marked by the successful works, and always calling forth

[78] Ian Denley, 'Humperdinck, Engelbert', *Grove Music Online* (2001) https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13550 (accessed 2 August 2023).
[79] Franklin, 'Arme Heinrich, Der ('Poor Heinrich')', *Grove Music Online* (2002) https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O900188 (accessed 2 August 2023).
[80] 'Die stärkste deutsche Oper nachwagnerscher Zeit, aber wagnerschen Blutes, ist Pfitzners Armer Heinrich. Ein Tristanzweig, wie Hänsel und Gretel ein Meistersingerzweig ist'. Bie, *Die Oper*, 532.

further experiment'.[81] Strauss had arguably the biggest breakthrough in German opera in the post-Wagnerian period and was one of its most representative composers. Bie, for instance, declared that Strauss had successfully broken away from Wagner-imitation, that Strauss himself was an epoch.[82]

Strauss's initial attempt at opera, *Guntram* (1894), was reminiscent of Wagner's music dramas on the surface with its medieval setting and titular Minnesinger, while at its core it was a rejection of the Wagnerian *Erlösungsdrama*.[83] His next works, *Feuersnot* (1901) and then especially *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), were more decisive turns away from the operatic titan in their themes of individualism, central female characters and erotic themes. *Salome* and *Elektra* were set to texts by Oscar Wilde and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, examples of *Literaturoper*, which was a new tradition that was markedly different from Wagner's approach of writing his own libretti. Strauss's approach to orchestration was also distinct from Wagner's. Building on Strauss's experience in exploring orchestration and colour in his early tone poems, the vocal parts in his operas became extensions of the orchestra. In *Salome* and *Elektra*, Strauss continued to push the limits of tonality within cacophonic textures. As Gilliam has explored, Strauss gradually distanced himself from both Wagner and his contemporaries by the way he exhibited 'a unique musical atheism', his operas showing an 'anti-German humanism', personal detachment from his work and intent of disturbing his audiences.[84] After the risqué one-act operas set in the distant past, Strauss's next opera, *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), turned to an altogether different setting: eighteenth-century Vienna. His first true collaboration with Hugo von Hofmannsthal (*Elektra* was a

[81] Paul Bekker, *The Changing Opera*, trans. Arthur Mendel (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1936), 261.
[82] 'Er ist eine Epoche, auch gegen die Gleichzeitigen. Er ist es in Deutschland, das er mit starker Hand vom Wagner-Epigonentum befreite, ohne in billige Volkstümelei und Stilmeierei zu lenken; er ist es in der Welt, der er eine Persönlichkeit von eigenem Schnitt vorstellte'. Bie, *Die Oper*, 537.
[83] As Gilliam notes, 'the work ends not with [Guntram's] redemption but with only the promise of it. He needs no eternal feminine, no ethical brotherhood, no judge or jury'. Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 23.
[84] Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, xii.

Literaturoper), *Der Rosenkavalier*, was an immediate hit. Strauss and Hofmannsthal used a similar courtly setting for their next opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, while *Die Frau ohne Schatten* drew on symbolism.

While Strauss's operas were some of the most commonly programmed operas in the Weimar Republic, he offered little in the way of new works during this time. In fact, Strauss was based in Vienna between 1919 and 1924 as one of the co-directors of the Vienna Staatsoper. *Intermezzo*, a kind of precursor to *Zeitoper*, received mixed reviews at its Dresden premiere on 4 November 1924, while *Die ägyptische Helena*, also premiered in Dresden on 6 June 1928, struggled to find a secure place in the repertory. His next opera, and final collaboration with Hofmannsthal, *Arabella*, did not premiere then until 1 July 1933 after the fall of the Weimar Republic.

Next to Strauss, the Austrian Franz Schreker was arguably the next most influential composer of German-language opera. Schreker's breakthrough work was *Der ferne Klang*, which premiered in Frankfurt on 18 August 1912. Following the premiere, Schreker's name quickly became known widely beyond Viennese circles, as the success of *Der ferne Klang* was compared to that of *Der Rosenkavalier*.[85] The press from across Germany and Austria praised *Der ferne Klang* as one of the most important new operas in the post-Wagnerian wilderness, one that was on a par with Strauss's operas.[86] Bekker was a notable champion of Schreker's music. He valued Schreker first and foremost by his theatrical and musical instincts, rather than by philosophy or ideology—as Strauss was.[87] Several more successes

[85] Hailey, *Franz Schreker, 1878–1934: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34. See 334, fn. 3.
[86] See ibid., 34–35.
[87] 'Ist nun Schreker ein neuer Wagner, überflügelt er den alten, wird er ihn allmählich zurückdrängen? Sagen wir gerade heraus: nein. Wagner ist eine überragende Kulturerscheinung, eine geistige Kraft von elementarer Bedeutung. Schreker ist eine genial veranlagte Theaterbegabung, ein Musiker, der Opern schreibt—nicht mehr, nicht weniger. Eben darum, wegen dieses nicht mehr und nicht weniger, schätzen wir ihn und freuen uns seiner. Es ist das Unglück der deutschen Oper nach Wagner gewesen, daß sie glaubte, Philosophie und Weltanschauung seien Ausgangspunkte und die Musik liefe nebenher, daß sie meinte, sich als Musikdrama gebärden, Namen und Begriff der Oper mißachten zu dürfen. Aber die Bühne hat ihre eigenen Lebensgesetzte und diese lassen sich

followed: *Das Spielwerk und die Prinzessin* (premiered 1913), *Die Gezeichneten* (premiered 1918) and *Der Schatzgräber* (premiered 1920), the first performances of which all took place in Frankfurt. Schreker then moved to Berlin in 1920 to take up the prestigious position of director at the Hochschule für Musik. This move, however, also coincided with the peak of his career as an opera composer. Schreker never enjoyed the same success with new opera in the 1920s as he had done in the 1910s.

Enter my protagonists in what follows: Paul Hindemith, Alban Berg, Kurt Weill and Ernst Krenek. Inspired by Gay's father-son framing, Michael Kater describes these composers as the 'sons' who revolted against their late Romantic 'fathers'.[88] Seeing Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek as 'brothers', though, implies the four had close and personal relationships. This, however, was not necessarily the case. For a start, two were German (Hindemith and Weill) and two were Austrian (Berg and Krenek). Hindemith, Krenek and Weill were of the same generation, but Berg was almost fifteen years older than Weill and Krenek.[89] Moreover, there is little that ties them together with regards to collaborations, correspondence and place.[90] What does unite them is that they were collectively seen to be at the forefront of developments in German opera, and modern music generally, in the 1920s. Contemporary critics praised these composers for breaking away from the traditions of their predecessors and offering new directions for German opera. Berg,

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nicht aus abstrakten Anschauungen heraus umgestalten'. Bekker, 'Franz Schreker' (1920), in *Klang und Eros, Zweiter Band der Gesammelten Schriften* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1922), 20.

[88] Michael Kater, 'The Revenge of the Fathers: The Demise of Modern Music at the End of the Weimar Republic', *German Studies Review* 15/2 (1992): 295–315 (296).

[89] Their years are as follows: Hindemith (1895–1963), Berg (1885–1935), Weill (1900–1950) and Krenek (1900–1991).

[90] One notable collaboration is *Der Lindberghflug*, a cantata, or more precisely a *Lehrstück*, by Brecht with music by Hindemith and Weill. The work first performed as a broadcast by the Frankfurter Rundfunk-Symphonie-Orchester in 1929, with a performance at the Baden-Baden festival that year. For a study on Krenek and Weill, see Matthias Henke, ed., *Zeitgenossenschaft! Ernst Krenek und Kurt Weill im Netzwerk der Moderne* (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2019).

Weill and Krenek had also all signed contracts with Universal Edition in Vienna, which had been set up at the turn of the century to promote important modern music.[91]

Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek studied at either renowned institutions or with leading composers of the day in Germany and Austria. These environments nurtured their creativity and encouraged them to develop an interest in opera. Hindemith grew up in Frankfurt and from a young age was involved at the city's opera house. The Oper Frankfurt was known for staging many of the newest operas in the 1910s under the direction of Ludwig Rottenberg, who had put the Oper on the map, so to speak. As a young boy and encouraged by his father, Hindemith learnt to play the violin. He soon studied with the leader of the Frankfurt Opera orchestra, Adolf Rebner, who admitted the budding violinist to the conservatory for free. Beginning in 1912, Hindemith studied composition with Arnold Mendelssohn and later Bernard Sekles at the Hoch Konservatorium, also in Frankfurt. Two years later, he began playing first violin in the Opera orchestra, before being promoted to leader in 1917. Hindemith's work at the opera house was particularly important as it gave him first-hand experience with the genre, while allowing him to meet some of the leading composers, conductors and musicians of the day.

Berg, on the other hand, grew up in Vienna and never had any formal musical education until the age of nineteen, when Schoenberg took Berg on as one of his pupils in 1904.[92] While Schoenberg's theoretical output centred mainly on his approach to harmony—*Harmonielehre* (1911) being his most famous work—he had written pieces for the stage, to which Berg would have no doubt been exposed. *Erwartung*, composed in 1909, was groundbreaking for the way in which Schoenberg used free atonality over an extended period of time, in this case nearly half an hour. Marie Pappenheim's libretto displays a clear

[91] Hindemith's music was instead published by Schott's Söhne.
[92] As Douglas Jarman notes, he was 'little more than an enthusiastic amateur'. Jarman, 'Berg, Alban (Maria Johannes)', *Grove Music Online* (2001) https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02767 (accessed 26 July 2023).

influence from contemporary research into the human psyche.[93] Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand*, composed between 1910 and 1913, also encapsulated contemporary Viennese thought by its influence from Otto Weininger. *Die glückliche Hand*'s novel use of changing coloured lighting spoke also to other modern works such as Wassily Kandinsky's *Der gelbe Klang* and Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* (1910). Berg's experience, then, working under Schoenberg would have opened his eyes to new possibilities for opera.

Like Hindemith, Weill was exposed to opera from a young age. Weill and his siblings (Kurt being one of four) regularly attended the opera, and by the age of fifteen, he was taking composition lessons with the city's assistant conductor at the Hoftheater, Albert Bing. After an initial stint studying under Humperdinck, Friedrich Koch and Rudolf Krasselt at the Musikhochschule in Berlin, Weill was forced to return to Dessau due to financial circumstances. He soon returned to the capital, though, after Ferruccio Busoni personally invited him to attend his master class series at the Akademie der Künste.

Weill's years with Busoni were especially formative on his creative development and would have exposed him to new thinking about opera. Busoni is another important figure in this thesis as he published his lamentations on the current state of opera and offered interventions and new directions beyond Wagner. Though he was born in Italy, Busoni spent much of his life in Germany and Austria, and had a strong influence on developments of German opera. Unlike Pfitzner, Strauss and Schreker, Busoni took a decidedly more anti-Wagnerian stance. This is most obvious in his famous essay *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, originally published in 1907. In this essay, Busoni called for a return to absolute music and in the case of opera, a return to the number form like that used by Mozart.[94] The

[93] *Erwartung* focuses on an unnamed woman searching the forest one night for her husband who, unbeknownst to her, lies dead in the forest.

[94] 'The greater part of modern theatre music suffers from the mistake of seeking to repeat the scenes passing on stage, instead of fulfilling its own proper mission of interpreting the soul-states of the persons represented… The storm is visible and audible without aid from music; it is the invisible and inaudible, the spiritual processes of the personages portrayed, which music should render intelligible… Measurably justified, in my opinion, is

essay sparked a reaction from Pfitzner, whose *Futuristengefahr* argued Busoni as a 'dangerous' Italian outsider undermining the great tradition. Busoni put his ideas from *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* into practice initially in *Arlecchino* and *Turandot* (both premiered on 11 May 1917 at the Stadttheater in Zürich), which Weill and his fellow pupils were exposed to during the master classes.

Krenek grew up in Vienna, but showed a much earlier interest in music than Berg. Had he been born a generation earlier, Krenek would have enjoyed the golden age of *fin de siècle* Vienna and likely been snatched up by Schoenberg alongside Berg.[95] Instead, Krenek took composition lessons with Schreker. When Schreker moved to Berlin in 1920, Krenek quickly followed suit to continue his studies. Here, he met the likes of Busoni, conductor Hermann Scherchen and pianists Eduard Erdmann and Arthur Schnabel, and he was soon involved in the International Society for Contemporary Music.[96] The move to Berlin also opened a world of new possibilities for composition, which is reflected in his output from the time as he moved away from the late-romantic style of his teacher and began exploring atonality. Krenek also travelled to Paris in 1925, where he met Stravinsky, Kokoschka and members of *Les Six*, exposing him to various strands of new music.[97]

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the plan of the old opera, which concentrated and musically rounded out the passions aroused by a moving dramatic scene in a piece of set form (the aria)'. Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*, trans. Theodore Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1911), 13–15.

[95] Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style* (London; The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), 2.

[96] Garrett Bowles, 'Krenek [Křenek], Ernst', *Grove Music Online* (2001) https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.15515 (accessed 26 July 2023). For more on the ISCM, see Giles Masters, 'New Music Internationalism: The ISCM Festival, 1922–1939' (PhD Thesis, King's College London, 2021).

[97] 'Die Wende, die meine musikalische Entwicklung genommen hatte, hatte ein großes Interesse bei mir geweckt, in die Atmosphäre einzutauchen, die Strawinsky und die jungen französischen Komponisten umgab, die so leichte und „nützliche" Musik schreiben. Und meine wachsende Abneigung gegenüber Deutschland und allem, wofür es stand, bewirkte, dass ich dieser ersten Reise in die wirkliche Welt „draußen", in einen der früheren Feindstaaten, mit freudiger Erregung entgegensah'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit: Erinnerungen an die Moderne* (Vienna: Braumüller, 2012), 586.

Expressionism and Modern Opera

This thesis brings to the forefront contemporary attitudes in Weimar Germany towards expressionism and modern opera. As outlined in my literature review, expressionism has proven to be notoriously difficult to define and delimit for later scholars. The same was true for artists and critics living in the early twentieth century. In the 1900s and 1910s, expressionism was not then so strongly associated with German art as it is today. Expressionism was typically used as a catch-all term for modernist European art that diverged from impressionism. In 1912, the art historian Richart Reiche used the recently founded *Sonderbund* exhibition, this time to be hosted in Cologne, as an opportunity to reorient the exhibition's attendees with what he saw expressionism to be:

> This year the fourth exhibition of the Sonderbund presents a survey of the current state of the most recent movement in painting—the one that replaced Naturalism and Impressionism and now strives for a simplification and intensification of forms of expression, a new rhythm and color, a decorative and monumental configuration. The exhibition attempts to give a survey of this movement, which has been called Expressionism.[98]

Though the exhibition reflected the international scope of expressionism in showcasing paintings by artists from France to Russia, the 1912 *Sonderbund* is notable for the way Reiche attempted to frame expressionism as having Germanic origins. Reiche had set up retrospective galleries for Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin to explain expressionism's origins. However, he demonstrated a clear favouritism towards van Gogh, and also organised a special showcase of Edward Munch.[99]

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[98] Richart Reiche, 'Foreword', International Exhibition of the Sonderbund, Cologne, 1912. Quoted in Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, trans. and ed. Nancy Roth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 17. For the original German, see Reiche, 'Vorwort', *Internationale Kunst Ausstellung des Sonderbundes westdeutscher Kunst-freunde und Künstler zu Cöln* (Cologne, 1912).

[99] Long notes how 'van Gogh received space for three times as many works as the other two'. Long, *German Expressionism*, 16.

Two of the most famous groups of artists that contemporary art critics retrospectively understood to be expressionists were based in Germany: *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), founded in Dresden in 1905 by Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff; and *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), founded in Munich in 1911 by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc.[100] Neither *Die Brücke* nor *Der Blaue Reiter*, however, were movements *per se*, but rather loose collections of artists, who were not necessarily German. Unlike other avant-garde groups at this time such as Futurism or later Dada, the expressionists had no manifesto. The closest thing *Die Brücke* had was a short text on a woodcut print by Kirchner, which called for a young generation of artists who wished to challenge the status quo and shape the future, to join them:

> With faith in evolution, in a new generation of creators and appreciators, we call together all youth. And as youths, who embody the future, we want to free our lives and limbs from the long-established older powers. Anyone who renders his creative drive directly and genuinely is one of us.[101]

Artists in *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* adopted a range of approaches to painting, but all used their art to convey intense, often violent emotions: landscapes were characterised by bold colours, harking back to French fauvism;[102] portraits were typically distorted to reflect the inner turmoil of the subject; primitivist subject matters were also popular; while others, especially Kandinsky, turned to total abstraction. Expressionist art, as contemporary critics

[100] The Berlin Secession in 1920, initiated by Max Pechstein, was an important event that celebrated many of the works from *Die Brücke* and those that would soon form *Der Blaue Reiter*. For more on the *Neue Sezession*, see Wolf-Dieter Dube, *The Expressionists*, trans. Mary Whittall (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 157–161.
[101] Quoted in Long, *German Expressionism*, 23. [‘Mit dem Glauben an Entwicklung, an eine neue Generation der Schaffenden wie der Genießenden rufen wir alle Jugend zusammen, und als Jugend, die die Zukunft trägt, wollen wir uns Arm- und Lebensfreiheit verschaffen gegenüber den wohlangesessenen älteren Kräften. Jeder gehört zu uns, der unmittelbar und unverfälscht das wiedergibt, was ihn zum Schaffen drängt’.] Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Programm der Künstlergruppe Brücke* (1906).
[102] Marc’s 1911-essay, ‘Die Wilden Deutschlands’, harks back to French fauvism. Both ‘wild’ and ‘fauve’ have been translated to English as ‘savage’. For the original German, see Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter*, dokumentarische Neuausgabe von Klaus Lankheit (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1965), 28–32. For an English translation, see ‘Germany’s ‘Savages’’, in Victor H. Miesel, ed., *Voices of German Expressionism* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 70–72.

understood, did not try to represent the external world realistically. Rather, form was a means to an end, a means for expressing the inner experiences of the artist or the subject of painting.[103]

Expressionism was not just associated with the visual arts. With the publication of *Der Blaue Reiter*'s almanac in 1912, expressionism became entangled with a wide array of media. While the title suggests it was intended to be a regular periodical, this was the only edition to have been published; it was reprinted, though, in 1914. This initial issue alone demonstrates the breadth and aims of *Der Blaue Reiter*. In addition to the inclusion of new paintings and drawings from its members, the volume also contained essays by Kandinsky and Marc on their approach to form in painting. Musical compositions were also included in the *Almanach*. Several short songs by Schoenberg and his disciples Berg and Webern were published, as well as an article by Schoenberg on music's relationship to text.[104] Expressionism, though, was not directly applied to Austro-German music until seven years later. 'Ausdrucksmusik' (literally 'expressive music') was, for example, the preferred term for Webern in 1912.[105] 'Expressionismus' was first applied to music in 1919 by Heinz Tiessen in a series of essays titled 'Der neue Strom' in the first issue of *Melos*, which had

[103] For Kandinsky, the shift from depictions of the external to internal was key for distinguishing twentieth-century art from that of the nineteenth. Kandinsky posited in *The Struggle for Art*: 'The now-dawning twentieth century is the century of the "internal," in contrast to the nineteenth century, which was that of the "external"'. Quoted in Long, *German Expressionism*, 40. For the original German, see Kandinsky, untitled essay, in *Im Kampf am die Kunst: Die Antwort auf den „Protest deutscher Künstler"* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1911), 73–75. Similar remarks were made by Adolf Behne: 'Expressionism knows no form which is without spirit, without expression. Here, form is in the service of expression. […] We have recognized the goal of the Expressionist picture is the expression of an experience. The Impressionist was satisfied with the impression, with the surface, the appearance. The Expressionist wants the spiritual quintessence of an experience'. Behne, 'German Expressionism, Lecture for the Opening of the New Sturm Exhibition', *Der Sturm*, 1914. Quoted in Long, German Expressionism, 61, 62. For the original German, see Behne, 'Deutsche Expressionisten: Vortrag zur Eröffnung der neuen Sturm-Ausstellung', *Der Sturm* 5, 17–18 (December 1914), 14–15.

[104] There was also an essay on Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, which emphasised the importance of the work's use of colour. For more on the almanac, see Mark Carroll, 'Hearing is Believing: 'Inner Necessity' and the Songs in the *Blaue Reiter* Almanac', *Musicology Australia* 32, no.1 (2010): 3–26.

[105] In 1912, Anton Webern described Schoenberg's music as follows: 'Schönbergs Verhältnis zur Kunst wurzelt ausschließlich im Ausdrucksbedürfnis. Seine Empfindung ist von versengender Glut; sie schafft völlig neue Ausdruckswerte, also braucht sie auch neue Ausdrucksmittel', quoted in Michael von Troschke, *Der Begriff „Expressionismus" in der Musikliteratur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1988), 15.

been founded by Scherchen.[106] It was then again applied to music in the spring of that year by Arnold Schering in 'Die expressionistische Bewegung in der Musik' (The Expressionist Movement in Music).[107] Just as in the visual arts, Tiessen framed his understanding of expressionism as a reaction against impressionism. In Tiessen's eyes, Schoenberg was at the centre of musical expressionism:

> In terms of music history, Schoenberg initially sets the inner authenticity, purity, and active intensity of his emotional expression in striking contrast to most of the other new innovators of the generation following Strauss, Mahler and Reger. A work as noble and concentrated as his chamber symphony is an artistic feat of which our time can be proud. For in Schoenberg's development, the specific-expressionistic tendency to reach the spiritual-emotional goal in the shortest possible way, to delete everything that only serves to smooth the formal or concertante and does not strengthen the expression, becomes most strikingly clear.[108]

One way for music to reach this spiritual goal, according to Tiessen, was through the rejection of the triad, the scale and symmetry (as exemplified by Schoenberg), something which he compares directly to the approach of the expressionist painter.[109]

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[106] 'Der neue Strom' was published in four parts in *Melos* 1 (1920): 5–8, 26–28, 78–82 and 102–106. 'Strom' can be translated to English as 'current', which is especially fitting in the view of Troschke, who sees Tiessen's uses of Strom as 'a metaphor for modern art… intended to refer to the broad, flowing movement of this style ('Als eine Metapher für die moderne Kunst soll das Wort „Strom" wohl auf die breite, fließende Bewegung dieser Stilrichtung hinweisen'). Troschke, *Der Begriff „Expressionismus" in der Musikliteratur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 52. According to Troschke, Tiessen's choice of the word 'Strom' could be for the following reasons: In his book *Der Expressionismus* (1914), Paul Fechter had already used *Strom* in relation to expressionism; the term was also used for an exhibition in 1919, as well as for a book series by Paul Raabe titled *Der Strom: Eine Buchfolge*. Moreover, Strom may have been used in the way it was an alliteration on Walden's *Der Sturm*. See ibid., 51–52.

[107] Schering's essay was published as part of a broader collection titled *Einführung in die Kunst der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Verlag von E. A. Seemann), 139–161. The essays were originally a series of lectures given at the Schiller-Verein in Leipzig.

[108] 'Die innere Echtheit, Reinheit, aktive Intensität seines Empfindungsausdrucks setzt Schönberg zunächst in auffälligen Gegensatz zu den meisten anderen Neutönern der auf Strauß-Mahler-Reger musikhistorisch folgenden Generation. Ein so edles und konzentriertes Werk wie seine Kammersinfonie ist eine künstlerische Großtat, auf die unsere Zeit stolz sein kann. Dann aber verdeutlicht sich in Schönbergs Entwicklung aufs Schlagendste die spezifisch-expressionistische Neigung, das geistig-gefühlsmäßige Ziel auf dem kürzesten Wege zu erreichen, alles zu streichen, was nur der formalen oder konzertanten Glättung dient und nicht den Ausdruck stärkt'. Tiessen, 'Der neue Strom: IV. Expressionismus', *Melos* 1 (1920): 104.

[109] 'Wie der expressionistische Maler seiner Linienführung nicht photographische (oder doch Wirklichkeitsvorstellungen geleitete) Naturtreue als optisches Erlebnis zugrunde legt, sondern seinen geistig-seelischen Ausdruckswillen,—so wendet sich die Linienführung des Musikers ab von der Diktatur der ersten Naturtöne, dem Dreiklang und seiner Skala, die bisher Grundlage der Melodiebildung waren, und schafft (mit

The *Blaue Reiter*'s almanac also included theatre pieces. Kandinsky's stage work *Der Gelbe Klang* (The Yellow Sound) was published in this issue and foregrounded one of the most characteristic features of his paintings: colour.[110] A regular, and thus more important, periodical for distributing expressionist art was *Der Sturm*, which was founded by Herwarth Walden in 1910.[111] As well as paintings, *Der Sturm* also published poems, essays and theatre pieces by Europe's leading proponents of secessionist art.[112] Both Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and Stramm's *Sancta Susanna* were published in *Der Sturm*, as were other works by them (see Figure 1). Plays by Frank Wedekind and August Strindberg also appeared in *Der Sturm*, whose work lay the foundations for expressionist playwrights who would be especially popular in the Weimar Republic. Two major contributors to expressionist theatre in interwar and post-war Germany were Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller.[113] J. L. Styan offers six key characteristics of expressionist theatre: 1) 'dreamlike and nightmarish' atmospheres; 2) unrealistic settings; 3) disjointed and episodic plots; 4) characters with no individuality; 5) rhapsodic language; and 6) unrealistic acting.[114] These plays were often protests against Wilhelmine authority and/or industrialisation, a Nietzschean glorification of

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ähnlicher „Verzerrung" der „Naturlinie") Konturen von einer unserem Empfinden näher kommenden Ausdrucksintensität'. Ibid., 105.

[110] In *Der Gelbe Klang*, Kandinsky tries to move towards a complete form of abstract theatre, a total work of art, applying ideas from him *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*. For more, see R. J. Cardullo, 'Wassily Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound* as a Total Work of Art: Reception and Interpretation', *Journal of Modern Literature* 41/4 (2018): 1–17. For the full play, see Wassily Kandinsky, 'The Yellow Sound', in Miesel, *Voices of German Expressionism*, 137–145.

[111] *Der Sturm* was broad in its aims and, in that sense, foreshadowed aspects of the Bauhaus. 'The art school—Sturm—teaches stage design, drama and public speaking, painting, poetry and music. Unity of art requires knowledge of all the arts as well as integrated instruction, but differences in expressive means also require the school to separate into individual art departments'. Long, *German Expressionism*, 65.

[112] Contributors included Alfred Döblin, August Stramm, Else Lasker-Schüler. During the First World War the amount of art published in *Der Sturm* dropped. Walden changed his focus after the war, turning away from German artists and instead looking to the avant-garde of eastern Europe. See Helen Boorman, 'Sturm, Der', *Grove Art Online* (2003) https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T082105 (accessed 28 July 2023).

[113] Important works by Kaiser include *Die Bürger von Calais* (1913), *Von morgens bis mitternachts* (1912), *Gas I* (1918) and *Gas II* (1920); and by Toller, *Die Wandlung* (1919) and *Masse Mensch* (1921).

[114] J. L. Styan, *Expressionism and Epic Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 4–5.

individualism akin to the *Übermensch*, a Freudian exploration into the hidden psyche of the protagonist and, following the war, a Marxist call to arms for society.[115]

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Zeichnung von Oskar Kokoschka zu dem Drama **Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen**

Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen

Von Oskar Kokoschka

Personen:

Mann
Frau
Chor: Männer und Weiber.

Nachthimmel, Turm mit großer roter eiserner Käfigtür; Fackeln das einzige Licht, schwarzer Boden, so zum Turm aufsteigend, daß alle Figuren reliefartig zu sehen sind.

Der Mann
Weißes Gesicht, blaugepanzert, Stirntuch, das eine Wunde bedeckt, mit der Schar der Männer (wilde Köpfe, graue und rote Kopftücher, weiße, schwarze und braune Kleider, Zeichen auf den Kleidern, nackte Beine, hohe Fackelstangen, Schellen, Getöse), kriechen herauf mit vorgestreckten Stangen und Lichtern, versuchen müde und unwillig den Abenteurer zurückzuhalten, reißen sein Pferd nieder, er geht vor, sie lösen den Kreis um ihn, während sie mit langsamer Steigerung aufschreien.

Männer
Wir waren das flammende Rad um ihn,
Wir waren das flammende Rad um dich, Bestürmer verschlossener Festungen!

gehen zögernd wieder als Kette nach, er mit dem Fackelträger vor sich, geht voran.

Männer
Führ' uns Blasser!

Während sie das Pferd niederreißen wollen, steigen Weiber mit der Führerin die linke Stiege herauf.

Frau rote Kleider, offene gelbe Haare, groß,

Frau laut
Mit meinem Atem erflackert die blonde Scheibe der Sonne, mein Auge sammelt der Männer Frohlocken, ihre stammelnde Lust kriecht wie eine Bestie um mich.

Weiber
lösen sich von ihr los, sehen jetzt erst den Fremden.

Erstes Weib lüstern
Sein Atem saugt sich grüßend der Jungfrau an!

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Figure 1: *Der Sturm*, 20 (1910), 1.

Leftist connotations of expressionist theatre reflected the increasing association of expressionist art with socialism. Having originally been a protest against official Wilhelmine styles, expressionist art had always had anti-nationalist undertones and was seen to be

[115] Ibid., 3–4.

progressive. The Kaiser's abdication and the foundation of the Weimar Republic, however, burst open the floodgates of expressionism's socialist potential. Herbert Kühn wrote:

> Expressionism is—as is socialism—the same outcry against matter, against the unspiritual, against machines, against centralization, for the spirit, for God, for the humanity in man.
>
> It is the same cast of mind, the same attitude toward the world, that has different names according only to different areas in which it appears. There is no Expressionism without socialism.[116]

In the wake of the November Revolution, expressionist artists joined the *Novembergruppe* and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* in their masses as they increasingly saw in their work the power to change society.[117] They began to publish their work in 'call-to-arms' pamphlets with explicitly revolutionary messages.[118]

To add to this maelstrom, expressionism was also applied to cinema in the early Weimar years. Robert Wiene's silent film *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920), one of the most famous cultural products from the Weimar Republic, was described by Herbert Ihering in 'Ein expressionistischer Film'.[119] The film's set designs, which are jagged and distorted, with close-up portraits of its characters, strikingly recall expressionist artwork. *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* set a new trend in German silent film that was particularly characteristic of

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[116] Herbert Kühn, 'Expressionism and Socialism', *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung*, 1919. Quoted in Long, *German Expressionism*, 178. For the original German, see Kühn, 'Expressionismus und Sozialismus', *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung* 2/2 (1919): 28–30.

[117] For more on the *Novembergruppe* and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, see Chapter One. Andreas Huyssen refers to this political-revolutionary manifestation of expressionism as the 'historical avant-garde', which he describes as a 'sustained attack on aesthetic notions of the self-sufficiency of high culture', such as 'expressionism and Berlin Dada in Germany; Russian constructivism, futurism, and the proletcult in the years following the Russian Revolution; and French surrealism, especially in the earlier phase'. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii–viii. Whereas modernism sought to distance itself from mass culture, 'the historical avantgarde aimed at developing an alternative relationship between high art and mass culture'. Ibid. For more on the historical avant-garde, see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[118] Ludwig Meidner wrote: 'Socialism must be our new creed'. Meidner, 'To All Artists, Musicians, Poets', *Das Kunstblatt*. 1919. Quoted in Long, *German Expressionism*, 175. For the original German, see Meidner, 'An alle Künstler, Dichter, Musiker', *Das Kunstblatt* 1 (January 1919): 29–30.

[119] See Herbert Ihering, 'An Expressionist Film', in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 620–621.

Weimar culture. As Siegfried Kracauer argued, German expressionist film was important as a kind of mirror of Weimar Germany, a social commentary that traced public opinion throughout the 1920s.[120]

To speak of expressionism in the early Weimar years, therefore, could mean any number of things. In the spirit of Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity*, expressionism in Weimar Germany can also be said to have had multiple 'faces'.[121] To stay true to how expressionism was understood in the early Weimar years, this thesis does not treat expressionism as a discrete, fully definable object of study.[122] I primarily use expressionism as a heuristic tool, a discursive device—a way into contemporary cultural and opera politics—to excavate a revised account of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture. Direct discussions of expressionism shall accordingly come and go throughout the thesis, taking on greater importance in some chapters more than others. As an aesthetic, expressionism hangs in the background as an omnipresent shadow, only occasionally acknowledged. My decision not to foreground expressionism is a direct response to critical voices in the reception of my case studies. This is in stark contrast to how scholars have since read these works, for whom expressionism has typically been the entry point for their studies. As we shall see, expressionism was hardly a source of contention for critics, nor was it typically singled out explicitly as noteworthy of praise. Their lack of attention to expressionism is in many ways reflective of the state of expressionism in Weimar Germany more generally. In the way expressionism as an aesthetic had become integrated into numerous avenues of Weimar culture, it was to some extent arguably synonymous with German culture at this time. This, I

[120] See Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaeresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[121] See Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).
[122] For this reason, I have chosen to not capitalise expressionism throughout the thesis.

argue, meant that critics often saw through expressionism and sought to tease out other aspects of an opera and its performance.[123]

One such facet of the operatic discourse that I shall explore in the chapters that follow is the place where these operas were premiered and how local circumstances directly fed into the reception. Due to its origins in the Holy Roman Empire, Germany developed a strong network of provincial opera houses distinct from other European nations, each with their own history, character and identity.[124] As emphasised by Walter Laqueur, the German provinces were important places for the premieres of stage works just as much as the capital, a characteristic of Weimar culture that was not necessarily the case in other European countries.[125] Perhaps as a consequence of this strong regionality, Berlin, the capital, only plays a small role in this thesis. Berlin is not completely discarded from the picture, however. The capital, instead, served a rather different purpose, namely in the professional life of this young generation of composers as a place of education under the careful guidance of the likes of Busoni and Schreker.

The key cities in this thesis are instead Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Dresden and Kassel.[126] Greater attention to local circumstances is, as Chapman suggests, a natural consequence of moving away from treating expressionism as an aesthetic: 'Such definitions—whether formalist or psychologizing and emotive—have been unsatisfying: many of the formalist

[123] Gabriel has argued how focusing on the structural topicality of *Zeitoper*, as opposed to its surface topicality, allows for continuities to emerge between *Zeitopern* and composers', primarily Weill and Krenek, earlier works. See Gabriel, 'Opera After Optimism', 63–64.
[124] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
[125] Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918–1933* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 28.
[126] Munich was another important city in the history of German operatic production, especially for Wagner's late music dramas. The Bayerische Staatsoper premiered the following works by Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868), *Das Rheingold* (1868), *Die Walküre* (1870). Other notable premieres at the Staatsoper include Humperdinck's *Königskinder* (1897), Korngold's *Der Ring des Polykrates* and *Violanta* (1916), Pfitzner's *Palestrina* (1917). At the Oper Leipzig the following were premiered: Ethyl Smyth's *The Wreckers* (1906), *Jonny spielt auf* (1927), Weill's *Der Silbersee* (1933). At the Berlin Staatsoper Unter den Linden were premiered Krenek's *Die Zwingburg* (1924), *Wozzeck* and Schreker's *Der Singende Teufel* (1928), while the Krolloper premiered Weill's *Royal Palace* (1927) and *Neues vom Tage* (1929).

definitions can be equally applied to Fauvism, Cubism, or Futurism and say little about the specific historical conditions that enabled the Expressionist artists' formal choices'.[127] In other words, approaching expressionism from an aesthetic point of view easily masks local nuances; fauvism and cubism, after all, were primarily French traditions, while Futurism was Italian. As we shall see, local circumstances frequently exerted a powerful influence over the production and reception of modern opera and were more than a mere backdrop.

Like expressionism, *modern* opera is a tricky phrase that resists a discrete definition. Pollock has commented on how the concept of a modern opera aesthetic in the twentieth century was something of an oxymoron: with the establishment of the canon, there was a growing expectation from audiences that new operas should speak to operatic tropes with which they were familiar. For composers who wished to create an overtly modern opera, then, avant-garde techniques were often 'incompatible with operaticism'.[128] Similar to Pollock, my consideration of modern opera is less grounded in the aesthetic. Simply equating opera's 'modernity' with its use of avant-garde techniques and radical approaches to form is not especially relevant here. As we have seen, expressionism as an aesthetic was by the time these operas premiered the status quo and had assimilated itself into numerous avenues of Weimar culture. Tropes of expressionist theatre, therefore, were not necessarily what made these works 'modern'.

In what follows, my understanding of modern opera stems from broader theories of modernity, chiefly Calinescu's emphasis on the notion of *time*.[129] The word *modern* has

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[127] Chapman, *Expressionism and Poster Design in Germany 1905–1922*, 23

[128] 'Writing a new opera, then, often entailed treating tradition as a series of referents, and balancing opera's dramatic, musical, and expressive conventions with modern means. In large part because of these compromises, new opera was not usually considered sufficiently innovative to be "new music," and contemporary opera's critics habitually characterized it as complacent and bourgeois, the last gasps of a dying art, in contrast to genres or outlets in which more sweeping innovations were possible. The question of whether and how opera could ever become truly modern was paramount, and opera's reliance on tradition gave critics reason to suspect that "modern opera" might even be an oxymoron'. Pollock, *Opera After the Zero Hour*, 1–2.

[129] 'the idea of modernity could be conceived only within the framework of a specific time awareness, namely, that of *historical time*, linear and irreversible, flowing irresistibly onwards'. Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 13.

always had temporal connotations, though it originally only served as a distinction from *antiquity*; the ancients and the moderns still shared the same idealistic vision of beauty.[130] Only in the wake of the Enlightenment, when Western society rebelled against traditional forms of authority, did *modern* become increasingly associated with a rejection of the classical aesthetic.[131] This rejection of an eternal standard of beauty was the stimulus for new approaches to form in art, as well as a reconfiguration of the connection between time and, what was increasingly being referred to as, 'modernity'.[132] A greater awareness of time was the impetus for modernity. Calinescu writes: 'Clearly, this is not the metaphysical or epistemological time of the philosophers, nor the scientific construct dealt with by physicists, but the *human time* and sense of history as experienced and valued culturally'.[133] In other words, modernity, as channelled through the artwork, was a grappling between past and present. This is key to my understanding of *modern* opera. As we shall see throughout the thesis, critics approached their reviews of these operas with a strong sense of historical awareness. They frequently framed these operas in terms of time, that is either breaking away from the shadow of Wagner or setting a path for the future of the genre. I see these reactions as proxies for *modern* opera.[134] When speaking of how critics saw opera to have been *modernised*, then, I see as directly linked to feelings of *progress*, strides made towards the future of the art form. Modern opera, as understood in this thesis, therefore, is not a style but an attitude, a mode of discourse that addressed the concerns of Germany's opera crisis.

I also consider the relationship between modern opera and modernity in Weimar Germany. Continuing with Calinescu, modernity from the mid-nineteenth century onwards

[130] See ibid., 1.
[131] 'With the breakup of traditional aesthetic authority, time, change, and the self-consciousness of the present have tended increasingly to become sources of value in what Lionel Trilling once called, with a felicitous phrase, the "adversary culture" of modernism'. Ibid., 4.
[132] Ibid., 42–43.
[133] Ibid., 9.
[134] Calinescu notes how 'the "consciousness of modernity" is not tied down to the use of a specific word or of a set of phrases, similes, or metaphors that obviously derive from it'. Ibid., 10.

can be seen as a tension between two sub-modernities: *bourgeois* modernity and *aesthetic* modernity, the former being the observable effects of the Enlightenment and capitalism on society, the latter being a rejection of bourgeois values heralded by artists and which led to the avant-gardes. This thesis seeks to loosen the connection between modern opera and bourgeois modernity in Weimar Germany.[135] Weimar culture, as Eric D. Weitz argues, can be summarised as a widespread negotiation of bourgeois modernity.[136] Some were critical of this modernity, as exemplified by George Grosz in *Metropolis* (1916–17); the prominence of red and the use of angular figures, all seeming to be in a rush somewhere, expresses his apocalyptic vision of modern Berlin in the face of increased industrialisation. *Zeitoper*, on the other hand, which put modern life front and centre, was, as Gabriel notes, a sign of the 'optimism of the times, the belief that modernization was making life better and would continue to do so in the foreseeable future'.[137] In decentring *Zeitoper*, this thesis shows how opera did not need to rely on surface level tropes of bourgeois modernity for it to be considered modern by contemporary critics. As we shall see, modern opera, like expressionism, had many faces.

This thesis stands at the crossroads between three primary lines of discourse that characterised cultural debate in the first half of the Weimar Republic: the future of

[135] Calinescu describes bourgeois modernity as so: 'The doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology, the concern with time (a *measurable* time, a time that can be bought and sold and therefore has, like any other commodity, a calculable value), the cult of reason, and the ideal of freedom defined within a framework of an abstract humanism, but also the orientation toward pragmatism and the cult of action and success'. Ibid., 41. For more on modernity and bourgeois life in Germany in the nineteenth century, see Jerrold Seigel, *Modernity and Bourgeois Life: Society, Politics, and Culture in England, France, and Germany since 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[136] 'That was Weimar culture: the restless questioning of what it means to live in modern times, the search for new forms of expression suitable to the cacophony of modern life, and the belief of possibilities of the future'. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 253. The 'modern times' explored by so many in this period encompassed 'urban, industrial society, the mélange of sights, sounds and thoughts connected with the city, with science and technology and layers of bureaucracy with rational modes of thinking, with complex social hierarchies, the world of the bourgeoisie and proletariat uncomfortably situated amid the old nobility and a still-substantial peasantry, and urban demimonde of gamblers, thieves, cops, and prostitutes and an educated middle class desperately trying to maintain its stature and status'. Ibid., 252.

[137] Gabriel, 'Opera After Optimism', 1.

expressionism, the need for new directions in opera and the grappling with a rapidly changing modern world. These discourses will ebb and flow in what follows, with a certain amount of flexibility as to how much I use these three terms throughout the thesis. Naturally, this approach allows for the chapters to go in different directions and vary methodologically. However, in doing so, this thesis aims towards building a much broader, and indeed far more ambitious, impression of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture.

Overview of Thesis

The thesis is split into four chapters, each centred on the production and reception of a particular work or works in a specific locale. A significant portion of the primary sources I use to reconstruct these events are contemporary reviews published in local and national newspapers from across Germany, and sometimes beyond. These are written by a mixture of anonymous authors and renowned critics, some of whom reported at more than one events discussed in the thesis. In my analysis of these reviews, I seek to answer the following: How did critics perceive the operas to be modern? What, if at all, were the reactions to expressionism and was expressionism included in critics' perception of the modern? How did critics relate these works back to broader perceptions of opera crisis? How were these operas seen to connect with broader aspects of Weimar culture?

In tandem with reviews found in newspapers, I use contemporary journal articles and music magazines as key primary sources. The beginning of the Weimar Republic saw the foundation of several new journals dedicated to the study of modern music, namely *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, edited by Paul Stefan between 1922 and 1937, which was published by Universal Edition, and *Melos*. There were also more established journals including *Die Musik*, *Zeitschrift für Musik* and *Signale für die musikalische Welt* that continued to pay attention to new trends and works. While these journals sometimes

contained reviews of my case studies, they were chiefly used a space for discussing broader musical and cultural issues of the period. Many of these sources have been fully digitised and thus I have accessed them online.[138]

Antagonisms between music critics on the political left and right come to the forefront in some chapters of the thesis more than others. More often than not, disagreements between the left and right aligned with progressive and conservative views towards art in Weimar Germany respectively. Frequently, as we shall see, it was the left who supported new modern operas. Two of the most important critics on the left who reappear throughout the thesis are the aforementioned Paul Bekker and Oskar Bie. We shall see in the following chapters how Bekker and Bie, among others, were some of the strongest supporters of Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek's operas. The opinions of Bekker and Bie would have carried significant weight in the tracing of new, modern German opera: the two were associated with prominent and notably left-leaning newspapers. Between 1911 and 1923, Bekker was the *Frankfurter Zeitung*'s principal music critic, while Bie was a frequent music and opera critic for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*. Bie was also famous as a literary critic, which, as Chapter Three explores, offers a new entry point for studying Weill's *Der Protagonist*. Bekker, as discussed in Chapter Four, also had hands-on experience as Intendant at the Kassel Staatstheater, a role which was seminal for the success of Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*.

As well as exploring the reception of my case studies, I also outline their geneses. For this I turn to letters and correspondences, as well as essays by the respective composers. These sources shed light on composers' own opinions towards the state and future direction

[138] Two important databases for accessing digitised German-language newspapers are ANNO, run by the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, which can be found at https://anno.onb.ac.at/ (accessed 26 July 2023) and ZEFYS, run by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, accessible at https://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ (accessed 26 July 2023). For more on accessing German-language newspapers through these websites, see Sanna Pederson, 'Digitized German-Language Newspapers', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 19 (2022): 199–204.

of opera and where they saw their operas in this picture.[139] In analysing these sources, my chief question has been: What were the aims of composers, practitioners and institutions for these works? Or, to put it another way, to what extent where these works self-conscious efforts from those involved to overcome the opera crisis and establish the modern opera composer or the modern opera theatre?

In Chapter One, 'Erotic Opera: Hindemith's Triptych and the End of Expressionism', I explore the early reception of Hindemith's operatic triptych. I focus on two performances: the premiere of *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Das Nusch-Nuschi* at the Württembergisches Landestheater in Stuttgart in 1921 and the premiere of *Sancta Susanna* at the Frankfurt Oper the following year, which was accompanied by performances of Hindemith's other two operas. The violent, grotesque and blasphemous subject matters of the triptych resulted in both performances turning into a *succès de scandale*. In Stuttgart, the triptych caused considerable controversy with the local government, while in Frankfurt the city's Catholic Bühnenvolksbund called for a complete ban of the works. Following the signing of the Weimar Constitution and the failed revolution, the place of expressionism in Germany's Republic more generally was called into question and deemed by some art critics to be in a state of crisis. German theatre, similarly, was seen to be in a state of decadence, with the dramas of the expressionist artist Kokoschka a recurring problem. In this chapter, I question what the source of the anxieties surrounding Hindemith's triptych were—expressionism or the erotic? To do so, I cast expressionism as contemporary critics such as Bekker and Rudolf Kurtz did: as a buzzword. This, I argue, provides an explanation as to

[139] The bulk of Hindemith's essays did not appear until after the Second World War. Weill frequently wrote essays for the radio magazine *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, while Krenek was similarly prolific in writing essays, though not in any formal capacity. For published collections of essays by Weill, Krenek and Berg, see the following: Stephen Hinton and Jürgen Schebera, eds., *Kurt Weill: Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften, mit einer Auswahl von Gesprächen und Interviews* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1990), *Exploring Music: Essays by Ernst Krenek*, trans. Margaret Shenfield and Geoffrey Skelton (London: Calder and Boyars, 1996) and Bryan R. Simms, ed., *Pro Mundo—Pro Domo: The Writings of Alban Berg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

why critics who attacked the triptych went straight for the erotic and rarely mentioned expressionism; as a buzzword, expressionism had lost its specificity to drive their arguments forward. Re-examining art critics' claims of the 'end' of expressionism also reveals that their concerns stemmed from the growing commodification of expressionism. This commodification, as I demonstrate, was observable in Frankfurt's theatres, where the prominence of expressionist theatre created a fertile environment ahead of the premiere of Hindemith's triptych. Expressionism on the operatic stage, however, was seen to be something new, with the triptych seen to be the long-awaited watershed moment in modern German opera.

Chapter Two, 'Opera in Fragments: *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*', traces the performance history of *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*. Scored for soprano, children's choir and full orchestra, and as concert performance only, the *Bruchstücke*'s three scenes are told entirely from the perspective of Marie. The premiere of the *Bruchstücke* at the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein's 1924-Tonkünstlerfest, I demonstrate, was seminal in whetting the appetites of critics ahead of the first performance of the full opera. Prior to the *Bruchstücke*, Berg had struggled to secure a performance of *Wozzeck* from an opera house. As early critics of the privately published piano-vocal score observed, the opera was filled to the brim with technical demands that made it seem unperformable. Berg's *Bruchstücke*, however, disarmed all doubters and faith was restored that a performance of the entire opera would be possible—in fact, they were seen to be the highlight of the Tonkünstlerfest. The *Bruchstücke* were also an important marketing strategy for *Wozzeck*, as this performance led to numerous calls from critics that opera houses snatch up this new opera. Following the premiere of *Wozzeck*, the *Bruchstücke* continued to be programmed and wherever they went, they drummed up further interest in the opera. At only twenty minutes in length and with no staging needed, they were also a cheaper means of raising awareness of the opera Yet, the *Bruchstücke* also carved out

their own performance history independent to *Wozzeck*. They were frequently programmed to represent Berg's modern musical style. In this chapter, therefore, I see the *Bruchstücke* and *Wozzeck* as two distinct musical adaptations of Büchner's play. I take my lead here from literary scholars, who fundamentally see *Woyzeck* as a fundamentally fragmentary, eternally incomplete work, and apply this idea to musical adaptations of the play.

Chapter Three, 'Pantomime and Modern Opera: Weill's *Der Protagonist*', explores the premiere of Weill's *Der Protagonist* at the Dresden Staatsoper in 1926, which was one of the most celebrated works from a young up-and-coming composer. *Der Protagonist* has repeatedly occupied a difficult position in the standard expressionism-*Zeitoper* dichotomy; it has been framed as occurring on the eve of the demise of expressionism, though the work itself was nothing but a great success, and while it was received as a sign of the future, it bears none of the hallmarks of *Zeitoper*. While scholars have primarily viewed *Der Protagonist* through the eyes of expressionism, returning to the initial reception of Weill's opera reveals an altogether different sphere of activity with which critics associated the opera: pantomime. Weill's use of pantomime in modern opera can be placed within a much broader resurgence in pantomime across Europe in the early twentieth century. From its beginnings in *fin de siècle* Vienna, I trace how *Der Protagonist* was in fact the latest instantiation of an ongoing pantomime renaissance which took the traditionally vernacular medium and thrust it to the forefront of high art. The inclusion of pantomime in a modern work for the stage had been one of Weill's early ambitions. Though Weill's interest in pantomime is typically indebted to the influence of his teacher Busoni, I argue that his affinity for the vernacular tradition was in fact something he developed on his own accord and prior to his first meeting with Busoni. At the premiere of *Der Protagonist*, the opera's two pantomime scenes were singled out by critics as especially noteworthy of praise. Through novel orchestration and an elaborate choreography of musicians within the theatre,

Weill's *Der Protagonist* was seen to present a modern theatrical experience, one which, I argue, achieved similar results to other attempts at modernising the operatic experience via showcasing the latest technological means on stage as part of the plot.

Chapter Four, 'Opera on the Periphery: *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel', explores the premiere of Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* at the Kassel Staatstheater in November 1926. The evening was an enormous success and a number of critics marked Krenek's opera as a sign of the future of German opera. Yet the fact that Kassel, of all places, was the site of such a defining moment in the history of opera was of great surprise to many critics. Eighteenth- and nineteenth century works had tended to dominate the Staatstheater's most recent seasons, and when it did have the opportunity to showcase something more modern, like Krenek's Second Symphony, the local orchestra struggled with the work's modernist idiom. In this chapter I use the reception of *Orpheus und Eurydike* to suggest that critics saw Kassel as residing at the periphery of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture, as opposed to its centre, as the Kassel Staatstheater was lauded as the site of another watershed moment for German opera. I speak of 'central' and 'peripheral' spaces in relation to assumptions critics had as to where they could expect to find the next big success in modern German opera. These assumptions, I argue, went largely untold, until an event such as *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel disrupted the status quo. With such a disruption, critics felt the need to reassess their outlook on the landscape of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture. Given that the centre and periphery are mutually constitutive—that is, one defines the another—critics could not reassess their understanding of Kassel without calling into question what this meant for other cities across Germany. To put it another way, close attention to places typically deemed to be on the periphery of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture can tell us much more about the centre and the constitutive whole.

CHAPTER ONE

EROTIC OPERA: HINDEMITH'S TRIPTYCH AND THE END OF EXPRESSIONISM

On the evening of 26 March 1922, the Oper Frankfurt did not hold back with images of the violent, the disturbing or the grotesque. Paul Hindemith's *Sancta Susanna* was premiered alongside performances of his two other one-act operas, *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, which had only recently been given their first performances at the Württembergisches Landestheater in Stuttgart on 4 June 1921. The performance in Frankfurt began with *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, a battle of the sexes that culminated with the male protagonist's violent murder of a woman and everyone around him. This was followed by *Sancta Susanna*, the story of a nun who, unable to resist sexual temptations, is immured behind a wall for her sins. With *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, the evening concluded with a twisted pantomime of deceit and seduction, a parody of opera and *commedia dell'arte*, featuring the slaying of the titular half-rat, half-caiman monstrosity.

For the basis of these one-act operas, which have collectively been referred to as the composer's operatic triptych,[1] Hindemith drew upon plays by Austrian and German expressionist artists: Oskar Kokoschka (*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*), Franz Blei (*Das Nusch-Nuschi: Ein Spiel für Burmanische Marionetten*) and August Stramm (*Sancta Susanna*). The provocative visuals and libretti of these operas stirred up considerable controversy from conservative critics, both in Stuttgart and Frankfurt. Depictions of primitivism, violence and sexuality featured prominently in the performances' *succès de scandale*: Oscar Schröter, in his review of the Stuttgart performance for the *Neues Stuttgarter Tageblatt*, took offence at the operas' subject matters, writing: 'I forbid myself the attempt to

[1] See Annegrit Laubenthal, *Paul Hindemiths Einakter-Triptychon* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1986) and Camilla Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus: Kompositionen Paul Hindemiths im Kontext des Frankfurter Kulturlebens um 1920* (Mainz: Schott, 2006).

explain the plot and meaning of either piece as I have neither inclination nor skill for pornographic writing'.[2] Also reviewing the Stuttgart performance, Wilibald Nagel wrote in the *Signale für die musikalische Welt*: 'the first performance is behind us—thank God—and world history continues towards the next mess'.[3] The *Neues Stuttgarter Tageblatt* soon announced a scandal had taken place at the Landestheater when the Ministry of Culture banned future performances of the triptych and an array of other planned projects. Less than a year later when the full triptych was staged in Frankfurt, the memory of the Stuttgart scandal was still fresh in critics' minds, as some spoke of the risk taken by the Oper Frankfurt in undertaking a new staging. If any negative attitudes towards *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Das Nusch-Nuschi* had dimmed in that time, they were soon reignited with the addition of *Sancta Susanna*. The opera's blasphemous themes led to a protest from the city's Catholic Bühnenvolksbund, who demanded the three operas be banned following the performances.

A quotation from Wagner's revered *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) in *Das Nusch-Nuschi* added to Hindemith's reputation as an *enfant terrible* and struck a particularly negative chord with many critics at the Stuttgart premiere.[4] The point of contention was the third scene of *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, during which Hindemith quotes elements of King Mark's betrayal scene

[2] 'Die Handlung und den Sinn der beiden Stücke zu erzählen, verbietet sich mir, da ich keine Neigung und Fähigkeit zu pornographischer Schriftstellerei habe'. Oscar Schröter, 'Württembergisches Landestheater', *Neues Stuttgarter Tagblatt*, 5 June 1921.

[3] 'Die Uraufführung liegt—Gott sei Dank!—hinter uns und die Weltgeschichte geht weiter, der nächsten Schweinerei entgegen'. Wilibald Nagel, 'Paul Hindemith: Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen. Das Nusch-Nuschi', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 24 (1921), 639–40. Nagel expressed his disdain for new music in 'Der Futurismus – eine undeutsche Erscheinung': 'Als bloß spekulationswütige Neuerer sind die Futuristen keine Förderer, sondern Zerstörer der Musik. Man braucht keine Reaktionär zu sein, um den Satz auszusprechen. Bei Beethoven, bei Wagner, Bruckner: überall liegen die Zusammenhänge mit ihren Vorgängern klar zutage. Wo aber ist dies bei Scott, Schönberg Hauer und den übrigen der Fall? Um es zu wiederholen: ein einzelnes gemeinsames Moment stellt keine geistige Verbindung her, wie sie ausschlaggebend wäre. Futurismus ist Spekulation mit unlauteren, in ihrer prinzipiellen Verwendung und Häufung kunstvernichtenden Mitteln. P. Bekker sagt einmal (Neue Musik, E. Reiß, Berlin 1919, S. 17): „Die ästhetische Spekulation gehört stets zu den bahnbrechenden Kräften und hat gerade auf musikalischem Gebiete—ich erinnere nur an die Entstehungsgeschichte der Oper—schon bedeutungsvolle Ergebnisse gezeitigt." Das oft angeführte Beispiel! Was Bekker sagt, ist nicht ganz richtig'. Nagel, 'Der Futurismus – eine undeutsche Erscheinung', *Neue Musik Zeitung* 41/1 (1920): 1–3 (2).

[4] Joel Haney, 'Slaying the Wagnerian Monster: Hindemith, *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, and Musical Germanness after the Great War', *Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 4 (2008): 339–393 (339).

from act 2 of Wagner's opera. As summarised by Joel Haney: 'Transposed into Blei's puppet empire, the love triangle between Mark, Isolde and Tristan reappears in grossly disfigured form… As Blei's subtitle indicates, this deflation of Wagnerian heroism, emotion, and eroticism, had been originally designed for a medium wonderfully suited to the task of ridicule'.[5] Schröter took particular offence at Hindemith's musical joke:

> A musician who was able to insert some of the most engaging words and tones from Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* into one of the most silly and contaminated scenes of *Nusch-Nuschi* has condemned himself.… The fact that this blasphemy was tolerated from the conductor's podium is a further dark point of this world premiere.[6]

Similarly, in his review for the *Württembergische Zeitung*, Alexander Eisenmann wrote:

> No one in the auditorium twitched a muscle at the point in question, only the performers shook with laughter. It is embarrassing to hear how one of the most magnificent points of *Tristan* is violated through its association with a castration knife playing the leading role.[7]

Haney argues that these reactions were in part fuelled by a sensitivity to 'a deeply embittered, defensive hypernationalism that clung strenuously to a heroic image of the past and longed for its restoration'.[8] For some, Wagner was that 'heroic image of the past', with his defamation in *Das Nusch-Nuschi* particularly offensive.

These protests, however, were only one side of the story. Those on the left used their reviews to seemingly set the story straight. W. B., writing for *Der Kommunist Stuttgart*

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[5] Ibid., 342–343.
[6] 'Ein Musiker, der in eine der läppischsten und verseuchtesten Szenen der „Nusch-Nuschi" einige der ergreifendsten Worte und Töne aus Richard Wagners „Tristan und Isolde" einfügen konnte, hat sich selbst gerichtet. „Es ist nicht mehr nötig" das kritische Henkeramt zu üben. Daß diese Blasphemie vom Dirigentenpult aus geduldet wurde, ist ein weiterer dunkler Punkt dieser Uraufführung'. Schröter, 'Württembergisches Landestheater'.
[7] 'Kein Mensch im Zuschauerraum zuckte mit einer Muskel, als man an der betreffenden Stelle angekommen war, nur die Darsteller schüttelten sich vor Lachen. Aber die Röte ins Gesicht treibt es, eine der herrlichsten Tristanstellen durch Verbindung mit einer Sache, in der das Kastrationsmesser die Hauptrolle spielt, entweiht zu hören'. Alexander Eisenmann, 'Württ. Landestheater', *Württembergische Zeitung*, 5 June 1921.
[8] Haney, 'Slaying the Wagnerian Monster', 344.

argued such hostility towards Hindemith's triptych had been blown out of proportion and that such 'desecrations' in the operas were in fact mere jokes.[9] Despite these fraught divisions in the post-performance backlashes, many spectators at the evenings' event were evidently pleased. In Stuttgart, Karl Holl wrote in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* how the applauders outweighed the scattered hisses.[10] In Frankfurt, once the curtain had fallen at the end of *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, director Ernst Lert, conductor Ludwig Rottenberg, Hindemith and members of the cast returned to the stage numerous times to receive the audience's applause.[11] Support and disdain for Hindemith was also not consistently split between the left and the right. With regard to the music, and in what appears to be an attempt to historicise Hindemith's career on the model of Ludwig van Beethoven's, the critic Arthur Bogen in his review for the right-wing *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* more generally saw in the triptych the culmination of Hindemith's first period of musical development: 'These compositions can be seen as an experiment, as well as the conclusion of a developmental period'.[12] Schröter had similarly used the word 'experiment' a year earlier to describe Hindemith's attempt at fusing expressionism with opera.[13] Indeed, after service in the First World War, Hindemith had reoriented his focus largely from performance to composition, which sparked a proliferation of creativity. In the eight months between the Stuttgart and Frankfurt performances, Hindemith's compositional skills had strengthened. There was critical consensus from Bogen

[9] 'Und gar die „Entweihung" Wagners. Diesen geistig Impotenten wird man nie begreiflich machen können, daß solche „Zitate", die offenbar nur scherzhaft gemeint sind, lange nicht solche Blasphemien sind'. W. B., 'Theater', *Der Kommunist Stuttgart*, 11 June 1921.
[10] 'Es war ein Skandal angesagt; doch kam es anders. Zwar das sonst im Theater ziemlich fatalistisch gestimmte Stuttgarter Publikum spaltete sich in eine zischende und eine applaudierende Partei. Aber man wahrte den parlamentarischen Anstand und ließ schließlich die Beifallsspender, welche die Stimmenmehrheit zu vereinigen schienen gewähren'. Karl Holl, 'Paul Hindemith: Zwei Opern-Einakter', *Forstzeitung*, 8 June 1921.
[11] 'Er führte Darsteller, Leiter und den Komponisten viele male vor den Vorhang und bewies, daß das Publikum Freude an der Darstellung, der Werken und ihrem Autor hatte'. P. B., 'Paul Hindemith: 'Drei Einakter'', *Frankfurter Zeitung—Abendblatt*, 27 March 1922.
[12] 'So dürfen diese Kompositionen ebensosehr als Experiment, wie als Abschluss einer Entwicklungsspanne gelten'. Arthur Bogen, 'Opern von Hindemith', *Deutsche allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 April 1922.
[13] 'Das Experiment, die problematische Idee des Expressionismus auf den dafür noch ganz unvorbereiteten Boden unserer Opernbühnen zu verpflanzen, wurde mit zwei kleinen Werken unternommen, die gar nicht aus dem Innern dieser Idee geboren sind, sondern ganz äußerlich an gewissen ungeklärten Erscheinungsformen dieser Idee hängen geblieben sind'. Schröter, 'Württembergisches Landestheater'.

and others that *Sancta Susanna*, the latest addition to the triptych, was superior to its predecessors.[14] In its entirety, though, and despite its detractors, the triptych was recognised to assume a seminal position in the evolution of German art. As H. K. stated in their review for the *Hannoversches Review*, 'Richard Wagner's legacy has been depleted and each of these attempts brings us closer to the artwork of the future'.[15]

While Hindemith's triptych was largely received positively and hailed as a sign of the future of German opera, art critics elsewhere were engaging in heated debates about the relevance of expressionism in German society and culture. As the 1910s progressed, expressionism became caught up with politics and utopian dreams of social reform. In the wake of Germany's defeat in the First World War and the Revolution of November 1918, expressionist artists began to imagine their how their art could assume a position at the forefront of such a revolution.[16] In reaction to the November uprising, two groups formed in Berlin which brought together some of the leading expressionist artists of the day: the *Novembergruppe* (November Group, in direct reference to the revolution) founded by Max Pechstein and César Klein, and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Working Council for Art) founded by Bruno Taut and Walter Gropius.[17] With the backing of the Berlin Publicity Office, members of the *Novembergruppe* published a pamphlet in spring 1919 titled *An alle Künstler* ('To all artists'), which summarised their goals and the ways in which modern art could

[14] 'Den stärksten Eindruck vermittelte die Uraufführung von 'Sancta Susanna'. Hindemith zeigt hier Reife und Gestaltungsfähigkeit von musikdramatischem Wurf. Wie in diesem (regiemäßig vortrefflich gemachten) Einakter aus knapp gebauter Thematik eine Ballung der Spannungen, Leuchtkraft der Klänge, scharfe Charakteristik der Personen erreicht, wie die stimmungsbildenden Elemente verteilt und zusammengefaßt werden, daß enthüllt intuitive Bindung der Gefühlskräfte und außergewöhnliche Könnerschaft'. Bogen, 'Opern von Hindemith'.

[15] 'es ist klar, daß auch die musikdramatische Kunst neue Wege suchen muß, daß das Erbe Richard Wagners aufgebraucht ist und daß uns jeder dieser Versuche dem Kunstwerk der Zukunft näherbringt'. H. K., 'Uraufführungen. Stuttgart: Paul Hindemith: Zwei Opern-Einakter', *Hannoversches Review Morgen Ausgabe* 266.

[16] Joan Weinstein, *The End of Expressionism: Art and the November Revolution in Germany, 1918–19* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 1.

[17] For a detailed account of the foundation of the *Novembergruppe* and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, see the chapter 'Berlin' in ibid., 23–106.

contribute to the revolution. The pamphlet's cover illustration by Pechstein—a man reaching up to the flaming red sky with one hand and using the other to grasp his burning heart—embodies the revolutionary spirit as the man transforms the violent fire consuming the streets into 'passionate flames of individual commitment'.[18] The essays in *An alle Künstler*, however, demonstrate differences of opinion within the Novembergruppe regarding the aim of the revolution.[19] This proved symptomatic of the ambiguous goals of the revolution more generally.[20] Germany's revolution ultimately failed with the signing of the Weimar Constitution in August 1919 and, by 1920, expressionist artists were left pondering how their work would function within Germany's new republic. Critics on the right readily associated expressionism with the violence of Bolshevism, while those who were initially sympathetic towards the movement, having seen in it the power for reconstructing German society, were quick to turn on expressionism after the failed revolution; they marked it as socially destructive in the way it undermined bourgeois authority.[21] The future of expressionism was ultimately called into question. In October of that year, the highly influential art critic Wilhelm Worringer, an early advocate of the movement, spoke of the 'crisis' of expressionism in a lecture to the Munich Goethe-Gesellschaft.[22]

As the reception of Hindemith's triptych and these broader cultural debates reveal, contemporary attitudes towards expressionism were polarised at the time of these

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[18] Ibid., 60. See page 61 for Pechstein's cover illustration.
[19] Weinstein notes how the contributing artists and writers did not agree on whether the revolution was primarily political, economic or artistic, ibid., 62.
[20] Ibid., 220. See also Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001) [1968], 105.
[21] Weinstein, *The End of Expressionism*, 221.
[22] Wilhelm Worringer, *Current Questions on Art*, quoted in Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, trans. and ed. Nancy Roth (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1993), 284. *Current Questions on Art* was originally published as *Künstlerische Zeitfragen* (Munich: Hugo Bruchmann, 1921). The ideas in Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, a doctoral thesis completed in 1907 for the University of Bern and published in 1908, attracted members of Die Brücke and the publication became synonymous with expressionism. See *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1953).

performances. While some critics strongly objected to Hindemith's choice of texts for the triptych, the audiences in Stuttgart and Frankfurt received the operas with open arms, and as expressionism had been proclaimed to be dead by art critics, Hindemith's turn to expressionism for the triptych was seen to be a strong sign of the future of German opera. As Joan Weinstein argues, the 'end' of expressionism should not be taken so literally. Weinstein sees the 'end' as a change in attitude following '[expressionism's] fateful history during the revolution', which 'destroyed confidence in its ability to serve the avant-garde notion of art in the forefront of revolutionary politics'.[23]

Whether or not expressionism was past its heyday, the triptych demonstrates it was still a source of preoccupation in the early Weimar years, one that continued to generate much conversation and debate. Expressionism in the years of and leading up to the triptych's first performances was in fact experiencing a period of transformation from the utopian aims of the revolution to an increasingly commodified asset of Weimar culture ranging from theatre, poetry and music to cinema. With this increased applicability, though, the term was used more loosely and could mean any number of things. In the post-war years, expressionism functioned more as a *Schlagwort* (Buzzword). That is how the influential music critic Paul Bekker saw expressionism in his discussion on Verismo and Giacomo Puccini: '[Verismo] says just as much and just as little as other buzzwords: Naturalism, Impressionism, Expressionism'.[24] The film scholar Rudolf Kurtz similarly viewed expressionism as a buzzword, and emphasised that this increased the term's power:

> If a buzzword is successful, however, a remarkable process begins. From the efforts that it covers over, it gains color, meaning, content. The greater the scope of the things that it labels, the more effectively it conquers general interest; the longer it remains effective, the more clearly the qualities of the content work themselves out. If emotional associations come alive during the formation of a

[23] Weinstein, *The End of Expressionism*, 3–4.
[24] 'Sie sagt gerade soviel und gerade sowenig wie andere Schlagworte ähnlicher Art: Naturalismus, Impressionismus, Expressionismus'. Paul Bekker, *Kritische Zeitbilder: Gesammelte Schriften, Band 1* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921), 149.

> buzzword, then the sense of the term will become increasingly clear over the course of its use.[25]

In the remainder of the chapter, I demonstrate how critics used expressionism as a buzzword in the reception and surrounding discourse of Hindemith's triptych. That is to say that contemporary understandings of the crisis of expressionism were wide-ranging. In their reviews of the triptych, some critics used expressionism as a derogative term to specifically highlight the operas' obscene, erotic subject matters and position the triptych within a broader decline of German theatre. Art critics such as Worringer, on the other hand, were primarily concerned with expressionism's increasing commodification in the post-war years, as opposed to anxieties over the literal death or end of expressionism. The crisis of expressionism, in other words, intersected with wider cultural debate at the time and was not a cut-off point for expressionist activity in Weimar Germany. Drawing on Wolfgang Hardtwig's distinction between literal and rhetorical crises in Weimar Germany, I see the crisis of expressionism as a representative of the latter. In the midst of this 'crisis', expressionist theatre proved to be popular and particularly characteristic at Frankfurt's theatrical institutions. In the years leading up to Hindemith's operas, this context can be seen as a positive force, one which I argue paved the way for the triptych. This chapter, then, positions early performances of Hindemith's triptych in Stuttgart and Frankfurt not at the end of expressionism, but at a crucial moment of transition that opened the door for future composers to utilise expressionist texts as their source material. In its reliance on expressionist texts, the triptych thus offered a watershed moment for modern German opera of the kind for which critics had eagerly awaited as an answer to the opera crisis.

[25] Quoted in Kathleen G. Chapman, *Expressionism and Poster Design 1905–1922* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 331, trans. Chapman. The original can be found in Rudolf Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film* (Berlin: Verlag der Lichtbildbühne, 1926), 9.

Erotic Theatre

The idea of writing an opera seems to have been a preoccupation of Hindemith early on in his career.[26] On 14 November 1917, he wrote to his friend Emmy Ronnefeldt that even on his deathbed, he still would still be searching for a suitable subject matter for an opera.[27] In July 1918, Hindemith discussed his plans with the sculptor Benno Elkan. Elkan offered the composer a libretto he himself had authored. While it was not to Hindemith's taste, the young composer did not have to wait much longer to find a suitable text—in fact, he soon found three—and between 1919 and 1921, he composed operas to Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, Blei's *Das Nusch-Nuschi* and Stramm's *Sancta Susanna*.

Despite the fact Hindemith had originally intended that the three operas be premiered together in Stuttgart—*Sancta Susanna* was rejected there on moral grounds[28]—it is unclear whether he intended them to be regarded as a triptych, similar to Giacomo Puccini's *Il trittico* (1918). Hindemith may have got the idea of composing a triptych from the painter Reinhold Ewald. The two met in Frankfurt's Schopenhauerhaus—an important meeting place for prominent artists and national figures—and Ewald was working on a triptych of his own during this period: *Thema in Variationen vom Caféhaus* (1919).[29] It is also not definitively known how Hindemith came across the texts in the first place. His earliest encounter with expressionism was possibly in late 1917 when he was introduced to *Das Kunstblatt*, a new magazine edited by the art historian Paul Westheim and founded in Weimar earlier that year. The October issue that year was a special edition on Kokoschka and may have sparked Hindemith's interest in the artist's work.[30] Also in 1917, *Das Kunstblatt* published an essay

[26] The following paragraph draws upon Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 94–97.
[27] 'Die wird noch auf meinem Totenbette immer weiter geplant, es sei denn, daß mir im Sterben ein annehmbarer Stoff einfällt'. Quoted in ibid., 94.
[28] Ibid., 167.
[29] Ibid., 61–62.
[30] According to Geoffrey Skelton, Hindemith was 'unsure . . . whether he yet really grasped what [expressionism] was about'. Skelton, *Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1975), 52.

by Camill Hoffmann titled 'Ausblick in die Literatur' (Outlook on Literature), which discussed the works of Stramm. The magazine thus may also have introduced Hindemith to *Sancta Susanna*.[31] How Hindemith came across *Das Nusch-Nuschi* is less clear, although as Camilla Bork has suggested, it is possible he was aware of Blei's play due to his own interest in puppets.[32] It is highly likely that Frankfurt's theatrical scene influenced Hindemith's choice of texts. A programme consisting of two *Wandlungsdramen* (transformation dramas) and one comedy—*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Sancta Susanna* representative of the former, *Das Nusch-Nuschi* the latter—was commonplace around 1920. This programming reflected how expressionist writers like Georg Kaiser, Paul Kornfeld and Walter Hasenclever, whose works were regularly performed in Frankfurt, were turning away from utopian visions and towards comedy.[33] As Bork notes, Hindemith's choice of texts should not be understated, for they signal a programmatic commitment to expressionism.[34]

When the three operas were staged, both in Stuttgart and in Frankfurt, some critics recognised the erotic as the uniting theme, not expressionism. Even before the inclusion of *Sancta Susanna*, Holl already spoke of how Hindemith had composed an 'erotic trilogy',[35] and Arthur Bogen wrote in the *Frankfurter Mittagsblatt* that: 'The texts have the same basic material: the erotic or, more precisely, the sex maniac. The soul appears to be repressed, sexuality prevails'.[36] In fact, much to the dismay of many, the Oper Frankfurt had become

[31] Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 97. See Camill Hoffmann, 'Ausblick in die Literatur', *Das Kunstblatt* 1/12 (1917): 378–381.
[32] Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 97. Blei's play was published in two editions: *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, in *Die Aktion. Wochenschrift für Politik, Literatur, Kunst* 3/31 (1911): 744–753 and in *Das schwere Herz. Zweisprachen und Gedichte* (Munich and Leipzig, 1913), 149–176. Bork notes how Hindemith follows the edition published in *Die Aktion*. Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 97. Next to *Der Sturm*, *Die Aktion* was another important magazine for the dissemination of expressionist art.
[33] Ibid., 140.
[34] Ibid., 97.
[35] 'so schritt jetzt Hindemith zur Komposition der erotischen Trilogie: „Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen" (nach Kokoschka),—„Das Nusch-Nuschi" (nach Franz Blei)—„Sancta Susanna" (nach August Stramm)'. Holl, 'Paul Hindemith: Zwei Opern-Einakter'. A footnote indicates that the text and piano reduction of *Sancta Susanna* had already been published by Schott.
[36] 'Die Texte haben den gleichen Grundstoff: die Erotik, genauer: das Erotomane. Das Seelische scheint verdrängt, die Sexualität herrscht'. Bogen, 'Frankfurter Opernhaus', *Frankfurter Mittagsblatt*, 27 March 1922.

synonymous with staging the erotic. In the *Frankfurter Volkszeitung*, Fritz Otte clamoured for the closure of the once-hallowed hall because of the prevalence of such content on its stage.[37] This interest in the erotic, especially female eroticism, reflected a growing interest in psychoanalysis and (particularly female) hysteria in *fin de siècle* Europe, fuelled in particular by the work of Sigmund Freud.[38] Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (*Sex and Character*, 1903) was especially influential in social and artistic circles and has come to be seen as something akin to an early expressionist manifesto.[39] In this work, Weininger reduced women to their sexuality, claiming that their inability to be anything more made them inferior to men.[40] This interest in female sexuality infused much of Western cultural production, and related themes became commonplace in operas produced around this time, notably Richard Strauss's *Feuersnot* (1901), *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909) and Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911).[41]

As in those works, female characters driven by sexual urges provide much of the momentum for the drama in Hindemith's triptych. In *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*—written in 1907, just two years after *Geschlecht und Charakter* was published—'die Frau' (the Woman), accompanied by a group of maidens, meets 'der Mann' (the Man), who is travelling with his warriors. The Woman taunts the Man with her sexual desires: 'Why do you bind me, Man, with your gaze? Devouring light, you confuse my flame! Consuming life floods over

[37] 'Wäre es unter diesen Umständen nicht besser, die einstige Kunststätte, die zum Tummelplatz gemeinster erotischer Handlung sich erniedrigt hat, für immer zu schließen?' Fritz Otte, 'Frankfurter Opernhaus', *Frankfurter Volkszeitung*, 30 March 1922.
[38] As J. N. Isbister notes, '[Freud] regarded his uncover of the sexual roots of the neuroses as restoring a whole new dimension to the understanding of human behaviour'. Isbister, *Freud: An Introduction to his Life and Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 67.
[39] Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, second edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 150.
[40] 'Woman is nothing but sexuality, Man is sexual and something else beyond'. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, trans. Ladislaus Löb, ed. Daniel Steuer with Laura Marcus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005) [1903], 80.
[41] For more on sexuality in post-Wagnerian opera, see Adrian Daub, *Tristan's Shadow: Sexuality and the Total Work of Art after Wagner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

me. Oh, take away the terrible hope—'.[42] In a wild rage, the Man orders his warriors to brand the Woman, who is seen to be a dangerous beast; she stabs him. This is followed by an orgy of the maidens and the warriors, and the Man is locked up in a cage. Attracted by the Man, the Woman approaches him; the Man breaks open the gate and touches the Woman with his finger, sending her into a violent spasm as he draws the very life out of her body. Set loose, the Man then kills the warriors and the maidens, before marching away through blazing flames.

Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen is typically considered by later scholars one of the earliest pieces of expressionist theatre.[43] It is free in form, avoids standardised stanzas and does not personalise individual characters. In contrast to the turbulent nature of the text, however, Hindemith's compositional style is more restrained. Despite the ominous atmosphere created by the horns and trombones playing in sustained minor seconds, the score demonstrates Hindemith's sophisticated understanding of late-Romantic harmony. It is far removed from the atonal style of the Second Viennese School that was typically associated with musical expressionism. In contrast to the loose stanzas that make up Kokoschka's text, Hindemith used a more conventional musical structure, suggesting he had a proclivity for balance and order. Though through-composed, the score of *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* can, as Annegrit Laubenthal has demonstrated, be divided into four sections, like the movements of a symphony: the first section is in sonata form, followed by an adagio and a scherzo, with a rondo finale.[44]

In contrast to the free-form nature of Kokoschka's text, Blei's *Das Nusch-Nuschi* is structured around a sequence of distinct verses, which Hindemith was able to use as the basis for aria-like moments. The added recitatives make *Das Nusch-Nuschi* a parody of a number

[42] Oskar Kokoschka, 'Murderer Hope of Womankind', trans. J. M. Ritchie, in *Seven Expressionist Plays: Kokoschka to Barlach*, trans. Ritchie and H. F. Garten (London: Calder and Boyas, 1968), 28.
[43] Nicholls, *Modernisms*, 146.
[44] Laubenthal, *Paul Hindemiths Einakter-Triptychon*, 55.

opera.[45] In the opera, Tum-Tum, a servant of Lord Zatwai, has been ordered to bring his master a wife of Kaiser Mung Tha Bÿa. Each of the Kaiser's four wives, however, is willing to abandon their husband for Zatwai, who apparently has communicated with each through their bedroom windows. Hindemith set this section as an aria with variations, which begins as a parody of George Bizet's *Carmen* (1875).[46] The wives take it in turns across the four variations to fantasise about how Zatwai had seduced her and how she longs to be with him (e.g., the second wife: 'He will be my pleasure for the whole night' [Er wird mir eine Freude sein die ganze Nacht]). The orthodox compositional structure strikingly contrasts with the wives' unfettered sexual appetites, who are seemingly oblivious to the potential ramifications of their actions.

Worried at the potential consequences of his actions should the Kaiser find out, Tum-Tum seeks out a new master who he can blame for what he has done. General Kyce Waing stumbles onto the stage intoxicated and is attacked by a Nusch-Nuschi ('Ow, ow! It's biting me in the backside' [Au, au! Es beißt mich in das Hinterteil!]). After falling on the creature, Kyce Waing unknowingly kills the Nusch-Nuschi under his own weight. Tum-Tum pretends to have saved Kyce Waing and is rewarded by being made the General's new servant. Tum-Tum then brings the Kaiser's wives to Zatwai, who leads them away one by one for a private dance. At this point of heightened sexual tension between Zatwai and the wives, Hindemith again resorts to more conventional musical modes, such as a fugato for the third dance, which continues variations on themes heard earlier in the opera. When the truth about the seduction of the Kaiser's wives comes to light, Tum-Tum explains that he was only following orders from his master. Kyce Waing is sentenced to be castrated, but when the executioner appears,

[45] Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 147.
[46] Ibid., 159.

he finds that his job has already been done (by the Nusch-Nuschi) and violent laughter erupts on stage.

Of the three operas, the juxtaposition between text and music is perhaps most apparent in Hindemith's final one-acter, *Sancta Susanna*. It tells the story of a young nun who succumbs to her erotic desires, thereby forfeiting her life within the church. Susanna is aroused by the scents of the church garden and the sexual activity of a young maid and her lover she observes there. These encounters lead her into an all-consuming frenzy of self-discovery that ends with her singing 'Ich bin schön' (I am beautiful) and ripping off her garments in an act of a defiance against the church. Hindemith marks this musically with a sudden crescendo to *ffff*, the loudest dynamic apart from the opera's end, with an upward leap of a fifth in Susanna's part.[47] She then tears the loincloth from the figure on the crucifix, singing, 'so helfe mir mein Heiland gegen den euren' (thus, my saviour helps me against yours). Here, a climactic C-major chord releases the harmonic tension, a point that also represents the release of Susanna's sexual tension. Hindemith's choice of a C-major chord, however, is striking, as the key is typically associated with purity or, as perhaps best exemplified in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the journey out of darkness into the light. Yet here this transformation comes at a point when Susanna has essentially forsaken her life of purity and her faith. From the viewpoint of the other nuns, she has fallen from light back into darkness; in her own mind, she has rid herself of the chains that bound her and is free to live her life on her own accord. In the final moments of the opera, Susanna is urged by the nuns to confess, but she refuses and is consequently immured within the church walls. Even as the other nuns scream 'Satana', Susanna stands her ground, choosing to stick with her decisions and, thus, becoming a symbol of self-liberation.

[47] Paul Hindemith, *Sancta Susanna: Oper in einem Akt, opus 21*, Klavierauszug von Hermann Uhticke (London: Schott & Co. Ltd., 1949), 30.

Figure 1: Advertisement for Hindemith's triptych (original source unknown). Hindemith Institut, Frankfurt am Main.

Regarding Hindemith's music, critics were keen to comment on the ways in which its reliance on traditional forms contrasted with the more hysterical, erotic themes of the texts. Among other critics, Theodor Adorno spoke of Hindemith's use of 'Urzellen'—short musical

motifs that form the basis of the score and that are continually developed throughout—and their effectiveness, particularly in *Sancta Susanna*, in the creation of an absolute, symphonic work.[48] Adorno wrote of the 'symphonisation of the opera', with each work being its own 'grand musical form' in which these Urzellen had no psychological meaning.[49] Each of the individual scores could be in fact broken down into traditional forms: as mentioned above, *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* is a four-movement symphony and *Das Nusch-Nuschi* has recitative and arias, while the whole of *Sancta Susanna* is a theme and variations based on the opera's opening flute motif. In Frankfurt there was also an attempt to frame each opera as an individual movement of a larger musical work. The critic signed P. B. writing for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* described Hindemith's triptych as 'a three-movement work for orchestra, voices and scene'.[50] In spite of the Oper's decision not to run the works chronologically, but rather *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, *Sancta Susanna* and then *Das Nusch-Nuschi* (see Figure 1), the critic went on to describe the triptych as a 'stage symphony'; *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* was the first Allegro movement, *Das Nusch-Nuschi* combined the two middle movements, a scherzando and intermezzo, while *Sancta Susanna* functioned as a brilliant finale. P. B. also offered an alternative framing according to voice: *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* a duet between man and woman, *Das Nusch-Nuschi* an ensemble piece and *Sancta Susanna* a monodrama.[51]

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[48] 'In „Sancta Susanna" finden sich die letzten Konsequenzen dieser Formungsweise gezogen. Denn hier wird aus einem Thema alles, was musikalisch überhaupt geschieht, herausentwickelt; einem Thema, dessen emotionale Kraft nicht einem Individuum, nicht einer Stimmung, sondern schlechthin dem irrationalen Grundgeschehen dieser Oper gilt. Es ist bewundernswert, wie Hindemith hier, in dem reifsten seiner Bühnenwerke, zugleich thematisches Drängen des Orchesterstroms und weitbogige Gesangsmelodien, Schwüle der Frühlingsnacht und Wucht der Katastrophe aus dieser einen, zu sinnlich-plastischer Konkretheit geronnenen Grundkraft gewimmt, die ihm unter den Händen zum Symbol des Triebhaften überhaupt geriet'. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Ad vocem Hindemith', in *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 17* (Frankfurt am Main; Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 215.

[49] 'Eine Symphonisierung der Oper setzt ein, anders jedoch als die Wagnerische; die Oper wird als große musikalische Form konzipiert. Die psychologische Leitmotivik verschwindet; dafür entwickelt sich in dem angedeuteten triebmäßigen Sinn aus thematischen Urzellen der ganze Bau'. Ibid., 215.

[50] P. B. 'Paul Hindemith: „Drei Einakter"'.

[51] 'Diese Nötigung führt nun den Suchenden in eine bestimmte Richtung. Es braust und brandet in ihm, es kichert, neckt und tanzt, es schreit in glühender Ekstase. Diese drängende Unruhe, dieser bald ins Groteske, bald ins schmeichelnd Lyrische gewandte Übermut, diese von innen nach außen schlagende, das eigene Selbst

Even with these closed forms, Otte felt that Hindemith's music still conveyed unfettered female sexuality: 'It remains astonishing how the composer, chasing after the problem of the closed form, crafts stretched melody, spring-night mugginess and the onset of the catastrophe into a unified stream from which those sensual drives flow, that turn the reprehensible, perverse female figure into a meaningful symbol'.[52] Similarly, following the Frankfurt performance, an anonymous critic for *Das Mittagsblatt* felt the dichotomy between the music and the subject matter was of no great concern; in fact, they felt the objectiveness of Hindemith's music brought clarity to the subject matter.[53]

Of course, there were those who were disappointed with Hindemith's music and felt the use of traditional forms did not help convey the operas' subject matters. Schröter, for instance, though pleased that the music did not retain 'the foul smell of animal sensuality' of the texts, felt that this meant there was a lack of unity between what was seen and what was heard.[54] In the *Schwäbischer Merkur*, Oswald Kühn noted that while Hindemith succeeded in creating initially interesting atmospheres, these moments of excitement did not last long and

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verzehrende Flamme des Menschen—dies alles verbindet sich mit jenem in die Breite drängenden Gestaltungstrieb des Musikers. Es entsteht ein dreisätziges Werk für Orchester, Singstimmen und Szene. Kokoschkas „Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen" gibt die textliche Lösung für den ersten, chaotisch emporwühlenden, nach Bewußtheit ringenden Satz, Franz Bleis burleskes „Nusch-Nuschi", ein „Spiel für burmanische Marionetten" spannt den Rahmen für den parodisierenden Scherz, für den Tanz und für eine sehr zart und sein singende Lyrik August Stramms „Sancta Susanna" endlich bringt an das Ernsteste, an den Kern der Leidenschaft an die sich erfassende und im Brand vernichtende Natur. Man könnte auch sagen: eine Bühnensinfonie, deren zwei Mittelsätze: Scherzando und lyrisches Intermezzo im „Nusch-Nuschi" zusammengezogen, von dem aufbrausenden Allegro furioso des Kokoschkas-Stückes vorbereitet werden und in die verzehrende Steigerung des Susanna-Satzes sich entladen. Man könnte auch nach dem Stimmen gruppieren: Zwiegesang von Mann und Weib, bunt schillernde Zersplitterung in das mannigfaltige Erscheinungsspiel des Ensembles, Monodrama der einen Stimme, aus der die Kreatur spricht'. Ibid.

[52] 'Es bleibt immerhin erstaunlich, wie der Komponist dem Problem der geschlossenen Form nacheilend, gedehnte Melodik, Schwüle der Frühlingsnacht und den Eintritt der Katastrophe, zu einem einheitlichen Gusse formt, dem jene sinnlichen Triebe entströmen, die der verwerflichen, perversen Frauengestalt zum zeichnenden Symbol werden'. Otte, 'Frankfurter Opernhaus'.

[53] 'Die Musik die (oft im Gegensatz zu den malerisch-symbolisch gefassten Regievorschriften) stets scharf sachlich bleibt, zwingt die szenisch Darstellung zu einem eindeutigen Realismus, der unmittelbares Klarheit schafft'. 'Zu Paul Hindemiths Opern', *Das Mittagsblatt*, 25 March 1922.

[54] 'Daß die Musik nicht so wie die Texte den üblen Geruch animalischer Sinnlichkeit hat, ist an sich ein Vorzug, der aber auch wieder die Einheit des künstlerischen Eindrucks des Ganzen zerstört'. Schröter, 'Württembergisches Landestheater'.

wearied the audience.[55] H. K. felt that after their reading of the texts and analysing the piano reduction, 'it was no surprise that the music only seldom deepened the effect, but in many cases, especially in the lyrical scenes, significantly weakened it'.[56] The cause of Hindemith's unconvincing music, in their eyes, lay firmly in the composer's choice of texts. Most detractors, however, took into account that Hindemith was still only in the early stages of his career and, if given a more appropriate set of libretti, would be able to produce something better.[57]

While some critics were not convinced about the large-scale structures of the music, they still readily praised Hindemith's use of instrumentation, orchestration and colour in creating effective music for these operas. At the premiere in Stuttgart, the critic W. N. wrote:

> This music is mainly of the most modern calibre. But the cacophony is not always necessarily meaningless, as if merely and exclusively cobbled together. When one hears the notes played on the piano, they seem atrocious and cannot be explained theoretically. One must hear them as colour-complexes in their orchestral context and you will soon notice how these expressive possibilities cannot be translated into actual sound in any other way. Or at least not in an equally sharply defined way.[58]

A year later in Frankfurt, an anonymous critic for the *Darmstädter Tageblatt* also wrote how in *Das Nusch-Nuschi* the music was 'congenial to the texts' and particularly modern: 'Of

[55] 'Seine Musik hat den einen Fehler: sie ermüdet zu leicht, hat nicht die Kraft, eine anfängliche interessierende Stimmung durchzuhalten und wird deshalb langweilig; wo es schön werden soll, wird es leicht banal'. Oswald Kühn, 'Württembergisches Landestheater: *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen—Das Nusch-Nuschi*. Musik von Paul Hindemith. Uraufführung am Samstag, 4 Juni', *Schwäbischer Merkur*, 5 June 1921.
[56] 'So war es nach Lektüre der Dichtung und Durchsicht des Klavierauszugs keine Überraschung, das die Musik die Wirkung nur selten vertiefte, vielfach aber, namentlich in allen lyrischen Szenen, bedeutend abschwächte'. H. K., 'Uraufführungen'.
[57] 'Auf jeden Fall ist Hindemith eine Hoffnung für die Zukunft. Mögen ihm gute Geister von literarischen Scherzen, wie sie Kokoschka und Blei bieten, fern halten und einem Dichter nahe bringen, der ihm mehr als vergängliche Kuriosa geben kann'. W. N., 'Württ. Landestheater: Opern-Uraufführung', *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, 6 June 1921.
[58] 'Diese Musik ist der Hauptsache nach modernsten Zuschnittes. Aber das Kakophonische ist hier nicht auch immer unbedingt ein Sinnloses, bloß und ausschließlich Zusammengeklaubtes. Hört man diese Klänge durch den starren Klavierton wiedergegeben, so wirken sie abscheulich und theoretische Erklärung kommt ihnen nicht immer nahe. So muss man sie als Farbenkomplexe in ihren Zusammenhängen im Orchester hören und wird da bald merken, daß sie immerhin Vertreter von Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten sind, die ohne sie nicht in die klangliche Tat umgesetzt werden können. Oder wenigstens nicht in gleich scharf bestimmter Weise'. Ibid.

course there was no trace of any melody; that would be a downright crime for a modern composer'.[59] They go on to comment on the cacophonic, chaotic nature of Hindemith's instrumentation, which encapsulates the chaos of the puppet game: 'A constant whirring of the violins in the highest harmonics, in addition to ascending and descending chromatic woodwind figures, harp glissandi, celeste strumming, drum rattle, xylophone clattering, gruesome bass tubas and yawning in between'.[60] For this critic, the absence of any kind of order in Hindemith's approach to orchestration and writing is what made his music modern. On the cacophonic nature of the orchestra, particularly the emphasis on colour in tandem with the erotic and the perverse female figure, one thinks of other contemporary operas. Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra* might be important precursors here. At the end of *Salome*, for example, after the titular character has kissed the decapitated head of John the Baptist, a wall of sound featuring violent screeching woodwinds and strings arises that reflects Salome's hysteria.

Protests, Scandals, Crises

Negative reactions to Hindemith's triptych in the press, both in Stuttgart and Frankfurt, were largely fuelled by the erotic and grotesque themes of the operas' texts. In Stuttgart, Holl argued that the three texts by Kokoschka, Blei and Stramm were only concerned with the erotic and had nothing to do with art.[61] Some critics commented on how tiresome, to quote Otte again, 'the perverse female figure' was. In his review of Erna Ellmenreich's performance as the Woman in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, Kühn wrote: 'she exhausted

[59] 'Die Musik Paul Hindemiths ist den Texten kongenial. Von irgendwelcher Melodie natürlich keine Spur; das wäre ja geradezu ein Verbrechen für einen modernen Komponisten'. 'Frankfurter Theaterbrief', *Darmstädter Tagblatt*, no. 88, 29 March 1922.
[60] 'Ein fortwährendes Schwirren der Geigen in den höchsten Flageolettönen, dazu auf- und absteigende chromatische Holzbläserfiguren, Harfenglissandi, Celestageklimper, Trommelgerassel, Xylophongeklopfe, grausige Baßtuben und dazwischen gähnende Leere: ein Chaos von Tönen'. Ibid.
[61] 'Die Vorbemerkung ist angebracht, weil Hindemiths Einaktern Texte zugrund liegen, die als solche unter den Begriff jenes nur-erotischen Theaters fallen, das mit Kunst eigentlich nichts zu tun hat'. Holl, 'Paul Hindemith: Zwei Opern-Einakter'.

her task, although kicking her legs didn't quite seem in style; perhaps it was too expressionistic'.[62] Similarly, Eisenmann wrote how in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, 'these constantly applied movements of limbs and contortions, this whirling and gyro-like turning of the body' were becoming exhausted.[63] When it came to *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, he felt that the opera stage was completely unsuitable for a performance of this work, which would have been more appropriate as a private, special performance for men.[64] The scene where Zatwai takes a turn with each of the wives was seen by Holl to have been particularly offensive, more so still as it is accompanied by the horny screeches of two monkeys.[65] Amidst all this despise towards the texts, critics greatly regretted that Hindemith had turned to such pieces for his first attempts at opera. Hindemith's misjudgement did not dampen their spirits and hope for the young composer though. Eisenmann wrote: 'It is greatly wished that the Nusch-Nuschi who crawled out of the mud would return to its muddy yellow water. The creature was smothered. A composer like Hindemith will easily find another piece that appeals to him and from which he can gain something worthwhile'.[66]

As conservative critics strongly objected to the erotic elements of Hindemith's operas, those who were supportive of the triptych came to Hindemith's defence. Gustav Stotz,

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[62] 'Erna Ellmenreich gab 'die Frau'; sie erschöpfte ihre Aufgabe, nur das Strampeln mit Beinen schien uns nicht ganz stilgemäß; vielleicht war es auch zu expressionistisch'. Kühn, 'Württembergisches Landestheater'.
[63] 'Aber die neuen Darstellungsmittel scheinen bald erschöpft zu sein. Diese stets angewandten Gliederbewegungen oder Verrenkungen, dieses Wirbeln kreiselartige Drehen der Körper hat man bald satt, man nimmt es als etwas Besonderes hin, übersetzt sich diese Sprache wieder ins Seelische zurück, so gut geht es, aber man bleibt im ganzen recht kühl dabei'. Eisenmann, 'Württ. Landestheater: Uraufführung'.
[64] 'Das andere Stück: „Nusch-Nuschi" nennt sich und ist ein „Spiel für burmanische Marionetten". Daß das Obszöne guten Stoff für saftige Witze bietet, wissen wir längst; es ist aber ein Unterschied, ob man gelegentlich einmal an einer kräftig gewürzten Unterhaltung teilnimmt, oder ob man sich im Theater so etwas vorspielen läßt. Als Sondervorstellung für Erwachsene männlichen Geschlechts ginge es noch an, aber tief zu bedauern ist, daß ein öffentliches Theater sich mit höchstem Fleiße eines Stückes annimmt, dessen Pointe nichts anderes als eine Schweinigelei ist'. Ibid.
[65] 'Man befindet sich in exotischem Marionnettenland; da darf schon ein stärkerer Toback geraucht werden. Er wird aber selbst kräftigen Jungen gelegentlich zu stark. So in der Liebesszene in der Zatwai abwechselnd mit den vier Frauen hinter den Paravent verschwindet, während zwei dressierte Affen die unzweideutige Handlung mit geilem Gekreisch melodramatisch begleiten'. Holl, 'Paul Hindemith: Zwei Opern-Einakter'.
[66] 'Es ist sehr zu wünschen, daß das aus dem Schlamm hervorgekrochene Nusch-Nuschi wieder in sein gelbes Schmutzwasser zurückkehrt. Man erstickte das Geschöpf. Ein Komponist wie Hindemith wird leicht einen anderen Stoff finden, der ihm zusagt und dem er etwas abgewinnt'. Eisenmann, 'Württ. Landestheater: Uraufführung'.

managing director of the Württembergische Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Deutschen Werkbunds (Württemberg Working Society of the German Work Union), appears to have been responsible for initially requesting the performances of the triptych in Stuttgart. After the backlash, Stotz was allowed by the editor of the *Deutsches Volksblatt Stuttgart* to publish a statement in defence of his decision to support Hindemith's operas.[67] According to Stotz, prior to the premiere he had felt no need to offer any warning about the operas' content. It did not seem to him to be any more offensive than those works which were already being performed on a daily basis throughout Germany. In Stotz's eyes, the problems only began when the press started publishing their reviews.

Stotz's published defence was accompanied by a statement from the editor of the *Deutsches Volksblatt Stuttgart* on 15 June, who was in fact hostile to the two operas. The editor wanted to clarify their opposing stance and not associate themselves or the newspaper with Stotz's views:

> Although we reproduce the statement word-for-word in accordance with the request, we would like to expressly state that from the point of view we have already taken, we have no reason to concede and shall continue to believe that such world premieres are the opposite of a 'progressive and lively further development of Stuttgart's artistic life'. Nor can we call the premiere a 'great success'. To hold the theatre critics responsible for the 'scandal' is, in our opinion, to turn things on its head.[68]

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[67] 'Die beiden Stücke waren nur mir bekannt. Ich hatte keinerlei Veranlassung, meinen Vorstand mit deren Inhalt bekannt zu machen, da mir das Stoffliche des ersten Stückes überhaupt nicht anstößig und das des zweiten Stückes nicht anstößiger schien als vieles, was fast täglich und ohne Protest über die deutschen Bühnen geht. Entscheidend für mich war die künstlerische Gestaltung, für deren musikalischen Wert mir Generalmusikdirektor Busch, für deren szenischen Wert mir Oskar Schlemmer bürgte. Diese Auffassung wurde durch den großen Erfolg, den die beiden Stücke bei der Uraufführung vor einem unbefangenen Publikum hatten, bestätigt. Der Skandal setzte erst ein, als die Besprechungen erschienen waren, deren üble Folgen für eine fortschrittliche und lebendige Weiterentwicklung des Stuttgarter Kunstlebens sich schon bemerkbar machen und in ihren letzten Auswirkungen noch gar nicht abzusehen sind'. Gustav Stotz, 'Nochmals Werkbund und Landestheater', *Deutsches Volksblatt Stuttgart*, 15 June 1921.

[68] 'Anmerkung der Redaktion: Wir geben zwar dem Ersuchen gemäß die Erklärung wörtlich wieder, möchten aber ausdrücklich bemerken, daß wir von unserem bereits eingenommenen Standpunkt keine Veranlassung haben, abzugeben und auch weiterhin der Auffassung sind, daß derartige Uraufführungen das Gegenteil von einer „fortschrittlichen und lebendigen Weiterentwicklung des Stuttgarter Kunstlebens" bedeuten. Einen „großen Erfolg" vermögen wir die Uraufführung ebensowenig zu nennen. Die Theaterkritik für den „Skandal" haftbar machen wollen, heißt nach unserer Meinung die Dinge auf den Kopf stellen'. Ibid.

The *Deutsches Volksblatt* appears to have used Stotz's statement to their own advantage by framing itself as having taken the moral high ground. In allowing Stotz to have his statement published, the *Deutsches Volksblatt* showed they were accommodating to different viewpoints and against censorship. Publishing their own response, however, gave them an excuse to criticise the triptych as a great detriment to Stuttgart's cultural scene.

Stotz was not the only one to accuse the press of foul play. Eduard Reinacher—whose poems Hindemith would use later for the song cycle *Des Todes Tod* (1922)—had his own statement published in the *Süddeutsche Sonntags Zeitung*. In his entry, Reinacher argued that the backlash from the press led to the theatre Intendant Rehm, Busch and director Holl all unnecessarily handing in their resignations. He accused the press of being 'unobjective, tactless and irresponsible' and strongly felt his views 'must not be withheld from the public'.[69] In his statement, Reinacher also recounted how after the distribution of the texts in the weeks preceding the premiere, rumours had already begun to circulate that a scandal was to be expected and that the operas were to be scrutinised by the press. He went on to suggest that the press had also altered public opinion of the work between the first and second performances:

> On the contrary, the overwhelming applause at this public performance proved that the uneducated and unincited spectators had received what was on offer without any moral offence. It was only through the hustle and bustle of the music critics that those instincts were let loose, which were crude enough after the second performance.[70]

[69] 'Nachdem die Stuttgarter Musikkritik durch ihr unsachliches, taktloses und verantwortungsloses Vorgehen in der Hindemithsache erreicht hat, daß Intendant Rehm, Generalmusikdirektor Busch und Oberspielleiter Holl um ihren Abschied nachgesucht haben, dürfen die folgenden Feststellungen der Oeffentlichkeit nicht vorenthalten werden'. Eduard Reinacher, 'Wie ein Skandal fabrizier wird', *Süddeutsche Sonntags Zeitung*, 19 June 1921.
[70] 'Vielmehr hat der überwältigende Beifall in dieser öffentlichen Vorstellung bewiesen, daß die unverbildeten und unverhetzten Zuschauer das Gebotene ohne moralischen Anstoß aufgenommen hatten. Erst durch das Trieben der Musikkritik wurden jene Instinkte losgelassen, die sich nach der zweiten Aufführung roh genug betätigten'. Ibid.

Contrary to Reinacher, another critic noted that after the second performance, *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, which many singled out as the most outrageous, was in fact received with no problem from the audience and that such a scandal was in fact more of a harmless demonstration.[71] Nevertheless, the damage had already been done. Those defending the works lamented how, faced with such a fantastic opportunity, Hindemith—one of Germany's up-and-coming composers—had been met ungratefully with 'abuse, threat and moral stench'.[72] The damage was such that the scandal soon turned into a more general crisis of the Landestheater. The Ministry of Culture banned several plays intended for production at the theatre, including Hermann Essig's *Der Kuhhandel*. Essig's play was seen by some to have included a caricature of a priest, meaning it too was banned and replaced by August von Kotzebue's *Die deutschen Kleinstädter* (1802), a more traditional *Lustspiel*.[73]

At the premiere of the full triptych in Frankfurt just eight months later, the Stuttgart scandal was still fresh in people's minds and created a sense of fear as to whether another crisis was about to unfold. In Frankfurt, the Catholic Bühnenvolksbund reacted particularly strongly to the triptych. The Bühnenvolksbund formed in 1919 as a reactionary group to a perceived increase in immoral and atheist themes on the German stage and advocated for more performances of Christian works.[74] Hindemith's erotic operas, therefore, drew a particularly negative response from the Bühnenvolksbund, especially the overt blasphemy in Hindemith's new work, *Sancta Susanna*. After the premiere of Hindemith's triptych, they called for a total ban on future performances, which they believed were 'likely to offend the religious and moral feelings of the majority of the Frankfurt population, especially during

[71] 'Ein richtiger Skandal wurde es nicht, es blieb bei einem harmlosen Demonstratiönchen'. 'Theater und Konzert', *Schwäbische Tageblatt*, 8 June 1921.
[72] 'Die beteiligten Kräfte bringen eine Leistung von hoher Schönheit und reifer Geschlossenheit zu Stande. Und der Dank ist: Schimpf, Drohung, Moralingestank'. 'Der Fall Hindemith', *Sonntagszeitung*, no. 21 (1924).
[73] 'Die Leitung des Landestheaters und die Erklärung des Werkbundes', *Neues Tagblatt*, 12 June 1921.
[74] George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), 169. For more on the Catholic Bühnenvolksbund, see Karl Gerst Wilhelm, *Wille und Werke. Ein Handbuch des Bühnenvolksbundes* (Berlin: Bühnenvolksbund Verlag, 1928).

Lent'.[75] Their protest was published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 1 April 1922 and stated further that:

> [*Das*] *Nusch-Nuschi* is an unimaginative, vulgar, dirty joke and *Sancta Susanna* is an outrageous violation of Christian worship. . . . Against such phenomena of decline, a stage of the rank and resources of the Oper Frankfurt has double the duty to eradicate the pathological and destructive, and to promote and maintain what is healthy and capable of development. . . . For all that Mr. Hindemith is a talented composer, the responsible directors of our theatre must tell him that it is wrong to waste his talent on obscene subject matters.[76]

Similarly to Stotz's statement in the *Deutsches Volksblatt Stuttgart*, the editorial board of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* responded by making it clear that it did not agree with the group's stance on the matter. In a response that nearly matched the original protest in length, the newspaper argued that the Bühnenvolksbund's reasoning was flawed as it equated art with morality, with the paper further emphasising that it opposed censorship. The editors concluded: 'there is no obligation to visit the theatre to see unpopular pieces, but there is so-called freedom of art'.[77] As with the *Deutsches Volksblatt Stuttgart*, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* used their response to take the moral high ground—this being a tactic which appears to have been used by both the left and the right.

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[75] 'Im Auftrage des Ortsausschusses Frankfurt a. M. des Bühnenvolksbundes, dem sämtliche christliche Organisationen unserer Stadt mit rund 60,000 Mitgliedern angeschlossen sind, beehren wir uns mitzuteilen, daß sich der Ortsausschutz des B. B. B. gezwungen sieht, gegen die Aufführung der drei Opern-Einakter von Hindemith im städtischen Opernhaus Protest einzulegen und zu verlangen, diese Werke, die im höchsten Masse geeignet sind, das religiöse und sittliche Empfinden der Mehrheit der Frankfurter Bevölkerung, zumal in der Fastenzeit auf das gröblichste zu verletzen, durch Beschluß des Aussichtsrates unverzüglich vom Spielplan abgesetzt werden'. Signed by Hürten Gerst, the Bühnenvolksbund's protest was printed in full as 'Ein Übergriff des Bühnenvolksbundes' in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 1 April 1922.

[76] 'aber alle Regiemilderungen vermögen das Unmögliche der Texte nicht zu verwischen, vermögen nicht zu ändern, daß 'Nusch-Nuschi' eine geistlose ordinäre Zote und 'Sancta Susanna' eine unerhörte Schändung christlicher Gottesverehrung ist. . . . . Gegenüber solchen Niedergangserscheinungen hat eine Bühnen vom Range und den Mitteln des Frankfurter Opernhauses die doppelte Pflicht, das Krankhafte, Zerstörende auszumerzen und das Gesunde, Entwicklungsfähige zu fördern und zu pflegen. . . . Ist Herr Hindemith ein begabter Komponist, dann muss ihm von den verantwortlichen Leitern unserer Theater gesagt werden, daß es ein Unrecht ist, seine Begabung an obszöne Stoffe zu verschwenden'. Ibid.

[77] 'Es besteht kein Zwang zum Theaterbesuch missliebiger Stücke; es besteht aber eine sogenannte Freiheit der Kunst'. Ibid.

The ethics of art was the topic of another article, also published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 2 May 1922 titled 'Kunst und Sittlichkeit' (Art and Morality). The author reported on a recent event held at the Paulskirche where, instigated by the Interkonfessioneller Verein zur Hebung der Sittlichkeit (Interdenominational Association for the Improvement of Morality), a Professor Brunner spoke about the moral demands of art. Brunner was reported to have argued that in the present day Germany was experiencing a broad decline, or decay, or art, which was reflected by an even broader deterioration of society in the wake of an increase of pornography, breakdowns of marriages and attacks on religion.[78] The reporter for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, though, once again clearly distanced themselves from the ideas discussed at the meeting, criticising the Bühnenvolksbund's one-sidedness.[79]

As hinted at in 'Kunst und Sittlichkeit', the triptych was also caught up in a more general theatre crisis that was plaguing Germany at the time, with the erotic being a key source of contention. This broader decadence is one explanation as to why conservative critics in Stuttgart so fiercely attacked the pieces, with the aim of removing those in charge of the Landestheater. One went so far as to suggest that there was an agenda to get rid of the theatre's administration team and that the attack on the erotic was just an excuse to achieve this.[80] Given that Rehm had already received an offer to move to Basel, protesters may also have sought to use this to their advantage and speed up the process of removing Rehm. Germany's theatre crisis, though, was already evident four years before the Stuttgart scandal

[78] 'Prof. Brunner geißelte sie als eine Kunst des Verfalls, der es an jeglicher Ehrfurcht fehle.… Im weiteren Verlauf seiner Ausführungen übte der Redner Kritik an allen möglichen kulturellen Niedergangs-Erscheinungen. Wie er auf die Zunahme pornographischen Schmutzes hinwies, so betonte er die Entwertung der Liebe, Ehe und Freundschaft und die Beleidigung religiösen Empfindens durch Werke der Kunst, nicht zuletzt heftige Angriffe gegen die Verseuchung zumal des Berliner Theaterlebens richtend'. 'Kunst und Sittlichkeit', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 2 May 1922.
[79] 'Es handelt sich vor allem um die Tatsache, dass eine einseitig gerichtete Organisation wie der Bühnenvolksbund plötzlich öffentlich als Diktator auftritt mit einer Anzahl von Mitgliedern, die in seinem Verhältnis zur Gesamtzahl der Theaterbesucher Frankfurts steht'. Ibid.
[80] 'Und man ist in der Tat nicht des Gefühls frei geworden, daß die Empörung über die Erotik des Textes Kokoschkas und Bleis von der Absicht erhitzt wurde, die Leitung des Landestheaters zum Abzug zu treiben'. 'Stuttgarter „Theaterskandal"', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 13 June 1921.

and was laid bare after a performance of Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Hiob* (1917) at the Frankfurt Neues Theater on 11 April 1920. This event made so much of an impression that in their protest published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the Bühnenvolksbund quoted from a review of those performances titled 'Erotisches Theater' (Erotic Theatre) by the critic and writer Bernhard Diebold, which had also been published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*:[81] 'Continue on this path and Germany will be lost culturally as well'.[82] In his full review, Diebold made it clear that he did not see in Kokoschka's works the future of German theatre:

> Under no circumstances do I want to be seen as someone who will be praised in a hundred years for having welcomed the poetic light of Kokoschka's poetry as heralding a rediscovered paradise in such culturally dark times. No, I am ashamed that such an aberration of 'culture', […] that such shit art would find an enthusiastic and loud welcome from (what appeared to be) the larger part of the audience… I even saw a critic applauding.[83]

Diebold's review suggests that this crisis within German theatre was particularly pressing. It was not only a crisis in the choice of repertoire staged, but also of audiences and critics who, according to Diebold, were being alienated into enjoying these vulgar works. The same year as the Stuttgart performance, Diebold had also published his book *Anarchie im Drama*. The fact that Hindemith had set *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, of all pieces, to music may also have further aggravated critics, given Diebold's earlier comments on the play itself.

Hindemith's triptych was also caught up in the broader crisis of expressionism. Two essays—Wilhelm Hausenstein's 'Art of this Moment' (1919) and Worringer's *Current*

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[81] See also Bernhard Diebold, *Anarchie im Drama* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1921).
[82] 'Weiter auf diesem Wege und Deutschland ist auch kulturell verloren'. 'Ein Übergriff des Bühnenvolksbundes'.
[83] 'Unter keinen Umständen will ich zu denen gehören, die man in hundert Jahren dafür rühmen wird, daß sie in einer Zeit dunkelster Unkultur die Dichterleuchte Kokoschkas als Ahnung des wiedergefundenen Paradieses begrüßt hätten. Nein, ich schäme mich vor solcher Verirrung der 'Kultur'. . . . ich schäme mich, daß solche Afterkunst bei der (anscheinend) größeren Hälfte des Theaterpublikums ein laut klatschendes 'Herzlichen willkommen' fand. . . . Ich sah auch einen Kritiker, der klatschte'. Bernhard Diebold, 'Erotisches Theater', *Frankfurter Zeitung* (1920).

Questions on Art (1920) (in which Worringer announced expressionism's crisis)—help shed light on this apparent crisis, as both authors express their concerns for the future of expressionism.[84] To understand their concerns, though, we need to begin with what expressionism meant to these art critics. For Hausenstein, expressionism was fundamentally overambitious and thus a rather unfathomable ideal: 'Expressionism tested the saying *qui trop embrasse mal étreint* (his reach exceeds his grasp). It embraced the universe. It wanted to embrace God and the heavens. It wanted more than it could handle'.[85] The inability to reach its extravagant conceptualisations, however, was not necessarily a problem; for Hausenstein, expressionism was in the end a glorified tragedy.

In his 1911 article 'The Historical Development of Modern Art',[86] Worringer had associated expressionism with the primitivism of the Parisian Synthesists and the expressionists. He made it clear that a primitivist approach did not equate with 'lack of skill', but was a 'different conception of artistic purpose':[87]

> We only vaguely sense that the grotesque distortion and compelling simplification of this primitive art […] emanate from a higher level of tension in the will to artistic expression, and we learn to recognize that the difference between our artistic achievement and the primitive is not one of degree, but of kind. A difference in kind that consists in reckoning art's achievements not in today's terms, namely in the release of a certain fine quality of feeling—sensual or spiritual, but in the release of a fundamental sense of the inevitable. An affirmation of the ambiguity of phenomena: in this lay the meaning, in this lay the essence, the mystique of this art…[88]

Thus, primitivist and expressionist art connected humanity with a higher order, something that correlates with the great strivings Hausenstein mentions in his thesis. Worringer argued

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[84] 'Art of this Moment' was originally published as 'Die Kunst in diesem Augenblick' in *Der neue Merker* 3, *Sonderheft* 2. English translations of excerpts of this article and of *Current Questions on Art* can be found in Long's *German Expressionism*, 280–83 and 284–87 respectively.
[85] Wilhelm Hausenstein, 'Art of this Moment', quoted in ibid., 281.
[86] 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' was published as 'Entwicklungsgeschichtliches zur modernsten Kunst', in *Im Kampf um die Kunst: Die Antwort auf den „Protest deutscher Künstler"* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1911), 92–99. The English translation can be found in Long, *German Expressionism*, 9–13.
[87] Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', quoted in ibid., 11.
[88] Quoted in ibid., 11.

that expressionism embodied the hope that art would 'affect us again'[89] by freeing oneself from rationalisation.

Nine years later, in *Current Questions on Art*, Worringer worried that expressionism had lost its original spiritual conception and with it, its greater mission of reigniting German art. One of the key concerns, shared with Hausenstein, was that expressionism had been exploited by those who did not understand its spiritual context, and so had subsequently turned it into superficial display. Hausenstein took issue with the way expressionism had 'settled comfortably into a mannerism of too many arriving too late'.[90] Aesthetics were prioritised over emotion, both in the visual arts and beyond, resulting in a 'great mass of mediocre expressionism'.[91] He even advocated that those responsible for this state of things should 'have their heads bashed in', for exploiting what was rightly his—and other expressionists'—catastrophe to exploit.[92] Worringer too was concerned that expressionism had lost its depth of meaning: 'the space surrounding [expressionism] has become empty and dried out, and no longer offers any nutritive power'.[93] Thus, it was not so much a complete eradication of the movement Hausenstein and Worringer were after. What we find instead is an outcry at its lack of integrity.

With Worringer's announcement of the crisis of expressionism just a year earlier, it seems strange that it was not explicitly identified as a cause of the protests and scandals that arose in Stuttgart and Frankfurt following performances of Hindemith's triptych. A closer analysis of Hausenstein and Worringer's concerns, though—that expressionism had become more of a buzzword with no fixed meaning—provides one explanation as to why the Bühnenvolksbund and Diebold went straight on the attack of the erotic. In the broader

[89] Quoted in ibid., 11.
[90] Hausenstein, 'Art of this Moment', quoted in ibid., 282.
[91] Quoted in ibid., 282.
[92] Quoted in ibid., 282.
[93] Hausenstein, 'Art of this Moment', quoted in ibid., 285.

cultural discourse over the crisis of German theatre, references to expressionism are notably absent. The triptych's reception shows that in the minds of the critics, expressionism and eroticism were to some extent interchangeable. Bogen noted that the triptych's barbaric acts were affiliated with expressionism and made the argument that it was a catchword for immorality. The 'stench of expressionism' was synonymous with 'incomprehensibility, Bohemianism, immorality and, similarly, wickedness'.[94] It remains difficult, therefore, to say for certain if critics' arguments were simply a straightforward reaction to the operas' erotic content or, whether under this pretence, they were fervent attacks on expressionism. This hesitancy towards expressionism is also evident in discussions of the music, as critics debated whether or not Hindemith's music was an example of musical expressionism. Kühn called the idea of musical expressionism a *contradictio in adjecto*; he asked, 'is not all art expressionistic and impressionistic in nature' and claimed that the music called expressionistic should more accurately be described as barbaric.[95] Having become a mere catchword, expressionism by then lacked specificity to drive these protests forward.

Expressionism in Frankfurt

Hausenstein and Worringer both note with dismay that while the original concept of expressionism had turned into more of a buzzword, it continued to live on through its commodification, with their attacks directed at those responsible for this transformation. Yet this very commodification, and with it its superficiality, helped to sustain the movement in

[94] 'Die Wahl solcher Stücke fetzt innere Festigkeit der Verantwortlichen voraus, die sich bewusst sein müssen, daß gewisse Zeitgenossen sich brüskiert fühlen, wenn der künstlerischen Kostprobe der Geruch des 'Expressionismus' anhaftet, was für diese Art Genießer ungefähr gleichbedeutend mit Unverständlichkeit, Bohemetum, Unsittlichkeit und ähnlicher Verruchtheit ist'. Bogen, 'Frankfurter Opernhaus'.
[95] 'Was 'expressionistisch' sein soll, ist dagegen in Wahrheit 'barbarisch'; expressionistische Musik, wie sie sich die Vertreter dieser Richtung (besser Schlagwortes) offenbar denken, ist eine contradictio in adjecto. Ist denn überhaupt nicht jede Kunst expressionistisch und impressionistisch? Auf Augenblicke läßt sich im Musikdrama solche Expression denken, z. B. in der Baßstelle der 'Salome', während der Enthauptung. Auf die Dauer wäre sie Unsinn. Und Hindemith schreibt auch tatsächlich nicht 'expressionistisch''. Kühn, 'Württembergisches Landestheater'.

the early years of the German Republic. This is particularly evident in Frankfurt, where a local network had created a fertile environment for expressionist activity at the city's theatres, which regularly staged expressionist theatre pieces, ahead of the performance of Hindemith's triptych in 1922.

The Frankfurt cultural scene, nevertheless, was not spared attacks from art critics who sought to spread the narrative of expressionism's irrelevancy. In a 1918 letter to the publisher Reinhard Piper, Max Beckmann, who had previously described the city and specifically the *Frankfurter Zeitung* as a 'stronghold of expressionism' (evident, as we have just seen, with the newspaper's support of the triptych), aired his growing frustration and negative attitude, writing that 'the whole Expressionist business is really nothing but a decorative literary one, which has nothing to do with a vital feeling for art'.[96] Beckmann was overjoyed when Worringer announced expressionism's 'death' in Frankfurt later that year.[97] But Beckmann's statement reflected primarily his stance toward the visual arts, and expressionist activity continued to thrive in other areas.

The Frankfurt performance of Hindemith's triptych was part of a variety of expressionist activities centred around the city's theatrical institutions, which Günter Rühle collectively first termed 'Frankfurt expressionism'.[98] There is a consensus in the secondary

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[96] Beckmann to Reinhard Piper, 18 February 1818, quoted in Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918–1924* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 130. The translation is by Crockett and Susan Babilon.

[97] Barbara Copeland Buenger, review of Neil H. Donahue, ed., *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (1995), *Monatshefte* 90, no. 1 (1998): 116–118 (118). Beckmann went on to be leading proponent of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the 1920s. His 'Creative Credo' (1920) touches upon his turn from expressionism to *Neue Sachlichkeit*: 'We hope we have gotten rid of a lot of what was there before. Emerging from a thoughtless imitation of the visible, from a feeble, archaic deterioration into empty decoration, and from a false and sentimental, tumorous mysticism, we are hopefully arriving at *transcendental objectivity*'. Beckmann, 'Creative Credo', in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 489

[98] Günther Rühle, *Theater für die Republik* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1967), 19. See also Rühle, 'Der Frankfurter Expressionismus oder: Die Provinz zeigte Berlin, was sie kann', in Barbara Schneider-Kampf, Klaus G. Saur and Peter-Klaus Schuster, eds, *Wissenschaft und Kultur in Bibliotheken, Museen und Archiven*. Munich: K. G. Saur, 2005, 443–456. Stephen Hinton discusses Hindemith's 'allegiance' to Frankfurt expressionism in 'Defining Musical Expressionism: Schoenberg and others', in Shulamith Behr, David Fanning, and Douglas Jarman, eds., *Expressionism Reassessed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 128.

literature that the beginning of Frankfurt expressionism is marked by the premiere of Georg Kaiser's *Die Bürger von Calais*, which took place at Frankfurt's Neues Theater on 27 January 1917, and lasted until around 1922.[99] The notion of a 'Frankfurt expressionism' needs some clarification as it implies a sub-movement or local style of expressionism exclusive to the city. Yet, many of the works performed here during this time dealt with a wide range of topics and showed a variety of influences, and none have exclusive ties to the city or the period in question. In addition, many of the plays were either written before 1917 or initially produced elsewhere: Kaiser wrote *Die Bürger von Calais*, for example, between 1912 and 1913, and Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* was first produced in Vienna in 1909. Furthermore, most of the playwrights had no significant connections to the city.

Frankfurt expressionism does not simply refer to a profusion of productions of expressionist plays in Frankfurt, but rather, as Stephen Hinton sees it, to a broader cultural framework in which the triptych, among other works, was created.[100] Rather than looking to the works for answers, I too emphasise the importance of networks of individuals and institutions who endorsed and promoted, discussed and critiqued, expressionism after the war; these were the targets of Hausenstein's and Worringer's attacks. That is, these were attacks on expressionism *in* Frankfurt.[101] The members of this network were not exclusively based in Frankfurt and their influence reached beyond the city. In Frankfurt, however, the network functioned as a catalyst that brought expressionist works to the city's theatres in the

[99] See, for example, ibid., 129n29; Ernst Schürer, 'Introduction', in *German Expressionist Plays: Gottfried Benn, Georg Kaiser, Ernst Toller, and Others*, ed. Schürer (New York: Continuum, 1997), xv; and Renate Benson, *German Expressionist Drama: Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 97.
[100] 'Der Frankfurter Expressionismus, der kulturelle Rahmen, in dem die drei Einakter Hindemith entstanden, war ein öffentlich gewordener Expressionismus. So hat Hindemith selbst den Expressionismus eher ‚versachlicht' rezipiert, nicht von innen heraus'. Hinton, 'Expressionismus beim jungen Hindemith', *Hindemith-Jahrbuch* 16 (1987): 18–31 (27).
[101] Similarly, in her attempt to 'provincialise Italian modernism, the avant-garde and opera culture' in post-war Venice, Harriet Boyd-Bennett put forward the idea of 'Opera *in* Venice, rather than *Venetian* Opera'. Boyd-Bennett, *Opera in Postwar Venice: Cultural Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3.

late 1910s and early 1920s.[102] Though probably not motivated by an explicit agenda, the regular staging of plays by Kaiser and others made the aesthetic of expressionist theatre a vibrant aspect of post-war Frankfurt culture.

This cultural framework provides much of the backdrop for Bork's research into the triptych.[103] Unlike Dresden, which had the Expressionistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft, or Düsseldorf, which had the Junges Rheinland, there were no comparable institutions in Frankfurt.[104] Expressionism in Frankfurt instead centred around several private circles of artists—in many of which Hindemith was involved—who met in more informal spaces. In addition to the Schopenhauerhaus, meetings would take place in photographers Nini and Carry Hess's studio and writer Peter Zingler's *Kabinett*. Those in attendance included playwright Paul Kornfeld, Diebold, set designer Ludwig Sievert, who had provided the deigns for the triptych's premiere in Frankfurt, and sculptor Benno Elkan.[105]

Two major theatrical institutions were also central to expressionism in Frankfurt. With its regular programming of expressionist plays, the Neues Theater was one of the main theatrical institutions of this network. From its foundation, the Neues Theater was privately owned, meaning it had greater artistic freedom to stage more new works. Officially opened on 11 September 1911 by Arthur Hellmer and Max Reimann, the social and economic conditions for its foundation were in place already at the turn of the century: between 1880 and 1912, Frankfurt's population increased from 70,000 to 420,000 inhabitants, and with an ever-growing middle class with money to spend on leisure, a new theatre had become economically viable.[106] New tram lines, a new main train station, and improvements to the

[102] For further information on expressionist activity in Frankfurt and Hindemith's associations with these circles, see Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 37–69.
[103] Bork's study is also notable for the way she examines Frankfurt expressionism as a specific style of staging at the city's theatres, see ibid., 20.
[104] Ibid., 47.
[105] Ibid., 49. See 47–69 for more on Hindemith's involvement in these groups.
[106] Thomas Siedhoff, *Das Neue Theater in Frankfurt am Main 1911–1935: Versuch der systematischen Würdigung eines Theaterbetriebs* (Frankfurt: Waldemar Kramer, 1985), 14–16.

road networks also made Frankfurt's theatres more accessible. In April 1910, Hellmer and Reimann published a brochure in local newspapers explaining their intents for Frankfurt's Neues Theater. They emphasised the economic viability of such a theatre and noted that they did not wish to compete with the city's other theatres, but wanted to offer additional sophisticated productions.[107]

Those in charge of the Neues Theater played a seminal role in bringing the plays of young expressionist dramatists to the stage. It was Hellmer more so than Reimann, though, who played a key role in branding the theatre as a sanctum for the German avant-garde. Frankfurt had less stringent rules of censorship than Berlin at the time, and Hellmer leapt at the opportunity to stage contemporary works: around 90 percent of the theatre's programmes were plays by living dramatists, with a staggering thirty-eight premieres on average each season.[108] Across a total of 24 seasons, the Neues Theater realised 913 new productions of 768 works.[109] Richard C. Figge notes how Hellmer '[seized] on [the] awakening interest in expressionism'.[110] Between 1917 and 1921, the theatre produced eleven more plays by Kaiser, including some of his most celebrated works: *Von morgens bis mitternachts* (1918), *Gas I* (1918) and *Gas II* (1919). The period between 1915 and 1921 also saw six productions of works by another early expressionist playwright, Frank Wedekind, including the famous *Erdgeist* (1915), *Frühlings Erwachen* (1918) and *Die Büsche der Pandora* (1920).[111] The productions frequently sold out, and Hellmer's programming proved to be both financially successful and appealing to Frankfurt's middle class who were frequently exposed to expressionist drama.

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[107] Ibid., 16.
[108] Richard C. Figge, review of Thomas Siedhoff, *Das Neue Theater in Frankfurt am Main 1911–1935: Versuch der systematischen Würdigung eines Theaterbetriebs*, *American Historical Review* 92, no. 2 (1987): 441 (441).
[109] Siedhoff, *Das Neue Theater in Frankfurt am Main 1911–1935*, 27.
[110] Figge, review of Thomas Siedhoff, *Das Neue Theater in Frankfurt am Main 1911–1935*, 441.
[111] For a full list of expressionist plays produced at the Neues Theater at the time, see Siedhoff, *Das Neue Theater in Frankfurt am Main 1911–1935*, 69.

The Oper was another institution which served as a hub for expressionist work in Frankfurt. This was due particularly to its director Carl Zeiß, who was appointed head of both the Schauspiel Haus and the Oper in 1917.[112] Prior to assuming this position, Zeiß was director of the Königliche Hofschauspiel in Dresden. Here, Zeiß had been in close contact with Kokoschka and the actor Heinrich George, who he brought to Frankfurt as a permanent member of the Schauspiel ensemble already in his first year. Zeiß also made sure to include Kokoschka's plays in the programmes. Importantly, and just as Hellmer did at the Neues Theater, he promoted contemporary works and was dedicated to a generation of young and upcoming artists that included Hindemith.

At the Oper, Zeiß worked closely with Ludwig Rottenberg, the house's Kapellmeister from 1892 to 1926.[113] Rottenberg's efforts ensured that the Oper became one of the leading institutions in Germany to promote new operas. During his tenure, he conducted several premieres of works by Schreker, including *Der ferne Klang* (1912), *Das Spielwerk und die Prinzessin* (1913), *Die Gezeichneten* (1918) and *Der Schatzgräber* (1920). He was also responsible for the German premiere of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* in 1922.

Zeiß and Rottenberg's openness toward new works thus paved the way for the first complete performance of the triptych at the Oper Frankfurt. The vibrant culture of expressionist theatre here can also help explain why the press supported Hindemith more in Frankfurt than they did in Stuttgart, as several critics remarked how the Oper Frankfurt had a duty to support one of its leading employees.[114] Expressionism remained a thriving force in the city, all throughout its transformation from an elusive idea to a superficial aesthetic.

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[112] Bork, *Im Zeichen des Expressionismus*, 42.
[113] Ibid., 43.
[114] 'Paul Hindemith erlebt diese Zeit mit unabhängigen Sinnen und faßt sein Erlebnis in eine uns neue, aber unmittelbar eindringliche Form von dramatischer Musik. Darum war es dem Frankfurter Opernhaus Pflicht, die Aufführung der drei zeitgeborenen Weltbilder zu wagen'. 'Zu Paul Hindemiths Opern', *Volksstimme*, 25 March 1922.

Hindemith was able to latch onto it and take full advantage of it for the triptych, suggesting that expressionism was far from dead.

A Watershed Moment

In the months leading up to the double-premiere of *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Das Nusch-Nuschi* in Stuttgart, rumours circulated throughout the city that Hindemith's one-act operas would bring something entirely new, 'up-to date' and of the 'latest style'.[115] When the event finally arrived, Schröter identified in these works what he saw to be a new, albeit reckless, operatic venture into expressionism:

> We now have neither the time nor the means for daring experiments, which to anyone who is reasonably familiar with the tasks and nature of the theatre might seem fruitless, nor the theatre audience with the necessary powers of judgment. This can only result in waste and confusion. And that happened at this premiere to a frightening degree. The experiment of transplanting the problematic idea of expressionism onto the still completely unprepared soil of our opera stages was undertaken with two small works that were not born from within this idea at all, but quite externally stuck to certain unexplained manifestations of this idea.[116]

Schröter's remarks suggest that Hindemith was exploring unchartered territory, that the triptych was perhaps the beginning of a new epoch in German opera. In several ways, though, the triptych was not especially radical or experimental. With Hindemith's decision to set three pre-existing plays to music, the triptych fell under the broader sub-genre of *Literaturoper*, which had been popular since the late nineteenth century. Moreover,

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[115] 'Seit zwei Monaten etwa geht ein Geraune durch die gute Stadt Stuttgart: wenn die beiden Opern von Hindemith gegeben werden, dann werdet ihr was erleben! So etwas war noch nicht da. Das ist ganz und gar „up to date", ist „latest style"'. W. N., 'Württ. Landestheater: Opern-Uraufführung'.

[116] 'Zu gewagten, jedem mit Aufgaben und Wesen des Theaters einigermaßen Vertrauten zwar schon als unfruchbar [*sic*] erscheinenden Experimenten haben wir jetzt weder Zeit und Mittel, noch das dafür erforderliche, in seiner Urteilskraft gefestigte Theaterpublikum. So kann dabei nur Vergeudung und Verwirrung herauskommen. Und das ist bei dieser Uraufführung in erschreckendem Maße geschehen. Das Experiment, die problematische Idee des Expressionismus auf den dafür noch ganz unvorbereiteten Boden unserer Opernbühnen zu verpflanzen, wurde mit zwei kleinen Werken unternommen, die gar nicht aus dem Innern dieser Idee geboren sind, sondern ganz äußerlich an gewissen ungeklärten Erscheinungsformen dieser Idee hängen geblieben sind'. Schröter, 'Württembergisches Landestheater'.

expressionist theatre was firmly established in Weimar Germany. It was hardly a new concept for critics and audiences.

The nature of the protests, scandals and crises surrounding the triptych, both in Stuttgart and Frankfurt, though, suggest that this was the start of something new for German opera, for which critics and audiences were unprepared. The causes of these disruptions primarily revolved around the triptych's erotic themes. Yet, there was also the sense that Hindemith's triptych was moving towards a new approach to opera, that which took expressionist theatre as its source material, which in itself was a source of anxiety for critics. Schröter's comment that Hindemith's triptych was 'not born from within this idea at all, but quite externally stuck to certain unexplained manifestations of this idea', implies that he felt Hindemith had not fully grasped what he was dealing with, that the composer had stumbled on this new model without fully realising the consequences of his actions. In other words, Hindemith had no agenda of creating the first 'expressionist opera'. Nevertheless, it was the first of several other operatic experiments which similarly took expressionist texts as their libretti. These were namely works by Berg, Weill and Krenek, works that I shall explore in later chapters.

The triptych's relevance in relation to other innovative operatic ventures in Germany also permits a fresh perspective on Hindemith's early operas. Its significance is further heightened when considered in relation to another near contemporary work, namely Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. Though *Wozzeck* was not premiered until December 1925 in Berlin, Berg was composing the music to his first opera around the same time Hindemith composed the triptych. Both at the time and retrospectively, scholars have valued *Wozzeck* for the way Berg used traditional musical forms to accompany modernist texts. *Wozzeck*'s score, for example, includes a passacaglia and rondo in act 1, a sonata and a fantasy and fugue in act 2, while act 3 is a sequence of inventions on a theme, note, rhythm, chord, key and motion. Yet as we

have seen in this chapter, Hindemith was experimenting with similar approaches contemporaneously, most notably in *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, and the whole triptych was seen to resemble as symphony on a 'meta' level. Berg's opera, therefore, which has received unprecedented attention throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, was far from being an isolated example of this approach.

Despite two-thirds of the triptych having already premiered in Stuttgart the year before, the Frankfurt performance in 1922 was just as significant in establishing the triptych as something epoch-making. After all, it was the first time that critics and audiences could see the three works in one evening. Given the prominence of expressionist theatre at the city's Neues Theater, the location of Frankfurt for this performance was a particularly appropriate place for the beginning of a new venture into opera utilising expressionist theatre. As outlined above, the Oper Frankfurt was well known for staging contemporary opera. Schreker's output here is especially significant as, next to Strauss, he was one of the most successful opera composers of the day. With hindsight, though, we know that the premiere of *Der Schatzgräber* on 21 January 1920 was to be the height of Schreker's operatic career. His next opera, *Irrelohe*, failed to excite critics and audiences. The Frankfurt premiere of the triptych, then, can be seen as a passing of the baton of modern German opera from Schreker to Hindemith.

Besides Schreker's successes, another important precursor to Hindemith's triptych in Frankfurt was Rudi Stephan's *Die ersten Menschen* (1920). Stephan was born in Worms, a city to the south-east of Frankfurt, in 1887 just eight years before Hindemith. Like Hindemith, Stephan also studied with Bernhard Sekles. His sudden death on the Eastern Front on 29 September 1915, though, ended his career before it had really taken off. Stephan, nonetheless, left behind several notable works such as his *Musik für sieben Saiteninstrumente and Musik für Orchester*, which were performed at the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein's

Tonkünstlerfeste in 1912 and 1913, as well as *Die ersten Menschen*. Stephan's source material for *Die ersten Menschen* was a play by Otto Borngräber, subtitled an 'Erotisches Mysterium' (Erotic Mystery), which the composer came across in 1909 and adapted into his opera between 1911 and 1914. Stephan originally planned for the opera to premiere in Frankfurt in 1915, though, with the outbreak of the war and Stephan's own passing, this performance never materialised. *Die ersten Menschen* was posthumously premiered five years after the composer's death on 1 July 1920 under the direction of Rottenberg. In a review of the opera's premiere for the *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Willy Werner Göttig described *Die ersten Menschen* as a 'masterpiece' and dwelled on the fact that Stephan had been 'snatched away from us, to whom it would have been granted to lead us out of the endless tangle of modern 'directions', leading us towards a new 'classic''.[117]

If it had not been for Stephan's untimely death, he too may have gone on to be one of the leading figures of modern German opera in the 1920s. *Die ersten Menschen* may also have assumed the pivotal position that Hindemith's triptych did. There are, after all, numerous similarities between Stephan's opera and Hindemith's triptych, especially *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*. Göttig, for instance, cautioned approaching *Die ersten Menschen* from the viewpoint of contemporary morals and values, encouraging onlookers to instead allow their erotic feelings to be invigorated.[118] Like Hindemith's opera, Stephan's work takes place in the distant past: close to the beginning of time after Adam and Eve's—now Adahm and Chawa's—expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Thematically, *Die ersten Menschen* is close to the triptych in the way it too deals with the succumbing to primitive, instinctual, sexual desires, regardless of whether the actions are morally right or wrong. Borngräber's play is

[117] 'Ließen schon die früheren Orchesterwerke Schönes erhoffen, so hat uns diese Opernmusik die Gewißheit gebracht, daß uns in Stephan der Mann entrissen wurde, dem es vergönnt gewesen wäre, und aus dem endlosen Wirrwarr der modernen „Richtungen" hinauszuführen, uns hinanzuführen zu einer neuen „Klassik"'. Willy Werner Göttig, 'Die ersten Menschen', *Zeitschrift für Musik* 87/14 (1920): 221–222.
[118] 'Ganz abgesehn davon, daß man diesem Buch natürlich nicht mit modernen Moralbegriffen gegenübertreten darf, muß man ihm auch mit gut abgehärtetem erotischem Empfinden entgegenkommen'. Ibid., 221.

based loosely on the story of Cain and Abel from the book of Genesis who, in his version, are renamed Kajin and Chabel. Whereas in the original biblical tale, Cain becomes jealous of Abel due to God favouring his brother's sacrifice more than his, in Borngräber's version the fratricide stems from the brother's lust over their mother. Chawa is unsatisfied as Adahm spends most his time labouring in the fields, while Kajin's sexual desire continues to grow as he gazes upon Chawa. One day, Chawa prays to God and begs that Adahm may once again gaze upon her like he used to. She is startled to find Chabel watching her from a distance. Kajin soon discovers his brother's lust over Chawa and in a fit of jealous rage, he brutally murders Chabel.

Though *Die ersten Menschen* failed to establish itself as a new direction for modern German opera, this would have only fuelled the yearning for a breakthrough in the genre. Hindemith' triptych fulfilled this upon its premiere in Stuttgart a year later and in Frankfurt the year after, where it had a local significance. Karl Holl, to whom Stephan's legacy is largely indebted, made a direct connection between *Die ersten Menschen* and the triptych, focusing specifically on the trend of composers turning to erotic texts in order to stimulate their creativity.[119] In Frankfurt, especially, the work may have inadvertently contributed to the protests towards the triptych. Though it was not mentioned in the article 'Kunst und Sittlichkeit' in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Stephan's opera may also have been on Brunner's mind as he gave his speech in the Paulskirche owing to the similarities between the two works. Even though *Die ersten Menschen* did not in and of itself cause a scandal, it may have

[119] 'Da Musik die Kunst ist, welche die Zustände und Regungen des Gefühles am unmittelbarsten von Sinn zu Sinn, von Seele zu Seele trägt, ist es verständlich, daß das bewußt und ausschließlich erotische Drama dieser Tage auf die schöpferischen Musiker eine starke Anziehungskraft ausübt. Mag es noch so ungeschickt im äußeren Aufbau, noch so verworren in der inneren Linienführung und noch so unklar in der dramatischen Zielsetzung sein, daß Auf und Ab, Neben-, Nach- und Durcheinander der inneren Kräfte—oft solcher Kräfte, die überhaupt noch nie zuvor in Klang und Melos gefaßt wurden—reizt die Phantasie der Musiker. So sind Stephans „Erste Menschen" entstanden; so schritt jetzt Hindemith zur Komposition der erotischen Trilogie'. Holl, 'Paul Hindemith: Zwei Opern-Einakter'.

played a part in tipping the city's conservative side over the edge when Hindemith's triptych premiered less than two years later.

Conclusion: The Triptych and the 'End' of Expressionism

This chapter has shown how Hindemith's triptych was met with praise amidst Germany's opera crisis and premiered at a pivotal moment in changing attitudes towards expressionism. While it is easy to conflate the protests which emerged from the triptych and the broader crisis of expressionism, a closer examination of the triptych's reception reveals that it was often the erotic which more precisely caused the disturbances surrounding Hindemith's triptych. The crisis of expressionism, is anything, was a discursive one as critics opposed to the triptych hesitated to directly blame expressionism for Hindemith's downfall.

A re-evaluation of the triptych in turn allows for a re-assessment of our perception of expressionism in the early Weimar era more generally, particularly the lectures of Hausenstein and Worringer explored earlier. The triptych demonstrates that expressionism, both as an aesthetic and an idea, did not simply dissolve at the beginning of the 1920s as they would likely have wished, but continued to be a point of focus in German culture. In fact, the great lengths to which Hausenstein and Worringer went to enforce their sense that expressionism was dead, only reinforced the whole notion as an *idée fixe*. This is apparent in responses to the triptych, where, though there was a clear sense of anxiety surrounding expressionism, that anxiety itself evidences it as a source of preoccupation. The context in Frankfurt also demonstrates that while art critics deplored expressionism's lack of spiritual content, they saw it more commonly as an aesthetically driven mode of art, which in turn made it easier for theatrical institutions to disseminate to a wider audience. I argue that the debates of art critics, therefore, should be seen as part of an attempt to foreshadow the demise of expressionist activity—something that did not actually transpire. This, I believe,

transforms our perception of expressionism in the immediate postwar years, as it does not require us to rely upon or discard the voices of art critics, but simply to not take them at face value; to put it another way, they should remain part of the discourse but not define it. In returning to the original source materials, from which the idea of the end of expressionism originated, this narrative can be deconstructed from the inside.

Rather than seeing the lectures and essays of Hausenstein and Worringer as endpoints, they should instead be taken as points of departure or an entry point into studies of expressionism in the Weimar era. They are not an isolated line of thought, but rather reflect the crisis of expressionism as part of a wider discourse of Weimar culture, which has repeatedly been called a 'culture of crisis'.[120] Considered as part of this broader cultural crisis, expressionism assumes greater cultural relevance and topicality. It should be stressed, however, that this does not imply that expressionism was *in* crisis. As we have seen in the case of the triptych, expressionism was in fact seen as a way out of crisis. The value of a recuperation of expressionism for our critical and historical use allows us to position it as progressive, going against stereotypical narratives of something waning. Hausenstein and Worringer's concerns over the commodification of expressionism also resonates with later concerns from the Frankfurt School over a broader commodification of art which was already taking place in the Weimar Republic. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, for example, explored their anxiety towards the 'Culture Industry' in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) which, in the post-enlightenment era under the rule of capitalism, 'impresse[d] the same stamp on everything';[121] individualism was being lost and what was supposed to be art, was in fact

[120] Todd Herzog, *Crime Stories: Criminalistic Fantasy and the Culture of Crisis in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009). Other publications on the notion of crisis in Weimar culture include Herbert Krauss, *The Crisis of German Democracy* (1932); Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1989); as well as Arthur Jacobson and Bernhard Schlink's *Weimar: A Jurisprudence of Crisis* (2000).
[121] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), 120.

only business.[122] Walter Benjamin also held particular concerns regarding the increasing role of technology in reproducing art, as outlined in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935).[123]

This chapter has also reconsidered expressionism in the early Weimar years by seeing it as a local project. In *Art Worlds* (1982), Howard S. Becker argues that art is more than just the works themselves, but relies upon the collaborations between a larger network of individuals. He sees 'art as activity', where those involved in the creation and sustainment of art are part of this 'art world'.[124] In the case of expressionism in Frankfurt, expressionist activity was particularly reliant on the efforts of Hellmer and Zeiß. While Hausenstein and Worringer loathed the way they had appropriated expressionism with little to no understanding of its true spiritual meaning, their efforts nonetheless demonstrated the ongoing interest in and public appeal of expressionism. This, in turn, helps to remove connotations of lateness surrounding expressionism. As we have seen, the notion of using expressionist theatre pieces for opera was perceived as radical, innovative and up to date. Art critics' concerns over the commodification of expressionism should in fact be seen as a more objective assessment of the way in which expressionism was evolving.

Early performances of Hindemith's triptych were key moments in the development of modern opera in Weimar Germany, glimmers of hope amidst the opera crisis. They proved that expressionism was far from at its end; rather, it was something that could still be renewed to great success. Just as Hindemith paved the way for future operatic experiments in expressionism, this chapter has similarly laid much of the groundwork for my approach to the

[122] 'Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce'. Ibid., 121.
[123] See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 5–8.
[124] Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1–2.

other case studies dealt with in this thesis. Its key methodological intervention—demystifying the end of expressionism—allows me to subsequently reconstruct German operatic discourse in the early Weimar Republic from the vantage point that expressionism could be used as a constructive element in solving the opera crisis. The crisis of expressionism was not its end, but both a continuation and a new beginning.

CHAPTER TWO

OPERA IN FRAGMENTS: *DREI BRUCHSTÜCKE AUS WOZZECK*

The premiere of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* on 14 December 1925 at the Berlin Staatsoper is an event familiar to most musicologists as a *succès de scandale*. As had happened at the premiere of other near-contemporary works such as Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913) and, as we saw in the previous chapter, Hindemith's triptych, some critics at *Wozzeck*'s first performance reacted negatively to the way Berg's opera trod new artistic ground; in this case, that *Wozzeck* was almost entirely atonal—the first opera of its kind. Paul Zschorlich, in his review of the premiere of Berg's opera for the *Deutsche Zeitung*, remarked how he had not left a public art institution, but a public madhouse, and how everywhere there were people in hysterics.[1]

The backlash to *Wozzeck* at the Staatsoper that night in December coincided with an ongoing dispute around the Staatsoper's management and the recent dismissal of Intendant Max von Schillings.[2] Following a short stint by Richard Strauss, Schillings was appointed as Intendant of the Staatsoper in 1919 and was responsible for the programming of contemporary opera. Under Erich Kleiber's baton, Schillings oversaw the production of works including Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, Busoni's *Arlecchino* and *Turandot*, Krenek's *Die Zwingburg* and Schreker's *Der Schatzgräber*.[3] Schillings, however, was a staunch conservative who had a particular distaste for Germany's new Republic. During his tenure,

[1] 'Als ich gestern abend die Staatsoper Unter den Linden verließ, hatte ich das Gefühl, nicht aus einem öffentlichen Kunstinstitut zu kommen, sondern aus einem öffentlichen Irrenhaus. Auf der Bühne, im Orchester, im Parkett: lauter Verrückte'. Paul Zschorlich, 'Gestotter in der Staatsoper', *Deutsche Zeitung, Abend-Ausgabe*, 15 December 1925.
[2] As Amanda Hsieh notes, Weimar's opera climate was 'nostalgic towards 'authentic' (Italian) opera', creating the perfect conditions for a revolt against *Wozzeck*. Amanda Hsieh, 'Lyrical Tension, Collective Voices: Masculinity in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 144/2 (2019), 323–362 (356).
[3] See Konrad Vogelsang, *Dokumentation zur Oper 'Wozzeck' von Alban Berg: Die Jahre des Durchbruchs, 1925–1932* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1977), 17.

Schillings continued to clash with the Prussian Minister of Culture, which ultimately led to his dismissal from the Staatsoper on 26 November 1925. The 'Schillings scandal', as it has become known, led to reactions on all sides and came to a head at the premiere of *Wozzeck*.[4] Kleiber's position at the Staatsoper was also vulnerable and opponents of the conductor used their reviews of *Wozzeck* to bring him down.[5]

For supporters of Kleiber and Berg, the Schillings scandal provided the perfect backdrop for reinforcing the success of *Wozzeck* as a great triumph for artistic freedom. Paul Stefan in his review for *Die Stunde* spoke about the evening with the image of a battle ground in mind: 'Alban Berg's opera is by all indications the sensation of the Berlin State Opera; notwithstanding the fact that the battle troops for and against had been brought in the success was enormous'.[6] For Oskar Bie, *Wozzeck* was a triumph for new music at the Staatsoper. In his review for the *Berliner Börsen Kurier*, Bie wrote:

> Months of work resulted in an evening so accomplished that one is reassured and even delighted by the inner strength of our State Opera. It is an artistic level, an artistic courage, an artistic conscience—the pinnacle of our culture. Do the enemies of this institute and its management believe that this would have been possible if the organisation was as bad as they suggest? This evening disproves them better than any talk.[7]

Reviews of *Wozzeck* as a new cornerstone for German opera were also characterised by war-like analogies. In another review for the *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, Stefan wrote: 'In the midst of a serious crisis at the Berlin Opera, the performance, like the music, was a conquest

[4] Douglas Jarman summaries how '[t]he liberal press denounced the dismissal as an unwarranted intervention by the bureaucracy into artistic affairs while the right wing used the affair as an opportunity to attack the policies of the new Republic'. See Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg:* Wozzeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 24.
[5] Opponents to Kleiber, for example, made the much-exaggerated claim that 137 rehearsals were needed for the work.
[6] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 70.
[7] 'Eine Arbeit von Monaten resultiert an diesen Abend so vollendet, daß man wohl über die innere Kraft unserer Staatsoper beruhigt, ja beglückt sein darf. Es ist ein künstlerisches Niveau, ein künstlerischer Mut, ein künstlerisches Gewissen—Spitze unserer Kultur. Meinen die Feinde dieses Institut und seiner Leitung, das wäre möglich gewesen, wenn die Organisation so schlecht war, wie sie angeben? Dieser Abend widerlegt sie besser, als alle Reden'. Oskar Bie, 'Wozzeck', *Berliner Börsen Kurier, Abend-Ausgabe*, 15 December 1925.

of new territory'.[8] Another critic for the *Casseler Tageblatt* similarly spoke of how *Wozzeck* trod new ground for opera, and as having 'fulfilled the long-awaited hope of the youngest generation of composers'.[9] Elsewhere, other critics framed *Wozzeck* as a point of departure for the genre. Rudolf Kastner, for instance, saw Berg's opera to be a clear step away from the *Tristan*-style of Debussy and from Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*.[10] The overall reception of *Wozzeck* was favourable enough that a wave of productions immediately followed the opening night in Berlin, with Berg's opera going on to be one of the most successful new operas to come out of Germany in the 1920s.[11]

The premiere of *Wozzeck* in December 1925 had been long-awaited by Berg, who had begun composing the opera back in 1913. Due to the opera's technical demands and cost of production, securing a staging of the work was no simple task; the eventual premiere, therefore, was something of a sigh of relief for the composer. Critics that night were also eager to finally hear the complete opera. After Berg privately published *Wozzeck* as a piano-vocal score back in 1922, some critics had already carried out extensive analyses of the opera and given their verdicts. Early reviews of *Wozzeck* prior to its premiere were mixed. The conservative Emil Petschnig took a distaste to *Wozzeck* and described it as nothing but 'a

[8] 'Die Aufführung, inmitten einer schweren Krise der Berliner Oper, war in ihrer Art Eroberung neuen Landes, wie die Musik'. Paul Stefan, 'Wozzeck', *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, Heft 1 (1926): 4.
[9] 'Ein Opern-Neuland ist erschlossen. Musik wie bisher weder geschrieben noch gehört worden, ist erklungen. Alban Bergs „Wozzeck" hat zum ersten Mal seit vielen unfruchtbaren Jahren der jüngsten Komponistengeneration die langersehnte Hoffnung erfüllt: Auch das „Neue" kann einen Dauerwert in sich tragen, kann an der Tradition schaffen'. Herm. Rud. Gail., 'Alban Bergs „Wozzeck": Die Aufführung an der Berliner Staatsoper', *Casseler Tageblatt*, 20 December 1925.
[10] 'Und es stimmt mit dem Eindruck von Generalprobe und Aufführung: es führt zu den Klangvision, zur unerbittlichen Ausdrucksharmonik von Alban Bergs Musik ein deutlicher Weg aus den letzten Folgerungen der Tristan-Psychologie über Debussy und über den Schönberg der „Erwartung" und „Glücklichen Hand" zum melo- oder monodramatischen, zum Sprechgesangs-Stil Bergs, zu seiner komprimierten motivischen Tonwelt, auch zu der tausendfältig vibrierenden Sprache seiner Instrumente'. Rudolf Kastner, 'Büchners „Wozzeck" als Oper. Uraufführung in der Staatsoper.—Musik von Alban Berg.—Ein merkwürdiges Experiment.', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 December 1925.
[11] Following the Berlin premiere there were productions in Prague (November 1926), Berlin (January 1927), Leningrad (June 1927), Berlin (October 1928), Oldenburg (March 1929), Essen (December 1929). For a full list of productions between 1926 and 1932, see Vogelsang, *Dokumentation zur Oper 'Wozzeck' von Alban Berg'*, 120–124

jumble of chords and voices'.[12] At the Berlin premiere, critics who had reviewed the piano-vocal score prior would have likely been curious whether their initial assessments of the opera would hold up after seeing *Wozzeck* staged for the first time.

One event that played a pivotal role in drumming up interest for *Wozzeck* was an earlier performance of *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck* (*Three Fragments from Wozzeck*) at the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein's (ADMV) Tonkünstlerfest in 1924, which was held that year in Frankfurt from 9–15 June. Founded in 1861 by Franz Liszt, Louis Köhler and Franz Brendel, the ADMV's primary mission statement was 'to maintain and promote German musical life in the sense of progressive development'.[13] In its early days, the ADMV was made up mainly of figures from Weimar and Leipzig, and oriented towards performance of music by the New German School, chiefly Wagner and Liszt. The ADMVs festivals took place almost every year and in a different German city. Given the society's prestige and aims, that Berg's *Bruchstücke* were performed at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest was a huge privilege and an important moment of publicity for both the composer and his opera. When performed in Frankfurt, the *Bruchstücke* were welcomed by critics and repeatedly singled out as the highlight of the entire festival. In the reception of the ADMV festival that year, critics expressed their yearning to see the opera staged in its entirety and called on opera houses to snatch up what they saw to be the next milestone in German opera. While accounts of the genesis of *Wozzeck* often cite the performance of the *Bruchstücke* in Frankfurt, the reception of this preliminary event has not been explored in depth. As a result, our current understanding of *Wozzeck*'s performance history has a crucial piece of the puzzle missing. As

[12] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 147. For the original, see Petschnig, 'Atonales Opernschaffen', *Die Musik*, 16/5 (February 1924): 340–350.
[13] 'Zweck des Vereins ist: 1) die Pflege und Förderung des deutschen Musiklebens im Sinne einer fortschreitenden Entwicklung; 2) die Wahrung und Förderung der Standes- und Berufsinteressen der Tonkünstler; 3) die Unterstützung bedürftiger Tonkünstler und ihrer Hinterbliebenen'. *Programmbuch. Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein. 54. Tonkünstlerfest Frankfurt a. M. 9. bis. 15. Juni 1924* (Frankfurt am Main: Buchdruckerei R. Th. Hauser & Co., 1924), 6.

we shall see, the performance of the *Bruchstücke* at the ADMV festival was seminal in garnering critical support for the opera and helps to explain why defences of *Wozzeck* at the Berlin premiere were so strong.

In this chapter, I reframe our understanding of the early performance history and reputation of Berg's *Wozzeck* by exploring the background, reception and performance history of the *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*. I shall especially pay attention to how the *Bruchstücke* shaped critical opinion of *Wozzeck*. As I demonstrate, the initial success of *Wozzeck* was indebted to the earlier performance of the *Bruchstücke* in Frankfurt, and *Wozzeck*'s future performance history continued to be intertwined with the latter. Yet, at the same time, the *Bruchstücke* went on to have their own performance history independent from *Wozzeck*. In tracing the performance history of *Bruchstücke* beyond their first performance at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest, this chapter stresses that they were more than a means to an end—that is, in hyping up *Wozzeck* the opera—and argues that they should be treated as a distinct musical adaption of Berg's source material: Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*.[14]

At the time of Büchner's death in 1837, *Woyzeck* was left incomplete and in fragments. The 'play' existed across several manuscripts, each of which contained a different set of unordered scenes and with no indication as to what order they should go in.[15] Characters frequently changed names across the scenes, there was no definitive title for the play, and the manuscripts were in such poor condition that they had to be treated chemically to make them legible. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were several attempts to complete Büchner's play. The first of these was undertaken by Karl Emil Franzos, who published the first completed collection of Büchner's plays in 1879. Franzos,

[14] For a detailed account of Berg's adaptation for the opera, see Jack M. Stein, 'From *Woyzeck* to *Wozzeck*: Alban Berg's Adaptation of Büchner', *The Germanic Review* 47/3 (1972): 168–180.
[15] For an overview of these manuscripts, see Karoline Gritzner, *Georg Büchner's* Woyzeck (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 4–6.

though, was not an academic and his version was deemed inaccurate by some scholars.[16] Other editions of Büchner's fragments soon followed by Paul Landau (1909) and Georg Witkowski (1920), as attempts to correct Franzos's mistakes.

Literary scholars have since foregrounded the distinctly fragmentary, eternally incomplete nature of Büchner's *Woyzeck*. John Reddick has written:

> Any theatre production billed as *Woyzeck*, any seemingly complete version of the text between the covers of a book, can unfortunately never be anything more than a construct, a best-guess composite put together out of the incomplete manuscripts that Büchner left at his death; even the very title is not Büchner's own.[17]

The idea of multiple *Woyzecks*, then, is customary in literary studies. Scholars have gone further in noting how the fragmentary nature of *Woyzeck* creates particular dramatic effects. Michael Patterson, for instance, argues that in the way not all the action is revealed to the audience, the fragmentary nature of the play creates a terrifying 'silence' for the audience as they contemplate what other horrific acts happen between the scenes.[18] The episodic structure of *Woyzeck* also situates itself between Volker Klotz's idea of open and closed drama.[19] As observed by Karoline Gritzner, while scholars such as Patterson and Burghard Dedner have argued that Marie's murder and Woyzeck's suicide is the climax of the opera, thus meaning *Woyzeck* is to some extent closed, earlier scenes in the play can still be rearranged without destroying this dramatic trajectory, suggesting that *Woyzeck* is both open and closed.[20]

In musicology, by comparison, Berg's *Wozzeck* is typically seen as a closed work. Willi Reich, for example, analyses how Berg's 'selection of the small forms is adapted to the

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[16] Franzos famously misinterpreted the titular characters name as Wozzeck, when it was in fact Woyzeck.
[17] John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 289.
[18] 'That Woyzeck kills the person he most loves is disturbing enough; that what drives him to this act is seen only in fragmental glimpses and not as clearly ordered development is fearful. It is the silence that terrifies'. Michael Patterson, 'Introduction to Woyzeck', in Georg Büchner, *The Complete Plays*, ed. Patterson (London: Methuen, 1987), 159.
[19] See Volker Klotz, *Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1969).
[20] Gritzner, *Georg Büchner's* Woyzeck, 43.

scenic events, making it possible to bind the whole together into a musico-dramatic unity'.[21] This is largely due to the composer's own approach to form for the opera. As is well known, Berg's score for *Wozzeck* was seen to have been revolutionary for the way he based each scene on a traditional musical form and how these collectively build towards a larger symphonic framework across the whole work. *Wozzeck* is divided into three acts, the overall work being an ABA ternary structure, with each act subdivided into five scenes. Act 1 is a series of character pieces formed of a suite, rhapsody, military march and lullaby, passacaglia and rondo. Act 2 is structured like a symphony, with a sonata, fantasy and fugue, largo, scherzo and rondo. Act 3 is a series of inventions: on a theme, on a note, on a rhythm, on a six-note chord and on a regular quaver movement. This structure was emphasised in early reviews of the opera. An essay by Ernst Viebig titled 'Alban Bergs „Wozzeck": Ein Beitrag zum Opernproblem' (Alban Berg's 'Wozzeck': A Contribution to the Problem of Opera) appeared in *Die Musik* in 1923, just months after Berg's publication of a piano-vocal score. Viebig praised Berg's opera and claimed 'it is in the *form* of the piece that the composer opens up new paths' and that '*absolute musical forms and the demands of the libretto find the perfect fusion*'.[22] The interconnectedness of individual scenes in *Wozzeck* suggest Berg's opera is a fixed, complete work. That the three acts are in ternary form, or that the individual scenes of act 2 outline a symphony, implies that no other order of scenes would work, from a musical perspective at least. Berg's *Wozzeck* is also generally seen as the definitive operatic adaptation of Büchner's play. This is in spite of the fact that Berg was not the only composer to set Büchner's play to music around this time. On 22 April 1926, Manfred Gurlitt's *Wozzeck* premiered in Bremen. Gurlitt, however, used eighteen of Büchner's twenty-five scenes, highlighting again the versatility of Büchner's fragments in the musical sphere.

[21] Willi Reich, *Alban Berg*, trans. Cornelius Cardew (New York: Vienna House, 1965), 122.
[22] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 140–141, trans. Jarman. The original essay was published in *Die Musik* 15/7 (1923): 507–510. Italics by Viebig.

Gurlitt's opera, though, never garnered the same success as Berg's and has been branded the 'other' *Wozzeck*.[23]

Yet the existence of the *Bruchstücke* and Gurlitt's opera suggests that, just as we talk of 'multiple *Woyzecks*', we might speak of 'multiple *Wozzecks*'. Secondary literature, however, has overwhelmingly favoured Berg's complete opera *Wozzeck*, with the *Bruchstücke* seen to be merely a stepping stone to the opera's premiere, while Gurlitt's *Wozzeck* has been largely forgotten. This chapter begins deconstructing such a hierarchy by foregrounding the performance history of the *Bruchstücke* beyond the Berlin premiere of *Wozzeck*. In doing so, I toy with the idea that, given the distinctly fragmentary nature of Büchner's play, there is the possibility of infinite musical adaptations of *Wozzeck*. Berg's title, then, 'Three Fragments from Wozzeck' is somewhat nonsensical, the idea of fragments *from Wozzeck* redundant. To that end, throughout this chapter I refer to the *Bruchstücke* not in reference to their translation as 'fragments', but more so to distinguish between them and the complete opera, *Wozzeck*.

Beyond reformulating histories of *Wozzeck*, a reconsideration of the *Bruchstücke* serves many of the broader aims of this thesis. I shall use the *Bruchstücke* to suggest how *Wozzeck*, of all the turns to expressionist theatre considered in this thesis, was the most commercially successful and has had the most long-lasting impact in both performance and the scholarship. The ADMV Tonkünstlerfest in 1924, as I shall demonstrate, was also a significant event in showcasing modern (German) music theatre. In addition to Berg's *Bruchstücke*, Hindemith's ballet-pantomime *Der Dämon* and Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* were programmed, as well as Krenek's full-length opera *Der Sprung über den*

[23] See Anna Kasten, 'Erzählte Geschichten und geschichtete Erzählungen—Georg Büchners Fragment *Woyzeck* und seine musikalischen Adaptation', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 43/2 (2012): 303–324 and Katrin Winkler, 'Der 'andere' *Wozzeck*. Über Manfred Gurlitts Büchner-Oper (1920–25)', in Peter Petersen and Hans-Gerd Winter, eds., *Büchner-Opern: Georg Büchner in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 189–201.

Schatten. While *Wozzeck* has traditionally been considered in isolation, the *Bruchstücke* offer an opportunity to dive deeper into how Berg's opera related to other contemporary works for the stage.

The fragmentary nature of *Wozzeck* also intersects with broader aspects of modern culture and life in Weimar Germany. Fragmentary drama and literature, as is well documented, was a distinct feature of modernist literature in post-war Germany with works such as Alexander Döblin's *Alexanderplatz* (1927), Walter Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße* (1928) and *Das Passagen-Werk* (1927–1940), among many others. In theatre, there was *Stationendrama* (station drama—a series of loosely connected scenes), with one of its earliest proponents being August Strindberg in *Till Damascus* (premiered in 1900). Station drama was also commonly used by the expressionist playwrights, such as Georg Kaiser in *Von morgens bis mitternachts*. The stringing together of scenes to create the whole was also seen in film, as directors pieced individually recorded scenes for the final edit. Berg's and Gurlitt's *Wozzecks* and the *Bruchstücke* similarly strung together the distinct scenes of Büchner's play to create a whole work. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to position the *Bruchstücke* and *Wozzeck* as other fragmentary modernist works of the early twentieth century. *Wozzeck*, though, also resonates with the idea of a work being in fragments on more of a meta level. For nearly two years, *Wozzeck* only existed in the discourse as in fragments. Before the complete *Wozzeck* was premiered in December 1925, Berg had drip-fed the work to the public and critics. The opera first entered the public sphere in late 1922, when Berg privately published a piano-vocal score of the opera. In 1923, *Die Musik* also published Marie's *Wiegenlied* from act 1 as an excerpt from the opera. The first performance of the *Bruchstücke* then took place in June the following year.

I begin by providing a brief overview of how the *Bruchstücke* came to be and what happens dramatically compared to the opera. This allows me to establish some of the key

differences in approach to performance practice between the works. I then demonstrate how the *Bruchstücke* 'saved' *Wozzeck* in the face of Petschnig's backlash to the opera. Following this, I shall analyse in detail the 1924-ADMV Tonkünstlerfest and the first performance of the *Bruchstücke*. I end by tracking the performance history of the *Bruchstücke* following their premiere. The reception of these later performances reveals how the *Bruchstücke* continued to whet the appetites of critics for the opera, but also that they were being programmed as a work its own right to showcase Berg's compositional style more generally.

Marie and Marie

On 5 May 1914, Büchner's *Woyzeck* was staged in Vienna for the first time, just several months after its official premiere in Munich on 8 November 1913. In the audience that evening was Berg. Büchner's play left a remarkable impression on the composer, who instantly saw the work's musical potential. An account from one of Berg's closet friends, Paul Elbogen, offers a detailed account of Berg's reaction at the end of the performance:

> We young people knew the play very well from Franzos's publication. A German actor, Albert Steinrück, rude and rather brutal, played Wozzeck. I sat in the gallery of the little Kammerspiele. Four rows behind me sat Alban Berg, whom I greeted as I came in because I had known him very well for years. They played the drama for three hours without the smallest interruption in complete darkness. Indescribably excited and enthusiastic I stood up amidst the wild applause, met Alban Berg a few steps behind me. He was deathly pale and perspiring profusely. 'What do you say?' he gasped, beside himself. 'Isn't it fantastic, incredible?' Then, already taking his leave, 'Someone must set it to music.'[24]

Berg took it upon himself to be that someone. Up until this point, Berg's compositions mainly included chamber music and short orchestral works. An opera, therefore, was a new and exciting venture for him as a composer. Its realisation, though, would be long in the

[24] Paul Elbogen, 'Firsthand reminiscence of a historic night', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 October 1981, 40. Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 1.

making. Berg set to work on the opera straight away, yet the outbreak of the First World War and his service in the army between 1915 and 1918 delayed its completion to April 1922.

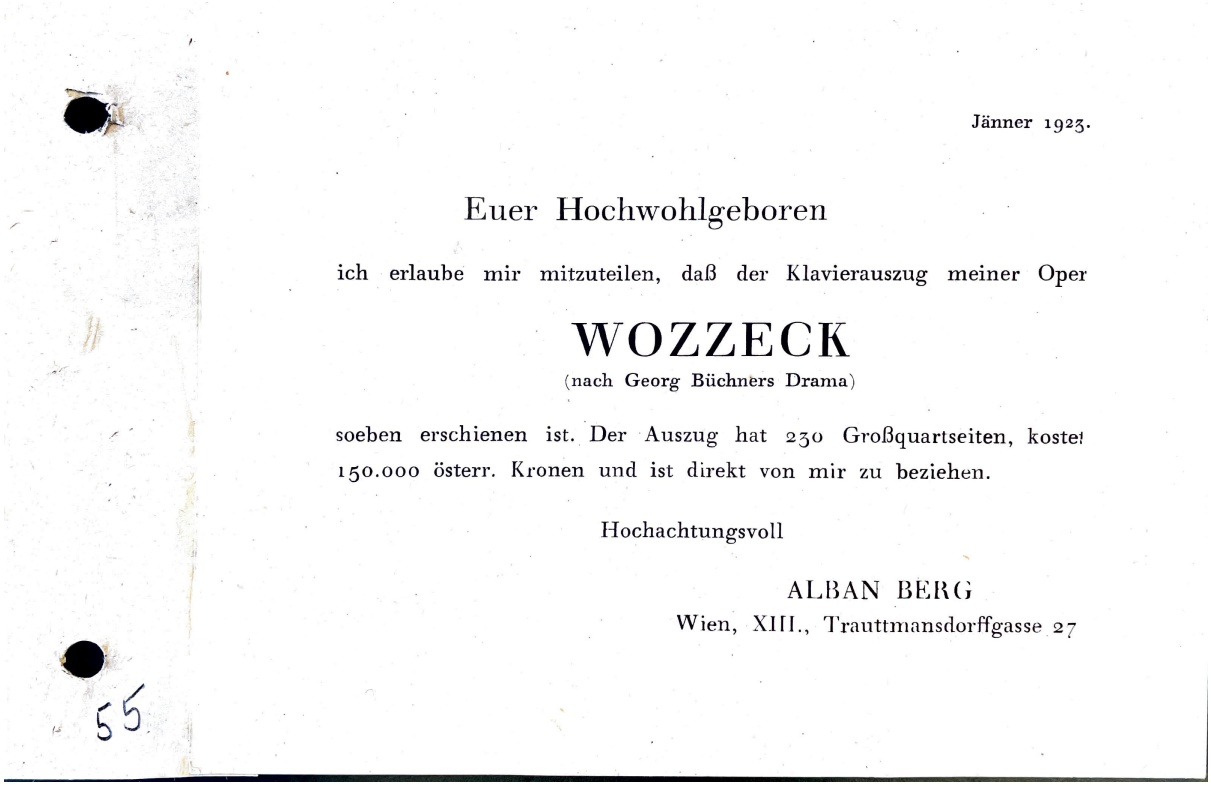
Despite his best attempts to pique the interest of an opera house to stage the now-completed *Wozzeck*, Berg's efforts were initially fruitless. Directors who wanted to stage *Wozzeck* were concerned that the opera's technical demands would require too many rehearsals and therefore be too expensive and risky. Berg himself was doubtful of his opera ever seeing the light of day. He sent a copy of the privately published piano-vocal score to Eduard Steuermann and on the title page he wrote how they had 'spent Wozzeck's worst hours together'.[25] Yet Berg was not to be defeated so easily. A letter to Schoenberg in July 1922 explains his new strategy of publishing a piano-vocal score that he could easily distribute and use to create interest:

> *Wozzeck*. I have notified several music periodicals of the completion of the opera and have already received a promise from some that the notice will be 'placed'. In addition, my sister's friend, May Keller, has agreed to have the piano score engraved. Her idea (and mine too) is as follows: a limited edition of the score available in the fall would enable me to distribute it to all eligible opera houses. Simultaneously, which is impossible when (as now) only 1 score is available, not to mention the risk of loss. In my opinion, that would offer my best chance for an acceptance (should there be any at all). Should this happen, a publisher would probably turn up as well, who would then take over the work for the sum put up by May Keller (i.e., 1,000 Swiss franks). (100 copies cost about 5 million, today 1 frank is worth about 6,000 kronen.) Of course I won't give the score to a publisher now, but will simply have it printed for my own purposes. I think I am doing the right thing.[26]

The project was supported financially by Alma Mahler, with Berg entrusting his pupil Fritz Heinrich Klein to undertake the task of transcription. Berg then announced the piano-vocal score's publication via a postcard in January 1923, which he sent to directors and opera

[25] Mark Evan Bonds notes how '"*Wozzeck*'s worst hours" is Berg's characterization of a period when his new as-yet-unproduced opera was indeed experiencing its darkest moments'. See Bonds, '"*Wozzeck*'s Worst Hours": Alban Berg's Presentation Copy of *Wozzeck* to Eduard Steuermann', *Notes* 76/4 (2020): 527–534 (529–530).
[26] Letter from Berg to Schoenberg, Vienna, 17 July 1922, trans. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey, in Berg, *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, eds. Brand, Hailey and Donald Harris (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1987), 316–317.

houses who may be interested in the work (see Figure 1). Though his strategy did not lead to an immediate production of *Wozzeck*, it did help in rousing further interest in the work. Just three months later, Emil Hertzka at Universal Edition decided to publish the piano-vocal score. In the same issue of *Die Musik* as Viebig's essay, the magazine also published Marie's Wiegenlied for voice and piano (see Figure 2).



Jänner 1923.

Euer Hochwohlgeboren

ich erlaube mir mitzuteilen, daß der Klavierauszug meiner Oper

WOZZECK

(nach Georg Büchners Drama)

soeben erschienen ist. Der Auszug hat 230 Großquartseiten, kostet 150.000 österr. Kronen und ist direkt von mir zu beziehen.

Hochachtungsvoll

ALBAN BERG
Wien, XIII., Trauttmansdorffgasse 27

55

Figure 1: Postcard advertisement for the piano-vocal score of *Wozzeck* (January 1923). Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Folder F21 3127.

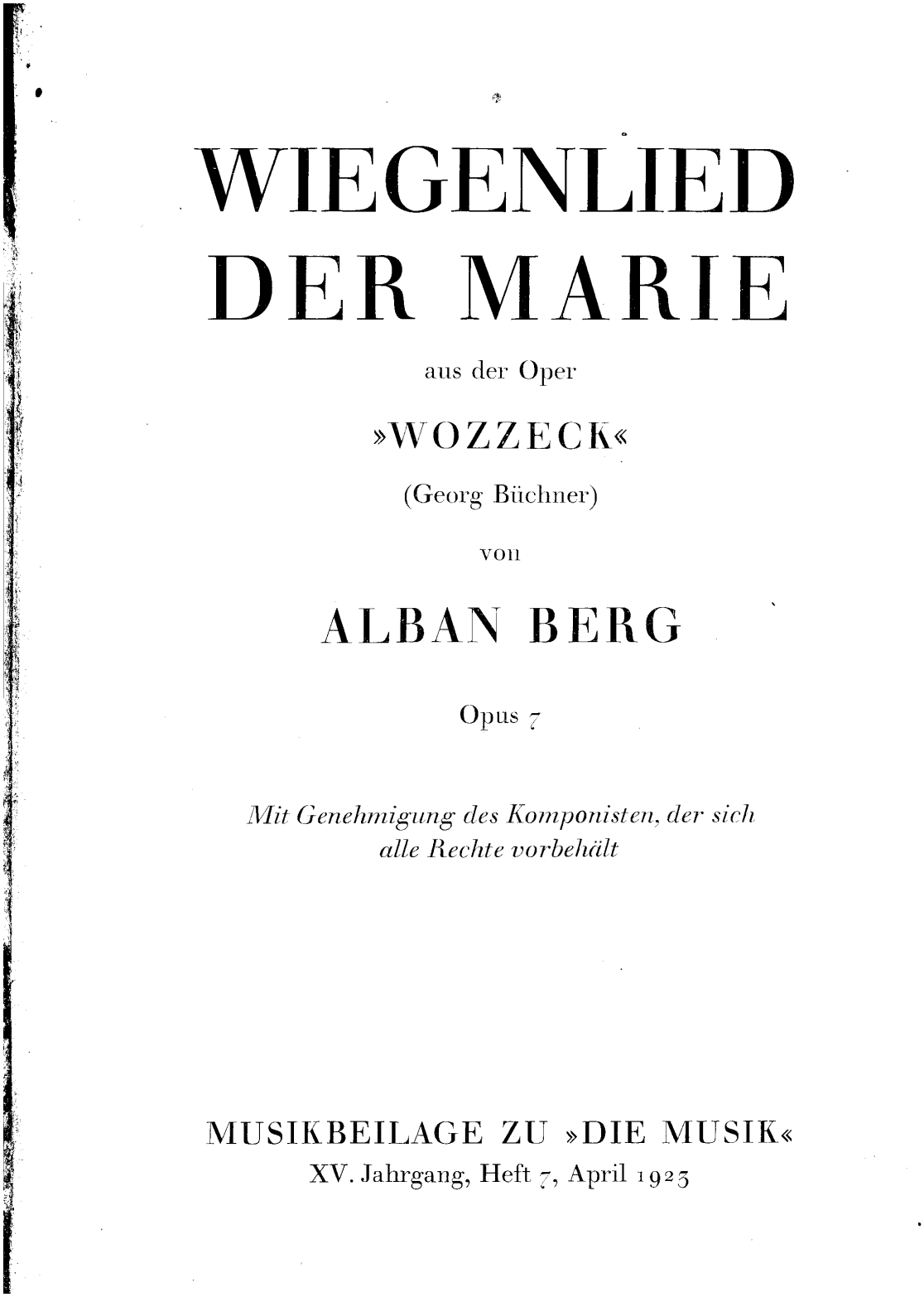
A turning point for hope of a performance of *Wozzeck* occurred at the second annual festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Salzburg, which took place from 2–7 August 1923. Alongside works by Schoenberg, Bartók, Krenek, Janáček, Stravinsky and Hába, Berg's String Quartet, Op. 3 was programmed as part of the festival—it

was the opening piece.[27] Berg's talent had already caught the attention of one of the festival's jury members, Hermann Scherchen.[28] Scherchen was well connected in the spheres of contemporary music, having been the conductor for the first performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912 and the founder of *Melos*, a journal established as a space for discussing new music. Scherchen would no doubt have been familiar with *Wozzeck* through the piano-vocal score. Keen to bring *Wozzeck* to the stage—at least in part—Scherchen suggested to Berg at the ISCM festival that he choose a selection of scenes from the opera for a concert performance at the next ADMV Tonkünstlerfest, for which Scherchen was also on the committee. Scherchen's decision not to produce *Wozzeck* in its entirety likely came down to the fact that Krenek's *Der Sprung über den Schatten* had already been chosen as the festival's showcase opera. The choice of Krenek's work, though, was completely out of Scherchen's hands, as the Oper Frankfurt had already commissioned the opera ahead of the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest. The ADMV was also clearly investing in Krenek, who was seen to be one of the most promising young talents in the Austro-German sphere, and so wanted to continue offering him a platform.[29]

[27] The festival's (largely European) programme was hailed by critics for its modernity. 'The musical bolsheviks of the world have a rendezvous at this year's festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music here. It is so contemporary that the radicals of last year have been adjudged conservative back numbers and replaced on the program largely by even newer blood'. 'Musical Bolsheviks Meet in Congress at Salzburg', *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 7 August 1923, 6. Quoted in '1923 Salzburg', *International Society for Contemporary Music* https://iscm.org/wnmd/1923-salzburg/ (accessed 15 November 2023). See '1923 Salzburg' for the full festival programme.

[28] The other jury members were Ernest Ansermet, André Caplet and Egon Wellesz.

[29] 'Nicht ganz unter der Verantwortlichkeit des Musikvereins steht, genau betrachtet, die erste Opernvorstellung der Tagung, das Kreneks Werk unabhängig von ihr seine Annahme im hiesigen Institut schon lange vor der Wahl Frankfurts als Festort gefunden hat, so daß hier nur ein auf das Datum abgestimmtes Zusammentreffen vorliegt. Seit Nürnberg 1921 schon ist es jedoch das Verdienst des Allgemeinen Musikvereins Ernst Krenek auf den alljährlichen Veranstaltungen immer wieder zur Diskussion gestellt und damit weitesten Kreisen bekannt gemacht zu haben'. Artur Holde, 'Das Tonkünstlerfest des Allgemeinen deutschen Musikvereins. Der Sprung über den Schatten. Komische Oper in drei Akten von Ernst Krenek', *Frankfurter General-Anzeige*, 1924. The ADMV programmed his String Quartet in C major for the 1921 festival in Nuremberg and his Second Symphony for the 1923 festival in Kassel.



WIEGENLIED DER MARIE

aus der Oper

»WOZZECK«

(Georg Büchner)

von

ALBAN BERG

Opus 7

Mit Genehmigung des Komponisten, der sich alle Rechte vorbehält

MUSIKBEILAGE ZU »DIE MUSIK«
XV. Jahrgang, Heft 7, April 1923

Figure 2: 'Wiegenlied der Marie', *Die Musik* 15/7 (1923).

For the *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*, Berg selected the following scenes from the complete opera: act 1, scene 3; act 3, scene 1; and act 3, scenes 4–5. Although advertised as an arrangement of *Wozzeck*, the *Bruchstücke* have no part for the titular character. Marie, Wozzeck's love interest, is the only character who features in the *Bruchstücke*. There is also the brief appearance of a children's choir and her child at the end of the *Bruchstücke*, though in most recordings of the work these parts are omitted.

The *Bruchstücke* begin with muted strings playing softly and *langsam*. After their opening semibreve, the strings alternate between minims and crotchets, resulting in a steady and eerie atmosphere emerging from the close harmonies. A muted horn interjects, who, playing in rising broken chords in quavers is the first to set off a series of interjections with increasing rhythmic intensity, which are later taken up by the woodwind. As the strings drop out of the texture, the woodwind, brass and percussion—triangle, snare drum and bass drum—take over and lead into a march. Accompanied by the march music, Marie begins by singing of her admiration for the passing soldiers: 'Soldiers, soldiers are handsome fellows!' [Soldaten, Soldaten sind schöne Burschen!]. A sudden change in texture, orchestration and tempo—the up-beat homophonic wind and brass switches to slow, sustained strings, recalling the *Bruchstücke*'s opening—reflects a shift in Marie's mood. She now laments the outside world's negative opinions towards her and her child: 'Come, my child. We shan't head their slanders. You are just a bastard child and give to your mother so pure a joy, although no priest blessed your little face' (Komm, mein Bub! Was die Leute wollen! Bist nur ein arm Hurenkind und machst Deiner Mutter doch so viel Freud mit deinem unehrlichen Gesicht![30]) She then sings the child to sleep with a lullaby, with a clear tone of sorrow in her words as

[30] Translated by Eric Blackall and Vida Harford. See Alban Berg, *Georg Buechners Wozzeck: Oper in 3 Akten (15 Szenen): von Alban Berg op. 7*, revised by H. E. Apostel (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1955), 78–79.

she reflects on the misery of her own life: ‘Girl, what are you doing? With child, but no man!’ (Mädel, was fangst Du jetzt an? Hast ein klein Kind und kein Mann!).

In the second fragment, Marie’s emotions are more heightened and unstable as she is consumed by the guilt of her sins. She recites passages from the bible and prays to God, begging for forgiveness. There is also a change in the way she speaks to her child. While in the first fragment, she comforts him, in the second, we see that at times she cannot bear to look at him. Her love for the child, though, does win, as she sends him away only to call him back into her arms: ‘The boy looks at me and stabs my heart. Be off! That brat there in the sunlight! Ah, no, come here! Come to me!’ [Der Bub gibt mir einen Stich in’s Herz. Fort! Das brüst sich in der Sonne! Nein, komm, komm her! Komm zu mir!]. Marie then sings directly to the child to comfort him, once more to tell him a story, though her words are far from uplifting:

> There was once a poor child
> Who had no father and no mother
> Everything was dead and there was no one in the world
> The child was hungry and cried day and night
> And because it had no one in the world…
>
> [Es war einmal ein armes Kind
> Und hat keinen Vater und keine Mutter
> War Alles tot und war Niemand auf der Welt,
> und es hat gehungert und geweint Tag und Nacht.
> Und weil es Niemand mehr hatt‘ auf der Welt…]

Marie loses her trail of thought as she realises Franz (Wozzeck) has not returned, neither today nor yesterday (‘Der Franz ist nit kommen, gestern nit, heut’ nit…’). She turns to the Bible once more and recounts Mary Magdalene kissing and washing Jesus’s feet, wishing that she too could do the same for her Saviour. Throughout this fragment, Berg illustrates Marie’s unstable state of mind as she alternates between lyrical passages and *Sprechgesang*, a vocal style developed initially by Schoenberg for *Pierrot lunaire* that lies somewhere

between speaking and singing. As the whole scene is an invention on a theme, Berg also contrasts the style of each theme to suggest Marie's growing unstable mindset.

Marie does not sing for the third and final fragment, which is scored almost entirely for orchestra. The fragment begins, as the *Bruchstücke* did, with muted strings playing *piano*. It opens with simultaneous quintuplet chromatic scales in the basses (split into three parts starting on C, E-flat and G-flat) and cellos (split into two parts starting on F and E-flat). As the basses and cellos rise in pitch, violas, violins and then the woodwind join in the chromatic scale, taking the scale(s) from the basses' starting note of their lowest C to an F-sharp four octaves above middle-C in the violins. Before the violins reach the climax of their chromatic scales, the lower strings have already begun another scale, though with less rhythmic intensity. This time the scales are played in triplets, and the scale peaks at only a C two octaves above middle C. The texture soon calms, before leading into one of the opera's most famous sections, the D minor interlude. While in the opera, this interlude draws together many of the leitmotifs heard throughout the opera, in the *Bruchstücke*, this is the first time these themes are heard. Following the interlude, a small children's choir sing a variation on 'Ring-a-ring-a-roses'. The *Bruchstücke* then end as the opera does: the single, spine-chilling sound of a child singing 'hop-hop, hop-hop'.

In Wozzeck's absence, the *Bruchstücke* tell Marie's side of the story. A more appropriate title for the work might perhaps have been simply *Marie*. She becomes the audience's surrogate, guiding us through the world in which these events take place. While comprised of only three scenes, for one of which Marie does not even sing, the *Bruchstücke* still have a clear narrative arc akin to the standard three-act opera structure. The first fragment sets the scene by introducing the audience to Marie. In this scene we learn crucial information about her character: that she in a single mother, that she has a troubled love life, and that she pities herself and the life of her child. These tensions peak in the second

fragment: Marie's mental state becomes erratic, she shows signs of disconnecting from her child, and she looks for a resolution by turning to God. The third fragment is the climax: Marie's murder serves as a tragic ending to the tale but also a resolution to her suffering.

Despite *Wozzeck* and the *Bruchstücke* stemming from the same source material, the way the audience perceives Marie's character greatly differs between these two works. In the *Bruchstücke*, Marie's isolation from the other characters leaves crucial information about her relationship with Wozzeck untold, information that alters our understanding of the couple's dynamic. In the opera, the full circumstances of what led to Marie's death are revealed to the audience: her flirting with the Drum Major and eventual infidelity, which leads Wozzeck to become jealous and murder her in rage. A key exchange between Marie and her neighbour Margaret in act 1, scene 3 that hints towards this love triangle is not included in the *Bruchstücke*. In the first fragment, we only hear Marie sing 'Soldaten, Soldaten sind schöne Burschen'. On its own, this may seem like an innocent comment. Marie's conversation with Margaret, though, which is omitted from the *Bruchstücke*, reveals that she has an eye for the Drum Major and that her intentions are perhaps not so innocent, but rather fuelled by lust:

MARGARET:
What a man! Like a tree!

MARIE:
He stands on his feet like a lion.

The Drum Major greets Marie who waves at him

MARGARET:
Oho! What friendly glances neighbour!
We're not used to that from you.

MARIE:
Soldiers, soldiers are splendid fellows!

MARGARET:
Your eyes are sparkling!

MARIE:
What if they are? What's that to do with you?
Take your eyes to the Jews and have them polished,
Perhaps they'll be bright enough for two buttons.

MARGARET:
How dare you, you 'madam'!
I'm an honest woman,
But everyone knows that you look through seven pairs of leather breaches![31]

Other scenes that provide crucial information about the Drum Major and Marie's relationship are also withheld in the *Bruchstücke.* These include act 1 scene 5, the end of which shows the Drum Major and Marie flirting and eventually rushing inside together, and act 2, scene 1, when Wozzeck becomes suspicious of Marie's new earrings.

We, as the audience of the *Bruchstücke*, are also not fully aware of Wozzeck's decrepit state that led him to murder. In the opera it is clear how Wozzeck is ridiculed by everyone around him, which is a detriment to his mental state. Act 1 follows Wozzeck's day-to-day routine and how the Captain, the Doctor and the Drum Major continue to belittle him, driving him further and further to madness. Marie's night with the Drum Major only adds fuel to the fire. Moreover, we see how at the realisation of his actions, Wozzeck descends into a further state of panic as he realises the needs to dispose of the murder weapon. Throwing the bloody knife into the pool, Wozzeck realises that he is covered in blood and must wash himself and inadvertently drowns himself ('Ich wasche mich mit Blut, das Wasser ist Blut… Blut…'). By the end of the opera, one understands how society's mistreatment of Wozzeck and the infidelity of his lover has led to his downfall.

In the *Bruchstücke*, however, none of this information about Wozzeck is revealed to the audience. The only reference to Wozzeck from Marie in the *Bruchstücke* is that he has not returned home since the day before yesterday, implying that he is the unfaithful, or at least

[31] Translated by Blackall and Harford, see Berg, *Georg Buechners Wozzeck*, 70–77.

disloyal, one. Wozzeck's physical absence in the *Bruchstücke* only reinforces the notion that he has neglected both Marie and her child. That we do not see Marie's murder take place also makes the act that bit more terrifying. In not knowing Wozzeck's poor mental state at the time, how do we know that Wozzeck did not murder Marie in cold blood. One of the key narrative threads of *Wozzeck*, therefore, is turned on its head for the *Bruchstücke*. Whereas in the former it is Marie who contributes to Wozzeck's suffering, in the latter we are led to believe the opposite: that Wozzeck is the reason for Marie's despair. *Wozzeck* and the *Bruchstücke* can accordingly be seen as two discrete adaptations of Büchner's *Woyzeck*. Though they share the source material, each has its own unique dramatic arc and interpretation of Büchner's characters. In other words, the *Bruchstücke* are not simply a derivation of *Wozzeck*, a condensed version of the opera that suffers due to the omission of scenes. Rather, the isolation of the three scenes for the *Bruchstücke* is what creates such distinct interpretations of Büchner's characters from their presentation in *Wozzeck*.

The *Bruchstücke*, in other words, should not be seen as a *Wozzeck*-suite *per se*. In fact, the *Bruchstücke* bear little resemblance to what audiences and critics would have recognised as an opera suite at that time. Since the nineteenth century, an opera suite was typically arranged just for orchestra.[32] There were no live singers to narrate the drama. The purpose of a suite was for audiences to enjoy some of the opera's most popular tunes. Berg's retention of Marie for the *Bruchstücke* diverts from the traditional opera suite, as Marie recounts the drama to the audience.[33] Neither can the *Bruchstücke* be seen to constitute an

[32] While the term was originally used to describe groups of Baroque dances, suite, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, was more commonly used for a concert arrangement of a stage work. Famous examples include Bizet's *Carmen Suites 1 & 2*, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, Strauss's Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier* and Ravel's *Ma mère l'Oye*.

[33] We find a similar case with Berg's second opera, *Lulu*, out of which the composer made the *Symphonische Stücke* for orchestra and soprano, also designated for concert performance. As with *Wozzeck*, Berg made an arrangement of *Lulu* out of fear that the full opera would never be staged, though his motivation to do so was largely due to the political climate; by 1934, when Berg began working on the *Symphonische Stücke*, opera houses were becoming increasingly reluctant to stage *Wozzeck*, while the National Socialists branded Berg's music as *Kulturbolschewismus* (cultural bolshevism).

opera in the traditional sense. A performance of *Wozzeck* is complete with set designs, costumes and numerous scenic transitions. The *Bruchstücke*, on the other hand, were conceived for concert performance. This opens up the possibility for the *Bruchstücke* to be performed in a wider array of performance spaces. While both iterations can be performed in the opera house or the theatre, *Wozzeck* cannot be staged in smaller venues or the traditional concert hall (unless, of course, it is a concert performance of the opera). With these different performance spaces, the audience's sensory experience also differs between these venues. In the opera house, *Wozzeck*'s staging creates a more immersive experience with the sets and costumes, and the hiding of the orchestra in the pit. In a concert performance of the *Bruchstücke*, the performance is much more self-aware. The soprano and the orchestra are one on the stage, creating a different sonic experience as the two voices meld, while the lack of visual signifiers through staging is removed. Visually, the performance is also stiller. Whereas in the opera the characters control and move throughout the stage area, in a performance of the *Bruchstücke*, Marie stands still, trapped within the orchestra.

Lying somewhere between an opera and a suite, the *Bruchstücke* may be better understood as a monodrama. There are a number of similarities between Berg's *Bruchstücke* and Schoenberg's monodrama, *Erwartung*, which is also scored for full orchestra and soprano. Like the *Bruchstücke*, any awareness of time is lost in *Erwartung*, with Schoenberg's piece supposedly a mere moment stretched over thirty minutes. Both works are also introspective, told entirely from the point of view of one character: Marie in the *Bruchstücke*, the Woman in *Erwartung*, both of whom are mentally unstable. Also like the *Bruchstücke*, *Erwartung* is more frequently heard in the concert hall. In both the *Bruchstücke* and a concert performance of *Erwartung*, the soprano's position among the orchestra restricts their movement and perhaps, therefore, their ability to fully enter into the role. Whereas on the opera stage, the soprano can use both the space and more extensive physical gestures to

embody the role, they are confined in the concert hall to a couple of square metres at the most. Perhaps, though, this set up does have implicit dramatic symbolism. In both the *Bruchstücke* and *Erwartung*, the soprano's position among the orchestra symbolises her isolation from the world and inability to escape from her nightmare.

In Defence of *Wozzeck*

The success of the *Bruchstücke* at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest was paramount for *Wozzeck* having any longevity. Berg's need to drum up interest in *Wozzeck* was particularly pressing given the backlash towards the opera in preliminary piano-vocal form from some critics. In stark contrast to the letter of July 1922 cited earlier, a later letter to Schoenberg on 25 March 1924 reveals how Berg was now close to giving up on the project and that the performance at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest was *Wozzeck*'s final hope:

> we are planning 2 expensive trips shortly: Prague, *Erwartung* and Frankfurt the *Wozzeck Bruchstücke*. After years of longing, I simply cannot deny myself the former; I suppose I have to attend the latter; I can't risk having Scherchen botch those couple of scenes, thereby destroying the last chances of getting the whole opera performed. We are definitely counting on these 2 imperative trips; counting on the truest sense of the word: that is, saving.[34]

There were serious doubts from critics as to whether *Wozzeck* was feasible. Despite his praise of the work, even Viebig had his concerns, suggesting that at least a year's worth of rehearsals would be necessary in order to pull off 'even a reasonably acceptable version'.[35]

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[34] Letter from Berg to Schoenberg, Vienna, 25 March 1924, trans. Brand and Hailey, in *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence*, 331–332.

[35] 'The merging in this work of opera and absolute musical forms, which is quite new and is rigorously carried out, would be a step forward—perhaps even a *great* step forward—if the opera did not, at least as things are at present, hold within it its own demise. Perhaps it can be resurrected in the future, when more things are technically possible. But the work places such enormous demands on the singers and the orchestra that one would have to rehearse at least a year in order to produce even a reasonably acceptable version'. Viebig, 'Alban Berg's 'Wozzeck'', quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 142. In a letter from Berg to his wife on 8 April, he notes how Schoenberg also had doubts towards *Wozzeck*. Berg quotes Schoenberg describing the work as 'intolerable' and as saying 'I shouldn't imagine *Wozzeck* will have any success, it's too difficult'. Quoted in Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg: The Man and His Work* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 52.

The most damning review of *Wozzeck* came from Emil Petschnig, which appeared in *Die Musik* in February 1924. Petschnig's distaste towards Berg's piano-vocal score stemmed from the fact that, in his opinion, the composer's complex approach to harmony and rhythm completely masked the opera's musical structure. Writing about act 1, scene 4, a passacaglia, Petschnig noted that: 'If the composer had not numbered every variation in order to make his intentions clear nobody would have recognized the movement as such from these monotonous sounds'.[36] He goes on to note how composers since Wagner, in embracing the latter's 'unending melody', had forfeited traditional compositional techniques that signalled particular situations in opera. This, in turn, led to a reduced quality of vocal writing, something which was still problematic in *Wozzeck*. Petschnig noted how Berg's vocal writing 'defies description and indicates total unfamiliarity with the subject'.[37] In Petschnig's opinion, Berg had only 'deceive[d] himself and others' if the composer believed *Wozzeck* was somehow a return to tradition: 'At the very best one can only speak of feeble attempts at recreating opera through certain formal devices but these attempts drown hopelessly in a jumble of chords and voices'.[38] Ultimately, Petschnig saw *Wozzeck* to be too much of a compositional exercise, rather than an inspired work of art. This viewpoint would have been reinforced by the fact that, at the time, Berg was still seen as subordinate to his teacher Arnold Schoenberg.[39] Petschnig concluded: 'I only feel regret at the undoubtedly considerable knowledge of compositional technique that has been used on this, in itself inconsistent, exercise'.[40]

[36] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 144.
[37] Quoted in ibid., 147.
[38] Quoted in ibid., 146–147.
[39] Writing recently about the *Bruchstücke* at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest, Amanda Hsieh notes how 'Schoenberg's 'notoriety as a 'technical'—hence mechanical and expressionless—composer still cast a shadow over his now 38-year-old former student's first opera'. Hsieh, 'Lyrical Tension, Collective Voices', 346.
[40] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 149.

Berg took Petschnig's essay to heart. The composer's response, 'The Musical Forms in my Opera 'Wozzeck'', which also appeared in *Die Musik* shortly after in May 1924, reveals how defensive Berg was of his opera:

> Far be it from me to oppose the musico-theoretical views of Herr Emil Petschnig—every bar of my music does that better than words ever could—but I would like to correct a few of the vast number of untruths in his article 'Creating Atonal Opera'.[41]

Berg went on to accuse Petschnig's 'method of criticizing by distorting the truth'.[42] One example of Berg 'correcting' Petschnig regarded the famous D minor interlude from act 3, the invention on a key. Petschnig points out how, after only two pages, Berg drops the key signature of one flat to explore other harmonic areas and complained that there were too many keys in this section: 'This is, therefore, a harmonic farce and much of what has gone before resembles a formal bluff'.[43] In his response, Berg stresses that the interlude is in fact in three parts, with the key-signature-less middle section leading back to the home key of D minor. This, as Berg is keen to make clear, is made obvious by the return of the key signature for the final section, a detail which Petschnig seemed to have ignored entirely. The conclusion to Berg's letter suggests that he did not expect Petschnig to be the only opponent to *Wozzeck* and that he was ready to come to his opera's defence again, should needs be. In fact, he actively sought a challenge:

> One can believe me when I say that these and other musical forms are successful at the points at which they were intended to be; and also that I am capable of proving their correctness and legitimacy in a more thorough, and thus a more conclusive manner than has been possible here. Anyone who wishes to be convinced of this should get in touch with me; I shall be happy to oblige.[44]

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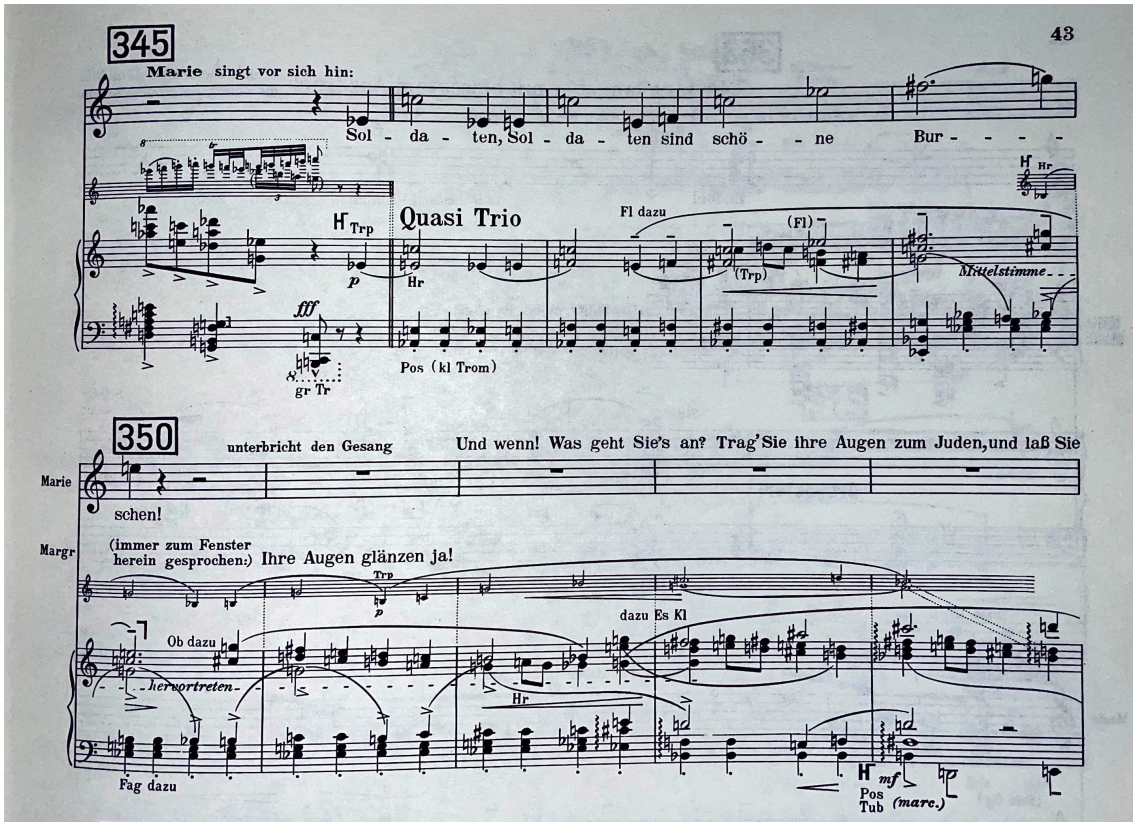
[41] Quoted in ibid., 149. Berg also got into a heated debate with Pfitzner over his views. See 'The Musical Impotence of Hans Pfitzner's *Die neue Ästhetik*', in *Pro Mundo—Pro Domo: The Writings of Alban Berg*, ed. Bryan R. Simms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 167–176.
[42] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 150.
[43] Quoted in ibid., 146.
[44] Quoted in ibid., 151–152.

If Berg's essay was a literary response to Petschnig's essay, the *Bruchstücke* may well have been a practical comeback to the critic's complaints. Though we cannot say for certain that the *Bruchstücke* were a direct reaction to Petschnig's 'Creating Atonal Opera'—it is unclear when exactly Berg settled on the choice of scenes (his letter to Schoenberg in March 1924 suggests that the fragments were finalised by then, and they were published later that year by Universal Edition)—it is striking how the scenes Berg chose for the *Bruchstücke* seemingly disprove several of Petschnig's concerns. At the very least, Petschnig's complaints would no doubt have been on the composer's mind when preparing them for publication.

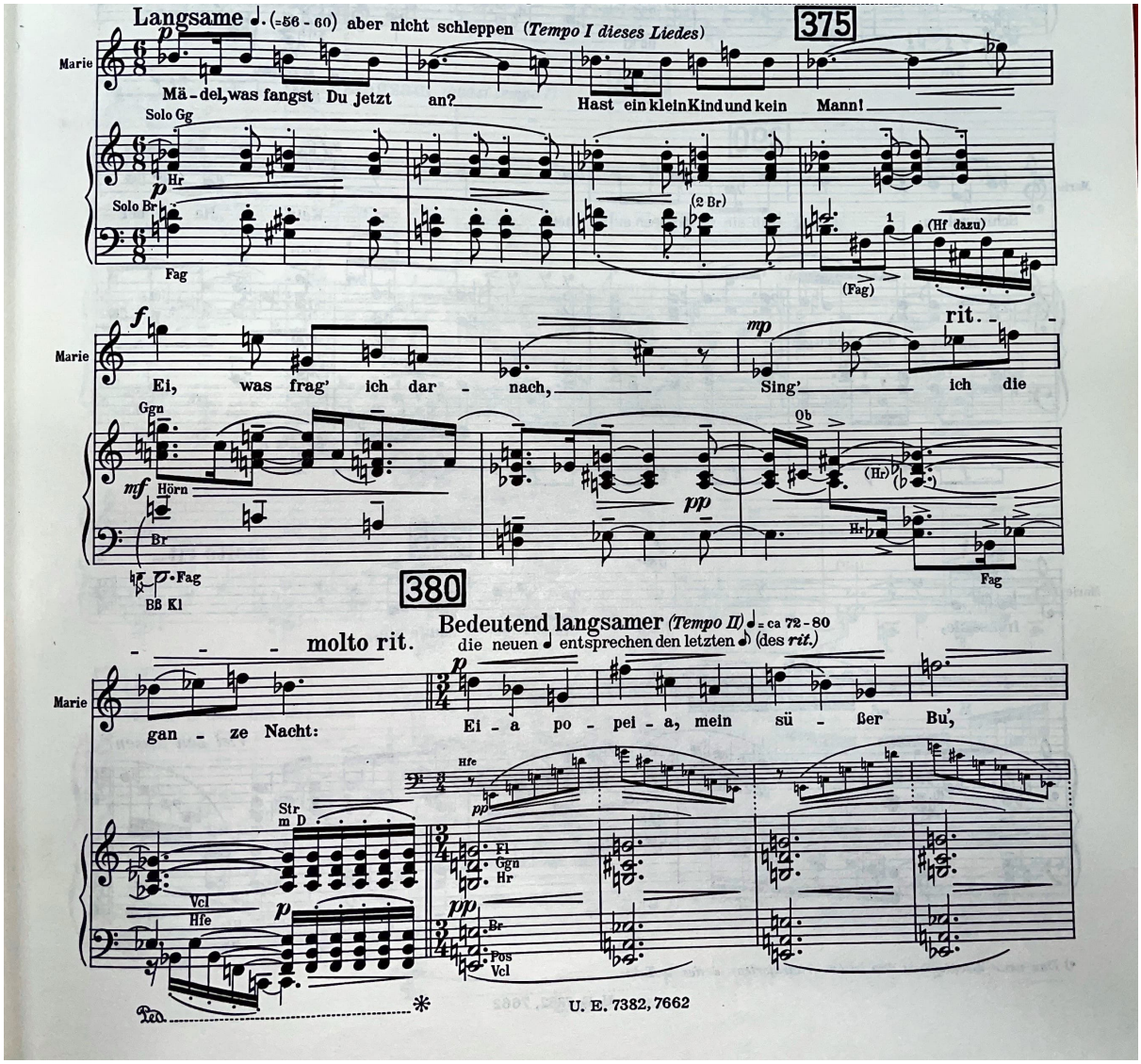
That both critics and opera practitioners had repeatedly emphasised the impracticality of Berg's score may have led to him to select these scenes in an effort to prove the work's accessibility. The three scenes that make up the *Bruchstücke* are arguably some of the opera's most lyrical and accessible passages that rely on the late Romantic style more so than free atonality. They also seemingly address several of the specific issues raised by Petschnig. In his essay, for instance, Petschnig complained about the dense textures and cacophony in Berg's score. For the *Bruchstücke*, it is notable that Berg selected points from the opera at which orchestral textures are at their simplest. As the piano-vocal score makes clear, Marie's line at the opening of the Mahlerian-inspired march (Soldaten, Soldaten sind schöne Burschen) is clearly a melody and accompaniment (see Example 1). Her line is doubled by the horns and trumpets, while the trombones play repeated crotches to accompany the melody. The lullaby is similarly homophonic, with its strophic structure allowing for regular phrasing (see Example 2). The opening lines make up an eight-bar phrase that is subdivided into four two-bar phrases.



Example 1: Alban Berg, Wozzeck, act 1, bb. 345–354. © Copyright 1926 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien / UE7382USA: © 1949 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien

That Marie was a far more recognisable character type in opera may also have influenced Berg in his decision to focus the *Bruchstücke* on Marie. Jarman notes how Wozzeck was the first 'psychotic anti-hero' to be the lead protagonist in an opera.[45] Marie, on the other hand, can be seen as the archetypal tragic female figure, let down by those (usually men) around her or in a society that is not suited to her, ultimately leading to her death.[46] An archetype familiar from countless other operas, Marie is, in that sense, quite generic and a safer choice than Wozzeck, especially when there was already scepticism towards the opera.

[45] Ibid., 2.
[46] One thinks of Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*, Manon in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.



Example 2: Alban Berg, *Wozzeck*, act 1, bb. 372–838. © Copyright 1926 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien / UE7382USA: © 1949 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien.

Petschnig also complained that Berg's return to more formal structures was not a successful alternative to post-Wagnerian melody:

> A musico-dramatic renaissance demands far more resolute action, a complete break with the present trend as represented by Strauss or even Schreker, a wholly new alignment and a completely fresh start; steps similar to those that have already been taken in instrumental music by moving music away from the gigantic, massive symphony to the intimacy of chamber music.[47]

[47] Quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg*, 147.

Though Berg did not reduce the size of the orchestra for the *Bruchstücke*, there are several ways in which the *Bruchstücke* can be perceived as a more chamber, intimate setting of *Wozzeck*. For example, whereas in *Wozzeck*, the audience learns about Büchner's fictional world by observing how the characters interact with each other, in the *Bruchstücke*, we learn through Marie's memories and experiences. The concert set up also adds to the chamber-like feel. Marie's fixed position on the stage directs the audience's eyes to one particular spot, one particular face, with the rest of the theatre left to their peripheral vision.

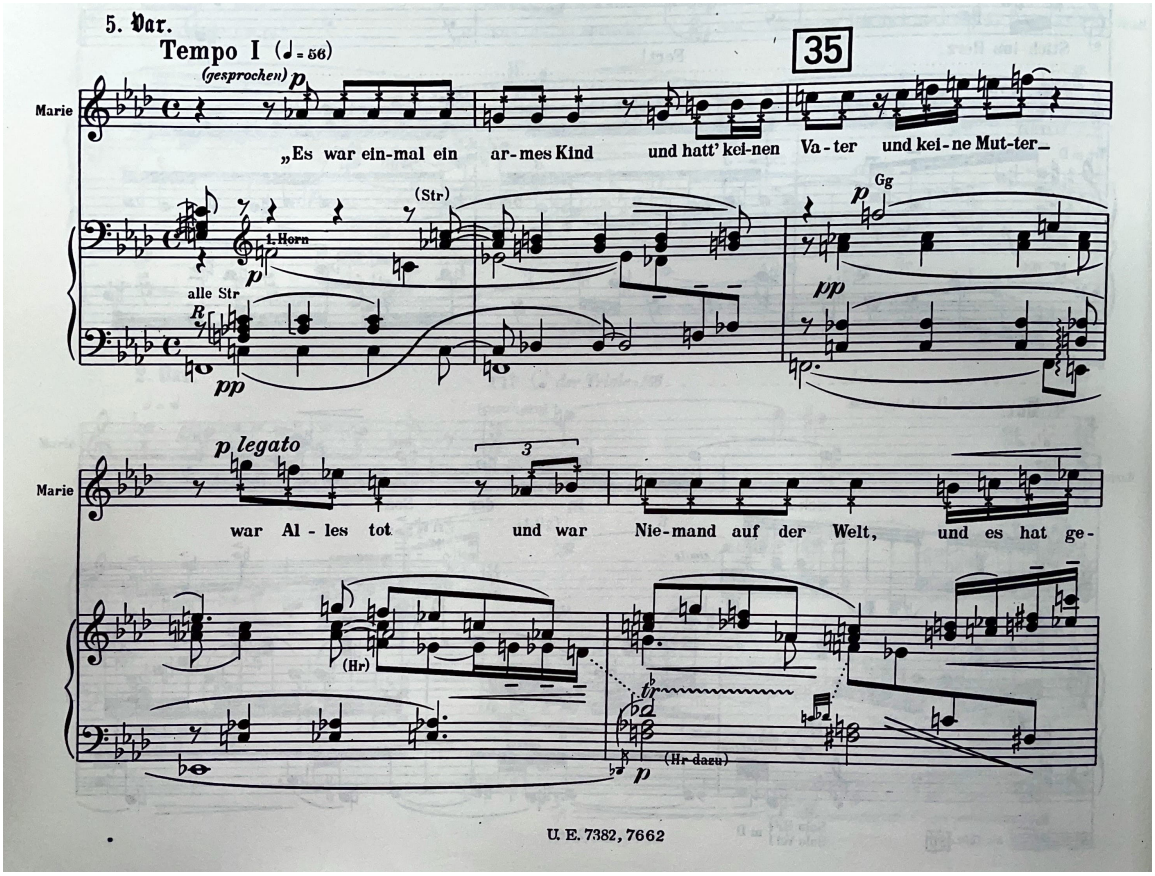
For the *Bruchstücke*, Berg also selected some of the opera's most musically and dramatically intimate moments. The second fragment, at times, is especially chamber-like. It opens with muted solo violin, viola and cello, all playing softly and close in pitch, and solo strings appear throughout the scene. The scene itself is also intimate in several ways. It takes place in Marie's bedroom, which is lit by a single candle. The scene focuses on two relationships: first, Marie and her child; second, her relationship with God. She cradles her child on her lap, while she herself begs her heavenly father for forgiveness. Variation 5 is also notable as it clearly is in the key of F minor, hardly a jumble of chords as Petschnig claimed. As in the first fragment, the texture of the music is clearly homophonic, with Marie's lyrical vocal lines, which outlines F minor, soaring above the syncopated strings (see Example 3).

Berg's use of *Sprechgesang* for Marie in this scene also signals the intimacy of the second fragment. In her analysis of the vocal part of Wozzeck, Amanda Hsieh argues that Berg's 'utility of this technique lies not so much in its novelty', but in the way it is used 'to [signal] the vulnerability of, and solidarity between, the opera's downtrodden characters in a cruel environment'.[48] Hsieh goes on to write:

[48] Hsieh, 'Lyrical Tension, Collective Voices', 339–340.

> In marking out the space for *Sprechgesang* as a one of lower-class camaraderie and explicit social critique, Berg allows this voice to become an unusual kind of vernacular language used between the 'wir arme Leut' of this opera.[49]

She notes how Berg mostly assigns *Sprechgesang* to Wozzeck's part when he is not around his superiors. In act 1 scene 2, for example, Hsieh writes how *Sprechgesang* is a 'secret language' between Wozzeck and Andres.[50] Taking Hsieh's argument that *Sprechgesang* in *Wozzeck* takes on such a personal, intimate meaning, it is significant that in the second fragment of the *Bruchstücke* Marie frequently uses *Sprechgesang*—after all, she too is one of the 'arme Leut'. The use of *Sprechgesang* in act 3, scene 1, then, is not so much a juxtaposition between the traditional and the modern, but rather a signal of Marie's intimate relationship with her child.



Example 3: Alban Berg, *Wozzeck*, act 3, bb. 33–37. © Copyright 1926 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien / UE7382USA: © 1949 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien.

[49] Ibid., 345.
[50] Ibid., 340–341.

The ADMV Tonkünstlerfest: 9–15 June 1924

The real test of whether the *Bruchstücke* could reassure sceptics came at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest in June 1924. By the time of the festival, Berg had secured conductor Erich Kleiber to stage the full opera at the Staatsoper in Berlin. Reviews of the festival, though, suggest that Kleiber's involvement in the project was not yet public knowledge. That Berg had finally secured a performance of the full opera, therefore, by no means made the *Bruchstücke* redundant. The ADMV Tonkünstlerfest was still of paramount importance to market *Wozzeck* and would hopefully serve as a teaser to make critics and audiences intrigued to experience the work in its entirety (and secure further performances of the opera in addition to the upcoming one in Berlin). That Berg had described the work as 'fragments' may also have drummed up further interest in *Wozzeck*. The title 'fragments of *Wozzeck*' would have planted the idea in people's minds that this was not the final product, but merely a taster of something far more ambitious and noteworthy.

The ADMV's 1924-Tonkünstlerfest programme distinguished itself from previous years by the way it included numerous works for the stage, with many performances taking place at the Opernhaus and by some of the leading young composers of the day. As a mini showcase of the modern German stage, then, 1924 was a particularly exciting year for Berg's *Bruchstücke* to be included. The festival opened with Krenek's *Der Sprung über den Schatten*; the third evening was a back-to-back concert of Hindemith's ballet-pantomime *Der Dämon* and Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat*; Berg's *Bruchstücke* was then programmed for the first orchestral concert on the fourth day (though reviews indicate it was in fact performed during the final orchestral concert on the last day); an altogether different opera was performed on the sixth day: Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, which was especially welcomed amidst a renewed interest in Baroque opera in Germany, heralded by the so-called

Handel Renaissance.[51] Interspersed among these stage works, the festival programme also included a range of orchestral, chamber and choral works, both new and old. The second morning of the festival opened with a lecture from Alois Hába about his approaches to quartal harmony. This was demonstrated by selections from his String Quartet no. 2, Suite no. 1 for quartertone piano and Fantasy for Solo Violin, as well as his a cappella-Suite. The programme also featured more late-Romantic choral works such as Schoenberg's *Friede auf Erden* and Pfitzner's *Columbus*. To conclude, the 1924-Tonkünstlerfest included a performance of Strauss's *Sinfonia Domestica* to celebrate the composer's sixtieth birthday (though the composer himself did not attend).

Amidst these exciting ventures in new music and birthday celebrations, accounts of the festival's General Meeting reveal that the ADMV was going through a period of considerable crisis. Following the end of the war and in the wake of Germany's hyperinflation, the ADMV, like many other organisations across Germany, was in severe financial trouble. The society had four foundations, each named after a different figure—Liszt, Beethoven, Wagner and Mansouroff—but their funds were now dangerously low, which was a cause of great concern for many at the General Meeting.[52] Another point of contention was Germany's increasingly materialist-oriented culture, which was seen as interfering with the nation's long-held interest in its cultural assets such as music. As Oscar von Pander noted in a review for the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, artists can only fulfil their potential when supported by the masses, as they are not usually blessed enough to support

[51] 'Da heute die Bühnen wieder Händelsche Opern aufführen, wird vielleicht auch Purcell gelegentlich einmal als ein Stück historischen Theaters lebendig werden'. W. Jacobs, 'Vom Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt. II.', *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 420, 17 June 1924. For contemporary discussions on the Handel Renaissance, see Johannes Kobelt, 'Händel-Opern—Festspiele Göttingen (Juli 1922)', *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 49 (1922): 619–620, Rudolf Steglich, 'Händel und die Gegenwart', *Zeitschrift für Musik* 92 (1925): 333–338 and Ernst Schliepe, 'Händels Opern und die Gegenwart', *Die Musik* 20 (June 1928): 640–643.

[52] 'man beklagte es, daß der Wert der der Vereinigung angegliederten Stiftungen (Liszt-, Beethoven-, Richard Wagner-, Mansouroff-Stiftung), die so viel Gutes gewirkt hatten, durch die gewalttätige Finanzpolitik des Staates fast auf Null zusammenschmolz'. Paul Marsop, 'Musik-Rundschau. Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfest. Von unserem Sonderberichterstatter. II.', *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, No. 167, 22 June 1924.

themselves financially.[53] The ADMV was also experiencing something of an identity crisis, particularly regarding its name as the Allgemeine *Deutsche* Musikverein. Reporting for the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, Paul Marsop describes how 'a wave of patriotic feeling swept powerfully through the hall' as they discussed how German composers were seemingly becoming marginalised in the international scene, as well as in their own national festivals.[54] The ISCM was a particular source of contention in this debate. Kapellmeister Schulz-Dornburg from Bochum suggested the ADMV strike up a partnership with the ISCM, but others who were present objected; some could not fathom how Germans could associate themselves with those who came up with the Treaty of Versailles. Others, however, such as Hans Schnoor for the *Leipziger Tageblatt* felt that nowadays there were no longer any differences between national and international issues, that the distinction between 'national' and 'international' music festivals was somewhat redundant.[55]

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[53] 'Seit seinem bald dreiundsechzigjährigen Bestehen hat der Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein keine so kritische Periode durchgemacht, wie die letzten zehn Jahre. Wurde ihm doch seine vornehmste Aufgabe, die Förderung der deutschen Musik, anfangs durch den Krieg, nachher durch die wirtschaftliche Zerrüttung unendlich erschwert, drohte doch der Boden, auf dem er erwachsen war, das Interesse für die Kulturgüter der Nation, in der Jagd nach dem Dollar völlig in das Nichts eines Schieber-Materialismus zu versinken. Denn nicht nur gilt für den schaffenden Musiker mehr noch als für die übrigen Künste der Satz, daß er ohne eine wirkungsvolle Resonanz in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft nie zur letzten Entfaltung aller seiner Möglichkeiten gelangen kann, sondern es ist auch eine ebenso bekannte Tatsache, daß er meist nicht mit irdischen Gütern gesegnet und daher darauf angewiesen ist, daß das das Interesse breiter Massen ihm die Bedingungen zum freien Produzieren schafft'. Oscar von Pander, 'Zum 54. Tonkünstlerfest', *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* [no date].

[54] 'Dr. Holle (Stuttgart) führte mit treffenden Worten und unter Heranziehung beweiskräftigen Materials Klage darüber, daß bei der diesjährigen Vereinstagung ausländische Komponisten in erster Reihe stünden, während umgekehrt bei Musikfesten im Auslande die deutschen Tonsetzer sich an den Katzentisch verwiesen sähen. Jetzt brach das Unwetter mit voller Kraft los. Verleger Sander (Leipzig), von allgemeiner Zustimmung getragen, fragte, wie es denn eigentlich mit der Berücksichtigung des Deutschen im Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikverein aussähe. Eine Welle vaterländischen Empfindens durchrauschte machtvoll den Saal. Just diesen Augenblick hielt Kapellmeister Schulz-Dornburg (Bochum) für geeignet, eine Arbeitsgemeinschaft zwischen dem Verein und der kuriosen neugegründeten „Internationalen Musikgesellschaft", in der die Deutschen eine klägliche Rolle spielen, anzuregen. Vom Schreiber dieser Zeilen mußte er sich sagen lassen, daß man es in weitesten Kreisen nicht verstünde, wie sich Deutsche ohne Not mit Angehörigen den Völkern, die den Versailler Schmachfrieden diktierten und gleichgültig dem zusähen, wie Hunderttausende afrikanischer Bestien auf deutschem Boden ihr Schwandwesen trieben, an einen Tisch setzten'. Marsop, 'Musik-Rundschau. Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfest. Von unserem Sonderberichterstatter. II.'.

[55] 'Heute gibt es keine Probleme mehr, die nicht die künstlerisch empfängliche Menschheit aller Nationen anginge. Und so sollte es auch prinzipiell keinen Unterschied mehr geben zwischen „nationalen" und „internationalen" Musikfesten'. Hans Schnoor, 'Zeitgenössische Musik. Ein Nachwort zu den Prager und Frankfurter Musikwochen', *Leipziger Tageblatt*, 28 June 1924.

Notwithstanding these concerns over the festival's nationalist/internationalist tone, the programme's strong emphasis on opera was seen by some to be particularly German.[56] (Given the prominence of opera and stage works at the festival, this may explain why nationalist sentiments were so strong that year.) At the 1924-Tonkünstlerfest, Krenek and Berg were the two main contenders for showcasing developments in German-language opera. Even more exciting for those present was that both *Der Sprung über den Schatten* and *Wozzeck* were Krenek and Berg's first stage works to be produced and thus potentially opened new directions for opera.[57] Expectations, though, would have been far higher for *Der Sprung über den Schatten*, especially with Krenek's opera opening the whole festival. *Der Sprung über den Schatten* was staged in its entirety (three acts, fifteen scenes), with no less than fifteen lead singers, plus a choir. The forces were considerably less for Berg's *Bruchstücke*, which lasted no more than twenty minutes and was only a concert performance.

Der Sprung über den Schatten and *Wozzeck* stood together as two opposing directions for new opera. Their respective subject matter and plots, for example, were antithetical. Büchner's play was a serious drama with themes of war, trauma and desperation. The text for *Der Sprung über den Schatten* (which Krenek wrote himself), on the other hand, was a parody. Krenek himself dubbed the work a *Komische Oper*, though many critics at the Tonkünstlerfest agreed that it was better described as a 'grotesque operetta' or a 'sharp contemporary satyr'.[58] The premise of the work: Prince Kuno hires the detective Marcus to

[56] Hans Schnoor commented that 'The turn to opera as experimental form is symptomatic of German creativity in general' (Symptomatisch ist für das deutsche Schaffen überhaupt der Hand zur Oper als Experimentalform.). Schnoor, 'Zeitgenössische Musik. Ein Nachwort zu den Prager und Frankfurter Musikwochen. II.', *Leipziger Tageblatt*, 24 June 1924.

[57] Krenek had already written his scenic cantata *Die Zwingburg*, though this would not receive its first performance until 21 October 1924 at the Berlin State Opera, under Erich Kleiber.

[58] 'Was indessen zunächst an dem Werk zu beanstanden ist, ist die Gattungsbezeichnung als Oper, selbst als „komische" Oper. Es ist mehr eine scharfe Zeitsatyre, ja eine turbulante Groteske'. Paul Bekker, '54. Tonkünstlerfest des Allgem. Deutschen Musikvereins', *Kieler Zeitung*, no. 279, 17 June 1924. 'Ernst Kreneks angeblich „komische" Oper Der Sprung über den Schatten ist tatsächlich eine aus Rand und Band gegangene Grotesk-Operette, mit der den Hörnerven bisher Unerhörtes zugemutet wird'. Paul Marsop, 'Musik-Rundschau. Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfest. Von unserem Sonderberichterstatter. I.', *Münchner neueste Nachrichten*, no. 167 [no date].

investigate the supposed affair between his wife Princess Leonore and the hypnotist Dr Berg. Leonore, however, is actually in love with another man entirely, the poet Laurenz Goldhaar. Dr Berg is good friends with Marcus, and for much of the opera Dr Berg impersonates Marcus as 'the detective'. After a masked party one evening, a series of mix-ups and misunderstandings occur: Kuno mistakenly dances with the maid Odette, and the Countess Blandine tries to meet with Goldhaar, who she thinks is Dr Berg. Blandine and 'the detective' then arrange a séance at the palace for that evening, in order to catch the hypnotist. Goldhaar, however, walks in at the wrong moment and he is believed to be the hypnotist. At Goldhaar's trial, Dr Berg now assumes the guise of a lawyer, while Marcus appears as witness and suggests Kuno and Leonore separate. Kuno eventually ends up seeing Odette, while Leonore continues to meet Goldhaar in prison. And herein lies the main message of the opera: that one cannot escape their own (sexual) desires, impulses and needs—ultimately, one cannot leap over their own shadow.

Der Sprung über den Schatten parodied contemporary German life. Dr Berg, for instance, makes something of a mockery of psychological treatment. He uses hypnosis to help his clients 'leap over their shadows'. Yet as Marcus announces at the opera's conclusion: 'You see, they no sooner think they have carried out the leap, than the old shadow reappears'.[59] The opera also deals with everyday topics such as marriage and divorce, foreshadowing Hindemith's later *Neues vom Tage*. Krenek's opera also references and parodies several opera tropes. Leonore's visits to Goldhaar in prison, for instance, harks back to Beethoven's *Fidelio*, while the frequent misunderstandings signal the work's indebtedness to comic opera.

[59] Quoted in Susan Cook, see *Opera for a New Republic: The* Zeitopern *of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 206. The original German is as follows: 'Du siehst, kaum glaubten sie, den Sprung vollführt, zu haben, schon ist der alte Schatten da, sie werden lustig weiter traben…'. See Ernst Krenek, *Der Sprung über den Schatten: Komische Oper in drei Akten (10 Bildern): Dichtung und Musik von Ernst Krenek, Op. 17. Klavierauszug mit Text* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1923), 192.

Musically, *Der Sprung über den Schatten* and *Wozzeck* were also strikingly different. Berg's sounds world for *Wozzeck* lay between that of the late Romantic tradition of Mahler and the new music of Schoenberg. Krenek's score, on the other hand, is a fusion of his atonal style of writing, which had come to be expected of Krenek, and American popular tunes and jazz. The Foxtrot, in particular, frequently recurs in Krenek's score for *Der Sprung über den Schatten*: the opera's overture is in the tempo of a Foxtrot, there is designated Foxtrot in the masked ball scene, and foxtrot idioms appear once again in the finale.[60] Critics at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest were generally in agreement that Krenek's music was one of the strongest elements of the work. In the *Kieler Zeitung*, Bekker wrote:

> The expressive power of Krenek's music is almost unbelievable, brought to life by an immediately convincing musical impulse. Jazz and shimmy, foxtrot and waltz play an important role. […] An electrifying rhythm livens the whole work, which masterfully demonstrates the formally excellent, even ingenious, 'movements'.[61]

Heinrich Strobel also welcomed Krenek's music, especially for the way it turned its back on romanticism, particularly sentiment, and had clearly defined musical numbers.[62]

Despite the admiration for Krenek's music, critics had major concerns with the text and overall plot for *Der Sprung über den Schatten*, which ultimately led to the opera being something of a disappointment. For many, *Der Sprung über den Schatten* was simply far too long. Bekker, for example, commented on how repartee and brevity were two essential

[60] See Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 80–81.
[61] 'Kreneks Musik ist von nahezu unglaublicher Ausdrucksstärke, beseelt von unmittelbar überzeugender musikalischer Triebkraft. Jazz und Schimmy, Foxtrott und Walzer spielen eine wichtige Rolle. […] Ein elektrisierender Rhythmus belebt das ganze Werk, das formal hervorragend gekonnte, ja geniale „Sätze" aufweist.' Paul Bekker, '54. Tonkünstlerfest des Allgem. Deutschen Musikvereins', *Kieler Zeitung*, no. 279, 17 June 1924.
[62] 'Trotz aller Schwächen begrüßt man in dieser Oper die entscheidende Abwendung von Romantik und Sentiment, die Rückkehr zu einer (wenn auch noch unklaren) musikalischen Formung. Ein Jugendwerk, unreif und unbekümmert um Erfordernisse des Theaters, aber doch verheißend'. Heinrich Strobel, '54. Deutsches Tonkünstlerfest. Von unserem st-Sonderberichterstatter. I.', *Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 162, 15 June 1924.

components for any kind of joke.[63] Over three acts, Krenek's joke was seen to have become tired and at times boring. Critics also agreed that the quality of Krenek's text was poor. As Karl Johann Perl bluntly put it in a review for the *Ausburger Post. Zeitung*: 'He shouldn't have done that: he lacks any talent for it'.[64] In the *Deutscher Musiker-Zeitung*, a Dr M. U. also described the text as 'a tasteless mixture of grotesque, farce and comedy'.[65] The grotesque elements of *Der Sprung über den Schatten* also seemed to have ruffled a few feathers, recalling the performance of Hindemith's triptych back in March 1922.[66] For several critics, this showcase of the grotesque betrayed the engraved message above the entrance to the Oper Frankfurt: 'Dem Wahren Schönen Guten' (To the true, the beautiful, the good). In the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, Heinrich Chevalley remarked how that evening, the Oper had probably never moved so far away from these words, while in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, Paul Schwers, describing the opera stage as a brothel, suggested an alternative, more appropriate message following the premiere of *Der Sprung über den Schatten*: 'Dem Verlogenen, dem Gemeinen, dem Häßlichen' (To the lying, the vulgar, the ugly).[67]

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[63] 'Ein elektrisierender Rhythmus belebt das ganze Werk, das formal hervorragend gekonnte, ja geniale „Sätze" aufweist. Und doch stellte sich, trotz einer in jeder Beziehung einfach vollendeten und großartigen Aufführung, mitunter etwas wie Langweile ein. Denn das Wesen eines Witzes, einer Groteske ist Schlagfertigkeit und Kürze. Neben vielem ausgezeichnet Gelungenen fanden sich auch Bilder, in denen die erforderliche Oekonomie nicht gewahrt war'. Bekker, 54. Tonkünstlerfest des Allgem. Deutschen Musikvereins'.

[64] 'Ernst Krenek, der jüngste unter diesen Dreien, dichtete sich sein Buch selbst. Das hätte er nicht tun sollen: es fehlt ihm dazu jede Begabung'. Karl Johann Perl, 'Feuilleton. Das Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfest. Krenek, Hindemith, Stravinski', *Ausburger Post. Zeitung*, no. 136, 13 June 1924.

[65] 'Das Buch ist im Grunde ein abgeschmacktes Stilgemisch von Groteske, Posse und Lustspiel mit einem gehörigen Schuß Ironie und Satire'. Dr. M. U., 'Oper und Konzert. 54. Tonkünstlerfest des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins in Frankfurt a. M.', *Deutscher Musiker-Zeitung*, no. 24, 14 June 1924.

[66] The grotesque elements of *Der Dämon* were also a point of contention for some.

[67] 'Ueber dem Frankfurter Opernhaus, in dem fast alle wichtigen Veranstaltungen des Festes stattfinden, sieht in Stein eingehauen: „Dem Wahren, Schönen, Guten." Und in diesem also geweihten Hause wurde gestern als erstes Werk Ernst Kreneks Oper „Der Sprung über den Schatten" zur Uraufführung gebracht. Wohl niemals entfernte sich das Frankfurter Opernhaus weiter von den Endzielen der ihm in diesen Worten vorgezeichneten Aufgabe als am gestrigen Abend, denn von den drei inhaltsschweren Forderungen ist in Kreneks Oper auch nicht eine einzige erfüllt'. Heinrich Chevalley, 'Das Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt a. M. I.', *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, no. 161, 11 June 1924. 'Die Opernbühne als stilisierte Bordellszene! Nur, daß die eindeutigen Dinge im gewöhnlichen Freudenhaus weniger raffiniert und darum weniger giftgefährlich sich auswirken als unter der Maske „seriöser" Kunst. „Dem Wahren, dem Guten, dem Schönen", so steht es in weithin sichtbaren Lettern am Giebel des Frankfurter Opernhauses zu ersetzen. Ich schlage vor: „Dem Verlogenen, dem Gemeinen, dem Häßlichen!"'. Paul Schwers, 'Das Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfest des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins. Die Bühnenwerke.', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, no. 27 (1924).

While critics were overwhelmingly disappointed with *Der Sprung über den Schatten*, the *Bruchstücke* were repeatedly praised as one of the most impressive works performed during the week. Reviewers frequently praised the soprano Beatrice Sutter-Kottlar for her performance as Marie.[68] Dr K. H., in a review for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, noted how her performance 'penetrated so deeply into the heart that spontaneous applause erupted throughout the entire house'.[69] In the *Neue Musik Zeitung*, Hugo Holle marked Sutter-Kottlar as one of the best interpreters of new vocal music.[70] Brought to life through Sutter-Kottlar's vocal ability, the lyricism of Berg's writing and the emotional weight of his music was also highlighted as one of the most impressive features of the *Bruchstücke*. According to Bekker:

> Berg's music is atonal, linear expressive art. His music, nevertheless, is still immediately convincing and forces you to directly experience the play's tragic and harrowing psychological events. The succinct sounds, fantastic power and suggestiveness like that in the interlude before the end of the opera are truly 'unheard of'.[71]

The *Bruchstücke* seemingly allowed critics to appreciate Berg's music from another angle. Whereas early reviews of *Wozzeck* in its entirety focused on the construction of the score from an intellectual point of view, in stripping *Wozzeck* of this grand structure, critics homed in on the emotional weight of particular moments in Berg's opera.

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[68] Sutter-Kottlar (1883–1935) had been based at the Frankfurt Oper since 1917, where she had sung other roles in contemporary opera. In July 1920, for example, she sung the role of Chawa for the premiere of Stefan's *Die ersten Menschen*. She was also well connected, with Hindemith even dedicating his String Quartet no. 5 to her.
[69] Die drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck, 'die in denkbar intensiver Darstellung durch Beatrice Sutter-Kottlar, Hermann Scherchen und das Orchester (samt einem kleinen Knabenchor) so tief zu Herzen drangen, daß spontaner Beifall das Haus durchbrauste'. Dr. K. H., 'Ende des Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfestes.', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, no. 443, 16 June 1924.
[70] '*Beatrice Sutter-Kottlar* sang die Partie der Marie mit jener Gestaltungskraft, die sie wohl zur besten Interpretin neuer Gesangswerke gemacht hat'. Hugo Holle, 'Vom Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt a. M.', *Neue Musik Zeitung*, Heft 7 (1924): 173–175 (175).
[71] 'Bergs Musik ist atonale, lineare Ausdruckskunst; sie ist aber trotzdem unmittelbar überzeugende Musik und zwingt zu unmittelbarem Miterlebnis der tragischen und erschütternden Seelenvorgänge des Spiels. Klänge von der Prägnanz und hinreißenden Gewalt und Suggestivität wie dies Zwischenspiel vor dem Schluß der Oper sind wahrhaft „unerhört"'. Bekker, '54. Tonkünstlerfest (Fortsetzung)'.

Bekker, for one, after seeing Berg's and Krenek's entries that year, was surprised that *Der Sprung über den Schatten* had been chosen as the main festival opera over *Wozzeck*.[72] The festival's programming inadvertently helped spin this narrative. Having the *Bruchstücke* on the last day of the festival allowed it to redeem the earlier mistake of *Der Sprung über den Schatten*. If critics wished they had seen less of *Der Sprung über den Schatten*, the *Bruchstücke* only left them wanting to see more of Berg's opera. A review of the *Bruchstücke* by Albert Maaß in the *Hagener Zeitung* confirms how the *Bruchstücke* impressed and whetted the appetites of critics:

> In the second orchestra concert, which was also the last of the festival, we were introduced to Alban Berg's 'Drei Bruchstücke aus der Oper "Wozzeck"', the festival's item of greatest musical value. Berg adds music to Büchner's strange, brilliant and visionary drama. It requires considerable skill to reach the genius and distinctive essence of Büchner, a skill which Berg possesses to an astonishing extent.
>
> […]
>
> Stages should secure the opera. It is one of the most important pieces of modern music and in turn is proof that music is fundamentally the art of the soul and must remain so.[73]

Adolf Aber for the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* believed it was 'unforgivable' that no director was yet to have taken on the work.[74] If prior to this performance, then, Berg was concerned that his opera was already at the end of its life before it had even begun, the

[72] 'Den vielleicht stärksten und lebendigsten Gewinn brachte die Uraufführung dreier Uraufführung dreier Bruchstücke aus der Oper „Wozzeck" von Alban Berg. Nach diesen Proben mußte man sich doch fragen, warum man nicht dieses Werk als Festoper gewählt hat an Stelle des ihm gegenüber immerhin recht fraglicher und mehr äußerlich blendenden „Sprung über den Schatten"'. Paul Bekker, '54. Tonkünstlerfest (Fortsetzung)', *Kieler Zeitung*, no. 289, 22 June 1924.

[73] 'Im 2. Orchester-Konzert, das gleichzeitig das letzte des Festes war, wurde man dann mit dem musikalisch Wertvollsten des Festes bekannt: Alban Berg: „Drei Bruchstücke aus der Oper „Wozzeck". Berg versieht den eigentümlichen, wirr-genialen und visionären Büchnerschen Stoff mit Musik. Büchners genial-apartes Wesen zu erreichen, dazu gehört ein beträchtliches Können. Diese hat Berg jedoch in erstaunlichem Maße. […] Bühnen sollten sich die Oper sichern. Es handelt sich in ihr um eines der wertvollsten Stücke der musikalischen Moderne; und ist wiederum ein Beweis dafür, daß Musik im Grunde Seelenkunst ist und zu bleiben hat'. Albert Maaß, 'Deutsches Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt a. M. IV.' *Hagener Zeitung*, no. 144, 21 June 1924.

[74] 'Es ist wirklich unverzeihlich, daß noch kein deutscher Operndirektor den Mut gehabt hat, dieses Werk einmal aufzuführen. Dr. Adolf Aber, 'Deutsches Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt a. M. 54. Jahresversammlung des Allgemeine Deutschen Musikvereins. VI–VIII.', *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, no. 169, 19 June 1924.

ADMV Tonkünstlerfest did indeed 'save' *Wozzeck*. With these fragments alone, Berg planted a seed in the minds of critics that *Wozzeck* was going to be a work of significant importance for German-language opera, one they should take note of.

Programming the *Bruchstücke*, 1925–1933

The enthusiasm the *Bruchstücke* garnered suggests the work played a pivotal role in changing attitudes towards *Wozzeck*. If Berg's opera was previously considered unplayable, critics now damned those opera houses who had turned down the opportunity to stage this work. Yet, while the *Bruchstücke* had originally been conceived to drum up interest for the opera, they continued to be programmed in the immediate years after the premiere of *Wozzeck*. In other words, that the *Bruchstücke* had served their purpose in catapulting *Wozzeck* to be the next big opera in Germany did not mean that this was the end of the former's musical journey.

Just as the Frankfurt performance of the *Bruchstücke* intrigued critics enough to make them want to see the full opera, the same effect resulted from future performances of the fragments. In March 1926, for example, the *Bruchstücke* were programmed at the sixth concert of the Düsseldorfer Städtische Musikverein, alongside Heinrich Kaminski's Introitus und Hymnus and a symphony by an amateur composer from Düsseldorf identified as W. Richter. A critic for the *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten* notes how after the *Bruchstücke*'s premiere at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest, they had suggested to the city's opera house that they stage *Wozzeck* in its entirety. The critic notes, however, that at that time of this suggestion most were afraid to make such a bold move.[75] While this critic felt the Düsseldorf

[75] 'Ich habe damals nach der Uraufführung dieser Stücke auf dem Frankfurter Tonkünstlerfest auf ihre Bedeutung hingewiesen und die Aufführung des Werkes an der Düsseldorfer Oper angeregt. Es wäre eine Tat gewesen. Doch man hatte damals Angst vor Taten'. O. A. Sch., 'Sechstes Musikvereins-Konzert', *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, 29 January 1926.

performance was not quite as effective as the one given in Frankfurt, they hoped nonetheless that it would once again create the desire to see the opera staged in its entirety.[76]

In December 1928, the *Bruchstücke* were performed in Dresden under Fritz Busch, with Elisa Stünzner as Marie.[77] Similar to those critics at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest in 1924, the *Bruchstücke* left those in Dresden eager to see the full opera. Even though *Wozzeck* had been in the world for three years by this point, the fragmentary nature of the *Bruchstücke* evidently still fostered the desire to see a full performance of the opera. Karl Schönewolf, for one, after seeing the *Bruchstücke*, did not wish to comment further on *Wozzeck* until the full opera was staged, an event which he felt was inevitable:

> Of course, the fragments in the concert hall remain just fragments. There is no interpretation without the dramatic situation. The scene is missing. Yet if the magic here could work so powerfully, what are the effects of the whole work? Everything about this piece is sincere, not cheaply bought: the immensely burdensome tragedy of this woman's soul, the strength of the ethos, the deep inner truth of the pathos. This is all possible because… more about that after the full performance. It must come. It cannot be escaped.[78]

The effects of the *Bruchstücke* were observable not just in Germany, but further afield. This was especially true in London after a BBC Symphony Concert at Queen's Hall. The *Bruchstücke* were conducted by Sir Henry Wood on 8 March 1933, with May Blyth as the soprano soloist. Other works in the concert were Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*, as well as more traditional works: Beethoven's *Egmont*, Bach's Violin Concerto no. 2 in E major and Haydn's Symphony no. 31. This was not the first time the BBC had arranged a performance

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[76] 'Co van Geuns gestaltet die Marie bedeutend, das Orchester sprach unter Schneevoigt nicht mit absolute suggestiver Wirkung, wie damals in Frankfurt, aber doch stark genug, um eine Vorstellung von dem Charakter der Musik zu geben. Die Aufnahme war so, daß wohl der Musik zu geben. Die Aufnahme war so, daß wohl der Wunsch, das Werk in unserer Oper zu hören, noch einmal wiederholt werden darf'. Ibid.

[77] Eliza Stünzner played 'the Sister' in Kurt Weill's *Der Protagonist*, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

[78] 'Die Bruchstücke im Konzertsaal bleiben natürlich nur Bruchstücke. Es fehlt die Deutung durch die dramatische Situation. Es fehlt die Scene. Wenn dennoch der Zauber so mächtig wirken konnte, wie muß dann erst das ganze Werk wirken? An diesem Stück ist alles echt, nicht billig erkauft: die ungeheuer lastende Tragik dieser Frauenseele, die Größe des Ethos, die tiefe innere Wahrheit des Pathos. Sie sind möglich, weil… Doch darüber mehr nach der vollständigen Aufführung. Sie muß kommen. Es gibt kein Entrinnen'. Karl Schönewolf, 'Drei „Wozzeck"-Bruchstücke', *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 9 December 1928.

of the *Bruchstücke*; on 13 March 1932, there had been a radio broadcast, also with Wood conducting.[79] Once more, the performance at Queen's Hall whetted the appetites of critics for the whole opera. The desire for *Wozzeck* in its entirety was particularly important in London, as reports revealed that a planned performance of the opera at Covent Garden had recently been cancelled, which was a disappointment for many.[80] The *Bruchstücke* were particularly important for British audiences, both for creating anticipation for the whole opera, but more importantly for potentially affording the only way they might hear any of *Wozzeck* on home soil.[81] An anonymous critic for the *Evening Standard* wrote:

> It has been argued that to give only three small fragments, and these apart from any stage setting, is a wholly unsatisfactory way of introducing a new work of importance. I do not agree.
>
> For many reasons it may not be possible to see in this country a full performance of 'Wozzeck' for some time to come. Why not, then, let us sample Alban Berg's strange music, if only as a cocktail that precedes a banquet?[82]

A pattern thus reveals itself: the *Bruchstücke* are performed, which leads to calls for a staging of the full opera. This is in spite of the various agencies behind each of these performances; there is no evidence to suggest that these later performances were connected in any way or that Berg was involved in both instances. Rather, the *Bruchstücke* seem to drum up interest in *Wozzeck* on their own terms. They functioned, in a sense, as the perfect

[79] For more on Berg and the BBC, see Nicholas Chadwick, 'Alban Berg and the BBC', *The British Journal Library* 11/1 (1985): 46–59.
[80] 'This glimpse of "Wozzeck" was tantalising, for a few weeks ago there was a prospect, which has since disappeared, of hearing the whole opera at Covent Garden during the coming grand season'. W. McN., '"Wozzeck"—A Very Queer Opera', *Evening News*, 9 March 1933. A concert performance of the entire of *Wozzeck* took place the following year in 1934 under the direction of Adrian Boult. A staged performance of *Wozzeck* did not materialise in Great Britain until January 1952.
[81] Shorter arrangements of operas were common in German-language opera in the late 1910s through the early 1930s and often happened out of fear over technical challenges or, later, political pressure. As with *Wozzeck*, Berg made an arrangement of his second opera *Lulu*—the *Symphonische Stücke*—under the growing presence of the National Socialists, who had branded his music as *Kulturbolschewismus*, and fearing that the full opera would never see the light of day. Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* symphony also seemed at one point to be the only iteration of the work that would be performed—the symphony had already provoked ire among the National Socialists.
[82] P. P., '"Wozzeck" Fragments', *Evening Standard*, 9 March 1933.

marketing strategy in the way they continued to advertise *Wozzeck*, but with seemingly little effort from those behind the performances.

The *Bruchstücke* also had their own performance history independent to *Wozzeck*. Between the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest in June 1924 and the premiere of *Wozzeck* in December 1925, the *Bruchstücke* were already being programmed on their own terms. On 16 June 1925, Albert Hüni sent the following letter to Berg regarding an upcoming performance of the *Bruchstücke* in Zürich early next year, also with Scherchen's conducting:

> Under the direction of Kapellmeister Scherchen, my wife will sing the three scenes from your *Wozzeck* in a concert performance on 13 January 1926 in Winterthur near Zurich. As a responsible interpreter of modern authors, it is of importance to her that she perform your work as authentically as possible. Speaking to the composer is often more fruitful than the most careful study. Perhaps there might be an opportunity for you to see my wife in Munich. As is well known, she has turned her back on the increasing artistic misery under Mr. Schalk at the Vienna State Opera and is joining the Munich Opera on 1 September 1925. Unfortunately, we still don't have an apartment in Munich, but I'll be happy to give you the address later if you think you'll be able to come to Munich at some point. My wife might be visiting Vienna before January, so a rendezvous could be possible there.[83]

Hüni's wife, Felice Hüni-Mihacsek, was a Hungarian-born opera singer. Known primarily for her renditions of various roles in Mozart's operas, she also engaged in contemporary roles such as the Falcon at the premiere of Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and in 1928 she went on to perform in a production of Hindemith's *Cardillac*. At the point of writing the letter, the

[83] 'Meine Frau wird am 13. Jan. 26 in Winterthur bei Zürich unter der Direktion von Kapellmeister Scherchen in konzertmässiger Aufführung die drei Szenen aus Ihrem Wozzek [*sic*] singen. Als verantwortungsvoller Interpretin moderner Autoren liegt ihr daran, auch ihr Werk so authentisch als möglich herauszubringen. Ein Wort des Komponisten vermag oft mehr als das sorgfältigste Studium. Vielleicht gibt sich die Gelegenheit, dass Sie meine Frau mal in München sehen. Bekanntlich hat sie der unter Herrn Schalk grossgewordenen künstlerischen Misère an der Wiener Staatsoper den Rücken gedreht und tritt mit 1. Sept. 25 in die Münchner Oper ein. Unsere Wohnung in München existiert leider noch nicht, ich werde Ihnen aber die Adresse später gern bekannt geben, wenn Sie glauben, einmal nach München kommen zu können. Möglich, dass meine Frau vor dem Januar auch mal in Wien gastiert, sodass dort ein Rendez-vous möglich wäre. Wollen Sie sich darauf aber nicht verlassen, geben Sie, falls es Ihnen nötig scheint, vielleicht schriftlich einige Direktiven'. Letter from Albert Hüni to Alban Berg, 16 June 1925, unpublished, ÖNB Folder F21 3127. That Scherchen was the driving force again is notable. Even after the success of the *Bruchstücke* in Frankfurt and the now-confirmed premiere of the entire opera, he still continued the pull strings to ensure *Wozzeck*'s success.

world was still yet to have heard *Wozzeck* in its entirety. Even though the premiere of *Wozzeck* would have been known—the two performances were in fact only a month apart—it suggests that programming committees and conductors such as Scherchen saw enough merit in the *Bruchstücke* as an autonomous work. After all, for this performance there was no need to use the *Bruchstücke* any more to drum up interest in the opera—preparations for the Berlin performance were already well under way.

Reviews of later performances of the *Bruchstücke* in the German press suggest that the work was programmed to stand as a representative of the most modern directions in music. As we saw in the previous section, critics such as Bekker and Maaß had drawn special attention to the power of Berg's music; Maaß, after all, noted how *Wozzeck* was 'one of the most important pieces of modern music'. A review of a concert in Düsseldorf which programmed the *Bruchstücke*, for instance, suggests that Berg's music was still considered risqué. An anonymous critic for the *Düsseldorf Nachtrichten* suggests that the evening's programme was so modern that those in charge had to swap a 'satanic Stravinsky' for an 'angelic Schubert' in order to get away with Kaminski and Berg, and so as to come across as favouring the modern over the classical.[84]

In Kassel, Kapellmeister Robert Laugs programmed the *Bruchstücke* alongside other modern works to contrast with more traditional fare. Gustav Struck in the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* reports how in addition to Bach's Christmas Oratorio, Brahms's Symphony no. 4 and Bruckner's Symphony no.5 were Scriabin's *Le Poème de l'extase*, Stravinsky's

[84] 'In letzter Minute jedoch, – bekam Schneevoigt Angst vor seinem eigenen Mute? – mußte der satanische Igor Strawinsky dem engelsgleichen Schubert weichen und es wurden statt der grellen Klammen des „Sacré du feu" die sanften Lichter der Bdur-Symphonie (Nr. 2) angezündet'. Theo Kreiten, 'Vom sechsten Konzert des Düsseldorfer städtischen Musikvereins', *Rheinische-Westfälische Zeitung*, 1 February 1926. 'Der Schubert sollte wohl, wie später eine einsätzige Sinfonie des Düsseldorfer Liebhaber-Komponisten W. Richter, den Vorwurf einseitig modernistischer Neigungen abwehren, denn im Musikverein gebt es immer noch streng konservative Gemüter. So konnten denn sie Werke von Heinrich Kaminski und Alban Berg zwischen bewährter und weniger überzeugender epigonischer Tonalität „passieren"'. Sch., 'Sechstes Musikvereins-Konzert'.

Pulcinella, and Krenek's Concerto Grosso no.2, as well as the *Bruchstücke*.[85] Elsewhere, and as late as 1930, it appears that the *Bruchstücke* were being programmed at music festivals as a means of provoking conservative critics. In Hamburg, a local branch of the ISCM (*Ortsgruppe*) was established with the aim of providing a sustainable space for performances of new music. February 1930 saw the ninth Symphonie-Konzert, organised by the Hamburg *Ortsgruppe* and conducted by Eugen Papst with a programme as follows: Josef Matthias Hauer's Sinfonietta, Berg's *Bruchstücke* and Casella's Partita für Klavier und Orchester. Hauer, like Schoenberg and Berg, was a proponent of twelve-tone music, while Casella was one of Italy's leading figures of new music.

The performance history of the *Bruchstücke*, thus, both intertwined with *Wozzeck* and was independent from the opera. The way in which the *Bruchstücke* repeatedly instigated further performances of the opera means that a reading of the performance history of *Wozzeck* is incomplete without consideration of the *Bruchstücke*. As we have seen, though, the *Bruchstücke* not only promoted *Wozzeck*, but Berg's compositional style more generally. While *Wozzeck* was certainly a major success and gave rise to numerous productions of the opera, the compactness of the *Bruchstücke* allowed for it to be disseminated on a more global scale, even reaching as far as Buenos Aires.[86] Perhaps if Scherchen had not suggested the

[85] 'Während nämlich Bekker zwischen Gluck, Pfitzner, Tschaikoddskij, Korngold, Puccini und—Audran lavierte, Objekten, die den einstigen Musikkritiker nicht über mäßig interessierten, brach Laugs in den bisherigen sechs Stammkonzerten manche Lanze für die intellektuelle neutönerische moderne. Neben den Alten: Bach (Weihnachtsoratorium), Brahms (IV., e-Moll), Bruckner (V., B-dur), Draesecke (Tragische Sinfonie) war es vor allem die russische Welt: Borodins melancholische Steppenträumerei (I., Es-dur), Skrjabins hysterisches Poème d'Extase, Strawinskijs „Pulcinella"-Pergolese-Travestie, deren artistisch-klangkoloristische Gesichte und Kunststücke er mit temperamentvollem Taktstock nachzeichnete und mit denen Kreneks manieriertes Concerto grosso II, Casellas knallige Italia-Rhapsodie und Alban Bergs pathologisch-sensible drei Wozzeckszenen (mit Frau Suter-Kottlar) an sensationellen Nervenreizen wetteiferten'. Dr Gustav Struck, 'Kassel', *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, 26 May 1926.

[86] Eugen Szenkar was invited by the Teatro Colon in Beunos Aires to conduct six concerts. He conducted works by Bach, Haydn and Reger, Mozart's Mass in C minor, Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 and Mahler's Symphony no. 3, as well as music by Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Prokofiev and Berg's *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*. See 'Eugen Szenkar geht nach Südamerika: Als Gastdirigent in Buenos Aires', *Stadtanzeiger für Köln und Umgegend*, Abendausgabe, 19 August 1932.

idea of the *Bruchstücke*, the performance history and impact of *Wozzeck* and Berg's reputation as a whole would have been altogether different.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have used Berg's *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck* to reassess the genesis, early reputation and performance history of *Wozzeck*. Though the premiere of *Wozzeck* in December 1925 was a pivotal moment in the opera's history—as we saw in this chapter's introduction, critics such as Bekker eagerly came to the defence of Berg's opera—strong support towards the opera had been solidified at an earlier date: the premiere of the *Bruchstücke* at the 1924-ADMV Tonkünstlerfest in Frankfurt. Even at this 'incomplete' performance of *Wozzeck*, many critics already recognised the work's value, both for German opera and modern music more generally. Critics left Frankfurt desperate to see Berg's opera in its entirety with the sense that they had caught a glimpse of a work that would loom large in the years to come. Early support towards *Wozzeck* was indebted to the *Bruchstücke* in the face of Petschnig's negative review, which then played a pivotal role in combating the conservative attacks on *Wozzeck* with the Schillings scandal at the opera's premiere in 1925. Even at the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest, the *Bruchstücke* alleviated some of the early concerns towards *Wozzeck* from some critics: that his opera was just a jumble of nonsensical sounds or a mere technical exercise. The *Bruchstücke* in Frankfurt showed sceptical critics an altogether different side to *Wozzeck*, showcasing some of the opera's most lyrical and accessible moments. Conveyed through Sutter-Kottlar's performance, critics praised the emotional depth of Berg's writing, proving that *Wozzeck* could not only be appreciated from an academic point of view, but as music that could move its listeners. As we have just seen, even beyond the Berlin premiere, the performance histories of the *Bruchstücke* and *Wozzeck*

continued to be intertwined. Reactions to the *Bruchstücke* in Frankfurt were not unique to the Tonkünstlerfest but repeated for years to come.

The performance history of the *Bruchstücke* sheds new light on why *Wozzeck*, of all the turns to expressionist theatre for new opera in Weimar Germany, went on to have repeated performances and has had the most impactful legacy. This is not to say the *Bruchstücke* are the chief reason for *Wozzeck*'s success throughout the twentieth century. With the *Bruchstücke*, though, there was a reliable, self-sustaining system in place that continually generated new interest in *Wozzeck*—one that helps explains why Berg, as a representative of the Second Viennese School, has remained central to accounts of twentieth-century music. In other words, one cannot simply conclude that the reason *Wozzeck* has had more attention than Hindemith's triptych is because critics simply favoured Berg's opera more than Hindemith's. The performance histories of particular operas were down to a range of factors other than the content of the works themselves. As we shall see in Chapter Four, for example, the city and institution of a premiere could have a profound impact on an opera's performance history and legacy.

This chapter has also presented the *Bruchstücke* as a discrete musical adaptation of Büchner's play, one that is independent to *Wozzeck*. As explored early in this chapter, the audience perceives Marie, and indeed Wozzeck, in a different light from their presentations in *Wozzeck*. Singing the role of Marie between the *Bruchstücke* and *Wozzeck* is also a different experience for the soprano, with the former playing out more like a monodrama. The case of the *Bruchstücke* and *Wozzeck* is not the only example of multiple iterations of the same work in Weimar Germany. Weill's *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, for example, recount similar sequences of events but are works in their own right. Like the *Bruchstücke*, the *Mahagonny Songspiel* is not simply a derivation of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*; as Hinton notes, the genesis of these two works is

not entirely clear. These two works by Weill also have different performance practices. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* is, like *Wozzeck*, a fully staged opera. On the other hand, the *Mahagonny Songspiel* is, similar to the *Bruchstücke*, greatly reduced in scale and forces required. Unlike the *Bruchstücke*, the *Mahagonny Songspiel* is partly staged; the premiere of the *Songspiel* saw the final scene performed in a boxing ring. It is also notable that the premiere of Weill's *Mahagonny Songspiel* took place at a music festival, like Berg's *Bruchstücke*. Alongside other new stage works such as Hindemith's palindromic *Hin und zurück*, the *Mahagonny Songspiel* was first staged at the Baden Baden festival in 1927. This chapter, then, also calls for a reconsideration of music festivals as sites of new stage works that mediated operatic performances in Germany at this time, alternative spaces to the traditional opera or concert hall. Ultimately, this chapter encapsulates how Weimar Germany's modern opera culture resists any neat, contained framing. Just as there were different faces of expressionism, styles of modern opera and performance spaces, there were also multiple iterations of the same 'work' and characters: *Mahagonnys*, Maries, *Wozzecks*.

CHAPTER THREE

PANTOMIME AND MODERN OPERA: WEILL'S *DER PROTAGONIST*

In Shakespeare's England, a theatre troupe arrives at a country inn to rehearse their performance for the Duke that evening. With guests from Germany and Spain in attendance, the Duke has requested a humorous pantomime whereby the meaning of the play is conveyed through gesture and music alone. The troupe is led by the Protagonist, a theatre fanatic wholeheartedly dedicated to his profession, for whom the boundaries between reality and performance are easily blurred. To counteract his fragile mental state, the Protagonist travels with his sister, his 'Spiegel der Wahrheit' (mirror of truth). While his love for her borders on being incestuous, just one look in her eyes can bring him back to reality. But the sister has a secret: she is in love with another man.

The troupe rehearse the grotesque pantomime: a farcical depiction of a man (played by the Protagonist) cheating on his wife to counteract her affair with a monk. After the rehearsal, the sister decides to reveal the secret to her brother, as he is easiest to talk to when in a state of ecstasy. Except all does not go to plan. Upon hearing his sister's revelation, the Protagonist remains in denial and accuses her of lying. To make matters worse, the conversation is soon diverted towards a new order from the Duke. Due to the unexpected presence of a bishop, the farce must be made tragic. Immediately, the light-hearted pantomime is turned into one of tragedy, and the Protagonist resumes his role. Disaster strikes when the sister returns to the scene with her lover. The Protagonist, completely lost between reality and his fictional persona, stabs his sister—or is she the cheating wife in the pantomime?—to death. Even after this moment of brutal murder, the Protagonist remains utterly deluded. He demands that his arrest be delayed so that the Duke may admire his latest role. The Protagonist believes it to have been his greatest performance.

The above account outlines the plot of Kurt Weill's one-act opera *Der Protagonist*. Based almost word-for-word on a one-act play of the same name (1920) by the expressionist playwright Georg Kaiser, *Der Protagonist* premiered at the Dresden Staatsoper on 27 March 1926 and established Weill as an up-and-coming young composer for the theatre.[1] For a first opera, Weill's collaboration with Kaiser was a notable achievement: Weill, only twenty-five years old and still in the early stages of his career, had established a professional relationship with Kaiser, who was one of the most successful and infamous playwrights in Germany at the time. *Der Protagonist* marked the beginning of a partnership and friendship with Kaiser similar to Weill's better-known collaboration with Bertolt Brecht. Following *Der Protagonist*, Weill and Kaiser would collaborate on two further projects: *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* (1928) and *Der Silbersee* (1933).[2] *Der Protagonist* also stands at a seminal point in Weill's creative development. The critic Oskar Bie noted how this work signalled Weill surpassing his former teacher Ferruccio Busoni, whom Bie described as Weill's 'master'.[3] Weill scholar Kim Kowalke has since framed *Der Protagonist* as the culmination of the composer's maturity.[4] *Der Protagonist* is also a significant work for Weill on a more personal level. Between May and June of 1924, as preparations for the opera were under way, Weill met Lotte Lenya for a second time through their mutual friendship with Kaiser.[5] This sparked the beginning a of life-long relationship, and Weill dedicated *Der Protagonist* to Lenya.

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[1] As noted by Stephen Hinton, *Der Protagonist* is not a *Literaturoper* in the same sense as *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Salome*, or *Lulu* because Kaiser's play was still relatively unknown prior to Weill's opera. See Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 67.

[2] There is some ambiguity surrounding how Weill and Kaiser first became acquainted. Three scenarios have been outlined by Gunther Diehl as to how the pair met: Kaiser possibly attended a performance of *Zaubernacht* and met Weill there; Fritz Stiedry may have enabled Weill to practice at Kaiser's apartment when the composer had no access to a piano; Busch may have put Weill and Kaiser in touch at his request for Weill to write another pantomime following *Zaubernacht*. See Gunther Diehl, *Der junge Kurt Weill und seine Oper 'Der Protagonist': Exemplarische Untersuchungen zur Deutung des frühen kompositorischen Werkes*, volume 1 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1994), 154–59.

[3] Oskar Bie, 'Der Protagonist', *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 29 March 1926.

[4] Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 263.

[5] Weill first met Lenya in October 1922 when she auditioned for a role in his ballet *Zaubernacht*.

Even though Kaiser originally wrote *Der Protagonist* as a spoken play, he had musical ambitions for the work from the outset. Kaiser had initially asked the Austrian conductor-composer Fritz Stiedry to compose music for the two pantomime scenes. Stiedry replied to Kaiser with great enthusiasm and with news that he would write music for the entire play.[6] The composer, however, ultimately pulled out of the project, and after a delayed premiere on 16 March 1922 in Breslau (without music), Kaiser did not wish for any future performance of the work.

Weill and Kaiser's operatic adaptation of *Der Protagonist* began life sometime in 1924, when the two were working on an altogether different project: a ballet-pantomime. This was not Weill's first involvement in pantomime. Prior to this project, the composer had provided music for a children's pantomime called *Zaubernacht* (1922), which was directed by Franz Ludwig Hörth and staged by Wladimir Boritsch. *Zaubernacht* was one of Weill's first major public successes, having premiered in Berlin before being staged in New York in 1925. By the time Weill came to work on his new pantomime project with Kaiser, however, he felt the medium to be too restrictive on its own and that it would no longer be suitable for the grand ambitions he had for this work.[7] Something radical had to be done. Pantomime had to be transformed into something else. In Weill's own words:

> Then came a block. We had grown out of the subject matter, the muteness of the characters bothered us, we had to burst the chains of the pantomime: it had to become opera. Georg Kaiser reverted to an earlier piece that he had at one point conceived in his mind in terms of opera, the one-act play *Der Protagonist*. Here

[6] Gunther Diehl and Giselher Schubert, 'Introduction', in *The Kurt Weill Edition*, Series 1, Volume 1: Der Protagonist (2006), 14. https://www.kwf.org/wp-content/uploads/KWE-1001_Protagonist_Introduction.pdf (accessed 16 September 2021). Kaiser had hoped this would be the first of many projects with the conductor. Kaiser wrote in his letter: 'One has to start somewhere—the rise of the constellation Stiedry-Kaiser. Then something big will emerge from its own heaven'. Quoted in ibid., 'Introduction', 14, trans. Stephen Hinton. For the original German, see Georg Kaiser, *Briefe*, ed., Gesa M. Valk (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen Verlag, 1980), 189.

[7] Only sketches of this ballet-pantomime project remain, with no significant resemblances to the final version of *Der Protagonist*. The original sketches are held at Yale University in the collection Register to the Papers of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya (MSS 30, box 28, folder 399).

> we had what we were looking for: an unforced, unintentional dovetailing of opera and pantomime.[8]

Weill's remark, the 'unintentional dovetailing of opera and pantomime', speaks to how he and Kaiser seamlessly incorporated the play's two pantomime rehearsals into the opera. The two pantomimes, in fact, are the focal points of the opera, with the rest of the action revolving around them. The second pantomime, for example, directly brings about the opera's dramatic climax; the Protagonist's delusion from rehearsing the tragic pantomime leads him to murder his sister. Critics at the premiere of *Der Protagonist* recognised these pantomimes as two of the opera's finest moments and believed that they successfully demonstrated Weill's talent as a composer and dramatist. Some critics also recognised *Der Protagonist*'s toying between pantomime and opera as a defining characteristic of the work. Writing for the *Thüringer Allgemeiner Zeitung*, for instance, the critic P. A. commented on *Der Protagonist*'s 'Ineinandergreifen von Oper und Pantomime' (dovetailing of opera and pantomime), quoting Weill's exact words.[9]

Both Weill and his *Der Protagonist* were praised by critics as signalling the future of opera. In a review for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Erich Haenel described Weill as 'an undoubted test of talent and thus a promise for the future'.[10] Similarly, writing for the *Berliner Morgenpost*, Rudolf Kastner described Weill as one of the great hopes, noting how the Dresden Opera had once again been ground-breaking for a young artist.[11] Some critics also described *Der Protagonist* as a new kind of theatrical experience and praised Weill's

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[8] From 'Bekenntnis zur Oper', published in the *Blätter der Staatsoper, Dresden* 13/1 (1926): 97–99. Quoted in Diehl and Schubert, 'Introduction', 13–14, trans. Hinton. For the full essay, see 'Bekenntnis zur Oper [II]', in Kurt Weill, *Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften, mit einer Auswahl von Gesprächen und Interviews*, eds. Hinton and Jürgen Schebera (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1990), 32–34.
[9] P. A., 'Operuraufführung in Dresden', *Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 April 1926.
[10] Quoted in Diehl and Schubert, 'Introduction', 19, trans. Hinton.
[11] 'Die Dresdener Oper hat wieder einmal bahnbrechend für einen jungen Künstler gewirkt. Kurt Weill ist an diesem Abend in die erste Reihe unserer großen Hoffnungen gerückt'. Rudolf Kastner, 'Veroperter Georg Kaiser', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 March 1926. It was in Dresden, after all, that many of Wagner's and Strauss's operas had been premiered.

music as being remarkably modern. Furthermore, beyond its local success in Dresden, Weill's *Der Protagonist* was welcomed given the ongoing notion of the opera crisis in Germany, and was part of what conductors such as Maurice Abravanel saw as an ongoing renaissance of opera.[12]

Despite the opera's enthusiastic reception and the optimism it instilled among critics, *Der Protagonist* is often skimmed over or only briefly explored in narratives of Weill and modern German opera. This, I argue, is for three reasons: first, due to Kaiser's reputation as one of Germany's leading advocates of expressionist theatre, *Der Protagonist* has since been clumped within the supposed ongoing demise of expressionism in Weimar Germany; second, like his contemporary, Paul Hindemith, Weill's creative development went in new directions following his youthful exploration into expressionism; third, despite the initial success of *Der Protagonist*, its immediate performance history was short-lived. Stephen Hinton, for example, positions *Der Protagonist* at the 'eclipse of expressionism in German culture' and argues this as one reason for Weill's rapid post-*Protagonist* artistic development, as well as why future performances were so limited.[13] As noted in this thesis's introduction, Susan Cook also sees expressionism as a style from which Weill moved swiftly away, and relates Weill's change of tone to broader cultural trends in Weimar Germany.[14]

Hinton and Cook's readings of *Der Protagonist* continue to reinforce the standard Weimar narrative of expressionism giving way to *Neue Sachlichkeit*. *Der Protagonist*, however, does not comfortably fit into this narrative. The idea that *Der Protagonist* was on the eve of the eclipse of expressionism is not reflected in the opera's reception; critics did not

[12] In his review of *Der Protagonist*, Maurice de Abravanel positioned it within a renaissance of opera: 'Sie begrüßten in ihm den Vorboten einer Renaissance der Oper'. Abravanel, '*Der Protagonist*', in David Drew, ed., *Über Kurt Weill* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 16.
[13] Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 77.
[14] Susan Cook writes: 'After the expressionist tone of *Der Protagonist* Weill changed direction, in keeping with the twenties spirit'. Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The* Zeitopern *of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010) [1988], 117.

see Weill's opera as part of a dying tradition, but as a symbol of hope for the future and an exemplar of modern music and theatre. At the same time, *Der Protagonist* does not foreshadow the oncoming of *Zeitoper*; the typical tropes associated with *Zeitoper*—topical settings, the use of film and technology, *Amerikanismus*, jazz—are notably absent in *Der Protagonist*. Weill's opera, as such, is something of an anomaly in this standard narrative.

In order to resituate *Der Protagonist* in our understanding of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture, I propose that the trajectory of expressionism to *Zeitoper* should be sidestepped altogether. Instead of simply foregrounding expressionism, I posit that *Der Protagonist* should be read in relation to a different sphere of activity, another face of modern opera in Germany at this time: pantomime. At the turn of the twentieth century, pantomime took on another new meaning with the *Jung Wien* (Young Vienna). Members of this literary circle enacted a 'pantomime renaissance' which sought to transform the theatrical medium from a vernacular tradition into a symbol of elite culture.[15] In tandem with this Viennese pantomime renaissance, pantomime also became a distinct feature of modern works for the stage across an array of genres: Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (premiered 1912), Strauss's *Josephslegende* (premiered 1914), Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (premiered 1921), to name but a few. In addition to the contemporary attitudes towards opera in Weimar Germany, I take the Young Vienna and this broader trend in music theatre in the early twentieth century as the primary contexts for this chapter. As I will demonstrate, cogent ties can be made between *Der Protagonist* and these three areas, thereby offering a new entry point into studies of modern opera in Weimar Germany.

I begin by exploring the Viennese pantomime renaissance in more detail, tracing how interest spread from the Austrian capital and how pantomime became popular across an array

[15] I take the term 'pantomime renaissance' from Karl Freiherr von Levetzow's essay 'Zur Renaissance der Pantomime' which was published in three parts in *Die Schaubühne* 1 (1905): 125–130, 159–162, 194–198.

of artistic media. In outlining such a rich context, I seek to frame Weill's opera as the latest instantiation of this resurgence in pantomime. From there, I outline the background of *Der Protagonist* and the ambition Weill had for this work as part of his plans for operatic reform. I see the opera's success as a direct result of Weill's own entrepreneurial spirit, with Weill having meticulously planned how the opera would be promoted as a new modern opera in which pantomime was a central facet. In turn, I reassess Weill's early biography by de-centring Weill's connection to Busoni. I then return to the night of the premiere and explore the ways in which *Der Protagonist* was received as being modern. In drawing on contemporary operas which similarly rely on pantomime, I also explore how Weill created a new kind of experience for the audience in this work. To conclude, I reflect on how this reassessment of pantomime brings about a reconsideration of Weill's career, as well expanding our understanding of what modern opera sounded and looked like in Weimar Germany.

Pantomime Preoccupations

From its genesis in ancient Greek theatre, pantomime has a long and rich history in European theatre. In the context of modern European history, pantomime was primarily understood as a vernacular tradition that incorporated mime, dance and music with distinct national differences. One of the most important developments in pantomime was the emergence of the Italian tradition *commedia dell'arte* in the sixteenth century. *Commedia dell'arte* popularised stock characters such as Pierrot, Harlequin and Pulcinella, each of whom were masked and performed only in mime. In the Holy Roman Empire, pantomimes were performed by *Wandertruppen* (literally wandering troupes), like the one found in *Der Protagonist*. In the years between the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) and the Seven Years War (1756–1763), these *Wandertruppen* provided theatre for local towns across Germanic lands. German

pantomime had its own stock characters, the most famous being Hanswurst, who was a figure in impromptu comedy popularised by the eighteenth-century Austrian actor Joseph Anton Stranitzky.[16] While pantomime in the Holy Roman Empire was used more for comic relief and light entertainment, French pantomime in contrast took a more political turn. As Hedy Law has explored, pantomime in France was caught up with the Enlightenment, as eighteenth-century French composers used pantomime as 'vehicles for moral liberty'.[17] By the nineteenth century, especially in Paris, ballet-pantomimes were popular and accessible forms of entertainment. The Folies-Bergère staged thirty ballet-pantomimes alone in the 1890s and companies such as the *Cercle Funambulesque* continued to promote *commedia dell'arte*.[18]

Despite the different directions the theatrical medium took across western Europe, pantomime remained primarily a form of middle-class entertainment in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the *fin de siècle*, however, the Young Vienna circle cultivated a pantomime renaissance which led to the traditionally vernacular medium becoming an emblem of tension between high and popular culture. As Alys X. George notes, whereas Viennese pantomime had until then been in 'the domain of fairgrounds and variety theatre', it was now a symbol of elite culture.[19] Members of this circle who wrote pantomimes—Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, Richard Beer-Hoffmann, Felix Salten—took inspiration from the French ballet-pantomimes.[20] Their new form of pantomime, however, was framed specifically against the background of the *Sprachkrise*

[16] John Warrack, *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 125–126.
[17] Hedy Law, *Music, Pantomime and Freedom in Enlightenment France* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 3.
[18] Sarah Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871–1913* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 1. 'Pantomime-ballet had become everyday entertainment for a broad public'. Ibid., 1.
[19] Alys X. George, *The Naked Truth: Viennese Modernism and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 170.
[20] Hartmut Vollmer, *Die literarische Pantomime: Studien zu einer Literaturgattung der Moderne* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2011), 22, fn.40.

(crisis of language) and the longing for new modes of expression against late nineteenth-century naturalism.[21] In his study of the accompanying texts for these pantomimes, Hartmut Vollmer writes:

> Around 1900, pantomime gave authors who were critical of language and art the opportunity to bring back the lamented break between subjective and objective world, between the sign and signified, into unity and to visualise the inexpressible, the extra-linguistic in a sensually perceptible way. In combination with music and dance and in using scenographic means (light, colours), the literary, optical/plastic pantomime was also able to realise the idea of a fusion of the arts into a 'total work of art', which Richard Wagner had already propagated in the mid-nineteenth century and which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was particularly pursued by Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) as a goal of aesthetic creativity.[22]

Pantomimes stemming from the Young Vienna circle frequently drew upon and incorporated *commedia dell'arte*, especially Pierrot, but also dealt with mystical, biblical and historical subjects and were theatrical spectacles with extravagant set designs.[23]

The Young Vienna's reclamation of pantomime reflects a broader Viennese interest in the human body during the early twentieth century. George argues that a fascination with the

[21] George, *The Naked Truth*, 171–177. See Hermann Bahr, *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus* (Dresden and Leipzig: E. Pierson's Verlag, 1890). Hugo von Hofmannsthal famously responded to the *Sprachkrise* in the fictional work *The Lord Chandos Letter* (1902).

[22] 'Die Pantomime gab den sprach- und kunstkritischen Autoren um 1900 die Möglichkeit, den beklagten Bruch zwischen Subjekt und Objektwelt, zwischen Zeichen und Bezeichnetem zu einer Einheit zurückzuführen und das Unaussprechliche, Außersprachliche sinnlich erlebbar zu visualisieren. In Kombination mit Musik und Tanz und durch den Einsatz szenographischer Mittel (Licht, Farben) konnte die literarische, optische/plastische Pantomime zugleich die Idee einer Fusion der Künste zu einem „Gesamtkunstwerk" realisieren, das Richard Wagner schon Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts propagiert hatte und das Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts besonders von Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) als Ziel ästhetischen Schaffens verfolgt wurde'. Vollmer, *Die literarische Pantomime*, 28. Vollmer's study was a pivotal work in pantomime studies. It stands as a shift in pantomime studies from a performance to a literary perspective, hence the book's title, 'Literary Pantomime'. His research primarily focuses on the accompanying texts to these pantomimes, which include performance directions, illustrations and even musical fragments. Studies on these pantomime texts followed in the 2010s and 2020s. See, for example, Mathias Meert, 'Die Pantomime als (Inter)Text', *Germanistische Mitteilungen* 44/1 (2018): 131–147 and *Intertextualität im dramatischen Werk Richard Beer-Hofmanns* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2020), Nina Tolksdorf, 'Rhetorik und Schriftbildlichkeit von literarischen Pantomimen', *Oribis Litterarum* (2023) https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/oli.12407.

[23] Karl Vollmöller's *Das Mirakel* (1911), for example, recounts a nun who abandons her nunnery for the sake of a knight in shining armour, only for her to later return. While she is away, the statue of the Madonna magically comes to life in the nunnery.

physical body, not just the mind, is seminal for our understanding of Viennese modernism.[24] She notes how:

> gesture was conceived of as a faithful and soulful expression of the individual—and thus a counterweight to rational, impersonal abstraction of language. With its expressive potential, the body was increasingly viewed in utopian terms as a medium for rendering visible and material the innermost stirrings of the subject in a way that words could not.[25]

In his essay 'Über die Pantomime' (1911), Hofmannsthal had advocated that body language was more truthful and personal than speech: 'The language of words is seemingly individual, in truth generic; [the language] of the body [is] seemingly general, in truth highly personal'.[26] Yet it was not just the human body which interested those working at the *fin de siècle*. There was also a fascination with inanimate beings such as puppets and marionettes, often with an element of exoticism. Richard Teschner took an interest in Javanese puppets, while Franz Blei incorporated Burmese marionettes into *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, set to music by Hindemith in 1920.

From these beginnings, Vienna's pantomime renaissance quickly spread beyond the Austro-Hungarian capital. Three pantomimes, for example—Friedrich Freska's *Sumurun* (1910), Hofmannsthal's *Das fremde Mädchen* (1911) and *Amor und Psyche* (1911)—were premiered in Berlin. Slightly further from Vienna, Karl Vollmöller's *Das Mirakel* (1911) was first performed at the London Olympia, before touring Europe and even crossing the Atlantic to be staged in New York, a trajectory similar to Weill's later pantomime *Zaubernacht*. Furthermore, several pantomimes by those in the Young Vienna were adapted into silent films. *Sumurun* was made into a film by Ernst Lubitsch in 1920 and Vollmöller's *Das*

[24] In her book, George 'restores *homo physiologicus* to his—and her—rightful place alongside *homo psychologicus* in the story of Vienna's cultural production from the late imperial period through the interwar years'. George, *The Naked Truth*, 4.
[25] Ibid., 169.
[26] Quoted in ibid., 183, trans. George.

Mirakel was adapted into two silent films—*Das Mirakel* (1912), directed by Mime Misu and *The Miracle* (1912), directed by Michel Antoine Carré—with music by Ernst J. Luz and Engelbert Humperdinck respectively.[27] Pantomime's position on the low-high art spectrum, therefore, was complex. From its vernacular roots, pantomime was elevated by the Young Vienna to a symbol of elite culture, while its subsequent international distribution through film embedded the theatrical medium within mass culture. This versatility, I argue, is what made pantomime such a popular agent for new stage works in the early twentieth century; in sitting between vernacular traditions, cultural elitism and mass media, it infiltrated European modernism in varying ways.

With such breadth across European culture, pantomime was also a fitting and timely source of inspiration for composers. Following the Young Vienna, there was a plethora of Pierrot ballet-pantomimes from a range of European composers. These included Ernst von Dohnányi's *Der Schleier der Pierrette* (Dresden, 1910; based on an original pantomime by Schnitzler), Otto Schulhof's *Pierrot träumt* (Karlsbad, 1914), Richard Kursch's *Der Pakt der Pierrette* (Königsberg, 1924) and Karol Rathaus's *Der letzte Pierrot* (Berlin, 1927), as well as Schoenberg's melodrama *Pierrot lunaire*.[28] Strauss also collaborated on the ballet-pantomime *Josephslegende* with Hofmannsthal and Harry Graf Kessler, who jointly provided the libretto. *Josephslegende* recalls elements of Strauss's earlier operas, especially *Salome*. Similar to *Salome*, which was also based on a tale from the Old Testament, Potiphar's wife in *Josephslegende* is driven by selfish, erotic desires, with her actions leading to the downfall of a young, innocent man (Joseph). Strauss and Hofmannsthal's previous project, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, also nodded to pantomime with its incorporation of *commedia dell'arte*. Strauss's preoccupation with pantomime also went so far as him co-founding an Internationale

[27] For more on the original pantomime, see Vollmer, *Die literarische Pantomime*, 381–406.
[28] For more on Pierrot and modernism, see Sherwin Simmons, 'The Dancer's Revenge: Dance/Pantomime and the Emergence of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Fantasy Pictures', *Dance Chronicle* 41/2 (2018): 121–157.

Pantomime-Gesellschaft (International Pantomime Society) with Reinhardt and Hofmannsthal in 1925.[29] Not only does this show another side to Strauss and Hofmannsthal's relationship—the two being typically grouped together for the operatic projects—it hints towards how the prevalent interest in pantomime across Europe brought together different artistic circles.

Like Strauss and Hofmannsthal, Bie's career also straddled new trends in music, opera and pantomime. Hofmannsthal looked highly upon Bie as an opera critic. In 1913, the same year Bie's *Die Oper* was published, Hofmannsthal had described Bie as a 'useful ally in the press' and wanted to get the critic on board to review Strauss's operas.[30] Disciplinary silos, though, have also affected Bie's legacy. In musicology, it is Bie's contemporary, Paul Bekker, who has received more scholarly attention as someone who shaped the discourse in German music and opera at this time. Yet, as we have seen, Bie was also a leading voice. Given the topic of this chapter, it is worth drawing attention to Bie's work as a literary critic, through which he came into contact with contemporary pantomime projects.

Between 1894 and 1922, Bie was the chief editor of the literary magazine *Die neue Rundschau*, as well as being a frequent contributor. During these years, *Die neue Rundschau* facilitated discussions on all aspects of modern literature including plays, modern dance and puppets, as well as pantomime. By the 1910s, there was also a notable increase in the number of contributions that focused on opera, many of which were written by Bie.[31] A similar case can be observed in the literary magazine *Die Schaubühne* (renamed in 1918 as *Die Weltbühne*), to which Bie also contributed. More so than *Die neue Rundschau*, *Die*

[29] See Vollmer, *Die literarische Pantomime*, 282, fn.534.
[30] Letter from Hugo von Hofmannsthal to Richard Strauss from Rodaun on 19 December 1913, in *The Correspondence Between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers, introduction by Edward Sackville-West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 182.
[31] See Bie, 'Neue Opern', *Die neue Rundschau* 25 (1914): 858–862; Bie, 'Spieloper', *Die neue Rundschau* 16 (1916): 560–563; Bie, 'Die Frau ohne Schatten', *Die neue Rundschau* 31 (1920): 742–747; and Bie, 'Busoni', *Die neue Rundschau* 32 (1921): 651–657.

Schaubühne had regular essays on pantomime, Pierrot, the Wiesenthal sisters (advocates of new approaches to dance), marionettes and puppets. By the 1920s, the now-titled *Die Weltbühne* also began integrating discussions on opera.[32] In 1920, Bie then published an essay titled 'Pantomime' in the newly founded music journal *Melos*. While the musical focus of the essay was broad, it specifically addressed pantomime in opera. Bie, for example, discusses how:

> When Beckmesser celebrates his memory of the beating, or when Othello chokes Desdemona, pantomimes also arise in the sung opera, created from the feeling that at these points, either comic or tragic, the word would diminish the effect. The pantomime then grows out of the hustle and bustle of the action as a wordless peak.[33]

Though the subject of Bie's essay in *Melos* looks back to the nineteenth century, it reiterates the broader conversation and engagement with pantomime in literary circles in the early twentieth century.

Regarding Weill's *Der Protagonist*, I shall argue that early twentieth-century opera treated pantomime differently from what had come before.[34] When talking about Verdi's *Otello* and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Bie draws attention to *moments* of pantomime that are ultimately inconsequential in the operas' overarching plots. A similar observation can be made with Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. The dream pantomime sequence in *Hänsel und Gretel*, for instance, while offering an interesting moment of drama as the children sleep, does not move the plot forward and functions principally as a neat way to round off act 2. In contrast, opera in the early twentieth century had become more reliant

[32] See, for example, 'Wozzeck', *Die Weltbühne* 21/2 (1925): 1001–1002.
[33] 'Wenn Beckmesser seine Erinnerung an die Prügelei feiert, oder wenn Othello die Desdemona würgt, entstehen auch in der gesungenen Oper Pantomime, die aus dem Gefühl geschaffen sind, dass an diesen Stellen, entweder komisch oder tragisch, das Wort die Wirkung herabzöge. Die Pantomime wächst dann als ein wortloser Gipfel aus dem Getriebe der Handlung heraus'. Bie, 'Pantomime', *Melos* 1: 254–256 (254).
[34] For the effect of gesture in nineteenth-century opera, see Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

on the medium. Pantomime was increasingly placed in the foreground of opera, such that the removal of pantomime scenes or characters from these works would dramatically disrupt or destroy the narrative flow. Operas such as Busoni's *Arlecchino*, Hindemith's *Das Nuschi-Nuschi*, Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* and *Der Protagonist*, all explicitly nod to pantomime through their reliance on gesture, *commedia dell'arte* and self-referentiality, as well as incorporating more explicit pantomime scenes.

This prevalent interest in pantomime across European modernism more broadly, as well as in the specific context of wider operatic trends at this time, sets the scene for Weill's *Der Protagonist*. Critics' preoccupation with pantomime in *Der Protagonist* was not isolated to this single event, but one node of pantomime's omnipotent presence throughout European culture at this time. As we shall see, in addition to being received as a seminal step in the trajectory of modern German opera, the opera's pantomime scenes particularly engaged critics and filled them with excitement. These pantomime scenes, as plays-within-a-play, also created opportunities for Weill to enhance the overall theatrical experience for the audience.

Weill the Protagonist

On 20 December 1936, Kurt Weill took part in an interview for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* to address the recent success of his musical *Johnny Johnson*. Weill entered the dimly lit office and sat down with his cigarettes ready to address the interviewer's questions on his latest Broadway hit. The interviewer Ralph Winett, however, immediately delved into the composer's musical background and began by asking what effect Busoni, Weill's former teacher, had had on him and what Busoni meant to him today. Weill responded: 'Busoni was one of the most important musical figures in this country. Without his "Arlequino" [sic], an opera in which the principal character was not a singer, but an actor, there might possibly

have been no music for "Johnny Johnson," "Mahogany," [*sic*] or the rest'.[35] Winett continued with the topic of Busoni and asked why Busoni's pupils liked Liszt so much, to which Weill answered: 'Just as Liszt started a movement which led to the great music of Wagner and Strauss, so Busoni started a movement which, we think, will lead to the great music of our time'.[36] Weill was then given one final question: whether 'Liszt was important not so much as a composer but as a springboard for other composers'; 'I think that is all very true', he replied, '[and] I would say that what Liszt did for Wagner, Busoni did for me'.[37]

What was meant to have been an initial discussion about Weill's 'musical antecedents' for *Johnny Johnson* quickly turned into an appraisal of Busoni. From the extracts quoted above, Weill's admiration of Busoni and his *commedia dell'arte* opera *Arlecchino* is obvious, as is the notion that he regarded Busoni as one of the most important composers to have lived.[38] Today, nearly a century on from Busoni's death, much of Weill's early career and the years leading up to *Der Protagonist* are still framed by the composer's association with Busoni and *Arlecchino*.[39] This is not surprising, for Busoni was a seminal figure in Weill's formative years: Weill had attended Busoni's Berlin master class programme between 1921 and 1924, and during this time, he and his classmates were frequently exposed to *Arlecchino*, attending performances in Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden and Weimar.[40] In his master class, Busoni used *Arlecchino* as an example of how his own operatic theory played out.[41] Given that Busoni's teachings were geared towards writing

[35] Ralph Winett, 'Composer of the Hour: An Interview with Kurt Weill', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 20 December 1936, 10, 12. The full transcript can be found at https://www.kwf.org/kurt-weill/recommended/composer-of-the-hour/ (accessed 18 March 2022).
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] For more on Busoni's *Arlecchino* and his Italian influences, see Erinn E. Knyt, 'From Nationalism to Transnationalism: Ferruccio Busoni, the Liceo Musicale di Bologna, and 'Arlecchino', *Music & Letters* 99/4 (2019): 604–634.
[39] See 'The Busoni Connection', in Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 37–66.
[40] Tamara Levitz, *Teaching New Classicality: Ferruccio Busoni's Master Class in Composition* (Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Bern; New York; Paris; Vienna: Peter Lang, 1996), 143.
[41] Ibid., 143.

opera, his students' engagement with *Arlecchino* would have been paramount.[42] One example of how Busoni enacted his operatic theory in *Arlecchino* is the opera's division into individual scenes and distinct musical numbers. This harks back to his lament for the traditional number opera in his famous essay *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music, 1907):

> Measurably justified, in my opinion, is the plan of the old opera, which concentrated and musically rounded out the passions aroused by a moving dramatic scene in a piece set form (the aria).[43]

Several years earlier in 'Von der Zukunft der Oper' (On the Future of Opera, 1913), Busoni had alluded to the model of 'gesungene Pantomime' and argued that opera should embrace parody, emphasising that characters should deliberately behave differently to the way they do in real life.[44] *Arlecchino* is once again indebted to Busoni's theories as the titular character prances around the stage singing nonsensical 'la-la-las' in true Arlecchino fashion, embracing *commedia dell'arte*, pantomime and blatant parody.

While in his interview for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* Weill made the point that *Arlecchino* impacted some of his more recent stage works such as *Johnny Johnson* and *Mahagonny*,[45] there are also striking dramaturgical similarities between *Arlecchino* and his

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[42] Ibid., 140.
[43] Ferruccio Busoni, 'A New Esthetic of Music', trans. Theodor Baker, in *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 83.
[44] 'Wiederum dürfte sich die Form einer von Musik begleiteten und durch Gesang illustrierten Handlung, ohne Text, in Erwägung ziehen lassen: sie gäbe eine Art „gesungene Pantomime"… Es ergibt sich demnach eine kommende Möglichkeit in der Idee des übernatürlichen Stoffes. Und noch eine: in der des absoluten „Spieles", des unterhaltenden Verkleidungstreibens, der Bühne als offenkundige und angesagte Verstellung; in der Idee des Scherzes und der Unwirklichkeit als Gegensätze zum Ernste und zur Wahrhaftigkeit des Lebens. Dann ist es am rechten Platze, daß die Personen singend ihre Liebe beteuern und ihren Haß ausladen, und daß sie bei pathetischen Explosionen auf hohen Tönen Fermaten aushalten; es ist dann am rechten Platze, daß sie sich absichtlich anders gebärden, als im Leben, anstatt daß sie (wie in unseren Theatern und in der Oper zumal) unabsichtlich alles verkehrt machen'. Busoni, 'Von der Zukunft der Oper' (1913), in *Von der Einheit der Musik: Von Dritteltönen und Junger Klassizität, von Bühnen und Bauten und anschliessenden Bezirken* (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1922), 189–192; Busoni's pantomime interest went beyond the frequently referenced *Arlecchino*. He also wrote the libretto for the pantomime *Das Wandbild*, with music by the Swiss composer Othmar Schoeck. See Martin Frey, 'Das Wandbild', *Zeitschrift für Musik* 88/3 (1921): 62–63.
[45] Here, Weill does not clarify whether he is referring to the *Mahagonny Songspiel* (1927) or the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930).

earliest opera *Der Protagonist*. Both works, for example, centre on the transformations of an actor into various personas, and while *Der Protagonist* does not draw directly on *commedia* characters, the troupe's reliance on stock characters harks back to the vernacular medium. Tracing how *Arlecchino* may have influenced *Der Protagonist* musically, however, is significantly more challenging, and perhaps a fruitless task ultimately. As Hinton notes, '[the] similarities are more those of texture, tone, and overall melodic contour, especially in the kinetic writing for winds, than of specific turns of phrase'.[46] This issue regarding musical influence is largely due to the way in which Busoni taught his pupils, as he did not teach in the conventional sense of equipping his pupils with the skills to write in a specific style, but instead 'favored the exchange of ideas through dialogue'.[47] As noted by Tamara Levitz, *Junge Klassizität* (New Classicality), one of Busoni's most famous ideas, was not 'a composition style as often assumed, but rather a historically-oriented aesthetic for music of the present and future', rooted in the aesthetic theories of Johann Winckelmann, Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.[48] In other words, Busoni and his pupils were not united in skill, but in a shared vision that did not translate directly to a musical style. New Classicality's roots in titans of German philosophy and literature such as Schiller and Goethe—representatives of Weimar Classicism, the city on which Germany's new republic was founded—suggest that Busoni's vision went beyond the confines of his classroom and was something he intended to impact culture more widely. While the emphasis Busoni placed on philosophical and theoretical ideas in his master class is not unusual for the time—many contemporary groups such as the *Novembergruppe*, for example, were characterised by their

[46] Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 64.
[47] Erinn E. Knyt, *Ferruccio Busoni and His Legacy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 4.
[48] Levitz, *Teaching New Classicality*, 75. Busoni described *Junge Klassizität* as 'the mastering, sorting, and exploitation of the achievements of all previous experiments and their incorporation in solid and beautiful forms. This art will be both new and old,—at first'. Quoted in ibid.

mix of craft, philosophy and politics in a mission to transform society—it makes tracing a musical lineage between Busoni, *Arlecchino* and *Der Protagonist* highly problematic.[49]

Tracing how Busoni's teachings impacted Weill in writing *Der Protagonist* is further complicated by the fact that Weill frequently played up his teacher's influence.[50] When talking about the master class in 1925, Weill indulged the notion that Busoni was some kind of musical messiah: 'there were no longer any "pupils". He called us "disciples", he gave us no lessons, but let us breathe his being, which though manifesting itself in all realms, always culminated in music'.[51] Weill was also not afraid of directing this reverence to his master's face; in a letter to Busoni on 13 February 1922, Weill showered him with an abundance of praise:

> To be sure, your influence reaches far deeper than to mere compositional matters: for me it culminates in the realization that before we are able to create a true work of art, we first have to guide our own humanity through all complexities, scaling them down to the simplest and most concise formula.[52]

Given Weill's exaggerated worship of Busoni and the practical issues regarding tracing the influence of Busoni's teachings, to dwell on how Busoni's master class and *Arlecchino* may have affected Weill's conception of *Der Protagonist* is to play into Weill's larger-than-life appreciation of Busoni and to continue to distort the historical picture. Yet recognising this historiographical issue does not mean Busoni should be discarded from the picture entirely. What it should lead to, I would argue, is a reconsideration of what kinds of questions are being asked about their relationship. Instead of questioning what influence Busoni had on Weill, I posit we should be asking what Weill's foregrounding of Busoni tells us about

[49] These issues surrounding Busoni's musical lineage have significantly informed Knyt's research into his pupils; she makes the point in her book that she will be focussing on 'the transmission of Busoni's aesthetic ideals to his pupils'. Knyt, *Ferruccio Busoni and His Legacy*, 5.
[50] Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 42.
[51] Kurt Weill, 'Busoni. Zu seinem einjährigen Todestage', trans. Hinton in *Weill's Musical Theater*, 43.
[52] Letter from Weill to Busoni, 13 February 1922, trans. S. Kampmeier. Weill-Lenya Research Center [WLRC] Series 40. Original letter held at the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek.

Weill's own self-positioning, and how this in turn changes our understanding of *Der Protagonist*. For example, Weill seemed to use his association with Busoni to his own advantage; upon introducing himself to the director of the Donaueschingen Chamber Music Festival in 1922, Weill noted three 'facts' about himself: that he was from Freiburg (even though he was from Dessau), that he was twenty-two years old and that he belonged to Busoni's master class.[53] Even after Busoni's death, Weill continued to use his teacher's name to promote himself. For instance, in the *Daily Brooklyn Eagle* interview referenced earlier, Weill's final remark—'what Liszt did for Wagner, Busoni did for me'—shows him using Busoni as a way of comparing himself to Wagner. In this comment, Weill constructs a musical lineage of ideas being passed down directly from Liszt to Wagner, with Liszt providing the necessary foundations for Wagner to go on and achieve greater things. Similarly, Weill positions himself as the heir to Busoni's musical throne, meaning that Weill's overstated praise of Busoni was in fact more to do with crafting his own identity as the next great composer.[54]

Weill's preoccupation with his relationship to Busoni can be seen as part of a conscious effort to promote his own name and advance his career.[55] Moreover, in the year or so leading up to the premiere of *Der Protagonist*, Weill used the success of others besides Busoni as a model for his own career path and actively sought to become acquainted with highly respected individuals beyond this immediate Busoni circle. In his formative years, Weill appears to have been acutely aware of the realities of making a success of himself; that is, he knew he could not rely solely on the quality of his music but had to be proactive in

[53] Letter from Weill to the director of the Donaueschingen Chamber Music Festival, 22 February 1922. WLRC Series 40.
[54] Weill's construction of his own legacy goes against the general assumption that he did not care about posterity, see Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 1. As Hinton notes, however, Weill was concerned not so much about 'posterity in general', but rather '*writing* for posterity'. Ibid., 6.
[55] In his early career, Weill also compared himself to Ludwig van Beethoven, although he clearly distinguished himself from Beethoven: 'I need words to set my imagination in motion'. Letter from Weill to Hans Weill, 27 June 1919, quoted in ibid., 3.

making the right connections and marketing himself in such a way to ensure his work would be heard and disseminated. In what follows, I shall see Weill's aspirations for *Der Protagonist* and operatic reform more generally not under the shadow of Busoni and *Arlecchino* (as Weill would perhaps have preferred), but as the result of Weill's own self-ambition and entrepreneurial spirit.[56] In doing so, I present Weill as the driving force behind his commercial success, the protagonist of his own story.

Returning to the early part of Weill's early career, a letter he sent to his sister Ruth on 28 January 1920 reveals that the composer already had bold ambitions for the theatre before starting Busoni's master class. In this letter, Weill spoke of how he had started to adapt Ernst Hardt's *Ninon von Lenclos* (1905) into an opera and that, if successful, it may point towards 'a new, thoroughly lyrical direction in music-dramatic production'.[57] Weill goes on to suggest that he would like to collaborate with a poet, though, at the time of writing he felt he was unable to effectively communicate his ambitious ideas. This letter, nonetheless, provides a crucial insight into Weill's ambitions, especially his early interest in pantomime:

> If I were to create a work of art together with a poet, I would have completely new ideas in mind, but they have not yet progressed to the point where I could communicate them to anyone. A major problem of humanity—probably embodied by a biblical figure: Job, Ahasuerus or the like—would have to be captured in a completely new artistic form. What words cannot say—and that will be a lot—will be said by music, pantomime, dance (in the modern sense), colour, and light, especially music, because it is best at expressing the unsaid. That might be a life's work and I wouldn't find many who would understand me.[58]

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[56] Weill's seemingly entrepreneurial spirit harks back to Wagner's self-promotion and branding, which has been explored in detail in Nicholas Vazsonyi, *Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[57] 'Zu all der Schönheit, die Hardt schon in der berückenden Sprache, in dem Milieu u.s.w. aufgespeichert hat, noch die Musik, die mir dazu vorschwebt—das wird einen Überschwang an Schönheit ergeben, das könnte, wenn es gelänge, sogar wegweisend für eine neue, durchaus lyrische Richtung in der musikdramatischen Produktion werden'. Letter from Kurt Weill to Ruth Weill, 28 January 1920, in Weill, *Briefe an die Familie (1914–1950)*, eds. Lys Symonette and Elmar Juchem (Stuttgart; Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2000), 256.

[58] 'Wenn ich nun mit einem Dichter zusammen ein Kunstwerk schaffen würde, so schwebten mir auch dafür ganz neue Idee vor, die aber noch nicht so weit gediehen sind, daß ich sie schon irgend jemandem mitteilen könnte. Ein großes Menschenheitsproblem—wahrscheinlich verkörpert durch eine biblische Gestalt: Hiob, Ahasver od. dergl.—müßte in einer ganz neuen künstlerischen Gestaltung erfasst werden, was das Wort nicht zu sagen vermag – u. das wird sehr viel sein – wird die Musik, die Pantomime, der Tanz (in modernem Sinn), die Farbe, das Licht sagen müssen, am meisten die Musik, denn sie kann am besten ungesagtes aussprechen. Das

The letter reveals how Weill was already interested in incorporating pantomime in a stage work before enrolling in Busoni's master class.[59] Moreover, pantomime was central to what Weill imagined would be his *magnum opus*. Weill, however, did not have to worry about waiting a lifetime to fulfil this ambition. With its two pantomime scenes, *Der Protagonist* seems to fulfil, at least in that respect, what Weill was looking for in this letter (though the subject matter was rather different to what he originally envisaged). Rather than seeing *Der Protagonist* as the direct result of Busoni's nurturing influence, therefore, Weill's first opera can in fact be framed as a response to Weill's own ideas that predated their relationship.

Six years later, Weill implied that *Der Protagonist* was his attempt at operatic reform. Originally published in *25 Jahre Neue Musik: Jahrbuch 1926 der Universal Edition*, Weill's essay 'Bekenntnis zur Oper' (Commitment to Opera) argues for a reform of the genre given that convincing dramatic trajectories were severely lacking in the music of recent operatic scores.[60] According to Weill:

> We must compose music in opera with the same unrestrained development of imagination as in chamber music. […] the dramatic impetus that opera requires can be a very essential component of any musical product. Mozart taught me that.[61]

While, in its original form, 'Bekenntnis zur Oper' made no reference to *Der Protagonist*, the essay was soon re-published in the *Blätter des Staatsoper, Dresden* on 1 April 1926 and expanded to include the background and preparations of *Der Protagonist* (quoted earlier). Weill's expansion of 'Bekenntnis zur Oper' is significant, especially given that it gave new attention to the opera's use of pantomime. Considering Weill had early ambitions to

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wäre vielleicht ein Lebenswerk u. ich würde nicht viele finden, die mich verstehen würden'. Letter from Weill to Ruth Weill, 28 January 1920 in ibid., 257.

[59] Weill had his first interview with Busoni in late November 1920, and began the master class in July 1921.

[60] Kurt Weill, 'Bekenntnis zur Oper', *25 Jahre Neue Musik. Jahrbuch 1926 der Universal Edition* (Vienna, 1926): 226–228.

[61] Quoted in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 458, trans. Kowalke.

incorporate pantomime into a career-defining stage work, the expanded version of 'Bekenntnis zur Oper' suggests that Weill saw *Der Protagonist* to be that work and that the opera was caught up with his ambitions for operatic reform.

As well as 'Bekenntnis zur Oper', there are several other essays written by Weill at this time that convey the composer's feelings towards the state of opera. These fundamentally revolved around finding a new direction for opera away from Wagner.[62] From these essays, we can glean insight into what Weill valued about opera. As is to be expected, much is geared towards Busoni, with essays such as 'Busoni und die neue Musik' (1925) and 'Busonis *Faust* und die Erneuerung der Opernform' (1927). Weill had, in fact, described Busoni as the most modern of all moderns,[63] although Busoni rejected the idea of 'modern' altogether.[64] When describing Busoni's *Doktor Faust* in 'Die neue Oper' (1926), Weill positioned it as 'the starting point for the formation of a new golden age of "opera" (in contrast to the "music drama"): for this *Faust* is theatre in the purest and most beautiful sense'.[65] It is noteworthy, however, that Weill described *Doktor Faust* as the 'starting point' for a new kind of drama and not the finished product of a new kind of drama, implying that Weill did not see Busoni's opera as itself constituting the future of the genre. Weill also acknowledged others who had helped pave the way for his own achievements. For example, Weill had huge admiration for Franz Schreker; shortly after the letter to his sister Ruth, Kurt wrote to his brother Hans that 'Schreker is absolutely ground-breaking for opera, like Mahler for the symphony and Schoenberg for chamber music'.[66] Another contemporary to whom

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[62] Weill, 'Die neue Oper', in *Musik und Theater*, 28.
[63] 'Heute hörte ich, daß der Kandidat für den Hochschuldirektorposten der modernste aller Modernen sein soll: Busoni'. Postcard from Kurt Weill to Hans Weill, 18 July 1919 in Weill, *Briefe an die Familie (1914–1950)*, 240.
[64] 'There is nothing properly modern—only things which have come into being earlier or later; longer in bloom, or sooner withered. The Modern and the Old have always been'. Busoni, 'A New Esthetic of Music', trans. Theodor Baker, in *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 75–76.
[65] Quoted in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 466, trans. Kowalke.
[66] 'Denn Schreker ist für die Oper unbedingt bahnbrechend, wie Mahler für die Symphonie u. Schönberg für Kammermusik'. Postcard from Kurt Weill to Hans Weill, 28 April 1920, in Weill, *Briefe an die Familie (1914–1950)*, 270.

Weill drew recourse was Igor Stravinsky, particularly his *L'Histoire du soldat*. In 'Die neue Oper', Weill wrote how the position of Stravinsky's work on the boundary between play, pantomime and opera made it a suitable candidate for new directions in opera, which supposedly then came to fruition in *Der Protagonist*.[67] This awareness of form also harks back to Weill's letter to Ruth, in which he had imagined a new medium embracing music, pantomime and dance.

Another seminal work that greatly inspired Weill was *Wozzeck*. Weill, however, did not appear to derive much compositional inspiration from *Wozzeck*. Musically, the two works are strikingly different: whereas Berg's orchestration is full of dense musical textures with angular lines, Weill's is more homophonic, and while the score of *Wozzeck* is divided up into traditional dances and musical forms in a standard three-act structure, *Der Protagonist* is almost entirely through-composed. *Der Protagonist* is most similar to *Wozzeck* dramaturgically. In both operas, the titular character's psychological torment leads him to brutally murder the one person closest to him. The two works, though, handle these situations in different manners. Wozzeck's murder of Marie, for example, is characterised by brutal realism, whereas the Protagonist's murder of his Sister delves more into surrealism, especially in the way the act is staged within the rehearsal of the second pantomime.

What Weill appears to have taken most earnestly from *Wozzeck* was the way Berg had promoted his opera before the premiere. Weill had observed the success in distributing the piano reduction of *Wozzeck* prior to its first performance and decided he wanted to do the same for *Der Protagonist*.[68] Berg's promotion of *Wozzeck*, in other words, was a model

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[67] 'Als die zukunftssicherste Zwischengattung kann wohl das gelten, was Strawinsky in seiner *Geschichte vom Soldaten* versucht; auf der Grenze zwischen Schauspiel, Pantomime und Oper stehend, zeigt dieses Stück doch ein so starkes Überwiegen der opernhaften Elemente, daß es vielleicht grundlegend für eine bestimmte Richtung der neuen Oper werden kann'. 'Die neue Oper', in Weill, *Musik und Theater*, 30.

[68] 'Ich halte es für dringend notwendig, dass spätestens 2 Monate vor der Première ein sauberer, exakter Klavierauszug im Handel ist; ich habe beim *Wozzeck* gesehen, wie viel das nützt'. Letter from Weill to Universal Edition, 22 December 1925, in Weill, *Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition: Ausgewählt und herausgegeben von Nils Grosch* (Stuttgart; Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2002), 25.

which Weill used in an attempt to replicate a similar success for *Der Protagonist*. *Wozzeck* also became a crucial point of reference that allowed Weill to hype up *Der Protagonist* and make his own name sound more reputable. Weill compared himself to Berg in much the same way as he had done with Busoni and Wagner in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* interview. In a letter to Universal Edition (UE) shortly after the premiere of *Der Protagonist*, Weill wrote: 'The success of *Der Protagonist* in no way fell short of that enjoyed by *Wozzeck*; the press is just as sensational, and the two works are mentioned together wherever modern opera is talked about'.[69] Weill also did not see Berg's opera as too much of a threat, or even a sign of the future. Rather, Weill saw *Wozzeck* as the conclusion of a line of operas from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), through to Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) and Strauss's *Salome* (1905), highlighting Weill's interest in constructing histories with the aim of putting himself at the forefront.[70]

While the distribution of a final version of the piano reduction was frequently delayed by UE, Weill's correspondences with the publishing company reveal how he was proactive in chasing them up.[71] When the score was finally complete, Weill notified UE that he wanted the piano reduction to be sent to the following critics: Adolf Weissmann, Rudolf Kastner, [Hermann?] Springer, Oskar Bie and Walter Schrenk, all of whom were well-connected among musical circles in Berlin.[72] Several of these critics frequently wrote reviews for

[69] 'Der Erfolg des *Protagonist* stand in nichts hinter dem des *Wozzeck* zurück, die Presse ist genau so sensationell, u. überall, wo von moderner Oper gesprochen wird, werden beide Werke nebeneinander genannt'. Letter from Weill to Universal Edition, 29 April 1926, in ibid., 32. Trans. Hinton in Diehl and Schubert, 'Introduction', 21.
[70] 'Das Ergebnis ist ein in seiner Art einzig dastehendes Kunstwerk, das zwar nicht als zukunftsträchtig gelten kann, aber doch als grandioser Abschluß einer Entwicklung, die in direkter Linie von Wagners *Tristan* über Debussys *Pelleas und Melisande* und Strauss' *Elektra* bis zu dieser völlig negativen Kunst führt'. Weill, 'Über Berg's *Wozzeck*', *Operetten auf Welle* 505 52/27 (1925): 3422, reprinted in Weill, *Musik und Theater*, 209. Weill makes the same point in 'Die neue Oper', see ibid., 30.
[71] See letter from Weill to Universal Edition, 29 January 1926, in Weill, *Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition*, 28.
[72] Letter from Weill to Universal Edition, 18 March 1926, in ibid., 29, underlined as in Weill's letter.

Berlin-based (and notably left-leaning) newspapers[73]—Weissmann was known for his reviews in the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, Bie for *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, Kastner for the *Berliner Morgenpost*—and thus they would have helped Weill's name circulate in progressive circles in Germany's capital. The connections these critics had, however, went beyond Berlin: Weissmann was the first president of the German Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, part of the ISCM (known in Germany as the Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik);[74] Springer also had widespread connections, having co-founded the *Verband deutscher Musikkritiker* (Society of German Music Critics) in 1913.[75] Given that Schrenk's name was underlined in Weill's letter, he must have been someone whose opinion Weill greatly respected. We know that Weill already had a direct connection to Bie, as he played a pivotal role in originally introducing Weill to Busoni.[76] In addition to Bie's recent praise and staunch defence of *Wozzeck*, the fact that the critic had published on contemporary dance and pantomime may also explain why Weill wanted Bie's opinion on his pantomime-centric opera so earnestly. Just days later, Weill then also wrote to Emil Hertzka to say he expected him to be at the performance; Weill also wanted Hertzka to make sure the conductor Erich Kleiber would be there too.[77] Kleiber had already enjoyed an extremely productive stint as

[73] Weill joined the *Novembergruppe* in 1925. For more on music in the *Novembergruppe*, see Nils Grosch, 'Zwischen Avantgarde und populärer Kultur der Weimarer Republik: Musik in der Novembergruppe und bei der 'Deutschen Kammermusik' Donaueschingen', in Grosch, ed., *Novembergruppe 1918: Studien zu einer interdisziplinären Kunst für die Weimarer Republik* (Münster and New York: Waxmann, 2018), 113–130.
[74] As noted by Giles Masters, the term *Neue Musik* is generally understood to have been coined by Paul Bekker in his 1919-essay 'Neue Musik', which differed from *zeitgenössische Musik* (contemporary music) in that '*Neue Musik* was sometimes understood to imply a greater emphasis on new as an aesthetic quality and moral imperative'. Masters, 'New-Music Internationalism: The ISCM Festival, 1922–1939', PhD Thesis, Kings College London, 2021, 18–19. Weissman had also written a rave review on the legacy of Busoni in *Die Musik*, which may have caught Weill's attention. See Adolf Weissmann, 'Ferruccio Busoni', *Die Musik* xvi/12 (September 1924): 887–893.
[75] Alongside Springer, the society's founders included Paul Bekker, Alfred Heuss and Wilhlem Klatte. See Brendan Fay, *Classical Music in Weimar Germany: Culture and Politics Before the Third Reich* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 18.
[76] Diehl, *Der junge Kurt Weill und seine Oper 'Der Protagonist*', 90.
[77] Letter from Weill to Emil Hertzka, 23 March 1926, in Weill, *Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition*, 30.

the new General Music Director at the Berlin Staatsoper, most recently with *Wozzeck*, and so making a good impression to Kleiber would have opened up many opportunities for Weill.[78]

While Weill had his eyes set on making an impression to those heralding opera and music criticism in Berlin, he also had international aspirations for *Der Protagonist*, even at this early stage. For example, Weill had written to the highly influential Austrian critic Paul Stefan, editor of the *Musikblätter des Anbruch* and another co-founder of the ISCM, explaining how he would be extremely happy if Stefan would come to the premiere.[79] Moreover, in a postcard (likely from 1926), Weill asked Abravanel if he could sway the Romanian conductor Raoul Gunsbourg to take an interest in *Der Protagonist* for the Opéra de Monte-Carlo, where Gunsbourg was director.[80]

In contrast to these bold international ambitions, Weill also had an awareness of the importance of the local context for the first performance of *Der Protagonist*. In another letter to UE, Weill wrote: 'In my opinion Cologne offers us, after Dresden, the best opportunity in Germany, and artistically speaking there are many reasons I frankly can't imagine a better location for the premiere'.[81] The location for *Der Protagonist*'s first performance, however, was eventually settled on Dresden. Groups such as the Dresden Secession, which only dissolved in 1925, had kept modernist art at the forefront of the city's cultural scene. Dresden had also been the site of some of Wagner's and Strauss's most successful works: *Tannhäuser*, *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and most recently *Intermezzo*. As well as Dresden's reputation as a stronghold of new opera, Weill's preparations for *Der Protagonist* revolved around the musicians based there. For instance, Weill was adamant that he wanted the

[78] A year later in March 1927, Kleiber conducted the premiere of Weill's next opera *Royal Palace*.
[79] 'Ich wäre sehr froh, wenn sie selbst zur Premiere kommen würden', letter from Weill to Paul Stefan, 21 March 1926. Sibley Music Library, Universal Edition-Kurt Weill Correspondence, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 5, 78.
[80] 'Vielleicht können Sie Gunsbourg, den Direktor der Oper in Monte-Carlo, dort treffen u. auf den *Protagonist* hetzen'. Postcard from Weill to Maurice Abravanel, WLRC Series 40, no date, presumably 1926.
[81] 'Köln ist m.E. nach Dresden die grösste Chance in Deutschland u., offen gestanden, in künstlerischer Beziehung könnte ich mir aus vielen Gründen keinen besseren Uraufführungsplatz wünschen'. Letter from Weill to Universal Edition, 28 June 1925, in Weill, *Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition*, 16. Trans. Hinton in Diehl and Schubert, 'Introduction', 16.

Dresden-based tenor Curt Taucher to play the lead role. The plans for *Der Protagonist*'s first performance seemed to revolve around Taucher. When Taucher went on tour to America in October 1925, Weill made the decision to delay the premiere of *Der Protagonist* just so that Taucher would be back in time to play the titular role.[82] Weill also had his mind set on Fritz Busch to conduct the first performance.[83] Busch was also known for taking on experimental works from the same generation of composers to which Weill belonged, such as Hindemith's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and *Das Nusch-Nuschi* in Stuttgart in 1921. Though the evening was a *succès de scandale*, the event nonetheless brought Hindemith widespread publicity, and perhaps Weill believed Busch could help bring him the same popularity. Having teamed Busch up with Taucher and invited several highly respected critics who were already singing the praises of *Der Protagonist*'s lead singer, Weill had people in place who he hoped would create the excitement necessary for him to reap the rewards of a successful first opera. All that was left now was for the performance to go ahead.

A Night at the Opera

An increasingly tense atmosphere occurred on stage at the Dresden Staatsoper as the first performance of *Der Protagonist* approached its dramatic conclusion. Enraged by his sister's lie and wholly dedicated to his performance, the Protagonist—a role to which the tenor Curt Taucher was equally committed—mercilessly stabbed his sister. Following this tragic incident, the other actors, the sister's lover and the innkeeper all stood around her dead body

[82] 'Taucher, der beste Tenor für die Titelrolle, von dessen Entscheidung die Annahme abhing, hat im Prinzip bereits zugesagt. Dienstag zeigt ihm Busch den Klavierauszug; dann fällt die letzte Entscheidung. Aber Taucher fährt schon Ende Oktober nach Amerika, dann müsste ich mit der Uraufführung bis Mai warten. So aber wäre es (auch für Berlin) das erste Ereignis des Winters. Dass die Aufführung unter der Eile leiden wird, ist nicht zu befürchten, da ja Busch selbst dirigiert'. Letter from Weill to Universal Edition, 22 August 1925, in Weill, *Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition*, 18.

[83] Writing in reflection on the death of Busch, the musicologist Adolf Aber wrote: 'No other opera house in Germany held greater repute. Under Fritz Busch Dresden maintained its lead'. See Adolf Aber, 'Fritz Busch, 1890–1951', *The Musical Times* 92/1305 (1951): 499.

in shock. The three actors in the Protagonist's troupe each called for a doctor. Then, following a brief moment of silence, a fanfare sounded from the Duke's musicians up in the stalls as the Protagonist, who was lost somewhere between reality and fantasy, proclaimed to the innkeeper:

> Go and tell your master, tell the Duke, to save me from arrest till the performance is over, or else he will deprive me of my greatest challenge, to merge authentic and pretended madness till one can't tell which is which.[84]

The musicians then descended from the stage to join the orchestra in the pit, who had joined in with the fanfare. Then, just as quickly as the sonic tension created by this fanfare filled the room, the musical chaos suddenly dissipated into the theatre's atmosphere, leaving only the sound of fading trombones ringing in the audience's ears. With that, the curtain descended and the performance was over. A few moments of silence followed as the audience processed what they had just witnessed. After a few hesitant claps, a thunderous applause began.

Taucher's role as the Protagonist was hugely admired by the audience, and critics were in agreement that his performance was one of the highlights of the evening. Writing for the *Dresdner neueste Nachrichten*, Karl Schönewolf wrote how 'the power of the play flows from him'.[85] Critics praised Taucher both as an excellent singer and actor, which served him well in embracing a character who is himself an actor.[86] Haenel, for example, in his review for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* described Taucher's performance as 'convincing genius of creativity in acting and singing', which was thoroughly supported by the work of director

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[84] 'Geht, und sagt dem Herzog Eurem Herrn, er soll mich bis zum Abend der Verfolgung entziehen. Er würde mich um meine beste Rolle bringen, die zwischen echtem und gespieltem Wahnsinn nicht mehr unterscheiden läßt'. Weill, *Der Protagonist: Ein Akt Oper von Georg Kaiser*, Vocal Score by Erwin Stein (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1978), 127–128, trans. Lionel Salter.

[85] 'Hat ihn vor allem Curt Taucher zu verdanken. Er ist wirklich der Protagonist, der Träger des Dramas, von ihm aus strömt die Kraft des Stückes'. Karl Schönewolf, 'Der Protagonist: Uraufführung im Opernhaus', *Dresdner neueste Nachrichten*, 30 March 1926, 3.

[86] 'Eine erstaunliche Leistung vollbrachte der Tenorist Curt Taucher als der vom Wahn besessene Protagonist. Nicht nur, daß er diese unglaublich anspruchsvolle Partie mit der Pracht seiner Stimme erfüllte; daß er auch als der vom Dichter geforderte große Schauspieler wirkte, erhob seine Leistung ins Ungewöhnliche'. A. Rappoldi, 'Kurt Weill: Der Protagonist', *Rheinische Musik- und Theater-Zeitung*, 13/14 (10 April 1926): 108–109 (109).

Josef Gielen and stage designer Adolf Mahnke.[87] Several critics posed the rhetorical question of what the name of his character—the Protagonist—meant. While the origin of the word can be traced back to the ancient Greek πρωταγωνιστής (prōtagōnistḗs, literally 'first actor'), critics acknowledged that nowadays they would refer to the protagonist as the star.[88] In that sense, Taucher both played *the* Protagonist and was *a* protagonist; he was the star of the show, a modern-day celebrity. One photo from the first performance (see Figure 1) provides an insight as to how Taucher successfully embodied the key components of his character:

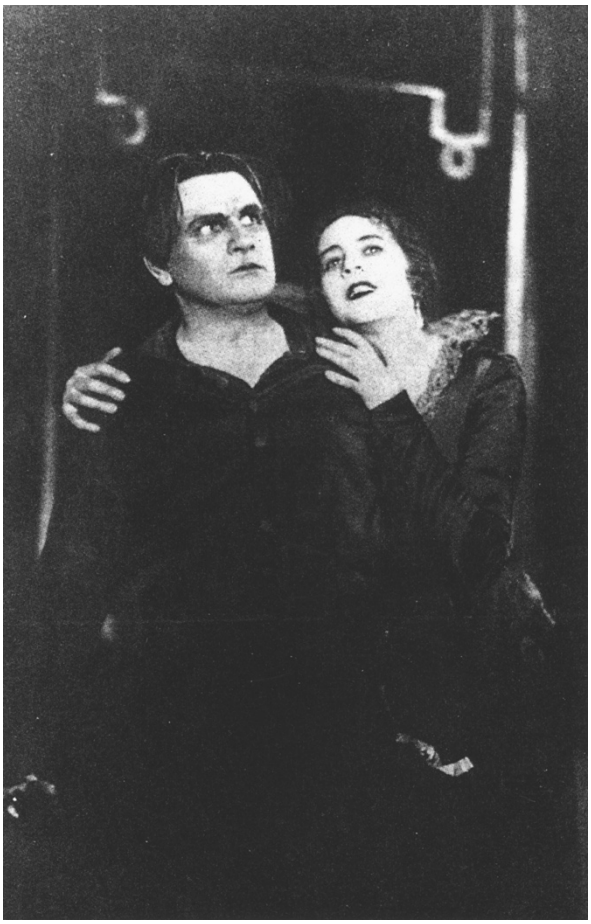

Figure 1: Curt Taucher and Eliza Stünzner, *Der Protagonist* premiere (1926), photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Weill-Lenya Research Center, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York.

[87] 'Für diese absolute überzeugende Genialität des Schöpferischen in Spiel und Gesang ist kein Wort Bewunderung zu hoch'. Erich Haenel, 'Kurt Weill: „Der Protagonist"', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 7 April 1926.
[88] 'Aber was ist das, der Protagonist? Doch nur ein Gattungsmann, eigentlich der erste Darsteller in der klassischen Tragödie. Hier ist er etwas anderes: der Star. Der große Schauspieler'. Adolf Weissmann, '„Der Protagonist"', *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, 29 March 1926.

Taucher's tall, proud stance, his broad shoulders, the intensity of his wide eyes and the seriousness of his face all created the impression of a self-obsessed and confident actor. We also get a hint of how Taucher channelled the way in which the Protagonist distanced himself from reality. Despite the physical closeness of Taucher and Elisa Stünzner, who played the sister, Taucher's eye line suggests that his focus is clearly elsewhere, and while Stünzner is evidently trying to engage with him by caressing him with her hands, he stands in resistance with his arms in a dramatic pose. In his search for someone who could help carry the success of *Der Protagonist*, Weill's choice of Taucher for the lead role had evidently paid off.

When Weill took the stage to receive his share of the audience's appreciation, some hisses and whistling began to surface.[89] According to some critics, Weill's use of atonal music for sections of the opera were not received by the audience so warmly. As a critic for the *Meißner Tageblatt* put it, 'a battle that assumed heated proportions was waged between the supporters of atonal and tonal music'.[90] In a review for the *Zittauer Morgen*, the critic Steinsdorff used Weill's atonal music as a crux for placing the work in the discourse of musical expressionism, which, in comparison to the poetry and the visual arts, was still ongoing, much to his dismay. While Steinsdorff felt Weill's 'amorphous music' had potential, he argued that Weill lacked the boldness employed by Berg in *Wozzeck*, and thus *Der Protagonist* fell flat.[91] Some, on the other hand, were more accepting of opera's

[89] 'Der Hauptdarsteller Kurt Taucher wurde für seine wirklich große Leistung mit Beifall überschüttet, als sich aber auch der Komponist zeigte, ertönte Zischen und Pfeifen. Es war ein Kampf der Parteien, wie man ihn in der Dresdner Oper kaum erlebt hat'. G., 'Die anatonale Oper', *Zwickauer Zeitung*, 30 March 1926.
[90] 'Bei der Uraufführung „Der Protagonist" wurde in der Dresdener Staatsoper ein Kampf zwischen den Anhängern der atonalen und tonalen Musik ausgefochten, der erhitzte Formen annahm'. E. R., 'Der Protagonist', *Meißner Tageblatt*, 3 April 1926. Trans. Hinton in Diehl and Schubert, 'Introduction', 18.
[91] 'Nun die Musik Weills. In der Dichtung und in der bildenden Kunst hat man den sogenannten Expressionismus hinter sich. Im Musikalischen steckt man noch mitten drin. Dieser Vergleich ist wohl berechtigt; wenn man sich sagt, daß die Atonalität in der Musik dem Gegenstandslosen in der Malerei und dem sprachlich Unlogischen in der Dichtung entspricht. Die sozusagen amorphe Musik hat gewiß Möglichkeiten, nicht der Entwicklung, aber gleichsam abenteuerlicher Expeditionen in die Randgebiete. Nur entschiedenste Kühnheit vermag sie übers Peinliche des bloßen Geräuschs hinauszuheben. Diese letzte Kühnheit, die wohl Alban Berg immerhin hatte, fehlt Kurt Weill. So war das Ergebnis am Sonnabend zu drei Vierten nervös machende Langeweile'. Steinsdorff, 'Uraufführung in der Sächsischen Staatsoper', *Zittauer Morgen*, 30 March 1926.

momentary ventures into atonality. In his review for the *Kreuzzeitung*, Johannes Reichelt wrote: 'Even if you come from a purely tonal background, you can feel the emotional colouring and dramatic tension at the high points'.[92] Other critics, however, described Weill's music as polytonal, and they tended to receive Weill's music more positively. Schönewolf, for instance, wrote:

> Everyone makes music for themselves. The main orchestra—in a chamber arrangement—plays approximately G minor, the stage orchestra play in D-flat major, and the singers are characteristically in C major. That undeniably has its appeal at times. And there, where the intellectual dominates, the effects are also strongest.[93]

The image of a battle over atonality which some critics recounted, therefore, seems to have been exaggerated, especially as a significant number of critics confirmed that those who were opposed to Weill's music were in a minority and only further encouraged the overwhelming applause.[94] Furthermore, there were still repeated curtain calls for Weill, Busch and the rest of the cast; several critics recorded they were called up at least forty times.[95]

Schönewolf's remark—'where the intellectual dominates, the effects are also strongest'—raises an interesting point picked up by several critics regarding *Der Protagonist*'s success: Weill's music was seen to be intellectual and rational, rather than erotically or emotionally charged. As surmised by the critic Heinrich Platzbecker, 'reason

[92] 'Auch wenn man aus rein tonalen Bezirken kommt, empfindet man die seelische Koloristik und dramatische Gespanntheit an Höhepunkten'. Johannes Reichelt, 'Der Protagonist', *Kreuzzeitung*, 29 March 1926.
[93] 'Jeder musiziert für sich. Das Hauptorchester—in „Kammerbesetzung"—spielt etwa in G-Moll, die Bühnenmusiker blasen dazu in Des-Dur und die Sänger charakterisieren in C-Dur. Das hat unleugbar zuweilen seinen Reiz. Etwa den eines entfernten Jahrmarktes, auf dem alle Drehorgeln ineinander fließen. Und dort, wo das Gedankliche vorherrscht, ist die Wirkung denn auch am stärksten'. Karl Schönewolf, WLRC Series 50A, unknown date and source.
[94] 'Beifall für ihn, die Darsteller und besonders den Komponisten wuchs dank einem beharrlichen Pfeifer bis ins Maßlose'. Weissmann, '„Der Protagonist"'.
[95] 'Der durch zwei Pfeifer wirksam geschürte Beifall nahm ungeheure Dimensionen an und rief Kurt Weill mit Busch und den Solisten wohl an die vierzigmal vor die Rampe'. Re., 'Der Protagonist', *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 30 March 1926.

speaks more than emotion'.[96] The tension between the sensually comprehensible and the absolute musical creation was also picked up by Schrenk in his review for the *Blätter der Staatsoper*, who felt Weill had fused them in new and unique ways.[97] In a separate review for *Der Protagonist*, Schönewolf elaborated his ideas further and wrote: '[Weill] succeeded because his music remains completely non-sensual, because it never tries to interpret, but is charged with the same dramatic tension as the scene'.[98] Schönewolf, in other words, felt that the dramatic impetus of Weill's music came organically from the notes in the score—its dramatic arc could be appreciated independently from what was happening on stage.

These critical responses to *Der Protagonist* seem to address some of the issues Weill raised in 'Bekenntnis zur Oper' and 'Die neue Oper', further suggesting that *Der Protagonist* was Weill's practical response to his theoretical writings about the misgivings of opera. In 'Die neue Oper', which is clearly inspired by Busoni, Weill wrote:

> For the musical elements of opera are no different from those of absolute music. In both it is only a question of the musical ideas unfolding in a form that corresponds with the emotional content. The tempo of the stage, which always demands an exceptional response from the operatic composers, is by no means a special, new component of opera, but must be clearly recognizable in our chamber and orchestral music before we approach opera.[99]

To put it another way, Weill argued that opera's music should not derive from the action but should be inherently dramatic in a way that equals the onstage action, a striking resemblance to Schönewolf's comments about *Der Protagonist*. Comparing this extract with contemporary reactions to *Der Protagonist* suggests that Weill's opera not only implemented

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[96] 'Auch aus der Musik Weills spricht mehr der Verstand als das Gefühl'. Heinrich Platzbecker, 'Der Protagonist', *Sächsische Staatszeitung*, 30 March 1926.
[97] 'Die Partitur des „Protagonisten", aus einer starken inneren Anschauung heraus organisch geoworden, zeigt Kurt Weill als einen von Musik erfüllten Menschen, der die Gesetzte bühnensinnlich-faßbaren und absolut-musikalischen Gestaltens in neuer und durchaus eigenartiger Weise miteinander vereinigt'. Walter Schrenk, 'Kurt Weill und sein „Protagonist"', *Blätter der Staatsoper* (February 1927): 8–9 (9).
[98] 'Es gelang ihm, weil seine Musik völlig unsinnlich bleibt, weil sie nirgends versucht auszudeuten, sondern mit der gleichen dramatischen Spannung geladen ist wie die Szene'. Schönewolf, 'Der Protagonist'.
[99] Quoted in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 464–465, trans. Kowalke.

his operatic theory but utilised it in such a way that it made a strong impression on critics, who praised the work. In turn, this validates the importance of both Weill's writings and *Der Protagonist* in how critics recorded the emergence of Germany's modern opera culture.

As well as being described as rational, Weill's music was also recognised as being modern. According to the anonymous critic U. in their review for the Prague-based modern music journal *Auftakt*, Weill was 'a leading expert in the most modern direction' and commented on the composer's strange ability to combine 'genuinely musical and constructive components'.[100] Similarly, Bie wrote how *Der Protagonist* 'possessed the latest modern freedom' and praised the climactic tragedy of *Der Protagonist*, which he argued was something that had not been expressed so successfully in modern music before.[101] In particular, Bie argued that timbre and instrumentation were central to the modernness of Weill's 'antiromantic' music. He equated Weill's antiromanticism with the composer's use of woodwind instruments, what Bie considered to be a reaction against 'the string tones of romanticism'.[102] Woodwind and brass instruments are emphasised visually, as well as audibly, as the audience watches the Duke's eight musicians playing in pairs of flutes, B-flat clarinets, trombones and bassoons onstage for the two pantomimes.

As well as timbre, Weill's harmony was also understood as modern, particularly the harsh dissonances in *Der Protagonist*, which 'flirted with the modern cacophony of works such as *Wozzeck*'.[103] As we saw in Chapter One, cacophony was seen to be particularly modern in reviews of Hindemith's triptych. Labelled as a successful example of *Neue Musik*

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[100] 'Kurt Weill, Busonis junger Schüler und Freund, von dem schon hie und da ein Werk bei Musikfesten und anderwärts aus der Taufe gehoben worden ist, erweist sich in seiner Musik (Klav.-Ausz. In der Universal Edition, Wien) zu dem Akte als ein erster Könner modernster Richtung. Sonderbar, wie sich darin echte musikalische mit konstruktiven Bestandteilen verbinden'. U., 'Der Protagonist: Ein Akt-Oper von Georg Kaiser. Musik von Kurt Weill', *Auftakt* VI/5–6 (1926): 129–130.
[101] 'Alles endet in einer gewaltigen Tragik, wie sie in der modernen Musik selten so selbständig ausgedrückt worden ist'. Bie, 'Der Protagonist'.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Weill 'schon stark mit den Finessen modernster Kakophonie (Wozzeck – Alban Berg) liebäugelt'. J. B., 'Dresdner Theaterbrief', *Kamenzer Tageblatt*, 30 March 1926.

(new music), a term which broadly encompassed modern music since the turn of the century, Weill's music was also compared to the likes of Schoenberg, Schreker, Strauss and Stravinsky, titans of contemporary music.[104]

Staging *Der Protagonist*

It was not only Weill's music that was deemed by critics to be ground-breaking, but also the staging of *Der Protagonist*. Bie, for instance, described *Der Protagonist* as a 'theatrical experience in a new form'.[105] The opera's *mise en abyme* setting of the two pantomimes and the fusion of different dramatic genres was seen by some critics as particularly novel. The critic Hans Schnoor described *Der Protagonist* as 'a colourful-mechanical cinematogram of pantomime, lyrical opera and melodrama'.[106] Similarly, a critic anonymously signed as J. B., wrote: 'the work comes close to the ideal of a new opera, a mixture of drama, pantomime and opera. It means a step into the future'.[107] Despite its dabbling in different genres, however, the pantomime flavour of *Der Protagonist* came across strongest. *Der Protagonist* was frequently referred to as a Bajazzo drama, literally 'clown drama'. Contemporary German audiences may have associated Bajazzo with Thomas Mann's short story *Der Bajazzo* (1897). In Weill's opera, however, it was not so much pantomime as a subject matter which was of the most interest, but rather how the opera's integration of pantomimes created opportunities for experimenting with the theatrical experience.

As plays-within-a-play, the two pantomime scenes in *Der Protagonist* created opportunities for Weill and Kaiser to experiment with the audience's dramaturgical

[104] 'Mit diesem stilistisch zwischen Schönberg und Schreker stehenden Stück hat die „Neue Musik" zweifellos einen großen Erfolg errungen'. Wilhelm Geyger, 'Uraufführung „Der Protagonist", von Kurt Weill, Text von Georg Kaiser', *Bremen Nachrichten*, 31 March 1926.
[105] Bie, 'Der Protagonist'.
[106] 'ein bunt-mechanisches Kinematogramm aus Pantomime, lyrischer Oper, Melodram'. Hans Schnoor, 'Kunst und Wissenschaft: Kurt Weill: Der Protagonist', unknown source, 29 March 1926.
[107] 'Dem Ideal der neuen Oper, einer Mischung von Schauspiel, Pantomime und Oper, kommt das Werk näher. Es bedeutet einen Schritt in die Zukunft'. J. B., 'Dresdner Theaterbrief'.

experience. In a performance of *Der Protagonist*, the audience observes both the performance of Weill's opera and the two pantomime performances within this fictional world. While the inclusion of different dramatic levels in a work is not unique in opera at this time, Weill's *Der Protagonist* is noteworthy for the way it frequently encourages the audience to question what they understand to be diegetic and extra-diegetic. The play-within-a-play structure was a common trend in early twentieth-century contemporary opera, many of which also drew upon pantomime and *commedia dell'arte*, with other examples including Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Sergei Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (1921). *Der Protagonist* also strongly recalls the plot of Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (1892). Similar to *Der Protagonist*, *Pagliacci* focuses on a travelling *commedia dell'arte* troupe who arrive at a village for a performance. A love triangle leads to the leader of the troupe, Canio, stabbing his lover, Nedda, to death during one of their performances.

In Kaiser's drama, the Duke provides the Protagonist's troupe with eight musicians—two flutes, two B-flat clarinets, two trombones and two bassoons—to accompany them in their performances of the pantomimes. Weill's score, however, makes use of the eight musicians throughout *Der Protagonist* and calls for them to play in different places around the stage during the opera. The audience hears the eight musicians before it sees them. The musicians are initially situated behind one of two curtains with their instruments down as the orchestra in the pit plays the opera's short overture. The eight musicians only begin to play at the overture's recapitulation. As the overture comes to an end, the first curtain rises to reveal the eight musicians, who are in full costume. They then go down some steps in front of the stage to join the opera orchestra as a second curtain rises to reveal the setting of the inn. Throughout the first half of the opera, the eight musicians make interjections alongside the orchestra as preparations for the first pantomime's rehearsal take place. Then, they are summoned back onto the stage for the pantomime's first rehearsal. The musicians take their

seats in the stalls to the left of the stage and perform the music for the first pantomime on their own. When it comes to the second pantomime, they perform together with the orchestra in the pit. Finally, the eight musicians erupt into a fanfare as the Protagonist celebrates his performance at the opera's dramatic conclusion, before they descend back down the steps and blend once more with the orchestra at the end of the performance.

As the musicians perform in various settings—behind a curtain, down in the pit, on stage, and often transitioning between these locations while playing—they create a unique soundscape for the audience. Moreover, what may appear at first glance to be a straightforward play-within-a-play is made rather more complicated by the eight musicians, as they seemingly blur the boundaries between the different layers of performance.[108] In *Der Protagonist*, when the audience first hears the eight musicians midway through the overture, they play in front of the second curtain. While the second curtain separates them from the fictional world of the inn and suggests they are playing as an accompaniment to the opera together with the orchestra, the fact that they are already in costume implies they are in the world of the opera and quite distinct from the opera orchestra. At this point, then, are the eight musicians playing extra-diegetic music with the orchestra or are they diegetic in the world of Weill's opera? Similarly, throughout the first half of *Der Protagonist* when the eight musicians play in the orchestra pit—made quite distinct from the orchestra by their costumes—they frequently make interjections as the action unfolds. Again, are they playing extra-diegetic music as part of the orchestra or are they diegetic interjections that are heard by the characters on stage? If the latter is true, does that mean the characters are also actually singing everything in this world, and is the whole affair some elaborate performance? (This

[108] In that sense, *Der Protagonist* bears a strong resemblance to Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* (1920). Like *Der Protagonist*, Korngold's opera exploits the play-within-a-play format to create a sophisticated array of different dramatic levels. What is understood as diegetic is often called into question by the changing perception of what takes place in the *real* world and what does not. See William Cheng, 'Opera *en abyme*: The prodigious ritual of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 22/2 (2011): 115–146 (116).

would be fitting given the Protagonist's relationship with performance.) Does that mean, then, that *Der Protagonist* is a play in which everything is sung, rather than an opera?

Though these questions are purely rhetorical and do not necessarily warrant answers, such ambiguities and questions do have a particular dramaturgical role as they play into the Protagonist's deluded and unstable mental state. For example, there is a direct connection between all the musicians—both the Duke's and Weill's orchestra—and the Protagonist's psyche. As witnessed by the audience, the Protagonist's mind is split between the real and his imaginary world. Similarly, the eight musicians and the opera's orchestra are like a distorted arrangement of the standard orchestra: the opera orchestra is made up of two oboes, two bass clarinets in B-flat, three horns, three trombones, timpani, percussion and strings, so when combined with the eight musicians, the resultant ensemble resembles a standard classical orchestra. While this decision may have been informed by the Dresden Staatsoper's resources, Weill's orchestration is nonetheless effective in embodying the Protagonist's warped mind. Schönewolf clearly correlated the Protagonist's psyche with the musicians:

> The imaginary duke, a kind of Jourdain ('Ariadne'), a higher, invisible power, demands a serious game. Life intervenes, the larger submerged orchestra plays along. Reality and delusion mix. The mood is one of uncanny violence. Burning double seconds trudge like the stride of the tragic muse itself. The scene becomes transparent. Music says what poetry alone could not say. The blaring D major fanfares of the fantastic eight musicians eerily announce the catastrophe of madness. The curtain has closed over the play of the stage; the game has become reality. There is no longer a difference between real madness and fake madness.[109]

[109] 'Der imaginäre Herzog, eine Art Jourdain („Ariadne"), eine höhere, unsichtbare Gewalt, verlangt ein ernstes Spiel. Das Leben greift ein, das größere versenkte Orchester spielt mit. Wirklichkeit und Wahn vermischen sich. Die Stimmung ist von unheimlicher Gewalt. Brennende Doppelsekunden stapfen wie das Schreiten der tragischen Muse selbst. Die Szene wird transparent. Die Musik sagt, was die Dichtung nicht allein sagen konnte. Die schmetternden D-Dur-Fanfaren der phantastischen acht Musikanten verkünden schauerlich die Katastrophe des Wahnsinns. Der Vorhang hat sich über dem Spiel der Bühne geschlossen; das Spiel ist Wirklichkeit geworden. Zwischen echtem und gespieltem Wahnsinn gibt es keinen Unterschied mehr'. Schönewolf, 'Der Protagonist', 2.

The point at which the musicians merge with the orchestra also has dramatic significance: it signifies the merging of the Protagonist's 'real and faked madness'. Moreover, that the musicians visually regroup further reinforces the Protagonist's changing mental state.

The eight musicians also give *Der Protagonist* a sense of self-referentiality, i.e., that, in an anti-Wagnerian manner, the performance is not meant to be an immersive experience for the audience. In his review for the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, Weissmann proposes that the positioning of the eight musicians between the stage and orchestra was something Weill took from Prokofiev.[110] Similar to the eight musicians of Weill's *Der Protagonist*, the advocates of comedy, tragedy, lyric drama and farce in Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* observe the ongoing action on stage and interject throughout. The Duke's musicians and the interjecting dramatists similarly act like a narrator. The role of a narrator is another common factor among other pantomime-cum-*commedia dell'arte* operas of the time such as Arlecchino in *Arlecchino* and Tum Tum in *Das Nusch-Nuschi*. Weill may also have taken the idea of a narrator from *L'Histoire du soldat*. One crucial difference between Weill's opera and Prokofiev's—and indeed the other examples I have given—is the absence of language. The Duke's musicians accompany and interject the drama by music alone. This fits with the opera's plot, for the Duke not only asks the Protagonist and his troupe to perform a pantomime because the guests are from abroad, but because music will also be necessary to make the meaning of the pantomime clearer. Music is the principal mediating agent between the worlds of the work.

The self-referentiality of *Der Protagonist* is made more obvious by the two curtains, the first revealing the eight musicians and the second the set of the inn. This serves to highlight the artificiality, to remind the audience that they are watching a performance. Anti-

[110] 'Die acht Musikanten des Herzogs, Flöten, Klarinetten, Fagotte, Trompeten paarweise. Kammermusik in Kostüm der Zeit. Auf halber Höhe zwischen Bühne und Orchester sitzend. Merkt ihr was? Das hat Weill, der nach allem Brauchbaren auslugt, von Prokofieff, dem glücklichen Komponisten der „Liebe der drei Orangen"', Weissmann, 'Der Protagonist'.

realism is further heightened by the vivid colours of the set designs (see Figure 2) and costumes of the musicians (see Figure 3):

Figures 2a and 2b: Set designs for outer curtain and interior set of *Der Protagonist*, Adolf Mahnke. Courtesy of the Weill-Lenya Research Center, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York, and *Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, University of Cologne.*

Figure 3: Musicians' costume design for *Der Protagonist*, Adolf Mahnke. Courtesy of the Weill-Lenya Research Center, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York, and *Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, University of Cologne.*

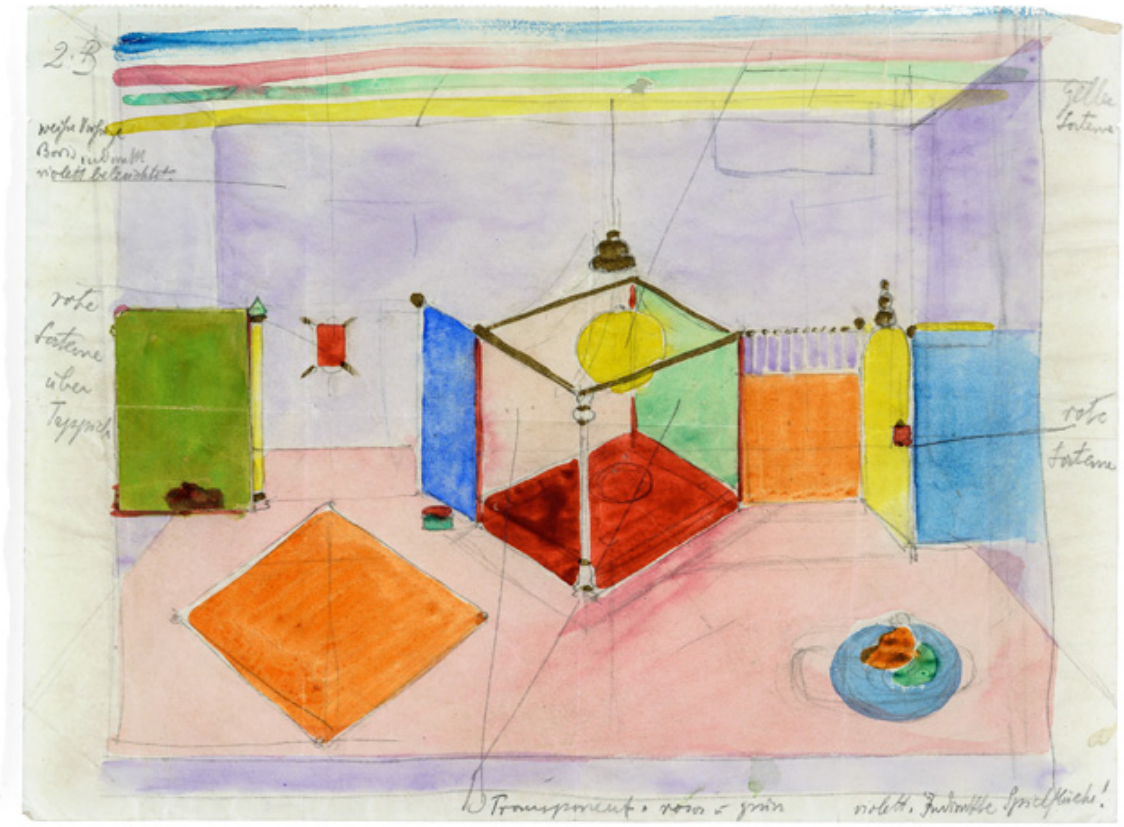

Figure 4: Set design for *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, scene 2, Oskar Schlemmer.

The bright primary colours may at first glance feel both removed from the dull colours of the mechanised world of industrialised Weimar Germany and the fictional Elizabethan setting. The geometric shapes in the set and costume designs (rectangles on stage, triangles in the costumes), though, suggest influence from the Bauhaus. Designs for the eight musicians in *Der Protagonist* are reminiscent in particular of Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadisches Ballett*, a radical experiment in corporeal expression through its use of abstract geometry as the basis for the human body.[111] While Schlemmer's exact influence on *Der Protagonist* is difficult to

[111] Schlemmer's *Triadisches Ballett* was first performed at the Bauhaus exhibition in 1923. Hindemith wrote the music for the ballet, though the score is now lost. Schlemmer would also go on to write a work more directly referred to as a pantomime called *Treppenwitz* (1927). While the Bauhaus did not have an organised music faction, music was still widely incorporated into its activities and the 1923-exhibition also showcased a number of musical works, including a selection of new piano pieces by Busoni, the premiere of Hindemith's *Marienlieder* (1923), as well as a performance of *L'Histoire du soldat*. See Clement Jewitt, 'Music at the Bauhaus, 1919–1933', *Tempo* 213 (2000): 5–11.

pin down, he had provided the set designs for the premiere of Hindemith's *Das Nusch-Nuschi* for its Stuttgart premiere in 1921 (see Figure 4). Schlemmer's sketches for the Kaiser's bedroom in *Das Nusch-Nuschi*, with the prominence of bright colours, rectangles and circles pre-empt the style of Mahnke's designs for *Der Protagonist*. The emphasis on colour, though, is important for another reason: once again, we come full circle back to Weill's letter to his sister, as the composer's earlier vision of theatre work which exploited pantomime and colour is finally realised in *Der Protagonist*.

Conclusion: Genealogies of Modern Opera

In this chapter I have used pantomime as a new entry point for studying modern opera in Weimar Germany. Through a detailed study of the origin, reception and performance practice of *Der Protagonist*, I have argued pantomime was central to Weill's ambitions for opera, how the two pantomime scenes played with the audience's sensory experience, how critics welcomed the opera's foregrounding of pantomime, and how this intersected with a wider resurgent interest towards pantomime in the early twentieth century.

Revisiting the genesis of *Der Protagonist* and Weill's own interest in pantomime has opened new perspectives on the composer's early career, especially continuities to his later career. Early on, I established how Weill had his own interest in pantomime that predated his exposure to the medium through Busoni's master classes and that drawing a direct line of influence between *Arlecchino* and *Der Protagonist* is problematic. This is not to say that *Arlecchino* had no impact on piquing the composer's interest in pantomime or had no effect on Weill's compositional approach. *Arlecchino* was composed in 1913 and had its first performance in 1917. It is likely, therefore, that Weill would have been aware of this work before enrolling as a pupil of Busoni's in 1920. Yet, as I have drawn attention to throughout this chapter, there were numerous other contemporary operas which had pantomime as one of

their defining features. As someone who was interested in the theatre from an early age, Weill may also have been drawn to these other pantomime-operas, notwithstanding the wider cultural interest in pantomime beyond opera of which Weill surely also aware.

Der Protagonist also foreshadows some of the key characteristics found in Weill's later works for the stage. For instance, *Der Protagonist* destabilises the dominant idea that the composer's involvement with epic theatre did not begin until around the early 1930s. While sentiments of Marxist social reform are not evident in *Der Protagonist*, the self-referential aspects of Weill's opera hint towards Brecht's epic theatre. In Weill's career, the self-referential, non-immersive aspects of his work are typically associated with his later epic theatre collaborations with Brecht, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930) and *Die Bürgschaft* (1932), the latter of which Weill described as an 'epic opera'.[112] Albeit by different means, the self-awareness of these later works is already evident as early as *Der Protagonist*.

Weill's handling of the Duke's eight musicians in *Der Protagonist* pre-empts how he played with the audience's sensory experience in his next Kaiser-collaboration: *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*. In *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, the assassin, following her failed attempt to murder the Tsar, plays the 'Tango-Angèle' on a gramophone to distract the Tsar as she and her fellow terrorists make a dashing escape through the window. Weill uses the gramophone in this case both as an agent in the opera's plot and as a way of experimenting with the soundscape. As Christopher Hailey notes, the increasing presence of radio in everyday life in Weimar Germany affected not only '*what* [was] heard, but *how* [it was] heard'.[113] The same can also be said for Weill's inclusion of the gramophone in *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, a fusion of the public and private spheres. This chapter, however,

[112] Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 154.
[113] Christopher Hailey, 'Rethinking Sound: Music and Radio in Weimar Germany', in Gilliam, ed., *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22.

has shed light on how experiments with the sonic soundscape of opera were not restricted to works in which modern technology was brought to the forefront. Weill's positioning of the eight musicians throughout the theatre in *Der Protagonist* was also used creatively and to great effect in challenging the audience's expectation of what an opera sounded like. There are in fact a number of key parallels between these two examples: as in *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, the Duke's musicians play a seminal role in moving the plot forwards and *Der Protagonist* similarly incorporates diegetic music on stage, adding a new dimension to the soundscape. *Der Protagonist*, however, notably, created a unique theatrical experience and achieved these effects without relying on the latest technology.

Continuing with the idea of operatic soundscape, the absence of jazz elements in *Der Protagonist* is also a point of interest for reassessing the ways in which opera in Weimar Germany sounded 'modern'. In Weimar culture, the increasing presence of jazz in western art music was closely linked with *Amerikanismus* (Americanism), which according to Detlev Peukert was 'a catchword for untrammelled modernity'.[114] In the specific context of Germany, *Amerikanismus*, described by Rudolf Kayser as 'a fanaticism for life, for its worldliness and its present-day forms',[115] became a kind of utopian buzzword in the wake of the devastating effects of the First World War. The nod to jazz in *Zeitoper* was thus an endorsement of the fascination with America felt throughout Europe in the interwar years. This fascination is felt within Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*. Krenek explores the American dream via the tension between the European musical tradition and the contemporary buzz around jazz. The reception of Weill's *Der Protagonist* is a reminder, though, that for an opera to sound 'modern' did not necessarily mean it had to endorse jazz or popular tunes.

[114] Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 178.
[115] Rudolf Kayser, 'Americanism', republished in English in Anton Kaes, Marin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 395–397; originally published as 'Amerikanismus', *Vossiche Zeitung*, no. 458, 27 September 1925.

This chapter also challenges the tight-knit entanglement of pantomime and silent film for which some scholars have argued. Corporeal expression in Weimar modernism, has typically been related to the relatively new medium of silent film, not pantomime, with references to pantomime entangled within discourses of silent film. As silent film became more popular around the world, it was often spoken about as a kind of pantomime. When writing about *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), Gillian B. Anderson writes how 'D. W. Griffith claimed that [this film] had instituted a new "art of Pantomimic screen spectacle"'.[116] As George reminds us, though, silent film came after the Young Vienna's pantomime renaissance with some of its roots traceable back to Viennese pantomime.[117]

George's attempt to highlight the lineage of Viennese pantomime to silent film has been preceded by the opposite narrative; that is, readings of pantomime in modern German opera have tended to only make connections as far back as silent film. Bryan Gilliam, describes pantomime as 'a cinematic idea'[118] and frames Weill's operatic reform with respect to film, noting that the pantomime craze in Weimar Germany was due to expressionist theatre and silent film.[119] Similarly, Alexandra Monchick has analysed Hindemith's *Cardillac* and *Hin und zurück* in terms of cinematic techniques.[120] *Cardillac* is notable here as it was first performed shortly after the premiere of *Der Protagonist* on 9 November 1926, also at the Dresden Staatsoper. While *Cardillac* does not depend on pantomime in the same way as *Der Protagonist*, there is a short pantomime scene at the end of act 1. Despite the shortness of this scene, Paul Stefan in his review for the *Musikblätter des Anbruch* highlighted how pantomime flavoured the entire opera:

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[116] Gillian B. Anderson, 'Synchronized Music: The Influence of Pantomime on Moving Pictures', *Music and the Moving Image* 8/3 (2015): 3–39 (4).
[117] George, *The Naked Truth*, 203–204.
[118] Bryan Gilliam, 'Stage and screen: Kurt Weill and operatic reform in the 1920s', in *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, 7.
[119] Ibid., 6. For more on Weill and cinema, see Hinton, 'Weill's Cinematic Imagination: Reality and Fantasy', in Naomi Graber and Marida Rizzuti, eds., *The Works of Kurt Weill: Transformations in 20th-Century Music* (Turnhout: Breplos, 2023), 3–19.
[120] Monchick, 'Paul Hindemith and the Cinematic Imagination', *The Musical Quarterly* 95/4 (2012): 519–525.

> 'Cardillac' is, in significant passages, almost a pantomime—and maybe the character of its human development gestures toward this emblem of human essence ultimately turning into an image. Stripped away from Hoffmann's novella are all the individual characteristics, everything that is more than a pantomimic outline, everything that is Romantic moralizing, content of any kind. A skit remains, a film subject with a strange deliberate bent, which highlights the cult of passion.[121]

In light of Stefan's view that *Cardillac* is a pantomime 'skit', Monchick notes how silent films were 'the most widespread and accessible pantomimes of the 1920s'.[122] While I do not intend to dismiss the obvious, and striking, commonalities between pantomime and silent film, Stefan's review echoes elements of Bie's review of *Der Protagonist*, thereby hinting towards some of the nuances of pantomime in opera. To put it another way, silent film is not always necessary as a link between pantomime and opera at this time—the two had their own relationship, as this chapter has shown.

Just as Weill assigns the Duke's musicians as woodwind instruments in *Der Protagonist*, Hindemith's pantomime scene revolves around two solo flutes. On the one hand, then, the timbre of woodwind instruments was perhaps associated with pantomime. In addition, like Bie in his review of *Der Protagonist*, Stefan describes *Cardillac* as a rejection of romanticism. As we saw earlier, for Bie, this rejection was directly linked to the dominance of woodwind instruments in Weill's music. Perhaps, then, pantomime encouraged composers to lean more heavily into the timbre of woodwind instruments, which in turn were seen by critics as these composers orienting themselves away from the string-heavy sound world of late-romantic opera. Pantomime can thus be seen to have played a role in creating the perception that opera had overcome the late-romantic tradition. The 'sound' of

[121] Quoted in ibid., 524, trans. Monchick.
[122] Ibid., 524.

pantomime, in other words, was one route composers could take in separating their operas from its immediate past.

To conclude, in recognising that Weill's *Der Protagonist* does not fit into the comfortable expressionism-*Zeitoper* dichotomy, this chapter has excavated how pantomime served as an alternative route to modern opera in Weimar Germany, one that on the eve of the dawn of *Zeitoper* was welcomed with open arms. How opera *looked* and *sounded* modern was not tied up exclusively with overt references to the latest mass media, such as radio and film. *Der Protagonist*'s intersection with a wider European interest in pantomime over influences coming from America also suggests that solutions to Germany's opera crisis were found not only across the Atlantic, but much closer to home. When operatic discourse in Weimar Germany was characterised by the need for opera to reinvent itself, pantomime's ongoing renaissance across much of Europe would have been an inescapable source of inspiration for composers writing new opera. As this chapter has demonstrated, Weill was able to harness pantomime in *Der Protagonist* to great acclaim as he created what many saw to be the latest triumph in modern German opera.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPERA ON THE PERIPHERY: *ORPHEUS UND EURYDIKE* IN KASSEL

When Ernst Krenek's three-act opera *Orpheus und Eurydike* premiered at the Kassel Staatstheater on 27 November 1926, the enthusiastic reaction from the press seemed to suggest that Krenek had secured a significant place for himself and this piece—his third stage work—in histories of German-language opera. In a review of *Orpheus und Eurydike* for the *Hessischer Kurier*, an anonymous critic signed R-th praised Krenek for the way his music was 'guided by sure instinct and controlled ability' and marked him as 'the strong hope of German music drama'.[1] A critic for the *Oppelner Nachrichten* similarly wrote: 'As long as German opera is supported by such talents, there is no need to worry about it';[2] while an anonymous critic for the *Casseler Tageblatt* claimed: 'A musical ethos flourishes here that cannot be forgotten and it is for the sake of this ethos that Krenek's work will live!'.[3] The audience in Kassel was equally in favour of Krenek's operatic endeavour, with reports of countless curtain calls for Krenek, for Oskar Kokoschka (on whose play Krenek's opera was based), conductor Ernst Zulauf and music critic turned local-theatre Intendant Paul Bekker.[4] In fact, the audience welcomed Krenek's opera with an enthusiasm that was almost unheard of in the history of the Kassel Staatstheater; local newspapers reported that such an applause had not been heard in the theatre for countless years.[5]

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[1] 'Als Instrumentalist wird Krenek von sicherem Instinkt und beherrschten Können geleitet. Er wird hiermit zur starken Hoffnung des deutschen Musikdramas'. R-th, '„Orpheus und Eurydike", Oper in drei Akten von Ernst Krenek. Dichtung von Oskar Kokoschka', *Hessischer Kurier*, 30 November 1926.
[2] 'Solange die deutsche Oper von solchen Talenten gefördert wird, braucht man darum nicht zu bangen'. Hermann Rudolf, 'Ernst Krenek: „Orpheus und Eurydike"', *Oppelner Nachrichten*, 2 December 1926.
[3] 'Hier blüht ein Musikethos, das man nicht vergessen kann, und um dieses Ethos willen wird Kreneks Werk leben!'. C. O. E., 'Krenek-Kokoschka: „Orpheus und Eurydike"', *Casseler Tageblatt*, 29 November 1926.
[4] 'Das Publikum dankte zum Schlusse mit brausendem Beifall und rief Krenek und Kokoschka unzählige Male vor die Rampe'. 'Kassel—„Orpheus und Eurydike"', *Der Tag* (Berlin), 30 November 1926.
[5] 'Eine so standhafte Begeisterung wie am Sonntagabend sah der Theaterraum seit ungezählten Jahren nicht mehr, eine Begeisterung, die, wenn nicht alles täuscht, doch etwas mehr war als nur geräuschvoller Premierenjubel'. C. O. E., 'Krenek-Kokoschka: „Orpheus und Eurydike"'.

While contemporary critics were keen to mark this evening in Kassel as a seminal moment in the history of German opera, opera companies have since seldom staged *Orpheus und Eurydike*, with Krenek's score having remained practically silent since the lowering of Zulauf's baton. Following its premiere in Kassel, the opera was not performed again until 1932, albeit this time only as a radio broadcast from Berlin.[6] *Orpheus und Eurydike* has received similarly limited scholarly attention. There are three possible reasons for its neglect in studies of Weimar opera. First, there was the international success of Krenek's next opera, *Jonny spielt auf*. Premiered in Leipzig on 10 February 1927 just shy of two months after *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s first performance, *Jonny spielt auf* relegated Krenek's former stage work to a footnote in his creative development overnight. Perhaps if *Jonny spielt auf* had premiered later, *Orpheus und Eurydike* may have had time to establish itself more securely in the repertoire.[7] Second, there is the issue that *Orpheus und Eurydike* was based on an expressionist play. As established in this thesis's introduction, by 1926 expressionism was seen in some quarters as increasingly outdated in Weimar culture, with Peter Gay marking 1925 as the turning point between expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Musicologists such as Cook have followed suit, seeing expressionism as paving the way for the more mature, more 'Weimar', *Zeitoper*.

A third possible reason for *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s neglect is its association with Kassel. Unlike Frankfurt, Berlin or Dresden, which had been the sites of other notable experiments in modern opera from Krenek's contemporaries—Paul Hindemith's triptych (1922), Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925) and Kurt Weill's *Der Protagonist* (1926) respectively—Kassel's programmes instead tended to offer more conservative fare. Krenek's

[6] Another radio performance then took place on 4 June 1972 on BBC Radio 3, while the next staged performance was not given until 1990 in Salzburg.
[7] Susan Cook also suggests that Hindemith's *Cardillac* too could have been a major success had it not been for *Jonny spielt auf*. See Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The* Zeitopern *of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010) [1988], 147.

Orpheus und Eurydike was the concluding work and highlight of a season dominated by nineteenth-century works: Wagner's *Lohengrin* (1850), Boieldieu's *La dame blanche* (1825), Pfitzner's *Der arme Heinrich* (1895) and Lortzing's *Der Waffenschmied* (1846). The programming at the Kassel Staatstheater, therefore, did not suggest that this was a likely site for a new opera by an up-and-coming trailblazer of *Neue Musik* like Krenek. Writing in 2005 after her husband's death, Gladys Krenek confirmed Kassel's hindering influence on *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s performance history. In the composer's view, this was quite distinct from the overshadowing success of *Jonny spielt auf*:

> In his memoirs *Im Atem der Zeit*, my husband wrote: 'The music which I produced for [*Orpheus und Eurydike*] belongs undoubtedly to one of the most important works I ever composed'. I remember it well, that he considered this work as having been especially successful. Even though *Jonny spielt auf* (Leipzig, 1927) overshadowed all other works from this period, Ernst Krenek pondered several times how [*Orpheus und Eurydike*] would have become a standard piece in the repertoire had its premiere taken place not in Kassel, but in Berlin, Hamburg or Vienna.[8]

The professional standard of the musicians in Kassel was also seemingly limited. Krenek found this out first-hand three years before *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s premiere when the Staatliche Kapelle Kassel (Kassel State Orchestra) presented a less than polished performance of his Second Symphony.[9] Krenek himself later noted how the Symphony was received 'with feelings raging from enthusiasm to horror', and that as the performance

[8] '„Die Musik, mit der ich dieses Opus ausstattete, gehört zweifellos zu den bedeutendsten Werken, die ich je komponiert habe", schrieb mein Mann in seinem Memoiren *Im Atem der Zeit*. Ich erinnere mich gut daran, dass er dieses Werk als besonders gelungen betrachtete. Mehrmals meinte Ernst Krenek, dass es ein Repertoirestück geworden wäre, wenn die Premiere dieser Oper nicht in Kassel, sondern in Berlin, Hamburg oder in der Wiener Staatsoper stattgefunden hätte—selbst wenn ein Jahr danach *Jonny spielt auf* (Premiere 1927 in Leipzig) alle anderen Werke von diesem Zeitpunkt an überschattete'. Gladys N. Krenek, Petra Preinfalk and Patrick Werkner, 'Vorworte', in Jürg Stenzl, ed., *Ernst Krenek, Oskar Kokoschka und die Geschichte von Orpheus und Eurydike*, (Schliengen: Argus, 2005), 9.

[9] John L. Stewart has since described the premiere of the Second Symphony as 'a clumsy performance of an awesome work'. See Stewart, *Ernst Krenek: The Man and His Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 37.

reached its climax, 'if this accumulation of sound would continue only a little further the hall would cave in, or some catastrophe of unforeseeable magnitude occur'.[10]

Throughout the nineteenth century and up until the time when Bekker took over as Intendant at the Staatstheater in 1925, the running of the local government in Kassel and subsequent management of the theatre had been particularly turbulent. Following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, Kassel was taken over by the French army and ruled by the emperor's brother Jérôme Napoleon as part of the Kingdom of Westphalia.[11] After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Kassel then became part of the Kingdom of Hannover, before eventually becoming part of Prussia. In order to appease the rebellions against this new government, the King of Prussia prioritised Kassel's theatre to ensure the kingdom maintained economic and cultural vitality. The theatre in Kassel, like Wiesbaden, was managed by the crown and not its local government, offering little chance for local autonomy. Notwithstanding these political changes, the Kassel Staatstheater played host to several major musical figures, such as Louis Spohr (1822 to 1859) and Gustav Mahler (1883 to 1885). Even if Kassel was not somewhere of particular importance, it was still on the radar. When Paul Bekker—one of the most influential music critics in Germany—took over as Intendant, this was another chance for the city to put itself firmly on the map as an important place for new music and opera in Germany.

Under Bekker's guidance, the evening of *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s premiere was marked by many critics as a turning point in the history of the Kassel Staatstheater. Across the board, critics were astounded at how that the Staatstheater had successfully pulled off this staging of Krenek's opera, a work which was no easy feat for both the singers and orchestral players. Critics especially praised Bekker for his work at the Staatstheater and how his

[10] Ernst Krenek, 'Self-Analysis', *New Mexico Quarterly* 23/1 (1953): 5–57 (12).
[11] Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit: Erinnerungen an die Moderne* (Vienna: Braumüller, 2012), 672–673. The following paragraph draws on Krenek's account of Kassel in his memoirs.

commitment to Kassel's artistic life had borne many fruits in the last year. Many critics accordingly used their reviews of Krenek's opera to come to terms with how the Kassel Staatstheater had staged *Orpheus und Eurydike* so triumphantly. As well as discussing the merits of the new work, their reviews were also characterised by reassessments of Kassel's reputation. Frequently, Krenek's opera was in competition with the Staatstheater for the limelight in the discourse. Ironically, the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel was also one of the very reasons the opera itself became overshadowed.

In this chapter I use the reception of *Orpheus und Eurydike* to suggest that critics understood Kassel to have resided at what could be considered the periphery of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture, as opposed to its centre. With the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel, this attitude bubbled to the surface as Krenek and Bekker's efforts disrupted the status quo. I use the terms 'central' and 'peripheral' spaces here not as literal, geographical points of reference. Located towards the centre of Germany, Kassel is one of the cities that lies furthest away from the nation's borders. Nor do I use them as direct quotations of how contemporary critics spoke of certain places. Such concepts were rarely used explicitly. On the contrary, my understanding of central and peripheral spaces stems from reading between the lines of the critical reception to *Orpheus und Eurydike*.[12] Attitudes towards the centre and the periphery present themselves as both distinct discursive categories and being dialectically related.

Kassel's peripheral status was hinted at in the opera's reception in numerous ways. These include critics' low expectations for the Staatstheater as an institution, memories of below-par performances such as the Second Symphony, as well as their acute awareness of

[12] The value of considering the discursive impact of these diametrically opposed categories has been demonstrated elsewhere. Christopher Chowrimootoo, for instance, has argued that notions of 'major' and 'minor' composers in twentieth-century music were in their own right 'powerfully performative categories that shaped the way composers, critics, and audiences understood musical culture in their own time'. Chowrimootoo, ''Britten Minor': Constructing the Modernist Canon', *Twentieth-Century Music* 13/2 (2016): 261–290 (264).

the local audience's aptitude to understand and appreciate a modern stage work. As we shall see, the Kassel Staatstheater was not somewhere contemporary critics expected to have witnessed the next big success in German opera. Expectations towards Kassel were held in contrast to those of more central spaces, such as Frankfurt, Dresden, Munich or Berlin. Frankfurt had played host to many of Schreker's operas, Dresden to Strauss's, Munich to Wagner's and Berlin to *Wozzeck*. Given the track record of these cities, critics could—and seemingly did—expect similar successes to follow. The premiere of *Orpheus und Eurydike*, though, demonstrated that the peripheral city of Kassel too could herald in a significant contribution to German opera. *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel, therefore, should not be overlooked when considering watershed moments for modern opera in Weimar Germany. Moreover, given that the centre and periphery are mutually constitutive, that is one defines the another, close attention to places typically deemed to be on the periphery of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture can also shed light on some of its typical central spaces. Some critics in their reviews of Krenek's opera expressed their surprise towards the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel in tandem with their recent and unexpectedly disappointing experience of seeing Hindemith's *Cardillac* in Dresden.

In what follows, I begin with an overview of the genesis of *Orpheus und Eurydike* from Kokoschka's inception of the work to how Krenek came to be involved in the project. I then focus on Bekker and Krenek's work at the Kassel Staatstheater. As we shall see, critics' lack of faith in Kassel was something also felt by Krenek. After the negative experience of his Second Symphony's first performance, the composer's move to Kassel to work for Bekker was accompanied by serious doubts and pessimism towards his new position. Krenek's expectations, however, were soon subverted, with his time there being particularly fruitful, as well as seminal for securing a performance for *Orpheus und Eurydike*. This chapter's main focus is the critical reception to *Orpheus und Eurydike*, chiefly the ways in

which critics negotiated how a peripheral space such as Kassel had been site for an important, new and modern opera. Finally, I step back from this microcosm of the history of the Kassel Staatstheater and consider what the local success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* means for the metanarrative of German opera at this time; that is, the dominant expressionism-*Zeitoper* dichotomy. Instead of retrospectively seeing *Orpheus und Eurydike* as one last gasp of expressionism in opera before the takeover of *Zeitoper* with *Jonny spielt auf*, I once again leave these two pillars by the wayside. Instead of seeing *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf* as antithetical through their embodiment of opposite sides of this dichotomy, I draw attention to some of the continuities between these works and other operas from Krenek's early career. Focusing on Krenek's and others' turn to Greek tragedy for modern stage works, I further destabilise the standard teleological narrative of the shift from expressionism to *Zeitoper* in modern opera in Weimar Germany.

From Play to Opera

Written between 1915 and 1918, Kokoschka's *Orpheus und Eurydike* was a new interpretation of the classic myth that was significantly darker in tone than previous reworkings. Recalling some of the key characteristics of his earlier work, *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, *Orpheus und Eurydike* utilises abstract and highly symbolic language to convey the extreme emotions and psychological torment of its titular protagonists in another brutal battle of the sexes.[13] In the classic tale, Orpheus's love for Eurydice causes him to turn around and look at her as they journey out of the underworld, resulting in him tragically losing her forever. In Kokoschka's adaptation, however, it is Orpheus's suspicion of her

[13] As Peter Tregear notes, if in the original myth Orpheus was in harmony with nature, he was now 'at odds with it'. Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), 15. As with *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, Kokoschka accompanied the play with paintings that explored these themes. Claudia Maurer Zenck, for instance, reads the work, specifically Krenek's adaption, in relation to the work of Otto Weininger and Karl Kraus. See Zenck, 'Erdgeist Eurydice. Kreneks Interpretation des Dramas von Kokoschka', in *Ernst Krenek, Oskar Kokoschka und die Geschichte von Orpheus und Eurydike*, 71–91.

betrayal in the underworld that leads him not only to gaze upon Eurydice but murder her in a violent rage fuelled by jealousy. Later scholars have argued that Kokoschka's disquieting treatment of Orpheus and Eurydice's relationship is reflective of the author's own inner turmoil. Around the time he began writing the play, Kokoschka's tumultuous relationship with Alma Mahler reached boiling point and ended rather abruptly when he discovered that she was having an affair with Walter Gropius.[14] Rüdiger Görner summarises how Kokoschka's *Orpheus und Eurydike* encapsulates this dynamic, which, at the same time, distances the play again from the original. Görner observes how, in the classic tale, Orpheus rescues Eurydice and brings her back to the land of the living, while in Kokoschka's play, Eurydike (Alma) entices Orpheus (Oskar) into her world, as she stands 'bursting with vitality', and he continues to 'suffer emotionally and physically… [fending] off suicidal tendencies which he [cannot] (yet) conquer'.[15]

Kokoschka's emotions were further heightened when writing *Orpheus und Eurydike* as he had recently served in the Austrian military during the First World War.[16] This was an especially traumatic experience for Kokoschka. In August 1915, he came close to death when he was shot in the head and stabbed in the chest, all before he was captured as a prisoner of war near the border with Russia. He was soon rescued by the Austrians and recovered in a hospital in Brünn. It was here that Kokoschka first had the idea of his next play, the work that would eventually become *Orpheus und Eurydike*. Kokoschka recounts the events in his

[14] Tregear suggests how Krenek may have 'felt a particular kinship with Kokoschka at this time', given his recent divorce from Anna. Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style*, 15. *Orpheus und Eurydike* was but one of Kokoschka's creations from this period which took their passionate relationship as its subject, mostly in the visual arts: works included the lithograph *Allos Makar* (1913), the oil canvas *Die Windsbraut* (1913) and the lithograph portfolio *Der gefesselte Columbus* (1913). Even after their separation, Kokoschka still loved her and used her as a focal point of his art, even designing a life-size doll of her which was completed in 1919.
[15] Rüdiger Görner, *Kokoschka: The Untimely Modernist*, trans. Debra S. Marmor and Herbert A Danner (London: Haus Publishing, 2020), 87.
[16] Ibid., 67–70.

biography as follows, which confirms the connection between this play and his relationship with Alma Mahler:

> I had to wait for many weeks to be transported home, always in danger that the front would roll back. I had lost track of time, and for some reason I was spatially isolated too, like in a cell, flies everywhere. Sometimes my memory of the past would erupt so strongly that I would see the woman I had broken up with so badly before me in the flesh. I thought I succumbed to her attraction, I couldn't separate myself. My ability to move with her, with this phantom, was impressed on me so vividly by the shot in the head that I developed it in my imagination without having to write it down. So, the play *Orpheus and Eurydike*, which I later wrote down from memory, came about out of my hallucinations, which I kept repeating in the Vladimir-Volhynsk camp.[17]

The above extract encapsulates Kokoschka's psychological torment at the time. In a state of special isolation, he recalls how he was overcome with an onslaught of memories, or rather nightmares, of 'the woman'. From its traumatic birth, *Orpheus und Eurydike* was a turning point in Kokoschka's creative development, a chance for a creative revision of himself as an artist. Zoë Ghyselinck argues that Kokoschka's reorientation as an artist went hand in hand with his coming to terms with his relationship with Alma: '[the play] allows the artist to descend into his own symbolic Underworld in order to be reborn with fresh inspiration'.[18]

A brief synopsis of Kokoschka's play will help to further highlight some of the work's autobiographical undertones. At the start of act 1, Orpheus returns home to Eurydike, who is sat in the garden in front of their house. She is wearing an undyed lamb's fleece and a ring engraved with Orpheus's portrait. The play's reference to Alma is made explicit in the

[17] 'Viele Wochen musste ich auf den Rücktransport in die Heimat warten, immer in Gefahr, dass die Front zurückrollen würde. Ich hatte den Zeitsinn verloren, und aus irgendeinem Grunde war ich auch räumlich isoliert, wie in einer Zelle, überall Fliegen. Manchmal brach meine Erinnerung an die Vergangenheit so stark hervor, dass ich die Frau, von der ich mich so schwer getrennt hatte, leibhaftig vor mir sah. Ich glaubte, ihrer Anziehungskraft zu erliegen, mich nicht trennen zu können. Da durch den Kopfschuß meine Bewegungsfähigkeit mit ihre, mit diesem Phantom, mir so lebhaft eingeprägt, dass ich sie, ohne sie aufschrieben zu müssen, in der Phantasie entwickelte. So ist aus meinen, mir auf dem Lager von Wladimir-Wolhynsk ständig wiederholten Halluzinationen das Stück Orpheus und Eurydike entstanden, das ich später aus dem Gedächtnis aufgeschrieben habe'. Quoted in Gloria Sultano, 'Orpheus Kokoschka. Schlaglichter auf Leben und Werk 1912 bis 1916', in *Ernst Krenek, Oskar Kokoschka und die Geschichte von Orpheus und Eurydike*, 54.
[18] Zoë Ghyselinck, 'Looking back: reception as creative sparagmos. Oskar Kokoschka's *Orpheus und Eurydike* revised', *Classical Receptions Journal* 9/4 (2017): 527–545 (543).

ring: it is engrained with the Greek phrase *alos makhar* (happiness is otherwise), which is almost an anagram of Oskar and Alma. It is clear to the audience from the outset that there is a great deal of tension and mistrust between the two lovers:

EURYDIKE You're back? *almost reproachfully*. So soon?	EURYDIKE Du bist zurück? *Fast vorwurfsvoll* So bald?
ORPHEUS And you, – as if not alone? As if you were thinking something through	ORPHEUS Und du? – wie nicht allein? als dächtest du was zu Ende?[19]

Psyche, later described by Krenek as 'a precocious girl who is supposed to protect Eurydice', enters and warns Eurydike of three suspicious females—the Furies.[20] Later that night, the Furies turn up at the house and demand that Psyche let them in so that they can take Eurydike to the underworld. Though Psyche is determined to protect Eurydike at all costs, the Furies persuade her to let them in; Psyche cannot resist the temptation to see the forbidden face of her lover Amor by the light of the Furies' torches. The Furies then directly confront Eurydike and explain they have been sent by Hades to bring her to the underworld for seven years. While Eurydike initially protests and attempts to resist her capture, she soon realises her fate is sealed and gives herself up. When Orpheus re-enters, though, he assumes that Eurydike is betraying him:

ORPHEUS You are leaving me?	ORPHEUS Du verlässt mich?
EURYDIKE To belong to you!	EURYDIKE Dir gehören!

[19] Translations by Michael Mitchell. See Oskar Kokoschka, *Plays and Poems*, trans. Mitchell (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 2001).
[20] Psyche's relationship with Eurydike is somewhat ambiguous in Kokoschka's play. As Ghyselinck notes, 'Psyche is characterized both as a child, sister, and friend of Eurydice'. Ghyselinck, 'Looking Back', 534.

ORPHEUS	ORPHEUS
Because you intend to go away!	Weil du fortgehen willst?
Can you lie to me?	Kannst du mich belügen?

Orpheus and Eurydike then take one last meal together, before the Furies' snake bites the heel of Eurydike. She falls dead and the Furies take her to Hades.

At the beginning of act 2, Psyche guides Orpheus through the underworld to rescue Eurydike. As they descend deeper, Psyche warns Orpheus that he must not question Eurydike about her seven years in the underworld. Following his successful rescue of Eurydike from Hades, Orpheus leads his lover on the long, treacherous journey back to safety. On the return journey the pair come across a group of sailors, with whom they travel as they continue their escape. One of the sailors catches a skull in their net. A ring is wedged between the teeth of the skull—Eurydike's ring. When Orpheus sees this, his insecurities get the better of him and he forces Eurydike to confess how she betrayed him for Hades. Overcome with resentment, Orpheus brutally murders Eurydike. She dies for a second time.

By the time of the events of act 3, Orpheus has lost his mind. In Ghyselinck's view, this final act is 'the most 'expressionist' of all: as a kind of (Dionysian) madman Orpheus rages and dances through the ruins and characterizes his attitude as if he is now awake after having been asleep for a very long time'.[21] The curtain rises to reveal Orpheus frantically digging around the ruins of his old house. A group of peasants then hang him upside down on a beam above the house. From his lofty height, Orpheus calls the peasants to dance:

ORPHEUS	ORPHEUS
Dance! Dance!	Tanzen! Tanzen!
Hey, all around my life	He, herum! Um mein Leben!
Hehe! Shadows, stealing here	Hehe! Schatten, die aus den
from the villages	Dörfern schleichen.
Eyeball to eyeball,	Entervier Augen, stiert sich
what staring!	was an.
A slain man in the ditch?	Ein Erschlagener im Graben?

[21] Ibid., 539, fn.38.

The chary murderer	Derscheue Mörder
slipped away	weggeschlichen?
Ridiculous!	Ausgelacht!
Again, down we go!	Schon wieder; hopps!
Here I am: it's me!	Ich da: Ich bins!

The ghost of Eurydike then appears to Orpheus and she wishes to confess her sins to him. The interaction between Orpheus and Eurydike, though, goes far from smoothly. Krenek himself describes it as 'a protracted, somewhat Strindbergian and ultimately inconclusive dialogue, expressing a climax of torture and desperation'.[22] Orpheus goes into yet another frenzy, revealing how he hates Eurydike. To conclude the act, Eurydike suffocates Orpheus:

ORPHEUS	ORPHEUS
With fiendish delight I confess:	Mit teuflicher Freude ich beichte:
I hate you!	Ich hasse dich!
My deed, Hades,	Meine Tat ist, Hades, der Tod
outwitted you	überlistet!
You are it, here!	Du bist's, hier!
Dance! Dance!	Tanzen! Tanzen!

The work ends with a short postlude led by Psyche, who is seen holding Orpheus's lyre. Just as in the original tale, the lyre has outlived its owner. Choruses of girls, boys, women and farmers appear and sing about a Lark—a symbol of Christ and Dionysus—as Psyche sings of her love for Amor.[23]

When Kokoschka's *Orpheus und Eurydike* premiered in Frankfurt on 21 February 1921, the performance was not especially successful and showed few signs of longevity. Perhaps in a bid to save the work for posterity, in 1923, Kokoschka sought someone to set *Orpheus und Eurydike* to music. Hindemith's adaptation of *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, after all, had successfully brought Kokoschka's earlier play back into the limelight, even if

[22] Krenek, 'Synopsis'. Ernst Krenek Institut, LM 155-02.
[23] Ghyselinck sees this collective singing as demonstrative of how Orpheus's death allows for a spiritual and creative rebirth of not just the masses. Ghyselinck, 'Looking Back', 540. She also suggests that this foreshadows the 'synaesthetic performances of the masses for the masses' in Artaud, Reinhardt and Piscator. See ibid., 540, fn.40.

the reception towards the work was still somewhat mixed. Kokoschka initially spoke of the likes of Alexander Scriabin setting *Orpheus und Eurydike* to music, or even someone based in New York who could help secure a production at the Metropolitan Opera.[24] The task, however, was eventually entrusted to Krenek. In his memoirs, Krenek recounts how Leo Kestenberg, then director of the Institute for Education and Teaching's Department of Music, informed him how Kokoschka was searching for a composer for the *Orpheus* project and suggested to Krenek that he would be suitable for the job.[25] At such an early stage in his career, the chance to work with someone as influential as Kokoschka would have been an exciting and worthwhile opportunity for Krenek, who was still looking to make his big break. The fact that, only a couple of years earlier, Hindemith's adaptation of Kokoschka had catapulted the composer into the public eye was also on Krenek's mind.[26]

Once Krenek was on board with the project, Kokoschka gifted him a signed copy of *Vier Dramen* (1919), in which *Orpheus und Eurydike* had been published.[27] Krenek later confessed that after his first reading of *Orpheus und Eurydike*, he did not understand what he had just read, referring to Kokoschka's play as 'expressionist blah blah blah'.[28] Still, Krenek was not put off by the piece. After several re-readings of the play, and with help from his

[24] Zenck, 'Erdgeist Eurydice. Kreneks Interpretation des Dramas von Kokoschka', 71.
[25] 'Kestenberg ließ mich wissen, dass Oskar Kokoschka, der große österreichische Maler, der auch einige Experimente auf literarischem Gebiet unternommen hatte, seine Tragödie *Orpheus und Eurydike* vertont haben wolle, und Kestenberg hatte mich als geeigneten Mann für diese Arbeit vorgeschlagen'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 457. During Krenek's time studying with Schreker at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, Kestenberg was Professor of Piano at the same institution, which is where the young composer likely met such an influential figure in Weimar Germany's musical life.
[26] 'Die Tatsache, dass Hindemith eines von Kokoschkas Theaterstücken vertont hatte, trug gewiss ebenfalls zu meinem Interesse bei'. Ibid., 457–458.
[27] Krenek's original copy of *Vier Dramen* is held at the Ernst Krenek Institut.
[28] 'Ich las sein Drama, und ich gestehe, dass ich sehr wenig davon verstand. Es war expressionistisches Blabla in höchster Potenz, wie mir schien. Doch in einem verbogenen Winkel meiner Seele war ich von diesem äußerst ungewöhnlichen Versuch tief bewegt und beschloss, eine Oper daraus zu machen, ganz gleich, wie'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 459.

good friend Eduard Erdmann,[29] Krenek gradually took a liking to Kokoschka's play and got to work adapting it into an opera:

> I was notified that the expressionist painter, Oskar Kokoschka, wished to see his play on Orpheus made into an opera. Again, I was challenged by the project as such, and I was not in the least deferred by the fact that the book, upon first reading, did not seem to make much sense to me. Again, I wrote the music in a feverish haste, as in a dream, once in a while grasping the implications of the text in a flash, then again groping in the dark, following my creative instinct rather than intellectual perception.[30]

His experience writing the music 'in a feverish haste, as in a dream' parallels Kokoschka's own account of how the play came to the painter in hallucinations. (Krenek, though, was known in his early career for the rapid pace at which he would compose.) Despite his initial anxiety towards the work, Krenek became increasingly excited about the project. He later described *Orpheus und Eurydike* as 'the most mature part of my early output', second only to his Second Symphony.[31]

To successfully adapt *Orpheus und Eurydike* into an opera, Krenek realised that he needed to make several major cuts to the play, as it was far too long-winded for a libretto in its original form. Krenek's copy of *Vier Dramen* reveals that the composer engaged closely with the text in an attempt to create the perfect libretto. In his copy, Krenek clearly marked which sections of the original play needed to be removed so as to streamline the work. At times, he suggested reordering certain lines. Krenek also suggested some seemingly inconsequential suggestions to the timeline of events. At the opening of act 2, where Kokoschka writes 'Drei Jahre später, im Orkus. Psyche sieht Eurydike im Schatten', Krenek has crossed out 'drei' and indicated that the act takes place '*fünf* Jahre später'.[32] Similarly,

[29] Ibid., 471. The two met when Krenek moved to Berlin to study with Schreker. Erdmann, who was active mainly as a concert pianist, performed many of Krenek's works for piano. For more on Krenek and Erdmann, see Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 77–78.
[30] Krenek, 'Self-Analysis', 13.
[31] Krenek, *Horizons Circled: Reflections on My Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 38.
[32] See page 32 of Krenek's copy of *Vier Dramen*.

towards the end of the act, Eurydike laments to Orpheus about her time in the underworld: 'Drei Jahre lang mit vielen Nächten währte der Kampf meines Gewissens mit Hades'. Here, Krenek suggests that Eurydike had struggled with Hades for not three, but two years.[33] Krenek's meticulous work on the libretto also suggests that he was at the helm steering the opera's development. From reading the composer's memoirs, it appears that the project was not especially collaborative. When Krenek did visit Kokoschka to show him his progress with the score, the artist was apparently more interested in a Chinese puzzle, and when Kokoschka was invited to provide the set designs, he declined the opportunity.[34] The two, nonetheless, still became closely acquainted and Kokoschka did attend the first performance.

Bekker, Krenek and Kassel

More so than *Orpheus und Eurydike* being a Krenek-Kokoschka project, it was Bekker with whom Krenek worked most closely ahead of the opera's first performance. When Kokoschka first had the idea of turning *Orpheus und Eurydike* into an opera, there was no planned performance. Only when Krenek was working as Bekker's assistant at the Kassel Staatstheater did the idea of a performance of *Orpheus und Eurydike* begin to be realised.

The premiere of *Orpheus und Eurydike* was the culmination of an ongoing period of change at the Kassel Staatstheater that had been instigated by Bekker through his role as Theatre Intendant and supported extensively by Krenek. This was a position Bekker had wanted for a number of years. Prior to Kassel, Bekker's most notable position to date was chief critic of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which he held from 1911 to 1923. During his time working for the newspaper, Bekker also published numerous musicological texts including *Beethoven* (1911), *Das deutsche Musikleben* (1916) and *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis*

[33] See page 50 of ibid.
[34] Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 459.

Mahler (1918).[35] In *Das deutsche Musikleben*, Bekker saw music as 'a power of popular organisation, an expression of the overall aesthetic will, a creative force within our social manifestation', while, in *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler*, he specifically argues that the greatest value of any symphony lies not in the beauty of its structure, but in its ability to unite and elevate its individual listeners.[36] Bekker also argues that musical form—form encompassing societies, musicians and critics—should not simply refer to the work as a material object but also encompass society's perception of the work, with this perception allowing music to be socially formative.[37] Bekker's new role was an opportunity to put some of his theories developed earlier into practice, especially his ideas about the ethics of opera and the *gesellschaftsbildende Kraft* (socially formative power) of music. The city of Kassel may also have been particularly appealing to Bekker over somewhere more central like Berlin. Nanette Nielsen, in her study of Bekker's musical aesthetics, points out that Bekker took issue with Kestenberg at the Krolloper for being far too concerned with radical modernist staging.[38] Bekker also believed that music should not have to adhere to specific political programmes. In 1931, while working as Intendant in Wiesbaden, he emphasised how freedom from party politics was central to the freedom of the theatre.[39] Perhaps, then, Bekker saw Kassel as an attractive opportunity to escape the fraught politics of Berlin.

Since his days working for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Bekker had admired Krenek's musical-dramatic skill. Upon hiring the composer to work with him in Kassel, therefore, he

[35] At the time of Bekker's career, music criticism was still far more influential than musicology and Bekker's oeuvre clearly traversed both fields. Nielsen notes how 'the history of the so-called 'new music' was to a great extent being written via music criticism, rather than musicology'. Nielsen, *Paul Bekker's Musical Aesthetics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 2.
[36] See Bekker, *Das deutsche Musikleben* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1916), 236 and Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler*, in *Neue Musik: Gesammelte Schriften Band 3* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1923), 11.
[37] See *Das deutsche Musikleben*, 3. For Bekker's conception of form, see ibid., 14.
[38] Nielsen, *Paul Bekker's Musical Aesthetics*, 114.
[39] 'With regard to freedom of the theatre, I count, above all personal things, the freedom from party politics'. Quoted in Nielsen, '*Sein oder Schein?* Paul Bekker's "Mirror Image" and the Ethical Voice of Humane Opera', *The Opera Quarterly* 23/2–3 (2007): 295–310 (303).

decided to help bring *Orpheus und Eurydike* to life.[40] Nielsen notes how Bekker favoured 'staging that promoted musical expression and [that] required a focus on the singer as a static energy, rather than more theatrical elements such as extravagant technological machinery or dynamic acting'.[41] Perhaps, then, the expressionist, introspective nature of *Orpheus und Eurydike*, in which Kokoschka favoured the heightened emotions of the characters over action, would have appealed to Bekker, as well as the work's distance from the technologized, industrial landscape of the modern world. According to Krenek, this was the most challenging work Bekker had ever undertaken as Intendant and was an almost impossible task that took no less than a year of preparation:

> The biggest project during Bekker's Kassel opera career was the production of my *Orpheus*. By all reasonable considerations, this seemed a pretty impossible undertaking given the musical difficulty of the work. But Bekker had decided to do it, and the seemingly hopeless task was added to the theatre's production schedule, even though it meant no less than a full year of work. His stubbornness in such matters was absolutely admirable.[42]

Bekker was so dedicated to the project that he also assumed the role of director of the production. His commitment to *Orpheus und Eurydike* is also reflective of his ardent attitude as Intendant in general. Krenek recalls how Bekker ensured that weekly meetings were held to coordinate the simultaneous and complicated rehearsal schedules between the Oper and Schauspielhaus.[43]

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[40] 'Paul Bekker hatte noch als Kritiker der Frankfurter Zeitung meine musikdramatische Begabung geschätzt, und so beschloss er, als er Intendant in Kassel wurde, meine Oper Orpheus und Eurydike herauszubringen'. Krenek, 'Erinnerungen an Kassel', 3. Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Teilnachlass Ernst Krenek ZPH-291.
[41] Nielsen, *Paul Bekker's Musical Aesthetics*, 115.
[42] 'Das größte Projekt während Bekkers Kasseler Opernkarriere war die Produktion meines Orpheus. Allen vernünftigen Erwägungen zufolge schien das in Anbetracht der musikalischen Schwierigkeien [*sic*] des Werkes ein ziemlich unmögliches Unterfangen zu sein. Aber Bekker hatte sich nun einmal dazu entschlossen, und die scheinbar hoffnungslose Aufgabe wurde auf den Produktionsplan des Theaters gesetzt, obgleich das nicht weniger als ein volles Jahr Arbeit bedeutete. Seine Sturheit in solchen Dingen war absolute bewundernswert'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 733.
[43] Ibid., 674.

Even though Krenek's time in Kassel led to this exciting venture, when first offered the position of being Bekker's assistant in June 1925, the composer was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of moving to Kassel and initially declined. Admittedly, at the time of Bekker's invitation, Krenek was grappling with several personal and financial problems. Six months prior, his marriage to Anna Mahler had broken down. The pair had recently settled in Zürich and having moved from what Krenek later described to be an 'impoverished' Austria and a 'hectic' Germany, he welcomed Switzerland's wealth and stability.[44] Accepting Bekker's offer would mean Krenek both having to leave his newly found Swiss life and return to Germany, a country which he now generally disliked and in which he saw himself as an outsider.[45]

Krenek's reluctance to accept Bekker's offer can also be attributed to the then recent memory of the premiere of his Second Symphony, which had taken place in Kassel on 11 June 1923 as part of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein's Tonkünstlerfest.[46] The city's musicians were evidently unprepared for Krenek's new symphony, his most ambitious work to date. The most famous atonal orchestral works at that time typically consisted of short movements that were mere bursts of energy, often over in a matter of minutes or less and that allowed the composer to discard any formal musical structures. Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra (1909), for example, lasts just fifteen minutes, approximately three minutes per movement. Krenek's three-movement symphony, in contrast, was around an hour in length and full of technically demanding parts for all the players of the orchestra. Looking back on

[44] 'Da ich aus dem verarmten Österreich und dem hektischen Deutschland kam, war ich zuerst von dem Reichtum und der Stabilität der Schweizer Republik beeindruckt. Alles, von der Nahrung bis hin zur Straßenbeleuchtung, war im Vergleich zu dem, woran wir uns in den Kriegsjahren gewöhnt hatten, reichlich vorhanden, und es gab nicht nur viel sehr Altes, das wie neu aussah, weil es so solide hergestellt worden war, sondern auch die neuen Dinge, die gerade entstanden, sollten sichtlich jahrhundertelang halten'. Ibid., 503–504.
[45] 'Während der ganzen Zeit, die ich in Deutschland verbrachte, betrachtete ich mich als Ausländer und wollte auch als solcher angesehen werden, was einige Leute, die Österreich für einen Teil Deutschlands hielten, überraschte'. Ibid., 283.
[46] Stewart, *Ernst Krenek*, 37.

the event, Krenek recounts how alien the Second Symphony was to Kassel's Staatliche Kapelle:

> The director, an older, average musician, didn't have the faintest idea what he had let himself in for. At the first rehearsal he gave a small speech, completely seriously and without malice: 'Gentlemen, we will now play something that no one will ever understand. Nevertheless, we will do our best. If you think you have the tune, please play it loudly'.[47]

The event was a success, insofar as it brought Krenek a significant amount of attention from the press, who marked him as an ultra-progressive modernist.[48] To have a work selected for the ADMV Tonkünstlerfest was also no small feat in itself. The work garnered several favourable reviews, including one from Bekker and another from a then still relatively unknown Theodor Adorno.[49] Many critics, however, spoke out against the symphony. In the eyes of the public, Krenek was a disrupter, an *enfant terrible*. Krenek later remarked how the public reaction was violent and contained an 'element of primitive fear'.[50] In his eyes, this explained why no one wanted to perform it again. Unsurprisingly, Kassel was not a place to which Krenek would have likely entrusted his future works.

After a second and evidently more persuasive telegram from Bekker, though, Krenek ended up accepting the offer; he did so, holding onto his disdain for Kassel and Germany. In his memoirs, Krenek writes how when he eventually set out for Kassel, he was leaving paradise and entering a land in which he would be in exile.[51] The Kassel Staatstheater came

[47] 'Der Dirigent, ein älterer Durchschnittsmusiker, hatte nicht die geringste Ahnung, auf was er sich eingelassen hatte. Bei der ersten Probe hielt er eine kleine Ansprache, völlig ernst und ohne jede Bosheit: „Meine Herren, wir werden jetzt etwas spielen, das keiner jemals verstehen wird. Trotzdem werden wir unser Bestes tun. Wenn jemand meint, ein Thema zu haben, möge er bitte laut spielen"'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 467.
[48] See Adolf Weissmann, 'Ernst Krenek', *Modern Music* 6 (1928): 17–23 and Hugo Leichtentritt, 'German Music of the Last Decade', *Musical Quarterly* 10 (1924): 193–218.
[49] Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style*, 11–12.
[50] 'Die Reaktion war so heftig, dass ich zu der Annahme neige, dem allgemeinen Eindruck sei ein Element primitiver Furcht beigemischt gewesen, womit ich die Tatsache zu erklären suche, dass niemand das Stück wieder in Angriff nehmen wollte, bis 1938'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 468.
[51] 'Jedenfalls nahm ich sein Angebot an und wußte also, dass ich Ende August das Paradies verlassen und in ein Land gehen würde, das ich eindeutig als Exil betrachtete'. Ibid., 642.

with its own set of challenges. Krenek recounts how each work at the theatre was normally only able to run for a maximum of four productions because the majority of tickets were bought by subscribers. This meant that there was a huge turnover of works throughout each season, and thus all those involved—soloists, choir members, directors, conductors, musicians, stage managers—were constantly learning new material.[52] The works performed were also still predominantly from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Krenek, for instance, recounts preparing incidental music for works by Jean-Phillipe Rameau, André Grétry and Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf.[53]

Notwithstanding these challenges, Krenek's time in Kassel ended up being a seminal period in his creative development and a time in his life he would later look back on fondly. During his two years as Bekker's assistant, Krenek had the opportunity to compose incidental music to plays, conduct entire operas and he began writing his extensive collection of music essays. Krenek was also particularly fascinated with what he describes as the 'magical mechanism of the theatre'.[54] He became enchanted by the ways in which people could emerge from and disappear through the stage floor, how they could seemingly soar through the air as if by magic, as well as the numerous lighting techniques and the creation of cycloramas.[55] With Bekker's support, *Orpheus und Eurydike* had the full backing of the Staatstheater. All the pieces were on the board for what was hoped to be a major success for Krenek, Bekker and the Kassel Staatstheater as a whole.

[52] Ibid., 674.
[53] Krenek, 'Erinnerungen an Kassel, 3.
[54] Ibid., 4.
[55] 'Durch diese Arbeit und auch durch die Bühnenmusiken, die ich für das Schauspiel schrieb und oft auch selbst dirigierte, wurde ich genau vertraut mit dem magischen Mechanismus des Theaters. Ich war fasziniert von den zahllosen Vor- und Einrichtungen, mit denen man Menschen und Dinge aus dem Boden hervorholen, in die Tiefe versenken, durch die Luft befördern, in geheimnisvolles Licht oder totale Finsternis versetzen, und auf dem Rundhorizont herrliche Landschaften hervorzaubern kann'. Ibid., 4–5.

Opera on the Periphery

A strong historical awareness permeated the reception of *Orpheus und Eurydike* following its premiere in Kassel. A new setting of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth perhaps in and of itself suggested to critics present that Krenek's opera was an attempt at operatic reform. In his review for the *Kölnische Zeitung*, Dr W. Jacobs made a direct connection between the 'birth' of opera, new beginnings in music and Krenek. Jacobs wrote: 'In our time of 'new music' one could believe in various possibilities when one hears the name of Krenek's opera. Around 1600 at the very beginning of opera, also in a time of *nuove musicche* [*sic*], the Orpheus material was already being worked on by Caccini and Peri'.[56] Myth, as a literary genre, also frequently invokes notions of reform, and, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Orpheus myth specifically had been subject to bold reinterpretations.[57] Jacques Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* (1858), for instance, broke away from the traditional story to present a parody of Greek myth in the genre of operetta. In the early twentieth century, Orpheus then took a decidedly modernist turn:[58] Rainer Maria Rilke's *Die Sonette an Orpheus* (1923) and Jean Cocteau's *Orphée* (1925), two of the most famous literary examples, both deal with themes of transformation. The association of Orpheus, modernity and transformation was also present in music, most closely to Krenek in Kurt Weill's cantata *Der neue Orpheus* (1925).[59]

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[56] 'In unserer Zeit der „neuen Musik" konnte man an verschiedene Möglichkeiten glauben, wenn man den Namen der Oper von Krenek vernahm. Um 1600, auch in einer Zeit der nuove musicche, in den ersten Anfängen der Oper überhaupt, wurde der Orpheus-Stoff schon von Caccini und Peri bearbeitet'. Dr W. Jacobs, 'Orpheus und Eurydike von Ernst Krenek: Uraufführung am Staatstheater in Kassel', *Kölnische Zeitung*, 30 November 1926.

[57] Görner, *Kokoschka*, 87.

[58] As Ghyselinck notes: 'Orpheus [is] a metaphor for artists' existential searches and the (im-) possibility of artistic creativity'. Ghyselinck, 'Looking back', 528.

[59] For an extensive overview of contemporary Orpheus music projects see Reinhard Kapp, 'Zum Stand der Bearbeitung des Orpheus-Stoffs in den zwanziger Jahren', in *Ernst Krenek, Oskar Kokoschka und die Geschichte von Orpheus und Eurydike*, 33–47. The suggestive title of *Der neue Orpheus* reflects Weill's own transformation as a composer as it is situated in the midst of a crucial point in his creative development, see Andreas Eichorn 'Introduction—Music with Solo Violin', in *The Kurt Weill Edition*, Series 2, Volume 2 (2010).

Several critics drew comparisons between *Orpheus und Eurydike* and Berg's *Wozzeck*. The two operas have several obvious similarities. Stewart, for instance, has drawn attention to 'the atonal harshness of the scenes of violence' in both works, and 'the sensuality found in both Eurydike and Wozzeck's common-law wife, Marie'.[60] We know that Krenek studied the piano reduction of *Wozzeck* in 1923 and later wrote to Berg asking about his approach to the voice writing.[61] Krenek, however, denied any influence from *Wozzeck*—perhaps in an attempt to maintain his own autonomy. The harmonic styles of *Wozzeck* and *Orpheus und Eurydike*, though, are similar in that neither work commits to being fully tonal or atonal, instead drawing on different harmonic approaches for colour. Rather than dwelling on these comparisons or whether one influenced the other, critics in their reviews of *Orpheus und Eurydike* were more concerned with whether Krenek's opera had surpassed the success of *Wozzeck*. Adolf Weissmann, for one, felt that in *Orpheus und Eurydike* he had heard nothing as captivating since *Wozzeck*.[62] Hermann Rudolf, on the other hand, believed that *Orpheus und Eurydike* was not quite as epochal as *Wozzeck*.[63]

Initial reactions to *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s first performance also saw critics shower Krenek's music with praise. The anonymous critic R-th for the *Hessischer Kurier* felt that Krenek's rhythms, phrasing and harmony came together in *Orpheus und Eurydike* 'to create a powerful experience'.[64] Critics were overjoyed at how Krenek's music redeemed what, according to Karl Holl in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, was Kokoschka's 'embarrassing poetry'.[65]

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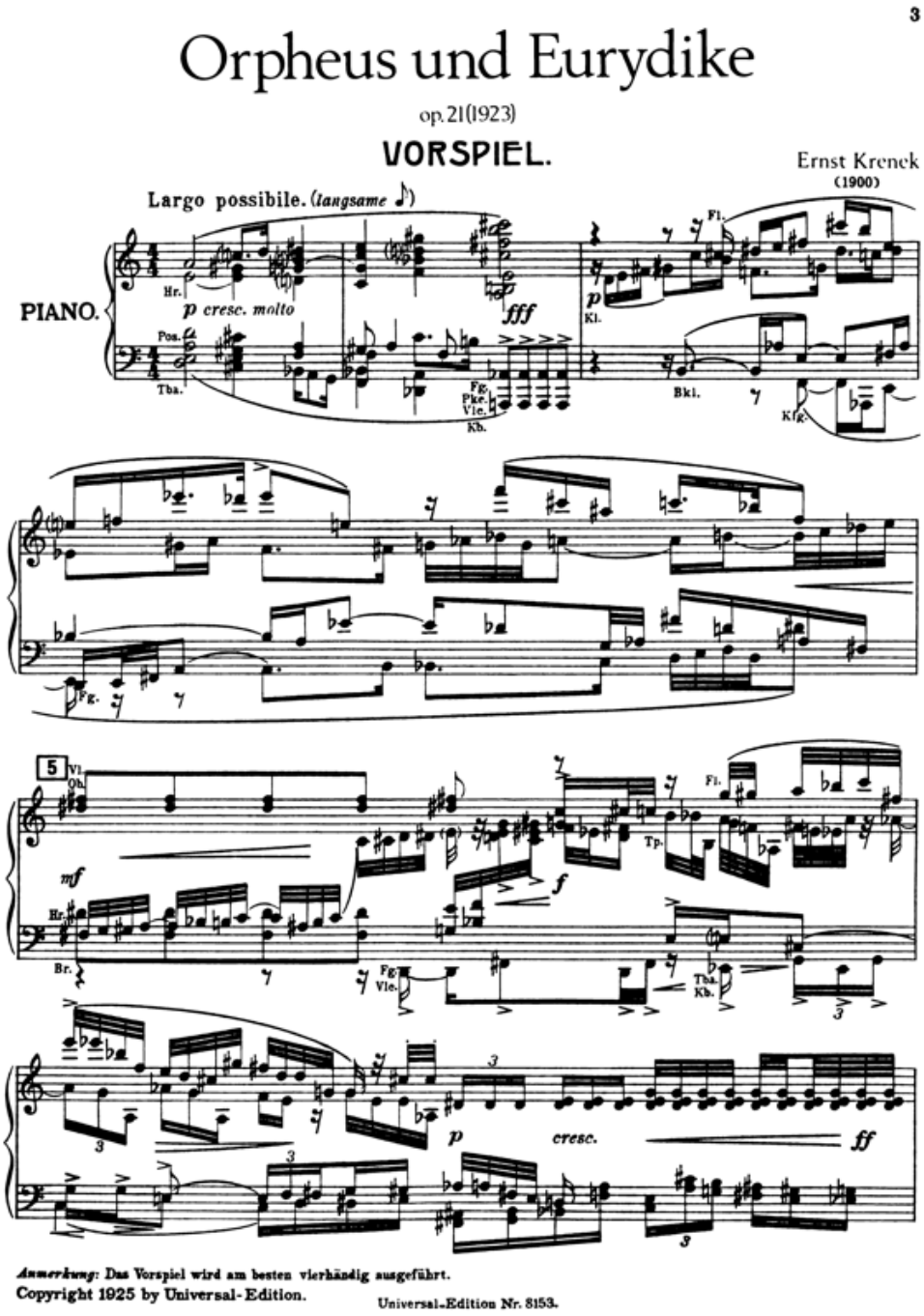
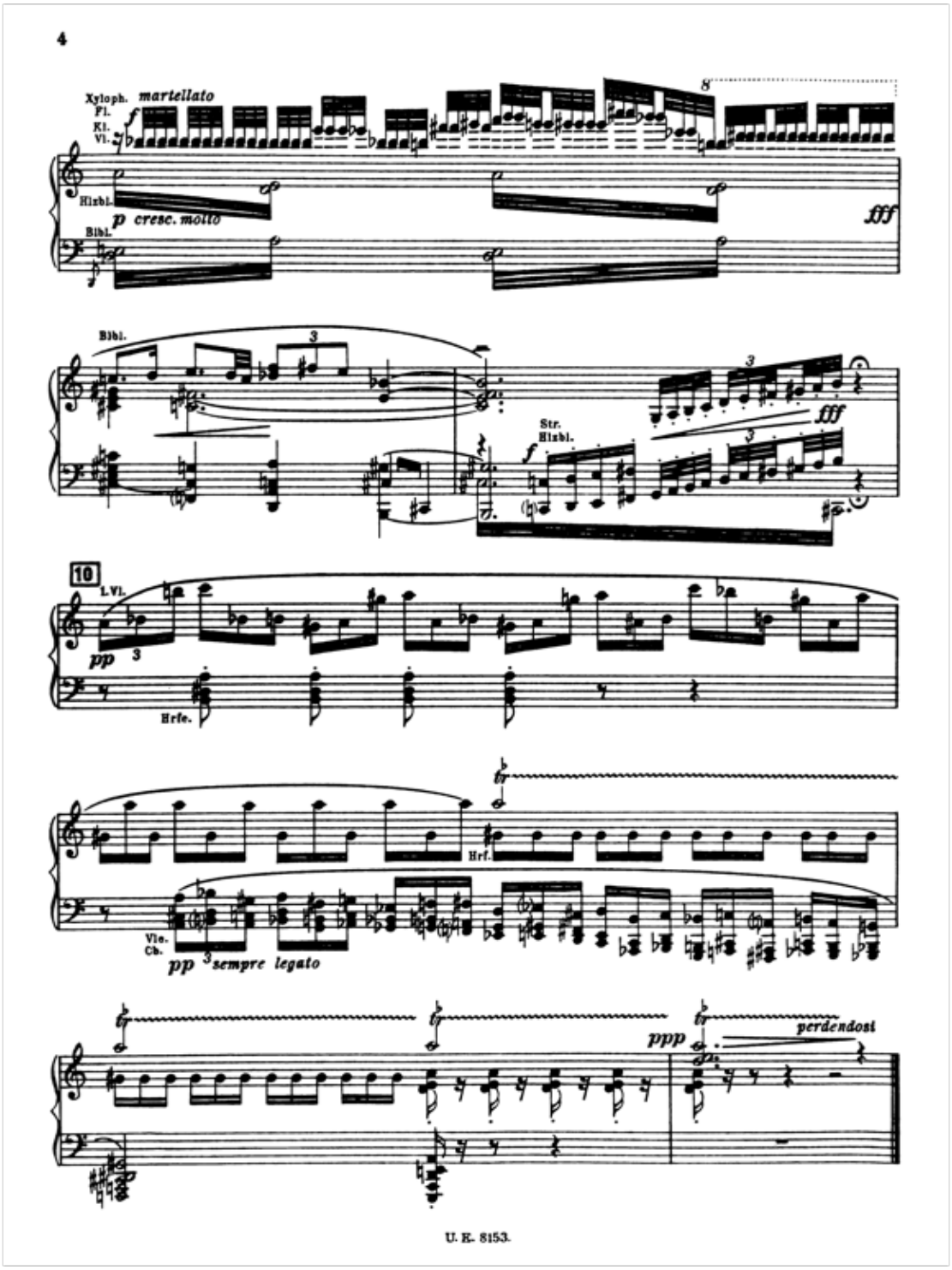
[60] Stewart, *Ernst Krenek*, 79.
[61] Ibid., 79.
[62] 'Nach Alban Bergs „Wozzeck" ist mir nichts ähnlich Fesselndes, nicht ähnlich Packendes begegnet wie Kreneks Orpheus'. Adolf Weißmann, 'Kreneks neue Oper', *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, 29 November 1926.
[63] 'Epochal? Vielleicht nicht so wie der „Wozzeck", aber immerhin doch gegenwartsgeeignet!'. Rudolf, 'Ernst Krenek: „Orpheus und Eurydike"'.
[64] 'Krenek ist Ausdrucksmusik von höchster Intensität, Urelement der Musik: Rhythmus, Bewegungslinie und Zusammenklang ballen sich im Orpheus zu starkem Erlebnis zusammen'. R-th, 'Staatstheater: Uraufführung: „Orpheus und Eurydike" von Ernst Krenek', *Hessischer Kurier*, 29 November 1926.
[65] 'Man würde diesem „Orpheus" von 1920 keine Träne mehr nachweinen, wenn er, Verlegenheitsdichtung eines zu anderem und höherem Berufenen, nicht musikalische Folgen gehabt und ein klangschöpferisches Talent vom anerkannten Rang Ernst Kreneks veranlasst hätte, eine Oper daraus zu machen'. Karl Holl, 'Kokoschka-Krenek:

Despite Krenek's best efforts to streamline Kokoschka's play, the libretto was seen by most critics to be the weakest part of the opera. An anonymous critic for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, for instance, described the opera's text as a 'monstrosity' and 'in anything but German'.[66]



Uraufführung von „Orpheus und Eurydike" am Staatstheater in Kassel', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 30 November 1926.

[66] 'Das Textbuch ist eine Monstrosität', 'Staatstheater: Uraufführung: „Orpheus und Eurydike"', *Der Herkules*, Capitel 4/12, 4 December 1926. 'Zumal das Stück in einer Sprache verfasst ist, die alles andere, nur kein Deutsch ist', 'Zwei Opernpremieren: „Orpheus und Eurydike"—„Don Pistacchio"', *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 November 1926.



Example 1: Ernst Krenek, *Orpheus und Eurydike*, act 1, prelude. © Copyright 1925 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien / UE8153

The sound world of *Orpheus und Eurydike* is established from the outset in a short orchestral prelude which also introduces several motifs that appear throughout the work. In a synopsis written for a later performance to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 1972, Krenek described the prelude's music as follows:

> A brief orchestral prelude with violent dynamic contrasts and involuted polyphony suggests the expressionistic atmosphere of the work. It starts with a chord that for a long time has had a quality of magic enchantment after I had heard it in the opening phrases of the prelude to the last act of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.[67]

The 'violence' of Krenek's music in this opening prelude is especially notable in bar 7 as the rhythmic intensity of the xylophone, flutes and violins cut through the texture (see Example 1).[68] Without any harmonic, rhythmic or melodic direction from the rest of the orchestra, their hemidemisemiquavers seem to rise aimlessly in both pitch and dynamic level and perhaps serve to illustrate the unrestrained, Dionysian emotions so often associated with expressionist art.

Critics at the time of the opera's premiere, though, did not tend to speak of Krenek's music as 'expressionist'. Krenek himself only spoke of evoking an 'expressionistic atmosphere', not that he was writing in a specific style of musical expressionism. His compositional style in *Orpheus und Eurydike* is also strikingly different from Schoenberg's, whose free atonal works were typically classified as examples of musical expressionism at this time. Unlike Schoenberg's orchestral writing, Krenek's writing for *Orpheus und Eurydike* is generally less angular; its textures are often homophonic and its harmony commits neither to atonality nor tonality, but draws on an array of colours. Consonant chords are typically used for effect, rather than as a sign of a turn to functional harmony. Beginning

[67] Krenek, 'Synopsis'.
[68] For an in-depth musical analysis of *Orpheus und Eurydike*, see Hans Knoch, *Orpheus und Eurydike. Der antike Sagenstoff in den Opern von Darius Milhaud und Ernst Krenek* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1977).

on a D major chord, the postlude is the most tonally stable section of the entire opera as it accompanies Psyche and the villagers singing. Krenek's reluctance to commit to one particular harmonic approach for *Orpheus und Eurydike* is encapsulated by the opera's opening chord. Based on the notes D, E and A, this chord is a stack of perfect fourths, which, in the absence of any perfect fifths or major/minor thirds, makes it difficult to establish any sense of a home key or even note. Despite the postlude's D-major opening, the whole opera ends with this 'Debussy' chord, robbing the work of a tonal cadence to conclude the preceding madness.[69]

Critics readily picked up on Krenek's diverse approach to harmony. Rudolf from the *Oppelner Nachrichten* noted how the composer's music 'resisted' labels such as 'tonal, atonal, linear and polymelodic'.[70] In his review for the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Walter Schrenk felt Krenek's music had a particularly close, almost Wagnerian, connection to Kokoschka's play, infused as it was with dramatic symbolism. Schrenk remarked how Krenek's score made Kokoschka's latent music free, expressing what his words could not.[71] Other critics such as Rudolf spoke of Krenek's 'primitive orchestral colours and harmonic subtleties', especially in the third act's mad scene.[72] For Rudolf Kastner, Krenek's balance of 'pure, childlike primitivism' and 'intellectual mastery of form and style' led the composer to a drama of music that utilised the most modern means of harmony and tonality.[73]

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[69] 'A chorus of peaceful country folks join her in praising the eternal harmony of nature in which the sun is rising, while the music ends with the Debussy chord on which it had started'. Krenek, 'Synopsis'.
[70] 'Er sträubt sich gegen Definitionen wie tonal, atonal, linear und polymelodisch. Gewiss „Orpheus" ist teils tonal, teils atonal, wenn man die Gesamtconception betrachtet'. Rudolf, 'Ernst Krenek: „Orpheus und Eurydike"'.
[71] 'Dann aber macht Kreneks Musik erst die latente Dramatik der Dichtung frei: was das Wort nicht kann, das leistet sie'. Schrenk, 'Orpheus und Eurydike', *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 November 1926.
[72] 'Was Krenek mit primitivsten Orchesterfarben und harmonischen Spitzfindigkeiten erreicht, ist geradezu verblüffend. Ein langgezogener Violinorgelpunkt in den gefürchteten Höhen, dazu ein hämmerndes Nonenmotiv in der Harfe, eine verzwickte rhythmische Figur in der unbegleiteten Gesangsmelodie, wie sie die Irrsinnszene des Orpheus so einzigartig wiederspiegelt, ersetz den sonst so beliebten Theaterknall viel wirksamer'. Rudolf, 'Ernst Krenek: „Orpheus und Eurydike"'.
[73] 'Wunderbar ist dann, wie Krenek—in einer fast kindlich-reinen Primitivität und doch als intellektueller Beherrscher von Form und Stil—den Weg zum Drama in einer Musik von ausgespartem Klang, selbstredend modernster Mittel—in Harmonik, Tonalität—findet'. Rudolf Kastner, 'Opernereignis in Kassel: Kreneks „Orpheus"', *Die Volksbühne* (Berlin), 7 December 1926.

While critics were disunited in their understanding of Krenek's music, they were generally in agreement that this evening was a pivotal moment for the Kassel Staatstheater. Both local critics and those from all over Germany recognised how the Kassel Staatstheater's successful staging of a modern work such as *Orpheus und Eurydike* was unprecedented. One local critic signed Dr P for the *Kasseler Neueste Nachrichten* marked how the event was an institutional success, a strong act from the Kassel Staatstheater which would bring it fame across the country.[74] The critic R. K. for the *Berliner Montagspost* similarly framed their review as the dawn of a new age for the Staatstheater:

> The Kassel Opera Theatre, which is known to be part of the Berlin State Theatre in the administrative system, has not attracted attention for many years. But since Paul Bekker has been director, things have completely changed into new activities. And now those of us who hurried here yesterday from all over Germany experienced the great rise of the Kassel opera in one fell swoop, as it were, through a special kind of feat.[75]

Bekker's involvement in the project was noted by many critics as the driving force behind both the work's success and in putting Kassel on the map. Kastner, for one, boldly stated how Bekker had 'unequivocally disarmed all doubters' and 'made Kassel the birthplace of a possible opera reform'.[76]

Critics recognised the evening though as being far from just a local success. Across the board, they considered what the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* meant for Kassel's position in Germany's broader opera culture. The critic C. O. E. from the *Casseler Tageblatt*,

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[74] 'Ein voller Erfolg aber auch unseres Kunstinstituts'… 'Diese bedeutet eine starke Tat des Kasseler Theaters, eine Tat, die ihm in Deutschland großen Ruhm einbringen wird'. Dr P, 'Uraufführung im Kasseler Staatstheater', *Kasseler Neueste Nachrichten*, 30 November 1926.
[75] 'Das Kasseler Operntheater, bekanntlich den staatlichen Berliner Bühnen im Verwaltungs-organismus eingegliedert, hat lange Jahre nicht mehr die Aufmerksamkeit auf sich gelenkt. Seit aber Paul Bekker Intendant ist, haben sich die Dinger völlig in neue Aktivität gewandelt. Und nun erlebten wir, die wir gestern aus ganz Deutschland hierher eilten, gleichsam mit einem Schlage durch eine Kunsttat besonderster Prägung den großen Aufstieg des Kasseler Oper'. R. K., 'Ein neuer Orpheus', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 29 November 1926.
[76] 'Bekker hat nun unzweideutig alle Zweifler, die sachlichen und die persönlichen, mit einem Schlage entwaffnet—Kassel zur Geburtsstätte einer möglichen Opernreform gemacht'. Rudolf Kastner, 'Kreneks „Orpheus"-Oper', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 November 1926.

for instance, speculated at the thought of newspapers across the whole Reich taking the Kassel Staatstheater seriously as an institution. They made a particular point of stressing how this U-turn in Kassel's reputation was thanks to Krenek and Bekker: 'Perhaps Kassel will gradually come to realise what it means to have men of such rank and reputation among us'.[77] When Bekker reminisced on the project in his homage to Krenek published in *Briefe an zeitgenössische Musiker* (1932), he looked back on how *Orpheus und Eurydike* was significant not just for Kassel but the whole of Germany:

> That performance of Kokoschka's *Orpheus* became a celebration of our collaboration, and thus an artistic feat that the Kassel stage has not seen again in a similarly striking manner and with such an impact on the entire German public. From the direct bond between author and performers, from the constant mutual contact, advice, scrutiny and criticism, a performance arose that was exactly what we wanted: not perfection, but the foreshadowing of its existence, the indication of what would have been profaned if one had tried to realise it. So, we managed to show the work, to make it recognisable as alive, and for a moment, the Kassel Opera was a musical centre.[78]

Bekker clearly recognised how, in that moment, *Orpheus und Eurydike* propelled Kassel to the forefront of discourse on modern opera in Germany (a discourse to which he had largely contributed and influenced). Contemporary critics were evidently acutely aware of hierarchies between central and peripheral musical spaces in Germany and that these labels were not fixed, but fluid. The above quote also hints towards how Bekker may have seen the

[77] 'Und wenn jetzt nach dieser bedeutsamen Uraufführung die Blätter im Reich vom Casseler Theater als einer außerhalb der Mauern dieser guten Stadt wieder ernst zu nehmenden Kunststätte sprechen werden, so danken wir das den unter und lebenden Persönlichkeiten vom geistigen Format eines Bekker und eines Krenek. Vielleicht wird auch in Cassel selbst allmählich erkannt werden, was es bedeutet, solche Männer von Rang und Ruf unter uns zu wissen'. C. O. E., 'Krenek-Kokoschka: „Orpheus und Eurydike"'.

[78] 'Jene Aufführung von Kokoschkas und Ihrem „Orpheus" aber wurde zu einem Fest unserer Zusammenarbeit, damit zu einer künstlerischen Tat, wie sie ähnlich auffallend und in die Weite der gesamten deutschen Öffentlichkeit wirkend die Kasseler Bühne seither nicht wieder gesehen hat. Aus der unmittelbaren Verbundenheit zwischen Autor und Interpreten, aus der steten gegenseitigen Fühlungnahme, Beratung, Prüfung und Kritik entstand eine Aufführungsleistung, die eben das war, was wir wollten: nicht das Vollkommene, sondern der ahnende Hinweis darauf, die Andeutung dessen, was profaniert worden wäre, hätte man es zu verwirklichen gesucht. So gelang es uns, das Werk zu zeigen, es ganz lebendig erkennbar zu machen, und die Kasseler Oper was für einen Augenblick ein musikalisches Zentrum'. Paul Bekker, 'An Ernst Krenek', in *Briefe an zeitgenössische Musiker* (Berlin: Max-Hesses Verlag, 1932), 92–93.

first performance of *Orpheus und Eurydike* as caught up with his ideas about the socially formative power of music: 'the direct bond between author and performer, from the constant mutual contact, advice, testing and criticism' harks to his idea of form being made up of societies, musicians and critics.

In addition to these discussions regarding the Kassel Staatstheater as an institution, some critics also commented on the local audience, particularly their receptiveness (or lack thereof) to a modern work such as *Orpheus und Eurydike*. C. O. E., for example, seemed pleasantly surprised that the locals were so engaged with Krenek's opera: 'Our otherwise so reserved music audience (this time richly interspersed with prominent personalities of art and the press from all German districts) showed a quite surprising receptivity for the new Krenek opera'.[79] In the same review, they recall how at the performance of the Second Symphony just three years prior, Krenek's 'chaotic genius… drove horror into [the audience's] bones'.[80] In comparing reactions to Krenek's Second Symphony and *Orpheus und Eurydike*, this critic hints towards a maturing of Kassel's audience in that time, observing a progress in their susceptibility to the modern (one that was perhaps nurtured by Bekker). Just as we speak of central and peripheral spaces, we can also consider central and peripheral audiences. On the night of *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s premiere, then, Kassel's local audience was observed by some to have been promoted from a peripheral to a central status.

In contrast, Leopold Schmidt in his review for the *Berliner Tageblatt* believed that the local audience at the Kassel Staatstheater was still extremely uninformed:

> One can judge the piece differently in detail. One thing is certain, it suffers from the worst flaw that a work of art can have: it does not make itself understood, and it unequivocally emphasises the intention to be convoluted, to be bizarre. The people of Kassel are a friendly audience and applauded, but no one can claim that

[79] 'Unser sonst so zurückhaltendes Musikpublikum (diesmal üppig durchsetzt mit prominenten Persönlichkeiten der Kunst und der Presse aus allen deutschen Gauen) zeigte eine ganz überraschende Aufnahmebereitschaft für die neue Krenek Oper'. C. O. E., 'Krenek-Kokoschka: „Orpheus und Eurydike"'.
[80] 'Die Gedanken schweifen unwillkürlich zurück zu jener frühen Sinfonie des Einundzwanzigjährigen, deren chaotische Genialität beim Casseler Tonkünstlerfest den Leuten das Entsetzen ins Gebein jagte'. Ibid.

> the subject matter made any sense to them. In other cities, such as Hamburg, things would not have gone so smoothly.[81]

It is clear from Schmidt's review that he fundamentally did not like *Orpheus und Eurydike*. An even greater frustration for him though seems to be that the Kassel audience was entirely ignorant to the fact that this opera—at least in his opinion—was a catastrophe, one which should have ruffled a few feathers in any well-informed audience for its sheer lack of intelligibility. His suggestion that 'in other cities, such as Hamburg, things would not have gone so smoothly', suggests that, in his eyes, the local audience in Kassel was still peripheral.

Further evidence of the way Kassel was perceived to be a peripheral space for modern opera comes to the forefront in reviews of the two lead singers for *Orpheus und Eurydike*: Martin Kremer (Orpheus) and Grete Reinhard (Eurydike). As Krenek recounts in his memoirs, there were initial problems in casting Eurydike because none of the singers in Kassel was musically or physically capable of the demands of the role; the role of Eurydike sings throughout much of the opera and frequently, as many of the parts, has chromatic intervals such as the tritone.[82] Bekker eventually came across the young Hungarian singer Grete Reinhard and introduced her to Krenek as a suitable candidate. Although Krenek recalls that she had no stage experience at this point, she was highly skilled as a recent graduate of the Vienna Academy of Music.[83] Her high level of training evidently came

[81] 'Man kann über das Stück im einzelnen verschieden urteilen; eines steht fest: es leidet an dem schlimmsten Fehler, den ein Kunstwerk haben kann, es macht sich nicht verständlich, und unzweideutig betont es die Absicht, verworren, bizarr zu sein. Die Kasseler sind ein freundliches Publikum und spendeten Beifall, aber niemand wird behaupten können, dass ihnen die Sache eingeleuchtet hat. In anderen Städten, etwa in Hamburg, wäre es nicht so glimpflich abgelaufen'. Dr Leopold Schmidt, 'Zwei Opernpremieren', *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 November 1926.

[82] 'Ein noch größeres Problem war, wer die Eurydike spielen sollte, denn in der Truppe war keine Sängerin, die den musikalischen und physischen Anforderungen der Rolle gewachsen war'. Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 733.

[83] 'Sie war Ungarin und heiß Grete Reinhardt, und Bekker hatte sie, ich weiß nicht wie und wo, entdeckt. Mir scheint, dass sie keine Bühnenerfahrung besaß und gerade die Wiener Musikakademie absolviert hatte. Aus irgendeinem Grund glaubte er, sie sei die Richtig für die Rolle in meiner Oper, und, so merkwürdig es scheint, er hatte recht'. Ibid., 733.

through in her performance of Eurydike as she was frequently singled out as the strongest part in the reception.

Kremer, on the other hand, was a local singer based at the Kassel Staatstheater who already had a damning reputation by the time of *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s premiere. Krenek seems to have taken issue with most of the opera singers he had to work with at the Kassel Staatstheater, describing them as mediocre imbeciles.[84] The main culprits, however, were the tenors. Krenek loathed how they could not talk about anything except their own voices, especially how high they could sing and the despair they felt when they were unable to do so.[85] Kremer was the worst of them, referred to by Krenek in his memoirs as 'a source of downright unbelievable stupidity'.[86] While critics admired Kremer's effort, they were in agreement that his performance had not been especially strong.[87] This was largely because Krenek had written the part of Orpheus for a heroic tenor and Kremer was a lyrical one.[88] Ironically, Orpheus's mad dance scene was for several critics the high point of the evening and Kremer's strongest scene,[89] that being the one scene in which Kremer did not need to rely on an assured technique to successfully embody the role of Orpheus.

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[84] Ibid., 678.
[85] Ibid., 678.
[86] 'Es gibt fast kein Thema, das man in Unterhaltungen mit Angehörigen dieser Zunft erfolgreich zur Sprache bringen kann, außer ihrer Stimme, den hohen Tönen, die sie produzieren können oder zu produzieren hoffen, ihrer völligen Verzweiflung darüber, dass sie es nicht können, und natürlich der totalen Inkompetenz und lächerlichen Unfähigkeit ihrer Kollegen. Die Kasseler Oper besaß eines der perfektesten Exemplare dieser Gattung in dem lyrischen Tenor Martin Kremer, einem guttausehenden jungen Mann mit einer sehr anziehenden Stimme; er stammte aus dem Weingebiet am Rhein und war ein Quell geradezu unglaublicher Dummheit'. Ibid., 678.
[87] 'Seine Leistung wurde, allerwenigstens in den ersten zwei Akten, von der seiner Partnerin allzusehr in den Schatten gestellt. Es gelang ihm im Anfang des Dramas nicht, diesen Glücks-Tristan darzustellen und zu singen, aber erfreulicherweise wuchs dann auch Kremer und sein Totentanz und seine letzte Abrechnung mit Eurydike waren eine glänzende, seiner Partnerin würdige Leistung'. Dr P, 'Uraufführung im Kasseler Staatstheater'.
[88] 'Leider hatte man die Partie des Orpheus, die Rolle eines Heldentenors, fehlbesetz'. 'Kassel—„Orpheus und Eurydike"', *Der Tag* (Berlin) 30 November 1926.
[89] 'Die musikalisch großartigste Szene des Werkes überhaupt ist nach meinem Empfinden der Totentanz, der eigentliche Schluss des Ganzen'. Dr P, 'Uraufführung im Kasseler Staatstheater'. 'Der musikalische Höhepunkt des Werkes war die Wahnsinnsszene im dritten Akte'. Ibid.

As the titular characters of the opera, Reinhard's and Kremer's performances were frequently compared to one another. Generally speaking, critics praised Reinhard's performance and felt Kremer's left much to be desired:

> Grete Reinhard was a pleasant surprise as Eurydike. Her outstanding performance was a complete success. Vocally fresh up to the last moment, she was astonishingly self-assured on the musical side. Her portrayal testified to the spiritual penetration of the work. Much can be expected from the young singer after this Eurydike. Martin Kremer was not as convincing as Orpheus. His voice lacks the power and fullness for the role.[90]

If Reinhard was a symbol of Vienna's highly sophisticated status as a central music hub, then Kremer's inability to live up to the demands of the role stood for Kassel's status as a peripheral hub. Critics, however, tended to be sympathetic with Kremer as they recognised that his voice was not suited to the role. The miscasting of Kremer for Orpheus was used as grounds for marking putting a positive spin on his otherwise underwhelming performance.[91]

Another commonality within the reception of *Orpheus und Eurydike* was how critics drew upon their recent experience of seeing the premiere of Hindemith's *Cardillac*, which had only recently premiered on 9 November 1926 at the Dresden Staatsoper.[92] Critics often made dialectical comparisons between *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Cardillac*, and with them Kassel and Dresden. Based on a libretto by Ferdinand Lion after an adaptation of E. T. A. Hoffmann's novella *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, *Cardillac* was Hindemith's first full-length opera and attempt at the genre following the triptych. At both the premieres of *Cardillac* and

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[90] 'Eine angenehme Überraschung hat Grete Reinhardt als Eurydike. Ihre überragende Leistung war ein voller Erfolg. Stimmlich bis zum letzten Augenblick frisch, war sie nach der musikalischen Seite hin von erstaunlicher Sicherheit. Ihre Darstellung zeugte von seelischer Durchdringung des Werkes. Nach dieser Eurydike wird von der jugendlichen Sängerin viel zu erwarten sein. Nicht so überzeugen wirkte Martin Kremer als Orpheus. Seiner Stimme fehlt die Kraft und Fülle für die Partie'. R-th, '„Orpheus und Eurydike", Oper in drei Akten von Ernst Krenek. Dichtung von Oskar Kokoschka'.

[91] 'Nicht so überzeugen wirkte Martin Kremer als Orpheus. Seiner Stimme fehlt die Kraft und Fülle für die Partie. Es bleibt bedauerlich, dass der Heldentenor Martell die Rolle ablehnte. Immerhin war es für Kremers stimmliche Verhältnisse eine beachtliche Leistung'. Ibid.

[92] Notably, there were no references to the triptych in the reception, despite the Kokoschka connection, although this is likely because the triptych performances were by then four years past.

Orpheus und Eurydike, critics had eagerly awaited the next big breakthrough in modern German opera and framed their reviews accordingly. Max Marschalk, for instance, began his review of *Cardillac* in the *Vossische Zeitung* by acknowledging the time of writing as a period of transition which called for new leaders of the genre. When he came to review *Orpheus und Eurydike* later that month, he began by expressing similar concerns over the status of composers who could pioneer new German opera and questioned whether Krenek could be next.

Though *Cardillac* was generally well received at its Dresden premiere, critics who did mention it in their reviews of *Orpheus und Eurydike* tended to view Hindemith's latest opera as lacklustre. In his review of *Cardillac* for the *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, Karl Westermeyer, while recognising that the work certainly opened doors for a new style of opera, believed that it was still far from the new form critics were desperate for.[93] Two and a half weeks later, those who were disappointed with *Cardillac* used their discontent as a backdrop to frame *Orpheus und Eurydike* as both an unexpected and pleasant surprise. Kastner reported how he had left Dresden feeling disappointed with *Cardillac* and was thrilled to have finally found what he was looking for in Kassel with *Orpheus und Eurydike*.[94] Similarly, in his review of *Orpheus und Eurydike* for the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Walter Schrenk wrote:

> Back then, when people went to Dresden for the premiere of Hindemith's *Cardillac*, people believed with certainty that they could at least predict one major theatrical success; it turned out that the work had little effect. Now—after Kassel, to the premiere of Ernst Krenek's *Orpheus and Eurydike*—one went with the feeling of experiencing a piece that was undoubtedly valuable but hardly

[93] 'Die Oper „Cardillac" von Paul Hindemith ist gewiß dem uns vorschwebenden künftigen Opernideal fern. Aber sie erschließt doch Aussichten auf einen neuen Stil'. Karl Westermeyer, 'Hindemiths „Cardillac": Vorbetrachtungen zur Dresden Uraufführung', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 84/46 (1926): 1647–1649 (1647).

[94] 'Wir kamen jüngst aus Dresden enttäuscht von dem undramatischen Hindemith-Cardillac zurück, flohen aus Frankfurt vor d'Alberts Golem, betrachteten liebevoll in Gera de Falla's teilgelungenen Versuch einer veristischen Oper—und waren reif für ein starkes Ereignis. Es ist jetzt in Kassel eingetreten'. Kastner, 'Kreneks „Orpheus"-Oper'.

> effective on the stage. And what did it become? A deep, even shocking impression and a great, undisputed success.[95]

Schrenk's review perfectly encapsulates the contrasting expectations between central and peripheral cities for modern opera in Weimar Germany. In the case of *Cardillac* and *Orpheus und Eurydike*, these expectations were subverted. The expectations were fuelled by neither the pieces nor the composers themselves; Hindemith had already proved himself as a composer in his triptych and *Kammermusik*, while Krenek's reputation was proven through his repeated appearances at the ADMV festival. In Schrenk's eyes, how successful *Cardillac* and *Orpheus und Eurydike* would be, rather, was determined by the place of their premiere. More interesting still is Schrenk's dialectical framing of the two works. In other words, the disappointment of *Cardillac* in Dresden served to heighten the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel. Such a comparison only further confirms how critics were acutely aware of the centre and the periphery, with the two being mutually constitutive. Kassel would only have ever been considered at the periphery of Weimar Germany's modern opera culture if there were clearly established centres.

The *Orpheus*-*Cardillac* debate further complicates the standard expressionism-*Zeitoper* narrative. Though *Cardillac* is not a *Zeitoper*, it resonates with expressionism's other—the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. *Cardillac* is a number-opera, which makes use of traditional forms such as the passacaglia and the fugue with contrapuntal writing throughout, as well as da capo arias. These are tropes associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit* music as they signal a return to form and order.[96] While *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s sobriety is typically understood to be

[95] 'Damals als man nach Dresden zur Uraufführung des „Cardillac" von Hindemith führ, glaubte man mit Sicherheit, mindestens einen großen Theatererfolg voraussagen zu können; es zeigte sich, dass das Werk nur geringe Wirkung übte. Jetzt—nach Cassel, zur Uraufführung von Ernst Kreneks „Orpheus und Eurydike"—ging man mit dem Gefühl, ein zwar zweifellos wertvolles, aber kaum bühnenwirksames Stück, zu erleben, und was wurde es? Ein tiefer, ja erschütternder Eindruck und ein großer, unbestrittenen Erfolg'. Schrenk, '„Orpheus und Eurydike"'.

[96] A good example of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in music in Hindemith's *Kammermusik 1–7*, which demonstrate strong rhythmic (mechanical) drives, chamber-like arrangements and incorporation of jazz tunes.

most welcome in Weimar culture, this was Marschalk's greatest issue with *Cardillac*. He complained that in being a number opera, Hindemith's writing for *Cardillac* was more mathematical than musical and that for long stretches the music seemed like dry schoolwork.[97] Marschalk subsequently warned composers about focusing too much on the music and not enough on the drama:

> A composer who has so few ideas, who writes so much that is not worth writing down, must not delude himself into making opera the 'primary musical work of art' again and pushing the 'dramatic-scenic element' into second place. 'The score' consists of eighteen independent, self-contained numbers'. That's fine—one can write numbers, end them, have the will to distinguish them from one another with line and colour. But what's the use of that if the unindoctrinated listener gets the impression that everything goes like this; and that grey is the basic colour![98]

Neue Sachlichkeit, as suggested by Marschalk's review of *Cardillac*, was evidently not all sunshine and rainbows or a sign of optimism. At times, it could come across to be rather bland and 'grey'. Juxtaposed with the overwhelmingly positive reactions to Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*, the standard narrative is flipped on its head once more as we see expressionism being celebrated while *Neue Sachlichkeit* was rejected. Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*, in other words, shook up the status quo not only regarding the landscape of Germany's opera scene, but also regarding what was fashionable at the time.

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[97] 'Dieser Ehrgeiz treibt den Komponisten dazu, sich mehr mathematisch als musikalisch zu betätigen. Lange Strecken hindurch wirkt seine Musik wie eine trockene Schularbeit'. Max Marschalk, 'Hindemiths „Cardillac": Uraufführung in Dresden', *Vossische Zeitung*, 11 November 1926.

[98] 'Ein Komponist, dem so wenig einfällt, der so vieles hinschreibt, was des Hinschreibens nicht wert ist, darf sich nicht dem Wahn ausliefern, die Oper wieder als „primäres musikalisches Kunstwerk" durchzusetzen und das „Dramatische-Szenische" in die zweite Reihe zu rücken. „Die Partitur" besteht aus achtzehn von einander unabhängigen, in sich abgeschlossenen Nummern." Schon gut—man kann Nummern schreiben, sie abschließen, den Willen haben, sie durch Linie und Farbe voneinander zu unterscheiden. Was nützt das aber, wenn der nicht sachlich gebildete Hörer den Eindruck gewinnt, dass alles so dahinlaufe; und dass Grau die Grundfarbe sei!'. Ibid.

Tracing Krenek's Creative Development

This chapter has primarily focused on the microhistory of *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s premiere as a pivotal moment for the Kassel Staatstheater. Before drawing this chapter to a close, I shall take a step back from this microcosm and consider how this particular moment challenges some of the broader metanarratives of modern German opera at this time, especially regarding Krenek's own creative development.

In the standard expressionism-*Zeitoper* narrative, the premiere of *Orpheus und Eurydike* stands at a pivotal moment in the trajectory of modern German opera, that is, on the eve of *Jonny spielt auf*'s premiere—the first *Zeitoper*—and the end of expressionism in opera. With the standard narrative in mind, *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf* encapsulate the typical antagonism between expressionism and *Zeitoper*, as they can both be seen as the archetypal examples of the two opposing pillars of Weimar opera. Based as it was on Kokoschka's play and with Krenek's self-confession that he had created an expressionistic atmosphere, expressionism presents itself as one of the integral components of *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s makeup, while *Jonny spielt auf*'s reliance on the contemporary metropolis, technology and popular music speaks to the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, meaning it has been framed as the archetypal *Zeitoper*. With the expressionism-*Zeitoper* framework, *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf*'s first performances imply rather neatly that the turn of 1926 to 1927 was a pendulum swing for new German opera. As the new year dawned, composers shifted their aesthetic outlook by turning away from expressionism and to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* for inspiration. As Orpheus and his music died, Jonny was preparing to strike up the band.

This neat account, however satisfying a narrative it may be, is hardly reflective of these operas' initial receptions. Both *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf* presented themselves to critics as viable solutions to the opera crisis within a matter of weeks of each other. Contemporary reactions to *Orpheus und Eurydike* reveal that even by late 1926,

expressionist theatre was still being caught up with celebrations of new German opera. The idea that *Orpheus und Eurydike* was part of a dying tradition and that *Jonny spielt auf* signalled the awakening of a completely new kind of opera does not stand up when one returns to contemporary reactions. Particularly in Krenek's early career, it is not a linear progression of the former falling out of fashion to the latter. In fact, Krenek was working on *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf* simultaneously in Kassel; as preparations were well under way for *Orpheus*, he was making the final touches to *Jonny*.[99]

Jonny spielt auf has, nonetheless, received considerably more scholarly attention than *Orpheus und Eurydike*. There are a number of reasons for this. The later obsession over *Jonny spielt auf* has for one been fuelled by the mark it left on German culture more broadly. *Jonny spielt auf* transcended the confines of the opera theatre and became a broader cultural phenomenon, such as with the appearance of a brand of 'Jonny' cigarettes. Further still, the fact that the opera was one of the main targets of the Nazi *Entartete Kunst* exhibition would have only drawn further attention to the work in Germany. The commercial success of *Jonny spielt auf*, though, was not especially welcomed by Krenek. We know, for example, that he was dismayed when *Jonny spielt auf* was not received as a serious work and that this negatively impacted his previous works and overall reputation:

> I was praised as the creator of a new operatic style, and condemned as a hard-boiled cynic who wanted to get rich quick through sensation-mongering. Other observers searched for satirical implications of which I was not aware at all. The consensus was that the opera was a big joke. This reaction hurt me considerably, for I thought I had produced a serious piece of work that deserved to be taken seriously.
>
> […]
>
> It appears to me that the overwhelming success of 'Jonny spielt auf' obliterated my previous attainments from the public eye. Those who had followed with sympathy my early bold experiments were disappointed, since I seemed to have become commercial. However, this was not the case, and thus I was bound to

[99] See 'Aufführung des *Orpheus* und Abschluß von *Jonny*', in Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit*, 732–737.

> disappoint those who expected me to follow up my success with more sensational hits in the same vein. The result was that I soon found myself sitting between two chairs.[100]

The fact that *Jonny spielt auf* was seen to be more of a fad, instead of a serious attempt at modern opera as Krenek wished it to be viewed, was further amplified as the opera became caught up with the notion of *Zeitoper*.[101] Only a year after the first performance of *Jonny spielt auf* in an article for *Melos*, Krenek's contemporary Kurt Weill expressed his concern towards the overuse of the term *Zeitoper*, which he noted had rapidly gone through the 'unfortunate transformation from concept to catchphrase'.[102] History seems to have repeated itself: Krenek was in dismay at the way contemporary critics saw *Jonny spielt auf* for all its fads, and how this ruined the reputation of his earlier works; the later scholarly attention to Krenek's *Zeitoper*, lauded as the most 'Weimar' opera, has similarly pushed works such as *Orpheus und Eurydike* to the 'periphery' of Krenek's oeuvre and in narratives of German opera at this time.

The sense of a chasm between *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf* falls by the wayside though when one recognises key thematic continuities between these two operas. For example, while expressionism is often seen as a reaction against mass culture and *Zeitoper* an embracing of it, Nielsen has argued that *Jonny spielt auf* was also a 'warn[ing] against the power of mass culture' in the way the opera pitted the individual against the community.[103] Recognising the shared themes between the two operas also allows us to better understand

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[100] Krenek, 'Self-Analysis', 17.
[101] As Tregear has since noted, *Jonny spielt auf* was seen by critics to be 'just another fad of the time, epitomized by the ephemerality implied by the invention of the label "Zeitoper"', and like many fads, it is best described as a one-hit wonder'. See Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style*, 55. *Jonny spielt auf*'s treatment of race makes it a particularly difficult work to stage in the twenty-first century. See Jonathan O. Wipplinger, 'Performing Race in Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*', in Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan and Eric Saylor, eds., *Blackness in Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 236–259.
[102] See Kurt Weill, 'Zeitoper', in Kaes, Anton, Marin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 572. For the original German, see *Melos* 7 (March 1928): 106–108.
[103] Nielsen, 'Ernst Krenek's 'Problem of Freedom' in *Jonny spielt auf*', *Twentieth-Century Music* 10/1 (2013): 25–57 (25).

Krenek's early career. The issue of freedom, for example, is a common theme across the composer's early stage works, especially across the traditionally separated expressionism and *Zeitoper* works. In Krenek's first completed stage work, the scenic cantata *Die Zwingburg* (The Tyrant's Castle), a group of workers are set free for one day when the fortress's tyrant ties up the organ grinder, whose rhythms accompany their labour. Overcome with their new-found freedom, the workers set the organ grinder free so that he too may share in their happiness. Yet upon his release, the organ grinder, who although sympathetic with the workers, cannot help himself from resuming the turn of the hand organ, and normal business resumes in the fortress. *Orpheus und Eurydike* then explored Orpheus's freedom from the torment of Eurydike. Freedom is also central to *Jonny spielt auf*. Stewart identifies three key signifiers of freedom in the opera: 'the glacier, which is the central object of the opera and represents dehumanized, life-denying, excessive intellectualism; the violin, which represents life-affirming sensuality, even in the hands of the corrupt sensuality; and the train, which represents liberation'.[104] Only later in his life, though, did Krenek realise that the topic of freedom found in his first two stage works and *Jonny spielt auf* was also found in *Orpheus und Eurydike*, which may have contributed to *Orpheus*'s neglect in tracing Krenek's creative development.[105]

In pushing expressionism and *Zeitoper* into the background once more, another important continuity between Krenek's early stage works comes to the foreground, namely his interest in Greek tragedy. While *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s association with expressionism has been used to point towards the opera's lateness, Krenek's use of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth signals the work's longevity and ability to transcend the particular social, cultural and political circumstances of the Weimar Republic with which *Jonny spielt auf* is so

[104] Stewart, *Ernst Krenek*, 83.
[105] Krenek, 'Self-Analysis', 13.

tightly intertwined. Krenek described the critics of *Jonny spielt auf* as naïve, as they 'saw in *Jonny* an epoch-making manifestation of the celebrated *Zeitgeist*, simply because a train appeared on stage, or because an aria was broadcast on the radio'.[106] Philhellenism (the love of Greek culture) had been central to the cultural identity of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated middle class) for over a century and a half.[107] Erika Fischer-Lichte has explored how 'performances of Greek tragedies contributed to the emergence, stabilization, and transformation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* cultural identity'.[108] Fischer-Lichte draws attention to a notable example of the use of Philhellenism in a socially formative way: in November 1919, Max Reinhardt founded the Großes Schauspiel in Berlin as a new people's theatre and decided to inaugurate it with a performance of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*.[109] A review of the performance by Stefan Grossmann in the *Vossische Zeitung* confirms the sense of social unity brought about by this performance: 'The image of a community of thousands was wonderful and heart-rending. Perhaps all the more heart-rending for the intellectual German citizen, because the spatial unity of the masses reawakened his yearning for an inner sense of belonging'.[110]

While over-emphasising the turn from expressionism to *Zeitoper* can create the impression of a rift in Krenek's output between the pre- and post-*Jonny spielt auf* works, in foregrounding Krenek's interest in Greek drama and its broader place in German culture, a more homogeneous picture emerges.[111] *Jonny spielt auf*, for instance, did not by any means signal Krenek's abandonment of Greek drama, nor did it signal a commitment to *Zeitoper*.

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[106] Quoted in Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style*, 55. For the original, see Krenek, *Im Zweifelsfalle*, 17.
[107] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Tragedy's Endurance: Performances of Greek Tragedies and Cultural Identity in Germany since 1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[108] Ibid., 5.
[109] Ibid., 127.
[110] Quoted in ibid., 128.
[111] This idea of a post-*Jonny* rift in Krenek's oeuvre is suggested by the Tregear's chapter title 'Sounding the Rift', which covers Krenek's works between *Jonny spielt auf* and *Karl V*. See Tregear, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style*, 55–85.

After *Jonny spielt auf*, Krenek wrote three one-act operas—*Der Diktator*, *Das geheime Königreich* and *Schwergewicht, oder Die Ehre der Nation*—which premiered together on 6 May 1928 as part of the Festspiele Wiesbaden. The three works each bear similarities with *Zeitoper* in their political and sometimes satirical plots, while also drawing on other tropes. *Der Diktator* is a Puccuni-esque attempt at *Verismo*, *Das geheime Königreich* is a *Märchenoper* indebted to *commedia dell'arte*, and *Schwergewicht, oder Die Ehre der Nation* incorporates jazz tunes and follows a boxing champion, making it the closest of the three to being a *Zeitoper*. Following the one-acters though, Krenek then turned again to a classic Greek setting for his next opera, *Leben des Orest*. Based on the tales of Orestes's wanderings, Krenek composed the opera between 1928 and 1929. *Leben des Orest* premiered at the Neues Staatstheater in Leipzig on 19 January 1930, before being staged at the Krolloper in Berlin later that year. Subtitled a 'Grand Opera' and with Krenek's own later admission that he was inspired by the work of Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Leben des Orest* appears at first glance to be far removed from the world of *Jonny spielt auf* and *Zeitoper*. Yet, as Tregear and John Gabriel have both demonstrated, there were in fact several shared characteristics between *Jonny* and *Orest*. With *Leben des Orest*, Krenek intended to tell the classic tale through a modern setting, it being a kind of crossover between his two preceding major stage works, *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf*. Gabriel notes, for instance, how *Leben des Orest* recalls the *Zeitoper* by its 'revue or film-like pacing', as well as its 'eclectic mix of musical styles', including jazz.[112] As we have seen in this chapter, critics keenly noted Krenek's range of colours, especially harmonic approaches, in *Orpheus und Eurydike*. An eclectic approach to composition, in other words, was a defining characteristic of the composer's style in the 1920s.

[112] John Gabriel, 'Ernst Krenek's *Leben des Orest* and the Idea of a Meyerbeer Renaissance in Weimar Republic Germany', in Mark Everist, ed., *Meyerbeer and Grand Opera from the July Monarchy to the Present* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 432.

Krenek's interest in Greek tragedy is also notable as it speaks to a much broader interest towards classic drama from composers in the early twentieth century and beyond Germany, with near contemporary works such as Darius Milhaud's *Les Malheurs d'Orphée* (1924) and Igor Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* (1927). Another attempt to modernise ancient Greek drama on the Weimar stage was Weill's cantata *Der neue Orpheus*, made somewhat explicit by its title. Premiered on 2 March 1927 at the Berlin Krolloper alongside the composer's latest one-act opera *Royal Palace* (both of which were based on texts by the surrealist poet Yvan Goll), *Der neue Orpheus* demonstrated that *Jonny spielt auf* had not suppressed Orpheus's popularity on the modern German stage. Like *Leben des Orest*, *Der neue Orpheus* is notable for the way it mixed classical antiquity with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Stephen Hinton describes this 'new Orpheus' as 'an everyday man of the modern city… whose job it is to furnish music of various kinds', before he finds his Eurydice at a train station, where he shoots himself.[113] In the cantata, we meet Orpheus in the following circumstances, each of which is accompanied by a different musical variation and style: 'as piano pedagogue, as variety artist, at the circus, at veterans' gatherings, as emancipated organist, as Mahler conductor at subscription concerts, as "torture pianist" playing in suburban movie theaters'.[114] For his cantata, Weill used a chamber orchestra with a solo soprano and violin, which is reminiscent of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, especially Hindemith's *Kammermusik*. There are also reminders of *Jonny spielt auf*: both works feature a train station and a solo violin.

While foregrounding expressionism and *Zeitoper* reinforces the sense of a rift between *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Jonny spielt auf* and suggests a level of incompatibility between the two settings, framing Krenek's oeuvre at this time through the lens of Greek

[113] Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 79.
[114] Ibid., 79.

tragedy brings the worlds of Orpheus and Jonny together. As *Leben des Orest* and Weill's *Der neue Orpheus*, these worlds could successfully be synthesised. *Orpheus und Eurydike*, however, still retains a particularly distinct and unique position among these works, as it demonstrates that Greek myth did not necessarily have to overtly exploit and celebrate modern technology in order to be considered successful and modern. Without the frills, tassels and accessories that were being used to dress up classic Greek drama, the original setting of Orpheus and Eurydice—albeit with an expressionist twist—was still able to draw in the crowds and present itself as something new and modern over three hundred years on from Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a reconsideration of Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* in our understanding of modern opera in Weimar Germany for the ways it disrupted, and disrupts, the status quo. Premiered in Kassel, somewhere critics saw to be on the periphery of Germany's opera culture, expectations were low ahead of the premiere that the Staatstheater would be host to a major event step in opera's development. Krenek himself had echoed these concerns several years earlier and had no desire to work in Kassel, let alone trust its Staatstheater with his first serious opera. *Orpheus und Eurydike*, however, defied all these odds and became one of the most unexpected operatic successes in Weimar Germany and in the most unlikely of places. As we have seen, Krenek's opera led critics to reconsider what role the Kassel Staatstheater would now play in the production of new operas in Germany, so much so that this was Krenek's opera almost took second place behind the city in critics' reviews of the opera. Perceptions of the centre and the periphery manifested in the reception in a number of ways. Naturally, the reputation of a local institution played a seminal role in shaping critical opinion, but as some critics observed, wider sociological factors such as the

local demographic came into play. There were, in other words, many layers of consideration for what defined somewhere as being on the centre and the periphery, with these layers not always lining up neatly with one another.

A detailed analysis of the reception of *Orpheus und Eurydike* destabilises the standard expressionism-*Zeitoper* narrative of modern German opera in the Weimar Republic. The positive reception to *Orpheus und Eurydike* confirms that as *Jonny spielt auf* stormed onto the scene in early 1927, there were not notable concerns among critics that expressionist theatre on the operatic stage had taken its last breath. Despite the performance history of *Orpheus und Eurydike* since, a closer analysis of the reception reveals how both this and *Jonny spielt auf* were received optimistically. The latter work only confirmed to critics that Krenek would play a decisive role in the future of German opera. Admittedly, there were reservations from some as to the appropriateness of Kokoschka's play, but this was not too much for the detriment of the entire work. If the text was weak, this only seemed to give critics more of a reason to celebrate Krenek's music as bringing a new meaning to Kokoschka's play.

Though this chapter has argued Kassel was understood by critics to have been a peripheral city in Germany's modern opera culture, this does not mean that notions of the centre and the periphery translated to the 'power' these places had in directing contemporary discourse; that is, to say the centre always had more influence than the periphery. The case of *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel, for instance, has shown how in subverting the expectations of critics, the periphery could lead critics to call into question what this meant for other places in Germany, such as Dresden. In other words, peripheral spaces warrant attention for the way they could shape attitudes towards the centre. This chapter's treatment of Kassel, then, resonates particularly with the thesis's overarching treatment of expressionism. Both expressionism and the Kassel Staatstheater have been side-lined to some extent in scholarship

since, with these two factors in turn contributing to negligence towards Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*. Yet, and like how this thesis has challenged expressionism's supposed cultural irrelevancy, Kassel's situation at the periphery did not mean the discourse surrounding Krenek's opera was removed from wider dialogue regarding modern opera in Weimar Germany; rather, the periphery was merely a different entry point to the conversation.

CONCLUSIONS

In her monograph, *Opera for a New Republic*, Susan Cook presents *Zeitoper* as a new kind of opera particularly suited to Germany's new Republic. Heralded by Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*, she frames *Zeitoper* as the answer to the German opera crisis. This thesis, in reconsidering Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek's earlier turns to expressionist theatre for new opera, has demonstrated that *Jonny spielt auf* was not the *only* answer to the opera crisis, but merely one of many. Across four chapters, I have explored how Hindemith's triptych (*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, *Das Nusch-Nuschi* and *Sancta Susanna*), Berg's *Wozzeck* (as told through the *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*), Weill's *Der Protagonist* and Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* were celebrated by contemporary critics as fresh and modern contributions to the art form.

This thesis has argued that expressionism in Weimar Germany was not as outdated as has subsequently been portrayed. In reconsidering expressionism as a seminal component of modern opera at this time, this thesis has challenged the dominant narrative: that, as expressionism was eclipsed by the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the visual arts, expressionist theatre in opera likewise fell out of fashion to the *Zeitoper*. As we have seen, Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek's early ventures into expressionism were welcomed by critics as answers to Germany's opera crisis. For many critics, these operas were evidence that the future of German opera was in safe hands. Signs that expressionism was passé were not present in the reception of my case studies. Contemporary trends in the visual arts, therefore, did not translate directly to those in modern opera in Weimar Germany. When considered on its own terms, the trajectory of modern opera tells a different story: expressionism and *Zeitoper* could be said to be different faces of opera in Weimar Germany, alternate routes to solving the opera crisis, two sides of the same coin.

The thesis, however, has painted a more nuanced picture of trends in modern opera beyond the binary tension between expressionism and *Zeitoper*. I have not sought to define expressionism in opera as a fixed aesthetic or see it as a genre equivalent to, or in competition with, *Zeitoper*. Expressionism in opera was far from a discrete, self-conscious 'movement' *per se* and it was not recognised by critics or composers as the primary factor that united these operas. Besides expressionism, these works can be grouped together as answers to the opera crisis; as key cultural events in post-war Germany; as the major breakthroughs of their respective composers. I have demonstrated how expressionism featured in the reception of these operas as more of a buzzword and that critics were rarely interested in debating these operas' connection to expressionism. In their reviews, contemporary critics frequently saw through expressionism and focused on other aesthetic tropes of these works: the perverse female figure, the modernness of the opera's music, pantomime, myth. Critics also frequently used their reviews to posit what these operas meant for the particular institutions and cities in which they were performed (the rise of the Kassel Staatstheater, the fall of the Oper Frankfurt, the Schillings scandal at the Berlin Staatsoper), the trajectory of German opera (these works and composers being signs of the future of the genre) and how these operas resonated with cultural debates taking place elsewhere (the decadence of German theatre, the commodification of expressionism). Taking my cue from the criticism, I have used expressionism more heuristically as a starting point for outlining a more holistic overview of some of the dominating attitudes towards and surrounding modern opera in Weimar Germany.

This treatment of expressionism is particularly topical for the way it intersects with wider, ongoing musicological debate, specifically recent reappraisals of modernism. In *Middlebrow Modernism: Britten's Operas and the Great Divide* (2018), Christopher Chowrimootoo has similarly emphasised that the middlebrow in music was not a fixed

aesthetic but more discursive in nature: 'a moving target', 'a relational category', with 'anxiety and ambivalence … among its fundamental premises'.[1] Chowrimootoo sees the middlebrow's ambivalence not as a problem, but rather as part of its rhetorical force. In embracing the aesthetic ambivalence of Britten's operas, he uses 'their uneasy position between high and low, modernism and mass culture' as a means 'to explain their broad appeal'.[2] Similarly, I do not take expressionism in opera's resistance to a discrete aesthetic as a methodological obstacle but embrace it so as to highlight the heterogeneity of styles that were considered modern by opera critics. Following Chowrimootoo, John Gabriel has recently situated *Neue Sachlichkeit* between Huyssen and Peter Bürger's 'other great divide': the historical avant-garde and the culture industry.[3] Gabriel comments on how, towards the end of the Weimar Republic, audiences became desensitised to the use of jazz in traditionally bourgeois institutions. In other words, Gabriel argues that jazz lost its shock value over time.[4] My treatment of expressionism in Weimar Germany is similar to Gabriel's observation of jazz at the end of the Republic. Like jazz, expressionism by the mid-1920s was no longer provocative for the way it had integrated itself into numerous avenues of Weimar culture; expressionism, in this context, had become increasingly diluted. This allowed critics to look beyond the expressionist aesthetic of these operas and approach their reviews from other angles. In other words, the lack of a distinct aesthetic framework is what made expressionism in opera the perfect vessel for conjuring up conversations that echoed wider cultural debates in Weimar Germany.

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[1] Christopher Chowrimootoo, *Middlebrow Modernism: Britten's Opera and the Great Divide* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 13.
[2] Ibid., 3.
[3] 'Like the middlebrow, the New Objectivity was—as a relational category—constantly renegotiating its position between its avant-garde goals of creating a new kind of autonomous art that brought together art and society and its openness to the culture industry's institutions as a means of reaching a broad audience in order to bring together art and society'. Gabriel, 'New Objectivity and the Middlebrow', in Kate Guthrie and Christopher Chowrimootoo, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Middlebrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming) https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197523933.013.20.
[4] Ibid.

As outlined in my introduction, this thesis has considered the notion of *modern* opera not in terms of style, but as an awareness of *time*. I have demonstrated this across the thesis by highlighting the ways in which critics saw these operas as signs of *progress* for German opera. Modern opera in Weimar Germany was not restricted to a fixed aesthetic and what it looked like on the stage varied considerably. The operas discussed in this thesis showcase an array of settings and tropes: the Woman in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and Susanna in *Sancta Susanna* are both reminiscent of the *femme fatale* figures who headlined Strauss's earlier operas, *Salome* and *Elektra*; with the everyday setting and brutal realism of *Wozzeck*, Berg drew upon themes similar to Italian *Verismo*; *Der Protagonist* foregrounds the vernacular tradition of pantomime and exploits the then-often encountered play-within-a-play format; Krenek, meanwhile, turned to the classic Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, one of the most recognisable operatic subjects. Operas deemed modern had many faces, and in some cases, as explored with *Wozzeck* and the *Bruchstücke*, there were multiple faces of the same work. It also still encapsulated German opera's anarchial state from the pre-war years, as expressed by Oskar Bie in *Die Oper* (1913). Bie's initial concerns, though, seem to have subsided by the time of the Weimar Republic. As we have seen, Bie was a staunch supporter of both *Wozzeck* and *Der Protagonist*, even though these two operas lacked the stylistic unity Bie was so desperate for a decade prior. While both works tap into similar themes of their titular character's psychological torment, they do so by different means. *Wozzeck*, on the one hand, does so through brutal realism, while *Der Protagonist* leans into surrealism. The two operas are also indebted to radically different schools of composition—Berg's evoking Schoenberg, Weill's Busoni—suggesting further that modern German opera also did not belong to a particular school of thought.

These operas were also not restricted to a particular kind of aural experience. Frequently, Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek juxtaposed different approaches to harmony

within their operas. Often, this resulted in their music being caught between the sound worlds of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, two of the leading titans of new music: in each of the operas of his triptych, Hindemith juxtaposed atonal cacophony with outbursts of consonant chords (ironically, as in *Sancta Susanna*, Hindemith used a C major chord for the opera's, and Susanna's, climax); in the *Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck*, Berg interwove moments of tonal stability with *Sprechgesang*, which was associated with Schoenberg's free atonality and thereby withheld a feeling of tonal security for the listener; Weill and Krenek in *Der Protagonist* and *Orpheus und Eurydike* both continually shifted between tonality, atonality and sometimes polytonality. As we saw in Chapter Three, Weill's choreography for the Duke's eight musicians also created novel sensory experiences akin to those which have typically been related directly to the introduction of radio on the operatic stage. Modern opera, therefore, was not bound to an engagement with bourgeois modernity as displayed in *Zeitoper*.

Encompassing a broad array of subject matters and compositional styles, operas deemed modern in Weimar Germany did not commit to a discrete aesthetic framework. This ambivalence extended to the classifications of these work in some instances. The *Bruchstücke*, for instance, lay between opera and concert performance, and was perhaps better understood as a monodrama. In Chapter Three, we saw how both Weill and critics conceived *Der Protagonist* as a fusion of opera and pantomime that looked towards creating a new medium. Both of these works were compared to Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat*, which had its own unique position between cabaret, music theatre and pantomime. Perhaps, this very heterogeneity is in and of itself a defining characteristic of modern German opera in the early twentieth century. The blending of genres seen in works such as the *Bruchstücke*, *Der Protagonist* and *L'Histoire du soldat* is also noteworthy as it resonates with later stage works by Weill, such as *Die Dreigroschenoper* and the *Mahagonny Songspiel*. Weill's

decision to label *Die Dreigroschenoper* as a 'play with music' is an explicit nod to the way in which this work did not commit to opera as an art form. Yet, Weill had already been mixing genres of theatre as early as *Der Protagonist*, which Weill and Kaiser labelled as an 'opera'. If combining forms of theatre was one way Weill reacted to the opera crisis, this was certainly not a tactic confined to his stage works from the later Weimar years.

The operas discussed in this thesis were all pivotal works in their respective composers' careers. Hindemith's triptych was framed by one critic as the composer reaching the end of his first period of development, while *Wozzeck* and *Der Protagonist* were seen to have allowed Berg and Weill to escape from the shadows of their masters: Schoenberg and Busoni. With the success of these operas, Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek were praised by critics as the archetypal modern opera composers. Just as their operas were not limited to one style, these four composers were not confined to one school of thought; Berg was indebted to Schoenberg, Weill to Busoni and Krenek to Schreker. As with modern opera, the modern opera composer was someone who critics hailed as such with reference to time, that is, as heralding in the future.

One organisation that played a particularly pivotal role in supporting these composers was the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein. Its 1924 Tonkünstlerfest showcased both Krenek's *Der Sprung über den Schatten* and Berg's *Bruchstücke*, as well as other new stage works by Hindemith and Stravinsky. The ADMV also programmed Krenek's Second Symphony in 1923, an event which inadvertently fuelled the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike*'s premiere three years later. Hindemith also participated in the ADMV behind the scenes as a committee member. The ADMV's importance for new stage works is unsurprising given Hermann Scherchen's involvement, as one of the most influential figures in Germany's music scene. In studies of music and opera in Weimar Germany, however, the ADMV is rarely acknowledged. Instead, newer festivals and institutions such as the

Donaueschingen/Baden Baden festival, the ISCM or the Krolloper have had more attention. Studies on the ADMV are limited in and of themselves. James Deaville has noted the importance of the ADMV for the avant-garde in music during the 1920s, but this thesis has demonstrated more thoroughly how the organisation was seminal in showcasing modern music and, specifically, opera.[5]

This thesis has also explored some of the key factors that have shaped the performance histories of these operas. The dialectical tension between expressionism and *Zeitoper* has arguably downplayed the significance of these operas at their premiere in favour of the latter over the former. In breaking down the expressionism-*Zeitoper* dichotomy, though, I have revealed how the later neglect of these operas had little to do with their connection to expressionism. More often than not, their longevity also had little to do with how much critics and audiences liked or disliked them. Each chapter has shown how the initial reception of operas with expressionist texts was overwhelmingly positive. Yet, it is only *Wozzeck* that had any long-lasting success. As we saw, though, the *Bruchstücke* played a decisive role in solidifying critics' defence of *Wozzeck* at the premiere and went on to create the demand for future performances of the full opera. The triptych, *Der Protagonist* and *Orpheus und Eurydike* had no such equivalent partner work. As for the performance history of Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike*, this has been negatively impacted by its premiere in Kassel, despite positive reactions to the work at the premiere. The reception reveals, though, that the success of *Orpheus und Eurydike* was most impactful for the reputation of the Staatstheater. As contemporary critics grappled with this U-turn in the history of the theatre, Krenek's opera became lost in the conversation at time. The subsequent scholarly neglect of *Orpheus und Eurydike*, then, can be seen as a continuation of early oversights of the opera.

[5] 'The 1924 festival in Frankfurt offered the most radical program of the post-war years, a panoramic overview of modern central European compositional styles'. James Deaville, 'The Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein', in Morten Kristiansen and Joseph E. Jones, eds., *Richard Strauss in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 161.

Another important outcome of this thesis is the way it has challenged the notion that *Zeitoper* was the most characteristically 'Weimar' opera. That is, that *Zeitoper* supposedly best encapsulated wider contemporary attitudes in Germany at this time. We have seen how the reception of operas based on expressionist theatre pieces intersected with some of the country's most pressing cultural questions. One of these was the moral duty and artistic freedom of the nation's theatres. Chapter One explored how conservative organisations such as the Catholic Bühnenvolksbund felt that German theatre was sinking increasingly into decadence with the rise of erotic imagery on stage. The reception of the triptych clearly reveals how the scandals surrounding Hindemith's operas were not one-off events. Animosity from those on the political right had been brewing for some time, and the performances of Hindemith's triptych were key moments when their outrage boiled over. Similarly, the premiere of *Wozzeck* set the stage for the Schillings scandal at the Berlin Staatsoper to erupt.

In both instances, critics on the left understood these events as triumphs for the freedom of art. Throughout this thesis we have seen how those on the left were key supporters of expressionism in opera. This has manifested in different ways. Left-leaning newspapers such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* came to the defence of Hindemith's triptych when the Bühnenvolksbund attacked the operas. The critics Bie and Bekker frequently supported these operas and offered some of the greatest praise. Bekker also contributed on the practical front, arranging and directing Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* in Kassel. The modern opera composer, however, was not necessarily tied to the left. Of the four main composers considered in this thesis, only Weill was (loosely) connected to the left as a member of the *Novembergruppe* and via his association with Brecht. As we saw in Chapter Three, Weill did notably distribute the piano score of *Der Protagonist* to prominent and primarily left-leaning critics ahead of the opera's premiere. Weill, in other words, sought out the support of those on the left in advance. Modern opera and the left in Weimar Germany,

therefore, were not entirely synonymous. Nevertheless, throughout this thesis it has been the left who supported modern opera most staunchly, often in the face of attacks from the right. Left-leaning critics were of the utmost conviction that the success of these works was important not just for opera, but for German society more generally. The performances of these operas, then, were stages for the broader conflicts in in the politics of culture in Weimar Germany.

While the thesis has offered an in-depth exploration of operatic trends in Weimar Germany up to around 1927, it does not account for expressionism in opera during the Republic's later years. This is largely due to the parameters I set for choosing my case studies: pre-existing expressionist texts adapted for opera by up-and-coming composers who were seen as heralding the future of the genre. There is scope to extend this study into the later Weimar years if these parameters were loosened slightly. If, for example, they were altered to simply consider operas with characteristics of expressionist theatre and not necessarily in relation to the perceived opera crisis, later performances of Schoenberg's *Erwartung and Die glückliche Hand* at the Krolloper in Berlin could be considered, both of which were written almost two decades earlier. This thesis has contributed to bridge the divide between the Second Viennese School and other composers by considering *Wozzeck* alongside operas by Hindemith, Weill and Krenek. Incorporating *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand* into this study would close the gap further between those traditionally recognisable breakthroughs in modern opera and those which have been lost over time, as well as adding to the many faces of expressionism in opera already discussed in this thesis.

A study of expressionism at the Krolloper would be a fitting continuation point from Chapter Four—a potential Chapter Five. The Krolloper only reopened in 1926, with Otto Klemperer as its chief conductor, and became an important institution for new opera and new

productions of the standard repertory.[6] A thorough investigation of the Krolloper would also allow me to account more fully for Berlin as a hub of modern opera. Despite being the Republic's capital and what is typically regarded as one of Europe's cultural centres at this time, Berlin has only played a small role in this thesis. This is primarily due to my aims for the project, as I have actively sought to highlight the importance of other cities. As has become evident across the thesis, the provincial cities in which these operas were performed were rarely passive vessels but frequently at the forefront of composers' and critics' minds. We saw how Hindemith's triptych was perfectly suited to Frankfurt with the prominence of expressionist theatre at its theatrical institutions. Weill was then adamant that the premiere of *Der Protagonist* take place in Dresden, even delaying the event to accommodate for the schedule of the city's leading tenor. Then we saw how the reputation of Kassel's theatres exerted a powerful influence over the performance history of *Orpheus und Eurydike*. While this thesis has offered new insights into these local circumstances, there is still much to be said as to how these places related. Expanding the project's geographical scope to encompass other prominent cities such as Berlin, therefore, would allow such interconnecting translocal networks to be identified, as well as shedding light on the mobility of particular works and productions through Germany's opera culture.[7]

This project could be expanded further still to encompass the intersecting backlash to expressionism and opera from the National Socialists in Weimar Germany's final years and transition into the Third Reich—a potential sixth chapter of the project. As is well known, Berg struggled to secure performances of both *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* with the increasing threats made by National Socialist ideologues and propaganda. A similar case can also be found with

[6] For more on the Krolloper at this time, see Eigel Kruttge, ed., *Experiment Krolloper, 1927–1931* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1975).
[7] See Francesca Vella, *Networking Operatic Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022) and Austin Glatthorn, *Music Theatre and the Holy Roman Empire: The German Musical Stage at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

Erwin Schulhoff's *Flammen* (*Plameny* in its original Czech title).[8] Based on the legend of Don Juan, *Flammen* combines elements of surrealism, expressionism and *commedia dell'arte* across a series of ten loosely connected scenes. A planned performance for 1933 under Erich Kleiber in Berlin was ultimately abandoned as the Nazi's battle on *Entartete Kunst* grew stronger. Schulhoff's opera, however, has received considerably less scholarly attention than Berg's opera. Such a chapter would not only shed new light on how National Socialism disrupted modern opera in Germany, but also tie in nicely to how the rest of this thesis has considered the range of factors that affected the longevity of certain operas at this time, for better or for worse.

This thesis has ultimately demonstrated how expressionist theatre on the operatic stage was not passé in the early years of the Weimar Republic, nor simply the road to a more topical and culturally relevant kind of opera. Hindemith, Berg, Weill and Krenek's early operas encompassed a range of contemporary attitudes towards expressionism and opera while also standing as intersections of broader debates that characterised Weimar culture: the desire to move on from the immediate past and embrace the present; expressionism's ambivalent, yet still omnipresent, cultural position; the tension between expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*; and battlegrounds between the left and right, progressives and conservatives. Expressionism in opera was not a sign of opera *in* crisis—rather, it acted as a mediator for Weimar Germany's many crises. Moreover, it was not the sign of a waning tradition with little contemporary cultural relevance but a microcosm of Weimar culture more broadly. Expressionism in opera was not opera of the past—it was opera of the times.

[8] *Plameny* premiered on 27 January 1932 in Brno and was poorly received. Schulhoff's opera only gained considerable interest following a performance in Leipzig in 1995 under Udo Zimmermann. For recent work on Schulhoff, see Matthias Herrmann, ed., *Überdada, Componist und Expressionist: Erwin Schulhoff in Dresden. Mit Briefen, Dokumenten und seinem Tagebuch* (Baden-Baden: Tectum Verlag, 2023).

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