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Opera after Stunde Null

by

Emily Richmond Pollock

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Mary Ann Smart, Chair

Professor Richard Taruskin

Professor Martin Jay

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Abstract

Opera after Stunde Null

by

Emily Richmond Pollock

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Mary Ann Smart, Chair

This dissertation discusses the musical, dramatic, and political implications of postwar German opera through the examination of four case studies: Boris Blacher's *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* (1953), Hans Werner Henze's *König Hirsch* (1956), Carl Orff's *Oedipus der Tyrann* (1959), and Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* (1965). Both the composers' musical decisions and the finished works' critical and musicological reception demonstrate just how urgently the genre of opera was thought to be in crisis. Enabled by the myth of the "Stunde Null" or Zero Hour, many avant-garde composers shunned opera as artistically bankrupt and conservative, preferring instead genres that were less closely tied to the musical past.

Opera's coherence as a genre depended upon the maintenance and renewal of dramatic and musical conventions from eras both immediate and distant – a dependence that became politicized as the boundaries of "new music" were policed. Composers of new operas in this era were forced to attempt creative and productive solutions to the problem of how to write an opera in a milieu skeptical of opera's potential for innovation. The reception of these operas reflects these concerns, as critics and musicologists alike sought to make sense of the pieces within the context defined aesthetically by operatic tradition and politically by the Stunde Null.

If opera was a problem in general for post-war composers in Germany, each of the four operas in this dissertation represents one set of solutions. By referring to a varied dramatic and musical heritage, these composers looked for artistic touchstones that would allow them to position themselves in meaningful artistic lineages, whether Italian *bel canto*, Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Greek tragedy, or abstract theater.

In Boris Blacher's *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, the authors' efforts to foil operaticism with nonsense opened the door for audiences to project their deepest fears onto the piece. The songs and arias in Henze's *König Hirsch*, which Henze revised and crafted to be as lyrical and transparent as possible, made the opera a target of harsh criticism because it was too "conventional." By contrast, Orff's *Oedipus der Tyrann* was met with both praise and confusion, for despite its striking effects, the piece's extreme asceticism proved incompatible with the expectations of

an opera audience. Meanwhile, the ambition and message of Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* earned it accolades, but the smaller, more intimate opera that lurks behind the noisy surface contradicts the received idea that Zimmermann conquered the tradition of operatic expressiveness.

The relationship of these operas' musico-dramatic orientations to tradition is therefore indicative of their positions relative to the ideology of the post-war blank slate. Inasmuch as the aesthetics prized after Stunde Null were largely defined by a negation of tradition through the privileging of the radically new, the supposed conservatism of opera led many to declare it dead. But by approaching tradition more constructively, we can better understand the position of opera during this fraught era.

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to Mom and Dad and AP with love

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Opera after Germany's "Zero Hour"

German Opera of the Present Day

In 1944, a German university professor named Carl Niessen oversaw the publication of a lavish volume entitled *Die Deutsche Oper der Gegenwart* ("German Opera of the Present Day").¹ Published in Regensburg and funded in part by that city's government, this fascinating artifact presents a comprehensive survey of opera from the time of the Third Reich. Alongside a smattering of scholarly essays, a gorgeous array of stage drawings and photographs from productions throughout Germany is reproduced in facsimile. The volume is nationalistic in tenor, beginning with the assertion that "no opera in the world can compete with the German opera in the present day."² An overwhelming majority of the depicted productions date from after 1933, meaning that the book's definition of "the present" corresponds exactly to the years since Hitler's rise to power.

Nearly two-thirds of the book is devoted to a series of portraits of contemporary German opera composers (for a list, see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Composers profiled in *Die Deutsche Oper der Gegenwart*

Boris Blacher	Hugo Herrmann	Hans Pfitzner	Kurt Striegler
Eugen Bodart	Ludwig Hess	Carl Friedrich Pistor	Heinrich Sutermeister
Fritz von Borries	Paul Höffer	Josef Reiter	Herbert Trantow
Hans Brehme	Leo Justinus Kauffmann	Hermann Reutter	Hermann Unger
Cesar Bresgen	Wilhelm Kempff	Emil von Reznicek	Theodor Veidl
Erwin Dressel	Robert Alfred Kirchner	Ernst Richter	Georg Vollerthun
Werner Egk	Paul von Klenau	Ludwig Roselius	Rudolf Wagner-Regeny
Ottmar Gerster	Friedrich Klose	Ernst Schliepe	Fried Walter
Kurt Gillmann	Gustav Kneip	Clemens Schmalstich	Julius Weismann
Paul Graener	Hans Ludwig Kormann	Othmar Schoeck	Franz Wödl
Hans Grimm	Arthur Kusterer	Norbert Schultze	Bodo Wolf
Arthur Grüber	Mark Lothar	Erich Sehlbach	Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari
Joseph Haas	Ludwig Maurick	Marc-Andre Souchay	Hermann Zilcher
Robert Heger	Ernst Meyerolbersleben	Leo Spies	Winfried Zillig
Albert Henneberg	Carl Orff	Hans Stieber	
Hermann Henrich	Wilhelm Petersen	Richard Strauss	

The profiles reproduce headshots and signatures, drawings and photographs from productions of the composers' works, and handwritten personal messages.³ Though some names, such as

¹ Carl Niessen, ed., *Die deutsche Oper der Gegenwart* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1944).

² Niessen, *Die deutsche Oper der Gegenwart*, 7. "Keine Oper der Welt kann sich mit der deutschen in der Gegenwart messen." For further commentary on this volume, see Rebecca Grotjahn, "'Ein Kulturgut für das ganze Volk': Oper, Politik und politische Opern in der NS-Zeit," in *Kontinuitäten, Diskontinuitäten: Musik und Politik in Deutschland zwischen 1920 und 1970*, ed. Anno Karl Maria Mungen and Heinz Geuen (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2006), 104.

³ Niessen, *Die deutsche Oper der Gegenwart*, 87–309.

Richard Strauss, Hans Pfitzner, and Carl Orff, have retained some historical prominence, most of these sixty-two composers are today relatively unknown. Judging by the number of stage pictures reproduced for each, the most important composers of the time were Strauss (ten pictures), Pfitzner (eight), Werner Egk (eight), Heinrich Sutermeister (eight), Rudolf Wagner-Regeny (eight), and Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (eight). Of these six, only Egk and Wagner-Regeny premiered another opera after 1945. Unsurprisingly absent from the profiles were such now-famous names as Paul Hindemith, Arnold Schoenberg, Ernst Krenek, and Kurt Weill. Though this may have been the great German opera of “the present day,” this version of the present was soon to end.

A closer look at the list of profiles shows that there were significant points of continuity between the era represented in the book and the post-war period. First in the alphabetical list of profiled composers is Boris Blacher, who became one of Berlin’s most prominent post-war composition teachers; last is Winfried Zillig, a former student of Schoenberg who was later better known as a conductor and a writer on music. Zillig had been the principal conductor at the opera house in Düsseldorf from 1932–37, where his first opera was staged in 1933. That opera, *Rosse*, was the first in a string of successful operas Zillig premiered during the Third Reich; several musicologists have argued that his operas during that period were related to National Socialism not only by chronology, but by their reflection of certain aspects of Nazi ideology.⁴ Four of Zillig’s operas had texts by Richard Billinger, the influential author of tales of “Blut und Boden” that were popular in the Nazi era.⁵

As an “authentic witness” to the Schoenberg school, Zillig later played an important role in the dissemination and explanation of twelve-tone music through his activities as a conductor and radio director.⁶ As Hellmut Federhofer has shown, Zillig’s method of demonstrating to lay audiences the twelve-tone technique relied on tonal examples, showing the roots of dissonant sounds in the music of familiar composers like Mozart.⁷ In so doing, Zillig portrayed twelve-tone music as something following naturally, rather than radically breaking away, from past music. This attitude had kept him from Nazi censure, as Zillig’s use of twelve-tone techniques was sufficiently traditional (incorporating triads and singable melodies) that his use of dodecaphony was not acknowledged by the Nazi musical press.⁸ In addition, even though his compositional style was based in Schoenberg’s system, Zillig’s operas were celebrated for the “noble” ideologies they portrayed.⁹ Because he was a devotee of the twelve-tone technique who had a successful career during the Third Reich, Zillig has become a favorite

⁴ Gudrun Dittmann, “Winfried Zillig/Richard Billinger: *Die Windsbraut*: Eine umjubelte Leipziger Uraufführung im Mai 1941,” in *Musikstadt Leipzig im NS-Staat: Beiträge zu einem verdrängten Thema*, ed. Thomas Schinköth, 280–291 (Altenburg: Kamprad, 1997); Claudia Maurer-Zenck, “Aufbruch des deutschen Geistes oder Innere Emigration? Zu einigen Opern der 1930er und 1940er Jahre,” in *Entartete Musik“ 1938 – Weimar und die Ambivalenz*, ed. Hanns-Werner Heister, vol. 1, 216–246 (Saarbrücken: Pfau-Verlag, 2001); and Grotjahn, “Oper, Politik und politische Opern in der NS-Zeit.”

⁵ Zillig also set *Die Windesbraut* (Leipzig, 1940), *Bauernpassion* (Munich, 1955), and *Das Verlöbniß* (Kassel, 1962), all from Billinger.

⁶ Hellmut Federhofer, “Winfried Zilligs Einführung in die Zwölftonmusik,” in *Neue Musik als Widerspruch zur Tradition: gesammelte Aufsätze* (Bonn: Orpheus-Verlag, 2002), 37.

⁷ Federhofer, “Winfried Zilligs Einführung in die Zwölftonmusik,” 38–41.

⁸ Erik Levi, “Atonality, 12-Tone Music and the Third Reich,” *Tempo* 178 (1991): 20.

⁹ Levi, “Atonality, 12-Tone Music and the Third Reich,” 19.

example for musicologists who seek to complicate the notion that the Nazis banned all “atonal” music as “entartete Musik.” Despite their “advanced” techniques and pedigree, Zillig’s *Die Windesbraut* and *Das Opfer* are included in Rebecca Grotjahn’s list of political operas that were part of Nazi programs to promote theater that both conformed to musical standards and enacted sanctioned ideologies.¹⁰

Grotjahn includes a third opera by Zillig on her list of political operas from the time of National Socialism: the twelve-tone Shakespeare opera *Troilus und Cressida*, commissioned for the Strasbourg Opera during the German occupation of Alsace.¹¹ What she does not note here, however, is that *Troilus und Cressida* was eventually premiered, not in Strasbourg, but rather in 1951 in a successful run in Düsseldorf. This premiere occurred despite the piece’s shady wartime inception and despite the fact that much of the music was composed during a time when Zillig was in a Nazi-appointed position in Poznań. As an opera whose origins are rooted in so many ways in the Nazi regime, *Troilus* is an appealingly straightforward opportunity to complicate and challenge the accuracy of a history that posits 1945 as any kind of cultural caesura. This piece, like the person who composed it and, presumably, a majority of those who performed and listened to it, spanned the supposedly enormous chasm between the Nazi era and the post-war period, serving as an obvious site of necessary post-war renegotiation and reinterpretation.

Until recently, Zillig’s credentials as an “atonal” composer were pressed into service to affirm his wartime innocence. Zillig felt that his denazification trial was deeply humiliating, contradicted de facto by his twelve-tone technique. In a 1946 letter, he referred to himself as “one of the few surviving ‘degenerates’” who, after always being suspected and oppressed by the Nazis, now faced the possibility of being labeled a Nazi propagandist. This, he implied, would be just as terrible as had been the Nazi persecution. He continued:

What scorn and what stupidity! And continue the oppression of the individual, continue the path ‘from humanism to nationalism to bestiality’ (Grillparzer). But they should have me gladly ... My work has its own mysterious life and will find its time.¹²

This narrative was later enshrined in T.W. Adorno’s essays on the composer.¹³ Adorno’s attempts to shore up Zillig’s reputation hinged in part on Zillig’s association with the master Schoenberg; Adorno stated matter-of-factly that Schoenberg considered Zillig to be the

¹⁰ Grotjahn, “Oper, Politik und politische Opern in der NS-Zeit,” 121–122.

¹¹ Grotjahn, “Oper, Politik und politische Opern in der NS-Zeit,” 122.

¹² Winfried Zillig to Maria Zillig, 5 February 1946, quoted in Silke Hilger, “Die vergessenen Weisen des Winfried Zillig,” *Musica* 49, no. 2 (1995): 82. “Der wenigen Entarteten Überlebender einer, ein alter Hasser der Nazis, wird, nachdem er von den Nazis stets verdächtigt und gedrückt war, nunmehr zum Nazipropagandisten zu stempeln versucht. Welcher Hohn und welcher Dummheit! Und weiterhin die Unterdrückung des Individuums, weiterhin der Weg zum Humanismus über den Nationalismus zum Bestialismus (Grillparzer). Aber sie sollen mich gerne haben ... Das Werk lebt sein eigenes geheimnisvolles Leben und wird seine Zeit finden.”

¹³ Christian Lemmerich, “Winfried Zillig: Anpassung und Engagement: Aspekte eines widersprüchlichen Lebensweges,” in *Arnold Schönbergs “Berliner Schule”*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2002), 159.

greatest among the second generation of his pupils.¹⁴ Adorno then wrote, “the Hitler Reich cut [Zillig] off as a composer,” a statement directly contradicted by the career success Zillig had experienced during the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁵ In 2002, however, Christian Lemmerich debunked this version of events, not only reaffirming that Zillig’s Nazi-period operas has been successful in their own time, but also laying out evidence that Zillig’s wartime position as a conductor in Poznań had been granted as the result of his propagandistic activities.¹⁶

Zillig’s three-page message in *Die Deutsche Oper in der Gegenwart* was longer than that of most other composers in the volume (Blacher submitted just five sentences, Orff a mere eight words), supplementing the standard elements of autobiography with a sketch of his current projects. “Now I’m working further on an opera *Troilus und Cressida*,” he wrote; this work he saw as an extension of the renewed version of Greek tragedy he boasted to have achieved in his previous opera, *Das Opfer* (1937).¹⁷ The earlier work, the story of a doomed polar mission and noble self-sacrifice, was a “new type of heroic opera.”¹⁸ Accordingly, Rebecca Grotjahn has demonstrated that *Das Opfer*, the opera that Zillig repeatedly cited as the direct predecessor for *Troilus und Cressida*, was a kind of “fascist Lehrstück,” a particularly effective vehicle for Nazi propaganda as a result of its ideological portrayal of heroic acts.¹⁹

Now, with *Troilus und Cressida*, Zillig explained, “I am going strictly and deliberately further down this path with steadfast faith to help attain a new form of opera out of the sources of the spirit, one that is worthy of the clarity, the greatness, and the heroism of our times!”²⁰ These words of pride, perhaps hubristic even then, are thoroughly alarming now: no matter how artistically interesting Zillig’s ideal form of opera may have been, the Germany of 1944, of which he hoped the opera would be worthy, cannot now be considered clear, great, or heroic. Zillig’s use of the word “heroism” as an aspirational quality for *Troilus und Cressida* is telling. The composer set his own libretto based on Shakespeare’s tragedy, a love story set

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “Winfried Zillig: Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit,” in *Impromptus: Zweite Folge neu gedruckter musikalischer Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968), 157. “Schönberg, sein Lehrer, hielt ihn für die größte aus der zweiten Generation seiner Schüler.”

¹⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, “Winfried Zillig: Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit,” 158. “... das Hitlersche Reich ihn als Komponisten ausschaltete.” The myth that Zillig faced artistic persecution under the Nazis was then perpetuated by writers who, in biographical sketches, have written statements such as the following: “Sowohl *Rosse* als auch *Das Opfer* fallen kurz nach ihrer Premiere beim Hitlerregime in Ungnade als eine Musik, welche die ‘degenerierten’ Theorien Schönbergs propagiere” (Juan Luis Milán, “Winfried Zillig,” in *Komponisten um Schönberg: zehn Musikerportraits* (Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 1995), 112). Perhaps unaware of the fact that *Troilus und Cressida* was a wartime commission of the opera house in occupied Strasbourg, Ulrich Dibelius attributed its late premiere to the presumption that Zillig’s works had been banned as “unerwünscht.” Ulrich Dibelius, “Winfried Zillig,” *Musica* xii (1958): 654.

¹⁶ Lemmerich, “Winfried Zillig: Anpassung und Engagement,” 152–163.

¹⁷ Winfried Zillig in Niessen, *Die deutsche Oper der Gegenwart*, 308. “... arbeite ich wieder an einer Oper: ‘Troilus und Cressida.’”

¹⁸ Winfried Zillig in Niessen, *Die deutsche Oper der Gegenwart*, 308. “... einen neuen Typus der heroischen Oper...”

¹⁹ Grotjahn, “Oper, Politik und politische Opern in der NS-Zeit,” 116. “*Das Opfer* kann als faschistisches Lehrstück aufgefasst werden.” Grotjahn even included *Troilus und Cressida* on her list of “political operas from the time of National Socialism” (Ibid., 121–122; “Politische Opern aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus”). She does not indicate, however, that it was later premiered.

²⁰ Niessen, *Die deutsche Oper der Gegenwart*, 308. “[G]ehe ich mit ‘Troilus’ nun dieser Weg bewusst und streng weiter im festen Glauben, aus den Quellen des Geistes eine neue Opernform gewinnen zu helfen, die der Klarheit, der Größe, und des Heroismus unserer Zeit würdig ist!”

during the Trojan War that ends with the death of the great hero Hector. In a study of Shakespeare reception under the Nazis, Rodney Symington quotes contemporary sources citing Shakespeare's "heroism" as indicative of the playwright's compatibility with the greatness of the Nazi era.²¹ German academics in the Nazi period had assimilated Shakespeare as a "Germanic" writer, bringing him into the nationalist fold.²² Zillig's "heroic" label for his opera was a powerful slogan, then; this strategy for promoting his work demonstrates how aesthetic value was politicized.

What is interesting is how closely Zillig otherwise hewed to his original description in the Foreword eventually published in the piano score of the opera. In the Foreword essay, published in 1950, he saw no problem describing his Shakespeare-based opera as a follow-up to the opera that had been so successful in 1937: "the author [that is, Zillig himself] goes further along the path that he began in *Das Opfer*: the path over Wagner, Gluck and the Florentines back to the origins of Western opera, the path of Greek tragedy."²³ By the Greek reference he meant that the opera should be understood as a "synthesis of elements of oratorio and music drama," a connection between the conventions of oratorio and Greek drama that Zillig had explored through a chorus of penguins in *Das Opfer*.²⁴ The idea that an opera, to be contemporary, had to be tempered by elements of other genres was expressed explicitly when Zillig later asserted the "self-evident" fact that musical progress was unlikely to take place in the realm of opera.²⁵

The case of Zillig and his *Troilus und Cressida* is a revealing example of the patterns of historiography that have informed accounts of opera composition in the Nazi era and after. Despite various forms of denazification, many composers saw career success both during and after the Third Reich. For those composers who wished to bid for musical and political legitimacy after the war, self-mythology was a necessity. One particularly successful way to create a version of history in which the composer himself was a victim, rather than a beneficiary, of the Third Reich, was to claim that his music had been too atonal or too formalist to have been accepted by the Nazis. Finally, and most importantly, if a composer could refer to the right artistic touchstones *outside* of opera – Shakespeare, oratorio, the Greeks – he could continue his previous artistic path entirely unbroken. *Troilus und Cressida* may have managed

²¹ Rodney Symington, *The Nazi Appropriation of Shakespeare: Cultural Politics in the Third Reich* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 124.

²² Symington, *The Nazi Appropriation of Shakespeare*, 125–127.

²³ Winfried Zillig, "Vorwort" to *Troilus und Cressida* (Wiesbaden: Brucknerverlag, 1950), 4. "... daß der Autor [Zillig, speaking of himself in the third person] dabei den Weg weiterging, den er im 'Opfer' ... beschritten hatte: den Weg über Wagner, Gluck und die Florentiner zurück zu den Ursprüngen der abendländischen Oper, den Weg zur griechischen Tragödie."

²⁴ Zillig, "Vorwort" to *Troilus und Cressida*, 4. "Vor allem muß die Synthese aus oratorischen und musikdramatischen Elementen verständlich gemacht werden." This became one of the traits of Zillig's work that was repeated in critical profiles of the composer. See, for example, Siegfried Günther, "Der Opernkomponist Winfried Zillig," *Das Orchester* ix (1961): 365. "Im 'Opfer' greift Zillig ein neues Problem auf, das er später noch grundsätzlicher gestaltet: die Heranziehung von Elementen des Oratorischen in die Oper."

²⁵ Winfried Zillig, *Variationen über neue Musik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1959), 216. "daß die Weiterentwicklung der Musik nicht in der Oper entschieden wird, ist aus vielen Gründen eigentlich selbstverständlich." There is hardly a composer from the mid-nineteenth-century onward about whom Zillig did not write; these essays are collected in Winfried Zillig, *Von Wagner bis Strauss: Wegbereiter der neuen Musik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1966), as well as in the aforementioned *Variationen über neue Musik*.

to transcend its origins in part by benefiting from Zillig's reference to the ancient Greeks and from the revision of Shakespeare in Germany back to a universally human, politically non-specific figure of literary greatness.

The case of *Troilus und Cressida*, then, quite potently demonstrates the complex dynamics of forgetfulness and memory after 1945: Zillig had to "forget" the material's previously attributed heroicism and instead "remember" that the story was mythological and universal. The supposed timelessness of the subject matter shielded the opera from its murky origins, as the supposed apolitical nature of music shielded many musicians from post-war censure. That which was thought timeless could endure, cutting through and cutting out the years of pain and compromise, perhaps enabling Zillig's music, as he said, to "have its own life and find its own time." After Zillig's death, his close colleague and admirer Carl Orff wrote an obituary in which he praised Zillig's prowess as a stage composer (he singles out *Troilus und Cressida*), but the ironies of the sentimental message are most aptly expressed in the obituary's last lines.²⁶

It is good that man was given the gift of forgetfulness. Many things *must* be forgotten, in order to keep on living, but some things one *should* not forget, in order to continue to exist, and then there are other things that one *cannot* forget. No one can forget you, dear Winfried, who has called you his friend.²⁷

The Problem of the Zero Hour

New had become shorthand for exoneration ... Musicians embraced the idea that a cultural page had been turned in 1945 ... American policy induced artists to make believe Germany's surrender marked a Stunde Null for the arts, and the idea of newness coursed through music culture in the occupation years ... which hinged on the idea that 1945 was the point where things began.²⁸

As David Monod here implies, the clean slate of "Stunde Null" quickly became one of the governing mythologies of the post-World War II era. As a worldview, it morphed readily to apply to a wide variety of situations in post-war German life, from the literal rebuilding of destroyed cities to the conceptual reconstructions that accompanied denazification and the partition of German territory into occupied zones. The resumption of artistic life was equally subject to the discourse of clean slates and fresh starts. The symbolic and real purges of

²⁶ Carl Orff, "Nachruf für Winfried Zillig," *Musica* xviii (1964): 67. "Ein Vorspiel von Teilen aus 'Troilus und Cressida' bleibt mir unvergeßlich. Es war das einzige Mal, daß du mir persönlich Einblick in eines deiner Werke gabst." Zillig had always seen Orff as a genius, the real innovator of music theater (Winfried Zillig, "Carl Orff, der Erneuerer des Musiktheaters," in *Variationen über neue Musik*, 199–215); Like Zillig, Orff had a significant artistic investment in the renewal of Greek drama.

²⁷ Orff, "Nachruf für Winfried Zillig," 67. "Es ist gut, daß dem Menschen die Gabe des Vergessens verliehen wurde. Vieles muß man vergessen, um weiterleben zu können, doch manches darf man nicht vergessen, um vor sich bestehen zu können, und wiederum anderes kann man nicht vergessen. Dich, lieber Winfried, kann keiner vergessen, den du Freund genannt hast."

²⁸ David Monod, *Settling Scores: German Music, Denazification, and the Americans 1945–1953* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 58–60.

musical life performed in the name of moving forward encouraged a radically new orientation to both immediate and distant musical pasts. If for no other reason than this, the year 1945 has represented a caesura in the narrative of German music, as composers, musicians, and audiences alike approached the cultural politics of their artistic actions with newly cognizant and wary attitudes.

The concept of Stunde Null has been widely criticized as an inadequate explanation of what happened in the arts; for some, "Stunde Null" became no more than a slogan or alibi for artists claiming to represent a fresh start while simultaneously approaching their art forms conservatively.²⁹ In music history, however, both the modernist preoccupation with progress and the Zero Hour mythology that enabled its aesthetic monopoly still dominate the historiographical discourse. In musicology, the year 1945 serves as a marker between historical periods; "post-war" music has come to be identified primarily with an international avant-garde that coalesced in the 1950s. As a result, the accomplishments of a handful of radical modernists, working at contemporary music festivals such as Darmstadt and Donaueschingen, overshadowed other kinds of contemporaneous musical renewal. It is no surprise that West Germany became such a center of self-consciously "new" music: the ideological power of Stunde Null gave high modernism a validity and authenticity that other more tradition-bound music could not possess.

Three contributions to the volumes of the *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert* (by Hanns-Werner Heister, Lydia Jeschke, and Albrecht Riethmüller) demonstrate the different perspectives musicologists have adopted regarding the idea of Stunde Null. Heister begins his essay (part of a larger chapter called "Renovierung statt 'Nullpunkt'") with the standard narrative of what happened to music after the war: "The avant-garde after 1945 wanted to make everything new and different in fundamental opposition to fascism."³⁰ Here and throughout his essay, Heister foregrounds the political motivations for a purposeful opposition to the past, embracing the avant-garde as most successful in actualizing this goal. Stunde Null was the catalyst for explosive new artistic developments and truly "new music"; music that does not easily fit into this definition is shunted aside as less valid and less relevant. On the other hand, scholars like Jeschke, who dismiss Stunde Null entirely as a fantasy, may also be missing the point: discursively, the idea of Stunde Null did have significant ideological pull. Jeschke begins with this challenge to conventional historiography:

Zero point? Clear-cut? Clean slate? Indeed there were enough reasons for composers after World War II to see themselves in such a situation or to yearn for this position ...

²⁹ For critiques see Frank Trommler, "Der 'Nullpunkt 1945' und seine Verbindlichkeit für die Literaturgeschichte," *Basis: Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur* 1 (1970): 9–25; and Heinrich Vormweg, "Deutsche Literatur 1945–1960: Keine Stunde Null," in *Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur: Ausgangspositionen und aktuelle Entwicklungen*, ed. Manfred Durzak, 14–31 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981). Literary historians have even come to a second-wave critique of "Stunde Null," which consists, among other things, of a reappraisal of its usefulness. See Stephen Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004).

³⁰ Hanns-Werner Heister, "Das Pathos der universalen Machbarkeit," in *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert: 1945–1975*, ed. Hanns-Werner Heister (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2005), 53. "Die Avantgarde nach 1945 wollte in grundsätzlicher Opposition zum Faschismus alles neu und anders machen."

but of course there *was* no cultural “zero point,” except as a slogan and a framework for discussion in writings on literary history.³¹

Jeschke has clearly assimilated critiques of the Stunde Null idea, but her extreme position denies the concept’s power *as* a slogan and as a point of debate. Riethmüller treads a middle path, acknowledging the importance of 1945 for periodization and exploring both positive (as a “Befreiung”) and negative connotations (“null und nichtig”) of the Stunde Null idea. Most importantly, he is interested throughout in the importance of Stunde Null as a factor in the reception of music, writing: “The idea of ‘Stunde Null’ is aimed not only at the way music itself had been dealt with – that is, on compositional techniques that were developed in particular works – but also on the way music was thought about.”³² Such a view, pointing towards reception history, allows us to begin to trace the influence that flowed between the politics that shaped the thought of this period and the music created during it.

Recent Anglophone scholarship has also criticized the idea that music and politics from this period are separable. Two books by historians, David Monod’s *Settling Scores: German Music, Denazification, and the Americans 1945–1953* (2005) and Toby Thacker’s *Music after Hitler, 1945–1955* (2007) illustrate this strand of current methodology.³³ Thacker concentrates on the Soviet Zone and GDR, which he finds more interesting because “the GDR proudly declared that music was a political affair.”³⁴ As a result, instead of persuasively reasserting the political disposition of musical practices in the West, Thacker simply reinscribes the bias that the East was the “political half” of Germany (and thus that the East holds more interest for cultural historians). Monod’s book documents the process of denazification as carried out in the American zone, examining prominent case studies of particular musicians, conductors, and composers.

Monod points out that the failure to recognize music as politically charged was as much the Allies’ as the Germans’. According to period documents on music control:

The social value of music ... lay in its ability to arouse sympathy and to bind people together in the mutual experience of their humanity. It could be abused ... but, in itself and if left alone, music was an “international language” that would inspire empathy and fraternity among peoples ... [and] was inspirational, not political.³⁵

³¹ Lydia Jeschke, “Paradigmenwechsel: Webern-Nachfolge—von der Reihe zum Serialismus,” in Heister, ed., *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert: 1945-1975*, 80. “Nullpunkt? Kahlschlag? Neuanfang? Allerdings gab es genug Gründe für Komponisten nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, sich in eine solche Lage versetzt zu sehen oder diese Situation gar herbeizusehnen ... natürlich hat es den kulturellen Nullpunkt, ausser als Schlagwort und Diskussionsgrundlage namentlich in der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung, nicht gegeben.”

³² Albrecht Riethmüller, “Die ‘Stunde Null’ als musikgeschichtliche Größe,” in *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert: 1925-1945*, ed. Albrecht Riethmüller (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2006), 323. “Das Thema ‘Stunde Null’ zielt keineswegs nur darauf, dass und wie musikalisch (in Noten) gehandelt wurde – also auf Kompositionstechnik bzw. auf Werke, die entstehen sollten – sondern auch darauf, wie über Musik gedacht wurde.”

³³ Monod, *Settling Scores* (see n. 30); Toby Thacker, *Music after Hitler, 1945–1955* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

³⁴ Thacker, *Music after Hitler*, 178.

³⁵ Monod paraphrasing John Evarts, the leader of the Theater and Music Section of the Information Control Division, in *Settling Scores*, 39.

Because of the cultural calamity facing Germans at this time, the insistence that music be treated apolitically became an important component of a larger impulse towards denial, an unappetizing but perhaps necessary part of moving forward. As Thacker notes facetiously:

[Although] an unusually high proportion of professional musicians were Nazi Party members ... when the Allies enquired into these matters, they found that apparently all German musicians were anti-fascists or strictly apolitical professionals, who had acted under duress.³⁶

Music's status as an alibi for so many Germans seems to have cemented the art form's status as somehow apolitical even in the most politically charged situations.

Scholarly work that situates musical life in context – of post-war divided Germany, of the new Cold War, of institutions like the Military Government (or new music festivals) – has begun to fill in the negated space of the reductive *Stunde Null* idea.³⁷ But in these studies, among the details of denazification proceedings, institutional machinations, and various political motivations, almost nothing has been written about the music composed during this period. Broad stylistic labels such as “modernism” or “avant-gardism” were invoked as important in promoting a new, “anti-fascist” music, but the works and composers that embody those “isms” are rarely examined in any detail. Paradoxically, then, by focusing their inquiries so tightly on the political issues, these scholars perpetuate the disciplinary split between music and politics, only in reverse, isolating politics from music.

In addition, an overreliance on the concept of *Stunde Null* leads scholars who do focus on the music of this period to concentrate on those pieces that most clearly fit the model of linear artistic progress and blank slates, while overlooking music more clearly tied to the musical past. That modernist-sounding music could, more than other styles, be considered untainted by recent history was a consequence of a particular story of Third-Reich musical culture in which atonal and modernist music was categorically prohibited by the state, such that composers could only (re)discover it after the Nazi era was over. As Erik Levi has shown, however, the difficulty of defining “atonality” and the imprecision and subjectivity of musical judgment meant that the musical attributes denounced by Nazi officials did not always map onto the actual musical materials used by composers.³⁸ As a result, Levi writes, “there were some instances when stylistically advanced music somehow managed to slip through the net,” and while Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern were all prominently denounced, others of Schoenberg's students (e.g., Zillig) were able to thrive during the Third Reich.³⁹ This complicates the narrative of modernist “rediscovery” after 1945, which, as a tale of almost magical enlightenment, portrays composers throwing off the shackles of older music in favor of the new sounds of Schoenberg, Hindemith, or Webern.

³⁶ Thacker, *Music after Hitler*, 38.

³⁷ See also Amy Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

³⁸ Levi, “Atonality, 12-Tone Music and the Third Reich,” 17–21.

³⁹ Levi, “Atonality, 12-Tone Music and the Third Reich,” 19.

The Problem of Opera: Four Case Studies

One major casualty of this bias has been opera, a genre thought particularly reliant on the coherence and continuity of dramatic and musical conventions. Opera's reputation consequently suffered after the war at the hands of the same avant-garde composers then rising to the heights of contemporary prestige. They considered opera to be beneath them – bastardized (through its enslavement to narrative), musically conventional, crowd-pleasing, and decadent to the point of artistic bankruptcy. Opera is hard to universalize and make transcendent. Its stories are easily interpreted as political statements, and its class associations are hard to escape. In part as a result of this problem, music historians have neglected opera written in the post-war period. To continue to overlook opera, though, is to recapitulate the modernist biases of the time. If opera was a problem in general for post-war composers in Germany, each of the operas composed after 1945 represents one set of solutions to those problems. To show a cross-section of these "solutions," this dissertation focuses on four operas that provide unique interpretations of what the generic designation "opera" could mean during the first two post-war decades. In both the composers' musical decisions and in the finished works' critical and musicological reception, it becomes clear just how urgently the genre of opera was thought to be in crisis.

An understanding of such aesthetic problems is greatly enriched by political and contextual considerations, and opera proves complex and productive ground in this regard. Particularly revealing are contemporaneous evaluative judgments and critical commentary that revolved around the definition and policing of boundaries of what opera could and should be. Reviews express not only the subjective judgments of individual critics but also ideological fissures that gave those judgments their vocabulary. Furthermore, works' reception was mediated by many factors "outside" the composers' score. Because opera is collaborative and involves negotiation among so many artistic parties (librettists, composers, stage directors, designers, conductors, musicians), opera is more fascinatingly messy than any other form of Western music and may embody more directly the contradictory political and social conditions from which works emerge. Because of the institutional behemoths that are required to sustain it, opera is part of an elaborate system of production, with conventions of planning, heavy financial burdens, and an aesthetic approach that is consequently practical and rather risk-averse. Historically, then, opera composers have by necessity embraced the "extramusical" aspects of their creations, from their literary collaborators to the musicians, administrators, and audiences that make up the larger operatic community.

Unlike much modernist music, then, written for a small and exclusive intellectual cadre, opera is a deeply public art form. Perhaps as a result of these generic conditions, opera scholars have been on the front lines of the musicological inquiry into concepts like audience-oriented music-making, considerations of what performers need and expect, and even the rehabilitation of long-abused epithets like *conventional*. Indeed, convention lies at the heart of my inquiry here. Post-war opera composers sought ways to use operatic conventions in a way that could be meaningful even in an era that turned convention into a political problem.

The more than 140 works that premiered in the twenty years after 1945 on the opera stages of West Germany demonstrate the enormous range of possibilities that the more than seventy composers of these operas saw as viable interpretations of “opera” (Table 1.2).⁴⁰

Table 1.2: Composers of operas premiered in West Germany, 1945-1965

Niels Viggo Bentzon	Manfred Gurlitt	Franz Xavier Lehner	Roger Sessions
Antonio Bibalo	Karl Amadeus Hartmann	Mark Lothar	Kurt Stiebitz
Boris Blacher	Robert Heger	Bohuslav Martinu	Igor Stravinsky
Eugen Bodart	Hans Werner Henze	Marcel Mihalovici	Kurt Striegler
Lukas Bottcher	Paul Hindemith	Darius Milhaud	Louise Talma
Hans Brehme	Wolfgang Hofmann	Richard Mohaupt	Werner Tharichen
Cesar Bresgen	Friedrich Hollander	Nicolas Nabokov	Kurt Thies
Francis Burt	Theodor Holterdorf	Robert Oboussier	Henri Tomasi
Hans Chemin-Petit	Bertold Hummel	Carl Orff	Hans Vogt
Jan Cikker	Hanns Jelinek	Max Peters	Rudolf Wagner-Regeny
Nico Dostal	Mauricio Kagel	Kurt Pfister	Gerhardt Westermann
Kurt Driesch	Heinrich Kaminski	Aribert Reimann	Gerhard Wimberger
Johannes Driessler	Milko Kelemen	Hermann Reutter	Winfried Wolff
Werner Egk	Wilhelm Killmayer	Erich Riede	Isang Yun
Gottfried von Einem	Giselher Klebe	Peter Ronnefeld	Winfried Zillig
Hans Ulrich Engelmann	Jan Koetsier	Hans Schanzara	Bernd Alois Zimmermann
Wolfgang Fortner	Erich Korngold	Friedrich Schmidtman	
Ottmar Gerster	Ernst Krenek	Friedrich Schroder	
Arthur Gruber	Bernhard Krol	Humphrey Searle	

Each of the four chapters of this dissertation examines a single work from this twenty-year period to show how musical style and critical discourse locate it with respect to operatic tradition and lineage: Boris Blacher’s *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, Hans Werner Henze’s *König Hirsch*, Carl Orff’s *Oedipus der Tyrann*, and Bernd Alois Zimmermann’s *Die Soldaten*. Each piece demonstrates in its own way what was considered possible and even powerful within the genre. Operatic lineages were themselves politically coded and classified. Whether by reference to art forms outside of music, to specific national traditions, to Classical or Baroque forms, or to popular idioms, the multifaceted traditions show how composers approached anew the standard dramatic protocols that had become such an easy target for critiques of opera’s artistic viability.

Because generic references and the critical verdicts that arise thereby are so tied to the way these operas are built, I have focused significant attention on showing how their forms and musical cues give the operas a structural and musical identity. I have been particularly interested in the contradictions that arise from the close study of early drafts and sketches. Setting the same texts in sometimes wildly different ways, the alternative versions represent a process of transformation in the composer’s interpretation, not only of the specific lines of text, but of how a particular stylistic approach to that moment “fit” into the scene’s overall structure. Two (or more) attempts at setting the same text show a changed compositional

⁴⁰ I compiled the list of 140 operas and their composers by looking through contemporary periodicals and catalogs, cross-referenced with encyclopedias (e.g. Grove and MGG).

interpretation of how opera “should” behave given the cues of the libretto and the dramatic impulses of the narrative. As a result of this process, each opera, even in its final form, contains a range of identities and affiliations.

Such a range of potential forms for opera is, on the one hand, exuberant and fertile, while on the other hand it seems indicative of anxiety and ambivalence. To the extent that scene structure, musical topoi, stock gestures, and vocal style all combine into an expression of at least one possible future for the genre, changes in the quintessentially operatic parameters described above reflect changes in composers’ ideas of what opera “ought” to be, an idea that is always both aesthetic and political. That there were many different idioms and points of reference available to opera composers at this time is perhaps indicative of a productive stylistic pluralism for opera composition in a time usually thought stagnant and uninteresting. But it is also clear, both from composers’ own self-rejections and from critics’ often-negative responses, that (perhaps unlike more “postmodern” attitudes) not every idiom was thought equally fitting to every story or every goal for opera’s future.

The historical legacy and traditions to which different approaches to opera gestured had everything to do with opera’s position of political uneasiness. In an atmosphere so fraught with political uncertainty, no opera composer could be sure that he had come up with the “right” approach to the genre, the solution that connoted the “right” kind of dramatic moment within the “right” sort of operatic project. I have found it useful, therefore, to return to the nuts and bolts of operatic form and to ask questions like: How does the composer indicate musically that a passage in the score is supposed to be an aria? How is musical material defined and deployed to depict characters, emotions, and dramatic registers? How does the composer’s idiom interact with the language and form of the libretto? The answers to these questions offer insight into the relationship between the strategies employed in the piece and the various traditional mechanisms by which opera had historically approached these questions.

The presence or absence of fixed numbers in an opera, along with other traditional operatic elements such as stage song, dance music, formalized choruses, or stock characters, is indicative of a composer’s view of the artistic legacy he was appropriating and reinterpreting. The operatic legibility of such conventions, however, can be abetted, modified, tempered, or obscured by factors of musical style. The relationship of musical style to stories and settings is another indicator: when evoking Italy, convention seems to have dictated one compositional answer, while an almost diametrically opposed idiom was called for to evoke ancient Greece. Composers’ responses to opera’s classic musical and dramaturgical requirements determined their position within operatic tradition. The reception of these operas reflects related concerns, as critics and musicologists sought to make sense of these pieces within the context defined aesthetically by operatic tradition and politically by the Stunde Null.

Rather than cohering in a singular approach, the four operas I have selected here significantly – and inevitably – diverged across the parameters described above. Though all four premiered in West Germany and were written by German composers, each piece presents an individual set of answers to the problem of what the generic designation “opera” meant (stylistically, politically, aesthetically, historically) to composers in the decades following the war. Each of them draws on different musical and dramatic traditions, resulting in different orientations to operatic “pastness.” Their source material, an element that musical language

must reflect or push against, represents several broad contemporary trends in opera libretti (Greek antiquity, fairy tales, classical German literature, and modern life).

The four operas were also composed by men in different generational brackets, in different stages of their careers, and – most significantly – implicated to differing degrees in the atrocities of the Nazi period. As shown by their presence in the Niessen volume, Orff (b. 1895) and Blacher (b. 1903) were old enough to have been composing before and during the Third Reich, and thus they were old enough to have engaged directly with Nazi musical institutions. Zimmermann was younger (b. 1918), which put him “between” generations, whereas Henze (b. 1926) was young enough to be unequivocally part of the “post-war” generation, part of the new guard.

In the post-war operatic repertoire, Blacher’s 1953 stage work *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* (*Chapter Two: The Significance of Nonsense*) was one of few that could be said to anticipate the onstage revolutions of 1960s music theater. In the *Abstrakte Oper*, Blacher and his librettist, the composer Werner Egk, came closer than most opera composers to embracing the modernist suspicion of expressivity and the rejection of contaminating “meaning.” Egk’s libretto is, accordingly, a “non-narrative” original text representing different archetypal emotions and states of being, forsaking a linear narrative. *Abstrakte Oper* seems to attack most of the conventions of operatic tradition, adopting an avant-garde stance that resonates with later provocations by the likes of Mauricio Kagel and later performance artists.

Nevertheless, by investigating the musical methods by which Blacher conveyed his archetypal situations, I argue that the success of these depictions was not dependent on a modernist attack on the generic constraints of opera, but rather relied on the manipulation of conventional musical topoi and other external musical references. Without the treasury of accumulated operatic convention to draw upon, Blacher’s musical signs could never have signified the emotional states Egk’s libretto embodied as successfully as they did.

Despite this musical transparency, however, the Mannheim premiere resulted in an uproar – the first good opera scandal in years – bringing into stark relief a number of pressing issues that faced experimental opera in the post-war period. The authors’ pretention to the avant-garde backfired when critics dismissed the title as a contradiction in terms. The question of whether the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* was meant in earnest or whether it was a joke took on a new urgency when audiences perceived the opera’s narratives as explicitly political. The staging, in particular, was subject to harsh criticism because it made the piece altogether too concrete. The gambit of abstraction that had seemed so clever and so promising to Egk and Blacher failed because of the irresistible puzzle the “nonsense” presented to listeners. The terms on which the *Abstrakte Oper* failed show with particular clarity the limits of opera in its relationship to the post-war avant-garde.

The relationship between the dictates of musical modernism and the conventions of the stage was also a central problem for Henze in *König Hirsch* (*Chapter Three: Italy, Atonally*). Henze’s compositional strategies in the first work he wrote after departing Germany for Italy reveal mediation between the traditions of opera and the composer’s contemporary position. In *König Hirsch*, this negotiation manifested itself primarily in the opera’s oft-noted “Italianate” qualities, from the provenance of its source material to its lyrical vocal style and use of traditionally operatic closed forms.

For Henze, then, the key to writing an opera in this contested era was to quite stubbornly recuperate an Italian, pre-Wagnerian dramatic inheritance, embracing the kinds of formalized scene structures and vocal styles that had long since been problematized as anti-realistic and antiquated. My particular focus on different versions of the lyrical songs for the exoticized character Checco gives insight into how Henze's "Italianate" emphasis on melody came partially at the expense of his previously more complex, dodecaphonic style. Aspects of these songs' revisions (traceable in manuscripts held at the Paul Sacher Stiftung) clarify the development of Henze's lyrical idiom. The characterization of Checco throughout the opera as a dreamy musician was rendered legible through musical cues and stereotypes and through the strategic delineation of musical register over the course of long scenes.

By assimilating certain nineteenth-century operatic practices, *König Hirsch* became a strong interpretation of what it meant to be operatic in an "Italian" way. The eventual score for *König Hirsch* was so overtly operatic, however, that the conductor of the premiere insisted on cutting it drastically in an attempt to make it leaner and more modern. As in the case of Blacher's abstract opera, the terms of the piece's critical failures were politicized, providing insight into what was at stake for composers when they looked back to a version of opera that was thought illegitimate within the confines of modernist composition. Henze never forgot the early feelings of rejection that came with *König Hirsch*, and he has styled himself a lyrical outsider to the modernist oligarchy ever since.

Orff (*Chapter Four: The Opera Underneath*) is perhaps the most famous composer to have been successful both during the Nazi regime and in the post-war era; the triumph of his *Carmina Burana* under the Nazis has made him a rare figure who attracts suspicion not only for his personal actions but also for his creative products. In the second half of his life, Orff made repeated incursions into music drama, including his 1959 opera *Oedipus der Tyrann*, the second in a string of works he premiered in Stuttgart between 1947 and 1964. For Orff, Classical subjects provided an opportunity to explore an acultural and pristine universality made up of hypothetically unmediated communication, aiming for something that was not really opera at all, but some purer drama from imagined Ancient Greece in which the words were bound intimately to the music.

Orff's version of antiquity meant direct, prosodic settings of Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles; the music is primarily consonant, but the slow-moving harmony is exceedingly static. Because of the primitivist priority placed on rhythm, the orchestra primarily comprises percussion instruments, resulting in a uniquely estranged musical landscape. Orff's idea of the origins of culture and music came out of a classically German desire for antiquity, a desire to strip away the accumulated traditions of opera per se and to create a music drama that was truly "original." Like any utopian vision, however, this was a less apolitical and universal idea than Orff claimed. His fascination with recreating a Golden Age out of elemental basics had disturbing points of contact with Nazi ideologies about the debased modern culture and the need for strong, simple, and virile art.

Contemporary reviews show critics questioning not only whether *Oedipus der Tyrann* could properly be considered an opera at all but also whether Orff's apparent lack of compositional intervention had resulted in a piece of music theater "without music." The judgment that this piece is "missing" its composer, however, is contradicted by the intense effort it took Orff to create such an aura of authorial distance. An examination of the sources

for *Oedipus der Tyrann*, held by the Orff-Zentrum in Munich, revealed elaborate alternative settings for many passages, cumulatively showing Orff's changed priorities and a gradual reduction of means from a more or less traditionally operatic model – including arias, even – to the ascetic final score.

Thanks to its bold vision and its uncompromising political stance, Zimmermann's 1965 opera *Die Soldaten (Chapter Five: Imperfect Pluralities)* became one of the most critically acclaimed and canonical operas of the twentieth century, repeatedly hailed as the "greatest German opera after Berg." In addition to the connection to Berg, the piece's aesthetic stance as an expansion of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, emphatically embracing as many forms of new and old media as possible in an exploded, maximalist pluralism, made it the most "German" in inheritance of the four operas considered here.

The opera's multiple tiers and timelines interact to form a vast landscape able to bear the heavy interpretive weight of Zimmermann's pacifism. Yet an interpretation of the opera that privileges the largest, most ambitious, and most politically forceful side of the opera's plurality is limited. The eighteenth-century play on which the opera was based is more about clashes of class and gender than it was a serious anti-war statement; the corresponding aspects of the story that carry over to the opera, though ignored in much of the reception, are the basis of several of the opera's literal and metaphorical "tiers." The piece's formal organization, with labels like "Nocturno," "Ciacona," and "Toccatà," is a way for Zimmermann to mark the multiple levels of action and character delineated in *Die Soldaten's* simultaneous dramatic structures. The rigidity of this large-scale structure and the stringent limits Zimmermann put on his own musical language offer an analogy to the boundaries and limitations of the society Zimmermann critiques, and mitigate the composer's anxiety over intuition and lyricism in the face of operatic history.

My interpretation emphasizes the intricacies of personal relationships, family dynamics, and domestic interaction in the piece while providing evidence that Zimmermann's early drafts, held by the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, presented simpler versions of scenes, predating the composition of the apocalyptic *Preludio* that in performance casts an unremittingly dark shadow over the entire opera. These changes represent a shift over time in the balance between large-scale and domestic politics, inviting an interpretation that is itself smaller and more intimate. Laying aside Zimmermann's most obvious political stance enables an examination of the ethical problems presented by his idea of fate and cyclical time.

My readings of these four case studies have shown four different ways of construing the rubric "opera" at a time of political stress. Because opera as an art form has relied so strongly on coherence, and because its historical adherence to convention and its conservatism were causes of opera's aesthetic devaluation, the story of new opera in this period is necessarily a story about interpretation of, and negotiation with, the operatic past. There was a complex and delicate politics involved in composers' strategies to make opera something "modern," despite – or maybe in purposeful opposition to – the idea that opera was bankrupt and outdated. At a time when many were pronouncing opera dead, there were nonetheless those who wanted opera to thrive and to reassume its place in German cultural life. By looking at their attempts at the reconstruction and rehabilitation of opera, we may gain new insights into the place of opera as a public genre and the urgent, contested importance of such visible fields of music-making during an era of multifarious reconstruction and rebuilding.

CHAPTER TWO

The Significance of Nonsense: Boris Blacher's *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1***Introduction**

If the butcher cuts both ears off a pig, it's still a pig, right? And if he chops off its little curly tail, it remains the same old pig. And if he chops up the whole sow and puts it in sausage casings and cooks it, then we still taste pork in the flavorful sausage. Can we say that the butcher has abstracted the previously grunting (and therefore concrete) pig? By no means. Because the pigginess in the sausage is still perceptible to the senses. We taste it on our tongues.¹

One does not commonly find charcuterie metaphors in opera criticism, but Boris Blacher's *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* (premiered in Frankfurt and Mannheim in 1953) provoked more imaginative thinking than usual concerning the topic of how the "sausage" of music theater is made. At particular issue for this reviewer, W. M. Eisenbarth, was the idea of "abstraction" in a so-called abstract opera: how something as concrete as acting, singing bodies (or snorting pigs) could be called "abstract," a term he reserved only for "ideas which have no corresponding sensory perception."² Opera, Eisenbarth asserted, is by contrast "something that presents only and exclusively in the sensory and sensual."³ Eisenbarth's philosophical objection neatly undermined the premise advanced by Blacher and his librettist, Werner Egk, that an abstract opera could exist that would be an appropriate "counterpart to abstract painting."⁴

The aesthetic motivations for abstracting opera are complex. While opera may tend to resist abstraction, a piece of music theater sufficiently abstracted could evade opera's reputation for melodrama and decadence. Accumulated practice would be abstracted out as just so much antiquated tradition, and the final product could rightly be celebrated as a "stab through the heart of conventional opera."⁵ Yet as Eisenbarth's colorful butchery analogy suggests, the execution of such a project in real life, on a real stage, proved difficult. Out of these ostensibly neutral questions of genre (what is opera? can it ever be abstract?) grew an increasingly political impulse to make meaning of the opera's pretense to meaninglessness. The abstraction in the *Abstrakte Oper* is mainly in the linguistic domain, with nonsensical

¹ W. M. Eisenbarth, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1 – konkrete Nervensäge," *Die Rheinpfalz* (Ludwigshafen), 19 October 1953. "Nichtwahr, wenn der Metzger einem Schwein die beiden Ohren abschneidet, dann ist es immer noch ein Schwein. Und wenn er das Ringelschwänzchen abhackt, dann bleibt immer noch das bekannte Borstenvieh. Und wenn er die ganze Sau zerhackt und in Därme füllt und kocht, dann schmecken wir immer noch das Schwein aus der duftenden Wurst heraus. Können wir sagen, der Metzger habe die vorher grunzende, also konkrete Sau, abstrahiert? Mit nichten. Denn auch das Schweinige in der Wurst ist sinnlich wahrnehmbar. Wir schmecken es ja auf der Zunge."

² Ibid. "Abstrakt aber sind nur Vorstellungen, denen keine sinnliche Anschauung entspricht."

³ "Oper ist doch etwas, was nur und ausschließlich sinnlich und sinnhaft dargestellt..." Ibid.

⁴ "Es handele sich um ein Gegenstück zur abstrakten Malerei." Karna Niehoff, "Dolchstoß ins Herz der konventionellen Oper: Begegnung mit Boris Blacher," in *Tagesspiegel*, September 9, 1957."

⁵ Ibid. "Dolchstoß ins Herz der konventionellen Oper."

“words” making it difficult to discern detailed characters or situations; instead, these are stereotyped and fuzzy around the edges, “abstract,” that is, rather than particular.

The librettist’s avoidance of linguistic meaning is partially offset by the composer’s reliance on stock musical stereotypes, which mitigate the libretto’s abstractions, making the portrayed emotions concrete through the manipulation and exploitation of a generically-bound system of musical topoi and conventions. These musical signifiers rely in part on external, pre-existing categories of cultural meaning (referring, for example, to jazz and cabaret) as well as on the careful internal delineation of contrasts and proprietary musical languages. While conventional musical cues may have been the best chance the authors had to actually communicate the opera’s stereotyped emotions to an audience, the piece’s tumultuous reception exposed as insufficient even this convention-bound musical signification. The authors’ attempts to foil operaticism with nonsense opened the door to divergent interpretations, both by the audience and by the director. The opera’s perceived lack of coherent meaning thereby resulted in a profound and politically charged outpouring of anxiety in published reviews about Germany’s past and opera’s future. It is this progression I wish to trace in the chapter: from the concept of abstraction as a blow against genre, to the practice of abstraction through language in Blacher’s opera and its relationship with musical markers, to the staging and reception of the opera as a contemporary allegory with political significance annoying and enraging critics and audiences.

Opera, Genre, and Linguistic Abstraction

The artistic orientation of the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, a short piece of music theater in seven scenes, seems at first glance to be resolutely anti-generic, as if the relationship between this piece and the repertoire otherwise performed in opera houses must necessarily be oppositional. By replacing standard elements like plot, character, and intelligible language with abstracted portrayals of basic emotions such as love, fear, and panic, the piece’s non-narrative, nonsensical text appears to challenge much that is “operatic” about opera.⁶ In Egk’s autobiography, first published in 1973, he recalled how he, in conversation with Blacher, was inspired to write the *Abstrakte Oper*.

After dinner we spoke about a really clever article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. It claimed that an opera would be modern if the musical language, its means of expression and its grammar, were modern. According to this theory, the wildest modernist composers could set the libretti of their grandparents, with nothing amiss ...

“That,” I said to Blacher, “does not please me.”

“What,” he said, puzzled, “could take the place of the usual opera plots?”

⁶ For a description and analysis of the text, see Stephan Mösch, “Jenseits der Worte: ‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1,’” in *Der gebrauchte Text: Studien zu den Libretti Boris Blachers*, 159–206 (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2002) and Werner Bodendorff, “Aspekte zur semantischen Bedeutung von Werner Egks Abstrakten Oper Nr. 1” in *Werner Egk, eine universelle Begabung: Komponist, Schriftsteller, Interpret und Zeichner*, ed. Brigitte Müller, 84–90 (Donauwörth: Verlag der Stadt Donauwörth, 2004).

“Coded bits of plot, fragments of sound, abstract words, a formulaic dialogue the meaning of which lies in its formulaic natures and not its content.”

Blacher was excited and said that would be something for him, if I were willing to make an outline. I was willing, and he composed the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*.⁷

The authors' premise immediately prompts the question whether any piece without plot or characters can or should be called an opera, even an “abstract” one. Meanwhile, the optimistic numbering in the title of the work implies a new generic category, its fashionable adjective “abstrakt” facilitating an avoidance of opera's conservative image. The designation “number one” is a ploy that allows the authors to make their own rules, creating a piece within their own new territory. Mapping this territory, however, was easier said than done; the evocative rhetorical gamble of the title raises problems both practical and philosophical.

The perceived absurdity of the premise is nowhere more apparent than in the criticism that followed its double premiere in 1953, on the radio as part of the Frankfurt Week for New Music (in June) and staged in the opera house in Mannheim (in October). Many critics who took the challenge of its title seriously questioned whether or not the idea of an “abstract opera” might actually be an oxymoron.⁸ “The fundamental contradiction is tucked into the idea of an ‘abstract opera,’” mused the Karlsruhe critic,⁹ and the Ludwigshafen headline read, “an

⁷ Werner Egk, *Die Zeit wartet nicht: Künstlerisches Zeitgeschichtliches Privates aus meinem Leben* (Percha/Starnberger See: R. S. Schulz, 1981), 448–449.

Nach dem Essen sprachen wir von einem superklugen Aufsatz der Frankfurter Allgemeinen. Darin wurde behauptet, eine Oper sei dann modern, wenn die Musiksprache, ihre Ausdrucksweise, ihre Grammatik modern wären. Nach dieser Theorie konnten selbst die kühnsten Neutöner die Libretti ihrer Großväter vertonen, ohne daß daran etwas auszusetzen war...

“Das,” sagte ich Blacher, “gefällt mir nicht.”

“Was,” sagte er verblüfft, “könnte an Stelle der üblichen Opernhandlung treten?”

“Chiffrierte Handlungsrudimente, Lautfetzen, abstrakte Wortbildungen, ein formelhafter Dialog, dessen Bedeutung in seiner Formelhaftigkeit liegt, nicht in seinem Inhalt.”

Blacher war begeistert und sagte, das wäre etwas für ihn, ob ich bereit wäre, einen Entwurf zu machen.

Ich war bereit, und er komponierte die “Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1.”

Blacher also described the process of coming up with the idea as collaborative, writing: “Später kamen Egk, der dann den Text schrieb, und ich auch auf die Idee, eine sogenannte abstrakte Oper zu schreiben,” Boris Blacher, “Neuland Rhythmus,” in *Das musikalische Selbstportrait*, ed. Josef Müller-Marein and Hannes Reinhardt (Hamburg: Nannen-Verlag, 1963), 416. According to an interview (29 May 2002) with Blacher's wife, Gerty Herzog-Blacher, Egk lived with the Blachers for a period of time during which the two men together formulated the idea of the *Abstrakte Oper*. Thomas Eickhoff and Werner Grünzweig, “Gerty Herzog-Blacher im Gespräch,” in *Boris Blacher im Auftrag der Stiftung der Akademie der Künste*, ed. Heribert Henrich and Thomas Eickhoff (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2003), 33.

⁸ Kurt Heinz, “Laga-baba-nabuna oder die Sprache der Liebe,” *Mannheimer Morgen*, 30 June 1953. “Eine ‘abstrakte Oper’ – das scheint zunächst einmal ein Widerspruch in sich selbst zu sein.”; Albert Rodemann, “Blacher-Egks ‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’” *Die Neue Zeitung* (Berlin), 21 October 1953. “... trotz ihres zum Widerspruch herausfordernden Titels...”; H.H., “Die großen Themen der Menschheit,” *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 30 October 1953. “contradictio in adjecto”

⁹ Eb., “Kultureller ‘Fortschritt’ ohne Ende,” in *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* (Karlsruhe), 29 October 1953. “Der Grundwiderspruch steckt eben schon im Begriff einer ‘Abstrakten Oper.’”

'abstract' opera is an impossible thing."¹⁰ The concept of an abstract opera seemed ludicrous, "ein Widerspruch in sich" [an inherent contradiction].¹¹ Such statements speak to the locations of opera's "common-sense" boundaries at the time of the premiere; objecting to an artistic experiment by recourse to "definition" or "impossibility" is a means of policing generic borders. The *Abstrakte Oper's* undeniably concrete presence on stage, with its living, breathing, singing bodies, was partly responsible for such critical rejection. "To what degree opera with living people can be abstract at all," one reviewer says skeptically, "the authors ought to know best."¹² Another mused that if these people onstage were meant to be people (even if they spoke no words or had no names), the piece would not be abstract; if they were *not* meant to be people, however, then it would "no longer have anything in common with opera."¹³ Opera is defined, in other words, by the singing characters who are defined within it. The presence of people makes the concrete unavoidable.

In an interesting contrast, the contemporaneous premiere in Donaueschingen of Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* opera *Orphée 53* had several critics of the *Abstrakte Oper* noting ironically that they had found Schaeffer's "concrete" music considerably more abstract than Blacher and Egk's piece.¹⁴ The possibilities of technology similarly led critic Kurt Heinz to presciently imagine an opera of colors and light effects, projected on a screen or in space –this, he concluded, "would be abstract, but would no longer be an opera. How the devil can one reconcile these two factors – to bring opera and abstraction under one roof?"¹⁵ These critics' statements show a creative struggle both to negotiate and to reinforce the strict limits that then existed on what kind of work could be called an opera and on what one could manage within those boundaries. The subsequent development of music theater into just these kinds of highly and much more severely abstracted forms also shows that, for better or

¹⁰ Hans Kretzer, "'Abstrakte' Oper – ein unmögliches Ding," *Die Rheinpfalz* (Ludwigshafen), 1 July 1953.

¹¹ Hans Daiber, "Konkrete Musik – abstrakte Oper," *Das Ganze Deutschland* (Stuttgart), 24 October 1953. "Eine abstrakte Oper ist ein Widerspruch in sich."

¹² U.S.E., "Musikalisches," *Basler National-Zeitung*, 17 November 1953. "Wie weit eine Oper mit lebenden Menschen überhaupt 'abstrakt' sein kann, werden höchstens die Autoren wissen."

¹³ Eb., "Kultureller 'Fortschritt' ohne Ende," *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* (Karlsruhe), 20 October 1953. "Sind das noch Menschen, die keinen Namen tragen, keine Sprache sprechen, keiner vernünftigen Verhaltensweise fähig sind? *Darauf* eine Antwort zu finden, dürfte am wenigsten schwer sein. Wollte sie vielleicht jemand bejahen, dann wäre dieser Opern-Unfug nicht mehr abstrakt, verneint man sie aber, dann hat er nichts mehr mit der Oper gemein. Der Grundwiderspruch steckt eben schon im Begriff einer 'Abstrakten Oper.'" Eb., "Kultureller 'Fortschritt' ohne Ende," *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* (Karlsruhe), 20 October 1953.

¹⁴ Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1," *Bremer Nachrichten*, 21 October 1953. "Die Musik dieser ersten sogenannten 'Abstrakten Oper' ist immerhin wesentlich konkreter als das, was man bisher als 'musique concrète' zu hören bekam."; "Neuer Opernkrach," *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 October 1953. "Vor kurzem hatte Pierre Schaeffer [sic] mit seiner 'konkreten Musik' einen ähnlichen Skandal in Donaueschingen hervorgerufen. Diesmal war es die 'abstrakte Oper Nr. Eins.'"; Hans Georg Bonte, "Die erste abstrakte Oper," *Die Neue Zeitung* (Frankfurt), 29 July 1953. "Diese 'abstrakte' Musik ist also als weit konkreter, als die sogenannte 'konkrete Musik.'"

¹⁵ Kurt Heinz, "Pfiffe, Protestrufe und Beifall für die 'Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1'" *Mannheimer Morgen*, 19 October 1953. "Vielleicht wäre es möglich, nur mit Farben und Lichteffekten, auf einer Leinwand oder in einem Raum projiziert, zu arbeiten. Das wäre dann abstrakt, aber es wäre keine Oper mehr. Wie zum Teufel aber soll man diese beiden widerstrebenden Begriffe: Abstraktion und Oper unter einen Hut bringen?"

worse, the *Abstrakte Oper* arrived awkwardly before its moment, conceived when it was still inconceivable.

Though these critics gamely engaged with the possibility of opera's abstraction in Blacher's work (even while rejecting it), others raised the question of whether the *Abstrakte Oper* could or should be taken seriously. Why weigh its value as experiment, as artistic innovation, when it might be a joke? The words "Persiflage" (satire), "Verspottung" (mockery), and "Ulke" (joke) often appear in the contemporary press;¹⁶ if the authors want to "kid" the audience (veräppeln), why should their claims to abstraction, or the piece's artistic worthiness as experiment, even be worthy of consideration?¹⁷ For these reasons, the question that most sharply divided contemporary critics was whether the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* was meant in earnest or whether it was merely an over-long stunt, making fools of the audience by mocking the audience's worldview and parodying operatic practice.¹⁸ Some commentators were quick to show that they had "gotten" the joke. Allusions to aspects of operatic "parody" in the opera are common, particularly with reference to the mooning romance of the love scene. For example, one critic wrote, "In Liebe I, we see the abstracted heroes of old opera onstage, a soprano and a tenor..."¹⁹ There is a fine line between the use of "old heroes" in a way that counts as an archetype and the use of these same figures in mockery and stereotype.

Several writers saw the authors' cheekiness as representative of a lack of respect or reverence, an "infantile bit of fun," in the words of one critic, with Blacher and Egk thumbing their noses at the tastes and expectations of their audience.²⁰ Motivated by this perception of mocking hostility, those who found it hard to take the *Abstrakte Oper* seriously used its farcical aura as a way to erode the piece's claims to generic legitimacy (that is, its rightful ability to call itself an opera). Several critics thus used their reviews as an opportunity to "call" the authors' bluff: if the whole thing was just a farce, a joke, a parody,²¹ did it really belong in the opera

¹⁶ See, for example: Erwin Kroll, "Weltangst und neue Musik," *Der Tag* (Berlin), 7 July 1953. "Dazu hat Blacher eine Musik geliefert, die spritzig und witzig überall ins Schwarze eines kabarettistischen Ulks trifft, der mit seiner Verspottung von Oper und Publikum, Mensch und Welt auch der tieferen Bedeutung nicht enträt."; and Willy Werner Göttig, "Deutliche Abfuhr für die 'Abstrakte Oper'," *Abendpost* (Frankfurt), 19 October 1953. "Soll es eine Persiflage sein..."

¹⁷ Willy Werner Göttig, "Deutliche Abfuhr für die 'Abstrakte Oper'," *Abendpost* (Frankfurt), 19 October 1953. "Auch in Mannheim wurde keineswegs klar, ob Egk-Blacher ihr Werk ernst nehmen oder ob sie den Zuhörer veräppeln wollen."

¹⁸ Fritz Brust, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 June 1953. "Es erhebt sich nun die Frage, ist das Ganze ein Ulke oder ist es ernst zu nehmen?"; Bruno Stürmer, "Das große Fragezeichen," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 30 June 1953. "... kann man nicht besprechen, ohne die Frage zu klären, ob das Stück ernst gemeint oder als Farce gedacht ist."

¹⁹ Fritz Brust, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 June 1953. "Dann treten die abstrakt gewordenen Helden der alten Oper, ein Sopran und ein Tenor, hervor."

²⁰ Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1: Skandalumtobte Uraufführung im Nationaltheater Mannheim," *Neue Wiener Tageszeitung*, 13 November 1953. "[S]olche infantilen Späße"; v.L., "Konkrete Oper und abstraktes Ballett," *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, 28 October 1953. "... So fühlt sich das Publikum an der Nase herumgeführt"; W.E. von Lewinski, "Die Frankfurter Woche für Neue Musik," *Wiesbadener Tagesblatt*, 2 July 1953. "... daß zumindest Werner Egk alles als Persiflage und als ein An-der-Nase-herumführen der Hörer gedacht hat."

²¹ Hans Daiber, "Konkrete Musik – abstrakte Oper," *Das Ganze Deutschland* (Stuttgart), 24 October 1953. "[Ö]fters wurde sie parodistisch und näherte sich dadurch dem Kabarett."; Ernst Thomas, "Abstrakte Oper Numero eins" *Darmstädter Echo*, 30 June 1953. "in parodistischer Manier"; E.V., "Experimente in Frankfurt," *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zürich), 5 September 1953. "parodistisch charakterisieren."

house, or was it an insult to the cultured tastes of the “serious friends and connoisseurs of music,” as one critic averred?²² Moreover, if the *Abstrakte Oper* was no more than a beer-hall skit, did it represent, more than anything, a missed opportunity to do something really experimental within the genre of opera?²³ And if this was the best we could do in opera, some critics worried, the prognosis was very grave indeed for the future of the art form. “The big question mark,” in the words of Bruno Stürmer’s headline, was “Ulke oder Ernst” – is it a joke or serious?²⁴ He continued, “This is the question we cannot avoid, if we still want attention paid to the arts. Once upon a time, the *St. Matthew Passion* and *Don Giovanni* were written here. Should we gradually forget that?”²⁵ If composers do not take music seriously, he implied, audiences cannot be counted on to stay invested. When compared to “truer” masterpieces, the *Abstrakte Oper* cannot help but come up short – as opera and as art. Where, then, can it belong?

As demonstrated by the skepticism that the critics voiced, the relationship between the “abstract” and the “opera” in the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* is complicated. The complication begins with the way the text is organized. Egk, who conceptualized the piece and drafted the libretto, arranged the opera in seven scenes, representing love, fear, pain, panic, and negotiation. His goal was “to capture a range of archetypal situations typical of our time and experiences, molding them in an abstract form.”²⁶ On one level, the structure seems not-too-distantly removed from classical number opera, and the abstract “states” represented in each scene have more than ample historical precedent (there are plenty of expressions of love and pain and panic in opera, if fewer diplomatic negotiations). Since this kind of “abstraction” is almost always crucial to opera’s mechanisms, I would suggest that the issue here was not so much the idea of representing an “abstract” stereotype of emotions, but rather the abstract “form” it took. Unlike the presumed mapping of traditional arias, choruses, or other numbers onto a narrative or realistic storyline, the seven scenes of the *Abstrakte Oper* are meant to be apprehended independently of one another. If thus independent, scenes that lack characters and storyline for motivation are more reminiscent of revue (critics often mentioned “cabaret”) than of opera.

²² August Kruhm, “Aus dem kulturellen Leben,” *Main-Echo* (Aschaffenburg), 2 July 1953. “Man sollte doch endlich mit derartigen musikalischen Bluffs aufhören, denn sie dienen nur dazu, einen gewissen musikalischen Snob zum Widerwillen seriöser Musikfreunde und Kenner groß zu ziehen.”

²³ USE, “‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’ im Nationaltheater Mannheim,” *Ostschweiz* (St. Gallen), 26 October 1953. “Es mag für eine gewisse geistige Haltung bezeichnend sein, daß man diesen einstigen Bierulk heute durchaus ernst zu nehmen versucht!”; Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert, “‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’: Skandalumtobte Uraufführung im Nationaltheater Mannheim,” *Neue Wiener Tageszeitung*, 13 November 1953. “... als Bierulk junger Konservatoriumsaspiranten...”; Dr. Kurt Honólka, “Guru okakau azim ua ui,” *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 19 October 1953. “... das Odium eines Bierulks.”

²⁴ Bruno Stürmer, “Das große Fragezeichen,” *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 30 June 1953. “Ulke oder Ernst – das ist hier die Frage...”

²⁵ Ibid. “[D]as ist hier die Frage, um die wir nicht herumkommen, wenn wir noch etwas Achtung vor der Kunst behalten wollen. Bei uns wurden einmal die ‘Matthäuspasion’ und der ‘Don Giovanni’ geschrieben. Sollen wir das allmählich vergessen?”

²⁶ Werner Egk, “Einführung” to *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 2. “Dem Werk liegt die Idee zugrunde, eine Reihe von für unsere Zeit und unser Erleben typischen Grundsituationen einzufangen und in einer abstrakten Form, d.h. ohne zusammenhängende Handlung und mit Hilfe eines abstrakten Textes zu gestalten.”

To facilitate this independence, each scene is portrayed by way of characteristic music and proprietary textual material. Egk's libretto consists mainly of vowels and word fragments. These come in three forms (Table 2.1): 1) vowel sounds, as in a vocalise; 2) recombinable patterns of syllables which sound like words but are not; and 3) non sequiturs or identifiable words put together in a directionless "conversation."

Table 2.1: Scenes of the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* and their textual markers

Scene 1: Angst [Fear]	Vowel sounds (a, u, ü, o) and onomatopoeic laughing sounds (ha ha ha, agatta gatta gatta)
Scene 2: Liebe I [Love]	Words made up of repetitive nonsense syllables (e.g., Laga, Baba, Lagaga, Babuna, Lanore, Banura, Lalore, Balura)
Scene 3: Schmerz [Pain]	Vowel sounds (a, i)
Scene 4: Verhandlung [Negotiation]	Russian and English words in nonsensical sequence
Scene 5: Panik [Panic]	Words made up of repetitive nonsense syllables (e.g., Azidazant, Akaplozit, Apodalip)
Scene 6: Liebe II	Repeated nonsense syllables (Za-za, Da-da, Ga-ga)
Scene 7: Angst	Repetition of Scene 1 without laughter.

Putting aside for the moment the one scene ("Verhandlung") with easily identifiable semantic content, it is clear that the syllables used to mark each scene are hardly random. The simpering baby talk of "Liebe II" and the vague, shifting vowels of "Angst" are meant to abstract not only the "feel" of these emotions but also the way these emotions are verbally expressed, whether in words or in more "primal" sounds – sighs and coos, gasps and murmurs. Egk's intensely silly libretto recalls Blacher's statement that "an opera text absolutely need not always be great literature."²⁷

In the scenes that combine and recombine allusive syllables, the choice of consonants further strengthens each sound's allusive effect. The spitting consonants in "Panik" (k, t, z) seem to suggest something rather different from the flabby sounds that dominate "Liebe II" (b, d, g, l, n). This is wholly consistent with stereotypes of how love or panic should sound, but such allusive power is culturally contingent. Though Egk claimed that these associations would be "automatic" on the part of the listener, it is worth questioning the cultural or linguistic background the piece expects of its listeners in order that they might hear those sounds to signify what they are meant to signify.²⁸ There is undoubtedly a complicated combination of cultural and linguistic constructions in play for "azidazant" to sound more like panic than love, and for "labuna" to sound more like love than panic.²⁹ This allusive system means that even though the libretto seems to dispense with semantic content as a kind of conceptual ploy, the sounds of the words are still in part responsible for conveying the archetypes the scene titles suggest. Nonsense still manages to signify, despite its lack of lexical meaning.

²⁷ Interview with Boris Blacher, in Ursula Stürzbecher, *Werkstattgespräche mit Komponisten* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973), 17. "Ein Operntext muß absolut nicht immer große Literatur sein."

²⁸ Werner Egk, "Einführung" to *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 2. "Die komponierten Worte sind musikalisch-phonetisch erfunden und richten sich an das automatische Assoziationsvermögen des Zuhörers."

²⁹ Bodendorff, "Aspekte zur semantischen Bedeutung von Werner Egks Abstrakten Oper Nr. 1," 84–90.

As most of the libretto denies any attempt to “place” or “date” the action, the particularity of the fourth scene, “Verhandlung,” is jarring. The portrayal of archetypes would usually by definition be free of markers for a specific time or place. This is the only scene that so literally represents a “scenario” (rather than an emotion), in this case a conversation between identifiably American and Russian diplomats in the context of the Cold War. Despite the diplomats’ use of real words from their “native” languages, the conversation that results as the scene progresses is nonsensical: the answers are to the wrong questions, the men talk past each other, and they repeat themselves to no effect (Example 2.1).

Example 2.1: Transcription of text from the published score for “Verhandlung”³⁰

Tenor:	Baritone: ³¹
	Patschemu (<i>Why</i>)
How are you	
	Otwetschai Patschemu (<i>Answer why</i>)
O.k.	
	Patschemu (<i>Why</i>)
O.k. How are you, how are you	
	Da otwetschai patschemu (<i>Yes, answer why</i>)
O. k. o. k. o. k.	
	Otwetschai, otwetschai (<i>Answer, answer</i>)
I hope that statements were made, I hope that	
	Sluschaite otwetschai, otwetschai (<i>Listen, answer, answer</i>)
have you met him, have you met him, have you met him	
	otwet patschemu, patschemu (<i>Answer why, why</i>)
Statements were made.	Patschemu (<i>Why</i>)
Statements were o.k. o.k. o.k.	ach da (<i>ah, yes</i>)
Statements were made, statements were made	
Statements were not made	
	Patschemu, otwetschaite (<i>Why, answer</i>)
Weather is permanent, weather is permanent, weather is permanent	
	Pagoda, Pagoda, haroscha (<i>Weather, weather, good</i>)
Weather is permanent, weather is permanent, weather is permanent	
	Patschemu Pagoda (<i>Why weather</i>)
Weather is o.k.	
	Ach da sluschaite, sluschaite (<i>Ah yes listen, listen</i>)
Weather is o.k., weather is fine	Sluschaite, sluschaite, sluschaite (<i>listen, listen, listen</i>)
o.k. o.k. o. k. o.	da Pagoda ach. (<i>Yes weather ah.</i>)

The extent to which this scene so convincingly represents not syllabic but rather syntactical nonsense was heavily influenced by Blacher’s interpretation of the text as it was given to him by Egk. An examination of Egk’s original draft in the archives of the Akademie der

³⁰ *Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 22–25.

³¹ Many thanks to my colleague Olga Panteleeva for her translation of the Russian half of the dialogue.

Künste in Berlin reveals that the libretto initially boasted a comparatively robust poetic construction. Specifically, a rigid structure of statements and replies, spoken in a “childish English and a childish Russian,” made up a conversation of exact repetitions of the same phrases and questions in both languages in succession (Example 2.2).

Example 2.2: Draft libretto for “Verhandlung,” by Werner Egk³²

VERHANDLUNG

Dialog in einem kindischen Englisch und einem kindischen russisch.

Inhalt etwa:

A: Wie geht es Ihnen?
 B: Wie geht es Ihnen?
 A: Wie geht es Ihnen?
 B: Wie geht es Ihnen?
 A: Wie geht es Ihnen?
 B: Wie geht es Ihnen?
 A: Ich will, dass morgen das Wetter gut ist
 Sie wollen, dass morgen das Wetter schlecht ist
 B: Sie wollen, dass morgen das Wetter schlecht ist
 Ich will, dass morgen das Wetter gut ist
 A: Weil ich will, dass morgen das Wetter gut ist
 Wollen Sie dass morgen das Wetter schlecht ist
 B: Weil ich will, dass morgen das Wetter gut ist
 Wollen Sie dass morgen das Wetter schlecht ist
 A: Zur Tagesordnung
 B: Zur Tagesordnung
 A: Wie geht es Ihnen
 B: Wie geht es Ihnen
 A: Die Papiere waren nicht unterschrieben
 B: Meine Papiere sind unterschrieben
 A: Meine Papiere sind unterschrieben
 B: Ihre Papiere sind nicht unterschrieben
 A: Ihre Papiere sind nicht unterschrieben
 B: Zur Tagesordnung
 A: Zur Tagesordnung
 B: Mein Wetter wird gut
 A: Dein Wetter wird schlecht
 B: Dein Wetter wird schlecht
 A: Mein Wetter wird gut
 B: Für mich scheint die Sonne
 A: Für mich scheint die Sonne
 etc.etc. (Regen, Hagel, Schnee u.s.f.)

Though both versions share the scenario of an unfruitful conversation, the diplomats’ conversation in the original version has a clearer form and progression of topics than does the eventual version’s conversation, which is a jumble of missed connections. Egk’s version is perhaps more literal, showing the diplomats explicitly disagreeing on simple points; Blacher took these same simple, inconsequential topics of small talk, denaturing them so that the gestures become not so much an understandable argument as a frustrated shell of that

³² Boris Blacher Archive, ADK, 1.75. 53.

argument. Even the most concrete of the libretto's scenes, "Verhandlung," becomes abstracted in its language and shape. Arguably, the idea that the *Abstrakte Oper* would be able to portray anything at all in spite of its nonsense hints that the radical quality of the "abstract opera" is actually a kind of ruse or alibi, a surface pretense to the avant-garde.

The premise of nonsense was also an invitation to "make" sense, especially in print, where a favorite critical pastime was the transcription of the syllables, either into fairly accurate transcriptions ("agattagatta," "Lajababa Babuna" – perhaps these critics had access to a score)³³ or into further approximated nonsense (for example, "guru-guru," "okakau," "azim-azim").³⁴ Whether they approved or disapproved, the critics reporting on the opera felt compelled to include these transcriptions to convey the sheer weirdness of Egk's libretto. The patterns of the libretto's linguistic play are just as easily mocked as adopted, as a critic in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* offered up his own genre play, an "Abstrakte Kritik Nr. 1."

Ci, cy, cyni-cism. Sno, snobbe, snob-bery. W- wh - why? A, au, audi-ence? C, com, compo-ser? Uaah, uaah, uaah. R, re, re-sult? ... Not okay, uaah, not, not, not okay... noise and finally the end. Finished, period, scree, scraw, screwed hollow.³⁵

As the critic beats the authors with the stick of their own invention, Blacher and Egk's attempt at linguistic abstraction comes to seem at best self-indulgent and precious in its self-regarding, "avant-garde" stance. Critics' assimilation of these syllables into forms they are able to transcribe and then turn around for the purpose of mockery serves as a kind of containment process for modes of communication that are absurd or discomfiting.

Making Music from Nonsense

That containment, it turns out, is key. Blacher sets the nonsense libretto within a musical framework that gives it structure and sense, operating as a familiar contest between the rigidity of stock musical gestures and the extreme emotions (madness, rage, lovesickness) often expressed in opera. Of course, the sparing and strategic use of meaningless language has ample precedent in operatic repertoire; what is new here is merely its dominance. The irony that the authors had put all of their experimental credentials into the canonical basket of vocal nonsense was hardly lost on their contemporary audience, a member of which wrote to the *Mannheimer Morgen* to explain:

This cacophonous concoction is actually approaching absolute zero and isn't even original in doing so. Here I would just remind you of the madness aria from *Lucia di*

³³ Hans Daiber, "Konkrete Musik – abstrakte Oper," *Das Ganze Deutschland* (Stuttgart), 24 October 1953.

³⁴ Kurt Honolka, "Guru okakau azim ua ui," *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 19 October 1953. "Ein Liebhaber turtelt mit Guru-guru-Lauten um die Dame, die ihn mit indignierten Okakau-Koloraturen in seine Schranken verweist.... Unter zwei riesigen Steinblöcken, die sich auf die Azim-Azim-Befehle eines darüber thronenden Weltmanagers heben und senken..." Kurt Honolka, "Guru okakau azim ua ui," *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 19 October 1953.

³⁵ ng, "Abstrakte Kritik Nr. 1," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 20 October 1953. "Zi, Zy, Zynis-Mus. Sno, Snobi, Snobis-Mus. Wa, wawu, warum? Pi, pu, Publi-Kum? K, Kom, Kompo-Nist? Uaah, uaah, uaah. Re, Ri, Rosul-Tat? ... Nix okay, uaah. Nix, nix, nix okay... Krach und endlich Schluß. Fine, Punkt, Li, la, leergebumst. "

Lammermoor, where the letter A serves as a basis for a brilliant structure of coloratura, or of the Rheinmaidens in Wagner's *Rheingold*, with their "Wagalaweia."³⁶

This can be pushed further, in pursuit of the nature of the relationship between these "meaningless" words and a piece's music and scenario. In canonical moments of wordlessness – the mad scene in *Lucia*, the gleefully speechless "Pa – pa- pa- pa!" of the enamored Papageno, the Wagnerian "Hojotoho!" – composers used opera's nonsensical potential to forge effective portrayals of unusual character states, identities, and environments. They integrated their nonsensical or non-semantic text elements into the musical paradigms that governed the operatic organization of the time. That is to say that, in the cases of *Lucia*, Papageno, and Brünnhilde, the singing of nonsense syllables takes place within a frame of musical idioms that help to contain, shape, and mitigate the verbal nonsense, making them useful to the composer's dramaturgical project.

Though Blacher's opera seems to deny such functionality, something similar is in fact at work in the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, albeit taken to an extreme. It is significant, then, that although much of what we might think of as "operatic" is missing from this piece, its orientation to the possibility of vocal nonsense aligns with operatic convention. Furthermore, the comprehensibility of verbal abstraction here relies in large part on the same library of musical signals that have allowed emotions and scenarios to be portrayed throughout operatic history. We recognize love, anger, madness, and despair in opera not just because the libretto describes these emotions, but also because the musical gestures, textures, and forms signify these states within the established conventions of opera.

Abstraction and representation are thus opposing forces, opening a gap, an opportunity for mitigation or reconciliation. The libretto is nonsense, but the music renders it comprehensible. In other words, Blacher's music contributes the most to the stated goal of portraying abstracted emotions and situations. (One might also ask: is it perhaps not the "opera" that negates the goal of abstraction, nor even opera's singing bodies, but rather the goal of "portrayal"?) Within this paradigm, even the most unusual feature of the piece, its non-narrative text, becomes just an extreme, radicalized version of the possibilities that opera always threatens: the potential for words to become secondary or even to approach meaninglessness because the musical allusions are so powerful. Seen in this way, the *Abstrakte Oper* is, in the words of Paul Müller, a critic in Düsseldorf, "the same as in any opera where the chorus and singers speak only incomprehensibly."³⁷ (A Mozart aria with lots of coloratura, suggested this same reviewer sarcastically, would appear more modern than this one.)³⁸ With a similar sarcastic edge, Kurt Honolka commented, "the *Abstrakte Oper* shows the radical

³⁶ R.K., "Kastrierte Oper Nr. 1," *Mannheimer Morgen*, 21 October 1953. "Dieses kakophone Machwerk nähert sich tatsächlich dem absoluten Nullpunkt und dabei ist es noch nicht einmal originell. Ich möchte hier nur an die Wahnsinnarie aus 'Lucia di Lammermoor' erinnern, wo der Buchstabe a als Grundlage zu einem genialen Koloraturgebäude dient oder an die Rheintöchter in Wagners 'Rheingold' mit ihrem 'Wagalaweia.'"

³⁷ Paul Müller, "'Abstrakte Oper' – diesmal nicht," *Rheinische Post* (Düsseldorf), 1 July 1953. "Es ist wie bei irgendeiner Oper, bei der Chor und Sänger nur unverständlich sprechen."

³⁸ Ibid. "Eine Koloratur-Arie Mozarts etwa ercheint uns 'moderner.'"

consequence to the insight that one can't really understand the texts of most opera (thank God)."³⁹

There is something important, however, pressing beyond and behind these sarcastic reactions: that the abstract form and language of the libretto are in a complementary but tense relationship with the idea of capturing or portraying these fundamental situations comprehensibly and recognizably in music. Although this abstract opera uses a conceptual gambit of nonsense to establish an avant-garde stance, the musical styles used and alluded to in the opera are what actually allow the authors to achieve their stated mission of portraying archetypal emotions. On the highest level, rigid musical structures help to mitigate the overall condition of nonsense that governs the work's aesthetic. *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* is cyclical, the first two scenes, "Angst" and "Liebe I" mirrored by "Liebe II" and a recapitulation of "Angst." Contrast between movements is stark, each number set off from the others. Within movements, too, the structures are obvious (blocks of material juxtaposed, major textural changes that set off sections) and some forms are tried-and-true; "Liebe II," for example, is in a clear ABA' form.

Blacher's music gives the opera shape and sense, however, primarily through internal contrasts and through discrete, audible, self-contained idioms. Blacher designates proprietary materials for certain "characters" in the opera to make them distinctive; this in turn requires that the differences between these materials be well defined and audible. In "Verhandlung," for example, the Russian always sings in 3/4, while the American sings in 6/8 (Example 2.3).⁴⁰

Example 2.3: 6/8 Negotiating 3/4 in "Verhandlung"⁴¹

The musical score for Example 2.3 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Soprano (S) and the middle staff is for Bass (B). The bottom staff is for piano accompaniment. The Soprano line has a '10' in a box above it, indicating a 10-measure phrase. The lyrics for the Soprano are 'o. k. How are you, how are you o. k. o. k.' and for the Bass are 'Da ot-wetschai patschemu'. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings 'pp' and 'fp'.

³⁹ Kurt Honolka, "Guru okakau azim ua ui," *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 19 October 1953. "Die 'Abstrakte Oper' zieht die radikale Konsequenz aus der Einsicht, daß man in den meisten Opern den Text ja doch nicht versteht. (Gottseidank...)"

⁴⁰ This is an example of Blacher's technique of "variable meter" which has been much discussed in the German literature, including by the composer. See Boris Blacher, "Über Variable Metrik," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 6 (1951): 219-222. For analyses of the *Abstrakte Oper* through the lens of this technique, see: Christopher Grafschmidt, *Boris Blachers variable Metrik und ihre Ableitungen: Voraussetzungen – Ausprägungen – Folgen* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), 154-162; and Peter Scherf, "Die 'variablen' Prozesse in der 'Abstrakten Oper Nr. 1' von Boris Blacher," in *Zum Verhältnis von Zeitgenössischer Musik und Zeitgenössischer Dichtung*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch, 136-153 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1988).

⁴¹ *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 23 (mm. 7-12).

Example 2.3 cont.

Example 2.3 cont. shows a musical score with three staves. The top staff is for the Tenor (T.), the middle for the Bass (B.), and the bottom for the piano accompaniment. The Tenor line has lyrics: "o. k. I hope that statements were made I hope that". The Bass line has lyrics: "otwetschai, otwetschai". The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with a *fp* dynamic marking.

These meter changes, along with the corresponding changes in the accompanimental gestures, are aurally obvious and identifiable without being complicated. They also serve an interpretive function; these are two time signatures that are compatible enough to exist on the same time scale but that are apparently not compatible enough to fit together without jarring adjustment, thus representing the impossibility of the characters' negotiation. The contrast is both symbolic, in representing the characters' irreconcilable differences, and practical, in defining their separate voices.

The establishment and development of such basic, instantly recognizable materials gives each person, emotion, or situation its identity, distinctive from the other elements portrayed within a scene. For example, the first scene, "Angst," uses a recurring piano motif that intervenes with increasing frequency, becoming almost like an ostinato (Example 2.4).

Example 2.4: Encroaching fear in "Angst"⁴²

Example 2.4: Encroaching fear in "Angst" shows a musical score with four staves. The top staff is for the Soprano (S.), the middle for the Tenor (T.), the bottom for the Bass (B.), and the bottom for the piano accompaniment. The Soprano line has lyrics: "a u a a u a a u a". The Tenor line has lyrics: "a u a u a u a". The Bass line has lyrics: "u ü u ü". The piano accompaniment features a recurring piano motif with a *ff* dynamic marking and a 70-measure rest.

⁴² *Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 5-6 (mm. 64-91).

Example 2.4 cont.

The musical score consists of four systems, each with vocal staves and piano accompaniment.

- System 1:**
 - Vocal staves: Treble clef, *f* dynamics, lyrics: *u*, *u*, *a u a*.
 - Piano accompaniment: Treble clef, *f* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Bass clef: *f* dynamics, lyrics: *u ü*, *ü*, *ü*, *a u a u*.
 - Figured bass: Treble clef, 4-measure rest, 3-measure rest.
- System 2:**
 - Vocal staves: Treble clef, *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *u a u a u*, *u u*.
 - Piano accompaniment: Treble clef, *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *u u*.
 - Bass clef: *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a u a u*, *u u*.
 - Figured bass: Treble clef, 4-measure rest, 3-measure rest, 4-measure rest.
- System 3:**
 - Vocal staves: Treble clef, *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Piano accompaniment: Treble clef, *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Bass clef: *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Figured bass: Treble clef, 3-measure rest, 4-measure rest.
- System 4:**
 - Vocal staves: Treble clef, *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Piano accompaniment: Treble clef, *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Bass clef: *pp* dynamics, lyrics: *a*, *a*, *a*.
 - Figured bass: Treble clef, 3-measure rest, 4-measure rest.

Additional markings include a box containing "80" above the first vocal staff in System 2, and a box containing "90" above the first vocal staff in System 3.

This dynamic and insistent motive contrasts with the stasis and flabbiness of the vocal lines, setting up a metaphorically antagonistic relationship between the piano as an aggressor and the fearful singers, whose half-notes seem to “fall in line,” backing away from the piano’s incursions. The way Blacher shapes the music’s dramatic dynamics encourages the listener to personify not just the non-character *people* onstage but also the instrumental “voices.” This makes the scene’s situation literal and audible, lending the scene a dramaturgy that the libretto alone does not.

Just as the constructed contrasts between voices and instruments seem to imply drama and demand personification, the popular connotations of Blacher’s frequent timbral effects and melodic gestures work against literal abstraction.⁴³ The complement of singers and instrumentalists that Blacher calls for (three soloists and a small, mainly homophonic chorus, as well as a big band-style orchestra of winds, brass, and a rhythm section) and many of the idioms to which he alludes are popular in origin. In particular, Blacher’s instrumentation and extended harmony are reminiscent of jazz-inflected and popular dance, cabaret, and revue styles. The influence of popular idioms of various kinds on Blacher’s compositional style has been thoroughly documented, most significantly by Jürgen Hunkemöller, who has written about Blacher’s uses of jazz idioms as a kind of “reception” of jazz.⁴⁴ Blacher acquired his facility with these popular idioms as a young musician assimilating Berlin culture in the 1920s. In an essay published in 1963, the composer reflected on his early experiences playing the harmonium for silent films in a Berlin cinema.

I pursued film music for years, and alongside that I transcribed sheet music. Gradually I pulled together enough of a routine that I could do arrangements for entertainment venues and dance halls. So that was the big saving grace ... That was how I kept my head above water, with instrumentations of operetta, popular songs [Schlager], and other entertainment music.⁴⁵

His knowledge of this music from the inside out meant that he had a good sense of the conventions of popular music and the cultural allusions that mainstream idioms had built and reinforced. Such allusions made possible a kind of “shorthand” upon which Blacher could draw when portraying the abstract opera’s situations and emotional states.

In addition to the opera’s broadly “popular” orientation, specific moments employ jazz inflections in ways that imply concrete representation. In the middle of “Liebe I,” not only the chords’ harmony but also their orchestration (dominated by high trumpets) suggest a kind of jazz ecstasy or outburst, followed by a reprise of the song’s beginning with its simple piano

⁴³ This aspect of Blacher’s style has led several musicologists consider the *Abstrakte Oper* a latter-day *Zeitoper*. See Bernard Banoun, “‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’ de Boris Blacher (1953), un ‘Zeitoper’ expérimental?,” *Germanica* 41 (2007): 91–112; and Martin Willenbrink, “Der Zeitopernkompontist Boris Blacher” (PhD dissertation, Technische Universität (Berlin), 1994), 193–228.

⁴⁴ Jürgen Hunkemöller, *Boris Blacher, der Jazz-Komponist* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 60–69.

⁴⁵ Blacher, “Neuland Rhythmus,” 411. “Meine Kino-Musik habe ich jahrelang betrieben. Daneben habe ich Noten abgeschrieben... [A]llmählich gewann ich so viel Routine, daß ich Arrangements für Unterhaltungs- und Tanzkapellen machen konnte. Das war also der große Rettungsanker... So habe ich mich mit Instrumentationen von Operetten, Schlagern und sonstiger Unterhaltungsmusik über Wasser gehalten.”

accompaniment. Meanwhile, the way the two vocal lines come together here – they are a soprano and tenor, of course – is reminiscent of love duets in musical theater or popular song (Example 2.5). As an abstraction or stereotype, the passage gestures toward the idioms conventionally used to represent stated emotions, such that even without a text that says “Ich liebe dich,” Blacher makes it clear that the singers are enacting a kind of cabaret love song.

Example 2.5: Jazz in “Liebe I”⁴⁶

The musical score for Example 2.5 consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal staves (Soprano and Tenor) and the piano accompaniment. The piano part is marked *ff* and features a complex, syncopated rhythm. The vocal lines are marked *ff* and feature a melodic line with a triplet. The second system shows the vocal staves and piano accompaniment. The piano part is marked *p* and features a complex, syncopated rhythm. The vocal lines are marked *ff* and feature a melodic line with a triplet. The lyrics are: "Na - no, - Na - no-re, Da - ba - la, Da - mu - na, - La - no-re".

Inflections of jazz also sometimes pop out of a scene’s prevailing texture in a way that affects structural balance, implying different voices and characters. In the “Verhandlung” scene, amidst the duelling 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures, a “jazzy” clarinet cadenza interrupts the otherwise-constant alternation of bickering diplomats (Example 2.6). This disruption texturally contrasts with the rest of the movement to an extreme. While the clarinet lick here may have no explicit associations, the musical features of its style (solo instrument, lack of rhythm, oriented around the chromatic scale) portray a kind of freedom that is only possible because of the rigidity of the surrounding textures, effectively interrupting the nonsensical conversation’s fragmented, stuck-sounding rhythmic mess. Here, Blacher used the popular idiom not just for its ability to allude to the vernacular world but also as a structural feature that interacts with the scene’s internal language to create contrasts that spark the dramatic imagination.

⁴⁶ *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 17 (mm. 53-65).

Example 2.6: Jazz cadenza in "Verhandlung"⁴⁷

Through the strong delineation of contrasting and bounded idioms, Blacher creates the conditions necessary for the meaningful recapitulation of musical material. This is particularly true in "Panik," where representations of the piece's other emotions accentuate the scene's disordered quality, both creating a more potent "panic" and representing in microcosm, with some gravitas, the symbolically cyclical form of the work as a whole. "Panik" is the longest scene and the only one that uses the entire complement of singers and instrumentalists. In addition to its counterpoint and relative textural complexity, Blacher added further layers to this centerpiece movement by drawing on materials from three other movements, "Angst," "Liebe," and "Schmerz." "Panik" is the only scene to incorporate recapitulated material from other scenes in this way. Although these textual and musical recurrences became a defining feature of the structure of "Panik," the allusions to other scenes were not included in the draft libretto that Egk had presented to Blacher; Blacher himself worked this element into the music during the process of composing the scene. Egk's libretto draft (Example 2.7) includes only the material native to the "Panik" scene (allusive syllables with literally explosive connotations) and not the vowel sounds associated with "Angst" (a-ö-u), the soprano vocalise of "Schmerz," or the cooing baby-talk of "Liebe" (Laga, Baba, Lagaga).

As Blacher set Egk's proposed text to music for this scene and incorporated the recapitulation of material from earlier scenes, he first composed a distinctive identity for "Panik" so that the recurrences would stand out among the scene's counterpoint. Blacher established the ruling texture and textual elements of "Panik" by riffing on Egk's words, meant to sound allusively like explosives and poison gas (Dynazit, Anitrozit, Akaplozit). These syllables are combined and recombined within a punchy, almost hoquet-like texture with material bouncing in different registers between the four sections of the chorus. Rhythms are rigid, consisting of sets of identical durations (quarter notes, triplets, or eighth notes), and phrases are punctuated by percussion hits (Example 2.8).

⁴⁷ *Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 23 (mm. 23-33).

Example 2.7: Draft Text for "Panik" in the Akademie der Künste⁴⁸

Panikwörter:

AZIDAZANT
 APODALIP
 ADYNAZIT
 ANITRONIT
 AKAPLOZIF
 ACLOROGUR

Beispiel für Chor Anwendung:

AZANT?AZANT?AZANT
 ALIP ALIP ALIP
 AZIT AZIT AZIT
 ONIT ONIT ONIT
 OZIF OZIF OZIF
 OGUR OGUR OGUR

oder

AZANT ALIP AZIT ONIT OZIF OGUR

Example 2.8: Texture and text idiomatic to "Panik"⁴⁹

Molto Allegro $\text{♩} =$ *mp*

CHOR

A-zi-da-zant A-zi-da-zant A-zant A-zant

A-zi-da-zant A-dy-na-zit, A-zit A-dy-na-

zit A-dy-nazit, A-lip, A-lip, A-lip, A-dy-na-zit A-ni-tro A-ni-tro

A-zi-da-zi-da-zant A-po-da-lip

10

⁴⁸ Boris Blacher Archive, ADK, 1.75.53.

⁴⁹ *Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 26 (mm. 1-12).

After this texture and pattern is established, the soloists start to thread in text first from "Schmerz" (characterized by an alteration "a-i-a-i-a" and then a long soprano vocalise on "a" – Example 2.9-2.10) and then from "Liebe." In the case of the "Schmerz" idiom, not only the melodic material but also the vocal color of the solo soprano is important for the reference. The reference is also set off texturally (solo vs. chorus) and rhythmically (a high, long note seems to hover in the air after the rhythmic activity of the material native to "Panik").

Example 2.9: Idiom of "Schmerz" movement⁵⁰

Allegro moderato

f p.

Sopran

a a i a a i

p quasi gliss.

Example 2.10: Idiom of "Schmerz" in "Panik"⁵¹

S. *i a a* **G.P.** **80** *dim. - - - poco -*

T. *i a* **G.P.** *a*

B. *i a* **G.P.** *a*

CHOR

---zit **G.P.** *A - ni - tro, A - ni - tro, A - ni - tro, A - ni - tro*

G.P. *f*

S. *--- a - - - poco* **90**

⁵⁰ *Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 19 (mm. 1-5).

⁵¹ *Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 30 (mm. 76-94).

The striking interruption of the sharp angles, hard consonants, and hypnotic rhythms of “Panik” with the slower, less metrical, amorphous vocalise of “Schmerz” is a moment of suspended animation resting among the driving phrases of the movement so far. The wordlessness of the interruption is also an important part of its character, an opportunity to recall an earlier moment in the piece. Interestingly, the draft score shows that Blacher’s first version of the long soprano vocalise at the center of the movement (m. 78-95) actually had text underlay of “scene-appropriate” words, in accordance with the outlines of Egk’s original libretto (Example 2.11). Only later did Blacher revise the passage, removing these syllables to create the same kind of long soprano line, uninterrupted by the sounds of dynamite, that is characteristic of the earlier scene.

Example 2.11: Alternate text for soprano melisma in “Panik”⁵²

The image displays a musical score for soprano melisma in "Panik". It consists of four staves. The top staff is labeled "S." and shows a melisma starting at measure 80, marked "dim." and "poco". The second staff is labeled "Soprano" and shows the same melisma with the text "a - - - - A - dy - na - zit, A - dy -". The third staff is labeled "S." and shows the melisma starting at measure 90. The fourth staff shows the text "na - zit A - dy - na - zit A - dy - na - zit".

This revision, which clarifies the relationship between the allusive syllables and the musical analogues that he developed for them, demonstrates Blacher’s development of a strategy to define and maintain the boundaries of the musical material associated with each of the piece’s “archetypal” emotions.

Such structural patterns serve as substitutes for the conventional modes of allusion and organization in canonical opera, such as leitmotifs or recurring themes. Without a story to ground the drama, Blacher’s music is the source for some modicum of structure and hierarchy through contrast and allusion. Ultimately, however, this musical signification became the crucial weakness in the piece’s claim to abstraction. The Düsseldorf critic Paul Müller voiced his general skepticism of the process of abstraction in music with an analogy to folksong:

The authors argue that “abstract opera” must exist, as parallel to painting and sculpture. This sounds quite convincing so far. But if one sings the melody of “Little Hans” on the syllables “lalala,” what results is hardly an “abstract song.”⁵³

⁵² Top line: final version (*Abstrakte Oper Nr.1*, Klavierauszug (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Bote & G. Bock 21054 (384), 1953), 30 (mm. 78-94)). Bottom line: draft version Boris Blacher Archive, ADK, 1.75.47.1

⁵³ Paul Müller, “‘Abstrakte Oper’ – diesmal nicht,” *Rheinische Post* (Düsseldorf), 1 July 1953. “Die Autoren argumentieren, daß es – parallel zu Malerei und Plastik – auch ‘Abstrakte Oper’ geben müsse... Das klingt noch

For Müller, it seems, the familiarity of melodies works against the possibility for music to be abstracted; if his hypothetical listener recognizes a melody such that he can sing its words in his head, those words magically become present, negating any replacement syllables' meaninglessness. And so, by analogy, if the music Blacher composed generates associations in the listeners' minds because the music seems recognizable, something we can "sing along with," abstraction is revealed as mere pretense.

The nonsense syllables that constitute the libretto are merely the first, superficially avant-garde layer of a piece, the semantics of which may be largely non-linguistic, but which are nonetheless highly intelligible. Given the accumulated cultural baggage of the sounds Blacher used to illustrate his scenes, the fundamental slipperiness between archetype and stereotype, between definition and cliché, here appear at the outskirts of opera and musical theater. Such a clichéd portrayal might seem to be Blacher's enemy in his anti-opera (and it may have undermined Egk's original goals), but it is actually the primary reason Blacher is able to create such drama without narrative, portrayal without character, sense without words.

Hearing Controversy and Politics in Abstraction

It is unsurprising that an opera with such blatant designs on the avant-garde would create the conditions for a classic scandal, and the profound weirdness of the *Abstrakte Oper* made for good copy in the national press. The Mannheim premiere was greeted by an uproar out of proportion to both the slim, 35-minute piece and to the regional opera house. Some notices reporting the premiere throughout Germany seemed to find the scandal festive, even fitting. "In 110 years of the Mannheim Nationaltheater there has never been such a scandal to report," marveled a critic from Göttingen.⁵⁴ "Finally an opera scandal in Mannheim!" read the headline in Mannheim's own *Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁵⁵ One critic commented sardonically that "measured by provincial proportions, this was a proper bourgeois scandal."⁵⁶ The tumult was described to a large extent with glee: it was something exciting about which to read and write, something new at which to marvel, particularly striking because it took place within the perceived conservatism and stuffiness of the opera world (and peripheral to the major urban centers at that).

Despite Blacher's attempts to lend structure to Egk's libretto, the piece was largely received as if it were an alien communication. The reviews make clear that the opera's infuriating incomprehensibility came not only from its nonsensical text, but also from the piece's uneasily oppositional relationship to generic expectations and from its insouciant approach to preconceptions about how opera or contemporary music theater should sound. The terms critics used to try to explain the work's aesthetics attest to its novelty. Despite one

ganz überzeugend. Singt man aber etwa die Melodie 'Hänschen klein' auf die Silben lalala, dann entsteht doch wohl kaum ein 'abstraktes Lied.'"

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Herrmann, "Theaterskandal in Mannheim," *Göttinger Tageblatt*, 20 October 1953. "Seit 110 Jahren war vom Mannheimer Nationaltheater kein ähnlicher Skandal zu berichten."

⁵⁵ Hermann Hartwig, "Endlich mal ein Mannheimer Theaterskandal" *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Mannheim), 19 October 1953.

⁵⁶ Eb., "Kultureller 'Fortschritt' ohne Ende," *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* (Karlsruhe), 20 October 1953. "An provinziellen Verhältnissen gemessen, war das ein gut bürgerlicher Skandal."

brave critic's characterization of the piece as "on the border between Expressionism and New Objectivity," critical vocabulary came largely from outside the operatic discourse.⁵⁷ To describe the libretto, writers frequently ranged far beyond the boundaries of opera, referring to "Dada" and "dadaistisch" (even using "dadasieren" as verb), harkening back to other, earlier avant-gardes that had taken a similarly defiant attitude to convention.⁵⁸ Other 1920s vocabulary such as "cabaret"/"Kabarett"/"kabarettisch"⁵⁹ (not necessarily equivalent to "kitsch"⁶⁰) evoked performance contexts that were seen as perhaps more appropriate for the *Abstrakte Oper* than was the grandeur of the opera house. Finally, terms borrowed from developments in other art forms such as "surrealistisch"⁶¹ and "mosaik"⁶² broached the piece's supposed debt to the forms of abstraction then in vogue in sculpture and painting.

Critical responses that challenged the experimental credentials of the *Abstrakte Oper*, labeled it an oxymoron, or dismissed it as a joke all chipped away at the authors' conceptual gambit. Simply a *pretense* to the progressive and experimental was not enough; critics who perceived the work as an experiment often then found fault with the kind of experiment it turned out to be. Progress in itself was not enough, these arbiters concluded; here the pursuit of "progress" had led to disastrous results ("a further monstrosity of musical progress").⁶³ The title's numbering practically dared critics to mock the impossibility of an *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 2* –

⁵⁷ Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1," *Bremer Nachrichten*, 21 October 1953. "Das ist ein Theater auf der Grenze zwischenn Expressionismus und neuer Sachlichkeit."

⁵⁸ USE, "'Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1' im Nationaltheater Mannheim," *Ostschweiz* (St. Gallen), 26 October 1953. "Das hat es als Dadaismus schon vor fünfunddreißig Jahren gegeben."; W.M. Eisenbarth, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1 – konkrete Nervensäge," *Die Rheinpfalz* (Ludwigshafen), 19 October 1953. "Papa Dada", "zurück zu Dada"; Wilhelm Herrmann, "Theaterskandal in Mannheim," *Göttinger Tageblatt*, 20 October 1953. "Dada 'Text'"; H. Dannecker, "Moderne Musik im Meinungsstreit," *Weser-Kurier* (Bremen), 21 October 1953. "Dadaismus"; Egbert Hoehl, "Abstrakte Oper, Gegenstandsloses Ballett," *Die Kultur* (Stuttgart), 25 October 1953. "dadaistisch"; W. St., "Theaterskandal um Abstrakte Oper," *Der Mittag* (Düsseldorf), 21 October 1953. "läppischen Dadaismus"; Bruno Stürmer, "Abstrakte Oper von Egk," *Kasseler Post*, 3 July 1953. "dadasierenden Lauten"; Dr. Wehagen, "Egk-Blachers 'Abstrakte Oper' in Mannheim," *Musikblätter Berlin*, November 1953. "...die Qualität dieses dadaistischen Textbuchs"; Bruno Stürmer, "Das große Fragezeichen," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 30 June 1953. "Clara Ebers, Ernst Häfliger und Kurt Böhme 'dadasierten' nach bestem Vermögen..."

⁵⁹ v.L., "Konkrete Oper und abstraktes Ballett," *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, 31 October 1953. "Die Mannheimer waren zunächst erheitert, glaubten sich in einem Kabarett."; H.P., "Abstraxas - schön?", *Die Abendzeitung* (Munich), 9 July 1953. "Kabarettnummer"; Ernst Thomas, "Lärm um Blacher und Egk," *Darmstädter Echo*, 20 October 1953. "... als Erfahrung im Kabarettistischen"; Albert Rodemann, "Oper auf ungewohntem Wege," *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Mainz), 19 October 1953. "... zu einer Art Kabarett"; W. St., "Theaterskandal um Abstrakte Oper," *Der Mittag* (Düsseldorf), 21 October 1953. "... zwischen Kabarettischem Ulk und musikalischer Glosse"; J. W., "Woche für neue Musik in Frankfurt," *Basler Nachrichten*, 7 July 1953. "kabarettistischen Charakter"

⁶⁰ Wolf Eberhard von Lewinsky's review, however, does mention Kitsch. v.L., "Konkrete Oper und abstraktes Ballett," *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, 31 October 1953.

⁶¹ "Oper in Baden," *Basler National-Zeitung*, 8 December 1953. "...eine Art surrealistisches Cabaret"; Wehagen, "Egk-Blachers 'Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1'," *Musikblätter Berlin*, August 1953. "surrealistische Wiedergabe"; "Laba-baba - nabuna I," *Der Tag* (Berlin), 20 October 1953. "surrealistische Ebene"; dpa, "Tumult um 'Abstrakte Oper'," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 22 October 1953. "surrealistisch"

⁶² "Blacher/Egk: 'Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1'," *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* (Heidelberg), 20 October 1953. "Mosaik"

⁶³ Eb., "Kultureller 'Fortschritt' ohne Ende," *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* (Karlsruhe), 20 October 1953. "Eine weitere Mißgeburt des musikalischen Fortschritts präsentierte jetzt das Nationaltheater Mannheim mit einer 'Abstrakten Oper'..."

"never, never to be," wrote one critic with finality.⁶⁴ And the status of the *Abstrakte Oper* as a failure was particularly fraught because of what its situation implied for the future of opera as a genre. "Nothing against operatic experiments," began Heinrich Lindlar's review, but:

For 350 years, since its birth, opera has drawn life from experiments, from clever novelties. Declared dead by each generation, it has experienced a metamorphosis and a rebirth in almost every generation. Until now, anyway. What Werner Egk and Boris Blacher have now hatched is a stillbirth, a monstrosity.⁶⁵

Every other generation may have declared opera dead so that it may live, Lindlar implies, but Blacher and Egk have declared opera living so that they may kill it.

The incompatibility of a dadaistic or surrealist text with the relative realism of the work's onstage enactment was often listed as among the piece's chief contradictions, but criticism of this aesthetic failure (i.e., the lack of abstraction in practice) seems a cover for a more powerful outrage, that over the particularly political way in which the *Abstrakte Oper* was seen to be concrete. The single most significant factor in the politicization of the *Abstrakte Oper*'s reception was the strong interpretation set forth in the set design by Paul Walter and in the staging by Hans Schüler, then the Intendant of the Nationaltheater Mannheim.⁶⁶ Though no video of the Mannheim premiere exists, a series of production stills documents Walter's production design and stage layout; it is also possible to infer certain aspects of Schüler's staging from these photographs.

From a technical standpoint, the production was quite modern, using what one contemporary critic described as "an immense technical apparatus of tape recordings, slides, film, and attractive light effects" to create changing images that were more backgrounds than scenery in the traditional sense.⁶⁷ The orientation of the projectors was such that the performers' bodies were "caught" in the light and pictures, adding to the anti-realistic effect. Text projections clearly marked each scene with large labels; the incorporation of these perhaps overly literal signposts clearly echos the kinds of placards common in Brechtian epic theater. Meanwhile, the typography of the labels as they were splashed across the scene

⁶⁴ "Oper in Baden," *Basler National-Zeitung*, 8 December 1953. "Wir begehren die Abstrakte Oper Nr. 2 nimmer und nimmer zu schauen."

⁶⁵ Heinrich Lindlar, "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1 – durchgefallen," *General-Anzeiger* (Bonn), 29 October 1953. "Nichts gegen Opernexperimente. Seit 350 Jahren, seit ihrer Geburt lebt die Oper von Experimenten, von kühnen Neuerungen. Von jeder Generation totgesagt, hat sie fast noch in jeder Generation eine Metamorphose und Neugeburt erlebt. Bis heute jedenfalls. Was jetzt aber Wener Egk und Boris Blacher als 'Abstrakte Oper Nr.1' ausbrüteten, ist eine Tot- und Mißgeburt."

⁶⁶ Schüler was an "old friend" of Egk's, and Egk claimed some responsibility for the concept of the production as a reflection of the post-war world, writing:

Wenig später riskierte es mein alter Freund Intendant Schüler in Mannheim, der sich früher schon in Leipzig nachdrücklich für mich eingesetzt hatte, das Experiment auf die Bühne zu bringen. Ich erzählte ihm echte Situationen aus der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit, einfach als Assoziationshilfe für die Richtung seiner Inszenierungsideen."

Egk, *Die Zeit wartet nicht*, 449.

⁶⁷ Egbert Hoehl, "Abstrakte Oper, Gegenstandsloses Ballett," *Die Kultur* (Stuttgart), 25 October 1953. "... mit Hilfe eines immensen technischen Apparates (Bandaufnahmen, Diapositive, Film, attraktive Lichteffekte)..."

reflected and reinforced the “feel” of each scene: cursive curlicues for “Liebe I,” typewriter letters for the diplomatic “Verhandlung,” and, for “Panik,” thick, graffiti-like brushstrokes, with massive scratched-in swirls in the “paint”; as the letters increase in size from left to right, these visual features helped to illustrate the sense of mounting anxiety.

In addition to the scene labels, the series of projections included images, though not with the aim of creating scenery or realistic spaces, such as a conference room for “Verhandlung” or a bedroom for “Liebe.” Instead, the photographs and collages functioned impressionistically – as what one critic described as “abstract projections of emotional states.”⁶⁸ The background projections for “Liebe I,” for example, incorporated fragments of glamorous photos of women shot in the style of advertisements or fashion magazines. These shards of commercial photography were embedded in a collage of words reminiscent of signage, along with the slogan “IHR ANTRIEB / SEX-APPEAL.” In “Angst,” abstract angles like drafting lines crisscrossed into a realistic image of the shell of a building, the windows empty and gaping; a cloud billowing out of the bottom implied an explosion. These bombed-out ruins were there not because the performers were supposed to look like they are realistically standing *in* the ruins, but because the ruins were germane to the archetypal state of mind being represented.

Projections of impressionistic, abstract, or symbolic images have now been used in modern opera staging so frequently that their functional non-verisimilitude is taken for granted. In 1953 in Mannheim, however, critics seem to have expected a staging that functioned more literally. Contemporary reviews reveal a strong impulse to find meaning not in the alienation and surrealism of these images, but rather in those images with the most potential for literal decoding in historical terms. While the Mannheim projections did little to provide a physical space for the opera, as opera scenery usually works to confine and define the action within a setting, they did have a particularizing effect on the scenes because of the identifiable contemporaneity of the images.

In “Angst,” the aftermath of an explosion was represented, an unsettling image so soon after the height of Germany’s rubble years. Both literal and figurative explosions also occurred in “Verhandlung,” which in one image showed direct newspaper headlines about contemporary events – “Can We Save America From Herself,” “Allies in Germany Question US Lead” – and in another showed a collage of bombers and missiles. The “Verhandlung” set, though minimal, featured a long table that almost too literally represented the distance between the two diplomats. As the Bremen critic described it dryly, “when American and Soviet delegates sit at a conference table and cannot agree with each other’s stubborn, repeated words, while behind them the world goes up in flames, it seems to be confirmed as quite a concrete scene.”⁶⁹ The scene with the most physically constructed scenery, “Panik,” featured two huge blocks slowly coming down on the heads of the helmet-clad chorus while a bowler-hatted man in the middle stood at a podium directing them down. The description of

⁶⁸ h.e., “Die Frankfurter Woche für Neue Musik,” *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Mannheim), 10 July 1953. “... die abstrakte Projektion seelischer Zustände.”

⁶⁹ Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert, “Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1,” *Bremer Nachrichten*, 21 October 1953. “Wenn da ein amerikansicher und ein sowjetischer Delegierter am Verhandlungstisch stizen und sich mit ihren hartnäckig wiederholten Vokabeln nicht verständigen können.”

several critics indicated that this structure was taken to be an air-raid shelter.⁷⁰ These images, too, were almost wincingly concrete.

A critic at the *Musikblätter* in Berlin described the “realism in the staging’s signifiers of setting – fire attacks, bomb blasts, explosions on one side, and crass depictions of the human perversity of the post-war period on the other.”⁷¹ These “strong references to the recent past and present time (occupation soldiers, air-raid shelters),” as another critic called them, were simply too politically charged and contemporary to be received as archetypes.⁷² The aerial explosions in “Verhandlung,” ruined buildings in “Angst,” concrete and helmets in “Panik” are all allusions, in other words, not only to generalized human politics and pain, the way Egk’s implied with the term “archetypal situations,” but also and more specifically to Cold War politics and German pain. And I would argue that these explicit images, whether or not they are reflected in or reflective of the score and libretto, had the kind of power they had on audiences in part *because* of the authors’ stubborn insistence on nonsense and audience’s subsequent urge to make meaning of it.

Given the use of such political images to animate the *Abstrakte Oper* onstage, it makes sense that critics would latch onto these images as indicative of a larger scenario or overall setting. Once the wartime setting of the piece was established by these images, critics could not help but interpret the other scenes, even those illustrated with seemingly apolitical images, in light of recent history. It was not unusual for the *Abstrakte Oper*’s seven cyclic scenes to be recast as a narrative whole, despite the authors’ program notes and repeated insistence that the whole point was not to have a story arc or plot. There is no acknowledgment of this contradiction; instead, critics put plot summaries into their reviews as if they were self-evident. After the events of “Verhandlung,” one critic explained, “then comes, naturally, Panik.”⁷³ Another interpreted the Cold War scenario of “Verhandlung” as a turning point in an overall progression within the work from non-political to political. In this, “Verhandlung,” with its diplomats and its world on fire, leads to “Panik,” with its air-raid shelter, bombs, sirens, and people in the classic duck and cover position; in the aftermath, the “Liebe II” can only be interpreted as a “wild dance” of an occupying American soldier and three prostitutes, led back to “Angst,” a reaction to the “sheer craziness the world has become.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Kurt Heinz, “Pfiffe, Protestrufe und Beifall für die ‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’,” *Mannheimer Morgen*, 19 October 1953. “... in einen Luftschutzbunker während eines Fliegerangriffs verlegte ‘Panik.’”

⁷¹ Dr. Wehagen, “Egk-Blachers ‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’,” *Musikblätter Berlin*, August 1953. “Überdies ging er in der Realistik der Milieuzzeichnung (Feuerüberfälle, Bombenangriffe, Explosionen auf der einen, krasse Darstellung menschlicher Perversitäten der Nachkriegszeit auf der anderen Seite[]).”

⁷² d, “Abstrakte Oper in Mannheim,” *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 20 October 1953. “...starke Bezüge auf die jüngstvergangene und gegenwärtige Zeit (Besatzungssoldaten, Luftschutzkeller).”

⁷³ Fred K. Prieberg, “Konkreter Skandal um abstrakte Oper,” *Music im Brennspiegel*, 4 November 1953. “Daraus folgt – ganz natürlich – die Panik.”

⁷⁴ Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert, “‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’: Skandalumtobte Uraufführung im Nationaltheater Mannheim,” *Neue Wiener Tageszeitung*, 13 November 1953. “Vom vierten Bild an wird es politisch. ‘Verhandlung’: ein Amerikaner und ein Sowjetrusse sitzen sich gegenüber und können über ihren penetrant wiederholten Vokabeln zu keiner Verständigung kommen, während hinter ihnen schon der Globus in Flammen aufgeht. Folgericht spielt das nächste Bild dann im Luftschutzkeller: die Bomben krachen, Sirenen heulen, die Menschen ducken und krümmen sich... Das sechste Bild ist ‘Liebe II,’ ein wilder Tanz von Dirnen und amerikanischen Soldaten... und dann bricht von neuem – als siebentes und letztes Bild – die ‘Angst’ über die Menschen herein:

In addition, on a much more local level of interpretation, critics' attempts to transcribe the opera's nonsense syllables have a political cast, particularly for "Panik," which had the most explicitly political staging and which makes the most explicit use of alliterative language in its "meaningless" words. The critic for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* guessed that the "Adynazit" and "Onit" meant "Dynamite," while "Anitrozit" was a new explosive material that stands in for nitroglycerine ("Nitroglyzerin").⁷⁵ Elsewhere, the critic at *Der Spiegel* transcribed syllables as well: "the ear hears quite clearly: Na-zi, na-zi, amona-zi."⁷⁶ These are actually spelled in the score as "Adyna, adyna, adynazit" – dynamite words. In other words, the same syllables that to some people signified explosives instead to this critic sounded like the fascist past.

Interestingly, when the word "adynazit" is fragmented, as Blacher does with so many of the "words" in the *Abstrakte Oper*, he never does allow just "nazit" to stand on its own, instead choosing "Azit" as the fragmented form, perhaps as an unsuccessful avoidance of these very associations. The Nazi echoes recur several times in critics' transcriptions and interpretations of the words in the *Abstrakte Oper*. Fred Prieberg recounted that in "Panik," "one hears in the sound of these syllables the names of explosives, poison gases and brown ideology. That is war and catastrophe. Have we not lived through it?"⁷⁷ And it was not only critics who heard "nazi" with their particularly keen ears; an audience member in Mannheim wrote in to the newspaper that "in the fifth scene, Panik, [there is] acid and the beggarly 'nazi' variation."⁷⁸

The political potency ascribed to these images and syllables makes the potential for humor in the *Abstrakte Oper* particularly problematic. The big question of whether the piece was meant to be taken seriously took on a political urgency; as the Frankfurt critic wrote, "if you take it seriously, you stand before it helpless and perplexed; if you take it blithely, then an excruciating gap opens up between this humor and the material such as 'Angst' and 'Panik' that at least those of us who have been through nights of bombing really cannot find funny."⁷⁹ It quickly led to offense and questions of morality: "Ought one make light of panic," one Mannheim critic asked, "when it is so painfully memorable to us all from recent times?"⁸⁰ Making a joke about the pressing anxieties of the Cold War – the "Witz über Weltangst," as one critic described it – was seen not as bold and cutting, but rather as cold, tasteless, and

erneut heulen und jaulen die behelmteten Leute ihr erschreckliches 'ua-au-ui-ua' in eine schier wahnsinnig gewordene Welt."

⁷⁵ "Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 June 1953. "... eine 'Panik' großen Stiles mit Dynamit ('Adynazit' und 'Onit') und Nitroglyzerin (der neue Explosionsstoff nennt sich 'Anitrozit')."

⁷⁶ "Witz über Weltangst," *Der Spiegel*, 8 July 1953, 32–33.

⁷⁷ Fred K. Prieberg, "Konkreter Skandal um abstrakte Oper," *Musik im Brennspeigel*, 4 November 1953. "Man hört im Klang dieser Silben die Namen von Sprengstoffen, Giftgasen und brauner Ideologie. Das ist Krieg und Katastrophe. Haben wir sie nicht erlebt?"

⁷⁸ Letter to the editor in R.K., "Kastrierte Oper Nr. 1: Blachers Oper ohne 7. Bild," *Mannheimer Morgen*, 21 October 1953. "...in Bild 5 Panik das acid und die kümmerliche Variation nazi."

⁷⁹ Willy Werner Göttig, "Zwischen abstrakten Klängen und perfekten Geräuschen: Musik, Musik," *Frankfurter Abendpost*, 30 June 1953. "... nimm man es ernst, so steht man ihm völlig hilf- und ratlos gegenüber nimmt man es heiter, so klafft eine marerende Divergenz zwischen eben dieser Heiterkeit und dem Stoff also etwa der Angst und der Panik die zumindest wir durch Krieg und Bombennächte Hindurchgegangenen wahrhaftig nicht komisch empfinden können."

⁸⁰ Kurt Heinz, "Pfiffe, Protestrufe und Beifall für die 'Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1'," *Mannheimer Morgen*, 19 October 1953. "Darf man mit der Panik (wie sie uns allen aus jüngstvergangener Zeit noch schmerzhaft erinnerlich ist) Scherz treiben?"

charmless.⁸¹ Willy Werner Göttig decried the “hollow arrogance,” “frivolity,” “tactlessness,” and “tastelessness” of authors who “play fast and loose in such a way with the horrifying experience of panic in an air raid, with the negotiations between ideological antagonists, with the fear of all that is yet to come.”⁸²

After the scandal, Hans Schüler, the theater’s Intendant and the director of the *Abstrakte Oper* production, published a response to his critics in the theater’s newsletter. Responding in a defensive mode, Schüler insisted that the scandal had actually been a victory for art. Rather than admitting that the audience might have been right, or that the piece might have been in some aspects tasteless or wrongheaded, Schüler forged an opposition of art and pleasure, insisting that “a theater that does not welcome the strongest impulse of its times is dead ... the theater is not only there for exaltation and entertainment.”⁸³ His version of events was that “a heated fight broke out. Who won? The living theater, in any case, because it revealed once again that theater is no artifact of the past, but rather that it is able to arouse passionate engagement in contemporary people.”⁸⁴

This spin on the scandal showed Schüler positioning himself on the side of progress and artistic contemporaneity against an implicitly “conservative” opposition.⁸⁵ Those who defended the *Abstrakte Oper* used the scandal as evidence of its efficacy, considering its opposition to mainstream culture to be indisputably positive. Wilhelm Herrmann declared it a “clever, provocative work”; “that the bourgeoisie were appalled is another matter,” he wrote dismissively, a perfect juxtaposition of the nonplussed reactions of the audience with his own authoritative praise for the work’s provocations.⁸⁶ A lengthy editorial in the *Forum Academicum* in Heidelberg featured a writer who denigrated West German theater culture for “degrading more and more into clichés of operetta for financial reasons,” praising the scandal as a sign of artistic progress and a continuation of the Mannheim tradition of theater as “more than entertainment or bourgeois edification.”⁸⁷

⁸¹ hw, “Neue Musik in Frankfurt,” *Badische Zeitung* (Freiburg im Breisgau), 1 July 1953. “... einen frechen Witz über Weltangst... machen.”; see also Julia Wasels, “Witz ohne Charme,” *Die Welt* (Essen), 1 July 1953.

⁸² Willy Werner Göttig, “Deutliche Abfuhr für die ‘Abstrakte Oper’,” *Abendpost* (Frankfurt am Main), 19 October 1953. “... seine hohle Arroganz.” “Soll es eine Persiflage sein, so ist es eine ebenso große Frivolität wie Geschmack-, ja sogar Taktlosigkeit, mit den entsetzlichen Erlebnissen der Panik bei Luftangriffen, mit der Verhandlung zwischen ideologischen Gegnern, mit der Angst vor allem uns noch Bevorstehenden derart Schindluder zu treiben.”

⁸³ Hans Schüler, “Nach der Schlacht,” *Nationaltheater Mannheim: Bühnenblätter für die Spielzeit 1953-1954*, 2. “Ein Theater, das nicht aus seiner Zeit stärkste Impulse empfängt, ist tot... das Theater [ist] nicht nur zur ‘Erhebung’ und ‘Unterhaltung’ da.”

⁸⁴ “Eine heiße Schlacht war entbrannt. Wer der Sieger geblieben? Das lebendige Theater jedenfalls, denn wieder einmal hatte sich gezeigt, daß das Theater keine Sache der Vergangenheit ist, sondern auch die Menschen unserer Tage zu leidenschaftlicher Anteilnahme aufzurütteln vermag.” “Nach der Schlacht” in *Nationaltheater Mannheim: Bühnenblätter für die Spielzeit 1953-1954*, 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4. “...konservativen Opposition.”

⁸⁶ Wilhelm Herrmann, “Theaterskandal um Egk und Blacher,” *Braunschweiger Zeitung*, 20 October 1953. “Ein kühnes, herausforderndes Werk. Daß die Bürger erschreckt wurden, steht auf einem anderen Blatt.”

⁸⁷ G.K., “Wie in Schillers Tagen,” *Forum academicum* (Heidelberg), December 1953. “...zahlreiche west-deutsche Theater, angeblich aus Finanzgründen, mehr und mehr zur Operettenklitsche degradieren.”, “Mannheim als Theaterstadt, lebendiges Theater, das mehr ist als Unterhaltung oder gutbürgerliche Erbauung, sondern geistiges Zentrum.”

It was a very small step from the bogeymen of “conservative opposition” to the evocation of specific political ideologies in the opera’s opponents. An editorial in Stuttgart reminded readers that “rioting is no way to argue” and that “the Nazis understood how to attack ‘undesirable’ works and artists... [by] rioting in the theater. Brute force instead of debate – this nasty practice trashed the good German name in the world.”⁸⁸ A Mannheim critic stated that protesters of the *Abstrakte Oper* “want to follow in Dr. Goebbels’s footsteps,” referring specifically to the 1930s, when the film *All Quiet on the Western Front* was disrupted by stink-bombs and the release of rats into the theaters. Calling in his headline for “no more white mice of this kind,” the critic cautioned readers that “such stink-bombs triggered the primitivism of a coerced pseudo-culture.”⁸⁹ Similarly, the Heidelberg writer warned ominously against the danger that such “reactionary circles” would work against modern art: “Healthy public feeling [Gesundes Volksempfinden]’ vs. ‘degeneracy and decadence’ [Entartung und Dekadenz] – we know this song, and ask ourselves with horror, how the gruesome experiences of the brown millennium could be so quickly forgotten.”⁹⁰ We find here that criticism of the avant-garde was by default painted as conservative, and thus equivalent to or leaning toward the aesthetic ideologies associated with Nazism.

The most characteristically modernist expression of the relationship between art, politics, and society came in the article by the Intendant. Schüler called the *Abstrakte Oper* an “experiment” that “had to do with a purely aesthetic problem of modern music, a problem of form in opera.”⁹¹ With this statement, Schüler reaffirmed the aesthetic purity of Egk and Blacher’s experiment, a kind of research into the possibilities of the genre. “Who would have thought,” Schüler continued:

that this problem of music aesthetics could be interpreted politically, that the harmless title *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* would be used as if it were a political slogan in an election campaign? One must not forget with what results politics were brought into the territory of art already once in Germany, and in a part of our Fatherland continue to be brought.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ho, “Randalieren ist kein Argument,” *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 17–18 November 1953 “Der große Fritz Busch erzählt in seinen Memoiren, wie die Nationalsozialisten es verstanden, ‘unerwünschte’ Werke und Künstler fertigzumachen: man... randalierte im Theater. Brachialgewalt statt Argumente – diese üble Praxis hat dem guten deutschen Namen in der Welt furchbar geschadet.”

⁸⁹ hh, “Keine weißen Mäuse mehr!” *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Mannheim), 14–15 November 1953. “...eine bestimmte Gruppe will in Dr. Goebbels’ Fußstapfen treten, der einst mit seinem Protest gegen den Film ‘Im Westen nichts Neues’ durch Stinkbomben und weiße Mäuse Furore machte und an die Stelle der Diskussion die Brachialgewalt setzte. Jene Stinkbomben leiteten die Primitivität einer zwangsbedingten Pseudo-Kultur ein.”

⁹⁰ G.K., “Wie in Schillers Tagen,” *Forum academicum* (Heidelberg), December 1953. “Reaktionäre Kreise”, “‘Gesundes Volksempfinden’ gegen ‘Entartung und Dekadenz’ – wir kennen dieses Lied und fragen uns mit Entsetzen, wie die grausigen Erfahrungen des braunen Jahrtausends so schnell vergessen werden konnten.”

⁹¹ Hans Schüler, “Nach der Schlacht,” *Nationaltheater Mannheim: Bühnenblätter für die Spielzeit 1953–1954*, 1–2. “Das Mannheimer Nationaltheater wagte das Experiment. Es ging um ein rein ästhetisches Problem der modernen Musik, ein Formproblem der Oper.”

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1–2. “Wer hätte gedacht, daß diese Probleme der Musik-Ästhetik politische gedeutet werden könnten, daß der harmlose Arbeitstitel ‘Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1’ als politische Parole im Wahlkampf Verwendung finden würde? Man darf nicht vergessen zu welchen Ergebnissen schon einmal in Deutschland Übergriffe der Politik auf das Gebiet der Kunst geführt haben und in einem Teil unseres Vaterlandes noch immer führen.”

Despite the important role that Schüler's own staging had played in sowing the seeds for a political reading and political offense, when faced with such criticism, Schüler accused his critics of dancing on the slippery slope toward Nazism, and, with his final clause, toward the "fascism" that Schüler saw as still thriving in the GDR, continuing the Nazis' nasty habit of muddying high aesthetic virtues with political questions. The only thing that the two sides of this discussion may have had in common was their preoccupation with the Nazis – they either heard Nazis in the music, saw it in the staging, or read it into the criticism. In this case, the spectre of National Socialism arose in such varied guises that one can only conclude, to no one's surprise, that the West Germans in 1953 had Nazis on the brain.

The stunning extent to which this particular piece seems to have brought up a recent and painful past stands in direct contradiction to the fact that, with the *Abstrakte Oper*, more effort was given than in any other piece of music theater in the first postwar decade not only to shy away from but also to programmatically deny the concrete, the historicized, and the identifiable. Instead of shielding the piece and its authors from politics, ironically, the abstractions in the *Abstrakte Oper* actually enabled the stage director and critics to find politics in it. The piece's supposed lack of meaning backfired, as audiences felt prompted to try to decode it. By failing to signify, the piece practically demanded that others search for its significance; though the resulting interpretations may seem reactive and controversial, they also show how irresistible a puzzle is to audiences and how uncomfortable the ambiguity of abstraction can be. Through staging and design, through creative listening and critical senses primed to detect controversy, the *Abstrakte Oper*, a piece "about" nothing at all, became a piece about everything that mattered: the future of opera, the Nazi past, the Cold War. That the modernist insistence on aesthetic purity was used to try to wash out the productivity of critics' outrage is a tragedy, if, perhaps, an understandable one. The story that started to emerge from the Mannheim staging of this narrative-less opera was simply too painful – and it was too soon to tell.

CHAPTER THREE

Italy, Atonally: Hans Werner Henze's *König Hirsch***Introduction: The Bondage of Convention**

The single reference to Hans Werner Henze among T.W. Adorno's many writings on music consists of a quintessentially Adornian rejection.¹ In his 1956 essay "On the State of Composition in Germany," Adorno singles out Henze's opera *König Hirsch*, premiered earlier that same year, as follows:

Some of the most talented German composers ... suffer so terribly under determinism that they attempt to break free of it; the foremost of these is Henze. In such works as the opera *König Hirsch*, however, this attempt led not to the longed-for realm of freedom, a true 'musique informelle' but, rather, backwards: to compromise. The laments about the compulsion of constructivism can become a mere pretext to withdraw into the more comfortable bondage of convention.²

According to Adorno, the opera's crucial point of disappointment and failure derives from Henze's reliance on, rather than the wished-for transcendence of, form and convention.³ Given this judgment, one could argue on one hand that Adorno's predictably crotchety dismissal might have been more a sign of dogmatism than of even-handed critique. On the other hand, one could argue that Henze's opera, with its closed forms, lyricism, and lavish orchestration, was really asking for it. From its character archetypes to its singing style to its formal structure, *König Hirsch* seems to be willfully operatic, and in an era that privileged innovation above all, such blatant operaticism had become a kind of deliberate provocation. This is true to such a

¹ Deborah Hochgesang, *Die Opern von Hans Werner Henze im Spiegel der deutschsprachigen, zeitgenössischen Musikkritik bis 1966* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1995), 138.

² Theodor W. Adorno, "On the State of Composition in Germany," trans. Wieland Hoban, in *Night Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (London: Seagull Books, 2009), 408-409. Originally published as "Zum Stand des Komponierens in Deutschland," *Deutsche Zeitung und Wirtschaftszeitung* (21 January 1956). Reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 18: Musikalische Schriften V. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), 134-139. "Manche der begabtesten deutschen Komponisten indessen leiden derart an dem Determinismus, daß sie auszubrechen versuchen. Unter ihnen steht an erster Stelle Hans Werner Henze. In Arbeiten wie der Oper 'König Hirsch' jedoch hat der Ausbruchversuch nicht ins ersehnte Reich der Freiheit, in eine wahrhafte *musique informelle* geführt, sondern nach rückwärts, in den Kompromiß. Das Jammern über den konstruktivistischen Zwang kann zum bloßen Vorwand dafür werden, in die bequemere Unfreiheit der Konvention sich zurückzuziehen."

³ The implications of Adorno's statements have been further amplified by Gerhard Scheit:

Es bleibt die Frage, ob der Ausbruchversuch, den Adorno hier im Kompromiss, in der bequemeren Unfreiheit der Konvention enden sieht, nicht in Wahrheit die Erkenntnis enthält, dass das Reich der Freiheit auch in der Musik unerreichbar bleibt, solange jenes Moment, das die Urphänomene der Moderne einmal geprägt hat, die Gesellschaft determiniert.

"Zwischen Engagement und Verstummen: Surrealismus als regulative Idee des Ästhetischen bei Hans Werner Henze," in Peter Petersen, ed., *Hans Werner Henze: Die Vorträge des internationalen Henze-Symposiums am Musikwissenschaftlichen Institut der Universität Hamburg 28. bis 30. Juni 2001*, *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 20 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 206.

great extent that critic Hans-Heinz Stuckenschmidt has stated that Henze's composition of *König Hirsch* and its sister work, the *Fünf Neapolitanische Lieder*, was the decisive and final point of rupture between Henze and the avant-garde.⁴ More specifically, according to Stuckenschmidt, Henze accomplished this break through his reliance on a range of explicitly operatic musical characteristics, "from the appetite for singability, to a southern rhapsodic passion for high vocal sounds, for coloratura, for trills."⁵ In part because Henze's previous theatrical output had been much more modernist in style, his deliberate use of an ultra-operatic musical language for *König Hirsch* became his "Dear John" letter to the German avant-garde, signaling his preference instead for the Italian-coded art of the sung melody.

The ideological orientation suggested by this artistic schism, and by Adorno's statement as a kind of response, lies right at the heart of the problematic position of opera as a genre in the post-war period. Opera's pronounced lack of prestige within the dominant modernist aesthetic after the Zero Hour meant that composers of new German operas had much to combat. Different approaches to writing new operas in this period – composers' relationships with tradition, their extramusical preoccupations, their artistic baggage – thus reveal both the struggle with, and the potential for constructive responses to, opera's problematic generic status. In the midst of this negotiation between the competing claims of operatic tradition and musical modernism, was it still possible for composers to find something redeemable within the boundaries of a genre that had been relentlessly disparaged for the weight of its conservatism?

If Henze's answer in *König Hirsch* was, apparently, "yes," then Adorno's "comeback" constitutes the definitive "no." At this point, faced with such an impasse, one might be tempted to comb through the opera for evidence that the piece *isn't* as conventional as Adorno thought, or to apologize for Henze's youthful missteps into cliché even while emphasizing the ways that the piece manifests his developing compositional originality.⁶ Alternatively, we could sidestep the accusation by claiming that Henze merely *thematized* Romantic conventions.⁷ According to Peter Petersen, Henze's thematization of clichés results in the

⁴ Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, "Hans Werner Henze – sein Werke und sein Aufstieg in der heutigen Musik," *Universitas* 24, no. 10 (1969): 1037. "Mit den Neapolitanischen Liedern, mehr noch mit der Oper 'König Hirsch' ist die Befreiung von den Fesseln der Technik vollzogen."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1038. "Im Vordergrund steht das Melodische. Es folgt dem Trieb zur Sangbarkeit, zu einer südlich schwärmenden Lust am klingenden hohen Ton, an der Koloratur, am Triller."

⁶ For instance, Klaus Oehl writes:

Der Künstler Henze löst den für sein Leben zentralen Konflikt durch bewußten Rekurs auf die Musiktradition, über die er sich definiert. Dadurch gerät er jedoch nicht in jene Abhängigkeit, die Theodor W. Adorno meint, wenn er dem der Darmstädter Avantgarde und ihrem Determinismus entflohenen Henze mit "Arbeiten wie der Oper *König Hirsch* [... Rückzug] in die bequeme Unfreiheit der Konvention" vorwirft; vielmehr führt ihn dieser Weg zur Entwicklung einer eigenen Sprache, welche selbstbewußt mit der Tradition umzugehen imstande ist.

"RICERCAR – Auf der Suche nach sozialer, politischer und künstlerischer Identität. Die Oper *König Hirsch* als autobiographische Allegorie," in *Hans Werner Henze: Politisch-humanitäres Engagement als künstlerische Perspektive*, ed. Sabine Giesbrecht-Schutte and Stefan Hanheide (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1998), 71. See the same claim in Oehl's monograph, *Die Oper König Hirsch (1953–55) von Hans Werner Henze* (Saarbrücken: Pfau-Verlag, 2003), 322.

⁷ Peter Petersen writes:

auspicious loss of their negative quality through transposition into a “higher” aesthetic context.⁸ But rather than seeking awkwardly to shield the piece from the severity of Adorno’s judgment, might it not be more interesting to entertain the possibility that Adorno was right – that *König Hirsch* does represent a kind of retreat to convention – while also challenging whether, in fact, that retreat is really so terrible as it may have seemed at the time?

Henze’s *Bel Canto* Opera

Only when this initial carping about convention subsides can we pose the more penetrating question about how precisely *König Hirsch* is positioned within operatic history and tradition, particularly with regard to its relationship to the early-nineteenth-century Italian repertoire most often named as an influence. Henze stated that “the intended discipline [of *König Hirsch*] is suggested by the perfectly simple title, ‘opera’”; indeed, while Henze’s previous four musico-dramatic works called themselves by genre names that avoided opera by addition (“Oper für Schauspieler” (*Das Wundertheater*), “Funkopern” (*Der Landarzt, Das Ende einer Welt*), “Ballettoper” (*Boulevard Solitude*)), *König Hirsch* is simply “Oper.”⁹ But if Henze’s work is in fact (as composer and theorist Diether de la Motte put it in 1964) an attempt at a “Renaissance of a pre-Verdian operatic tradition,” then what emerges in a work like *König Hirsch* is not a straightforward pastiche of Donizetti or Bellini, but rather a certain construction of early-nineteenth-century Italian opera as refracted through the lens of a young, German opera composer in the early 1950s.¹⁰ By making his opera so “operatic,” Henze advances an interpretation of what it means to *be* operatic and, in particular, of what it means to be operatic in an Italian way.

König Hirsch was the first major work Henze completed after his emigration to Italy in 1953, and critics’ resultant curiosity about the ways in which this piece reflects the newly “Italianate” Henze dates back to the piece’s premiere, as Deborah Hochgesang has shown.¹¹ The opera’s fundamentally Italian foundation traces back to its source material, a *favola* of Carlo Gozzi, adapted by librettist Heinz von Cramer into a massive three-act structure to be stuffed with five hours’ worth of *bel canto* laments, histrionic coloratura, and guitar-accompanied folksongs sung by *commedia dell’arte* character archetypes. This broadly Italian

Henze ist *kein* Romantiker des 20. Jahrhunderts. Aber in seiner Musik wird die Romantik auf vielfältige Weise thematisiert.

“Hans Werner Henze – ein Romantiker des 20. Jahrhunderts?” in *Musik und Leben: Freundesgabe für Sabine Giesbrecht zur Emeritierung*, ed. Hartmuth Kinzler (Osnabrück: Univ., Fachbereich Erziehungs- und Kulturwiss., 2003), 332.

⁸ Peter Petersen, “Klischee als Sujet. Hans Werner Henzes *The English Cat* und sein ‘Arbeitstagebuch,’” in *Klischee und Wirklichkeit in der musikalischen Moderne*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1994), 68.

⁹ Hans Werner Henze, “Mein ‘König Hirsch,’” *Melos* 23 (1956): 244. “Mit seinem ganz einfachen Titel ‘Oper’ ist angedeutet, welche Disziplin angestrebt wurde.”

¹⁰ Diether de la Motte, “Das Verhältnis zwischen Text und Musik” in *Internationaler Kongress Zeitgenössisches Musiktheater*, ed. Ernst Thomas (Hamburg: Deutscher Musikrat, 1966), 44. “Renaissance der vor-Verdischen Operntradition.”

¹¹ Hochgesang, *Die Opern von Hans Werner Henze, 196–97*. In addition, critics such as Klaus Oehl have construed the opera’s themes and style as biographical metaphors for Henze’s own experience with self-imposed exile. See Oehl, “RICERCAR – Auf der Suche nach sozialer, politischer und künstlerischer Identität,” 55–71.

styling has allowed *König Hirsch* to become emblematic of Henze's mature idiom as an opera composer and of his place in the genre. One summary of Henze's operatic style, for example, cites the influence of "the aria and related forms such as the *canzona*," Henze's imitation of "the form and texture of Italian monody," a focus on melody, and a structural emphasis on clear and basic forms as elements that make Henze's operas into "singer's operas" in the mode of Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi.¹² Despite the tendency of some scholars to deny this influence, apologizing for or justifying it in some way, the consensus on *König Hirsch* is that this opera is the piece in which elements of Mediterranean art and music became "a fundamental part of Henze's mental and spiritual culture."¹³

That these Italian means facilitated Henze's rejection of German modernism is substantiated by his early public comments about the process of composing *König Hirsch*, comments which strongly imply a kind of Italianization of his musical style, always defined against the prevailing German worldview. An early draft of Henze's 1956 artist's statement on *König Hirsch* for the Schott house journal *Melos* included an explicit acknowledgment of the way the opera's musical language set him against his avant-garde peers; Henze's words here amount to a shrewd declaration of non-affiliation.

They have come up with a term, "the state-of-the-art composers," where the post-Webern school of thought is the only one that represents this "state-of-the-art," excluding all other opportunities. My goal with *König Hirsch* has been to oppose this position, which is also historically contingent and not particularly well supported.¹⁴

As originally written, Henze's move here explicitly to distance himself from the current state of the avant-garde would have functioned as a sort of alibi, anticipating exactly the kinds of criticism later leveled by Adorno. In positioning the hegemonic claims of his peers as not only dubious but, additionally, as just as "historical" as his own supposedly regressive music, this cut paragraph is perhaps the earliest extant example, in a decades-long line of such statements, of Henze's claim to "outsider" status.

The published version of the *Melos* article, though perhaps not approaching the German avant-garde with such pronounced belligerence, retains a wealth of positive associations with Italian music, thus making his affiliations clear. Henze extols the wonders of sounding Italy: the blaring *banda*, the processional songs, the "shimmering high tones of the

¹² David Symons, "Hans Werner Henze: The Emergence of a Style," *Studies in Music* 3 (1969): 35–36; 51.

¹³ For example, Franco Serpa writes:

"Opernhafter Stil", "melodischer Lyrismus" oder "südliche Musikalität" sind daher herkömmliche und bequeme Kriterien, mit denen man von einem anspruchsvollen Text, wie es ein Text Henzes ist, nicht viel begreift.

"Henze und die Mediterrane Kultur," in *Der Komponist Hans Werner Henze: ein Buch der Alten Oper Frankfurt, Frankfurt Feste '86*, ed. Dieter Rexroth (Mainz: Schott, 1986), 275.

Hochgesang, *Die Opern von Hans Werner Henze*, 273. "ein wesentlicher Teil von Henzes seelischer und geistiger Kultur."

¹⁴ Early typed draft of essay, "Mein 'König Hirsch'," dated 29 June 1956, PSS. "... hat man ein Wort gefunden, 'der kontemporäre Zustand der Komponisten' damit ist, alle anderen Gelegenheiten ausschliessend, die nachwebernianische Schule gemeint, welche allein den besagten Zustand repräsentiere. Mit dem 'König Hirsch' habe ich nicht die Absicht verfolgt, diese (auch geschichtlich) nicht sehr untermauerte These zu vertreten."

mandolin" and "the darker ones of the guitar," coloratura, noise, bells, and so on.¹⁵ He goes on to praise the Italian opera, where, "it is natural and right to give an emphasis to one heightened moment of life through singing, and it is 'realistic!'"¹⁶ Henze wrote still more explicitly about the Italian origins of the opera's musical language in an Italian-language introduction and synopsis:¹⁷

The music became simpler, the orchestral colors broader, and everything is a sign of my admiration for lyrical Italian opera, in particular that of Bellini ... For me the most important thing was the discovery of song. The pleasure of expression by means of the voice is distant from the German spirit, and therefore it was a real discovery for me to see how much expression and importance there is in singing. *König Hirsch* became a "bel canto" opera, probably a new thing, rather exceptional in modern music.¹⁸

As Henze describes in these sources, the sound world of *König Hirsch* constitutes a kind of summary interpretation of his impressions of Italian music: in the vocal writing (especially in the coloratura of some characters and in the folksong of others), in the orchestral colors (particularly the "folk" elements such as guitar and accordion), and in the dramatic protocols (the willing suspension of realistic time to make room in the form for sung emotion).

Despite Henze's inclusion of both folk and operatic influences in the above and other such descriptions, the Italian musical influences most emphasized by the secondary literature on *König Hirsch* have not been the operatic ones, but rather the elements of folk music in the piece, particularly the use of Neapolitan folksong for the mirrored tenor-buffo characters, Checco and Coltellino (derived from the *commedia dell'arte* brothers Arlecchino and

¹⁵ Henze, "Mein 'König Hirsch'," *Melos* 23: 242–43. "Da ist der schmetternde Klang der *banda* beim abendlichen Fest von St. Vito, gemischt mit dem frenetischen Prozessionsgesang, der flirrende hohe Ton von Mandolinen, insistent und lasziv in der Luft stehend, der dunklere der Gitarren, aus fernen Jahrhunderrückter gellender Lärm und leise Vokale, mörderisches Gezeter, Litanei, dünnes Gebimmel des Angelus-Läutens."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 243. "... es ist natürlich und richtig, einem gesteigerten Augenblick des Lebens durch Singen Nachdruck zu verleihen, und es ist 'realistisch!'"

¹⁷ The majority of its approximately 2700 words consist of a detailed plot synopsis, preceded by three short paragraphs of introductory material, from which this quote is excerpted. Despite its title, the notes clearly describe the full version and not the abridged version that usually goes by that name (several of the plot points described in the summary do not occur in the shortened version). My guess is that the text may have been drafted for a purpose related to the planned "second premiere" in Venice, which never occurred; this planned premiere is discussed in Klaus Oehl, *Die Oper König Hirsch*, 26–27.

¹⁸ Handwritten, unpublished notes, filed as "Über 'Il re cervo,'" PSS. "La musica è diventata più semplice, i colori dell'orchestra più vasti, e tutto fa testimonianza della mia ammirazione per l'opera lirica Italiana, soprattutto per quella di Bellini... Per me la cosa più importante era la scoperta del canto. La gioia di esprimersi per mezzo della propria voce è lontano dallo spirito tedesco, e quindi fu una vera scoperta per me di vedere quanta espressione e quanta importanza esiste nell cantare. Il 'Re Cervo' diventa un opera del 'bel canto' probabilmente una cosa nuova, piuttosto rara, nella musica moderna." The majority of the document's approximately 2700 words consist of a detailed plot synopsis, preceded by three short paragraphs of introductory material, from which this quote is excerpted. Despite its title, the notes clearly describe the full version and not the abridged version that usually goes by that name (several of the plot points described in the summary do not occur in the shortened version). My guess is that the text may have been drafted for a purpose related to the planned "second premiere" in Venice, which never occurred; this planned premiere is discussed in Klaus Oehl, *Die Oper König Hirsch*, 26–27.

Brighella).¹⁹ Henze's adoption of Neapolitan culture in works like *König Hirsch* and the *Fünf neapolitanische Lieder* is a complicated process of affiliation and allusion, on one hand a process of problematic exoticism and on the other an expression of artistic respect for something that might otherwise be considered humble.²⁰ But while the explicit evocation of folksong was one clearly new style cultivated in *König Hirsch*, the strangeness of the idioms in the opera, both relative to Henze's earlier output and to the dominant German avant-garde, emphatically did not start and end with Neapolitan song. When Henze says, as quoted above and elsewhere, that when he moved to Italy he discovered "song," I would argue that he means both the Neapolitan *canzone* and the operatic aria. An examination of other writings by Henze from around this time reveals that his conception of *bel canto* opera was intimately bound up with, even indistinguishable from, the popular *canzone*. For example, Henze's interpretation of the music of Naples in a 1955 radio essay for South German Radio combines semi-ethnographic observations about Neapolitan history and culture with audio examples to discuss the provenance of and influences on the Neapolitan *canzone*, beginning with the French troubadours.²¹ What seems to fascinate him most is the way in which the *canzone* synthesizes different kinds of music, both high and low, modern and ancient, foreign and indigenous.

In coloring and expression, even the newest *canzone* ... display a legacy uniting several centuries of tempestuous history: music history thrust together ... with the origins from Arabia, Spain, Portugal, Sicily, and the modern sentimental affect of the nineteenth-century, the Golden Age of Italian opera – but all of those things have been transformed ... as they emerge out of the mouth of the people.²²

A mystique of exoticized authenticity accrues to the music he describes, as when he marvels, "the new *canzone* is born, the authors remain anonymous."²³ This same impulse is apparent in a widely quoted statement from Henze's open letter to Josef Rufer regarding *König Hirsch*:

¹⁹ See, for example: Hochgesang, *Die Opern von Hans Werner Henze*, 190; Oehl, *Die Oper König Hirsch*, 66–67.

²⁰ Wolfgang Burde, "Volkstümlichkeit und Avantgarde. Überlegungen zum neueren Schaffen von Hans Werner Henze," in *Avantgarde und Volkstümlichkeit. Fünf Versuche*, ed. Rudolph Stephan (Mainz: Schott, 1975), 36–46; Marion Fürst, "Das Fremde im Blick: Überlegungen zur Funktion des Exotischen im Werk Hans Werner Henzes," *Musik-Konzepte* 132 (April 2006): 105–122. Burde remarks on the symbolic status that accrued to the *musica da piazza* – a street music by default "of the people" – later on, once Henze's Communist political awakening had occurred. Fürst convincingly interprets the "musica da piazza" in *König Hirsch* and the *Fünf neapolitanische Lieder* as a kind of exoticism.

²¹ Script for Abendstudio radio essay "La Canzone Napoletana," held in the PSS, produced by the SRF, 3 April 1955. Some of the most ethnographic and impressionistic (and least music-oriented) parts of the essay were excerpted and published under the title "Neapel" in *Musik und Politik* (2nd edition), ed. Jens Brockmeier (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 41–48.

²² Ibid. "Selbst in den neuesten Canzonen manifestiert sich deutlich die Herkunft, in Kolorit und Ausdruck.... eine Einheit aus vielen Jahrhunderten wildbewegter Geschichte – Musikgeschichte... zusammendrängt... mit der Provenienz aus Arabien, Spanien, Portugal, Sizilien, und der modern-sentimentale Affekt des 19. Jahrhunderts, der Glanzzeit der italienischen Oper – aber das alles hat sich verwandelt, ... wie sie aus dem Munde des Volks hervorbricht."

²³ Ibid. "Die neue Canzone ist geboren... Die Verfasser bleiben anonym."

I have had a fair amount of time to measure the gap between *musica da camera* and *musica da piazza* ... I myself found (and still find) this gap pointlessly great and unsatisfactory, and as an inhabitant of the *camera* am not at all sure whether the *piazza* is not far more real.²⁴

Enamored with the potential honesty and lyricism of this idealized *musica da piazza*, Henze imagines *König Hirsch* as the heir to a kind of classical music that is closer to the people than it is to the concert hall (and particularly, one assumes, the concert halls of Darmstadt and Donaueschingen).

This utopian ideal is reflected by Henze's choice of music for the 1955 radio essay. In addition to a number of stunning performances by the Neapolitan singer Fausto Cigliano, the program's musical examples included excerpts from harpsichord sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti, Stravinsky's "Pulcinella," the prelude to Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona*, and operatic arias and *canzoni* of Bellini ("Or dove fuggo io mai?" from *I Puritani* and "Fenestre ccha lucive") and Donizetti ("Una furtiva lagrima" from *L'Elisir d'amore* and "Ti voglio bene assai"). True to Henze's ideology, the diverse examples curated here by Henze present themselves as a complete and objective portrait of music in Naples in which the "classical" examples are framed as no "higher" an art than the folk music. In the text, Bellini is again singled out for particular praise in this regard, because "his work is closely bound up with the thoughts and feelings of the people, and his melodies, in their incomparable completeness, clarity, and purity, are close to the singing of this people."²⁵ Naples, in other words, is the magical place where opera and the *canzone* are just two different manifestations of the same authentic voices, where "the division between *musica da piazza* and *musica da camera* was as good as non-existent."²⁶ In my reading, Henze's recurring depiction of an idealized synthesis between folk music and art music complicates the assumption that the folk element in *König Hirsch* is its most important Italianate feature, further clarifying the kind of Italian opera that Henze wanted *König Hirsch* to become. With Bellini's lyricism as close to his mind as street singing, the prized authenticity of the singing voice in all its varied guises and conventions would for Henze beat artificial academicism every time.

A further clue as to what the seemingly honest lyricism of Italian opera may have had to offer Henze lies in a 1955 letter from the librettist of *König Hirsch* to the publishers at Schott Musik. Heinz von Cramer mused:

The great difference ... between the original [Gozzi *favola*] and its new, contemporary transformation, [is] that often the experiences of surrealism had to stand in the place of

²⁴ Translated and reprinted as Hans Werner Henze, "König Hirsch (Il Re Cervo) (1) The Spirit of Italy," in *Music and Politics*, 58. Open letter to Josef Rufer, originally published in *Musiker über Musik: aus Briefen, Tagebüchern und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Josef Rufer (Darmstadt: Stichnote, 1956).

²⁵ Henze, "La Canzone Napoletana," PSS. "Sein Schaffen ist eng verbunden mit dem Denken und Fühlen des Volkes, und seine Melodien in ihrer unvergleichlichen Vollkommenheit, Klarheit und Reinheit, sind dem Singen dieses Volks nah."

²⁶ Henze, "La Canzone Napoletana." "... die Trennung von *musica da piazza* und *musica da camera* [ist] so gut wie nicht existierend."

real naïveté (because such naïveté – sadly – is no longer available to us) ... So we would have at least distanced ourselves a bit from the patina of that language.²⁷

Cramer suggests here that the libretto's language had to somehow convey a certain naïveté, even as the contemporary world denied the possibility of naïveté. His strategy, Cramer explains here, was to arm himself with an alibi of modern surrealism, allowing a now-forbidden sincerity to sneak in through the back door. Extended to Henze's music, this idea is the perfect metaphor for how musical conventions or clichés remain able to channel dramatic meaning, even within a contemporary culture offering only jaded responses to what was once considered trustworthy, authentic, and genuine. The conflict between established convention and the contemporary criticism of its associations was an essential component of the problem of genre in the post-war period because the strength of a genre comes from continuity and communication, two things the post-war aesthetic held deeply suspicious. Writing a piece like *König Hirsch* thus involved a negotiation between two aesthetic poles: one where the supposedly naïve ran the risk of embarrassing the composer because he had become too conventional, and another where the modernist pursuit of new sounds ran the risk of obscuring the dramatic situation.

Manuscript Studies and the Transformation from Sketch to Song

In his open letter to Josef Rufer, Henze reflected that in composing *König Hirsch*, "what seem on the surface the simplest things still present the greatest problems."²⁸ The suggestion here that Henze actually found it surprisingly difficult to write the simple, conventional-sounding music in *König Hirsch* reveals the effort and process inherent in the incorporation of non-modernist idioms such as nineteenth-century opera and folksong into a modern and atonal piece. The final score of *König Hirsch* represents the end result of this process of self-conscious Italianization, but because this transformation of Henze's musical language took place over such a long period of time (the opera took Henze three years to write), and because the process itself was hardly straightforward and unilinear, earlier sources and sketches for the piece can document the course of his development and provide a detailed look into how he approached problems in his materials. The evidence found in sketches and drafts can fill in essential information not only about Henze's musical methods per se (e.g., tone rows or motivic development), but also about changes in priorities or adjustments of approach over time, revealing underlying tensions and problems. Radically different musical settings of the same text can reflect competing interpretations of the libretto's meaning and dramatic drive. The unlocked organization of an earlier, messier draft can uncover how a relationship came to be forged between temporally distant ideas, close in origin but no longer intimate in the printed score. In his study of an extant partial sketchbook for *König Hirsch*, Peter Petersen discusses how the sketchbook reveals the diversity of materials Henze was working to

²⁷ Heinz von Cramer to Ludwig Strecker, dated 20 October 1955, PSS. "... der grosse Unterschied... zwischen dem Original und seiner neuen, zeitgenössischen Umformung, die oft an die Stelle echter Naivität die Erfahrungen des Surrealismus setzen musste (weil uns – leider – jene Naivität nicht mehr gegeben ist)... So hätten wir uns wenigstens ein wenig distanziert von der Patina jener Sprache."

²⁸ Henze, "König Hirsch (Il Re Cervo) (1) The Spirit of Italy," 58.

integrate into his earliest stages of composition, with the newer elements he was attempting to cultivate (particularly, in this sketchbook's case, the "characteristics of the Neapolitan Canzone-Melos") eventually assimilating into his previous, more academic and atonal style.²⁹ Sketches and revisions can thus show how elements of divergent idioms were incorporated into the same piece, the even seamlessness of the final product concealing a mixture of high tension and simple coexistence.

The potential for manuscript material to reveal the problematic underpinnings of *König Hirsch* is realized through close study of the manuscript short score of Act II. A short score in Henze's working methodology was a site of both fixed ideas and flexibility; while the vast majority of Henze's real sketching occurred in working diaries which will not be made publicly accessible until after the composer's death, the Particell represented an intermediary step on the way to a fully fleshed-out and orchestrated autograph.³⁰ Since comparisons usually reveal a close correspondence in overall structure, rhythm, and pitch between the Particell and the eventual printed score, we can conclude that only relatively rarely was the short score of *König Hirsch* a place for sketching or major revision. Examining rejected musical settings for a song text early in Act II, however, allows us to see how Henze responded to the demands of a classically operatic dramatic situation: a closed-form stage song sung by a musician character. The changes in the rhythmic, metrical, formal, and textural features that Henze found most fitting for the text in question reflect a shifting awareness of the song's dramatic status and a changing strategy aimed at making this status intelligible. The introductory pages for the scene leading up to the song are clean, but when the song proper begins, the Particell is riddled with evident false starts and the excision of entire staves and pages. Upon further examination, it becomes clear that these pages show Henze working over a setting of just a few lines of text, part of a three-stanza poem that is set off from the surrounding scene.

The situation dramatized by this text is that of a singing dream. The overall plot of *König Hirsch* is relatively convoluted; at its center is a fairy-tale politics of betrothal, abdication, and assassination, supplemented by seemingly-extraneous clowns, crowds, body doubles and talking animals. Its basic trajectory traces the exile, metamorphosis, and eventual triumphant return of a king whose power and life are threatened by his enemies. Act II takes place in the enchanted wood to which the King has escaped, pursued by the rest of the cast with a range of benign and malevolent motives. As the act opens, the spirits of the forest, personified by a

²⁹ Peter Petersen, "Ein unbekanntes Skizzenheft zu 'König Hirsch' von Hans Werner Henze," in *Opernkomposition als Prozeß*, ed. Werner Breig (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996), 154. "Besonders interessant sind die Versuche, Merkmale des neapolitanischen Canzone-Melos in die atonale Partitur zu integrieren." This article concerns a sketchbook given as a gift to the composer by Ernst Schnabel's wife and subsequently filled with ideas for *König Hirsch*.

³⁰ In the short score, it is typical to see anywhere between two and five separate staves per system, often with orchestration cues notated, with full text underlay and counterpoint but rarely with refinements such as dynamics, phrasing, or articulation. Ulrich Mosch states that the 1940s and 1950s in general reveal many gaps in the documentary record for Henze, lamenting that the working diaries in which much of Henze's sketching took place are unavailable:

Leider werden wohl diese Quellen, welche uns so nahe wie keine anderen an den Ursprung des Schöpferischen bei Henze führen, aus durchaus verständlichen Gründen auch nach dem Ableben für Jahrzehnte für die Öffentlichkeit unzugänglich bleiben.

"Ein Blick in Henzes Werkstatt: Bemerkungen zu den Skizzen und Particelli," in Petersen, *Hans Werner Henze: Die Vorträge des internationalen Henze-Symposiums*, 276.

mixed-voice choir, discover and observe the musician-clown character Checco sleeping in their midst. On the character roster, Checco is listed as either the “dreamy fellow” (“verträumten Burschen” in the full original version, *König Hirsch*) or more specifically as the “dreamy musician” (“verträumter Musikant” in the later chamber abridgement known as *Il Re Cervo*). He has come here in pursuit of his pet parrot, which flew away accompanying the King into the forest. The spirits of the forest consider sealing up the forest to shut Checco out, but they become intrigued by the prospect of listening to his “pretty dreams” (hübsche Träume), which they believe to be about them. Framed by these supernatural listeners, the sleeping Checco narrates a strange and uncanny dream in three verses (Example 3.1).

Example 3.1: Text of Checco’s Dream Song³¹

Durch den Wald fährt ein Karren beladen mit Stille. Kein Arm, der sich rührt. Es knarren die Sielen. Keine Hand, die ihn stößt. Es dreht sich das Rad.	<i>A cart drives through the forest loaded with silence. No arm to move it. The reins creak. No hand to push it. The wheels go around.</i>
Die grüne Schlange, rotäugig, schnell, sie wartet auf Nahrung. Groß ist das Tor aus Lichtern. Schieb fort den Riegel aus Gold, groß ist das Tor aus Schatten. Schieb fort den Riegel, so schwarz.	<i>The green snake, red-eyed, quick, is waiting for nourishment. Great is the gate of lights. Push hard on the golden latch, great is the gate of shadows. Push hard on the latch, so black.</i>
Da schlägt in der Tiefe des Waldes Herz. Wellen erzittern und Farne. Die Schlange umschließt es, sie nährt sich von Stille. Die Schlange bewacht es. Sie hungert nach Stille.	<i>There, beating in the deep heart of the wood. Waves and ferns tremble. The snake clasps [the cart], feeding on the silence. The snake guards [the cart]. She is hungry for silence.</i>

The closed-off verse form and the surreal, almost symbolist imagery of Checco’s dream is registrally atypical in the libretto of *König Hirsch*, even as the plot itself is filled with magical actions; usually, “magic words” in *König Hirsch* are more akin to aphorisms and incantations than to this kind of sinister description. Perhaps noticing this peculiarity, Cramer singled out the song for further explication in the 1955 letter to Schott mentioned above.

I have a particular conception of what the Song of Ghecco [sic] in the second act is concerned with, which I would like to try to explain: I thought with the “cart” drawn by an invisible force, whereby the “reins creak” as if worked by a straining horse or mule (also yes, the wheel turns, even though no one pushes the cart – or better: no one who is visible). I wanted with this to convey a bit of the magical, fairy-tale ambiance of the forest, where many unseen and inexplicable forces operate. It seemed to me therefore

³¹ *König Hirsch*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 4915, 1956), 282-290.

that the cart of silence – though appearing to be unharnessed [i.e., with animals] – still does not move all on its own. This is only to paraphrase my thoughts.³²

The song thus performs two distinct narrative functions. In giving Checco his first extended solo passage, it enhances the immediate portrait of his character as a magical dreamer; it additionally wields these eerie images to enhance the forest's overall supernatural atmosphere.

Cramer referred to this text as Checco's "first Canzone."³³ Henze eventually echoed the designation by labeling it in the short score as the "Canzona di Checco." Though much of Checco's other material in Act II evokes folk song more explicitly, portraying him clearly within the story as a performing musician, the "Canzona" labels for the dream song point toward the establishment of Checco's musicianship from the very beginning of this solo aria. Although the diegetic aspect is perhaps more subtly shaded in this first aria than in later passages, then, the establishment of Checco's musicianship nonetheless governs Henze's compositional work here, such that a "musicianly" musical characterization becomes the central issue for Henze's setting of this text.

Henze settled on certain elements of this aria from the beginning of his compositional process, characteristics that carry over throughout all of the short score material. The song was always in 6/8, and solo woodwinds playing independent lines always dominated the orchestration. This is significant because both of these aspects, meter and orchestration, serve to set off the aria from the rest of the scene. A section of harmonic and rhythmic stasis directly precedes the aria, with thirteen bars of shimmering 4/4 from the low winds, violins playing harmonics, and vibraphone; the 6/8 time and contrapuntal woodwinds that signal the song's beginning thus constitute an abrupt and readily perceptible change. As the main audible ways by which Henze cordons off dramatic segments in the opera, shifts like these in meter or texture are key to sections' legibility as set pieces or songs. The libretto is also geared toward the definition of this song text as dramatically separate and registrally distinct, since the Forest Voices introduce the song by locating themselves clearly as witnesses and listeners before the song's proper beginning. These textual, orchestral, and metrical features that work to separate and set up the song remain consistent throughout all of Henze's working materials, strongly influencing the eventual dramatic and musical shape of the aria.

Even with these consistencies established, however, three different attempts at setting this song text are evident in the short score, each distinct from the version that was eventually

³² Heinz von Cramer to Ludwig Strecker, dated 20 October 1955, PSS. "Was das Lied des GHECCO [sic.] im 2. Akt anbetrifft, hatte ich allerdings eine besondere Vorstellung, die ich zu erklären versuchen möchte: ich dachte mit den Karren gezogen von einer unsichtbaren Macht, weshalb die Sielen knarren wie bei einem Gaul oder Maultier, die sich ins Zeug legen (auch das Rad dreht sich ja, obwohl niemand den Karren stösst – oder besser: niemand, der sichtbar wird. Ich wollte damit ein wenig die magische Märchenatmosphäre des Waldes ausdrücken, wo viele unsichtbare und unerklärliche Kräfte wirken. Es ging mir darum, dass der Karren Stille – obwohl unbespannt scheinend! – doch sich nicht von allein bewegt. Dies nur, um meinen Gedanken zu umschreiben."

³³ Heinz von Cramer to Hans Werner Henze, undated, PSS. Discusses the progress of the libretto. "Seine erste Canzone liegt am Beginn des 2. Aktes – und handelt von der Stille; sie ist nicht direkt traurig, aber lyrisch und ruhig."

orchestrated and published (Table 3.1). The score examples that follow Table 3.1 present complete transcriptions of the sketches (Example 3.2).

Table 3.1: Four Versions of Checco's Dream Song

Version	Length in measures	Text Set	Location in Particell ³⁴	Status
Sketch 1	15	First 9 lines	402 and 403	Rejected
Sketch 2	1	First 2 words	402	Rejected
Sketch 3	16 x 2	Stanzas 1 and 3 ³⁵	404	Adopted with revisions
Final	44	Stanzas 1, 2, 3	Orchestral MS only	As published ³⁶

Example 3.2a: Sketch 1³⁷

Short Score - PSS Microfilm 567, p. 403 bottom

Durch den Wald fährt ein Karren beladen mit

Ob.

B. clar

Short Score - PSS Microfilm 567, p. 402

Stille Kein Arm der ihn zieht, es knarren die Sellen

³⁴ Page numbers from PSS – Microfilm 567.

³⁵ Stanza 2 is included subsequently in the Particell, PSS – Microfilm 567, p. 405, but in a new section, not in the proper order between Stanzas 1 and 3.

³⁶ *König Hirsch*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 282-290.

³⁷ PSS – Microfilm 567, p. 402-403.

Example 3.2a cont.

Kei-ne Hand, die ihn stößt es dreht sich des Rad

Die grü - ne Schlan - ge rot - äü - gig, Schnell, Sie war - tet auf Nah -

- rung Groß ist dar Tor aus Lich - - tern

Example 3.2b: Sketch 2³⁸

Durch den

³⁸ PSS – Microfilm 567, p. 402 (bottom)

Example 3.2c: Sketch 3³⁹

Short Score - PSS Microfilm 567, p. 404

With Stanza 3 only

For this line: Stanza 1, Sung. Stanza 3, played by viola.

Durch den Wald fährt ein

In manuscript this vocal line is written directly atop the vocal line for Stanza 1

Da schlägt in der

Ob.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Kar - ren be - la - - - den mit Stil - - -

Tie - - fe des Wal - des Herz. Wel - - len er

³⁹ PSS – Microfilm 567, p.404.

Example 3.2c cont.

le Kein Arm der sich rührt Es knar -
 zit - tern und Far - ne. die Schlan - ge um - schließt er und nähr -

ren die Sie - len Kei - ne Hand die ihn Stößt
 t sich von Stil - le

Example 3.2c cont.

es dreht sich des Rad
die Schlan - ge be - wacht es Sie hun - gert nach Stil - le

Sketch 1 is a relatively complete rejected version, a total of fifteen bars setting the first one-and-a-half stanzas of text. Though written across two pages labeled out of sequence, close examination clarifies that these two sections are actually one unbroken passage. Directly following Sketch 1 is a solitary opening bar of a second rejected version (Sketch 2) that bears a textural resemblance to the final version. Though no complete version stemming from this bar is extant, there may have been a more complete intermediate version here that has now been lost. The third, most complete version (Sketch 3) is notated separately from the complete Particell on an interpolated sheet of paper. It consists of complete, overwritten and superimposed settings of the first and third stanzas; with minor changes and elaborations, Sketch 3 is consistent with the final rendering of Stanzas 1 and 3 in the orchestral monograph. Its companion Stanza 2 (not reproduced here) is also subsequently written out in the Particell, but its discontinuity with the previous paper size and pagination qualifies this stanza as a separate entity from Sketch 3. Because Sketch 2 is so fragmentary, the most meaningful comparison to be made is between the most complete rejected version, Sketch 1, and Sketch 3, which already largely corresponds to the published score. These are emphatically two different settings: Sketch 3 is not a “revision” of Sketch 1, but rather a complete reformulation in nearly every aspect, and the differences between these first and third attempts reveal important points of stress for the form and content of the aria.

Sketch 1 is considerably less syllabic than Sketch 3, and where melismas do occur in Sketch 3 they are more contained. The most extended melisma in Sketch 3, for example, takes place on the word “knarren,” which means “to creak,” in a clear instance of word-painting; other melismas in Sketch 3 occur as simple octave leaps and repetitions of identical gestures.

The amount of rhythmic complexity in each version correlates to the different degrees of syllabicism. In Sketch 1, for example, the sixteenth-note subdivision is often articulated, even to the point that an eighth-note without further elaboration becomes by far the exception. Grace notes and triplets are also a striking feature of the first version, with ornaments anticipating or decorating several strong beats. The second half of Sketch 1 shows a pattern of ties occurring over the barlines, obscuring the strength of the downbeat. All of these factors combine to create a vocal line of relative rhythmic complexity. The vocal line in Sketch 3, by contrast, articulates the sixteenth-note subdivision or smaller in only two situations: 1) as the “kick” of a dotted rhythm or 2) within the word-painting (on “knarren”) mentioned before. The line is not cluttered with grace notes or triplets, and Henze establishes strong rhythmic consistency.

In Sketch 3, Henze creates a clearer correspondence on the bar-to-bar level between poetic line groupings and their settings. Whereas the rhythms and shapes in Sketch 1 form each bar as a newly composed, independent gesture, the version in Sketch 3 repeats shapes and creates spaces by which to offset the ends of lines of text. This results in consistent pacing and to a predictability of gesture. The first two lines in Sketch 3, for instance, are set with pickups leading toward the strong syllable of the word or grouping (“Wald,” “KAR-ren,” “be-LA-den,” “STIL-le”), the repeating gesture creating a pattern of emphasis for the text’s natural accents and poetic meter. The three lines that follow have a similar profile (with strength placed on “Arm,” “SIE-len,” and “Hand”). In Sketch 1, by contrast, there is much greater variation in the length of time spent articulating individual syllables and in the stress patterns implied by the vocal line’s rhythmic gestures. Whereas the regularity of Sketch 3 helps to make the line breaks and accents clearer and more prominent, Sketch 1 fails to amplify the text’s verse form in this way.

The style of orchestral accompaniment also evolved significantly, with an uneven and inconsistent first sketch becoming more stable and constant by the final rendering. Within Sketch 1, the lack of a steady pattern in the orchestra matches the relative lack of steady rhythm in the vocal line. After the first few bars, which feature an alternation between spiky and wide-ranging running sixteenth-notes and an eighth-quarter, eighth-quarter figure, the woodwinds begin to articulate each eighth note of the 6/8 meter contrapuntally by way of interlocking sustained pitches. Continuing into Stanza 2, Henze doubles the speed of this effect, articulating all of the sixteenth-note subdivisions. He apparently persisted with this perpetual-motion idea through the one-bar fragment in Sketch 2, which shows two staves of running sixteenth notes in a more wide-ranging and arpeggiated fashion than before. This strategy of launching the perpetual motion from the beginning of the song carries over to Sketch 3, where the accompaniment overall is much more orderly and consistent than in Sketch 1. The oboe’s steady dotted-quarters anchor the meter while the clarinet and bass clarinet combine in articulating the continuous sixteenth note subdivision, breaking only in the “breath” before the beginning of a new couplet (for example, before “Kein Arm...”) and at the very end, where the pattern falters in the last two bars and “drops” notes. As a result of this evolution, the final version shows a fundamental consistency and uniformity of texture and rhythmic motion that is noticeably absent from the earlier sketch, providing a more predictable, lower-profile background for the vocal line.

One of the most significant things to emerge from Sketch 3 is the way the first and third stanzas relate to one another, as reflected in their superimposed notation in the Particell. Henze seems to have determined at this point that the form of the dream song will be ABA', and he thus notates the third stanza (A') literally over the top of the already-written first stanza (A).⁴⁰ A handwritten note from Henze after the setting of Stanza 2, which occurs later in the short score, points back to the beginning of the song in Sketch 3 and so is essentially an indication of "da capo" (it reads "A wie A aber mit Orch[ester]"). His A', however, is not a matter of a simple strophic repeat. Instead, the vocal melody from Stanza 1 becomes a viola solo, while the other tutti string sections cover the lines previously assigned to the winds, and the low woodwinds are given a new, additional, slow-moving line. In order to set the text of Stanza 3, the A' section boasts a new vocal line that acts as a countermelody to the old one. The resulting ABA' structure is essential to the closed-form identity of the song and connects it, however metaphorically, to the tradition of da capo opera arias.

The substantial differences between the sketches of Checco's dream song indicate a process by which Henze fundamentally reconceptualized the song's form and musical character in a simpler, more straightforward mode. He eventually composed a setting that is rhythmically static and relatively un-ornamented, with simplified phrasing and text-setting and a more consistent accompaniment. This revised musical strategy reflects Henze's changing interpretation of the dramatic situation. It is no coincidence, in other words, that Sketch 3 is where the explicit designation "Canzona di Checco" appears. This text thus comes into its own as an "Italian" aria, sung by a musician character as a "realistic" song. Though the generic identification as diegetic song is framed by the libretto, it is Henze's revision of the aria that allows it to be legible as song, and in particular as a song sung by a musician character. The revisions are thus part of a complicated negotiation with the idea of diegesis (challenged already in an atonal context) and with the larger difficulty of establishing musical protocols to govern the narrative operations of a modern opera. These fundamentally conventional procedures finally allow the piece to assimilate into operatic tradition and to make musical and dramatic sense within the genre. Reworking his "Canzona" in deference to expectations of the genre of opera, Henze thus performs a balancing act between post-war novelty and operatic tradition, attempting to exploit the still-viable dramatic potential of certain conventions while also trying to maintain the essential modernist claim to originality.

Song, Sprachlichkeit, and the Delineation of Musical Register

A concept in operatic narrative such as "diegesis" derives its meaning as a category in practice principally from the way in which different musical and dramatic registers are defined within a larger system. It is only possible for the conventional signals in Checco's dream song to signify "song" or "aria," in other words, because of how the aria takes its place within the stylistic context of the entire piece and within the established systems of meaning of the genre of opera as a whole. By calling upon (rather than repudiating) these systems of meaning, these conventional and generic signals can serve to mitigate what Hanns-Werner Heister calls the problem of "coding and decoding" in new music. In Heister's formulation, the "encoding" of

⁴⁰ The "B" section in this scheme is, of course, the eventual setting of Stanza 2.

new compositions is problematized when composers purposely position themselves against convention and against easily legible meaning; sense is lost because the artist himself becomes the only person with access to the codes for the resulting pieces.⁴¹ This reading of the consequences of modernist anti-conventionalism for the communication of meaning finds a parallel in a short, early essay by Henze called "Signs":

[A work of art] enlists agreement and discord – and then goes on to create fresh signs, and fresh agreement and fresh discord about these signs ... Meaning spreads powerfully, in waves, and it becomes necessary to interpret it into categories... Once [these] new signs have been accepted and classified, others must soon follow.⁴²

The terms Henze uses here point toward a definition of topoi and musical register for new music. He describes the interactions of a piece's "signs" with agreed-upon meanings, the signs then themselves becoming part of and influencing those same agreed-upon systems of meaning. If genre is a metaphor for belonging, then the situation of that belonging is constantly being challenged and refreshed by the reception of the individual pieces genres comprise. Musical register within a given piece works in exactly this way, just on a smaller scale: a composer creates different dramatic levels that become legible both through reference to accepted external topoi and through the establishment of internal stylistic cues or contrasts. An investigation of the other solo material written for Checco in Act II allows us to see exactly how Henze used these strategies to define and negotiate dramatic register in *König Hirsch*.

Act II Scene 2 features Checco's most explicitly songlike utterance, not coincidentally the most "Neapolitan" and the only song labeled "*canzone*" in the published score. Though the entirety of Scene 2 features Checco as its solo character, the *canzone* proper only takes place in the final section of the scene. The scene's registral differentiation makes possible the legibility of this *canzone*; it is in relation or contrast to the preceding material that one is able to hear the last section as an actualization of the label "*canzone*," with a strong, distinct registral identity. As before, with the dream song, the identity of the *canzone* begins with the libretto, which provides a dramatic caesura to frame the new section and the performance situation (Example 3. 3). Checco has also made explicit references to his musical self throughout the scene, asking the Forest Voices, "Do you want to play a little concert with me?" and telling them, "My heart is full of music."⁴³ The poetic register of the *canzone* (two stanzas, refrains, and a spoken interlude) is highly elevated compared to the monologue and dialogue of the rest of the scene and is rich in obscure imagery that repeatedly references the sea and nature.

⁴¹ Hans-Werner Heister, "Chiffrierung und Dechiffrierung: Probleme der Sinnvermittlung in neuer Musik," in *Verbalisierung und Sinngehalt: Über semantische Tendenzen im Denken in und über Musik heute*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1989), 27–57.

⁴² Hans Werner Henze, "Signs," in *Music and Politics*, 205–206. Originally published as "Gefahren in der neuen Musik," *Texte und Zeichen: eine literarische Zeitschrift*, no. 2 (1955): 213–215.

⁴³ *König Hirsch*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 363. "Willst du ein kleines Konzert machen mit mir? Mein Herz ist voller Musik."

Example 3.3: Text of Checco's Canzone⁴⁴

Als ich mit Vogelzungen noch zum Fisch sprach
auf Regenbogen kamst du geritten
hast in die Träume erste Sehnsucht geschnitten,
bis aus dem Meer die Muschel für ewig geglitten.

*As I spoke to the fishes with the tongue of a bird,
on a rainbow you came riding.
You carved my first longing into dreams
until the seashell slipped out of the sea forever.⁴⁵*

Wind, der mit meinen Haaren spielt,
trug mir davon, was ich liebe.
Mußt dich nun drehn, Südwind,
Nordwind, mußt dich nun drehn.
Ostwind, wann wirst du dich wenden?
Wann wirst du dich wenden, Westwind?

*Wind that plays with my hair,
bring to me what I love.
You must now turn, South Wind,
North Wind, you must now turn.
East Wind, when will you change?
When will you change, West Wind?*

Als ich zum Fischer kam, sah ich dich selten.
Bist nachts auf silbernem Floß geschwommen,
über die dunkle Dünung manchmal gekommen,
aber so schnell hat der Mond dich wieder mitgenommen.

*When I came to the fisherman, I saw you rarely.
You floated on the silvery river at night,
came sometimes over the dark groundswell
but the moon so quickly took you with it again.*

(gesprochen)

Schließlich bist du ganz fortgeblieben. Alle meine Träume
lang hab' ich gewartet, doch du kamst nicht mehr, und das
Wasser und der Himmel waren schwarz. Da bin ich dich
suchen gegangen, fort und fort, um dich wiederzufinden...

(spoken) [no music occurs here]

*Eventually you stayed completely away. I waited for all
of my dreams for a long time, but you didn't come
anymore, and the water and the sky were black. There I
went to look for you, away and away, to find you again...*

Wind, der über mein Gesicht weht,
trug mir davon, was ich liebe.
Mußt dich nun drehn, Südwind
Nordwind, mußt dich nun drehn.
Ostwind, wann wirst du dich wenden?
Wann wirst du dich wenden, Westwind?

*Wind that wafts over my face,
bring to me what I love.
You must now turn, South Wind,
North Wind, you must now turn.
East Wind, when will you change?
When will you change, West Wind?*

The song's clear musical identity begins with the accompaniment (Example 3.4). While Henze's orchestration throughout *König Hirsch* is notoriously romantic and lush, here he uses only guitar, the Southern self-accompaniment instrument *par excellence*. Though written out in conventional note values, the song is unbarred and unmetred for its entire duration. The idiom evoked by the long sustained notes and rhythmic irregularity is improvisatory, though the strophic form complicates that pretense to spontaneity. Instead of a straightforward collage or quotation of "authentic" Neapolitan song, the song presents a now-familiar tension between the gestures and forms of the evoked musical practice and the atonal musical language that otherwise characterizes Henze's idiom. Though the accompaniment (realistically) contains mainly consonant chords, for example, the relationships between the voice and accompaniment and between the successive chords strongly resist straightforward harmonic progression.

⁴⁴ *König Hirsch*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 386-390.

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Matthias Röder for his help in translating the first stanza.

Example 3.4: Checco's Canzone⁴⁶

Canzone
ca. 63

185

Ch. *pp* *f* *mf* *p* *(mf)* *(p)*
Als ich mit Vo - gel - zun - gen noch zum Fisch sprach,

Chitarra *mf* (Klang 8^{va} bassa) *vibr.*

Ch. auf Re - gen - bo - gen

Chit. *p secco* *sf in p* *dolce* *vibr.*

Ch. *mf* *f*
kamst du ge -

Chit.

Ch. *portar la voce* *breve pp* *!*
- rit - ten, hast in die Träu -

Chit. *pp* *perendosi* *ppp*

Ch. *breve p* *mp* *lunga breve lunga ppp*
- me er - ste Seh - sucht ge -

Chit. *p espr.*

Ch. *3* *3* *3*
- schnit - ten, bis aus dem Meer die Muschel für e - wig

Chit. *mp* *3* *3* *3*

Ch. *3* *p* *6*
ge - glit - ten. Wind, der mit mei - nen

Chit. *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *p dolce*

⁴⁶ König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 386-390.

Example 3.4 cont.

The musical score consists of eight systems, each with a vocal line (Ch.) and a guitar line (Chit.). The lyrics are in German and describe a scene where a person is playing cards and another person is being asked to turn around to identify a wind direction.

System 1:
 Ch.: Ha - - ren spielt, trug mir da - von, was ich
 Chit.: *pp*

System 2:
 Ch.: lie - - be. Mußt dich nun drehn,
 Chit.: *p*, *cant.*

System 3:
 Ch.: Südwind, Nord - wind, muß dich nun drehn.
 Chit.: *ppp*, *secco*, *cant.*, *p*

System 4:
 Ch.: Ost - wind, wann - - wirst du dich wen - - den?
 Chit.: *p*, *mp*

System 5:
 Ch.: Wann - - wirst du dich wen - - den, West - -
 Chit.: *p*

System 6:
 Ch.: - - Wind?
 Chit.: *p*

Instead, the vocal line and guitar maintain a kind of lightly dissonant independence, with any given chord in the guitar as likely to clash with the vocal line as to serendipitously coincide. The melodic chromaticism of Checco's vocal line is both dissonant (as is characteristic of Henze) and diegetic (in its contribution to the music's exoticization of Neapolitan culture). The guitar part in the *canzone* is characterized by several recurring ideas that quickly become identified as stock diegetic figures: arpeggiated triads, repeated single notes, or chords followed by a quick, upward scale. That the accompaniment in the refrain and in the coda is entirely diatonic provides an increasing contrast to the steadily chromatic vocal line.

With this song Henze aimed to write something distinct from ersatz tonal folk music while simultaneously suggesting the appropriate diegetic idiom by use of significant aural markers, such as the improvisatory but not declamatory text setting, the obvious orchestration, and diatonic triads and other accompaniment patterns that are idiomatic for the guitar. Combined with the dramatic situation and character type, this song becomes fully legible dramatically despite weird dissonances and difficult intervals that might otherwise be thought to lie beyond the realistic abilities of a musician-clown.

The long, melismatic phrases and sparse guitar accompaniment of this *canzone* have an artless quality that might seem to be the obvious “solution” to the evocation of Neapolitan song within the opera. An early draft of the song in the Particell, however, has very little in common with the final version, casting doubt on the obviousness of the setting style (Example 3.5).⁴⁷ Though both settings are highly chromatic, follow a form of verse-plus-refrain, and use similar patterns of phrase variation, the draft shows a syllabic setting in 4/4 time with melismas decorating only the central word or syllable of each phrase, a stark contrast to the final version’s lengthy, unmeasured, and decorated phrases that end in fermatas.⁴⁸

Example 3.5: Draft version of *Canzone*⁴⁹

Vers 1 wie gedruckt
" 2 ohne Refrain, direkt in den Text gehend,
dann Refrain + Epilog des Orchesters

Als ich zum Fischer kam sah ich dich sel - ten Bist nachts auf sil - ber - nem
Als ich mit Vo - gel - zun - gen noch zum Fisch sprach Auf Re - gen - bo - gen
Fluss ge schwom - men, ü - ber die dun - kle Düh - nung manch - mal ge -
kamst du ge - rit - ten, hast in die Träu - me er - ste Seh - sucht ge -
koin - men a - ber so schnell hat der Mond dich wie - der mit - ge - nom - men
schrit - ten ch aus dem Meer die Mus - chel für e - wig ge - glit - ten
cornosord.

⁴⁷ Klaus Oehl also transcribes and comments upon parts of this version. Cf. *Die Oper König Hirsch*, 210–11.

⁴⁸ The draft setting of the verse consequently occupies just over half the number of quarter-note beats (38) compared to the length of the final version (71).

⁴⁹ PSS – Microfilm 567, p. 440.

The purely diegetic accompaniment of solo guitar also appears to have been a later innovation, as the draft shows an accompaniment that sandwiches vocally-related countermelodies, as well as hunting calls in the French horn, between what appear to be strummed chords for guitar. Henze's changed approach to the *canzone* is most apparent where the vocal melody has been radically altered, as in the sketch's setting of the verse, but peculiarities also emerge from the draft of the refrain. While its melodic gestures are largely similar to the final version (though in transposition), it differs in that it is fully metered and is accompanied by countermelodies in the bassoon, accordion, and other instruments that do not appear in the eventual, guitar-only version of the refrain. A closer look reveals that this drafted orchestral tapestry was not wasted, however. The Particell shows this version of the refrain written over with the text for Checco's lament in Scene 4, these countermelodies becoming the background instead for the third of his *canzoni* (see Examples 3.13 and 3.14 below). The original form of the vocal line for the Scene 2 *canzone* becomes a further countermelody to the Scene 4 lament; significantly, this transformation shows the relationship between these two temporally distinct passages, which are connected both by musical material and by the dramatic circumstances of Checco's musical performances.

As with the rejected versions of Checco's dream song, the early draft of this *canzone* presents an alternate solution to the form, prosody, and dramatic situation provided by Cramer's libretto. In this case, Henze allowed the final version to blossom into the most diegetically pure music in the opera, suspending the demands of meter, orchestration, and harmony to let Checco really "perform." Within the context of the scene as a whole, the motivation for developing this radically removed idiom for the *canzone* comes from the requirement that dramatic conditions such as song or speech be registrally distinct. Henze's eventual approach was thus to forge a true musical division between the idiom of Checco's *canzone* and the varied styles of the rest of the scene, a division that would not have been as pronounced or legible had he proceeded with the draft version.

The music for Checco in the rest of the scene serves to clarify this distinction. The long, through-composed passage that precedes the *canzone* portrays interactions between Checco (as the only solo voice) and two other entities: the chorus of Forest Voices, who from the beginning of the act develop a special relationship with Checco, and his parrot (portrayed not by a singer but rather by instruments and a dancer), with whom he also has a magical relationship. His discourse with these two (super)natural beings is enacted through several different vocal styles corresponding to a range of points on the spectrum from speech to song, all of which are registrally distinct from the *canzone* idiom used at the end of the scene.

In the vocal style closest to speech, Checco utters long phrases of text on steady pitches within a relatively small range, declaimed in free rhythm while an accompanying harpsichord (or the string section) punctuates his phrase beginnings with dissonant chords (Example 3.6).

Example 3.6: Vocal style close to speech⁵⁰

44 *Rubato*
molto piano
 Hast du wirklich gesagt, daß ich wach bin? Und ich sehe dich und bin wach?

⁵⁰ König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 359.

The harpsichord accompaniment immediately recalls classic models of operatic recitative, and, as within those models, the words fall in performance more or less into naturalistic speech-rhythms. The exceptionally free rhythmic pacing of Henze's modern recitative shades into a slightly different, but still fundamentally declamatory kind of vocal writing (Example 3.7).

Example 3.7: Recitative style⁵¹

8 *pp eccitato* Was sind das für Leu - te, sie sind durch - sichts - tig und weiß und sie gehn o - ber - halb des Erd - bo - dens? *accel.*

Though the more active accompaniment requires clear barlines and steady meter, the vocal line is still concentrated in syllabic utterances that fall on a small number of pitches. The rhythm of the declamation is necessarily more artificial than that of the recitative in Example 3.6, but it still approximates the tempo and accents of speech. Neither of these styles could be easily confused with "song." Though pitched throughout, this musical mode clearly signifies a conversational register, as "sprachlich" as possible within a stylized operatic language.

A third vocal style set for Checco in this scene consists of a kind of Sprechstimme with a larger range and spikier intervals, with crosses across the stems to indicate that the pitches themselves can be approximated (Example 3.8).

Example 3.8: Sprechstimme style⁵²

meno mosso, calmo
p solenne, cerimoniale
8 Du bist zu mir ge - kom - men und hast mich auf - geweckt, weil du meine Hil - fe brauchst. Ja, ich ver - stehe.

Compared to realistic speech, the rhythms move quickly, implying agitation; added to the way that the voice modulates in tone throughout its range, this creates a more "heightened" or excited speech mode than the other two, more recitative-like registers, which are less active and less frantic. Going another level "up" in register, certain passages feature legitimately lyrical lines for Checco, using an appropriately operatic range and fully determining both pitch and rhythm in a way that is more varied and stylized than identifiable "operatic" speech would typically be (Example 3.9).

Example 3.9: Lyrical style⁵³

Checco setzt sich langsam auf *pp semplice*
8 Ich füh - le, daß et - was Schö - nes in der Nä - he ist. A - ber ich kann's nicht se - - hen.

⁵¹ König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 366.

⁵² König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 370-71.

⁵³ König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 354-55.

Despite the shapeliness of these lines, however, there are also clear signs that these kinds of passages are still not as fully “sung” in the narrative sense as is the *canzone* that ends the scene. The poetry is not organized into clear stanzas or repeating patterns, and there is none of the motivic consistency that would imply that a song was “constructed.” Moments like the quickness of the tripping words, “in der Nähe ist, aber ich kann’s nicht,” signal that the register is slipping back toward speech. The pacing and phrasing lack the regularity that would suggest the dimensions of a formal song, and the libretto, too, which punctuates these short passages with words from the Forest Voices or with actions in the form of stage directions for the parrot or for Checco, does not suggest a closed form. These sorts of “arioso” passages thus do not possess the same kind of closed and consistent identity that Henze reserves for song alone. It is thereby apparent, given the context of Checco’s vocal styles throughout the scene, just how particular, and how distinct, the diegetic song idiom really is.

Whenever a libretto calls for a long utterance by one character not in dialogue with others, the composer has to decide how to stage it musically: whether, for example, as soliloquy, as aria, or as song. As a final case study, Checco’s solo lament in Act II Scene 4 (the so-called third *canzone*) demonstrates a further method by which musical and dramatic register is delineated. Unlike Checco’s other two “songs,” which contained especially poetic imagery and were carefully marked off from the surrounding musical context, Checco’s words here are flexible in register: they are not in verse, they are characterized by direct address and shifts in tone, and they connote both love song and lament (Example 3.10).

Example 3.10: Text of Checco’s Lament⁵⁴

Ach! Ach! Ich weiß nicht mehr was ich tun soll. Ich habe alles verdorben. Wald, gib mir einen Rat. Ich bin allein. Niemand spricht mit mir. Wer kann mir helfen? Ich wollte meinen Freund retten. Nun habe ich Angst, ihm in die Augen zu sehn.

Ah! Ah! I don’t know anymore what I should do. I have spoiled everything. Forest, give me some advice. I am alone. Nobody talks to me. Who can help me? I want to save my friend. Now I’m afraid to look him in the eyes.

Ich möchte dir sagen können, wie sehr ich dich liebe. Aber meine Zunge ist schwer von unnützen Worten. Zu nichts bin ich geschickt. Kannst du mich überhaupt lieben? Ich möchte dich sagen hören, daß du mich liebst.

I would like to be able to tell you how much I love you. But my tongue is heavy from unused words. I am sent to nothing. Can you love me at all? I would like to hear you say that you love me.

Ich weiß nicht weiter. Mein Freund im Regenbogenkleid, hilf mir! Ich habe Angst. Aber ich muß doch nach dir sehn. Wer weiß, was sie dir angetan haben. Nur, bitte, blick’ mich nicht gleich an!

I know nothing further. My friend in rainbow clothes, help me! I am afraid. But I must still look for you. Who knows what they have done to you. Only, please, don’t look at me right now!

The held notes and ornaments that begin the solo (Example 3.11), in an unaccompanied entrance marked *alla napolitana*, allude to the second song’s long chromatic melismas. As the orchestra enters in a kind of late-Romantic harmonic tapestry, and as Checco’s vocal lines become increasingly declamatory, monotone, and conversational, the initial nod to the register of song seems to be forgotten.

⁵⁴ *König Hirsch*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 4915, 1956), 476-481.

Example 3.11: Checco's Lament, mm. 421-435⁵⁵

Checco
alla napolitana *lamerlanto* *f* *mf* *pp* *abbandonarsi*

Ch. Ach! Ach! Ich weiß nicht mehr, was ich tun soll.

Arpa, Clar. basso, Fag.

425 $\text{♩} = 60$ *sotto voce*

Ch. Ich habe alles verderben. Wald, gib mir einen Rat.

Viol. *p* *sotto voce*
 Va.
 Vcl.

Ch. *pp* Ich bin allein. Niemand spricht mit mir; Wer kann mir helfen?

Ob. *p cart.*
 Cor. ingl.
 Clar. *pp*
 Clar. basso

Ch. Ich wollte meinen Freund retten. Nun habe ich Angst, ihm in die Augen zu sehen.

pp

In real time, we might be tempted to read the initial “songlike” outburst as a mere byproduct of Checco’s heightened emotional state, but the subsequent passage (Example 3.12) contradicts such an interpretation with the plainly diegetic associations of the iconic guitar’s bare arpeggio and strummed chords. Significantly, this musical cue occurs just before Checco switches textual registers, changing from third person, with the parrot as a “him” (“Nun habe ich Angst, ihm... zu sehen”), to a direct form of address, “you” (“Ich möchte dir sagen können ...”).

⁵⁵ König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 4915, 1956), 476-477.

Example 3.12: Checco's Lament, mm. 436-443⁵⁶

Unlike the purely diegetic music in Scene 2, however, Checco's words are accompanied not only by the guitar but also by a plaintive bassoon that provides a chromatic countermelody to the vocal line in a kind of orchestral writing that is reminiscent of the woodwind and viola countermelodies in the dream song. Similarly, the vocal writing of Checco's lament (marked "canto semplice"), resembles the vocal lines in the dream song much more than it does the Neapolitan song: syllabically set and rhythmically clear, with accents placed on the proper syllables without ornamental interference.

Though there is a clear idiomatic and registral association between the lament and the dream song, the lament is also strongly connected to the Scene 2 *canzone*. As mentioned before, much of the musical material for the Scene 4 lament was originally drafted for the *canzone*, including the bassoon solo, which was originally written to accompany the *canzone's* spoken interlude (Example 3.13). Once the spoken interlude became entirely unaccompanied, the text's notated rhythm was removed, its bassoon accompaniment repurposed for Scene 4 with the superimposition of the lament's text (Example 3.13 line 2).

Example 3.13: Draft of Canzone 2, spoken interlude, with Canzone 3 (Lament) overwritten⁵⁷

⁵⁶ König Hirsch, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 478.

⁵⁷ PSS – Microfilm 567, p. 440.

The orchestration of the Scene 4 lament also features the accordion, another “vernacular” instrument; its melodic line is a copy of the vocal melody from the refrain of the Scene 2 *canzone*, which was originally drafted in transposition and with more rhythmic regularity than its eventual form.

The draft of this material in the short score, where both songs appear on a single system, reveals the close relationship between Checco’s second and third songs (Example 3.14). In the sketch example, the first staff line (the original refrain of the *canzone*) became the accordion solo in Scene 4, whereas the more syllabic, simpler melody on the second staff line (with the lament text) was added later, thus transporting the material from Scene 2 to Scene 4. This positions the Scene 4 lament as a kind of further refrain of the Scene 2 *canzone*, recapitulating the material and bringing it within the same registral orbit. The closed identity of the accordion melody as it comes from the Scene 2 refrain also reinforces the identity of the lament as a third *canzone*: as another, if less obvious, closed-form song.

Example 3.14: Draft of Canzone 2, refrain, with Canzone 3 (Lament) overwritten⁵⁸

Musst dich nun drehn Süd-wind Nord-wind musst dich nun drehn! Ost-wind,
 UN-NUT-ZEN WOR-TEN ZU NICHTS BIN ICH GE-SCHICKT

The final section of Checco’s Scene 4 solo, his direct plea for help (Example 3.15), takes on “songlike” characteristics in yet another way. The consonant guitar returns to prominence, while the rest of the orchestra falls away. While Checco sings this last section in a steady, declamatory monotone that circles back to the idiom of the introductory passage (m. 433-435), the surprising purity and honesty here of the consonance between voice and accompaniment (which is somewhat rare, even among Henze’s relatively tonal passages) lends this last section of the song an incantatory atmosphere. Registrally, this final section falls somewhere between the conversational declamation of Checco’s “everyday” speech and the heightened register of aria or Neapolitan song. If the desperate words and the dramatic gesture (he is on his knees) imply something higher than speech (even “operatic” speech) alone, the guitar perhaps confirms that Checco’s pleas are yet another kind of performance.

⁵⁸ PSS – Microfilm 567, p. 441.

Example 3.15: Checco's Lament, mm. 463-477⁵⁹

beugt sich zum Bündel

mp sotto voce
 Ich weiß nicht wei - ter. Mein Freund im Re-gen-bo-gen - kleid, hilf mir! Ich ha-be Angst.

469 *mp*
 A-ber ich muß doch nach dir sehn. Wer weiß, was sie dir an - ge - tan ha-ben. Nur, biß - te, blick' mich nicht gleich an! Er hebt den Mantel vom Bündel.

(Chit.)
 Cor. Ingt.
 Archi

With the multiplicity of suggested idioms in Checco's third *canzone*, Henze uses previously established musical cues to shape the register of the character's utterances. Though the third song is much freer overall in form and much more diverse in style than were the first two solo arias, the mixture of elements from both the first two solo songs and from Checco's more casual *Sprachlichkeit* enables shifts in musical register to match the more flexible text. By setting both song and speech materials for Checco in Act II, Henze fashions a musical logic that gives these different styles their legibility and delineation, subsequently allowing him to manipulate these different registers for dramatic effect. The forging of these registral distinctions is essential to how *König Hirsch* "makes sense" as an opera, or, perhaps, how Henze *makes* the opera's sense. Furthermore, these registral cues are established through a combination of internal idioms, established within the context of this opera alone, and external signals, in dialogue with historical operatic practices and with generic, conventional, or topical expectations that might seem, to some, to be dangerously regressive and old-fashioned.

Melody, the "Renegade's Hara-kiri"

No matter how painstaking the labor that went into the delineation of these arias, no matter how delicate the attempted balance between opera's history and opera's modern problems, the operatic songs to which they gave rise in *König Hirsch* ultimately became the principal emblem of Henze's artistic failure. The composer's now-notorious conflict with the conductor charged with the premiere, Hermann Scherchen, was centered squarely on the supposed redundancy of song. Their power struggle, from which Henze did not emerge victorious, concerned a long list of cuts the conductor planned to execute in order to temper the opera's perceived excesses and reduce the bulging, convoluted, monstrously long opera to a more probable scale. The main victims of this slaughter were the opera's arias, including, among many others, the entirety of Checco's dream song, the second half of the *canzone* in Act II

⁵⁹ *König Hirsch*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4915, 1956), 480-481.

Scene 2, and the greater part of the Scene 4 lament.⁶⁰ Henze's cries of protest in response to the planned cuts prompted Scherchen to justify his decision with a withering motto: "What do you want, my dear? We don't write arias anymore today."⁶¹ One *ought* not be so foolish as to write arias, his words imply; it *isn't done*. Even if we might not want to take sides in this quarrel, let us consider briefly the values the story illustrates. Scherchen represents a certain kind of gatekeeper or aesthetic policeman who can decide (at least for one run) what will be heard. He then wields his considerable power over the young composer, who later, with his own fame and renown established, can cast himself in the part of the persecuted but righteous artist. The "we" and "today" in Scherchen's statement imply an indisputable aesthetic consensus among an incontestable modernist mainstream, accompanied by an investment in the idea of an artistic Zero Hour by which the traditional is not only distasteful but politically impossible.

A previously unidentified letter from Henze to Scherchen, dated just three weeks before the premiere, sheds new light on the facts and significance of this widely cited incident.⁶² In this lengthy document, Henze reiterates his position in the argument in overwhelmingly formal tones, imploring Scherchen to reconsider a number of his artistic decisions. Since their conversation on Saturday (1 September, when the confrontation apparently occurred), Henze begins, he has been thinking about the argument constantly and wants to try to write his thoughts down in a letter so as to avoid being tripped up and befuddled, both by the enormous respect he feels for the conductor and by the harshness with which Scherchen often cuts him off in conversation.⁶³ As a justification for the kind of opera he has chosen to write, Henze describes the intensity of his recent experiences watching operas by composers such as Mozart, Verdi, and Puccini with an Italian audience, asserting that these experiences were revelatory for him. Because watching these operas in this context had a

⁶⁰ Oehl, *Die Oper König Hirsch*, 338-340. An appendix to this monograph indicates that the first of Checco's arias was cut from the premiere performance, as it was from the subsequent, "composer-sanctioned" abridged chamber version, *Il Re Cervo*. Oehl's Table B shows that the first *canzone* was deleted for the premiere in 1956, while the second and third songs were shortened (the second half of the second song was removed, and m. 425-462 were removed from the third song). This table was made possible by Oehl's examination of the marked-up piano-vocal score owned by Hermann Scherchen.

⁶¹ Different exact wordings of this slogan exist; cf. Klaus Geitel, *Hans Werner Henze* (Berlin: Rembrandt Verlag, 1968), which was the first comprehensive life-and-works study of Henze. On page 73, Geitel writes: "Auf die Antwort, er habe ausgerechnet die Arien weggestrichen, repliziert Scherchen gelassen: 'Was wollen Sie den, mein Lieber. Wir schreiben doch heutzutage keine Arien mehr.' 'Wer ist wir?' fragt Henze erbittert zurück." As the letter quoted below makes clear, it is likely that Henze only later came up with the "comeback" ("Who's 'we'?").

⁶² Hans Werner Henze to Hermann Scherchen, dated 4 September 1956, PSS. The first, identifying page of this letter had long been filed in the folder of Scherchen-Henze correspondence in the PSS, but the remaining seven typescript pages (plus one page that was revised and retyped) had been separated from the first page and filed under the "Unidentified Texts" [Nicht indentifizierte Texte] in the collection of Henze's text manuscripts, which is where I uncovered it in October, 2010.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1. "seit unserem Gespräch auf Ihrer Terrasse am Samstag habe ich unablässig an das gedacht, was Sie mir gesagt haben, und mir sind sehr viele Gedanken gekommen, die ich Ihnen heute in Form eines Briefes niederlegen möchte, um zu vermeiden, daß Ihre Reaktionen und Antworten auf das, was ich unbedingt zu sagen habe, mich verwirren könnten, verwirren erstens wegen des ungeheueren Respekts vor Ihrer Persönlichkeit und vor Ihrer Arbeit, und zweitens vor der Härte, mit der Sie oft bei mir unterbinden, Ihnen das, was mir mein innerstes Bedürfnis ist, zu sagen."

direct impact on his work in *König Hirsch*, he acknowledges that the resulting similarities may make his opera seem derivative.⁶⁴ He continues:

So when you said to me on Saturday, "We don't write arias anymore these days," I would have had to answer you immediately that I do not understand what you mean by the word WE.⁶⁵

Henze states that he considers the arias extremely important to *König Hirsch* because of his strong investment in opera's ability to express the highest personal emotions of the hero in aria form.⁶⁶ His declaration here of the importance of arias draws on similar rhetoric as in the *Melos* program note (the idea that singing emotions in the context of opera becomes "realistic"), but in this instance he more pointedly addresses the ideology implicit in Scherchen's cutting of the arias – the assumption that they are somehow surplus, an excess, and not integral to the musical or dramatic fabric of the work.

Much of the remainder of the letter is devoted to extensive notes about Scherchen's decisions in the cutting and tempi of particular passages. "I have to say these things to you," Henze writes, "despite the danger that you'll consider me bourgeois or old-fashioned."⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that Henze apparently revised and retyped the fifth page of his letter to excise two references he had made to Puccini, first in the second half of a sentence that starts out describing the extended solo scene for Checco in Act II as "pure bel canto" and then admitting, "I had just then attended a performance of *Tosca* in the presence of 5000 charmed Neapolitans."⁶⁸ Henze then reveals that the fourth scene of Act II (wherein the opera's antagonist forces Checco to talk by threatening the life of his beloved parrot) was actually

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1–2. "...das Theater auf mich eine große Faszination ausübt, gehört zu meiner Arbeit in den letzten Jahren die immer intensivere Beobachtung dessen, was man unter Opern-Theater versteht. So darf ich Ihnen nicht verhehlen, daß die Opern Mozarts, aber auch die von Verdi und auch die von Puccini sobald ich sie im Rahmen eines italienischen Publikums, unter Italienern kennen lernte, und tief als Offenbarung erlebte, einen sehr starken Einfluß auf meine Arbeit ausübten. Vielleicht sogar manchmal soweit, daß sich Ähnlichkeiten im Stil ergaben. Mein Ehrgeiz war es aber, aus dem Erlebnis dieser für mich vollkommen neuen Welt auch zugleich einen in meiner Sprache gehaltenen Niederschlag zu konzipieren, so daß die mögliche Kritik, meine Oper sei epigonal, mich nicht mit der ganzen Härte treffen könnte."

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2. "Wenn Sie mir am Samstag also sagten, 'Wir schreiben heute keine Arien mehr', hätte ich Ihnen sofort darauf antworten müssen, daß ich nicht verstehe, was Sie mit dem Wort WIR meinen."

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2. "Die Faszination der Oper besteht für mich in der großen 'klassischen' Ruhe, in welcher sich die Formen entwickeln, und die phantastische Freiheit, mit der sich die Helden einer Oper erlauben, die Handlung aufzuhalten und ihren höchst persönlichen Gefühlen in Arien Ausdruck zu verleihen. Daher sind für mich die Arien im 'König Hirsch' von allergrößter Wichtigkeit."

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3. "Ich muß Ihnen diese Dinge sagen, auch auf die Gefahr hin, daß Sie mich für bürgerlich oder altmodisch halten."

⁶⁸ Ibid., 5. "Bei der 2. Szene (Partitur S 513) geniere ich mich nicht, Ihnen zu sagen, daß ich es mir als reine belcanto-Musik vorgestellt habe, nachdem ich gerade einer Aufführung der 'Tosca' vor 5000 verzauberten Neapolitanern beigewohnt hatte." There are two copies of p. 5 of the letter, the unsent version of which is clear, because it still has the original (non-carbon-copy) paper attached. The only difference between the two pages is the excision of the two sentences that reference Puccini.

inspired by the extortion scene in Act II of *Tosca*.⁶⁹ Scherchen had apparently said in their argument that he specifically did not want to present a “boring, verismo opera,” so perhaps it was with that comment in mind that Henze decided to cut these two allusions, thinking better of them in light of Scherchen’s obvious prejudice.⁷⁰ The letter ends with a plea that Scherchen take his concerns seriously and rethink his assessment of the opera.

I would be very happy if you could free yourself from the thought that my ideal is bourgeois or antiquated ... Everything should be singing, singing, singing, from calm, beauty, and freedom. It is an effort against despair, against fear, against anxiety, and against instability.⁷¹

Henze’s appeal here to abstract and frankly Romantic notions of freedom and beauty seem a lame and impotent gesture against the power of the modernist conductor. Furthermore, what was under attack here, it seems, was not only *König Hirsch* but also the very idea of opera itself – bourgeois, old fashioned, traditional – as reincarnated and reinterpreted in Henze’s piece.

The detail and gravity of Henze’s eight-page epistle makes Scherchen’s postcard reply seem all the more meager and dismissive by contrast.⁷² Peppered throughout the postcard are three acknowledgments of insults from the original argument, to which Henze explicitly objected in his letter, but the apologies the conductor issued were perfunctory at best.

I regret the “harshness” (that I ask you to interpret [instead] as terseness) ... I regret too: “We write today, etc.” [i.e., the beginning of the famous quote] // though with the big words [you use] I just don’t follow you... the “boring verismo opera” – regretted!⁷³

Despite his nominal contrition, Scherchen’s derisive response to Henze’s declared affinity with the Italian opera he had recently experienced adds insult to injury and is characteristically anti-operatic. He continues:

I disagree with you: Mozart/Verdi – experienced in the context of an Italian audience – unfortunately do not function there as “revelations” [Offenbarungen] // and really, why SUCH BIG words [i.e., like “Offenbarungen”]?⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid., 5. “Vielleicht darf ich mir erlauben, Ihnen hier als Idee die Erpressungsszene im II. Akt der ‘Tosca’ zu nennen, eine von mir sehr bewunderte Szene, an der sich in aller Bescheidenheit diese Komposition inspiriert hat.”

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4. “Heute mittag sagten Sie mir, daß Sie ja keine langweilige, veristische Oper aufführen wollten. In meiner anfänglichen Verlegenheit wußte ich Ihnen darauf nicht zu antworten.”

⁷¹ Ibid., 7–8. “Ich wäre sehr glücklich, wenn Sie sich von dem Gedanken frei machen könnten, daß diese meine Ideale bürgerlich oder antiquiert sind... Alles soll singen, singen, singen, von Ruhe, Schönheit und Freiheit. Es ist ein Versuch, gegen die Verzweiflung, gegen den Schrecken, gegen die Unruhe und gegen die Unbeständigkeit.”

⁷² Other parts of this postcard dealing with musical concerns are transcribed in Oehl, *Die Oper König Hirsch*, 28.

⁷³ Hermann Scherchen to Hans Werner Henze, dated 5 September 1956, PSS. “ich ... bedaure sogleich die ‘Härte’ (die ich Sie als Kürze zu verstehen bitte) ... ich bedaure auch: ‘Wir schreiben heute etc.’ // mit den ‘grossen Worten’ aber komme ich dann wieder nicht mehr mit/ ... die ‘langweilige veristische Oper’ - - : bedauert!”

⁷⁴ Ibid. “ich widerspreche Ihnen: Mozart / Verdi – im Rahmen eines italienischen Publikums erlebt – wirken leider gerade da nicht als ‘Offenbarungen’ // und warum überhaupt SO GROSSE Worte?”

Scherchen's unwillingness to respect Henze's Italian and operatic inspirations shows how blind a renowned artist coming from a strong modernist viewpoint could be to the artistic validity of opera and its traditional forms. Imagine if Henze's references to Puccini had been retained!

* * *

And so Henze's ultimate failure in the eyes of the modernist avant-garde, artists whose rising prestige was earned through their political renunciation of the past, came down to the conventionality and excess of song. The enslavement of opera to narrative, to lyrical beauty, to dramatic tradition, to audience expectations, was simply not overcome – and indeed, Henze seemed not to even try to overcome it. Not coincidentally, the heresy of the aria also stands at the heart of another bitter tale Henze has frequently told, that of the premiere of his *Nachtstücke und Arien* at Donaueschingen in 1958, only two years after *König Hirsch*:

After the first few bars, Boulez, Stockhausen, and also my friend Nono, got up together and left the auditorium, making sure that everyone saw them. They weren't even prepared to *listen* to this music that sounded so different from theirs.⁷⁵

Christian Bielefeldt has contended that the lucid, subjective, and lyrical sounds of *Nachtstücke und Arien* were a purposeful and direct challenge to the objective and non-communicative ideology attributed to Adorno and his Darmstadt acolytes.⁷⁶ "The idea of the tune," reflected Henze in 1986, "was the greatest audacity of the 1950s. The renegade's hara-kiri."⁷⁷

This renegade's rhetoric is perhaps a just reaction reversing the harsh aesthetic terms that treated tunes, consonance, and operatic conventions with uncritical disdain. By calling attention to the "audacity" of the tune, Henze has ironically reabsorbed and refashioned the avant-garde discourse of rebellion, now applied to lyricism rather than to the more "usual" modernist musical traits. It also seems no coincidence that the interview in which this remark was recorded was published in the year that followed the world premiere, at long last, of the original, full version of *König Hirsch*, arias and all, in Stuttgart in 1985. By that point, perhaps, the aesthetic ideology that had so roundly rejected the arias and the old-fashioned excess they seemed to represent in the time of the opera's composition had finally relaxed. With these changed aesthetic priorities in place, it becomes possible to interrogate the methods by which Henze formed and shaped his gargantuan *König Hirsch*, the young composer seeking to accommodate his own previous idioms to the Italian operatic tradition of which he sought to become part. What seemed an easy retreat into the bondage of convention represented a significant effort to assimilate and interpret these conventions, and put them to use in a new musical era. The bondage may well have been easy, in other words, but the tying up was not.

⁷⁵ Hans Werner Henze, "German Music in the 1940s and 1950s," in *Music and Politics*, 46.

⁷⁶ Christian Bielefeldt, "'Merkwürdige, zarte sinnliche Erregung': Psychoanalytische Wege zur frühen Musikästhetik Hans Werner Henzes," *Musik & Ästhetik* 10, no. 37 (January 2006): 53.

⁷⁷ Ian Strasfogel, "'All-Knowing Music' – Dialogue on Opera – Hans Werner Henze and Ian Strasfogel," in Rexroth, *Der Komponist Hans Werner Henze*, 141.

CHAPTER FOUR
The Opera Underneath: Carl Orff's *Oedipus der Tyrann*

Introduction: Archaeology, Access, and Contemporary Orff Scholarship

Source study can feel like a kind of archaeology. Poring over piles of manuscript material in varying stages of completion, one gets a sense of the chaos of creativity and of the ways in which everyday life seeps into the compositional process: a sketch written on the back of a concert program or party invitation, a coffee stain, notes-to-self written on paper from a hotel or an airline.¹ Such finds can seduce a scholar into a feeling of intimacy with a composer in a way that the sterility and permanence of a printed score never could. Yet the affection this breeds, and the feeling of the immediacy of historical time that accompanies it, can be dangerous. How does an imaginary kinship affect scholarly rationality when those with whom we feel this time-traveling bond have fatal flaws and checkered pasts? This is an important reminder, not only of the humanity of the artists we study, but also of the scholar's own subjectivity and the ways in which a real or imagined personal attachment to the composer can influence the questions we are willing to ask. When closeness to and intimacy with the sources themselves are primary objectives, maintaining critical distance from the person who created those sources becomes difficult.

In the case of Carl Orff, a polarized scholarly discourse resists from all sides the addition of further insights from a sizeable collection of previously untapped primary materials.² On one hand, tensions concerning biographical details have overshadowed sustained musicological engagement with much of his oeuvre; on the other hand, writing about Orff's later works may inescapably shade into an advocacy that risks endorsing troubling aspects of his career. The personal investment and intellectual engagement that results from sustained analysis or source study can make this calculation even more problematic. Though scholars might prefer to approach works from a position of sympathy for their creator, can works still be even-handedly examined in cases for which such assumed sympathy is politically problematic?

A summary of the recent controversy in Orff scholarship contextualizes these difficulties in positioning my own work. Michael Kater, the historian who has published most extensively on Orff's career during the Third Reich, has presented the case that Orff, though definitively not a member of the Nazi party, benefitted from the Nazi regime.³ This

¹ This is not a hypothetical list; all of these examples are represented in the collection of manuscripts for Orff's *Oedipus der Tyrann*.

² The only references I have found to the sketches for *Oedipus der Tyrann* are in the following passage by Andreas Liess: "Drafts of five complete versions of the first scene (Priest-Kreon) exist. A comparison of these indicates the methods by which Orff worked out a style specific to a setting of *Oedipus*." Andreas Liess, *Carl Orff*, trans. Adelheid Parkin and Herbert Parkin (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966), 148. Liess does not discuss the versions in further detail; this statement implies that Liess interpreted the process of creating the first scene as a closed activity, at the end of which a style had been finalized. My examination of the sketches shows that this was not the case.

³ Michael H. Kater, "Carl Orff im Dritten Reich," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 43, no. 1(1995): 1–35; Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), especially p. 184–195; Kater, "Carl Orff: Man of Legend," in *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits*, 111–143 (Oxford: Oxford

contradicted both the post-war narrative claiming that Orff had been “wronged” by the Nazis and also a too-facile branding of Orff as a Nazi and his music as Nazi music.⁴ Before the mid-1990s, most musicologists who studied Orff were invested in his innocence, in keeping with the black-and-white fiction of denazification; other than this self-reinforcing discourse, however, there is little evidence to support a claim to victimhood or opposition.⁵ Meanwhile, increasing attention to *Carmina Burana* and its positive reception in the Third Reich meant that Orff’s anti-Nazi credentials, which had previously hinged on the Nazis’ supposed *distaste* for *Carmina Burana*, now suffered with that piece’s reversal of reputational fortune.⁶

While not endorsing a straightforward identification of Orff with Nazism, Kater discusses two wartime commissions that tie Orff directly to the regime.⁷ Orff additionally encouraged Schott to promote his pedagogical literature through official channels, and he accepted a Reichsmusikkammer prize in 1942.⁸ Claims about Orff’s political naïveté in accepting these honors and commissions aside, it is clear, Kater points out, that he must have been considered politically sound – and certainly not oppositional – for the officials in the Third Reich to have approved them.⁹

Though Orff was not the worst of the Nazi collaborators Kater discusses, he finds one story particularly damning: that Orff fabricated a relationship with the White Rose movement and misrepresented his friendship with its leader, Kurt Huber, in order to be denazified by an American intelligence officer, Newell Jenkins.¹⁰ The story, which Jenkins related directly to Kater, has proved controversial, resulting in what Kater described as “pressure,” “threats,” and “ad hominem attacks” from the Orff-Zentrum Munich (OZM), in particular from then-director Hans-Jörg Jans, and from the “reactionary” Orff Foundation.¹¹ Kater’s criticism of Orff himself has by now been overshadowed by his increasing vitriol directed at the OZM and the institution of Orff scholarship more broadly.¹²

University Press, 2000); Kater, “In Answer to Hans Jörg Jans” *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2000): 711–712. See also Michael H. Kater and Albrecht Riethmüller, eds., *Music and Nazism: Art under Tyranny, 1933–1945* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003).

⁴ Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 111.

⁵ Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 112.

⁶ Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 112.

⁷ Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 130–133. These two commissions are the opera *Antigonae* and the music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which has been particularly controversial because it was commissioned to replace Felix Mendelssohn’s “racially-tainted” music for the same play.

⁸ Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 133.

⁹ Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 131.

¹⁰ Kater, *The Twisted Muse* 190–192; Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 133–140. For further information on Orff’s denazification, see David Monod, “Verklärte Nacht: Denazifying Musicians under American Control,” in *Music and Nazism: Art under Tyranny, 1933–1945*, ed. Michael H. Kater and Albrecht Riethmüller (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003), 300–303.

¹¹ Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 284.

¹² Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, n. 182, p. 327. Kater insists, for example, that there was a systematic program of “white-washing efforts of Orff defenders after World War II, especially of the CM [Carl-Orff-Zentrum] and the Orff Foundation, through denial and obfuscation.”

Ironically, Kater first publicized his findings about Orff and Jenkins at a conference on music in the Third Reich held at the OZM in 1994.¹³ Following that event, the OZM “confronted” him, accused him of constructing a “willfully negative” portrayal of Orff, and in an act that Kater considered “censorship,” neglected to publish the conference volume with Kater’s findings.¹⁴ Kater has dismissed later rebuttals by reference to other scholars’ “insider” positions, calling Werner Thomas an “Orff acolyte and apologist... who has served as a sort of court hagiographer for both the Orff Foundation and the Orff Zentrum for years” and claiming that Oliver Rathkolb had been “commissioned” by Jans to “verify or falsify the Jenkins story.”¹⁵

In a 2000 article concerning Orff’s settings of two Brecht texts in the 1920s, Kim Kowalke used several of Kater’s historical arguments as a point of departure; even though he sought partially to exonerate Orff’s compositional style from the charge of “inherent” fascism, complicating the general Anglophone skepticism toward Orff at the end of the twentieth century, Kowalke reignited the controversy.¹⁶ He faced challenges in obtaining permission to reproduce his musical examples and was annoyed by Schott’s requirement that he send them the article before they would consider permission. Schott’s subsequent review determined that the article constituted irresponsible scholarship because it relied on Kater’s account of Jenkins’s testimony.¹⁷ Kowalke’s wish to include the story from Kater contradicted the publishing house’s “explicit mandate to safeguard Orff’s interests in cases like this.”¹⁸ Kowalke interpreted Schott’s statement as a conflict of interest that stifled scholarly inquiry and urged

¹³ Kater and Riethmüller, *Music and Nazism*, 12. Kater writes here that his findings then “did not please the directors” of the OZM, who “viewed their institution as a dedicated ‘composer institute,’ implying an uncompromising guardian mandate on behalf of Orff.”

¹⁴ Kater and Riethmüller, *Music and Nazism*, 12.

¹⁵ Kater, “In Answer to Hans Jörg Jans,” 711. The Jenkins story has been challenged by Werner Thomas and Oliver Rathkolb, and despite Kater’s constant reassertion and reappraisal of the facts in question, current director Thomas Rösch sides with Rathkolb’s research when he states: “The allegation that the composer had pretended to have been a founding member of the White Rose after the war has definitely and finally been disproved” ; “Als eindeutig widerlegt gilt schließlich die Behauptung, der Komponist habe nach dem Krieg vorgegeben, Gründungsmitglied der *Weißten Rose* gewesen zu sein (Hinweis von Oliver Rathkolb.)” Thomas Rösch, “Carl Orff,” in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Personenteil vol. 12 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004), 1400.

¹⁶ Kim Kowalke, “Burying the Past: Carl Orff and His Brecht Connection” *Musical Quarterly* 84 no. 1 (2000), 58–83; and Kim Kowalke, “A Reply to Hans Jörg Jans,” *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2000), 705–710. Though Kowalke takes the contested details of Orff’s biography as true, he argues against *Carmina Burana*’s classification as “Nazi music” by showing how certain of Orff’s compositional characteristics – for example, the ostinati and simplicity of melody – can be traced back to his earlier pieces. As evidence that the anti-Orff bias is insufficiently historical, Kowalke cites a 1995 article by Leon Botstein, which casually referred to Orff as a “Nazi sympathizer.” Leon Botstein, “After Fifty Years: Thoughts on Music and the End of World War II,” *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1995): 226, quoted in Kim Kowalke, “Burying the Past,” 70. Richard Taruskin suggests that the example of the Brecht settings just demonstrates once again that Orff’s music is particularly good at conveying propagandistic messages through its “pounding rhythm and the endless ostinato. Repeat anything often enough, Dr. Goebbels said (quoting Stalin) and it becomes the truth.” Richard Taruskin, “Can We Give Poor Orff a Pass at Last?,” in *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 165. Originally published as “Orff’s Musical and Moral Failings,” *New York Times*, 6 May 2001.

¹⁷ Dr. Christian Sprang, of the legal team at Schott, in a letter to Kim Kowalke: “The common impression is that this article cannot be considered as [a] ‘responsible piece of scholarship’ as it is in part based on wrong facts... it does not reflect the actual scientific state of knowledge.” Quoted in Kowalke, “Burying the Past,” 75–77.

¹⁸ Kowalke, “Burying the Past,” 76.

all official parties “to refrain from actions that could be interpreted as attempts to restrict or inhibit scholarly discourse on the subject of Orff and the Third Reich.”¹⁹

This accusation of censorship led to a further exchange between Kowalke, Kater, and Jans, who attributed Kowalke’s problems to a misunderstanding on Kowalke’s part of the independent but interconnected nature of the OZM (a state-affiliated research institute), the Orff Foundation (the private estate), and the publishers at Schott.²⁰ Kowalke and Kater, Jans stated, should not have assumed that the OZM is “fundamentally in league” with the other two entities.²¹ Jans objected that the arguments of OZM-affiliated individuals “risk being disqualified prima facie on the assumption that our institutional alignment has transformed us into blind apologists and zealous acolytes.”²² Kowalke, in a reply, reiterated his skepticism of the independence of these institutions, citing the unnamed persons who had questioned his article’s validity for Schott and who he believed were affiliated with the OZM, thus blurring the distinctions Jans wanted to maintain.²³ Extrapolating from Kowalke’s view, such a blurred institutional mission on the part of the OZM may not constitute censorship per se, but it does create a “party line” the deviation from which risks drawing punitive action from the three institutions in question.

The discourse surrounding the controversy has increasingly focused on disciplinary orientation and methodology. Kater has portrayed his work on Orff as opposed to traditional musicology because he refuses to enact the reflexive affinity between the scholar and the composer that he sees as being inherent in the discipline. As a “social historian,” on the other hand, he “was interested much less in Orff’s music than in his words and deeds during the Nazi period, in order to draw a portrait of him as a social and political being.”²⁴ By criticizing musicologists “who have tended to assess ‘their’ artists mainly by inherent artistic criteria and are less inclined to investigate political and social frameworks and implications,” Kater insinuates that such close identification of the musicologist with “their” composers leads to a blindness or even willful ignorance regarding unsavory political and social contexts.²⁵ In turn, there may be blindness in Kater’s assumption that any scholar who studies Orff’s music would be unable by definition to consider simultaneously both the political and the musical. Unsurprisingly, then, Kater’s work stands in a tense relationship with the work of the larger musicological circle of Orff scholars, and anyone who works with the OZM must grapple with this legacy.

¹⁹ Kowalke, “Burying the Past,” 77.

²⁰ Hans Jörg Jans, “Behind the Scenes: Composer Institutes and the Semblance of Censorship,” *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2000): 696–704.

²¹ Jans, “Behind the Scenes,” 698.

²² Jans, “Behind the Scenes,” 701.

²³ Kowalke, “A Reply to Hans Jörg Jans,” 708. Kowalke further questioned whether the OZM should itself conduct research and “‘seek its own standpoint’ on matters of scholarship through such initiatives as research commissions intended to refute or rejoin work of individual scholars who have used the collection.”

²⁴ Kater and Riethmüller, *Music and Nazism*, 12.

²⁵ Kater, “Carl Orff im Dritten Reich,” 1. “Einmal ist das Feld der Musikgeschichte allzu lange den Musikwissenschaftlern überlassen worden, die dazu tendiert haben, ‘ihre’ Künstler vor allem nach kunstimmanenten Kriterien zu beurteilen und weniger nach politischen und sozialen Rahmenbedingungen und Implikationen zu fragen.”

The challenged status of the OZM as an independent research facility is not only a moral or philosophical but also a practical matter: the OZM plays gatekeeper, allowing access to its proprietary documents, and requests to consult the original sources must be approved by the composer's widow, Liselotte Orff. My own archival work on the 1959 opera *Oedipus der Tyrann* was facilitated by the OZM, currently under the directorship of Dr. Thomas Rösch. Rösch, with the permission of Orff's widow, generously allowed me access to the more than 400 distinct items of sketch and draft material that exist for this piece, none of which have been previously inventoried or studied. These materials vary widely from penciled slips of scrap paper with ideas for text underlay to fully notated and orchestrated draft scenes in fair hand. There is little uniformity among the documents in format and material, and sketch materials are sometimes written on the above-mentioned, everyday ephemera – programs, invitations, odd stationery, advertisements – as well as on the reverse sides of old sheet music.

The randomness of these manuscripts gives an alluring sense of authentic unwittingness, made all the more precious in light of Orff's massive, eight-volume *Dokumentation*, which, along with the published scores, seems to literally embody the final word on and about Orff.²⁶ I found myself consciously resisting the impulse to treat these documents as sacred relics. By reproducing images of the autograph score in a way that elevates them to fetish objects, the *Dokumentation* elides the contradictory nature of much of this autograph material.²⁷ These documents' appearance in the monolithic *Dokumentation* calls into question the function of such partial facsimiles in a context where they cannot realistically be used for study, further belying the "documentary" pretext and the supposedly unmediated look the large volumes offer into Orff's work process. Andreas Liess also uses as one of only five photographic plates in his Orff biography a manuscript score page from *Oedipus*, the only image that is musical in nature and not a portrait photograph.²⁸ These images are presentational and sterilized; faced instead with the chaotic reality of the working documents, the scholar is both humbled and honored.

The cozy feeling of having a direct window into Orff's workspace was tempered, however, when I discovered several sketches for *Oedipus* written on the reverse side of parts for a 1938 "occasional" work called "Aufruf zu einer völkischen Feier" (Call to a Nationalist Celebration).²⁹ This piece is not currently documented in the scholarly literature, and it is not

²⁶ Carl Orff, *Carl Orff und sein Werk: Dokumentation* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1975–1983).

²⁷ *Carl Orff und sein Werk: Dokumentation*, vol. 7: Abendländisches Musiktheater (Tutzing: Schneider, 1981).

²⁸ Liess, *Carl Orff*, plate between pp. 80 and 81.

²⁹ "Oedipus Entwürfe" in the Orff-Zentrum München: 3/31, f. 9 pp. 20 and 35. "Völkisch" was used as a shorthand for the nationalist racial purity espoused by the Nazis. NB: The footnotes and diagrams in this chapter use a numbering system which I devised to track the documents in the Orff-Zentrum Munich. The sources for *Oedipus der Tyrann* are filed in four different portfolios of varying size (two are quite large). The OZM call numbers for these are 3/31 (199 score pieces), 3/32 (201 score pieces), 3/33 (libretto and text sources), and 3/34 (5 score pieces). I have defined a "piece" as something materially contiguous, that is, anything from one single piece of paper to a set of several nested contiguous pages on large double-sided score paper. Within these four portfolios, pieces are further sorted into subfolders. The numbering system I use for materials from the Orff-Zentrum thus follows the format: OZM [portfolio #]: [sub] f.[older] x p.[age] y. (e.g., OZM 3/34: f. 2 p. 4.) This should allow any researchers subsequently accessing the material to find the exact pages on which I found the cited sketches. I should also note that the sketches have *not* been ordered in the folders by date or by order composed, and thus it cannot be assumed that a later positioning in the folder (or a later number in my system) implies a later date of composition.

included in Orff's official catalog of works, but Rösch confirmed its existence to me when I came across the papers and told me it had been written for a "Schuletreffen" in 1938. He said that Frau Orff knew of the old sheet music among the sketches. I decided not to research the piece any further beyond Rösch's confirmation, because my scholarly interest has always focused on the post-war period, rather than on music under the Nazis, and on opera, rather than on the kind of Gebrauchsmusik exemplified by the "Aufruf." I admit, too, that the Kater controversy gave me pause: would researching the "Aufruf" constitute a breach of the implied contract derived from the aims I had designated when I began my research and obtained permission?

Even though my research did not lead me to any deeper inquiry into the circumstances and history of the occasional work, the find did impact my view of Orff and, ultimately, my interpretation of *Oedipus der Tyrann*: the blank slate idea of the Zero Hour is and was a fiction. With prominent figures, such as Orff, still pursuing successful artistic careers in the post-war period, the continuities of German culture before, through, and after the period of Nazi rule are obvious, complicating any straightforward moral judgments. The persistence of material artifacts like sheet music makes this reality concrete in a vivid and discomfiting way. In the context of Orff's biographical history, it is not only ironic but also greatly symbolic that one of his universal, "post-Nazi," Classical artworks was written partly, though literally, on the back of a Nazi work.

An Opera without Music

Orff's *Oedipus der Tyrann* is a monument to severity. The text follows Hölderlin's wild, dense 1804 German translation of Sophocles's tragedy of fate and recognition. Years before the action begins, the King of Thebes and his wife, Jocasta, had a son who was prophesied to murder his father; though it was decided the child should be killed, he was instead rescued and raised without knowledge of his true origins. Later, an oracle told Oedipus that he was fated to kill his father and marry his mother, and, presuming that this prophecy applied to his (adoptive) parents, Oedipus fled. While on his journey, he murdered a man during an argument (not knowing it was the King, his true father) and proceeded to free Thebes from a curse, becoming King of Thebes himself and marrying the widowed Queen. As Orff's opera begins, Oedipus resolves to discover the truth behind the plague on Thebes, which is caused by the unsolved murder of the previous King. As information is slowly revealed, however, Oedipus realizes the tragic truth of his parentage and his crimes. Jocasta commits suicide, and Oedipus blinds and exiles himself.

Just as in his setting of the Sophocles-Hölderlin *Antigona*, which premiered ten years earlier, Orff's *Oedipus* bucks the stereotypes of operatic libretti by including the entirety of the drama, with all of the "talky" parts intact, inserting no doggerel additions for the sake of good songs.³⁰ These are *Literaturopern* in the purest sense: exact musical settings of great

Where multiple drafts exist, I have avoided making assumptions about which sketches may have come earlier or later in their "evolution" towards the final product.

³⁰ Though both works have similar idioms and approaches to text, it is generally thought that *Antigona* is the more elaborate, and, more importantly, more operatic work. Nicholas Attfield paraphrased Brecht's critique of the earlier opera's conventional roots by asserting that some moments in *Antigona* "have their roots in

works of dramatic literature. In addition to the libretto's unadulterated use of the play text, Orff intended to keep his compositional style from interfering with or even interpreting the words. In this, too, he set himself consciously against the way opera is "usually" composed. In place of opera's canonical predilection for ornament and lyricism, the composer provided his singers with long stretches of monotone German declamation, inflected only by the occasional melisma or accented half-note. He favored stately pacing, with a stripped-down accompaniment of supposedly "primal" rhythms and timbres played by an orchestra whose makeup (an arsenal of pitched and unpitched percussion, winds and brass, basses, four harps and ten pianists) mitigated lush orchestral stereotypes.

By stripping away any concession to dramatic license or singable melody, Orff declined to compromise his concept of a radically and literally original idiom. In the words of one contemporary critic, "Orff values his heritage, but not tradition."³¹ Orff's overall dramatic project involved the liberation from the tradition of opera through a return to origins; commentators recognized that Orff intended his works to be understood within a history separate from that of operatic maximalism, romanticism, or monumentalism. The musicologist and educator Erich Doflein, writing in 1948, *before* the premieres of *Antigone* and *Oedipus*, assessed Orff's dramatic inheritance by going back not to canonical operatic precedent, but directly to Greek tragedy.

Orff's music-theater has nothing more to do with the music drama of Wagner or Strauss. Nor does Orff renew his art in the Handelian style of late Baroque opera, like other contemporary composers ... With such relinquishments, however, further perspectives onto the world-wide history of theater open up to him and attain their old meaning and effectiveness: the beginnings of opera, the scenic oratorio, the stages of Shakespeare or Hans Sachs, the mystery play and the theater of Terence in the Middle Ages ... and, as is so often the case at a sea-change in musical theater, the Greek tragedy, with its reputed bond between language and music, is again shown to be a model and inspiration for new ideas in design.³²

somewhat unexpected territory: in the repertory opera of the nineteenth century, the very ground that Orff so desperately wanted to escape ... [Orff] still clings to operatic traditions of a century gone by." Nicholas Attfield, "Re-staging the *Welttheater*: A Critical View of Carl Orff's *Antigone* and *Oedipus der Tyrann*," in *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage*, ed. Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjenšek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 362.

³¹ K. H. Ruppel, "Carl Orff als Klang-Regisseur: 'Oedipus der Tyrann' in Stuttgart uraufgeführt," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 14 December 1959. "Orff wahrt ein Erbe, aber keine Tradition."

³² Erich Doflein, "Das Musiktheater Carl Orffs," in *Der Musikalmanach*, ed. Viktor Schwartz (Munich: Kurt Desch, 1948), 79. "Orffs Musiktheater hat nichts mehr mit der Musikdramatik von Wagner oder Strauß zu tun. Orff erneuert seine Kunst auch nicht am Händelstil der späten Barockoper, wie andere Komponisten der Gegenwart... Mit solchen Verzichteten aber öffnet sich ihm ein weiterer Ausblick auf die Weltgeschichte des Theaters... Die Anfänge der Oper, das szenische Oratorium, die Bühne Shakespeares oder Hans Sachs, das Mysterienspiel und das Terenztheater des Mittelalters erschließen der erkennenden Phantasie Orffs ihren alten Sinn und ihre Wirkungsweise. Und – wie so oft an Wendepunkten des musikalischen Theaters – erweist sich die griechische Tragödie mit ihren mutmaßlichen Bindungen von Sprache und Musik wiederum als Vorbild und Anreger neuer Gestaltungsgedanken ..."

Orff's works belong not, in Doflein's formulation, to the petty decadence of operatic history, but rather to a much more global, much better esteemed tradition. I would argue that the benefits of that separate history thus go beyond Greek ideal's purely artistic potential, neatly and conveniently circumventing the problem of opera in the post-war period. The more that composers and critics, bolstered by the idea of a post-war Zero Hour, derided the traditional as not only artistically but also politically suspect, the more that writing opera, arguably the most conservative genre of all, brought diminishing returns. Writing a piece for the opera house that is not, strictly speaking, an opera bestows plausible deniability regarding the politicized challenges of composing in the operatic form. As Pietro Massa has demonstrated, the denial of genre and appeal to universality allowed Orff to depoliticize musical tragedy.³³

Orff's attempt to negate "the operatic" in his music theater could also be seen to reflect the anti-audience attitude that so many composers and critics of opera adopted in the twentieth century. Nicholas Atfield has argued that the operas' newness was aimed "quite deliberately, to alienate: to create a sense of massive distance, to shake the spectator from the comfort of the repertory opera."³⁴ In positive evaluations of Orff's new music theater, critics were wont to adopt a sneering attitude toward the audience, including Doflein, who predicted, "the comfy opera-goer, who is used to being picky, will find himself not a little surprised."³⁵ The radically anti-operatic quality of Orff's music drama attacks the generic expectations of the "typical" opera audience. Again, this modernist outlook is not just a matter of aesthetic potential; it also has political valence as an attempt to avoid the stigma of opera in the post-war period. Given Orff's professional history, this generic, general problem of opera after *Stunde Null* became perhaps all the more urgent and personal.³⁶

Orff's subtle politics of aesthetic allusion and affiliation did not lead to scandal, and in fact the premiere audience in Stuttgart applauded the work generously, with press notices that were mostly respectful and philosophical in tone. However, Orff's music theater is rarely staged today, despite the evergreen popularity of *Carmina Burana* and Orff's correspondingly high degree of international "name recognition." Notwithstanding his own hyperbolic claims about the importance of his operatic experiments to history and within his compositional output, the opera has been given few opportunities for fresh stagings; after the major productions in Stuttgart and Munich, the opera disappeared from the stage, with only one staged run over the last 45 years.³⁷ I would like to suggest one possible reason for *Oedipus's*

³³ Pietro Massa, *Carl Orffs Antikendramen und die Hölderlin-Rezeption im Deutschland der Nachkriegszeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006).

³⁴ Atfield, "Re-staging the *Welttheater*," 349.

³⁵ Doflein, "Das Musiktheater Carl Orffs," 77. "Der behagliche Opernbesucher, der gewohnt ist, Rosinen zu picken, wird nicht wenig überrascht sein."

³⁶ Nicholas Atfield has written that the "universality" of *Antigone* and *Oedipus* is "a smokescreen that could be used to buffer Orff against the awkward political climates in which he was embroiled, and within which many of his works were conceived." Atfield, "Re-staging the *Welttheater*," 344.

³⁷ Stuttgart runs: December 1959, April 1963, July 1965, March 1968. The Stuttgart production also toured Europe: at the Wiener Staatsoper (April 1961), Théâtre des Nations, Paris (April 1963), Hamburg (1964), Deutsche Oper Berlin (1966), and Herodion Atticus Theater, Athens (1967). In Munich: Bayerische Rundfunk broadcast February 1961, Bayerischen Staatsoper premiere March 1961. Additional productions in Münster: Städtische Bühnen, 31 January 1960; and in Nürnberg: 9. Woche des Gegenwartstheaters, 29 May 1960. Most recent performances, at the Darmstadt Staatstheater, 2 December 2006. Records held by the OZM.

lack of stage success: the trend in reviews of its premiere to question whether the work could properly be considered an opera. As demonstrated by the reception of Henze's and Blacher's post-war operas, mid-century ambivalence about opera as a genre meant that generic uncertainty could be at least as much of an advantage as a liability. (Even today, Thomas Rösch has firmly insisted that *Oedipus* is "überhaupt keine Oper.")³⁸ Ironically, then, the same aggression against genre that might have allowed *Oedipus* to evade opera's political baggage might also have contributed to the lack of interest in performing the piece.

Reviews of the *Oedipus* premiere at Stuttgart's Württembergische Staatsoper in 1959 make clear that the piece destabilized mid-century expectations about the nature of opera and its potential. Comments on Orff's recalibration of the word-music balance were commonplace, as was the idea that this recalibration was somehow legitimately Greek. Such claims, of course, are themselves generic, part of opera's history and tradition, but some critics took the rhetoric further, equating the composer's attentiveness to the word as a negation of "music" itself.

Yet again we see here how much closer Orff's means of expression come to the spirit of Greek tragedy than was ever managed by opera from Monteverdi to Wagner and Strauss. They are absolutely not to be contained by the term "music."³⁹

The implications of this shift in the generic status of *Oedipus der Tyrann* are profound. Stripping away the most musical aspects of opera meant that *Oedipus* could be considered more "Greek" than previous operas, but it also generated the idea of an "opera without music." As one critic put it:

In the seventeenth century there had already been attempts to resurrect the performance style of antiquity. What came out of that was the birth of "opera." But quickly the music managed to dominate the text ... Orff radically does away with these habits. He only uses the musical means to serve the poetry. His *Oedipus* is effectively an opera without music.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the work's subtitle, "Ein Trauerspiel des Sophokles von Friedrich Hölderlin," served as a further clue that the piece was intended to transcend the realm of opera. Not all critics

³⁸ Dr. Thomas Rösch, personal conversation with the author June 2011. Pietro Massa's dissertation argues that musicologists have erred fundamentally in their approach to *Antigone* by attempting to integrate Orff's settings of Greek tragedy into opera history. Massa instead contextualizes these pieces within theater history, particularly within the history of these Greek tragedies in German-speaking countries. Massa, *Carl Orffs Antikendramen*.

³⁹ Klaus Colberg, "Uraufführung in der Württembergischen Staatsoper: Carl Orffs 'Oedipus'," *Kasseler Post*, 15 December 1959. "Von neuem erweist sich hier, um wie vieles näher Orffs Ausdrucksmittel dem Geist der griechischen Tragödie kommen als es jemals von Monteverdi bis Wagner und Strauß die Oper vermocht hat. Mit dem Begriff der 'Musik' sind sie gar nicht zu fassen."

⁴⁰ "Zur Weltaufführung von Orffs 'Oedipus der Tyrann': Oper ohne Musik, Ein Bericht aus Stuttgart," *Weltbild*, 16 January, 1960, 28–29. "Schon im 17. Jahrhundert gab es Versuche, den antiken Aufführungsstil wiederzuerwecken. Was dabei herauskam, war die Geburt der 'Oper'. Aber schnell gelang es damals der Musik, über den Text zu dominieren ... Mit dieser Gepflogenheit räumt Orff radikal auf. Er setzt musikalische Mittel nur noch ein, um der Dichtung zu dienen. Sein 'Oedipus' ist gewissermaßen eine Oper ohne Musik."

approved of this evasion either of authorship (which seems to put Sophocles and Hölderlin in pride of place instead of the composer) or, concomitantly, of generic clarity.

There is no indication of what kind of work this is. One should obviously be worried about that. All we know for sure is that this piece is neither play nor opera or oratorio, neither a new show nor a stylistic copy of antiquity. As a form for a work it is as colorless and non-committal as the title.⁴¹

The composer's supposed non-mediation of the text is rendered even more paradoxical by Orff's assertion that Hölderlin's translation was in fact incomplete without music. A staged performance of Hölderlin's *Antigone* at the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1940 prompted Orff to conclude that, though an exciting performance, it nevertheless fell short of the essence of Hölderlin's art because it lacked music.

I missed Hölderlin! In a staged performance of his *Antigonae*, the spoken word is not sufficient in my opinion. It has to be music and gesture again, as it originally was in the Greek tragedy and as Hölderlin adapted it in such an inspired way.⁴²

The most concentrated debate over *Oedipus der Tyrann* took the form of a series of editorials and letters in the Feuilleton of the Saturday editions of the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*. Under the heading "Der Fall 'Oedipus,'" the editors set out the following leading questions:

- 1) Does Orff's *Oedipus* belong on the program of an opera house, the audience of which has derived particular musical expectations from a 250-year-old tradition that they expect to be fulfilled by "their opera"?
- 2) Was Orff successful in updating the spiritual and artistic contents of Sophocles's ancient tragedy and Hölderlin's adaptation by modern means?⁴³

⁴¹ Heinz Joachim, "Enttäuschung über Orffs 'Oedipus': Höchst zwiespältige Uraufführung," *Die Welt* (Hamburg), 14 December 1959. "Eine musikalischen Werkbezeichnung fehlt. Über sie soll man sich offenbar den Kopf zerbrechen. Sicher ist nur: Das Stück ist weder Schauspiel noch Oper oder Oratorium, weder Neuschau noch Stilkopie der Antike. Es ist als Werkform ebenso farblos und unverbindlich wie der Titel."

⁴² Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, 21. "Mir fehlte Hölderlin!... Für mich reicht bei einer szenischen Aufführung seiner *Antigonae* das gesprochene Wort nicht aus. Es muß wieder Musik und Geste werden, wie es ursprünglich in der griechischen Tragödie war und wie es Hölderlin in so genialer Weise nachdichtete." For more about the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of Hölderlin performances in Germany, see Massa, *Carl Orffs Antikendramen*.

⁴³ "Der Fall 'Oedipus': Zu Carl Orffs neuem Werk," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 19 December 1959.

- 1) Gehört Orffs "Oedipus" in den Rahmen eines Opernspielplans und eines Opernhauses, dessen Publikum aus einer zweihundertfünfzigjährigen Tradition bestimmte musikalische Erwartungen herleitet und deren Erfüllung von "seiner Oper" erwartet?
- 2) 2) Ist es Orff gelungen, die antike Tragödie des Sophokles und die Nachdichtung Hölderlins in ihrem geistigen und künstlerischen Gehalt mit modernen Mitteln zu vergegenwärtigen?

The first question again concerns genre and the place of *Oedipus* in the canons and institutions of opera. The second takes the opposite orientation: evaluating the work against genre, against the antique values of the subject matter. These questions spurred both critics and audience members to debate at length in the newspaper – more than 8000 words in total – the merits of Orff's experiment, the place of such experimentation within the opera house, and the status of *Oedipus* as an opera worthy of their great opera houses. One writer explicitly broached the terms and theory of the generic contract:

Opera is always a kind of "social contract" between artist and society. This "treaty" has been amended many times and is newly accepted in ever-changing versions, but it always included an audience as a partner in the contract, and composers have accepted that condition time and time again. Such a contract is still valid today. The esoteric and the opera stage are mutually exclusive (here is a warning for composers who might mistake Hölderlin for a librettist). One may complain about it, but it is so.⁴⁴

This writer judges *Oedipus der Tyrann* too esoteric to fit the dictates of opera, so much so that Orff is in breach of a contract to which he implicitly assented by writing a work for the opera stage. The following week, a member of the public reflected in a letter to the editor on the difficulty *Oedipus* would have finding a place in the canon:

Orff's *Oedipus* is no opera. The sparse music relies upon a kind of *Sprechgesang*, which is insufficient for an opera ... [*Oedipus* is] also not a music-drama. The foundation of both of those artistic genres is musical invention. This work, which breaks so fundamentally with tradition, yet cannot stand on its own two feet as an independent genre, will have difficulty finding a home.⁴⁵

By ruling *Oedipus der Tyrann* insufficiently musical and insufficiently operatic, critics and audience-members elided Orff, the composer of this un-music. It seems, then, that Orff paid a price for flaunting his opposition to the genre of opera, even as that opposition enabled his bid for Classical credentials. Orff's gambit was to pit the godliness of the Greeks and the purity of Classicism against his own musical authorship; in gambling against the authority of the ancients, he sacrificed his own composerly presence.

⁴⁴ Karl Heinz Wocker, "Warum eigentlich keine Oper?," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 9 January 1960. "Oper ist immer eine Art 'contrat social' zwischen Künstler und Gesellschaft. Diese 'Konvention' ist vielfach abgeändert und in immer neuer Fassung neu akzeptiert worden ... immer aber war ein Publikum da, der Vertragspartner, und die Komponisten haben das akzeptiert, immer wieder ... Solch ein Kontrakt ist auch heute noch gültig ... Esoterik und Opernbühne schließen sich aus (Hinweis für Kompositeure, die Hölderlin für einen Librettisten halten). Das mag man bedauern, aber es ist so."

⁴⁵ R. W. Mayer, "Contra Hölderlin," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 16 January 1960. "Orffs 'Oedipus' ist keine Oper. Die karge Musik stützt sich auf eine Art Sprechgesang, der für eine Oper nicht ausreicht... ['Oedipus' ist] auch kein Musikdrama. Das Fundament beider Kunstgattungen ist die musikalische Erfindungskraft. Dieses Werk, das mit der Tradition so gründlich bricht, als selbständige Gattung jedoch nicht auf eigenen Füßen stehen kann, wird schwer eine Heimat finden."

Origin Stories I: Ancient Greece and the Opera

In familiar musicological and critical narratives, staging or representing Greece in opera is its own tradition, a trajectory for the genre that has often been seen as a series of attempts (often failed) to restore the power of Greek tragedy at the expense of operatic convention. Because it lacked traditional operatic machinery, *Oedipus der Tyrann* accorded with an aesthetics and view of history that sought deeper roots than opera, but Orff's yearning to return to antiquity could itself be seen as profoundly operatic, since, in the 1951 telling of Walter Riezler, "opera began as an art form with the apparent revival of Greek tragedy ... and up until Gluck and beyond, again and again, stylistically or in the materials, [they] had looked for a connection to the world of the ancients."⁴⁶ With Orff, Riezler wrote, the goal was taken to extremes, as "for the first time the huge task has been undertaken to let the ancient tragedy arise again as music, in its whole reality, word for word."⁴⁷ Orff himself described his turn to ancient tragedy as an "inevitable" consequence of efforts to find "the unity of language, music, and movement," because such unity was "an innate condition" of tragedy.⁴⁸

Settings by opera composers of Greek stories or plays have given composers, directors, and designers thousands of opportunities to imagine and re-imagine what Greece should look and sound like in the opera house.⁴⁹ Michele Napolitano has recently written of the original concept of opera as a "marriage manqué," an effort, always doomed to fail, "to recover the specific qualities of ancient Greek tragedy and music."⁵⁰ As an "ideal point of reference," however, Greek drama seemed to represent the utopian synthesis of the arts for which generations of composers perennially strived.⁵¹ The ideal of Greece was particularly useful whenever opera became too elaborate, too weighed down by convention, or too heavy with music. Napolitano embraces the opposition between the "most Greek" and the "most operatic":

Greek tragedy has furnished the ideal conditions for radical innovations, guaranteeing by its very nature the highest imaginable level of alienating distance, and assisting

⁴⁶ Walter Riezler, "Neue Horizonte: Bemerkungen zu Carl Orffs *Antigonae*," *Gestalt und Gedanke: Jahrbuch der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste* 1 (1951): 103–104. "Auch für die Musiker wird nun die griechische Tragödie wieder zum Problem, – nachdem dreihundert Jahre vorher die Oper als Kunstform mit der vermeintlichen Neubelebung der griechischen Tragödie, von deren rein musikalischer Natur man überzeugt war, begonnen und bis über Gluck hinaus stilistisch oder doch in den Stoffen immer wieder die Bindung an die Welt der Alten gesucht hatte."

⁴⁷ Riezler, "Neue Horizonte," 105. "Zum ersten Male wird hier das Ungeheure unternommen, eine antike Tragödie als Musik wieder erstehen zu lassen, in ihrer ganzen Wirklichkeit, Wort für Wort."

⁴⁸ Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, 22. "Mein ständiges Bemühen um die Einheit von Sprache, Musik, und Bewegung ... mußte mich zwangsläufig zur antiken Tragödie führen, in der sie von Haus aus einen Gegebenheit war."

⁴⁹ For an excellent brief history of the legacy of the Classics in opera, see Robert C. Ketterer, "Opera," in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, Salvatore Settis, 656–659 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010). For an additional overall history and several case studies of the phenomenon of ancient drama as a source for opera and other music theater, see Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjenšek, eds., *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ Michele Napolitano, "Greek Tragedy and Opera: Notes on a Marriage Manqué," in Brown and Ograjenšek, *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage*, 31.

⁵¹ Napolitano, "Greek Tragedy and Opera," 32.

considerably in the production of unprecedented musical solutions ... the more radical the musical choices, the more these choices were marked by their particular ability to subvert the traditional coordinates of opera. Radicalism in music drama was made possible only at the expense of the already outmoded conventions of the genre.⁵²

Because they have historically served as a weapon to be wielded against "the genre," references to ideals of Greek drama are themselves shorthand, evoking positive cultural valences without necessarily reflecting historical truths about Greek performance. Lacking a solid referent, the Greek ideal in opera is based more on other, previous Greek ideals as staged in opera, than on any actual Greek cultural product.

Orff's classicizing project did not begin with *Oedipus* but rather was fundamental to his idea of music drama from early on, with his earlier adaptations of Monteverdi as a historical turning point. According to German musicologists, however, his denial of past traditions allowed Orff to come particularly into his own; in the words of Wolfgang Schadewaldt, as he "left completely behind him the abandoned forms and means of classical-romantic opera," he came to a novel interpretation of the character of Sophoclean tragedy.⁵³ Only through a denial of opera could Orff achieve his goal to "implement anew the great tragedy of the Greeks," the same rebirth or renewal of tragedy so fundamental to the history of opera.⁵⁴ "The restored tragedy of Sophocles," Schadewaldt continued, "through Carl Orff's own modern manner of *musiké*, is neither 'opera' nor 'play,' but rather just tragedy, just as it was staged for the first time on the ground of the ancient cult-spaces of Dionysus."⁵⁵

The cultic roots of Orff's music theater, if regarded as goals, are precisely some of its most alarming aspects. In their strongly pagan ritualism, the works bear resemblance to the cultic theater, described by historian George L. Mosse, which presented Nazi ideology onstage in ritual forms in special outdoor performance spaces.⁵⁶ In this context, we might read differently Riezler's assertion that some audience members at the Salzburg premiere "had the impression that the effect of ancient tragedy in the theater of Dionysus in Athens could have

⁵² Napolitano, "Greek Tragedy and Opera," 46.

⁵³ Wolfgang Schadewaldt, "Carl Orff und die griechische Tragödie: *Antigona, Oedipus, Prometheus*," in *Prometheus: Mythos Drama Musik: Beiträge zu Carl Orffs Musikdrama nach Aischylos*, ed. Franz Willnauer (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1968), 28. "Dem Komponisten und Dichter Carl Orff selbst brachte bereits der neue Griff zur Tragödie des Sophokles nicht Geringes: einmal den neuen Kompositionsstil, der die von ihm schon in seinen früheren Bühnenwerken mehr und mehr aufgegebenen Formen und Mittel der klassisch-romantischen Oper vollends hinter sich ließ, und sodann, auf Hölderlins dichterischer Deutung des Sophokles fußend, eine mit den neuen musikalischen Mitteln unternommene neuartige Interpretation des Wesens der Sophokleischen Tragödie."

⁵⁴ Schadewaldt, "Carl Orff und die griechische Tragödie," 28. "...die große Tragödie der Griechen neu zu verwirklichen" "So nahm Orff jenes alte Anliegen der Musikgeschichte des neueren Europe wieder auf, das auf die 'Wiedergeburt' der Tragödie, oder besser: auf die 'Erneuerung' der Tragödie gerichtet ist ... und das seit der Renaissance, die die Opera seria gebracht hatte, in mehreren Etappen neu aufgegriffen wurde."

⁵⁵ Schadewaldt, "Carl Orff und die griechische Tragödie," 35. "Da durch Carl Orff auf eine eigenen moderne Weise der Musik zurückgegebene Tragödie des Sophokles ist weder 'Oper' noch auch 'Schauspiel,' sondern eben Tragödie, so wie diese einst auf dem Boden des alten Kultraums des Dionysos... zum ersten Mal in Szene ging."

⁵⁶ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 81.

been like this ... with the people gathered in a festival of the gods, the chorus of the elders like a part of this people."⁵⁷

Orff made Classical purity the opera's defining characteristic. Through touches like the Greek-lettered title page (calligraphy he practiced multiple times), Latin-language stage directions, and dedication to the faculty at the University of Tübingen, Orff bestowed an aura of antiquity that belies the opera's constructedness.⁵⁸ The volume of Orff's *Dokumentation* pertaining to *Antigone* and *Oedipus* conjures these same ghosts. The title page's epigraph, for instance ("Tragedy emerges out of the absolute power of language alone"), grants a kind of authenticity-by-association, implying that Orff's speech-like music theater has the absolute power of speech and is therefore closest to what we might think of as "tragedy with a capital T."⁵⁹ Photos reproduced from the Stuttgart premiere show a semi-circle of laurel-crowned, robed chorus members on steps, surrounding a raised circular platform; the scenery, by Caspar Neher, is sparse and geometric, with a backdrop creating the textural effect of marble or tile.⁶⁰ The *Dokumentation* also includes photos from the Athens performance of the same production. It is hard not to believe that the Athenian setting – photographed from above and taking place in the open air – was calculated with an eye toward the appearance of the authentic and the pan-historical.⁶¹ Nicholas Attfield has written that "Orff appears to have thought of himself as gaining direct access to an age long since past, in which natural and intellectual lives had existed in superior equilibrium."⁶² Given Orff's attitude that he possessed a direct line to Sophocles, the interpretive potential for *Oedipus der Tyrann* seems deliberately limited by the almost overwhelming self-consciousness of the opera's "Classical" outlook.

"Classical" also serves as a proxy for ideas of universality and unquestionable origins, ideas that, upon further reflection, seem dubious, but that are nonetheless prevalent in the discourse regarding Orff's music theater. Andreas Liess, Orff's biographer, frequently refers to the "universality" and "unity" of Orff's music-theater.⁶³ Such universality and unity are, again, directly opposed to "normal" operatic drama. Rather than being "rooted in the traditional

⁵⁷ Riezler, "Neue Horizonte," 106. "Mancher Hörer der Salzburger Uraufführung (im Freien, noch bei Tageslicht) hatte den Eindruck: so ähnlich könne die Wirkung der antiken Tragödie im Theater des Dionysos zu Athen gewesen sein, in voller Sonne, vor dem zum Götterfest versammelten Volke, der Chor der Alten wie ein Teil dieses Volkes."

⁵⁸ Calligraphy practice documents (two sheets of practice writing ΟΙΔΙΠΟΥΣ / ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΣ), OZM 3/33. The dedication page reads: "SUMMO ATQUE AMPLISSIMO / ORDINI PHILOSOPHURUM / UNIVERSITATIS LITERARUM / EBERHARDO-CAROLINAE TUBINGENSIS / HOC OPUS / DEDICAVIT / CAROLUS ORFF / MONACENSIS / DOCTOR PHILOSOPHIAE HONORIS CAUSA / TUBINGENSIS / ANNO / MCMLIX" (Carl Orff of Munich [Honorary PhD, University of Tübingen] dedicates this work to the highest and most honorable philosophers of the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen. 1959). *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959).

⁵⁹ Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, 4. "Die Tragödie entsteht aus der eigenen Machtvollkommenheit der Sprache allein."

⁶⁰ Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, plates XVI–XIX.

⁶¹ Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, plates XXIV–XXVI.

⁶² Attfield, "Re-staging the *Welttheater*," 348.

⁶³ Liess, *Carl Orff*, 40. "The universality of Orff's art is revealed in the wide variety of imagery within his creative scope... his creative work is a natural expression of the modern consciousness in its struggle to a unity of the physical and the spiritual." *Ibid.*, 73. "The elemental is revealed, the whole human experience reflected in a dramatic unity."

theater," Liess describes, "Orff's work mirrors the basic attitudes and beliefs of mankind; it gives a spiritual and universal picture of our age ... Orff has, in his music, a direct and natural spiritual power."⁶⁴ The universality of Orff's vision has to do with a very particular interpretation of the thrust of history, as traced by Liess thus:

We are at the end of an epoch, and as a man in his old age harks back to the time of his youth, so a culture in its final phase reverts to earlier forms. The simple act of creation, however, is no longer possible when it is opposed by too conscious an awareness of things ... Certainly, Orff's spiritual form is moulded by the superimposition of a high intellect on a primitive creative instinct ... producing works whose immediate, elemental nature is most compelling ... In discovering and bringing to fruition the elemental power of music, Orff leads the listener once more along the path to a familiar relationship with the cosmos ... stress[ing] man's one-ness with the Universe ... The return to primitive sources is for Orff no more than a return to a deeper self.⁶⁵

Universality can therefore be achieved only by breaking down the barriers of the old order of music theater; Orff views "theatrical genres" like opera "as broken and scattered fragments to be collected and reworked into their old organic unity."⁶⁶

Of particular relevance is Orff's anecdote about attending a 1914 performance of Strauss's *Elektra* in Munich, which struck him as both a high point and an endpoint because of the "highly romantic" orchestra and the overwhelming "expressive power" of the voices, which prevented the text from being understood.⁶⁷ "It was clear to me," Orff wrote, remembering, "that a new orchestra had to be found, that would give the word back its central importance on the stage. I needed to find new ground and begin anew."⁶⁸ These were the basic artistic impulses finally realized in *Antigone* and *Oedipus*. Authenticity is achieved (i.e., Orff's works are "truly Antique") because, unlike previous, romanticized opera, "in spirit, all Orff's work is ultimately derived from Greek tragedy."⁶⁹ Ultimately, however, the appeal to origins was not even confined to Western sources; another critic suggested links between Orff's sound-world and Middle Eastern monody, gamelan orchestra, or ancient Chinese music.⁷⁰ The "Oriental"

⁶⁴ Liess, *Carl Orff*, pp. 24 and 31. Atfield has observed accordingly, "there is a marked tendency in readings of Orff's theatrical works to appeal to a sense of their universality to all mankind, their fundamental unity of music, gesture, and image." Atfield, "Re-staging the *Welttheater*," 343.

⁶⁵ Liess, *Carl Orff*, 31–35.

⁶⁶ Liess, *Carl Orff*, 63–64.

⁶⁷ Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, 49. "Elektra stellte für mich einen Höhepunkt, der nicht mehr übergipfelt werden konnte, gleichzeitig aber auch einen Endpunkt da. Das hoch-romantische Elektra-Orchester lief Gefahr, mit seiner polyphonen Klangfülle, wie auch in seiner expressiven Kraft, die Singstimmen zu überfluten und so die Textverständlichkeit in Frage zu stellen."

⁶⁸ Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, 49. "Es war mir klar, daß ein neuer Klangkörper gefunden werden mußte, der dem Wort wieder seine zentrale Bedeutung auf der Bühne zurückgibt. Ich mußte neuen Boden finden, neu beginnen."

⁶⁹ Liess, *Carl Orff*, 118.

⁷⁰ Riezler, "Neue Horizonte," 108. "Noch heute gibt es die beiden Arten der Musik in reiner Form nebeneinander: die rein dynamisch-lineare, 'melismatische' Blas- und Gesangsmusik der vorderasiatischen Völker und die ebenso reine, der melodischen Linie und zugleich der harmonischen Entwicklung entbehrende, dabei rhythmisch vielgestaltige, höchst differenzierte Klangmusik des 'Gamelang' auf der Insel Java." *Ibid.*, 115. "Nach der

associations of *Antigona* or *Oedipus* only serve to strengthen the appeal to the universal, by treating Western culture's historical or contemporary "Others" as windows into the West's own ancient past, evoking past millennia.

That these imaginary ancients were mere spectres seems not to matter. *Oedipus der Tyrann*, pure and simple, successfully laid claim to being more authentically "ancient," more authentically "Greek" than any previous piece of musical theater, boasting to finally have cracked the problem that composers like Monteverdi, Gluck, and Wagner had only attempted to solve. But in the case of *Oedipus*, such recourse to the idea of Greek drama as a defense against operaticism became politicized: the attack on operatic convention after 1945 had been politically charged such that composers' subsequent recourse to alternative aesthetic models, such as an imagined Greek version of music theater, was itself a political tactic.

Origin Stories II: Ancient Greece in Germany

Like operatic interpretations of Greece, German interpretations of Greece were always imaginary. Orff's *Oedipus* took part in one of Germany's most venerated cultural traditions: idealizing Greece as a distant past to mourn or to emulate. By Orff's time, the idea of Greece had been filtered through the lens of German writers, philosophers, and artists who had determined Greece's meaning in modern Germany through both artistic expression and philosophical debate. Dennis Schmidt has described the compulsion to find ways to appropriate Greek tragedy for the modern world as a "curiously German" obsession; tragedy for German thinkers represented a distinctive theory of history, a theory that responded to a perceived crisis of modern life.⁷¹ The ideas of this phenomenon are omnipresent in the discourse surrounding Orff's operas: a yearning for authenticity and pure beauty that is political in its very claim to universality.

The fetishization of origins and of the ancients was so typically German as to be a cultural cliché. Philhellenic cultural elements in Germany were cemented by nineteenth-century intellectuals who built an interest in Greek culture by founding institutions (e.g., museums and academies) to support and promote archaeological knowledge in an organized and established way.⁷² These supposedly purely artistic or philological "obsessions" actually constituted an "institutionally generated and preserved cultural trope," the activities of which in turn promised prestige and the potential to "revitalize" German culture.⁷³ This resulted in generations of Germans who "knew" that the Greeks were special and thought of themselves as exceptional for their recognition of the Greeks' power.⁷⁴ Translations and adaptations by

Uraufführung der *Antigona* schrieb ein Chinese, der sie gehört hatte, in sein Tagebuch: 'Antigona, wunderbar – wie in Peking vor 5000 Jahren.'

⁷¹ Dennis J. Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 4–6.

⁷² Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁷³ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, xvii–xix.

⁷⁴ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 16. This production of knowledge led directly to interpretations about the centrality, say, of "beauty" in Greek art, a value system that Germans were directed to emulate. *Ibid.*, 3.

academics, poets, and composers had the power to assimilate Greek cultural artifacts into German aesthetic ideologies.⁷⁵

The relationship between Greek appropriation and German nationalism is particularly relevant to Orff and the post-war context.⁷⁶ The bond between the Germans and their imagined Greek forerunners had become increasingly charged with politics and race, feeding into steadily building concepts of German identity.⁷⁷ The incorporation of philosophy and the history of ideas into explicitly political plans and programs allowed the Nazis to place themselves in a hereditary line with writers like Hölderlin and Nietzsche, claiming those writers (as well as the ancient Greeks) as forerunners. Writing in 1935, E. M. Butler asserted that Germans had been subject to the “spiritual tyranny” of the Greeks, and “have imitated the Greeks more slavishly; they have been obsessed by them more utterly; and they have assimilated them less than any other race.”⁷⁸ Butler here implied that the Germans’ intellectual obsession was an obsession without understanding, warping the Greeks and the Germans alike and revealing more about the Germans – who are “tragically dissatisfied with themselves” – than about any matters of philological or poetic truth.⁷⁹

Tragedy, so central to Orff’s vision, was intimately bound to these discourses. Nietzsche, using the force of tragedy to “galvanize a ‘people’ and to lend it an identity,” cemented the idea that there was something special about German culture that could “animate” the tragic arts and give them new power, giving rise at the same time to a uniquely German national “sensitivity.”⁸⁰ The chauvinism that had allowed Nietzsche to define the German people as a privileged ethical unity with a singular presence in history was, however, politically fraught. Heidegger expanded this idea of the exceptional relationship between German culture and Greek tragedy, tying it directly to Nazi ideology. Drawing particularly on Heidegger’s rhetoric in the speech “Self-Assertion of the German University” (1933), Dennis Schmidt shows how Heidegger viewed Greek models as the essential and only remedy to the distress and crises of the present age.⁸¹

For Heidegger this was not only a strong recommendation, it was a historical imperative, the one true destiny for the German people.⁸² But Glenn W. Most, in striving to

⁷⁵ For a detailed survey, see Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 375–390.

⁷⁶ With specific reference to Orff, Richard Taruskin has written that the German appeal to origins was used as a specific weapon in a “propaganda battle” against the churches of Germany, with Orff’s “animalistic” settings of Greek and Latin used to demonstrate that Germans, through neopaganism, were “the true heirs of Greco-Roman (‘Western’) culture.” Taruskin, “Can We Give Poor Orff a Pass at Last?,” 166.

⁷⁷ As Dennis Schmidt writes, “The heliotropism of Germany philosophy, which finds itself persistently pulled in the direction of some image of ‘the Greeks,’ will never be able to be an issue that frees itself fundamentally from the question of nationality.” Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*, 279.

⁷⁸ E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 6.

⁷⁹ Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 335.

⁸⁰ Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*, 218–219.

⁸¹ Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*, 232.

⁸² Alan Paskow has written that Heidegger truly believed in the potential for his philosophy, specifically by drawing on the poetry of Hölderlin and the culture of ancient Greece, to articulate the spirit of “a renewed and

answer the question, "Who are Heidegger's Greeks?," describes how a nation of imaginary and anachronistic Greeks, in whose name Germans should dismantle their modern culture and return to "originality" and "unquestionable authenticity," are not a people at all but rather are a "primal archive of philosophy," participants in a canon that was created and reified by the Germans themselves.⁸³ "Heidegger's Greeks," concludes Most, "are Germans in togas," less actual beings or historical participants than "an idealized projection of specifically German virtues."⁸⁴ Other historians who read the phenomenon within the context of specifically National Socialist ideology have emphasized the reliance on concepts of nature and "rootedness," which attached an idealized landscape to an equally idealized national identity.⁸⁵

Drawing on this idea of rootedness in a landscape, Germans took as their model the Greeks' cultural image of themselves as a powerful, unique, and bounded community against barbarian outsiders, using this connection to justify German domination since they saw themselves as the savior of the West.⁸⁶ Even Hitler in *Mein Kampf* wrote that "the struggle that rages today concerns great goals: a culture is fighting for its existence, one that joins together millennia and embraces Greece and Germany together."⁸⁷ Heidegger's "de-historicized" use of Hölderlin was also political, geared towards the legitimization of Germany's most *völkisch* strains.⁸⁸ As Bambach explains:

When [Heidegger] deploys the innocent language of "homecoming," "the uncanny," "poetic dwelling," "the hearth" and "commencement," he attempts to carry out his political designs ... as an urgent call for the instantiation of a more properly authentic National Socialism. What emerges ... is nothing less than the mythification of a poet for political purposes.⁸⁹

great nazified German nation." Alan Paskow, "Heidegger and Nazism," *Philosophy East and West* 41, no. 4 (October 1991): 527.

⁸³ Glenn W. Most, "Heidegger's Greeks," *Arion* 10, no. 1 (2002): pp. 86, 89, 91.

⁸⁴ Most, "Heidegger's Greeks," 94–95.

⁸⁵ Charles Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). Bambach argues that Heidegger's appropriation of the Greeks "is always political," particularly in the idea of rootedness, which drew on the racial myths of a "privileged, originary relation between the ancient Greeks and the German Volk," opposed to the rootless upheaval and chaotic crisis of the contemporary world. Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, xx (preface), 212. The connection to an apolitical and universal "nature" is the subject of Constanze Guthenke's *Placing Modern Greece*, which discusses how Greece was romanticized as "the peak of artistic, political, and natural harmony." In search of continuity with the past, Germans found in Greece a "landscape of longing" whose symbols and tropes became enshrined in mythologized cliché. Constanze Guthenke, *Placing Modern Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25; *Ibid.*, 92–94. Also explaining this connection is Gilbert Highet, who cites the ideas of the German philosopher Paul Hensel, who in the 1920s promoted the idea of a "second" German Renaissance in which the "national kinship" between the Germans and the Greeks had been discovered and enacted. This allowed the Germans to identify themselves as Greeks just as the English, French, and Italians had identified themselves as Latin, thus constructing the great nationalist conflict as a historical inevitability. Hensel, "Montaigne und die Antike," quoted and translated in Highet, *The Classical Tradition*, 267.

⁸⁶ Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, 195; *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, 105.

⁸⁸ Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, 245.

⁸⁹ Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, 241.

Bambach also cites writers like Alfred Baeumler, who wrote in 1943, "National Socialism has an immediate and direct relation to Greek civilization.... Knowledge of this immediate relation between Greek and German culture confirms the accuracy of the racial view of history."⁹⁰ The Germans' interest in the ancient Greeks, then, was no mere quirk or cultural dabbling. It was central to the philosophical justification of nationalism.

Meanwhile, aesthetic assessments from ancient sources were readily transformed into moral judgments, exalting Greece as "the symbol and embodiment of humankind's true, free, uncorrupted nature."⁹¹ The lofty ideal of being true, free, and uncorrupted was easily repurposed to suit political and racial aims.⁹² At its extreme, evoking Greek signs was a kind of shorthand in Third Reich Germany, creating and reproducing "mythology as identification" in a way that pretends to be utterly natural and universal.⁹³ The German philosophical imperative for national identity was modeled on the idea of the Greeks as a bounded nation.⁹⁴ Furthermore (and quite relevant to Orff's projects), theater and music drama occupy a central place in the creation of such a national ideology, as it is the art form best equipped "to set the process of identification into motion."⁹⁵ Germans manifested the ideas about themselves as a people through their conviction, and through the act of being convinced, that they were the Aryan heirs to the Greeks and that the Greeks were therefore Aryan.

A sense of loss and mourning for the fragments of Greece was connected to the similar search for Aryan origins and the formation discourses concerning of racial purity. Though territorially threatened by those who studied ancient Germany, Classicists took comfort in Hitler's interest in Greece.⁹⁶ Long-established institutions worked to make archaeology useful to the Third Reich, as Suzanne Marchand has argued:

Archaeology could offer the new Reich exemplary warriors, unnamed heroes of the state, Aryan strongmen masquerading as Olympic athletes. The renewal of the Olympia excavations in 1936 reinforced this archaeological/eugenic parallel, as two exhibitions of athletic sculptures were mounted in Berlin ... in joint celebration of German museological prowess and of the ideal of Greek corporeal beauty.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ Alfred Baeumler, *Politik und Erziehung* (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1943), 137; quoted in and translated by Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots*, 137.

⁹¹ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 15–16. As a further example of the politics of aesthetic value systems, George L. Mosse describes the work of the artist Fidus as creating an ideal of Aryan male beauty that combines "ancient Germanic strength" with "echoes of the Greek ideal of physical beauty." Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 85.

⁹² Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 341–349. Brigitte Peucker has written about such a tactic in Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, the prologue of which exemplifies the Nazi idea of beautiful moving sculpture and rhythmic gymnastics, a kind of dance exercise based on Greek statuary. See Brigitte Peucker, "The Fascist Choreography: Riefenstahl's Tableaux," *Modernism/modernity* 11, no. 2 (2004), 288–289.

⁹³ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy "The Nazi Myth," tr. Brian Holmes, *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 2 (1990), 296–297. In this famous essay, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write that the fundamental property of Nazi racist ideology was the "mythification" of German identity.

⁹⁴ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, "The Nazi Myth," 299.

⁹⁵ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, "The Nazi Myth," 303.

⁹⁶ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 348–350.

⁹⁷ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 351.

The ability of German Classical studies to be so corrupted by “eugenics and vitalist thought,” Marchand writes, “is indicative of institutionalized philhellenism’s final moral vacuity.”⁹⁸ Political actors during the Third Reich consistently drew their ideological legitimacy from nominally apolitical artistic, academic, or philosophical values. Indeed, as George L. Mosse has explained, the “apolitical” nature of Nazi ideology was one of its major selling points, since “traditional politics” were thought to be worldly and artificial, while National Socialism was mystical and natural.⁹⁹ These tenets were often nationalist and racialized such that the Germans were all of history’s creative heroes, as Mosse explains:

As the genuine, as the solely pure race of peoples, the Germans, it was claimed, represented all that was creative since the inception of time. From the very beginning, before they had entered history as a group, Germans had affected the cultures of Greece and Rome. This theoretical assertion transformed the ancient Greeks into Germans and divorced modern Greeks from their classical heritage.¹⁰⁰

That this type of narrative was presented as objective history made it, of course, no less ideological and propagandistic.

Orff’s creation of an image of Greece onstage in *Oedipus* helped to perpetuate an idea of Greece that was always and already political and historical, no matter how fervently the artist might claim that Greek culture was a truly universal or original source. The “Stunde Null” did nothing to de-politicize these resonances. An explicitly political program, however, was conspicuously absent from Orff’s reckoning or from the interpretations of his commentators, who fell instead into clichéd presentations of Greece as universal and heroically primitive without acknowledging the political ends to which these identical ideas had so recently been directed. German artists and writers, including Orff, took for granted that they had special access to ancient ideals and that they had a special obligation to or relationship with antiquity. This assumed kinship, as we have seen, was also already politically fraught by the time Orff was writing *Oedipus*. Only by seeing Orff’s opera as a consequence or echo of the longer German tradition of imagining Greece does the peculiar problem of Orff’s supposedly apolitical, stalwartly unmediated Classical drama start to take shape.

Traces of the Opera Underneath

Both its studied lack of operaticism and its Classical roots allowed *Oedipus der Tyrann* to lay claim to an aura of naturalness and universality, the context for which, as detailed above, is richly historical and political. Though Orff’s piece seemed to critics to be self-evident, uncomposed, and sacred in its simplicity, the piece’s seeming self-evidence is contradicted by the intense effort it took to achieve this composerly pretense of non-presence. It is to this process that I now turn. Because *Oedipus* includes so few purely instrumental passages, and because the play text of Hölderlin’s *Oedipus* translation is a stable source as the opera’s libretto, it was

⁹⁸ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 352.

⁹⁹ Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 69.

not difficult to match up the fragmentary OZM sketches with their corresponding passages in the final score. Less straightforward was to account for the startling differences between the drafts and the final published score. Orff often drafted up to ten different versions of a passage, sometimes even redrafting up to twenty-five times.

These sources contain a multitude of alternative settings for nearly every passage, many featuring more rhythmic variation, more melismatic vocal lines, and a more active orchestra and chorus. The sketches and drafts reveal a consistent pattern of changing priorities over the decade of the opera's composition, manifesting a process of gradual but radical reduction of means. The draft materials betray a set of aesthetic priorities quite distinct from the final score, acting almost as a kind of alternate universe in which Orff's relationship to the text is much less "pure" and much more operatic. An even-handed consideration of these other versions as viable and meaningful alternatives works against a valorization of the final version as a universal and perfectly integrated whole. Rather than aiming to reveal the teleological road taken from the imperfect draft to the finished totality, and rather than treating precompositional material as evidence of a piece's coherent design, I aim to treat each sketch as part of a chaotic and unruly range of possibilities.

Seen this way, the drafts' rejected contents provide an opportunity to entertain new hermeneutic speculation, giving context to Orff's idiosyncratic text-setting and uniquely self-effacing musical interpretations. The earlier, more "operatic" materials hiding in the drafts for *Oedipus der Tyrann* show that behind Orff's studied severity lay a lyrical impulse and an operatic dramaturgy that was controlled and suppressed in the quest for a strict and purely Greek idiom. Considering the political implications of a more operatic approach, this secret orientation concerns not only the inner mechanisms of the opera but also provides new insights into the urgent question of what kind of music theater Orff meant his *Oedipus* to be, just how he molded it to be Greek, and how beholden it really was to traditions of opera otherwise considered to be tainted or suspect.

For almost every generalization one could make about Orff's musical idiom in *Oedipus der Tyrann*, there is a corresponding draft example that contradicts it.¹⁰¹ The beginning of the opera is itself a good example of this. *Oedipus* begins with stark, unaccompanied, ritualistic-sounding singing on a single pitch, inflected by articulation and phrasing but unaffected by meter (Example 4.1a). This sets the tone for the rest of the work, signaling that the opera to follow will revel in basic and ascetic extremes. It implies a musical universe without melody and with only a narrow range of tone colors. It gives primacy to the projection of the text's sounds without interpreting the meaning of the words. In contrast to this, one of the alternative beginnings Orff considered (Example 4.1b) has a 16-bar "overture" of sorts, the construction of which is familiar from *Carmina Burana*: repeating cells in a hypnotic percussion texture.

¹⁰¹ The authoritative source on the musical style and prosody of Orff's three Greek scores is Thomas Rösch, *Die Musik in den Griechischen Tragödien von Carl Orff* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2003).

Example 4.1a: Final version¹⁰²

libero
(♩ ca. 60)

Oed. *p*

O ihr des al - ten Kad - mos Kin - der, neu Ge - schlecht, in

Example 4.1b: Draft version¹⁰³

Pk 1. *pp*

Pk 2. 3. *pp*

grTr 1. 2. *pp*

Klav. 1.-4. *p*
sc⁶
sempre ped.

Klav. 5. 6. *p*
sc⁶

Pk 1. *tr*

Pk 2. 3.

grTr 1. 2.

Klav. 1.-4.

Klav. 5. 6.

This is followed by a melismatic flourish in the pianos and then, finally, Oedipus's first vocal line (Example 4.1c). This is one of several drafts of the opening of the piece, all of which begin with at least some kind of instrumental gesture. These orchestral gestures establish a rhythmic scheme and tonic C after which the opening vocal line on straight C's can "make sense." To begin the opera instead as Orff does in the final score, with the chant-like recitation, without rhythm, without interval, departs entirely from the expectations of opera. It is not exaggeration to say that really *anything* would be more operatic than Orff's chosen opening, and any of the drafts' more elaborate openings would have had a less ascetic, less extreme, more "conventional" effect, giving a sense not only of tonality and rhythm but also of the scope of the forces used in the opera and the palette of tone colors available to the composer.

¹⁰² *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 1.

¹⁰³ OZM 3/34: f. 2, p. 1.

Example 4.1c: Draft version continued¹⁰⁴

Becken

Lithophon

Xyl.

Marimbaph.

Organon

Oedip

Klav. 1.3

Klav. 2.4

Klav. 5.6

O ihr des al-ten Kad-mos Kin-der...

Among the least operatic aspects of *Oedipus* are the long tracts of purely spoken text, sometimes with and sometimes without rhythmic notation. Though the strangeness of Hölderlin's language makes it unlikely that anyone would mistake the words for naturalistic speech, the use of large amounts of unpitched vocalization is a departure from traditional operatic practice. In Example 4.2a, the printed score shows the final version of these lines of spoken dialogue with no accompaniment, on a rhythm but without fixed pitch. In an earlier version (Example 4.2b), however, these lines were not only pitched but also had a distinct melodic contour.

¹⁰⁴ OZM 3/34: f. 2, p. 2.

In the draft version, Orff contrasts the accented, more agitated words of Oedipus's line, alternating between two pitches, with the tenuto, steady words sung by Kreon. Oedipus's second line uses the same kind of alternating pattern, but a third higher, as if raising the stakes along with the vocal range. Kreon's subsequent reply becomes more modal and melodic, even incorporating grace notes. There is a range here of expression that responds to the shape and meaning of the dialogue. This nuance is lost in the final version, which has only articulation and the occasional quarter note to break up the passage's literal monotony. If the vocal setting of lines of text is considered to be a kind of interpretation of the structure and meaning of that text, these interpretive gestures of the earlier drafts are hidden in the final, flattened version.

Example 4.2a: Final version¹⁰⁵

23 *meno mosso*
 Oed. *p*
 Fällt in den Häusern o-der draußen Lajos? Fällt er in fremdem Land in diesem Morde?

più lento
 Kreon *p*
 Gott an-zu-schauen, gieng er aus, so hieß es, nicht kehrt' er in das Haus, wie er gesandt war.

più mosso
 Oed.
 Sah's nicht ein Bo-te o-der ein Be-gleiter, von dem es ei-ner hört' und forsche-te?

rit. *a tempo*
 Kreon *p*
 Todt sind sie. Ei-ner nur, der floh aus Furcht, wußt' eins von dem zu sa-gen, was er wußte.

Example 4.2b: Draft version¹⁰⁶

Oedipus *f* *meno f*
 Fällt in den Häu-tern o - der drau-ßen Laj - os? Fällt er in frem - den Land in die - sem Mor - de?

Kreon *p*
 Gott an - zu - schau - en, gieng er aus, so hieß es, nicht kehrt' er in das Haus, wie er ge - sandt war.

Oedipus *f*
 Sah's nicht ein Bo - te o - der ein Be - glei - ter, von dem es ei - ner hört' und for - sche - te?

Kreon
 Todt sind sie. Ei - ner nur, der floh aus Furcht, wußt' eins von dem zu sa - gen, was er wuß - te

¹⁰⁵ *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 21.

¹⁰⁶ OZM 3/31: f. 5, p. 33-34.

The process by which Orff arrived at a final version often encompassed a large number of possible interpretations and settings. It is not unusual to see him experimenting in the sketches with a full range of melodic and declaimed vocal writing in versions of a single passage. Example 4.3 shows three versions of the same line of text: one sung monotone, one relatively melodic, and one declaimed as in ritualized speech.

Example 4.3: Three versions of one vocal line¹⁰⁷

Molto meno mosso
p oscuro

Jok. lang hat Oe-di-pus den Mann geflohen, daß er nicht ihn töd-te.

Lang hat Oe-di-pus den Mann ge-flohn, daß er nicht ihn töd-te.

Lang hat Oe-di-pus den Mann ge-flo-hen, daß er nicht ihn töd-te.

quasi leggiero

Jok. Jezt stirbt er weg, zu-fäl-lig, nicht durch jenen.

Jetzt stirbt er weg, zu-fäl-lig, nicht durch je-nen.

Jetzt stirbt er weg, zu-fäl-lig, nicht durch je nen.

When such a spectrum of options is present in Orff's drafts, the barest and least-adorned melody is commonly the final version. The score that results is, consequently, relatively sparse, unmelodic, and often unpitched. Cumulatively, the succession of small decisions in favor of melodic austerity constitutes a major shift in Orff's thinking about where the extremes of expression should lie. The result is that speech in the opera is rendered as actual speech, rather than recitative, and the scale of what is considered possible vocal territory is altered; the dramatic associations of each kind of sung or spoken utterance change accordingly.

Changes in Orff's use of different vocal styles also affect the structure and form within a scene. The avoidance of contrasting idioms in the final score can result in a flattened-out texture and more continuous structure that less effectively reflect the text's poetic and dramatic ebbs and flows. Example 4.4a presents a moment of transition in the final score where the Priest, who has been singing a declamatory line without much rhythmic definition, switches to more constrained rhythms, with the piano providing metric accents. By the end of the passage, he transitions to more varied pitch material. Coloratura it surely is not, but when the listener is accustomed to a few very repetitive elements, even slight changes (here, from monotone to intervallic singing) are noticeable.

¹⁰⁷ Top line: final version (*Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 155); second and third lines: draft versions (OZM 3/31: f. 9, p. 21).

Example 4.4a: Final version¹⁰⁸

Aus Jüng-ling-en er-wählt sind die. Das
 an-de-re Ge-zweig häuft sich be-kränzt auf Plä-zen, bei der Pal-las zwie-fach-ern Tempel, und des
 Is-me-nos weis-sa-gen-der A-sche. Denn die Stadt, die du siehst, sehr
 wankt sie schon, und heben kann das Haupt vom Ab-grund sie nicht mehr und rother Wel-le.
 a tempo
 Sie merkt den Tod in Bech-ern der frucht-barn Erd', in Heer-den und in
 un-ge-bo-re-ner Ge-burt des Weibs; und Feu-er bringt von in-nen

In the draft version (Example 4.4b), Orff makes the switch away from monotone as soon as he adds rhythmic definition, which results in a more defined, formally emphasized division between the two styles: pure monotone declamation in one style, and something more traditionally “musical” in a second style.

Example 4.4b: Draft version¹⁰⁹

Aus Jüng-ling-en er-wählt sind die. Das
 an-de-re Ge-zweig häuft sich be-kränzt auf Plä-zen, bei der Pal-las zwie-fach-ern
 Tempel, und des Is-me-nos weis-sa-gen-der A-sche. Denn die Stadt, die du siehst,
 sehr wankt sie schon und he-ben kann das Haupt von Ab-grund sie nicht mehr und rot-her Wel-le.
 Sie merkt den Tod in Bech-ern der frucht-barn Erd', in Heer-den und in
 un-ge-bo-re-ner Ge-burt des Weibs, und Feu-er bringt von Ih-nen

¹⁰⁸ *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 2–3.

¹⁰⁹ OZM 3/31: f. 5, p. 6–8.

Such shifts are interesting because of what they imply about the definition of and alternation between different kinds of vocal register – register referring not just to the pitch of the voice (high or low), but also to dramatic register and a passage’s position on the spectrum from speech to song. Each version shows a different interpretation regarding the translation of Hölderlin’s poetry into drama through the use of vocal register. With the more audibly contrasting material, the draft makes evident a more decisive structural split between the two bits of dialogue, whereas the final version is more blurred and gradual. The ways Orff plans and rethinks these internal contrasts provide clues to his changing approach to expressing the relative formality, ritualism, or emotional color of a given passage of poetry.

The question of melodic register and the consequences of such changes arise intriguingly in a bit of dialogue between Oedipus and Jokasta (Example 4.5). This dialogue is spoken in the printed score and rhythmically declaimed in the draft; in both cases, then, a speech-like register is delineated (Example 4.5a).

Example 4.5a: Spoken and sung versions¹¹⁰

Jokasta Hab' ich dir diß nicht längst vorausgesagt?
[Jok.]

Oedipus Du hast's gesagt. Ich ward von Furcht verführt.
[Oed.]

9.24

Hab' ich dir diß nicht längst vor - aus - ge - sagt? Du hast's ge sagt. Ich ward von Furcht ver - führt.

Jokasta Nimm nun nichts mehr von jenem dir zu Herzen.
[Jok.]

Oedipus Was? auch der Mutter Bett soll ich nicht fürchten?
[Oed.]

9.24

Nimm nun nichts mehr von jenem dir zu Her - zen Was? auch der Mut - ter Bett soll icht nicht fürch - ten? [Was]

Aria
[Jok.]

At the end of this dialogue in the draft version, a high A for Jokasta follows with the designation “Aria.” A more operatic word one could not find: it indicates a clear moment of emotional reaction, a place of shifting verbal purpose. The two characters change from alternating single lines of dialogue to a longer, more monologic passage for Jokasta (“Was fürchtet denn der Mensch...”).

There are also clues in the final score that Orff thought of this spot in the libretto as a moment ripe for an aria. There, Jokasta’s lines starting at the point formerly marked “Aria” consist of parallel phrases with the same opening gesture each time, followed by a third phrase that amplifies the gesture further (Example 4.5b). The rhythmic regularity of the accompaniment (despite its harmonic stasis) is in marked contrast to the unaccompanied speech that precedes it, and the marking “dolce” is still another aspect that identifies this passage as songlike, set off from the surrounding material by texture, melodic form, and textual features. With its large range and clear melodic shapes, its measured phrases and its constant accompaniment, this is as song-like as anything in the score. Comparing the two versions shows a particularly potent example of the consequences of operatic thinking as they remain in the final score; these remnants of previous conceptions are clues that complicate the

¹¹⁰ Top line: final version spoken dialogue (*Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 4996, 1959), 158); second line: draft version (OZM 3/31: f. 9, p. 24).

genre definition that insists that *Oedipus der Tyrann* exists outside of the realm of opera. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the word “Aria” does not appear in the final score; still, the moment remains “marked.”¹¹¹

Example 4.5b: “Aria”?¹¹²

Jok. $\frac{6}{8}$ (200) Andante $\text{ca. } 88$ $\frac{3}{4}$ *f dolce* $\frac{4}{4}$
 Was fürch - tet denn der Mensch, der mit dem
 Klav. *f* *p*
 Pk.

Jok. $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$
 Glück es hält? Von nichts — giebt ei-ne Ahnung deutlich.

Jok. *p* *f* $\frac{1}{4}$ (201) $\frac{2}{4}$ poco rit. *p leggiero*
 Da - hin — zu le-ben, so wie einer kann, das ist das Beste.
 c. p.

The second occurrence of the word “Aria” in the sketches corresponds to a moment that is marked in the final score with the performance indication *molto appassionata*.¹¹³ In this instance, too, the word “Aria” sneaks into the final score in a different guise. Moments of passion or tunefulness are relatively rare in *Oedipus*, but it is clear here that their motivation is conventionally familiar from the sphere of opera. Early versions of Oedipus’s final lament also show aspects of a more elaborate operatic idiom (Example 4.6). This soliloquy occurs at the

¹¹¹Orff, *Dokumentation*, vol. 7, 230. There is a reference here to a “Sprecharie” by Kreon, which is “a rhythmic skeleton, in which the missing melody is suggested by the way of presenting the language.” (“...ein rhythmisches Skelett, in dem die fehlende Melodie durch die Art des Vortrags der Sprache suggeriert wird.”)

¹¹² *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 4996, 1959), 158–159.

¹¹³ OZM 3/31: f. 9, p. 31

absolute high point of the drama: Oedipus's acknowledgment and reckoning, immediately after he blinds himself and the chorus asks him why he has done so (Example 4.6a). In this stanza, Oedipus blames Apollo for his misfortune and displays his bloody injury (his "suffering"). He recognizes that his self-mutilating action was extreme, compared even to those who commit suicide, and explicitly connects his new blindness to the horror at perceiving the truth of his life.

Example 4.6a: Passage text¹¹⁴

Apollon war's, Apollon, o ihr Lieben,
der solch Unglück vollbracht,
hier meine, meine Leiden.
Es äffet kein Selbstmörder ihn,
ich Leidender aber,
was sollt ich sehn,
dem sehend nichts zu schauen süß war.

*It was Apollo, Apollo, oh dear ones,
who accomplished such misfortune,
my suffering here.
Not even the suicidal man would emulate him [Oedipus],
but I, the Sufferer,
what should I see,
when of what there was to see, nothing was sweet to view.*

The wild melismas drafted for Oedipus here (Example 4.6b) would have emphasized the anguish of his recognition – of his fate and the gods who made it – and the pain in his injured eyes; his leaping, choking grace notes would have made this passage much more *con passione* (the performance marking that occurs at this moment in the final score).

Example 4.6b: Final and alternate versions¹¹⁵

Oed. *come prima trasfigurato* *con passione*
A-pol-lon war's, A-pol-lon, o ihr Lieben, der solch Unglück vollbracht, hier meine, meine Lei-den.

10.12a
A - pol - lo war's, A - pol - lon, o ihr Lie - ben, der solch

10.12b
A - pol - - - - lon [war's, A-pol-lon, o ihr Lieben, der solch Unglück voll-bracht, hier mei-ne, mei-ne Lei-den.

10.17v
A-pol-lo war's, A-pol-lon, o ihr Lie-ben, der solch Un-glück voll-bracht hier mei-ne, mei-ne Lei-den.

10.42
A-pol - - - - lo war's, A-pol lon, o ihr Lie ben, der solch Un-glück vollbracht hier mei ne, meine Lei-den.

¹¹⁴ *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 231.

¹¹⁵ Top line: final version (*Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 231); bottom lines: draft versions (OZM 3/31 f. 10, pp. 12, 17, 42).

Example 4.6b cont.

Es äf-fet kein Selbstmörder ihn, ich Lei-dender a-ber, was sollt'ich sehn,dem sehend nichts zu schauen süß war.

10.12b Es äffet kein Selbst-mörder ihn,ich Leidender a-ber, was sollt'ich sehn,dem sehend nichts zu schau en süß war.

10.42 Es äf fet kein Selbst mör der ihn,ich Lei den dera-ber was sollt'ich sehn,dem seh end nichts zu schau en süß war

These operatic vestiges – passionate songs – remain in the printed score like the tails of humans or the legs of whales, traces and symbols that the body of the opera has evolved past but cannot completely forget, remove, or deny.

Composers of operas based on Greek sources must carefully consider how to handle the prominence and role of the chorus, which in Greek tragedy is meant to be an all-knowing and interpretive collective force commenting on the action. The traditional role of the chorus in opera generally stops short of the prominence and omniscience of the Greek chorus, with a very active chorus instead more characteristic of oratorio. In *Oedipus*, Orff's fidelity to the Sophocles/Hölderlin text meant that ratio of chorus to soloists in the libretto exactly matches that of the original text. This rather "unoperatic" ratio is further emphasized because Orff does relatively little to amplify the solo or dialogue passages through, for example, the repetition of words or lines or through the imposition of lyrical melismas to extend the texts and change their proportions. As with the solo writing and orchestration, the progress from Orff's compositional drafts to the definitive score shows a gradual taming of the chorus's musical language. In the final score, the chorus sings plainly in simple, repetitive phrases that imply authority and stateliness. Example 4.7 shows a typical idiom for the chorus, consisting of pure declamation in thirds. In multiple earlier drafts, however, these same passages were extremely florid, lacking the ritual severity of the final version.

The most austere and ritualized writing for the chorus occurs as pure declaimed speech over an accompaniment (Example 4.8a). This kind of vocal expression is the least "musical" of all in the opera, the spoken mode carrying the potential to radically deny the musicality of the singers. It separates the singers from the orchestral texture continuing repetitively beneath their lines and, when performed, has no rhythmic (or, obviously, melodic) correspondence to the surrounding sounds. The lack of rhythmic definition in the final version of this passage is contradicted by one set of sketches, which shows these lines instead declaimed in defined rhythms (Example 4.8b), but even this mildly compositional intervention proved insufficiently severe for Orff's final setting. The draft version of this chorus passage implies a longer timeline than does the rhythmic declamation (102 eighth-notes in the draft vs. 40 in the final score), and so it would have required more music (and music that corresponded more closely to the given rhythms). Admittedly, it may not seem significant whether one set of four lines' declamation was in rhythm or in unmeasured speech. But even for relatively minor changes like this one, the drafts show greater structure and greater musicality. Where the final score seems to be obvious and natural, the drafts show a more "musical," more obviously "composed" interpretation of the same lines of text.

Example 4.7: Final version and draft versions¹¹⁶

34

$\frac{4}{4}$ Lento ♩ ca. 52

6

Chor

Zuerst dich nennend komm'ich, Zeus Tochter; un-sterb-li-che A-the-ne,

11.11 Zu - erst _____ dich nen nend komm'ich Zeus Toch ter un - sterb - - li - che A - the ne

Zu - erst _____ dich nen nend komm'ich Zeus Toch ter un - sterb - - li - che A - the ne

12.13 Zu - erst _____ dich nen-nend komm'ich Zeus Toch-ter,un-sterb li - che A - the - ne

12.15 Zu - erst _____ dich nen-nend komm' _____ ich Zeus Toch-ter un - sterb - - - li - che A - the - ne

Zu - erst _____ dich nen-nend komm' _____ ich Zeus Toch-ter un sterb - - - li - che A - the - ne

12.20 Zu - ers _____ dich _____ nen-nend komm'ich Zeus Toch - ter un-sterb - li - che A - the -

$\frac{4}{4}$

Chor

und den Erd-um-fassenden, und die Schwester Ar - te-mis, die den kreisenden,

11.11 und die Erd - - um - fas-sen-den die Schwes-ter Ar-te-mis, die den krei-sen-den

und die Erd - - um - fas-sen-den die Schwes-ter Ar-te-mis, die den krei-sen-den

¹¹⁶ Top line: final version (*Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 29); bottom lines: draft versions (OZM 3/32: f. 11, p. 11; f. 12, pp. 13, 15, 20).

Example 4.7 cont.

Chor

der A-go-ra Thron, den rühm-li-chen be-si-zet, und den Phö-bos fernhin treffend.

11.11
der A-go-ra Thron, den rühm-li-chen be-si-zet und den Phö-bos fern-hin tref-fend

12.13
der A-go-ra Thron, den rühm-li-chen be-si-zet und den Phö-bos fern-hin tref-fend

12.20
der A-go-ra Thron, den rühm-li-chen be-si-zet und den Phö-bos fern-hin tref-fend

Example 4.8a: Final version¹¹⁷

gr. Tr. *libero, sempre c.p.*

Chor

Soli singoli alternativamente

Wenn aber überschauend einen mit Händen wendelt, oder mit Worten, und fürhtet das Recht nicht,	und die Thronen nicht der Dämonen verehrt, den hab' ein böses Schik- saal, unschiklichen Prangens wegen,	wenn nicht Gewinn er gewinnt recht, und offenbares verschleußt,	und unberühr- bares angreift albern.
---	--	--	--

Alfi, Harfe,
Solobass

Klav.
Basses

Example 4.8b: Draft version¹¹⁸

[Wenn a-ber u-ber-schau-end]

ei-ner mit Hän-den wan-delt o-der mit Wor-ten, und fürch-tet das Recht nicht

und die Thro-nen nicht der Dä-mon-en ver-ehrt, den hab' ein bö-ses Schik-saal,

un-schäk-lich-en Prang-ens we-gen, wenn nicht Ge-winn er ge-win-net recht,

und of-fen-bar-es ver-schleußt, und un-be-rühr-bar-es an-greißt al-bern.

¹¹⁷ *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 145–146.

¹¹⁸ OZM 3/31: f. 9, p. 8.

Changes in the vocal lines are the revisions that most straightforwardly demonstrate a changed interpretation or dramatic shape. The texture and presence of the orchestra, however, adds an important dimension to the opera's range of expression, as moments of increased tension or importance can be heightened by orchestral presence. Though the final orchestration is often sparse, the sketches reveal a simplification process similar to the one I have traced in the vocal writing. Declaimed passages that in the final score occur with only very minimal orchestral accompaniment often, in earlier versions, show much more rhythmic intervention. In the line Oedipus sings in Example 4.9, the final version (Example 4.9a) shows a sort of percussion "hit" on the downbeat, sustained throughout the declaimed line.

Example 4.9a: Final version¹¹⁹

Oed. und so, daß euer keiner krank ist, wie ich. Denn euer Leiden kommt auf einen, der allein ist bei ihm selber, auf keinen andern nicht. Und meine

Klav. p
Tan. Xyl.
p

Such downbeat markers are integral to the way the division of time and dramatic pacing are created within a scene. Regular orchestral "punctuation," like that in the draft of this passage (Example 4.9b), creates a sense of ritual repetition, opposed to the freer, more improvisatory quality of the final version.

Example 4.9b: Draft version¹²⁰

Lith. *p*

Xyl. *p*

Mar.

Tamt. *p*

Oedip. krank, und so, daß eu er keines, krank ist wie ich. Denn eu - er Lei-den kommt auf einen, der allein ist bei ihm selber, auf keinen andern nicht. Und meine

Klav. 1-6 *mf*

¹¹⁹ *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 11.

¹²⁰ OZM 3/34: f. 2, p. 4.

This change in form and pacing also interacts with changes in the vocal line of the kind already examined. Oedipus's vocal lines are monotone in the eventual version, while the draft version had him singing on a variety of pitches across his range, significantly impacting the relationship in this passage between poetic structure and musical style. Specifically, the formulas in the drafted pitches – the grace notes and the emphasis of longer note values – provide further punctuation of the beginnings or endings of each text fragment, analogous to the beginning or ending formulas in medieval chant. They broadcast an awareness of the poetic form that is further amplified by the orchestration, which is compressed, disappearing in the final version.

A more extreme revision to the orchestration is shown in Example 4.10. While the printed score (Example 4.10a) shows Oedipus's lines punctuated only sparingly by the timpani, an earlier version is underscored by quite a noisy orchestra (Example 4.10b), including all six pianists and two xylophones. This active texture, when compared to the sparseness around it, could indicate heightened dramatic importance.

Example 4.10a: Final version¹²¹

Oed. *più lento*
p cant.
Doch wenn er kommt, dann wär ich bö - se, thät' ich nicht al - les,
Libero ten.
p
Pke.
p

Example 4.10b: Draft version¹²²

Xyl. 1
Xyl. 2
Pk
gr. Tr.
Oedip
Doch wenn er kommt, dann wär ich bö - se, thät ich nicht al - les
Klav. 1-6
f
ff
ff

¹²¹ *Oedipus der Tyrann*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 4996, 1959), 18.

¹²² OZM 3/34: f. 2, p. 4

The timbral difference between a single timpani and a large complement of pitched percussion, however, is not the only effect: the revisions to orchestration ripple out to affect dynamics and rhythm, form and pacing. The final version is a free and cantabile *piano*, with simple rhythms and subtle articulation marks for emphasis. The draft version, on the other hand, has rhythms that fight against the vocal line, dynamics that increase to an insistent *fortissimo*, and uniformly accented strikes.

For every type of stripped down, de-musicked music in *Oedipus der Tyrann*, there are drafts that show a more elaborate effect, an alternate universe where the characters speak and sing differently. In the final version, passages that had once been conceived as melodic are instead declaimed on a single pitch, and passages that had once been declaimed are spoken instead. As a result of Orff's crackdown on melody, vocal registers were compressed, and melisma was less prominent. The orchestral accompaniment was erased or filtered down to the absolute basics. It is apparent that Orff's version of Greek tragedy was far from self-evident, and in fact the opera's appearance of obviousness came as the result of sustained effort and experiment. In addition to offering alternative readings of individual moments in the opera through a different set of dramatic and vocal cues, the drafts collectively show the process by which Orff arrived at his definitive, authoritative "Greek" idiom. Taken cumulatively, the spectrum of possibilities Orff considered setting for the opera's individual moments show an uneasy and unstable relationship to two different, opposed ideals that themselves have notoriously shifting definitions, as shown in the "origin stories" above.

At one end, more prominently represented in the drafts, a conventional idea of operatic mechanics would demand melodic variation, dramatic orchestration, a discernable structure, ornamented vocalism, and changes in lyrical expression at heightened moments of drama. The drafts show the extent to which these traces of tradition were at least initially unavoidable as Orff gave a musical shape to Hölderlin's text. On the other end was the idea of austerity and purity in Orff's own version of Classicism, a studied self-abnegation as a composer in favor of an idiom that seemed timeless and self-evident. Because so much of the reception of *Oedipus der Tyrann*, both in the press at the time of the premiere and in the scholarly literature to date, has focused on its determined stance against operatic expression, the existence of so much unused material with a different orientation is significant. The evidence in the drafts of this shift in priorities over time shows Orff's struggle to so willfully reject a traditionally operatic way of thinking that his own musicality and compositional authority was ultimately lost.

Orff's fundamental change in aesthetic orientation, coming only over time and with great effort, occasions a reconsideration of the piece's relationship to the genre of opera, previously thought to be one of uncomplicated rejection. The problems that *Oedipus der Tyrann* raises – about operatic authorship, when the style of text-setting seems so stubbornly basic as to be self-evident and non-interpretive; about composition, when music shades towards absence, so abstracted as to be pure sound instead – destabilized the assumptions contained in the generic contract between the audience and the composer. This more complicated relationship to opera and to antiquity is of utmost importance given that *Oedipus* premiered in an era when being universal, non-operatic, and timeless carried a significant advantage, especially for a composer with a political interest in finding musical inspiration and personal redemption in something older and more awesome than German memory. *Oedipus der Tyrann* may seem like the apex of rigorous tragedy, but there is an opera underneath.

CHAPTER FIVE

Imperfect Pluralities: Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*

Introduction

Die Soldaten, the only completed opera by Bernd Alois Zimmermann, occupies a rare position among post-war operas by German composers as one of the few to claim a place not only in the performance history of major opera houses, but also in the canon of twentieth-century masterworks. The evocative sounds of Zimmermann's expressionistic and aggressive score turn the story of a young bourgeois girl ruined by soldiers and the fiancé who avenges her through murder and suicide into a timely allegory about the evil effects of war on society. The forceful political statements, philosophical reference points, and dodecaphonic idiom for which *Die Soldaten* is known are all characteristics that run counter to the stereotypes of opera – conventional, politically complacent, entertainment-focused, sentimental – that prevailed in avant-garde circles at mid-century.¹ Furthermore, the extant critical literature shows that Zimmermann's bold vision and uncompromising political stance granted him access to a higher degree of prestige and recognition than was accorded others, especially those who were primarily known as "opera composers."² By writing an even more critical and even more violent-sounding opera than *Wozzeck*, Zimmermann set *Die Soldaten* in a genealogical line that granted it not only "better" music, as judged by some mid-century modernist metric, but also more "importance" of message. To judge by the number of productions and the amount of scholarly attention the piece has accrued, Zimmermann gambled big and won. The critical success, musicological recognition, and directorial engagement garnered by *Die Soldaten* seem an explicit rejoinder to the problematic discourses and difficult conditions of reception composers of new operas faced after 1945.³

Unlike Blacher and Orff, Zimmermann felt no need to deny that what he was writing was an opera in the fullest sense; instead, he aggressively stated his own vision of what the future of opera should be. Confident in his ability to achieve something bold, Zimmermann avoided the anti-genre anxiety of self-consciously avant-garde composers. Instead, he seemed to believe that it was exactly opera – a massive, dramatic form combining many artistic media – that was best suited to the kinds of statements and drama that he envisioned. When treating the source play, two major interventions allowed Zimmermann to mold an opera with an unprecedented level of complexity, both musical and ideological. First, the non-linear timeline

¹ Dieter Rexroth, "Ausserhalb der Forderungen der Epoche: Paul Hindemith, Bernd Alois Zimmermann und der Musikalische Fortschritt nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg" in *Musikkultur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Rudolf Stephan and Wsewolod Saderatzkij, 307–313 (Kassel: Bosse, 1994).

² See Siegfried Borris, "Komponist und Mitwelt. Der Komponist als Seismograph wider Willen," in *Musik und Bildung: Praxis Musikunterricht* 10 (1978): 701–706; and Stefan Bodo Würffel, "Soziale Aspekte der neueren deutschen Literaturoper," in *Burgersinn und Kritik: Festschrift für Udo Bermbach zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Herfried Münkler, Rainer Schmalz-Bruns, and Michael Greven, 443–463 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998).

³ Bernhard Müssgens, "Über einige Auswirkungen der Naziherrschaft auf Leben und Werk Paul Celans und Bernd Alois Zimmermanns," in *Die dunkle Last: Musik und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Brunhilde Sonntag, Hans-Werner Boesch, and Detlef Gojowy, 348–363 (Cologne: Bela, 1999).

led to an articulation of a peculiarly fatalistic philosophy of “spherical” history, concomitantly universalizing the responsibility for soldiers’ crimes in the ethical scheme of the opera’s onstage world. Second, the creation of dramatic and musical tiers thematized the immovable structures of the portrayed society, analogous to the endemic injustice and violence Zimmermann wanted to critique.

As a vehicle for Zimmermann’s most forcefully anti-war beliefs, *Die Soldaten* was a summary statement of his own troubled experiences during the war. As many musicologists have shown, his commitment to this position in the years following World War II is thought to have been personal (that is, psychological and biographical), political, and also religious. (Many of Zimmermann’s works were influenced by his devout Catholicism, including the work he completed five days before his suicide in 1970, the “Ecclesiastical Action” *Ich wandte mich und sah an alles Unrecht, das geschah unter der Sonne* [“So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun”].)⁴ An opera of big ideas, *Die Soldaten* placed enormous strain on the orchestral and vocal performers, on the audience, and on the operatic medium itself.⁵

Zimmermann had a complicated relationship with the genre of opera as conventionally conceived, as did many of his “in-between” generation. In 1948, the 30-year-old composer wrote emphatically, “That opera finds itself in a crisis has by now even become a fact of music history, and regarding the present situation, the crisis is still far from resolved.”⁶ But he considered that crisis to be productive.

We live in unsettled times stylistically, and escape attempts are readily ventured in every direction – with the result that for now we have freed ourselves from doctrinaire timidity about style.⁷

In this same 1948 essay, Zimmermann demonstrated his interest in and knowledge of new forms of music theater, citing Berg (*Wozzeck*), Hindemith (*Cardillac*), and Stravinsky (*Oedipus Rex* and *L’histoire du soldat*).⁸ Still, it was not until nearly ten years after the publication of this essay that Zimmermann began work on *Die Soldaten*, by which time he had developed his own approach to the form. In his 1965 essay, “The Future of Opera,” Zimmermann wrote:

⁴ Ecclesiastes 4:1 (English version: KJV). Wulf Konold, “Zimmermann-Aspekte. Anmerkungen zu Persönlichkeit und Werk.” *Musik und Bildung: Praxis Musikunterricht* 10 (1978): 630–633.

⁵ See Siegfried Mauser, “Die erkenntnistheoretischen Grundlagen der Zimmermann’schen Zeitphilosophie,” in *Zeitphilosophie und Klanggestalt: Untersuchungen zum Werk Bernd Alois Zimmermanns*, ed. Siegfried Mauser and Hermann Beyer (Mainz: Schott, 1986), 9–19.

⁶ Bernd Alois Zimmermann, “Mysterium oder Oper?” (1948), reprinted in Heribert Henrich, ed., *Bernd Alois Zimmermann: “Du und Ich und Ich und die Welt”: Dokumente aus den Jahren 1940 bis 1950* (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 1998), 113. Written as a review of the opera *Verkündigung* of fellow Cologne composer Walter Braunfels. “Daß sich die Opera in einer Krise befindet, ist inzwischen sofar musikhistorisch geworden, und ihre jetzige Situation darauf, daß diese Krise noch längst nicht überwunden ist.”

⁷ Zimmermann, “Mysterium oder Oper?,” 113. “Wir leben in unruhigen stilistischen Zeiten, und Befreiungsversuche sind bereits nach jeder Richtung unternommen worden—mit dem Ergebnis, daß man sich zunächst einmal von der doktrinären stilistischen Ängstlichkeit befreite.”

⁸ Zimmermann, “Mysterium oder Oper?,” 113–114.

Opera is better contemplated as a [type of] theater under which I perceive the convergence of all theatrical media developed as purposes of communication in their own domain. In other words: architecture, sculpture, painting; *Musiktheater*, spoken theater, ballet; film, microphone, television, tape and sound technologies; electronic music, *musique concrète*; circus, the [popular] musical and all the forms of gestural theater, all come together in the phenomenon of pluralistic opera ... In some scenes of this opera [*Die Soldaten*], speech, singing, screaming, whispering, jazz, Gregorian chant, dance, film, and the totally modern "technical theater" ... are placed in the service of the notion of pluralistic forms of Musiktheater.⁹

In keeping with this pluralistic outlook, Zimmermann used collage techniques, borrowing and quoting material and compositional ideas from sources as diverse as Bach, Josquin, jazz, and chant.¹⁰ He also used multimedia to show multiple perspectives and to forge connections between postwar Germany and the eighteenth-century world in which the opera is nominally set. Zimmermann extended this pluralistic outlook further by stacking scenes from the source play (written by Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz in 1776) on top of each other to reflect what he called the "spherical shape of time" ("Kugelgestalt der Zeit"), the multiple levels of staging portraying events that happen at different times and creating a collapsed timeline of a simultaneous past, present, and future.¹¹ Finally, Zimmermann used the labels of older forms to refer to earlier periods of music history and other repertoires, creating a pan-historical panoply.¹² Zimmermann's eagerness to use forms from the past and to include tonal and

⁹ Bernd Alois Zimmermann, "Zukunft der Oper," in *Intervall und Zeit*, ed. Christof Bitter (Mainz: Schott, 1974), 41–42. "... an eine Oper zu denken, besser noch: an ein Theater, unter dem ich die Konzentration aller theatralischen Medien zum Zwecke der Kommunikation an einer eigens dafür geschaffenen Stätte verstehe. Mit anderen Worten: Architektur, Skulptur, Malerei, Musiktheater, Sprechtheater, Ballett, Film, Mikrophon, Fernsehen, Band- und Tontechnik, elektronische Musik, konkrete Musik, Zirkus, Musical und alle Formen des Bewegungstheaters treten zum Phänomen der pluralistischen Oper zusammen ... Bei den *Soldaten* ... in einigen Szenen dieser Oper Sprechen, Singen, Schreien, Flüstern, Jazz, Gregorianik, Tanz, Film und das gesamte modern 'technische Theater' ... in den Dienst des Gedankens der pluralistischen Form des Musiktheaters gestellt worden."

¹⁰ Zimmermann's borrowings in the opera are discussed comprehensively in several sources, including: Clemens Kühn, *Das Zitat in der Musik der Gegenwart* (Hamburg: K. D. Wagner, 1972); Henning Siedentopf, "Die neue Musik und die Collage. Zu Form und Sprache gegenwertiger Komponisten," *Universitas* 29 (1974): 75–82; Lise Viens, "Strategies Citationelles dans *Die Soldaten* de Bernd Alois Zimmermann," *Canadian University Music Review* 17, no. 1 (1996): 1–19; Frank Schneider, "Bach als Quelle im Strom der Moderne (von Schonberg bis zur Gegenwart)," *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz* 1 (1994): 110–125; Ralph Paland, "Struktur und Semantik in Bernd Alois Zimmermanns musikalischen Collagen," *Musik-Konzepte* 12 (2005): 103–119; Klaus Winkler, "Bach-Choralzitate in Kompositionen des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Alte Musik als ästhetische Gegenwart*, ed. Dietrich Berke and Dorothee Hanemann, 535–543 (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1987).

¹¹ For a widely-cited account of Zimmermann's philosophy see Carl Dahlhaus, "'Kugelgestalt der Zeit': Zu Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Musikphilosophie," *Musik und Bildung: Praxis Musikunterricht* 10 (1978): 633–636. See also Erika Funk-Hennigs, "Zimmermanns Philosophie der Zeit: Dargestellt an Ausschnitten der Oper *Die Soldaten*," *Musik und Bildung: Praxis Musikunterricht* 10 (1978): 644–652. For an overview of simultaneity in Zimmermann's opera, see Angelus Seipt, "Polyphonie und Collage: Die Simultanszenen in Zimmermanns *Soldaten* und das Musiktheater der Gegenwart," in *Zwischen Den Generationen*, ed. Wulf Konold, Manuel Gervink, and Klaus Wolfgang Niemüller, 145–164 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1989).

¹² The most complete study of the uses of these forms and the musical content therein is Aloyse Michaely, "Toccata—Ciacona—Nocturno: Zu Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Oper 'Die Soldaten'," in *Musiktheater im 20.*

historical materials in his collages put him at odds with composers who resisted history in the name of the Zero Hour. Yet with this very opposition, Zimmermann turned his embrace of older styles and conventions – one might say, his embrace of history – into an innovation, as he sought to acknowledge and utilize music history in a way that engaged with rather than denied the past. His view of historical time, drawing on dramaturgical ideas of the simultaneous past, present, and future, was a self-conscious acknowledgment of the present power of history.¹³

The vast opera that resulted was weighed down by the interpretive burden of Zimmermann's anti-war politics. Yet an interpretation of the opera that focuses entirely on the largest, most ambitious, and most politically forceful side of the opera's totality has a limited view. The Lenz play of the same name on which the opera was based was a sometimes-satirical comedy of manners focused on clashes of class and gender rather than advancing the kind of serious anti-war statement into which Zimmermann transformed it. Aspects of the play that are more historically particular, embedded in the play's merchant-town setting and middle-class characters, are ignored in much of the critical literature, though they are manifest in many of the opera's literal and metaphorical "tiers." As a result, aspects of *Die Soldaten* that are deeply rooted in older dramatic and operatic traditions embody remnants of conventional expressive methods in a way that is both intriguing and, eventually, contradictory to the opera's overarching message.

These remnants are apparent in alternate versions and drafts preserved in archival sources. Zimmermann's drafts have yielded earlier, simplified versions of scenes like the soldiers' chaotic Toccata and the opening orchestral material. The changes the composer made in these scenes resulted in a more expansive political purview and more extreme contrasts; cumulatively, these amount to a shift in the balance of Zimmermann's political focus. Since some of the most monumental elements were added to the score only gradually, the drafts provide insight into a time when Zimmermann's own interpretation of the play was smaller and more intimate.¹⁴ With the original, more modest conception having been more closely aligned with the original play, Zimmermann's process of expanding Lenz's play into an opera with a very different vision – yet without adapting the text of the play into a traditional libretto – makes *Die Soldaten* a particularly intriguing case in the history of *Literaturoper* and an important example of how multivalent meanings can accrue to a narrative in the course of composition. More importantly, Zimmermann's process of turning Lenz's play into an explicitly political opera with modern relevance entailed the creation of allegory – so as to have "universal" rather than historical resonance – and the rejection of that which was self-consciously "classical" in the original drama.

Jahrhundert, ed. Sigfried Mauser and Jens Malte Fischer, 127–204 (Laaber: Laaber, 2002). See also Laurence Helleu, "L'utilisation des formes anciennes dans *Les Soldats*: l'exemple de la strophe, acte 1, scène 1," *Contrechamps* 5 (1985): 124–139.

¹³ Zimmermann's most important writing about this compositional philosophy is in the 1957 essay, "Intervall und Zeit" (*Intervall und Zeit*, 11–14). See also Peter Lausch and Dieter Mersch, "Alles auf Einmal: Zu Bernd Alois Zimmermanns musikphilosophischem Denken," *MusikTexte: Zeitschrift für neue Musik* 24 (1988): 46–49.

¹⁴ This process of revision for greater complication contradicts the main narrative otherwise known: that Zimmermann was forced to make compromises when the management at the Cologne opera house deemed the work "unplayable."

From Lenz to *Literaturoper*

Although the opera *Die Soldaten* differs vastly from the play on which it is based, Lenz's technique of dramatic simultaneity made his play a particularly fitting source for a composer as philosophically obsessed with time and history as was Zimmermann. In an innovative move for 1776, Lenz rejected to an extreme extent the classical Aristotelian unities of place, time, and action by cutting between many short scenes that were set at the same moment in different locations and featured different characters.¹⁵ The play, a "Komödie" in five acts and thirty-five scenes, recounts the story of Marie Wesener, the bourgeois daughter of a textiles merchant in the French Flemish town of Lille. When the army comes to town, the soldiers of the visiting regiment wreak havoc on all aspects of town life – both the play and the opera are filled with scenes of carousing and other military decadence – and upend the personal lives of particular townspeople. Marie is one of these, having caught the eye of the aristocratic Baron Desportes. Though he has a fiancée at home, he lures Marie from her own beloved, the young Stolzius, with promises of upward social mobility; Desportes, however, has no intention of being seriously involved with her.

After the Baron tires of Marie, she takes up with the Major Mary, who has taken on the devastated and unrecognizable Stolzius as a military servant. Meanwhile, the Countess de la Roche warns her son, the young Count, against developing his own infatuation with Marie. The Countess then decides to rescue Marie from her degraded position, offering to take her into her home on the condition that she rehabilitate herself. Marie, however, decides to run away from the Countess's house to find Baron Desportes; instead, Desportes sends his gamekeeper to intercept Marie and rape her (she then becomes a beggar). Shortly after, Desportes, while dining with Major Mary, gloats about his obliteration of Marie. Furious, the vengeful manservant Stolzius poisons Desportes and himself. Many commentators on *Die Soldaten* have emphasized how Zimmermann turns the play's critique of the military into an allegorical tragedy, with Marie's rape standing in for the effects of war (particularly World War II) on society.¹⁶ Seen in this light, Marie's victimization leads not only to the ruin of her own life and Stolzius's, as in Lenz's play, but also to the destruction of the entire world by the atomic bomb.¹⁷

Zimmermann took Lenz's short scenes and cross-cutting action a step further by stacking the scenes to form a structural and formal simultaneity, recounting some events out of causal or realistic order (Table 5.1). In the most extreme example, the penultimate scene of the opera draws together eight different scenes from the play using a combination of film, pantomime, and song. The opera's space explodes into a multimedia display of images of war,

¹⁵ Alan C. Leidner and Karin A. Wurst discuss how Lenz's drama "is unusual, and was ahead of its time – so far, in fact, that to trace Lenz's reception is ... to drop a writer with strikingly modern attitudes into the eighteenth century, then record the reactions his work has provoked over the years." *Unpopular Virtues: The Critical Reception of J. M. R. Lenz* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1999), xi.

¹⁶ Claudia Maurer Zenck, "Vergewaltigung als Gleichnis: Zu Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Deutung von Lenz' Drama in seiner Oper *Die Soldaten*," in *Fokus Deutsches Miserere von Paul Dessau und Bertolt Brecht: Festschrift Peter Petersen zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Nina Ermlich Lehmann et al., 375–407 (Hamburg: Bockel, 2005).

¹⁷ William Robin, "Staging the Apocalypse: The Atomic Bomb in Bernd Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*" (paper presented at the conference, Music in Divided Germany, University of California, Berkeley, 11 September 2011).

battlefields, death, and destruction. At the very end comes an evocation of the cloud of the atomic bomb. Zimmermann's ambitious and chaotic ending is the most explicit recounting of the opera's political message, leaving the contemporaneity of his interpretation in little doubt. In integrating these modern images with the gamekeeper's actions against Marie (often portrayed, in a sadistic staging tradition, as a gang rape), the scene elevates her pain to the level of apocalypse, universalizing it on behalf of the whole society, while effacing the pain that is personal to Marie.

Table 5.1: Scenes in Lenz and Zimmermann compared

Lenz	Zimmermann
Act I: 1	Act I: 1: Lenz text added, "Herz, kleines Ding..."
Act I: 2	Act I: 2
Act I: 3	Act I: 3: Mother's lines given to Father; Lenz text added, "Alle Schmerzen, die ich leide..."
Act I: 4	Act I: 4: Considerable chopping up of dialogue and simultaneity of conversational lines
Act I: 5	Cut
Act I: 6	Act I: 5
Act II: 1	Cut
Act II: 2	Act II: 1: Dialogue chopped up with interjections/ simultaneity; Lenz text added, "O Angst, Tausendfach Leben..."; scene ends early.
Act II: 3	Act II: 2: Interaction between Wesener and a customer is eliminated; simultaneity
Act III: 1	Cut
Act III: 2	Act II: 2
Act III: 3	Cut
Act III: 4	Act III: 1
Act III: 5	Act III: 2
Act III: 6	Act III: 3: Lines for mother are assigned to sister
Act III: 7	Cut
Act III: 8	Act III: 4: Some dialogue switched around so Countess has longer monologue
Act III: 9	Act III: 5: Lines for mother are assigned to sister
Act III: 10	Act III: 5: Lenz text added, "Ach ihr Wünsche junger Jahre"
Act IV: 1	Cut
Act IV: 2	Cut
Act IV: 3	Act IV: 1: Film
Act IV: 4	Act IV: 1: Film
Act IV: 5	Act IV: 1: Sung
Act IV: 6	Cut
Act IV: 7	Act IV: 1: Film
Act IV: 8	Act IV: 1: Film
Act IV: 9	Act IV: 1: Pantomime
Act IV: 10	Cut
Act IV: 11	Act IV: 1: Film
Act V: 1	Cut
Act V: 2	Act IV: 1: Pantomime
Act V: 3	Act IV: 2
Act V: 4	Act IV: 3: In Lenz Marie and her father recognize each other; in Zimmermann, they do not.
Act V: 5	Cut

Though the bourgeois morality of Lenz's text may seem to fit Zimmermann's politics rather poorly, Lenz was historically an interesting figure for Zimmermann to engage. Lenz's admission to the canon came only as modernism began to valorize "eccentric form" and "seemingly incomplete art."¹⁸ Lenz was thereby included in a rediscovery of Germany's radical literary past and became a strong draw for a composer who thought of himself as both avant-garde *and* historically situated.¹⁹ Zimmermann may also have appreciated the extent to which this "modernist" strand in Lenz had become anathema during the Third Reich.²⁰ After Bertolt Brecht's adaptation of Lenz's *Der Hofmeister* ("The Tutor") and the subsequent repurposing of Lenz as a Brechtian alienating figure, a left-wing politicized version of Lenz came to prominence in the 1950s, the decade during which Zimmermann worked on his adaptation.²¹ As Peter Becker encapsulates it, Zimmermann's major accomplishments were his intensification of Lenz's concepts of drama and theater and his expansion of the play's social-critical perspective.²²

According to Zimmermann, Lenz was attractive less for the story he told than for his innovative linguistic and narrative style. He actually saw the plot of the play and its expressive language as two separate considerations.

The plot of [Lenz's] *Die Soldaten*, its tale: unexceptional ... However: the language! Absurd to the point of ugliness in its own time ... an astonishing anticipation of the techniques and methods of representation that at first seemed to be reserved for Expressionism.²³

Zimmermann especially appreciated Lenz for his innovations in timeline and his blithe unconcern for the Aristotelian unities; with its "derivation of the multiplicity of events out of a unity," Lenz's model gave Zimmermann the conceptual impetus to push the technique of dramatic simultaneity even further in his own work.²⁴ Although, as Dörte Schmidt has argued, Zimmermann was just one in a line of composers in the "history of non-Aristotelian *Literaturoper*," the particularly radical and edgy associations Lenz's work had accrued through

¹⁸ Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 49.

¹⁹ Other illuminating essays on the source play for *Die Soldaten* include James Gibbons, "Politics and the Playwright: J. M. R. Lenz and *Die Soldaten*," *Modern Language Review* 96, no. 3 (July 2001): 732–746; and David Hill, "'Das Politische' in *Die Soldaten*," *Orbis Litterarum*, no. 43 (1988): 299–315.

²⁰ Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 58–59.

²¹ John Osborne, "Lenz, Zimmermann, Kipphardt: Adaptation as Closure," *German Life and Letters* 38, no. 4 (July 1985): 385. Osborne has discussed Zimmermann's adaptation of Lenz's play as a productive part of the Lenz revival of the second half of the twentieth century.

²² Peter Becker, "Aspekte der Lenz-Rezeption in Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Opera *Die Soldaten*," in *Musiktheater Heute*, ed. Hellmuth Kühn (Mainz: Schott, 1982), 94.

²³ Bernd Alois Zimmermann, "Lenz und neue Aspekte der Oper," *Blätter & Bilder: eine Zeitschrift für Dichtung, Musik und Malerei* 9 (1960): 39. "Die Handlung der 'Soldaten', ihre Fabel: nichts Außergewöhnliches ... Indessen: diese Sprache! Absurd bis zu Häßlichkeit auf der einen Seite ... ein erstaunlicher Vorgriff auf Techniken und Methoden der Darstellung, wie sie erst dem Expressionismus vorbehalten zu sein schienen."

²⁴ Zimmermann, "Lenz und neue Aspekte der Oper," 40. "Ableitung der Vielfalt der Erscheinungen aus einer Einheit."

the course of its twentieth-century reception made Zimmermann's choice seem more legitimately modernist, above and beyond the actual formal or conceptual transpositions from Lenz's conception to Zimmermann's.²⁵

In rejecting the chronological and geographical particularity of the original story, and in aiming for a more universal narrative *not* grounded in a specific local history, Zimmermann created a problem of how to reconcile his universal allegory of war with the socially critical outlook so central to Lenz's eighteenth-century setting. Though modern adaptations of Lenz tended to emphasize the element of critique in Lenz's work – the political resonance is what made Lenz both critically prestigious and attractive to modern composers – Zimmermann's strategy of augmenting the play's eighteenth-century politics with modern references resulted in a much more expansive critique.²⁶ As Zimmermann broadened the play's conceptual background to reach beyond the eighteenth century, he drew on a philosophical and aesthetic lineage of simultaneity that itself extended beyond Lenz, back to St. Augustine and forward to literary Modernism.²⁷

Past, present, and future become permutable: Ulysses-Bloom crosses through cities of day and night and represents a form of the past, which Joyce expresses through the allegory "put allspace in a nutshell" and Pound said, "It is dawn at Jerusalem while midnight hovers above the pillars of Hercules. All ages are contemporaneous. The future stirs in the minds of the few."²⁸

Zimmermann drew seriously from these disparate fields because he believed that everything that existed or had ever existed was open to him, another expression of his commitment to the plurality of history.²⁹ Zimmermann's expanded reach, however, went beyond mere innovation in form to create an opera that aimed to speak incisively in his own era. In striving for this goal of a perfectly contemporized history, the opera's allegory itself became ahistorical; as the play's historical time became *Everytime*, its characters became *Everymen* and *Everywomen*.

To create this more universalized political message, Zimmermann excised certain elements of the play while emphasizing others by, for example, consistently treating the words

²⁵ Dörte Schmidt, *Lenz im zeitgenössischen Musiktheater: Literaturoper als kompositorisches Projekt bei Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Friedrich Goldmann, Wolfgang Rihm und Michele Reverdy* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), 6. "die Geschichte der nicht-aristotelischen Literaturoper."

²⁶ Schmidt, *Lenz im zeitgenössischen Musiktheater*, 8.

²⁷ See Andreas von Imhoff, "Zimmermanns Aussermusikalische Quellen," *Musik und Bildung: Praxis Musikunterricht* 10 (1978): 636–640; and Andreas Eichhorn, "Augustinus und die Musik," *Musica* 50, no. 5 (1996): 318–323.

²⁸ Bernd Alois Zimmermann, "Zu den *Soldaten*," in *Intervall und Zeit*, 96. "Zukunft, Gegenwart und Vergangenheit werden vertauschbar: Ulysses-Bloom durchwandert die Tag- und Nachtstädte und repräsentiert eine Form von 'Gegenwart', die Joyce durch das Fleichnis des 'put allspace in a nutshell' ausdrückt und Pound sagt: 'Morgen bricht über Jerusalem an indes Mitternacht noch die Säulen des Herkules verhüllt. Alle Zeitalter sind gegenwärtig. Die Zukunft regt sich im Geiste der Wenigen.'"

²⁹ Wilfried Gruhn, "Integrale Komposition. Zu Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Pluralismus-Begriff," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 15, no. 4 (1983): 287–302; and Jörn Peter Hiekel, "'Pluralistisches' Musiktheater als Ausdruck der Katastrophe: Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Oper *Die Soldaten*," in *Experimentelles Musik- und Tanztheater*, ed. Frieder Reininghaus, Katja Schneider, and Sabine Sanio, 140–143 (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2004).

and music in the military scenes as chaotically as possible. Like Zimmermann, however, Lenz did have a political point to make in his play, but it had little to do with the horrors of war or even physical violence. In the play, the greatest wrong done against Marie is not that she was raped (though this violation is implied), but that the Baron Desportes reneges on his promise to marry her. Marie's father in Lenz's drama encourages his daughter to pursue the soldiers romantically, emphasizing that she might thereby achieve a more desirable social position.

Marriage, then, is at the heart of Lenz's concern, and at the heart of the playwright's political project, as further demonstrated in his essay, "Über die Soldatenehen" ("On the Marriage of Soldiers"), written the same year as the play. Sent to Duke Karl of Württemberg, the essay argued that marriage would cure all evils associated with military life, as the current proscription against marriage for the enlisted man served only to foment aggression as an acting-out of sexual frustration. Lenz's play concludes with a parallel idea, a dialogue between the Colonel of the visiting regiment and the Countess de la Roche in which the Colonel muses that the best way to prevent awful circumstances like Marie's would be to recruit self-sacrificing girls from good families to be official army whores for the unmarried men, thereby easing the social burden inflicted on a city by visiting regiments. Though obviously a satirical suggestion, the dialogue is nevertheless revealing of its author's values. While Lenz's *Die Soldaten* is as didactic as is Zimmermann's operatic adaptation, then, its moral lesson focuses not on condemning war but on the ways in which military campaigns threatened civil society and conjugal life. As evidenced by Zimmermann's omission of Lenz's final scene from the opera's libretto, Lenz's own historically particular politics were far removed from the requirements of Zimmermann's crushing anti-war statement.

Although Zimmermann's libretto reshapes the play's narrative structure and political message, it is in general surprisingly faithful to the language of Lenz's play.³⁰ Nearly all of the language in the libretto is Lenz's own, including rare additions drawn from Lenz's poetry, deployed in a way that adds both poetic symbolism and structure. In the opening scene of the opera, for instance, the dialogue from Act I Scene 1 of the play is interwoven with a "spinning song" sung by Marie's sister Charlotte, its text taken from another poem by Lenz, beginning "Herz, kleines Ding, uns zu quälen." Zimmermann's "strophic" setting of this poem is the justification for the opening scene's formal heading "Strofe," one of many instances in which a formal designation has a textual motivation. Similarly, in Act II Scene 2 a poem, beginning "O Angst, Tausendfach Leben," helps to mold the form of the scene into "couplets." Most musically interesting is the addition to Lenz's Act III Scene 10, which provides the three women onstage – the Countess, Marie, and Charlotte – a rapturous trio on the text "Ach ihr Wünsche junger Jahre" in which the women, staggered rhythmically, sing each line of the poem in turn.

Words from Lenz's scenes are often repeated, interrupting the normal flow of the dialogue. Cuts are frequent. Many of the cuts are driven by the usual operatic imperative to reduce the number of words to set, but some have more substantial interpretive and political

³⁰ Schmidt, *Lenz im Zeitgenössischen Musiktheater*; Laurence Helleu, "Des Soldats de Lenz aus Soldats de Zimmermann: une adaptation exemplaire," in "Die Soldaten, Bernd Alois Zimmermann," special issue, *Contrechamps* (1988): 27–39. The mechanics of the adaptation have been previously documented by Schmidt and Helleu, but the musical and interpretive consequences of particular cuts and adjustments have not been fully accounted for.

implications.³¹ Several of the cuts downplay Lenz's obsession with marriage; the play's Act III Scene 7, for example, which is entirely concerned with Desportes's worries about his broken contract with Marie, does not appear in the opera. Zimmermann also removed the character of Marie's mother, re-assigning her lines to Marie's sister, Charlotte. Rather than the stable family unit Marie has in Lenz's play, restored at the end by the recognition scene, in the opera Marie's lopsided family includes a cruel sister, a grandmother who never interacts with her grandchild but sings a folksong mourning Marie's loss of virginity, and a dreadfully naïve father who fails to recognize Marie at the end of the opera, a particularly significant departure from Lenz's play. This new, less stable family structure makes the Countess's maternal condescension all the more poignant when she arrives to rescue Marie. The lack of maternal guidance for Marie is even more noticeable because two of the men in the opera, Stolzius and the Count, have prominent conversations with their mothers. Zimmermann's copy of the play, however, shows that the composer's collaborator, Erich Bormann (who prepared the first draft of the libretto before Zimmermann took over to make much more drastic textual interventions), considered casting the maternal role, even going so far as to assign her a mezzo-soprano voice part.³² Only in Zimmermann's later revision of the libretto did he decide to eliminate this character.³³

In stacking Lenz's short scenes to occur simultaneously, Zimmermann altered them in ways that problematize the characters' actions and reactions, contributing significantly to his depiction of the play's events as preordained and not based in causality. Act II Scene 2 combines and interweaves two separate scenes from Lenz's play. First, Desportes seduces Marie after convincing her to write a letter rejecting Stolzius; meanwhile, Marie's grandmother, speaking prophetically in verse, comments on the consequences of their actions. The second sphere of action in this scene shows Stolzius receiving the news of Marie's betrayal and swearing his vengeance on her seducer (which leads eventually to his own death). Although these scenes are enacted onstage simultaneously, they occupy different moments in the "realistic" timeline: Stolzius hears the news of the seduction while it is happening. Action and reaction merge, the letter read after it has been written, but before it has been sent. The grandmother's lament, which should occur sometime after, rather than during, the sex scene, is also a reaction to the play's decisive turning point.

While the action of the opera up to the point of Marie's seduction is straightforwardly sequential, from that point on, the timeline branches out to incorporate several levels of action. The simultaneous structure and its branching timelines are markers of symbolic significance, since Marie's decision to yield to Desportes, triggering Stolzius's vow of revenge, will drive the rest of the plot. Philosophically speaking, after this moment, the rest of the opera has already occurred: no agency remains for any of the characters. By disrupting linear time and coherent space at this exact moment of causal abdication, Zimmermann particularly amplifies his critique of causality. The inevitability and collapsibility of history implied by the non-linear timeline leads to the idea of "circumstance" ("Umstand"), which governs the actions of the characters and turns them from onstage agents into allegorical cogs.

³¹ Act II Scene 1 of the opera contains most of the content of the play's Act II Scene 2, but it cuts off before the last exchange wherein the soldiers regale each other with amusing tales of anti-Semitic pranks.

³² Akademie der Künste, Bernd Alois Zimmermann Archive 1.62.3.2 – typescript draft. N.B.: call number system is ADK's own.

³³ ADK BAZA 1.62.3.1 – handwritten corrections.

Through such changes in language and structure, Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* offers an interpretation, an accounting for, and a recounting of Lenz's *Die Soldaten* that puts the same story to different ends.³⁴ If, as John Osborne has stated, Zimmermann has "disturbed the delicate balance of Lenz's tragi-comedy ... in a consistently tragic direction," then perhaps Lenz's play did not find its most straightforward or consistent representation in Zimmermann's opera.³⁵ Yet his fidelity to the text as a *Literaturoper* also complicates any presumption of a seamless relationship between text and music: the source play contradicts the music and the music contradicts aspects of the text. Fashioning his libretto from Lenz's own language in the tradition of *Literaturoper*, Zimmermann confronted the incompatibility between bourgeois comedy and twentieth-century opera, inconsistencies that have survived to coexist uneasily in the final product. While Zimmermann believed his changes to the story were necessary for his new idea of drama, the opera's resulting allegory and stereotype neglect the remaining elements of small-scale character portrayal, obscuring the smaller nuances of the drama in favor of bigger, more obvious gestures. Despite the singularity of his stated vision, Zimmermann's pluralistic opera contains deep ambiguities. Even though the words of the opera's libretto shared their genetic material with the words of the play, a political "misreading" as strongly tilted as Zimmermann's was a singular and idiosyncratic act of interpretation.

Structure and Pluralism

The musical language of the opera is serial and blazingly expressionist, forming an alienating musical surface, but formal labels appended to individual scenes govern the opera's organization.³⁶ Every scene and stretch of instrumental music in the opera is labeled with the name of a musical form, genre, or procedure from an earlier historical period. Zimmermann used these labels and the musical materials that accompany them to define the different operatic spaces of his pluralistic dramaturgy, creating a rigid structure that defines and confines the characters within the opera's portrayed society. In addition to creating a symbolically strict structure, the different labels carry historical allusions that metaphorically enact the collapse of past, present, and future on which Zimmermann relied for his political and philosophical messages concerning "circumstance" and spherical time. Especially in passages with different scenes occurring simultaneously, the recurrence of musical features

³⁴ John Osborne describes "the principal tension between the design of the composer and the material which he has chosen to adapt." He continues: "The incongruity is most evident at those points in the opera where music and drama directly confront each other... What Zimmermann does ... is to generalize the social-critical and anti-militarist elements, and to transform the work into a universal and despairing lament over the aggression of man to man, at all times and in all places... the opera is designed to overwhelm with shared excitement and terror, the catharsis of tragedy." Osborne, "Lenz, Zimmermann, Kipphardt: Adaptation as Closure," 387–392.

³⁵ Osborne, "Lenz, Zimmermann, Kipphardt: Adaptation as Closure," 392.

³⁶ The serial procedures used in *Die Soldaten* are discussed in Michael Karbaum, "Zur Verfahrensweise im Werk Bernd Alois Zimmermann," in *De ratione in musica. Festschrift Erich Schenk zum 5. Mai 1972*, ed. Theophil Antonicek, Rudolf Flotzinger and Othmar Wessely, 275–285 (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1975). For a discussion of the use of older forms, see Michaely, "Toccata – Ciacona – Nocturno"; and Erik Fischer, "Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Oper Die Soldaten: Zur Deutung der musikalisch-dramatischen Struktur," in *Festschrift Heinz Becker zum 60. Geburtstag am 26. Juni 1982*, ed. Jürgen Schlader and Reinhold Quandt, 268–289 (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1982).

associated with the different labels marks out distinctive worlds presented concurrently (e.g., the soldiers, the bourgeois family, or the young anti-hero); even in complex simultaneous scenes, each level can be teased out, delineated and bounded by its musical identity.

Table 5.2 summarizes the overall structure of the opera, with scenes and instrumental interludes labeled as they are in the table of contents of the full score. These Italianized labels reach back through several centuries of music history for their referents. In some cases, Zimmermann's interpretation is straightforward and functionally self-explanatory. *Introduzione* and *Preludio* are used for the music that precedes each act, and the passage between the two scenes of Act II is labeled *Intermezzo*. Terms that refer to other vocal genres, such as *Strofe* for a scene containing a strophic, diegetic song and *Corale* for the scene that cites a Bach chorale in collage, are equally clear in context. Others, particularly those less "native" to opera or vocal music, are used with a certain degree of poetic license in Zimmermann's adaptation of their features.

Table 5.2: Scene headings of *Die Soldaten*³⁷

	<i>Preludio</i>
Act I.	<i>Introduzione</i>
	Scene 1: <i>Strofe</i>
	Scene 2: <i>Ciacona I</i>
	<i>Tratto I</i>
	Scene 3: <i>Ricercari I</i>
	Scene 4: <i>Toccata I</i>
	Scene 5: <i>Nocturno I</i>
Act II.	<i>Introduzione</i>
	Scene 1: <i>Toccata II</i>
	<i>Intermezzo</i>
	Scene 2: <i>Capriccio, Corale, e Ciacona II</i>
Act III.	<i>Preludio</i>
	Scene 1: <i>Rondino</i>
	Scene 2: <i>Rappresentazione</i>
	Scene 3: <i>Ricercari II</i>
	<i>Romanza</i>
	Scene 4: <i>Nocturno II</i>
	Scene 5: <i>Tropi</i>
Act IV.	<i>Preludio</i>
	Scene 1: <i>Toccata III</i>
	<i>Tratto II</i>
	Scene 2: <i>Ciacona III</i>
	Scene 3: <i>Nocturno III</i>

In some cases, Zimmermann seems to play on an analogy between each term's denotative meaning and the scene's dramatic content. The *Capriccio* is a sex scene, and the *Rondino* involves repeated and insistent religious statements on behalf of a self-righteous chaplain of the soldiers' regiment. *Romanza* is the most atmospheric, textural, and delicate of Zimmermann's orchestral interludes, and *Rappresentazione* is simply a short scene of dialogue

³⁷ *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 5076, 1966).

between two characters. *Tropi* refers to the medieval compositional practice of troping chant, though the centerpiece of the scene itself is actually a reinterpretation of another medieval compositional technique, the isorhythmic motet.

Of the fifteen different labels appended to music in *Die Soldaten*, several are used more than once. These correspond to the most important recurring situations and characters, helping to create a sense of cyclical time and inevitability that was necessary for the political message. For *Ciacona*, *Ricercari*, *Toccata*, and *Nocturno*, there is a close relationship between the characters or setting of the scene type and the musical procedures belonging to each label. These shared dramatic and musical features work together to create a unified series out of scenes that are temporally scattered throughout the opera. The sonic and theatrical identity created by the interaction of dramatic level and musical characteristics in each scene type provides a basic musical scaffolding for the opera over which the events of the plot and psychology of the characters are built. More significant, though, is the way the recurrence and variation of the elements present in these sets of scenes articulate the characters' progression through the supposedly inevitable action. The music of the smaller-scaled scenes, especially, results in quite nuanced psychological characterization that is ultimately entirely overpowered by the overarching political message.

The two scenes labeled *Ricercari* are set in the home of the bourgeois family at the story's center. In each scene, a different soldier comes to call; these meetings are the catalyst for the sexual relationships that lead to Marie's ruin. The musical connection between these scenes and the imitative Baroque genre from which they take their name lies in the mirror canons that structure the music's rhythmic profiles. This occurs in *Ricercari I*, the scene where Marie first meets Desportes (Example 5.1). The diagram shows the axes of symmetry, indicated by the dotted lines, with the rhythm staves in the middle containing a reduction of the vocal and orchestral rhythms with the rests replaced by ties for greater clarity. Across the entire passage, the combined vocal line of Marie and Desportes is rhythmically mirrored around Axis 1. For the orchestral line, likewise, the passage is rhythmically mirrored around Axis 1. In addition, for the first line of text, the rhythm in Marie's vocal line is mirrored around Axis 2 of the orchestral rhythms in the oboe, viola, and flutes. In the second phrase, the rhythm in Desportes's vocal line is the mirror around Axis 3 of the rhythm in the guitar and harp parts. As a tautological consequence, the rhythm of the vocal line in the first half is identical to the orchestral line in the second half, and vice versa.

Here, Zimmermann took the puzzles and learnedness for which *ricercari* are known as inspiration for an exploration of a rigid rhythmic symmetry, a kind of historical connection between the rigor of Baroque structures and the compositional techniques of modernism. Zimmermann's formal structures are modernist translations or interpretations of historical artifacts rather than strict derivations from historical practice, but by invoking the name of a Baroque genre associated with intellectual precision, Zimmermann draws a genealogical line connecting his compositional methods, though esoterically, to these antiquated yet admired historical practices. That these intellectual games were used to illustrate moments of tense interaction between the public and the private spheres seems symbolic of the intricate negotiation of power relationships that operates in the portrayed society.

Example 5.1: Ricercari I palindrome form³⁸

The image shows a musical score for 'Ricercari I' in a palindrome form. It is divided into two systems by a horizontal line labeled 'AXIS 1'. The first system is for Marie, with lyrics 'Hö - ren Sie auf, ich weiß doch, daß das al - - - les nur Kom - - - pli - men - ten'. The second system is for Desportes, with lyrics 'sein. Ich schwö - re lh - nen, daß ich noch in mei nem Le - - - ben nichts'. The score includes vocal lines, vocal rhythm, orchestral rhythm, and an orchestral reduction with instruments like oboe, flute, viola, harp, and guitar. Vertical dashed lines indicate 'AXIS 2' and 'AXIS 3'.

Meanwhile, the three domestic and intimate scenes labeled *Nocturno*, which revolve around interactions between members of the Wesener family, stand out prominently within the opera because they are lightly textured and even pretty. The first Nocturne takes place at Marie's bedside at night, when she confesses to her father that Desportes is in love with her. The quiet night-time music that Zimmermann composed to accompany this conversation produces a gauzy, atmospheric environment using harpsichord, pitched percussion, flutter-tongued flutes, pizzicato strings, guitar, and harp. Their focus on textural effects means that the Nocturne scenes are also characterized by their lack of rhythmic and metric regularity. The music-historical referent for Zimmermann's use of the term Nocturno is somewhat less clear than for some of his other labels, but it may be connected to the "night music" of Béla Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*.

While the "pretty" music could be heard simply as evidence of all that Marie has to lose by the end of the opera, the situational identity of the Nocturnes becomes important during the last scene, in the third Nocturne, when Marie, by this point homeless, encounters her father. Although he does not recognize her, the recurrence of the Nocturne topos supplies a musical identification for the character and indicates her fraying familial ties. Such an interaction between recognizable music and the dramatic situation is a hallmark of

³⁸ Derived from *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 5076, 1966), 98.

Zimmermann's partition of the characters in order to rigidly constrain their movements in and the momentum of the drama.

The three *Ciaconas*, finally, are identified with Stolzius, the abandoned fiancé. Their characteristic stamp comes from a quintuplet-based rhythmic pattern threaded through these scenes, each time in a slightly different form. The rhythmic pattern acts analogously to the traditional Chaconne's ground bass; instead of a repeating bass line, here a cycling rhythmic pattern "grounds" the music. The rhythmic profile of the Chaconnes is destabilized by a consistent conflict between the rhythms of the vocal lines and the orchestra's accompanying quintuplet ostinati. The quintuplet pattern is introduced, along with the character himself, in a particularly audible way in the first Chaconne (Example 5.2), with an insistent drone on D.

Example 5.2: Ciacona 1 drone effect³⁹

The musical score for Example 5.2 is presented in two systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Stolzius and the piano accompaniment for Alt-Fl. and Harfe. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 88. The piano part features a continuous quintuplet pattern on a single note (D). The vocal line includes the lyrics 'Mir ist nicht wohl, Mut-ter.' and is marked with dynamics like *mf* and *p*. The score is divided into three measures with changing time signatures: 4/4, 3/8, and 4/4. The second system continues the piano accompaniment and vocal line, with dynamics like *p*, *mf*, and *p*.

By contrast to the initial drone, the quintuplets in the second Chaconne are much more frenetic and intervallically varied, ranging through the entire twelve-tone series. At the moment in the second Chaconne when Stolzius finds out about Marie's betrayal with Desportes, Stolzius becomes deadened with the shock (the stage direction reads, "wie in Trance"). This psychological blow is reflected by the complete absence of the quintuplet figure for the rest of the scene, which consists of a vow of revenge in a deathly serious Sprechstimme.

Stolzius's journey as a character is again represented symbolically by quintuplets in the third Chaconne as they are taken up by unpitched percussion (Example 5.3). Here, at the beginning of the scene, Desportes again displays his misogynistic attitude toward Marie ("I tell you, she was a whore from the start").⁴⁰ In fact, the symbolic quintuplet rhythm is the only accompaniment for much of this scene, which eventually culminates in Desportes's boast

³⁹ *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 5076, 1966), 87.

⁴⁰ J.M.R. Lenz, *The Tutor. The Soldiers*, tr. William E. Yuill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 130.

about having sent his huntsman to rape Marie. Stolzius, witnessing this admission through his quintuplet presence, poisons Desportes shortly thereafter. Of all the structural techniques Zimmermann uses to organize material, the heartbeat-like incessant quintuplet pattern in the Chaconnes is one of the most recognizable, and, like the Nocturnes for Marie, audibly reflects and underlines both the psychology of the characters and the inevitability of their allegorical position in the opera's social world.

Example 5.3: Ciacona III⁴¹

The musical score for Ciacona III consists of three systems. The first system features four staves: Desportes (soprano), Kl. Tr. (clarinet), R. Tr. (trumpet), and Xyl. (xylophone). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The second system features two staves: Desp. (soprano) and Kl. Tr. (clarinet). The third system features two staves: Desp. (soprano) and R. Tr. (trumpet). The score includes various musical notations such as quintuplets, dynamics (mf, f, p, cresc.), and tempo markings like 'immer streng im Tempo' and 'immer sehr streng im Tempo'. Lyrics are provided for the vocal parts: 'Wie ich Dir sa-ge, es ist ei-ne Hu-re vom An-fang an ge-we-sen.'

In addition to cases in which recurring musical material is strategically manipulated to signal psychological or dramaturgical meaning, there is also a larger project of sense and meaning at work here. This has to do with the setting of scenes in simultaneity, including the setting of scenes out of chronological order. Zimmermann envisioned staging each simultaneous scene in a separate, bounded theatrical space, providing an important clue to how he thought about musical simultaneity. The idea that any scene occurring simultaneously with another should be spatially bounded and identifiable has a clear analogue in Zimmermann's strategy of devising proprietary musical material for scenes like the Nocturnes, Chaconnes, and Toccatas. Each of these scene types occurs three times in *Die Soldaten*, and for each labeled type, one of those three occurrences is set simultaneously with another action.

⁴¹ *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 5076, 1966), 503.

The recurring formal labels, along with the musical materials that identifiably belong to them, are a method for creating a musical logic and coherence within even the most complicated simultaneous scenes. The premeditated and purposefully manipulated interaction between quoted or borrowed historical elements and the opera's larger dramaturgical project of simultaneity means that even when these levels exist literally on top of each other, the constituent parts of the simultaneity remain bounded and logically defined. But the rigidity of this logic is also a structural game; it makes a place for everything and keeps everything – or everyone – in place. The establishment of proprietary musical material for the opera's different "worlds" – the world of the soldiers, the world of the bourgeois family, the world of the anti-hero – became a way to draw boundaries within the music to reinforce the dramatic portrayal of a bound-and-determined crawl toward apocalyptic destruction without responsibility, a determinism that obliterates even the meaningful character work enacted in these very groups of scenes. Analogous to the levels of stage that Zimmermann had envisioned to structure the three-dimensional space of the opera, the way these sets of scenes define the different levels of the drama eases the dramatic burden of simultaneity while at the same time portraying an unfeeling and universally stratified society that retains the signifiers of oppressive difference, signifiers that are perceptible even in the seeming chaos of simultaneity.

Pre-compositional Sources and the Question of Serialist Intentionality

While the passages excerpted above demonstrate Zimmermann's efforts to portray his characters' actions and psychology at a high structural level, the extent of his systematic pre-compositional materials makes forming inferences about his local interpretive choices complex. Analyzing operatic moments from a serial composer like Zimmermann is problematic because the compositional systems in place do not permit the complete flexibility of dramatic effect for any given line. Interpretive intentionality and effect are constrained by the purposeful limits the composer has placed on his material. Chord progressions or dissonance are often dramatically insignificant in this idiom; pitch, precisely because it is so strictly determined, matters very little. Musical parameters that are conventionally tied to dramatic expression, such as dynamics or register/disposition, may actually work counter to the drama in cases where the materials have been organized according to a fixed pattern. Dynamics that change methodically as a result of a predetermined scheme, for example, resist critical attempts to read dynamic changes as revealing anything about Zimmermann's interpretation of a character's words or emotional state. As rapid change and dodecaphony become the baseline, the composer can no longer rely on mercurial changes in tone and dissonance to mark different dramatic or psychological situations. Other analytical parameters consequently become more significant.

Different settings of the same passage can demonstrate how certain parameters are, in practice, more mutable than others: though pitch order may have been inflexible, register might have been used for dramatic emphasis, and the orchestral forces in play might change drastically. Zimmermann provides detailed descriptive markings of how words are to be sung. He also notates many specific physical actions that affect the dramatic focus of a scene and indicate his interpretation of the characters' states of mind. Sprechstimme and other pitch-indeterminate singing can also serve as a neat avoidance of dodecaphonic tyranny, granting a

larger range of vocal expression than the twelve pitches in their preset row. Texture, orchestration, rhythmic patterns, and clarity of text-setting all exert a strong influence on how moments make an impression or how scenes are able to contrast with one another.

Consider two versions of a vocal line sung by the Countess in Act III, Scene 4 (Example 5.4). In this passage, the Countess frets about her softhearted son's affection for Marie, whom the Countess believes to be bad for her son's reputation and future.

Example 5.4: Two versions of vocal lines for the Countess⁴²

Gräfin *mp* *f* *p* *ff* *f* *ff* *p*
 Wenn er nicht mein Ein-ziger wä-re

Gräfin *G* *mf* *f* *pp* *f* *ff* *p* *f* UK
 Wenn du nicht mein Ein-ziger wä-rst und ich

Gräfin *ff* *mp* *f* *pp* *f* *p* *pp*
 und ich ihm kein so empfind-lich-es Herz ge-ge-ben hät-te.

Gräfin K $\frac{1}{2}$ *p* *ff* *mf* *f* *mf*
 dir kein so emp-find-lich-es Herz ge-ge-ben hät-te

Comparing the final and draft versions of this line (“Were you/he not my son, and had I not endowed you/him with a heart so full of tender feeling”) provides some insight into what was possible within the strict boundaries Zimmermann had erected.⁴³ Striking features in both versions include the large intervals, the incorporation of triple and quintuple beat divisions, and absurdly detailed dynamic changes. Also idiomatic for the Countess’s character are grace notes and leaping portamenti, markers of her “arioso” singing style in this scene. In both versions, such articulation markings, along with tied notes, muddy the placement of the beats, adding to the perception of rhythmic complexity. Very little about these passages suggests form on the surface of the music, and note length, dynamic emphasis, and beat placement are mostly indifferent to word accents and poetic stress. The Countess’s music gives the impression of being so aristocratically cultivated as to result in an ironic near-formlessness. In

⁴² Top line: final version (*Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 5076, 1966), 383); bottom line: draft version (ADK BAZA 1.62.51.13).

⁴³ Lenz, *The Tutor. The Soldiers*, 115.

its obedience to techniques of the highest erudition, it lacks contrast and conventional expressive ability.

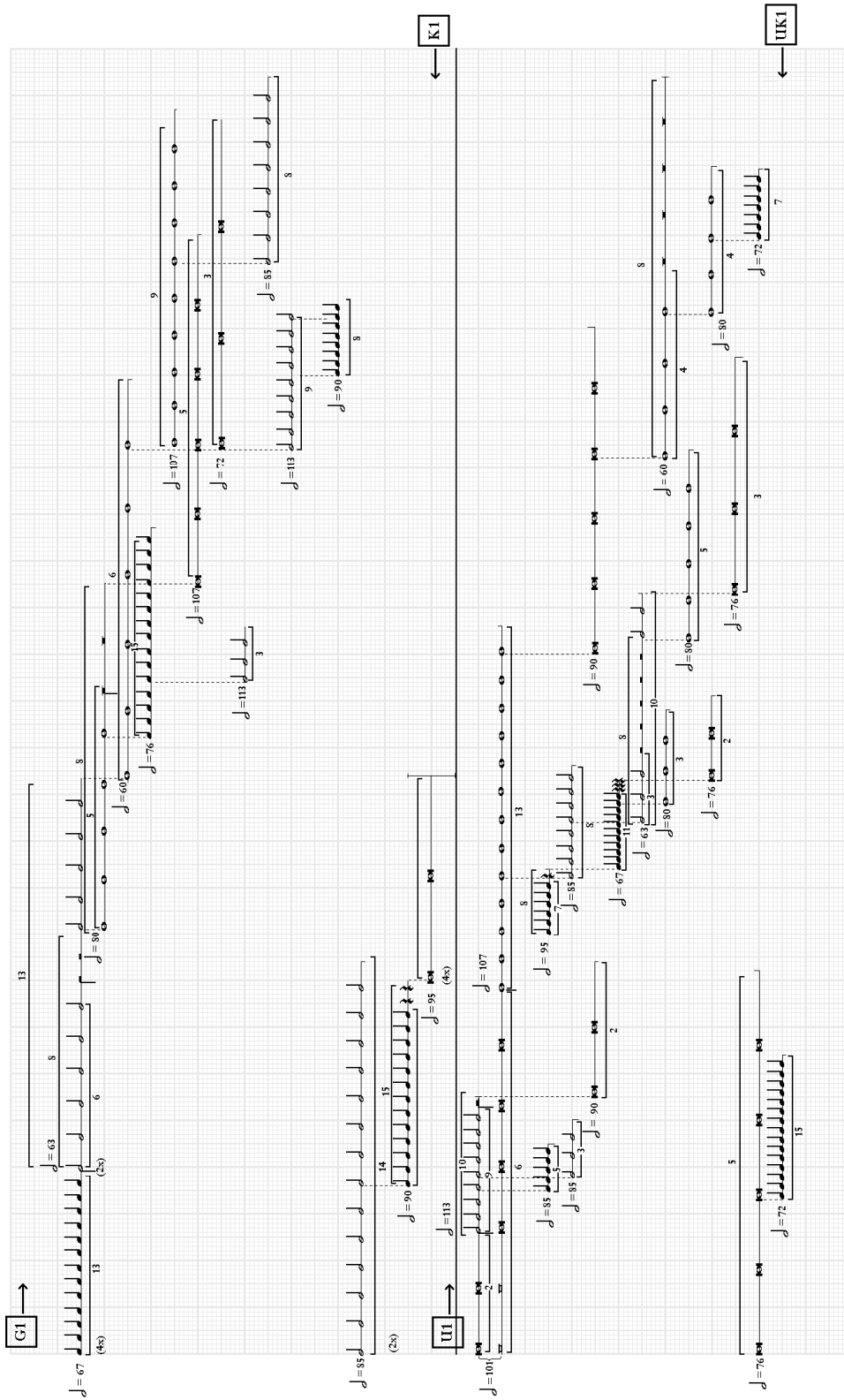
Given the conditions of the character's idiom, though, the draft's long held note on "Herz" stands out. It is the longest note in either version, coming as the end result of the passage's longest crescendo from piano to fortissimo. Its placement at the top of the staff, the second highest note in this form of the row, also seems primed for better audibility and emphasis. The word "heart" is an undeniably important word in the Countess's sentiment, as she worries that the young Count's too-soft heart makes him an open target for what she sees as Marie's bad luck and sob stories. Her perception that her son is unable to resist compels the Countess to act herself, taking steps at the same time to rescue Marie and to keep her away from the young Count. The young Count's "heart" – sympathetic, foolish, and concerned only with the moment and the woman at hand – will be countered by the Countess's proactive, rational, and compassionate actions. It is tempting to see this little emphasis as a rare expressive gesture; perhaps it was too obvious and too sentimental a word painting to retain.

This setting also comes from a slightly different arrangement of the libretto, in which the Countess speaks directly to her son, rather than as an indirect, monologic musing ("du" and "dir" instead of "er" and "ihm"). This changes the interpretation of the line: while direct address has the goal of persuading her son by reference to his own characteristics, the indirect expression envoices an anxious interior monologue that will not directly affect her son's decisions but does provide the Countess her own impetus to act. Such a lack of sentimentality directly contrasts the eighteenth-century source. Working with a source play full of personal relationships, class dynamics, family drama, and marriage, Zimmermann worked explicitly to counter those elements, perhaps to avoid the risk of a setting that was too literal, too realistic, and too faithful to the source to qualify as a real modernist masterwork, free of the supposedly stuffy devices of accumulated convention.

Viewing Zimmermann's compositional process as a conflict between the modernist ambitions of his musical idiom and the perhaps more operatic sentimentality of the source play casts a rather different light on the composer's extension of serial ideas to govern not only the pitch series but also many other musical features. The collection of sketches for *Die Soldaten* in the Akademie der Künste shows Zimmermann's experiments with the serialization and systematization of every musical parameter, from the dynamics and articulation markings to time signatures, tempi, rhythms and note durations, and even physical gesture. The instrumentation and register of pitches within the row are also tightly controlled and sometimes predetermined. As befits a composer so philosophically interested in time, Zimmermann made copious graphic representations of the proportions of tempo and note duration he used to structure the opera's progression. This unprecedentedly inflexible structure for an opera has effects beyond the mere unity or generation of material. It tightly constrains how much the opera's music can really reflect the drama of the moment or the progression of a character.

This is not to imply that Zimmermann's idiom is *devoid* of signification, however; rather, the resonances seem more philosophical than conventionally character-driven. For example, perhaps by analogy to his obsession with "spherical time," Zimmermann seems to have found particular pleasure in palindromic schemes, subjecting his rhythmic orders and proportions to the "classical" serial procedures of retrograde and inversion (see Example 5.5).

Example 5.5: Graph of rhythmic proportions⁴⁴



⁴⁴ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.14.

Zimmermann's serial approach to pitch material is also indicative of his philosophical ideas about holistic and integrated time and space. He based each scene on a specific tone row, each derived from a single symmetrical all-interval row through a variety of procedures. In addition to the tone rows, he serialized a number of other compositional parameters. His detailed work to gain total command over the musical material included the completion of numerous tables of row transpositions and transformations and charting all possible symmetrical divisions of particular beats. One particularly comprehensive diagram from the sketches shows Zimmermann's attempts to control and document many musical parameters (Example 5.6). In addition to a tone row and its transformations, there are rows for note and rest durations (including triplets), dynamic markings, time signatures, lists and orders of articulation and technique marks for both strings and winds, and an orchestration list.

Example 5.6: Serialized compositional parameters⁴⁵

4 Trpt, 3 Fl + Alt-Fl (+Flag) Fg.
Xyl, Marimba, Vibr.
11 Glocken, Glock sp.
Cel, Cemb, Hrf, Git.
Trgl, 3 Beck, 2 Tamtams
PK + Streicher

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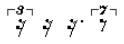
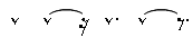

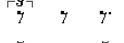
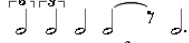

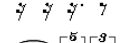


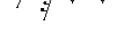




Doppel-Zg. Tripel-Zg. Flatter-Zg.

ord.	ord.	ord.	arco	ord.	ord.	ord.
Frosch	s. pont.	detaché	pizz	vibr.	c. legno (geschl.)	gliss-arco
Spitze	s. tast.	spicc.	pizz. + vibr.	non vibr.	c. legno (gestr.)	gliss-pizz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Another diagram (Example 5.7) shows three different sets of possibilities for note durations, organized according to orchestration (e.g., woodwinds have eighth- and sixteenth-note triplets, while brass have quarter, whole, and half notes).

⁴⁵ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.3.

Example 5.7: Orchestration and note duration systems⁴⁶

Holz	Blech	Streicher
4 Fl. 	4 Tromp. 	
3 Ob. 	5 Hörner 	
4 Cl. 	4 Pos. 	
3 Fag. 	Cb.tb. 	
		
		

These tables function both as constraints on the range of possibilities within the sound world of a single scene and as extreme extensions of serial technique that show in what order these different pitches, rhythmic structures, sound qualities, and playing styles should be deployed. Zimmermann then grafted lines of the play onto the musical material generated by these processes in ways that reflected less the specifics of text-setting and more the now seemingly “inevitable” structural unity, a system resistant to intuitive or interpretive agency.

While the diagrams show an impressive range of possibilities, likely a larger range of markings and variation than would ever have been used in most canonical opera scenes, Zimmermann’s predetermination of so many of the opera’s sounds would have limited to a large extent the actual expressive possibilities these variations presented during composition. The totalizing control Zimmermann aimed to exercise over so many aspects of his musical material functioned as an antidote to convention. Seen this way, these intensely detailed diagrams are a kind of fence Zimmermann built to keep out stereotypically operatic styles and approaches to drama; had he been tempted to match the text with conventional musical tropes, these schemes would have frustrated those temptations. Yet in the opera’s most beautiful or intimate moments it is also clear that this fence is made of mesh, a system subject to interference and override. The system is itself an alibi.

Characterizing Chaos

With its multiple timelines and perspectives, *Die Soldaten* portrays society as at once chaotic and relentless. The sounds Zimmermann uses to represent the military presence are so extreme as to turn even normal interactions grotesque. The exaggerated portrayal of the soldiers’ chaotic lives, contained in the *Toccatas*, is one of the opera’s major engines of critique. The *Toccatas* depict the consequences of the military presence in society overall as a complement to the more personal tragedy of the opera’s main characters. Through the soldiers’ chaotic words and exaggerated actions, it becomes clear that the injustices against Marie and Stolzius are not the fault of a single, definable enemy. They are instead a result of a systemic, military “enemy” that Zimmermann extends allegorically to pertain to contemporary society’s militaries and soldiers. Substituting something more universal for the play’s eighteenth-century context (the opera’s setting is “French Flanders,” but its time period is

⁴⁶ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.2.






“yesterday, today, and tomorrow”), he explicitly critiques the conditions of the recent past and contemporary life.⁴⁷

In this depiction of the military’s deleterious effects, the soldiers behave not as individual characters with moral agency but as carriers of circumstance that act out predetermined roles. Zimmermann’s theory of “Umstand,” which he first articulated in a letter to Dr. Ludwig Strecker in 1958, is central to the opera’s depiction of a militarized society as a machine that inherently causes individual trauma.⁴⁸

What excites me about the play is ... the circumstances of the play, which exemplify less the causality of fate than the fateful constellation of characters and circumstances that all people, fundamentally innocent, can meet at any time and on any day, and thus be destroyed.⁴⁹

The military’s mechanical aspect in Zimmermann’s onstage society is enacted through the rigidity of musical structures, which over-prescribe every action of the violent and frenetic Toccata scenes. Zimmermann infuses the soldiers’ scenes with a furious rhythmic energy that has the effect of chaos on the surface, but this effect results from strict control, as when soldiers in a café become part of the percussion section of the orchestra by stomping their feet, smacking down playing cards, and hitting their dishes on the table in perfectly choreographed time. Archival documents show that Zimmermann’s specifications of the scene’s layout were rigidly symmetrical and prescribed; he even created a special notation system to control the sounds of furniture and dishes (Example 5.8-5.9).

Example 5.8: Specifications for Toccata II⁵⁰

<p>I = hohes Beck. 2 hohe cow-bells kl. Gong</p>	<p>I a =  mit Kaffeelöffel</p>	<p>I b =  I mit Knöchel — mit flacher Hand ⊙ mit Faust</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Karten spielen</p>
<p>II = mittl. Beck 2 mittl. cow-bells gr. Gong</p>	<p>II a =  ⊕ mit Inhalt ⊙ ohne Inhalt</p>	<p>II b =  verschiedener Tonhöhen</p>
<p>III = tiefes Beck 2 tiefe cow-bells kl. Tamtam</p>	<p>III a =  ⊕ Griff ⊙ Rand</p>	<p>III b = 3 Servietablette verschiedene Größe auf dem Tisch = — freischwingend = I mit Kaffeelöffel abgedämpft = ⊕</p>

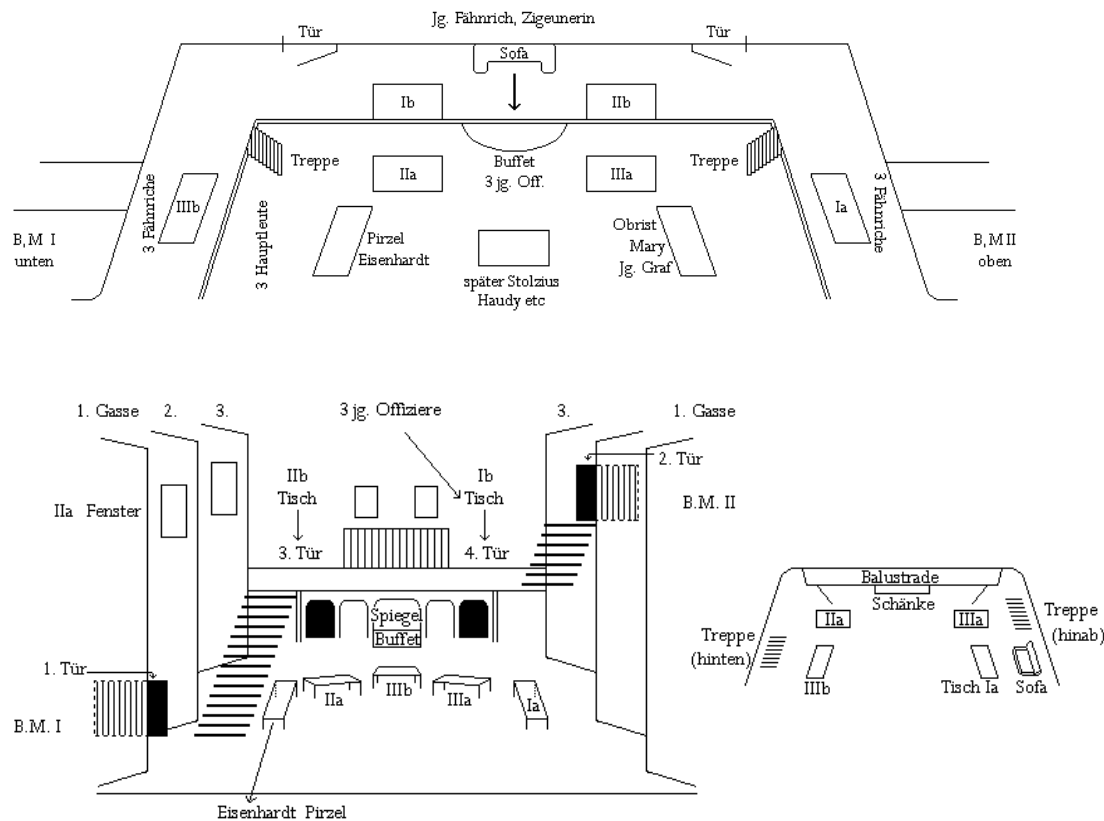
⁴⁷ *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne 5076, 1966), iv. “Der Schauplatz ist im französischen Flandern. Zeit: gestern, heute und morgen.”

⁴⁸ Ulrich Mazurowicz, “Aber wenn ich nun mein Glück besser machen kann’: Zwei Frauengestalten in Literaturopern des 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Festschrift Christoph-Hellmut Mahling Zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Axel Beer, Kristina Pfarr, and Wolfgang Ruf, 841–85 (Tutzing: Schneider, 1997).

⁴⁹ Bernd Alois Zimmermann to Dr. Ludwig Strecker, 21 August 1958, quoted in Wulf Konold, *Bernd Alois Zimmermann: Der Komponist und sein Werk* (Cologne: DuMont, 1986), 188. “Das, was mich an dem Stück begeistert, ist ... der Umstand, wie hier in einer exemplarischen Situation nicht etwa so sehr durch das Schicksal bedingt als vielmehr durch die schicksalhafte Konstellation der Charaktere und Umstände, so wie sie sind, Menschen, wie wir sie zu allen Zeiten und jeden Tag treffen können, unschuldig im Grunde, vernichtet werden.”

⁵⁰ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.7.

Example 5.9: Scene layout diagram⁵¹



The ensemble scenes for the soldiers enact the fundamental conflict of military life as Zimmermann saw it. On one hand, certain structural imperatives give absolute order to the military system and make soldiers' destructive actions seem inevitable, while on the other hand, the chaos of military life entails the complete abandonment of social and sexual mores.⁵²

The overall destructiveness of the soldiers' actions makes the Baron's crime against Marie seem merely emblematic. In subsuming the personal and private into the global and political, Zimmermann's totality was a "Gesamtkunstwerk" that aimed at a more universal critique, strongly resisting the expression of that which is characteristic or individual. In other words, Zimmermann was less concerned by the Baron's bad behavior than with the general amorality of the military, which structurally enables the Baron's power.⁵³ As in the quoted

⁵¹ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.11.

⁵² In Michael's words, "Tumult, Brutalität und Chaos" characterize these scenes in the opera ("Toccatà – Ciacona – Nocturno," 135). These scenes function as a kind of spectacle whose volume, tension, and complication make the Toccatas some of the most-often analyzed scenes in the opera, mostly in the context of compositional technique and the realistic portrayal of chaos.

⁵³ Danielle Cohen-Levinas, "Les fissures dissidentes du Gesamtkunstwerk: Quelques considerations sur les formes lyriques au 20. siècle," in *L'Oeuvre d'Art Totale*, ed. Denis Bablet, 233–258 (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1995). For more on *Die Soldaten* as a Gesamtkunstwerk, see Wolfgang Fortner, "Richard Wagners Wirkung auf die Späteren," in *Festschrift für einen Verleger: Ludwig Strecker zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus, 178–190 (Mainz: Schott, 1973); and Manfred Schuler, "Zu Bernd Alois Zimmermanns Oper als 'Totalem Theater'," in *Musiktheater im Spannungsfeld zwischen Tradition und Experiment (1960 bis 1980)*, ed. Christoph-Hellmut Mahlind and Kristina Pfarr, 117–122 (Tutzing: Schneider, 2002).

letter above on "Umstand," when the "destruction" of Marie as a "fundamentally innocent" victim becomes symbolic in this way, her status as a human victim disappears; the crime is depersonalized and magnified away from her individual suffering, such that she becomes more of an emblem than a character. The human becomes submerged into the allegorical. Zimmermann wrote of Marie that:

The "story" of Marie – so considered – seem[s] perhaps meaningless: a common story, that belongs to all time; the story of the Virgin Mary, of Mary Magdalene, of [any] Maggie. It does not matter which name one applies, nor which people are acting: one name stands for all – and all are implicated in it, and that is just the procedure which makes Lenz's *Die Soldaten* so exemplary. So thus in my opera is the story not told, rather a situation depicted, exactly stated: an account is given of a situation that threatens to occur from the past to the future ... The piece acts virtually like a pendulum swinging between tomorrow, yesterday, and today.⁵⁴

Since, by reference to the archetypes listed here, Marie is slotted into an allegorical role as the female protagonist, her victimhood is, arguably, inevitable. This sense of inevitability is emphasized in Toccata I, which includes one of the play's most significant and famous lines of text: "Eine Hure wird immer eine Hure, sie gerate unter welche Hände sie will" ("A whore will always turn out a whore, no matter into whose hands she falls").⁵⁵

In the crowded Toccatas, Zimmermann amplifies the soldiers' textual meaninglessness by converting text into atmospheric, chaos-inducing conversation, which makes it all the more striking when the texture thins out for important phrases. Though much of this scene consists of overlapping, obscured dialogue, then, the military officer Haudy's all-important maxim is set in a way to be not merely audible but prominent (Example 5.10). The words begin pitchless, in contrast to the thorny atonality of the previous, dense vocal counterpoint, and they are marked "fast geschrien" ("almost screamed"). Accompanied by a specific physical gesture, also of interruption ("schiebt Pirzel beiseite"; "pushes Pirzel aside"), Haudy's words come out in emphatic bursts. The shock of the repeated, screamed "eine Hure" depends on reversing the meaning of this exclamation from a directed insult into a fatalistic maxim. The orchestra plays only in the gaps between phrases of text, giving the words clarity, and the accompaniment stops entirely when Haudy drops to an insistent, sharply-shaped pianissimo hiss. The second line's sung atonality is also uncharacteristically unaccompanied, given only a single mark of emphasis by the piano and the harp.

⁵⁴ Zimmermann, "Zu den *Soldaten*," in *Intervall und Zeit*, 97. "Dabei mag die 'Geschichte' der Marie – so betrachtet – vielleicht bedeutungslos erscheinen: eine alltägliche Geschichte, allen Zeiten angehörend; die Geschichte der Marien, Magdalenen, Maggies. Es ist gleichgültig, welche Namen man einsetzt und auch die der jeweils 'handelnden' Personen sind gleichgültig: ein Name steht für alle – und alle haben damit zu tun, und das ist just der Vorgang, der die 'Soldaten von Lenz so exemplarisch macht. So wird also in meiner Oper nicht eine 'Geschichte' erzählt, sondern eine Situation dargestellt, noch genauer gesagt: der Bericht über eine Situation vorgelegt, die von der Zukunft her die Vergangenheit bedroht ... Das Stück spielt gewissermassen hin und her pendelnd zwischen morgen, gestern, und heute."

⁵⁵ Lenz, *The Tutor. The Soldiers*, 90.

Example 5.10: Haudy's maxim from Toccata I⁵⁶

The musical score for Example 5.10 consists of three systems. The first system features the vocal line for Pirzel (soprano) and Haudy (bass). Pirzel's part begins with 'Gottes...' and includes the instruction '(fast geschrieen) (schiebt Pirzel beiseite)'. Haudy's part includes the lyrics 'Eine Hu-re, eine Hu-re wird im-mer eine Hure,' and is marked '(gespr.)'. The piano accompaniment includes parts for Flute, Xylophone, Horn, Trumpet, and Strings, with dynamic markings like 'sfz' and 'ff'. The second system continues Haudy's vocal line with the lyrics 'sie ge-ra-te un-ter wel-che Hände sie will.' and includes a '(K)psubito' marking. The piano accompaniment continues with 'Klav., Hfe.' and 'f (klingen lassen)'. The score also includes tempo markings 'Rubato' and 'licenzioso', and a metronome marking of 76-80.

The rhetorical boundaries of this line are also enacted by Zimmermann's use of the row segment: the last five pitches of the retrograde form of the scene row, with the F-natural pivoting to the first five notes of the prime form (Example 5.11).

Example 5.11: Scene row for Toccata I⁵⁷

The musical score for Example 5.11 shows the scene row for Toccata I. It consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff displays the prime form of the scene row with fingerings: 2 12 11 1 3 9 10 4 5 7 8 6. The second staff displays the retrograde form of the scene row with fingerings: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12. The title 'Toccata I' is written at the end of the second staff.

Haudy's vocal line uses these five pitches in a mirrored palindrome, a kind of micro-form that could be interpreted to reflect either the proposed inevitability of the archetypal woman's decline or the absurd circularity of Haudy's statement. As compared to the rest of the scene's text setting, the special treatment of these lines (in parameters such as accompanimental texture, pitch, and articulated emphasis) is indicative of their thematic importance.

⁵⁶ *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 5076, 1966), 135.

⁵⁷ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.1

Zimmermann's setting, then, emphasizes a worldview that erases Marie's own situation of womanhood and sexual victimization in favor of the conflicts of sex and violence endemic to the (contemporary) society he portrays. These conflicts reverberate into the opera as a whole and even seep into the noisy, homosocial Toccatas. We can find them in the muteness of Madame Roux, the proprietress of the coffee house where the soldiers carouse; she is powerless to respond to the soldiers' barked French orders that address her as "bête." Even more problematic is the exoticized staging of "the Andalusian," a waitress who dances for the soldiers in Toccata II. The "Tanz der Andalusierin: Variations sentimentales" is accompanied by diegetic jazz scored for upright bass, guitar, clarinet, and trumpet. She first appears in the embrace of an Ensign, and begins to dance at the moment the jazz musicians begin to play. The stage directions read:

Just as suddenly as the Andalusian [appears], the contrabass, guitar, clarinet, and trumpet [appear] on the scene. Only jazz musicians are to be entrusted with the performance of the music onstage.

Music falls silent on the scene, the players lay their instruments aside and gather, along with the others, ever closer to the Andalusian, so that she gradually withdraws from the audience's view. Andalusian sinks to her knees: sitting dance.

Andalusian is completely surrounded by stomping officers; the Obrist [Colonel], the Chaplain, and Haudy appear; the dancing breaks up.

Andalusian crouches, forgotten, absently, on the ground; no one pays attention to her; she sneaks away.⁵⁸

Though the score is conspicuously mute on the characteristics of the Andalusian's dance, an especially notable gap given the choreographic precision of much of the rest of the score (e.g., the "military" dance by the Ensigns earlier in the same scene), the mounting danger here of the leering male gaze is more than apparent.

An earlier draft of the dance scene raises further problems, containing two descriptive stage directions pertaining to the dancer that were not included in the final score.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Die Soldaten*, Klavierauszug (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne 5076, 1966), 223–242. "Ebenso plötzlich wie die Andalusierin sind Kontrabaß, Gitarre, Klar. u. Trompete auf der Szene. Es sind ausschließlich Jazzmusiker mit der Durchführung der Szenen-Musik zu beauftragen ... Musik auf der Szene verstummt, die Spieler legen die Instr. aus der Hand und scharen sich mit den anderen immer enger um die Andalusierin, die sie allmählich den Blicken der Zuschauer dadurch entziehen. Andalusierin sinkt in die Knie: Sitztanz ... Andalusierin ist völlig von stampfenden Offizieren umringt; Obrist, Feldprediger und Haudy treten auf; Tanz bricht ab ... Andalusierin hockt vergessen, abwesend auf der Erde; niemand kümmert sich um sie; stiehlt sich fort."

⁵⁹ The short score draft of Toccata II appears in ADK BAZA 1.62.51.6. The nine pages were filmed out of order but if matched up to the Schott piano score correspond to pp. 179–251, missing pp. 195–201. The balance of the scene (pp. 252–258) is filmed as ADK BAZA 1.62.51.8 p. 4. The pages of the film match to the piano score as follows:

film image p. 1: from p. 201 "Quasi alla marcia" to p. 208 up to "Rondeau."

film image p. 2: from p. 241 (end of Andalusian's Dance) to p. 247 bar 1.

film image p. 3: from p. 247 (second bar) to end of 251.

Three gypsies are suddenly there. Excitement has arrived at its high point ... suddenly, the young gypsy stands ... throws her head back, long black hair ... then begins her dance.⁶⁰

Drops her wide, enveloping shawl: red full skirt, broad black belt, green bodice, white blouse, very deep décolletage; the dance takes on an erotic note, right on the border of what would be found obscene: arms up to horizontal; slowly rising ostinato movements.⁶¹

While in the final version the predatory attitude toward the female dancer is solidly attributable only to the male characters onstage, the draft stage directions here intensify the exoticism with their references to three "gypsies," an exoticism that possesses the shadow of a leer that seems the composer's own. With the stereotyped attraction of the exotic, perhaps even Zimmermann himself becomes entangled in the inescapable politics of eroticism.

But if, as Haudy says, a whore will always become a whore, then Zimmermann, in putting the blame for Marie's victimization on society and its institutions, actually portrays that very fatalist dynamic. The utopian idea of spherical time makes possible an aesthetic of simultaneity, turning the portrayed cycle of negative events in one town into a template for a critique of contemporary society while also pushing against the chronologically and dramatically particular. The problem with Zimmermann's fatalistic conception of events, however, is that it removes the possibility that Marie could ever *not* have been caught in the web. Her fate was sealed with the soldiers' arrival in the town. Desportes's decision to abandon and victimize her is apparently not a decision at all (not to mention the actions of the servant huntsman who actually commits the rape at Desportes's command, itself a disturbing expression of power). Zimmermann's musical structures, from his precompositional schemes to his use of recurring forms, build this inevitable injustice into the very fabric of the opera. When productions turn Marie's worst moment into a gang rape and multiply her pain, and when Zimmermann suggests that the act should signify a whole war's worth of crimes and carnage, Marie's personal experience of trauma is lost amid the exaggerated grotesquerie and amplified screams. At its extremes, then, the opera actually undermines and contradicts its message of moral censure. It lies about its own significance, laying claim to a global political statement that is at best idealistic and at worst hubristic, flattening out the particular portrayed experiences of one young, female character.

film image p. 4: from p. 179 to p. 186 bar 3.

film image p. 5: from p.186 bar 4 to p. 195 bar 1.

film image p. 6: from p. 222 bar 4 to p. 228 end.

film image p. 7: from p. 229 to end of p. 240.

film image p. 8: from p. 208 Rondeau to p. 214 bar 3.

film image p. 9: from p. 214 bar 4 to p. 222 bar 3.

⁶⁰ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.6, p. 6. "3 Zigeuner sind ebenso plötzlich da. Die Begeisterung ist auf den Höhepunkt angelangt ... Plötzlich steht die jg. Zigeunerin ... Wirft den Kopf in den Nacken, langes schwarzes Haar ... beginnt dann ihren Tanz."

⁶¹ ADK BAZA 1.62.51.6, p. 7. "... wirft den weiten verhüllenden Shawl ab: roter weiter Rock, schwarzer breiter Gürtel, grünes Mieder, weiße Bluse, sehr tiefer Decolletée; der Tanz nimmt eine erotische, hart an der Grenze der Obszönen sich befindende Note an: Arme bis zur Waagerechte; langsam sich steigend ostinate Bewegungen."

The War at the Beginning

The opera's orchestral passages, which uniformly point toward the impending apocalypse, are bounded and related pieces that give the plurality-obsessed opera a dread sense of inevitable structural progression. Unlike scaffolding, however, that is erected ahead of the rest of a building, these pieces were added after much of the opera had already been composed, a final expression of overwhelming aggression and political urgency that was, in essence, an afterthought. It is well known that Zimmermann composed the orchestral pieces in 1962, after he had already completed much of the rest of the opera, which was initially drafted in 1959. The impetus for writing the orchestral music was the conversion of the drafted opera into a piece suitable for the concert hall, a "Vokal-Sinfonie."⁶² Since the Cologne opera's attempt to cancel the performances based on its notorious judgment that the work was unperformable, the premiere of the concert suite in 1963 acted as a trial, allowing music from the opera to be vetted prior to its staging in the opera house.⁶³ For the "Vokal-Sinfonie," Zimmermann produced the Preludio, the Introduction to Act I, and the Intermezzo from Act II; other orchestral pieces were finished, along with the incomplete Act IV, by the end of 1963.⁶⁴

These pieces, added toward the end of Zimmermann's compositional process, were integral to his reconceptualization of *Die Soldaten* with a more expansive anti-war message. The opera's first Preludio, as Zimmermann explained in 1967, is part of a cycle that includes the interludes and the cacophonous ending; it is "fundamentally nothing else but the connection to the end of the opera."⁶⁵ Shifting the opera's balance away from the moments that were more family-oriented and personal, Zimmermann's eventual conception of the allegorical apocalypse came only at the end of the compositional process. Certain inconsistencies remain as a result; as William Robin has pointed out, the massive, shrieking Preludio points much more directly to the opera's "cataclysmic" end than it does to the lyrical, domestic scene that actually begins the dramatic action.⁶⁶

While the Preludio is a prominent indicator of Zimmermann's extreme musical, political, and philosophical viewpoints, the vastly different sound world presented in an earlier fair copy of the opera's beginning is indicative of a more moderate, smaller-scale approach to music and plot alike. It is difficult to believe that the opening's famously relentless timpani, excessively complicated orchestral textures, and harsh dissonance took the place of something as simple and brief as this initial finished version (Example 5.12). In the final score, the Preludio lasts a full five minutes, occupying the first seventy-one pages of the piano score.⁶⁷ In the "Vorspiel" version, by contrast, the forty-seven eighth-note beats at the marked tempo would add up to a mere thirty-two seconds of music: not grand enough in scope by far to gesture toward the apocalypse.

⁶² Konold, *Bernd Alois Zimmermann*, 191.

⁶³ Konold, *Bernd Alois Zimmermann*, 191.

⁶⁴ Zimmermann to Schott, 22 June 1963, quoted in Konold, *Bernd Alois Zimmermann*, 192.

⁶⁵ Zimmermann to Ulrich Brecht, 28 December 1967, ADK BAZA, quoted and translated in Robin, "Staging the Apocalypse." "Denken Sie in dieser Beziehung an das Vorspiel zum 1. Akt., wo der *circulus* von vorne beginnt; denn das Vorspiel ist ja im Grunde nichts anders als die Anknüpfung an den Schluss der Oper."

⁶⁶ Robin, "Staging the Apocalypse."

⁶⁷ Because of its contrapuntal complication, much less of it is reduced to staff than is usual for piano scores.

Example 5.12: Alternative beginning⁶⁸

„Die Soldaten“
Vorspiel

Pesante ♩ = 88 (♩ = ♩)

B. A. Zimmermann

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system features three Horns (3 Hr.) and three Trombones (3 Tromp.) playing a melody with a *fff* dynamic. The second system includes Percussion (3 Pos.) and Strings (Str. tutti) with a *ff* dynamic. The third system shows Percussion (PK) and Strings (R. tr.) with a *ff* dynamic. The score concludes with a *poco decrescendo* and a *ppp* dynamic.

In the draft beginning, a group of solid brass builds a four-note cluster, countered by quick, characteristically symmetrical groups of five in the timpani and tenor drum. A tutti entrance by the strings accounts for the rest of the pitches in the row (the resulting held chord is the aggregate minus F#). Punctuated partway through by a second symmetrical set of quick notes in the percussion, the dissonant chord sustains until a decrescendo to the end of the passage. The texture of military-appropriate brass and drums combines with a straightforward build-up of row-derived, dissonant sonorities to convey a simple impression: this is a twelve-tone opera about soldiers.

There is arguably some resemblance between this “Vorspiel” and the “Introduzione” that comes between the eventual “Preludio” and the opening scene (for example, the presence of quintuplets and the relatively slow buildup of additive dissonance). However, further

⁶⁸ ADK BAZA 1.62.65.

examination shows that they are not the same music at all: the pitches and intervals are not related, and although the technique of shifting time signatures is similar, the patterns do not match (the "Introduzione" is also twelve beats shorter). It does seem plausible, though, that aspects of the "Vorspiel," which so much more appropriately match the opening scene, were rewritten to form the eventual "Introduzione." Thus, in the final version of the opera, Zimmermann transformed a kind of music that was originally considered weighty and meaningful enough to open the whole work, into a kind of music that instead provides a quick transition between the foreshadowing of doom and a sweet domestic struggle. For the opening itself, something transparently serial and based in legible topoi was replaced by something overwhelming, harsh, and unprecedented that illustrated the end of the world. The differences between the "Vorspiel" and Preludio suggest a profound change in outlook and a symbolically definitive answer to the question of balance between the opera's dramatic poles: simple convention was out; apocalyptic plurality was in.

This machine-like, all-encompassing pluralism, however, retained certain imperfections. The conversion of characters to archetypes may have made them better-fitting cogs in Zimmermann's politically-charged social machine, operating through "circumstance" to cause great pain, but it also erased their particularity. Not only through the inevitability of human fate do the crimes against Marie and Stolzius threaten to become meaningless; perhaps just as meaningless is the proposed equivalence that Zimmermann's plurality posits between all geographical spaces and all historical times, between all human actions and all political systems. A fatalistic critique of society's injustices as a mere "que sera, sera" is a critique without impact.

It could be argued that this discussion and analysis foist too heavy an ideological burden on *Die Soldaten*; it is, after all, an opera, part of a musical genre that, as I have argued throughout, was commonly stereotyped as having ineffective or complacent politics. How can we require this one piece both to pose the aesthetic problem of how to make a forceful political statement in opera, and to solve it as well? Yet consider the work's reception: the sheer force and audacity of the political aspects of *Die Soldaten* were what allowed it to transcend the stigma of "traditional" opera; it was the first post-war German opera to become a critical and repertory success. The easy emphasis on the most obvious political references in the opera – anti-military and anti-war – came at a cost: indifference to the problematic and poignant representations of gender roles, family structures, sexual relationships, and other textured aspects of society that were critiqued by Lenz's play but transformed nearly out of existence in the final form of Zimmermann's opera.

It is clear from Zimmermann's compositional process and from the structure he built into the opera that he hardly ignored the domestic sphere and complex interpersonal relationships in Lenz's text as he pondered how to set it musically to make it contemporary and politically topical. Indeed, a full interpretation of *Die Soldaten* should account for the details of Zimmermann's compositional style that allowed the public and the private spaces and characters to be so distinctly articulated within the opera's unwieldy form. But it is also certain that the focus on great and terrible war in the reception of the opera was itself a response to and product of the postwar context, when the pain caused by a military society was still explosively powerful, not only for the composer personally but also for the German audience and community at large. In their contemporary refocusing, the allegorical narratives and

philosophical innovations in form created, if anything, a closer bond with the war of such recent memory. His courage was rewarded with his opera's admission to the canon, but while his aesthetic philosophy posited historical cycles and pluralistic balance, the balance could not help but be tipped to one side when the opera became public property. The more everyday politics of sex and social climbing, rape and poisoning, receded into insignificance. And that is the ultimate weakness of Zimmermann's adaptation: in the end, the story's ambitious moral overshadows the morals of the story.

While the rigid structure of *Die Soldaten* analogously represents the systematized dynamics that so inexorably had led to the destruction of human beings in wartime, the opera's ambiguous moral message continues to disturb and provoke. Its most aggressive and obviously statement-making elements – its multimedia, its dissonance, its sheer size and volume of forces, its political themes – granted Zimmermann the singular ability to make opera seem relevant and philosophically vital, transcending the supposedly bourgeois and conventional limitations of the genre. That he had to go to such extremes to achieve this "greatness" is evidence of the ossified and polarized discourse around opera's post-war potential. The Zero Hour had done nothing to separate the Germans from their past, and if the more mundane aspects of opera characters' everyday lives, no matter how finely drawn in the domestic scenes, were overshadowed by representations of cataclysm, perhaps that is an accurate reflection of how the German public themselves remembered their recent history.

Conclusion: The Funeral Orator of Modern Opera

In 1967, the German general-interest magazine *Der Spiegel* conducted an interview with the celebrated French composer and conductor Pierre Boulez. The topic of their conversation was opera, specifically the impossibility of modern opera.

SPIEGEL: Mr. Boulez, you are the funeral orator of modern opera. Even though twenty contemporary operas will be premiered in the coming season in Germany alone, you claim that there is absolutely no modern opera.

BOULEZ: I won't let myself be fooled by the large-scale activities of certain opera houses. I maintain: Since Alban Berg's "Wozzeck" and "Lulu," no opera worth debating has been composed.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Pierre Boulez, "Sprengt die Opernhäuser in die Luft," *Der Spiegel*, 29 September 1967.

SPIEGEL: Herr Boulez, Sie sind der Leichenredner der modernen Oper. Obwohl in der kommenden Saison allein in Deutschland 20 zeitgenössische Opern uraufgeführt werden, behaupten Sie, es gebe überhaupt keine moderne Oper.

BOULEZ: Von der gigantischen Betriebsamkeit gewisser Opernhäuser lasse ich mich nicht täuschen. Ich bleibe dabei: Seit Alban Bergs "Wozzeck" und "Lulu"...

SPIEGEL: ... seit dem Jahre 1935 also ...

BOULEZ: ... ist keine diskutabile Oper mehr komponiert worden.

[ellipses in original]

As the interviewer points out, Boulez's insistence on the impossibility of modern opera after Berg is contradicted by the factual existence of premieres in German opera houses. But Boulez has a higher standard, a bar that cannot be cleared by large cultural institutions. His pronouncements have an aura of finality and self-evidence. "Only the traditional repertoire can be played in established opera houses," he explains, "in the smaller houses you can risk more, but the large opera houses stand as museums."⁷⁰ Even if an opera has been composed yesterday, he seems to say, if it is possible to program and stage the piece within the confines and institutional structure of a large opera house, it is by definition not modern enough. Inherent parts of the operatic machine – like the principles of season programming, the traditions of stagecraft, the layout of the hall, the makeup and abilities of the ensemble – are symptoms of regression and conservative ideology. Meanwhile, houses' directors institutionalize and cultivate the audience's "average, bourgeois tastes."⁷¹ Boulez, it seems, has given up on the opera houses. And how.

SPIEGEL: Mr. Boulez, do you believe that it is possible to realize your modern music theater in our, yes, quite conventional opera houses?

BOULEZ: No, certainly not ... The new German opera houses appear quite modern, indeed – from the outside. Inside they have remained extremely old-fashioned. That one is only able to stage modern opera with great difficulty, in a theater in which predominately repertory [that is, older opera] is played, is unbelievable. The costliest remedy would be to blow up the opera houses. Now, don't you agree that that would be the most elegant [solution]?⁷²

In his stubborn refusal to recognize mid-century opera as a viable living art, Pierre Boulez appoints himself opera's judge, jury, and executioner. What is surprising is not that Boulez made such pronouncements, because his status as an international *enfant-terrible* practically demanded those antics, but that certain influential composers and critics so thoroughly accepted his verdict. While Boulez's "proposal" is a notorious moment in modernism, it is not an isolated incident; rather, it is symptomatic of the larger post-war impulse to critique and push against the genre of opera. While it might not be unprecedented

⁷⁰ Boulez, "Sprengt die Opernhäuser in die Luft."

... kann man in den bestehenden Opernhäusern das übliche Repertoire spielen ... Auf einer derartigen kleinen Bühne könnte man dann allerhand riskieren, während die großen Opernhäuser als Museen weiterbeständen.

⁷¹ Boulez, "Sprengt die Opernhäuser in die Luft." "Meiner Meinung nach darf ein Intendant seinen bürgerlichen Durchschnittsgeschmack nicht auch noch institutionalisieren und kultivieren."

⁷² Boulez, "Sprengt die Opernhäuser in die Luft."

SPIEGEL: Herr Boulez, glauben Sie, Ihr modernes Musiktheater in einem unserer ja sehr konventionellen Opernhäuser verwirklichen zu können?

BOULEZ: Ganz bestimmt nicht ... Die neuen deutschen Opernhäuser sehen zwar sehr modern aus – von außen; innen sind sie äußerst altmodisch geblieben. In einem Theater, in dem vorwiegend Repertoire gespielt wird, da kann man doch nur mit größten Schwierigkeiten moderne Opern bringen – das ist unglaublich. Die teuerste Lösung wäre, die Opernhäuser in die Luft zu sprengen. Aber glauben Sie nicht auch, daß dies die eleganteste wäre?

that opera would be judged by the same ideological criteria as, perhaps, tape music, or new piano works, or pieces for Pierrot ensemble – for example, weighing their innovation, intellectual rigor, or commitment to destabilizing the bourgeoisie – the operas treated in this dissertation have revealed it as a strange, and perhaps misguided way to approach an art form whose composers, as we have seen, have relied throughout history on conventions, stylizations, and archetypes to communicate with their audiences. It is important to question why and how opera's inability (or its creators' refusal) to fit a certain vision of modern music became a problem for composers working in the genre. And as musicologists now continue to historicize the twentieth century's aesthetic values and to contextualize modernism, consideration of the "high-middlebrow" – that is, expensive art with civic prestige but lesser innovative credentials – becomes salient to the fuller picture of mid-century art.

If we follow Boulez, perhaps it would have been better not to rebuild bombed opera houses or restore the traditions of German cultural life. The familiar images of Nazi government meetings in Berlin's Kroll Opera House, the cultural palace of old turned into a space for a different kind of horrifying, spectacular performance, morph into pictures of German "rubble women," clearing away the debris from the same building in 1945. This result might inspire relief, leaving little space to mourn the structure as the site of the premiere of Hindemith's *Neues vom Tage*. The Kroll Opera House does not exist anymore; the last of its remnants were removed in 1951. Good riddance to such a structure, we might say, and it was a strong temptation to feel similarly about anyone or any institution that was tainted by the Nazis, a common wish to break completely with this horrific past. But as these four case studies have shown, removing from public life the people, structures, and musical styles associated with that past was impossible.

The title *Der Spiegel* famously derived from Boulez's provocation is as evocative as it is overstated: "Blow Up the Opera Houses." Though audacious enough a recommendation in any context, Boulez's "remedy" called readily to mind a not-so-ancient history where opera houses really *had* been blown to bits. Boulez's 1967 statement had a special resonance in context where Stuttgart was the only major German city whose opera house went undamaged, and major opera companies were performing in provisional locations as late as 1963. Embedded in Boulez's inflammatory recommendation is a fundamental tension regarding opera in the reconstructive decades after the end of World War II. On one hand, the reopening of Germany's beloved cultural institutions and the resumption of cultural activities of all kinds were some of the most important goals furthered by the Germans and Allied occupation authorities alike. On the other hand, these same beloved institutions became anathema to certain of those artists who, for both aesthetic and political reasons, endorsed only the radically new. Opera automatically failed this test. Institutions with monumentality, with the aura of the conservative, with the acknowledged reality of historical continuity, rubbed up dangerously against the Nazi era, threatening to breach the historical barricade that had been erected in 1945 – the "Stunde Null."

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