

PART I

Background

1 The musical world of Strauss's youth

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Born in Munich on June 11, 1864, Richard Strauss entered the world at a crucial time of change for the political and cultural environment in which he would develop as person and musician: three months earlier, Ludwig II had acceded to power over the Kingdom of Bavaria, while almost six weeks earlier, Richard Wagner had first arrived in Munich under the new king's aegis. That these related events did not have an immediate impact on Strauss in his earliest years does not diminish their ultimate real and symbolic significance for his life and career: he emerged as musician within a city where the revolution in music was a matter of public debate, especially to the extent that its progenitor Wagner directly influenced the monarch and indirectly had an impact on affairs of state.

Character of the city

However, of all German-speaking major cities, Munich may have been the least suited for artistic upheaval, given the nature of its institutions and the character of its citizens. In his study *Pleasure Wars*, Peter Gay paints a picture of a Munich that was hopelessly polarized, between the cultural offerings sponsored by the ruling Wittelsbachs and the middle class that preferred popular types of entertainment.¹ Notably absent during the reigns of Ludwig I, Maximilian II, and Ludwig II was a significant bourgeois involvement in the higher forms of art, which Gay attributes in part to what he calls the "habitual passivity" of Munich's *Bürger*,² formed by a nexus of the monarch's paternalist attitude towards his subjects and the residents' appetite for amusement. Ludwig I speaks from this position when he opined in 1842, "*opera seria* is boring, but the *Münchener* and their king love merry *Singspiele*."³ Munich Intendant Karl von Perfall, writing as Theodor von der Ammer, takes a more cynical view of this attitude in his observation: "The Isar-Athenian is not and never was that which with greater refinement can be called artistic. He only possesses a great urge to amuse himself ... Thus his theater visit is also only for the purpose of finding entertainment."⁴ Edward Wilberforce's 1863 book *Social*

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Life in Munich provides more detail about musical taste among the city's residents:

To the people who frequent the concerts, the music seems only a secondary consideration ... The crowd at every concert is a matter of fashion and of custom. Most people go because the rest go; a great many because they hope to be spoken to by the king; a great many more because their husbands have gone to their clubs, and they have nothing to do at home ... The excellence of the orchestra, and the presence of the court, makes these [Musical Academy] concerts the principal ones in Munich.⁵

Wilberforce proceeds to contrast this artificial, elaborately staged concert hall experience with the “natural” outdoor culture of Munich's bourgeoisie:

But we breathe a very different atmosphere from that of these gas-lit rooms, brilliant though the company, and brilliant the play, when we get out into the open air, to one of the many gardens about Munich. How pleasant it is to sit on a bench and listen to the music of some military brass band or society of instrumentalists!⁶

Other nineteenth-century visitors similarly observed the city's two faces, whether traveller Theodore Child in calling Munich a “dolorous and incongruous patchwork,”⁷ or an unnamed author in the opinion “Munich is the most artificial of all the cities of this world,”⁸ or when – more positively reporting about the polarized artistic life there – Friedrich Kaiser remarked how theater director Carl Bernbrunn “significantly obtained both the support of the fun-loving [*lebenslustig*] Munich public and the favour of the royal court by staging ... festivals.”⁹ Such assessments criticized the low artistic tastes of the Munich *Bürger*, whose “beer culture” figured prominently in travelogues and memoirs by visitors to the city. Still, city guides from the early 1860s could direct visitors to Munich's architecture and art collections as unique in Germany, the legacy of Ludwig I and (to a lesser extent) Maximilian II, even though Grieben's notes at the same time “the pleasant [*gemüthlich*], yet at times coarse [*derb*] lifestyle.”¹⁰

In this light it is interesting to observe how travelers from the United States tend to judge the music offered in Munich's beer gardens favorably. Indeed, a certain trope appears to exist in American travel memoirs about central Europe: the visitor provides an extended description of Munich's architectural and artistic wonders, and then briefly portrays the city's beer culture and beer gardens, replete with a positive description of the accompanying music (the same writers tend not to refer to either operatic or orchestral performances in Munich). This applies to such diverse reminiscences as W. H. K. Godfrey's *Three Months on the Continent* (1874),

P. B. Cogswell's *Glints from over the Water* (1880), Curtis Guild's *Over the Ocean* (1882), and Theodore Child's *Summer Holidays: Travelling Notes in Europe* (1889).¹¹ It appears that these aspects of Munich culture particularly struck the American visitor, whether out of novelty or familiarity.¹²

This ongoing question of artistic sensibility among the city's residents inspired critic Theodor Goering to ask in 1888, "[I]s Munich a musical city?" His answer was equivocal: "He acknowledged the city's fine orchestras, choirs, soloists, and singers ... but ... though times were beginning to change, Munich was still essentially dominated by 'princely hobbies' rather than by musical tastes freely developed by the educated middle classes."¹³ The "princely hobbies" involved cultivating the higher forms of musical expression – the opera and symphonic music – which did not encourage the development of large-scale municipal musical institutions. In fact, the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra only came into existence in 1893, and then as the Kaim Orchestra (the current name dates from 1924). Considerably smaller than court cities Berlin and Vienna, which respectively numbered 702,500 and 663,000 inhabitants in 1869 and supported lively musical scenes outside court, Munich (with its 170,000 residents) failed to develop a middle-class public for "high-status" musical events (opera, symphonic and chamber music) comparable to those in Dresden and Leipzig, for example.¹⁴ Yes, citizens of Munich did attend such performances, but – as we have already discovered – they were just as, if not more, likely to participate in "low-status" entertainment, as also reflected in the limited number of concerts offered during the season (thus the primary professional orchestra, the Musikalische Akademie, presented eight to twelve concerts annually).

Institutions of musical life: overview

These limitations of the scene notwithstanding, members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* could hear opera, symphonic music, and the sacred repertory in Munich at a high level of accomplishment. The primary high-status public institutions of musical life during Strauss's youth were the Hofoper (the Court Opera, which performed at the Hof-Theater and the Residenz-Theater), the Musikalische Akademie (in the Odeon), and the Königliche Vokalkapelle, the first two employing the Hoforchester (Strauss's father Franz was a horn player with the orchestra from 1847 to 1889). The amateur orchestra called "Wilde Gung'l" came into existence in late 1864 (conducted by Franz Strauss from 1875 to 1896), in response to Joseph Gungl's eighteen-member *Kapelle*, which had established itself earlier that year at the Englisches Café. The Königliche Musikschule (1867–73,

in 1874 reorganized as a state institution) provided concerts for the Munich community, while the Volkstheater presented operettas and ballet. Public presentations of chamber music did not prominently figure in the city's musical life during Strauss's formative years, but the nineteenth-century practice of music-making did continue to flourish in the homes and salons of Munich's *Bürger*. Needless to say, the city did not lack opportunities for hearing "popular music": in the 1867 edition of Grieben's guide to Munich and environs, author Adolf Ackermann indicates the city possessed over 300 beer houses and that at these and other *Vergnügungsorte* (entertainment venues) there was "music everywhere on an almost daily basis."¹⁵ Daily at noon a parade with military music took place – a military band also played "every Weds. Evening 6–7 in the Hofgarten, and Sat. evenings by the Chinese tower in the English Garden."¹⁶

That the majority of the elite institutions stood under royal patronage – not only in name but also in deed – did leave a mark upon the musical life of Munich, ranging from the employment of musicians to the repertory performed at the Court Opera. After all, Franz Strauss remained in active court service for over forty years, during which time he developed a career and raised a family in the employ of the Wittelsbach monarchy. At the same time, the Bavarian kings of the nineteenth century exerted varying degrees of influence upon the selection of works for the Hof-Theater, the musical institution of the highest prestige in the city.¹⁷ The operatic repertory cultivated after 1864 under Ludwig II proves that royal taste did not always take a conservative or (in the case of Ludwig I) popular direction, even though scholarly studies – including Willi Schuh's detailed account of Strauss's Munich years¹⁸ – have neglected the more traditional operatic programming during the king's reign in the desire to foreground Wagner's contributions.

Indeed, the account by Schuh may well describe the domestic conditions under which the young Richard emerged as a musician, but his book (and other biographies that followed) fails to establish an adequate context for the composer's early development. Granted that Strauss would have been too young during the late 1860s and early 1870s to pay much attention to details of the city's musical life, let alone to understand the machinations at court, he did mature within a musical/cultural environment that – by his own admission – left a lasting mark upon the youth.¹⁹ The milieu Strauss encountered was unique in Germany, with musical, cultural, and social polarities the order of the day: the conflict between Wagner/Ludwig II and the conservative musical establishment, the disparity between the tastes and character of the nobility/*Bildungsbürger* and the lower classes, and even the divide between "interior culture" (sites of privilege, whether the opera stage, concert hall, or domestic salon) and

“exterior culture” (military music, music in the beer gardens, street music), with the church and its music serving as intermediary.

A closer study of the city's institutions of musical life and the individuals associated with them will provide an understanding of what it meant for Richard Strauss to be an aspiring musician in late-nineteenth-century Munich and, indeed, for a musician to develop in a central European city other than the leading centers of Berlin, Vienna, and Leipzig.

The Hofoper

After a long period of ascendancy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the climax of which many historians identify as the premiere of Mozart's *Idomeneo* in 1781, the Munich Hofoper went into decline in the early nineteenth century.²⁰ Not until Franz Lachner took over the musical leadership of the institution in 1836 – under Intendant Karl Theodor von Küstner – was the Munich Court Opera able to rise again to prominence. He improved the quality of performance and reformed the repertory, so that new works by Lortzing, Marschner, Flotow, Gounod, and Verdi received solid performances – Lachner also conducted the Munich premieres of *Tannhäuser* (1855) and *Lohengrin* (1858), despite his lack of sympathy for Wagner's music. In general, the Hofoper was quite active during Lachner's tenure, mounting over 100 performances per season.²¹

Musical scholarship has assumed that, with the arrivals of Ludwig II and Richard Wagner in Munich in 1864, the operatic scene there dramatically changed. Indeed, Wagner's ascendancy did lead to Lachner's eventual retirement, with Hans von Bülow briefly taking the helm. During the late 1860s, the Court Opera became the primary site for new Wagner productions, with the premieres of *Tristan und Isolde* (June 10, 1865) and *Die Meistersinger* (June 21, 1868), and the unauthorized first performances of *Das Rheingold* (September 22, 1869) and *Die Walküre* (June 26, 1870). None of these first performances would have influenced the very young Strauss, but it should be remembered that Wagner remained a staple in Munich after the initiation of the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, with twenty-four performances in 1876 alone, twenty-three in 1877, and twenty-five in 1878 (including the individual evenings of the *Ring* cycle).

The scholar nevertheless is well advised to put these Wagner performances into a broader perspective. Thus in 1868, the Hofoper presented almost 120 full evenings of opera, mounting thirteen performances of Wagner (three of *Der fliegende Holländer*, one of *Lohengrin*, and nine of *Die Meistersinger*).²² That same year, however, the stage offered Auber ten times (*Der erste Glückstag* five times, *Maurer und Schlosser* four times,

and *Die Stumme von Portici* once),²³ Lortzing nine times (*Der Wildschütz* twice, *Zar und Zimmermann* twice, *Der Waffenschmied* twice, and *Die beiden Schützen* three times), Boïeldieu nine times (*Die weiße Frau* five times, *Rothkäppchen* twice, *Der neue Gutsherr* twice), Weber six times (*Der Freischütz* five times, *Oberon* once), Halévy six times (*Die Jüdin* three times, *Die Musketiere der Königin* three times), Meyerbeer four times (*Die Hugenotten* three times, *Robert der Teufel* once), Gounod twice (*Faust*) and Verdi twice (*Der Troubadour*). Other opera composers represented on the repertory of calendar year 1868 include Beethoven, Cherubini, Dittersdorf, Donizetti, Flotow, Gluck, Krempelsetzer, Lachner, Méhul, Mozart, Nicolai, Rossini, Schubert, Schumann, Spohr, and Zenger.

In other words, opera-goers during 1868 in Munich would have enjoyed a rather complete cross-section of European opera of the nineteenth century, at the rate of one performance every third evening – this level of activity made the Hofoper the leading high-status musical institution in Munich of the time.²⁴ Of course, the opera performances of the late 1860s and early 1870s would not yet have a real effect on the child and youth Strauss, but they do represent the music his father played and the repertory that Richard himself would eventually experience at the Court Opera. Jumping ahead one decade to the late 1870s, and Strauss's first serious engagements with opera in performance, we discover that the number of evenings devoted to opera did not significantly vary from year to year during that period, and the representation of composers from the past and the proportion of works from the various national "schools" remained relatively stable. The seasons ranged from approximately 120 to 140 performances, although 1881 featured 150 and 1883 over 160, so that the son of an orchestral musician would have had ample opportunity to become familiar with staged opera.

Moreover, the repertory was surprisingly diverse, especially considering that Wagner's shadow hung over the institution through both his influence upon Ludwig II and his intervention through conductor Hans von Bülow. Needless to say, Wagner's music dominated every season, with at least twice, if not three times the works by the second-most performed composers. For the entire period from 1868 to 1892, Perfall counted a total of 742 Wagner performances at the Hofoper, followed by Mozart (241), Weber (226), Lortzing (213), Verdi (170), Auber (160), Meyerbeer (136), Beethoven (135), Rossini (132), and Gounod (116).²⁵ It is enlightening to observe how large a role the works of Lortzing played, but even more interesting to consider the significant presence of Italian and French composers of the past and present, especially Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Verdi, none of whose operas Wagner felt was of artistic value.

Turning specifically to the theater's repertory from the period 1877 to 1883, the formative years for the young Strauss, one can note similar proportions among these leading composers, yet with some informative variants. For example, Auber was particularly well represented during these years, with twelve performances in 1877 (ten percent of the repertory),²⁶ while Meyerbeer's four main operas received thirty-four performances (*Die Hugenotten* accounting for over half that number) and Lortzing's five leading works fifty-eight performances between 1877 and 1883.²⁷ Both *Aïda* and *Carmen* entered the Munich repertory several years after their premieres – *Aïda* in 1877, *Carmen* in 1880 – but once on the program, they would play dominant roles for years to come: Verdi's opera opened with ten performances, the most for any one work in 1877, and the Hofoper consistently staged Bizet's work five times per year into the late 1880s. Other favourites during this period – operas that annually received multiple performances – include Adam's *Der Postillon von Longjumeau*, Auber's *Die Stumme von Portici*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Boïeldieu's *Die weiße Frau*, Gounod's *Faust*, Lortzing's *Der Waffenschmied*, Mozart's *Don Juan* and *Die Zauberflöte*, Rossini's *Wilhelm Tell* and *Der Barbier von Seville*, Schumann's *Manfred*(!), Verdi's *Der Troubadour*, all of Wagner's operas (including the individual evenings of the *Ring*), and Weber's *Der Freischütz*. Among new operas, the theater repeatedly staged the very successful *Das goldene Kreuz* by Ignaz Brüll (which Strauss himself would later conduct in Munich), *Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung* by Carl Goetz, *Die Folkunger* by Edmund Kretschmer, and the perennial favourite *Katharina Cornaro* by former Kapellmeister Franz Lachner.

Of course, just because he came into contact with an opera through the Hofoper does not mean that Strauss valued the work, then or at a later date: for example, Strauss famously attacked Gounod's *Faust*, calling its German success "one of the greatest blots of shame."²⁸ After his "conversion" to Wagner, Strauss by and large adopted the party line of the New German School in his tastes, although his repertoire choices for Weimar and Munich can be said to reflect the eclectic operatic programming of the Hofoper during the reign of Ludwig II. It was during those early, formative years, while his father's anti-Wagnerian position still held sway with the boy, that Strauss acquired an intimate knowledge of the standard repertoire of the time, as documented in his letters to Ludwig Thuille.²⁹ There the young Strauss reports at length to his friend about his (positive) impressions from such works as Auber's *Die Stumme von Portici*, Boïeldieu's *Die weiße Frau*, and Lortzing's *Zar und Zimmermann*.³⁰ Needless to say, Strauss was also able to obtain an early, close familiarity with those staples of the nineteenth-century German stage – the operas of Mozart and Weber's *Der Freischütz* – as a result of his exposure at the Hofoper. He may have come to

maintain a musical and ideological allegiance to Bayreuth, but the foundations of Strauss's opera aesthetic were laid in the Court Opera of Munich.

Observing such opera conductors as Hans von Bülow (as guest), Hermann Levi, and Franz Wüllner also contributed to the young composer's musical training, whether they were conducting the standard repertoire or Wagner's operas. The audience member of the Hofoper not only benefited from its first-rate conducting, but also was able to hear some of the leading voices of the day on stage, which included sopranos Mathilde Mallinger (the first Eva) and Therese Vogl (the first Sieglinde), tenor Heinrich Vogl (the first Loge and Siegmund), and bass Kaspar Bausewein (the first Fafner and Hunding). Starting in the Lachner years, the orchestra for the opera (the Hofkapelle) maintained a high level of artistic accomplishment, which carried over into its concert activities (see below).

Musikalische Akademie

Established in 1811, the Musikalische Akademie was the symphonic arm of the Court Opera Orchestra, consisting of Hofoper performers and led by its conductor.³¹ While not as prominent a Munich institution during Strauss's youth as the opera, the orchestra nevertheless maintained a season of subscription concerts in the Odeon, divided into two series of four-to-six concerts each, the first finishing by Christmas, the second occurring during the Lenten season. Strauss regularly attended the Musikalische Akademie concerts – in fact, his letters to Thuille more substantially refer to the orchestra concerts than to the opera performances, and in greater detail.

During his formative years, Strauss would have experienced the concerts under the direction of Hermann Levi (conductor 1872–96), who presented exemplary orchestral programs that reflected both his early, close friendship with Brahms and his strong support for the music of Wagner.³² The 1864 season under the direction of Franz Lachner reflects the orchestra's conservative repertoire before the arrival of Bülow and Levi: five compositions by Lachner himself; four by Mendelssohn; three by Beethoven; two by Mozart, Schumann, and Spohr; and one by Bach, Cherubini, Haydn, and Schubert. The season featured four new works: Lachner's Psalm 63 and Orchestral Suite No. 2, J. J. Abert's *Columbus* Symphony, and Wilhelm Taubert's Overture to *Tausend und eine Nacht*.

By the time Strauss was regularly attending the Musikalische Akademie concerts – his father had been a member since 1847 – the program contents had dramatically changed. Writing to friend Thuille in March, 1878, the thirteen-year-old already expressed in some detail his opinions about visiting composer Saint-Saëns and his *Rouet d'Omphale*, which Levi

had programmed in the second subscription concert beside Mozart's Symphony No. 38, three songs by Max Zenger from *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, three duets by Schumann, and Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 3.³³ The other concerts of the Lenten series brought subscribers mixed programs of old and new compositions: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5; Brahms, Piano Concerto No. 1 and Symphony No. 1; Wagner, *Siegfried-Idyll*; Raff, Violin Concerto in A minor; Spohr, Overture to *Jessonda*.

The second series of the 1880–1 season is particularly noteworthy because it featured works by all three composers of the New German School (Berlioz's *Harold en Italie*, Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, and Liszt's *Orpheus*), which are balanced by the usual assortment of symphonies by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and by Brahms's *Variationen über ein Thema von Haydn*. This was also the series in which Strauss's Symphony in D minor received its premiere, while the first half of the season brought recent compositions by Raff (Symphony No. 9, *Im Sommer*), Dvořák (Slavonic Rhapsody), Svendsen (Swedish Rhapsody), and Goldmark (*Ländliche Hochzeit* Symphony).

Thus the resident of Munich could have heard some of the newest orchestral music at the Musikalische Akademie concerts, while enjoying the established figures from the Classical and Romantic eras. Not unlike the Opera, these concerts reveal a more mixed repertoire than the scholar might suspect – Levi programmed leading composers whatever their musico-political direction, which led to quite interesting juxtapositions – for example, Brahms and Wagner on the same night. It must be borne in mind that the post-1872 repertoire is more a product of Levi's personal predilections than of any pressure exerted by Ludwig II or Wagner, since friend Brahms received more performances at the Odeon than did Wagner, Liszt, or Berlioz. This situation in Munich is unique and should not be interpreted as characterizing orchestral symphonic repertoires in other major central European cities, which – with the exception of Weimar and similar New German “outposts” – tended towards more conservative concert offerings. As a result, however, it provided the young Strauss with a greater familiarity with the totality of recent central Austro-German orchestral composition (conservative and progressive) than he might have acquired in other cities, including Berlin and Vienna.

Wilde Gung'l

More important for Strauss – and possibly also for the citizens of Munich – was the amateur orchestra called “Wilde Gung'l,” which took life in the year of Strauss's birth.³⁴ As Bryan Gilliam observes,

Towards the end of the 1870s Strauss demonstrated an increasing interest in orchestral music, probably linked to the fact that his father had taken over the so-called Wilde Gung'l Orchestra in 1875. This amateur orchestra, which Franz Strauss led until 1896, helped introduce Richard to the world of symphonic composition. He attended rehearsals and himself joined the ensemble in 1882 as a first violinist ... The Wilde Gung'l allowed Strauss to learn orchestration on a practical level.³⁵

The ensemble's name derived from the conductor Joseph Gung'l (Gungl), who had established his *Kapelle* in Munich in 1864 (it performed lighter, popular musical fare). The amateur orchestra, Wilde Gung'l, formed later that year, as a "wild" offshoot of the professional ensemble. As the first professional musician to conduct the Wilde Gung'l, Franz Strauss is credited with elevating its repertoire and performance standards. However, the orchestra's modest size – about thirty players at the time – necessarily limited programming, which featured both smaller "high-status" symphonic works, and popular orchestral dance and salon pieces, including waltzes, gallops, polkas, and quadrilles by Franz himself. Given Franz Strauss's musical tastes, it is no coincidence that neither Liszt nor Wagner figured in the repertoire of the Wilde Gung'l during his long-term tenure as conductor. Even though he did not begin playing violin in the ensemble until late 1882, Richard Strauss undoubtedly attended performances and rehearsals well before that date, possibly as early as the mid 1870s, especially considering that his father "turned [the Wilde Gung'l] into a type of private orchestra."³⁶ During Richard's active participation, which extended until September, 1885 (with the exception of his Berlin visit of 1883–4), he would have played such works as Symphonies Nos. 93 and 98 by Haydn; Symphony No. 41 and arranged quartet movements by Mozart; Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 and the *Prometheus* music by Beethoven; the *Rosamunde* Overture and the Overture "in the Italian style" by Schubert; the Overtures to *Abu Hassan* and *Preciosa* by Weber; the *Ruy Blas* Overture and selections from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mendelssohn; a concert overture by Johann Nepomuk Hummel; various overtures by Cherubini, Auber, Boïeldieu, and Carl Gottlieb Reissiger (a favourite of Franz); selections from the opera *Die Folkunger* by Edmund Kretschmer; the "Triumphal March" from *Aïda* by Verdi; and Symphony No. 4 by Niels Gade.³⁷ This repertoire may have borne some similarity to that of the Musikalische Akademie in the selection of earlier composers (even though the Wilde Gung'l only performed their smaller works), but the differences between Franz Strauss and Levi become readily evident upon comparing their programming of recent concert music: for Levi, it included Wagner and Liszt; for Strauss, Verdi, Kretschmer, and Reissiger (who had died in 1859). It is interesting to contemplate whether the Wilde Gung'l would have

programmed some of the earliest orchestral works by the young Strauss had his father not been the conductor, although those compositions certainly betray no influence from the New German School.³⁸ At the same time, Franz Strauss himself set a conservative tone through his repertoire selections for the *Wilde Gung'l*, which ironically was not at all musically “wild” in comparison with *Gung'l*'s own ensemble, which often performed Wagner in popular venues (see below). The citizens and amateur musicians of Munich nevertheless did become more acquainted with standard works from the traditional genres of “Classical” and “light Classical” music through the concerts of the *Wilde Gung'l*. Above all, the young Richard Strauss would intimately experience these pieces through his performance, which would leave its mark upon him.³⁹

Chamber music

Rather poorly served by professional chamber music ensembles and concert series in comparison with Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, Leipzig, or even smaller cities like Basel and Weimar,⁴⁰ Munich nevertheless was able to maintain two primary groups, each with its own series that customarily took place in the *Museumssaal*. Anonymous *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* reviewer and Munich resident “Wahrmund” (“Word of Truth”) commented in early 1882 on how welcome Hans Bussmeyer's chamber series was, “since we do possess a standing string quartet through Herr Walter and colleagues, but the rest of the extensive field of chamber music is otherwise cultivated only in private circles.”⁴¹ Reports in music journals from the time suggest that attendance numbers greatly varied for these concerts, which – taken together with the paucity of ensembles – reflects the city's problematic relationship with “elite” culture. However, we know of at least one young *Bürger* who participated in the city's chamber music institutions: as Schuh comments, “in addition to operas and symphony concerts, Richard regularly attended recitals by the Benno Walter Quartet and the Hans Bussmeyer Trio.”⁴²

That the offerings of these ensembles tended to represent either older music or a conservative style of direction is a factor of chamber music itself rather than a marker of local or regional taste. Neither Wagner nor Liszt cultivated the genre, which did not lend itself towards programmatic composition, and those colleagues who did – Karl Goldmark and Robert Volkmann, for example – occupied the fringes of the New German School. The chamber music concerts in Munich tended to program Brahms and Raff among living composers, whose music had already developed a following among the high-status public.

An overview of two representative seasons (from Strauss's formative years) should suffice to establish the repertoires of the Walter Quartet and the Bussmeyer Piano Trio.⁴³ For the 1877–8 season, Walter's quartet presented two quartets by Haydn and one by Mozart; Beethoven's Op. 18, No. 2 and Op. 135; Schubert's String Quartet in G; Schumann's Op. 41, No. 3; and Brahms's Op. 67. The six concerts of the 1881–2 season did not bring much change: the opening concert of the first series, on October 26, 1881, offered the residents of Munich Haydn's Op. 76, No. 4; Mozart's Clarinet Quintet; and Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 95. The only instances of chamber music for the season that extended beyond these three composers were Schumann's Op. 41, No. 2; Mendelssohn's Op. 12; and Joseph Rheinberger's String Quartet in C minor, Op. 89. Although Walter's quartet gave the premiere of Richard Strauss's String Quartet in A on March 11, 1881, the programming was so Classically oriented that even the critic for the conservative *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* complained.⁴⁴

Bussmeyer's *Kammermusikabende* (chamber music evenings) presented in reality anything but trio concerts, since – despite a core of pianist (Bussmeyer), violin and violoncello – they featured chamber ensembles ranging from duets to a small orchestra. For the same two seasons of four concerts each, Bussmeyer presented more varied and current programming than Walter: in 1877–8, the audience heard Mozart and Beethoven (no Haydn), but also Lachner's Piano Quintet, Op. 39; Anton Rubinstein's Cello Sonata, Op. 18; and Saint-Saëns's Piano Quartet, Op. 41. The later season likewise featured the Saint-Saëns Piano Quartet, as well as his Piano Quintet, Op. 14 and a Piano Quintet, Op. 4 by Giovanni Sgambati, which certainly provided the audience with a glimpse of recent chamber music production, even though Brahms and his associates were largely absent from the programs.

In all, this scene meant that a *Münchner* like the young Strauss could only count on about ten concerts of professional chamber music annually during the late 1870s and early 1880s, a figure not at all comparable to the offerings of other central European cities. As "Wahrmund" remarked, the gap was in part filled by performances in private circles, which proliferated in late-nineteenth-century urban milieux. This activity was even more exclusive than attendance at public concerts, since it presumed either social status or ability as performer, and thus cannot be considered as typical of musical taste in Munich. Like select fellow residents, violinist Richard Strauss himself participated in quartet performances, every other Sunday afternoon in the residence of his cousin Carl Aschenbrenner, whose father was a counsel in the Bavarian Supreme Court. There he acquired a close familiarity with the standard repertoire of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven quartets.⁴⁵ In this regard, Richard's early experiences of

chamber music were unlike those of fellow *Münchener*, however, who may have played in informal circles, but generally possessed neither the talent nor the music that Franz Strauss could draw upon to gain first-hand familiarity with the more challenging pieces from the “Classical” canon.⁴⁶

Königliche Musikschule

Originally called the *Königliche Konservatorium für Musik* (1846–65),⁴⁷ the *Königliche Musikschule* (now the *Hochschule für Musik und Theater München*) provided the citizens of Munich a source for chamber and orchestral music that augmented the city's public concert life. As William Weber has argued, conservatory programs reflect the musical tastes and practices of a place, while adopting a generally conservative repertoire⁴⁸ – the *Königliche Musikschule* is no exception, despite the participation of Wagner associates. Thus the Conservatory's *Musikabend* on March 11, 1878 brought movements from concerti and chamber works by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, and the *Musikabend* of March 29 (which Strauss critiques in a letter to Thuille)⁴⁹ featured an orchestral suite by Bach, concerto movements by Mozart and Beethoven, an overture by Haydn, an aria by Marschner, an opera quintet by Mozart, and a serenade by Karl Matys. It was only in the *musikalisch-dramatischer Abend* on April 6 that the audience would have heard more contemporary music, including vocal pieces by Engelbert Humperdinck, Philipp Wolfrum, and Anton Rubinstein. That larger works also figured in the public concerts of the *Musikschule* is evidenced by the *Musikabend* on March 29, 1882 in the Odeonssaal, at which the institution's combined forces performed the Mozart Requiem.⁵⁰ The quality of the conservatory concerts could not match that of the professional ensembles or even the *Wilde Gung'l* under Franz Strauss, yet it afforded the Munich *Bildungsbürgertum* one other venue for cultivating “elevated” taste.

Other concerts

Like any major city in central Europe at the time, Munich attracted its share of traveling virtuosi and staged the usual recitals by and benefit concerts for local artists. During the 1879–80 season, for example, such noted performers as Désirée Artôt, Hans von Bülow, and Anton Rubinstein made stops in the city, while recitals were given by Munich cellist Siegmund Bürger, violinist Walter, and coloratura soprano Henriette Levasseur. Moreover, the city's various vocal musical associations, whether the *Männergesangverein*

“*Liederhort*”, the *Lehrer-Gesangverein* or the *Oratorienverein*, all offered annual concerts, while providing their members with the type of musical experience that the amateur orchestra *Wilde Gung’l* did for local instrumentalists. Again, it must be noted that, despite their quality, the number of these individual concerts stands behind that for comparably sized German cities, which became clear to young Richard upon his visit to Berlin. In a letter to Thuille from Berlin in March, 1884, he warned that “the lethargic air of Munich is your artistic death.”⁵¹

Königliche Vokalkapelle

The Catholic Munich placed high value in an active church-music scene, which in the late nineteenth century manifested itself most visibly at the court church *Allerheiligen*. This was the home of the *Königliche Vokalkapelle*, which – although a product of the late eighteenth century – was thoroughly reorganized in 1864 and placed under the direction of Franz Wüllner.⁵² Indeed, some commentators gave Wüllner credit for calling the *Vokalkapelle* into life and developing it to a high degree of accomplishment.⁵³ Above and beyond the ensemble’s ecclesiastical responsibilities (which were considerable), Wüllner’s *Vokalkapelle* annually offered a series of four concerts called “*Vokalsoiréen*,”⁵⁴ which used the *Odeonssaal* for its performances – after Wüllner left Munich in 1877, Rheinberger carried on his directorial practices, although the season was reduced to three concerts. The choir’s concert repertoire embraced both sacred and secular compositions, the more recent offerings including works by Wüllner, Rheinberger, Lachner, and – for the 1881–2 season – Brahms, Schumann, Robert Franz, Philipp Scharwenka, and Woldemar Bargiel. One of the most interesting and varied of Rheinberger’s *Vokalkapelle* concerts from the late 1870s and early 1880s took place on March 16, 1880, for which he programmed choral works by Palestrina, Hammerschmidt, Eccard, Liszt (*Ave Maria*), Vivaldi, Lachner (Psalm 25), Rheinberger (*Salve regina*), Bernhard Scholz (lied), Franz von Holstein (lied), Ignaz Brüll (chorus), Adolpha Le Beau (two choruses), Schubert (*Des Tages Weihe*), and Bargiel (Psalm 95). Despite Liszt’s presence on the program, the *Königliche Vokalkapelle* was not a site for the performance of New German sacred music, which did not accord well with the conservatism of the Catholic region.

Indeed, the music performed by the *Vokalkapelle* at the *Allerheiligenkirche* for high church holidays like Easter and Christmas reflects the strong, almost reactionary influence of the Caecilian movement in Bavaria. For Holy Week of 1878, Rheinberger and his *Vokalkapelle*

presented six works by Palestrina, three by Tomás Luis de Victoria, and one each by Jakobus Gallus and Orlando di Lasso, while also performing Caecilian-style music by nineteenth-century-Munich sacred composers Caspar Ett and Johann Caspar Aiblinger. The three separate performances on Good Friday consisted of a Passion and *Popule meus* by Victoria; a *Vexilla regis* by Aiblinger; a *Matutin*, *Benedictus*, and *Stabat mater* by Palestrina; an *Adoramus* by Giacomo Antonio Pertti; and an *Adoramus* by Gregor Aichinger.⁵⁵

The stark aesthetic contrast between this conservative repertoire in the churches and the Wagner cultivation of the Hofoper illustrates the polarized nature of musical life in Munich. Lacking the musical diversity encountered in other large central European cities, and under the direct cultural management of the reigning Wittelsbachs, the Bavarian capital offered its citizens and visitors strongly divergent musical experiences, between the elite institutions for opera and concerts on the one hand and “popular” music on the other. The *Bildingsbürger* seemed to aim for the high-status events, while at the same time enjoying the city’s “beer culture” and its music.

“Popular” music in Munich

Despite the rising quality of the Court Orchestra, some of the best music in Munich was heard in the city’s entertainment venues, whether the beer halls and gardens, cafés or taverns. As already observed, such sites represented the other side of musical taste in the culturally polarized Munich. However, it is particularly difficult to reconstruct the “popular-music” scene from Strauss’s youth, since these daily concerts did not receive reviews in the local or the musical press. Pre-eminent among the ensembles was that of Joseph Gung’l, whose orchestra numbered between twenty and forty players according to the venue.⁵⁶ Gung’l’s programming included the usual entertainment fare of waltzes by himself, Lanner, and the Strauss family, yet he also expertly presented more demanding works by Beethoven, Schubert, and – even – Wagner. Thus one American visitor could make the following remarks on the quality of Gung’l’s performance and repertoire: “The superb music which one may listen to here for a mere trifle is astonishing. I visited one of these gardens, where Gung’l’s band of about forty performers played a splendid programme – twelve compositions of [Johann] Strauss, Wagner, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Gung’l.”⁵⁷ As an unnamed critic in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of 1866 notes, Gung’l’s intention was “to stimulate taste for symphonic music in less educated circles.”⁵⁸ Thus,

despite the maligned beer culture of Munich, those very drinkers were at the same time consuming music of some sophistication, at least at establishments where Gung'l's ensemble was performing.

It is certainly ironic that residents and visitors were more likely to hear Wagner's music at the *Englisches Café* and the *Café National* than at a *Musikalische Akademie* concert in the *Odeon* (and not at all at a *Wilde Gung'l* performance). Indeed, Gung'l conducted his orchestra on January 5, 1872 at a concert of the *Wagner-Verein* for the benefit of the *Nibelungen* performances – the program consisted of the prelude to *Lohengrin*; a vocal selection from Weber's *Oberon*; a violin concerto by orchestra member Fromm; the overture to *Tannhäuser*; the lieder “*La Tombe dit à la rose*” (as “*Die Rose*”), “*Träume*,” and “*Attente*” (as “*Die Erwartung*”) by Wagner;⁵⁹ Beethoven's Piano Concerto in C minor; and the *Kaisermarsch*.⁶⁰ The following passage by traveler Henry Bedford from 1875 may well overstate the case for Wagner at “low-status concerts” (using William Weber's designation), yet it does certainly argue for his music's popularity at the time:

That Wagner's music is popular and that it is growing in popularity is obvious enough, at least in Germany, where it is best known. We do not remember a single programme at any of the many concerts we heard – and every German town as well as city has its nightly concert in one or more of its public gardens – wherein Wagner's music did not occupy a chief place, and was not listened to with the most attention, and received with the most applause. Those who cater for the public take good care to learn the public taste, and when conductors like Gung'l, Strauss, and Marchner⁶¹ give but the second place to their own brilliant and showy compositions, and honour, as the popular favourite, so profound a thinker, and so severe a composer as Richard Wagner, we may be sure that the music of the new school is making its way, indeed has already made its way, into the hearts of the most musical people in Europe.⁶²

Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that the young composer Strauss would not have had some experiences with performances of Wagner's music beyond the royal musical institutions and “high-status” musical events in Munich. How he responded to those compositions, probably in arrangements by Gung'l and others, is another matter, although Schuh does document the youth's positive response to *Lohengrin*.⁶³ At the same time, Gung'l's band or other such ensembles would have introduced to him the lighter repertory of dance music, particularly waltzes, at an age prior to his active participation in *Wilde Gung'l* – such contact with popular music would have been virtually unavoidable in Munich of the day, despite Strauss's famous remark, “under my father's strict tutelage I heard nothing but Classical music until I was sixteen.”⁶⁴

Music publishers

When the budding composer Richard Strauss sought to publish his early works, it stood to reason that he would turn to the Munich company Joseph Aibl, under the direction of Eugen Spitzweg. Munich was no important center of music publishing, especially in comparison with Leipzig, Vienna, and Berlin, so Strauss had little choice in the local market regarding his best chance of finding a publisher for his first opus numbers (despite his father's assistance). Aibl was the most established firm in the city, dating back to 1824 and led by Eduard Spitzweg from 1836 to 1884, then by his sons Eugen and Otto until 1904, when Universal bought the company. Smaller music publishers in Munich included Theodor Ackermann, Falter und Sohn (their catalogue acquired by Aibl in 1888), Halbreiter, Schmid and Janke, and Steiner – Franz Strauss published a number of his compositions (Opp. 2, 7, 8, 9, 12) with Falter, although he also availed himself of Aibl and Halbreiter for individual publications. However, other Munich composers of the 1870s and 1880s – Hans von Bülow, Franz Lachner, Joseph Rheinberger, Franz Wüllner – chose Aibl above other Munich houses, although they also prominently maintained ties with the leading houses in Leipzig, Vienna, and Berlin, and with Schott in Mainz. This desire for publication outside Munich, in prestigious Leipzig, undoubtedly contributed to Strauss's (successful) solicitation of Breitkopf and Härtel as publisher of his Festive March, Op. 1.⁶⁵

Of course, music itself would have been readily available in the Bavarian capital. According to the *Bayerische Gewerbe-Statistik* of 1879 (based on the census of 1875), the province was home to 826 music stores, with the greatest concentration of them in Munich.⁶⁶ Studies have yet to be undertaken regarding the purchase of music in Munich (indeed, in any specific market for the nineteenth century), but, given the continued expansion of central European music publishing in the late nineteenth century, there can be little doubt that music stores did a brisk business in Munich and – with the well established network of individual publisher representation and distribution throughout Europe⁶⁷ – the consumer there could likely obtain any in-print music.

Music journalism

Munich did not produce any music journals of note during Strauss's youth, but the major Leipzig publications of the time – *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, and *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* – did cover the city's musical scene with irregular correspondence reports. In

general, these and other German-language music periodicals would have been available to residents of Munich through various avenues: individual subscriptions, purchase at music stores, and sharing of copies, whether personally or through *Lesesalons*.

More significant for the composers and performers of Munich was the daily press, and particularly the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, which reviewed local operatic performances and concerts, including those of the Wilde Gung'l (music journals did not report on popular concert institutions). This paper generally reported favorably about Wagner and his music, which may well have had some influence on the Munich public – with a circulation of 25,000, it was the most read paper in the city.⁶⁸ More popular on the national scene was the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, “the first paper in Germany,”⁶⁹ which moved to Munich from Augsburg in 1882 and had been promulgating a strongly anti-Wagnerian and anti-Liszt position since the late 1860s. The other Munich-based newspapers, such as the *Süddeutsche Presse* and the *Volksbote*, occupied artistic and aesthetic positions between the two larger dailies. The young Strauss would have had contact with these papers, but, filtered through his father’s aesthetics, it is difficult to determine what he might have derived from music reviews in the daily press other than its evaluations of his own music. In these reviews, especially those from the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, he found modest encouragement for his early compositions.

Conclusions

The Munich of Richard Strauss’s youth did not offer its citizens the musical scene that larger or even comparably sized German and Austrian cities could boast. The paternalistic Wittelsbachs maintained control over the city’s three primary institutions for musical production: the opera, the symphony orchestra, and the sacred vocal ensemble (not to mention the *Königliche Musikschule*). This royal involvement in music undoubtedly hindered the development of municipal or private musical organizations that could have filled the gap between the elite offerings under the aegis of the court and the popular music scene that flourished in open-air venues, *cafés*, and beer halls. Not that the average *Bürger* objected to that culture, which accorded well with contemporary descriptions of the *lebenslustiger Bayer* and – more specifically – *Münchner*. However, such polarization between high- and low-status performances characterized the city’s musical life, which also divided along the lines of progressive (i.e. pro-Wagner) and conservative (i.e. anti-Wagner) taste, a split that shaped more than just musical politics in the Bavarian capital.

At the same time, this study of Munich musical life between 1864 and 1883 has uncovered how a diverse scene could nevertheless unfold within such constraints, whether the varied offerings of the Hofoper from the German, French, and Italian repertoires, including Wagner, Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Verdi; or Levi's mixed programming of old and new, conservative and progressive compositions for the Musikalische Akademie concerts; or even the range of music – from Johann Strauss to Richard Wagner – heard in popular entertainment venues, especially through the performances of Joseph Gungl's ensemble. Richard Strauss may have grown up in a domestic and social milieu that cultivated high-status, conservative values in music, and yet we know he attended Levi's Musikalische Akademie, for example, and it is hard to believe that he did not pay call on Gungl on occasion. Certainly the dominance of Wagner's figure in Munich – whether at the Hofoper or in the social networks of the time, and at that, for better or worse – prepared the young Strauss for his eventual conversion to the master's cause. And the acquired close familiarity with compositions of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century musical heritage would put him in good stead for a future career as conductor (and composer).