

9 Austria and Germany, 1918–1960

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Just over 14 years went by between the end of the First World War and the Nazis' seizure of power, a short span for the high cultural repute Weimar culture has been accorded in twentieth-century popular and academic imagination – a repute particularly relevant to Berlin, which is still deriving much of its fragile self-confidence from that mythical decade. Opera is part and parcel of these images, but in a limited sense: we think of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, the Golden Boys of the Golden Twenties, of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928), *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930) or Paul Hindemith's *Neues vom Tage* (1929); we think of the Kroll Opera and its controversial productions under the musical direction of Otto Klemperer; we think of a pointedly urban, sassy modernity. But it may be the range of personalities and events rather than any *couleur locale* that made Berlin such a musical hotbed at the time. There was the premiere of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in 1925; there were the antagonistic figures of Ferruccio Busoni and Hans Pfitzner, both teaching masterclasses at the Academy of Music since 1920; there was their superior, Academy director Franz Schreker, who had come from Vienna in the same year; there was Hindemith, who joined the Academy as a professor in 1927; there was Alexander Zemlinsky, who came from Prague in the same year to conduct at the Kroll Opera and taught from 1931 to 1933 at the Academy of Arts – composers with wildly different approaches to opera, embodying a disintegration of stylistic common ground that is the main characteristic of twentieth-century music. In popular musical theatre, too, the Berlin operettas by Walter Kollo were balanced by the Berlin premieres of Viennese composers such as Oscar Straus, Robert Stolz, Ralph Benatzky and Franz Lehár, whose *Zarewitsch* (1926), *Friedrike* (1928), *Das Land des Lächelns* (*The Land of Smiles*, 1929) and *Schön ist die Welt* (*Beautiful Is the World*, 1930) were first shown in Berlin.

The musical scene in Vienna proved more conservative than that of Berlin after 1918, the Second Viennese School notwithstanding, of whose operas only Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand* was premiered in Vienna, in 1924. Schoenberg himself had moved to and fro between his hometown and Berlin since 1911; in 1926, he finally left Vienna to teach composition at the Prussian Academy of Arts. (Even Franz Schmidt, who remained in Vienna, had his second opera *Fredigundis* premiered in Berlin in 1922.) So

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Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in 1919 was indeed the only other influential operatic premiere in Vienna between the wars. The largest part of new musical theatre was made up of operettas: works by Paul Abraham, Benatzky, Julius Bittner, Leo Fall, Emmerich Kálmán, Lehár, Stolz and others. Though it would be simplistic to imply a straightforward causal connection, it is intriguing to note the parallel between Vienna's diminished roles as musical and as political capital. What in 1914 had been the hub of a major European power comprising a wide variety of peoples found itself by the end of the war on the fringe of a small country landlocked between Germany and Italy.

The end of the war brought major changes for the opera houses in Germany and Austria. After the breakdown of the monarchies, often within a few months the former court operas were transformed into national, state or municipal operas, which meant new financial structures and a new public accountability of institutions which had been fortresses of conservative culture. But new conditions had already been set by the outbreak of war, which meant the loss of subsidies and the necessity to attract larger audiences, something at which non-musical theatre was more adept than opera. Due to the fact that in a standard *Dreispartentheater* – a theatre comprising opera, ballet and *Sprechtheater* – opera tended to soak up two thirds of the funds, its need to spend less and attract more customers was direct. The ensuing attempts to popularize programmes reinforced a trend towards operetta as a financial mainstay of musical theatre which had already begun before the war (Walter 2000, 71–130; 79).

The financial problems of opera were intensified through the hyperinflation of the early 1920s, which hit hardest those whose disposable income was based on savings (which were devalued profoundly), among them large parts of the educated bourgeoisie who had made up the core opera audience. Conservative misgivings about postwar theatre were in part misgivings about changes in the audience structure – the diminished role of a former cultural elite and the larger role of new groups: workers who came to the theatre through union-organized cultural programmes and, after 1923, the 'new middle classes' of executives, teachers, civil servants, etc. who had profited from an economic stabilization. Such changes fuelled an interest in emphatically modern operas, which were written in Weimar Germany in larger numbers than either before or since, though they rarely achieved lasting success. In the 1926–7 season, new works accounted for 20 percent of opera productions, but only for 4.5 percent of performances (Walter 2000, 103–4). The repertoire of older operas, though, remained stable and was in 1927 not much different from that in 1917 or 1907. Most frequently performed were the works of

Wagner, Verdi, Mozart and Lortzing; Bizet, Weber and Offenbach also figured prominently. The rise of Puccini (in third place in the German statistics in 1926–7) was the most conspicuous development in this respect (80–83, 104–5; see also Köhler 1968).

More than their political and social counterparts, music historians have tended to focus on all things new emerging after the war; and perhaps justly so. But the anti-republican conservatism of parts of the German elites which helped to undermine the Weimar Republic played its role in musical life as well. When the Berlin State Opera reopened on 14 November 1918, it did so with Wagner's *Meistersinger*, an opera recommending openness to the new as much as a central role for an established culture and community – a mixed message which was played out with increasing intensity during the Weimar years.

Conversely many works which made their name after 1918 and are part of our idea of postwar opera had been conceived before the war. Schreker's *Der Schatzgräber* (*The Treasure Seeker*), first shown in Frankfurt in 1920, had been composed between 1915 and 1918; Berg's *Wozzeck*, first shown in 1925, had been begun by 1914; Rudi Stephan's *Die ersten Menschen* (*The First Humans*) had been written in 1914 and was premiered in Frankfurt in 1920; Walter Braunfels' *Die Vögel* (*The Birds*) had been begun in 1913 and was premiered in 1920, after the composer had converted to Catholicism and up-ended the moral of the plot (Kienzle 2000, 100–101). Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, first shown in Munich in 1917, became a national success after the productions in Vienna and Berlin in 1919; but the libretto had already been finished by 1911 and the whole opera in June 1914.

Palestrina may serve as an entry into the maze of German opera between the wars because, though maniacally conservative, it attempts something characteristic also of much self-professedly modern art of the time: as an answer to a confusing present and recent past, it claims to re-establish foundations, to find a new or find anew an old starting point for artistic integrity. And it is not so much ironic as logical that, in the year of *Palestrina*'s premiere, Busoni (whose *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (1907) was the main target of Pfitzner's *Neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz* in 1919) brought out in Zurich both *Arlecchino* and *Turandot*, representing his radically different version of opera renewed by harking back to operatic traditions of the eighteenth century and of a playful use of dramatic and musical construction to hold the story told and the way of its telling at arm's length.

Nowhere in *Palestrina* does the attempt to re-establish foundations become more obvious than in the *Vorspiel*, reinventing step-by-step basic elements of tonal musical language. But *Palestrina* performs its ideological

programme as a tightrope walk: it sings the praise of art by inspiration through re-imagining a music rigidly rule-bound; and it praises the work of art transcending all time and purpose through re-imagining a Mass, an emphatically functional genre (though in a context centred on transcendence). Pfitzner's need to philosophize in music on music – though traditional enough: see the *Meistersinger* of Pfitzner's hero, Wagner – may have betrayed an insecurity as to the state of the art counteracted in the ostentatious conservatism of *Palestrina*.

Křenek

Only a few years later, the musical reflection on music (as in *Palestrina*) and the idea of opera literally composed of heterogeneous elements (as envisioned by Busoni) shaped one of the most successful German operas of the 1920s: Ernst Křenek's *Jonny spielt auf* (*Johnny Strikes Up*, Leipzig 1927). Grown up in Vienna, Křenek too had come to Berlin in 1920 as a student of Schreker's. *Palestrina* extrapolates to the salvation of music itself a Wagnerian obsession with salvation stories – an obsession shared by Pfitzner's *Der arme Heinrich* (*Poor Heinrich*; Mainz, 1895) and *Die Rose vom Liebesgarten* (*The Rose from the Garden of Love*; Elberfeld, 1901), and by his later operas *Das Christelflein* (*The Little Elf of Christ*; Dresden, 1917) and *Das Herz* (*The Heart*; Berlin and Munich, 1931). *Jonny spielt auf* also shares this theme, but without the Wagnerian trappings. Instead of alleviating dissatisfaction about the way music was going by the invocation of old certainties, *Jonny* uses uncertainty: by breaking up the unity of style, by confronting shimmy, foxtrot and Stephen Foster's 'Swanee River' with allusions to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera and by confronting composer, virtuoso and jazz musician. But, in the end, Křenek reclaims certainty no less than Pfitzner: it is the 'vitality' of jazz violinist Jonny's musicianship that shows Max the way to America, the new cultural lodestar – in an eerie premonition of the forced emigration of so many European composers only a few years later.

In contrasting lost operatic self-sufficiency with a new musicality, *Jonny* seems to mirror Křenek's own meandering course as an opera composer. Already in *Der Sprung über den Schatten* (*The Leap over the Shadow*; Frankfurt, 1924) he had experimented with parody and popular music; but *Orpheus und Eurydike* (Kassel, 1926) harks back to the expressionist stance of the scenic cantata *Die Zwingburg* (*The Stronghold*; Berlin, 1924) and to a more unified, atonal musical language. It was followed by a set of programmatically diverse one-act works: *Der Diktator* (*The Dictator*), *Das geheime Königreich* (*The Secret Kingdom*) and *Schwergewicht, oder Die Ehre der Nation* (*Heavyweight*,

or *The Pride of the Nation*; all Wiesbaden, 1928). In *Das Leben des Orest* (*The Life of Orestes*; Leipzig, 1930), Křenek again deconstructed a Greek myth; and again the music alludes to popular styles. In *Karl V.* (Prague, 1938), Křenek is back in the Catholic south, and here the search for foundations has curious consequences: to musicalize his imagination of Catholicism as a unifying force in a fractured world, he uses Schoenberg's dodecaphony, making *Karl V.* the first completed large-scale twelve-tone opera.

That Schoenberg himself had first employed dodecaphony in opera in the marital comedy *Von heute auf morgen* (*From One Day to the Next*, 1930) seems surprising less because of any inherent unsuitability of the technique to comic subjects but because the other dodecaphonic operas of the time share *Karl V.*'s striving for greatness – nowhere more so than in Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, also wedding dodecaphony to a desperate invocation of roots. Berg's *Lulu*, the other great dodecaphonic torso, seems more of its day with its elements of *Zeitoper*, but here too we find an ambitious, large-scale opera on a subject that, through G. W. Pabst's film adaptation of Frank Wedekind's *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1929), had been reaffirmed as a topical story of modern morals and sensibilities. That *Lulu* and *Moses* remained unfinished again says less about dodecaphony as a basis for opera than about the ravages of time which killed Berg in the midst of composing and which brought the Nazis to power, forcing Schoenberg into exile. Křenek had only marginally more luck. The premiere of *Karl V.* in Vienna in 1933 was cancelled: it was premiered in 1938 in Prague, and the composer of this grand vision of European history had to flee to America.

Schreker

The historically fluid nature of modernity is perhaps best illustrated by Schreker. His first opera *Der ferne Klang* (*The Distant Sound*; Frankfurt, 1912) was seen as heralding a new modernist alongside Strauss and Schoenberg. But the modernism meant here was soon to be refashioned into 'late romanticism', a label that stuck in music historiography, which tended to preserve 'modernism' for the later Schoenberg, for Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Bartók, Varèse, etc. *Der ferne Klang* illustrates the operatic characteristics which fitted the tenets of literary modernity as proclaimed by the Viennese playwright and critic Herrmann Bahr in the 1890s (see Bahr 1890 and 1891). Against the social determinism of naturalism, Bahr wanted literature to focus on states of the soul, on the inner life (which a few years later exploded into expressionism). Composers of this modern persuasion turned away from *verismo* or Wagnerian mythologizing and composed dreams, hallucinations and hysteria, right alongside Sigmund Freud, who published

Studien über Hysterie (*Studies in Hysteria*) in 1895 and *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) in 1899. The ‘distant sound’ of Schreker’s opera, obsessively pursued by musician Fritz, is a metaphor for his submerged love for Grete; and Schreker employs music of immense opulence and subtlety to make sound and psyche mesh. Schreker’s *Das Spielwerk* (*The Glockenspiel*; Munich, 1920), *Die Gezeichneten* (*The Stigmatized Ones*; Frankfurt, 1918), *Der Schatzgräber* (*The Treasure Seeker*; Frankfurt, 1920) and *Irrelohe* (Cologne, 1924) follow that path, mixing psychology, mysticism, medievalism (or in *Die Gezeichneten*, one of the fashionable Renaissance settings also found in Max von Schillings’ *Mona Lisa* (1915), Korngold’s *Violanta* (1916) and Zemlinsky’s *Eine florentinische Tragödie* (1917)), magical instruments (the glockenspiel, the lute in *Der Schatzgräber*), expansive melodies, rich chromaticism and orchestral grandeur in varying proportions.

Meanwhile, war had intervened and changed the rules. The musical buzzwords were ‘new objectivity’, ‘linearity’, ‘popular music’, ‘neo-classicism’, ‘young classicism’ (Busoni 1920 and 1956, 34–8); the interest in psychological intensity and fine gradations of musical means was replaced by an interest in irony, parody, hard contrasts and pastiche. Within a few years, the former moderns came to represent a culture from which a younger generation wanted to distance itself, a culture associated with the world which had so willingly slithered into war. In 1928, Schoenberg wrote in a tribute to Schreker: ‘Dear friend, we are from those good old times when unsympathetic people showed themselves as such through calling us “modernists”. How are we to find our way in a time that calls us “romantics”?’ (1928a, 82).

So the failure of Schreker’s *Irrelohe* in 1924 was caused as much by its lack of a new modernity as by its abundance of an old one – by its overblown plot around sex and violence and its dense chromaticism. In subsequent operas Schreker tried in different ways, though without success, to adapt to the spirit of the times: elements of *Zeitoper* and self-reflexivity in *Christophorus, oder Die Vision einer Oper* (*St Christopher, or The Vision of an Opera*; the Freiburg premiere in 1931 was cancelled and did not take place there until 1978); counterpoint and modal harmony in *Der singende Teufel* (*The Singing Devil*; Berlin, 1928); and in *Der Schmied von Gent* (*The Blacksmith of Ghent*; Berlin, 1932) a folk opera – ironically a genre the Nazis, who quickly dismissed Schreker in 1933, would try to foster themselves soon afterwards.

Korngold

But the old modernity could still prove triumphant, as it did in Erich Wolfgang Korngold’s *Die tote Stadt* (*The Dead City*; Cologne and Hamburg, 1920). Korngold, only 23 at the time, had already composed two one-act

operas, *Der Ring des Polykrates* (*The Ring of Polycrates*) and *Violanta* (both Munich, 1916). He was the quintessential musical child prodigy; and as other child prodigies like Mozart or Chopin he had a flawless command of the musical language he had grown up with. So *Die tote Stadt*, yet another opera about dream-states and intense interiority, became one of the most successful works of the 1920s. Maybe a story about retrospection, mourning and the need to go on struck a chord after the war. But perhaps the reason was just Korngold's mastery of this style, hardly matched even by Schreker or Strauss: securely tonal, but richly chromatic; expressionistically intense, yet balanced by lucidity and relaxation; melodically appealing, but kaleidoscopically flexible. Yet the *Zeitgeist* prevailed. *Das Wunder der Heliane* (*The Miracle of Heliane*; Hamburg, 1927) largely failed, not least due to its hazily mystical plot. An anecdote pinpoints the situation: Korngold's father, the music critic Julius Korngold, campaigned against Křenek's *Jonny*; and a Viennese cigarette manufacturer used the fuss to market two new brands: the cheap *Jonny* and the luxurious, golden-tipped *Heliane*. Korngold's last opera *Die Kathrin* (*Catherine*; Stockholm, 1939), reflecting the operetta arrangements he had made since the early 1920s, merges opera and operetta, aiming at a popular music theatre, not unlike Schreker had with *Der Schmied von Gent*.

Yet the gap in the reception history of Schreker, Korngold or Zemlinsky between 1933 and the 1970s is more than the echo of an ageing modernism, and demonstrates the influence of history on music history, whose 'relative autonomy' (see Dahlhaus 1977, 173–204) is very relative indeed. For the Jewish composers, recognition of their work was bluntly cut off; and the gap was not bridged until a new generation became curious about the origins of Schoenbergian modernism.

The comparison with Schoenberg and Strauss puts this in perspective: Schoenberg's musical sensibilities were no less than those of Schreker or Korngold out of touch with the *Zeitgeist* of *Zeitoper* which he satirically adopted in *Von Heute auf Morgen* – the parody of a parodistic genre. But his internationally recognized role as Schoenberg the Progressive made him after 1945 a link to a past which could be defined as inherently forward-looking, telling a progress story that skipped the apparent aberration of Nazism. And Strauss, with *Salome* and *Elektra* (Dresden, 1905 and 1909) prime examples of prewar modernism, had by the 1920s become his own one-man genre, largely impervious to the developments around him.

Strauss after the First World War

After his co-directorship of the Vienna State Opera from 1919 to 1924, Strauss went freelance and continued his prewar collaboration with

Hugo von Hofmannsthal in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Vienna, 1919), *Die ägyptische Helena* (Dresden, 1928) and *Arabella* (Dresden, 1933). The historical refractions of *Der Rosenkavalier* (Dresden, 1911) and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Stuttgart, 1912) have been read as foreshadowing neo-classicism; the mundane subject of *Intermezzo* (Dresden, 1924) has led to its categorization as an early *Zeitoper*. But though *Intermezzo*'s extrapolation of recitative styles into Strauss's musical language is as interesting as some quasi-filmic cuts between scenes – also found in Berg's *Wozzeck* and Zemlinsky's *Die Kreidekreis* (*The Chalk Circle*; Zurich, 1933) – the subject is not new for the composer who had dealt with his home life already in the *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903). And for all the diversity in Strauss's later operatic output, the differences are overshadowed by a music that renounces all claims to contemporaneity and draws on a rich pool of tried and tested means. Unlike those of Schreker, Zemlinsky or Korngold, Strauss's operas have remained a staple of the repertoire, giving him a role in twentieth-century operatic history that only Puccini can rival.

But though Strauss had leaned towards a (self-)classicizing attitude since *Der Rosenkavalier*, the postwar situation presented him with a context for it. He and Hofmannsthal became involved in the foundation of the Salzburg Festival. In 1919, Hofmannsthal outlined his ideas to the festival association, and he envisioned a new capital of central European culture born of Austro-Bavarian spirit, for him the root of the best in German-language theatre: 'Salzburg is the heart of the heart of Europe . . . and it was here that Mozart had to be born' (Hofmannsthal 1919, 6–7). Mozart and Goethe were the pillars of his vision of a culture connecting the aristocratic and the popular, East and West, country and city, old and new; and beside their works Strauss's operas were, from 1926 onwards, central to the festival repertoire. That the imagination of this spiritual empire coincided with the political end of the Austro-Hungarian empire is hardly accidental – an Austrian echo of the German idea of itself as a *Kulturnation*, a 'cultural nation', which had consoled German patriots during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries about the political disarray of their country.

Zeitoper and the reclamation of form

Against such dreams of continuity, *Zeitoper* positioned itself as a new dawn after the abdication of the *ancien régime*. Yet *Zeitoper* was (and is) another buzzword, implying a clearly defined phenomenon, whereas in fact it has been associated with operas as different as Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Max Brand's *Maschinist Hopkins* (*Hopkins the Factory*

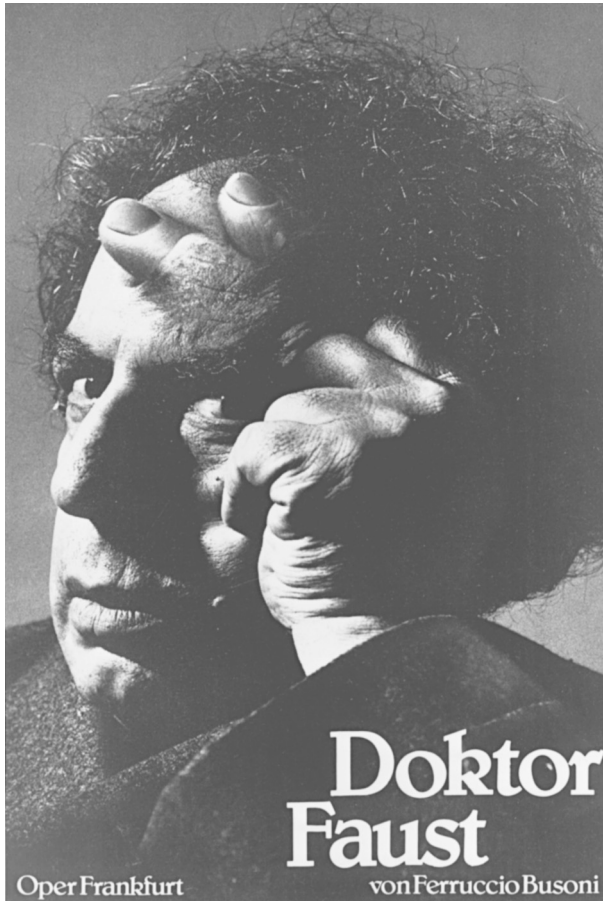
Worker), Berg's *Lulu* and Schoenberg's *Von Heute auf Morgen*. Contemporary and mundane subjects, gramophones and ringing telephones on the stage and allusions to popular music are one level, and a relevant one. But to listen to these operas in comparison makes palpable that the label covers up profound differences. And the sheen of the new hides the manifold ways in which these 'operas of their time' were connected to other operas of their time and to music history.

Insecurity about what it meant to be an artist links *Jonny spielt auf* with *Palestrina*, Hindemith's *Cardillac* and *Mathis der Maler*, also with Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, whose religious subject can easily be translated into a discourse on artistic truth and popularity, and perhaps with the glut of Orpheus re-readings since the mid-1920s: Gian Francesco Malipiero's *L'Orfeide* (Düsseldorf, 1925), Darius Milhaud's *Les Malheurs d'Orphée* (Brussels, 1926), Křenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* (Kassel, 1926), Weill's cantata *Der neue Orpheus* (Berlin, 1927), Alfredo Casella's *Favola di Orfeo* (Venice, 1932). But more typical were libretti about modern *mores* or with openly political intent. Of course *Jonny's* different musical spheres mean more than music, and allegorize a broader cultural renewal. But it would overly functionalize the new rôle accorded to popular music in these operas if it were seen as a mere cipher for a socio-political project. The idea of the special power of popular music which developed at the time changed music history itself – something we feel strongly today, when to understand 'music history' as 'art-music history' seems ever more ridiculous. When the uneducated heroine of Irmgard Keun's novel *The Artificial Silk Girl* (Berlin, 1932) mocks the scheming behind the scenes of a serious theatre production she witnesses as an extra, yet describes her experiences in cheap Berlin dance-halls in hypnotically beautiful language, she illustrates a sea-change in which opera merely participated.

If the use of songs seems one of the most idiosyncratic aspects of *Zeitoper*, it also fits into a wider trend to reclaim distinct musical forms for opera. The idea that a renewal of opera would have to be achieved against Wagnerian music-drama, against the strategy of overwhelming the listener through dissolving the (theatrical) world in musical boundlessness, had been a staple of the discussion since the turn of the century. That the future might be won through harking back to older models of music theatre and the supposed autonomy of traditional musical forms was a corresponding conclusion. Not accidentally, *Die Dreigroschenoper* started as an adaptation of *The Beggar's Opera* (London, 1728); Hindemith's publishers Ludwig and Willy Strecker, too, had suggested *The Beggar's Opera* to him in 1923, before he settled on E. T. A. Hoffmann and *Cardillac*.

So on one level the song-style could be seen as only the most radical exponent of a widespread tendency in postwar opera to regain firm

Figure 9.1 Busoni's *Doktor Faust*: poster for Hans Neuenfels' production at Frankfurt Opera, 1980. Reproduced by permission of Professor Günther Kieser.



formal ground. Hindemith based *Cardillac* (Dresden, 1926) on the models of aria, concerto, passacaglia, etc.; already in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer, Hope of Women*; Stuttgart, 1921) and *Sancta Susanna* (Frankfurt, 1922) he had used sonata and variation as frameworks. Berg uses sonata, rondo, fugue, passacaglia, cavatina, chorale, etc. in *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*; sometimes as unrecognizable background structures, sometimes with semantic intent (the fugue in Act II scene 2 of *Wozzeck*; the film music in *Lulu*). Zemlinsky composes closed vocal numbers and dance sequences in *Der Zwerg* (*The Dwarf*; Cologne, 1922); and Busoni structures parts of his *Doktor Faust* (Dresden, 1925) after a dance-suite, scherzo, fugue, etc. To compare Weill's 'Moon of Alabama' from *Mahagonny* with the sonata movement underlying Act II scene 1 of Berg's *Wozzeck* strains the meaning of 'musical form' and cuts out the question of listening comprehensibility;

nevertheless both may be linked by a shred of common historical sensibility.

Busoni was a pivotal figure. In the *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* he developed his vision of anti-Wagnerian opera: not an imagined world suffused by music, but a spectacle of many means and attractions – a concept which already outlined the ‘epic’ quality of many postwar operas, the foregrounding of narrative technique we usually associate with Brecht. The break-up of stylistic unity allowed the clash of different musics, used in Křenek’s *Jonny* as well as in Brand’s *Maschinist Hopkins*, which differentiates between aspects of the plot through employing tango and jazz, Puccinian *cantabile* and neo-classical bustle. Weill in *Der Dreigroschenoper* uses, inter alia, a neo-baroque overture, music from *The Beggar’s Opera* (Peachum’s ‘Morning Chorale’), and a musical idea by Brecht (‘Pirate Jenny’), and alludes to Eduard Künneke’s operetta *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* (*The Cousin from Doodah*; Berlin, 1921), Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* (Milan, 1904) and his first composition teacher Engelbert Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* (Weimar, 1893): see Hinton 1990, 33–41.

Busoni’s ideal was Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, combining ‘education, spectacle, solemnity and entertainment’ (Busoni 1956, 19). It is no wonder that his student Weill could adapt to Brecht’s aesthetics. Were we not used to the successes of Brecht/Weill, the blithe combination of political agitation, sharp dialogue and catchy tunes would seem an unlikely idea. But it did provide education, spectacle and entertainment (though not much solemnity) and appealed wildly. The catchiness of texts and tunes made the shocks of their spiky parodies all the more effective – dialectics at work.

Not by chance do at least three of Busoni’s terms refer to an opera’s relation to its audience: the idea of a new kind of musical theatre was the reaction to the weakening of opera’s social moorings, of a socio-cultural role which had been damaged together with the culture that had underpinned it. ‘Whither opera?’ was a ubiquitous question in the German musical press of the 1920s. Weill was convinced in 1927 that ‘opera has to take note of the interests of that wider public for which it ought to be written in the near future if it is to have any right to exist at all’ (2000, 60). And Křenek saw *neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) defined by its capacity to affect the ‘outer world’, whereas the ‘romantic individualism’ of expressionism had ‘isolated the creative artist and made him ideologically independent of success’ (quoted in Grosch 2000, 135).

That Křenek with *Orpheus und Eurydike* and Weill with *Der Protagonist* (Dresden, 1926) had delivered their own expressionist calling cards throws their new attitude into sharp relief. It is more than a demotic

allergy against bourgeois delusions of operatic grandeur. Given opera's need to acquire new audiences, it is intriguing to note how the socio-aesthetic maxims followed economic necessity like a shadow – a neat illustration of Marx's ideas about foundation and superstructure. The problems of opera were exacerbated by the increasing importance of new media which appealed to a far wider public. With the formation of the conglomerate UFA (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft) in 1917, film production in Germany reached a new level of industrialization; and with the establishment of a regular radio programme in 1923 in Berlin, opera acquired a whole new channel of dissemination. Many operas took the bull by its horns: in *Jonny spielt auf* Anita's aria and Jonny's music are presented as radio transmissions. The protagonists of Ernst Toch's *Der Fächer* (*The Fan*; Königsberg, 1932) listen on the radio to music from the same composer's *Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse* (*The Princess on the Pea*; Baden-Baden, 1927). And for *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* (*The Tsar Has his Photograph Taken*; Leipzig, 1928), Weill had the 'Tango Angèle' marketed as a record before the premiere, so that the record could be used as pre-existing music in the opera (and became a success, though after the premiere rather than before). Underscored by such techniques, the pastiche structure of the operas mirrored an increasingly multi-faceted media culture.

But born of its time, *Zeitoper* was short-lived. Brecht's, Weill's and Elisabeth Hauptmann's *Happy End* (1929) failed utterly, not least due to its agitprop finale; *Mahagonny* already deviates from the *Dreigroschenoper* mode towards a broader, more elaborately operatic structure. In *Der Jasager* (*He Who Says Yes*; Berlin, 1930), the penultimate Weill–Brecht collaboration, the stark text forbids any playfulness; and Weill is at his most grainily sober. In *Die Bürgschaft* (*The Surety*; Berlin, 1932) this new sobriety is taken up in a far more varied and relaxed manner – Weill's version of a style that could combine a new accessibility with the grand sweep of traditional opera. *Der Silbersee* (*The Silver Lake*) returns to the smaller scale of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, but not to its all-pervasive irony; after the parallel premieres in Leipzig, Magdeburg and Erfurt on 18 February 1933, the Nazis quickly banned it, and Weill fled to Paris.

Křenek's way from *Der Sprung* and *Jonny* to *Karl V.* has been mentioned; Hindemith took a similar path. He too had meandered through the fashionable styles: the parody of expressionism in *Das Nusch-Nuschi* (Stuttgart, 1921), neo-classicist strictness in *Cardillac*, prototypical *Zeitoper* in *Neues vom Tage*. His ostentatious (re)turn to roots was *Mathis der Maler* – written in 1934–5 in reaction to the new conditions set by Nazism, which cut through German and soon Austrian opera history incisively.

Opera under Nazism

Yet how incisive Nazism really was for opera is a matter of perspective. One could stress the continuities: the pillars of the repertoire were still Wagner, Verdi, Mozart, Puccini and Lortzing. Performances of French operas had been decreasing since 1918, not least in favour of Italian ones; so the ban of music from enemy nations in 1939 was less palpable than it might have been. Even the sacking of Jewish musicians was not necessarily very obvious to audiences: against 3 percent of musicians dismissed in 1933 for being Jews stood a general fluctuation of musical personnel of 25 percent (Dussel 1988, 196). On the other hand, state funding and the number of theatres and their employees drastically increased between 1933 and 1944, though mostly due to the general economic recovery after the depression (Schreiber 2000, 667). In any case, opera was not a major occupation of Nazi cultural politics, certainly not of the system's higher echelons. Goebbels poked fun at Furtwängler and Strauss for their puny audiences, compared to the millions listening to the radio or to Lehár operettas (Egk 1981, 318, 343). If a mark was overstepped, though, the reaction could be swift: when in June 1935 the Gestapo intercepted a letter from Strauss – president of the Reich Music Chamber – to Stefan Zweig, the Jewish librettist of *Die schweigsame Frau* (*The Silent Woman*; Dresden, 1935), in which he adopted the wrong tone in describing his musical politics, Goebbels sacked him immediately (Riethmüller 2003). Whether Strauss's *Friedenstag* (*Peace Day*; Munich, 1938) was meant as an anti-war statement or a celebration of endurance is not clear; in any case it was a celebration of diatonicism and final C major jubilation. Strauss's last operas *Daphne* (Dresden, 1938), *Capriccio* (Munich, 1942) and *Die Liebe der Danae* (*The Love of Danae*; Salzburg, 1944) did not add anything substantially new to his stature, though *Capriccio* interestingly revived the narrative playfulness of *Ariadne*.

But one could as easily stress the break Nazism meant. Just listing émigré opera composers makes the loss strikingly obvious: Goldschmidt, Hindemith, Korngold, Křenek, Schoenberg, Toch, Weill, Wellesz, Wolpe, Zemlinsky... Such spectacular impoverishment can be found in all fields of German culture. Historically ironic was the case of Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler* implied Hindemith's willingness to accommodate to the new conditions, musically reaching back to folksong, Gregorian chant and modal harmony. But the opera about the sixteenth-century painter torn between his artistic calling in the service of Catholic authority and his religious and political convictions made its conciliatory point so tortuously, and Hindemith's sins as a former young Turk were so glaringly obvious, that he stood no chance. Similarly, moderately

expressionist painters such as Max Pechstein, Ernst Barlach, Karl Schmitt-Rottluff and Emil Nolde had hoped in vain during the early years of the Nazi reign that they could position their art as particularly Germanic (Willett 1970, 196–219).

But Nazi opera policies never added up to a concerted programme; different factions within the cultural apparatus pursued their own agenda (see, for example, Schubert 2003). Hindemith's failure had not least to do with a trial of strength over Furtwängler's public defence of the composer. Where *Mathis* failed, Ottmar Gerster's *Die Hexe von Passau* (*The Witch of Passau*; Düsseldorf, 1941) was a moderate success (though less so than his *Enoch Arden* (Düsseldorf, 1936), with its 500 performances): a story around a fifteenth-century peasants' revolt using a musical language not too far from Hindemith's, an example for the tempered (and folksy) modernity that was acceptable to a Third Reich that, for all its regressive traits, did not want the restoration of Second Reich culture. Rudolf Wagner-Régeny harked back to the sober tone of Weill's *Die Bürgerschaft*: his *Der Günstling, oder Die letzten Tage des großen Herrn Fabiano* (*The Favourite, or The Last days of the Great Fabiano*; Dresden, 1935) was hailed as a model of clarity, and *Die Bürger von Calais* (*The Burghers of Calais*) was produced lavishly at the Berlin State Opera in 1939. Even material generally deemed degenerate could occasionally be used. Paul Klenau used dodecaphonic structures (though with tonal echoes) in *Michael Kohlhaas* (Stuttgart, 1933), though he was criticized for it. Schoenberg's student Winfried Zillig used dodecaphony in *Rosse* (*Horses*; Düsseldorf, 1933), *Das Opfer* (*The Sacrifice*; Hamburg, 1937) and *Die Windsbraut* (*The Whirlwind*; Leipzig, 1941). Werner Egk's successful *Peer Gynt* (Berlin, 1938) used song style and jazz rhythms from the 1920s – but used them to characterize the demonic world of the trolls, justifying the stylistic choice through its denunciatory purpose.

Mostly, though, conservatism reigned, thematically and musically. Staging the Nazi movement itself, common in film and drama, was frowned upon in opera; the image of NS martyr Horst Wessel 'as an opera tenor, surrounded by his SA friends singing baritone and bass' struck terror even in Nazi hearts (Schmitz 1939, 381). Instead, we find folk tales (e.g. Heinrich Strecker's *Ännchen von Tharau* (*Ann of Tharau*), Breslau, 1933), fairy tales (e.g. Egk's *Die Zauberigeige* (*The Magic Fiddle*), Frankfurt, 1935), comic operas (e.g. Edmund Nick's *Das kleine Hofkonzert* (*The Little Court Concert*), Munich, 1935; and Mark Lothar's *Schneider Wibbel* (*Tailor Wibbel*), Berlin, 1938) or classic subjects (e.g. Paul Graener's *Der Prinz von Homburg* (*The Prince of Homburg*, after Heinrich von Kleist), Berlin, 1935; and Hermann Reutter's *Doktor Johannes Faust*, Frankfurt, 1936).

Carl Orff's solution was both opportunist and original. His neo-folk, neo-medieval style served up what was wanted by the regime: roots, simplicity, physicality, communality. The scenic cantata *Carmina burana* (Frankfurt, 1937) sets medieval texts collected in a Bavarian monastery; *Der Mond* (*The Moon*; Munich, 1939) and *Die Kluge* (*The Wise Maiden*; Frankfurt, 1943) are based on fairy tales; *Agnes Bernauer* (Stuttgart, 1947) on Bavarian history. But his music was clearly an offspring of *neue Sachlichkeit*, transposed from city to country, from 'now' to 'then', avoiding the *Asphaltromantik* vilified by the Nazis but retaining some of the historical momentum of 1920s hope for a new popularity. *Carmina burana* was duly castigated by critics for being experimental and 'un-German'; but despite or because of this it became a success to rival *Die Dreigroschenoper*, its country cousin, its dark shadow.

Some of the most topical operas of the Third Reich were never part of its official music history. Karl Amadeus Hartmann wrote *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (*The Simplest Simpleton*, after Grimmelshausen's picaresque novel of the Thirty Years War) in 1934–5, using the pastiche and alienation techniques of the 1920s. He knew that it could not be performed at the time and chose to fall silent as a composer until better days; the opera was premiered in 1948. Viktor Ullmann, a student of Schoenberg's and Alois Hába's and composer of two previous operas – *Der Sturz des Antichrist* (*The Fall of the Antichrist*, 1935; premiere Bielefeld, 1995) and *Der zerbrochene Krug* (*The Broken Pitcher*, 1942; premiere Dresden, 1996) – wrote *Der Kaiser von Atlantis, oder Die Todesverweigerung* (*The Emperor of Atlantis, or The Refusal to Die*) in 1943 in the concentration camp at Terezín, where Hans Krása had written his children's opera *Brundibár* a few years before. Ullmann's work was never performed there and had to wait until 1975 for its premiere. The story about emperor Overall who declares total war and thereby appals even Death invites the obvious comparisons. The music is equally telling: encompassing allusions to Mahler, Schoenberg, Weill, cabaret songs, protestant chorale, Reichardt, Bach and Brahms, Ullmann looks back at the multi-faceted structure of *Zeitoper*, but also composes a compendium of German music, as if he refused the Nazis' attempt to take this tradition away from him.

After 1945

Music has its own geography; and in 1945 it changed irrevocably. No longer could Austria and Germany claim to be its centre. The

international operatic success of the year was English, a phenomenon inconceivable before the war, particularly from a Germanocentric perspective: Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* heralded an opera composer who would outshine his German and Austrian contemporaries.

Indeed, the mid-century might seem a watershed: in 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) were founded; in the same year Strauss and Pfitzner died, followed in 1950 by Weill and in 1951 by Schoenberg. In 1947, the Salzburg Festival for the first time premiered an opera by a living composer: Gottfried von Einem's *Dantons Tod* (*Danton's Death*), the first opera of the 29-year-old who had spent the Third Reich waiting for its end, studying privately with Boris Blacher. But the next Salzburg premiere, in 1949, was Orff's *Antigoniae*, pointing out that the past was not done with. Orff had smartly changed tack, continuing his style, but moving away from Germanic subjects towards antiquity, an interest that had begun with *Catulli Carmina* (Leipzig, 1943). *Antigoniae* was followed by *Oedipus der Tyrann* (Stuttgart, 1959), *Prometheus* (Stuttgart, 1968) and *De temporum fine comoedia* (Salzburg, 1973). Success during the Third Reich did not *per se* constitute a career impediment: Egk was performed in both East and West Germany and wrote operas until 1966; Gerster's *Die Hexe von Passau* for its peasants' revolt became a GDR favourite; Reutter made a career in the FRG. Wagner-Régeny became an influential composition teacher in the GDR, but received no opera commissions; the scenic oratorio *Prometheus* (1959) was written for Kassel and *Das Bergwerk von Falun* (*The Mine at Falun*, 1961) for the Salzburg Festival.

The past was present in other ways as well. Some of the émigrés returned, with mixed results. When Korngold's *Die Kathrin* had its Vienna premiere in 1950, audiences reacted favourably, but the critics condemned it as a dinosaur. Křenek stayed in the USA, but wrote operas for German theatres, which continued his penchant for diversity, oscillating between political engagement in *Pallas Athene weint* (*Pallas Athene Weeps*; Hamburg, 1955), which uses the fate of Socrates as a mirror image of McCarthyism, and *opera buffa* in *Sardakai* (Hamburg, 1970), taking its cue from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* – though again with political overtones. Hindemith moved to Switzerland and wrote *Die Harmonie der Welt* (*The Harmony of the World*) for the 1957 Munich Opera Festival, using Johannes Kepler's theories of planetary motion as a mirror of his own theories of musical harmony.

Particularly thorny was the *réémigré* situation in the GDR. Alongside Brecht, Hanns Eisler and Paul Dessau had been expelled from the USA under McCarthyism and returned to Berlin. Eisler had never composed an opera, but collaborated with Brecht on numerous plays. In 1951–2,

Eisler wrote his own libretto for a *Johann Faustus* opera. But after publication of the text, it was dragged into a heated debate about the role of intellectuals in German history, disheartening Eisler so much that he refrained from setting the text. Dessau, too, had worked with Brecht. Now he followed Roger Sessions in setting Brecht's radio play *The Trial of Lucullus*. Its anti-militarist message did not go down well with the GDR authorities; but the carefully selected public of the premiere in Berlin in March 1951 liked it nevertheless, raising the political stakes. The Central Committee of the party charged the opera with the blanket condemnation of 'formalism', curiously inappropriate with regard to the colourful, extrovert music. Brecht and Dessau reworked the opera (changing the title from *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus* to *Das Verhör des Lukullus*), and it became a staple of the GDR repertoire. It took Dessau until 1966 to write another opera, *Puntilla*, again after Brecht; but three more works – *Lanzelot* (Berlin, 1969), *Einstein* (Berlin, 1974) and *Leonce und Lena* (Berlin, 1979) – developed his flamboyant musical style and an epic theatre of complex relationships between representation and comment.

The Eisler and Dessau affairs did not bode well. After Stalin's death in 1953 the problematic heritage of 'socialist realism' was widely debated when, paradoxically, GDR opera increasingly fell under the influence of Soviet models, imitated by composers such as Max Butting (*Plautus im Nonnenkloster* (*Plautus in the Nunnery*), 1959) and Ottmar Gerster (*Die fröhliche Sünder* (*The Happy Sinner*), 1963). But still, the post-Stalinist operatic scene was far from uniform. Conservative composers such as Robert Hanell polemicized against Western 'made-up modernisms' (Neef 1992, 216); but after 1960 some GDR composers made them up too: Siegfried Matthus cautiously introduced serial structures into *Lazarillo von Tormes* (*Lazarillo of Tormes*; Karl-Marx-Stadt/Chemnitz, 1964) and more openly into *Der letzte Schuss* (*The Last Shot*; Berlin, 1967); Udo Zimmermann in *Die weiße Rose* (*The White Rose*; Dresden, 1967, revised version Hamburg, 1986) and Rainer Kunad in *Old Fritz* (Radebeul, 1965) used serial structures as well. The conflict between an international orientation and the insistence upon disassociation, especially from the estranged big-brother FRG, was to run through GDR operatic history. Whether much of that history can be retrieved after the re-unification – and cultural re-colonization – of the GDR in 1990 is, sadly, doubtful.

After Nazism had brutally interrupted the 'normal' course of (music) history, West German and Austrian composers in 1945 had the chance to re-connect with the avant-garde of the 1920s – that, at least, is the authorized version. But the tale has its holes, even beside the continued work of composers who were not much interested in taking up pre-war progress. In the spectrum of New Music, opera was positioned

awkwardly: bound to big institutions with their own inertia and with more conservative audiences than other modes of music. And the rediscovery of prewar avant-gardes was selective: after Nazism's exercises in artistic communality (re-staged in the GDR), Weill's vision of opera for 'that wider public' appealed less than Schoenberg's insistence on the artist as avant-gardist. German critics were shocked by Weill's Broadway career and preferred 'the old, real Weill, smelling of Russia leather and tobacco' (Fiechtner 1961, 217). Adorno (1950) even denied that the Broadway Weill could be called a composer. But the threat that was rhetorically warded off in such statements came anyway: the influx of swing, jazz, then rock'n'roll from America was the most influential development in European postwar music; but one that, other than in the 1920s, hardly affected opera anymore.

The intensification of the prewar trend towards *Literaturoper* assured opera of a cultural worthiness which could be taken for granted even less than after 1918. So Orff sets Sophocles' *Antigonae* and *Oedipus* in Hölderlin's translations and Aeschylus' *Prometheus* in Greek; Egk uses Kleist's *Die Verlobung in San Domingo* (*The Engagement in San Domingo*; Munich, 1963); Boris Blacher sets *Romeo and Juliet* (Berlin, 1947); von Einem sets Büchner's *Dantons Tod*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (*The Visit of the Old Lady*; Vienna, 1971) and has Heinz von Cremer adapt Kafka's *Der Prozess* (*The Trial*; Salzburg, 1953); Giselher Klebe uses Schiller in *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*; Düsseldorf, 1957) and Shakespeare in *Die Ermordung Cäsars* (*The Murder of Caesar*; Essen, 1959); Zillig composes *Troilus und Cressida* (Düsseldorf, 1951); Wolfgang Fortner develops into a Lorca specialist with *Die Bluthochzeit* (*Blood Wedding*; Cologne, 1957) and *In seinem Garten liebt Don Perlimplin Belisa* (*Don Perlimplin's Love of Belisa in his Garden*; Schwetzingen, 1962); Hans Werner Henze adapts Cervantes for *Das Wundertheater* (*The Magic Theatre*; Heidelberg, 1949), Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* for *Boulevard Solitude* (Hanover, 1952), Kafka for *Ein Landarzt* (*A Country Doctor*; Hamburg, 1951), Carlo Gozzi for *König Hirsch* (*King Stag*; Berlin, 1956), Kleist for *Der Prinz von Homburg* (*The Prince of Homburg*; Hamburg, 1960), and so on.

Perhaps the proven credentials of the texts were the permission charge for musical experiments; disoriented audiences could fall back upon a secure literary base. If GDR composers had to deal with official restrictions, their Western counterparts were spoilt for choice. The range of musical options is hard to summarize, encompassing atonality, dodecaphony, different tonal idioms, pastiche and parody, later electronic music and *musique concrète*. They are perhaps best encapsulated by the figure of Boris Blacher, teacher of Klebe, von Einem and Aribert Reimann.

He, too, used serial techniques and, from the mid-1960s onwards, electronics; but his ballet opera *Preussisches Märchen* (*Prussian Fairy Tale*; Berlin, 1952) is a virtuosic pastiche of songs, marches, waltzes, polkas etc., while the *Abstrakte Oper Nr. 1* (*Abstract Opera No. 1*, 1953) builds on the nonsense syllables and isolated phrases of Egk's libretto soundscapes of 'pure' emotions – abstract expressionism in music.

But the representative German opera composer after 1945 is Henze, for better or worse. He begins playful, satirical, sarcastic in *Das Wundertheater* (satirizing racism and nationalism), *Boulevard Solitude* and the radio operas *Ein Landarzt* and *Das Ende einer Welt* (*The End of a World*, 1953) using everything from eighteenth-century parodies to Bergian atonality and dodecaphony, cabaret songs and big-band jazz. In 1953, he flees the busy Germany of the economic miracle and the gathering serialist orthodoxy as represented by Boulez, Stockhausen and Nono and settles in Italy, re-inventing himself as an Italian composer, drawing on folk music as well as on Italian opera tradition. The controversial *König Hirsch* (1956) seemed to aim at a renewed grand opera, using every means at hand for a glittering musical tapestry – and effectively shutting Henze out from the inner avant-garde circles. Henze continued on his colourful way in *Der Prinz von Homburg*, *Elegie für junge Liebende* (*Elegy for Young Lovers*; Schwetzingen, 1961), *Der junge Lord* (*The Young Lord*; Berlin, 1965) and *Die Bassariden* (*The Bassarids*; Salzburg, 1966), by and by – and rather like Strauss – becoming his own classic; the *Elegy* is even dedicated to the memory of Hofmannsthal. But in step with West German society, in the late 1960s and 1970s Henze again re-invented himself, now as a left-wing political composer in works such as *El Cimarrón* (1970), *La Cubana* (1973) and *We Come to the River* (London, 1976).