Undertones of Insurrection

Music & Cultural Politics in the Modern German Narrative

Marc A. Weiner

with a new introduction by the author
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MUSIC & CULTURAL POLITICS IN THE MODERN GERMAN NARRATIVE

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK
To
Paula N. Drake,
Beloved Sister and
Friend Through the Chaos
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This book examines social, political, and ideological issues associated with music in narratives of German modernism, and in its original version drew upon developments in musicology and upon discussions of the ideological, extra-aesthetic implications of literary form in the modern German narrative that first emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s, and that have come to typify their fields ever since. Nonetheless, when I first undertook this study nearly twenty years ago, I felt justified in claiming that the questions it raised were fundamentally different from those that had previously been pursued in most examinations of music in the literature of German-speaking Europe, because it was obvious at the time that, until then, investigations of musical-literary relations within the purview of German Studies had largely disregarded social concerns in general, and political issues in particular. By and large, that has not changed and continues to characterize the small field of musical-literary relations in German Studies today.

Following the appearance in 1948 of Calvin Brown’s influential *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (the concerns of which far exceeded German literature), scholars in German Studies interested in music either focused their attention on music and the figure of the musician as motifs in the literature of the German-speaking countries, deemed it sufficient to simply identify or to point out those passages in the works of the German literary canon that contained discussions of music, or examined primarily technical parallels between specific musical arts, musical forms, and literary works. These three approaches were exemplified by studies that had already come to seem rather outdated by the early 1990s: George Schoolfield’s monograph, *The Figure of the Musician in German Literature* (1956), Theodore Ziolkowsky’s widely cited article, “Hermann Hesse’s *Steppenwolf*: A Sonata in Prose” (1958), and Steven Paul Scher’s *Verbal Music in German Literature* (1968). While these investigations accomplished what they set out to do—the first in an encyclopedically descriptive fashion, the second from a tradition within
comparative literature that deemed the identification of textual detail and the comparison of the arts as ends in themselves, and the last from a perspective of New Criticism characterized by close readings in a social, historical, and political vacuum—the methodologically circumscribed nature of inquiry they reflected prevented their authors from taking into account the ideological ramifications of their material. That is, while much had been gained from descriptive close reading such as theirs, much had been ignored as well.

This was regrettable, considering the fact that by the early 1990s, these publications were still so representative of much of the research within the small arena in German Studies devoted to the interrelations of music and literature. Following Schoolfield, numerous books and articles appeared with titles of the “Music in the Life and Works of…” kind that contributed to our awareness of the pervasiveness of the motif in German literature, but fell short of examining the role such motifs play in the ideological configurations of that literature, and indeed of the society from which they were drawn. Similarly, numerous scholars like Ziolkowski and Scher attempted to define the formal similarities and differences between music and literature, as well as the impact of such structures on the use of music as a motif in narrative texts, and contributed to our understanding of the subtleties involved in the conflation of the two arts, but their interests did not extend beyond the aesthetic material under discussion. Unfortunately, this state of affairs continued well past the initial publication of this book in 1993, as even the most cursory examination of studies since then makes clear. In other words, there remains a dearth of investigations of music in German, Swiss, and Austrian literature that take into consideration the social and ideological forces involved in the generation and the reception of the arts, both individually and when they meet. Two recent publications representative of current approaches to the subject—*Listening In: Music, Mind, and the Modernist Narrative* (2003) and *Phrase and Subject: Studies in Literature and Music* (2006)—are no exception.

Since the appearance of this book, a number of collections associated with a series of conferences at the University of Graz have provided an overview of the field, revealing not so much different methodologies as an expanded set of objects of inquiry. For subsequent to the early 1990s, few of these investigations have sought to examine the larger cultural implications behind the development of the narrative strategies under
investigation, strategies often based on the associations that inevitably accompany any art in a given culture, both in the world at large and when it appears within a narrative context. Indeed, the very titles themselves suggest as much: *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field* (1999); *Word and Music Studies: Essays on Literature and Music* (1967-2004), etc.—not, say, *Word, Music, and Culture*, or *Word, Music, and Politics*, or *Word, Music, and the Ideology of Form*, or some other formulation indicating a concern for those dimensions of inquiry that go beyond the positivistic, the biographical, the descriptively historical, and the New Critical. As such, the insights they have provided have continued to be either descriptive or largely formal in nature. What’s more, these collections are just that—groups of heterogeneous investigations with diverse concerns and aesthetic objects, which (with one notable exception, to be discussed below) tend to dominate the scholarly scene far more than focused and theoretically informed monographs on the subject of music and German literature. Equally heterogeneous collections had already appeared prior to those just mentioned—such as *Music and German Literature* (1992)—and still others have emerged since: *Resounding Concerns* (2003); and *Music and Literature in German Romanticism* (2004).

This is not the case, to be sure (though this is not the exception just alluded to), with Jean H. Leventhal’s *Echoes in the Text: Musical Citation in German Narratives from Theodor Fontane to Martin Walser* (1995), for in her monograph, Leventhal is one of the few scholars to recognize that the modernist author expected “a reader who will bring to these texts [by, in addition to the titular authors, Schnitzler and Döblin]” an attentive ear and keen memory for music.” As my reader will see in the pages that follow, this expectation is a key to my own argument, insofar as I will claim that it is with the understanding of the associations a contemporary reader would bring to the text that the modernist author could exploit the use of music to awaken in the reader’s imagination larger social, ideological, and political associations from the world in which both the author and the reader lived. But Leventhal does not explore the implications of such authorial aspirations, and mentions instead the modernist author’s “expectations” merely as an afterthought at the end of her study, the primary purpose of which was simply, she explains, to recognize and identify “the inclusion of citation of specific musical material in a selection of…narrative prose texts,” a modest goal that links her work
to a host of others, already mentioned, that were primarily concerned with citation and summary. The methodological limitations of Schoolfield’s, Ziolkowski’s, and Scher’s works of the 1950s and 1960s doubtless reflected the conservative nature of the two disciplines upon which they drew: musicology and the study of (canonical) German literature, as they were defined by the academic institutions of the time. It is certainly no coincidence, for example, that they—and others working in a similar vein—seldom mention any forms of musical art deemed popular or low, the focus of their interest revealing a penchant for such high cultural forms as classical chamber music, symphony, and opera, while eschewing for the most part discussion of what at the time was deemed to be more modern music, such as jazz and forms of electronic acoustical art. In this context, it is worth mentioning that discussion of jazz, rock, or folk music and kinds of music deemed “ethnomusicological”—and thus, from the canonical musicologist’s viewpoint, marginal—were still rare in the institution of musicology in the mid-1980s, a failing for which the prominent scholar, Joseph Kerman, criticized his colleagues at the time.

While such conservatism may have also made sense within the larger framework of the institution of literary studies in America at the time, it is still discernible in numerous publications that have emerged since then, many of which continue to pursue goals and employ methodologies similar to those of Schoolfield, Ziolkowski, and Scher—that is, they ask similar questions which essentially ignore social and political issues. More recently, some occasional investigations of music-as-narrative have emerged—such as *Silence and Slow Time: Studies in Musical Narrative* (2004) and *Literatur und Musik in der klassischen Moderne: Mediale Konzeptionen und intermediale Poetologien* (2006)—but more often than not they have also omitted discussion of the art as a cipher of larger social-political import. One study from this time that does concern the relationship between ideological forces and sonic phenomena in German culture is *Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of Modern German Culture* (2004), but the interests of its editors and authors lie elsewhere than those pursued here, and therefore (with one minor exception), this collection of diverse essays and heterogeneous agendas omits consideration of German and Austrian literature altogether.
Developments in the late 1980s, 1990s, and the first part of the twenty-first century, in both musicology and in German literary scholarship not devoted to music, have widened the scope of their respective territories by viewing the arts with which they are concerned as semiotic codes rooted within the ideological forces of their societies. Such provocative, and for their time even radical investigations as Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* and Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (both 1991) employed critical and literary theory in their analysis of the ideological dimensions discernible within musical structures, and thus expanded the parameters of the examination of music to include the notion that both these structures and the discourse with which music is discussed function as codes reflecting social power relations (this argument will infuse my first chapter and reappear throughout the book that follows). Such investigations may seem standard fare today, but in the early 1990s they were anything but. Much of the impetus for their approach was due to Subotnik’s, and, to a lesser extent, McClary’s incorporation of the work of Theodor W. Adorno into their own analyses of music and of its place within a social context. Though the focus of McClary’s study was, specifically, the perception of music through socially pervasive conceptions of gender, her insights have proven applicable to an analysis of the function of music in modern Western society in general, and have deservedly contributed to a fundamental paradigm shift within musicology that continues to define the discipline today.

That new paradigm of the post-1991 era emerged in interrogations of music through the employment of methodologies and aesthetic theories that had already typified research in the literary humanities for some time, such as—in addition to feminism, gender studies, and Critical Theory—deconstruction, post-structuralism, new historicism, and cultural studies in general. The titles of scholarly works within the “new musicology”—if I may be forgiven the formulation—speak volumes: *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the 19th Century* (1991); *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (1993); *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (1993); *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (1994); *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (1995); *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (1995); *Beethoven Hero* (1995);

With the emergence of the same theoretical models within literary scholarship, what was generally described as “culture studies” came to the fore, and by the late 1980s had been established as a major part of the intellectual work in departments of German throughout the country. Through the infusion of neo-Marxist assumptions and questions emerging from the Frankfurt School, culture studies in literature departments defined itself and its goals and methodologies in part through its rejection of a primarily New Critical approach to (usually canonical) literary texts. Indeed, by the time this book appeared in 1993—which, too, was influenced by Adorno, especially by his Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie (Introduction to the Sociology of Music)—the contextual, as opposed to the primarily textual interrogation of literary meaning was on the verge of constituting the norm, so that studies and courses on the literature of German-speaking Europe more often than not unfolded through consideration of the ideological forces within a given cultural and historical moment in which the literary text emerged and was initially received. When I began work on this book, culture studies was still perceived (and perceived itself) to be on the “cutting edge” of literary inquiry, yielding kinds of insights that seemed both novel and, as those of us working in the field at the time liked to think, rather “insurrectionary” when compared with the kind of positivistic (and often largely biographical) and New Critical discussion of texts that had heretofore constituted the norm. In this respect, I must acknowledge in hindsight what seems now to be a rather quaint conflation of the “insurrectionary” affect with which I wrote the book and the nature of its subject—the means by which a new kind of German, Austrian, and Swiss literature unfolded its Ideologiekritik, its social and cultural criticism—as revealed in my use of the loaded term “Insurrection” in my title. Yes, at the time I hoped to employ the insights vouchsafed by the new methods of culture studies in a kind of inquiry that would be new in the
field of musical-literary relations, and that I hoped might, in its own small way, help to advance the subject out of the stagnation I believed had come to characterize it, thereby emulating the shift in methodologies found in musicology just discussed.

The kinds of insight I found missing in most studies of music in German literature were provided for me by such texts as Judith Ryan’s *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* (1983), Donna Reed’s *The Novel and the Nazi Past* (1985), and Russell Berman’s *The Rise of the Modern German Novel: Crisis and Charisma* (1986) and *Modern Culture and Critical Theory: Art, Politics, and the Legacy of the Frankfurt School* (1989), which addressed directly the relationship between ideological forces, literary strategies, and narrative form, and thus brought into a discussion of German literature those aspects of cultural practice vilified as extrinsic by both positivists and New Critics in the 1950s and 1960s. In so doing, these works appeared to me in the early 1990s to have effected a kind of investigation of literature parallel to that found in Subotnik’s and McClary’s recent investigations of music. The similarities in the approaches discernible in Subotnik’s and Berman’s works were clearly attributable, at least in part, to the fact that Berman, too, modeled his investigations on an analysis of the relationship between artwork and ideology developed by Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt School. A basic tenet of these literary studies—that aesthetic (in this case, narrative) structures are politically significant because they represent an artist’s response to the political implications of cultural codes with which the recipient of the modern artwork (in this case, the reader) is also acquainted—provided the basis for my own understanding of the ideological associations attending the appearance of music in the modern German narrative. It goes without saying that, since the appearance of Ryan’s, Reed’s, and Berman’s texts just cited, such studies have come to characterize much of the work done in German departments in the American academy once the institution was reconfigured through inclusion of a host of alternative methodologies heretofore foreign to the literary academic landscape. Today such work is fairly standard; in the 1980s, in was not.

I mentioned above that, with one exception, one was hard-pressed in the early 1990s to find studies of music and literature that paralleled the kind of exciting investigations undertaken by Subotnik and McClary
in musicology. That exception was, and continues to be, the work of Lawrence Kramer, who is not so much concerned with the questions I pursue here—involving the development of narrative strategies in the modern German narrative that were based on the cultural vocabulary of the modernist author’s readership—but who has a keen awareness of the means by which ideological forces inform the development and the operations of aesthetic form. His publications draw and expand upon much of the theoretical work already cited, and provide an example of a kind of analysis of musical-literary relations that goes far beyond the more traditional and circumscribed projects that continue to be the norm today. By the time my book appeared, Kramer had examined *Music and Poetry—The Nineteenth Century and After* (1984) and *Music and Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (1990), and he has subsequently added, among others, the aforementioned *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (1995), *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture* (1997), *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* (1998), *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (2002), and *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (2004). When I wrote this book, Kramer and I were involved in very different projects, and therefore his investigative model was not appropriate to my argument here, but though I did not employ his insights in the early 1990s, I have done so since.

However, as the saying goes, the exception proves the rule. My point, again, is that while musicology was late in incorporating modern theory—which by the late 1980s was a central feature of nearly every major literary program in the American academy—the kinds of investigation that had come to characterize both disciplines was by that time still largely missing from studies of music and literature within departments of German, studies that continue to this day to be characterized by modest goals, outdated methodologies, and limited expectations.

I also wish to mention that, in the early 1990s, I still had to assume that my English-speaking audience would be relatively unfamiliar with the work of Hans Pfitzner, a composer of major importance to the cultural life of German-speaking Europe in the first half of the twentieth century who plays a prominent role in this book. Indeed, even the music drama for which Pfitzner is best remembered today—*Palestrina*—did not receive its first American staging until the Royal Opera Company of Covent Garden performed it at the Metropolitan Opera in New York on
June 21, 1997. Up to 1993, scholarship on the figure had been primarily available only in German, and had done little to illuminate his position within the ideological forces of his time. Since then, however, Pfitzner has become the subject of, or at least has received more than merely passing mention in, a number of rewarding discussions: Owen Toller, *Pfitzner's Palestrina: The “Musical Legend” and its Background* (1997); Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich* (1999); Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (2000); a special issue of the *Musical Quarterly* devoted to the composer (2001); Sabine Busch, *Hans Pfitzner und der Nationalsozialismus* (2001); *Music and Nazism: Art under Tyranny, 1933-1945* (2003); Celia Applegate, *Music and German National Identity* (2004); Claire Taylor-Jay, *The Artist-Operas of Pfitzner, Krenek, and Hindemith: Politics and the Ideology of the Artist* (2004); Walter Frisch, *German Nationalism: Music and the Arts* (2005), as well as, sporadically, in Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (2007). I would recommend any number of these texts to readers interested in finding out more about this fascinating, though troubling representative of European aesthetic conservatism in the first half of the twentieth century.

With an understanding of the arts as involved in the often unacknowledged ideological forces within a culture, I attempted in this book to bridge a gap between the highly rewarding infusion of modern cultural and literary theory into musicology, the politically insightful examinations of narrative structures in the modern (and, in Ryan’s case, postmodern) German novel, and discussions of musical-literary relations in German Studies, the methodological conservatism of which had obtained in the early 1990s and that continues to “define” the field today. It is my hope that the book that follows will illuminate the means by which the modern German narrative unfolded its ideological agenda through references to music that were by no means solely formal in nature, but that were infused rather with ideological meaning in the world in which that literature and that music were created and received.

***

I owe a debt of gratitude to many institutions, foundations, programs, departments, and individuals without whose financial and emotional
encouragement I would still be fulminating somewhere in the middle of chapter three. Since, as Brecht says, one thinks of food first and morality second, I wish at the outset to express my gratitude to my financial benefactors: to the President’s Council on the Humanities at Indiana University for awarding me travel grants to examine material in the Franz Werfel archives of the University of California at Los Angeles and in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany; to the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Dean of the Graduate School at Indiana for a Grant-in-Aid to defray the cost of procuring photographs; and to the Andrew W. Mellon program at Harvard University for awarding me a Faculty Fellowship in the Humanities for research and participation in Harvard’s Institute for Literary and Cultural Studies.

The earliest stages of this project grew out of discussions with a number of engaging and refreshingly enthusiastic graduate students in a seminar I gave at Indiana University on music in German literature, especially with Ann McGlashan, Cathy Raymond, and Felix Tweraser, who have gone on to pursue investigations of music and modern German literature of their own. Following these initial formulations, my work and personal well-being benefited from discussions with Marjorie Garber and Richard Hunt at Harvard, and with colleagues in the German department there at the time: Dorrit Cohn, Gail Finney, Carl Guthke, Judith Ryan, and Maria Tatar. I also owe a real personal and intellectual debt of gratitude to two fellow melons (or “Mellow Felons,” as we were affectionately known), Marcel Cornis-Pope and Carol Oja.

I wish to thank colleagues, both former and present, and dear friends at Indiana University, especially Eva Knodt, Breon Mitchell, Antje Petersen, and William Rasch, for offering a number of very helpful suggestions (many of them infuriatingly justified!), and David Lasocki of the Music Library for clarifying some contradictory bibliographical information concerning obscure musicological publications in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany. The late Wolfgang Paulsen, for many years both my mentor and “ideal reader,” subjected the entire manuscript to a careful reading as it developed, an act of generosity that was typical for him, for he was a wonderful human being who represented the very best within the European intellectual tradition. It was largely owing to his enthusiasm for his field that I decided to pursue a career in academia. And finally, my thanks to Sander Gilman, whose work constitutes a model of textual analysis and
cultural and ideological criticism. The distinction of his scholarship, the extent of his professional encouragement and support, and the warmth of his friendship have added immeasurably to my professional experience over the past twenty years.

I have attempted to use, whenever possible and appropriate, standard published translations of the German texts under discussion, but I have modified these when necessary; all other translations are my own. The following collectors, archives, and their staff members aided me in the often difficult process of procuring photographic material: Antony Beaumont; Dr. Hedwig Müller of the Institut für Theater-, Film- und Fernsehenwissenschaft der Universität Köln; Elke Schwandner of the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar; Helga Bauer of the Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin; Anita Schulze and Sybille Hilger of Bild-Kunst, Bonn; the Klaus Broszat Fotostudio in Munich; Klaus Schultz, former Generalintendant of the Stadttheater Mannheim; Horst P. Horst; Amy Guskin of European American Music Distribution Corporation; and Carolyn Peterman and Mark Simons of Photographic Reproduction Services at Indiana University.


The post-1992 studies referred to in this new Introduction have been included in the revised Bibliography, but otherwise the text of the introduction, chronology, chapters 1-6, notes, and index remains that of the original.

Marc A. Weiner
Bloomington, Summer 2008
Notes


3. For an excellent account of similarities between the acts of reading and listening and political activities, see Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Circumstantial Evidence.”

4. Leventhal 188.


7. The only other one having been, as far as I know, a concert performance in Berkeley, sung in English, under the direction of Kent Nagano in the early 1980s.

8. See also John Williamson, *The Music of Hans Pfitzner* (1992), which appeared too late for me to take into consideration, as this first version of this book was already in production at the time.

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selected works since 1993

-----. Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss (University of California Press, 2004).
Leventhal, Jean H. Echoes in the Text: Musical Citation in German Narratives from Theodor Fontane to Martin Walser (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).
Potter, Pamela M. Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).


preface

This book examines social and political issues associated with music in narratives of German modernism, and in so doing draws upon recent developments in musicology and upon discussions of the ideological implications of literary form in the modern German narrative. The questions it raises are fundamentally different, however, from those pursued in most examinations of music and German literature, for previous works on musical-literary relations within the purview of Germanic studies have disregarded social concerns in general, and political issues in particular.

Following the appearance in 1948 of Calvin Brown's influential *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (the concerns of which far exceeded German literature), scholars in Germanic studies either focused their attention on music and the figure of the musician as motifs in the literature of the German-speaking countries, or examined primarily technical parallels between musical and literary works. These two approaches are exemplified by two often-cited works from the 1950s and 1960s: George Schoolfield's *The Figure of the Musician in German Literature* (1956) and Steven Paul Scher's *Verbal Music in German Literature* (1968). While both studies accomplished what they set out to do, the former in an encyclopedically descriptive fashion and the latter from a perspective of New Criticism characterized by close readings in a social, historical, and political vacuum, the methodologically circumscribed nature of these investigations prevented them from taking into account the ideological ramifications of their material. That is, while much has been gained from descriptive close readings such as theirs, much has been ignored as well. This is regrettable, considering the fact that these publications are so representative of research within the small arena in Germanic studies devoted to the interrelations of music and literature. Following Schoolfield, numerous books and articles appeared with titles of the "Music in the works of" kind which contributed to our awareness of the pervasiveness of the motif in German literature, but fell short of examining the role such motifs play in the ideological configurations of that literature, and indeed
of the society from which they were drawn. Similarly, numerous scholars like Scher have attempted to define the structural similarities and differences between music and literature, as well as the impact of such structures on the use of music as a motif in narrative texts, and have contributed to our understanding of the subtleties involved in the conflation of the two arts. But they, too, have not set out to examine the larger cultural implications behind the development of the narrative strategies under investigation, strategies often based on the associations that inevitably accompany any art in a given culture, both in the world at large and when it appears within a narrative context. As such, the insights they have provided have proven largely formal in nature.

The methodological limitations of such works doubtless reflect the conservative nature of the two disciplines upon which they drew in the 1950s and the late 1960s: musicology and the study of canonical German literature. It is certainly no coincidence, for example, that Schoolfield, Scher, and others working in a similar vein seldom mention any forms of musical art deemed popular or low, the focus of their interest revealing a penchant for such high cultural forms as classical chamber music, symphony, and opera, while eschewing for the most part discussion of such modern music as jazz and forms of electronic acoustical art. In this context it is worth mentioning that discussion of jazz, rock, or folk music and kinds of music deemed “ethnomusicological”—and thus, from a canonical musicologist’s viewpoint, marginal—were, until fairly recently, rare in the institution of musicology as well. While such conservatism may have made sense within the larger framework of the institution of literary studies in America in the 1950s and 1960s, it is still discernible in numerous publications that have emerged since then, many of which pursue goals and employ methodologies similar to Schoolfield’s and Scher’s—that is, they ask similar questions which essentially ignore social and political issues.

Recent developments in both musicology and in German literary scholarship not devoted to music have widened the scope of their respective territories by viewing the arts with which they are concerned as semiotic codes rooted within the ideological forces of their societies. Such provocative investigations as Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music and Susan McClary’s...
Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality (both 1991) employ critical and literary theory in their analysis of the ideological dimensions discernible within musical structures, and thus expand the parameters of the examination of music to include the notion that both these structures and the discourse with which music is discussed function as codes reflecting social power relations. Much of the impetus for this kind of approach is due to Subotnik's, and, to a lesser extent, McClary's incorporation of the work of Theodor Adorno into their own analyses of music and of its place within a social context. Though the focus of McClary's study is, specifically, the perception of music through socially pervasive conceptions of gender, her insight is applicable to an analysis of the function of music in modern Western society in general. In this society, music reflects and evokes a host of forces that scholarship often deems extramusical. These insights, dismissed by more traditional musicologists and also virtually ignored by those investigating music in literature, form a basic premise of my book, in part because my own work also has been influenced by Adorno, especially by his Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie (Introduction to the Sociology of Music).  

One is hard pressed to find studies of music in literature that parallel the kind of exciting investigation undertaken by Subotnik and McClary. Lawrence Kramer has recently employed the kind of structuralist analysis based on modern literary theory found sporadically in their work and, more extensively, in Carolyn Abbate's Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century (1991), but his Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After (1984) focuses on formal parallels between the arts, and thus unfolds within the confines of New Criticism discernible in Brown's and Scher's investigations. Kramer seldom takes into consideration the sociopolitical, or generally ideological implications of the parallels between the arts that he seeks to draw. His analysis of literature therefore lacks the ideological insights that are so remarkable in Subotnik's and McClary's analyses of music. This is still the case, its title and professed intentions notwithstanding, in his subsequent Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900 (1990).  

The recent work of other literary and cultural scholars, however, though it does not discuss music, proves rewarding when applied to an investigation of the ideological implications of music in German modern-
ist literature. I have in mind such texts as Judith Ryan's *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* (1983), Donna Reed's *The Novel and the Nazi Past* (1985), and Russell Berman's pioneering studies *The Rise of the Modern German Novel: Crisis and Charisma* (1986) and *Modern Culture and Critical Theory: Art, Politics, and the Legacy of the Frankfurt School* (1989), which address directly the relationship between ideological forces, literary strategies, and narrative form, and thus bring into a discussion of German literature those aspects of cultural practice vilified as extrinsic by both positivists and New Critics in the 1950s and 1960s. In so doing, they effect a kind of investigation of literature parallel to that found in Subotnik's and McClary's recent investigations of music. The similarities in the approaches discernible in Subotnik's and Berman's works may be attributable in part to the fact that Berman, too, models his investigations on an analysis of the relationship between artwork and ideology developed by Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt School. A basic tenet of these literary studies—that aesthetic (in this case, narrative) structures are politically significant because they represent an artist's response to the political implications of cultural codes with which the recipient of the modern work (in this case, the reader) is also acquainted—provides the basis for my own understanding of the ideological associations attending the appearance of music in the modern German narrative. With this understanding of the arts as involved in the often unacknowledged ideological forces within a culture, I have attempted to bridge a gap between the recent and highly rewarding infusion of modern cultural and literary theory in musicology, the most recent and politically insightful examinations of narrative structures in the modern (and, in Ryan's case, postmodern) German novel, and the methodologically more conservative area of musical-literary relations in Germanic studies.

*

I owe a debt of gratitude to many institutions, foundations, programs, departments, and individuals without whose financial and emotional encouragement I would still be fulminating somewhere in the middle of chapter three. Since, as Brecht says, one thinks of food first and morality second, I wish at the outset to express my gratitude to my financial benefactors: to the President's Council on the Humanities at Indiana
University for awarding me a travel grant to examine material in the Franz Werfel archives of the University of California at Los Angeles and in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany; to the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Dean of the Graduate School at Indiana for a Grant-in-Aid to defray the costs of procuring photographs; and to the Andrew W. Mellon Program at Harvard University for awarding me a Faculty Fellowship in the Humanities for research and participation in Harvard's Institute for Literary and Cultural Studies in 1987-88.

The earliest stages of this project grew out of discussions with a number of engaging and refreshingly enthusiastic graduate students in a seminar I gave at Indiana University in the fall of 1986 on music in German literature, especially with Ann McGlashan, Cathy Raymond, and Felix Tweraser, who have gone on to pursue investigations of music and modern German literature of their own. Following these initial formulations in 1986-87, my work and personal well-being benefitted from discussions with Marjorie Garber and Richard Hunt at Harvard, and with colleagues in the German department there: Dorrit Cohn, Gail Finney, Karl Guthke, Judith Ryan, and Maria Tatar. I also owe a real personal and intellectual debt of gratitude to two fellow Mellons (or "Mellow Felons," as we were affectionately known), Marcel Cornis-Pope and Carol Oja.

I wish to thank my colleagues and dear friends at Indiana University, especially Eva Knodt, Breon Mitchell, Antje Petersen, and William Rasch, for offering a number of very helpful suggestions (many of them infuriatingly justified!), and David Lasocki of the Music Library for clarifying some contradictory bibliographical information concerning obscure musicological publications in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany. Wolfgang Paulsen, for several years now my "ideal reader"—residing in Menlo Park at the receiving end of a capricious postal system—subjected the entire manuscript to a careful reading as it developed. And finally, many thanks to Sander Gilman, whose work constitutes a model of textual analysis as cultural and ideological criticism.

I have attempted to use, whenever possible and appropriate, standard published translations of the German texts under discussion, but I have modified these when necessary; all other translations are my own.

The following collectors, archives, and their staff members aided me in the often difficult process of procuring photographic material: Antony
Beaumont; Dr. Hedwig Müller of the Institut für Theater-, Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft der Universität zu Köln; Elke Schwandner of the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar; Helga Bauer of the Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin; Mr. Frentz and Mr. Lampertius of the Ullstein Bilderdiensit in Berlin; Anita Schulze and Sybille Hilger of Bild-Kunst, Bonn; the Klaus Broszat Fotostudio in Munich; Klaus Schultz, Generalintendant of the state theaters in Mannheim; Horst P. Horst; Amy Guskin of European American Music Distribution Corporation; and Carolyn Peterman and Mark Simons of Photographic Reproduction Services at Indiana University.


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Introduction

When Georg von Wergenthin, the main protagonist in Arthur Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road into the Open*) of 1908, dreams of inheriting the success and adulation once enjoyed by Richard Wagner, subtle allusions to musicians and to musical compositions evoke in the mind of Schnitzler's contemporary reader specific social and political issues of topical importance in fin de siècle Vienna. Throughout the work, references to the music of Wagner and covert allusions to Gustav Mahler form an ironic backdrop to the portrayal of diverse ideological forces in von Wergenthin's world. As an unsuccessful dilettante, unavowed anti-Semite, and Wagner enthusiast, Schnitzler's hero represses the sundry tensions of his life associated with Jews when he attends a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* at the Vienna Opera, and loses himself instead in a megalomaniacal fantasy:

The lights were dimmed, the prelude to the third Act began. Georg heard languid ocean waves breaking on a desolate coast and the mournful sighs of a fatally wounded hero vanishing in bluish-thin air. . . .

The curtain was raised. The English horn sounded with longing, the wounded hero slumbered under a pale and indifferently expansive sky in the shadow of the linden tree, and the devoted Kurwenal watched over him. . . . Truly, that was a voice of unusual timbre. If only we had a baritone like that, Georg thought. And there is so much else that we need! If only he were given the necessary power, he felt he would be able in time to build the modest theater where he worked into a first-rate stage. He dreamed of exemplary performances to which people would throng from all sides. . . . He no longer sat there simply as a critical observer, but as one who himself one day would be a director. His hopes ran farther and higher. Perhaps only a couple of years would pass—and harmonies he himself had discovered would sound through a wide and festive space; and the audience would listen with rapture, like those
here today, while somewhere outside a shallow reality would powerlessly float by. Powerlessly? That was the question! . . . Did he know, then, whether he was given the power to hold men through his art, like the master who was heard here today? To be victorious over the petty considerations and bereavements of everyday life?¹

On its surface, this passage conveys to the modern reader little more than Georg von Wergenthin’s obvious dream of achieving power and glory in Viennese society. But to Schnitzler’s contemporary reader, the passage evoked a wealth of underlying associations that far transcended the hero’s ordinary bourgeois aspirations. To the reader of 1908, Schnitzler’s protagonist emerged as a focal point for the dramatization of numerous sociopolitical forces of the time: anti-Semitism, Zionism, Pan-Germanism, and various nationalist movements in the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, all of which are intimately, though covertly associated with music and with musical figures in the narrated monologue’s topical subtext.²

Throughout the novel, von Wergenthin’s insignificant efforts as a composer, conductor, and critic affiliated with a minor theater in Germany never bring him the kind of success he longs for when he thinks about Wagner, but even as he consciously compares himself to the German composer, the cultural symbol of anti-Semitism and German nationalism par excellence in turn-of-the-century Europe, Schnitzler surreptitiously compares him to Gustav Mahler, composer, conductor, and director of the Vienna Opera who gained that position in part through his notorious conversion from Judaism to Catholicism.³ Mahler had launched new productions of Tristan in 1898 and 1903 during his tenure as director and principal conductor in Vienna, and Schnitzler could expect his Austrian audience to recall these celebrated events ten and five years later; indeed, a number of details refer directly to them.⁴ Schnitzler’s unproductive hero longs for the very positions the real-life Mahler held as impresario and composer. The reader must even assume that Mahler conducts the performance von Wergenthin attends in the novel. Yet the narrated monologue reflecting von Wergenthin’s ruminations never mentions, indeed virtually suppresses, the musician stigmatized in anti-Semitic Austria as a Jew, even as the protagonist imagines himself involved in precisely those activities with which Schnitzler’s readers iden-
Alfred Roller's set design to *Tristan und Isolde*, Act III, for the Vienna Opera.
tified Mahler. Schnitzler’s (and his protagonist’s) suppression of Mahler and concomitant glorification of Wagner are not dependent on musical-aesthetic considerations, but on the ideological concerns with which the two composers were linked in his day: the anti-Semitic hero both envies and represses the Jew, and replaces him with a symbol of German nationalism and racial purity at a time when Pan-German forces were demanding an end to Slavic and Czech claims for nationalist autonomy in the Empire, but it is only the contemporary reader who is privy to the ideological forces operating within von Wergenthin’s psyche. This mixture of aesthetics and sociopolitical meaning also forms the basis of many other passages in the novel that covertly compare von Wergenthin’s (purportedly Teutonic) compositions with those of Mahler (especially his Fifth Symphony) and of another celebrated Jewish musician, Felix Mendelssohn. 5

Through hidden references to music laden with extramusical associations, Schnitzler’s text demonstrates in a provocative manner the proximity of musical art and sociopolitical pressures in the early twentieth-century imagination and provides an example of how an author could rely on such proximity in the shaping of a modernist text. Schnitzler’s readers could experience this monologue on at least two levels. The surface narrative, with its equation of Wagner and grandeur, seems neither insightful nor powerful. But its subtext, which emerges only after the reader has recognized and reflected upon the link between music and the social sphere, offered a challenging literary experience to his contemporary audience, for it clearly undermines the ideological use of culture portrayed in the surface narrative. Schnitzler thus exploits the associations he could expect his audience to bring to the text, associations which were firmly entrenched within the cultural vocabulary of his time, in order to effect social criticism through music.

There is a danger in discussing music as a sign of various sociopolitical ideas and of ideological forces that exist separate from the artwork: such a polar model suggests that one can meaningfully conceive of music as functioning outside of the socially conditioned hermeneutic process in which any art is involved, as if music, or its performance, reception, and discussion, could unfold in a vacuum. Yet the term extramusical can emphasize the ideological side of this polar model and thus highlight the
forces which always imbue aesthetic works, both in the world at large and in their representation within literary texts. At first, the notion of extra-musical associations linked to given musicians and to musical works does not seem unusual, but a narrative strategy presupposing a reading audience able to discern such implications suggests a pervasive, culturally based repertoire of assumptions, tastes, prejudices, and associative patterns. Because it has changed over time, this repertoire appears in retrospect as representative of a specific moment in the development of German culture.

Every age has its cultural vocabulary—the aesthetic symbols through which a society understands and portrays itself and that provide a kind of shorthand within social interaction—and such a set of images shifts and undergoes transformation as the values associated with it change. But at any given historical moment it provides a collection of value-laden images that form the basis for an interpretive community (comprised both of authors and readers, as well as composers, performers, and listeners) and that, in retrospect, can be highly revealing to the cultural critic who lives in a different time and hence is subject to a different cultural vocabulary. The innovative aspect of Schnitzler’s novel is that he uses the cultural vocabulary of his time to employ a specific kind of narrative strategy that has come to be associated with the modernist age: he relies on the omission and distortion of information as a device designed to activate the reader.

This book examines the literary repercussions within German modernism of music’s status as a social sign (by German modernism I mean, unless otherwise noted, the modernism of German-speaking Europe from around 1900 to the end of World War II). After the turn of the century, two trends developed in the use of music in German literature. On the one hand, in a large group of popular and easily accessible prose works music simply appears as a motif imbued with social connotations, but does not provide the basis for a calculated evocation of such connotations without which the meaning of the text cannot unfold. That is, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, music often functions in German narratives as little more than a motif which merely embellishes literary depictions of social concerns. Such works (represented here and in chapter 3 by texts of Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Dau-
thendey, Vicki Baum, Bruno Frank, and Klaus Mann) provide examples of the kind of socially mimetic and comparatively simplistic literature from which the complex and engaging modernist text differs.

On the other hand, modernist works, contemporaneous with, but in terms of their narrative strategies far more demanding than those which uncritically reflect the cultural vocabulary of the age, form a much smaller innovative and experimental group. In these works, music evokes sociopolitical issues through a variety of narrative devices, and thus functions as part of the modernist narrative’s strategic makeup. A characteristic, often-cited feature of the modernist text is its employment of lacunae, hidden information, and narrative dissonance. It was thus commensurate with the development of literary form in west European literature in general that allusions to music in German modernism were not restricted to the obvious, surface narratives characterizing the more popular and simplistic works of the early twentieth century, but also operated in diverse ways as subtexts which presented the reader with a challenging literary experience intended to invite critical reflection. Schnitzler’s *Road into the Open* is a case in point; the most intriguing aspect of the novel, after all, is its suppression of musical information. The reader gains insight into the repressive mechanisms of Georg von Wergenthin’s psychological makeup because the text, which mirrors his thoughts through a narrated monologue, does not openly provide the very information von Wergenthin would repress for social reasons. The social implications so central to the novel emerge only after the reader has recognized and reflected upon the fact that a specific music is suppressed for reasons found in the contemporary world. This modernist text itself performs a kind of cultural psychoanalysis in that it presents material to the reader which is hidden to the figures within the narrative because of psychosocial pressures. The resulting irony directs the reader’s attention to the socially critical implications inherent in the covert commentary. Schnitzler’s subtext thus made sophisticated demands on his reader and, as such, his novel belongs to a tradition of modernist texts which strategically exploit the sociopolitical associations linked with music in the popular imagination, in the interpretive community, of his age.

Music, of course, has always operated within a socially determined semiotic system, and the associative configurations in which it was per-
ceived prior to Schnitzler’s time were always representative of given historical moments. But how does music come to function as a code for sociopolitical pressures? In part, an answer may be found in the socially pervasive and constitutive discourse on music which both reflects and contributes to the social reality of the art. In discussing the status of music as a social sign, a distinction must be made between three spheres: (1) music as a genre, whose shape at any given historical moment is determined internally by the immanent logic of its material; (2) the social reality of that genre, which exists and develops within the framework of its institutionalization in society; and (3) the development of a discourse on music in such nonmusical, verbal genres as music criticism, aesthetic debates, and popular literature, that operates as a secondary code reflecting the social function of the art. It is this secondary code that is of primary interest to an examination of music’s role in modernist narrative strategies. In these verbal genres, the explicit linkage of music and various social concerns is established in language; that is, the social existence of music is constructed in the discourse on music. Because the social existence of music itself results from its status in this discourse, one must distinguish between a discourse that constitutes or itself contributes to an explicit linkage (that is, criticism and polemics), a discourse that both reflects and reinforces a culturally pervasive, explicit linkage that exists prior to its formulation in the public imagination (that is, in conventional, popular literature), and a discourse that presupposes such a linkage as the basis for a narrative strategy (the modernist text).

Because the nonfictional discourse involving music both reflects social tensions affecting music and itself contributes to, or constitutes them, this book concerned with music in modernist literature opens with an analysis of various ideological forces in the critical discourse on music of the early twentieth century. An exemplary battleground for these forces is a debate carried out in the German press from 1905 to 1926 between the composers Hans Pfitzner and Ferruccio Busoni and the music critic Paul Bekker. The right- and left-wing political agendas underlying the imagery with which Pfitzner, Busoni, and Bekker expressed their opinions accompanied the appearance of similar or at times identical motifs in German and Austrian literature from the period. By analyzing the way music was discussed in German-speaking Europe from 1900 to the rise of
fascism, the associations it evoked in narratives of the time can be shown to have reflected a widespread cultural vocabulary that was itself constituted and continually reinforced through a discourse on music.

After discussing musical polemics, I shall focus on a number of modernist texts that employ music in diverse narrative strategies, but the reader should bear in mind that these works are fundamentally different from the much larger body of contemporaneous fiction in which music appears as little more than an artistic motif accompanying the depiction of social concerns. While the focus of the book is the modernist work that presupposes and ultimately calls into question the cultural vocabulary upon which it is based, these narratives are to be understood within the context of other texts that both constitute and reflect that vocabulary (that is, music criticism and popular literature). It was out of polemical discourse that the link emerged between music and the social sphere which would be uncritically reflected in popular literature of the early twentieth century.

One highly pervasive example of this link can be found in the vague association of music with countercultural impulses represented in a number of texts from the teens and twenties. In these works, different kinds of music evoke a society different from that of the modern German-speaking empires, but they do so overtly, in an obvious fashion. They bear discussion in order to cast into greater relief the innovative and more clandestine use of music in the modernist work. In the more popular fiction of the early twentieth century, visions of alternative, sometimes violent societies not yet contaminated by the failings of the modern age compete with images representing the rigidly hierarchical dynamics of social interaction established through the repressive ideologies of the Wilhelminian Empire and the Habsburg monarchy, and these visions are typically enhanced through musical accompaniment. The image of fantastic and bizarre collectives that oppose a lost paradise, or even a violent yet genuinely free world, to the reality of contemporary social despair conflates here with the notion, popular at the time, of music as an art of insurrection and a threat to the status quo.

An alternative music that obviously and overtly signifies spontaneity, freedom, social equality, and a release from the strictures of turn-of-the-century moral repression appears for example in Gerhart Hauptmann’s
popular novella *Der Ketzer von Soana* (1918; *The Heretic of Soana*). For Francesco, the priest in Hauptmann’s text who comes to question institutional grace, and for Hauptmann’s readers, music provides an emblem of a superior, more natural and spontaneous social exchange than that found in the modern Church, which reflects and furthers alienation in the modern world. This is at first only suggested when Francesco beholds a Greek frieze on a rustic sarcophagus in the mountains:

> For the first time, . . . the young priest condescended to inspect the ornamental frieze on the sarcophagus, which consisted of a bacchanalian procession and showed prancing satyrs, dancing female flutists. . . . At . . . times it seemed to him that he himself was surrounded by shouting intoxicated mænads.¹⁰

That this motif of Dionysian music—borrowed from the highly influential, and hence constitutive discourse of Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872; *The Birth of Tragedy*)—is associated with nature, uncivilized spontaneity, and sensuality opposed to the strictures of the modern world is suggested through the art’s metaphorical connection to Agata, the young Italian heathen who so bewitches Francesco, a representative of modern morals, that he rejects modern social norms:

> Every strain in the music of this childlike countenance was at once sweet and bitter, melancholy and gay. In her glance was a shy retreat and at the same time a tender challenge, unconscious, flower like, innocent of the violence of animal passions. (74)

As Hauptmann’s novella progresses, music implying nature, sexual freedom, and emancipatory spontaneity located in a different kind of community merges with primitive sounds of nature that break through the acoustical art of institutionalized turn-of-the-century Catholicism. Here, two kinds of sounds are initially and explicitly juxtaposed as signs of competing ideologies:

> Regularly, every day, at about the hour of twilight, he delivered a little discourse, principally to the women and daughters of Soana, which had for its subject the virtues of the Blessed Virgin. Before and afterward the nave of the church resounded with songs of praise in honour of Mary, which rang out through the open door
into the springtime. And with the delicious old airs, so beautiful in both text and music, there mingled from without the cheerful chirping of sparrows and the sweet plaint of the nightingales in the damp gorges of the neighborhood. At such moments Francesco, while apparently serving Mary, was wholly given over to the service of his idol. (80)

Finally, the consummation of Francesco’s and Agata’s love is staged before a backdrop of musical motifs signifying a revolt against the corruption of the modern world, a return to nature, and a loss of individuation implicitly suggestive of an alternative collective not based on modern modes of competition but on a less repressive mutual exchange:

Never had Francesco, never had he as priest felt such a nearness to God, such a security in Him, such an obliviousness of his own personality, and gradually, in the rushing of the mountain brook, the mountains seemed to boom melodiously, the rock-crags to peal like an organ, the stars to make music with myriads of golden harps. Choirs of angels shouted through infinite space, like tempests the harmonies came roaring down from above, and bells, bells, chimes of bells, wedding-bells, small and large, deep and high, immense and delicate, diffused an oppressive, blissful solemnity throughout the universe. And so they sank, locked in each other’s embrace, upon their leafy bed. (113)

The dissolution of Francesco’s individuation under the power of Dionysian music is a motif taken directly from the cultural vocabulary generated under the influence of Nietzsche’s text. His discourse on music establishes and reinforces ideas and images which pervade the social reality of music and are reflected directly (and uncritically) in the popular literature of the time. The social implications of music are obvious here; Hauptmann’s text does not hide an implied meaning through thinly veiled musical signs. Instead, music’s function is so overt as to cross the border separating mere cliché and outright kitsch. As such, it is typical of many works from this period, both those that have entered the literary canon and texts now forgotten or considered trivial.

Music of this kind appears, for example, in Max Dauthendey’s novel Raubmenschen (1911; Bandits), where problems of the modern age are
projected into past paradisiacal settings in which music plays a key role. Like Hauptmann’s novella, and unlike Schnitzler’s modernist novel of three years earlier, this text portrays music simply as an accompaniment to social issues; the art does not function here as a component in a subtle narrative strategy presupposing contemporary sociopolitical associations on the part of the reader. Instead, the narrative presents such connections so obviously that no reader could have missed them.

As an action-packed thriller describing murder, sexual escapades, and figures from the upper classes of Europe, *Raubmenschen* can be seen as a second-rate literary document of cultural conservatism. Yet its literary value is of less importance here than the topicality of its cultural vocabulary; the fact that it was so popular underscores the public’s fascination with and acceptance of its motifs. Within the machinations of the slightly pornographic, blood-and-guts narrative, passages abound that are symptomatic of a tension between a technologically advanced, modern society and a vision of primitive simplicity lost in the hectic, modern world. Music highlights this tension. In a number of passages, Hanna, one of the many heroines in the novel suffering from the turbulence of turn-of-the-century Europe, imagines a peaceful life she believes must have existed in Aztec Mexico and in classical Greece. These two imagined civilizations serve a nearly identical function in this text, both providing imaginary settings for the expression of early twentieth-century desires, which in each case are linked to music. The most prominent musical emblem of Hanna’s dissatisfaction with the modern world is a hymn to Apollo discovered during an excavation in Delphi. Rennewart, the narrator and main protagonist, reflects upon this hymn and on the failings of modern Europe that generate such devotion to a lost civilization and to its representative music:

> Europe is so wonderfully sentimental, I thought. It seemed to me that all other parts of the earth must be laughing at us, because our life can return to a two-thousand-year-old hymn to Apollo, to a dug-up melody, in which we can suddenly fall in love, a melody which our life cannot produce, and because of which we therefore can nearly despise our life, which cannot create this melody, and can emigrate, become restless and can yearn for a two-thousand-year-old past.

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The fact that this music is lost, past, and Greek is of greater significance than the specific nature of its aesthetic contours (the reader learns nothing, for example, of its melodic structure, its length, or its tonal configurations); it functions not as an object worthy of discussion so much as an emblem of dissatisfaction with early twentieth-century society, and this function could not be overlooked by the most uncritical of readers.

Hanna, too, projects her longing for an antimodern alternative community onto a cultural cliché, an impoverished image that characterizes all manifestations of music in this popular text. Because music is little more than a schematic emblem to her, she is unable to discern cultural differences, and fuses her dream of an ancient Aztec civilization with images commemorative of ancient Greece. From the vantage point of a twentieth-century bourgeois tourist, she describes to Rennewart the role of music in the life of the Aztecs:

[Then] she asked me if I knew that the Aztec Indians had had their main buildings around this square. The cathedral was the temple of the sun, to the left of which was the dance school, to the right the school of music, and on the fourth side the palace of the king. And at that time it was the custom that every member of society passed an exam in playing an instrument in order to receive the rights of citizenship, because the Aztecs were a very musical people. (125)

Clearly this vision of a musically rich past is conceived within the norms of bourgeois socialization in early twentieth-century Germany, in which a musical education was deemed a sine qua non. As the self-understanding of this class is called into question, its ideal image of itself is transferred to a wish that is projected onto a lost age: Dauthendey, Hanna, and the early twentieth-century reader (unconsciously?) see themselves in reflections of "lost" civilizations, an example of the way modern social forces imbue musical visions of imagined social alternatives disguised as lost collectives. The description above, therefore, is far more an evocation of the Gründerjahre under Wilhelminian rule or even a make-believe fin de siècle Vienna (complete with an Aztec Ringstrasse), than a description concerned with archaeological or musicological verisimilitude.

In Hauptmann’s and Dauthendey’s texts, music’s evocation of socio-political issues is obvious and can hardly be said to constitute part of a
subtle narrative device. Their works both reflect a given collection of ideas and concerns with which the art was, perhaps unconsciously or at least automatically, associated in the early twentieth-century German imagination, and at the same time they contributed to and reinforced that cultural vocabulary. But neither Hauptmann nor Dauthendey used that association as the basis for a literary strategy that would call into question the ideological forces imbuing culture in the modern German-speaking world. The equation of music and social issues found in their texts is a general one, and as such also appears in a number of other works from the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Theodor Fontane’s L’Adultera (1880; The Woman Taken in Adultery), Ferdinand von Saar’s “Geschichte eines Wiener Kindes” (1891; Tale of a Viennese child), Thomas Mann’s short stories “Der kleine Herr Friedemann” (1897; “Little Herr Friedemann”), “Tristan” (1902), and “Walsungenblut” (1905; “Blood of the Walsungs”), as well as Schnitzler’s Leutnant Gustl (1900; Lieutenant Gustl), Frau Berta Garlan (1901; Bertha Garlan), and “Das Schicksal des Freiherr von Leisenboh” (1904; “The Fate of the Freiherr von Leisenboh”) all overtly thematize music’s contemporary parameters. Like Hauptmann and Dauthendey, Fontane and von Saar explicitly link their social themes—primarily promiscuity and the breakup of traditional moral values—to music; they seldom hide the connection. Instead, they either explain how music (and in their texts this means Wagnerian music) is associated in their minds with such issues as German nationalism, changing sexual mores, and licentious desire, or they openly flaunt the connection between music and sociopolitical ideas as a component of the German and Austrian bourgeois culture in which their texts are set.

As such, their literary use of music is located in a tradition of texts that discuss in an overt fashion Wagnerian music as posing a threat to the body, particularly to the nerves of young women. Derived from Nietzsche’s polemics Der Fall Wagner (1888; The Case of Wagner) and Nietzsche contra Wagner (1889), Wagner’s art constitutes in these works a catalyst for debauchery. This theme functions as a key narrative component in von Saar’s “Geschichte eines Wiener Kindes.” The bulk of that text (also of negligible literary quality) describes the adulterous escapades of the protagonist Else—whose name not coincidentally resembles that

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of the heroine in *Lohengrin*—and links her to the corrosive power of Wagner’s erotic art:

“Ah yes, Isolde’s Love-Death!” Else hastily cried. “It’s wonderful! Please play it!”

“Won’t it affect you too strongly, my dear?” Mrs. Ramberg asked in a subdued voice. “I fear—”

“Oh no, no! It won’t do anything! Please, dear H . . . !” . . . Thus once again a silence filled with anticipation arose, and, soon thereafter, out of congruently trembling waves of sound, in gradual, cruelly sensuous, continually retreating and rising phrases, developed the most violent attack on human nerves known to music. The resulting effect was here, too, virtually physical: everyone, in their own way, felt gripped, overwhelmed, tortured, delighted, dishevelled. Even Frau von Ramberg could not maintain her dignity; she began to writhe on her chair like a snake. Else lay leaning far back on her low Fauteuil . . . She was pale, and quick, even tremors shook her body. Suddenly she uttered a piercing cry, . . . rose, heavily gasping for breath, . . . and stumbled . . . out of the salon.

“A sorry state of affairs!” the architect said after a pause. Then turning to H . . . : “There you have the effects of Wagnerian music.”

“It’s not Wagner’s fault that people are sick,” the other replied phlegmatically.

“But where would he be if they weren’t?”

Here, the social impact of a kind of music is made explicit: Wagnerian art contributes to the dissolution of the body and of the social fabric, and the reader will infer that this explains Else’s earlier unconventional sexual activity as well. At the very least, Else’s erotic freedom and proclivity for Wagnerian music emerge as two manifestations of a single phenomenon. In von Saar’s and Fontane’s works, the authors do not exploit their reading audience’s acquaintance with the connection between the issues thematized in their texts and the music under discussion, but instead simply draw attention to music’s status as a sign referring to specific concerns of the world in which it was performed and received. The con-
nection between abandon, the dissolution of the social fabric, and Wagner makes sense to this culture, but it is not yet an automatic motif. Specific connections between aesthetics and the social sphere are apparent, but they are not yet so firmly established within the public imagination that an author could (or chose to) evoke such ideas through the mere mention of acoustical art. Instead, these texts participated in the constitutive development of a cultural vocabulary upon which modernist authors would base their narratives as well, but which they would ultimately criticize and subvert through their innovative strategies.

The early twentieth-century popular works of Hauptmann and Dauthendey (and, implicitly at least, von Saar) differ from their nineteenth-century forebears, however, in that they all reveal an interesting structural model in which music conflated with extramusical issues at this time; they all portray the art within a polar structure which by implication opposes music to official (nonmusical) culture. This polar or binary model developed within the extraliterary discourse on music in the nineteenth century and was central to music’s function as a sign for sociopolitical concerns in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany and Austria: it also forms the basis for a number of narrative strategies employing music in modernist texts.

The notorious Wagner-Nietzsche polemic of the 1870s and 1880s not only contributed to the social interpretation of musical imagery in the collective cultural vocabulary of late nineteenth-century German society, but decidedly influenced the polar structure of that imagery. The intellectual configurations of this generation are unimaginable without Nietzsche, and the conceptualization of music in his writings was fundamentally constitutive of the way it would appear in German culture from the 1880s to the 1930s. In The Case of Wagner, for example, Nietzsche equated specific sociopolitical concerns with the music of Wagner, and this equation formed one side of a polar model that opposed Wagner (and the issues he represented) to another kind of music:

Wagner’s stage requires but one thing: Germans! . . . The definition of a German: an obedient man with long legs. . . . There is a deep significance in the fact that the rise of Wagner should have coincided with the rise of the “Empire”: both phenomena are a proof of one and the same thing—obedience and long legs.—Never have
people been more obedient, never have they been so well ordered about.¹⁵

When Nietzsche praised the music of Georges Bizet and rejected that of the German composer, extra-aesthetic issues propelled his discussion of art, and these issues emerged as opposites:

Bizet's work also saves; Wagner is not the only “Saviour.” With it one bids farewell to the damp north and to all the fog of the Wagnerian ideal. . . . [What] it has above all else is that which belongs to the sub-tropical zones—that dryness of atmosphere, that limpidità of the air. Here in every respect the climate is altered. Here another kind of sensuality, another kind of sensitiveness and another kind of cheerfulness make their appeal. This music is gay, but not in a French or German way. . . . Il faut méditerraniser la musique. (8:3–5)

As symbols for different kinds of music, Bizet and Wagner evoke for Nietzsche (and virtually for the entire European audience that came to read him) different ideas, realms, and notions of national consciousness, one supranational or international, one Pan-German. While the specific association of these ideas with these composers would change on occasion in the works of some writers after Nietzsche, his polar musical model would remain firmly established as part of the German cultural vocabulary. Nietzsche's text clearly associates here different musical camps with antithetical political orientations or positions; indeed, the juxtaposition of two aesthetic vehicles representing diametrically opposed social and political positions is a characteristic feature of the social configuration of music in the period of German modernism, and may be traced to these influential anti-Wagnerian tracts by modernism's most often-cited philosopher. The extreme juxtaposition of the work of the two composers in Nietzsche's vituperative text provided an argumentative model that was authoritative in its uncompromising gesture, rhetorically convincing, and readily accessible to a culture given to thinking in dialectical images. Nietzsche's polemical diatribe against Wagner was clearly related through its polar structure to the notorious Brahms-Wagner and Hanslick-Wagner polemics of the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, but was far more explicit in its political agenda; it articulated in powerful images a general
conflation of musical art and politics central to German cultural life of the century and provided that culture with an easily accessible model which would decidedly shape the way music was perceived and portrayed in German-speaking Europe from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s.16

By the early twentieth century, the specific association of a given musical figure (for Nietzsche invariably Wagner) or school (romantic music) with a given sociopolitical issue (in *The Case of Wagner*, German nationalism) would give way to other constellations, other connections between music and the world in which it was performed. By 1900 a figure such as Wagner could come to represent for different writers a host of diverse themes depending on the ideological agenda underlying the author’s text. At issue is not so much a rigid link between a particular kind of music and specific sociopolitical forces, such as the link between Wagner and Pan-Germanism or Bizet and internationalism in Nietzsche, as the pervasive role of music as a referent to such forces in general in German culture of the time.

The recent Wagner renaissance has devoted much attention to the way the composer served as a standard-bearer for numerous, and often even antithetical interests in France, Russia, and the German-speaking countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.17 In Vienna of the 1890s, for example, Wagner provided a focal point for both Pan-German nationalists and liberal socialists, both of whom viewed in the figure a powerful representative of issues dear to them. In the works of Thomas Mann, Wagner invariably represents licentious desire and socially corrosive forces, while in the contemporaneous writings of Franz Werfel the composer signifies conservatism and traditionalism associated with Prussian order and the Habsburg monarchy. Specific musicians or musical works did not become unyieldingly connected with specific ideas in the cultural imagination of Germany and Austria, for a musician and his music could represent any number of contradictory desires depending on the needs of an author and the disparate tensions of a moment. The link between a given music and a given contemporary concern was often in flux.

Such conflicting appropriations of Wagner demonstrate how topical concerns conflated with musical works and their progenitors so that the

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art became for an entire culture an often unacknowledged pretext for the expression of social and political preoccupations. But the malleability of the connection between music (or musicians) and what it (or they) signified allowed for a variety of subtle references in the hands of a modernist author; the modernist text would both exploit the associations established in the popular imagination through the Nietzsche polemics and would unmask and subvert them as ideological constructs.

By 1900, the young Thomas Mann could portray musical taste in his novel *Buddenbrooks* as a direct and automatic reflection of national and social orientation because the connection went unquestioned in German culture by this time. He did so using Nietzsche's bifurcate model which split the art into two opposing camps, but the unquestioned linkage between these camps and their diverse orientations constitutes one of the subtle objects of criticism within the text. In *Buddenbrooks*, the proximity between music and the public sphere, already evident in Fontane and von Saar, is evoked more subtly, for here different kinds of music represent two weltanschauungen, one classical, controlled, disciplined, and measured, and one more romantic, wanton, sensual, and, by classical standards, ill defined, and bordering on illness. Mann imposes a musical polarity upon the diametrical sociopolitical orientations of the foreign, non-German violinist and impassioned Wagnerite Gerda Buddenbrook, and of her accompanist, the conservative Prussian organist Edmund Pfühl, whose musical proclivities are described in terms redolent of social implications:

Edmund Pfühl was an organist of no small repute, whose reputation for contrapuntal learning was not confined within the walls of his native town. His . . . fugues and chorals . . . as well as the voluntories he played on Sundays at Saint Mary's, were flawless, impeccable, full of the relentless, severe logicality of the *Strenge Satz*. What spoke in them, what gloriously triumphed in them, was a technique amounting to an ascetic religion, a technique elevated to a lofty sacrament, to an absolute end in itself. . . . He would utter the name of Palestrina in the most dogmatic, awe-inspiring tone. But even while he made his instrument give out a succession of archaistic virtuosities, his face would be all aglow with feeling. . . . This was the musician's look; vague and vacant precisely because it
abode in the kingdom of a purer, profounder, more absolute logic than that which shapes our verbal conceptions and thoughts.\textsuperscript{18}

The key terms here, "flawless," "relentless," "severe logicality," and "ascetic," delineate Herr Pfühls love of severity and control. A given form of aesthetic expression—here, contrapuntal music—brings with it associations of repression, and hence is deemed \textit{morally} superior to other forms of art. The repressive, ascetic, and by implication conservative nature of this art evokes a sociopolitical dimension characterizing all passages in the novel devoted to Herr Pfühls relationship to music. In the discussions between this traditional Prussian and Gerda Buddenbrook, one kind of music—be it that of Palestrina in the passage above, or of Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven below—represents clarity, decency, and honesty, and hence functions as an icon of accepted taste associated with Enlightenment values in the ruling Prussian order. Another kind of music—invariably Wagner—represents licentious desire, a lack of diligence and discipline, and foreign chaos threatening to the patriarchal German social status quo: it is this music that later weakens and overpowers the delicate Hanno Buddenbrook. Pfühl’s reaction to a foreign, dangerous art is made clear in the following passage:

They played a movement of Haydn, some pages of Mozart, a sonata of Beethoven. . . .

Gerda Buddenbrook was an impassioned Wagnerite. But Herr Pfühl was an equally impassioned opponent—so much so that in the beginning she had despaired of winning him over.

On the day when she first laid some piano arrangements from \textit{Tristan} on the music-rack, he played some twenty-five beats and then sprung up from the music-stool to stride up and down the room with disgust painted upon his face.

“I cannot play that, my dear lady! I am your most devoted servant—but I cannot. That is not music—believe me! I have always flattered myself I knew something about music—but this is chaos! This is demagogy, blasphemy, insanity, madness! (2:108)

Nietzsche’s rejection of Wagner as a danger illuminates Pfühl's indignation. But the composer’s function as a representative of German nationalism has been usurped by other musicians, notably Palestrina, Haydn,
Mozart, and Beethoven. The connection between music and sociopolitical issues operates immediately in these passages as it does in Nietzsche’s text; indeed, it is perhaps the very raison d’être for the art’s presence here, but when compared to *The Case of Wagner*, the specific meaning of Wagnerian music as a social sign has been called into question. Under the influence of Nietzsche, Mann adopts a portion of the Wagner polemic, while abandoning other aspects which had been integral to the philosopher’s argument, and does so in order to propel a sociopolitical discussion carried out through musical signs. Now Mann’s fictitious musician discerns in the contours of Wagner’s foreign musical aesthetic a challenge to the very values the composer had represented in Nietzsche, values associated with Pfühl’s Hanseatic heritage. Calling upon morality as the backbone of his civilization, Herr Pfühl rejects an art whose social implications threaten to cast the world as he knows it into chaos through the rule of the people. For Wagner’s art, signifying unbridled sensuality throughout Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is immediately associated by the organist with an imagined demagogue, a leader championing the cause of the common people. (It is in keeping with the cultural vocabulary of the period that this foreign music is introduced to the severe man by a woman, a fitting detail in the sexual metaphors surrounding different kinds of aesthetic form at the time which I discuss in greater detail in conjunction with the Pfitzner polemics in chapter 1 and with Mann’s *Death in Venice* in chapter 2.) Such aesthetic opposition has less to do with the innate formal features of the arts—different kinds of music or music and writing—than with the social and political tensions to which they allude.

The modernist narrative involving music, like its more accessible and popular counterparts, is based on the art’s role as a sign for a variety of issues, but it does more than merely reflect the social status of music. It both exploits music’s social parameters and unmasks them, ultimately subverting the socially determined equation of a given kind of music with a given sociopolitical concern. By exploiting the social assumptions related to the art, the modernist text thus reveals the ideology at work in the cultural vocabulary upon which it itself is based. This tendency develops in the modernist narrative from the beginning of the twentieth century (as seen in *The Road into the Open*) to the end of the age of modernism (as
I will show in chapter 6 in a discussion of Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* from 1947). One central feature of the ideological forces operating within a cultural vocabulary is that those whom they affect are not always aware of them. Instead, they are often sublimated, only to emerge automatically in the acts of listening and of reading. Thus, not only the modernist text itself, but the task of examining such implications in early twentieth-century writings about music provides a kind of cultural psychoanalysis designed to reveal the ideological pressures at work even when a society listens to, writes about, and reads about the least mimetic of the arts.\(^{19}\)

It would not be long before Mann would begin to experiment with the extra-aesthetic associations that could be evoked even more subtly through the more covert use of music in a narrative text. While a number of German and Austrian authors such as Hauptmann and Dauthendey would continue to connect overtly sociopolitical ideas with musicians and musical works, others, like Mann and Schnitzler, came to rely on the culturally determined associations their audience could be expected to bring to their texts and developed subtle narratives concerning music that reveal a great deal about the ideological configurations of the time. In the silence of their literary portrayals of music and in the hidden structures of their musical subtexts, their hope for social change was transformed into narrative strategies; political and social issues emerged not only in the topical, socially revealing literary motifs of popular early twentieth-century narratives, but also in the more subtle and calculated references and associations that music triggered in the audience of the time. Such references have become difficult to detect as the everyday experience of their readers has changed, precisely because the narrative strategies of suppression, omission, and distortion relied upon and evoked contemporary issues. These strategies are now only discernible against the background of the widespread conflation of music and the diverse ideological forces central to German culture from 1900 to the 1930s, which must be reconstructed if they are to be intelligible to the reader today.

My analysis of modernist narratives concerns such literary strategies and the political tensions they imply, and therefore unfolds not in a straightforward chronological progression suggesting a teleological development but in a flexible order. Following the discussion of Pfitzner’s...
polemical discourse, chapters 2 and 3 analyze two works (Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* [1912; *Death in Venice*] and Hermann Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf* [1927; *Steppenwolf*]) from the Wilhelminian Empire and the Weimar Republic involving similar themes, a breakdown of a writer and the social hierarchy of the arts in his world, but incorporating different literary strategies: one suppressing music, the other overtly portraying music's role in modern society. Mann's novella incorporates many of the motifs found in the discourse of the Pfitzner polemics, and thus reveals the connection between certain kinds of music and certain social positions (so central to Pfitzner's arguments) as ideological constructs. Similarly, *Steppenwolf* shares many motifs concerning jazz with a number of popular works of the 1920s and 1930s—Vicki Baum's *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1925; Helene Willfüer, student of chemistry), Frank's *Politische Novelle* (1928; *The Persians Are Coming*), and Klaus Mann's *Mephisto: Roman einer Karriere* (1936; *Mephisto*)—but Hesse critically analyzes the ideological assumptions underlying the use of these motifs.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine two narratives from the Austrian Republic—Franz Werfel's *Verdi: Roman der Oper* (1923; *Verdi: A Novel of the Opera*) and Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* (1925; *Rhapsody: A Dream Novel*)—unobtrusively based on operas (Pfitzner's *Palestrina* and Mozart's *Magic Flute*) that evoked sociopolitical issues through their association in the popular imagination with conservative texts of the time—Thomas Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918; *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*) and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919; *The Woman without a Shadow*), respectively. Here, again, I seek to reconstruct the implications of the subtle musical allusions these texts contain, in order to show how these modernist works both presuppose and systematically subvert the ideological implications associated with the musical motifs upon which they draw.

Chapter 6 shows how the cultural vocabulary of 1900–1933 associating specific sociopolitical extremes with musical polarities was expanded upon and ultimately abandoned in Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus* (1947). In this work, incontrovertibly the most celebrated of German literature dealing with music, Mann consciously portrays the kind of association between music and politics discernible in the earlier texts as a remnant of a former phase in German culture, one no longer representa-
tive of the cultural vocabulary of Germany after the explicit politicization of music under the National Socialists. Mann develops here a subtle explanatory model for the relationship between music and society that suggests an emancipatory departure both from the approach to music critically portrayed in Death in Venice and from the political affiliations he had espoused in Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man. In Doctor Faustus, the equations between music and worldly issues emerge as remnants of an earlier phase of the cultural repertoire of German-speaking Europe no longer representative of the post-war era. Thus, the final chapter analyzes a work that comes at the close of the modernist age and that highlights in an exemplary fashion the modernist narrative's tendency to criticize and to subvert the associations central to a repertoire of images within a moment in German culture.
## chronology

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<td>1929</td>
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<td>von Hofmannsthal dies in Rodaun</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>A local ban in Thuringia on “Jazz, Jewish, and Negro art furthered by the Republic”</td>
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<td>1931</td>
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<td>Pfitzner, <em>Das Herz</em> premiers in Berlin and Munich;</td>
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<td>Schnitzler dies in Vienna</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>T. Mann, “Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners,” <em>Neue Rundschau</em>;</td>
<td>T. Mann presents his lecture</td>
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<td>T. Mann leaves Germany</td>
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<td>“Protest der Richard-Wagner-Stadt München” spearheaded by Pfitzner;</td>
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<td>Collapse of the Weimar Republic;</td>
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<td>Proclamation of the Third Reich;</td>
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<td>Bekker emigrates to Paris</td>
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<td>Pfitzner made a member of the advisory committee to the Führer <em>(Führerrat)</em> of the Reichsmusikkammer</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>Pfitzner’s cantata <em>Von deutscher Seele</em> performed at a ceremony</td>
<td>Pfitzner’s cantata <em>Von deutscher Seele</em> performed at a ceremony</td>
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<td>welcoming Josef Goebbels in Berlin;</td>
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<td>Hindemith, <em>Mathis der Maler</em> performances banned;</td>
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<td>Bekker emigrates to the United States</td>
<td>Bekker emigrates to the United States</td>
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<td>1935</td>
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<td>1936</td>
<td>Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit”; K. Mann, <em>Mephisto: Roman einer Karriere</em></td>
<td>Rescission of T. Mann's German citizenship; Nürnberg racial laws; Pfitzner made a Reichskultursenator</td>
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<td>1937</td>
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<td>Carl Orff, <em>Carmina Burana</em> premieres in Frankfurt; Berg, <em>Lulu</em> premieres in Zürich; Bekker dies in New York</td>
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<td>1938</td>
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<td>German Anschluß with Austria; Reichskristallnacht; Werner Egk, <em>Peer Gynt</em> premieres in Berlin; Werfel emigrates, first to France, then to Spain and the United States</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>Bahle, <em>Eingebung und Tat im musikalischen Schaffen: ein Beitrag zur Psychologie der Entwicklungs- und Schaffengesetze schöpferischer Menschen</em></td>
<td>Outbreak of World War II; Pfitzner festivals in Frankfurt and Munich</td>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>Hesse, <em>Das Glasperlenspiel</em></td>
<td>T. Mann reads Adorno's <em>Philosophie der neuen Musik</em></td>
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<td>1945</td>
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<td>End of World War II; Werfel dies in Beverly Hills</td>
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<td>1946</td>
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<td>T. Mann consults with Adorno on the composition of his novel <em>Doktor Faustus</em></td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>T. Mann, <em>Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn erzählt von einem Freunde</em>; Adorno/Horkheimer, <em>Dialektik der Aufklärung</em></td>
<td>Pfitzner denazified</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>T. Mann, <em>Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus</em></td>
<td>Pfitzner dies in Salzburg; Strauss dies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen</td>
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<td>1949</td>
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<td>Schoenberg dies in Los Angeles</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1952</td>
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<td>T. Mann emigrates to Switzerland</td>
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<td>1955</td>
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<td>T. Mann dies in Kilchberg</td>
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<td>1962</td>
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<td>Hesse dies in Montagnola</td>
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<td>1969</td>
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<td>Adorno dies in Frankfurt</td>
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chapter 1

Music in the Modern Imagination:

The Polemics of Hans Pfitzner
From 1905 to 1926 a debate appeared in the German and Austro-Hungarian press that focused on music and registered profound social crisis. Couched within a discussion of the history, technical makeup, interpretation, and future possibilities of music, a hidden agenda unfolded that concerned nothing less than the traditional values of the German-speaking world threatened by forces of change. With hindsight, it is clear that the polemic regarding music provided a vehicle for the expression of various extramusical issues: the rise of foreign technology, a feared influx into Europe of foreign races, the questioning of German hegemony and traditional moral codes, changes in sexual roles, and the desire on the part of the disadvantaged to restructure the social hierarchy in the Wilhelminian and Austro-Hungarian Empires and the postwar republics of Germany and Austria. Yet while such volatile issues appear in retrospect as a driving force within the controversy, their champions and critics, it seems, were not always aware of their presence. The images with which German-speaking Europe perceived and discussed music in the first third of the twentieth century illustrate the way the collective imagination sublimated into art the social and political pressures of the time.

At the center of the debate was the German nationalist Hans Pfitzner, a composer and theorist whose patriotism informed his notion of the superiority of German art and his definition of legitimate music. Though seldom discussed in scholarship and virtually ignored by the general public outside Germany and Austria today, Pfitzner was considered by many between 1900 and 1933 to be one of the most gifted of German composers working in the post-Wagnerian tradition. Prior to the National Socialist accession to power, his supporters included such prominent musical-literary figures as Gustav Mahler, Bruno Walter, Arthur Schnitzler, Paul Hindemith, and Thomas Mann. Mahler produced Pfitzner's *Die Rose vom Liebesgarten* (The rose from the garden of love) at the Vienna Opera in 1905, Walter conducted the premiere of Pfitzner's major work for the stage, *Palestrina*, at the Munich Opera in 1917, Schnitzler advised...
the composer on the libretto to the music drama, Hindemith played the
viola in the premiere of Pfitzner's C#-Minor String Quartet in Berlin in
1925, and Mann included a panegyric essay on *Palestrina* in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* and acted as one of the founding members of the
Hans Pfitzner Organization for German Music (Hans-Pfitzner-Verein für deutsche Tonkunst) in 1918. Even Alban Berg would have studied
composition under Pfitzner, and not under Arnold Schoenberg, had he
not missed a train for Straßburg in a moment of confusion for which
modern music may be grateful. Though Walter, Hindemith, Mann, and
many others would later become disillusioned with Pfitzner following his
association with the National Socialists after 1933, his prominence in
Germany as a composer and critic from 1900 to the rise of fascism was
second to that of only Richard Strauss. It is symptomatic, for example,
that during the First World War the propaganda department of the Ger­
man Foreign Ministry subsidized performances of *Palestrina* in Germany
and Switzerland as an example of inspirational and patriotic German art:
Harry Graf Kessler, working in the ministry, was responsible for organiz­
ing tours to these performances as part of the war effort, for which the
German government granted special travel permits. With the publica­
tion in 1926 of his *Gesammelte Schriften*, Pfitzner’s prominence as a cul­
tural observer and a conservative force in the musical life of Germany was
made manifest.

When discussing Pfitzner’s polemics, it is important for two reasons to
bear in mind the stature he enjoyed in German-speaking Europe prior to
World War II. First, his fame lent credence in the popular imagination of
the time to his writings, and thus granted them an impact which seems
remarkable today. Second, and more importantly, the topical nature of
his arguments and of the metaphors employed within them indicates
their representational character; his debates are not only significant as
historical documents—as the products of an influential figure now
demed marginal—but reflect a widespread discourse which allowed
Pfitzner to speak to his audience persuasively and with great force.
Through Pfitzner’s polemics we can learn much about the social param­
eters influencing aesthetic pursuits in Germany in the early twentieth
century, and especially about the images and motifs employed in the
expression of conservative ideas at the time.
The cornerstone of the debates was a pamphlet by the Italian composer Ferruccio Busoni entitled *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (*Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*).4 Though the first edition of the text had appeared in 1907 (implicitly responding to a work of Pfitzner’s from 1905), it was Busoni’s revised and extended version of 1916 that triggered Pfitzner’s attacks. In this short work Busoni questioned a number of notions he believed had become entrenched in the musical imagination of Europe. Foremost among these was the interpretation of the history of music as a teleological progression that had passed a pinnacle of cultural developments and was now doomed to decay (75ff). Busoni stated that the works of Bach and Beethoven, for example, did not signify a supreme, unsurpassed turning point, but “a beginning” (80). Thus, his *Sketch* tacitly undermined the widespread assumption in his time that a canon of great masters should be revered as giants or cultural heroes above other, lesser men, and that the work of these giants had a legitimate claim to cultural superiority and exclusivity.5

Busoni’s treatise makes clear that for him a time of crisis had been reached which threatened the unfolding of music’s possibilities and the realization of its potential “freedom” (77). He was greatly concerned about what he called *Gesetzgeber*, the “legislators” who evaluate the art solely according to its adherence to tradition and to a normative set of canonical rules (78). Busoni feared that such *Gesetzgeber* hampered experimentation with musical form and thereby threatened music’s development, which he described as “young” (77) and called a child (76) in order to emphasize its potential future transformations. He underscored the urgency of the problem with the statement: “Music was born free; and to win freedom is its destiny” (77). Busoni never stated whom he meant by the “legislators” of music: the word suggests a Beckmesser-like pedant more interested in preserving a fetishistic control over the art and in valorizing only certain normative kinds of aesthetic expression than in entertaining a number of possibilities for musical experimentation. The term is significant, for it clearly evoked extramusical implications of an ill-defined sociopolitical nature.

An interpretive model that refused to privilege certain canonized German composers and was directed instead toward the future struck at the heart of Pfitzner’s publicly stated view of Germany’s supremacy in the
development of music, and his reaction was shared by many. Pfitzner focused widespread attention on Busoni’s text through his own extensive and vituperative refutation; Futuristengefahr: bei Gelegenheit von Busonis Ästhetik (The danger of futurism: on the occasion of Busoni’s aesthetic), which appeared in 1917 in the Süddeutsche Monatshefte and was republished in 1926 in his Gesammelte Schriften. Pfitzner sensed in Busoni’s reflections on the future of music in general an attack on German art in particular, and this association of aesthetic interpretation and nationalist orientation was to accompany the intellectual exchange for the duration of the debate. Indeed, the motifs and argumentative strategies employed by Busoni, his supporters, and by Pfitzner in their aesthetic discussions are indicative of a pervasive discourse of the time spanning left- and right-wing sociopolitical positions. Many critics have made light of the national-political overtones discernible in the Busoni-Pfitzner polemic, but these overtones were a driving force in the affair. To Pfitzner, the many and related reflections in the Sketch must have appeared as a point-by-point refutation of ideas with which he had been publicly associated since the publication of his Bühnentradition (Stage tradition) of 1905–1906 and Vom musikalischen Drama: Gesammelte Aufsätze (On the musical drama: collected essays) of 1915.

Pfitzner believed that German cultural superiority was manifest in its music tradition, which, according to him, had reached its pinnacle in the works of Beethoven, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Carl Maria von Weber, Robert Schumann, and Wagner. He situated his own historical-aesthetic position at the end of this very tradition, which he felt was threatened by developments in musical composition and performance in his day. Pfitzner, like his beloved Wagner, believed that art was the most perfect expression of the “essence” of a people, as his writings repeatedly make clear:

Artistic degeneration is the symptom of national degeneration. National art is the noblest part of the organism of the body of the people. If you tell me which art thrives among the people, I will tell you how healthy the people are. All diagnosticians of the giant organism of a nation or religion have taken questions of art seriously.
Thus, Pfitzner’s sensitivity to the political implications in Busoni’s rhetoric was consistent with his own understanding of aesthetics in general. When Busoni wrote of Beethoven as a “beginning,” described Schumann as a “composer of so much lower stature” (79), declared that Wagner constituted a dead end that would be useless to pursue, and defended the use of recitative and aria in modern opera (83)—a departure from Wagnerian aesthetics—Pfitzner felt attacked for his own veneration of these three figures, representatives of a specifically superior German musical tradition representing for him a superior national identity.¹⁰ In his response to Busoni in Futuristengefahr, Pfitzner expressed his patriotism in the following typical passage:

> German music is not just some kind of cerebral sport, but an art we love; and when the spirit of one of our great masters is willing to appear before us, we should receive him accordingly, should call him “Prince” or “Father,” and by no means should we try to attack him; otherwise he won’t speak to us.

> Berlioz and Liszt are held by Busoni—and unfortunately by a great many others—to be great composers. (1:203)

The message is clear: thoughts of German music bring with them associations of a hierarchical social system in which great (German) masters are to be revered, even worshipped. Once the identity of the prince or patriarch is underscored as German, Pfitzner’s argument immediately moves to the denigration of foreign composers.

Busoni’s criticism of the rigidity of musical traditions in Germany struck at the heart of an aesthetic program based on a conservative nationalist ideology and, given Pfitzner’s approach to musical issues, it would have been remarkable had he not been infuriated by the Sketch. Busoni’s text indeed appears to harbor anti-German sentiment; a section criticizes the ideological function of the German word musikalisch, and by implication ridicules the widespread notion that the German and Austrian peoples were unusually or innately “musical” (86–88). Busoni wrote that no equivalent for the term was to be found in French or Italian, where one spoke of being “fond of music” (87) without making it a “point of honor to be ‘musical’” (87). However, and this is a key clarification in the Sketch, he suggested that the notion of a musical per-

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¹⁰ Music in the Modern Imagination 39
son had come to mean one who had an understanding of “the rules”: “[Music] is still so young, and is eternal; the day of its freedom will come.—When it shall cease to be ‘musical’” (88). Thus, Busoni clearly associated the restrictive “legislators” with the German language, the only language that included notions of superiority in its description of those interested in music. Obviously he hoped that the art would one day no longer be influenced by the abstract theoretical rules of the Gesetzgeber he associated specifically with Germany and Austria.

When the first edition of the Sketch appeared in 1907 in Trieste, it aroused only marginal interest, but the reaction to the second, enlarged and revised edition, published in 1916 in Leipzig, was altogether different. Though the later version included some new material (consisting primarily of an expanded section on opera and sections on feeling, routine, and new “possibilities for the expansion of musical material”), it was not the nature of Busoni’s additions so much as the timing of the text’s reappearance that aroused such a vehement reaction. When the second edition came out during the war, a number of critics, among them Hans Mersmann of the Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung and Wilibald Nagel of the Neue Musik-Zeitung, openly condemned the distribution in Germany of what they perceived to be anti-German sentiment. Shortly after Pfitzner’s vitriolic attack appeared, Busoni wrote a letter to the composer Hans Huber stating that he harbored no ill will against the Germans, maintaining that Pfitzner had grossly misunderstood and misrepresented his remarks. As one critic has noted, Busoni no doubt felt that Pfitzner’s reaction was unjust because the Italian had actively taken part in German cultural life since moving to Berlin in 1894, twenty-two years prior to Pfitzner’s attack. Nevertheless, his intentions are not the central issue here. Whether Busoni wished to deride Germany in his reflections on aesthetic matters is of less importance than the fact that he clearly was perceived to have done so by a number of critics and their readers. That statements concerning music could immediately arouse national implications was a central feature of the arts in early twentieth-century Germany.

The political overtones in the remarks Pfitzner and his contemporary critics perceived as anti-German are most explicit in the section concerning the word musikalisch and in a later passage from Nietzsche’s Jenseits von Gut und Böse (1886; Beyond Good and Evil) that Busoni quoted at length in the final portion of his Sketch:
I feel that many precautions should be taken against German music. Suppose a person loves the South as I love it—as a great school of recovery for the most spiritual and the most sensuous ills, as a boundless solar profusion and effulgence which spreads out over a sovereign existence believing in itself—well, such a person will learn to be somewhat on his guard against German music, because in injuring his taste anew, it will also injure his health anew. Such a Southerner, a Southerner not by origin but by belief, if he should dream of the future of music, must also dream of it being freed from the influence of the North; and must have in his ears the prelude to a deeper, mightier, and perhaps more perverse and mysterious music, a super-German music, which does not fade, pale, and die away, as all German music does, at the sight of the blue, wanton sea and the Mediterranean clearness of sky—a super-European music, which holds its own even in [the] presence of the brown sunsets of the desert, whose soul is related to the palm tree.¹⁵

Music emerges here as an overt cipher for issues that fall outside of the aesthetic sphere; Busoni employed the oppositional, polar model of Nietzsche’s Wagner polemic from the 1880s (and also found in Mann’s Buddenbrooks of 1900), because it underscored the musical-social polarities in his own argument.

That Pfitzner perceived Busoni’s aesthetic as having political significance is made clear in the very title he chose for his own response to the pamphlet: Futuristengefahr. As Busoni noted in an “Open Letter to Hans Pfitzner” published in June 1917 in Berlin’s Vossische Zeitung, he found Pfitzner’s title inappropriate and unfair:

By the title alone, “The Danger of Futurism,” you lead the reader astray by heaping on my name, in the eyes of the public, all the weaknesses and faults with which you could possibly reproach a certain group of people—a group from which I am far removed.

The word “Futurism” is not used on any page of my little book. I have never attached myself to a sect—Futurism, a movement of the present time, could have no connection with my arguments.¹⁶
Hans Pfitzner with the score to
*Palestrina*, 1922. (© Ullstein Bilderdienst; reprinted with permission)
Caricature of Hans Pfitzner by Emil Preetorius, 1924. (Courtesy of Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz)
Busoni’s protestations were not unfounded, for *Futuristengefahr* was to circulate within a wide and intellectually prominent readership. Thomas Mann, for example, quoted the text in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* of 1918, and Robert Musil recorded his reaction to the polemic and made note of Mann’s quotation in his diary entries of 1918–1921. Whether Busoni’s ideas indeed had no connection to the futurist movement is a debatable point, especially given the fact that in 1913 he had met with its founder, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, in Paris and had greatly admired the work of the futurist artists Umberto Boccioni and Carlo Carràs. Indeed, he even commissioned a portrait by Boccioni which the artist completed, shortly before his death, in 1916 (plate 5). However, it is more important to recognize the implications of the term *Futurism* in the debate than to question whether a connection truly existed between Busoni and the futurist movement. For Pfitzner, the title of his rejoinder was appropriate, because for him futurism and Busoni’s aesthetics were two manifestations of a single phenomenon: an unruly music, characterized for him by cacophony and disrespectful of the forms distilled through a lengthy development of (German) music, constituted in his mind the aesthetic representation of anarchy and of an amorphous foreignness and/or internationalism opposed to Germany’s cultural-national hegemony.

*Futuristengefahr* was a trenchant refutation of the political implications Pfitzner sensed in Busoni’s pamphlet, but the political dimension was often disguised behind aesthetic discussions. Less than eight pages into the text, Pfitzner took up Busoni’s metaphorical image of music as a child, only to reinvest it with a specifically German nationalist affiliation:

I have always understood the development and education of the child music quite differently. I have always looked with satisfaction and admiration on the path the education of the beautiful child has taken. After growing into an admirably large, stout, and healthy baby under the care of its Dutch nurse, it spent blessed times in its Italian boarding house and now for the last 150 years has been a handsome and powerful youth at home in our Germany, where he hopefully will feel well for a long time to come. (1:193)

The “satisfaction” that accompanies Pfitzner’s gaze is attributable to the national destination of the musical child. Busoni employed the metaphor
in his description of music to emphasize above all the possibilities still open to the art; for him, youth constituted potential freedom, while Pfitzner took the metaphor literally. For Pfitzner, the national affiliation was the central issue, not an undefined potential, though his passage concludes with the hope that music would continue to prosper. But it is clear that he wished it to prosper as a German art. The specific nationalist overtones in the passage equate “Germany” itself with the German-speaking countries of 1916, at least with the Wilhelminian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, in which major developments in musical composition had occurred within the 150-year period mentioned in Pfitzner’s text.

Yet the social implications of music in Pfitzner’s aesthetics are far more complex than a simple privileging of one nation’s art over another. Implicit in Futuristengefahr is a polarity opposing a well-structured, hierarchical world represented by the harmonic musical production of the great, princely masters to a world of anarchy represented by dissonance, cacophony, and musical disorder. In the final section of the Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music, Busoni had discussed such new, and for Pfitzner threatening, approaches to harmonic material as splitting each whole tone into tripartite tones or sixths of a tone (93–94), using all twelve whole tones with greater flexibility in composition (88–92), and incorporating new divisions of the scale (90–94). Busoni longed for an “abstract sound, a technique without hindrance, an unlimited world of tones” made possible by advances in acoustical technology.19 Near the conclusion to the pamphlet he even quoted a report on an electric organ called the Dynamophone (produced in America by Thadeus Cahill) capable of producing unaccustomed sounds (94–95). Such thoughts were anathema to Pfitzner, and in response he turned to the figure of the lofty musical genius as a guarantor of order:

Whole-tones and half-tones are not enough for Busoni; he thinks if there were third- or sixth-tones, that would lead to a corresponding potency in subtle and expressive constructions. I am of the totally opposite opinion and feel that the composer is everything, and that it is his musical system that is always present. . . .

Even the harmonic-melodic constructions [Busoni] suggests on p. 41 . . . are there more often than one thinks. . . . And this ex-
Above: Ferruccio Busoni. Photograph by Hänse Herrmann. (Courtesy of Theatermuseum, Cologne)

plains the phenomenon that one hears them in this way or that according to how a chord appears; thus, under some circumstances one can perceive and understand it as a beautiful sound or at least as a characteristic idiosyncrasy which, let loose from the flow of the whole and struck freely, would be senseless cacophony. (1:215, 219–20)

For Pfitzner, the composer-as-master used the theoretical musical system to effect control and to create beauty, which itself provided evidence of order, while cacophony constituted the acoustical sign of chaos, of a loss of order concomitant with a disrespect for the cultural leaders of the German nation. For him, the structural order of music (or its absence) served as a paradigm for adherence or disobedience to a set of values that held together Wilhelminian society. Thus, implicit in the understanding of the formal structures of music, a political philosophy can be discerned that had widespread social implications. Because he felt musical anarchy to be symptomatic of a pervasive loss of values in a time of cultural and social collapse, salvation resided for Pfitzner in the act of preserving the works of Germany’s superior national-aesthetic past, an act which precluded change and necessarily viewed all deviation as anarchy:

Busoni hopes the future will provide everything for occidental music, and he interprets the present as a stammering beginning, as preparation. But what if it were otherwise? What if we found ourselves on the pinnacle or had already passed the pinnacle? What if the last century or the last century-and-a-half constituted the blossoming of occidental music, the height, the true shining period that will never come again and upon which follows a decay, a decadence, like that after the blossoming of Greek tragedy? My feeling tends far more toward this interpretation. . . . What if the task of our time were, instead of searching for sixth-tones, wanting to storm forwards in a frenzy, destroying everything that has been accomplished in favor of something new, if the task of our time were to contemplate lovingly that which has developed or is now coming into being, and not just that which swims on the surface? (1:220–21)
For both Busoni and Pfitzner, the present was seen as a time of crisis: due for Pfitzner to the threat of change per se which would constitute a loss of reverence for his great musical predecessors (and for himself), and for Busoni to the danger of stagnation in the development of music. In a section of his *Sketch*, Busoni had vilified the “legislators” so preoccupied with the notation of the art that they evaluate a musical work’s execution solely according to its faithfulness to the composer’s instructions, rather than to the spirit or liveliness of the performance itself (84–86). For Busoni, performance and composition were different expressions of a related artistic experience, and thus for him the significant composer was scarcely superior to the accomplished performer. This equalizing gesture was diametrically opposed to Pfitzner’s elevation of the composer and to its implied conservative image of society fostered under the monarchy of the Wilhelminian Empire.

Busoni’s preference for the “inspiration” behind the “signs” (84) over the mere notation of the musical material was a reaction to what he sensed to be pervasive pedantry posing a threat to the unencumbered development of music. Pfitzner, on the other hand, responded to the crisis he sensed in a purported cultural-social collapse by venerating precisely the very calligraphic *material* of romantic music as a kind of inscribed law, as a set of aesthetic instructions to be followed and adhered to with the same dedication and abdication of individual spontaneity required by the written law holding together German society. Pfitzner expressed concern with liberties taken in the interpretation and execution of music dramas, fearing that the intentions of their composers were often disregarded in favor of willful and arbitrary effects on the part of directors and designers in contemporary stagings.20 As a counter to such transgressions, he insisted on an exact and faithful rendition of all instructions indicated in an operatic score, including all stage directions and costume descriptions, hoping thereby to stave off the loss of values in his time:

*Precisely for this reason, because* an exactitude, an absolute faithfulness is not possible, precisely for this reason we have a profound duty, indeed [we might even call it] the first commandment of reproduction, to strive for faithfulness with all the strength we can muster. This commandment appears to me to be artistically so self-
evident that actually I would like to treat it as a moral issue. If people were to accept this notion: not only that it is very difficult to hit upon the correct execution of a work, but that it is not at all necessary to even want to do so, that in fact striving for the opposite would really be the only truly ingenious way of going about it—that would be chaos. (1:266)

For Pfitzner, veneration of the written script as law was the essence of a moral duty that held together a nation, protecting it from Busoni's irreverent anarchical elements—from “chaos.” (That Pfitzner's insistence on the morally superior status of a text and his denigration of amorphous music as disorderly are symptomatic of widespread conservative notions of the time—and the discourse with which music was discussed—is suggested in the appearance of such concerns and motifs in the literature of the teens and twenties in German-speaking Europe.)

These anarchical elements were discernible for Pfitzner in Busoni's notion of the ideal audience, which constituted an alternative, emancipatory image of a society a world removed from the German's hierarchical and nostalgic ideal, one related, not incidentally, to Busoni's notion of music as a "free" art. In his description of opera in the modern world and its potential for the future, Busoni wrote that the spectator should "think" and not "believe," a remark that presaged at least superficially the anti-Wagnerian rhetoric in the theatrical aesthetics of such a leftist writer as Bertolt Brecht.21 (In this context it is worth noting that Brecht attended a performance of Palestrina in Munich in 1918 and was so incensed by the work that he penned a parodistic oratorio in response to it. Similarly, when the German expressionist Georg Kaiser saw Palestrina in 1920 in Berlin, he wrote to his wife that it was "perfected crap" [vollendeter Mist].)22 Busoni’s challenge to the audience to engage critically with the musical-dramatic work of art led to his statement that virtually half of the effort necessary for the comprehension of an opera must come from the audience, the other half presumably residing with the composer and the performers. Thus the interpretive impetus which located within music the possibility of freedom also assigned the audience and the interpretive performer a participatory, active function.

The juxtaposition of stasis and process in the Pfitzner-Busoni polemic is stressed in a response to Pfitzner's pamphlet written by Paul Bekker, a
prominent German-Jewish music critic of the time and proponent of the avant-garde. His essay, entitled *Futuristengefahr?* appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 9 January 1918:

[The value of Busoni’s booklet] lies solely in its stimulating power, the strength of which Pfitzner himself proves through the fact that he has published an extensive critical response. Busoni’s booklet stimulated him from within. In this way it has realized the author’s intention—as far as a critic can tell who does not stop at the words [of a text], but [strives] to grasp their meaning correctly. . . . Pfitzner speaks of a “danger” of futurism. For art there is only one danger: it is called stagnation. In movement there can never be danger, because it releases powers that stagnation cripples and binds. But there is movement in the lightly swaying music of Busoni’s text, which one should not take so terribly seriously, not in a pharisaical manner, interpreting it word for word.23

Bekker attributes Pfitzner’s rejection of foreign composers to his “nationalist limitations,” and thus the opposition of uncompromising stasis and flexible process as two modes of thought itself operated within a critique cognizant of the nationalist polarities inherent in *Futuristengefahr*.24 In both Busoni’s *Sketch* and Bekker’s reaction to Pfitzner’s polemical text, a conservative, nationalist position is equated with inflexibility, with a dogmatic, procrustean attitude toward art that rejects all notions of change and wishes to control the social body. Bekker’s emphasis on process ties in with Busoni’s understanding of the audience as an active, participatory agent involved in the reformation of music drama: while Pfitzner’s ideal audience must statically worship the cultural masters who have provided the people with icons of its aesthetic-national heritage, Busoni’s (and Bekker’s) audience is involved in an ongoing, spontaneous process which grants all participants—composer, performer, and listener—a significant role.

By encouraging listeners to be spontaneous and flexible, Bekker in effect challenged the hegemony of German music. This implied threat formed the center of Pfitzner’s polemic with him concerning Bekker’s book *Beethoven* of 1911 and the essay “Die Symphonie von Beethoven bis Mahler,” which Bekker later incorporated into the text of his influential

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Paul Bekker (right) with Max Zulauf, Oskar Kokoschka, and Ernst Krenek during rehearsals for Krenek’s opera *Orpheus und Euridike*, 1926. (© Ullstein Bilderdienst; reprinted with permission)
book *Neue Musik*. Pfitzner leveled his attack on these texts in 1919 in a work entitled *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz: ein Verweisungs symptom?* (The new aesthetic of musical impotence: a symptom of decay?). His critique overtly concerned Bekker’s employment of extra-musical associations in the analysis of Beethoven’s symphonies, but beneath this thematic preoccupation different political positions unfolded, so that, in retrospect, the polemic can be seen as a political argument expressed through aesthetic signs.

Bekker suggested that each of Beethoven’s symphonic works had a poetic idea as its basis, and he attempted to show how the works convey through such musical forms as rondo, sonata, variations, and so on, various poetic notions, images, and themes. To Pfitzner, this method of approaching a musical work was anathema, for he believed it cheapened the aesthetic experience and actually represented the replacement of a musically motivated and hence, for him, legitimate reaction with a kind of reception that employed nonmusical cognition. Pfitzner feared that the popularity of Bekker’s *Beethoven* book—thirty-six thousand copies had been sold between its appearance in 1911 and the time Pfitzner penned *Die neue Ästhetik* in 1919—was symptomatic of a pervasive, superficial approach to art which allowed music to be enjoyed via easy, untutored, and naive consumption. Thus his argument was inherently elitist, for by deeming only a contemplative, reverential, educated, musically sophisticated and yet devotionally passive audience worthy of receiving great German music, Pfitzner in effect was limiting the legitimate audience to those who shared his own ideal of art’s role in society. This very rejection of exclusivity was at the heart of Bekker’s interpretation of Beethoven, as is made clear in a passage from “Die Symphonie von Beethoven bis Mahler”:

> [The] criterion of the symphonic work of art does not lie in a notion determined by professional concepts of the “beauty” of execution or invention, but in the specific character and the extent of the power with which this work of art is able to build communities of feeling. The symphonic theme is not supposed to be primarily original—even the themes from the Beethoven symphonies are not so—it should be easily comprehended and penetrating, it should have the ability to form communities.²⁵

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In his reaction, Pfitzner once again revealed both his elitism and the passivity with which he imagined the ideal audience:

This kind of aesthetic must delight all musical quacks and dolts; they are protected by it, it justifies them. In order to satisfy followers of this aesthetic, one need not have the least musical talent. If nothing more depends on the music itself, but only on the "poetic idea," the "program," the power to "form communities," then it is easy to compose. . . . Actually, there is no way of looking at art that is more false, more unmusical, and that removes one further from the work of art than the one developed in this book. He who does not comprehend that a Beethoven theme . . . is to be enjoyed directly, as a world all its own, indivisible, untranslatable, he who needs to dissect it, to describe, to interpret, to cut it up into pieces as a child tears apart a doll, a butterfly, he does not know what music is. (2:155)

An issue from the Busoni polemic reappears in this passage. Pfitzner's pointed attack on the notion of the community is underscored through his emphasis on aesthetic privilege: not all listeners are worthy of partaking in the musical experience, he suggests, because not all were endowed with the privilege of being innately musikalisch. But, for him, innate musicality was coupled with the notion of legitimate reception as a direct and by implication passive event because its only participants were already members of an aesthetic elite. Pfitzner's polemic with Busoni was thus implicitly directed against Bekker's interpretation of the active community as well, which Bekker believed was inherent in the aesthetic behind Beethoven's works, and which he underscored in his own method of popular exegesis. Not surprisingly, in a letter of protest to the League of German Music Critics dated 26 June 1920, Pfitzner accused Bekker of hurling Beethoven from "his throne," an image symptomatic of his conservative position and of the feudal metaphors in his debates with Bekker and Busoni. The German artist was for him a master, his works were superior and hence not intended for easy or common reception, yet they should be received passively and devotedly by a happy few, not by a community of active (and therefore challenging) participants in the aesthetic experience.
The political dimensions of Pfitzner's and Bekker's disagreements on this matter are made even more explicit in another passage from "Die Symphonie von Beethoven bis Mahler": "The ideal audience for whom Beethoven wrote was a continuation of the powerful democratic movement that proceeded from the French Revolution to the German wars of independence." The tension here is between democracy and monarchy; the notion of music as a democratic art was fundamentally opposed to Pfitzner's image of music as an art recalling a feudal hierarchy. Thus, in response to the new and threatening music theories of the early twentieth century, Pfitzner could flatly state that "only those who do not belong to the property owners harbor a desire for insurrection" (2:122). Within the context of his argument it becomes clear that by property owners, Pfitzner meant the great German masters of composition whose works were not to be enjoyed in a democratic manner. They represented a feudal heritage whose modern (though, in 1919–1920, defunct) political instantiations were the monarchical Kaiserreich of the Wilhelminian and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

That such political thoughts imbue the discussions of professional musicians throughout the period in both Germany and Austria may be seen in a passage from the Viennese composer Arnold Schoenberg's Harmonielehre (Theory of Harmony) of 1911. Here, the tonal system Pfitzner so longed to preserve as the emblem of monarchy is equated with the image of the dictator, and sonic forces that undermine tonal order are characterized as forces of political insurrection:

The fundamental tone . . . has a certain sovereignty over the structures emanating from it just because the most important components of these structures are, so to speak, its satraps, its advocates, since they derive from its splendor: Napoleon, who installs his relatives and friends on the European thrones. I think that would indeed be enough to explain why one is justified in obeying the will of the fundamental tone: gratefulness to the progenitor and dependence on him. He is Alpha and Omega. That is morally right, so long as no other moral code obtains. Yet, another can indeed prevail! If, for example, the supreme lord becomes weak and his subjects strong, a situation that arises only too often in harmony. Just as it is hardly inevitable that a conqueror will endure as dictator, so
it is no more inevitable that tonality must take its direction from the fundamental tone, even if it is derived from that tone. Quite the contrary. The struggle between two such fundamentals for sovereignty has something indeed very attractive about it, as numerous examples of modern harmony show.28

Although Schoenberg’s sympathies lie with the atonal troops threatening the dictator at the center of tonality, the imagery he uses to portray musical tensions is remarkably similar to Pfitzner’s, even to the extent that both articulate the notion that moral issues are involved in questions of sonic order. Such similarities reflect a widespread association of sociopolitical issues with music and suggest that Pfitzner’s cranky expostulations were not simply the isolated ravings of an archconservative, but were formed from a cultural vocabulary that made sense to an entire generation within German-speaking Europe.

Political overtones are also implied in the vocabulary and formulations employed by Busoni and Bekker when they discuss Pfitzner. In a letter to Bekker regarding the Pfitzner controversy written in January 1920 and then published in the Frankfurter Zeitung on 7 February of that year, Busoni stated:

I feel the idea of Oneness in music as one of the most important of [the] as yet uncomprehended truths.

I mean the idea that music is music, in and for itself, and nothing else, and that it is not split up into different classes.29

Though a conflation of politics and aesthetics was probably not intended here, such a blending recurred throughout the debate, suggesting their pervasive confluence at the time. One would look in vain for a statement such as this in Pfitzner’s writings.

When Bekker responded to Pfitzner’s attack in 1917, he emphasized that Pfitzner’s statements were to be understood in conjunction with the composer’s music drama Palestrina, for which rehearsals were underway at the Prinz-Regenten-Theater in Munich when Futuristengefahr appeared.30 The connections between the two works are indeed striking, for Palestrina can be seen as a dramatic presentation of ideas described in the polemical text. If the music drama had not been composed between 1911 and 1915, immediately before the debate with Busoni and Bekker, one
could interpret it as an intentional dramatic portrayal of ideas at the heart of the polemical exchange, for the plot concerns the tension between the aging Palestrina, representative of a long tradition of magnificent religious music, and newer schools of composition propelled by theories based on “heathen . . . writings.” With their emphasis on theory and their implicit disavowal of the power of inspiration, these schools appear in retrospect as precursors of the very intellectual-aesthetic positions Busoni and Bekker would occupy in their debates with Pfitzner.

At the beginning of the work Palestrina has not composed for years, since the death of his wife, and, interestingly enough given the title of Pfitzner’s text directed against Bekker, his artistic frustration is clearly presented as an aesthetic manifestation of impotence. When in the course of the first act Palestrina’s friend, Cardinal Borromeo, calls upon him to compose an exemplary mass, he feels unequal to the task, and, alone, is visited by apparitions of the “deceased masters of the musical art of past ages, Palestrina’s great predecessors” (17). They explain to the composer that his work will be the final link in a great chain of music history, and thus will mark the shining end of a superior tradition of godly music. In the penultimate scene of the act, Palestrina transcribes melodies sung to him by a chorus of angels (21–23), and then falls asleep (see plate 7).

The work is a striking dramatization of a number of ideas later debated with Busoni and Bekker, and it underscores Pfitzner’s elitist view both of the elect composer and of his own music as the final, despairing manifestation of a glorious tradition of (specifically German) art threatened by new schools of musical composition based on abstract, overly intellectual theories and suggesting disorder. (I discuss the music drama in greater detail in chapter 4). It is abundantly clear that Pfitzner’s projection of ideas and issues dear to him onto an Italian composer of the Counter-Reformation in no way reflects his veneration of Italian music, or of non-German music per se, for, as suggested in his transformation of Busoni’s image of the musical child, legitimate music moves for Pfitzner in the course of its development from Italy in the age of Palestrina to the North, to Germany. Palestrina, as the last representative of a great tradition, is Pfitzner besieged in the modern world.

The key to Pfitzner’s portrayal of the act of composition is the moment of inspiration. Indeed, this notion constitutes the cornerstone of his aes-
Palestrina transcribes the *Missa Papae Marcelli* as it is sung to him by a chorus of angels. From the premier of *Palestrina* in the Prinz-Regenten-Theater in Munich, 1917, with Karl Erb in the title role. (Courtesy of Klaus Schultz Collection)
thetics and, obviously linked to the innate musicality reserved for a select (German) few, it manifests for him both the passivity and the exclusivity of great art, for the moment of inspired creation is itself presented as an act of devoted listening replete with religious associations, not as an event characterized by activity and process.\textsuperscript{32} Significantly, it is this very notion that Bekker criticized in his article of 1917. Bekker maintained that all of Pfitzner's works were based on details of inspiration (an observation that recalls Nietzsche's assessment of Wagner as the master of mere details in \textit{The Case of Wagner} and \textit{Nietzsche contra Wagner}),\textsuperscript{33} and therefore described his compositions as collections of insular moments. Bekker believed that the true \textit{Einfall} was not as important as the overall conception of a work in which the detail appeared, and stressed that it must be subordinated to a process, to an active development within the act of composition itself:

As is well known, Pfitzner is of the opinion that the moment of inspiration, that is, the individual motif, the individual melody, is crucial for the growth of the musical work. In contrast to this position, I . . . am of the opinion [that] in every truly great, original work of art of every genre . . . the most important thing is the conceptual idea of the whole, the vision that at first appears before the inner eye of the artisan [\textit{des Schaffenden}] in vague outlines, gradually becoming clearer and giving birth to the individual moment of inspiration in a continuing process of realization.\textsuperscript{34}

This notion of the musical detail as a constellation achieved through active interaction with the aesthetic material is diametrically opposed to Pfitzner's idea of a passive, privileged, epiphanic musical moment. For Bekker, the act of artistic creation required work and was thus available to many, while for Pfitzner it was limited to those "musical" few who were granted a place in the pantheon of the national music tradition.

An examination of Bekker's response to Pfitzner's \textit{Die neue Ästhetik} poignantly illustrates the extramusical issues in their exchange, because in it Bekker underscored those aspects of Pfitzner's criticism that he felt were extraneous to an aesthetic debate, particularly offensive, and indicative of a variety of concerns characteristic of his adversary. In the polemic with Busoni, sociopolitical issues had lurked beneath, though not far
beneath, the surface of ostensibly aesthetic discussions, while now they erupted in an overt exchange documenting the dovetailing of art and the social sphere at the time. Bekker countered Pfitzner’s criticism of his works on Beethoven with a short article entitled “Impotenz oder Potenz? Eine Antwort auf Herrn Professor Dr. Hans Pfitzner” (Impotence or potency? a reply to Professor Dr. Hans Pfitzner), which appeared in the Frankfurter Zeitung on 6 January 1920. Passages in both Futuristenjahr and Die neue Ästhetik had already either suggested or overtly revealed anti-Semitic sentiment, but in Bekker’s response of 1920, the theme emerged as a conscious object of debate for the first time. Bekker wrote that Pfitzner’s Die Neue Ästhetik had “the vocabulary of anti-Semitic defamatory literature,” referring to the following passage from Pfitzner’s text, which he quoted at length:

“In the shame and the injustice of the revolution we witnessed with sadness how German workers, the German people, allowed themselves to be led by Russian-Jewish criminals and honored them with a fervor they had not ever shown any of their German heroes and providers. In the arts we witness how a German man of the people with the keen intelligence and extensive knowledge of Herr Bekker . . . directs the international Jewish movement in the arts.”

Bekker went on to argue that Pfitzner had attacked him thus in part because, as a critic, Bekker had written favorably of the musical accomplishments of two Jewish composers, Mahler and Schoenberg, and also suggested that his championing of such non-German composers as Claude Debussy, Frederick Delius, and Busoni may also have inflamed Pfitzner’s rancor. Bekker thus interpreted the attack against his own approach to the aesthetics of music as compelled by both German nationalism and anti-Semitism, and viewed the two as intimately related in Pfitzner’s aesthetics.

Pfitzner himself stated that his distinction between Jew and non-Jew was based not on race but on attitude or affiliation vis-à-vis the German nation. Recalling the famous statement of Vienna’s anti-Semitic mayor Karl Lueger, “I decide who is a Jew!” Pfitzner labeled Jewish those members of the German population who harbored international sentiments,

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and non-Jewish those who identified with German national patriotism. Bekker summed up Pfitzner's argument as follows:

Jew or non-Jew, that makes no difference. The aesthetician of musical "Potency" has his own special opinions on this matter. "The dividing line in Germany does not fall between Jew and non-Jew, but between those who are inclined toward German nationalism [deutschnational empfindend] and those who are internationally inclined [international empfindend]." Thus: the Jew is a non-Jew, insofar as he inclines toward German nationalism; the non-Jew is a Jew, insofar as he is not inclined toward German nationalism! . . .

Things have really deteriorated when a serious man and artist dares to come before the public with such grotesque elaborations without having to fear widespread ridicule. Jewish-international is thus now simply a characteristic of one's beliefs. Well good, I accept this characteristic of belief, for I know I am not only far removed from Pfitzner's narrow-minded hysterical nationalism, I know I am also in very good company with my "Jewish internationalism," in much better company than Pfitzner could ever offer me.38

Though Pfitzner later argued that he did not mean to attack Bekker personally for being a Jew, his remarks in Die neue Ästhetik clearly equate the Jew with those characteristics he recognized in Bekker's Beethoven studies and deemed inferior or even dangerous to his image of society: international affiliations threatening the fabric of Germany, a loss of moral standards, and disrespect for German art manifested in sloppiness or a lack of musicality in the interaction with musical art works.

Racism and xenophobia had appeared earlier in less obvious form in Pfitzner's polemics, and they represent significant examples of the way social pressures were already manifested in the images used to understand and discuss art in the German-speaking countries prior to the National Socialist accession to power. In Futuristengefahr, remarks suggestive of racism accompany Pfitzner's arguments regarding the degree to which one must respect a composer's notation. When ridiculing Busoni's suggestion that the polarity of major and minor be expanded to include other scales and fragmented tones as well, Pfitzner's rhetoric betrays his European bias and ethnocentricity:
But if I try to force my brain to perceive these limits as blurred, to no longer differentiate between major and minor, to disavow our keys in favor of third- and sixth-tones—I do not have the feeling as if a far-off place were speaking to me rapturously of a great and future joy, but rather as if I should learn new ways of thinking in order to understand the music of a wild tribe or the tonal language of past millennia. The Eskimos, Papuans, and Swahili Negroes probably also do not differentiate between minor and major. The tonal systems of the Indians and the Arabs were more graduated than ours is. (1:219)

Clearly the text discriminates against Busoni the Italian by associating him with foreign and purportedly primitive (and, for Pfitzner, therefore inferior) peoples. The derisive irony in this parody of Busoni’s arguments cannot hide the fears inherent in the images with which a conservative culture responded to what it perceived to be a threat to its autonomy and control. Pfitzner’s colonial-imperialist attitudes, shaped by a pervasive ideology that developed under Wilhelminian expansion and was painfully frustrated by losing World War I, viewed a challenge to the status quo as a descent into anarchy constituting a loss of national hegemony and the mixing of races. For Pfitzner, these sociopolitical issues emerged both automatically and consciously in the aesthetic realm.

The final phase of the polemic with Bekker appeared in the foreword to the third edition of Die neue Ästhetik published in Pfitzner’s Gesammelte Schriften of 1926. The foreword itself constituted a reaction both to Bekker’s “Impotenz oder Potenz?” article and to a response to Die neue Ästhetik by Alban Berg, entitled “Die musikalische Impotenz der neuen Ästhetik Hans Pfitzners,” though Berg’s criticism received only a passing reference in Pfitzner’s foreword. Pfitzner was primarily concerned with elaborating on the issues of internationalism, anti-German sympathizers, and anti-Semitism that Bekker had raised in 1920 and which would continue to concern Pfitzner until his death in 1949.

The foreword of 1926 opposes the sanctity of German art as an expression of the German Volk to a constellation of themes and images that operated within Pfitzner’s imagination as icons of difference and danger. These included the already familiar Jews, internationally disposed German pacifists, and cacophony, as well as new agents and signs of doom.

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appearing for the first time in the debate: Bolsheviks, Americans, virtuoso noise makers, the circus, atonality, laughter, and jazz:

He who has a genuine perception of this time of battle against German nationalism [Deutschtum] unclouded by a fear of the truth, he will understand that my attacks carried out in this book are not offenses, but defenses. Those who do not notice the decay of all German culture and art and act with indifference or even promote empathy, also promote the demise of all European culture, whose uppermost source and refuge has always been Germany, and help to transplant onto our solid land the international lack of spirit, pseudo- or anational Americanism. A portion of European and German mankind feels quite good about this; the other is horrified at the thought that in the foreseeable future—perhaps in no more than two or three decades—Beethoven’s symphonies and Wagnerian operas and other symbols of our art will not be played at all.41

Up to this point, the polarity inherent in Pfitzner’s thinking had juxtaposed Germans and non-Germans, but now it was transformed to encompass a new yet related structure: following the war, America replaced the amorphous image of an ill-defined Other and emerged as a distinct foreign nation whose threatening power had previously been located in supranationalism. This restructuring then united Germany with the Europe that had been its foe in the earlier geography of Pfitzner’s imagination. Germany now was still superior to the rest of Europe, and hence remained set off from it, but the Fatherland joined Europe when an external foe representative of new (that is, different) technology and new values appeared on the horizon. This notion of America as the locus of a modern and foreign danger had been latent in Pfitzner’s reaction to Busoni’s enthusiastic discussion of Thadeus Cahill’s American Dynamophone, but now the confluence of a foreign acoustical phenomenon and America as the national symbol of modernity came to the fore in Pfitzner’s writing.

The alien acoustical foe contained in the polarity of German versus non-German contained in itself an oppositional pair: within the images of a powerful threat to German culture, music split in two for social and political reasons in the early twentieth-century imagination:
What we are trading in, for that we have, so to speak, two "offers." The international atonal movement has not yet been "accepted," it can only be forced upon a people. The atonal chaos, along with its corresponding forms in the other arts, is the artistic parallel to bolshevism, which threatens the states of Europe. Basically, no one wants to have anything to do with this group; it is imposed upon the world by a minority, with force—just as millions did not want the World War, but four or five scoundrels [did], who pushed it through. This group kills the body, of the world here, of art there. But the second offer is already accepted, it is finished and is already here! It is the jazz-fox-trot flood, the musical expression of Americanism, this danger to Europe. This kills the soul and flatters the body, which is why its danger remains unnoticed and is welcome.42

Such thoughts were simply another formulation of xenophobic fears already expressed in Pfitzner's earlier equation of Jews and internationalism:

That . . . the omnipresent Jews [Alljuden] are part of the international bolshevik work of insurrection, [and to what extent this is the case,] more learned men than I can . . . disclose; the fact is not to be denied. (2:109—10)

(That Pfitzner's association of Jews with bolshevism was not his invention, but reflected a conflation with topical currency in right-wing circles, can be seen in the title of another work, from 1924, by Dietrich Eckart, Hitler's mentor and influential anti-Semitic propagandist: "Der Bolshevismus von Moses bis Lenin: Zwiegespräch zwischen Adolf Hitler und mir" [Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: conversation between Adolf Hitler and myself].43 Pfitzner's later association with the National Socialists, though fraught with professional frustration, was based on an ideological affinity discernible in their adoption of similar, and at times even identical cultural topoi.) Both Jewish international communism as the political form of anarchy and Americanism as the representative of democracy threatened the traditional, feudal hierarchical superiority of Germany and of German art in the early twentieth-century conservative imagination, for each of these foreign enemies was represented by an aesthetic-acoustical icon implying values fundamentally different from
those contained within the pantheon of great German music. The very perception of these sounds signaled an impending onslaught against the status quo.

Further examples of diametrically opposed arts representing social extremes can be found in Pfitzner’s metaphorical vocabulary. Just as high art for Pfitzner was the expression of the essence of the German nation, so the changing relationship between high and low art signified for him national and social tensions. While Germany’s essence was manifest in its superior art, lesser-German, non-German, or foreign elements found representation in low art. This had already been made apparent in Futuristengefahr, when Pfitzner had derided the rise of kitsch in Europe (“bad Italian opera, salon blabbing [der Salonschmarren], the movie-house operetta, Reader’s Digest music [Musikführer Musik]” [1:198–99]) and had associated it with the non-German elements he saw represented in Busoni’s Sketch. In the 1926 foreword to Die neue Ästhetik, Pfitzner’s concern emerged as twofold: he feared not simply that the artistic heritage of Germany was being influenced by other kinds of inferior aesthetic production but, more specifically, that the exclusivity of legitimate (that is, high) German art was thereby compromised. Now, jazz was the new sign of danger, brashly situated in the nether regions of low, anarchical art:

The appearance of that which is prepared in [Americanism] through our activities and the general course the world is taking, of that which emerges and replaces our culture that is dying from mistreatment, can be imagined by those who hear . . . an American jazz band concert. I have always felt antipathy bordering on horror toward the circus, the beer garden [Wintergarten], and similar institutions and pleasures. But as long as that was a world in and of itself, with its audience and its artists, and the true [eigentliche] high art of concerts and theater continued to persist clearly separated next to and above it, the existence of the former could not concern anyone. One could seek out one and avoid the other, and thus depart from a different world in order to look for one’s own which was always present. Now I see this world vanishing completely and the other one surfacing—yes, it is already here and begins its triumphant march through Europe, grinding everything—the American tanks of the spiritual battle against European culture! (2:115–16)
For the first time in the polemic, a dangerous, superficial art oriented toward entertainment is located within the geography of Germany itself, but Pfitzner’s strategy disavows a relationship between the national essence of his own country and this low stuff; instead, he likens it to the artistic production (and thus to the national consciousness) of America. At stake was the exclusive (sociopolitical) position Pfitzner demanded for his own work, which was threatened by a country that deemed itself democratic and was represented by an art form accessible to the masses. Jazz was the acoustical sign of a foreign, low-class (and, by implication, racial) threat to Germany’s exclusive purity.44

With the same feelings one has at the perfected, daredevil, comical, Bengali-illuminated productions in the circus, one . . . hears [here at a jazz concert] the grotesque, nasally squeaking, rustling rhythms, noises, and sounds which stimulate one to laughter and in a calculated fashion follow each other faster and faster, one is astonished by the baffling virtuosity of the saxophone player who, illuminated in white with sovereign assuredness, dashes off his racing runs. . . ., one endures three singers . . . who convolute bleating tones in a perfected drill, apparently in order to propagate the quarter-tone system and at the same time to amuse the audience; all of this perfect as a performance—as an artistic genre elevated to the preeminence of coffeehouse and Variété, without spirit, without depth and content, far from the realm of the beautiful, alien to us, a stimulus to the ears, to laughter, sensation, an anesthetic, a sounding baseness. The audience is entirely fascinated, delighted by this soulless American machinism [Maschinismus], which repels me more than I can say. The feeling that I have here is difficult to describe—something of a homeless nature, unsound, almost frightening seizes me, as if I had ended up in a shady, hostile society, whose language I do not understand: I do not belong here, away, to my home, to my own kind! (2:117–18)

The terror with which Pfitzner perceived such music underscores its function as a symbol of forces threatening to change an established social order. These images are not his own; his writing conflated a host of acoustical-visual and national clichés which were widespread in the
Weimar Republic. As such, these images surfaced repeatedly in the literature of the period as well.

The fear and derision so palpable in Pfitzner’s response to jazz as the quintessential low art reappear in his reaction to film, another art form found in the literature of the 1920s and evoking there, too, social connotations. The motion picture constituted for him the visual equivalent to inferior music. Pfitzner once described the new age (das Neue) as characterized by “cinema, radio, movies, golf, soccer, horse races, boxing,” and thus clearly associated film with the technical aspects of musical production (“radio”), a feature that he also emphasized in his portrayal of jazz. On a number of occasions Pfitzner expressed his concern that the success of serious, high-musical art could be compromised through the growing popularity of movies, though he insisted that the motion picture audience was fundamentally different from that of the opera. While moviegoers were characterized for him by an infantile delight in visual stimulation and a lack of concentration, and the operatic audience was endowed with the gift of musicality and serious devotion, the differences between the two collectives were essentially social in nature. Thus Pfitzner’s description of the low-class visit to the movies included motifs of vulgarity and sexual license not found in his descriptions of high, serious art:

I only know that the cinema audience is completely different from that of the theater. . . . In quick succession voyeuristic pleasure is satisfied. . . . [But] what is the cinema if not a theater whose emphasis lies in the visual, even as music accompanies the viewed actions. . . . [This music] fulfills the base function of providing the listener with a certain rhythmic stimulation.

The association of a socially inferior and by implication un-German music with another kind of inferior art (here film) was a staple of the cultural imagination at the time and as such would reappear one year later in passages on the cinema, jazz, and radio in Hermann Hesse’s novel Step­penwolf and in numerous other works of the time in which modern popular music played a role (as I shall discuss in chapter 3). Yet while Hesse was aware of, and criticized, the elitist implications underlying such motifs, they appear to have propelled Pfitzner’s rhetoric automatically, and with unabashed vehemence.
Pfitzner’s polemical writing on musical-cultural questions employed yet another kind of imagery illustrative of his time as well. Like the earlier description of jazz as a foreign invasion, this passage on the cinematic audience is redolent not merely of social prejudice, but also of sexual overtones. Sexual imagery, ranging from the erotic to the lascivious, often accompanied the motif of music in the popular imagination from 1900 to the 1930s; indeed, the connection informed the majority of literary portrayals of music in this period, due in large part to the fact that “sexualized” music was linked in the cultural vocabulary of the time to forces deemed insurrectionary. The perception of Jews, foreign races, and foreign countries as threatening had often triggered imagery of sexual difference in Pfitzner’s rhetoric. His transformation in Futuristenfeuer of Busoni’s metaphor of music as a child, for example, is particularly poignant: appearing to Pfitzner as a threatening, amorphous, supranational, and anarchic future possibility, Busoni’s musical child aroused sexual associations in the conservative imagination, for Pfitzner designates the gender of the child, nowhere determined in Busoni’s prose, as male in his text. At the opening of the passage his term for the child is das Kind, but it changes to [der] Jüngling at the end once music has entered Germany. The associative process that designated the national affiliation of the art as specifically German thus also redefined its gender as masculine in order to stave off a carnal threat that was either ill-defined (das Kind) or, perhaps, female. As a specifically male, and by implication German art, the child formed for Pfitzner a tradition worthy of veneration and preservation which held back the onslaught of those disenfranchised in the ideology of patriarchal Germany: foreign races, foreign cultures, and women.

Such a transformation suggesting a response to a feared assault operated within Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz as well. Busoni’s text had no overt sexual motifs of a threatening nature; indeed, the only explicit sexual description of music was his comment that “it is a virgin art” (76), but Pfitzner’s title explicitly sexualized the aesthetic controversy. The categorization of different kinds of music as “potent” or “impotent” is particularly illuminating, in that such a polarity underscores the urgency behind a cultural vocabulary that segregates the world into German versus non-German and Jew versus non-Jew. By labeling “impotent” those factions in the national-aesthetic sphere that Pfitzner believed
to be dangerous, the musician actually revealed a deep-seated fear of the power of his enemies that also emerged in his compensatory transformation of a genderless international musical child into a virile male German youth. Pfitzner’s relentless emphasis of the potency of his own art scarcely corresponds psychologically to the repeated images of despair and loss that accompany his assessment of his own place in the trajectory of German music. It is significant that he portrayed Palestrina, in many respects an obviously autobiographical portrait, as an old man unable to produce, while the figure of Silla, Palestrina’s importunate and revolutionary young student who wishes to leave the master and to study the new music theories with their “lascivious” texts (12), is an alto role in Pfitzner’s music drama. Operatic history is replete with such trouser roles in which boys are portrayed by female singers, but the fact that Pfitzner chose to give a woman’s voice to the dramatic personification of a new, irreverent, and threatening trend in the development of music is in keeping with the image of dangerous music as innately female implied in his polemics, a manifestation of the ideology of the femme fatale at the turn of the century, and it also repeats the bifurcate gesture which opposes one kind of music (conservative, hallowed, German, male) to another (anarchical, revolutionary, sexually ill-defined, and possibly female).

That such issues as these accompany Pfitzner’s polemics illustrates a close, often unobtrusive and even automatic association of extramusical concerns with music that informed the fabric of artistic pursuits in general in the early twentieth century. This merging of the social realm with purportedly aesthetic matters also characterizes the appearance of music as a theme or motif in much German and Austrian literature of the time, a fact that both underscores the widespread cultural basis of the association of music and social crisis and highlights affinities between specific concerns expressed in Pfitzner’s polemics and those operating in the literary imagination of his age. Long-standing and cherished concepts concerning the sanctity of the artist, the privileged stature of aesthetic pursuits, and belief in the artist’s freedom and individuality were questioned, and the debate took on a heated fervor, as they reflected the tensions between left- and right-wing positions within the polarized climate of early twentieth-century politics and social turmoil. The juxtaposition of two art forms, as well as the bifurcation of one art into two camps, as banners of
extreme sociopolitical agendas reappeared in the literature contemporaneous with the Pfitzner debates.

Yet the relationship between issues in the Pfitzner polemics and those contained in the literature of the time extends beyond thematic similarity. The debates between Busoni, Bekker, and Pfitzner concerning the degree of activity an aesthetic form should legitimately grant the audience also shed light on the relationship between the various narrative strategies adopted by German and Austrian modernist authors writing about music and the sociopolitical dimensions of their literature. The issues discernible in Pfitzner's polemics—elitism, the association of specific art forms and social standing, cacophony and anarchy, xenophobia, monarchism versus liberalism, stasis versus process, and music as a sign for sexual danger—reemerge in significant literary texts concerned with music that contain forms which invite decoding and careful concentration on the part of the reader. The polemical issue of audience participation thus emerges in the literary forum as well. With a readership faced with a complex text and implicitly invited to engage actively in its reception, a political event unfolded in the act of reading that was related to the political ramifications in Busoni's vision of an audience providing half of the effort during the reception of an opera, and in Bekker's emphasis on process and active interpretation in the ideal listener—a member of a communal entity responding to Beethoven's "democratic" works that "form communities." Even as Pfitzner fulminated against diverse musical signs of social and political transformation in the world around him, contemporary authors were using those very signs to startle and challenge their readers, who, in responding to the hidden meaning behind the music, would be asked to question the very traditions Pfitzner so longed to preserve.
References


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