This volume presents two works in full score: the Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, op. 12, which Weill composed between April and June 1924; and his cantata Der neue Orpheus, op. 16—based on a poem of the same name by Iwan Goll—for soprano, solo violin, and orchestra, composed between July and September 1925. Only a piano reduction of the Violin Concerto, which Weill himself prepared, appeared in print during his lifetime; not until 1965 would his publisher, Universal Edition in Vienna (hereafter UE), issue a full score, albeit with a layout quite different from Weill’s. Der neue Orpheus has been available in print only as a pianovocal score, prepared by Arthur Willner and slightly revised by Weill. This volume publishes the cantata’s full score for the first time.

The conception and composition of the Violin Concerto and Der neue Orpheus coincided with a critical phase of change, reorientation, and self-discovery in Weill’s career, during which he became increasingly aware of his commitment to musical theater and began to direct most of his creative energy toward the stage, eventually all but abandoning the concert hall. In later years, Weill described his works from this period as “artistic ventures marked by the struggle for new harmonic and melodic means of expression.” Several crucial performances of his works in 1923 gave him public visibility when he was still a member of Ferruccio Busoni’s master class for composition at the Preußische Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

Weill’s “transition from master student to a composer of some stature” is clearly discernible. After the successful premiere and brief run of his children’s pantomime, Zauber Nacht, at Berlin’s Theater am Kurfürstendamm at the end of 1922, the Berlin Philharmonic presented the premieres of his Divertimento, op. 5 and Fantasia, Pasacaglia und Hymnus für Orchester, op. 6, in 1923. During the same year he composed his String Quartet, op. 8, and Frauen tanz, op. 10, two works that established him as a young composer to be reckoned with. In 1924 he gained international recognition with a performance of Frauen tanz sung by Lotte Leonard at the second chamber music festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Salzburg. UE subsequently offered Weill an eight-year option agreement (Prioritätsertrag), giving it the right of first refusal to publish and distribute his works and providing Weill with a small monthly stipend against anticipated royalties. Weill’s relationship with his publisher was not unconflicted, however, for although it provided prestige and international reach, UE promoted his works halfheartedly and often postponed their publication.

Two other decisive moments took place in 1924: the death of Busoni on 27 July, which emphatically marked the end of Weill’s student years, and his encounter with Georg Kaiser, Germany’s foremost expressionist playwright, which prompted Weill’s definitive turn toward the stage. Busoni was a father figure and friend, and his approaching death deeply disturbed Weill; after one of many visits to the ailing teacher, he reported to his sister: “Busoni is deathly ill and none of us knows where our heads are. It would be less painful to suffer oneself than to see such a man suffer so terribly. When I’m not with him I have to bury myself in work in order to forget the sight of him.” (Conceivably, the darker mood of the Violin Concerto’s first movement, with its interwoven allusions to the Dies irae, could be related to this context.) By July 1924, however, Weill had found a new friend in Kaiser, who was to fill the gap that Busoni would leave: he not only wrote the librettos for three of Weill’s stage works, but he also introduced Weill to his future wife, Lotte Lenya, and to the Alsatian poet Iwan Goll (1891–1950), who, in addition to Der neue Orpheus, would provide the text for the one-act opera Royal Palace. In the first months of 1924, when Weill and Kaiser had started work on a ballet-pantomime, Weill also toyed with the idea of composing a violin concerto. Work on both projects came to a halt when Weill left in late February for an extended trip to Switzerland, Italy, and Austria. Upon his return to Berlin in early April he devoted himself entirely to the concerto. Finished at the end of June, it was the only work that Weill would complete in 1924. Later that summer, he and Kaiser abandoned their ballet-pantomime; instead, Kaiser provided a libretto for the one-act opera Der Protagonist, which Weill began to compose in the early fall of 1924 (see KWE I/1). Thus, two projects for the stage frame the Violin Concerto:

Der neue Orpheus is similarly situated between two works for the stage: composed in the summer of 1925, it is framed by Der Protagonist and Weill’s second opera, Royal Palace. There is an obvious difference, though, between the concerto and the cantata. The former marks the end of Weill’s compositions of “absolute music” (with the exception of his Second Symphony, in 1933). Der neue Orpheus, on the other hand, has often been described as a crucial step along Weill’s path to dramatic music. At one point Weill himself called Orpheus a stepping-stone toward Royal Palace:

In the fall of 1925, as a study for Royal Palace, I wrote a cantata, Der neue Orpheus, for soprano, solo violin, and orchestra, on a text from Iwan Goll’s Eiffelturm, and until now I always hesitated to arrange for its premiere. For the past several months I’ve been thinking of using it as a prelude to Royal Palace. It would fit exquisitely into the larger picture; it would even deepen and emphasize most effectively the idea of a serious revue that Royal Palace embodies. I can imagine that the performer of Dejanira would present the piece, which represents a new genre between aria and chanson, in front of the curtain with small gestures, somewhat in the style of Yvette Guilbert; then the opera would immediately follow.

Although the Violin Concerto “stands somewhat isolated among Weill’s works,” as Kim Kowalke has observed, in that “it was his last purely instrumental work that he composed for the concert hall until Symphony no. 2,” the work nevertheless reflects the general state of composition in Central Europe around 1924 in almost exemplary fashion. In the early 1920s many modernist composers began writing music for chamber orchestra, signaling a shift in musical aesthetics and economics. Institutions reacted to this trend, as evinced by the rise of societies, music festivals, and competitions devoted to the composition and performance of chamber music. Paul Bekker, one of the most influential music critics of his time, considered the composition of such works an essential trait of this period, interpreting the quest for compression as a reaction against late romantic

by Andreas Eichhorn
expansion. He singled out Busoni, Arnold Schoenberg, and Igor Stravinsky, three of the composers associated with this trend who also provide points of reference for Weill's concerto:

Large musical forms and greatly augmented instrumental bodies no longer have any justification for their existence. Thus we see the great orchestra of the postromantic era grow smaller and smaller until it becomes a chamber orchestra. We notice how the larger-than-life forms that Bruckner, Mahler, and Strauss need for their music—music still dominated by the idea of harmonic expansion—now contract, so to speak. They shrink into small, clear-cut concentrated patterns, which are examples not of the apothegmatic brevity of the early German romantics but of energy compressed to a high degree of intensity, just as the multiple harmonic constituents of the sound itself are now forced back into a single unit. If Busoni represents the melodic and Schoenberg the contrapuntal form, I should call Stravinsky the most important exponent of this contracted or compressed form.  

By the early 1920s, the emphatic concept of chamber music had come to embrace precepts of compositional technique, style, and aesthetics (some of which Bekker addresses above) that also play a role in Weill's concerto. First, the “renaissance of chamber music” represented a changing ideal of sound. The movement had begun with works that achieved model status, such as Schoenberg's Kammersymphonie, op. 9 (1906), and Pierrot lunaire, op. 21 (1912), Franz Schreker's Kammersymphonie (1916), Francis Poulen's Rhapsodie nègre (1917), Darius Milhaud's Cinq symphonies pour petit orchestre (1917–22), and Stravinsky's L'histoire du soldat (1918). (Weill himself labeled his Divertimento op. 5 for small orchestra and men's chorus a “Kammersuite” when he submitted it to the program committee of the Donaueschingen Festival in February 1922.) The rich, monumental, and blended sound of the late romantic orchestra yielded to a polyphonic and sometimes abrasively disparate texture, whose distinctive character, striving for transparency, owed much to a combination of diverse, isolated colors from wind instruments, as can often be found in contemporaneous music from France. The enormous costs associated with an orchestra offered an economic incentive to turn to chamber music: many composers, including Paul Hindemith, found that works for large ensembles were more difficult for transparency, owed much to a combination of diverse, isolated colors from wind instruments, as can often be found in contemporaneous music from France. The enormous costs associated with an orchestra offered an economic incentive to turn to chamber music: many composers, including Paul Hindemith, found that works for large ensembles were more difficult to place than those for smaller orchestral forces. Moreover, the deliberate experiments with unconventional, idiosyncratic combinations of instruments reflected not only a search for novel and fresh sonic effects but also a desire to eliminate the traditional demarcation of generic boundaries. Finally, the concept of chamber music was closely tied to the notion of a rough parity among all voices. This was achieved through a concertante setting, whose heightened complexity depended on combinations of linear polyphonic and thematic elaboration (durchbrochene Arbeit).  

Weill's Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra could be heard as a prime example of this stylistic trend. Scored for two flutes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, one oboe and trumpet, percussion and four contrabasses, the work comprises three movements: I. Andante con moto, II. Notturno—Cadenza—Serenate, and III. Allegro molto, un poco agitato. Several authors have pointed out the concerto's sonic affinities to works similarly scored for chamber orchestra with a predominance of wind instruments, among them Stravinsky's Symphonies d'instruments à vent, Octocor pour instruments à vent, and L'histoire du soldat. Weill heard this last work during the chamber music festival “Neue Musik,” organized by Hermann Scherchen in Frankfurt, at which Weill's String Quartet op. 8 received its premiere. In a letter to Busoni, he voiced concern about Stravinsky's (and Hindemith's) forays into the realm of popular music:

There was an experiment [here] that made one sit up and take notice: Stravinsky's L'histoire du soldat. It is a kind of ‘folk play with singing and dancing,’ something between pantomime, melodrama, and farce; as far as this form allows, the music has been masterfully shaped, and its hanker- ing for a street flavor is tolerable because it fits the subject matter.

I'm going to hear my quartet for the first time only today because the Hindemith people are terribly overburdened. . . . I fear that Hindemith has already danced his way a bit too far into the land of the fox-trot.

Only two years later, Weill himself would incorporate popular elements into Der neue Orpheus—a fact that corroborates the view of 1922–1925 as a phase of artistic self-discovery. Weill made no secret of his intention to place an experimental combination of instruments at the heart of his concerto. In its departure from standard practice, his layout of the full score must be seen as a means of highlighting the work's unconventional forces. Additional features underline the specific character of the concerto as music written for chamber orchestra: a polyphonic design enhanced by durchbrochene Arbeit and the solisic treatment of instruments, in which the clarinets—just as in Der neue Orpheus—receive preferential treatment. Typical for its time are a return to dance topos (march, waltz, tarantella), recurring rhythmic patterns, ostinatos that assume structural significance, the use of character types (notturno, serenata) and performance types (cadenza), all of which serve as structurally and cyclically unifying devices in the face of a heavily obscured tonality. In contrast to the concerto, Der neue Orpheus marks a transition. Weill's brief uncertainty about how to classify the work—he wavered between “concertino” and “cantata”—reflects its hybrid, multilayered conception. The term cantata points to vocal presence but also to the text's intrinsic dramatic potential. Weill had always been aware of the power of words to inspire his compositions. At the age of nineteen he had already confided to his brother Hans, “I need poetry to set my imagination in motion, and my imagination is not a bird, but an airplane.” The label concertino, on the other hand, emphasizes instrumental and non-scenic qualities and thus links it to the Violin Concerto, a plausible relationship given the use of solo violin and the foregrounding of wind and brass instruments. Scored for double winds, trumpets, and trombones, harp, percussion, and full orchestral string sections but without violins, the cantata unfolds in a single span, with the central unit comprising a set of seven variations. In the end, however, it appears that Weill considered the term cantata more inclusive, hence more capable of capturing this novel blend of elements from different genres. Taking Weill's notes on Das Berliner Requiem (1929) into account, Richard Wacker posits that Weill considered the genre of cantata a type of middle ground between concert music and dramatic music. Yet it seems that no single generic term adequately describes Der neue Orpheus, a unique hybrid of cantata, concerto, opera, concert aria, orchestral song, and cabaret set piece.

Stylistic aspects of Der neue Orpheus are multiplied as well. Whereas the musical language of the two framing sections is “free-tonal” and thus relates to the preceding works (including the Violin Concerto), the cantata's center section reverts to common-practice harmony: here we see the “new Orpheus” in his daily life, active in heterogeneous settings that encode widely varied cultural significance. Taking his cue from the poem, Weill employs—for the first time—a variety of popular musical idioms, which he defamiliarizes on occasion to parodic effect. In this respect the cantata clearly points to Weill's subsequent work, Royal Palace, where popular idioms mark the musical language even more prominently and decisively. The source of Weill's new pluralism of styles appears to be Goll's poem, as Wacker suggests: “[Not only] Goll's text but also his concept of surrealism, which he most likely shared with Weill during their collaboration, may have served as a catalyst. They may very well have heightened Weill's awareness of new, topical artistic tenets such as stylistic pluralism (to an extent unprecedented in Weill's earlier works) and the principle of synthesis.”

Weill sensed the special role that Der neue Orpheus played in his early oeuvre. He described his Violin Concerto as a “somewhat abrasive, elusive, completely dissonant piece” that could not be understood without a fair amount of familiarity with Schoenberg's music. But he saw himself on a more original and promising path with Der neue Orpheus: “I have to master an expression that is still new to me. And I'm pleased to say—something I had already discovered in Der neue Orpheus—that I'm slowly beginning to advance toward 'my real self,' that my music is getting to be much freer, looser and—simpler. But that also has to do with the fact that outwardly I've become more independent, more secure, more cheerful, and less inhibited. Of course, living with Lenya plays a great part in all this.”
In mid-February 1924, shortly before his trip to Switzerland and Italy, Weill reiterated his desire to sign a contract with UE. In a letter addressed to the company’s director, Emil Hertzk a, he mentioned a number of completed and successfully performed works (Quodlibet, op. 9; Frantzenata, op. 10) but also disclosed future projects: “My next plans are: a violin concerto (already begun), a new string quartet, and a new (comic) opera.”21 Traveling to the Alps and beyond stimulated the composer’s creativity, as he reported to Busoni while on route: “Sometimes I believe that just these few weeks in the sun of the South have brought out things in my development that have long been dormant within me; in any case, I’m experiencing an enormous desire for action, and I’m full of plans. I do so hope to find you feeling better.”22

An additional incentive may have been the contract that UE offered Weill at the end of April. The publisher accepted Frantzenata and the String Quartet op. 8 for immediate publication. A letter to his parents and brother and sister-in-law, dated 29 May 1924, documents Weill’s unrestricted desire to work, his awareness of being at a critical phase of his life, and his resolve to seize new opportunities. By then, work on the concerto had progressed considerably: “My work has made such demands on me and outside obligations have been increasing as well. Two movements of the Violin Concerto are finished, but for three days now I’ve been stuck—so that my plan to have the whole thing finished before my visit with you can’t be realized. But it’s going to be great! . . . Much—if not everything—in my future development depends entirely on me now: I’ve got to work or the Concerto will be forever.”23

Four weeks in the sun of the South have brought out things in my development that have long been dormant within me; in any case, I’m experiencing an enormous desire for action, and I’m full of plans. I do so hope to find you feeling better.”23

Five days later Weill set out to finish the composition, as he announced in a letter to UE on 3 June 1924. This letter is noteworthy as the only document in which Weill alludes to the work’s aesthetic considerations: “I am working on a concerto for violin and wind orchestra that I hope to finish within two or three weeks. The work is inspired by the idea—one never carried out before—of juxtaposing a single violin with a chorus of winds. I have just come across the announcement of a competition by Schott that pursues similar goals. Therefore, I would appreciate if you could mention the work in Anbruch now, perhaps in the ‘Manuscripts’ section.”24

Weill paid special attention to an experimental sound, assembling instrumental forces in a manner that would make his work unique within the genre. But the use of nontraditional instrumental forces is in one respect a nod to tradition: the contrast of timbre and texture is a basic concept of the concerto. Weill’s combination of solo violin and wind ensemble pushes this concept to an extreme. The competition sponsored by the German music publisher B. Schott’s Söhne aimed to cultivate a modern “concerto in chamber style” in the spirit of the old concerto da camera.25 Weill’s reaction to Schott’s initiative shows that he saw his work along those lines, that is, he viewed it as a piece of expanded chamber music. Furthermore, he would find himself spearheading this trend, even though his request for a note to that effect in Anbruch went unfulfilled.

Surviving correspondence does not offer enough information for a detailed account of subsequent events. When Weill finished the composition at the end of June, he began to explore possibilities for a premiere, at the same time creating a piano reduction (even though his contract did not oblige him to do so) and seeking to generate interest in the work among renowned violinists.26 He turned first to Josef Szigeti, a friend of Busoni’s, to whom he offered the dedication.27 On 10 September 1924 Weill reported to UE: “In an enthusiastic letter, Szigeti has accepted the dedication of the Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra and agreed to play it far and wide. Alas, he cannot begin to learn it until early next year.”28 Szigeti, however, did not insist on performing the world premiere and released the work, as Weill conveyed in a postcard to his publisher on 25 September: “The piano reduction of the Violin Concerto is with Szigeti, who can prepare it for next season at the earliest, but will allow it to go to another violinist first.”29 But Szigeti’s postponements of his decision—apparently he never did decide to play the work in public—prompted Weill to instruct his publisher, in a letter of 15 October 1925, to omit from the piano reduction the planned dedication to Szigeti.

Weill urgently needed a published piano-violin reduction for perusal and study material as he frantically pursued performance opportunities. For months, though, UE ignored the composer’s repeated requests to print such a score. It was not until after the successful world premiere in Paris on 11 June 1925 that the publisher expressed interest in following through with publication. Weill mailed his copy on 7 July 1925: “Under separate cover, I am sending you the piano reduction of my Violin Concerto and kindly ask you to engrave it immediately, because it is badly needed for performances. The performance in Dessau under [Franz von] Hoelßlin will be on 29 October, with the celebrated Stefan Frenkel as soloist. It is quite possible that Staram will do the concerto with Darrieux in Berlin. Roland-Manuel has published another splendid review about the Violin Concerto in the 24 June issue of Éclair. I will send it to you shortly, along with others.”30 Weill pressed hard to have his piano reduction in print prior to the German premiere in Dessau. On 17 September 1925 he wrote: “How far along is work on the piano reduction of my Violin Concerto? I hope it will be out in time for the performance in Dessau (29 October).”31 About ten days later Weill admonished his publisher to expedite publication of his compositions in general and restated the urgent circumstances of the concerto: “I am in the same position with my Violin Concerto. My piano reduction has been in your hands for months to no advantage; now several people have requested it. Frenkel needs it at the latest two weeks from now for the performance in Dessau; Mrs. Petzko-Schubert, who wants to perform the concerto with Scherchen in Leipzig on 2 February, needs it at the same time. What is to happen now?”32 The publisher managed to supply Frenkel with only a galley proof (Bürstenabzug); the publication did not appear until December 1925, even though Weill had returned the proofs on 20 October, within days of receiving them. Not surprisingly, Weill’s letter of 30 November expressed his frustrations: “I am stunned by your last letter. The Violin Concerto was supposed to come out on 29 October, and I corrected proofs for Quodlibet months ago—and now you don’t know whether these works can be published before Christmas. Your constant postponements are ruining all my prospects with sympathetic conductors. Fried wants to see Quodlibet, Horenstein and Scherchen are anxiously awaiting the Violin Concerto. You yourself have not yet negotiated a single performance of one of my works—and my hands are tied because I don’t have the materials.”33 The piano reduction finally came out on 19 December 1925, and Weill confirmed receipt of two author’s copies on 6 January 1926.

Until 1930, all performances of the concerto were conducted from Weill’s holograph score, in spite of the considerable risks entailed. Weill had trouble retrieving his score from UE for his own use, and on more than one occasion he had to intervene to make sure that conductors received it in time for performances. In the run-up to a performance in Zurich in June 1926 Weill suggested that UE create a copy, but not until the fall of 1929 did the publisher have the score copied for the American premiere under Fritz Reiner in Cincinnati in March 1930. As property of Associated Music Publishers, an agency representing several major European publishing houses, the copy apparently remained in the United States until the 1960s.

Few documents about the production of instrumental parts survive. A letter of 10 February 1925 suggests that Weill commissioned the creation of the manuscript parts in Berlin: “Director Hertzk a informed me that you would also cover the expenses for the materials relating to the Violin Concerto. I would be grateful if you could confirm again that I can go ahead.
and place the order.”35 The surviving manuscript part for the solo violin, at least, was created in Berlin (as identified by a stamp of the music copying office: “Notenschreib-Büro Dr. Wohlauer”).

ii. World Premiere in Paris, 11 June 1925

With Josef Szigeti unavailable to perform the premiere, Weill explored other performance opportunities, still without the help of his publisher. On 10 October 1924 he reported to UE: “As you may already know, Frauentanz will be performed under Walther Straram in Paris in December. Straram also wants to do the Violin Concerto in Paris, as soon as I have the materials at my disposal, if possible in January. . . . Here [in Berlin], negotiations for a world premiere of the Violin Concerto are still in limbo. If they come to naught I will send you the full score and piano reduction right away.”36 No further details are known about the Berlin plan, but in April 1925 Fritz Busch expressed interest in a Dresden performance for 10 October 1924 he reported to UE: “Notenschreib-Büro Dr. Wohlauer”.

In addition to this critical feedback—or press maneuver, as the initials “I. G.” may well have belonged to Iwan Gold—at least two more reviews came to Weill’s attention: one by Roland-Manuel (Éclair, 23 June 1925) and one by Henry Prunières, editor of the prominent La revue musicale.37 Prunières had heard Weill’s Frauentanz the previous year in Salzburg, where he approached him about a performance of that work in Paris.38 His review of the concerto appeared in the August issue:

Kurt Weill, who is only twenty-five years old, is one of the most gifted musicians of the young German school. If he doesn’t have the dynamism and the passionate spirit of Hindemith, he possesses an assured craft that is quite exceptional. We have already been able to appreciate his merits in his String Quartet (op. 8), performed by the Roth Quartet during one of the Revue musicale concerts, and his songs [Frauentanz] sung by Mrs. [Ružena] Herlinger in the same series.

Mr. Walther Straram unveiled to us the concerto for violin with accompaniment of wind instruments and double bass. The work was well served by an unparalleled performance. Played by Mr. Marcel Darrieux and the wonderful instrumentalists assembled by Mr. Straram, it was presented under ideal conditions. It disappointed, however, an audience interested in foreign works only as far as they offer revelations of striking originality. This concerto, though written with extraordinary ingenuity, remains in the slightly gray atmosphere of works of the German school following Max Reger. It is divided into two movements, a majestic and massive Andante and a very lively Finale in the form of a tarantella. Three episodic movements intervene between the Andante and Allegro. The writing is always taut. The contrapuntal framework shows exceptional refinement. The music is dense and tight. No air, no light. I understand very well that the audience is not impressed by a work hardly tailored to please, but we must acknowledge the remarkable skill of the author in the art of measuring and balancing the orchestral sounds and his sense of polyphony. Of its kind, the concerto by Kurt Weill is a perfectly successful work.41

iii. German Premiere in Dessau, 29 October 1925

Just days after the premiere in Paris, Franz von Hoeflin signaled interest in performing the concerto in Dessau, Weill’s former hometown.42 Hoeflin had made a name for himself by conducting world premières of works by Schoenberg, Hindemith, and Ernst Krenek. Although Weill expressed doubts about the proposition and asked UE for advice, he soon agreed to a German premiere in Dessau scheduled for 29 October 1925. When the date approached, he decided to oversee rehearsals, as he reported to his parents: “I will travel to Dessau tomorrow, early Wednesday, to attend rehearsals in the morning and afternoon, because the soloist will not arrive until Thursday’s rehearsal. On Thursday my staff will follow: my ‘Miss Wife’ [Lenya], Peter [Bing], and [Martha] Gratten. Thursday night I will return to Berlin at 9 P.M., as I don’t want to be feted by Dessau’s philistines.”43 In an effort to generate publicity, Peter Bing, a budding conductor (whose father, Albert, had taught Weill music theory and piano from 1915 to 1918), wrote a general article about Weill that the Amtsblatt Anzeiger published the day before the premiere.44 The rehearsals appear to have confirmed Weill’s doubts about Hoeflin’s abilities, even though the latter had successfully conducted the world première of Hindemith’s violin concerto (Kammermusik no. 4) just four weeks earlier. On the first day of his trip he reported to Lenya:

The first rehearsal is over now. For the time being it still sounds horrible, and I’m afraid that tomorrow it will also leave much to be desired. Hoeflin is actually quite incompetent. He can neither conduct nor rehearse; it’s awful. People laugh and play wrong notes all the time (which he doesn’t even notice), and there is not a speck of discipline. I can’t get mad at him. I feel sorry for him. Because he overreaches himself. Although he is not predisposed to new music nor able to interpret it, he nonetheless believes he can make a career of it.

I was stupid to give this somewhat rough, abstract, completely dissonant piece to the Dessauers, who are the most ignorant and philistine of all. It will be unanimously rejected. One has to have willingly digested a portion of Schoenberg before one can understand this music. The cynical attitude of the orchestra and the impotence of this conductor make me quite nervous . . . Now I’m going to rehearse with the xylophone player. He’s a catastrophe, and he’s almost certain to wreck the second movement.”45

The review that Weill forwarded to UE had appeared on 17 June in the Berliner Börsen-Courier with the heading “German Music in Paris.” Signed “I. G.,” the article illuminates the context of the performance:

Enclosed please find the first, extremely favorable review of the Parisian world premiere of my Violin Concerto. The way the article is presented in this review, so it would be highly desirable for your promotion department to communicate the important fact of this performance to German music journals and newspapers as well. Various people in Paris are confirming the success of the piece. No changes seem to be necessary. Please let me know if you intend to publish the piano reduction now. The Parisian violinist Darrieux is going to perform the concerto several more times, and I believe that after this great success, Szigeti will rehearse it too. For the time being, Frenkel wants to perform it in Dessau and Berlin.46

The review which Weill forwarded appears on 17 June in the Berliner Börsen-Courier with the heading “German Music in Paris.” Signed “I. G.,” the article illuminates the context of the performance:

In the absence of German architecture and German theater, the Grand Exposition of Decorative Arts just now paid tribute to German music. The fair’s new, exceedingly winning theater, built by Perret (who gave Paris its only modern building, the Théâtre de l’exposition des arts décoratifs), hosted three symphonic concerts by the International Society for Contemporary Music, where, among the Frenchmen Milhaud, Ravel, and Florent Schmitt, the Spaniard de Falla, the Russian Stravinsky, the Englishman Berners, the Romanian Mihalovici, Schoenberg, Honegger, Casella, et al., the young German Kurt Weill achieved a big success with a large, three-part “concerto for one violin and wind instruments.” Along with Hindemith, Weill is one of the most gifted musicians of the young German school.

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The premiere confirmed Weill’s fears. A week after the performance in Dessau he complained bitterly to his parents:

“[T]his goddamned stinking hole of Dessau has left me in such a state of depression that for days now I’ve been of no use to anyone. Never before have I experienced such a haughty, disappointingly blank atmosphere as among this riffraff. Since they responded with complete silence to the Suite Dance by Bartók—one of the most worthwhile, easily accessible contemporary works, which has received stormy applause in sixty cities—I couldn’t possibly expect any success for my concerto. Besides, the set-up there is unfortunate. Hoeflin is very unpopular, and rightly so. I didn’t think such a degree of incompetence was possible. The performance was bad except for the violinist, who was excellent. The reviews are completely negative, and as long as Mr. von Hoeflin holds the reins there, Dessau won’t see me again.”

Indeed, devastating press greeted the far-from-ideal performance. Because the Berlin papers had not dispatched their critics to cover a premiere in the province, local and regional critics held the critical spotlight. The Volkblatt für Anhalt called Weill’s concerto a “musical bluff;” the Desauner Zeitung considered it “polyphonic gone wild” and compared it to the noise of an unruly school class, the Anhalter Anzeiger found the “futuristic, hypermodern” work incomprehensible, and the Magdeburgische Zeitung summarized: “The bizarre and grotesque elements were far too prominent.”

Arthur Seidl, reporting for the Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung, noted a “peculiar abrasiveness and meagerness” in the concerto’s overall sound that made him wonder whether it might sour the milk of breast-feeding women in attendance.

Some reviewers, however, tried to explain the negative reactions. The critic for the Anhaltische Rundschau thought the polyphonic texture demanded too much of the audience: “For long stretches, orchestra and violin run side by side but completely disconnected (that is the atonal independence), and even the xylophone with its clattering exuberance fails to console the listeners in the long run. The absolute autonomy of the individual parts may be a proud achievement, but it is utterly tiresome for the listener. It remains an intellectual work that lacks the warm blood of a living organism.” Reviewers also criticized the unconventional orchestral forces. The critic for the Desauner Zeitung confirmed, albeit disparagingly, the period’s predilection for uniquely constituted chamber orchestra groupings and also corroborated a detail of performance practice, namely that the work features four contrabasses: “Like so many modern composers, Weill, too, tries to create a special effect by assembling an odd miniature orchestra. The sight alone is sufficiently grotesque: a small bunch of wind players and four towering contrabasses, joined by a xylophone!” Whereas the Anhaltische Rundschau thought that the wind orchestra “appears to have been treated with much skill and care,” the Dresdner Nachrichten, which considered the work “interesting” overall, pointed out a discrepancy between the solo violin on the one hand and the wind ensemble—which whose role departed from convention—on the other: “Especially the wind orchestra’s accompaniment of the Weillian concerto—quite unique, deliberately breaking with time-honored rules of instrumentation and assigning entirely new roles to the individual parts of the accompaniment (a bit experimental, it seems)—shows [the intellectual approach] as well. But the violin part has real music.”

A sole exception to the chorus of negative comments was a review by Weill’s friend Peter Bing. Published in the December issue of Anbruch, his article focused on the work itself and ignored the actual performance, except for Frenkel’s splendid playing.

In early December 1925, Weill reported an attractive opportunity for a top-level performance that also offered international exposure: “The German section of the International Society for Contemporary Music has proposed my Violin Concerto for the music festival in Zurich. The nominated works need to be in Winterthur by 10 December. I kindly ask you to send the score as soon as possible to the following address: International Society for Contemporary Music, attn: Mr. Reichardt, Winterthur, Ryffenberg. If the score is still in Dessau, please arrange the necessary steps via telegraph. UE acted promptly, and in mid-January 1926 Weill learned that his work had been accepted. But all further, time-consuming preparations for the performance were again left to him. By the end of January it was clear that Fritz Busch, who had already committed to performing the world premiere of Der Protagonist in March (and who seemed to be impressed by Royal Palace, which Weill had finished earlier that month), would conduct. Weill then asked UE to create a copy of the orchestral score: “We are negotiating with a famous conductor for the performance of the Violin Concerto in Zurich. Will you create multiple copies of the score? If not, please arrange for a manuscript duplicate. The instrumental parts need to be in Zurich by 1 April. On behalf of the German branch I must ask you to waive rental fees and the like in this case.” Almost three months later, Weill had to prompt his publisher again: “The headquarters of the ISCM is complaining that the parts of my Violin Concerto, requested for 1 April, have not yet arrived. Please send the error-free parts that were used in Dessau. I hope the score has been duplicated by now. One copy is needed for the pre-rehearsals in Zurich, and Busch wants to have the other one right away. Both cases very urgent!”

For promotion leading up to the performance in Zurich, the editorial department of UE’s monthly, Puls und Takstrock, approached Weill for an article about his concerto. Weill initially agreed. A few weeks later, however, he changed his mind and suggested Peter Bing as an alternative: “The Dresden premiere [of Der Protagonist] has taught me that we are always misinterpreted if we talk about our own output—regardless of format. As a result, I no longer want to comment on my works as a matter of principle and kindly ask you to approach another musician. The young conductor Peter Bing . . . would be willing to take it over.” Bing, who had generated publicity for the concerto’s German premiere in Dessau and later reviewed the performance, responded quickly. When the article appeared in the magazine’s May issue, it reiterated but also expanded many aspects of his review:

The work was composed in spring 1924. It juxtaposes the solo instrument with an orchestra that omits strings, except for contrabasses, and otherwise comprises only flutes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns—two of each—as well as an oboe, a trumpet, and percussion. The exclusion of the string sound obviously accommodates the solo instrument, which can easily separate itself from the coarser sound of the wind orchestra.

Two larger movements, more significant in nature, frame the work. The first, Andante con moto, consists of a series of variations (in a loose sense) on a chord figure presented in the beginning. The last, Allegro molto un poco agitato, is a tarantella-like piece that captures chiefly with its brio. A group of three smaller pieces comes between the outer movements. Titled “Notturno,” “Cadenza,” and “Serenata,” they represent an emphatic resting point within the architectonic structure. The notturno, in which the xylophone plays an important role, is a true “night piece” in the [E. T. A.] Hoffmannian sense; the cadenza with its special use of the trumpet is a showpiece for the soloist; and, finally, the serenata presents a very tender, melodic creation.

Throughout the piece, the melodic lines show voice leading typical of chamber music and distinguish themselves through their canonic style and an open flow that is not inhibited by rigid time signatures; contrapuntally independent voice leading predominates also in the orchestra. Despite its considerable challenges, the gratifying solo part offers the soloist an opportunity to pull out all the virtuoso stops. Aside from the many passages in which the solo violin carries the melody—I am thinking here especially of the outer movements’ extended concluding arches—there are those seemingly written as passagework and flowery embellishments showcasing the soloist’s dexterity; but these too need to be taken and felt as melodies, for they are melodically imagined and conceived despite their vibrant rustic. Rich inventiveness, combined with an extraordinary strength of design, has produced a self-contained work that no doubt stands apart from the ordinary.”
festivals thus far, Zurich featured novel programming, with both chamber and orchestral concerts. The committee must have categorized Weill's work as a chamber piece, because the concerto appeared in the second Kammermusikwinter on 23 June in Zurich's Tonhalle. Busch conducted, and Frenkel replaced an ailing Alma Moodie as soloist. Even though his work eventually sparked some controversy among the critics, Weill, in a first reaction, considered the performance a success: "The reception of my work was enthusiastic. The musicians called it the 'most positive result of the festival,' and the audience also behaved decently. I have several bookings, especially in America."64

This successful performance before an international audience generated the most comprehensive and detailed critical assessments that Weill's concerto had yet received, usually within omnibus reviews of the festival.65 An astonishing 150 dailies covered the event. In addition to first-string critics such as Karl Holl, Rudolf Kastner, Max Marschalk, Paul Stefan, and Adolf Weißmann, the list of reviewers also included musicologists Adolf Aber, Erich Doflein, Arthur Eaglefield Hull, Rudolf Felber, Jacques Handschin, and Paul A. Pisk. Observers from the United States attended the festival as well, although Aaron Copland and Olin Downes had little to say about Weill's concerto.66 All agreed that the work belonged in the realm of music for chamber orchestra. Paul Aron (Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten), for example, observed: "With its three little night musics placed between the large outer movements, the work is so clearly structured, so well crafted in its chamber-music writing, yet so perfectly natural in its flow, that no further commentary is required."67 Weißmann (Die Musik) and Heinz Pringsheim (Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung) considered the Violin Concerto one of the best chamber works of the festival; Kastner (Berliner Morgenpost) thought the concerto had "the character of a chamber symphony"; and Stefan (Anbruch) noted: "It is real chamber music, with three serenades as central movements, always at the limits of tonality, brilliant, spirited, every turn revealing the musician who has the future in him and can already implement it in the present."68

The critics also found the concerto's structure convincing. Kastner noted an "elastic structural power (the second of the three movements has an original, distinctive outline of notturno, cadenza, and serenade)—all three display delightful humor in abundance and unusual aspects of sound and rhythm. The main movement, with its conceptual motivic and formal connections, is a little masterpiece."69 Holl (Frankfurter Zeitung) considered "the form, emphasized through rhythm, . . . extraordinarily clear and assured"; Erwin Felber (Kaiserliche Tageblatt), despite reservations, thought the work was "rich in its vividness, interesting in its form"; Weißmann (B.Z. am Mittag) pointed out an "unerering design," the three movements showing "masterly construction and rhythmic variety"; and Pisk (Berliner Börsen-Zeitung) thought that "whereas the three-part structure of the classical concerto is retained, its content is renewed not only in terms of melody and rhythm, but also in terms of character."70 A handful of critics heard Busoni's spirit behind the form's lucidity and vibrancy; for instance Marcel Sulzberger (Zürcher Post) remarked: "Busoni's school reveals itself everywhere: in the formal elegance, in a tendency toward a fantastic and capricious play of forms, and here and there in clever expositions of thematic material."71 And two reviewers even detected elements that engendered a cyclical structure. Without elaborating, Weißmann simply noted that "a rhythmic motive becomes the pillar of the structure, in three movements," and Hans Schnoor (Dresdner Anzeiger) thought "Weill's imagination seems to be especially creative only when it comes to form. . . . As in Mahler's Symphony no. 7, the individual movements are interconnected in concept and mood. A compulsive rhythm, which characterizes the entire work, also ensures symphonic unity."72 Of the concerto's three movements, the central one—its tripartite—garnered particular praise, even from critics who disliked the concerto in general. Also sensing a Mahlerian tone, Walther Jacobs (Kölnische Zeitung) noted: "In the two insubstantial outer movements, Stefan Frenkel mastered the violin's exercises with brilliant technique and musical instinct. But the two night musics of the central movements, notturno and serenata, which continue to savor Mahleresque moods, are really compelling in their peculiar form of orchestration, namely in the treatment of the percussion instruments."73 And Adolf Aber (Hannoverscher Courier) thought "the free forms of the second movement . . . offered, also in terms of orchestral accompaniment, many charming and fascinating moments."74

Ernst Iler (Neue Zürcher Zeitung) heard a collision of styles in the different handling of the solo part and the orchestra:

Weill's conception of the orchestral part is absolutely modern, but he thought, probably for reasons of a concertante effect, that he had to keep the solo part fairly conventional. This creates a discrepancy in style that one would have gladly missed, for the first movement's beginning and ending offer, albeit briefly, such idiosyncratic new features with an intense atmosphere, and the movement shows such a musical, at times austere and rigorous, intensification, that one follows this substantial piece with interest (even though the instrumentation, whose colors are kept within shades of gray, has limited appeal). The tripartite central movement, which as a whole represents a night music, also has its moments: the first part conjures an appealing, fleeting nocturnal image; the cadenza, cheered by a few trumpet sounds, offers a thoughtful soliloquy with sometimes improvisational verve; and the serenata appeals with its sonic and instrumental variations of the accompanying rhythm. The last movement has the true flow of a finale; the counterpoint appears to be a bit pedestrian at times; a section redolent of 'Forest Murmurs' precedes the tarantella-like strata and establishes the necessary contrast in character."75

This assessment was echoed, for instance, by Rudolf Stephan Hoffmann (Neue Freie Presse, Vienna), who thought "the violin treatment follows a time-honored style, concertante passagework and figurations alternate with melodic cantilena, whereas the overall harmony is fairly muddled."76 Erich Doflein took a much closer look at "the overall harmony" when he discussed Weill's concerto in an extensive article on works composed in 1926:

In his melodic treatment Weill relies highly on the cantilena, a form of melody that presupposes a context of functional harmony. Weill combines two or more such melodies, evoking a doubly functional tension that heightens the harmonic impact but harms the polyphony's audibility despite the clever choice of such a scalicizing ensemble, whose fine effect is possible only through the composer's almost violent grip that covers up all weaknesses. Weill stands between styles. This becomes especially apparent in the chromatic origin of his harmonies. He is a very powerful and innovative harmonic composer (he remains harmonic), which makes the frequent passages of pure accompaniment most effective. His harmonies possess a peculiar impulse, his counterpoint hardly so.77

Weill's writing for the solo violin received near unanimous praise. Reviewers found the part highly idiomatic for the instrument and considered it rewarding for any soloist, even though it appeared to be exceedingly difficult to perform. However, several critics pointed out occasional balance problems between the soloist and the ensemble, and here they tended to blame the composition, not the performance. For example, Kastner (Berliner Morgenpost) felt that "the last [movement] is not entirely polished in the balancing of the wind sound, but it has an energizing rhythmic drive," and Marschalk (Vossische Zeitung) thought "the violin, which has to handle the most difficult tasks . . . cannot always compete with the sound of the small orchestra, a sign that Weill still has many a thing to grasp in terms of compositional technique."78 Handschin, writing for Der Bund (Bern), brought Weill's teacher into play again: "Like Busoni, Weill strives for lightness but also for new ground, and where Busoni, in his violin concerto, places the complementary wind instruments alongside the solo instrument in the foreground, Weill uses wind instruments exclusively for his accompanimental body. The latter turns out to be dangerous, as it is fairly difficult to coax a pianissimo—even frequently required when accompanying—out of a wind orchestra."79

Though some reviewers detected echoes of Busoni and Mahler, and Holl and Hermann Spelti (Berliner Tageblatt) added Stravinsky and Hindemith as possible influences, most struggled to place the work, and the composer himself, into a larger context. In the end Weißmann emphasized Weill's originality:
One could point to the example of Stravinsky in the omission of the string section. However, I believe that Kurt Weill, in his juxtaposition of a violin and an orchestra that admits the contrabass as the sole string instrument, holds his own ground. . . . No doubt the essence of Busoni's spirit is manifest here. The avoidance of commonplace goes so far that sometimes one feels only this merit of negation. One cannot speak well of a work that garners applause from the audience on first hearing. This concerto shows its surly face at all times, even though it moves along in often engaging rhythms. One senses a desire to be different, not always a need to be different. The future development of Weill, this highly gifted young artist, will show whether he can shed the labored elements. The sureness of his instinct is beyond all doubt.80

Upon his return to Berlin in mid-July 1926, Weill commented in private on an earlier review of Weißmann's, which had appeared in B. Z. am Mittag. Calling it "the Weißmann nonsense," he thought that "after his devastating judgment of Schoenberg, his remarks about me are just malicious enough so as not to endanger my musical reputation. I'm quite pleased about it."81 Only days later, Frenkel showed him about sixty press clippings from the festival, and Weill thought that these, taken as a whole, represented a distinct critical success. The wake of the Zurich performance, however, also brought a rift between Weill and his former counterpoint tutor, Busoni affiliate, and fellow composer, Philipp Jarnach. Jarnach had admired and championed many of Weill's early compositions (Frauenzauber in particular)—and Weill had dedicated Fantasia, Passeaguelas and Hymnus to him—but did not care much for the Violin Concerto (although he evidently lobbed for early performances).82 When Weill returned from Zurich to Berlin, he reported to his parents that Jarnach had "let loose a storm of intrigues against me. Since they can't get me on artistic grounds, they now depict me as an unprincipled racketeer and try to influence all decisive professional circles accordingly. Every day I hear new gossip-mongering against me, and all of it goes back to that one source."83

v. Additional Performances through 1930

Stefan Frenkel remained the concerto's chief advocate during the final years of the Weimar Republic. Symptomatic of his dedication to the work was the fact that he played the solo part from memory, as many awed reviewers pointed out. Weill, in turn, appears to have toyed with the idea of composing a second concerto for Frenkel.84 In all, Frenkel performed the work at least a dozen times, including premières in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland.85 The Soviet première in Kharkov and two subsequent performances in Kiev and Odessa may have been canceled at the last minute; Frenkel later recalled that he was asked to replace Weill's concerto with Beethoven's op. 61.86 The U.S. première took place on 28 March 1930 in Cincinnati. Fritz Reiner conducted the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, whose concertmaster, Emil Heermann, performed the solo part. Even though extensive program notes were supposed to prepare the audience, it reacted with shock, as Samuel T. Wilson reported for Musical America:

Emery Auditorium hummed like a hive of angry bees during the breathing space provided by the breaking of a string on the soloist's violin during the first American performance of Kurt Weill's Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra at the first of the eighteenth pair of concerts given by the Cincinnati Symphony. Laughter also had its innings. Not in years has any piece of modern music roused so much antagonism from a local audience. . . . If fineness of performance could have brought anything attractive from the score, the care and artistry which soloist, conductor and orchestra lavished on the concerto should have done it, but it remained thin, squaky and hideously discordant music. One lucid interval came with the Nocturne, in which there was a mildly entertaining duet for violin and xylophone. Mr. Reiner must have gauged audience reaction in advance, for the rest of the program was made up of music guaranteed to soothe the lacrinated feelings.87

Indeed, many critics and audiences—not just in the United States—appeared to be challenged by the concerto's idiosyncrasies: skeptical at best, their reactions were usually bewildernent or outright rejection. The more learned critics who attended a performance during the Festliche Tagung des Reichsverbandes Deutscher Tonkünstler und Musiklehrer (which Weill labeled a "right-wing" festival) in Halle on 11 October 1926 predictably snubbed the work as well.

Exceptions were in-depth reviews by three distinguished composer-critics: Max Butting, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, and Theodor W. Adorno. In an omnibus review for the May 1926 issue of the Sozialistische Monatshefte, Butting—like Weill and Stuckenschmidt—gave a member of the Novembergruppe—reviewed print publications of eight solo concertos: Stravinsky's Piano Concerto; Klengel's concertos for piano, op. 18, and violin, op. 29; Ernst Toch's Cello Concerto op. 35; Weill's Violin Concerto op. 12; and Hindemith's concertos op. 36/1–3 for piano, cello, and violin (i.e., his Kammermusiken nos. 2–4):

The two [Toch's and Weill's concertos] have a few things in common. They are rich in ornamentation, yet precise in their form, and they remain from beginning to end solos's concertos in the sense that the soloist can shine. Both are clever and wise, with superior craftsmanship, and each possesses a lot more significance within the oeuvre of its composer than the piano concertos by Klengel and Stravinsky mentioned above. But undeniably they are also a little romantic and more striking than modern music wants to be. Weill is more austere here, and the design of his lines is more rigorous than Toch's. Neither of them has gone beyond the purely experimental: based on his personality, each has created something extraordinary. These works have a measure of perfection in the sense that they are outcomes of a longer journey; they don't offer insights into development nor do they suggest how the paths might continue. Therefore, all problematic aspects have been contained; in spite of their freedom, they are not very daring; they stand on firm ground, whether they please or not, but offer little incentive to ponder the question of the possibilities of a modern solo concerto. They are modern insofar as the music was when these concertos were created. But, looking at the works, there is no way of seeing farther into an unknown future: instead one feels content with the unfolding of the musical action. The world of this music ends as soon as the reality of its sound has faded. This is different from Klengel, where one senses the possibilities that lie beyond the experiment.88

Stuckenschmidt attended the Berlin performance on 16 February 1928, which also featured Schreker's Kammerphilharmonie:

Even this early work by Kurt Weill, who, within a few years, has attained a stature as a representative of young German music, has been performed several times in provincial cities. We are grateful to Heinz Unger for this well prepared and stylistically assured Berlin premiere. The Violin Concerto concludes a series of instrumental works that were inspired by Weill's studies with Busoni. On the model of Stravinsky, it opposes [the violin]—partly an independent part and partly one concertante voice among others—with a soloistically scored wind orchestra with contrabasses. The balance is not entirely successful. The outer movements point to Der Protagonist, the first decisive work to emerge after the concerto that had summarized earlier developments. Dramatic eruptions are set off by the constructive polyphony of the opening. The concatenation of the opposing episodes and the distribution of their weight suggests Weill's dramatic technique. But what was advantageous there endangers the organic unity here. The beautiful part toward the end of the first movement, where the violin's calm arches float above the swiftly slipping woodwinds, anticipates the lyricism of Royal Palace. The design of the finale, rhythmically taut, has more flow. New soundscapes flit by, the violin charges forward over lyrical passages and ends in a sparkling stretta. Three small structures connect to form the central movement: nocturno, cadena, serenata. The Stravinskian elements are unmistakable. But its conception is entirely personal, formed with a sure hand and fine wit. Violin against xylophone, virtuoso passages against trumpet fanfares, guitar pizzicatos against a casual melody of the flute; these are terrific ideas. These capital miniature movements, on account of their concentration, rise above the other parts of the concerto.89

Adorno reviewed the Frankfurt performance conducted by Ernest Ansermet, as guest conductor from Geneva:

The lines of Weill's development intersect in this piece: still evident is Busonian lucidity, playfully avoiding compact polyphony, though denying itself the melodic vividness that Weill later developed so aptly; a distinct
Stravinsky with the classiﬁst and, furthermore, highly accomplished clarity of sound, also a wind effect here and there; the dramatic edge of the later Weill, which frequently renounces the classical balance; but most of all a highly curious, shrilly expressive and painfully laughing Mahler, who calls into question all the play taken for granted and thereby pushes off from matter-of-factness into the dangerous surreal realm of today’s Weill. The piece ﬁnds itself exposed and alien: therefore in the right spot. One could imagine that Weill, after the compression in his last works, might revert to his more extensive breadth, his harmonic boldness, in order to lend them ultimate precision.98

In 1928, the music critic Heinrich Strobel noted a deep rift forming within German-language music criticism: on the one side he identiﬁed an antimodern, provincial critical bearing mostly "in the hands of a narrow-minded group that, out of touch with the arts and the times, merely pontiﬁcates"; on the other he saw professional criticism "at the few larger newspapers" that could afford (and chose to maintain) a full-time position for a qualiﬁed music critic.96 The reviews of Weill’s Violin Concerto that appeared in the German press between 1925 and 1930 are an informative case in point, as the work turned out to be a litmus test for reviewers: it found informed and judicious consideration in Zurich, Berlin, and Frankfurt, but met (often polemical) rejection in Dessau, Halle, and Dortmund.

An unexpected admirer of Weill’s concerto was Hindemith, who presented the work to his composition students at Berlin’s Hochschule für Musik. The pianist Arno Eurfurth, enrolled in his class in March 1931, recalled that Hindemith analyzed the work thoroughly and also looked at the violin part from a performer’s perspective.97 In a slightly different educational context, Scherchen, conducting for the Ostmarken-Rundfunk in Königsberg in the fall of 1929, presented the work in a series of broadcast concerts: Typen des Violinkonzertes. Weill’s concerto appeared on the ﬁrst program, titled “Der strenge Stil” (the strict style), along with a Concerto for Four Violins and Orchestra by Antonio Vivaldi and J. S. Bach’s Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra in D minor (BWV 1043).98

vi. Performance History and Recordings after 1930

The performance history of Weill’s concerto in Germany breaks off with Franklin in January 1930. Weill himself may have contributed to the dwindling number of performances, as his Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, which Otto Klemperer premiered on 7 February 1929, proved an effective and immensely popular concert piece (its forces were also dominated by wind instruments, with strings omitted). The rise of the National Socialists made performing Weill’s works increasingly difﬁcult, and Weill was among the 108 composers ofﬁcially banned on 1 September 1935 by the Propaganda Ministry led by Joseph Goebbels.99 Germany would not hear the Violin Concerto again until November 1951, when the Sinfonisches Orchester in Königsberg presented the work in a series of broadcast performances, the number rose steadily from 1960 on. In response to the growing interest, UE decided to publish the full score in 1965 (see section “Editorial Procedures” and Critical Report). By the mid-1960s there were, on average, ﬁve performances a year. Data for 1973–1992 show that between 1973 and 1987 the average rose to seven performances a year; Now a thirty-year-old work, the concerto no longer bafﬂed reviewers as it had in 1930 in Cincinnati. But whereas Weill had then been an unknown ﬁgure, in the mid-1950s he was a well-known composer of works for the musical theater, and reviewers were surprised to discover such documents of his early career. One reviewer, stating that “Weill is most noted to Americans for his compositions of ‘September Song,’ Street Scene, and Knickerbocker Holiday,” thought the concerto’s “theme itself is hard for the layman to identify” and concluded that “it is an unusual record but one that gets a growing appreciation by the listener as the strains become more familiar.”100 Billboard magazine (6 August 1955) cautioned that “Kurt Weill has established a strong reputation in several musical ﬁelds, but his association with Lady in the Dark and Knickerbocker Holiday should not lead dealers to present this item indiscriminately to quondam buyers of pop or light classical persuasion. His concerto dates from his avant-garde period and will prove difﬁcult listening for all but the most experienced connoisseur of early 20th century ‘contemporary’ music. . . . Likely to sell well in its class.” Irving Kolodin (Saturday Review, 24 September 1955) considered the concerto “a thought-provoking work, with a highly organized tonal texture for all its acridity and dryness of style.” In his review of the concert at the Metropolitan Museum, Harold C. Schonberg (New York Times, 10 March 1955) thought the concerto had a “decided proﬁle” and “reflected the German expressionism of the period with its touches of satire, its fleeting references to jazz, its atonalism and pungent harmonies. Even the orchestration . . . is expressionistic.” And yet, with all of Weill’s deﬁance, there occasionally peered through a type of melodic sentiment not far from Wagner and Mahler.

A second recording was made in Vienna in June 1964, when Hermann Scherchen conducted an ensemble featuring Robert Gerle as soloist. Although the concerto has been recorded more than twenty times as this Edition goes to press, Scherchen’s recordings hold special signiﬁcance as the only one to feature a recording artist who had conducted the concerto during Weill’s lifetime.102 Scherchen was a close associate of Weill’s, and had conducted several of his works, including the concerto in 1929, with Frenkel as soloist. Inexplicably, Scherchen’s recording for the Westminster label omitted thirty-two measures from the last movement.103 The cut manifests itself not only on the recording but also in Weill’s holograph full score (Fh), where several pages have been canceled with bold pencil (see Plate 5). One could speculate that Scherchen introduced such a “judicious cut” to expedite the ﬁnal by compressing the concluding stretta; after all, Scherchen had developed a reputation for such radical shortening.104 However, a simpler explanation might be the physical limitations of the twelve-inch long-playing record (33 rpm), which, in the 1960s, could accommodate a playing time of about thirty minutes per side. In order to ﬁt the entire concerto on one side of the disc, Scherchen (or the producer?) may have opted to cut rather than compromise on tempo. As it is, the recording runs to 30'14”—the near-maximal length of one side; the cut saved about thirty-five to forty seconds.105 In comparison, the MGM recording from 1955 ran for a slightly shorter time (29'24”), but the last movement had to be placed on the B-side of the disc; all subsequent recordings issued on long-playing discs opted for faster tempos to ﬁt the work on one side. Therefore, Scherchen’s recording may come closest to the tempo that Weill originally envisioned. Prewar ofﬁce records from UE support this assumption: a card from the Werke-Kartotheke (a log documenting the shipping and fees for rental materials) lists the playing time for the Violin Concerto at thirty-three minutes. The most likely source for this information is Weill himself, as UE, in a letter of 22 March 1930, inquired about the performance duration for ﬁve of his concert works, including the concerto.106

The Werke-Kartotheke entries also permit a rough assessment of the increase in performances. Whereas the 1950s had seen only a handful of concert performances, the number rose steadily from 1960 on. In response to the growing interest, UE decided to publish the full score in 1965 (see section “Editorial Procedures” and Critical Report). By the mid-1960s there were, on average, ﬁve performances a year. Data for 1973–1992 show that between 1973 and 1987 the average rose to seven performances a year;
1988 saw a sharp increase that peaked in 1991 with twenty-five performances.\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{vii. Performance Issues}

In his holograph score (\textit{H}), Weill specified the number of contrabass players by entering “4 Kontrabässe” in the instrumental rubric. Subsequently, for unknown reasons and under unknown circumstances, this numeral was smudged. When \textit{UE} had \textit{fh} bound, the binder applied opaque adhesive tape on the inside margins of the score pages, covering the numerals in all instrumental rubrics, including the smudged one for the contrabasses. The copyist who created \textit{FM} in 1929 omitted the number (see Plates 2 and 3). This loss of information created confusion; for example, Edward Cole weill’s lifetime that mention a number report four players.\textsuperscript{108} Moreover, an advertisement for the concerto that appeared in one of \textit{UE}’s periodicals in 1928 expressly states: “instrumental forces: solo violin, 10 winds, 4 contrabasses, percussion.”\textsuperscript{109}

The balance between orchestra and soloist had been a subject of discussion in the 1920s, when several reviewers perceived a problem, for which at least some of them blamed the orchestration rather than the performers or the venue’s acoustics. In his review of the German premiere in 1925, Peter Bing pointed out that “confinement to the unsentimental sound of the winds requires utmost precision in the performance and presentation and an extremely careful consideration of all dynamic nuances.”\textsuperscript{110} The xylophone part appears to have posed particular difficulties. Weill complained about the performer in Dessau. When the work was given in Halle, Weill asked Bing (who had become assistant conductor there in 1926) to get in touch with the percussionist, and advised: “Once again, I kindly urge you not to let the xylophone player out of your sight (he needs to memorize everything, and for the double stops at the end he needs to position the bars properly).”\textsuperscript{111} Weill’s remarks probably referred to an older model of the instrument (frequently used by German orchestras up until World War II), whose peculiar four-row arrangement of the bars forced players to memorize more complicated passages. Performers using a modern instrument, where the bars are arranged in two rows in keyboard fashion, should encounter no difficulties in performing the part.

\textbf{II. Der neue Orpheus op. 16}

\textbf{i. Genesis}

Iwan Goll’s “Der neue Orpheus” typifies the new, socially relevant poetry of the postwar era.\textsuperscript{112} The first version of the poem appeared in German in 1918. In 1923 the bilingual Goll published a substantially revised version in French. By 1924 he had revised it yet again for a new publication in German.\textsuperscript{113} In a thorough study of the poem’s three incarnations, Ricarda Wackers has pointed out that the third version, which Weill used for his setting, shows decidedly fewer epic elements than the one of 1918:

Signs of this distinct lyricization are the prominent enjambment and the generally sparse punctuation, which undermine traditional syntax and contexts. At the same time, the individual poetic word gains in weight (as Goll had explained in his essay on poetry “Das Wort an sich”). The poem’s sometimes powerfully metaphorical language has to be viewed in this context. It tends toward turns of phrase, and even neologisms (e.g., “Sternenmost” and “stelen,” in the fourth stanza), that are common in expressionist poetry but also in the tradition of high poetry. Goll contrasts this elevated lyrical style with ironic, colloquial phrases bordering on the grotesque (e.g., “1 m 78 groß / 68 Kilo / Augen braun / Stirn schmal” in the fourth stanza). Having these stylistically highly divergent registers simultaneously at his disposal—a technique that recalls Apollinaire’s surrealistic handling of lan-

Since Weill usually chose texts that jumpstarted his musical imagination, Goll’s polyphonic poem may well have inspired a musical equivalent. Combining diverse musical styles, \textit{Der neue Orpheus} would prove a transitional work in Weill’s oeuvre.

The precise circumstances of Weill’s first encounter with the Alsatian poet and playwright are unknown. Georg Kaiser, a friend of both Weill’s and Goll’s, appears to have introduced the two artists during one of Goll’s frequent visits to Berlin: in the fall of 1924, Goll spent several weeks in the German capital, primarily to attend the world premiere of his satirical play \textit{Methusalem oder Der ewige Bürger} on 13 October. Kaiser offered his tiny Berlin apartment on Luisenplatz 3, “Pension Häßfort,” to Goll and his wife, Claire—the same apartment that he would sublet to Weill and Lenya from May 1925 until September 1928.\textsuperscript{115}

A postscript to a letter from Weill to \textit{UE}, dated 7 July 1925, documents the composition for the first time: “I’m currently working on a cantata for soprano and small orchestra (for Lotte Leonard).”\textsuperscript{116} A week later, Weill wrote to his parents, “The Paris performance [of the Violin Concerto] did a lot for me. Only the opera [i.e., \textit{Der Protagonist}] is im limbo. Yet I’m tremendously tempted to write a new one. I’ve spent the entire morning swimming at the Jungfernheide (true, though hard to believe), then I worked some (on a cantata for Lotte Leonard), and now I’m listening to the radio.”\textsuperscript{117} On 16 August he reported to the critic Rudolf Kastner: “I have written, for Lotte Leonard, a concerto for soprano, violin, and orchestra, and now I am turning to a string quartet.”\textsuperscript{118} Two days later, on 18 August 1925—the date that Weill entered at the end of his continuity draft, \textit{Dh}, and which may indicate when he began the orchestration—he informed \textit{UE}: “I have just finished a new piece, \textit{Der neue Orpheus}, concerto for soprano, violin, and orchestra (text by Iwan Goll).”\textsuperscript{119}

Weill’s correspondence suggests that from the very outset, the genesis of \textit{Der neue Orpheus} was closely tied to the internationally acclaimed soprano Lotte Leonard, a singer devoted exclusively to concert works, who had performed Weill’s \textit{Frauentanz} with great success at the Second International Chamber Music Festival of the ISCM in Salzburg in August 1924.\textsuperscript{120} Weill’s continuity draft, or \textit{Particell}, one of the few extant from his European works, offers clues about the creative process (see Plate 7). The eleven-page draft presents the complete work with few corrections; only the cadenza preceding the first variation, mm. 166–171, underwent substantial revision. Weill slightly altered Goll’s poem, primarily by omitting a few short passages or by repeating lines occasionally. In two cases, however, Weill deliberately changed the wording, turning “Die Vergißmeinnicht denken an Selbstmord” (the forget-me-nots are considering suicide) into singular (“Das Vergißmeinnicht denkt an Selbstmord”) and replacing “Klavierlehrer” (piano teacher) with a comparable word, “Klavierpädagog,” which contains a shade of irony and has more colorful vowels (see Critical Report, pp. 65–67, for parallel columns showing Goll’s poem and the text as it appears in this Edition). By September 1925 he had decided to call the work a cantata rather than a concerto. Weill’s handwritten cover for the holograph full score reads “Kantate,” and on 17 September he reported to UE: “My latest work, \textit{Der neue Orpheus}, Cantata for Soprano, Solo Violin, and Orchestra, has been accepted for performance by Lotte Leonard. Now I would like to offer it to [Erich] Kleiber or [Otto] Klemperer for the premiere. Would you be able to assist me here?”\textsuperscript{121} Though Leonard was scheduled to sing the premiere in early 1926, she had to cancel the performance at the last minute and would, in fact, never perform the work.

\textbf{ii. Printing of the Piano Reduction}

Whereas \textit{UE} had repeatedly postponed producing the Violin Concerto, it immediately began to prepare the piano reduction for \textit{Der neue Orpheus} (and conceivably created the orchestral parts at the same time), as a performance opportunity arose for February 1926. Much to Weill’s relief, \textit{UE} commissioned Arthur Willner to prepare the score. By the end of October
1925 Weill had a manuscript score in hand, and on 30 October he commented to UE:

I’ve received the piano reduction of Der neue Orpheus. It is well done on the whole, though here and there it is a bit crowded. As the reduction is written in pencil, it cannot be used for rehearsal purposes, and I think it would be appropriate to engrave it right away. . . . Albert Bing (Coburg) intends to perform Der neue Orpheus in Berlin with the Philharmonic and Lotte Leonard, probably in February. I think very highly of Bing and would be delighted to entrust him with this world premiere. Please send him the full score as soon as you have created the orchestral materials. Before the piano reduction of Der neue Orpheus goes to the engraver, I would like to suggest a few changes.121

Weill’s changes affected chiefly the left hand of the piano part, which he thinned out in a few spots by eliminating octave doublings (see Critical Report). According to UE records (Herstellkartei), on 28 November 1925 the production department handed Willner’s piano reduction to a staff member to prepare the manuscript for engraving. On 16 December UE sent the model to the company Hirsch for engraving, and on 6 January 1926 Weill confirmed receipt of the galley proofs, which he returned on 28 January. The piano reduction appeared on 18 March 1926.122 The full score, however, remained unpublished (and even uncopied until the 1970s, when UE photocopied Weill’s holograph so that conductors of the work’s still infrequent performances would no longer need to work with the original).

Assignment of an opus number for Der neue Orpheus turned out to be problematic. Weill’s holograph full score (Fh) carries two different numbers: op. 16 on the cover but op. 15 on the first page of music. This discrepancy caused some confusion in UE’s production department. On the card that chronicles the production flow of the printed piano reduction (Ve), a staff member changed the original entry, op. 16, to op. 15, whereas Willner’s manuscript (Vm) shows the reverse: Willner had entered 15, which a later hand changed to 16. Eventually, UE published the piano reduction as op. 15, but advertisements in UE’s house publications Musikblätter der Anbruch and Pult und Textkasten continued to list the cantata as op. 16 for some time.123 Moreover, UE published the piano-vocal score of Der Protagonist in November 1926 also as op. 15. This number bears some logic, since Weill composed Der Protagonist before Der neue Orpheus (even though the piano reductions came out in the opposite order). UE did not, however, subsequently change the opus number for Der neue Orpheus from 15 to 16. Instead, it suppressed the opus number for Der Protagonist in later advertisements for Weill’s works—typically found on the back covers of his published piano reductions and sheet music of individual numbers from his compositions—listing all the stage works without their opus numbers (as was fairly common at the time) and Der neue Orpheus with its actual published number (i.e., op. 15). The Kurt Weill Edition has elected to publish Der Protagonist (KWE I/1) as op. 15 and Der neue Orpheus as op. 16.

iii. Premiere and Reception in the Press

Shortly after Weill completed his composition, two performance opportunities arose for the 1925/26 season, although neither came to fruition. First, as guest conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, Weill’s former teacher Albert Bing expressed interest in performing Der neue Orpheus with Lotte Leonard. Then, in February 1926, Weill reported to UE that the work would instead be performed by the ISCM with Oskar Fried as conductor, again with Leonard as soloist.125 This performance was scheduled for early April 1926 (just days after the premiere of Der Protagonist in Dresden on 27 March), but on 6 April Weill informed UE that Leonard had canceled the performance on very short notice.126 In September 1926, four conductors considered presenting the premiere: Albert Bing still hoped to conduct the work in Berlin, but when he was noncommittal about a date, Weill wanted to offer the premiere to Otto Klemperer, also for a performance in Berlin.127 Independently, Hermann Scherchen toyed with the idea of performing the work in Leipzig but then changed his mind and programmed it for one of four concerts that he planned to conduct in Berlin. Finally, in response to Weill’s offer a year earlier, Erich Kleiber expressed interest in the work.128

Since May 1926 it had been clear that Weill’s second one-act opera, Royal Palace, would premiere at the Berlin Staatsoper under Kleiber during the 1926/27 season. For a variety of reasons, the date shifted from winter to spring. At the end of January 1927, when the March premiere was settled, Weill had the idea of presenting Der neue Orpheus “as a prologue of sorts” to Royal Palace.129 When the Staatsoper approached UE for materials, the publisher, unaware of these plans, reacted with irritation and cabled Weill, who responded on 10 February: “In answer to your telegram I can tell you that I was the one who initiated (and would welcome) the idea of presenting Orpheus at the same time as the Staatsoper, because the two works are closely connected, and that I have asked Jarnach to make the score available to me if that combination were to happen. By the way, Jarnach expressed concern about the condition of the Orpheus score that he received from you. I kindly urge you again to treat my handwritten orchestral scores with greater care, even if you don’t have them copied.”130

The premiere of Der neue Orpheus (in combination with Royal Palace and Manuel de Falla’s El retablo de maese Pedro) took place on Weill’s twenty-seventh birthday, 2 March 1927, at the Staatsoper’s venue on Platz der Republik (“Krolloper”). Kleiber conducted, Delia Reinhardt (who also performed the lead role of Dejanira in Royal Palace) sang, and the orchestra’s concertmaster, Rudolf Deman, performed the solo violin part. The latest issue of Blätter der Staatsoper contained the text of the cantata (librettos for the operas could be purchased separately). By early May 1927, the program had enjoyed seven performances; there is no record of any other performance of the work during Weill’s lifetime.131

The world premiere at Germany’s flagship opera house drew the greatest possible critical attention, a fact that also confirmed Weill’s new position as one of the leading composers of his generation. Among the many reviewers were the most respected critics of the day, including Adolf Weißmann, Karl Holl, Oscar Bie, Max Marschalk, Hugo Leichtentritt, Hermann Springer, and Heinrich Strobel. All had followed, and commented on, Weill’s compositional development from as early as 1922, focusing all the more intensely on him since the highly successful premiere of Der Protagonist. However, because the lion’s share of the reviews went to the two one-act operas, Weill’s cantata was mentioned only in passing.132 The opinions were anything but unanimous.133 Weißmann wrote for B.Z. am Mittag: After a few measures of wildly surging music, Delia Reinhardt steps in front of the curtain, completely calm, as the well-dressed woman of today. One realizes that what she has to declaim vocally under the title Der neue Orpheus matters to her, but Iwan Goll, the poet, and Kurt Weill, the composer, have put it into her mouth in such a form that she must be fairly uncomfortable presenting it in this particular context. For Der neue Orpheus may well be a good cabaret number. Orpheus is the artist who has adapted to the latest times, and yet he fails because things cannot be changed. . . . Kurt Weill takes this far more seriously than it appears under these circumstances. He’s turned it not into a cabaret number but rather a cantata, of course not without the aid of grotesque and satirical devices. After all, he is a devilishly clever fellow, one who knows how to cook up a dish. As long as he melodramatizes, oscillating between aria and chanson, he is not really entertaining. But the “Ackerstraße des Alltags” [everyday dirt road] strongly reminds him of Stravinsky’s L’histoire du soldat, with which he has a violin solo in common. In between he pokes fun at the folk song “Long, Long Ago.” Poor Delia Reinhardt! She is so noble, her voice so plain, beyond good and evil, that one suffers with her. Thank God Orpheus shot his heart to pieces. We no longer have to fear what he might bring.”134

In the Frankfurter Zeitung, Holl shared Weißmann’s reservations about Reinhardt singing the cantata:

One found that the composer’s strengths came off to far better advantage in his cantata Der neue Orpheus (text also by Goll), which, coming from the same source as Royal Palace and based on a related idea, preceded the opera as a quasi-overture. . . . A vaudeville act elevated to intellectual spheres.
For a melodramatically conceived soprano, solo violin, and an extremely diaphanous orchestra. Delia Reinhardt, too guileless in general and for this role especially, had to make the best of it on the apron of the Staatsoper's stage.  

Franz Köppen, writing for the Berliner Börsen-Zeitung, appreciated Weill's exploration of possibilities for a new genre and considered Reinhardt a good choice:

More convincing than the "tragic revue" [Royal Palace], in terms of true inventiveness and the ability to deliver memorable characterizations, is the cantata . . . Der neue Orpheus, which, presented as a prologue, is based on Iwan Goll's poem, which upholds the everlasting truth of the Orpheus myth and serves as a mythological grounding for the Royal Palace affair. In ways more compelling than the main work, it offers the possibility of finding new forms within the genre of melodramatic singing between aria and chanson. Admireable is the assuredness with which Delia Reinhardt completes the illusion that a style in the making is already achieved. . . . The followers of tomorrow's music, forcefully represented in the house, generated applause that left little room for opponents but produced many curtain calls for the entire creative team, including the composer and the poetirst.

Richard Wilde (8-Uhr Abendblatt) echoed Köppen's views:

Goll's poem of struggling artistry, beautiful in its conception, interweaves poetically scintillating metaphors with modern language trivia. And Weill follows suit. He switches from the lyricism of the aria to the cockiness of the chanson and creates a style out of the absence of style. His style, which he underscores with well-combined orchestral colors. In Delia Reinhardt he had an interpreter worthy of every praise.

Oscar Bie, on the other hand, thought (like Weißmann) that Weill's setting was too serious for the text:

At the beginning, Delia Reinhardt . . . performed in front of the curtain a modern cantata by Weill, which bears a certain inner connection to the opera. Der neue Orpheus, text also by Goll, wittier than the opera, fresh representation of good old Orpheus as he appears to the poor world of today, warm compresses on its wounds, one moment in a circus, the next at a veterans' association, as a lyric singer, a conductor of Mahler, in the movie theater, on the radio, Eurydice awaits him at the Schlesischer Bahnhof with ruffle hat and umbrella; the dumb, impovershomed world that always expects him, and he shoots himself in the waiting area. I believe here the text beats the music. The latter I would have imagined more sparkling, more pointed, more satirical, more restrained, so that it clearly carries the text. But it indulges in rich symphonics, as if it had to contrast the joke with a piece of lyricism. The score is interesting—only the solo violin of Orpheus, otherwise low strings, no horns—but it ought to shoot up high. Still a step along the path, like the opera itself, crossing border territories into a future that wants to be taken slowly.

The notoriously conservative Max Marschalk, who had not favorably reviewed a single work by Weill for the readers of the Vossische Zeitung, also found the cantata flawed:

Der neue Orpheus is also by Weill, a bitterly sincere setting of a satiric poem, again by Goll. Aria and chanson are supposed to create a blend, and here again, as in Royal Palace, the intent is to convey a tragic event through comic or grotesque means. What poet and composer are aiming for is perhaps not so bad after all, but judging from what they achieve, we see that they thoroughly lack the power to accomplish their mission. More so than in his music for Royal Palace, the composer, a predominantly dramatic spirit, fails to come up with lightness or a humorous smile in his cantata music. Even in cases where he wants to be funny—for example in the passage, "Everybody is Orpheus, Orpheus, who doesn't know him? Five feet eight inches tall, 190 pounds, brown eyes, narrow forehead, bowler hat, Catholic, sentimental, of democratic background, and a musician by trade"—he merely grimaces. On the whole, the music is dry and lacking in sensuality and not really individual; still, one has to admit that a good deal of sincerity and ability have been playfully squandered on unworthy tasks.

Hugo Leichtentritt merely filed a brief report for the Musical Courier:

"The opera was preceded by Weill's cantata Der neue Orpheus . . . Here Ivan Goll has parodied [sic], not without a certain humor, the struggle of the artist against the world. Weill has taken this cabaret number rather too seriously and has made of it a complicated piece of symphonic writing, with an orchestra a la Stravinsky, a toilsome and not very amusing affair, which passed without noticeable impact."  

No comments by Weill about the performance of Der neue Orpheus survive, and he mentioned the composition only once thereafter, when Goll, back in Paris, offered Royal Palace and Der neue Orpheus to Sergey Diaghilev in June 1927 for a performance by the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev, however, declined.

iv. Posthumous Performances

Until the mid-1970s Weill's cantata languished in relative obscurity. The first documented post-1927 performance took place in Vienna on 20 November 1959; Paul Angerer conducted the Konzerthausgemeinschaft's chamber orchestra, with Ilona Steingruber and Eduard Melkus as soloists. The Austrian radio aired a recording of that performance on 18 January 1960.

Prior to that UE, by way of its London affiliate Alfred A. Kalmus, had submitted full scores of several Weill works to the BBC for possible broadcast in Britain. Leonard Isaacs, the musical director for the BBC's "Third Programme," vehemently rejected Der neue Orpheus in an internal memorandum of 30 October 1952: "This work is undoubtedly competently written, but I find it very distasteful. Its value, if any, seems to me to be non-musical, and it represents just that diseased part of the European mentality which helped to bring about the catastrophe of Hitler and the War. I could only view its resuscitation, even on reputedly 'documentary grounds,' as having a positively bad effect. Its descent into vulgarity (e.g., p. 27, Var. III) and its all-too-clever 'wrong note technique' belong to a dead epoch—but one which is too near our own day to be viewed dispassionately. Unhealthy."  

Even though his fellow-evaluator Harry Croft-Jackson refuted Isaacs's views, and Norman Fulton, another colleague at the BBC, appreciated the composition despite some misgivings about the text, Isaacs's opinion as senior executive prevailed. On 23 January 1953 he summarized: "I have looked recently through quite a number of scores by Weill, and have come to the conclusion that not one of them is worth the trouble of reviving. These included: Der Neue Orpheus, Quodlibet for orchestra, Lindbergh-"flag and the violin concerto. The question of translation also occurs to me. The original German was in backstreet slum dialect. I think that this would be quite revolting in English." Isaacs's verdict would effectively ban Weill's music from the BBC's classical programs.

It would be several decades before performances of Der neue Orpheus in English-speaking countries finally reached appreciative audiences and critics. Beginning in the mid-1990s choreographers discovered the scenic quality of Der neue Orpheus—a quality that Weill and Goll had pointed out to Diaghilev. The first recording of Der neue Orpheus appeared in 1994.  

v. Performance Issues

Weill's unusual treatment of the string section in Der neue Orpheus has caused some confusion about the number of players required. Omitting violins, Weill splits both the viola and violincello sections into two subsections. A typed inventory from the early 1950s of handwritten performance materials for Weill's concert works published by UE gives the following number of desks for the string section: "--3/3/3/3/4" (i.e., viola I: 6 players, viola II: 6; violoncello I: 6; violoncello II: 6; and contrabass: 8). Thus, Weill envisioned a full-size orchestral string section minus its violins. Conductors will have to address the issue of seating the lower strings.

The vocal part requires a singer who can project above the substantial orchestral forces. Weill composed the cantata with the concert singer Lotte Leonard in mind and, in fact, dedicated the composition to her. The only performance during Weill's lifetime, however, was sung by Delia Reinhardt,
a celebrated opera singer who had appeared at the Munich and Berlin state operas as well as Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera.\textsuperscript{149} Weill advised: “I can imagine that the performer of Dejanira would present the piece, which, as she performed only with piano or a quartet—had developed a style of presenting chansons that intrigued even Giuseppe Verdi and Charles Gounod. She used facial expressions and body language, especially her arms and shoulders, to dramatize the works. Weill may have seen her perform in Berlin, where she successfully appeared after World War I.\textsuperscript{150}

The entry for Der neue Orpheus in UE’s prewar Werke-Katalog gives a performance duration of eighteen minutes, a statement that probably derives from information provided by Weill himself.\textsuperscript{151}

\textbf{Editorial Procedures}

Until 1965 all European performances of the Violin Concerto were conducted from Weill’s holograph full score (\textit{Fs}), while the piano-violin reduction (\textit{Se1}), published with separate violin part in December 1925, served as rehearsal and performance material for soloists. In the fall of 1929, in preparation for a performance of the concerto in North America, UE created a manuscript copy (\textit{Fm}) of Weill’s holograph full score (in the process of copying, the publisher sent Weill \textit{Fs} with a list of questions that the composer presumably answered). All three sources served as the basis for the printed full score (\textit{Fe1}), which UE published in June 1965.\textsuperscript{152} UE’s edition, however, deviates from \textit{Fs} (and \textit{Fm}) in that it does not adopt Weill’s idiosyncratic score order; instead it preses Weill’s unusual instrumental forces to the mold of the conventional instrumental concerto for solo instrument and symphony orchestra. This Edition, on the other hand, considers Weill’s specific score order an integral part of his conception of the Violin Concerto as a work for chamber orchestra written in a concer-tante style; it therefore adheres to the score order of \textit{Fs}.

Weill’s cantata Der neue Orpheus had been published only in the format of a piano reduction (\textit{Ve}), again with separate violin part, prepared by Arthur Willner and slightly revised by Weill (\textit{Vm}). It was not until the 1970s that UE prepared a photomechanical copy of \textit{Fh} that served as a rental score.

For both compositions, this Edition privileges \textit{Fs}. In those cases where the published piano reductions, \textit{Se1} and \textit{Ve}, respectively, provide more detailed information for the solo violin parts and, in the case of the cantata, for the soprano part, the Edition adopts this information and documents the editorial action in a critical note.

An additional source survives for Der neue Orpheus: Weill’s continuity draft (\textit{Dh}), which transmits the work nearly complete in \textit{Particelli} format. In three instances—mm. 37, 87, and 220—the sung text in \textit{Dh} deviates from that in \textit{Fs} and the later sources \textit{Vm/Ve}. Namely, in m. 37 \textit{Dh} has “Hörst du die Drehung der Erde” (do you hear the turning of the Earth), as opposed to “Hörst du die rostige Erde” (do you hear the rusty Earth) in \textit{Fs} and \textit{Vm/ Ve}; in m. 87, “Für die Demokratie” (pro-democracy) instead of “von der Demokratie” (of democratic background); and in m. 220, “Sonntags vor Kriegervereinen” (on Sundays before veterans’ associations) rather than “Abends in Kriegervereinen” (in the evenings at veterans’ associations). The Edition privileges \textit{Dh} for the sung text. The variants found in \textit{Fs} (and subsequently copied into \textit{Vm/ Ve}) appear to be slips of the pen that belie the neat handwriting Weill used when he copied the lyric into his full score. The deviating passages often duplicate words found elsewhere in the poem (a phenomenon frequently encountered in manually copied texts), and it is unlikely that these ungainly repetitions transmit consciously introduced alterations.

\textit{(Translated from the German by Elmar Juchem)}

\section*{Notes}


2. \textit{W-LLe9}, 34.

3. The following undated letter gives one of many examples of Weill’s discontent. In the summer of 1926 he wrote to Peter Bing: “The fabulous placements of Hindemith’s \textit{Cardillac}, which are solely the merit of Schott, leave me in utter despair about U.E.’s capabilities. Apparently they can’t even place \textit{Protagonist} in Munich, though that had seemed so promising, for Munich has just announced its season. Failure to build on the curtain with small gestures, somewhat in the style of Yvette Guilbert.” Weill, postcard to Ruth and Leo Sohn, no date [late June/early July]. WLRC, Series 30, Box 8 (Peter Bing Collection), Folder 11.


5. However, his letter to Peter Bing (cited in note 3) suggests that Weill had also begun an Intermezzo for two mandolins, pizzicato strings, and a few wind instruments.


7. \textit{W-LLe9}, 34.

8. It was not until the 1970s that UE prepared a photomechanical copy of \textit{Fh} that served as a rental score.

9. UE’s edition, however, deviates from \textit{Fs} (and \textit{Fm}) in that it does not adopt Weill’s idiosyncratic score order; instead it presents Weill’s unusual instrumental forces to the mold of the conventional instrumental concerto for solo instrument and symphony orchestra. This Edition, on the other hand, considers Weill’s specific score order an integral part of his conception of the Violin Concerto as a work for chamber orchestra written in a concerto style; it therefore adheres to the score order of \textit{Fs}.

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\textit{(Translated from the German by Elmar Juchem)}


8. Weill used the word "Concertino" in letters to Rudolf Kastner, 14 August 1925; and to Albert and Emma Weill, 23(3) October 1925; W-UE, 306.


39. "Ich kann Ihnen die erfreuliche Mitteilung machen, dass – wie mir telegrafisch Herr Direktor Hertzka sagte, dass Sie auch die Kosten für das Material des neuen, so überaus gelungenen Theater der Ausstellung, das von Perret erbaut ist, dem Russen Strawinsky, dem Engländer Berners, dem Rumänen Honegger, il est en possession d’un métier d’une sûreté tout à fait exceptionnelle. On avait d’ailleurs, il y a peu de temps, des concerts avec ses œuvres, mais les critiques étaient assez sévères. Comment va-t-il aujourd’hui?"

40. "Anbei sende ich Ihnen die erste, ausserordentlich günstige Besprechung der Pariser Uraufführung meines Violinkonzerts, die recht gewollt, als der Ausstellung selbst Deutschland nicht vertreten ist."


42. "[J]etzt ist die erste Probe vorbei. Vorläufig klingt es noch schaurig, ich fürchte, es wird auch morgen noch viel zu wünschen übrig lassen. Hoffen ist tatsächlich sehr unangenehm. Er kann weder dirigieren noch probieren – das ist böse. Die Leute lachen, dauernd falsch (was er nicht einmal merkt), u. d’Ziizelin ist keine Spur. Böse kann ihn ich nicht sein. Er tut mir leid. Denn er überrascht sich. Er ist weder auf neue Musik eingestellt noch kann er sie gestalten; aber er glaubt auf diese Weise

43. "Die Blasorchesterbegleitung des Weillschen Konzerts besonders, die recht gewollt, als der Ausstellung selbst Deutschland nicht vertreten ist."

nen Stimmen der Begleitung, ein wenig experimentierend scheint es fast, ganz neue

die Partitur mit der

machte; Briefe eines Dirigenten, 1920–1939

Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM): Ihre

56. "Die deutsche Sektion der Intern. Ges. f. neue Musik hat für das Zürcher Musikfest


63. The second chamber music concert was the festival’s fourth (and last) concert. It fea-

Wegen der Züricher Aufführung des


57. "Wegen der Züricher Aufführung des Violinkonzerts

58. "Die Sekretariat der I.G.N.M. beschwert sich darüber, dass für den 1. April

60. "Bei meiner Dresdener Premiere habe ich die Erfahrung gemacht, dass es uns immer

59. Weill, letter to UE, 18 March 1926; photocopy in WLRC, Series 41, Box 1.

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82. “Eine Prospektive des Weills konzerto was the violinist Georg Kulenkampff. In December 1928 one of UE’s journals announced a chamber concert in Magdeburg with Walter Beck as conductor, as well as Weill’s concerto, the program was supposed to include works by Schenberg and Janacek among others (Publ. und Taktstock u. a., no. 10 [December 1928]: 126; see also Anbruch 11, no. 1 [January 1929]: 52). As no reviews have come to light, and the Magdeburg city archive holds no documents that would confirm a performance, the planned concert was presumably canceled.

83. “In addition to his performances in Dessau and Zurich, documentation exists for the performances in Berlin in 1927 and 1929, and in the last year of their marriage, Albert and Emma Weill, 22 July 1926; “Auch diese frühe Arbeit des in wenigen Jahren zu einer repräsentativen Erscheinung gewordenen Klaviersolisten Konzertisten” by Adolf Schering, 20 December 1933. As norecordings of W-LL(e), p. 47.

84. “In addition to his performances in Dessau and Zurich, documentation exists for the performances in Berlin in 1927 and 1929, and in the last year of their marriage, Albert and Emma Weill, 22 July 1926; “Auch diese frühe Arbeit des in wenigen Jahren zu einer repräsentativen Erscheinung gewordenen Klaviersolisten Konzertisten” by Adolf Schering, 20 December 1933. As no records of W-LL(e), p. 47.

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86. “Interview with Davis (see note 82). Frenkel recalls a last-minute substitution in the Bach concerto, this time with Dimitri Mitropoulos (who had studied piano with Busoni) conducting. That concert—the first of four in a series called Music for Moderns, which premiered in February 1930: 379.

87. “In addition to his performances in Dessau and Zurich, documentation exists for the performances in Berlin in 1927 and 1929, and in the last year of their marriage, Albert and Emma Weill, 22 July 1926; “Auch diese frühe Arbeit des in wenigen Jahren zu einer repräsentativen Erscheinung gewordenen Klaviersolisten Konzertisten” by Adolf Schering, 20 December 1933. As no records of W-LL(e), p. 47.

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90. “In addition to his performances in Dessau and Zurich, documentation exists for the performances in Berlin in 1927 and 1929, and in the last year of their marriage, Albert and Emma Weill, 22 July 1926; “Auch diese frühe Arbeit des in wenigen Jahren zu einer repräsentativen Erscheinung gewordenen Klaviersolisten Konzertisten” by Adolf Schering, 20 December 1933. As no records of W-LL(e), p. 47.
was sympathetic to the idea but referred Frenkel to Associated Music Publishers, with whom he should check whether a conflicting agreement existed: photocopy of UE's letter in WRLC, Series 30, Box 12, Folder 24.

98. Unidentified clipping; WLA, Box 83, Folder 9.

99. Dates in parentheses give year of recording (not release):

100. The stereophonic recording (Westminster WST-17087) omits mm. 235–267 of the third movement; Irving Kolodin's liner notes make no mention of the cut. In addition, the recording in effect skips m. 197 of the same movement.

101. It was the only score available in Vienna at the time (the manuscript copy, Fh, was sympathetic to the idea but referred Frenkel to Associated Music Publishers, with whom he should check whether a conflicting agreement existed: photocopy of UE's letter in WRLC, Series 30, Box 12, Folder 24.

102. A penciled entry on the first page of the recording in effect skips m. 197 of the same movement. Irving Kolodin's liner notes make no mention of the cut. In addition, the recording does not show the cut, although it has some cryptic markings at m. 235.

103. The 1955 recording had used a version of Scherchen's notorious practice, usually accompanied by photocopy in WLRC, Series 41, Box 2. Weill's reply does not survive.

104. Reviews of performances in Dessau (1925), Halle, and Dortmund (1926): Dessauer Zeitung, 30 October 1925; Das Orchester (Berlin), 1 November 1926; Tima- nia (Dortmund), 5 December 1928; Dortmunder General-Anzeiger, 11 December 1928; Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung, 8 February 1929.


106. "Im übrigen bitte ich Dich nochmals, den Xylophonistn nicht aus den Augen zu verlieren (er muss es auswendig können u. für die Doppelgriffe am Schluss muß er die Hölzer sich zusammenbringen)." Weill, letter to Peter Bing, 22 November [erste: September] 1926; WRLC, Series 30, Box 8 (Peter Bing Collection), Folder 12.


125. Letter of 26 February 1926; W-UE, 29.
127. Letter of 17 November [recte: September] 1926; W-UE, 40. (In the second half of September 1926, Weill similarly misdated at least two other letters: one to his parents ["22.11.26"] and one to Peter Bing [also "22.11.26"]; both were written, without doubt, in September. W-Fam corrects the error, but W-UE does not.)
128. See Weill, letter to Peter Bing, 22 November [recte: September] 1926.
130. "In Beantwortung Ihres Telegrammes telelte ich Ihnen mit, dass die Anregung der gleichzeitigen Aufführung meines Orpheus in der Staatsoper, die ich wegen des inneren Zusammenhangs beider Stücke sehr begrüssen würde, von mir aus ging, u. dass ich Jarnach gebehen und ihm in der Partitur mir zur Verfügung zu lassen für den Fall, dass diese Kombination zustande kommen würde. Übrigens äusserte dabei Jarnach sein Befremden darüber, in welchem Zustand Sie ihm die Orpheus-Partitur geschickt haben. Ich bitte Sie nochmals dringend, meine Manuskript-Partituren, wenn Sie sie schon nicht kopiert lassen, mir entsenden."
131. WE had submitted a piano reduction of Der neue Orpheus to the offices of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musik-Verein (ADMV), which was planning its fifty-seventh annual festival (held in Krefeld in 1927). Because he thought it was difficult to judge the work from the piano reduction alone, Weill instructed UE to send the full score directly to Jarnach, who appears to have been a member of the program committee, Weill, postcard to UE, 3 February 1927; photocopy in WLRC, Series 41, Box 1. The ADMV performed Weill's Quintet, op. 9, on 12 June 1927.
132. See Weill, letter to UE, 2 May 1927; W-UE, 60. Hans Heinseimer, head of UE's stage division, mentions nine performances for Royal Palace in a letter to Weill, 7 Feb ruary 1927; W-UE, 19.
136. Berlin, Too Has Its Jazz Opera," Musical Courier 94, no. 12 (24 March 1927): 5. In light of this positive review, Delia Reinhardt had decided to incorporate influences of an American jazz opera in the event, the nationalist, right-wing press also began to take note of Weill. Despite the fact that the...
ciality. The attempt to bring the dance hall into the concert room was considered very ‘modern’ in 1930, when the Dreigroschenoper was the rage in Berlin, but it has entirely lost its topicality, and now-a-days simply sounds low-class.”

146. The work’s first stage performance took place in Krefeld, Germany, in April 1995. Bernard Gillardeau and Madeleine Bart choreographed the piece for an evening’s program, “Liebesleid und Liebeslust” (love’s sorrows and joys), that combined Weill’s cantata with Claudio Monteverdi’s “Lamento d’Arianna” and Carl Orff’s Carmina Burana. Der neue Orpheus featured Andrea Hanson (soprano) and Klaus Peter Diller (solo violin). The program was repeated in 1996 in Mönchengladbach. Other stage productions were mounted in Dessau in 1997 and in 2004, choreographed by Arila Siegert and Gregor Seyffert, respectively.


149. Reinhardt (1892–1974) was known for her Mozart repertory but also for such roles as Octavian (Der Rosenkavalier), the Empress (Die Feu ohne Schatten), Elsa (Lohengrin), and Elisabeth (Tannhäuser).


151. In a letter of 22 March 1930, UE had inquired about the performance durations for five of Weill’s concert works: Quodlibet, Frauentanz, Violin Concerto, Der neue Orpheus, and Das Berliner Requiem; see note 106.