7

JAZZ RECEPTION IN WEIMAR GERMANY: IN SEARCH OF A SHIMMY FIGURE

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As in America, though without benefit of an advocate as authoritative as F. Scott Fitzgerald, who actually coined the term, the Twenties have gone down in German cultural history as the "Jazz Age." So domineering is our picture of bare-kneed flappers dancing the shimmy with tuxedoed lounge lizards in post-war Berlin, a city caught in a frenzy of sexual excess and political thuggery, that few have bothered to ask those mundane questions so obvious to social historians: Who actually consumed this music, and in what amounts? Where did Germany's jazz originate? How was it imported, learnt, and disseminated? The meagre statistics that have emerged in answer to these questions are sobering. Germany's Jazz Age, it seems, was restricted to a small segment of the urban middle class; legitimate American jazz[1] was known only to a tiny subculture of aficionados, none of them in positions of influence; record issues and radio audiences were ludicrously small by today's standards; working-class young people continued as before to spend their leisure time reading penny dreadfuls or playing cards at home with their parents, while Germans in the towns and countryside, who then as now made up the bulk of the population, had little inkling of the nature of this music and still less desire to consume it.[2] The Jazz Age, it seems, was a creation not of German society but of the Weimar media. The music, dance forms, and cultural epiphenomena that bore this label captured the imagination of German journalists and intelligentsia to such an extent as to elevate jazz, a music entirely foreign to German traditions and ethos, to the level of what was called by one of its champions a *Zeitfrage* – an "issue of our times."[3]

German art composers could hardly help but respond to a music so massively represented in the media, whether their response was negative (Schoenberg), enthusiastic (Krenek), playful (Hindemith), socio-critical (Weill), or simply opportunistic (Eugen d'Albert). Few composers could or wished to maintain the lofty detachment of an Anton Webern or Ivan Vishnegradsky, least of all when their works were meant to engage with those institutions of Weimar society where music was actually performed. But to what aspects of jazz and jazz performance did these composers respond? How did they acquire their knowledge of jazz? Did

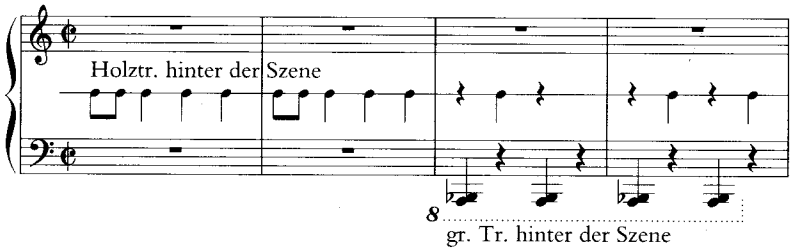
they learn from listening to live performances, or to studio recordings, or from other sources altogether? Above all, what sort of music constituted jazz in the minds of German art composers, dance-band musicians, and publicists? To answer these questions we shall begin by narrowing our focus to one of the institutions of Weimar's musical culture most strongly affected by the jazz craze: the opera house.

I

From Helsinki to Zagreb, from New York to Odessa, not to mention dozens of stages in Weimar Germany itself, Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* was granted a box-office success comparable only to the great cinema hits of D. W. Griffith and Charlie Chaplin. Assuming a conservative estimate of one thousand spectators at any of its nearly five hundred performances from 1926 to 1929, we arrive at a total of half a million listeners, a figure exceeding by a factor of fifty the retail sales of the greatest hit recordings of the day. In purely quantitative terms, then, Krenek was as much a part of the German Jazz Age as Paul Whiteman or Al Jolson, and far more so than Armstrong or Ellington. For many Germans Krenek's assimilation of jazz, especially in *Jonny's Blues*, the opera's "hit single", was authoritative and definitive. To understand the nature of this assimilation let us narrow our focus still further.

Jonny's anxiously awaited first entrance occurs 573 bars into the score. At this point the music radically changes character and we hear, announcing the appearance of the work's title-hero, the rhythm in Example 7.1 played on a *Holztrommel*, or woodblock, with punctuation from the bass drum:[4]

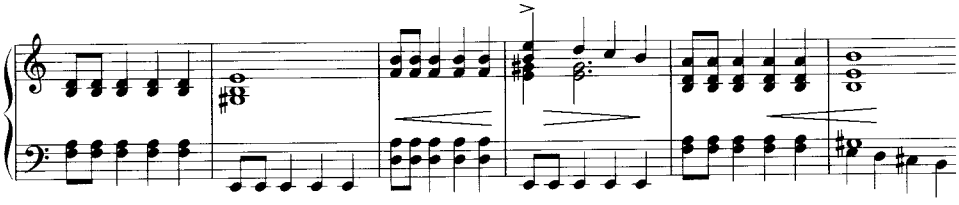
Example 7.1 Ernst Krenek: *Jonny spielt auf*, piano-vocal score, mm. 573ff



Our focus has now narrowed down to a single rhythm, divested of melody, timbre, and other features associated with jazz. Yet this figure, played behind the stage and isolated from the rest of the orchestra, is obviously meant to be immediately recognizable as jazz. It is the first clear indication in the work of a jazz ambience and introduces a character who, together with his female namesake Yvonne, will embody a jazz milieu and morality for the rest of the work. The

figure is immediately expanded to form the rhythmic basis of Jonny's first number – a *Shimmy*, we are told in the score – taken at a breakneck "gramophone tempo" by an invisible jazz band (see Example 7.2).

Example 7.2 Ernst Krenek: *Jonny spielt auf*, piano-vocal score, mm. 611ff



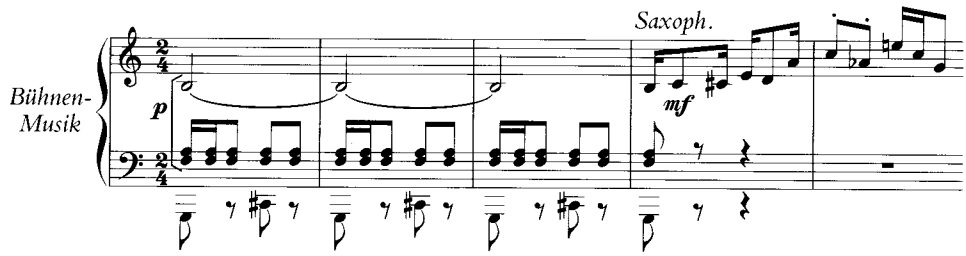
At this point, as latter-day observers, we might be inclined to agree with the critic of the New York première who acidly remarked of Krenek's work that "the supposedly American features . . . are about as American as a *Konditorei* on the *Kurfürstendamm*".[5] This figure has little to do with 1920s jazz as we know it today. We listen in vain to the work of Jelly Roll Morton or King Oliver, Sidney Bechet or Louis Armstrong, for a percussion figure remotely like it.[6] Not even the pseudo-jazz of Paul Whiteman, the *soi-disant* King of Jazz, can offer us a starting point to explain Jonny's shimmy. Yet this inconspicuous figure is more interesting than might seem at first glance. We will now trace Jonny's woodblock figure through the music of the Weimar period. It will lead us through many levels of musical life and performance in Germany – from opera to popular songwriting and humble dance-band music, from radio and the sheet-music trade to the greatest art composers of the day – touching on several levels of culture and yet showing points of intersection between them. At times we will abandon the figure to discuss points that stand in need of greater illumination. But in the end we shall return to it, perhaps having overturned a number of received opinions about jazz reception and jazz performance in Weimar Germany.

II

Let us remain at the level at which we entered: at the opera house. The Jonny figure, as it happens, is by no means specific to Krenek's opera. Indeed, we discover it in a good many of the "jazz operas" or related stage works that have left such an indelible imprint on our popular image of Weimar music. One place to look for it is in the works of the many young composers who closed ranks behind Krenek and Weill to form the new anti-expressionist idiom of the late 1920s. Among these was the Polish-born composer Karol Rathaus (1895–1954). Known today primarily for his superior work as a teacher at Queen's College in New York, Rathaus was at the time a venturesome writer of *Zeitopern* and had

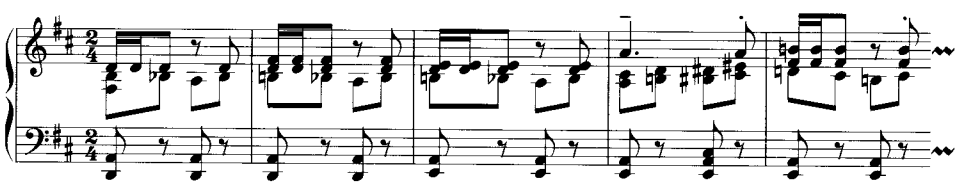
just been accepted into the Universal catalogue. His ballet-pantomime *Der letzte Pierrot* (1926, perf. 1927), as the Schoenbergian allusion of its title implies, is a study in the demise of expressionism. At the work's climax Pierrot is forced to dance a *pas de deux* with a flapper and finds himself unequal to the eroticism of the situation, symbolized by an onstage jazz band of the sort already familiar from *Jonny spielt auf* and soon to become de rigueur in Weimar opera from Eugen d'Albert to Max Brand. We have no trouble recognizing the rhythmic figure, which, as in *Jonny*, announces a scene change to a jazz milieu (see Example 7.3).[7]

Example 7.3 Karol Rathaus: *Der letzte Pierrot*, piano score, p. 30

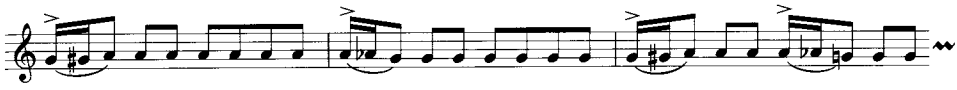


Another of these composers was Wilhelm Grosz (1894–1939), a musician whose career and aesthetic outlook parallel those of Kurt Weill in several important respects. Where Weill collaborated with Bertolt Brecht, Grosz worked with the playwright and early cinematic theorist Béla Balázs to produce, among other works, a joint ballet-pantomime *Baby in der Bar* (1927). Here Balázs, indulging in a penchant for Freudian depth psychology already apparent in his librettos for Béla Bartók,[8] has a proletarian woman abandon her newborn infant in an upper-class cocktail lounge. In a demonstration of infant sexuality, the Baby then proceeds to seduce the customers to the strains of blues, tango, and foxtrot. At the work's climax, the hapless head waiter succumbs to a "shimmy" (Example 7.4), whose rhythm has already been announced thematically at the opening of the score (Example 7.5):[9]

Example 7.4 Wilhelm Grosz: *Baby in der Bar*, piano score

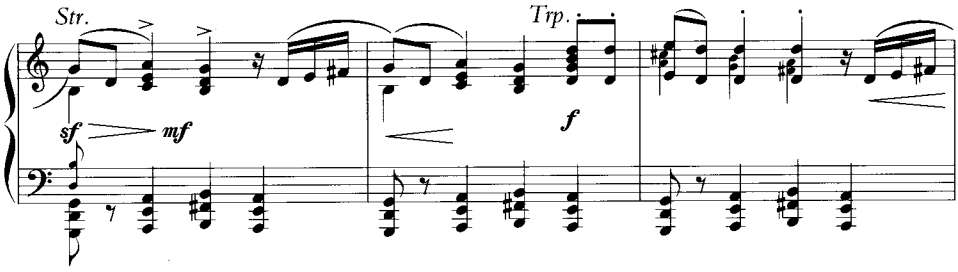


Example 7.5 Wilhelm Grosz: *Baby in der Bar*, piano score



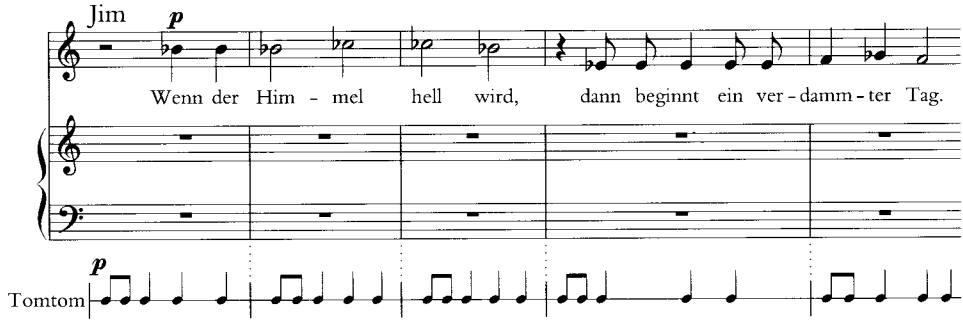
Once again the Jonny figure is unmistakable – and once again it occurs at a dramaturgically critical juncture. As in the Krenek and Rathaus examples, it is the contrast between atonal expressionism and the jazz of the *grand monde* that forms the motor of the work. The same figure is found in the opening pages of Grosz/Balázs's lightweight parody of the silent film industry, *Achtung, Aufnahme!* (1930), announcing the work's commitment to a jazz ambience. Here, too, it is given the puzzling label "shimmy" (see Example 7.6).[10]

Example 7.6 Wilhelm Grosz: *Achtung, Aufnahme!* piano score



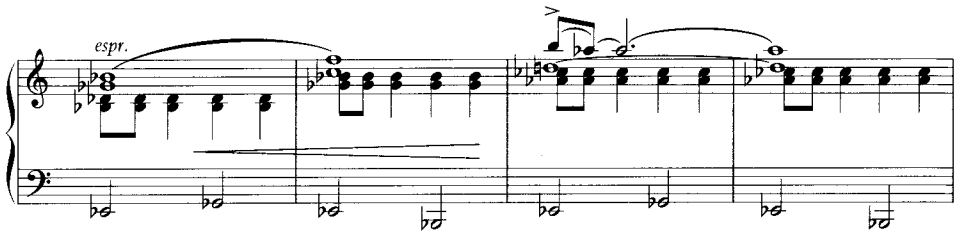
But we needn't confine ourselves to the compositional second rank to find other examples of the same figure. One of the earliest scenes conceived for Kurt Weill's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, Jimmy Mahoney's nocturnal soliloquy before his trial and execution (No. 17), originated in the lost opera *Na und?* of 1926. (This is, perhaps, one reason why it stands out musically and "culinarily" from the rest of the score.)[11] As in Krenek's work, Jimmy is introduced by a solo percussion instrument, this time not by a woodblock but by a tom-tom or, as it was known in the jazz parlance of the time, a Chinese drum. At a fraction of Krenek's tempo we hear the same rhythmic motif that introduced Jonny (see Example 7.7).[12]

Example 7.7 Kurt Weill: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, p. 251



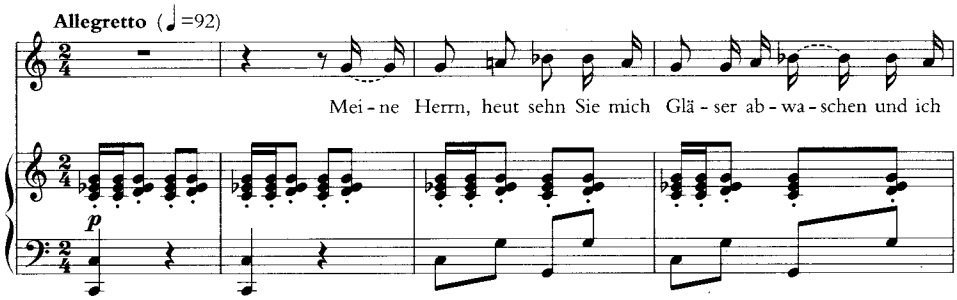
Once again the motif is elaborated to form the rhythmic basis of the entire number, whether in its original 4/4 or expanded to 6/4 in the refrain (see Example 7.8).

Example 7.8 Kurt Weill: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, p. 251



Weill, then, was aware of this jazz figure and used it at a crucial moment in the dramaturgy of one of his major stage works.[13] Nor need we look far to find other examples of it in his music. The well-known "Lied der Seeräuber-Jenny," or at least the jazz section of it as opposed to its Judeo-Slavic refrain, is unthinkable without it (see Example 7.9).[14]

Example 7.9 *Brecht Liederbuch*, ed. Fritz Henneberg, p. 56



These examples – and others could easily be found – will suffice to show that our figure was not unique to Krenek's *Jonny*, but was a key element in the *Kunstjazz* of the 1920s.[15] As inconspicuous as it may seem, it was in fact central to the musical thought of those Weimar composers who adapted what they considered to be jazz for their stage works. It was set aside for crucial moments in the drama, heralding the entrance of a jazz backdrop, precipitating a turning point in the hero's fortunes, or standing out by being placed in the spotlight of an onstage jazz combo. Yet this does not help explain its provenance. Why would Krenek attach this rhythm to a specifically American character, Jonny, as though it were as self-evidently American as the ragtime syncopations that greet the California miners in Puccini's *Fanciulla del West*? Why was it termed a "shimmy" when we know from countless examples in popular music, beginning with "I wish I could shimmy like

my sister Kate," that it bears little if any relation to the historical American shimmy of the 1920s? And where, outside of German opera scores, should we begin to look for it in order to establish its jazz pedigree? These questions should be borne in mind as we probe more deeply into German jazz reception of the 1920s.

III

Two misconceptions haunt all discussions of the impact of jazz on the musicians of Weimar Germany. One is that the music they confronted was legitimate jazz; the other, that it was specifically American. Neither was the case, and yet much research has followed these false premises in order to establish that Weimar composers listened enthusiastically to Sam Wooding's or Claude Hopkins' live appearances in 1925–26, lauded the performances of Sidney Bechet and Tommy Ladnier, and avidly absorbed the classic recordings of legitimate black-American jazz. In fact, the Wooding and Hopkins performances, though effectively reported in the German media (thanks mainly to the cult of Josephine Baker), were primarily socio-cultural rather than musical events: Bechet and Ladnier remained anonymous backup musicians,[16] and legitimate black-American jazz, as apart from its diluted commercial imitations, was unknown in Germany as a concept until 1930.[17] The rare and isolated appearances of legitimate jazz in Weimar culture were overwhelmed by the great mass of commercial syncopated dance music, especially Germany's home-grown product. Weill's much-quoted words of 1926 in praise of black-American improvised jazz have to be seen in their context: a critique of radio dance music, followed by words of almost equally high praise for the "genuine jazz" of Ernö Rapée (a Hungaro-American who led the stage band at Radio City Music Hall in New York) and the popular German bandleaders Julian Fuhs, Bernhard Etté and Marek Weber.[18] Krenek's documented enthusiasm for the Chocolate Kiddies must be seen against his later remarks on the sources of his jazz borrowings: "Real jazz was unknown in Europe. We gave the name jazz to anything that came out of America."[19] Only in his American exile, then, and not with the Chocolate Kiddies, did he confront "real jazz." Just as Krenek's quintessential jazz musician Jonny can, with equal ease, sing a spiritual, a work song, a popular dance tune, or a snatch of Stephen Foster, jazz to Weimar Germany was an all-embracing cultural label attached to any music from the American side of the Atlantic, or indeed to anything new and exciting, whether this be the "jazz time" of American automobiles or "Maori jazz from New Zealand." Weimar composers inherited a concept of jazz vastly more inclusive than our own. Jonny's banjo and the cinema-like automobile chase of Act 2, the live jazz broadcast on radio and Jonny's uninhibited love life: all were props from the same arsenal of Americanesque effects which bore the label "jazz".[20]

For the purposes of this essay, however, we shall limit our focus to the assimilation of musical techniques and try to fit them into the evolution of Germany's post-war commercial music. It is important to bear in mind that both Weill and Krenek formed their basic notions of jazz music in the early 1920s, at a time when no American jazz musicians had yet visited central Europe, and indeed when no or negligibly few American recordings were available. Krenek's jazz scores can be traced from the early "Foxtrott" in his *Suite*, Op. 13a (1922; published 1923), and more importantly from the superior predecessor to *Jonny*, his comic opera *Der Sprung über den Schatten*, which was composed in 1922–23 at the peak of Germany's hyperinflation. Weill, too, had dabbled in modern dance forms long before his purportedly first essays in jazz assimilation, *Der neue Orpheus* (1925, perf. 1927) and *Royal Palace* (1926). The Weill-Lenya Research Center at Yale University preserves sketches and fragments of exercises in dance idioms, some of them worked out to a high level of contrapuntal and motivic intricacy.[21] All of them, according to David Drew,[22] date from the early 1920s. Let us put these surprisingly early dates into the context of Weimar Germany's popular music industry.

Germany's reception of American jazz and commercial dance music differed from France's or England's in several major respects. The effects of the post-war blockade, the unwillingness of allied companies to reestablish economic ties with a pariah nation, and particularly the effects of the hyperinflation, which still could be felt long after the introduction of the Reichsmark in October 1923, effectively isolated Germany culturally from the rest of western Europe. The number of American recordings imported into Germany was negligible, and in the early 1920s virtually nil.[23] Even those American jazz musicians such as Harry Pilcer, Louis Mitchell, or Arthur Briggs (not to mention Sidney Bechet), who settled in England or France, avoided Germany until the late 1920s for the simple reason that its money was worthless. The mass media, rightly regarded today as the most important vehicles for the dissemination of legitimate jazz, were non-existent or underdeveloped. The matrix-exchange program, which accounted for the bulk of the import of American jazz and dance recordings, had yet to be introduced (it was not fully underway in Germany until 1927); the first radio stations were only established in 1923–24; the only medium that could carry on the process of international cultural exchange, the printing industry, was limited by its nature to commercial music rather than an improvised art such as jazz. Yet the German urban middle classes, perhaps more so than in any other European country, were seized by a jazz fever in the early 1920s that reached the proportions of a psychosocial phenomenon. What was the music that fed this mania and gave Hindemith, Krenek, and Weill their initial and formative impressions of jazz?

The music, as might be expected, was German, not American. German commercial musicians invented their own brand of jazz, based on a certain amount of

lore regarding the fabled music from America, and grafted it onto their own tradition of salon dance music and the café music of the *Stehgeiger*, which could at least boast a heritage of improvisation in the untutored "gypsy" music that had so impressed Liszt almost a century earlier. It is no accident that almost all of the celebrated German jazz bandleaders were violinists with Hungaro-Slavic names such as Marek Weber, Ernö Geiger, Barnabas von Gécay, or Dajos Béla; and for the same reason it is no accident that Krenek's Jonny "strikes up" with a violin rather than the banjo and saxophone that he also carried about in his luggage. To the mass public of Weimar Germany, a jazz musician was typically a *Stehgeiger*, and no amount of polemicizing by jazz adherents or purists was able to change this fact.[24]

What about the recording industry? Horst Lange's exhaustive discography of jazz on German 78 shellac recordings[25] creates a false impression unless we take the trouble to examine the order numbers and establish the unstated facts, so essential to reception history, of when these recordings appeared and in what numbers. Despite the impressive number of titles by major American jazz figures apparently available on German 78-rpm discs, only a tiny fraction of them actually appeared in Germany during the 1920s. Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings largely remained unissued until the late 1930s during the German "Swing craze" (a little-known and seemingly self-contradictory phenomenon), by which time Armstrong had developed a commercial following even in Nazi Germany.[26] The Red Hot Peppers recordings of Jelly Roll Morton appeared even later, when the tireless Horst Lange discovered the matrices unissued and forgotten in a Berlin warehouse after World War II. The only Morton title to appear in Weimar Germany was *The Chant* (1926).[27] None of the titles of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band or the 1922–23 recordings of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, so essential to the proliferation of early jazz in England and America, was issued in Germany. Small wonder, then, that these names and virtually all others from the world of legitimate American jazz fail to occur among the millions of words published on "jazz" by the hyperactive Weimar press.[28]

The reason for this was quite simple. The matrix-exchange program, worked out at high corporate levels by the German and American recording monopolies,[29] followed a simple policy of bartering German classical recordings for American dance music. The actual matrices chosen for exchange excluded *a priori* the so-called "race records" on which most legitimate jazz of the time was released. Even a well-informed Parisian jazz expert such as Hugues Panassié, with his "shelves and shelves of records," was entirely unaware of the great black jazz artists until enlightened in 1929 by a visiting white American clarinettist who explained to him the American system of segregated record catalogues.[30] Weimar Germany, being still more isolated from American sources than France, was even less *au fait* with American developments. Instead, the matrix-exchange program fed its

unsuspecting public a jazz fare made up largely of sweet white dance bands such as Guy Lombardo, Paul Specht, and above all the two giants of Weimar's jazz reception, Vincent Lopez and Paul Whiteman. It was this music, once the matrix-exchange program began in earnest around 1926, that nurtured Weimar Germany's image of jazz, that provided models for its own commercial musicians, and that dominated the catalogues of its recording companies.[31] It should therefore come as no surprise to learn that some leading German jazz writers (including Theodor Adorno and even Lange himself) energetically fought what they considered the "myth of black jazz." Jazz, for Weimar Germany, was a white dance music based on but entirely superseding some colorful black musical traditions. Black musicians, in Adorno's immortal words, merely contributed the "coloristic effect of their skin" to a white man's art.[32]

Even those few legitimate jazz recordings that did enter the German market did so in numbers that would be considered negligible by the standards of today's commercial music industry. A German jazz record was first issued in a run of 500 copies.[33] Not until this stock had been depleted, as very seldom happened, was the work reissued. Only major hits by Paul Whiteman, Al Jolson, or the now-forgotten banjo virtuoso Harry Reser could expect larger press runs, namely of about 10,000 copies. Mass culture, though structured roughly as we know it today, was in its infancy, and it is highly likely that many more Weimar Germans heard the music of Krenek's *Jonny*, and especially "Jonny's Blues," than ever heard a note of legitimate American jazz.

Nor did this situation change with the introduction of radio in the mid-1920s. German radio stations had three options in their transmission of jazz: broadcasts by their own radio dance orchestras, live broadcasts from dance halls and jazz locales, and the broadcasting of gramophone recordings. With remarkable unanimity they settled for the first option, decking out their standard radio dance orchestras with jazz titles and producing that music which occasioned Kurt Weill's excoriating review of 1926 (see note 18).[34] Broadcasts from dance halls, pioneered in Switzerland from luxury hotels, were less frequent (yet frequent enough that Krenek could draw on this cliché for the climax of *Jonny*).[35] But given the paucity of American musicians in Weimar Germany the result was a further massive reinforcement of the German jazz surrogate. As for recordings, it was not possible to broadcast them until the late 1920s, after the introduction of the electrostatic cartridge had led to the production of discs of broadcast quality. By this time, however, Weimar Germany's image of jazz and American dance music was already fixed, and radio programmers, intent on satisfying the existing expectations of a mass public rather than forming new ones, simply aired standard German dance fare by Julian Fuhs and Dajos Béla, or hit tunes by Friedrich Holländer and Nico Dostal, all under the name of jazz. A study of the weekly program guides

issued by several major German broadcasters during the decade reveals that of 12,500 jazz titles known to have been broadcast, only three were by Ellington and none was by Armstrong.[36]

Surprisingly, the greatest turnover by far in commercial music was made neither by the gramophone industry, which, as already mentioned, had tiny pressings by today's standards, nor by the radio networks, which were already public institutions dependent on government funding, but by the sheet-music trade. There were several reasons for this. First, the system of musical copyright was based on printed music, giving music publishers control of royalties. Second, and immediately germane to the present study, Weimar's commercial musicians, trained in conservatories and experienced in the printed salon and march music of the Wilhelmine period, had no tradition of or aptitude for improvisation. The natural instinct of a German musician interested in acquiring a knowledge of jazz was to turn to the printed page, whether this be the latest dance hit from Berlin or the leading guide on pseudo-improvised instrumental breaks. We will later see that this was also the natural instinct of art composers.

IV

A fascinating and amusing first-person account of the early days of jazz in Weimar Germany has survived in an obscure source, a weekly trade magazine published in Düsseldorf whose lengthy title – *Der Artist: Zentral-Organ der Zirkus, Varieté-Bühnen, reisenden Kapellen und Ensembles* [The Acrobat: central organ for circuses, variety stages, travelling bands and ensembles] – reveals its origins in nineteenth-century vaudeville and music hall. In 1920, shortly after the end of hostilities, a young German bandleader from Dortmund was hired to play dance music in a Swiss luxury hotel. The first-person account of his difficulties, published in 1926, confirms many of the points made above regarding the early reception of jazz:[37]

> Even at the beginning of 1920, at a time still within recent memory, there was scarcely a single musician in the whole of Germany who knew what a jazz band or a shimmy actually is. For those who doubt this claim I can offer my own experiences as proof. Let me begin, however, by stressing that the German musician should not be reproached for his ignorance. The main reason for it lay in the sad fact that at that time Germany was still sealed off from its "enemies abroad," even though that gigantic mental fermata, also known as the World War, was well and truly over. Our opinion of the nature and properties of the jazz band was therefore based on very vague and obscure rumours.

Germany's isolation, we shall see, was not only political but cultural and economic. Having received his contract, our musician hired his sidemen, packed his library, and moved to St Moritz, where he proceeded to play antiquated German foxtrots

(*Fuchstänze*) to fashionable audiences from England and France. He soon discovered that he would have to modernize his repertoire:

> We were regaled with whisky sodas for our serenades and Ave Marias, but our *Fuchstänze* were only greeted with puzzled expressions. One evening after we had primarily obliged our audiences with *Fuchstänze*, an Englishman approached the bandstand and courteously asked for a foxtrot. Astonished, I asked him with equal courtesy whether he hadn't noticed that we had been playing nothing but foxtrots for the last hour. He replied, with an embarrassed smile, that he had followed our playing with utmost attention: just what we had played he couldn't very well say, but he could say with certainty that there wasn't a foxtrot amongst it. . . . Only too soon was I to discover that the Englishman was right, and that our German foxtrots of the time turned out on closer inspection to be nothing more than somewhat exotically syncopated *Rheinländers* and *Rixdorfers* in disguise.

Our musician, then, lacked an up-to-date repertoire. The way he went about acquiring it is revealing of the double dependence of German dance musicians on Anglo-American publishers and on the printed page:

> Before the war broke out I had possessed, for many years running, a standing order with the London publishers Francis & Day, who sent me new Anglo-American titles *en masse* for a fixed annual sum. My attempts to renew this subscription after the war, from Dortmund, failed miserably: my letters brought no answers at all since at that time any Englishman considered it beneath his dignity to enter into business relations with a German. . . . From St Moritz, however, the standing order went off without a hitch, and in a matter of days I received a pile of the latest English and American foxtrots, a pile so large that I had to add a zwieback crate to my navy locker.

In short, our Dortmund musician obtained his repertoire, not by consulting recorded examples or listening to other musicians, but by turning to foreign music publishers. At this point, still in the year 1920, he confronted the word "jazz" for the first time:

> Hardly had we rounded the foxtrot cliffs when a new danger reared its head. One day the hotelier let drop that he intended to re-engage us for the coming winter season and that the contract was ready to be signed. Then he added a condition: I would have to play "jazzband" (he actually said *Tschetzpend*). I heard this exotic word for the first time in my life, and I hadn't the foggiest notion what it meant. Since, however, my principle is the Horatian maxim *nil admirari* (never be fazed) I replied with the iron mien of an Assyrian charioteer: "But of course, Herr Direktor, we'll play *Tschetzpend*!". . . Done! We both signed the contract which stipulated, in black and white, that I was to play *Tschetzpend*. . . . My hunt for the *Tschetzpend* began.

His first instinct was to search for new publications of dance music. Writing to the musicians' union in Berlin, he was informed that jazz was a new dance style accompanied by the latest German foxtrots, played at a racing tempo. Once again, his international audience in Switzerland told him otherwise:

We rushed at Derby Gallop tempo so that the dust never settled on the dance floor. The audience looked quizzical. Aha, I thought, the jazz is working its magic. But when several people asked me what I was playing and I proudly replied that we'd just played jazz, I began to see that all-too-familiar embarrassed smile once again. And when a nervous guest, full of *vino* and *veritas*, retorted that what we had played was nonsense but not jazz, my daemon whispered into my ear: the man's right, our Berlin jazz isn't up to snuff. My embarrassment reached a climax when a little Parisienne asked us to play a shimmy. She had just come from Paris, she added, where shimmy and jazz band were all the rage. . . . I expressed my regret with a shrug of the shoulders, and the little Parisienne pursed her brightly painted lips in disdain.

Jazz, as our musician could not have guessed, was not so much a repertoire of printed dance numbers, still less a form of social dancing, but rather a new rhythmic basis, instrumental timbre, and performance style. Enlightenment finally came from an unusual and, for our purposes, revealing quarter:

I had just bought my customary morning newspaper in a [St Moritz] bookshop when I noticed a pile of sheet music on the next table: French and English dance music for piano, with droll, colorful pictures on the title pages. I leafed through it without a thought in my head. Suddenly I stumbled on a foxtrot with the photograph of an orchestra on its title page and the explanatory caption that this was the celebrated London jazz band N.N., whose repertoire includes the above-mentioned foxtrot. No Egyptologist could have taken his papyrus more lovingly in hand or scrutinized it more closely than I did this jazz-band photograph. . . . At long last I saw what a jazz band is. Seven blokes in sport dress: piano, violin, two banjos, saxophone, trombone, and percussion. I entered into a dialogue, diplomatically conducted on my part, with the bookdealer, who proved to be an enthusiastic devotee of the new music, and learnt all I needed to know about a jazz band down to the last detail. I was saved! Everything relating to jazz that has since become obvious to any musician but was still vague and enigmatic at the time was revealed at a stroke.

This amusing report confirms a number of points regarding the early reception of jazz in Germany. Note, for instance, the importance of France and England as arbiters of German taste: they were to remain so for the rest of the decade, far more so than America. Note also that our musician at no point turned to recordings or to authoritative foreign musicians for his knowledge of jazz: there were none in Germany at that time to consult. Finally, note his dependence on printed piano music, the primary medium for the dissemination of early jazz in Germany. Ultimately, our early German jazz authority created his own style of German jazz on the basis of printed pop songs, visual evidence, and lore.

It was under these circumstances, then, that German commercial musicians created the music that fed the jazz craze of the early 1920s. And it was under the same circumstances that Hindemith, Krenek, and Weill, as well as the second rank of Wilhelm Grosz, Erwin Schulhoff, Karol Rathaus, Max Brand, and their

younger contemporaries Paul Dessau, Boris Blacher, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, and Rudolf Wagner-Régeny, all formed the image of jazz that they incorporated in their *Kunstjazz*.[38] On the one hand there were the so-called *Radaukapellen* or semi-professional "racket bands" (the term, antedating World War I, is George Grosz's)[39] who created jazz by disfiguring Wilhelmine march and salon numbers and peppering them with unmotivated explosions or sound effects from the drummer, from police sirens to pistol shots (one of which found its way into the opening of Weill's *Mahagonny Songspiel*). On the other hand there was printed dance music from abroad, not to mention an active indigenous publishing industry that soon turned out American hits and German imitations at a phenomenal rate to satisfy Weimar Germany's demand for jazz. Just as Stravinsky, surrounded by rags and cakewalks in Paris, had to wait for a printed stimulus to take up ragtime during his Swiss exile in 1917,[40] so young German composers of the Jazz Age took their stimulus from the printed page. There is nothing in Krenek's early foxtrot from Op. 13a, nor in Weill's unpublished, and perhaps unperformed, early essays in popular dance styles, to suggest the influence of a live performance or gramophone recording, but much – the accuracy of the part-writing, the conservative handling of harmony, the choice of instrumentation and timbre – to indicate the influence of printed dance music. This influence will be examined more closely below. First, however, it is essential to discuss the least well-known of Weimar's musical mass media, the music publishing industry.

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What sort of music did the German sheet-music industry turn out for Weimar Germany's jazz consumption? Of the thousands upon thousands of titles issued during the decade, only a tiny fraction has been examined, and to date no attempt has been made to codify, quantify, or evaluate this vast and seemingly monotonous repertoire. However, a few words can be ventured as to the impact of American popular music on the German scene and how German commercial musicians responded to it. At first, German dance-band leaders generally bought piano editions, or lead sheets, which they then arranged for the use of their own ensembles. Later, especially from the mid-1920s, printed arrangements, some of them by well-known American or British arrangers, were available in large numbers from English and German publishers. A German bandleader, depending on his standards and ambitions, had the option of playing these arrangements as written, or altering them to meet the special needs and abilities of his own musicians. Indeed, the pages of *Der Artist* as well as much of Paul Bernhard's book-length study *Jazz: eine musikalische Zeitfrage*, mentioned earlier, are full of practical tips to bandleaders for recasting printed arrangements for their ensembles. Usually these arrangements