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JEWISH DIFFERENCE AND RECOVERING 'COMMEDIA': ERICH W. KORNGOLD'S 'DIE TOTE STADT' IN POST-FIRST WORLD WAR AUSTRIA

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The year 1920 saw both the premiere of Erich W. Korngold's opera *Die tote Stadt* and the launch of the Salzburg festival, revived after the First World War by the poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the designer Alfred Roller, the conductor Franz Schalk, the composer Richard Strauss, and the director Max Reinhardt. Multiple points of overlap exist between the Festival and Korngold's most famous opera. Notably, Roller was the stage designer for *Die tote Stadt*. However, I am most interested in Korngold's and Reinhardt's concurrent but seemingly disparate creative interests.[1] When Reinhardt was working on the Festival, he was also drawn to Yiddish theatre, for which several venues had opened in Vienna to accommodate its increasing popularity in the 1920s.[2] Whilst the Festival aligned itself with the Catholic Church and offered an Austrian 'counterpart to Wagner's Bayreuth', the Yiddish theatre of Vienna was comparably more 'modest, low budget, [and] low tech'.[3] Both nevertheless attempted, separately but in parallel, to reclaim a greater German *Kulturnation* by reaching beyond a smaller than ever Austria. In this article, I show that given there is a *commedia dell'arte* sequence seemingly independent of Korngold's otherwise late Romantic, post-Wagnerian opera,[4] the tension between Reinhardt's Catholic and Jewish endeavours is similarly negotiated in Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. There is a history connecting *commedia dell'arte* with Jewish theatre, which allowed

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[1] Korngold and Reinhardt were, in fact, close associates. Their first encounter took place in 1906, at the premiere of Mahler's Symphony No. 8. They met again during the summer of 1911 and subsequently cultivated a collaborative relationship over the next two decades. Brendan G. Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland, Ore., 1997), 56 and 72.

[2] Lisa Silverman examines Reinhardt's concurrent though divergent theatrical endeavours in her 'Search for Redemption: The Salzburg Festival Meets Yiddish Theater', ch. 4 in *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford, 2012), 141–71; and 'Max Reinhardt between Yiddish Theatre and the Salzburg Festival', in Jeanette R. Malkin and Freddie Rokem (eds.), *Jews and the Making of Modern German Theatre* (Iowa City, IA, 2010), 197–218.

[3] David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), 168; Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 142.

[4] For a discussion of Korngold as a post-Wagnerian composer, who consciously negotiated 'the problem of being an opera composer, particularly a German or Austrian one, in the wake of Wagner', see Peter Franklin, *Reclaiming Late-Romantic Music: Singing Devils and Distant Sounds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2014), 92–3.

the Italian comedy to play a critical role in shaping the reception of Korngold's opera in the aftermath of the First World War.

Indeed, Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* raised timely questions about Jewish citizenry in war-torn Austria by introducing *commedia dell'arte*—and, by extension, Jewish theatre and Jewishness—into an otherwise predominately Catholic-centred storyline and Wagnerian-tone opera. As the historian Lisa Silverman writes, it became crucial for Austria's—or rather Vienna's—assimilated Jews to sculpt a new identity for themselves to counter the surge of antisemitism after the First World War.[5] Their previously 'tripartite and relatively comfortable' pre-war identities as 'proud members of the German *Kulturnation*, loyal citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and also as Jews', were first compromised by wartime ideas about the German nation, and were subsequently lost amid the Habsburg Empire's collapse into German-Austria (1918) and then the First Republic (1919).[6] To reclaim their sense of belonging amid the post-war chaos, many Austrian Jews looked to familiar elements of Baroque Catholicism (as represented by the Salzburg Festival) while seeking a 'renaissance of Jewish culture' (illustrated by the popularity of Yiddish theatre).[7] Austrian Jews often became, as Silverman states, 'the driving forces behind the creation of new cultures of inclusion, exemplified by combining the sophistication of traditional German drama with "authentic" folkloristic Jewish culture'.[8] Reinhardt's—and Korngold's—seemingly eclectic artistic interests in the late 1910s and 1920s reflected the Janus-faced reality of a community frequently needing to conceal its Jewish lineage, yet, spurred by antisemitic hatred, committed to reinventing Jewish culture.[9]

Commedia dell'arte in *Die tote Stadt* demands analytical attention because the genre is unique to the operatic version of the story. Julius and Erich W. Korngold (under the alias of Paul Schott) adapted the libretto from Georges Rodenbach's symbolist and profoundly Catholic *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892).[10] The opera's primary plot-line about the protagonist Paul's dreamt murder of his lover, a double of his deceased wife, has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years, particularly in relation to female sexuality, gender-based violence, and, to a lesser extent, masculine anguish.[11] Paul is lonesome and ostensibly Jewish (more on this later), and obsessively mourns his dead wife, Marie.

[5] Silverman, *Becoming Austrians*, 5 and 19.

[6] Ibid. 8–9.

[7] I borrow the phrase 'the renaissance of Jewish culture' from Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, 1998). Parallel to this article's focus on Jewish innovations in post-war Austria, Brenner's study examines how German Jewish communities, through a renewed creative energy invested in the arts and in education, attempted to reimagine their place in post-First World War German society.

[8] Silverman, 'Max Reinhardt between Yiddish Theatre and the Salzburg Festival', 203.

[9] Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 6 and 9.

[10] The libretto was based on Rodenbach's own stage version of the novel, *Le Mirage* (1901), via the Viennese playwright Siegfried Trebitsch's German translation, *Das Trugbild* (1913; originally titled *Die stille Nacht*, 1903). Korngold's contemporary critics understood that Erich was extensively involved in writing the libretto. Philip Mosley, 'Appendix B: From Rodenbach to Korngold: The Intertextual Genesis of *Die tote Stadt*', in Philip Mosley (ed.), *Georges Rodenbach: Critical Essays* (Madison, NJ, 1996), 190–4 at 190; Christopher Palmer, 'Tote Stadt, Die', *Grove Music Online*, accessed 14 July 2019, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000905004. For *Bruges-la-Morte*'s symbolism, see Paul Gorceix, *Réalités flamandes et symbolisme fantastique: Bruges-la-Morte et Le Carillonneur de Georges Rodenbach* (Paris, 1982) and Lynne Pudles, 'Fernand Khnopff, Georges Rodenbach, and Bruges, the Dead City', *Art Bulletin*, 74 (1992), 637–54; cited in Jonathan Stone, 'When Metaphor Throttles Metonymy: The Perils of Misreading in Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte*', ch. 6 in *Decadence and Modernism in European and Russian Literature and Culture: Aesthetics and Anxiety in the 1890s* (Cham, 2019), 171–208 at 172.

[11] For example: Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, 'Orphic Rituals of Bereavement', ch. 4 in *Opera and the Art of Dying* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 96–122, especially at 116–22; Sherry Lee, '"… deinen Wuchs wie Musik": Portraits, Identities, and the Dynamics of Seeing in Berg's Operatic Sphere', in Christopher Hailey (ed.), *Alban Berg and His World*

His fate shifts, however, when he encounters and becomes infatuated with Marie's doppelgänger, Marietta (Act I). Confused by his own change of heart and jealous of Marietta's social circle, in a dream Paul strangles Marietta to death with a lock of Marie's golden hair, which he has kept in a quasi-religious shrine (Act III). Early twentieth-century Vienna was enthralled by *femme fatale* characters, such as Richard Strauss's Salome, Frank Wedekind's Lulu, and Otto Weininger's generic type Woman. The figure of Marietta is therefore key to *Die tote Stadt*. Current reiterations of the opera's storyline nevertheless tend to focus too narrowly on Paul with respect to Marie/Marietta, spotlighting the psychodrama of Acts I and III but overlooking Act II's overtly theatrical *commedia dell'arte* sequence.[12] Yet when the father and son duo reworked *Bruges-la-Morte* into their own *Die tote Stadt*, they not only gave new names to Rodenbach's main characters, they also created new parts—*commedia dell'arte* ones, 'Paul's friend Frank and Marietta's theatrical companions'—which can only be found in the opera.[13]

The *commedia dell'arte* characters critically allow Korngold's assimilated Jewish peers to understand the opera as intrinsically *of* Vienna by transporting them from the canal city of Bruges to the canal city of Venice, which, as Ben Winters argues, is 'a location with a long-standing cultural relationship with the composer's adopted hometown of Vienna'.[14] No doubt in part because the Habsburgs ruled Venice for half of the nineteenth century, Venice had inspired Viennese writers such as Hofmannsthal to imagine it over and again.[15] While Korngold's own *Violanta* (1916) is already set in Venice, there had also been a 'Venice in Vienna' amusement park in the Austrian capital (which I shall come back to).[16] Moreover, even though there remains a separation between current scholarly research into the connection between *commedia dell'arte* and Viennese theatre, and Jewish theatre's importance in post-war Vienna,[17] the mutual historical actors in these

(Princeton, 2010), 163–94, especially at 173–8; Ben Winters, 'Strangling Blondes: Nineteenth-Century Femininity and Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 23 (2012), 51–82.

[12] Despite their rich analyses of *Die tote Stadt*, scholars of the opera have often bypassed Act II's *commedia dell'arte*. See, for instance: Hutcheon and Hutcheon, 'Orphic Rituals of Bereavement' (even though they discuss Marietta's dance from Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*, p. 119); Lee, 'Portraits, Identities, and the Dynamics of Seeing in Berg's Operatic Sphere'; and Winters, 'Strangling Blondes' (in an attempt to disentangle *Die tote Stadt* from a reception informed by Korngold's Hollywood career, Winters focuses on the symbolic weight of the opera).

[13] Regarding name changes, as Sherry Lee and Sadie Menicanin observe, 'Hughes is renamed Paul, his unnamed dead wife is christened Marie, his housekeeper is called Brigitte rather than Barbe, and his wife's lookalike, the dancer Jane, becomes Marietta'. Lee and Menicanin, 'Acoustic Space, Modern Interiority, and Korngold's Cities', in Daniel Goldmark and Kevin C. Karnes (eds.), *Korngold and His World* (Princeton, 2019), 67–87 at 77.

[14] Ben Winters, 'Korngold's *Violanta*: Venice, Carnival, and the Masking of Identities', in Nicholas Attfield and Ben Winters (eds.), *Music, Modern Culture, and the Critical Ear* (London, 2018), 51–71 at 52.

[15] Ibid. 53. Hofmannsthal produced a number of works set in Venice, 'from his Casanova-inspired verse-play of the 1890s, *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin* (The Adventurer and the Singer) and his essay of 1908, *A Memory of Beautiful Days*, to *Andreas*, his unfinished Venice-set novel.' In the wider German literary landscape, there is also Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912).

[16] Winters, 'Korngold's *Violanta*', 53–5.

[17] For a connection between *commedia dell'arte* and Viennese theatre, see Katherine Arens's discussion about the 'Viennese *Volkstheater* (popular theater) [being] a descendent of the *commedia dell'arte*'; Arens, 'Revolution from the Prompter's Box: Rewriting Public Dreams of Political Morality', ch. 3 in *Vienna's Dreams of Europe: Culture and Identity beyond the Nation-State* (London, 2015), 89–127 at 89. For the links between Viennese and Yiddish theatres, see Silverman's 2010 book chapter and 2012 monograph cited above. Additionally, in the context of an increase in post-war refugees ('both Jews and non-Jews') as well as a Jewish dominance in large and small institutions such as the Burgtheater, the Volkstheater, the Kammerspiele, and the Theater in der Josefstadt, Brigitte Dalinger examines how popular Jewish drama (in both Yiddish and German) tackled questions of antisemitism, 'the coexistence of Jews and non-Jews … and the connections between the Yiddish and German-language theatres in Vienna' after the First World War; Dalinger, 'Popular Jewish Drama in Vienna in the 1920s', in Edna Nahshon (ed.), *Jewish Theatre: A Global View* (Leiden, 2009), 175–96 at 175–76 and 179.

studies—chief among them Reinhardt—allow me to complete a picture where *commedia dell'arte* and Jewish theatre enabled assimilated Jewish artists to participate in an Austrian society that was actively reframing its identity in the aftermath of the war. *Die tote Stadt*, of course, was first performed in Germany instead of in Austria: the German double premiere took place in Hamburg and Cologne in 1920 (4 December) and the Austrian debut in Vienna in 1921 (10 January). That order of appearance was not coincidental.[18] As the German Jewish journalist Heinrich Eduard Jacob observed, 'as early as 1922' there was a need for Austrian Jewish artists to do well in Germany before they could succeed in Austria.[19] The opera's delayed Viennese production connotes that necessity of German critical approval. However, I contend that Vienna's—specifically, Vienna's assimilated Jewish—audiences recognized Korngold's opera as decidedly theirs when it finally reached the Wiener Staatsoper.[20]

Commedia dell'arte's boisterous, slapstick humour enabled *Die tote Stadt* to grapple with an interconnected web of antisemitic issues, particularly that of noise. Indeed, questions of 'Jewish' sounds sit at the heart of this article. I am interested in First World War and post-war Gentile prejudice against Jewish intonation and hence Jewish 'noise'. But more importantly, I am concerned with how members of Vienna's assimilated Jewish community participated in making audible 'Jewish difference' (to borrow Silverman's term), with intonation functioning similarly to gender and class in the cultural production of post-war Austria.[21] Because Korngold's protagonist Paul declares at the end of *Die tote Stadt* his intent to leave Bruges, the site of his obsessions, this post-Wagnerian opera may appear to be a straightforward and even conservative story about the rehabilitation of a recognizably Jewish man: one who may be read as weakened and 'degenerate',[22] but who ultimately re-enters society, as a man *should*. Yet Paul arrives at his decision after having experienced the distinctively different sound world of Act II. That order of events informed how the opera's audiences participated in its final normative turn. Indeed, *commedia dell'arte* allows *Die tote Stadt* to evade fully submitting itself to Austria's dominating Catholic culture and to instead reach for something new.

NOISE AND 'JEWISH DIFFERENCE'

The 'accusation of the Jews as noisemakers', as Ruth HaCohen writes, began in early Christianity with Christian notions of 'harmonious sounds'.[23] Such anti-Jewish hostility intensified at the *fin de siècle* and further escalated during and after the First World War, with phrases such as 'Lärm wie in einer Judenschule' regularly deployed in Vienna as both a way to underline Jewish presence and as a complaint against unwanted sounds

[18] Korngold's previous two operas were also premiered in Germany: *Der Ring des Polykrates* and *Violanta* were presented as a double bill in Munich, Staatsoper, 28 Mar. 1916.

[19] Silverman, 'Max Reinhardt between Yiddish Theatre and the Salzburg Festival', 209.

[20] See also Harald Haslmayr, '"… es träumt sich zurück…": *Die tote Stadt* im Licht der österreichischen Nachkriegskrisen', in Arne Stollberg (ed.), *Erich Wolfgang Korngold: Wunderkind der Moderne oder letzter Romantiker?* (Munich, 2008), 173–86 at 173.

[21] Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 4 and 8.

[22] Lee and Menicanin argue that Paul 'may even be diagnosable as a neurasthenic, given his oversensitivity to sound stimuli'; see their 'Acoustic Space, Modern Interiority, and Korngold's Cities', 72. As the historian Moshe Zimmermann writes, neurasthenia as a diagnosis was instrumentalized to stigmatize Jewish bodies (even though before the First World War a number of reputable Jewish physicians and experts, such as the Zionist psychiatrist Rafael Becker, [also] shared this belief about nervousness being 'common especially among Jews'); see Zimmermann, 'Muscle Jews versus Nervous Jews', in Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni (eds.), *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe* (Lincoln, Nebr., 2006), 13–26 at 18–19.

[23] Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven, 2011), pp. xiii and 1.

(Jewish or otherwise).[24] At the same time, as Paul Lerner argues, there were wider societal concerns about male nervousness, as a 'new cultural archetype' of the 'nervous' and even 'hysterical' Jewish man emerged during the war.[25] This image of Jewish male loquaciousness was manifest in the realm of psychoanalysis and, surviving the war, it became an often-unwelcome trope in medical-political debates on veterans' welfare. This trope was unpopular even when it came from a leading neurologist such as Hermann Oppenheim, a resolute advocate for men suffering from war-related traumatic distress.[26] Oppenheim's professional rivalry with the Gentile Max Nonne culminated in 1916 at the annual meeting of the German Neurological Association. The Jewish physician was accused of encouraging a 'pension commotion' (*Rentenkommotion*), which was widely reported in the press, including in Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse* (for which Julius Korngold wrote).[27] Similarly, the Austrian historian Hannes Leidinger writes about the cries of the battlefield and of the military hospitals, and the hard-line military doctor Julius Wagner-Jauregg's attempts to silence these nervous breakdowns.[28] The sonic dimension of health care became a punitive site where 'Jewish' differences were to be corrected.

Fears for what the sounds of war could do to men's health were, as James Mansell argues, transferred onto anxieties about the potential injuries that urban noise could inflict on city dwellers after the war.[29] The 'traumatic soundscape' of the war, Mansell suggests, prompted an entire wave of writers to pay attention to their 'descriptive repertoire' of sound, which had 'replac[ed] vision as the predominant mode of perceiving the world in literature'.[30] Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), for example, vividly foregrounds the auditory rather than the visual.[31] Indeed, the Lieutenant Colonel and literary scholar James H. Meredith asserts that Woolf's rich descriptions of sounds are evidence of how Londoners at large, and not just veterans, had become sensitive to noise: 'To a weary citizenry, the sights and noise of postwar London resemble a battlefield.'[32] Similarly in Austria, in that 'battlefield' at home, whether a Viennese Jew was a maker or a victim of noise, he found himself always subjected to Gentile aurality and in danger of being heard as emasculated. Jews found themselves, then, as Joy Calico states in her interrogation of noise and power in early twentieth-century Vienna, always on the losing side of debates about 'who gets to make noise and who gets to name noise'.[33] The Jewish

[24] Ibid. 127–9; HaCohen translates the phrase as 'noise as in the synagogue, or as loud and disorderly as in the synagogue' (p. 30). The direct translation of 'Judenschule' is 'Jewish school'. Although 'synagogue' is commonly used for translations of the phrase quoted in the text, there is, as a reviewer of this article helpfully suggests, a lingering antisemitic sentiment implied in the persistent conflation in translation practices of the noise of a Jewish school with that of a synagogue. Joy Calico, 'Noise and Arnold Schoenberg's 1913 Scandal Concert', *Journal of Austrian Studies*, 50 (2017), 29–55 at 40.

[25] Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890–1930* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), 32 and 61–2.

[26] Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, esp. ch. 3, 'Long Live Hysteria! The Wartime Trauma Debate and the Fall of Hermann Oppenheim', 61–85.

[27] Ibid. 74–9; Thomas Rohringer, 'Kriegsbeschädigte und Kriegsfolgenbewältigung', in Alfred Pfoser and Andreas Weigl (eds.), *Im Epizentrum des Zusammenbruchs: Wien im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 2013), 318–25 at 321.

[28] Hannes Leidinger, 'Tod und Trauma: Suizide im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Pfoser and Weigl (eds.), *Im Epizentrum des Zusammenbruchs*, 122–9 at 126.

[29] James Mansell, 'Neurasthenia, Civilization and the Sounds of Modern Life: Narratives of Nervous Illness in the Interwar Campaign against Noise', in Daniel Morat (ed.), *Sounds of Modern History* (New York, 2016), 278–302 at 291–2.

[30] Ibid. 292.

[31] See also Kate Flint, 'Sounds of the City: Virginia Woolf and Modern Noise', in Helen Small and Trudi Tate (eds.), *Literature, Science, Psychoanalysis, 1830–1970: Essays in Honour of Gillian Beer* (Oxford, 2003), 181–94 at 191–4.

[32] James H. Meredith, *Understanding the Literature of World War I* (Westport, CT, 2004), 153.

[33] Calico, 'Noise and Arnold Schoenberg's 1913 Scandal Concert', 43.

subject was either excessive in externalizing his feelings, or deficient in withstanding the pressure of something as immaterial as the vibrations of air. He was, as it were, always 'too Jewish'. Korngold's Paul is one such subject: the secluded Paul speaks to himself, dreams, and appears easily upset by noise in the opera's lively *commedia dell'arte* episodes.

When Erich and Julius Korngold adapted Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte*, they emphasized the role of sound in the storytelling.[34] The idea of noise became a means through which their opera asserted 'Jewish difference' amid Vienna's intensifying antisemitism after the war. Sensing increasing anti-Jewish animosity, Julius Korngold himself had suggested in October 1914 that Jewish composers such as Schoenberg should 'be modest' ('[sich] bescheiden') and delay their 'nerve-wracking' ('nervenzerrüttende') intervention ('Wirkung') until after the war.[35] He thus advocated a late Romantic repertory, which informed his son's music.[36] Yet to assert 'Jewish difference' was to engage with—even to claim—that difference rather than to deny it,[37] such as when Schoenberg directly confronted the anti-noise complaints against him. Instead of yielding to demands for Jewish silence, Schoenberg turned the critique of his noisiness squarely on its head by launching a lawsuit against the Gentiles who created a noisy commotion at the infamous 1913 'scandal' concert.[38] *Die tote Stadt*'s music exhibited the late Romantic characteristics that were fundamental to Erich Korngold's reception, and which Julius believed to be the 'right' kind of music in resource-scarce and politically intense wartime. Yet the opera straddles sounding 'late Romantic' and sounding 'noisy'—or fitting into its Catholic surroundings and finding a new identity through popular Jewish theatrical practices. It participated in audible Jewish difference through its little-discussed middle act.

The idea of parading, reclaiming 'Jewish difference', may appear to arise from a present-day identitarian sentiment.[39] However, it has historical precedents, specifically with respect to how the use of theatre recovered political ground negotiating Jewish self-representation in a public forum. I refer above to the studies connecting *commedia dell'arte* with Jewish theatre in the context of early twentieth-century Vienna. I shall flesh out that historical context more fully here, first by reaching further back into history. In her examination of Jewish *commedia dell'arte* performance in early modern Mantua, the theatre scholar Erith Jaffe-Berg provocatively suggests that Jewish actors felt free enough to subvert existing anti-Jewish elements of the *commedia dell'arte* tradition *within their own performances* of the *commedia dell'arte*.[40] As Jaffe-Berg argues, Jewish actors—whose craft already heavily relied on the comedic—strategically engaged with Mantuan Christian actors' *commedia dell'arte* tradition so as to ensure the Jewish community's survival during the exclusionary era of the Counter-Reformation.[41] The Jewish troupes'

[34] Indeed, contextualizing *Die tote Stadt* in terms of 'twentieth-century metropolitan life in all its acoustic complexity' (p. 69), Lee and Menicanin suggest that 'it is likely that the potential for an acoustic realization of Rodenbach's imagined spaces played a significant role in selling Korngold on the project of composing and staging the dead city' (pp. 73–4). See their 'Acoustic Space, Modern Interiority, and Korngold's Cities'.

[35] Martina Nußbaumer, '"Jetzt ist die Stunde da, in der nur das Höchste laut werden darf": Zur Aufrüstung des klassischen Musiklebens', in *Im Epizentrum des Zusammenbruchs*, 374–85 at 377.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 4.

[38] Calico, 'Noise and Arnold Schoenberg's 1913 Scandal Concert', 40.

[39] I am thinking specifically of the linguistic strategy employed by historically oppressed communities, reclaiming words that have been used as insults against them. The LGBTQ+ communities, for example, have reclaimed the word 'queer'.

[40] Erith Jaffe-Berg, Commedia dell'Arte *and the Mediterranean: Charting Journeys and Mapping "Others"* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2015), 101, 104, 119, and 124. My emphasis.

[41] Ibid. 129.

involvement with *commedia dell'arte* granted them membership in Mantuan society as long as they provided lavish and self-financed carnival entertainments. These performances were financially punitive because they were only possible through taxation within the Jewish community.[42] They nonetheless enabled mutual influences between early modern Mantua's Jewish and Gentile *commedia dell'arte* actors, who were both travelling (hence itinerant, if not always overtly persecuted) people.[43] As early as the Renaissance, Jews found an expressive space in theatre where there were possibilities 'to self-fashion',[44] to shape narratives of 'Jewish difference'.

Indeed, theatre continued to be a space for Jewish self-fashioning in early twentieth-century Vienna. While the expansive literature on 'Vienna 1900' describes how 'Jewish participation was carefully circumscribed' in the city, Jewish theatre—immensely popular among both Jews and non-Jews—opened up possibilities to play with the politics of Jewish citizenry.[45] Influential Jewish writers, including Richard Beer-Hofmann, Arthur Schnitzler, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, explored Austrian identity at the intersection of 'Viennese modernism', popular Jewish theatre, and *commedia dell'arte*.[46] Closer still to Korngold's world, Schoenberg's venture into *fin de siècle* cabaret culture and his *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) attest to how popular Jewish theatre and *commedia dell'arte* influenced music of Korngold's youth.[47] Notable too is Strauss and Hofmannsthal's *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912/1916), which, like *Die tote Stadt*, juxtaposes *commedia dell'arte* with a Wagnerian-toned '*opera seria*' and whose opera-within-the-opera is likewise a story about fidelity and overcoming grief. The fact that it was Hofmannsthal rather than Strauss who wished to undertake the project further suggests how significant the coexistence of a multiplicity of diverging worlds was to Vienna's assimilated Jews when it came to the question of collective mourning and recovery.[48] Julius Korngold reviewed '*Ariadne* II' when it premiered in Vienna.[49] Moreover, Strauss and Hofmannsthal's first Ariadne for both '*Ariadne* I' (Stuttgart, 1912) and '*Ariadne* II' (Vienna, 1916), Maria Jeritza, became Korngold's first Marie/Marietta (Hamburg, 1920 and Vienna, 1921). These historical connections might appear tenuous. They nonetheless form a web of associations for imagining popular Jewish theatre and *commedia dell'arte* in post-Wagnerian opera.

Die tote Stadt's 'Schlager' (hits) offered old-world comfort to its audience many times over. Yet because of the nexus of contemporary *commedia* preoccupations, *Die tote Stadt* is

[42] Ibid. 128.

[43] Ibid. 124. Jaffe-Berg explicitly writes that '*commedia dell'arte* became an important model for emulation within Jewish performance' and vice versa (pp. 123–4).

[44] Ibid. 125.

[45] Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 4.

[46] Karin Wolgast, 'Die Commedia dell'arte im Wiener Drama der Jahrhundertwende', *Orbis Litterarum*, 44 (1989), 283–311. In her doctoral dissertation, Wolgast further examines the connection between these seemingly disparate artistic practices by incorporating lesser-known historical figures such as Louis Taustein (aka Alexander Kolloden) and Alfred Maria Willner, who were both involved in the cabaret and operetta worlds as journalists and/or librettists; see her 'Die *Commedia dell'arte* im Wiener Drama um 1900' [PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 1993] (Frankfurt, 1993), 91–4.

[47] Max Reinhardt was similarly involved in the—Jewish-dominated—world of cabaret in the early 20th c., co-founding *Sound and Smoke* (*Schall und Rauch*) in 1901. Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 62–84.

[48] Hofmannsthal's July 1911 '*Ariadne-Brief*' to Strauss changed Strauss's opinion about the project: 'What [*Ariadne*] is all about is one of the straightforward and stupendous problems of life: fidelity; whether to hold fast to that which is lost, to cling to it even in death—or to live, to live on, to get over with it, to transform oneself …'. Franz Strauss and Alice Strauss (eds.), *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (Cambridge, 1980), 94; quoted in Bryan Gilliam, '*Ariadne*, *Daphne* and the Problem of *Verwandlung*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15 (2003), 68–81 at 71.

[49] Julius Korngold, *Deutsches Opernschaffen der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1921), 167–79.

more than a post-Wagnerian, nostalgic opera of Catholic symbolism.[50] Indeed, given that there was a musical piece written about Pierrot almost annually across various genres, *c.*1880–1920,[51] the Pierrot found in *Die tote Stadt* stands not alone but with the numerous Pierrots and other *commedia dell'arte* characters in *fin de siècle* Vienna. William Cheng has recognized the significant presence of Pierrot, whose song sits in the middle of the opera and at the centre of a series of 'nested realms of diegesis' that results in 'a reflexive celebration … of sung spectacle'.[52] In addition, Michael P. Steinberg acknowledges that Marietta's troupe *is* one of *commedia dell'arte* and writes, albeit briefly, about how their appearance renders 'Venice as Bruges's *Doppelgänger*, as Marietta is Marie's'.[53] As far as I am aware, Steinberg's article remains, at the point of writing, the only anglophone scholarly recognition of the opera's multiple *commedia dell'arte* figures. More than comic relief disconnected from the opera's central plot, *commedia dell'arte* characters found their way into Korngold's opera because they had emerged as a means through which the Viennese (alongside denizens of Berlin, Munich, and London) could confront 'society's dominant respectable values, and attack them by nonserious means'.[54] *Commedia dell'arte* was ubiquitous in early twentieth-century—and specifically post-First World War—Vienna.

THE OPERA

Commedia dell'arte's noisy liveliness interrupts *Die tote Stadt*'s Catholic rituals surrounding Paul's icons of Marie: her hair, her portrait, and her 'temple of memories'. Since the composer's own synopsis for the opera's Viennese premiere gives considerable space to describing the episodes of Act II,[55] I shall summarize Korngold's storyline before I proceed to examine the opera's *commedia dell'arte* scenes. The action takes place in Bruges at the end of the nineteenth century. In Act I, to remember 'his dead wife and the past' in the 'dead city', Paul keeps a 'temple of memories' containing, among other things, a large painting of Marie holding a lute and a braid of her golden hair. His friend, Frank (one of Korngold's own creations), has come to Bruges to see him. But the grieving protagonist is agitated because he has just met Marietta, who is a dancer from Lille and whose appearance resembles Marie's. We meet Marietta as she visits Paul's house. She sings a song that is one 'of great significance [to] Paul' and, presumably as Marie used to do, she accompanies herself on a lute. Yet already, unlike Marie, Marietta shows herself to be very much not dead but alive: 'She dances', and Paul is mesmerized by her body. He 'tries to embrace her' but Marietta evades him, accidentally uncovering Marie's portrait,

[50] Martin Green and John Swan, *Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination*, rev. edn. (University Park, PA, 1993), 7–8.

[51] Reinhold Brinkmann, 'The Fool as Paradigm: Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and the Modern Artist', in Konrad Boehmer (ed.), *Schönberg and Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter* (Amsterdam, 1997), 139–67 at 153–4 and, for a compiled table, 163–6.

[52] William Cheng, 'Opera *en abyme*: The Prodigious Ritual of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 22 (2011), 115–46 at 116–19 and 129.

[53] Michael P. Steinberg, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Operatic Modernism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 36 (2006), 629–48 at 642. Pierrot's presence is only one instance where '*commedia* moods' (to borrow Green and Swan's words) might be found in Korngold's opera. Others include *commedia dell'arte*'s 'oscillating temperament', 'bell ringing' (which signified both merriment and despair), scenes of 'public processions' and carnivals, and themes of the *femme fatale* and sexual murder; Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, pp. xiv and 7.

[54] Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, p. xiii.

[55] 'Synopsis' in Erich Wolfgang Korngold, *Die tote Stadt*, with René Kollo, Carol Neblett, Hermann Prey, Benjamin Luxon, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf, Sony Music 88697446602, 2009, compact disc. Liner notes, 6–9.

and sees herself—'Is that not she herself? The same shawl, the same lute?'[56] Marietta leaves for her rehearsal as Hélène in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*. Split between fidelity to Marie and desire for Marietta, Paul has a vision where Marie beckons…

While Act I already calls attention to the opposition between death and life, the opera's often overlooked middle act intensifies that polarity by introducing *commedia dell'arte* characters to Korngold's otherwise post-Wagnerian opera. In Act II, Paul's 'vision continues', finding himself 'in front of Marietta's house' at night. One moment, he sees Brigitta, his 'old and loyal housekeeper', appearing 'as a novice among a group of Beguines' because of 'his breach of faith to Marie'. At another moment, he becomes jealous of Frank, who is about to enter Marietta's house. Most importantly, Korngold writes: 'Laughing and singing, members of Marietta's troupe now approach in boats. Paul withdraws and listens unseen.' A new and initially light-hearted dream unfolds with the merriment of a *commedia* performance. Marietta play-acts the resurrection scene from *Robert*. Yet her 'mockery of resurrection … has completely outraged [Paul]'. He tells Marietta that 'in her he loved only his dead wife', leading Marietta to challenge 'her dead rival' by going 'to *her* house … to banish the ghost forever …'.[57] The morning after, Marietta 'stand[s] triumphantly' before Marie's portrait in Act III. She makes fun of Paul's reverence for the procession passing outside, demanding that he kiss her. Paul struggles with his conflicting emotions and argues with Marietta. In turn, Marietta declares: 'The fight is on—life against death.' She discovers Marie's hair and ridicules it, angering Paul, who eventually 'strangles her with the braid' until Marietta is dead like Marie. Paul's vision ends with him waking up 'to find everything untouched'. Marietta returns after having just turned a corner to fetch her forgotten umbrella and Paul's earlier gift of roses. Yet Paul decides that he 'will not see her again' and will leave Bruges instead, for 'A dream of bitter reality has destroyed his fantasy …'.

ACT I: 'SEE, SEE AND UNDERSTAND'

In my reading of the opera, Marietta plays a crucial role in Paul's recovery, not because his eventual dreamt murder of her triggers a rude awakening, but because, even when Paul is difficult, Marietta is consistently warm and playful. The allure of her body ultimately pushes Paul to commit murder in his dream. Yet throughout the opera, Marietta's *commedia* energy counterbalances the violent force that Paul's dreamt murder carries. Marietta is significant to Paul because, as Ben Winters asserts, she is 'very much alive', embodying 'the triumph of life' in the opera's original 'working title' ('Der Triumph des Lebens').[58] Her existence as a dancer allows her to represent the 'arte' (dancing and acrobatics) of the *commedia dell'arte*, the lively physical ethos of which she boldly displays in front of Paul.[59] Indeed, as Korngold establishes in Act I, in the tension between *commedia dell'arte* and Catholic symbolism—between, to put it crudely, Jewish enjoyment and Catholic guilt—Paul's responsiveness to Marietta evidences *Die tote Stadt*'s privileging of life over death. Marietta is distinct from everything that has transpired in the opera

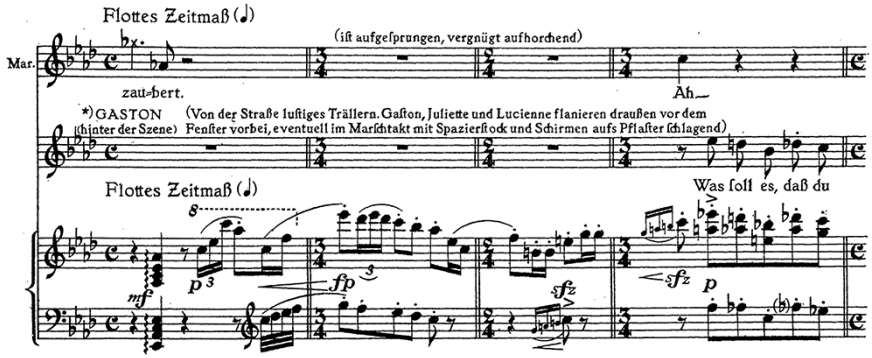
[56] Hutcheon and Hutcheon have described Marietta as 'spoiled'; see their 'Orphic Rituals of Bereavement', 117. However, Marietta's irritation here is understandable since—though Korngold himself omits to clarify it in the synopsis—Paul has given Marietta the shawl and the lute, thus 'setting her up' to look like Marie.

[57] My italic emphasis.

[58] Winters, 'Strangling Blondes', 63 and 68. Winters challenges existing Weiningerian readings of Marie and Marietta as standing in direct opposition, as Mother versus 'Whore', citing, for instance, Lee, 'Portraits, Identities, and the Dynamics of Seeing in Berg's Operatic Sphere', 174.

[59] Green and Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot*, 4 (*Commedia dell'arte* contrasts with *commedia erudita*, which is more cerebral and less bodily).

Ex. 1. Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, Act I, Scene v, bb. 743–6, vocal score. The theatre troupe members' beating of the pulse is written into the stage direction. Korngold DIE TOTE STADT. Copyright © 1920 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany. Copyright © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of the European American Music Distributors Company, sole US and Canada agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany



before her entrance, in her laughter (the first heard in the opera), 'uninhibitedness', and the 'free manner of the theatrical world'.[60] Musically, too, just as Marietta steps into Act I, Scene v, her difference is signalled through the sonorities of glockenspiel, triangle, and harps—instruments that will define the sounds of the *commedia dell'arte* sequence in Act II. Since Marietta's famous Lute Song ('Glück, das mir verblieb'; b. 668 ff.) has been discussed extensively elsewhere and since my focus is Act II, I will simply call attention to the presence of the lute, which—as an instrument common in *commedia dell'arte*—anticipates Act II's theatrical display and the life-affirming force of Marietta's troupe.[61] At bar 741 ff., when Marietta's Lute Song suddenly gives way to the merriment of her thespian peers Gaston, Juliette, and Lucienne from outside the window, Marietta shows us that she runs after life with little hesitation, chasing the musical pulse created by the actors' walking sticks and umbrellas (see Ex. 1). In response to the actors' joyous and nonsensical 'diridon' (b. 751 ff.), Paul instinctively withdraws inside himself, showing that it is not the city of Bruges that is 'dead', but rather his own interior.

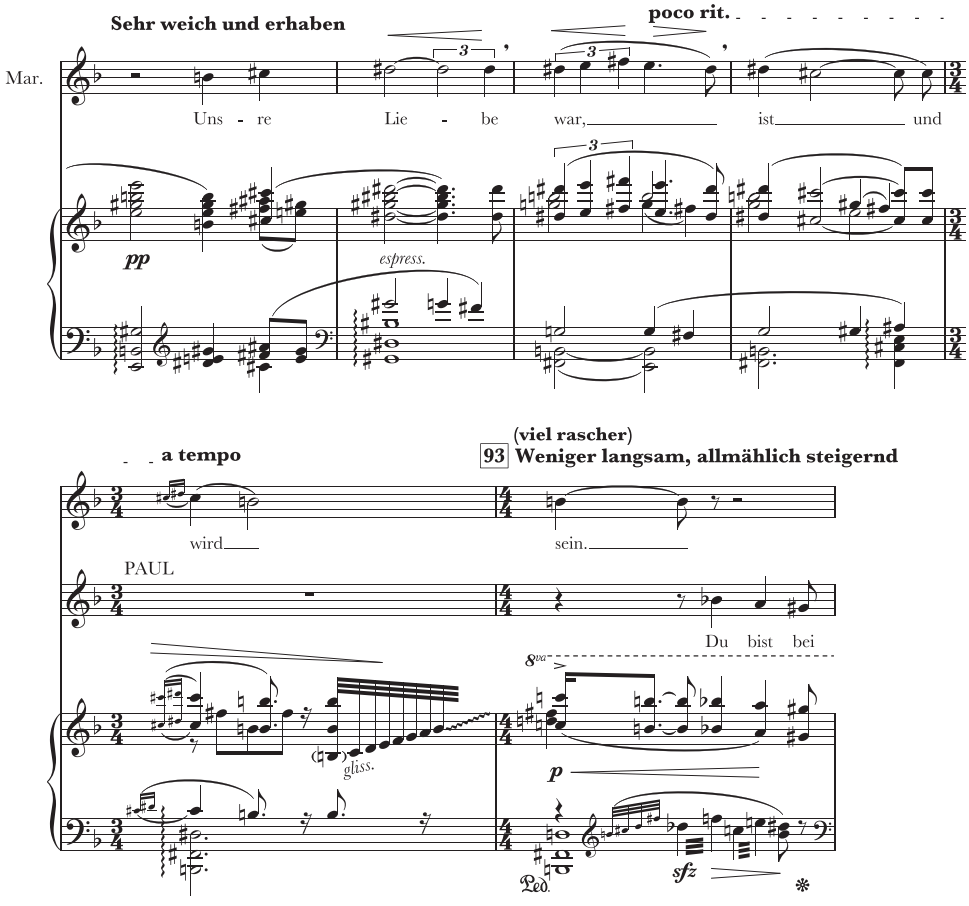
Act I, Scene vi critically reveals, then, that what Marie's world symbolizes—death, devotion, and confinement—is something suspect, from which Paul should escape. Marie (whose name, given by the Korngolds, is French for Mary) stands in for the old Catholic world that the assimilated Jewish community of Vienna no longer found viable in the aftermath of the First World War. The stage darkens for Scene vi, taking the audience into Paul's dream world, where Marie's apparition steps out of her portrait and, like one of Wagner's foreboding Norns, warns Paul against deserting her. Marie's descending-second intervals of 'Paul' recall the Wagnerian interval of 'woe' frequently sounded in the *Ring* (bb. 1064–5). The *sul tasto* strings and muted horns also help to create the 'very solemn, ceremonially mysterious, otherworldly' sound world surrounding Marie.[62] It is hard to remain unaffected by the weight of Marie's command as she

[60] 'lächeldn' (smiling), 'Unbefangenheit', and 'das freie Gehaben der Kulissenwelt'.

[61] The lute is commonly associated with the *commedia dell'arte*. It is specifically Pierrot's instrument. Although the libretto's stage direction indicates that Marietta 'plays the lute' ('Sie spielt die Laute'; R. H. Elkin, *Libretto: The Original Italian, French or German Libretto with a Correct English Translation. Die tote Stadt* (New York, 1921), 24–5), no actual lute is actually sounded at this point in the music.

[62] 'sehr getragen, feierlich geheimnishvoll, unirdisch'.

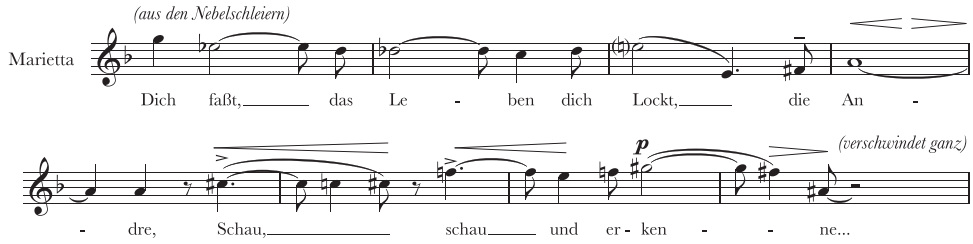
Ex. 2. Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, Act I, Scene vi, bb. 1089–94, from the vocal score. Korngold DIE TOTE STADT. Copyright © 1920 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany. Copyright © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors Company, sole US and Canada agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany



settles into the first iteration of her phrase 'Unsere Liebe …' ('our love'; bb. 1089–94; see Ex. 2). Carefully kept within a limited (comfortable, perhaps smothering) range, her long and arched melody of that first 'Unsere Liebe …' comes after Paul's prayer-like pleas for forgiveness over his change of heart. Emerging out of the scene's slow-moving harmonic rhythm, her B major phrase's momentary directionless motion generates the 'objectless desire' that Richard Taruskin describes as marking Wagnerian symbolism.[63] Yet, immediately after Marie's first iteration of 'Unsere Liebe …', the first harp's ascending *glissando* in rich C flat major leads to woodwind-led gestures that contradict the mood of that 'objectless desire' and instead anticipate Act II's *commedia dell'arte* (b. 1904 ff.). The oboes rudely interrupt Marie's sombre religiosity with their *sforzando* ascending quadruple *appoggiatura* in the Dorian mode, punctuating the flutes' soft chromatic descent (bb. 1094–6). Such *commedia* gesturing similarly interrupts her next 'Unsere Liebe …', now

[63] Richard Taruskin, 'Symbolism', in ch. 2 'Getting Rid of Glue', in *Oxford History of Western Music*, iv: 'Music in the Early Twentieth Century' (New York, and Oxford, 2005), https://www-oxfordwesternmusic-com>, accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

Ex. 3. Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, Act I, Scene vi, bb. 1150–9, orchestral score. Korngold DIE TOTE STADT. Copyright © 1920 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany. Copyright © renewed. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors Company, sole US and Canada agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany



echoed by Paul (bb. 1123–36), though only after Marie's ever more excited and intensified declarations of her ownership of him, making clear the co-dependent nature of their relationship.

Korngold seems to have created a deliberate ambiguity surrounding the voicing of Act I's final phrase, 'See, see and understand' (bb. 1154–7), by situating it at a point of transition where it is unclear whether Paul sees a receding Marie or an emerging Marietta.[64] The libretto and vocal score printed in 1920 both state that it is Marie who delivers those words 'from [behind] the misty veils' before she 'disappears completely' and out of the mist steps Marietta.[65] Marie and Marietta are, of course, sung by the same singer, who should—at this point of the opera—be donning the same costume. However, in response to that appeal of 'See …', Paul desperately answers not Marie but 'Marietta!' (bb. 1215–16). Despite the fifty-eight bars between Marie/Marietta's urging and Paul's cry, Paul not only names Marietta but might also have *heard* Marietta at the end of Act I, revealing his own desire to escape Marie's melancholic grip. Indeed, in the new study score from Ernst Eulenberg Press (an imprint of Schott Music, Korngold's publisher), that final phrase is unmistakably assigned to Marietta, with her name spelt out in full (see Ex. 3); editorial decisions were made, as Christian Hoesch, the head editor at Schott Music, explains, following consideration of 'performance material newly issued by Schott Music on the basis of the first printed edition'.[66] I belabour this point of whether Paul hears Marie or Marietta at the end of Act I because Paul's hearing of Marietta here can yield a profound rereading of Marietta as a 'warm-blooded' (her words), life-affirming force instead of a destructive *femme fatale*. Even acknowledging the presence of ambiguity at this point of the opera is hermeneutically productive. Thus, to the words of

> *Life comes to claim you, a new love beckons—*
> See, see and understand

[64] Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 39; 'Schau, schau und erkenne'.

[65] In the vocal score, Korngold furthermore allows a cut of rehearsal marks 101–9, which effectively removes Marietta's wild dance from the stage. Erich Wolgang Korngold, *Die tote Stadt. Opern in 3 Bildern frei nach G. Rodenbach: 'Bruges la morte' von Paul Schott* [vocal score] (Mainz, 1920). Paul Schott, *Die tote Stadt: Oper in drei Bildern frei nach G. Rodenbachs Schauspiel 'Das Trugbild' ('Bruges la Morte'), Musik von Erich Wolfgang Korngold Op. 12* [libretto] (Mainz, 1920), 20. Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 39; 'aus den Nebelnschleiern'.

[66] Christian Hoesch, 'Vorwort/Preface', in Erich Wolfgang Korngold, *Die tote Stadt: Oper in drei Bildern* [score], trans. Lindsay Chalmers-Gerbracht (Mainz, 2017), p. vi.

the orchestra eases, ushering in Marietta's less strained register that is one octave lower than Marie's persistent demand of 'Unsere Liebe'. This moment (especially from 'See …') provides Paul temporal, harmonic, and psychic relief by giving way to an ever-greater sense of spaciousness with 'solemn calm' (bb. 1150–1), 'getting wider and wider, increased in expression' (bb. 1154–5) in secure tonalities.[67] Even when Korngold omits to specify that phrase as Marietta's, he lets her claim the rest of the scene, as he writes in the stage direction: 'The background lights up, one suddenly sees in place of Marie Marietta[,] dancing seductively in the theatre in flowing fantasy-dance costume', to the expression markings of 'suddenly extremely lively dance tempo, the rhythm sharply marked' (b. 1160 ff.).[68] There is (also at b. 1160 ff.) an offstage military marching band with triangle, cymbals, tambourine, military drum, and bass drum playing a 4+4 eight-bar phrase, ushering listeners to a Mahleresque luxuriant waltz (b. 1199 ff.). The waltz's increasingly hurried frenzy—interrupted by Paul's *Sprechgesang*-like cry of 'Marietta!'—leads to a 'still quicker, Bacchanalian dance'; its liveliness is obviously meant to be seductive.

ACT II: *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE* TO THE FORE

Act II immerses us further within Paul's dream. Paul's vision continues, and the composer asks his audience to imagine the events taking place in this act to occur several weeks after the events of Act I.[69] The orchestral interlude that precedes Act II once again confronts listeners with music of Wagnerian solemnity, reinforcing the opposition between a Wagnerian-toned realm and a quasi-popular, anti-Wagnerian, and anti-Catholic domain that I argue connotes Jewishness. Indeed, while the Beguines of Bruges in Scene i represent both the deadness (of the dead city) and Catholic religiosity, Paul's dream is at once immensely noisy and sensitive to noise. Rodenbach's reputation as a symbolist writer has shaped both popular and scholarly readings of *Die tote Stadt* as similarly symbolist. Ben Winters, for example, has identified in his readings of *Die tote Stadt* the 'Catholic symbolism of Bruges' as well as the 'strangulating hair symbolism', which is 'a particularly potent symbol in nineteenth-century art and literature'.[70] The parts of the opera that closely adhere to the original narrative might be read as symbolist. The scenes and characters that exist only in Korngold's operatic adaptation, however, are not. Rather, they act as a critical—*commedia*—opposition to symbolism, which Martin Green and John Swan locate in 'the operas of Wagner and the poetry of Wagner enthusiasts like Mallarmé'.[71] *Commedia dell'arte* functioned as a means through which early twentieth-century Central Europe reacted to French and Wagnerian symbolisms and their penchant for 'solemnity'.[72] Korngold subjected his listeners to an aural oscillation between a Wagnerian-inflected symbolism of religiosity and what has been established from the outset, in the figure of Marietta, as a *commedia dell'arte* mode of articulation.

[67] 'mit feierlicher Ruhe', 'Immer breiter werdend, gesteigert im Ausdruck', and 'breit'.

[68] 'Der Hintergrund erhellt sich, man sieht plötzlich an Stelle Mariens Marietta auf dem Theater in wallendem Phantasietanzkostüm, prächtig geschmückt, verführerisch lockend tanzen'; 'Plötzlich äußerst lebhaftes Tanzzeitmaß, der Rhythmus scharf markiert.'

[69] 'Synopsis' in liner notes, Korngold, *Die tote Stadt*, cond. by Leinsdorf, 6.

[70] Winters, 'Korngold's *Violanta*', 51; Winters, 'Strangling Blondes', 52.

[71] Green and Swan, *Triumph of Pierrot*, 8.

[72] Ibid. 7–8.

While Scene i articulates through Brigitta's appearance as a beguine a withdrawal into memories and the comfort that comes with such withdrawal,[73] Scene ii disrupts Paul's desire to retreat into an idealized past unsuitable for his present. Taking place in Scene ii is Frank's revelation that he, too, is involved with Marietta, thereby rupturing his friendship with Paul. Making explicit the *commedia* lens through which audiences should view Paul's dream, Korngold has Frank frame himself with *commedia dell'arte* images. The stage direction indicates that 'the moon', an element intimately connected with Pierrot, 'comes out of the clouds'.[74] Immediately, responding to Paul's 'pain and shame' (bb. 267–8) at having fallen for Marietta, Frank asserts Marietta as a force of life and describes his own role as functionally aligned with hers. Thus, he declares that she 'wants complete (*volle*) fulfilment' (bb. 287–8; the underlined 'volle' is further accented when it is restated at b. 290) and that Paul's existence between life and death is unfulfilling for her.[75] Here, Korngold has the glockenspiel (b. 288 ff.) and harps (bb. 291–2)—instruments that have hitherto been silent—follow Frank, banishing the gloom of the earlier chromatic and oscillating *staccatissimi*. Most importantly, Korngold assigns Frank a meta-discursive position by letting him assume the position of a Pierrot (with Paul cast as a second Pierrot and Marietta a Columbine). Frank sings: 'Dreaming in our secret longing, we are enthralled by her, and we are Pierrots [plural] who adore her, and she is Columbine who seduces us, enslaves us—.'[76] The orchestra is drastically reduced to only the strings, creating a 'mysteriously hast[y]' effect with highly chromatic two-bar patterns, which intensify as the initially *pp* strings slowly ascend and *crescendo* while they nervously sound *tremolo* on the bridge (bb. 317–28). Just as early twentieth-century evocations of *commedia dell'arte* reflected contemporary anxieties about the turbulent historical moment, Frank's references to *commedia* characters send Paul into greater vocal and psychological unease. While the music accelerates as if swirling into a grotesque waltz, Paul's vocal expression intensifies, developing from 'alienated [and] disrupted' (b. 329), to 'excited' (b. 335), and from 'shaken' (b. 344) to eventually 'shrieking' (b. 356).[77]

Scenes i and ii of Act II differ in their respective preoccupations with Catholicism and *commedia dell'arte* archetypes. Yet both scenes prepare for the arrival of Scene iii's extended *commedia dell'arte* performance. Recall here the glockenspiel and harps mentioned above: their toy-like timbres constitute a *commedia* mode in *Die tote Stadt*. Of course, associations of fantasy, play, and enchantment with instruments such as the glockenspiel would already have been known through Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, and, to an extent, Strauss's *Ariadne*. This *commedia* mode has already lightened Paul and Frank's tense exchange in Scene ii, where the darker timbres of cellos and basses (often

[73] The housekeeper character, Barbe, in Rodenbach's novel leaves the protagonist Hugues's household because she refuses to have her own moral sense tarnished by Hugues's relationship with the dancer Jane. Although Rodenbach's Hugues arrives in Bruges only after his wife's death and acquires the housekeeper Barbe locally, it seems that at least some of Korngold's critics, including Joseph Reitler ('Feuilleton. Staatsoper. Erich Wolfgang Korngolds "Die tote Stadt"', *Neue Freie Presse* [Morgenblatt], 11 Jan. 1921, pp. 1–4), understood Bruges to be the site of Marie's death and hence the reason for Paul's stay.

[74] Korngold, *Die tote Stadt: Oper in drei Bildern* [score], 287. For imagery of the moon in *commedia dell'arte*, see Lynne Lawner, *Harlequin on the Moon: Commedia dell'Arte and the Visual Arts* (New York, 1998).

[75] Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 43; 'Sie will die volle liebe'. The underlined emphasis is given in the Eulenberg edition of the score (p. 292) and the 1920 edition of the libretto book.

[76] Adapted from ibid. 43; 'So wie wir nur im Traume fliegen, fliegt sie mit wachem Sinn, zwingt uns als Pierrots ihr zu Füßen, und Colombine tanzt und lacht die Sünde weg, berauscht und …'. I have changed Martin and Martin's 'Harlequins' to 'Pierrots', since the German text states 'Pierrots'; otherwise the translation stays faithful to Martin and Martin. Elkin translated—as I have here—'Pierrots' as simply 'Pierrots (plural)'. See his *Die tote Stadt*, 45.

[77] 'befremdet unterbrechend', 'erregt', 'bestürzt', and 'geschrien'.

marked 'morendo', dying away) musically denote the ponderous solemnity reminiscent of Wagner (and especially *Parsifal*). Indeed, Scenes i and ii each prepare for the arrival of Scene iii by ending with orchestral colours and tonal harmonies that Korngold has already associated with *commedia dell'arte* to anticipate the beginning of Scene iii. For instance, the piano and the celesta boldly ring out arpeggiated chords of E flat and D flat, first nearing the end of Scene i in bars 249–50 and then towards the end of Scene ii in bars 370–1, signalling Scene iii's musical world of *commedia* whimsies. Korngold further elicits listeners' anticipation for the *commedia dell'arte* performance as the flutes' whole-tone descents in bars 377–8 and bars 381–2 look forward to the same whole-tone descents—now reinforced by the even brighter piccolos—in bars 392–3 and, a few steps lower, in bars 396–7, unfurling Scene iii.

Scene iii opens onto a music-theatrical world explicitly labelled 'Burlesk, fantastisch' (b. 392): those descending whole-tone runs from the flutes and the piccolos now suggest the circus as they are playfully joined by the harps' ascending *glissandi* and the strings' semitone–semitone–tone patterned *pizzicati* (bb. 392–8). To escape in full the Wagnerian-toned expressions of death of the previous two scenes, the music moves in a more light-hearted and fast-paced 6/8 time as opposed to the soberer 4/4. The moon that is characteristic of *commedia dell'arte* reappears as the stage directions clearly indicate 'Moonlight', awaiting the entrance of Marietta's players onto the stage.[78] Their offstage merriment is audible before they are seen onstage. The performers effectively transition aurally and spatially into Paul's dream world of Bruges as the entourage's boats move them 'through the canal' to centre stage.[79] By calling for 'Rich, colourful variation in positions and groups. Light effects', Korngold's stage directions emphasize the buoyancy and colourfulness that is essential to this scenic atmosphere.[80] The material objects presented at the opening of Scene iii confirm Marietta's 'dance troupe' as of *commedia dell'arte*.[81] The costumes—Lucienne's and Julietta's ballet clothes as well as Fritz's Pierrot outfit—provide audiences with a glimpse of the variety-show nature of their troupe. Moreover, Pierrot's possession of a lute at his entrance is particularly significant. We have already encountered this instrument when Marietta sings the 'Lute Song' in Act i. While her 'Lute Song' anticipates Pierrot's lute in Act II, scene iii, Pierrot's carrying *his* lute also retrospectively affirms Marietta's membership in the *commedia* world and her role, as a force of life, in the opera.

Act II, Scene iii contains six 'numbers', adhering to a structuring format common in popular theatrical spaces, including *commedia dell'arte*, variety shows, and Jewish theatre:

An opening number, with performers entering 'onstage'
An ensemble
The leading lady Marietta's 'Lute Song'
The Pierrot lied, as the centrepiece
Ballet from *Robert le diable*
Exit

[78] Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 45; 'Moonschein'.

[79] Ibid. 45; 'durch den Kanal'.

[80] Ibid.; 'Reicher bunter Wechsel in Stellung und Gruppierung. Spiele des Lichts'.

[81] 'Tanzgesellschaft'.

Fig. 1. '"Venedig in Wien": Kanalpartie mit Gondelkasse' ('Venice in Vienna': canal party with gondola ticket office), 1895. Reproduced by permission of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung

Marietta's troupe thus make their entrance at bar 400, and they—Juliette, Lucienne, Victorin, and Graf Albert—quite literally burst onto the scene, exclaiming 'in high spirits' and calling the audience 'to Venice' (bb. 423–7).[82] Their high-spiritedness renders their roles self-referential and even meta-discursive, and Korngold even has Graf Albert call out to the 'director' Victorin 'A splendid stage décor!', to underscore the overtly 'staged' quality of their entrance.[83] Indeed, the canal city they lead us into is not the silent Catholic Belgian town of Rodenbach's novel. Rather, it is the Adriatic island city, home to the *commedia dell'arte*, whose staginess highlights the set's affinity with the miniature Venice staged in Vienna's Prater, familiar to Korngold's Viennese audience (see Fig. 1).[84] The extremely popular 'Venice in Vienna' theme park, moreover, used its sophisticated Venetian setting (the most realistic of its kind in Europe at the time) for music-theatrical performances.[85] Amid its fabricated Venetian 'palaces, canals, gateways, piazzas, bridges, houses, boulevards, and even a small convent'—a *mise en scène* comparable to that of *Die tote Stadt*'s middle act—Korngold's Viennese public found on their doorstep 'an opulent and playful testing ground for all kinds of contemporary theatrical and musical presentations for a wide popular audience (comedies, farces, revues, ballet, variety, cabaret, wrestling, etc.) [besides] Viennese operetta'.[86] 'Venice in Vienna'

[82] 'übermütig'.

[83] Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 45; 'Famose Mise en scene!'

[84] The amusement park was built in 1895 by the theatre impresario Gabor Steiner, whose son is Max Steiner, 'Korngold's future colleague at Warner Bros.'; Winters, 'Korngold's *Violanta*', 53.

[85] Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner, *Unruly Masses: The Other Side of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. David Fernbach and Michale Huffmaster (1999; New York, 2008), 91.

[86] Ibid. 91–2. Korngold was also deeply involved in the world of operetta.

remained until the 1910s and became synonymous with 'popular mass entertainment in artificially adapted urban structures'.[87] It was perhaps not coincidental, then, that the variety of theatrical spectacles and music idioms of Marietta's troupe corresponds to that found in Vienna's miniature Venice, pointing audiences not only to popular theatre in general, but also away from the opera's ostensible setting of Bruges and back towards Vienna itself.[88] Korngold's 'Venice' in Act II, Scene iii's opening 'number'—carried forth by the rhythmic and metric energy of the polka (as ubiquitous in Vienna as the waltz)—allowed his Viennese audiences to imagine themselves within the Venetian scene of *Die tote Stadt*.

The first proper ensemble 'number' is set in motion by an introduction from Victorin and Graf Albert at bar 460 ff. Korngold's expression marking—'suddenly much calmer, swaying and restrained, very graceful'—suggests their self-aware control as professional performers.[89] Victorin begins with a two-bar arch (d'–e'–g'–e'–d'), which he states in total four times, the last time stabilizing himself on the tonic of g', creating a simple and balanced eight-bar sentence (bb. 461_2–469_1). That eight-bar sentence is picked up by Graf Albert (bb. 469_2–477_1). The audience is then treated to a wordplay by the two performers (b. 477_2 ff.). Producing in effect the beginning of a catalogue-like patter song, their text brings the Greek courtesan Phryne into proximity with *commedia dell'arte*'s Colombine as well as the playfully rhymed names Phyllis and Willis: 'With all the Phrynes and Columbines and Phyllis and Willis enchanted by the bewitching Mariette!' (bb. 477_2–485_1).[90] Fritz, the Pierrot, subsequently takes over, 'half effusive, half self-ironic', and carefully illuminates himself with the lantern (b. 485 ff.).[91] He offers an 8+8-bar melody built on short–long dyadic patterns of neighbouring notes, whose rocking rhythm suggests a nursery song (bb. 485_2–502_1). To continue that childlike playfulness, Victorin and Graf Albert rejoin with their previous two-bar motif of d'–e'–g'–e'–d', but this time forming a canon (bb. 498_2 ff.). The dancers Juliette (at b. 506_2) and Lucienne (at b. 511_2) add further to the increasingly rich texture of voices. The dancers' two-part harmony (bb. 515–20) becomes the group's five-part harmony, preparing the audience for the most substantial portion of this ensemble 'number' (b. 543 ff.). Their nonsensical 'plum, plum' humorously imitates the plucking of the lute, which is musically made concrete by the introduction of the mandolin in the orchestra.[92] Signifying *commedia dell'arte* because it is *of* Marietta's *commedia dell'arte* troupe, this 'lute' is sounded at this point both diegetically and non-diegetically as Fritz is supposed to play the instrument onstage. The rest of the ensemble meanwhile 'accompany themselves on the walking sticks or umbrella', retrospectively affirming their previous interruption of 'diridon' in Act I, Scene v, making light-hearted reference to one of the opera's darkest symbolist moments. Their eventual exuberant exclaims of 'Marietta, hoch!' (b. 574 ff.) usher in the leading lady's lute song.

[87] Ibid. 92. The amusement park ceased operation in 1901, but the structure stayed until 1916, just before the premiere of Korngold's *Violanta*; Winters, 'Korngold's *Violanta*', 54.

[88] As Ulrike Kienzle and Ben Winters argue, Prater's 'Venice in Vienna' 'might have reflected Viennese identity back' to audiences of, respectively, Schreker's *Der ferne Klang* (1912) and Korngold's *Violanta* (1916), as both operas have Venetian settings such as *Die tote Stadt*. Kienzle, *Das Trauma hinter dem Traum: Franz Schreker's Oper 'Der ferne Klang' und die Wiener Moderne* (Schliengen, 1998), 204–7; Winters, 'Korngold's *Violanta*', 53 and 71.

[89] 'Plötzlich viel ruhiger, wiegend und zurückhaltend, sehr graziös.'

[90] My translation, adapted from Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 46 and Elkin, *Die tote Stadt*, 49. 'Die mit allen Phrynen und Columbinen und Phyllis und Willis um die Wette bezaubernde, bezaubernde Mariette.'

[91] 'halb schwärmerisch, halb mit Selbstironie'.

[92] This is the only instance where the mandolin—an instrument that resembles a lute—appears in the opera. It is therefore, interestingly, the only place where a 'lute' is not only visible but also audible in the opera.

The third musical number of Act II, Scene iii's *commedia dell'arte* sequence (b. 581 ff.) comprises a brief solo by Marietta (b. 641 ff.) that is obviously meant to resonate with her Lute Song from Act I, Scene v. Her melodies in Acts I and II are not identical, but they similarly circle around intervals of, or smaller than, the minor third, both times articulating a sort of melancholy. In Act II, Scene iii, however, Marietta's performance is ushered in by explicit declarations of freedom and renewal instead of death and mourning. To Graf Albert's proclamation that 'Art is free' (bb. 621–3), Marietta 'jumps up on the bench' to position herself onstage, as it were, and calls out, first by herself (bb. 633–6) and then with the entire troupe (bb. 637–40): 'Down with Bruges! And down with all it stands for!'[93] To underpin such declarations of freedom, the orchestra all the while gestures towards *commedia dell'arte* with its pulsating three-note figures in ascending tone–semitone patterns; this suggestion of circus-like music is already established for the opera's listeners (see my discussion of the 'Burlesk, fantastisch' moment [b. 392] above). Marietta sings in the middle of Bruges—or 'Venice'—instead of in the privacy of Paul's home, rejecting the consecrated domestic enclosure of her doppelgänger. Her song transforms into the Pierrot Lied, with her eventual A minor (b. 663) giving way tonally, through a dreamlike stepwise descent (bb. 668–73), to E flat (b. 674) and its subdominant A flat (b. 676 ff.), before another modulation down to Pierrot's D flat (b. 692 ff.). That D flat is also Marie's key in the opera,[94] wearing away the sacred singularity of the figure of Marie. His self-accompaniment on the lute,[95] an instrument reified in Marie's portrait as her instrument, serves a similar iconoclastic function to Marietta's use of the lute in her Act I performance and the ensemble's 'plum, plum' mimicry of its strumming. Moreover, this transfer of the lute from Marie to Marietta and eventually to Pierrot will effect a similar transformation when versions of the Pierrot lied (Act III, Scene ii; b. 330 ff.) and the Lute Song (Act III, Scene iii; b. 1134 ff.) return at the end of the opera. Just as memories are reconstituted between dreaming and waking, Korngold allows Paul to re-enact and replay his trauma between his dreaming and waking.

William Cheng provides an in-depth analysis of the Pierrot Lied, so I shall devote no more space to that musical number except for two points.[96] First, Cheng argues that the Pierrot Lied has the quality of 'meta-theatrics' because of its apparent 'narrative' function, its capacity to comment on the opera itself from outside the 'reality' of the opera's time and space.[97] I agree, and I believe that all the performance numbers of Act II, Scene iii can be considered 'meta-theatrical', commenting on the overwhelmingly Wagnerian-toned symbolism that governs the frame of the opera. The Pierrot Lied constituted a significant performance in the aftermath of the First World War because of how self-consciously the Lied was located in the Austro-German—specifically, the Viennese—imagination (the Vienna State Opera's employment of the city's beloved native Richard Mayr was a factor; Korngold's writing of an aria with deliberate folk appeal was another).[98] Viennese theatre, as Katherine Arens argues, operated as a

[93] Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 49; 'Die Kunst ist frei', 'springt auf die Bank', and 'Schach Brügge! Und Schach der dumpfen Lüge!'

[94] Jessica Duchen, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (London, 1996), 77.

[95] The stage directions indicate that Pierrot 'accompanies himself on the lute' ('begleitet sich auf der Laute'). Elkin, *Die tote Stadt*, 48–51.

[96] Cheng, 'Opera *en abyme*', 115–46.

[97] Ibid. 116.

[98] K. J. Kutsch and Leo Riemens, *Großes Sängerlexikon*, 3rd, expanded edn., 7 vols. (Bern and Munich, 1997–2002), iv: Muffo–Seidel (1997), 2285–6. For the entire first week of the opera's Viennese run (four performances in total), Mayr's sole task was to sing the Pierrot Lied (Die tote Stadt, Neuproduktion vom 10.01.1921, *Wiener Staatsoper Archiv*,

space for public debates amid a post-war desire for a pan-German—if not a pan-European—identity instead of a self-enclosed Austrian nationalism. Marietta therefore refers to Pierrot as a German from the Rhine as she summons him for a Viennese waltz (bb. 662–4),[99] featuring, as Cheng describes, 'lilting dactylic metre of the text, sweeping arpeggios in the harp, an abundance of notated vocal portamenti, and the overall elastic rhythms of the music' (b. 692 ff.).[100] Audiences might even have heard an imprint of Vienna's dance hall in the Pierrot Lied, given Korngold's preoccupation with reorchestrating Johann Strauss's operettas for the Vienna theatre in the 1920s.[101] Pierrot's waltz became a political commentary: just as the dance halls' streams of waltzes permitted, or rather required, participants to change partners and to continue, Korngold's Jewish audiences were asked to move, to carry on, even when faced with impossible challenges of anti-Jewish hatred.

The next, and most substantial, music number materializes in the troupe's rendition of the supernatural ballet scene from Meyerbeer's immensely popular and influential *Robert le diable*. While Hugues in Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* mistakenly believes that the Helene onstage (Jane) enacts his dead wife's resurrection, Paul actually realizes his illusion on witnessing Marietta's play-acting. Meyerbeer's 'Resurrection' motif is heard at this point in *Die tote Stadt*. And Korngold's engagement with Meyerbeer's *Robert*, as Steinberg boldly argues, deliberately offered a Jewish—and self-consciously extravagant—representation of a Catholic display.[102] *Robert* had been reproduced numerous times over the course of the nineteenth century, including via Wagner's use of the ballet scene's tonal structure for *Parsifal*'s Act II, which features Klingsor's trickery, the Flower Maidens' seduction, and Kundry.[103] Meyerbeer fell victim to Wagner's essentializing accusation of 'inauthenticity', as someone who offered something other than his own cultural heritage as 'a Berlin-born Jew' (an accusation that might also be applied to Reinhardt's Salzburg efforts).[104] The fact that Marietta is a performer—a dancer—in an opera by Wagner's loathed and disparaged predecessor is too clearly a point to be made here. Korngold in many ways rendered grotesque Wagner's complaints about the elaborate 'Jewish' venture of the grand opera.[105] Korngold's musical reference to Meyerbeer already demonstrated 'a certain sophisticated operatic cosmopolitanism', but his manoeuvring of a *commedia dell'arte* troupe for an extra-Germanic operatic quotation doubly underscores a post-war cosmopolitan impulse for Austrian Jews' 'dreams of Europe'.[106]

https://archiv.wiener-staatsoper.at/search/work/180/production/1045, accessed 11 Dec. 2021). Even though Mayr's performance of the Pierrot Lied was also well received at the Hamburg premiere (Duchen, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, 88), it was really the Viennese critics (including Joseph Reitler and Elsa Bienenfeld), who devoted column space to praising Mayr's performance; see Reitler, 'Feuilleton', 4 and Elsa Bienenfeld, 'Feuilleton. Die tote Stadt. Oper in drei Bildern von Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Erste Aufführung an der Wiener Staatsoper am 10. Januar 1921', *Neues Wiener Journal*, 11 Jan. 1921, pp. 3–4 at 4. Benjamin Goose, 'Opera for Sale: Folksong, Sentimentality and the Market', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 133 (2008), 189–219.

[99] Martin and Martin (trans.), liner notes for *Die tote Stadt*, 51; 'You're a German, from the Rhine!' ('*Ein Deutscher bist du, bist vom Rhein!*').

[100] Cheng, 'Opera *en abyme*', 116.

[101] Daniel Goldmark and Kevin C. Karnes, 'Preface and Acknowledgements', in *Korngold and His World*, p. ix.

[102] Steinberg, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Operatic Modernism', 642.

[103] Robert Ignatius Letellier, *An Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Giacomo Meyerbeer: Operas, Ballets, Cantatas, Plays* (Abingdon, 2008), 108; Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Madison and Teaneck, NJ, 2010), 130.

[104] Steinberg, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Operatic Modernism', 642.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Arens, *Vienna's Dreams of Europe*.

The *commedia dell'arte* troupe exits as self-referentially as it enters. The performers, led by Marietta, have shown themselves to be playful, warm, and a force of life against death and even violence. Ultimately, *Die tote Stadt* presents more than late Romantic lyricism, though it absolutely offers that too. Instead, the opera boldly flirts with elements that appear to fall outside the bounds of a 'post-Wagnerian' opera. Korngold manoeuvred the position of being both a victim of antisemitism and an artist with creative agency, dispelling the anti-Jewish negativity embodied in the opera's crime of sexual murder for something that in time became transformative. Indeed, Korngold marshalled the delicate balancing act on behalf of the Viennese Jews, to understand where and how they belonged in post-Imperial Austria through exploring a particular *commedia dell'arte* mode of existence, ironic and playful in its undermining of power. What *Die tote Stadt* demonstrated is a tolerance, and perhaps even a yearning, for ambiguity, hybridity, and play, reflecting the strengths and resourcefulness of Vienna's assimilated Jewish community. What remained after the *commedia dell'arte* troupe's exit might feel as phantom-like as Marie's apparition; the troupe, however, has changed the shape of Paul's psyche.

CONCLUSION

Korngold's biographer Brendan Carroll contends that the composer was uninterested in his Jewishness and instead favoured Catholicism.[107] In a place where Catholicism intimately shaped governance and state funding into the 1920s, and where antisemitism was written into institutional bureaucracy, Korngold's position was unsurprising in this regard. Such an identity was born out of a legacy of Jewish survival that evolved from following the dictates of a Catholic environment; scholars of *fin de siècle* Vienna including Jacques Le Rider, Carl E. Schorske, and Lisa Silverman give a number of examples of such assimilated Jews participating in Catholic culture.[108] The reorganization of political space since the First World War, however, made audible the intolerance of the former empire's Catholic metropolis.[109] *Die tote Stadt*, then, materialized both as score and performance surrounded by waves of violence towards Jews, who were scapegoated for the loss of the war. While *Die tote Stadt*'s protagonist could—and likely would—be read as 'Jewish' because of his allegedly excessive and hence emasculating emotional expressions of grief, Korngold's opera presents no explicit 'Jewish content'. I have nonetheless argued that it actively participated in taking control of audible 'Jewish difference', confronting head-on prejudices about Jewish sentimentality and frivolity.[110] Subverting or even directly challenging Gentile conceptions of Jews, the assimilated Jews—Korngold, Reinhardt, and even Hofmannsthal—who had previously been uninterested in their Jewishness turned to Jewish culture to fashion a wide-reaching republican self-understanding for all Austrians.[111]

Indeed, Korngold's fellow assimilated Jewish critics paid keen attention to the opera's *commedia dell'arte* elements. They heard 'Jewish difference' in *Die tote Stadt* and situated

[107] Carroll, *The Last Prodigy*, 72.

[108] Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York, 1993), 187; Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1981), 191; Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 13–16 and 18.

[109] Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 4; Robert Wistrich, 'Aufstieg und Fall des Wiener Judentums', in Marcus G. Patka (ed.), *Weltuntergang: Jüdisches Leben und Sterben im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 2014), 34–44.

[110] Indeed, Heinrich Berl criticized 'Korngold's Viennese sentimentality and Pucciniesque triviality' in his 1924 'Erich Wolfgang Korngold: Ein judischer Musiker'; see Karen Painter, 'Polyphony and Racial Identity: Schoenberg, Heinrich Berl, and Richard Eichenauer', *Music & Politics*, 5 (2011), http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0005.203.

[111] Silverman, *Becoming Austrian*, 7.

the comedic players squarely in Vienna in the aftermath of Europe's first total war. A pertinent example is the musicologist and music critic Elsa Bienenfeld, who wrote about the opera's Viennese premiere in the Jewish-founded newspaper *Neues Wiener Journal*.[112] Hearing *commedia dell'arte* as a source of hope and renewal, Bienenfeld remarkably began her *feuilleton* by celebrating first and foremost the lively scenes of Act II, the performers that she would name as not only 'Gaukler' (itinerant entertainers) but also explicitly 'Italian *commedia dell'arte*' artists.[113] No less importantly, while Bienenfeld praised the opera's 'marvellous scenes, enchanting sounds, a joyous richness of colours', she unambiguously declared that Korngold 'does not submit himself to Wagner's theatre'.[114] She even protests against complaints directed at *Die tote Stadt* to further distance Korngold from Wagner, writing: 'The eternal grumblers have already come forward accusing him [Korngold] for not turning to Tristan or Palestrina.'[115] Bienenfeld openly resisted the propensity of late Romantic Austro-German opera for symbols of death and ritual in the Wagnerian vein. Instead, to her, between *commedia dell'arte* and Wagnerian symbolism, *Die tote Stadt* granted glimpses into a different way of knowing, through which Korngold's fellow Viennese Jews might helpfully explore their continued existence after the First World War.

In her elevation of the anti-Wagnerian, the quasi-popular, hence arguably the Jewish, in the opera, Bienenfeld read Paul's dream through the lens of psychoanalysis, describing Paul's loss and trauma this way:

> In the scenes of wistful grief and lustful feelings lies in an absolutely theatrically gripping parable the reflex of painful battles … against death and neglect… . It is a heart-rending farewell when the bereaved husband at the end of the opera deserts the room of his treasured relics. Through the adaptation [*Umdichtung*], the composer opened up rich and, in stark contrast, swinging moods; found situations that complied with his inclinations to eruptions of red-hot eroticism; and had in the unreality of the dream play the [basis] on which the lively and colourful agility of his music could unfold in unbound freedom.[116]

The word 'Umdichtung' needs further elaboration: it means adaptation in this context but it can also be understood as reworking, or recasting. Calling forth psychoanalytic ideas about dreaming, remaking, and healing, Bienenfeld's 'Umdichtung' should be understood as her reading Paul reliving and remaking his memory drastically differently

[112] Bienenfeld, 'Die tote Stadt', 3–4.

[113] Ibid. 4. 'eine Gauklerszene, die das dramatische Scherzo der Oper bildet, mit vielen Figuren, wie eine italienische Commedia dell'arte'.

[114] Ibid. 3. 'Prachtvolle Bilder, zauberische Klänge, ein jauchzender Reichtum von Farben' and 'Dieser junge Erzmusikant unterwirft sich nicht dem Theater Wagner'.

[115] Ibid. 4. 'Schon melden sich die ewigen Nörgler, die ihm vorwerfen, dass es kein Tristan und kein Palestrina sei, dem er sich zuwendet. Was will man denn? Der Sturm einen Jugend braust hin! Wer kann sagen, wohin diesen jungen, herrlichen Künstler diesen Urmusiker noch sein Dämon führen wird!'

[116] Ibid. 3. 'In den Bildern von sehnsüchtiger Trauer und wollüstigen Empfindungen liegt in einem allerdings nur theatralisch packenden Gleichnis der Reflex des schmerzlichen Kampfes, der stets von dem Überlebenden gegen Tod und Vergessen gekämpft wird. Wer hat nie das Bild eines geliebten Toten mit allen Kräften der Erinnerung wie ein Lebendiges festhalten wollen, wer hat es nicht im Strome des Daseins entgleiten sehen? Es ist ein ergreifender Abschied, wenn der trauernde Gatte am Schluss der Oper den Raum seiner geliebten Reliquien verlässt. Durch die Umdichtung eröffnete der Komponist ergiebige und in starken Gegensätzen schwingende Stimmungen, fand Situationen, die seinen Neigungen zu Ausbrüchen glühender Erotik entgegenkamen, und hatte in der Unwirklichkeiten des Traumspiels die Unterlage, auf der sich die lebhafte, farbige Beweglichkeit seiner Musik in ungebundener Freiheit entfalten konnte.'

through his dream, of which *commedia dell'arte* plays a significant part. His Catholic-toned surroundings and experiences are recast in a different—more readily Jewish—light. Paul wakes up and is absolved of a murder that he has not actually committed. Just as Paul's voyeuristic eavesdropping on Marietta throughout Act II's *commedia* suggested a self-aware stance, distanced from the action he observed, Korngold granted his audiences the same privilege as observers of a safely enclosed fantasy, to process and negotiate the kinds of tensions that they, as part of the assimilated Jewish community in Vienna, would probably have heard and found relevant to their own personal circumstances. In the process, it allowed a different—traditionally secondary—story to emerge, reframing questions of aurality and even ethics.

Paul awakens ready to leave his self-isolation and return to society. There is a whole set of critiques about masculine norms, the management of emotions, and capitalist production to be offered about Paul's return to a society in which he has been too weak to participate. We might even read his departure from Bruges as a compromise made in the subjectivity of a Jewish man, fitting himself once again to what was demanded of him. Yet the question to ask about *Die tote Stadt* might not actually be Sander Gilman's provocative rhetorical question, 'Can Jews make music in a Western context?', which he poses in his interrogation of long-held cultural beliefs about Jewish intonation and Jewish music-making.[117] Instead, a more productive question here might be *why* Korngold quite deliberately went out of his way to include, in the middle of a post-Wagnerian opera, a *commedia dell'arte* performance seemingly unrelated to—and unnecessary for—the rest of the opera. Humour and laughter had been important parts of Jewish culture, as strategies of survival for a historically persecuted and migratory community. Indeed, *Die tote Stadt*'s fantastical dream indicated a deliberate claiming of a space that had often been denied to Korngold's fellow Viennese Jews. In other words, *Die tote Stadt* allowed its protagonist to 'see and understand'—to dream and process his trauma—by accommodating a mode of performance incongruent with the narrative-driven music drama. The opera's choice of laughter over severity, ambiguity over rigidity, and fantasy over allusion was profound for its assimilated Jewish audiences in post-war Vienna: it allowed them to emerge from the ashes of the Habsburg Empire, nostalgic, bereaved, but laughing.

ABSTRACT

Commedia dell'arte re-emerged in the early twentieth century to become a means for Europe's assimilated Jews to process the conditions of modernity by non-serious means. Yet, existing scholarship on Erich W. Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* tends to focus on the protagonist Paul with respect to the doppelgängers Marie/Marietta, spotlighting the psychodrama of Acts I and III but overlooking the overtly theatrical episodes of Act II's extended *commedia dell'arte* sequence. The opera's 'Schlager' (hit songs) offered old-world comfort to its post-First World War Viennese audience. Nevertheless, the *commedia dell'arte* scenes were significant in terms of advancing an affirmative politics for war-torn

[117] Sander Gilman, 'Are Jews Musical? Historical Notes on the Question of Jewish Musical Modernism', in Philip V. Bohlman (ed.), *Jewish Musical Modernism: Old and New* (Chicago, 2008), p. xiv.

Vienna's assimilated Jews, precisely because of how deliberately noisy they appeared in opposition to the world of Catholic harmony. Placing side by side Wagnerian symbolism and *commedia dell'arte*—that is, ingredients from Christianity and contemporary popular Jewish theatre—Korngold's opera asked timely questions of the Jewish citizenry in Austria's First Republic.