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Workers, Unite!: The Political Songs of Hanns Eisler, 1926-1932

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

WORKERS, UNITE! THE POLITICAL SONGS OF HANNS EISLER, 1926-1932

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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Political Parties and Other Organizations:

Comintern – Communist International

DASB – Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerbund (German Workers Singing League)

IAH – Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (International Worker's Aid)

HUAC – House Un-American Activities Committee

KJVD – Kommunistischer Jugendverband Deutschlands (German Communist Youth League)

KPD – Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)

MASCH – Marxistische Arbeiter Schule (Marxist Workers' School)

SPD – Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)

ABSTRACT

One of the most prolific German composers of the twentieth century, Hanns Eisler was a communist who sought to blend politics, advanced musical techniques, and folk elements into compositions that would give a powerful voice to Europe's working classes. To that end he left behind an extensive body of songs, chamber works, film scores, and theoretical writings that stand as a critique of and alternative to popular society.

This treatise is intended to introduce English-speaking singers and music historians to Eisler's "Kampflieder," or fighting songs, from the pre-World War II period. As these songs are bound to the political culture of Weimar Germany, I have included an analysis of the ways Marxist dialectical materialism shaped Eisler's compositional aesthetic. Eisler's fighting songs were also bound agitpropaganda theater groups that developed in Berlin's working class neighborhoods; this treatise offers a glimpse into the social context that produced those groups and Eisler's position within them as a musical revolutionary.

In 1947, while living in the United States, Hanns Eisler was investigated by the FBI and interrogated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, becoming one of the first artists to be publicly attacked as "Communist" and blacklisted for his political affiliations. I have argued that his pre-War fighting songs bore directly on his American fate, and that the lingering effects of McCarthyism have led to his neglect in American music scholarship.

INTRODUCTION

Born in eastern Germany, raised in Austria, inspired by revolutionary Berlin, driven from Germany, persecuted in the United States, received reluctantly by his adopted Vienna, resented and admired in his final East German home, composer Hanns Eisler weathered the turbulence inspired by his political beliefs throughout his life. His was a generation convinced it was contributing to a new social order, a generation whose artistic creations offered a critique of and alternative to capitalist society. As a committed communist, Eisler worked throughout his life to blend politics, the musical avant-garde, and German folk elements into compositions that would give a powerful voice to the working classes and advance Socialism throughout Europe.

Eisler was, above all things, a rebel. He led the life of a dissenter and cultural critic, and his work led him into a dizzying array of musical arenas that make him difficult to categorize. How does one approach such an enigmatic figure? Encumbered with a sense of history, weighted down with notions of progress and evolution, we view our pasts through a contemporary lens. Here our subject looms large and his importance to us, rather than to himself or to his own time, is exaggerated. Nevertheless, Eisler offers one window through which we can view his creative impulses, his inventions, and his thoughts: music. Music was the center of Eisler's life, and through music he sought to change the world.

Eisler's extensive theoretical writings also offer valuable insight into his compositional goals. He belongs to a marginal group of musicians who are also significant intellectuals; his writings on the role of music in Western society are extensive and lucid. A dialectical thinker, Eisler believed that artists must seek to resolve the inconsistencies of a commercially viable, creative output with art that assumes a socially interactive role. To this end, he left behind numerous books, essays, criticisms, and articles in which he outlined his practical and theoretical concerns for music composition. Between 1927 and 1928 alone, as leading music critic for the Berlin communist daily *Die Rote Fahne* (*The Red Flag*), Eisler wrote more than thirty opinion pieces that diagnosed the decay in Berlin's artistic communities (particularly in the

realms of concert music and opera), positing that, should they not respond more effectively to the needs of the proletariat, they would quickly disappear in favor of readily consumed mass entertainment. Here, as in his music, Eisler handled his compositional tools with care: his words are precise, direct, and illuminating.¹

The purposes of this treatise are three-fold. I offer it as an introduction to English-speaking singers and music historians interested in Eisler's vast, multi-faceted song repertoire. In an effort to understand the political, social, and economic forces that shaped his music before it was nearly silenced by National Socialism in the 1930s, I have focused on one of the composer's most productive periods, the years immediately following his move to Berlin in 1925. From the late 1920s to the early 1930s Eisler composed a unique body of "Kampflieder," or fighting songs, aimed at criticizing middle-class culture, capitalism, and Weimarian democracy. My focus is specifically on those songs conceived outside the realm of didactic plays, which are individual works whose music and narratives should be examined more fairly as complete units. I have instead chosen to examine his autonomous political songs and those songs that were interpolated or created for agitprop theater shows and other small-scale stage works.² To that end, I have compiled a detailed list of songs and accompanying research material that has previously been inaccessible to those who are not proficient in German.

The second purpose of this treatise is to offer non-German speakers insight into Eisler's compositional aesthetic. While there is a small but growing body of English literature devoted to Eisler's music, few authors move beyond a cursory examination of his biography or his collaboration with Bertolt Brecht.³ Eisler must not only be examined as one who was affected by the major political events of his generation, but one who sought an active role in shaping political history through music. Throughout his life he responded to what he viewed as the historical demands of Marxism, offering

¹ For a complete listing of Eisler's theoretical writings, see Manfred Grabs, *Hanns Eisler: Kompositionen – Schriften – Literatur (Hanns Eisler: Compositions, Writings, Literature)* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), 181-249. Also useful is Manfred Grabs' *Hanns Eisler: a Rebel in Music* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1978), a collection of Eisler's selected writings translated into by Marjorie Meyer.

² Agitprop theater shows typically had no binding narrative; they were variety entertainments that showcased the talents of orators, musicians, jugglers, comedians, etc. Didactic plays, meanwhile, were bound by a continuous storyline.

³ One noteworthy exception is the work of Joy Calico, who has drawn attention to Eisler's *Doktor Faustus* libretto.

more than a musical commentary on the class struggle: he saw himself as a part of communist revolution and viewed his compositions as an important impetus to social change.

Third, I will examine the impact of Eisler's militant music on his experiences with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and his subsequent omission from the U.S. musicological canon. During the 1940s, Eisler became a very public symbol for communism in the U.S. media. His compositional activities in Berlin provided explosive tinder used to kindle the political careers of Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy, who spearheaded a witch-hunt that identified Eisler as the primary link between Moscow and Hollywood's dream factories. Far more than his apolitical U.S. film compositions, I believe the pre-War political songs listed in this treatise determined Eisler's American fate. Furthermore, his example provides an important case study for investigating the intersections between academia and the political realm, particularly in the ways politics and money can limit the field of academic inquiry.

CHAPTER ONE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE OF HANNS EISLER

Eisler was born in Leipzig on July 6, 1898 to Dr. Rudolf and Ida Maria Eisler. He was the youngest of three children, all of whom would devote their lives to the ideals of Marxism and whose worlds remained at least politically, if not personally, intertwined until their deaths. Eisler's father was a philosopher in the neo-Kantian tradition: his more than forty essays and books, all of which evidence a progressive, liberal mindset, deal with sociological questions of the individual's place in and responsibility to society.⁴ His mother was the daughter of a Leipzig butcher, whom Eisler identified as a product of the working class. Of his heritage Eisler frequently remarked, "the most interesting fact of my life . . . is that I am from two distinct social classes."⁵ Ida Maria Eisler reinforced her son's identification with Germany's proletariat and encouraged her children to actively participate in the struggle for workers' rights.

Six years after Eisler's birth, the family moved to Vienna. Although Hanns' musical talent manifested itself early, his father's sporadic employment as a private tutor left no money for music lessons; Eisler's only available instrument was a piano rented periodically throughout his youth. As a result, Eisler learned from an early age to compose without the piano, a skill he would use throughout his turbulent exile years – the train car, the subway, the restaurant, or the hotel room served him equally well as a composition studio. He was largely an auto-didact who developed his compositional technique through careful, attentive study of past masters; his early musical ideas were shaped less by an external authority and more by his innate sense of musical value.

During their school years, Hanns and his brother Gerhart belonged to a group of young political reactionaries as well as an illegal socialist debate club where they were

⁴ Eberhardt Klemm, *Hanns Eisler* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1973), 6. While Rudolf Eisler did not achieve the same measure of fame or notoriety as a philosopher as Hanns would as a musician, he did produce one lasting work: his *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe und Ausdrücke* (*Lexicon of Philosophical Terms and Expressions*), to which Lenin frequently referred in his published writings.

⁵ Nathan Notowicz, *Wir reden nicht von Napoleon. Wir reden von Ihnen! Gespräche mit Hanns Eisler und Gerhart Eisler* (*We aren't talking about Napoleon. We're talking about you! Discussions with Hanns Eisler and Gerhart Eisler*) (Berlin: Jürgen Elsner, 1971), 27.

exposed to and discussed the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. From an early age, then, Eisler learned to approach middle-class culture and morality with a critical eye, convinced that the path to social progress lay not only in the creation of new ideas, but in the application of dialectical reason to shape, scrutinize, and refine them. He responded to the outbreak of the First World War with anti-imperialistic compositions, including an oratorio based on the writings of Chinese philosopher and pacifist Li-tai-pe.⁶ Drafted into the Austrian army in 1916, Eisler continued to write songs during his time of service. These early songs, with piano or orchestral accompaniment, demonstrate a precocious musical sophistication and aesthetic confidence.

Eisler's formal musical education began after the war with Karl Weigl at the Neue Wiener Konservatorium (New Viennese Conservatory); he paid for his studies by working as an editor for the Viennese music publishers Universal Edition. When Weigl's conservative teaching methods proved too rigid and unadventurous, Eisler sought another teacher. He soon found himself in the studio of Arnold Schoenberg, already the leader of Vienna's musical avant-garde; he would remain in Schoenberg's tutelage for four years. Schoenberg quickly recognized Eisler's extraordinary talents, an assertion borne out by the fact that he taught the penniless student for nearly four years without charge.⁷ Schoenberg later included Eisler, along with Alban Berg and Anton Webern, among the three "masters" whom he had taught; convinced of his student's abilities, Schoenberg recommended Eisler's Piano Sonata, op. 1, to Universal Edition, even before the last movement had been completed.⁸

Schoenberg encouraged his pupil's dedication to "clarity in music, responsibility in music, and the absence of musical pretense."⁹ The two differed, however, in the musician's potential role as political activist. Schoenberg dismissed Eisler's passion for socialism as passing fancy and predicted that his student's yearning for communist revolution would disappear as soon as he had "three suits in the closet." Eisler, however, was insulted by his teacher's implicit assumption that his commitment to activism would be easily exchanged for a new suit of clothes; he therefore broke with

⁶ Ibid, 22-24.

⁷ Grabs, 10. During his studies with Schoenberg, Eisler also frequently took lessons with Schoenberg's student Alban Berg.

⁸ Klemm, 8.

⁹ Notowicz, 46.

his teacher, personally and ideologically, in a move that proved very painful for both. Thirty years later, Eisler shouldered the responsibility for their separation:

Schoenberg had a high opinion of me. Of a hundred talented students, I was the third of his pupils whom he recognized as a master. Now, he thought, I would sit in the saddle and ride with him. And my communism was just a youthful folly; it would soon pass away (just a symptom of my hunger) . . . I did the expected: I broke ranks with him. I did this crudely, ungratefully, rebelliously, petulantly, despising his philistine attitudes, withdrawing from him contemptuously. He responded with great personal generosity. The letters he wrote me during those weeks are impressive testimony to this remarkable man.¹⁰

Thus ended the filial relationship between the two, a rift which would heal only in their shared Californian exile during the late 1930s.

Despite the loss of his teacher, Eisler's break with Schoenberg can be viewed as an emancipation for the young composer. It occurred in 1926, one year after Eisler settled in eastern Berlin, the heart of the German communist movement. The musical world Eisler experienced in Vienna was focused upon the concert musician - one of Schoenberg's favored pupils, he enjoyed many opportunities to premiere his compositions and was under contract to Universal Edition Publishers long before many of his contemporaries had publishing offers. In Berlin, a concert musician operated within the same parameters, with one important distinction: the city was home to numerous intellectuals who questioned the societal role and function of concert music. Here Eisler met and collaborated with Erwin Piscator, Maxim Vallentin, and Bertolt Brecht, like-minded individuals who were determined to redirect the course of music and theater away from both the exclusive elite and the mass culture industry. By 1926, Berlin was one of the most technologically-advanced European cities, and rapid developments wrought by radio broadcasting and recording technology, which led to pressure for commercial success, were being felt in all segments of the society. Eisler surrounded himself with friends who shunned commercialism; in this company,

¹⁰ Hanns Eisler, quoted in Albrecht Betz *Hanns Eisler, Political Musician* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 44.

allegiance to a powerful, guru-like figure such as Schoenberg would have appeared provincial, or, worse, bourgeois.

Eisler gained entry into this realm in part through his siblings' connections to the Berlin's communist community. Both Gerhart and Ruth Eisler (Fischer) were members of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany, or KPD); Ruth's politics, however, was more radical than either of her brothers'. A brilliant public speaker, Ruth Fischer was known as a fiery orator whose speeches called for the immediate overthrow of the Weimar government, and from 1924-5 (during which time brother Hanns moved to Berlin) she was one of the KPD's leading figures. Fischer's radical policies effectively isolated the KPD from more moderate support among Berlin's blue-collar populations, and she was ultimately removed from leadership by the Moscow-led Politburo. Gerhart, meanwhile, advocated a more neutral course for the Party, a moderate attitude which his sister viewed as a kind of cultural treason. Ruth resented Gerhart's (and, by extension, Hanns') temporizing as weak and non-committal; the political and personal rift that developed between them would later haunt both Hanns and Gerhart as their sister became an informant for the Nixon House Un-American Activities Committee.

From 1927 until his departure from Berlin in 1933, Eisler devoted himself solely to musical compositions for the working class. In an effort to provide politically charged antidotes to the sentimental folk songs or publishing-house songs sheets that comprised their repertoires, he created large-scale works for workers' choral societies. In November 1927 he joined with the prominent agitpropaganda troupe, *Das Rote Sprachrohr*, for whom he frequently composed during the pre-War years; those songs which were published and have survived are catalogued in this treatise. Eisler also began composing for films in 1927. His pioneering film work provides further evidence of his commitment to socially useful music: he always sought to create functional and artistically valuable film compositions, viewing film scoring as a viable contemporary art music genre.

Eisler also met Bertolt Brecht during this fruitful pre-War period; their twenty-seven year friendship would survive Weimar Berlin, Nazism, Hollywood exile, and the founding of an East German communist state. Together, Eisler and Brecht developed a

unique mode of theatrical expression that celebrated realism and eschewed what they perceived were the hackneyed, sentimental, and manipulative emotional expressions of conventional stage music. The Eisler/Brecht collaboration was far more fruitful than the celebrated pairing of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill; the numerous stage works and solo songs Eisler and Brecht created suggest that they shared deeply rooted political and aesthetic ideals and a mutual admiration for their artistic talents.

On February 27, 1933, the German Reichstag building was partially destroyed by arson - a defiant, politically explosive statement by Hitler's National Socialist Party. Eisler fled the country the following day, beginning a fifteen-year exile that would lead him to London, Vienna, Paris, Copenhagen, Mexico City and, ultimately, to the United States.¹¹ In 1938 he accepted a professorship at New York's New School for Social Research, a university with a reputation for courting exiled German intellectuals.¹² While there, he received support from the Rockefeller Foundation to study film music, which culminated in the book *Composing for the Films*, co-authored by Theodor Adorno. Experiences with Nazism made Eisler cautious; he knew his Jewish heritage made him a prime target for Hitler's "solution." As a result, he appears to have embraced film music during this time for both practical and artistic reasons, and to have kept a wary distance from New York's active communist community.

Four years later he joined a growing group of German expatriates in Hollywood, California.¹³ His tenure at the New School helped him develop important contacts in the film industry, and friendships with powerful figures such as Charlie Chaplin and Charles Laughton eased his entry into Hollywood's studios. He continued his teaching activities at the University of Southern California and resumed his collaboration with fellow exile Bertolt Brecht, who had settled in Santa Monica in 1941. In fact, omitting occasional interrogation by immigration authorities, Eisler's Hollywood exile proved fruitful and relatively peaceful. His fortunes changed, however, in 1947 when the House Un-American Activities Committee made public an ongoing investigation of his life. A

¹¹ According to Keith Rozendal, more than thirty thousand copies of Eisler's recordings and sheet music were publicly burned by the Nazis. See Rozendal, "Our Singing too must be a Fight," available at www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Amphitheatre/8718/Issue3/3h.html; internet, accessed 8 July 2003.

¹² Betz, 167.

¹³ Albrecht Dumling, "Zwischen Aussenseiterstatus und Integration: Musiker Exil an der amerikanischen Westküste," *Musik im Exil: Folgen des Nazismus für die internationale Musikkultur* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993), 311-37.

scandal-hungry American press, fed by the U.S. government's virulent anti-communist policy, ruined his reputation and portrayed him as part of a growing communist threat. Ignoring the pleas of Eleanor Roosevelt, Thomas Mann, and Albert Einstein, among others, government officials publicly castigated Eisler in televised national trials and eventually deported him in 1948. Defeated and angry, he returned to a devastated Berlin.

Eisler biographers (Klemm, Betz, Grabs, Schebera, among others) have been intrigued by the music Eisler brought back to Europe from his U.S. exile, much of which was conceived for the concert hall. While this return to the concert realm may seem perplexing in light of his political views, one must remember that Eisler wrote these works with a post-National Socialist Germany in mind. He did not perceive an immediate need for *agitpropaganda* theater or workers' songs to overthrow capitalism; instead, he wrote music intended to support musical institutions in a devastated country. As Georg Knepler notes, this was neither music of victory nor triumph; it was music intended to secure a new function for opera, theater, and the concert stage in a socialist government.¹⁴

Eisler lived the last fourteen years of his life in the German Democratic Republic (DDR), where he assumed a prominent position in its embryonic musical world. He became a founding member of the German Association of Composers and the East German Academy of the Arts, and accepted a professorship in composition at the newly-founded *Hochschule für Musik* (which would later bear his name). During this period he penned more than two hundred compositions, including incidental music for twenty stage plays, the East German national anthem (*Auferstanden aus Ruinen* – “Arisen from Ruins”), and the song cycle *Ernste Gesänge*, wrote musical criticism for journals and Berlin newspapers, held public lectures, and saw the premiere of his *Deutsche Sinfonie* (1959), a large-scale work which he began during the advent of

¹⁴ Georg Knepler, “Hanns Eisler and Interventive Thought,” *Journal for Musicological Research*, Vol. 17, 250. See also Dorte Schmidt, “Models of Identification in the Opera of the German Democratic Republic: On the functional change of an aesthetic category,” (trans. Marcos Bisticas-Cocoves) *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1997, 143-148; and Frank Schneider, “Remigranten in der DDR,” *Musik in der Emigration 1933-1945: Verfolgung, Vertreibung, Rückwirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1994), 249-259.

National Socialism. It was, in effect, the most stable and creative period of Eisler's career.

Decades of stress and struggle, however, had clearly taken a toll on Eisler's health. While traveling in Vienna in 1960, he suffered his first heart attack at age sixty-two. Afterwards, he curtailed his composing and teaching activities somewhat; at the same time, he received increasing accolades from the East German government for his important contributions to DDR culture. A second, final heart attack came on 6 September, 1962. Of the many praises heaped upon Eisler's name immediately before and following his death, critic Harry Goldschmidt offered a memorable, hopeful assessment of his friend's fate:

In our time, we can comfortably call Hanns Eisler a 'master,' but not only for the power, vitality, and variety of his work. Goethe laid a path [for German art] that connected the objective world in accordance with one's innermost self This [connection] is powerfully realized in Eisler's music. Therefore it deserves its place not only in our past, but also in our future.¹⁵

As the twenty-first century dawns, Goldschmidt's view has begun to take root among a new generation of music historians who hope to secure Eisler's position in music academia and in performance.

¹⁵ Quoted in Manfred Grabs, *Hanns Eisler: Kompositionen – Schriften – Literatur* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), 16. Translated by author.

CHAPTER TWO

EISLER'S DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Eisler arrived in Berlin in 1925 during the “Golden Era” of the Weimar Republic (1923-1929). This period was marked by Reichskanzler Gustav Stresemann’s efforts to stem the rampant hyperinflation that threatened Germany’s economy and emerging democracy with collapse. Under Stresemann’s direction Germany joined the League of Nations, signed a neutrality pact with Russia, increased tax-based funding for social programs, and, with U.S. financial aid, began to slowly emerge from the financial and psychological devastation of the First World War. Yet the country’s economic progress was founded almost exclusively on loans from overseas, financial sources which promptly dried up with the crash of the U.S. stock market in October, 1929. Uncontrolled hyperinflation returned along with mass unemployment and a severe decrease in living standards, particularly among Berlin’s working-class communities. The Great Depression, coupled with Stresemann’s death, helped to further destabilize Weimarian democracy and usher in National Socialism.¹⁶

For Marxists the Republic’s evident failings heralded the end of capitalism, a phase in the movement from the advent of world markets, through proletarian revolution, to the establishment of a new communist state. Inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution, Karl Liebknecht proclaimed Germany a Socialist Republic from the Berlin Castle on 9 November 1918, only two hours after it had been dubbed a People’s Republic by Philip Scheidemann at the Berlin Reichstag across town. While Scheidemann’s Social Democrats (SPD, or Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands) were able to maintain control, the country’s electorate effectively splintered into rival factions, with working class political representation divided between the moderate SPD

¹⁶ Detailed Weimar Republic history can be found in Golo Mann’s *The History of Germany Since 1789* (8th ed.), (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 564-675. First published under the title *Deutsche Geschichte des 19. Und 20 Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1958. Regarding Weimar’s failure, Mann notes that the era’s Social Democrats, or the former opposition party during the Bismarck/Wilhelmenian period, failed to produce effective leadership that could unite Germany’s predominantly blue collar population and achieve social progress. He argues that the concept of a united Germany during this period is historical illusion, a false political entity governed by “men who had never wanted it, who did not believe in it and who, although they reluctantly sat in the saddle, cast their eyes at other horses that might perhaps be better after all. One is tempted to say that the thing which gradually disintegrated after 1930 and then collapsed within a few weeks in 1933, the ‘Republic,’ never existed.” (684)

and the more radical communists (KPD, or Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands). The beating deaths of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg galvanized the split and left a politically frustrated and volatile left wing determined to incite revolutionary change in any way possible; it was to this cause that Hanns Eisler devoted his personal and professional life during his years in Berlin.

The writings of Karl Marx were well known to Eisler. He was introduced to them by his father, studied them as a young boy, and debated them with his brother and sister as an adolescent. In short, Eisler's Marxist education was at least as thorough (if not more so) as his musical one, and it is clear from his earliest theoretical writings that he wished to wed Marxist dialectical theory with musical composition. The conceptual seed around which Eisler developed his compositional technique was *dialectical materialism*, or the notion that all reality is material, and that material change occurs only through the struggle of opposing forces. In *Das Capital* Marx examined modern capitalist production as a complex system that operated according to its own fundamental laws. These laws exist in perpetual tension with one another; indeed, their differences and systematic connections must be approached as a dynamic whole whose existence is continually moving toward fulfillment.

Marx's analysis began with the basic unit of capitalist economy: the commodity. Under capitalism, human beings assign value to commodities based either upon their use values (the concrete, utilitarian nature of the object), or upon their exchange values (the material or monetary value of the item). Every commodity contains both use and exchange value, so the nature of reality under capitalism is dual. In capitalism, exchange values are expressed ultimately as money, which serves as a universal determinant for the worth of a commodity. This is one of the primary contradictions Marx exposed in his analysis of capitalism: that all reality, while material, is equalized by an abstract, intangible equivalent such as money, and that capitalist systems encourage people to place primacy of exchange, or monetary, value over use value. In this framework money serves as a mystifying agent that conceals the underlying reality of capitalist production, which according to Marx is the impoverishment of the proletariat and the devaluation of its labor to the benefit of the bourgeoisie and ruling classes.

For Eisler, the transformation of music from an instrument of cultural expression to a tradable commodity (in the form of sheet music or recording) posed a philosophical dilemma. He was born eight years after Edison's 1877 invention of the phonograph, saw the advent of commercial radio transmission in 1920, and began to compose "fighting songs" in 1927, the same year *The Jazz Singer*, the first film with synchronous sound, was introduced. The invention of mass communication technologies afforded dissemination of music and ideas at an unprecedented level and speed; at the same time, music's function as a reflection of the attitudes and values of a particular local population diminished, replaced by music that could be consumed by undifferentiated groups of people. Before the advent of mass entertainment, it was possible to view popular musical trends such as nineteenth-century German workers' choirs, American minstrel shows, and European cabaret as movements that evolved out of local, folk traditions into practices with widespread appeal. Within such a framework, popular culture could be viewed as the organic progeny of folk practices, one that could also coexist with industrialized, local communities. Mass media, however, presented an abrupt shift away from music created *of* the people to music created by corporate entities *for* people.¹⁷ Eisler was confronted with a world in which new musical ideas were transmitted to broader audiences faster than ever before, yet whose transmission threatened to reduce music's cultural value to mere entertainment.

His response was critical and decisive. As a Marxist, Eisler saw mass media culture as a primary contributor to social *alienation*; it separated humans from the results of their creative efforts.¹⁸ In the 1931 essay, "Der Erbauer einer neuen

¹⁷During the 1930s and 1940s, a group of Jewish intellectuals referred to as "The Frankfurt School" advanced this kind of cultural analysis in response to Hitler's appropriation of the mass media. In this context, the music generated by a social group supports ritual, responds to political or economic trends, and engenders a sense of community through group music-making. Corporate involvement reduces music's cultural value by reducing society members to consumers, their only true function in this framework. For additional reading, see T.W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1991); Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969); Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994).

¹⁸In the Marxist theory of alienation, workers in capitalist societies do not own the means of production – raw materials, machines, factories – they use to create their work. These are owned instead by capitalists to whom workers sell their "labor-power," or their ability to work, for a wage. Workers are therefore alienated from the production process as well as from the objects/services they produce, for the purpose becomes not to produce something of personal use value, but something that can be exchanged for money. See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 990.

Musikkultur” (The Builders of a New Music Culture), Eisler addressed what he perceived as the degeneration of music in bourgeois society:

The function [of music] has become exclusively the provision of momentary stimuli. This is the only way in which the last fifteen years can be explained. The stimuli wear off very rapidly and in the latest period of bourgeois music, where the function has remained the same, there has been a continuous need for new methods in music. These do not arise from a general change in the function of music within society, but from the urge for change while maintaining the same function – entertainment.¹⁹

Eisler viewed this type of music as inherently threatening, as a social force that had the power to “lull people and blunt their intellect.”²⁰ By removing music from its local context (i.e., live performance), the commercial music industry, including record companies, sheet music producers, and radio networks, contributed to a society in which humans were increasingly alienated from one another through passive reception of musical commodities. Musicians were equally alienated from their creations by capitalists who controlled the means of production and dissemination.

Eisler answered Marxist alienation and dialectical materialism with a compositional aesthetic intended to contribute to societal transformation – his music needed to move the proletariat toward a communist state:

Music, like every other art has to fulfill a certain purpose in society. . . . The workers’ music movement must be clear about the new function of their music, which is to activate their members for struggle and to encourage political education. This means that all music forms and techniques must be developed to suit the express purpose, that is the class struggle. . . . The task of workers’ music will be to remove the sentimentality and pompousness from music, since these sensations divert us from the class struggle.²¹

Simultaneously, composing socially active music required Eisler to abandon his membership in the musical avant-garde. The elitism he perceived in the concert realm,

¹⁹ “Die Erbauer einer neuen Musikkultur” in Hanns Eisler, *Reden und Aufsätze*, Winfried Hoentsch ed., Leipzig, 1961, pp. 25-52. This essay originated as a lecture given by Eisler in Duesseldorf, December 1931, where the workers’ choirs were rehearsing the play, *The Measures Taken (Die Massnahme)* With Eisler’s permission, it was published in a slightly altered format. Complete text: EGW III/I, 140-63.

²⁰ From the essay “Unsere Kampfmusik” in *Illustrierte Rote Post*, Berlin, March 1932, No. II. EGW III/I, 169-70.

²¹ Hanns Eisler, “Unsere Kampfmusik” in *Illustrierte Rote Post*, Berlin, March 1932, No. II. EGW III/I, 170.

bound as it was to the European art music tradition and, more personally, to the works of his mentor, Schoenberg, led him to reject the “art for art’s sake” mentality of the Second Viennese School and search for music with a political conscience. In short, Eisler was compelled to forsake the well-traveled, politically indeterminate path of the European art music composer; he instead chose to follow the course of *angewandte Musik* (applied music).

Vocal music, including opera, oratorio, cantatas, songs, choruses and their mixed forms, theater, film, radio plays, and even gramophone records were all included in Eisler’s conception of *angewandte Musik*. He viewed applied music as a political alternative to *Gebrauchsmusik*, or use music, which was advanced by his contemporary Paul Hindemith. The distinction between these two concepts is subtle but significant. *Gebrauchsmusik* might best be understood as music created for practical circumstances, designed to promote “usefulness rather than personal expression as the motivation for artistic endeavor.”²² *Gebrauchsmusik* arose as a rebuttal to autonomous composition; it too encouraged experimentation with various media in an effort to bridge the gulf between audience and performer and diminish the artificial formality of the concert hall. Eisler observed, however, that conservative interpretations of *Gebrauchsmusik* were still created within the framework of bourgeois musical institutions, such as folk festivals; as such these works might address the musical needs of the proletariat, but they could not move people closer to social transformation. His understanding of *angewandte Musik* entailed compositions that replaced worn harmonic, rhythmic, instrumental, and textual clichés with a direct and unambiguous relationship between words and music.²³ Through direct communication Eisler’s music could make explicit political statements intended to polarize the working masses and ignite the forces of social revolution. Music was his tool for changing the entire world.

It would be a mistake, however, to romanticize Eisler’s political motivations as rooted in a subjective morality. Eisler was, first and foremost, a Marxist, and as such he saw his musical efforts as part of a progressive history. Both Marx and Eisler viewed

²² Douglass Seaton, *Ideas and Styles in the Western Music Tradition* (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1991), 372.

²³ Albrecht Betz, “Music and Politics: theme and variations” in *Hanns Eisler, A Miscellany*, compiled and edited by David Blake (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1995), 396.

history itself as moving toward a better, increasingly humane social order, a process Eisler could aid through art by creating music that engendered social awareness. His compositions were intended to unite worker and intellectual, philosopher and plebian, in a common force against the exploitative grip of the ruling classes. Ultimately, Eisler and his contemporaries believed that art could unmask the contradictions of capitalism; once revealed, no state ideology could restrain the mass of workers from recognizing their own interests and pursuing them.

Writing music for the masses required Eisler to approach composition in distinctive new ways. Rather than accepting distance between artist and audience as a given, Eisler composed music that, through its accessibility, could be readily consumed and interpreted by the working class. In song literature, this required clear, unambiguous political texts, such as the following *Einheitsfrontlied* (“Song of the United Front”):

(Verse 1) And because a man is a man,
he needs something to eat, if you please!
Empty words won't fill him up –
they won't bring him food!

(Refrain) Then left, two, three!
Left, two three!
To your place, dear Comrade!
Join the united workers' front –
because you, too, are a worker!

(Verse 2) And because a man is a man
he hates being crushed under the boot.
He wants no slave under his foot,
No master over his own head.

(Verse 3) And because the peasant is a peasant,
no one else will free him.
The freedom of the worker
Comes only at the worker's hand.²⁴

This text, written by Bertolt Brecht, is typical of Eisler's fighting songs and political choruses. It targets the working-class audience, heightens workers' group identity and

²⁴ Fritz Hennenberg, *Brecht-Liederbuch* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), 226. Translation by author.

connects their social position with a kind of slavery enforced by the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, it makes workers responsible for their own liberation, a freedom which can only be won through collective action. In choosing texts, Eisler's didactic mission was to inform the proletariat about its own urgent class struggle and to inspire the masses to search for social alternatives beyond capitalism.

Aggressive political texts were heightened by equally aggressive musical techniques. The most striking feature of Eisler's fighting songs is rhythm; it is typically regular, insistent, and march-like from beginning to end (see Fig. 1). Here a group of workers marches toward freedom, propelled by repeated bass chords. Rather than using folk or art song forms, he adopts standard Tin Pan Alley verse/refrain form. This element suggests Eisler is plumbing the resources of popular media: the insistent, steady march rhythms in the piano accompaniment are offset by subtle syncopations in the vocal line in mm. 8, 12, and 14, hinting at the influence of ragtime marches that crossed the Atlantic from the United States in the 1910s and 1920s. These rhythms may have been simultaneously unexpected, enticing, and familiar to an early twentieth-century Berlin blue-collar audience. While such appropriation contradicts Eisler's culture-industry criticisms, it also reflects his practical nature and his wish to create music that could be of use to his listeners:

. . . for history has taught us that every new musical style has not arisen from an aesthetically new point of view and therefore does not represent a material revolution, but the change in the material is conditioned as a matter of course by an historically necessary change in the function of music in society as a whole.²⁵

²⁵ Eisler, quoted in Blake, 53.

f

Und weil der Mensch ein Mensch ist, drum braucht er was zum Es - sen, bit - te

f

5

sehr. Es macht ihn ein Ge - schwätz nicht satt, das schafft kein Es - sen—

9

her. Drum links, zwei, drei! drum links, zwei drei! wo dein Platz, Ge - nos - se ist! Reih dich

14

ein in die Ar - bei - ter - ein - heits - front, weil du auch ein A - bie - ter bist! Und bist!

1 2

Fig. 1 *Das Einheitsfrontlied* (“Song of the United Front”)

In Eisler's estimation, the distinctions between popular and concert compositional devices diminished when viewed in terms of function; therefore, he felt free to draw from a variety of musical sources to create songs like *Einheitsfrontlied*.

In other songs, Eisler's dialectical approach drew upon major and minor tonalities to create melodic variety between verse and refrain. His melodies are compact, encouraging concise declamation of text free from ornamentation or artifice. The idea of contrast also appears in well-placed meter changes, seen here in the refrain of *Solidaritätslied* ("Solidarity Song"):

1.-5. Vorwärts und nicht vergessen, worin unsere Stärke besteht.

4 steht. Beim Hungern und beim Essen,

7 vorwärts, nicht vergessen die Solidarität!

Fig. 2. *Solidaritätslied* ("Solidarity Song")

The insertion of a single 2/4 bar in the midst of the regular 4/4 meter is striking. It propels the returning “Vorwärts!” (“Forward!”) adds an element of musical complexity which makes the song more memorable. It may also be viewed as a political statement: as workers resist state control, their voices will likewise not be bound by the established meter of a conventional march.

All of Eisler’s choral pieces and solo songs from the late 1920s to early 1930s, were designed to be flexible. Eisler created music that could be adapted to a variety of situations, such as political rallies, theater productions, meetings, or concerts. For choruses he created music that could be sung either in four-part harmony or in unison. For works with instrumental ensemble he composed piano lines that could serve as solo accompaniment. The key to his style during the Weimar years was versatility, the ability to adapt musical material to the task at hand.

In criticizing Weimarian culture through dialectical materialism, Eisler was effectively criticizing the loss of social cohesion through what anthropologist Paul Connerton identifies as the process of modernization:

Under the conditions of modernity the celebration of recurrence can never be anything more than a compensatory strategy, because the very principle of modernity itself denies the idea of life as a structure of celebrated recurrence. It denies credence to the thought that the life of an individual or community either can or should derive its value from acts of consciously performed recall, from the reliving of the prototypical. Although the process of modernisation does indeed generate invented rituals as compensatory devices, the logic of modernisation erodes those conditions which make acts of ritual re-enactment, of recapitulative imitation, imaginatively possible and persuasive. For the essence of modernity is economic development, the vast transformation of society precipitated by the emergence of the capitalist world market. And capital accumulation, the ceaseless expansion of the commodity form through the market, requires the constant revolutionising of production, the ceaseless transformation of the innovative into the obsolescent. The clothes people wear today, the machines they operate, the workers who service the machines, the neighbourhoods they live in – all are constructed today so that they can be dismantled tomorrow, so that they can be replaced or recycled.²⁶

²⁶ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 64.

If an artist may be defined, in part, as one who generates cultural identity through word, song, or image, then Eisler's social position was threatened by a culture industry that reduced art to mere commodity and by a bourgeois concert realm that assumed his music needed to provide neither personal nor practical value for his audiences. He described the alienation of music in this manner:

What did the Industrial Revolution do to musical culture? The Industrial Revolution disturbed most of the old folk music . . . it is useless for factory workers to sing in a factory . . . The tempo and rhythm of the work is dictated by the machine, no longer by the workers themselves. Spontaneous musical culture dies under such conditions . . . after two generations the greatest section of the population was without any culture at all.²⁷

As a Marxist who viewed his world through an historical lens, Eisler foresaw that a fragmented relationship between art and society could lead not only to art's impotence as a social force, but to its annihilation.

²⁷ Hanns Eisler, *Musik und Politik - Schriften, 1924-1948* (Leipzig, VEB Deutscher Verlag, 1973) ,419.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSIC-MAKING IN THE AGITPROP REALM

If the central fact of Hanns Eisler's life was music, then the central stage on which his music was conceived was Weimar Berlin. This city of millions, with its expansive green parks, smoke-enshrouded factories, elegant theaters, and working-class slums was Eisler's home from 1925 until 1933. Here he began his life-long friendship with author Bertolt Brecht and made a lasting commitment to writing socialist music. The lure of Berlin drew a young Eisler away from a favored position in Arnold Schoenberg's Viennese composition studio, and the city reclaimed him after his expulsion from the United States in 1948. Hanns Eisler would spend the remainder of his life there.

As Germany's largest city, Berlin in the 1920s was an exciting center of film, literature, music, theater, and visual arts. Films such as Josef Sternberg's *Die blaue Engel* ("The Blue Angel"; 1930), Christopher Isherwood novels, and more recently Bob Fosse's musical *Cabaret* (1972), and have reinforced Berlin's decadent image in contemporary consciousness. Richard Bodek notes, however, that Weimar Berlin was also home to one of the largest working-class populations in Europe, and the gulf between Germany's moneyed elite and blue-collar masses was manifested in the city's neighborhoods.²⁸ Post-World War II separation of Berlin into western and eastern zones reflected the pre-War reality of housing the bourgeoisie in Berlin-West and the working class in the tenement houses of Berlin-Ost. East Berlin was the domain of the German Communist Party, and as such was the locus of activity for *agitpropaganda* theater.

History of *Agitpropaganda* Movement

As the term implies, *agitprop* theater was created for the purposes of encouraging political agitation through the use of propaganda. It was a response to the historical demands of Marxism: that knowledge of the class struggle must be acquired,

²⁸ Richard Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1997), 1.

refined and propagated to engender social revolution. In *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin*, Richard Bodek argues that agitprop's emergence as a powerful social force in Weimar Berlin's blue collar districts was a matter of course. Berlin-Wedding, for example, was a world of crumbling, overcrowded slums, where the homeless, unemployed, and drunk haunted the streets along with school children and youth gangs. Poor sanitation meant that garbage frequently flowed out into sidewalks; factories such as AEG Turbine Hall and the Schering Works cast their shadows over entire sections of the neighborhood. Wedding was a breeding ground for radical political activity where workers turned to collective agitation in an effort to control their own lives, which were increasingly restricted by state legislation, work, and the demands of material existence.²⁹



Fig. 3 Map of Berlin Neighborhoods

²⁹ Ibid, 23-33.

It would be naïve to imagine, however, that the needs of proletarian Berlin were singular or that workers were unified in their political beliefs. Blue-collar communities were diverse, and out of this variety grew a lively, often turbulent political culture. The largest and most active group among the Berlin working classes was the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands – German Communist Party), whose agenda entailed fighting the dominance of the church and the moderate SPD (Sozial Demokratische Partei Deutschlands – German Social Democratic Party). The Social Democrats, however, were the more politically powerful party. Ideologically, both groups were inspired by Marx and Engels; however, the SPD, as the ruling party, would forever be at odds with the communists, who favored a revolutionary overthrow of the government. KPD reactionary politics attracted Berlin’s disenfranchised youth, while SPD acceptance of the status quo appealed to their grandparents. It was a political gulf that would widen throughout the Republic’s brief history as Berlin’s population squabbled amongst themselves, unaware of the looming threat of Nazism.

The youth wing of the KPD, or KJVD (Kommunistische Jugend Verband Deutschlands – German Communist Youth Party) was one of the first groups to recognize that it might bring more people into the movement through entertainment. The idea was spurred by Erwin Piscator’s 1924 *Red Revel Revue*, a vaudeville-style show that included acrobatic acts, dance, song, sports, speeches – in short, the vast possibilities of stage entertainment – whose brief numbers were intended to promote communist ideas. Piscator’s *Revue* was narrated by minstrel-like interlocutors, one a proletarian, the other a modern burgher, who commented on the entertainment from their different class views.³⁰ The KJVD drew on this model to create their own “Roter Rummel” shows. One former KJVD youth noted:

Unless there was a very special event, the youths would run right past us and instead go to the movies, or to the amusement park next door . . . Thus some comrades hit upon the idea: What the amusement park can

³⁰ Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 211-212; Erwin Piscator, *Das politische Theater* (Berlin: 1969), 60-61. The term “interlocutor” refers to one of the stock minstrel show figures; the interlocutor functioned as a kind of master of ceremonies who controlled the show’s pacing.

do, we can, too. We have to try to clothe our political agitation in a shape as lively as that of the amusement park.³¹

The alliance struck here between entertainment and political action gave birth to the “First Agitprop Troupe of the KJVD” in Berlin-Wedding in 1926, later renamed *Das rote Sprachrohr* (The Red Megaphone) in 1928. Under Maxim Vallentin’s leadership, *Das rote Sprachrohr* became the most active and influential agitprop group in Weimar Berlin; it would inspire the majority of Hanns Eisler’s fighting songs from 1927 until the beginning of his working friendship with playwright Bertolt Brecht in 1930.

In addition to the popular *Rote Sprachrohr*, the 1920s agitpropaganda trend was fueled by a 1927 German tour of a soviet theater troupe named *Die blaue Blusen*, or The Blue Workshirts (blue shirts were the official uniform of soviet working youth). The Communist International, or Comintern, was established in Moscow in 1919 in order to claim Communist leadership of the world socialist movement. In its 1920 congressional meeting, it laid out twenty-one conditions for membership in the governing body, one of which entailed the spread of communist propaganda and political agitation in support of the proletariat. *Die blaue Blusen* became a part of Moscow’s didactic mission to spread communism throughout eastern Europe and into Germany.³² Scripts were brief and ideologically cohesive, allowing the troupe to serve as a kind of “living newspaper” that responded to working class concerns in any given region; music and dance numbers were interspersed throughout the performance. Players wore simple costumes and used the barest of sets (if any were used at all). The resulting show was portable, fast-paced, varied, and powerful: *Die blaue Blusen* and their progeny performed in virtually every imaginable venue, taking their message of emancipation to Berlin’s working classes.³³

³¹ Nuko, “Unsere Agitproptruppen,” quoted originally in Hoffmann and Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater*, 1: 343, in Jelavich, 213. The term “Rummel” here is a reference to “Rummelplätze,” or amusement parks, which were favorite haunts of German urban youths.

³² Herbert Staud, *Die Wiener Kleinkunst der Zwischenkriegszeit im Widerstand gegen den Faschismus*; Hans Magschok, *Rote Spieler, Blaue Blusen*. The Blaue Blusen German tour was organized by the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH) of Berlin, a group that provided aid to unemployed and striking workers and encouraged political activism in Berlin’s poorest districts.

³³ Otto Steinecke, “Den ‘Blauen Blusen’ zum Gruss,” in *Die Rote Fahne*, 21 October 1927. In another *Rote Fahne* article that same week, G.G.L Alexander asserted that the value to be found in *Die blaue Blusen* and German workers theaters lay in their collective nature, which represented the true face of international communism.

It is not surprising that Eisler would be drawn into the realm of agitprop theater. Agitprop began to blossom shortly after his arrival in the city and, aside from newspapers and public speeches, was the primary organ of the German communist party. In an agitprop troupe Eisler had a ready company of performers at his disposal with whom he could experiment, try out his compositional techniques and explore new modes of musical expression. He was surrounded by like-minded individuals who shared his commitment to the class struggle, particularly intellectuals who, like he, sought more meaningful creative outlets for their talents than those presented by traditional middle-class German culture. In opposition to Schoenberg's attitudes about a musician's intrusion into the political realm, Eisler chose to devote himself completely to the principal social current of his generation.³⁴

As a composer for many agitpropaganda troupes, Eisler created fighting songs with several discernible objectives. The first of these was to lure the masses away from other forms of popular entertainment such as films and dance halls. Agitprop theater groups like *Rote Sprachrohr* were comprised primarily of working-class youths, and it was to this same audience that they addressed their shows. Eisler's militant songs and incidental music were woven into the entertainment; his overt aim was to link the various topics to one another and to set the show's emotional tone. However, he felt compelled to consider the rhythmic potential of pop idioms such as ragtime and sentimental, Tin Pan Alley-style ballads:

The first requirement the class struggle places on the mass fighting song is that it is quickly taken in, that it is easily understood, vigorous and accurate in attitude. And here lies a great danger for the revolutionary composer. Comprehensibility in bourgeois music is to be found solely in the field of popular song, and unfortunately, the mistake is often made of settling for a so-called 'red' popular song. Yet the bourgeois song hit has a corrupt musical passivity which we cannot adopt. The melodic line and the harmony of popular song are of no use. But it is possible to remold the rhythm of jazz to make it taut and vigorous.³⁵

³⁴Late in his life, Arnold Schoenberg, who never agreed with his pupil's politics, would write, "We, who live in *music*, have no place in politics and must regard it as foreign to our being. We are a-political, at best able to aspire to remain silently in the background." Arnold Schoenberg, as quoted in Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler, Political Musician* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 44.

³⁵ Hanns Eisler, "Unsere Kampfmusik," *Illustrierte Rote Post*, Berlin, March 1932; published in Manfred Grabs, ed., *Hanns Eisler: A Rebel in Music* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1999), 60. Trans. by Marjorie Meyer.

By allying himself with worker's theater, Eisler made a clear break with the concert tradition from which he had emerged. He was searching for an audience, a *proletarian* public, with whom he could form a new musical alliance that destroyed the isolation he associated with the bourgeois concert hall. He recognized, however, that in taking certain musical elements from popular music, including rhythms and extended harmonies such as "blue notes," and wedding them with political text *and* consummate compositional skill, he might transcend the limitations of superficial "entertainment."

If art could entice, then it could also instruct, and a second crucial component of class-consciousness and revolution to which many in Berlin's artistic community were dedicated was education. Marx's educational ideas were well-documented.³⁶ Turning to the Russian October Revolution and Lenin's call for Marxist educational reform in the class struggle, members of the KPD founded the *Marxistische Arbeiter Schule* (Marxist Workers' School), or MASCH, in 1926.³⁷ Within months of its creation, the school's program grew to include lectures in economics, history, music, science, and literature by prominent communist intellectuals such as John Heartfield, Berta Lask, and Kurt Kläber. Hanns Eisler was the school's first music teacher and was directly involved with agitprop theater efforts centered at MASCH.

MASCH exemplified the Marxist educational ideals to which Eisler would subscribe for the rest of his life. In an effort to abolish any sort of cultural or knowledge monopolies or privileged modes of schooling based on class, it offered free public education to all who attended. By combining classroom instruction with physical education and labor, instructors attempted to close the gap that had developed historically between manual effort and mental work; their expressed aim was to develop in students not a better work ethic, but instead a mind made aware of the full productive process. Above all, MASCH teachers were called upon to provide education that assured the well-rounded development of each student's personality and abilities. This directive assigned the communist community in Berlin a new role in the educational process, one which focused less on competition and more on cooperation and support,

³⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital I*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), Ch. 13 passim; *German Ideology* vol. I, pt. 1; *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, section IV). For additional reading on Marxist education theories, see Pierre Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977).

³⁷ Bodek, 83.

and which assumed a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between pupils and instructors.³⁸

Despite his radical political stance, as a teacher Eisler reflected in large part the more conservative pedagogical attitudes of Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg's instruction was notoriously thorough, grounded in disciplined study of all compositional periods. Eisler realized that any personal effort to create a new manner of musical expression for the proletariat needed to be built on the basis of solid Western compositional techniques; it also required an educated audience. Only through education could Berlin's working masses attain an awareness of the stupefying effects of mass culture:

We must remember that the operetta, the hit song, false and genuine folk songs are listened to by a large proportion of all strata of society and that the workers are faced here with just as big a danger as musical snobbism. The cultivation of classical music is correct if it is used to liquidate light entertainment music. The advantages of classical music over entertainment music are clear, in that a certain demand is made of working-class listeners to be attentive, while entertainment music makes no such demand and rather panders to laziness and comfort. It is important to counter this danger for working-class listeners by performing the great works of bourgeois music."³⁹

Educators, then, were at the forefront of class struggle. Eisler and his contemporaries assumed leadership roles at MASCH and throughout the workers' communities in which they lived, striving to lead people to class-consciousness. This required an aggressive, reactionary stance, reflected by Eisler's urgent call for action: "We Marxists must now see to it that our people receive some culture, whether they want it or not. We Marxists have to stuff culture in the people's mouths, do you understand? That is urgently necessary."⁴⁰

A third primary objective of agitpropaganda theater and of the communist artistic community at large was a direct challenge of capitalism. Inherent in this was a critique of the culture industry. In Weimar Berlin, most Marxists assumed the general

³⁸ Joachim Schmidt, "Fünf Jahre Marxistische Arbeiterschule," *Der Marxist*, 1:1 (1931): 28; "Marxistische Arbeiterschule," in *Die Rote Fahne*, 28 January 1928.

³⁹ Eisler in Grabs, 64. Trans. by Marjorie Meyer.

⁴⁰ Eisler as quoted in Thomas Phleps, *Hanns Eislers Deutsche Sinfonie* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988), 19. Translated by author.

view that capitalist control of the cinema, theater, and recording technology was deplorable, although the basis for criticism varied. Intellectuals such as Eisler and Brecht found it axiomatic that film-makers, in this case bourgeois capitalists, would create films that reflected their own ideologies. Others, such as Walter Benjamin, objected to the very nature of an industry whose pursuit of profit made it inherently corrupt; in other words, theater, film and literature were produced not to educate audiences about a capitalist world view, but to lull the masses into acceptance of capitalist society.⁴¹ The *Rote Sprachrohr* published program booklets referring to popular movies as “the cultural slime of art-kitsch” and reminding audiences that mass culture served only to stupefy them and divert them from class-consciousness.⁴²

From a contemporary perspective, this branding of all mass media as decadent seems uncritical and even simplistic. However, agitpropaganda groups were continually challenged to compete with the culture industry for working-class audiences; hence, they developed stereotypical portrayals of them in their shows. Moreover, the widening array of images and messages introduced *through* mass culture forced Berlin workers to re-examine their social lot – their world was exploding with a dizzying array of goods, services, and travel opportunities, but work and low wages kept luxuries forever out of reach. The simplest and most seductive response was to vilify as hedonistic what one could not have.

An additional target of agitprop reproach was the Christian church. In *Capital*, Marx considered Christianity’s (and specifically, Protestantism’s) focus upon individual human beings and their souls to be a chief ideological support for a capitalist economy. His logic followed that if a culture’s primary belief system addressed people’s needs singularly rather than collectively, then an atmosphere of anonymous commodity exchange coupled with social isolation would result.⁴³ Communists in Weimar Berlin found this to be a particularly lucid description of the role of the church in their everyday lives. Unlike the United States, post-imperial Germany did not constitutionally mandate a separation between church and state. Indeed, the state

⁴¹ Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology, and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974), 33-38.

⁴² Jelavich, 216.

⁴³ Marx, *Capital I*, ch. 1, final section (passim).

formally recognized churches as political entities and established special legal status for them as public law corporations.⁴⁴ During the Weimar period (and beyond), church leaders were included in state decisions regarding education and other social and family policy. Communists of this era therefore drew a direct correlation between the church and the government, both of whom were seen as repressive bodies and obstacles to class-consciousness.

Others looked to communism to restore moral imperatives in German society that had been destroyed during the First World War. “In no other time has Christianity been so clearly recognizable, so shining, yet so elusive, as now. If there were Christians – real Christians! – then a war such as [WWI] would have been inconceivable. Only love in life is fruitful – hate is the foundation of nothingness.”⁴⁵ KPD/KJVD membership offered active participation in society and a sense of community responsibility not available in the church. *Rote Sprachrohr* and *Blaue Blusen* shows told a story of church decadence, of church leaders abandoning the Christian mandates of fraternal love, care of the needy, and spiritual equality in favor of big money and political clout.⁴⁶

By their very nature, agitprop theater groups reinforced a sense of communal belonging. Alfred Kerr, one of the chief critics for the communist daily *Die Rote Fahne*, commented on this in a 1927 review of a *Blaue Blusen* performance:

The *class identification* excited the workers: this was their troupe, and it was their life that was up there on the stage. The sympathetic intellectuals were amazed by its ‘novelty,’ ‘freshness,’ and ‘originality.’ Both the artistry and the factuality of its presentation of the Russia of the workers and peasants elicited their tumultuous approbation. Soviet Russia was instantly brought home to them. All obfuscations and misrepresentations were swept away. There stood revealed the spirit and the strength, the *conviction* and the will of the world’s first workers’ and peasants’ state.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ From the late nineteenth century to the present, German law has mandated that all church members must pay roughly nine percent of their annual income tax to the denomination in which they were baptized; the only way citizens can remove themselves from this obligation is to formally (and legally) renounce their ties with the church.

⁴⁵ Painter and sculptor Heinrich Vogeler, as quoted in Nowacki, 72.

⁴⁶ Bodek, 106.

⁴⁷ Alfred Kerr, *Die Rote Fahne*, as quoted in Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler: Political Musician*, Translated by Bill Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge United Press, 1982), 63. Original italics.

Eisler's lyrics to the *Rote Sprachrohr* theme song reinforce the connection between agitprop troupe and audience:

We are the Red Megaphone,
Megaphone of the masses are we.
We proclaim your troubles
We proclaim that which will free you.
We are the Red Megaphone,
Megaphone of the masses are we.

No God, no boss, no minister
Slinks from the trough unpunished,
Because we broadcast, we flush out,
We smoke out, with scorn and gravity.
We call for class warfare!
We are the Red Megaphone,
Megaphone of the masses are we!⁴⁸

Group identity was predicated on class, unity against a common enemy in the form of virtually any authority figure in church or government, and a collective need to revolt against the prevailing social system. Within this realm, agitprop theater behaved as a sort of ritual activity that resisted the encroaching force of modernization. Youthful, blue-collar agitprop groups and audiences viewed their own social positions within the larger cultural framework as marginal, which allowed them to criticize the standing social order through speeches, demonstrations, songs, and political skits. Through theater they sought the rudimentary structure of community, defined by anthropologist Victor Turner as “the communion of equal individuals” that emerges from cultural rites of passage.⁴⁹ Agitprop was an equalizing force, one that inverted, if momentarily, the balance of power in Berlin's blue-collar world.

Finally, agitprop music offered a public forum for the KPD to advance its political agenda. The KPD fostered a bitter, lively feud with the SPD, and political song “reflected the complexity of [that] relationship with just as much accuracy and subtlety

⁴⁸ “Das Rote Sprachrohr” lyrics printed in “Für die Sovietmacht,” in Ludwig Hoffmann and Daniel Hoffmann-Ostwald, eds., *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918-1933*, vol. 2 (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1973), 201. Translated by author.

⁴⁹ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995) 96.

as theoretical articles and parliamentary debates.”⁵⁰ Agitprop was a more politically radical dramatic or musical form than the music festivals and workers’ choirs favored by the SPD and proved an attractive expressive form to a party increasingly marked by extremism. The zenith of the agitprop groups came in 1930, when the Communist Party received over twenty-seven percent of the Berlin city vote in Reichstag elections.⁵¹ The Rote Sprachrohr and other groups became increasingly antagonistic, portraying SPD party-functionaries as beer-swilling, bureaucratic buffoons, or, more sinisterly, as social fascists. Bodek asserts that the division between the two parties, who were in many ways advocating similar issues, such as workers’ rights, was misguided and socially destructive. Within the agitprop realm, the SPD became equated with the National Socialists, an ill-informed connection that was not based in reality and which ultimately weakened KPD politics.⁵²

The KPD’s radical agenda begs discussion of Eisler’s own political positions. As mentioned earlier, Eisler’s sister, Ruth Fischer, was leader of the Berlin Communist Party when he arrived in Berlin in 1925. She was removed from her position soon thereafter, accused of exchanging “the will of the masses for her own personal will for revolution, social reality for her own subjective desires.”⁵³ Eisler’s own official connection to the KPD remains mysterious. In a 1947 appearance before the United States House Un-American Activities Committee, Eisler was asked if he was a member of the Communist Party. He replied that he was not, but, when pressed, admitted that he had applied for admission to the KPD in his earliest Berlin days. He then stated that, because he did not pay his dues, his membership lapsed and was never renewed.⁵⁴ Biographers have questioned his testimony for decades, wondering if it points to a weak spot in Eisler’s communist convictions. When connected to his composing activities, however, it appears that Eisler favored action over political rhetoric. He was not active in party politics in Berlin, but chose instead to implement his political ideas by writing agitprop song. His journal and theoretical writings reveal an intellect suspicious of over-

⁵⁰ Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: The Socialist Labor Movement in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), 133.

⁵¹ Bodek, 81.

⁵² *Ibid*, Chapter Three, *passim*.

⁵³ Udo Winkel, “Zur Ideologie der KPD – Material zur alten Arbeiterbewegung” in *Marxistische Kritik*, Nr. 4 (December, 1987), 111.

⁵⁴ <http://foia.fbi.gov/eisler.htm>, 13 June 2003.

emotionalism or uncritical allegiance to any political entity, characteristics of both his sister's politics and the more extremist KPD leaders. Nonetheless, Eisler did ascribe to the same general code of beliefs as Berlin's Communist Party.

In sum, Eisler embraced agitpropaganda because he understood its didactic potential. His songs for workers' theater groups were conceived as the antithesis to the concert tradition. Instead, he hoped his music would, "make use of beauty to teach the individual, to make the ideas of the working class and the actual problems of the class struggle comprehensible and attainable."⁵⁵ His songs helped to shape a sense of communal identity among Berlin's working classes, criticize the disenfranchisement of the proletariat, and provide both an alternative view of and path away from capitalism. His songs supported the agenda of the KPD, particularly in their criticism of the Church and the SPD. In an effort to respond to the working classes, Eisler hoped his agitprop songs could resist the cultural onslaught of popular music while simultaneously subsuming elements of popular musical expression. He worked diligently to secure music's role in a communist world to come.

⁵⁵ Hanns Eisler, in Grabs, 55.

CHAPTER FOUR
HANNS EISLER'S FIGHTING SONGS

The following is an alphabetical list of Eisler's "Kampflieder," or fighting songs, composed from the time of his arrival in Berlin in 1925 until his departure in 1933. Included are his songs for solo voice, workers choruses, and *agitprop* songs. Excluded are those fighting songs which were conceived as parts of large-scale dramatic works, such as those associated with the didactic plays of Bertolt Brecht (*Die Massnahme*, *Die Mutter*, or *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, among others). The works are categorized according to the composer's original score. These categories should nonetheless be understood as an attempt to organize a body of music whose nature is multi-faceted and flexible. Eisler believed in malleable forms that could be adapted to the immediate needs of individual performances; this resulted in songs which may have been composed for one voice but premiered by twenty, or whose accompanying banjo and clarinet were easily substituted by a guitar. English translations for titles are included in parentheses; where no parenthetical reference is given, the original text was written in English. This listing expands on the previous work of Eisler scholar Manfred Grabs.

1. *Alabama* [Arrangement]
Type: Solo song with instrumental accompaniment
First Line: Ich kam von Alabama her (I came from Alabama) (*Re-issue*: Es bracht der Eisenhower [It needs Eisenhower])
Refrain: O Susanna
Original Version: "Amerikanisches Soldatenlied" (Stephen C. Foster)
Origin of Text: "Amerikanisches Soldatenlied" (*Revised text*: Ernst Busch)
Performer(s): Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Clarinet
Date: probably end of 1931
Edition: *Internationale Arbeiterlieder*, 1953, 152-153 (Voice, Revised Text).
Published in Eisler Complete Works (EGW) I/25.

2. *Anrede an den Kran "Karl,"* op. 18, 3 (Address to Carl the Crane)
Type: Solo song, piano accompaniment
First Line: Rück mal drei Meter vor (Move on about three meters)
Author: Bertolt Brecht

Original Performer(s) 1: Voice, Alto-Saxophone, 2 Trumpets, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Clarinet (this was the original orchestration intended for recording)

Date: September 1930, Berlin

First Performance: 10 October 1930, Berlin

Edition: EGW I/20

Version 2 - Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Edition: *Balladenbuch* op. 18, UE 1931 – EGW I/22

3. *Anrede an ein neugeborenes Kind*, op. 37, 1 (Address of a newborn child)
Type: Voice with instrumental accompaniment
Variations of Title: Kinderschrei-Song. – Song vom ersten Schrei (Song of a child's first cry)
First Line: Sehen Sie. Hörten Sie. Wie es schrie? (Look – listen – how did it cry?)
Author: Walter Mehring
Performer(s): Voice, 1 Clarinet (E flat), 2 Clarinets (B Flat), Alto-Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, 2 Trumpets, Trombone, Banjo, Piano
Date: 1931, Berlin
Duration: 3'20
Edition: EGW I/20
Recordings: GLORIA/LINDSTRÖM 10 451 (78) (Busch, Ens; Eisler); MELODIA C 60-13 187-8 (Busch)
Song titles: 1. An Stelle einer Grabrede (At the Graveside); 2. Antikriegslied (Anti-war Song); "A quatre heures du matin" (Quarter to noon); "Arbeite, arbeite mehr" (Work, Work More!); Arbeiterkantate (Workers' Cantata)
4. *Arbeiter Thomas* (Worker Thomas)
Type: Agitprop song
Performers: Voice, Piano
Author: Franz Jung
Date: 1928
First Performance: probably late 1928/early 1929 in the Alten Theater, Leipzig;
Source: Fragment – not published
5. *Arbeitslied* (Work Song)
First Line: Denn man muß die Hände rühren (One must move one's hands)
Authors: Günther Weisenborn, Leo Hirsch
**Original Performers:* Voice, Clarinet 1 (E flat), Clarinet 2 (B Flat), Alto-Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, 2 Trumpets, Trombone, Tuba, Snare drum, Banjo, Piano, (4) Cello, (2) Double bass
Date: 1931, Berlin
Edition: EGW I/20
**Variation:* Voice, Piano
Edition: EGW I/22

6. *Ballade vom Nigger Jim* op. 18, 6 (Ballad of Nigger Jim)
Variations of Title: Ballade vom Bruder Jim; Ballade vom Neger Jim
First Line: Als Nigger Jim aus dem Urwald kam (When Nigger Jim came out of the jungle)
Author: David Weber
Original Performers: Voice, Alto-Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Clarinet
Date: Fall, 1930, Berlin
First Performance: probably 9 November 1930, Berlin
Duration: 4' *Edition:* EGW I/20
Recordings: LINDSTRÖM/GLORIA 10 606 (78); HOMOCHORD 44 033 (78) (Busch, Ens.; Eisler). – NOVA 885 004, MELODIA D 023 397-8 (Busch, Ens.; Gollasch)
Version 2 - Performers: Voice, Piano
Edition: *Balladenbuch* op. 18, UE 1932 (C) – EGW I/22
7. *Ballade vom Soldaten* op. 39, 1 (Ballad of a Soldier)
Variations of Title: Ballade vom Weib und dem Soldaten; Ballade von dem Soldaten (Ballad of the Woman and the Soldier; Ballad of the Soldier)
First Line: Das Schießgewehr schießt (The militia fires)
Author: Bertolt Brecht
Date: February 1928
Original Performers: Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Clarinet
Duration: 2'50
Edition: EGW I/20
Recordings: GLORIA/LINDSTRÖM 10 451, ODEON PO 38 (78) (Busch, Ens.; Eisler). – ETERNA/PLÄNE 810 017, MELODIA D 023 397-8, DG 44 028, DG Lit 2 755 005, LE CHANT DU MONDE LDX 74 666 (Busch, Ens.; Guhl)
8. *Ballade von den Baumwollpflückers*, op. 22, 1 (Ballad of the Cotton Pickers)
Variations of Title: Lied der Baumwollpflücker
First Line: Es trägt der Bürger meine Gabe (The citizen carries my treasure);
Author: Bruno Traven (the original text which Eisler and Busch used was a German translation printed in *Arbeiter-Sängerzeitung*, 3 1929, S. 53)
Date: 1929, Berlin
Original Performer(s): Piano, Voice
Edition: EGW I/17
Version 2 Performer(s) 1: Solo voice (baritone), Four-part Men's Chorus, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Banjo, Snare drum, Piano (scored for recording);
Duration: 3'30
Edition: Verlag Deutscher Arbeiter-Sängerbund e. V., Berlin 1931. – EGW I/20;
Recordings: GLORIA 10 606 (78), HOMOCHORD 4 033, 440 33 (78), NOVA 880 064 (Busch, Chorus, Ens.; Eisler)

9. *Ballade von den Säckeschmeißern*, op. 22, 4 (Ballad of the Sack Tossers)
First Line: Ach, mich zieht's nach einem fernen Lande (Oh, I'm called to a foreign land)
Author: Julian Arendt
Date: 1930, Berlin
**Performer(s) 1:* Voice, Alto-Sax., Tenor-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Piano
Duration: 3'10
Edition: Verlag Deutscher Arbeiter- Sängerbund e. V., Berlin 1933; EGW I/20;
Recordings: LINDSTRÖM/GLORIA 10 294 (78) (Busch, Choir, Ens.; Eisler. Production 1931). – NOVA 885 004, MELODIA D 017 051-2, PLÄNE S 77 101 (Busch, Ens.; Gollasch)
Notes: Used as incidental music to the 1933 film, *Nieuwe Gronden*.
**Performer(s) 2:* Voice, Piano.
Edition: EGW I-17
10. *Ballade von den Seeräubern* (Ballad of the Pirates)
Variations of Title: Seeräuber-Ballade
First Line: Von Branntwein toll und Finsternissen (Crazed from whisky and gloom)
Refrain: O Himmel, strahlender Azur (Oh heaven, gleaming azure)
Author: Bertolt Brecht
Performer(s): Voice, Piano
Date: before 1933
Edition: EGW I/17
11. *Ballade von der Krüppelgarde*, op. 18. 1 (Ballad of the Crippled Garde)
Variations of Title: Krückenmarsch (Crutch March) –Krüppelgarde
First Line: Wir sind die Krüppelgarde (We are the crippled garde)
Author: David Weber (adapted from Jean Baptiste Clément)
**Performer(s) 1:* Voice, Alto-Sax., 2 Trumpets, Trombone, Snare Drum, Banjo, Piano
Date: September 1930, Berlin
First Performance: 18 October 1930, Berlin (Busch, Eisler)
Edition: EGW I/20
Recordings: Arranged by Rolf Lukowsky: AURORA Rote Reihe 7, MELODIA D 032 203-4 (Busch, Studiochor Berlin, Ens.; Lukowsky)
See also: Wir sind ja sooo zufriednen (We are just soooo happy) – Zwei Balladen op. 22
**Performer(s) 2:* Voice, Piano (piano arrangement by Erwin Ratz)
Edition: Balladenbuch op. 18 UE 1931, EGW I/22
**Performer(s) 3:* Voice, Piano; *Edition:* Leningrad/Moskau 1933 (Russian version by Aronson), EGW I/22
12. *Ballade zum § 218*, op. 18, 2 (Ballad of § 218 [a law limiting abortion])
First Line: Herr Doktor, die Periode (Doctor, the period)

Author: Bertolt Brecht

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1929, Berlin

First Performance: 3 November 1929, “Roten Fahne” celebration day, held in Zirkus Busch Berlin (Neher)

Edition: Balladenbuch op. 18, UE 1931, 65-71 (English version by Eric Bentley), EGW I/17

13. *Bankenlied*, op. 48, 1 (The Bank Song)

Variations of Title: Laßt uns den Banken einen Besuch abstatten (Let’s let the banks alone today)

First Line: Wir sind entlassen! (We’re free!)

Author: Jean Baptiste Clément (1884)

German Translation: Walter Mehring

Version 1 Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1931, Berlin

First Performance: 8 November 1931, Berlin (Busch, Uthmann-Chor; Eisler)

Dedications: [1] Uthmann-Chor Berlin. – [2] Ernst Busch: “Lieber alter Ernst: ich versichere Dir: es werden bessere Zeiten kommen!! Dein alter Hanns Eisler 22. Januar 1935” (Dear old Ernst – I promise you – better times will come! 22 January 1935)

Duration: 3’10

Edition: *Schweizerischer Arbeitersängerverband*, Liederverlag, 1934; EGW I/17

Recordings: NOVA 880 098 (Eisler)

14. *Bauer Baetz* (Farmer Baetz)

Type: Theater music

Author: Friedrich Wolf

Adaptation: Traditional farmer’s song (Bauerntod, or farmer’s mourning song: “Wir Bauern, wir wissen nicht” (We farmers, we don’t know)

Notes: According to Friedrich Wolf, Eisler declared “Arbeiternot ist Bauerntod!” (Workers need is the death of the farmer!) at the song’s premiere. (Friedrich Wolf, Aufsätze über Theater, Berlin 1957, 36)

Date: December 1932

First Performance: 17 February 1933, Stuttgart, by the theater group “Südwest”

**Performer(s) 1:* Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Snare Drum, Piano

Edition: EGW I/20

Performer(s) 2: Voice, Piano

Edition: Verlag Süddeutscher Arbeitermusiker-Bund, Stuttgart 1933. – EGW I/22

15. *Das Gerücht* (The Rumor)

Type: Theater Music

Author: C. K. Munro

Arranger: Leo Lania

Date: 1930

First Performance: 20 February 1930, Volksbühne Berlin

Director: Karlheinz Martin

Source: EGW I/18.

16. *Das Lied vom SA-Mann* (Song of the SA Man)

Variations of Title: Die Ballade vom SA-Mann (Ballad of the SA man) – Einer von vielen (One of many) – Lied des SA-Mannes (The SA man's song) – Lied des SA-Proleten (Song of the SA – Proletarian). – Song des SA-Proleten (The SA Proleten's song);

First Line: Als mir der Magen knurrte (As my stomach growled)

Author: Bertolt Brecht

Date: 1931, Berlin

Origin: Rote Revue "Wir sind ja sooo zufrieden"

Duration: 3'24

First Performance: 17 November 1931, Berlin

**Version 1 (for the review)

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Edition: EGW I/17

**Version 2

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Edition: EGW I/17

Recordings: FONO 64 169 (Stein, Vila)

**Version 3

Performer(s): Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare Drum, Banjo., Piano (Scored for the recording)

Edition: EGW I/20

Recordings: Arrangement by Adolf Fritz Guhl: ETERNA 810 017, LITERA 860 187, MELODIA D 032 203-4, DG 44 028, DG Lit 2755 005, LE CHANT DU MONDE LDX 74 666 (Busch, Ens.; Guhl). – Arrangement by Rudolf Stodola: "Theatermanufaktur" 1981 (Scheer, Ens.; Stodola); See also "Das Lied vom trockenen Brot" (Song of the Stale Bread)

17. *Der heimliche Aufmarsch*, op. 28, 3 (The Secret March)

Type: Solo song

Variations of Title: Arbeiter, Bauern (Workers, Farmers) – Der heimliche Aufmarsch gegen die Sowjetunion (The Secret March on the Soviet Union);

First Line: Es geht durch die Welt ein Geflüster (A whisper is passing through the world)

Author: Erich Weinert (New edition: Ernst Busch, 1949)

**Version 1

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1930, Berlin

Venue: Agitprop performance of the Rote Sprachrohr's "Für die Sowjetmacht"

First Performance: 16 October 1930, Berlin

Edition: Verlag für Arbeiterkultur Berlin, special edition of “Kampfmusik”, Januar 1931; Verlag für Neue Musik, Berlin 1932. – Moskau 1932 (Russian by Sergej Tretjakow). – 1.10, 13-17. – Internationale Arbeiterlieder, LdZ 1954, S. 160-163, EGW I/17

Recordings: AMIGA 840 041 (Jaldati, Rebling)

**Version 2 (scored for recording)

Performer(s): (Voice), Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare Drum, Banjo, Piano

Date: 1930

Edition: EGW I/20

18. *Der Kaufmann von Berlin* (The Merchant from Berlin)

Type: Theater music

Author: Walter Mehring

Performer(s): Voice (Solo, Chorus), 2 Clarinets, 3 Trumpets, Trombone, Snare Drum, Banjo, Piano

Division:

1. Kantate von Krieg, Frieden und Inflation (Cantata of War, Peace, and Inflation) (Choir)
2. Lied der Gepäckträger (Backpacker Song) (“Ach Mensch, die aus’ m Osten” [Oh, Man, those from the East])
3. Das Lied vom trockenen Brot (Song of the stale bread) (“Wer arbeit’, muß auch essen” [Whoever works must eat])
4. Chor der Weisen von Zion (Chorus of the Wise Men from Zion)
5. Lied der Hakenkreuzler (Song of the Swastikler) (“So zogen wir Helden” [How we raised heroes])
6. Pogromlied (Pogrom song)
7. Abgesang der Straßenkehrer (Song of the Street Sweeper) (“Mensch, das war mal’n Mensch gewesen” [Man, that used to be a human being])
8. “Was ist der Unterschied” (What is the difference)
Schrott-Chanson (“Ein neues Lied wir anheben” [We lift a new song])
Tanz der Huren (Dance of the Whores)

Date: 1929, Berlin

Dedication: Wolfgang Roth, New York;

First Performance: 6 September 1929 Piscator stage in the Theater on Nollendorfplatz, Berlin

Direction: Erwin Piscator

Staging: Lazlo Moholy-Nagy

Film: Alex Strasser

Featured Performer: Ernst Busch

Orchestra: Weintraub Syncopators

Assistance: Herbert Breth-Mildner

Edition: EGW I/7; I/23; *Recordings:* 1, 5. (5: Arranged by Rolf Lukowsky):
AURORA 585 042/Rote Reihe 4 (45) (Busch, Choir, Ens.; Lukowsky)

19. *Der Marsch ins dritte Reich* [Sketch] (March into the Third Reich)

Type: Solo song

First Line: Der Führer sagt: Jetzt kommt der elfte Winter (The leader says, now comes the eleventh winter)

Original Version: Tipperary (“Englisches Soldatenlied”)

Author: Bertolt Brecht

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1932

First Performance: 11 December 1932, Berlin, Busch-Eisler-Matinee

Edition: Deutscher Arbeiter-Sängerbund e. V., Berlin, I. 1933 (Title page bears a facsimile of Eisler’s signature) - EGW I/25

20. *Der neue Stern* (The new star)

Type: Solo song

First Line: Der Bürger frißt bei Kerzenlicht (The Philistine dines by candlelight)

Author: Erich Weinert

Performer(s): Voice, Piano (with optional instruments)

Date: 1929, Berlin

Edition: EGW I/17

Recordings: Arbeiter-Kult G.1 (78), LdZ 236 (78) (Stobrawa, Weinert, Eisler; Gruppe Junger Schauspieler, Die Stürmer. Produced Fall 1929)

21. *Der Revoluzzer* [Sketch/Fragment] (The Revolutionary)

Type: Solo song

First Line: War einmal ein Revoluzzer (There Once was a Revolutionary);

Original Composer: Béla Reinitz

Author: Erich Mühsam

Performer(s): Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Piano; (scored for recording)

Date: 1930

Edition: EGW I/25

22. *Der rote Wedding* (Red Wedding)

Variations of Title: Der Rote Wedding; Lied der Truppe “Roter Wedding” (Song of the Troupe, “Red Wedding”); Lied vom Roten Wedding (Song of Red Wedding); Rot Front (The Red Front)

First line: Links, links, links, links! Die Trommeln werden gerührt (Left, left, left! The drums are sounding!)

Author: Erich Weinert

**Version1

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1929

Occasion: Entrance song of the Berlin agitprop troupe “Der Rote Wedding”

First Performance: November 1929, Party meeting in the Berlin Pharussälen, at the first premiere of the troupe

Edition: *Das Lied im Kampf geboren*, 1958, 73-75

Recordings: Arbeiter-Kult G 2, ETERNA 810 052 (Truppe “Der Rote Weddings”; Produced in Fall, 1929);

**Version 2 (Variations in text)

Date: 1929

Edition: *Das Lied im Kampf geboren*, 1959, 41-43 (Vocal line identical to version 1)

**Version 3 (completely new text)

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

23. *Die Jungens von Mons* (The Boys from Mons)

Type: Theater music

Author: Friedrich Wolf

Division (according to the text):

1. Lied der Jungens von Mons (“Jungens, jetzt legt die Ohren zurück” [Boys, hold your ears back!])
2. Lied des Portiers vom Palace Hotel (“Oh, I went down” *English original)
3. Lied der Monsjungens (“Revolverschuß und Mädchenkuß” [Revolver Shot and Maiden’s Kiss]) (probably also included instrumental music, marches)

Date: December 1931

First Performance: 20 December 1931, Berliner Theater, Gastspiel Berliner; Volksbühnen-Schauspieler

Direction: Richard Weichert

24. *Die Mäuler auf* (1930) (Open Your Mouths)

Type: Solo song

First Line: Heilgebrüll und völkische Heilung (Healing Roar and Folk Healing);

Author: Kurt Tucholsky

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 16 February 1959, Berlin

Producer (Rundfunk): 30 June 1959 (Busch, Ens.; Goehr)

Duration: 1’54

Edition: EGW I/19

Recordings: AURORA 580 015 (45) (Busch, Guhl)

25. *Drum sag der SPD ade* (And the SPD says goodbye)

Subtitle: Ein neues Kampflied (A new fighting song)

Variations of Title: *Berlin bleibt rot*

First Line: Hallo! Was kommt die Straße lang (Hello! What's coming down the street) – Hallo! Wer zieht die Straße lang (Hello! Who's coming down the street)
**Version 1

Author: Robert Winter

Performer(s): Solo voice

Date: April 1928, Berlin

Occasion: Parliamentary elections, 1928

Edition: Flugblatt (1 May 1928); *Das Lied im Kampf geboren*, 1961, 85-87. – EGW I/14

**Version 2

Author: Hanns Eisler adaptation of Robert Winter (Text fragmentary)

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: probably 1958; *Occasion:* Press conference of the “ND”;

Edition: EGW I/17

26. *Ein neues Stempellied* (op. 48, 2) (A new stamp song)

Variations of Title: Arbeitslosensong (Unemployed song); Stempellied 1932 (Stamp song 1932)

First Line: Wenn heute (Wenn einmal) einer stempeln geht (When today a stamp is used)

Author: David Weber

**Performer(s) 1:* Voice, Piano; *Date:* Ende 1932

First Performance: 11 December 1932, Berlin, Busch-Eisler-Matinee

Edition: Liederverlag des Schweizerischen Arbeitersängerverbandes 1934; EGW I/17

**Performer(s) 2:* 3 part Male chorus (or Mixed Chorus), Tenor-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare Drum, Banjo, Piano

Date: 4. 9. 1934, London

Edition: EGW I/20

27. *Feldfrüchte* (Field Fruits)

Type: Solo song;

Variations of Title: Radieschen (Radishes)

First Line: Sinnend geh ich durch den Garten (Alert, I walk through the garden)

Author: Kurt Tucholsky

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

**Version 1:

Date: 1930, Berlin

First Performance: 19 March 1930, Lehrervereinshaus Berlin, Youth meeting of the Verbandes der Lithographen (Lithography society)

Edition: EGW I/19

**Version 2

Date: 1959, Berlin

Producer (Rundfunk): 2. 7. 1959 (Busch, Ens.; Goehr)

Duration: 3'40

Edition: EGW I/19

Recordings: ETERNA 810 019, MELODIA D 017 051-2 (Busch, Guhl). – Arrangement by Simon Rebstock: PLÄNE H 701 79/80 (Görner, Rebstock)

28. *Freie Jugend* (Free Youth)

First Line: Links, links, links, links! Die freie Jugend marschier (Left, left, left, left! The free youth marches!)

Author: Ernst Busch, adapted from Erich Weinert

Source: Der rote Wedding

Date: 1929 Musik; 1949 Text

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Edition: EGW I/17

29. *Gustav Kulkes seliges Ende* (Gustav Kulkes Blessed End)

First Line: Gustav Kulke war zu Kaisers Zeiten (Gustav Kulke was in the Kaiser's day)

Type: "Solo Song"

Author: Erich Weinert

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1929, Berlin

Notes: The melody is adapted from the folk song "Der Mai ist gekommen" by Justus Wilhelm Lyra Zurück

Source: lost

Edition: Das Lied im Kampf geboren, Vol. 3, 39-40 – EGW I/14

Recordings: Arbeiter-Kult G. 4, ETERNA 810 052 (Weinert, Eisler, Produktion Fall 1929)

30. *Hallo, Kollege Jungarbeiter* (Hello, young comrade!)

Type: Theater music /Agitprop play;

Author: Maxim Vallentin (Das Rote Sprachrohr)

Date: 1928

First Performance: 21 March 1928, Chemnitz, 3rd annual youth celebration of the KJVD (Das Rote Sprachrohr)

Source: lost

31. *Heer ohne Helden* (Army without heroes)

Type: Theater music

Author: Anna Gmeiner

Origin: Lied der Bergarbeiter/Bergarbeiterlied ("Wir graben unsre Gräber") - (Miner's Song – "We dig our graves" (op. 22, 3);

Date: 1929, Berlin

First Performance: 26. 1. 1930, "Theater der Arbeiter" im Wallnertheater Berlin

Direction: Slatan Dudow

**Performer(s) I:* Voice, Piano

Edition: EGW I/17

**Performer(s) 2:* Male chorus or solo voice, 2 Clarinet, Tenor-Sax, 2 Trumpet, Trumpet, Snare drum, Piano

Duration: 2'50

Edition: Verlag Deutscher Arbeiter-Sängerbund e. V., Berlin 1931 - EGW I/20;

Recordings: HOMOCHORD (Homophon-Company Berlin) H 3 942 (78).

LINDSTRÖM/GLORIA G.O. 10 605 (78) (Busch, Ens.; Eisler, 1930);

MELODIA C 80-05 431-2 (Busch, Ens.; Lukowsky?)

**Performer(s) 3:* Voice, Piano (KIA v. Erwin Ratz)

Edition: Verlag Deutscher Arbeiter-Sängerbund e. V., Berlin 1931–

Schachteram, Moskau 1950 (Russian version by N. Retschmenski) - EGW I/22;

**Performer(s) 4:* Voice, Piano

32. *Heimweh* (Homesickness)

Type: Theater music

Author: Franz Jung

Performer(s): Flute, Cello, Wind Orchestra, Snare Drum

Date: 1927

First Performance: 8 January 1928, Studio of the Piscator Stage, Berlin;

Direction: Leonhard Steckel

Sets: John Heartfield

Note: The premiere of “Heimweh” was the Piscator studio’s first stage experiment. It was intended to unite directors, authors, actors, stage technicians, and musicians in an effort to create a new kind of theatrical expression. At the same time, artists were given the chance to experiment and progress. Eisler was a part of this group; this was his first stage music.

33. *Idioten* (Idiots)

Type: Canon

Author: Hanns Eisler

Performer(s): 4 voices a cappella

Date: 1928, Berlin

Edition: EGW I/14

Idylle

If there is no bread to eat

I Had a Little Doggie

I Had a Little Nut-Tree

Ihr Brüder, hier im fernen Kaukasus (You brothers, here in the far Causasus)

Ihr, die ihr auftauchen werdet (You, who will emerge)

Ihre Fäulnis ist so groß (Your laziness is so grand)

Ihr Frau'n erscheint (You women appear)

Ihr in den Tanks und Bombern (You in the tanks and bombs)

Ihr Leute, jetzt ist's Nacht in London (You folks, it's night in London)

Ihr Leute, kommt, ein großes Schauspiel anzusehn (You folks, come see a great drama)

Ihr Leute, wenn ihr einen Sagen hört (You folks, when you hear a story)
Ihr Mund ist wie der Mund an einer Büste (Your mouth is like the mouth on a bust)
Ihr müßt sie lieb und nett behandeln (You must handle her kindly and nicely)
Ihr nicht – aber wir! März 1930 (Not you, but us! March 1930)
Ihr sollt die verfluchten Tarife abbauen (You should tear down the cursed tariffs)
Ihr wißt es, was es heißt (You know what it means)
I like little pussy
Im Badezimmer (In the bathroom)

34. *In Weißensee* (In Weißensee)

Type: Solo song
First Line: Da, wo Chamottfabriken stehn (There, where the Chamott factories stand)
Author: Kurt Tucholsky
Performer(s): Voice, Piano
Date: 1930, Berlin
First Performance: 8 November 1930 (on the date of the first premiere of Friedrich Wolf's "Die Matrosen von Cattaro"), Kabarett "Katakombe" Berlin (led by Ernst Busch)
Duration: 3'
Edition: EGW I/19
Recordings: AURORA 815 101 (Busch, Ens.; Goehr)

I saw many friends
I saw three ships
Ist's wahr? (Is it true?)
Ist wo etwas faul (There something rotten somewhere)
It is so simple
It works
It was hunger alone
Ja, damals (Yes, back then)
Ja, das Hauspersonal (Yes, the house servants)
Ja, das Tempo der Zeit (Yes, the pace of the times)
J'a des femmes vraiment compliquées (Yes, the women are truly complex)
Ja, du kannst nicht zurück (Yes, you can't turn back)
Ja, ich bin, ich bin in ihn verschossen (Yes, I am, I am crazy about him)
January ten sixteen ten
Ja, wirklich, Sie haben gar nicht unrecht (Yes, really, you aren't exactly wrong)

35. *Kampflied für die IAH* (Fighting song for the IAH)

Variations of Title: Ermunterung zur Arbeit (Inspiration to Work) – Kampfkolonnen (Fighting Convoys)
First Line: Wir führen einen Krieg, Kamerad (Comrade, we're leading a war); Wir führen einen Kampf, Kamerad (We're leading a fight, comrade)

Author: Erich Weinert

**Performer(s) 1:* Voice, Piano

Date: 17 June 1931, Moskau

Occasion: World Congress celebration of the tenth anniversary of the IAH (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe), 1931, Moskau

Edition: Verlag für Arbeiterkultur, Berlin (Lieder der Kampfmusik), Beilage zur "Kampfmusik" 7 1931, Verlag für Neue Musik, Berlin 1932, Sowjetisches Liedblatt, 1931 (in Russian), Pesni nemezkogo proletariata (Songs of the German Proletariat), Leningrad 1932, 9-11 (Russian by M. Aronson); Music notes for "Zwei Welten", Moskau 1934 (in German) – Leningrad 1934 (in Russian); EGW I/17

**Performer(s) 2:* Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare Drum, Banjo, Piano; *Duration:* 2'20

Edition: EGW I/20

Recordings: Arrangement by Rolf Lukowsky: AURORA 585 044/Rote Reihe 6 (Busch, Studiochor Berlin, Ens.; Lukowsky)

36. *Komintern* (Comintern)

Variations of Title: Komintern-Lied (Comintern Song)

First Line: Verlaßt die Maschinen / Laßt die Arbeit ruhn (Leave the machines/ Let the work rest)

Author: Franz Jahnke, Maxim Vallentin

Performer(s): Solo voice

Date: 1929

Occasion: Demonstration of Agitprop troupe "Das Rote Sprachrohr": "Zehn Jahre Komintern" (Ten Years of the Comintern)

First Performance: May 1929. Composed for the 10-year anniversary of the Communist Internationale, or Komintern, performed by "Das Rote Sprachrohr";

Edition: Das Rote Sprachrohr, Berlin, 2 February 1929, Das Rote Sprachrohr, Berlin, 7 July 1929, EGW I/14

37. *Lied der deutschen Rotarmisten* (Song of the German red army)

First Line: Mächtig schützen unsre Waffen (Powerfully we protect our weapons)

Source: Rotarmistenlied (Red army song)

Author: Erich Weinert

Performer(s): Solo voice

Date: 1932 (Music), 1936 (Text)

Notes: Text written by Weinert at request of the Rotarmisten Choir) *Edition:* Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung, Moskau, 23. 2. 1937 (Mit euren Liedern ziehen wir in den Kampf – With your songs we go into battle)

38. *Lied der Familie Freese* (Song of family Freese)

First Line: Und einmal ist ne Krise (And once there's a crisis)

Origin: Wir sind ja sooo zufrieden (Rote Revue)

Author: Vogel
Performer(s): Voice, Piano
Date: 1931
Edition: EGW I/17. – Theater der Kollektive, Bd. 1 (3.49), 299 (Text)
See also: Ohne Kapitalisten geht es besser (Without capitalists it's better)

39. *Lied der Roten Matrosen* (Song of the red sailor)
Variations of Title: Rote Matrosen (Red sailors)
First Line: Wir fahren hinaus auf die brausende See (We sail on the roaring sea);
Author: Helmut
Performer(s): Solo voice
Date: 1928
Duration: 2'45
Edition: Die Trommel, Berlin, 11 (November) 1928, 12; Die Rote Front, Berlin, 1 January 1929; Seid bereit! Liederbuch für Arbeiterkinder. Verlag Junge Garde, Berlin 1931, 12; Rot Sport! Kampflieder der roten Sportler. Arbeitersportverlag, Berlin 1932, 24-25; Soldaten singen, Verlag des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung, Berlin 1957, 34-35; Das Lied im Kampf geboren, Vol. 8, 1961, 71-72; EGW I/14
Recordings: Arrangement by Kurt Greiner-Pol: ETERNA 810 026 (Mitglieder des Erich-Weinert-Ensembles; Löffler)
40. *Lied des Kampfbundes*, op. 28, 5 (Song of the fighting club)
Variations of Title: Kampflied gegen den Faschismus (Fighting Song against fascism); Sturmlied des Kampfbundes gegen Faschismus (Protest song of the fighting club against fascism)
First Line: Wer zahlt das Geld für Hitler (Who counts money for Hitler)
Author: Erich Weinert
Performer(s): Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Banjo, Piano
Date: 1932, Berlin
Duration: 3'30
Edition: Das Lied im Kampf geboren, Vol. 8, 1961, 98-100; EGW I/20;
Recordings: GLORIA (Busch, Mitglieder des Kampfbundes gegen den Faschismus, Ens. Produced February/March 1932)
41. *Lied vom Trockenbrot* op. 18, 5 (Song of the stale bread)
First Line: Wer arbeit', muß auch essen (Who works, must eat)
Origin: Der Kaufmann von Berlin (Stagemusik for The Merchant from Berlin);
Author: Walter Mehring
Performer(s): Voice, Piano
Date: (1929) 1931
Edition: EGW I/23
Recordings: FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5 433 (Bentley)
42. *Lustige Ecke* (Amusing locale)

Type: Solo song collection
Performer(s): Voice, Piano
Division:

1. Noblesse oblige (“Was muß ich hören, Herr Graf” [What must I hear, dear duke])
2. Der kleine Kohn (“Der kleine Kohn kommt aus der Schule” [Little Kohn comes from school])

Date: 1926/1927, Berlin
Edition: EGW I/16

43. *Mit der Ifa marschiert* (Marching with the Ifa)

First Line: Sie machen uns nicht länger dumm (You won’t make fools of us any longer)

Author: Slang

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1931

Occasion: Ifa-Kulturschau Leipzig, 14 – 28 March 1931 (Ifa = Interessengemeinschaft für Arbeiterkultur, Society for the Interest of Worker’s Culture)

Edition: Program booklet of the Ifa-Kulturschau Leipzig; EGW I/17

44. *O Fallada, da du hangest* (Oh Fallada, there you hang)

Variations of Title: Ein Pferd beklagt sich (A horse complains); Ein Pferd klagt

First Line: Ich zog meine Fuhre (I pulled my master)

Type: Solo song

Author: Bertolt Brecht

Notes: The text that Eisler used is a dialogue between a reporter and a horse. Only the horse’s part is composed.

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1932

Duration: 3’10

Edition: EGW I/17

Recordings: LdZ B 106 (78) (Kühl, Jarczyk). – LITERA 860 138, DG 140 038 (Thate, Krtschil), Arrangement by Boris Blacher: NOVA 880 187 (Kühl, Ens.; Blacher). – Arrangement by Adolf Fritz Guhl: ETERNA 810 017, DG 44 028, LE CHANT DU MONDE LDX 74 666 (Busch, Ens.; Guhl); Arrangement by Henry Krtschil: ETERNA 825 797, NOVA 885 037, DG 144 035 (May, Ens.; Krtschil); DAL-MSM 355 (Farandouri, Ens.; Krtschil). – Arrangement by Rudolf Stodola: PREISER RECORDS SPR 3 216, PLÄNE S 44 102, “Theatermanufaktur” 1981 (Scheer, Stodola). – Arrangement by Rozbroy/Türk: ESEL RECORDS (Görner; Rozbroy, Türk)

45. *Rotarmistenlied* (Song of the Red Army)

First Line: Achtung! Arbeiter und Bauern (Attention! Workers and Farmers);

Author: Karl Schulz

Performer(s): Solo voice

Date: 1932

Occasion: "Für die U.S.S.R. Sondernummer der roten Post"

Notes: The premiere was accompanied by the commentary that Eisler "brought this song from the Soviet Union." It is unclear whether this is an adaptation of a melody or an original composition

Edition: Illustrierte Rote Post, Berlin, 29 1932, 6; EGW I/14

46. *Russisches Eisenbahn-Lied* (Russian Railway Song)

Type: Solo song

Variations of Title: Eisenbahn- (Russisches) Lied (Railway [Russian] Song- this is how it appears in Eisler's original score)

First Line: Früh und spät auf langen Geleisen (Early and late on long tracks)

Author: unknown

Performer(s): Solo voice, Male chorus, Piano

Date: 1931

Notes: This song probably resulted from a "Kampflied" competition for writers and composers held in 1931, supported by the Komintern

Edition: EGW I/17

47. *Seifenlied* [Arrangement] (Soap Song)

First Line: Wir haben unsre Brüder (We have our brothers)

Original composer: Otto Stransky

Author: Julian Arendt

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

Date: 1929 (for Berlin city council elections held on 17 November 1929)

Edition: EGW I/25

48. *Sergeant Waurich*

First Line: Das ist nun ein Dutzend Jahre her (That was a dozen years ago)

Author: Erich Kästner

Performer(s): Voice, Ensemble

Date: 1929

Duration: 1'44

Edition: EGW I

Recordings: AURORA 585 033-034, PLÄNE S 77 103 (Busch, Ens.; Guhl)

49. *Solidarität* (Solidarity)

Type: Choral Montage

Division: Wladimir Vogel: Der heimliche Aufmarsch (The Secret March)

Karl Vollmer: Wir sind ein 5-Millionen-Heer (We are an army of five million)

Hanns Eisler: Kampflied für die IAH (Fighting song of the IAH)

Manfred Bukofzer: IAH-Lied (IAH song)

Performer(s): Narrator, Speaking chorus, Children's chorus, Chorus, Orchestra;

Date: 1931

Occasion: World Congress of the IAH (International Arbeiterhilfe)

First Performance: 10 October 1931, Sportpalast Berlin (Arbeiterchor Groß-Berlin; Goldstein)

Duration: 40'00

Literatur: Die Welt am Abend, Berlin 30 September 1931; Kampfmusik, Berlin, 1932, 4

50. *Spartakus 1919* (op. 43)

Type: Solo song

Variations of Title: Spartakus 1919 (in) Berlin (Spartacus 1919 in Berlin)

First Line: Im Januar um Mitternacht (In January at midnight)

Text: “nach einem alten Berliner Arbeiterlied” (“according to an old Berlin working song)

Original Text: Richard Schulz

Performer(s): Voice, Piano

**Version 1

Date: 1932, Berlin

Edition: EGW I/17

**Version 2

Date: 1954

Duration: 1'20

Edition: EGW I/17

Recordings: FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5 433 (Bentley) – NOVA 885 174 (Hähnel, Kochan)

**Arrangement: Karl Rankl

Performer(s): Mixed Chorus; Male Chorus;

Edition: Verlag für Neue Musik, Berlin 1933

51. *Stempellied* (op. 28, 6) (Stamp song)

Variations of Title: Lied der Arbeitslosen (Song of the unemployed)

First Line: Keene Sechser in der Tasche (Not a penny in the pocket)

Author: David Weber;

Date: 1929, Berlin (The text was first published on 14 October 1929 in “Die Welt am Abend”)

**Performer(s) 1:* Voice, Piano

Edition: Verlag für Arbeiterkultur, Berlin, Reihe “Kampfmusik”, Mai 1931; Verlag für Neue Musik, Berlin 1932; Zwei satirische Jazz-Lieder, Leningrad 1935, S. 9-15 (Russian by Lewik); EGW I/17

**Performer(s) 2:* Voice, Alto-Sax., Trumpet, Trombone, Snare drum, Piano (Scored for recording)

Edition: EGW I/20

Recordings: HOMOCHORD (Homophon-Company Berlin) H 3 942 (78), LINDSTRÖM/GLORIA G.O. 10 605 (78) (Busch, Ens.; Eisler; 1930). – AURORA 580 008(45), MELODIA D 017 051-2, NOVA 885 004, PLÄNE S 77 101 (Busch, Ens.; Gollasch)

52. *Udarnik-Kanon* (Udarnik canon)
Subtitle: Beim Müde-Werden zu singen (Of singing while getting sleepy)
Variations of Title: Ermunterung zur Arbeit (Motivation for work)
First Line: He! Packt fester an! (Hey – work harder!)
Author: probably Hanns Eisler
Performer(s): 2 part a capella Chorus
Date: 19 June 1931, Moscow
Edition: ELK 6, S. 100. – Rundadinella, Hofm. 1961, 246; EGW I/14
53. *Vier Wiegenlieder für Arbeitermütter*, op. 33 (Four lullabies for the working mother)
Variations of Title: Wiegenlieder einer proletarischen Mutter. – Wiegenlieder für proletarische Mütter
Author: Bertolt Brecht
Performer(s): Voice, Piano;
Division:
 I - Als ich dich in meinem Leib trug (As I carried you in my womb)
 II - Als ich dich gebar (As I bore you)
 III - Ich hab dich ausgetragen (I carried you)
 IV - Mein Sohn, was immer auch aus dir werde (My son, whatever becomes of you)
 (Original order: II, I, III, IV)
Date: 1932, Berlin
Duration: 6'30
Edition: 1.6. – Kate Kühl singt das Lied der Zeit, Hg. Ernst Busch, LdZ; EGW I/17
Recordings: ETERNA 820 624, NOVA 885 037, WER 60 041 (May, Olbertz). – “Theatermanufaktur” 1981 (Scheer, Stodola); Arrangement by Boris Blacher: NOVA 880 187 (Kühl, Ens.; Blacher. IV mit Busch); III, IV: EIGELSTEIN ES 3 003 (Petri, Reininghaus); IV – Arrangement by Rudolf Stodola, PREISLER RECORDS SPR 3 216, PLÄNE S 44 102 (Scheer, Stodola)
54. *Was jede Frau weiß* (What every woman knows)
Type: Theater music
Variations of Title: Maggie
Author: James Matthew Barrie
Translator: Harry Gottlob
Date: 1928
First Performance: 1928, Staatstheater Berlin, Schauspielhaus
Direction: Paul Bildt
Source: lost
55. *Wenn die Igel in der Abendstunde* (When in the evening hours the eagle)
Untertitel: Anna Luise 1928
Type: Solo song

Author: Kurt Tucholsky
Performer(s): Voice, Piano
Date: 1930
Dedication: “für und von Ernst Busch”
First Performance: 19. 3. 1930, Lehrerbereinshaus Berlin, Jugendfeier des Verbandes der Lithographen (Busch, Eisler)
Duration: 4’55
Edition: EGW I/19
Recordings: ETERNA 810 019 (Busch, Guhl); Arrangement by Simon Rebstock; PLÄNE H 701 79/80 (Görner, Rebstock); Arrangement by Nils Sustrate; TELDEC/LITERA 865 337 (Raddatz, Ens.; Sustrate)

56. *Wiegenlied für ein nie geborenes Kind* (Song for a never-born child)
First Line: Ich wollt es gern behalten (I wanted to keep it)
Author: Dinah Nelken
Performer(s): Voice, Piano (or Ens.?)
Date: 1929
First Performance: November 1929 , probably at the opening of the Cabaret “Die Unmöglichen” in Berlin West, Lutherstraße (Klemm, Teddies Jazz-Sinfoniker). Song mentioned in “Die Welt am Abend”, 29 November 1929, under the “Especially Good” category;
Source: lost
Edition: Dinah Nelken. Die ganze Zeit meines Lebens, Verlag der Nation, Berlin 1977, 43 (Text)
57. *Zeitungssong* (Newspaper Song)
Variations of Title: Lob der öffentlichen Meinung (In praise of the open opinion)
First Line: Wenn ich des Morgens in die U-Bahn steige (When I get on the subway in the mornings)
Origin: Wir sind ja sooo zufrieden (Rote Revue)
Performer(s): Voice, Piano; *Date:* 1931
Edition: Theater der Kollektive, 1. Bd. (3.49), S. 300-302
Notes: Song text attributed to Eisler, but has not been verified
58. *Zu Lenins Todestag* (On the anniversary of Lenin’s death)
First Line: Lenin ist eingeschreint (Lenin is enshrined)
Type: Solo song
Text: after Karl Marx (The farmer’s war in France)
Performer(s): Solo voice
**Version 1
Date: Januar 1932, Berlin
Edition: Illustrierte Rote Post, Berlin, 4 (Januar) 1932, 1; EGW I/14;
**Version 2 (“Aus der Kantate zum 22. Januar Lenins Todestag”)
Date: January 1936, New York
Edition: EGW I/14

CHAPTER FIVE
EISLER'S FATE IN U.S. MUSICOLOGY

“Wars bring the world to ruin, and through the rubble goes a specter . . . come to change everything and to stay forever; its name is Communism.”⁵⁶

In examining the posthumous fate of Eisler's music in U.S. academia, we must begin with a word: communism. For Marx, the word had two implications, including an actual political movement of the working class within capitalism, as well as the society workers would create through revolutionary struggle. In the latter nineteenth century the word was used synonymously with socialism to designate the working class movement; internal divisions within that movement, however, led to a distinction between the two terms. Socialism ultimately indicated peaceful, constitutional reform of proletariat exploitation. Communism advocated revolution: it encouraged the oppressed to forcibly wrench political power from the ruling classes and end their own suffering. During Joseph Stalin's lifetime (1879-1953), communism assumed the added dimension of authoritarianism, as discussion of Marxist theory was suppressed and all communist parties within the Soviet bloc were rendered subordinate to the Kremlin.⁵⁷

Secrecy was also a defining characteristic of early communism. In Tsarist Russia, Vladimir Lenin's vanguard Bolshevik party was a tightly organized, secret, professional group of political agitators. Even as the Bolsheviks established the world's first socialist regime, they never completely shed their conspiratorial quality; Lenin's regime was criticized within his own government for covert action and attempts to silence those who would question his plans for the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ This secretive tendency, combined with a call for revolution, Stalin's murderous despotism, the Kremlin's anti-capitalist doctrines, and the Soviets' rapid expansion through Eastern Europe and China gave U.S. political leaders cause to fear its advance into North America.

⁵⁶Bertolt Brecht's poetic rendering of The Communist Manifesto – third draft, 1945. Found in the *Grosse Kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* in thirty volumes (Brecht 1988-98). Author's translation.

⁵⁷Hans Müller, *Ursprung und Geschichte des Wortes 'Sozialismus' und seiner Verwandten* (Hanover: J. H. W. Dietz, 1967), 1-9.

⁵⁸N. Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), chs. 1 and 2, passim.

Eisler's communist sympathies, then, carried with them a host of negative associations as he entered a capitalist society. Seventy years after he fled Europe for the U.S., our task is to understand how those associations have shaped scholarly reception of his music. For years Eisler was virtually invisible in the U.S. musicological canon; likewise little of his music, aside from his collaborations with Brecht, was performed on American stages. As one of Schoenberg's favored triumvirate of pupils, Eisler by association and volume of work merited greater attention from twentieth-century U.S. music historians. Why did he not receive it?

For Eisler scholar Joy Calico, the answer lies less in Eisler's political proclivities than in his varied compositional output. This musical "polyglot" was equally at home within both popular and art music realms and could move fluidly from film scoring, to agitprop choruses, to atonal art songs. Calico posits that Eisler's diversity trumps scholars bent on easy categorization; furthermore, his association with popular music leaves him tainted, one who has "squandered" his talents on political folly and on mass-oriented music. In a musical and academic world "notoriously indulgent of the Left," she asserts Eisler's absence from U.S. musicology has less to do with his communism and more to do with his versatility.⁵⁹

Calico offers one explanation among many. One might view the position of leftist thought in U.S. academia in a different light. Indeed, historians are as subject to social and political dynamics as anyone else, and the political climate in the mid-twentieth century United States was far from indulgent where communism was concerned. Throughout the Cold War the federal government entertained a civic policy that was vehemently anti-communist. Politicians such as Joseph McCarthy, Richard Nixon, and J. Edgar Hoover used their bureaucratic muscle to suppress politically unpopular ideas and to discourage any deviant public dialogue by government employees, entertainment figures, and educators. During the McCarthy period (1946-1956, roughly), any kind of connection to communism, even in the spirit of academic inquiry, was suspicious and left one's professionalism open to governmental scrutiny. In short, communist sympathies could end one's career, evidenced by the hundreds of

⁵⁹ Joy Calico, "Hanns Eisler, Marxist Polyglot," www.crixa.com/muse/unionsong/reviews/eisler/, 13 May 2003.

American academics accused of and fired for communist activity during this ten-year period.⁶⁰

Calico assumes that academic freedom in the United States is an inherited democratic privilege. Freedom of intellectual pursuit is not, however, explicitly protected under U.S. legislation. As most American colleges and universities are governed by external boards who are increasingly dependent upon private income sources to keep their institutions solvent, they are particularly vulnerable to the country's political climate and changing social philosophies. Cold-War tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States created a public furor over communism from which university administrators were not exempt; to wit, Joseph McCarthy called upon civic-minded parents to purge the communist threat from the nation's schools:

Every man and woman in America can appoint himself or herself to undo the damage which is being done by communist-minded teachers and communist-line textbooks. Countless times I have heard parents throughout the country complain that their sons and daughters were sent to college as good Americans and returned four years later as wild-eyed radicals. The educational system of this country cannot be cleansed of communist influence by legislation. It can only be scrubbed and flushed and swept clean if the mothers and fathers . . . of this nation individually decide to do this job. This . . . you must do if America and Western civilization are to live.⁶¹

McCarthy was echoing sentiments voiced in 1946 by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who claimed that citizens must be vigilant to detect communism in popular magazines and newspapers, books, movies and radio, fraternal orders, law enforcement, and particularly in high schools and colleges.⁶²

Galvanizing political rhetoric fostered public paranoia; soon the U.S. government issued a formal call to administrators to eliminate suspected communists from all influential positions. In 1949, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee issued the following public statements about U.S. universities. First, they alleged that U.S. schools

⁶⁰ David Holmes, *Stalking the Academic Communist: Intellectual Freedom and the Firing of Alex Novikoff* (Vermont: University Press of New England, 1989), 3.

⁶¹ Joseph R. McCarthy, *McCarthyism: The Fight for America* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 101.

⁶² William R. Tanner and Robert Griffith, "Legislative Politics and 'McCarthyism,'" in Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis, eds., *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 178.

were targeted by (unspecified) world communist leaders in an aggressive campaign to destroy the United States. Second, educators labeled “communist” were deemed unable to maintain standards of academic freedom due to their allegiance to a totalitarian entity, the Kremlin. Third, communists were assumed to use the university classroom to indoctrinate new generations of followers. Finally, the Senate committee concluded this indoctrination was difficult to detect because the communist educator network was crafty, secretive, and pervasive. School administrators were therefore called upon to purge any instructors who could demonstrably be connected with communism in any form.⁶³

Did communism truly gain a foothold in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s? Despite Hoover’s assertion that one in 1,814 Americans was communist (compared with one in 2,277 Russians during the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution),⁶⁴ communism never established itself as a widespread political ideology in the United States. Fed by Depression-era economic anxiety, the American Communist Party reported its greatest membership (82,000) in 1936; by 1958, that number was reduced to three thousand.⁶⁵ Even before the post-World War II “Red Scare,” communism proved a hard sell for an ethnically-diverse, racially-divided working class who wanted to

⁶³ “Subversive Influence in the Educational Process,” report to the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Eighty-third Congress, 17 July 1953, 28-29; quoted in Lewis, 19-20. Congress responded to this report with The Internal Security Act of 1950, which required: a) “Communist-action” organizations and “communist-front” organizations to register with the U.S. attorney general; they were also required to furnish the govt. with names of officers, membership lists (current and former) and all financial sources; b) members of these registered organizations were barred from employment in govt., private industries w/defense contracts, and were denied use of or application for U.S. passports; c) registered groups were not allowed to claim tax-exempt status; d) registered organizations were required to label their publications and broadcasts as “communist”; e) the Attorney General, in the interest of ‘internal security,’ was given automatic power to detain any members of these registered organizations at his discretion; in that event, members were denied the right to a court trial, although they could apply for judicial review or appeal; f) immigrants who had any kind of connection to communist organizations or who engaged in activities deemed dangerous to the public interest could be forcibly deported without a trial; g) naturalized citizens could lose their citizenship if they joined communist organizations. In the wake of federal legislation, at least four states made it illegal to join the communist party. Notably, city officials in the author’s hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, issued a 1951 city ordinance that made it unlawful for members of the Communist Party to set foot within the city limits – the penalty was a fine and/or six months in jail. Lionel Lewis, *Cold War on Campus: A Study of the Politics of Organizational Control* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Inc., 1988), 9; See also David Cauter, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 70-75.

⁶⁴U.S. House of Representatives, “100 Things You Should Know about Communism in the U.S.A” (Washington, D.C.: 1950), Question 31.

⁶⁵ Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 153-166.

believe work would yield the American dream. Marxist secularism also posed a barrier to widespread acceptance, alienating communism from workers who were devoted to their church traditions.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, Marxism did have its proponents in U.S. universities; most accused of subversive activity during the McCarthy era had been involved at least tangentially with the communist party during their lives. During the 1930s particularly, communism attracted a number of American intellectuals who formed the heart of an educated, politically-active professorship throughout the Second World War. Their ranks rapidly diminished, however, following the Hitler/Stalin non-aggression pact in 1938 and increasing government scrutiny of communist activity immediately following the War.⁶⁷

By 1951, academic institutions across the country showed signs of strain. That year, a *New York Times* survey reported that faculty across the country felt increasingly censored by administrators and that their ability to search for knowledge and truth had been curtailed by the political climate. This led to a “tendency toward passive acceptance of the status quo, conformity, and a narrowing of the area of tolerance in which students, faculty and administrators feel free to speak, act, and think independently.” The study’s authors noted that censorship and conformity led students to avoid any association with ideas or people deemed “liberal” and to avoid speaking out publicly on controversial issues (either in class or around campus).⁶⁸ The Cold War therefore made itself felt on U.S. campuses by pressuring faculty to conform to government-mandated standards of behavior, censoring their speech, beliefs, actions, and associations. Administrators and governing boards offered little resistance, creating instead rules of conduct that mandated the dismissal of any faculty member with communist connections.

Between the World Wars, musicology established itself as an academic discipline in American universities. Its growth was aided considerably by musicologists

⁶⁶ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict, 1919-1990* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 29-40.

⁶⁷ Robert Iverson, *The Communists and the Schools* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959); Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), chs. 2 and 3.

⁶⁸ Kalman Siegel, “College Freedoms Being Stifled by Students’ Fear of Red Label” and “Colleges Fighting Repressive Forces,” *New York Times*, 10 May 1951 (p. 1) and 11 May 1951 (p.29), esp. 1, 28, May 10, as quoted in Lewis, 22-23.

who fled the dangers of Nazi Germany, notably Alfred Einstein, Otto Gombosi, Manfred Bukofzer, Kurt Sachs, and Willi Apel, all of whom taught subsequently at U.S. schools and trained generations of American music scholars.⁶⁹ Understandably, these musicologists had a strong connection to the German art music tradition which they fostered in their students; perhaps music history allowed them to ruminate on a powerful German musical legacy rather than on a devastated, post-War ruin. Whatever the underlying cause, German academics teaching in U.S. institutions helped shape a musicological canon which for years looked to the European past for inspiration.

Eisler's turbulent, revolutionary music, however, was firmly rooted in contemporary social life; his was a *music of the present*. Moreover, the strong public links between Eisler's music and communism likely made it utterly taboo as U.S. historical musicology blossomed as an academic pursuit.

It is also possible that Eisler's music may have appeared completely irrelevant to mid-twentieth century American musicologists. Unlike Germany, the United States did not develop its own widespread artistic movement devoted to communist ideals. Musicologist Charles Seeger, who during 1934 wrote music criticism for the communist newspaper *The Daily Worker* (under the pseudonym Carl Sands), reflected on early U.S. communist songs:

We were culturally far behind Europe at that time [the early 1930s]. Eisler had done what we wanted to do, but couldn't. We did it in spots. My song "Lenin - Who's That Guy" used ordinary fragments of technique in an unusual way, because we thought that was revolutionary and therefore suitable for the workers to use. We didn't give them those same patterns in the usual way, which was what Broadway did. Eisler did quite a number of songs for street singing . . . and gave them just an unusual twist, so that the workers can sing them. The music was in their idiom, but had something in advance of their idiom that brings it up.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Vincent Duckles and Gary Tomlinson, "Musicology III (i)" *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed., 2nd ed., Vol 17, 2001, 521-522. In this article, Duckles and Tomlinson openly acknowledge the greatest difference between contemporary popular music studies in the U.S. vs. Great Britain and Canada is a sophisticated, Marxist-influenced cultural-studies tradition.

⁷⁰ David K. Dunaway, "Charles Seeger and Carl Sands: The Composers' Collective Years" *Ethnomusicology* 24 (May), 1980, 164.

Seeger's comments point to a marginalized communist movement in the United States, one whose musical expression was much less advanced than its European counterparts. Communist-oriented song in the United States did not develop the broad appeal or widespread dissemination Eisler's songs enjoyed in Europe, flowering instead only in small intellectual enclaves in urban areas. American musicologists, in their pursuit of the musical past, may have found little value in a music whose history had yet to be written.

The House Un-American Activities Committee: Eisler's Interrogations

Despite Eisler's prominent role as a composer for the workers' movement in Germany, he was virtually inactive politically during his time in the United States. The majority of his letters, interviews, and writings of this period reflect a much greater preoccupation with fascism than with capitalism; indeed, he was faring rather well in his Hollywood exile when he became the target of McCarthy's cultural watchdogs. One year prior to the HUAC trials in 1947, which led to his deportation in 1948, Eisler was offered a full professorship in composition at the University of Southern California (he was slated to succeed Ernst Toch) and he had just begun a collaboration with Charlie Chaplin on the film *Monsieur Verdoux*. His film music had garnered two Academy award nominations, the first in 1941 for "Hangmen Also Die," the second in 1944 for "None but the Lonely Heart"; meanwhile, he maintained close friendships with fellow exiles Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann, and his former mentor, Arnold Schoenberg.

Unbeknownst to Eisler, his good fortune would soon be fouled by McCarthy's cultural police. Beginning in the early 1940s, the Federal Bureau of Investigations compiled extensive dossiers devoted to both Hanns and Gerhart Eisler's activities; by the time he was brought before HUAC in 1947, Hanns' file had grown to more than seven hundred pages. While there is evidence that Gerhart worked as a Comintern agent to the American Communist Party during the 1930s, by 1941 he supported his family solely as a journalist in New York. The FBI's interest in Hanns was spurred by their investigations of his brother, and investigators worked hard to connect the dots between both Eislers, Moscow, and Hollywood.

During his last two years in the United States Hanns was followed by government agents, had his personal conversations electronically monitored, and had his mail secretly confiscated and read. The investigation yielded little; despite Richard Nixon's assertion that Eisler's case was perhaps, ". . . the most important ever to have come before the Committee," the FBI could not prove that the composer intentionally infused his film scores with 'subversive' communist content or that he attempted to enlist prominent Hollywood actors and actresses in the workers' revolutionary movement.⁷¹ Nonetheless, Eisler was called before HUAC on two separate occasions to defend his political ideas, first on May 12, 1947, and again on October 14. In both hearings he expressed outrage over the way his case had been reported in the American press, referring to the committee's actions as "sinister" and "ridiculous," designed to intimidate artists throughout the country to "conform to [its] political ideas."⁷²

HUAC members repeatedly questioned Eisler's alleged communist party membership throughout their proceedings. His response has been frequently analyzed: he denied membership in either German or American Communist parties, though when pressed admitted that he had applied for membership to the KPD in Berlin in 1926. He asserted party affiliation was incompatible with his artistic aims – as a result, he simply did not pay dues and was therefore not enrolled in the KPD. Some view this as outright evasion; Eisler was clearly a communist in spirit. He was also, however, an independent, critical thinker. Publicly establishing Eisler's communist party membership would have been a HUAC coup, for in the U.S., American communists were notoriously disciplined adherents to the party line. The message was that communist sympathizers who were not formal party members had greater personal and political autonomy; their dues-paying counterparts, meanwhile, were under the direct control of the Kremlin. Eisler's ambivalent testimony, as well as his invocation of the Fifth Amendment, made him appear evasive and cagey, and the American press latched onto his new moniker, "The Karl Marx of Music."⁷³

⁷¹ Richard Nixon quoted in Georg Knepler, ". . . was des Eislers ist," *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* (Berlin-DDR), XV/I, 1973, 29.

⁷² <http://www.eislermusic.com/huac/htm>, May 15, 2001.

⁷³ Credit for this phrase belongs to Robert Stripling, a witness for HUAC prosecutors, who asserted that "Mr. Eisler is the Karl Marx of communism in the musical field and he is well aware of it." Eisler's droll retort: "I would be flattered." *Ibid*, 10 November, 2002. For a discussion of the perception of American

The press played a significant role in HUAC's power and scope. The day before Eisler's first hearing, a New York newspaper quoted an unnamed source who identified the composer as a high communist party functionary, one who controlled the Kremlin's access to American media. His Hollywood work was portrayed as a "front" that masked his true vocation: he was a spy sent to destroy American democracy.⁷⁴ Indeed, the nation's newspapers, radio, and television stations fed greedily on HUAC proceedings. They were reported widely in the press, vilifying the accused and contributing to an alarmist atmosphere in the country. The subsequent public frenzy united the citizenry against communism; figures such as Eisler gave this nameless, amorphous enemy a recognizable face. Eisler and those blacklisted throughout the 1940s and 1950s were convenient political scapegoats whose prosecution eased growing national anxiety over a powerful Soviet Union. As Lionel Lewis notes, ". . . it seemed easier to hunt for so-called 'crypto-communists' or fellow travelers than to confront communism in the international arena."⁷⁵

Eisler inspired devotion in his friends. Prominent artists such as Aaron Copland, Henri Matisse, Charlie Chaplin, Thomas Mann, Leonard Bernstein, Peter Lorre, and Pablo Picasso petitioned the U.S. government to suspend deportation proceedings and drop the (empty) case against the composer, but to no avail – Eisler boarded a plane for London on March 27, 1948, never to return to the United States. Upon his expulsion from the country, Eisler issued the following statement:

I leave this country not without bitterness and infuriation. I could well understand it when in 1933 the Hitler bandits put a price on my head and drove me out. They were the evil of the period; I was proud of being driven out. But I feel heartbroken over being driven out of this beautiful country in this ridiculous way. What am I accused of? Of participating in the fight of the American people for the honest and lost causes? Unfortunately not. I am not accused of having fought against reaction and fascism in this country. I have not fought against those who want to

communists during the 1930s and 1940s, see Schrecker, ch. 1. Invocation of the Fifth Amendment often was interpreted publicly as an admission of wrong-doing. For administrator Livingston Houston, "invocation of the Fifth Amendment places upon a professor a heavy burden of proof of his fitness to hold a teaching position and lays upon his university an obligation to re-examine his qualifications for membership in its society." Lionel Lewis, 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 28 September 2003.

⁷⁵ Lewis, 8.

involve the world in a new war. I have not fought against the shamelessness and corruption and commercialism of a certain press and magazines which create a paper curtain separating the American people from political and economic realities . . . I have not fought against racial discrimination oppressing my colored brothers . . . I have not fought against anti-Semitism. No, I am not accused of being a fighter. My trouble started when I was subpoenaed [by] the House Committee on Un-American activities . . . As an old anti-fascist it became plain to me that these men represent fascism in its most direct form . . . I was against them. There is a limit to the patience of an artist . . . I had to stand up to these men, regardless of consequences. A composer knows that music is written by human beings for human beings, that music is a continuation of life, not something separated from it. I had to defend music. Now I am forced to leave. But I take with me the image of the real American people whom I love.⁷⁶

The Academic Legacy of McCarthyism

The U.S. Freedom of Information Act (1967; amended in 1975, 1996) allowed researchers unprecedented access to FBI files and archival materials compiled during the McCarthy era. As a result, researchers are now able to closely examine that generation's apparent mass departure from reason and to glean meaningful insights into the post-World War II Red Scare. For Ellen Schrecker, McCarthy-era politics were less an example of fascist 'thuggery' than an adroit attempt of a capitalist government to eliminate communists from influential public positions. She posits that McCarthyism was " . . . the result of a concerted campaign by a loosely structured, but surprisingly self-conscious, network of political activists who had been working for years to drive Communism out of American life. With the onset of the Cold War, these professional anti-Communists were able to sell their program to the nation's governing elites, who then put it into practice."⁷⁷ In other words, U.S. communist oppression was not initiated by public opinion, but emerged as a carefully-crafted, top-down political agenda that used the press to unite the public against leftist political activism, however innocuous.

⁷⁶ <http://www.eislermusic.com/huac/htm>, accessed 15 May 2001.

⁷⁷ Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), xiii.

That academics would be so vigorously pursued by anti-communist officials suggests that they occupied a distinctive role in U.S. life. As both an academic and a composer, Eisler and his contemporaries were subject to deeply held American suspicions about intellectual pursuits. Government officials capitalized on public perception of academic complexity pragmatically: they labeled as “communist” all those who were in a position to criticize their policies. McCarthyism suggested that university professors had the potential to encourage “dangerous” thinking in their students; they had, therefore, the potential to be enemies of American democracy.

That university administrators did little to fight the onslaught of government intervention on their campuses suggests that a major ideological shift occurred in the country between Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal reforms and the Cold War. Prior to the 1930s, groups such as the American Association of University Professors struggled to protect academic freedoms in U.S. schools. Ten years later their voices were silenced by the roaring din of labor leaders, businessmen, and administrators who sought to “out” the communists hiding in their ranks. By 1949, the Soviets had demonstrated nuclear capability, reports of Stalinist atrocities were rampant in the U.S. press, and the federal government’s public anti-communist campaign was in full flower. National security emerged as the overriding concern, and assumptions “. . . about the critical nature of the world situation and the alien nature of communism, enabled most Americans to view the repressive measures taken against alleged Communists as necessary for the survival of the United States.”⁷⁸

In comparison to those of mid-twentieth century America, contemporary U.S. universities may appear tolerant of alternative viewpoints; the Communist tiger has been de-fanged, and Marx and Lenin are no longer the primary targets of political opportunists. But appearances can deceive – the Cold War may have instead encouraged academics to construct “politically correct” disciplines that operate under the guise of liberalism but do little to widen the scope of academic discourse. Moreover, academic freedom is subject more than ever before to the will of the state; major research institutions such as the University of California Los Angeles, Harvard University, and the University of Michigan, all of whom support significant musicology

⁷⁸ Ibid, xiv.

departments, receive significant government subsidies each year.⁷⁹ This dependence on government funds places academics in a precarious position: they may wish to criticize government domestic policy and censorship, but they are ultimately dominated by the standards of a governing entity that supports their research.

The way humans respond to the present depends wholly on their understanding of what has gone before; history is the ground on which we erect our social selves. We use history in academia as a kind of generative ritual, one that tells us who we are and from whence we've come; we sustain traditions, musical practices, and musicians who validate our conception of what is historically true. Musical events that do not support our understanding of cultural "truth," such as concerts staged by American composers to protest Eisler's deportation in 1948, run the risk of complete omission from our history. The resulting history is sanitized; it is also inaccurate.⁸⁰

Joy Calico's assertion that Eisler has been ignored by American musicology because of his multi-faceted compositional character may be partially correct, but that assessment says as much about our nature as it does his. Furthermore, other musical "polyglots" such as Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, Dmitri Shostakovich and Aaron Copland have received ample attention from American musicologists. Calico assumes that Eisler's omission from American music history is intentional: in her estimation, he defies definition and therefore does not receive one. An alternative argument, however, is that he does not receive attention because he was virtually erased by McCarthyist political censorship. McCarthyism narrowed the range of topics available for scholarly attention during the very time that musicology expanded significantly in American universities. Thirteen years removed from the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the anti-Communist backlash of the post-War period continues to shape

⁷⁹ These three universities have remained among the top ten recipients of U.S. federal research and development funds for nearly twenty years. While the federal government contributes about fifteen percent of general academic revenues, those schools in the top ten receive a disproportionate amount of government dollars. These research funds are, however, only a part of institutional dependence on federal support; student grant and loan programs, fellowships, work-study programs, and other non-research programs also receive government subsidies. For additional information, see R.C. Lewontin, "The Cold War and the Transformation of the Academy" in *The Cold War and the University: Toward and Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, Andre Schiffrin, ed. (New York: The New Press, 1997).

⁸⁰ Historian John Dower has noted this cultural "white-washing," and observes: "We accuse the Japanese of sanitizing their history, but we're doing the same thing. Anyone who's critical is called an America-hater. Is that what America stands for – unquestioning, blind, patriotic nationalism?" As quoted by Howard Zinn in "The Cold War and the Transformation of the Academy," *ibid*, 72.

our understanding of historical truth. Perhaps only now that Communism is no longer viewed as a viable threat to national security will Eisler's dissenting voice be heard in America's music schools.

CONCLUSION

The first line of Eberhardt Klemm's biography of Eisler reads: "We honor Hanns Eisler as the most significant German composer of the working class." For anyone interested in his music, this assertion offers a powerful summary of the composer's life. Eisler did not seek the "cultural birthright" of prestige he inherited as one of Schoenberg's favored pupils. He did not pursue fame, nor did he attempt to chart a new aesthetic course for concert music. Instead, he devoted his compositional talents to the world's working classes, hoping to broadcast their interests through his songs and inspire their unity through his agitpropaganda work.

Eisler was not, however, a composer with a single-minded devotion to communism. During Eisler's life, communism took on many different forms, and the Marxist communism that shaped his youth bore little resemblance either to Stalinism or to the communist government in East Germany. His writings reflect a mind captured by the *potential* of working-class unity rather than by organizational doctrine; indeed, he carefully criticized East German communism until his death, believing always in the social benefit of dialectical thought. To categorize him simply as a "communist composer" diminishes his independent intellect and the varied, complex compositional devices of which he was master.

Within the United States, however, Eisler *was* summarily painted into just such a corner with broad, red brushstrokes; this gave him little room to maneuver into American artistic life. His fate in U.S. music history was bound to the House Un-American Activities Committee scandal, which sought the complete eradication of leftist thought in America. McCarthyism shaped public and academic discourse for decades, evidenced in part by the paucity of Eisler research by U.S. scholars and also by the scarcity of Eisler compositions in U.S. libraries and archives. As one of the most productive and critically acclaimed composers of the twentieth century, Eisler's absence in American musicology challenges the notion that important musical works will, by their artistic merit, escape obscurity. As Don Michael Randel notes, "[Musicologists] *systematically* undervalue certain periods, composers, and works and privilege others

because of the very nature of the conceptual and narrative tools [they] apply.”⁸¹ The Red Scare placed Eisler outside the field of inquiry; only now, in the wake of the Cold War and the discovery of new political enemies is he garnering attention in American academia.

Performers play an equally important role in shaping the musicological canon. Matthias Goerne’s recent recording of the *Hollywood Songbook* has widely publicized Eisler’s exile compositions, as have re-releases of Ernst Busch’s landmark recordings of his political songs. The “Kampflieder” detailed in this treatise offer singers artistically rich songs that fall outside the realm of standard recital repertoire. True to the composer’s vision of flexible, useful music, they can be performed with a variety of instrumental ensembles or with piano. Moreover, they present an opportunity to explore extended vocal techniques, such as fluid, cabaret-style movement between spoken and sung passages. Because they are not part of large-scale works, the songs can be easily grouped according to singers’ programming needs.

In order to understand Hanns Eisler’s compositions and artistic development, one must understand the socially and politically turbulent times in which he lived. Eisler hoped his music would provide a unifying voice for disenfranchised people in all countries; given the virulent reactions of political administrations who sought to suppress his music, he must have been at least partially successful. In the end, Eisler’s music represents the idea that art can empower people, improve their lives, and challenge them to shape their own futures. His devotion to socially viable, *valuable* compositions reminds us that, “. . . wherever men and women try to create alternatives to the conditions under which we are living today . . . they will find in the work of Hanns Eisler a wealth of ideas and stimuli for the ways which . . . a musician, poet, historian, and theorist can impinge on world events.”⁸² Eisler believed in making music relevant to everyday human experience; he was also committed to writing music that challenged those experiences. As new generations discover his music, he becomes more

⁸¹ Don Michael Randel, “The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox,” in *Disciplining Music*, edited by Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 20.

⁸² Georg Knepler in “Hanns Eisler and ‘Interventive Thought’” published in *The Journal for Musicological Research* Vol. 17, 259. Translated by J. Bradford Robinson.

than a talented composer or musical rebel. Eisler was a liberator, and with him survives the idea that music can teach, challenge, and enlighten.

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