

Aleksandra Maria Steczkowska

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*

**THE KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI  
ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN CRACOW**

**Aleksandra Maria Steczkowska**

**The Poetics and Musical Language of Erich Wolfgang Korngold in His  
Works for Violin and Piano: A Study of Expression and Nostalgia in  
Instrumental Dialogue**

**Description of the doctoral art dissertation within the proceedings for the  
conferment of a doctoral degree in arts, in the artistic domain: musical arts**

**Supervisor: prof. dr hab. Piotr Tarcholik**

**Kraków 2025**

**Artistic creative component recorded as part of doctoral  
dissertation:**

**Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)**

*Serenade from the ballet Der Schneemann*

*Caprice fantastique “Wichtelmännchen”*

*Sonata in G major, Op. 6:*

I *Ben moderato, ma con passione*

II *Scherzo. Allegro molto (con fuoco)*

III *Adagio. Mit tiefer Empfindung*

IV *Finale. Allegretto quasi Andante (con grazia)*

*Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares “Viel Lärmen um nichts”, Op. 11:*

I *Mädchen in Brautgemach*

II *Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache)*

III *Gartenscene*

IV *Mummenschanz (Hornpipe)*

*Mariettas Lied zur Laute from the opera Die tote Stadt, Op.12*

*Tanzlied des Pierrot from the opera Die tote Stadt, Op.12*

*Gesang der Heliane from the opera Das Wunder der Heliane, Op.12*

**Aleksandra Maria Steczkowska – violin**

**Michał Roemer – piano**

**Wojciech Marzec – sound production**

The recording was made in the concert hall of the Mieczysław Karłowicz State Music School

Complex in Kraków – Nowa Huta,

on 5–6 July and 23–24 November 2024



# Table of contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction   | 8   |
| Chapter I - Korngold and his era: sources of creative identity   | 12  |
| Biography  | 14  |
| Socio-cultural context   | 24  |
| General characteristics of the composer's work   | 28  |
| Reconstructing Korngold's aesthetic views  | 30  |
| Chapter II - Pieces for violin and piano: context, analysis, interpretation, performance perspective                     | 33  |
| <i>Der Schneemann</i> - revelation of the miracle child  | 36  |
| <i>Serenade</i> from the ballet <i>Der Schneemann</i>  | 41  |
| <i>Sieben Märchenbilder</i> , Op. 3 - Fairytale beginnings of a musical language   | 45  |
| <i>Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"</i>   | 48  |
| <i>Sonata in G major</i> , Op. 6 - a tribute to tradition and virtuosity   | 54  |
| I <i>Ben moderato, ma con passione</i>   | 63  |
| II <i>Scherzo. Allegro molto (con fuoco)</i>   | 66  |
| III <i>Adagio. Mit tiefer Empfindung</i>   | 76  |
| IV <i>Finale. Allegretto quasi andante (con grazia)</i>  | 74  |
| <i>Viel Lärmen um nichts</i> , Op. 11 ( <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> ) - a composition that captivated the world        | 79  |
| <i>Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"</i> , Op. 11 (suite <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> ) | 83  |
| I <i>Mädchen im Brautgemach</i>  | 84  |
| II <i>Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache)</i>  | 86  |
| III <i>Gartenscene</i>   | 89  |
| IV <i>Mummenschanz: Hornpipe</i>   | 93  |
| <i>Die tote Stadt</i> , op.12 - Korngold's living legend   | 95  |
| <i>Mariettas Lied zur Laute</i>  | 100 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>Tanzlied des Pierrot</i>   | 105 |
| <i>Das Wunder der Heliane</i> op.20 - an artistic testament of its creator        | 112 |
| <i>Gesang der Heliane</i>   | 122 |
| Chapter III - Korngold's poetics and musical language: works for violin and piano | 126 |
| Melody  | 126 |
| Rhythmics   | 126 |
| Tempo   | 127 |
| Harmony   | 128 |
| Articulation  | 129 |
| Dynamics  | 130 |
| Colours   | 130 |
| Texture   | 131 |
| Musical forms   | 131 |
| Performance markings  | 131 |
| Expression  | 132 |
| Nostalgia   | 137 |
| Dramaturgy  | 140 |
| Virtuosity  | 141 |
| Sound idiom   | 142 |
| Summary   | 144 |
| Conclusion  | 146 |
| Bibliography. List of materials used  | 148 |
| Appendix. Translations of German source texts used in the works                   | 156 |

## Introduction

Musical literature for violin and piano is one of the richest and most diverse areas of instrumental creativity, and the period of its particularly luxuriant flowering is inextricably linked to the 19th-century custom of home music-making and the popularisation of recitals. In this process, both virtuoso artists and affluent bourgeoisie played a significant role, acting as conscious patrons of culture for whom the salon was not only a social space but also a place for vibrant engagement with music. Among the hundreds of sonatas, miniatures and transcriptions, composed both for domestic gatherings and for the concert stage, one can see the development of an intimate, personal dialogue between two equal instruments - a dialogue that was able to combine virtuosity with expressive depth and poetic subtlety. A special place for this development was Vienna at the turn of the 20th century - a city where music still carried the weight of the classical-romantic tradition and at the same time became a space for modern experimentation. It was in this reality that Erich Wolfgang Korngold worked, and his compositions for violin and piano, written between 1910 and 1927, reveal a unique musical language, steeped in *fin-de-siècle* emotionality and imbued with an astonishing nostalgia. The works showcase both refined compositional craftsmanship and stylistic diversity, ranging from classical forms to expressive miniatures, but despite making an original and valuable contribution to the violin literature of the 20th century, they have not yet received their due place in the concert repertoire. The present study attempts to read these works from the perspective of a violinist - an artist and researcher for whom not only formal structures but also poetics, performance idiom and the expressive potential of this music are important.

The aim of my work is to analyse and interpret all of Korngold's compositions for violin and piano in terms of poetics, musical language and expressive layer, and to present an artistic performance concept that combines historical and contemporary interpretative practice.

Korngold's output for violin and piano remains a relatively under-researched area. Existing studies primarily focus on operatic and film activities, largely overlooking his chamber music. While in recent years a few small-scale analyses of *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6 have emerged, the remaining works have not yet been explored by scholars. There are two monographs on the composer in English-language literature, but they do not offer a detailed analysis of the violin works. Some material is only available in German and remains untranslated to this day. No major publication on Korngold has been produced in Polish literature. The discography also remains limited, as only three albums presenting the complete

set of works for violin and piano have been published to date. More than sixty years after the composer's death, his legacy continues to be primarily associated with film music, which significantly overshadows the importance of his earlier output, rooted in the late-romantic tradition and distinguished by its expressive richness and nostalgic hue. Given the fragmentary nature of existing studies and the limited presence of this music in performance practice, the need for in-depth research and its artistic realisation appears fully justified.

The work is set in a research paradigm characteristic of the art of musical interpretation, combining theoretical reflection with performance practice. It is based on Mieczyslaw Tomaszewski's method of integral interpretation of a musical work, complemented by elementary analysis, inference and abstraction. The research is monographic in nature and focuses on Korngold's entire oeuvre for violin and piano, addressing selected performance and interpretative issues. The description of the expressive layer of the compositions in question takes into account the use of metaphor, in line with Roger Scruton's notion that

music is an intentional object of experience, accessible only to rational beings through the exercise of imagination. Metaphor cannot be eliminated from the description of music, as it defines the intentional object of musical experience.<sup>1</sup>

The thesis consists of two components: an artistic work with the author's performance of all the works studied (the practical part) and a description of the work in the form of this thesis (the theoretical part).

The practical part consists of the following items:

- *Serenade* from the ballet *Der Schneemann*,
- *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'* (from the cycle *Märchenbilder*, Op. 3),
- *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6,
- *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares 'Viel Lärmen um nichts'*, Op. 11 (suite *Much Ado About Nothing*),
- *Mariettas Lied zur Laute* from the opera *Die tote Stadt* op.12,
- *Tanzlied des Pierrot* from the opera *Die tote Stadt*, Op.12,
- *Gesang der Heliane* from the opera *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20.

The first chapter of the written component provides the theoretical foundation of the work and outlines the context necessary for the analysis of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's works

---

<sup>1</sup> Roger Scruton, *Aesthetics of Music*, transl. Zbigniew Skowron, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Kraków 2024, p. 7.

for violin and piano, in line with the concept of integral interpretation. It provides a biographical sketch of the composer, focusing on aspects of his life and work that are directly related to the artistic work. It presents selected issues of the socio-cultural background of turn-of-the-century Vienna, helpful in better understanding Korngold's artistic identity. Subsequent subsections include a general characterisation of the creative output, detailing the genres and forms undertaken, and a reconstruction of the composer's aesthetic views, based on his statements and reflections. This chapter prepares the ground for further analysis, setting Korngold's oeuvre in the broad cultural and aesthetic context necessary for a nuanced interpretation and understanding of the selected works.

The second chapter presents all existing compositions for violin and piano by Korngold. It begins with a brief introduction, demonstrating the uniqueness of the composer's talent compared to other 'child prodigies' known to music history and highlighting the importance of the works discussed in the development of his career. The description covers seven works of varying sizes, completed between 1910 and 1927, belonging to different musical genres. Apart from *the Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, representing chamber music of purely instrumental provenance, the other five items are Korngold's original transcriptions of his own stage works and opera arias. The collection is completed by a superb arrangement of virtuoso piano miniatures by violinist Rózika von Révay. The works form the subject of an artistic work that is characterised by expressive coherence and which, as a testimony to the late Romantic aesthetics of abundance, contributes to the image of Viennese culture in the first half of the 20th century. The description takes a closer look at the works, placing particular emphasis on their genesis and sources of inspiration in the context of the composer's life. It also includes a concise account of the premiere histories and proposes key interpretative insights, as deemed significant by the author. The characterisation of the compositions is enriched by insights and selected performance tips, illustrated by musical examples. Concise analyses of the most essential musical elements aim to deepen the understanding of the works, which fosters more informed, intentional performance choices, positively influencing the overall reception of the works.

The third chapter presents Korngold's idiom of musical poetics, created on the basis of distinctive features discerned in works for violin and piano. It includes a discussion of the elements of the musical work, the forms chosen and the virtuosic aspects, and describes issues of expression, nostalgia and drama in the works. It also addresses the issue of sound as a key element of interpretation, commenting on the author's concept of sound used in the recording. This concept is grounded in the idea of historically informed performance, enriched by the

knowledge of selected recordings from the first decades of the 20th century, integrated with the author's personal violin aesthetic and reflection on the specificity of the analysed compositions. It is not, therefore, a historical or aesthetic reconstruction of sound but rather its exploration, iconscious yet full of creative freedom. The resulting sound idiom, inspired by Korngold's language, is an attempt to give an artistic answer to the question of a contemporary performance approach to his music: one that harmonises with its style, expression and dramatic intensity.

The dissertation concludes with a list of referenced publications and other materials, as well as an appendix containing translations of German texts on which the works for violin and piano are based.

It is hoped that this dissertation will serve a dual purpose: as a substantive resource for artists interested in Korngold's oeuvre and as a contribution to the popularisation and encouragement of discovering this beautiful music for all interested individuals.

## Chapter I - Korngold and his era: sources of creative identity

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) is a composer primarily associated with film music, not only among the general public, but often also in professional music circles. Although nearly seventy years have passed since his death, his life and work do not command the widespread familiarity they deserve, especially in light of the esteem in which he was held in his youth and the success of his works - expressive, striking, with a high degree of sophistication and technical excellence.

The story of Korngold's career is divided into two seemingly separate sections, which could represent the lives of two very different artists. The first is the classical oeuvre<sup>2</sup>, intended for performance in philharmonic halls and opera houses. The second is the film oeuvre, comprising twenty-two film scores (including two arrangements of works by Mendelssohn and Wagner). Korngold's work began in the first decades of the 20th century and had its centre in Vienna, where the post-Romantic (neo-Romantic) idiom prevailed in music at the time and Art Nouveau was flourishing in art. The artists aimed for a synthesis of the arts; the resulting works were characterised by opulence, splendour, decadent sensuality and abundant use of ornamentation. The art was aimed at an upper-class audience and had a certain elitist resonance. Korngold's second activity took place during and after the Second World War, in the United States (where social position was not inherited as in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but was governed by the ethos of the 'American Dream'), during the so-called Golden Era of Hollywood. During this era, cinema triumphed as the most popular form of mass media: egalitarian, universally adored and shaping the everyday lives of thousands. These two, fundamentally different creative realities are united by the figure and aesthetic stance of Erich Wolfgang Korngold. The story of his life is a fascinating one, which could easily serve as a film script. It outlines four main stages.

The 'child prodigy' stage - is the time of the discovery of Korngold's genius and talent, his childhood and early teenage years showered with the splendour of exceptionality. During this period, closely supervised by his father and filled with numerous journeys and creative output, Korngold showed his incredible performance skills (as a pianist) and his astonishing compositional maturity at this age to an increasingly wider world. The culmination of this stage can be seen in the premiere of the ballet *Der Schneemann* at the Vienna State Opera in 1910. Immediately following this is the stage of 'bloom and triumph' - the peak period of creativity in

---

<sup>2</sup> In terms of symphonic, opera and chamber music, piano works and songs.

the field of classical music, framed by the composer's operatic works. It began with the premieres of *Der Ring des Polykrates*, Op. 7 and *Violanta*, Op. 8 in 1916, reached its zenith with the opera *Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12 in 1920, and was symbolically crowned by his masterpiece, a synthesis of his style, *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20, in 1927.

The third stage can be called a 'time of necessity'. In the 1930s, Korngold's life was disrupted by rising anti-Semitic sentiment, the economic crisis, the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938, repression by the Nazis and then the outbreak of the Second World War. Driven by the need to provide for his family<sup>3</sup> Korngold took on commissions to arrange operettas, primarily by Johann Strauss II. His exceptional arrangements led to a revival of Strauss's works, significant in music history, and an offer to collaborate on a film adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with director Max Reinhardt. This opportunity profoundly shaped Korngold's and his family's future, opening an entirely new world. The realisation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* took place in the United States under Warner Brothers, who, impressed by Korngold, established a long-term collaboration with him on highly exclusive terms. Thus began his career in a new medium as a film music composer, becoming one of the pioneers of the orchestral sound characteristic of Hollywood's Golden Age, influencing composers such as John Williams and Hans Zimmer.

The final creative period is the "emigration" stage. In 1938, while working in California on the music for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the annexation of Austria by the Nazis prevented Korngold's return. For the remaining nearly twenty years of his life, he stayed in America with his family (with brief visits to Vienna five years after World War II), becoming a U.S. citizen in 1943. During this time, he composed several classical concert works alongside numerous film scores.

After Korngold's death in 1957, his work fell into oblivion for several decades. A revival of interest in the works began in the last quarter of the 20th century. His compositions returned to concert repertoires, recordings were produced, and in the 1990s, two monographs on his life were published.<sup>4</sup> Available publications are primarily in English and German, but their number is limited, and their scope incomplete. Polish-language literature on the subject is virtually

---

<sup>3</sup> Marriage to Luzi von Sonnenthal in 1924 and the birth of two sons, Ernst Werner in 1928 and George in 1929.

<sup>4</sup> They are: *The Last Prodigy. A biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, by Brendan G. Carroll and *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, by Jessica Duchon. Both monographs were written in English and have not been translated into Polish. See Bibliography. List of materials used.

nonexistent.<sup>5</sup> Due to the limited access to sources and their relative scarcity, an expanded biography of the composer is included here, which should prove useful to readers.

## Biography

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was born on 29 May 1897 in Brno, in Moravia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1901 the whole family moved permanently to Vienna<sup>6</sup>. Erich's father, Julius Korngold, had a degree in law and was professionally involved in music criticism, writing columns for the famous Viennese newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*. He completed his legal studies to satisfy his family's ambitions (Jewish bourgeois families placed a strong emphasis on education and training), but his passion for music led him to attend lectures at the Vienna Conservatory alongside his legal work. During this period, he was entrusted with the role of concert reviewer, which launched his career as a music critic<sup>7</sup>. Erich's mother Josephine (née Witrowsky) aligned her life with her husband's, as was customary, becoming an exemplary hostess, running an open salon, and supporting Julius's professional endeavours. She was known to play the piano proficiently, sing amateurishly, and adore opera, attending performances regularly for nearly fifty years<sup>8</sup>. She was particularly noted for her sharp wit and intelligent humour, a milder form of which she passed on to her son.

Korngold showed above-average musical aptitude from an early age. At the age of five, he could reproduce by ear themes from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and other operas and works he had heard performed at home by his father on the piano<sup>9</sup>. He recognised and proficiently built up major chords (including overtones) in all keys of the circle of fifths by memory. He often sat down at the piano and improvised freely, creating astonishing chord progressions. By the time he was six, he was regularly composing his own pieces, so his father sent him for piano and

---

<sup>5</sup> The literature on the subject in Polish is represented to a limited extent. Apart from a few articles, these are mainly opera reviews and fragmentary descriptions, concerning film music, included in larger publications on the subject.

<sup>6</sup> The first child in the family was Hanns Robert, who was five years older than Erich (his middle name was given in honour of Robert Schumann, as was his brother's, in honour of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) and who, since the discovery of Erich's genius, has always lived in Erich's shadow, being overlooked and even ignored by his parents. Hanns Robert grew up to be the black sheep of the family, gambling and getting into numerous financial difficulties, which his younger brother regularly pulled him out of. Interestingly, Hanns always sincerely admired Erich Wolfgang, attending every premiere of his works. See Brendan G. Carroll, *The last prodigy: a biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, Amadeus Press, Portland, Oregon 1997, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> As part of a press polemic, Julius presented an impassioned defence of Johannes Brahms's *Fourth Symphony* in response to an article criticising and insulting it. Eduard Hanslick and Brahms himself liked the text, which resulted in the initiation of Julius' acquaintance with both men. Hanslick took a liking to the passionate young lawyer (he had also studied law in Prague in his youth) and saw him as a promising critic. He supported his career by making an offer to employ him on the editorial staff of the *Neue Freie Presse*, where he himself was the undisputed leader of musical opinion. After Hanslick's death in 1904, Julius took over the position and esteem of the leading music critic in the German-language press for many years. *Ibid*, pp. 24-27.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

theory lessons to his relative, Emil Lamm<sup>10</sup>, who was amazed at how much progress Korngold was making from lesson to lesson, not only realising the notes, but developing exuberantly in directions that had not yet even been suggested to him. At the age of seven, he would not part with his notebooks, in which he jotted down musical ideas and small pieces (mainly waltzes)<sup>11</sup>. He was diagnosed with absolute pitch. Although he never took piano lessons with any of Vienna's renowned concert pianists or received formal training in this regard, by age eleven, he had developed impressive pianistic skills and a unique technical style. He also possessed an extraordinary musical memory, able to reproduce any heard piece, recall those he had performed, and fluently play any of his compositions on the piano, regardless of their instrumentation<sup>12</sup>.

At the age of nine, Korngold composed the cantata *Das Gold* ('Gold'), to a text by his school friend<sup>13</sup>. Julius, no longer able to dismiss his son's abilities as childish play, sent him for harmony and counterpoint lessons with Robert Fuchs. Representing the 'old school', the conservative composer, initially sceptical, was soon convinced of Korngold's genius, but his rigid beliefs in musical language meant that the nearly two-year collaboration was not very harmonious and did not offer promising prospects. Julius Korngold therefore turned to his greatest authority, Gustav Mahler, for a suitable teacher. The latter, having heard the boy playing his own cantata

„[...] he began to pace hastily to and from in the curious limping rhythm peculiar to him when he was excited. He kept exclaiming “A genius! A genius!” in ever more strident tones. [...] "Send the boy to Zemlinsky." [...] “No conservatory! No drill! He will learn everything he needs to know from Zemlinsky during the free give and take of creative instruction.”<sup>14</sup>

The collaboration with Alexander von Zemlinsky was indeed an excellent decision. It lasted nearly three years, until his departure for Prague in 1910. Zemlinsky supported the development of the boy's talent, not limiting his imagination, encouraging him to constantly ask questions in his search for musical meaning and to better define his own creative path. Korngold himself said he owed Zemlinsky everything he knew about modern voice-leading and harmony, including the technique of “suspension resolution,” logical harmonic progressions, and constructing distant modulations<sup>15</sup>. After the end of his regular collaboration with Zemlinsky, Korngold occasionally consulted Vienna Conservatory faculty<sup>16</sup>, which he stopped completely

---

<sup>10</sup> Jessica Duchon, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, Phaidon Press Limited, London 1996, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> The manuscript was destroyed by the Nazis during the confiscation of Korngold's house and possessions in 1938.

<sup>14</sup> Julius Korngold, *Die Korngolds in Wien*, Edition Musik & Theater, Zürich/St. Gallen 1991. quoted by B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> Most notably with Hermann Grädener, on the composition of vocal music, especially choral works.

before the age of sixteen. A childhood prodigy was seamlessly transformed into a youth full of musical success, replete with compositional triumphs and, from time to time, excellent recitals and performances as a pianist. Despite his very young age, Korngold became a respected figure in European artistic circles.

The first major success of his youthful days was the staging of the ballet *Der Schneemann* at the Vienna State Opera in 1910, when the composer was only twelve years old. Orchestrated by Zemlinsky, the work was met with enthusiastic acclaim, establishing Korngold in international consciousness. The enormity of the praise fuelled the predilection in the composer's heart for stage music. Between 1911 and 1913, he wrote two symphonic works (*Schauspiel Ouverture*, Op. 4 and *Sinfonietta in B flat major*, Op. 5), *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6 for violin and piano, and a cycle of six songs (*Einfache Lieder*), published only in 1916 as Op. 9. In parallel, Korngold was tackling the queen of the stage music genre - opera. His first compositions were modestly scaled, taking the form of two one-act operas of the *buffa* type (*Des Ring der Polykrates*, Op. 7) and *seria* (*Violanta*, Op. 8). Their excellent premiere on 28 March 1916 in Munich, conducted by Bruno Walter, solidified his operatic path.

The First World War period was not a particularly productive time for Korngold. Although he avoided active military service, he was appointed musical director of an infantry regiment. Due to the compositional duties associated with this position and the overbearing atmosphere of wartime hardship and tragedy, Korngold ceased work on a new three-act opera, deeming it too ambitious. Instead, commissioned by the management of a Viennese theatre, he composed excellent music for Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*<sup>17</sup>, to accompany the performances.

A turning point in Korngold's career was the composition of the opera *Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12<sup>18</sup>, whose double premiere (in Hamburg and Cologne) in 1920 brought him international recognition. *Die tote Stadt* represents an absolute triumph for the composer, was staged all over the world and remains his most recognisable operatic work to this day. Following this success, Korngold became one of the most important composers of his era. The years 1920-1927 were a period of intensive work for him as a composer and conductor, and a time when he consolidated his position in the European musical world. He continued to create instrumental, operatic and vocal works. At this time, he wrote several song cycles for voice with piano or orchestral accompaniment (*Vier Lieder des Abschieds*, Op. 14, *Drei Gesänge* Op. 18), a three-movement

---

<sup>17</sup> See *Viel Lärmen um nichts*, Op. 11 - the composition that enchanted the world, [in:] chap. II.

<sup>18</sup> See *Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12 - Korngold's living legend, [in:] chap. II.

*Piano Quintet in E major* Op. 15, a *String Quartet* op. 16 and an interesting and very demanding for the soloist *Piano Concerto in C sharp major (for the left hand)*, Op. 17, commissioned by the pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm in World War I<sup>19</sup>.

The 1920s were also significant for Korngold's personal life, as he married his beloved Luzi von Sonnenthal in 1924. This marriage was strongly opposed by both Luzi's family and Korngold's father, who considered Erich's chosen one not good enough for him<sup>20</sup> and feared that the relationship would distract him from composing. Julius had a very strong personality and his relationship with his son was quite complicated. As an influential music critic, he wanted to direct his offspring's career, often imposing his will and restricting his artistic and moral freedom. Erich had a gentle, compliant character, so he always tried to please his father, often sacrificing his own desires. Marriage to Luzi was the only issue in his life where he went completely against his parent's wishes. This resulted in a cooling (initially even a rupture) of their relationship and a lot of harassment from Julius, aimed at his son's chosen one. Luzi bore it with admirable cheerfulness, for she was a highly intelligent, witty and empathetic person. She was trained as a musician and actress, sang, played the piano, drew (her caricatures were particularly popular), and read countless books<sup>21</sup>. She was a lifelong supporter of her husband, and because Korngold counted enormously on her opinion and valued her comments, she advised him on professional matters, sometimes even acting as his impresario. Korngold called Luzi his best friend<sup>22</sup> and their happy, enduring marriage tells a story of a beautiful relationship<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>19</sup> Korngold was the first recipient of Wittgenstein's commission. The pianist subsequently made such a request to Richard Strauss, Franz Schmidt, Paul Hindemith, Sergei Prokofiev and Maurice Ravel, among others. Prior to this, there was only one concerto for the left hand, written in 1902 by Liszt's pupil Géza Zichy, a Hungarian pianist who lost his right hand in a hunting trip at the age of 14, but did not abandon the piano, playing with his left hand and making numerous transcriptions. *Piano Concerto* is a unique work in Korngold's oeuvre. It was composed with great panache and is full of emotional tension and struggle, foreshadowing his later film music compositions in style. The sound design of the *Concerto* is very interesting - one can recognise the composer's idiom without the slightest doubt, but here he makes exceptional use of the orchestra's colourful possibilities, not instrumenting in his usual extremely dense, rich way, but achieving a more 'dry', expressive sound. The extensive percussion section (timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, snare drum, tambourine, tam-tam, bells, xylophone, celesta), contributes to the specific colour of the piece. Korngold achieves the effect of playing with two, three or even four hands in the piano part, which, given his typical piano texture, is not unusual, as the piano parts in his works have an orchestral density and often make use of multitimbral, technically peculiar consonances in both hands. In 1930, the composer completed another work for the left hand (this time with a chamber cast), *Suite for two violins, cello and piano (left hand)*, Op. 23, commissioned by Wittgenstein. Both works constitute a very interesting item in his oeuvre.

<sup>20</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 125.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup> One of Korngold's late works, *the Symphonic Serenade in B flat major*, Op. 39, even bears the following dedication: "For Luzi Korngold, my wife, my best friend." The composer dedicated many of his works to his wife, including the opera *Das Wunder der Heliane*, which he considered his masterpiece.

<sup>23</sup> In her memoirs, Luzi recorded: "From the moment my friendship with Erich Korngold began, to the last when I lost this friend for good, I may say that my life has been one long and happy love story." Quoted in B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 120

The culmination of the composer's mature period was the opera *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20, staged in 1927. It represents a synthesis of Korngold's style and his most complex, intricate composition. Its historical and aesthetic context meant it did not surpass the success of *Die tote Stadt*<sup>24</sup>, though Korngold regarded it as the work of his life. Julius recalled his son presenting the freshly composed final duet: "He said that this music should disarm all enemies; he had the feeling of having created a great work."<sup>25</sup>

May 1927 marked Korngold's thirtieth birthday. His entire oeuvre and history of artistic success, achieved at such a young age, are truly impressive. It is worth mentioning that Korngold's first biography<sup>26</sup> was published when the composer was only 25 years old. In 1927, he began teaching harmony, counterpoint theory and conducting at the State Music Academy in Vienna<sup>27</sup>, received an *honoris causa* degree, and was hailed by the press as the youngest professor in history<sup>28</sup>.

A childhood under the star of genius and a youth full of success did not last indefinitely. The time came when the sensitive dreamer, raised under a protective bubble, had to confront mundane life necessities for the first time. With his family growing - sons Ernst Werner (born 1928) and George Wolfgang (born 1929) - Korngold needed a stable income. He could not count on financial support from his father; after all, he was too proud to ask for it. He did not want to confirm the dark visions of Julius, who told him that marriage to Luzi would limit his talent and ruin his career. So the composer began to take on commissions from Viennese operetta theatres and music publishers who wanted to adapt classical operettas to the stage and orchestral standards of the time. At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the third decade of the 20th century, operettas were still very popular in Vienna. Korngold revised and arranged the works, sometimes enriching them with specially composed (often in the process of free improvisation) components that maintained the style of the respective composer. These were mainly operettas by Johann Strauss II. The composer's widow, Adela Strauss, held Korngold's talent in high esteem and felt that he was the perfect person to refresh her husband's work<sup>29</sup>. The composer was genuinely fascinated by Strauss's music, and his versions of the operettas

---

<sup>24</sup> See *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20 - the artistic testament of the creator, [in:] chap. II.

<sup>25</sup> J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> See Rudolf Stefan Hoffmann, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, Ch. Stephenson, Wien 1922.

<sup>27</sup> Currently Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien - University of Music and Dramatic Art.

<sup>28</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 205.

<sup>29</sup> The premiere of the new arrangement of *A Night in Venice* involves an interesting development. The second act of the work contained one duet, which was not popular and usually omitted from performances, but Korngold nevertheless pushed hard for it to be performed. After the premiere, the composer's widow approached him to ask why. Korngold replied that he did not care about the critics' opinions because it was simply his favourite piece. A surprised Adela replied: "Unbelievable! It was also his [Johann Strauss's] favourite passage!". Ibid, p. 162.

remained in the repertoire for many years and influenced later stagings of these works, securing Korngold the title of 'Strauss expert'<sup>30</sup>.

In 1934, Korngold received an unexpected invitation to Hollywood to prepare an arrangement of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for a film being made based on Shakespeare's play of the same title, directed by Max Reinhardt. Developing a score for cinema is quite a specific task, so the director needed a composer skilled in orchestration who also has a flair for the dramatic. Korngold, combining his experience in composing and working on theatre and opera music, was the ideal figure. He worked in such a way as to keep the spirit of the original composition intact, to remain true to Mendelssohn's style and to maintain the coherence of the score with the film and the score itself. The task was not easy, as the music had to be precisely fused with the action of the film and the montage of individual scenes. Some of the original excerpts were too short for the duration of the scene, some of them had an unsuitable form, others were too long or too engaging and as a result would distract the viewer from the action. Korngold shortened, re-composed, arranged, integrated, created variations on a theme, applied leitmotif techniques, increased expression, reduced drama - in short, he used all available means to do his job as well as possible. The best summary of the collaboration between Reinhardt and Korngold are the words, contained in a newspaper article: "They left the original Shakespeare and they left the original Mendelssohn. It's a miracle. It's artistic."<sup>31</sup>.

The success of this project was the impetus that launched Korngold's career in the cinema industry. In the following years, he primarily created film music for Warner Brothers. The working conditions he set were unprecedented in the profession, but the label's management agreed to all of them. Korngold's remuneration was decent, he had the right to choose only those projects he liked and to reject others without interpretation; he also stipulated that he would not compose more than two scores in a twelve-month period. In addition, he was to retain full rights to his compositions upon completion of the film and use them at his discretion<sup>32</sup>. The composer was initially enthusiastic about the possibilities for large-scale impact offered by the cinema. He was convinced that, thanks to films, many people would become interested in classical music and that names of its composers would be etched in the public's memory for longer. Unfortunately, the high hopes were quite quickly dashed by reality, with the artist stating that "A film composer's immortality lasts from the recording stage to the

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 162. The arrangements were of a typically very high artistic standard for Korngold, realised with great attention to detail and coherence throughout. After seeing *Revenge of the Bat*, Yehudi Menuhin said that he 'floated above the ground for three days'. J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 275.

dubbing room”<sup>33</sup>. Korngold set a new standard in film music by treating it like an operatic composition, intended to be performed on stage, taking care to ensure the integrity, consistency of the score and the aesthetic qualities and technical excellence of each episode.

His score for the 1936 film *Anthony Adverse* won him his first Oscar, but according to the rules of the time, the award was given to the entire music department under Leo Forbstein. For his own original composition<sup>34</sup> Korngold did not receive the honour personally, and his name was not even mentioned at the gala. This caused quite a bit of controversy in the community, who felt it was unfair that a music creator did not receive a named award for his work, and instead an impersonal studio was rewarded. This situation contributed to a change in the rules of honours in later years and officially, and by name, Korngold received an Oscar two years later for the 1938 film *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The production was initially a real headache for him. The composer did not want to create music for a typical adventure picture, the film's focus on showy action scenes rather than the psychology and spiritual experiences of the characters did not inspire but bored him<sup>35</sup>. For some time he agonised over communicating a binding, negative decision. This impasse was compounded by *the Anschluss*, the takeover of Austria by Nazi Germany. The work on the film provided a plausible official reason for Korngold and his family to stay safely in the United States and avoid terror and violence. The decision was therefore obvious, yet the composer reserved the right to be paid weekly, with the option to withdraw from the venture at any time<sup>36</sup>. It is ironic that the score of this particular film represented, for many people, the moment of first contact and admiration of Korngold's music. He was the first composer to win an Oscar for original symphonic music in an adventure film, and the music for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* itself was the first film composition to have a radio broadcast<sup>37</sup>, and so began to function autonomously, without a picture.

Korngold approached the composition of film music as if it were his operatic and symphonic works. He treated the film script like an operatic libretto. He used the technique of

---

<sup>33</sup> *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, [in:] *Film score. The view from the podium*, ed. Tony Thomas, A. S. Barnes & Co., London 1979, p. 83.

<sup>34</sup> Film music at the time often used arrangements of existing works (composers often had to create up to a dozen or so scores of several dozen minutes a year). It was not treated with as much attention as it is today, it was simply one of the components of a film rather than an original, separate composition and usually had a short lifespan. It was common practice to employ several composers to work on the music for a single film, each with their own task, such as being responsible for a section of the score or the orchestration, and so on.

<sup>35</sup> As he claimed, there were 'too many battles'. Quoted in J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 188.

<sup>36</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 271.

<sup>37</sup> The broadcast took place three days before the film's release, that is, on 11 May 1938. The Warner Brothers Factory Orchestra played and the event was produced by the NBC Blue Network radio station. See Brendan G. Carroll, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, essay published on the website of the Library of Congress in the United States, <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/TheAdventuresOfRobinHood.pdf> [accessed 23 May 2025].

*leitmotifs*, creating special motifs for characters, places and abstract concepts (for example, love, longing, revenge or adventure) that tied the entire work together and made the viewer's experience more complete. He invented unconventional methods, such as matching the instrumentation of a section of the score to the timbre of a particular actor's voice<sup>38</sup>. He did not create mediocre musical accompaniment that would be immediately forgotten, but full-fledged compositions that could be successfully performed on concert stages without alteration or reworking.

The composer liked to improvise the main themes on the piano while watching the film and then jotting them down afterwards. He himself talked about the process:

“Never have I differentiated between my music for the films and that for the operas and concert pieces. Just as I do for the operatic stage, I try to invent for the motion picture dramatically melodious music with symphonic development and variation of the themes. [...] I do my composing in the projection room while the picture is unrolling before my eyes. And I have it run off for me again and again, reel by reel, as often as I need to see it. It is entirely up to me to decide where in the picture to put music.”<sup>39</sup>

This was an unprecedented, original, groundbreaking approach at the time, which set new standards in the field. Korngold's compositions, characterised by a late-romantic, rich symphonic sound, had an enormous influence on the further development of film music. Among the most famous of these are: *The Sea Hawk* (1940), *The Sea Wolf* (1941), *King's Row* (1942), *The Constant Nymph* (1943), *Escape Me Never* (1946).

From 1938 onwards, while living in exile, Korngold financially supported his closer and further friends, refugees of Jewish origin, facilitating their acclimatisation in the United States. He provided his family and his parents, as well as his wife's mother and sister<sup>40</sup>. He composed mainly film music, later using some of the material as themes for classical compositions (including *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 35).

Julius Korngold had strong views on the direction his son's work should take. His attitude to new forms, such as film music, was highly sceptical. He advised Erich against further involvement in this field, convinced that it would damage his reputation as a respected composer of classical music and undermine the value of his output to date. Despite his subsequent success and awards for his work for Warner Brothers, Erich himself also had mixed

---

<sup>38</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 258. This is mentioned by Mervyn LeRoy, director, in an interview with Carroll in Los Angeles, 6 September 1975.

<sup>39</sup> The text is taken from an article originally placed in the 1940 book *Music and Dance in California*, quoted in *Erich Wolfgang Korngold, [in:] Film score. The view from the podium*, ed. Tony Thomas, A. S. Barnes & Co., London 1979, pp. 87-88.

<sup>40</sup> This is one of the reasons why a composer receiving a substantial fee had to manage their finances carefully. The other is that Korngold was a generous, optimistic and cheerful dreamer, possessing a peculiar mixture of the elements of nobility and naivety. This combination of qualities created a variety of situations. For example: he liked the idea of the film *The Green Pastures* so much that he refused to accept any remuneration for the music he composed.

feelings about film music. The figure of his father played a very large role in Korngold's life, and his opinions echoed back to him, causing increasing doubts, which grew stronger after Julius' death in 1945. The critic died in exile in Los Angeles, convinced that he had experienced the demise of the two greatest values in his life: the Austro-Hungarian Empire and his son's talent.

A few years after the war, Korngold decided to return to Vienna, hoping to shift the focus of his career again to classical music. However, a warm welcome did not await him in his beloved city: most of his old friends and relatives had left Vienna or died in the war, and his former home had been taken over by foreign tenants. The Viennese spirit - elegance, lightness, and finesse - he longed for was gone. With the Viennese Opera building, which was the site of the composer's first childhood triumph and his subsequent successes, largely bombed out, and other destruction, the prevailing atmosphere in Vienna was more like that of a 'dead city'. The Second World War had cut society off from a bygone era with a thick line. Korngold's post-Romantic style was considered outdated, and the themes and musical genres he undertook were considered dull and passé. Critics were interested in modernist trends, previous supporters ignored his work, and works that were once hugely popular were relegated to the background. In addition, former acquaintances openly or secretly accused the composer of flight, lack of commitment and a comfortable life in exile. When the news of Richard Strauss' death was broadcast on the radio on 8 September 1949, Korngold approached the piano in absolute silence and performed from memory almost the entire *Elektra*<sup>41</sup>, thus paying tribute to the deceased composer, whose passing made him deeply sad and which probably made him realise that the Viennese "golden age" had passed irretrievably.

Korngold made attempts to return to active musical activity. Between 1947 and 1951, several concerts featured his music, and in 1950, the long-delayed, Nazi-banned Viennese premiere of his fourth opera, *Die Kathrin*, Op. 28 (completed in 1937), took place. The atmosphere of concert life and the mood of the audience, however, had completely changed. The halls were now usually only half full, the audience did not react as enthusiastically as before, and there were also many of the usual obstacles and organisational adversities, which Korngold, after a severe heart attack in his forties, lacked the youthful optimism to surmount them. Disappointed by the cool reception, the composer decided to return to the United States

---

<sup>41</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 340.

and in 1951 moved to his home in Toluca Lake<sup>42</sup> in Los Angeles, where he spent the rest of his life with his family.

On his return to America, despite his deteriorating health and feelings of despondency, Korngold tried to continue composing classical music. The sweetness, pain, happiness and longing he experienced when thinking of lost Vienna resulted in *Sonett für Wien*, Op. 41, a song for voice with piano, to a nostalgic poem by Hans Kaltneker. It was not an isolated expression of longing for his beloved city. In 1952, Korngold completed *Symphony in F sharp major*, Op. 40, the only symphony in his oeuvre. The choice of genre does not seem accidental, as it evokes the masterpieces of the Viennese classics and seems to be a kind of musical tribute to that significant, creative-inspiring centre that was and remains Vienna. However, the work was only appreciated years later.

In October 1956, the composer suffered a massive stroke, after which the right side of his body was paralysed for three weeks and he was also unable to speak. Doctors claimed that with proper rehabilitation, he could recover, but Korngold succumbed to his defeatist mood and illness, refusing to do the exercises prescribed to stimulate his nervous system<sup>43</sup>. It seems very likely that he also suffered from depression<sup>44</sup>, however, there is no medical evidence to confirm this. Korngold forgot the names of his closest friends, and was also initially unable to read newspapers and books, but was able to recall from memory and associate a composer's name with a given surname, and was able to read scores and recognise the tonalities of works without difficulty<sup>45</sup>. Despite his illness, the composer's 60th birthday was an enjoyable day, full of celebration and expressions of respect and remembrance coming in from the Old and New Continents. Brendan Carroll writes that telegrams were sent by, among others:

Alma Mahler, Bruno Walter, Lotte Lehmann, Maria Jeritza, Ray Heindorf, Margit Ganz, Slezak, and, of course, his publishers. One that particularly pleased him was signed «Your Vienna Philharmonic». There were also radio tributes and some celebratory articles, and many letters from ordinary music lovers from throughout America, Europe, and England. All this was a great comfort to him, especially as he had been convinced that he was forgotten.<sup>46</sup>

Exactly six months later, on 29 November 1957, Erich Wolfgang Korngold died after seven hours of agony, caused by a heart attack.

---

<sup>42</sup> Toluca Lake is a quiet neighbourhood in Los Angeles that was a popular residence for those involved in the film and entertainment industry. Bob Hope, Bette Davis, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Ronald Reagan, among others, had their residences there.

<sup>43</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 361.

<sup>44</sup> Justified concerns are expressed in a letter to Dr Lawrence Kubie, a New York psychiatrist, by the composer's wife. Ibid, p. 362.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 361, p. 363.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 364.

## Socio-cultural context

As a child prodigy, Korngold already manifested personal, distinctive and overly mature qualities in his earliest works, which remained in his music until the very end. The aesthetics and poetics of the composer's musical style were formed during the first twenty-odd years of his life (the 1920 opera *Die tote Stadt* can be considered a shaped, larger-scale work), and I am therefore presenting the socio-cultural context of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, that is, the late 19th century extended to the 1920s.

Vienna, being the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was at the time its main political, administrative and cultural centre. As a centre of trade and finance, with a modern infrastructure, extensive water transport, railways and electricity, it attracted people from different social classes. Stefan Zweig, the eminent Austrian novelist, wrote:

[...] this was the particular genius of this city of music, that it was able to melt all contrasts harmoniously, shaping something new and original: "Austrianness", "Vienneseness". The hospitable city with its special sensitivity attracted the most diverse forces to itself, discharged them, reconciled them, calmed them down. It was pleasant to live here, in this atmosphere of spiritual tolerance. Every inhabitant of this city involuntarily transformed into an internationalist, into a cosmopolitan, into a citizen of the whole world. [...] The genius of Vienna [...] lay in its ability to harmonise within itself all national and linguistic contradictions. Its culture was a synthesis of all Western cultures.<sup>47</sup>

The turn of the century, however, marked the beginning of the decline of the monarchy, weakened by nationalist and socialist movements and emerging ethnic divisions. These accumulating tensions were about to explode.

An evanescence of Viennese culture was the cafés and the lifestyle associated with them<sup>48</sup>. As places accessible to the general public, regardless of wealth, they became the centre of the city's cultural life. For the price of a cup of coffee, artists and intellectuals, politicians and scientists could sit in them all day long, presenting their ideas and spending time discussing them. Zweig takes a closer look:

To understand this, one must know that the Viennese café is an institution of a special kind, incomparable to any other in the world. In fact, it is a kind of democratic club, accessible to everyone [...] in the better Viennese café you could get all the Viennese periodicals, and not only Viennese, but also German, French, English, Italian, American, and besides - the most important literary and artistic monthly magazines from all over the world [...] this perhaps contributed most to the intellectual liveliness and international orientation of the Austrian, that he could take such extensive news of all world events in the café and discuss them among his friends.<sup>49</sup>

The bourgeois salons, whose hostesses were usually women from the upper classes<sup>50</sup>, also created meeting spaces for the Viennese elite: aristocrats acted as patrons for artists, and

---

<sup>47</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday. Memoirs of a certain European*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 2015, transl. Maria Wisłowska, p. 24, p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> The so-called *Wiener Kaffeehauskultur*, listed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011.

<sup>49</sup> S. Zweig, op. cit. p. 48.

<sup>50</sup> The most famous salon at the time was run by Berta Zuckermandl, a politically engaged writer, journalist and art critic. Her salon hosted mainly writers and artists, representing the avant-garde milieu.

philosophers and scientists presented their work, sparking engaging debates. Conversations often took place in a liberated style, guests spoke out, and the prevailing morality was questioned.

In opposition to this intellectual freedom, public life was official, governed by strict norms and strict patterns of behaviour, with great emphasis on the observance of ceremonialities. Vienna at the time sometimes attached more importance to form than to content, especially in the realm of manners. Beneath the immaculate façade, however, there were scandals, dishonesty and double moral standards, as Zweig concludes:

Our generation grew up in such an unhealthy, stuffy, perfume-saturated atmosphere. It was this dishonest morality of silence and concealment, contrary to the laws of psychology, that weighed like a bane on the years of our youth.<sup>51</sup>

Conventions were challenged by artist-provocateurs and thinker-scandal mongers, revealing the hypocrisy of Viennese behaviour, which Sigmund Freud, for example, explored from a scientific perspective.

The questioning of traditional norms was not limited to the sphere of thought and customs, but was also reflected in the arts. At the end of the 19th century, architecture was dominated by historicism, which rejected classicist ideals and imitated the style of earlier eras in a monumental, sumptuous manner, drawing most readily on Renaissance, Gothic and Baroque architecture. Painting was ruled by academicism, tackling grandiose historical, mythological, and religious themes, referencing ancient and Renaissance ideals, favouring staged compositions over dynamism.

As an expression of opposition to the above trends, the Vienna Secession was born in 1897, established by a newly formed association of artists headed by Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann and Egon Schiele. The motto of Art Nouveau was "To the times - their art, to art - its freedom". The artists pursued the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* - a synthesis of the arts - and their works were suffused with ornaments, decorative gold embellishments, symbolism, eroticism and were characterised by restless, flexible lines. Art Nouveau was the dominant direction in Viennese space until after the First World War, when it was supplanted by Expressionism, abstraction and the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement, representing realism with elements of naturalism.

Theatrical performances were an integral part of community life at the time, not only providing entertainment and reflection on contemporary issues, but also shaping the consciousness of the Viennese and permeating other spheres of their lives. Patterns of

---

<sup>51</sup> S. Zweig, op. cit. p. 76.

behaviour, ways of conversation, vocabulary, proper diction or inspiration in fashion and style were drawn from the plays. Zweig describes how the theatre influenced the everyday life of the city's inhabitants:

The average Viennese looked in the morning paper not for news of discussions in parliament or world events, but above all for the repertoire of the theatres, which occupied a place in public life as important as in no other city. For a Viennese, for an Austrian, the Burgtheater was more than just a stage on which actors performed. It was a microcosm in which the macrocosm was reflected, a colourful mirror in which society saw its own reflection.<sup>52</sup>

The love of theatre created the perfect conditions for the dynamic development of the performing arts and influenced the formation of a modern social and artistic consciousness among the people of Vienna.

In addition to the fine arts and theatre, music played a key role in shaping Viennese culture. Musical life at the time was centred around the activities of the Vienna State Opera and Philharmonic. The repertoire continually included works by Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, whose interpretations changed under the influence of distinctive conducting personalities such as Felix Weingartner (a specialist in Beethoven and Brahms), Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss (both of whom brilliantly interpreted Mozart, Wagner and their own compositions) or Franz Schalk (an ardent supporter of the works of Bruckner and Strauss). Wilhelm Furtwängler and Bruno Walter (who supported Korngold by conducting his youthful works) were also frequent visitors to the Viennese stages.

At the turn of the 20th century, two main trends clashed in music: post-Romanticism and modernism in general, represented by emerging trends such as impressionism, expressionism, dodecaphony, neoclassicism or vitalism. On the one hand, tradition reigned, on the other, the search for new forms of expression (often radical) that were intended to reflect the complexity and transformations of the era. Post-romantics emphasised melodic lyricism, complex harmony, chromatic consonances, frequent modulations, and narrative forms. Their works, composed primarily for large symphonic ensembles, were characterised by lush colours and very dense textures. They were full of agogic fluctuations and often required *rubato* playing. Representing this current, Wagner, Mahler and Strauss used a maximally extended performance apparatus and increased the size of their works, going to extremes<sup>53</sup>.

In opposition to symphonic works, chamber and piano music often represented the impressionist current, becoming a field for colour experiments in the spirit of timbral minimalism. Expressionism, on the other hand, took over the emotional intensity from the post-

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> Outstanding examples are Wagner's *Nuremberg Singers* (the music alone lasts about 4 hours and 30 minutes) and Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, known as the 'symphony of a thousand' because of the number of performers.

Romantics, but explored it in a completely different way, emphasising an enormous range of moods and rapid changes of emotion, using extreme registers, expressive contrasts, brutal sound full of dissonances, handling extreme dynamics and abandoning the construction of long phrases in favour of fragmentation.

It is also important to remember the revolutionary significance of the work of Arnold Schönberg, who initially experimented with atonality and then formulated the tenets of dodecaphony, which were adopted by Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Of these three main representatives of the Second Viennese School, Berg is called a lyricist<sup>54</sup> because of the primacy of the melodic in his compositions, and Webern an aphorist because of his predilection for microforms, limiting the duration of his works to as little as a few minutes or a few tens of seconds.

Audiences and critics had already been divided into two camps since Wagner's musical dramas; some praised the innovative works, seeing them as the future of music, while others reacted with indignation, hence many premieres were accompanied by scandals. Conservative critics, originating from Eduard Hanslick's circle (to which Korngold's father also belonged), stood for the musical ideals of the past.

In conclusion, Erich Wolfgang Korngold grew up in a city where, without making the slightest effort, he had the opportunity to come into contact with the most eminent musical personalities of his time, to observe the beginnings of new artistic and intellectual currents and to listen to leading European artist-performers. In such an atmosphere, his views and aesthetic tastes were formed.

### **General characteristics of the composer's work**

*I am and I always will be an opera composer.*

*I think that's my fate*

*Writing for the films is like writing an opera,  
only it goes a little bit faster.*<sup>55</sup>

Because of his genius as a child, Korngold was often compared to Mozart (his middle name, given in honour of the Viennese classicist probably also suffused such an association). Both had strict fathers, supervising their careers in a way that left a mark on their sons' psyches

---

<sup>54</sup> These terms appear repeatedly in the works of Theodor W. Adorno, including *Alban Berg: Master of the smallest link*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, and in *Philosophy of New Music*, transl. Fryderyka Wayda, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1974.

<sup>55</sup> *Famous at 13*, New York Times, 25 October 1942, p. 6, <https://www.nytimes.com/1942/10/25/archives/famous-at-13-erich-korngold-who-has-had-success-as-composer-for-a.html> [accessed 23 May 2025].

forever; both were melodists, displaying inexhaustible creativity in the melodic lines they composed; legends still circulate about the phenomenal musical memory of both. However, the greatest similarity between the composers manifests itself through the fact that the central area of their work is opera.

The style of operatic thinking deeply permeates all the genres Korngold undertook and is present in many different aspects of his works. Five of the seven existing items for violin and piano are transcriptions of excerpts from operas or other stage compositions by the composer. In each of the categories listed below (in addition to the operettas), numerous arrangements of selected excerpts from the composer's most famous dramatic works are included alongside the excerpted works. Making transcriptions of this kind was a common practice at the time.

The following table outlines Korngold's primary genres with representative works, providing a clearer overview of his compositional output.

| SPECIES AND CATEGORIES | MAJOR COMPOSITIONS  |
|------------------------|---|
| Pieces for solo piano  | 3 sonatas:<br>- <i>Piano Sonata No. 1 in D minor</i> ,<br>- <i>Piano Sonata No. 2 in E major</i> , Op. 2,<br>- <i>Piano Sonata No. 3 in C major</i> , Op. 25,<br>2 cycles:<br>- <i>Don Quixote: 6 Charakterstücke</i> ,<br>- <i>Märchenbilder</i> op. 3,<br><i>Geschichten von Strauss</i> Op. 21 (fantasia)  |
| Chamber works          | <i>Sonata in G major</i> , Op. 6 (for violin and piano),<br>3 string quartets:<br>- <i>String Quartet No. 1 in A major</i> , Op. 16,<br>- <i>String Quartet No. 2 in E flat major</i> , Op. 26,<br>- <i>String Quartet No. 3 in D major</i> , Op. 34,<br><i>String Sextet in D major</i> , Op. 10,<br><i>Piano Quintet in E major</i> , Op. 15,<br><i>Suite for two violins, cello and piano (left hand)</i> , Op. 23 |
| Instrumental concerts  | <i>Piano Concerto in C sharp major (for the left hand)</i> , Op. 17,<br><i>Violin Concerto in D major</i> , Op. 35,<br><i>Cello Concerto in C major</i> Op. 37 (from the film <i>Deception</i> )  |
| Orchestral works       | symphonic overtures,<br><i>Sinfonietta in B flat major</i> , Op. 5,<br><i>Viel Lärmen um Nichts</i> , Op.11 (arrangement - orchestral suite),<br><i>Symphonic Serenade in B flat major</i> , Op. 39,<br><i>Symphony in F sharp major</i> , Op. 40   |
| Stage works            | <i>Der Schneemann</i> (ballet),<br>2 one-act operas:  |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
|                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Das Ring des Polykrates</i>, Op. 7,</li> <li>- <i>Violanta</i>, Op. 8,</li> <li><i>Viel Lärmen um Nichts</i>, Op. 11 (stage music),</li> <li>3 three-act operas:</li> <li>- <i>Die tote Stadt</i>, Op. 12,</li> <li>- <i>Das Wunder der Heliane</i>, Op. 20,</li> <li>- <i>Die Kathrin</i>, Op. 28,</li> <li><i>Die stumme Serenade</i>, Op. 36 (musical comedy)</li> </ul> |
| Songs and vocal works     | numerous cycles and single songs for voice with piano and for voice with symphony orchestra (mainly to texts by German or English poets), as well as several compositions for solo voice, choir and orchestra or instrumental ensemble  |
| Arrangements of operettas | 11 arrangements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 - by Johann Strauss II,</li> <li>- 2 - by Jacques Offenbach,</li> <li>- 1 - by Leo Falla,</li> <li>- the development of two existing arrangements for production in the United States</li> </ul>  |
| Film music                | 22 film scores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 19 - composed for the Warner Brothers label,</li> <li>- 2 - for Paramount Pictures,</li> <li>- 1 - for Republic Pictures</li> </ul>  |

**Table 1.** The main genres of Korngold's oeuvre and major compositions

Korngold's oeuvre also includes quite a few smaller works without an opus number, often unissued, remaining in manuscript at the Library of Congress in Washington<sup>56</sup>.

### Reconstructing Korngold's aesthetic views

Korngold remained true to his artistic *credo* throughout his life, following those ideas presented to him by his own inner voice. He never sought to satisfy the momentary expectations of a capricious public with his work, distancing himself from prevailing aesthetic fashions and the inevitable, omnipresent criticism<sup>57</sup>.

As an artist, he believed that music should be beautiful. He understood beauty in the spirit of Greek philosophy, linking it to the idea of goodness, spirituality, growth and the acquisition of wisdom. In his introduction to Ulric Devaré's book *Faith in Music*, written in 1955, he expressed his belief (while listing the artists he valued most) that:

Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn, the symphonies of Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner and Mahler, as well as the charming French and Italian operas [...] the operas of the German masters, Mozart, Wagner, and Richard Strauss, will continue to maintain their unbroken vigor and impact, and will bring to mankind today and in the future, pleasure and exaltation, dedication and happiness.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> See B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, pp.399-402, where a full list of these compositions is available.

<sup>57</sup> This respectable attitude is not surprising given that throughout his life Korngold faced criticism for, among other things: an overly modernist, unconventional harmonic language; an unreformed, conservative musical style; the abandonment of high artistic standards and the lowering of the level of works; the excessive complexity of works and the targeting of his music at the elite.

After completing *Symphony in F sharp major*, Op. 40 in 1952, he wrote in a letter to Hermann Levandowsky as follows:

I believe that my newly completed symphony will show the world that atonality and ugly dissonance at the price of giving up inspiration, form, expression, melody and beauty will result in ultimate disaster for the art of music.<sup>59</sup>

One of the themes that sparked the creative flame in Korngold's mind was the eternal conflict between the corporeal and spiritual elements, often shown in the context of life and death. Man, thrown by the desires of the spirit and sexual lusts, is inevitably heading for disaster, and what can set him free is true love, which has the power to redeem and restore balance and harmony to life. This theme appears, among others, in the opera *Die tote Stadt*, and also constitutes the work *Das Wunder der Heliane* and there it resounds to the fullest.

Korngold held the unshakable conviction that music, whether composed for theatre, film or traditionally for resounding in concert halls, is always a work that can have full artistic value, in other words, that the purpose of a composition does not predetermine the value of a work. In a 1946 interview, he stated:

Music is music whether it is for the stage, rostrum or cinema. Form may change, the manner of writing may vary, but the composer needs to make no concessions whatever to what he conceives to be his own musical ideology ... [...] Even if I wanted to, I could not write beneath my level.<sup>60</sup>

In the same interview, he noted that when a film is accompanied by an artfully composed musical layer, intended for a symphonic cast, it opens up an opportunity for mass audiences to become familiar with and sensitised to this type of art. “The cinema is a direct avenue to the ears and hearts of the great public and all musicians should see the screen as a musical opportunity.”<sup>61</sup> Making responsible use of this opportunity, Korngold wrote film music in such a way that these works could be performed entirely on concert stages. Many of Korngold's film compositions functioned as separate stage works and can still be heard in this form today, such as the tone poem *Tomorrow*, Op. 33, from the film *The Constant Nymph*, and *Cello Concerto in C major*, Op. 37, part of the film *Deception*.

Korngold's life and work falls during the most dramatic and dynamic years of the 20th century. Among the various aesthetic attitudes is the conviction, particularly popular immediately after the end of the Second World War, that art should be a direct reflection, a chronicle of its time. The suffering experienced and the scale of the atrocity confronted artists

---

<sup>58</sup> Erich Wolfgang Korngold, *Faith in Music!*, preface to the book by Ulric Devaré, *Faith in music*, New York: Comet Press, New York 1958. quoted in *Korngold and his world*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Kevin C. Karnes, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 2019, pp. 258.

<sup>59</sup> J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 201.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 179, p. 183.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

with the question of whether it was even possible to continue making art, and triggered an explosion of searches for ways, forms and individual answers to the question of what art should look like. Many artists were convinced that the drama of the past years must be constantly present, like a mark, in future works<sup>62</sup>.

Korngold strongly rejected the above thesis. Any tendency to move away from beauty towards ugliness, from nobility to revolutionary sound, from sublime, intellectually complex yet highly sensual harmonics to "morbid, chilling consonances"<sup>63</sup> appeared to him as alien and unpleasant. He firmly rejected aesthetic trends that presuppose the exposure of human imperfections and flaws, focusing on showing the brutality of life or the worst mental states of man. In his own words:

The true creative artist does not wish to recreate for his fellow man the headlines screaming of atom bombs, murder, and sensationalism found in the daily paper. Rather for his fellow man, he will know how to take and uplift him into the purer realm of phantasy.<sup>64</sup>

He responded to accusations that his works sounded as if the hell unleashed by the Nazis had never happened by replying that the artist was not a historian or a 'photographer of the epoch' - he creates, as it were, outside of time and above his surroundings<sup>65</sup>. Critics of this attitude reminded him that the Second World War was unquestionably the bloodiest event in the history of the world, and therefore it must resonate in the works created. Korngold, on the other hand, replied that the Battle of Leipzig was also the bloodiest event known during the Napoleonic Wars, but that one would look in vain for its reflection, for example, in the music of Schubert, and then added, with his characteristic humour, that it would be equally futile to look for such landmark events for the age of steam and electricity as the invention of the locomotive in the poetic works of Chopin or the musical dramas of Wagner<sup>66</sup>.

In summary, Korngold was strongly opposed to the thesis that music should be a reflection of the socio-political events of its time. The Second World War did not make the artist stop and try to redefine music and the creative process. It did not make him abandon the old values and ideals that had hitherto resounded so harmoniously in his compositions. On the contrary, Korngold believed that a rebuilding of the spirit, a turning towards beauty, nobility and harmony was all the more necessary for humanity after surviving the horrors of war. He did

---

<sup>62</sup> Noteworthy compositions and composers include Arnold Schönberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* op.46 (1947), Luigi Nono's *Il canto sospeso*, Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* op.66 and Dmitry Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 13 'Babi Yar'* op.113.

<sup>63</sup> *Korngold and His World*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Kevin C. Karnes, p. 285.

<sup>64</sup> E. W. Korngold, *Faith in Music!*, preface to U. Devaré, *Faith in music...*, quoted in *Korngold and his world*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Kevin C. Karnes, p.258.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 258.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 258.

not attempt to engage in themes of the transformation of social relations, nor did he address political issues with his works. He never wavered from his standards, regardless of the circumstances or the purpose of the composition. His greatest fascination was the possibility of a noble effect on man through beauty, in the spirit of which he created his works, wishing thereby to inspire human nature to reveal what is most perfect in it. Korngold, brought up in the idealised Viennese salon of the late 19th century, thrown out of this circle of beauty, wonder and delicacy into the turmoil and brutality of both world wars and then directly into the dynamic world of the "Hollywood dream", retained the coherence of his own creative personality thanks to these convictions.

## **Chapter II - Pieces for violin and piano: context, analysis, interpretation, performance perspective**

In the history of music, there is no shortage of composers and works described as brilliant, pinnacle or groundbreaking. Outstanding composers were able to perform a masterful synthesis of existing styles, create in an innovative manner, transcend existing aesthetic boundaries and sometimes completely change the musical perspective. Their works were the fruit of talent, systematic effort, sparks of inspiration, and knowledge, often emerging in the middle or later stages of their creative careers, when youth, creativity, and experience converged in an optimal configuration to fully collaborate.

It is worth noting, however, that throughout the history of European music, there have been cases of exceptionally talented, musically developed children displaying competences far beyond their age. The most famous of the "child prodigies" is undoubtedly Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, along with Camille Saint-Saëns and the prematurely deceased Felix Mendelssohn, Friedrich Chopin and Franz Schubert. Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss also displayed above-

average ability at a young age. Other composers whose works were performed in public as early as childhood included Aleksandr Glazunov, George Enescu and Béla Bartók.

Even against the backdrop of such illustrious figures, Korngold's talent proves exceptional for several important reasons. Firstly, his early compositions<sup>67</sup> are characterised by a surprising consistency and artistic maturity. They lack technical awkwardness or infantile, stylistic naivety, features typical of childish creativity. Juvenilia by young composers are usually assessed with a certain degree of forbearance and tolerance, but in Korngold's case there is no need for this.

Secondly, his early works testify to an excellent sense of the musical idiom of the period, as well as a complete freedom to move within the late Romantic style, with frequent, uninhibited escapades beyond its boundaries<sup>68</sup>. In the context of the composer's age, this is a remarkable phenomenon, as he wrote many of these works as an eleven-year-old. Korngold's individual style evolved naturally; nevertheless, even in his early works its characteristic elements can be discerned: textural richness, melodic invention, advanced harmony, irregular, restless rhythms, a wide colour palette, lyricism and a number of other features, more or less developed, that make up the composer's creative idiom<sup>69</sup>.

A third aspect that clearly distinguishes Korngold's early works from the compositions of the other 'child prodigies' is their deeply nostalgic expression. One may wonder where such a pronounced emotion of longing and melancholy comes from in the works of a young, successful boy. If one assumes that Korngold to some extent reflected the spirit of the age in his work, then the nostalgic mood could be understood as a form of anticipation, in line with the apt observation that "the 20th century began with utopia, ended with nostalgia"<sup>70</sup>. Perhaps the Viennese *wunderkind*, in addition to his prematurely developed musical skills, was also endowed with a so-called 'old soul'. In this context, it is worth noting Korngold's upbringing, whose childhood took place almost exclusively among adults: artists, intellectuals and representatives of the milieu of the Viennese cultural elite. Julius Korngold ensured that his son avoided unproductive amusements, did not waste precious time on idle pastimes, but instead developed his talent with complete focus<sup>71</sup>. The only acceptable form of leisure was therefore

---

<sup>67</sup> Even those composed at a very young age and unpublished such as *Piano Sonata No. 1 in D minor*, the ballet *Der Schneemann* and six characteristic pieces for piano, collected under the title *Don Quixote*.

<sup>68</sup> Korngold was initially described as a modernist. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 23.

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter III - Korngold's poetics and musical language: works for violin and piano.

<sup>70</sup> S. Boym, op. cit. p. 7: "The twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia."

<sup>71</sup> Conductor Karl Böhm, a friend of the Korngold family, often spent holidays with them. The following anecdote, which Böhm shared in the introduction to the programme booklet for a CD of Korngold's one-act opera *Violanta*, Op. 8, recorded for CBS Recordings, comes from one such summer trip: 'I remember the young Korngold's father

reading, which the young Korngold eagerly took advantage of<sup>72</sup>. Combined with his high sensitivity and vivid imagination, this may have encouraged him to develop a deep empathy and a rich inner emotional world, which then found an outlet in his works. The nostalgic overtones present in Korngold's early works should be regarded as an interesting and isolated phenomenon, a peculiar phenomenon that deserves special attention in the study of his oeuvre.

All of the works that make up the artistic work and that I discuss in this chapter represent significant points on Korngold's creative path, each for a different reason.

The ballet *Der Schneemann*, composed at the age of eleven, is the composer's first stage work. After its outstanding premiere at the Vienna State Opera in 1910, it was immediately included in its repertoire. The two-act, small-scale composition was a true revelation of Korngold's genius to the wider artistic and intellectual community not only within the borders of Vienna itself or the whole of Austria-Hungary, but also in other European cities.

The cycle of seven piano miniatures, *Märchenbilder*, Op. 3 (from which the arrangement of *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"* is taken), highlighted Korngold's phenomenal sense of musically illustrating stories, characters and moods. Already at the age of thirteen, he was able to portray a variety of characters and personalities in an extremely apt, aphoristic and imaginative manner, sprinkling the whole with a large dose of humour. The works present personal motifs and characteristic elements of the composer's musical language, which will remain present throughout his work. The cycle also captures the virtuosity and excellent piano technique that Korngold possessed despite his young age.

*Sonata in G major*, Op. 6 is a vivid example of the composer's graceful sense of combining elements of tradition and modernity. He uses a well-worn classical form as an experimental space in which he juxtaposes a profound knowledge of convention with fresh ideas and conducts an unfettered exploration of sound. Two characteristic features of Korngold's style become apparent in the *Sonata*: the instrumental mastery he demands of his performers, revealed in the virtuosic element that permeates the technical layer of the piece, and the need for emotional expression, manifested through intense lyricism, narrative and an aesthetic orientation towards beauty.

*Viel Lärmen um nichts*, Op. 11, the musical setting for Shakespeare's comedy of the same title (*Much Ado About Nothing*), occupies a significant place in Korngold's oeuvre

---

constantly encouraging his son to compose - so much so that one time, when we all went swimming in the lake, Julius shouted after his son "Erich! Don't swim! Compose!". B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 32.

<sup>72</sup> See *Viel Lärmen um nichts*, Op. 11 - the composition that enchanted the world, [in:] chap. II.

because of the clearly defined and shaped elements of his personal style. At the forefront is Korngold's musical narrative skill and sense of drama, which subsequently played a key role in his work for the Hollywood film industry. In the background is the original, rich colour palette, the colours of which Korngold achieved with small means, in a very sophisticated way. Expressive, cantilena-like melodic lines, rich harmony and evocative illustration in portraying the characters' characters and the atmosphere of events complete the picture. The suite, both in its transcription for violin and piano and in its orchestral version, became extremely popular and remains to this day one of Korngold's most frequently performed and recorded compositions.

The opera *Die tote Stadt* Op. 12, from which the two famous arias *Mariettas Lied zur Laute* and *Tanzlied des Pierrot* are taken, established Korngold as a mature composer. The work was an incredible success, was performed in almost every European opera house and was staged in the United States as the first German opera after the end of the First World War. The significance of this was highly symbolic, as at a time of strained international relations, the presence of *Die tote Stadt* on the American opera stage was interpreted as a gesture of reconciliation and an attempt to rebuild cultural ties between the German-speaking world and the West. The composition is the brightest star in Korngold's creative firmament. It brought him international fame and recognition and, years later, acted as the spark that reignited renewed interest in the composer's work<sup>73</sup>. Today, it remains his most recognisable and acclaimed stage work.

The opera *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20, should be regarded as the composition most fully reflecting Korngold's artistic maturity, exceptionally refined and radiating richness of means in all musical aspects. Written with extraordinary mastery, it represents the symbolic culmination of the composer's Viennese period. The opera is a synthesis of aesthetic ideals and stylistic preferences, a kind of apotheosis of Korngold's individual idiom, who considered it his greatest work<sup>74</sup>, pointing out that all the works written up to that point were merely a prelude to *Heliane*<sup>75</sup>. The aria *Ich ging zu ihm*, whose transcription for violin and piano is entitled *Gesang der Heliane*, is the highlight of the opera.

### ***Der Schneemann* - revelation of the child prodigy**

The ballet *Der Schneemann* ('The Snowman') was Korngold's first stage work, revealing his natural sense of drama and his astonishingly, for his young age, mature sense of illustrating

---

<sup>73</sup> This was contributed primarily by the 1975 New York production and recording, starring Carol Neblett as Marie/Marietta and René Kollo as Paul.

<sup>74</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 193.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 195.

characters and events with music. The composition is not sizeable<sup>76</sup>, however, it played a key role in the development of the young composer's career, enabling him to establish himself in the consciousness of the Viennese community, independent of his father's influence. Young Erich's active participation in the premiere and in the preparations for the premiere curbed malicious slanders that the real author of his earlier works was Julius Korngold. After the ballet's successful premiere and première, numerous concert proposals and requests for scores and performance rights began to arrive from German-speaking cities such as Hamburg, Cologne and Leipzig, from London and Moscow<sup>77</sup>.

Julius Korngold was the first and tireless admirer of his son's talent. As an acknowledged critic, and privately a good friend of many composers, performers and musical theorists, he understood perfectly that above-average ability needed nurturing, conscious, systematic work and constant attention to development. He carefully kept a watchful eye on his son's activities, eliminating pastimes that he saw as harmful, in opposition initiating stimulating games and tasks that developed the musical imagination. The Korngolds' living room was often the setting for an exquisite game, involving young Erich improvising short piano illustrations to postcards, images of characters from albums or scenes from stories currently being read<sup>78</sup>. The ballet *Der Schneemann* was inspired by one such black-and-white postcard, depicting a snowman and a chimney sweep. The libretto, which draws on the tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, was sketched by Julius Korngold<sup>79</sup>.

Here is the plot of the ballet: Pierrot is in love with the beautiful Colombine, whose uncle, Pantalón, does everything in his power to prevent the two from having contact. Colombine is not allowed to leave her chamber and her only entertainment is to gaze out of her window at the market where the Christmas fair is taking place. Pantalón wants to please his niece, so he heads to the stalls in search of a present. Meanwhile, the street urchins start a snowball battle and make a giant snowman. In Pantalón's absence, Pierrot plays a sweet serenade for his beloved on his fiddle, and when he spots a returning figure, he hides behind the snowman. An amused Pantalón taunts the fiddler by imitating the snowman. This gives Pierrot the idea to disguise himself as a snowman and take his place, so that he can watch Colombine unobstructed. Having taken up his position, he looks into his beloved's window with longing eyes.

---

<sup>76</sup> Two acts with an interlude; the whole piece takes approximately 40 minutes to perform.

<sup>77</sup> The Moscow premiere of *Der Schneemann* took place in 1912. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 68.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 39.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 39.

Annoyed by the fact that Colombina is giving the snowman all her attention, Pantalón mockingly invites him into the house. To his surprise, the snowman immediately obeys the command. Terrified, Pantalón seeks help from the servants, but they stone with fear. To build up his courage, Pantalón drinks the wine in one gulp, which causes the idols to twist and turn before his eyes until they are whirling madly around him. Dazed, he falls into a heavy sleep, which Pierrot and Colombine take advantage of to escape. Pantalón, having regained his senses, runs out into the marketplace, but he only hears the horn of the carriage in which the lovers have departed. In a fit of fury and despair, he angrily throws himself at the real snowman, tearing him to pieces, while the urchins dance mockingly around him.

Korngold began work on the ballet at the end of December 1908 and completed it in the spring, before his twelfth birthday<sup>80</sup>. Despite its late-Romantic, rich sound layer, the composition has a light, charming character and is clearly rooted in the tradition of Viennese dance music. The compact, two-act structure is woven around leitmotifs that aptly reflect the character of the protagonists. The motifs counterpoint each other in an effective, humorous manner, giving the entire composition a playful, optimistic tone. Noteworthy is the original musical language, not only for an eleven-year-old, the harmonic thinking and the evocative yet unorthodox illustration of the music.

The premiere of the ballet took place more than a year after its completion, on 14 April 1910, at the Ministerial Palace in Vienna. It was the main attraction of a *soirée* organised by Baroness von Bienerth, the wife of the prime minister of the Austrian government. The choice of the piece was suggested to her by Dr Ludwig Winter, director of the administration of the city theatre, after hearing it at the Korngold house. In front of the social cream of Vienna, the ballet was presented in a four-hand version by the composer himself and Richard Pahlen<sup>81</sup> on the piano. The violin solo part was performed by Fritz Brunner, while the main dance roles were played by Louise Wopalensky, Eduard van Hamme and Karl Godlewski from the Imperial Ballet. The presentation was so much enjoyed by the audience that it was repeated two weeks later, on 26 April, in support of the imperial collection for widows and orphans<sup>82</sup>.

After the excellent reception of the work, Korngold's father approached the publishing house Universal with a request to print the score to the ballet in dozens of copies, for private use, and then distribute them to significant figures in the musical world. Operative representatives of

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 39. Korngold was born on 29 May.

<sup>81</sup> The fact that the young Korngold, still a boy, was performing on the same stage with the experienced Pahlen, 24 years older than him, must have aroused among the assembled audience not only admiration for his extraordinary skills, but also astonishment at the unusual sight itself.

<sup>82</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 46.

the publishing house asked for the rights to publish the ballet (and *Piano Sonata*, composed in 1908), which met with Julius' agreement, with the proviso that *Der Schneemann* could not be made available for use by any institution without his express permission.

It was an annual Viennese custom to present musical innovations to Emperor Franz Josef on his name day, i.e. 4 October. *Der Schneemann* was ideally suited for this purpose and, suggested by the director of Universal Edition, Alfred Hertzka<sup>83</sup>, immediately met with the lively acceptance of Felix Weingartner<sup>84</sup>, then conductor of the Vienna State Opera and Mahler's successor in this position. To orchestrate the ballet, Hertzka initially proposed Franz Schrecker, whom Julius Korngold, however, did not appreciate<sup>85</sup>, so the work was orchestrated by Erich's teacher Alexander von Zemlinsky.

The premiere in the presence of the Emperor himself was a special celebration, for which special character costumes and choreography were created by Karl Godlewsky, dancing the role of Pierrot. Louise Wopalensky presented herself as Colombina, the Opera orchestra was conducted by Franz Schalk and the solo violin parts were performed by Arnold Rosé, concertmaster of the ensemble<sup>86</sup>. Korngold took an active part in the rehearsals for the premiere: he changed the stage action, made comments, conducted some passages and even replaced the opera *répétiteur* behind the piano keyboard when the latter would not stop complaining that the piece was too difficult<sup>87</sup>.

The day after the premiere, on 5 October 1910, two major Viennese newspapers published excellent reviews. Dr. Rudolf Stefan Hoffmann, later Korngold's first biographer, said in the pages of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*:

[...] the delightful Intermezzo which has been added can be compared with the very best ballet music... after a brilliant performance which brought the house down for the young arch-musician as Richard Strauss called him, I would like to express the wish that this blessed fruit be allowed to ripen in peace.<sup>88</sup>

"*Neue Freie Presse*" published Richard Specht's text, as Julius Korngold was obviously unable to include the report in his home newspaper. Specht wrote that the ballet *Der Schneemann*:

---

<sup>83</sup> This action, full of admiration and good intentions towards the young artist, was not welcomed by Julius Korngold, as it violated the terms under which he had released the rights to the ballet to Universal Edition.

<sup>84</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 56. Korngold appreciated Weingartner's precision, clarity of interpretation and fidelity to tradition, especially in the symphonic and operatic repertoire. However, he did not consider him an innovator or an outstanding artist on the scale of Gustav Mahler and often expressed this opinion, sparing him no criticism. He therefore doubted the sincerity of Weingartner's intentions, fearing an attempt to possibly sabotage his son's work. However, the conductor sincerely valued the music that the young Korngold was creating and, as a noble man, did not turn down a good proposal.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

[...] this work can be compared with every kind of genre of pantomime, and yet its delicate grace, surprising rhythmic charm, bold assurance in creating a character in a laconic couple of bars is truly amazing and ever rather frightening when one considers the tender age of its creator.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the excellent reviews, Korngold's father claimed that Universal Edition had breached their contract by offering the ballet to the Vienna State Opera. In fact, the conservative critic was eager to take the opportunity to end the collaboration. He was not fond of the publishing house because it supported a radical, modernist branch of music. The agreement was terminated, but nothing concerning the musical phenomenon that the young Korngold represented at the time could remain a secret, especially in a city as fond of gossip and scandals as Vienna. Consequently, Ludwig Strecker from the Schott publishing house promptly stepped forward with a counterproposal, offering to publish the composer's works for life. This bold initiative stood the test of time admirably, the cooperation was extremely satisfactory for both parties, a long-standing friendship and intimacy developed between Korngold and Strecker and his family<sup>90</sup>, and Schott remained the composer's publisher until his death.

Korngold's debut was not, however, spared from negative comments, as some artists remained at odds with his father or fell victim to the critic's harsh judgements and resented him. These people sought to harm everything associated with Julius, and thus cast doubt on Erich's genius, attributing the ballet's authorship to Zemlinsky or even to Julius himself. The latter replied with humour that, had he possessed talent of this format, "he would not have his life to being a mere critic"<sup>91</sup>. Some went so far as to suggest that Julius had threatened Weingartner by forcing him to stage a ballet<sup>92</sup>. Opinions were dictated by an emotional relationship to Korngold's father and, as is usual in such cases, completely contradictory: those who did not question the work's authorship accused the young Korngold of modernist tendencies, while others considered him too subservient to his father's conservative tastes. Contrary to contradictory opinions and various insinuations, the young Erich, in terms of musical taste and language, did not allow himself to be forced into his father's beliefs and desires, but shaped his own voice, faithfully following his inner intuition and honing the skills he had already acquired. A perfect illustration of this statement is an article by Paul Bekker, a German critic known for his extensive theoretical and practical knowledge, who wrote in the magazine *Sound of the Future* about Korngold's compositions:

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>90</sup> As an expression of friendship, Korngold dedicated the most famous of his operas, *Die tote Stadt* Op. 12 to Ludwig Strecker.

<sup>91</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 61.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

One looks in vain for the traces of young uncertainty, for exaggeration and clumsiness. Here there are no rough edges, no loss of control, nothing borrowed, nothing imitated. This music looks at the world with a new face, a face that shows fresh, innocent features but of a totally original coinage.<sup>93</sup>

It is worth noting that it was not only the native Vienna and German-speaking centres that praised Korngold's work. When Sir Henry Wood was introducing London audiences to the composer's works at promenade concerts in 1912, Ernest Newman, the British musicologist, devoted an entire article to Korngold in the magazine *The Nation*, in which he made the interesting observation that *Der Schneemann* "sounds like music for children (or those who want to be children again for a while), written by an adult"<sup>94</sup>. According to him, anyone who came across Korngold's scores and tried to play them would find that they were written by a thirty- perhaps forty-year-old. "Humour, irony, tenderness - these are not the aesthetic categories one expects from an 11-year-old boy."<sup>95</sup>

Years later, in 1937, in an interview with *The Etude Music Magazine*, Korngold explained that his first composition was a ballet because it was the easiest form for a child of that age to understand. He highlighted the fact that although he wrote it at a very young age, he never changed a single note in it. He also stated that the best living composer of ballet music is Igor Stravinsky, after whom there was no more development, only imitation. When asked why he did not compose more ballets, he replied somewhat perversely, 'Why write a ballet, when it may be included in an opera with far greater effect? Opera is the combination of all the elements. After all, the inspiration for the dance comes from the music, not music from the dance.'<sup>96</sup>

Undoubtedly, the success of the ballet *Der Schneemann* at the beginning of the young Korngold's composing career strengthened the dream present in his heart of composing stage music, led by the queen of this genre, opera.

### ***Serenade from the ballet Der Schneemann***

Serenade from the ballet *Der Schneemann* is the shortest of the composer's works for violin and piano, lasting just two and a half minutes. In the original, it is a violin solo, closely integrated into the stage action, which Pierrot performs under the window of his beloved Colombine. The violin voice is faithful to the original, having been transcribed in direct form from the score<sup>97</sup>. The piece is only 38 bars long (including a two-bar solo piano introduction), and is in 4/4 metre, in a moderate *andantino* tempo, in the key of A major. The form is

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p.45.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, pp.87- 88.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>96</sup> The quotation and information is from an interview with the composer conducted by Verna Arvey, pianist and writer, at the Warner Brothers Studio. Quoted in 'The Etude Music Magazine', No.1, January 1937, Theodore Presser Company, pp.15-16, <https://archive.org/details/EtudeJanuary1937> [accessed 23 May 2025].

uncomplicated<sup>98</sup> and free, thus harking back to the origins of the genre, when serenades were self-contained miniatures with a love song character.

The composer builds phrases using two motifs of contrasting rhythm and different expressions (see Example 1). The first motif (m1) is single-bar, measured and uses a binary rhythm pattern. It is introduced by the piano, as early as the first bar, in the introduction. It begins with an eighth rest, followed by three eighth notes and two quarter notes, and includes a characteristic emphasis on the second eighth note (the top note), falling on the second measure in the bar. In moments of heightened expression, each eighth note receives an accent or marking. The second motive (m2) is also single-bar, but most often the composer extends or modifies it and arranges it over the space of two bars. The motif makes use of triplets and dotted rhythm (group: dotted eighth and sixteenth) and, through the ligatures used, does not emphasise the measures of the bars as does the first motif. Its shape, mainly due to its broader ambitus (from the diminished octave through the ninth to the tenth) and the fragmentation of rhythmic values, resembles a rapidly rising and immediately falling wave. It is characterised by the juxtaposition of *crescendos* and *diminuendos* in a small space, as well as an open, broad, sweeping ascending gesture and subsequent extinction<sup>99</sup>. The melodic lines constructed from the above motifs are short but not lacking in tunefulness. For the expression of both motives, the intervals used in their endings play an important role. The rising seconds give them the character of an optimistic question or expression of hope, while the falling seconds bring to mind a sigh, sometimes with painful overtones. Rising fourths introduce a mood of joyful expansiveness, while falling fourths encourage reflection. Quintets are always used in a descending direction and occur in conjunction with minor chords, giving motifs and whole phrases a nostalgic tinge.

In the violin part there are characteristic *mini-diminuendos* over the space of one note (bars 3, 4, 11). From bar 6 onwards, the composer introduces (graphically) a good deal of *marcato* markings in the parts of both instruments. In the original, the characteristic colour of the accompaniment is provided by the harp, which the piano imitates in the transcription through numerous *arpeggio* chords (see Example 2).

---

<sup>97</sup> The composer has made two virtually imperceptible rhythmic changes. In the transcription, the first measure in bars 18 and 19 is based on an eighth-note division, whereas the original uses a triplet division (the use of the ligature remains unchanged).

<sup>98</sup> The sections in bars 3 to 13 and 20 to 30 are based on the same melorhythmic pattern (the melody appears several times in octave or fifth transposition). In bars 16 to 19, an ascending progression and numerous crescendos are used, so that in bar 20 a climactic dynamic is reached in the piece (*forte ma dolce*), valid with minor changes until bar 32, and then gradually descending. The section from bar 34 to the end of the miniature is coda-like.

<sup>99</sup> In the score of the ballet, there is a term *affettuoso* at the first demonstration of this motif in the solo violin part, which is missing in the transcription. It provides an important performance clue.

E.W. Korngold.

Andantino.

Violine.

m 1

mf sempre espressivo

Klavier.

p

m 1

m 1

m 1

m 2

m 1

m 2 – wydłużony, zmodyfikowany

poco rit.

legatissimo

m 1

poco rit.

**Example 1.** E.W. Korngold - Serenade from the ballet *Der Schneemann*, bars 1-11 (motifs)

In my interpretation of *Serenade*, I have chosen to emphasise the fact that the melodic line is formed by placing one- or two-bar motifs side by side, in adjacent positions, without being intended as a long-breathed phrase (as is the case, for example, in *Sonata in G major*). This way of phrase construction is not typical of Korngold and, in my opinion, serves to convey a particular lyrical situation. Pierrot, playing a song for his beloved, does not tell a long, thought-out story, but spontaneously expresses the feelings swirling in his heart, of which every now and then another comes 'to the surface'. In this way, each motif functions as a slightly different thought, feeling or memory, building the mood of the piece, rather than leading a conscious, planned narrative. In my realisation, therefore, I made no attempt to construct an

elaborate musical statement or to deliberately model, maintain and transfer dynamic-formal tension between successive bars.

E. W. Korngold.

Violine. **Andantino.** **mini-diminuendo** *mf sempre espressivo*

Klavier. **arpeggio** **marcato** **marcato** **marcato** **marcato** **mini-diminuendo** **arpeggio** *poco rit.*

**Example 2.** E.W. Korngold - Serenade from the ballet *Der Schneemann*, bars 1-11 (articulation, dynamics)

*Serenade* is maintained in the tone of a serene, lyrical song of a sweet, dreamy character, with subtle touches of nostalgia. With its compact form, clear expression and expressive artistic message, it is a valuable item in the repertoire of recital *encores*, while remaining the most famous and recognisable excerpt from the ballet *Der Schneemann*.

### ***Sieben Märchenbilder* Op. 3 - the fairytale origins of musical language**

In December 1910 Korngold completed his third opus, *Sieben Märchenbilder*, a cycle of seven miniatures for solo piano. The pieces were accompanied by short texts by Hans Müller, a playwright and novelist who was a friend of Julius Korngold and published in the 'Neue Freie Presse'<sup>100</sup>. The composition was dedicated to Archduke Eugen, in gratitude for his patronage<sup>101</sup>.

"Seven Fairy Tale Pictures", as the English equivalent of the title would sound, is further evidence of the exceptional plasticity of the young Korngold's musical imagination and a surprising stylistic maturity for his age. The cycle abounds in melodic themes and has been artfully composed, displaying a wide spectrum of piano possibilities. The miniatures do not sound like childish attempts at composition, but have a certain nostalgic overtone<sup>102</sup>. References to the style of other composers can be picked up in them. Characteristic melodic structures, such as the whole-tone scale, are reminiscent of Debussy's melodicism, while the numerous dotted rhythms allude to the expansive rhythmic figures present in the works of Richard Strauss. Many of the harmonic combinations employed are surprising in their boldness and originality. Nevertheless, even the most peculiar and unexpected sequences can be explained within the framework of functional harmony. Korngold reaches for unusual, modernist-sounding chords, but this advanced form of harmonic language grows out of tradition without attempting to shatter the existing order. Ernest Newmann wrote the following about the composition in a review for *The Nation*:

You may incidentally see his mastery in every sort of harmonic combination and transition in graceful trifles like *Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse* and the *Rübezahl* from the *Märchenbilder* where he plays laughingly with one or two of the devices by which Debussy sets such store, and then throws them aside as toys that a man ought not to take too seriously.<sup>103</sup>

The series consists of seven parts:

#### I - Die verzauberte Princessin

---

<sup>100</sup> As a diagnosed hypochondriac and brilliant storyteller, Müller was regarded as an eccentric figure among the Viennese world. Throughout his life, he admired Korngold's talent and activity. In addition to the above-mentioned texts, Müller also wrote the libretto for the one-act opera *Violanta*, Op. 8, and for the opera *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20, considered by Korngold to be his masterpiece. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 102.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55. In the summer of 1910, Korngold was in Salzburg, where a music festival was in progress. The event was patronised by Archduke Eugen, who vividly remembered his admiration for the chamber ballet *Der Schneemann*, staged at an imperial fund-raiser for widows and orphans a few months earlier, at the end of April (See *Der Schneemann* - the revelation of the miraculous child, [in:] chap. II). The Archduke, eager to meet the national *wunderkind*, asked Korngold to give a private recital, which was also heard by a small elite group of European virtuosos, critics and composers who were at the festival. The following morning, Erich attended the festival's morning concert. As the Archduke was walking to his seat, he stopped by Korngold and, in the presence of the other guests and listeners, had a brief conversation with him, thanking him for the donated ballet score (which he had previously requested) and promising to study it carefully. The event reverberated and caused much comment and discussion in the community, extending the young Korngold's recognition and appreciation.

<sup>102</sup> See the title of the chapter on *Schneemann*, footnote 28.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 89.

II - Die Princessin auf der Erbse

III - Rübezahl

IV - Wichtelmännchen

V - Ball beim Märchenkonig

VI - Das tapfere Schneiderlein

VII - Das Märchen spricht der Epilog.<sup>104</sup>

The title evokes an association with Schumann's four-movement composition for viola and piano, *Märchenbilder*, Op. 113. Although Korngold did not directly pay homage to the German Romantic, an intriguing similarity can be observed between the two works. Indeed, the last movement of each cycle is a slow movement: in Schumann's *Langsam, mit melancholichem Ausdruck*, despite its melancholic expression quite cheerful, in Korngold's *Das Märchen spricht der Epilog*, full of striking nostalgia. This is a rather unusual procedure, as culminations of this type of composition usually take the form of a virtuoso display or a lively dance. The choice of a slow, introspective finale as the conclusion of a cycle inspired by fairy tales and magic testifies, in my opinion, to the composer's great maturity. Fairy tales accompany humans mainly in childhood and are most often passed on orally, usually as bedtime stories. The calm, nostalgic finale is not only an aesthetic closure to the piece, but also a beautiful symbolic gesture that elevates the cycle's narrative to a meta-level: on the one hand, it slightly distances the previously told stories, in a way commenting on them from the perspective of 'acquired wisdom', and on the other, it can express the inner state of the cycle's speaker, the adult who, having finished telling the tale, feels a sudden nostalgia for an irretrievably past childhood.

Apart from its aesthetic and musical qualities, the *Märchenbilder* cycle is significant in the composer's career for several reasons. The fourth movement, *Die Wichtelmännchen*, became Korngold's first recorded work for a record label. The recording for the Gramophone Company in Vienna was made in 1914 by the pianist Alfred Grünfeld, who came across Korngold and his music in the salon of Adela Strauss, an ardent admirer of the composer's talent<sup>105</sup>.

---

<sup>104</sup> I give the titles of the individual parts in free translation into Polish: I - Zaklęta księżniczka, II - Księżniczka na ziarnku grochu, III - Liczyrzepa/Rzepiór (this is a ghost living in the Karkonosze Mountains, the hero of many Polish, Czech and German legends), IV - Goblin (perhaps a more appropriate translation would be the word "gnome" or "kobold" - for the German word means a small, domestic ghost, prone to pranks), V - Bal u baśniowego króla, VI - Dzielny mały krawiec, VII - Epilog (literally: "the tale tells an epilogue").

<sup>105</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 77 pp. 79, p. 345. These were not, however, the first recordings of Korngold's music. In 1911, at the invitation of the Philipps-Duca company, Artur Schnabel recorded *Piano Sonata No. 2 in E major*, Op. 2, on pianola tape, and the composer himself recorded the entire *Sieben Märchenbilder*, Op.

The fifth movement of the cycle marks the first appearance of a characteristic motif that will remain present in the composer's work to the very end, unchanged (see Example 3). It is an interval structure with a very wide ambitus. It was invented by Korngold himself and is called *Motiv des fröhlichen Herzens* - "Motive of the Serene Heart"<sup>106</sup>. It is formed by a series of notes based on a sequence of ascending or interlocking pure quartets (sometimes in overtone). Such a broad and sweeping musical gesture momentarily attracts and captures the listener's attention.



**Example 3.** E.W. Korngold - *Märchenbilder*, Op. 3, Part V - *Ball beim Märchenkonig*, bars 1-3 ("Serenity Motif")

This original motto will remain a kind of signature, Korngold's 'trademark'. It will recur in all of his major works: we find it in operas, chamber works and film music alike<sup>107</sup>.

*Märchenbilder* is part of a general trend that is characteristic of Korngold's oeuvre: a lively ability to inspire other authors. The creative spark returned more than once in charming form. In this case, the pianist Isidor Cohn, a pupil of Bülow and Scharwenka, sent Korngold a collection of essays inspired by the cycle<sup>108</sup>, written by his female pupils.

3, in this form. The fate of this tape is unfortunately unknown, but the 2nd and 4th movements as performed by the composer were also immortalised on a 1951 gramophone disc recorded for Varèse Sarabande as the fruit of the efforts of Marcel Prawy, a great advocate of Korngold's music. The Austrian playwright and opera critic had known and admired the composer since the late 1920s and was keen to preserve Korngold's unique style of playing for future generations. The album entitled *Korngold by Korngold* is a perfect example of the creativity that characterised the artist's performance: when conducting and playing his works, the composer embellishes and expands them with improvised passages and bars that do not exist in the score.

<sup>106</sup> See B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 77, p. 85, and J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 48, pp. 56-58.

<sup>107</sup> "The theme of the Serene Heart" appears in the following compositions, among others: *Sinfonietta*, Op. 5, composed for large symphony orchestra, *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6 (mainly in the fourth movement), in the Intermezzo (third movement) from the *String Sextet in D major*, Op. 10, in the opera *Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12 or as the first theme of *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 35, which draws on the theme of the film *Another Dawn*.

<sup>108</sup> Cohn promoted Korngold's work with, in his own words, 'the zeal of an apostle'. It was he who introduced Sir Henry Wood to the composer's works, which led to their performance at one of London's promenade concerts, known since 1927 as the BBC Proms. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 99, p. 378.

### *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*

The fourth movement of *Märchenbilder* has been arranged for violin and piano as the exclusive link to the cycle, being given the title *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*. It was arranged by the violinist Rózsika von Révay<sup>109</sup>, making the caprice the only work for violin and piano in Korngold's oeuvre whose transcription does not come directly from the composer. The original key of E minor has been replaced by the key of A minor, allowing the virtuosic potential of the violin to be better exploited, not least through the use of passages with a wide ambitus, from the minor octave to the quadruple octave.

---

<sup>109</sup> Little information has survived about the artist. Rózsika von Révay is listed in the database of Holocaust survivors and victims; her date of birth is given there: 22 February 1894 (see online: [https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person\\_view.php?PersonId=4217138](https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=4217138), accessed 23 May 2025). From 1928 to 1934, von Révay performed regularly in Vienna, primarily playing chamber concerts for Radio Wien, as violinist of the Auber Trio (see Photograph), an ensemble founded by the Polish cellist Salomon Auber, in which his wife Maria played the piano. Salomon Auber was born in Tarnow in 1864 and settled permanently in Vienna at the age of 30, where he gave concerts and private lessons. The musician's succinct biographical note indicates that von Révay took lessons from him (see online: [https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik\\_A/Auber\\_Familie.xml](https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_A/Auber_Familie.xml), accessed 23 May 2025), although there is no information on their number or frequency; however, it is known that in 1921 von Révay appeared as soloist in a concert at the Musikverein, conducted by the cellist himself. The Auber Trio made several concert tours in Europe (France, Germany, Switzerland), but was mainly active in Vienna (for example, on 14 April 1928 the ensemble played *Piano Trio in B flat major 'Archduke'*, Op. 97 for Radio Wien Ludwig van Beethoven), as evidenced by numerous entries in archival issues of Viennese newspapers (see more online in the searchable archive of Austrian historical newspapers and magazines: <https://anno.onb.ac.at/anno-dry/simple?query=Rozsika%20Revay&from=1&selectedFilters=date:%5B1927%20TO%201943%5D>, accessed 23 May 2025).



**Photograph.** Prof. S. Auber (with cello), Maria Auber (at the piano), Rózsika von Révay (with violin) - posed photograph, photo N.N., Vienna, 1920-1931. Source: National Digital Archive, Concern "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny" - Illustration Archive, ref. 1- E-1327, <https://audiovis.nac.gov.pl/obraz/232653> [accessed 23 May 2025].

No information has survived about the violinist's acquaintance or closer relationship with Korngold, and there is no mention of a possible commission for such an arrangement in the sheet music published by Schott. Korngold's work was widely acclaimed and widely celebrated in Vienna and other European cities. Knowing the realities of the era, in which artists were eager to take popular works of the time, operatic arias or various musical innovations, and then develop them according to their own taste, liking and performance style, including them in the programmes of their recitals<sup>110</sup>, it can be assumed that Révay saw the stage potential of *Wichtelmännchen* and arranged the work for her own concert needs. It was common practice of the time to devise works with herself as the performer in mind, so it can be concluded from the

---

<sup>110</sup> The undisputed king in the field of violin transcriptions of the time is Fritz Kreisler. The number of transcriptions he made is impossible to specify, as not all of them have been published, but he nevertheless created a minimum of several dozen.

technical layer of the whimsy<sup>111</sup> that Révay was a very skilful violinist with a rich arsenal of performance resources at her disposal.

The artist has retained the original flow of the piece without changing its form. The arrangement is full of interesting articulatory procedures which play a colouristic role. In many cases, the notation suggests that it should not be treated with mechanical precision, with its form hinting rather at the effect it is meant to resound, as too much formalism in performance could provide a caricatured overtone of a given place (see Example 4).



**Example 4.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, violin part, vol. 197 (irregular group)

The motifs are short and expressive, showing the character of energetic interventions. They are often presented by the violin against a piano backdrop, built up from octave tremolo or trills. The instruments enter into dialogue with each other, imitating motifs, sometimes by way of complement, addition or humorous commentary, at other times by way of foreboding, sarcastic repetition or counter-proposition. The parts of both instruments are interspersed with expansive passages of (sometimes absurdly) wide ambitus. Interestingly, there are no descending passages in the piece; there are only ascending passages with a sweeping gesture, emphasised by crescendos, similar in their dynamics to fireworks being set off. Phrases are spiced up by accents, often placed irregularly or on the weak part of the bar, and a penetrating *sforzato*, used on the principle of a sudden eruption. The ending, which acts as the punch line of a phrase, is sometimes almost 'shouted out', emphasised in the manner of a horn: the consonance remains constant and is repeated several times with increasing or sustained intensity, each value accompanied by an accent or *sforzato* (see Example 5).

<sup>111</sup> In some places there are even annotations '*ad libitum*' or *ossia* versions. At the beginning of the piece there is also a notation: "It is up to the performer to omit the lower voice of the double stops". These didascalia probably come from the publisher, who was trying to widen the circle of potential buyers of sheet music.

**Rasch hinhuschend, aber deutlich**

Violino

Piano

**Example 5.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*, bars 1-22 (motifs, articulation, dynamics)

1 arco

detache

spicc.

p ponticello

detache

spicc.

p ponticello

ponticello

spicc.

poco a poco cresc.

f

p

**Example 6.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*, violin part, bars 40- 66 (multiplicity of articulation types)

The articulatory layer of the piece is really rich, and some of the techniques used add a touch of extravagance to the whimsy (see Example 6, Example 7, Example 8). The means used include accents, *sforzato*, *marcato*, ricochets, *staccato* (the nature of the sections involving *staccato* in the violin part prompts the use of a *volante* variation), *spiccato*, *pizzicato* (including left-hand *pizzicato*, *arpeggio pizzicato*, a longer section of *pizzicato* chords), *sul ponticello*, chromatic glissando, trills, tremolo and numerous *arpeggio* chords (in the piano part). The colouration is enriched by an abundance of grace notes, dissonant second-interval harmonies, chromatic descents, and groups of numerous small rhythmic values (9, 11, 25) fitting within a crotchet, arranged based on semitone or scalar passages (see Example 9). These figures and techniques seem to evoke the laughter of the titular goblins, their mischievous, irritatingly malicious nature, and the fairy-tale, fantastical character of the miniature.

**Example 7.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*, violin part, bars 109-35 (multiplicity of articulation types)

Dynamics play an important role in building the illustrativeness of the piece. Grotesque effects are heightened by rapid dynamic shifts of opposite vector (piano-forte, fortissimo-piano, etc.), sudden, sweeping crescendos and changes in texture density, juxtaposed by contrast.

The image displays a complex musical score for a violin part, consisting of three staves. The notation is highly detailed, featuring various articulation marks such as accents (>), slurs, and dynamic markings like *sfz*, *f*, and *p*. The score includes technical instructions such as *pizz.* (pizzicato), *arco* (arco), *flieg. stacc.* (flying staccato), *gliss.* (glissando), and *ad lib.* (ad libitum). There are also performance directions like *(okt. ad lib.)* (octave ad libitum). The score is divided into sections labeled *Ossia: (A)* and *Ossia: (B)*. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece is in the key of B-flat major, as indicated by the key signature and the final chord.

**Example 8.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*, violin part, bars 136-56 (multiplicity of articulation types)

**Example 9.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*, bars 191-200 (irregular groups)

Twice in the course of the piece the metre changes (from 2/4 to 3/4), together with the character. In these sections, the caprice is transformed into a slightly rhythmically deformed waltz, with minor mood fluctuations, agogically unstable through the *rubato* incorporated into its fabric. In the violin part, the melodic line is reinforced by generously applied octaves, and ornaments in the form of mordents and harmonics also appear. The grace notes should become more subtle and change in expression to a more playful tone (previously they were witty but also strong, emphatic). The shape of the phrases and their flow show characteristics of a waltz. A dance-like quality is present, as well as moments of decisive movement, achieved by moving forward with a single, long line. This line gradually gains density and weight, and its tension is half-liberated in moments of lift and momentary pause.

All the characteristics of the piece described above are contained within just two hundred bars, making *Caprice fantastique* an extraordinarily striking miniature. The fairy-tale figures of the goblins, which inspired this movement, and particularly their mischievous, malicious, and capricious nature, are perfectly captured in the music, while the pervasive *geheimnisvoll*<sup>112</sup> spirit reflects the mystery shrouding their mythical, enigmatic world. The musical imagination of a thirteen-year-old boy, combined with astonishingly mature compositional skills for his age, brought the vibrant miniature *Wichtelmännchen* into existence. In the virtuosic arrangement for violin and piano proposed by Rózsika von Révay, *Caprice fantastique* reveals even more of its inherent colours and emotions.

### ***Sonata in G major, Op. 6 - a tribute to tradition and virtuosity***

*Sonata in G major, Op. 6* is the only example of its genre in the composer's chamber works<sup>113</sup>. It was inspired by Artur Schnabel, a distinguished pianist and legendary interpreter of the music of the Viennese classics<sup>114</sup>. He was delighted with the *Second Piano Sonata* composed by the thirteen-year-old Erich and performed it regularly<sup>115</sup>. As he and violinist Carl Flesch were a touring duo interested in expanding their repertoire with new and interesting items, Schnabel suggested to Korngold that he should think of a piece for their ensemble.

Young composers of the early 20th century often leaned towards avant-garde aesthetics, aiming to transcend previous stylistic norms and challenging established conventions. Against their background, Korngold distinguished himself by a musical language that was deeply rooted in tradition, but already marked by a clear individuality from his very first compositions. He was also characterised by a desire for his work to bring pleasure to both the audience and the performers. For this reason, he avoided solutions that would not bring him personal satisfaction. As a pianist of above-average skill and original playing style, he usually composed works that were technically very demanding and complex in terms of performance. When we look at *Sonata*, it is evident, even in the light of the above observation, that in composing it, Korngold was thinking of two great artists, virtuosos of their instruments. The dedication in the notes, *Artur Schnabel und Karl Flesch gewidmet*, also confirms this fact. The sonata was completed in 1913 and published as opus 6. The premiere took place on 21 October in Berlin, with the

---

<sup>112</sup> From German - mysterious, enigmatic

<sup>113</sup> Representing the sonata genre in Korngold's solo works are three piano works: *Sonata No. 1 in D minor*, composed in 1908/1909 and not given an opus number, *Sonata No. 2 in E major*, Op. 2, completed in 1910, and *Sonata No. 3 in C major*, Op. 25, from 1931.

<sup>114</sup> He was famously described as 'the man who invented Beethoven'. Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1987 (revised edition), p. 425.

<sup>115</sup> It is worth recalling the pianist's words in this context: "I am attracted only to music which I consider to be better than it can be performed" Arthur Schnabel, *My Life and Music*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1972, p. 122.

dedicatees as performers. In November, the composition became known in Vienna, and thereafter the artists performed the sonata regularly in joint recitals. In May 1914, during a music festival in Bonn, it could be heard interpreted by the composer himself with his music partner Adolf Busch<sup>116</sup>.

The first sketches of the Sonata were still being written in 1912, but the main part of the work fell during the summer months of 1913<sup>117</sup>. At the time, Korngold was busy orchestrating *Sinfonietta*, Op. 5, composed the year before, his first work for a large symphony orchestra. Thinking with a diverse palette of instrumental orchestral colours had a significant impact on the sonata's stylistics, noticeably permeating its texture.

*Sonata in G major*, Op. 6 is a substantial composition, taking around forty minutes to perform. It consists of four movements:

I - *Ben moderato, ma con passione*

II - *Scherzo. Allegro molto (con fuoco)*

III - *Adagio. Mit tiefer Empfindung*

IV - *Finale. Allegretto quasi andante (con grazia).*

The composer does not go beyond the typical framework of the genre. He uses the familiar, seemingly established structure of the work, supplementing it with his own innovative ideas. He develops the chosen form, using it as a stable platform on which new content is clearly presented and can fully resonate. This makes him a continuation of the creative stance taken by Brahms or Mahler. First movement is maintained in the form of a sonata allegro. It is followed by a powerful *Scherzo* of ABA' structure, which is the longest movement of the sonata. Third movement is a slow one - a less frequent but not surprising choice. The finale takes the form of a series of free variations, enriched by a concise fugue, loosely linked to elements of the sonata allegro form. The sonata is reminiscent of Richard Strauss's *Sonata in E flat major for violin and piano*, Op. 18, composed a quarter of a century earlier and published in 1888, in terms of its substantial size, ardent expression, rich texture and enchantingly tuneful, lyrical melodic lines.

The piano part is overly grandiose. Its texture is reminiscent of a hybrid between a solo concerto and a piano excerpt, as it is standard to operate with consonances consisting of two to

---

<sup>116</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 93.

<sup>117</sup> The only notations referring to the dates and place of composition are those noted in the manuscript in mov. II: "Karlsbad, 30 Juni 1913" and in mov. III: "Altaussee, 19 August 1913", i.e. 30 June and 19 August respectively. Emily Ruth Laminack, *A performer's guide to Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Sonata for violin and piano in G major Op. 6*, doctoral dissertation 2016, unreleased, [https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/laminack\\_emily\\_r\\_201605\\_dma.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/laminack_emily_r_201605_dma.pdf) [accessed 23 May 2025], p. 10.

four notes in the part of each hand. Korngold often leads the voices in octaves or employs doubling of individual chord components, taking the singing, broad *legato*<sup>118</sup> as the overriding mode of expression. These compositional procedures provide the sonata with a richness of orchestral texture, while at the same time making the piano part sometimes dominant, especially in sections where the violin material is located in the instrument's midrange. Throughout the sonata there are numerous, albeit short, piano solos<sup>119</sup>, some of which act as linking passages, but most of which are individual statements, introducing new themes or acting as a concluding commentary.

The Sonata is an overwhelmingly coherent composition in terms of thematic material, texture and colour. The motivic unity is the basic glue of the piece, and the internal references are very clear and suggestive. Each movement (except *Scherzo*) begins with a motif with similar melorhythmic contours (see Example 10). This characteristic similar shape unifies the material, which is often subjected to complex harmonic transformations, passing through a series of distant tonalities in a short space. Like an Art Nouveau painter whose primary means of expression was the long line - fluid, undulating and restless - Korngold runs a supple and flexible melodic line, masterfully playing with its thickness, curvature and subjecting it to constant alterations. The melodies are internally complex, and long-breathed phrases carry an imperative of continuity, almost relentless progression. Climaxes are constructed over many bars. The idiom of lyricism takes precedence, present even in the chordal piano part, as the composer thinks not vertically but horizontally, with chords often resulting from the richness of lines and the abundance of voices.

Another important aspect of the sonata's character is the dance-like quality that permeates it. The construction of a dance-like overtone is primarily influenced by rhythm and the manner of accentuation - the juxtaposition of heavier and more stable measures against lighter, complementary ones. The ends of the motifs often turn in an upward direction. The higher notes reached in a delicate way can depict a temporary 'state of weightlessness', occurring in the dance, for example in the figure of lifting a partner. Such a lack of weight is a transient, fleeting phenomenon. As the melodic line descends into its previous register, it gains weight, either gravitating towards a new harmony or returning to the old key. The motifs used by Korngold are deeply rooted in the aesthetics of the Viennese waltz: elegant yet expressive,

---

<sup>118</sup> Incidentally, this testifies to his incredible talents and physical aptitude as a pianist, as he himself performed this sonata at the age of 16.

<sup>119</sup> These are usually two-, three- and four-bar sections. Among the longest are the solo in the epilogue of *the Sonata* (9 bars) and the first demonstration of the theme in the fugue (12 bars), also found in the finale.

they often make use of sweeping yet refined gestures, reminiscent in their liveliness of the rapid whirling turns characteristic of that dance.

**cz. I**

Ben moderato, ma con passione

VIOLINE

KLAVIER

*p espr.*

*p*

**cz. II**

**cz. III**

Mit tiefer Empfindung

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

**cz. IV**

Allegretto quasi Andante (con grazia)

*mp semplice ma con espressione*

*pp legato*

*poco rit.*

*a tempo*

**Example 10:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 1-2; mov. II, bars 5-9; mov. III, bars 1-4; mov. IV, bars 1-4 (unifying motif of *Sonata*)

The sonata reveals the presence of a dramatic element, permeating Korngold's compositions from his earliest works<sup>120</sup>. Here we find plastic, clearly delineated themes and numerous episodes of soloistic recitative character (see Example 11). Korngold treats selected motifs in a manner similar to the technique of leitmotifs, and the overall tunefulness, lyricism of the phrases and their expressive, sometimes declamatory overtones, bring to mind a way of thinking appropriate to opera. A sense of dramaturgy, an instinct for stage requirements (the pace of musical action, the architecture of climaxes, form), and the suggestive characterisation of figures through concise themes and aptly chosen colouration—these are qualities that, in later years, earned fervent acclaim in the Hollywood film industry.

The harmonic language is rich with an abundance of employed sonorities, and its grandeur is astonishing, considering that only two instruments are involved. Korngold enriches the traditional framework of major-minor harmony with whole-tone and modal scales, the juxtaposition of different tonal variants, the use of ambiguous modes, and sudden chromatic and enharmonic modulations. The degree of chromaticism in the musical material is pushed to the absolute limits of the prevailing system, yet all sonorities can be interpreted within the framework of functional harmony.

The Sonata shares many features with the tenets of Expressionism, present among Viennese composers at the time. The fervent, sometimes even ecstatic expression, the energy of the phrases, the intensity of the counterpoints, the construction of the melody on the basis of intervals of a wide ambitus and exclamatory character, the presence of numerous dissonances, the complex, irregular rhythmic and the frequent use of extreme registers - all these measures are common to the techniques used by the Expressionists. The fundamental difference, however, concerns the layer of meaning: whereas Expressionism focused on showing the dark, tense and internally complicated aspects of the human psyche, Korngold's style rather emphasises the positive qualities of human nature, expressing through music an optimistic belief in the possibility of overcoming life's crises and achieving inner harmony. Ascending fourths and fifths symbolise joy and happiness<sup>121</sup>, ascending sixth leaps, despite their

---

<sup>120</sup> Interpreting the sonata allegro form on the grounds of drama or using tools and nomenclature derived from the literary world is not an uncommon move in music theory. I do not adopt such a research method, leaving a possible space for theorists. Speaking of the dramatic element, I am referring to Korngold's inclinations towards opera music and its characteristic rules (dramatic continuity, primacy of expression, technique of leitmotifs, narrative-psychological role of the accompaniment), which so strongly shape his style of thinking that, as in the case of Mozart, they become the overriding feature that binds his entire oeuvre together.

<sup>121</sup> They form the so-called 'Serene Heart Recital', see *Sieben Märchenbilder*, Op. 3 - the fairy-tale origins of musical language, [in:] chap. II.

questioning character, are full of hope, while ninth extensions most often reflect witty mischief, innocent roguish pranks, or unrestrained vital energy, rather than conflict and suffering.

The image shows a musical score for E.W. Korngold's Sonata in G major, Op. 6, movement I, bars 109-116. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a violin part and a piano accompaniment. The violin part is marked '(edel) mgp espr.' and the piano part is marked 'p'. The score includes a recitative-like section with a star symbol below the piano part. The piano part has a 'ten.' marking and a 'p' marking.

**Example 11.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 109-116 (recitative-like section)

Due to its rich harmonic language, the sonata abounds in a multitude of colours and hues. Korngold enhances the effect of multicolour by frequently presenting familiar material in a different tonal context, rather than using a new motif or developing an earlier one. He prefers to present the same theme in a new sound design, rather than introducing additional content. The composer plays with the violin's timbre, sometimes using effects such as harmonics, playing *sul ponticello* (*am Steg*), dense tremolo, numerous glissandos (ambitus from seventh to tenth), trills or pizzicato (see Example 12).

**Example 12.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, violin part, mov. I, bars 69-87 (articulation to enrich colour)

The violin part is characterised by a high level of virtuosity. It is generally written in a single voice, occasionally enriched with chords, double stops, or octave doublings. Unusually, the violin line is often in a very high register: it frequently occupies the three-line octave, sometimes reaching into the four-line octave, especially in passages requiring special expression<sup>122</sup>. Analysing each of these sections in terms of colour and expression, one can see that the violin appears in them as a coloratura soprano, piccolo flute or imitates a specific falsetto sound.

The melodic line is highly capricious, consisting of numerous large leaps and distant connections, which means that selecting appropriate fingering requires considerable thought. The structures are not typically idiomatic for the violin, with the left hand rarely staying in one position for long, constantly being compelled to shift positions or employ extensions (both upwards and downwards)<sup>123</sup>. The composer's frequent use of whole-tone scales results in the replacement of the typical left-hand quartal arrangement with a semitone between the third and fourth (or second and third) fingers by a tritone-based arrangement using only whole tones, and the use of scales and variations outside the major-minor system or the frequent use of

<sup>122</sup> By the end of the third movement, the violin is at the upper limit of its register, so that the composer even places a lower octave *ossia* for 8 bars.


<sup>123</sup> From an executive point of view, I recommend shifting the perception of the index finger as a reference point for the hand to the middle finger and alternatively anchoring in the centre of the hand (preferably on the aforementioned second finger, as it is anatomically stronger than the third finger - the ring finger), which will increase the flexibility of the hand and fingers, extensibility in both directions and control of intonation.

chromaticism creates the need to define new arrangements and then neatly combine them all so as to maintain perfect intonation and flawless *legato*<sup>124</sup>.


From a practical point of view, it is also worth noting that the violin voice edition contains two errors, absent from the score:

- mov. III, bar 28: In the first half of the bar, the rhythm should be identical to the second: on the second beat, there should first be a sixteenth-note triplet, followed by two sixteenth notes,
- mov. IV, bar 118: the absence of a natural on the *d'* note in the first quarter-note of the triplet means that the chord should sound as a G major chord (see Example 13).

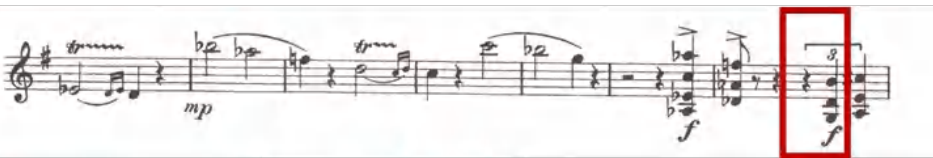
**cz. III, t. 28,  
błędny zapis**



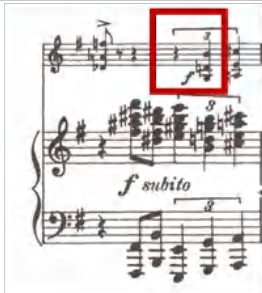
**cz. III, t. 27-28,  
wersja poprawna**



**cz. IV, t. 112-118,  
błędny zapis**



**cz. IV, t. 118,  
wersja poprawna**



**Example 13.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. III, bars 28, bars 27-28; mov. IV, bars 112-118, bar 118 (errors in violin part, correct versions from the score)

<sup>124</sup> Due to the *legato* articulation and wide ambitus of the motifs, it is usually disadvantageous to stay in one high position and link the notes through the strings, as this negatively affects the timbre within a single motif.

**mov. I - *Ben moderato, ma con passione***

The first movement begins without an introduction, directly with the main theme, based on a lively, meandering chromatic melodic line, first presented in the violin part. It is accompanied by a piano progression of chords containing numerous alterations, enharmonic equivalents of notes, and modal fluctuations, creating a distinctive sonic colouration. In the violin part, extended half notes (by an eighth or quarter note) regularly appear, functioning as a kind of “soprano pedal note.” During their duration, the piano performs a short sequence of several contrasting chords, unified by the sustained violin note. This characteristic technique recurs in many of Korngold’s works.

The image shows a page of musical notation for the first movement of E.W. Korngold's Sonata in G major, Op. 6. The score is for Violin and Piano. The title is "Ben moderato, ma con passione". The score is annotated with red and purple boxes. A red box labeled "temat I" highlights the first measure of the violin part. A purple box labeled "„sopranowe nuty pedalowe”" highlights the first measure of the piano part. A red box labeled "submf" highlights the second measure of the piano part. A red box labeled "dolce" highlights the third measure of the piano part. The score shows the violin part with a chromatic melodic line and the piano part with a complex chordal accompaniment.

**Example 14.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 1-12 (theme I and the stages of its development, 'soprano pedal notes')

The first movement, initially maintained in *piano* dynamics, begins after quarter- and eighth rests with a motif of two ascendant sixths in the violin part (the first of which is in unison with the piano, while a sounding subdominant appears on the second). This is a very characteristic Korngold gesture, reminiscent of the 'Serene Heart Motif' in its direction and sweeping ambitus. The theme is long, unfolding in three approaches (bars 1-4, 5-10, 10-18), the last of which begins an octave higher than the first, undergoing a diminuendo in the rhythmic layer in the violin part<sup>125</sup> (see Example 14).

In bars 37-38 and 130-132 in the violin part, one can notice peculiar rhomboidal marks above each note. No doubt these are intended to symbolise the swelling of sound - *enfiando*, crescendo and diminuendo in a very small space. Korngold thus achieves a sobbing, somewhat hysterical, wrenching expression. The composer places the same signs three and two bars from the end of the first movement in the piano part, thus conveying his intention and acting more on the imagination of the pianist, as it is impossible to perform such a notation on this instrument (see Example 15).



**Example 15.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, violin part, mov. I, bars 36-39; score - bars 165-170 (*enfiando*)

The rhythmic complexity can be fully observed in bars 97-102. The piano simultaneously realises a duple rhythm (sometimes with dotted rhythm) and a triple rhythm (triplets), with rhythmic values occasionally connected by a ligature or their entry following a rest. At the same time, the violin primarily employs a triple rhythmic division, with triplets

<sup>125</sup> The beginning of this final section in the piano part also occurs in the diminuendo, but begins earlier, from the 5th degree.

subdivided into semiquavers, but disrupted by quadruple slurring or irregular entries; in bar 101, there is even a group consisting of 20 notes. From a performance perspective, the key in this section is maintaining a sense of a shared quarter note pulse and being aware of places where slurs or rests make the accent on the regular beat merely implied. It is, of course, crucial to play accents only where they are notated, avoiding disruption of the section's structure by accenting every beat (see Example 16).

The image shows a musical score for E.W. Korngold's Sonata in G major, Op. 6, movement I, bars 97-102. The score is written for violin and piano. The violin part begins with a pizzicato section (pizz.) and then transitions to arco (arco). The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and a 20-note group. Performance markings include 'sempre cresc. e accel.', 'molto rit.', and 'a tempo'.

**Example 16.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 97-102 (rhythmic complexity)

Bars 109-116 are an excellent example of a recitative-like section. The texture of the piano part is significantly reduced, with the piano playing and holding consonances (often not even chords, but double stops) that underpin or complement the violin's recitative line<sup>126</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> See Example 11. Echoes of this passage will be heard decades later in the melodies of the first movement of the *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 35; the resemblance is very clear.

**Example 17.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 158-170 (*coda*)

The movement ends in a serene, tranquil mood: the final section (from bar 159 with upbeat to bar 170) is led towards a quenching and calming of earlier emotions. The number of notes in the piano part is reduced as the violin melody reaches higher and higher registers (a suspension on the third of the dominant in the four-line octave, in bar 164). In bars 164-166 (*Mit edlem Ausdruck*) there is a final minor opening, beginning the culmination of the movement, with the tonic appearing only as the last consonance (see Example 17).

**mov. II - Scherzo. Allegro molto (con fuoco)**

The composer has taken the unusual decision of choosing the key of E major, very distant from the basic key of the sonata (G major), as the base for the *Scherzo*, yet already in the first seven (or even three) bars he shows us the degree of attachment with which he will treat this

choice, basing the theme on the following chords, which change every bar: *E - Cis - C - a - G - C* (see Example 18). The metre is more stable: the two outer movements are in 3/8 metre<sup>127</sup>, and the middle section, the trio (*moderato cantabile*), is in 3/4 metre, extended occasionally to 4/4 (in this way Korngold precisely notes the desired *rubato*). The trio begins in the key of B minor, around which it then circles passing through closer or further, but still explainable on the grounds of major-minor harmonics.

For the *Scherzo*, the composer chose the triadic form ABA', using the enigmatic, dreamlike B movement for maximum contrast to the vigorous and 'noisy' outer movements. The A and A' movements are built on a sonata allegro form. In the A' movement, the second theme presented the second time introduces *the scherzo* finale, providing an elegiac transition to the *coda*, maintained in an effervescent character.

The entire movement sparkles with humour and feistiness, exuding a kind of playful insolence, a childlike mischief. This effect is created by virtuosic arpeggios and scale passages (present from the very beginning of the movement), syncopated entrances and shifted accents (see Example 18), a scattering of violin melodic line notes over an octave, including numerous ninths and sevenths, which may be treated as misguided, caricatured octaves (see Example 19), creative combinations of phrases (extending them or abruptly switching between them) (Example 19), the creative blending of phrases (extending them or abruptly interrupting them with the intervention of a second instrument), and the parodying of particular motifs and moods between violin and piano. The use of chromaticism, modality, the juxtaposition of contrasting timbres and harmonically distant chords also contribute to creating a *scherzando, non-serious* atmosphere.

---

<sup>127</sup> A brief exception occurs in the *coda*, where the 10-bar passage is written in 3/4 metre. There, the beginning of the second theme is shown in augmentation, which contributes to building a feeling of recapitulation, of heading towards the end, and makes the next-to-last section of *the coda* sound even more virtuosic.

**Allegro molto (con fuoco)**  
arco

**E      Cis      C**

**a      G      C**

pizz.      arco      pizz.

**Example 18:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 1-27 (harmony, syncopated accents, scale-based sequences, passages).

Musical score for violin part, bars 45-86. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time. It features several dynamic markings: *p espr.*, *espr.*, *ff*, *mf*, and *ff*. Red boxes highlight specific passages: two boxes in the second staff (bars 45-46), and five boxes in the fourth staff (bars 47, 48, 49, 50, and 51).

**Example 19.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, violin part, mov. II, bars 45-86 (broad ambitus leaps)

Musical score for piano accompaniment, bars 45-86. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time. It features several dynamic markings: *ff marcattissimo*, *Sul G*, *ffz*, *Sul A*, *poco ritard.*, and *ff*. The score includes performance instructions: *Etwas zurückhaltend in Zeitmaß und steigend*. The score is divided into three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

**Example 20.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 246-268 (articulation, dynamics)

The *con fuoco* character of boisterous carefree playing is also encouraged by the terms *marcato*, *marcatissimo*, *stacatissimo*, the use of numerous accents, with accents often over each note and chord (see Example 20), the use of *glissando* (in the violin part) and chords of very wide ambitus (in the piano part, often played *arpeggio*). Wit and impromptness can also be seen in bar 306, where the first note of the motif descends below the violin scale and the composer does not transpose it an octave higher, but entrusts this one note to the piano, enclosing it in the violin part in parentheses (see Example 21). It is noteworthy that the phrase in the A and A' movements is 'cobbled together' from short and expressive motives, thus the breath is short and frequent, and the continuity of the statement is divided by numerous eighth-note or sixteenth rests.



**Example 21.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, vol. 306 (sound beyond the violin scale)

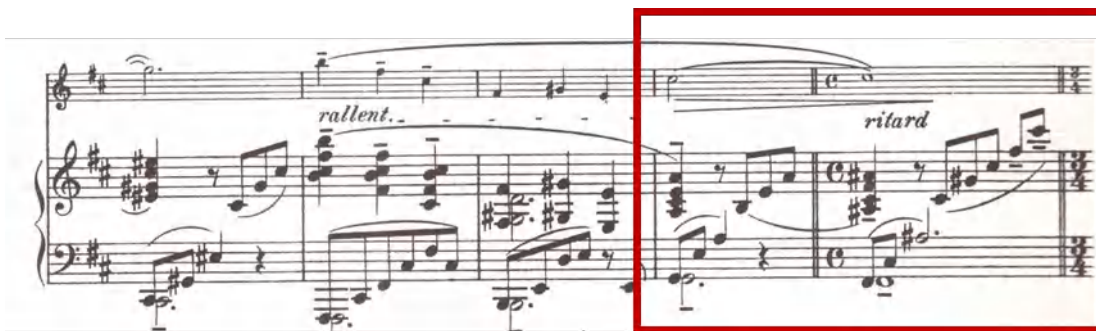
The middle section B presents a stark contrast in this regard. It is a poignant, enigmatic *misterioso*, in which the piano part primarily sustains a continuous, flowing quaver motion (see Example 22). Its shape could be likened to waves crashing against the shore (with the intention of ebb and flow distinctly audible), atop which the violin weaves a long-breathed, mysterious phrase of extraordinary lyricism and tenderness. The chosen metre evokes a dance-like character, further emphasised by *tenuto* markings (in the piano part on the first beat, in the violin part on the third, first, or even every beat in the bar).

Korngold notates a slowing down, changing the metre in the final bar of a given phrase from 3/4 to 4/4 (see Example 23). This deliberate, structural incorporation of *rubato* into the fabric of the piece is highly characteristic of the composer and recurs in many places. The overall sound is shimmering, elusive, and iridescent with colours, maintaining constant, regular motion. In

contrast to the outer sections, it calms, drawing the listener into a trance-like state through its repetitive rhythm<sup>128</sup>.



**Example 22.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 396-401 (trio, contrasting B section)



**Example 23.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 479-483 (change of metre - rubato woven into the fabric of the piece)

**mov. III - Adagio. Mit tiefer Empfindung<sup>129</sup>**

Of all the movements of the sonata, the third has the freest form and a loose narrative style, reminiscent of an unhurriedly spun story<sup>130</sup>. One can detect a certain triadicity of structure, with a middle link in bars 28-69 as well as returning to *Tempo I* and thematic material in bar 70. Korngold chooses D major as the tonal centre, but conducts the harmony in his own fine way. The rhythmic are complex, artful and, on the agogic level, the composer leaves few things to chance or to the intuition of the performer: as in the trio in the second movement, he even marks

<sup>128</sup> Julius Korngold noted in his memoirs and interviews that Erich showed an unusually broad knowledge of musical literature even as a child. He also emphasised his phenomenal musical memory and harmonic intuition. I personally associate the mood and colour of the trio with the 'Aquarium' from *Carnival of the Animals* by C. Saint-Saëns; however, there are no documented sources to confirm the inspiration in this particular case.

<sup>129</sup> From German: "with deep affection".

<sup>130</sup> Carroll refers to it as an 'elegiac rhapsody'. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 92.

slowing down by extending the metre of the last bar in the phrase from 4/4 to 5/4 (see Example 24), and places precise markings for tempo fluctuations throughout the movement.

The image shows a musical score for E.W. Korngold's Sonata in G major, Op. 6, movement III, bars 27-30. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano part with various dynamics and tempo markings. A red box labeled 'B' highlights a specific bar. Another red box labeled 'rozpísané ritardando' is placed below the piano part. A third red box highlights a section of the score with markings 'poco rit.' and 'mf a tempo (nicht schleppen) (ohne Verschiebung)'.

**Example 24.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. III, bars 27-30 (beginning of middle bar B, change of metre - *rubato* incorporated into the fabric of the piece)

Korngold shows that he can write magnificent, rich and extremely refined slow movements. The development of phrases occurs in an uninhibited, unbridled manner, quite as if driven by the emotions of the moment. *Adagio* is a beautiful song of personal expression, held in an atmosphere of intimacy in which ardour is intertwined with gentleness, power with delicacy, and subtlety and sweetness are fleeting and ephemeral, fading into passionate excoriations. This creates a captivating duet, with sincere and moving overtones created by both instruments. The third movement is a fantasy with a dreamlike middle section, maintained in a *mysterioso* atmosphere, with indefinite, suspended, unfinished phrases, punctuated by sudden, rhythmically and timbrally expressive interventions by the solo piano, which lead to a common climax (bars 54-58, with a climax in bar 57). In bars 83-86, the composer employs a canon technique, in bar 87 weaving the upper voice of the piano part and the violin voice in unison, which 'spills over' into the climax of the whole movement in bars 88-90<sup>131</sup> (see Example 25).

<sup>131</sup> The duplication of the violin voice is one of Korngold's favourite procedures. In his operas, the composer very often used an arrangement in which the upper voice of the string instruments plays *colla parte* with the singer (it is similar in Puccini's operas - the soprano has colour support in the highest voice of the violin), and in his works for violin and piano he realises this colour effect by duplicating the violin line in the upper voice of the piano's right-hand part.

The image shows a page of musical notation for E.W. Korngold's Sonata in G major, Op. 6, movement III, bars 83-96. The score is presented in four systems, each with a red box highlighting a specific feature:

- System 1:** Labeled "kanon" (canon) and "ruhig" (calmly). Dynamics include *mp*. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment.
- System 2:** Labeled "dublowanie melodii skrzypiec" (doubling of violin melody). Dynamics include *mf*. It shows the violin melody being doubled by the piano.
- System 3:** Labeled "coda". Dynamics include *ppp*. It marks the end of the movement.
- System 4:** Labeled "T". Dynamics include *ppp*. It shows the final chords of the piece.

**Example 25.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. III, bars 83-96 (relations between voices, *coda*)

The Adagio ends similarly to the first and fourth movements - calmly, quietly, in a peaceful manner. Beginning in bar 90, the section adopts a fading tendency, thanks to a reduction in texture, alternating instrumental entrances and shading the dynamics from *piano* (*p*) through *pianissimo* (*pp*) to *piano pianissimo* (*ppp*). Despite the coda-like nature of the

section, we can only hear a pure tonic chord once, as the last consonance. Prior to this, the composer uses dissonances that question the stability of the harmony, wobbling its foundations gently. The rising sixths and the diminished fourth in the violin part represent a kind of sweet uncertainty, a rhetorical question in the nature of a *dolce*, an expression of an introverted, reflective state of mind rather than a real question that demands an answer (see Example 25).

The slow movement shows great internal motivic unity as well as coherence with the other movements (most strongly with movement I, then with movements IV and II) strongly enhancing the impression of the organic nature of the whole sonata.

#### **mov. IV - *Finale. Allegretto quasi andante (con grazia)***

For the finale, Korngold chose the fundamental key, G major. In terms of construction, this movement is a series of free variations interwoven with the form of a sonata allegro. The variations are based on the theme of the song *Schneeglöcken*, which Korngold composed in 1911 but did not publish until 1916 in the cycle *Sechs Einfache Lieder* op. 9<sup>132</sup> (see Example 26). The song uses Joseph von Eichendorff's poem of the same title, *Schneeglöckchen* ('Snowdrop'). The lyrical subject in the poem compares poets to flowers, to the snowdrops of the title, and notes how the beauty represented by artists can perish with them too soon, when the surrounding world is not yet ready for it and unable to understand and accept it (which in the poem is symbolised by the metaphor of falling snow). The song is full of surprising and unexpected harmonic turns. As a fourteen-year-old, Korngold shows incredible skill in the field of *Wort-Ton* relationships, combining words with appropriate harmony and using such phrasing of the melody that the text is very much alive and present in the foreground. In terms of structure, the composer has chosen the simplest type of song, the stanza song, thus ensuring uniformity of form and mood and directing the viewer's perception towards the verbal layer. The melody of the song sounds in transposition a major second higher (G major) than the original (F major),

---

<sup>132</sup> Using the melody of his own song as the basis of a chamber composition would become Korngold's habit. Similarly composed by F. Schubert, R. Schumann, G. Mahler or J. Brahms. The latter also uses song material from his own Op. 59 - No. 3: *Regenlied* and No. 4: *Nachklang* - in the finale of his *Violin Sonata* No. 1 in *G major*, Op. 78. A good example of this technique in Korngold's *Piano Quintet* Op. 15, where the melody of the song *Mond, so gehst du wieder auf* from *Lieder des Abschieds* Op. 14, was used as material for the theme of the slow movement. Korngold would go on to give a 'second life' to melodies he had written, not only those from his song compositions, but also from film music - themes from the films *Another Dawn*, *Anthony Adverse*, *The Prince and the Pauper* and *Juarez* would form the basis for the *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 35.

which allows the violin to use open strings and natural harmonics, enriching the timbre<sup>133</sup> (see Example 27).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It is divided into three systems. The first system is for the vocal part (GESANG) and piano accompaniment (PIANO). The vocal line is marked 'Ruhig fließend' and 'p zart'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'mit Verführung' and 'p zart.'. The second system is marked 'poco rit. (ten.) a tempo' and contains the lyrics 'Gar-ten heu-te Nacht, wie wenn lau-e Lüf-te gin-gen: „Sü-ße'. The third system is also marked 'poco rit. (ten.) a tempo' and contains the lyrics 'Glöck-lein, nun er-wacht! Sü-ße Glöck-lein, espress.'. The piano accompaniment in the third system is marked 'molto espress.'.

Example 26. E.W. Korngold - 6 *Einfache Lieder*, Op. 9, *Schneeglöckchen*, bars 1-11 (original *Sonata* theme)

<sup>133</sup> Carl Flesch and Arthur Schnabel consulted the composer in the process of learning the sonata. Duchon gives an excerpt from a letter in his book which shows that Korngold, knowing perfectly well how he wanted his composition to sound, was not closed to the apt technical ideas of the performers: in the 14th bar of the fourth movement, Flesch suggested the use of natural flageolet on the *g'* sound, to which Korngold agreed, conceding that he himself, in fact, hummed this sound in falsetto. J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 59.

**Allegretto quasi Andante (con grazia)**

*mp semplice ma con espressione* *poco rit.* *a tempo*

*pp legato*

*poco rit.* *a tempo* *dolce*

*pp*

**Example 27:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, movement IV, bars 1-9

*pizz.* *sf* **fuga** **Allegro giocoso**

*dimin.* *subito pp* *sfz* *pp* *stacca.*

*(leicht dahinhuschend)*

*tissimo* *pp* *sfz* *pp*

*arco* *sfz* *p* *trumm* *sfz*

**Example 28.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 89-103 (beginning of fugue)

In the history of music, one can see the tendency of young composers to display their entire arsenal of technical means, especially in the finale of their compositions. This is no different in the case of Korngold, whose youth was further imbued with the spirit of an age of abundance, aesthetic opulence and splendour present in other arts. Korngold was not satisfied with combining variation form with elements of sonata allegro, so he introduced a fugue into the finale (see Example 28).

After the majestic climax of the whole movement in bars 164-167, the sonata's *coda* begins with a repeated display of the main melody in the violin part, this time with a very distinctive use of trills in the piano part (see Example 29). Considering this choice in the context of the poem's text, an interpretation of the trills as an element illustrating falling snow comes to mind.

**Example 29.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 161-173 (return of theme I, trills in the piano part)

The sonata ends in a manner atypical of most of Korngold's compositions, as the *coda* lacks a frenetic, virtuosic spark, brilliant passages or rich, strong-sounding chords. The two instruments unite in a solemn, peace-filled monologue, a summing up of past experiences (see Example 30).

The image shows a musical score for E.W. Korngold's Sonata in G major, Op. 6, movement IV, bars 201-217. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a violin part. The piano part has a 'Pedal' marking and a 'poco a poco crescendo' instruction. The violin part has a 'molto espressivo' marking and a 'molto cresc.' instruction. The score ends with a 'T' in a red box, indicating the tonic chord. A red bracket highlights the final climactic section, and a red box with a question mark is placed above the final measure.

**Example 30.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 201-217 (coda, last climax, rhetorical question, tonic)

The calm statement begins in a modest pianissimo (*espressivo, dolce e cantabile; delicatissimo; sempre tranquillo*), but soon, through a gradual crescendo, extending the range of motifs to an ever higher register in the violin part and enriching the piano texture, reaches a full climax (*fortissimo, molto crescendo*, accents over each note). At the end, the violin plays the first motif of the finale in augmentation, asking a rhetorical question that will remain suspended for the next two bars. These are based on descending repetitions of the tonic chord in the piano part. Thus, juxtaposing the culmination of the whole sonata with the endings of the first and third movements, one can see a reassertion of the tonic chord which here occupies, without any dissonance, as many as the last four bars. The last two bars bring the fusion of the instruments on

a tonic that can be both an answer and an expression of a peaceful acceptance of the fact that there are unanswered questions. The tone of such a finale is mature, personal and very satisfying. With the motifs of the first part woven into it, it represents the culmination of the experience so far. This way of writing certainly has a cathartic power.

### ***Viel Lärmen um nichts*, Op. 11 (*Much Ado About Nothing*) - a composition that captivated the world**

Korngold was protected from the dangers of fighting on the fronts of the First World War by his young age, for the composer was seventeen at the outbreak of the conflict. When he came of age, he was not called up for compulsory military service, but served as music director of an infantry regiment<sup>134</sup>. His main task was to compose pieces, which were performed at numerous charity concerts to financially support the Austrian War Relief Fund<sup>135</sup>. These duties consumed a great deal of time and were taken very seriously, as it was music that had the power to positively influence falling morale and lift the spirits of the Austrians. The atmosphere of violence, misery and cruelty, the restrictions disrupting daily life in the city and the dramatic press coverage had a depressing effect on the young and highly sensitive Korngold, negatively affecting his musical creativity and the strength needed for creative activity. The works published during the war are few and far between, and some of them were written before the outbreak of the conflict<sup>136</sup>. Concentrating on a larger work was beyond the composer's capabilities at this time (which explains the abandonment of his enthusiastically begun work on the opera *Die tote Stadt* in 1916).

In 1918, Korngold received a request from the local theatre group Wiener Volksbühne, represented by directors Rundt and Ziegler, to create music for William Shakespeare's comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*<sup>137</sup>. The composer was enchanted by the idea, as he was well

<sup>134</sup> There is a record in the Austrian war archives stating that he was unfit for active service due to poor physical condition (among other things: being very overweight). B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 379.

<sup>135</sup> The most famous of the works composed during the war period is the *Military March in B flat major*, published by the Schott publishing house. There is an anecdote connected with its composition. The commanding officer to whom the composer was subordinate, initially did not take too enthusiastically to the piece, claiming that the army would not be able to march at such a fast pace. Korngold retorted this statement with a sassy smile: "General, we will play this march when we are in retreat!". Ibid, p. 114.

<sup>136</sup> In addition to the composition described in this chapter, these include the one-act opera *Violanta*, Op. 8, *Sechs Einfache Lieder* Op. 9 (a song cycle, begun in 1911) and *the String Sextet in D major*, Op. 10.

<sup>137</sup> The play was written in 1598/1599 and published in 1623. In musical literature, we can find examples of the inspiration of the comedy and its musical elaboration: Hector Berlioz's 1862 opera *Béatrice et Bénédict* is based on the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Sir Charles Villard Stanford composed the opera *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1901, Ernest Chausson included the *Chant funèbre* ('Funeral March'), inspired by the comedy, as the final fourth piece in the cycle *Chansons de Shakespeare*, Op. 28. of 1910, and in 1953 Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote an overture for symphony orchestra entitled *Much Ado About Nothing*, Op. 164. Kenneth Branagh's famous and excellent 1993 film adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, which was enhanced by music composed by Patrick Doyle, a Scottish film composer experienced in creating music for Shakespearean plays is also worth mentioning.

acquainted with and greatly appreciated the plays of the English playwright, having read most of them in his teens<sup>138</sup>. In his condition at the time, this was an ideal task for him, which stimulated creativity while having a concrete framework. It also brought with it an interesting compositional challenge: due to the constraints of war, but also to leave the actors in the foreground, Korngold could only have a small group of instrumentalists.

The composer completed the work at the end of 1918 and began work on the orchestration a few months later. In the summer of 1919 came the unexpected, shocking news that the Wiener Volksbühne had gone bankrupt and, as a consequence, the entire production was to be cancelled. The management of the famous Viennese Burgtheater, hearing of the misfortune, offered to take over the process of producing the play with Korngold's music, as well as looking into hiring members of the Vienna Philharmonic for a series of performances.

The premiere of *Viel Lärmen um Nichts* took place in the beautiful 18th-century baroque theatre (Schlosstheater) on the grounds of Schönbrunn Palace, on 6 May 1920. The musical all consisted of 18 scenes, lasting from several dozen seconds to several minutes. The five-act play was staged with only one intermission, but was enriched by a musical intermezzo, *Gartenscene*, in which Korngold quoted a melody from his earlier but then unpublished collection, *Tänzchen im Alten Stil*. In order to link the music more closely to the text of the play, the composer also wrote a stylized Old English madrigal song, *Lied des Pagen Balthasar*, an exquisite miniature about a man's infidelity, with a finely crafted harp accompaniment imitating lute playing.

The piece was composed for a small performance ensemble of nineteen instrumentalists: a seven-member string chamber ensemble (two 1st violins, two 2nd violins, viola, cello and double bass), flute/piccolo flute, oboe, clarinet *in B*, bassoon, 2 French horns *in F*, trumpet *in C*, trombone, piano, harp, an extensive percussion section including timpani and pump organ for special colour effects<sup>139</sup>. Korngold was able to showcase his compositional mastery in its full splendour. He wrote in a manner that ensured the music, which also accompanied certain dialogues, did not overwhelm the performers but subtly complemented their performance. Moreover, Korngold demonstrated musical skills akin to those of exceptional caricaturists—short sections required extraordinary precision and concise portrayal of characters and events.

---

<sup>138</sup> Korngold read them in the famous German translation, the Schlegel-Tieck edition. B. G. Carroll, *The Incidental Music for "Much Ado about Nothing" Op. 11 by Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) - The centenary of the first production*, Vienna, May 6 1920, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341099052\\_The\\_Incidental\\_Music\\_for\\_MUCH\\_ADO\\_ABOUT\\_NOTHING\\_by\\_Erich\\_Wolfgang\\_Korngold](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341099052_The_Incidental_Music_for_MUCH_ADO_ABOUT_NOTHING_by_Erich_Wolfgang_Korngold) [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>139</sup> It was customary for music for plays and compositions of a lighter genre to have an emergency version with pump organ in the score - in case a full line-up of woodwind instruments could not be assembled. Driven by a concern for colouristic qualities, Korngold included the pump organ in the permanent composition.

Above all, the composition itself, though intended to accompany the actors' performance, was a logical, beautiful, and fully realised whole.

As Nick Barnard notes:

Too often the epithet "great orchestrator" is used for composers who write for large and opulent ensembles. A truly *great* orchestrator is one who is able to conjure a wide range of instrumental colours and timbres from a relatively limited ensemble – which is exactly what Korngold achieves here. I find it fascinating how his signature instrumental combination of harp/piano/glockenspiel is so fully realised this early in his career.<sup>140</sup>

During the preparation of the production, a characteristic feature of Korngold's working style became apparent, which accompanied the composer for the rest of his life. From the first rehearsals to the premiere, he was present at almost every rehearsal, being involved in almost all aspects of the production. What came to full expression when working on projects in Hollywood, and what set Korngold apart from other film music composers, was his uncanny ability to match the duration of the music to the length of the dialogue or scene, without compromising the musical thought and with a well-planned distribution of tension. The subtlety and sensitivity with which Korngold emphasised dialogue, as well as his ability to link different scenes together and operate pauses to emphasise the drama, most likely developed precisely during his work on *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The orchestration of the piece went very well, and the whole creative process ignited a lot of enthusiasm in the composer, who simultaneously created a three-movement arrangement for symphony orchestra. Following his father's encouragement, he included it in a concert he was conducting with the Vienna Philharmonic<sup>141</sup>, hence Vienna was given the privilege of hearing excerpts from *Much Ado About Nothing* five months before its premiere. The suite was enormously popular, was encored many times<sup>142</sup>, and encouraged by this success Erich expanded it to five movements. In this form it is still played to this day. Due to its beautiful, melodic and easily memorable themes, aptly portraying the characters of the comedy, as well as its small size and relative ease of performance, the suite quickly gained popularity. Its success was also influenced by its excellent orchestration, emphasising both the humour, wit and

---

<sup>140</sup> Nick Barnard, *Korngold - Complete Incidental Music: Much Ado about Nothing, Der Vampyr (Naxos 8.573355)*, [in:] MusicWeb International, 2022, <https://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2022/Mar/Korngold-incidenta-8573355.htm> [accessed 5 May 2025].

<sup>141</sup> 24 January 1920. See *Korngold, Erich Wolfgang, Œuvres Avec Numéro d' Op., Viel Lärmen um nichts Op. 11*, [in:] online archive Musiques Régénérées, <http://www.musiques-regeneeres.fr/ExilVienne/Korngold/op11.html> [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>142</sup> The Viennese demanded multiple encores, while at another concert, in Italy, at the famous Teatro Augusteo, the suite was so popular that when the composer came out to repeat one of its movements as part of a requested encore, he stood on the platform for a few minutes until the audience came to an agreement on which one they wanted to hear. Present at the concert were Giacomo Puccini, Ottorino Respighi and Alfredo Casella, who had previously attended all nine rehearsals, fascinated by the composition. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, pp. 167-168.

romantic element of the play. By 1933, the composition was in the repertoire of more than a hundred orchestras around the world<sup>143</sup>. Today, it remains one of Korngold's most frequently performed works, with numerous studio and concert recordings.

It is uncertain whether Korngold's arrangement of *Much Ado About Nothing* for violin and piano would have seen the light of day had it not been for the consistent demand from audiences and institutions for further performances. In his innate modesty, Korngold did not anticipate that the music would achieve such success<sup>144</sup>. The production was extended for another season, and since the musicians of the Vienna Philharmonic had their own commitments and were occupied with a pre-established artistic repertoire, Korngold arranged the score for violin and piano.

It was performed by the violinist Rudolf Kolisch and the later conductor, here in the role of pianist - Paul Breisach. To enrich the arrangement, the composer accompanied them on the second piano (sometimes the pianists alternated). Korngold's playing was characterised by a specific style: a rich chordal texture, a broad timbral ambitus, the presence of improvised elements, the momentum of musical gestures - the composer's virtuosity brought out an abundance of colour from the piano, exploring the instrument's possibilities to such an extent that, in the perception of the audience, they equaled in colour the possibilities of the orchestra<sup>145</sup>. During weekend performances, the musicians were joined by Karl Anton Stiegler<sup>146</sup>, the famous first horn player of the Vienna Philharmonic, enriching the lively *Hornpipe* with his solo<sup>147</sup>.

The arrangement for violin and piano is excellent and has enjoyed enduring popularity since its inception. Violinists such as Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, Toscha Seidel<sup>148</sup>, Fritz

---

<sup>143</sup> By 1923, the suite was gaining notoriety both next door in Europe and in South America. Korngold personally orchestrated the composition for the Berlin Philharmonic in a concert at its home venue, and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra presented the suite in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires during a tour conducted by Richard Strauss. See [entry:] *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, [in:] Concert Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic: <https://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/en/konzert-archiv> [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>144</sup> When Luzi von Sonnenthal, Korngold's later wife, described the piece as a true masterpiece, Erich laughed and commented 'Eine kleine Bühnenmusik' ('little stage music'), jokingly referring to Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 86. He also said: "I am not so experienced in this, so nobody can take offence at me for having written it." B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 134.

<sup>145</sup> An oft-repeated comment among listeners was that Korngold, playing the piano, 'sounds like a full orchestra'. The composer himself, in an interview with *The Etude Music Magazine*, replied: 'I play only the piano and the orchestra. The orchestra is such a very nice instrument to play.' "The Etude Music Magazine..., p.16.

<sup>146</sup> Luzi Korngold recalled: "This powerful musician, used to the dimensions of great opera houses, nearly blew the little baroque theatre away." J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 87.

<sup>147</sup> The role of encouragement was supposedly played by the promise of a good cigar (sic!). See B. G. Carroll, *Incidental Music for Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing' Opus 11 ...*.

<sup>148</sup> A Korngold-Seidel recording made in the summer of 1941, unreleased due to wartime restrictions, survives in the archives of the American record company RCA (Radio Corporation America). In it, the arrangement of the suite took a more defined form: Korngold concretised the piano part in particular, without giving as much space to the improvisation as before (although he did add a chorale-like beginning before the last movement *Hornpipe*, inspired by the sound of the violinist), and Seidel played it with an intense sound, in a rhapsodic style. Korngold

Kreisler and Max Rostal have been eager to use it. The suite was also transcribed for viola by Lionel Tertis<sup>149</sup>. Korngold created a three-movement version for solo piano as well (without the overture and intermezzo), and in 1984 an unpublished and previously unknown authentic manuscript score of a transcription of the three movements for string quartet appeared at auction in Vienna and was premiered by the Steude Quartett on 8 May 2012 at the Musikverein<sup>150</sup>.

***Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts", Op. 11 (suite Much Ado About Nothing).***

The Suite for violin and piano consists of four movements:

I Mädchen im Brautgemach

II Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache)

III Gartenscene

IV Mummenschanz<sup>151</sup>.

In order to construct a form that is better from the concert point of view, the composer changed the order of the movements, arranging them according to the principle of expressive contrast<sup>152</sup>.

Korngold's music illustrates the events described in a beautiful and sublime way. It creates an appropriate mood, sometimes taking on the role of narrator. The composer evocatively conveys the inner state of the characters, elaborating on what they choose not to express in words. Knowledge of the plot and the context of the individual scenes of the play is crucial when interpreting the work, so I will give the plot in concise form.

---

was in fine form at the time; the recording vividly captures the unique style of his playing. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 303.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 135.

<sup>150</sup> The score material was published by Schott Publishers at the request of The Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of Music Lovers) in Vienna. The arrangement was recorded by two ensembles: the Amernet String Quartet, Centaur Records 2015 and the Eusebius Quartet, SOMM Recordings 2021. See <https://www.schott-music.com/en/drei-stuecke-noc306642.html> [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>151</sup> I give the Polish equivalents of the titles of the different movements: I - Panna w komnacie ślubnej. II – Holzapfel i Schlehwein- these are the names of the two guards, who in the original are called Dogberry and Verges, from the German edition. In his translation into Polish, Stanisław Barańczak proposed the nicknames Grzmot and Pokrak, opting for comedy and emphasising the character of these characters, who are exceptionally incompetent guards, while Maciej Słomczyński, aiming to remain more faithful to the original, proposed the less suggestive terms Czepiec and Łata. In these circumstances, it will be most sensible to translate only the second part of the title, which will provide the viewer with more information, i.e. Marsz Straży. III - Scena ogrodowa. IV - Maskarada (literally 'pantomime'). In the English version we will see the subtitle *Masquerade: Hornpipe*, as the last part draws on this folk dance.

<sup>152</sup> Order in the play: Hornpipe - prelude to Act II, Gartenscene - Act III, scene 1, Holzapfel und Schlehwein - Act III, scene 3.

The comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* focuses on the relationships of two couples: Hero-Klaudio and Beatrice-Benedick. It tells their love stories, full of violent emotions, deception and provocation. Happily in love, Claudio and Hero plan their wedding, but fall prey to the intrigue of the jealous Don John, who deceitfully accuses Hero of infidelity. The deception is exposed by the unwitting actions of Constable Dogberry, an unremarkable intelligence and grotesquely incompetent warden. Benedick and Beatrice are both extremely intelligent, witty and independent people who emphasise their opposition to marriage and relationships at every turn. They constantly clash with each other in brilliant verbal skirmishes. Thanks to the clever manipulation of their friends, they discover that they have in fact had warm feelings for each other for a long time. The story culminates in a happy ending with the wedding of the two couples and a general reconciliation between the protagonists.

### **I Mädchen im Brautgemach**

The first movement, which opens the suite, is in D flat major and 4/4 metre and begins with a short introduction in *langsam*, only two bars long. It shows the freedom with which Korngold moves within the major-minor system, as it consists of the following four chords: B flat major, A major seventh, G major seventh and D flat major (see Example 31). The unusual juxtaposition of consonances catches the listener's attention and arouses curiosity and musical appetite, providing the aural equivalent of 'peeking through the keyhole'. The violin performs the chords pizzicato, very softly (*sehr weich*), in piano dynamics, while the piano performs legato and pianissimo, creating an intimate, delicate atmosphere. This minimalism of the means used, which nevertheless provides a clear and concrete effect, bears witness to Korngold's uncanny sense for capturing the essence of the illustrated scene in an economical, aphoristic way.

The less than two-bar violin solo that follows the introduction, punctuated by the words *mit Anmut und Grazie* (with charm and grace), sets the tone for the entire movement, which is made up of charming melodies. Their delicate lines, consisting of a number of exultant and sighing motifs, illustrate the surge of emotion experienced by the characters. The melodic lines are repeated in different violin registers, accompanied by changing piano counterpoint. The phrases convey the character, feelings and dreams of the delicate, sweet Hero as she prepares to meet Claudio, her future husband. Each show, therefore, provides an opportunity to introduce a new timbre, to focus on a different emotion than before, and to explore the colour of different registers (warmer or hazier in the violin's midrange, shinier on the E string, deeper on the G

string). The rich, romantic harmonic language is occasionally decorated with more modern consonances, which nevertheless do not break down the chosen convention.

**Example 31.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. I - Mädchen in Brautgemach, bars 1-8 (introduction, basic rhythmic figures - nos. 1 and 2)

The movement takes the form of an ABA', preceded by a brief introduction and ending with a short epilogue. In the contrasting middle section (bars 19-24), the phrase takes on a more excited expression, through an ascending progression leading to a playful-sounding *accelerando*, dotted with accents and numerous *sforzato* (see Example 32). Two rhythmic figures run throughout the movement (see Example 31): two sixteenth - two eighth notes (figure 1) entering after an eighth rest, and a dotted eighth-note - a triplet of sixteenth notes - two eighth notes (figure 2). These motifs add a Spanish colour to the piece, which may be a musical reference to the character Claudio, a war hero from the army of the Duke of Aragon. In Shakespeare's play, the love between Claudio and Hero is a typically courtly feeling: he fell in love with her at first sight and immediately stated that he would marry her, she did not take the time to get to know him better and cherishes trusting notions. Korngold often writes *arpeggio* next to the piano chords, which adds subtlety to the phrases, seeming to emphasise the nature of the feeling linking the pair of protagonists.

**Example 32.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], violin part, mov. I - Mädchen in Brautgemach, bars 23-40 (abundance of agogic and expressive terms and caesuras).

The 49-bar movement contains as many as 31 agogic statements and 15 caesuras (11 in the violin part and 4 in the piano part), which poses a considerable performance challenge in terms of chamber music. Occasionally, the tempo undergoes two changes within a single bar (see Example 32). It is clear that by placing so many terms in a small space, the composer wants to achieve the effect of playing rubato, but leaves nothing to chance or to the imagination of the performers. Despite the numerous changes in this layer of the piece, when performing the first movement of the *Suite I* never had the feeling of being left in a rigid agogic corset or implementing a kind of artificial tempo protocol; on the contrary, I was amazed by the organic and simplicity of these changes, so very logical despite the apparent chaos of abundance.

## II *Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache)*

The second movement is composed in the key of C minor, combined with solemnity and drama, usually used to express deep, intense emotions, suffering or inner struggle. At the beginning, Korngold included the phrase *im Zeitmas eines grotesken Trauermarches*, meaning 'in the tempo of a grotesque funeral march'. Indeed, the movement, played at a slower, exaggerated tempo, takes on a caricatured quality. Here, the composer brilliantly captures the character of the representatives of the night watchmen who are supposed to protect the

inhabitants of Messina. The unflappable constable Dogberry<sup>153</sup> and his partner Verges are deliciously inept characters, representing incompetence in an absurdly comic way.

Im Zeitmaß eines grotesken Trauermärchens

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning with a piano (pizz.) and arco markings, and dynamics of p, f, and sfz. The second system features an accelerando (accel.) and a return to a tempo, with sfz dynamics and triplet markings. The third system includes a poco accelerando (poco accel.) and a return to a tempo, with sfz dynamics, triplet markings, and a *sempre stacc.* marking. The score concludes with a *m. d.* marking and a final sfz dynamic.

**Example 33.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. II - Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache), bars 1-9 (accents, sforzata, triplet groups, agogic changes)

The even metre with its clear pulsation and distinct accents is shaken from time to time by *accelerando* and *rallentando*, appearing on the triplet groups introduced in these bars, enriched by irregular accents and *sforzato* (see Example 33). Syncopations and agogic shifts jolt the march out of its stable pulsation and rhythmic equilibrium for short stretches, after which a sharp, clear rhythmic contour returns. Certainly, these contrasts serve to produce a comic effect, but perhaps also interpreting them on an allegorical level would not be an abuse: something that should be fixed, certain and unchanging, i.e. the strength of the law whose observance is

<sup>153</sup> Dogberry is one of the more distinctive comic characters in Shakespeare. The headstrong constable is always self-satisfied and cocky. His speeches are pretentious and full of malapropisms (verbal mistakes, involving the use of a similar-sounding but representing a different meaning of a word). He tells his subordinates that it is perfectly normal to sleep on night watch and instructs them not to apprehend a thief under any circumstances, lest they be implicated in a crime and thus tarnish themselves with a connection to the crime.

protected by the guard (the march rhythmic), has been shaken by the weakness and flaws of human character (agogic changes, syncopated accents).

The melody is not complex, most often using scales and chromatic passages, and sometimes based on a selected triad, imitating military fanfares. The trills, mainly present in the violin part, can successfully imitate the characteristic 'noise' effect achieved in march music on the snare drum.

Like the first movement of the suite, this one also adopts an ABA' form, with the middle section contrasting with the outer sections only in terms of expression, achieved through harmonic means (change of mode to major, use of chords with witty-sounding alterations). The rhythmic continue to use the same figures. In the original version, Korngold emphasises the lighter character of the particle by changing the instrument playing the main melody: in the middle section it is the clarinet, in the outer sections - the bassoon and the trumpet with a mute. In the transcription, the violin should mimic this effect by changing the timbre with slight changes in articulation.

In the conclusion, the composer shifts the articulation in the violin from *arco* to *pizzicato* (which had appeared earlier but never for more than two beats within a bar) and bases the final four bars on a dominant-tonic relationship (see Example 34), using only the root notes of the chords (*G-C*), except for the penultimate beat of the piece (a tritone, *F#-C*). The regular rhythm, steady pulse, and dramaturgical diminuendo seem to illustrate the measured steps of guards on the Messina cobblestones, the clinking of their armour buckles, and the echo of heavy military boots fading into the distance.

The image shows a musical score for the final four bars of a movement. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano part with a steady pulse and a violin part with a melodic line. The final four bars are highlighted with a red box, showing a dominant-tonic relationship (D-T) and a tritone (F#-C). The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, and *pizz.* Below the score, there are two pairs of boxes labeled 'D' and 'T', indicating the dominant-tonic relationship.

**Example 34.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. II - Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache), bars 56-60 (harmonic plan for the end of mov. II).

### III Gartenscene

The third movement of the suite is the atmospheric and expressive slow movement of the cycle. Like the previous movements, its structure is divided into three main sections, arranged successively in the keys of C major, E major, C major. The first wing of this triptych (bars 1-40) is a song-like monologue by the violin, appearing against a background of delicate piano accompaniment. The piano part creates a harmonic environment and subtly counterpoints the violin voice with an eighth-note melodic line. With the ever-present eighth-note movement in the accompaniment layer, the composer achieves an impression of fluidity (see Example 35). The leading melodic line in this section in the original is entrusted to the cello, accompanying Beatrice's most important monologue in Shakespeare's play, becoming a wordless song with a strong, clear pronunciation.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Example 35. The first system features a violin part with the instruction "Sehr ausdrucksvoll (breit, doch nicht zu langsam) *espress.*" and a piano accompaniment with "p" and "arpeggiert". A red box highlights the first few measures of the piano part. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with "mf" and "molto espress." markings, and a red box highlights a specific melodic line in the piano part. The third system shows the piano accompaniment with "poco" marking and a red box highlighting the final measures.

**Example 35.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. III - Gartenscene, bars 1-15 (continuous eighth-note piano counterpoint)

To fully appreciate Korngold's illustrative artistry and to understand the significance of this monologue, we must refer to the character of Beatrice and the nature of her relationship with Benedick. The heroine has a fiery, impetuous temperament, is uncompromising, stubborn and adheres to very high moral standards. Moreover, as one of the wittiest characters in Shakespeare's character gallery, she is extremely intelligent, which led her to believe that there is no man in the world who can capture and hold her interest for long. Like Beatrice, Benedick is gifted with a keen intelligence and a very sharp, ready tongue. Both characters are proud to the point of absurdity, hiding their true feelings under a mask of irony and humour. The protagonists fall prey to a trap set by their sympathetic friends, who, observing this verbal fencing and apparent dislike from a distance, see perfectly the true nature of their relationship. When Benedick overhears his friends' orchestrated conversation about the passionate feelings he has for Beatrice, he immediately abandons his long-standing commitment to remain a bachelor and decides that he will love her. Beatrice, hearing relatives gossiping about Benedick's desperate love for her, falls into the same trap. In the original version, a cello solo accompanies the woman in a moment of self-reflection when she, standing in truth, allows herself to reveal the true nature of her own feelings. Korngold's music elaborates what Beatrice dare not express in words, being not just an illustration, but an extension and complement to the character's emotional state.

The middle section (bars 40-111), held in the key of E major<sup>154</sup>, is composed on the basis of a nostalgically rocking, stylised waltz. The drama here is created by the agogic relationship of the sections along the *Zurückhaltend-Im Fluß* axis, ("restrained-fluent"), Korngold's characteristic interweaving of *sostenuto* and *avanti*, which brilliantly conveys the characters' thrilling, overpowering current of no-longer-suppressed feelings, entwined with reflective commentary when, after a long period of evasions and retractions, they finally meet and talk frankly to each other. The composer employs juxtapositions of distant chords and distant, unexpected modulations, creating room for the performers to move across a wide palette of colours (see Example 36).

---

<sup>154</sup> The musical material of this episode in the original is present in the prelude to Act III.

**Example 36:** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. III - Gartenscene, bars 72-92 (*Zurückhaltend-Im Fluß*).

After the violin's recitative statement in bars 99-111, the key of C major returns. The melodic lines of both instruments draw on the motifs presented in the first section of the piece, interacting this time in a *molto espressivo, rubato* statement. The fermatas used in this section at the top notes of the individual phrases (bars 113, 117, 122, 126) help to create the impression of emotion frozen in rapture (see Example 37). In bar 135, a piano solo (in the middle of which the violin joins in) begins a short 10-bar *coda*, based almost entirely on a tonic chord. Only in bar 138 does a pivot to the subdominant appear, closing the movement in a serene and fulfilling manner (see Example 38).

Erstes Zeitmaß (rubato)  
*molto espress. largamente*

The image shows three systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a violin staff (top) and a piano staff (bottom). The first system is marked with *molto espress.* and *largamente*. The second system has a *f* dynamic marking. The third system has a *p* dynamic marking. Red boxes are drawn around specific notes in the violin staff: the first box is around a note in the first system, the second box is around a note in the second system, and the third box is around a note in the third system. These notes appear to be part of a melodic line that is being emphasized.

**Example 37.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. III - Gartenscene, bars 111-125 (expressive fermata)

*pp* *express.*

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a violin staff (top) and a piano staff (bottom). The second system consists of a violin staff (top) and a piano staff (bottom). The first system is marked with *pp* and *express.*. The second system is marked with *rall.* and *pp*. Red boxes labeled 'T', 'S', and 'T' are placed below the first system, and a red dashed line spans across both systems. The 'T' boxes are positioned under the first and third measures of the first system, and the 'S' box is under the second measure. The red dashed line is positioned below the first system and above the second system, indicating a specific section of the music.

**Example 38.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. III - Gartenscene, bars 135-144 (harmonic plan for the end of mov. III)

#### IV *Mummenschanz*: *Hornpipe*

Korngold based the finale of the suite on the *hornpipe*<sup>155</sup>, a folk dance originating in England, Scotland and Wales, known since the 15th century as a sailors' dance. It was originally performed exclusively by men, and the choreography included a characteristic position with arms crossed at the elbows, entwined in front at chest level, and numerous squats and a *rock* step involving swinging the legs crossed at the ankles<sup>156</sup>. Due to the nature of these figures, the *hornpipe* was not a very fast dance. Wanting to preserve its nature, but at the same time not to give up the liveliness necessary for the finale, I decided to convey the joy and wit of this movement with bright, sparkling tone colour and expressive articulation, preserving the *bewegt* (with motion) suggested by the composer. In the play, the piece accompanies a masquerade, during which Beatrice and Benedick give a real display of verbal fencing. The ironic banter, bickering and word games ultimately end in agreement and warm understanding.

The image shows a musical score for six staves. The first staff is marked 'Bewegt' and 'f'. The second staff has 'f' at the end. The third staff has 'f' at the end. The fourth staff has 'mf' and 'cresc.' markings. The fifth staff has 'ff' at the beginning. The sixth staff has 'ff' at the end. The music is in G major and 3/4 time, featuring a variety of rhythmic patterns and articulation.

**Example 39.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], violin part, mov. IV - *Mummenschanz* (Hornpipe), bars 1-29 (melodic-rhythmic material, grace notes, articulation)

<sup>155</sup> Placed much earlier in the play, as a prelude to Act II.

<sup>156</sup> Margaret Dean-Smith, [entry:] *hornpipe*, [in:] *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, ed. Friedrich Blume, vol. 6: Head-Jenny, Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel-Basel-London 1957, pp. 756-757.

The section begins with a short violin solo (originally for horn), and its liveliness is based on scalar passages and sixteenth-note and eighth-sixteenth-note figures (see Example 39). A joyful, spirited, and at the same time robust atmosphere is created by numerous accents, both on main beats and syncopated, the use of *sforzato* on the weak part of the bar (most often the final eighth note in the bar), trills, and dynamic crescendos over short sections. The composer suggests a lighter yet distinct *staccato* articulation as the primary method of sound production in this section. To highlight the virtuosic element, both instruments may, in certain places, shift the *staccato* closer to *marcato*, and the violin should employ *spiccato* articulation with varied weight to ensure the produced sound remains consistently active and full of vigour. Korngold evokes the sound of a folk band through the use of fifth-based double stops, imitating the open strings of stringed instruments (see Example 40), while numerous grace notes in the violin part underscore the carefree, playful character of the piece.

The image shows a musical score for Example 40. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for a horn or violin, featuring a melodic line with accents and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The middle and bottom staves are for piano accompaniment. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with double stops, highlighted by a red box. Dynamics include *mf*, *cresc.*, and *ff*. Performance instructions like *Ped.* and *\** are present.

**Example 40.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. IV - Mummenschanz (Hornpipe), bars 16-20 (imitation of the sound of the open strings of a folk band).

The straightforward and emphatic character of the movement is softened slightly in the *luftig* ('airy, light', bars 37-44) section, ending with a characteristically colourful descent along the whole-tone scale. In the course of the piece, there are caesuras inscribed in the score, breaths that emphasise the specificity of the dance. The final section from bar 77 is marked with the phrase *Vorwärts!*<sup>157</sup> and gradually accumulates energy, *accelerating* from bar 89 in a *sempre accelerando* until it discharges its energy at the climactic *sforzato* in bar 97, followed by a tonally calmer, cadential passage. Just when it would seem that the music is heading towards complete tranquillity and extinction, Korngold 'winks' at the audience by placing an amusing closing chord in the last bar of the entire movement (see Example 41).

<sup>157</sup> From German - forwards.

**Example 41.** by E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke* [...], mov. IV - Mummenschanz (Hornpipe), bars 99-105 (ending)

### ***Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12 - Korngold's living legend**

Korngold had already begun the first sketches for the opera *Die tote Stadt* ("The Dead City") in 1916, on the wave of the enthusiastic reception of his two one-act operas, *The Ring of Polycrates*, Op. 7 and *Violanta*, Op. 8. The increasing number of duties that came with another year of military service forced him to postpone the work until 1919<sup>158</sup>.

The novella *Bruges la Morte* ('Dead Bruges'), published in 1892 by a Belgian symbolist Georges Rodenbach, served as the material for the libretto. Describing a city submerged in oneiric desolation, the story, previously printed in episodes by the French daily *Le Figaro*, made the writer famous, reviving interest in his work. Rodenbach wrote a four-act play based on the novella, *Le mirage*, which was subsequently translated into German (under the title *Die stille Stadt* - 'The Silent City') by Siegfried Trebitsch, a Viennese playwright and good friend of Julius Korngold<sup>159</sup>. Having familiarised himself with the play, Erich immediately began to construct a project for another one-act opera, but was dissuaded from this idea by Hans Müller, who suggested that Korngold should concentrate on a larger format - a full-scale opera. The writer began work on a libretto, but with a lot of commitments of his own, he did not commit to the additional project in a way that would have satisfied Julius Korngold. The pragmatic critic took matters into his own hands, stating that he would create the libretto together with his son. In order to avoid possible insinuations and to curb the gossip of Viennese circles, a fictional creator, Paul Schott, was brought to life, for under this pseudonym father and son constructed the libretto, making a few fundamental changes from the original text<sup>160</sup>.

<sup>158</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 121.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>160</sup> The pseudonym is a combination of the name of the opera's main character and that of Korngold's publisher. The secret was kept for a surprisingly long time - it was only revealed in 1975, when *Die tote Stadt* was staged again in New York. J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 74.

The protagonist of the opera is Paul, mourning his late wife Marie. Unable to come to terms with his loss, the man has set up an altar in his home in memory of the deceased, on which he keeps a braid from her hair and adores it incessantly. One day he meets the vivacious, sensual dancer Marietta, who looks like his wife. Torn between loyalty to his deceased beloved and the desire he feels at the sight of Marietta, who is bursting with life energy, he experiences disturbing, violent and tense emotions. Under their influence, he murders the dancer by clamping his dead wife's braid around her neck. However, it turns out that this was merely a harrowing vision, a hallucination of a traumatised mind. Through it, Paul is sobered, awakened from the lethargy of grief, and realises that it is time to cease mourning his wife and attempt to start living his own life anew<sup>161</sup>.

The story is set in Bruges<sup>162</sup>, a Belgian city with austere medieval architecture. The empty, dark streets punctuated by narrow canals and the bells ringing ominously behind the monastery walls contribute to the dark character of the story. The story combines the subtlety of a psychological drama with the tension of a thriller and is maintained in an atmosphere of suffocating, impenetrable mystery.

It is worth noting that the beginning of the 20th century was a time of luxuriant development of psychoanalysis, whose founder, Dr Sigmund Freud, was active in Vienna<sup>163</sup>. The themes of *Die tote Stadt* (dream fantasy, morbid mourning, repressed guilt after the loss of a loved one, sexual obsession, elements of necrophilia, the hypocrisy of reality) resonate perfectly with Freudian conceptions of the workings of the human mind, which rejected the rationality of choices and behaviour in favour of emotional factors. If the story used as the canon of the opera had been taken up by other Viennese composers, such as Arnold Schönberg or Franz Schrecker, surely their optics would have brought to the fore the elements of brutality, death, fear, obsession and suffering<sup>164</sup>. Korngold, meanwhile, brought out the motif of a love stronger than death, presenting the audience with what is really a victory, a triumph of the full unstoppable

---

<sup>161</sup> This is the most significant change from Rodenbach's play, where the murder of the dancer remains a fact, in consequence of which the man descends into madness. Julius Korngold was keen to soften the story and give it a conciliatory tone. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 122.

<sup>162</sup> Korngold visited Bruges, the 'dead city', for the first time in 1955. Ibid, p. 357.

<sup>163</sup> The close and inseparable manner in which new intellectual, aesthetic, and scientific currents intermingled in Vienna is vividly illustrated by the fact that in the building at Bergasse 19, where Korngold's aunt, Steffi, lived, Freud resided one floor below, frequently attending her legendary dinners (as did the young Erich). B. G. Carroll, *The Centenary of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's opera, 'Die tote Stadt' Opus 12*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346572707\\_The\\_Centenary\\_of\\_Erich\\_Wolfgang\\_Korngold%27s\\_opera\\_Die\\_tote\\_Stadt\\_Opus\\_12](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346572707_The_Centenary_of_Erich_Wolfgang_Korngold%27s_opera_Die_tote_Stadt_Opus_12) [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>164</sup> Composing an opera based on Rodenbach's play was considered by, among others, Giacomo Puccini and Leo Fall (Fall composed mainly operettas, hence the interest in this subject matter is somewhat surprising). J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 72.

power inherent in humans, the natural, instinctive desire to live<sup>165</sup>. The composer himself admitted<sup>166</sup>, that he was most attracted to Rodenbach's novella, apart from the melancholic atmosphere of Bruges:

the spiritual conflict between the two protagonists; the erotic force and drive of the living woman contending with the powerful sway still exerted by the dead one; the more fundamental concept of the struggle between death and life, and particularly the question of how the claims of life must cause us to moderate our grief at the departing of loved ones.<sup>167</sup>

In order to create the conditions for a suitable musical setting of such a story, Korngold more than expanded the orchestra's composition, extending it to include many unusual instruments that added further unique shades to the colour palette of *Die tote Stadt*. In addition to the triple instrumentation of woodwinds, 4 horns, 4 trumpets (including a bass trumpet), 3 trombones and a tuba, the composer used a rich percussion instrumentation and two harps. The string quintet parts are often scattered *divisi*. Keyboard instruments are represented in large numbers: the celesta, piano, organ and pump organ (to achieve a special 'supernatural' colour effect for the character of the deceased Marie). In addition, the score features a mandolin, church bells, a wind machine, a chamber wind ensemble and percussion instruments (behind the stage), as well as: 2 additional trumpets and 2 additional trombones, a children's choir, a 16-voice chamber choir and 8 sopranos (above the stage).

Korngold wields this instrumentation masterfully, combining the individual voices so that the colourful qualities of the instruments not only illustrate, but actually co-create the action. The orchestra comments on the events and builds and manages the opera's drama. It actively creates the narrative, creates the right atmosphere and perfectly mediates the emotions to which the characters are subjected. The composer strives to provide the orchestra with a homogeneous sound, treating it as one huge, resonating instrument. He is particularly concerned with the unity of sound in the string quintet. This way of composing is characteristic of him and will recur in his later major works, for example in his opera *Das Wunder der Heliane*. The individual orchestral parts are very demanding, for Korngold wrote them in a style that was natural to him, unrestrained by an awareness of technical difficulties, treating the musicians in each section, or voice, like virtuosos.

The solo roles are equally demanding, not only in terms of technical and artistic proficiency but also in terms of stamina. This is particularly true for the protagonist, Paul, sung

---

<sup>165</sup> It is worth mentioning that the opera originally had the working title *Der Triumph des Lebens*, or precisely 'The Triumph of Life'. See *Die tote Stadt*, [in:] Bayerische Staatsoper (Bavarian State Opera), <https://www.staatsoper.de/en/productions/die-tote-stadt/2024-10-07-1900-14680> [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>166</sup> In an article written for the 1921 Wiener Blätter des Operntheaters. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 379.

<sup>167</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 122.

by a tenor, who, apart from the opening scene and a brief break in Act II, remains on stage throughout the entire opera<sup>168</sup>. Korngold does not spare high notes, wide-ranging leaps, or expressive exclamations in his part, and the plot and character of Paul already impose a highly emotional mode of expression as the primary one. The soprano's dual role of Marie/Marietta, on the other hand, requires immense flexibility<sup>169</sup> in skillfully portraying the character of a flirtatious, sensual, vibrant dancer and the recalled memory of the deceased wife, shrouded in a halo of quasi-sacredness yet simultaneously terrifying. The soprano must therefore masterfully combine dramatic and sensual elements, both in singing and in acting.

It was characteristic of Korngold to see other musicians through the prism of his genius and lack of technical limitations, to have a kind of carefree approach to aspects of performance and to set no limits to his own aesthetic concepts. This optimistic state of the composer is very aptly reflected in a statement from a letter to a warm friend, Egon Pollack, who conducted the premiere of *Die tote Stadt* in Hamburg. The letter is dated 30 October 1920, less than a month before the premiere. Korngold was in Vienna at the time and conducted rehearsals for the orchestra there. He writes about the opera and the mood of the musicians as follows:

Everyone says it's extremely difficult; as far as I'm concerned, I have to say that I find it [opera] simply "beautiful music!!!"<sup>170</sup>.

At the age of twenty-three, Korngold enjoyed great fame and reputation. When word spread that his new full-scale opera would soon be completed<sup>171</sup>, opera houses began competing with each other for the right to premiere it. Eventually, *Die tote Stadt* had a double premiere on 4 December 1920<sup>172</sup>: in Hamburg, a city particularly sympathetic to Korngold's work and considered by the composer to be his happy place, and in Cologne. The opera was met with an

---

<sup>168</sup> About two and a half hours.

<sup>169</sup> In 1975, the Metropolitan Opera revived *Die tote Stadt*, inviting 88-year-old Maria Jeritza to attend rehearsals as guest of honour, the first singer to present the part of Marie/Marietta to the United States. At the time, the soprano shared her thoughts on the demands of the role with Carol Neblett, who was performing the part. She stated that this one must "not only be the vivacious young dancer Marietta, and then the dead wife Marie in the Vision Scene - but also, the depraved, seductive version of Marietta as she appears in Paul's dream! Three women! It is one of the greatest acting challenges for a singer in all of opera...". B.G. Carroll, *The Centenary of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's opera 'Die tote Stadt'*.

<sup>170</sup> B.G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 136'.

<sup>171</sup> The composer was in the habit of setting himself precise, non-scheduled deadlines and then celebrating the completion of his work with family and friends. In the case of the opera *Die tote Stadt*, this occurred on 15 August 1920 (according to Carroll, exactly 'before 9 o'clock in the evening'). Ibid, p. 135.

<sup>172</sup> The premiere was even supposed to be a triple performance, but Vienna postponed the date to January 1921 due to complications. Below I give the conductors and selected instrumentation from each show:

4.12.1920, Hamburg: Richard Schubert - Paul, Anny Münchow - Marie/Marietta, Josef Degler - Pierrot (Fritz), conducted by Egon Pollack,

4.12.1920, Cologne: Karl Schröder - Paul, Johanna Klemperer - Marie/Marietta, Karl Renner - Pierrot (Fritz), conducted by Otto Klemperer,

10.01.1921, Vienna: Karl Aagaard Oestvig - Paul, Maria Jeritza - Marie/Marietta, Richard Mayr - Pierrot (Fritz), conducted by Franz Schalk.

incredibly enthusiastic reception and, after an excellently received premiere and reviews full of admiration and praise from critics, it did not take long for interest in *The Dead City* to erupt. By 1922, almost every opera house in Austria and Germany was staging this exceptional work, and other leading European venues followed them<sup>173</sup>. The opera was a huge success in every city in which it was performed, securing Korngold's position as the most performed composer in Germany and Austria after Richard Strauss<sup>174</sup>. By the end of the first half of the 20th century, it had been staged on more than 70 stages in Europe and the United States<sup>175</sup>. Interestingly, *Die tote Stadt* was the first German opera performed in the USA after the First World War. The New York premiere took place at the Metropolitan Opera on 19 November 1921, where Maria Jeritza triumphed in the dual role of Marie/Marietta<sup>176</sup>.

Alban Berg, who attended the rehearsals for the Vienna premiere, wrote in a letter to his wife that he was "very impressed by this piece"<sup>177</sup>. A fervent fan of *Die tote Stadt* among composers was also Giacomo Puccini (incidentally, his *Tosca* was heavily criticised by Julius Korngold for what he considered an overly vulgar and contrived libretto), who called Erich Wolfgang 'the strongest hope of new German music'<sup>178</sup>. Franz Schalk, who conducted the Vienna premiere, described *Die tote Stadt* as "the sum of Austrian opera"<sup>179</sup>.

The most famous and recognisable excerpts from *The Dead City* are two arias: *Mariettas Lied zur Laute* from Act I and *Tanzlied des Pierrot* from Act II. Both were arranged by the composer for violin and piano and published by Schott.

### ***Mariettas Lied zur Laute***

---

<sup>173</sup> In Poland, the premiere of *The Dead City* (in Polish translation) took place on 28 February 1928 in Lviv. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 387.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

<sup>175</sup> J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 78.

<sup>176</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 379.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 44, p. 375. The composer admired *The Dead City* for its excellent orchestration and its take on the theme of *Weltschmerz*, the so-called pain of existence. Berg had served in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War and was fascinated by issues concerning human mental and physical endurance. Two years after the premiere of *Die tote Stadt*, that is, in 1922, he completed his opera *Wozzeck*, on which he had begun work in 1914 and which premiered eleven years later (1925). The opera was a great success, compounded by the huge moral scandal it aroused. However, it is futile to look for a positive message in it; on the contrary, Berg leaves no illusions, portraying the human psyche and social reality in a brutal way. Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* tackles difficult issues, but the tone of this opera is optimistic, offering hope that the human psyche is strong enough to overcome even immense suffering, a sense of hopelessness and lack of purpose. This trusting view of human nature and unwavering belief in its possibilities is characteristic of Korngold and sets him apart from other artists and aesthetic attitudes of the time.

<sup>178</sup> Interestingly, both composers shared a fondness for duplicating the solo vocal line in the upper voice of the violin, which played *divisi* for this purpose. Korngold was even once dubbed the 'Viennese Puccini' by critics because of this predilection. Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p. 381.

*Die tote Stadt* originated in Korngold's mind from *Mariettas Lied*, Marietta's aria from the first act, which critics later described as 'the last hit tune in German opera'<sup>180</sup>.

The aria presents the main themes of the work in an essential way: love beyond death and the struggle between memories; belonging to the past, and life here and now, in the present. Its incipit is the words "Glück, das mir verblieb", which can be freely translated as "happiness that has stayed with me"<sup>181</sup>. This happiness is the appearance of Marietta in Paul's life, remarkably reminiscent of his deceased wife, which the protagonist interprets as, on the one hand, a gift from heaven and, on the other, an action, a blessing from Marie herself. The first encounter with the dancer reaches a musical climax precisely in *Lautenslied*, which generates a whole sequence of events, played out in subsequent acts, leading to a moving finale. Technically, the aria is de facto a duet between Marietta and Paul and expresses a longing for the past, for a lost love. The boundary between truth and fiction is blurred, through Marietta's increasingly emphasised resemblance to Marie. The characters of the two women become intertwined, creating visions that, for Paul's mind, will have disastrous consequences. In this context, it is worth highlighting an extremely telling compositional device: the character of Paul has no assigned leitmotif<sup>182</sup>. Korngold deliberately deprives the protagonist of it and uses structures dedicated to Marietta or the feeling of love *per se*, which reflects the man's mental state - Paul has become so immersed in memories, mourning and obsession with his dead wife that he has lost himself. The aria forms the compositional buckle of the entire work: in the finale, when the protagonist pulls back the curtains, hiding Marie's portrait and thus symbolically indicating the start of the process of coming to terms with loss, the aria's melody returns, this time with a new text, the meaning of which is conveyed by the paraphrase: "farewell my true love, wait for me in the brightest heights, here on earth there is no resurrection, no resurrection"<sup>183</sup>.

Hamburg and Cologne, where the opera had its double premiere, as well as Vienna and other cities, instantly picked up on the beautiful and artfully composed *Lautenslied*, soloists eagerly included it in recital programmes, and Korngold even offered autographs and dedications bearing the opening motif from the soprano part<sup>184</sup>.

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>181</sup> See Appendix. Translations of German source texts used in the works.

<sup>182</sup> J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 77.

<sup>183</sup> "Glück, das mir verblieb / lebe wohl mein, treues Lieb. / Leben trennt von Tod / grausam Machtgebot. / Harre mein in lichten Höhn / hier gibt es kein Auferstehn.". See Appendix. Translations of German source texts used in the works.

<sup>184</sup> Korngold's grave, which is located in the Hollywood Forever Cemetery (Beth Olam Cemetery) in Los Angeles, was decorated with an inscription of the aria's incipit (the melodic line alone, without words). See [entry:] *Korngold, Erich Wolfgang*, [in:] World's largest gravesite collection 'Find a grave™',

The phenomenal success and popularity of *Marietta's Songs* led the composer to create a transcription of the work for violin and piano<sup>185</sup>. The arrangement is in the original key of B flat major<sup>186</sup>. Korngold wrote this song in the character of a slow waltz, enriched, however, by a *rubato* incorporated into the metrorhythmic fabric. The technique of playing *rubato* was extremely important for musical performance at the time, being one of the most important components of its specificity. Artists used it to reveal their artistry and sensitivity, often to the extent that it became a distinctive feature, defining their playing style. Korngold characteristically wove *rubato* into the score a priori, lengthening selected rhythmic values. This results in frequent changes between 3/4 and 4/4 metre in the piece (see Example 42).

---

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7920/erich\\_wolfgang-korngold](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7920/erich_wolfgang-korngold) [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>185</sup> There is also a version for violin and orchestra. It is available to order from the Schott Publishing website.

<sup>186</sup> In the opera, the key assigned to the character of Marietta is B major, with five sharps, while Marie expresses herself mainly in the possessive five flats of D flat major, which is a mirror symmetrical reflection of the key of B major on the circle of fifths. This treatment evokes legitimate associations: sharps - brightness - the world of the living, flats - darkness - the world of the dead.

**charakterystyczny akompaniament triolowy**

**zniany metrum - efekt rubato**

**Example 42.** E.W. Korngold - *Marietta's Lied zur Laute*, Op. 12, bars 1-17 (accompaniment, vocal violin line, *rubato* incorporated into the fabric of the piece)

The melodic line entrusted to the violin has a delicate shape, predominantly featuring vocally convenient intervals with a narrow ambitus, such as seconds and thirds. In moments of heightened expression, fourth and fifth leaps appear, lending the phrases a soaring quality, with phrase endings adorned with grace notes. The melodic line, along with its ornamental grace notes, is doubled in the right-hand part of the piano. In the introduction (bars 1–4), the piano part introduces a characteristic triplet accompaniment, which remains present throughout the piece (with certain rhythmic adjustments). This accompaniment typically oscillates between octaves or fifths (less frequently fourths or sixths), and at times incorporates pitch material belonging to

the chord, key, or scale used in a given bar (see Example 42). In the original, performed by celesta and harp (with second violins *divisi* added for colouristic purposes), it creates a shimmering, quivering, and exquisitely subtle sonic aura, evoking a dreamlike and not entirely real atmosphere, a state of fragile illusion or mirage. The colouration of this accompaniment brings to mind the paintings of the Impressionists, where light is diffused yet warm, and the depicted elements seem to remain in motion despite their apparent stillness, brought to life by the observer's eye.

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment, likely from E.W. Korngold's *Mariettas Lied zur Laute*. The score is written for a grand piano, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) and includes the instruction *espress.* (espressivo). The tempo is marked *langsam!* (slow). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including slurs, accents, and triplets. The texture is dense and expressive, characteristic of the Impressionist style mentioned in the text.

**Example 43.** E.W. Korngold - *Mariettas Lied zur Laute*, Op. 12, bars 65-68 (moving away from shimmering accompaniment towards chorale-like voice leading)

In the concluding passages of an episode (e.g. bars 14-15 in episodes 6-17 or bars 65-66 in episodes 57-68), the texture is changed, the number of voices is reduced and their rhythmic mobility is restricted, subordinated to the chorale-like rhythm of the main melody (see Example 43). These procedures create an atmosphere of solemn summary, of serious constation, of understanding. In the original, the soprano line is duplicated in these sections by French horns, cellos, second violins in the lowest register and clarinets; the melodic activity of the bassoons also increases. The whole sound becomes denser, not as diffuse as before.

Langsam poco rit. Sehr langsam, schlicht, mit Empfindung

4 1 D Saite

langsam!

pp A Saite

breit

breit

Daselbe Zeitmaß

langsam!

pp

Allmählich fließender und im Ausdruck gesteigert

pp espress.

A Saite

poco rit.

a tempo (fließend)

sub. pp

Dämpfer auf! rit.

Wieder sehr langsam, mit tiefster Empfindung

poco a poco calando

p con sordino

langsam!

breit

breit

mf

Ganz langsam (Adagio)

ppp

**Example 44.** E.W. Korngold - *Mariettas Lied zur Laute*, Op. 12, violin part, bars 1-72 (expressive and agogic terms)

Among the most frequent expressive and agogic markings (see Example 44) throughout the miniatures<sup>187</sup> are: *langsam* (very slow) - eight times, *espressivo* - eight times, *breit* (wide) - seven times. The last mentioned is very characteristic of the composer's style and often appears in his works for violin and piano<sup>188</sup>. When the violin voice enters, the composer uses the adjective *schlicht* (ungainly, simple, modest), further writing *mit Empfindung*, that is - with feeling. In bar 26, the phrase *im Ausdruck gesteigert* (with increased expression) appears, and in bar 57, along with the main melody, the phrase returns (in a slightly more fleshed-out form) *mit tiefer Empfindung* (with deepest feeling).

<sup>187</sup> The transcription for violin and piano consists of 79 bars.

<sup>188</sup> See Implementing terms, [in:] chap. III.

*Marietta's Song* invites performers to explore various shades of *dolce* playing. The palette of timbres is closely intertwined with qualities and categories such as beauty, grace, charm, allure, delicacy, tenderness, longing, and nostalgia. It is advisable not to lean towards a monumental, soloistic, or overly defined sound but rather to embrace the ephemerality inherent in *Marietta's Song*<sup>189</sup>. The previously described type of accompaniment and other compositional choices imbue the piece with an aura of transience, unfolding in a peculiar atmosphere of mirage. The delicacy and tenderness that underpin individual phrases, the profound lyricism of the musical expression, and the pervading nostalgia evoke a state of "admiration from a distance," a rapture filled with respect and sweetness, enveloped in mystery. This lends the work a touch of sublimity, reflected in the reflective, almost philosophical phrases in bars 14–17, 65–68, and 69–75.

I tried to select the fingering and work out the violin part in such a way that it approached the expression of the human voice. This included thinking of the phrase through the prism of breath, expressing emotional nuances through the use of a variety of vibrato, appropriate articulation (speed of the bow, volume of sound, disposition of the weight of the right arm, strength of the fingers of the left hand) of individual sounds, inspired by the distribution of consonants and vowels in the text of the aria, or drawing on originally vocal techniques such as for example *portamento*.

*Marietta's song* immediately after its premiere became a real hit of its time, finding its way into the hearts of representatives of various social strata<sup>190</sup> and still invariably delights. The piece remains one of the most recognisable in Korngold's oeuvre - extremely charming, full of enchantment, which is hard to pass by indifferently.

### ***Tanzlied des Pierrot***

*Tanzlied des Pierrot* is the second extremely popular aria from the opera *The Dead City*. At the Vienna premiere, "*Mariettaslied* caused a storm of applause, and in the second act

---

<sup>189</sup> In bar 57, the violin part includes the indication *con sordino*, which gives the impression of being an addition not originating from the composer but rather inserted by the publisher. I chose not to play with a mute, among other reasons, to preserve the possibility of greater timbral variation within the dynamic range of piano to pianissimo. This approach is, for me, far more interesting than the singular, strongly defined timbre achieved through playing *con sordino*.

<sup>190</sup> There is a well-known anecdote about how even an opera fireman, watching over the safety of the artists in the opera house, after hearing an aria at one of the rehearsals personally approached Korngold to tell him: 'Herr Korngold, that is splendid!'. J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 90.

Richard Mayr literally stopped the performance with his *Pierrotlied*<sup>191</sup>. The composer produced a transcription of the work for violin (or cello) and piano<sup>192</sup>.

Like Marietta's aria, Pierrot's solo touches on a theme of deep longing, triggering an almost obsessive desire to return to things past, to a happy past. It is a nostalgia-drenched love song about longing for the Rhineland, a land that witnessed and was part of the hero's romantic experiences. The song shows that *liebesfreud*, love's joy and happiness are illusory and do not last forever, inevitably leading to the pain of loss, causing immense suffering. Pierrot, a character well-known in *dell'arte comedies*, often symbolises a tragic fate. A paradox has been written into his very nature: he is an unrequited love, an eternally sad clown. In *Die tote Stadt*, this role is played by the adoring Marietta Fritz, a member of the same troupe to which the dancer belongs.

The aria's opening phrase can be translated as: "My longings, my dreams / carry me back into dreams", and its message is expressed in the final conclusion: "Intoxication and misery / and illusion and happiness: / ah, this is the juggler's fate..."<sup>193</sup>. The composer precisely defines the mood of the aria in the words *Langsame sentimentale Tanzliedweise* ("slow, sentimental, in the style of a dance song"). The nostalgia and subtlety of expression, conveying the sinking of the protagonist in memories, dreams and reveries is consistently maintained through other expressions<sup>194</sup>. The piece is introspective in nature, emphasising the inner feelings and dreams of the protagonist, presented in an intimate, confidential atmosphere.

In the original, the song is composed in the key of D flat major<sup>195</sup>, while the violin arrangement has been transposed half a tone upwards to D major, which allows the use of the instrument's natural harmonics and open string resonance. As in *Marietta's Song*, Korngold supports and colours the melodic line of the violin part, duplicating it in changing registers in the piano part.

---

<sup>191</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 145: "The "Mariettaslied" brought a storm of applause, and in the second act, Richard Mayr literally stopped the show with his "Pierrotlied"."

<sup>192</sup> Another transcription for violin and piano was prepared by Fritz Kreisler, for his own concert use.

<sup>193</sup> "Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen / es träumt sich zurück." and "Rausch und Not / und Wahn und Glück / ah, das ist des Gauklers Geschick ...". See Appendix. Translations of German source texts used in the works.

<sup>194</sup> One of these - *sehr weich und gesangvoll* (very soft, gentle and singing) - appears in the second half of the piece, in bar 45, when the performers might have been tempted to increase the volume of the sound considerably and to reach for a more open, broader style of playing. Another term - *zurückhaltend* (restrained, holding back) - appears at the beginning of the piece, in bar 8, and towards the end, in bar 86, describing a recitative section in the violin part that serves as a compositional bracket for the whole aria.

<sup>195</sup> D flat major is the key assigned to the deceased Marie, and is therefore associated with the past, which cannot be repeated. The use of the same key for Pierrot's nostalgic aria is not accidental, as he sings about longing, loss and the impossibility of returning to past happy moments.

I have made minor changes to the Schott published material in relation to the recorded registers in the score where the violin line is noted<sup>196</sup> (see Example 45). I was driven by a desire to take advantage of the colour potential of an instrument whose scale offers, in this particular case, far more varied possibilities than the human voice. The composer's transcription seems somewhat conservative in this respect, standard.

Here is the list of changes:

- bar 26: last eighth note - *a* instead of *a'*,

- bar 44: transfer of the sixteenth-note progression from the piano part to the violin voice, then transfer of the entire section up to and including bar 52 an octave higher, from an 1-line octave to a 2-line octave,

- Bars 69 to 77: moving the entire section up an octave, from a 2-line octave to a 3-line octave<sup>197</sup>.

The changes in the aforementioned places make the register in which the violin's melodic line is held the same as that of the piano's right hand (only in bars 53-68 does the piano duplicate the violin's melody an octave higher). Moving the sixteenth notes between the instruments in bar 44 does not take away the lightness and delicacy of the next phrase, while allowing the violin to gracefully change register and move an octave higher in a smooth, natural way. In the original, in bars 69-77 the soloist does not sing, and the melodic line in this section is taken over by eight sopranos, gathered behind the stage, performing a vocalisation (an octave higher) on the one-syllable exclamation "ah!" (see Example 46).

---

<sup>196</sup> I am not the only one who has made this decision. Diverse and different register changes are made by violinists Detlef Hahn (Detlef Hahn, Andrew Ball, *Korngold: The Complete Music for Violin & Piano*, [CD], catalogue number CDDCA1080, ASV, 2000) and Joseph Lin (Joseph Lin, Benjamin Loeb, *Violin Recital: Joseph Lin*, [CD], catalogue number 8557067, Naxos, 2004). Lin plays the piece in the original key of D flat major, moving many phrases into the higher register of the triple octave.

<sup>197</sup> By moving the melodic line of the violin part an octave higher in bars 69-77, a noticeable contrast of registers is created between the last note in bar 77 (i.e. *d'''*) and the first pitch of bar 78 (*a''*), which superbly emphasises the character of the last phrase. From the heights of dreams, hopes and emotional elation, we descend, as it were, to the ground, to a statement uttered with understanding calmness: "Intoxication and misery / illusion and happiness: / ah, this is the juggler's fate...". With these words, Pierrot accepts the nature of his fate, but at the same time continues to hope for the realisation of his desires. The painted smile of the clown takes on a longing and sad, nostalgic tone, because Pierrot knows in his heart that returning to the past and fulfilling his dreams is not really possible.

**Example 45.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot* Op. 12, bars 21-85 (original: alterations marked)

**Example 46.** E.W. Korngold - *Die tote Stadt* Op. 12 - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, score, (solo voice - tacet + 8 sopranos)

The miniature begins with a brief, seven-bar piano introduction, far removed from the notated key. In the first bar, an E $\flat$  major seventh chord with a ninth is heard, and from the second bar onward, a characteristic eighth-note quartal-quintal pattern emerges, based on four notes - A, D, E, G - presented against a sustained bass chord (also quartal-quintal) of A-E-A. The tonic, a D major chord, appears for the first time only in bar 13. The preceding bars (8–13) gradually approach the tonal centre, starting from the somewhat ambiguous position left by the piano introduction: bars 8–10 are based on an interpolated dominant with a sixth-to-fifth suspension (an E major seventh chord), leading to the dominant seventh chord with a fourth-to-

third suspension (an A major chord) in bars 11–12, which then resolves in bar 13 (with a ninth-to-octave suspension). It is here that the actual “sentimental dance song” begins (see Example 47).

**Example 47:** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot* Op. 12, bars 1-14 (harmony, intervals)

The intervals used to open the motifs in the violin part play a significant role in creating expression: a major third, a diminished fifth (tritone), and a perfect fifth, all ascending. The major third is the most expressively neutral, leading to the sixth of an interpolated dominant, resolving to the fifth. This suspension does not produce a strongly dissonant sound in the chord, resulting in a delicate character that serves colouristic purposes. The tritone generates considerably greater harmonic tension and reaches the fourth of the dominant, resolving to the third—a crucial component of the dominant that a listener accustomed to functional harmony keenly seeks and feels the absence of. The third motif features an upward leap of a perfect fifth, reaching the ninth, which suspends the octave in the tonic appearing for the first time. It is worth noting that the perfect fifth is a characteristic interval for Korngold, symbolising joy and happiness, forming part of the “Motif of the Cheerful Heart.” Thus, it seems no coincidence that a leap of a perfect fifth establishes the tonic for the first time in the piece. The suspension of the ninth to the octave creates a significant dissonance—the greatest thus far—and generates a pronounced need for resolution, which provides the listener with a stronger sense of relief and tonal affirmation (see Example 47).

Subito a tempo  
langsame fentimentale Tanzliedweise

poco rit. wieder  $\text{♩}$  (a tempo)

G Saite D Saite

*molto espress.*

wieder  $\text{♩}$  (poco rit.)

*molto espress.* p

D Saite (A) a tempo ( $\text{♩}$ )

$\text{♩}$  (a tempo)  $\text{♩}$  (poco rit.)

stets  $\text{♩}$  poco rit. ( $\text{♩}$ )

mp p

a tempo (aber trotzdem weiter  $\text{♩}$ )

Sehr weich und gefangvoll ( $\text{♩}$ )  $\text{♩}$  (poco rit.)

$\text{♩}$  (a tempo)  $\text{♩}$  (poco rit.)

$\text{♩}$  (a tempo) (B)

*molto legato*

poco rit. a tempo ( $\text{♩}$ )

A Saite Immer ruhiger

p 3 p p

**Example 48.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot* Op. 12, violin part, bars 13-76 (agogic fluctuations)

One element that the composer uses in a very interesting way is tempo. It contributes to creating the impression of mobility, constant floating, drifting, perhaps subtly illustrating the rippling surface of the Rhine water referred to in the text of the aria, or reflecting the dynamics of emotions, the gusts of feeling to which the heart of the sentimental hero succumbs. The agogic layer thus significantly supports the expression of the phrases, arranged in a sequence of emotional tides. The melodic line undergoes constant tempo fluctuations on the *poco ritenuto - a tempo* axis<sup>198</sup>, as it were, drifts on the wave of these changes. In addition to the frequent agogic fluctuations, Korngold places the symbol of a half note with a dot or a quarter note above selected bars to show which rhythmic value in the passage is to be thought of and counted, which one will better reflect the prevailing pulse of the section (see Example 48).

In the piano part, in the second part of the piece, i.e. from bars 45 to 85, the composer enhances the impression of rhythmic undulations in the accompaniment by interweaving groups of triplets with eighth and sixteenth notes, depending on the desired effect: triplets turn into

<sup>198</sup> The largest distance separating *poco ritenuto* and *a tempo* is five bars, and the smallest is one (when the terms are in adjacent bars).

eighth notes when the phrase slows down or stabilises, and into sixteenth notes when it becomes more dynamic (see Example 49).

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system features a piano part with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a violin part with a melodic line. A red box highlights the piano part's first two measures. The second system shows the piano part with a 'ped.' (pedal) marking and a 'mofo legato' annotation in a red box above the first measure. The violin part continues with a melodic line. A red box highlights the piano part's last two measures. The tempo marking 'd. (a tempo)' is present at the top of the first system, and a circled 'B' is in the violin part of the first system.

**Example 49.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, Op. 12, bars 57-66 (rhythmic piano part, portamento in violin part)

The piece is in 3/4 metre and draws on the rhythmic characteristic of the waltz. In the piano part in bars 17-22, the composer places caesuras between the first and second measures, which may suggest a performance mannerism used in the Viennese waltz and derived from the specificity of the steps of this dance, where the first measure is slightly emphasised and slightly shortened, and the second measure comes a little earlier, anticipating the moment when, according to the metronome indications, it should have appeared (see Example 50).

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system features a piano part with a simple rhythmic pattern and a violin part with a melodic line. The tempo marking 'poco rit.' is above the first measure, and 'wieder d. (a tempo)' is above the second measure. A red box highlights the piano part's last two measures. The second system shows the piano part with a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking and a red box highlighting the first two measures. The violin part continues with a melodic line.

**Example 50.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot* Op. 12, bars 15-20 (caesuras)

Also noteworthy are the characteristic intermittent, thin arch-shaped lines between some of the notes in the violin part (see Example 49). These do not appear in any of Korngold's other works described in this dissertation. What is puzzling is the fact that they link notes together that are already on the same arc. In my opinion, this is written in an unusual *portamento* manner. This fact is confirmed in the score in the solo vocal part (see Example 51), where a *portamento* has been notated in the same places - by means of a finely wavy line connecting the notes (not a straight line, as in the case of a *glissando*).



**Example 51.** E.W. Korngold - *Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12 - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, score, solo voice (*portamento*)

### ***Das Wunder der Heliane* Op. 20 - an artistic testament to its creator**

*Blessed are those who love,  
For love and not death has them in its power.  
And these shall receive the resurrection,  
Who have given their lives for love.*<sup>199</sup>

In 1923, the twenty-six-year-old Korngold began work on a new opera, the fourth one in his oeuvre. The libretto, based on a play by Hans Kaltneker<sup>200</sup>, titled *Die Heilige* ("The Saint"), was written by Hans Müller<sup>201</sup>. The manuscript of the play has been lost, but Emma Wohanka's

<sup>199</sup> Trans. Szymon Żuchowski after: Szymon Żuchowski, *The Miracle of 'Heliana'*, [in:] *Kultura Liberalna*, 8 May 2018, <https://kulturaliberalna.pl/2018/05/08/cud-heliany-zuchowski-zajaczkowski/> [accessed 23 May 2025]. The quote is from the opera libretto, by Hans Müller-Einingen, and in the original reads as follows: "Selig sind die Liebenden. / Die der Liebe sind, sind nicht des Todes. / Und auferstehen werden / die dahingesunken sind um Liebe."

<sup>200</sup> Hans Kaltneker (1895-1919) was a writer of Romanian origin who died prematurely of tuberculosis and lived and worked in Austria. His work was significantly influenced by Wagnerian ideas. Korngold was moved by Kaltneker's poetry and composed music to three of his poems (cycle *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 18). The artists never met, but the fascination and admiration were mutual. Kaltneker's publisher confirmed that the writer wanted Korngold to create an opera based on one of his plays. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 164.

<sup>201</sup> Müller and Korngold collaborated on the following works: *Sieben Märchenbilder*, Op. 3 (short texts of a few verses, illustrating the individual movements), *Violanta*, Op. 8 (libretto), *Der Vampyr* (music, composed at Müller's request) and *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20 (libretto). *Violanta* was part of Korngold's debut (1916) opera tandem: *Der Ring des Polykrates*, Op. 7 (opera buffa) and *Violanta*, Op. 8 (opera seria). It was through Müller's passionate persuasion that Korngold abandoned the one-act format and began to think about a full-scale opera, resulting in *Die tote Stadt*, Op. 12. Müller, regretting his withdrawal from working on the libretto for this opera and seeing what a huge success it was, asked Korngold in 1921 to compose music for his latest play, the Gothic tragedy *Der Vampyr*. He accepted the offer to work on *Das Wunder der Heliane* immediately. It is worth mentioning that Korngold's first invitation (unaccepted) to work in the field of German film music (early 1930s) was received precisely by Müller, who was at the time one of the chief scriptwriters at the leading UFA studio (Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft) - *Ibid*, p. 164, p. 218.

1931 doctoral thesis has survived, in which the author writes that Kaltneker himself called his work a 'musical mystery'<sup>202</sup>. The plot, imbued with mysticism and maintained in a poetic, unreal atmosphere of mystery, became a creative impulse of particular intensity for the composer.

*Das Wunder der Heliane* ('The Miracle of Heliane') deals with the theme of love, which overcomes all injustice and adversity and is endowed with the power to redeem man. The work can be read as another variation of one of the fundamental philosophical issues, namely the conflict between the corporeal and spiritual elements. This problem is portrayed by reflecting on individual freedom and the need to preserve one's identity and dignity under conditions of tyranny and violence. Knowledge of this sublime, monumental story is crucial in the context of interpreting the music, so I will introduce it in the clearest possible form.

The action takes place in an unspecified time in an unnamed country, ruled by a despotic Ruler who, unable to win the love of Heliane, who is married to him, tyrannises his subjects, wanting them to suffer with him. When the Stranger arrives in the city<sup>203</sup>, who wishes to give the people a little happiness and joy, he is immediately thrown into prison and sentenced to death. Into his cell comes Heliane, led by compassion. The stranger, aiming to experience beauty one last time, begs her to give herself to him. As a result of persuasion, Heliane, in rapture, stands naked in front of him - in love, yet terrified by the strength of the emotions she feels. Fate then causes the Ruler to arrive in the cell and, finding Heliane in an unambiguous situation, accuses her of adultery and orders the Stranger's immediate execution.

During the trial in which the protagonist's life is at stake, in her most famous aria, entitled *Ich ging zu ihm* ("I went to him"), Heliane returns as if in a trance to previous events. She does not try to defend herself. True to form, she does not deny that she appeared naked to the Stranger. She declares that there was no intercourse between them, however, the deep affection she has for him, reflected by the fervent, ecstatic music, is obvious to all gathered. Driven by a desire to protect Heliane, the Stranger pierces himself with a dagger. The enraged Ruler puts the woman to an impossible test of innocence: if she is undefiled, she will be able to resurrect the Stranger. In a last, desperate attempt, the tyrant blackmails Heliane, promising to give her life if she surrenders to him, but she refuses. At this point, the Stranger rises from the dead. Heliane runs towards him, but the Ruler pierces her with his sword. The woman dies, but

---

<sup>202</sup> Emmy Wohanka, *Hans Kaltneker*, doctoral thesis, 1931, unpublished. Quoted in B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, pp. 383-384. Furthermore, Michael Haas states that Kaltneker personally assigned musical voices to the characters. See Michael Haas, *Das Wunder der Heliane*, [in:] 'Forbidden Music Blog', <https://forbiddenmusic.org/2017/07/09/das-wunder-der-heliane/> [accessed 23 May 2025 ].

<sup>203</sup> Perhaps a neater term would be 'Foreigner', given that the man arrives from a different emotional reality, so to speak, from another country.

the Stranger's kiss brings her back to life. The triumphant man casts out the Ruler and frees his subjects from his yoke, after which he and Heliane rise united towards Heaven, united by eternal love.

The idea of a feeling with a redemptive power, of a love stronger than death, allowing guilt to be redeemed and life to be reborn in the dead, is a kind of refinement of the image of love presented in *Die tote Stadt*. The protagonist of *Die tote Stadt*, Paul, has made himself 'dead while alive', unable to stop despairing of his dead wife Marie. The Stranger and Heliane, who gave their lives as a result of the affection they shared, are resurrected by each other, against all odds, by the strength of their love.

Julius Korngold claimed that the opera originated in his son's mind from the aria of the title character "[...] around whom he wove the aura of a musical language which embroidered the vivid contours of preternaturally tender, exquisite melody into an impressionistic fabric."<sup>204</sup> It is impossible to verify the veracity of the above opinion<sup>205</sup>, while looking with an objective eye, it is possible to identify a work that certainly played the role of a kind of musical study, serving as a preparation for outlining the sound world in which Heliane's story was to take place.

---

<sup>204</sup> Sonja Kiefer-Blickensdorfer, programme booklet for the album *Korngold. Das Wunder der Heliane*, SWR Freiburg, Naxos, catalogue number 8.660410-12, Opera Classics, 2018, [https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1p4vTeKleSfW9zaXJuTuOBQ1iXups\\_eNL](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1p4vTeKleSfW9zaXJuTuOBQ1iXups_eNL) [accessed 23 May 2025].

<sup>205</sup> Leaving aside the level of correspondence between Julius Korngold's words and the actual creative process, it is interesting to note that Heliane is the only character to be named: the others are named after their role or their professional function (Ruler, Doorkeeper, Judge, Messenger, Stranger, etc.). The name Heliane is the Old High German form of the name Helena, whose etymology is to be found in the Greek *hele* - radiance and *helane* - torch. In Greek mythology, Helena was the daughter of Zeus and Leda, a woman of legendary beauty. The meaning of the name Heliane is 'dazzling' or 'bright'. The name reflects light and beauty and is associated with purity and grace. See [entry:] *Meaning of the name Heliane*, <https://www.ksiegaimion.com/helena> [accessed 23 May 2025].

The image shows two systems of a musical score. The top system includes a vocal line with lyrics: "Nacht geh' id ein. Wirft du schwe - ben - der Traum um". The piano accompaniment is marked "a tempo", "pp", and "espress.". The bottom system includes a vocal line with lyrics: "mei - ne Stir - ne sein? Wirft du". The piano accompaniment is marked "a tempo", "pp", "dolce", and "mf espress. hervortretend". Two red boxes highlight specific rhythmic patterns in the piano part, one in the first system and one in the second system.

**Example 52.** E.W. Korngold - *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 18, mov. I, bars 4-8 (metre)

In 1924, Korngold composed *Drei Gesänge* Op. 18, three songs to Kaltneker's poetry. These works are among the most sophisticated examples of their genre in the composer's oeuvre. The musical language serves to maximise expression. The chromaticism of the material is pushed to the limit, and the interpretation of certain consonances within the framework of functional harmony becomes highly debatable, even with a flexible approach. Korngold uses bitonality, polymetry and non-standard metre notation (for example, instead of 6/8 - 3x2/8, see Example 52). The piano texture is unusual - rich even for his predilections. The mystical atmosphere of the song is interwoven with the at times almost predatory expression of the melodic line, achieved by means of intervals with a wide ambitus and strong emotional charge (such as sixths, sevenths or ninths), as well as through the use of dotted rhythms, glissandos and syncopated accents. All of the above-mentioned elements appear in *Das Wunder der Heliane* in multiplied form.

This opera is a mature work and can undoubtedly be considered Korngold's *opus magnum*. Its unique character consists of three key elements: colour, texture and harmonics. The

degree of their sophistication, the sophistication of the means used and the originality of the style confirm the above assessment.

Korngold's compositional approach reveals that he did not view the orchestra as a collective of multiple cooperating instruments. Writing in the spirit of the Mahler-Strauss tradition, he treated the symphony orchestra as a single instrument: vast, organic, and resonating as a whole. This approach resulted in remarkable cohesion and homogeneity of sound.

The tone colour employed by Korngold is at times almost inspired, possessing a distinctive palette that can equally convey a state of passive trance-like absorption (the duet of the Stranger and Heliane in Act I) or depict the grim hopelessness and violence of a tyrant's regime (Act II). Whether a passage is characterised by a wide ambitus, bold motivic material, and sweeping musical gestures, or features a narrower intervallic range with motifs of a more intimate and personal nature, the sound bears the composer's musical signature. Timbre becomes his hallmark, functioning like a sonic genotype.

Korngold is particularly fond of juxtaposing harp and celesta, colouring them with the sound of the piano<sup>206</sup>, flutes or strings, sometimes supplementing this colour with the sound of French horn. The resulting colour is at once soft, sparkling and expressive. Its unusual mysteriousness and originality bring to mind a sound of a fantastic, almost celestial character, seeming to come from beyond the boundaries of the known world. Even if the juxtaposition of instruments used by the composer at any given moment is not atypical and has been used in the history of instrumentation as a 'musical fabric' by other composers, Korngold leads and combines the voices in his own way, making the 'weave' one of a kind. Despite the grandiose instrumentation, the composer occasionally introduces several-voice *divisi* in string instruments in order to maximise the number of melodic lines. Korngold's timbre is original and internally coherent; the distinctive orchestral sound has become his trademark. In an era in which the great violinists played so expressively that one could easily distinguish them by listening to the sound alone<sup>207</sup>, Korngold also created his own sonic showcase.

*Das Wunder der Heliane* makes sophisticated use of the leitmotif technique. In addition to melorhythmic structures, these become tonalities to which Korngold attributes specific character traits, emotional states and even the moral condition of the characters. In this way, the

---

<sup>206</sup> See *Viel Lärmen um nichts*, Op. 11 - the composition that enchanted the world, [in:] chap. II.

<sup>207</sup> One need only mention Mischa Elman's rich, expressive vibrato, the rapid changes of position that make up Jascha Heifetz's brilliant sound, Toscha Seidl's rhapsodic phrasing style or Fritz Kreisler's charming tone and the *rubato* at his disposal, imbued with the spirit of the Viennese's beloved dances, the waltz and the ländler.

tonalities and the relationships between them reflect the depth of the opera's spiritual message and create the symbolic layer of the work, fulfilling a narrative function.

Numerous dissonances and heavily chromatised consonances are present in the seemingly traditional harmonic field, and musical scales outside the major-minor system also appear. The contrasts between the tonalities emphasise the structural axis of the opera: the conflict between corporeality and spirituality, the rift between the Ruler and Heliane. The brutal character of the Ruler is represented by darker, more tense keys (F minor, A flat major), while the person of Heliane is associated with lighter, luminous keys (E major, B major). Minor scales, dark, accompany conflict and suffering. Major scales, with their bright sound, convey the spiritual dimension of the work, representing love, transcendence and harmony. The key of C major, for centuries identified with light and purity, is used at the moment of triumph, the titular miracle of Heliane, reinforcing the symbolism of redemption and victory.

In the realm of rhythm, intricate and complex subdivisions appear (see Example 53), notated with great precision, which gain plasticity through the deliberate incorporation of rubato into the fabric of the score. True to his practice, Korngold employs frequent changes of metre, often altering accentuation or pulsation within a given metre. He precisely describes rhythmic proportions, clarifying the relationships between the basic note values that establish the pulse of a given section. He extensively uses agogic markings, both in verbal and symbolic forms, which are highly specific and clearly defined.



**Example 53.** E.W. Korngold - *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20, bars 1-5 (clarinet part)

Opera makes gigantic demands on musicians. This doesn't just apply to the singers (although there is a technically complex, richly composed love duet and showpiece arias in each of the three acts) or the conductor, but also to the chorus and orchestra, where every voice is treated in a virtuoso manner. The degree of difficulty of the individual parts is incredible - some passages are practically unplayable and many of the noted minor values in the rhythmically complex structures, impressive scale progressions or passages with a large register span (e.g. in violin parts) cannot be played perfectly faithfully in the fast tempo given.

The demands that *Das Wunder der Heliane* places on the soloists can be assigned to the category of challenges characteristic of Wagner's musical dramas. The main difficulties include above all the emotional intensity of the parts and their length, the far-from-comfortable tessitura, the level of complexity of the musical material, insufficient recovery breaks, numerous rubato or tempo changes. Above all, in addition to vocal mastery, sophisticated acting is also needed, as the complex libretto requires creations at a really high level.

The opera introduces an intense atmosphere from the very beginning, and the presented tension builds throughout the first act. The rising temperature of emotions and their impulsiveness are expressed primarily through the soaring direction of the phrases, involving abrupt changes of registers and a significant broadening of the ambitus. This effect is reinforced by the intensification of the instrumentation or the sudden *crescendo*, appearing at the last possible moment. The composer deftly controls the distribution of expressive tension, gradually piling up the emotional charge and using suspense, pushing back the climaxes in time. In this way, he becomes the director of the musical narrative, intensifying the emotions felt at key moments.

The entire composition is characterised by love of beauty, deep lyricism and moodiness, with each act having a slightly different tone. Act I depicts the events in a fairy-tale manner: we are introduced to the reality of the story and, together with Heliane, experience not entirely comprehensible but very vivid emotions. The amorous and mystical moments play out *quasi una fantasia*, as if in a trance. Act II sobers up and reverberates in sombre colours, realistically conveying an atmosphere of tyranny, unjust judgement and a trap, looked at humanly, with no way out. It is full of dramatic intensity. Act III unfolds in a solemn, elevated, almost prayerful atmosphere, evoking associations with an oratorio, while its finale transforms into a stirring hymn celebrating the power and significance of true love. The opera is a true conglomerate: it interweaves sensuality and passion, innocence and purity, violence and desire in an atmosphere of excitement and tension.

The blend of pure eroticism with elements of Christian mysticism brings to mind a work premiered in 1905, namely Richard Strauss's *Salome*. Based on a drama by Oscar Wilde and inspired by a biblical story, the opera was, by the moral standards of the time, quite shocking. The most famous scene from *Salome* is the so-called 'dance of the seven veils', in which the title character strips off layer after layer of her garments during a sensual performance, driving Herod to ecstasy and demanding the head of John the Baptist in gratitude. The soprano Marie Wittich, who played the title role at the premiere, refused to perform the dance, citing moral

reasons<sup>208</sup>. *Das Wunder der Heliane* went a step further than *Salome*: the title character first shows the Stranger her hair, then her bare feet and finally offers her naked body to him. During the performances, a symbolic, compromising solution was used - the sopranos performed in a white petticoat<sup>209</sup>.

An excellent source of information on the customs of Viennese society in the early 20th century is the autobiographical novel *The World of Yesterday. Memories of a European* by Stefan Zweig. In it, the writer diagnoses the Viennese of the time as people dominated by rigid moral norms and numerous moral prohibitions. At the time, female sexuality was a taboo subject, girls were brought up in a spirit of extreme prudery, and any expression of interest in their own carnality was suppressed and severely condemned. Young women found themselves in a difficult position, enforced by social norms: their awakening desire had to hide ruthlessly under a mask of false asexuality, their natural curiosity in the carnal sphere had to be satisfied in a secret way (erotic literature was very popular at the time), and their lack of preparation for life with a man in a marriage often led them to fear love and, as a consequence, to old age. Zweig strongly criticises the hypocrisy of social norms and the prohibitions in place, showing how highly negative the individual human stories and the general condition of society and the emotional atmosphere of the era were<sup>210</sup>.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the active work of Dr Sigmund Freud in Vienna, who considered sexuality to be a key aspect of the female psyche. Freud's views, methods and research were controversial, facing criticism (above all for his patriarchal prejudices and limited, single-minded way of thinking) both in his time and today, but he was nevertheless one of the first scientists to speak openly about women's sexuality, which enabled further research in this field and the relaxation of strict moral norms, which were also being eroded by artists, mainly painters and sculptors.

In the above context, the issue of sexuality as depicted in *Das Wunder der Heliane* is clear and irrefutable: the act of love is pure and beautiful and, moreover, takes on an almost sacred power when it takes place between people who love each other. Moreover, it is not marriage or duty that legitimises it, the opera states, but love.

---

<sup>208</sup> *The New Penguin Opera Guide*, ed. by Amanda Holden, Penguin 2001, p. 889.

<sup>209</sup> What was still unthinkable in Vienna in 1927 was depicted ninety-one years later in a 2018 production by the Berlin Opera: the performer of the leading role, the excellent soprano Sara Jakubiak did indeed appear naked at the end of the discussed scene. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 202.

<sup>210</sup> See S. Zweig, op. cit. pp. 73-94, chapter 'Eros matutinus'.

Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century was a city full of contradictions: on the one hand, conservative and rooted in tradition, and on the other, alive with scandals and controversy. The aristocratic and bourgeois salons loved to gossip about artists, intellectuals and decadent cultural figures. Shocking events fascinated the Viennese, even though they officially condemned any deviation from the norm. At the beginning of 1927, a new and contentious topic galvanised the community. In Leipzig, a sensational work for the time premiered in February, which caused much controversy and warmed the pens of critics: Ernst Křenek's *Jonny spielt auf* (*Play us, Jonny*). It was a novelty in the opera world at the time, described as a jazz opera. The story of the jazz violinist's adventures served as a pretext for incorporating rhythms and harmonies characteristic of the new trend into the traditional score, as well as presenting the latest technological advances (including the radio, automobile and locomotive). During the post-war crisis, when opera directors had to struggle to balance their budgets by staging works by Puccini, Strauss, Berg and Schrecker, the uncomplicated and unsophisticated formula of Křenek's show, addressed to a mass audience and aimed at entertainment rather than the sublime aesthetic experience of an elite group, fulfilled its role, providing theatres with huge revenues. The work quickly became extremely popular and was translated and staged in numerous European theatres.

For a musical conservative like Korngold's father, jazz opera became the symbol of "new music": a noisy and kitsch creation, bringing with it all the worst and inevitably leading to a decline in the musical taste of Viennese music lovers. This degradation could not be allowed at any price and *Jonny* had to be fought with all possible means. Korngold senior therefore used his influence and connections (for example, with the then director of the Vienna State Opera, Franz Schalk) and got his way: Vienna did not hear Křenek's opera. The virulent articles Julius wrote, however, were full of such malice that they had the opposite effect, arousing interest in the forbidden fruit. The critic contrasted the condemned work with his son's new 'model' opera, creating and artificially fuelling a conflict between diametrically opposed works, unnecessarily polarising society<sup>211</sup>.

This was the atmosphere in which the first shows of *Das Wunder der Heliane* took place. The world premiere took place on 7 October 1927 at the Stadttheater in Hamburg. Korngold's warm friend Egon Pollack conducted, the part of Heliane was performed by the aforementioned

---

<sup>211</sup> News and scandals, exciting the Viennese, permeated many areas of everyday life, as the following anecdote perfectly illustrates. The Austrian Tobacco Works showed first-rate marketing sense by releasing two new series of cigarettes at the time: *Jonny* and *Heliane*. *Jonny* was a cheap, unsophisticated product available "for every pocket", while *Heliane* cigarettes were wrapped in lilac-coloured paper and had a gold mouthpiece, which of course came with a much higher price tag. J. Duchon, op. cit. p. 125.

soprano Maria Hussa, the Stranger was sung by the tenor, Carl Günther, and the Ruler by the baritone, Rudolf Bockelmann.

The Vienna premiere took place on 29 October 1927, performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Franz Schalk, with Lotte Lehmann in the role of Heliane and Jan Kiepura as the Stranger. The atmosphere in the city was almost unbearably tense, the tickets were sold out, it was also to be the first premiere of Korngold's opera, broadcast on the radio<sup>212</sup>. None of the Viennese music lovers and critics doubted that Korngold had created a brilliant work, composing sensational music, while there were fears that the theme of the libretto was too intricate, too complicated to be presented in an opera. The judgement of moral choices, the struggle between the corporeal and spiritual elements, the power of love to raise the dead - the post-war public and critics were not interested in such issues, far removed from the problems of the time.

Regardless of the critics' concerns about the chosen subject, Korngold regarded this opera as his masterpiece, and audiences confirmed this conviction with each successive performance. *Das Wunder der Heliane* conquered the stages of Munich, Hamburg, Lübeck, Nuremberg or Breslau (Wrocław). The composer himself conducted the 25th anniversary performance in Vienna<sup>213</sup>, and the aria *Ich ging zu ihm* quickly and permanently entered concert repertoires. Although the opera was a huge success in every opera house in which it was staged, the composer was so exhausted by the atmosphere of intrigue and negative emotions accompanying the preparations for the premiere that he later withdrew from writing larger forms for a long time<sup>214</sup>.

The idea and music of *Heliane* lived within the composer for many years, with echoes found in the score composed seventeen years later, in 1944, for the film *Between Two Worlds*. This score is highly atmospheric and bears many similarities to *Das Wunder der Heliane*, even including direct quotations from the opera<sup>215</sup>. Korngold was deeply captivated by the film's plot

<sup>212</sup> B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 201.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, p. 204.

<sup>214</sup> In parallel with the opera, he composed *Drei Gesänge* Op. 18 - three songs to Kaltneker's poetry, *Klavierkonzert in Cis* Op. 17 - a one-movement piano concerto for the left hand, and a delightful trifle - *Vier kleine Karikaturen für Kinder* Op. 19, i.e. 4 children's caricatures, where he gave a succinct and witty musical portrait of Schönberg, Stravinsky, Bartók and Hindemith. Pieces written after the premiere of *Das Wunder der Heliane* include a piano fantasy on themes from the works of Johann Strauss - *Geschichten von Strauss* Op. 21, a song cycle - *Drei Lieder* Op. 22, *Suite* Op. 23 for two violins, cello and piano (left hand), a serenade composed out of joy at the birth of a son - *Baby-Serenade* Op. 24, and *Piano Sonata No. 3 in C major* Op. 25. The next major form and at the same time an opera is only *Die Katrin* Op. 28, written during the years 1932-1937, in parallel with his work for Hollywood.

<sup>215</sup> The Doorkeeper's theme from Act III (the prison guard sings an aria about Heliane's miraculous healing of his daughter, thus emphasising that he believes the woman will resurrect the Stranger) is used in the film at the moment when the Reverend's character learns that she will be allowed to continue her work. During the final scene, when the pair of protagonists are given a second chance through their mutual love and return to earth to live after

and its exploration of the idea of a love powerful enough to overcome death itself, capable of redeeming committed wrongs - a love that heals, ennobles, and imbues the chaotic actions of humanity with profound meaning. In the film, the strength of the mutual affection between the protagonists restores them to life and grants them another chance. It is thus unsurprising that, inspired by this story, Korngold chose to weave selected fragments and references to his favourite opera into the score, allowing it, through the new medium, to also receive a “second chance.”

### *Gesang der Heliane*

Korngold composed the original aria in F sharp major, a tonality that is sonically radiant, vibrant, and triumphant, thereby emphasising the spiritual exaltation and transcendent significance of the events. The violin transcription is set in F major. None of Korngold’s operatic arias fails to demand absolute vocal mastery from the singer, with many requiring a continuous testing and pushing of vocal limits. The most challenging task for the violinist, however, lies in planning the rendering of the piece’s dramaturgy and tension through tone colour and intensity.

In terms of chamber music, Korngold sets the bar high, as he does in his other works for violin and piano. Both instruments must be closely aligned in intention, timbre, and articulation. The use of a uniform *nota contra notam* rhythmic style demands impeccable collaboration between performers, while the dramatic layer requires true narrative mastery.

The aria is not long, consisting only of 45 bars, including an introduction that serves to establish the mood of the scene. The form of the piece derives from a continuous buildup of expression, realised through an expressive *crescendo*. The climactic phrase occurs in bars 34–42, marked with the indication *In Verzückung* (in rapture), with the peak of tension falling in bar 39<sup>216</sup> (see Example 54).

---

committing suicide, the resounding melody bears the hallmarks of the same ecstatic quality that we can hear in the aria *Ich ging zu ihm*. B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p. 313.

<sup>216</sup> In the original, the composer uses an excellent procedure, moving the vocal line in the course of the piece (bar before No 171) to a lower octave register in order to gain more space to build up the approach to the climactic passage and at the same time delay it slightly. In the violin version at bar 25, the composer does not duplicate this treatment, so the violinist must achieve the same effect by other means.

The image shows a musical score for E.W. Korngold's 'Gesang der Heliane' Op. 20, bars 33-41. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a violin melody and piano accompaniment. Key markings include 'poco rit.', 'molto rit.', 'In Verzückung', 'kulminacyjny odcinek utworu', 'accel.', 'a tempo', 'rit.', 'nicht eilen!', 'Breit', and 'climax'. The score shows a progression of expressive tension and long-line thinking, culminating in a climactic section.

**Example 54.** E.W. Korngold - *Gesang der Heliane* Op. 20, bars 33-41 (climax of the work)

The phrases have an expansive progression, based on the consistent shaping of expressive tension and long-line thinking. The dominant rhythmic values are dotted half notes and half notes. The primary motif, from which Korngold constructs the phrases, spans a single bar, with a clear emphasis on the first beat and the sixth beat (with the function of an upbeat (see Example 55). The melodic line is sustained for a considerable time in the middle register of the violin. The chosen key precludes the use of the G string (which would require playing in high positions entirely unsuitable for this type of cantilena), and before the melody shifts to a higher octave, where the bright, shimmering sound of the E string can be utilised, it remains for an extended period in a less distinctive, somewhat ungrateful timbral register, encompassing the D and A strings.



**Example 55:** E.W. Korngold - *Gesang der Heliane*, Op. 20, bar 18 (basic motif)

The piano plays chord progressions *colla parte* with the violin, for two-thirds of the aria's duration without filling longer rhythmic values with any embellishment. This creates an impression of stasis and increases the difficulty of shaping the phrase's continuity and emphasising its horizontal character. The composer calls for *piano*, *pianissimo*, and *espressivo* playing, thereby opening up opportunities to explore the timbral nuances of delicate dynamic shades and to highlight subtle differences between them. Both instruments should thus employ a soft, malleable sound that can be freely shaped. The tone should be both expressive and slightly diffused, with an Impressionistic colouration. There is often a need to vary the saturation of the sound and modulate timbre within a single pitch. The key element enabling such performance techniques is a wide range of violin vibrato types, closely integrated with the work of the right hand<sup>217</sup>, as well as a varied way of articulating the onset of sounds.

In the violin transcription, numerous agogic and expressive indications appear in German (see Table 2). From the catalogue of Italian terms, Korngold frequently uses *(poco/molto) ritenuto* and *(molto) espressivo*. These indications clearly show that the composer aims for a mature, expressive delivery, whose intensity builds gradually but steadily until it reaches its fullest expression. Such an aesthetic environment underscores the beauty and sublimity of Heliane's character and actions.

<sup>217</sup> Particular attention should be paid to the following aspects of right-hand technique: the contact point between the bow and the string, the speed of the bow, the weight of the arm, which translates into the depth of t with the string, and the amount of bow hair used.

| <b>TERMS IN GERMAN</b> | <b>POLISH TRANSLATION</b>         |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| mässig                 | moderately                        |
| nachlassend            | letting go, relaxing              |
| ruhig                  | quietly                           |
| sehr zart              | very gently, tenderly             |
| zurückgehalten         | hold, backwards                   |
| langsam                | slowly                            |
| steigernd              | increasing, potentiating, growing |
| nicht eilen            | take your time                    |
| breit                  | widely                            |

**Table 2.** Performance markings with translations (in order of appearance in *Gesang der Heliane*)

## Chapter III - Korngold's poetics and musical language: works for violin and piano

### Melody

Korngold is a melodist whose compositions are dominated by a beautifully constructed, artful and expressive cantilena. Its lyrical, singing character is achieved primarily through the use of *legato* as the primary mode of expression. The melodic lines are long, with a wavy, swirling, lush shape. Very often their direction is ascending or laid out on the basis of interweaving ascendant and descendent phrases, which creates low-frequency sine waves. The composer thinks in long phrases, in which he usually locates several 'transitive climactic heights' on the way to the climax. He makes equal use of the extroverted, open expression of the melodic lines as well as the more reflective, introverted expression, shaping the lines in a way that is simple and sophisticated at the same time, like an artist who can suggest the depicted object to the viewer with a few sketched lines.

The ambitus of composed melodies and individual motifs is wide, especially in typically instrumental works<sup>218</sup>. Korngold was particularly fond of the intervals of fourths and perfect fifths and of sixths and ninths. The composer's personal musical motif, characteristic of his entire oeuvre, the 'Serene Heart Motif', consists of a series of interlocking fourths and perfect fifths.

The melodics of Korngold's works for violin and piano are founded on a song-like and operatic style of thinking. Even in compositions of purely instrumental provenance (such as *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6), whose scale and ambitus far exceed the dispositions of the human voice, the inspiration of vocal melodicism remains clear and clearly audible.

### Rhythmics

Rhythmics play an important role in Korngold's works. The composer likes to use expressive punctuated rhythms, which give the broadly ambitious melodic lines an expansive character and "innervate" the singing phrases, emphasising their inner animation. The use of punctuated rhythms also contributes to the lightness of the motifs and evokes their dance

---

<sup>218</sup> What I have in mind are the works that are not transcriptions of operatic arias: *Serenade* from the ballet *Der Schneemann*, *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, *Sonata in G major* Op. 6 and the suite *Viel Lärmen um Nichts* Op.11.

character. The rhythmic figures and the pulsation itself are rooted in Viennese dance music, especially waltz and ländler.

The composer uses double and triple division extremely frequently at the same time, interweaving them horizontally (eighth notes and triplets within a single melodic line) or juxtaposing them vertically (between voices). The coexistence of these two rhythmic orders is present in each of the pieces for violin and piano. This treatment creates an impression of agogic fluctuation, as the rhythmic stability set by the bipartite division is counterpointed by the tripartite wobbliness and fluidity, which plays with the listener's perception. The rhythmic variety also adds to the density of the texture, and the changing accents resulting from the overlapping divisions increase the musical tension. Korngold blends these two rhythmic worlds very freely, often writing counterpoint and accompaniment in bars of duple metre in triplet rhythm. In this way, depending on the other components and the character of the fragment, he achieves an effect of fluid accompaniment (*Serenade*), languorous and open-work texture (*Mariettas Lied*) or structural richness and multi-layering (*Caprice fantastique, Tanzlied des Pierrot*).

The composer shows a particular predilection for prolonging the duration of rhythmic values through the use of ligatures, often overlapping strong parts of the bar. As a result, some accents disappear or are rearranged (syncopation effect), and some melodic motifs dissolve gently, without a clear ending. Others, on the other hand, develop gradually, accumulating a charge of energy on extended values, which they then pass on to the subsequent rhythmic groups.

In the works under discussion, the composer sometimes entrusts both instruments with the realisation of an identical rhythm at the same time, on the principle of *nota contra notam* texture. This procedure, however, usually results from the duplication of the melodic line of the violin in the part of the piano's right hand.

## **Tempo**

A very characteristic feature of Korngold's style are the surprisingly frequent changes of metre, which are an unusual way of precisely notating *the rubato* the composer expects. Instead of noting a fermata, the length of which would be decided each time by the performer, Korngold changes the metre (for example, for one bar), thereby obliging the musician to lengthen the given sound by the value he has planned. Also helpful, or perhaps even guaranteed, in the realisation of the composer's vision of playing *rubato* are the numerous performance terms

concerning agogics. They sometimes change every bar or more frequently<sup>219</sup>, which is why the verbal layer in some miniatures is almost as rich as the sound layer.

In works for violin and piano, slow and moderate tempos prevail: *langsam*, *adagio*, *andantino*, *moderato*, *allegretto*. Sometimes the tempo designation is not precise, indicating more the character of the piece or its section<sup>220</sup>. The dance-like sections are kept at lively tempos, as are the virtuoso passages. The composer does not give metronome markings, leaving the performers to choose the tempo. This gives a greater margin for interpretation, as the tempo depends on a reading of the character and style of the piece, additional agogic markings and the dramatic context.

## Harmony

Harmony is one of the most important components of Korngold's works. The composer uses a very personal, rich, late-Romantic harmonic language based on extended tonality, with influences from impressionism and expressionism. This is reflected in the numerous chromatic and enharmonic modulations and extended, complex chords with the addition of alteration or dissonant components. Despite numerous idiosyncratic chord progressions and modulations to keys distant from the tonic, which create an effect of narrative depth and heightened dramaturgy, all unexpected moves can be explained within the framework of functional harmony. The abundance, fullness, density, and harmonic clarity produce an impression of symphonic sound.

Harmony also serves a colouristic function (in the vein of impressionistic principles), taking on an illustrative role. In certain sections and works, it is blurred, undefined, and pastel-like, which Korngold achieves through the use of parallelisms (such as progressions of fourths or seconds) and modalisms, as well as the subtle dissonant colouring of chords, which are not subsequently resolved.

The composer also incorporates harmony into his frequently employed technique of leitmotifs, assigning specific tonalities and consonances symbolic meaning and enhancing the character of leading motifs through the expressive colouration of chords. Bitonality, a certain tonal ambivalence, and contrasting juxtapositions of keys, sometimes leading to semantic clashes, serve to convey the nature of the portrayed (or implied) character, moral conflict, or relationships between characters. Harmony significantly shapes the dramaturgy of the works

---

<sup>219</sup> See I *Mädchen im Brautgemach*, [in:] *Vier Stücke aus der Musik...*, chap. II., where out of 49 bars only 17 have no verbal term - the others have a minimum of one, often two.

<sup>220</sup> Most common: *sehr ausdrucksvoll* - very expressive, *zurückhaltend* - restrained, *ruhig* - calm, *breit* - wide, extensive.

and the mood of scenes, while also contributing to humour and underscoring the progression of the action, thereby confirming that Korngold thought like a creator of dramatic, stage music, regardless of the chosen form or genre.

### **Articulation**

Continuing the traditions of Viennese classics, the composer places great emphasis on shaping phrases through articulatory details. He employs slurs of varying lengths, accents, tenuto, staccato, and portato as means of expression. Diverse methods of sound production ensure that melodic lines are more distinctly sculpted, with their character conveyed with great precision and emotional richness. The violin and piano must demonstrate flexibility in executing articulation, as changes typically occur over short sections.

The primary mode of expression in the parts for both instruments is *legato* - dense, long, sonically rich, and emotionally saturated. In the piano part, *legato* is particularly demanding in sections where the composer employs chordal textures, while in the violin part, achieving a good *legato* is challenged by large intervals and leaps between notes, necessitating frequent changes of position and string.

Articulations such as *marcato* and *staccato* (including *spiccato* in the violin part) frequently appear, especially in lighter, witty passages, as well as in virtuosic and theatrical fragments. In the piano part, Korngold often uses *arpeggio* and *tremolo* techniques, achieving interesting colouristic effects and enriching the texture.

The composer also notates *glissando* (particularly in *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6), and although *portamento* is only occasionally indicated in the score, it is often an implied method of connecting notes due to the performance practices of the time. Characteristic are the occasional long appoggiaturas, imitating the expressiveness of the human voice, embellishing the melody, and lending it an elegant quality, as well as short acciaccaturas, which enhance vivacity and virtuosity while underscoring the capricious, flirtatious, or humorous character of a given phrase. Appoggiaturas function as a kind of mood intensifier, deepening the emotional expression and musical dramaturgy of the works.

In summary, articulation in Korngold's music serves not only a technical but, above all, a dramatic function - every detail contributes to the musical narrative, the creation of mood, and the evocative characterisation of figures or situations. Due to its significant illustrative potential, articulation participates in the theatricalisation of certain works, with the most striking example being the suite *Viel Lärmen um Nichts*. Through appropriate articulation, the

composer stylises works and their fragments, imparting the character of selected dances, songs, and other musical genres.

## Dynamics

Korngold uses dynamic markings in his works for violin and piano in a classical manner, without seeking new means of expression in this respect. His dynamic palette is broad, although extremes appear infrequently and are used with sensitivity and caution. The dynamics themselves, however, remain extremely vivid, iridescent and internally pulsating, thanks to numerous *crescendos* and *diminuendos*<sup>221</sup>. In both *piano* and *forte* tones, the composer sculpts and shapes the intensity of sound with great precision. Rapid changes and dynamic contrasts serve to build narrative tension, influence the construction of climaxes and complement the emotional dimension of the phrases. Dynamics not only illustrate but also co-create the mood: softer nuances convey a personal, introspective, and intimate atmosphere, while stronger ones evoke an aura of expansive emotionality and the universality or accessibility of the message.

## Colours

Korngold's statement, which I quoted in the paper,<sup>222</sup> about how playing two instruments - piano and orchestra - is crucial to understanding the colour paradigm the composer adopts. Regardless of the performance cast, the artist thinks with a symphonic colour palette. This becomes apparent above all in the density of texture, the contrasts of registers and the specificity of individual phrases. Orchestral breadth and richness of colour pervade all of Korngold's works, so it is good to use one's imagination and musical sense when interpreting them, inspired by the abundant colour of the wide instrumentarium and the various combinations and juxtapositions of instruments.

The composer's true colouristic genius is fully demonstrated in his works intended for smaller ensembles. Their colouration, despite the limited instrumentation, is perceived as equally full and complete as that of symphonic compositions. This is possible thanks to the perfect combination of the colours of the individual instruments and their skilful selection so that they complement each other or work in contrast.

---

<sup>221</sup> An interesting idea is the rhomboidal marks placed in the *Sonata in G major*, created as a result of the desire to achieve swells, rapid *crescendo* and *diminuendo* within a single note on each note of the motif occurring there (see Example 15., [in:] part I - *Ben moderato, ma con passione*, [in:] *Sonata in G major* Op. 6..., chap. II.).

<sup>222</sup> See *Viel Lärmen um nichts*, Op. 11 - the composition that enchanted the world, [in:] chap. II.

## **Texture**

Texture in Korngold's works is another element derived from the symphonic paradigm. Rich, complex, dense and extremely elaborate, it is maintained in the spirit of Mahler's and Strauss's compositions. Korngold often constructs it on a multi-layered basis, placing, for example, a theme in the violin part and counterpointing voices and a chordal harmonic background in the piano part. In this way, it creates an effect of spatiality, depth, and three-dimensionality of sound planes. The instruments engage in a dialogue, adding to each other's thoughts, presenting contrasting motifs or co-creating mood and colour by means of various timbral effects. The texture actively participates in building the drama, and its changes enhance the expression of the fragment. Korngold does not treat texture as a separate musical element, but rather as a living tissue, fused with other aspects of the composition, a vehicle for expression, co-creating the colour and drama of the works.

## **Musical forms**

In terms of the construction of the pieces, Korngold leans towards traditional, classical forms, which he sometimes modifies slightly. He does not pursue the search for new musical patterns, and often reaches for the uncomplicated triadic structure of ABA'. Familiar, long-established forms serve as spaces for him to present his own original content.

The form of the pieces often resembles that of a miniature musical drama. The narration of the phrases unfolds as if the music was trying to tell its own story. The composer first introduces a lyrical conflict, then, through a subtle interplay of suspensions, builds and escalates tension, reaching its peak in climaxes that may lead to a cathartic effect.

An interesting aspect that makes up the specificity of Korngold's style is the way the composer begins his works. Regardless of the mood, character, purpose or cast of the piece, the beginning always catches the attention of the listener and is original. Korngold very often opens the work directly with a main motif, a sonorous leading idea or even a theme. If the composition begins with a short introduction (often an atmospheric introduction) or a section in the nature of an introduction, one can hear a characteristic trace of the composer's style, his signature.

## **Performance markings**

In his works, especially those written after his childhood years, the composer uses a rich set of performance terms in both Italian and German. Korngold usually leaves off in Italian the typical, commonly used markings for agogics, expression, articulation and dynamics. More

detailed formulations, conveying the mood, character and emotional layer of the works, are written down in his native language<sup>223</sup>. His attention to nuance allows him to build the expressive dimension of the works on the ground of a personal, lyrical expression bearing the trace of an inner drama.

Initially, Korngold was not a linguistic perfectionist. Precision in the notation of intentions began to take shape around 1921, during the most flourishing period of his career, when his works were performed in many cities in Europe and the United States. The composer, having no say in the selection of performers or in the final shape of interpretation, became more cautious and began to include numerous expressive and agogic terms in the scores<sup>224</sup>. Their abundance is so characteristic that it can be considered one of the features of the composer's style.

## Expression

Expression is one of the key aspects of Korngold's works - it is an essential component of them and a significant distinguishing feature. The expressive spectrum of the music is very wide: from subtle, lyrical songfulness and inner calm, to phrases of heightened intensity and strong emotional charge. The composer balances these two poles with extraordinary sensitivity, creating a dramaturgy based on both contrast and clash of moods, as well as on their organic, mutual interpenetration.

The lyricism manifests itself primarily in the violin's broad, flowing phrases, often imitating the sound of the human voice (both in singing and speech). Maintained in soft, pastel colours, they are subtle in expression and characterised by emotional depth. They often unfold on a plane of harmonic modulations, building tension that finds resolution in an unexpected return to the tonal centre. Such treatments enhance the expression, giving the musical statement an emotional fullness and create a narrative, emphasising the internal logic of the phrases. The calm, delicate expression is the most personal and confidential form of emotional expression in Korngold's music.

---

<sup>223</sup> The most common expressions in Italian are (alphabetical order): *accelerando, agitato, a tempo, calando, con sordino, dolce, espressivo, largamente, legatissimo, morendo, rallentando, ritardando, ritenuto, subito*. In German the most common are: *bewegt, breit, gesangvoll, langsam, mit Ausdruck, nicht schleppen, steigend, sehr weich, sehr zart, warm, zurückhaltend*.

<sup>224</sup> An outstanding example is the song cycle *Vier Lieder des Abschieds*, Op.14, which dates from this period. Carroll states (with some emphases) that in this composition, out of 200 bars, only two do not have a term added. See B. G. Carroll, *The last prodigy...*, p.153. Indeed, out of 184 bars, about 40 have no denotation, which sets the number of bars with denotations at approximately 80%.

The heightened, soaring expression is emphasised above all by strong dynamic contrasts, dense texture and dramatic interactions between the instruments. The violin often enters into a passionate, impassioned dialogue with the piano, with each instrument maintaining its own narrative and independence. Such a procedure generates great tension and enhances the emotional message of the works. The intensity of this kind of expression is also due to the bold use of chromaticism, sudden harmonic turns and the building of expressive climaxes that build up over longer sections.

In both the reflective, contemplative passages and the agitated, dynamic ones, Korngold uses long phrasal arcs and strict *legato*, thus creating an inner-breathing rhythm and greater space for emotional perception. Regardless of the nature of a particular episode, the expression remains embedded in a logical narrative and at the same time is always very natural. The chosen means of expression are not the result of technical, formal calculation, but reflect and communicate genuine feelings. Thanks to this authenticity, the expression in Korngold's works is multidimensional: powerful, essential and subtle, passionate, passionate and delicate at the same time. This ability to accurately and aphoristically capture inner emotional states, often fleeting, sometimes perhaps seemingly contradictory, but at the same time very expressive, has given Korngold incredible popularity in the field of opera and film music.

It is worth taking a closer look at the relationship between the violin and the piano, which is transformed and presented in various guises in Korngold's successive compositions. The two instruments enter into a lively, dynamic dialogue with each other, taking on a varied form and emotional temperature: from an intimate conversation to a dramatic confrontation.

*The serenade* from the ballet *Der Schneemann* is an example of introspective and delicate expression, where the parts of both instruments combine to form a subtle, nostalgic song.

In the *Caprice fantastique*, the conversation takes place in an atmosphere of playfulness: violin and piano engage in a showy, imaginative dialogue, full of unexpected twists and turns and changing moods. The virtuoso runs, arranged along the lines of short interventions, are reminiscent of brilliant verbal repetitions, and the handling of contrasting registers emphasises their dynamics.

In the *Sonata*, Op. 6, the duo presents the thematic material in a coherent and complementary manner, developing the story through imitation, motif transformation and active counterpoint. The work also abounds in dynamic developmental sections, constructed in

the likeness of a lively discussion in which the instruments exchange different musical ideas, striving to reach a common position. In the lyrical sections, violin and piano interact, complementing and uniting each other in building and sustaining an emotional mood. Korngold places many subtle details of colour and articulation in both parts, which are internal references to previous motifs. These references, when noticed and properly executed, enrich the piece with another level of expression.

The suite *Viel Lärmen um nichts* is the apotheosis of chamber expression. The violin plays a leading, narrative role for most of the piece, and its part shows a theatrical character at times. The piano extremely colourfully illustrates and contributes to the story, leading a very subtle, original and intricate counterpoint. The dialogues are full of charm, lightness, freshness and humour, playing out in a calm atmosphere of musical intimacy and trust, helped to create by Korngold's exceptional colouristic skills.

In the transcription of *Mariettas Lied* from the opera *Die tote Stadt*, the violin takes on the role and expression of the human voice, while the piano is sonorously incorporated into the symphony orchestra. Not only does it accompany the violin with subtle arpeggios and atmospheric triplets, but also, by providing the harmonic layer and rich texture, it frames the space for the emotional narrative and supports the violin in creating expressive depth. In *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, the piano comments on and complements the nostalgic but expressively uplifting violin part, emphasising the pulse and dance-like character of the piece.

The crown of the expressive interplay between violin and piano is *Gesang der Heliane*, where Korngold ascends to the heights of expression. The violin part harmoniously reconciles sweetness and power, delicacy and decisiveness, uncertainty and strength, while the chordal texture of the piano part creates a sense of drama, the momentousness of the story and a solemn, almost sacred atmosphere. The apparent passivity, initially suggested by the steady rhythmic, builds to a monumental finale in the long run.

In the works for violin and piano, introspective expression predominates, oriented towards the world of inner sensations, feelings and reflections, directed more towards experiencing and understanding emotions than manifesting them. Regardless of the degree of introversion or extroversion of a given piece, the message always seems more personal, intimate, rather than addressed to the whole world, for show. Exploring the expressive possibilities of the traditional combination of violin and piano, long present in music, Korngold

presents a whole range of emotions and moods, making expression the core of the musical message of his own works.

The table below synthesises the most important features of expression in Korngold's analysed works for violin and piano, taking into account its character, the relationship between the instruments and the means of expression used.

| <b>TITLE</b>  | <b>VIOLIN - PIANO RELATIONSHIP</b>   | <b>NATURE OF EXPRESSION</b>   | <b>MAIN MEANS OF EXPRESSION</b>  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <i>Serenade</i> from the ballet <i>Der Schneemann</i> | violin realises the leading voice, the piano supports the violin expressively and creates the colour layer | nostalgic, sweet, subtle  | Lyrical expressive melody, delicate, impressionistic colouring, numerous crescendos and diminuendos arranged according to the dynamics of high tide - low tide |
| <i>Caprice fantastique</i> "Wichtelmännchen"          | The mutual banter, the brilliant display of both instruments, the spectacular "musical fencing"            | virtuosic, whimsical, grotesque   | contrasts, virtuosity, rapid changes of mood, expression based on energy and effects   |
| <i>Sonata in G major</i>                              | equal narrative, partnered development of drama and emotional climaxes, lively dialogue                    | the whole range of emotional expression - from personal, lyrical confessions to dramatic exclamations | full range of artful compositional techniques, high level of complexity of musical material  |

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Suite <i>Viel Lärmen um nichts</i></p> | <p>violin in the foreground, piano mostly contrapuntal and colourful, cooperation in driving the narrative, unity in theatrical illustration</p>                                       | <p>dreamy, delicate, grotesque, elegant, lyrical, tender, passionate, danceable, humorous, ludic, "scenic"</p> | <p>Theatrical illustrativeness, sophisticated nuances of colour, articulation and agogic, graceful instrumental dialogue, dynamic changes of character</p>                 |
| <p><i>Mariettas Lied zur Laute</i></p>    | <p>violin in the role of the human voice, the piano creates a sound world, supporting the expression of the violin and duplicating its line</p>  | <p>nostalgic, lyrical, oneiric</p>   | <p>a cantilena-like melody with a unique sweetness, sublime colours and harmonics, openwork texture</p>  |
| <p><i>Tanzlied des Pierrot</i></p>        | <p>the violin's voice has the character of a solo vocal part, the piano is treated in a colourful, complementary way, duplicating the violin line, emphasising the dance structure</p> | <p>nostalgic, sentimental, coquettish</p>  | <p>dance-like rhythmic, contributing to the lightness of the piece, fine ornamentation, refined agogic layer (<i>rubato</i>), elaborate piano texture</p>                  |
| <p><i>Gesang der Heliane</i></p>          | <p>violin in the role of singer-songwriter, piano builds tension, multiplies expression, creates drama</p>   | <p>mystical, intimate, monumental, full of pathos</p>  | <p>broad, epic phrases in the violin part, rich harmony, complex chords in the piano part, expressive dynamics, a work built on a plan of a climactic <i>crescendo</i></p> |

**Table 3.** Summary of expressive features in Korngold's works for violin and piano

## Nostalgia

One of the characteristic elements of Korngold's poetics, closely related to expression, is the nostalgic note that pervades the composer's works in varying degrees of intensity, constituting an essential aspect of his artistic language.

The phenomenon of nostalgia was described in the 17th century by Johannes Hofer in his medical dissertation<sup>225</sup>, as nostalgia was initially understood as a disease entity - an unhealthy longing for the homeland. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the last century, the understanding of nostalgia broadened and it is still seen today as a bittersweet feeling of longing for something past or non-existent: a place, a time, an emotional state or one's own imagination. One of the most famous researchers of this phenomenon, Svetlana Boym<sup>226</sup>, distinguishes two basic types of it. *Restorative* nostalgia is an idealising variety, often of an elevated nature, which expresses the desire to reconstruct the lost world and is focused on returning to 'home'. *Reflective* nostalgia, on the other hand, is melancholic in nature. Associated with the inevitability of the passing of time, it is closer to contemplation of memories, without sustaining illusions of return, and focuses rather on nurturing the feeling of longing itself<sup>227</sup>.

In Korngold's works, nostalgia appears to express a universal desire for meaning, a sense of rootedness and a need for understanding. It seems to reflect a universal human longing for emotional security and happiness. The composer, however, does not concretise the representation of these notions and uses nostalgia as a means of expression in a way that makes the pieces a kind of personal emotional vehicle. The viewers, responding to the nostalgia aroused in them, channel it into their own individual images and imagery. Nostalgia in Korngold's work can therefore be assigned to the second of the propositions detailed by Boym, the reflective variety. For the works are not an attempt to rebuild a past musical or social reality. Rather, they are an expression of the need to return to something emotionally significant that has not been fully experienced or completed and therefore returns in the sphere of aesthetic impressions and memory. Korngold creates a special sonic space, dedicated to images and memories, so that these can linger in it, eternally existing, whereby the music is not meant to be therapeutic, but a reserve for contemplated feelings. The songs evoke past events not in order to reconstruct them, but so that they can be re-experienced on an emotional and aesthetic level.

---

<sup>225</sup> S. Boym, op. cit. p. 7.

<sup>226</sup> Svetlana Boym (1959-2015) is a cultural theorist. Her work has focused on issues of memory, nostalgia, modernity and emigration.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, p.13.

They allow idealised imaginings to come to life, while the subtle musical language evokes personal, melancholic reflection and an aestheticisation of emotions and projections.

During and immediately after the Second World War, many artists grappled with themes of trauma, loss and alienation in their work. They expressed emotions related to the collapse of the old order, violent social changes, loss of homeland, death of loved ones and insecurity. If the nostalgic trait had only manifested itself in Korngold's works written in exile, its interpretation in a biographical-historical context would have been obvious. Meanwhile, the nostalgic expression is present in his music from the very beginning of his creative path, forming an integral part of the composer's artistic language. The presence of this nostalgic note in his earliest works, dating from his childhood and early youth is particularly surprising. In the *Serenade* from the ballet *Der Schneemann*, the young Korngold seems to express a melancholic desire to return to a childhood that has, after all, just begun and is still going on. The lyrical, uncomplicated melodies, which pay homage to the idiom of Viennese classical music, and the uncomplicated (for Korngold) harmony may give the impression that the *Serenade* itself is not a proper serenade, but a memory, an idealised image of serenades heard in the past. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that nostalgia, understood as a cultural phenomenon, is not necessarily the result of a real recollection of an individual or social group, but may be a projection of a desire for an ideal reality, independent of time and non-existent beyond our imagination<sup>228</sup>.

Nostalgia in Korngold's later works may be a form of internal, perhaps even subconscious resistance, to the prevailing reality. The composer expresses his longing for a bygone musical aesthetic not in a spirit of reconstruction and return, but in a form of idealisation, creating a sonic portrait of the spirit of this music and emotionally contemplating the past. He does this with deep tenderness and delicacy, but also with self-reflection and irony. The boundary between authentic nostalgia and stylisation in the works is sometimes very fluid<sup>229</sup>, and the idealised image obviously has some distortions.

Despite numerous references to the aesthetics of post-Romantic composers, Korngold's musical poetics are original and personal. The composer does not directly quote the sound characteristic of Mahler or Strauss, but presents a musical portrait of the era filtered through his own creative personality.

---

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, pp. 8-9.

<sup>229</sup> See *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, [in:] chap. II.

The artist creates an aura of nostalgia in his works mainly through the appropriate use of harmonics, agogics, melody and texture and colour.

The numerous chromatic and enharmonic modulations, often very surprising, blur the sense of tonality and push its boundaries, and the fluidity and ease with which the composer enforces them technically reinforces the state of drifting in tonal space, inevitably leading to the perception of a stable tonal centre as a lost element. Themes in the parts of both instruments are not infrequently heavily chromatised, which introduces uncertainty and a sense of chaos, a labile melody. Numerous chord suspensions function as sonic sighs (a rhetorical gesture used as early as the Baroque era), while cadences with suspension resolutions or elliptical outbursts enhance the sense of incompleteness and introduce ambiguity. This gives rise to an affect of disappointed hopes, reconciliation with a reality different from desires and cherished imaginings. The composer creates a sense of unresolvedness through suspended cadences, symbolising the impossibility of deciding whether phrases should be brought to a logical conclusion or left to linger eternally in a “musical glass sphere.”

The freedom of agogic contributes to the impression of a subjective feeling for the pulse of the pieces, which seem to take place in private, individual time. Changes in metre, breaths and fermata somehow stretch or stop time, giving the pieces a contemplative character, while *rubato* shifts the focus from the action back to long-lived emotions, with its planned irregularity emphasising the uneven flow of memories. Handling of silence, pauses, and the extension of the duration of sounds through numerous ligatures are also of great importance to the nostalgic narrative.

The melody, characterised by its cantilena style and the beauty and richness of its lines, sometimes displays a subtly romanticised sentimental quality. The use of rests, breaths and stops in the course of phrases (often in the higher registers) fuels a feeling of unfulfilment, of suspension in time. The piano, in nostalgic moments, often takes on the role of creating a harmonic and colourful background, handing over the storytelling field to the violin.

One of the clearest examples of nostalgia in Korngold's works is *Mariettas Lied*, from the opera *Die tote Stadt*. The theme of the work itself is defined from the outset in a nostalgic spirit, and in the transcription for violin and piano the aria takes on an even more introspective character and mood of personal expression. The piece may initially appear to be a tale of temporarily regained happiness, but it is a seeming happiness, lined with a deep fear of loss. The

main character of the opera, Paul, remains in a state of melancholy<sup>230</sup>: unable to come to terms with the death of his wife, he creates an altar dedicated to her memory, entering a new, illusory world. It is his phantasm that keeps deepening. The sound layer functions as Paul's psyche, reflecting his inner conflicts. The contradiction between reality and illusion is emphasised with harmonic tensions, while Paul's inability to go through the grieving process is suggested by fuzzy, non-concrete cadences. Paul's obsession with the deceased Marie is conveyed by the insistent returns of her *leitmotif*, a kind of musical compulsion, as they are repeated not to solve the problem but to persist in its structure.

*Marietta's Song* is a piece of reflection, a projection of lost love, evoking not so much the person herself but the emotions and memories associated with her. The lyrical, soulful, inconcrete expression creates the impression of recreating in one's memory a song heard in the past. The atmosphere of fluidity and ephemerality, which includes chords played *arpeggio* and the impressionistic background of the piano part, evokes a fog of reminiscence rather than a specific memory.

In the light of Boym's distinguished notion of 'reflexive nostalgia', which includes Korngold's works, the entire opera *Die tote Stadt* may represent an aesthetic duration, an eternal desire, an impossibility of fulfilment. In this way, music not only serves as a vehicle for expression, but even becomes a manifestation of psychological mechanisms *per se*.

## **Dramaturgy**

The works for violin and piano have a narrative, tense structure, a rich musical language and an intense emotional charge, with which they confirm Korngold's dramatic inclinations and experience in the field of opera and stage music in the broadest sense. The composer moves seamlessly between lyricism and drama, operating on many levels with contrasts (especially: thematic, harmonic, dynamic, agogic, timbral and textural). Melodies and themes show potential for characterisation, on the basis of leitmotifs, and their development often tells a story in a dramatic way. The instruments enter into dialogue with each other, the virtuosic parts are full of tuneful, yet flowing, long phrases and sudden turns that intensify the expression. Phrases are often constructed in a theatrical manner: statements are suspended or interrupted by a dramatic pause, they have a postponed punch line, entrances are sometimes sudden and abrupt,

---

<sup>230</sup> Freud distinguishes between mourning - *Trauer* - as a process of working through loss, and melancholy - *Melancholia* - as being stuck in the loss, an unconscious identification with the lost object. See Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, [in] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Strachey, vol. XIV (1914-1916), The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London 1957, pp. 243-246.

and complex rhythms create a *parlando* effect. The dense, multi-layered texture gives the pieces depth and creates a sonic 'action space'. Korngold relieves the resulting tension by using harmonic finesse, modulations to unexpected keys or changes of metre or mood. In the works for violin and piano, the drama does not result solely from technical procedures, the intensity of the musical layer or contrasts, but also from a subtle emotional impact on the listener, a kind of musical psychology built up through a clearly delineated narrative.

### **Virtuosity**

Virtuosity in Korngold's work does not occur in the 19th-century sense as a display in itself, a demonstration of technique<sup>231</sup>, but takes the form of instrumental mastery. The technical and expressive demands Korngold places on the performers are extremely high. The parts of both instruments in works for violin and piano are rarely comfortable or natural in terms of performance, often forcing the musicians to push the boundaries of their own abilities and to search for alternative or less frequently used methods and techniques. In the piano part, this is particularly evident in the number and peculiar arrangement of notes forming chords, occurring in the parts of both hands<sup>232</sup>. This originality is not only due to the textural richness characteristic of Korngold's work, but is a reflection of the composer's physical pianistic predispositions. Although he often performed his works, he did not compose them with himself in mind, but always played them on the piano in the creative process, and the very specific playing apparatus he possessed thus influenced the density of texture. Because of this multifaceted nature, themes and motifs are often hidden, woven into the structure, passing between the different voices. This generates a significant difficulty, as it requires first analytical and then performance vigilance to ensure that each motif can be fully heard and resound naturally.

The violinist must primarily demonstrate versatility in left-hand technique to meet the textual challenges, as well as possess a very wide range of vibrato types. Furthermore, they must have excellent command of the right-hand bowing technique to convey, through bow speed, the many expressive nuances required by individual phrases. Songs also demand that they have a good command of the volume of sound and flexibility in this area. For it is often the case that the violin part, even in sections where it plays the leading role, is written in the middle register against a very rich piano texture. On the other hand, many of the miniatures are lyrical pieces, conveying delicate feelings and emotions, prompting an exploration of colours from the *piano-*

---

<sup>231</sup> Of course, the pieces are full of typically virtuosic elements (passages, scale marches, double stops, sophisticated types of articulation and so on), but the emphasis is not on these. Rather, they serve to build character, to reflect *joie de vivre*, joy and carefree living, a kind of youthful expansiveness.

<sup>232</sup> The most striking example is undoubtedly *the Sonata in G major*, Op.6.

*pianissimo* dynamic range. It is not uncommon for the need to play with full sound and pastel colour to occur side by side, in contrast. Both extremes, related to the intensity of sound, must therefore be perfectly mastered by the performer.

Viewed from an instrumental performance perspective, the degree of complexity of the individual pieces varies (by far the highest is found in the *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6). However, the virtuosity does not serve to show off, but to intensify the emotional tension, as if the technique becomes another means of expression. Regardless of the level of technical difficulty, each of the works for violin and piano is challenging in terms of interpretation and chamber music, requiring the performers to be united in their expressive intentions, to work perfectly together in terms of agogics and to be perfectly united in colour space.

### **Sound idiom**

Over the last few decades, there has been a lot of discussion about historically informed performance. The term is commonly applied mainly to music of the Renaissance and Baroque eras, and its essence is a style of playing and singing based on knowledge of the performance rules specific to a given period, composer or musical centre. With knowledge of the performance practices of the time, the artist makes a conscious interpretative choice (which also applies to the decision to break the rules of the period), which should result from a deep understanding of the historical style and the spirit of the piece.

Although much more time separates us from the Renaissance and Baroque eras than from the music of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this does not mean that a historically informed approach should be limited to so-called early music only. It would be quite an oversimplification, indeed an oversight, to think that the performance style of music from a century ago does not require equally careful consideration of the historical context, the aesthetics of the period or the instrumental and vocal practices of the time. Korngold's work deserves a conscious, in-depth interpretative approach that takes into account its idiom, language and the spirit of the period. Finding the right colour palette was one of the steps in creating the author's sound concept, which I presented in the artwork.

In Korngold's time, the cult of individuality prevailed throughout Europe and the musical scene was dominated by great interpreters and virtuosos. The violinist performance style was characterised by heightened expression, abundant use of *portamento*<sup>233</sup> and frequent

---

<sup>233</sup> As Carl Flesch, one of the most eminent violin pedagogues and violinists of the era, wrote: "The affectionate and singing combination of two sounds should be the result of a heightened need for personal expression; our best violinists therefore reserve absolute freedom in the use of the appropriate type of portamento." Carl Flesch, *Sztuka*

use of free *rubato* playing. Above all, the audience expected contact with a performer with a strong personality, and wanted to be swept away by the emotions, character and even whim of the artist they were listening to. This aesthetic was part of the late Romantic tradition, in which interpretation was a creative act and not just a faithful reproduction of the score. Each virtuoso's playing style was so personal and original that it simultaneously became recognisable and impossible to imitate. The music moved the audience and caused an immediate reception. This was expressed both in reviews, critiques and polemics in newspapers and in conversations in salons and cafés. The music had a strong impact on listeners, even though not every performance would meet today's standards of technical perfection. Today, thanks in part to the development of the recording industry, there has been a clear shift in focus: performers are increasingly expected to be almost laboratory-precise, intonationally and rhythmically perfect, and completely "faultless" in their recordings and performances<sup>234</sup>. Current standards are driving us towards a unification of performance styles, at the expense of individual expression and artistic risk-taking. Today's violinists present an extraordinary technical level, but sometimes they lack that individualism which characterised the playing of artists at the turn of the 20th century - that characteristic tension which caused the beauty of playing to lie in unpredictability and overly personal expression.

On the artistic path to my own performance conception of Korngold's works, I tried to take into account the stylistic idiom of the period, the peculiarities of late Romantic expression and the individual character of the composer's musical language. I have paid particular attention to issues of colour, articulation, modes of conducting phrases, and the relationship between violin and piano. I have considered all these elements in the context of available sources and performance practices from the early twentieth century, and my analysis of Korngold's musical poetics, enriched by a contemporary perspective on the works, has allowed me to construct a coherent sonic narrative, which I have presented in the artwork. My approach does not claim exclusivity, but is one of many possible answers to the question of how to speak with the voice of this music in a contemporary way - with respect for the past, but also with personal commitment, without rejecting the promptings of intuition and one's own sensitivity. I am aware that each interpretation, even if based on similar premises, leads to slightly different results, being a resultant of individual feeling, experience, aesthetics and the school of performance

---

*gry skrzypcowej*, vol. I, *Technika ogólna i stosowana*, transl. Emil Górski, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Cracow 1960, pp. 33-34.

<sup>234</sup> A rich source of information on the changes taking place in the art of musical expression and performance is Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's work, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performances*, whose conclusions are derived primarily from an analysis of available recordings and other testimony from the era. See: Bibliography. List of materials used.

from which the artist grows. It is in this diversity and individuality, which has always been the essence of musical performance, that I consider one of the most valuable aspects of artistic practice.

## **Summary**

Korngold's musical poetics in his works for violin and piano are complex and multidimensional. The structures of the works are not based solely on the classical logic of musical forms, but often take on a narrative shape in which successive episodes are built on the principle of contrast, increasing tension, climaxes and the discharge of emotions. In this way, the composer creates the inner dramaturgy of the works, reminiscent of the development of stage action.

Korngold consciously continues the Viennese tradition of Romantic music, which inseparably intertwines a love of beauty, lyricism, and sentimentality with a dance-like quality. Colourful harmonies, ornamental melodic lines, and sensual timbres of his compositions reflect the Secessionist manifesto of abundance. The sensual intensity typical of the turn of the century manifests itself in the saturation of nearly every musical element with emotion, while the modernist turn finds an outlet in vivid, expressive detail. A subtle layer of emotional codes, cultural and identity references, aligns with the current of post-Romantic melancholy, creating a nostalgic resonance in the works.

Korngold's works for violin and piano, although they may initially bring to mind the 19th-century tradition of domestic music-making associated with chamber forms of a utilitarian nature, are a personal and serious creation. The composer consciously exploits the possibilities of both instruments, casting the violin in the foreground role of singer-soloist and allowing the piano to transform into a symphony orchestra with almost infinite possibilities of colour. This gives the works a dramatic, theatrical feel. The intimate, seemingly salon-like instrumentation supports the profound expression of the works, creating an atmosphere of heartfelt expression, a mood of personal confession.

The aesthetic space of this music is unique. The emotional intensity does not deform into artificial pathos, but stimulates perception. Explored to the extreme, the harmony does not overwhelm, but gives the impression of freedom. The artfully guided narrative does not create dramatic labyrinths, but allows moments of intimate, lyrical expression to ring out in a more moving way.

From a contemporary perspective, this music can be read as the swan song of *fin-de-siècle* Europe - a world whose aesthetics were irretrievably lost in the catastrophes of the 20th century.

## Conclusion

Erich Wolfgang Korngold stands as a singular figure in the musical landscape of the first half of the 20th century. As a child prodigy, he swiftly garnered acclaim in both conservative and avant-garde circles. His works, particularly his operatic and symphonic compositions, aligned with the late-Romantic tradition of sonic richness and expressionistic emotional intensity, blending lyricism with dramatic flair. Over time, his steadfast commitment to this style drew criticism. His emigration to the United States and compositional work in Hollywood positioned Korngold as one of the pioneers of symphonically inspired film music. However, this shift also led to the marginalisation of his classical oeuvre from his Viennese period, a neglect that persisted for decades.

This dissertation, focusing on the analysis and interpretation of Korngold's works for violin and piano composed between 1910 and 1927, demonstrates that these pieces form a significant link between Romantic tradition and contemporary music within their genre. The analysed compositions reveal that, from an early age, Korngold consistently employed a musical language rooted in rich, cantabile melody, sophisticated harmony, masterful colouristic and illustrative techniques, and a distinctly theatrical narrative quality. Of particular importance to the coherence of his style is the recurring motif throughout his oeuvre - the "Motif of the Cheerful Heart" - which serves as both a source and a reference point for subsequent themes. Equally significant is his consistent use of dense, saturated textures, which create dramatic depth and a suggestive sonic space. Korngold's music is perpetually imbued with intense emotionality, permeated with nostalgia and characterised by varied expression. This emotionality, even in his earliest works, assumes a mature, personal form, becoming a hallmark of the composer. Such consistency in his musical language attests not only to Korngold's remarkable artistic awareness but also to his ability to transform tradition in a profoundly individual manner: rooted in the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic while foreshadowing directions in 20th-century music.

In his works for violin and piano, Korngold treats both instruments distinctively. The violin part is, on one hand, cantabile and lyrical, radiating expressive depth, and on the other, virtuosic, light, and full of grace. The piano part demands from the performer an extraordinary sense of colour and the ability to evoke the rich palette of a symphonic orchestra. It is also characterised by a rarely encountered textural density, requiring exceptional pianistic technique. The agogic layer, shaping musical dramaturgy, elevates the chamber element of

these works to a masterful level. This compositional style renders the pieces inspiring for performers and appealing to audiences, making them worthy of further musicological and performative exploration.

The application of the concept of musical poetics in analysing Korngold's works for violin and piano has not only facilitated a broader interpretation of his oeuvre but also highlighted his artistic consistency against the backdrop of aesthetic transformations in European culture during the first half of the 20th century. Furthermore, it has underscored the potential of this category as a tool for analysing musical expression. Combined with an understanding of historical performance practices and recordings from the era, this approach has enabled the creation of a cohesive sonic concept for the artistic work.

This study covers only a fragment of Korngold's compositional output, whose broad spectrum defies straightforward classification. Between childhood genius and mature craftsmanship, Romanticism and modernism, the enchanting elegance of Vienna and the dazzling grandeur of Hollywood, we encounter a composer fully aware of his artistic identity and faithful to his creative language.

It is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to a deeper reflection on the significance of this extraordinary figure for the musical culture of the past century and on the value of Korngold's oeuvre—both within the context of violin and piano literature and, more broadly, the history of music in the first half of the 20th century. In a world often swayed by fleeting trends and curious fads, Korngold's music stands as an example of sincere, highly refined, deeply personal art endowed with an internal logic that grants it exceptional coherence. Perhaps this is why, though it still too rarely graces concert stages, it shines with a quiet yet undeniable brilliance amid contemporary repertoires—a light of art that needs no spectacle to move and awaits those who truly listen.

## Bibliography. List of materials used

- Adorno, Theodore W., *Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994.
- Adorno, Theodore W., *Filozofia nowej muzyki*, transl. Fryderyka Wayda, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1974.
- Bristiger, Michał, *Krytyka muzyczna a poetyka muzyki*, [in:] "Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja" 1972, no. 4, Ossoliński National Institute, Warsaw, pp. 56-66.
- Carroll, Brendan G., *The last prodigy: a biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, Amadeus Press, Portland, Oregon 1997.
- Dean-Smith, Margaret, [entry:] *hornpipe* [in:] *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, ed. Friedrich Blume, vol. 6: Head-Jenny, Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel-Basel-London 1957, pp. 756-764.
- Duchen, Jessica, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, Phaidon Press Limited, London 1996.
- Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, [in:] *Film Score. The view from the podium*, ed. by Tony Thomas, A. S. Barnes & Co., London 1979.
- Flesch, Carl, *Sztuka gry skrzypcowej*, vol. I, *Technika ogólna i stosowana*, transl. Emil Górski, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Cracow 1960.
- Flesch, Carl, *The Memoirs of Carl Flesch*, Rockliff, London 1957.
- Freud, Sigmund, *Mourning and Melancholia*, [in] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Strachey, vol. XIV (1914-1916), The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London 1957, pp. 243-246.
- Haas, Michael, *Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2013.
- Hoffmann, Rudolf Stefan, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, Ch. Stephenson, Wien 1922.
- Iwańska, Ilona, *Jasność i ciemność, czyli tonacje krzyżkowe i bemolowe*, [in:] 'Teoria Muzyki. Studia, Interpretacje, Dokumentacje' 2018, no. 12, Cracow 2018, pp. 105-125.
- Kasperowicz Ryszard, *Od Arystotelesa do Adorna. W poszukiwaniu teorii ekspresji muzycznej*, [in:] 'Ethos' 2006, no. 1-2 (73-74), Lublin, pp. 161-181.
- Korngold and his world*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Kevin C. Karnes, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 2019.

- Kreisler, Fritz, *Four Weeks in the Trenches: The War Story of a Violinist*, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York 1915.
- Kuryluk, Ewa, *Wiedeńska apokalipsa: eseje o kulturze austriackiej XX wieku*, W.A.B. Publishers, Warsaw 1999.
- Levinson, Jerrold, *Music as Narrative and Music as Drama*, [in] 'Mind and Language'. 2004, no. 19 (4), Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 428-441.
- Morton, Frederick, *A Nervous Splendour: Vienna 1888/1889*, Penguin Books, New York 1980.
- Schnabel, Arthur, *My Life and Music*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1972.
- Schonberg, Harold C., *The Great Pianists*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1987 (revised edition).
- Schorske, Carl E., *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1985.
- Scruton, Roger, *Estetyka muzyki*, transl. Zbigniew Skowron, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Kraków 2024.
- The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de siècle*, ed. by Gail Marshall, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007.
- The New Penguin Opera Guide*, ed. by Amanda Holden, Penguin 2001.
- Tomaszewski, Mieczysław, *Ekspresja utworu muzycznego jako przedmiot badań. Rekonesans w sferę twórczości lirycznej „Wiek Uniesień”*, [in:] "Teoria Muzyki. Studia, Interpretacje, Dokumentacje" 2019, no. 14, Cracow 2019, pp. 11- 24.
- Tomaszewski, Mieczysław, *Interpretacja integralna dzieła muzycznego. Rekonesans*, Academy of Music in Kraków, Cracow 2000.
- Tomaszewski, Mieczysław, *Narracja dzieła muzycznego jawna i domyślna, poufna i tajemna*, [in:] 'Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny' 2017, XV, pp. 200-213.
- Wąchocka, Ewa, *Dramaturgia muzyczna*, [in:] 'Przestrzenie Teorii' 2021, 36, Adam Mickiewicz University Press, Poznań, pp. 73-91.
- Zweig, Stefan, *Świat wczorajszy. Wspomnienia pewnego Europejczyka*, transl. Maria Wisłowska, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 2015.

## Sheet music

For some items, I have used more recent reprints where the date of publication is not given. In such cases, I have included the details of the original edition, as indicated on the copy.

*Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen" aus "Märchenbilder" für Klavier* Op. 3, für Violine und Klavier bearbeitet von Rózsika Révay, Schott, Mainz 1933 (renewed 1961 Luzi Korngold; Printed in Germany).

*Das Wunder der Heliane* Op. 20 (Oper in 3 Akten), Schott, Mainz 1927.

*Der Schneemann* (Pantomime in 2 Bildern), Universal Edition, Wien 1910.

*Die tote Stadt* Op. 12 (Oper in 3 Bildern), Schott, Mainz 1920.

*Drei Gesänge* Op. 18, Schott, Mainz 1925.

*Fairy Pictures. Seven compositions for the pianoforte*, G. Schirmer, New York 1911.

*Gesang der Heliane aus der Oper "Das Wunder der Heliane"* Op. 20, für Violine und Klavier, Schott, Mainz 1927.

*Mariettas Lied zur Laute aus der Oper "Die tote Stadt"* Op. 12, für Violine und Klavier, Schott, Mainz 1920.

*Serenade aus der Pantomime 'Der Schneemann'*, für Violine und Klavier, Universal Edition, Wien 1910.

*6 Einfache Lieder* Op. 9, Schott, Mainz 1916.

*Sonate G-Dur*, Op. 6, für Violine und Klavier, Schott, Mainz 1913 (renewed 1941; printed in Germany).

*Tanzlied des Pierrot aus der Oper "Die tote Stadt"* Op. 12, für Violine und Klavier, Schott, Mainz 1920 (renewed 1948; Schott & Co. Ltd., London).

*Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares 'Viel Lärmen um nichts'* Op. 11, für Violine und Klavier, Schott, Mainz 1920 (renewed 1947; Schott Music Ltd., London).

## Internet sources, other material

[entry:] *Auber, Familie*, [in:] 'Oesterreichisches Musiklexikon Online', [https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik\\_A/Auber\\_Familie.xml](https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_A/Auber_Familie.xml) [accessed 23 May 2025].

Barnard, Nick, *Korngold - Complete Incidental Music: Much Ado about Nothing, Der Vampyr* (Naxos 8.573355), [in:] 'MusicWeb International', 2022, <https://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2022/Mar/Korngold-incidentall-8573355.htm> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Boym, Svetlana, *Nostalgia and Its Discontents*, [in:] 'The Hedgehog Review', vol. 9, no. 2, 2007, pp. 7-18,  
<https://hedgehogreview.com/issues/the-uses-of-the-past/articles/nostalgia-and-its-discontents> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Carroll, Brendan G., *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Library of Congress,  
<https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/TheAdventuresOfRobinHood.pdf> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Carroll, Brendan G., *The Centenary of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Opera "Die tote Stadt" Opus 12*,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346572707\\_The\\_Centenary\\_of\\_Erich\\_Wolfgang\\_Korngold%27s\\_opera\\_Die\\_tote\\_Stadt\\_Opus\\_12](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346572707_The_Centenary_of_Erich_Wolfgang_Korngold%27s_opera_Die_tote_Stadt_Opus_12) [accessed 23 May 2025].

Carroll, Brendan G., *The Incidental Music for "Much Ado about Nothing" Op. 11 by Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) - The Centenary of the First Production, Vienna, May 6 1920*,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341099052\\_The\\_Incidental\\_Music\\_for\\_MUCH\\_ADO\\_ABOUT\\_NOTHING\\_by\\_Erich\\_Wolfgang\\_Korngold](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341099052_The_Incidental_Music_for_MUCH_ADO_ABOUT_NOTHING_by_Erich_Wolfgang_Korngold) [accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Die tote Stadt*, [in:] Bayerische Staatsoper (Bavarian State Opera),  
<https://www.staatsoper.de/en/productions/die-tote-stadt/2024-10-07-1900-14680> [accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Erich Wolfgang Korngold*, [in:] Concert Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic,  
<https://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/en/konzert-archiv> [accessed 23 May 2025].

*Famous at 13*, [in:] The New York Times, 25 October 1942, p. 6,  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1942/10/25/archives/famous-at-13-erich-korngold-who-has-had-success-as-composer-for-a.html> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Haas, Michael, *Das Wunder der Heliane*, [in:] 'Forbidden Music Blog',  
<https://forbiddenmusic.org/2017/07/09/das-wunder-der-heliane/> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Kiefer-Blickensdorfer, Sonja, programme booklet for the *Korngold* disc. *Das Wunder der Heliane*, SWR Freiburg, Naxos, cat. no. 8.660410-12, Opera Classics, 2018,  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1p4vTeKleSFw9zaXJuTuOBQ1iXups\\_eNL](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1p4vTeKleSFw9zaXJuTuOBQ1iXups_eNL) [accessed 23 May 2025].

*Korngold and His World*, Bard Music Festival programme booklet, Annandale-on-Hudson: Bard College, 2019,

<https://cdn.fc.bard.edu/documents/2019/09/2019%20Korngold%20Program.pdf>  
[accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Korngold, Erich Wolfgang*, [in:] World's Largest Gravesite Collection 'Find a Grave™', [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7920/erich\\_wolfgang-korngold](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7920/erich_wolfgang-korngold)  
[accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Korngold, Erich Wolfgang, Drei Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts" für Streichquartett*, <https://www.schott-music.com/en/drei-stuecke-noc306642.html> [accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Korngold, Erich Wolfgang, 'Œuvres Avec Numéro d'Opus, Viel Lärmen um nichts Op. 11'*, [in:] Musiques Régénérées,  
<http://www.musiques-regenerees.fr/ExilVienne/Korngold/op11.html> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Laminack, Emily Ruth, *A Performer's Guide to Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major Op. 6*, Doctoral dissertation (DMA), University of Georgia, 2016, unreleased,  
[https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/laminack\\_emily\\_r\\_201605\\_dma.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/laminack_emily_r_201605_dma.pdf) [accessed 23 May 2025].

Leech-Wilkinson, Daniel, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*, CHARM, London 2009, Chapter 5: 'Changing Performance Styles: Violin Playing',  
[www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap5.html](http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap5.html) [accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Rózsika Révay*, [in:] 'ANNO Historische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften', Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/anno-suche/simple?query=Rozsika%20Revay&from=1&selectedFilters=date:%5B1927%20TO%201943%5D> [accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Rózsika Révay*, [in:] 'Holocaust Survivors and Victims Database', United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
[https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person\\_view.php?PersonId=4217138](https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=4217138) [accessed 23 May 2025].

"The Etude Music Magazine", no. 1, January 1937, Theodore Presser Company, pp. 15-16, <https://archive.org/details/EtudeJanuary1937> [accessed 23 May 2025].

[entry:] *Meaning of the name Helena*, <https://www.ksiegaimion.com/helena> [accessed 23 May 2025].

Żuchowski, Szymon, *Cud „Heliany”*, [in:] *Kultura Liberalna*, 8 May 2018, <https://kulturaliberalna.pl/2018/05/08/cud-heliany-zuchowski-zajackowski/> [accessed 23 May 2025].

### List of music examples, tables and photographs

**Example 1.** E.W. Korngold - *Serenade* from the ballet *Der Schneemann*, bars 1-11 (motifs).

**Example 2.** E.W. Korngold - *Serenade* from the ballet *Der Schneemann*, vol. 1-11 (articulation, dynamics).

**Example 3.** E.W. Korngold - *Märchenbilder* Op. 3, mov. V - *Ball beim Märchenkonig*, bars 1-3 (Recital of the Serene Heart).

**Example 4.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, violin part, vol. 197 (irregular group).

**Example 5.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, bars 1-22 (motifs, articulation, dynamics).

**Example 6.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, violin part, bars 40-66 (multiplicity of articulation types).

**Example 7.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, violin part, bars 109-135 (multiplicity of articulation types).

**Example 8.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique 'Wichtelmännchen'*, violin part, bars 136-156 (multiplicity of articulation types).

**Example 9.** E.W. Korngold - *Caprice fantastique "Wichtelmännchen"*, bars 191-200 (irregular groups).

**Example 10:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 1-2; mov. II, bars 5-9; mov. III, bars 1-4; mov. IV, bars 1-4 (the unifying motif of *the Sonata*).

**Example 11.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 109-117 (recitative-like section).

**Example 12.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, violin part, mov. I, bars 69-87 (articulation to enrich colour).

**Example 13.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. III, bars 28, bars 27-28; mov. IV, bars 112-118, bar 118 (errors in the violin part, correct versions from the score).

**Example 14.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 1-12 (theme I and the stages of its development, 'soprano pedal notes').

**Example 15.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, violin part, mov. I, bars 36-39; score bars vol. 165-170 (*enfiando*).

**Example 16:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 97-102 (rhythmic complexity).

**Example 17.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. I, bars 158-170 (*coda*).

**Example 18.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 1-27 (harmony, syncopated accents, scales progressions, passages).

**Example 19.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, violin part, mov. II, bars 45-86 (leaps with wide ambitus).

**Example 20:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 246-268 (articulation, dynamics).

**Example 21.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, vol. 306 (sound beyond the violin scale).

**Example 22.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 396-401 (trio, contrasting link B).

**Example 23.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. II, bars 479-483 (change of metre - *rubato* woven into the fabric of the piece).

**Example 24.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. III, bars 27-30 (beginning of middle section B, change of metre - *rubato* incorporated into the fabric of the piece).

**Example 25.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. III, bars 83-96 (relations between voices, *coda*).

**Example 26.** E.W. Korngold - *6 Einfache Lieder*, Op.9, *Schneeglöckchen*, bars 1-11 (the original theme of the *Sonata*).

**Example 27:** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 1-9.

**Example 28.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 89-103 (beginning of fugue).

**Example 29.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 161-173 (return of theme I, trills in the piano part).

**Example 30.** E.W. Korngold - *Sonata in G major*, Op. 6, mov. IV, bars 201-217 (*coda*, final climax, rhetorical question, tonic).

**Example 31.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. I - *Mädchen in Brautgemach*, bars 1-8 (introduction, basic rhythmic figures - nos. 1 and 2).

**Example 32.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, violin part, mov. I - *Mädchen in Brautgemach*, bars 23-40 (abundance of agogic and expressive terms and caesuras).

**Example 33.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. II - *Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache)*, bars 1-9 (accents, *sforzata*, triplet groups, agogic changes).

**Example 34.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. II - *Holzapfel und Schlehwein (Marsch der Wache)*, bars 56-60 (harmonic plan for the conclusion of mov. II).

**Example 35.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. III - *Gartenscene*, bars 1-15 (continuous eighth-note piano counterpoint).

**Example 36.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. III - *Gartenscene*, bars 72-92 (*Zurückhaltend-Im Fluß*).

**Example 37.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. III - *Gartenscene*, bars 111-125 (expressive fermata).

**Example 38.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. III - *Gartenscene*, bars 135-144 (harmonic plan for the conclusion of mov. III).

**Example 39.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, violin part, mov. IV - *Mummenschanz (Hornpipe)*, bars 1-29 (melodic-rhythmic material, grace notes, articulation).

**Example 40.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. IV - *Mummenschanz (Hornpipe)*, bars 16-20 (imitation of the sound of the open strings of a folk band).

**Example 41.** E.W. Korngold - *Vier Stücke aus der Musik zu Shakespeares "Viel Lärmen um nichts"*, Op. 11, mov. IV - *Mummenschanz (Hornpipe)*, bars 99-105 (ending).

**Example 42.** E.W. Korngold - *Mariettas Lied zur Laute* Op.12, bars 1-17 (accompaniment, vocal violin line, *rubato* incorporated into the fabric of the piece).

**Example 43.** E.W. Korngold - *Mariettas Lied zur Laute*, Op.12, bars 65-68 (moving away from shimmering accompaniment towards chorale-like voice leading).

**Example 44.** E.W. Korngold - *Mariettas Lied zur Laute* Op.12, violin part, bars 1-72 (expressive and agogic terms).

**Example 45.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot* Op.12, vol. 21-85 (original - places of alteration marked).

**Example 46.** E.W. Korngold - *Die tote Stadt* Op.12 - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, score, (solo voice - *tacet* + 8 sopranos).

**Example 47.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, Op.12, bars 1-14 (harmony, intervals).

**Example 48.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, Op.12, violin part, bars 13-76 (agogic fluctuations).

**Example 49.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, Op.12, bars 57-66 (rhythmics in the piano part, *portamento* in the violin part).

**Example 50.** E.W. Korngold - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, Op.12, bars 15-20 (caesuras).

**Example 51.** E.W. Korngold - *Die tote Stadt*, Op.12 - *Tanzlied des Pierrot*, score, solo voice (*portamento*).

**Example 52:** E.W. Korngold - *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 18, mov. I, bars 4-8 (metre).

**Example 53.** E.W. Korngold - *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20, vol. 1-5 (clarinet part).

**Example 54.** E.W. Korngold - *Gesang der Heliane*, Op. 20, bars 33-41 (climax of the work).

**Example 55:** E.W. Korngold - *Gesang der Heliane*, Op. 20, vol. 18 (basic motif).

**Table 4.** The main genres of Korngold's work and major compositions.

**Table 2.** Performance terms with translations (order of occurrence in the work *Gesang der Heliane*).

**Table 3.** Summary of expressive features in Korngold's works for violin and piano.

**Photograph.** Prof. S. Auber (with cello), Maria Auber (at the piano), Rózsika von Révay (with violin) - posed photograph, photo N.N., Vienna, 1920-1931. National Digital Archive, Koncern "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny" - Illustration Archive, ref. 1-E-1327, <https://audiovis.nac.gov.pl/obraz/232653> [accessed 23 May 2025].

## Appendix. Translations of the German source texts used in the works

### Gesang der Heliane – *The Song of the Heliane*

#### GERMAN TEXT

Ich ging zu ihm, der morgen sterben  
Der Abend neigte sich–da ging ich hin.  
Er bat mich um mein Haar, ich gab es  
Er bat um meine Füße. Aus den Schuh'n  
Trat ich und gab ihm die entblösten  
Er warf sich hin, erflehend meinen Leib,  
da löst ich das Gewand von mir und  
wie mich mein Gott erschaffen, vor ihm:  
nackt.  
Ich war sein in Gedanken...ja, ich war's!  
Auf meinen Knien bat ich zu Gott, dass  
die Kraft mir schenke, dies zu vollenden.  
Nicht hab ich ihn geliebt. Nicht ist mein  
in Lust entbrannt.  
Doch schön war der Knabe,  
schön wie ein Stern im Vergehen.  
Und neigt ich mich,  
So tat ich's, damit sein armes Aug  
Noch Liebe könne sehen, ehe dass es  
bräche.  
Und also schwör ich,  
nehme mich hinauf in den Himmel,  
so war ich nun schwöre:  
Nicht hat mich Lust meines Blutes  
zu jenem Knaben getrieben,  
doch sein Leid.  
Mit ihm getragen, und bin in Schmerzen,  
sein geworden. Und nun tötet mich.

#### ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I went to him, who is to die tomorrow.  
As evening was drawing in, I went there.  
He asked me for my hair, and I gave it to him  
He asked for my feet. Out of my shoes  
I stepped forward and held out my bare feet to  
He threw himself down, clinging to my body,  
so I took off my robe and stand out  
how my God created me, before him:  
naked.  
I was his in thought...yes, I was!  
On my knees, I prayed to God that he  
grant me the strength to see this through.  
I did not love him.  
My body did not burn with pleasure.  
Yet handsome was the boy,  
Fair as a star.  
And if I humbled myself,  
I did it so that his poor eyes  
Might yet see love, before they closed.  
And this I swear,  
may God take me up to heaven,  
I now truly swear:  
Pleasure of my blood  
did not drive me to that boy,  
But his grief I bore  
With him, and in pain  
I became his. And now kill me.

## Mariettas Lied zur Laute – *Marietta's Lute Song*

### GERMAN TEXT

**Marietta:** Glück, das mir verblieb,

rück zu mir, mein treues Lieb.  
Abend sinkt im Haag  
bist mir Licht und Tag.  
Bange pochet Herz an Herz  
Hoffnung schwingt sich himmelwärts.

**Paul:** Wie wahr, ein traurig Lied.

**Marietta:** Das Lied vom treuen Lieb,  
das sterben muss.

**Paul:** Ich kenne das Lied.

Ich hört es oft in jungen,  
in schöneren Tagen.  
Es hat noch eine Strophe -  
weiß ich sie noch?  
Naht auch Sorge trüb,  
rück zu mir, mein treues Lieb.

Neig dein blaß Gesicht  
Sterben trennt uns nicht.  
Mußt du einmal von mir gehn,  
glaub, es gibt ein Aufersteh.

### ENDE DER OPER

**Paul:** Glück, das mir verblieb,  
lebe wohl mein, treues Lieb.  
Leben trennt von Tod  
grausam Machtgebot.  
Harre mein in lichten Höhn,  
Hier gibt es kein Aufersteh.

### ENGLISH TRANSLATION

**Marietta:** Happiness that has stayed with  
me,

move up close beside me, my true love.  
In the grove evening is waning,  
yet you are my light and day.  
One heart beats uneasily against the other,  
hope soars heavenward.

**Paul:** How true, a mournful song.

**Marietta:** The song of the true love  
bound to die.

**Paul:** I know this song.

I often heard it sung  
in happier days of yore.  
There is yet another stanza -  
have I still got it in mind?  
Though dismal sorrow is drawing nigh,  
move up close beside me, my true love.

Turn your wan face to me  
death will not part us.  
When the hour of death comes one day,  
believe that you will rise again.

### END OF THE OPERA

**Paul:** Happiness that has stayed with me,  
Farewell, my faithful love.  
Life separates from death  
a cruel command of power.  
Wait for me on the lofty heights,  
There is no Resurrection here.

### ***Märchenbilder op. 3, motto from mov. IV – Wichtelmännchen***

#### **GERMAN TEXT**

Das trippelt und trappelt  
und wispert durchs Haus.  
Husch, husch... Glock eins!...  
Zur Tür hinaus..!

#### **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

That's the sound of little feet scurrying about  
and whispering through the house.  
Hurry, hurry... First bell!...  
Out the door..!

### ***Tanzlied des Pierrot – Pierrot's Dance Song***

#### **GERMAN TEXT**

Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen,  
es träumt sich zurück.  
Im Tanze gewann ich,  
verlor ich mein Glück.  
Im Tanze am Rhein,  
bei Mondenschein,  
gestand mir's aus Blauaug  
ein inniger Blick,  
gestand mir's ihr bittend Wort:  
o bleib, o geh mit nicht fort,  
bewahre der Heimat  
still blühendes Glück,  
mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen,  
es träumt sich zurück.....  
Zauber der Ferne  
warf in die Seele den Brand.  
Zauber des Tanzes lockte,  
ward Komödiant.  
Folgt ihr, der Wundersüssen,  
lernt unter Tränen küssen.  
Rausch und Not,  
und Wahn und Glück,  
ach, das ist des Gauklers Geschick...

#### **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

My longing, my yearning,  
it takes me back in my dreams.  
I won at the dance,  
I lost my happiness.  
Dancing at Rhein,  
in the moonlight,  
a blue-eyed gaze  
confessed it to me,  
her pleading words confessed to me:  
Oh stay, oh, do not go away,  
preserve our homeland  
quietly blossoming happiness,  
my longing, my yearning,  
it takes me back in my dreams...  
The Allure of the Far Away  
set my soul ablaze.  
The magic of dance drew in,  
I became a comedian.  
Follow her, the ever-so-sweet one,  
learns to kiss through tears.  
Excitement and despair,  
and delusion and happiness,  
This is the fate of a jugler...

### **Oświadczenie promotora rozprawy doktorskiej/artystycznej pracy doktorskiej**

Oświadczam, że niniejsza rozprawa doktorska została przygotowana pod moim kierunkiem i stwierdzam, że spełnia ona warunki do przedstawienia jej w postępowaniu o nadanie stopnia naukowego.

Miejscowość, Data ..... Podpis promotora .....

### **Oświadczenie autora rozprawy doktorskiej/artystycznej pracy doktorskiej**

Świadom odpowiedzialności prawnej oświadczam, że niniejsza rozprawa doktorska została przygotowana przeze mnie samodzielnie pod kierunkiem promotora ..... i nie zawiera treści uzyskanych w sposób niezgodny z obowiązującymi przepisami w rozumieniu art. 115 ustawy z dnia 4 lutego 1994 r. o prawie autorskim i prawach pokrewnych (Dz.U. z 2022 r. poz. 2509).

Oświadczam również, że przedstawiona rozprawa doktorska nie była wcześniej przedmiotem procedur związanych z uzyskaniem stopnia naukowego.

Oświadczam ponadto, że niniejsza wersja rozprawy doktorskiej jest identyczna z załączoną na nośniku danych wersją elektroniczną.

Wyrażam zgodę na udostępnianie niniejszej rozprawy doktorskiej na zasadach określonych w Regulaminie Biblioteki Akademii Muzycznej im. Krzysztofa Pendereckiego w Krakowie.

Miejscowość, Data ..... Podpis autora .....