

# 1 | Between Europe and America: Kurt Weill's Symphony in a Suitcase

On 21 March 1933, Kurt Weill fled Berlin, having heard he was on a Nazi blacklist following a wave of arrests of prominent intellectuals that coincided with the Reichstag fire in late February. In his single suitcase was a completed draft of the opening movement of his Second Symphony (or *Symphonic Fantasy*), his first effort at large-scale instrumental composition in ten years, and what would prove to be his final symphonic composition.<sup>1</sup> A commission from the eminent Parisian music patron Princesse Edmond de Polignac in 1932 and originally destined to be premiered in her private salon, it represented the tentative promise of further work in France. Perhaps this was what in part determined his course to Paris. Visiting the previous year, he had been warmly received as the latest bright young thing from Germany. In Berlin he had been hiding out at the home of the couple Caspar and Erika Neher – the former Weill's colleague, the latter Weill's lover – since the beginning of March. Whether Caspar was aware of his wife's liaison with Weill is unclear. The couple drove him across the border; it is hard to imagine the emotional charge in the vehicle.

One of the many people to be tossed out of the political maelstrom of Berlin 1933, Weill then completed his symphony in exile on the outskirts of Paris in 1934, drawing on material from his stage works. According to conventional music-historical scripts, Weill, the socialist and populist theatre composer internationally famed for his works with Bertolt Brecht, should have been an unlikely contributor to this genre; he was negotiating territory historically considered the pinnacle of 'high art' music and home to Beethoven, Brahms, and Bruckner, a genre encumbered by specifically Germanic idealist nationalism, at least since its reception by nineteenth-century ideologues.<sup>2</sup> What is more, the work is challenging for Weill

<sup>1</sup> The history of the work's title – and associated questions about its genre status – will be discussed in more depth further on. Throughout this book, the work will be referred to as Symphony No. 2; however, note that the official title *Fantaisie symphonique* or Symphony No. 2 has recently been agreed in preparation for the forthcoming Kurt Weill Edition.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of the nationalistic ideological colouring of the symphony in early nineteenth-century critical reception, see Sanna Pederson, 'A. B. Marx, Berlin Concert Life and German National Identity', *19th-Century Music* 18 (1994–5): 87–107; Celia Applegate, 'How German Is

biographers.<sup>3</sup> As a salon commission from a wealthy heiress, the symphony was written for a bourgeois world that Weill had previously critiqued.<sup>4</sup> The *Symphony No. 2* provokes several questions: why, suddenly and seemingly uncharacteristically, write a *symphony* of all things?<sup>5</sup> And why, to put a finer point on it, at this precise moment turn to the symphonic genre as the darkening German political regime precipitated his escape?

From a broad perspective, this is a book concerned with symphonies in the interwar period. Its more specific concern, though, is how people imagined selfhood in and around a specific year. It argues that, given the symphony's lively intellectual history of entanglement with ideas of the self (or selves), it is a genre uniquely placed to illuminate what thinking about people's sense of self meant in 1933, at a moment of great international insecurity. By taking a number of symphonies composed or premiered in 1933 and applying a transnational lens, it is possible to reclaim some of the fine grain of the cultural and political landscapes of that incredible, uncertain historical moment. The book begins by tracing the international journey of Weill's symphony in exile from its conception to its transatlantic

It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century', *19th-Century Music* 21 (1998): 274–96.

<sup>3</sup> Weill's *Second Symphony* has received only limited critical attention compared to much of his *oeuvre*, being the subject of only a handful of studies to date: Robert Bailey, 'Musical Language and Formal Design in Weill's Symphonies', in *A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill-Studien*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke and Horst Edler (Hindelsheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1993), 207–15; Christian Kuhnt, "'Das Gegenteil von Pastorale": Anmerkungen zu Kurt Weills 2. Sinfonie', in *Exilmusik: Komposition während der NS-Zeit*, ed. Frederich Geiger and Thomas Schäfer (Hamburg: von Bockel, 1999), 315–32; Jürgen Schebera, 'Amsterdam, 11. Oktober 1934: Einiges zur Uraufführung von Weills *Sinfonie Nr. 2*', in *Kurt Weill-Studien*, ed. Nils Grosch, Joachim Lucchesi, and Jürgen Schebera (Stuttgart: M & P Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1996), 109–18; Misako Ohta, 'Kurt Weill und Gustav Mahler: Der Komponist Weill als Nachfolger Mahlers', *Gakushūin Daigaku kenkyū ronshū* 2 (1998): 39–58.

<sup>4</sup> See Ronald Taylor, *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 203.

<sup>5</sup> As far as it is possible to infer from the available primary sources, it seems Polignac only commissioned a work for orchestra, and that it was Weill's decision to write a symphony. Sylvia Kahan supplies the most authoritative range of primary sources illuminating this issue. She cites a letter from Weill to his publisher of 7 November 1932 (emphasis added): 'I have . . . received from the Princess Polignac a commission to write her *an orchestra work* to be premiered at her house and to be dedicated to her.' See Sylvia Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Singer Princesse de Polignac* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 292. In her footnotes she mentions a letter from Weill to Lotte Lenya of 29 November 1932 in which Weill writes (emphasis added): '*The symphony* is coming along. La Polignac has already paid me 5,000 francs.' Cited in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, trans. and ed. Kim H. Kowalke and Lys Symonnette (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), 105. Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse*, 489.

premieres. The present chapter thus serves two functions: it is both the book's initial case study and its introduction, weaving in and out of the two registers. Then, via a series of five other main symphonic case studies, the book will revisit the *Symphony No. 2*'s international settings to build a sense of the stakes for the genre in those places. The chapters traverse Berlin, Paris, and a slightly more fluid US East Coast nexus centring on New York and Boston, with pit stops in Mexico City and Chicago, to consider some music that today is hardly known, whether by concertgoers or the bulk of musicologists: Hans Pfitzner's *Symphony in C# minor*, Roy Harris's *Symphony 1933*, Florence Price's *Symphony in E minor*, Aaron Copland's *Short Symphony*, and Arthur Honegger's *Mouvement symphonique n° 3*.

Subjectivity will be a recurrent term in this volume. It is taken to mean a sense of selfhood or consciousness that operates at both individual and collective levels – something that symphonies and symphonic discourse (here meaning written commentary responding to symphonic music) grappled with throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Alongside illuminating subjectivity in 1933, a central claim is that these largely forgotten symphonies and the specific cultural anxieties they produce offer insights into how people thought about an area with close ideological links to subjectivity – namely, political and aesthetic notions of space.

The nation-state, itself a particular kind of imagined space, has strongly orientated much existing scholarship on symphonies.<sup>6</sup> Symphonies are taught as German or Russian, or American or French, for example. Weill's symphony forms the starting point for this volume because the nation-state so evidently fails it as a hermeneutic frame. A work that reveals the symphony circa 1933 as swept up in political events which had a global reach, Weill's symphony demonstrates clearly that the genre at this time was an international phenomenon. Yet, while looking globally, the composers I consider simultaneously held a critical mirror to their local contexts. Furthermore, Weill's symphony puts a focus on the Germanic aesthetic and philosophical heritage that was the genre's ideological centre of gravity – and, in so doing, on how that heritage policed contemporary

<sup>6</sup> For some, it has acted as a hermeneutic limit; for more recent work, it has been a more porous and flexible construct. See, for instance, Andrew Deruchie, *The French Symphony at the Fin de Siècle: Style, Culture, and the Symphonic Tradition* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013). Although centred on the United States, Douglas W. Shadle's exploration of the nineteenth-century American symphony has an explicit transnational dimension, however; see Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

ideas about symphonies, particularly about who was allowed to compose them. I suggest that only if we widen our viewfinder beyond the nation-state and bring these works from 1933 into contact with one another can we understand the deep anxieties they reveal about the genre, and what its instability at this time tells us about corresponding ideas of selfhood and space. After all, this was an era characterised by international mobility and displacement, exchange of ideas and cultures across borders, globalised uncertainty, and international antagonism, when politics brimmed with anxieties about space, personal freedom, and international boundaries. Just what was the symphony in 1933? And what do we think it is today?

When Weill used material from his own expressly political stage works in his symphony, he underlined the genre's status in the early twentieth century as something far beyond a purely musical object. The symphonic genre was a tool of political critique, both embedded within and sceptical of social discourses about exile, high art, internationalism, political reform, and popular culture. These social discourses were transformative for modern notions of subjectivity. In some ways, Weill's work foregrounds the genre's typically modern self-awareness. The symphonic genre itself had become a vehicle by which to reflect at a distance on both the suffocating geographical determinism and the nationalist self-aggrandising that had come to plague it, as well as to lampoon symphonic monumentalism's role in establishing political hegemonies.

Since the genre was no longer one that could sustain the nineteenth century's unabashed idealism, to decide to write a symphony in 1933 was necessarily to negotiate social discourses about mass tastes and markets. Previous scholars have suggested that Weill's work was simply a swiftly turned-out money-maker at a time of dire financial need.<sup>7</sup> His assets in Germany, of course, had been frozen, so the economic case must have been intense. But there is also a sense in which the work seems profoundly sincere. The symphonic genre retained much of its allure and prestige as the litmus test of a composer's capabilities: to what extent, then, was the

<sup>7</sup> See Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1985), 203; Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse*, 309, 311; Schebera, 'Amsterdam', 109. Sanders suggests money was a major motivating factor for the symphony. Kahan highlights Weill's letters to Lenya in which he refers to the money he was being paid for the symphony (or waiting to be paid: Weill wrote, 'That beast [Polignac] hasn't given me my money' and 'I'm ready to string her up on one of the pipes of her organ if she doesn't give me my money'), citing Kowalke and Symonnette, *Speak Low*, 104–7 and 111–14. Kahan does not overtly suggest it was a major drive, however. Schebera positions money as important for Weill in this period, but he does not suggest that any financial motivations implied the work's superficiality.

work a conscious transition of musical register and a bid for elevated respect and recognition? Having studied with Ferruccio Busoni, Weill had credentials that rivalled those of any of his more 'serious' orchestral composer contemporaries, and, as he confided cryptically to Lotte Lenya the day after he finished the sketch, he was confident about the work: 'I'm very happy that I can also do something like this better than the others.'<sup>8</sup> Considering the fraught political context and the work's lengthy gestation – uncharacteristically protracted for Weill – some commentators have suggested that his self-quotation from stage works with an overt socialist agenda points towards a reading of the symphony as a powerful social commentary on changing relations between citizens and the State.<sup>9</sup> Why shouldn't this be commensurate with the genre's historically lofty ideals? It is hardly incompatible with financial motivation. Yet, if secondary literature on Weill's work at large has resisted such an interpretation, then this is revealing about the remarkable persistence of twentieth-century perceptions of true symphonic idealism as decontextualised, universal, and, above all, divorced from quotidian economic imperatives.

In the work's programme note, Weill took a playful and non-committal position on the musical content of his symphony, despite its flagrant borrowing from the stage. Perhaps this was a knowing gesture towards just some of these problematics of absolute music – after all, absolute music has always been a category steeped in ideology.<sup>10</sup> As Weill explained:

It is not possible for me to comment on the content of the work since it was conceived as pure musical form. But perhaps a Parisian friend of mine was right when she suggested that an appropriate title would be a word that expressed the opposite of 'pastoral', should such a word exist. I do not know.<sup>11</sup>

Weill's remarks, particularly the reference to 'pastoral', also hint at the work's clear dialogue with the Germanic symphonic tradition. Following

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Weill to Lotte Lenya, 16 December 1933, in Kowalke and Symonnette, *Speak Low*, 107.

<sup>9</sup> The following sources endorse a political reading of the symphony, challenging pervasive characterisations of the work that suggest it was simply a popular crowd-pleaser or a superficial sideline contribution to Weill's theatrically orientated *oeuvre* and ideology. See Kuhnt, 'Das Gegenteil von Pastorale'; Schebera, 'Amsterdam'; Stephen Johnson, 'After Mahler: The Central European Symphony in the Twentieth Century', in *A Guide to the Symphony*, ed. Robert Layton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 382–401.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Laurenz Lütteken, *Sinfonie als Bekenntnis: Zürcher Festspiel-Symposium 2010* (Kassel: Baerenreiter, 2011), 8–9.

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Weill, programme note in Programme of the Subscription Concert (Bruno Walter/ Concertgebouw Orchestra), 11 October 1934 (hereafter Concertgebouw Programme Note).

eighteenth-century classical symphonic models, the symphony is in three movements – Sonata (*Sostenuto – Allegro molto*), Largo (titled ‘Cortège’, referencing the funereal slow movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica*), and Rondo (*Allegro vivace*) – and is unified by motivic interactions (described by one commentator as ‘Lisztian thematic transformations’<sup>12</sup>). These, however, are disguised on the surface level by a sense of disjunction (bear in mind the theatrical *Verfremdungseffekt* developed with Brecht) resulting from the abrupt succession of orchestral gestures and almost cinematic cuts between diverse musical materials that reference multiple historical and contemporary forms. Indeed, Weill’s integration of dance structures, march, sonata form, Cortège, and lyrical song invites comparison with Mahler’s famed all-embracing attitude to the symphony.<sup>13</sup> Adorno’s commentary on Mahler could equally apply to Weill: ‘All categories are eroded . . . none are established within unproblematic limits. Their dissolution does not arise from a lack of articulation but revises it: neither the distinct nor the blurred is defined conclusively; both are in suspension.’<sup>14</sup> Also noteworthy – and again referencing the Mahlerian model – is the bittersweet humour with which the work is invested (Adorno calls its Mahlerian instantiation ‘gallows humour’):<sup>15</sup> the grotesquerie of the trombone and woodwind glissandos; the faux-militant trumpet fanfares; the impossibly quick triplet motif of the closing bars.<sup>16</sup> The bald repetition of the march for winds in the final movement creates a particular moment of generic fluidity, manipulating the forces present in the orchestra to create a popular-sounding marching band. Given that commentators have hypothesised that the march alludes to the paradox of the menacing yet ludicrous appearance of ‘goosestepping Nazis’, does the repetition critique the mindlessness of political complicity and critique popular forms as

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Jarman, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Biography* (London: Orbis, 1982), 94. See also Bailey, ‘Musical Language’. Bailey provides an analysis of the symphony’s first movement, examining its motivic unity.

<sup>13</sup> Plenty of commentators have done the same, or drawn up other seemingly Mahlerian influences on the work: see, for example, Antony Beaumont, booklet accompanying Kurt Weill, Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, cond. Antony Beaumont, *Symphony No. 1, Quodlibet, Symphony No. 2*, CD, Chandos Records Ltd, 2006, CHSA 5046, 12; Ohta, ‘Kurt Weill und Gustav Mahler’; Jarman, *Kurt Weill*, 95; Jürgen Schebera, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life*, trans. Caroline Murphy (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 223.

<sup>14</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> As Stephen Johnson writes in reference to Weill’s Second Symphony, ‘we should not forget we are dealing with an accomplished ironist here: one who, no less than Mahler, could use popular styles to poignant, disturbing or even downright brutal effect’. Johnson, ‘After Mahler’, 391.

channels of mass propaganda?<sup>17</sup> A question mark similarly hangs over the C major ending. To tack on a gesture towards notions of purity and simplicity is farcical, and seems to function in the same way as Igor Stravinsky's critique of C major and the assumptions it carries in *Symphony in C* (1938–40). Sibelius's *Symphony No. 7* of 1924 notwithstanding, that no symphony could really end in C major with a straight face by 1934 confirms the self-consciousness that haunted the genre.

Initially, a premiere for the symphony was not forthcoming. It was not until August 1934 that Bruno Walter, exiled from Berlin in the same week as Weill, agreed to take up the symphony for performance (under pressure from Weill's advocate and pupil from Berlin Maurice Abravanel).<sup>18</sup> (The events surrounding Walter's exile from Berlin are given further attention in Chapter 2.) Walter was quick to get the ball rolling; the inaugural performance took place in Amsterdam on 11 October 1934, with immediate subsequent performances in The Hague and Rotterdam.<sup>19</sup> A few weeks later, Walter took the work to the United States, presenting it at Carnegie Hall in New York on 13 and 14 December. Weill could not have hoped for a more prestigious opening for his first piece of absolute music in ten years; as he wrote to Lenya, 'I'm afraid the gods will be envious' (the 'envy of the gods' being a jinx).<sup>20</sup> Early insecurities about his ability to develop the right style ('den richtigen Stil') for an orchestral work were long forgotten.<sup>21</sup> After attending the rehearsal for the performance at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, he appeared to have every reason to remain buoyant, reporting to Lenya: 'Just a quick note. The rehearsal [of the Second Symphony] was wonderful. Walter does it marvellously and everyone is really enthusiastic, especially the *entire orchestra!* It's a good piece and sounds fantastic.'<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For example, Beaumont, booklet accompanying Kurt Weill, *Symphony No. 1, Quodlibet, Symphony No. 2*, CD, 12.

<sup>18</sup> See Schebera, 'Amsterdam', 110–11. On 7 June 1934, Walter wrote to Abravanel that he of course had enormous interest in listening to Weill's symphony. Weill-Lenya, series 47.

<sup>19</sup> Atypically for a Polignac commission, the promised private salon performance did not take place until after the premiere. The work was finally performed in the large music room, avenue Henri-Martin, on 24 June 1935. See Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse*, 328.

<sup>20</sup> Schebera, 'Amsterdam', 111.

<sup>21</sup> Kuhnt, 'Das Gegenteil von Pastorale', 318. Kuhnt quotes a letter from Weill to Universal Edition, found photocopied at Weill-Lenya.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Weill to Lenya, 10 October 1934, in Kowalke and Symonette, *Speak Low*, 145. This letter is frequently cited to confirm Weill's positive attitude to the symphony. See, for example, Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1979), 86; Schebera, *Kurt Weill*, 223; Schebera, 'Amsterdam', 114; Bailey, 'Musical Language', 207; Taylor, *Kurt Weill*, 203.

### 'I Had Prepared Myself for Much Worse Things!'

Weill's optimism, however, was misplaced. He misjudged the complex and restrictive discourses used to police the symphonic genre. The work animated and agitated reviewers, provoking divisive and inconsistent responses, and, if anything, it seemed his *Dreigroschenoper* success stacked the odds against his symphony's chances.<sup>23</sup> Juxtaposed in the programme with Brahms's Fourth Symphony, a mainstay of the repertory, the yardstick against which Weill's symphony was to be measured was especially diminishing. The reviewer for *Eemlanden* reported snidely: 'That was not so bad! I had prepared myself for much worse things! . . . Modern, very modern, but funny and fluent, and without sentimentality.'<sup>24</sup> For the most part, however, critics came down even harder on Weill, and a Maastricht newspaper spelled out some major and recurrent qualms:

Kurt Weill is the composer of the *Dreigroschenoper*, and I fear that will remain his fate for years to come. It is no disgrace, of course, though it would be better for him to accept it, rather than attempting to force his talent in this pretty hopeless direction. Because, to be honest, Weill's *Symphonische Symphonie* is not much more than a number of expanded songs. The result? Rather ridiculous. And not only is the song style ill-fitted to symphonic forms; the nature of Weill's music is little suited to absolute music. Weill is a man of the theatre . . .<sup>25</sup>

As many questions as the reception raises about the nature of Weill's music, it raises still more about the nature of 'absolute' music. Ultimately, these questions about nature or character seem to point to insidious underlying questions and assumptions about Weill himself – and to judgments about the kinds of people who listened to his music. When, as we will see towards the end of this chapter, the reviewers gendered his 'popular' music as feminine to argue it did not belong in the concert hall, when they criticised his supposedly superficial thematic development, and when they questioned his motivations for writing a symphony, these critics were not reacting solely to aspects of 'pure' music; rather, they were responding to social discourses relating to Weill's popular status and fame, political discourses linked to the socialist message of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, racial

<sup>23</sup> The only existing research that has been done on this body of reviews is in a German-language article by Schebera. See Schebera, 'Amsterdam', especially 116.

<sup>24</sup> H. F. K., 'Belangrijke nieuwe muziek in het Concertgebouw: Serge Prokofieff en Kurt Weill', *Eemlanden*, 12 October 1934 (trans. Liselotte Snijders).

<sup>25</sup> 'Weill en Prokofieff – Symphonie in Songs – Prokofieffs derde pianoconcert', *Maast.* (Maastricht newspaper?), 12 October 1934 (trans. Josephine Kahn).



discourses bound up with his Jewish heritage, and to the perceived internationalism of Weill's musical voice (at odds with symphonic, and specifically Germanic, nationalism). What is more, the reviewers did so while communicating their unease about Amsterdam's fringe relationship to Germanic symphonic culture: cultural anxiety about being on the margins.

Crucially, as will be shown by the critical reception of Weill's symphony in Amsterdam, the story of the Weill premiere indicates how symphonies and their discursive contexts blur the borders of those aesthetic, subjective-interior, and political spaces where subjectivity plays out and in relation to which it is reflexively assembled. Yet, since existing literature on symphonies and their discursive contexts in this period lacks a comparative perspective, we begin on the back foot, ill-equipped to approach the Amsterdam reviews, and still less able to compare their subtleties with the reception of Weill's work in New York a few weeks later, where a whole raft of different localised histories and concerns – not to mention attitudes towards Germany – were at play. As the reception begins to disrupt inherited conceits about the symphonic genre's universality, it reveals that serious foundational work piecing together a fuller, more globalised picture of symphonic discourse is still required.

## The Symphony in 1933

Weill's *Symphony No. 2*, Pfitzner's *Symphony in C# minor*, Harris's *Symphony 1933*, Copland's *Short Symphony*, Honegger's *Mouvement symphonique n° 3*, and Price's *Symphony in E minor* make up a constellation of works that complement one another aesthetically, ideologically, and biographically, overlapping and contrasting in complex and unexpected ways. Together, they hatch more finely a sense of what it is that we are dealing with when we talk about 'the symphony' in the interwar period, and specifically in the pivotal year 1933, when Germany pulled the trigger on a political upheaval whose shockwaves would be felt globally through the twentieth century and beyond. They capture a keener sense of the era and communicate a more capacious vision for the symphonic genre than previous studies. Steering away from the mode of aesthetic survey, as this volume explores how the genre uncovers localised ideas about subjectivity, space, and exclusion, it pursues connections with diverse cultural and political areas: fascism, liberal ideologies, exile, gender, race, imagined geographies, post-colonial anxieties, as well as recording technology, ballet, Classical Greek sculpture, Weimar dialectics, Pan-Americanism.

The kaleidoscopic scope of the symphony's cultural history becomes a way of illuminating the book's central themes.

The transnational dimension here is vital. This book spotlights how fundamentally a transnational perspective is needed fully to understand both the symphonic genre and the localised political and social issues shaping the written discourse emerging in response to symphonies in the years around 1933. Far from a hermetically sealed, purely musical topic, as many previous studies have characterised the genre, in 1933 the symphony was clearly an interdisciplinary phenomenon and a window onto the cultural and political contours of the moment.<sup>26</sup> The focus, therefore, is at times less on the musical works themselves than it is on what the *idea* of the symphony and people's responses to it tell us about the works' settings. I am interested in the symphony as a locus around which a set of critical rhetorics and discourses continually re-emerge and are reconstructed.

Utopian Enlightenment (and typically Germanic) philosophical narratives about sovereignty and space have long been wedded to the symphonic genre. In 1933, political developments applied particular pressure to them, often taking them to breaking point. The year in which Hitler took power and the Great Depression reached its peak, 1933 was a fraught one for politics and economics, concentrating far-reaching social questions that intersect with 'symphonic' issues about selfhood, society, power, and spatial expansionism. This points to the symphony's darker, authoritarian side: to think of the symphony is often to conjure connotations of nationalistic power display or monumentality. Indeed, symphonic ideals have proved flexible allies for both free will and totalitarianism at different times and in

<sup>26</sup> The literature concerning symphonies, frequently in the mode of aesthetic survey, is very large, but for a selection of relevant studies see, for instance, Christopher Ballantine, *Twentieth Century Symphony* (London: Dobson, 1983); A. Peter Brown, *The Symphonic Repertoire*, vol. 3A *The European Symphony ca. 1800–ca. 1930: Germany and the Nordic Countries*, vol. 3B *The European Symphony ca. 1800–ca. 1930: Great Britain, Russia, and France*, vol. 4 *The Second Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Brahms, Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, and Selected Contemporaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002–7); Louise Cuyler, *The Symphony* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Manuel Gervink, *Die Symphonie in Deutschland und Österreich in der Zeit zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1984); Layton, *Guide to the Symphony*; Lütteken, *Sinfonie als Bekenntnis*; Wolfgang Osthoff and Giselher Schubert, *Symphonik 1930–1950: Gattungsgeschichtliche und analytische Beiträge* (Mainz: Schott, 2003); Robert Simpson, *The Symphony: Elgar to the Present Day* (Aylesbury: Penguin Books, 1967); Wolfram Steinbeck and Christoph von Blumröder, *Die Sinfonie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2002); Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 3 *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 4 *The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) (hereafter *OHWM*); Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War* (London: Dent, 1977); Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

different places. The spectre of Germany and Austria and the genre's liberalist-idealist Germanic heritage looms large throughout this volume. To spotlight the year fascism took hold in Germany brings those Germanic social and political discourses historically associated with the genre to the fore – after all, to quote Karen Painter, 'the symphony was the most German of musical genres'.<sup>27</sup> And yet symphonic monumentalism is only a small part of the story. Spotlighting 1933 is also to spotlight a key moment of contingency, to allow us, if we look closely, paradoxically to see alternative possibilities and critical potentials in this music and in the discussions it generated. This is music that, even if it cannot exceed or overpower some political shifts taking place, may also dissent, music that can communicate visions for alternative realities. Investigating the legacies of Germanic liberalist-idealist discourses in different sociocultural contexts, each chapter investigates how different local political ideologies produce different visions of space and subjectivity, and how the case study symphonies allow us to explore them, along with their contradictions.

By 1933, political news travelled fast through vast cross-continental communications networks, shaping an increasingly globalised cultural consciousness. This generation of composers often seemed just as mobile: US composers Harris and Copland both studied – although they did not overlap – in Paris in the 1920s with Nadia Boulanger; Copland spent 1931–3 hopping between Germany, Morocco, the United States, and Mexico; Mexican composer and conductor Carlos Chávez, a prominent figure in Chapter 4, divided his formative years between New York, Paris, and Mexico City; Price had planned trips to France and England in the early 1950s to hear her works performed and meet with publishers, although ill health, and then her untimely death, meant neither went ahead; Honegger was a Swiss-German working in Paris; even arch-German Pfitzner frequently conducted abroad (although the Nazi government put limits on his travel from 1933). But for the symphony, things were perhaps moving too fast, and too far. It was a genre that had lost confidence in its ideals; for many, symphonies seemed culturally out of time – a closed chapter, locked to cultural worlds and values that had died as the nineteenth century rolled into the twentieth. Other symphonic composers expressed this distance with self-reflective critique. The year 1933 thus seems a particularly problematic and unstable moment for a genre so insistent on its absolute, self-contained status, and for pervasive narratives about the symphony as

<sup>27</sup> Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2007), 3.

nationally particularised and geographically deterministic. Yet that sense of instability is also invigorating, giving us pause to look anew at how the symphony can be unfolded into transnational, cross-disciplinary spheres, inviting corresponding methodological approaches. By reframing the symphony, scholars can mine the genre and its discursive contexts for the social information they reveal. A methodology that opens up a contact point with 1933, moreover, lights up how this historical-ideological crossroads has legacies that shape the twenty-first century, too.

### 1933 as Epicentre

Viewed from a historical distance, the year 1933, where the symphonies in this book coalesce, was remarkable. The totalising Nazi political apparatus jerked into motion, tightening legal control over the German state as much as it did over spurious biological definitions of the German race.<sup>28</sup> Creative talent drained from Germany. Albert Einstein moved permanently to the United States after his university position in Berlin evaporated. German universities terminated the employment of Jewish academics. Aside from Weill and Bruno Walter, further musical figures to leave Germany in 1933 included Arnold Schoenberg, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Egon Wellesz, and (although not Jewish) Ernst Krenek, whom the Nazis had decried as a cultural bolshevist. Likewise, 1933 saw the emigration of writers and cultural theorists such as Brecht, Thomas Mann, Alfred Döblin, Hannah Arendt, and Siegfried Kracauer. Many German exiles, like Walter Benjamin, spent 1933 in Paris, the French economy having largely withstood the 1929 economic crash.

Across the Atlantic in the Depression-struck United States, however, quite a different mood prevailed. As Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office as the 32nd president of the United States, the country began its most intimate flirtation with socialism. It was a rocky time. The Midwest saw the first storms preceding the dust-bowl crisis. Prohibition ended (although not until December). In Chicago, wealthy spectators from around the globe marvelled at the Century of Progress International Exposition. And 1933 was a fulcrum moment for Pan-American relations (at least from a US perspective): Roosevelt launched the Good Neighbor Policy, and it was the year that saw the term 'Mexican Vogue' coined in the *New York Times*

<sup>28</sup> In 1933, the Nazis outlawed the existence of other political parties and began their eugenics programme through compulsory sterilisation of citizens with supposedly hereditary diseases.



**Figure 1.1** Diego Rivera at work on his mural *Man at the Crossroads* at the Rockefeller Center, New York, 24 April 1933. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, NYWT&S Collection LC-DIG-ds-08080 (digital file from original item).

for the growing attraction of everything south of the border.<sup>29</sup> John Rockefeller commissioned a mural from Diego Rivera for the foyer of the Rockefeller Center in Manhattan; Rivera tested the boundaries of US socialist inclinations when he insisted on including an image of Lenin and it all ended in scandal (see Figure 1.1). The destroyed work was recreated in the newly opened Palacio de Bellas Artes concert hall in Mexico City in 1934 with the revised title *Man, Controller of the Universe*.

But a year cannot be remarkable all the time. For many, despite shifting political sands and economic hardships, things went on as normal. Cinema-goers would see Ginger Rogers get her silver screen break in *42nd Street* and King Kong scale the newly completed Empire State Building, advertising a modernist emblem in the New York skyline. Arguably the most iconic film from 1933 today, *King Kong* was not among the ten top-grossing films in the United States that year; the

<sup>29</sup> 'Noted Woman Archaeologist', *New York Times*, 15 April 1933, cited by Helen Delpar, 'Carlos Chávez and the Mexican "Vogue", 1925–1940', in *Carlos Chávez and His World*, ed. Leonora Saavedra (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 204.

homoerotic German import *Mädchen in Uniform* was, however. This was Hollywood's swansong period of forthright woman, sexual innuendo, and semi-nudity before stricter enforcement of the Hays code stopped all the fun and 1934 ushered in a more conservative cinema.<sup>30</sup> All-star musical comedy *Gold Diggers of 1933* took not only full advantage of the latitude, but also box offices by storm.<sup>31</sup> It featured hit song 'We're in the Money'; less well remembered, though, is the risqué duet 'Petting in the Park'. *Gold Diggers of 1933* also had a clear political subtext, and made 1933 synonymous with Depression hardship. It staged the class warfare characterising the early 1930s, ennobling the 'forgotten' workless common folk – his dole queues, her empty days staying warm in bed – and endorsing their mistrust of academic and economic elites.<sup>32</sup> It is a telling portrait of US social tensions and aspirations.

In this 'Century of Progress', people chipped away at the limits of human endeavour. The Nobel prize in physics went to Erwin Schrödinger for breakthroughs in quantum mechanics – his cat-in-a-box thought experiment came two years later. The first man to fly solo around the world achieved the feat in seven days, eighteen hours, and forty-nine minutes.<sup>33</sup> An aesthetic revolution in day-to-day transit took place when the London underground launched Harry Beck's redesigned tube maps, still iconic today, replacing scaled distances with bald, digestible angles in a modern colour scheme (see Figure 1.2). This design became the global prototype for city transport mapping. Elsewhere, US board game pioneers were busy developing Monopoly, which would reach stores in 1935. And while things went on relatively undisturbed for some, for others things ended: notable deaths included ex-US president Calvin Coolidge and Austrian architect Adolf Loos.

<sup>30</sup> The production code (known as the Hays code, after Will H. Hays, who led its development) was a Hollywood censorship code introduced in 1930 in response to the influence of a religious pressure group. They were alarmed at the commercial popularity of scintillating cinema with salacious themes, and foresaw morally degrading effects, especially on the psychological development of children. The Hays code was not fully enforced until 1934; the years 1930–4 are known as the pre-code era. See, for instance, Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> It was the joint second-highest grossing film that year, tying with *Cavalcade*, behind Paramount's *I'm No Angel*. 'Actual Receipts at the Wickets Now Decide "Box-Office Champions of 1933"', *Washington Post*, 6 February 1934, 14.

<sup>32</sup> The real forgotten in this film were people of colour: the uncredited singer of the film's closing number, 'My Forgotten Man', was Etta Moten Barnett (1901–2004), best known for playing Bess in George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

<sup>33</sup> See Bryan B. Sterling, *Forgotten Eagle: Wiley Post, America's Heroic Aviation Pioneer* (New York: Carrol and Graf, 2001), 133.

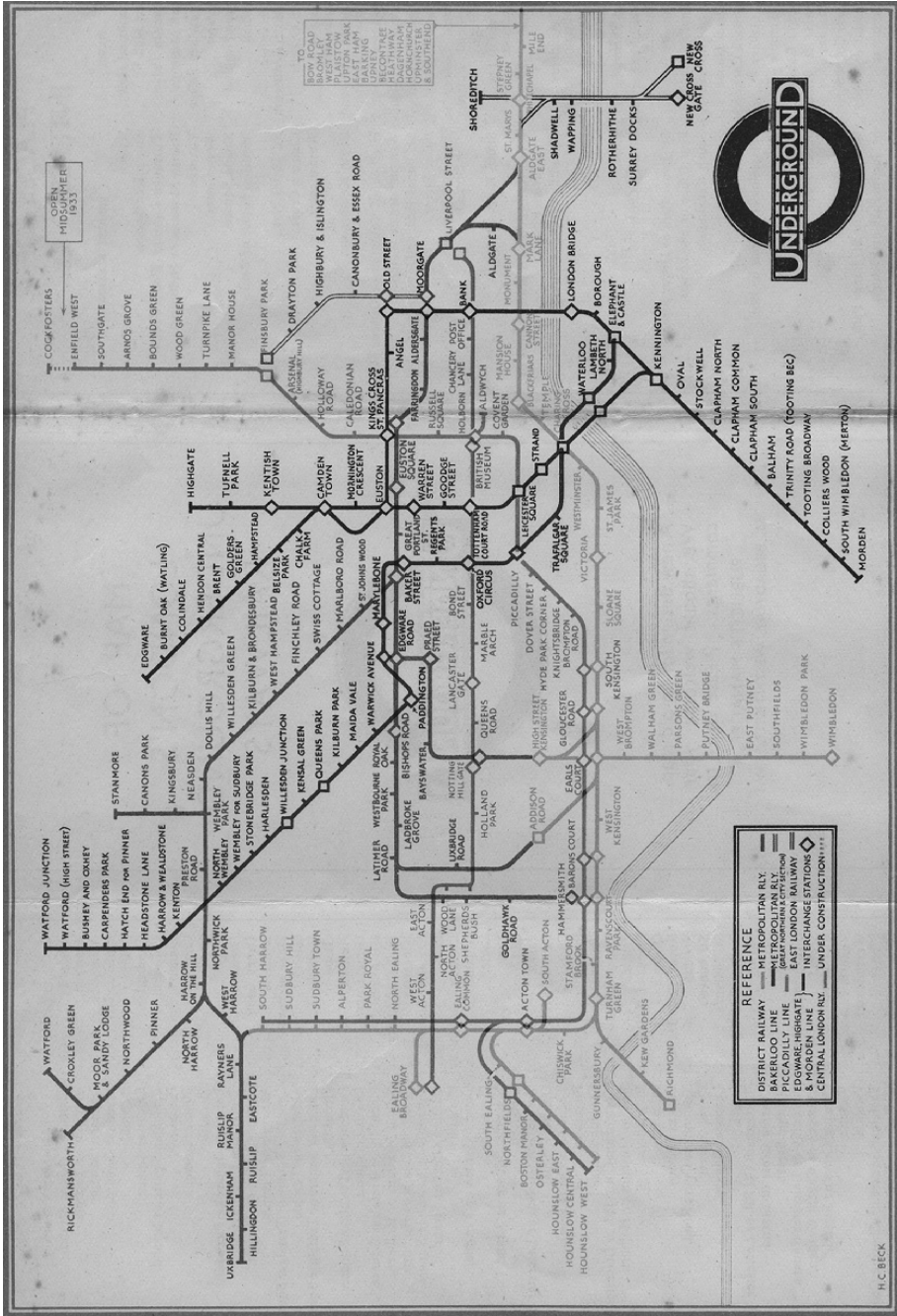


Figure 1.2 Harry Beck's 1931 redesign of the London tube map, released in 1933. © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection.

The year 1933 is the epicentre of this book, but not its hard limit. It is the historical trigger point – the year whose political events set in motion the course of Weill's *Symphony No. 2*, inextricably entwined with his life in exile – and this book spills beyond it in both directions. It is the synchronic point of overlap for all the case studies, featuring prominently in the genesis of each. All were either composed or premiered in that year, but their stories exceed it, too. Therefore, as in the opening vignette that outlined Weill's escape to Paris and work on his *Symphony* in 1933, and its 1934 premiere, the book's discussion will often move from 1933 to the months on either side. Furthermore, in opening up a series of windows onto this moment, sometimes we find they cast new light on even less obviously proximate histories. The book will use the events of 1933 to catch other historical threads, which lead us further back, or to uncover and recombine historical snapshots of preceding eras.

To explore a tightly focused time period is to emulate a historical approach that in recent years has captured the imaginations of scholars and the public alike. Although as early as 1955 Raymond Postgate presented a single year as the focus for a historical study, chronicling month by month the politically momentous year 1848, it is only in the last decade or so that the 'year study' approach has really taken off, around ten years after Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's 1997 study *1926: Ein Jahr am Rand der Zeit*.<sup>34</sup> The approach has been having its moment in popular non-fiction and documentary broadcasting, too: take BBC Four's *Bright Lights, Brilliant Minds: A Tale of Three Cities* (2014), which lit up three cities in three 'exceptional' years – Vienna in 1908, Paris in 1928, and New York in 1951<sup>35</sup> – or art historian Florian Illies's international bestseller *1913: The Year before the Storm*

<sup>34</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Raymond Postgate, *Story of a Year: 1848* (London: J. Cape, 1955). Further examples include: Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *1492: The Year Our World Began* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Kevin Jackson, *Constellations of Genius: 1922: Modernism Year One* (London: Hutchinson, 2012); James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005). Within musicology, Benjamin Piekut has more recently examined the New York experimental scene in 1964. See Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Hugh MacDonald, *Music in 1853* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012); Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton, *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Taking an adjacent approach, Tamara LeVitz's *Modernist Mysteries: Perséphone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) is a micro-historical analysis of the premiere of Stravinsky's ballet in 1934.

<sup>35</sup> *Bright Lights, Brilliant Minds: A Tale of Three Cities*, BBC4, written by James Fox, produced by Julian Birkett and Helen Shariatmadari, three episodes, [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04fh387](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04fh387) (accessed 1 August 2016), first broadcast 20 August 2014.



(2013).<sup>36</sup> More recently Sam Mendes's Hollywood blockbuster thriller *1917* (2019) immersed audiences in the messiness and futility of the First World War, using the technical cinematic means of what seemed like two unbroken takes.<sup>37</sup> A common trope within year studies is to focus on a year that demarcates some kind of shift.<sup>38</sup> The year 1933 falls squarely within this category. Such studies, however, are at their most successful where they resist writing as if change already hung in the air, emphasising instead the contingency of historical events and the provisional status of human experience. Given what we know now, it is easy to filter our responses to 1933 through a sense of grim inevitability, forgetting that at the time the future was uncertain. This book thinks about the year's cultural landscape as one shaped most strongly by memory and other processes of weaving the past into the present.

If there is a genre that cannot help but look back, it is the symphony. Indeed, the symphony has often been about the social mechanisms of memory, about commemorating. The years after the Great War, therefore, presented a problem for composers seeking to grapple with the genre's blend of large-scale thematic integration and populism. After Europe had witnessed tragedy of unprecedented proportions, the symphonic genre's pre-war expansionist ideals, spearheaded by those like Mahler or Scriabin, or its earlier heroic narratives rang hollow against the senselessness of mechanised destruction. Even its tumultuous stories of Romantic introspection seemed out of place in the face of post-war nihilism. What was left to celebrate? Could either the symphony's nationalism or its opulent universalism be rescued? The symphonic dream as it had once been conceived seemed in tatters.

In 1933, looking back was in the foreground in other ways. A great number of composers died around this time: Alban Berg, Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, and Franz Schreker. The passing of these composers who had bridged the late Romanticism of the twentieth century with interwar Europe – another figure was Frederick Delius, whose death fell in 1934 – perhaps contributed to the feeling of the curtain falling on the symphonic tradition, particularly in Austria and Germany. The anxieties that caused such cultural nostalgia were indeed especially acute in Germany – a reaction,

<sup>36</sup> Florian Illies, *1913: Der Sommer des Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2012); published in English as *Illies, 1913: The Year before the Storm*, trans. Shaun Whiteside and Jamie Lee Searle (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> *1917*, film, directed by Sam Mendes, Hollywood: Universal Pictures, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, Fernández-Armesto, *1492*; Jackson, *Constellations of Genius*; Kutschke and Norton, *Music and Protest in 1968*.

as Pamela Potter puts it, to a 'fear that Germany's musical strength was about to fade into oblivion'.<sup>39</sup> On top of the symphonic silence from Sibelius and Nielsen from the mid-1920s, the ideological torch many still wanted to hold for a certain pre-modernist utopian conservatism was being gradually starved of fuel. The male lead in *Gold Diggers of 1933* was an unlikely figure to have hit the nail on the head: symphonies had become something that in many people's eyes – as the Boston heir turned Broadway songwriter Brad (Dick Powell) put it – 'you have to be half-dead to compose'.

Others struggled to escape the symphony's aesthetic history. Those serialist composers seeking symphonic relevance went inwards, attempting to rationalise and compress the genre. Indeed, for some historians the 'pointillistic canons' of Webern's 1928 two-movement Op. 21 mark the nihilist self-erasure of the nineteenth-century Austro-Germanic symphonic tradition and even went so far as to 'obliterate the nineteenth-century concept of the word "symphony"'.<sup>40</sup> Reinhold Brinkmann makes a similar point about how Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony Op. 9 solved the nineteenth century's problem of symphonic form, integrating the genre's traditional four movements into one tightly wrought, compressed structure.<sup>41</sup>

So far, we have a clear sense of an ending. Or, at least, this is what conventional historical narratives tell us. Symphonic surveys suggest a period of lull and stagnation had set in right around 1933. It is understandable but misleading: the tacit assumption is that not only was the genre dwindling after its nineteenth-century heyday<sup>42</sup> but that it had become something of a poisoned chalice, given the marked anti-German political sentiment following the Great War. In that climate, the genre's public muscle-flexing was in dubious taste. Many contemporaries were afraid sonata form had had its day. For instance, a historical touchstone such as the 1928 international Columbia Gramophone competition for a new lyric symphony – a commercial attempt to re-energise a flagging field – does

<sup>39</sup> Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). See, in particular, 'Attempts to Define "Germanness" in Music', 200–34.

<sup>40</sup> Brown, *Symphonic Repertoire*, vol. 4, 892.

<sup>41</sup> See Reinhold Brinkmann, 'The Compressed Symphony: On the Historical Content of Schoenberg's Op. 9', trans. Irene Zedlacher, in *Schoenberg and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 141–61, especially 149–53.

<sup>42</sup> This narrative is outlined by Brown, *Symphonic Repertoire*, in particular vol. 4; also by Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations* (on page 3 she writes that the genre 'dwindled into irrelevance' after Mahler's death, despite its continuing prominence in music criticism). The decline narrative is challenged, however, by studies such as Ballantine, *Twentieth Century Symphony*.

nothing to dispel a narrative of crisis (and simultaneously indicates the stakes for the genre – namely, that it was still worth cultivating). It is true that 1933 was a moment when many of those twentieth-century composers whose work in the genre is best documented turned their attention away from the symphony. Symphonies by Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Kurt Atterberg, Howard Hanson, Roger Sessions, Stravinsky, and Ernst Krenek, to name a few such composers, are conspicuously absent in this year. And if, as symphonic surveys also have it, from the early 1930s a new symphonic current influenced by the Nordic frugality of Sibelian tonal logic began to stimulate symphonic production in the United States and the United Kingdom, 1933 arrived just at the tipping point, before that counter-narrative of re-emergence really gained momentum.

Despite falling in the no-man's land between two monolithic symphonic narratives – one of decline, the other of regrowth – this aesthetic climate was nonetheless enormously productive for symphonic composition. In 1933 and the years immediately either side of it, works emerged across Europe and in the United States from seasoned symphonic composers as well as from more unlikely quarters, focusing tensions between the genre's nineteenth-century ideological legacies and wide-ranging, but typically modernist anxieties. The selective list in Figure 1.3 illustrates the magnitude of this body of works, as well as their geographical distribution. And that is not to mention unfinished works (for instance, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji's Choral Symphony, begun in 1931) or planned symphonies from composers who died before their works could be completed (Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 3 and Alban Berg's *Symphonic Pieces from Lulu*).

The table demonstrates that a number of women were writing symphonies in the years either side of 1933: apart from Price, to whom we will turn in Chapter 6, listed here are Frida Kern and Johanna Senfter. Taking a feminist perspective on symphonic contribution in the period likewise makes it difficult to argue that in 1933 the symphony was a genre past its sell-by date. Austrian composer and conductor Kern, who composed *Symphonische Musik* Op. 20 (1934), began her training at the Musikakademie in Vienna at the fairly late age of 32; after finishing her studies in 1927, she established a women's orchestra, which toured Europe and North Africa. Senfter is another largely forgotten composer, and the symphony she wrote in 1933 has a significant part to play in her historiography. Her Symphony No. 6 quoted the National Socialist hymn 'Horst-Wessel-Lied' as a counterpoint to 'Wachet auf ruft uns die Stimme'. Following the end of the Second World War, this symphonic quotation

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Argentina	Juan José Castro, <i>Symphony No. 2 (Sinfonía Bíblica)</i> (1932), <i>Symphony No. 3 (Sinfonía Argentina)</i> (1934)
Austria	Hanns Eisler, <i>Kleine Sinfonie</i> (1932) Frida Kern, <i>Symphonische Musik</i> Op. 20 (1934) Franz Schmidt, <i>Symphony No. 4 in C major</i> (1932–3) Alexander Zemlinsky, <i>Sinfonietta</i> Op. 23 (1934)
Estonia	Eduard Tubin, <i>Symphony No. 1 in C minor</i> (1931–4)
France	Arthur Honegger, <i>Mouvement symphonique n° 3</i> (1932–3) Albert Roussel, <i>Symphony No. 4 in A major</i> (1934) Kurt Weill, <i>Symphony No. 2</i> (1932–4) (begun in Berlin)
Germany	Paul Dessau, <i>Symphony No. 2</i> (1934; reworking and premiere 1962) <sup>43</sup> Karl Amadeus Hartmann, <i>Miseræ</i> (or <i>Symphony No. 1</i> , withdrawn in 1950) (1933–4) Paul Hindemith, <i>Mathis der Maler</i> <i>Symphony</i> (1933–4) Hans Pfitzner, <i>Symphony in C# minor</i> Op. 36a (1932) Johanna Senfter, <i>Symphony No. 6</i> (1933)
Hungary	Ernő Dohnányi, <i>Szimfónikus percek (Symphonic Minutes)</i> (1933)
Italy	Gian Francesco Malipiero, <i>Symphony No. 1 (in quattro tempi come le quattro stagioni)</i> (1933)
Mexico	Carlos Chávez, <i>Sinfonía de Antígona</i> (1933), <i>Llamadas, Sinfonía proletaria</i> (1934)
Poland	Józef Koffler, <i>Symphony No. 2</i> (1933) Karol Szymanowski, <i>Symphony No. 4 (Symphonie concertante)</i> Op. 60 (1932)
Soviet Union	Dmitry Kabalevsky, <i>Symphony No. 2</i> (1934), <i>Symphony No. 3 (Requiem)</i> (1933) Aram Khachaturian, <i>Symphony No. 1</i> (1934) Nikolai Myaskovsky, <i>Symphony No. 13</i> (1933), <i>Symphony No. 14</i> (1933), <i>Symphony No. 15</i> (1934)
United Kingdom	Arnold Bax, <i>Symphony No. 5</i> (1932), <i>Symphony No. 6</i> (1934–5) Havergal Brian, <i>Symphony No. 4 (Das Siegeslied)</i> (1932–3) Benjamin Britten, <i>Sinfonietta</i> Op. 1 (1932), <i>Simple Symphony</i> Op. 4 (for string orchestra) (1933–4) Ralph Vaughan Williams, <i>Symphony No. 4</i> (1934) William Walton, <i>Symphony No. 1</i> (1932–5)
United States	Aaron Copland, <i>Short Symphony (Symphony No. 2)</i> (1931–3) William Dawson, <i>Negro Folk Symphony</i> (1934) Duke Ellington, <i>Symphony in Black</i> (1934) (musical short released in 1935, integrating film with Ellington's extended composition <i>A Rhapsody of Negro Life</i> ) Roy Harris, <i>Symphony 1933</i> (1933) Florence Price, <i>Symphony No. 1 in E minor</i> (1931–2)

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Figure 1.3 Selective list of symphonic works composed c. 1933.

made Senfter's music ineligible for public performance, and Senfter herself politically toxic. A pupil of Max Reger, Senfter wrote music of the later Romantic tradition, strongly influenced by the vocal polyphony of Bach and Brahms, and in some ways her story parallels Pfitzner's, a composer

<sup>43</sup> Gervink, *Die Symphonie in Deutschland und Österreich*, 244.

who similarly ingratiated himself with the Nazis and whose Symphony in C# minor is the subject of Chapter 2.

Casting the net more broadly over the early 1930s, we also find symphonic works by Ethel Smyth, Elsa Barraine, Ina Boyle, and Elizabeth Maconchy. Smyth's choral symphony *The Prison* (1930) was premiered in 1931 in Edinburgh.<sup>44</sup> Barraine, who had won the Prix de Rome in 1929, wrote her first symphony, twenty-five minutes long, in 1931, and in 1933 came her six-minute orchestral work *Illustration symphonique pour 'Pogromes' d'André Spire*.<sup>45</sup> Irish composer Boyle's Symphony No. 2, *The Dream of the Rood* (named after the famous early medieval poem found in the Vercelli Book tenth-century manuscript), in three movements, dates from 1929 to 1930.<sup>46</sup> Vaughan Williams had examined the whole score during the composition lessons she took with him and liked it.<sup>47</sup> Only the first of her three symphonies, *Glencree* (1924–7), ever received a performance, however; it was another three-movement work ending, unusually, with a meditative slow movement.<sup>48</sup> Boyle sent out the manuscript of *The Dream of the Rood* to many conductors – Adrian Boult, Henry Wood, and Ernest Ansermet among those who received it – but none showed interest in performing it.<sup>49</sup> Maconchy wrote her first symphony in 1929–30; although it was later withdrawn, it received a play-through by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1932, conducted by Aylmer Buesst. In 1933, Constant Lambert considered her, alongside Britten, one to watch on the British music scene. 'There are regrettably few young composers of any personality in England today', he wrote, 'but in Miss Elizabeth Maconchy and Mr. Benjamin Britten we have two whose future development should be of the greatest interest'.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See Jürgen Schaarwächter, *Die britische Sinfonie 1914–1945* (Cologne: Dohr, 1995), 388–9.

<sup>45</sup> See Odile Bourin, Pierrette Germain-David, Catherine Massip, and Raffi Ourgandjian, eds., *Elsa Barraine, une compositrice au XXème siècle* (Sampzon: Éditions Delatour, 2010).

<sup>46</sup> See Séamas de Barra, *An Essay on the Music*, in Ita Beausang, *Ina Boyle (1889–1967): A Composer's Life, with an Essay on the Music by Séamas de Barra* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2018), 61–128, 82–3.

<sup>47</sup> Ita Beausang, *Ina Boyle (1889–1967): A Composer's Life, with an Essay on the Music by Séamas de Barra* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2018), 23.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Maconchy, *Ina Boyle: An Appreciation with a Select List of Her Music* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1974).

<sup>49</sup> Beausang, *Ina Boyle*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> Constant Lambert, 'Matters Musical', *Sunday Referee*, 12 November 1933, found in Christa Brüstle, 'Elizabeth Maconchy and Béla Bartók: "Ultra-Modernity" in British Music', in *Elizabeth Maconchy: Music as Impassioned Argument*, ed. Christa Brüstle and Danielle Sofer (Vienna: Universal Editions, 2018), 124–49, 142. Annika Forkert has explored Maconchy's biography and reception history in relation to her colleagues William Walton, Britten, and Michael Tippett to come to a greater understanding of what 'did so much damage to Elizabeth

These many, varied symphonic works from the years around 1933 channel a range of sociopolitical concerns that are differently amplified in different contexts: about the twentieth-century bourgeois subject, about dislocation, about institutionalised and politicised forms of violence, about the lines of power along which art is divided and articulated as low or high, about mass production and expanding international markets. Like Weill's symphony, many of these works evince an ambivalent stance towards the genre and towards the idealist and nationalist discourses with which it was caught up: no longer playing by nineteenth-century rules, they manipulate or critique the form. If it has been argued that the twin starting points for the twentieth century's symphonic production are the aesthetic dualities of Mahlerian world-building and Sibelian logic, then, aesthetically, this body of works suggests the need to expand such a model.<sup>51</sup> Diverse further influences include *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Zeitoper*, theatre, ballet, cinema, jazz, African-American musical traditions, and spare South American modernisms. An abundance of archival sources, moreover, make it clear that the symphony and its supporting institutions in the period were a thriving, if contested, international phenomenon. Considered as a body, these symphonies undoubtedly demonstrate the currency and immediacy of the form, in spite of the continuing dialogue they evince with its classical and Romantic heritage and ideals. But the ways in which they respond to the aesthetic and political climate are far from straightforward.

Amidst the Black literary, artistic, and musical innovation spurred by the Harlem Renaissance,<sup>52</sup> African-American intellectuals took on the symphonic genre in the years around 1933 as part of the movement's call to invest existing artistic forms with new, consciously racial meaning.<sup>53</sup> William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* (completed in 1930), whose primary theme derives from a twelve-bar blues, was premiered in

Maconchy's reputation, compared to Britten'. See Annika Forkert, 'Beauty among Beasts? Maconchy, Walton, Tippett, and Britten', in Brüstle and Sofer, *Elizabeth Maconchy*, 63–85.

<sup>51</sup> David Fanning, 'The Symphony since Mahler: National and International Trends', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, ed. Julian Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 96–130.

<sup>52</sup> The Harlem Renaissance was a centre of gravity among the many Black Renaissances taking place around the same time in the first half of the twentieth century in Northern cities like Chicago, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia.

<sup>53</sup> See, for instance, Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith, eds., *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Samuel A. Floyd, ed., *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Greenwood, 1990); Alain LeRoy Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1968).

1931 by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra under Howard Hanson. Price's Symphony No. 1 in E minor, a work she had begun in 1931, was finally premiered in 1933 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. This was the first symphony by an African-American woman to be performed by a major US orchestra. It was well received, but was not published during her lifetime. William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* (1934) was heard over the radio in a National Broadcasting Company production performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1935; by contrast, at his own graduation ceremony, as the music school's orchestra played music Dawson himself had written, he had only been allowed to sit in the gallery, and a white proxy had received his diploma certificate.<sup>54</sup> What connected Still, Price, and Dawson was a project that aimed first and foremost at 'the elevation of the Negro Folk idiom – that is spirituals, blues, and characteristic dance music – to symphonic form'.<sup>55</sup>

As with the other works in Figure 1.3, these works evidence a careful weighing-up of both the symphonic genre's historical baggage and its scope for critique and renewal. Yet the symphony might seem an unlikely vessel for the United States' Black Renaissance, given the bare realities of racial segregation, which affected US concert halls and orchestras in ways that varied between cities and states: in the South it was enshrined bluntly in law through Jim Crowism, while no less powerfully determining the psyche – and, importantly, infrastructure and public spaces – of Northern cities.<sup>56</sup> It was not just about what had been put into law; there were also many documented instances of extra-legal racial policing of concert halls through day-to-day individual behaviours – for instance, ushers seating Black audience members only in the balcony or ticket collectors refusing Black patrons entry despite having a ticket.<sup>57</sup> The importance of African-American symphonic accomplishment and propagation was overstrained, carrying the weight of the hope for a basic universal human dignity that did not yet exist (and that it would take far more than aesthetics to achieve).

<sup>54</sup> See Rae Linda Brown, 'Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888–1953) in the Context of Her Life and Work' (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1987), 67–8.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, 'Florence B. Price's "Negro Symphony"', in Fabre and Feith, *Temples for Tomorrow*, 84–98, 91.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, Amy Absher, *The Black Musician and the White City: Race and Music in Chicago, 1900–1967* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), especially 'Musicians in the Segregated City: Chicago in the Early 1900s to 1930s', 16–47. For wider conceptual consideration of early twentieth-century Black audiences in the United States, see also Jacqueline Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). At the time of writing, there is no overarching resource dealing with US segregation in the spaces of classical musical performance in the first half of the twentieth century. Variation from state to state and city to city makes the topic an unwieldy one.

<sup>57</sup> See Absher, *Black Musician*, 25.

Harlem Renaissance thinkers sought racial justice by demonstrating the equal nature of Black intellectual achievement within 'respected' cultural forms like the novel. As such, symphonic composition became a form of resistance to the status quo that nonetheless held Black artists in the binds of acquiescence, appeasing cultural institutions and value structures from which they had been systematically excluded. Necessarily, the trajectories of these symphonies were negatively impacted by the racist landscape onto which this music initially emerged, as well as – perhaps also playing some part in the Jewish Weill's symphonic reception – the racialised (white) subjectivities concert-goers and critics implicitly associated with absolute music and had in mind as they policed the genre. Additionally, symphonies by African-American composers are harder to recover from history than those by their white contemporaries. For example, on 7 January 1933, just three weeks before Hitler seized power, Hanson performed the third movement of Still's *Afro-American Symphony* in his Berlin Philharmonic concert of new American music. However, it was not listed on the concert programme; only favourable reviews in the German music journal *Die Allgemeine Musikzeitung* and in some US press coverage indicate that it was played and heard.<sup>58</sup> Not only did African-American composers face exceptional challenges in achieving performances, but, even when performances did take place, there is no guarantee today of straightforwardly finding a material trace.

Why have the works in Figure 1.3 dropped through the cracks of standard symphonic periodisation?<sup>59</sup> Sometimes they have been historicised (or even missed out on being historicised in the first place) in ways that excise them

<sup>58</sup> When consulting the Berlin Philharmonic's catalogue of concerts in 2013, I found the programme for Hanson's 7 January 1933 concert listed as follows: 'Griffes: Das Lustschloß von Kubla Khan, Mason: Ouvertüre Canticleer, Bennet: Concerto grosso, Sowerby: Mooney Music, Hanson: Pan und der Priester'. Heinz Pringsheimer, however, noted that 'most successful was the scherzo in the *Afro-American Symphony* by the Negro composer William Grant Still, which has jazz-style spiritedness and is not without refinement'. Likewise, the reviewer for the *New York Times* wrote that the audience 'demanded a repetition of Still's scherzo.' See 'Berlin Hails Hanson Offering Our Music', *New York Times*, 9 January 1933, 22, found in Judith Anne Still, *William Grant Still: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), 170. Pringsheimer, 'Aus dem Berliner Musikleben', *Die Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, 13 January 1933, 17–28, 23. By contrast, the write-up of the concert in the conservative *Zeitschrift für Musik* made no mention of Still's scherzo. The listing in the Berlin Philharmonic's digital catalogue has since been amended in light of these reviews. See 'Konzerte der Berliner Philharmoniker 1932–1934 (In- und Ausland)', in Peter Muck, *100 Jahre Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester* (Schneider: Tutzing, 1982), as digitised and revised for the Berlin Philharmonic Archive, March 2013.

<sup>59</sup> German-language scholarship has fared somewhat better than that of the Anglosphere in beginning to deal with the symphonic tradition in the 1930s. See Gervink, *Die Symphonie in Deutschland und Österreich*; Schaarwächter, *Die britische Sinfonie*; Osthoff and Schubert, *Symphonik 1930–1950*, 310.



from the canon and from standard definitions of the symphony. The impulse retroactively to define the symphony, alongside twentieth-century commercial impulses to create a core concert repertory, has had a negative impact on this period and has led to it rarely figuring in history books or on concert programmes.<sup>60</sup> The fact that many of these works were antagonistic to the idea of the symphony or were testing its limits has been damaging for how the period has been remembered. It has remained a way of policing musical value ever since. Yet, social and aesthetic value judgements are hard to disentangle. As my primary interest is in the ideological legacy of discourse around symphonies, in this volume I am not preoccupied with the aesthetic question of what makes a symphony a symphony. For a musical work to be included in Figure 1.3, it is enough that the composer called it a symphony or symphonic. Neither is the primary aim of this book to show that a more diverse range of people than previously assumed or accounted for in terms of, for instance, gender or racial identity were writing symphonies in the early 1930s; that important research is work for a different project. More interesting to me is why a particular composer might choose to use such a freighted title, and what this might uncover about the status of the symphony by 1933.

Freighted it was. Beethoven proved a tough act to follow after the German idealist critical turn raised the experience his symphonies offered to listeners to the plane of the infinite. Coupled with preoccupations about looking back, then, was the idea of the symphony as a vehicle for expressing or exploring subjectivity. After all, in 1933 both the Depression and German fascism's reformulation of selfhood in relation to the collective put questions of modern subjectivity in the political foreground. Definitions and the drive to categorise cannot shoulder the blame alone. Interrogating the general absence of this body of works isolates some fault lines and pervasive intellectual frames that have grown up within the symphony's post-war intellectual history – in both scholarly networks and geographical asymmetries. Largely, these have responded to or aligned with contemporary intellectual currents and value systems. Disciplinary insistence on the autonomy of music from sociopolitical concerns has hit studies of the symphony particularly hard, and is partly responsible. So, too, is a cultural mainstream that sidelines geographies and national traditions outside hegemonic and political power centres.

<sup>60</sup> A number of unsuccessful attempts to define the symphony characterise scholarship from the 1960s and 1970s, which betrayed both individual compositional agendas and the kind of positivism shaping musicology in this period. See, for instance, Robert Simpson, *The Symphony: Haydn to Dvořák* (Aylesbury: Penguin Books, 1966), 9. Christopher Ballantine, in 1983, searched for a single 'symphonic essence'. He defined such a 'symphonic essence' as 'the musical preoccupation with dualism'. Ballantine, *Twentieth Century Symphony*, 13.

Symphonies have always been about space; indeed, space and subjectivity come hand in hand. The concert hall, as an archetype of the so-called public sphere, seems a good place to start thinking about these relationships. But alongside their performance spaces, the works considered in this book bring a host of other kinds of spaces with them, both physical and imagined: interior subjective space, the often politically charged cities outside, intimate aural worlds of chamber music, the nostalgic agrarian spaces on which collective national or even transnational identities imaginatively coalesce; the industrial spaces over which Romantic and coherent senses of selfhood seem to fracture; the colonial fantasies of simplicity and possibility to which those anxious about modernity turn. These spaces may seem disparate. Nonetheless, they are all focused by the symphony and the messy, shifting configuration of ideas and tropes with which it has become imbricated in the course of its intellectual history. Whether, at one extreme, the intangible internal spaces where we imagine selfhood resides or, at the other, those that charge entry and have cloak-rooms, all these spaces are ideologically constructed. All, from acoustically designed concert hall to pastoral idyll, capture aspects of the universal; the quasi-Platonic, abstract idea-form that leaves its shadows on the cave wall; the reproducible. Ideologies associated with symphonies can deepen the conceptual furrows engraving these universalised spaces in our collective imaginations.<sup>61</sup> Here, I investigate how symphonies conspire in these fantasies that orient us within the world, and particularly those spatial fantasies that collectivise selfhood.

### **Symphonies, Subjectivity, and Space: E. T. A. Hoffmann to Paul Bekker**

By exploring the nexus of subjectivity and space in the symphonies of 1933, this book is part of a project to cultivate a more advanced understanding of the genre's deep entanglement with nineteenth-century Germanic philosophies of subjectivity, as well as its sociopolitical stakes.<sup>62</sup> On the one hand, the symphony is an idealist, expansionist project – starting around the beginning of the nineteenth century, aestheticians and musicians alike reconceived it as a 'manifestation of the infinite'.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, it

<sup>61</sup> See Bonds, *Music as Thought*, in particular chapter 1, 'Listening with Imagination', 5–28, especially 22–8.

<sup>62</sup> On the former, see, for instance, Lütteken, *Sinfonie als Bekenntnis*, 138.

<sup>63</sup> Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 28.

directs its lens inwards onto subjective interiority, familiarising the listener with a universalised notion of selfhood.<sup>64</sup> E. T. A. Hoffmann's 1810 review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is a famous initial landmark in this trajectory of symphonic aesthetics. As Mark Evan Bonds demonstrates, however, Hoffmann's review was only made possible by a generational shift in how instrumental music was conceived around the turn of the nineteenth century. Suddenly, influenced by the ideas of those like Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Johann Gottfried Herder, critics' perceptions of instrumental music changed, with it coming to be seen as a uniquely sublime and elevated art form rather than merely sensually pleasing. Beethoven's contemporary reception has intimately linked the symphonic genre as a whole to the Romantic subjective turn. Hoffmann argued that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony opened up a transcendent 'unknown realm' quite apart from the physical world of the senses, allowing listeners to access that yearning for the 'infinite' that went far beyond conventional expression and signalled the dissolution of bounded selfhood.<sup>65</sup> Margaret Notley and others have shown how, as the nineteenth century went on, symphonic discourse struggled with questions about the relationship between individual sovereignty and mass publics, and about community-formation and the national imaginary.<sup>66</sup> Other scholars have made similar observations, while turning the spotlight on the genre's ethical ambivalence. As Daniel M. Grimley emphasises, 'simply "sounding together" has not always been an easy or politically straightforward task, and the idea of community that the symphony has often seemed to elevate can swiftly become more exclusive than inclusive'<sup>67</sup> For instance, the Germanic intellectual heritage of the idea of subjectivity bound up with the symphony is one that in 1933 was most straightforwardly available to communities who saw that philosophical tradition as theirs.

People thinking critically about music around the early nineteen thirties did so in a climate in which ideas simmered about the symphony as a phenomenon integrally linked to both society and to space. The notion of an infinite realm achieved through Romantic introspection was still

<sup>64</sup> Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E. T. A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>65</sup> E. T. A. Hoffmann, *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, ed. David Charlton and Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 238.

<sup>66</sup> See, for instance, Bonds, *Music as Thought*; Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Daniel M. Grimley, 'Symphony/Antiphony: Formal Strategies in the Twentieth-Century Symphony', in Horton, *Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, 285–310, 285.

a pervasive current of thought. But in 1918 a new perspective entered the fray when Berlin music critic Paul Bekker theorised the symphony from a sociological angle. Written as the German imperial government began to crumble after the First World War, his treatise *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* represents a useful starting point for unravelling the most salient conceptual areas for the case studies considered in this book.<sup>68</sup> Situating the genre within libertarian discourses, Bekker's optimistic vision of the symphony's intended audience – the *Hörerschaft*, or utopian assembly of listeners who come together for the duration of the work and, in so doing, reflect a perfect democratic social body – can be traced back to the genre's Enlightenment origins. The idealised public of listeners is quite literally composed by the music, and Bekker thus made the case for an intimate and reflexive connection between music, space, and listening community.<sup>69</sup> This seemed a radical departure from the kind of heroic symphonic narratives and Beethoven idolatry evinced in, for example, Felix Weingartner's roughly contemporary and enduringly successful *Die Sinfonie nach Beethoven*, first published in 1898 and revised for a fourth edition in 1926.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, the fraught relationship between the individual and the collective in democratic thought has always been central to symphonic discourse. Writers in the early nineteenth century drew parallels between the composite, yet multi-voiced functioning of the orchestra and the idealised mechanisms of democratic social orders governed by ethical values of individual freedom and autonomy. They pointed to how the orchestra was a harmonious (understood literally) analogue to the needs of the autonomous individual and the collective requirements of the social order.<sup>71</sup> Bekker's text shows that the positive moral value invested in the symphonic genre in the nineteenth century seemed to have lost none of its potency by 1918, or if it had, then post-war republican optimism was the climate in which it could be resurrected. But the symphony has not always channelled egalitarian impulses. Frequently, the symphony and the orchestra have been put to politically dystopic use: in fascist Germany, for instance, the

<sup>68</sup> Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1918).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>70</sup> Felix Weingartner, *Die Sinfonie nach Beethoven*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926).

<sup>71</sup> See Bonds, *Music as Thought*, in particular 'Listening to the Aesthetic State: Cosmopolitanism', 63–78; see also Emily I. Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), in particular 'The Republic of Sound', 136–79. Dolan has argued for how the different instruments and instrumental characters in the orchestra represent autonomous individuals within a synthesised semi-utopian collective, reflecting late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century contemporary philosophical discussions of the self and society.

stratified organisation of the symphony orchestra modelled the *Führerprinzip* (leader principle): gathered around the central authoritarian figure of the conductor, the large ensemble needed to perform a symphony as one body mirrored Nazi ideology.<sup>72</sup> Or, as Jacques Attali noted in 1977 in his critique of the capitalist ideological function of the orchestra as ‘total spectacle’, its hierarchically ranked, anonymous musicians fulfil ‘the image of programmed labour in our society’.<sup>73</sup> The conductor, ‘simultaneously entrepreneur and State’, models the invisible, necessary power of the economic order. As Attali put it: ‘Power is; it has no need to impose itself and the technique of conducting evolves from authority to discretion.’<sup>74</sup> Either way, whether utopian or dystopian, or something more ambivalent, the symphony simulates – or even stimulates – the political imagination.

Alongside politics, the symphonic genre came with an expansionist spatial impulse. For Bekker, the articulation of musical ideas that embraced all layers of society required a vast unfolding of energy, which in turn demanded a correspondingly vast physical space.<sup>75</sup> Put less prosaically, what he meant is that symphonies can be loud, and volume travels. Bekker wedded the symphonic genre to an idealisation of public space as a site for rational consensus, similar to the liberal coffee-house culture Jürgen Habermas later theorised in *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*.<sup>76</sup> Notley and Benjamin Korstvedt have worked on the liberalist underpinnings of symphonic space, and signalled the value of more thorough critical attention to Habermas’s social theory in relation to the symphony.<sup>77</sup> Yet Bekker’s ideal symphony, epitomised – in one of the more pedestrian aspects of the treatise – by Beethoven’s works, represents a direct, one-way conduit from the composer to the mass listening public, and such rhetoric perhaps uncovers an anti-democratic and coercive aspect to the symphony’s power over the community it creates, which Bekker does not adequately reconcile. Indeed, symphonic space has been inflected differently in different ideological contexts. For instance, Alexander Rehding has excavated the strong fascist ideological charge to

<sup>72</sup> For discussion of the orchestra’s symbolic role in Nazi Germany, see Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations*, in particular 214–15.

<sup>73</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 65–6.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 67. <sup>75</sup> Bekker, *Die Sinfonie*, 11.

<sup>76</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

<sup>77</sup> Notley, *Lateness and Brahms*, 156–60; Benjamin M. Korstvedt, ‘Reading Music Criticism beyond the Fin-de-Siècle Vienna Paradigm’, *Musical Quarterly* 94 (2011): 156–210, 172.

the massive imagined spaces conjured up by the symphonic genre for 1930s German musicologists.<sup>78</sup> In line with totalitarian ideologies that renounced selfhood, these were expansive virtual arenas in relation to which the individual disintegrated.

## Nations, Geographies, and Absolute Music

Since the Second World War, it has been common for many strands of scholarship on the symphony to reflect the qualities historically ascribed to symphonies themselves. If symphonies are monumental, so too have been the ways we have historicised them. Vast, grand, expansive, transcendent: symphonies, and their development and decline, have often been awkwardly wedded to other grand narratives, particularly political ones, or to privileged geographic regions. Indeed, until recently, much writing on the symphonic genre has been survey-type work, delimited by country and carefully periodised.<sup>79</sup> Through the twentieth century, the tendency of those general English- and German-language surveys of the symphony was towards the strongly uncritical and canonising, made all the more troubling by highly selective historical and geographical coverage.<sup>80</sup> Particularly in anglophone scholarship, the foundations of these approaches can be traced back to the post-war period: the legacy of the canon-forming, class-building music-appreciation guide is keenly felt, and the chronological life-and-works or nationally determined organisational principles of these guides have proved tough to shift. In addition, the genre's popularity meant the potential for a broader market appeal was prioritised over academic rigour in the mid-twentieth-century popular press. Of course, it is worth noting that studies and surveys of the symphony are not the only areas of scholarship in which works dealing with the genre can be found.<sup>81</sup> But as the place where the most explicit curation of

<sup>78</sup> See Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially 172–80.

<sup>79</sup> For an example of survey-type work organised around national narratives, see Brown, *Symphonic Repertoire*; Layton, *Guide to the Symphony*; Hartmut Krones, *Die österreichische Symphonie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005).

<sup>80</sup> For examples of a particularly canonising genre, the chronological life-and-works-style study, see Ralph Hill, *The Symphony* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949); Simpson, *The Symphony: Haydn to Dvořák*; Simpson, *The Symphony: Elgar to the Present Day*; H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Twentieth Century Composers*, vol. 2 *Germany and Central Europe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970).

<sup>81</sup> See, for instance, Rehding, *Music and Monumentality*.

the genre itself takes place, they shape many structures in our thinking and expectations about how information is located.

The nation, underlying the discursive field of much symphonic commentary, has profoundly determined much writing and thinking about symphonies. Since the nineteenth century, the symphonic genre has been intimately packaged up with nationalism and nationalising impulses and agendas. Creating a unique national symphonic style carried high stakes for the identity of many nation-states.<sup>82</sup> Like the geographical landscape, this is a terrain that has never been neutral or evenly weighted. Broadly put, the symphonic landscape and its scholarly representation crystallise around Austria and Germany: in the nineteenth century, around their political hegemony; in the twentieth century, around their decline. The hybrid Austro-Germany is a particularly problematic imagined space – one that only really existed, under the darkest possible conditions, for a brief while after the *Anschluss*. Douglas Shadle elucidates this centre of gravity in his book on the nineteenth-century symphony in the United States.<sup>83</sup> It is hardly surprising, then, that in twentieth-century symphony scholarship these national discourses (orientated by German-speaking nations) continued keenly to influence the territorialisation of discussions about the symphony.<sup>84</sup>

Related to the problem of geographical organisation, examining 1933 and the years immediately adjacent points to the politicised periodisation that plays out in how we narrativise the symphony, and how its close associations with Germany have been disruptive. If many studies match this narrative of symphonic decline, particularised to Austria and Germany,<sup>85</sup> with an emphasis on symphonic rejuvenation in anglophone countries especially<sup>86</sup> ‘as the Roaring Twenties gave way to the more sober-minded thirties’,<sup>87</sup> it is troubling how neatly this opposition mirrors the lines along which early

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Pederson, ‘A. B. Marx’; Jim Samson, ‘Nations and Nationalism’, in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 568–600; Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation*, 1–14, ‘Introduction’.

<sup>83</sup> Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation*, especially ‘Introduction’.

<sup>84</sup> See, for instance, Kronos, *Die österreichische Symphonie*.

<sup>85</sup> See Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations*, in which she traces a trajectory from ‘Symphonic Idealism in Crisis’ to ‘Symphonic Defeat’ in Germany. See also Cuyler, *The Symphony*. Cuyler heavily weights discussion towards symphonic development in the United States in the chapter ‘The Symphony in the Twentieth Century’.

<sup>86</sup> See Taruskin, ‘The Symphony Goes (Inter)National’, in *OHWM*, vol. 3, 745–802, and ‘In Search of the “Real” America’, in *OHWM*, vol. 4, 559–674. See also Cuyler, *The Symphony*; Stedman, *The Symphony*.

<sup>87</sup> David Fanning, ‘Symphonik 1930–1950: Gattungsgeschichtliche und analytische Beiträge’ (book review), *Music and Letters* 85 (2004): 498–9, 498.

twentieth-century global conflicts were drawn.<sup>88</sup> How impartial were our historian-narrators? The era suffers from being framed as a bookend moment in standard symphonic narratives. Additionally, Nazi cultural policy was directly or indirectly responsible for the critical silence surrounding some works composed around 1933. Some were too closely affiliated with the new regime for comfort. Others either were never rehabilitated after a poor initial reception in Nazi Germany or never fully recovered from being identified with *entartete Kunst* (degenerate art).

There are broader issues, too, with more immediate stakes. Strongly influenced by the thought of another central figure in the symphony's intellectual history – namely, Eduard Hanslick – symphonies have been a key historical archetype of 'absolute' music, considered adrift from localised political and social concerns.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps more so than other genres, they have invited decontextualised analyses that focus on the hermetic world of musical construction.<sup>90</sup> As symphonic reception and criticism veered towards ideals

<sup>88</sup> Wolfgang Osthoff and Giseller Schubert have begun to interrogate this narrative by giving a more balanced account of the post-1930s symphonic revival beyond the United Kingdom and the United States. Osthoff and Schubert, *Symphonik 1930–1950*, 310.

<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, Arnold Whittall's 'Millennial Prelude' to his *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, which was a 1999 rewrite of his 1977 textbook work *Music Since the First World War*. Both versions contain two chapters on symphonies. In its first few pages Whittall defended the continued relevance of his 1975 approach for the millennial reader:

[M]uch of my own text may appear to subscribe to the outmoded heresy of autonomy . . . . It is the composition as music which dominates, even so, for there is always a sense in which the work of art, with the inevitable element of consolation in face of an alarming world which it brings with it, represents a triumph over the world and not a mere reflection of it. It is a product of the world that transcends its context. When [Roger] Scruton writes that 'music inspires and consoles us partly because it is unencumbered by the debris that drifts through the world of life' [Scruton, *Aesthetics*, 122] this is not just a pious poetic fantasy.

Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2–3. For further discussion of this position, see Whittall, 'Autonomy/Heteronomy: The Contexts of Musicology', in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73–101.

<sup>90</sup> For discussion on music analysis post-new musicology, particularly concerning using unity as the governing principle, see the dialogue in *Music Analysis* sparked by Robert P. Morgan, 'The Concept of Unity and Musical Analysis', *Music Analysis* 22 (2003): 7–50, with a whole section in *Music Analysis* 23 (2004): 333–85 devoted to responses from Kevin Korsyn, Daniel K. L. Chua, Jonathan D. Kramer, and Joseph Dubiel (with an introduction by Jonathan Cross). Also in the latter issue is Kofi Agawu's reflection on the state of music analysis at the time, 'How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back in Again', *Music Analysis* 23 (2004): 267–86. See also Ian Biddle on music analysis as textual activity in 'The Gendered Eye: Music Analysis and the Scientific Outlook in German Early Romantic Music Theory', in *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Suzanne Clark and Alexander Rehding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 183–96. Critical discussion of separatist impulses in music analysis and of critiques of formalism can be found in Jim Samson, 'Analysis in Context', in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, 35–54.



of ‘absolute’ musical autonomy, the symphony’s connection with privileged subjects became troublingly implicit, integrally embedded within the autonomous musical work, such that to elevate autonomous music as ‘universal’ became insidiously to elevate a certain kind of personhood as ‘universal’. The musical information such approaches yield is rich; the scope of the social information symphonies could yield, however, has not yet been adequately explored. Such work betrays a persistent assumption that has changed little over the past several decades: that engagement with the symphony requires no social or political context.<sup>91</sup>

Such emphasis on musical autonomy does not bode well for the symphony’s resilience as new curricula are developed. Since the symphony, with its origins in sonata form, was claimed to be the most abstract of orchestral genres, it has remained one of the genres most impervious to the radically changing intellectual currents of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century humanities, and to altering priorities of musicology as a whole. Despite the revisionary efforts of those like Susan McClary and Rose Rosengard Subotnik,<sup>92</sup> or by James Hepokoski,<sup>93</sup> some major subsequent scholarship on the symphony has continued to be haunted by past disciplinary insistence on music’s special autonomous aesthetic status, reifying ‘music’ into its ‘value-free object of study’.<sup>94</sup> Studies such as A. Peter Brown’s from the

<sup>91</sup> Such decontextualisation appears frequently in symphony scholarship. It characterises studies from Ballantine’s 1983 self-proclaimed ‘first intensive published investigation’ of the genre in this period (Ballantine, *Twentieth Century Symphony*, 11) to Brown’s colossal study of 2002, which barely concedes any lines of influence extending beyond the musical establishment (Brown, *Symphonic Repertoire*). Karen Painter’s 2008 work to demonstrate the contested political ground supplied by the symphony by focusing on the genre in Germany in the early twentieth century was thus long overdue. See Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations*, 6.

<sup>92</sup> See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), in particular chapter 3, ‘Sexual Politics in Classical Music’, 53–79 and 127–30. See also Susan McClary, ‘Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert’s Music’, in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2006), 205–33; Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>93</sup> For example, see James Hepokoski, ‘Masculine. Feminine. Are Current Readings of Sonata Form in Terms of a “Masculine” and “Feminine” Dichotomy Exaggerated? James Hepokoski Argues for a More Subtle Approach to the Politics of Musical Form’, *Musical Times* 135 (1994): 494–9, and his later work, such as Hepokoski, ‘Back and Forth from Egmont: Beethoven, Mozart, and the Nonresolving Recapitulation’, *19th-Century Music* 25 (2001–2): 127–54; Hepokoski, ‘Beyond the Sonata Principle’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55 (2002): 91–154.

<sup>94</sup> See Philip V. Bohlman, ‘Musicology as a Political Act’, *Journal of Musicology* 11 (1993): 411–36, especially 422–4. The controversy and resistance triggered by McClary’s analysis of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in relation to – potentially violent – masculine sexuality is illuminating. See Susan McClary, ‘Getting Down Off the Beanstalk’, in *Feminine Endings*, 112–31, 129–30, and reactions such as Pieter van den Toorn, ‘Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory’, *Journal of Musicology* 9 (1991): 275–99.

early to mid 2000s, for instance, seemed immune to (new) musicology's incorporation of post-colonial, post-structural, queer, and feminist perspectives, which have enriched opera studies in particular over the last three decades.<sup>95</sup> New musicology's strong bias towards opera suggests the diagnosis that opera is just more obviously interdisciplinary and hard to contain than so-called 'absolute' music, and also that the kinds of professional networks shared by scholars working towards the new musicological project had little in common with those working on the symphony. In addition, it is interesting – or telling – that, in the main, the symphonic genre continues to attract interest from only a limited scholarly demographic, with few people of colour or women.<sup>96</sup> The symphony continues, perhaps, to be revealing about particular kinds of subjectivities.

Confronted with the changing emphases of modern musicology, this has left the symphony particularly vulnerable. Opera studies and film music studies, for example, had to fight the essentialising impulses that have historically structured the discipline. To assure a place in academia, they developed bold critical frameworks around the 1990s.<sup>97</sup> However, the merits and

<sup>95</sup> See Brown, *Symphonic Repertoire*. There is a large literature on opera from feminist and queer perspectives. Some examples include: Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith, eds., *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Post-colonial perspectives have also recently begun to influence the direction of opera studies. See, for example, Mary Ingraham, Joseph So, and Roy Moodley, *Opera in a Multicultural World: Coloniality, Culture, Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Latterly, more scholarship has been preoccupied with understanding opera through critical race theory. See, for instance, Nina Eidsheim, 'Marian Anderson and "Sonic Blackness" in American Opera', *American Quarterly* 63 (2011): 641–71; Juliana M. Pistorius, 'Inhabiting Whiteness: The Eoan Group *La Traviata*, 1956', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 31 (2019): 63–84. In 2018, Naomi André published *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018). Both André and Pistorius were involved in founding the Black Opera Research Network (BORN) in 2020 'to serve as a platform for conversations on the history, experiences, politics, and practices of Black opera'. See <https://blackoperaresearch.net/about/> (accessed 18 August 2022).

<sup>96</sup> When *A Guide to the Symphony*, edited by Robert Layton, was published in 1993 (with a later edition in 1995), of the eleven 'music experts' chosen as contributors, not one was female. Set against the frenetic revisionist disciplinary activity of the 1990s, this seemed revealing, if not wholly unexpected, and the 2013 *Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, edited by Julian Horton, unfortunately merely confirmed that scholarship was not yet in a position where it could redress the balance – only two of its sixteen contributors were female. Although gender alone tells us nothing about the lenses through which writers approach the genre, such disproportional gender representation appears nonetheless indicative of the kind of conservative forces shaping this area of scholarship.

<sup>97</sup> Film music research has taken off since the mid 1980s. Since then, some studies definitional for the field have included: Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987); Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Caryl Flinn,

significance of the symphony as the pinnacle of Western art music and its work concept may have been assumed a priori. Now the tides have turned; what once seemed self-evident appears weak in current scholarly contexts, particularly in light of the shift of emphasis in the discipline towards addressing overdue ethical questions about colonial legacies, and towards popular musicology.<sup>98</sup> In this revised context, scholarship on symphonies now needs to prove just why we should devote our energy to what might be perceived as a privileged relic of the nineteenth century.<sup>99</sup> Perhaps its ongoing absence from the (post)-new musicological project, for instance, derives from its image as comparatively conservative, anachronistic, and also oppressively masculine in relation to other twentieth-century genres. Unfortunately, the cultural norms and assumptions that ensured the symphony's place on the scholarly agenda have ultimately proved an obstacle to producing a legacy of work that stands up to intellectual and methodological scrutiny by contemporary academia. For instance, there has been little activity in uncovering and collating sources and critical writing that build a sense of the ideological implications for the symphony in the early twentieth century.<sup>100</sup> If the current musicological climate is still highly receptive to the collaborative energy and interdisciplinary messiness that opera stages, perhaps scholars are overlooking possibilities for applying similar approaches to other genres and areas.

## An Alternative History

This book begins that project. Those ways of engaging with the genre that became entrenched throughout the twentieth century have allowed particular periods, repertoires, and (national) voices to slip from history. The

*Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1992). Roughly concurrent disciplinary innovations in opera studies have been outlined under note 95: opera's emphasis on musical bodies challenged musicology's fetishist essentialism of the musical object.

<sup>98</sup> For more detailed discussion of the interdisciplinary tension this has engendered, see John Covach, 'Popular Music, Unpopular Musicology', in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, 452–70.

<sup>99</sup> Samantha Ege's research on Florence Price's Symphony in E minor is a good example of such work. Through detailed archival work alongside methods drawn from Black feminist biography, she shows how Price's symphony was the result of grassroots political activism and the collective agency and network-building of Black women in Chicago of the 1930s. See Ege, 'Composing a Symphonist: Florence Price and the Hand of Black Women's Fellowship', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 24 (2020): 7–27.

<sup>100</sup> Painter's book is the exception. See Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations*. See also Nicholas E. Tawa, *The Great American Symphony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), which gives some sense of the ideological stakes for the American symphony.

early 1930s is just one of them. Framing the neglected and politically tumultuous year 1933 gives us access to a more finely calibrated plane on which to reformulate our understanding of the genre: one that invites interdisciplinary perspectives; one that disrupts linear narratives of individual composers and national traditions, setting the symphony in negotiation with contextual networks; one that tackles the important legacies of the idea of Germany and Austria for the genre head-on. As far as symphonies are concerned, it seems many new musicological agendas, in particular, have lost none of their urgency. Perspectives inspired by that movement still offer productive starting points for scholarship on the twentieth-century symphony, particularly since this body of music largely missed out on treatment in the first place. Issues like (post-colonial) power, gender, and race deserve to be put front and centre more often when we approach the symphony; their cross-disciplinary literatures offer ample theoretical underpinning.<sup>101</sup>

A key motivation for refocusing the lens on the genre is to come back to those core symphonic reception issues of subjectivity and space that many have observed are in need of more sophisticated analysis, and which were pressing issues in the cultural ferment of 1933. By this means, we can generate a higher resolution image of the genre's social and political role in different but coexistent sociocultural arenas. Building on established scholarship that considers how social practices at the symphony concert perpetuate hegemonic identities and value systems, I examine the symphony as a mechanism by which particular kinds of subjectivities asserted their status and maintained their power.<sup>102</sup> This is partly about how social, community-forming, and spatial rhetorics associated with the genre have aligned with particular political movements or ideologies – for example, fascism in Germany, US liberalism and Pan-Americanism across the Americas. In addition, however, this volume has a musical focus, examining how sound can play an active part in sustaining or undermining political impulses.

With these broad aims in mind, the six case studies serve the book's narrative and thematic coherence first and foremost. Although this is an overlooked repertoire, my curation of the 1933 symphonies does not

<sup>101</sup> Feminist disciplinary critique and potential models are offered by Suzanne Cusick. See Cusick, 'Gender, Musicology, and Feminism', in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, 471–98.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998); Sven Oliver Müller, 'Political Pleasures with Old Emotions? Performances of the Berlin Philharmonic in the Second World War', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 43 (2012): 35–52.

attempt to represent every musical language and aesthetic theory of the moment. Nor does it attempt to demonstrate the diversity of contributors to the symphonic genre in 1933. For the most part, I am more interested in shining a light on where power is structurally located and exploring how the symphony might be an aesthetic and political mechanism deeply embedded in upholding the status quo. As such, a range of works have been selected for what they reveal about particular coexistent places, framed by the transatlantic story of Weill's Symphony No. 2. The approach fosters biographical, musical, and other kinds of connections between composers, the works, and the surrounding commentary that are contingent and unexpected – Pfitzner brushes shoulders with Copland and Price with Weill – and that traverse national boundaries – Copland goes to Mexico and Honegger is premiered in Berlin. More than a project of rehabilitation, it takes these neglected works and configures them differently in relation to one another, to see what kinds of knowledge are yielded.

Casting the geographical net across oceans is a rarer approach to one year than, say, concentrating on one, more focused, sense of place, but it suits the comparative history of a concept like the *idea* of the symphony. Detailed historical work on one particular place and period has been pervasive in much recent music scholarship.<sup>103</sup> This book adopts an alternative, but complementary transnational methodology. It seeks to tell a different historical narrative, but one that is clearly necessary if we are to understand a complex international phenomenon like the symphony. In common with those recent place-centred approaches, the scope of this volume is concerned with challenging musicology's inherited value systems and historical orthodoxies, as well as its geographical delineations entrenched by political asymmetries that have shaped the discipline. Likewise, it responds to some contemporary anxieties in music scholarship that have prompted renewed interest in actor-network theory (ANT);<sup>104</sup> methodologically, however, it aligns itself more closely, not with such object-oriented approaches, but with transnational historical ones like *histoire croisée* (or entangled history): the symphonies considered here – those of Weill, Price, Copland, Pfitzner, Honegger, and Harris – present

<sup>103</sup> For instance, a five-year European Research Council-funded project titled 'Music in London 1800–1851' at the music department of King's College London ended in 2018. By contrast, and perhaps exemplifying a disciplinary shift of emphasis that aligns more closely with my own approach, in 2023 another five-year European Research Council project will begin in the same department titled 'Beyond 1932: Rethinking Musical Modernity in the Middle East and North Africa'.

<sup>104</sup> See Benjamin Piekut, 'Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques', *Twentieth-Century Music* 11 (2014): 191–215. See also Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

a clear opportunity to 'follow topics beyond national boundaries'.<sup>105</sup> This shadows a move in the last fifteen years or so in historical disciplines to emphasise 'the cultural and social connections between nation-states'. For historians Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, 'methodological approaches, historical evidence, and categories of analysis inherited from the past need to be historicized. Rather than proceeding on the basis of established categories of "nation", "state", or "society", *histoire croisée* orientates itself around problems.'<sup>106</sup> Musicology has been diagnosed as needing this kind of perspective with real urgency; according to the authors of a 2014 volume on transatlantic music culture, it is a discipline which 'has traditionally been approached from within the category of the nation, often centring on composers and their works as representative of national achievements'.<sup>107</sup> If studies of the symphony have internalised these structures particularly rigidly, transnational approaches create opportunities to dismantle the category of 'nation' and geographical determinism so enmeshed in symphonic histories, while acknowledging their historical significance.

What the symphony in 1933, at this uncertain moment for the genre, precisely was is just the kind of 'problem' a transnational methodology can tackle. It is helpful, therefore, to re-imagine symphonies using ideas inspired by transnational thinking: as "'entangled" products of national crossings' and systems of aesthetic or cultural-political relations.<sup>108</sup> Unlike many place-centred or ANT-influenced studies, however, this book does not reject the work concept as a methodological starting point, but it does come at it critically. To understand the power structures in which the symphony, as an archetype of the work concept, is complicit, it helps to begin with the work concept in clear view.

### '[Weill] Doesn't Give the Impression That a Symphony Was Burning inside Him'

Jinx or no jinx, at the Amsterdam premiere of his symphony in 1934 (see Figure 1.4), Weill came up against an inflexible set of beliefs about symphonies. His initial excitement about the excellent rehearsal had been

<sup>105</sup> Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xii.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>107</sup> Felix Meyer *et al.*, eds., *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900–2000* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 12.

<sup>108</sup> Cohen and O'Connor, *Comparison and History*, xiii.

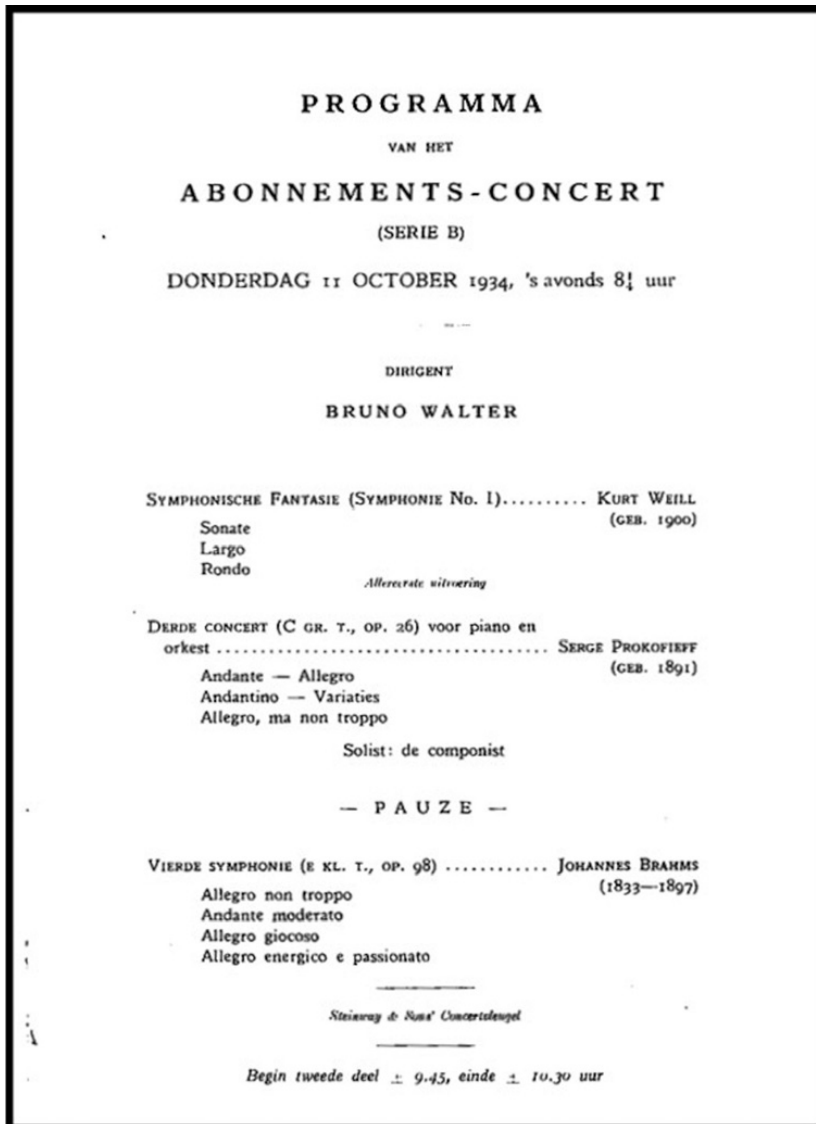


Figure 1.4 Front cover of the original programme for the world premiere of Kurt Weill's Second Symphony by the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. Note that the work is introduced as 'Symphony No. 1'; the symphony was retrospectively renumbered No. 2 to acknowledge Weill's one-movement student symphony (1921). The title *Fantaisie symphonique* or Symphony No. 2 has been agreed ahead of its appearance in the Kurt Weill Edition. Courtesy of the Weill-Lenya Research Center, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. Reproduced with the permission of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Concert Archive.

short-sighted. Before we depart from the Netherlands, let us first delve further into the specifics of Weill's exclusion from the reception to gain a more concrete initial sense of how space and subjectivity were entwined in symphonic reception at this time. What critics had to say about the 'nature' of Weill's ostensibly theatrical music, alongside the way the reviews foregrounded the aesthetic legacies of ideals associated with nineteenth-century absolute music, is revealing for how this book's major themes are coupled. Unpacking it uncovers that critics' problems with the work had less to do with 'purely' musical aspects, and more to do with Weill and whether he, as a Jewish, socialist, supposedly popular theatre composer belonged in the reified space of the concert hall.

Several writers commented on the 'banality' or 'emptiness' of Weill's music, implicitly contrasting it with the depth of true symphonic language.<sup>109</sup> L. M. G. Arntzenius, writing in the *Telegraaf*, addressed this directly: '[O]ne could not trace any symphonic art in the normal sense of the word. Symphonic art requires an orchestra that has been more deeply touched and worked on.'<sup>110</sup> Such aesthetic legacies had clear nationalist-ideological correlates. Alongside metaphors of depth came those of organicism, another key Germanic symphonic ideology that embedded music in other social, scientific, and aesthetic discourses of the nineteenth century. Together, depth and organicism helped make music about subjective interiority and encumber it with the burden of national identity construction.<sup>111</sup> The reviewer in the socialist paper *Het Volk*, initialled P. F. S., suggested that 'all the "songs" that are interweaved in the piece display the same kind of primitive melody, which does not lend itself to the distinctive character of symphonic style: the development'.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, far from finding it to be a paragon of organic unity, the reviewer for the *Dames Kroniek* wrote uncharitably of Weill's thematic development that 'it all sticks together like dry sand', acidly describing the themes as simply 'appearing' rather than the more symphonic or organic 'developing'.<sup>113</sup> In a similar rhetorical vein, but with a more contemporary geneticist bent,

<sup>109</sup> See, for instance, H. R., 'Donderdagavondconcert Concertgebouw', *Handelsblad*, 12 October 1934 (trans. Linda Bakkum); Theo v. d. Bijl, 'Concertgebouw: Een nieuw werk van Kurt Weill', *Jüd.* (a Jewish periodical?), 12 October 1934 (trans. Snijders); L., 'Muziek: Concertgebouw', *Dames Kroniek*, 13 October 1934 (trans. Anne Hillebrand).

<sup>110</sup> L. M. G. Arntzenius, 'Walter's Tweede Avond – Première van Kurt Weill's "Symphonische Fantasie" – Prokofieff Oogst Succes', *Telegraaf*, 12 October 1934 (trans. Kahn).

<sup>111</sup> Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*.

<sup>112</sup> P. F. S., 'Weill en Prokofieff – Première der symphonische fantasie bereidt een teleurstelling – Voortreffelijke uitvoering', *Het Volk*(?), 12 October 1934 (trans. Kahn).

<sup>113</sup> L., 'Muziek: Concertgebouw'.



another reviewer indicated that the music ‘all remained in an embryonic state’.<sup>114</sup> Arntzenius summed up the supposed problem with the musical themes: ‘Sometimes they have a song-like character, sometimes they appear to be a bit heavier, yet they never swell to become an actual piece, to become the foundation for, indeed, a symphonic sound. No, never will they reach the level of a true symphony.’<sup>115</sup>

If Weill’s work was not a ‘true symphony’, how, then, should reviewers account for the obvious delight of the listening public in the wake of Weill’s *Dreigroschenoper* fame: the fact that Weill bridged so-called ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms and audiences? ‘On the slippery floors [of the concert hall] he made the occasional clumsy gambol and he winked amicably and jovially at the distinguished ladies Rhythm and Melody, something which does not belong in a dignified symphonic milieu!’<sup>116</sup> Note the gendering of popular theatrical music’s ‘Rhythm and Melody’ as feminine, reiterated in the gendering of a star-struck audience: ‘There was a lot of applause for the piece by Kurt Weill (the young ladies in particular were very enthusiastic – of course because of the *Dreigroschenoper!*).’<sup>117</sup> Here, the symphony’s community-forming impulse – a legacy of its Enlightenment origins – was inflected by specifically twentieth-century concerns.

Weill’s exclusion shows how powerfully the idea of the symphony had been shaped by Romantic conceptions of creative authorship. As one anonymous reviewer observed, Weill ‘doesn’t give the impression that he *had* to write a symphony because it was burning inside him’.<sup>118</sup> But it is uncertain whether those inherited narratives about the feverish symphonic generative process still fully convinced. Equally uncertain is the status of the antisemitic stereotypes that peppered the reviews without ever quite rearing their heads explicitly. This suggests how notions of symphonic authenticity continued to be congruous with ideas of racial purity. After describing Weill’s melodies as ‘primitive’, the reviewer for *Het Volk* went on:

Initially, coming from the schooling of Busoni, [Weill’s] work displayed great seriousness. Abruptly this changed. Instead of increased intensification, stagnation set in. The composer had found a genre which promised him comfortable

<sup>114</sup> ‘Concertgebouw: Wereldpremiere van de Eerste Symphonie van Kurt Weill’, n.d. (trans. Snijders).

<sup>115</sup> Arntzenius, ‘Walter’s Tweede Avond’.

<sup>116</sup> V. d. Bijl, ‘Concertgebouw: Een nieuw werk van Kurt Weill’.

<sup>117</sup> H. F. K., ‘Belangrijke nieuwe muziek in het Concertgebouw’.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Concertgebouw: Wereldpremiere’.

success. . . . Only those of a strong nature know how to avoid the dangers that the flush of victory brings along.<sup>119</sup>

The writer hints at weakness of character, popularism, and commercial success: this may have been how they felt about Weill's development as a composer, but note how this trio of tropes used to distance Weill from the supposedly pure and cerebral world of Germanic symphonic idealism (a world for 'those of a strong nature') converge with antisemitic ones. Such ambiguity characterised much of the language used by reviewers. It suggests the presence of insidious underlying ideas about how evolutionary theories determined racial hierarchies (e.g. 'intensification' versus 'primitive' 'stagnation'). There is a parallel with racialised responses to Mahler's supposedly song-like, theatrical symphonies twenty years earlier.

Just one reviewer briefly mooted – and discarded – the idea that the work might be a conscious critique. ('Is this a deliberate revolution? Difficult to believe: the unity seems too weak to destroy the fundamentals of the existing literature.'<sup>120</sup>) Thus, the notion of symphonic critique was completely overlooked by most. It would seem that Weill had overestimated the reviewers' readiness to hear his work as positioned critically within the problematics of absolute music when remarking in the programme note that:

It is not possible for me to comment on the content of the work since it was conceived as pure musical form. But perhaps a Parisian friend of mine was right when she suggested that an appropriate title would be a word that expressed the opposite of 'pastoral', should such a word exist. I do not know.<sup>121</sup>

It is hard to say whether Weill's tongue was in his cheek or not. Weill suggests that it is impossible for a symphonic composer to engage discursively with the meaning of a 'pure musical form'. But by introducing the voice of a – clearly modern – Parisian 'Freundin' (the *Princesse de Polignac* perhaps?), he immediately undercuts that absolute position. It seems that ventriloquising thoughts about content through a feminine alter ego avoids threatening absolute music's (or his) masculinity. Weill reiterates that he himself did not know, hardening up his masculine, absolute stance. Furthermore, with a nod to 'the opposite of "pastoral"', Weill satirises the Beethovenian idea of the symphony and its nostalgic agrarian spaces, where people fantasise fully coherent versions of themselves, supposedly realised through authentic modes of being and quiet contemplation in

<sup>119</sup> P. F. S., 'Weill en Prokofieff'. <sup>120</sup> Arntzenius, 'Walter's Tweede Avond'.

<sup>121</sup> Concertgebouw Programme Note.

nature. Instead, primed by the reference to Paris, city-dwelling readers were reminded of some home truths. Those modern subjects did not enjoy boundless fields and fresh air, but cramped urban living, micro-managed production lines, and neon-lit nights. Weill's (or his urban Parisian friend's) comment disrupts a long trajectory of German idealist thought about symphonies, coherent subjectivities, and infinite, universalised spaces. Christian Kuhnt locates this reading of 'the opposite of "pastoral"' more specifically within the political context. While thoroughly non-programmatic, via self-quotation and corruption of themes from Weill's existing works that bring the anxiety, poverty, and political perils of the late-Weimar era into the symphony's atmosphere, the work transports the listener to an anti-idyll.<sup>122</sup>

Either way, Dutch reviewers did not respond to any of Weill's knowing reflections on the fraught discourses of absolute music. It was as simple as this; Weill and his music, Dutch reviewers concluded, did not belong within the concert hall's reified walls. Race, political inclination, how popular aesthetics were gendered: these all seemed to play a part in his exclusion. So, too, did the *idea* of the symphony, which became an agent in policing those norms. But would this reception have differed elsewhere? Different contexts channel different cultural ideas about subjectivity and space. It follows that what we learn from Weill's exclusion is in some ways specific to Amsterdam. The reception pivoted on localised concerns, but was still shaped by an imagined sense of a symphonic ideal – the Weill criticism was shot through with a sense of deference to Germanic *symphonische* values. Were symphonic anxieties more pronounced in Amsterdam than they might have been in a more culturally assured city like Berlin or Vienna? Seductively fine-grained but, lacking comparative context that accounts for the symphony's internationalism, frustratingly hard to parse, this Amsterdam concert isolates and clarifies one of the key problems inherited from existing thought on the symphony. It is time some of those blanks were filled, creating a more robust sense of the social stakes for the genre. That is the task of the rest of the book, in which the chapters elucidate how particular symphonies focus ideas of subjectivity and space in a network of transnational contexts animated by the stories of particular musical works, which roughly overlap with those highlighted in the story of Weill's symphony: Berlin, Paris, Boston, New York, Mexico City, Chicago. Only then will some context be provided for the reactions to Weill's symphony two months later when Walter took the baton once again, this

<sup>122</sup> Kuhnt, 'Das Gegenteil von Pastoral', 329.

time in Carnegie Hall, New York, a concert that we will visit at the beginning of Chapter 6, before exploring the legacies of works from 1933 across the twentieth century and for the present day.

Ultimately, approaching the symphony in 1933 seems to be a matter of refining a critical framework capable of mediating the multiple and freighted historical layers that the discourse collapses together, and of dealing in a sophisticated way with the localised conditions for, and implications of, so-called universal values. Evidently a site at which cultural exchange takes place, the symphony in this period discloses anxieties about intercultural relations, but is also a vehicle for engaging imaginatively with other nations and identities and for formulating a sense of selfhood and community. Offering a glimpse into people's sense of their place in the world, symphonic discourse was a means of defining who they were, but equally, and often more revealingly, who they were not. The symphony may be a genre of privilege, but that is exactly the point. Attending critically to symphonies and their social discourses, a genre with high status despite its acute ethical ambivalence, remains a vital project.