

Křenek's Conversions: Austrian Nationalism, Political Catholicism, and Twelve-Tone Composition

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Ernst Křenek: A Composer Without Qualities?

In the interwar period the central European music press usually placed Ernst Křenek in the company of composers of the stature of Bartók, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Schönberg, and Weill. The decades following the end of the Second World War, however, saw his reputation fade. Though his works of the fifties and sixties were consistent with contemporary trends in European composition, he was widely perceived as an aging composer whose best years were behind him. Premieres were greeted with respect but little enthusiasm. Along with composers such as Philipp Jarnach, Eduard Erdmann, Heinrich Kaminski, and Karol Rathaus, Křenek had been stamped a has-been from the Weimar Republic.

Unlike the others, however, Křenek lived long enough to make a comeback. In the late 1970s, performers and musicologists in Germany and Austria took a second look at Křenek's early career. Křenek stood out from his forgotten contemporaries for, among other things, the sheer variety of music he composed between 1920 and 1945. The composer seemed to have touched every contemporary-music base: There were expressionist shockers like *Die Zwingburg* (1922) and the Symphony No. 2 (1922), Stravinskyisms in the Symphony for Wind Instruments and Percussion (1924-25), a

hip *Zeitoper* in *Der Sprung über den Schatten* (1923), a hip *Zeitoperette* in *Schergewicht, oder Die Ehre der Nation* (1927), a bankable *Jazzoper* in *Jonny spielt auf* (1926), and the neo-Romantic, Schubert-infused *Reisebuch aus den österreichischen Alpen* (1929), to say nothing of the twelve-tone works, which varied from Bergian expressionism (*Karl V* [1933]) to knotty Schönbergianism (String Quartet No. 6 [1936]) to the neo-medieval (*Lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae* [1942]). In retrospect, this versatility earned Křenek a reputation as a chameleon, a Composer Without Qualities. Like the protagonist of Robert Musil's novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Křenek's works of the twenties and thirties so vividly reflected the multi-hued times in which they were written that there seemed to be no room left for a distinctive composerly personality. Carl Dahlhaus noted that many critics attributed Křenek's abrupt changes in musical style to a "lack of composerly profile." When the *Neue Einfachheit* movement emerged in the late 1970s, though, Křenek's musical pluralism began to look surprisingly contemporary to Dahlhaus and others:

The changes of musical language, which do not shrink from extremes, have always made it difficult to catch Ernst Křenek's compositional personality in a formula fit for journalism. Precisely at the present moment, it is an important phenomenon. It provokes substantive reflection, especially since one of the most striking characteristics of the most recent developments is that composers may try reaching back to elements of the tonal tradition without giving up their claim to belonging to the avant-garde.¹

The stylistic capriciousness of Křenek's works seemed a prophetic refutation of constraining, Adorno-inspired theories of the relentless evolution of musical materials.

1. Carl Dahlhaus, "Ernst Křenek und das Problem des musikalischen Sprachwechsels," in *Ernst Křenek*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1982): 36-46, at 36-37. The translation here, and elsewhere where not credited, is mine.

Dahlhaus held up Křenek as a model composer, one who cared more for his artistic conscience—the *Kunstcharakter* of his works—than for historical justifications of his compositional decisions. Dahlhaus ended his essay without defining exactly what he meant by “Kunstcharakter.” As a result, “anything goes” seems to be the lesson Dahlhaus drew from the stylistic plurality of Křenek’s works. He saw in Křenek’s changes of musical language merely the composer exercising his free will.

More recently, Matthias Schmidt has advanced a contrasting thesis to account for Křenek’s parade of musical identities. Comparing Křenek to the Viennese satirist Karl Kraus, Schmidt portrays the composer as a social critic whose works were born of a spirit of contrariness. Schmidt identifies Křenek’s conscious avoidance of “routine self-repetition” as part of the composer’s ethical system and argues that the composer’s choices of compositional techniques were very seldom timely:

The chronological order in which Křenek used various compositional techniques barely corresponds to that development which is fixed in the monolinear history of “progress” in new music. (For example, he wrote his first twelve-tone work in a period of European-wide musical Restoration. And as he began composing serially, the Darmstadt avant-garde had already cast this aside as superseded.)²

Far from being a mere man of his times, Schmidt’s Křenek makes it a point of pride to swim upstream.

There is a political component in Schmidt’s interpretation of Křenek’s personality. As Schmidt points out, the composer’s constant recalcitrance contributed to his decision to emigrate from Austria in 1938 and not to acquiesce, as most Austrians did, to Hitler’s *Reich*. Other biographical

2. Matthias Schmidt, “Die Maske des Satirikers: Stichworte zu Ernst Křenek und Karl Kraus,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 52, no. 3 (1997): 26–33, at 26.

treatments of Křenek have also preferred to emphasize his penchant for nay-saying. Claudia Maurer Zenck placed Křenek's emigration in the center of her groundbreaking biographical and musical study, *Ernst Křenek—ein Komponist in Exil*. In the title to her edition of the composer's correspondence, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus der Mitte* (The Hopeless Radicalism of the Center), she chose a phrase of Křenek's which accentuated the composer's rejection of the politics of the organized left and right.

Křenek was hardly apolitical, though. He himself reveled in his reputation as a gadfly. In 1980 he described his 1931 opera *Kehraus um St. Stephan* as a work "in the Karl Kraus manner, against the Nazis, against the Jews, against everyone."³ Surprisingly, the composer expressed shock that such a work was rejected by German and Austrian stages for political reasons. The episode illustrates well Schmidt's implicit thesis that Křenek's works are inescapably bound up with his politics. And for contemporary political sensibilities, Křenek's nonchalant pairing of Nazis and Jews demonstrates that the composer's contrarianism may not be without ethical problems of its own. (Nor, for that matter, does Schmidt refer to the anti-Semitism that laces Kraus's later writing.)

It is important, then, not to be vague when discussing Křenek's politics. To understand his antipathies, it is essential to consider his enthusiasms as well, especially his Austrian patriotism. This has proven difficult. The years from 1927 to 1938 were a time of profound civil unrest in Austria, and since 1945 Austrians have been inclined to repress the memory of them. Novelist and journalist Josef Haslinger has suggested one reason why:

3. Ernst Křenek, "Der verletzte Komponist," interview by Claudia Maurer Zenck, in *Ernst Křenek*, ed. Kolleritsch, 15-28, at 28.

One could not speak about National Socialism, because then one would have to have spoken about the civil war of 1934. The war was the reason why the resistance in Austria by and large remained an affair of the communists.⁴

As we shall see, Křenek was hardly dissatisfied with the ambiguous legacy of 1934. But to speak of Křenek's Austrian patriotism means to dwell on topics of Austrian history which to this day have lost little of their divisiveness.

While Křenek's enthusiasms may be less attractive than his anti-Nazism, they are crucial in reconstructing the composer's changing worldview. Schmidt is indeed correct to perceive connections between Křenek's politics and his constantly shifting musical language. But it was not sheer willfulness that stimulated Křenek constantly to retool his compositional technique, as Dahlhaus and Schmidt have suggested. Křenek's stylistic mutability, as I shall argue, was intimately connected to the history that was unfolding around him. It bears the impress of the succession of social and cultural Utopias to which the composer aspired.

Křenek's Path to Composition with Twelve Tones

Though, as Schmidt suggests, the mood of musical Europe in the thirties may have been conservative, growing numbers of composers began to employ twelve-tone methods. In an essay for Berlin's *Vossische Zeitung* published in February 1934, Hans H. Stuckenschmidt drew the reader's attention to recent or upcoming performances of three twelve-tone operas: Paul von Klenau's *Michael Kohlhaas*,

4. Josef Haslinger, "Das endlose Land," foreword to *Das doppelköpfige Österreich: Essays, Polemiken, Interviews*, by Gerhard Roth, ed. Kristina Pfoser-Schewig (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995): 9-18, at 13.

Křenek's *Karl V*, and Winfried Zillig's *Rosse*. Though Hanns Eisler gave up twelve-tone techniques when he broke personally with Schönberg, he reintroduced them in his *Kleine Sinfonie*, op. 29 (1932), and followed that work with a series of twelve-tone chamber pieces and cantatas. The list of composers outside the Schönberg circle who began using twelve-tone techniques during the thirties could be extended to include René Leibowitz, Paul Dessau, Frank Martin, Erich Itor Kahn, Wladimir Vogel, Stefan Wolpe, and many others. Another long list could be made of Schönberg, Webern, and Berg students who took up twelve-tone techniques at this time, among them Nikos Skalkottas, Otto Jokl, Peter Schacht, Norbert von Hannenheim, and Ludwig Zenk.

Also worth noting is an increase in propaganda for twelve-tone music during these years in Vienna. Schönberg's public lecture "New Music, Old Music, Style and Idea" may have assiduously eschewed all mention of twelve-tone composition, but Webern enthusiastically made up the lack with two lecture series: "The Path to the New Music" and "The Path to Composition with Twelve Tones." If we may rely on the notes of Willi Reich, Webern announced not only that the legitimacy of twelve-tone composition had ceased to be an open question, but that it had in fact become the only intelligent choice available to the contemporary composer:

Composition with twelve tones has reached a degree of coherence not even approximated earlier. It is clear that when relationships and connections are present everywhere, comprehensibility is guaranteed. And everything else is nothing but diletantism. This has always been true!⁵

5. Anton Webern, *Der Weg zur neuen Musik*, ed. Willi Reich (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1960), 19.

Thus did twelve-tone composition become a cause. No longer was it deemed (*pace* Thomas Mann) the sole "intellectual property" of its inventor Schönberg. Instead, there arose a multiplicity of voices within the movement. As Křenek noted in 1934:

Perhaps at first one fears that the use of the twelve-tone system would automatically result in the "Schönberg style".... But even one's first attempt proves that this is not the case. The row-principle is not some sort of "ideological superstructure" to justify theoretically the expressive habits of a particular master. Instead, it allows each composer his own **individual**, characteristic tone-speech.⁶

Where there is freedom of speech, differences of opinion are bound to arise. The Danish composer (and Nazi sympathizer) Paul von Klenau shared with Alban Berg his dismay at finding Ernst Křenek a twelve-tone comrade-in-arms:

I have been combing through Křenek's [*sic*] *Karl V* for a while, but, even with the best will in the world, I cannot find this music beautiful. It would have been better if he had stuck with his last style and had left twelve-tone music in peace. The way he uses it now, he will discredit it anew.⁷

As we can see from Klenau's letter to Berg, the cause of twelve-tone composition was by no means unified in its membership. By 1934, the reasons for marching under its banner were as various as the composers who proclaimed allegiance to it.

That Ernst Křenek should join these composers surprised many observers. As a music student in Vienna after the World War, Křenek aligned himself not with Schönberg, but with Franz Schreker—a patrimony that made him inclined more to provoke members of the Schönberg circle

6. Ernst Křenek, "Erfahrungen mit dem 'Zwölftonsystem'," *Vossische Zeitung*, 3 March 1934, *Musikblatt*. All emphasis here and in subsequent newspaper citations appears as *Sperrdruck* in the original.

7. Klenau to Berg, 30 January 1934, Fonds 21 Berg 940/53, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

than to declare solidarity with them.⁸ Some of his more recent works, like the Fifth Quartet and the *Reisebuch aus den österreichischen Alpen*, had been judged by one commentator to be "unequivocal high treason" against the New-Music revolution.⁹ Having adopted twelve-tone composition in 1932-33, though, Křenek became one of its most outspoken apostles, extolling its virtues in newspaper and journal articles. His 1936 lecture series, *Ueber neue Musik*, contains an extensive technical and philosophical introduction to twelve-tone composition. After emigrating to America in 1938 Křenek published the textbook *Studies in Musical Counterpoint*, the most comprehensive illustration of twelve-tone techniques since Josef Matthias Hauer's treatises of 1925. This conversion to twelve-tone composition becomes less incomprehensible when viewed as one of several processes of self-identification Křenek had been undergoing since the late twenties.

From his return to Vienna in 1928 to his emigration after the *Anschluß* a decade later, Křenek occupied himself with issues of Austria's national identity—a project to which he was so committed that he took to using the pseudonym "Austriaca" for many essays he penned in the music journal 23. He solemnized his allegiance in May 1933 by joining Bundeskanzler Engelbert Dollfuß's Vaterländische Front, a patriotic organization that would, in the words of its advertisements, "unite all who consciously and with conviction feel themselves Austrian, who love their home and fatherland."¹⁰ No group of mere flag-wavers, members were to

8. Křenek grew so annoying that Berg could write to Schönberg in 1926: "Oh, how happy your 'Foreword' made me, dearest esteemed friend. You really have finished off Křenek with this, and with him—what am I saying—9/10 of the U.E. catalog!" Berg to Schönberg, 30 May 1926, *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, ed. Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey, and Donald Harris (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 345.

9. Klaus Pringsheim, "Der Zustand heutiger Musik," *Der Querschnitt* 10, no. 4 (April 1930): 215-19, at 219.

"organize themselves into an army capable of strong action, bound together in a common goal: Austria and its right to existence, Austria and its duties for the fulfillment of its mission in central Europe and for the benefit of everything German."¹¹ Křenek, who had sought to make himself conspicuous in Dollfuß's new nation-state, soon became a voice of the establishment as a regular contributor to the government newspaper, the *Wiener Zeitung*, as well as, less frequently, the government-sponsored weekly *Der Christliche Ständestaat*.

Solemnization of another kind occurred in the following year. In April 1934, Křenek wrote his friend and former editor Friedrich Gubler, "I have returned to the Catholic Church with complete conviction and in this I am quite satisfied with myself."¹² Křenek's decision to marry the already-divorced Anna Mahler in 1924 had forced his renunciation of the Church, but, he wrote Gubler, he had never seriously given up his faith. As we shall explore more thoroughly later on, Křenek's Catholicism, which came to play a prominent role in his *Weltanschauung* through the thirties, was politically tinged and became inseparable from his concept of the Austrian nation. At Christmas in 1934, for example, Křenek told all those who would listen:

In the eyes of the spiritual man, the first indications of a **theocracy**, which are unmistakable in the **political will** of the new Austria, acquire a **special significance**. They clearly prove the **genuine, lasting efficacy** of the sacred fundamental idea of the **old Christian Roman Empire**.¹³

10. Křenek to Gubler, 31 March 1933, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus der Mitte: Briefwechsel Ernst Křenek—Friedrich T. Gubler, 1928-1939*, ed. Claudia Maurer Zenck (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989), 270.

11. "Hinein in die vaterländische Front!" *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 May 1933, 3.

12. Křenek to Gubler, 25 April 1934, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 276-77.

13. Ernst Křenek, "Der 'geistige Mensch' und die Politik," *Wiener Zeitung*, 25 December 1934, Weihnachtsbeilage, 3-4, at 3.

Křenek had ample opportunity to publicize his views on the Austrian character and on the Catholicism that was for him an integral part of that character. Between the years 1924 and 1938 he penned hundreds of articles, essays, and reviews for prestigious newspapers, music journals, and theater program books. Křenek was also responsible for the libretti of most of his operas and song cycles after 1924. In 1934 he was appointed chair of the Austrian Association of Playwrights and Stage Composers on the strength of these works, which demonstrated his political suitability. This constant preoccupation with affairs of the day was often judged detrimental to the artistic quality of his work. Schönberg noted of Křenek's first libretto, *Der Sprung über den Schatten*:

The only disagreeable, or at least incomprehensible thing, is the wisdom of this young man of 23 or 24; how does he know it is the same for the whole of humanity? From books? From literature? But wisdom such as that needs a basis of experience. To accept it uncritically from Wedekind, Kraus, Altenberg, Kokoschka and one or two French writers is journalistic.¹⁴

A penchant for "polemic tinged with pathos" is especially apparent in works from the *Reisebuch* (1929) through *Karl V* (1933).¹⁵

I shall attempt to demonstrate that Křenek's musical praxis was just as subject to the desire to propagate his views on nationalism and Catholicism as were his journalistic and literary activities. Though the musical styles of the *Reisebuch*, the Fifth Quartet, and *Kehraus um St. Stephan* on the one hand, and *Karl V*, the unfinished oratorio *Symeon der Stylit*, and the Sixth Quartet on the other, seem to lie at

14. Arnold Schoenberg, "Křeneks Sprung über den Schatten," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black, ed. Leonard Stein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 477-81, at 477.

15. Křenek to Gubler, 10 January 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 77.

opposite ends of the stylistic spectrum, they share a preoccupation with national and religious questions. Specifically, as the composer's conception of the Austrian nation included an increasingly politicized Catholicism, and as he moved from a national ideology based on *Volkstümlichkeit* to one based on religion, the "axioms" on which he constructed his composerly practice also changed.

The French Origins of Křenek's Austrian Ideal

In 1928 Křenek settled in Austria, the country that for the next decade would be at the center of his attentions. The composer recalled the circumstances that led to his return:

Through *Jonny spielt auf* I had achieved a considerable degree of financial independence, so I gave up my position at the opera house in Wiesbaden, where I had followed Paul Bekker when he took over the direction of that institution. Various courses of action lay open to me. In 1929 *Jonny spielt auf* was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, and this would have been a good opportunity for taking up contacts with America. However, this possibility had no attraction for me at the time. What I thought I wanted to do was establish residence in southern France, with which I had become enamored on previous vacation trips. I was not aware of the fact that I had outlived the frame of mind in which I had conceived my dream picture of France and the Western world. During a visit to my native Vienna it came to me almost as a revelation that this was the place where I had to settle down. I was charmed by the city, the country of Austria, and the style of its life, as if I had never known them before.¹⁶

Though Křenek headed directly for Vienna in November 1927 after resigning his position at the Wiesbaden opera house, he kept finding himself drawn to Paris. Before finally settling down in Vienna the following June, the composer made three trips to France, each lasting about a month.

16. Ernst Křenek, "Self-Analysis," *New Mexico Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1953): 5-57, at 19.

What was it about France that so attracted him? And why did he eventually choose Vienna?

Křenek noted in his autobiography that Max, the protagonist of *Jonny spielt auf*, represented Křenek himself: "a brooding, introspective, central European intellectual" enticed by "the happy, straightforward representatives of the Western world,"¹⁷ a Western world which not only meant Jonny's America, but in Křenek's distinctive geography, France as well. But though *Jonny's* final curtain falls on a happy assimilation of the Center to the West, Křenek himself found such a reconciliation difficult. As his biographer John L. Stewart has observed, Křenek was shy and reserved, and his unease was compounded in interactions with representatives from a foreign culture he admired.¹⁸ In October 1937 on a ship bound for America, Křenek confessed in his diary:

Depression, inferiority complex, because I can't pull myself together to approach a French troupe of actors, although Madame Milhaud introduced me to a member of the troupe at the Gare St. Lazare. The old inferiority complex over the French, at the same time certainly an over-estimation of their worth. Undoubtedly they think me arrogant, although I am only clumsy and constrained.¹⁹

The inferiority complex was already well in place by 1932 when Křenek began writing the libretto for *Karl V*. In the opera, the Emperor Karl envies France's King Franz for his easy, elegant manners:

Secretly courted by me, he charms Madrid with his *esprit*. As if he were free and I the slave. And isn't he? He seems carefree, unconstrained, writes poems, tender epistles, is the idol of the cavaliers and

17. *Ibid.*, 16.

18. John L. Stewart, *Ernst Křenek: The Man and His Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 96-97.

19. Diary entry, 13 October 1937, *Ernst Křenek, Die amerikanischen Tagebücher, 1937-1942: Dokumente aus dem Exil*, ed. Claudia Maurer Zenck (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1992), 18.

ladies of my kingdom—and I, ruler of the world, divided in myself, pine away in worthless worry over the dissolving unity of the empire.²⁰

Karl enumerates for his confessor Juan all the graces he shall never possess: "Shall I tell you of the morning of my life, when love, friendship, yearning for music, for the light, the sweet, for naturalness all moved me—and this Franz leads just such a life, a life in which I would never be able to participate."²¹ Křenek found the French worthy of emulation, but he was psychologically incapable of coming to terms with them personally. His solution was to recreate in Austria those qualities he ascribed to the French. The Emperor Karl's "Sehnsucht nach Musik" is a yearning for the "Beautiful in Music," a yearning that Křenek would gratify abundantly after 1928. He sought to banish the melancholy of his earlier compositions with the lightness, grace, and elegance found in works like the *Reisebuch*, the *Fiedel-Lieder* (1930), or the *Four Bagatelles for Piano, Four Hands* (1931).

It was not only the promise of a life of ease that drew Křenek to France. Křenek's professional life up to 1928 had revolved around Germany and Switzerland. A comparison between these two countries and France and Austria suggests another criterion Křenek used in choosing his new residence: the prominence of Catholicism. Sympathy with France on the basis of a shared religion was not uncommon in Austria's conservative circles. In a letter to his editor Friedrich Gubler, Křenek criticized as superficial a formula propagated by Austria's pro-German liberals—"Christian-socialist = reactionary + antagonistic to Germany = franco-phil"—but the composer did not say it was wrong.²² Indeed, by 1931 Křenek himself would call attention to

20. Ernst Křenek, *Karl V*, in *Prosa, Dramen, Verse* (Munich: Albert Langen, Georg Miller Verlag, 1965), 222.

21. *Ibid.*, 225.

the gulf between Prussia, the nascent Protestant superpower, and Austria, which is in every respect typically Catholic and is characterized more by the Italian, Spanish, Slavic and Oriental types than by the German.²³

The Catholic element comes right to the fore in Křenek's first substantial project upon settling in Vienna, the *Leben des Orest*. The climax of this opera is a rescue engineered by divine grace: A jury appointed to decide Orest's fate is deadlocked—six condemn Orest as guilty, and place six black balls in a voting urn. Six, believing in his innocence, have cast six white balls. In the consternation following the announcement of a hung jury, a little girl accidentally drops a white ball she had been playing with; the ball clinks into the voting urn. The apparent accident is interpreted as a gesture of heavenly mercy: Orest is acquitted.

Some critics were put off by the opera's implausible conclusion; the *deus ex machina* was a transgression against the rules of good drama. Divinity must be personified on stage if its actions are to be plausible: "There is divine action but no divinities," Bernhard Diebold complained, "Orest is rescued by pure accident."²⁴ But such criticisms, Křenek insisted, were as irrelevant for the end of *Orest* as for *Parsifal*. "The seeming accident," he wrote, "is precisely the visible instrument of grace, an instrument of a power which operates behind the apparent world, inexplicable but also a guarantor of morality."²⁵ The opera is no longer a tragedy,

22. Křenek to Gubler, 21 October 1932, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 239. Křenek also explicitly stated a lively sympathy for France on the basis of its shared religion in "Zu Karl Burckhardts Richelieu," *Wiener Zeitung*, 23 February 1935, 8.

23. Ernst Křenek, "Von der Aufgabe, ein Oesterreicher zu sein," *Die Freyung* 2, no. 2 (April 1931): 1-10, at 2.

24. Bernhard Diebold, "Singende Tantliden," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 12 March 1930, 14; reprinted in *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 35-38, at 38.

25. Ernst Křenek, "Der 'Entlarvte Orest'," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 22 March 1930, 13; reprinted in *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 39-42, at 40.

or near-tragedy, but ultimately a celebration of the divine, demanding "faith, hope, and submission" of its audience.

The decision to place a miracle at the crux of *Orest*, like the decision to write a five-act "grand opera," a number opera in the mold of Meyerbeer and the later Verdi, appears to have been a response to contemporary French literature. Křenek wrote to Gubler:

I am astonished that neither Michel nor you in your review considered further that the central idea of this work of Gide's (*Oedipe*) is once again his notion of the "action gratuite," one that decidedly dominates almost all of his works (*Prométhée*, *Caves du Vatican*, *Faux-monnayeurs*): that *incomprehensible, irrational mercy* which effects a *rescue from the catastrophe*.... If this had not escaped you, then the parallel to my "Orest" would have been imperiously evident.... The relationship of these trains of thought is as clear as day (certainly a stronger relationship than that comparison with Cocteau which Michel brought up; of Cocteau's works, at most *Orphée* is relevant—a work which greatly stimulated me during the time I was working on *Orest*).²⁶

Nor was this the last of Křenek's libretti to exhibit Gallic ancestry. *Kehraus um St. Stephan* was conceived as a satirical opera in the manner of Offenbach, at least the Offenbach circulated in Vienna by Karl Kraus. (Here Křenek was compelled to compensate for the absence of religious elements in the model by adding religious symbolism of his own devising, such as the rising sun and arrival of spring with which the opera concludes.)

Křenek repeatedly pointed out similarities between his *Karl V* and Paul Claudel and Darius Milhaud's *Christophe Colomb*. Both operas followed a confessional form that Křenek saw as distinctively Catholic, pointing out that "Columbus has to **justify** his actions to himself—and this gives the work its particular character, one which results from the Christian qualities of its subject and its **Catholic** author."²⁷ There are, however, some differences in the

26. Křenek to Gubler, 16 July 1932, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 231-32.

religious implications of the two works. Columbus's faith is vindicated in the opera's final scene—the divinely ordained revelation of the New World trumps all the recriminations that have been heaped up against Columbus. By the time he wrote *Karl V*, Křenek's religious sensibilities had become so thoroughly intermingled with a sense of geopolitical realities that divine intercession and redemption seemed to him no longer plausible. Instead, the confessional mode is transformed into a public airing of self-criticism, which, like the communist variety, turns political analysis into an occasion for nationalist and religious indoctrination.²⁸

While his identity as (lapsed) Catholic was important for Křenek in 1928, it was not yet central to his political views. Nor for that matter had the composer given any indication that he felt patriotically inclined toward Austria before settling there. That came afterwards. Křenek's original intention seems to have been merely to "live in splendid isolation"—in an idyll for which the south of France and lower Austria offered equally satisfying prospects. Reality soon caught up with him.

Austria: A Nation Malgré Soi

Barely a month after Křenek's return to Vienna in June 1928, some 150,000 Germans descended upon the city to celebrate the tenth *Deutsches Sängerbundesfest*, an event scheduled every four years. The Austrian capital had been chosen as the site of the festival to commemorate the centenary of the death of Franz Schubert. The staging of the *Fest* was an unprecedented coup for Austria's tourist industry.²⁹ An

27. Ernst Křenek, "Neue Wege der Musik im Drama," *Wiener Zeitung*, 29 September 1935.

28. See Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 251.

29. Soma Morgenstern, "Vor dem 10. deutschen Sängerbundfest," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11 June 1928, 1.

enormous festival hall holding a 40,000-member chorus and an audience of perhaps 70,000 was erected in the Prater; extra trains ran from the city to points north and west;³⁰ the city monitored hotels and restaurants to forestall price gouging.³¹ Bundespräsident Hainisch even put up three of the singers in his own home.³² For a week, the city was overrun. The novelist Soma Morgenstern, who covered the events for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, recalled:

They called themselves *Deutsche Sangesbrüder*. They didn't wear any uniforms, but they made themselves conspicuous by their white caps with coats of arms. Whenever they met each other, they greeted one another joyfully "Deutsche Sangesbrüder, Heil!"... The *Sangesbrüder* sang everywhere—they sat in pubs and drank beer and sang. They sat in coffee-houses and drank beer and sang. Their wives drank coffee with whipped cream and sang along. They sang in groups on the street. And these were only the private gatherings.³³

The festivities closed with 120,000 participants parading down the Ringstraße. An invasion such as this was not exactly calculated to win the hearts of native Viennese, especially those like Křenek who sought refuge "in splendid isolation." They drank too much beer and made pigsties of all the coffee houses.³⁴ Moreover, the colossal scale of the event turned a cultural occasion into high politics, dramatizing certain existential questions that had plagued Austria since the end of the World War.

Morgenstern recalled that "it was obvious (and one didn't need any special nose for news) that the whole centenary festival had, without any help from Schubert,

30. "Die Eröffnung der Sängerhalle," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 9 July 1928.

31. "Die Gasthauspreise während des Sängerbundesfestes," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 4 July 1928, 5.

32. "Beim Reisemarschall der Sängerarmee," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 4 July 1928.

33. Soma Morgenstern, *Joseph Roths Flucht und Ende: Erinnerungen*, ed. Ingolf Schulte (Lüneburg: zu Klampen Verlag, 1994), 53-54.

34. *Ibid.*, 55.

freshened up otherwise distant thoughts of the *Anschluß*.”³⁵ Indeed, such thoughts would be hard to ignore when the president of the Deutsche Sängerbund, Friedrich List, intoned: “You Austrian land, you splendid city of Vienna, just as you were and are German, so will you remain German, for as long as there is a German folk!”³⁶ The demonstrative power of the occasion was so great that even Bundeskanzler Dr. Seipel, no friend of the *Anschluß*, felt compelled to give voice to the thoughts that were increasingly occupying many minds. Though his words were modest and carefully chosen, they unleashed an overwhelming response:³⁷

Dr. Seipel spoke about Ludwig van Beethoven, the greatest German musician whom the Rhinelands had presented to Vienna, he celebrated in stirring words Franz Schubert’s memory and concluded his short speech by **championing the *Anschluß* with Germany**. When he finished, roaring cheers filled the *Sängerhalle*, caps and kerchiefs were waved, the public rose from its seat and as though an invisible baton had given the sign, the “Deutschlandlied” suddenly sounded out from sixty thousand throats. This Austrian [continued the reporter], who knew the melody well from the old folk-hymn, was left with a peculiar impression when he heard this tune sung to a text with very different poetic contents.³⁸

An even more enthusiastic endorsement of the proceedings was provided by the *Wiener Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the newspaper of the Social Democrats. For example, it gave its report on the Ringstraße parade an unambiguous interpretation:

170,000 men marched along the Ringstraße. 500,000 people stood alongside. This enormous parade was more than a demonstration for the German song, for German art. It was a demonstration for the

35. *Ibid.*, 56.

36. “Das deutsche Sängerfest in Wien,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 22 July 1928, 1.

37. “Bundeskanzler Dr. Seipel an die Sängergäste: Eine bemerkenswerte Kundgebung,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, 11 July 1928, 4.

38. “Das Deutschlandlied aus 60.000 Kehlen,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, 20 July 1928.

Anschluß, for the union of the German peoples in a greater German republic.³⁹

Newspapers were filled with reports of the demands by this or that group for the *Anschluß*. If the Viennese and German papers are to be trusted, the rest of Europe was also seized by the *Anschluß* question. Speaking for the "little entente" of former Habsburg lands, Czechoslovakia's foreign minister was unsettled. He spoke out against the *Anschluß* and sought support in this from the French government. And as the Parisian correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* noted:

There was no way to avoid the **suspicious and insinuations** which the *Sängerfest* unleashed in France; the festival brought into play once more the *Anschluß* debates with the same old, well-known arguments. The French lack all understanding for the emotional and cultural aspects of the events in Vienna; they see in it the expression of a very particular and very systematic policy, not the proclamation of native folkish feeling.⁴⁰

As the Austrian novelist Joseph Roth, a legitimist who celebrated the monarchy in many novels about *Alt-Österreich*, later complained to Křenek: "À bas with the *Anschluß*! Pity, that France is our rescuer."⁴¹

Franz Schubert himself was turned into a greater-German figure.⁴² The headline of the *Neues Wiener Journal* for 18 July stated succinctly: "Greeting to the German singers: Cultural *Anschluß* under Schubert's Aegis." A feuilleton titled "Franz Schubert und das deutsche Lied" demonstrated the tendencies of the festival: While the nouns

39. "Der Festzug der deutschen Sänger," *Wiener Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 23 July 1928.

40. "Argwohn in Paris," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 24 July 1928, 1.

41. Roth to Křenek, 11 November 1932, *Joseph Roth—Briefe 1911-1939*, ed. Hermann Kesten (Berlin: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970), 227.

42. See the speech by the President of the German Reichstag, in "Feststadt Wien: Die Veränderung des Ringstraßenbildes.—Das erweiterte Programm," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 15 July 1928.

Deutschland and *Österreich* are both found in the essay, the adjective *deutsch* appears several times, while *österreichisch* does not show up at all. Thus the *Neues Wiener Journal* praised Vienna as one of the "German" centers of music, a place where "the national power of German music grew up to international greatness."⁴³ In Schubert, one finds "the splendid simplicity of the German *Volkslied*, in which every German feeling rests as if in its homeland."⁴⁴

From all this it is clear that the idea of "Austria" was in a bad way. A popular notion of "Austrianness" was almost non-existent. The legitimacy of the Austrian Republic was as problematic as that of the Weimar Republic. The victors of the First World War had not seemed to care how fiercely they provoked the resentments of Austria's ethnic Germans. When the Habsburg Empire was dismembered by the French, English, and Americans in the Treaty of St. Germain, the part of Austria which was not claimed by national secessionists—Czechs, Poles, Romanians, and so on—was defined as *Rest-Österreich*. Not all secessionist movements were successful in pressing their claims, however. Since the vast majority of the populace within Austria's new borders considered itself ethnically German, many citizens of *Rest-Österreich* favored unification with Germany, which would have completed a process of German unification begun by Bismarck in the previous century. But this union of *Rest-Österreich* with Germany was forbidden by the allied powers, who thought that an independent Austria would create a more stable balance of powers in central Europe.

At its inception, then, the country of Austria was not strictly speaking Austrian, but German-Austrian (*deutsch-*

43. "Franz Schubert und das deutsche Lied," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 19 July 1928.

44. *Ibid.*

österreichisch).⁴⁵ As a 1918 proclamation from the National Assembly declared: "The entirety of the German delegates to the Austrian Reichsrat therefore constitutes the *provisional National Assembly of Deutsch-Österreich*."⁴⁶ The sources of identity in the old empire had been the institutions of the monarchy and, to a lesser extent, the church. "Language" (*Sprache*) and "People" (*Volk*) were two territories already claimed by the German nationalists. Thus when the Austrian nation-state was formed, there was simply no ideology of Austrian nationalism to back it up. Only after the disastrous Second World War did the wider Austrian populace feel disinclined to associate itself too closely with its neighbors to the north. After 1955 most Austrians began to assert (and assent to) an independent Austrian national identity.⁴⁷

Although the concept of an Austrian nation had no basis in the popular imagination, some intellectuals, such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, nevertheless attempted to construct just such an Austrian national identity. These constructions in turn received occasional support from larger socio-political blocs, for whom an allegiance to the idea of either "Germany" or "Austria" was more a consequence of the tactics of domestic politics than conviction of national

45. Austria, however, did not remain "Deutsch-Österreich" for long: The name was forbidden by the Treaty of St. Germain. Other possibilities that were mooted in the twenties included "Südostdeutschland," "Deutsche Alpenlande," "Deutschmark," "Donau-Germanien," and "Deutsches Friedland." See Walter Wiltschegg, *Österreich—der "Zweite Deutsche Staat"?* (Graz: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1992).

46. Cited in Leopold Kunschak, *Österreich, 1918-1934* (Vienna: Typographische Anstalt, 1934), 28. This terminology was also adopted by the powers deciding Austria's fate. See Alfred D. Low, *The Anschluss Movement, 1931-1938, and the Great Powers* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985), 14.

47. See John W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 459-60.

essence. Thus, the political support of the *Anschluß* movement in Austria until 1933 found its most effective advocacy in the Social-Democrat camp; the conservative, predominantly Catholic Christian Socialists were far less inclined to support union with Germany. The Social Democrats had many reasons for throwing their weight behind the *Anschluß*. Some thought that in supporting the *Anschluß*, they were fulfilling a prediction set forth by Marx and Engels,⁴⁸ according to which only a unified Germany could progress down the path to socialism. Further, the oft-beleaguered Austrian Social Democrats were anxious for a union with the better organized Social Democrats of Germany. Germany, with its highly industrialized economy, had a larger pool of urban proletariat from which to recruit voters and activists. Though the Austrian drive for the *Anschluß* always had small right-wing German nationalist parties at its core, before 1933 it could also count on support from the more powerful Austrian Left.

By and large, Austrian conservatives were anxious to avoid union with the "Red Menace" to their north. Because of the strength of the Social Democrats in the Weimar Republic, it was inopportune for the conservatives to employ the rhetoric of German nationalism, a paradoxical situation considering the political alliance of conservatives and nationalists in interwar Germany. One Austrian historian has noted the conservatives' ambivalence:

It is much more difficult to assess the Christian Socialist position on the *Anschluß* than the Social Democrats'. The Christian Socialist connections with Germany were substantially less significant than the Social Democrats'. The individual provinces, interest groups, the church and other factors carried greater weight with the Christian Socialists.⁴⁹

48. Low, *The Anschluss Movement*, 48-54.

49. Wiltsegg, *Österreich*, 121.

One study of the Christian Socialists' newspaper, the *Reichspost*, does suggest that for Austrian conservatives, "Red" Germany was the path by which evil "civilizing" contamination reached Austria. An essayist for the *Reichspost* asserted:

Cultural Bolshevism is making its way here, employing methods of cultural destruction which work more effectively than political antagonism. Now there is all the more reason for developing a unified defensive front of Christian and national culture.⁵⁰

But Austrian conservatives who resisted the German onslaught of leftist politics and modern culture had few ideological weapons at their disposal. They attempted to cobble together as best they could a notion of Austrian national identity based on regionalism, Christian traditionalism, economic protectionism, and nostalgia.

Křenek's Politics, Křenek's Austria

The Austrian nation in the late twenties was not significantly less socially heterogenous than other countries. Indeed, the polarization between right and left was so severe that eventually paramilitary organizations from both camps were wandering around the Austrian countryside ambushing each other. The civil war in the countryside had become so completely a part of the landscape that Alban Berg could jokingly refer to a swarm of wasps which attacked him as "presumably Nazis, although their black and yellow uniforms would lead one to think they were

50. Josefine Widmar, "Kunst als Kulturzersetzung. Die Tätigkeiten der 'Ita' im Deutschen Reich," *Der Reichspost*, 13 June 1930, 8. Cited in Ulrich Weinzierl, "Die Kultur der 'Reichspost'," in *Aufbruch und Untergang: Österreichische Kultur zwischen 1918 und 1938*, ed. Franz Kadmoska (Europaverlag: Vienna, 1981), 325-44, at 335.

legitimists."⁵¹ Defining what was truly Austrian was an act with political overtones. In this context Křenek's bland statement that in June 1928 he was "charmed by the city [of Vienna], the country of Austria and the style of its life, as if I had never known them before,"⁵² acquires new meaning. What Křenek was seeking in "Austria" was not merely *joie de vivre* transformed into (*gemütliche*) *Lebensfreude*. Křenek's "Austria" was a haven free of the baleful German influences decried by the *Reichspost* feuilletonist above. The political subtext of Křenek's word "Austria" becomes clearer when we read his description of his first nationalist work:

While Hindemith was supplying German youth with practical music for their enjoyment and enlightenment, and Kurt Weill interpreted musically the acid social critique of Bertolt Brecht, I wrote in twenty days the twenty songs of the "Reisebuch aus den österreichischen Alpen" ...extolling the beauties of my homeland and discussing its problems.⁵³

Křenek's Austrian *Heimat* is a conservative bulwark, conceptually antithetical to (or at least distinct from) Hindemith's German populism and especially from Weill's and Brecht's socialist provocation. The Austria Křenek sought was one that would accord with his political and social needs. Křenek's conservative politics were a necessary precondition for his conversion to Austrian nationalism.

Though Křenek wrote that "in controversial situations my sympathies would usually tend toward the left,"⁵⁴ he usually maintained a respectful distance from the left, a distance which at times turned quite disrespectful. The composer did share with the Social Democrats a distaste for the

51. Berg to Morgenstern, 10 August 1932, Soma Morgenstern, *Alban Berg und seine Idole*, ed. Ingolf Schulte (Lüneburg: zu Klampen Verlag, 1995), 246-47.

52. Křenek, "Self-Analysis," 19.

53. *Ibid.*, 20.

54. *Ibid.*, 26.

old Liberals, but certainly not because he agreed with them that liberalism needed a more or less substantial dose of socialist correction. Rather, liberalism for Křenek was simply a bad idea to begin with. Certainly he viewed liberalism as disastrous for the arts: "Art, which bloomed in the allegedly gloomy *Vormärz* was only delivered by the Liberals into that vile servitude to commerce which today, more than ever, is our bane."⁵⁵ Křenek thought liberalism's political self-justifications specious:

The age before [1848], known as the pre-revolutionary or Biedermeier period, was a time of very concentrated intellectual and cultural prosperity in Vienna. Metternich's system of censorship, which is supposed to have had a muzzling effect, did not in fact harm any real intellectual product much; only the believers in a liberal economy blow up the petty, ludicrous tricks of this system, which missed their marks by a mile, into a despotism of bigots and a kind of latter-day Spanish Inquisition. In reality, Metternich was concerned to keep the underdogs as far as possible from politics and at bottom everyone might well have been grateful for this.⁵⁶

For Křenek, who in 1934 wrote "one may think about feudalism what one likes,"⁵⁷ the liberal revolutions of 1848 began a precipitous decline in Austria's political culture, leading to the unrelievedly bleak political landscape in which he found himself from the late twenties onward. The Austrian novelist Joseph Roth, a friend of Křenek's, found palpable continuity between succeeding generations of political movements. Roth's formula, "the fathers of National Socialism were the Social Democrats, and their grand-

55. Ernst Křenek, "Wagners Beziehung zu Wien," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 20 April 1930, *Literaturblatt*, 6.

56. Ernst Křenek, "A Few Words About Johann Strauss," in *Exploring Music: Essays by Ernst Křenek*, trans. Margaret Shenfield and Geoffrey Skelton (New York: October House, 1966), 19-22, at 19. Originally published as "Ein paar Worte über Johann Strauss," *Die Oper: Blätter des Breslauer Stadttheaters* 19 (1929-30): 292-94.

57. Ernst Křenek, "Eindrücke von einer Spanienreise," *Wiener Zeitung*, 20 April 1934, 6-8, at 8.

fathers were the liberal Jews,"⁵⁸ neatly lumps together all the tendencies that Křenek found distasteful.

As the composer's reference to the "underdogs" might suggest, Křenek had a well-developed sense of the distinction between the noble folk (*Volk*) and the rabble (*Pöbel*). In *Kehraus*, the rather sleazy patrons of a cafe near a train station, listening to a tango played on a gramophone and viewing pornographic postcards, bear the full brunt of Křenek's disdain as his protagonist Othmar succumbs to hallucination.

OTHMAR: (*at first quietly, then forgetting himself completely*) These pigs! How they drool over nature! How they poison the creature with their glance! With their dog and pig snouts—at these words, the guests all turn their heads to the public. They all have idiotically grinning dogs' and pigs' heads. They remain completely immobile and sit motionless—they root about in your realm, O God, God! God, I will ask you on Judgment Day: What, what have I done, what is my sin, that I am so cursed, that I must share space, time and language with these people?⁵⁹

It is presumably a healthier community of *Volk* that congregate in the wine-garden at the opera's end, serenaded by a folksy *Schrammel* quartet.

Křenek was not really inclined to share the Left's preoccupation with the economic woes of the poorer classes. He thought Berg's depiction of life in *Wozzeck* entirely too negative.⁶⁰ The honest poor don't really feel their suffering: "Without a doubt, the life of the greater portion of the Spanish population is miserable far beyond our imagining; it has to be asked, though, how this state is actually felt subjectively."⁶¹ In the same vein Křenek idealized beggary:

58. Roth to Křenek, 24 October 1934, *Joseph Roth—Briefe*, 388.

59. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 183.

60. Křenek to Erdmann, 1 April 1930, *Begegnungen mit Eduard Erdmann*, ed. Christof Bitter and Manfred Schlösser (Anton Hain: Darmstadt, 1972), 279.

61. Ernst Křenek, "Spanien, Ein Land in Gärung von Fritz Wahl," *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 January 1935, 6.

"There is certainly an irrational connection between the forbearance of suffering and the greatness of spiritual accomplishments."⁶²

Křenek was especially unnerved by the thoughtlessness and political manipulability of the masses and distrusted the demagoguery he saw as inherent in all mass movements. His opera *Der Diktator* demonstrates the suggestibility of even those who most try to resist the title character's hypnotic power. Though Křenek capitalized on the craze for hit tunes in the mid-twenties, he maintained (especially in *Der Sprung über den Schatten*) an ironic distance from the mania for self-hypnosis that possessed the characters. As the refrain of the foxtrot from this opera goes: "Round in the circle, turn, stamp, wild dance! Oh let me go down in you, and I won't stand still for the rest of my life. Wonderful swaying, reeling, and turning *knowing thoughts no more*."⁶³ In a similar sense, the final images of *Jonny spielt auf* could suggest a dancing *Welt-Untergang*.

Nor was Křenek immune from racism, which in Austria afflicted both left and right. Though *Jonny* rose to popularity on fast-paced action and lively music, Křenek also wanted to scare conservative culture-critics. The presentation of Jonny standing atop a spinning globe, dominating the world and then advancing nonchalantly (but for some audience members, menacingly) upon the audience, had apocalyptic undertones for a public fed on Spengler's *Decline of the West*. The musicologist Eckhard John has plausibly analyzed the psychological premises of Křenek's opera:

The story of Max and his beloved, the singer Anita, is a fantasy of menace in which the woman does not take her traditional place as the composer's inspirational muse. Instead, in the shape of a violin, she is already in the hands of the "black man." And as the plot

62. Křenek, "Eindrücke von einer Spanienreise," 7.

63. Emphasis added.

progresses, as one registers the changing stage configurations, one realizes that at bottom jazz music is by no means a liberation for the composer Max, but is felt to be a sexualized and existential threat.⁶⁴

Křenek's religion formed part of the foundation for his racist sentiments. Of Columbus's discovery, Křenek wrote, "this triumph of Catholicism, too, is in effect a victory for the pure, more refined Latin spirit over the extravagant, grotesque barbaric darkness of heathen Mexico."⁶⁵ Jews in *Jonny* are also subject to ridicule: Daniello, "the crazy Jew," who incompetently tries to internationalize his Jewish name is probably a cruel caricature of the Jewish violinist Bronislaw Huberman, whose violin was stolen in a sensational case in 1919. Huberman's sentimental rubati and slides were viewed by some as a trashing of high-art culture, and they outraged National Socialists and musical progressives alike. Křenek, too, complained in the early thirties about the "Verjudung" of traditional culture.⁶⁶ The influence of Jewish capital in Vienna's political and social life was for Křenek no less nefarious—in *Kehraus*, the Berlin industrialist Herr Goldstein is a symbol of *Zivilisation* creeping in upon Austrian *Kultur*.

Once these components of Křenek's political thought are noted, it comes as less of a surprise to learn that by 1930 he had developed a taste for legitimism, for the restoration of the monarchy. The final stage-direction in *Kehraus*, "the eagles (on the tops of the towers) of St. Stephan glitter blindingly,"⁶⁷ illuminates a hope that the dual monarchy that those eagles represented would once again shine on the world stage—an aspiration that was in any case vain: few

64. Eckhard John, *Musikbolschewismus: Die Politisierung der Musik in Deutschland, 1918-1938* (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1994), 296.

65. Ernst Křenek, "Darius Milhaud," *Der Anbruch* (April-May 1930), translated and reprinted in Křenek, *Exploring Music*, 27-34, at 30.

66. *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 137, 139.

67. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 208.

countries in Europe would have tolerated a Habsburg restoration. Křenek learned patience, therefore, a patience envied him by his more rabidly monarchistic friend Roth:

Of course I know that if the Emperor of Austria is nothing but the Emperor of the Alpine swineherds, then he would not be the Emperor we would want. But to wait until the international Catholic lands were ready to accept him: That I cannot do, I am too weak, I must *experience* it, physically. That was why I had written you, and because I believed that you also felt the same urgency. I believe an Emperor, once installed on the throne, would manage to be international, thanks to his "Imperialness."⁶⁸

Instead of the monarchy came the authoritarian government of Engelbert Dollfuß, who stripped Austria of its democratic institutions. In October 1932 Dollfuß made systematic use of an obscure law passed during the World War which allowed unilateral executive decisions. The parliament was dissolved in March 1933. At the end of March the Republikanische Schützbund, a Social-Democratic paramilitary organization which saw itself as a defender of Austria's post-war constitution, was declared illegal. Its enemy, the fascistic, paramilitary Heimwehr, was employed in its elimination. After Austrian Nazis committed a series of terrorist acts, the Austrian National Socialist Party, as bitter an enemy of the Heimwehr as were the Social Democrats, was declared illegal in June 1933. The Communist party was declared illegal in May 1933, as was the Social Democratic Party nine months later. The Austrian Republic was now declared a *Bundesstaat*, specifically a *Christliche Ständestaat*, a corporative state whose social and political theory was based upon the papal encyclical of 1931, "Quadragesimo Anno."

During this period, Dollfuß sought the support of the Italian government in defending Austria against threatened

68. Roth to Křenek, 31 October 1934, *Joseph Roth—Briefe*, 390.

encroachments by Hitler's German *Reich*. These friendly relations were maintained by the appeasement of the fascist parties within Austria. For this reason, the dictatorships of 1933-1938 are often characterized as "Austro-fascist." The novelist and essayist Gerhard Roth blamed the anti-democratic behavior of Austria's conservative leadership for the catastrophe which befell the country from 1933 to 1945: "When... Dollfuß dissolved the Social-Democratic Party and ruled the political scene with his Vaterländische Front, the resistance to fascism was halved, cut in thirds."⁶⁹ As Roth and others have argued, the rule of Dollfuß (1932-34) and his successor Kurt Schuschnigg (1934-38) made Austria ripe for an even greater political catastrophe.

Whether the Austrian government was in fact fascist, or merely authoritarian, Křenek lent it his full support, providing pro-government articles on cultural matters in the *Wiener Zeitung* through 1937. Křenek's claim that this government seemed to some "only a second-hand fascism, mitigated by *Schlamperei*,"⁷⁰ hardly does justice to the feelings of those on the losing end of constitutional reform, those disenfranchised, exiled, or executed. It trivializes a grave political catastrophe. In the first part of 1934, Křenek even flirted with the language of totalitarianism, terminology employed by the ideologues of Austro-fascism as well as of National Socialism.⁷¹ He wrote of "the spirit to which we owe our duty, striving after continuity and totality (that is, the Catholic)," and declared that

69. Gerhard Roth, "Was für den einen das Paradies ist, kann für den anderen die Hölle sein," in *Das doppelköpfige Österreich*, 28.

70. Křenek, "Self-Analysis," 27.

71. Ernst Hanisch, "Der politische Katholizismus als ideologischer Träger des 'Austrofascismus'," in *"Austrofascismus": Beiträge über Politik, Ökonomie und Kultur, 1934-1938*, ed. E. Tálos and W. Neugebauer (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1984): 53-74, at 58.

To effect a true unity, a real totality in its best sense, the framework encompassing all energies should be as wide as possible, and the idea in whose name these energies should be directed should be as simple and universal as possible.⁷²

With these rather extreme views, it is small wonder that Křenek was "almost the only musician of international reputation and noteworthy creative power who supported the revival of the tradition of the old, supernatural Empire, conceived in the spirit of Catholic Christianity."⁷³ It seems an ironic footnote that in 1936, Křenek should also claim that all composers outside the Schönberg-School, among whose members Křenek now included himself, were more or less conformists.⁷⁴

Austria in Musica: Křenek's Nationalist Works

So ends this brief résumé of Křenek's somewhat distant relationship to the political Left and his approach toward the political Right. If the visceral impact of 150,000 Germans carousing through Vienna's streets shouting "Heil Deutsche Sangesbrüder!" was not enough to scare him into action, the association of the *Anschluß* with the Social Democrats might have done the trick. As Křenek was forced to admit, though, "Present-day Austria is once again a by-product of a catastrophe, the afterbirth of decline, wanted by nobody. Under such premises, it is difficult to fill the concept of the Austrian character with positive content."⁷⁵ The Austrian idea being *terra incognita*, Křenek set out to discover it. As he declared in the opening line of the *Reisebuch aus den*

72. Ernst Křenek, "Problem der Werdenden," *Wiener Zeitung*, 27 May 1934, Sonntagsbeilage, 1-2.

73. Křenek, "Self-Analysis," 27.

74. Ernst Křenek, *Ueber neue Musik: sechs Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die theoretischen Grundlagen* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1937), 96.

75. Křenek, "Von der Aufgabe," 4.

österreichischen Alpen, composed in the summer of 1929, "to know my land, I now set out on wandering." That Křenek would search for the "true Austria" in the countryside should not surprise. The capital had long been known as "Red Vienna," as the city had become the center of the Social Democratic movement. The libretto for *Kehraus* is filled with invective against urban culture. The composer, however, always remained too much of a city boy to sing unreservedly the praises of the rude folk in their remotest homes. As a compromise, he sought out the urban-rural interface, the *Heurigen* (wine-gardens) and *Gaststätte* (inns) in the countryside.

When he arrived, he would have found that the tourist industry had already beat him there. Though intellectuals and politicians had been slow in fashioning a national image of "Austria," those whose business was selling Austria to increasingly mobile world-travelers had to have some notion of the product they were selling. To my knowledge, the complex fashion by which Austrians and the foreigners who visited them constructed the "typically Austrian" has not been studied. At the least, though, one might presume that the musically-inclined tourist would seek to live out the "exoticisms" in the host country that he had seen on stage in his own. And for this tourist mentality, when the Austrians aren't enjoying themselves in the ballrooms of the second act of *Fledermaus* or Heuberger's *Opernball*, they are to be found in the *Gaststätte cum Heurigen* in the third act of *Der Rosenkavalier*. From a musical standpoint, reality and stage-reality had grown together—just as the *Schrammel* ensembles of the *Heurigen* began performing more operetta tunes, composers were constantly incorporating and fabricating folkish materials in their stage works.

Though Křenek intensely disliked the vacationers that came to visit his country (an aversion that was again tinged

with anti-Semitism), he himself was a visitor in his own land. In the wine-gardens that inhabit the *Reisebuch*, Křenek gained his first image of what he thought was truly "Austrian." As Othmar, the protagonist of *Kehraus*, concludes, "Here, gentlemen, here is my world. I will remain in this vineyard given to me by good Kundrather."⁷⁶ It is an acoustic image of this world that Křenek sought to transmit in his song cycle. Years later Křenek would lament:

It is regrettable that in Austria of all places, where the treasure of folk-song is still livelier than is customary in German-speaking lands, no one has yet attempted to imitate Bartók's achievements with Hungarian folklore by working out similar intensifying transformations of this cache of melodies.⁷⁷

But the *Reisebuch* shows the beginnings of such an attempt to produce a national art in a way that Křenek could have considered "Bartókian." As the libretto for *Kehraus* clearly demonstrates, the conservative Křenek was anxious to re-establish conventions in Austria's social and political life. Along with the restitution of decent morality went the restitution of worthy, traditional musical conventions. "As is well known, the democratizing dissolution of the conventions of everyday life has gone hand in hand with the destruction of our musical systems."⁷⁸ He regretted that "there isn't anything anymore which could be regarded as 'forbidden,' in the sense of a traditional musical convention."⁷⁹ Reestablishing musical "conventions"⁸⁰ became a priority for Křenek.

76. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 206.

77. Ernst Křenek, "Ueber die Volksverbundenheit der Kunst," *Wiener Zeitung*, 20 May 1934, Pfingstbeilage, 1-2.

78. Ernst Křenek, "Neue Humanität und Alte Sachlichkeit," *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* 24, no. 4 (April 1931): 244-58.

79. Ernst Křenek, "Banalitäten," *Der Querschnitt* 10, no. 4 (April 1930): 237-38, at 237.

80. Ernst Křenek, "Franz Schubert und wir," in *Bericht über den internationalen Kongress für Schubertforschung, Wien 25. bis 29. November 1928* (Augsburg: Benno Filser Verlag, 1929), 69-76, at 73.

(dem Andenken Franz Schuberts)

8. UNSER WEIN



*) Wo nicht anders bezeichnet, elastisches, weiches staccato, eins und drei etwas überbetont.

Example 1a. Ernst Křenek, *Reisebuch aus den österreichischen Alpen*.
No. 8, "Unser Wein," mm. 1-2.

The eighth song in the cycle, "Unser Wein," illustrates well Křenek's nationalist style (example 1a). Though Křenek makes liberal use throughout the cycle of "we" and "us" to define the typically Austrian, this is the only song in which the first person plural finds its way to the title, turning the piece into a programmatic act of national identification. Austria is a nation of wine villages: Gumpoldskirchen, Baden, etc.—whose products are dear to Austrians but scorned by foreigners. Musically, Křenek has incorporated gestures idiomatic to *Heurigen* performances into the song's musical text. Special performance instructions are given for the recurring upbeat: "when not otherwise indicated, elastic, light staccato, one and three somewhat overemphasized." Commercial recordings of old *Heurigen* performances document numerous models for Křenek's stylish upbeat figure.⁸¹ The song's closing bars are also reminiscent of the musical world of the *Heurigen*. The *ritardando* at the end of the phrase, and the melodic lingering on scale-degree two is a cliché from operetta music as well

81. These are documented, for example, on *So Hab'n Ma's in Breitensee Gern: Fritz Matauschek und sein Ensemble* (1910-1926), Basilisk Records DOCD-3011, and *O Du Süasse Weana Musi: Max Jauner & "D' Grinzinger"* (1901-1910), Basilisk Records, DOCD-3014.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is in G major, 4/4 time, with lyrics "bie - tet sich der Son - ne dar...". It begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a dotted half note, and then a half note. Above the vocal line, the markings "rit." and "Sostenuto" are present. The piano accompaniment is in G major, 4/4 time, and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many triplets. Dynamic markings "pp" and "ppp" are used in the piano part. The score is marked with a "Coda" symbol and an asterisk at the end.

Example 1b. Ernst Křenek, *Reisebuch aus den österreichischen Alpen*.
No. 8, "Unser Wein," mm. 48-52.

as from the *Heurigen's* musical ambience (example 1b).⁸² Throughout the entire cycle, similar melodic cadences—to which a judicious portamento would be à propos—evoke these two "typically Austrian" performance worlds.

To present-day ears, the rhythm of Křenek's song seems to resemble more closely a habanera or a tango than anything Austrian. The triplet figures often found in these dances never occur in Křenek's song, though. Neither is the rhythm ♩.♩.♩ particularly characteristic of the operetta or *Heurigen* repertoire. Actually those dotted rhythms might have originated at a historical, not a geographical distance. In his 1928 opera *Mondnacht*, the Viennese composer Julius Bittner highlighted an eight-measure passage in the vocal score (example 2). Though Bittner's nationalistic score is filled with dance-steps and *volkstümlich* elements, this "Old Viennese Folksong" was the only one the composer footnoted as being of folk origin. A dotted rhythm similar to Křenek's is found in the second and third bars. Bittner's citation must have been quite obscure and old-fashioned: If the folk-song were widely known, there would have been no reason for Bittner to footnote it. Křenek heard Bittner's

82. For a sampling of this cliché, see Lotte Schöne & Richard Tauber in *Operetta*, Nimbus Records, NI 7833.

Spaicic (überlegen)

Das *) hast du mir beim Heu - ri - gen doch selbst ge - sagt. Ich glaub'

p

*) Altes Wiener Volkslied

Example 2. Julius Bittner, *Mondnacht*. Act I, mm. 325-29.

opera in December 1928 and wrote his parents of his favorable impression of the work.⁸³ Křenek, on the lookout for truly Austrian music, likely took Bittner's footnote as a guarantee of its ethnic authenticity. In Křenek's song, a rhythm no longer typical in contemporary Austrian popular music became, paradoxically, a symbol for Ur-Austrian musicality.

Standing above "Unser Wein" is the dedication to the memory of Franz Schubert, linking it (and Křenek's nationalism) with the events of 1928. Schubertisms in the cycle are too numerous and obvious to require elaboration here. Schubert-kitsch was of course just as much a part of the tourist's "typically Austrian" musical landscape as were the *Heurigen*: Why else would 150,000 *Deutsche Sangesbrüder* choose to meet in Vienna? For the Schubert centenary Bittner specially composed a Singspiel *Der unsterbliche Franz*, in which the music consisted almost entirely of arrangements of Schubert. (Bittner was merely capitalizing on the continued success of Berté's *Das Dreimäderlhaus*, another life-of-Schubert operetta made up of arrangements of Schubert's music, which premiered in Vienna in 1916.) A

83. Křenek to Ernst Křenek, Sr., 4 December 1928, *Handschriftensammlung*, I.N. 117.216, Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek.

good definition of Viennese Schubert-kitsch *anno* 1928 was offered by Elsa Bienenfeld, music critic for the *Neues Wiener Journal*: She chastised her readers for celebrating "local-patriotic Schubert-Fests, which cozy up to a Schubert they think to be 'Viennese born and bred'; a harmless, easy-going connoisseur of life."⁸⁴ Křenek's union of the Schubert-topos with the easy sociability of the *Heurigen* and operetta worlds partakes of this popular image of Schubert. The published edition of Křenek's work also sought to benefit from the trade in Schubert-memorabilia: The oblong *Querformat* of the book imitated the original format of Schubert's own song cycles, which in 1928 had been reprinted in a facsimile edition.

Mannerisms from operetta and *Heurigen* music are found occasionally in works composed after the *Reisebuch*. Unexpected examples appear in the twelve-tone opera *Karl V*. The warning of Křenek's "Voice of God" periodically evokes pastoral horn-calls (example 3a). The opera's *Zwischenspiel* sports a rather incongruous waltz episode (example 3b). Despite the absence of tempo change, Křenek manages to reproduce here the three-note *Auftakt* he had so carefully described in "Unser Wein."

More prominent than these reminiscences of "Old Austria" are the Schubertisms which appear in works immediately following the *Reisebuch* (including the completion of a piano sonata left unfinished by Schubert). The second subject of the Fifth String Quartet's first movement contains one such example. With Schubertian lyricism, it illustrates a musical possibility Křenek valued most highly in Schubert: "In Schubert, a turn to the minor is still a decisive musical event—in a chromatic universal chaos it is as unimportant as is everything else which can occur in such

84. Else Bienenfeld, "Hausse in Schubert," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 8 July 1928, 11-12, at 12.

Voice of God

ein - ge bor - en So hns im wah - ren Gei - ste. Wie

+ Pos.

Hr.

Pk.

Vlc. Kb.

mf

f

Example 3a. Ernst Křenek, *Karl V.* Act I, mm. 93-97.

Poco più mosso (♩. 54)

pp

mf

f

Vl.

Hr.

Example 3b. Ernst Křenek, *Karl V. Zwischenspiel*, mm. 12-15.

Calando (molto!)(♩. 64 zurück)

f

f

p

Trp. Vl.

Hr.

(hoch.)

Example 3c. Ernst Křenek, *Karl V. Zwischenspiel*, mm. 40-42.

music."⁸⁵ Astonishingly, even in the "chromatische Allerschaos" of the twelve-tone *Karl V*, Křenek still makes use of this Schubertian trick (example 3c).

Perhaps more significant than these uses of Schubertian or "alt-österreichisch" topoi was Křenek's greater adherence to traditional principles of tonal progression and tonal form. The first song of Křenek's cycle unambiguously establishes a tonal center of E^b major before briefly tonicizing closely related keys (C minor, A^b major) and cadencing unambiguously on the dominant, E^b. Further modulations lead us to E^b minor, which in Schubertian fashion shifts to E^b major, the key in which the piece ends. While this modal shift and a few textural features sound "Schubertian," many of the harmonic practices featured in this song are too general to be specifically defined as elements of Schubert-pastiche. The presentation of tonality is a distinct element of Křenek's new style, separable from specific imitations of Schubert.

Ever since 1924 Křenek had been repentant for the atonal sins of his youth. In that year he wrote the pianist and composer Eduard Erdmann, "As you probably know, I took my first step in cultivating a distinctive style of expression by furiously writing 'Linear' music like someone gone berserk (String Quartet)."⁸⁶ Křenek's harmonies had been the incidental product of whatever combinations of voice-leading he thought appropriate. Křenek expressed his remorse with an evocative commercial metaphor, fitting for the year following Germany's inflation trauma:

Chords are not related to one another *only* by their degrees of dissonance, but above all through the arrangement and hierarchy of their

85. Křenek, "Franz Schubert und wir," 75.

86. Křenek to Erdmann, 7 and 14 May 1924, *Begegnungen mit Eduard Erdmann*, 260.

root tones. In my opinion we have in a horrible way carelessly run our business into the ground.⁸⁷

Křenek continued the inflation metaphor throughout the decade, linking it to moral decay of the post-war era (a favorite tactic of conservative commentators): "This tendency toward the ever greater differentiation of musical materials through the infinite increase of their components has, in fact, a feeling of 'spiritual inflation' about it."⁸⁸ The reintroduction of tonal conventions was for Křenek a gradual process. Though Křenek began to take account of what he saw as the harmonic implications of chords, it was not until 1928, after he settled down in Vienna, that he attempted stringently to control the events of a piece in relationship to the "Ordnung und Hierarchie ihrer Grundtöne"—this "order" being reinstated just at the moment he sought to introduce Schubertian and "alt-österreichisch" conventions into the song cycle.

A comparison with Křenek's setting of Goethe's "Monolog der Stella," written in the first part of 1928, while Křenek was still wandering back and forth between Austria and France, will demonstrate that the use of a tonal center which audibly governs the entire harmonic process of a song was an achievement specifically of the *Reisebuch*. The monologue's opening line, "You bloom beautifully, more beautifully than ever, dear, dear place of hoped-for eternal rest," is accompanied by conventionally tonal music suggesting, though not cadencing in, E^b major, only to veer off into a tonal abyss on the next line, "But you attract me no more." A series of alternating recitatives and ariosi in various keys ensues, and tonal stability is only reached with a refrain in F major somewhat *à la manière de Poulenc*.

87. *Ibid.*, 261.

88. Křenek, "Banalitäten," 237.

By the time he came to write the *Reisebuch*, though, the "liebe Stätte der gehofften ewigen Ruhe" was precisely what Křenek was seeking. Consequently, the tonal center of many of the songs is very strongly asserted. Those songs which are more tonally ambiguous generally justify their extravagance by making a poetic point. When Křenek composes a song about tourists, whom he privately considered to be a species of "eternal Jews," who "make themselves prominent during the high season" in the countryside, the harmonies are, like their subject in Křenek's view, rootless.⁸⁹ Tonal stability, enriched through clearly comprehensible modulations, is related to the conceptual solidity of the *Heimat*. The triads and tonal progressions of the piece were not merely part of some "Back to Tonality" movement. When contrasted with musical instability, triads and tonal progressions become ideological elements, in this case an attempt to construct and reinforce a notion of rootedness in Austrian soil.

Given Křenek's efforts to fill the Austrian idea with positive content, it is not surprising that he didn't much like *Wozzeck*, a work whose sympathy for an oppressed "arme Leut'" was as obvious as its assessment of their prospects was bleak. "Neither nature nor human existence is so negative, questionable, and suspicious," Křenek complained in a letter to Erdmann.⁹⁰ Such political one-sidedness, Křenek opined, had baleful musical consequences:

Wozzeck appears to affirm a region of the "peripheral" where no "Center" exists, nor is one even contemplated; this runs counter to my opinion...to prefer the peripheral, but always keeping an eye on

89. "Up and down—just like madmen people are running all summer long up and down amidst the mountains as if an ancient curse would chase them, as if fire-crackers were exploding under them." "Auf und Ab," song no. 10 from *Reisebuch aus den österreichischen Alpen*.

90. Křenek to Erdmann, 1 April 1930, *Begegnungen mit Eduard Erdmann*, 279.

a tonal center. Therefore I object to Berg's one-sidedness. Certainly this music is quite suitable when the moon rises "like blood-stained steel," but what does one do when it is the sun that rises? And even today the sun certainly still does rise. I will simply not let that be denied me.⁹¹

Křenek often used the rising sun as a symbol with political and religious connotations. The end of *Kehraus* features a blinding sunrise to accompany the beginning of spring. (The gesture of divine grace demonstrated in *Leben des Orest* was also accompanied by the beginning of spring.) The song cycle *Durch die Nacht* features a seemingly endless angst-ridden night filled with premonitions of death, a night blissfully ended by dawn and the promise of springtime. And the Emperor Karl's *Weltreich* was holy precisely because it was one on which the sun never set.

Discussing *Wozzeck*, Křenek linked the sources of spiritual or social authority directly with specific musical resources. Křenek criticizes Berg's *Weltanschauung* for its lack of social or spiritual redemption. According to Křenek, Berg's music lacks as a consequence a musical "Center." The tonal elements "of course feel nothing like a tonic that has been worked toward."⁹² For Křenek, dissonant harmonies and odd progressions can only unveil their meaning when they are perceived as radiating from a tonal center.

We have seen this analogy between a harmonic "Center" and Utopia at work in the *Reisebuch*. (The perceived absence of just such an analogy in *Wozzeck* had irritated Křenek.) The harmonies of the *Reisebuch* remain closely bound up with the newly restored tonal cadences and progressions. By virtue of its perpetual tonicity, the Austrian landscape, which had been newly restored to Křenek, becomes an idealized, Utopian space, a rediscovered fatherland.

91. *Ibid.*, 281.

92. *Ibid.*, 280.

From Tonality to Twelve-Tone Techniques; From Volkstümlichkeit to Catholicism

Throughout the twenties Křenek's social and political ideals had been fairly mutable. After 1928, Křenek steadfastly remained an Austrian patriot. His political and social ideals continued to develop, though. As the nature of Křenek's Austrian Utopia altered over the following decade, the musical means by which he depicted it, that is, the nature of the musical "Center" that represented it, changed as well.

Volkstümlichkeit still characterizes the musical Utopia of *Kehraus*. At the end of this conservative, anti-capitalist, anti-urban injunction for city-dwellers to return to the world of the *Reisebuch*, a folkish *Schrammel* quartet crosses the stage.⁹³ The conceptual and musical "Centers" of Křenek's next two vocal works, the song cycle *Durch die Nacht* and the song "Die Nachtigall" (composed in January and February 1931), are noticeably different. In these lyric meditations, Křenek avoids direct appeals to the Austrian populace. Consequently, stylistic markers of "Austrianness" are much less in evidence.

Unlike the musical and ideational "Center" of the *Reisebuch*, Utopia in *Durch die Nacht* is not present from the beginning. It appears first as if in a vision and is ultimately achieved only in the cycle's final song. The harmonic progressions of most of the cycle are "peripheral," composed of passages which vaguely suggest tonal centers without firmly establishing any of them. At the end of the second song, the narrator declares his faith in God and the miracles God is capable of introducing into the world:

I am still waiting for the miracle. Nothing is true, or even possible, which occurs any other way. I don't deny God, I deny everything which denies him. And when he wills it, everything is a miracle.

93. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 206.

This pious credo is of course accompanied by music from the harmonic "Center," a harmonic progression which would conventionally be described as "tonal" (example 4a). But this is not the same "tonality" that we find in the *Reisebuch*. Though the D-major tonality is introduced by a series of chords which hammer out all of the notes of the diatonic scale, the functional compass of *Durch die Nacht*'s tonality extends far beyond those seven notes. The tonal center expands, encompassing in a phrase the remotest harmonies, circling through a seemingly endless series of descending progressions, mostly based on subdominant relationships.⁹⁴ At the point seemingly furthest from the D-major tonic, an F^b-major chord is enharmonically reinterpreted as E-major, which resolves deceptively onto F major. The enharmonic shift is a small "miracle," a point at which the Euclidean geometry governing the line of descending harmonies breaks down: A harmony that was at first embedded in the subdominant's nether regions is reinterpreted as functionally dominant (the dominant of the dominant in D major, a harmony lying no longer "beneath" the tonic, but "above" it). The *quasi tromba* performance indications allude to the divine element in this irrational circling. The idealized image of tonality offered here is one that almost magically integrates harmonically and melodically all twelve notes of the scale and contains harmonies built on almost all of them.

The ideational and musical opposite of this all-encompassing harmonic totality is the tonally rootless linear unfolding of a twelve-tone motive (example 4b) which accompanies the words "That suspicion wafts toward me again, a downy feather of that horror, nothingness." The tone-row, which annihilates tonal stability, recurs at points

94. The simplified repetition of this phrase in the piano on the following page clarifies the harmonic underpinnings of the progression.

Adagio

Noch wart ich auf das Wun - der. Nichts

accel.

— is wahr, — und mög - lich daß sich an - de - res er - eig - net.

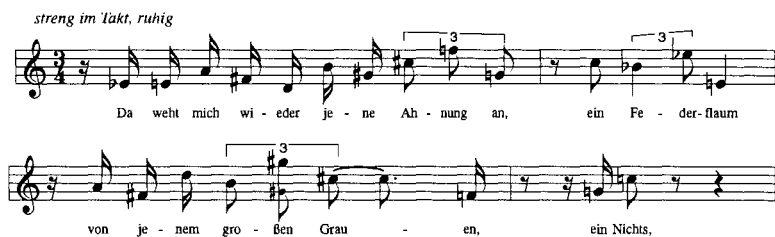
a tempo (Adagio)

Nicht Gott, nur al - les leugn' ich, was ihn leug - net, und wenn er will.

quasi tromba

ist al - les wun - der bar.

Example 4a. Ernst Křenek, *Durch die Nacht*, mm. 76-87.



Example 4b. Ernst Křenek, *Durch die Nacht*, mm. 31-34. Vocal line only.

in the story where the narrator's spirits are at their lowest. The terror instilled by night's "demon eyes" is only quelled by the narrator's prayer in the penultimate song, which dispels the twelve-tone row in a cascade of diatonic bliss. The divine guarantee that redemption will be permanent is depicted in the song cycle by the integration of the tone row into the harmonies of the song cycle's wonder-working melody (example 4c).



Example 4c. Ernst Křenek, *Durch die Nacht*, mm. 347-50.

Karl Kraus's poem "Die Nachtigall" also displays an opposition between the terrestrial and the transcendent. The nightingale announces "You children of humans...pass away so quickly, and we are forever!" As we might expect, radiant tonal triads accompany references to the divine "shining day" and the redemptive promise of love. Křenek represents the eternity of the nightingale's cry "And we are eternal!" with a passage which integrates tonally the remotest harmonies (example 5). In an expansive phrase, similar to example 4a, a series of progressions emphasizing subdominant functions descends from a tonicized E major

The musical score is for a piano and voice piece. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system shows a vocal line with the lyrics "im" and "mer." and a piano accompaniment starting with a *mf* dynamic. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with a *mf espr.* dynamic. The third system features a piano accompaniment with *f* and *ff* dynamics. The fourth system includes a tempo change from *rit.* to *a tempo (Adagio)* and features a piano accompaniment with *f* dynamics. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time.

Example 5. Ernst Křenek, "Die Nachtigall," mm. 23-29.

down to the distant B^b major (the only other unadulterated triad in the passage) before sweeping back to E major.

Comparing the texts of *Durch die Nacht* and "Die Nachtigall" with those of the works that precede them, it is clear that at the beginning of 1931 Křenek had, at least for the time being, gotten out of his system the need to depict the society and its discontents that he had expressed in *Jonny*. The composer took Othmar's precept to heart: "We have squandered the time for revolutions, the time for forming a community. Today, everyone must make their own start toward becoming a human."⁹⁵ Social identifications had become for Křenek more of a hindrance than a help. As the composer wrote to Gubler: "The decisions which face us and make demands upon us take place in realms where social considerations no longer play any concrete role."⁹⁶ Křenek took Kraus's personal, spiritual texts and set them with a musical language devoid of self-conscious regionalisms. The tonal centers of these works are neither *volkstümlich* nor Schubertian. Tonality is an abstract, almost systematic concept, demonstrating its totalizing properties by reconciling perceived opposites.

But in turning his attention from the social to the spiritual, Křenek had not entirely given up his old conceptions of "Austrianness"—the April 1931 premiere of *Durch die Nacht* took place on a program otherwise devoted to little-known Schubert songs. The evening, as Křenek mentioned to Gubler, "was meant to be somewhat didactic."⁹⁷ Only in the course of the summer of 1931 did Křenek turn sour on the notions of "Austrian culture" then current in circulation. The rejection of *Kehraus um St. Stephan* by the Leipzig Opera, and the implied rejection of Křenek's politics, pro-

95. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 207.

96. Křenek to Gubler, 10 January 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 76.

97. Křenek to Gubler, 16 March 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 103.

vided him with an occasion to review his strategy for renewing the Austrian nation. The composer came to the conclusion that the pastoral idylls he had been advocating were a completely inadequate response to the crisis into which Austria had plunged by 1931: "The shallow optimism with which the opera ends is a typical operatic formula. It is not capable of directly expressing the day-to-day problems which are unfolded in the opera's plot."⁹⁸

The composer felt himself at a dead-end. If Vienna had once had a source of authentic culture, it was now a cesspool of kitsch. In a feuilleton on "Vienna's Spiritual Situation," the composer categorically asserts that

Vienna is neither the city of fried chicken and the *Heurigen*, nor is it the city of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and so on, and so on, up through Ganglbberger and Pausperl, the music heroes of today (as our cheap arrangers would have us believe—those who try to bamboozle the visitors here for the benefit of their pocketbooks).⁹⁹

He came to feel that the "Austrian culture" he had been propagating had been irretrievably debased by sinister mercantile influences. On vacation, Křenek found the dining room of his inn invaded by the radio broadcasting from Vienna "in concentrated form the brain-softening pap of this Jewified (*verjudet*) yodel culture."¹⁰⁰ Křenek wrote Gubler of an old aristocratic villa in the countryside now "*verjudet* and contaminated by the prominent personages who bare their operetta grins from every display window. Herr Albers, Herr Tauber, Lehar and many others...befoul the noble facades."¹⁰¹ For Křenek, Austria stood at a cross-

98. Křenek to Gubler, 7 July 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 109.

99. Ernst Křenek, "Wiens geistige Situation," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 19 July 1931, 16.

100. Křenek to Gubler, 10 September 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 137.

101. Křenek to Gubler, 12 September 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 139.

roads—uncertain as to whether Greco-Roman spirit would be validated or whether central Europe would be overrun by the “*verjudet*” barbarity of present-day Germany, where the Jews in the Cafe Central produce their alpine folk-songs which the troglodytes, if they aren’t able to read, listen to on the radio.”¹⁰² The comical attempts at a putsch by the Heimwehr in the fall of 1932 only increased his pessimism. It had become impossible to fill the “Austrian idea” with positive content.

This pessimism is reflected in Křenek’s *Gesänge des späten Jahres*, composed on his own texts from October to December 1931. The ten songs of the cycle usually end on dissonant chords, sonorities distant from the Utopian “Center” of the tonic triad. The tonal “Center” is reached only temporarily, in the middles of songs. The harmonic structures of these songs, then, depict the alienation Křenek felt from all that had once given comfort. Characteristically, though, Křenek never does without some moment of consolation. He was, after all, not the blasphemer that he would make the composer of *Wozzeck* out to be.

Křenek’s alienation is most palpable when the song texts treat homes and homelessness, themes explicitly dealt with in the fourth and fifth songs, the “Ballade vom Fest” and “Heimatgefühl.” The former song is a Kafkaesque tale. The narrator has received a party invitation, which he shows to the gatekeeper of a castle. The gatekeeper silently opens the door for the narrator, who proceeds to wander aimlessly through the castle in search of the party. The narrator drifts from room to room, and though he distantly hears the noise of the party, he can never seem to find it. The others he meets along the way can offer him no help. The song ends with the lost narrator wondering “*Ach, why is it*

102. Křenek to Gubler, 16 September 1931, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 146.

given to us to learn so little about exactly that which surrounds us, and why do we yearn so much for that knowledge?" As the "Ballade"'s narrator gives voice to Křenek's sense of isolation, the gentleman who issued the invitation to the party acquires religious overtones. The "Herr"'s divine aura is made apparent when the poet first asks spitefully "Where is the gentleman who invited us?" only to rue his rashness and repeat his question "humbly," "Where, where? Is he waiting for us?"

The song is written with twelve-tone techniques. Just as the narrator never finds the party, tonality, as it was presented in *Durch die Nacht* or "Die Nachtigall" remains a distant mirage (example 6). Though triads accompany the phrase "Sometimes we are quite close: We can hear the music and the noise of the guests," these triads are as distant from an integrating, totalizing tonality as the remotest dissonance. Křenek uses twelve-tone techniques here to realize in music

Manch mal sind wir schon ganz nah:

Wir hören schon

mf *p* *f* *f*

mf *hohl* *sfz*

Example 6. Ernst Křenek, *Gesänge des späten Jahres*.
No. 4, "Ballade vom Fest," mm. 236-45.

a harmonic labyrinth that has no tonal goal. The device would keep triads from sounding tonal, since for Křenek the constraints of the technique continually confounded attempts to construct traditional tonal progressions. It was for their anti-tonal properties that Křenek valued the "technical security" of the twelve-tone techniques in this song cycle.¹⁰³

But though the harmony, like the "Ballade"'s narrator, is condemned to remain forever on the periphery, there exists a musical "Center" nonetheless: the tone row itself. Křenek does not employ the tone row thematically, as Schönberg or Webern might. Only occasionally is the presence of the row intended to be audible. For Křenek, twelve-tone techniques were devices to create harmonic and melodic activity governed by a largely unseen master hand. Thus the "Herr," who has placed the narrator in his rootless, transitory state, is also related to the unseen force of the tone row which controls the musical proceedings, as it were, supernaturally. The "Herr"'s invitation itself calls forth the row (mm. 1-7). Though in the castle all is confusion, a form of integrity is still to be found in the transcendent, the divine.

"Heimatgefühl" follows the "Ballade vom Fest" in the cycle. It, too, is written with twelve-tone techniques, though the inner voices are often filled in with freely-chosen notes. In it the poet struggles to maintain a sense of identity with the homeland, though it is "sunk in the tormenting nettles of contemptible plagues." His credo—"Nevertheless, it is still my forest,...it is still my city, in which I must put up with it all"—at first promises solace in that it is marked by a progression onto D minor which in the context of the song sounds cadential (example 7). But this promise of stability and redemption withers away. Just as the poet confesses

103. Hans Redlich to Křenek, 26 July 1932, *Handschriftensammlung*, I.N. 114.768, Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek.

mit langsamer Steigerung, aber ruhig im Tempo

so ist es doch im - mer mein Wald,

pp

Example 7. Ernst Křenek, *Gesänge des späten Jahres*.
No. 5, "Heimatgefühl," mm. 32-35.

that the *Heimatsstadt* is less an object of love than the site of dull resignation, the harmonies sink into ambiguous whole-tone chords, offering harmonic respite from the nagging major sevenths and minor ninths, but constituting no substitute for a real home key. The poem ends with the image of trains leaving the city for parts unknown, accompanied by unsettled dissonances. The song leaves open the question of whether acts of local identification are not ultimately arbitrary. Owing to the use of twelve-tone techniques, the seemingly tonal "Center" of the D-minor cadence is really no closer to harmonic stability than the dissonances accompanying the trains journeying to their far-off destinations.

Despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the almost unrelieved gloominess of the cycle, Křenek closes the work with a song, "Der Genuß des Unendlichen," which promises transcendence and redemption. "Once in many hundred thousand days or years I will perhaps reach the place which my eyes have never seen," a place free of disillusionment where "I may trust the beloved appearance."¹⁰⁴ This heavenly, blissful spot is anticipated in the preceding song, "Vor dem Tod," where the poet yearns for the "very distant grace of the other realm." The stormy passagework of the

104. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 406.

piano interlude (titled "Der Augenblick") which connects "Vor dem Tod" with "Der Genuß des Unendlichen" is brought to a sudden halt when the piano bangs out the notes C and C \sharp in its lowest register. Not only do these tones create a big, apocalyptic racket, but they also define the two tonal centers of "Der Genuß des Unendlichen." The pitches of the song's opening hew closely to the notes of the C-major scale, and the work closes with a luminous C \sharp -major sonority (examples 8a and 8b). The "directed tonality," this progression from C major to the distant C \sharp , mirrors in music the process of ascending to the heavenly place, "I ride up above on eagle's wings between tolling bells until I reach the space where nothing fades."

The arrival is marked by a series of tinkly chord progressions, *quasi celesta*. Can heaven be far behind? Though these progressions sound identical—a static, unchanging twinkling—there are subtle differences. The final chord of the first series is a C-major chord with an added second. Each successive progression closes with a harmony which raises one note of this tetrachord up half a step (in order, D \sharp , G \sharp , E \sharp , and C \sharp). The series thus ends with a tonal-sounding cadence in C \sharp major. At the end of this long song cycle, a musical "Center" has at last been reached. Of the ten songs in the cycle, only "Der Genuß des Unendlichen" ends with harmonies suggesting closure.¹⁰⁵ The first three chords of each of the final progressions form together a complex of twelve tones (example 8b). They are color chords; their weak functional tendencies serve to illustrate "heaven's colorful orbs," a tonally indifferent sounding of the twelve elements of the musical cosmos. This "harmony of the

105. The added note at the end does not of course disrupt the listener's sense of tonal center. With this ending chord Křenek was surely alluding to the tradition of great Viennese song cycles ending with similar harmonies: Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder*, Zemlinsky's *Lyrische-Symphonie*, and in particular Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.

Adagio, molto tranquillo

ppp dolcissimo, senza espr.

*sehr distinkt
attacca*

Der Genuß des Unendlichen

Andante, molto tranquillo (♩ = 42-48)

Gesang

Klavier

ppp *dolcissimo, celeste* *p*

poco rit. *a tempo*

Ein - mal,

mp *pp semplice, senza espressione
legato sempre*

mp

Example 8a. Ernst Křenek, *Gesänge des späten Jahres*. No. 10, "Der Augenblick," mm. 64-67, and No. 11, "Der Genuß des Unendlichen," mm. 1-10.

The musical score is for a vocal and piano piece. It features a vocal line with German lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into several systems. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics 'stal ten an des Him - mels bun - te Schei - ben' and the piano accompaniment with dynamics *mf* and *p*, and the instruction 'quasi Celesta'. The second system continues the vocal line with 'un - er - schöpf - lich, un - er - müd - lich,'. The third system shows the vocal line with 'hell unschuld - los wie küh - les Glas' and the piano accompaniment with dynamics *pp*, *mf*, and *espr.*. The fourth system shows the vocal line with 'schwer von Fül - le wie die ho - hen Som - mer' and the piano accompaniment with dynamics *f*, *ff*, *p*, and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

stal ten an des Him - mels bun - te Schei - ben

mf *p* quasi Celesta

un - er - schöpf - lich, un - er - müd - lich,

hell unschuld - los wie küh - les Glas

pp *mf* *espr.* *espr.*

sostenuto a tempo

schwer von Fül - le wie die ho - hen Som - mer

f *ff* *p* *pp*

Example 8b. Ernst Křenek, *Gesänge des späten Jahres*.
No. 11, "Der Genuß des Unendlichen," mm. 55-75.

vor der Sün - de, un -

mp quasi Celesta *pp*

end - lich,

p sempre *pp*

un - end lich, un -

ppp

end lich.

8^{va}.....

mp

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a piece titled 'Křenek's Conversions' by Dubinsky, page 298. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment is in two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp. The tempo and mood are indicated by 'mp quasi Celesta'. The dynamics range from 'pp' (pianissimo) to 'ppp' (pianississimo). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and articulation marks. The lyrics are in German and appear to be a religious or spiritual text, mentioning 'vor der Sünde' (before the sin) and 'endlich' (finally). The score is divided into several systems, with the final system ending with a double bar line and a '8va' marking, suggesting a repeat or a change in the piano part.

spheres" nonetheless feels integrated into the harmonic texture of the close; it complements the slow harmonic progression from C major to C[#] major. With its placid surface, this passage presents the first positive valuation of a largely non-functional series of twelve tones.

The "Sphärenharmonie" is a dominant musical characteristic of the C[#]-major, heavenly "Utopia." The topic of the C-major opening of the song is also easily identifiable. The monophonic tune which introduces the song stays within a single hexachord, lacks a leading tone, and moves largely in stepwise motion—it is a pastiche of Gregorian chant, to be performed with devotion, but without pietistic expression. Though the first page of the song is dominated by white keys, there are no conventional tonal cadences. In having the bass line hover around D and then pass aimlessly from white key to white key, Křenek seems to be creatively re-imagining the old church modes. The "chant" is then put through many modulations and variations as the poet "ascends" to the heavenly place. The poet is lifted to this spot thanks to the instrumental power of the tune—the Divine is reached through the good offices of the Catholic liturgy. The song proposes a new source of identity, a new *Vaterland* for the poet: the Church.¹⁰⁶

As Křenek once noted in his diary: "It's my old dualism: always striving for a *modus vivendi* with existing reality, but also wanting to retain a critical distance."¹⁰⁷ The twelve-tone songs in the *Gesänge des späten Jahres* indicate that the old hopes for community and fatherland ultimately proved

106. It would still be some years before Křenek would further exploit the medieval vein. After the *Anschluß* forced the composer to abandon his Austrian patriotism, he once again took up efforts to incorporate medieval styles of composition into his works, most notably in the *Proprium missae in festo SS Innocentium martyrum (die 28 Decembris)*, op. 89, of 1940 and the *Lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae*, op. 93, of 1942.

107. Diary entry, 3 March 1940, Křenek, *Die amerikanischen Tagebücher*, 136.

deceptive. Just when the belief in the virtues of the people and practices of the fatherland was no longer to be sustained, an enthusiasm for the Church was conceived—an enthusiasm expressed in musical ideas that were by turns concrete (chant) and, to use a phrase of Křenek's, "speculative-religious" (twelve-tone techniques).¹⁰⁸

Austria's "International" Nationalism: The Political Mission of the Church

Křenek had long had a soft spot for the Church: The third song of the *Reisebuch*, "Kloster in den Alpen," praised those elegant monks who kept their distance from the *Pöbel*, and who were wise enough not to become "slaves of technology" like the city-dwellers. The composer returned to this setting in his next opera, *Karl V.* There the emperor ends his days in the monastery at St. Yuste, making his confession to the humble monk Juan de Regla. Like much else in his life, Křenek's Catholicism was individualistic and selective, as he noted in 1940:

I became quite melancholy when I saw many people go to take communion, because I myself have not yet been able to resolve to take this step. There are too many obscure things in my life, too many things done by halves.¹⁰⁹

Despite this unwillingness to assimilate completely to any group, Křenek attributed superhuman wisdom to the Church:

108. For Křenek's use of the term "spekulative-religiöse," see *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 182.

109. Diary entry, 24 March 1940, Křenek, *Die amerikanischen Tagebücher*, 141.

Christian humility demands of us that we believe in the Church instituted by Christ himself and have faith in it, even if we don't believe we can always understand the path it takes.¹¹⁰

Křenek had plenty of company in feeling a need to reaffirm solidarity with the Church. The percentage of Austrians who were Catholics declined during the First Republic from 93.7% to 90.5%; in Vienna that percentage had sunk to 79% by 1934.¹¹¹ Beginning in the early thirties, though, the hemorrhage within Catholic ranks eased considerably. As Austria's economic problems worsened, and the division of Austrian society into left- and right-leaning camps deepened, the Catholic parties suddenly found they had wind in their sails. Participating in actions to fight the anti-clerical Social Democrats and the irreligious Bolsheviks, and emboldened in 1931 by a papal encyclical, "Quadragesimo Anno," that published guidelines for the political and social constitution of a God-pleasing Christian state, Catholic politicians formulated an ideology which would provide a new state philosophy. Dubbed the *Christkönigsideologie* by some observers, it sought "to re-Christianize society, and within Austria's modest borders erect Christ's empire and kingdom."¹¹²

By 1932, a re-Christianization of society seemed like a good idea to Křenek. In August of that year he wrote Gubler, "Perhaps we may still be saved by recalling that we are a Christian-Catholic state. This fact has been forgotten by too many."¹¹³ As far as I have been able to determine, Křenek stopped short of endorsing clericalism and the re-constitution of Austria as a theocracy (attractive as he may

110. See Ernst Křenek, "Das Buch vom Antichrist," review of the novel *Der Antichrist*, by Joseph Roth, *Wiener Zeitung*, 25 November 1934, *Sonntagsbeilage*, 2.

111. Hanisch, "Der politische Katholizismus," 55.

112. *Ibid.*, 57.

113. Křenek to Gubler, 5 August 1932, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 235.

have found certain "theocratic elements" in the New Austria). Instead, his new-found solidarity with the Church led him to a new idealization of the truly Austrian. Křenek admitted in 1934 that he had difficulty doing without these nostalgic fantasies:

This unconscious clinging onto the luminous shadows of an old, lost world of dreams amidst the most varied, entirely different, and harsh realities—this is a truly Austrian element.¹¹⁴

Indeed, once settled in America, Křenek found that he always sided with the southern Confederates in Civil War films. Intellectually the composer knew that he knew better, but he found "sentimental presentations of a 'Golden Age'" irresistible.¹¹⁵

Křenek's Utopian image of Austria had now regressed some three hundred years, from Metternich's *Vormärz* to the time of the Holy Roman Empire. In this new political dream he was instructed by the philosopher Theodor Haecker and other writers associated with *Der Brenner*, a highly literary Catholic journal that enjoyed the monetary and moral support of Karl Kraus. An essay by Haecker in the fall 1932 issue of *Der Brenner* demonstrated the religious necessity of a supranational *Heilige Römische Reich* and outlined Austria's special mission in bringing it about.¹¹⁶ For Haecker, the Holy Roman Empire had a purely religious significance, as the spiritual way station between Revelation and Apocalypse:

114. Ernst Křenek, "Im Vorarlberg," *Wiener Zeitung*, 29 July 1934, *Sonntagsbeilage*, 3-4, at 3.

115. Diary entry, 5 May 1940, Křenek, *Die amerikanischen Tagebücher*, 151.

116. Křenek possessed a copy of *Der Brenner* containing this essay. See Křenek to Ficker, 21 May 1934, *Ludwig von Ficker, Briefwechsel, 1926-1939*, ed. Ignaz Zangerle, Walter Methlagl, Franz Seyr, and Anton Unterkircher (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1991), 254.

We live now, at least on the prophetic plane, in the Imperium Romanum. Of course, we also live on the political plane within it, and there can be no *essential* contradiction between the political and the prophetic.¹¹⁷

Not only is concord between temporal and sacred authority possible, it is an absolute necessity:

The *Reich* is a Catholic entity and a Catholic idea. Therefore it can only exist under Catholic leadership and through Catholic thought.¹¹⁸

Though in theory the *Reich* could be realized anywhere on earth, the Austrians, being better Germans,¹¹⁹ were better equipped to fulfill this mission:

With their "Reiche," which were always "Reiche" whether located in Madrid or in Vienna, the Habsburgs created a "dynastic power" arrayed against the absolutist states of Richelieu and Frederick the Great. No Habsburg could have said "L'État c'est moi," like Louis XIV, or, even more plebeian...and idolatrous, "I am the first servant of the state," like Frederick the Great. The Habsburg belonged to the *Reich*, which is something essentially different. It is above all else Catholic. It is not a state in and of itself. The Habsburg had a Catholic "nationality."¹²⁰

But Haecker's religio-political ruminations, written to demonstrate the conceptual absurdity of the *Dritte Deutsche Reich* promulgated by the National Socialists, ends uncertainly: "The Sacrum Imperium, the Roman Empire of German Nations, is no more. Whether it is gone forever I cannot say."¹²¹

Křenek accepted Haecker's interpretation of the Holy Roman Empire pretty much in full.¹²² "Every true

117. Theodor Haecker, "Betrachtungen über Vergil, Vater des Abendlands," *Der Brenner* 13 (fall 1932): 3-31, at 16.

118. *Ibid.*, 25.

119. *Ibid.*, 23.

120. *Ibid.*, 24.

121. *Ibid.*, 25.

122. That Křenek took many of his theological-political notions from *Der Brenner* is demonstrated by his encomium for the publication in 1936: "Fünfundzwanzig Jahre 'Brenner'," *Wiener Zeitung*, 29 July 1936, 7.

Austrian," he confidently declared in 1934, "is a *Reichsmensch*."¹²³ His opera *Karl V* is a meditation on the destructive forces of nationalism, Protestantism, and capital. The emperor Karl may have failed to unify the world under the sign of the cross, but his example was instructive: "What he heroically set out to accomplish remains a task that for all eternity will also be ours to fulfill."¹²⁴

As we have noted, Křenek's friend Joseph Roth considered the restoration of the Habsburg Empire within the realm of possibility. Former Austrian lands, though, were not at all eager to see a Habsburg once again holding court in Vienna. Though such an action would have strengthened Austria's independence from Germany, the international community decided that a restored monarchy would only encourage imperialist aggression in the east.

Circumstances allowed Křenek to witness the realization of part of his political vision. If the monarchy was out of reach, Dollfuß's authoritarian government could fill in the gap. An elite class would take up the responsibilities that had been surrendered when the liberals demanded their say in government. "Authority does not mean arbitrariness," Bundeskanzler Dollfuß declared. "Authority means ordered power, it means leadership through selfless men conscious of responsibility and ready for sacrifice."¹²⁵ These were soothing words for a composer who mourned the loss of a small ruling class. Occasionally, Dollfuß invoked an even grander parallel:

Let us recall that for centuries in Germany a select circle drawn from the folk chose the leader of the nation within the context of a sacred ritual. Within Austria's more restricted borders, her mayors will

123. Křenek, "Eindrücke von einer Spanienreise," 7.

124. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 254.

125. Excerpt from a speech, Vienna, 11 September 1933, Johannes Messner, *Dollfuß* (Innsbruck: Verlagsanstalt Tyrolia, 1935), 115.

have a task to fulfill which recalls the functions of the electors of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.¹²⁶

Křenek was won over by talk like this, and contributed his share, so much so that Ludwig Ficker, editor of *Der Brenner*, pointedly warned Křenek: "Be sure to guard yourself against disappointments."¹²⁷

The intrigue that in January 1934 resulted in the removal of *Karl V* from the production plans of the Wiener Staatsoper only slightly dampened the composer's enthusiasm for the new trends in Austrian politics. In April 1934, after the bloody dissolution of the Social Democrats and the creation of a new constitution, Křenek wrote to Gubler, "In the meantime I am working here more for moral than material benefit and am trying to make myself conspicuous in the 'new' state. Since I have absolutely no illusions, I learn many things that are welcome."¹²⁸ Křenek was even more enthusiastic in a letter to Ficker written a month later:

I am now caught up in a veritable whirlpool of superficial administrative and organizational activities. They are not unwelcome to me. They present themselves as starting points for influencing public activities—which in the final analysis I have always sought out, for it accords with one part of my temperament.¹²⁹

Twelve-Tone Composition and Křenek's Catholicism

The revolutions of 1933 and 1934 had wrought certain obvious changes on Austrian musical life. Webern's immediate reaction upon learning of the suppression of the Social-Democrat uprising in February 1934—"they have shot

126. Excerpt from a speech, 1 May 1934, Messner, *Dollfuss*, 120.

127. Ficker, *Briefwechsel*, 242.

128. Křenek to Gubler, 25 April 1934, *Der hoffnungslose Radikalismus*, 276.

129. Ficker, *Briefwechsel*, 254.

down our music"¹³⁰—turned out to have been overly pessimistic. But when the Social Democrats were abolished, so was the Sozial-Demokratische Kunststelle, which had been an important forum for music by members of the Schönberg circle. The choruses, cantatas, and oratorios written for Social-Democratic occasions by Paul Pisk, Rudolf Reti, Heinz Tiessen, and Hanns Eisler fell by the wayside. Otto Jokl, a student of Alban Berg, stopped composition on a (potentially sacrilegious) *Amerikanische Passion*, an oratorio based on the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and turned to the composition of twelve-tone instrumental music.

It also appears that a certain re-Catholicization of Austrian musical life took place: Webern began setting the works of Hildegarde Jone, a central member of the spiritual *Brenner* circle. After 1935, he turned to public forms of religious composition in the cantatas and *Das Augenlicht*. Křenek composed most of an oratorio *Symeon der Stylit*, based on an episode from Hugo Ball's *Byzantinisches Christentum*. Josef Matthias Hauer, who had improbably chosen Flaubert's *Salammbô* as the subject for an opera in 1927, began using more chaste subjects: the mystery play *Die Schwarze Spinne* after Jeremias Gotthelf and the hortatory *Der Menschen Weg*. One bizarre offering from the Vienna State Opera was a *Passion Christi*, compiled from a thirteenth-century laudarium by the Italian musicologist Fernando Liuzzi and accompanied by choruses by Palestrina, Schütz, and Lotti.¹³¹ The most successful product of the re-Christianization of musical life was Franz Schmidt's apocalyptic oratorio on texts from the Revelation of St. John, *Das Buch mit Sieben Siegeln*. As fate would have it, Schmidt's oratorio didn't receive its premiere until after

130. Morgenstern, *Alban Berg*, 339.

131. See Willi Reich, "Wiener Musikleben," *Der Auftakt* 17, nos. 5-6 (May-June 1937): 76.

the *Anschluß* with Nazi Germany. As if he feared that his oratorio might be too closely identified with the Austrian Catholic regime, he immediately followed his oratorio on the Apocalypse with the Nazi-friendly cantata *Deutsche Auferstehung*.

Study of Křenek's public statements on music, Catholicism, and the Austrian nation leads to the conclusion that twelve-tone composition was, in his interpretation, an appropriate musical expression for devotion to the "Austrian idea"—the idea of Austria as the once and future home of the Holy Roman Empire. In an essay celebrating Schönberg's sixtieth birthday published in the *Wiener Zeitung*, Křenek linked the composer's accomplishments with the singular political fate of the nation:

Today we Austrians are growing inexorably more aware of what a share of happiness and responsibility has been given to us. We are the first outposts for modes of existence new in the West, modes of which we still only have a premonition. On this account, we Austrians must be proud to count Arnold Schönberg as one of our own.¹³²

Křenek's positive valuation of twelve-tone composition was inseparable from his new political and social Utopia, the *Christliche Ständestaat*. While the composer's earlier concept of a harmonic center and periphery continued to play an important role in his musical language of the thirties, his strict use of twelve-tone techniques guaranteed, somewhat mystically, the integrity of the most recondite, "peripheral" harmonies and progressions. The tone row, loaded with metaphysical associations, permeated the substance of his next compositions, just as ideologically charged tonal triads had saturated the *Reisebuch*. The ever-present "Central" tone row acquired in Křenek's mind religious and political

132. Ernst Křenek, "Arnold Schönberg," *Wiener Zeitung*, 9 September 1934, *Sonntagsbeilage*, 1.

characteristics consonant with the new state he was helping to shape.

The religious associations are easier to identify. The never-ending, majestic, yet almost indifferent circulation of the twelve notes possessed for the composer occult overtones:

Its inner aesthetic truth will be proven by the very "harmonious" music composed with it. A singular impression of **seriousness** and **dignity** will be called forth by its extraordinary unity, by the complete quality of its being rounded out, and by the nearly *astronomic* correspondence and harmony of the elements.¹³³

Like Joseph Matthias Hauer and Paul von Klenau, Křenek here emphasized the affinity between the constant circulation of twelve pitch classes and the old medieval notion of *harmonia mundi*—an analogy that had also been apparent in "Der Genuß des Unendlichen."

The libretto for *Karl V* is filled with intimations of mystical connection between compositional technique and the natural ordering of the cosmos. Křenek's Voice of God reminds the Emperor Karl of the universe's constitution:

I gave you the world, the world which by Columbus's deed was presented to humanity as a whole, so that men saw how as a perfect sphere it rolled through twelve signs of the heavens, finite yet infinite.¹³⁴

As the Emperor Karl dies, he is surrounded by celestial sounds: "And now: music of eternity intoxicates my head!... Everything is but one thing, transformed a thousandfold." Singing clocks enter, their faces marking off the unending circling of the twelve hours. There are four of them, of course, one for each of the basic forms of the tone row. Together they coordinate divine and mundane time,

133. *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

134. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 211.

the prophetic and political planes of human existence.¹³⁵ The celestial interpretation of twelve-tone composition was especially attractive for Křenek, who thought it particularly Austrian to seek the divine in everyday objects. Twelve-tone composition became a sounding reminder of a cosmic *Weltplan*.

We should note that Křenek's views are a far cry from the materialistic interpretations of twelve-tone composition—those, for example, of Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno—which are still propagated today. For Wiesengrund-Adorno twelve-tone techniques were the image of a complete rationalization of Nature typical of the spirit of late capitalism. Though he respected Křenek's compositions and agreed with the composer that twelve-tone composition vividly depicted in music the society from which it originated, he couldn't possibly agree with Křenek's "neo-Thomistic interpretation" of twelve-tone composition, and the composer's views that twelve-tone works rendered an "image of an *Ordo*."¹³⁶

At least through 1935, Křenek advocated the anti-rational, religious aspects of twelve-tone composition. In contemporary Austria, these religious implications had political resonance. In his article on Schönberg, Křenek observed:

As in philosophical thought, which seeks to orient itself more and more around scholasticism and *philosophia perennis*, we see in the political and social spheres a new consciousness of ties with the supranatural.

Realizing that too firm a rejection of rationality could equally lead to Nazism, he offered a small caveat:

135. Křenek, *Prosa, Dramen, Verse*, 253.

136. Wiesengrund-Adorno to Křenek, 1 March 1935, *Theodor W. Adorno und Ernst Křenek, Briefwechsel*, ed. Wolfgang Rogge, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 61.

Certainly in such times the adversary is at his most active. He will present us with false idols, which could achieve temporarily demonic powers. But this in itself is proof of the new emergence of powerful energies of faith.

And twelve-tone composition was a perfect expression of this new, post-revolutionary society:

We don't believe ourselves to be mistaken when we see precisely in the strict obedience to obligation and law...a symbol of this new spiritual attitude, which is in a deep and true sense conservative and which returns true freedom to the artistic genius by assigning him true and dignified bonds.¹³⁷

Uttered in the year 1934, the phrase "wahre und würdige Bindung" sends a chill up the spine. The time of liberalistic relativism was gone—the Catholic values of "faith, hope, and submission" had regained their proper place at the head of the state. Austria was placed in the power of what Křenek hoped would be a "higher, more worthy, holy order."¹³⁸ Křenek thought it typically Austrian for the individual to submit himself to a supernatural order. In a review of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's posthumously-published fragment *Andreas*, Křenek identified essentially Austrian elements:

The latent ideal of earthly perfection is still the *cortegiano*, the cavalier; the ideal of ordering everything, including the extraordinary, in the harmonious and strict hierarchy of Spanish ceremony. This stands in close correspondence to Catholic behavior: to submit in blind obedience to the demands of a ritual, which then provides true freedom as its reward.¹³⁹

In his propagandistic essay "Erfahrungen mit dem 'Zwölftonsystem'," published in Berlin's *Vossische Zeitung* in

137. Křenek, "Arnold Schönberg," 1.

138. Ernst Křenek, "Der Verlorene Welt der Vater," *Wiener Zeitung*, 24 September 1934.

139. Ernst Křenek, "Das nachgelassene Roman-Fragment Hofmannsthals," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 16 December 1932, 1-2, at 2.

March 1934, Křenek justified twelve-tone composition by claiming that in the chaos of postwar European music some sort of submission to authority, "another type of **obligation**," was necessary out of "considerations of spiritual economy."¹⁴⁰ In this argument, the type of *Bindung* is less important than the fact of its existence. In order to function, the composer only requires a little freedom, a little place in the sun: "If one considers that forty-eight forms of the row are at one's disposal, forms which one can derive from a row delivered by inspiration, *then really that is freedom enough*."¹⁴¹

Křenek's description of twelve-tone music often employed a vocabulary not altogether innocent of political meanings: "The attempt to develop new motivic relationships took on that same element of totality which led to the conception of twelve-tone techniques."¹⁴² Is the fascistic aftertaste in Křenek's phraseology fortuitous? It is difficult to say. Around 1934, Křenek noted his approval of the Italian fascist government's refined spiritual qualities:

It is characteristic of Fascism...that it has advocated purely spiritual ideals..., abstract categories such as movement and élan. Following Latin temperament and Roman tradition, every wave of national sentiment in Italy leads to an assertion of the value of the **state's** form of organization. The integrity of the soil and the people is at most a precondition for the completely spiritual shape of the state. It is never an end in itself.¹⁴³

With examples such as this, one can see why compound adjectives such as *katholisch-faschistisch* and *klerikalfaschistisch* were often used interchangeably with *austrofaschistisch* by

140. Ernst Křenek, "Erfahrungen mit dem 'Zwölftonsystem'," 3.

141. *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

142. Křenek, *Ueber neue Musik*, 52.

143. Ernst Křenek, "Ungarn, Italien, Österreich," *Wiener Zeitung*, 27 March 1935, 8-9, at 8.

leftist Austrians of the thirties and why they continue to be employed polemically today.¹⁴⁴

A few years later, Křenek would react violently to any association of twelve-tone composition with fascism. In a diary entry from 3 July 1941, Křenek recounted the following episode:

Mr. Allen, of Stanford University, sent me an article which he had composed for *Modern Music*. There he undertakes to prove that the 12-tone technique is a symbol and parallel of totalitarianism, and that Hitler is only too happy that we are spreading confusion in the democratic world by teaching this technique. If this goes through it means the inexorable end of everything. I can just as soon hang myself, and I probably will.... It is hardly conceivable what moves people to such horrible actions.¹⁴⁵

Křenek's revulsion at Allen's proposal also reflects the composer's extremely precarious position as a resident alien with very uncertain economic prospects. In his denunciation of Allen's hypothesis, though, Křenek displays a selective memory. Reacting to a lecture "Frank Lloyd Wright vs. the International Style," Křenek argues that Nazism had little to do with rationality. Indeed, it elevated irrationality:

...they see in Nazism only the formidable machine, the thorough rationalization of production, the over-all planning. But they forget completely that it was irrationalism that set all these energies in motion.¹⁴⁶

What Křenek here forgets completely are his efforts to link Schönberg's compositional methods with the new emphasis on the irrational found in Austria's Catholic, authoritarian government.

It would probably be unwise, though, to make too much of Křenek's flirtation with fascism. He held back, for exam-

144. See Josef Haslinger, *Politik der Gefühle: Ein Essay über Österreich*, rev. ed. (Vienna: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 22, 76.

145. Křenek, *Die amerikanischen Tagebücher*, 188.

146. Křenek, *Die amerikanischen Tagebücher*, 262.

ple, from the truly fascistic *Heimwehren*. Ultimately, Křenek backed two losing horses. The Dollfuß and Schuschnigg governments failed miserably to satisfy domestic social needs and to inculcate among Austrians a sense of national identity. Křenek's second miscalculation was to assume that the Austrian government would support his endeavors just as loyally as his typewriter supported theirs. Schuschnigg's Austria was not terribly concerned about supporting the country's living composers. The concentration of resources under Austria's authoritarian government ultimately brought Křenek few tangible benefits. For the usually fecund Křenek, his meager output between 1934 and 1936 testifies not only to doubts over his choice of compositional axioms, but also to his uncertainty about the kinds of audiences for whom he was writing.

When in 1936 and 1937 Křenek once again placed himself before the public as a composer, his works had acquired a recondite character which contrasted sharply with the occasionally hortatory works of 1928-1933. Predictably, they did not meet with much success: His Sixth Quartet was published but not performed, while his Piano Variations were performed, but not published. The mystical, transcendental aspects of twelve-tone composition were intensified in these works. Possibly following a precedent set by Hauer, and anticipating techniques later employed by Webern, the twelve-tone rows in these works are deployed in completely symmetric arrangements which systematically exhaust all forty-eight forms of the row. For the first four movements of the Sixth Quartet, the dispositions of the row are not coordinated with the surface gestures and the syntax of the music. The row structure in these movements remains completely inaudible. The Quartet's final movement is a quadruple fugue based on a theme from each of the preceding four movements. Each of these themes presents a differ-

ent version of the row (retrograde, inversion, etc.), and according to the composer, all of the fugue entrances exhaust the forty-eight possibilities of manipulating the tone row. Because of the close connection between fugal themes and row forms in the final movement, the listener is made dimly aware of the relationship between the surface elements of the piece and its structuring background. By this point, though, there is little else left to occupy the listener's attention. As the fugue mechanically spins out its patterns, the listener merely registers the kaleidoscopic entrances of the fugue's themes. Listening to this highly objectified sound-world becomes an act of contemplation as a fixed constellation of themes and pitches rotates to display its various aspects.

In writing the Sixth Quartet, the composer turned his gaze away from the world. His purpose was not to relate the divine to the mundane, as he had in *Karl V* and *Symeon der Stylit*. Rather, Křenek was developing a new style of "cultic music," whose aesthetic and social premises he began exploring around 1936:

The premise, however, that cultic music, including the cultic music of the medieval Church, was and should be comprehensible from the start, that it is the common property of its listeners (i.e., all the faithful), is not the obvious proposition that it is often taken to be.... Cultic music speaks to God. The faithful listen in.¹⁴⁷

The revival of "cultic music" is still related to Křenek's nationalist ideology of the "Austrian" Holy Roman Empire. In its most notable instances New Music becomes an expression of Christian identity at its most profound:

The less solid the support musicians find to encourage their work, the more the character that their creations assume will show that their *Reich* is not of this world. The speech of the New Music has been heard earlier in the Bible's pathetic curse and lament. Its color is that

147. Křenek, *Ueber neue Musik*, 105.

of eschatological mourning. One might name Pascal and Kierkegaard as the ancestral masters of its worldview—from more recent times one could also name Léon Bloy and Karl Kraus. The object of their mourning is such that neither gentle nor inflammatory exhortations toward recommended, concrete, rational courses of action can command it out of this world....¹⁴⁸

Křenek rather grandly turns the proponents of New Music into isolated soothsayers whose vision is firmly focused on Haecker's "prophetic plane." Though at this time Austria was perhaps the only country in the world where it would have been possible to assume so publicly and unashamedly the role of prophet, Křenek's new pessimism with regard to existing social and political realities also provided the beginnings for an aesthetic based on "inner emigration." This foundation would stand the composer in good stead when Austria's *Anschluß* with Germany turned him into a bona fide exile and brought a permanent end to his adventure in Austrian politics.

148. Křenek, *Ueber neue Musik*, 94.