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MUSIC OF THE GREAT WAR. OBSERVATIONS ON A NEGLECTED REPERTOIRE

Abstract: Little is generally known today about the music of the First World War. On the assumption that music has to be considered as extraordinary among all the media ‘distributing’ it (i.e. shaping its perception in various ways), my paper concerns three categories of music written under the influence of the Great War and in response to it: with music representing sovereigns and nations (based on the example of the musical glorification of the Habsburgs in WWI), in relation to the vanguard style and its employment as a signifier of the war and finally, the Great War’s ambiguous legacy in music.

Key words: First World War, Music History, Representation studies, Historical aestheticization

It is striking how little the music of the First World War is generally known today, not to mention its absence, mostly, from concert halls. Although this year’s anniversary was an occasion for some work to be published on the impact of the “seminal catastrophe of this century” on artists and composers, the actual music of the Great War, however, was hardly dealt with, at all. Apart from a few essays on individual, mostly biographical aspects, up to the present day there has been only one monograph that has actually been published in an endeavour to provide an in-depth analysis of music from the years 1914–1918.¹

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¹ Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through the Night. Music and the Great War*, Berkely, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2003.

There seems to be no explanation for this neglect. Firstly, because of the sheer wealth of material that has survived. Secondly, because of the historical significance of this material. Recalling the renowned German researchers, Sven Oliver Müller and Jürgen Osterhammel's recent reference to the importance of music as a source for the historical sciences,² such disregard for WWI's compositional artifacts appears all the more inexplicable. To deal with the music of the Great War is also of tremendous relevance because on this basis, it is possible to demonstrate how this particular art form shapes the common perception and re-presents it.

As the war was a phenomenon that soon defied previous worldviews and therefore urgently raised demands for interpretation, even the role of music has to be considered as outstanding among all the media. On these assumptions, three aspects of music written under the influence of the Great War and in response to it shall be examined further. They consist of the categories of representation, sensation/trauma and legacy.

I. The Return of Representation: Propagandizing the Habsburgs in the Great War

Bearing in mind that for its 'distribution' all the media available at that time were used, it can be said that World War One was the first mass-media-led global conflict. Significant parts of these galvanizing practices, at that time called 'mental mobilization', were carried out by means of music³ and comprised the representations of nations and of ruling dynasties. The latter's emergence was not free of the paradoxical representation of monarchy which had largely lost importance due to the French Revolution and several crises of royalty in the 19th and early 20th century.⁴ Now, with the outbreak of the war, it underwent a fervid reactivation and even merged with the bourgeois ideology of nationalism. Ex-

² Sven Oliver Müller, Jürgen Osterhammel, "Geschichtswissenschaft und Musik", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für Historische Sozialwissenschaft*, 38/2012, 1, 5–20.

³ Cf. Thomas Leibnitz, "Die Musen schiessen nicht. Zur Rolle der Musik in Österreich während des Ersten Weltkrieges", in: Manfred Rauchensteiner (ed.), *An meine Völker. Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914–1918*, Wien, Amalthea, 2014, 62–67; Frank Böhme, "Die auditive Mobilisierung. Musik und Propaganda", in: Sabine Schulz, Leonie Beiersdorf, Dennis Conrad (eds.), *Krieg und Propaganda 14/18*, München, Hirmer 2014, 32–39.

⁴ Christina Schröer, "Spektakel des Umbruchs. Politische Inszenierungen in der Französischen Revolution zwischen Tradition und Moderne", in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Matthias Puhle, Jutta Götzmann, Gerd Althoff (eds.), *Spektakel der Macht. Rituale im alten Europa 800–1800*, Darmstadt, WBG, 2009, 217.

amples of the musical representations of the Habsburg dynasty may illustrate this approach.

At the core of audial Habsburg representation was Joseph Haydn's *Volkshymne* (The Peoples' Anthem). For obvious reasons it was used numerous times in the Great War. The most spectacular adaptation may be found in the orchestral overture *Aus Ernster Zeit* (From Serious Times, 1914)⁵ by Felix von Weingartner, the famous conductor and one-time successor of Gustav Mahler. Not only did Weingartner in his piece let the *Volkshymne* crow over both the *Marseillaise* and the Tsarist anthem, but he also entrusted it to the organ, suggesting the Habsburgs' 'divinely legitimized sovereignty'. As if that wasn't enough, he combined it with the *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz* (Hail to Thee in A Victor's Crown), the old Prussian hymn, to produce a final apotheosis according to the emperor Franz-Joseph's motto *Viribusunitis* (With United Forces), which had been applied originally to the Habsburgs' multiethnic state, but referred in wartime to Austria's 'brother-in-arms', the German Reich – a strategy that was also realized in visual forms.⁶ Another combinative symbolization for representative purposes was created by Franz Lehár in 1915. In *Fieber* (Fieber),⁷ a 'poem for tenor and orchestra', he musically envisioned a doomed soldier in a military hospital, lying in agony, which reaches its point of culmination in a flashback of the assault he was wounded in. What makes *Fieber* remarkable is Lehár's interpolation of two favorite military marches, the *Radetzky-Marsch* and the Hungarian *Rákóczi induló* (Rákóczi march) during the episode of the troops' euphoric departure to war, clearly intended to function as an aural signifier of the Dual Monarchy.

But there was another musical symbol that was more suggestive than the aforementioned in representing the Habsburgs and Austria-Hungary, respectively: the *Prinz Eugen Lied* (Song of Prince Eugene of Savoy). Passed into history as the Habsburgs' most successful commander, the Prince was remembered first and foremost for his siege and conquest of Belgrade – the very event that gave the popular song its subject. Notwithstanding the historical fact that Prince Eugene had crusaded against the Ottomans, the song was extensively utilized in the Austrian publicity campaign against Serbia from the first days of the war onwards. A stage example can be found in Leo Fall's operetta *Die Kaiserin* (The

⁵ Simon Obert, "Komponieren im Krieg. Felix Weingartners Ouvertüre «Aus ernster Zeit»", in: Simon Obert, Matthias Schmidt (eds.), *Im Mass der Moderne. Felix Weingartner – Dirigent, Komponist, Autor, Reisender*, Basel, Schwabe, 2009, 187–216.

⁶ Werner Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich. Die Habsburger und ihre Geschichte in der bildenden Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Wien, Köln, Weimar, Böhlau, 2007, 50–252.

⁷ Stefan Frey, "Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg." *Franz Lehár und die Unterhaltungsmusik im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt/M., Insel, 1999, 180–181.

Empress, 1915), where it is sung by Franz Stephan of Lorraine, explaining his military victory by the ‘spiritual prefiguration of the Prince’. In so doing, *Die Kaiserin* linked the Eugene-myth not only with that of Franz Stephan, but also with that of his much more famous wife, Maria Theresa, whose cult grew to outright mythicization in the First World War.⁸ In Fall’s operetta she was presented as a charmingly maternal sovereign with a remarkable compositorial far-sightedness, for here, she was shown as the original inventor of the waltz, making dynasty and dance synonymous. Hugo von Hofmannsthal would come back to this idea in his essay on Maria Theresa (1917) where, in the penultimate year of the war, he gave the conjunction of the Habsburgs and the myth of the ‘Musikland Österreich’ (Austria – country of music) an enduring form: “The character of Maria Theresa’s world was mundane and naïve, and pious. It was filled with the will for order and nature and to be elevated to God. It was close to nature and when it was proud, it was genuinely proud without any stiffness and rigidity. Haydn, Gluck and Mozart are its essence which became the eternal spirit.”⁹ This enduring notion of Austria will not be described here, however, it should be noted that it also took on a radical form, not only in World War One, but even after the catastrophe of the Second World War as well, when, for instance, the Austrian composer Joseph Marx expressed these words in 1951: “He who does not enjoy those teachers (= W. A. Mozart, author’s note), does not deserve to be a man, and certainly not an Austrian.”¹⁰

As intended suggestions of continuity depend on the similarity of forms, the audio-textual representations of the Habsburgs in the Great War, whether in operettas, or in symphonic pieces, or in ideological, music-related statements, can be described as **normed**. It was only with the emperor Charles and his wife Zita’s accession to the throne in 1916 that some attempts were made to find new modes of representation, for which the new imperial couple’s young age became the starting point and was coined correspondingly in the phrase of ‘Jung-Österreich’ (Young Austria). For this, see the address of Crown Prince Otto as ‘Jung

⁸ Werner Telesko, *Maria Theresia. Ein europäischer Mythos*, Wien, Köln, Weimar, Böhlau, 2012, 177–186.

⁹ “Das theresianische Weltwesen war irdisch und naiv und voller Frömmigkeit. Es war voll Mut zur Ordnung und Natur und voll Erhebung zu Gott. Es war naturnahe und, wo es stolz war, voll echtem Stolz ohne Steifheit und Härte. Haydn, Gluck und Mozart sind sein unvergänglicher Geist gewordener Gehalt”, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Maria Theresia. Zur zweihundersten Wiederkehr ihres Geburtstages”(1917), in: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Brief des Lord Chandos. Schriften zur Literatur, Kultur und Geschichte*. Stuttgart, Reclam, 2000, 176.

¹⁰ Joseph Marx, March, 25 1951, quoted from: Erik Werba, “Joseph Marx. Zum 70. Geburtstag”, Beilage zur *Wiener Zeitung* [1952], 12 [Austrian National Library Sep. 672–c. S].

Österreichs Morgenrot'¹¹ (Young Austria's Dawn) in the song *Kaiserprinzchen* (Little Prince Imperial) by Robert Stolz and Arthur Rebner (1917) or Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Hymn of Empress Zita* (1917), with the lyrics by Baroness Hedda Skoda, which features the image of Austria's youth paying homage to the new empress ("Young Austria steps forward and piously chants"¹²). Particularly worth mentioning is the operetta *Der Favorit* (The Favorite) by Robert Stolz (music) and Fritz Grünbaum and Wilhelm Sterk (lyrics), premiered in November 1916, in the very days the aged Franz-Joseph died. Supported by the passionate cantilena of a solo violin, the operetta's main hit "Du sollst der Kaiser meiner Seele sein" (You should be the emperor of my heart) interestingly uses an imperial vocabulary, but applies it to the intimate, thus oscillating between newly-sparked monarchism and subversion: "I know a state that is of no boundaries, I know an empire where a thousand tender thoughts are entwining my love's lane of roses. This is the state where I do live; this is the state that I give to you, on whose throne you are seated, in my heart's free state."¹³

2. Sensation and trauma

When Viennese musicologist Guido Adler predicted in 1915 in his lengthy essay *Tonkunst und Weltkrieg* (Musical Art and World War) that the "current art of war (...) is not expected to have a profound influence on the music of our time,"¹⁴ he significantly misjudged how the Great War would actually affect musical expression soon after its reality became clear. On the other hand, it is instructive to remember that the stylistic devices that were soon to be used for compositorial 'comments' on the war had already been developed before 1914: by Igor Stravinsky in Paris, Aleksandar Scriabin and Arthur Lourié in tsarist Russia, by Rued Langgaard in Denmark, by Luís de Freitas Branco in Portugal, by Arnold Schoenberg in Austria-Hungary, and by Francesco Balilla Pratella and Luigi Russolo in Italy. All these provocative experiments, mostly born out of the spirit of decadence, now appeared to be 'suitable' for representing the hitherto unthinkable. Therefore, it was less of an "intrusion of the war *into* artistic

¹¹ *Das Kaiserprinzchen*. Verse von Arthur Rebner, Musik von Robert Stolz, Wien, 1917.

¹² "Jung Österreich tritt vor/ Und sing im frommen Chor", *Kaiserin Zita Hymne*. Verse von Baronin Hedda von Skoda, Musik von Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Wien, 1917.

¹³ "Ich weiß ein Land, das ohne Schranken,/ ich weiß ein Reich, worin sich ranken/ wohl tausend zärtliche Gedanken/um meiner Liebe Rosenpfad./ Das ist das Land, worin ich lebe,/ das ist das Reich, das ich dir gebe,/ auf dessen Thron ich dich nun hebe, / ist meines Herzens freier Staat", *Du sollst der Kaiser meiner Seele sein*. Lied aus der Operette *Der Favorit* von Fritz Grünbaum und Wilhelm Sterk. Musik von Robert Stolz, München, Berlin, 1916.

¹⁴ Guido Adler, *Tonkunst und Weltkrieg*, Wien, 1915, 5.

forms¹⁵ (as Alexander Honold put it; emphasis St.S.) and rather a process of the semantization of styles, incited by the war.

This can be traced in the case of Alfredo Casella's *Paginedi Guerra* (War Pictures) for piano fourhands, later to be orchestrated and supplemented. Written in the year when Italy entered the war on the side of the Allies, apparently Casella was especially impressed by the war machinery that was put to use so devastatingly for the first time on the western front. In the opening movement of his cycle, *Nel Belgio: sfilata di artiglieria pesante tedesca* (In Belgium: a parade of heavy German artillery), he tried to "translate the seemingly unstoppable roll and roar of German munitions into an equally uninterrupted, dissonant ostinato", which had its model in Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. The paradigms of Stravinsky are also noticeable in Casella's *Elegia eroica* (Heroic Elegy) of 1916, dedicated "alla memoria di un soldato morto in guerra" (to the memory of a soldier killed in war). Here, he ends his piece with the interpolation of a song that had once served as a protest against the Habsburgs and would later become Italy's national anthem, the *Cantodegli Italiani* ('Fratelli d'Italia/Brothers of Italy), but alienated it through Stravinsky-like polyharmonics and rhythm (2/4 against 6/8). By this means, the anthem's statement could be listened to both as a signifier of the last post, as a musical epitaph, and as a vision of the national power of resistance. It is this ambiguity of venturesome musical conceptualizing and reactionist ideology that also characterizes Heitor Villa-Lobos' Third Symphony (1919),¹⁶ entitled *A Guerra* (The War), a work he conceived as the first part of a symphonic trilogy which was supposed to glorify Brazil's (minor) role in the Great War. In the symphony's final movement (*A Batalha/The Battle*), kettledrums, bass drums and cymbals imitate the sound of gunfire with irregular rhythms and immense sound. Only after a while, two musical quotes become recognizable and finally 'overpower' the martial wall of sound: it is the Brazilian national anthem and (as a symbol of victory and freedom) the *Marseillaise* which restore musical 'order'.

The Great War's sonic reality was actually an interplay between intensive acoustic pressure throughout (often, several days of) constant fire and literally dead silence, agony. Though the alternation of inescapable noise and disturbing aural emptiness was hardly ever taken up by composers, there is a composition that reflects this irritating effect, young Gian Francesco Malipiero's *Pause del silenzio I* (1917). His 'breaks' of the silence consist of a series of rapidly changing,

¹⁵ Alexander Honold, "Der Einbruch des Krieges in die künstlerische Form", in: Niels Werber, Stefan Kaufmann, Lars Koch (eds.), *Erster Weltkrieg. Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch*, Stuttgart, Weimar, Metzler, 2014, 448–494.

¹⁶ Manuel Negwer, *Villa-Lobos. Der Aufbruch der brasilianischen Musik*, Mainz, Schott, 2008, S. 87–88.

Ex. 1 – Gian Francesco Malipiero: *Pause del silenzio I* (1917): stylized war cries

Allegro assai

Ob.
ff

Corni in Fa
ff

Trombe in Si b
ff

Viol.
f

+ Fl.

contrary ‘moods that wander (according to Malipiero’s own description) from the pastoral to the elegia cover to outbreaks of ‘violent rhythms’:¹⁷ stylized war cries (ex.1) and iridescent cascades of sound (ex. 2), echoing the acoustic crashing down effect of the battlefields.

Apart from the exceptional cases of Malipiero and Villa-Lobos, composers for the most part refrained from imitating the war’s acoustics, which simply defied a ‘naturalistic’ representation.¹⁸ Ultimately it is not surprising, then, that they relied more on established paradigms symbolizing war. Given the fact that most of the well-established composers of the ‘fin de siècle’ belonged to a generation which was not involved physically in the Great War, added to such ‘romantic’ interpretations of the war. Of course, from today’s viewpoint such approaches like that of Hans Pfitzner in his *Zwei deutsche Gesänge* (Two German Songs, 1916¹⁹), where the death of a trumpeter is displayed all too ‘illustratively’, or the one by Richard Strauss in his *Lied der Frauen* (Women’s Song, 1918), in which the male protagonist’s death and the female readiness to make sacrifices is glorified excessively, appears to be inappropriate, even cynical in the light of what real-

¹⁷ John C. G. Waterhouse, *Gian Francesco Malipiero. The Life, Time and Music of a Wayward Genius 1882–1973*, Amsterdam, Routledge, 1999, 119.

¹⁸ This would also apply to cinematic representations of the Great War as well. Cf. Corinna Müller, “Akustik des Krieges. Der Erste Weltkrieg als akustisches Ereignis im frühen Tonfilm”, in: Rainer Rother, Karin Herbst-Meßlinger (eds.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Film*, München, text+kritik, 2009, 103.

¹⁹ Johann Peter Vogel, *Pfitzner. Leben, Werke, Dokumente*. Zürich, Mainz, Atlantis, 1999, 121.

Ex. 2 – Gian Francesco Malipiero: *Pause del silenzio I* (1917): iridescent sound figures

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Pause del silenzio I" by Gian Francesco Malipiero. The score is arranged in a system of staves, each representing a different instrument. The instruments included are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), English Horn (Corno ingl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Clar. Si b), Bassoon (Fag.), French Horns (Corni Fa), Trombones (Tromboni), Violin I (Viol. I div.), Violin II (Viol. II div.), Viola (Vla. div.), and Violoncello (Vlc. div.). The music is written in 3/4 time and features a consistent melodic motif across all instruments, characterized by a sequence of notes with sharp and flat accidentals. The dynamic marking *ff* (fortissimo) is prominently displayed at the beginning of each instrument's part. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

ly occurred in the war. But hardly less problematic is a work like the *Sinfonia Brevis de Bello Gallico* (Short Symphony on the War in Gaul, 1916–1918) by Vincent D'Indy, for whom the battles of the Marne were the starting point for a 'gay',²⁰ neo-classical symphony.

An exceptional case of misconceiving/substituting the realities of the Great War in music can be found in the completely forgotten symphonic poem *Isonzo*, written by Croatian Major Lujo Šafranek (1882–1940). Composed in March 1918, during his deployment in occupied Belgrade, this larger-than-life work was also premiered there and met an enthusiastic response from an audience mostly made up of the occupying forces. It was so successful that even Felix Weingartner asked to play it with the Vienna Philharmonic in the Vienna Musikverein, one month later. Hailed by the Viennese press as 'fuming with up-to-dateness',²¹ the piece indeed referred to the immediate past, namely to the finale of the battles at the Isonzo which had ended in October 1917 with the unexpected victory of Austria-Hungary over Italy – a Pyrrhic victory as it turned out to be. Irrespective of whether Šafranek, who had participated in the battle, could foresee this or not, he designed his symphonic poem as a cross between Richard Strauss' *A Hero's Life* and Bedřich Smetana's ever-popular *Vltava* (The Moldau), following a programmatic scenario with episodes provided by the poetry of Franz Xaver Kappus: "tranquillity – springs – the young Insonzo – the broad Isonzo – the Adriatic Sea – storm – peace idyll – war and victory".²² While Šafranek came up with a menacing motif suggesting the 'enemy' Italy,²³ it was his music portraying nature and the 'homeland' that stood out: for example the beginning of the piece, reminiscent of Wagner's *The Rhine Gold*, but extended significantly through the use of the whole tone scale. He did the same with the motifs of 'prayer' (flown around by descending strings) and the 'war cry' (ex.3), which are not without effect and are surpassed only by the end of the work where all the patriotic motifs are mounted up on each other at once, certainly, following the example of Anton Bruckner's symphonies. But, as insistently as Šafranek's apotheosis appealed to audiences, it turned out to be purely wishful thinking, all too soon.

²⁰ Watkins, *Proof Through the Night* (see footnote 1), 168–169.

²¹ "(...) eine von Aktualität dampfende Kriegskomposition", *Neue Freie Presse*, April 22, 1918, 1.

²² *Isonzo*. Symphonische Dichtung von Ludwig Šafranek. Klavierauszug. K.u.k. Gouvernement-Druckerei in Belgrad 1918. Wien Bibliothek Ms 34613.

²³ Called in the piano score 'motive of greed'.

Ex. 3 – Lujo Šafranek: *Isonzo* (1918) – Motifs of ‘prayer’ and ‘war cry’

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, featuring a melodic line of sixteenth-note runs with slurs and sixteenth-note rests, marked with a '6' below. The middle and bottom staves are in treble and bass clefs respectively, showing a piano accompaniment of chords. The dynamic marking *ff* is placed below the middle staff.

The second system continues the musical score with three staves. The top staff is marked *8va* and contains the same sixteenth-note melodic runs. The middle staff has a *rit.* marking followed by *a tempo*. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment. The dynamic *ff* is also present.

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is marked *(8va)* and continues the sixteenth-note melodic runs. The middle staff includes a trumpet part labeled *Trp.* with a melodic line. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment. The dynamic marking *fff* is placed below the middle staff, along with a *rit.* marking.

3. The Great War's legacy in music

Aside from the rather reality-denying works, such as *Isonzo*, the aspect of memorializing increasingly shifted to the centre of the composers' concern, as the war progressed. In this sense, it can be said that in the initial years of the war, works dedicated to personal losses formed the majority of commemorative compositions. The most famous of these would be Maurice Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* which acquired its final form in 1917 and was intended by Ravel as a memento for seven friends who had fallen in combat. More examples are Frederick Septimus Kelly's *Elegy* (1915), for his friend, the poet Rupert Brooke, who died at the Battle of Gallipoli, Arnold Bax's *In memoriam* (1916) for Patrick Pearse, one of the executed leaders of the Irish Easter Uprising, and Frank Bridge's *Lament* for string orchestra (1915), a piece in which he effectively mourned the death of nine-year old Catherine, drowned in the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German submarine (the very same act of war that would become so important as a justification for the United States' entry into the war).

With the commemoration of the dead becoming increasingly ritualized after 1915, at the same time gaining further importance as the bearers of collective memory, many composers responded accordingly. Key examples of this include Max Reger's last composition, a *Requiem* ('To the memory of the German heroes who fell in the Great War', 1916), but also Frederick Delius' *Requiem* ('To the memory of all young artists fallen in the War', 1916) and Edward Elgar's expressive setting of Laurence Binyon's poem *For the fallen*, within his choral work *The spirit of England* (1917). After the end of the war, commemorative music was monumentalized and mythologized. Above all others, John Foulds did so in his gigantic *World Requiem* (1923) and Arthur Bliss in *Morning Heroes* (1930), an oratorio-like composition that uses (among other sources) Homer's *Iliad*, the poetry of the Tang Dynasty and the war poetry of Wilfred Owen, with the purpose of giving the traumatic experiences of the war a universal dimension.

But just as all these examples indicated an ultimately 'pacifistic will' it is often overlooked that the end of the war gave birth to plenty of nationalist works: *Cypres et lauriers* (cypress and laurel) by the aged Camille Saint-Saëns, pompously celebrating the victory of France, *Omamaa* (Our Country, 1918) by Jean Sibelius, acclaiming the newly independent Finland or Manolis Kalomiris' monumental first Symphony (1920), testimony to Greece's fatal super-power fantasies after the war, to mention only a few. Compositions with such an approach were countered by those of the defeated states, where, addressing the Great War's legacy 'directly' was avoided almost without exception. So, mostly composers chose to 'retreat' into sometimes sullen, sometimes low-brow chauvinism. In this

context, Hans Pfitzner's infamous *Von deutscher Seele* (Of the German Soul, 1921) has to be mentioned, as well as *Ruralia Hungarica* (1923) by Ernst von Dohnányi or Pancho, Vladigerov's *Vardar* (1928). Particularly notable is the absence, in the music of interwar Austria, of the memory of the war that was lost. But after all, according to the Freudian notion of the return of the repressed, here the war found its way at least into popular culture, when, in Robert Stolz's operetta *Das Lied ist aus* (The song has ended, 1930) a soldier's farewell is envisioned, emotionally culminating in the lines 'Und vergiss mich nicht' (Forget Me Not).

Closing remarks

The First World War was an elementary event caused by man. Its immense effects on people, whether material, physical or mental, demanded interpretation that was granted in very particular way by music. As different these approaches may be, they all represent a historical perception. They vividly illustrate how an attempt was made to aestheticize the hardship of an unbearable reality. Perhaps, the most impressive of these artifacts of the Great War was Carl Nielsen's Fourth Symphony. The composer, living in neutral Denmark, but nevertheless war-torn, called this work 'The Inextinguishable'. Imbued with ideas of vitalism,²⁴ he remarked about his symphony "We can say: if the whole world were destroyed and dead, even then Nature would resume growing new life, begin thriving and pushing with those strong and fine forces which are found in matter itself. Soon, plants would start breathing, the mating and screaming of birds would be heard and seen, the aspirations and wishes of man would be felt. These forces, which are 'inextinguishable', I have tried to show".²⁵ But, Nielsen's concept of the 'Inextinguishable' did not result in a work either of naïve optimism or of fatalism. And, it was this ambivalence that made Nielsen one of the Great War's most 'modern' composers and his symphony an off-the-norm musical testimony of those years.

²⁴ Michael Fjeldsøe, "Carl Nielsen and the Current of Vitalism in Art", in: *Carl Nielsen Studies*, Volume IV, Kopenhagen, 2009, 26–42.

²⁵ Carl Nielsen an Julius Röntgen, Februar 1920, zit. nach: Fjeldsøe, "Carl Nielsen and the Current of Vitalism in Art" (see Footnote 24), 31.