



Subversive Obedience: The Film Music of Willi Forst's *Viennese Trilogy*

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Music formulates and forms the cornerstone of Vienna's trademark as a 'capital' of this particular art form. While this status was advanced in 19th century literature,¹ it was its manifestation in cinema that determined and gave this image a lasting impact. It is especially noticeable in film productions between 1939 and 1945, where the topos of 'Vienna' was augmented and differentiated under the aegis of the Third Reich's cultural policies. Here, in movie productions of the newly founded Wien-Film, the visualisation of music became an integral part of the studio's paradigms.²

Among the artistic pinnacles of Wien-Film's productions were without doubt the feature films by Willi Forst – next to Gustav Ucicky the most distinguished *auteur* of the studio. This is especially due to the fact that director's aesthetic touchstones were not just the topos of 'Vienna', but also Viennese music. The considerations of Forst's Viennese Trilogy – *Operette* (Wien-Film 1940), *Wiener Blut* (Wien-Film 1942) and *Wiener Mädeln* (Wien-Film 1945/49) – by film studies have been both ambivalent and contradictory in their ideological reading within the scope of National Socialist cinema.³

- 1 Martina Nußbaumer, *Musikstadt Wien. Die Konstruktion eines Images* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2007).
- 2 Sabine Hake, *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 149–71.
- 3 Michael Wedel, *Der Deutsche Musikfilm. Archäologie eines Genres 1914–1945* (München: edition text + kritik, 2007), 392.

This struggle for interpretation breaks upon the postulation as to whether Forst's work and resulting films were products of a subversive or an obedient agency. Subversive is here to be understood as films constructing a Viennese identity against an Other (Prussian, American – essentially Non-Viennese). At the same time, the Othering in the Viennese Trilogy always has a reconciliatory dimension, and – in the case of *Wiener Blut* – is arguably to be interpreted as an allegory for the Austrian acceptance of its inevitable “ascension” into a Greater Germany.⁴ While both polar standings have their legitimate points, the fluidity of the films' semantics sparks not just the controversy explained above, but leads to the question of how the Chionian audio-spectator is constituted in the Viennese Trilogy. It was Michael Wedel who examined the three films in their correlation with the paradigms of operetta on the one hand, and that of the German Musikfilm on the other.⁵ In the following sections, these conclusions will be expanded with regard to the film-musical layer and contextualised in the scope of the films' production.

Forst's ambivalent collaborator

The trilogy of features considered in this text, realised between 1940 and 1945/49, was a reunion of Forst and the composer Willy Schmidt-Gentner, who had successfully collaborated in *Leise flehn meine Lieder* (Cine-Allianz 1933) and *Maskerade* (Tobis-Sascha 1934). After these two features, they discontinued their joint work, most likely because of Forst's subsequent association with the German film market. The reason for this cessation by Schmidt-Gentner was that although he, according to classified files, had already become – most likely out of opportunism – a member of the Nazi Party in 1932,⁶ he then expressed his contempt for the regime several times in 1934,⁷ which forced him to leave the Reich. Therefore, it is to be assumed

4 Hake, *Popular Cinema*, 162.

5 Wedel, *Der Deutsche Musikfilm*, 391–441.

6 Polizeidirektion Wien, 18. 2. 1949, S1044531 GauA. W.S-G.13; Prieberg notes Schmidt-Gentner's entry into the Nazi Party in 1933 (Party Member No.: 3.083,719), also noting his expulsion from the party in 1934, see: Fred K. Prieberg, *Handbuch Deutsche Musiker 1933–1945* (Auprès de Zombry: private publishing house, 2004), 6231.

7 Mitteilung über den Erlass des Reichsministers für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda vom 27. 6. 1938 an die Reichsfilmkammer, Außenstelle Wien, IA-Pf/Kb. 6562/6183, 8. August 1938, Bundesarchiv, Deutschland, R 9361-V/117057, 1; Dr. Röber to Joseph Goebbels, 24. 1. 1939, IB/Dr.MG/B/623, Bundesarchiv, Deutschland, R 9361-V/117057, 1.

that Forst in his movies produced in Germany preferred the politically 'acceptable' film composers Theo Mackeben and Peter Kreuder.⁸ Despite this, Forst held Schmidt-Gentner in such great esteem that he even wanted to bring the composer to Hollywood when considering relocating his own career there.⁹ These plans, however, never came to fruition.

Instead, Schmidt-Gentner turned out to be highly prolific in Austrian film production.¹⁰ Here, he was even assigned the direction of a film-opera, *Die Pompadour* (Mondial 1935), which he completed with the assistance of the aspiring Veit Harlan, and the rudimental socio-critical *Prater* (Mondial 1936). After these box-office failures, however, Schmidt-Gentner concentrated once again solely on composing scores for film. In 1938 – shortly prior to the German annexation of Austria – he penned the music for the features *Konzert in Tirol* (Vindobona 1938) and *Prinzessin Sissy* (Mondial 1938). When the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany took place, Schmidt-Gentner found himself in a precarious situation. In June 1938, three months after the Anschluss, he was titled a “*stärkster Gegner des Nationalsozialismus*”¹¹ (a strongest opponent of National Socialism) by a classified examination of the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Therefore, the Ministry advised excluding him from the film council (Fachschaft Film) and, moreover, not granting him a permit to work in the Reich.¹² This situation, however, seems to have changed rapidly. Further correspondence on the case of the composer continued in January 1939, with the conclusion that Schmidt-Gentner was not considered politically conspicuous any longer.¹³

Therefore, from this point on, one could trace the lifting of the sanctions on the composer and his subsequent 'rehabilitation'. In 1939, Schmidt-Gentner was invited to write the music for the prestigious film *Frauen sind doch bessere Diplomaten* (Ufa 1941), the first German colour film produc-

8 Marion Linhardt, “Phantasie und Rekonstruktion. Die Filme über Wien,” in *Willi Forst. Ein Filmstil aus Wien*, ed. Armin Loacker (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2003), 284–6.

9 Francesco Bono, *Willi Forst. Ein filmkritisches Porträt* (München: edition text + kritik, 2010), 47.

10 Stefan Schmidl, *The Film Scores of Alois Melichar. Studies in the Music of Austro-German Cinema 1933–1956* (Wien: Morawa, 2018), 287–90.

11 See footnote 7.

12 L. c.

13 Dr. Röber to Joseph Goebbels, 1.

tion, but in the end this commission went to Franz Grothe.¹⁴ Neither was he chosen to score the first feature of the newly-founded Wien-Film, E.W. Emo's Strauss-pastiche *Unsterblicher Walzer* (Wien-Film 1939), a contract that went to the politically more opportune Alois Melichar.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Schmidt-Gentner was commissioned to provide the musical logo for Wien-Film, which from then on introduced all of the studio's productions, a quasi-equivalent to Alfred Newman's famous fanfare for 20th Century Pictures (20th Century Fox), written in 1933. It is very likely that Gustav Ucicky, also a frequent collaborator of Schmidt-Gentner's since 1930, then succeeded in signing the composer for his *Aufbruch in Damaskus* (Terra 1939) and *Mutterliebe* (Wien-Film 1939). These projects seemed to have finally cleared the way for Schmidt-Gentner's re-entry into large-scale scoring and a coveted resumption of his work for Forst. The rapid transition from the political file case of the Nazi Party to the star composer of Wien-Film – a film production company which entrusted him with the music of one of the most important propaganda films of Nazi Germany, *Heimkehr* (Wien-Film 1941) – is astonishing. This incredible rise in prestige is reflected not least in Schmidt-Gentner's salary: in 1942, he received 17,500 RM for *Wiener Blut*, and three years later for *Wiener Mädeln* as much as 40,000 RM¹⁶ – a sum that ultimately made him the highest-earning film composer of the Third Reich.¹⁷

Music in Forst's Exalted Ornaments

Schmidt-Gentner's availability is one of the key factors which enabled Forst to create his "*realm of dreams*", as Georg Seeßlen called his filmic works.¹⁸ Seeßlen referred therein principally to the director's mark as an *auteur* of an alternate, escapist world. This applies specifically to the Viennese Tri-

14 Situationsbericht der Ufa vom 28. 6. 1939, in R 55/651, f. 270, cit. after: Helga Belach, "... als die Traumfabrik kriegswichtig wurde. Zur Produktionsgeschichte der Ufa-Revuefilme 1933–1945," in *Wir tanzen um die Welt. Deutsche Revuefilme 1933–1945*, ed. Helga Belach (München: Hanser, 1979), 157.

15 Prieberg, *Handbuch Deutsche Musiker*, 4546–51.

16 "Liste sämtl. Komponisten bis 31. Dezember 1944" (Fernschreiben der Wien-Film GmbH an die Ufafilm, undated), Filmarchiv Austria, WIFI-DO-1-208.

17 See the earnings of Ufa film composers in Christoph Henzel, "Einleitung," in *Musik im Unterhaltungskino des Dritten Reichs*, ed. Christoph Henzel (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2011), 12.

18 Georg Seeßlen, "Die Geschichte eines (erotischen) Traumreiches," in *Willi Forst. Ein Filmstil aus Wien*, ed. Armin Loacker (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2003), 17–56.

logy, amplified by audiences' yearning for an exalted form of filmic entertainment. The box-office success and warm welcome by Goebbels himself – who had nothing but praise for *Operette*¹⁹ and commended *Wiener Blut* for its “Schmiß und Grazie”²⁰ (spirit and graciousness) – are therefore to be interpreted as a result of the end of the prohibition on movies with ‘purely’ entertaining content that occurred in June 1940.²¹ Forst’s form of exalted entertainment is in part based on the prominence given to music, appearing in all three features of the trilogy as performance scenes.²² In *Operette*, it is the ‘freely performed’ after-show interpretation of key numbers from *Die Fledermaus*, in *Wiener Blut* it is the dancing sequence within Metternich’s ball, and, most spectacular of them all, in the crowning musical ‘duel’ in the finale of *Wiener Mädeln*. In each of these big scenes music is infused into the filmic space and always has a dynamic quality, as seen in the waltz scene in *Operette*. Here, the cinematography spatially evolves from room to room and the soundtrack, as Wedel points out,²³ floats between the diegetic and non-diegetic, creating “*virtual spaces of experience*”.²⁴

In this context, Forst’s choreography of masses of people is of special interest, especially in light of a statement in the director’s post-war journal *Mein Film*, in which in 1949 it was stated that “*the underlying, ingenious talent of this film director [was] to turn a musical motif into a visually effective scene.*”²⁵ Applied to the gallop dancing scene in *Wiener Blut*, one can observe the Mass Ornament truly arising through music with Forst’s directing, as the paths of the bodies in motion are determined by the operetta number “Drauß in Hietzing”, given new lyrics. The multitude of dancers is shown in unison and Forst does not hold back in presenting the ecstasy of collectivism, though he also emphasises the variety of the individuals in the scene. Whereas Riefenstahl accentuates similarities when zooming in

19 Gernot Heiss, “Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen,” in *Willi Forst. Ein Filmstil aus Wien*, ed. Armin Loacker (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2003), 124–5.

20 Goebbels, 3. 4. 1942, cit. after Felix Moeller, *Der Filmminister. Gobbels und der Film im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Henschel, 1998), 267.

21 *Ibid.*, 235.

22 Linhardt, “Phantasie und Rekonstruktion,” 289.

23 Michael Wedel, “Krise und Klischee. Zur Genesefunktion von OPERETTE,” in *Willi Forst. Ein Filmstil aus Wien*, ed. Armin Loacker (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2003), 366.

24 Wedel, *Der Deutsche Musikfilm*, 416.

25 “(...) *die eigentliche, geniale Begabung dieses Film-Regisseurs [sei es,] aus einem musikalischen Motiv eine visuell wirksame Szene werden zu lassen.*” O. Th. Kropsch, “Regie: Willi Forst,” in *Mein Film*, Nr. 49, 1949, 10.



Figure 1: The after-show performance in *Operette* (1940) (Filmarchiv Austria)

on individual personalities in the masses, Forst underlines their differences. This he accomplishes by pairing opposites (small/big, thin/fat, young/old, male/female) within the ranks, which not only has a comedic effect, but also – and even more profoundly – breaks up the concept of an orderly mass.

However, this exaltation in staged performances manifests itself not only in the grandeur and the dynamics of the *mise-en-scène*, but also in their intimacy and imagined ‘naturalness’. This is exemplified in *Wiener Mädeln*, where the composer Carl Michael Ziehrer (Forst) sees again his former love interest Klara (Judith Holzmeister) during the World’s Fair in Norway. Klara marks the moment with the premiere of Ziehrer’s new song *Was mir dein Mund verschwieg heut’ Nacht* (What Your Lips Kept from Me Tonight).²⁶ As the singer is performing *prima vista*, Ziehrer acts as a prompter in the scene and whispers the lyrics of the song to her, suggest-

²⁶ Based on Ziehrer’s waltz *Mein Herz hängt an Wien* op. 500 for which Schmidt-Gentner provided the strophe, cf. Max Schönherr, *Carl Michael Ziehrer. Sein Werk – Sein Leben – Seine Zeit. Dokumentation, Analysen und Kommentare* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1974), 615.

ing a realism which amplifies and ultimately exalts the intensity of the song. Forst's directing uses the hallmark of Paula Wessely's performances, which he had used successfully in the director's *Maskerade* and which had since been associated with her acting, namely her 'naturalness'.²⁷ This is certainly a distinguishing feature in contrast to the conventions of Ufa's Musikfilm.

The Role of Motifs and Allusions

Considering the structures of Forst's trilogy more closely, it becomes evident that they are shaped by a (leit)motivic design. Particularly in *Operette*, attention with the aim of establishing a structural coherence is given to the film's score, which derives from the central song in the movie – a slow waltz – *Ich bin heute ja so verliebt* (I Am So in Love Today).²⁸ As a diegetic form the song appears relatively early in the film, when it is performed twice and in succession: first, 'wrongly' – non-rubato, loud, emotionless – and second, 'correctly' – rubato, sotto voce, emotional.²⁹ It is the double interpretation of *Ich bin heute ja so verliebt* which causes the ongoing rivalry between the two characters Marie Geisteringer (Maria Holst) and Franz Jauner (Forst), but, of course, also their unconsummated romantic relationship. In the film's score the theme is introduced in the main titles, where it is sung by a full choir.

The exposition is in fact a 'mini-development', composed following the paradigms of the Viennese Classic. Moreover, the film music encloses subtle references to two opposed composers of the 19th century: Brahms and Wagner. The former (example 1) is recalled through the imitation of his 1st Symphony's *Alhornruf*, the latter (example 2) in the repetitive chromatic descending figures alluding to the Pilgrims Choir from *Tannhäuser* (with this very opera playing a role later in the film's plot, and is then directly quoted in the score).

The film music in Forst's trilogy has important connotative qualities, heard in all of its features. In *Operette*, although the establishing scene is set in Mainz, a Viennese identity is represented through the lyrical theme

27 Gernot Heiss, "Paula Wessely: Kritik im Wandel der Zeiten," in *Im Wechselspiel. Paula Wessely und der Film*, ed. Armin Loacker (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2007), 347–62.

28 Hake, *Popular Cinema*, 166.

29 Rebecca Grotjahn, "Ein Lied wie dieses muss gebracht werden, ausgestattet – wie ein Theaterstück". Willi Forst und die Inszenierung des Singens," in *Willi Forst. Ein Filmstil aus Wien*, ed. Armin Loacker (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2003), 182–7.

Musical score for Example 1, featuring Trumpets, French Horn I, Trombones, and Tuba. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. The Trumpets part has a long note with a slur. The French Horn I and Trombones parts have a similar long note with a slur. The Tuba part has a long note with a slur.

Example 1: Willi Schmidt-Gentner, *Operette* (1940), Allusion to Johannes Brahms' First Symphony, Filmarchiv Austria, WiFi-MM-115

Musical score for Example 2, featuring Violins I, Clarinet I, Violas, French Horn I, Trombones, Bassoons, Trombone III, and Tuba. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. The Violins I part has a melodic line with slurs. The Clarinet I, Violas, and French Horn I parts have a similar melodic line with slurs. The Trombones, Bassoons, Trombone III, and Tuba parts have a long note with a slur.

Example 2: Willi Schmidt-Gentner, *Operette* (1940), Allusion to Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Filmarchiv Austria, WiFi-MM-115

of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, immediately segueing in the diegetic performance of *Ungeduld* from the same composer. Both citations can be read not only as sonic connotations of Vienna, but also as a self-reference to Forst's first success as a director, *Leise flehn meine Lieder*. Another example of his connotative approach concerns an almost unimaginable aspect of the score: Forst allowed Schmidt-Gentner to insert a subtle reference to Offenbach's famous *Barcarolle* from *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (1881), played in $\frac{3}{4}$ measure with harp-arpeggios, as in the famous original. Through this non-diegetic allusion, the movie signifies a historical fact while leaving out a composer 'unacceptable' to the Third Reich. Interpolating controversial history as a musical *couleur temporelle* is also evident in the underscoring of Metternich in *Wiener Blut*, expressed in Beethoven's G-Major Minuet (WoO 10/2), adapted for strings in the soundtrack. The linking of Metternich's character with this piece is to be perceived more as an effectuation of a nostalgic disposition (evoking 'good old times') than a mediation of the outdated Habsburg rule, as would be the official National Socialist reading, realised in features like *Der Große König* (Tobis 1942) and *Kolberg* (Ufa



Figure 2: *Wiener Blut* (1942), original poster (Filmarchiv Austria)

1945). Coming back to Francesco Bono, who claimed that in Forst's Trilogy sentimentality should be seen as an expression of opposition that is not of a political nature,³⁰ considering the examples of a sonic microlayer one cannot argue that the aforementioned features do not go entirely without a political significance.

Wiener Blut: Mickey-Mousing in the Third Reich

The second two entries in Forst's trilogy are the director's effort to deal with the new realities of the Third Reich taking over Austria (*Wiener Blut*) and then the war (*Wiener Mädeln*). In the case of the former, a cinematic adaptation of the homonymous operetta (1899), the slap-stick comedy specifically typifies the struggle between 'Austrian' and 'Prussian' principles,³¹ but essentially offers an artistic coming to terms with the current situation. In this comedic approach, most scenes from the film are, interestingly enough, left unscored, leaving the narrative to work on its own. When music carries the comedy, it is foremost in the diegesis, namely in the only original song written for the movie by Schmidt-Gentner, *Tritt ein, bring Glück herein* (Enter, Bring Joy Hither). It is frenziedly, chaotically and hilariously performed by the domestic servants to welcome their new master, Count Wolkersheim (Willy Fritsch).

One of the exceptions to the sparse usage of music for slap-stick purposes is the movie's prologue, where Forst himself, heavily disguised as an alchemist, creates 'Viennese Blood' out of various ingredients. Schmidt-Gentner's underscore mimics the onomatopoeic sounds of the alchemical process – boiling, blubbing and fizzing – with aspects of Mickey-Mousing and the rapid succession of polytonal ascending and descending eighth and sixteenth-note passages, supplemented with harp glissandi and instrumentalizations of comical effects on the xylophone (example 3).

This kind of 'close synchronisation' of auditory and visual action through a musical mimesis was introduced by Max Steiner in *King Kong* (RKO 1933)³² and was soon adapted for comical effect, especially in the world of animated film. Soon enough, when came to be termed Mickey-Mousing was primarily associated with cartoon music and considered a staple Hollywood film music technique. However, in animation of the Third Reich,

30 Bono, *Willi Forst*, 128.

31 Hake, *Popular Cinema*, 161–2.

32 Michael Slowik, *After the Silents. Hollywood Film Music in the Early Sound Era, 1926–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 239.

The image shows a musical score for a film score. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for Flutes, Xylophone, and Violins I. The middle staff is for Oboes, Clarinets, Trumpet I, and Trumpets. The bottom staff is for Violins II, Violas, Violoncelli, Bassoons, Trombones, and Bass Tuba. The music is in 8/8 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many accents and slurs. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 8/8. The score is written in a style typical of film music notation, with many slurs and accents indicating a specific rhythmic feel.

Example 3: Willy Schmidt-Gentner, *Wiener Blut* (1942), Mickey-Mousing in the prologue of the film, Filmarchiv Austria, WiFi-MM-120

such as *Das dumme Gänslein* (Fischerkoesen 1944), no Mickey-Mousing was applied, but instead a derivative of swing music. It is therefore surprising to hear this musical practice in the prologue of *Wiener Blut*, as the Third Reich had already been at war with the United States for five months by the time of its release. Of course, the movie was produced before Germany's entry into this part of the conflict on the side of their Japanese allies, but it is still notable that the censors presumably overlooked this sequence, or found the particular associative influence of Hollywood on it harmless.

But the prologue is not the only utilisation of 'American' Mickey Mousing, as it musically occurs with even more subtlety as the movie progresses, such as in the film's screwball comedy inspired scenes (drawing on yet another American filmic convention, although, unlike Mickey Mousing, a relatively established one in German cinema³³). Here, the marital dispute between Countess and Count Wolkersheim is reinforced by a short series of staccato accents in the orchestra. Another application of comedy read in the score of *Wiener Blut* is the grotesque underscoring of Count Wolkersheim's shock as he stumbles across his strict aunt-in-law (example 4). The chord, split between middle woodwinds and muted brass, is a third inversion of a $F^{\#7}$, enharmonically placed on a natural (E instead of E^b) fourth step in B^b Major, and acts in the sequence as a stinger chord, which James Buhler and David Neumeyer define as "a sharp, usually dissonant musical

33 Cf. Paul Martin's *Glückskinder* (1936) or Helmut Käutner's *Wir machen Musik* (1942).

*chord*³⁴ that serves as a sonic metaphor “of particular psychological states and as such greatly aid in reading expressions, especially facial ones”³⁵ (the latter applies very much to *Wiener Blut*, as it is the sight of aunt-in-law’s face that is presented as appalling). As a demonstration, Buhler and Neumeyer point to *Casablanca* (Warner Bros. 1942), in which a corresponding stinger chord – an eleventh chord on E, seldom used and thus ‘irritating’ – signifies a critical moment in the storyline of the film, namely the reencounter of the movie’s lovers, Rick and Elsa (example 5).³⁶ Even more dramatic is the musical stinger Hanns Eisler singles out in his approval of this technique: a moment in his own score for *Hangmen Also Die!* (United Artists 1943), where a twelve-tone chord is played against a portrait of Adolf Hitler.³⁷ Schmidt-Gentner’s realisation of the artifice is naturally expressed in a comedic frame, and can be understood as close to the widespread associating of Mickey-Mousing with the genre of animated comedies (it is important to remind the reader here that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s popular series *Tom and Jerry*, substantially dependent on Scott Bradley’s Mickey-Mousing scores, started in 1940³⁸).

When Buhler and Neumeyer speak of Mickey-Mousing as a “sweetener”³⁹ that renders sound “so that it seems to violate the conditions of verisimilitude”⁴⁰, the authors precisely characterise the method of creating an alternate cinematic realm through music as carried out in *Wiener Blut*: Somewhat surprisingly, both Hollywood and Wien-Film constitute and create their respective dreamscapes with the same musical toolkit – presenting a parallelism with a peculiar quality. This parallelism may be explained by the ambivalent cinematic ideal of Goebbels, who himself made no secret of his admiration of American cinema. Being deeply infatuated with *Gone with the Wind* (Selznick International Pictures 1939), Goebbels used the feature as an example to be emulated by the Third Reich’s film industry.⁴¹ At the same time, he perceived German cinema as a rival to the capi-

34 James Buhler and David Neumeyer, *Hearing the Movies. Music and Sound in Film History*, 2nd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 74.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006; orig. 1944/47), 39.

38 Daniel Goldmark, *Tunes for 'Toons. Music and the Hollywood Cartoon* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), 58.

39 Buhler and Neumeyer, *Hearing the Movies*, 72.

40 Ibid.

41 Moeller, *Der Filmmminister*, 76.

Oboes
Clarinets

ff

Horns

Horns
Trombones

ff

Bassoons
Trombone III

Example 4: Willy Schmidt-Gentner, *Wiener Blut* (1942), stinger chord, Filmarchiv Austria, WiFi-MM-120

Flutes
Clarinets

v

Harp
Vibraphone
Celesta

v

Bassoons
Horns
Harp

Example 5: Max Steiner, *Casablanca* (1942), Stinger chord (after Buhler, Neumeyer 2016, 74)

talistic (and 'Jewish') Hollywood, setting a goal and challenge to modernise German cultural heritage in order to achieve a similar effective kind of a film style.⁴²

A further aspect of Forst's and Schmidt-Gentner's 'close synchronisation' is expressed in a mocking deception of the audio-spectator. Servant

42 Klaus Kreimeier, *Die Ufa-Story. Geschichte eines Filmkonzerns* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002; orig. 1992), 284; Moeller, *Der Filmmminister*, 77.

Knöpfel (Hans Moser) is observed in a zoom-out, where he seemingly (and masterfully) plays the piano. As the camera zooms out further, however, it becomes clear that he has a mere supporting role, literally the turning pages for the ‘real’ pianist, Count Wolkersheim’s aunt-in-law.

Wiener Mädeln: A ‘Third Solution’

Based on the interpretation of last part of the trilogy, *Wiener Mädeln*, as a filmic symbolisation of an identity crisis, the final scene of the movie, which is entirely structured through music, epitomises the war as a pinnacle of conflict by artistic means. It is directly mediated through a ‘battle of orchestras’ – an American marching band under the baton of the Sousa-esque character John Cross (Sousa’s surname was changed to ‘Cross’ because of his ‘Jewishness’⁴³) on the one side and Ziehrer’s refined and time-honoured music ensemble on the other. The ‘battle’ is fought by the popular tunes of the opposed cultures. In its rapid changes and interweaving, the skirmish reminds of *Unsterblicher Walzer*⁴⁴ and Forst’s own *Wiener Blut*, both tracing back to *Walzerkrieg* (Ufa 1933).

The connotative quality of the performed music is reinforced by the visuals of the duel taking place at the World’s Fair in Christiania: the amiability and tradition of Habsburg Vienna (signified with its St. Stephen’s cathedral, imperial uniforms and medals) is juxtaposed against the modernity, but also wildness, of the United States (represented by skyscrapers and Native Americans behind Cross’ band). The choice and the character of the pieces in this ‘battle’ has not been considered in previous studies on the Viennese Trilogy, but requires special attention in order to be profoundly understood, especially in the associative potency of the tunes’ selection. Considering the context of the filming – the penultimate year of the war – the utilisation of representative American ‘national’ repertoire (*Stars and Stripes Forever* and the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, for instance) is noteworthy, for it is not used in a propagandistic or in a demeaning manner. This applies foremost to the usage of Stephen Foster’s *Swanee River*, which almost brings victory to the Americans over the Viennese *Radetzky Marsch* in the duel of the orchestras. With the prominent placement of this piece of music, Forst may – shortly before the end of the war – also have given a cynical cinematic commentary on Goebbels’ call to filmmakers to create a

43 Walter Fritz, *Im Kino erlebte ich die Welt – 100 Jahre Kino und Film in Österreich* (Wien, München: Brandstätter, 1997), 204.

44 Schmidl, *The Film Scores of Alois Melichar*, 25–6.

“new German folk song film,” which he gave following the screening of the Stephen Foster biopic *Swanee River* (20th Century Fox 1939).⁴⁵

However, victory in the contest is not awarded to either of the conductors and their respective ensembles, but, as Wedel accurately notices, to the singing ‘Wiener Mädeln’, who enter the stage at the advantageous moment.⁴⁶ The all-female performance of the title song subverts ideology and is offering a ‘third solution’.

Operetta – film – film music

The Viennese Trilogy offers a critical rendering of Forst’s unique occupation in the cinema of the Third Reich – with its opinionated and often disguised interpretations of wartime subjects and identity. It is with these techniques of commenting on the political that the films draw on Viennese operetta, rather than the ostensible topics. But the trilogy should be read not only as an adoption of operetta modes, but also as their transformation into a new form of medial manifestation. For the musical layer of this idiosyncrasy, Forst entrusted Schmidt-Gentner with agency in its execution. Dutifully realising the director’s demands, the scores of the Viennese Trilogy exhibit a richness of detail which essentially supported the director’s audacious subtlety. The result represents a peak of subversive obedience, hardly to be repeated in other circumstance. However, the collaboration of Forst and Schmidt-Gentner barely continued after the war, as they would work together only once again, on a feature with the significant title *Weg in die Vergangenheit* (Paula Wessely 1954). In the end, only nostalgia remains.

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45 Kreimeier, *Die Ufa-Story*, 284.

46 Wedel, “Krise und Klischee,” 378.

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