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Rolling in the Modern: The Mahler-Roller Productions of the Vienna Court Opera House (Historical Essay and Syllabus)

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ROLLING IN THE MODERN: THE MAHLER-ROLLER PRODUCTIONS
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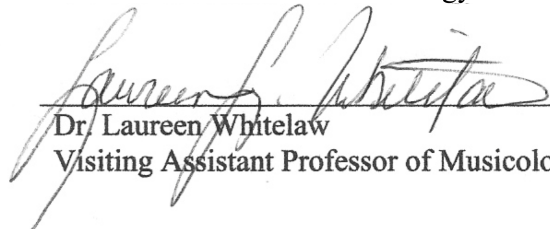
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ROLLING IN THE MODERN: THE MAHLER-ROLLER PRODUCTIONS
OF THE VIENNA COURT OPERA HOUSE
(HISTORICAL ESSAY AND SYLLABUS)

A Project Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Meadows School of the Arts

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Music

with a

Major in Musicology

by

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The amount of support I have received over the past two years is immeasurable. If you asked me four or five years ago about whether or not I would strive for a master's degree, I probably would have laughed in your face. And yet, here I am, finishing up this paper in the midst of a global health crisis. With that, none of this would have been possible without the help of all of my friends, my loved ones, and my professors and advisors, who have been the utmost of help at every stage. My project advisor and professor Dr. Peter Kupfer has been endlessly helpful at every stage of this venture, and the members of my committee, Drs. Kristina Nielsen and Lauren Whitelaw, provided me with valuable commentary for both the paper and syllabus. Furthermore, my mother, father, and sisters have provided me with the emotional support for these difficult times. My girlfriend, Genevieve Hudson, doubled that emotional support, and was there when things got really tricky. My friends at SMU, including Matt, Cela, Susanna, and many others were there when I needed to vent or decompress from a strained-neck from reading/writing all day. Finally, and definitely not least, are my grandparents, especially papa and grandpa. I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for their continual support, both verbally and emotionally.

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Rolling in the Modern: The Mahler-Roller Productions
Of The Vienna Court Opera House
(Historical Essay and Syllabus)

Advisor: Dr. Peter Kupfer

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This project takes the Mahler-Roller productions at the Vienna Court Opera House as a case study to examine the ways that contemporary artistic trends can influence operatic productions. By analyzing the sketches Roller created for their productions, I argue that Mahler and Roller expanded the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* to both increase the production quality, the metaphorical content, and set a new standard for interpretive operatic productions.

This project is divided into two parts. Part I is a historical essay that provides context for the Mahler-Roller productions. I first outline the history of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and discuss the ways that Wagner implemented it in his own operas. Next, to provide context to the operatic production standards in Vienna before Mahler and Roller, I examine what designers were creating for sets and costumes, followed by an introduction to Adolphe Appia, an important figure in the transformation of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* for twentieth-century operatic productions. Finally, after covering the Vienna Secession, I examine two productions staged by the duo and look at two sketches Roller created for the sets. Following this paper, I have created a syllabus that can be used to teach a class which deals with this topic.

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This is dedicated to Aunt Mary and Grandma.

PART I: HISTORICAL ESSAY

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As much as the history of opera has been considered from a textual point of view – that is, the study of scores, the creation of critical editions – its visual element has not been treated with the same depth. This has in part to do with a lack of evidence from earlier periods as well as with musicology's focus on instrumental music and its attendant analytical paradigms. But operas have not always looked the same on stage and there have long been debates about how an opera should be mounted, and in particular how the music should interact with the other components of a production, and vice versa. One of the first to write extensively about this was Richard Wagner, with his concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total work of art"). While the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was not originally Wagner's idea – earlier descriptions along the same lines had been used for literature, painting, and even landscaping¹ – Wagner was the first to systematically apply this to opera, emphasizing the connections between the drama, the music, and the text. The theory that Wagner proposed for opera, and the relationship that the music will have to the drama, was revolutionary for its time; before this, music was written as a *reaction* to the libretto, that is, the libretto was a narrative that was set to music. However, while the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* was significant in its reforms, Wagner never treated the visual

¹ See H. M. Brown, *The Quest for the Gesamtkunstwerk and Richard Wagner* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Brown elaborates on the history of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, showing how the theory evolved over time and included not just music but landscaping, art, and literature.

element of opera with the same rigor as he did drama, music, and poetry. Indeed, before Wagner, there was very little consideration for how the visuals on stage should be connected to the music. Books had been written proposing various methodologies, but the decision of how an opera should be staged often fell into the hands of the conductor.² Furthermore, it wasn't until the late nineteenth century that operatic productions began to engage consciously with contemporary artistic trends. One such example is the Vienna Court Opera House under the direction, from 1897, of Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). He appointed the Secessionist artist Alfred Roller (1864-1935) who developed new sets and costumes for canonical works, including *Tristan und Isolde*, *Lohengrin*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Fidelio*. As a member of the first post-Wagnerian generation, Mahler sought to create a newly realized *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and saw Roller as an ideal artistic partner. Their collaboration instigated operatic reforms that informed future generations of operatic interpretation. Through reexamination of Alfred Roller's sketches for new productions at the Vienna Court Opera House in 1903-07, this paper aims to highlight the stylistic revolutions in opera staging that occurred in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and in part explain how artistic movements have influenced opera productions. This study is significant in that it situates the Mahler-Roller collaborations in the political and cultural context of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and demonstrates how this context can affect the arts. The Vienna Secession valued Wagner's idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and examining Roller's sketches will display how that theory manifested itself as a new operatic aesthetic. Including the sketches in this project offers a unique perspective as they offer concrete visual evidence on which to base discussions of differences

² Such books include Benedetto Marcell's *Il teatro alla moda* (1720), Walther R. Volbach's *Problems of Opera Production* (1897), and Adolphe Appia's *Music and the Art of the Theatre* (1898).

between the old and new. I will argue that we can learn a lot about how artists from different fields can come together to create new art forms.

This paper is divided into four sections. In the first, I give a history of Wagner's conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* by showing how he developed the theory in his two major prose works, *The Art-Work of the Future* (1848) and *Opera and Drama* (1851). The second section considers the staging practices in Vienna before Mahler's appointment at the Vienna Court Opera. I argue that during this period there was no attempt to *interpret* the musical score, certainly not in an integrated, *Gesamtkunstwerk* manner, and that as a result costumes and set designs merely replicated what was called for in the libretto. The third section focuses on the Vienna Secession, the primary artistic group in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Named after artists who seceded from the principal artistic institutions in Vienna (the Academy of Fine Arts and the *Künstlerhaus*), Secessionists embraced the liberal ideology spreading across Vienna and began to revitalize contemporary art by hosting exhibitions at the Vienna Secession Building. They focused on installations that realized physical embodiments of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. As one of the founding members of the Secession, Alfred Roller's collaborations with Mahler struck a chord with both critics and the public. Given Roller's primacy in this project, I will further discuss his aesthetic values and how he translated them into his sets. The Roller sketches for the new production's sets designs will provide a glimpse into these set designs; with no photographic evidence available, the sketches represent what Roller envisioned for the sets and costumes. The last section focuses in on the Mahler-Roller collaborations. I will argue that Mahler and Roller's reforms sparked a new age of operatic score *interpretation* by examining two sketches Roller created for the sets. Ultimately, my goal in this paper is to show how contemporary artistic trends

influence operatic productions. The combination of Roller's sets, which reflected the popular style of art in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and Mahler's new vision for operatic performances, which used the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a template, created a new model of operatic production.

Chapter 2

THE WAGNERIAN GESAMTKUNSTWERK

There are few figures in the history of Western art music who influenced music as much as Richard Wagner did. Ironically, much of Wagner's influence also comes through his extensive prose writings, in which he outlined a project that fundamentally reevaluated music's position not just in opera, but in society, transforming it into a practice that touched the inner spirit of the listener and reunite the German people with their folk heritage. Wagner proposes his formulation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in *The Art-Work of the Future*. Wagner's goal served both a spiritual and metaphysical function. Indeed, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* influenced artists so much that "no subsequent artist who reflected on the relationships between the arts could get around association and comparison with Wagner."³ Nietzsche saw the difficult future that Wagner's theories might assume, noting that "everything Wagner *can* do, nobody will be able to do after him, nobody has done before him, nobody *shall* do after him. – Wagner is divine."⁴ As I will argue, however, this wasn't necessarily true. The influence that Wagnerian aesthetics had on the future generation of

³ Wolfgang Dömling, "Reuniting the Arts: Notes on the History of an Idea," *19th-Century Music* 18, no. 1 (1994): 3. <https://doi.org/10.2307/746598>.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case for Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1967), 176-7; Quoted in Thomas S. Grey, "Preface," in *Wagner's Musical Prose Texts and Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xiii.

artists was vast and strong and while various groups praised and idolized Wagner for his revolutionary stance on the purpose and function of art, others developed his ideas further.

What was Wagner's formulation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*? Musicologist Barry Millington defines it as a theory of recombination: "Harking back to ancient Greek drama, [Wagner] suggested that there the basic elements of dance, music and poetry had been ideally combined. Their division into separate genres had diminished their expressive force; only in the total work of art could they regain their original dignity."⁵ In *The Art-Work of the Future*, Wagner describes it as "the art-work of the people, a work which, in the form of Greek tragedy, enters upon the public arena of political life."⁶ Indeed, Aristotle's influence on the Florentine Camera represents one of the earlier attempts at a *Gesamtkunstwerk*: "[the Florentine Camera's] reconstruction of ancient Greek tragedy was based on the idea that it had been sung rather than spoken throughout, so that the meaning of the words was inseparable from the expressive and musical aspects of their sound."⁷ Wagner felt that the union of music and poetry could yield a powerful dramatic effect in his operas. However, because of the dense and often confusing language, Wagner's consideration and repurposing of the term was often misread by his followers.⁸ Literary critic Dieter Borchmeyer indicates that "what he meant here is simply the restoration of the 'original

⁵ Barry Millington, "Gesamtkunstwerk," in *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000011027>.

⁶ Dieter Borchmeyer, "The Ideal Audience: The Greeks and 'The Art-Work of the Future,'" in *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 65.

⁷ Sanna Pederson, "From Gesamtkunstwerk to Music Drama," in *The Total Work of Art*, ed. Anthony J. Steinhoff, David Imhoof, and Margaret Eleanor Menninger (Berghahn Books, 2016), 41.

⁸ Peter Vergo, "Wagnerian Painting," in *The Music of Painting: Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage* (London: Phaidon, 2010), 17. Vergo indicates that because of the dense language the meaning of Wagner's theories could be appropriated for other purposes. *Ibid.*, 18.

unity' of the 'three purely human art-forms,' which he personifies as the 'primeval sisters' of dance, music, and poetry."⁹

In the *Gesamtkunstwerk* Wagner insisted that "the three sister arts would be reunited in the actor of the future, who would be dancer, musician and poet in one."¹⁰ Thus, Wagner wrote his own libretto for the operas; doing so allowed him to control the metaphorical connection between music and poetry. We can use the *Ring* cycle as an example. Wagner finished the libretto in the late 1860s, following his two monumental books, *The Art-Work of the Future* and *Opera and Drama*. His growing fascination for Nordic mythology provided him with the subject of his first opera designed as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelungen*).¹¹ The story of Siegfried, drawn from Nordic legend,

provide[d] a suitably hallowed subject for his socially transforming 'Art-Work of the Future.' The libretto he came up with portrayed Siegfried's death at the end result and expiation of a curse on the Nibelung hoard, placed there long ago. ... In this blend of tragedy and epic, the tragic element was to be portrayed through action, the epic through a wealth of ballad-narratives of a kind for which Wagner had already shown a strong predilection.¹²

Writing his own libretto allowed him to control every aspect of the dramatic part of the opera, bringing together a fusion of the three sister disciplines.

⁹ Borchmeyer, "The Ideal Audience," 66.

¹⁰ Millington, "Gesamtkunstwerk."

¹¹ Discussing Wagner's inclination to Nordic legend is outside of the realm of this paper. Briefly, Wagner was reflecting on the communal aspect of Norse mythology and fell for the *Nibelunglied* that inspired the *Ring* cycle. Carl E. Schorske compares this phenomenon to craftsman William Morris. See Carl E. Schorske, "The Quest for the Grail: Wagner and Morris," in *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 90–104.

¹² Richard Taruskin, "Deeds of Music Made Visible (Class of 1813, I)," in *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), <https://www-oxfordwesternmusic-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/view/Volume3/actrade-9780195384833-div1-010004.xml>.

When drafting the *Ring* cycle Wagner imagined it to be performed in a hall with a festival-like atmosphere. Up to this point operas in general had, for at least two centuries, been staged in dedicated opera houses, but these had been designed as much as for socializing as for viewing the drama on stage. Wagner believed that the creation of a purpose-built opera house, which demanded the audience's attention solely on the stage, could allow his ideal productions to take place. Designed specifically for Wagner's operas, the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus* (Festival Opera House) was completed in 1876. It included several revolutionary elements, such as the sunken and hidden orchestra pit and undisturbed sightlines for the audience, both of which were intended to achieve a certain effect: "[Wagner's] new theatre was to be a machine for focusing the audience's full attention upon the stage – a demand that was quite novel in an age when a great many of the audience went to the theatre to see and be seen."¹³ Indeed, many of these technical advances have survived into modern day opera houses.

Wagner refined his operatic standards a few years after *The Art-Work of the Future*. In *Opera and Drama* Wagner scrutinizes past and current operatic practices, specifically Italian opera and French grand opera, by pitting those two against his own works. As music critic Patrick Carnegie explains, Wagner believed that his work "shall owe its structure neither to opera nor to modern 'literary drama', but to the living dramatic art of the Greeks and of Shakespeare on the one hand, and, on the other, to modern instrumental music, by which [Wagner] means, first and foremost, symphonic form."¹⁴ His theory placed poetry and drama on equal footing with German symphonic music, the leading form of music, in his mind, in the mid-nineteenth century.

¹³ Patrick Carnegie, "Staging the Ring at Bayreuth," in *Wagner and the Art of Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 73.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

By suggesting this, Wagner was, rather egotistically and megalomaniacally, defining his own place in the canon of music, joining in the ranks of Beethoven.¹⁵ Wagner justifies his project by relating the fall of Greek tragedy to the Tower of Babel. As the languages became incomprehensible, “so [to] the individual arts grew separate and autonomous when the common political interest which united them aesthetically ‘split into a thousand egotistical particularities.’”¹⁶ The language here suggests that Wagner equated the disintegration of the Greek tragedy with the devaluing of morals, a phenomenon he saw occurring in the cosmopolitan nature of Italian and French opera (and perpetuated also by Jews). According to Borchmeyer, “one of the corner-stones of Wagner’s aesthetic theory is his identification of moral and aesthetic ‘good’, and his unmasking of artistic shortcomings as moral ones.... At all events, there is scarcely a single essay by Wagner in which artistic conditions are not unequivocally equated with moral ones.”¹⁷ Wagner’s qualms with Italian and French opera can be summarized with this quote from part I of *Opera and Drama*:

Modern Italian opera music has been called, with singular appropriateness, a prostitute ... French opera music is rightly regarded as a coquette ... But there is a further type of degenerate woman who fills us with the repugnance and loathing: I mean the prude, and it is to her that so-called German opera music [must] be compared.¹⁸

Thus, Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* connects moral inferiority to operatic practices; only through a reunification of the arts can (true German) opera be reinstated as a “moral institution.” For example, Wagner indicates in the conclusion of his *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*

¹⁵ See Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner’s Beethoven (1870): A New Translation*, trans. Roger Allen (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014).

¹⁶ Quoted in Borchmeyer, 67.

¹⁷ Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, part I. Quoted in Borchmeyer, “Opera as an Immoral Institution,” in *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, 88.

¹⁸ Ibid.

(*Collected Essays and Poetry*) that his Bayreuth Festival will resurrect the national morality: “For it is certain that public morality can easily be judged by the character of a nation’s public art.”¹⁹ Musicologist Thomas S. Grey expresses Wagner’s belief that his own prose “re-invented art and music in his own image, that his oeuvre was indeed a perfect, self-contained whole that was expressly designed to render its context – an imperfect present – obsolete.”²⁰ The imperfect present Wagner refers to is the aforementioned moral instability that Italian, French, and German opera represented. In sum, Wagner’s project of operatic reform was as much about moral reform, from a distinctly mid-nineteenth-century nationalist angle. As we will see, this ideological aspect of Wagner’s theories was emulated by future Wagner disciples to call for societal change, applying the moral aspect to an otherwise artistic, aesthetic, phenomenon. The Vienna Secession was created under a similar ideological premise: their disdain for the commercialization of art was one of the reasons they left the artist’s union. While there is little evidence to support the notion that Mahler adopted the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in order to “fix” society, he was preoccupied with “purifying” operatic performance practices and viewed the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as an aesthetic that could achieve his goal. In this way, both Mahler and Roller adopted the ideological component of Wagner’s project, though to different ends and not nearly as self-consciously.

As important as *The Art-Work of the Future* and *Opera and Drama* are, Wagner’s change of view between these two works is important when considering the intent behind the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In her study of the evolution of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, musicologist Sanna Pederson notes that

¹⁹ Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (Complete Prose and Poetry), ix., 318. Quoted in Borchmeyer, “Opera as an Immoral Institution,” 88.

²⁰ Grey, xiii.

Wagner's writing gradually shed the political hortatory style evident during the revolutionary years of 1848-1849 and became more figurative, relying increasingly on extended metaphors and analogies to describe his plans for creating a new kind of opera. ... By the time he writes [*Opera and Drama*], though, he depicts his new kind of opera as the result of music and drama coming together like woman and man in the act of sexual love.²¹

Indeed, the shift towards metaphorical description reflects the evolving nature of the theory.

Furthermore, the term *Gesamtkunstwerk* doesn't even make an appearance in either of the works;

Wagner refers to the idea as "Drama," "Drama der Zukunft," or "Kunstwerk der Zukunft"

("Drama," "Drama of the Future," or "Artwork of the Future").²² Wagner justifies this

nomenclature by stating that "because I do not care to invent any arbitrary name for these works,

I will simply call them dramas, since that at least indicates the standpoint from which they are to

be understood."²³ Wagner's main focus wasn't on terminology, but rather on an ideological

aesthetic theory.

Individuals concerned with music in society believed that Wagner's theories could provide a means to an end. Historian William Weber shows how Wagner's theories were manipulated to embrace what Weber calls "musical idealism." Musical idealism emerged when "a set of social and cultural tendencies first became apparent at the turn of the nineteenth century. ... The most striking of these tendencies was a shift in musical taste from a preference for contemporary music to a preference for works by dead masters."²⁴ Like Wagner himself, Wagnerians abhorred the commercialization of music, that is, what they saw as the French and

²¹ Pederson, 40.

²² Pederson, 42.

²³ Richard Wagner, "A Communication to My Friends," in *The Art-Work of the Future, and Other Works*, trans. W. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 267–392.

²⁴ William Weber, "Wagner, Wagnerism, and Musical Idealism," in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David C. Large and William Weber (Cornell and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 28-9.

Italian practices of pleasing audiences with shallow spectacle for financial gain rather than deep moral reflection and edification.²⁵ Weber continues, stating that “the musical commercialism stimulated a powerful countercurrent of musical idealism. Initially the trend manifested itself as a moral critique of the social and musical tendencies evident in the music business, a warning against bad taste and the quest for gain.”²⁶ Again, the notion of morals reappears, supporting the claim that Wagner equated aesthetic values with moral judgments.

Later generations of artists were greatly influenced by Wagner’s theories, even if they manipulated them for their own needs.²⁷ In the final section of this paper we will witness how Mahler and Roller expanded on the *Gesamtkunstwerk* to create the new productions of Mozart, and, perhaps most importantly, Wagner.

²⁵ The problem of music commercialization was one that persisted through musicologists on through the twentieth century. German Music critic Theodor Adorno maintained similar principles when commenting on musical trends in the mid-twentieth century. German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus argued for Western art music (and specifically German symphonic music) “relative autonomy,” insisting that the music had no explicit connection to the world outside of music. See Anne C. Shreffler, “Berlin Walls: Dahlhaus, Knepler, and Ideologies of Music History,” *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 4 (2003): 498-525.

²⁶ Weber, 33-4.

²⁷ There is an expansive collection of literature that covers this topic. See Peter Vergo, *The Music of Painting: Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage*, (London: Phaidon, 2010); Patrick Coleman ed., *The Art of Music*, (San Diego: The San Diego Museum of Art, 2015); Jane Kallir, *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte*, (New York: Galerie St. Elienne, 1986); Klaus H. Carl and Victoria Charles, *The Vienna Secession*, (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2011). These books discuss the influence Wagner had on the visual arts and how the *Gesamtkunstwerk* extends past the musical realm.

Chapter 3

“A PROPHET OF MODERN THEATER”: ADOLPHE APPIA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIC PRODUCTIONS

Before the late nineteenth century, producers of opera typically placed greater emphasis on the musical and poetic aspects of opera over the visual.²⁸ Sets and costumes from the mid-seventeenth-century Vienna serves as a case study to show how there was a lack of stylistic change up until Mahler’s time. In his history of set designs and costumes in Vienna, theater historian Wolfgang Greisenegger chronicles the numerous artisans, architects, and designers who represented the highly sophisticated style of Baroque design. Given the close association of opera with courts, and operas as a metaphor for royal power, many early stage designs reflected this dynamic. Greisenegger notes that early operatic tradition “was influenced by its birthplace – the palace. Everything that took place within its walls, even its entertainment, served a higher purpose: the consolidation of dynastic power.”²⁹ The ideology of early operas was one of politics and power, serving not an artistic need, but a political one. One of the most notable designers was Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini (1636-1707). Greisenegger indicates in his discussion of Burnacini’s sets for *Il Pomo d’Oro* (1668) that “Burnacini made use of sharp contrasts for his

²⁸ Wagner’s knowledge of visual art was limited and is discussed in an entire essay that considers the reflexive properties of landscape painting. See “The Painter’s Art” from Richard Wagner in *The Art-Work of the Future, and Other Works*, translated by W. Ashton Ellis, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 69-214.

²⁹ Wolfgang Greisenegger, “Set Design and Costumes,” in *The Vienna Opera*, ed. Andrea Seeböhm (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 175.

effects. He loved intense colors, which he would usually combine in threes, and knew how to use sumptuous materials to execute his flamboyant ideas.”³⁰ Evocative sets, detailed paintings, and lavishly furnished scenes can be seen in the sketches drawn by Burnacini, as well as one other Italian architect, Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena (1696-1757). It is important to keep in mind, however, that though the sets and costumes were lavish, they “merely” reflected the lavish musical style and settings of the libretti and they were not intended to interpret any symbolic or metaphorical meanings hidden within the score.

Eventually, the High Baroque style propagated by the Italians fell out of vogue. Greisenegger confirms this, stating that “audiences began to get by quite happily without an elevated visual and musical style. The purpose of the theater was now to educate and entertain: the call was for characterization, the comedy of manners, and the chance to share the destinies of people with whom the audience could relate.”³¹ In the age of Enlightenment, audiences and set designers rejected the grand opulence of earlier set designs. This shift in values was spearheaded by several figures: costume designer Philipp von Stubenrauch (1784-1848), set designer Johann Ferdinand Hötzendorf von Hohenberg (1733-1816), and Josef Platzer (1751-1806), whose emphasis on clarity and lighting defined his visual language. Stubenrauch was one of the first Viennese trained designers drafted to create scenic designs. He was an expert on stage costumes and earned fame after he published four books containing hand-colored engravings based on popular Viennese performances. In 1812 he was named Imperial and Royal Director of Costume and Scenery. As Stubenrauch focused on the costumes, Hohenberg, also trained in Vienna and

³⁰ Greisenegger, 178.

³¹ Ibid., 183.

who worked extensively at the Schönbrunn, was hired to work on the designing and building of sets at the court theater. Greisenegger notes that “their work was a reaction against sumptuous sets, fantasy, and monumentality and sought to give back the full value of the poetic word by concentrating the audiences’ attention on the dramatic action.”³² However, despite the fame, neither Stubenrauch nor Hohenberg reflected contemporary artistic trends or used the visual component to symbolically interpret any latent meanings in the libretto or music.

As it happens, one influential figure was formulating a radical approach to scenic design just before Mahler began his tenure at the Vienna Court Opera. Stage designer, theater theorist, and dramatist Adolphe Appia saw an opportunity to refine the visual component of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. After seeing Wagner’s final production of *Parsifal* in 1882, Appia was “overwhelmed by the impact of these works as music, while goaded by the unshakable conviction that their potential as pieces for the theatre, and as basis for an entirely new form of theatrical art, had not only been left unexplored and unexploited, but also had been all but totally obscured under the gross burden of contemporary stage practice.”³³ Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* was the starting point for Appia’s new aesthetic theory of stage design. His development of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* places him at an important nexus in this paper. Unlike previous theorists, Appia was explicitly reacting to contemporary artistic trends – much like Wagner did in his written prose. Art historian Denis Bablet remarks on these trends, noting that “the visual chaos of overload sets carried the day. The audience’s attention was dispersed by the

³² Greisenegger, 186. Opera attenders began to fill in the theaters because of the extravagant costumes designed; this brought criticism from the bureaucracy, so much so that a report was brought to the emperor in 1820 accusing opera houses of spending money on the production alone; too much money, so it seems.

³³ Richard C. Beacham, introduction to Part Two, in *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Scenarios, and Designs*, by Adolphe Appia, trans. Walther R. Volbach, ed. Richard C. Beacham (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 82.

accumulation of pseudo-historical detail by which the general impression – and the drama itself – were swamped.”³⁴ Bablet even goes so far to say that “the Wagnerian dream of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or ‘total work of art,’ ... simply disappeared, or else became merely an unattainable ideal always out of reach.”³⁵ Appia reacted to these trends by focusing on two issues he identified in contemporary scenic design that, if “fixed,” could remedy the situation: adjust the relationship the actor had with the stage and create a new theory of scenic design principles that will cater to a more meaningful production. This conviction is made most apparent in his collection of written prose. Appia’s first essay, *Comments on the Staging of The Ring of the Nibelung* (1891-2), represents his initial attempt to write down his own critiques of *Ring* productions while also providing the basic framework of his later developed theories. His critiques include the lighting, the staging, and the characters, proposing his own solutions that could revitalize scenic designs and operatic productions. For example, Appia takes aim at how the lighting interfered with the audience’s viewing:

Why does the throughgoing spectator, who is enraptured in this marvelous world, which the music suggests to him and the libretto substantiates, feel the need to complete his esthetic satisfaction? ... Because a living element, vibrant with excessive life, is offered him in a lifeless atmosphere ... the preeminent medium is missing, namely, *lighting*, without which plasticity and mimetic expression are inconceivable.³⁶

The lack of adequate lighting was interfering with the audience’s appreciation of the drama, and thus breaking the crucial relationship that the actor forms with the audience. Appia also took aim

³⁴ Denis Bablet, “Appia and Theatrical Space: From Revolt to Utopia,” in *Adolphe Appia, 1862-1928: Actor, Space, Light* (Geneva: Pro Helvetia, Arts Council of Switzerland, 1982), 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁶ Adolphe Appia, “Comments on the Staging of the Ring of the Nibelungs,” in *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Scenarios, and Design*, 92. Emphasis in original.

at the setting of the *Ring* when he discusses the repetitive imagery Wagner calls for in the score: “There is thus a danger of monotony and every precaution must be taken to avoid it.”³⁷

As theatre historian George Kernodle has written, Appia viewed his own work as finishing what Wagner had begun: “Wagner had accepted the completely inadequate stage mounting of his day, without realizing it was a sharp contradiction to what he wanted to express.”³⁸ While it might not be true that Wagner succumbed to the inadequate opera productions he encountered in the various opera houses throughout Europe, Appia argues that Wagner might not have completely understood the relationship between the visual and the musical. Appia points at such an inadequacy stating that “when Wagner speaks of landscape painting as a ‘warm, living *background* for living man and not for his imitation,’ he seems to be assuming the impossibility of the union of man and background, and although his further conclusions may not be consistent with this attitude they are wholly logical in their particular application.”³⁹ Appia envisioned an environment where the actor can be presented on stage, undisturbed nor disguised, by any of the background material, whether it be props, scenic backdrops, or obtrusive designs. He strongly believes in the use of light, which places the actor in an idealized form.

Music and the Art of the Theatre (1898) is Appia’s magnum opus. This book represents the final stage of evolution in his theoretical design for a newly-conceived operatic standard, which he calls the “word-tone drama.” However, while Wagner rejected the “music-drama”

³⁷ Appia, 95.

³⁸ George R. Kernodle, “Wagner, Appia, and the Idea of Musical Design,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 6, no. 3 (1954): 225-6, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3203963>.

³⁹ Appia, *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, 111. Emphasis in original.

because it missed the point he was trying to convey, Appia's term refers to a different type of unity between music and drama.⁴⁰ In the preface to the English edition, written in 1918, Appia explains his main point of departure in the work: "Wagner's urge to create in homogeneous form the integral expression of the human drama in all its purity and profundity was infinitely more compelling than the influence of opera. Still, the Master could not encompass everything..."⁴¹ The "word-tone drama" was the all-encompassing theory that could be used to create the drama in an opera. The second chapter of *Music and the Art of Theatre*, "Richard Wagner and the *Mise en Scène*," reveals the full description of the "word-tone drama":

In this drama [the word-tone drama], the poetic-musical text is governed by the absolute will of the dramatist; but the visual production of the word-tone drama which results is not governed by the will of the dramatist and consequently it requires experience quite different from that acquired through composing words and tones. Here, indeed, the cultivation of the visual sense, of the feeling for external form, is a necessary and determining factor if the music is to be effectively communicated in production. The magic which the dramatist creates for the ear must now be evoked also for the eye, and this particular procedure bears only indirectly upon the intimate longing for expression which gave birth to the drama.⁴²

This description expresses the purpose of the word-tone drama. The notion that the "soul of the drama" is what directly affects the movement of actor, and not the music, indicates that Appia is placing music on a different level of the hierarchy. Appia still maintains that music has "expressive power" in this formulation but introduces the visual dimension as having the same emotional power. "Its pulsations determine every motion of the organism," he writes, indicating that the acting, set design, and costumes are in direct contact with the drama and the music.⁴³

⁴⁰ See Borchmeyer, "The Ideal Audience," 66. I briefly discussed how the Wagnerians often misread his theories. Peter Vergo discusses how French painters and poets in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly Baudelaire, Cézanne, and Gauguin interpreted Wagner's theories. See "Wagnerian Painting," 18-23.

⁴¹ Appia, *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, 3.

⁴² Ibid., 105-6."

⁴³ Ibid., 105.

Thus, if the dramatist sticks to the formula that Wagner proposed in his works, they will only be able to focus on the musical, dramatic, and poetic elements of the drama. The word-tone drama enables the dramatist to consider all the elements of the opera; that is, the visuals of the opera (the set design, the costume, and the acting) will share the same significance in the overall production. Appia believed that his word-tone drama would create a new format for Wagnerian operas. Mahler and Roller embraced this theory and incorporated some of Appia's suggestions into their own productions, including Appia's favorability of evocative lighting as a way to highlight the metaphorical content of the opera. As I will discuss in finer detail in the final section of this paper, both Appia and Roller embraced the notion of space on stage. Physical space, in their view, allowed for a more expressive acting style to take place. Furthermore, Mahler and Roller strove for a stage design where "everything is only intimated."⁴⁴ Both parties also took advantage of the technical advances in lighting of the day, which were no longer plagued by the uncontrollable gaslight lamps.

Appia represents an important bridge between Wagner and the Mahler-Roller collaborations in the way he sought to expand on Wagner's original conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁴⁵ Appia saw in Wagner's operas an opportunity to form a new scenic design theory that he deemed the word-tone drama. This theory provided a framework in which, as Appia argues, a "German artist can acquire that sense of form which Wagner lacked,"⁴⁶ thus reinvigorating Wagnerian drama. Mahler had a similar revelation with his musical standards at

⁴⁴ Alfred Roller, "Mahler und die Inszenierung," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2, 1920. Cited in Patrick Carnegy, "The Inheritors: Cosima and Siegfried Wagner, Gustav Mahler and Alfred Roller," in *Wagner and the Art of Theatre*, 164.

⁴⁵ Mahler and Roller weren't the only opera producers to be influenced by Appia's theories. As Mike Ashman points out, the Mariinsky Theatre in 1909 put on a production of *Tristan* that incorporated Appia's ideas. Ashman, "Producing Wagner," in *Wagner in Performance*, 35.

⁴⁶ Appia, *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, 130.

the Vienna Court Opera House, and, as we will see, his partnership with Alfred Roller provided him with the visual counterpart necessary to create a new kind of Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. That this occurred in the conservative environment of Vienna is a minor miracle, and so we now turn to discussion of that context.

Chapter 4

A FRUITFUL ENVIRONMENT FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE: FIN-DE-SIÈCLE VIENNA AND THE VIENNA SECESSION

Near the end of the nineteenth century, Viennese politics and culture slowly shifted from a conservative, monarchic society towards a liberal one that embraced modernism. Historian Carl E. Schorske comments on this shocking phenomenon, noting that “there was no sudden leap out of history into modernism here. Rather the cultural innovators were in continuous dialogue with a present that was still tradition-laden. They were themselves engaged in transforming their cultural legacies as much as rejecting them.”⁴⁷ Perhaps the most prominent event as a result of modernism is the creation of the Ringstrasse. As political liberals established power in Vienna in the 1860s, Franz Joseph I, then Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, knocked down the city’s ancient fortified walls and built a ring road that surrounded the first district of Vienna. Interestingly, art historian Jane Kallir has likened this project to the *Gesamtkunstwerk*: “The Ringstrasse ... had been developed in the mid-nineteenth century as an urban *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the baroque spirit. It had so thoroughly fulfilled the elite’s need and desire for monumental civic building in the capital that when a new generation for architects came along at the century’s

⁴⁷ Carl E. Schorske, “The Book: Theme and Content,” in *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 10.

close, they were cast back upon private residences as virtually their only professional outlet.”⁴⁸

What made this a “modern” *Gesamtkunstwerk* is that the buildings on the road, though they represented a wide variety of time periods and styles, nevertheless represented a modernist spirit. Among the buildings on the Ringstrasse was the city hall, university, parliament, the opera house, and the Musikverein. Thus, both conservatives and liberals supported the creation of the Ringstrasse for its preservation of the old and embracing of the new.

While musicians, writers, scholars, and intellectuals embraced the rise of modernism, the visual arts were stuck in their conservative ways. If a painter were to have any success in Vienna they had to be trained at the Academy of Fine Arts and exhibit their works at the Künstlerhaus. The Künstlerhaus, built for the Austrian Artists’ Society, represented the historical Biedermeier style, which reflected Francis I’s (1792-1806) strict censorship.⁴⁹ The leading Biedermeier artist was Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793-1865), known for his simple every-day scenes of country life.⁵⁰ Artists trained at the Academy were taught conventional, historicist styles of painting. However, members of the Künstlerhaus began to retaliate against this conservative manner: “People argued, ranted, and demanded a change in the structure of the committee. ... Most people were united in their demand that Austrian art needed to strike a new path.”⁵¹ The

⁴⁸ Jane Kallir, Foreword by Carl E. Schorske, in *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne, 1986), 8.

⁴⁹ Interestingly, it is often thought that Austrian chancellor Klemens Wenzel von Metternich was the one that established this oppressive state. It is true that Metternich chaired the Congress of Vienna from 1814-15, but Francis I established the *Hausmacht* doctrine; thus, leading to an oppressive state. Alan Janik and Stephen Toulmin discuss the extent that *Hausmacht* influenced the direction of the Empire in “Hapsburg Vienna: City of Paradoxes,” in *Wittgenstein’s Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 33-66, especially 36-41.

⁵⁰ For more on Biedermeier Vienna, see Rober Waissenberger ed., *Vienna in the Biedermeier era, 1815-1848*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1986); and Alice M. Hanson, *Musical Life in Biedermeier Vienna*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁵¹ Klaus H. Carl and Victoria Charles, “The Künstlerhaus,” in *The Vienna Secession* (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2011), 65.

most important Künstlerhaus artist was Hans Makart (1840-1884), whose style borrowed directly from Renaissance-styled scenes.

Eventually, small groups began to form outside the Künstlerhaus, meeting at the numerous cafés scattered around the city. These cafés served not just as meeting points for artists, but also for writers, thinkers, and intellectuals. One such circle, known as the Pernerstorfer Circle, embraced Wagner's theories, and adapted them to formulate populist politics and symbolist art. As historian William J. McGrath notes, "the members of the circle were drawn with increasing force to the ideas of three great thinkers whose works expressed profound alienation from liberal ideals: Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche."⁵² Regardless, younger members of the Künstlerhaus embraced Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Wagner's theories in general, identifying their ability to resituate art as a device for societal change. This group of artists eventually formed the Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs, Sezession (Union of Austrian Artists, Secession). In a letter written by the president Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), the group expressed their position to the Künstlerhaus:

As the committee must be aware, a group of artists within the organization has for years been trying to make its artistic views felt. These views culminate in the recognition of the necessity of bringing artistic life in Vienna into more lively contact with the continuing development of art abroad, and of putting exhibitions on a purely artistic footing, free from any commercial considerations; of thereby awakening in wider circles a purified, modern view of art; and lastly, of inducing a heightened concern for art in official circles.⁵³

The group founded the journal, *Ver Sacrum* (Sacred Spring). Seventy issues were published over five years, in which members discussed their philosophies, drafted short stories, exhibited small

⁵² William J. McGrath, "Introduction," in *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 2.

⁵³ Vergo, "Secession," in *Art in Vienna, 1898-1918*, 23.

drawings or sketches, and even invited Viennese writers to include their prose works. One important figure associated with the Secession was the critic Hermann Bahr (1863-1934), who, in an issue of *Ver Sacrum*, espoused one of the most important principles of the Secession: “We want art that is not a slave to foreign influences but at the same time is neither afraid nor hateful of them.”⁵⁴ They wanted to create a symbiotic relationship between foreign and domestic art.

Thus, the Vienna Secession’s foundation was built on the premise of a fundamentally new aesthetic. These artists, trained at the Academy, revolted against the conservative style, and identified a need for a more encompassing art form. The group wanted not just to embrace new stylistic trends in Vienna, but also celebrate the champions of art nouveau scattered around Europe. They hosted exhibits at their purpose-built Secession building, which gave them complete control over the way pieces were displayed. Exhibitions included works from other European nations, and as such four non-resident members were invited to the Secession: Fernand Khnopff (1852-1921) from Belgium, Max Klinger (1857-1920) from Germany, Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918) from Switzerland, and Jan Toorop (1858-1928) from the Netherlands. Artist and celebrated sculptor Max Klinger was featured at the Secession’s fourteenth exhibition, the so-called “Klinger-Beethoven” exhibition of 1902. Musicologist Anna Harwell Celenza insists that the Klinger-Beethoven exhibition was designed by the Secessionist not to glorify Beethoven, but “instead [the Secessionists] appropriated the image and ‘idea’ of Beethoven in a struggle for cultural legitimacy. The Klinger-Beethoven Exhibition of 1902 was not an act of Beethoven veneration, but rather one of the earliest displays of Beethoven commercialization.”⁵⁵ The idea of

⁵⁴ Carl and Charles, 89.

⁵⁵ Celenza, 203.

Beethoven as a cultural hero interested the Secessionists, for if they could dethrone the mythos that music held over the city by placing Beethoven in a different setting, that is, in the exhibition house, then the visual arts could maintain a significant role in Viennese culture.

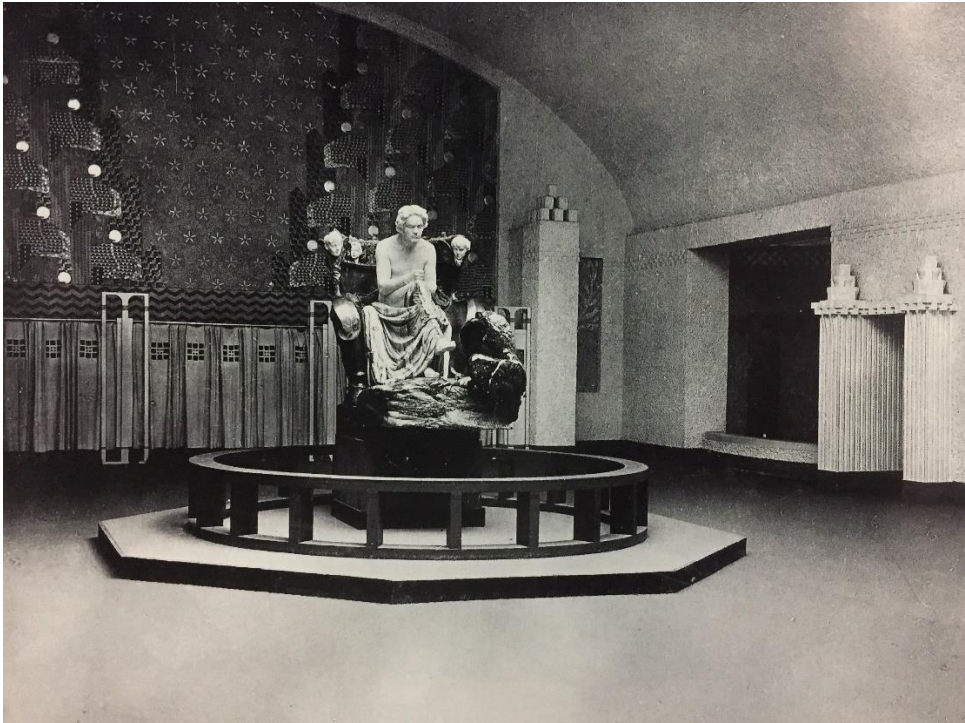


Figure 4.1. Max Klinger, *Beethoven*, 1902. *Ver Sacrum*, 5 (1902), 167.

This exhibition was the Secessionists' attempt at a *Gesamtkunstwerk*: the building was designed to focus the viewer on the Klinger statue, showing Beethoven sitting in a commanding position with a stern look on his face (Figure 4.1). The wings on either side of the main hall displayed pieces that allowed the viewer to examine both the statue and the other artworks which were meant to accompany and augment the meaning of the sculpture. For example, in the central hall where the Beethoven statue was placed, Roller's painting *Falling Night* provided a background for the statue, while opposite that was Adolf Böhm's (1861-1927) painting *Dawning*

Day (1902); both pieces were created specifically for this exhibit. All of the objects in the exhibition hall were placed in accordance with *Raumkunst*, or “spatial art.” Klinger explains this concept in his essay *Painting and Drawing* (1885), noting the spatial relationships that different objects should create in a room: “Unity of space, with its emphasis on meaning ... Confronted with any monumental space, we need to identify works of sculpture that can, through their assertiveness of form, create harmonious ensembles such as to constitute a link with those works of fantasy that occupy the upper surfaces of the wall.”⁵⁶

Klimt’s *Beethoven-Frieze* was created for this exhibition and hung in the left wing of the building (Figure 4.2). Art historian Stephen Koja notes that “Klimt’s frieze attempts a symbolic transition of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and, at the same time, a very personal interpretation.”⁵⁷ Art historian Peter Vergo suggests that “it would seem plausible to interpret the whole work as a visual paraphrase of the ideas and emotions expressed in the final, choral movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.”⁵⁸ Additionally, historian Franz A. J. Szabo suggests that the painting makes a connection to Wagner’s veneration of Beethoven.⁵⁹ The fact that Roller was ultimately responsible for the arrangement of the Secession’s exhibits shows his mastery of the concept and his ability to create spaces that allowed for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

⁵⁶ *Beethoven* exhibition program, 1902, 18-19; cited in Vergo, “The Art-Work of the Future,” in *The Music of Painting*, 125.

⁵⁷ Stephen Koja, “‘...Just about the Nastiest Women I Have Ever Seen...’ Gustav Klimt’s Beethoven Frieze: Evolution and Programme,” in *Gustav Klimt: The Beethoven Frieze and the Controversy over the Freedom of Art*, ed. Stephen Koja (Munich: Prestel, 2006), 93.

⁵⁸ Vergo, “Secession,” in *Art in Vienna, 1898-1918*, 71. Scholars have commented on the *Beethoven-Frieze* since the opening of the exhibition, so much so that a discussion of it here would be neither justified given the content of this paper nor the overall goal I have in mind. Stephen Koja’s edited volume contains several essays that dig deeper into the philosophical aspects of Klimt’s work. I include a brief discussion of this work in this paper to show the splintering of the society.

⁵⁹ Franz A. J. Szabo, “Reflections on the Beethoven Frieze and Its Relation to the Work of Gustav Klimt,” in *Gustav Klimt: The Beethoven Frieze and the Controversy over the Freedom of Art*, 144.

Vergo suggests that Roller's setting for the ninth exhibition (1901) is his most important: "by ruthlessly eliminating all conventional distractions, [Roller] achieved for the first time that clarity of spatial organization which was to distinguish all the association's later shows."⁶⁰ Not only was this notion of spatial organization key to the Secession's exhibitions, but this visual language followed over into the settings that Roller created for new productions at the opera house.



Figure 4.2. Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven-Frieze*, 1902. Wikipedia.

⁶⁰ Vergo, "Architecture and the Applied Arts," 156.

Musicologist Kevin Karnes indicates the popularity of the Klinger-Beethoven exhibition: “Two days [after the opening of the exhibition] ... the [*Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*’s] coverage of the event exploded, as debates raged about everything from the statue’s aesthetic and technical merits to Klinger’s purportedly Jewish ancestry.”⁶¹ However, the Vienna Secession suffered from internal squabbles as a result of the fourteenth exhibition. Karnes discusses these organizational issues which lead to the inevitable failure for societal change that the Secessionists had hoped to create. Indeed, in the planning of the Klinger-Beethoven Exhibition, Karnes notes that

yet for all of the Secessionists’ intoxicating rhetoric about collaborative work and the communal spirit that supposedly animated their exhibiting endeavors, the twenty-some artists who contributed to the projected were not granted equal voices in its planning or realization. Indeed, not only did the voices of its principal organizers – Roller and Hoffman – stand out conspicuously, but a careful reading of the exhibition catalogue reveals a hierarchical ordering of *all* the artists who contributed their labors and artworks to the show.⁶²

The Secessionists, ironically, suffered from the same hierarchical structure that they encountered at the Künstlerhaus. This exhibition, which placed prioritized the Klimt and Klinger works, was what ultimately tore the group apart.

Though the Secessionists’ influence waned after the Beethoven Exhibition, Roller’s artistic work continued. And though he was not as popular as some of his colleagues, he is important in music history because of the collaborations with Mahler at the Vienna Court Opera House in the years 1903-07. Roller was trained at the Academy, and specialized in drafting,

⁶¹ Kevin Karnes, “Max Klinger, the Gesamtkunstwerk, and the Dream of a Third Kingdom,” in *A Kingdom Not of This World: Wagner, the Arts, and Utopian Visions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37.

⁶² Karnes, ““All of Vienna Has Become Secessionistic’: Longings of an Organization,” in *A Kingdom Not of This World*, 87. Emphasis in original.

drawings, and advertisements.⁶³ Starting in 1899 he taught at the University of Applied Arts. He took over some of the drawing classes, where he instituted his own set of reforms: “[Roller] sought to combat the academic tradition of drawing from plaster casts by emphasizing the importance of studying nature and of being able to capture movement.”⁶⁴ It was during this time period that Roller was introduced to Mahler, who was engaged as the music director and conductor of the Vienna Court Opera in 1897, just a few months before the Vienna Secession was officially founded. As we will see, Mahler’s ideas for a new operatic tradition were met by Roller’s fascination with stage design. With both individuals influenced by Wagnerian theories and full of ideas for new operatic productions, it was the perfect pairing to enact radical change. Furthermore, Roller’s goals with his productions are more apparent when we understand how Secessionists approached visual arts.

⁶³ Ironically, Mahler’s goal for “purifying” the stage contrasts Roller’s experience as a creator of advertisements, one of the purest manifestations of commercialization.

⁶⁴ Vergo, “Architecture and the Applied Arts,” in *Art in Vienna 1898-1918*, 156.

Chapter 5

SCENE CHANGE: THE MAHLER-ROLLER COLLABORATIONS, 1903-07

Mahler was riding a wave of success when he returned to Vienna in 1897. His professional life thus far had consisted of conducting positions at several prominent opera houses, including Prague, Leipzig, Budapest, and Hamburg, and his eventual hire at the Vienna Court Opera House was due to this reputation of a skillful and popular opera conductor. Although there was some political drama caused by Mahler's appointment, his time at the opera house benefited from a synthesis of Viennese modernist thought and a rejection of traditional practices.⁶⁵ Mahler's predecessor at the Vienna Court Opera House was Wilhelm Jahn (1835-1900) who, for seventeen years, directed numerous premieres and continued the tradition of elaborate, highly ornamental sets.⁶⁶ Austrian opera administrator Egon Seefehlner notes that "Jahn put his energies into reviving the singing ensemble," but points out that "a whole era came to an end with Jahn's departure – an age characterized by highly visual style and a life of splendor. ... He was proof that directors of theaters (and especially of opera houses) should be changed every ten years or so."⁶⁷ The elaborate set designs, maintained throughout the history of

⁶⁵ The political side of his appointment as director of the Court Opera house reveals the complex political and societal web of connections that Mahler encountered on a daily basis. For more on the social dimension of this event, see Daniel Snowman, "The Lion Tamers: The Ascendancy of the Conductor," in *The Gilded Stage: A Social History of Opera* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 242–62.

⁶⁶ Egon Seefehlner, "The Directors and Their Ensembles," in *The Vienna Opera*, ed. Andrea Seeböhm (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 74.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

operatic performance in Vienna, ended as Jahn left the opera house. As it happens, Jahn directed the Vienna premiere of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1883. Seefehlner's description of Jahn's production as maintaining a "visual style" references designer Carlo Brioschi, who designed the sets for Jahn's productions. Brioschi's set for *Tristan* maintains the tradition of finely-detailed decorations, a wide range of colors, and props that took up space on the stage. This is the visual style that was expected by audience members when Mahler began his tenure at the court opera house, and the style that Roller disrupted with his own aesthetic.

Mahler's education at the Vienna Conservatory, and subsequently at the University, was a major factor in his eventual devotion to Wagner, which in turn influenced his own aesthetic. Mahler's work and affiliation with the Pernerstorfer Circle supplied him with a greater appreciation and knowledge of Wagner's theories. McGrath suggests that Mahler wholly subscribed to Wagner's theories, and shows this through Mahler's close relationship with founding member Siegfried Lipiner (1856-1911). McGrath writes about Lipiner's play *Adam*, noting that "Mahler thus believed that like music, Lipiner's verse communicated the essence of reality to the reader in an unmediated form, and in this belief Mahler was echoing ideas expressed in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*."⁶⁸ Carnegie, connecting Mahler's own goals to Wagner's, shows that "Mahler always sought to emulate Wagner's program for the reform of theatre management and practice – major decisions made by artists rather than state functionaries, adequate rehearsal time, and so on."⁶⁹ This program consisted of several changes, changes that we consider tradition to this day. Mahler moved the podium so that the conductor

⁶⁸ William J. McGrath, "The Saga Society," in *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 112-3. While Mahler's own compositions are more closely associated with Nietzsche, and, by a similar vein, Schopenhauer, it is still worth pointing out this connection Mahler had with other Wagnerians.

⁶⁹ Carnegie, "The Inheritors," 159.

no longer blocked the audience's view. He was the first in Vienna to dim the lights during a performance, and restricted admission to anyone who tried to enter in the middle of the music.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Mahler reinstated cuts in Wagner's operas that had become tradition, but which he felt undermined the unity of the works. For example, Mahler performed *Götterdämmerung* in full in 1898, adding an hour to the "usual" running time. He also removed cuts from *Meistersinger* and *Tannhäuser*.⁷¹ Mahler also expected the musicians to perform to the best of their ability, so he increased the amount of rehearsal time, giving himself time to iron out any small performance issues.

The changes Mahler was making at the Court Opera house were all designed to create a new version of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Conductor Bruno Walter (1876-1962), a disciple of Mahler, described how Mahler viewed operatic performances: "complete unity was the goal he set himself: a mutual interaction of score and stage. He grew to see that such unity was not achieved merely by the fusion of action and music; staging, costume, and lighting had to be brought up to an equal pitch of perfection."⁷² A fusion of action and music, of the visuals to the musical; this was an evolved version of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. However, Mahler lacked the experience to create a new visual language that could match his performance alterations. His eventual collaboration with Roller provided him with the visual component that he needed to complete his goals.

Carnegy provides some background to their first collaboration, *Tristan und Isolde* in 1903:

⁷⁰ Seefehlner, 78.

⁷¹ Carnegy, "The Inheritors," 160.

⁷² Bruno Walter, "The Opera Director," in *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Lotte Walter Lindt (New York: Knopf, 1958), 83.

Roller, who had for some time interested himself in scenic design, had only recently discovered *Tristan* in traditional-style performances under Mahler's baton at the Opera. He had hated the settings and been [inspired] to make sketches of his own which he quickly showed Mahler. So impressed was the conductor that, recognizing the 'true visual expression' of the Wagnerian drama, and despite Roller's total lack of stage experience, he swiftly commissioned him to design new sets for *Tristan*.⁷³

Walter's glowing review gives us an idea of some of the specific elements of this production:

Roller's sets for *Tristan* showed deep visual understanding; thenceforth Mahler and Roller worked together for the realization of his ideal of unity in operatic performance. Up to then it had been assumed that it was enough to have stage décor, costumes, and lighting that satisfied broadly cultivated tastes and were an interesting contribution toward the production; the idea of integrating music and drama and infusing them both with a dominating idiom and mood was in its infancy, in so far as it existed at all. Roller, a painter of imagination steeped in the theater and its possibilities, was, like Mahler, filled with the desire for animation of the opera stage. His decorative use of three-dimensional settings greatly increased the effectiveness of his lighting, which in turn became an element in the suggestive power both of the drama and of the music. The colors and forms he employed were organically related to the mood of the work; even his costumes played their part. An indescribably moving performance of *Tristan* ushered in the great period in Mahler's search for perfection.⁷⁴

Walter mentions some important elements which can be seen in Roller's sketch for act two of *Tristan*. As mentioned earlier, one of the key design cues of Roller's visual language is his emphasis on space. As such, the exploitation of space for symbolic meaning is represented in all his set designs. Carnegy argues that "Roller found his liberation from the dictates of academy painting in the sinuous fantasy of line, color and tone (the style being more important than the 'faithful' depiction of the subject) and in an interest in spatial arrangement which quickly showed itself in the exhibition settings he designed for the Secession," and suggests that those

⁷³ Carnegy, "The Inheritors," 162.

⁷⁴ Bruno, 83-4.

exhibition settings were a “lab” for Roller, where he could experiment with light and space.⁷⁵

The space that Roller incorporated into the garden scene (see Figure 5.1), with an empty foreground and background, recalls the empty spaces he created in the exhibition settings.

Wagner’s description of act two, scene one is as follows:

A garden with tall trees in front of Isolde's apartments with steps leading up to it at one side. A clear, pleasant summer's night. At the open door is placed a burning torch. Sounds of hunting. Brangäne, on the steps to the apartments, looks out after the hunting party as their sounds fade away into the distance. Isolde comes out of the apartments in wild agitation and comes up to her.

Roller’s sketch omits a couple of elements Wagner calls for in his description. Rather than invoke a “clear, pleasant summer’s night,” Roller instead fills the sky with clouds, limiting the sunlight that would otherwise dominate the lighting in this scene. Only in the distant backdrop can we see the sinking sun. Doing so allows Roller to make use of the lighting technologies; more direct sunlight would have interfered with his controlled mood lighting. Furthermore, Roller only uses three colors in the sketch, focusing on the impending evening. The trees, bushes, courtyard, and Isolde’s apartment (which is fashioned more like a turret than living quarters) are soft, muted grays, blues, and blacks. The trees are fashioned like a border of the painting, forcing the viewer to focus on the stage where the action took place.

⁷⁵ Carnegie, “The Inheritors,” 163. Stephen Thursby’s dissertation expands on Roller’s thoughts on staging and theatrical design. Similar to Appia’s *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, Roller published an article in 1909 titled “Bühnenreform?” (“Stage reform?”) where he plots out ideas and proposes some adjustments that can be made to contemporary staging practices. See Alfred Roller, “Bühnenreform?,” *Der Merker* 1/5 (1909): 193-97.

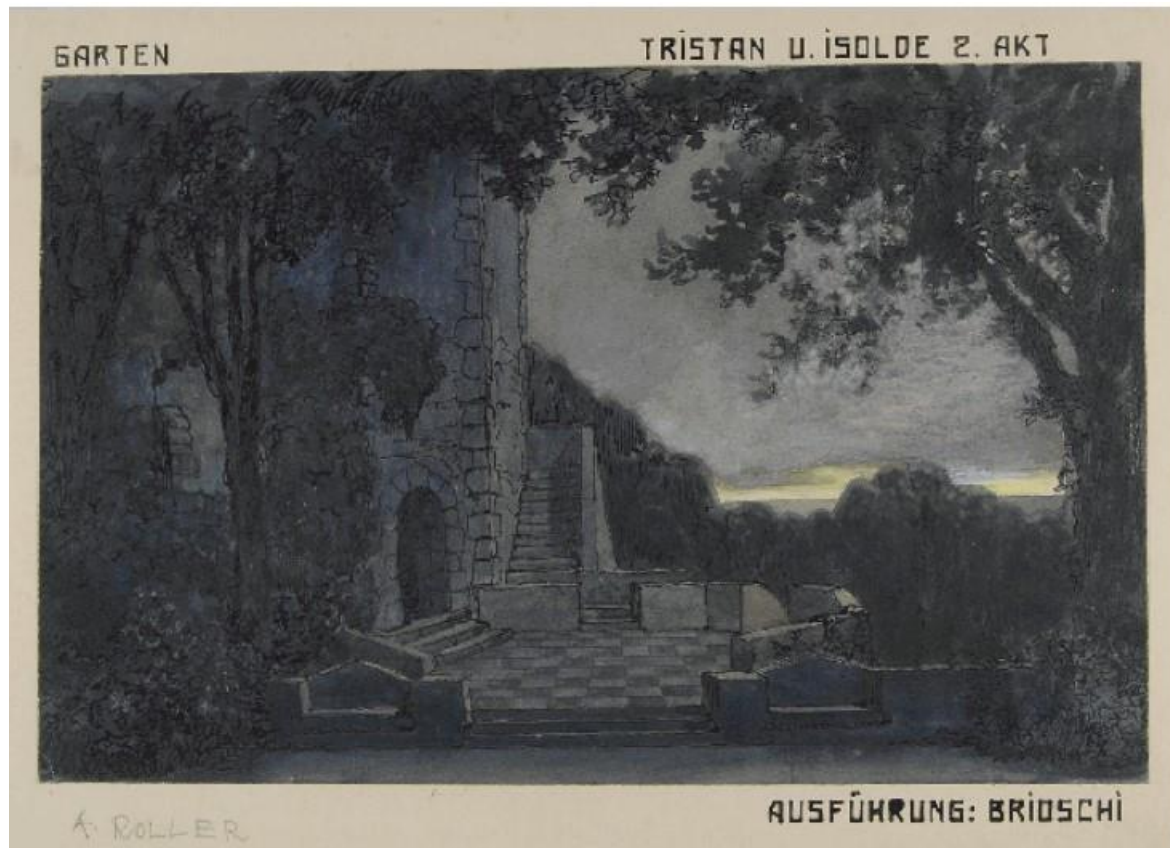


Figure 5.1. Alfred Roller, sketch for *Tristan und Isolde*, Act 2, scene 1. Theaternmuseum, Wien.

At the beginning of act two Isolde and Brangäne are listening for the hunting party's horn calls. Wagner calls for the set to show the fields where the hunting party can be seen: "Brangäne, on the steps to the apartments, looks out after the hunting party as their sounds fade away into the distance," but Roller does not permit the viewer to see beyond the courtyard. This more strongly emphasizes the solitude that Isolde is facing as she yearns for Tristan. Rather than create that background for the hunting party to be seen, he fills the space with trees. Another element that Roller omits is the torch that should be placed by the apartment door. In the libretto, Isolde

throws the torch on the ground in retaliation to Brangäne's warnings: "To the tower with you! Keep careful watch! This light, were it the light of my life, laughing, I do not hesitate to extinguish it." This torch is an important element in that it signifies Isolde's rejection of counsel, and, instead, her turn to her heart. By removing the torch from the scene, and perhaps replacing it with the stage lighting, Roller creates a more dramatic effect when Isolde throws the torch to the ground. Light takes on entire new meaning in the first duet in scene two between Tristan and Isolde ("Bist du mein?/Hab' ich dich wieder?"; "Are you mine?/With me once more?"). The struggle for darkness over light weighs heavily on the lovers, for they can never love one another in their "real" world of "light." Isolde's struggle with day obstructs her chance for love: "But the loved one's hand extinguished the light; what the maid would not risk I did not fear; under the power and protection of the Love-Spirit I bade defiance to Day!" Tristan denounces Day: "For Day, for spiteful Day, the most bitter foe, hatred and grievance! Just as you extinguished the light, would that I could extinguish the light of insolent Day!" While Wagner's music reinforces the struggle for an impossible love through evaded cadences, Roller's lighting embraces the metaphorical content of the opera and makes the struggle one that the audience can witness. The subsequent duet, "O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe" ("Descend, O Night of Love") is a product of the dwindling orchestral forces that Wagner scores for the transition from the previous section into the duet. In this scene Tristan and Isolde are embracing in the flower garden, lamenting over their sorry state: "Descend, O night of love, grant oblivion that I may live; take me up into your bosom, release me from the world!" Wagner settles on A-flat as the tonal center of the duet, but the transition from the previous musical material disguises the fact that the duet is written with typical operatic duet elements: both singers sing on the same text, are often in unison or sixths, and remain mostly in one key. By remaining in a tonal center, Wagner reflected the peace and

calmness described in the text. After a climactic crescendo on a dominant seventh chord, Isolde states “the sun concealed itself in our bosom, the stars of bliss gleam, laughing,” indicating the triumph of love in darkness. The music is reinforcing the ambiguity in their search for love, and while there is no sketch Roller left behind for this scene, we can imagine the shifting colors from the lights as they reflect the confused, yet hedonistic, love duet.

As Vergo points out, Roller’s design discards the elaborate decorations that often adorned previous set designs: “The most immediately striking feature of these new productions was that they, too, dispensed with most of the naturalistic props and purely decorative details that had hitherto disfigured the staging of so many Wagner’s works.”⁷⁶ The manipulation of space for dramatic effect was an element that both Roller and Mahler agreed upon, and something that should be altered if they were to create a meaningful set: “Roller and Mahler’s common point of departure was the elimination of anything visual that did not relate to their understanding of the music as the core of the drama.”⁷⁷ Appia, too, insisted on the importance of space on stage. As Bablet notes, when designing his own set designs for Wagner’s productions, “Appia’s mission was to straighten things out, to replace the coexistence of conflicting elements with a functional arrangement that drew its expressive power from the hierarchical ordering of the means of theatrical expression.”⁷⁸ Perhaps the more powerful tool that Roller had at his disposal was the new lightning technologies. Because of these Roller was able to make use of the entire color spectrum to reflect the changing moods of the music and, without any props or items that would

⁷⁶ Vergo, “The Art-Work of the Future,” 138.

⁷⁷ Carnegy, “The Inheritors,” 163.

⁷⁸ Bablet, 12. Appia struggled with the conflicting relationship that an actor had with a static, flat background. Bablet discusses some of the sets he designed for *Die Walküre* where Appia proposed “clouds coming and going, weighing down the atmosphere or liberating space.” Ibid., 14.

get in the way, the light clearly articulated Roller's conception. Carnegie affirms this notion, stating that "light became a principle agent in the search for a visual stylization and for symbols which, in activating the audience's imagination, would deepen the musicality of its response."⁷⁹ Instead of static lighting, the new technology gave Roller greater control over the manipulation and movement of the lights. The costumes were designed by Roller as well, and borrowed visual motives championed by Klimt: "[Roller's costumes displayed] a Klimt-like passion for kaleidoscopic geometric patterning" which references "the Secession's love affair with abstract patterning and ornamentation."⁸⁰ The lighting technology reflected the emotional impact that Wagner intended to create with his score and libretto. It could also be suggested that Roller developed a set of "leitmotifs" that he relied on when setting the mood of the scene.

Contemporary critics were quick to point out the Impressionistic elements in Roller's set designs. Max Graf's review describes how "the nervous color-romanticism of the moderns now prevails in the new *Tristan* sets by Alfred Roller. Light and air are called upon to make music along with the Wagner orchestra. ... For the first time Impressionist arts appear on the operatic stage."⁸¹ This connection with Impressionism is not without justification. During the same time as this premier the Secession was holding its sixteenth exhibition ("The Development of Impressionism in Painting and Sculpture"), which introduced Impressionist artists including Monet, Renoir, and Gauguin to the Viennese public. Indeed, with the Impressionists in town,

⁷⁹ Carnegie, "The Inheritors," 164.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 167.

⁸¹ Max Graf, "Der Sezessionistische Tristan," *Hamburger Nachrichten*, 15 March 1903, quoted in Carnegie, "The Inheritors," 169.

making this connection to the set design created by Roller further ensures that there was a serious intent by Roller to connect his designs to contemporary artistic trends.

Mahler and Roller approached Mozart's operas with the same goals in mind. Mahler removed cuts that were traditionally used to limit the performance time and insisted on perfection from his ensemble and soloists, while Roller created new sets for the productions that followed his principals of design. Their 1905 *Don Giovanni*, however, caused a stir among the publics and critics. What makes this production worth mentioning is Roller's complete reliance on metaphor instead of naturalistic representation. For the stage design, Roller created four gray columns that bordered the stage, referred to as his "Roller" towers, which remained in place throughout the entire opera. Roller used these towers to focus the viewer's attention on the space in the middle of the stage where the action took place. Again, the visual language that Roller was able to create with the light benefited greatly from his stage design. These towers gave Roller greater manipulation of the emotions depicted in the score as the towers provided different functions throughout the opera; furthermore, the space created by the towers, and the lack of objects in the center of the stage, created the perfect target for the lights to shine on. The sketch in Figure 5.2 shows how the towers fit into the graveyard scene, act two, scene 3. The libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte leaves much to the imagination of the set designer when creating the sets. Da Ponte's only description of the setting is "A graveyard. Night. (*This lonely spot is decorated with a number of statues, including one of the Commendatore.*)" Roller's sketch depicts the Commendatore statue in the center with a large open space in front of it. Flanking the central space are the "Roller Towers," which have been decorated to represent gravestones. Four sepulchers circle the statue, two on the left and two on the right. The backdrop shows three tall

trees. With the dominating towers, the commanding statue, and the limited color palette, the audience felt drawn towards the sparseness of the set, and, furthermore, might have been dumbfounded when the statue began to speak. In the middle of an exchange between Leporello and Don Giovanni, the statue announces, “you will have your last laugh before the next dawn!” Roller uses classical-style linear perspective to draw our attention to the statue. The styles on the towers match up with our eye-line, pointing towards the statue.



Figure 5.2. Alfred Roller, sketch for *Don Giovanni*, act 2, scene three. Theatermuseum, Vienna.

There is little evidence that describes the colors that Roller used in this scene. However, from what we can make out from the sketch, Roller followed identical design principles to his *Tristan* sketch. Muted blues, greys, and blacks dominate the scene, and it appears in the sketch

that Roller had intended for there to be a shadow casting down onto the stage. The main source of light appears to be focusing on the statue. In this scene Don Giovanni and Leoporello encounter the Commendatore statue, which engages them about their foolish mortal decisions. Emotions stir as Don Giovanni urges Leoporello to read the inscription on the statue's base "Upon the base one who sent me to my death I here await my vengeance." Roller connected the grim atmosphere of the graveyard scene with his barren graveyard, devoid of any extraneous objects. With such few elements on stage, audiences would have been drawn towards the singers and their reactions to the statue. The exchange would have been made all the more dramatic with these sets.

Interestingly, it was these design elements that sparked a negative response from the viewers. While critics attacked the singers and Max Kalbeck's new translation, Roller's settings, lighting, staging, and costumes received the majority of criticisms. Evan Baker quotes a review by Hans Liebstockl in the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*: "Scenery! Scenery! Bring forth the high towers with holes! Milky ways! Glaring red trees! Mystifying courtyards! Dark chambers! Yellow castles! Lines, corners, contrasts, clashes of colors! Out with the discordant ingeniousness!"⁸² Walter, normally Mahler's most vocal supporter, suggested that "the colors, again, were too strong for the mild glow of Mozart's orchestration; the choice of singer for the leading role proved unfortunate."⁸³ However, Julius Korngold, music critic at the influential *Neue Freie Presse*, praised the production for Roller's increasing tendency towards metaphor and symbolism. That is, as Baker observes, Korngold identified the "concept of stylized scenery

⁸² Hans Liebstockl, *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, December 22, 1905. Quoted in Evan Baker, "1900-1945: Clearing the Stage," in *From the Score to the Stage: An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 275-6, <http://media.obvsg.at/AC11123337-1001>.

⁸³ Walter, "The Opera Director," 85.

as represented by the four gray towers onstage, [which] symbolized the abolition of the old scenic style of wings and borders.” Roller’s cemetery scene was a “masterpiece,” and Korngold marveled over its dramatic atmosphere: “The dead were literally coming closer and closer to the viewer, [it is as if] we can touch the stone sepulchers, and it gives us the creeps.”⁸⁴

Mahler and Roller’s productions symbolize a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* through which contemporary artistic trends were brought to the leading cultural establishment in Vienna. Mahler’s use of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* allowed him to elevate operatic production standards, while Roller’s sets represented a metaphorical approach to score interpretation. Mahler made changes to the performances in order to achieve his goals of “purifying” opera performances and of more strongly emphasizing metaphorical content of the opera, rather than the surface-level extravagance. Walter supports Mahler’s goal, noting that “the work itself was, for him, the law.”⁸⁵ Roller’s own interpretation of the scores reinforce Mahler’s goal by supplying the necessary visual element to the operas. Furthermore, Roller’s relationship with the Vienna Secession, and their own transmissions of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, aided Roller with necessary skills for the set designs. Indeed, the Mahler-Roller productions represent a crucial step in interpretive operatic productions.

Mahler and Roller had a successful run at the court opera house and they continued to create new productions of established canonical works, including *Falstaff* (1904), *Fidelio* (1904), *Das Rheingold* (1905), and *Die Walküre* (1907). These productions made waves in Viennese culture, and soon enough made Mahler a popular cultural figure in the Viennese avant-garde.

⁸⁴ Julius Korngold, *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), December 22, 1905. Quoted in Baker, “1900-1945: Clearing the Stage,” 276.

⁸⁵ Walter, 88.

Supporting this notion, Banks notes that “Mahler was important to modernist artistic circles in Vienna, not just because he promoted scenic innovations, but because he was seen as a leading figure sympathetic to their cause within the Monarchy’s cultural establishment.”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Banks, 10. Interestingly enough, Mahler never wanted his productions to be described as “Secessionist,” but rather to be described as being true to the score. Mahler is quoted as saying “It’s all in the score.” See Carnegie, 164.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: ENCORE AND FOYER-TALK

Mahler eventually left the Court Opera in 1907 due to administrative differences and increasingly threatening anti-Semitic attacks.⁸⁷ But the legacy that Mahler and Roller created at the Vienna Court Opera House forms one of the most drastic examples of the integration of modernist thought and aesthetics in the city of music. Of course, this isn't the only example of the visual arts and music working together to create a different form of art. Across the European continent in the mid- to late-nineteenth century art and music became increasingly interdisciplinary. Peter Vergo's book *The Music of Painting* contains numerous examples of artists working together with stage designers, as well as painters who adopted Wagner's theories to influence and inform their own artworks. Similarly, a group of craftsmen adjacent to the Vienna Secession, who formed the Vienna Workshop (*Wiener Werkstätte*), created chairs, cabinets, forks, and knives with the idea of art for everyday life.⁸⁸ If we consider the origins of

⁸⁷ Kirk Ditzler, "Tradition Ist 'Schlamperei': Gustav Mahler and the Vienna Court Opera," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 29, no. 1 (1998): 11–28, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3108363>. Of course, the situation included more than just "administrative differences" and "anti-Semitic attacks." Anti-Semitism had followed Mahler for his entire career and the fact that a converted Jew worked in the highest cultural position in Vienna was somewhat of an affront to the conservative right. Edward Kravitt's article "Mahler, Victim of the 'New' Anti-Semitism" dives into the various journals and the representative critics who were relentless with their polemics; see Edward Kravitt, "Mahler, Victim of the 'New' Anti-Semitism," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 127, no. 1 (2002): 72–94. See also K. M. Knittel "'Ein hypermoderner Dirigent': Mahler and Anti-Semitism in 'Fin-de-siècle' Vienna," *19th-Century Music*, 18, no. 3 (Spring, 1995): 257–276.

⁸⁸ The Wiener Werkstätte falls in an interesting nexus between the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the *Künstlerhaus*, and, mentioned briefly in footnote 14, English craftsman William Morris. The Wiener Werkstätte owes much influence to the Arts and Crafts movement spearheaded by Morris and his Scottish counterpart Charles Rennie Macintosh.

the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a “total work of art” that was conceived by Wagner to unite the German folk under a “morally just” art form, the connection between the Vienna Workshop’s creations and Wagner’s theory is clear. The Workshop didn’t have the moral expectations that Wagner did, but they still agreed with the notion of a uniting art form.

My goal in this paper has been to show the development of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and how it provided Mahler and Roller with the framework to intentionally incorporate contemporary artistic trends into new operatic productions. Indeed, their work was revolutionary in the ways that they manipulated the *Gesamtkunstwerk* for their own aesthetic purposes. The duo’s approach to score interpretation provided a foundation for post-World War II *Regietheater*, or “director’s theater,” which aimed “to create new experiences and understandings of the operatic repertory through a process of defamiliarization” by using sets and costumes that didn’t adhere to the libretto or the stage directions in a literal manner.⁸⁹ While not necessarily using the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a framework for *Regietheater* productions, this style of theater owes its foundation to the Mahler-Roller productions for Mahler and Roller’s interpretation of the score, rather than more or less straightforward adherence to the libretto. Regardless, it is nevertheless clear that the Mahler-Roller productions were directly influenced by the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Mahler’s intentional inclusion of contemporary artistic trends allowed for

⁸⁹ Alexander K. Rothe, “Regieoper,” in *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 7, 2020, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-90000315418>. German opera changed in a similar fashion to *Musiktheater*. Spearheaded by Walter Felsenstein in the 1940s, Felsenstein intended for music “to create drama so that the phrase [realistic music theatre] became more than a socialist artistic doctrine.” See Steinbeck, Dietrich. “Felsenstein, Walter.” In *Grove Music Online*. Accessed April 8, 2020. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000009456>.

a new kind of fusion of the arts. The different elements I have discussed in this paper – the conception and development of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, operatic production practices and Adolphe Appia, the Vienna Secession's ideology, and the Roller sketches – show the connections that operatic productions have to sister disciplines. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a ideological framework that benefits, and indeed, demands interdisciplinary approaches to its formulation. Once we are able to understand how Roller and Mahler absorbed these theories, it becomes all the more significant why their productions are worthy of such elaborate examination.

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PART II: SYLLABUS

COURSE OVERVIEW

Wagner, Mahler, and the Visual Arts in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna

Ideal Target Audience:

This course is designed for upper level undergraduate students who are interested in taking a music history course that includes more than “purely” music and its related context. As my research dealt with art history as well, the student would be interested in how the two disciplines become increasingly interdisciplinary as time progressed from the eighteenth-century to the twentieth-century. The student will ideally have the basic knowledge of any upper level music student, having taken a “standard” Western art music survey course. I would also expect them to have at least a basic understanding of European history. They do not need to be familiar with the important artists that we will discuss in class, but should be at least familiar with artistic mediums (oil on canvas, sculpture, etc.)

DESCRIPTION AND POLICIES

Course title: Wagner, Mahler, and the Visual Arts in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna

Meeting time: T/Th, 2:00-3:20pm

Instructor: [Dr.] Greg Eckhardt

Contact info: geckhardt@smu.edu; 518-242-0019

Office hours: MW, 12:00-1:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How have music and art come together to create a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*? Starting with Richard Wagner in the mid-nineteenth century we will examine the ways his theories and primarily the theories espoused in *The Art-Work of the Future* and *Opera and Drama*, have influenced future generations of artists and musicians. Taking *fin-de-siècle* Vienna as our end and focal point for this class, we will study the developments that Gustav Mahler created as music director and conductor of the Vienna Court Opera House. Furthermore, we will study theories from other important figures in this history in this period, including Adolphe Appia, Alfred Roller, and intellectuals from *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- *Remember and Understand*: Students will be able to recall important artists, their works, and important musical pieces that we will study in this class.
- *Apply*: Students will be able to apply this knowledge to our class discussions and will be able to use this knowledge in their own class-assigned research assignments.
- *Analyze*: Students will learn how to critically analyze art works, situate them in their historical context, and discuss the rationale the artist had for creating the work. Doing so will demonstrate their ability to comprehend both scholarly commentary and the genesis of a piece of art.
- *Evaluate*: Students will be able to read scholarly works, including journal articles, book chapters, and primary source concert reviews, which will in turn play into our in-class discussions. Furthermore, students will be able to communicate arguments and their opinions in their writing assignments.
- *Create*: Students will leave this course with the ability to communicate specific elements within both music and art; that is, describe what visual elements are present in a piece of art, articulate what the composer is doing with their music that might be related to art, etc.
- *Discover and Express*: Students will become familiar with musicological research and the different methods that we musicologists use daily. Furthermore, students will become better writers, allowing them to articulate their thoughts in a writing medium succinctly, clearly, and deliberately.

TEXTS

There will be no required textbook for this class. All readings, artworks, and musical examples will be made available on the canvas website. It will be expected that students will print out the readings and annotate them for each class meeting, which will be used for discussion and show engagement with the texts. More on this below.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Annotated Readings

For each class, students will have read the assigned reading *prior to class* and will bring a printed, hard copy of the reading complete with name and annotations to each class meeting. The annotations don't need to be incredibly detailed – no need for lengthy paragraphs in the margins. Rather, they should highlight the main points of the article, point out examples that support the article's argument, and ultimately be there for the student so they can fully comprehend the text. Ideally, annotations should provide a road map for the student; by highlighting the arguments, main points, and critical examples that support the argument, students should be able to return to the reading and recall the point of the reading. Texts with annotations will be collected at the end of class for a grade and will be returned the next class with the instructor's comments and gradings. Students only need to complete ten (10) TOTAL annotations over the course of the semester. Each annotated reading will be worth 2%. There are three possible grades for each reading:

✓+ = 2%

✓ = 1%

✓- = .5%

Rationale: My time here at SMU has shown me the value in hard copy reading. In all the classes that I've been, every time, without fail, I have a better time recalling the information discussed in the reading as opposed to when I take notes on my computer. As such, the students in this class are required to follow suit. I find this important especially in the beginning of the semester when we discuss the Gesamtkunstwerk. The foundational knowledge that they will learn in the first unit is crucial to their understanding of how the concept was used to create the productions at the court opera house. Bloom's taxonomy dictates that understanding is one of the key variables that will lead to high-order learning. If students actively "decode" the arguments and examples in each reading they will have a better chance at understanding the importance of the reading and will be able to connect the reading's points to their understanding the topic at hand.

Weekly Summaries

Reviewing the material that we learned in class is a great way to ensure comprehension of the various topics we will be discussing. Thus, students will be required to create written summaries that discuss the theme of the week. The summary should consist of the following:

1. What was the overall theme for the week?
2. What were the main points conveyed in each class?
3. What were the most important artworks and musical pieces/events that tie into the main points?
4. How did the readings support your understanding of the topics?
5. What are your primary takeaways from this class? What sort of questions did you think of when doing the readings?

Students will only be required to complete **four summaries**. Below is a list of the weeks that students can choose from when they create a summary:

1. Understanding Wagner [week 1]	4. The <i>Gesamtkunstwerk</i> and its Influence [week 4]
2. Wagner and Wagnerism [week 2]	5. Manifestations of Wagner's influence and the <i>Gesamtkunstwerk</i> [week 5]
3. The <i>Gesamtkunstwerk</i> in History and in Wagner [week 3]	

Again, the student will only be expected to provide **four summaries**. The summary should be at least 500 words. The format of the summaries should include your name, the theme of the week, and a numbered list in which you answer each of the question. That is, each of the above questions should be written explicitly in your response and you will write your answer directly below the question. This will make it easier for you to return to these summaries later in the semester when you need to recall points that could help you with your research. You should consult your annotated readings as well as in-class notes that you took when you write these summaries.

Summaries will be due on the Friday of each week at 5pm through canvas.

Rationale: My undergraduate music history survey class had a similar assignment: every Friday we would need to hand in our listening journals. I liked the idea of a journal that we would keep because it held me responsible for my own learning and made it easier for me to go back and study for the listening quizzes. While there are no quizzes in this course, I think building up a collection of these weekly summaries will help the students recall the information that they think is most important. When I grade the summaries, I will have the opportunity to correct any misunderstandings or confusions that might come up. This is holding both me and the students accountable. Furthermore, by rewriting their notes in a different format they will be reaffirming what they learned in class. In The Music History Classroom (2012) Mary Natvig suggests that summarizing the main points at the end of class will clear up any misunderstandings. The students should be comfortable with the material that they are studying, and by creating

summaries of the weeks topics they will have the opportunity to discuss in their own words what they took away from that week's readings.

Cumulative Class Bibliography

Over the course of this course, students will be engaging with scholarly texts and showing their comprehension by completing the annotations and the weekly class summaries. In addition to this, each student will be responsible for two entries in our cumulative class biography. There is a vast body of literature that covers this topic, but for this class I have limited our scope to the most pertinent readings. Thus, students will need to find two sources to contribute to the bibliography. Students are *not* allowed to just copy readings that we have done in class; they need to be one we did not discuss. The sources need to be one **scholarly article, book chapter, or some type of scholarly literature** that relates to our course topic, and **one piece of art** that, again, is relevant the class. Students are encouraged to look at the footnotes, bibliographic entries, or source lists that appear in the readings. This is a common practice in scholarly research. Bibliographic entries should follow the Chicago style of citation; more info can be found here: https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/tools_citationguide.html

An example of an entry follows:

1. Scholarly Journal Article
 - a. Frisch, Walter. "Music and Jugendstil." *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 1 (1990): 138–61.
2. Artwork
 - a. Schiele, Egon. *Self-Portrait*. 1910. Oil and gouache on canvas, 44 cm x 30.5 cm. Leopold Museum.

Bibliography submissions must be handed in **no later than the Friday of Week 11**. Students should submit their contribution through canvas.

Rationale: The idea of a "communal bibliography" came up in a few of my classes throughout my college career, and I really like the idea for a few reasons. For one, it afforded the student the opportunity to look further into a topic that we discussed briefly in class. My own research for this project has shown me how many interesting materials there are that deal with this topic of music, art, and fin-de-siècle Vienna. One advantage this interdisciplinary course, also, is that the sources that students find don't necessarily need to be about music. This means that there is a plethora of sources that they can use. Furthermore, requiring the students to find an artwork means that they will be actively engaging with the artworks that we discuss in class, and I will encourage them to try and find their favorite artists during the course. In educational psychology, constructivism suggests that learners are active in constructing their own knowledge and that there is a shared responsibility between individuals in a group to do so (Moshman 1982). Creating a class bibliography is a shared activity that holds students accountable for both their own and the groups learning. This assignment is similar to one used by Erinn E. Knyt (2013) in her undergraduate opera history survey course where a student created a source reading list on a contemporary opera. While this assignment doesn't require students to find historical primary sources, I argue that it follows in a similar manner to that source reading list.

Students will be searching for literature that they believe will be useful for further comprehension of the topics. Again, understand is one of the key foundations of Bloom's taxonomy and is paramount to success in any field.

Short Writing Assignments

Being able to communicate one's own arguments through writing is an important skill that every college student should have. Furthermore, musicians won't necessarily be completing long, research papers that cover a single topic. These homework assignments are designed to teach you how to write in different styles. Students will be responsible for **completing two out of the three** short writing assignments explained below. Each writing assignment will have its own due date so that the students will have adequate time to complete each assignment. Each assignment will follow the same formatting and will be due on the Friday of that week at 5pm on canvas. For those Fridays **no weekly summaries will be due**. This will be repeated on the course schedule. The assignments are as follows:

1. Artwork Analysis (due Friday of Week 7 at 5pm)

In 500-750 words, the student should choose an artwork *not covered in class* and perform a formal analysis. Artistic analysis will be taught in Unit 1 of this class, as it will be a necessary skill for full comprehension of the other artworks we will be discussing. This assignment is like a music theory class analysis assignment. The skills we learn in class should be applied to this artwork. In the analysis the student should identify the artist, the work, the medium, and present a brief history of the artwork, showing that you understand the historical context. Following this, the student should mention each element of the artwork that they can discern. Attached to this analysis should be a copy of the artwork in question.

2. Scholarly Article Review (due Friday of Week 11 at 5pm)

In 500-750 words, the student should read, analyze, and respond to a scholarly article of their choosing. The article should be from a peer reviewed journal and relevant to the topic course. The student is allowed to use an article that was put in the class bibliography; alternatively, they can find one that they are interested in, but the student must receive permission from the instructor before they complete the assignment. Students should be identifying what the argument(s) is/are in the paper, what the supporting evidence is, and whether or not they agree with the author. Your response should be based on the facts presented, not the manner of presentation; if you don't agree with the author, point to specific examples from the text that you don't agree with. In the review, you should include quotes from the article that you agree and/or disagree with and include a parenthetical citation for the page number (no need for footnotes.)

3. Exhibition/Concert Review (due Friday of Week 13 at 5pm)

In 500-750 words, review either (a) an art exhibition OR (b) a concert you attended. The review should be in response to the materials or works that were exhibited/performed at the respective event. Students should list what works were present, the artist/composer, and their significance – why were they included in the exhibition? Because you didn't design the exhibition or the concert, you should not try to shoe horn our topics into your review; your task here is to show your active engagement with the arguments discussed in class by applying critical analysis skills

to the events. That is, you should be able to point out what type of message or meaning was being conveyed in the exhibition or concert.

Rationale: Some of these assignments I borrowed from the chapter written by Eleonora M. Beck in The Music History Classroom. My intention in choosing these assignments is for the students to adopt different writing styles. I acknowledge that not all of them will be pursuing musicological careers, so I felt that allowing them to write papers other than the standard research paper would be provide them with the opportunity to do so. The exhibition/concert review is designed to let the students practice their critical writing skills. By trying to understand the unifying theme that brings the concert or exhibition together, it will show the students that these types of events aren't just thrown together. Rather, curators or programmers are decisive in which pieces they include in the program. The scholarly article review gives the student an opportunity to engage with an article that they may or may not agree with and express, in writing, their rationale for their opinion. I want the students to practice engaging with an article in the form of a writing assignment. This goes beyond the standard annotations in that the students will need to construct a clear and concise paper where they define the arguments and respond to them appropriately. The artwork analysis is like a music theory classes' music analysis assignment, in that it focuses on the formal elements of a single work and will give students an opportunity to apply different terms to properly analyze an artwork.

FINAL PROJECT: A NIGHT IN THE MUSEUM – THE ART EXHIBITION PROJECT

In lieu of a more traditional final research paper, students will be required to design an art exhibition as a final project. Drawing from the skills and repertoire that we learned over the course of the semester, the student will be responsible for curating an art exhibition and constructing an accompanying soundtrack that will be played during the exhibition. Students should select at least 5 nineteenth-century artworks and 5 nineteenth-century musical works in any medium that relates to the topic of our course, namely, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Art exhibitions in museums, just like symphony orchestra concerts, are often constructed with a theme in mind. Artworks include paintings, lithographs, sculptures, mosaics, etc. Musical works can be any genre/instrumentation that you see fit (symphony, quartet, concerto, etc.). You may choose **only one** musical example and one art example that we discussed in class. The other four should, for both the music and the art work, be examples that you find **on your own**. For each artwork the student will be required to provide the following information:

- Artist, artwork, medium, dimensions, location of artwork (what gallery is it a part of? What museum? Etc.)
- Historical significance of the work – why is this painting related to the theme of the exhibition?
- A brief analysis of the work – identify any of the main features that you want the “audience member” to pay attention to

Furthermore, students will be required to provide the same information for the musical piece:

- Composer, piece, instrumentation, date composed
- Historical significance – why are you including this piece in the soundtrack? How does it relate to the theme of the exhibition?

- A brief analysis – what are some specific elements of the music that you can identify to show how it relates?

In addition to the details, students will be responsible for a brief essay (~1000-2000 words) in which you describe your reason for choosing the theme of the exhibition. Think of it as a written defense. You need to convince the audience members that both the music and the art work together to create the image or idea you have in mind. View this project as your own *Gesamtkunstwerk*. How do the musical examples and artworks complement one another? Additionally, consider the space, the lighting, and the arranging of the artworks in the space, and describe how they work with the music and the artworks to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In this brief essay, the student will be responsible for referencing *at least six* scholarly sources. You may use *two* sources that we have read in class. The other sources may be drawn from the cumulative bibliography or ones that you found in your own research.

The Exhibition will be presented in-class during Week 15 and our meeting in finals week. After your presentation, you are required to hand in the paper and a copy of **each of the descriptions that you created for each artwork on canvas.**

The project will go through multiple stages. For each of these stages, the part assigned will be DUE at 5pm (CST) on the indicated date. Dates will be copied onto the class schedule.

1. Friday of Week 6: Topic and exhibition proposal handed in. Students should meet with the instructor to discuss your topic BEFORE Friday of week 6.
2. Friday of Week 8: Preliminary list of musical works (5 works: **one from syllabus, four from your own research**) submitted online through canvas. Provide 2-3 sentences of justification for including the piece on your soundtrack for each piece. This does not need to be fully fleshed out.
3. Friday of Week 10: Preliminary list of artworks (5 pieces: **one from syllabus, four from your own research**) submitted ONLINE through Canvas. Provide 2-3 sentences of justification for including the piece on your soundtrack for each piece. This does not need to be fully fleshed out.
4. Friday of Week 12: Draft for each of the descriptions and your three scholarly sources submitted ONLINE.
5. WEEK 15 and Finals Week Meeting: Presentations. After your presentation you should submit the introductory paper and the descriptions for each of artworks on canvas.

Stages 1-4 of the project will be worth 5% of the overall grade each. The final presentation will be worth 10% of the grade. Grading is designed this way to give the student some leeway if one stage of the project doesn't meet all of the stages requirements.

Rationale: I had a difficult time coming up with what type of final project I would like the students to have, and I finally decided on this one. As opposed to a final paper or exam, I think a project like this engages in a couple of different topics that we learned in class. Firstly, by demanding students to include scholarly research, students will be required to do their own research on each art work and practice critical thinking skills. Secondly, they will have another opportunity to write critically and be able to defend their own positions in the short paper which proceeds the exhibition. Finally, I believe that this is a great opportunity to show the students the

amount of art out there that is related to our course. The idea of an art exhibition is similar to a programmed recital that students will need to do for their degree. This project mirrors the same skills they will use when they create a recital. Thinking critically about the works they include in this project shows how they understand the material. Returning to Bloom's taxonomy, designing original work (create) is the cumulation of the different levels as described in the taxonomy. One of my intentions in this class is to show the way that art and music have worked together, or how they have influenced one another. This project allows the students to witness the relationship and give them the opportunity to actively engage with the topic.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Readings & Annotations	10 annotations, 2% each = 20%
Weekly Summaries	4 summaries, 5% each = 20%
Cumulative Class Bibliography	10%
Short Writing Assignments	2 assignments, 10% each = 20%
Exhibition Project	20%
Professionalism	10%

Late assignments will be accepted with a 5% deduction for each work day it is submitted late. Late assignments **will not be accepted if more than a week has lapsed** since the due date unless the student has sought and received prior approval from the instructor. In the event of an emergency, please notify me by email as soon as possible so we can make arrangements.

PROFESSIONALISM AND ABSENCES

Each member of this course has a responsibility to complete the assignments, while also conversing in scholarly dialogue. Although there will be occasional lectures when introducing a new topic, this is primarily a discussion-based course. It is imperative that the students come having read the assigned reading so that they will be ready and able to discuss the content and make connections to the overall themes of the course. As such, attendance is mandatory for **every class**, including the final presentations at the end of the semester. Anticipated absences should be communicated in advance. Sometimes unforeseen situations or illnesses come up; to accommodate them, you will be allowed **two unexcused absences** over the course of the semester. Unless cleared with me in advance, absences exceeding these two allotted "freebies" will negatively affect the students' final grades by 2%.

GRADING SCHEME

93 to 100 = A	73 to 75.99 = C
89 to 92.99 = A-	69 to 72.99 = C-
86 to 88.99 = B+	66 to 69.99 = D+

83 to 85.99 = B	63 to 65.99 = D
79 to 82.99 = B-	59 to 62.99 = D-
76 to 78.99 = C+	58.99 or less = F

TECHNOLOGY IN CLASS

Ideally, a world where technology provides no unnecessary distractions or tangents would be lovely. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Students are required to bring **hard copies of every assigned reading to every class**. Technology will only be used when deemed necessary by the instructor.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS> to begin the process. Once approved and registered, students will submit a DASS Accommodation Letter to faculty through the electronic portal *DASS Link* and then communicate directly with each instructor to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (<https://www.smu.edu/StudentAffairs/Chaplain/ReligiousHolidays>)

EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR UNIVERSITY EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.

CLASS SCHEDULE

subject to change

UNIT ONE: WAGNER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

WEEK 1

Introduction: Understanding Wagner

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Introduction to Music and Art + Syllabus Review

Thursday:

Grey, Thomas S. Preface to *Wagner's Musical Prose Texts and Contexts*, xi–xix. New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Schorske, Carl E. “The Quest for the Grail: Wagner and Morris.” In *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 90–104. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Rationale: Both readings are assigned so that the students will be at least familiar with the writings of Wagner, as well as his journey from Catholicism to Norse Mythology. The concepts discussed in this class, and for the rest of the unit, are essential for the students to understand the gravity of Wagner's influence on music and the visual arts. Furthermore, I like the Grey because it is a brief glimpse in to Wagner scholarship, and introduces ideas about musicological research that the students will need to learn. Schorske's chapter relates Wagner to the craftsman William Morris. Morris lies somewhat outside the reach of this course, but the connection between the two is notable in that it shows how figures have used history to inform their decisions and actions.

WEEK 2

Wagner and Wagnerism

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Weber, William. "Wagner, Wagnerism, and Musical Idealism." In *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, edited by David C. Large and William Weber, 28–71. Cornell and London: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Thursday:

McGrath, William J. Introduction to *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 1–16. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974.

Rationale: The readings for this class focus on the reaches of Wagner and the creation of Wagnerism. Weber's reading explains the rise and evolution of Wagnerism and how it formed to be one of the primary aesthetic movements in nineteenth-century Europe. Understanding why Wagnerism existed at all is important for the students understanding of the ways that people viewed and valued music's emotional power. McGrath's chapter identifies a group in fin-de-siècle Vienna, the Pernerstorfer Circle. I like the chapter because of how he ties philosophy, politics, culture, and Wagnerism into this important historical event.

WEEK 3

The Gesamtkunstwerk in History and in Wagner

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Brown, H. M. "Romantic Drama and the Visual Arts." In *The Quest for the Gesamtkunstwerk and Richard Wagner*, First edition., 38–58. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Thursday:

Steinhoff, Anthony J. "Richard Wagner, Parsifal, and the Pursuit of Gesamtkunstwerk." In *The Total Work of Art*, edited by Anthony J. Steinhoff, David Imhoof, and Margaret Eleanor Menninger, 1st ed., 12:56–78. Foundations, Articulations, Inspirations. Berghahn Books, 2016. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvr6955g.9>.

Listen: Richard Wagner, Overture to *Parsifal*, WWV 111 (1882).

Rationale: This week dives into the world of the Gesamtkunstwerk, arguably the most important concept that we will discuss in class. Students at this point will now be familiar with Wagner's written prose, Wagnerism and its rise in nineteenth-century Europe. My rationale for the current arrangement is that I want to show how this theory wasn't just something Wagner came up with; rather, that it has a long drawn out history. Placing the Steinhoff chapter on Tuesday would introduce the Gesamtkunstwerk as primarily a Wagnerian ideal, and I would then later point out how it existed before Wagner. This week will be when the students are become familiar with the Gesamtkunstwerk. I assigned the overture to Parsifal so that students will get an idea of the

musical landscape that Wagner was trying to create in his opera and because it is the topic of discussion in Steinhoff's chapter.

WEEK 4 The Gesamtkunstwerk and its Influence

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Borchmeyer, Dieter. "The Ideal Audience: The Greeks and 'The Art-Work of the Future'" and "Opera as an Immoral Institution" In *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, 59-74; 87-91. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Listening: Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, Act 2, scene 1. Follow along with the libretto.

Thursday:

Pederson, Sanna. "From Gesamtkunstwerk to Music Drama." In *The Total Work of Art*, edited by Anthony J. Steinhoff, David Imhoof, and Margaret Eleanor Menninger, 1st ed., 12:39-55. Foundations, Articulations, Inspirations. Berghahn Books, 2016.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvr6955g.9>.

Rationale: This week we will focus our attention on how Wagner first approached the creation of the Gesamtkunstwerk; that is we will, look at the two ideals he attached to the creation of a unifying art form and the morality he invoked in coming up with this ideal. Borchmeyer's chapters are approachable for undergraduate students as he does a good job of breaking down the complex metaphors and meanings Wagner imparts in his writings. Sanna Pederson's chapter comments on how the Gesamtkunstwerk evolved in Wagner's writings, and identifies some important notes on the genesis that the student will need to understand if they are to be able to define the Gesamtkunstwerk.

WEEK 5 Manifestations of Wagner's influence and the Gesamtkunstwerk

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Karnes, Kevin. "Max Klinger, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and the Dream of a Third Kingdom." In *A Kingdom Not of This World: Wagner, the Arts, and Utopian Visions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 37-65. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Artwork: Max Klinger, *Brahms Fantasy* (1894).

Listen: Johannes Brahms, Selected Lieder: “Alte Liebe,” op. 72, no.1; “Sehnsucht,” op. 49, no. 3; “Am Sonntag Morgen,” op. 49, no. 1; “Feldeinsamkeit,” op. 86, no. 2; “Schicksalslied,” op. 54; “Kein Haus, keine Heimat,” op. 94, no. 5.

Thursday:

Vergo, Peter. “Wagnerian Painting.” In *The Music of Painting: Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage*, 13–55. London: Phaidon, 2010.

Artwork: Paul Cézanne, *Young Girl at the Piano (Overture to Tannhäuser)*, 1869-70.

Rationale: In the last week of this unit, students will learn about manifestations of both Wagner’s influence and the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk in the visual arts. My purpose in putting this topic in the Wagner unit is so that I will be able to show a connection between artists and Wagner. Karnes’s chapter discusses an important figure, Max Klinger, showing how Klinger interpreted Wagner’s theories and used it to create one of his most popular works, the Brahms-Fantasie. The recordings the students will listen to are the corresponding Lieder. Vergo, who makes a few appearances in my project, discusses various painters who have approached Wagner in a couple of different ways; literal depictions (portraits), metaphorical symbols (scenes evoking Wagner), and works that attempt to create a Gesamtkunstwerk. Furthermore, starting in this class and moving forward to unit two, we will look at an artwork that was discussed in the readings. I will spend some time on the Thursday of week four to discuss how to do an artistic analysis so that the students come prepared to discuss the artwork.

UNIT TWO: OPERATIC PERFORMANCE PRACTICES AND ADOLPHE APPIA

WEEK 6

Ringstrasse Vienna and The Vienna Court Opera House

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Schorske, Carl E. “The Ringstrasse, Its Critics, and the Birth of Urban Modernism.” In *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, 46-62. New York: Knopf, 1980.

Vergo, Peter. “Vienna 1900.” In *Art in Vienna 1898-1918: Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele and Their Contemporaries*, 9–17. London: Phaidon, 1975.

Thursday:

Seefehlner, Egon. “The Directors and Their Ensembles.” In *The Vienna Opera*, edited by Andrea Seeböhm, 57–85. New York: Rizzoli, 1987.

Friday: [Final Project] Topic And Exhibition Proposal Handed in on Canvas at 5pm

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: This unit turns to fin-de-siècle Vienna, the opera, and Adolphe Appia. For this week, I assigned three readings that I believe will supplement the student's understanding of three important historical occurrences in this class: the political and cultural realm of fin-de-siècle Vienna, as demonstrated in the Schorske; the Vienna Secession, and art in this time period, as demonstrated in the Vergo, and the history of the directors at the Vienna Court Opera House, in the Seefehlner. For the Schorske and Seefehlner, I have excerpted only a portion of the respective chapters; both come to be around 100 pages each, and I don't expect a student to read all of the information presented in both (both go somewhat beyond our course material, or just represents extraneous knowledge). My research has benefited greatly from these three chapters, and I hope that the students will find the same results.

WEEK 7

Operatic Performance Standards in Vienna

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Savage, Roger. "The Staging of Opera." In *Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, edited by John Russell Brown, 351–420. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Thursday:

Greisenegger, Wolfgang. "Set Design and Costumes." In *The Vienna Opera*, edited by Andrea Seeböhm, 175–210. New York: Rizzoli, 1987.

Artwork: Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini, Sets for *Il Pomo d'Oro* by Antonio Cesti, (1668).

Friday: Artwork Analysis due at 5pm

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: This week is more specific in that it looks at set designs and costumes in opera over time. The Savage is an exhaustive chapter that looks at the practices, the standards, and the trends as they developed in operatic performance, with regard to all opera houses. The Greisenegger chapter focuses on just opera performances in Vienna, which is important for the students because of how it establishes what the expectations and traditions were. Understanding the trends and traditions in operatic performance is crucial for the students to understand (a)

what Mahler and Roller were reshaping for their own productions, (b) what Appia was reacting to in his works, and (c) how the expectations for sets and costumes developed over time.

WEEK 8 An Adolphe Appia Primer

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Volbach, Walther R. "A Profile of Adolphe Appia." *Educational Theatre Journal* 15, no. 1 (1963): 7–14.

Beacham, Richard C. Introduction to Part Two. In *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Scenarios, and Designs*, by Adolphe Appia, 81–88. Translated by Walther R. Volbach. Edited by Richard C. Beacham. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989.

Thursday:

Bablet, Denis. "Appia and Theatrical Space: From Revolt to Utopia." In *Adolphe Appia, 1862–1928: Actor, Space, Light*, 9–16. Geneva: Pro Helvetia, Arts Council of Switzerland, 1982.

Listen: Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold*, Act 1, Scene 1 (1854).

Artwork: Adolphe Appia, sketch for *Das Rheingold*, Scene 1. (1924).

Friday: [Final Project] Preliminary Lists Of Musical Works due on Canvas at 5pm

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: Adolphe Appia is an important figure in this class and my intention in this week is to introduce who he was and some of his theories. All three chapters were used as a part of my research and are, in my opinion, very accessible levels of writing for upperclassmen to comprehend. Volbach's article is similar to a biography of Appia, whereas Beacham's introduction presents some of the essential writings that Appia created. Bablet's chapter is interesting in that it was the introduction to an art exhibition that focused on Appia's designs. I value it for Bablet's thoughtful comments on the evolution of Appia's works and theories.

WEEK 9 **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES*

WEEK 10

Appia and Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Brown, H. M. "Adolphe Appia: A Watershed in the Evolution of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*." In *The Quest for the Gesamtkunstwerk and Richard Wagner*, 173–87. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Thursday:

Appia, Adolphe. "Richard Wagner and the *Mise En Scène*." In *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, edited by Barnard Hewitt, translated by Robert W. Corrigan and Mary Douglas Dirks, 104–30. Books of the Theatre Series 3. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1962.

Listen: Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, Act two, scenes 1 and two. (1859).

Artwork: Adolphe Appia, sketch for *Tristan und Isolde*, Act two, scene one, (1896).

Friday: [Final Project] Preliminary Lists of Artworks due on Canvas at 5pm

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: This week deals specifically with Appia's theories, which, as we will see, influenced Roller and Mahler. Brown's chapter is invaluable as it relates Appia's works to the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk. Brown's entire book is valuable to this class as it depicts the various elements to the Gesamtkunstwerk but assigning the entire book for a class is beyond what I would hope to teach. On Thursday we read a section of Appia's Music and the Art of the Theatre, diving into what Appia proposed as a way to create a Gesamtkunstwerk that would embrace the visual element. Again, these are crucial topics to discuss and explore as they are the foundational terms that we rely on throughout the course. Appia's work shows how people adopted the theory and repurposed it for their own ambitions.

UNIT THREE: SECESSION, ROLLER, MAHLER

WEEK 11

The Vienna Secession

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Vergo, Peter. "Secession." In *Art in Vienna 1898-1918: Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele and Their Contemporaries*, 18–65. London: Phaidon, 1975.

Artwork: Gustav Klimt, *Schubert at the Piano*, (1899).

Thursday:

Karnes, Kevin. "'All of Vienna Has Become Secessionistic': Longings of an Organization." In *A Kingdom Not of This World: Wagner, the Arts, and Utopian Visions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 66–85. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Friday: Scholarly Article Review Due at 5pm

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: Unit three covers the three last pieces of the puzzle: The Vienna Secession, Gustav Mahler, and Alfred Roller. Including these three topics in the unit reinforces the notion that the Secession has close ties with Mahler and Roller. Vergo's provides the students with the history of the Secession, including how it came to exist, the principal artists in the Secession, and their respective ideologies. We will look at Klimt's Schubert at the Piano as an example of music being represented in art. Karnes's book situates the Secession in the time period. He does well to point out the philosophical aspects of the Secession. I will only assign the chapter up until page 85 because the rest of the chapter looks at the topic that we will discuss next week: the Klinger-Beethoven Exhibition.

WEEK 12

Secessionist Gesamtkunstwerk

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Celenza, Anna Harwell. "Music and the Vienna Secession: 1897-1902." *Music in Art* 29, no. 1/2 (2004): 203–12.

Artwork: Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven-Frieze*, (1902).

Thursday:

Kallir, Jane. "Foreword (By Carl E. Schorske)," "In Search of the Total Artwork," and "The Graphic Arts and the Birth of Expressionism" In *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte*, 7–9; 15-24; 121-144. New York: Galerie St. Etienne, 1986.

Friday: [Final Project] Draft of Artwork Descriptions and Three Scholarly Sources

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: This week looks at the types of Gesamtkunstwerk that the Secessionists designed. Celenza's article focuses specifically on the Klinger-Beethoven exhibition and how the members of the Secession intended for it to be a Gesamtkunstwerk. Furthermore, Celenza uses the Klinger-Beethoven exhibition as a powerful entry point to make the connection between music and art in fin-de-siècle Vienna. In Kallir's book, I chose three different sections for the students to read. The Foreword, "in search of a total artwork," and "the graphic arts" are all pertinent to the class as they explore two different elements: the striving for a total artwork, and the development of the graphic arts, which bleeds into Roller's graphic designs.

WEEK 13 Mahler and Roller in Vienna

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Schorske, Carl E. "Gustav Mahler: Formation and Transformation." In *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, 172–90. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Keener, Andrew D. "Gustav Mahler as Conductor." *Music & Letters* 56, no. 3/4 (1975): 341–55.

Thursday:

Ditzler, Kirk. "Tradition Ist 'Schlamperei': Gustav Mahler and the Vienna Court Opera." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 29, no. 1 (1998): 11–28.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3108363>.

Friday: Exhibition/Concert Review Due

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: This chapter focuses on Mahler the conductor, a topic that I don't expect much students to have learned about in their undergrad surveys. I appreciate Schorske's chapter in that it focuses on the roots of Mahler's upbringing and his consequent immersion into Viennese cultures. Keener's article looks at the developments and his reputation as a conductor. Ditzler's article focuses entirely on Mahler's reputation as an operatic conductor, the developments he implemented during his tenure, and what his expectations were. It briefly mentions Roller's productions, but I think the article is valuable for the historical context to Mahler's appointment at the opera.

WEEK 14

The Mahler-Roller Productions

READINGS:

Tuesday:

Carnegy, Patrick. "The Inheritors: Cosima and Siegfried Wagner, Gustav Mahler and Alfred Roller." In *Wagner and the Art of Theatre*, 160-74. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013.

Thursday:

Assorted critical commentary/reviews of the productions by Bruno Walter, Julius Korngold, Hans Liebstockl, and Max Graf.

****NO WEEKLY SUMMARY DUE****

Rationale: Finally, we turn to the Mahler-Roller productions. Carnegy's chapter has been invaluable in its scrupulous detail of the legacy Mahler and Roller inherited, as well as the developments they left behind. The section of this chapter is the most pertinent; Cosima and Siegfried are important figures, but while they are at work in Bayreuth, Mahler and Roller's place in Vienna adds to the complex network of culture that has taken up so much of this course's time. Furthermore, this class will focus most of our attention on the Roller sketches, as my paper did. My hope is that students will be able to draw on the various terms, concepts, and figures we've discussed over the semester when reading the Carnegy chapter, and my plan is to ask guided questions about the sketches that students will answer in class. On Thursday we will look at critics responses to the productions, showing how the public saw and reacted to these innovative productions.

WEEK 15

Art Exhibition Presentations

“TYPICAL” CLASS MEETING DESCRIPTION

[Week 5, Tuesday: Manifestations of Wagner’s Influence and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*]

The general structure of this class would follow what Claire Howell Major, Michael S. Harris, and Todd Zakrajsek describe in chapter 1 of *Teaching for Learning* would describe as a “Socratic lecture”: “This type of lecture, which typically follows a reading assignment to give students a baseline of knowledge, is structured around a series of carefully sequenced questions” (p. 3). Before the discussion, I would begin by reviewing with the students what we have learned so far about the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In the previous week the students listened to act 2 of *Tristan* and followed along with the libretto. In that class we watched some different examples of *Tristan* productions and evaluated how the score, the set design, and the words worked together to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Melanie Lowe suggests a few techniques for listening in the classroom, and points out that “if the piece is from a larger work, especially a dramatic work like an opera or an oratorio, it is important for students to know the story – interpretive work so often depends on the context” (2012: 52). Thus, we would listen to act 2 of *Tristan* with both the score and libretto on the projected slide and follow that with clips of different productions. Lowe urges that the reason for each task needs to be clearly stated before we dive into the examples. I would point out in class that our task in watching the different clips of productions it to evaluate the different ways that set designers have interpreted the score. After we discussed examples of *Tristan*, we would turn our attention to Max Klinger, who was the main subject of the Karnes chapter. Klinger is important here because of his work that deals with the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Karnes ultimately spends most of the time discussing his philosophy and connections to Brahms. Following the form of a Socratic seminar we would turn to the chapter and discuss the different

points and arguments that arise during the class after the mini lecture. The chapter is rather lengthy, so it will be crucial for the students to use the annotations they made in their readings. These annotations will help them recall the points that they will need to discuss. Sitting in a larger seminar format would allow students to ask questions and reply to one another. While I would be leading the discussion with my general questions about the reading, I would encourage students to recite any of the questions they thought of during the reading. Being able to express questions in a coherent manner is one of my course outcomes (*Express*). The questions I would ask are both fact and opinion based; I want them to consider whether or not they agree with Karnes's assertions. In the previous class I would have handed out a paper that gives the basics of a formal art analysis. This skill is important as the students need to do formal analysis on artworks for their assignments. After reviewing the techniques needed for an analysis, we would then look at the artwork that is the subject of the chapter, the *Brahms Fantasy*. I included this artwork in the syllabus because of its explicit connection to music. At the end, I would summarize all the main points that we discussed in class and probe the students for any questions they might have.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR WIDER APPLICATION

The version of the course presented here is very specifically focused and designed for a particular type of student, but there are ways the class could be altered to make it more appealing to a wider audience. For example, I think inviting art students, art history students, and theater students would make for a lively classroom experience and to allow for those students to join the class I would need to spend a little time in the first week of class (maybe even on the first day of class) to review some musical terms that we will be using throughout the course; some examples might be different genres of classical music or terms that can be used to describe the music; ideally, I would want them to be at least somewhat comfortable with talking about music. The same goes for the music/theater students, as they will need to have the tools to be able to analyze artworks (this would be covered in the first unit of the course.) As for units, I would expand the time we spend on the Vienna Secession to look at other examples of artists working with theaters to create new set designs and/or costumes. This might go alongside a lecture or two on operatic acting history from the beginnings of opera and on through the twentieth century. I would expand on Adolphe Appia's work as an actor theorist and study how he conceived a new acting style. This topic is covered in his *Music and the Art of Theatre*, but Denis Bablet's book *Adolphe Appia, 1862-1928: Actor, Space, Light* (1982) spends some time on this topic. Furthermore, Appia worked with English stage director Edward Gordon Craig, and one of his biographies by George Nash (1967) could provide some useful information. Appia also worked with Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and helped develop Dalcroze's Eurythmics. With these included topics, all of the students should have some worthwhile material that they can use for their own studies.

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