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Introduction

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If the quantity of performances and recordings is anything to go by, and the warmth of their reception, Berg's music is reaching a wider audience as the twentieth century ends than it has at any previous time. Since the appearance in 1979 of Friedrich Cerha's edition at last allowed *Lulu* to be heard in its entirety, this opera has arguably overtaken *Wozzeck* in both popularity and critical esteem. Recordings of the *Lulu Suite* threaten to outnumber those of the ever-popular Violin Concerto in the catalogues.

It is no longer remotely fashionable to ask 'what if?' questions about composers who died prematurely, but the popular emphasis on Berg's final compositions makes my mind, at least, turn occasionally to such idle speculation. Berg's compositional technique in the final act of *Lulu* and in the Violin Concerto is remarkably focused and fluent, and belies the opera's long gestation. His willingness to consider a substantial list of future projects as he neared the end of his work on the opera – a third string quartet, a piece of chamber music with piano, a symphony, a piece for radio or film[1] – might be taken to suggest that he was ready to unleash an outpouring of creativity, following a long period of frustration whilst composing the first two acts. The Violin Concerto would have fitted into such a pattern, for though one can certainly see signs of the speed at which it was put together, it remains a work that almost unerringly forges what was for Berg a new balance between the intricate and the communicative. At 50, he knew himself and his ways as a composer well enough to organise his working methods so that the music would flow.

All this, of course, overlooks a number of crucial negative factors. The Nazis were in power in Germany and already had a strong influence on Austrian life. Berg's financial and domestic situation was precarious, yet so profound was his Viennese sensibility that he was not inclined to move abroad like so many others. Even biology was against him: his own father had died in his mid-50s, and poor health dogged Berg in his final years. Had he lived, his music would have been officially reviled in Austria at least until 1945, and in post-war Europe he might well have been regarded as a kind of musical dinosaur. It is factors such as these that render detailed speculation about an older Berg's achievements quite impossible.

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So we are grateful, as Willi Reich wrote in an obituary, 'for every smile of his bright yet still so puzzling countenance, for every note of his inconceivably intense and inspired work!'[2] What is more, we may observe that Berg's present popularity represents something of a rediscovery, rather than a direct continuation of his contemporaries' appreciation of the living man.[3] Recognising both these things, the present volume seeks both to discuss every major work, and to contextualise Berg's cultural outlook and musical output against the background of his own time and in terms of its resonances within the musical culture of the twentieth century.

In the first part of the book, Christopher Hailey takes us inside Berg's home territory in the Vienna suburb of Hietzing, Andrew Barker provides a profile of the composer's formative connections with major figures in Viennese cultural life, and Raymond Geuss examines how his music was treated in (and itself informed) the writings of a man who was both a talented composition pupil of Berg and one of the twentieth century's greatest philosophers, Theodor W. Adorno. Subsequent chapters in Part II examine the music itself, beginning with Berg's earliest compositions and culminating with his greatest success during his lifetime, the opera *Wozzeck*. The pivotal nature of this masterpiece for Berg's development is pursued at the beginning of the third part of the book, in three chapters which examine how Berg expanded his musical horizons in the early 1920s. For perhaps his greatest gift of all was to build constantly on his experience, accumulating and re-synthesising, so that almost everything he did was turned to good use later on. From this remarkable human nature, rather than from any reluctance to accept the challenge of the new, came the tendency of so much of his work to find its roots either in the Vienna of the 1900s, or in his complex personal life and his world of friends and acquaintances. Part III also examines all the post-*Wozzeck* music, and features a consideration by Judy Lochhead of the Lulu character in the light of recent feminist theory.

This chapter reminds us that the subsequent impact of Berg's music, whilst latent in whatever we might consider to be the music's substance, is nonetheless developing and multi-faceted. The final part of the book is devoted to Arnold Whittall's masterly examination of this topic, which shows how aspects of a Bergian synthesis may be detected in music that is either more single-mindedly constructive or single-mindedly referential, or – perhaps most of all – both pluralistic and historically sensitive. That these latter characteristics are so often seen as definitive for a post-modern age, and also of Berg's own artistic temperament, suggests in part why he has now become, not the foreign minister of his own land of dreams, as Adorno suggested to his face,[4] but to later generations a posthumous and much-loved ambassador from the world of modernism to our own times.

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PART I

Culture and environment

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1 Defining home: Berg's life on the periphery

Christopher Hailey

Old Hietzing natives were never in a hurry and others, like myself, who moved there later in life were drawn there because in Old Hietzing one never had to hurry. *Soma Morgenstern*[1]

The effervescence of Vienna's turn-of-the-century culture, its spontaneous combustion of ideas, was an explosion of pent-up energies, of unstable ingredients long compacted under the pressure of Vienna's remarkably dense social, cultural and physical geography. Vienna's central first district was a magnet of extraordinary power, the centre, as it were, of a solar system around which its outer districts spiralled in uneven orbit. The sources of that power – the Hofburg and its bureaucratic appendages, the parliament and city hall, the banks and stock exchange, the university and academies, the Court Opera, Burgtheater and Musikverein – produced enough noteworthy activity, intrigue and gossip to fill the columns of the city's more than two dozen newspapers and tabloids, and to fuel agitated coffee-house debates on art, politics, philosophy and sex. But if the first district was the place where everyone met, only a few chose to live there. Peter Altenberg, of course, occupied a small hotel room in the Dorotheagasse, and Karl Kraus slept by day at his apartment in the Dominikanerbastei, but such creatures of the first district were the exception. It was in the city's orbiting outer districts that the rumblings within Vienna's core found their resonating chamber.

The twenty-one administrative districts of early twentieth-century Vienna were established between 1850 and 1904 (see Map 1) and were part of a process, along with the removal of the inner-city fortifications, the construction of the Ringstraße and Gürtel, the canalisation of the Wien river and the construction of the Stadtbahn, that would forge the city's scattered communities into a single sprawling metropolis.[2] But differences remained. Geography, history and architecture, local industry and economy, and above all the income, class, occupation or ethnicity of its inhabitants gave each district a distinctive identity, its own perspective; and it was the concert of those perspectives that diffracted the impulses of the first district into the prismatic cultural and intellectual rainbow of *fin de siècle* Vienna.

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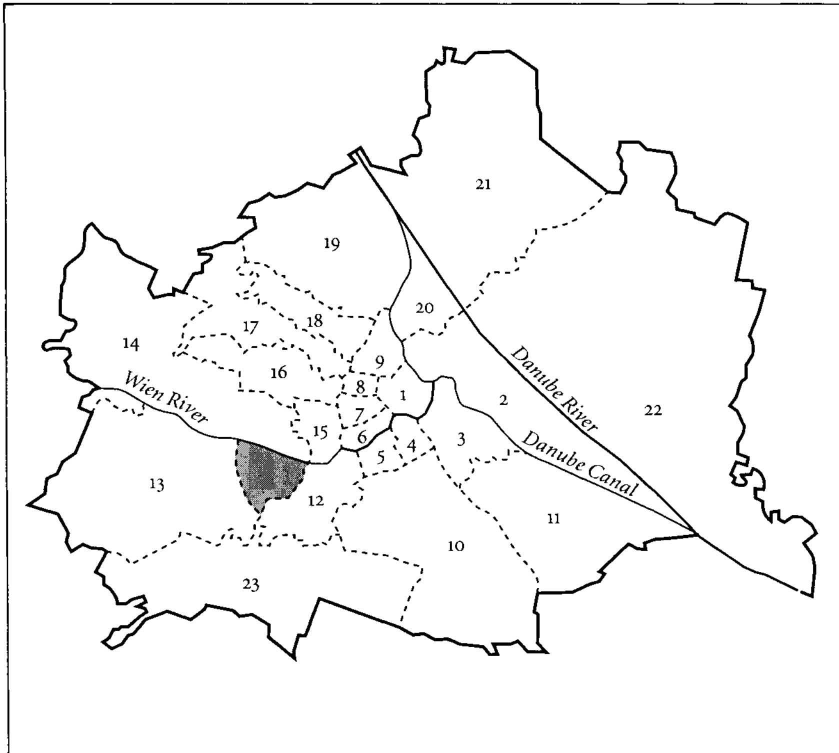
Map 1 Present-day administrative districts of Vienna (during Berg's lifetime much of what is today the fourteenth district was part of Hietzing). The shaded area shows the location of Alt-Hietzing and the Schönbrunn grounds.



Key

1 Inner city	9 Alsergrund	16 Ottakring
2 Leopoldstadt	10 Favoriten	17 Hernals
3 Landstrasse	11 Simmering	18 Währing
4 Wieden	12 Meidling	19 Döbling
5 Margareten	13 Hietzing	20 Brigittenau
6 Mariahilf	14 Penzing	21 Floridsdorf
7 Neubau	15 Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus	22 Donaustadt
8 Josefstadt		23 Liesing

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By their proximity to the centre the inner districts two to nine shared in the allures of the first district. Those who lived here often did so out of convenience. Mahler's apartment in the Landstraße district was within walking distance of the Opera, Franz Schreker and Josef Marx chose Margareten for its proximity to the Academy, and Sigmund Freud lived in Alsergrund near the University. But these third, fifth and ninth districts were also known as being home for diplomats, vendors and bureaucrats, just as the second district of Leopoldstadt was home for many of Vienna's working- and lower middle-class Jews, and the eighth district of Josefstadt a fashionable address for many of their upwardly mobile cousins. Beyond the Gürtel, the outer ring that had been completed in 1873, lay districts ten to twenty-one. These were the neighbourhoods that anchored Vienna in the surrounding countryside, from the Vienna woods to the Hungarian plain. Here the pace of life slowed. Carl Moll lived in the leafy olympia of the Hohe Warte near the vineyards of the nineteenth district, and Arthur Schnitzler had his villa in the more urban elegance of the eighteenth. For those yearning for the countryside itself, Vienna was ringed by quaint towns and villages such as Rodaun, where Hugo von Hofmannsthal lived and worked, or Mödling, where Anton Webern tended his modest alpine garden.

The inner city served up the world's imponderables; in the surrounding districts one could assert control over the more manageable dimensions of the *Alltag*, one's daily routine. Here, too, there were restaurants and cafés, but they were neighbourhood establishments with a local clientele. Here in the outer districts were the shopkeepers and tradesmen one knew by name and the neighbours with whom one could discuss such truly profound issues as the weather, the price of meat – and the other neighbours. Here were those first-hand encounters with the earthy wisdom of the *Ur*-Wiener, those interchanges and experiences of everyday life that nourish our deepest notions of calling a place home. These outer districts offered vantage points from which to triangulate the distance from Vienna's inner city to the world beyond.

The heart of Vienna's thirteenth district, Alt-Hietzing, or Old Hietzing, lies along the west wall of the Imperial summer palace of Schönbrunn, where a cluster of shops, bakeries, cafés and hotels gives the spot an air of tidy self-sufficiency.[3] At one end the parish church, dating from the early fifteenth century, and the post office, housed in the former summer palace of the emperor's foreign minister, are palpable reminders of the larger spheres of church and state; at the other end tram lines that converge at the beginning of Hietzinger Hauptstraße are the visible links to the metropolitan *Innenstadt* twenty minutes to the east.

Hietzing is a comfortable place. It is a district of Imperial yellow and

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varying hues of green, a district of elm, maple, chestnut, birch and plane trees, of squares and gardens, and of shady inner courtyards. In addition to the stately grounds of Schönbrunn, whose palace and gardens were laid out in the early eighteenth century, there are numerous parks, including Maxing Park and Hügel Park, several well-populated cemeteries and the expansive Lainzer Wildlife Preserve.[4] Despite the traffic that in recent decades has overtaken its principal arteries, the prevailing impression is one of settled quiet. Birds and the odd screech from the Schönbrunn zoological garden (founded in 1752, it is Europe's oldest) punctuate the stillness. There are villas here – it is what is called a Nobelbezirk, an elegant district – but little ostentation. Just as the Schönbrunn Palace and grounds manage to preserve a rural quality despite their formal splendour, Hietzing's estates and high-ceilinged apartment buildings integrate themselves among their less prepossessing neighbours in the shambling warren of its streets.

At the time of its incorporation in 1892, Alt-Hietzing and the surrounding communities of Ober St-Veit, Unter St-Veit, Speising and Lainz, were still predominantly agricultural, with nurseries, dairy farms, vineyards and pastures making up the bulk of commercial activity, as well as a few small industries such as meat processing, and textile and clothing manufacture. By the turn of the century Hietzing had established itself as a place where aristocrats, upper-level bureaucrats and professionals, and a sprinkling of artists, musicians, writers, actors, actresses and singers made their home. Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele worked here, Johann Strauss, who had celebrated early successes at the Dommayer Casino on Hietzinger Platz, built his villa in the Maxingstraße opposite the Schönbrunn grounds; Emil von Sauer lived on the Hietzinger Hauptstraße, and the writers Berta von Suttner and Hermann Bahr were residents, as were the Court Opera soprano Marie Gutheil-Schoder, the actor Hans Moser and the Burgtheater star – and mistress to the Emperor – Katharina Schratt. And it was to Hietzing that Johanna Berg moved with her two youngest children, Alban, 20, and Smaragda, 19, in 1905. With the exception of three years, 1908 to 1911, it was in Hietzing that Alban Berg was to spend the rest of his life, and it was in Hietzing, rather than the inner city where he had grown to manhood, that he developed the strategies by which he transformed the impulses of his youth into the artworks of his maturity.

In the autumn of 1920, Soma Morgenstern – then a law student in his late twenties – moved from a modest furnished room near the University to the outlying thirteenth district, where he hoped to find the peace to study

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for his doctoral exams. It was to be a temporary dislocation, for after obtaining his law degree he fully intended to move back into the inner city and begin his career. Instead, he remained in Hietzing for the next twelve years.[5] One pleasant Friday afternoon in late September 1920 Morgenstern was on his way into the inner city to meet friends in a café before attending a concert. He boarded the 59 tram, which travelled from Hietzing to the inner city, and as he looked around among the handful of passengers his glance fell upon an attractive-looking couple studying a volume held between them. He was struck as much by the intensity of their study (the volume was a score of Mahler's Second Symphony, the work that he, too, was going to hear later that evening) as by their refined appearance. 'Das hohe Paar', he thought – 'a lofty couple' – an impression, he admits, that was stimulated more by his fascination with the woman than by any interest in her companion.[6]

In the autumn of 1920 Helene and Alban Berg were in their mid-thirties and had been married for nearly ten years. Since May 1911 they had made their home in a ground-floor, three-room apartment on Trauttmansdorffgasse, a quiet, tree-lined street of two- and three-storey apartment houses that arcs in a bow from the Maxingstraße to the intersecting Gloriettegasse, creating a configuration of clean, angular lines that reminded Theodor W. Adorno quite plausibly, if incongruously, of Cezanne.[7] The Berg apartment, which fronts directly onto the corner of Trauttmansdorffgasse and Woltergasse, also looked out upon a large, unruly garden to the rear, a characteristic Hietzing combination of urban rectitude and sylvan lassitude. Hietzing's centre and the Schönbrunn grounds were just a few steps away, as was the villa in which Helene Berg had been born and where her parents still lived.

Helene Berg was the third of four children in the household of Franz (b. 1849) and Anna (b. 1859) Nahowski. The oldest, a daughter Carola (b. 1877), was the child of Anna's first marriage with Johann Heyduck, which had ended in divorce. Anna (b. 1882), Helene (b. 1885) and Franz Josef (b. 1889) were to all appearances the children of Franz Nahowski, although family legend has maintained that Helene and Franz were the illegitimate offspring of an eleven-year liaison that their mother had with the Emperor Franz Josef II between 1878 and 1889.[8] The Nahowski villa on Hetzendorferstraße (today Maxingstraße 46) is indeed located conveniently close to Schönbrunn. For his early morning trysts (usually a breakfast around 4am) the Emperor would leave the palace grounds by a small, inconspicuous garden door, cross the street, and, by a side entrance in the Weidlichgasse, let himself into the villa – he had his own key – and climb a winding staircase to Anna Nahowski's private salon.[9] With the end of the affair (after the Emperor began his liaison with Katharina Schratt, who lived in nearby Gloriettegasse), tensions in the Nahowski household sub-

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sided and the children were raised in an atmosphere of bourgeois respectability and practised discretion.

It was during the 1906–7 season that Alban Berg had first noticed Helene Nahowski at concerts and in the Opera. When he discovered she was a neighbour who lived no more than five minutes' walk from his home he began to haunt her street, dipping out of sight as soon as she appeared. Tall, thin, and youthfully awkward, he was easily spotted by his quarry. Finally, on Good Friday 1907, Helene's brother Franz, sympathetic to the young man's predicament, engineered an encounter, lured Berg to the family garden, and then ran to fetch his sister.[10] At a time when marriages were not infrequently a race against the calendar the four-year courtship that ensued is a testament to strictly observed proprieties. It is also testimony to the strong misgivings that Franz Nahowski had about his daughter's spindly suitor.

There was nothing objectionable about Alban Berg's background.[11] His family was very nearly the social equal of the Nahowskis. Indeed in 1905 Alban's sister Smaragda married the son of Alexander Freiherr von Eger, President of the Imperial rail line (k.k. Privilegierte Südbahngesellschaft) in which Franz Nahowski was an official.[12] Alban and Smaragda (b. 1886), who had an extremely close relationship not unlike that of Helene and her brother Franz, were the youngest of four children. Their father, Conrad (b. 1846), had run an import/export firm while their mother, Johanna Braun (b. 1851), managed the family religious supplies shop. Their older brothers Hermann (b. 1872), who lived in America, and Charly (b. 1881), who remained in Vienna, both followed their father in the export business. It was a comfortably prosperous first-district household with several servants, a governess, and a regulated schedule that included leisurely summers at the Berghof, the family's lakeside estate in Carinthia, no more than a hundred miles from the Nahowski's country property in neighbouring Styria.

Berg's parents encouraged cultural pursuits and enjoyed their contacts with some of Vienna's musical celebrities, including the pianist Alfred Grünfeld, a one-time summer neighbour, and Anton Bruckner, an occasional customer in the family shop and visitor in their home. The children were bright, attractive, musical, and quick to take advantage of the cultural opportunities around them. Charly was an ardent Wagnerian, a devout reader of *Die Fackel*, and an enthusiastic supporter of the controversial Court Opera director Gustav Mahler. Smaragda, a student of Leschetizky, was an accomplished pianist who in later years would coach leading singers, including Lula Mysz-Gmeiner, Anna Bahr-Mildenburg, Marie Gutheil-Schoder and Frieda Leider. She was also an intimate in the circles around Karl Kraus, Peter Altenberg, Gustav Klimt, Max Oppenheimer and Egon Friedell, and after her brief marriage she became an

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outspoken lesbian. Alban, whose modest vocal and keyboard resources betrayed attentions divided between music, literature and art, was the coddled amateur composer whose Lieder were a centrepiece of family musical occasions.

Though Conrad Berg's untimely death in 1900 left the family in some financial uncertainty, the death in 1905 of Julie Weidmann, Johanna Berg's childless sister, brought the inheritance of a small fortune and extensive real-estate holdings, including the villa on Hietzinger Hauptstraße to which the family moved in October of that year. This sudden turn of fortune may well have provoked Berg to rethink his future. He had just begun his second year as an unpaid accounting apprentice in the Austrian civil service, a coveted opportunity for a secure position with generous pension benefits that had been obtained only through the influence of a highly placed family friend. A year later, however, having completed his apprenticeship and won his regular appointment, Berg abandoned this promising career in order to devote himself to music. His freedom had not come easily, but he assuaged his mother's misgivings by agreeing to administer the family's properties. As a marginally employed would-be artist Berg was thus a poor candidate for marriage, and around 1909 even a sympathetic Peter Altenberg gave the couple some half-serious advice. 'A young artist like yourself,' he told Alban, 'doesn't marry the daughter of a court official!'; 'Such a beautiful, genteel girl,' he told Helene, 'doesn't marry such a young Bohemian. He won't amount to anything.'[13]

It was not until June 1923 that Soma Morgenstern finally met the Bergs. By that time they had seen each other frequently and had realised that they had a number of mutual friends. One day as he entered the tram – again it was the 59, this time on its way out to Hietzing – Morgenstern was greeted by Alban Berg. The exchange was cordial but ended abruptly when Morgenstern, who was going to visit his mother in Mariahilferstraße, jumped out with a hasty farewell (having, out of politeness, already travelled well past his stop).

Some days later he met Helene Berg on the steps of the Hietzing post office. When he told her how pleased he had been to make her husband's acquaintance she looked surprised. Berg, it seems, had returned home that day out of sorts because Morgenstern's sudden departure – 'at a stop where no Hietzinger would ever have had any reason to go' – seemed like an excuse to end the conversation. When Morgenstern explained the circumstances Helene was visibly relieved and urged him to call on her hus-

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