

A HERO'S WORK OF PEACE: RICHARD STRAUSS'S *FRIEDENSTAG*

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Richard Strauss's one-act opera *Friedenstag* (*Day of Peace*) has received staunch criticism regarding its overt militaristic content and compositional merits. The opera is one of several works that Strauss composed between 1933 and 1945, when the National Socialists were in power in Germany. Owing to Strauss's formal involvement with the Third Reich, his artistic and political activities during this period have invited much scrutiny. The context of the opera's premiere in 1938, just as Germany's aggressive stance in Europe intensified, has encouraged a range of assessments regarding its preoccupation with war and peace. The opera's defenders read its dramatic and musical components via lenses of pacifism and resistance to Nazi ideology. Others simply dismiss the opera as platitudinous. Eschewing a strict political stance as an interpretive guide, this thesis instead explores the means by which Strauss pursued more ambiguous and multidimensional levels of meaning in the opera. Specifically, I highlight the ways he infused the dramaturgical and musical landscapes of *Friedenstag* with burlesque elements. These malleable instances of irony open the opera up to a variety of fresh and fascinating interpretations, illustrating how *Friedenstag* remains a lynchpin for judiciously appraising Strauss's artistic and political legacy.

In this thesis, attention is paid to the troubled period of the opera's genesis, from Strauss's initial collaboration with author Stefan Zweig to its eventual completion with Joseph Gregor in 1936. Close study of the score reveals how Strauss, despite his struggles with the libretto, carefully integrated music and politics into a complex artwork that eludes the epithets of "Nazi" and "pacifist" in favor of a more nuanced understanding. A century and a half after Strauss's birth, *Friedenstag* continues to shed light on the precarious world that he and other German artists navigated on the eve of World War II.

*For Robert Prendergast, grandfather and tenor,
and Andrew Patner, critic, boss and friend*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface: The Legacy of a “Non-Hero”	1
Chapter One: The Birth of an Opera	5
Chapter Two: The Dramaturgy of <i>Friedenstag</i>	26
Chapter Three: Musical and Dramatic Burlesque in <i>Friedenstag</i>	45
Chapter Four: Burlesque, Transfiguration and a Finale	80
Chapter Five: The Staging History and Early Reception of <i>Friedenstag</i>	96
Appendix A: Zweig’s Initial Sketch of <i>Friedenstag</i>	105
Bibliography	106

PREFACE: THE LEGACY OF A “NON-HERO”

The artistic and political activities of Richard Strauss between 1933 and 1945 have invited much scrutiny. Decades later it stands out as a paradoxical phase of his career. It was by no means an unprofitable period for the composer. Amongst other accomplishments, Strauss managed to premiere his six final operas between 1933 and the end of the war.¹ Prolificacy, however, was not without its price. These works were in one way or another overshadowed and stigmatized by the composer’s relationship with the Third Reich. That Strauss engaged with the regime in official capacities is a fact that continues to pose questions without offering any definitive answers about either the composer’s own political views or the potential ideological dimensions of his art. With critical distance and the availability of fresh archival material, however, more nuanced understandings of these matters have begun to take root. Scholarship concerned with this period of the composer’s life is extraordinarily wide-ranging in scope and perspective, and continues to develop as such.

A particularly absorbing case is that of Strauss’s one-act opera *Friedenstag* (*Day of Peace*), a work that continues to receive staunch criticism regarding its overt militaristic content and compositional merits.² With its tale of suicidal heroism set at the end of the Thirty Years’ War, the opera would appear to be an ostensibly clichéd allegory tainted by the circumstances of its premiere in Munich on the eve of World War II. Despite being conceived by the Jewish writer Stefan Zweig, the work has been frequently pilloried as the first opera to be “born out of the

¹ *Arabella* in 1933, *Die schweigsame Frau* in 1935, *Friedenstag* and *Daphne* in 1938, *Die Liebe der Danae* in 1944 at a private performance, and *Capriccio* in 1942, Strauss’s last public premiere.

² Though the definite article “der” appears before *Friedenstag* in certain letters, Strauss wrote the title out as *Friedenstag* on the opening page of the autograph full score, reproduced in facsimile in the Richard Strauss Edition volume, and it appeared as such on the program for the Munich premiere. See Richard Strauss, *Friedenstag*, libretto by Joseph Gregor, *Richard Strauss Edition: Sämtliche Bühnenwerke*, vol. 15 (Vienna: Verlag Dr. Richard Strauss, 1999), vii.

spirit of National Socialism.”³ In this regard, the scholarship of Gerhard Splitt has been particularly critical of both Strauss and the opera in light of the composer’s collusion with the government between 1933 and 1935.⁴ *Friedenstag* does not lack defenders, however, who read its drama and music via lenses of pacifism and resistance to Nazi ideology. The work of Pamela Potter,⁵ Carl Dahlhaus⁶ and Kenneth Birkin⁷ in the 1980s falls into this vein. More recently, Michael P. Steinberg⁸ and Bryan Gilliam⁹ have substantially broadened our understanding of the opera within wider artistic and political contexts. It is the aim of this study to further such work in reappraising the composer’s musico-political legacy, and to counter more perfunctory artistic appraisals of the opera, such as those of Charles Osborne: “To write an opera on the subject of the preferability of peace to war is platitudinous: to write so dramatically unconvincing a work almost undermines the worthiness of the undertaking.”¹⁰ Osborne’s remarks, I will show, suffer from a superficial engagement with a work that is far from platitudinous.

³ Alan Jefferson, *The Life of Richard Strauss* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 206. Aside from a general attribution to Reich ideologues, Jefferson provides no direct source for this oft-repeated and infamous quote.

⁴ See Gerhard Splitt, “Oper als Politikum: *Friedenstag* (1938) von Richard Strauss,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 55, no. 3 (1998): 220-51, and for a larger discussion of Strauss and the Third Reich, see Gerhard Splitt, *Richard Strauss 1933-1935: Ästhetik und Musikpolitik zu Beginn der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus Verlagsgesellschaft, 1987). Splitt’s scholarship itself is not without controversy.

⁵ See Pamela M. Potter, “Strauss’s *Friedenstag*: A Pacifist Attempt at Political Resistance,” *The Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 408-24, and Pamela M. Potter, “Strauss and the National Socialists: The Debate and Its Relevance,” in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 93-114.

⁶ See Carl Dahlhaus, “Eine Ästhetik des Widerstands? *Friedenstag* von Richard Strauss,” *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* 28 (1986): 18-22.

⁷ See Kenneth Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne: An Interpretive Study of the Literary and Dramatic Sources of Two Operas by Richard Strauss*. New York: Garland, 1989). Birkin’s valuable edition of the correspondence of Stefan Zweig and Joseph Gregor has made available documents hitherto unavailable outside of the Vienna Philharmonic Archive.

⁸ See Michael P. Steinberg, “Richard Strauss and the Question,” in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 164-92 and Michael P. Steinberg, “The Politics and Aesthetics of Operatic Modernism,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no. 4 (Spring 2006): 629-48.

⁹ See Bryan Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner’s Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 238-71.

¹⁰ Charles Osborne, *The Complete Opera of Richard Strauss* (North Pomfret, VT: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1988), 200.

What is to be made of the dynamic between such disparate perspectives? *Friedenstag* remains, to a certain extent, opaque. Strauss faced many challenges throughout its genesis and he was notably reserved in discussing its meaning.¹¹ One explanation may lie in an aphorism drawn from the opera itself: “Nur wer sich demütigt gewinnt den Sieg!”—“Only he who humbles himself wins the victory.” This maxim fittingly reflects both the pressures on Strauss during this period and his navigation of the political environment. That Strauss engaged with the Reich does not mean the opera itself is, or ever was, purely reflective of National Socialist ideology. Neither can it be considered an outright “work of peace,” to borrow a phrase associated with Strauss’s tone poem *Ein Heldenleben*. I will make the case that the political dimensions of the work elude such exclusive readings due to the frequently palpable spirit of burlesque in the score. It should be noted here, as will be elaborated later, that I mean burlesque in the sense of deliberate and distinct acts of irony, not raucous sexuality. Like his literary contemporary Thomas Mann, Strauss was an ironist without peer in the musical world, and his mockery often revealed an ambiguous critical edge. An important figure in the landscape of musical modernism, Strauss’s eclectic and erudite compositional style continues to taunt listeners. Only with mindful tongue-in-cheek could the composer quote his own compositions as “works of peace,” or later answer an accusation of operatic kitsch with the retort, “where does the kitsch end and the opera begin?”¹²

Friedenstag is a work whose meaning turns on ambiguity. Examining instances of burlesque opens the work up to a variety of fresh and fascinating interpretations, given the extraordinary political context surrounding its composition. This investigation first explores the

¹¹ Outside of correspondence, no substantial commentary about the opera survives in the composer’s own writings.

¹² “...wo hört der Kitsch auf und wo beginnt die Oper?” Strauss to Stefan Zweig, October 10, 1934, in Willi Schuh, ed., *Richard Strauss–Stefan Zweig: Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt am Main: Atlantis, 1957), hereafter referenced as *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, with sender to recipient information, date and page numbers. This and other translations by the author, unless otherwise noted.

troubled genesis of the libretto and score between the years 1934 and 1936, before delving into the opera's dramaturgical structure. My analysis highlights salient instances in which Strauss integrated burlesque elements into the score, and devotes special attention to the opera's final sequence. This thesis concludes with a consideration of the opera's early staging history and reception. Throughout, I make the case that the political dimensions of *Friedenstag* elude strict labels such as "Nazi" and "pacifist" because of the opera's malleable burlesque elements, which are still relevant today and illuminate our understanding of Strauss and his art.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BIRTH OF AN OPERA

New Collaborations

With the death of Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1929, Strauss lost a trusted librettist and his closest artistic collaborator. Left with the unpolished libretto of *Arabella*, the composer faced uncertain artistic horizons in the artistically decentralized years of the ailing and fragile Weimar government. His tone poems and early operas indeed held sway in concert halls and opera houses across the world but his contemporary work faced critical disparagement. The last completed operatic collaboration before Hofmannsthal's passing, *Die ägyptische Helena* (The Egyptian Helen), failed to achieve the success the creators intended. Moreover, Strauss's advocacy for the increase of royalties on "serious music" (ernste Musik) and copyright extension went unheeded.¹ Dauntless, the composer persevered. He resumed work on *Arabella*, and prompted by Clemens Krauss, he began to prepare a new performing version of Mozart's *Idomeneo*. All the while, Strauss sounded out new librettists from across Germany, but without much promise of success.

In 1931, matters brightened considerably. Strauss's artistic horizons gleamed as a new collaborator emerged in the form of the respected Austrian poet and author Stefan Zweig. This partnership would, however, only produce one completed opera, *Die schweigsame Frau* (*The Silent Woman*), based on Ben Jonson's Jacobean comedy *Epicæne, or The silent woman*. To their mutual chagrin, the Nazi party's ascension to power in 1933 and Strauss's leadership of the regime's *Reichsmusikkammer* (RMK, or Reich Chamber of Music) soon rendered the Jewish Zweig *persona non grata* in Germany.² In order to understand the complicated political context

¹ Bryan Gilliam, "Friede im Innern": Strauss's Public and Private Worlds in the Mid 1930s," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 572, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2004.57.3.565>.

² William Mann, "Richard Strauss's *Friedenstag*," *The Musical Times* 112, no. 1539 (May 1971): 438, accessed December 13, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/955947>.

of *Friedenstag*, originally intended to have been the second collaboration with Zweig, further consideration must be given to this critical moment of Strauss's career since it had an undeniable impact on the final shape of the opera.

Many of the facts concerning Strauss's collaboration with the Reich initially appear compromising, but scrutiny invites an understanding that avoids a singular and unbending interpretation. One of many cultural celebrities who publically engaged with the regime, Strauss possessed an eminence that ensured he would remain one of the most recognizable. Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, aimed to draw the chief living exponents of Germanic culture into the various branches of his new *Reichskulterkammer* (RKK, or Reich Chamber of Culture).³ Proximity and association with such luminaries would provide the new Reich with credibility and prestige.⁴ Strauss's presentational value alone was considerable. To this end, Goebbels offered the composer the presidency of the RMK in November 1933, contrary to his later profession that the government forced it upon him.⁵ In what must be regarded as an act of blind and blithe ambition, Strauss accepted the post, no doubt perceiving that the position promised fulfillment for his aesthetic goals, as well as broader benefits. He envisioned having the opportunity to achieve his coveted royalty and copyright reforms, and possibly the chance to reverse recent injunctions against Jewish musicians and atonal music, decisions he believed were to the detriment of German culture.⁶ Updating Zweig about progress on *Die schweigsame Frau*, Strauss elucidated: "I believe I am not permitted to

³ Apart from the RMK, other divisions supervised fine arts, cinema and literature.

⁴ Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 219-20.

⁵ There is speculation that the negotiations were already underway in July 1933.

⁶ Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19. The pretext of "cultural good" is also not without trouble, since before and after his appointment Strauss associated his name to denunciations of German cultural fixtures Thomas Mann and Paul Hindemith, though these endorsements have themselves drawn scrutiny for their authenticity or perceived malicious intent.

refuse since much good can truly be achieved with the good will of the new German government to promote music and theatre, and in fact, I too have already been able to bring about many a prosperous feat and prevent many a misfortune.”⁷

Despite his enthusiasm for the larger concerns of policy and a willingness to publicly appear as a mouthpiece for the RMK, Strauss’s association with the regime was far from congenial. His myopic approach to his position, his reluctance to actively participate in Berlin politics, the anti-Straussian machinations of Goebbels’s rival Alfred Rosenberg plus his persistent collaboration with Zweig drew massive disapproval from the Reich.⁸ With his usual *savoir-faire*, Strauss resisted castigation, and ever fearless of reprisal, he continued to push Zweig for a follow-up subject to *Die schweigsame Frau*.⁹

The Path to *Friedenstag*

In February 1933, the partners corresponded over a number of potential topics for their next opera, including *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*—a striking (if not sardonic) choice given that Hitler had just taken power as *Reichskanzler* in late January.¹⁰ Strauss replied with several suggestions of his own, including an adaptation of Bibiena’s comedy *La Calandria*. This idea was inspired

⁷ “Ich glaube mich aber demselben nicht versagen zu dürfen, weil bei dem guten Willen der neuen deutschen Regierung, die Musik und Theater zu fördern, wirklich viel Gutes gewirkt werden kann, und ich auch tatsächlich schon manches Ersprößliche bewirken und manches Unglück verhüten konnte.” Strauss to Zweig, January 21, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 54.

⁸ David B. Dennis, *Inhumanities: Nazi Interpretations of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 386. Rosenberg openly accused Strauss of having a “Jewish component in his blood” based on his partnership with Zweig.

⁹ It is worth comparing Strauss’s case with that of the RMK’s Vice President, the cantankerous conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler. Furtwängler attracted a similar amount of censure from the regime, but he benefitted from a level of personal patrimony from Hitler that Strauss could never hope to possess. Furtwängler’s open resistance to the Reich and the severe public admonishments he suffered likewise contrasts the more private and more invasive threats Strauss withstood. Like Strauss, Furtwängler remained in Germany until the final stages of World War II, though perhaps because of his flagrantly abrasive personality, his choice to remain was lauded rather than criticized.

¹⁰ Zweig to Strauss, February 23, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 46. Zweig identified the subject as a “German folk opera *par excellence*” (eine deutsche Volksoper *par excellence* [*sic*]). The *Pied Piper* was not taken up, perhaps because of the fairy-tale connotations that would have skewed it towards the tone and style of Strauss’s earlier opera *Feuersnot*.

by an entry in *Weltgeschichte des Theaters* by contemporary theatre historian Joseph Gregor, providentially the man whom Zweig would soon propose as a substitute librettist for *Friedenstag*.¹¹ Zweig balked at *Calandria*, stating that “the Renaissance as décor is hackneyed.”¹² Nevertheless, scenarios based around medieval or Renaissance subjects continued to be exchanged.¹³ Amidst their letters, Zweig stressed to Strauss, “...I also think that, especially at present, something is expected from you that is, in some form, linked to what is German.”¹⁴ Strauss evidently took to such prompting, proposing an idea for one-act opera based on the life of Holy Roman Emperor Henry III that would conclude with the Peace of Constance in 1043—a historical event with the potential for contemporary resonance.¹⁵ It is also noteworthy that at the same time, Strauss began revising the libretto and score of *Guntram*, his first opera and his only other major dramatic work dealing with a quest for peace. This may account for his interest in the theme of reconciliation in the Henry III scenario, a theme that ultimately came to the fore with *Friedenstag*.¹⁶

¹¹ Apart from *Friedenstag*, Gregor would go on to write the libretti for *Daphne* and *Die Liebe der Danae*, as well as contributions to *Capriccio* that were mostly discarded. As director of the Theatre Collection at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Gregor’s output mostly comprised scholastic work on theatrical history. Before his introduction to Strauss, he was in fact already a published poet, novelist and playwright, primarily as an adaptor of Baroque dramas in this last respect. Gregor and Zweig became acquaintances in Vienna in the 1920s.

¹² “die Renaissance als Decor abgeleiert ist...” Zweig to Strauss, ca. January 31, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 58.

¹³ Working from Calderón’s play *La hija del aire*, Zweig (and later Gregor) attempted to bring to fruition an opera based on the figure of Semiramis, a character Strauss had discussed as a libretto subject as early as 1906 with Hofmannsthal.

¹⁴ “...auch glaube ich, daß man gerade jetzt von Ihnen etwas erwartet, was dem Deutschen in irgend einer Form verbunden ist.” Zweig to Strauss, ca. January 31, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 58.

¹⁵ Strauss to Zweig, February 2, 1934, *Ibid.*, 59. Strauss actually conflated numerous medieval events and personalities in his choice. As Birkin notes, Henry III was not a participant in the Peace of Constance, which actually took place in 1183. He had however, convened the Synod of Sutri in 1043 to install the new pope Clement III in an attempt to create more ideological and religious hegemony in the Holy Roman Empire. The actual Peace of Constance resulted in the freedom of northern Lombardy from the might of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, one of the most powerful figures from German history appropriated by National Socialist ideology. His name was applied to the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1941 after Hitler had first signed a non-aggression pact with Stalin in 1939 to prevent the dreaded “war on two fronts.” See Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 97.

¹⁶ A detailed discussion of dramaturgical concurrences between the two operas will be presented in the next chapter.

While these notions of reconciliation and unification appealed to Zweig, the writer was now acutely aware that any further association with Strauss would be dangerous in the current political climate. Despite his attempts to gallantly withdraw, Strauss demurred at the alternative collaborators the writer continually put forward. Despite the declining and polarizing political situation, the pair arranged to meet at the 1934 Salzburg Festival to discuss their nascent topics. Strauss was scheduled to conduct *Fidelio* at Salzburg after finishing his summer engagement at the Bayreuth Festival, and an Austrian rendezvous was ideal for Zweig, who now feared setting foot on German soil.¹⁷

The meeting almost did not take place. Travel between Germany and Austria was now taxed, and matters were further exacerbated by the assassination of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss on July 25 in an abortive coup—an event that caused Zweig considerable distress.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Strauss had his own difficulties. As a “German” artist and *Reichsmusikkammer-Präsident*, Strauss was discouraged from appearing at the Salzburg Festival, an “Austrian” event, even though he was one of the Festival’s original founders.¹⁹ To boot, Bruno Walter and Arturo Toscanini, both incompatible with the Reich, were also appearing at the Festival.²⁰ Such censure on his personal artistic activities surely made Strauss more

¹⁷ Zweig had rapturously praised Strauss’s performance of the opera at the 1932 Festival. See Zweig to Strauss, August 26, 1932, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 22 and 165n32. The mention of *Fidelio* here is noteworthy given the opera’s later linkage with *Friedenstag*.

¹⁸ The 1934 Festival opening was delayed one day due to fallout from the assassination. (<http://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/history/1934>). Following the death of President Paul von Hindenburg on August 2, Hitler was finally invested as *Führer und Reichskanzler* of Germany.

¹⁹ Strauss had received permission to attend the festival the previous summer, and the 1934 Salzburg *Spielplan* included performances of *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Elektra* and *Die ägyptische Helena* to commemorate the composer’s seventieth birthday. See Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 239. Salzburg was also stigmatized as the primary continental competitor of the Bayreuth Festival where Strauss conducted during the summers of 1933 and 1934. See Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 176.

²⁰ These two conductors are also players in the *causes célèbres* cited in arguments for Strauss’s collaboration with the Nazi Party. In 1933, Strauss (in Berlin on business for *Arabella*) substituted for Walter at a Berlin Philharmonic concert after the latter had been threatened with violence. Strauss took the rostrum at the Bayreuth Festival that same year after Toscanini made good on his threats to cancel his engagement owing to fascist

receptive to libretto topics with anti-Fascist strains. Still, his growing resistance to Nazi domination was not as explicitly pacifist as Zweig's. After some hassle, Strauss was finally granted permission to travel, and the two collaborators finally met in Salzburg on August 17. As their subsequent correspondence shows, ideas for the Emperor Henry "one-act play" were discussed at length.²¹

Zweig pondered the subject further in the days following their meeting. Though the historical focus shifted considerably in the process, Strauss's germinal idea of a peace agreement remained the core.²² In a letter on August 21, Zweig set down his outline for a new scenario set during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648): "In it, I would like to combine three elements: the tragic, the heroic and the humane, all these culminating in a hymn to the reconciliation of nations, to the grace of creative edification, only I would like to completely omit emperors and kings from the work and place it in anonymity."²³ The subject's abstract treatment was of crucial importance for Zweig. In an earlier letter to Strauss during work on *Die schweigsame Frau*, Zweig expounded (not without irony, in retrospect) that "the politics pass, the art survives and for that, one should work towards that which is perpetual and leave the propagandistic to those who already find in it prostration and happiness."²⁴

endorsement of the Festival's enterprise. See Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 220-23, and Spotts, *Bayreuth*, 169-71.

²¹ Franz Trenner, *Richard Strauss: Chronik zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Florian Trenner (Vienna: Verlag Dr. Richard Strauss, 2003), 552.

²² Birkin points out Joseph Gregor's observation that had it retained a medieval setting, the scenario would have immediately summoned unwelcome Wagnerian connotations. Strauss had effectively abandoned such settings and their associations after *Guntram* and *Feuersnot*. Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 101.

²³ "Ich möchte drei Elemente darin zusammenfassen: das Tragische, das Heroische und das Humane, ausklingend in jenen Hymnus an die Versöhnung der Völker, an die Gnade des schaffenden Aufbaus: nur möchte ich Kaiser, Könige, ganz aus dem Spiel lassen und es ins Anonyme stellen." Zweig to Strauss, August 21, 1934, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 74.

²⁴ "Es beglückt mich sehr, daß Sie so gut in der Arbeit sind, die Politik vergeht, die Kunst besteht und darum soll man auf das Dauernde hinwirken und das Agitatorische jenen überlassen, die darin schon Erschöpfung und Beglückung finden." Zweig to Strauss, April 13, 1933, *Ibid.*, 50.

Zweig set his scenario on October 24, 1648, the day the Peace of Westphalia (the *Westfälischer Friede*) was jointly declared at Münster and Osnabrück to end the Thirty Years' War. The action of the sketch focused on an uncompromising Kommandant²⁵ and his soldiers who defend a German citadel in an unnamed city (inferred to be in a southern German principality) undergoing siege by Swedish forces from the North.²⁶

The Commandant has sworn not to let the fortress surrender to the enemy as long as he is alive. The besieging commander has sworn to grant no pardon. Horrible misery reigns in the city below the citadel. The Bürgermeister beseeches the Kommandant to surrender the fortress. The citizens break in, the most distinctive voices each typifying distress, fear and hunger (individual voices, entwined, mass scenes). The Kommandant does not yield. He has the citizens, who curse him, forcibly ejected. Alone with his officers and soldiers, he announces that he can no longer defend the fortress. Yet he will not surrender it, but rather blow it up. He leaves it up to them to go down to the city and negotiate with the enemy for pardon, but he will not. Now individual scenes (terse, but each very accentuated). Some go, some stay (each according to the characters).

Those who remain: heroic tragic atmosphere.

Religious scene. The Wife of the Commandant appears. He orders her to go without telling her what he intends. She guesses his plan. Intense scene. She seeks not to deter him since she knows his oath. Yet she does not go. She stays with him—this as a lyrical element—in order to die with him.

Preparations for the blowing up of the fortress. Last farewells. All embrace each other. The fuse is readied. It is lit. Complete stillness.

Then—a cannon shot. All jump up. The Commandant anticipates an attack. The fuse is extinguished. They happily prefer to die in open battle. But no second cannon shot. All wait. Bewilderment. Apprehension.

Moment of new intense suspense.

Then distantly, from a neighboring village, a bell (very distant) in the stillness. Then from another, a second. Then (still distantly) a third. A blast on a trumpet. Someone spots a peace envoy, carrying a white flag. Then more and more bells. Then suddenly a cry from below: peace. Peace has been concluded. The bells roar more and more and join with the jubilation of the (invisible) people.

The peace envoy appears. Peace has been concluded at Osnabrück.²⁷ The enemy commander asks for permission to greet the Kommandant. A scene of awakening. Again and again the bells, which suffuse the entire scene like an organ.

²⁵ The German spellings of character names are used throughout this thesis.

²⁶ The translation attempts to preserve the raw tone of the sketch. Zweig's own idiosyncratic spellings of character names have also been retained throughout.

²⁷ Münster in the final libretto.

The enemy commander appears. The two stare at each other severely. They have both sworn to destroy each other. Gradual détente. They step closer. They join hands. They embrace each other.

The people surge in. They cheer the commanders. The Kommandant gives an address: now everyone must go to work. Reconstruction and reconciliation. All for all. Individual responses in approval. One rank after the other takes up the sentiment. And out of all of this, a great chorus is built up by degrees, in which all tasks and achievements of the peace of nations are celebrated in the spirit of each rank, and which propels itself to a powerful development in the finale: a hymn to fellowship.²⁸

With few exceptions, this outline of the opera remained constant through to the final score.²⁹

Sources of Inspiration

The oft-cited dual inspirations for the opera are the 1625 drama *El sitio de Breda* (*The Siege of Breda*) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Diego Velázquez's painting *La rendición de Breda* (*The Surrender of Breda*, 1634-35, see fig. 1.1), now housed in the Museo del Prado in Madrid.³⁰

While it is difficult to determine Strauss or Zweig's acquaintance with these two specific works before their partnership, it is significant that both the play and the painting are discussed (the latter reproduced) in Gregor's *Weltgeschichte des Theaters*, a text the Strauss and Zweig cited frequently in their correspondence.³¹ The play and subsequent painting were both inspired by an actual historical occurrence during the Thirty Years' War:

Ambrosio Spínola, the Genoese general in charge of Spanish troops in Flanders receives the keys to the city of Breda from the Dutch governor, Justin of Nassau, ending a long siege. This occurred on 5 June 1625. At the time, it was considered a key moment in the long war waged by the Spanish to prevent Dutch independence.

The work has a clear propagandistic bent, emphasizing the clemency of the Spanish monarchy. Unlike other paintings of contemporary history, the

²⁸ The German text is reproduced in the appendix. Zweig to Strauss, August 21, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 74-6.

²⁹ Zweig's distinctions of nationality would be further abstracted in subsequent stages of the opera's development. The implications of overt and latent national identities in the dramaturgy of the opera will be discussed in Chapter Two.

³⁰ The painting is also known under the name *Las lanzas* (The Lances).

³¹ In his *Weltgeschichte*, Gregor ascribes the title of the painting to the play. See Joseph Gregor, *Weltgeschichte des Theaters* (Zürich: Phaidon, 1933), 349.

present one takes no joy in victory, and the only evidence of the battle is the smoking background. Velázquez focuses our attention of the foreground, where preparations are being made not only to end the war, but also to initiate the peace that follows.³²



Figure 1.1. *La rendición de Breda, o Las lanzas*. Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, 1634-35. Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, accessed February 2, 2015, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/online-gallery/zoom/1/obra/the-surrender-of-breda-or-the-lances/oimg/0/>.

The painting's preoccupation with conciliation and clemency echoed Calderón's dramatic treatment of the event, and appealed to Zweig and Strauss's dramatic leanings. The correlation between the Justin–Spínola parlay and the opera's final confrontation scene between the Kommandant and the Holsteiner (the enemy commander) cannot be denied, though Zweig's choice of date gives his scenario an added significance. By casting it as the final episode (if not an epilogue) of the war and not an intermediary step, Zweig was able to capitalize on the literal

³² Museo del Prado, description of *La rendición de Breda*, Museum Gallery Database, accessed February 2, 2015, https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/online-gallery/obra/the-surrender-of-breda-or-the-lances/?no_cache=1.

victory of armistice over war. The device of the Westphalian settlement made peace a *fait accompli* in *Friedenstag*, freeing the characters from any delineation of vanquisher and vanquished. Interestingly enough, Velázquez depicts Spínola in black armor, perhaps not coincidentally the same attire described for the Kommandant in the final libretto, though a direct dramaturgical correlation between the two figures is troublesome.

Strauss also had experience with dramatic and musical depictions of peace parlays early in his career. As Kapellmeister to the Grand Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, he provided music for four presentations in a series of eight historical *tableaux vivants* (*Lebende Bilder*, or “living pictures”) commissioned for the golden anniversary of the ducal marriage in 1892.³³ Strauss’s “Encounter and Compact of Peace between Prince Maurice of Orange and the Marquis Spínola,” was fourth in the series, based on an engraving by Charles Rochussen and accompanied by an introductory text by Hermann Oelschläger.³⁴ The event depicted in this “Compact of Peace” was the Twelve Years’ Truce in 1609, an important armistice signed between Habsburg Spain and the Dutch Republic during the Eighty Years’ War, the larger conflict bookending the Thirty Years’ War.³⁵ The heritage of the Grand Duchess Sophie occasioned this choice of content. As a member of the House of Orange-Nassau, she was thus related to both Prince Maurice and Justin of Nassau, the surrendering commander at Breda.

While there is little ostensible musical connection between these short pieces and *Friedenstag*, it

³³ Other contributing composers included Hans von Bronsart and Eduard Lassen. See Walter Werbeck, foreword to *Suiten und Stücke aus Bühnenwerken I, Richard Strauss Edition: Orchesterwerke*, vol. 25 (Vienna: Verlag Dr. Richard Strauss, 1999), xii. Strauss’s movements were later catalogued under the title *Musik zu „Lebende Bilder,”* TrV 167. Strauss was also hard at work on the music for Act Two of *Guntram* at this time.

³⁴ *Ibid.* The solemn E-flat major music for the “Compact of Peace” was later transmuted into the *Militärischer Festmarsch (Königsmarsch)* TrV 217. Strauss’s music for the sixth tableau depicting the first Battle of Lützen, incorporated musical idioms from the respective combative countries. This music would be recycled into martial compositions for the Kaiser before ultimately becoming the music accompanying the battle sequences interpolated into the 1925 silent film version of *Der Rosenkavalier*.

³⁵ Del Mar inadvertently conflates the Breda and Antwerp events in his biography of the composer. See Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works*, 3 vols. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 2:266-67 and 3:54.

is important to note Strauss's familiarity with historicist set pieces, specifically scenes of reconciliation, and their potential for musical and dramatic presentation. Given its associations with the Velázquez painting, Calderón's play and its specific, historicist focus (it is easily the most historically-oriented opera Strauss ever composed), *Friedenstag* emulates certain elements of the *tableau vivant*—a possible rationale for its rather static dramaturgy.

Significance and Meaning

To an avowed pacifist such as Zweig, the Thirty Years' War offered an auspicious setting that harmonized with the ravages and aftermath of World War I.³⁶ The fractured political and religious alliances that sparked the seventeenth-century conflict mirrored the convoluted international allegiances that triggered the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. The Thirty Years' War endured as one of the most devastating conflicts on German soil, with entire regions violently decimated by famine, plague and pillaging. The correlations with Germany in 1918—massive privation, the Spanish influenza epidemic, and economic ruin—brought the distant past into sharp relevancy with the plight of the interwar period.³⁷ That Zweig also proposed Robert Faesi's "dramatic festive play" *Opferspiel* to Strauss, which dramatized the siege of Calais and the famous episode of the six burghers who offered themselves up to save the city, showed his commitment to subjects with pacifist strains.³⁸

³⁶ For a detailed investigation of other operas from the National Socialist period that deal with the Thirty Years' War and their reception, see Mathias Lehmann, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg im Musiktheater während der NS-Zeit* (Hamburg: Bockel Verlag, 2004).

³⁷ It is worth noting that the exiled Bertolt Brecht would soon make the Thirty Years' War the setting for his saturnine opus *Mother Courage and Her Children* (*Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*).

³⁸ Zweig erroneously described seven burghers instead of six. Strauss rejected Faesi's piece outright: "When it is reduced to its essentials, the action that remains will not satisfactorily interest the composer and the public – the best in it – purely literary – would surely have to be deleted!" (Wenn er auf dessen Maß reduziert wird, bleibt eine Handlung, die den Musiker und das Publikum nicht genügend interessieren wird – das Beste darin – rein literarisch – müßte doch gestrichen werden!) Strauss to Zweig, September 21, 1934, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 82.

Like the case of the Great War, the legacy of the Thirty Years' War was appropriated by various political factions for various political ends, a point that further highlights *Friedenstag's* interpretive potentials. Since the Peace of Westphalia prompted an increase in socio-political consolidation amongst the Germanic states, the Thirty Years' War gained a foothold in German intellectual thought during the nineteenth century by underpinning a call for national unity. Writing in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, Friedrich Schiller conceived the conflict as a struggle for German liberty. Schiller himself dramatized the war in his *Wallenstein* triptych, famously depicting the conflict on an epic scale through the tragic figure of general Albrecht von Wallenstein. Schiller's treatment stressed nationalist concerns endemic to his own time over the religious alliances that characterized the actual war.³⁹ While Zweig and Strauss were doubtlessly familiar with Schiller's plays (a bevy of revivals were produced prior to the outbreak of war in 1914), their approach posited no great general or hero at the core.⁴⁰ Instead, a relatively minor garrison commander—stripped of any recognizable significance and lacking in martial virility—is the key figure. This choice obviously reflects Zweig's desire for anonymity and abstraction, but it also mirrors Strauss's quip to Zweig in a letter from May 1935 about his taste in protagonists: "Prince or rascal, just no prigs or martyrs!"⁴¹

Under the Third Reich, the Thirty Years' War acquired a positive aura in German cultural history, which may have accounted for the regime's overt lack of ideological resistance to

³⁹ Kevin Cramer, *The Thirty Years' War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 108-9.

⁴⁰ Strauss however, discerned a dramaturgically incongruous Schillerian tint in the syntax of Gregor's early libretto drafts and directed him towards more natural modes of speech. See Roland Tenschert, ed., *Richard Strauss und Joseph Gregor: Briefwechsel, 1935-1949* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1955), hereafter *Strauss-Gregor: Briefwechsel*, with sender to recipient information, date and page numbers. Strauss to Gregor, October 6, 1935, *Strauss-Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 33-34.

⁴¹ "Prinz oder Spitzbub, nur keine Tugendbolte und Märtyrer!" Strauss to Zweig, May 5, 1935, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 129. The opera's treatment of the supporting soldier characters however, mirrors Schiller's portrayal of the lower ranks in *Wallensteins Lager*, the first installment in the trilogy.

Friedenstag. As with the nineteenth century, the conflict was subsumed within the needs of the political present. Hitler perverted Schiller's stance in *Mein Kampf* by comparing the Peace of Westphalia to Germany's humiliating treatment through another famous armistice, the Treaty of Versailles.⁴² Propaganda seized on the rhetorical potential of the extreme number of casualties in the Thirty Years' War, productively relying on its inherent sacrificial imagery. While the actual overall number of fatalities is now estimated to have been below ten million, Hitler's swollen oratory continually enforced the heroic sacrifice of the "fifteen million dead."⁴³ Furthermore, in Hitler's view, German biological supremacy evinced itself by the recovery of the population.

Strangest of all in Reich propaganda was the extent to which the northern countries, aggressors against the Holy Roman Empire during the Thirty Years' War, were to be integrated into the collective reality of a greater German community, or the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As late as 1937, Wilhelm Frick, Reich Minister of the Interior, announced plans to consecrate a new statue to the Swedish Lutheran warrior-king Gustavus Adolphus, whose strivings for the "Nordic-German race" were such that Hitler was to be regarded as his ideological descendent and heir.⁴⁴ Such a stance supports an interpretation of the finale of *Friedenstag* whereby Swedes and Germans (i.e., the Holsteiner and the Kommandant) were natural brethren thrown into a useless struggle. Since the opera had lain finished for almost a year before Frick's announcement, the libretto could hardly be seen to have been making a statement in sympathy with such notions.

Resignations and Redirections

While Strauss and Zweig continued to develop their new project, negotiations for the 1935 premiere of *Die schweigsame Frau* continually hit ideological and bureaucratic barriers. The

⁴² Cramer, *The Thirty Years' War*, 228.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 228-29. Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden was a major figure in the Thirty Years' War, dying heroically at the Battle of Lützen in 1632.

libretto had to pass the scrutiny of every level of party hierarchy. Hitler himself, with the greatest reluctance, provided the final authorization of Zweig's text.⁴⁵ Zweig, now living in a permanent state of self-imposed exile in England, resolved that his collaboration with Strauss should definitely be given up. The writer now relentlessly proposed that Joseph Gregor officially take over his role in future projects. Cowed, Strauss grudgingly accepted Gregor after meeting with Zweig in Bregenz on June 2, 1935. Nevertheless, the composer stipulated that Zweig remain involved in a remote capacity since Gregor's theatrical chops did not meet his standards.⁴⁶ With Zweig's encouragement, the over-eager Gregor enthusiastically submitted an elaborate sketch based on the legendary queen Semiramis (a familiar lure for the composer) but his gallant attempts left Strauss heinously dismissive. He bemoaned to Zweig: "Of course you have read Gregor's fetus by now. I believe criticism is superfluous. A philologist's childish fairytale!"⁴⁷

After the excessive difficulties surrounding the premiere of *Die schweigsame Frau*, Strauss wanted to start work on the Thirty Years' War libretto in earnest. Zweig had revived his interest in the subject during their Bregenz rendezvous on June 2.⁴⁸ Just a few weeks later, however, Strauss's career underwent a serious derailment when the Dresden branch of the Gestapo intercepted one of his more inflammatory letters to Zweig. Amounting to an open confession of their collaboration and full of blatant derisions of his RMK post, it was damning in the extreme. After a calculated delay, Martin Mutschmann, the Gauleiter of Saxony, sent a

⁴⁵ It is fascinating that the regime took no umbrage to *Die schweigsame Frau*'s ignominious treatment of Sir Morosus, a decorated naval hero. With its London setting, such elements may have been interpreted as jabs at English sensibilities and the country's famed naval supremacy.

⁴⁶ Rudolf Hartmann, director of the premieres of *Friedenstag*, *Die Liebe der Danae* and *Capriccio* echoed this sentiment in his history of Strauss opera stagings: "I gained the impression that Gregor's imagination, so far as the stage was concerned, was not particularly well developed." Rudolf Hartmann, *Richard Strauss: The Staging of His Operas and Ballets*, trans. Graham Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 216.

⁴⁷ "Sie haben inzwischen ja den Gregorschen Fötus gelesen. Ich glaube, Kritik erübrigt sich. Kindliches Philologenmärchen!" Strauss to Zweig, May 17, 1935, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 130. Zweig then attempted to direct the pair towards the plays of Heinrich von Kleist as fodder, but Strauss resisted.

⁴⁸ At this time, *Friedenstag* carried the title *1648* in correspondence.

photocopy of the seditious epistle to Hitler on July 1.⁴⁹ The time and excuse to oust Strauss had come.

On July 6, Goebbels, through intermediary Walter von Keudell, demanded Strauss's resignation from the RMK on the (feigned) grounds of ill-health. Incredulous at the extent of Nazi intelligence, Strauss put up a valiant excuse but quickly complied.⁵⁰ Anticipating further reprisals, Strauss sent repentant letters to both Goebbels and Hitler but received no answer. Thus began an uneasy accord between Strauss and the Reich, tempered mostly by his friendship with Hitler's jurist Hans Frank. Strauss was never officially ostracized, and with the exception of *Die schweigsame Frau*, his works suffered no interdiction like those of other composers. Indeed, at least publicly, he remained amicable with the regime, if only for the sake of protecting his Jewish daughter-in-law and his grandsons after the Nuremberg Laws were officially enacted in September 1935.⁵¹ Artistically, he was left in an invidious position with no options but Gregor as an acceptable collaborator. Thankfully, with his base in Vienna, Gregor (and indirectly Strauss) could still correspond with Zweig without fear of government interference.

Meanwhile, Zweig was busily preparing Gregor for his first in-person meeting with the composer. He sent Gregor a more elaborate sketch of *Friedenstag* on July 3, replete with stretches of dialogue. At the end of this treatment, Zweig outlined the three crucial musical moments as he saw them:

The vehement, desperate opening chorus. The uproar of the people.
The heroic love scene between man and wife.

⁴⁹ For a copy of Mutschmann's cover letter and Strauss's private memorandum chronicling these events, see *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 169-74.

⁵⁰ Strauss was in Berchtesgaden at the time preparing to meet with Gregor for his first meeting with Gregor. Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 562.

⁵¹ Bryan Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 150. Perhaps the first real indication Strauss had of the more reprehensible side of the regime, the Nuremberg Race Laws made the marriage between Strauss's son Franz and Alice von Grab illegal and demoted his grandsons Richard and Christian to the status of "half-breeds."

The tense scenes of final preparations and of farewell. The atmosphere of death. Then the rhythmically illustrative scene of defense preparations, the tense scene of waiting and the symphony of bells.⁵²

This list no doubt served to impart to Gregor the salient dramatic moments as well as guide him to those that would also provoke Strauss's musical imagination. Gregor finally met Strauss at Berchtesgaden on July 7, the latter still reeling from his dressing down by Nazi officials the day before. They discussed a number of potential subjects at the meeting, including the outlines for what would become the three completed Strauss–Gregor operas, along with the rudiments of *Capriccio* in the guise of Casti's *Prima la musica e poi le parole*. After the meeting, Gregor confirmed his dubious strengths as a dramatist by sending the composer several disappointing sketches. Strauss sent him stern directives: "Action and characters! No thoughts! No poetry! Theatre!"⁵³

A harbinger for their collaboration and significant for the development of the libretto of *Friedenstag* (now titled *24. Oktober 1648*), Strauss summoned Gregor to his villa at Garmisch at the end of July to have him work on the libretto under close supervision. While it was Strauss's practice to meet with his librettists to discuss matters ill-served by written correspondence, such a close and imposing proximity—for what was in reality a crash course in writing an opera libretto—represented a startling departure from the composer's norm.⁵⁴ To his credit, Gregor was by no means indolent before the meeting. By July 21, he had drafted the first scene of the opera

⁵² "Die musikalischen Hauptpunkte scheinen mir: / Der leidenschaftliche, verzweifelte Chor des Anfangs. Volkstumult. / Die heroische Liebesszene zwischen Mann und Frau. / Die gespannten Szenen der letzten Vorbereitungen und des Abschieds. Die Todesatmosphäre. Dann die rhythmisch illustrative Szene der Verteidigungsvorbereitungen, die gespannte Szene des Wartens und die Glockensymphonie." Kenneth Birkin, ed., *Stefan Zweig and Joseph Gregor: Correspondence: 1921-1938* (Dunedin: University of Otago Department of German, 1991), hereafter *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, with sender to recipient information, date and page numbers, Zweig to Gregor, July 3, 1935, *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, 235.

⁵³ "Handlung und Rollen! Keine Gedanken! Keine Dichtung! Theater!" Strauss to Gregor, July 16, 1935, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 30.

⁵⁴ Such a prescriptive approach would have been anathema to Hofmannsthal, who made it known to Strauss that impositions on him would be to the detriment of the collaboration.

up to the Kommandant's oration about the Kaiser's letter. Copies were then dispatched to both Strauss and Zweig for approval. Zweig's reply arrived just before Gregor left for Garmisch, effusive with constructive criticism and praise. In particular, Zweig highlighted the interpolation of the Italian soldier (later the Piemonteser) as a masterstroke with plenty of musical potential.⁵⁵

Gregor arrived at the Strauss villa on July 30, 1935, staying for two days before departing to continue work the text in (relative) isolation at the lakeside resort of Plansee in Tyrol. He wrote to Zweig before his departure from Garmisch, stating that much solidifying work had been accomplished on *Friedenstag*—the first mention of the final title in any correspondence between the three.⁵⁶ While the correspondence between Strauss and Gregor from the first few weeks of August 1935 does not survive, it is evident that Strauss continued to receive drafts and subjected them to strenuous criticism. Gregor wrote to Zweig on August 4 describing the stalemate that had arisen over the final third of the opera, which necessitated an intense revision of all preceding material.⁵⁷ The genesis of the final scene, considered at length in the penultimate chapter of this study, presented no end of difficulty.

Strauss at Work

Before progressing to a detailed discussion of the dramaturgical components of the opera, let us consider Strauss's own compositional efforts on *Friedenstag*. Until a detailed analysis of the surviving archival and sketch material is possible, however, assumptions about Strauss's creative process rest on shaky ground. It is uncertain, for example, whether any musical material for the opera exists from the time Strauss and Zweig began to exchange ideas for the opera in 1934. In

⁵⁵ Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 130.

⁵⁶ Gregor to Zweig, July 3, 1935, *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, 243. Thus the title likely grew out of the sessions at Garmisch. In the same letter, *Daphne* is also discussed at length, Gregor no doubt eager to proceed with work on a subject of his own construction.

⁵⁷ Gregor to Zweig, August 4, 1935, *Ibid.*, 245. The pivotal episode of the *Glockenchor* was the locus of the impasse.

terms of Gregor's libretto, Birkin notes that Strauss made extensive annotations regarding textual cuts and endorsements on his personal copy of the version of the first scene dated July 21. Birkin does not, however, note if any musical material was notated on it as well.⁵⁸ Strauss received the first complete (or at least substantial) draft of the full libretto on August 24, 1935,⁵⁹ but the current location of this working copy, known to be heavily annotated, is unknown.⁶⁰

Other signposts of composition are equally indistinct. Franz Trenner's catalogue of Strauss sketchbooks identifies the first definite sketch material appearing at an indeterminate point in 1935.⁶¹ The first explicit mention of composition occurs in Strauss's October 31 letter to Zweig, the first letter after his dismissal from the RMK in July. The update amounts to a dour evaluation of his own efforts:

In general, I have now occupied myself with composition for some weeks already, yet it seems to intend to yield no music as I am obliged to demand of myself. After all, the whole subject is simply a bit too prosaic – soldiers – war – famine – Middle Age heroism – mutual destruction – it does not sit well with me, even with all the good will I have ... *Friedenstag* is too "Middle Age" a handiwork – Gregor's verses have no depth and are merely melodious superficialities without music!⁶²

⁵⁸ Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 135-37. The document now resides in the archive of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

⁵⁹ Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 564.

⁶⁰ Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 143. Birkin identifies another three stages of development for the libretto, respectively dated October 5, October 15 and December 7 from accompanying letters. While of little use in mapping Strauss's progress on music, these demarcations are valuable for assessing the irksome journey of the final sequence after the episode of the bells (see Chapter Four below).

⁶¹ Franz Trenner, *Die Skizzenbücher von Richard Strauss* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1977), 99. The sketchbook in question is numbered 90. Material for *Friedenstag* is catalogued in Tr. 91 through 94 (Trenner abbreviated as Tr. following Bryan Gilliam's methodology in his study of the *Elektra* sketches). Continuity sketches for the final chorus of *Friedenstag*, dated January 19, 1936, follow sketches for the *Drei Männerchöre*, TrV 270, completed by October 8 in a Strauss sketchbook deposited in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Mus. ms. 22152), dubbed the "William Jerger" sketchbook. See Gilliam, "Friede im Innern," 591.

⁶² "Überhaupt ... [sic] ich beschäftige mich nun schon einige Wochen mit der Composition, aber es will keine Musik werden, wie ich sie von mir verlangen muß. Der ganze Stoff ist eben doch ein bißchen zu alltäglich – Soldaten – Krieg – Hungersnot – mittelalterliches Heldentum – gemeinsames Sterben – es liegt mir nicht recht – so guten Willen auch ich habe ... Der *Friedenstag* ist ein zu mittelalterliches Handwerk – Gr.'s Verse haben keine Tiefe, sind nur wohlklingende Oberfläche ohne Musik!" Strauss to Zweig, October 31, 1935, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 147-48.

Oddly enough, these complaints echo Strauss's appeals to Zweig almost a year earlier when the project was in its infancy: "...do not forget: I must also compose it, and therein it has to express sensations which arouse emotional music in me, and I'm afraid the motives of desperation, heroism, weakness, hate, reconciliation, etc., do not summon in me enough melody which truly goes to the heart at all."⁶³

Strauss's grievances beg a blunt question: if he found the libretto so leaden and uncongenial to his creative faculties, why did he continue to devote his time and energy to it at all? A few speculative reasons may be advanced. First, a completed *Friedenstag* would represent a second albeit symbolic collaboration with Zweig.⁶⁴ Second, his diligence on the incomplete and rudimentary text of *Arabella* in the wake of Hofmannsthal's passing was significant. Whatever condition it was in, Strauss did not wish to abandon in-progress work important to his collaborators. On a broader level, Zweig correctly anticipated that Strauss's impulse to bring any nascent opera to final fruition would ultimately override any conditions or obstacles. Prior to the premiere of *Die schweigsame Frau*, Strauss asserted that with the contentious political environment, any further operatic collaborations between the two would go, upon completion, "into a safe, that will be opened when we both consider the time propitious to contemplate a premiere."⁶⁵ Zweig disabused these notions generously, eloquently and prophetically: "A Richard Strauss is permitted to publicly take what is his right and not work in secret..."⁶⁶

⁶³ "...vergessen Sie nicht: ich muß ihn auch componieren und es müssen darin Empfindungen zum Ausdruck kommen, die bei mir gefühlvolle Musik wecken und die Motive: Verzweiflung, Heroismus, Schwäche, Haß, Versöhnung u.s.w. – ich fürchte, ich bringe dafür nicht genug Melodie auf, die wirklich zu Herzen geht." Strauss to Zweig, October 10, 1934, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 87.

⁶⁴ Zweig exerted a residual influence on each of Strauss's operatic works after *Die schweigsame Frau*.

⁶⁵ "...in ein Safe, das erst eröffnet wird, wenn wir beide den Zeitpunkt für geeignet halten, an eine Aufführung zu denken." Strauss to Zweig, February 20, 1935, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 94.

⁶⁶ "Ein Richard Strauss darf sich jedes Recht öffentlich nehmen und nichts heimlich tun..." Zweig to Strauss, March 20, 1935, *Ibid.*, 95.

For much of September and October 1935, Strauss traveled across France and Germany, including a brief stop at Professor Dr. C von Dapper-Saalfels's sanatorium in Bad Kissingen.⁶⁷ During this sojourn, his contempt for the libretto reached its lowest ebb. Hoping to rally the composer's sagging energies, his wife Pauline sent the libretto to conductor Clemens Krauss for his opinion.⁶⁸ While work was not progressing swiftly on *Friedenstag*, Strauss was nevertheless active with other projects. At this point, the libretto of *Daphne* was advancing towards its final stages, and Strauss now juggled revisions (and condemnations) of both it and *Friedenstag* simultaneously in his correspondence with Gregor.⁶⁹ A serious choral venture was also in development: the *Drei Männerchöre* from poems of Friedrich Rückert. Strauss's recourse to the Rückert texts during August and October 1935 represent, on one level, a deeply private reaction to his harsh treatment at the hands of the regime and the prevailing creative gridlock with Gregor. The stark differences between the morbidly resigned Rückert texts and the platitudinous ebullience of the concurrent *Friedenstag*, Strauss's most chorus-laden opera, display the polar capabilities of a now vulnerable composer. Since sketches for *Friedenstag* abut drafts of the *Männerchöre* in the surviving "Wilhelm Jerger" sketchbook, the magnitude of the contrast is even more extreme. On a more foundational level, the *Männerchöre* gratified Strauss's need for stimulating textual material while he waited for the libretto of *Friedenstag* to reach a workable state. Perhaps in the three Rückert movements he finally found the music he demanded of himself.

As autumn progressed, Strauss resumed composition on *Friedenstag* in earnest. He gave Gregor an optimistic appraisal on November 20: "It will interest you that I am diligently at work,

⁶⁷ Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 564-65.

⁶⁸ See Gilliam, "Friede im Innern," 581, and below, Chapter Two.

⁶⁹ In the correspondence, *Friedenstag* is coded as "No 1", *Daphne* as "No 2".

a first sketch is already underway up until the exit of the deputation.”⁷⁰ After diligent work, the *Particell* of *Friedenstag* was completed at Garmisch on January 24, 1936.⁷¹ Strauss had previously expressed his satisfaction in a letter to Gregor on January 13: “The final hymn turned out rather well, I think.”⁷² It was at this point that the idea emerged to pair the opera with the incipient *Daphne* on a double bill with a view towards a possible joint premiere in 1937, provided latter could be finished in time.⁷³ The full score of *Friedenstag* was completed on June 16.⁷⁴ In a letter to Gregor a week later, Strauss wrote out the front matter details for the librettist’s approval before dispatching the manuscript to his publisher. It is noteworthy that at this point Strauss considered classifying the opera as either *Oper* or *Bühnenweihspiel* (A Play for the Consecration of the Stage), a term recalling Wagner’s final opera *Parsifal*, although Wagner christened his work a *Bühnenweihfestspiel* (A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage).⁷⁵ The correlation has further credence. *Friedenstag* shares with *Parsifal* the dramatic quality of a series of *tableaux vivants*, yet as we shall see, Strauss explored other musico-dramatic avenues that open up fresh angles on the opera’s political significance.

⁷⁰ “Im übrigen wird es Sie interessieren, daß ich fleißig an der Arbeit bin: eine erste Skizze ist schon bis zum Abgang der „Deputation“ gediehn.” Strauss to Gregor, 20 November 1935, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 20. In the published edition of the correspondence, Tenschert identifies a chronological error in the original dating of the letter as “20.4.35,” since this date is incompatible with the surrounding events, but no alternative is offered. Birkin places the date of the letter as November 20, 1935. See Kenneth Birkin, “Stefan Zweig – Richard Strauss – Joseph Gregor. An evaluatory assessment of Zweig’s influence upon Strauss/Gregor operas. Part one: *Die Liebe der Danae*, and *Friedenstag*,” *Richard Strauss-Blätter* 10 (December 1983), 36n24.

⁷¹ Franz Trenner, *Richard Strauss Werkverzeichnis*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Verlag Dr. Richard Strauss, 1999), 313.

⁷² “Der Schlußhymnus ist mir, glaube ich, besonders gut geraten.” Strauss to Gregor, January 13, 1936, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 45.

⁷³ See letter from Gregor to Strauss, February 17, 1936, *Ibid.*, 49-50 and Gregor to Zweig, February 18, 1936, *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, 265, and below, Chapter 4.

⁷⁴ Trenner, *Werkverzeichnis*, 313. The *Männerchöre* received their first public performance in Cologne on March 5, 1936. The exceptional political events of this period were the remilitarization of the Rhineland on March 7 and the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics in Berlin on August 1. For the latter occasion, Strauss conducted his own *Olympische Hymne*.

⁷⁵ Strauss to Gregor, June 24, 1936, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 67. Fittingly, *Friedenstag* premiered at the 1938 Munich Opera Festival on a lineup that included *Parsifal*.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DRAMATURGY OF *FRIEDENSTAG*

Despite Strauss’s voluminous complaints against the abstruse theatricality of Gregor’s language, he requested few substantial changes regarding the overall structure of *Friedenstag*. The final opera is largely faithful to Zweig’s initial brief sketch from 1934 and the revised scenario he sent to Gregor in July 1935. In terms of Strauss’s operatic *oeuvre*, *Friedenstag* ranks as one of the composer’s most dramatically concentrated and well-made libretti, evincing his instincts for cogency and balance. The episodes are powerfully packed and sequenced with little or few deviations from the main spine of the story.¹ Though cast as a continuous single act, the opera can be broken down into three major sections (A, B and C, see table 2.1), with a comparable number of internal scenes between all three.²

Table 2.1. Major scenic divisions of *Friedenstag*

A	B	C
A-1: Opening ensemble of Soldiers	B-1: Entrance of Maria, wife of the Kommandant	C-1: Entrance of Citizens—Declaration of peace is relayed
A-2: <i>Trauermarsch</i> —Entrance of Deputation and Citizens	B-2: Maria’s soliloquy	C-2: Festive march—Entrance of the enemy army
A-3: Scene between the Deputation and Citizens and the Kommandant	B-3: Scene between Maria and Kommandant	C-3: Scene between the Holsteiner and the Kommandant
A-4: Kommandant reveals plans of immolation—Reminiscences of previous battles	B-4: Preparation and lighting of the fuse—Cannon shots and fuse extinguished	C-4: Maria’s intercession—Preliminary hymn—Commanders reconciled
A-5: Soldiers swear loyalty or take their leave of the Kommandant	B-5: <i>Glockenchor</i> (Chorus of Bells)	C-5: Final apotheosis and hymn

For the final sequence (C-3 through C-5), Strauss was especially keen to ensure that the trajectory from the Holsteiner’s entrance towards the final apotheosis did not founder—a process

¹ See Willi Schuh, *Über Opern von Richard Strauss* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1947), 75-81.

² Gregor and Strauss frequently demarcated the opera into halves in their correspondence, the *Glockenchor* (B-5) being the pivot point. Distinguished Strauss scholars such as Schuh and Bryan Gilliam have relied on a tripartite conception of the opera for their analysis.

I will discuss in detail in the penultimate chapter. Section B serves as the keystone of the opera, owing principally to the introduction of Maria, the wife of the Kommandant. Around this intimate core, sections A and C serve as symmetrical complements, both anchored by martial episodes (boxed) involving the penetration of the citadel by outside forces. In Bryan Gilliam's formal reading, the social and political is the focus of section A, giving way to the human focus of section B, with the three unified in the final section C.³ This configuration strongly mirrors Strauss's preceding one-act opera *Elektra*, whose palindromic dramatic and musical structure hinges around the central confrontation between Elektra and Klytemnästra.⁴

Further comparisons with *Elektra* are fruitful, since they highlight structural elements of *Friedenstag* and the world that its characters inhabit. Both operas transpire in real time and begin with a figurative Greek chorus—the ensemble of soldiers in *Friedenstag* inviting comparison with the five maids and the overseer in *Elektra*. These characters provide the necessary exposition for their respective dramatic circumstances, expressing primarily pessimistic sentiments from correspondingly saturnine stances. Furthermore, both operas present worlds in which dissenting opinions are neutralized, if not punished outright: note the Piemonteser, whose Italian *Heimwehlied* is drowned out by the jeers of the rest of the soldiers in *Friedenstag*, and the Fifth Maid, whose defense of Elektra provides brief major key respites in a world otherwise subjugated to the bleakness of D minor (the same key that opens *Friedenstag*). One of the striking differences between the two operas is the inverse emphasis on male characters and voices in *Friedenstag*. This also extends to the characters who help restore dramatic stasis: the bloody and aggressive homecoming of Orest is transformed into the valiant (though aborted)

³ Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 251.

⁴ Strauss also judiciously pruned Hofmannsthal's text down to the most concentrated sequence of events, occasionally asking the playwright for additional lines of text as necessary. For a detailed examination of *Elektra*, see Bryan Gilliam, *Richard Strauss's Elektra* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

sacrifice and eventual pacification affected by Maria, the wife of the Kommandant. Though she is not the direct instigator or deliverer of peace, Maria still fills a crucial role as the interpreter of the bells as the sounds of peace, and later the role of mediator between the two commanders.

The Theatrical Heritage of *Friedenstag*

Despite its concentrated nature—and one might regard the work as too concentrated in its momentum—a primary criticism of *Friedenstag* has been the relatively stagnant nature of its dramatic narrative. The work unfolds as a series of sequential and declamatory dialogues whereas the crux of the story—the declaration of peace—is little more than a *deus ex machina*, or in this case, a *deus ex tintinnabula*, since the rescuing agent here is the chorus of bells heralding the declaration of peace.⁵ The source of the opera's rhetorical bent may lay with the Austrian theatrical heritage of Zweig and Gregor, as well as the lingering influence of Germanic baroque traditions such as the *Trauerspiel*, or lamentation play.⁶ That Zweig himself spoke of the work frequently in allegorical terms is no surprise given this orientation.⁷ The lamentation play was a form well rooted in Catholic Austria, combining elements of Spanish drama (the *autos sacramentales* of Calderón) and other northern German theatrical traditions. It took its subject matter from history, as opposed to the mythic narratives that supplied classical tragedies.⁸ The heroes of the lamentation play were primarily monarchical emblems that frequently underwent acts of martyrdom. Adhering to the classical tradition, the final event was typically achieved via the *deus ex machina*, though the effect was not always one of glorious triumph. In *Friedenstag*,

⁵ The device of the offstage trumpet call at the climax of Act Two of *Fidelio* is one obvious ancestor of the bells used to signal peace in *Friedenstag*.

⁶ See Steinberg, "Richard Strauss and the Question," 164-92. This also includes the presentational heritage of the *tableaux vivants*.

⁷ Though as Walter Benjamin's opus *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* has shown, the exact relationship of the concept of allegory to the *Trauerspiel* is far from transparent.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), 62.

the act of peace never seems to be one properly earned as much as a sheer matter of chance, given the relative contrivance of the cannon shots which preempt the conflagration. This configuration presents the more startling notion that the characters onstage are simply (if not literally) the pawns of external political forces without agency or importance in the grander scheme.

Such theatrical traditions possessed significant political application. The wider tradition of the Austrian baroque theatre (on which Gregor was a published expert) was one of “political self-representation”—a world theatre based on the projection of imperial (Holy Roman) totality, in which power and ideology are harnessed to combat cultural dissolution by means of “sovereignty and legitimacy.”⁹ This context is obviously only useful to a limited degree—Strauss was clearly not attempting to revive the *Trauerspiel* as a form, though its influence could have easily exerted itself through Gregor’s expertise as a theatre historian. As will be seen, issues of dissolution and sovereignty form a thematic foundation for the final scene of the opera.

Setting a Siege

The dramaturgy of *Friedenstag* owes no small debt to the original vision of Zweig, and it is instructive to note which dramatic elements in the completed opera derive from his preliminary sketch. As mentioned previously, his setting of the opera during the Thirty Years’ War—specifically on the day of the Westphalian armistice—lent tremendous symbolic import to Zweig’s scenario. Also critical is its backdrop amidst a military siege, making *Friedenstag* one in a long line of what may be termed “siege operas.”

The framing device of the military siege is one of the most fertile and established in Western literature, with the Siege of Troy being one of the earliest examples. One need only

⁹ Steinberg, “Richard Strauss and the Question,” 177.

point out the varied adaptations of Homer's *Iliad*—Vergil's *Aeneid*, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and Berlioz's *Les Troyens*¹⁰—and the innumerable musical works drawn from early modern epics like Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata* to see the continued fascination of siege scenarios. Laden with grandiose narratives and imaginative locales, siege stories were scarcely alien to current events throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One cannot help but note that during Strauss's lifetime, German military superiority was ironically bookended by two important sieges: that of Paris, 1870-1871, during which the German Empire was declared, and the Battle of Stalingrad, which effectively turned the tide against Germany's military fortunes in the winter of 1942-1943. Furthermore, Gregor, as a resident of Vienna, would have been familiar with the city's survival of multiple siege attempts by the Ottoman Empire, an important part of its history.

Many dramaturgical connections exist between these various siege operas. On the macrocosmic level, the bifurcated dynamic of besieger and besieged sets up a fundamental framework profiling dramatic comparison or contrast. This framework is used lightly in *Friedenstag*, given its fixed setting inside the hall of the citadel. More visible is the conceit that since a siege begets both confinement and privation, the extreme limits of human endurance and interaction can be explored at both the individual and social level. In *Friedenstag*, the combat deadlock and the desperation for survival trigger moments of intense confrontation: individuals against individuals (the Kommandant and Maria), individuals against collectives (the Kommandant against the citizens), or collectives against collectives (soldiers against the citizens, army against army). In terms of hierarchical dynamics, these moments of dramatic crisis

¹⁰ Strauss was present for the world premiere of the complete *Les Troyens* in 1890 in Karlsruhe. The work was prepared for performance and conducted by Felix Mottl over two evenings. See Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 82.

frequently result in challenges to authority figures and institutions, a choice made vocally manifest in *Friedenstag* by the massive petition of the citizenry to the Kommandant.

Against these epic preoccupations, a romantic subplot typically provides a microcosmic emotional contrast, setting up an act of sacrifice that contributes substantially to the dénouement. Strauss sensed that the prevailing dynamic between the Kommandant and Maria lacked depth when he proposed an elaborate expansion of the plot whereby Maria would carry on a love affair with one of the Kommandant's younger lieutenants.¹¹ In Strauss's sketch, she would ultimately forsake the lieutenant to die patriotically with her husband. Moved, the Kommandant makes the final heroic gesture: "The Kommandant shoots himself, and through the act, makes the sacrifice which he intended to make for his honor as an officer instead for human renunciation of the beloved and honored wife, which gives her a clear path to reunite with her beloved!"¹²

Responding to the artificiality of the idea, Zweig jibbed: "I find the connection of the heroic with a love episode invariably a bit too operatic in the worst sense of the phrase..."¹³

Zweig demanded serious emphasis on the drama's more symbolic human concerns, thus stripping the story of any ancillary or potentially distracting details in order to accentuate the "heroic" element. Reasons for this are manifold as well. The more symbolically ambiguous the text, the more universal its application could be—a reflection of Zweig's communitarian

¹¹ Birkin points out that the age difference between the Kommandant and Maria may have been an autobiographical projection on Zweig's part, mirroring the age gap between the author and his future second wife Lotte Altmann, at the time his secretary. Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 106-107. The final libretto does not specify an exact age gap, though Strauss mentions it in a letter as being twenty years, the same between Zweig and Altmann. Since this element also does not appear in Zweig's original sketch, it likely entered the dramaturgy of the peace during the collaborator's 1934 summer meeting in Salzburg. Strauss to Zweig, September 9, 1934, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 82.

¹² "Der Commandant erschießt sich und bringt damit das Opfer, das er zuerst als Offizier seiner Ehre bringen wollte, nun als menschlichen Verzicht auf die geliebte und verehrte Gattin, indem er ihr so den Weg frei gibt zur Vereinigung mit dem Geliebten!" Ibid., 83-84. Compare with *Guntram*: the Kommandant's intended suicide would have been a hero's withdrawal from the world, in this case literally.

¹³ "Aber ich finde die Bindung des Heroischen mit einer Liebesepisode doch immer zu sehr opernhafte im schlimmen Sinne..." Zweig to Strauss, October 3, 1934, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 84-85.

beliefs.¹⁴ Strauss would eventually dilute this approach by infusing the score with specific and culturally significant musical allusions while at the same time affecting commentary on them.¹⁵

The more equivocal approach would ultimately take shape as a double-edged sword.

Ambivalence for the sake of communality could lead to ideological appropriation or misperception, as the pre-premiere reception of *Friedenstag* shows.

Frequently quoted (but still unpublished in its entirety) is Strauss's famous comment to his wife regarding preliminary party approval of the *Friedenstag* libretto in a letter dated December 9, 1936. By this point, copies of the libretto were circulating in an effort to secure performance approval in Dresden.¹⁶ Strauss relayed to Pauline that: "on his own initiative, [Leonhard] Fanto¹⁷ gave the *Friedenstag* text to an advisor of Martin Mutschmann to read, which appeared to confirm M.'s resolution; because the advisor was inspired by this 'highly political' opera text: 'yes, this is what we need.' Kindergarten!"¹⁸ That the libretto had won over Mutschmann, the same Gauleiter who had earlier exposed Strauss's correspondence with Zweig, seemed to be of little value to him. The famous interjection of "Kindergarten" may serve to illustrate Strauss's intellectual contempt for a Reich he considered culturally artless, not unlike his earlier criticisms of the regimes that it replaced. That *Friedenstag* was seen as a desirable and "highly political" work continues to plague "the first opera born from the ethos of National Socialism."

¹⁴ Steinberg, "Richard Strauss and the Question," 176. To address a more immediate concern, such a text stood an easier chance of passing censorship review, snags with which had plagued *Die schweigsame Frau*, a process that Strauss was surely not eager to repeat.

¹⁵ One wonders what Zweig would have made of Strauss's allusions. As yet, there is no indication that Zweig ever witnessed a performance of *Friedenstag*, or had access to the score or published libretto. Strauss's published correspondence with Zweig ends in December 1935. Gregor's last letter to Zweig is dated October 18, 1935.

¹⁶ See Chapter Three.

¹⁷ Scenic designer and painter at the Sächsische Staatstheater Dresden, Fanto also designed costumes for Strauss going as far back as the premiere of *Salome*.

¹⁸ Translation and German original quoted in Gilliam, "Friede im Innern," 587.

Nationalities and Localities

Given Zweig's conceit of anonymity, any attempt to scrutinize historical accuracy in *Friedenstag* might appear bootless and misdirected.¹⁹ Yet the opera is not completely devoid of historical detail, and what does exist is noteworthy. Take, for example, the opera's chronological setting of October 24, 1648, which contrasts with the ambiguous location of the citadel, the center of the dramatic action, recognized in the libretto only as "a besieged town" (einer belagerten Stadt).²⁰ Given the palpable associations with the Kaiser in the libretto, the city must obviously be located in a state loyal to the Holy Roman Empire, and hence under the purview of the Roman Church. This fact is reinforced by the presence of the Prälat (Prelate) amongst the deputation.²¹ The only actual cities mentioned by the characters are Magdeburg, referenced during the Kommandant's reminiscences, and Münster, identified by the Holsteiner as the site of the peace signing.

That the besieged town has a historical antecedent is open to debate. David Murray offers up Bamberg as a possible location for the opera, though no evidence is offered.²² Again, details in the final score are muddy. Geographic landmarks in the city mentioned in the text include the Karlstor, the Marienturm and the Magdalen, the latter two identified as churches during the *Glockenchor*. All these were common namesakes found in most major urban centers within the Holy Roman Empire during the time of the Thirty Years' War. "Karl," or "Charles," was a frequent name of Habsburg monarchs, and "Maria" and "Magdalen" obviously allude to the

¹⁹ Michael Steinberg wisely points out that the opera contains a number of outright historical fallacies, such as the notion of presenting the war as a continuous event over thirty years, when the actual ferocity of combat constantly fluctuated between trough and peak. Incidentally, the negotiations for the Peace of Westphalia began as early as 1643.

²⁰ Joseph Gregor, *Friedenstag* (Berlin: Oertel, 1938), 5. All textual quotations from the opera are taken from the published libretto.

²¹ It should be noted however, that allegiances during the Thirty Years' War were not strictly delineated along religious lines.

²² David Murray, "Friedenstag," *Grove Music Online*, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O009310>.

Biblical figures of the same name, thus strengthening the text's relative universality. The two latter names are also significant in that they echo the name of the female protagonist Maria.

The chronology of the Thirty Years' War, in fact, points to a possible Bavarian setting for the opera, which might imply a subtle autobiographical touch on Strauss's part.²³ The combined forces of France and Sweden under the Vicomte de Turenne and Carl Gustav Wrangel continually devastated Bavaria and Württemberg between 1645 and 1648. As the coalition forces swept eastward towards Bohemia, Bavaria suffered exceptionally fierce desolation after the Battle of Zusmarshausen in May 1648, the last major battle before the Peace of Westphalia.²⁴ Again, while historical accuracy and verisimilitude were not primary objectives with *Friedenstag*, drawing out these associations helps illuminate the ways abstractions informed the dramaturgy of the opera.

This dearth of definite cultural and geographic signifiers has further implications for any political readings of the opera. As previously mentioned, the only recognizable historical personality referred to in the opera is the anonymous "Kaiser," who is revered by the Kommandant but reviled by a number of the soldiers and citizenry.²⁵ Furthermore, any explicit vocabulary directly expressive of Germanic notions of "deutsche" or "Reich" is practically non-existent, the one exception being a single line by the Holsteiner. In the final confrontation scene, he taunts the Kommandant: "Who barred the path of the Faith and I throughout the empire?" (Wer sperrte den Weg mir / und dem Glauben im ganzen Reich?).²⁶ While the absence of complex jingoistic jargon may seem insignificant at first, such sanitation stands as a noteworthy

²³ Given the Nazi Party's association with Munich, it is tempting to see a connection between an inferred setting in Munich and the opera's world premiere in the city, but such a link remains speculative.

²⁴ An excellent and succinct study of the Thirty Years' War can be found in Stephen J. Lee, *The Thirty Years [sic] War* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

²⁵ Ferdinand III of Habsburg was the reigning Holy Roman Emperor at the time of the Peace of Westphalia, but again, he is not specified in Gregor's text.

²⁶ Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 39.

contrast to previous depictions of the Thirty Years' War as a struggle for German unity. (As will be seen, the unity presented in the final scene of *Friedenstag* is one of transfiguration into a state of being that defies terrestrial political divisions.) Moreover, the absence of such patriotic verbiage in a German-language opera immediately differentiates *Friedenstag* from two of its Wagnerian forebears, *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. These works, whose final choral incitements are rife with nationalist sentiments, were famously fêted by the Reich's cultural and political ideologues during the 1930s. The Reich's penchant for ceremonial displays of magnitude as aesthetic *coups* ensured that these finales would be enhanced in contemporary stage productions—a practice ultimately skewed, on an abstract level, in *Friedenstag*.²⁷

One of the rare direct expressions of national identity in *Friedenstag* emerges in an episode of strong linguistic and musical contrast: the song of the Piemonteser. Presumably a device to depict the cosmopolitan nature of the Thirty Years' War, the inclusion of this youthful courier from Piemonte accurately reflects the diverse allegiances of those who found themselves unified in conflict. This interlude of Gregor's own invention (one of the few such instances in the opera) provided Strauss with a moment of strong musical potential, akin to the interlude with the Italian Singer in *Der Rosenkavalier*.²⁸ It is tempting to see this choice as either a purposeful (or woefully inadvertent) comment on the contemporaneous alliance between Germany and Italy before World War II, but again, such interpretations take a dangerously generalized view of chronology and context.²⁹ Aside from the Piemonteser, the only other nationality suggested in

²⁷ The productions at Bayreuth following Hitler's ascension are the obvious examples here. See Spotts, *Bayreuth*, 159-211. A discussion of the musical and staging implications of these choral finales on the end of *Friedenstag* is discussed in the final chapter.

²⁸ As will be seen in the next chapter, the Piemonteser is politically allied with the soldiers and the Kaiser's messenger, but his youth and romantic disposition set him completely apart.

²⁹ Up through the middle of 1935, Germany and Italy were (at least publicly) at loggerheads over territorial issues surrounding German absorption of Austria. Diplomatic bonds were not crystallized until 1937, when Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, cemented later in 1939 with the famous "Pact of Steel" that solidified joint German and Italian military opposition to Britain and France.

the opera is that of the besieging commander, the Holsteiner, an abstracted expansion of Zweig's initial mention of the besieging army being from Sweden.³⁰

The naming of certain principal characters along functional lines (i.e., the Kommandant, the Wachtmeister, the Schütze, etc.) deserves brief attention since Zweig's push for anonymity worked against Strauss's instincts as composer. Elsewhere, Strauss was frequently outspoken about the extent to which his characters had to be full-fledged individuals, a demand that stalled composition on earlier works such as *Josephs Legende* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. As he wrote to Hofmannsthal in 1916 regarding the latter opera:

It has nothing to do with a little more or less music or text. The difficulty rests with the subject itself with its Romanticism, its symbols: figures like the Emperor and the Empress—also the Nurse—can not be filled with red corpuscles like a Marschallin, an Octavian, an Ochs. I can rack my brain as much as I want—and I am honestly toiling and sifting and sifting through—but my heart is only half in it, and the moment the head must shoulder the greater part of the work, a breath of academic cold settles in (what my wife very rightly calls “musical hackery”) which no bellows can ever to kindle into a genuine fire.³¹

Even before Gregor entered the picture, Strauss had already voiced concerns about the high level of abstraction in the opera to Zweig, who had reiterated at the end of his initial sketch, “I would leave everything in anonymity, give no names either for the town or the commander. Everything should only be gestalt, symbol, and not a specific individual.”³² Only two named characters

³⁰ First as a county then as a duchy, Holstein held a contentious place in the political affairs in northern Europe. King Christian IV of Denmark held the title of Duke of Holstein for the majority of the Thirty Years' War.

³¹ “Da macht es nicht etwas mehr oder weniger Musik oder Text, das liegt am Stoff selbst mit seiner Romantik, seinen Symbolen – Figuren wie Kaiser und Kaiserin nebst Amme sind nicht mit so roten Blutkörperchen zu füllen wie eine Marschallin, ein Octavian, ein Ochs. Da kann ich mein Hirn anstrengen wie ich will, und ich plage mich redlich und siebe und siebe durch, aber das Herz ist nur zur Hälfte dabei, und sobald der Kopf die größere Hälfte der Arbeit leisten muß, wird ein Hauch akademischer Kälte darin [bleiben] (was meine Frau sehr richtig „Musikzieren“ nennt), den kein Blasebalg zu wirklichem Feuer anblasen wird.” Franz and Alice Strauss, eds., with Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel, Gesamtausgabe*. (Zürich: Atlantis, 1952), hereafter *Strauss–Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel*, with sender to recipient information, date and page numbers. Strauss to Hofmannsthal, July 28, 1916, *Strauss–Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel*, 343-44.

³² “Ich würde alles im Anonymen lassen, keine Namen geben weder für Stadt noch den Commandanten, es soll alles nur Gestalt sein, Symbol und nicht einmaliges Individuum.” Zweig to Strauss, August 21, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 76.

appear in the opera as completed.³³ First, in order of vocal appearance, is the Bürgermeister Hans Stoß, or “John Push” (to render a crude English translation that reflects the dramatic function of the character). The other is the Kommandant’s wife Maria, a name rife with interpretive potentialities and implications. This ascription first appears in Gregor’s first text draft of 1935.³⁴ Until that moment, she was accorded the simple title of “Die Frau.” That Maria’s presence accompanies the more musically expressive passages in the opera signifies that Strauss’s “academic cold” had passed, at least temporarily.

Clemens Krauss

At this juncture, it is important to consider the impact of Clemens Krauss on the genesis of *Friedenstag*. While not an active contributor to either the libretto or score, Krauss’s relationship with Strauss enabled him to provide guidance to the composer in October 1935, when work on the libretto had reached an impasse. Along with the young Karl Böhm, Krauss was Strauss’s greatest conducting champion in the last two decades of the composer’s life.³⁵ Krauss also proved to be one of Strauss’s most persuasive operatic collaborators, often providing seminal advice and direction regarding the late operas.³⁶ After receiving Strauss’s recent working copy of

³³ When the garrison looks down upon the marauding populace, the Musketier identifies a certain “Veitenburger” down amongst the pike men but this character is never identified or acknowledged onstage past this. It may be of passing significance that Saint Veit (Vitus in Latin) is the patron saint of Bohemia (the cradle of the Thirty Years’ War) and was/is a popular geographical namesake in both Bavaria and Austria. Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 13.

³⁴ Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 113. The Gregor-Strauss correspondence shows Gregor still referred to Maria as the wife even as late as February 1936. See Gregor to Strauss, February 17, 1936, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 49-50.

³⁵ With the exception of *Die schweigsame Frau* and *Daphne*, Krauss premiered all of Strauss’s operas from *Arabella* through to the posthumous public premiere of *Die Liebe der Danae*. Krauss conducted the latter work’s covert Salzburg dress rehearsal “premiere” in 1944 as well.

³⁶ *Capriccio* is the obvious example here, whatever the true extent of Krauss’s contributions may be. Krauss also famously tipped the scales in favor of an orchestral rather than choral ending to *Daphne*, something Zweig himself had suggested to Gregor. See Bryan Gilliam, “Daphne’s Transformation,” in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 38.

the *Friedenstag* libretto from the composer's wife, Krauss wrote to back on October 7, 1935, providing both stimulus and critique for the depressed composer:

Some days ago, I sent the manuscript back to you. I read it with great interest. The approach is very interesting and extremely suitable for musical treatment; the action very exciting with plenty of possibilities for profound moments of feeling to be expressed through music: the Kommandant's farewell to his soldiers (magnificent), the great resolution of the wife to join him in death and, not least of all, the reconciliation of the Kommandant with the Holsteiner. — In ambiance though, a little too much soldiers and weapons. This is a purely personal objection, but I simply have a firm aversion to people with modern firearms on the operatic stage. For that reason, the concluding glorification of peace appears so much greater as a contradiction. It is perhaps a pity that this one-act is not the last act of a more developed drama. An entire evening of battle din is, again, not possible, and it should also not be a history play. The language in many places leaves much to be desired. I believe you will still need to intercede to ensure all theatricality is stripped away.³⁷

Krauss's praises as well as his qualms are dramaturgically instructive. The focus on three major anchoring points of the opera highlights the same musical potentialities that Zweig himself thought appropriate fodder for Strauss. Krauss's trepidation regarding "people with modern firearms" highlights a concrete and violent dramatic symbol central to the opera that seems out of place with Strauss's usual dramatic sensibilities. His comment that the presence of modern firearms would contradict the allegorical finale would suggest that the abrupt transition from militancy to glorified peace renders the finale implausible and unconvincing. More

³⁷ "Vor einigen Tagen sandte ich Ihnen das Manuskript zurück. Ich habe es mit großem Interesse gelesen. Der Vorwurf ist sehr interessant und aussergewöhnlich geeignet für eine Vertonung; die Handlung sehr spannend, mit sehr vielen Möglichkeiten, tiefe Gefühlsmomente durch die Musik zum Ausdruck zu bringen: Abschied des Kommandanten von seinen Soldaten (großartig), der grosse Entschluß des Kommandanten mit dem Holsteiner. — Im Milieu ein wenig zu viel Soldaten und Waffen. Das ist aber ein rein persönlicher Einwand, ich habe eben eine gewisse Abneigung gegen Menschen mit modernen Schußwaffen auf der Opernbühne. Dafür wirkt dann die Friedensverherrlichung am Schluß als Gegensatz um so grösser. Es ist vielleicht schade, daß dieser Akt nicht der letzte Akt eines ausgewachsenen Dramas ist. Ein ganzer Abend Kriegsgetöse ist aber wieder nicht möglich und eine Historie soll es ja auch nicht werden. Die Textworte lassen an vielen Stellen noch einiges zu wünschen übrig. Ich glaube, Sie werden da noch eingreifen müssen, damit alles Theatralische abgestreift wird." Günter Brosche, ed., *Richard Strauss–Clemens Krauss Briefwechsel* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1997), hereafter *Strauss–Krauss: Briefwechsel*, with sender to recipient information, date and page numbers. Krauss to Strauss, October 7, 1935, *Strauss–Krauss: Briefwechsel*, 206. That Krauss had Strauss's only copy is evinced in Strauss's letter from October 2 asking for the manuscript's prompt return.

interesting, however, is Krauss's notion that the dramatic scope of the work was lacking as just a single act, a truncated, wanting fragment of a larger "more developed" story. Moving in an expansive direction and demanding a more complex story and characters would have likely spoiled Zweig's intent for an allegorical opera. Given Gregor's limited talents as a novice librettist and the overall difficulty in bringing the text to a semi-satisfactory state, Strauss may have felt it would not have been fruitful to take on so radical a revision.

Still, Strauss took kindly to the conductor's exhortations, and in his reply, he further fleshed out his own concerns, particularly the language issues and the onstage militarism:

That *Friedenstag* pleased you pleases me. With newly demanded corrections from me, which you do not know about, matters have improved. Even the most recent ending had to take yet another entirely different shape. I myself in my last letter to the author had to again criticize the "theatrical" language. The luminaries of the time had not yet read Schiller.³⁸ In general: the entire thing is certainly not without potential—but not quite my standard and my "type." What else can one say?

This Middle Age-heroism: this "communal death" etc. etc. has already found its ultimate, glorifying assumption in Siegfried's Funeral March—one would have thought! Instead of self-destruction—self-fulfillment! Instead of Napoleon—Goethe! The parting of the two in Weimar would be a symbol!³⁹

That these complaints—how the harsh tones of militarism left him critically detached—prefigure his later comments to Zweig is not surprising. Outside the operas, military or political themes can be found only in certain early songs and other utilitarian compositions that comprise only a

³⁸ In his September 25 letter to Gregor, Strauss chastised the hints of Schiller's *Wallenstein* present in the text. See Gregor and Strauss, *Briefwechsel*, 36. Strauss may have also been referring to Schiller's interpretation of the conflict in his *Geschichte des dreißigjährigen Kriegs*.

³⁹ "Daß Ihnen der „Friedenstag“ gefallen hat, freut mich. Mit neuen von mir geforderten Korrekturen, die Sie nicht kennen, ist manches noch besser geworden. Auch der letzte Schluß müßte noch ganz andere Gestalt bekommen. Ich selbst habe noch in meinem letzten Brief an den Autor die „theatralische“ Sprache moniert. Die Leutchen damals hatten doch Schiller noch nicht gelesen. Überhaupt: das Ganze ist sicher nicht ohne Begabung — aber nicht ganz mein Niveau und mein „Typ“. So sagt man doch? // Dieser mittelalterliche Heroismus: dies „gemeinschaftliche Sterben“ etc. etc. hat halt doch in Siegfrieds Trauermarsch einen endgültigen verklärenden Abschluß gefunden — sollte man meinen! Statt Selbstzerfleischung — Selbstvollendung! Statt Napoleon — Goethe! Der Abschied der Beiden in Weimar wäre Symbol!" Strauss to Krauss, October 8, 1935, *Strauss-Krauss: Briefwechsel*, 208.

small part of the composer's musical output.⁴⁰ These primarily consist of marches orchestrated by other hands during Strauss's tenure in Berlin in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴¹ Also relevant in light of *Friedenstag's* heavy choral nature are *Taillefer*, a cantata-like work from 1903 depicting the triumph of the Norman invaders at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, and *Bardgesang*, a musical depiction the victory of the German tribes over the Roman legions at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest.

The symbolic weight of the Goethe–Napoleon anecdote in the letter to Krauss also presents Strauss's notions of fulfillment as distinct from Zweig's sentimental pacifism. That the composer identified heroism in this context in a "Middle Age" or medieval guise may have also been a response to Nazi ideology and its theatrical penchant for medieval masculine heroic imagery, imagery which triggered the coopting of Wagner's operas. As we shall see, Strauss's qualms play into a much larger concern with heroism.

Strauss and Heroism

Across his career, Strauss's artistic expressions and treatments of heroism were bound up with notions of egoism, a fixation on the self which Hofmannsthal found exacerbating.⁴² Over the course of his life, Strauss "held on to his Nietzschean beliefs that Christianity and democracy were ideas at odds with individuality, that they reduced the individual to a herd mentality."⁴³ This has been characterized as the "subject-object" duality, the "post-Nietzschean notion of an individual in struggle with his or her outer world"—a notion which was eclipsed in the majority

⁴⁰ These include the *Zwei Lieder aus „Der Richter von Zalamea“* TrV 211, adapted from texts of Calderón, specifically the song "Es war ein Bruder Liederlich."

⁴¹ For example, *Parade-Marsch* TrV 213, „*De Brandenburgsche Mars*” TrV 214, and the *Militärischer Festmarsch (Es-Dur)* TrV 217. The aforementioned selections from *Musik zu „Lebende Bilder“* also fall into this category.

⁴² Leon Botstein, "The Enigmas of Richard Strauss: A Revisionist View," in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 5. Gregor would come to experience this in its harsher form during the development of *Daphne*.

⁴³ Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss*, 135. This mindset put Strauss at odds with the Weimar Republic.

of the Hofmannsthal operas.⁴⁴ It had been well displayed in the idiosyncratic “hero against the world” dynamic found in the programs of the early tone poems—primarily *Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel*—where, despite the hero’s virility, the fight with the world around him ultimately ends in his own self-destruction. It is tempting to see these as just another manifestation of heroic tragedy, obviously not a new topic for dramatic presentation. Yet in Strauss’s hands the treatment is not simply nihilistic. In *Till*, for example, the hero’s struggle is musically mitigated throughout by a sense of defiant impishness, which hits its zenith in the triumphant coda. In *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Ein Heldenleben*, the struggles of the heroes culminate in some measure of success before the protagonists reach an altered state of existence, namely in the *Nachtwandlerlied* of *Zarathustra* and the Hero’s *Weltflucht und Vollendung* in *Heldenleben*. *Don Quixote*, with its diverse variations on knightly character, presents an affectionate but satirical portrait of the hero. Perhaps the most distinguishing facet of Strauss’s heroes is that they are not taken with any hardline seriousness or solemnity. Running through all these works is a subtle critique of Romantic heroism, which had reached a vaunted apex in Wagner’s operas. Considered in this light, Strauss’s handling of masculinity and militancy in *Friedenstag* can be understood as a further reaction to the bloated virility of Romantic heroism. This operatic treatment of heroes involved an austerity that would not be founded on pure *gravitas* and solidarity. Such irreverence stood in stark opposition to Zweig’s somewhat hapless emphasis on communality and sense of responsibility to such an ideal. Ironically, the masculine and martial focus of *Friedenstag* doubtlessly contributed to its lack of popularity in the postwar period, when favor fell on Strauss’s earlier, feminine centered operas.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁵ See Schuh, *Über Opern von Richard Strauss*, 77-78. Both *Salome* and *Elektra* also fit the mold of the subject-object duality, given their aversion to their immediate environments and their attempts to maintain their independence from those environments.

Coming as it did in the wake of Hofmannsthal's death, *Friedenstag* also continued a process of what might be deemed a rejection, if only passing, of Hofmannsthal's social impulses, marked by a return to the subject-object duality. A renewal of the older dynamic was already evident in *Die schweigsame Frau*, with the serene (and silent) world of the misanthropic naval hero Sir Morosus riotously turned upside down by his nephew and his Italian opera troupe in order to prove the merits of his fiancée. In *Friedenstag*, the mantle of the solitary hero falls squarely on the shoulders of the Kommandant, who is placed in an incontrovertibly militant light. One of the most withdrawn of Strauss's male protagonists, his isolation is moderated only by his fanatical sense of loyalty to the Kaiser and his (far from happy) marriage, which are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

The Legacy of *Guntram*

In considering Strauss's notions of heroism and militancy, one must recognize *Guntram*, the composer's first completed opera, as an important precedent. It is the only other Strauss opera which deals directly with the balance between belligerence and peace, either in the early mongering stages or the waxing stages of combat.⁴⁶ Aside from the thematic concern for conciliation, further comparisons with *Guntram* and *Friedenstag* are enticing since Strauss in fact revisited this early score in mid-1934, just as the germs of *Friedenstag* were percolating.⁴⁷ Whether intentional or not, many similarities exist between the two works. Both open upon worlds of privation and unrest. The kingdom in *Guntram* is under the threat of putative rebellion, and out of mistrust, its rulers oppress their poorer subjects. Similar circumstances, though much

⁴⁶ *Die ägyptische Helena* should also be mentioned however, since it is effectively a "post-war" opera, dealing with the deleterious if not post-traumatic effects of ten years' worth of the Trojan War on the marriage of Helena and Menelas.

⁴⁷ This revised version of the score was sent to Fürstner on July 10, 1934 but would not be publically presented until October 1940 in Weimar, city of the opera's premiere.

more dire, exist in *Friedenstag*.⁴⁸ The suspenseful dramatic device of impending battle is more sharply drawn in *Guntram*, given the messianic characterization and mission of the protagonist. The characters in *Friedenstag* lack any such agency, though their dramatic circumstances receive more realistic treatment than in *Guntram*. The extent of the menace in *Guntram* is never specified beyond a basic, ominous warning of massing armies, and the identity of the aggressors and the ultimate outcome of the battle announced at the end of the second act are never revealed. Furthermore, the hostility of the two Dukes in *Guntram* may derive more from paranoia than any real threat; their punitive actions prompt reprisals. It is tempting, too, with its elements of suppression, implied torture and the exploitation of art for the benefit of the state (the hymns of the Minnesingers in Act Two), to read *Guntram* (even more so than *Friedenstag*) as an allegorical counterpart to the world of the Third Reich even though its composition predated the Reich's ascendancy by decades.

The two operas also feature relatively loveless marriages, with the figure of the wife acting as a repository of benevolence that counteracts the malevolent and destructive intentions of the husband. In *Guntram*, this dynamic exists between the valiant Freihild and the vindictive Duke Robert; in *Friedenstag*, Maria and the Kommandant.⁴⁹ The spiteful characterizations and bass-baritone ranges of the two husbands make them distant cousins, though the Kommandant is given considerably more depth than the Duke Robert, who effectively exists as a cardboard melodramatic villain whose expiation triggers the circumstances of Guntram's spiritual crisis.⁵⁰ In this respect, too, another important element is missing in the case of *Friedenstag*: a consistently active agent for peace. In *Guntram*, the titular hero fulfills this function, but in

⁴⁸ Anonymous female characters, also from the presumably feudal peasant class, express the concerns of hunger and hardship in both operas as well.

⁴⁹ The first and last married couples Strauss depicted onstage, respectively.

⁵⁰ Strauss may have had this model in mind in suggesting the romantic subplot for *Friedenstag*.

Friedenstag, the only character who in any way comes close to fulfilling this role is Maria but she remains decidedly passive since both the fuse and the siege is halted by the offstage declaration of peace. In spite of their similarities, the prevailing tone of *Friedenstag* is one of irony, which sets it apart from the youthful confidence of *Guntram*. It is this ironic treatment of heroism that frequently tilts *Friedenstag* into burlesque territory, and which shapes the opera's dramaturgy in distinctive and complex ways.

CHAPTER THREE: MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC BURLESQUE IN *FRIEDENSTAG*

Strauss and Burlesque

Using the term “burlesque” in a close study of *Friedenstag* might imply a brazen comedic and sexual underpinning to the work, but this is hardly the case.¹ For the perpetually ironic Strauss, burlesque was a multifaceted and idiosyncratic technique used in numerous compositions to subvert musical and dramatic conventions and expectations, and, as in the case of *Friedenstag*, one that enabled the composer to overcome and compensate for his aversion to the opera’s militant subject matter. As he previously admitted to Hofmannsthal in 1916, while at work on *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in the midst of World War I:

And since my tragic side is soundly exhausted, and since after this war tragedy in the theatre for the moment strikes me as soundly imbecilic and naïve, I would like to apply this indomitable talent for operetta (I am, after all, the only composer today who has true humor and wit and a pronounced parodistic talent) ... (Sentimentality and parody are the sensations to which my talent responds most strongly and fruitfully) ... Long live the politically–satirical–parodistic operetta!²

The composer emphasizes parody here, which we may regard one of many facets of Straussian burlesque—typically an allusion to existing or familiar musical material (Strauss’s or that of other composers), and then a transformation of that material for ironic, as well as comedic, ends. Despite the added emphasis on “operetta,” which might impart a degree of ridicule, the more remarkable instances of burlesque in Strauss’s works are those that point to deeper implied dramatic connections between works. How these transformations exist as autonomous dramatic statements in addition to affirming other layers of meaning is a hallmark of Strauss’s skill.

¹ *Salome*, by contrast, easily submits to this interpretation, as does *Feuersnot*.

² “...und da meine tragische Seite ziemlich ausgepumpt ist und mir nach diesem Kriege Tragik auf dem Theater vorläufig ziemlich blöde und kindlich vorkommt, und dieses unbezwingliche Talent [zur Operette] (ich bin doch schließlich jetzt der einzige Komponist, der wirklich Humor und Witz und ein ausgesprochen parodistisches Talent hat) betätigen möchte ... (Sentimentalität und Parodie sind die Empfindungen, auf die mein Talent am stärksten und fruchtbarsten reagiert) ... Es lebe die politisch-satirisch-parodistische Operette!” Strauss to Hofmannsthal, June 5, 1916, *Strauss–Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel*, 335-36.

Strauss's intertextual allusions have garnered praise, but also criticism. Over the years, one of the principle charges laid against Strauss's operas, including *Friedenstag*, was their stylistic plurality and, by extension, a perceived lack of unity. Charles Osborne's remarks are typical: "its music is for the most part unworthy of Strauss, who seems to be unenthusiastically writing self-pastiche verging, at moments, on self-parody."³ On the other hand, Bryan Gilliam has persuasively identified how Strauss abandoned "stylistic uniformity" in his compositions in favor of "a language that reflects a modern preoccupation with the dilemma of history, one that arguably foreshadows the dissolution of the ideology of style in the late twentieth century."⁴

And, as Leon Botstein has commented:

Unlike Schoenberg, Strauss as a composer was self-consciously pessimistic, if not cynical about aesthetic progress. Awareness of modernity, in the sense of knowing one's historical place, was tantamount to using the past against itself. . . Strauss, beginning with *Der Rosenkavalier*, helped to invent a new twentieth-century form of self-critical historicism. What distinguished the Straussian form of historicism. . . was the fragmentation in the use of the past and the irony associated with Strauss's (and Hofmannsthal's) approach to historical appropriation. In the name of the modern, fragments of the past had to be brought back, suggestively, and reordered and reintegrated anew.⁵

These notions of "self-critical historicism" and the use of "the past against itself" aptly describe the composer's approach in *Friedenstag*, as does the crafting of "fragments of the past" into a new and unique entity. Furthermore, Morten Kristiansen has identified the combinatory effect of *Stilkunst*, or "style art," at work in Strauss's second opera *Feuersnot*,⁶ itself another clear dramaturgical ancestor of *Friedenstag* in its irreverent stance, the conspicuousness of its approach and its blatant musical parallels to and with Wagner. Strauss's aim in *Feuersnot* was twofold: burlesquing both Wagner and the city of Munich, which had at one time repudiated

³ Osborne, *The Complete Operas*, 200. Osborne vaguely recognizes that the choice may be intentional.

⁴ Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss*, 89.

⁵ Botstein, "The Enigmas of Richard Strauss," 18-19.

⁶ See Morten Kristiansen, "Richard Strauss, *Die Moderne*, and the Concept of *Stilkunst*," *The Musical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 689-749, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600974>.

Wagner and Strauss's own opera *Guntram*. Wagner frequently Strauss's became subject, irony being one way to escape the elder master's shadow without being an outright imitator.⁷

For Strauss, allusions could involve specific quotations or broader evocations, and in the case of Wagner, these could point to both musical and dramatic material. As he developed as an opera composer, Strauss was able to engage with Wagner in larger dramaturgical ways.⁸

Regarding *Friedenstag*, Michael Steinberg observes that "the score is a pastiche of Wagnerian clichés with all of Wagner's psychological depth removed."⁹ Burlesque gestures in *Friedenstag* are often conspicuous, giving the score a derivative feel at first glance. Yet this perception of insincerity dissipates as the deeper implications of their obvious nature are considered in full. As Gilliam has perceptively observed, "parody need not be seen as an attempt to tear down its referent: Strauss clearly wanted to continue the Wagnerian musical discourse, but on his own terms."¹⁰

Burlesque, Parody and Pastiche

Before examining *Friedenstag* in detail, let us consider burlesque in relation to other important (and overlapping) intertextual techniques: parody and pastiche. Our main objective here is to understand Strauss's application of techniques, but certain clarifications remain necessary since these concepts have acquired complex denotative and connotative meanings in critical discourse

⁷ For a deeper investigation of Strauss and Wagner's legacy see Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, especially 10-51.

⁸ As early as the *Burleske for Piano and Orchestra* from 1885-86, Strauss was mocking the *Tristan* chord (at the conclusion of the cadenza passage). The texts and scores of *Guntram*, *Salome*, *Der Rosenkavalier* (particularly in the scene between Octavian and the Marschallin in Act One), *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* are rife with Wagnerian antecedents.

⁹ Steinberg, "Richard Strauss and the Question," 178.

¹⁰ Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 27. This effectively began with the early tone poems.

and are often used interchangeably—sometimes inadvertently.¹¹ Distinctive in and of themselves, these compositional devices all hinge upon the act of referencing a distinct object(s) or antecedent(s), and presenting that reference (again, either as a direct quotation, a modified quotation, or a more nebulous evocation) in a new and immediate musical and/or dramatic context.

To what degree do Strauss's allusions embrace their historical referents? Acts of pastiche negotiate the spectrum between mimicry and evocation. Distinct from *pasticcio*, pastiche is defined as original compositional material "deliberately written in the style of another period or manner."¹² Consider, for example, the D-flat major aria of the Italian Singer in *Der Rosenkavalier*, seemingly a simple act of pastiche, and a diegetic one at that. Its melodic contour evokes nineteenth-century *bel canto*, yet it is still cast in Strauss's own *milieu*. The anachronistic effect is compounded since the opera is set in the eighteenth century, in the Vienna of Maria Theresa. Strauss morphs the Singer's pastiche aria in the direction of burlesque by deliberately obfuscating a sense of authentic historicism. This strategy illuminates another aspect of Straussian burlesque, namely that the purpose and significance of allusive acts are not always forthright. Moments that seem to lampoon a particular style can undergo additional musical or dramatic transformation to achieve a different level of significance, leaving the burlesque gesture open to a wide range of interpretations. The Italian Singer's aria provides further illustration, since its appearance in the levée scene in Act One is not treated as a complete discrete song, but one whose performance negotiates a chaotic environment. Furthermore, fragments of it reappear

¹¹ Take, for example, the use of "parody" in the moniker "parody mass," a musical setting of the mass which (to risk a broad generalization) relies on points of imitation with pre-existing musical material purely for compositional, and not humorous, objectives.

¹² *Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Pastiche," accessed March 27, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e7725>.

in the Act Three D-flat major trio, subsuming what was apparently a mundane and commercially cheap melody into a critically sublime musical expression.

While pastiche may serve as the basis for a burlesque treatment of an allusion, parody and burlesque would seem to be more, if not completely, synonymous. Both approaches mimic or evoke material with the purpose of undercutting their referents. As with pastiche, parody can be subsumed into larger musical and dramatic structures. Yet, one would not go so far as to describe Strauss as a “parodist,” since his works are not exclusively large-form correlative imitations of pre-existing compositions. Nor when he undercuts his referents is he doing so merely for that purpose. For Strauss, acts of burlesque contain an element of critique distinct from the conventional mockery intended in acts of parody—an element made all the more distinct by the way it engages with the expectations and tastes of an audience. On a basic level, the capacity to recognize the referential object (whether it is a musical moment or a dramatic gesture) is essential for the important step of connecting and evaluating the object with its burlesque treatment, thereby engendering the sensation of humor or comedy. Thus, a certain degree of self-awareness is involved. For Adorno, and others, this reflexivity—a form of self-irony—is another weakness in Strauss’s art, coupled with its heterogeneity:

The artistic vanity of the post-Wagnerian [Strauss] who believes himself capable of the impossible, is colored by the awareness of the impossibility of program pieces, by self-irony; the latter was the hallmark of all art in the era of vitalism, finding literary expression in the works of Anatole France and Thomas Mann. The narrators mock the fact that they claim to have seen what they narrate; the musician, that he lacks objects, the surrogate of his objectivity.¹³

While concerned here with the debates on Strauss and program music, Adorno’s critique might be applied to Strauss’s operatic ventures. Instead of the self-irony being directed at the nature of

¹³ Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, “Richard Strauss. Born June 11, 1864,” trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, *Perspectives on New Music* 4, no. 1 (Autumn-Winter 1965): 20, accessed December 9, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/832523>.

programmatic intent, the musician mocks expectations by articulating notions of musical and dramatic plurality, as multiple entities are invoked and placed in dialogue with one another. Such modernist tendencies to simultaneously create and critique tend to disturb any notions of solemnity surrounding musical dramatic works. Strauss sought to distance himself from any sense of somber posing, as his comment to Hofmannsthal in 1916 about the impropriety of tragedy after the Great War reveals.

Friedenstag, we should note, is more than a quilt of allusions or ironic asides consciously stitched together by Strauss according to an elaborate master plan.¹⁴ We might also consider what Alfred Kalisch termed “unconscious reminiscences,” unintentional allusions that frequently worked their way into his compositions.¹⁵ Given his extensive career as a conductor and his capacious musical memory, Strauss’s reservoir of musical ideas was substantial, as was his detailed knowledge of the staging of many operatic works. Artistic similarity, seemingly without any real purpose, is unsurprisingly easy to perceive. When Willi Schuh took out an article in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* highlighting a fragment of the Swiss *Volkslied* “Freut euch des Lebens” in a passage in *Die schweigsame Frau*, Strauss was none too pleased: “I have openly said I have not been particularly happy about ‘Freut euch des Lebens.’ I have no great love for the reminiscence hunts of philologists. What’s more, I do not know the folksong at all and can hardly remember if I heard the melody anywhere. In any case, it is not a conscious quotation!”¹⁶

¹⁴ For a philological approach to quotations in Strauss’s works, see Günter Brosche, “Musical quotations and allusions in the works of Richard Strauss,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, edited by Charles Youmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 213-25.

¹⁵ Alfred Kalisch, “Richard Strauss: The Man,” in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 275. Kalisch cites two instances: the resemblance of the “Wiegenlied” in *Symphonia Domestica* to the “Venezianisches Gondellied” in Book I, Op. 19b of *Lieder ohne Worte* by Mendelssohn and the resemblance of a “love motif” in *Salome* to an unidentified cavalry call of the Austrian army. The former instance took Strauss by total surprise when pointed out to him.

¹⁶ “Über »Freut euch des Lebens« habe ich mich offen gesagt, nicht besonders gefreut. Ich liebe der Philologen Reminiscenzenjagd nicht sehr. Außerdem kenne ich das Volkslied gar nicht, kann mich kaum erinnern, die Melodie irgendwo gehört zu haben. Jedenfalls ist es kein bewußtes Citat! Wohin kommt man mit [illustration]

Such an act, conscious or unconscious, should not be considered an artistic sin. Borrowing, appropriation, quotation and the refashioning of musical material to varying degrees have long been the rule rather than an exception in music.

The Bleak Opening of *Friedenstag*

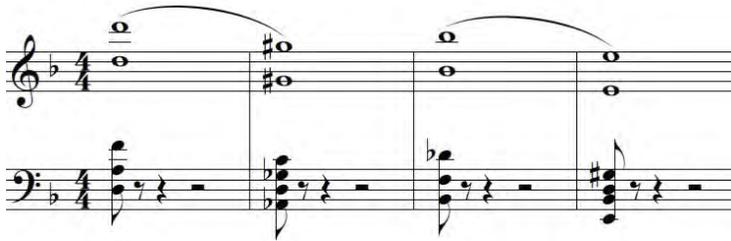
An example of burlesque with broad significance is found in the opening bars of *Friedenstag*. The opera begins in a bleak D minor, with a seemingly unassuming sequence of descending tritones. (Consistent with the majority of Strauss's operas, there is no formal overture or prelude.) This melodic use of tritones, the infamous medieval *diabolus in musica*, is not revolutionary in itself. As the opening gesture of an opera, however, it produces a profound consciousness of discord, suggestive of both the stark world of the opera and the literal discord between the opera's two rival armies. At the same time, it recalls the openings of two major symphonic works in D minor characterized by falling fifths and fourths, respectively: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mahler's First Symphony. The allusion as it aligns with Beethoven points forward to what many have sensed as a connection between the choral passages of *Friedenstag* with those in the Ninth Symphony and *Fidelio*. Conventional wisdom furthermore aligns the martial music in the opera with similar moments in the works of Mahler.

In the Beethoven and Mahler symphonies in play here, the aural world effectively emerges from an almost neutral space, with the falling figures sounding either over a tremolo or orchestral pedal. In contrast to these consonant openings, *Friedenstag* begins with a pungent falling dissonance, aurally painting a barren landscape with its withered inhabitants, to striking effect. With the descending figures sounding in the woodwinds, doubled at the octave, Strauss punctuates these simple phrases with block chords (strings, bassoons) on the downbeats of each

angefangen überhaupt?" Strauss to Schuh, January 23, 1944 in Willi Schuh, ed., *Richard Strauss: Briefwechsel mit Willi Schuh* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1969), 59.

measure. Supportive minor chords alternate with sonorities consisting of two tritones separated by a minor third (Ex. 3.1).

Example 3.1. Opening tritones.



This series of descending tritones forms one of the more obvious associative themes of the score, recurring frequently to illustrate the concepts of desolation and fatigue associated with the citizenry. (It also bears a further marked similarity to Mahler's First Symphony in that each descent is followed by a major second ascent before the next falling tritone, the first ascent spelled out enharmonically as G-sharp to B-flat in Ex. 3.1 above.)

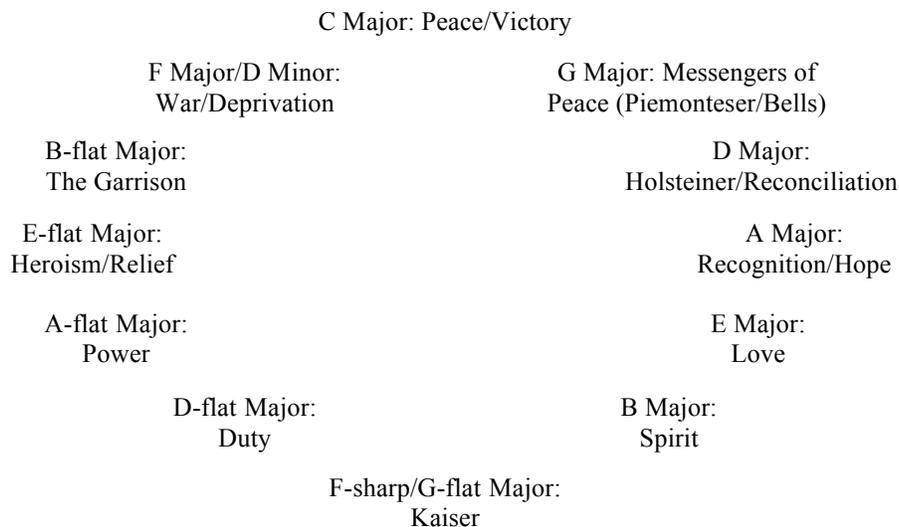
The effect of dissonance is therefore compounded—a horizontal statement reinforced by a tart vertical statement—and immediately undermines any notion of an easy resolution, musically or dramatically. This anticipatory sense of a withheld resolution has further roots in both Beethoven and Mahler. The falling intervals which open the Ninth Symphony, a fifth (E–A) followed by an inverted fourth, play out over a open fifth in the strings on A and E. Mahler's falling fourths also sound over a widely spaced pedal on A. These harmonic prolongations of the dominant at the expense of the tonic are further reinforced by melodic obfuscation: Beethoven's statements of the falling intervals become more compressed with each restatement, while Mahler continually dredges up several subsidiary thematic ideas from his primordial mist. Strauss avoids such elaborations, allowing the rudimentary opening to speak for itself in its naked bitterness.

Associative Themes and Tonalities

Strauss's negotiation with Wagner's legacy involved his handling of associative musical themes and tonalities. In the same way that the score is not a patchwork of ironic quotations, Strauss did not assign formula-like motifs to characters, places, ideas and the like in *Friedenstag*. Yet, several moments in the score involving burlesque do hinge on the use of thematic material and merit closer investigation. Strauss's penchant for associating tonal areas with particular concepts and characters and exploiting tonal relationships for dramatic ends is now well known. The aforementioned embedding of the tritone into the fabric of the score is in fact connected to a larger complex of contrasting keys highlighting tritonal relationships, a practice Strauss frequently employed to depict notions of discord in his tone poems and operas.¹⁷

As Kenneth Birkin has shown, almost all of the major dramatic and musical conflicts in *Friedenstag* can be arranged into a series of opposing tritonal relationships, which roughly aligns with the familiar circle of fifths (see fig. 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Associative Keys in *Friedenstag*.¹⁸



¹⁷ Two excellent examples include the Wife/Husband B/F relationship in *Symphonia Domestica* and the tonal polarity of the quintet of Jews in *Salome* (D) with the duet of the placid Nazarenes (A-flat).

¹⁸ Adapted from Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 261.

Some of these tonal identifications are substantial and extensive, while others, such as the keys representing the Kaiser and “Power,” appear briefly as tonicizations or modulations. Birkin’s model likewise does not take into account relationships between relative or parallel keys, such as the relationship between E-flat major (a fabled heroic key, though here more associated with relief from wasteful heroism) and C minor (a key often linked to war and tragedy), an important tonal duality with implications for the entire opera. Nevertheless, such a configuration helps to illuminate the tritone as an important musical building block of Strauss’s score as well as the major associative keys. As a whole, *Friedenstag* evinces a tight tonal outline (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Tonal Outline of *Friedenstag*

Scene	Tonality	Rehearsal No.	Text
A-1	D minor		“Hast was gesehn?”
	G major	8 + 4mm.	“La rosa...” (Song of the Piemonteser)
	D minor	25 + 7 mm.	“Ein feiger Bursch.”
A-2	D minor	28	“Hunger! Brot!” (Offstage Chorus)
	C minor	36	<i>Trauermarsch</i>
	D minor	39	“Hier ist des Kaisers Boden.”
A-3	D minor	41	“In aller pflicht’gen Demut...”
	B-flat minor	50	“Sieg!”
	D-flat major	51	“Sieg!”
	D minor	54	“Hunger! Brot!”
	F major	64	“Dann tut die Tore auf!”
A-4	D minor	67	“Ihr Alten habt in mancher Schlacht...”
	F major	71	“Zu Magdeburg...”
	C major	74	“Die Jäger standen...”
	D minor	78	“Nie war ich Kämpfer...”
	D major	80	“Doch blickt Ihr fragend stumm auf mich...”
	D-flat major	81	“Mein bester Krieger...”
B-1	E minor/Unstable	89	“Wie? Niemand hier?”
	E minor/Unstable	93	“Hohl wie der Tod...”
B-2	C-flat minor	97	“Nur einer hier in diesem wildem Turm...”
	C# minor/E major	99	“Und dennoch warb...”
	B minor	101 + 7 mm.	“Wohl durft ich dir...”
	D minor	105	“...Friede.”
	E major	108	“...hebt strahlend sich die Sonne.”
B-3	Unstable	112	Kommandant enters
	G major	123 + 5 mm.	“Dank dir, Sonne...” (Duet)
	Unstable	129	“Der Kaiser stand im Saal.”
	C minor	133	“Krieg...”
B-4	C minor	142	Soldiers enter/Wachtmeister sent below with fuse
	D minor	145	First cannon shot in distance

Table 3.1. Tonal Scheme of *Friedenstag* (cont.)

Scene	Tonality	Rehearsal No.	Text
B-5	G major	148	First bell sounds in the distance
	D minor/F major	155	“In langen Reihen: der Reiter zuerst...”
C-1	E-flat major	159	“Das Zeichen, das Zeichen...”
C-2	D major	166	Entrance march of the Holsteiner’s army
C-3	D major	169	“Wo ist der Mann...”
	C major	172	“Gediehn das Werk...”
	Unstable	176	“Verflucht versprechen!”
C-4	E-flat major	181	“Geliebter, nicht das Schwert!”
	D major	187 + 9mm.	“Sei uns begrüßt...”
C-5	F major	198	“Warum kämpfen wir Jahre um Jahre?”
	A major	203 + 11mm.	“Sei uns begrüßt...”
	C major	206	“Wagt es zu denken...”

Two fundamental progressions comprise the opera’s tonal trajectory: from D minor to D major, and from C minor to C major, schemes which echo Beethoven’s Ninth and Fifth symphonies respectively. Like *Friedenstag*, these symphonies begin in musical darkness but conclude with emergent musical light—a path Strauss had charted before in *Elektra*. The battle between D minor, which dominates section A, and D major, which dominates section C, is intensified by the semitonal relationship with D-flat, an intervallic distance Strauss used frequently to highlight dramatic entities at odds or excluded somehow from the tonal mainstream.¹⁹ The battle between the tonal areas comes to a head in section B, particularly in the scene between Maria and the Kommandant. During their confrontation scene (B-3), Strauss intensifies the sense of conflict between peace and annihilation by constantly modulating between associative keys. Maria momentarily establishes G major before her ecstatic duet with the Kommandant concludes with a tumultuous interplay between C minor and E-flat major, finally resolving on a Neapolitan D-flat.

¹⁹ See Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner’s Mountain*, 138. In some instances, semitonal juxtaposition makes a compelling argument for the existence of a double tonic in certain Strauss operas.



Figure 3.2. Ludwig Sievert's set rendering for the Munich premiere. The libretto's description of a circular hall was reinterpreted as a ruined courtyard.²⁰

Following the distinctive descending tritone pairs and before establishing a strong tonal context at the beginning of the opera, Strauss employs a motivic unit that establishes the scene as military in nature. When the curtain rises on the soldiers of the garrison languishing in a circular chamber of the besieged city's citadel, we see a cross section of officers, supplemented by a larger body of marksmen (see fig. 3.2). The thematic cell underscoring this scene is one of

²⁰ Ulrike Hessler, ed., *Macht der Gefühle: 350 Jahre Oper in München* (Berlin: Henschel, 2003), 158.

“rhythmic gesture,” a technique often used by Strauss.²¹ In this instance, the gesture takes the form of a cyclic marching theme consisting of a dotted eighth-sixteenth-quarter note figure on the tonic of D, with a downward leap to the dominant followed by a semitone step upward before repeating itself (Ex. 3.2).

Example 3.2. The Garrison’s “March”



The repeated cell is embedded throughout the opera, frequently as an ostinato, often sequenced and sped up for moments of climactic escalation. Its rhythmic contours also attach themselves to the vocal lines of the Kommandant and the soldiers of the garrison, particularly those of the Schütze, the Wachtmeister and the Konstabel. (It also manages to resurface in the concluding hymn, expanded as a dotted quarter-eighth figure.) With this compact rhythmic gesture, Strauss consciously or not supported one of Zweig’s mandates for Gregor regarding the Kommandant: “From the start, he must have a militaristic diction, which distinguishes itself from those of the others, a man who is used to commanding and being short.”²²

In terms of the larger dramaturgical structure, the march is a primary means of conveying the military realm in musical terms, as are the various soldiers’ songs. As musical units, both rely heavily on unyielding formal structures to produce order and unified behavior among the garrison, and help to galvanize their resolve. Yet any notions of causality are challenged, for in the world of the citadel such attempts only achieve a certain measure of success. In addition, the

²¹ Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner’s Mountain*, 83.

²² “Er muß von Anfang an eine *militärische* Diktion haben, die sich von denen der Anderen unterscheidet, ein Mann, der gewohnt ist zu befehlen und kurz zu sein.” Zweig to Gregor, July 26, 1935, *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, 239. Italics in the original.

genre of the soldier's song, as it is first introduced, casts a critical shadow on the lives of the soldiers.

Following the jejune D minor expository dialogue of the Schütze and Wachtmeister describing how the enemy has set a farm ablaze in the field, the grim and expectant mood is momentarily dispelled by the sunny G major vocal entrance of the young Piemonteser, bearer of a message from the Kaiser and now singing while half asleep. As previously mentioned, both the character and his vocal style can be considered an instance of self-burlesque on Strauss's part, a clear throwback to the Italian Singer of *Der Rosenkavalier*, though it is important to acknowledge Gregor's assertion that the tune came from a memory of his time in the Tyrol during World War I.²³ More significant for the opera's dramaturgy, the Piemonteser represents the solid first instance of a military figure in *Friedenstag* communicating through the genre of a soldier song—one that strikingly diverts attention away from the soldierly concerns at hand. The Piemonteser's song consists of three stanzas, the last of which is interrupted by the heckling chorus of marksmen. Each verse revolves around the vision of a feminine object from the Piemonteser's "home," whether real or metaphorical. The first verse focuses on a rose ("La rosa"), the second, a sweetheart named Pedretta, and third, a "madre santissima" (sainted mother). All these visions are transitory, passing away or expelled with the refrain "E non ritorna più" (And never to return)—a chilling commentary for a young soldier ("Bursch" or lad) in a strange land likely to never return home.²⁴ All is not entirely lost, since his pleas for the "sainted mother" are eventually answered later on in the opera with the arrival of Maria, a continuance of

²³ For a detailed examination of the Piemonteser, see Giangiorgio Satragni, "Das Lied des Piemontesers in der Oper *Friedenstag*," *Richard Strauss-Blätter* 59 (2008): 32-67.

²⁴ The fate of the Piemonteser is not revealed. He does not make any further vocal appearances after his final "E non ritorna più" nor is he mentioned in any stage directions after the soldiers disperse at the end of section A.

Marian imagery and language used throughout the libretto, which is itself a reflection of Gregor's Austro-Catholic roots.²⁵

Written in an Italian dialect, the song of the Piemonteser provides a clear musical and dramatic contrast to its surroundings, prompting the other soldiers (they are evidently fluent in Italian) to respond to its idealized notions. The high tessitura, reaching up as a high B natural,²⁶ and sweet lyricism have a delusory effect on weary listeners like the Konstabel, who is brought out of his reverie by the morose Schütze.²⁷ Musically, the transition to the song involves a clever manipulation of the tonic/dominant relationship between D and G. The modulation from D minor to G major could be considered either a leap to a borrowed major subdominant (a plagal half-cadence), or, to invert the configuration, a leap from a minor dominant D back to a major tonic of G, characterized as a more healthy, desirable and invigorating tonal space than D minor. This relationship can also be extended to include the concluding key of the opera, C major, making D (in both its major and minor modes) an applied dominant (V/V of C) of the key of peace, the musical objective or goal of the work. In this way, the Piemonteser is not simply a messenger of the Kaiser but an emissary of the tonal peace that concludes the opera. Ironically, the only one who praises the Piemonteser is the Kommandant, who is grateful for the delivery of the Kaiser's letter, calling it his "last miracle" (letzte Wunder).

Religion in *Friedenstag*

Sadly, the melancholy garrison proves intractable to the Piemonteser's charm. They deride the young man's homesickness by mimicking his text and fragmenting his melody—a fleeting

²⁵ It is worth noting that two Strauss characters possess this Christian name (in every sense of the phrase): Maria and the Marschallin, Marie Therese. Since she also is described as appearing in semi-military garb, the name of Maria may represent an indirect invocation of the French avatar of liberty, Marianne.

²⁶ The Italian Singer's range extends to the same, spelled enharmonically as a C-flat.

instance of burlesque involving diegetic music. The larger chorus of marksmen respond with a doggerel song of their own, into which Strauss introduces a quotation that will become a thematic cornerstone of the score: Martin Luther’s hymn “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” (A mighty fortress is our God).²⁸

Strauss only uses the first phrase of the hymn (Ex. 3.3) to underscore the soldiers’ irreverent line “Der Hinz schwört auf der Bibel” (Tom swore on the Bible), conveying their disdain for the religious fanaticism that has led them to this moment while simultaneously characterizing the opposing army. Strauss stresses the contrast between those robust in faith (the Holsteiner’s army) and those reliant on weapons (the garrison) through the accompaniment for the next line, “Der Kunz schwört aufs Gewehr” (Dick swore by his gun), when a trumpet tosses off a vague and forgettable fanfare (Ex. 3.4). Though it mimics the arching contour of “Ein feste Burg,” the fanfare’s insipidity suggests that the world of the citadel is in a weaker position than its opponents, both musically and dramatically. The power of the hymn is made concrete in the confrontation of the two commanders in section C, when the Holsteiner, supported by a majestic intonation of the hymn, asserts the might of the newer faith over the Kommandant’s withered power.

Example 3.3. “Ein feste Burg” as initially stated after Rehearsal No. 26.



Example 3.4. Fanfare.



²⁸ Its composition is dated between 1527 and 1529. The earliest extant version in print is found in *Kirche gesang, mit vil schönen Psalmen vnnd Melodey, gantz geendert un gemert* (Nuremberg, 1531). See Marilyn Kay Stulken, *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 307-8.

In burlesquing the hymn, Strauss invites musical and dramatic analysis of its source and historical significance. Based on Psalm 46 (God is our Refuge and our Strength), “Ein feste Burg” occupied a complex ideological crucible of music, religion and politics during the Reformation. Its presence in *Friedenstag* continues a lengthy historicist tradition of embodying the Protestant struggle through a musical avatar. It has some claim as an authentic battle anthem of the Reformation, allegedly sung by the soldiers of Gustavus Adolphus before the First Battle of Breitenfeld in 1631—a major Protestant victory that marked the beginning of the so-called “Swedish” phase of the war.²⁹ While reflecting antagonism against the German principalities of the time, the anecdote reflects certain feelings of reverence for Gustavus Adolphus in the nineteenth century, drawn out through the paradigm of nationalism:

[The Swedish army] was likewise religious. This host was Lutheran like its king and heralded itself in every way as such. Here the forgotten tools of the sixteenth century were still effective: “A mighty fortress is our God” was still sung, understood and respected. How terribly they contrasted with the godless hordes who elsewhere savaged our poor Fatherland in the name of the one, true Faith.³⁰

The nobility of purpose and deportment of Gustavus Adolphus was praised, in contrast to the brutal and mercenary motivations of other European kingdoms attempting to usurp the Holy Roman Empire. The hymn continued to serve as a rallying anthem, and was frequently printed and reprinted in countless variations in soldier songbooks. Its attachment to the cause of unification was cemented at the Wartburg Festival of 1817 and persisted through World War I.³¹

²⁹ Stulken, 308. Also known as the Battle of Leipzig, where the Protestants were victorious.

³⁰ “Ebenso was es religiös. Dies Heer was lutherisch wie sein König und kündigte sich in jedem Zuge als ein solches an, hier waren noch die vergessenen Hebel des 16. Jahrhunderts wirksam, hier wurde noch das „Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott” gesungen, verstanden und nachgeföhlt. Wie fürchterlich stechen dagegen die gottlosen Banden ab, die sonst unser armes Vaterland zerfleischten im Namen des allein wahren Glaubens.” William Oncken, ed., *Ludwig Häusser’s Geschichte des Zeitalters der Reformation, 1517-1648* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1868), 548.

³¹ For a detailed exploration of the hymn’s nineteenth-century reception in nineteenth-century politics, see Michael Fischer, *Religion, Nation, Krieg: Der Lutherchoral Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott zwischen Befreiungskriegen und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Münster: Waxmann, 2014).

From the seventeenth century onward, composers continually utilized “Ein feste Burg” for its associations with faith and belief.³² Strauss was surely familiar with many such instances. J. S. Bach famously made it the thematic core of the eponymous cantata “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,” BWV 80. Closer to Strauss’s time, the musical associations of the tune proved to be inseparable from the political associations, especially as German unification loomed on the horizon. Mendelssohn and Wagner put the hymn to seminal use, and Strauss admired both composers.³³ The hymn sounds in the final movement of Mendelssohn’s “Reformation” Symphony, composed for the 1830 tercentennial of the Augsburg Confession—a milestone of religious freedom in German history. Wagner incorporated the tune into his *Kaisermarsch*, WWV 104, composed to commemorate the declaration of the German Empire in January 1871. Used as a secondary subject throughout the march (the primary theme is a chorale of Wagner’s own invention), the hymn almost literally chimes in to support the triumph of the fledgling empire in a regal B-flat major.³⁴ Yet it is in a French grand opera that “Ein feste Burg” played a comparable musical (and dramaturgical) role to the one it serves in *Friedenstag*: Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots*.

The links between Strauss and Meyerbeer are scant. Not surprisingly, Strauss did not hold Meyerbeer or his works in high esteem, though the extent of his exposure to Meyerbeer’s operas is open to speculation.³⁵ While Strauss heard *Les Huguenots* on two occasions—albeit in

³² Post-*Friedenstag*, Viktor Ullmann and Peter Kien incorporated the hymn into the final of their opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, composed at Theresienstadt in 1943.

³³ For a detailed study of Mendelssohn and Strauss, see R. Larry Todd, “Strauss before Liszt and Wagner: Some Observations,” in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 3-40.

³⁴ For Wagner, the primary connection with the hymn was through Bach even before the *Kaisermarsch* was composed: “‘And Bach is Luther,’ R. went on. ‘Just look at the calm way in which he writes the boldest, most daring of things.’” Entry of February 20, 1870 in Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, ed., *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 1:191.

³⁵ See Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 177.

truncated form—he never conducted the work.³⁶ Still, several facets concerning the inclusion of “Ein feste Berg” in *Les Huguenots* offer stimulating comparison with *Friedenstag*. The hymn is used in both operas as a musical statement as well as a weapon amidst the conflict between warring religious factions.³⁷ Though the hymn is divorced from its German nationalist associations in *Huguenots*, both Martin Luther and his religious convictions are lionized throughout, placing the opera in greater spiritual proximity to *Friedenstag* than may be supposed.

Meyerbeer makes the hymn the core thematic unit of the overture. First intoned by a brass chorale, he elaborates and expands on it in a series of variations in E-flat major, a traditional key of heroism, as well as a key associated with marches reaching back to Haydn. In the opera proper, the Huguenot characters utilize the hymn as a diegetic antidote of strength and stability to combat the ideological and musical identities of the fanatic Catholics. It is initially associated with the servant character Marcel. A survivor of the siege of La Rochelle, Marcel sings the hymn (in French translation) during a gathering of Catholic nobles, almost as an incantation to combat their influence on his master Raoul (“Seigneur, rempart et seul soutien”).³⁸ It next sounds in the final number of the second scene of the fifth act, entitled *Vision* (Number 28C in the score). After Raoul and his Catholic paramour Valentine are united in a cursory wedding officiated by Marcel, the trio experiences an apparition of celestial bliss—a revelation not unlike the one presented at the end of *Friedenstag*. In response, they ecstatically carol the

³⁶ Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 202 and 348. It is unknown how familiar he was with Liszt’s *Grande fantaisie sur des thèmes de l’opéra Les Huguenots*. The only Meyerbeer opera he conducted with any regularity was *Robert le Diable* during his tenure at the Berlin Hofoper. See Raymond Holden, *Richard Strauss: A Musical Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 186-88.

³⁷ The opera’s frank depiction of fanatic Catholicism necessitated its revision in German productions during the nineteenth century. See Steven Huebner, “*Huguenots, Les*,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O008109>.

³⁸ He follows this with another diegetic number, the grotesque song “Piff, paff” which gleefully chronicles the misfortunes of the Catholic armies.

hymn (again in E-flat major) before they are all mowed down by rabid Catholic assassins amidst the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre.³⁹

Strauss's use of the hymn (something not directly demanded by Gregor's text) may seem to simply serve the demands of verisimilitude to bolster the scenario. Its swollen presentation in connection with the Holsteiner and the religious fervor he represents, however, reflects Strauss's characteristic tendency to critique religion in his operas, *Salome* being the major operatic precedent.⁴⁰ As he wrote to Zweig when presented with a number of religious subjects as dramatic fodder: "... perhaps you don't know to what extent I am a vehement Antichrist... In *Salome*, I wanted to compose the good Jochanaan more or less as a Hanswurst: for me, a preacher in the wilderness, to boot one who feeds on locusts, is something ineffably hilarious."⁴¹ Strauss would likewise have been at spiritual odds with the type of religious fanaticism and national subservience associated with the hymn's erstwhile musical appearances. Strauss would later confront this fanaticism musically in the final sequence of *Friedenstag*.

Fighting the Rats: Burlesque and the *Volk*

Following the soldier's jocose verses, the citizens of the town are heard offstage, approaching the citadel to beg the Kommandant to surrender the city.⁴² Their physical entrance is prefigured by

³⁹ Similar to *Friedenstag*, *Les Huguenots* also concludes in C major (rather abruptly) with the bier of Queen Marguerite de Valois appearing onstage just after the Catholics execute the trio. This seemingly brings an end to the bloodshed, another instance of a *deus ex machina* ending, but one unfortunately just a few bars too late to save the protagonists.

⁴⁰ A relevant example of religious burlesque in the tone poems would be the use of the chant "Credo in unum Deum" in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

⁴¹ "...aber Sie wissen vielleicht noch gar nicht, ein wie leidenschaftlicher Antichrist ich bin ... Ich wollte in *Salome* den braven Johanaan mehr oder minder als Hanswurst komponieren: für mich hat so ein Prediger in der Wüste, der sich noch dazu von Heuschrecken nährt, etwas unbeschreiblich komisches." Hanswurst is a comedic German stock character similar to Pantalone in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition. Strauss and Zweig, *Briefwechsel*, 128.

⁴² During the Viennese premiere of the work, in 1939, the soldiers dissolved into laughter after their verses preceding this segue. While such a staging choice/vocal interpolation is not indicated in the printed score, the fact that the Vienna production utilized the same artistic leaders as the Munich premiere would seem to indicate that Strauss at least tacitly approved of such a choice, especially since he was also in attendance. Richard Strauss,

their offstage cries of “Hunger! Brot!” split between the lower male voices on “Hunger” (descending a fourth), and the higher male and female voices on “Brot.” This latter musical statement morphs continually throughout the scene, relying heavily on minor and diminished chords in almost painful stepwise resolution. Castigating the citizens as “the Enemy within” (Der Feind im Land), the Wachtmeister calls their attempt at to approach the Kommandant an act of “open rebellion” (offne [*sic*] Rebellion). Since the citadel is forbidden to all but the garrison, the marksmen make ready to fire on the approaching “rats” (Ratten).⁴³ Ironically, the citizenry prove more successful than the enemy army, overwhelming the lower guard and breaking through the gate (on a cacophonous Neapolitan E-flat) into the heart of the citadel.⁴⁴

After the soldiers resign themselves to let the citizens approach, Strauss transitions into the first of the two martial sequences that accompany the penetration of the citadel. The first passage (in A-2) is explicitly labeled *Trauermarsch* in the score. Given Strauss’s memorable dismissal of heroism as embodied in the funeral procession music of the dead Siegfried in Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*, the label *Trauermarsch* stands out all the more. Both the label and the march’s key carry burlesque implications, which are enhanced by the plangent musical treatment. The sense of burlesque is compounded since the march is assigned to an unconventionally heroic operatic entity, the citizens, described by the libretto as “eine Gespensterschar,” or a crowd of specters. Strauss, like Wagner in *Götterdämmerung* and other composers elsewhere, embraces a dark and brooding C minor for his funeral march, but presents no tribute to deceased heroism.⁴⁵ Instead of a heroic C minor, Strauss offers up the mournful

Edition Wiener Staatsoper Live: Vol. 15 Richard Strauss: Arabella / Friedenstag / Ariadne auf Naxos, Chorus and Orchestra of the Wiener Staatsoper, conducted by Clemens Krauss, *Friedenstag* recorded on June 10, 1939, KOCH 3-1465-2, 1994, CD.

⁴³ Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 12-13.

⁴⁴ Zweig reinforced the act of storming of the citadel in the scenario draft he prepared for Gregor.

⁴⁵ The C minor funeral march (*Marcia funebre*) of Beethoven’s “Eroica” Symphony is part of this context.

dirge of a disillusioned and ailing populace dragging themselves up to the citadel to beg for surrender. The music eschews any semblance of the grandiose, relying on dissonant sequences of ascending chords to illustrate massive privation. (This also marks the only place in the printed score where Strauss utilizes a theatre organ.) All these means are later aped by the mirroring march in the final section of the opera (C-2), when the enemy army enters after the declaration of peace. Strauss makes this march an ebullient contrast to the first by integrating “Ein feste Burg” as a dynamic and celebratory ground bass. Layered upon it is a robust but clomping orchestral elaboration in a bright and bursting D major that jocosely and obnoxiously surmounts D minor’s domination of the score.⁴⁶

The *Trauermarsch* in scene A-2 is followed by the confrontation scene between a deputation of citizens, led by the Bürgermeister, and the Kommandant, who abruptly enters and throws down a musket in defiance of the mob.⁴⁷ Through a contemporary lens, the scene reads all the more remarkable today for the contrasts it presents to the qualities of obedience and hegemony valued by the Third Reich. The petitions of the Bürgermeister, the blind Prälat and the whole deputation become increasingly demonstrative the more the Kommandant resists, and he counters their logic with extensive harangues.⁴⁸ In retaliation, the voices of the populace overwhelm and drown out the Kommandant, raucously upsetting the perfect cadence of his D-flat major oration praising “Victory, my glorious unapproachable god!” (Sieg, mein herrlicher unnahbarer Gott!) with a panoply of outrage reinforced by the orchestra.

⁴⁶ The unfettered opulence may also owe something to rococo exuberance Strauss gave to the incidental music for *Der Bürger als Edelmann* or the so-called “Turkish” in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

⁴⁷ The score gives no details as to the identities of the members of the deputation. The frontispiece of the score identifies that at the premiere the deputation comprised seven singers. See Strauss, *Friedenstag*, x. The number may owe something to the Zweig’s (inaccurate) reference to seven burghers in proposing the story of the Burghers of Calais as an opera subject.

⁴⁸ In the stage directions, the Prälat is described as being led on by a young man, possibly an indirect allusion to mythological elders such as Tiresias or Anchises.

It is worth noting here that the Kommandant personifies Victory as a male entity, in contrast to the more familiar Classical conception of Victory as a female entity, whether it be the Latin goddess Victoria or the Greek goddess Nike. The latter choices would have been more in line with Strauss's Hellenism, not to mention the well-known German conception of Victory as a goddess in the quadriga atop the Brandenburg Gate. In the context of this discussion, it worth mentioning that the Brandenburg Gate was originally dubbed the "Friedenstor" (Peace Gate) with the goddess figure intended to be Eirene, the Greek goddess of peace.

The choral and orchestral exhortations against the Kommandant are silenced with the arrival of an officer from the front, heralded by an offstage B-flat trumpet such as occurs in *Fidelio*. The officer begs the Kommandant to release the munitions stores in the citadel's cellars, but his plea is refused. This may initially seem an inconsequential and unmotivated dramatic contrivance, but in tracking the Kommandant's logic, it would appear that he has already decided to use the stockpiles for self-destruction rather than self-defense. (The plot device of the Front Officer is not present in any of Zweig's sketches.) The Kommandant gives weight to his argument by reading aloud from the Kaiser's letter, provoking a solo outburst from an unnamed woman in the crowd. Her denunciation (trimmed by Gregor from its original length at Zweig's suggestion) is the first of three female challenges to the Kommandant's intransience, the other two coming from Maria in sections B and C. While focused on familial survival, this unnamed townswoman would seem to reject the National Socialist feminine motto of "Children, Church and Kitchen."⁴⁹ Tenaciously, she argues for the Kommandant to surrender for the sake of her family's survival, even going so far as to denounce the Kaiser and Victory. Her resolution inspires other individuals (all men), before the whole contingent steps forward and offer

⁴⁹ "Kinder, Kirche und Küchen." Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 384.

themselves up to be killed “before another shot is fired” (bevor noch ein Schuß fällt!).⁵⁰ Not coincidentally, this action is buttressed by the red rising of the sun through the battered walls of the citadel and by two important yet bifurcated musical gestures in the orchestra. First is a rising E-flat major figure in the strings signifying the growing light of dawn. The second is a ponderous low brass theme (Ex. 3.5) characterized by descending stepwise semitones (here from E-flat to D-flat) and a falling minor sixth. The theme recurs many times in the opera, usually in conjunction with the Kommandant’s resolution to blow up the fortress.

Example 3.5. The Kommandant’s “Resolve”



Confronted with the coming day and the intransience of the populace, the Kommandant announces that once his “great sign” (großes Zeichen) is displayed midday, the gates of the city are to be flung open. The scene ends with an abrupt volte-face of the now-appeased populace, musically accentuated with an acoustic ripple effect: this good news travels through the crowd from those inside the citadel to those outside, the latter interjecting with two further plaintive cries of “Brot!” while those aware of the news hail the Kommandant as the giver of life and hope.

Another Soldier’s Tale

After lambasting the cowardly morals of the citizens, the Kommandant orders the soldiers to prepare the powder in the cellars. Only gradually do the soldiers glean his intentions. The language of his address is rife with Wagnerian imagery, particularly in the description of Greek fire and the heaping up of the stores. These allude directly to the descriptions of the Norns and

⁵⁰ Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 20.

Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung* of how Wotan ordered the host of Valhalla to fell the World Ash Tree and surround the fortress with the wood, awaiting the eventual conflagration. The Kommandant's address, by contrast, is merely a prelude to the main musical idea of this scene: a reminiscence of the Siege of Magdeburg, described as a *Reiterlied* or cavalry song. This is yet another instance of Strauss relying on the genre of the soldier's song to serve as a primary means of character expression. Working copies of Gregor's drafts show that Strauss discarded the initial text for this moment, scribbling in a request for "Liedmässiger Strophen" (moderate song verses).⁵¹ The obvious allusive models for this scene are Mahler's militaristic *Wunderhorn Lieder*. While a Straussian antecedent may lurk in the seventh song of the *Krämerspiegel*, Op. 66 (an offhand C minor battle yarn about identifying who one's true enemies really are), the burlesque at play here arises from the immediate situation and the song's historical referent.

Both in the twentieth century and even within days of the actual incident, the Siege of Magdeburg was a mainstay of the horrors and excesses of war, quickly ranked amongst the most infamous sacks in history.⁵² The capture and devastation of this Lutheran bastion on May 20, 1631, after repeated sieges, represented a crushing Catholic victory. (Not surprisingly, it was characterized as an act of rape.) In the case of *Friedenstag*, it is fondly remembered by the Kommandant as a moment of critical triumph and strength. (It is unknown if Strauss was aware that the fortitude of Magdeburg was depicted in a song text set to the tune of "Ein feste Burg" just before the 1631 siege.) In any case, the Kommandant's *Reiterlied* contrasts with the Piemonteser's song by using a recognizable symbol of an event as a collective rallying point, a strategy used by Gustavus Adolphus himself in his own battlefield use of "Ein feste Burg." The

⁵¹ Birkin, *Friedenstag and Daphne*, 140.

⁵² For a detailed insight into the incident, see Hans Medick, "Historical Event and Contemporary Experience: The Capture and Destruction of Magdeburg in 1631," trans. Pamela Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal* no. 52 (Autumn 2001): 23-48.

Kommandant's song has the expected affect. After a long first strophe in F major directed to the Wachtmeister (making extensive use of inversions and seventh chords to obfuscate the key with its relative D minor), the latter literally takes up the tune, catching the Kommandant's stern look and receiving a soldier's kiss in return for his loyalty. The wave of loyalty overtakes the Konstabel (with a bright modulation to C major) and then the Schütze, who confesses an earlier lack of resolve but now pledges his allegiance to the Kommandant's inquiring gaze, culminating in a broad D major chorale (Ex. 3.6). This chorale is gloriously (if not obnoxiously) reprised in the dutiful key of D-flat major before they leave to prepare the cellars. The suggestion here is that the glory of heroism belongs only to the self-sacrificing.

Example 3.6. "Glory" chorale in D-flat major.



Yet, not all of garrison is convinced. Both the Musketier and the Hornist dismiss the plea as something beyond the bounds expected of them. The Hornist departs with the sobering observation: "Lauf brav dem Kriege nach, wo die Trompete schallt, aber nicht des Todes Fiedel! Ich geh!" (I gladly run to war wherever the trumpet resounds, but not the fiddle of Death. I go!). The implication is that the Hornist (a musician) is not above duty, just duty that is knowingly wasteful, a precept Strauss would have doubtlessly affirmed.

Burlesque and the *Ewig-Weibliche*

When the soldiers disperse, and the warming rays of the sun are felt, the Kommandant's wife Maria enters amidst a musical backdrop nervously vacillating between E minor and G major (see figs. 3.3 and 3.4). She immediately launches into the first section of a double aria, the second section consisting of her meditation of the moroseness of her husband, who is never given so introspective a moment throughout the entire opera. The first section is more descriptive in nature. Maria comments on the rumblings below (the bumps of the soldiers equated with the clicks of deathwatch beetles), the gloomy expression of the men and "a secret light" (ein geheimes Leuchten) amongst the populace departing from the citadel she encountered along her journey up.⁵³ The symbolic motive of light emanating from the populace, the sun and Maria herself achieves a magnificent E major climax on the word "sun" (Sonne) in the final passage of her double aria before the Kommandant's reentrance. This more musically plentiful second section also presents a concentrated musical portrait of what is at best an abstract marriage, replete with imagery of Maria helping to unarm her husband after battle, perhaps a sly invocation of the Hero's Companion and the battle activities in *Ein Heldenleben*. Yet Maria is no fiery *Gefährtin* in the manner of the tone poem. In many ways, she represents an *inversion* of that character, another instance of burlesque in *Friedenstag* relying more on dramaturgy than strictly musical means.

⁵³ In the Vienna premiere, this section was supplemented by percussive "thuds" on the downbeats of six measures between rehearsal numbers 92 and 93, accompanying the text "Du Totenuhr da unten, kindest du / in düstrem Schlagen uns die letzte Stunde?" (You deathwatch below, does your / somber ticking foretell our final hour?). Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 25.



Figure 3.3. Viorica Ursuleac as Maria, Munich premiere.⁵⁴



Figure 3.4. Ursuleac with Hans Hotter as the Kommandant, Munich premiere.⁵⁵

In their early discussions of potential operatic subjects, Zweig offered Strauss a slight admonition: “...perhaps what your operas still lack is this figure of the suffering heroine, if I may hazard this term—the woman who through her goodness conquers destiny.”⁵⁶ This is indeed an apt description of the Kommandant’s wife Maria, though the extent of what “suffering” she undergoes is open to debate. Arguably, Maria’s intended act of sacrifice through self-immolation would appear to be the key to her success as a “suffering heroine” but this is ultimately subverted by the dramatic *deus ex machina* of the peace declaration. If anything, she vanquishes destiny by simply delaying the Kommandant from commencing the act of sacrifice. Various sacrificial

⁵⁴ Hessler, *Macht der Gefühle*, 159.

⁵⁵ Joseph Gregor, *Richard Strauss: Der Meister der Oper* (Munich: Piper, 1939), 252.

⁵⁶ “...in Ihren Opern fehlt vielleicht noch diese Gestalt der Leidensheldin, wenn ich dieses Wort wagen darf, der Frau, die durch Güte das Schicksal besiegt.” Zweig to Strauss, June 17, 1934, *Strauss-Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 66. Zweig’s claim can be debated.

precursors have been discussed since the opera's premiere, from Beethoven's Leonore and Goethe's Gretchen. Whether or not she was envisioned as an embodiment of the Goethean *Ewig-Weibliche* (the eternal feminine), Zweig demanded that her role be treated with the utmost seriousness. Arguing against Strauss's desire for a romantic subplot, Zweig dictated that "the wife also has a very large part beyond everything that is erotic."⁵⁷ Indeed, the relationship of Maria to her surroundings is more saintly than corporeal, especially with regard to her husband. *Friedenstag* thus presents a rarified form of the Straussian married couple, perhaps the only real example of a "heroic" marriage in Strauss's operas. Considering Maria's devotion to sacrificing herself on behalf of her unsociable bass-baritone spouse, the strongest Wagnerian comparison would be with Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer*. Strauss's mature depictions of marriage—Barak and his Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Robert and Christine in *Intermezzo*, and Menelaus and Helen in *Die ägyptische Helena*—tend to profile the acrimonious alongside details of everyday living.⁵⁸ By contrast, the couple at the center of *Friedenstag* is more subdued and simplistic, more akin to the symbolic Emperor and Empress of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. We glean from Maria's soliloquy that theirs was a wartime marriage, but no other biographical details are offered beyond the fact that the nuptials were the only time Maria saw any spark of non-martial joy in her husband.

Since she is the only named female character in the entire opera and the only female character of considerable consequence, Maria is often categorized loosely as a "Strauss heroine." No two female Strauss protagonists are created equal, but if there are Straussian characters who foreshadow Maria, the most likely candidates are Chrysothemis and the Empress. In the first

⁵⁷ "Auch die Frau hat eine ganz große Partie jenseits alles Erotischen." Zweig to Strauss, October 3, 1934, *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁸ Brief mention should also be made of Herodes and Herodias in *Salome*, a union that continually slides into rancor and which eventually climaxes in filicide.

place, both are in earnest pursuit of some form of satisfying matrimony. Like Chrysothemis, Maria proclaims the arrival of the restorative force in the opera—in her case, the declaration of peace as opposed to the arrival of Orest. It is telling that in his monograph on Strauss, Gregor likened the exchange of Maria and the Kommandant to the Recognition Scene between Elektra and Orest, a comparison interesting to consider but yielding little value. It is a reunion of sorts, to be sure, but it has little of the dramatic import of the corresponding scene in *Elektra*. The Empress's challenge against patriarchy and her refutation of Keikobad can meanwhile be seen as parallel to Maria's challenge to the suicidal Kommandant, even if Maria's challenge is technically unsuccessful since she ends up pledging her fidelity in death.

Rounding Brünnhilde's Mountain

As we have seen, Michael Steinberg critiqued *Friedenstag* as a “pastiche of Wagnerian clichés” lacking the depth of the older master's touch. To a certain extent, this is true. As an opera composer Strauss remained in constant dialogue with Wagner's works, and it was almost impossible for him to escape Wagner's influence, especially in an opera peppered with Teutonic militancy. Strauss's famous rejection of Middle Age heroism (as embodied in Siegfried's funeral music) speaks to discourage a straightforward “Wagnerian” interpretation of the score. It does not mean, however, that Wagner needs to be thrown out altogether.

In their respective studies, Pamela Potter and Steinberg have observed the obvious symbolic parallels with Wagner's operas: the ruined citadel of *Friedenstag* is an earthly approximation of a ruined Valhalla or a decrepit *Gralsburg* bloated with suicidal masculinity, and the Kommandant and Maria equate to second or third pressings of Wotan and Brünnhilde.⁵⁹ The general association seems clear, but deeper connections, both to *Die Walküre* and the rest of

⁵⁹ See Potter, “Strauss's *Friedenstag*,” 420; Steinberg, “Strauss and the Question,” 176-81; and Steinberg, “The Politics and Aesthetics of Operatic Modernism,” 635-39.

Wagner's *oeuvre*, abound. On a syntactic level, the use of imagery involving eyes (Augen), such as the power of gazing and seeing joy in the eyes of another, as occurs in the interactions between Maria and the Kommandant, have direct parallels in *Die Walküre*.⁶⁰ Like the Valkyrie, Maria's sin is the sin of disobedience, though her trespass of coming to the citadel against the Kommandant's directive contains none of the emotional and symbolic heft of Brünnhilde's subverting of Wotan's wishes. The entire Wagnerian father-daughter dynamic, with its notion of self and other-self, is absent here, and it is that portrayal of devotion turned against itself which makes Wotan's sacrifice of Brünnhilde so dramatically rich. By contrast, Maria is not even fully integrated into the dramatic context. As Steinberg observes, she "is entirely unconnected to the circumstantial resolution that bursts upon the scene. The result is an effect, a trick, with no underlying logic."⁶¹ She intercedes and interprets but directly affects little. Strauss attempted to mitigate this situation with musical substantiation, ironically echoing Zweig's aversion to conventions that are "operatic in the worse sense of the phrase," conventions Zweig may have inadvertently promoted in his dramatic scenario.

More fruitful Wagnerian parallels can be drawn with the world of Monsalvat in *Parsifal*, and to the kingdom of the Gibichungs in *Götterdämmerung*.⁶² Central to *Parsifal* is a secluded world of masculine heroism dominated by a bass-baritone leader. The Grail King Amfortas is torn between duty and the needs of his soldiers against both the enemy (i.e., Klingsor as an equivalent to the Holsteiner) and the needs of survival. Again, femininity (Maria/Kundry) is a threat to this community and its mission, thwarting the actions of the isolated community, while

⁶⁰ Significant examples include the gazes exchanged between Siegmund and Sieglinde and Wotan's fixation with Brünnhilde's eyes in the final scene of Act Three. The gaze is also a potent force in *Tristan und Isolde*. This gestural symbol invites comparison with the more deadly associations of the gaze and voyeurism in *Salome*.

⁶¹ Steinberg, "Strauss and the Question," 179.

⁶² Wagner's characterization of the Gibichungs with staid dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythmic figures offers a musical point of connection with Strauss's opera.

the Kommandant's entanglement with Maria (akin to Amfortas and Kundry) undermines the success of the suicide wish. In *Götterdämmerung*, the power of Gunther, king of the Gibichungs, as ruler and hero is weakened by his inability to secure a wife. He thus cannot continue the kingly line, a line already threatened (if not tainted) by Alberich's siring of Hagen with the previous queen. The Kommandant is likewise relatively impotent on a personal and emotional level, but also as a soldier. Gunther, at least, is allowed one final and brief heroic moment to avenge his honor right before being slain by Hagen.

Musically, the confrontation between Maria and the Kommandant contains the most extended unstable tonal passages in the entire opera, reflecting the dramatically bland but rhetorically vociferous Socratic debate between them. In vain, Maria tries to discern her husband's plan and dissuade him from it. With its tripartite constellation of love, death and duty, much of the language of the scene is redolent of *Tristan und Isolde* but Maria and the Kommandant in no way conform to the model of doomed lovers. Faced with the Kommandant's resolve, Maria matches it might for might, declaring her intention to stay by him. This is musically represented by a steady modulation to G major before sliding back to an uneasy C minor. Yet the presentational qualities of the text and Strauss's exuberant setting of it give the sense that even when they finally embrace, the two characters are just as incongruent as ever. An impressive cadence on the supertonic D-flat major leads to a swift sequence where Strauss strip back the orchestra as the soldiers amass, taking it down to simple timpani triplets as the fuse is lit. Out of the stillness under a now gloomy sky, three cannon shots fired from the distant battlefield rouse the Kommandant's resolve for a final reckoning with the foe. The grey motionlessness of the battlefield undercuts any forward momentum as Strauss then launches into

one of the most frequently lauded passages of the opera: the *Glockenchor*, the chorus of the bells of peace.

The Bells of *Friedenstag*

The bells heralding peace were always seen as integral to *Friedenstag* as Zweig conceived it, reaching as far back as to his initial sketch. As in the case of the *Trauermarsch*, what is most noteworthy about the bells in the final score is their seemingly prosaic deployment. As composed, they only sound in this isolated sequence of the opera.⁶³ Strauss handles them fairly simply as one part of a gradual orchestral crescendo in G major depicting the dispersal of the fog and the final arrival of peace. There are five tuned bells involved, marked with the instruction “von ferne” (from a distance) and pitched as follows (Ex. 3.7):

Example 3.7. The Bells of *Friedenstag*



The only description of the bells in the score is “Glocken,” with no indication whether tubular bells or any other combination of instruments should be used. It is worth noting that Strauss had just conducted *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in 1933 and as such, he would have been aware of the various percussive instruments used to achieve the effect of overtones and the like to give the bells a credible timbre.⁶⁴ With the exception of the flattened E, the pitches for the *Parsifal* and

⁶³ The recording from the Vienna premiere reveals the bells were also played *ad libitum* during the final F major passage between the two commanders, though no such direction appears in the published score.

⁶⁴ For a detailed investigation of the genesis of the Grail bells passages in *Parsifal* and their realization in performance, see William Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). It is unknown how familiar Zweig was with *Parsifal*.

Friedenstag bells correspond, and the flattened E reveals a peculiar music choice.⁶⁵ The addition of E-flat creates another tritone interval with A natural, yet another instance of Strauss clandestinely undermining a triumphant moment with dissonance. The effect is somewhat obfuscated, since the bells enter in descending order of pitch, save for the A natural, which is the last to sound. Rhythmically, Strauss opts for very restrained patterns and simple durations for each of the five bells, principally half and whole notes with the A natural played with quarter triplets. The effect is somewhat underwhelming, since there are no dynamic markings indicated and the bells eventually drop out one by one.⁶⁶ Still, with the near match to the pitched bells of *Parsifal*, we can observe Strauss alluding to a canonical work with a hint of chromatic melodic inflection, as he does in the opera's opening measures.

As already mentioned, Maria is the only character onstage to correctly interpret the meaning and significance of the bells while the rest of the soldiers anxiously note the various sources of the bells while tracking the movements of the enemy army in the field. From the soldiers' description, it would appear that only the bells in town are sounding. This departs from the explicit description in Zweig's sketch that the bells sound from the surrounding towns and villages, implying that the bell towers relay news of the peace concluded at Münster. In the final score this situation is gradually relayed to the Kommandant, first by an unnamed officer, the Bürgermeister and finally by the Holsteiner. In this lead-up to the entrance of the (formerly) enemy army, the Kommandant is the only holdout against the good news, asserting his hatred of the enemy and the continued need for militancy. Strauss accentuates his isolation by constantly leaving the Kommandant's vocal line exposed, giving it the barest frenzied accompaniment with

⁶⁵ The pattern in *Parsifal* is another series of falling fourths: C–G, A–E.

⁶⁶ Another similarity exists with *Parsifal* in that both outer acts include extended passages accompanying scenic transformations to the hall of the Grail castle which, while not marches *per se*, involve processional movement akin to the march passages in *Friedenstag*. The dissonant transformation music in Act Three is a literal funeral march for the dead Tituel in all but name.

CHAPTER FOUR: BURLESQUE, TRANSFIGURATION AND A FINALE

In February 1936, Gregor traveled to Garmisch to hear Strauss play through the score of *Friedenstag*.¹ Once he had returned to Vienna, the fawning librettist penned the composer an ecstatic letter full of congratulations:

The great simplicity and monumentality of *Friedenstag* will enable this work to shine out lastingly among all of your works. The soldiers at the beginning with the wonderful contrast of the Italian,² the funeral march of the deputation, the soldier songs and the great duet of the Kommandant and his wife are the four basic foundational pillars on which the second part, from the bells onward, raises itself like a tremendous cupola. If the genuine reality of war belongs to the first part, then to me the ideal world of peace in the second part is constructed with such ideal magnanimity that I am befuddled to find anything else so absolutely rapturous amongst even your own works. I must go back to *Death and Transfiguration* and my beloved *Also sprach Zarathustra*—here lie the roots. But this perfection, which you have achieved in the final chorus, will be compared with the greatest models. I can find an equal only with the finale of the Ninth. Yet the end of *Friedenstag* is even more straightforward, monumental, dome-like, while the end of the Ninth, to my sensibility, is rendered restless through the chiming forth of the vocal quartet. In *Friedenstag*, everything is straightforward, monumental, truly dome-pure C major, not refracted from B as in *Zarathustra*.

The effect of the converging choruses, whereby the tower is abolished, immaterialized and destroyed, is incredible! What a different annihilation than that by gunpowder!! I have always wanted to see this supreme effect of two converging choruses (like the opening of the *St. Matthew Passion*) on the stage as well — you have brought it off magnificently!

... It was endlessly valuable for me to hear the magnificent work since I am still sculpting the pedestal on which this colossal structure will stand: *Daphne*. If *Friedenstag* expresses the highest idea of mankind, then *Daphne* sings of the peace in nature. The two works obviously belong together.³

¹ Recall that Strauss had completed the *Particell* on January 24. From their correspondence and the *Chronik*, the visit must have occurred before Strauss's departure to Italy on February 18. Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 568.

² At this point, the Piemonteser was still named "Der Italiener."

³ "Die große Einfachheit und Monumentalität des „Friedenstages“ wird dieses Werk dauernd aus allen Ihren Werken herausleuchten lassen. Die Soldaten das Anfangs mit dem wunderbaren Kontrast des Italieners, der Trauermarsch der Deputation, die Soldationlieder und das große Duett des Kommandanten und der Frau sind die vier einfachen Grundpfeiler, auf denen sich wie eine riesige Kuppel der zweite Teil, von den Glocken ab, erhebt. Gehört der erste Teil der realen Wirklichkeit des Krieges an, so ist die ideale Welt des Friedens in zweiten Teile auch mir einer derartigen idealen Großzügigkeit gemacht, daß ich verlegen bin, selbst unter Ihren Werken etwas so unbedingt Hinreißendes zu finden. Ich muß bis zur „Verklärung“ und zu meinem geliebten „Zarathustra“ zurückgehen, hier liegen die Wurzeln. Aber diese Vollendung, die Sie in den Schlußchören erreicht haben, wird mit den größten Beispielen verglichen werden. Ich kann nur den Schluß der Neunten zum Vergleich finden, aber der Schluß des „Friedenstages“ ist noch einfacher, monumentaler, kuppelhafter, während der Schluß der Neunten für

For all of its surfeit, Gregor's letter provides a fascinating springboard to close this examination of burlesque in *Friedenstag*.⁴ His characterization of the finale as "straightforward, monumental, dome-like" epitomizes the opera's greatest paradox: how can music so triumphant and so transparent seem so suspect and so empty at the same time? Its "great simplicity and monumentality" retains a maddening, and numbing, ambiguity. Replete with major key affirmations and conciliatory hyperbole, the finale might initially appear platitudinous or even irrationally optimistic. Yet, a subtle commentary runs through it all, a burlesque of both the subject and its solemnity. Like the finale itself, the burlesque at play here is also not as straightforward as might be expected. It assumes a deeper and more disquieting quality here than elsewhere in the opera. Strauss was not the only composer who could transform something as fundamentally solid as C major into something dubious, but his methods at work in *Friedenstag* are especially striking.

What sustains Strauss's other, more restrained operatic endings is the extent to which the characters and the worlds they inhabit undergo transfiguration, signaling an ultimate achievement or dramatic growth.⁵ To a degree, *Friedenstag* does culminate in an act of

mein Gefühl durch der herausklingende Soloquartett unruhig gemacht wird. Beim „Friedenstages“ ist alles einfach, monumental, wirklich kuppelreines C-dur, nicht gebrochen vom H, wie beim „Zarathustra“. // Unerhört die Wirkung der zusammenströmenden Chöre, wodurch der Turm aufgehoben, immaterialisiert, vernichtet wird! Was für eine andere Vernichtung als die durch Pulver!! Ich habe mir schon immer gewünscht, diese Idealwirkung zweier zusammenströmender Chöre (Matthäuspassion, Anfang) *auch auf dem Theater zu sehen* — Ihnen ist erhaben gelungen! ... Es war mir unendlich wertvoll, das herrliche Werk zu hören, da ich ja noch an dem Piedestal forme, auf dem dieser Riesenbau stehen wird, an der „Daphne“. Drückt der „Friedenstag“ die höchste menschliche Idee aus, so besingt die „Daphne“ den Frieden in der Natur. Die beiden Werke gehören ganz natürlich zusammen.“ Gregor to Strauss, February 17, 1936, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 49-50.

⁴ At the time, work on *Daphne* had reached a low ebb which may also account for the letter's excessive posturing.

⁵ The composer himself regarded expansive musical endings as unsatisfying. Early in his correspondence with Hofmannsthal, he tackled the issue directly: "I add hereto that in opera all mass-scenes and large ensembles make poor final curtains, whereas solo scenes or love duets, either with jubilant *fortissimo* endings or highly poetic endings that fade away *pianissimo*, are the most rewarding." (Ich bemerke hierzu, daß in der Oper alle Massenszenen, große Ensembles schlechte Aktschlüsse sind, dagegen Soloszenen oder Liebesduette, entweder mit jubelnden *Fortissimo*– oder ganz poetisch ausklingenden *Pianissimo*-Schlüssen, das dankbarste sind.) Strauss to Hofmannsthal, December 22, 1907, *Strauss–Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel*, 22-23.

transfiguration. The stage directions specify that when the chorale exuberantly modulates to A major, the walls of the citadel part of their own accord and sink. Thus *Friedenstag* represents the most visually manifested transfiguration Strauss ever attempted. Perhaps because of its sheer scale, the gesture seems less sincere and genuine than the transfiguration of a collection of individual characters. From a practical standpoint, an opera about peace and the unification of war-torn peoples could not easily avoid some concluding choral expression without leaving a gaping dramatic liability. Had that route been chosen, it could have been skillfully manipulated. The success of Strauss's other operatic conclusions rests on their ability to leave behind a few ambiguous threads to provoke the audience's imagination. The blunt, vehement finality of *Friedenstag* delimits what is implied will happen after the curtain falls.

Regardless, a hymn-like ending for *Friedenstag* was always part of the opera's outline. Zweig's original sketch plainly called for a Hymn to Fellowship.⁶ While the effect of the sinking tower is often credited to Gregor, Zweig himself may have prompted the idea in his second sketch for Gregor which included the phrase: "The blood-soaked earth transformed to fertility, the people reconciled."⁷ The social focus of the finale also represents another side of the post-Hofmannsthal dramaturgical shift. Sections A and B of *Friedenstag* engage with notions of solitary heroism. Yet the convergence of social and individual concerns in the final section does

⁶ We must also recall that Strauss proposed a subplot wherein the Kommandant would shoot himself in order that Maria and her paramour may live. Such an interpolation would have demanded a conclusion focusing on some type of love duet. In critiquing Strauss's proposal, however, Zweig explicitly dissuaded Strauss from infusing the opera with any notions of what he considered "conventional romanticism": "I always find it slightly awkward when men who are shown to be heroes suddenly break out into a love aria—it is likely the ideal mixture for the public, since it is so often experienced, yet my instinct bristles against it." ("Ich empfinde es immer als leise peinlich, wenn Männer, die als Helden dargestellt werden, plötzlich in die Liebesarie übergehen – wahrscheinlich ist es, da so oft erprobt, die ideale Mischung für das Publicum. Aber in mir wehrt sich ein Instinct dagegen.") Ironically, the Kommandant's lack of amorous conventionality has been singled out as one of the opera's weakest components. Zweig to Strauss, October 3, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 85.

⁷ "Die blutige Erde in fruchtbare verwandelnd, die Völker versöhnt." Zweig to Gregor, July 3, 1935, *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, 234. Given the collaborators' frequent meetings over several years, it is not inconceivable that a substantial portion of the opera's development remains undocumented. Birkin more than once suggests that certain conversations between Straus and Gregor may have taken place over the telephone.

signal a return to Hofmannsthal’s impulse to integrate solitary figures back into the fold of the larger worlds they inhabit or, at the very least, liberate them from the confines of egoism. At the most basic level, the peace at the end of *Friedenstag* leaves little room for isolation. Prodded by Maria’s intercession, the misanthropic Kommandant is brought back into the fold of the collective. Egoism blatantly surrenders to magnanimity with his acquiescence. Whether it yields willingly or grudgingly remains unclear, since the Kommandant offers no emanation of his thoughts and the shift to the collective is achieved through music alone.

Table 4.1. Detailed Tonal Scheme and Character Breakdown of the Final Sequence, C-3 through C-5.

Tonality	Rehearsal No.	Text	Character(s)
D major	169	“Wo ist der Mann...”	Holsteiner (Offstage)
C minor	170	“Wo ist der Mann...”	Kommandant
V/D-flat major D-flat major	171	“Zu Münster sie saßen...”	Holsteiner (Onstage)
C major	172	“Gediehn das Werk...”	Holsteiner
	173	“Friede!”	Offstage Chorus and Maria
Unstable	174	“Trau nicht den bösen...”	Kommandant
B-flat major	175	“Friede und Freundschaft...”	Holsteiner
[E-flat major]	176	“...Brot!”	[Holsteiner cadence upset]
Unstable		“Verflucht versprechen!”	Kommandant
D major	180	“...das göttliche Wort” (Ein feste Burg)	Holsteiner
E-flat major	181	“Geliebter, nicht das Schwert!”	Maria
D major	187 + 9mm.	“Sei uns begrüßt...”	Offstage Citizens: Women & Tenors
	188	“Nicht Fremde mehr...”	Offstage Basses (+ Above)
	189 + 2mm.	“Glocken!”	Maria
	189 + 9mm.	“Hört ihr die Stimmen?”	Deputation & Soldiers (+ Maria)
	189 + 12mm.	“Uralte Last...”	Offstage Citizens (+ Above)
	191	“Hebst uns empor...” (Sei uns begrüßt)	Above
	192	“Ihr Kinder...”	Offstage Women (nearer)
	192 + 5mm.	“Wie uns das aufruft...”	Bürgermeister (+ Offstage Women)
	193	“Unser Schritt ist zagend...”	Offstage Basses (+ Above)
	194	“Ich aber preise...”	Prälat (+ Above)
	195	“Noch dies Umarmen...”	Offstage Tenors (+ Above)
	197	“Glückselger Friede...”	(Demarcation of Onstage & Offstage Choruses)
C major	197 + 7mm.	(Commotion from offstage crowds, bells and cannon shots <i>ad lib</i> (?))	
F major	198	“Warum kämpfen wir Jahre um Jahre?”	Kommandant & Holsteiner
	200	“Sonne, Sonne...”	Maria (+ Above)
A major	203 + 11mm.	“Sei uns begrüßt...”	Onstage Chorus
		(The walls open, the tower sinks.)	
	204	“Sei uns begrüßt...”	Offstage Chorus
C major	206	“Wagt es zu denken...”	Entire Chorus
	209	“Wagt es zu denken...”	Maria and Soloists
	210	“Wagt es zu denken...”	Entire Chorus (+ Above)

Musical and Dramatic Architecture

Though by no means convoluted, the final sequence is remarkable for all the musical and dramatic material compressed within it (see table 4.1). After his robust introductory march, the Holsteiner addresses the Kommandant with gregarious praise of his military might. The Holsteiner's volte-face remains a weakly motivated shortcoming; his forces have miraculously gone from setting farms ablaze at the beginning of the opera to bringing wagons of provisions to their former enemy. The same could be said of the Kommandant's eventual decision to support peaceful reconciliation. In his encounter with the Holsteiner, the Kommandant has little use for kind words, or bright tonalities. Bereft of victory, he attempts to dispel the prevalence of D major, the music modulating into persistently unstable tonal space with each of his interruptions. The Holsteiner, Maria and the offstage citizens still continue to thwart the Kommandant's impulses, at one point making a brief, almost preemptory, tonicization to C major.

Like the exchange between the Kommandant and Maria, Gregor constructed a dialectical confrontation for the two men, with the Kommandant's provocations always growing in ferocity (see fig. 4.1). Accusing the Kommandant of oppression, the Holsteiner finally invokes "Ein feste Burg" to promote his own religious cause, although again, it is never explicitly named beyond mention of the old and new faiths. This last act throws the Kommandant into a frenzy and he reaches for his sword. Maria now steps forward and reasserts E-flat major, associated here with relief rather than heroism, after the Kommandant had earlier destabilized it in his arguments with the Holsteiner. Drawing the Kommandant's attention to the allegorical hegemony of peace that has overcome everyone except him, she seems to have finally penetrated his insular mindset:

The Kommandant gives her a long stare, then fixes his gaze on the Holsteiner. They stand opposite each other wordlessly. Suddenly, the Kommandant throws away his sword—the commanders take each other's arms and embrace. During this scene the room has gradually filled with the citizens and soldiers of both

armies.⁸

The reconciliatory goal is now accomplished over a cascading transitional passage that angelically culminates in a reassertion of D major.



Figure 4.1. Hans Hotter as the Kommandant and Ludwig Weber as the Holsteiner, Munich premiere.⁹

An elaborate choral sequence now builds to the final apotheosis and hymn, beginning with the preliminary “Sei uns begrüßt, du neuer Herrscher” (We welcome thee, thou new sovereign) for offstage female and tenor voices (Ex. 4.1). Following on the heels of the D major transitional passage, Strauss strips back the orchestral fabric to violin tremolos, gradually enhancing and elaborating the orchestral texture as the other groups and soloists enter. Curiously,

⁸ “Der Kommandant sieht sie lange an, dann gleitet sein Blick auf den Holsteiner. Sie stehen einander wortlos gegenüber. Plötzlich wirft der Kommandant sein Schwert weit von sich—sie sinken einander ergriffen in die Arme.—Während dieser Szene hat sich der Raum allmählich mit Volk und Soldaten beider Parteien gefüllt.” Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 41.

⁹ Hessler, *Macht der Gefühle*, 158.

the melodic contour of “Sei uns begrüßt” recalls the oboe passage at “Bald aber naht ein Bote,” within the great soliloquy “Es gibt ein Reich” (There is a kingdom) in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Ex. 4.2). While the similarity of outline—repeated descending fourths and large upward leaps—may be coincidental, a significant dramaturgical parallel between these two musical moments invites attention. Like the citizen’s acclamations of Peace as a “new sovereign,” Ariadne’s F major description of Hermes’ approach to lead her on to the kingdom of death anticipates another act of transfiguration by means of a godly figure. This cross-reference is not necessarily an instance of burlesque, but this connection to one of Strauss’s more noble (and baroque) characters imparts a certain solemnity and honesty to the moment, before the drama becomes bloated with more rapturous sentiments.

Example 4.1. “Sei uns begrüßt” (Soprano line isolated)



Example 4.2. “Bald aber naht ein Bote” from *Ariadne* (Oboe part)



As shown in Table 4.1, the extended choral sequence in D major is effectively divided into two subsections, with the first section bookended musically by statements of “Sei uns begrüßt.” Overlapping voices in the second subsection impart a fugue-like quality, though it is not structured as a fugue in any formal sense. Strauss may very well have taken a nod from Zweig’s early conception of the sequence: “gradually the grand fugue develops itself, the hymn

to peace, to work, to the vibrancy of life.”¹⁰ This passage eventually tonicizes C major, forming a firm dominant sonority before a downward cadence launches the commanders’ final euphoric duet in F major.

“What is not can still become!”¹¹

Important here is Strauss’s access to two versions of the text for this entire sequence: Gregor’s and an elaborated revision by Zweig. The final stages of the libretto were fraught with difficulty, and as mentioned earlier, matters came to a head during the autumn of 1935. Still the dutiful and distant midwife, Zweig had willingly offered Gregor several suggestions in early September that could have expedited matters.¹² Yet by the end of the month, the concluding scenes still lacked satisfactory shape, as Strauss’s letter of September 29 attests:

In regards to *1648*, however, I ask you to make the changes which we have already discussed, if possible: they concern the moment where the bells come in after the cannon shots — the parley between the two commanders as well, which must be more dramatically sharpened and in which the woman must also take part.¹³

Repeated entreaties from Strauss for an overhaul were to no avail. Perhaps unwisely, Gregor put off sending material to Zweig for his suggestions. Strauss vented his frustration with the wooden characters in a letter to Gregor in early October:

Even now, I have worked through the latter half of *Friedenstag* once more. I do not think that I can find music for it at all. There are no real human beings: the Kommandant and his wife, all of it goes on stilts ... Also the entire scene from the

¹⁰ “...bildet sich allmählich die große Fuge, der Hymnus an die Arbeit, an den Frieden, an das lebendige Leben.” Zweig to Strauss, October 3, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 86.

¹¹ “Was nicht ist, kann noch werden!” Strauss to Gregor, October 15, 1935, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 39.

¹² These included that both Maria (still referred to as “the Wife”) and the Bürgermeister intervene to hold the Kommandant and Holsteiner back from attacking the other, providing the pretext for a quartet. Zweig to Gregor, September 3, 1935, *Zweig–Gregor: Correspondence*, 252.

¹³ “Aber an *1648* bitte ich womöglich schon jetzt die Änderungen anzubringen, die wir besprochen haben: sie betreffen den Moment, wo nach dem Kanonenschuss die Glocken einsetzen – ferner die Unterredung der beiden Kommandanten, die dramatisch viel schärfer gefasst werden muss und in welchem auch die Frau eine Rolle spielen muss.” Strauss to Gregor, September 29, 1935, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 34.

entrance of the Holsteiner on is wholly undramatic, like two schoolmasters quibbling over the theme: *The Thirty Years' War*.¹⁴

The reproach came off as gauche when Strauss received a new set of revisions from Gregor just after sending the letter. Strauss followed up with a more conciliatory letter the next day, blaming his irritation on his extreme despondency. Nevertheless, he still outlined how he wanted the conclusion structured:

The last round of revisions are an enormous improvement and come even closer to the essence. Only the ending, from the moment where the two commanders fall into each other's arms, must undergo complete change. In this moment of complete silence, the peace hymn of the people must start from outside: simply a song of praise without the memories of war. Maria, the two commanders and all those present gradually join in this hymn, during which the tower slowly sinks. Once this is complete and the people have all become visible onstage, *a singular* progression until the end: no more poetry. It can only happen thus.

Otherwise, I am in so depressed a mood that today I doubt if I shall ever write a single note again. You certainly understand me: one easily becomes unjust in such a state of depression.¹⁵

To be fair to Gregor, Strauss was not entirely without inspiration at the time since at the time of the above letter, he was finishing up the last of the *Drei Männerchöre*, "Fröhlich im Maien."¹⁶

This concurrence is fascinating in that the Rückert text, set in a jovial D major, concerns a joyful Maytime celebration, and may have done something positive to jog Strauss's creativity. As mentioned earlier, late continuity sketches for the final pages of *Friedenstag* (from Rehearsal

¹⁴ "Ich habe jetzt auch die Hälfte des "Friedenstages" von neuem durchgearbeitet, ich glaube nicht, dass ich dazu jemale [*sic*] Musik finden kann, Das sind keine wirklichen menschen: der Kommandant und seine Frau, das geht alles auf Stelzen, ... Auch die ganze Scene vom Auftritt des Holsteiners an ist völlig undramatisch: so besprechen sich zwei Schullehrer über das Thema: *Dreißigjähriger Krieg*" Strauss to Gregor, October 6, 1935, *Ibid.*, 35-36. Italics in the original.

¹⁵ "Also die letzten Correkturen sind eine enorme Verbesserung und treffen schon näher den Kern. Ganz anders muß nur der Schluß werden von dem Moment an, wo sich die beiden Kommandanten in die Arme fallen. In diesem Moment der Stille muß ganz leise von außen der Friedenshymnus des Volkes einsetzen: nur mehr Lobgesang ohne Erinnerung an den Krieg. In diesen Hymnus stimmen allmählich Maria, die beiden Kommandanten und alle Anwesenden ein, während dessen langsam der Turm versinkt. Als dies vollendet und das ganze Volk außen sichtbar auf der Scene geworden ist, *eine einzige* Steigerung bis Schluß: nur mehr Lyrik. Nur so kann es werden. // Im übrigen bin ich in einer so gedrückten Stimmung, daß ich heute zweifle, ob ich je noch einmal einen Ton componieren werde können. Sie verstehen mich gewiß: in solcher Depression wird man leicht ungerecht." Strauss to Gregor, October 7, 1935, *Strauss-Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 36-37. Italics in the original.

¹⁶ The *Partitur* was finished on October 8. See Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 565.

No. 213 onward) and “Fröhlich im Maien” adjoin each other in the “Wilhelm Jerger” sketchbook.¹⁷ While several months passed between the entry of these sketches, such instances of contemporaneity provide further proof of the rejuvenating artistic effect of the *Drei Männerchöre*, in addition to their weight as political commentaries.

While the above mandates to Gregor may read harshly in retrospect, one must be sympathetic to Strauss’s eroding placidity as well as his push for dramatic cogency—a sensitivity that he honed over the course of his long career. At any rate, Gregor took the hint. Despite additional exchanges and complications in the ensuing months, Strauss’s general outline for the finale would persist through to the final score. Not the least bit anguished by Strauss’s missive, Gregor finally sent the existing draft to Zweig, while Strauss further attempted to amend any wounded feelings by sending Gregor an enclosure with Clemens Krauss’s more favorable comments.¹⁸ Though no direct evidence of its transmission survives in the published correspondence, Strauss must have received Zweig’s reworking, with Gregor’s original for comparison, by the end of October. He wrote to Zweig on October 31: “I thank you deeply for your efforts on behalf of *Friedenstag*. Your version is more stage-worthy and concise than our friend Gr. [*sic*]; For the moment, however, I still cannot say which one I will choose since the entire ending still does not possess the form which I have requested from the author!”¹⁹ The decision evidently gave him difficulty for several weeks, for he wrote to Gregor on November 20:

Please excuse my long silence: I have naturally received the two versions, though

¹⁷ See Gilliam, “Friede im Innern,” 591. A gap of several months separates this material. Strauss habitually jumped between sketchbooks.

¹⁸ See Strauss to Gregor, October 15, 1935, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 39.

¹⁹ “Ich danke Ihnen herzlich um Ihre Bemühungen für den »Friedenstag«. Ihre Fassung ist theatralischer und conciser als die unseres Freundes Gr.; ich könnte aber heute noch nicht sagen, wofür ich mich entschiede, um so mehr als der ganze Schluß noch nicht die Form erhalten hat, die ich vom Autor erbeten habe!” Strauss to Zweig, October 31, 1935, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 147. This was one of their final letters. Zweig would later commit suicide on February 22, 1942 while in self-exile in Petrópolis, Brazil.

as of today I cannot decide which I ultimately prefer. Yet the proper and ultimate conclusion, as I would like to have it, still eludes me. I write to you what I wrote to Z. [Zweig] that everything from the embrace of the two commanders on—a hymn of peace beginning outside in which those onstage gradually join (the soldiers of both armies)—must, rising and undeviating in an ascending line, without the rhetoric of war and misery, build up to the triumphant conclusion. That is still what I ask.²⁰

To briefly encapsulate, Zweig's revision featured an elaborate confrontation between the two commanders, with the Holsteiner taking a more active role.²¹ Following his previous recommendations to Gregor, Zweig gave a more elaborate role to Maria and the Bürgermeister to broker the peace. The Kommandant, rude and unapproachable as ever, responds prosaically, "I do not want peace: I wanted the victory!" (Ich will nicht den Frieden: Ich wollte den Sieg!).²² Only after the Holsteiner's lengthy appeal to the Kommandant's sense of humanity, describing their fallen comrades in arms and the devastation endured by all, does the Kommandant concede, thereby enabling peace to triumph. Ultimately, Strauss rejected this version in favor of Gregor's simpler scene, trading a more dramaturgically satisfying option for one of dramatic cogence, which was always his primary objective. Zweig's version was not entirely discarded, however, since several of his more lyrical passages were subsumed into Gregor's final text.

Burlesque and the Hymn to Brotherhood

Though the reconciliation of the Kommandant and the Holsteiner is accomplished dramatically as pantomime in the finished score, it is finally given musical treatment in an ebullient F major duet in which they rhetorically deconstruct all of those political and religious divisions that have

²⁰ "Entschuldigen Sie mein langes Stillschweigen: ich habe natürlich die beiden Fassungen erhalten, kann mich aber bis heute nicht entscheiden, welche ich schließlich vorziehen kann. Aber der eigentliche allerletzte Schluß, so wie ich ihn haben möchte, fehlt mir noch. Ich schrieb Ihnen doch s. Z., daß von der Umarmung der beiden Feldherren ab ein Friedenshymnus von außen beginnend, in den die [Soldaten beider Parteien] auf der Bühne allmählich einstimmen, anheben und ungebrochen in aufsteigender Linie, ohne daß von Krieg und Elend darin noch die Rede ist, bis zum triumphalen Schluß geführt werden muß. Darum bitte ich noch." Strauss to Gregor, November 4, 1935, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 20.

²¹ Zweig's version is quoted at length in Birkin, "Stefan Zweig - Richard Strauss - Joseph Gregor," 26-31.

²² *Ibid.*, 28.

hitherto divided them. This section includes a momentary quotation of “Ein feste Burg,” the only time the Kommandant takes up the hymn. Maria soon adds her voice to make a trio, exhorting the sun to “burn away the walls, encompass us all” (verbrenne die Mauern, schließe uns ein).²³ Her words become deeds as the trio modulates to A major, the same moment when the “walls open up, the tower sinks” (Die Mauern öffnen sich, der Turm versinkt). Though visually impressive, the effect was deemed too baroque by the initial production team. Omitted for the premiere, it survived in the score and was achieved in subsequent productions with some success. Director Rudolf Hartmann later observed:

In this way, not only the final hymn but the also the optical effect was to express the atmosphere of liberation. I was worried by the idea of the tower or sinking or disappearing (as it did in the otherwise beautiful production at Dresden) because in my view this effect was too baroque and magical, and impossible to reconcile with the realism of what came before. First, I argued, there was the fortress with its cannon, muskets and gunpowder store, all readily believable dangers, and then suddenly things were by no means as serious: the stage caused them to disappear and the theatre became a concert platform.²⁴

While Hartmann was not opposed to the finale in principle, his concerns that any solemnity achieved by the first part of the opera would be undermined by baroque artificiality actually points to certain undermining effects at work in Strauss’s score.

In its eventual effusive musical setting, the drama’s final chorus is realized as a burlesque critique of peace’s trite and banal victory. Peace itself is not being mocked, but those who passively claim it and revere it are. While Zweig’s original pageant is replaced with Straussian gestures of transfiguration, it is handled with an ironic twist. Saddled with Gregor’s platitudinous text, the entire ensemble becomes a mouthpiece for peace that lacks supporting substance or

²³ Maria makes similar utterances earlier in the preliminary choral sequence, echoed by the men’s voices onstage.

²⁴ See Hartmann, *Richard Strauss*, 216-18. Hartmann comments that in Dresden (also the site of the *Daphne* premiere) the moment was successful with a projection effect by scenic designer Adolf Mahnke. In Munich, Hartmann and designer Ludwig Sievert (in conjunction with Krauss and Strauss) simply had the chorus break through all hatches and doors while the overall structure of the citadel remained intact. Gregor reportedly was not an active presence during rehearsals.

action. Perhaps intentionally, the moment invokes an ironic image of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* conveying a sense of blithe impersonality and servility and implying a negation of individuality (see fig. 4.2). It is worth remembering in this context that apart from the Rückert settings for the *Männerchöre*, Strauss had just completed the bombastic (if not lugubrious) *Olympische Hymne* for the 1936 Berlin Olympic ceremonies—a choral work for hundreds of voices that carries a similar sense of impersonality and adulation, as the individuals are subsumed into the collective.



Figure 4.2. The final tableau, Munich premiere.²⁵

In *Friedenstag*, too, the music's bombast provokes interpretation. Despite its outward seriousness, the music may well suggest a sly effort on Strauss's part to critique the very notions

²⁵ Hessler, *Macht der Gefühle*, 159.

being lauded. Cast in the key of C major and climaxing *ad nauseum*,²⁶ the final choral utterance seems to recall the last act of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* and the heroic conclusions of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and *Fidelio*—all works appropriated and manipulated by the Third Reich for ideological purposes.²⁷ *Friedenstag*, however, seemingly reduces the notions of nobility in those works to crudity. As Strauss himself had quipped to conductor Clemens Krauss during the period of composition, “the luminaries of the time hadn't read Schiller yet,” suggesting such noble sentiments would be, and ultimately were, alien to the setting of the opera.²⁸

An additional thematic thread steeped in symbolism connects *Friedenstag* with Beethoven. The texts of *Fidelio* and the Ninth Symphony are characterized by their focus on male–female pairs who are either already divine or undergo an apotheosis. In *Fidelio*, Leonore is hailed at the “Retterin” (Savior) of her husband Florestan. In Beethoven's adaptation of Schiller's “An die Freude,” Joy, the daughter of Elysium, and the image of a celestial “Vater” (Father) emerge as the prime allegorical pair. Elysium, or the Elysian Fields, being of course the resting place of chosen heroes in Greek mythology after their death. The “Peace” hailed in Gregor's finale is masculine: a “new sovereign” (neuer Herrscher) and “young king” (junger König). Maria's repeated supplications to the feminine sun (Sonne) form another divine pair,

²⁶ Similar complaints are also leveled at the *Festliches Präludium*, Strauss's calling card composition for RMK functions at which he conducted.

²⁷ *Die Meistersinger* shared the *Spielplan* with *Friedenstag* at the 1938 Munich Opera Festival, no doubt to also make use of the number of choristers required for both operas. Strauss himself conducted the first inter-war performance of Beethoven's Ninth at the Bayreuth Festival in 1933, the same year the Nazi party took power in Germany, as well as the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death. Recall too that Zweig heard Strauss conduct *Fidelio* at the 1932 Salzburg Festival, which may have influenced his early thoughts on the opera. For a detailed study of Beethoven and the Third Reich, see David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1970-1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 142-74.

²⁸ It is unclear whether Strauss was referring to Beethoven's adaptation of Schiller (which omits much of Schiller's battle imagery) or any of the earlier variants of the poem that Schiller published in his own lifetime.

since the sun's ascendancy in the final tableau gives its own separate victory over the gloomy haze of war.

Connections also exist to Mahler's Symphony No. 8—another massive and humanistic choral work. In light of Mahler's proscription under the Reich, the allusions to the famed "Symphony of a Thousand" would qualify as a burlesque of contemporary tastes, presenting the unacceptable through the guise of the acceptable. Strong textual similarities exist between *Friedenstag* and Mahler's symphony, with their respective longings for heavenly grace as embodied in both paternal and maternal forms, embracing the Goethean *Ewig-Weibliche*. Structurally, Strauss sets up the vocal forces of his finale in similar fashion to Mahler by periodically splitting them into a double choir complemented by a separate body of vocal soloists consisting of all the named supporting characters and two additional (and unnamed) sopranos and altos each. Maria herself takes the highest and most salient vocal line.²⁹

After the modulation to A major and a final statement of "Sei uns begrüßt" shared by the double choir, the music slides into C major with the exhortation "Dare to think it, / dare to believe it, / dare to gaze up / towards the divine light!" (Wagt es zu denken, / wagt es zu vertrauen, / wagt in das göttliche / Leuchten zu schauen). The rhythmic gesture of the opening march now expands to form a march-like hymn reliant on the same melodic outline as "Sei uns begrüßt," with the phrases drawn out beyond its original triple meter (Ex. 4.3).

Example 4.3. "Wagt es zu denken" (Soprano line)



²⁹ In critiquing Beethoven's vocal quartet in the Ninth in his letter to Strauss, Gregor overlooked Strauss's own inclusion of a small vocal ensemble in the finale of *Friedenstag*.

The first utterance by the chorus (Rehearsal No. 206 to 209) concludes with triplet figures from the timpani that literally pound home the truth (4 mm. before Rehearsal No. 209). This segues into a repeated statement of the same text given to the group of soloists, now more compressed and sped up. The unified choirs reenter and join the soloists with the text “Surge out of our hearts, / endless exaltation! / Flame of Love, / ascend, ascend— / Glorious Spirit, to you!” (Ströme des Herzens, / endloser Jubel! / Flamme der Liebe, / aufwärts, aufwärts— / Herrscher Geist, zu dir!), phrased in arching statements.³⁰ Having already built itself up to such an ecstatic fervor several times, this outward musical telescoping has no further direction in which to go, no further target to achieve. Strauss’s “rising and undeviating” ascendant line seems to outshoot itself, just as the composer presumably intended. Strauss strikes a final upset just before Rehearsal No. 216, pitching a G-sharp and a G-flat against each other and flattening the B natural of what otherwise would have been a grand C major seventh chord supporting the word “Herrscher.” The dissonances eventually resolve as the music spins its way through the final Presto to the C major downbeats of the final measures, as the curtain finally falls. It would seem that what could be achieved has been, yet the glory rings hollow.

³⁰ Gregor, *Friedenstag*, 46.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE STAGING HISTORY AND EARLY RECEPTION OF *FRIEDENSTAG*

Delays and Disadvantages

Though Strauss completed the score of *Friedenstag* in June 1936, over two years would pass before an audience would hear it. In this span of time, the Third Reich grew both in size and audacity through the remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936 and the *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938. Thus by the time of the opera's premiere in July 1938, political circumstances were such that the slightest mention of peace on the German operatic stage was a suspicious gesture. After the Sudeten crisis and the signing of the Munich Pact in September 1938, it became an outright effrontery, since the Reich had spun these territorial victories as concessions owed to Germany in the name of—and for the sake of—peace. Throughout the early years of the Reich, tropes about peace and its attainment had been peculiar staples of Nazi rhetoric. Following his initial attempts at the international bargaining table to discuss increasing the size of the now-reduced German army, rearmament and border expansion, Hitler made a series of “peace speeches” to the *Reichstag*. His remarks from 1935 were typical: “What else could I wish for other than calm and peace...Germany needs peace, and wants peace.”¹ The resulting militant backdrop of 1938 opened up *Friedenstag*'s own message of peace to accusations of hypocrisy. Whose “day of peace” was it to be? Was it Zweig's dream of a Europe bounded through brotherhood and unity, or Hitler's grand plan of a new and homogenized Germania? While the work was never officially fêted or appropriated by the regime, the stigma of its disturbing ambiguity could not be easily overlooked.

¹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 555.

Preparing the Premiere

As mentioned in Chapter One, Strauss had less difficulty in securing performance approval for *Friedenstag* than he had for *Die schweigsame Frau*. Karl Böhm wrote to Strauss on February 25, 1937 to relay that he had received permission to produce the opera from the President of the *Reichstheaterkammer* on behalf of Goebbels.² The conductor made an impassioned plea for Dresden, hitherto Strauss's primary premiere venue, to be granted the premieres for both *Friedenstag* and *Daphne*.³ Strauss tacitly acknowledged the request but a joint premiere was still a long way off since composition on *Daphne* had reached a standstill. Arrangements soon took a different turn. On May 24, Strauss received a lengthy missive from Clemens Krauss who implored the composer to grant the premiere of his next opera to Munich, and by extension, himself. The reasons for this petition were manifold. Krauss had just been appointed Intendant of the Bayerische Staatsoper, and securing a Strauss debut would ensure him a *coup* of magnificent proportions. Munich, the composer's birth city, had never been granted a Strauss premiere; the disastrous local debut of *Guntram* almost forty years prior had left an indelible chip on his shoulder.⁴ In his letter, Krauss did not mention *Friedenstag* by name, but there is no doubt that he was aware of the opera's dormant status, while *Daphne* languished in its incomplete *Particell*.⁵

Krauss's plea succeeded. While attending a performance of *Elektra* in Dresden at the end of May 1937, Strauss succeeded in convincing Böhm to renounce his interest in the premiere of

² See Martina Steiger, ed., *Richard Strauss–Karl Böhm Briefwechsel 1921-1949* (Mainz: Schott, 1999), hereafter *Strauss–Böhm: Briefwechsel*, with sender to recipient information, dates and page numbers. Böhm to Strauss, February 25, 1937, *Strauss–Böhm: Briefwechsel*, 56.

³ *Ibid.* Writing to Gregor, Strauss alluded to pending arrangements with the pun: “The exact “Day of Peace” [*Friedenstag*] is not yet fixed.” Strauss to Gregor, December 1, 1936, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 79.

⁴ Hans Knappertsbusch had almost succeeded in arranging for the premiere of *Arabella* to take place in Munich after negotiations for Dresden fell out over the sacking of music director Fritz Busch, but Dresden eventually prevailed.

⁵ Krauss to Strauss, May 24, 1937, *Strauss–Krauss: Briefwechsel*, 224-25.

Friedenstag. Strauss first confirmed Böhm’s waiver with Krauss via postcard.⁶ The next day, Krauss received a hearty confirmation that the premiere would indeed be granted to Munich for the 1938 summer Opera Festival.⁷ Böhm was still permitted the rights for the double premiere of *Daphne* (its own world premiere) and *Friedenstag* in Dresden, which occurred on October 15, 1938. When presented with its intended “pedestal,” however, the event lasted four hours, “entirely too long” in Böhm’s view.⁸ The two operas were soon unlinked and regulated to double bills with other short works. Strauss had already musically upset Gregor’s intention to connect the two operas by cutting the original choral finale of *Daphne*. After consulting with Krauss, Strauss pursued a more understated ending that gave the final statement to the orchestra, with a brief vocalise for the transfigured heroine: “no solo voices—no chorus—in short, no oratorio: all else would be a dilution.”⁹

The Day of Peace

With Krauss in the pit, *Friedenstag* debuted as the opening night of the Munich Opera Festival on Sunday, July 24, 1938, in the Nationaltheater.¹⁰ Instead of the bucolic *Daphne*, Beethoven’s ballet *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*, choreographed by Pia and Pino Mlakar, provided the fore-entertainment for *Friedenstag*’s run of three performances.¹¹ The performance of a Beethoven work depicting a mythological hero no doubt strengthened the palpable associations between that

⁶ Strauss to Krauss, *Strauss–Krauss: Briefwechsel*, 226. The postcard is undated, but either May 26 or 27, 1937. Strauss quickly wrote back to Böhm expressing his gratitude for rescinding his rights to Krauss.

⁷ Strauss to Krauss, May 28, 1937, *Ibid.* Strauss further requested that Krauss keep the matter secret until further details with Dresden regarding *Daphne* could be finalized. Both Krauss and his wife Viorica Ursuleac, the first Maria, would become joint dedicatees of the opera.

⁸ Personal communication quoted in Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner’s Mountain*, 238.

⁹ “...keine Solostimmen—kein Chor—kurz kein Oratorium: alles wäre eine Abschwächung.” Strauss to Gregor, May 12, 1937, *Strauss–Gregor: Briefwechsel*, 83.

¹⁰ The 1938 Festival lineup included *Die Meistersinger*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Don Giovanni*, *Parsifal*, *Salome*, *Figaros Hochzeit*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *Così fan tutte* and *Lohengrin*. Titles reproduced from Rudolf Hartmann, *Das geliebte Haus: Mein Leben mit der Oper* (Munich: Piper, 1975), 145.

¹¹ Strauss and his wife also attended the second performance on July 31. Trenner, *Strauss: Chronik*, 590.

composer's *oeuvre* and *Friedenstag*.¹² Up-and-coming Staatsoper bass-baritone Hans Hotter (then only twenty-nine) portrayed the Kommandant, and soprano Viorica Ursuleac, wife of Clemens Krauss, performed the role of Maria.¹³ Frequent Strauss collaborator and resident director Rudolf Hartmann supervised the staging, the first of his three Strauss premieres (see fig. 5.1). Designer Ludwig Sievert was tasked with the sets and costumes and he took a historicist approach in their execution.



Figure 5.1. Curtain call at the Munich premiere. Left to right: Weber, Sievert, Gregor, Strauss, Hotter, Krauss, Ursuleac, Hartmann.¹⁴

Response was mixed. The *Völkischer Beobachter*, the press weapon of Alfred Rosenberg and hitherto critical of Strauss, claimed *Friedenstag* spoke directly to Nazism but reviewer Herbert Griegk acknowledged Strauss's awkward handling of the heroic material.¹⁵ According to

¹² Strauss would have likely approved of the semitone step down from the heroic E-flat major ending of *Prometheus* to the opening D minor of *Friedenstag*. Strauss had earlier arranged the ballet as an interpolation for Hofmannsthal's reworking of *Die Ruinen von Athen*.

¹³ Other cast members of note included Julius Patzak as the Schütze, Georg Hann as the Wachtmeister and Ludwig Weber as the Holsteiner. See Trenner, *Werkverzeichnis*, 313.

¹⁴ Joseph Gregor, *Clemens Krauss: Seine musikalische Sendung* (Bad Bocklet: Walter Krieg Verlag, 1955), 160-61.

¹⁵ Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 349.

Hartmann, the public in Munich (the cradle of National Socialism) took more strongly to it than party officials did.¹⁶ As with *Die schweigsame Frau*, Hitler avoided the premiere, showing up at its Viennese debut one year later. Writing in his journal after the Vienna premiere on June 10, 1939, Goebbels found the work “excellent, with heroic instrumentation and verve, thrown off with great panache, but wholly without invention.”¹⁷

The irony of the timing of the opera’s premiere was not lost on the critics. A preview in *The New York Times* stated, “though the time of the story is back in the seventeenth century, there are notes struck which cannot but chime in with present-day preoccupations.”¹⁸ Perhaps the truest reading of Strauss’s political allegiances and those of the opera came from Goebbels himself. After a two-hour long breakfast with the composer the morning after the Vienna *Friedenstag*, he wrote: “He is so unpolitical, like a child.”¹⁹ Strauss was clearly not hopeful about the survival of his work, let alone the political situation in Europe: “I fear that this work in which I put the best of myself will not be performed before long. Will the cataclysm which we all fear soon break out? ... How many years will these inevitable consequences then paralyze the good intentions of theatre directors to revive a work extolling the union of peoples?”²⁰

With the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939, the opera swiftly vanished from opera houses across Europe.²¹ A work with such a conciliatory message became blatantly inappropriate in Germany. Before that, the opera enjoyed a generous series of coordinated local debuts across

¹⁶ Hartmann, *Richard Strauss*, 217.

¹⁷ Jana Richter, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Teil I/Band 6: August 1938-Juni 1939* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998), 374.

¹⁸ *New York Times*. “*Friedenstag* at Munich.” July 24, 1938, accessed December 13, 2013, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F30712FC3E55157A93C6AB178CD85F4C8385F9>.

¹⁹ “Er ist so unpolitisch wie ein Kind.” Richter, *Die Tagebücher*, 375.

²⁰ Quoted in Potter, “Strauss’s *Friedenstag*,” 420.

²¹ Conventional wisdom touts that *Friedenstag* received over one hundred performances across Germany and Italy in the immediate aftermath of the Munich premiere. William Mann provides 98 as a more specific number. See Mann, “Richard Strauss’s *Friedenstag*,” 438.

Germany, as was traditionally arranged for new works by Strauss.²² Aside from the double-bill with the premiere of *Daphne* in Dresden, the opera was mounted in Weimar, Breslau, Nuremberg, Berlin, Vienna, Graz, Kassel, Magdeburg, Karlsruhe, Oldenburg, Königsberg, Rostock and Venice.²³ Krauss conducted the Berlin and Vienna performances, the latter reuniting the Munich principals with Hartmann.²⁴ The opera reached international stages just before Strauss's death in 1949, when it received its Parisian and Belgian premieres.²⁵

Friedenstag in the Postwar Period

Though *Friedenstag* is often consigned to the disreputable state of operatic obscurity, it managed to slowly spread its way beyond Germany after the Second World War. The United States premiere was held at the University of Southern California in 1957,²⁶ and a professional production was mounted at Santa Fe Opera in 1988 just prior to its New York debut in a concert performance.²⁷ The BBC broadcast a studio performance of the opera in May 1971 from Manchester, and concert performances were put on in Oxford and London in 1985.²⁸ The first notable post-war revival in German-speaking Europe occurred in Graz in 1950, while Hartmann supervised another production for the Munich Opera Festival in 1961. Perhaps to deemphasize the Beethoven connections, the opera was preceded by a new version of *Thamos, König in*

²² That the work was intended to reach the widest possible audience is evinced by the fact that the piano-vocal score by Ernst Gernot Klussmann was prepared in both German and French editions, and additional translations into English and Italian were available. See E. H. Mueller von Asow, *Richard Strauss: Thematisches Verzeichnis* (Vienna: L. Doblinger, 1955-1959), 3:949.

²³ See Hartmann, *Richard Strauss*, 206-19 for production illustrations, and Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 319.

²⁴ The liner notes to the 1994 archival release of the 1939 Vienna recording claim it has been the only production of the opera hitherto mounted in the city. The opera was the only work performed that evening, prefaced by Strauss's *Wiener Philharmoniker Fanfare*, TrV 248.

²⁵ See Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 387.

²⁶ Osborne, *The Complete Operas*, 197.

²⁷ Andrew Porter, "Musical Events," *New Yorker*, December 11, 1989, 135. William Mann also mentions a concert performance in Los Angeles without a date though it must have been prior to May 1971. See Mann, "Richard Strauss's *Friedenstag*," 438.

²⁸ Osborne, *The Complete Operas*, 197. Mann's 1971 *Musical Times* article on the opera was a preview for the BBC broadcast.

Ägypten, a *Schauspiel* with music by Mozart. Hartmann described the public's reaction to the revival as "reserved and cool." This reception is not surprising given that the revival's opening night coincided with the erection of the Berlin Wall earlier that morning (August 13, 1961).²⁹



Figure 5.2. Helmut Jürgen's scenic rendering for the final scene, Munich Festival 1961.³⁰

Much had changed politically and aesthetically in the twenty-three years since Hartmann had directed the premiere. Existing production photos and color renderings for the 1961 Munich production indicate that Hartmann took a relatively abstract approach to the stage action and décor (see fig. 5.2). Helmut Jürgen's stage design eschewed the heavy realism of the 1930s in favor of the New Bayreuth style of Wieland Wagner, with a raised disc acting area and an oratorio-style presentation of the choral units for the finale. In his guide to the stage designs,

²⁹ Date in Hartmann, *Richard Strauss*, 214. Hartmann does not mention the convergent incident.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Hartmann gave only a brief comment on the political significance of the work in the context of its Third Reich premiere: “Soon after *Friedenstag* we learnt the horrors of war for ourselves and came to know what destruction and need really meant. It appears that as a survivor one has to feel the rubble under one’s feet if one is to be able to rejoice after the danger has passed.”³¹ He was more glib about the long-term value of the work:

A symbolic game with war? The public had experienced everything themselves; the opera could not hope to approximate reality. *Friedenstag* was, in an ideal sense, an appeal to men’s political consciousness (in so far as it exists), but the warning came too late; in the modern world the opera seems fated to have historic rather than immediate significance.³²

Despite the potentials it holds for enterprising directors, *Friedenstag* remains on the periphery of contemporary opera companies. Performance data from Schott Music reveals only one production was mounted during the Strauss sesquicentennial year.³³ For an opera so obscure, it nevertheless boasts a remarkable collection of audio recordings, ranging from an archival broadcast of the 1939 Vienna premiere to a complete stereophonic studio recording with Giuseppe Sinopoli and the Dresden Staatskapelle in 1999.³⁴

Yet as decades pass and the real experiences of war and political division continue to fluctuate around the world, the political consciousness of the opera retains a significant value. The nuanced and often complex ways that Strauss integrated various allusions into *Friedenstag*—ways that can often be regarded as burlesque, as this study has found—reveal much about Strauss as a composer and dramatist enduring troubled political times. With

³¹ Ibid., 219.

³² Ibid.

³³ This was in Kaiserslautern. Another production was mounted in Ludwigshafen in February 2015. Schott Music, “*Friedenstag* – Performances,” accessed Tuesday, April 14, 2015, <http://www.schott-music.com/shop/9/show,156168.html?showOldPerformances=true#top>. Schott maintains licensing for Germany and other central European countries. A search through the performance database of Strauss’s international publisher Boosey & Hawkes returns no hits for *Friedenstag*.

³⁴ No less than two other stereo recordings were issued between 1988 and 1999, the opera’s novelty making it an attractive addition to the swelling catalogues of recording companies, along with the wider trend of political and economic détente across Europe.

hindsight, it is easy to dismiss *Friedenstag* as a missed opportunity, with its authors taking the humble route of least resistance as opposed to the more defiant. But perhaps *Friedenstag* offers another perspective owing to the composer's recourse to burlesque and irreverence. Regretfully, we may realize that Strauss's preoccupation with art detached him from much of the political reality of the time and also contributed to his delusions that Nazism would be a cultural force that he could be control. As Goebbels callously upbraided him in 1944: "Stop your claptrap about the importance of serious music, once and for all. It will not serve to raise your own standing. Tomorrow's art is different from yesterday's! You, Herr Strauss, belong to yesterday!"³⁵ Today we can confidently regard this appraisal of the composer's legacy as completely wide of the mark. Strauss's compositions remain as vital as ever, and for all of its alleged shortcomings, *Friedenstag* endures, both as an artistic endeavor and as a lens that sheds light on a precarious phase of Strauss's career.

³⁵ Peter Franklin, "Strauss and His Contemporaries: Critical Perspectives," in *The Richard Strauss Companion*, edited by Mark-Daniel Schmid (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 54.

APPENDIX A: ZWEIG'S INITIAL SKETCH OF *FRIEDENSTAG*¹

Zeit: das dreißigste Jahr des dreißigjährigen Krieges. Ort: das Innere einer Citadelle. Eine deutsche Festung wird von den Schweden belagert. Der Commandant [*sic*] hat geschworen, sie lebend nicht den Feinden in die Hand fallen zu lassen. Der belagernde Commandant hat geschworen, keinen Pardon zu üben. Es herrscht gräßliche Not in der unteren Stadt unterhalb der Citadelle. Der Bürgermeister beschwört den Commandanten [*sic*] die Festung zu übergeben. Das Volk dringt ein, die verschiedensten Stimmen der Not, der Angst, des Hungers personifizieren sich (Einzelstimmen, verschlungene, Massenscenen). Der Kommandant weicht nicht. Er läßt das Volk, das ihn verflucht, gewaltsam hinausdrängen. Allein mit seinen Offizieren und Soldaten erklärt er, daß er die Festung nicht länger halten kann. Aber er wird sie nicht übergeben, sondern lieber in die Luft sprengen. Er stellt jedem frei, hinab in die Stadt zu gehen und vom Feinde Pardon zu nehmen, er nehme ihn nicht. Nun Einzelscenen (knapp aber jede sehr accentuiert). Einige gehen, einige bleiben (je nach den Characteren).

Die Zurückbleibenden: heroisch tragische Stimmung.

Religiöse Scene. Es erscheint die Frau des Commandanten. Er befiehlt ihr zu gehen, ohne zu sagen, was er vorhat. Sie errät seine Absicht. Starke Scene. Sie sucht nicht ihm abzureden, da sie seinen Eid kennt. Aber sie geht nicht. Und bleibt bei ihm (– dies als lyrisches Element), um mit ihm zu sterben.

Vorbereitungen zu Sprengung der Citadelle. Letzter Abschied. Alle umarmen sich. Die Lunte wird gelöst. Sie wird entzündet. Vollkommene Stille.

Da – ein Kanonenschuß. Alle fahren auf. Der Commandant erwartet einen Angriff. Die Lunte wird gelöscht. Sie sind glücklich lieber im offenen Kampfe zu sterben. Aber kein zweiter Kanonenschuß. Alle warten. Verwundert. Beunruhigt.

Augenblick neuer starker Spannung.

Da von ferne aus einem Nachbardorf eine Glocke (sehr fern) in die Stille. Dann eine zweite aus einem andern. Dann (noch immer fern) eine dritte. Eine Trompetenstoß. Man meldet, ein Parlamentär nahe mit einer weißen Flagge. Dann mehr und mehr Glocken. Und plötzlich von unten der Ruf: Friede. Friede ist abgeschlossen. Die Glocken brausen mehr und mehr und mit dem Jubel des (unsichtbaren) Volkes zusammen.

Der Parlamentär erscheint. In Osnabrück ist der Friede abgeschlossen worden. Der feindliche Commandant bittet ihn begrüßen zu dürfen. Zustimmung. Scene des Erwaches. Immer wieder die Glocken, welche die ganze Scene wie Orgel durchfluten.

Der feindliche Commandant erscheint. Beide sehen sich finster an. Sie haben beide geschworen sich zu vernichten. Allmähliche Entspannung. Sie treten näher. Sie reichen sich die Hand. Sie umarmen sich.

Das Volk strömt heran. Bejubelt den Commandanten. Der halt eine Ansprache: jetzt müsse jeder ans Werk. Aufbau und Versöhnung. Alle für alle. Einzelne Antworten der Zustimmung. Ein Stand nach dem andern nimmt das Wort. Und aus all dem erbaut sich stufenmäßig der große Chor, in dem alle Aufgaben und Errungenschaften des Völkerfriedens im Sinne jedes Standes gefeiert werden und der sich zu machtvollen Schwung im Finale entfaltet: zum Hymnus an die Gemeinschaft.

¹ Quoted from Zweig's letter to Strauss, August 21, 1934, *Strauss–Zweig: Briefwechsel*, 74. Zweig's idiosyncratic spellings are retained.

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