

Introduction

Hanns Eisler's incidental music to Bertolt Brecht's stage play *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe oder Reich und reich gesellt sich gern. Ein Greuelmärchen* contains some of his most well-known songs. However, the fact that these songs are also an integral component of a "drama with music"¹ has been widely ignored to this day. After *Die Massnahme* and *Die Mutter*, *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* is the third major theatrical collaboration between Brecht and Eisler. To understand why it was not as successful as its predecessors one must take into account the difficult political circumstances at the time of its genesis and the problems concerning the possibility of obtaining a performance. A stage production in Nazi Germany was unthinkable in 1934, when Eisler began working on the incidental music. Brecht and Eisler were both in exile then, and performances outside of Germany proved to be extraordinarily difficult owing to financial and political constraints. The work was performed infrequently both in East and West Germany after 1945.² Eisler's incidental music exists in various versions and arrangements. This volume presents the chronologically last and most extensive version of the work for the first time in print.

The Genesis of the Work

When Brecht informed Eisler in late summer 1932 that he had just completed an arrangement of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, he was no doubt hoping that Eisler would volunteer to read his script critically.³ It is debatable whether Brecht had already planned to include music in the work at this time and for this version of the play. Other than the texts to the future "Kavatine der Isabella" and "Das 'Vielleicht'-Lied", there are no recognizable songs in the play. The idea of incorporating music on a larger scale possibly came to Brecht in alliance with Kurt Weill.⁴ In a letter to Brecht of early June 1933, Weill claims

authorship of the idea of adapting the play into an operetta: "For my part, I am still mulling over the project that I suggested to you concerning 'Spitzköpfe und Rundköpfe.' [...] However, the following points must be cleared up: you know that I have been toying with the idea of transforming this play into a kind of 'operetta' for quite some time now, and that this idea is exclusively mine. Now it appears that Aufricht mentioned to Steinthal that you want to have Eisler write the music to the play. As I have absolutely no intention of crossing your plans with Eisler, and since the conditions for my work would have to be totally clear and unequivocal, I would like you to clarify this matter before I pursue this project."⁵ Although there is no extant answer of Brecht's, the comment made to Weill by Steinthal most likely conveys Brecht's intentions correctly; Brecht was indeed in Paris at that time negotiating with Ernst Aufricht about a performance.⁶ It remains unclear, however, precisely when Brecht proposed to Eisler that they collaborate on *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* (or *Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe*, as the play had been called until 1934). The reference to Eisler in an article published in the *Rote Fahne* on 25 December 1932 is misleading: "Bert Brecht is collaborating with Eisler on a worker's choral piece that will incorporate elements from the *Communist Manifesto*. They are also working on an anti-Fascist play called *Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe*, based on motives from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*." Here it is unclear whether the "collaboration" refers solely to the choral piece (of which there are no known sources) or to the stage work.

During the summer and fall of 1933, Eisler was busy working on the film scores to *Nieuwe Gronden* and *Le grand jeu* in Paris. In his surviving letters to Brecht from this period, he does not mention the incidental music, although he does express the wish for a mutual collaboration. In August of that year Eisler

- 1 Hanns Eisler, *Zur Musik* (for English translation see the end of this introduction, German version see p. 1 of the present publication and the description of source AG in the Critical Report).
- 2 Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler. Musik einer Zeit, die sich eben bildet*, Munich, 1976, p. 116. Betz even claimed it to be Brecht and Eisler's "most underrated work to this day". For the performances of the work, see Albrecht Dümling, *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* in: *Brecht-Handbuch I. Stücke*, ed. by Jan Knopf, Stuttgart, 2001, pp. 309–316, here: p. 314f.
- 3 See Bertolt Brecht's letter to Hanns Eisler of August/September 1932 in: Bertolt Brecht, *Briefe 1*, ed. by Günter Glaeser in collaboration with Wolfgang Jeske and Paul Gerhard Wenzlaff, Berlin a. o., 1998 (= *Werke. Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. by Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei and Klaus-Detlef Müller [subsequently: *Werke*], Vol. 28), p. 341f.: "The *Measure for Measure* adaptation is finished and just fine (unperformable). I hope that you will be one of the three readers who will read the work (while applying all cautionary measures)." The version of the play that Brecht offers here for reading was published in late 1932 with few alterations as a stage script by Felix Bloch Erben in Berlin and published under the title *Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe oder Reich und reich gesellt sich gern. Ein Greuelmärchen* [1933 version] in: Bertolt Brecht, *Stücke 4*, ed. by Johanna Rosenberg and Manfred Nössig, Berlin a. o., 1988 (= *Werke*, Vol. 4), pp. 7–145; it was edited from an early 1933 makeup copy of the eighth book of Brecht's *Versuche*, which was ultimately left unpublished. Concerning the various versions of the text of the play between 1931 and 1938 see the editor's remarks in: Bertolt Brecht, "Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe". *Bühnenfassung, Einzelszenen, Varianten*, ed. by Gisela Bahr, Frankfurt am Main, 1979, pp. 236–240, the editors' comments in: Brecht, *Stücke 4*, loc. cit., pp. 459–491, and Dümling [Note 2], pp. 309–311.
- 4 Kurt Weill had taken note of Brecht's Shakespeare arrangement in early 1933. See Kurt Weill's letter to Lotte Lenya of 9 January 1933 in: *Sprich leise wenn du Liebe sagst. Der Briefwechsel Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke, Cologne, 1998, p. 83: "By the way, I read his [Brecht's] adaptation of *Measure for Measure*, parts of which are very lovely. I immediately noticed that there is a wonderful role for you in it, and he actually told me that he's thinking of you for it. Aufricht might want to do it."
- 5 Letter to Bertolt Brecht from Kurt Weill, presumably from early June 1933, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste (subsequently: SAdK) Berlin, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (subsequently: BBA) 911/47.
- 6 See Bertolt Brecht's letter to Helene Weigel of 10 June 1933 in: Brecht, *Briefe 1* [Note 3], p. 361f.: "Then I shall negotiate with Aufricht about the Spitzköpfe in Paris."

writes: “It’s a shame that I can’t come to see you. It would be wonderful to work with you now.”⁷ Their creative association on *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* began early in 1934, possibly generated by the prospect of a performance under Per Knutzon at the Dagmar-Theater in Copenhagen.

1934 Version

Hanns Eisler left Paris on 12 February 1934 for Svendborg on the Danish island of Fyn in order to be in the immediate vicinity of Bertolt Brecht.⁸ He was accompanied by his companion and future wife Louise Jolesch. According to Eisler’s handwritten datings and the nature of the sources (see Source Description of **G** and **H**), his work on the music to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* can be broken down chronologically as follows: in Denmark he first wrote “Die Ballade vom Knopfwurf” (4 April 1934) and the “Kavatine der Isabella” (5 April 1934)⁹. Eisler’s collaboration with Brecht and the playwright’s collaborator Margarete Steffin on a new version of the play became quite intensive; Eisler was even drawn into discussions on the text of the play.¹⁰ At times, this “teamwork” seems to have involved more work than the composer was willing to invest. Referring to their temporary return to Paris in mid April, Louise Eisler-Fischer writes: “Eisler couldn’t stand it all too long in Denmark. As the work on the play got bogged down in details concerning two horses, Eisler suddenly turned up at the Paris hotel where I had arrived earlier. ‘Farm horses may be very important to a farmer,’ he said, ‘and I understand that they play

a certain role in the structure of the play, but they keep me too long from composing. I need a piano and not horses.”¹¹

In Paris Eisler composed the “Chorlied von der nützlichen Missetat” (14 April 1934) and an early version of the “Duett (Isabella – Judith)”, most likely in mid May.¹² The “Lied der Sichel” was also presumably written in Paris between mid April and mid May.¹³ It is likely that Eisler continued writing music to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* during this time, although there is no written evidence. Gustav Regler, for instance, mentioned the performance of several songs in Paris in a letter to Brecht dated 19 April 1934: “[...] Hanns Eisler called you to mind in the most delightful manner the day before yesterday when he played to us from the ‘Rund- und Spitzköpfe’. Although I cannot give you a definitive political opinion yet, I would like to say that I particularly enjoyed several ballads (Erbhofsumpf / Angelas-Hymne [/] Knopfwurf / Vielleichtlied).”¹⁴ Little is known about the circumstances of this and other such recitals.¹⁵ There are also no surviving copies of, for example, “Das ‘Vielleicht’-Lied” that are datable to this period.

Eisler and Louise Jolesch returned to Fyn in early July and took up residence in Skovsbostrand, “[...] three minutes by foot to Brecht’s house.”¹⁶ Louise Eisler-Fischer recalls: “The rented piano from Svendborg occupied practically the entire space in one of the rooms of the house, but that didn’t stop Eisler from playing and singing the pieces he had completed from the *Rundköpfe und Spitzköpfe* to the Brechts, Grete Steffin, Karl Korsch and Walter Benjamin, who all crowded together and

7 Letter to Bertolt Brecht from Hanns Eisler of 10 August 1933, SAdK Berlin, *BBA 479/53–56*. Eisler’s letters to Brecht from the mid 1930s are quoted in excerpts and commented upon by Eberhardt Klemm, *Hanns Eisler an Bertolt Brecht 1933 bis 1936, Briefexzerpte und Kommentare* in: *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 17 (1972), pp. 98–113.

8 Date according to Louise Eisler-Fischer, *Eisler in der Emigration* in: *Neues Forum*, September/October 1972, pp. 70–73, here: p. 71. Werner Hecht, *Brecht-Chronik*, Frankfurt am Main, 1998, p. 394, mentions 25 February; Manfred Grabs, *Hanns Eisler, Kompositionen – Schriften – Literatur*, Leipzig, 1984, p. 19, even suggests that it was not until 13 March of that year. That Eisler was already there in February is confirmed by his hand-written dating with the mention of the guest house he was staying at – “Stella Maris Denmark 25 February 1934” – on the autograph of *Die Ballade von der Billigung der Welt* (SAdK Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv [subsequently: HEA] 597 [EA 145/71–86]) as well as by a letter sent by Margarete Steffin to Walter Benjamin presumably in mid February 1934 (published in: Margarete Steffin, *Briefe an berühmte Männer*, ed. by Stefan Hauck, Hamburg, 1999, p. 111f.). Moreover, Louise Eisler-Fischer’s observation is all the more plausible as she incorporates dates of political events in her memoirs (general strike in Paris and anti-Dollfuss uprisings in Austria on 12 February 1934).

9 Margarete Steffin writes to Walter Benjamin on 15 March 1934 (see Steffin, *Briefe an berühmte Männer* [Note 8], p. 119) that: “Hanns E. is busy composing.”

10 Concerning the collaboration of Brecht and Eisler in Denmark in 1934 see also Ruth Berlau, *Für Hanns Eisler* in: *Sinn und Form. Sonderheft Hanns Eisler*, 1964, pp. 326–329, in particular: p. 327f.

11 Louise Eisler-Fischer [Note 8], p. 71.

12 See Hanns Eisler’s letter to Bertolt Brecht of 24 May 1934, SAdK Berlin, *BBA 479/66–69*: “The duet Isabella – Judith turned out just fine.” In the 1934 versions of the play, “Judith” is the name of the character who is called “Nanna” in the later versions, including the printed edition of 1938. This early version of the duet was probably a compilation of **H:Ag13/6** and **H:Sk13/1** a. c. (see Source Description in the Critical Report).

13 This dating is suggested by the fact that the type of paper used for the autograph is identical to that used for the notation of the “Chorlied von der nützlichen Missetat”. During the compositional work on *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, the same music paper is found only in the parts of the autograph of the aforementioned early version of the “Duet (Isabella – Judith)” (see above Note 12) and in the parts of the autograph of “Die Ballade vom Wasserrad” which also contain an early version (compilation of **H:Sk11/1–2** a. c. and **H:Ag11/4**; see Source Description in the Critical Report). This early version was possibly also written in Paris between April and June 1934.

14 Letter to Bertolt Brecht from Gustav Regler of 19 April [1934], SAdK Berlin, *BBA 479/65*. (The letter also contains a hand-written entry by Eisler: “Best wishes, your Eisler”.) In several early versions of the play, “Angelas” is the name of the character who is called “Iberin” in later versions: With “Angelas-Hymne”, Regler presumably means an early version of the “Choral (Hymne des erwachenden Jahoo).” “Erbhofsumpf” no doubt refers to the “Erbsumpflied” (see Brecht, *Stücke 4* [Note 3], p. 467), the words of which are no longer extant. It was apparently removed from the play at a later date. There are no known copies by Eisler.

15 Walter Benjamin was also no doubt thinking of a musical presentation when he wrote to Bertolt Brecht on 21 May 1934 (quoted in: Walter Benjamin, *Versuche über Brecht*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, p. 129): “I heard some of the new songs and liked them very much.”

16 Louise Eisler-Fischer [Note 8], p. 71. In a letter to Bertolt Brecht dated 18 June 1934, SAdK Berlin, *BBA 479/58*, Hanns Eisler mentions the date on which he intended to travel: “As far as the collaboration is concerned: I am coming to see you on 3 July, this is absolutely certain, thus I would appreciate it if you could find suitable lodgings for Lou and myself, as inexpensive yet as close to you as possible. You can make a definitive booking since I am coming for sure.”

just barely had enough room with the door open. Eisler generally did this to the light of smoking petroleum lamps, since there was no electric lighting in our cottage.”¹⁷ There he composed “Die Ballade vom Wasserrad” (27 July 1934), the “Lied von der belebenden Wirkung des Geldes” (4 August 1934), “Das ‘Was-man-hat-hat-man’-Lied” (8 August 1934), the “Lied eines Grossen” (9 August 1934), “Duett (Isabella – Judith)” (14 August 1934), “Das Lied von der Tünche” (15 August 1934), “Das ‘Vielleicht’-Lied” (19 August 1934) and the “Choral (Hymne des erwachenden Jahoo)”¹⁸. The “completely new version”¹⁹ of the play that arose in collaboration with Eisler and Steffin, in part through the incorporation of the songs, contains the following observation at several passages: “Here music strikes up, symbolizing the cruelties and absurdities of a confused age.”²⁰ There is no known music composed by Eisler exclusively for this purpose. Perhaps an overture originally written for the incidental music to *Kamrad Kasper* in 1932 was intended here; it is found in the bundled autographs written in 1934 (G:Fh0/1).

(Concerning the sequence of the songs in the 1934 version, see the numbering in G and H as well as Volume V/3A of this Complete Edition.²¹)

1934 Arrangement / Ratz

At the latest after his return to Paris in early April 1934, Eisler commissioned his friend Erwin Ratz in Vienna to produce piano reductions of the pieces that had been completed so that the music could be presented at negotiations with theaters.²²

(In addition to Copenhagen, Brecht and Eisler were negotiating with theaters in London, New York, Paris and Zurich.) The piano scores of all the songs composed in 1934 were finished by the beginning of September at the latest.²³

Between September 1934 and 1937, Brecht and Eisler, along with Wieland Herzfelde of the Malik-Verlag, planned to have the play printed together with the music, similarly to the *Lieder Gedichte Chöre* book published in Paris in the spring of 1934. The source of the musical text would have been Ratz’s piano reductions.²⁴ The project had to be abandoned for financial reasons. A separate printing of the music in conjunction with the world premiere in Copenhagen in November 1936 (see below) also did not materialize.²⁵

Ultimately, Erwin Ratz’s piano scores served as the basis for the scattered publication of nearly all of the songs written in 1934 in volumes 1, 2 and 4 of the *Lieder und Kantaten*, published between 1956 and 1958²⁶. Only the “Choral (Hymne des erwachenden Jahoo)” was eliminated by Eisler from this later form of publication, which was no longer directly connected to the stage play.

1936 Arrangement / Roger-Henrichsen

Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe was not given its first performance until fall 1936, and not in the Dagmar-Theater, but in the much smaller Riddersalen-Theater in Copenhagen. The performance was directed by Per Knutzon. Brecht had since revised the play and, in particular, added two new song texts: “Lied der Nanna” and “Kuppellied”. Eisler set these two songs

- 17 Louise Eisler-Fischer [Note 8], p. 71. In addition to the aforementioned Walter Benjamin and Karl Korsch, Erwin Ratz was also in Skovsbostrand in August of that year (oral communication of Ratz’s daughter Brigitte Ratz to Albrecht Dümmling).
- 18 The type of paper used and the preparation of the instrumental nomenclature by Erwin Ratz in G:Ag1/12 (see Source Description in the Critical Report) suggest a dating in August 1934, when Ratz was also in Skovsbostrand. All vocal numbers of the 1934 version were thus completed before Eisler’s departure from Fyn to London at the end of August.
- 19 Letter from Bertolt Brecht to Elias Alexander dated 31 March 1934 in: Brecht, *Briefe 1* [Note 3], p. 413. Alexander was Brecht’s agent and wanted to negotiate a performance of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* in London (see Elias Alexander’s letter to Bertolt Brecht of 6 April 1933, SAdK Berlin, BBA 785/22).
- 20 Passim. The quoted instruction is also found in the 1936 version of the play as reconstructed by Bahr [Note 3], e. g. on p. 21.
- 21 All surviving typescripts of the text of the play in the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv of the SAdK Berlin which can be brought into connection with the music of the 1934 version, in particular because the “Lied der Nanna” and “Kuppellied” are missing (BBA 255, BBA 257, BBA 258, BBA 262–263, BBA 430, BBA 431, BBA 2151, BBA 2152 and BBA 2193), diverge from the contents and numbering in G and H with respect to the number and sequence. Concerning these typescripts see also Bahr’s notes in Brecht, “*Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*” [Note 3], pp. 238–240.
- 22 See Hanns Eisler’s letter to Bertolt Brecht of 16 April 1934, SAdK Berlin, BBA 479/72–73: “I am very busy. Ratz is already working on the first piano pieces. As soon as it is technically possible, you will receive a copy of the music for London. (There is certainly no lack of diligence and haste, but it does take time.)”
- 23 See Hanns Eisler’s letter to Bertolt Brecht of 11 September 1934 (?), SAdK Berlin, BBA 479/47: “Please, you must absolutely not send Alexander the piano reductions – that would be completely superfluous. But take them along with you to London.” Also see the report on Eisler’s meeting with Stefan Zweig in London, where Eisler played the “Lied von der belebenden Wirkung des Geldes” and “Die Ballade vom Wasserrad” in: Hanns Eisler, *Gespräche mit Hans Bunge. Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht*, transcribed and commented by Hans Bunge, Leipzig, 1975 (= Ibid., *Gesammelte Werke* III/7), p. 101f., in particular p. 101: “I believe we had just received the piano reductions of the *Spitzköpfe*.”
- 24 See Wieland Herzfelde’s letter to Bertolt Brecht of 27 June 1935, SAdK Berlin, BBA 477/31: “Eisler is impatiently [awaiting] the publication of the music [...]. I have told him about the objections and he will have several passages simplified in the piano reduction; moreover the titles of the songs are still provisory (they are not yours; they were added by the person who produced the piano reduction), and one must take a decision here as soon as possible.” In his turn, Eisler had considered the Paris publisher Bernard Rosner for the publication of the text of the play together with the music (see Bernard Rosner’s letter to Hanns Eisler of 13 August 1934, SAdK Berlin, BBA 462/03).
- 25 Per Knutzon made a suggestion to this effect in his letter to Hanns Eisler dated 19 August 1936, SAdK Berlin, BBA 476/19–20. See also Hanns Eisler’s letter to Bertolt Brecht dated 15 October 1936 (?), SAdK Berlin, BBA 479/10, which apparently refers to such a possibility: “Dear Brecht, today a so-called business letter. A Copenhagen publisher called me up in London. He is offering me 20% of the retail price. However, I also have to include you in this sum; he is responsible for the Danish translator. I would suggest ceding you the usual amount from my royalties on music editions, which is a third, hence approximately 6 and a half percent. (This is what we did with Universal Edition.) Please write me immediately to let me know if you accept this, since I do not want to conclude anything with the publisher before I’ve come to an agreement with you.”
- 26 Hanns Eisler, *Lieder und Kantaten*, Vol. 1, Leipzig, 1956; Ibid., *Lieder und Kantaten*, Vol. 2, Leipzig, 1957; Ibid., *Lieder und Kantaten*, Vol. 4, Leipzig, 1958. Concerning the selection of the songs in the various volumes, see Source Description of W, X and Y.

to music in August 1936 in a version for voice and piano. He was aware that the songs composed in 1934 could not be performed in their original version. A few days earlier, Per Knutzon had informed Eisler in a letter: “As to the music, the situation is such that we can only use four musicians, although these four can obviously play different instruments. I would be much obliged to you if you could arrange the music as quickly as possible in such a way that it can be played by four people. Should you really have no time to do this, and if you allow us to have it done here in Copenhagen, we would contact Bernhard Christensen or Otto Mortensen.”²⁷ Eisler initially opposed this plan in a letter to Brecht: “As far as the music is concerned, the situation is very unpleasant. An arrangement for four instruments is impossible, although an arrangement for two pianos would be plausible. I am so busy that I absolutely cannot do it. I would suggest a compromise and would like your support for it. The original scoring of the music should be performed for at least eight days. That seems to be necessary for a premiere. I must have the possibility of playing the music in its original form for a short while. In the meantime, Mortensen can make an arrangement for two pianos, which I will check and correct. I see no other possibility. I can’t even play my overture with only four instruments, not to mention songs such as ‘Lob des Geldes’ or ‘Tünchnerchor’.”²⁸ But later that day, Eisler sent the two new songs to Brecht in a second letter with instructions for the arrangement and without any further mention of the “original scoring” of the other numbers: “I have now written these two songs for piano solo. The arranger should score it in a very cabaret-like style for two pianos, emphasizing the blues character in the first song and the street-ballad character in the second.”²⁹ The arrangement for voice or chorus and two pianos was not made by Otto Mortensen, as Eisler had suggested in his first letter, but Børge Roger-Henrichsen.³⁰

The premiere of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* (in Danish) took place on 4 November 1936 at the Riddersalen-Theater in Copenhagen. The music was played in Børge Roger-Henrichsen’s arrangement for voice/chorus and two pianos. Hanns Eisler did not attend any of the rehearsals nor any of the 21 performances given until 24 November of that year.

(For the sequence of the songs in the 1936 arrangement see the numbering in T as well as Volume V/3A of the Complete Edition.³¹)

1962 Version

Brecht’s final version of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* was published in 1938 in the second volume of his *Gesammelte Werke* (Malik). What is different in this version of the play compared with the previous versions is, in particular, the sequence of the songs. Moreover, the “Chorlied von der nützlichen Missetat” is now replaced by “Das neue Iberinlied”. Following the 1936 Copenhagen production, there were no further stagings of the work until the end of the war, and only two performances have been documented between 1945 and 1962, the year of Eisler’s death: a partial performance at the Bert-Brecht-Studio of the Deutsche Volksbühne Dresden in November 1948, probably without music; a school production in Frankfurt am Main in February 1960, with music by Ehrhardt Hoenemann and Hans Hermann Thiele.

It was far from self-evident that a Brecht play should be produced at a West-German theater in 1962, just one year after construction on the Berlin Wall had begun. Henning Rischbieter had recommended *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* to the Intendant of the Landestheater in Hanover, Kurt Ehrhardt, who then entrusted Günter Fleckenstein with the production.³² Neither Rischbieter nor the Landestheater had any direct contact to Eisler, which is why the Suhrkamp Verlag intervened.³³

For Hanns Eisler, this was a welcome opportunity to perform music he had composed a quarter of a century earlier for the first time according to his own wishes. In addition, Eisler seems to have placed particular importance at that time in getting his authorization as a Brecht collaborator recognized in Western nations as well. He also wanted to exercise a direct influence on stagings with his music, following a severe disappointment the previous year with a production of *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan.³⁴ The last time he had been able to intervene directly was in late summer 1961 while working on Roger Planchon’s *Schweyk* production at the Théâtre de la Cité in Villeurbanne near Lyon. This collaboration – which Eisler considered a success – was obviously intended as a model for the staging of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* in Hanover as well. It is with this in mind that he wrote to Karlheinz Braun of the Suhrkamp Verlag in Frankfurt am Main on 16 August 1962: “Dear Dr. Braun, in a few days I shall be sending you the score of the ‘Rundköpfe und Spitzköpfe’. This time it is particularly important that I be present at least for one

27 Knutzon’s letter to Eisler of 19 August 1936 [Note 25].

28 Hanns Eisler’s letter to Bertolt Brecht of 24 August 1936 (?), SAdK Berlin, BBA 479/09.

29 Hanns Eisler’s letter to Bertolt Brecht probably of 24 August 1936, SAdK Berlin, BBA 479/01.

30 See source description of T.

31 The presumed source for the 1936 production in Copenhagen is a typescript of the text of the play in Danish, a photocopy of which is preserved in the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv der SAdK (BBA 2156). This source diverges from the contents and numbering in T with respect to the number and sequence of the songs.

32 See also Günter Fleckenstein, *Zur Aufführung von Brechts “Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe”. Der Regisseur berichtet über die Einrichtung in: Hammoerscher Theateralmanach auf die Spielzeit 1962/63*, p. 40.

33 Conversation held between Albrecht Dümmling and Henning Rischbieter on 16 March 1999.

34 See for example Hanns Eisler’s letter to Paolo Grassi (Piccolo Teatro) probably of 19 January 1961, SAdK Berlin, HEA 5338: “My dear, honored Mr. Grassi! Many thanks for your hospitality. Nevertheless, I am leaving Milano disconcerted, tired and depressed. I have never before seen such a misrepresentation, trivialization and ‘beautification[.]’ of my music. Mr. Strehler did not even bother taking the trouble to confer with me, the oldest living collaborator of Brecht. Mr. Strehler does not seem to have fared well with his fame. The whole thing is a foul mess, which must obviously remain between us. Please ensure that my name is removed from the program booklet. I do not wish to be named as composer. What a pity! [...] I am now slinking off to Ascona, with the appalling sound of the film organ ringing in my ears.”

week at the final rehearsals of the staging and the music. You perhaps know that Brecht also mentioned me as a collaborator on the play. Please arrange this with the Landestheater in Hanover. There should be no problems since it is a highly important premiere.”³⁵

Eisler first had to adapt a complete score of his music to make it correspond to the printed version of the play (1938).³⁶ This meant above all that he had to arrange the songs “Lied der Nanna” and “Kuppellied”, written for voice and piano in 1936, for a medium comparable to that of the other numbers. To this end, Eisler used versions possibly made already in the mid 1950s and unrelated to the context of the incidental music. Both songs called for a double bass, as opposed to the scoring of the 1934 version. Perhaps Eisler took this opportunity to add a double bass part to some of the songs composed earlier as well, and to include a new version of the “Ballade vom Wasserrad”, probably written for another project, and which already contained a double bass part.

Two weeks later, on 1 September, Eisler informed the Suhrkamp Verlag that he was sending the material: “Dear Herr Doktor! I have just sent you the music by special delivery and registered mail. There are four packages, since there is an enormous amount of music in the ‘Rundköpfe und Spitzköpfe’. I am also including a list of the music numbers. [...] P. S. It would be better if I could come to the rehearsals in Hanover not only at the end, but towards the middle so that I am still able to change and arrange the difficult music. What are the exact dates?”³⁷

One can only speculate on the actual size and contents of the “four packages”. They perhaps contained only the score, as announced in the first letter, hence a compilation of sources [O] and [AE], or photocopies of this material. Perhaps they also included material for the parts, thus the source [AI] or a photocopy of it. At all events, in his second letter to Braun, Eisler made it clear that he did not regard these sources to be the definitive version of the stage music, but considered further changes probable in the context of the production in question. Eisler, however, did not make it to Hanover, since he died a few days later in Berlin on 6 September.

The first German performance of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* with Hanns Eisler’s music took place at the Landestheater in Hanover on 21 October 1962. According to Günter

Fleckenstein’s director’s copy and the program notes, “Die Ballade vom Knopfwurt”, “Das neue Iberinlied” and the “Lied von der belebenden Wirkung des Geldes” had been eliminated. The “Choral (Hymne des erwachenden Jahoo)” was sung in alternation by two groups of people who all joined in together only in the final strophe. The last strophe was heard again at the end of the play, where it replaced the “Sichellied”. Erik Tass, the musical director of the performance, remembers that the instrumental setting had to be reduced due to the small stage in the Studio of the Humboldtübne.³⁸ There is no known surviving recording of this production on video or tape.³⁹

The Music

In spring 1934, apparently after he had heard that Brecht and Eisler had begun working on *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, Kurt Weill wrote to his wife Lotte Lenya: “Bidi [Bertolt Brecht] is writing an operetta with Eisler! They will no doubt make use of everything I told him about music theater.”⁴⁰

It is a moot point, however, whether Brecht and Eisler actually did take Weill’s idea of adapting the play into an operetta as their point of departure. To be sure, from a purely quantitative viewpoint, the proportion of spoken text to sung text gives the music considerable weight in all versions of the play. Nevertheless, the spoken dialogues do predominate, making it impossible to speak of a genuine operetta. Eisler’s exaggerated reference to the incidental music as an “opera”⁴¹ in a typewritten work catalogue from his American years is perhaps the belated testimony to original or subsequent concepts that perhaps would have led to a shift in the relationship between the spoken text and the music. (In 1935, on the occasion of a possible film production that ultimately did not materialize, Brecht had considered arranging the play “[...] into a little comic opera or satirical operetta [...]”⁴²) Some of the songs also clearly bear operetta-like traits or elements that parody operettas, especially the trio “Lied eines Grossen”.

Undeniable is the fact that in *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, Brecht and Eisler returned to models derived from “epic theater”, in which music was viewed as an essential component. The “most successful demonstration”⁴³ of the “epic theater” that Brecht and Weill had begun developing in the late 1920s is *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera) of 1928. In *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, Eisler deals more comprehen-

35 Hanns Eisler’s letter to Karlheinz Braun of 16 August 1962, quoted from an incomplete copy in the SAdK Berlin, HEA 5357.

36 All editions of the play published up to 1979, especially by the publishers Suhrkamp and Aufbau, are based on the printed version of 1938. Günter Fleckenstein’s director’s copy was based on an edition printed by the Suhrkamp Verlag (Berlin a. o., no year, copyright notice: 1957).

37 Hanns Eisler’s letter to Karlheinz Braun of 1 September 1962, quoted from an incomplete copy in the SAdK Berlin, HEA 5357.

38 Conversation held between Albrecht Dümling and Erik Tass on 9 March 1999.

39 The only surviving material is a tape recording used for the playback of fanfares and radio addresses; it is preserved in the Archives of the Niedersächsisches Staatstheater.

40 Kurt Weill’s letter to Lotte Lenya of 6 April 1934, quoted in: *Sprich leise* [Note 4], p. 132f. The quoted passage is followed by a wickedly witty characterization of the physiognomies of Brecht and Eisler: “But I could care less. What kind of operetta could such a dried-out herring write anyway, and with this nutcracker to boot.”

41 Hanns Eisler, *The works of Hanns Eisler* [1946], SAdK Berlin, HFA 4007, p. 2: “[Op.] 45 DIE RUNDKOEPE UND DIE SPITZKOEPE (OPER)”.

42 Bertolt Brecht, *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* [film treatment] in: *Ibid., Prosa 4. Geschichten, Filmgeschichten, Drehbücher 1913–1939*, ed. by Brigitte Bergheim in collaboration with Michael Durwardt, Ute Liebig and Jan Knopf, Berlin a. o., 1997 (= *Werke*, Vol. 19), pp. 378–380; here: p. 380.

43 Bertolt Brecht, *Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater* [1935] in: *Ibid., Schriften 2/1*, ed. by Inge Gellert and Werner Hecht, Berlin a. o., 1993 (= *Werke*, Vol. 22/1), pp. 155–164, here: p. 156.

sively with Kurt Weill's "Song-Musik" than in the "Lehrstück", or didactic drama, *Die Massnahme* or in *Die Mutter*. When Eisler sent Brecht the songs he wrote in 1936, "Lied der Nanna" and "Kuppellied", he insisted on the characteristics which this "gestic"⁴⁴ "Song-Musik" – patterned after "so-called cheap music" – shared with the new pieces. At the same time, however, he made a vague reference to the difference between these new pieces and the songs composed in 1934: "Dear Brecht, this is the second letter that I am writing you today and the second song that I am sending. I think it turned out well. It owes its effect above all to the fact that the music is frightfully common and vulgar. It must be sung by a fat, drunken old hag with remains of a Titianesque beauty. It is musically easy to sing but difficult to interpret, and very free in tempo. [...] These two pieces, which are quite different from the rest of the music, are sure to bring some humor into this gloomy affair. I hope that the lyrics are translated in such a way that the words also convey a certain humor. The only thing left to mention is that in the song I am enclosing herewith, I have used the main motif from Richard Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde' as an accompaniment, since one must always honor the masters where honor is due."⁴⁵ Eisler's songs to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* cannot all be subsumed under the category of "gestic music", although they clearly betray the influence of "Song-Musik". Inherent in them, moreover, is a reflective moment such as had already been realized in the choruses and songs from *Die Mutter*, for example.⁴⁶ The use of "Song-Musik" in *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* was probably due chiefly to the potential target group. In contrast to *Die Mutter*, which unequivocally addresses itself to the working class and is intended to encourage workers to take a revolutionary stance, *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* is aimed primarily at the petite bourgeoisie which was susceptible to the Fascist tendencies of the times. In Brecht's own words: "Eisler wrote 'Song-Musik' to the play *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* which, unlike *Die Mutter*, addresses itself to a 'broader' audience and pays more attention to the needs of pure entertainment. To a certain extent, this music is also philosophical. And it also avoids narcotic effects, mainly by linking the solving of musical problems

to the clear and precise elaboration of the political and philosophical meaning of the poems."⁴⁷ The "philosophical" character of Eisler's music to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* can be understood as the reflection of its own effect precisely in its relationship to the sung text. For example, in the "Duett (Isabella – Nanna)" the words uttered by the landlord's prosperous wife take on a different meaning when they are placed in the mouth of the tenant's daughter, even though the "words" are visibly the same; since the daughter has been forced into prostitution, it is the social difference between the two duet partners that now becomes thematized.⁴⁸ However, the music not only characterizes the social class of the dramatis personae. In conjunction with the sung texts, elements from a great variety of musical styles are generally employed as a reflection of this music's function in a society that prizes it.⁴⁹ The idioms of popular music, both contemporary and past, in many songs are found next to borrowings from church music and political "Kampfmusik" (struggle or revolutionary music) ("Lied der Sichel"). "Serious music" itself is also used as a stylistic reservoir: the quotation from *Tristan und Isolde* in the "Kuppellied", an example mentioned by Eisler himself, is a motif determined by history and semantics, which undergoes a shift in meaning through the words of Frau Cornamontis. The music not only evokes historical contents, but also makes contemporary allusions: a twelve-tone-configuration is heard in the opening measures of "Das 'Was-man-hat-hat-man'-Lied." Brecht hardly mentions Eisler's music in his writings on the Copenhagen premiere. In a collection of cue notes to [*Zur Kopenhagener Aufführung*], there is the succinct statement: "Music by Hanns Eisler, set for small orchestra, performed on two pianos."⁵⁰ In the more fully elaborated text, even this spare mention is missing.⁵¹ Also spare is the information on the music in the *Anmerkungen zu 'Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe'* published in 1938 along with the final version of the text of the play.⁵² It generally concerns the vocal and interpretive achievements of individual actors and the integration of the two pianos into the stage design: "The two pianos were spotlighted when they played; their mechanism was laid open."⁵³ At the center of Brecht's description of the Copenhagen production

44 See Brecht [Note 43], p. 161: "There is hardly any other way to lay down the character of this 'Song-Musik' as a 'gestic music' than with such discussions that bring out the social purpose of the innovations. In practical terms, gestic music is music that allows the actor to perform certain basic gestures. The so-called cheap music has been a kind of gestic music for a fairly long time now, especially in cabaret and operetta."

45 Eisler's letter to Brecht probably of 24 August 1936 [Note 29]. On the characterization of his music as "gestic" see also Hanns Eisler's letter to Bertolt Brecht of 14 October 1936, SAAdK Berlin, BBA 479/02–08: "N. B.: Don't let the actors speak too much in the songs. The singing brings the gestures with it and makes it easier for them."

46 Brecht does not seem to have used the term "Song-Musik" for the music to *Die Mutter*. In *Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater* [Note 43], p. 161f., he speaks of "music" and "pieces" from *Die Mutter*.

47 Brecht [Note 43], p. 162.

48 See also Albrecht Dümling, *Lasst euch nicht verführen. Brecht und die Musik*, Munich, 1985, pp. 376–379.

49 For several examples of these stylistic elements and their musico-dramaturgical functions see Gerd Rienäcker, *The invigorating effect of music? Making music about music in Brecht and Eisler's "Song of the invigorating effect of money"* in: *Hanns Eisler. A Miscellany*, ed. by David Blake, Luxembourg, 1995, pp. 91–102, and *ibid.*, *Vorworte zu Hanns Eislers musikalischen Kommentaren in: Programm-Material 1–4 zu 'Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe' von Bertolt Brecht/Hanns Eisler*, ed. by Berliner Ensemble (Editor: Bärbel Jaksch), [Berlin], 1998, Part 3, pp. [3]–[8].

50 Bertolt Brecht, *Schriften 4. Texte zu Stücken*, ed. by Peter Kraft in collaboration with Marianne Conrad, Sigmar Gerund and Benno Slupianek, Berlin a. o., 1991 (= *Werke*, Vol. 24), p. 515. The text is also published in: Brecht, "Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe" [Note 3], pp. 204ff.

51 Bertolt Brecht, [*Zur Kopenhagener Aufführung*] probably November 1936, in: *Ibid.*, *Schriften 4. Texte zu Stücken* [Note 50], p. 204f.

52 Bertolt Brecht, *Anmerkung zu "Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe"* in: *Ibid.*, *Gesammelte Werke. Band II*, London, 1938 (Malik), pp. 139–147. (Also printed in: Brecht, *Schriften 4. Texte zu Stücken* [Note 50], pp. 207–219.)

53 Brecht, *Anmerkung zu "Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe"* in: *Ibid.*, *Schriften 4. Texte zu Stücken* [Note 50], p. 216.

is the concept of “alienation”. From an acoustical point of view, he considers “noise or music backgrounds” as a means of alienation: gramophones visible on the stage and on which actors can play recordings. Eisler’s songs are not expressly designated as means of alienation. (Even though certain aspects of Eisler’s “making music about music” can also be categorized as types of alienation.⁵⁴) This corresponds to the tendency to enlarge the share of spoken text, and even to further reduce the importance of the music, in the versions of the play produced at the latest since 1936. The printed edition of 1938 also omits the mention “With music by Hanns Eisler”⁵⁵ in the title, even though it is still found in most of the typescripts of the 1934 version of the play. In the preface to the score, however, Eisler insists that the music to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* “plays an important role” in the play and “goes far beyond the boundaries of incidental music”.⁵⁶

The Edition

This edition presents the complete music to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* to the public for the first time in print. The basis for this edition is the 1962 version, which is the most extensive and – in comparison with the 1938 version of the play – the most complete, a factor that is of relevance to performances. (The 1934 version and the 1936 arrangement by Børge Roger-Henrichsen are published in Volume V/3A of the Complete Edition. The parts from Erwin Ratz’s 1934 arrangement which Eisler incorporated into the *Lieder und Kantaten* in the late 1950s are published in the respective volumes in Series III of this Complete Edition.) There are a number of ambiguities in the 1962 version, however, many of which result from its relationship to the 1938 version of the stage play.

1. In his preface to the score, Eisler suggests eliminating the “Choral des erwachenden Jahoo”, perhaps out of textual considerations. However, in the main source **AG**, and elsewhere, it is contained under the title “Choral (Hymne des erwachenden Jahoo).”

2. At the place of “Das Neue Iberinlied” inserted by Brecht in the printed version of 1938, Eisler’s score contains the “Chorlied von der nützlichen Missetat”. Eisler’s sketches pertaining to the setting of “Das Neue Iberinlied” text to the musical material of the “Chorlied” did not progress beyond this stage.

3. The printed version of the stage play repeats the wording of two songs within the play: “Das ‘Was-man-hat-hat-man’-Lied” as well as the “Sichellied” (= “Lied von der Sichel”). The extant sources for the incidental music in its 1962 version contain no

indications as to whether or how these repeats are to be musically realized. The indications in the stage play at least seem to imply that there is no instrumental accompaniment at the repeats, although the part material in **AK** (possibly compiled only posthumously) expressly calls for this through *tacet* signs.

4. The text of the printed version of the stage play does not stipulate that any purely instrumental music should accompany the action on stage, in contrast to the various versions of the play that may have served as the basis for the 1934 version. (See the repeated mention in the play typescripts of 1934: “Here music strikes up, symbolizing the cruelties and absurdities of a confused age.”) It remains unclear whether the “Overture” to *Kamrad Kasper*, which was possibly intended to be used in conjunction with the 1934 version, was ever envisaged as the actual overture of the 1934 version, of the 1962 version, or of both versions. (The printed version of the stage play offers two possibilities for inserting a potential overture: before the prologue, which is still missing in the play typescripts of 1934, or between the prologue and the first scene.)

5. The musical element of the 1962 version that differs most conspicuously from that of 1934 is the double bass part which Eisler added to several songs. This addition essentially concerns the numbers that also call for the piano. The double bass part was not added, however, at the “Duett (Isabella – Nanna)”, “Lied eines Grossen” and “Vielleicht-Lied”. There is no way of knowing for sure whether this was due to lack of time or whether it represents a deliberate omission.

The present edition aims to present a musical text that does justice to the practical requirements of a performance while refraining – in the aforementioned problematic points – from taking decisions for which there is no evidence in the sources. This allows for the greatest possible transparency in the theoretical and musicological approach to the musical text. Thus the “Choral (Hymne des erwachenden Jahoo)” was included in the musical text, in accordance with the main source. The “Overture”, however, has been placed in the Appendix, since its function remains undetermined in relationship to the 1934 version and its relevance debatable with respect to the 1962 version. Eisler’s surviving sketches to “Das neue Iberinlied” are reproduced in source edition following the Critical Report (“Skizzen zu ‘Das neue Iberinlied’”). Manfred Grabs’ additions of the double bass part (see below) are found within the source description of **AG** in the Critical Report). Users are thus able to take their own decisions depending on their respective practical or theoretical objectives.

54 See Rienäcker, *The invigorating effect of music? Making music about music in Brecht and Eisler’s “Song of the invigorating effect of money”* [Note 49], in particular p. 95: “Whatever is usual, all-too-usual, must be converted into the unusual i. e., made alien, by introducing gaps and breaks, by reorderings, by thwarting the expected just at the moment of fulfilment, by procedures which are foreign, or seem to be, to the material, so that the vocabulary is wrenched out of what is usual – while, at the same time, not being wholly foreign or external to the material, because relationships can only be made to dance to tunes played in their own proper way”. And Ibid., *Vorworte zu Hanns Eislers musikalischen Kommentaren* [Note 49], in particular p. 6: “The jazz instrumentation [in the “Lied von der belebenden Wirkung des Geldes”] makes its own special contribution to alienate what has already been absorbed, in particular the ‘romantic’ vocabulary [...]”

55 See the description of specific title sheets of these typescripts in: Brecht, “*Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*” [Note 3], p. 238f.

56 Eisler [Note 1].

Manfred Grabs' edition of the incidental music to *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, prepared in 1984 for the *Gesammelte Werke*, proved to be an important and helpful preparatory aid to the editors of this volume.⁵⁷ It was impossible to consider simply revising Grabs' work, however, since the editorial goals and requirements of the *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe* differ from those of the *Gesammelte Werke*. The Critical Report lists the additions Grabs made in view of offering a practical completion of the fragmentary source situation in **AG**. In particular, the double bass parts in Nos. 13, 14 and 16 – which were possibly intended, but no longer carried out by Eisler – were “composed” by Grabs in a manner that cannot be allowed in a historical-critical edition. Whoever is interested in these additions can consult the list of Grabs' annotations in Source **AG**. (It cannot be simply assumed, however, that Grabs' annotations in **AG** represent the final form of the planned edition.) At all events, the present volume should be seen as a bridge connecting the *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe*, which is inaugurated with this edition, and the *Gesammelte Werke* precisely on the basis of this interconnection among the contents.

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Berlin,

11 December 2001

Thomas Ahrend / Albrecht Dümmling
Translation: Roger Clement

The Music

Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe is a drama with music; music plays an important role in it and goes far beyond the boundaries of incidental music. I demand an excellent ensemble of musicians and actors who can sing. Jazz instruments are absolutely necessary, otherwise it does not sound right. The trumpets and trombones employ a great variety of mutes (hard, soft, brass with hole, wow-wow and melody mutes). It would be ideal if the trombonist had a tenor trombone in addition to the alto instrument. [*] The percussion can be doubled. Supplementing the usual instruments are a xylophone, vibraphone, Hawaiian guitar and accordion.

The “Choral des erwachenden Jahoo” should be eliminated since it displays an irony that does not fit the play: “Here is the swamp, and here we oafishly wait for a Fuehrer to lead us into it.” This poem originally belonged to a cycle of “Anti-Hitler Chorales” and was only “inserted” into *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*. I would recommend eliminating it.

Hanns Eisler

[*] What he probably means is: “... if the trombonist had a tenor-bass trombone in addition to the tenor instrument.”

⁵⁷ In addition to the source **AG**, which served as the printer's copy for the planned edition, the Hanns-Eisler-Archiv of the SAdK Berlin also has a specimen print of the music text with Grabs' corrections (*HEA 1647*), the typescript of the Kritischer Bericht (*HEA 1648*) and a specimen print of the music text of the arrangement for voice or chorus and two pianos by Roger-Henrichsen (*HEA 1646*), also edited by Grabs.