

## Introduction

Piano music plays a peculiar role in Eisler's thought and work. It was bound up with his beginnings as a composer and he returned to it when he had the leisure to compose. But at the same time it acted as a kind of negative foil to his "real" activities, namely his support for the workers' movement and for a music that could be utilized in its struggle for a socialist society. Eisler's piano music is to a certain extent that of the "private" composer, and he made little fuss about it. The piano was his instrument, and his playing is said to have possessed a great deal of charisma, despite his technical deficiencies.<sup>1</sup> Eisler's piano oeuvre is more extensive than that of his teacher Arnold Schoenberg. Besides occasional pieces, we also find works that we can describe as being of major importance, either on account of their position in his overall oeuvre or because of their immanent qualities.

This volume presents Eisler's piano sonatas and his piano variations. The remaining works for piano will follow in Volume IV/11, including the Sonatina op. 44, whose place is in his pedagogical oeuvre and is therefore not published here, despite belonging to the genre of the sonata. Naturally, the variations contained in op. 8 and op. 31 have not been removed from their respective collections of piano pieces so as to include them here, but have been kept in their original context.

The sonatas and variations in this volume are the most significant of Eisler's piano compositions. They are the works with which he made a major contribution to the piano music of the Second Viennese School in particular, and of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in general. If we consider just how much the Second Viennese School oriented itself to the formal canon of the Classical era, it is surprising that the "piano sonata" was ignored by the composers at the heart of the School – with the obvious exception of Alban Berg's op. 1. It was the "renegade" of the School, Hanns Eisler, who ultimately wrote no less than three contributions to this genre.

With his Sonata op. 1, composed in 1923 at the close of his studies with Arnold Schoenberg, Eisler made a highly regarded, successful debut as a composer. A comparison with his earlier piano pieces makes evident the qualitative leap that he had made under Schoenberg's guidance.<sup>2</sup> This work was his "journeyman's piece" and it follows the traditional pattern of the three-movement sonata. In it, Eisler demonstrates to the

full his art of constructing motivic and thematic relationships and his ability to create contrapuntal combinations.<sup>3</sup> This Sonata is essentially in the atonal idiom of the Second Viennese School, but its tonal residue (such as in the unresolved dominant seventh/ninth chord at the close of the main theme in the first movement) reveals a trait that Reinhold Brinkmann sees as characteristic of the "future critical singer": "If we don't wish to dismiss its [i.e. the chord's] isolation as a break in the style, then it can hardly be understood as anything other than parodistic".<sup>4</sup>

The Second Sonata was composed shortly afterwards. Although it was given the opus number "6", it was neither performed nor published at the time. It is not a sonata in the narrow sense of the word, but really a variation cycle. Its complete title runs: "Second Sonata for Piano (in variation form)". To be sure, variations 1 to 3 form a kind of sonata movement within the variation cycle, after the manner of Scherzo – (contrasting) Trio – Scherzo (reprise in inversion). But other references to the sonata genre or sonata form – such as the remark "Quasi second subject" at the 11<sup>th</sup> variation, or "Development section" in a sketch for the 9<sup>th</sup> variation – were abandoned by Eisler, probably because they did not seem plausible.<sup>5</sup> This sonata is an experimental site where Eisler was able to engage with contrary tendencies from the composing scene of the day. He applies the "method of composing with twelve tones related only to each other" invented by Schoenberg, but not in order to achieve a large-scale form with an increased level of complexity. Instead he thins out his piano textures and makes the sound more strident, in the spirit of the New Objectivity

1 See the accounts of Eduard Steuermann (p. XXXII) and Walter Olbertz (p. XXXIII) included here.

2 Christian Martin Schmidt, however, is of the opinion that: "Right from the beginning, his competence as a composer is highly developed", though he illustrates this not with the early piano pieces, but with the songs that Eisler wrote before beginning his studies with Schoenberg ("Sonate, que me veux-tu? Zu Hanns Eislers Klaviersonaten und deren Vortrag", in: Hartmut Krones [ed.], *Hanns Eisler. Ein Komponist ohne Heimat?*, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2012 [= *Schriften des Wissenschaftszentrums Arnold Schönberg* 6], pp. 21–34, here p. 25).

3 See Christoph Keller, "Das Klavierwerk Hanns Eislers", in: Wilhelm Killmayer, Siegfried Mauser and Wolfgang Rihm (eds.), *Klaviermusik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Mainz: Schott, 1992 (= *MELOS. Jahrbuch für zeitgenössische Musik* 51), pp. 25–41, here pp. 25–28.

4 Reinhold Brinkmann, "Kompositorische Maßnahmen Eislers", in: Rudolf Stephan (ed.), *Über Musik und Politik*, Mainz: Schott, 1971 (= *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für neue Musik und Musikerziehung Darmstadt* 10), pp. 9–22, here p. 20.

5 Thomas Ahrend's attempt in his doctoral thesis of 2004 to analyse this work as an interweaving of variation form, sonata form and the form of a multi-movement sonata (*Aspekte der Instrumentalmusik Hanns Eislers. Zu Form und Verfahren in den Variationen*, Berlin: Mensch & Buch Verlag, 2006 [= *Musikwissenschaft an der Technischen Universität Berlin* 7], pp. 70–76) is highly ingenious but replete with untenable assertions. The sonata-like character of the work can perhaps best be discerned in the manner in which it is permeated by the principle of developing variation. Eisler often bases a variation on an element that he has developed in the preceding variation (thus the 4<sup>th</sup> variation takes up directly where the close of the 3<sup>rd</sup> variation left off, the same is true of the 6<sup>th</sup> variation in its relationship to the 5<sup>th</sup>, and so on). The result is a continuum whose division into individual numbers seems arbitrary, especially towards the close of the work. Inasmuch as the individual variations tend to relate to each other rather than developing specific aspects of the theme, it is comprehensible that Eisler described this variation cycle as a "sonata".

(though Schoenberg too had taken a step in this direction in his Suite for Piano op. 25). Even the popularity of jazz in the 1920s finds a response in this work, which is rich in syncopations.

Both the Variations and the Third Sonata were written in exile in the USA, when Eisler had sufficient time to engage with piano music – something that was neither politically nor commercially productive. With their reminiscence of the quintet from Mozart's *Magic Flute*, in which Papageno is prevented from speaking by having a lock put on his mouth, the Variations refer to the situation of the exiled composer. The funeral march in the 1<sup>st</sup> Finale is also a document of suffering in exile, for it is dedicated to the memory of his friend Margarete Steffin who had died in Moscow while on the run from the Nazis. In his Variations, Eisler returned to the twelve-note method from which he had previously turned away when distancing himself from “modern music”. He now saw it in a new light on account of its having been ostracized by the Nazis.<sup>6</sup> It is noteworthy that the twelve-note method is employed far more rigorously in this work than in the Second Sonata. It is as if Eisler were here using the method as a means of rationalization after the manner of an *écriture automatique*; even the prevailing A-B-A form of the individual variations points to the work having been composed swiftly. And yet we cannot view the Variations as any kind of routine, academic, dime-a-dozen work. The concision with which Eisler forms his multitude of musical types is proof of both his mastery and of the experience that he had meanwhile acquired in “functional music”.

In 1943, Eisler wrote a three-movement piano sonata for the first time since his opus 1. This Third Sonata is also his last large-scale piano work. It differs from the First Sonata above all in its far more unconventional treatment of form and in its highly individual transformation of the idiom of the Second Viennese School – especially in its first movement. Unlike the First Sonata, the musical language derived from Schoenberg no longer conveys any sense of stylistic unity here, but instead is placed in a relationship to elements that can be traced back to Eisler's settings of Brecht and Hölderlin and that also incorporate aspects of the chansonesque (such as in the second subject

of the first movement).<sup>7</sup> All the same, we cannot here speak of an eclectic mixture. The different layers are interlinked in such a manner that by being confronted with each other they transgress their own boundaries and come together in a unity whose “truth” – this word, which Theodor W. Adorno liked to use in relation to Schoenberg, is surely apt here – lies precisely in its contrariness. The way in which Eisler incorporates the twelve-note method is here symptomatic of his techniques of free composition. He uses it in order to vary the B section of his last movement, thereby creating an island of dodecaphony – *con alcune licenze*. Seen in the context of the whole work – a work in which tonal elements also appear without tonality being restored as a system – it is only logical that the twelve-note method should not be applied systematically either. In each case it is Eisler himself who makes the compositional decisions, based on his unerring instinct for harmonic and melodic logic.<sup>8</sup>

### Composition and reception

#### Sonata for Piano op. 1

According to the date given on the autograph, Eisler wrote the first movement of this Sonata in just five days, namely from 5 to 9 March 1923 (the year is in fact given as 1922, but this is clearly a slip of the pen). Eisler played the Sonata before a small group at Schoenberg's house in Mödling as early as 29 March, though without having yet completed the last movement. This is proven by a letter of Alban Berg. He was present at the performance, and his report to his wife was not without envy at Schoenberg's “mood of patronage” towards his younger colleague: “this almost impetuous acceptance of Eisler's sonata for Prague and a recommendation to Hertzka – but really, the third movement hasn't even been composed to the end yet”.<sup>9</sup> However, Eisler did not need long to finish it. He composed

6 See Albrecht Dümmling, “Zwölftonmusik als antifaschistisches Potential. Eislers Ideen zu einer neuen Verwendung der Dodekaphonie”, in: Otto Kolleritsch (ed.), *Die Wiener Schule und das Hakenkreuz. Das Schicksal der Moderne im gesellschaftspolitischen Kontext des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Vienna: Universal Edition, 1990 (= *Studien zur Wertungsforschung* 22), pp. 92–106.

7 See Christoph Keller, “... daß weit hüllt in Dunkel und Blässe das Haupt der Menschen”. Zum ersten Satz von Hanns Eislers 3. Klaviersonate”, in: Hanns-Werner Heister and Hartmut Lück (eds.), *Musik, Deutung, Bedeutung. Festschrift für Harry Goldschmidt zum 75. Geburtstag*, Dortmund: Edition V im Pläne-Verlag, 1986, pp. 97–100; Keller, “Das Klavierwerk Hanns Eislers” (fn. 3), pp. 36–40; Thomas Phleps, “Aus der Heimat hinter den Blitzen rot...”. Hanns Eislers *Dritte Sonate für Klavier*”, in: Friedrich Geiger and Thomas Schäfer (eds.), *Exilmusik. Komposition während der NS-Zeit*, Hamburg: von Bockel Verlag, 1999 (= *Musik im “Dritten Reich” und im Exil* 3), pp. 189–231; Markus Roth, *Der Gesang als Asyl. Analytische Studien zu Hanns Eislers Hollywood-Liederbuch*, Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2007 (= *sinefonia* 7), pp. 213–241 (“Exkurs: Die Dritte Klaviersonate”).

8 See Christoph Keller, “Im Netz struktureller Zusammenhänge. Zu Hanns Eislers Klaviersonaten”, in: *Eisler-Mitteilungen* 48 (October 2009), pp. 4–10, here p. 9 f.

9 Alban Berg, *Briefe an seine Frau*, ed. Helene Berg, Munich: Albert Langen / Georg Müller Verlag, 1965, p. 494.

it “on a single Sunday”,<sup>10</sup> he claimed.<sup>11</sup> In general, we have to treat Eisler’s own claims with a certain degree of caution, but in this case it is quite plausible because the sonata’s world première was given by Eduard Steuermann in Prague on 10 April 1923. This makes Sunday 1 April the probable date for the work’s completion. Even for such an experienced pianist as Steuermann, this would not have left him much time to learn what is hardly an easy work. It is possible that the third movement had not yet acquired its definitive form when it was first given in Prague, because the passages pasted over in the recapitulation make it evident that this was initially an exact reprise of the exposition. Only later was it extended by bars 91–109 (see the critical commentary).<sup>12</sup>

Eisler later said that he had never in his life got to know a better musician than Steuermann.<sup>13</sup> It was thanks to Schoenberg that he was able to rely on a pianist of this calibre for the world première of his sonata. Schoenberg put it on the programme for the ninth concert of the Society for Private Musical Performances in Prague, where Steuermann also performed piano pieces by Fidelio F. Finke and accompanied songs by Béla Bartók and Alexander Zemlinsky.<sup>14</sup> The first performance in Vienna took place on 4 October 1924<sup>15</sup> in the hall of the Secession, as part of a chamber music evening for the Music and Theatre Festival of the city of Vienna. The rest of the pro-

gramme comprised string quartets by Joseph Haydn and Alban Berg, a cello sonata by Karl Weigl and a *Geistliches Lied* (‘Spiritual Song’) by Egon Wellesz. Shortly before his death, Eisler claimed that “the performance of my piano sonata in Prague was not the world première; that took place in Vienna”.<sup>16</sup> It remains unclear whether his memory was playing tricks, or whether the private nature of the Prague performance had led him to regard it as not a real “world première”. The former is possible because of the long time that had meanwhile elapsed, and on account of Eisler’s general unreliability in such matters; the latter is also possible because Erwin Ratz, who was well informed, wrote of the “world première of the Sonata for piano op. 1 at the Viennese Music Festival” in an article on Eisler at the time of the Vienna concert.<sup>17</sup>

The first performance in Prague seems to have been a success (though neither the composer nor the initiator of the première was present). In any case, Eisler wrote to Schoenberg three days later as follows: “The sonata was well received in Prague. Zemlinsky, Jalowetz are said to have lavished extraordinary praise on it. The 3<sup>rd</sup> movement (finale) seems to have had the biggest impact. But the other movements too. After everything I’ve been told, the piece was very well received”.<sup>18</sup> In this same letter, Eisler writes that Emil Hertzka (the director of Universal-Edition) is taking him under contract and his first publication will be the Piano Sonata. “He was incredibly gracious and explained repeatedly that I have your recommendation alone to thank”. This news is followed by gushing expressions of gratitude that end with the “very devoted pupil” asking the “highly honoured master” to accept the dedication of his Piano Sonata op. 1.

On 27 April 1923, Eisler signed a contract assigning the copyright of the Sonata op. 1 to Universal-Edition (UE): “The manuscript of the work remains with the publisher as its property. | For assigning my copyright I shall receive: | [...] a royalty of 10 % of the retail price of each copy sold, to be accounted for each half year, but only after the sale of 50 copies”.<sup>19</sup> On 12 March 1924,<sup>20</sup> thus before the Viennese “world première”, the work was published in its first edition, though with several mistakes. The fact that the publisher held considerable hopes for the young composer is proven not least by the publication on 4 September 1925<sup>21</sup> of a second, corrected issue – a rare occurrence in the music publishing world.

10 Eisler to Alban Berg, [29 March 1924], Hanns Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943*, ed. Jürgen Schebera and Maren Köster, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2010 (= *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe* [hereinafter: HEGA] IX/4.1), p. 23.

11 David Blake recalls a version of this account that is substantially identical but somewhat different in its details. Eisler told him the story of how he wrote his opus 1 during the lessons he gave Blake in 1960 (“Mein Lehrer Hanns Eisler”, in: *Sinn und Form. Beiträge zur Literatur. Sonderheft Hanns Eisler 1964*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Künste, Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1964, pp. 54–68, here p. 55 f.).

12 The pasted-over passage at the close of the first movement also suggests that the definitive version was not ready at the time of the world première. Here, Eisler originally notated a series of chromatically descending chords in both hands that is barely realizable at the “presto” tempo he designates (see critical remark on bar [136]A), and which Steuermann seems to have replaced by a series of alternating chords (see the notation in his personal copy, critical remark at bar 136, source B2). Here, the alternation of the hands makes a far quicker tempo possible. It was probably in reaction to Steuermann’s criticism that Eisler decided on a compromise between the two versions by having two chords in the right hand followed by one in the left each time.

13 Hanns Eisler, *Gespräche mit Hans Bunge. Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht*, ed. Hans Bunge, Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975 (= *Gesammelte Werke* [hereinafter: EGW] III/7), p. 76. As edited and translated by Sabine Berendse and Paul Clements: *Brecht, Music and Culture. Hanns Eisler in Conversation with Hans Bunge*. London / New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014, p. 62.

14 Ivan Vojtěch, “Die Konzerte des Prager Vereins”, in: *Schönbergs Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, Munich: edition text + kritik, 1984 (= *Musik-Konzepte* 36), pp. 115–118, here p. 116.

15 An incorrect date (10 October 1924) is given in Jürgen Schebera’s Eisler biography (*Hanns Eisler. Eine Biographie in Texten, Bildern und Dokumenten*, Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1998, p. 32) and is repeated in Ulrike Wintersteller, “Wie die Trän’ auf die Zwiebel. Zur zeitgenössischen Rezeption der frühen Klavierwerke Hanns Eislers”, in: *Eisler-Mitteilungen* 48 (October 2009), p. 18.

16 Eisler answered this question from the Czech musicologist Ivan Vojtěch in a letter of 3 August 1962 (Archive of the Academy of Arts [Akademie der Künste, hereinafter: AdK] Berlin, Hanns-Eisler Archive [hereinafter: HEA] 6560).

17 Erwin Ratz, “Hanns Eisler”, in: *Musikblätter des Anbruch* VI/9 (October 1924), pp. 381–384, here p. 382.

18 Eisler to Arnold Schoenberg, 13 April 1923, Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* [fn. 10], p. 18.

19 AdK Berlin, HEA 3036.

20 According to an entry in the publisher’s book of Universal-Edition. See Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 293.

21 According to a fax of 5 November 1997 to the International Hanns Eisler Society from Joyce Shintani of the promotional/copyediting department of Universal Edition.

In late April 1925, Eisler was given the Artist's Prize of the city of Vienna that was worth 1,000 schillings (it was also awarded to Paul A. Pisk, another composer published by UE).<sup>22</sup> UE published an advertisement capitalizing on the award of the Prize to its two composers<sup>23</sup> and in Eisler's case it drew particular attention to the Sonata op. 1, quoting a review by Adolf Weißmann in the *B. Z. am Mittag*<sup>24</sup> and mentioning that the work was already in the repertoire of Eduard Steuermann, Leopold Münzer, Else C. Kraus, Franz Osborn, Robert Schmitz, Paul Aron, Erny Lamardine and Eduard Erdmann and had enjoyed "more than 25 performances in a single season". In the column "Aus aller Welt" ('From all over the world') in UE's own journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, we read of performances in Berlin by Osborn and Kraus, in Vienna by Steuermann, in Paris by Münzer and in New York by Schmitz. It is further mentioned that "a performance this year" will also take place in Moscow, and that Nikolai Myaskovsky has "devoted a comprehensive article to the work in the most recent number of the leading Russian music journal".<sup>25</sup> We have already made reference to the portrait article about Eisler by Erwin Ratz in the *Musikblätter*, in which considerable space is devoted to a description of the Sonata. Ratz sees the "easy comprehensibility"<sup>26</sup> of Eisler's music as one of its particular characteristics, in contrast to the music of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, which, he says, is difficult to understand. In an article on Eisler published several years later, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt discussed the Sonata likewise in relation to the Second Viennese School: "This work, dedicated to Schoenberg, clearly shows the influence of the Master, but differs from most of the first opuses of his school on account of its unusual harmonic clarity and the high degree of transparency of its textures".<sup>27</sup> Theodor W. Adorno called the work "witty" ('geistreich') and differentiates Eisler's Sonata from other music he would describe in similar terms, such as that of Richard Strauss or Ravel: "In general, it is understood to signify noth-

ing very specific – one thinks mostly of some extra-musical associations that might be bound up with such works. But if one says of Eisler's music that it is 'witty', then it is justified in a precisely musical sense. It is a music that is continually giving us punchlines – its very being lies in surprises and in leaps – leaps and surprises that upon closer inspection prove not to be the result of arbitrary whim, but are a meticulous technical aspect of the piece. This is a music whose expressive language is the staccato: it has something elfishly precipitous about it, varying from deceptive sweetness to fierce aggression. This peculiarity, combined with a great lucidity of texture, has always made it particularly effective and enables it to take on specific expressive content more easily than is the case with much other modern music".<sup>28</sup> Leonhard Deutsch singles out one specific aspect in his article "An introduction to harmony in contemporary piano literature",<sup>29</sup> in which Eisler's Sonata serves as an example of how a relationship to tonality can still be determined in a piece that seems to be "atonal". He says that "here the concept of a basic tonality is not merely fictitious", which results from the fact "that all three movements [...] close on the fundamental note E flat".

While Eisler's opus 1 found much praise in the specialist press and the daily newspapers, the media reactions to it were not without those who claimed it belonged to the category of the "degenerate", being "spawned by the current fashion for chaos that we know all too well".<sup>30</sup> These insults after the manner of the *Völkischer Beobachter* already point in the direction of the boycott to which Eisler's music would be subjected from 1933 in Germany, and thereafter in most European countries. That boycott also meant that the Sonata op. 1, despite its success, largely disappeared from the scene,<sup>31</sup> and like much other modern music of the 1920s it did not enjoy any renaissance in the general upswing after the Second World War. Eisler's de-

22 Karl Josef Seitz, Mayor of Vienna, to Eisler, 30 April 1925, AdK Berlin, HEA 3147: "Dear Sir, | the municipal council of the federal capital Vienna decided on 27 April 1923 to create artist's prizes that are to be awarded for the purpose of honouring and furthering excellent musicians. | Based on the unanimous proposal of the judges, the City Senate decided at its meeting of 29 April 1925 to award you such a prize. | This gives me cause to congratulate you most warmly on your success and to express the desire that the artist's prize of the city of Vienna might inspire your creative spirit and that you will in future continue to delight the city of Vienna and its art-minded citizens – but above and beyond this, the whole German people and the world – with many more of your creations".

23 *Musikblätter des Anbruch* VII/6 (June/July 1925), inside page of the back cover.

24 "Who is Hanns Eisler? Undoubtedly a man who aims for his goal with all his energies. And his three-movement op. 1 is no babbling of an immature man, but an intentionally, skilfully polyphonic piece that is nevertheless constructed with the greatest sense of economy. The second-movement Passacaglia is exemplary".

25 *Musikblätter des Anbruch* VII/2 (February 1925), p. 98.

26 Ratz (fn. 17), p. 383.

27 Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, "Hanns Eisler", in: *Musikblätter des Anbruch* X/5 (May 1928), pp. 163–167, here p. 164.

28 Adorno had surely known the work for a long time (Eisler gave him a copy of the first edition in 1925, bearing a personal dedication, see Critical Report, Source B3) and he wrote this commentary for a broadcast by the New York radio station WNYC in which he presented works by Austrian composers living in exile in the USA (besides Eisler, these were Schoenberg, Alexander von Zemlinsky and Ernst Krenek). "Zum Rundfunkkonzert vom 22. Februar 1940", in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Musikalische Schriften V*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984 (= *Gesammelte Schriften* 18), pp. 576–580, here p. 578 f.

29 *Musikblätter des Anbruch* IX/8–9 (October–November 1927), pp. 324–344, here p. 337 f.

30 *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 1924, p. 818, quoted as in: Wintersteller (fn. 15), p. 19.

31 One exception was the concert organized on 6 April 1938 by the W. P. A. (Works Progress Administration) Federal Music Project of New York City, when Eduard Steuermann played a programme that included the Piano Pieces op. 8; see the programme book in: AdK Berlin, HEA 3313. Then there was the radio broadcast in the USA, mentioned in fn. 28 above, in which Steuermann again played the Sonata. This was most probably the performance preserved on shellac (AdK Berlin, HEA Sammlung Louise Eisler-Fischer 434 [30.7217]), which according to current information is the only recording of the work by the pianist who gave its first performance.

rogatory remarks about “Darmstadt”<sup>32</sup> certainly will not have helped to make him popular at that meeting place of the 1950s avant-garde. And in the German Democratic Republic, where Eisler was resident from 1950 onwards, his non-political works were met with a certain degree of distance, even ignorance. Nevertheless, in his biography of the composer, which was published during Eisler’s lifetime, Heinz Alfred Brockhaus gave a sympathetic account of the Sonata op. 1: “Overall, it still shows the strong influence of his teacher. But it is remarkable in that it [...] does not take up the gloomy, brooding Arnold Schoenberg, but is in fact extraordinarily lively and brilliant despite its atonal textures, skilfully exploiting different pianistic possibilities”.<sup>33</sup> The fact that UE published a third edition of this op. 1 in 1972 is an indication of the renaissance that Eisler’s music began to experience in the wake of the 1968 movement.

### Second Sonata for Piano (in the form of variations) op. 6

It is a testament to Eisler’s adventurous spirit that he by no means endeavoured just to repeat the success of his op. 1, but instead tried out something new, despite the risk of failure that this can bring with it. The relatively complicated gestation of the Second Sonata, which only found its conclusion in 1960 when it was first published, illustrates Eisler’s quest and his presumed dissatisfaction with the results. Initially, Eisler wrote the theme and eleven variations. The theme and the first three variations are extant in what appears to be a fair copy, though from the fourth variation onwards the work is only sketched out (this fourth variation corresponds to the seventh of the final version). In a second attempt, Eisler wrote out the music that already existed in a fair copy (in itself an unusual step) and then wrote three new variations after the third one. The first of these also looks like a fair copy, whereas the next two look like sketches. Instead of now making a fair copy of those variations that still existed only in sketch, he engaged the assistance of Erwin Ratz, a friend of his own age and a co-student of Schoenberg. Eisler now had a total of 14 variations, of which Ratz wrote out a fair copy in pencil of the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>. He worked primarily from Eisler’s manuscript – which was only a sketch in parts, but quite legible, though three passages were copied from a sketch book that is no longer extant. Ratz was in all this more than just a copyist, but rather an assistant or “accessory”. He now presented the results to Eisler. The composer, however, did not check whether Ratz had correctly copied out his music, but continued with the creative process and

made numerous changes and additions. These interventions were more often to the performance indications than to the actual musical text. The changes that Eisler made to the theme and the first three variations are almost more remarkable – in other words, to the sections of the work of which he had himself already made two fair copies. All these changes – mostly to articulation and dynamics – point in the same direction. They coarsen the piece, “barbarizing” it, so to speak, and thereby confirm a tendency that was already inherent in the sparse textures of this work from the very start, with its note repetitions and syncopations. One could see in this a reaction to the *stile barbaro* of Béla Bartók, but a more important model, especially in the context of twelve-note music, was probably the Piano Suite op. 25 by Schoenberg, a work about which Eisler was by his own admission “enthusiastic” and that he had “studied as closely as possible”.<sup>34</sup>

In his article of October 1924, Erwin Ratz does not discuss the Sonata op. 6 in any detail, but counts it along with opp. 1–5 and 7 as one of Eisler’s “seven finished works [...] of which each one has its own specific character and already bears the imprint of an individual nature”.<sup>35</sup> Just one year later, on 25 October 1925, Eisler notated the theme of his op. 6 on a dedicatory leaf of paper<sup>36</sup> that he gave to Emil Hertzka on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UE – though this was the theme as it appears in the first version of the work (see facsimile III, p. 87). This makes it seem plausible that the second version (with the three added variations) was only composed later. So it is impossible to claim that op. 6 was “finished” as early as October 1924, and ironically it was Ratz who over a year later was given the task of creating a version from the sketches of variations 5–14 that could be given to a copyist along with the second version of the opening theme and variations. After Eisler had made further, small changes to the copyist’s copy (or had instructed these to be made), this fair copy was then copied by yet another copyist, probably in early 1926. The work was thus ready to be published, and according to §6 of the five-year contract that Eisler had signed with UE on 15 June 1925, he was compelled to offer the work to the publisher.<sup>37</sup> We can only speculate as to the reasons why it was not published at the time. In the year 1926, Eisler’s Piano Pieces op. 3 of 1923

32 He wrote as follows to his pupil Wolfgang Hohensee, with a view to his participation in the Darmstadt Holiday Courses: “I hope that you won’t be taken in by the bluster and the rat race of my colleagues in West Germany”. Letter of 3 July 1951, Hanns Eisler, *Briefe 1944–1951*, ed. Maren Köster and Jürgen Schebera, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2013 (= HEGA IX/4.2), p. 205.

33 Heinz Alfred Brockhaus, *Hanns Eisler*, Leipzig: VEB Breitkopf & Härtel, 1961, p. 21 f.

34 Eisler to Arnold Schoenberg, 9 March 1926, Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 41.

35 Ratz (fn. 17), p. 382.

36 Published for the first time in Eberhardt Klemm, “EISLER, HANNS. Op. 6. 2. Sonate für Klavier (in Form von Variationen)”, in: *Beiträge zur musikalischen Quellenkunde. Katalog der Sammlung Hans P. Wertisch in der Musiksammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, ed. Günter Brosche, Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1989 (= *Publikationen des Instituts für österreichische Musikdokumentation* 15), pp. 128–130.

37 See the copy of the contract in AdK Berlin, *HEA 3040*: “6. I am bound to offer you all my compositions that are completed during the duration of the contract, after they have been finished [...] and you are free to accept the works in question, in accordance with the conditions mentioned, within a space of four weeks of receiving them. If you have not declared yourselves willing to accept the work within four weeks, then your right of priority ceases to apply and I have complete right of disposal of the works in question”.

were published, and it is possible that UE was not interested in publishing yet another piano work by Eisler right now, or that the later work was deemed not to be of the same quality. It is also possible that Eisler disregarded his contractual obligation and did not even show his op. 6 to UE – either because he was himself as yet dissatisfied with it, or because he now wanted to appear before the public with other genres. Eisler had moved from Vienna to Berlin in September 1925,<sup>38</sup> and this move was bound up with a radical change in his artistic orientation. On 9 March 1926 he wrote a letter to Schoenberg that has often been quoted, in which he broke away from “modern music” and claimed that he understood nothing of the twelve-tone method and twelve-note music except for superficialities.<sup>39</sup> Be that as it may, the next works that Eisler published with UE – the *Diary* op. 9 and the *Newspaper Clippings* op. 11 with their self-manufactured, artless texts – demonstrate clearly that he was shifting the focus of his creativity and disassociating himself from the ivory tower of modern art. So the idea that Eisler might not have wanted to come before the public with a twelve-note work at this time is distinctly plausible.

This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Eisler was obviously not trying to find another publisher (which was expressly allowed by his contract with UE for any works they turned down), nor did he try to have the work performed. In 1943, in response to an enquiry from the League of Composers in the USA, he claimed that Eduard Steuermann had taken the Second Sonata into his repertoire (along with the First Sonata

and the Variations),<sup>40</sup> but the unreliability of this information is also underlined by Eisler’s claim that “[i]t would be the first public performance” of all these works (which in the case of the Variations was not even true for the USA). There is no indication that Steuermann gave any performance of the Sonata, or even that the work had ever passed through his hands. The only traces of the manuscript having been used for a performance (such as fingerings, details on how the music should be distributed between the hands etc.) are from the later performance that Walter Olbertz gave in 1958. Olbertz’s performance on 4 July 1958 took place at a concert for Eisler’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in the assembly hall of the Academy of Arts in East Berlin, and according to the current state of our knowledge this must be regarded as having been the world première of the Second Sonata.<sup>41</sup> Olbertz recorded the work for GDR radio on 30 June 1959, and this recording was released on record in the mid-1960s.<sup>42</sup> It is noteworthy not least because it documents the state of the work before the first edition, for example without the additions to the left hand in bars 155–156.

The publication of this work by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig in 1960 was marked by several disagreements and delays that were caused primarily by Eisler’s bad state of health. Thus Julius Goetz, Breitkopf’s editor, had to write to Eisler on 2 February 1960 to ask him “to produce a [musical] text that is unambiguous and flawless”,<sup>43</sup> though the main reason for sending the manuscript back to Eisler was the fact that Olbertz had written out several bars in pencil at page turns to facilitate performance, which Goetz mistakenly assumed were variants of the text. Eisler checked through the manuscript and sent it back to Goetz in April. Goetz sent Eisler the transparencies for proof-reading on 14 September, and announced that he would visit him on 23 September – expecting that Eisler would be finished with his corrections by then, and that he would be able to take the proofs back with him to Breitkopf.<sup>44</sup> Having become wise through previous bad experiences (see below regarding the Variations), Goetz put Eisler under considerable pressure of time, though this by no means prevented the composer from making a whole host of changes and additions to the transparencies. However, many mistakes remained unnoticed, both by Eisler himself and by Breitkopf’s own proofreader.<sup>45</sup> Even in his final stages of revising this work, Eisler neglected to engage in any critical inspection of the text presented to him.

38 Different authors have associated the composition of the Second Sonata with Eisler’s move to Berlin. Heinz Alfred Brockhaus is one of them; in his biography, he also refers to information received from Eisler: “In Berlin in 1925, Hanns Eisler got to know the pianist and piano teacher Artur Schnabel. Among the compositions that he wrote for Schnabel’s pupils was the Piano Sonata No. 2, op. 6”. (Brockhaus [fn. 33], p. 33). Eisler’s student David Blake recalls something similar: “He got a post at the Klindworth-Scharwenka Conservatory and was asked by Artur Schnabel to write new piano music for his pupils. The Second Piano Sonata was the immediate response”. (“The early music”, in: David Blake [ed.], *Hanns Eisler. A Miscellany*, Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995, pp. 11–64, here p. 40 f.). However, Blake does not tell us the source of his information – unlike Eberhardt Klemm, who in the abovementioned article (fn. 36) writes as follows (p. 130): “After moving to Berlin, Eisler went about revising the work. It was in this revised version that the Sonata was played back then by pupils of Artur Schnabel, as Eisler mentions in his ‘Short Autobiography’ (1956)”. In this autobiography, however (“Kurze Selbstbiographie [II]” in: Hanns Eisler, *Musik und Politik. Schriften 1948–1962*, ed. Günter Mayer, Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982 [= EGW III/2], pp. 363–365, here p. 363 f.), Eisler only writes: “In the autumn of 1924 I moved to Berlin. Arthur Schnabel showed an interest in my compositions, and his pupils played my piano music”. It is proven that the Schnabel pupil Else C. Kraus played the Sonata op. 1 (see above). However, for the reasons elucidated in the next paragraph, it is improbable that any of Schnabel’s pupils will have given a performance of the Second Sonata.

39 “Modern music bores me, it doesn’t interest me, and some of it I hate, even despise. I really don’t want anything to do with what’s ‘modern’. If possible, I avoid listening or reading it. (I regrettably even have to count my own works of recent years among it)”. Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 41.

40 Eisler to the League of Composers, New York City, 4 November 1943, Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 271.

41 It is not the Second Sonata op. 6, but the String Quartet op. 75 that is mentioned as a world première on the programme leaflet; in a copy held by the Hanns Eisler Archive (AdK Berlin, HEA 3352), however, “Uraufführung” (‘world première’) has been crossed out where the String Quartet is mentioned, and it has been added for the Sonata – probably in Stephanie Eisler’s hand.

42 Eterna 820 117.

43 Julius Goetz to Eisler, 2 February 1960, AdK Berlin, HEA 7003.

44 Julius Goetz to Eisler, 14 September 1960, AdK Berlin, HEA 5981.

45 Goetz wrote in *ibid.*: “The house proofreader has already carried out his corrections and the mistakes he identified have been removed from the transparencies”.

## Variations for Piano

We are not aware of any specific reason why Eisler decided to write his Variations. But the general statement that Eisler gave in conversation with Hans Bunge regarding his exile in the USA is probably also applicable here: “[...] what else was I to do from eight in the morning during the emigration except compose? Tell me, what else could I have done with my day? Brecht and I were productive in order to escape boredom”.<sup>46</sup> As we can deduce from a letter that Eisler wrote to Eduard Steuermann,<sup>47</sup> he wrote the Variations in the summer of 1941. This was a time when Eisler was busy with his film music project at the New School for Social Research in New York, and he spent the summer in Woodbury with his friends Joachim and Sylvia Schumacher in order to alleviate his financial problems. “I am having a gloomy summer and am melancholic enough”, he wrote from there to his wife Louise, who was working as a governess in Fairlee in Vermont in order to earn money.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the summer in the countryside was in musical terms thoroughly productive. Besides the Variations for Piano, Eisler wrote the *Woodbury-Liederbüchlein* (‘Woodbury Songbook’) and the film music to *A Child Went Forth* (later, in the form of the *Variationen über amerikanische Kinderlieder – Variations on American Children’s Songs* – this resulted in his Septet No. 1). He also began work on his *Vierzehn Arten den Regen zu beschreiben* at this time (‘Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain’). These three works were the result of either commissions or the film music project, but there is no hint that any such considerations lay behind the Variations for Piano. The compositions of this summer are notable for their focus on variation technique and variation forms, so it would seem clear that Eisler was interested in employing them not just in film music, but also – free of the constraints of the other medium – in a piano work.

In his reminiscences of Eisler’s stay in Woodbury, Schumacher mentions the *Vierzehn Arten*, the *Liederbüchlein* and even the

folk songs,<sup>49</sup> but Eisler seems not to have spoken to him of his Variations for Piano – at least, Schumacher’s reminiscences make no mention of them. However, Schumacher does write about “the liveliest exchanges about Beethoven’s method of linking variations with development”,<sup>50</sup> mentioning in this context the 32 Variations in c minor for piano (WoO 80).<sup>51</sup> This variation cycle by Beethoven was of exemplary importance to Eisler, as we can also see from the extensive analysis that he later offered in conversation with Nathan Notowicz.<sup>52</sup> Invoking Schoenberg,<sup>53</sup> Eisler claims that “whoever can write variations can compose. He [i.e. Schoenberg] regarded it as the best compendium of compositional techniques and the best practice for a budding composer”.<sup>54</sup> He sums up the quintessence of his Beethoven analysis as follows: “The art of varying is freedom within constraints. One is compelled to follow the theme, and yet one has to act freely; this is the peculiar contradiction that gives life to the musical form of variations”.<sup>55</sup> Many of the traits that Eisler identified in Beethoven’s variations are realized in his own, such as: “it is important in a

46 Eisler, *Gespräche* (fn. 13), p. 71. Translation as in Berendse/Clements (fn. 13), p. 58.

47 Steuermann wrote as follows to Adorno on 3 February 1942: “Eisler recently brought me new piano variations (written in the summer) and I promised him I’d play them”. Quoted as in: Dorothee Schubel, “Lieder der Emigranten – Eduard Steuermann und Hanns Eisler komponierten Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht”, in: Albrecht Dümling (ed.), *Hanns Eisler*, Frankfurt a. M. / Basel: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2010 (= *Querstand* 5/6), pp. 93–112, here p. 95.

48 Eisler to Louise Eisler, [20 August 1941], Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 180.

49 Joachim Schumacher, “Erinnerungen an Hanns Eisler”, in: *Musik und Gesellschaft* 27 (1977), pp. 538–541, here p. 538: “In May 1941 Hanns moved to us, out in Woodbury. We found a simple room for him with a gardener, down in the valley. It had the advantage of a funny, out-of-tune old piano. The gardener is retired now, but to this day he remembers Eisler’s rugged use of the piano, and his voice too: ‘He was such a nice man, and he played so often the folksongs I liked best. Later I could not understand what in hell the Unamerican Activities Committee could have had against Mr. Eisler’”. In a letter of 8 June 1976 to Manfred Grabs, the then head of the Hanns Eisler Archive at the Academy of Arts of the GDR, Schumacher also wrote the following (AdK Berlin, HEA 7692): “Hanns often improvised on the extra-large Blüthner piano that my pianist wife had brought from Switzerland, and he also sang American folk songs (that he was commissioned to write at the time)”.

50 Schumacher (fn. 49), p. 538.

51 According to Schumacher (*ibid.*), it was because Sylvia Schumacher was learning Beethoven’s c-minor Variations in the summer of 1941 (in preparation for lessons with Robert Casadesus) that these exchanges came about. We also have a letter from the Schumachers of 1 September 1943 in which they write: “Sylvia has worked on the Beethoven variations in c minor, wonderfully concentrated pieces”, to which Eisler replied: “At least I hear that Sylvia is practising, even the c minor variations – a particularly accomplished work. Jocki should take a look at it sometime from a composing viewpoint. There’s lots to learn in it. [He continues with explanations and music examples.] Forgive talking shop, but could I communicate anything to you in times like these that could be more important than notes? Everything else you can read about in the newspapers” (Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* [fn. 10], p. 508 and p. 264 f.). It is possible, given that these events lay far back, that Schumacher had confused the conversations of 1941 with the correspondence of 1943.

52 Nathan Notowicz, *Gespräche mit Hanns Eisler und Gerhart Eisler. Wir reden hier nicht von Napoleon. Wir reden von Ihnen!*, ed. Jürgen Elsner, Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1971, pp. 61–163 (“Third Conversation” of 25 February 1958 and “Fourth Conversation” of 7 March 1958).

53 This analysis reports what Eisler had heard from Schoenberg “in roughly 1921”, though Eisler relativizes the matter as follows (*ibid.*, p. 61): “I can’t decide what was originally formulated by Schoenberg and what’s by me. What’s important is that the whole manner of observation, the analysis, is Schoenberg’s”.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

variation work that certain variations are grouped together”.<sup>56</sup> Thus his theme and 1<sup>st</sup> variation are linked together; and the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> variations and – less clearly – the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> – refer to each other. The exchange of voices in consecutive variations such as he had observed in Beethoven is also found within Eisler’s 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> variations and in the coda. Eisler recommends that “if you have moved very far from the original form of the theme [...] then the next variation should move back to the theme, close to it, so that the listener does not get lost”,<sup>57</sup> and this is what he does in his 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> variations. And his insistence that the theme’s most representative traits should appear at the start of it (“the face is the most representative aspect of a human being, not the legs”)<sup>58</sup> is something that he himself takes to heart. The motive from the *Magic Flute* that is exposed in the upper voice in the first two bars is not just of crucial structural significance, but also offers the semantic key to the whole work.

This work initially comprised the theme, 11 variations and a coda. It was probably in early August 1941 that Eisler learnt in a letter from Bertolt Brecht of the death of his colleague Margarete Steffin in Moscow on 4 June while they were both fleeing from the Nazis.<sup>59</sup> He thereupon wrote a “*Trauermusik* (für Grete)” (“Lament for Grete”) on the same leaf of manuscript paper on which he had written an *Andantino* based on the same twelve-note row as the Variations, though this was not included in the work (see the source edition on p. 142 of this volume). He added the footnote “Died of tuberculosis while fleeing” to her name. It is possible that it was not certain at the start that this Lament would be integrated in the Variations, because it was only in a second (slightly altered) manuscript version that Eisler added the Lament as Coda II to the former coda (which now received the designation “I”; in bar 342, Eisler broke off this manuscript and referred for its continuation to the reverse of the original sheet of manuscript paper on which the middle section and recapitulation of the Lament were notated).

The Variations were given their first performance by Eduard Steuermann on 8 May 1942 in New York at a concert of the International Society for Contemporary Music;<sup>60</sup> they were performed under the title “Theme, Eleven Variations, Coda and Funeral Music, Op. 70”. Eisler was at this time hunting for work in Hollywood and asked for news in a letter to his wife: “How were my Variations in Steuermann’s concert.

Please give an honest report”.<sup>61</sup> Eisler was sceptical, as we can discern from a subsequent letter: “Many thanks for the programme and the report about the Variations. Were you really enthusiastic? I think that’s just the sentimentality of our being apart”.<sup>62</sup> Steuermann too was sceptical after Eisler had given him the Variations: “They are certainly interesting too, though they pleased me better when he [i.e. Eisler] played them with all his exuberance than when I was left alone with the work. Yes, works are true children and sometimes behave like them; but I’m not sufficiently familiar with the Variations, perhaps I’ll find a good approach. I’m lucky with children”.<sup>63</sup>

It is unclear why and when the Variations were expanded by two further Finales. Was Eisler unhappy about closing the work with the Lament? Eisler formulated what was required of a close in his Beethoven analysis (“Because to close a work, it must have the feeling of a conclusion. So the theme must be taken from its characteristic form and made into something more non-binding ... we call it resolution”).<sup>64</sup> The Lament, which was conceived as an independent piece, clearly does not fulfil this requirement. Even the 2<sup>nd</sup> Finale, which was initially also called “*Trauermusik*”, is no better suited in this respect. Only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Finale does the reprise move into a coda that offers resolution and provides a sense of conclusion. Both Finales were originally termed “*Fassungen*” (‘versions’) – the second as “II Lament | (II version of the *Finale*)”, the third as “*Brilliant version*”. Eisler did not delete these remarks until after 1947. This suggests that the finales were originally conceived as alternatives. All the same, the contradictory designations “2<sup>nd</sup> Finale” and “3<sup>rd</sup> Finale” allow them to be interpreted as possible alternatives.

Besides such incentives that were intrinsic to the material, so to speak, external circumstances might also have prompted Eisler to work further on the Variations after their first performance. It is possible that Eisler considered putting the Variations on the programme of his farewell concert in New York on 28 February 1948, because we know from other sources that he wanted to have a large-scale piano work performed there – possibly by Eduard Steuermann.<sup>65</sup> In the event, this did not come about, though we do not know why. This supposition is supported by the fact that Eisler later gave 1947 as the year of composition of the Variations (see below), though this can at best be considered true for the two extra finales. What is certain is that these two pieces were not composed after 1947,

56 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

59 Brecht’s letter, written on 25 June 1941 while travelling from Vladivostok to Los Angeles (AdK Berlin, *HEA 4271*), was passed on by Eisler to Louise Eisler on 7 August. See Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 177 and 436.

60 This “Concert of Music for the Piano by Edward Steuermann at the MacDowell Club” also included works by Alexander Scriabin, Ferruccio Busoni, Alban Berg, Arnold Schoenberg, Roger Sessions and Karol Rathaus (quoted as in: Ahrend [fn. 5], p. 172 f.).

61 Eisler to Louise Eisler, [8 May 1942], Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 208.

62 Eisler to Louise Eisler, [12 May 1942], Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 210.

63 Eduard Steuermann to Theodor W. Adorno, 3 February 1942, quoted as in: Schubel (fn. 47), p. 95.

64 Notowicz (fn. 52), p. 152 f.

65 After the farewell concert of 14 December 1947 in Los Angeles, where Leonard Stein had played the Third Sonata, Eisler asked Stein to give him his copy of the work for a concert in New York (see the letter from Leonard Stein to Eberhardt Klemm of 13 June 1987, AdK Berlin, *HEA 7739*); this can only refer to the farewell concert in New York.

because we can see them on the photos<sup>66</sup> that Eisler had made of the autograph of the Variations (and of the Third Sonata) when he was still in the USA.

The first performance of the “complete” version with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Finales only took place a fairly long time after Eisler’s expulsion from the USA, namely on 18 December 1956 in the assembly hall of the German Academy of Arts in East Berlin as part of a concert that was devoted exclusively to works by Eisler. In the programme book<sup>67</sup> the work is simply listed as “Theme and variations for piano”, without any mention of the year of composition or of it having already been performed. So we can here only speak of the first proven performance of the complete version. Nor do the texts in the programme booklet offer any information on the work, which is listed as op. 76 in the work catalogue appended to it. The concert audience was given some information – though some of it misleading – by Leo Spies, the First Secretary of the Music Section of the Academy of Arts, who had to announce a change in the order of the programme and also gave a brief introduction to the Variations: “You will first hear variations for piano. These are 10 variations on a theme by the composer, with two finales. The first finale is a rondo, the second a sonata movement. | We should also note that the theme quotes several bars from the famous quintet in B-flat major from the first act of Mozart’s *Magic Flute*. Eisler wrote this work in difficult times, in America in 1947, and he took delight in linking up with Papageno, who as we know has a lock on his mouth and so cannot sing in this quintet, but only hum. | In this manner, the Classical heritage is continued”.<sup>68</sup> Spies began his announcement with the words: “Hanns Eisler has asked me to inform you of the following” – which means that the quotation from the *Magic Flute*, to which Manfred Grabs was the first to refer in the literature on the composer,<sup>69</sup> can be taken as something expressly intended by Eisler.

Walter Olbertz performed the Variations, his engagement having been mediated by Dieter Zechlin, the pianist whom Eisler had first asked to play the work.<sup>70</sup> Unlike Steuermann, Olbertz was not a pianist specialized in contemporary music – and certainly not in the music of the Second Viennese School. But when he visited Eisler at his home on the Pfeilstraße in Berlin-Niederschönhausen, he played the work to the composer’s satisfaction, with Eisler demonstrating several passages at the piano himself in the energetic manner that was typical of him (Olbertz compared his piano playing to Eisler’s singing, whose expressive power was not impaired by his vocal inadequacies).

66 See the Critical Report, source **B2**.

67 AdK Berlin, *HEA 3170*.

68 *Ibid.* (the year 1947 has been added by hand to the typescript).

69 “Über Berührungspunkte zwischen der Vokal- und der Instrumentalmusik Hanns Eislers”, in: Manfred Grabs (ed.), *Hanns Eisler heute. Berichte – Probleme – Beobachtungen*, Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1974 (= *Arbeitsheft 19* der Akademie der Künste der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik), pp. 114–129, here p. 116.

70 The editor owes this and the subsequent information to a conversation with Walter Olbertz that took place on 3 February 2014 in the Archive of the Academy of Arts on Robert-Koch-Platz in Berlin.

When asked whether a choice had to be made from one of the three Finales, Eisler answered: “Play them all!” Otherwise, Eisler was more interested in the material wellbeing of the pianist, who was 25 years old at the time, and whom he called “My old [friend]” in conversation. As for the impact of the work, Olbertz later said, looking back: “No one played it in any concert, nor did I, only in the Academy, and that was a closed society. Twelve-note music was frowned on. Eisler had written the national anthem, but then the simple functionaries discovered that he’d also composed twelve-note music, and that was kept almost completely under wraps. I think it’s not a piece anyway that pianists would be desperate to include in their concert programmes”.

The Variations were published by VEB Breitkopf & Härtel Musikverlag Leipzig in 1959, though with an incorrect date: “(1940)”. Their collaboration with Eisler obviously proved to be difficult. The company’s editor Julius Goetz had to turn to Nathan Notowicz to ask for his support “to speed up the Eisler publications”.<sup>71</sup> Eisler gave plausible answers to the questions posed by Goetz, though he did not notice that the questions were themselves inaccurate,<sup>72</sup> just as he did not notice most of the other mistakes in the engraver’s copy or the proofs (which were hardly few in number).

### Third Sonata for Piano

Two years after the Variations, Eisler embarked on another large-scale work for piano. He had meanwhile gained a foothold in Hollywood and had delivered his first score for the film industry: *Hangmen Also Die*. “I am writing my book about film music and for sheer recreation I am writing a piano sonata. It will be my fourth”, he wrote on 12 April 1943 to his friend and kindred spirit, Clifford Odets.<sup>73</sup> We have no other evidence that he was already working on his sonata at this time, so this reference to it – as always with Eisler – must be treated with caution. This is all the more true since we can identify a concrete event that prompted the composition of its first movement, several months later. It was written for the

71 In his letter of 4 February 1959, Goetz wrote as follows (Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Staatsarchiv Leipzig [hereinafter: StA-L] 21106 VEB *Deutscher Verlag für Musik 163*): “We had sent the Professor the green proofs and noted expressly that he should settle the ambiguity of the passages marked in red. Regrettably, that did not happen in several cases. In the case of two specific passages we don’t want to guess what the author would want. We should therefore be grateful to you if you would contact Professor Eisler so that the necessary corrections can be made”.

72 See the critical commentary on bar 264, upper staff, and bar 490.

73 Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 254. The misleading statement “it will be my fourth” is an indication of the uncertainty surrounding the project at this time (Eisler repeatedly announced works that he then never realized). It is unlikely that he had reached the number four by counting the Sonatina for Piano op. 44 that he had written in 1934, though the editors suggest this in their comments on the letter (*ibid.*, p. 500). It is also disproven by Eisler’s later designation of this as his “Third Sonata”.

celebration of the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Alfred Döblin that was organized by Bertolt Brecht and Helene Weigel. Brecht wrote as follows in his diary on 14 August 1943: “Heinrich Mann gave a marvellous welcoming speech, Kortner, Lorre, Granach read from Döblin’s books, Blandine Ebinger sang Berlin chansons, Steuermann played a movement by Eisler at the piano, and at the close Döblin gave a speech against moral relativism and in favour of fixed values of a religious kind in which he offended the non-religious feelings of most of those who were there to celebrate. A fatal feeling seized the more rational listeners, something along the lines of a sympathetic sense of horror towards a co-prisoner who has succumbed to torture and is now making a confession”.<sup>74</sup> Eisler recalled the event fifteen years later: “[I]t was awful. But Brecht was a truly wonderful friend. This celebration of Döblin’s sixty-fifth birthday only came about at all because the Brechts – Bert and Weigel – got on the telephone and said to me, for example (I only played a small part): ‘For God’s sake, we have to do something for Döblin’s birthday – could you contribute something?’ So, what did I do? I knuckled down and wrote a piano piece and persuaded my friend Steuermann (who was also in California at that time) to play it, even though he had nothing to do with Döblin. [...] We threw ourselves completely into this, trusting in the ideas of our cherished master Bert. It ended in catastrophe. That I spent three or four days composing, with my friend Steuermann practising for a week in order to perform it, only to hear [...] I should seek God! That was too much for me. I didn’t create a scandal in the room, but got up from my chair noisily and publicly – Brecht called ‘Shhh!’ after me – and I left causing what you might call ‘an unpleasant scene’. It was such a pathetic affair”.<sup>75</sup>

In his footnotes to his edition of the conversation that he held with Eisler, Hans Bunge already suggested that this piano piece must have been a movement from the Third Sonata.<sup>76</sup> In the course of the work on the present volume, we were able to determine that the first movement of the Third Sonata was indeed composed as a *Klavierstück für Alfred Döblin* (‘Piano Piece for Alfred Döblin’), this being the piece’s original title. The performance markings in Steuermann’s hand are also an indication that it was used for the Döblin celebration.<sup>77</sup> If we count back from Döblin’s birthday on 10 August – trusting

in the chronological details given by Eisler – then this first movement must have been composed in late July/early August 1943. In early September, Eisler wrote to the Schumachers as follows: “Otherwise, there is a new piano sonata (my III<sup>rd</sup>) and a large-scale orchestral work on which I’m still working, alongside the usual small things, mostly children of a bad temper”.<sup>78</sup> So we may assume that the Sonata was finished by early September (not least because Eisler expressly mentions only the orchestral work as still being in the process of composition). Given Eisler’s generally swift tempo when composing, it is thoroughly possible that he could have written the second and third movements in a single month. So it would be perfectly plausible that the whole sonata was composed between late July and early September, were it not for the abovementioned letter of 12 April. This letter, however, allows for the hypothesis that the second and third movements were composed before the first – in other words that the piano piece for Alfred Döblin might have taken the place of a different first movement that had been discarded (and has not survived). However, given Eisler’s known working methods, that seems unlikely. We do know for certain that the first movement was composed as an independent piano piece. This is clear, not just on account of the title that has been subsequently erased, but also from the different materials used to write the three movements. The first movement was written in pencil, but the second and third movements have survived together, both in sketch and as a fair copy in ink. There are also assorted musical factors that tend to confirm that the first movement was not originally intended to be a sonata movement. It is just two and a half minutes long, which is unusually brief for the opening movement of a sonata, and in any case is considerably shorter than the other two movements, which each last about four minutes.<sup>79</sup> The first movement is not cast in classical sonata form either, even though the sonata as a whole corresponds to the sonata genre featuring three movements, quick–slow–quick. Nor does it bear any movement title, whereas the others are given the conventional designations *Adagio* and *Allegro con spirito*.<sup>80</sup>

The world première of the Sonata took place on 15 October 1945 in an unspectacular setting: Leonard Stein played it in the afternoon concert series entitled *Monday Musical* that was organized by the Music Department of Los Angeles City Col-

74 Bertolt Brecht, *Journale 2. Journale 1941–1955 | Autobiographische Notizen 1942–1955*, Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995 (= *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* [hereinafter: GBA] 27), p. 165. See also Brecht’s poem *Peinlicher Vorfall*: “When one of my highest gods celebrated his 10,000th birthday | I came with my friends and my pupils to honour him | And they danced and sang before him and recited what had been written. [...]” (Bertolt Brecht: *Gedichte 5. Gedichte und Gedichtfragmente 1940–1956*, Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993 [= GBA 10], p. 91).

75 Eisler, *Gespräche* (fn. 13), p. 77 f. Translation as in Berendse/Clements (fn. 13), pp. 63–64.

76 Eisler, *Gespräche* (fn. 13), p. 323. Also Berendse/Clements (fn. 13), p. 265.

77 See Critical Report, description of source **B1**, p. 143.

78 Eisler, *Briefe 1907–1943* (fn. 10), p. 265.

79 In his letter of 11 June 1960, Eisler gave the following information in answer to a request from Edition Peters (letters of 8 March and 9 June 1960): “a performance duration of ca 16 minutes” (StA-L 21109 VEB Edition Peters 169). However, this duration seems too long, considering the tempo markings (in the first and second movements Eisler also gives metronome markings). The durations mentioned by Leonard Stein in his copy add up to ca 10 minutes.

80 On the programme leaflet of this Eisler Solidarity Concert that took place on 14 December 1947 in the Coronet Theater in Los Angeles under the patronage of Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, Ernst Toch and Roy Harris, the sequence of movements is given as *Allegro–Adagio–Rondo* (AdK Berlin, HEA 3324, facsimile in: Schebera [fn. 15], p. 208).

lege. It was heard amidst piano pieces by Scriabin, Schoenberg, Milhaud, Gershwin and Prokofiev and alongside a Capriccio by Stein himself.<sup>81</sup> Eisler was presumably not present, and in later years Stein could not remember the occasion either: “I knew I had played his Third Sonata at his ‘farewell’ concert in 1947<sup>82</sup> but I had forgotten I had given its first performance at a piano recital at Los Angeles City College on October 15, 1945 (I was reminded by a program I came across recently)”.<sup>83</sup> Stein was Schoenberg’s assistant; according to his own recollection, Eisler got to know him in 1942 and they quickly became friends.<sup>84</sup> Stein made a copy of the Sonata in which we can see the traces of his performance, including instructions on the work’s interpretation in Eisler’s hand. So Stein obviously prepared the work with Eisler’s help, and his copy is able to clarify a series of ambiguities found in the autograph.

In 1946 Alfred Schlee was appointed the new director of the publishing house UE. On 30 March of that year he wrote to Eisler to ask “whether you are already in touch with a publisher regarding your new compositions, or whether you would like to send us your works”.<sup>85</sup> In his reply,<sup>86</sup> Eisler mentions “piano music” in general, among other things, but more specifically he lists only the *Klavierstücke für Kinder* (‘Piano Pieces for Children’), which is somewhat paradoxical because these pieces had already been published at this time (twice, in fact),<sup>87</sup> which was not the case with the Variations or the Third Sonata. Apart from this, Eisler advised Schlee “to contact Ratz, who works for you, as I hear. He should propose which of my works that he possesses might be reprinted or printed anew [...] Ratz has a vast amount of music; just make a selection that corresponds to your requirements”. At this time, Ratz possessed neither the Variations nor the Third Sonata, but he later acquired them, probably when Eisler returned to Vienna. Ratz had copies made of both works, but nothing was published by UE – neither of these two works, nor anything else from among Eisler’s new compositions. In 1949, politics caused Eisler to fall out with this friend and colleague<sup>88</sup> from earlier times,<sup>89</sup> and the

non-publication of Eisler’s new works by UE was presumably also in reaction to the Cold War. Eisler’s relationship with the publisher that had launched his career back in the 1920s now ended with accusations of unfair business practices.<sup>90</sup> This disagreement can probably only be understood in the context of the continuing struggle between East and West.

Europe may have been split in two by the Cold War, but Eisler encountered just as much scepticism, even hostility, on the other side of the divide, though for contrary reasons – at least as far as his “classical” oeuvre was concerned. In early 1949 he was hunting for work in East Berlin and there met Wilhelm Weismann<sup>91</sup> in order to negotiate having his music published by Peters in Leipzig. The expert opinion written by Weismann<sup>92</sup> on 1 February 1949 reveals the kind of difficulties that Eisler would face in the GDR (where he then lived from 1950 until his death in 1962): “The impression made by Eisler’s oeuvre is very mixed, judging from the few samples I have seen [...] the views that Eisler holds today and that undoubtedly only resulted from the resolutions published half a year ago by the People’s Commissariat of the USSR astonishingly do not correspond to the music he has shown me. If one applies Eisler’s views or the Moscow resolutions to his music, then we would have to reject it – at least those works that he wrote in younger years and continues to push vigorously today. In brief, we here find incompatible things that can only be explained because Eisler has as yet found no time to adapt in practice. Yet I would very much advise treating Eisler’s oeuvre with the greatest reticence. Because it was not possible to deny him any assurances, we agreed the following: [...] 3) Mr Eisler has given us the manuscripts of a violin sonata and a piano sonata that Mr Goldhammer has meanwhile taken away in order to practice and play to us. | Mr Eisler would like to assign us the rights for his works only in the Eastern Zone, which given

81 See the programme leaflet in: AdK Berlin, *HEA 3320*.

82 See fn. 80.

83 Leonard Stein to Eberhardt Klemm, the then head of the Hanns Eisler Archive at the Academy of Arts of the GDR, 13 June 1987, AdK Berlin, *HEA 7739*.

84 See *ibid.*: “I first met Eisler in 1942 and quickly became a friend of his, an experience shared by many people in Los Angeles”.

85 Quoted as in: Eisler, *Briefe 1944–1951* (fn. 32), p. 300.

86 Eisler to Alfred Schlee, 1 August 1946, Eisler, *Briefe 1944–1951* (fn. 32), p. 47.

87 Published in 1934 by Heugel in Paris and in 1935 by the State Music Publisher in Moscow.

88 Eisler later described Ratz as his “pupil” (Notowicz [fn. 52], p. 86).

89 See the letter from Ratz to Eisler, 25 April 1949 (AdK Berlin, *HEA 8364*, quoted as in: Eisler, *Briefe 1944–1951* [fn. 32], p. 405): “The only thing that I’d have expected of you was that you would at least for a moment bring that degree of objectivity needed to comprehend the terrible pain and the despair that must fill one when one sees that a person one loves very much is defending a regime for which the values of truth, humanity and freedom don’t exist [...] that it fills me with pain that you don’t even try to comprehend my despair and make me out to be a fool, is perhaps understandable”.

90 See the letter from Eisler to Alfred Schlee, 23 May 1962 (AdK Berlin, *HEA 6704*): “Dear Mr Schlee! | At last a letter from UE and I thought: perhaps their bad conscience is plaguing them. Because colleagues and pupils showed me my works from your publishing house that they had bought in New York and London. Thus at Bote & Bock in West Berlin my English pupil bought everything of mine that you have published. I hear with interest that the Piano Sonata op. 1 now costs four West marks instead of two. Now I thought you would send me an account statement from 1933 onwards, because in contravention of the customs of the publishing business, you have never sent me an account since then. Now, dear Mr Schlee, you’re an artist, but you should also be interested in bookkeeping too. I react badly when even just 50 groschen are withheld from me for the benefit of your shareholders, because I have no desire to finance UE, even if in a most modest manner (because even small livestock produce manure).”

91 Wilhelm Weismann (1900–1980) was a composer and musicologist. He worked for Peters from 1929 onwards and was additionally appointed a professor at the Music Academy of Leipzig in 1948.

92 “Visit to Hanns Eisler in Berlin on 28 January 1949”, StA-L 21109 VEB Edition Peters 169. In a letter to Eisler of 11 February 1949, Weismann argued in similar terms (AdK Berlin, *HEA 6072*, quoted as in: Eisler, *Briefe 1944–1951* [fn. 32], p. 373): “Allow me to express openly the feelings of trepidation that overcame me when you referred in particular to the works of your early period, beginning with Schoenberg, which in my opinion you ought to have rejected radically”.

the current situation is understandable. In my opinion, however, it is not acceptable that different editions of Eisler's works should be published in the different zones and countries. The original publisher would have to own the rights for all countries and be able to sign subcontracts (in which Eisler would be involved) with firms in other zones and countries. In this manner, everyone would save having to engrave a work several times over, which would benefit Mr E. [...]"

For the next ten years, Peters never contemplated publishing the works mentioned under clause 3) above. It was only in 1959 that the Collection Litolff, which belonged to Peters, published the Sonata for Violin and Piano, and on 16 September of the same year Weismann wrote to Eisler as follows: "Coming back to our conversation in the International [Hotel] in Leipzig, I would like to ask you to send me the manuscript of the somewhat easier *Piano Sonata* that you wrote in 1946 (?). We would be delighted to take the work into our catalogue",<sup>93</sup> at which Eisler promptly replied: "Dear Professor Weismann! | Please find enclosed the piano sonata you asked for. | Many thanks | your old [Eisler]".<sup>94</sup>

Eisler sent Weismann the autograph of the Third Sonata, not one of the copies, even though the copy that Stein had made was in his possession and he could also have procured the Viennese copy (as had been the case with the Variations published by Breitkopf). The consequence was not only a vast number of mistakes in the first edition owing to the poor legibility of the autograph but also the severe impairment of the latter by the markings of the editor. While Weismann's attitude towards Eisler might have improved in the meantime – perhaps because the "People's Commissariat of the USSR" no longer watched over the cultural life of the GDR with the same rigour after Stalin's death – his understanding of Eisler's music remained nevertheless limited, otherwise he would not have spoken of the Third Sonata as "somewhat easier". Nor does he seem to have altered this opinion of the work while it was being published, because the back cover of the first edition had the following advertisement for Edition Peters – Collection Litolff: "NEUE KLAVIERMUSIK | FÜR HAUS UND UNTERRICHT (LEICHT BIS MITTELSCHWER)" ("New piano music for home and study [easy to middling difficulty]"). Peters was clearly convinced that Eisler's Third Sonata might speak to an amateur public.

There do not seem to have been any performances of this work during Eisler's lifetime, except for the two by Stein in the USA. After the concert in Los Angeles in 1947, Stein did not even possess his own copy of the work any more, and the sources make no mention of any other performances (except for Steuermann's performance of the first movement as the *Klavierstück für Alfred Döblin*). We know of no performances during the period between the publication of the first edition in 1960 and Eisler's death in 1962, neither in the GDR nor

elsewhere. Walter Olbertz, who was the first pianist in the GDR to take up Eisler's piano works, studied the Third Sonata (and the Sonata op. 1) only after Eisler's death, when he was preparing to make a record of them. One can hardly imagine a greater contrast to the enthusiasm that had greeted Eisler's first opus at the very beginning. This cannot have been on account of any lack of quality on the part of the later work, because in the decades since then its significance has been appreciated and acknowledged through performances, recordings and scholarly contributions.<sup>95</sup>

### About this edition

This edition of Eisler's sonatas and variations is confronted by many problems that cannot be solved after the usual manner. These difficulties are largely a result of Eisler's working methods. His effervescent creativity meant he was always interested in what was new, and less interested in giving a definitive form to what he had already written. This is proven by his many reworkings of existing compositions, from arrangements for a different set of instruments to reusing material in a very different context. The piano sonatas and variations were also affected by Eisler's aversion to permanence, despite their belonging to genres that are seemingly fixed in nature. "Final authorized versions" exist in Eisler only as a matter of chance; if he had picked up a work one more time, it might not have remained untouched. The downside to such productive modes of thought was Eisler's reluctance to engage with the final results of his creativity. When copies or proofs were given to him, he preferred making changes or additions rather than checking to see if they were correctly notated. This is why a responsible editor cannot claim "passive authorization" for Eisler's works. The fact that Eisler left something unchanged does not mean that it was because he wanted it thus. It only means that he did not notice what might need correcting. Ultimately – to mention the third chimera of which Reinhard Kapp has spoken in the context of editorial work,<sup>96</sup> the "principal source" is a category that is useful only to a certain degree. It may be useful for making divergent readings easier to recognize, but for Eisler's works that were subjected to a process of transformation, no

93 AdK Berlin, HEA 6971.

94 Eisler to Weismann, letter of 18 September 1959, AdK Berlin, HEA 6971.

95 Apart from the literature mentioned in fn. 7 and 8, we wish to mention the following here: Horst Weber, "I am not a hero, I am a composer". *Hanns Eisler in Hollywood*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2012, pp. 305–330 ("Abgesang auf die Sonate"); Richard Hermann, "Observations on the First Movement of Hanns Eisler's *Third Piano Sonata* and his Schoenbergian Legacy", in: Peter Pabisch (ed.), *Patentlösung oder Zankapfel? "German Studies" für den internationalen Bereich als Alternative zur Germanistik – Beispiele aus Amerika*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2005 (= *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik*. Series A · *Kongressberichte* 72), pp. 333–346.

96 The main lecture at the symposium *Das Autograph – Fluch und Segen. Probleme und Chancen für die musikwissenschaftliche Edition* organized by the subject group "Freie Forschungsinstitute" at the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung Berlin, 19–21 April 2013.

specific source can claim to have primacy. Here, all we can do is to weigh up carefully each individual passage in the context of all the available sources. On the other hand, of course, different stages of the compositional process may not be mixed together, as in the worst case this can lead to an accumulation of contradictory markings.<sup>97</sup> This makes editing these works at times a tightrope walk in which we have to find a balance between the fetish of the primary source and the spectre of mixing sources. Whether or not we have succeeded in this here must be determined by others. The materials for such an assessment are here made available entire, and it is perfectly possible to reconstruct versions other than those given here by using the critical remarks and the source editions.

### Sonata op. 1

The least problematical editing case is the Sonata op. 1. Here, Eisler was still committed to the work concept upheld by the Schoenberg School. We can see this in purely visual terms, for the autograph has been written out with a great degree of precision. The first edition was based on the autograph (not on any copyist's manuscript) and still had a few mistakes – which proves that Eisler was already far from being a perfect proofreader.<sup>98</sup> But nevertheless he was so annoyed about the mistakes that he sent Alban Berg “a list of the most abominable printing mistakes”<sup>99</sup> when the latter congratulated him on his opus 1. In his private copy, Eisler entered these corrections in red crayon. These corrections then found their way into the second issue. So this work is the only one given here for which a relatively reliable first edition has survived.

Several misunderstandings in the first edition can be traced back to corrections in the autograph that were carelessly or incompletely carried out. These have been clarified in the present edition. For example, there is the combination of legato slurs and accents in the first movement, bar 53, or the expression mark “fließend” (‘flowing’) placed in bar 91 of the third movement instead of bar 93. Furthermore, several inconsistencies have been ironed out, especially with regard to the articulation markings in the second movement, but also in the note durations in the *prima* and *seconda volta* in the third movement (bars 42a and 42b). Apart from this, we have had to make a

series of what might be termed orthographical improvements, though we proceeded here with the greatest of caution. Only in those places where Eisler's idiosyncrasies in assigning notes to the different staves resulted in odd solutions did it seem appropriate to us to intervene (for more about this see below), such as in the first movement at the 6<sup>th</sup> triplet sixteenth note in bar 63, which is notated in the upper staff in the autograph and in the first edition, but which cannot be justified either for structural or performance reasons; nor is it warranted on grounds of readability.

### Second Sonata

Of the four works presented in this edition, the Second Sonata is the most difficult case in editorial terms. This is because of its complicated composition history and the fact that its first edition only appeared decades afterwards. This work went through several metamorphoses that were compromised on account of Eisler having tasked Erwin Ratz with helping him. To be sure, Ratz succeeded admirably in deciphering Eisler's sketches, which were in part difficult to read, but we have to concede that he did not always transcribe correctly, especially towards the close, where the arduousness of his task seems to have made him rather weary. Furthermore, his transcription is not free of certain arbitrary elements (determined in part by his more rigid understanding of the twelve-note method). Eisler did not censure him for it, but nor did he expressly condone his changes. The editorial difficulties here lie in the fact that Eisler made numerous changes and additions to Ratz's copy, though without first correcting Ratz's mistaken readings and omissions.

The same process was repeated in the case of the two copyist's copies and the proofs for the first edition. The result is a first edition in which we find mistakes from the most varied of sources. These range from mistakes made by Ratz in 1926 that were perpetuated through all subsequent versions, to mistakes made in 1960 during the publication process. It would be all too easy to edit a reproduction of the first edition in which the most obvious mistakes were expunged; however, it is impossible to correct all the mistakes and omissions because these became part of the process of transformation to which the work was subjected over the decades. The editor has no choice but to decide to use one specific phase of composition. For the reasons given in the evaluation of the sources,<sup>100</sup> we have here decided in favour of a kind of “penultimate authorized version” and have taken as our basis the copyist's copy that was used for the engraving of the first edition. We have used the earlier sources to correct this source as much as possible without distorting the character of the version in question. Because of the many changes that resulted from this decision, the present edition could be accused of publishing the work in a version that in fact never really existed. However, this work – in which

97 Thus Eberhardt Klemm marks the quarter notes in the upper staff of bars 305 and 306 with both slurs (on the 1st–2nd and 2nd–3rd quarter notes respectively) and with marcato wedges in his new edition of the Second Sonata (“corrected according to the sources”, Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1988) – just to give one example of the improper mixing of sources in this edition. He ignores the fact that the slurs are only in the autograph (where the first of the two quarter notes is each given an accent), while the wedges only appear in the copies made by the copyists – and are naturally given without slurs (Ratz had already omitted these in the manuscript copy he made).

98 This is surprising because Eisler for a while worked as a proofreader for UE. Checking the music of other composers is clearly not the same as checking one's own.

99 See fn. 10.

100 See Critical Report, p. 111.

the rhythm of even the first bar is incorrect as handed down to us – cannot be published in any edition without recourse to decisions that could be contested.

### Variations

The Variations, too, were more or less a work in progress, though this applies here to its staggered compositional process, for the finished product was not subject to subsequent alterations as was the case with the Second Sonata. This makes the source situation somewhat easier, though even here, incorrect readings found their way via the engraver's copy into the first edition without Eisler noticing them. Eisler also declined to make changes to the engraver's copy or to the proofs of the first edition, which means we were able to base our edition on the autograph without further complications. This work is written strictly using the twelve-note method (unlike the Second Sonata), so ambiguous passages in the autograph were able to be deciphered by means of a tone-row analysis. This also allowed us to find errors made by Eisler himself, such as the D in bar 507 that had slipped too far up and had mutated into an F. We only made rare corrections of this nature, and only did so where it was more likely that Eisler had made an error than that he had consciously deviated from the row structure. Where there were possible reasons for such deviations, we naturally kept to the autograph source – such as the  $g^2$  in bar 293 that ought to be  $g^2$  flat as the first note of the inversion but was presumably altered to  $g^2$  in order to establish  $g$  as the main note in the upper voice in bars 292–294 and as the fifth of a ninth chord on  $c$ .

In order to improve readability, we have changed the clef in a few passages – such as in the recapitulation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Finale, where Eisler kept the bass clef when transcribing the opening section from bar 393 onwards, even though this passage can be notated far more easily in the treble clef on account of its ascending trajectory. Using the bass clef here would require an unnecessary change of clef that we have also avoided in other passages (such as in bar 427, where the first two quarter notes were notated in the lower staff in the bass clef).

### Third Sonata

The Third Sonata was written more or less in one stretch (at least in comparison to the Second Sonata and the Variations). However, several years elapsed between the autograph and the publication, and the first edition is at least as flawed as with the other two works. For this reason, the first edition could not be used as the basis for the present edition. We took the autograph as our primary source, not least for pragmatic reasons (it meant we would not have to justify a multitude of deviations from the first edition). However, Eisler did make changes to the proofs and even to his private copy of the first edition (mostly additions to the expression markings) that in most cases do not contradict the autograph, but in fact fill

gaps where such markings are absent. For this reason we were able to incorporate most of these in our edition without the result being an inadmissible mixing of the different sources. A borderline case is found in the slurs added in the second movement at bars 24–26 and at parallel passages; they result in an elegant, Viennese attitude that is not inherent in the original version. Because these passages have no articulation markings in the autograph, we nevertheless decided to adopt them here. The publisher's editors intervened in Eisler's musical text to a greater degree here than in the other works in the present edition. This primarily affected the abovementioned manner in which Eisler distributed his music between the staves, which only in part reflects its actual distribution between the hands (which is the usual criterion in the piano repertoire). Often, the 88 notes of the piano are treated as a continuum whose notational turning point – *cum grano salis* – is at  $c^1$  (in that the music from  $c^1$  upwards is notated in the treble clef, and from  $c^1$  downwards in the bass clef). This means that when music is notated in the middle, there are often beams that cross the staves. Whereas the first editions of the other works edited here largely followed this manner of notation, the first edition of the Third Sonata was a different case. In the autograph, the upper voice of bars 5–6 moves into the lower staff at the penultimate triplet eighth note of the 5<sup>th</sup> bar in order to avoid a change of clef; however, in the first edition the upper voice is kept in the upper staff. And in bars 11 ff. the lower voice is placed in the lower staff from the outset in the first edition, although Eisler had notated it as a second voice in the upper staff until bar 13. Eisler expressly approved the musical text as engraved by Edition Peters – “Engraving and corrections masterly as always with you!”, he wrote to Wilhelm Weismann,<sup>101</sup> so in most cases we have kept to the distribution between the staves as found in the first edition. In several cases, however, we have followed the autograph, such as at the beginning of the third movement, where in bars 2–3 only the descant is left in the upper staff in the first edition – this means an incorrectly notated ligature for the  $a$  in the bass (because of the change of clef). And in bar 46 of the second movement, a decision by the publisher's editor to notate the lower voice of the upper staff as the upper voice of the lower staff has resulted in an incorrect pitch ( $c^2$  instead of  $c^2$  flat). Here it is natural for us to use the notation of the autograph, not least because otherwise the double diminished octave  $c^1$  sharp/ $c^2$  flat appears particularly glaring.<sup>102</sup>

101 Eisler to Wilhelm Weismann, undated letter accompanying his answers to a questionnaire that the editors of VEB Edition Peters had sent him along with the proofs of the Third Sonata on 8 March 1960. Eisler's sweeping consent might also be explained by his bad state of health, to which he also refers in his letter: “I am still exhausted after having been on my sickbed for 4 months; I was at last able to busy myself with the 3rd Sonata”. (StA-L 21109 VEB Edition Peters 169). To be sure, Eisler's enthusiasm might have been directed at the graphic quality of the musical text – which in this case was thoroughly justified.

102 The chord in question can be understood as a thirteenth with the fundamental note of  $d^1$  flat, as Eisler notated in sketch  $A_1$  (see the source edition, p. 152), though the notes of the chord are partially different.

Eisler's custom of writing notes above middle C in the treble clef and those below in the bass has occasionally caused rapid changes of clef where it is not possible to notate the music across the staves. For example, in bar 45 in the first movement the first chord is notated in the bass clef between two chords in the treble clef. We avoided changing clefs here, even though the first edition is notated thus. Similarly, we have intervened when a clef change unnecessarily divides up a musical figure, as in bars 76–77 in the third movement, where the treble clef was only given at the beginning of bar 77 in the lower staff, even though the two-note motive starting on b flat begins with the last eighth note of bar 76.

### Thanks

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