Constructions of Masculinity in Ernst Krenek’s \textit{Schwergewicht, oder die Ehre der Nation}

THESIS

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MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Music

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Constructions of Masculinity in Ernst Krenek’s Schwergewicht, oder die Ehre der Nation

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After losing World War I, Germany’s new society, the Weimar Republic (1919—1933), needed to rebuild its image both at home and abroad. As a reaction to the soft bodies of their military, who some argued led the country in its humbling defeat, Weimar developed a newfound fascination of bodies. Athletes embodied Weimar’s new ideals and boxers especially came to represent a new brand of hegemonic masculinity. The Ambassador to America even went as far as declaring that it was athletes, not thinkers, who would move the country forward.

Ernst Krenek responded to this craze by composing a satire. The burlesque operetta Schwergewicht, oder die Ehre der Nation (1928), reflects on what the idolization of boxers really means for both society and the boxers themselves. Krenek alienates his boxer, Ochsenschwanz, from the audience by neglecting the boxer musically and writing libretto where he can only be categorized as brutish, violent, and unintelligent. He frames the operetta with popular dance music, which supports Ochsenschwanz’s rival Gaston, a dancer. Gaston emasculates and humiliates Ochsenschwanz until he paralyzes the boxer and renders his strong body useless. Besides easily cracking the tough exterior of the boxer, Krenek exposes the truth that the fighting machine’s
singular function is only useful in a society that values toughness. When society asks the boxer to represent all of its hopes and dreams, he will fall short.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On May 6, 1928, Ernst Krenek (1900–1991) premiered Der Diktator (The Dictator), Das geheime Königreich (The Secret Kingdom), and Schwergewicht, oder die Ehre der Nation (Heavyweight, or the Glory of the Nation) at the Wiesbaden City Theater during the town's annual May Festival. This trio of one-act operas was Krenek’s first operatic premiere since the debut of the wildly successful Jonny Spielt auf in 1927. Of the three contrasting one-act works, Schwergewicht, oder die Ehre der Nation was the only one composed the music and libretto for after Jonny was declared a hit. Some critics saw Krenek’s decision to make Schwergewicht a “burlesque operetta” that included popular dance tunes as an effort to cash in on the success of Jonny. Others speculate that Jonny was so successful because it introduced Krenek’s idea of jazz to many parts of Europe that had never heard this new style of American music before. Schwergewicht was performed last in the trilogy and served as a comic relief and light-hearted conclusion to the tragic (Der Diktator) and fairy-tale (Das geheime Königreich) operas that preceded it. Schwergewicht is framed by burlesque music and, in the same way that jazz modernizes Jonny, popular dance music updates the traditional aria-like moments. Due to its proximity to Jonny in both chronology and use of popular musical styles, I will use existing scholarship on Krenek’s most famous work as the starting point for my own analysis of Schwergewicht. Schwergewicht’s libretto serves as a satirical parody of the sports hero worship that was a popular trend in the Weimar Republic (1919–1933). (For a detailed summary of the plot, please see the Appendix.) Every character in this operetta is a parody of what they represent in Weimar society.

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1 Der Diktator was completed on August 8, 1926 and Das geheime Königreich was completed February 17, 1927 (seven days after Jonny’s premiere, but sooner that it was declared an international success). The composition of Schwergewicht began in the spring of 1927 and was completed on June 10, 1927. Krenek wrote his own libretto for all four stageworks mentioned. John L. Stewart, Ernst Krenek: The Man and His Music (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Oxford University Press, 1991), 89.
Krenek shows his title character, Ochsenschwanz, no mercy. He creates the boxer to be nothing but an uncivilized fighter to his core. Krenek uses this characterization to draw attention to the fact that this supposed idol is glorified for brutish behavior. Evelyne, his wife, is a dancer who enjoys her role as a damsel in distress, as the music given to her is the blues which she uses to lament about the state of her affair. Not much more sympathetic than her husband, Evelyne is really only after fame and attention. Gaston, the dancer with whom Evelyne is having an affair, is motivated by a personal vendetta against the boxer—not romantic feelings for Evelyne—when he ultimately becomes Ochsenschwanz’s rival. Throughout Schwergewicht, Ochsenschwanz is visited by a fan, a reporter, a fan, a bureaucrat, and a professor. Anna Maria Himmelhuber, the lone fan, is one of the operetta’s most educated characters. Only she sings contrapuntal music, but she lacks common sense. The other characters are unnamed and are merely referred to by their occupation. The journalist represents the media, whose questionable promotion of boxers was crucial to their celebrity; the bureaucrat represents the government to show how out of touch it is with its people. Krenek makes each character an exaggerated version of their social role makes for a humorous operetta and also fulfills any satire’s purpose of questioning normal societal practices and problems. Even the philosophy professor, Professor Himmelhuber, whose baritone voice should be the wise voice of reason, cannot make sense of the situation anymore after his intelligent daughter is still infatuated with the boxer even after he knocks her out.

Just as the plot is unsympathetic towards Ochsenschwanz, the orchestra and musical styles also do not favor the *basso buffo* despite the fact that he has the operetta’s titular role. Instead, when the orchestra is not being whimsical to add to the humor on stage, it does its best to enhance the romantic storyline between the soprano and tenor, dancers Evelyne and Gaston. In *Jonny*, Krenek
uses musical style to his title character’s advantage. The key difference in *Schwergewicht* is that, by heavily featuring dance music, Krenek’s score best supports the title character’s rival, Gaston. Krenek further devalues Ochsenschwanz’s music by writing mostly atonal recitative, which exclusively defines the boxer’s music, in an operetta that favors tonal popular music. By depriving his supposed hero of an aria-like musical moment to shine, the boxer cannot gain the audience’s sympathy. By the end of the operetta, Ochsenschwanz’s lines are not even pitched before he is unable to make any sound at all, due to his body’s electrocution at Gaston’s hands. Krenek’s decision to call Ochsenschwanz a *basso buffo* instead of simply a *basso* aligns with this operetta’s classification as comic, but this is not reflected in the boxer’s music. Ochsenschwanz’s lines are neither exceptionally high, nor disjunct between registers, nor comically fast, as many *basso buffo* parts are. The voice type simply exists to set the expectation that the main character is a buffoon before the audience ever gets a chance to see who he is.

The Austrian-born composer of Czech descent was well qualified to write a satire on one of the most important parts of Weimar’s culture. By 1928, Krenek had lived in the Weimar Republic for eight years, almost as long as the young republic’s entire existence. In 1920, at the age of twenty, he followed his composition teacher, Franz Schreker, to Berlin. Krenek would call Weimar home through the premiere of these three one-act operas. He only lived in the republic’s cultural center, Berlin, until 1924, but he took up residencies in other parts of Germany and spent time travelling abroad, most notably to Switzerland and Paris, which surely gave him an outsider’s perspective to some of Weimar’s more questionable ideals.

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Joseph Auner, Susan C. Cook, and other scholars who have studied Jonny show that Krenek writes certain characters as either tonal or atonal to represent larger themes of modernity and autonomy. In Jonny, for example, Jonny’s atonality is forward-looking, and represents modernity and progress. Jonny and the American jazz genre emerge from this opera victorious over Max’s tonal old-world style and from this, scholars conclude that Krenek is making a statement that music should be forward-looking and modern. A declaration like this was profound for Krenek in the late 1920s, as he, like many young composers, struggled to move forward against his traditional musical training. After Jonny, music critics saw Krenek as one the most innovative, influential, and important voices of the new generation of composers. The success of an opera constructed on American jazz music, rather than a genre that had grown out of Romantic German tradition, showed that the world was ready for a new direction. Fittingly, his next stage work centers around popular dance music some of which, most notably the blues and tango, originated in the Americas. As a burlesque operetta framed and dominated by popular music, tonality is the prevalent musical language in Schwergewicht. By constructing the operetta around tonal music, Krenek is not abandoning the signifier of modernity he promoted through atonality in Jonny. In this case, tonality is acceptable and he uses other devices, like dance music from the Americas and contemporary Weimar figures, like boxer and social dancers, to establish modernity. Schwergewicht’s titular character is still the odd man out, as is Jonny, but not in a way that makes him more progressive than his operetta’s music allows him to be. While Jonny’s jazz music is accepted by the style of his opera, Ochsenschwanz does not fit into his musical world. Since the boxer is supposed to represent the

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ideals of the new Weimar society, it is problematic that his music cannot fit into the musical society that Krenek’s music has created for him.

Reviews of the premiere refer to a note from the composer saying that the inspiration for *Schwergewicht* came from a statement made by the Republic’s ambassador to the United States.\(^6\) The ambassador allegedly declared that a channel swimmer, or any other sports hero, does more for the country’s international standing than all of its artists, philosophers, and scientists combined.\(^7\) Krenek does not name the diplomat, but it was likely Adolf Georg von Maltzan, who was Weimar’s ambassador to America from 1925 until his death in 1927 because he served at the time Krenek started writing *Schwergewicht*.\(^8\) Regardless of this anecdote’s veracity, this quote was unquestionably the driving force behind Krenek’s inspiration for this opera and it proves that Weimar truly did think that athletes would help move the country forward. Historian Eric Jensen notes Weimar’s sports obsession was documented with the publication of forty new sports magazines and eighty-one new sports journals during the Weimar years alone.\(^9\) These magazines helped to make athletes, both domestic and abroad, household names in Weimar. In true celebrity fashion, as much attention was given to the details of the athlete’s personal lives as well as any professional achievements.\(^10\)

German-speaking lands had spent at least the last century and a half making some

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\(^8\) The composition of *Schwergewicht* took place in the Spring of 1927; Krenek was likely inspired to write this in late 1926 or early 1927. Von Maltzan served as ambassador until his untimely death in a plane crash in September 1927. Winfried Baumgart, “Maltzan, Ago Freiherr von,” *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 15 (1987), 743. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd119062569.html#ndbcontent.


\(^10\) Ibid., 9—10.
of the most important artistic and literary contributions to the Western world. Social norms were built on the assumption that education—*Bildung*—was fundamental to all productive members of society. To reject thinkers and shift to athletes as national heroes was certainly radical, but many citizens accepted, and even welcomed, the change.

After losing the Great War, Weimar culture found it particularly difficult to reconcile with the past. What was the point of all those great artistic advancements when most of humanity had just spent five years at war with itself? Since, politically speaking, to lose is to accept responsibility for a war, the citizens of the German-speaking lands were now looked at as no better than their viking ancestors, even if they had experienced a few centuries of enlightenment. The radical advancements of modern warfare in the early 20th century showed humanity’s potential for devastating levels of destruction while solidifying the need for toughness, both physical and emotional, and machinery in a modern world. A poet or composer, for example, doesn’t bring those traits to mind and even if they did, the world that allowed them to flourish also led to the First World War. A boxer, on the other hand, is the embodiment of toughness and even comparable to a machine (see Chapter 2). In other words, a boxer may be the complete opposite of a 19th-century German role model, but the upheaval of German culture almost begs for a completely different type of hero. A popular coping method was to blame society for the softening of men, who had to repress all natural urges to fight in order to appear civilized. This led to an upswing of “back-to-nature” movements that encouraged the youth to pursue physical endeavors rather than music or writing poetry. The idea was that if the Germans ever had to fight again, they would not be so passive the next time.\(^\text{11}\)

Krenek’s treatment of his boxer in *Schwergewicht* is hardly surprising given that his own livelihood is one that the diplomat’s statement demotes. Artist-operas—where the main character is an artist, composer, or musician, as in *Jonny spielt auf*—were popular in this decade. Oftentimes the composer is sympathetic to the artist within the opera, but these characters are not considered autobiographical. Still, the unlikely victor against the boxer is a member of the art world and along with the ultimate demasculinization that happens when Ochsenschwanz is defeated by a dancer, it is impossible to miss the victory of arts over sports as *Schwergewicht*’s message.

Although *Schwergewicht* reveals significant problems within both Ochsenschwanz’s life and Weimar society itself, the upbeat music at the beginning and ending frames the operetta in a way that suggests that Krenek is also excited about the heavyweight glory of the nation. The purpose of this thesis is to scratch beneath that upbeat surface and reveal the social problems Krenek presents in this satire. While the majority of Weimar may have been optimistic about the new ideals and constructions of masculinity that would lead them forward, Krenek was not afraid to question the growing popularity of boxers. Ochsenschwanz may be able to physically fight and defend himself, but Krenek never provides him with an opportunity to demonstrate his prowess. Instead, by making Ochsenschwanz a passive character, Krenek questions the merit of being all brawn and no brains.

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CHAPTER TWO: THE BOXER

Many different conflicting types of masculinity were able to co-exist in the Weimar Republic’s unique environment, but the image of the boxer, with his strong body and self-made fortune, quickly rose up to represent the most dominant and ideal form of masculinity for the modern German man.¹³ In this chapter, I will give a brief background of the historical context of the boxer in Weimar Germany before discussing three scenes that demonstrate the lack of the control that the boxer really has over his image where he is defined by a journalist, a fan, and a government worker’s perception of him. The boxer was a symbol of strength, upward mobility, and modern masculinity during the volatile Weimar period, but Krenek is suspicious of this new role model. These examples show that Weimar society is responsible for creating and defining the image of the boxer. Ochsenschwanz ends up as one of the weakest characters on the stage because Krenek does not believe that physical strength necessarily equals an idyllic or hegemonic masculinity.

As a new society, Weimar had the imperative to reject its past ideals and idols, and redirect its future. The recent memory of Germany’s defeat in World War I helped lead to a newfound interest in the body and a refusal to adhere to the old class system.¹⁴ Athletes were working-class heroes who demonstrated a type of upward mobility that was impossible before the modern era in Germany, and champion boxers demonstrated perfectly that Weimar was not a nation of victims.

The early days of the First World War quickly weakened Germany’s trained military and the country called on its male citizens to fight.¹⁵ These men and boys were eager to fight for their

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¹⁴ Ibid., 62.
¹⁵ Due to propaganda and general “war enthusiasm,” Germany’s peacetime conscript army quadrupled over a twelve day period in August 1914 to over 3.5 million. Alexander Watson, Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 45.
country, but they were deluded by “naive, glorified images of war and quickly became disillusioned or suffered mental collapse when they experienced real combat.”\textsuperscript{16} Modern warfare began with the First World War, and there was nothing glamorous about this new mode of combat. It no longer mattered who had the most physically skilled army or who could draw up the most elaborate battle plans because the battlefield changed overnight, from rifles and horses to machine guns and tanks.\textsuperscript{17} The introduction of chemical warfare, with various poison gasses, may be the most drastic weapons upgrade for military strategists, but the impact was the same: new weaponry could kill exponentially more men than it took to operate the weapons themselves. At the beginning of the war, most armies were devastatingly underprepared—not even providing soldiers with helmets until the countless men lost deemed them necessary.\textsuperscript{18} The war that began the modern 20th century showed little regard for human life. Soldiers—or rather ordinary citizens performing their civic duty—were now more disposable than ever. The men who survived returned home with a natural distrust in humanity, but also a newly urgent question: what did it mean to be a man? To be well-educated and cultured, as the old-world values deemed necessary, clearly counted for nothing in the trenches. The masculine ideals of the 19th century were obsolete in a world capable of modern warfare and Weimar found itself needing to redefine its values.

After the war, some Germans blamed their nation’s loss on the men going soft. Of course there were countless other factors at play, but historian Erik Jensen suggests that Weimar’s newfound fascination with bodies stemmed from neglecting them in the past.\textsuperscript{19} There was an idea in the new republic that retroactively blamed the disinterested 19th-century approach toward physical

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 14.
fitness and bodies for its weak military. Jensen’s book about bodies, gender, and sports in Weimar begins with a photograph of Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske—the Republic’s newly elected president and defense minister, respectively—at the beach, and the nation’s reaction to it after it was published on the front page of the weekly *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* in 1919. Weimar’s citizens began to worry that the aging, frail, soft bodies of their leaders might be seen as representative of their new society.20 The defeated nation was sensitive to this. Along with many other countries, Weimar joined in on the trend of promoting strong, athletic bodies to optimistically show the country’s rehabilitation and improving national health. This explains why Weimar’s ambassador to America was so eager to praise the country’s athletes: they publicized the illusion that Weimar was as strong, healthy, and youthful as its model citizens.21 Anyone who was able-bodied could work to make themselves strong and successful. Athletes, who usually came from working-class beginnings, served as the perfect role models for Weimar’s new ideal.

The class system in Wilhelminian Germany allowed the upper classes to dictate the masculine ideals that were centered around a well-rounded and cultured mind. A cultivated mind came to represent high status and, aside from gymnastic-like *Turnen* exercises performed by school-aged boys, no physical requirements were expected of the German elite.22 The rise of industrialization slowly began to empower the working class and the fall of the German empire revoked the authority of the elite. With society in shambles after the war and democracy on the rise, the working class found it easier to have a voice and challenge the old social norms set by the emperor-less and outdated upper class. One of the most popular ways working-class men gathered

21 Ibid., 6.
and socialized in the 1920s was through sports, especially boxing.\textsuperscript{23} Boxing clubs were common places where working-class men met at the end of the day to socialize, train, spar, and compete, but even nightclubs and dinner theaters would transform their dance floors into boxing rings between musical sets to cash in on the fad.\textsuperscript{24}

In the 19th century, the popularity and practice of sports was rejected by the wealthy upper classes because physical competition was seen as lowly and uncivilized. Working-class Germans did box before the war but the combative, violent nature of the sport did not appeal to the higher classes, which prevented it from ever being in fashion.\textsuperscript{25} All of post-war Germany had a newfound fascination with bodies, and boxing put the body of the boxer on display for all to see. The German people were well aware of the disadvantages of a soft body by this point—soft bodies had potentially lost them the war. In the modern world, machines were becoming commonplace and physical labor was slowly becoming obsolete. One way the Germans dealt with these two crises was to reclaim independence by focusing on training the body, almost as if it were a machine itself.

Much like an athlete today, the Weimar boxer had to eat, sleep, and exercise according to a specific training schedule and make other lifestyle sacrifices if he wanted to become a champion. This concept of training the body was brand new in Weimar Germany and the public greatly admired the professional boxer’s self-discipline.\textsuperscript{26} The accomplishments that boxers worked hard to achieve by shaping their skills through training translated to the modern and optimistic idea that perseverance, and not social status, led to a prosperous life.\textsuperscript{27} Aside from a lack of physical strength, the German public also felt that their men were no longer mentally tough or disciplined enough to

\textsuperscript{23} Jensen, “Belle of the Brawl,” 64.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{26} Jensen, “Belle of the Brawl,” 73.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 72.
make sacrifices that would help them reach a long term goal, such as winning a war or adapting to modern life. The media loved to glorify formerly scrawny men, like Hein Müller (1903–1945), who worked hard to add muscle to his 90lb frame and became Weimar’s reigning light heavyweight champion in the latter part of the 1920s.\(^{28}\) Despite its low, working-class beginnings, the appeal of boxing, in particular the boxer’s body, soon caught up to the intellectuals and higher classes. By the mid 1920s, everyone boxed. Intellectuals made sure to brag about their time in the ring because they had the most to prove to their changing society and boxing showed that they were willing to roughen up their soft edges.\(^{29}\) Summarizing German scholar David Bathrick’s investigation of Bertolt Brecht and other intellectuals’ interest in boxing, Jensen notes that “artists and intellectuals revealed a particular attraction to the sport that stemmed from a self-conscious attitude toward their own perceived effeminacy, a self-consciousness that further underscored the declining masculine status of Bildung. By publicly associating themselves with a sport that articulated a tough, working-class masculinity, these men sought to bring their own images into closer alignment with the qualities that Weimar society increasingly valued.”\(^{30}\) The amateur boxing fad among the elite made it more acceptable for professional boxers from working-class backgrounds to be admired by the general public and, most importantly, achieve celebrity status.

One facet of the boxer’s celebrity was his status as a sex symbol for men and women alike. The admiration of men’s bodies by other men constantly towed the line between aspiration and desire. Boxers were frequently featured in homosexual artwork.\(^{31}\) Activist and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld even convinced heavyweight champion Max Schmeling to pose nude in contrast to an

\(^{28}\) Ibid.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 51.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 62.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 89.
Aphrodite statue. Comparisons to Ancient Greek gods and goddess appear whenever there is a new physical ideal for the body; it helps to prove that the body, in this case the body of the male boxer, is natural, perfect, and beautiful. Women’s attraction to boxers, with the media already portraying boxers as sex objects, gave women the upper hand and allowed them to be the sexual aggressor for one of the first times in German society’s history. In literature and movies featuring boxing or boxers, it was often the woman who attempted to seduce the boxer. Her success depended on the boxer’s dedication to the sport and determination to become a champion. Part of the boxer’s training regimen was to give up all physical pleasures. To reject advances from a woman was said to show the boxer’s commitment to the sport and his desire to become a champion.

Upward social mobility was another new and exciting concept in post-war Germany, and the media liked to portray this idea through successful boxers. According to them, one of the most respectable ways for a working-class man to gain fame and fortune was through boxing. It was believed that anyone with enough training and dedication could become a champion boxer, as long as he worked hard and wanted it enough. In reality, only a small fraction of professional boxers in Weimar earned a living wage, let alone a fortune. One of the most successful boxers of the Weimar Era, Max Schmeling, on whom Ochsenschwanz is loosely based, turned to endorsement deals, acting jobs, and other promotions to make most of his money since boxing alone could not support his glamorous lifestyle. The media still chose to over-represent success stories and inflate a champion’s prize earnings as a way of inspiring hope in the masses. If anyone, even a poor

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32 Ibid., 88.
33 Jensen notes the short stories “Mrs. Adi” and “Inge and the Boxing Match” along with films The Boxer’s Bride, Abwage, and Love in the Ring. Ibid, 89—92.
34 Ibid., 73.
35 Ibid., 61.
36 Ibid., 76.
working-class boy, worked hard, he would become the best and all of his dreams would come true. What could be better than that?

The life of luxury was coveted in Weimar, especially in its earlier years when inflation skyrocketed out of control. Schmeling’s earnings, comprised of both boxing money and endorsement deals, far surpassed Thomas Mann (1875-1955), who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929. This gave the working class proof that boxing was their ticket to a successful life and warned the upper classes that older trends or careers, like writing, were not lucrative or

![Image of Simplicissimus](image-url)

Figure 2.1. *Simplicissimus* (1930)

37 Ibid.
respectable anymore. The boxing fad promoted the idea that anyone was capable of physically training their bodies, where traditionally, there were often class boundaries, among other factors, that prevented the lower classes from access to the education necessary for a career that depended on the brain, thinking, and culture. The media’s promotion of these athletes in such a tumultuous society showed how much the Weimar Republic needed sports and how influential the boxer was. They continually poked fun at old-fashioned German figures; the 1930 cover of satirical magazine *Simpleissimus*, for example, featured Schmeling towering over Goethe and Bismarck (see Figure 2.1).  

To sum up this shift in values, Jensen writes, “Upward mobility no longer depended on an esoteric appreciation of Schiller, Brahms, and the Greek tragedies, but instead on talent, aggression, and a well-toned body.”  

Never before did the working class have the power to have its own role models who could influence the whole of society, but the physical and mental strength of the boxer came to exhibit the most important traits of hegemonic masculinity. The boxer, who grew out of working-class conditions, was now the hero of Weimar culture at large.

**Ochsenschwanz’s music**

In *Schwergewicht, oder Die Ehre der Nation*, Adam Ochsenschwanz represents a stereotypical boxer and it quickly becomes obvious that Krenek is not a fan of his main character—the operetta’s titular character lacks musical skill and grace while existing in a musical world centered around popular dance music. Although Ochsenschwanz’s music does not lend itself to any worthwhile critique, there are three scenes where the characters around him represent different societal pressures he must endure. The first and only musical number that the boxer somewhat participates in is the waltz where a reporter reveals Ochsenschwanz is uncultured and uneducated. The

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38 Image appears as it is presented in Jensen’s book. Ibid., 60.  
39 Ibid.
journalist uses waltz music to try to lead the boxer into an intelligent interview, but the uninterested boxer comes off as little more than an illiterate brute to the audience. The second scene features Anna Maria Himmelhuber and her philosopher father, and the way they speak of Ochsenschwanz reveal how two more facets of Weimar society think of the boxer. Although he is not granted a scene in the ring, Ochsenschwanz spends most of his stage time trying to train and the presence of a young fan confirms the boxer’s successful celebrity status. Anna Maria is supposed to be a bright young medical student, but she is presented primarily as comic relief and her actions are clearly erratic and illogical. Unsurprisingly, she is the only character that Krenek allows to worship Ochsenschwanz and her father muses on what that means about the state of Weimar’s youth. The final scene of the Schwergewicht is the last important moment where society acts on Ochsenschwanz. A government worker appears to bestow an national honor onto the boxer, but he is merely performing a task that he believes will better his country and is perhaps too out of touch with the modern world to be considered a fan as well.

Of these four characters—the journalist, Anna Maria Himmelhuber, Professor Himmelhuber, and the government worker—only one genuinely likes the boxer, but she only sees the false reality the media presents of him. The rest of the characters see Ochsenschwanz for what he is: violent, agitated, and dull. Krenek invites his audience, who may have idolized boxing heroes themselves, to look at the boxer in this light as well. Krenek emasculates the figure of the boxer by making him one of the most passive characters on the stage as he is solely defined by the expectations of the others around him. Before looking into these three scenes that best exemplify this, it is important to understand how Ochsenschwanz exists musically before Krenek puts various societal pressures on him.
At the beginning of *Schwergewicht*, Krenek establishes Ochsenschwanz’s personality and character traits: he’s loud, agitated, demanding, and looking for any opportunity to show off his punches. He enters the stage swinging his fists in “typical boxer movements,” (m. 105) and later flips a table (m. 155) then breaks his exercise machine in a violent outburst (m. 163). He is not quick-witted but he believes himself to be a great boxer, and possibly eligible for an honorary doctoral degree (mm. 378-380). His music separates itself into two halves where it is primarily atonal at first and then mostly tonal in the second half. These two halves correlate to the private and public Ochsenschwanz, respectively. At the beginning, the only people around are his wife, Evelyne, her pesky dance partner, Gaston, and his silent attendant, Ottokar, which leaves the boxer free to be himself, revealing that his preferred musical style is atonal. When he returns halfway through the operetta, he snaps a demand at Ottokar (m. 283), but quickly turns tonal when the journalist appears and introduces waltz music in C Major. The rest of the time he is on stage, he shares it with characters who represent public life—the journalist, a fan, a professor, a government worker—and is usually able to sing in a key, which demonstrates his ability to appear civil. This operetta, with its distinct popular styles and dance numbers and framed by cabaret, favors tonality and Ochsenschwanz’s preferred atonal lines do not fit the bill. Ochsenschwanz receives no songs or aria-like moments. Boxers are supposed to be machine-like and like a machine, Ochsenschwanz produces no feelings or emotions that would require an aria. This undermines his role as a main character and doesn’t allow his audience to sympathize with him. Krenek strategically denies the

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basso-buffo an opportunity to express himself through music because he is supposed to be “the glory of the nation” who no longer needs past distractions like complex emotions, thoughts, or music.

The Journalist

The journalist’s most important scene is one in which he interviews Ochsenschwanz and reveals the boxer’s lack of intelligence and culture. Here, Krenek comments on both the hero-worship of the boxer and the integrity of the media. The media played a necessary role in promoting the figure of the boxer and the interview that Krenek writes is far from flattering for its subject. The scene that unfolds shows the journalist immediately crafting the boxer’s uninterested answers to make him look better and more cultured, all while the journalist’s libretto is thick with sarcasm. The audience would no doubt be laughing at the journalist’s jokes and the puns that Ochsenschwanz unknowingly makes, rather than feel sympathy toward the boxer’s lack of wit.

This interview takes place over waltz music and in the context of Schwergewicht, there is no question that the waltz is the journalist’s music. The waltz is old fashioned, but it is easily recognizable to anyone who is even slightly cultured and even though Ochsenschwanz may not recognize it, the audience would get the hint that the journalist is about to take control. Not only does he introduce the waltz that appears, but the journalist also works hard to keep the dance on track as he repeatedly puts Ochsenschwanz in a position to follow his lead. Krenek uses the music of this scene to immediately emasculate the boxer while the libretto dumbs him down. Until this point, Ochsenschwanz has been firmly atonal regardless of what the orchestra plays, but within five measure of the meter switching to 3/4 where the journalist introduces the waltz in C Major, Ochsenschwanz responds tonally (m. 289). He even sings an exclamation, “Aha!” (m. 292) in a perfect fifth just three measures after the characteristic oompah pahs of the waltz rhythm begin (m. 292).
290). The boxer may seem to have the upper hand due to intimidation and lack of interest—neither a waltz nor an interview can take place if the object is not engaged—but the journalist is persistent. He will ultimately end up singing alone (mm. 336-344), but he is able to adapt his music in ways that can at least grab Ochsenschwanz’s attention several times.

For a waltz to be successful, both partners must be focused and engaged. Rather than interpreting this failed waltz as a misstep of the journalist, we can see this as another jab at the boxer’s intellect. In addition to the focus needed to endure the constant whirling of a waltz, experience is a necessity for successful waltzing and Ochsenschwanz demonstrates neither. The waltz was associated with the cultured upper classes and the fact that Ochsenschwanz was unable to withstand more than a single revolution before breaking off and doing his own thing metrically results in an additional hit to his character: he is uncultured. This is only a minor obstacle for the journalist though, as he is skilled enough to take the information he gains from his limited engagement with the boxer and spin it into a positive and newsworthy interview on his own.

At first, the rhythms and metric placements of Ochsenschwanz’s responses suggest that he’s willing to engage in this waltz (mm. 289–298). The downbeat of the measure is the most important beat of any waltz, and these should be occupied by the journalist, who is leading. The best way Ochsenschwanz can respond is to pick up on a weaker beat, but if he comes in on an off beat or takes too many beats of rest, the dance is compromised. Eventually, Ochsenschwanz responds to the journalist in and out of time so erratically that it’s obvious that he’s not giving the waltz a second

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42 Ibid., 5.
thought (mm. 301-314); perhaps he is not even cultured enough to recognize the trademark rhythms. The boxer is not paying attention to the journalist’s words from the beginning, and his first few “answers” occurring in time are just coincidence (see Figure 2.2). Soon enough, the boxer’s ignorance of the situation around him translates to complete disregard of the meter. The journalist asks what he thinks of America and the boxer’s response, “Too dry!,” (mm. 297-298) to which the journalist exclaims in the next measure, “The champion loves alcohol!” Ochsenschwanz was referring to his toast, which he had just taken a bite of, but the journalist chose to interpret this
remark as a comment on America’s prohibition. It’s his job to make Ochsenschwanz look contemporary and opinionated but he knows it won’t be easy with the boxer only focused on himself. Fittingly, this is a moment when the two are out of sync metrically. The journalist does his best to hold strong and sticks to proposing his waltz rhythm. Once or twice, he attempts to imitate one of Ochsenschwanz’s common rhythms, which ties over the barline, and succeeds in getting the boxer’s attention (m. 304-322). He asks another question, this time about Beethoven. The boxer threateningly says to “leave him alone with these amateurs” (i.e. Beethoven, whose name he does not recognize) and the rhythm of the journalist’s amused response signals another attempt at a traditional waltz (m. 311), while the boxer goes on about boxing champions he has heard of like Dempsey and Paolino, not like this “Beethoven.” The journalist tries this tactic again in order to hold the boxer’s interest while asking about Goethe’s Faust in measure 319, but metrical and conversational confusion ensue again. Ochsenschwanz is unable to either recognize where he is in the meter or is too agitated to wait until the appropriate beat to declare that his fist is better. In German, Faust can mean “fist” as well as the play that the journalist was referring to, and as we’ve already seen, the boxer never misses an opportunity to show off his strength, which, by now, he’s sure the journalist is questioning. From here, the two are not metrically in sync with each other for the rest of the waltz.

Shortly after this, the boxer goes back to ignoring the journalist completely and worrying about his breakfast, but the journalist has enough to work with. In his head, he already knows how he’s going to spin the boxer’s words to make him appear intelligent and admirable. His final phrase (mm 336-344) swells triumphantly as he is given the stage to declare sarcastically, “a straight line of the finest human intellects from Kant through Nietzsche to Ochsenschwanz,” but just as he’s about
to cadence, a new scene is beginning and the orchestra shifts its attention to that. The journalist’s moment is over but he still gets the last word over a tritone interval, to fit the transitional scene’s music, which is anti-climactic after the build up to the V-I cadence that should have concluded his interview. The journalist will get the ultimate last word however, when he transforms this equally disappointing meeting into a thoughtful newspaper article. The final form of this interview doesn’t appear in *Schwer gewicht*, but the audience would have been familiar with these types of articles that do little more than promote sports figures’ celebrity. The end of this waltz is a musical disappointment for the journalist, but not a loss because it’s not the boxer who takes control. Instead, the orchestra becomes interested in something else which could be a subtle note from Krenek that these inflated boxing interviews are old news and becoming uninteresting. A scene like this is a parody of a typical
Weimar boxer’s interview which depends on a positive spin to make the boxer appear civil even though, ironically, the media is crucial for the promotion of boxers.

The journalist’s clever lines are ones that the audience can easily understand and laugh at throughout this scene. As a journalist, he functions by bridging the gap between important or celebrity figures and the masses. As the journalist in *Schwergewicht*, he acts as a buffer between what is happening onstage, what is in Krenek’s head, and the audience. It is clear that Krenek is not buying into the media hype that boxers are the new “it” boys and the journalist’s reactions to Ochsenschwanz are the most obvious portrayal of that. But because of the interdependence between boxers and media, Krenek does not paint either of them in a good light. He presents the irony of “good press,” as it is doubtful that the journalist will risk his reputation by publishing an unfavorable picture of Ochsenschwanz, but does not do much to comment on it. This is the first time in the operetta that another character is responsible for speaking for and defining the perception of Ochsenschwanz. As a dance, the journalist’s music fits this burlesque operetta and Krenek gives him favorable libretto: sarcastic and witty, perfectly suited for a satire. While Krenek is suspicious of the press’s adulation of the figure of the boxer, in *Schwergewicht* he is more sympathetic to the journalist and press.

**The Himmelhubers**

Anna Maria Himmelhuber, the medical student, whose father is a professor of philosophy, is both the only significant female character and the only character who is a fan of Ochsenschwanz in *Schwergewicht*. Krenek immediately introduces Anna Maria as an undesirable young woman who is “a pale, ugly, bespectacled student wearing an impossible dress,” (m. 203) and the way she presents herself to both the audience and the other characters is riddled with contradictions. She is modern
and assertive, yet she is self-conscious and yields to the men on stage. She is educated, yet she is the only character who admires the boxer. Her music is complex and atonal, yet its counterpoint and dissonances offer little resistance before yielding to the simplicity of the dance tunes.

Figure 2.4 features Anna Maria’s first appearance (m. 215), as she announces herself in counterpoint to an empty stage then hides when she hears someone coming. Keeping with her learned musical style, her music tries to be tonal but her nervousness, due to breaking into her idol’s house, prevents that. Most of her intervals are 3rds and 5ths but oftentimes the tonic of the triad will be raised a half step when she returns to it, making the otherwise major chord diminished (e.g. m. 218). She acknowledges that she shouldn’t be there but blames her subconscious when she says, “I’m doing something wrong in coming here, I know that perfectly well, but my subconscious is too strong” (mm. 239-252). It makes sense that Anna Maria would be up on all the current scientific trends, like Freud’s work on the subconscious, because she is a medical student. Her name is
vaguely reminiscent of Freud’s most famous patient Anna O. and Krenek may be poking fun at Schoenberg (whom he had a documented rivalry with at the time), who was very fond of Freud’s work. Krenek makes sure to note that Anna Maria is ugly and poorly dressed, but educated and deluded enough to be able to justify breaking and entering into one of Weimar’s biggest sex symbol’s houses through psychoanalytical babble. She no doubts represents the highly intellectual side of modern German society and it is through her that Krenek shows he is not willing to blindly promote this disconnected type of modernity either. By this point in the operetta, Krenek’s opinion of the boxer is clear, so why would he choose the most high-brow character thus far to be Ochsenschwanz’s only fan? Krenek’s constant degradation of Anna Maria is one of the strongest ways he undermines Ochsenschwanz. Having a fan like Anna Maria may be worse than having no fans at all. She may turn out to be one of the more humorous characters in the operetta, but the audience never laughs with her, only at her. At the same time, her gender and age make it permissible for her to idolize the boxer in a way that would be seen as strange or inappropriate for the other characters. Krenek may have only intended for Anna Maria to serve as comic relief, but she is Schwergewicht’s most important character when analyzing Ochsenschwanz as a modern, masculine role model. Through this lense, Anna Maria is a symbol for both Weimar’s educated youth and the youth of Weimar and it becomes startlingly clear how problematic it is to worship boxers.

Anna Maria’s father, Professor Himmelhuber, is only briefly present in Schwergewicht, but, as may be expected from a professor character, he offers some of the best insight to the larger themes at play. It is important to know what he thinks because his daughter partially defines herself through

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him by including his profession whenever she announces who she is. She has already admitted that
she’s doing something wrong and that’s because even though she may be swept up in a wave of
fanaticism, her philosopher father balances her and serves as her moral compass. As a minor
caracter, he mainly participates in tonal recitative musically, but he does fit the operatic stereotype
of a wise and intellectual baritone. He provides commentary on boxers’ egos and excessive
aggression (m. 489), the ethics of training dummies (m. 492), and even the youth culture of Weimar
(m. 543). Ochsenschwanz intends to show the professor his training area and Krenek makes sure to
write Himmelhuber’s thoughts as asides to himself, so that the audience can hear. The boxer is not
amused by Gaston’s (now disguised as Ottokar) incessant comments about the dress (m. 454), but
the professor believes he must show interest in this alleged affair so that the boxer won’t be
offended by the lack of interest that the professor has in Ochsenschwanz’s personal life. In Weimar,
boxers were so used to being media sensations that it was only natural that a layman should revel in
the opportunity to learn more about their private life. As Ochsenschwanz grows more and more
agitated and swings at the training dummy more and more aggressively, the professor is in
observation mode (mm. 489-504). He seems to find it interesting just how easily the boxer is
provoked and how extreme his reactions to such annoyances are.

Between punches, Ochsenschwanz explains that the training dummy is just that, a dummy,
but Professor Himmelhuber is still appalled. He muses on the idea that the dummy could be a real
human, perhaps wondering why it is necessary to make a training tool resemble a human being at all.
Ochsenschwanz says that he wishes it was a real human that he was beating up and when the
professor wishes for it to stop, he goes in for the kill. Much to both of their surprise, Anna Maria
falls out of the dummy and even more surprisingly, she is elated and says, “Ah, that was nice!” (m.
The professor questions the merits of youth culture and it is at this time that the audience should be questioning the popularity of the boxer as well. Professor Himmelhuber knows his daughter. He knows that she is intelligent and he presumably provided her with a good upbringing, yet she still became a delusional sports fanatic and he has just witnessed the effects of this. Is the influence of the boxer responsible for her behavior? She trespassed, stripped down via the orders of a stranger (explained in Ch. 3), and enjoyed getting pummeled by a champion boxer. None of this is logical and it was all done because she worships Ochsenschwanz. Some role model. The professor’s highly-educated daughter, however, cannot see this lapse in judgement and, in one last jab at Freudian psychology, asks for forgiveness of her irrational behavior because she “has a complex” (mm. 547—550).

In this particular instance, Ochsenschwanz is not personally to blame for Anna Maria’s situation. On the surface, he was not aware that she was hiding inside of his training dummy and let’s not forget she is an intruder. The scene with the journalist showed that Ochsenschwanz is not particularly friendly with public figures and that the raw material he gives in interviews is not particularly flattering. As I previously noted, much of the promotion of the figure and celebrity of the boxer was driven by the media, and that is likely true for Ochsenschwanz’s fame. The Ochsenschwanz that Anna Maria was dying to meet didn’t exist and this is the problem with Weimar idolizing boxers.

The Government Worker

Before the government worker arrives, Gaston and Evelyne sing of their freedom and run off together. The orchestra supports the singers’ triumphant D major and remain in this key while an electrocuted Ochsenschwanz calls for help. Despite the horrific scene he walks into
(Ochsenschwanz’s electrocution), the bureaucrat is firmly in that same triumphant D major which the orchestra continues to affirm until they conclude the act with the dancer’s upbeat melody (see Chapter 3). The government worker’s music is tonal, pompous, slightly reminiscent of a fanfare, and entirely out of place in *Schwergewicht*. He has the music of a heroic tenor and the tempo slows abruptly when it’s time for him to sing and his legato triple meter lines in 3/2 stick out as too formal or stately compared to the preceding scene dominated by fast, steady, duple meter eighth notes meant to replicate a machine. Additionally, there are four melismatic moments in the entire operetta and he is given three of them, two of which are in the same phrase (m. 690). As displayed by Figure 2.5, these occur on “*Ehre*” (“glory”) and “*Nation*” when he is telling Ochsenschwanz that he is the glory of the nation because he will represent them at the upcoming Olympics (his other melismatic word). Krenek sticks this melismatic titular phrase in at the end of *Schwergewicht* as a final way of poking fun at the athletes over thinkers statement. Not only is the last-minute addition of a heroic
tenor out of place, but his melismas don’t fit with the music either. To highlight “glory” by drawing attention to this word is to show the bureaucrat’s bias. To him, as a representative of the country with a newfound fascination in bodies and boxers, this is a very high honor and obviously the nation and its international reputation is of utmost importance as well. Krenek adds this role to the end of his operetta to show musically how out of touch the government is with its people; the audience, having adjusted to the syllabic and burlesque tendencies of *Schwergewicht*, would have thought the bureaucrat’s cameo strange too.

![Figure 2.5. Ernst Krenek, Schwergewicht, Regierungsrat](image)
The government worker, who is a stand-in for the government, is out of touch with reality in two major ways. First, he is projecting his notion that to represent one’s country is still the highest honor that an individual can achieve. The boxer, as a figure, represents personal gain. Not only are modern men free to put their own needs ahead of their country’s, but in 1928, a mere decade after the Great War, Weimar men might not rejoice at the chance to go out and fight for their country, whether in the ring or on the battlefield. The best boxers were supposed to have sacrificed everything to become champions, so why should the country be able to take credit for the individual’s achievement? This Regierungsrat’s lines evoke an operatic sound from a time when the nation was more important than the individual, even though he clearly takes personal pride in representing such an establishment. The only problem is that no one in the modern world, or at least in this audience, would think that his pride is placed in a worthwhile institution.

The worker also fails to notice that Ochsenschwanz is being electrocuted. As far as he can tell, the boxer is simply training because he is sitting on his exerciser, which shows that the government is also detached from the boxers and the craft they’re putting so much faith into. They don’t care to know how boxers actually train, as long as they show up to the important matches and represent the country well, the government has no reason to treat boxers any differently than they would treat a machine. A boxer, like a machine, is a means to an end. When Ochsenschwanz hoarsely asks him to turn off the machine (mm. 681-683), he doesn’t even notice that the boxer is incapable of controlling his voice. Instead, he delivers the aforementioned melismatic titular line that launches the orchestra into the bright and cheery conclusion of the burlesque operetta while Ochsenschwanz wastes away on his machine. This bureaucrat is a parodic stand in for Weimar’s
Ambassador to America, Adolf Georg von Maltzan, who inspired this operetta. By ending on this note, there is no way the audience can miss Krenek’s message: this is the glory of the nation?

Chapter Conclusion

Weimar’s collective memory of World War I provided the perfect social climate for a new type of dominant masculinity and the heavyweight boxer fit the bill. He was strong, disciplined, and ambitious; no one could accuse him of being a victim. Yet, Krenek’s Ochsenschwanz is not his own man and even worse, he is a victim of his environment. His livelihood in Schwergewicht is completely dependent on how people see him and what others need him to be. The journalist needs Ochsenschwanz to be interesting enough to write about so that he can publish a good story. The government needs him to be a good fighter so that they can raise the international perception of their country. Anna Maria, the fan, needs him to be a larger-than-life idol over whom she can fawn and create an escapist fantasy with. The irony, and possibly least masculine reality, is that Ochsenschwanz needs all these people to place unrealistic expectations on him. Practically speaking, a boxer, or any sports hero, is not any more functional in the modern world than the artists and thinkers that he is supposed to replace. He needs good press, institutions that invest too much in him, and fans to remain relevant. Without a society to define and value him, he is nothing but a man with too much aggression.

In Schwergewicht, Krenek places Ochsenschwanz in a musical world that does not value him. His music does not fit into the burlesque framework and he is not interested enough in the society around him to engage in the dances that the music presents. He is the Weimar boxing star without the society to glorify him and it is through this lens that Krenek shows his society how undeserving he thinks boxers are of their glory, idolization, and importance.
CHAPTER 3: THE DANCER

In *Schwergewicht*, Krenek’s decision to make Ochsenschwanz’s rival, Gaston, a dancer seems like an unfair fight. Aside from the basic comedic elements of this pairing, both the social elements of a male dancer in Weimar and Gaston’s individual character traits make him a worthy opponent. In this chapter, I will begin by placing the male dancer within the social context of Weimar Germany. I will then discuss three scenes that demonstrate Gaston’s ability to remain in control of any situation when he is on stage: first, the opening of the operetta, which establishes Gaston as Ochsenschwanz’s romantic rival; second, the *Tango milonga* section where Gaston begins to put his plans in action; and third, the final scene in which Gaston uses his quick thinking to cripple Ochsenschwanz. Weimar society considered dance to be a feminine art form, but Gaston comes to represent modern culture, strength, and masculinity in his own right. In direct opposition to the boxer, Gaston becomes more autonomous as *Schwergewicht* progresses. He has a handle on technology, the ultimate element of modernity, but his profession still ties him to Germany’s cultured past. While Gaston may be perceived as as an effeminate dancer at the beginning of the operetta, this assumption is shattered when he destroys the boxer’s body and takes off with his wife, making him *Schwergewicht’s* most dominant character.

In 1922, the painter Otto Dix (1891-1969) completed a self-portrait titled *An die Schönheit* (To Beauty). He gazes confidently at the viewer from a Romantic-style dance hall amongst symbols of Europe, America, the past, and the present (see Figure 3.1).

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44 “By the turn of the 20th century and also in the more liberal Weimar Republic, dancing was clearly encoded as a female art.” Yvonne Hardt, “*Ausdrucktanz*, Worker’s Culture, and Masculinity in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities Across Borders*, edited by Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 260.

Figure 3.1. Otto Dix, *An die Schönheit* (1922)
Funkenstein evaluates this painting in terms of Dix’s own life which shows just how masculine, modern, and sophisticated the mastery of social dances could make men appear. Funkenstein observes that the telephone Dix holds serves as a symbol of technology and that his “cold, almost calculating stare reinforces that he controls power and knowledge.” Technology and the ability to quickly calculate a plot that will frame the boxer are two crucial ways that Gaston attains dominance and asserts his masculinity in the operetta, which immediately makes Dix and Gaston similar. Both men also have significant ties to American culture and modernity, which I will discuss below.

Currently, there is little scholarship on the social or cultural perception of male dancers, in respect to masculinity or otherwise, in Weimar. Funkenstein’s assessment of Dix’s work establishes a cultural framework through which I will evaluate Schwergewicht’s Gaston.

The key to understanding An die Schönheit is in the contrasts Dix presents. Dix is a self-labeled modernist who paints himself in a, now old-fashioned, Romantic-style dance hall. His appearance, demeanor, and even the different cuts of suits all serve to set Dix apart from the other male dancers in the background. One of the most notable recurring themes in these contrasts are the symbols for America, which Dix uses to make him appear more modern against the Romantic hall. An African American sits at a drum set, signifying jazz, with the image of a Native American chief on the bass drum, and Dix’s suit is in an American cut, which allowed the body full mobility. Funkenstein suggests the suit may be a metaphor for the social mobility allowed in American society. Though Dix was well known as a Weimar artist, he was far from wealthy. Hyperinflation in the early 20s made it easier for anybody with a little bit of money to look like they had a lot of

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46 Ibid., 168.
47 Ibid., 169.
48 Ibid., 168.
49 Ibid., 171.
Since times were tough for most, it could be assumed that only the wealthy could afford to
dress and present themselves well. Dix knew this, chose to invest the little money he had in his
sense of style, and easily assimilated himself with the wealthy. This type of social mobility could
never have been possible in Wilhelminian society and was a modern phenomenon in its own respect.
Even with the lack of information of Gaston’s background, we know that as a dancer, he is afforded
certain opportunities. His name is vaguely French and may indicate that he is from a culture that
has traditionally valued dance more strongly than the Germans. In a country newly obsessed with
dance, Gaston’s heritage and profession would have given him the edge that ultimately allowed him
to enter Ochsenschwanz and Evelyne’s life in the first place.

The other significant contrast presented in To Beauty is the one between Dix and the male
dancers in the background. While they appear lethargic and weak, Dix is the only man who
confidently makes eye contact with the viewer. Two of the female figures also look at the
viewer—dancing is the feminine sphere after all—but it is Dix’s stance and the intensity of his gaze
that gives him complete dominance over the setting. Just as the boxer’s body was the masculine
ideal in Weimar, the feminine ideal was a dancer’s body, but Dix remains the subject of this
painting featuring both male and female dancers. This painting blurs the traditional gender roles of
dance and Dix’s representation of himself as a dominant, stylish, and modern man propels him and
his dancing into the hyper-masculine sphere.

Dix’s ideas about dance give insight to the social perception of male dancers, but his
treatment of them in his own work is contradictory. Comparisons to the other men in his portrait
supports the idea that dancing is somewhat emasculating, which is evident when he goes out of his

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30 Ibid., 174.
way to avoid that judgment for himself—it’s his self portrait after all. Dix paints himself differently
than the other men, who don’t look like him. An example of this is the man immediately behind
Dix. He leans into the woman he is dancing with and his eyes are expressionless, if not closed, the
same way the woman’s are. This is in sharp contrast with Dix’s confident stance and gaze. At the
same time, if dancing were truly a degrading activity for men, he would not have associated himself
with it at all.

Krenek left no specificity of Gaston’s appearance, but he is clearly a modern dancer and
knowledgeable of American trends, so for those reasons alone he would likely identify more with
Dix than the other two dancers in the portrait. Unlike Dix, Gaston’s social status and financial
situations are unknown because they are not relevant to this operetta, but given that the boxer was
such a strong symbol for the working class, it’s important to note that dancers, even modern
dancers, were still associated with the upper classes and their values. Dix prominently features
modern elements to enforce his masculinity, but it is his gaze that establishes complete dominance.
Gaston displays his own modern elements through his knowledge of American dance trends and
machinery, but he ultimately establishes his dominance when he takes control of the situation after
he initially runs from the boxer. Dix’s work shows that merely associating himself with dance could
give him an air of wealthy, ultra-masculine modernity in his social circle, but his work does not speak
to the physical act of dancing. When considering dance as a sport, instead of art or a social signifier,
the parallels to boxing are quite obvious.

Dancing, like boxing, was a physical skill that takes a professional years of training to perfect.
The same elements that made the machine-like process behind building a boxer’s body applied to
dancers, although the ends to the means were different. Professional dance, as an art form, implies
integrity, structure, and a knowledge of culture; there is an assumed class or educational barrier to entry at the professional level. But, in the early 20th-century, social dancing was distancing itself from the upper classes and becoming a popular sport and prestigious in its own right.\textsuperscript{52}

*Schwergewicht’s* libretto says that Gaston and Evelyne are training for a dance marathon (m. 120), which requires dancers to dance for hours on end as they build up their endurance. A male dancer was not nearly as likely to experience the fame or fortune that a boxer would through his sport, but a dancer’s discipline was still admirable. Popular dances imported from the Americas, such as the Charleston and tango, were all the rage when they crossed over into Europe. In the case of the tango, for example, popular social coupled dances were dependent on the dominant role of the male partner. Although dance in Weimar was still understood to be a feminine art form based on ingrained stereotypes, modern social dances required dominant men and provided a space for new ideas about masculinity to flourish.\textsuperscript{53} Krenek’s choice to have his boxer defeated by a dancer is undoubtedly emasculating, but Gaston proves to be a worthy opponent.

At first glance, the image of a boxer and the image of a dancer are polar opposites in terms of masculinity. One fights, the other is artistic. One is bulky, the other is lean. One fights, the other prances. It doesn’t take long to realize that while they’re both athletes, they’re seen very differently from each other both now and during the 1920s in Weimar. It should be easy to anticipate the outcome of a conflict between these two figures (i.e., the boxer will beat up the dancer), but surprisingly, in *Schwergewicht*, Gaston, the dancer, triumphs over the champion boxer and renders Ochsenschwanz physically disabled. Gaston’s quick wit and mechanical knowledge allows

\textsuperscript{52} Social dancing was outlawed under Kaiser Wilhelm II and through WWI, when the ban was lifted during the Weimar years, dance competitions became so popular that an entire industry rose around dance. Funkenstein, “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 166.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 164.
him to defeat the boxer, which alludes to another modern theme: the domination of machinery over the physical strength of man. To add insult to injury, Gaston runs off with Evelyne, Ochsenschwanz’s wife, whom Krenek gave the autonomy to choose the dancer over the boxer. In Jonny spielt auf, Krenek demonstrates his appreciation of modernity through machinery,\textsuperscript{54} which is one way Krenek emasculates his boxer, but the sexual politics at play in Schwergewicht are enough to make any Weimar man question the assumed masculinity of this brawny (anti)hero.

Just as the boxer’s body needs to be treated like a well-oiled machine, the dancer’s livelihood depends on the body as well, as dancers are the most highly skilled athletes of the art world. Gaston’s electrical knowledge and artistic profession alone make him much more well-rounded than the uneducated boxer, who is only useful as a single-function machine. It may not have been typical of dancers to be mechanically proficient in Weimar Germany because they don’t need this skill in order to do their jobs, but this is the singular modern trait that gives Gaston the ultimate edge allowing him to triumph over Ochsenschwanz. With this, Krenek shows that even though the boxer might represent modern German values, this new emphasis on the body won’t get the country far. Maybe instead of solely reacting to their perceived softness, Weimar needs to be forward thinking as well.

Gaston’s Music

It’s significant that Gaston dances American popular dances. The audience doesn’t know exactly what his specialty is, but he and Evelyne are currently training to “break the record Teddy Knickerbocker set up in Shimmyfoxtown, Massachusetts for the Charleston” (m. 120) and not spending his time on outdated or out-of-touch dances, like ballet. Gaston would not be the ultimate

underdog at the start of *Schwergewicht* if he were a symbol for the stuffy upper class who, until the 20th century, also had an upper hand in deciding the future of the country. The fact that Krenek makes the distinction between 19th- and 20th-century dance is a conscious decision. As the boxer’s rival, Gaston is a representative of the art world, but the popular dances separate him from the upper classes in a way that proper courtly dancing would not. Still, he is an artist who is more cultured and educated than Ochsenschwanz, and is intelligent enough to have the foresight to take technology seriously. Gaston’s ability to think ahead and plan quickly is what ultimately gives him the ability to defeat Ochsenschwanz. The fact that the dancer’s attack renders the boxer physically paralyzed only drives home Krenek’s prediction that human strength amounts to nothing in a modern world.

When considering the featured musical styles of *Schwergewicht*, it makes perfect sense that at least one of the main characters should be a dancer. Krenek names several dance numbers within *Schwergewicht* and it is framed as a burlesque operetta. The audience doesn’t necessarily know what type of dancer Gaston is, other than a marathon dancer who is knowledgeable of the latest American record holders, but because of the nature of the operetta’s music, he belongs on the stage more than Ochsenschwanz does. Although the work is titled for the boxer, this is Gaston’s musical world and ultimately, he is always in control. Initially he is intimidated by Ochsenschwanz and he cowers when Ochsenschwanz enters the room. He desperately tries to pacify the boxer’s suspicions and even addresses him as “dear champion” in measure 108 as a sign of respect and out of fear for his own safety, but he is witty and quick thinking. He swiftly formulates plans and, in order to persuade characters and manipulate scenes, he is able to adapt to whatever music the others
introduce. Gaston is even able to maintain control of the situation when he is disguised as Ottokar, the silent role of the boxer’s assistant.

The discussions of the next three scenes as they occur in Schwergewicht serve to show Gaston as a mastermind in action. First, Gaston and Evelyne seem to have a bluesy duet, but while Evelyne indulges herself in a rare operatic moment, Gaston undercuts her melodic lines by fuming about being pushed around by Ochsenschwanz. It is during this, the operetta’s first song, that Gaston vows to take down the boxer and when he musically joins Evelyne at the end, he convinces her that it’s all in pursuit of her, their affair, but it is only because he will need Evelyne on his side. Second, Anna Maria reappears and Gaston sees that he can use her as a prop. Even though they are both intruders in the boxer’s house at this point, Anna Maria asks Gaston for help, does whatever he says, and surrenders the tango music that she introduces to him. Third, is a brief scene where the dancer rigs Ochsenschwanz’s exercise machine and sings the second of his victorious moments. Krenek’s ideas about modernity, machinery, and man are revisited and restated. Gaston and Evelyne sing again, but this time together, and their melody will go on to conclude Schwergewicht. Gaston convinces even the orchestra that this was his love story all along, but his words and actions show that he was really out to prove his own dominance over the boxer.

*Tempo di Blues*

In Weimar, two of the most glorified bodies were those of the male boxer and female dancer. Ochsenschwanz and his dancer-wife Evelyne should be a perfect match, in theory. While their bodies may look good together, each of them is clearly uninterested in the other. The boxer seems to only view his wife as his property and she never speaks well of her husband “the monster” (m. 103) either. Instead, she lets the audience know right away that she wants to be with Gaston.
Remembering back to the contradictions presented in Chapter 2 of the boxer as a sex symbol, the decision Evelyne makes to stray from her husband is not surprising. Boxers were adored by women, but sports mythology of the time said they had to choose between being on top of their game or women. It’s no wonder then that Evelyne is looking for attention elsewhere, and the fact that she chooses a dancer over a boxer is the operetta’s first dig at Ochsenschwanz’s socially-perceived masculine superiority.

As the curtains open to Gaston and Evelyne finishing their morning training, she declares that she’s had enough of this “stupid jumping around,” (m. 92) which doubly outrages Gaston. First, he defends the “noble art of dancing,” (m. 94) then he points out that dancing is what “enables them to be together” (m. 95). A few lines later, Evelyne reveals that she might only be using dance to “get in all the glossies” (m. 113) and to be with Gaston, not because she’s passionate about the sport, but nonetheless, this opening scene establishes the couple’s affair and Gaston’s fondness of Evelyne and dance. Over their breakfast, which Ochsenschwanz’s strict diet prevents him from indulging in, Gaston and Evelyne steal kisses until the boxer catches them and flies into a rage. After the tension dissipates, the blues begin when a solo oboe presents a theme in D minor (m. 177), which Evelyne takes up and sings of how she wishes to be with Gaston. Gaston sings too, but this is not a duet. He fumes, not quite in a key, and decides he needs to hatch a plan that will do away with the boxer and allow him to steal Evelyne. Gaston and Evelyne’s affair is one of the first things the audience learns about in Schwergewicht, but Evelyne may only see Gaston as a distraction. Ochsenschwanz can’t stand to see Gaston kissing his wife, but he also sees his wife as his property who he can ignore and neglect. The affair is what sets the plot in motion, but the affair is trivial. After all, she giggles while her husband flies off the handle, amused by the two men fighting over
her despite their obvious strength discrepancies (m. 168). She should be worried for Gaston’s safety as her husband hurls his exerciser at him. Gaston has feelings for Evelyne, but they are secondary as his feelings quickly changes from lovesick dancer to a spiteful mastermind with something to prove.

The first musical number of *Schwergewicht*, a duet marked as “Tempo di Blues” (m. 177), occurs after Ochsenschwanz leaves and Gaston and Evelyne are left to contemplate their dead-end situation through the windows of their separate rooms. Although the two characters sing concurrently, their bodies are not physically on stage or together and they sing about separate

Figure 3.2. Ernst Krenek, *Schwergewicht, Tempo di Blues*
things—in separate keys—until the end. Evelyne, as if she were a blues queen, sings about how she wishes she could escape with Gaston (m. 185). Gaston sings “I will get you, brute” (m. 184.)atonally to threaten the absent Ochsenschwanz; he is plotting, not expressing an emotion and his music is still in the operetta’s established recitative style. At the end of the number, he settles around a F tonality and imitates Evelyne’s final line as he resolves to save her (Figure 3.2).

Before this point, Gaston was timid and intimidated by the boxer but now he has resolved to take action. The gendered politics at play here show Gaston reclaiming his masculinity. The Blues was a feminine genre in the 1920s, as the most famous blues singers were women. While he is introduced as timid and associated with his feminine profession initially, he doesn’t use the blues to wallow like Evelyne does. Instead, he allows his frustration toward the boxer to grow and, with Evelyne’s complaints in one ear, decides to take action that will save them both. When Gaston responds to Evelyne’s bluesy lament, he implies that she is his motivation, but really she is just part of his plan to emasculate the boxer who he says that he will “make dance to his pipe when he plays the tune” (m. 186); Evelyne may just become an object to Gaston too. The strings close this section by restating the earlier blues melody that began with the oboe in its original D minor before the rest of the orchestra joins in. The music becomes playful and anticipatory as it modulates to a definitive F major in measure 200—they’re with Gaston now. The audience doesn’t know if this is the first time that Ochsenschwanz has emasculated Gaston in this way, but by the end of this scene, we certainly know that it will be the last. The Gaston that reappears later is confident, calculated, and conniving, and he is in complete control of the second half of the operetta.

**Tango Milonga**

When Anna Maria is discovered by the boxer and the journalist, she begins with the same contrapuntal introduction that she previously announced to an empty stage until the journalist cuts her off and accuses her of “hysteria” (m. 364). From there, she launches into a *tango milonga* that is unlike any of her music thus far. The tango was new, trendy, and trashy in Weimar. The closeness of a couple dancing the tango alone was enough cause for outrage amongst the upper classes, but the tango had class stigmas attached to it as well. The tango was originally a low-class Argentinian dance, but as it caught on in the dance halls of high society, there was a fear that lower class people would be allowed to mix and mingle with the well-to-do because mastery of the tango was often enough to jump class boundaries and get oneself admitted into a dance hall. Like the waltz and almost any coupled dance before it, women were advised against dancing the tango, but this time for fear of getting tricked into dancing with a suave, opportunistic working-class tango aficionado.

The *tango milonga* is a predecessor to the tango. Sometimes, instead of dancing, it was used for dialogue or to indicate comedy in some way but more importantly, this immature tango was heard and perceived as an undeveloped, even lower-class tango. While the signature tango rhythm (dotted eighth plus sixteenth, followed by two eighth notes) isn’t prominently featured in the score, variations of it are heard throughout this section, especially when the duet begins between Anna Maria and Gaston (see piano rhythms in Figure 3.3). This is not an example of Krenek misunderstanding or misinterpreting a tango. He demonstrated in *Jonny* that he is perfectly capable

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of writing a traditional tango,\textsuperscript{58} so the decision to degrade the form is deliberate, to get another laugh at Anna Maria’s expense.

To understand the comedy, first consider Anna Maria’s character. So far, she has only awkwardly and nervously introduced herself to an empty room and later she cannot even fully introduce herself without being interrupted by a man who feels the need to comment on her appearance and mental state. Anna Maria is by all accounts, an inexperienced and awkward girl who is in no position to be introducing the tango, especially to her famous sex-symbol boxing hero. Although she may wish to present this confident, forward version of herself, she cannot manage a real tango and all she can convince the orchestra to get on board with is a jenky milonga. Second, this loosely tango-like music is easier for Gaston, who would have understood the implications of the tango, to grab ahold of when he formulates a plan and chooses to take control. Anna Maria first uses this music to ask Ochsenschwanz for an autograph. When it’s clear that won’t happen, she begins to lose confidence and control. She becomes preoccupied with hiding again, but this time from her father. She tries again to start her tango but now it is directed at Gaston as she asks for his

help, which she desperately needs. She tries initiate the tango and be commanding, but ends up playing out the submissive female role to perfection as Gaston steals her music and leads her into the trap he is setting for Ochsenschwanz. Anna Maria is putting forth a fantasy version of herself when she abandons her contrapuntal music and introduces a risky and exotic dance, but she is only capable of producing an underdeveloped tango, and she can’t even maintain control of that.

This is Gaston’s first (weakly-disguised) reappearance since the blues scene and he is intrigued by Anna Maria. He wonders what she’s doing there and how she may be able to play into his as of yet unrealized revenge plan. He can clearly see that she is nervous and weak-willed so as soon as the others leave and she asks him for help, he knows that he can use her as a prop. While the tango may originally be a dance of persuasion and seduction, this lesser tango still provides Gaston with more than enough material to help bend Anna Maria to his will. If danced correctly, a woman dancing the tango will never have to stand on her own two feet because she should completely depend on the man.⁵⁹ Anna Maria desperately needs Gaston to help hide her and although she resists his instructions at first, she verbally agrees out of desperation. Her music is a bit more resistant. Although both singers fluctuate between D minor and major while Gaston is trying to convince Anna Maria to take her clothes off so she can replace the training dummy, Gaston settles on D major when Anna Maria says no. After this, she decides that Gaston’s way is her only option. She still occasionally sings in the minor key, most notably when she’s ashamed and singing of her shame (mm. 414 and 425), but it is her cadence in D major (m. 430) that concludes the tango (see Figure 3.4). This, however, is not on her terms. At this point she has given up her voice to Gaston because she thinks it is her only option. He sets her into positions as the training dummy.

⁵⁹ Mark Knowles, “Reaction to the Tango,” 124.
and then she is forced to remain silent. When this scene begins, they are both intruders who try
different disguises for themselves as the scene progresses. He appears to be a worker fixing
Ochsenschwanz’s smashed exercise machine and she pretends to be proficient in the tango. Gaston
sees through her thin disguise and beats her at her own game when he convinces her to physically
disguise herself as a *Trainierpuppe* and she literally becomes his puppet.

**Gaston v. Ochsenschwanz**

When the others return, Gaston tries to frame Ochsenschwanz for adultery, pedophilia, and
other crimes against morality by drawing attention to Anna Maria’s discarded dress. The scene that
unfolds is discussed in the previous chapter when Anna Maria gets knocked out. Immediately after
that, Evelyne appears in the window and yells “Ah! Disgraceful man! Traitor! Deceiver! Tyrannize
me, would you?” at Ochsenschwanz (m. 559). The boxer can tell he’s been set up, but he decides to
use exercise as an outlet for his growing rage. He tells the dancers to consider themselves “lucky
that [he] can work off [his] anger in training, otherwise [they’d] all be in for it” (m. 568). He jumps
onto his machine and Gaston seizes the opportunity that has just presented itself. He connects a
live wire that was lying on the floor to the handlebars of the exerciser which sends a slow, steady
electric current through Ochsenschwanz (m. 575). The solo oboe that introduced the blues returns,
but this time with a melody in D major, as if to provide a happy conclusion to the facade of the love

Figure 3.5. Ernst Krenek, Schwerge wicht, Closing Theme, oboe, mm. 578—585

Figure 3.6. Ernst Krenek, Schwerge wicht, Closing Theme, Evelyne and Gaston, mm. 607—614

story (see Figure 3.5). Gaston frees Evelyne and as displayed in Figure 3.6, they sing together again
to the oboe’s melody, but now in unison, about how happy they are to be free of this man and free
to love each other. In measure 651, the helpless boxer asks, “what good is my strength now?”; he
has been undone by the dancer. After the government worker’s appearance (see Ch. 2), the
orchestra returns to Gaston and Evelyne’s closing theme (presented in Figures 3.5 and 3.6) to end
the operetta. This is the third time the theme appears and it solidifies the happy ending for the dancers—Gaston even managed to convince Schwergewicht’s orchestra that the operetta’s plot was really all about him.

**Conclusion**

Scholarship about Jonny shows that Krenek favors modernity over 19th-century values. At first it seems backwards to think that a dancer, whose craft has been around for centuries, triumphs over a figure who represents modern Weimar values. Instead of old values triumphing over the new, it makes more sense to think of modernity in terms of Krenek’s well-documented love of machinery. Even though both athletes featured in the Schwergewicht train their bodies as if they are machines, it is ultimately Ochsenschwanz’s exercising mechanism—an actual machine—that destroys the boxer’s body. Gaston, who is a modern figure in his own right as a masculine male dancer, becomes the most modern and dominant in this operetta because he has the ability to control the machine. He doesn’t even have to break a sweat destroying the body that the boxer spent his entire career building. In the end, a strong body means nothing in the modern world; should the Germans have to fight again, their bodies are still no match for machine guns and tanks. The strong body is simply a useless symbol of a problematic and impractical ideal.

Subsequently, this is a problem for the new mindset of the Weimar Republic, who has just declared that its international standing is dependent on its athletes. The physical strength of human bodies may soon amount to nothing in an increasingly modern world filled with machines and new technology. By allowing the dancers to get their happy ending, Krenek is subtly trying to shift the glory of the nation back onto the artists and thinkers. They were not in danger of being outdone by

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the machinery of the 1920s and, as demonstrated through Gaston, they even possessed the ability to control the technology that would continue to shape the modern era.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

When the music of the scenes I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 are put into the order they occur in the operetta, Ochsenschwanz quickly fades into the background because he is not featured in any of the set musical moments. The first aria-like moment, the blues, takes place when Ochsenschwanz is off stage and he remains there while Anna Maria presents the most intellectually stimulating music of the opera. He is physically present during the next musical number, the waltz, but he does not make an effort to join in. When Anna Maria tries to tango with him he is again, uninterested and leaves the stage. The tango continues as Gaston’s plan for revenge unfolds. Ochsenschwanz is onstage for the next musical moment, but only because he is paralyzed while Gaston and Evelyne briefly sing of their victory. He remains unable to move when the bureaucrat enters and heroically bestows the nation’s highest honor onto the ailing boxer. Krenek never gives Ochsenschwanz a moment to sing alone or musically and by the end of Schwergewicht, he cannot even speak. As reflected in chapter two’s subheadings, the boxer is not defined by music, but by the others around him who stand in for society.

Gaston, on the other hand, uses the Schwergewicht’s musical environment to shine. He takes the music he is presented with and uses it to his advantage. The blues does not turn Gaston’s frustration into a pity party. Instead of wallowing, he plots. When Anna Maria initiates a premature tango, he steps in to save by it taking control of both the music and her as he puts his plan into action. He does not use music to defeat the boxer because Ochsenschwanz has proved that he does not respond to musical prodding. Instead, Gaston rubs his victories in musically when the boxer is unable to respond. Gaston’s first victory occurs when Ochsenschwanz knock Anna Maria out of the training dummy. Finally others, the public, can see how awful the boxer is. In D major, he
triumphantly and excitedly calls Ochsenschwanz a “wretched sadist, adulterer, abuser of minors” (mm 513–533). When the boxer tries to go and work out his anger, Gaston electrocutes him. The dancer gets a second happy ending when he and Evelyne gloat in front of him, again in D major (m. 607) before running off together. The orchestra picks up their theme to conclude the operetta, which may make it impossible for even Ochsenschwanz to ignore the fact that they’re on Gaston’s side. Ochsenschwanz may identify with the operetta’s Schwergewicht title, but music was never about him.

When an opera’s titular character cannot control their musical environment, it is a sign of weakness. It is questionable whether or not Ochsenschwanz ever realized he was in an operetta in the first place. Krenek took the ambassador literally when he said that athletes would replace thinkers, and created a Weimar hero who didn’t think at all. Instead of projecting strength and dominance, Ochsenschwanz relies on society to define him. By not granting Ochsenschwanz a scene in the ring, Krenek never gives the boxer a chance to act, he can only react. A nation of fighters would certainly be a step in a new direction for Weimar, but this would not be a step forward. If a single boxer cannot define himself without external factors to guide and define him, how can Germany reestablish its international reputation built on the same premise? Krenek shows that while a strong body may be a force to be reckoned with, its strength is one dimensional and can easily be sidelined. Neither physical strength nor bodies should be the singular focus of a new nation desperate to define itself in an increasingly modern and mechanized world.
APPENDIX: SCHWERGEWICHT SUMMARY

The curtain rises as Evelyne, Ochsenschwanz’s wife, and Gaston, her dance partner, are training for a dance marathon and just finishing up their morning training. They are about the eat breakfast and the audience quickly learns that these two have been conducting an affair.

Ochsenschwanz, the boxer, storms in taking swings in the air and questions Gaston’s presence when he notices him. Gaston is intimidated by the boxer but remind him that he and Evelyne are training for their marathon. The dancers sit down to their decadent breakfast, compared to Ochsenschwanz, and steal kisses while he’s not looking and comment on how dumb he is. Eventually he catches them and flies into a rage; he flips their breakfast table, hurls his exercise machine at Gaston, who then escapes, and then locks Evelyne in a room. Ochsenschwanz calls his assistant, Ottokar (a silent role), to replace his machine and then he leaves. He returns with a reporter and calls again for Ottokar to make his breakfast. The reporter interviews Ochsenschwanz, who is not paying attention at first, and the reporter takes the boxer’s comments about his breakfast as answers to his questions about America. The reporter goes on to ask about musicians, philosophers, and writers, all of whom Ochsenschwanz assumes are boxers who are inferior to him. Gaston reappears in a disguise and helps Ottokar set up the new exercise machine. The boxer and reporter leave because a professor has shown up to award the boxer an honorary doctorate. Gaston locks Ottokar in his room and disguises himself further, as Ottokar. Gaston provokes the boxer when he returns with the professor and Ochsenschwanz starts taking swings at his training dummy to show off.

Eventually the others leave and the boxer comments how lucky everyone is that he can work off his aggression in training; he begins exercising with his machine. Gaston quickly re-wires the machine, frees Evelyne, kisses her, and they run off together. The boxer slowly begins to be electrocuted. A
civil servant enters and tells Ochsenschwanz that he’s been chosen to represent his country in the olympics and when the boxer asks him to turn off his machine, he says the boxer cannot afford to miss a single minute of training. He tells the boxer he is the glory of the nation and then leaves.

The curtain falls as Ochsenschwanz’s cries for help grow weaker and weaker.
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