

Performing Lieder, Hearing Race: Debating Blackness, Whiteness, and German Identity in Interwar Central Europe

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In one of a collection of essays on contemporary German culture published in 1928, the liberal German Jewish critic Rudolf Arnheim describes hearing a group of black musicians perform African American spirituals. He warns the reader that one loses something in listening to such music on the gramophone, “because the eyes require to be lodged somewhere.”¹ Above all, he urges, “One must *see* these Negroes when they sing.” They sing, he writes, “exactly as they look, and they each look a little forbidden, if one takes our cosmetic ideal of beauty as a basis.”² The illustration that accompanied the essay in question, by the leftist graphic artist Karl Holtz, is a study of the grotesque (see Figure 1). Five black men—short and rotund, tall and rail-thin, or small and cherubic—wear matching tuxedos, gloves, and shoes. Big-lipped mouths full of misshapen teeth (where there are teeth at all) are open in song, and the various pairs of eyes are either closed in pleasure, raised to the heavens in pious wonder, or delightedly looking straight at the reader as if in an invitation to join the merriment. The figures in the image are the embodiment of racist

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1. Arnheim, “Negersänger,” 15: “weil die Augen doch irgendwo sinngemäß deponiert werden müssen.” Translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

2. *Ibid.*, 15–16: “Sehen muß man diese Neger, wenn sie singen. . . . Jeder singt genau so wie er aussieht, und ein bißchen verboten sieht jeder von ihnen aus, wenn man unser Kosmetikideal von Schönheit zugrunde legt” (emphasis in translation mine). Critic Herwarth Walden made a similar statement after attending a 1925 performance of the Chocolate Kiddies: “Seeing and hearing is no art, rather a prerequisite. If one puts together the visible and audible, one composes it, and thus a work of art is created”: Herwarth Walden, “Schwarzkünstler,” *Die Weltbühne* 21 (1925): 818–19, here 819 (“Sehen und Hören ist keine Kunst, aber die Voraussetzung. Stellt man Sichtbares und Hörbares zusammen, komponiert man es, so ist ein Kunstwerk entstanden”).

Negersänger

Nachdem sie leibhaftig in einem Konzert aufgetreten sind, weiß man erst, was man doch noch verliert, wenn man glückstrahlend vor seinem Grammophon sitzt und zusieht, wie die Nadel über die Platte schürft, weil die Augen doch irgendwo sinngemäß deponiert werden müssen. Sehen muß man diese Neger, wenn sie singen. Denn während es dem europäischen Kunstgesang entspricht, daß der Sänger — besonders der Chorsänger — seine Eigenart möglichst unterdrückt zugunsten dessen, was objektiv in den Noten einmal für Alle niedergelegt ist, singt so ein Neger zunächst einmal sich selbst und bedient sich dazu der

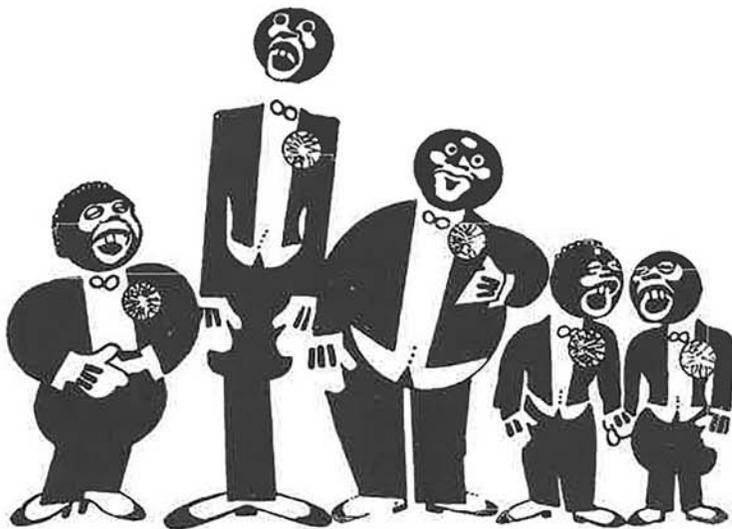


Figure 1 Illustration by Karl Holtz for Rudolf Arnheim's essay "Negersänger" (1928)

caricature, of extreme comical visualization intended to signify the inelegant strangeness of blackness.³

Yet during the same decade in which Arnheim published his writings on spirituals, *Liederabend* (or German voice recitals) featuring African American concert singers challenged the very premise of his thinking. In cities such as Vienna, Salzburg, and Berlin, they sang differently from the way they “looked,” and in so doing severed the links between music and appearance that Arnheim had conjured. Standing on stage, mouths open, arms wide, they produced German music—the music of Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, and Mahler—not black music. Audiences who tacitly shared Arnheim’s assumptions were shocked to discover that as a consequence of what these musicians performed and the way they performed it, the sonic line between blackness and whiteness could be blurred.

The fact that such provocative racial performances occurred in the world of classical music contradicts popular perceptions of interwar, Jazz Age Europe. Although Berlin and Vienna were epicenters of jazz and the avant-garde, they were also places where classical music still thrived in all of its supposedly staid bourgeois respectability.⁴ Classic *Liederabend*—regarded as conservative musical performances within the already conservative world of classical music—have received little attention in scholarship.⁵ The music featured in most *Liederabend* programs was not new, avant-garde, or experimental, but rather consisted of repertoire standards—lieder by Schubert, Brahms, Schumann, Strauss, Wolf, and others.⁶ Yet in the 1920s, Laura Tunbridge writes, the *Liederabend* functioned as a site of cultural encounter or a contact zone across the Atlantic Ocean.⁷ During the interwar era, concert artists

3. Holtz drew from a preestablished iconography of African American popular entertainers that had been in circulation in Europe for at least five decades. By the late nineteenth century, David Ciarlo writes, “minstrelsy and the cakewalk were two primary avenues by which graphic racialization entered mainstream German visual culture”: Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire*, 225. On the history of African American popular entertainers in German-speaking Europe prior to the 1920s, see Deaville, “African-American Entertainers”; Lotz, *Black People*; Kusser, *Körper in Schieflage*; and Wipplinger, “Racial Ruse.”

4. Much of earlier historians’ formulation of Weimar Germany as a site of avant-garde modernism derived from Gay, *Weimar Culture*, and Peukert, *Weimar Republic*. Since then, scholars such as Kathleen Canning and Moritz Föllmer have challenged this interpretation of central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s: Canning, Barndt, and McGuire, *Weimar Publics / Weimar Subjects*; Föllmer, “Which Crisis? Which Modernity?” Similarly, scholarship on Austria in the interwar era has also reevaluated the relationship between culture and politics; see Beniston and Vilain, *Culture and Politics*; Hochman, *Imagining a Greater Germany*; Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism*; and Wasserman, *Black Vienna*.

5. For contemporary research that overturns this way of thinking, see Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*.

6. This canon was, of course, constructed; see Weber, *Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, and Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*.

7. Tunbridge, “Singing Translations,” 71.

offered hundreds of *Liederabend* to listeners in central Europe and elsewhere. Karl Christian Führer's meticulous research on radio programming in Weimar Germany, for example, demonstrates that the *Liederabend* dominated classical music programs in Leipzig and nearby regions, surpassing concerts of symphonic or chamber music and performances of operas and oratorios.⁸

Our tendency to associate classical music with a conservative social order and to assume that it was immune from global cultural encounters has resulted in our failing to see a number of exciting cultural movements at work. Critic Alex Ross, like Nicholas Attfield, Führer, and others, makes this very point: "The automatic equation of radical [musical] style with liberal politics and of conservative style with reactionary politics is a historical myth that does little justice to an agonizingly ambiguous historical reality."⁹ The *Liederabend* was an especially potent powder keg in Austro-German musical culture precisely because of its institutional history, claims to national identity, and performative promises of transformation. Black singers' entry into the world of German lieder in the interwar era made the relationships between politics and culture, race and national identity, and music and locus even more contentious, not less.

At the center of these musical debates over the links between race, nation, and culture was the paradoxical nature of the lied itself, a genre heralded as both quintessentially German and wholly universal. The German lied is considered so German, Richard Taruskin points out, "that it has retained its German name in English writing."¹⁰ Indeed, in one of African American tenor Roland Hayes's unpublished writings praising the genre, he too reinforced the German lied's musical hegemony: "The reason we have come to use the German word rather than the French (chanson) or the Italian (canzone) or any other," he writes, "is because the Germans, in a very special way, were able to retain and improve a national quality in this form of musical expression."¹¹ Yet its highly ritualized performance tradition, embodied by the *Liederabend*, had by the 1920s given the genre an internationalist bent. "The classical vocal recital," Tunbridge argues, "became a performative nexus for identifying as belonging to a certain race or nation while simultaneously demonstrating one's command over a number of different languages and styles."¹² The challenge of the *Liederabend* in the interwar era

8. Führer, "Medium of Modernity?"

9. Ross, *Rest Is Noise*, 346. See also Attfield, *Challenging the Modern*, and Führer, "High Brow and Low Brow Culture."

10. Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, ch. 3.

11. Unpublished concert program notes (no date), Roland Hayes Collection, Detroit Public Library, Series IV, Box 1, File 66.

12. Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*, 35. As I have argued elsewhere, the lied was seen as "purer" and more open to interpretation along racial, ethnic, and national lines than opera on account of the absence of costumes and other materials: Thurman, "German Lied."

was whether the singer could become a musical shape-shifter, a mystical medium of different styles, affects, and manners of expression from across time and space.

What white audiences in central Europe had not expected, however, was that African Americans would perform this daring feat quite so well. Although many African American musicians had traveled to Europe before the interwar era, the majority had performed black popular music, like Josephine Baker, or sung African American spirituals, like the Fisk Jubilee Singers.¹³ Black classical musicians who traveled to Germany and Austria before the Great War, such as Sissieretta Jones, had not specialized in German music either, preferring instead to sing Italian arias or American parlor songs. In the interwar era, however, black concert singers committed themselves to the study of German music in a manner that was simply unprecedented in the history of black musicianship in Europe. In fact, it was precisely due to their rigorous study and meticulous execution of German lieder that African American concert singers rose to celebrity during the so-called transatlantic Jazz Age.¹⁴

As a consequence of their efforts—and much to the astonishment of their audiences—when black singers such as Marian Anderson, Aubrey Pankey, and Roland Hayes opened their mouths, they sounded like Germans. Their fine musical phrases, beautiful vocal tone color, and admirable German diction ensured that they embodied the performative qualities of German national identity. As we will see, many of those who attended their *Lieder-abende* marveled at the way these musicians were able to capture German expressivity, especially since eyewitnesses reported that the singers looked to them decidedly un-German. Some listeners recognized that their acknowledgment of these musicians' convincing performances was also an admission that German music could be recreated and represented by outsiders.¹⁵ In other words, the supposedly inherent and eternally vague trait

13. See, for example, Thurman, "Singing the Civilizing Mission," and Deaville, "African-American Entertainers."

14. In this article, I focus on African American performers rather than black European performers precisely because of the immense amount of coverage the former received in the European press. Moreover, the most prominent black European classical musicians, including George Bridgetower, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and Edmond Dédé, lived and performed in the nineteenth century. For recent scholarship on black performers of classical music, see André, *Black Opera*; André, Bryan, and Saylor, *Blackness in Opera*; Brooks and Sims, *Roland Hayes*; Chybowski, "Becoming the 'Black Swan'"; Eidsheim, "Marian Anderson and 'Sonic Blackness'"; Jones, *Dean Dixon*; Karpf, "Brains, Breath, and Voice"; Lee, *Sissieretta Jones*; Oja, "Everett Lee"; Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music*; and Turner, "Class, Race, and Uplift."

15. Historian Hoi-eun Kim argues that this is precisely how Germanness has operated in modern global history. Rather than seeing Germanness as an essence, Kim suggests that we consider it "a collective sum of variable attributes of a nation and its members that both German nationals and non-Germans envisioned, articulated, and even embodied." Germanness, he

of “musical Germanness” might after all be discoverable, translatable, and reproducible.¹⁶

It might seem strange to associate blackness with Germanness in performances of classical music, but it is precisely this strangeness that I wish to confront. Although public discourse now recognizes the long history of German anti-Semitism, it has been more reluctant to acknowledge Germany’s and Austria’s black populations (past and present) and identify anti-black racism in central European history. Since the 1980s, a growing Afro-German movement, spearheaded by figures such as black lesbian feminist poet Audre Lorde and Afro-German poet May Ayim, has called for the recognition of Afro-Germans in society as both black and German.¹⁷ When people of African descent in central Europe appear in public discourse, they are usually described as a post-World War II phenomenon, which ignores the long history of black diasporic migration to Europe over centuries.¹⁸ In general, transatlantic discourses of blacks in Europe explain them as a current manifestation of globalization, as immigrants and outsiders, thus reinforcing the assumption that black people lack the historical connection to Europe that would enable them to claim European identities and to truly be European citizens.¹⁹ Afro-Germans, however, have

posits, has long been “subject to global production and articulation by non-Germans who wanted to define it for their own interests and agendas.” Kim, “Made in Meiji Japan,” 291–92.

16. By “musical Germanness,” I mean the discourse that developed in the late eighteenth century by which Germans were described as the “people of music” and a particularly German essence was attributed to musical composition and/or expression. Although coined in the 1930s by Willibald Gurlitt, a musicologist under National Socialism, the term’s place in musical discourse had been pervasive, routine, and virtually uncontested long prior to his remarks. As scholars such as Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter have argued, no one could define what musical Germanness actually was, and, as demonstrated by Friedrich Geiger, its definition came to rest on slippery notions of “Tiefe” (depth) and “Innigkeit” (ardor). By the mid-nineteenth century, many believed that Germans “understood the deeper sources of music more fully and intuitively than others.” Applegate, “Saving Music,” 219; Potter, *Most German of the Arts*; Applegate and Potter, *Music and German National Identity*; Geiger, “‘Innigkeit’ und ‘Tiefe.’” See also Gregor and Irvine, *Dreams of Germany*.

17. Approaching one million in Germany and Austria, Afro-Germans represent about 1 percent of the total population of the two countries combined. Marion Kraft’s essay “Coming In from the Cold” provides a brief introductory overview of the history of black Germans. On Afro-German history, see Opitz, Oguntoye, and Schultz, *Showing Our Colors*; Lennox, *Remapping Black Germany*; Mazón and Steingröver, *Not So Plain*; and Florvil and Plumly, *Rethinking Black German Studies*. The exact number of Afro-Germans is unknown, because Germany and Austria refuse to identify citizens by race.

18. See Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*. Gilroy’s book opens with the quip “Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness.”

19. As Ann Stoler, George Fredrickson, and others have argued, an increasingly rigid black-white binary came into existence in the modern era across the Black Atlantic, and this binary functioned as two sides of the same coin. European whiteness, historical scholarship has demonstrated, was dependent on the racialization of non-European peoples. In creating this racial bifurcation, white Europeans ensured that people of African descent would be outsiders to

been declaring themselves German since at least 1919.²⁰ Many white, German-speaking institutions and citizens have refused to recognize them as such for just as long.²¹

In this article, I demonstrate how musical performances occasionally rendered the categories of blackness and Germanness, long presented as separate in transatlantic discourse, malleable or fluid. I offer close analyses of two black musicians and their shape-shifting performances of German lieder in Vienna, Salzburg, and Berlin in the interwar era: Roland Hayes (1887–1977) and Marian Anderson (1897–1993). In these case studies, I examine the singers' attempts to master the German lied, a process they undertook because of its influential position and multivalent function in German concert life. Lastly, I consider local reactions to their performances of German lieder and, relatedly, German culture.²² As we will see, audiences' responses were varied and even contradictory. But, I argue, regardless of the range of their opinions, they all processed their musical experiences through a racial filter. Some German listeners applauded black singers for "becoming white" on stage through their masterful interpretation of a Brahms lied and welcomed them as honorary Germans. Others insisted that they had heard blackness in the music of Schubert simply because the performer was black. None of the positions, ranging from glowing to skeptical to even downright hostile, eradicated notions of racial difference. On the contrary, they all upheld them. Even when in direct opposition to one another, white listeners relied on the category of race in forming their aesthetic judgments. Audiences routinely resurrected racial barriers in response to black performers' musical attempts (intentional or otherwise) to dismantle them. White listeners' struggles to come to terms with black musicians' performances are proof

Europe. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*; Fredrickson, *Racism*; Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*. On white Europeans' consistent denial of black Europeans' claims to citizenship and on the history of European anti-black racism more generally, see Chin et al., *After the Nazi Racial State*; Hine, Keaton, and Small, *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*; and MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*.

20. See Aitken and Rosenhaft, *Black Germany*. See also "Petitions to German Authorities (1919)," Black Central Europe website, accessed June 13, 2018, <https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1914-1945/petitions-to-german-authorities-1919>.

21. In twentieth-century Germany, Priscilla Layne argues, "Blackness [was] posited as always already outside of German culture and in opposition to German culture, foreclosing the possibility of being both black and German": Layne, *White Rebels in Black*, 2.

22. This article joins a body of scholarship that pushes back against an earlier generation of Cold War historiography that carved out an Austrian identity as distinct from Germany. More recently, historians such as Erin Hochman, Michael Steinberg, and David Luft have pointed out that it is possible to speak of a shared Austro-German culture between 1900 and 1938. Even Austrian conservatives who were opposed to the Anschluss nonetheless expressed their position as one of "German—Austro-German—cultural superiority," Steinberg argues. Despite constant political change in central Europe in the 1930s, many listeners in Germany and Austria continued to assume that German music was their rightful heritage. Hochman, *Imagining a Greater Germany*; Steinberg, *Meaning of the Salzburg Festival*, 117; Luft, "Austria as a Region."

that musical reception was not a passive experience but rather an active process whereby racial categories were being worked out and renegotiated in interwar central Europe.

In order to parse the numerous and often contradictory responses to black performers in Germany and Austria, I employ theories of racial listening developed over the past decade by scholars such as Nina Sun Eidsheim, Jennifer Lynn Stoever, and K. M. Knittel. In her study of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese audiences and their politics of listening to composer and conductor Gustav Mahler, Knittel stresses that “the listening experience is not—and can never be—a neutral one: like any other perception, it is structured not only by our backgrounds and experiences, but also by our preconceived ideas.”²³ Stoever’s groundbreaking book *The Sonic Color Line* takes the idea of racially informed listening further by arguing that by the nineteenth century the practice of listening had become a “racialized body discipline.”²⁴ She posits that what she calls the sonic color line “describes the process of racializing sound—how and why certain bodies are expected to produce, desire, and live amongst particular sounds—and its product, the hierarchical division sounded between ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness.’”²⁵ What helps to foster and maintain the sonic color line, she insists, is the “listening ear,” which determines how sounds become coded as black or white. From the nineteenth century, white elite audiences seized this new method of racial segregation in order to cultivate a listening practice that made them the arbiters of taste, citizenship, and personhood.²⁶

My article also builds on a growing body of musicological scholarship that examines how and when audiences began to associate classical music with whiteness. While previous research has successfully demonstrated how black voices became racialized in popular culture, addressing the voices of people of color in classical music has become an increasingly urgent concern. Like Mina Yang, Mari Yoshihara, and others, I argue that classical music, like whiteness itself, is frequently racially unmarked and presented as universal—until people of color start performing it.²⁷ Audiences, in turn, then employ practices of racial listening in order to invoke the sonic color line in classical

23. Knittel, *Seeing Mahler*, 2. See also Eidsheim, *Race of Sound*. For recent research that explores histories of listening, see Thorau and Ziemer, *Oxford Handbook of Music Listening*.

24. Stoever, *Sonic Color Line*, 4.

25. *Ibid.*, 7.

26. On judging musical quality, taste, and personhood, see Cheng, *Just Vibrations*.

27. On the way in which bodies racialized as nonwhite have challenged the notion of classical music’s universality, see Yang, “East Meets West,” and Yoshihara, *Musicians from a Different Shore*. Since the 1990s, the field of critical whiteness studies has produced a dynamic body of scholarship that examines how whiteness functions in global contexts. Richard Dyer has argued that “[a]s long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people”: Dyer, *White*, 1. Whiteness’s invisibility is in fact one of its central characteristics, Dyer argues. On whiteness and performance, see Bosse, “Whiteness and

music anew, even as they consider the porousness of its bounds.²⁸ Historical investigations into past listening practices provide us with a valuable method for tracing how musical cultures constructed these sonic racial lines—and how performers sometimes erased them. I also reflect on the way the Austro-German canon—still considered the core of classical music—became white in its musical heartland of German-speaking Europe, and the way the whiteness of that canon was built in contradistinction to black bodies.

Contemporaneous print media constitute my primary source base, even while I recognize the difficulties of relying on music criticism to inform historical and musicological scholarship. German media historians have also pointed out that researching Weimar-era media materials presents its own particular challenge in that many records were destroyed during World War II.²⁹ Although many American and Austrian newspapers have been digitized and made text-searchable, German newspapers still exist primarily in analog form and are accessible only through archival research.³⁰ I supplement historical newspapers with memoirs, unpublished writings, musical scores, concert programs, private letters, and personal diaries located in German, Austrian, and American archives in order to create a multidimensional portrait of the ways in which performers and listeners understood blackness, whiteness, and German musical culture.

the Performance of Race.” For a contemporary German context for marking/unmarking, see El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch*, 134.

28. In his investigation of black performances of popular music, Mark Burford carefully argues that the music itself is not white, but has become racialized as white, “because of the barriers, caveats, bargains, and apologies performers of all races and ethnicities have faced when attempting to perform and voice complex selves through it.” The same applies to classical music. Burford, “Sam Cooke,” 168–69. Borrowing from Terry Kawashima, Burford also argues that we routinely conflate “white features” with “whiteness,” and thus fail to detect the mechanisms at work in the construction of race; see Kawashima, “Seeing Faces, Making Races.”

29. See Fulda, *Press and Politics*; Ross, “Writing the Media into History”; and Tworek, “Journalistic Statesmanship.” Nonetheless, what scholars have reconstructed from the sources available portrays a deeply divided political arena in which most German newspapers operated. By as early as 1913, half of all German newspapers had a publicly stated political conviction. The majority of reviews, interviews, and reports of black performers appeared in liberal newspapers, many of which were directed by German Jews or sympathetic to liberal and Jewish causes. But they also appeared in boulevard newspapers and daily tabloids, which were popular, consumer-oriented publications that eschewed political affiliation and drew a majority of readers, both socialists and right-leaning nationalists, many of whom indulged in the daily leaflets as a respite from politics. On Jewish German and African American social networking and intellectual engagements in Weimar Germany, see Wipplinger, *Jazz Republic*.

30. Historian Lara Putnam cautions scholars against the growing reliance on digitized materials, arguing that digitization has the power to obscure as much as to illuminate. “The digitized revolution is not inherently egalitarian, open, or cost-free,” she argues; rather, the corpus of digitized documents has thus far privileged Western materials and researchers over others: Putnam, “The Transnational and the Text-Searchable,” 389.

Ultimately, what the sources reveal is that race was the primary filter through which listeners interpreted black performances of the Austro-German musical canon. On the basis of their listening practices, critics determined whether a singer's performance met the standards not only of Austro-German musical culture but also of cultural citizenship. Black performances of lieder suggested that cultural identities had the power to supplant racial ones and that Germanness was something that could be mastered through performance and study, rather than being inherited biologically through whiteness. Upon hearing black musicians perform, white central Europeans confronted the provocative reality that their identities were not stable categories passed down genetically, but were transmutable through the very act of performance. Critics, audiences, and even black performers' closest friends and allies in central Europe reconstructed the sonic color line anew in response to these racially transgressive performances. Their constructions remained remarkably constant, even after the Nazi seizure of power and Engelbert Dollfuß's establishment of an Austrofascist state in Vienna in 1933, demonstrating a strong consistency in attitudes toward black voices across a shifting geopolitical terrain. Black classical musicians could be loved or loathed for singing German lieder, but the notion that their voices sounded either "white" or "black," German or un-German, could not be uprooted. The audience's practice of racial listening thus reflected transatlantic conversations on blackness and proved that Western art music and its oft-touted, supposedly benign message of universality could not escape the politics of race and nation; rather, it had become complicit in them.

A Black Steiner: Roland Hayes as a German Lieder Singer

The son of formerly enslaved parents from the Deep South, African American tenor Roland Hayes was, Jeffrey Stewart writes, "the first African American vocalist to challenge the color line in modern concert singing."³¹ He fell in love with European art music as a student at Fisk University, and, together with contralto Marian Anderson, began a tradition of African American performance of German lieder that continues to this day.³² Hayes spent much of the 1920s studying lieder in Europe before making his career in the United States. In an essay for the *Musical Courier*, he wrote, "It is true that I had learned about vocal technique in America, but I had to travel to Europe to learn about music."³³ He first took up the lied in London in 1921, where he studied with German-born British baritone Sir George Henschel, a pupil

31. Stewart, *New Negro*, 369.

32. See Thurman, "German Lied."

33. Roland Hayes, "Lieder Is of the People," *Musical Courier*, December 1954, 11.

and close friend of Johannes Brahms and a musical collaborator of Roger Quilter and Gabriel Fauré, who had recorded his own interpretations of the lieder of Schumann and Schubert in 1928.³⁴ By the time he returned to the United States in the late 1920s, Hayes was a highly paid and sought-after singer who could command a fee of \$2,500 (or more) per recital. (The *New York Times* reported that in 1924 he earned one hundred thousand dollars, a claim that Hayes himself neither confirmed nor denied.)³⁵

Throughout his career Hayes was motivated by a desire to become one of the most respected German lieder singers in Europe and the United States. "I was determined to establish myself throughout Austria and Germany as a singer in the great *Lieder* tradition," he shares in his memoir.³⁶ Settling in Vienna in the fall of 1923 to study with accomplished Polish baritone Theodore Lierhammer (for "coaching in the Viennese tradition"), Hayes sought to immerse himself in Vienna's flourishing musical life.³⁷ He was deeply impressed by the "Musikstadt der Welt" and the extent to which the city's cultural life centered on music. He focused on careful study of the works of "Vienna's own musician," Franz Schubert, and built up a repertoire from that composer's six hundred lieder in addition to learning songs by Brahms, Beethoven, Schumann, and Wolf.³⁸ When in mid-April 1923 Hayes's agent booked him his first engagement in Vienna, he finally had his chance to prove to the Viennese that he was a worthy practitioner of German lieder.³⁹ His concert program comprised a number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pieces, followed by the music of Schubert, Wolf, and Brahms.

Hayes's European premiere stunned Viennese critics. Although he was, to their minds, unmistakably foreign—one critic described him in primitivist terms as "a small, agile Negro with crisp hair, thick lips and shining white teeth"⁴⁰—to some, his expert execution of German lieder suggested a cultivation far removed from what they imagined to be his primeval blackness.

34. See Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo' and Her Son*, 145. Hayes publicly lauded Henschel for training him to sing lieder, and he performed Henschel's own arrangements of lieder in concerts. For a sketch of a concert program in which he sang Henschel's arrangement of "Sei nur still" by seventeenth-century composer J. W. Franck, see Roland Hayes Collection, Detroit Public Library, Series IV, Box 1, File 70.

35. See Brooks and Sims, *Roland Hayes*, xvii. See also Woolsey and Hayes, "Roland Hayes," 184.

36. Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo' and Her Son*, 171.

37. *Ibid.*, 172. Theodore Lierhammer also worked with other African American musicians, such as Pankey, Joseph Edwin Covington, and John Payne; see "Aubrey Pankey, American Baritone Tours Europe," *Chicago Defender*, January 2, 1937, 21. See also Raoul Abdul, "Up, Up and Away: Three Weeks of Study at Vienna's Wiener Musikseminar," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 31, 1982, 26.

38. Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo' and Her Son*, 168–69.

39. *Ibid.*, 168.

40. *Wiener Mittags-Zeitung*, April 1923, quoted in Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo' and Her Son*, 170.

His diction and lyricism were apparently evidence of that great Austro-German musical tradition that many believed created a unique German sound. An unnamed critic stated, “No German could sing Schubert with more serious or unselfish surrender,” while another critic for the popular newspaper *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote, “Do not imagine that it is sufficient to be white to become an artist; try first to sing as well as this black man did.”⁴¹ The latter observation is a remarkable example of what critical race theorists call marking/unmarking in historical discourse. The writer critiqued the popular assumption that one had to be white in order to be an authentic singer of German lieder, admitting that he too had assumed that classical music and German national identity were anchored in whiteness—until he heard Hayes sing. Thus, the critic’s comments revealed “the invisibility of whiteness as a racial position,” as Richard Dyer describes it, for only after Hayes had performed the German lied did the music and its performers become marked in racial terms.⁴² But much to the critic’s surprise, he discovered that German musical identity was not irrevocably bound to whiteness after all. The link between appearance and sound, between race and culture, could be severed.

Hayes’ performance in the spring of 1923 was the first of many that challenged audiences’ notions of what constituted authentic performance practice. Following his successful debut in Vienna, he embarked on a tour through central Europe that took him to Graz, Budapest, Karlsbad, and Prague. Hayes credited Countess Bertha Henriette Katharina Nadine Colloredo-Mansfeld with helping him to learn how to sing lieder with authority. Together in Prague they read definitive biographies of historical German figures including Goethe, Schiller, and Bismarck, and played through the music of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Beethoven, Brahms, and Wolf.⁴³ The countess suggested numerous changes to Hayes’s performance style that transformed his singing. From her he learned to elongate or double the consonants on specific words (such as the “l” in “Liebe”), thus giving him a more authoritative grasp of lieder performance practice.⁴⁴

Following his time in Prague, Hayes headed to Berlin in May 1924, where he immediately encountered opposition. Before he even stepped onto the stage in the Beethovensaal, Berliners had begun to express their outrage. Prior to his arrival, some Germans had protested his appearance in front of the American Embassy, calling for the cancellation of his concert. In fiery letters to German newspapers, they argued that his presence on stage would remind Germans of the “Black Horror on the Rhine,” a derogatory term referring to the stationing of French colonial troops from North and West

41. Quoted in Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo’ and Her Son*, 171.

42. Dyer, *White*, 3.

43. See Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo’ and Her Son*, 198.

44. See Brooks and Sims, *Roland Hayes*, 127.

Africa in occupied western Germany after World War I. Reaching approximately 85,000 in number between 1920 and 1921, the soldiers drew the ire of white Germans, who spread racist, highly sexualized propagandistic images of black men raping white women in order to denounce what they deemed to be a black invasion of German soil.⁴⁵

Before the Great War, black musicians in Germany and Austria had been seen as exotic curiosities but had posed no serious threat to constructs of German national identity. With the so-called boom in black bodies and cultures in German-speaking Europe after World War I, however, caused by the stationing of black troops on German territory and the “jazz invasion” of black diasporic musicians, many white Germans and Austrians became alarmed that there were more black people in Europe than ever before. The fear of racial mixing—embodied by the children born to these French colonial troops and white German women (the majority of whom the Nazis later sterilized or killed in concentration camps)—stoked the fears of German nationalists, who believed in fostering and maintaining a racially pure German body.⁴⁶ German fears of miscegenation had existed under colonialism, but the threat had been a few steps removed, located predominantly in German colonial Africa.⁴⁷ Yet the “Black Horror on the Rhine” propaganda campaign that developed in the interwar era became, as Sander Gilman argues, “the first major confrontation between the German image of blackness and the reality of the Black” in Germany.⁴⁸ The perceived threat of cultural pollution and racial miscegenation had never been greater within German culture.

International newspapers reported both the Berliners’ fury and the potential scandal posed by Hayes’s *Liederabend*. As intensity grew, the American consul general warned the young Hayes, then in Prague, not to visit Germany until the Allied army occupation had withdrawn from the Rhine region. Hayes refused. As a precaution, however, he traveled to Berlin from Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, with a few Czech friends, so as to make his arrival less conspicuous. Once in the glittering capital, he discovered that he had not been banned from performing there and arrived at the prestigious Beethovensaal on the night of his debut without any difficulty.⁴⁹

45. On the “Black Horror on the Rhine” propaganda campaign, see Marks, “Black Watch on the Rhine”; Wigger, *Die “Schwarze Schmach am Rhein”*; Roos, “Nationalism, Racism and Propaganda”; Poley, *Decolonization in Germany*; and Campt, Grosse, and Lemke-Muniz de Faria, “Blacks, Germans, and the Politics of Imperial Imagination.”

46. See El-Tayeb, “Blood Is a Very Special Juice”; Campt, “Converging Spectres”; and Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims*.

47. See Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire*.

48. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks*, xii.

49. See Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo’ and Her Son*, 210–11. See also Brooks and Sims, *Roland Hayes*, 120–21.

Nonetheless, when a visibly nervous Hayes took the stage, he was greeted with boos and jeers. As parts of the audience raged against the sight of him, he softly began to sing Schubert's lied "Du bist die Ruh." His performance won over the audience, which, according to multiple reports, became still and silent. After the last notes of the lied had floated through the concert hall, the audience burst into applause. By the end of the evening, the Beethovensaal boomed with boisterous appreciation for this African American tenor from rural Georgia. Hayes had been transformed by his *Liederabend* from a threatening black male presence into an adopted son of German music.

Much of Hayes's success in Berlin had to do with his choice of repertoire. His decision to begin his *Liederabend* with Schubert's "Du bist die Ruh" turned out to be the best possible choice for that moment, for several reasons. First, singing softly forced the crowd to stop shouting in order to hear him. Second, the lied's sweetness, warmth, and quietness (the primary dynamic markings are *pianissimo*) were disarming; rather than presenting Hayes as a threatening stranger, the piece gave the opposite impression: the performer of "Du bist die Ruh" sounds gentle and patient. Third, "Du bist die Ruh" was one of Schubert's better-known lieder, and its comforting familiarity may also have helped to subdue Hayes's audience. What Hayes offered his listeners on that evening in 1924 was ultimately something intimate, familiar, and beloved. Expecting scandal, exotic curiosity, minstrelsy, and indecency (which they associated with blackness), the audience encountered a soothing, simple, and much-loved Schubert lied. Instead of sounding like African American singers of spirituals and popular music, Roland Hayes musically resembled the native German-speaking performers that the audience was accustomed to hearing. (An excerpt from a recorded performance of the song by Hayes may be heard in Audio Example 1 in the online version of the **Journal**.)

After their initial resistance, most Berliners were impressed by Hayes's expert mastery of the German lied. Several newspapers called him a "true artist" who had captured the sentiment of German lieder with breathtaking accuracy and warmth. In the right-leaning nationalist newspaper *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, musicologist Hermann Springer called Hayes "a Negro . . . who shows dedication in singing Schubert and Brahms for us in the German language."⁵⁰ The seriousness of Hayes's musical purpose found approval in Berlin. In fact, it was "specifically in these songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf that one noticed that Roland Hayes is a real artist, not just a singer but rather a musician," wrote a critic for the conservative *Deutsche*

50. "Konzerte," *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, May 15, 1924: "Ein Neger . . . der ernst der Sache ergeben, uns Schubert und Brahms in deutscher Sprache singt." Many of the music critics who contributed to daily newspapers, entertainment magazines, or gossip tabloids wrote anonymously, thus making it difficult on occasion to attribute a political leaning or ideology to a particular writer. For information on German and Austrian newspapers, including political affiliations, dissemination records, and editorial staff, see Melischek and Seethaler, *Die Wiener Tageszeitungen*, vol. 3, and Stöber, *Deutsche Pressegeschichte*.

Allgemeine Zeitung.⁵¹ Like the critic for the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, the writer claimed that real artistry was located in the purity and universality of German music. Accordingly, Hayes had transitioned from being a black entertainer to being a more “universally” appealing artist of classical music.

Hayes’s extensive classical vocal training and sure technique, in particular, won the admiration of several critics. “Without any artificial effects, he builds his song from the inside out,” praised the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*.⁵² “His voice is not big,” observed *Der Tag*, “but it has a rather pleasant sound and is very well cultivated, so that every nuance is effortlessly at its command.”⁵³ Nearly every review of Hayes’s performance used words such as “cultivated” and “smooth” to describe his voice. “Mr. Hayes,” wrote the critic for the more liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*, “also possesses a magnificent sonorous *mezza voce*; he masters the whole falsetto, the head voice, which he sings in *piano* as if from the belly, with great skill. . . . It is admirable what his teacher was able to make of him.”⁵⁴ The implication that Hayes’s strengths as a vocalist came almost entirely from his German teacher perhaps made his performances more palatable to readers. The critic located genius elsewhere, outside of Hayes himself.

It was obvious to many listeners that Hayes was a foreigner, but they marveled at his ability to mask that foreignness. The critic of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* remarked that the range of feeling (“Gefühlkreis”) that made German Romantic music unique must have been foreign to Hayes, yet “one was astonished to hear with what depth of expression and understanding of the specific voice he sang lieder such as Schumann’s ‘Nussbaum’ or ‘Ich hab im Traum geweinet’ and Schubert’s ‘Nacht und Träume’ or ‘Die Forelle.’”⁵⁵ The well-loved, conservative cultural feuilleton *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* agreed: critic Siegmund Piesling praised Hayes’s performance in a sold-out

51. “Der Schwarze Tenor,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 16, 1924: “Gerade in diesen Liedern von Schubert, Schumann, Brahms und Wolf merkte man, daß Roland Hayes ein echter Künstler ist, nicht eben nur ein Sänger sondern ein Musiker.” This newspaper was backed by the Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP, German People’s Party).

52. “Konzerte,” *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, May 15, 1924: “Ohne aufgesetzte Effekte baut er seinen Gesang von innen heraus auf.”

53. “Konzerte,” *Der Tag*, May 17, 1924, 2: “Seine Stimme ist nicht groß, doch von angenehmen Klang und sehr gut gebildet, so daß ihr alle Schattierungen mühelos zu Gebote stehen.”

54. *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, May 17, 1924, 4: “Herr Hayes besitzt außerdem eine herrlich klingende mezza voce, er beherrscht das Falsett, die Kopfstimme, die im Piano sind wie im Bauch, mit grosser Kunst. . . . Jedenfalls bleibt bewundernswert, was sein Lehrer aus ihm gemacht hat.”

55. “Der Schwarze Tenor,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 16, 1924: “Man sollte meinen, daß gerade der Gefühlkreis der deutschen musikalischen Romantik dem Empfinden dieses Ausländers fernliegen müßte, und man war erstaunt zu hören, mit welcher Tiefe des Ausdrucks und welchem seinen Verständnis für die spezifische Stimmung er Lieder, wie Schumanns ‘Nussbaum’ oder ‘Ich hab im Traum geweinet’ sowie Schuberts ‘Nacht und Träume’ oder ‘Die Forelle’ sang.”

hall warmed by “an African heat.”⁵⁶ He wrote, “A Moor, who sings Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Hugo Wolf in German without much of an accent, is all the more deserving of being listened to if he can feel the spirit of the German lied. And Hayes feels it. How he sings Schumann’s ‘Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet’! A black man! Many a white lieder singer could learn a lesson from him.”⁵⁷ Piesling’s use of the word “Moor” is especially striking because it harks back to earlier histories and mythologies of black migration. While the moniker “is an ambiguous, multivalent term whose meaning could differ significantly according to time period, language, location, and other contexts of use,” Arne Spohr argues that it nonetheless carries “colonial and racist connotations.”⁵⁸ Yet its successor—“Negro”—represented a significant decline in status for people of African descent in the nineteenth century. If the term “Moor” “kindled visions of brave warriors, Christian saints, and the riches of Africa,” Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann write, “Negro” “alluded instead to a trading commodity; a childish, cheap, and unskilled hand.”⁵⁹ Thus, Piesling distanced Hayes from his middle-passage diasporic blackness and conjured up instead a much older image, giving his supposedly foreign allure an exotic, otherworldly time and locale.

Regardless of the nature or degree of Hayes’s foreignness, many Berliners believed that he had accomplished something almost unimaginable: he had somehow learned to “penetrate the spirit of the German lied” and possessed the ability to perform with the “great ardor [*Innigkeit*]” that was required to interpret German music.⁶⁰ Hayes’s lieder performances “were in a gentle, flawless German, sung with so much ardor, with such deep and true sentiment” that many listeners left the Beethovensaal convinced of his musical genius.⁶¹

56. “Konzertchronik,” *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, May 14, 1924, 4: “Der überfüllte Saal klatschte sich in afrikanische Hitze hinein.” This newspaper supported the Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP, German National People’s Party); see Fulda, *Press and Politics*.

57. “Konzertchronik,” *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, May 14, 1924, 4: “Ein Mohr, der Schubert, Schumann, Brahms und Hugo Wolf in fast akzentlosem Deutsch singt, ist eine um so größere Hörenswürdigkeit, wenn er sich in die Seele des deutschen Liedes einfühlt. Und Hayes fühlt sich ein. Wie er bloß Schumanns ‘Ich hab’ im Traum geweinet’ singt! Ein Schwarzer! Da kann sich mancher weiße Liedersänger ein Beispiel nehmen.”

58. Spohr, “‘Mohr und Trompeter,’” 614–15n11. I am grateful to Arne Spohr for allowing me to read his article prior to its publication here. On the use of the word “Moor” in European history, see Earle and Lowe, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, and Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*.

59. Honeck, Klimke, and Kuhlmann, introduction to *Germany and the Black Diaspora*, 3.

60. “Konzerte,” *Der Tag*, May 17, 1924, 2: “in den Geist des deutschen Liedes einzudringen, und daß er Gesänge von Schumann, Brahms und Wolf mit wirklich gefühltem Ausdruck und großer Innigkeit, dazu mit recht guter Aussprache vorzutragen vermochte.”

61. *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, May 17, 1924, 4: “Sie wurden in einen sanft tadellosen Deutsch mit so viel Innigkeit, mit so tiefer und wahrer Empfindung gesungen.” A fellow African American tenor commented on Hayes’s Viennese debut in the *Chicago Defender*: “Roland Hayes, the Negro tenor, is said to have ‘taken Vienna by storm.’ . . . His singing of

But, as one critic surmised, “The listeners, who had perhaps expected a vaudeville sensation, soon became aware that here, real and very serious art was speaking to them.”⁶² Real art, the critic implies, was German art, and few singers of any nationality could truly master it. Yet Hayes, as an African American, had succeeded. Following this concert, an American studying music in Berlin greeted Hayes backstage and, according to Hayes, exclaimed, “Goddamn it . . . put it there! This is the first time I have seen the Germans admit that good art can come out of America.”⁶³ Both diasporically black and quintessentially American, Hayes’s “twoness,” as W. E. B. Du Bois called it,⁶⁴ played an important role in his acceptance in central European society.⁶⁵

Hayes performed in Vienna one last time before returning to the United States, and the “Musikstadt der Welt” welcomed him back.⁶⁶ An admirer and patron wrote to him gushingly afterward, “I very rarely saw our public so enthusiastic and you really deserved it!”⁶⁷ Following his recital on October 8, 1925, a review in the *Neue Freie Presse*, a popular liberal newspaper, demonstrated how critics depicted blackness and German lieder as direct opposites:

A Negro, who sings Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms in the original language, and—dare we almost say it—also in the musical original language! His phrasing, expression, soulfulness are those of a German lieder singer intent on conveying all the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of a lieder recital. The voice, while not always untinged by foreign resonances, encounters its best quality in an eminently cultivated, wonderfully light connection between the falsetto and the head register. . . . Sometimes, you begin to think that you are listening

Schubert or Brahms is distinguished by a flawless enunciation of the German words, hardly equaled by the average German singer, and by an understanding of the innermost meaning of these songs, which is nothing short of astonishing”: Maude Roberts George, “Music Notes,” *Chicago Defender*, September 15, 1923, 5.

62. O.T., *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, May 13, 1924, 3: “die Hörer, die vielleicht eine Varieté-Sensation erwartet hatten, wurden bald inne, das hier wirkliche Kunst, sehr ernst zu nehmende, zu ihnen sprach.”

63. Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo’ and Her Son*, 212.

64. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 8.

65. Prior to the Berlin recital, Germans had imagined Hayes as a threatening colonial African soldier. But following his *Liederabend*, he became a positive example of Americanism. Both perspectives indicate a flattening of blackness along the axis of the diaspora. On German grappling with African American identity specifically and the complexities of the diaspora more generally, see Camp, *Other Germans*, and Wright, *Becoming Black*.

66. The critic for the *Mittags-Zeitung* reported, “An audience that filled the Konzerthaus to capacity . . . [was] astounded by the matchless diction and interpretation of his German songs”: quoted in Alain Locke, “Roland Hayes: An Appreciation,” *Opportunity*, December 1923, 326. African American cultural critic and aesthete Alain Locke was in Vienna for Hayes’s debut and shared his experience and Viennese press clippings in his report.

67. Alfred Lederer, letter to Roland Hayes, October 10, 1925, Roland Hayes Collection, Detroit Public Library, Series I, Box 1, File 40.

to a black Raval, at other times, to a black Steiner. . . . Yet this is at all events an eminently remarkable appearance that captured and held the listener's attention.⁶⁸

Dubbed "a black Steiner" (a reference to the popular Austrian concert singer Franz Steiner), Hayes is presented in this review as a musicking contradiction.⁶⁹ He is foreign, yet musically expressive in a natively German way. He comes from a primitive or primeval culture, but he sings Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms in the original (German) musical language. Descriptions of his black body imply that Hayes should have been more comfortable in the world of dance and black popular music, yet he had proved himself capable of "conveying all the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of a lieder recital" that would normally be expected only from native singers of the lied. Many became convinced that Hayes was a musical chameleon, a cultural chimera who had firmly established his credentials as a twentieth-century lieder singer through his mastery of the appropriate performance practice tradition.⁷⁰

Marian Anderson and the German Lied

One of the most famous singers of the twentieth century, Marian Anderson launched her career in German-speaking Europe studying and performing German lieder. Regarded as "most decidedly a Handel-Schubert singer,"⁷¹ Anderson possessed a cultivated voice that many believed was at its most expressive when singing religious works, especially Schubert's "Ave Maria," Handel's "Begrüssung," and Bach's "Komm süßer Tod." (An excerpt from a recorded performance of Schubert's "Der Tod und das Mädchen" by

68. "Konzerte," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 11, 1925, 17: "Ein Neger, der Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms in der Ursprache singt und—fast möchten wir sagen—auch in der musikalischen Ursprache! Linienführung, Ausdruck, Beseelung sind die eines auf alle Geistigkeiten des Liedvortrages bedachten deutschen Liedersängers. Die Stimme, nicht immer frei von fremdartigen Resonanzen, findet ihr Bestes in einer eminent durchgebildeten, fabelhaft leichten Verbindung von Falsett und Kopfgestir. . . . So glaubt man bald einen schwarzen Raval, bald einen schwarzen Steiner zu hören. . . . Aber unter allen Umständen eine überaus bemerkenswerte Erscheinung, die das Interesse der Hörer erregt und festhält."

69. As for other black singers, the public gave Hayes several nicknames that rendered him a black variation of a white performer, including the "black Steiner" and the "black Caruso." The "black Raval" refers to Franz Raval, a lyric tenor at the Vienna Court Opera who sang under Gustav Mahler in the early twentieth century.

70. See Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, 2:504. Rogers recorded that Hayes received the following compliment about his convincingly German-sounding lieder: "Once after he had sung for a German prince in Munich, the latter marveled that Hayes had been able to interpret a certain love song not only in the German spirit but in that of the prince's own class" (ibid.).

71. Vehanen, *Marian Anderson*, 153.

Anderson may be heard in Audio Example 2 in the online version of the *Journal*.) She resided in central Europe intermittently throughout the 1930s and became an overnight international sensation after her debut at the Salzburg Festival in 1935, where conductor Arturo Toscanini said she had a voice heard “once in a hundred years.”⁷²

Anderson’s primary motivation for studying in Europe had little to do with cultivating her vocal technique; rather, she sought out German teachers in the United States, England, Berlin, and Vienna who could coach her in the lieder repertoire.⁷³ Like Hayes, Anderson began seriously studying German lieder in England before journeying to Germany.⁷⁴ In 1927, she asked Hayes’s accompanist Lawrence Brown to find her a reputable teacher in London, and Brown arranged for her to study with German concert singer Raimund von Zur Mühlen, a celebrated lieder singer and former student of Clara Schumann.⁷⁵

Anderson’s period of study with the aging yet highly respected tenor and vocal pedagogue was brief but productive. In one of her early lessons, Anderson sang for Zur Mühlen Schubert’s lied “Im Abendrot,” and he was not impressed:

“Do you know what that song means?” he demanded.

“Not word for word,” I said, “and I’m ashamed that I don’t.”

“Don’t sing it if you don’t know what it’s about.”

“I know what it’s about,” I explained, “but I don’t know it word for word.”

“That’s not enough,” he said with finality.⁷⁶

Following this encounter, Zur Mühlen gave Anderson a German edition of Schubert’s lieder and suggested that she learn “Nähe des Geliebten” for the following lesson. According to Anderson, he intentionally gave her an edition that did not include English translations, thus forcing her to translate and study the text carefully. For her next lesson, she was expected to provide a line-by-line analysis of the text, an aspect of her musical training that she carried with her for the remainder of her career.⁷⁷ Anderson’s training in Europe shaped her approach to the lieder repertoire and the art of singing itself.

72. See Keiler, *Marian Anderson*, 156.

73. See Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning*, 127.

74. While in London, Anderson had the support of an established network of African American musicians and entertainers. She used her ties to fellow black musician Roland Hayes to meet the white British composer Roger Quilter, for example, and she enjoyed the company of John Payne, a member of a black theatrical company in England. See Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning*, 121. She also briefly took lessons with black singer Amanda Aldridge, daughter of Ira Aldridge and sister of Irene Luranah Aldridge, an opera singer who had performed in multiple opera houses in Europe in the late nineteenth century, including the Bayreuth Opera House in 1896; see Keiler, *Marian Anderson*, 73.

75. See Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning*, 119.

76. *Ibid.*, 125.

77. *Ibid.*, 126.

Accompanist Kosti Vehanen recalled that “[w]hen Miss Anderson arrived in Europe, her programs were conceived in typical American form. A number of composers, some quite unimportant, were on them. Miss Anderson’s first coach in Berlin suggested many other songs in an effort to acquaint the newcomer with different types.”⁷⁸ She began to focus on understanding the cultural and intellectual significance of the body of lieder sought out by European audiences.

Anderson gave three recitals in Berlin in 1930. First, she performed lieder and African American spirituals at the Bachsaal in the Konzerthaus. (The recital program may be seen in Figure 2.)⁷⁹ Following her success there, she performed for a private gathering hosted by Sara Cahier, a white American singer who had premiered Gustav Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* and a patron, teacher, and friend of Anderson’s. Finally, she gave a recital at the University of Berlin for prospective managers interested in signing a contract with her.

In her memoir, Anderson recalls that she walked onto the stage at the Bachsaal that October feeling intimidated by the native German speakers who made up her audience. “I was about to sing before a German public,” she writes, “a group that would be alert to every subtlety of its own language and would probably know most of the Lieder by heart. It gave me a strange feeling.”⁸⁰ Accompanist Michael Raucheisen appeared frightfully nervous, and rightly so: in the audience were some of the most elite members of Berlin’s musical community, including Artur Schnabel. But when the reviews began to appear in German newspapers a few days later, Anderson was pleased to discover that the majority of them were glowing.⁸¹

As in the reviews of Hayes’s performances, critics could not seem to describe Anderson’s sound without discussing her physical appearance. In her case, her skin color was interpreted in a gendered manner. While critics often reported that Hayes was “dark-skinned,” Anderson frequently became a light-skinned biracial woman under their gaze.⁸² At her Salzburg debut in 1935, one critic even described her as a “mulatto.” “Wearing a white, long, low-cut silk dress, with a huge flower in pale red at her cleavage,” he wrote, “she looks as if she had sunbathed too long in Africa.”⁸³ This Salzburg critic denied blackness in Anderson’s appearance. “As far as a white person is entitled to a judgment of taste,” he continued, he found her pretty and

78. Vehanen, *Marian Anderson*, 150.

79. Anderson provided the text for every lied included in her concert programs.

80. Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning*, 138.

81. *Ibid.*

82. German reviewers described opera singer Sissieretta Jones and pianist Hazel Harrison in the same manner in the 1890s and early 1900s.

83. “Konzert Marian Anderson,” *Salzburger Volksblatt*, August 29, 1935, 6: “In dem weißen, langen, ausgeschnittenen Seidenkleid, am Brustausschnitt eine riesige mattrote Blume, sieht sie aus, als hätte sie viel zu lang in Afrika sonnengebadet.”

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Bach - Saal Freitag, den 10. Oktober 1930 / 8 Uhr
 Lützowstr. 76

Liederabend der Neger-Artistin
MARIAN ANDERSON

Am Flügel: **Michael Raucheisen**

VORTRAGSFOLGE:

I.

L. van Beethoven	Freudvoll und leidvoll Mit einem gemalten Band Wonne der Wehmuth Neue Liebe
------------------	--

II.

Richard Wagner	Träume Schmerzen
Franz Liszt	In Liebeslust
E. Grieg	Die drei Zigeuner Vom Monte Pincio Zur Johannisnacht

III.

G. Verdi	Arie der Eboli aus „Don Carlos“ (O don fatale, o don crudele)
----------	--

IV.

Negro Spirituals: arr. von R. Johnson	Done foun' me los' sheep
" " H. Burleigh	De Gospel Train
" " E. Boatner	Tramping
" " H. Burleigh	I Don't feel no ways fired

V.

" " H. Burleigh	Deep River Heav'n, Heav'n
" " L. Brown	Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
" " H. Burleigh	O Wasn't dat a wide ribber

KONZERT-FLÜGEL BECHSTEIN
 Aus dem Magazin Budapestter Straße 9a

Während der Vorträge bleiben die Saaltüren geschlossen

PRESSE

Figure 2 Marian Anderson's Berlin recital program, October 1930. Marian Anderson Papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books, and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania, MS Coll 200, Box 178, 08532. Used by permission.

lively, “with inky black hair, beautiful intelligent eyes, and animated facial expressions.”⁸⁴

Anderson’s supposedly exotic looks had attracted the attention of most reviewers, but her deft vocal skill and her handling of German lieder were what had impressed them. Taken aback by the conviction with which she sang lieder, music editor Rudolf Kastner at the liberal *Berliner Morgenpost* wrote, “This remarkable woman sang German lieder at that, with a natural command of style, a language so meaningfully accentuated, and convincing musicality.”⁸⁵ Indeed, Anderson’s mastery of German was so complete that critics in Germany and Austria asked her repeatedly in public interviews how she came to speak German so well. By the end of her residency in Vienna in 1937, listeners joked that her accent was so local that she occasionally lapsed into Viennese dialect; she admitted that she occasionally had to remind herself to speak high German.⁸⁶

Her linguistic mastery of the poetry and her musical mastery of the score made her a phenomenon. The critic at the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* marveled at Anderson’s achievement in the Bachsaal:

Imagine this: a member of the black race, an artist through and through, she began her evening with lieder by Beethoven, and continued with songs by Wagner, Liszt, and Grieg (all sung in German). . . . And she sang these German lieder—above all those by Beethoven—with such a mature understanding, so soulfully inspired and deeply musical; you do not hear something like this every day.⁸⁷

Anderson continued to earn praise for her authoritative performances of lieder in central Europe during the 1930s. “What a lovely rebuttal to false racial theories!” cried Rudolph Reti, chief music critic of *Das Echo*, after her performance in Vienna in November 1935. “Have you ever heard Schubert sung more joyfully, more ‘Schubertly,’ than by this Neger, the music made magical by an almost northern tinge of silvery coolness?”⁸⁸ The definitive

84. Ibid.: “soweit einem Weißfarbigen ein Geschmacksurteil zusteht, eine herzige, lebhaftere Erscheinung mit pechrahenschwarzen Haar, schönen klugen Augen und bewegtem Mienenspiel.”

85. *Berliner Morgenpost*, October 12, 1930, 9–10: “Aber diese merkwürdige Frau singt noch dazu deutsche Lieder mit selbstverständlicher Stilbeherrschung, die Sprache ist sinnvoll akzentuiert, die Musikalität überzeugend.”

86. See “Die Neger-sängerin Anderson in Wien,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 21, 1935, 6.

87. “Die Neger-Altistin Anderson,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 17, 1930, 8: “Man stellte sich vor: die Angehörige der schwarzen Rasse, Künstlerin durch und durch, beginnt ihren Abend mit Liedern von Beethoven, schließt daran Gesänge von Wagner, Liszt und Grieg (alles auf deutsch gesungen). . . . Und diese deutschen Lieder, vor allem die von Beethoven, singt sie mit reifem Verständnis, so beseelt und tief musikalisch, wie man es selbst bei uns nicht alle Tage hören kann.”

88. Rudolph Reti, “Die Neger-sängerin,” *Das Echo*, November 22, 1935, 5: “Welch holde Widerlegung falscher Rassentheorien: habt Ihr Schubert je seliger, je ‘Schubertlicher’ gehört als von dieser Negerin, von einem geradezu nordlichen Hauch silberner Kühle durchzaubert?”

confirmation of Anderson's abilities came at the end of her residency in central Europe. After her concert with the Vienna Philharmonic in June 1936, a critic for the apolitical daily *Neues Wiener Journal* wrote, "It might surprise you that Marian Anderson comes to us primarily as an interpreter of German classical music; but whoever has once heard her sing Schubert, Schumann, or Brahms knows that her relationship with German musical art is utterly convincing."⁸⁹

The Germanness of Anderson's musical interpretations was especially impressive, a few critics surmised, because her blackness could so easily have thwarted the success of her *Liederabend*. Many reviews applauded Anderson for having cleverly walked this racial tightrope and for overcoming the limitations that her race must surely have imposed on her talent. Indeed, a critic for the *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna reported, "When one chats with the famous Marian Anderson, who is giving a concert today in the great hall of the Musikverein, one can, in spite of her dark brown tint, occasionally forget her exotic heritage."⁹⁰ In admiring Anderson's elegant, sophisticated, and spiritual renditions of Bach, Handel, and Schubert, some critics claimed that they were looking past her blackness, even though her race had most likely drawn some of them to her performances in the first place. Attempts to ignore or forget her blackness illustrate Patrick Johnson's observation that "performance becomes a vehicle through which the Other is seen and not seen."⁹¹ Initially drawn to her because she was exotic and foreign, audiences in Germany and Austria came to adore Anderson because they believed that she embodied the characteristics of German music when she sang. A *New York Times* reporter marveled that the Viennese had "reached the point of accepting practically without challenge her sovereign interpretations of Schubert, of Wolf, of Mahler—in short, of masters whom they usually concede to foreigners only with all manner of hair-splittings and reservations."⁹² Anderson was no longer a foreigner; on the stage, in concert dress, and singing German lieder, she became one of them.

89. "Marian Anderson als Konzertsolistin," *Neues Wiener Journal*, June 17, 1936, 11: "Es mag überraschend-wirken, wenn Marian Anderson vornehmlich als Deuterin klassische-deutscher Musik zu uns kommt; aber wer einmal von ihr Schubert, Schumann oder Brahms singen gehört hat, weiß, daß sie zur deutschen Tonkunst in einem restlos überzeugenden Verhältnis steht."

90. "Die Negersängerin Anderson in Wien," *Neue Freie Presse*, November 21, 1935, 6: "Wenn man mit der berühmten Marian Anderson plaudert, die heute im großen Musikvereins-saale ein Konzert gibt, so könnte man trotz ihrem dunkelbraunen Teint zuweilen ihre exotische Herkunft vergessen."

91. Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness*, 7. See also the source for Johnson's discussion, Williams, "Pantomime of Race," 17.

92. *New York Times*, July 19, 1936, quoted in Keiler, *Marian Anderson*, 172–73.

Black Bodies, White Souls

The problem remains, however, that both Anderson's and Hayes's blackness—however demure, subdued, and minimal it was imagined to be in the case of Anderson, or how wildly primeval in the case of Hayes—was for many a stumbling block to the enjoyment of these performances of German lieder. However entranced some critics were by these stunning renditions of Schubert's lieder, they nonetheless could not imagine Anderson or Hayes as both black and capable of expressing the German spirit. Instead, they encouraged listeners to erase the singers' blackness and see them as white. At the end of an interview with Hayes in 1925, for example, a reporter for the *Neues Wiener Journal* suggested that Hayes “appears to have a white soul.”⁹³ And a headline regarding Anderson articulated the same kind of race-crossing: “The Negro Singer with the White Soul.”⁹⁴

Both Hayes and Anderson had to cease to be black in the listener's imagination if their remarkably convincing renditions of German lieder were to be accepted. Many critics felt compelled to expunge anything foreign or alien about the performers before they could admit the validity of their musical interpretations. A Hamburg newspaper insisted, for example, that Hayes's race had disappeared during his *Liederabend*: “Color bleaches under the rays of art, and what remains is man.”⁹⁵ Only after Hayes's color had been (metaphorically) bleached could the critic see Hayes for the true artist he was. In fact, one journalist proposed that future listeners close their eyes when listening to him singing: “To avoid being disturbed by the Negro's gaze, the wise listener shuts his eyes during the singing, which then focuses the concentration.”⁹⁶ Hayes's blackness was a distraction that required a solution if white listeners were to hear properly—that of severing the relationship between sight and sound. The popular *Wiener Zeitung* also erased Anderson's blackness in order to make her Viennese. “In Vienna,” the critic wrote, “Marian Anderson is a foreigner no longer.”⁹⁷ She had become “not

93. “Der schwarze Tenor auf der Probe,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, October 8, 1925, 9: “Er scheint, eine weiße Seele zu haben.” The critic also writes, “For his race he is without question a miracle man. He has fully assimilated European culture as if it emanates from his entire being” (“Für seine Rasse ist er ohne Frage ein Wundermann. Die europäische Kultur hat er, wie aus seinen ganzen Wesen hervorgeht, voll in sich aufgenommen”).

94. “Die Negersängerin mit der weißen Seele” (unidentified newspaper article, dated by hand “[1935]”), Marian Anderson Papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books, and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania, MS Coll 200, Box 225, 09577.

95. Quoted in Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo' and Her Son*, 215.

96. *Kleine Volks-Zeitung*, April 27, 1923, 7: “Und damit man durch den Negerblick nicht gestört wird, drückt der Schlaumeier während des Singens die Augen ein, was dann als Sammlung wirkt.”

97. H.E.H., “Konzert,” *Wiener Zeitung*, November 23, 1935, 8: “Marian Anderson ist in Wien keine Fremde mehr.”

a black but rather an artistic sensation,” capable of convincingly rendering some of Austro-German music’s greatest works.⁹⁸ A top critic from the Viennese *Mittags-Zeitung* offered similar praise of Roland Hayes: “Not as a Negro, but as a great artist, he captured and moved the audience.”⁹⁹ Such statements, made in earnest, offer yet another example of the way the practice of marking/unmarking in music criticism functioned. In both cases, music critics assumed that whatever was black could not also be universal and that what was universal could not be tainted by ethnic particularism, leaving whiteness untouched and unspoken. Up to Anderson’s departure from Europe in 1937, listeners attending her sold-out *Liederabende* insisted that they were not frequenting her concerts simply because of her exotic background. “The artistry of Anderson,” one critic assured his readers, would have existed “if the singer were white.”¹⁰⁰ Her mastery of the German lied made Anderson any white singer’s equal. She was worthy of attention not because of her race but in spite of it.

What is going on here? Why did listeners insist on seeing Anderson and Hayes as white? Dubbing black classical musicians “negroes with white souls” went beyond erasing, dismissing, or downplaying their blackness. In a musical context, that phrase tacitly affirmed the whiteness of classical music. Behind musicians’ claims about the universality and pure artistry of German art song lies a racialized view of the music itself. By insisting that Hayes’s and Anderson’s souls were white, listeners were able to accept them into the world of cultivated German music and make them honorary members of German culture.¹⁰¹ The term “negro with a white soul” made it possible for listeners to recognize black concert singers’ artistry while simultaneously reinforcing the popular assumption that other forms of black expression had none. Thus, when a newspaper described Anderson as “The Negro Singer with the White Soul,” it reassured readers that her interpretations were trustworthy and culturally valid. One can see how listeners aligned black musicians’ appearance with their musicianship. Because they *heard*

98. Ibid.: “Nicht als schwarze, sondern als künstlerische Sensation.”

99. Quoted in Locke, “Roland Hayes,” 356.

100. “Konzert Marian Anderson,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, November 23, 1937, 10: “Die Kunst der Anderson bestünde auch zu Recht, wenn die Sängerin eine Weiße wäre.”

101. During the American occupation of West Germany after 1945, white German commentators used a similar rhetorical device when pleading with Germans to be more accepting of children born of African American soldiers and white German women. Heide Fehrenbach writes, “In efforts to establish the children’s ‘innocence’ and untainted moral state, liberal commentators would remark that while they might be black on the outside, on the inside—where it counts—the children had a ‘white heart’”: Fehrenbach, “Of German Mothers,” 171. Fatima El-Tayeb similarly argues that in the case of black Germans today, “if their blackness is recognized, their Germanness is not and if they are allowed to be German, they are not so black, after all”: El-Tayeb, “Dangerous Liaisons,” 29. German national identity, both scholars argue, operates in a black-white binary that has been difficult to dismantle.

Anderson and Hayes as German and therefore as white, they felt compelled to *see* them as white as well.

Critics often portrayed black concert singers as contrasting starkly with black jazz musicians in order to elevate them to the status of white European concert singers. After Hayes's last performance in Vienna in October 1925, for example, the critic at the *Neue Freie Presse* wrote, "What a contrast to this brutal, 'black' music is singing of such astonishing European refinement as Roland Hayes's!"¹⁰² The *Berliner Allgemeine Zeitung* also set up a contrast between Hayes and black minstrel entertainers:

The nigger as a clown-eccentric, voluntarily and lucratively submitting himself to the grinning delight of his audience—performing an everyday variety number—for better or for worse associated with racial disdain. But a Negro tenor with a sufficiently intriguing program consisting of the most tender flowers from the artistic garden of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf?¹⁰³

When African American baritone Aubrey Pankey sang in Vienna in November 1931, he received similar praise: "A black man," wrote Robert Konta of the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, "who sings Schubert and Richard Strauss with overwhelming intensity of feeling and forms them into great unforgettable experiences. He is a boon for our period where one is very easily inclined to see in all Negro musicians mere Jazzband Clowns. There are evidently black men who are messengers of culture at its greatest."¹⁰⁴

Such reviews exploit racist stereotypes of the black entertainer. Clown-like, brutish, and smirking, the aggressively masculine black musician functions as a straw man against which critics can praise the black concert singer. But in doing so these critics did not elevate black performers. Rather, the pitting of jazz musicians against black concert singers devalued both kinds of performers and performances. There were no celebrations of black musical talent or accomplishment on the musicians' own terms. Instead, the black musician either fulfilled the central European stereotype of black

102. "Konzerte," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 11, 1925, 17: "Welcher Gegensatz zu dieser brutalen 'schwarzen' Musik Gesang von so erstaunlicher europäischer Gepflegtheit wie der von Roland Hayes!"

103. "Der Neger-Tenor Roland Hayes," *Berliner Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 13, 1924, 2: "Nigger als Clownsegecentrics [*sic*], freiwillig und geschäftskundig sich dem grinsenden Behagen ausliefernd, eine alltägliche Variete-Nummer, auf Gedeih und Verderb mit dem Rassenhochmut verbunden. Aber ein Neger-Tenor mit einem hinreichend verdächtigen Programm von zartesten Blüten aus Schuberts, Schumanns, Brahms, und Wolfs Kunstgarten?"

104. *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 26, 1931, quoted in Nettles, *African American Concert Singers*, 126. Josef Reitler also praised Pankey in a similar manner: "He is the possessor of a musical soul, which in glowing manner is able to approach Schubert and Richard Strauss with a feeling and understanding worthy of a born German. Colorful expression is skillfully combined with a natural mellowness": *Neue Freie Presse*, November 23, 1931, quoted in Nettles, *African American Concert Singers*, 126.

musicality or was rescued from it by virtue of art music's near-magical properties of uplift and transcendence.

Hayes was aware that the public consistently tried to erase his blackness, and he was frustrated by it. While visiting Paris in 1924, he confessed in a diary entry that he knew his blackness to be a catalyst of some kind, sparking listeners to work through their ideas of race and music. "Although I know my face to be black," he wrote, "I am persuaded that the Spirit's choice of my body to inhabit has some specific purpose. . . . I am not pleased when I am told that my being black does not 'matter.' It does matter, it very much matters. I am black for some high purpose in the mind of the Spirit. I must work that purpose out."¹⁰⁵ Wishing neither to be absorbed into the world of whiteness nor to be relegated solely to the world of black music making (high or low), Hayes sought acceptance as both a black man and an interpreter of German lieder. Classical music was universal, many claimed, but as Hayes's and Anderson's stories tell us, audiences tacitly understood it to be a white medium.

White Music, Black Sounds

Many critics applauded black concert singers for becoming white on stage, but others heard their performances as fundamentally black anyway, despite the absence of any racial musical signifiers. Sometimes critics relied on theories of cultural and biological racism to explain what they understood to be a deficient musical interpretation, attributing a performer's supposed inadequacies to an insurmountable cultural and intellectual gulf that no amount of effort or training could bridge. The influential Viennese music critic and editor Julius Korngold commented, for example, "that from each phrase, though technically perfectly rendered, a primitive sort of feeling wells up."¹⁰⁶ After hearing Hayes sing, critic Elsa Bienenfeld complained that "he sings over the expression of the words. As if African intelligence could not follow the German line of thought. But he has the expression of the melody. That may be his instinct."¹⁰⁷ Unlike the journalist at Hayes's Berlin recital who credited his convincing performance to his teacher rather than his own efforts, Bienenfeld perpetuated the long-standing myth of black musical talent as "natural" or "inherent"—and therefore untrainable, being incapable of intellectual adaptation or evolution. Both refused to recognize the musician's agency in and capacity for the proper study and interpretation of lieder.

105. Hayes and Helm, *Angel Mo' and Her Son*, 171.

106. Quoted in Locke, "Roland Hayes," 357.

107. *Neues Wiener Journal*, April 26, 1923, 4: "Am Ausdruck der Worte singt er vorüber. Als ob die afrikanische Intelligenz nicht den deutschen Gedankenweg laufen könnte. Aber er hat den Ausdruck der Melodie. Das ist vielleicht sein Instinkt."

But concert criticism went beyond musical interpretation or linguistic fluency and extended to the nature of sound production itself. The music, some critics argued, *sounded* black, despite the fact that it was a lied by Schubert. This approach routinely functioned to refute the singer's claims to be a professional musician trained in Western art music. For these critics, black performers had no place in central Europe, no matter what they sang. Their blackness was immutable and ever present, manifesting in the ways in which their bodies produced sound. Trapped by their own biology and unable to transcend their own cultural limitations, they were forever doomed to imitate but never actually produce Germanness.

Black concert singers have of course been capable of producing black sonic effects akin to those that exist in popular music. "In popular genres," Nina Eidsheim writes, "vernacular languages and pronunciation styles are used to tag performers with social distinctions."¹⁰⁸ A singer's unique wail or hum can purposely function as a marker of his or her identity and refer to a particular historical tradition in singing. But classical singers largely eschew individual style in favor of adherence to strict musical conventions of diction, timbre, and tone.¹⁰⁹ After all, all European-trained singers deliberately followed the stylistic conventions dictated by Western art music. If listeners claimed to have heard blackness in the voices of African American singers, we are left to draw one of two conclusions: either there were indeed fundamental biological differences in black singers' vocal production, or the distinction between black and white singers in interwar Europe lay, as Eidsheim writes, "beyond the sound itself."¹¹⁰ In the 1920s, some listeners insisted that they heard a fundamental difference in sound. Listening with a racial ear, music critics relied on the long-established transatlantic belief that black vocal difference was located in the timbre of the singer's sound. The notion that black American voices sounded different from white voices had existed in the United States since at least the 1890s, when the American trade paper *The Phonogram* wrote that "Negroes [record] better than white singers, because their voices have a certain sharpness or harshness about them that a white man's has not."¹¹¹ But interwar concert music criticism provides evidence that such views had traveled across the ocean.

Often, German and Austrian critics compared black concert singers' voices to their skin color, creating a racialized form of sensory alignment in which the sound of a singer's voice matched his or her visual appearance. Listeners described such voices as sounding like the colors black, purple, or blue—all dark hues. In 1930, a critic for the *Vossische Zeitung* wrote that

108. Eidsheim, "Marian Anderson and 'Sonic Blackness,'" 643.

109. See *ibid.*, 644.

110. *Ibid.*

111. *The Phonogram*, January 1891, 23, quoted in Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 30. See also Eidsheim, "Marian Anderson and 'Sonic Blackness,'" 644.

“[Anderson’s] complexion is not altogether black, but she has a black, a blue-black voice, which she handles with artistic skill and taste. . . . Sonically her voice sounds somewhat unusual to our ears, exotic: but we readily take a fancy to its appeal.”¹¹² The critic for the daily *Berliner Morgenpost* admired her “purple sonority,” finding it fitting for a contralto.¹¹³ In Vienna in the mid-1930s, critics compared the darkness of Anderson’s tone to the darkness of her skin color. One Viennese critic wrote, for example, “The dark, soft tone of her voice works so well with her African skin color.”¹¹⁴ In Salzburg, another stated that Anderson possessed “a dark voice, brown like her skin.”¹¹⁵ Others praised her “soft, dark, alto voice” and enthused over “the marvel of this dark woman, this dark voice!”¹¹⁶ In 1935, the *Salzburger Volksblatt* critic complained that her deep and dark voice’s “negroid coloring” made it difficult to hear any resonating overtones. “It goes down deeply like a very dark contralto, and up surprisingly high. Where does this little chest find such power?”¹¹⁷ Like those of other black singers in interwar Austria and Germany, Anderson’s voice became black like her race, an audible marker of her racial difference.

White American and white European singers who were Anderson’s contemporaries, however, faced no such criticism. Indeed, when examining their reception it becomes clear that critics’ listening practices were shaped by the act of racial marking/unmarking. At first glance, all contralto voices described in print media appear to have been portrayed in similar ways, their low range frequently eliciting adjectives such as “dark,” regardless of the singer’s race. But that is where the similarities end. German and Austrian reviews of white contraltos such as Gertrude Pitzinger, Sigrid Onegin, and Margarete Matzenauer emphasized color and tone with less specificity than those of Anderson. Their voices were “big,” “warm,” or “glorious” (“herrlich”), they could have wide ranges, they could sound masculine, and they could sound like a church organ or a cello obbligato. But rarely did critics assign a particular color or hue to a singer’s voice, and they never related

112. M.M., “Neger-Altistin,” *Vossische Zeitung*, October 11, 1930, 3: “Sie ist nicht schwarz, aber sie hat eine schwarze, eine blau-schwarze Stimme, die sie mit Kunstfertigkeit und Geschmack behandelt. . . . Im Klang ihrer Stimme liegt etwas unsern Ohren Ungewohntes, Fremdartiges; aber wir verfallen ohne weiteres [*sic*] ihrem Reiz.”

113. *Berliner Morgenpost*, October 12, 1930, 9–10: “Purpurtiefe eines echten Kontra-Alt.”

114. Joseph Marr, “Konzert der Negersängerin Marian Anderson,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, November 22, 1935, 7: “Der dunkle Samfton ihrer Stimme paßt so gut zur afrikanischen Hautfarbe.”

115. “Konzert Marian Anderson,” *Salzburger Volksblatt*, August 29, 1935, 6: “Eine dunkle Stimme, braun wie die Haut.”

116. “Konzerte,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 26, 1935, 5: “Ihre weiche, dunkle Altstimme”; Reti, “Die Negersängerin”: “Wunder der dunklen Frau, der dunklen Stimme!”

117. “Konzert Marian Anderson,” *Salzburger Volksblatt*, August 29, 1935, 6: “Die Stimme hat negroide Färbung”; “Sie geht tief hinab als ausgesprochener sehr dunkler Alt, und verwunderlich hoch hinauf. Woher nimmt dieser kleine Brustkorb nur die Kraft?”

vocal color to the singer's appearance (hair color, eye color, skin color, and so on).

Rather, what made these white contraltos' performances praiseworthy was their ability to control their voices, not necessarily the timbre of the voice itself. Pitzinger, one critic wrote, possessed "a securely functioning feeling of style, that she used to meet each lied composer's characteristic tone, a natural and convincing style of artistic expression and a fresh, musical joyfulness."¹¹⁸ About a decade before Anderson arrived, her mentor, Sara Cahier, had received praise from Austrian critics for having mastered the rules of singing. After hearing her "bring forth a captivating *pianissimo*, for example, and then in the next blink of an eye yield a shocking *fortissimo*," the audience knew that she was a true connoisseur of the lied.¹¹⁹ Jewish American contralto Sophie Braslau was one of the best-known American singers of the 1920s. After a performance in Berlin in 1925, critic Otto Steinhagen stated that Braslau's "phenomenal" voice was "an alto of astonishing resonance, with a seldom heard depth and power that at times reminds one of a manly register. But then come the highs of a mezzo-soprano, likewise full of power and expression-rich elasticity."¹²⁰ Power, control, technique, and the conviction of one's artistic expression were the markers of a white contralto's success to the ears of Austrian and German music critics.

In addition to describing Anderson's and other black singers' voices as dark, critics also frequently called them guttural, as if they were more anthropoidal or primal than white voices. According to the *Wiener Zeitung*, for example, "The guttural quality of Anderson's expression lends her organ the timbre of an Italian viola."¹²¹ "Sometimes," wrote another Viennese critic, "the sound takes shape further back in the throat—is that due to her English mother tongue or is it actually because of her foreign blood?"¹²² Even Hayes's high tenor did not deter Viennese music critic Balduin Bricht

118. *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 91, no. 10 (March 8, 1933): 163–64: "Ein sicher funktionierendes Stilgefühl, das bei jedem Lied den für seinen Autor charakteristischen Ton trifft, eine natürliche und zwingende Art des künstlerischen Vortrags und eine frische Musizierfreudigkeit."

119. "Theater und Kunst: Konzert Cahier," [*Linzer*] *Tagblatt*, May 7, 1920, 6: "daß sie beispielsweise ein bemerkendes Pianissimo zu bringen vermag, daß im nächsten Augenblicke einem erschütternden Fortissimo spielend weicht."

120. "Sophie Braslau," *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 83, no. 23 (June 10, 1925): 62: "Vortrefflicher aber noch, geradezu phänomenal, ist die Stimme dieser Sängerin, ein Alt von erstaunlicher Resonanz, dazu eine seltene Tiefe und eine Kraft darin, die zuweilen an männliche Register erinnert. Dazu kommt die Höhe eines Mezzosoprans, ebenfalls voll Kraft und ausdrucksreicher Elastizität."

121. "Brahms Abend Bruno Walters," *Wiener Zeitung*, June 19, 1936, 8: "Das Gutturale der Aussprache verleiht ihrem Organ das Timbre einer italienischen Viola."

122. Marr, "Konzert der Negersängerin Marian Anderson": "Manchmal rundet sich der Ton weiter rückwärts im Hals—kommt es von der englischen Muttersprache oder ist es doch das fremde Blut?"

from gendering and racializing it, describing it as a “somewhat guttural expression of a tenor voice with a feminine resonance!”¹²³ When baritone Aubrey Pankey performed in Salzburg in 1932, he too was criticized for sounding black. His style of singing was said to be too different and exotic to offer German listeners anything of value. His voice, which the critic described as lacking in color, was “of a different nature from that of Europeans. It sits very far back and is very guttural. Obviously, this has to do with the Negroid formation of the mouth.”¹²⁴ When Pankey performed in Berlin in 1924, a critic at the *Berliner Tageblatt* articulated what he believed was so special about the black voice:

That which we love about the voices of a people so young at heart and in touch with nature—the smooth, unspoiled sound, the sophistication that does not allow any ugly sound or anything tasteless or violent to emerge—Mr. Pankey possesses to a high degree. Also surprising in his case, his empathic understanding of our language, tone, and sentiment. Schubert’s “Wanderer,” concluded with “Nacht und Träume” in deep resignation, could not have been rendered more impressively.¹²⁵

In contrast, some listeners championed other black singers’ voices precisely *because* they judged their voices to lack the guttural quality black musicians were believed to possess naturally. When, for example, Vehanen first heard Anderson perform at the University of Berlin with concert manager Rulle Rasmussen, they discussed her voice using language similar to that of the critics. Vehanen recalled that Rasmussen observed,

“I think she is a marvelous pupil with a beautiful voice; but evidently she has much to learn.”
[Vehanen replied,] “I don’t know. I think the voice is well placed, without the guttural tone that most Negroes have.”
“I don’t mean the voice,” Rulle replied. “I mean the expression, the interpretation.”¹²⁶

123. Balduin Bricht, “Der Negersänger Roland Hayes,” *Kleine Volks-Zeitung*, April 27, 1923, 7: “Diese etwas kehlige Aussendung einer ins Feminine hinüberklingenden Tenorstimme!”

124. “Negergesang unter Polizeibegleitung,” *Salzburger Volksblatt*, May 10, 1932, 10: “Die Stimme ist anders geartet als die des Europäers. Sie sitzt sehr weit hinten und ist sehr guttural. Offenbar hängt das mit der negroiden Mundbildung zusammen.”

125. J.S., “Ein Negerbariton,” *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, May 14, 1932, 3: “Was wir an den Stimmen des so jung gebliebenen, naturenahen Volkes lieben, den weichen, unberührten Klang, die Kultiviertheit, die keinen unschönen Laut, nichts Geschmackloses oder Gewaltames aufkommen läßt, besitzt Mr. Pankey in hohem Grade. Überraschend auch bei ihm die Einfühlung in unsere Sprache, Ton- und Empfindungs-welt. Schuberts ‘Wanderer’ mit dem in tiefer Resignation gebrachten Schluß, ‘Nacht und Träume’ können nicht eindrucksvoller wiedergegeben werden.”

126. Vehanen, *Marian Anderson*, 19.

These debates about singers' voices—purple or brilliantly light, guttural or more cultivated—reveal that audiences often relied on biological notions of racial difference in assessing a performance of classical music. Their criticisms of singers' voices and behaviors assumed that their performances were marked by essential features—biological and cultural—that were not only fundamental to their musicianship but could not be overcome through musical practice, cultural immersion, or linguistic training.¹²⁷ For such listeners, their blackness was irredeemable, permeating everything it touched, including classical music itself, which supposedly had little to do with race.

Conclusion

German and Austrian audiences were willing to grant black singers unequivocal authenticity in one repertoire: African American spirituals. In spite of their different and even opposing stances on black concert singers, most music critics concluded their reviews by praising the performers for their heartfelt renditions of songs such as “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” or “Go Down, Moses.” Here, finally, after a long evening of performing Germanness, black singers supposedly dropped the act to reveal their “true selves.” These true selves were apparently not German or European at all. Neither did critics locate black authenticity in a contemporary, vibrant, bustling, transnational, and transatlantic black diasporic society; instead, they firmly planted black singers in nineteenth-century antebellum America. African American spirituals were, to many listeners' minds, the authentic musical expression of life in the antebellum Deep South, and audiences praised them accordingly with repeated calls for encores. The reporter for *Die Stunde* wrote that although Pankey sang German lieder well, the “best he gave us, however, was definitely in the native spirituals.”¹²⁸ The critic for the *Berliner Tageblatt* stated that Hayes ended the evening with songs that were “sung as on the plantations.”¹²⁹ At one of Anderson's last concerts in Vienna in November 1937, the audience so relished her performance of spirituals that they demanded she perform several of them twice.¹³⁰ Although central European audiences might have believed they were listening to the simple songs of formerly enslaved black peoples, musicological scholarship suggests

127. Groundbreaking scholarship on music and disability has been especially helpful in exposing music's complicity in enforcing biologically reductive modes of thinking; see Straus, *Extraordinary Measures*, and Howe et al., “Colloquy: On the Disability Aesthetics of Music.”

128. “Konzert,” *Die Stunde*, November 19, 1931, 7: “sein Bestes aber doch wohl in den heimischen Spirituals gegeben hat.”

129. *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, May 17, 1924, 4: “Den Schluß des Konzertes bildeten ‘negro spirituals’ [*sic*], geistliche Negergesänge, wie sie in den Plantagen gesungen werden.”

130. See “Konzert Marian Anderson,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, November 23, 1937, 10.

otherwise. As Eileen Southern, Jon Michael Spencer, Ronald Radano, Lawrence Schenbeck, Paul Allen Anderson, Sandra Graham, and Jon Cruz have argued, African American concert performers frequently arranged spirituals to suit the tastes of white American and European audiences.¹³¹ Hayes's performances of African American spirituals in central Europe sounded very much like European art songs; for one recital in Berlin in 1925, for example, he orchestrated his arrangement of spirituals for harp and strings instead of using the piano.¹³²

A few critics warned against emphasizing African American spirituals over German lieder in evaluating the performances of black concert singers. As much as the music critic for *Das Echo* enjoyed Anderson's performance of spirituals such as "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," he nonetheless pushed back against popular opinion that African American spirituals were her best work. "It would be an injustice, however, to single out these songs," he stated. "Seldom has Schubert been sung with such a sense of style and inner connection."¹³³ The critic for *Die Stunde* agreed: "The Schubert that she sings is the most authentic and best Schubert, and the spirituals move us as if they originated from the Danube and not the Mississippi."¹³⁴ Unlike performances by Paul Robeson or Hayes, which critics praised for transporting the audience to a Southern plantation or the Mississippi River, Anderson's *Liederabend* was fully Viennese, in this critic's estimation, for even her spirituals reminded audiences of their own *Heimat*.

African American *Liederabende* functioned as sonic experiments in central Europe, where audiences tested out the relationship between race and sound in classical music in an era of increased transatlantic black migration and travel.¹³⁵ Audience constructions of whiteness and blackness tell us that race was not only a visual experience but also a sonic one in German musical culture. Using their "listening ear," audiences sought to determine what they were seeing and hearing within the Austro-German canon along racial lines. They revisited their definitions of blackness and whiteness in response to black performers' musical erasures of the black-white binary that dominated transatlantic discourses of race, nation, and culture in the twentieth century.

131. Southern, *Music of Black Americans*; Spencer, *New Negroes and Their Music*; Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, ch. 4; Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music*; Anderson, *Deep River*; Graham, *Spirituals*; Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*.

132. See *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, September 15, 1925. See also Stewart, *New Negro*, 372–73, and Thurman, "Africa in European Evening Attire."

133. *Das Echo*, November 22, 1937, 5–6: "Es wäre sehr ungerecht, nur diese Lieder herzuheben. Selten wurde Schubert mit so viel Stilgefühl und innerer Verbundenheit gesungen."

134. "Marian Anderson," *Die Stunde*, November 23, 1937, 4: "So ist der Schubert, den sie singt, echter und bester Schubert und die Spirituals rühren uns an, als wären sie an der Donau und nicht am Mississippi entstanden."

135. See Naumann, "African American Performers and Culture."

Black performances of German lieder take on new meaning when we consider them not only as musical interpretations of canonical works but also as performances of cultural citizenship in Europe. The question of whether different racial minorities can claim a German or Austrian identity has become only more urgent in the twenty-first century, especially with the rise of far-right political parties in Europe. Musicological scholarship has the potential to play a critical role in public conversations about the relationship between blackness and national identity not only in the United States but also in Europe, a continent that still largely embraces a mythology of whiteness in order to deny Europeans of color their European identities.¹³⁶ African American renditions of Brahms or Beethoven offer a powerful musical counternarrative to our historical narratives of European identity formation because what they performed struck right at the heart of German culture and the question of whom it belonged to. Their rigorous study and successful execution of German lieder suggest that, contrary to ongoing far-right biological claims to German national identity, Germanness is something that can be not only performed but also *learned*.

But African Americans' masterful musical game of authenticity vs. mimicry, which allowed them to be at once black and German on stage, always required the audience to play along with them. The shared, liminal space of the concert hall was, ultimately, a temporary one. Having come away from a *Liederabend*, listeners resorted to two particular modes of racial listening. Some chose to call black singers white, which by extension associated Germanness with whiteness. Others insisted that something foreign or alien, located in the black body, had impinged on a black musician's ability to produce German sounds, thus sonically marking their performances as irredeemably un-German. Race was ultimately the filter people used to understand performances of repertoire from the Austro-German canon. A fixed polarity and a false dichotomy guided their complex listening processes: blackness or Germanness. Outside the concert hall, in the sober light of day, the two categories remained separate spheres at opposite poles.

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136. See El-Tayeb, *European Others*.

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Abstract

When African American concert singers began to perform German lieder in central Europe in the 1920s, white German and Austrian listeners were astounded by the veracity and conviction of their performances. How had they managed to sing like Germans? This article argues that black performances of German music challenged audiences' definitions of blackness, whiteness, and German music during the transatlantic Jazz Age in interwar central Europe. Upon hearing black performers masterfully sing lieder by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and others, audiences were compelled to consider whether German national identity was contingent upon whiteness. Some listeners chose to call black concert singers "Negroes with white souls," associating German music with whiteness by extension. Others insisted that the singer had sounded black and therefore un-German. Race

was ultimately the filter through which people interpreted these performances of the Austro-German musical canon. This article contributes to a growing body of scholarship that investigates how and when audiences began to associate classical music with whiteness. Simultaneously, it offers a musicological intervention in contemporary discourses that still operate under the assumption that it is impossible to be both black and German.

Keywords: race, lieder, listening, black musicians, whiteness