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HANNS EISLER ON THE MOVE: TRACING MOBILITY IN THE 'REISESONATE'

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Genosse Eisler, wo steckst Du wohl
in Moskau, New York oder an 'nem Pol?
—Ludwig Renn, 'Steckbrief für Hanns Eisler' (1937)¹

FROM 1929, HANNS EISLER spent much of his time journeying. Film projects brought him to the Soviet Union, and he travelled with his music to concerts in Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands. When Hitler was named German chancellor in January 1933, Eisler was already on the move. The composer followed Bertolt Brecht to Denmark, wrote music in Paris, travelled across Europe to concerts, and planned multiple trips, often via London, to the United States, where connections through New York's New School of Social Research ushered him across North America. Engaged in the artistic multitasking characteristic of his entire career, Eisler was collaborating, composing, conducting, and coordinating the international workers' music movement, and the exilic networking and travel from 1933 paved the way for his migration to the United States in 1938.

In the profoundest sense, Eisler's displacement has fashioned, obscured, and faded his portrait as a composer. A recent collection of essays on the composer, edited by Hartmut Krones, asks a question with its title, as it expresses the authors' difficulty locating and emplacing their subject: *Hanns Eisler: Ein Komponist ohne Heimat*.² Across studies of his 'exile', the composer's itinerancy protrudes. 'Just when he'd arrived, suddenly he wasn't there', Hans Christian Nørregaard remarked on Eisler's 'presence' in the German exile community around Bertolt Brecht in Svendborg, Denmark.³ There he never stayed long enough to request a residence permit, and Nørregaard based his study of the composer's whereabouts on anecdotes extrapolated from letters

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¹ 'Comrade Eisler, where might you be? / In Moscow, New York, or at a pole?' Quoted by Hanns Eisler in his article 'Über ein Konzert bei den internationalen Brigaden in Spanien', in Günter Mayer (ed.), *Musik und Politik: Schriften 1924–1948* (Leipzig, 1973), 395.

² Hartmut Krones (ed.), *Hanns Eisler: Ein Komponist ohne Heimat?* (Vienna, 2012).

³ Christian Nørregaard, 'Hanns Eisler, Komponist', in Willy Dähnhardt and Birgit S. Nielsen (eds.), *Exil in Dänemark: Deutschsprachige Wissenschaftler, Künstler und Schriftsteller im dänischen Exil nach 1933* (Heide, 1993), 493.

between Grete Steffin and Walter Benjamin. Hanns Eisler's exile was conditioned by his identity as a composer continuously on the road. He changed and adapted, playing the roles of pedagogue, music theatre collaborator, workers' music movement organizer, film composer, and Central European cultural visionary.

This essay puts Eisler's displacement into relief through examination of his *Reisesonate*, or Journey Sonata, for violin and piano. The three-movement sonata for violin and piano serves as a connective thread to synthesize biographical, material, and stylistic histories. It is also a touch point for portraits of the composer that have their roots in such contrasting modes of evidence as gossip and governmental surveillance files. Eisler's identity as a traveller prompts our hearing and understanding of the piece. Both composer and work travelled together from 1937, the starting date for the composition of the sonata, to 1948, the year Eisler fell victim to McCarthyism and left the United States to avoid deportation. Programmed on his farewell recitals in Los Angeles and New York, the sonata's performance foretold the composer's departure.

Against these historical circumstances, one is tempted to construct the Sonata as a by-product of the composer's biography, as a 'lesser' work that, written for the desk drawer, neither suits the politically engaged oeuvre of Eisler's Weimar years nor the return to Schoenbergian serial aesthetics in the United States. We would not be the first to do so. The sonata has not gained a foothold in the Eisler literature, and, perhaps symptomatically, Károly Csipak assesses the work as 'irritatingly harmless'. Why? Because it neither challenges the young violin student with a complete range of violin techniques, nor does it draw in serious listeners by exhausting the twelve-note series upon which each movement is based.⁴

Conversely, our reading draws out the work's connective potential and thereby develops Eisler's boisterous and sometimes uneasy movements among musical, literary, and exilic communities. We resist the tendency to uncover the nomadic voice of the exile in the work, a move that would parallel the dominant scholarly assessment of the *Hollywood Songbook* as a statement on displacement as a cohering, if despondent, state.⁵ Instead, we position the *Reisesonate* in several contexts—its material, performance, stylistic, and political histories—each of which challenge the directional simplicity of emigration as the move from home to exile, from nation to nationlessness.⁶ Ultimately, the *Reisesonate*, with travel as its stimulus, trajectory, and historiographical legacy, encourages and organizes a shift in understanding of Eisler mid-century as present rather than absent.

We begin by situating the sonata's compositional genesis against the background of Eisler's travels and then consider some tropes and strategies in Eisler scholarship vis-à-vis his places. An assessment of Eisler's travel writings leads us to consider the sonata as a travelogue as we highlight traces of mobility through an analytical

⁴ Károly Csipak, *Probleme der Volkstümlichkeit bei Hanns Eisler* (Munich, 1975), 200–1.

⁵ The overwhelming majority of Eisler scholars approach the *Hollywooder Liederbuch* as the exile's outcry of despair. While a complete listing would go beyond the scope of this footnote, examples are Claudia Albert, *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens: Hanns Eislers 'Hollywooder Liederbuch' (1942/43)* (Stuttgart, 1991); Markus Roth, *Der Gesang als Asyl: Analytische Studien zu Hanns Eislers 'Hollywood-Liederbuch'* (Hofheim, 2006); and Horst Weber, *I am not a Hero, I am a Composer: Hanns Eisler in Hollywood* (Hildesheim, 2012).

⁶ For an overview of the way that exile studies within musicology have, until recently, conceived of displacement as linear transfer see Brigid Cohen, *Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-garde Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2012), 13–16. For a critical overview of German-language exile studies see Florian Scheduling, "'The Splinter in your Eye': Uncomfortable Legacies and German Exile Studies', in Erik Levi and Florian Scheduling (eds.), *Music and Displacement: Diasporas, Mobilities and Dislocations in Europe and Beyond* (Lanham, Md., 2010), 119–34.

reading of the work. We explore how, against the background of travel and mobility, the sonata's components and technical constituents become themselves mobile and destabilize static notions of musical modernism in the process. Beyond this close reading, the sonata's performance history highlights how closely the work connects with Eisler's own mobility as it brackets and pinpoints his migrations. Lastly, we consider further documentary evidence about Eisler's journeys: the surveillance files compiled about him by the British Security Service, only recently made available to scholars.

PLACING THE *REISESONATE*

In 1937 Hanns Eisler was fervently productive, composing works across the gamut of his musical interests: workers' songs for the popular resistance in Spain, settings of Brecht texts, nine chamber cantatas, the *Lenin-Requiem*, and two movements of the *Deutsche Sinfonie*.⁷ He also led an itinerant life. When he boarded a train to the Czechoslovak capital in October and began work on the *Reisesonate*, he was headed to performances of his chamber cantatas conducted by Alois Hába. There, Eisler would also marry Louise Jolesch before travelling to the United States, arriving in New York on 21 January 1938, where the American Music League organized a concert of welcome for him at the New School on 27 February.⁸ He had begun 1937 in Spain, engaged in the cultural activities of the international brigades fighting Franco. Ad hoc concerts, which the composer conducted, energized solidarity among the resistance, and three songs speak to the specific political context, to writing music in response to immediate personal experiences: 'The March of the 5th Regiment', 'No pasarán', and 'The Song of 7 January'. In the latter Eisler responded, for example, to the death of Albert Müller, a German writer who fell at the front in Madrid.⁹ From 27 January, he and Louise had settled in a tourist hotel in Svendborg, where Eisler visited Brecht and immersed himself in composition, travelling once to Paris in March for the performance of a portion of an orchestral suite at the ISCM festival.¹⁰ That spring and summer he was particularly prolific, composing nine chamber cantatas and the *Lenin-Requiem*. These pieces, as well as an article ('Einiges über den Fortschritt in der Musik'), reveal that the composer used both music and prose as outlets for preliminary thoughts on the productive potential for approaching musical consonances with the techniques of twelve-note composition.¹¹ We shall return to this concept as it relates to the violin sonata.

The title of his violin sonata foregrounds the context of Eisler's migration in no uncertain terms. Subtitled *Reisesonate*, the piece accompanied the composer as he travelled. As Eisler journeyed through Europe in 1937, the year he began composing the Sonata, around the United States from 1938 to 1948, and from Prague to Vienna to Berlin from 1948 to 1950, he packed the manuscript papers with sketches, movement drafts, and notes for performance. The *Reisesonate* provides musical counterpoint to the composer's chaotic biography, almost like a travel companion, and sheds light on Eisler's relationship to the journeying that defined his life at mid-century. By drawing attention to the composer's mobility through musical inscription, the sonata

⁷ See Fritz Hennenberg, *Das große Brecht Liederbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 63–7.

⁸ See Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler, Political Musician* (Cambridge, 1982), 166; and Eberhardt Klemm, *Hanns Eisler, für Sie porträtiert* (Leipzig, 1973), 79.

⁹ According to Klemm, Müller was company commander in the Thälmann battalion. See Klemm, *Hanns Eisler, für Sie porträtiert*, 28.

¹⁰ See Nørregaard, 'Hanns Eisler, Komponist', 498.

¹¹ Eisler, 'Einiges über den Fortschritt in der Musik', in Mayer (ed.), *Musik und Politik*, 391–4.

challenges the simplistic reduction of this period in the composer's life as a linear journey from home to exile resolved by return.

Though the precise genesis of the travel sonata nickname remains nebulous, a preponderance of documentary and biographical evidence buttresses the designation's logic—perhaps one reason for the evocative inscription's missing appraisal. A handwritten annotation on the cover page of one manuscript copy reads as clarifying marginalia and provides a first location and timestamp for the work: '[On a journey to Prague in October 1937]' (see Pl. 1).¹² And yet, Eisler's actual location remains unclear, as his point of departure is omitted. The open-ended square bracket situates travel as the backdrop for the piece and, quite unwittingly, puts into motion the extensive annotation Eisler's manuscripts for the work will undergo. At the same time, that unclosed bracket takes on poetic significance. In drawing attention to the impetus and omitting the moment of completion, it almost participates in keeping the composition marginal. Without the finality that would cement the sonata's status as a work, the manuscript invites us to think of it as provisional.

The violin sonata is in many ways straightforward, to the extent that it is both concise in length and economic with respect to form and dodecaphonic composition. Nonetheless, the three-movement work was not composed in one sitting, on one journey. Eisler frequently wrote music and prose on trains, ships, and in hotel rooms.¹³ The note's implication—that he wrote the entire piece over the brief journey from Svendborg to Prague—is untrue.¹⁴ A longer perspective on the *Reisesonate's* paper trail allows glimpses into the stop-and-start of its compositional genesis. Sketches show Eisler experimenting with various fugue subjects for the third movement and working through alternative piano textures to accompany the first movement's two primary subjects, for example.¹⁵ Written on paper printed in America and collected among compositions that both pre-date and post-date the 1937 Prague journey (e.g. *Kantate auf den Tod eines Genossen* [June 1937] and *Woodbury-Büchlein* [1941]), the fragments associate the work with journeys past and future, that is, with the longer journey of Eisler's displacement.¹⁶

Eisler most likely kept the physical archive of the *Reisesonate* with him throughout his subsequent migrations, as he travelled to New York via London, to Los Angeles, and then back to Berlin via New York, Prague, and Vienna. Preserving the violin sonata as a work in progress, and as a work composed in the United States, was even a strategy Eisler employed to underscore his own allegiance with the Austro-German tradition, and by extension as a composer who left internationalist politics when he

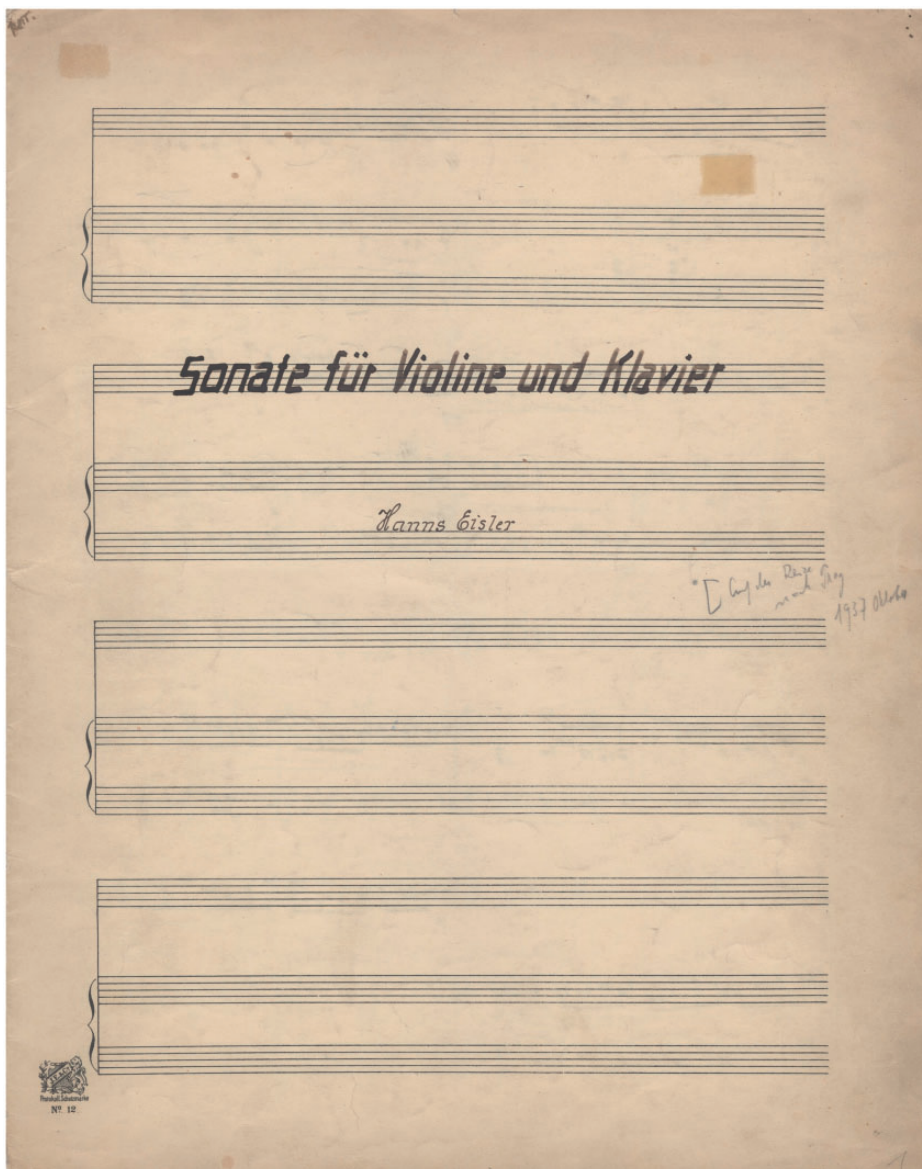
¹² '[Auf der Reise nach Prag 1937 Oktober]', Call no. 280, Hanns-Eisler Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

¹³ Friederike Wißmann, for example, discusses the *Deutsche Sinfonie's* episodic composition in this context; *Hanns Eisler: Komponist, Weltbürger, Revolutionär* (Munich, 2012), 114.

¹⁴ The composer himself, however, perpetuated this myth, convenient as it was. Manfred Grabs relates an anecdote from a violinist who had studied the work with Eisler, in which each movement captured the ethos of an urban environment on the travel docket in 1936–7. He claimed that in the first one heard 'the motorized and pounding rhythms of American cities, in the second Paris, as one sits freezing and sipping soup broth at a bistro early at five in the morning, and in the last the joy upon returning to Prague'. See Manfred Grabs, 'Bemerkungen zu einigen Fragen der Kammermusik', in Manfred Grabs (ed.), *Hanns Eisler heute: Berichte Probleme, Beobachtungen* (Berlin, 1974), 102–3.

¹⁵ Call nos. 836 and 842, Hanns-Eisler Archiv.

¹⁶ Call nos. 833 and 850, Hanns-Eisler Archiv. Numerous sketches are on paper printed by Passantino Brands, which of course Eisler might have picked up during any of his stays in the USA. As with the *Reisesonate* itself, the trace of travel ensnarls the sonata in the migration pattern more so than it fixes the compositional process to particular places or transportation vehicles.



PL. I. Hanns Eisler, *Reisesonate* MS, cover page. Hanns-Eisler Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, call no. 280

left continental Europe.¹⁷ In a 1946 letter, he reported on the nature of his professional activity 'since my immigration in 1940', citing among others his productive concert music output on the West Coast:

¹⁷ Other works from 1937 were prominent in his musical profile upon arrival in the United States. Four of the chamber cantatas were programmed on the 1938 New York Composers' Forum concert that showcased Eisler alongside Ruth Crawford. See Melissa J. de Graaf, *The New York Composers' Forum Concerts, 1935–1940* (Rochester, NY, 2013), 72.

From February 1946 till June I taught [at] the University of Southern California advanced counterpoint and composition, I composed the following works in this time: a string quartet [*sic*], piano sonata, theme and variations for piano, sonata for violin and piano, a symphonic [*sic*], a suite for orchestra, five orchestra pieces which were accepted for the international music festival in San Francisco, and many other works for orchestra, voice and so on.¹⁸

Eisler's white lies—few of the works listed here were written in 1946, and much of the composition of the sonata also pre-dates this year—further illustrate that following the *Reisesonate* as a thread through Eisler's exile sheds light on the composer's ever shifting identity politics. Relics of his savvy professional politics, the fibs shape his sense of success in America.

Edition Peters would ultimately publish (and copyright) the sonata in 1959 in a series that makes available many of the composer's American compositions.¹⁹ Meanwhile the work had not been lying protected and silent in his desk drawer. Eisler cleaned up manuscripts for use by musicians, adding dynamics and expressive markings. In Hollywood, a self-described 'friend and admirer', the violinist and composer Theodore Norman, urged students and colleagues to perform the violin sonata. Norman, active in the promotion of avant-garde émigrés in Los Angeles concert life, reached out to Eisler in a letter: 'Is it possible to have photo-static copies of your violin-sonate [*sic*] made so that my students can study the work. [*sic*] I have also spoken to other violinists and they would also like to have a copy? Perhaps you have plans of publishing the work soon?'²⁰ Later copies have traces of those performances: fingerings and cues in addition to bowings and phrasing markings. Proofs from the 1950s have the markings Eisler would send as corrections to Edition Peters while preparing the first edition. Scholars have consistently interpreted his development of the *Deutsche Sinfonie* with a mode of slow, subversive composition for the desk drawer.²¹ In contrast, the changes to the sonata reveal Eisler's editorial process more than they do a shifting political perspective or increased psychological turmoil, as is the case with the large-scale musical critique of fascism. Along the way—just when or how is impossible to determine because the composer's sketches and fair copies are undated—he began adding the sonata's nickname in parentheses beneath the pragmatic primary title. Over time, however, the title of the work remained unfixed.²²

Fussing with musical details, Eisler hardly altered the *Reisesonate's* thrust once he moved to the United States, but the work continued to configure and reflect his changing communities. In Los Angeles, Eisler wrote the names and addresses of two performers on the cover of one copy: Eudice Shapiro, the leader of an RKO film orchestra, and Norman, the first violinist from the Los Angeles Philharmonic (1935–42),

¹⁸ Letter to a Mr Katz, 25 Oct. 1946. Reproduced in Horst Weber and Manuela Schwartz, *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker, 1933–1950*, i: *Kalifornien* (Munich, 2003), 289.

¹⁹ For example, the Third Piano Sonata (1943) and *Vierzehn Arten den Regen zu beschreiben*, Op. 70 (1940) were published in 1960, the String Quartet, Op. 75 (1938) in 1961, and the Nonet no. 1 (1939) in 1962.

²⁰ Undated letter from Theodore Norman to Hanns Eisler, Lion Feuchtwanger Collection, University of Southern California.

²¹ See Wißmann, *Hanns Eisler*, 107–26.

²² Several sources pertinent here are held in the Hanns Eisler Archiv. The MS bears the descriptive title 'Sonate für Violine und Klavier' alone (call mark 280). A later document, presumably the proofs to the manuscript, is entitled 'Sonate für Violine und Klavier / (Die Reise Sonate)' (call no. 167), while a further copy bears the inscription 'Sonate für Violine und Klavier / (Die ReiseSonate)' (call no. 1058). The first edition, published by Edition Peters in 1959, is headed 'Die Reisesonate für Violine und Klavier'. In a letter to Erich Katz on 25 Oct. 1946, Eisler refers to the work as a 'sonata for violin and piano' (quoted in Weber and Schwartz, *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker*, 289).

who urged his students to learn the sonata.²³ Neither being an émigré themselves, they call into question just how isolated the ‘little Weimar’ of Hollywood was. The sonata figured prominently in the concerts that the Committee for Justice for Hanns Eisler organized out of solidarity with the composer following the tribunal at the House Un-American Activities Committee. They took place in the Coronet Theater in Los Angeles on 14 December 1947 and then in New York City’s Town Hall on 28 February 1948. That Eisler imagined that the acclaim from the latter—in particular the extensive press coverage—might somehow allow his music to act as his proxy emerges in the thank you note he sent to the violinist, Tossy Spivakovsky, for the New York performance. In his letter, Eisler celebrated being back in Europe and explained that with the *Reisesonate* score sent under separate cover, he had hopes the émigré virtuoso would occasionally play it again.²⁴

Spivakovsky, himself a Berlin-trained touring émigré, is a key character in the *Reisesonate*’s story to the extent that his performance and participation articulate what might have been anticipated, had the work not been so readily written off as a student exercise by critics. In the live recording of his interpretation at Town Hall we hear virtuosic flair that glistens throughout.²⁵ In Spivakovsky’s hands, warm glissandi pacify moments of militant severity that otherwise resonate with Eisler’s workers’ song aesthetic, for example in the concluding bars of the first movement. This violinist’s *Reisesonate* embodies the Central European heritage of the work and projects the sonata’s substance rather than its pedagogical valence, an aspect that many subsequent performers foreground. Sustained correspondence between Eisler and Spivakovsky kept the sonata transatlantic.²⁶ The missive from the composer leaves the story of exile travel open-ended on two fronts. Most simply, Eisler keeps in touch, perpetuating the communities of solidarity manifest in the Committee for Justice for Hanns Eisler. They communicated sporadically in this fashion until 1962, when Eisler died in East Berlin. Furthermore, writing on 1 August 1948 from Dobříš, Czechoslovakia, Eisler is still journeying: he reports that subsequent correspondence should be sent to Vienna, where he will be present for a premiere in one week’s time.²⁷

FROM EXILE TO MOBILITY

The *Reisesonate* bookends Eisler’s migrations: it accompanies him on the move. That the work’s physical documentation also travelled with him is crucial in shifting our understanding of his mobility as contingent and dynamic. In Eisler historiography, the com-

²³ Call no. 1058, Hanns-Eisler Archiv.

²⁴ Call no. 5845, Hanns-Eisler Archiv. Dated 1 Aug. 1948, the letter begins: ‘ICH SCHICKE IHNEN MIT GLEICHER POST DIE VIOLIN SONATE, UND HOFFE SEHR, [dass] SIE SIE NOCH GELEGENTLICH SPIELEN WERDEN. IHR ERFOLG IN DER [sic] TOWN HALL, WAR JA SEHR ERMUTIGEND’ (I send the violin sonata in the same post, and hope very much that you will occasionally play it again. Your success in the Town Hall was very encouraging).

²⁵ The Hanns-Eisler Archiv holds a sparkling live recording of the New York Town Hall Concert of 28 Feb. 1948 with Tossy Spivakovsky (violin) and Leonid Hambro (piano).

²⁶ Spivakovsky also received communication from the Committee of Eisler defenders, thanking him for his performance of the sonata at the fateful New York concert that marked Eisler’s last public American appearance. See the undated letter from Freyda Adler to Tossy Spivakovsky held by the Lila Acheson Wallace Library at the Juilliard School, New York. The letterhead lists Aaron Copland as the Committee’s National Chairman, with Leonard Bernstein and Roger Sessions as Co-Chairmen. The East Coast Committee consisted of Mrs Kurt Alfred Adler, Stella Adler, Betty Bean, Harold Clurman, Mrs Paul Draper, Martha Foley, Mrs Robe Garfield, Mrs Yip Harburg, Mrs Barry Hyams, Eleanor Lynn, Mrs Emmie Rado, Mrs Irwin Shaw, and Mrs Ingeborg Stephens, while the West Coast Committee included Mrs June Brown, Mrs William Dieterle, Mrs Paul Hendreid, Mrs Hilda Lantz, Mrs Clifford Odets, Mrs Mary Rolfe, and Salka Viertel.

²⁷ Letter from Hanns Eisler to Tossy Spivakovsky, Hanns Eisler Archiv, call no. 5845.

poser's homes—from Vienna to Berlin to Hollywood to East Berlin—have long been used as anchors regarding both the composer's biography and his music.²⁸ Musicologists read the composer's own ideas about engaged music into this periodization, consistently aiming to connect him to his places and fix his status as insider or outsider. Alternatively, Eisler is celebrated as representative of his time, but the synchronic investigation of 'Hanns Eisler der Zeitgenosse' likewise discourages approaches to his music that make diachronic connections.²⁹ Yet this static approach simplifies the relationship between composer and location, reducing him to a cast of international characters wearing different hats: a naive Eisler in Vienna as a diligent, if critical, Schoenberg student, composing for the circles of the Second Viennese school; an ambitious Eisler in Berlin coaching workers' choirs in performances of his songs; a professionally successful and personally isolated Eisler in New York and Hollywood, composing for films and responding to the circumstances of exile with works for the desk drawer; and finally, a nationalist Eisler, imagining and implementing a socialist music culture in East Berlin. Such blunt demarcations leave the composer's interests one-dimensional, dependent on place. Periodizations invite historians to pick and choose a favourite Eisler for their cause. For example, in left-leaning readings Eisler's Hollywood scores represent a capitulation to economic pressure.³⁰ On the other hand, the dismissal of the composer's activity throughout his residence in East Berlin—an artistic 'death' that correlates with his endorsement of the GDR—conflates Cold War judgement and music criticism.³¹

Predisposed to boundaries rather than fluidities, one might read Eisler himself as partaking in this levelling of his life chronicle. When students at the Humboldt University in East Berlin asked him what he thought of jazz, the composer referred to his years in America as though they had been another life in the past: 'You are aware that I lived in America for about thirteen years through the coincidence of emigration.'³² Here it is important to hear Eisler's cursory 'coincidence' ('Zufall'), which explains why the composer paints a uniform picture of jazz and life in America through his response. Over the course of the conversation he downplays the American years of his life, in the process taking his own exile—and its resonance with students in East Berlin—for granted. The reference to serendipity does much to undermine the casual and anecdotal tone, however. Emigration was, of course, anything but a fluke.

Periodizations that rely on Eisler's seemingly stable and rigid places not only highlight the breaks and discontinuities in between them, favouring continuity over

²⁸ For example, Albrecht Dümmling devotes a paragraph to each of these four locations, with a few theoretical discussions. See 'Zur Person Hanns Eislers', in Günter Mayer (ed.), *Hanns Eisler der Zeitgenosse: Positionen—Perspektiven. Materialien zu den Eisler-Festen 1994/95* (Leipzig, 1997), 9–10. Numerous monographs focus on a single location. See e.g. Peter Schweinhardt, *Fluchtpunkt Wien: Hanns Eislers Wiener Arbeiten nach der Rückkehr aus dem Exil* (Wiesbaden, 2006) and Horst Weber, *I am not a Hero, I am a Composer*.

²⁹ See Mayer, *Hanns Eisler der Zeitgenosse*, which was commissioned by the International Hanns Eisler Society.

³⁰ See e.g. Weber, *I am not a Hero, I am a Composer*, 77. Weber generally takes a holistic view towards Eisler's output in Los Angeles, reading works of various ambitions side by side, but his scorn for the strain money and capitalism induced in the composer interprets financial pressure as necessarily destructive of artistic freedom: '[Eisler], too, was prepared to participate in the obscuring of social conditions in Hollywood that prevented capitalism from the realization that it is itself the source of the world's misfortune.'

³¹ See e.g. Albrecht Betz, 'Der Komponist als Dialektiker: Hanns Eislers Philosophie der Musik', in Albrecht Dümmling (ed.), *Hanns Eisler* (Frankfurt am Main, 2010), 140. Betz posits that, in the context of the GDR, Eisler 'never truly achieved a late work of any significance'.

³² 'Sie wissen, dass ich durch den Zufall der Emigration ungefähr 13 Jahre lang in Amerika gelebt habe.' See Dieter B. Herrmann, *Ich bin mit jedem Lob einverstanden: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch 1960–1962* (Leipzig and Hildburghausen, 2009), 63.

change, stability over mobility, and emplacement over displacement. They also obstruct the dynamic energy consistent *throughout* Eisler's music and paint him as a chameleon-like and strategic code switcher, reworking musical aesthetics to suit political and social pressures. In other words, the attempt to periodize his career actually puts the composer's 'works' at odds with his 'life'. A person of incompatible multiplicities, Eisler becomes a dissonant figure who defies integration into a larger narrative. The *Reisesonate* is a reflection, expression, and product of the composer's personal journey. Following its trail makes way for an integrated, if unstable, narrative of the transnational politics, the individual initiative, and the circumstances that made Eisler a traveller. Here we take a cue from Manfred Grabs, who hears an echo of the literary in the violin sonata's title and suggests a kinship with Eduard Mörike's novella *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* (1855).³³ Interpreting the piece as a form of travel writing—a travelogue—emphasizes the composer's mobilities, paving the way for a reconsideration of Eisler's stases.

LOCATING HIMSELF

Of course, Eisler himself was a prolific writer of prose, notoriously provoked by the politics and sounds of his environs. The broad geographical reach and relentless tempo of life on the go beleaguered and inspired Eisler, who came to reflect upon these movements as the defining characteristic of his relationship to the world in the 1930s. Details from his extended conversations with Hans Bunge put his journeys into relief:

I was on the road for a terribly long time [in 1935] and came back to Brecht from Moscow via Leningrad and Stockholm. I really wanted to work a bit with him again. But after eight days a telegram arrived: would I travel immediately to Prague for an international music conference, because the unification of the communist and social democratic Workers' Music Societies was in process there. And of course I absolutely need to be there. . . . Coming from Prague, I only had enough time to leave via Paris—on board the *Lafayette*, for which I already had tickets—to sail to New York, because my lectures at the university were about to begin.³⁴

This boisterous retelling characterizes early- to mid-century travel, which was prolonged and varied. In these oral memoirs transcribed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Eisler painted himself as flexible—travelling for concerts—and committed: the larger journey to the New School for Social Research in New York governed Eisler's smaller-scale movements. Being 'on the road' was both integral to his professional identity and development and a modality distinguishable from feeling situated and resident in a

³³ Grabs, 'Bemerkungen zu einigen Fragen der Kammermusik', 102. Ernst Krenek's *Reisebuch aus den Österreichischen Alpen* (1929) provides a further point of reference. As Konrad Liessmann points out, Krenek's song cycle explores the ill-suited concept of home and belonging for the world of the mobile, nomadic, modern person, foreshadowing the composer's own migration. See Konrad Paul Liessmann, 'Die Sehnsucht der Moderne nach Heimat: Eröffnungsvortrag des Symposiums "Echoes from Austria – Musik als Heimat? Ernst Krenek und das österreichische Volkslied im 20. Jahrhundert" am 19. Oktober 2003 im Radiokulturhaus Wien', in id. (ed.), *Echoes from Austria/Musik als Heimat: Ernst Krenek und das österreichische Volkslied im 20. Jahrhundert* (Schliengen, 2007), 19–26.

³⁴ 'Ich war furchtbar lang auf der Reise [in 1935] und kam dann von Moskau über Leningrad, Stockholm zum Brecht zurück und wollte wirklich mit ihm wieder etwas arbeiten. Nach acht Tagen kommt ein Telegramm, ich möchte sofort nach Prag fahren zu einem internationalen Musikkongreß. Weil: dort sind Einheitsverhandlungen zwischen der sozialdemokratischen Arbeitersängerschaft und der kommunistischen. Und ich muß da unbedingt hin. . . . Von Prag kommend, hatte ich nur noch Zeit, über Paris—mit dem Schiff "Lafayette", wo ich schon die Karten hatte—nach New York zu fahren, denn meine Universitätsvorlesungen fingen gerade an.' Hanns Eisler, *Gespräche mit Hans Bunge: 'Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht'* (Leipzig, 1975), 89–90.

community.³⁵ The frequent allusions to travel in interviews, private correspondence, and musical works reflect the dynamic and sometimes tumultuous effect of mobility upon his career and personal life.

Such seemingly descriptive passages may reveal Eisler as a travelling writer, but he was no writer of travel literature: for the most part, it is hard to locate his points of departure in his prose. With important exceptions, such as the above quotation, the composer's collected writings reveal an absence of information grappling with times of transition. Illustrative tableaux—not unlike the one-dimensional profiles we describe in our gloss of Eisler historiography above—serve political and musical arguments, taking the place of travelogue narratives. When engaging in place, Eisler usually mobilizes observations instead of remarking on his own mobility. For example, in his essay 'Musical journey through America', a trip to Detroit becomes an opportunity to critique the automobile industry during the Great Depression. While Eisler does not deny his travels, he rarely admits to being an outsider, and instead writes with the familiarity of an insider and the confidence of a self-described 'news reporter'.³⁶ His cosmopolitanism and travel experience situate him at what Eva Hoffman observes as an 'oblique angle' between immigrants and their new worlds, so that Eisler's prose is steeped in 'observing and seeing' and almost anthropological in nature.³⁷ Speaking to the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in 1937, he gained authority by emphasizing his international experiences:

Of course the United States is a different country from France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Austria before Schuschnigg and Hitler, Germany before Hitler, Czechoslovakia . . . , Denmark, Jugoslavia [*sic*], and last but not least the Soviet Union. I have lived and worked as a musician in all these countries. Maybe some of my experiences can be useful for you.³⁸

The tone with which Eisler describes the places he has experienced is rooted in his fundamental attitudes about writing about oneself. He explicitly comments upon the preference for directed critical argumentation and explanation over musing observation and exploration that emerges over the course of his reviews, notes, and manifests. In conversation with Hans Bunge, he lauded Bertolt Brecht's absent first-person singular and his deliberate biographical silence: 'Brecht never "expressed" himself "biographically"; he was a genuine Un-Romantic.'³⁹ Eisler demanded dialectical writing of himself as well, often writing of the dangers of a prose that is simply descriptive. He appears to have been taken aback by his journal-like writing in 1953: 'I've noticed that I'm keeping a diary. This surprises me', he writes in his diary.⁴⁰ In the ensuing

³⁵ Eberhardt Klemm's biographical overview, presented in an appendix to his 1973 monograph, organizes the composer's life almost completely according to his travels, confounding not only Eisler's very real mobility, but providing evidence that Eisler was also understood to be consistently linked with the places he went, while paradoxically presenting him as never rooted. Even after his supposed 'Heimkehr' to Berlin in 1950, Klemm locates the composer in lengthy stays in Vienna and Moscow among many shorter journeys to premieres. See Klemm, *Hanns Eisler, für Sie porträtiert*, 77–80.

³⁶ Eisler, 'A Musical Journey through America', in *Hanns Eisler: A Rebel in Music, Selected Writings*, ed. Manfred Grabs (New York, 1978), 90–2.

³⁷ Eva Hoffman, 'The New Nomads', in André Aciman (ed.), *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York, 1999), 51.

³⁸ Eisler, 'Labor, Labor Movement and Music: Speech to the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, New York, 25 June 1938', in *Musik und Politik*, 426.

³⁹ 'Brecht hat sich nie "biographisch ausgedrückt", er war ein echter Nichtromantiker.' Eisler, *Gespräche mit Hans Bunge*, 134.

⁴⁰ Eisler, 'Tagebucheintrag', *Musik und Politik*, 309.

reflections he expresses outrage at the idea of inviting others into the ‘abominable’ (‘abscheuliche’) times in which he lives. Ultimately, he tones down his fury and concedes that certain modes of chronicling can aid in the reconstruction of the past: only ‘a journal that keeps a distance, that keeps track of facts for the next generations. Of course, this must also contain self-awareness.’

In New York and in Los Angeles, Eisler entertained, always with a glass of wine in hand. The debates, stories, and musical performances of these jocular evenings have their traces in the anecdotes of friends and colleagues who were charmed by Eisler’s charisma. The playwright Clifford Odets, for whom the composer wrote incidental music (*Night Music*, 1940), conflated Eisler’s person and persona into one, describing him as a ‘stumpy little gazelle who runs all over the landscape, a chamois of surprising nimbleness’.⁴¹ As an arrogant newcomer to the New York theatre scene in 1940, Eisler can enjoy upsetting social convention, in the process making himself known and still ‘surprising’. Despite the backhanded compliments he pays this ‘egoitching’ guest, Odets respected the composer for his experience as a refugee and took note of what he perceived wise counsel in a time of war.⁴² Only two weeks after writing Eisler into the landscape of exotic savannahs, he registered:

Hanns . . . made a suggestion, saying, ‘Making some money is very important now. Three or four very bad years are ahead of everyone. I am talking as a man who has been many times a refugee, in wars and hard changes. Be not generous for now; be very cool; work not too hard; take care of everything now and keep your papers clean and in order.’⁴³

Again Odets confers outsider status on Eisler, but with a respect for life’s vicissitudes and an ear towards what he might need to learn.

Travel and displacement further proved identity-forming for Eisler among his fellow émigrés. In a 1964 portrait Lion Feuchtwanger wrote of Eisler’s musical miscellany and compared its many locales to those of the composer, whom Feuchtwanger had ‘met frequently, and in many places: in Paris, in London, in New York, in California’. He elaborated on their camaraderie:

Neither of us is destined to be blown about the globe so vehemently. We’re both inclined to a peaceful, contemplative life and love good books, good wine, and good conversation. And calm, consistent work more than rushed, extended, adventuresome travels. It is astonishing how much Hanns Eisler has accomplished despite so much forced mobility [*Beweglichkeit*].⁴⁴

The novelist and playwright writes of and around Eisler’s displacement, a journey on which he is a fellow traveller. The winds of fate play with the two anti-fascist artists, who cultivated allies in the Soviet Union even before 1933, sought refuge and community in Europe, and connected in the ‘little Weimar’ of southern California during the Second World War and after. Feuchtwanger has nothing good to say about mobility,

⁴¹ Clifford Odets, *The Time is Ripe: The 1940 Journal of Clifford Odets* (New York, 1988), 207. For an in-depth discussion of Eisler’s incidental music for *Night Music* see Laurie Silverberg, ‘Eislers kleiner Broadway-Auftritt: Odets’ Night Music’, in Ulrich Tadday (ed.), *Musik-Konzepte Sonderband: Hanns Eisler: Angewandte Musik* (Munich, 2012), 114–36.

⁴² Odets, *The Time is Ripe*, 115. This from an earlier party in 1940 attended by Eisler: ‘In the meantime Hanns, energetic, restless, egoitching, was hopping all over the room like a billiard ball, unable to sit, constantly breaking in—rude, apparently very nervous. . . . Hanns has no patience with nonsense.’

⁴³ Odets, *The Time is Ripe*, 223.

⁴⁴ Lion Feuchtwanger, ‘Hanns Eisler’, in *Sinn und Form: Sonderheft Hanns Eisler* (1964), 30.

which for him is the opposite of stability and productivity—conditions necessary, he finds, for artists.

TRACING MOBILITY IN THE SONATA

Keeping in mind the absence of a travel journal from Eisler's transatlantic journey from Svendborg to New York, we turn to the *Reisesonate* in search of details in dynamic motion. The sonata fills this gap: the first movement was laid out on the train to Prague, the second on the ocean liner from London, the third in New York. And yet, the *Reisesonate* does not act as a viewfinder that isolates geographical snapshots or translates a specific travel experience. Upon first listening—and in contrast to the musical allusions to movement and landscape in Louis Spohr's 'Nachklänge einer Reise nach Dresden und in die sächsische Schweiz', Op. 96 (1836), for example, which shares both nickname and ensemble with Eisler's *Reisesonate*—the work's colourful impatience resists programmatic interpretation. Staccato textures are peppered across the movement, effecting jocular melodies that contrast with the dodecaphonic derivation of pitch material. However, a sense that the work is kaleidoscopic extends beyond the effervescent interaction of violin and piano. In his developing variation, Eisler tumbles the ensemble through a hybrid array of styles. In a review published in the *New York Times*, Olin Downes drew attention to 'a wide divergence of style and subject matter'.⁴⁵ While Downes's observation resounds with our own multilayered listening, the following brief introduction to its world insists that the *divergent* styles Downes hears also *converge* across the movements of the piece, providing fleeting moments of synthesis for the listener.

A mere fifteen minutes in duration, this playable piece integrates stylistic juxtaposition with traces of tradition. Where does Eisler take us? His treatment of musical material is by the book: one series generates the main themes for the entire work (Ex. 1). Each movement of the sonata begins with the straightforward introduction of a diatonically inflected dodecaphonic theme—in the first and third movements the prime and in the second the retrograde (Exx. 2–4). Eisler varies the violin–piano texture, which ranges from accompanimental to dialogic, across the three initial row enunciations, but foregrounds the pitch material and makes the series audible in each. All the more noticeable, then, are the tonal tendencies of the row and its transformations. The first three pitches of the prime (Ex. 1) outline a C♭ major triad, and the major third between pitches 9 (E♭) and 10 (C♯) confers a proximal secondary home on C major. The first two bars of the third movement particularly articulate these tendencies (Ex. 4), ultimately confirmed by the bright and unconcealed C♭ major chord with which the work concludes. In the first movement, Eisler always uses those opening intervals of the prime to outline a triad and in the opening bars resolves the stepwise motion in the back end of the row by threading the retrograde inversion into the theme through motivic development (Ex. 2). The first cadential gesture rounds out the presentation with a rising perfect fifth and falling minor sixth above a hovering F♯ minor chord. In the second movement, Eisler teases out the inner tonal workings even more. As the piano imitates the violin's dulcet melody, the strong beats sound thirds and sixths (Ex. 3).

The sonata betrays the strong influence of nineteenth-century Austro-German chamber works for the same instrumentation. The first movement intelligibly projects

⁴⁵ Olin Downes, 'Eisler Selections Played in Tribute', *New York Times*, 29 Feb. 1948, p. 64.

Ex. 1. Hanns Eisler, *Reisesonate*, prime row

A single melodic line on a treble clef staff, consisting of 12 notes. The notes are numbered 0 through 11 from left to right. The notes are: 0 (Bb), 1 (B), 2 (Cb), 3 (C), 4 (Db), 5 (D), 6 (Eb), 7 (E), 8 (Fb), 9 (F), 10 (Gb), 11 (G).

Ex. 2. Hanns Eisler, *Reisesonate*, 1st mvt., bb. 1–4

Violin **Con spirito** ($\text{♩} = 144$)
P₀ [0 1 2 3 4] [5 6 7 8 9 10 11] **RI₀**

Piano **P₀** **RI₀**

Violin dynamics: *p* (measures 1-4), *mf* (measure 4).
 Piano dynamics: *p* (measures 1-2), *mf* (measures 3-4).

Ex. 3. Hanns Eisler, *Reisesonate*, 2nd mvt., bb. 1–9

Violin **Andante semplice** ($\text{♩} = 80$)
 con sord.
PP **R₀** **R₀** **R₀**

Piano **mp** **R₀**

a sonata form refracted through twelve-note technique. Eisler marks the beginning of the two distinct theme areas (bb. 1–29, bb. 30–58) with a statement of P_0 and situates them as contrasting through character—one capricious, one *poco martiale*. A violin cadenza within the metre functions as the development, as musical material from both theme groups percolates. The recapitulation of the two theme groups hinges on

Ex. 4. Hanns Eisler, *Reisesonate*, 3rd mvt., bb. 1–2

an interjection of the violin cadenza, which synthesizes the aforementioned temperaments. The second movement models dialectic synthesis in the interaction between the two performers, who play in rhythmic unison and harmonic imitation in its opening bars. The violin adds commentary to the repetitions of the theme in the piano for the remainder of the movement, projecting an almost chaconne-like character to the labyrinthine melody. Eisler puts the turn towards the *attaca* last movement in relief with a transposition of the theme (R_3) at the midpoint. The frantic tarantella—peppered with hemiolas—with which the work concludes tumbles towards the finish line, but not before a three-part fugue interrupts, squaring the metre and summoning academic composition before the climax: a violin cadenza (bb. 143 ff).

The traditional interplay between violin and piano is radically unsettled by four violin cadenzas: two in the first and third movements respectively. These virtuosic passages destabilize formal boundaries, celebrating the violinist as soloist rather than chamber music as collaborative enterprise.⁴⁶ In contrast to the arioso solo that sets the tone and frames the second movement of Béla Bartók's Violin Sonata, No. 1, Sz. 75 (1921), for example, Eisler's cadenzas rupture form and texture. In the hands of a capable violinist, the cadenzas offer some of the most compelling musical moments in the work. In the last movement, for example, the first cadenza initiates a chain of double-stops from a minor second (D–C \sharp)—the beginning of the retrograde—into the work's signature C \flat major triad, launching a rubato section that displays the violinist's ability to realize unison double-stops (Ex. 5). The solo moments abound with technique idiomatic to the violin that harks back to Ysaÿe's 'obsession' with Bach: leap-filled acrobatics (mvt. 1, bb. 101–4), contrapuntal machinations (mvt. 3, bb. 149–62), and spasmodic dynamics (mvt. 1, bb. 58–62).⁴⁷ The cadenzas make a place for the radical in the work, creating tension with the light, occasional texture of the sonata's principal themes that has been the target of critics' scrutiny. The violinist temporarily ushers the work beyond the traditional confines of a sonata, ultimately disrupting decisive classification.

The 'divergence' that Olin Downes hears in the work conjures up references that underscore Eisler's activity between music worlds. The first movement's march (bb. 30

⁴⁶ See Grabs, 'Bemerkungen zu einigen Fragen der Kammermusik', 99–106.

⁴⁷ Entitled 'Obsession', the first movement of Ysaÿe's Sonata for Solo Violin, Op. 27, No. 2 abounds with quotations from the Prelude of Bach's Violin Partita in E Major.

Ex. 5. Hanns Eisler, *Reisesonate*, 3rd mvt., violin, bb. 20–5

ff) resonates in the opening of Schoenberg's Fourth Quartet, Op. 37 (1936) and Eisler's pioneering compositions for the German workers' movement, such as the 'Song of the United Front' (1934). The texture of one transitional section in the second movement (bb. 32–40) recalls the serenity of a modernist passacaglia, comparable, for example, to the third movement of Benjamin Britten's Violin Concerto, No. 1, Op. 15 (1938–9). Finally, Eisler's academic fughetta points both backwards to his contrapuntal training and forwards to his imagined musical utopia. In fact, Eisler consistently composed fugues in his chamber music as didactic moments oriented towards an ever more educated workers' audience. His string trio *Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H*, Op. 46 (1934), for example, combines Bach's musical signature with a serial approach, at once aligning itself with the Germanic tradition and positing dodecaphony as its latest development.⁴⁸

This journey presents the sonata as an eclectic composition by a polyglot composer committed to communication with the seriousness of the Austro-German tradition. Framing traditional forms and heterogeneous styles dialectically imbues this work with a controlled dynamism that bears the imprints of its present.⁴⁹ As Sally Bick has shown, dodecaphony's simultaneous dissonance and reason made it, for Eisler, an ideal tool to express anti-fascist sentiment.⁵⁰ Eisler spoke of 'modern music' as 'the enemy of fascism'.⁵¹ The strategic move to 'tonalize' the series affords the orthodox serialism of the interwar years specificity and conceptualizes it as the style of a particular place and time. If Eisler invokes his teacher Schoenberg's compositional method, he also evokes an Austro-German musical scene that was fast disappearing as composition of the sonata progressed. Under the circumstances of refuge from Nazi

⁴⁸ Eisler makes this strategy explicit in his essay 'Präludium und Fuge über B-A-C-H (mit 12 Tönen)', first published in the exile journal *Musica Viva*, 1/2 (July 1936), 1–3, reprinted in *Musik und Politik*, 379–82. Eisler was not, of course, the only composer to combine the B-A-C-H motif with dodecaphony. Similar approaches can be found in Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31 (1926–8) and Webern's String Quartet (1936–8), for example.

⁴⁹ The diatonically based serialism links Eisler with many émigré avant-garde composers, who tried to marry dodecaphony with a kind of tonal-consonance focus. Mátyás Seiber, who migrated to London in 1935, and István Anhalt, who left the European continent in 1948 for Canada, have no biographical connections with Eisler. And yet both employ similar compositional strategies in their chamber music as they interweave a textbook dodecaphony with a tonally centred idiom. See Florian Scheduling, 'Which Displacement? Placing Exile in the Post-war Compositions of István Anhalt and Mátyás Seiber', in Friedemann Sallis, Robin Elliott, and Kenneth DeLong (eds.), *Centre and Periphery, Roots and Exile: Interpreting the Music of István Anhalt, György Kurtág and Sándor Veress* (Waterloo, Ont., 2011), 111–28.

⁵⁰ Sally Bick, 'Political Ironies: Hanns Eisler in Hollywood and behind the Iron Curtain', *Acta Musicologica*, 75 (2003), 65–84 at 73–4.

⁵¹ Eisler, 'Contemporary Music and Fascism', in *Musik und Politik*, 491.

Germany, employing dodecaphony is thus not only a manifesto of a convinced avant-gardist; it also bears the early imprints of nostalgia. Eisler's nod to interwar serialism, which is being expelled alongside him, references a place that no longer exists, even as early as 1937, before the annexation of Austria a year later.

The precariousness of place in the *Reisesonate* speaks to the paradox that Peter Franklin interprets in Arnold Schoenberg's presence in Los Angeles, where he was both the 'culminatory figure of the old Western Great Tradition' and the apex of the 'Los Angeles mirror hall of otherness'.⁵² And yet, Eisler's strategy to insert elements such as the semblance of tonality and the numerous references to well-rehearsed compositional formal principles elevates the sonata beyond memorialization and nostalgia precisely because it renders his music internationally recognizable. The hybrid eclecticism in internationalizing dodecaphony by dressing it in tonal, consonant clothing turns the sonata from a geographically locatable one into a mobile work. Eisler encourages mobility with specific regard to musical material and compositional technique: a flexible engagement with dodecaphony.

The urge to 'tonalize' dodecaphony is not, of course, the sole domain of migrants, even if it does appear as an aesthetic strategy with some frequency in the works of numerous émigrés such as István Anhalt, Mátyás Seiber, and indeed Schoenberg. In fact, as Erik Levi has shown, even some Nazi composers, such as the Schoenberg pupils Paul von Klenau and Winfried Zillig, employed tonalized dodecaphony.⁵³ Conversely, they did so in lengthy and bombastic operas, choosing the least mobile of all musical genres, rather than the émigrés' brief chamber works. Indeed, a fundamental characteristic of the *Reisesonate*, its very genre, makes it an ideal travel companion. Chamber music, as an intellectual idiom that draws attention to small gestures, targets intimate yet public performance settings and lends itself ideally to contexts of migration. Travel and mobility foster undogmatic, mobile approaches concerning not only individual works, but also the eclectic catalogues of migrant composers. Eisler moved with ease between film and concert musics while in California, continuously engaged in blurring demarcated boundaries between high and low, as his film music project with Adorno exemplifies.⁵⁴ The sonata thus not only enacts mobility upon close listening. It also does so in the context of Eisler's oeuvre more widely. In so doing, the work is integral to giving the travelling Eisler some kind of historical agency. As it sounds like chamber music written on the go, it functions as an unwritten travelogue, both in the narrow and in the wider perspective.

PLACES OF PERFORMANCE

Contemporary performances and reviews of the sonata inevitably link the work to Eisler's travels. The *New York Times* coverage of the valedictory concert offers a window into this American performance framed in the context of the most sensationalized of Eisler's journeys: his voluntary deportation from America back to Europe. During Eisler's time in America, press coverage of the composer in newspapers such as the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times* ranged from sympathetic to hostile, but all critics consistently wrote of Eisler

⁵² Peter Franklin, 'Modernism, Deception, and Musical Others: Los Angeles circa 1940', in Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds.), *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley, 2000), 144 and 152.

⁵³ See Erik Levi, 'Atonality, 12-Tone Music and the Third Reich', *Tempo*, 178 (1991), 17–21.

⁵⁴ See Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film*, ed. Johannes C. Gall (Frankfurt am Main, 2006).

with distance, labelling him as a political artist throughout.⁵⁵ By the time Eisler was leaving New York, his European heritage loomed large and his absence imminent. Olin Downes mocked Eisler's timid presence at the concert: 'The composer . . . was present in a box, but gave no sign of his location or no gesture of acknowledgement.'⁵⁶ The attention the critic gives the violin sonata ignores the composer's Schoenbergian influences. '[The violin sonata's] way is simpler, more concrete, less introspective [than the string quartet's.]' On his way out of New York, Eisler is reduced to a 'German-born composer [permitted] to go to any country for which he can get a visa'. The careless inaccuracies in Downes's writing reflect a misunderstanding of the politics, both geopolitical and personal, behind the composer's displacement.

Many scholars have found the temptation to construct this journey as anything other than a re-migration too hard to resist.⁵⁷ Chronologically, Eisler's sojourn in America does indeed parallel the rise and fall of the era of European fascism, even as it exceeded it by three years. The Eisler literature widely condemns the actual circumstances of his effective expulsion from America, convincingly outlining the witch hunt of which he was a victim.⁵⁸ His move eastwards has nonetheless been narrated as signalling a circular endpoint: a return bringing the journey full circle. The context for Eisler's farewell from the United States, however, did not dovetail with that of his arrival. This was not a return occasioned by the fall of fascism, the end of war, and the advent of peacetime in Central Europe. Instead, the very reason why Eisler had to leave America parallels the beginning of a new conflict, namely that of the Cold War. Keeping this in mind, terms such as re-migration and return can be misleading. The push factor of Eisler's second transatlantic migration was far greater than the pull factor of a shattered post-war Europe. The Eislers even struggled to find a place to settle: they reached out to friends and colleagues in France, Germany, and Czechoslovakia, before it was confirmed that they would receive new Austrian passports, but only after their arrival on the Continent in Prague.⁵⁹ Further, the Europe for which Eisler departed New York in March 1948 bore little geopolitical, societal, or economic resemblance to the Continent he had left behind in 1937. This point may perhaps be a truism, but it further emphasizes that Eisler's renewed migration was a venture to pastures new, and not a return. The American Music League concert celebrating Eisler's arrival at the New School had hinted at the reasons for his displacement through its programme: along with works by the New School composers Henry Cowell and Aaron Copland, the Jewish Choir Freiheit Gesangverein performed a 'Yiddish Song' by Eisler on their portion of the concert.⁶⁰ The 1948 concert paints a

⁵⁵ Three examples are Isabel Morse Jones, 'Words and Music: Hanns Eisler Coming', *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Mar. 1935; Samuel L. M. Barlow, 'Musician's Case', *New York Times*, 22 Feb. 1948; and Virgil Thompson, 'Concert of Hanns Eisler's Music', *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 Mar. 1948. Press coverage of the HUAC affair was extensive and there exist numerous articles reporting on the hearings and Eisler's subsequent American departure.

⁵⁶ Downes, 'Eisler Selections Played in Tribute'.

⁵⁷ Peter Schweinhardt, for example, asserts the term 'Rückkehr' (return) specifically as a corrective of what he perceives as a focus on exodus in exile studies (see Schweinhardt, *Fluchtpunkt Wien*). 'Return' brings with it its own baggage, as an anticipated resolution to exile, as the second, inevitable, half of an event that, ultimately, confirms one place of belonging. Schweinhardt uses the term 'Rückkehr' throughout the book.

⁵⁸ For bracing narratives of the paper trails that buttressed Eisler's persecution see James Wierzbicki, 'Hanns Eisler and the FBI', *Music and Politics*, 2 (2008), available online at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/> (accessed 21 Dec. 2013), on the FBI, and Horst Weber on the Hearst media empire (Weber, *I am not a Hero, I am a Composer*, 361–2).

⁵⁹ Schweinhardt, *Fluchtpunkt Wien*, 46–65.

⁶⁰ Joe Glasser, 'Willkommen, Hanns Eisler!: Konzert der American Music League in der New School for Social Research', *Neue Volkszeitung New York*, 5 Mar. 1938. Quoted in Manfred Grabs, *Wer War Hanns Eisler: Auffassungen aus sechs Jahrzehnten* (West Berlin, 1983), 116.

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Eight Songs by Hanns Eisler

CHLOE OWEN, <i>soprano</i>	JOHN RANCK, <i>piano</i>
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(1) Spring (2) Hotel Room II (3) Hotel Room: 1942
(4) Nightmare (5) In the Garden (6) Pantry
(7) To the Survivors (8) Hollywood Elger VII
Words of Noe. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7, by Bertold Brecht
Words of Noe. 4 ("Nightmare"), by Hanns Eisler
(English translations on Pages 11, 13 and 14)

Sonata for Violin and Piano
Allegretto—Andante—Presto
TOSY SPIVAKOVSKY, *violin* LEONID HAMERO, *piano*

INTERMISSION

Program Continued on Second Page Following

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PL. 2. Programme, 'Hanns Eisler Music', Town Hall, New York City, 28 Feb. 1948. Hanns Eisler Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, call no. 3325

portrait of the composer among American colleagues: his supporters' names flank the published programme (see Pl. 2).⁶¹ However, with its chamber suite based on American children's music and selections from the *Hollywood Songbook*, the concert paints a different portrait of Eisler, one without a trace of the Jewish internationalist who had been heralded in 1938. How fitting that the *Reisesonate* should be included on that evening's programme, emblematically bidding farewell to America for Eisler and thereby also signalling another migration!

Reviews such as Downes's of the farewell concert given in Eisler's honour are not the only documentary evidence available on the composer's American departure. The Eislers left the United States on Pan American World Airways Flight 100/26, landing at Heathrow Airport at noon on 27 March, where they presented visas issued by

⁶¹ The Hanns Eisler Archiv holds a copy of the programme (call no. 3325). It is worth noting that support for Eisler extended beyond those listed here and included several well-known figureheads of the US cultural scene, such as Charlie Chaplin and Igor Stravinsky. Woody Guthrie voiced his solidarity with his song 'Eisler on the Go', focusing on mobility rather than location: 'Eisler on the go, / Eisler on the move / Brother is on the Vinegar truck and / I don't know what I'll do // I don't know what I'll do, / I don't know what I'll do / Eisler's on the come and go and / I don't know what I'll do // Eisler on the farm, / Eisler on the town / Sister in the tickly bush and / I don't know what I'll do // Eisler on the boat, / Eisler on the ship / Daddy on the henhouse roof and / I don't know what I'll do / Eisler in the jailoe, / Eisler back at home, / Ranking scratch his head and cry and / I don't know what I'll do // Eisler him write music, / Eisler him teach school, / Truman him don't play so good and // I don't know what I'll do'. Stephen Hartnett argues that Guthrie's lyrics represent a poignant case study of graceful protest in the midst of terror. See Hartnett, 'Four Meditations on the Search for Grace amidst Terror', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 19 (1999), 196–216.

Czechoslovakia and were permitted to meet with composers Alan Bush and Ernst Hermann Meyer during a two-hour layover.⁶² On his landing card, Eisler writes that he is ‘in transit’.⁶³ Briefed by their American colleagues, the British authorities were nervous about the expelled Communist who, they feared, might very well still have old ties in England with whom he might attempt to engage in covert activities. Consequently, Eisler’s brief stay in the United Kingdom happened under the watchful eyes of MI5, His Majesty’s Security Service. The extant files of MI5 provide insight into the operation and represent a further body of documents that sheds light on Eisler on the move. They, too, are a travelogue and complement the ground-breaking work by James Wierzbicki and Joy H. Calico regarding Eisler’s FBI and Comintern files.⁶⁴ Eisler was, to all evidence, a victim of covert surveillance on all sides. Recently made accessible for research in the British National Archives in London, the files include surveillance notes, intercepted communications, correspondence between MI5, the Home Office, and the American Embassy in the UK, as well as internal memoranda and operational notes.

Eisler had long been in the sights of the Security Service. The file’s first entry predates the starting date of the composition of the *Reisesonate*. Reading ‘21. 8. 34. Arrived at Harwich [harbour]. C/L [checklist] not to be employed’, it records Eisler’s travelling and then decrees that he should not be given a work permit.⁶⁵ In November 1934, the decision was revoked and Eisler was granted permission to write the film music for the Alliance-Capitol Productions feature *Abdul the Damned* (1935, dir. Karl Grune). Despite the Home Office’s assessment in December 1934 that Eisler was ‘connected with the production of sound films and the composer of proletarian songs’ and that ‘there is nothing to show that EISLER is communist or has communist leanings’, surveillance operations continued.⁶⁶ As the files detail Eisler’s travels, they increasingly include biographical detail. In 1936, for example, MI5 now mentions Eisler’s ‘communist connections’ and meticulously records his ‘landings’ on British soil, such as on 27 February, 10 April, and 26 April 1937, alongside the purposes of his stay (‘attend musical conference’, ‘research at British Museum’, ‘continue research at B.M.’). Even as Eisler is elsewhere, his music remains present, such as when the MI5 ‘source’ reports back from a concert of Eisler’s music at the London-based Free German League of Culture on 19 March 1941. Following speculation whether Eisler may be the League’s ‘“representative” in the United States?’, his name was added to the ‘Communist Black List’ on 18 April 1941.

As the British authorities prepare for the Eislers’ arrival at Heathrow Airport in 1948, the actual prose of the files makes for disturbing reading, as the Eislers are described in unashamedly anti-Semitic language:

⁶² Alan Bush recalled this meeting with fondness in his remarks after Eisler’s death. See ‘Für Hanns Eisler. Beiträge von Freunden, Mitarbeitern und Schülern’, *Sinn und Form: Sonderheft Hanns Eisler* (1964), 332.

⁶³ The landing card is contained in ‘The Security Service: Personal (PF Series) Files. COMMUNISTS AND SUSPECTED COMMUNISTS, INCLUDING RUSSIAN AND COMMUNIST SYMPATHISERS. Johannes EISLER / Charlotte EISLER: Austrian’, call no. KV 2/2009, The National Archives, Kew.

⁶⁴ Wierzbicki, ‘Hanns Eisler and the FBI’, and Joy H. Calico, ‘Eisler’s Comintern File’, paper read at International Conference ‘Hanns Eisler’, London, 19 Apr. 2010.

⁶⁵ All subsequent MI5 and Home Office quotations are taken from ‘The Security Service: Personal (PF Series) Files’.

⁶⁶ The fact that Eisler, like fellow film composers Ernst Toch, Karol Rathaus, and Wilhelm Grosz, was not in residence but in transit was of crucial importance for the British Secret Service. See Michael Haas, *Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis* (New Haven, 2013), 251.

Age 48, born 7/6/98, Leipzig, Germany; 5' 5"; 175 lbs. ; heavy build; very prominent stomach; light brown hair on sides and completely bald on top; blue eyes, horn rimmed glasses; prominent nose; Jewish appearance; walks with jerky motion; speaks German, English with accent; married to LOUISE ANNA EISLER, age 40 born 3/6/06, Vienna, Austria; 5' 2"; 115 lbs. ; hazel eyes; dark brown hair; dark complexion; Hebrew Magyar race.

Once more, mobility comes to the foreground, as the Eislers are called 'fellow travelers', with the 'mail drop' given as 'none known'. The files record that the composer complained bitterly about the treatment he received upon setting foot on British soil, which included a humiliating luggage search. While 'nothing of interest was found', the Customs Officers would no doubt have handled score materials. It is likely that a copy of the *Reisesonate* would have been among them as shortly afterwards, on 1 August, Eisler posted a copy to Spivakovsky.⁶⁷ If the *Reisesonate* accompanied the first political migration, so, too, did it the second. And just as the *Reisesonate* sang Eisler's farewell in New York, it sounded his European arrival. Until the composer's death in 1962, European performances of the sonata appear with some regularity, and they do so on either side of the Iron Curtain. For example, on 13 May 1949, the sonata formed part of an ISCM chamber concert in Vienna (Karl Brix, violin, and Friedrich Wildgans, piano), on 10 July 1950 it was performed in a celebratory concert for the 250th anniversary of the German Academy of Sciences in East Berlin, and on 16 March 1960, Alfred Holeček and Nora Grumlikova played it in a concert of the Czech Composers' Union in Prague.⁶⁸

MUSICOLOGY AND MOBILITIES

Displacement and migration are a reality of history, and movements and mobilities are intrinsic to the human condition—and they have always captured the human imagination. The dawn of Europe's literary and written history breaks with an epic journey, Homer's *Odyssey*, and that of music, too, for the *Odyssey* was, after all, recited. The point of travel and migration as enriching and empowering can in fact be traced through philosophy. Julia Kristeva argued that migration kick-started Western art, and Martin Heidegger reasoned, 'a boundary is not that at which something stops but . . . that from which something begins its presencing'.⁶⁹ The twentieth century has produced ever larger numbers of displaced people and migrants virtually everywhere, and their musics have moved with them. Migrants shape the world we live in today just as mobilities shape our musics.

Employing mobility as a methodology to understand music largely remains the domain of ethnomusicologists and popular music scholars and is only beginning to enter musicological discourses more widely.⁷⁰ Considering the centrality of movements across borders and boundaries, whether geographical or social, physical or ideological,

⁶⁷ Call no. 5845, Hanns-Eisler Archiv. See also n. 24 above.

⁶⁸ Programme leaflets of the concerts in Vienna and East Berlin are in the Hanns Eisler Archiv (call nos. 3329 and 3332). The Prague concert is described in a letter from Alois Haba to Hanns Eisler, dated Prague, 28 Mar. 1960, which is also in the Hanns Eisler Archiv (call no. 6828). The music sociologist Kurt Blaukopf, who spent the Second World War in Paris and Jerusalem, penned a review of the Vienna concert for the evening newspaper *Der Abend* (17 May 1949). He heard the *Reisesonate* as a part of the composer's 'path' towards increased 'clarity of expression and poignancy of impression', among other strengths.

⁶⁹ See Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York, 1991), 42, and Martin Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, 1971), 154.

⁷⁰ Two examples are Levi and Scheduling (eds), *Music and Displacement* and Jason Toynbee and Byron Dueck (eds), *Migrating Music* (London, 2011).

literal or metaphorical, for music and for those who perform and perceive it, the continued adherence in music studies to specific, fixed, and allegedly stable musics and places is increasingly out-dated. One of music's fundamental characteristics is precisely that it is in flux. The paradigms and methodological blueprints for mobilities studies are in place. They have been provided by social scientists since the 1990s, mostly in the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, and migration studies.⁷¹ Perhaps musicologists from all fields might join the debate.

Hannah Arendt suggested in 1943 that 'refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples'.⁷² Referencing Arendt, we have focused on one migrant, Hanns Eisler, and on one of his own contributions to the 'vanguard of the displaced', his *Reisesonate* for violin and piano. We posit that the sonata highlights notions of mobility and travel. In so doing, our reading challenges rigid notions of home versus exile. Taking the sonata seriously is tantamount to taking the mobility intrinsic to the work seriously. Mobility and travel create the possibility of a space empowering Eisler, rather than victimizing him as a voiceless refugee in the immobile and timeless place of exile. Similarly, a hearing open to the seemingly contradictory eclecticism of the sonata—traditional form and dodecaphonic technique, full-scale sonata and brevity of duration, solo virtuosity and dialogic chamber idiom—maintains it in a space of mobility. Eisler moved easily between places, whether real or virtual, political or social, professional or stylistic. As the *Reisesonate* testifies, this ease of mobility created hybrid and heterogeneous artistic spaces. Such a reading in effect renders obsolete the construction or narration of strict borders between the places Eisler inhabited and the styles between which he moved. Travel and mobility as spaces of empowerment challenge narratives of Eisler as a composer catapulted from stasis to stasis geographically (from Weimar to exile to the GDR) or aesthetically (from Schoenberg School to agitprop to film music) and suggest instead a model of hybrid, fluid, and heterogeneous mobility.

At the same time as highlighting mobility, the *Reisesonate* maps neatly Eisler's own creative provenance and artistic convictions. The reference points to the Western art music tradition, specifically that of the semi-public sphere of making chamber music, and the alliance with Schoenberg and the interwar avant-garde render the sonata's cultural pre-history palpable. As the sonata's movements—it is tempting to take the word literally—unfold, its starting point remains audible. Bringing into account the political crises that have left traces not only in documents such as Eisler's MI5 file but also in concert reviews of the sonata itself, and taking seriously this seemingly 'harmless' work allows for powerful listening indeed. Paradoxically, while highlighting the mobility Eisler and so many other European intellectuals experienced in the mid-twentieth century, the sonata simultaneously emplaces that very mobility as the locale of an active, empowered, and very real journey against the backdrop of political upheaval and human catastrophe.

⁷¹ Providing a representative snapshot of the available literature in the field far exceeds the scope of this article. Three recent examples of introductory reading are Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38 (2006), 207–26; Barney Warf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York, 2009); and Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁷² Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', *Menorah Journal*, 31 (1943), 77.

ABSTRACT

Begun on a train from Svendborg in Denmark to Prague in 1937 and developed until his forced departure from the United States in 1948, Hanns Eisler's *Reisesonate* (Travel Sonata) is inextricably linked with the composer's displacements. This article positions the *Reisesonate* in several contexts—its material, performance, stylistic, and political histories—that challenge the directional simplicity of emigration as the move from home to exile, from nation to nationless-ness. We situate the sonata's genesis against the background of Eisler's travels and discuss strategies in Eisler scholarship vis-à-vis his places. Mobility emerges in an analytical reading of the work that destabilizes static notions of musical modernism. Performance history and further documentary evidence, including the surveillance files of the British Security Service, provide portraits of the composer on the move. We suggest that the *Reisesonate* provides musical counterpoint to Eisler's biography, like a travel companion, and sheds light on the journeying that defined his life at mid-century.