

## Making Korngold: Korngold, Schoenberg and the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* Poll, Vienna, 1930 \*

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In August 1930 the Viennese newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* conducted a poll amongst its readers to identify the most famous Austrian scientists and artists of the day. Arnold Schoenberg and Erich Korngold were listed amongst the most influential composers. This article describes the poll and investigates its use and misuse over the years in the context of the rivalry between Schoenberg and Korngold, their musical styles, subsequent careers and changing reputations. While not mentioned in every biographical reference, the poll appears in one form or another in influential and widely read sources. Though it is a culturally and temporally limited piece of evidence, the poll highlights two serious issues in the reception of twentieth-century music: the comparative cultural significance of Schoenberg and Korngold, and the tension between two musical cultures—art music and film music. This article charts the way in which scholars have used the poll to argue for the relative importance of those two genres, and provides a salutary reminder about the questionable wisdom of relying too heavily on secondary sources.

In the early years of the twentieth century Korngold and Schoenberg moved in the same Viennese music circles and came to the attention of the same prominent people. Schoenberg received tuition from Zemlinsky and enjoyed Richard Strauss's and subsequently Mahler's support. Hanslick named him the second Mozart.<sup>1</sup> Korngold, a child prodigy pianist and

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm MacDonald, *Arnold Schoenberg* (London: Dent, 1976) 22.

composer, who was a generation younger than Schoenberg, caught the imagination of Viennese aristocracy. In 1904, when he first suspected that his son had prodigious talents, Julius Korngold was at the peak of his career, having succeeded Hanslick as music critic for *Die Freie Presse*, a world-renowned liberal-bourgeois newspaper.<sup>2</sup> Julius drew upon Hanslick's considered opinion and reputation together with that of other reputed scientists and musicians of the day, including composers Gustav Mahler, Engelbert Humperdinck and Arthur Seidl; musicologists Erich von Hornbostel, Hugo Leichtentritt and Hermann Kretzchmar; conductor Artur Nikisch; and music critics Ferdinand Pfohl and Otto Lessmann.<sup>3</sup> With Erich's genius confirmed by these authorities, Julius approached Richard Strauss with a sample of his son's composition and subsequently secured lessons for him from Zemlinsky. Hanslick revised his prediction: the adolescent Korngold was now to be the second Mozart. By 1925 both Schoenberg and Korngold had been the subjects of biographical monographs that promoted them as leaders of twentieth-century music.<sup>4</sup>

In 1930, the year of the poll that is the subject of this article, Korngold was at the peak of his European career. His opera *Die tote Stadt*, which was first performed in 1920, continued to be an enormous success; *Das Wunder der Heliane* (1927), though his first significant critical disappointment, was very popular. His arrangements of Johann Strauss and Offenbach's operettas were also successful,<sup>5</sup> and he was collaborating with fellow operetta composer Julius Bittner on Johann Strauss II's *Walzer aus Wien*, which opened in October 1930 at the Vienna Stadtheater. The Austrian President awarded him the title of Professor *honoris causa*.

Schoenberg, meanwhile, was teaching at Berliner Hochschule. In April 1930, the BBC broadcast a programme devoted exclusively to Schoenberg, which featured *Pierrot Lunaire*. Jennifer Doctor claims that this programme, which exploited Schoenberg's 'controversial history', was introduced as part of the 'effort to spread the gospel of his work',<sup>6</sup> when his music, by and large, remained incomprehensible to critics and the public alike.<sup>7</sup> Although Schoenberg's music was being performed—*Von Heute auf Morgen* had opened in Frankfurt, *Pelleas und Melisande* had been broadcast on the Berlin Radio, *Suite* op. 29 was performed in Paris, *Gurrelieder* was performed in Leningrad and *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* were both performed in Berlin—it enjoyed little public or critical success.<sup>8</sup>

On 27 July 1930, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, a reputable Viennese newspaper, announced an initiative to honour those citizens who contributed to national pride through their outstanding achievements:

<sup>2</sup> 'Neue Freie Presse,' AEIOU Austrian Forum: *Encyclopedia of Austria*, accessed 5 Aug. 2008 <aeiou.iicm.tugraz.at>.

<sup>3</sup> Julius Korngold, *Child Prodigy. Erich Wolfgang's Years of Childhood (Preliminary Printing from the Work of Memoirs "Postludes in Major and Minor")* (New York: Willard, 1945) 29–31; Brendan Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland: Amadeus, 1997) 42.

<sup>4</sup> Egon Wellesz, *Schoenberg* (London: Galliard, 1971), originally published by Dent in London, 1925. R.S. Hoffmann, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Vienna: Stephenson Moser, 1922).

<sup>5</sup> Carroll, *The Last Prodigy* 209–15.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) 176.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera 1597–1940*, intro. Edward Dent (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978) 1376, 1378, 1410.

<sup>8</sup> Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, transl. Leo Black (London: Longman, 1968) 168–9.

A motion will soon be put before a meeting of the National Council to bestow on those people 'who through their special and high status creative achievements in the service to the Arts and Sciences have made their name and gained general recognition.' The honour will not only bestow a greater significance on their standing in the hierarchy of decorated Austrians, but will also create a class of excellence.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the comparatively small size of the post-Empire Austrian state, the newspaper encouraged its readers to consider the cultural wealth of its people. It would, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* assured its readers, be no easy task to decide who would tower above so many outstanding citizens. This honour, democratically decided and confirmed by experts from every relevant discipline, seemed designed to put modern Austria on the European cultural map.<sup>10</sup>

The newspaper circulated a questionnaire among its subscribers, who were asked to vote for the twenty-four most famous contemporary Austrian citizens: twelve artists, including composers, poets, painters, sculptors and architects, and twelve scientists. The person whose vote best approximated the final decision would win a cash prize. The results were published on 15 August 1930.

Over 630 people were nominated, but actors, musicians and directors were removed from the list to expedite the decision, thereby reducing the total by some 400 to 230. Several notable people were also disqualified because they were not Austrian citizens. Franz Léhar was voted 'the greatest living operetta composer' and Richard Strauss was voted 'the greatest living composer of dramatic and symphonic music,' but although both composers worked in Vienna and received more nominations than anyone else, neither was an Austrian citizen.<sup>11</sup> The great theatre director Max Reinhardt had been born in Austria, but had taken Czechoslovakian citizenship. However, the newspaper suggested that his name and those of the other performing artists be resubmitted for subsequent awards.<sup>12</sup>

The final list of twelve artists, in order of the number of votes they received, was as follows:<sup>13</sup>

1. Dr Karl Schönherr: playwright;
2. Dr Artur Schnitzler: playwright;
3. Dr Anton Wildgans: dramatist and poet, and twice director of Vienna Burgtheater, 1921 and 1930;

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<sup>9</sup> 'Ein österreichisches Ehrenzeichen für Kunst und Wissenschaft soll geschaffen werden. Es ist nach kürzlich im Nationalrat eingebrachten Gesessentwurf bestimmt zur Verleihung an Personen "die sich durch besonders hochstehende schöpferische Leistungen auf dem Gebiete der Kunst oder der Wissenschaft allgemeine Anerkennung und einen hervorragenden Namen erworben haben." Der Auszeichnung wird nicht nur durch ihren Rang auf der Stufenleiter der österreichischen Orden eine hohe Bedeutung zukommen, ihr Wert wird noch dadurch gehoben, dass ein Numerus Clausus für ihre Verleihung eingeführt wird.' *Sammlung Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (hereafter *NWT*), Nr. 205, 27 July 1930, 5, ed. Hermann Böhm, Newspaper Archive: Vienna City Library Vienna, ZPH 1232, last updated 13 Apr. 2003, accessed 5 Aug. 2008 <[www.wienbibliothek.at/cgi-bin/ma09/embed-wo.pl?lang=de&l=3&doc=http://www.wienbibliothek.at/bibliothek/erwerb/2003/sammlung-neues-wiener-tagblatt-de.htm](http://www.wienbibliothek.at/cgi-bin/ma09/embed-wo.pl?lang=de&l=3&doc=http://www.wienbibliothek.at/bibliothek/erwerb/2003/sammlung-neues-wiener-tagblatt-de.htm)>. All translations in this article are by the author.

<sup>10</sup> *NWT* Nr. 224, 15 Aug. 1930, 4; *NWT* Nr. 205, 27 July 1930, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *NWT* Nr. 224, 15 Aug. 1930, 4.2.

<sup>12</sup> *NWT* Nr. 224, 15 Aug. 1930, 4.2.

<sup>13</sup> Though females were included in the poll returns, the top twelve artists (and, incidentally, the top twelve scientists) were all male.

4. Dr. Wilhelm Kienzl: dramatic composer and writer on music, who had written Austria's National Anthem of the time;
5. Josef Hofman: architect in art and crafts movement;
6. Professor Anton Hanak: a sculptor who worked with Josef Hofman;
7. Professor Erich Wolfgang Korngold;
8. Hermann Bahr: dramatist, novelist and critic;
9. Julius Bittner: composer of operas, choruses and songs and operetta collaborator with Korngold;
10. Karl Franz Ginskey: poet;
11. Professor Dr Klemens Holzmeister: architect who designed the Salzburg Festival Theatre, Government Buildings in Ankara, Turkey, and the Dollfuss Memorial in Vienna; and
12. Professor Arnold Franz Walter Schoenberg.<sup>14</sup>

Despite being an intriguing snapshot of pre-World War II Viennese culture, this poll seems to have generated little interest. Korngold's wife, Luzi, in her biography of their life together, remembered 1930 for Erich's brief professorial posting, the success of *Walzer aus Wien* and his discussions with Max Reinhardt about *Schöne Helena*. Although she took pride in her husband's achievements, Luzi makes no reference to this poll.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, it was not mentioned in Jessica Duchén's 1996 biography of Korngold,<sup>16</sup> nor has any reference been found in the Schoenberg archives,<sup>17</sup> or in Juliane Brand or Erwin Stein's collections of Schoenberg's letters.<sup>18</sup> The only mention of the poll that I am aware of in the Schoenberg literature is in Joan Allen Smith's *Schoenberg and his Circle: A Viennese Portrait*,<sup>19</sup> discussed below. The results of the poll were, however, frequently mentioned in later discussions of Korngold. For a list of these see Table 1. As we shall see, over time the details of the poll were subtly changed in ways that often served to advance Korngold's reputation.

In 1934 Korngold left Austria for Hollywood and began a career as a film music composer. Schoenberg, who had a familial connection with the Korngolds, also took up residence on the outskirts of Hollywood.<sup>20</sup> Schoenberg continued to be the chief exponent of serial music, while Korngold was part of the renaissance of the Romantic tonal idiom, exhibiting what Caryl Flinn describes as a 'calm disinterest' in the 'present [Modernist] understanding of music.'<sup>21</sup> A few years later in 1939 journalist Frederick Othman, writing for the *Hollywood Citizen News* made the first printed reference to the poll. Othman repeats a snippet of

<sup>14</sup> NWT Nr. 224, 15 Aug. 1930, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Luzi Korngold, Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Ein Lebensbild. Österreichischen Komponisten des 20. Jahrhunderts (Vienna: Elizabeth Lafite, 1967) 53.

<sup>16</sup> Jessica Duchén, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (London: Phaidon, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Personal email from Eike Feß, Schoenberg archive librarian, to the author, 26 Sep. 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Donald Harris, eds, *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987); Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, transl. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Faber & Faber, 1958).

<sup>19</sup> Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and his Circle: A Viennese Portrait* (New York: Schirmer, 1986).

<sup>20</sup> Carroll, *The Last Prodigy* 291.

<sup>21</sup> Caryl Flinn, 'The New Romanticism: Hollywood Film Composition in the 1930s and 1940s,' *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) 13–50, esp. 29.

**Table 1.** Published references to the 1930 *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* poll, tracking the misrepresentation of its details over time

Year	Author	Publication	Indicated source	Described limits	Year of poll
1939	Frederick Othman	<i>Hollywood Citizen News</i>	repeated conversation	world's greatest musicians	n/a
1945	Julius Korngold	<i>Child Prodigy</i>	<i>Neues Wiener Tagblatt</i>	most important living artists	not given
1962	Anthony Thomas	<i>Films in Review</i>	repeated conversation	most remarkable composers in Europe	n/a
1980	Brendan Carroll	<i>New Grove</i>	<i>Neue Wiener Tagblatt</i>	greatest living composers	1928
1985	Brendan Carroll	<i>Erich Wolfgang Korngold</i>	<i>Neues Wiener Tagblatt</i>	greatest living composers	1932
1986	Brendan Carroll	<i>New Grove Dictionary of American Music</i>	<i>Neue Wiener Tagblatt</i>	greatest living composers	1932
1986	Joan Allen Smith	<i>Schoenberg and his Circle</i>	<i>Neue Wiener Tagblatt</i>	greatest living composers	1928
1991	Anthony Thomas	<i>Film Score: The Art and Craft of Movie Music</i>	<i>Neue Wiener Tageblatt</i>	European musical cognoscenti electing the most important and influential contemporary composers	1932
1996	Keith Anderson	Liner notes to <i>Die tote Stadt</i>	not given	popular poll electing the greatest composers living in Vienna	1926
1997	Brendan Carroll	<i>The Last Prodigy</i>	<i>Neues Wiener Tagblatt</i>	NWT readers electing the most highly regarded Austrians	15 Aug. 1930
1998	Helmut Pöllmann	<i>Erich Wolfgang Korngold: Aspekte seines Schaffens</i>	not given	most important living composers	1928
2000	Georgina Born & David Hesmondhalgh	<i>Western Music and Others</i>	<i>Neues Wiener Tagblatt</i>	NWT readers electing the most prominent Austrians	1930
2002	Tim Ashley	<i>Oxford Companion to Music</i>	Wiener Tageblatt	NWT readers electing the greatest composers living in Vienna	1928

conversation frequently heard in the studios, and which would appear to be derived, if inaccurately, from the poll: 'If you don't know, Korngold ... [is] acknowledged generally as one of the world's greatest musicians.'<sup>22</sup>

In 1945 Julius Korngold discussed the poll in his memoirs. These memoirs were based on a journal of his son's career that Julius maintained sporadically throughout his life. Although the section devoted to Erich's childhood was published in 1945, it was only available through the Korngold family. Julius's account of the poll is inaccurate:

A large widely read newspaper 'Neues Wiener Tagblatt' sent out a questionnaire to name the most important living artists creatively active, the two musicians selected by the poll as the most remarkable were Arnold Schoenberg and Erich Wolfgang Korngold.<sup>23</sup>

This was a substantial misrepresentation of the actual poll results: the requirement of Austrian citizenship was ignored, as were Kienzl's and Bittner's placings. Rather than being two of the four greatest Austrian composers, Schoenberg and Korngold had become the two most remarkable living musicians.

Julius's account is consistent with his desire to promote his son as a serious musician. Erich's biographers, Brendan Carroll and Jessica Duchon,<sup>24</sup> both highlight Julius's staunch belief in the true and natural order of tonality, his abhorrence of Schoenberg's music, his tireless direction and, at times, belligerent promotion of his son, and his belief that Erich squandered his talents by working with Bittner on Johann Strauss's operettas. They argue that when Julius lived in Hollywood he was extremely homesick and was also possibly suffering from the early symptoms of senile dementia. In 1945 Schoenberg's reputation as 'a great twentieth-century composer' was already in place, but Julius's revision of the poll places Schoenberg on a par with Erich (Schoenberg actually polled twelfth, while Korngold was seventh) and ignores Bittner, Erich's collaborator and the source of his most recent success. Julius believed that both avant-garde music and operetta compromised music's proper status;<sup>25</sup> but by aligning Erich with Schoenberg and the avant-garde, rather than with Bittner and operetta, he sought to advance Erich's reputation in the concert hall. In so doing, Julius appears to have been willing to overlook his objections to Schoenberg's music.<sup>26</sup> He may have been further motivated by a desire to impress Erich's American colleagues, some of whom studied composition with Schoenberg. As the following discussion will show, Julius's version of the poll was repeated for some sixty years.

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick Othman, 'His Music Painful to Korngold,' *Hollywood Citizen News* 9 May 1939. *Film Score: Online Magazine of Motion Picture and Television Music Appreciation*. Contributed by G.D. Hamann, accessed 12 Dec. 2008, <[www.filmscoremonthly.com/articles/2001/26\\_Jul---Thirties\\_Film\\_Music\\_Articles.asp](http://www.filmscoremonthly.com/articles/2001/26_Jul---Thirties_Film_Music_Articles.asp)>.

<sup>23</sup> Julius Korngold, *Child Prodigy* 79.

<sup>24</sup> Carroll, *The Last Prodigy*; Duchon, *Korngold*.

<sup>25</sup> Carroll, *Last Prodigy* 207.

<sup>26</sup> Marian Poole, 'Placing Korngold: Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Place in the Twentieth Century and in the Great Tradition,' MA thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2008, 30; letters between Julius Korngold and Schoenberg, 11 Sep. 1944, 13 Sep. 1944, 12 Oct. 1944 and 15 Oct. 1944, Arnold Schoenberg Centre, Correspondence, accessed 5 Aug. 2008, <[www.schoenberg.at/6\\_archiv/correspondence/letters\\_database.htm](http://www.schoenberg.at/6_archiv/correspondence/letters_database.htm)>.

The next mention of the poll is in a 1962 review of Korngold's film music by Anthony (Tony) Thomas.<sup>27</sup> Thomas had been corresponding with Erich since 1946, and in the 1960s was one of the first writers to archive film music and to acknowledge the creativity of film composers. This review echoes Othman's informal tone: 'It was often said in Vienna that the two most remarkable composers in Europe were Arnold Schoenberg and Erich Wolfgang Korngold.'<sup>28</sup>

Brendan Carroll, in the 1980 'Korngold' entry in *New Grove*, repeats Julius's version of the poll, but makes a spelling mistake and gives the wrong date: 'In 1928 the *Neue* (sic) *Wiener Tagblatt* conducted a poll whose returns named Korngold and Schoenberg as the two greatest living composers.'<sup>29</sup> Five years later, in his 1985 biography of Korngold,<sup>30</sup> Carroll proudly tells of the mass of evidence he had accumulated over the previous twelve years, his close friendship with Korngold's sons, George and Ernst, and his dedication to restoring the status of a composer who, 'because of the caprices of political history and musical fashion, became the victim of unjust neglect.'<sup>31</sup> A revised second impression, the result of 'suggestions kindly offered by certain readers who [had] pointed out inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the text', was printed in 1985.<sup>32</sup> Though providing valuable insights into Korngold's works and his life, a discography and a bibliography, the revised edition remains substantially unreferenced. In this 1985 revision, Carroll inexplicably changes the poll's date from the 1928 to 1932. In the Korngold entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986), also by Carroll,<sup>33</sup> he again gives the date as 1932, and again misspells 'neues' as 'neue': 'A poll conducted by the *Neue* (sic) *Wiener Tagblatt*, in 1932, named Korngold and Schoenberg as the two greatest living composers.'<sup>34</sup> While it is possible that another poll may have been conducted in 1932, I have found no evidence of polls in any year other than 1930.

In 1986—the same year as the publication of the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*—Joan Allen Smith published her book on Schoenberg's Viennese circle. The biographical notes in Smith's book contain the only reference I have found to this poll in the Schoenberg literature. She repeats Carroll's 1980 dating and his spelling mistake, but did not explore or expand upon the information: 'In 1928 a poll by the *Neue* (sic) *Wiener Tagblatt* named Korngold and Schoenberg as the two greatest living composers.'<sup>35</sup>

In 1991, Thomas mentions the poll once more, this time explicitly, but gives the date as 1932, presumably based on Carroll's 1985 publications. Thomas significantly inflates the importance

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Thomas, 'Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold' [album review], *Films in Review* 13 (March 1962): 177–8; Jon Burlingame, 'The Korngold Anthology: An Interview with Tony Thomas,' *The Cue Sheet: Journal of the Society for the Preservation of Film Music* 12.4 (October 1996): 25–30.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, 'Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold' 177.

<sup>29</sup> Brendan Carroll, 'Korngold, Erich Wolfgang,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: MacMillan, 1980) 210.

<sup>30</sup> In a note to the second edition, dated March 1984, Carroll stated that after a 'favourable reception,' the first impression was 'exhausted.' Brendan Carroll, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold, 1897–1957: His Life and Works* (Paisley Scotland: Wilfion Books, 1985) 2.

<sup>31</sup> Brendan Carroll, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold, 1897–1957: His Life and Works* (Paisley Scotland: Wilfion Books, 1985) 1.

<sup>32</sup> Carroll, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (1985) 2.

<sup>33</sup> Brendan Carroll, 'Korngold, Erich Wolfgang,' *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: MacMillan, 1986) 652.

<sup>34</sup> Carroll, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (1985) 10.

<sup>35</sup> Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and his Circle* 278.

of the poll by claiming that it was only European connoisseurs who were consulted, rather than the newspaper's Viennese subscribers.

In 1932, a Viennese newspaper, *Neue* (sic) *Wiener Tageblatt* (sic), conducted a poll among the European musical cognoscenti to determine which of the contemporary composers were considered the most important and the most influential. The two composers who headed the list were Schoenberg and Korngold. Ironically, both men would end their lives in California.<sup>36</sup>

Thomas was an advocate of film music, who worked to promote its status by creating archives, and by encouraging an exploration of the connection between cultural hierarchy and cultural prejudice as it affected film music composers. The inaccuracies in his discussion of the poll, however, effectively undermines his cause.

The confusion about the exact date of the poll did not stop there. A new, wrong date, that places the poll closer to the premiere of *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Korngold's most avant-garde work, appears in Keith Anderson's 1996 liner notes to a Swedish recording of *Die tote Stadt*. He mentions a 'popular poll in Vienna in 1926 ... [where] the two [Schoenberg and Korngold] were described as the greatest composers then living there'.<sup>37</sup> Anderson's dating error indicates that he had not consulted the original document, although he accurately reports the location of the poll, and the fact that it was limited to living Austrian composers. Anderson appears to be unaware, however, that the poll was restricted to the newspaper's subscribers.

By 1997, Carroll had evidently seen the original article and, in his latest, generally exhaustive and excellently referenced biography acknowledges that the poll results had been 'rather exaggerated.' He does not, however, give any details of the nature of the poll except to say that 'readers were asked to establish the most highly regarded Austrians.' Nor does he mention that the results were in two categories, scientists and artists. However, he gives the correct results for Korngold and Schoenberg, and includes Richard Strauss's highest, though disqualified, rating. He downplays the significance of the misinformation by observing that 'at least Korngold was in good company,' although he does not make it clear whether he was referring to Strauss, Schoenberg or both. Carroll omits Kienzl and Bittner's significant placings, despite having made several mentions of Bittner,<sup>38</sup> and two mentions of Kienzl.<sup>39</sup> Carroll's selective discussion of the poll is therefore congruent with Luzi Korngold's desire to restore Erich's status as an art music composer.<sup>40</sup>

Helmut Pöllmann, in his 1998 *Erich Wolfgang Korngold: Aspekte seines Schaffens*, analyses Korngold's music and reception and repeats the information in Carroll's 1980 *New Grove* article, and again claims the poll took place in 1928. Like Thomas, Pöllmann refrains from any deeper discussion of the implications presented by these results.

When asked who were the two most important living composers, Korngold and Schoenberg were named. Artists and the general public were both caught up in the

<sup>36</sup> Tony Thomas, *Film Score: The Art and Craft of Movie Music, The Career and Views of 25 Eminent Composers* (Burbank, CA: Riverwood Press, 1991) 80.

<sup>37</sup> Erich Wolfgang Korngold, *Die tote Stadt*, Op 12. Recorded at the Royal Swedish Opera House, Stockholm,

<sup>31</sup> August-September, 1996, Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, Naxos LC5537, Liner Notes 5–6.

<sup>38</sup> Carroll, *The Last Prodigy* 158, 174–5, 210, 223, 294.

<sup>39</sup> Carroll, *The Last Prodigy* 158, 180.

<sup>40</sup> Carroll, *The Last Prodigy* 211–12.

schism between those working for perfunctory gain and those who are committed to distinction. The reception of Korngold and Schoenberg provides the purest example of this polarity.<sup>41</sup>

In 2000, Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, citing Carroll (1997), reported the poll a little more accurately:

*Neues Wiener Tagblatt* ran a 1930 poll of its readers on how they ranked prominent Austrians in various walks of life. Of the composers cited, Richard Strauss (who was in fact a Bavarian) came first, Korngold second, and Schoenberg third.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, in 2002, Tim Ashley's article in the *Oxford Companion to Music* draws together inaccuracies from all the earlier sources: he cites Carroll's 1997 biography, but gives the date from the 1980 *New Grove* article, and takes Thomas's spelling from 1991, Anderson's geographical boundaries and Carroll's incomplete analysis, thus perpetuating Julius's version:

In 1928 a poll taken from among the readers of the *Wiener Tageblatt* [sic] revealed that Korngold was considered one of the two greatest contemporary Austrian composers, Schoenberg being the other.<sup>43</sup>

The *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* poll tells us nothing significant about the relative quality of Schoenberg and Korngold's music. The poll does, however, provide a useful opportunity to assess objectively Schoenberg and Korngold's relative status within the context of 1930s Vienna. As we have seen, this opportunity was missed due to the failure of otherwise creditable writers to locate or accurately report the original poll results. Most of the writers who repeated this incomplete and inaccurate information were associates of Korngold's circle of friends and family or instigators of a musicology of film: the poll's results as communicated through the literature on Korngold can be seen as 'spin.'

After the Second World War, respected musicologists such as Wilfrid Mellers argued that film music's accompanying role diminished music's integrity.<sup>44</sup> In this climate, researchers were reluctant to evaluate Korngold's innovations and successes in Hollywood. They therefore established a mythology of Korngold as a forgotten composer of opera, and orchestral and chamber works. They cast Korngold as the victim of twentieth-century disillusionment with romanticism, rather than highlighting Korngold's real distinction as an innovative and highly influential composer of film music.

<sup>41</sup> Helmut Pöllmann, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold: Aspekte seines Schaffens* (Mainz: Schott, 1998) 23. 'Auf die Frage nach den beiden wichtigsten, lebenden Komponisten wurden Korngold und Schönberg genannt. Nicht nur der Künstler, auch das Publikum ist in der Polarität zwischen dem spielerisch zu Erlangenden und dem mit aller Anstrengung sich Anzueignenden verfangen. In der Rezeption von Korngold und Schoenberg hat diese Polarität ihre jeweils reinste Ausprägung erfahren.'

<sup>42</sup> Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, 'Korngold's Pleasure, and Deception,' *Western Music and Others* (Berkeley: California Press, 2000) 154.

<sup>43</sup> Tim Ashley, 'Korngold. Erich Wolfgang,' *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Alison Latham (Oxford: OUP, 2002) 459.

<sup>44</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, 'Film Music,' *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Eric Blom (London: MacMillan, 1954) 93–110. Notable dictionaries of music and texts by recognised musicologists agreed that when or because Korngold became a film music writer his early promise was not reached. See Poole, *Placing Korngold*: Ch. 4 'Musicologists' Descriptions of Korngold's Music', also Ch. 5 'Critics' Descriptions of Korngold's Music.'

The polarised attitudes of audiences, critics and musicologists towards the different types of music exemplified by Korngold and Schoenberg was a central issue in twentieth-century music historiography. The rise and fall of Korngold's reputation illustrates the complexities of the reception of music during the twentieth century. The way in which the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* poll of 1930 was presented and misrepresented reminds us of the need to accurately check secondary sources, but is also an example of the tangled web of personal agendas and myth-making that is an important part of the musicology of the period.