BERLIN METROPOLIS
1918–1933

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PRESTEL
MUNICH * LONDON * NEW YORK
## CONTENTS

8  Ronald S. Lauder  
Preface

10  Renée Price  
Foreword

### DADA AND STREET LIFE

14  **BERLIN METROPOLIS**  
Art, Culture, and Politics Between the Wars  
Olaf Peters

36  **ART AND ANTI-ART IN BERLIN AROUND 1920**  
Dada and the Novembergruppe  
Janina Nentwig

58  **PLATES I**

### ARCHITECTURE, THEATER, AND FILM

114  **MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN 1920s BERLIN**  
Leonhard Helten

136  **BABELSBURG/BABYLON**  
Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" Reinterpreted  
Jürgen Müller

162  **PLATES II**

### THE NEW WOMAN, FASHION, AND POLITICS

246  **"THE RHYTHM OF OUR TIME IS JAZZ"**  
Popular Entertainment during the Weimar Republic  
Sharon Jordan

274  **THE NEW WOMAN IN 1920s BERLIN**  
Dorothy Price

294  **BERLIN AS A CITY OF FASHION**  
Adelheid Rasche

311  **PLATES III**

370  Checklist

388  Selected Bibliography

394  Index

400  Photograph and Copyright Credits
"THE RHYTHM OF OUR TIME IS JAZZ"

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT DURING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Sharon Jordan

For long during this night's walk, I had reflected upon the significance of my relation to music, and not for the first time recognized this appealing and fatal relation as the destiny of the entire German spirit.

Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf*

In Otto Dix's painting *To Beauty*, completed in 1922, the viewer is introduced to the artist, who is standing in the center of a darkened dance hall [Fig. 1]. Dix has positioned himself in the middle of two figures. On one side, an African-American jazz drummer conveys the modern American spirit of the emerging twentieth century, while opposite, an elaborately coiffured hairdresser's mannequin displays the outgoing style of the European nineteenth century. The complicated hairstyle of the wax bust mannequin is old-fashioned and firmly rooted in the past in contrast with the full-length couple standing nearby. This young woman wears the short, cropped hair of the urban *Neue Frau* (New Woman) and the looser, unstructured fashion of the day, which was ideal for the new style of social dancing. Dix and his wife Martha, who wore her hair in a similar bobbed style, were great dancers who regularly entered amateur dance competitions.
Dix signed several self-portraits with his nickname "Jimmy" during this period, reflecting both his love of the Shimmy dance and his interest in America.2

Dix's alignment with the jazz drummer is clear in the painting, despite the two men's contrasting skin colors, with the drummer's charcoal-black skin in stark opposition to Dix's own artificially white face. The coloring of each man is exaggerated, relating their appearance to characters in popular entertainment, such as the minstrel performers from the vaudeville or variété circuits, who blacked their faces with burnt cork, or the acrobats in the circus who powdered their faces. Both men are dressed alike in sophisticated slim-fitting suits with narrow ties. This style of high-waisted suit and the slicked back hair were part of the latest look for the American businessman.3 The jazz drummer also wears in his suit pocket a pocket square printed with the American flag. In their left hands, both men hold key symbols to their identity. In the drummer's left hand, he grips a drumstick, his instrument for the new music. In Germany, some referred to the drums simply as "the jazz" during this time.4 In Dix's corresponding hand, he clutches a telephone receiver, a timely example of the technological innovations that were dramatically reshaping modern life. The national telephone network was put into place in Germany in 1922.5 Many nightclubs and dance halls installed telephones at each table to encourage their clientele to talk and flirt with each other. Through all these elements, Dix signals his interest in the sound of jazz and in technological development, recognizing in them a new type of beauty relevant to the modern machine age.

The Weimar Republic took its name from the small city in which its constitution was ratified. Founded in 1918 in the devastating aftermath of World War I, the Republic's relatively brief existence began with military defeat, economic deprivation, hyperinflation, and constant political instability. Weimar was the historical center of the German Enlightenment and the home of Goethe and Schiller. If Weimar was associated with intellectual growth and the concept of Bildung, or self-cultivation through an engagement with great works of art, then Berlin was the country's passionate heart, its volatile soul, and its unruly personality. The city worked out its neurosis in the collective anything-goes world of popular entertainment and urban mass culture. During World War I, social dancing had been outlawed and it was expressly forbidden for men in uniform to participate in American-style dancing.6 With the end of the war, this changed as popular culture and social dancing became two of the few public pleasures available to many people. In 1918, the foxtrot began a dance craze that lasted throughout the Weimar period. Anyone could dance the foxtrot, for it was essentially fast walking. By 1921, the Shimmy, and in 1925, the Charleston were the most popular jazz dances.7 Social dancing was an enjoyable way to make up for lost time after the war, with the sexually charged mood and tension of the tango making it continually popular as well. The array of offerings and venues meant everyone could afford to partake. The working-class visited variété theaters, dance halls, circuses, and amusement parks and fairgrounds, while the bourgeoisie frequented these along with more upscale revues and cabarets or weekly tea dances, such as those held at the Hotel Adlon. In the popular magazine Simplicissimus, an illustration by leading cartoonist Karl Arnold, for a series about Berlin, published on June 8, 1921, captioned "Jazz Orchestra and Shimmy Dance," reflects how social dancing was integrated into the fabric of people's daily lives, providing post office clerks and typists with something vital that was missing with the monotony of their workday [Fig. 2]. In Klaus Mann's autobiography The Turning

Point: Thirty-five Years in this Century, written in 1932, one year before the writer left Germany, Mann describes how jazz, together with social dancing, was something of a psychological and physical salvation for many people confronting the challenges of post-war society:

Let’s make our descent into hell accompanied by the syncopated yelling of a Negro band!...Let’s dance!...Millions of helpless, impoverished, bewildered people capered and swung in a delirium of hunger and hysteria. Dance was a mania, a religion, a racket...Jazz was the great balm and narcotic of a disconcerted, frustrated nation.  

When Harry Haller, the protagonist in Hermann Hesse’s novel Steppenwolf, published in 1927, decides to reinvent himself, he finds liberation through jazz dancing, giving himself over to his alluring dance instructor, who says she can teach him the foxtrot in one hour and another popular dance, the Boston, in two. Learning to do these dances becomes part of a psycho-social transformation that emancipates Haller completely from the rigid constraints of prevailing bourgeois values.

Music was everywhere, recalled Josephine Baker of her first visit to Berlin in December 1925. Baker described the extravagant chorus lines of the cabaret revues, like the famous Wintergarten, a variété theater with seats for 1,000 people, as “ocean liners powered by the rhythm of their orchestras.” With the relaxation of censorship laws in 1918, exotic dancing and striptease also grew in popularity to compete with the rise of cinema, with many cabarets emphasizing risqué costumes and featuring more nudity than plot, thus cashing in on the sexual permissiveness of Berlin. For many people, the cabaret mirrored the unique character of urban life by featuring a rapid succession of unrelated acts, echoing the simultaneity of sounds and movement and the constant stimulus of the city streets. As early as 1900, in a collection of cabaret lyrics, Otto Julius Bierbaum wrote:

The contemporary city dweller has vaudeville nerves; he seldom has the capacity of following great dramatic continuities, of tuning his senses to the same sound for three hours. He desires diversity – Variété.

In 1921, cabaret lyricist Walter Mehring’s song “Heimat Berlin” (the word meaning “cozy hometown” an ironic choice for the urban metropolis) evoked the adventure and energetic pace of the city’s streets with the lyrics:

Giddy up! Down the Linden! Don’t act dead! On foot, on horse, in twos! Got a watch in my hand and a hat on my head. No time! No time to lose!

In another popular song, “Berliner Tempo,” Mehring composed the lyrics in two columns
with performers meant to recite them simultaneously, reflecting a typically frenetic journey through the streets of the city.

During this period, modern composers continued to make Berlin a vital place for musical experimentation as they, too, challenged traditional values. Avant-garde composer Arnold Schoenberg was in Berlin from 1911 until leaving to serve in the army: he then returned to teach at the Preussische Akademie der Künste (Prussian Academy of Arts) in 1926. The following year, composer Paul Hindemith was also appointed professor at the school. Alban Berg, whose musical landmark Wozzeck opened in Berlin in 1925, recognized, "Being modern [meant] using new devices like cinema, jazz, and variété." The composer Kurt Weill, musical collaborator with dramatist Bertolt Brecht, similarly recognized the importance of the American music and social dancing at the time, writing, "A certain branch of dance music so completely expresses the spirit of our times that it has even been able to achieve a temporary influence over a certain part of serious art music. The rhythm of our time is jazz...And a glance into the dance halls of all continents demonstrates that jazz is just as precisely the outward expression of our time as the waltz was of the outgoing nineteenth century." Throughout Berlin, from the seediest dance halls to the opera, by the end of the 1920s new music could be heard everywhere, with the music and dance of American jazz helping to shape exactly what it meant to be urban and modern in such calamitous times.

Not everyone welcomed the rampant pursuit of pleasure in Berlin. Beginning in 1921, advertising columns throughout the city began warning residents of the dangers of venereal disease should they maintain a promiscuous lifestyle, with the text reading, "Berlin, stop and think! You are dancing with death" [Fig. 3]. The public service message looked similar to advertisements for popular nightclubs, but its inclusion of a representation of a skeleton dancing with its female partner implied that social dancing, like prostitution, fostered unhealthy habits and promoted disease. Cabaret lyricist Walter Mehring quickly adapted the slogan into song lyrics, "Berlin, the partner of your dance is death - Foxtrot..."
Band, originally made for his series Berlin Trip in 1922, the dark-skinned musicians depicted performing inside a crowded nightclub share an animalistic appearance that sets them apart from the club's European clientele, signaling their outsider status and reflecting the primal sexuality associated with jazz by way of the African-Americans who introduced it to Europeans [Fig. 4]. Since its formation in America, jazz had an illicit air about it, which was part of its early appeal. The word jazz was initially a euphemism for sex, and someone might call himself "a jazzer" to imply he was cool and in-the-know. As it was introduced in Germany, many felt African-American music was symptomatic of a regrettable and dangerous cultural decline, with American jazz denigrating the greatness achieved specifically through music. This was the land of Mozart, who, though born in Austria, had begun a tradition of German-language opera with Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute) in 1791 that continued into the twentieth century with Richard Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier (The Knight of the Rose) in 1911. Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, completed in 1824, is arguably the ultimate example of the universal power of music. In the nineteenth century, Richard Wagner revolutionized opera with the Gesamtkunstwerk or "total work of art" that synthesized music, drama, poetry, and the visual arts. Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung), the four-part epic written over 25 years between 1848 and 1874, is synonymous with German identity and the country's mythic origins. How could jazz, invented by foreigners and a product of the low-culture world of the vaudeville theater and the brothels of New Orleans, be worthy of such mass adoration?

"AMERIKANISMS"

Amerikanismus was the German term for the widespread interest in uniquely American things throughout this period. In the world of popular entertainment, this included jazz, Hollywood movies, and boxing. By 1920, American actor Charlie Chaplin was one of the most famous men in the world. In Dix's painting To Beauty, the New World identity of the African-American jazz drummer is heightened by the exoticism of the Native American who appears on his drum set. Together, they represent key aspects of Amerikanismus that appealed to the imagination of many Germans. For leading avant-garde artists, these renegades, non-white American archetypes provided liberating and authentic alter-egos to enact a revolution against mainstream values. The values of bourgeois American society were not of much interest to these artists, since these ideas were informed by European values. "Correspondents in all great centers of Europe and America, by Negroes and Eskimos," read the byline of Der Querschnitt (meaning "cross-section"), one of the most creative and sophisticated cultural magazines of the Weimar period, reflecting this interest in the point of view of these exotic outsiders, the Americans on the margins rather than
the mainstream of society. Der Querschnitt devoted much coverage to America and to jazz from its foundation in January 1921 by modern art dealer Alfred Flechtheim, through its continuing publication by Berlin's Ullstein Verlag beginning in 1923, until it was forced to close in 1936.18 African-American performers and the heightened tempo of their music signaled a new direction in modern society, one that ignored or made fun of the rigid, class-based distinctions ingrained in European society, while elevating the products of popular entertainment and mass culture to where they were considered art. Unlike in America, the minstrel performer—whether African-American or more frequently a white person in blackface—was admired as a symbol of individuality who was instructive for their satirical views on modern society.20 This was the case during the war in 1917, when artist George Grosz made two lithographs depicting a pair of tap-dancing African-American performers, called the Christmas Brothers, with one of the men sporting the American flag on his lapel in one version, when this type of pro-American sentiment was controversial. The cowboys and Indians of the Wild West were similarly appealing as solitary adventurers and noble savages, able to tame and conquer a vast natural wilderness comparable to the urban metropolis, with a lifestyle structured by its own codes of behavior. In Germany, this generation was brought up on Karl May's Wild West adventure books, published throughout the 1890s, featuring the protagonist Old Shatterhand and the noble Apache character Winnetou. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Buffalo Bill traveling show with the Annie Oakley female character had been among the most successful fairground entertainments in Europe. In 1922, the same year he painted To Beauty, Otto Dix depicted himself in a colorful feathered headdress in the drawing Wild West. In 1917, the artist George Grosz turned his studio into an exotic Wild West location with Native American wigwams, buffalo skins, and tomahawks.20

Cabaret lyricist Walter Mehring met George Grosz in Berlin in 1916. With John Heartfield, Richard Huelsenbeck, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, and Johannes Baader, they became key members of the Berlin Dadaists, artists devoted to using new media to enact a political and cultural revolt during the Weimar period. Both Grosz and Heartfield adopted Americanized names as a protest to signal their opposition to the war.21 Among his friends, Mehring called himself by the American abbreviation “Wait” while referring to his friend Bertolt Brecht as “Bert.”22 In a biographical text introducing John Heartfield, written by Huelsenbeck for the Dada Almanach, a book published to coincide with the “Erste Internationale Dada-Messe” (“First International Dada Fair”) exhibition in Berlin in 1920, the ironic text opens by connecting Heartfield to both the Native American and to the low-culture world of the minstrel performer on the vaudeville circuit:

Johan Heartfield, the great chieftain, was born in 1888 in New Orleans, where his father, the ‘White Bear’ had pitched his wigwam for some decades...When John was three years old he began, to the astonishment of his fellow human beings, to reveal artistic talent by painting his face with lith or shit...People flocked from far and wide to witness John’s talent, who incidentally advertised himself in a loud voice in true American fashion...23

In Erinnerung an New York (Memory of New York), the first image of nine lithographs in a portfolio by George Grosz, the artist shows his interest in the fast-paced energy of the streets of New York City, long before he had actually ever visited America, by using shifting spatial planes, dense intersecting lines,
Gross's image, the set-up of the buildings and trees in the background appear staged, as in a film set, indicating that Hollywood Westerns had likely helped to inform his view of the look of these distant places.

The early jazz that Germans adored was actually ragtime, and since the turn of the century, nothing was more popular than American ragtime. It was heard everywhere in the popular entertainment world—in cabaret revues and variété theaters, at the circus, in amusement parks and fairgrounds, and at the cinema.

and overlapping forms [Fig. 5]. The portfolio's images of Berlin, by comparison, show the dismal reality of the present day, with wounded veterans and the downtrodden working classes appearing in desolate and inhospitable urban areas. Gross made the series shortly after he was discharged from the army in 1915, at the same time that he Americanized the spelling of his name. The second image in the portfolio is Texasbild für meinen Freund Chingachgook (Texas Picture for My Friend Chingachgook), showing cowboys and Indians in a frontier town with the name related to a character in a series of books by American author James Fennimore Cooper [Fig. 6]. Many popular silent Hollywood films of the time were set in the Wild West. In

Ragtime developed in the Midwest with Scott Joplin and in the American South with other itinerant pianists who freely departed from written scores to embellish and improvise at the piano, resulting in spontaneous variations. Its name came from the staggered, syncopat-
ed melody in which emphasis was placed on the secondary notes, creating an unexpected rhythm that was referred to as "ragging the beat" with any tune or song that was peppy and danceable called a "rag." Eventually, this accelerated rhythmic momentum came to be called jazz and swing. Ragtime was introduced to German audiences by a broad network of African-Americans who toured the country extensively before World War I, with the weekly periodical for traveling artists, Der Artist, listing more than 100 black entertainers on tour in 1896. A second wave of ragtime in America began in the 1910s. This time it was made up mainly of white European Jews from New York City's Tin Pan Alley, with their evolving version of ragtime owing much to Eastern European klezmer music. Irving Berlin had emigrated with his family to New York City shortly after his birth in Russia in 1893. His "Alexander's Ragtime Band," released in 1911, followed by "That International Rag" in 1913, became international hits that showed the possibility of incorporating ragtime sound into a traditional compositional structure. Before the war, George Grosz had an American friend who introduced him to authentic ragtime music. Grosz even advertised in the back pages of magazines to find and buy more ragtime recordings.

The cakewalk dance was the centerpiece of most vaudeville shows and among minstrel performers, and the dance became a popular craze well before the popularity of jazz among Americans and Europeans alike. Between 1900 and 1914, "The Brooklyn Cake-Walk" was the most recorded tune in Germany for pre-gramophone sources, including discs for the music box and cylinder rolls for the phonograph. Its name reflects the ritual in which slaves who were the winners in plantation dance competitions would often receive a cake as a prize. The highly stylized dance is easily recognized with its unusual side-by-side partnering, its high-strutting step, the exaggerated arched back posture, and the bent wrists, characteristics originating among African-Americans as a means of satirizing the posturing attitudes of white people. The humorous yet pointed critique inherent in the dance was indicative of the general atmosphere in the vaudeville and variété theaters, where the rhythmic sound of ragtime similarly appealed to members of the cultural and artistic avant-garde as a means of signaling their own flouting of bourgeois morals and their embrace of alternative values. In the German Expressionist artist Ernst Kirchner's painting *Panama Dancers*, 1910–11, four members of a dance troupe are depicted performing the cakewalk, with its distinctive prancing steps, with two of the women holding canes enacting the men's roles [Fig. 7]. The painting's title indicates that Kirchner may have seen the African-American performer Aida Overton Walker, who was known as "the Queen of the Cakewalk" and the widow of vaudevillian George Walker, perform with her troupe, the Panama Girls, in Dresden.

By this time, ragtime had spread across Europe. In France, Claude Debussy had incorporat-
ed ragtime syncopation in "Golliwogg's Cakewalk," the sixth movement of his suite Children's Corner, first published in 1908. The piece was meant to reflect the innocence and wonder of children and referenced popular toys, particularly the golliwogg, a black doll related to the minstrel performer. The connection between the golliwogg and childhood is their lack of guile and naiveté. African-American minstrel performers were valued for their humor and, like children, their perceived lack of inhibitions and authenticity in an increasingly materialistic and bourgeois society. French composer Erik Satie also used ragtime sound to convey the simultaneity and noise of urban life in Parade, a ballet about a troupe of circus performers that premiered in 1917. One of its numbers, "Ragtime du Paquebot," became widely popular as a stand-alone recording. Parade was a creative collaboration between Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes with Jean Cocteau, who wrote the book, and Pablo Picasso, who did the costumes and sets. As early as 1913, Cocteau had written to French artist Albert Gleizes, who was in New York asking him to send ragtime records to France. Satie's ragtime-inflected music for Parade caused a scandal for his incorporation of street noise from everyday objects, including a starter's pistol, a megaphone, foghorn, typewriter (an American invention), and a street barker shouting slogans, all to evoke the disparate sounds of the city. The characters included the "American business manager" costumed in Cubist-style assemblages of forms and objects.

Forced to leave his homeland with the beginning of the war in 1914, Igor Stravinsky settled in Switzerland, where, in his isolation, he continued to find inspiration in the Russian folk tales of his past. He mixed these freely with ragtime, America's folk music, to create L'histoire du Soldat (The Soldier's Tale), which premiered in Lausanne in 1918. Ernest Ansermet, who conducted the work at its premiere, had returned from his second American tour with the Ballets Russes earlier that year, bringing with him a bundle of ragtime scores for Stravinsky to study.

The jazz age in America officially began in 1917 with the recording of "Livery Stable Blues" by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, though the recording was not distributed in Germany until 1923. The first jazz recording released in Germany was "Tiger Rag" in January 1920, and by 1921, the Brunswick and Columbia labels began to export American jazz recordings to Germany. Originating from the amalgamation of ragtime rhythm and syncopation, with aspects of the blues mixed with elements of gospel spirituals, jazz was unmistakably American. By 1923, Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, and Bessie Smith had all made recordings for the newly invented, electric-powered gramophone that replaced the hand-cranked phonograph.

Friedrich Hollaender was a cabaret composer in Berlin who played piano as the bandleader for the Weintrab Syncopators, one of the first authentic German jazz bands that emerged during the Weimar period. Hollaender described this early interest in jazz recordings, saying, "Everyone wanted it and no one could play it. People ran around buying the new records from America, carted them home, tipped them on the plate like fried eggs and let them roll, ten times, twenty times." The music was strange and different, loud and exciting. In jazz, the drums and the saxophone, which Hollaender referred to as the "foreign foghorn," assumed a leading role for the first time, unlike the supporting roles they held in symphonic ensembles. The eclectic sound of this ragtime and early jazz, with its novel instruments, including the banjo, was unburdened by the established musical idioms of
the European cultural tradition. In the variété theatres, performers used instruments from the vaudeville minstrel shows, including the tambourine, harmonica, and the ever-present banjo, along with everyday objects, including brooms, jugs, tubs, chairs, and wheels—anything that seemed impossible to play but produced sound to the delight of audiences. The artist Max Beckmann recognized this, saying, "I love jazz so much. Especially because of the cowbells and the automobile horns. At least that's decent music."39

With the Dawes Plan of 1924, an American initiative to revise the terms of war reparations, the German economy was stimulated, leading to financial improvement out of the worst of the inflationary period. This economic plan boosted interest in Amerikanismus by encompassing technological innovation, industrialization, and methods of efficient manufacturing, with Germans becoming enthusiastic students of American ideas. Methods of standardization, inspired by Henry Ford's automobile assembly line, were eagerly tested and adapted by German businessmen. Henry Ford's autobiography was highly popular, going through numerous printings and selling over 200,000 copies after it was published in Germany in 1923.37 In a short vignette using common stereotypes of the different attitudes among nations, the writer and cabaret lyricist Kurt Tucholsky imagined a contest in which several countries were invited to "draw a circle" in which the American appeared with a circle-drawing machine, the biggest in the world.38

"The Athens on the Spree is dead, and the Chicago on the Spree grows apace," is how Walther Rathenau described the ramifications of massive industrial growth in Berlin by 1899, referring to the river running through the city.39 He imagined the urban sprawl and industrial character of Chicago displacing Berlin's neo-classical architecture and the city's identity as a seat of Enlightenment learning. Rathenau was one of the country's biggest industrialists, the son of the founder of AEG, Germany's largest electrical company. During the nineteenth century, the growth of industry had led to the rise of the proletariat working-class, whose numbers swelled under the pace and scale of industrialization during the Weimar period, with large numbers of Berliners joining the Communist party. In spite of the war, after America, Germany remained the world's most industrialized country throughout the 1920s. By 1922, Berlin's similarity with Chicago was highly relevant when John Heartfield designed the covers for the German publication of books by various American authors, including Upton Sinclair's novel The Jungle, published in the United States in 1906, about Chicago's meatpacking industry and its related exploitative labor practices. Grosz and Heartfield, who with his brother Wieland Herfelde, founded the publishing company Malik-Verlag in 1917, were Communists. Though they admired the individuality of certain Americans, particularly jazz musicians, minstrel performers, and Native Americans, they, along with many others on the left and right, were critical of the commercialization and consumerism resulting from American-style capitalism as it took hold in industrialized Germany. Grosz used an image of New York City's Flatiron Building, one of the country's earliest skyscrapers, with the text Reklameabteilung (Advertising Department) written across it to signal these concerns on the cover of the second issue of Neue Jugend (New Youth), a Malik-Verlag periodical, in June 1917.40

Rising to unexpected heights, the skyscraper was the central product of new American innovation and engineering and a key symbol of the realm of the urban businessman. A rollercoaster in Berlin's Lunapark included...
a painted backdrop featuring New York City skyscrapers transporting riders to the far-away urban paradise. In 1928, the architect Erich Mendelsohn published a book length photo-essay called Amerika: Bilderbuch Eines Architekten (America: An Architect's Picture Book) featuring numerous images of industrial grain silos, factories, and public transport systems in cities including Detroit, Buffalo, and Chicago. Dozens of photographs romanticized the towering skyscrapers, cavernous avenues, and views of New York's majestic harbor, with the city given pride of place in the book as "the world center—the money center." Of an intersection at Broadway and 43rd Street, Mendelsohn used an aerial vantage point to dramatize the verticality of the skyscrapers, describing the pedestrian island with divergent streets below as "between heaven and mechanics, the whole garden of God."42

By the 1920s, though its origins were in New Orleans, jazz was associated with cities like New York and Chicago, which had become home to hundreds of thousands of African-Americans seeking jobs and better lives in northern cities.43 Jazz was modern and it was urban. It was fast and bouncy with an upbeat tempo that reflected like nothing else the hectic pace, cacophonous noise, and constant change or simultaneity of the urban metropolis.

"A MIXTURE OF JUNGLE AND SKYSCRAPER ELEMENTS"

The growth of popular entertainment and mass culture were closely related to modern technological developments throughout the Weimar period. Bertolt Brecht made this connection in a poem titled "Song of the Machines," where he described the music of "our black stars" as "jazz bands in which engineers make music."44 In 1922, composer Paul Hindemith instructed his students to play the ragtime-inspired sections of his recent piano suites wildly yet with the rhythm of a machine.45 On October 29, 1923, at 8 p.m., with the foundation of Berlin's Funkstunde AG network, public radio broadcasting began bringing live and recorded music nightly into people's homes, along with news, readings, radio plays, political reporting, and sporting events. In less than a year, eight regional radio companies were set up throughout the country.46 In Berlin, the number of radio listeners grew quickly, from 200,000 in 1924 to one million in 1926; and by 1928, there were over two million radio subscribers in the city. Dance music was broadcast for an hour from 10:30 to 11:30 p.m. on weeknights and until midnight on weekends.47 In the essay "Tanzmusik" (Dance Music), published in 1926, Kurt Weill wrote that the dance music played nightly on the radio was one of the rare things with the power to lift urbanites above their daily routine. He found that the music reflected the instinct of the masses rather than a far-away, lone artistic individual.48 Weill's jazz-inflected score for Bertolt Brecht's Die Dreigroschenoper (The Three-Penny Opera), which premiered in Berlin in August 1928, complemented the drama's modern proletarian theme. Weill also used jazz rhythms in another collaboration with Brecht, Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny (Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny), in which Brecht staged a critical view of the capitalist system. The German banjo virtuoso Michael Danzi was hired, along with several American saxophone players, to augment the Berlin Symphony Orchestra with authentic jazz musicians at its premiere performances in 1927.49

Along with the radio, cinema was another exciting technological medium to develop in the 1920s. Between 1895 and 1910, short films were curiosities shown during breaks in variété shows and at amusement fairs.50 Cinema became a mass media with the release of longer feature films starting in 1918 and the founding of major filmmaking studios in
Berlin. For just a few cents a ticket, anyone could buy a couple hours of entertainment that additionally guaranteed a break from the cold outside and the unheated apartments of so many city dwellers. By 1930, over a million movie tickets were sold daily in Berlin. Before sound was introduced, music was still an integral part of the movie-going experience, with ragtime recordings often synchronized to a film's projection and live performances before and at intermission of a feature. In December 1925, Berlin's Palast am Zoo cinema had both a symphony orchestra and a fifteen-piece jazz band on stage around its featured movies. In 1927, Walther Ruttmann's Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt (Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis) was released. Banjo player Michael Danzi was again hired to perform at its premiere. The full-length documentary was a celebration of different aspects of urban life and the film was innovative for its syncopated montage style rather than a narrative script with actors. The viewer is taken through the city with a constant stream of images that mirror its fast pace and constant movement, from its opening with a train rushing into Anhalter Bahnhof station to pedestrians dodging streetcars, from colossal industrial turbines with churning machines to urban shop windows filled with merchandise. The film culminates with several dance sequences featuring whirling couples and close-ups of legs doing the Charleston, with the limbs echoing the accelerated pulse of the earlier machines. One of the still photographs from the film evokes the city through its relationship to popular entertainment, with performers arranged in a montage over a city street [Fig. 8]. A man kneels below the outstretched leg of a dancer, as though in awe of it, flanked by other musicians also on bended knee, while a white emcee on the left is contrasted by a minstrel in blackface on the right, all seeming to indicate that the city is a stage for living and that identity is as malleable as a costume.

The fetishizing of the leg in the center of the image relates to the popularity of the cabaret chorus lines throughout this time. The Tiller Girls were one of the most popular of these opulent chorus lines, premiering in Berlin at the Admiralpalast in 1924 [Fig. 9]. Though they were actually British, the Tiller Girls were commonly misidentified as American in the media and held up as examples of its
with each smiling chorus girl sliding down the conveyor belt a product of industrial efficiency [Fig. 10]. The elegant linear structure that propels the chorus girls towards the viewer is reminiscent of Moholy-Nagy’s sketch designs for urban bridges. The montage composition, using publicity photographs originally reproduced in mass culture magazines, is itself an example of the intersection of art, technology, and popular entertainment in its mix of materials and choice of subject matter.

At the Bauhaus, the influence of jazz was part of a philosophy favoring experimentation in new media. Oskar Schlemmer, who led the school’s theater workshop, was considered by some to be a Classicist because he preferred figurative work, compared to other leading artists on the faculty who worked in abstract modes, including Vasily Kandinsky and Moholy-Nagy. In a letter, Schlemmer brought jazz together with the entire Zeitgeist of the period, summarizing, “The artistic climate here cannot support anything that is not the latest, the most modern, up-to-the-minute. Dadaism, circus, variété, jazz, hectic pace, movies, America, airplanes, the automobile. Those are the terms in which people here think.” A jazz band was formed at the Bauhaus in 1924 by Hungarian student Andor Weininger, who played the piano. T. Lux Feininger, the son of painter Lyonel Feininger, was a member of the band who played banjo and clarinet as well as a photographer who frequently depicted the band members and their instruments. In one photograph, taken in 1928, Werner Jackson on saxophone, Xanti Schawinsky on clarinet, and Hermann Clemens Rüsseler on banjo appear with humorous expressions, arranged vertically like a skyscraper [Fig. 11]. The jazz band often performed at theater productions under Schlemmer’s direction, and here he appears standing in the rear. With his composition, Feininger explores aspects
of the Neues Sehen (New Vision), part of the philosophy of Moholy-Nagy, who encouraged compositional choices that included unexpected angles, abrupt cropping, and off-centered compositions. All were seen as ways to fully imagine the modern world from a fresh perspective. The playfulness of the image also reflects the connection between the energetic and modern sound of jazz and the optimistic exploration of new media underway at the school. This is also seen in a series of 48 photomontages made between 1924 and 1930 by Marianne Brandt, a talented industrial designer at the Bauhaus. The images reflect the dominance of popular entertainment throughout the decade, with women acting as symbols of social and cultural change and as consumers of mass culture. In Zirkus (Circus), made in 1926, the female figure at the top and the two young men at the bottom are dancing the Charleston [Fig. 12]. The composition is arranged with a sweeping arc between them, the overlapping diagonal imagery conveying the dynamism and speed of modern life. The appearance of a cyclist also references the popularity of mass sporting events, including the six-day bicycle races. An older man wearing a traditional artist’s smock stands alone on the bottom right looking on as the modern group rushes past him.

By the mid-1920s, with recordings readily available and radio and films popularizing the music, orchestral jazz ensembles established themselves in Germany playing genuine jazz and dance music. New York bandleader
Paul Whiteman was a major influence on the look and style of these German ensembles. Whiteman commissioned composer George Gershwin to write "Rhapsody in Blue," which premiered in New York in February 1924. It was the first presentation of orchestral jazz in a concert hall rather than in a vaudeville theater or a dance hall. Among the most popular German ensembles were the Weintraub Syncopators under the direction of bandleader, composer, and cabaret lyricist Friedrich Hollaender. Others included Eric Borchard with his Yankee Jazz-Band, the Comedian Harmonists, Marek Weber, Werner Richard Heymann, and Micha Spoliansky among leading composers and conductors of popular music. Friedrich Hollaender was the musical director for Max Reinhardt's Schall und Rauch cabaret, which opened in December 1919, where he regularly collaborated with writers and lyricists Kurt Tucholsky and Walter Mehring. Schall und Rauch was one of the city's largest cabaret theaters, with over 5,000 seats, located in the basement of Reinhardt's dramatic theater in architect Hans Poellitz's masterwork, the Grosses Schauspielhaus. It was one of the few cabarets with overtly political motivations. Its name, "sound and smoke," alludes to the cabaret atmosphere, as well as indicating that its program would cut through the competing noise and obfuscating smoke of contemporary politics. Hollaender also wrote the scores for many major films, including Josef von Sternberg's Der blauwe Engel (The Blue Angel), released in 1930, making Marlene Dietrich an international star. Hollaender, who appears at the piano in several sequences, also recorded the film's famous song, "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss auf Liebe eingestellt" ("Falling in Love Again"), with Dietrich. The Blue Angel was Germany's first major sound film, released two years after the first talking picture, The Jazz Singer, was released in America. In the film, Dietrich plays cabaret singer Lola-Lola, whose adventurous life and sexual independence cause the venerable Professor Rath, played by leading actor Emil Jannings, to throw away his respectable teaching position to join her and the other performers in the itinerant life of the variété circuit. Driven insane by the impossibility of keeping the capricious Lola satisfied and the irreparable destruction of his professional reputation, the film ends with the Professor collapsed upon his desk in his old classroom. Audiences were delighted by the charisma of the leading actors and titillated by the film's overt depiction of Lola's sexuality, though the narrative presents an underlying moral lesson about the corrupting influences of cabaret and popular entertainment.

Throughout this time, African-American performers were big draws in variété theaters and circuses throughout Germany. August Sander's photograph of a group of circus performers, part of a series made between 1926 and 1932, depicts inhabitants of the fringe world of the itinerant entertainer, whose circus caravans and variété troupes traveled throughout the country, stopping to occupy working-class areas usually on the outskirts of towns and cities [Fig. 13]. Sander's photograph features members of Barum's amerikanische Karawanen-Menagerie (Barum's American Caravan Menagerie), formed in 1878 to compete with P.T. Barnum's well-known American circus. The African-American man on the right wears a ringmaster's costume, counterbalanced by the woman on the left wearing a similar jacket. The performers are from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, with all arranged in an informal, close-knit grouping around one of the recently introduced portable gramophones. Sander chose six photographs from the circus series to include in the final section of his magnum opus Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts (People of the Twentieth
Circus Performers, in which he categorically documented the individual types that together comprised Germany's people. The circus performers were grouped with other city dwellers, including persecuted Jews and political prisoners, who occupied the lowest positions in society.

Since the turn of the century, many German and French artists had liberated their art from prevailing Western traditions by looking to African sculpture and other non-Western sources. For the German Expressionist artists, music and dance were at the core of the artistic will, the drive to express the creative essence of human nature that was central to Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy. Because American ragtime music and jazz dances were popularized through performance and bodily movement, they were experienced and enjoyed as instinctual and authentic rather than cerebral, fulfilling Nietzsche's Dionysian ideal. Throughout the 1920s, artists who sought to critique contemporary values found the same freedom and originality in the identity of the African-American performers, who were seen as the perfect embodiment of an alternative to European society. They came from the modern, urban world of popular entertainment and were clearly outsiders by virtue of their non-Western skin color and their New World origins. In an article in Neue Jugend, published by the Malik-Verlag in June 1917, George Grosz extolled the circus acrobat as a paragon of adaptability, with the elasticity of the job being a necessary skill for surviving in the modern, chaotic city. In another August Sander photograph, Raoul Hausmann as a Dancer, taken in 1929, the Berlin Dada...


artistic representation is seen exaggerating the size and shape of his lips, perhaps mimicking a minstrel performer while wearing the loose fitting pants of a modern dancer [Fig. 14]. His pose bears a resemblance to a caricature drawing of an African-American performer that appeared in the magazine Der Querschnitt in February 1927 to illustrate an article about the current American dance, the Black-bottom, that was becoming as popular as the Charleston [Fig. 15]. In Christian Schad’s portrait Egon Erwin Kisch, made in 1928, the well-known leftist journalist, known as the “raging reporter from Prague,” is depicted sitting atop the construction crane of a modern steel bridge [Fig. 16]. Like Otto Dix, Schad was one of the leading artists associated with the Neue Sachlichkeit style of painting that typified the Weimar era. Schad was known to paint his backgrounds separately, which is likely the case here given the unusual aerial location. Across Kisch’s
bared upper body, a number of tattoos appear, also possibly added by the artist as a means of confirming his subject's gritty personality and his journalistic interest in the members of the working-class, the downtrodden, and those on the margins of society. A chorus girl or circus sideshow entertainer is prominently featured on his stomach, and on his right arm there is a smiling costumed minstrel in an energetic pose. The minstrel is historically related to the clown and the classical fool, who served as foils for audiences by appearing visibly disassociated from them. This enabled them to use satirical humor to expose truths and critique the follies of society, similar to the role of a journalist.

In Germany, the peak in popularity of ragtime music and minstrel performances at the circus and amusements parks coincided with human zoos and ethnographic exhibitions, all of which proliferated from the 1890s until the beginning of World War I. The traveling zoos and ethnographic amusements, along with the establishment of major ethnographic collections in museums, grew out of European colonialism, with Germany acquiring its colonies beginning in 1883 in areas of Africa and the South Pacific. Native zoos and traveling ethnographic exhibitions made huge profits by displaying foreigners as curiosities and oddities, exploiting their customs, dwellings, and clothing in ersatz environments. Native Americans or entertainers dressed as them were frequently included in these zoos, fairs, and in circuses, with many of these also featuring African-American performers. In the drypoint series Annual Fair, made in 1921, Max Beckmann shows the mix of entertainment at typical amusement fairs. Beckmann appears in the opening page as a circus barker, while his wife Minna appears later as a tightrope walker. Two images in the
series depict tribal Africans in costume, holding spears, and arranged on a crowded stage or being gawked at by a white spectator. In 1922, Otto Dix also did a drypoint series featuring different performers in the circus, including the American Riding Act, depicting three performers costumed as Native Americans wearing elaborate feathered headdresses, riding horses bareback while standing upright. Among these exotic outsiders, a superficial linkage developed between African-American performers and tribal Africans due to their shared race and to the presence of both groups in these popular entertainment settings. This connection was seen as a positive among many avant-garde artists, who appreciated both groups for their rhythmic music and vernacular dances that were seen as indications of their innate expressiveness. This racial connection between African-American jazz musicians and Africans was perpetuated throughout the 1920s, as seen in one layout from Der Querschnitt, published in February 1928 [Fig. 17]. On the top left, there are photographs of two of Europe’s leading jazz impresarios at the time—the Englishman Jack Hylton and German bandleader Friedrich Hollaender. The two men appear above a photograph of a group of South Africans with tribal drums, with the caption reading “Original Jazzband.” The Africans are also equated with the exotic foreignness of the Native American through a photograph on the facing page featuring the artist George Grosz wearing a headdress and war paint for a dress-up party in a group that also includes artists Max Pechstein and Karl Hofer. Above this image, two European women appear, one the wife of French artist André Derain, wearing their faces blacked in minstrel color for another dress-up party.

The Berlin Dada artist Hannah Höch responded to the issue of race and contemporary standards of beauty perpetuated in the mass media through a series of artworks in which she collaged together photographs of people from non-Western cultures with those of white European women. Höch worked for Berlin’s Ullstein publishing conglomerate, from whose periodicals, including Der Querschnitt, she drew her source material. Höch made these photomontages to challenge contemporary social and political conditions. In the collage Liebe im Busch (Love in the Bush), made in 1925, Höch addresses the occupation of the Rhineland and the ongoing racial discrimination that outlawed mixed marriages by depicting an African male figure embracing and holding the hand of a white woman [Fig. 18]. Beginning in 1919, the French army had moved colonial African troops from Senegal and Morocco into Germany’s Rhineland to occupy the area, ensuring the collection of coal and other mineral resources for war reparations payment. The right-wing German press
immediately initiated a propaganda campaign to stir up resentment towards the occupation, referred to as the "black shame" or the "black horror on the Rhine," treating it as a psychological invasion in which the colonial African troops in the heartland were seen as a humiliating insult. The media stoked fears that the African troops would corrupt virtuous German women, perpetuating a long-standing prejudice that blacks were overtly sexual, predatory, and animalistic, with the occupation inflaming feelings of racial superiority that had previously been used to justify colonialism and would later suit the propaganda of the Nazis. While many people viewed the occupying African troops with suspicion and hostility, Höch subverts any threat they were said to pose by including an African child's head and reversing the masculine and feminine attributes, putting the modern woman in pants and giving the male figure the legs of a dancing showgirl. Though the male head is clearly African, he is also wearing the white gloves of the vaudeville minstrel costume. Höch's conflation of these male parts exposes the complex position occupied by African-American performers in European society, who were perceived simultaneously as representatives of modern urban America and as primitive Africans.

Beginning in 1924, post-war economic improvement finally made it profitable for American entertainers to begin touring German cities again. The New York City bandleader Sam Wooding accompanied the Chocolate Kiddies, first in the influential wave of African-American performers to arrive for their two-year European run, beginning with three months at Berlin's Admiralspalast in May 1925. After seeing a performance, composer Paul Hindemith incorporated jazz elements into his Kammermusik No. 1, with its foxtrot finale. Josephine Baker soon followed; after a performance at the Theater am Kurfürstendamm

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20. Josephine Baker posing in her banana costume in front of stage curtain with her likeness during a performance in Germany, ca. 1928. The Granger Collection, New York
on New Year's Eve 1925, she was immediately famous. During Christmas 1926, a Josephine Baker doll was available in stores and in 1928, her memoirs were published in Germany, though she was only 26 years old. In Paul Klee's drawing of Baker, titled Negro Beauty: Precision, made in 1927 and based on a publicity photograph, she is depicted using spare and smooth lines, with the subtitle reflecting the artist's understanding of her appearance as aligned with modern technology and mechanization [Fig. 19]. In 1928, Baker returned to Berlin's Theater des Westens as part of a two-year, 25 country tour with the Revue Nègre from the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The ensemble also included Sidney Bechet, the legendary jazz clarinetist, who, like Baker at the time, was based in Paris. The various numbers in their production relied upon the audience's stereotypical expectations related to its African-American cast by featuring a Mississippi rag, a plantation spiritual, and a number set amidst a backdrop of urban skyscrapers. The show's most popular number conformed to tribal stereotypes, with Baker carried onstage on the back of her dance partner Joe Alex in the "Dance of the Savages" making Baker synonymous with her banana skirt costume. In a press photograph of Baker taken in front of the curtain, the colossal drawing emphasizes the idea of African sexual fecundity through her exaggerated backside, while Baker herself hams it up below, displaying her lighthearted attitude with a goofy expression [Fig. 20]. Her reception among Berlin's cultural elite shows the same fusion that dominated the view of artists who freely combined the optimistic, revitalizing forces of America's black performers with the appealing primitive expressiveness found in Africans. The bon vivant Count Harry Kessler described his impression of Baker's performances in his diary as "a mixture of jungle and skyscraper elements. The same holds good for the tone and rhythm of their music, jazz. Ultramodern and ultra-primitive...The extremes they bridge render their style compulsive...In comparison, our own products hang like a limp bow string, lacking inner tension and therefore style, with far too much of a 'cozy parlor' origin about them." The writer Erich Maria Remarque signed Baker's guest book to someone "who brought a blast of jungle air, elemental power and beauty onto the tired stages of Western civilization." Journalist Ivan Goll, a foreign correspondent for German newspapers in Paris, agreed with this enthusiasm, writing about Josephine Baker and her cast-mates after seeing them in 1926:

All of Europe is dancing to their banjo. It cannot help itself...Negroes dance with their senses. (While Europeans can only dance with their minds.)

But Goll also recognized the unique position of African-Americans, who were not at all free in their home country yet seen as arbiters of modernity in Germany, continuing:

These Negroes come out of the darkest parts of New York. There they were disdained, outlawed; these beautiful women might have been rescued from a miserable ghetto...They do not come from the primeval forests at all...But they are a new, unspoiled race.

The complex associations related to the African-American jazz performer throughout this period come together in Ernst Krenek's opera Jonny spielt auf (Jonny Strikes Up). After opening in Leipzig in 1927, the opera premiered at Berlin's Städtische Oper in October 1927, and played steadily throughout the country until 1931. The opera, about an African-American jazz musician, whose part was played by European actors in blackface,
dramatized the feeling that jazz had thoroughly conquered high culture and modern society alike. As a popular bandleader, full of energy and vitality, Jonny is set up as the antithesis of his adversary, a white composer who represents the European establishment. The final chorus includes the lyrics, "The hour strikes for the end of the old era, the new era now dawns..." The trip begins to the unknown land of freedom," meaning America, with Jonny and other characters departing via train for the journey.  

Jonny plays the violin, which was not as commonly found in the American jazz repertoire, but one that was frequently included in European ensembles. By showing an African-American winning the affections of a white woman before stealing a violin, the plot encapsulated many of the perceived dangers associated with the presence of these black outsiders, who were seen as responsible for corrupting the arts through jazz, along with the country's morals and values. When the Munich press mistakenly reported that a black singer would perform in the title role rather than a white European performer in blackface, a mass of protesters gathered outside the theater to stop the performance.  

In the photomontage and collage poster made by Ernst Flachsländer for the Berlin performances, the diagonal crisscross arrangement of repeated objects has the appearance of an industrial machine, with the railway station clock keeping time in the center, while also drawing attention to the legs of the Charleston dancer above and the man who cheekily looks up at them from below [Fig. 21]. The image of Jonny used in the poster is that of African-American drummer Buddy Gilmore, photographed by Berenice Abbott in Paris in 1926. In the montage of Gilmore's image three times across the right side in precise formation, the placement of the drumstick in the middle image appears to pierce Gilmore's nose like a tribal adornment, injecting a note of primitivism into the otherwise urban scene.

CONCLUSION

A vivid summation of the life of the Weimar Republic can be found in Otto Dix's famous triptych *Metropolis*, painted between 1927–28 (page 17), in which Dix has included himself as both a crippled veteran in the left panel and as the tuxedoed dancer in the middle panel. Any optimism stemming from the new technology and urban jazz of *Amerikanismus* proposed in the earlier painting *To Beauty* has been unsuccessful in alleviating the crushing poverty and ongoing social problems, as seen in the triptych's two side panels depicting war veterans and prostitutes trying to eke out their living on the city streets. The discrepancy between the destitute people outside and the well-dressed clientele inside the nightclub seems to indicate a truth in the satirical comment made by writer and cabaret lyricist Kurt Tucholsky, who stated facetiously, "On account of bad weather, the German revolution took place in music." Jazz and social dancing were more popular than ever, with the fast moving, side-to-side leg movement of the Charleston, shown being danced in the painting, coming to epitomize the 1920s. The saxophone also came to the forefront, overshadowing the drums as the key instrument of orchestral jazz ensembles, with the drummer here still featuring the caricatured lips of the minstrel performer but now relegated to a position in the background.

By the end of the turbulent 1920s, jazz was ubiquitous. In 1927, the Funkstunde radio corporation began broadcasting live from inside popular Berlin nightclubs, as well as publishing learn-at-home dance lessons for the tango, Charleston, and the fox trot for its listeners. A critical uproar ensued against one of the country's leading music conservatories, Frankfurt's Hochschule für Musik, when the director announced it would begin a course in jazz instruction among its curriculum, which would have made it the first institutional training for jazz anywhere in the world. The Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor Adorno spoke out against jazz as part of the "culture industry" that he claimed bred conformity in the guise of individual choice. The ongoing criticism against jazz as a foreign pollutant fed into the overall cultural pessimism begun years earlier with Max Nordau's influential book *Entartung* (*Degeneration*), originally published in 1892, presenting a critical study of the ruinous effects on European society, of both rapid industrialization and cultural decadence. This was followed by Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*), published in 1918 and again in 1922, in which the author envisaged the disintegration of Western civilization. African-American jazz performers easily fit into the views of these social theorists. Though critics and defenders of jazz spent much time arguing in the media about the music's role in the political, social, and cultural life of the Weimar Republic, it was nonetheless just one part, however vital and dynamic, of something much larger and more complicated.

Music was a central part of Nazi propaganda efforts to unite the nation and glorify its superior Aryan character through rallies, concerts, youth groups, and other means. As early as 1928, right-wing groups in Vienna staged protests against Josephine Baker's upcoming performances in "pornographic" and in Munich in 1929 she was refused a performance permit due to her "corrupting" influence. As the power of the Nazi party grew, so, too, did its efforts to suppress jazz. In April 1930, a cultural minister in Thuringia issued an "Ordinance against Negro Culture" banning the music in the region. Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister for Propaganda, banned jazz nationally from the radio in October 1935. The Nazis vehemently criticized jazz as part of the "Jewish cultural Bolshevism" of the popular entertainment industry.
performed were aligned with the many Jews who were prominent as managers, directors, writers, composers, and performers in the cabaret, film, and recording industries, with both groups considered racially inferior and alien. In May 1938, the exhibition “Entartete Musik” (“Degenerate Music”) opened in Düsseldorf before traveling to other cities around the country with the infamous “Entartete Kunst” (“Degenerate Art”) exhibition, defaming both modern art and music as culturally degenerate. The music portion included audio material and artworks to denigrate composers such as Alban Berg, Paul Hindemith, Ernst Krenek, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Anton Webern, Kurt Weill, and others. The guide for the “Degenerate Music” exhibition was a variation on the publicity photographs and sheet music from Krenek’s opera Jonny Strikes Up [Fig. 22]. It replaced his production’s white performer in blackface with a caricature of a black musician, focusing the attack specifically on jazz. The depiction thoroughly indicts the saxophonist as an undesirable outsider: on his lapel, there is a Star of David equating him with the many Jews in popular entertainment; the background’s red color aligns him with Soviet Communism; his exaggerated lips are a reference to the ongoing belief in the physiognomic inferiority of African-American performers; and the large earring functions as a tribal adornment that accentuates his primitive status while diminishing his masculinity. In Karl Hofer’s elegiac painting Der Plattenspieler (The Record Player), made in 1939, a melancholy woman appears alone in her room with only her now illegal recordings for companionship [Fig. 23]. Hofer was one of the artists branded as degenerate by the Nazis, removed from his teaching post at Berlin’s Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Academy of Visual Arts), with many of his paintings confiscated and destroyed, including Jazzband and Cabaret, two paintings that were included in the “Degenerate Art” exhibitions.
According to Duke Ellington, "Jazz is a good barometer of freedom...the music is so free that many people say it is the only unhamppered, unhindered expression of complete freedom yet produced in [America]." Despite the intense efforts to suppress it, jazz lived on in private and underground as a vital source of inspiration for many devoted enthusiasts until its re-emergence in both East and West Germany and its continued development with the rise of the post-war Swing Kids generation.

Research support for this essay was provided by two PSC-CUNY Awards, jointly funded by The Professional Staff Congress and The City University of New York.

I would like to thank Renée Price and Scott Guterman for their interest in this material and Olaf Peters for inviting me to contribute to this catalogue.

5 Bärbel Schrader and Jürgen Schebera, The "Golden" Twenties: Art and Literature in the Weimar Republic (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 86. In October 1923, the biggest automated telephone exchange in Europe was opened in the city of Leipzig.
6 Sell Tower, Envisioning America, 89.
7 In 1921, a book titled Jazz und Shummy: Breuer der neuesten Tänze by Franz W. Köebner (Berlin: Dr. Eysler & Co., 1921) was published in Germany, including text, photographs and illustrations of popular jazz dances. In 1919, the One-Step and the Boston replaced the Fox trot; in 1920, the Shuffle, and by 1921, the Shummy was the dance; followed by the Two-Step and the Cakewalk in 1922, the Fishwalk in 1924, and the most popular of all, the Charleston, arriving in 1925; it was followed by the Black Bottom in 1926. Schrader and Schebera, The "Golden" Twenties, 136.
8 Klaus Mann, The Turning Point: Thirty-five Years in this Century (New York: Fischer, 1942), 85-86; see also Sell Tower, Envisioning America, 94.
9 Hesse, Steppenwolf, 122.
12 Otto Julius Bierbaum, published
in Deutsche Chansons (Berlin, 1900). See Jelavich, in 
Haxthausen and Suhr, Berlin: 
Culture and Metropolis, 98; 
see also Peter Jelavich, Berlin 
Cabaret (Cambridge: Harvard 
University Press, 1993), 24-25. 
This was also the focus of 
another text: “Classicism and 
the Infiltration of Vaudeville” by 
the playwright Oskar Panizza, 
written in 1896, who argued that 
the classical foundations of the 
nineteenth century were giving 
way to the rise of a different spirit 
with the expansion of popular 
entertainment. These inquiries 
into the psyches of modern 
urbanites would influence Georg 
Simmel in writing his famous 
essay “Die Grossstadt und das 
Geistesleben.” (The Metropolis 
and Mental Life), originally 
published in 1903.

18 Mehring, quoted in Jelavich, in 
Haxthausen and Suhr, Berlin: 
Culture and Metropolis, 105, and 
Jelavich, Berlin Cabaret, 54.

19 Berg, quoted in Schrader 
and Schebera, The “Golden” Twenties, 
174. During this time, Classical 
Music was equally vital. Wilhelm 
Furtwangler was conductor at the 
Berlin Philharmonic from 1922 
until 1934; Otto Klemperer was at 
the Berlin State Opera; and Bruno 
Walter was at the City Opera from 1929 
to 1925 until 1929.

20 Weil, "Dance Music," in Anton 
Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward 
Dimendberg, eds., The Weimar 
Republic Sourcebook (Berkeley, 
Los Angeles, and London: 
University of California Press, 
1994), 597. Weil's "Tanzmusik" 
was published in Der Deutsche 
Rundfunk 4 (March 14, 1926), 732-733.

21 Mehring, quoted in Sell Tower, 
Envisioning America. Weil and 
also Walter Mehring, Das Politische 
Cabaret (Dresden, 1920), 9.

22 Sell Tower, Envisioning 
America, 1996. An important 
early essay by Rudolf Kayser, 
“Americanismus,” was published in 
Berliner Volkszeitung on 
September 27, 1925; see Kaes, 
Weimar Republic Sourcebook, 
395-397. One of the earliest 
book-length studies to address 
this phenomenon was published 
in Germany in 1927; Adolf Hautel, 
America und der Amerikanismus: 
Kritische Betrachtungen 
eines Deutschen und Europäers (Jena: 
E. Diedrichs, 1927).

23 For a discussion of Dar 
Querschnitt, see Erika Essau, “The 
Magazine of Enduring Value: 
Der Querschnitt (1921-1936) and 
the World of Illustrated Magazines,” 
in Peter Brooker, Sascha Blu, 
Andrew Trackler, and Christian 
Weikop, eds., The Oxford Critical 
and Cultural History of Modernist 
Magazines, vol. III. Europe 1880- 
1940, Part II (Oxford: Oxford 

24 Important early vaudeville 
minstrel performers include Silent 
Johnny Hudgens, Bert Williams, 
and Al Jolson. See Geoffrey C. 
Ward and Ken Burns, Jazz: A 
History of America’s Music (New 
York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000) and 
London: Pinicco, 2001). 8 (this 
is also a 10-part DVD series). 
For an expanded discussion 
of the minstrel, see Henry T. 
Sampson, Blacks in Blackface: A 
Sourcebook on Early Black 
Musical Shows, 2nd ed. (Lanham, 
Toronto, and Plymouth, UK: The 
and Robert C. Toll, Blacking Up: 
The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century 
America (New York: 
Oxford University Press, 1974).

25 The architect and critic Hugo 
Zehder wrote about Dix: “He is 
an Indian, a Sioux chief. 
Always on the warpath. He swings 
his paintbrush like an ax and 
every stroke is a scream of color.” 
Zehder, quoted in Funkenstein, 
“A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 
184, note 23. When critic Paul 
Westheim visited Groz’s studio, 
he described it as: “You believed 
you were entering the wigwam 
of a Sioux chief. Wonderfully 
boystish. On the walls hung 
tomahawks, clubs, buffalo-skin 
shields – whether real or painted, 
I can’t remember. Nor can I recall 
whether scalps were dangling 
there as well... We squatted in 
the middle of this wigwam... on 
low stools... drinking not fire water 
but tea, and we smoked not a 
pipe of peace but, alas, German 
war-standard tobacco.” Westheim, 
quoted in Funkenstein, “A Man’s 
Place in a Woman’s World,” 182.

26 Before Groz changed the 
spelling of his name, it was Georg 
Ehrenfried Gross. John Heartfield 
changed his name from Johan 
Herzfeld.

27 Beth Irwin Lewis, George 
Gross: Art and Politics in the 
Weimar Republic (Madison: 
University of Wisconsin Press, 

28 Huelsenbeck, in Malcolm 
Green, ed., The Dada Almanac 
English edition (London: 
Originally published as Richard 
Huelsenbeck, Dada Almanach 
(Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1920).

29 See Rainer E. Lotz, German 
Ragtime and Prehistory of Jazz 
vol. 1 (Chigwell, Essex, UK: Storyville 
Publications & Co., Ltd., 1985); 
and Neil A. Wynn, ed., Cross the 
Water Blues: African American 
Music in Europe (Jackson: 
University Press of Mississippi, 
2007).

30 A brief introduction to 
American ragtime and jazz is 
found in Bob Blumenthal, Jazz: An 
Introduction to the History and 
Legends Behind America’s Music (New 
York: Harper Collins, 2007); and 
Burton W. Peretti, The Creation of 
Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in 
Urban America (Urbana and Chicago: 

31 For ragtime and jazz 
dances, see also Julie Maing, ed., 
Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmie Sham, 
Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader 
(Urbana and Chicago: University of 
Illinois Press, 2009); and Eve 
Golden, Vernon and Irene Castle’s 
Rag Revolution (The University 

32 See Rainer E. Lotz, Black 
People: Entertainers of African 
Descent in Europe and Germany 
(Bonn: Birgit Lotz Verlag, 1997). 
The periodical Der Artist: Central- 
Organ der Circus, Varieté, Varieté- 
Bühnen, reisenden Kapellen und 
Ensembles (Dusseldorf) 
was a weekly publication listing 
performances for traveling 
artists throughout Germany. 
The European vaudeville circuit 
offered possibilities to African- 
American performers that were 
not possible at home with many 
prefering to stay in Europe. Much 
of the history of black vaudeville 
and minstrel performers in Europe 
remains unknown or has been 
lost, partly because the many 
pre-graphophone sources for ragtime 
music have been lost or have 
not lasted over time and/or after 
prolonged play.

33 Lewis, George Groz, 25 and 
36.

34 Lotz, Black People, 24. In the 
1990s, the phonograph industry 
developed in Germany with the 
peak in popularity of cylinders 
between 1900-1914. During the 
World War I, German manufacturers 
of phonograph music, including 
cylinder rolls made from wax 
and beginning in 1901, from celluloid, 
dominated the world market 
after the United States. By 1914, 
there were over 350 music labels 
selling popular music throughout 
Germany.

35 See Vimeo.com/6013355/8 
for commentary by John Coffey, 
Deputy Director for Art and 
Curator of American and Modern 
Art at North Carolina Museum of 
Art, Raleigh, North Carolina.

36 “Children’s Corner” was 
dedicated to Debussy’s young 
daughter. The six movements 
all had English-language titles, 
a possible nod to Debussy’s 
daughter’s English nanny.

37 John Willett, Art and Politics 
in the Weimar Period. The New 
Sobriety 1917-1933 (New York: 
Da Capo Press, 1990), 33. Satie 
and Cocteau were part of a circle 
in Paris that was very interested
in ragtime and early jazz. Other composers in the group included Georges Auric, Darius Milhaud (who visited New York in 1922), and George Antheil, who lived in Germany (also 1922) and in 1929-24, where he had contact with Bauhaus and De Stijl artists. See Mona Hadler, "Jazz and the Visual Arts," in Arts Magazine, vol. 57, no. 10 (June 1983), 91-101; and Jody Blake, Le Tumulte Noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age France, 1900-1930 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

39 Barbara D. Heyman, "Stravinsky and Ragtime," in The Musical Quarterly vol. 69, no. 4 (October 1983), 543-552; see also Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period, 32.


42 Schrader and Schebera, The "Golden" Twenties, 140; and see Friedrich Hollaender, Von Kopf bis Fuss: Mein Leben mit Text und Musik (Berlin: Wedel Verlag, 1996), 96.

43 Beckmann, quoted in Marsha Morton, "Weimar Sounds: Music in the Art of Max Beckmann," in Rose-Carol Washton Long and Maria Makela, eds., Of Truths Impossible to Put in Words (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), note 55. George Grosz recalled something similar about early jazz: "It was in a café near the Oramenburg Tor [in Berlin] that I first heard a jazz band. People called it a noise band. It was not a jazz band in the American sense, but more of a café orchestra gone crazy. Two or three musicians with saws and cow bells would parody the general melody with rhythmic interruptions." Grosz, George Grosz: An Autobiography, translated by Nora Hodges (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1997), 90.

44 Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period, 99.

45 Called "nation notes," the full text of the comparison of countries is: "The Nations were invited to draw a circle. The American appeared with a circle-drawing machine, the biggest in the world; the Englishman drew an almost perfect circle free-hand; the Frenchman made a richly adorned oval; the Austrian said: 'Gwan, we're not gonna bother' and reproduced the Englishman's circle; the Germans came up with a figure of 1096 sides which looked like a circle but wasn't one." See Kurt Tucholsky, The World is a Comedy: A Kurt Tucholsky Anthology, translated and edited by Dr. Harry Zohn (Cambridge, MA: Sc-Art Publishers, 1957), 157.

46 Rathenau, quoted in Jelavich, Berlin Cabaret, 11, note 3. Rathenau's commitment to reconciliation with the Allied forces angered many on the right. His murder by right-wing opponents was an early blow to the stability of the Weimar Republic.

47 See Sell Tower, Envisioning America, 64.


49 Mendelssohn, American Bilderbuch eines Architekten (Berlin: Rudolf Mosse Buchverlag, 1928), the photograph of Times Square at 43rd Street and its related caption are on 44-45. Between 1916-30 alone, more than one million African-Americans moved from the south to the north in the Great Migration; see Isabel Wilkerson, The Warmth of Other Suns (New York: Random House, 2010).

50 Sell Tower, Envisioning America, 87, and 103, footnote 2, and see Partsch, Hannibal Anfe Portals: Jazz in Weimar, 109.

51 Hadler, 'Jazz and the Visual Arts,' 96.

52 Schrader and Schebera, The "Golden" Twenties, 120. Beginning in 1925, sound recording technology also improved dramatically. The electric microphone was introduced, which reduced interference and improved volume levels, leading to better recordings and a boom in the sale of both recordings and gramophones, the design of which also improved, with its overall size reduced to become more portable in its own compact box. Walter Benjamin, one of the period's most important philosophers, wrote and produced a number of radio plays, an aspect of his work that is relatively unknown. These radio plays are the subject of a recent publication: Lelia Rosenthal, ed., Radio Benjamin, Jonathan Lutes, trans. (New York: Verso, 2014).


55 Michael Danzi, in An American in Germany, 1924-1939, as told to Rainer E. Lotz (Schmittlen: Norbert Ruecher, 1986), 38.

56 The movie projector was invented by German brothers Max and Emil Skladanowsky. Their first movie projection was the third and final act in a comic pantomime at Berlin's Wintergarten music hall on November 1, 1895. The Lumière Brothers in Paris were two months behind when they projected their first movie.

57 Schrader and Schebera, The "Golden" Twenties, 89.

58 Danzi, An American in Germany, 20. Unfortunately, this liveness was relatively short-lived due to its expense.


62 Other members of the band initially included Heinrich Koch (bells), Rudolf Pars (drums) and Hans Hofmann (trumpet). The orientation of the band shifted over time to include a bigger wind and brass section and a less humorous tone, with Eddie Colleen, Ernst Egeler, and other members joining.

63 "Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Manneke Brandt (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv and Jovis Verlag, 2005). Brandt drew much of her source material imagery from Berlin's Ulstein Verlag periodicals, including Uhu and the Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung.

64 Ward and Burns, Jazz: A History of America's Music, 189.

65 For an overview of these artists, see Lori Münz, ed., Cabaret Berlin: Revue, Kabarett and Film Music between the Wars (Hamburg: Edel Classics, 2005), which includes four music CDs.

66 The film opened on April 1, 1930. The following day, Dietrich sailed for New York with her director, leaving Germany for a career in Hollywood.

67 Although the technology had been invented in Germany in 1922, the German film industry did not think talking pictures would catch on. The UFA production company owned the patent for sound technology, but sold it onto 20th-Century Fox, letting Hollywood beat Germany to sound in cinema by a couple of years.

68 Katherine Tubb, "Face to Face? An Ethical Encounter with Germany's Dark Strangers in August Sander's People of the Twentieth Century," Tate Papers (online research publication), issue 19 (23 April 2013), 3.


70 This was the same issue of Neue Jugend no. 2 (June 1, 1917) that included the image of New York City's Flatiron Building mentioned earlier.


75 Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period. 90, and Cook, "Jazz as Deliverance," 31.

76 For a discussion of Baker, see Nancy Nenko, "Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin," in Katharina von Ankum, ed., Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Sidney Bechet found that German audiences were alternately thrilled and dumbfounded by his abilities, not quite believing such skill was possible in a black man, rather than a blackface white entertainer. As he recalled: "After the concert some white woman came up to me, wet her finger and wiped it across my cheek, she had to make sure." Bechet, quoted in Partsch, "Hannibal Ante Portas: Jazz in Weimar," 111.


80 Gol, in Kaes, Weimar Republic Sourcebook, 559.


82 Lyrics, quoted in Cook, Opera for a New Republic, 88.

83 Cook, Opera for a New Republic, 105.


85 Cook, "Jazz as Deliverance," 31.

86 Cook, "Jazz as Deliverance," 40.


88 Nenko, "Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space," 158.

89 Wacken, The Image of the Black in Western Art, 168.

90 Jelavic, Berlin Cabaret, 174.
