First of all, music for the sake of music, or art for art’s sake is a very young slogan, not more than a hundred years old. The great masters in the history of music never used such slogans. For example, Johann Sebastian Bach said of himself, “My duty is to serve the Lord and the Church with my music.” His feelings were not so much those of an artist as those of an artisan or preacher. Beethoven was thoroughly influenced by his times, the era of the great French Revolution. If you read Wagner’s theoretical writings from 1848, you will find that they are directly antagonistic to slogans such as “art for art’s sake.”

What is the reason for the present disavowal of the attitude of the truly great masters and their traditions? We will find the answer if we examine the second part of the conductor’s statement, that he wants to serve the people. We know that today very few people really understand and find pleasure in serious classical or modern music.

Of course, I realize that some of the great works enjoy a certain popularity, but that is mainly among the intellectuals in the big cities. However, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Boston are not the United States alone. When broadcasting companies send out questionnaires on the program wishes of their listeners, 99 percent answer, “Give us more entertainment music and less symphonies.” If classical music has so small a basis, what chance is there for serious modern music?

This is an important point. Why? Because a sound musical situation requires a constant flow of new musical works. Let us now question a modern composer, someone as well known as Arnold Schönberg. He will certainly answer, “I am completely isolated. Very few people understand my music, perhaps a hundred or two.” If we ask him why he continues to write un-
der these abnormal conditions he will say, “I have to express myself, and perhaps in a couple of hundred years people will understand what I have written.” Yet this is not only true of composers with world-wide reputations like Schönberg, every student who writes in modern style, and every young composer is in the same terrible fix.

Was this always so? No, absolutely not. Beethoven and Wagner were isolated for some years, but this dilemma did not endure the whole of their lifetime. And in the history of music there was never a period where all musical production was in such a predicament as it is today. What is wrong? Are modern composers not proficient? Are the people lacking in understanding? Again the answer is, no. Arnold Schönberg is an excellent composer and there are understanding people in all countries. But something is wrong. The disaster begins when you divide music into entertainment and serious categories. Ask the music critic of a well-known liberal newspaper in New York. Most likely he will answer, “My dear friend, this division has always existed. Don’t worry about it. It has always been that some people have more appreciation of art than others. Don’t take it to heart, my dear Mr. Eisler. Do you really think that Beethoven was understood by all the people of his time? Or Mozart? Certainly not.”

In answer to this we could say to our friend the music critic, “But don’t forget that now there are more practical opportunities for hearing and understanding music. Just think of the radio. But has the radio brought about any definite Changes?” Again my answer is, no. Summing up for the conductor, the composer and the critic, we can say, music today is in a crisis. And we, as the class-conscious political and artistic avant-garde, must say that this crisis is an expression of the deep economic and political world crisis.

One characteristic of this crisis in music is the division of entertainment and serious music. Is this not a very strange division? Must we be entertained only by the cheapest musical rubbish and must we look serious and behave like snobs when listening to serious classical music? Again history can teach us. In the history of music we seldom find any circumstance where music was a direct and natural expression of and for the people without any restrictions or difficulties. Only in primitive society, for example among the American Indians, or in ancient oriental culture, or in the ancient Germanic, Roman and Celtic societies, do we find an unbroken unity of sacred and secular music. But in the Middle Ages we find a special differentiation between church music and popular music. This division does not entirely correspond with our division of serious and entertainment music. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we find a highly developed church music, a very refined music for the aristocratic courts and for the wealthy merchant class in the new bourgeois cities in Italy, France and the Netherlands. Next to these more specialized forms of art music we find typical “useful” music of and for the ordinary people, mainly dance music and folk songs.

We must remember that a musician like Bach served both the church and the aristocracy. There was certainly a constant connection between this art music and folk music. Church music often used folk songs and vice versa: the people often sang church melodies. At that time folk music had a real cultural basis and tradition. From earliest times primitive manual labor and craftsmanship were connected with music. The purpose of this music was to organize primitive cooperative labor — sailing, fishing, farming and other crafts. Some festival and religious songs testify by their words that they were directly connected with this primitive labor. Further, we must not forget that until the seventeenth century the church was open to everybody and was a decisive factor in cultural musical life in general.

I won’t go into further detail here about historical material. However, you may be interested in an example of familiar song. I am sure you all know the famous “Volga Boatmen’s Song.” You can hear it in any White Russian tea room or cabaret. Former so-called noblemen tenderly remember the good old times when they could cheerfully kick a peasant in the pants. But was this song always an expression of the ideas of these filthy noblemen-bandits?

No. It is an old and revered song. It was actually used by boatmen on the Volga River, not only to express themselves, but also to organize their work of pulling the boats upstream. Obviously when so many men have to pull a heavy boat they have to use their force at the same time, that is to say, in a definite rhythm provided by the song. Otherwise they would be unable to move the boat or to use their labor force most
economically. Later on, this song became a real folk song and was used for many kinds of manual labor. Let us go farther. Suppose a smart businessman hears the boatmen singing and likes it. He thinks that song may mean business. He hires some carpenters to build benches on the river banks; he then sells tickets to the ladies of rich city merchants to hear for the first time the original Volga boatmen singing the original Volga Boatmen’s Song. And the beautiful ladies enjoy the song very much.

As you know, generally speaking, art and music today are the prerogatives of rich ladies. They come to listen again and again, and the Volga Boatmen’s Song is a great hit. But after a time the women say, “Today the performance was not very good, in fact, it was rather poor. Yet last Monday the performance was first class. Divine! What has happened?” They ask the boatmen and the answer is curious. The boatmen say, “Today the boat was quite light, it was not loaded. But last Monday we had to pull very heavy stones. We had to work very hard and so we sang with all our might.”

This is not meant as a joke. You can certainly see the difference between music today and the old folk music culture, where the people sang for themselves and not for listeners. In genuine old folk music no difference existed between entertainment and serious music. In old art music, let us say that of Mozart, no differences existed. In his operas, The Magic Flute and The Seraglio, the music is both serious and entertaining.

The present differentiation began with the Industrial Revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. What did the Industrial Revolution mean for society in general? It meant the birth of a new type—the industrial worker. The industrial worker lost his simple rural culture, he lost his old mores and habits and he lost his craftmanship and his small property. These were all taken from him by force, in order to make of him a proletarian who had nothing to sell but his labor power. All this occurred as the technique of the division of labor progressed. Read the reports of the factory inspectors of the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s and you will realize the dehumanizing, degenerating and humiliating effects the Industrial Revolution had on the working class. In these reports there are the most horrible details about child labor, female labor, killing exploitation, the unlimited powers of the employers and the helplessness of the employees. At that time, the bourgeoisie grew in strength and reached the heights with geniuses like Beethoven, Goethe, Byron, Shelley and Balzac. The worker was no longer a human being. On the one hand there was a glorious bourgeois culture, and on the other there were the uncultured faceless masses. But from these helpless masses, the vanguard, the industrial workers in magnificent cooperation with Progressives of all professions, sought and found a way out of their condition. They became class-conscious. They discovered the economic reasons and the driving forces behind all these developments; and it was only a short time for the tremendous development from utopian socialist ideas to the scientific methods of Marx and Engels and the beginning of political organization.

I could go on talking about these things, but they belong more to a lecture on the history of the working class. But for us there is one interesting point: What did the Industrial Revolution do to music culture? It destroyed most of the old folk music. The explanation is simple. Factory workers cannot sing at work in the same way and for the same reasons as the Volga boatmen sang. The tempo and rhythm of their work is dictated by their machines and not by the workers themselves. Spontaneous music culture dies under such conditions. Two generations after the Industrial Revolution the majority of the population was without any music culture at all. And this is how the division between entertainment and serious music arose!

In order to understand serious music it is necessary to have a high general level of culture and to have a high standard of living. That is to say you must have time, money and education enough to be able to play at least one instrument; you must have a more or less theoretical training and a certain general knowledge of the fine arts, literature and so on. You must have the opportunity of hearing musical works again and again, you must learn to play them yourself. All this can make you a really proficient music lover and musical amateur. It is evident that all this is available only to the middle class or to the upper class. Without a similar social background and similar social conditions you are more or less helpless.

It is also true that the nineteenth century composer, the romantic composer, wrote for and expressed the
sentiments of this section of society. Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms and others were the musical lions of upper middle-class drawing rooms. The thousands of love songs and piano pieces were sung and played by the young Daughters of the Industrial Revolution.

In addition, by the nineteenth century, art music was no longer solely music for the social soirées of emperors, princes and noblemen, but for the first time became merchandise and a business. A hundred years before the Industrial Revolution a man like Bach was at one and the same time a servant of the church, servant of the court, composer, piano, violin and organ player, teacher of Latin, French and musical composition. He also printed some of his own works; he was a copyist and librarian for his church. He was not a romantic figure like Liszt, but a normal good citizen with twelve children. The Industrial Revolution created the travelling music virtuoso, who was like a travelling salesman. The composer became a specialist, he was only a composer, like Beethoven. The music teacher became a specialist, the special music theoretician, like Albrechtsberger; he taught only theory, but was neither a virtuoso nor a composer. The music publisher also came into being, and thus also the owners of concert halls, which were formerly located in the castles of noblemen. Then came the concert manager, often the same person as the concert virtuoso. Later he became independent, a sheer businessman in music, buying and selling the “merchandise” music. The music historian also appeared, a new and often curious type. So we see that quite a number of new and special types developed and became involved in the break between serious and entertainment music; they took into their hands the process of distribution and merchandising, of the buying and selling of music as a commodity.

Despite these negative features, this development in the nineteenth century was a progressive one. On the one hand we find a number of very talented composers and virtuosi, on the other hand a new and highly cultivated type of listener and musical amateur. At that time no musical crisis existed in the form that it does today, although characteristic of the times around the year 1800 a musical crisis started. But this apparently relatively peaceful and normal picture is altered sharply if you consider not just the new organization of musical life, but the dreadful background of the overall social conditions at this period. In England where the earliest and most radical industrial revolution took place, go percent of the population lived in ignorance and cultural darkness. It leads us to say that the social conditions of the time were a fundamental danger to further cultural development.

What kind of music was practised and was necessary for the uncultured 90 percent? It had to be the kind of music which could be produced and consumed as quickly and cheaply as beer or gin, as glaring and as bad as the new factory-made clothes. But just as gin is not very healthy and just as cheap clothing is neither beautiful nor durable, so also was the new “entertainment” music. It was cheap, factory-made and without any cultural value. This music was only digestible for those bereft of any musical taste. One condition alone was necessary, that they were not deaf. Naturally, such music was not created by great masters, nor yet by the people themselves. It was by no means folk music of the old type. It was music watered down for the people by mere music merchants. Fourth and fifth-rate composers were paid by these merchants to write this sort of false “popular” music, and publishing houses printed it — cheap music, cheap words on cheap paper — and sold it in the streets like newspapers or candy. The production of such music increased with the invention of mechanical musical instruments. As entertainment music of this kind increased, serious music decreased.

Today entertainment music has become so predominant on the radio and in films that it can be heard at any time of the day or night. If you turn on the radio, if you go to a restaurant for a glass of beer, you always hear such music.

What does this kind of music give the people? I ask you to answer this question. What does a big glass of whiskey give you? Nothing but a headache after a very short period of pleasure. If you drink too much you end up in hospital. In particular, if young people hear too much of this music they become mentally dull and disinterested in the real needs and potentialities of the working class.

Let us now turn to the present day, the period of an unprecedented musical crisis. Though the nineteenth century be the father of this musical crisis, we must nonetheless judge the child. The great economic crisis after the world war largely affected the middle...
classes as well as most professionals throughout the world. The younger generation, influenced by new conditions, with new habits and new standards prefers sport and films to concerts. In this country in particular serious music is promoted and sponsored only by wealthy women. Of course middle-class youth, students and intellectuals are to be found at the concerts, but that does not alter the general picture. If there were to be a very special, very peculiar earthquake which would allow up only wealthy women, then on the following day conductors, singers, pianists and composers would be found on the bread lines. Although it is the wealthy who sponsor serious music, they no longer have a monopoly on understanding good music as had the middle class and the aristocracy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today concert-going is mostly an opportunity for displaying dress, jewellery and snobbishness. The fashionable and handsome Stokowski’s are admired more than the musical compositions that these gentlemen try to conduct. Composers, conductors, singers and teachers must have close relationships with these wealthy women, whose sponsorship is not too wholesome. It is sometimes awful to see what parasites some artists become, rather than as free men making their talents responsible to the people. How can musical standards be maintained under such protective conditions? Let me give you some facts. The Metropolitan Opera is the wealthiest of its kind in the world. For about fifty years a number of wealthy families have supported the opera with large donations. How many of you have ever attended a Metropolitan Opera performance? I suppose half a dozen, or perhaps no one. Have you any knowledge of the great operatic works of Mozart, Beethoven, Handel or Wagner? You may even say that although the Metropolitan Opera does not serve the people directly, they are creating a fine opera tradition which someday may be of use to the country. But I must answer, no. Of course the technical standard of the orchestra is very high and they have some excellent singers. However, the conductors are not first class, only experienced and good routine musicians. Culturally the whole standard is rather low. Nothing is done to modernize the productions; the performances are not usually first class. The old operas are performed again and again in a routine way. This is not a cultural institution, it is a luxury club for snobs. Further, who selects the conductors? Wealthy women select wealthy conductors. Musical ability is of secondary importance. Who works out the concert programs? The same wealthy women work out rather bad programs. They are generally like round-trip express trains from Beethoven to Sibelius. Is anything done for modern American composers? No. Who is responsible for this? The wealthy women sponsors! Which class do these wealthy women represent? The bankers, manufacturers, merchants and department store owners. Can this class be a leading force in the musical life of the people? No. Who can help the people? The people!

There are few good concerts available to the people today. Except for some popular concerts, only the cheap trash of Broadway and Hollywood is offered. I don’t consider jazz and swing entirely bad. Men like Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman are really talented musicians. But Duke Ellington makes his fortune in night clubs and his development as an artist is therefore handicapped. Benny Goodman, a very fine clarinettist, has made stupid and boring films in Hollywood and thus ruins his real craftsmanship. What is being offered to the people as musical fare? Songs like, Bei mir bist du schön, Ti-pi-tin, and similar stupidities. And I shudder to think of the thousands of sentimental love songs produced by Broadway and Hollywood. Some of you will say, that’s harmless, that’s just entertainment, don’t worry. But as a musician I do worry, for I know all is poison, opium for the people. But what is the solution? Should the working people grow long beards and with great dignity attend only concerts of serious music? That is ridiculous and impossible.

Before I continue, let me say a few favorable words about the United States. I am happy to say that the administration in this country and President Roosevelt are also progressive in the sphere of culture. I think that a great deal of the WPA work in the theater and in music is admirable. But can the Government provide the solution? That is impossible. A progressive government can certainly help the people. But that is only a temporary help and not a definite change. The main support for the people, I repeat, is the people themselves.

But who are the people? You are the people. Let me say something about your possibilities as a workers’ choir. I believe that since your union has worked so
successfully in the theatrical field you will also want to do something important in your field. To be frank, I have had no personal experience with your organization. I have never heard any of your performances; I don’t know your conductor or your qualities as a choir, and I don’t know what you sing. But I can tell you about some of the conclusions I have drawn from international experience. Of course, the United States is different from France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Austria before Schuschnigg and Hitler, Germany before Hitler, Czechoslovakia (I hope never to have to say “before Hitler”), Denmark, Yugoslavia and last but not least the Soviet Union.

I have lived and worked as a musician in all these countries. Perhaps some of my experiences may be of use to you. I have seen highly successful choral organizations like the excellent People’s Front Choir in France with 250 voices and a similar organization in London under the leadership of Alan Bush. I have heard millions of people singing my songs on Red Square on the first of May in Moscow. But I have also seen and heard other workers’ choral groups and I must confess that sometimes I was unable to tell whether they were alive or dead. What is the reason for this?

A weak workers’ choir usually has no special line. They are neither fish nor fowl, neither bourgeois nor proletarian. They sing popular lyrical choral music. For example, in Germany they used to sing, Wer bat dich, du schöner Wald, a sentimental popular chorus by Mendelssohn. Or they sing some popular works by good composers. But mostly they sing cheap lyrical rubbish by fourth or fifth rate composers. Such music is not only boring to sing, but is intolerable to listen to. Most of these pieces were written at the end of the nineteenth century and before the war. They have nothing in common with great art, nor do they express real life today. Poor choirs also sing some folk songs, usually badly arranged for four-part choir. Finally, they also sing what we call in German Tendenz choruses, that is choruses with conscious social significance. In Germany, the Netherlands and in England many Tendenz choral compositions were written between 1890 and 1920. Some of these pieces are really excellent, but most of them sound rather old-fashioned today. I am sure you know such pieces. The words are usually innocuous and quite mild like: “Today we are struggling in the night, but we hope that tomorrow there will be light,” or “Some day we shall be free.”

The music is equally old-fashioned and so is the behaviour and the concert performance of the choir. These good people work very hard for six months on such a program. They hire a hall, put on their Sunday best, stand with great dignity and solemnity on the stage, follow very carefully the indications of the conductor, and do what is called their best. The audience is usually made up of relatives of singers, fellow union members and other friends. But the whole atmosphere is funereal. So the question remains, “Who is dead?” Maybe progressive music. The program begins. First come a couple of folk songs, or rather something masquerading as folk songs. I am always horrified to hear a group of union workers, toughened by many class struggles singing, “La, la, la, la, la, laaaa, aaaa,” or “I am so lonesome when I remember you.”

After these wonderful songs comes the obligatory classical repertoire, two or three pieces by better composers. If the performance is not very good, no matter, the audience has heard better performances on the radio. Finally, the choruses with social significance are sung. With ramrod stiffness and monotony, you hear — the promise that “Sometime the sun will shine again,” or “Freedom, we love you.”

Now and then the conductor has a friend or a wife who plays the violin or piano, or sings solo. And so a soloist appears on the program. Pieces like Liszt’s Love Dreams, with its arpeggios going up and down, or the Sweet Kreisleria for violin; if he or she is a singer then you hear pieces like Grieg’s I love you, and certainly at the end Laugh, Pagliacci.

The, listeners are very polite and the concert ends peacefully with the presentation of a bouquet of flowers to the conductor — organized by the concert committee. And all this is the result of six months’ hard work. I often ask myself, What do the singers do at the rehearsals, especially the second tenors and the second basses? ooooooooooolalalalalalalalalaa.

The bass line itself is stupid, but perhaps they console themselves with the thought that the whole thing may not sound too bad. I am sure that after such a concert, an executive committee meeting is held and somebody asks why the audience was so small in number. “Too little publicity and not enough ticket selling,”
the chairman will say. I’m not convinced, even if you used a machine gun to sell tickets. The chairman, I am sure, will want to know why so few people attend rehearsals. I can understand the feelings of the choir members, especially my good friends, the second basses. Frequently it is difficult to find a person under forty in such choirs. The reasons for this are all quite obvious.

We talked about the crisis in music a little while ago, of the division between entertainment and serious music. A concert of this kind has nothing to do with the crisis in music. Surely such a concert is neither entertaining nor serious music. It is merely a boring, meaningless, inartistic, an utterly dreary affair. However, half a century ago, this kind of concert would have been a sign of real progress for the working class, but today it means less than nothing.

Especially to the younger generation who prefer the movies, the radio and sport; and if they are politically minded they go to meetings, left theater groups and so on. But if a cultural organization cannot attract the youth then it is not fulfilling its function and will lose vitality. What can such an organization do under these circumstances? If each member realizes that these difficulties are part of a more general crisis and of the specific social conditions of the working class, then a way out will be found more easily. Let me give you some suggestions:

1. The main question is the repertoire. This must be chosen so that it is both interesting for the audience and for the singers (last but not least for the second basses) and for each voice of the choir [that is] rehearsing the pieces for six months. The music and words must be engaging and stimulating.

How can a repertoire of this kind be formed? The only way is close contact with modern progressive composers. I have told you about the dreadful situation of the modern composer, who is either isolated and starving or who lives as a parasite. But you can give him a new chance! And he will give you a new chance! This collaboration between the progressive working class and progressive composers is mutually beneficial. For a progressive choral group this cognizance is absolutely vital. Close contact with such a group carries a fresh wind to the composer, new ideas, opportunities for publication, in short, a new life.

In building a repertoire there must be the right balance between classical art music and modern music. One important point is to forget old-fashioned rigidity. A modern conductor or composer can easily find not only good classical pieces for you, but interesting new works by different modern composers from various countries. Then there are the folk songs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the marvelous madrigals of composers like Orlando di Lasso, Marenzio and numerous others of the highest level.

There is also abundant material in modern music of class-conscious compositions from many countries, including the Soviet Union. Finally, you can ask modern composers to write new works for you.

But unfortunately such a concert consisting of short pieces would add up to a boring evening. Which brings me to suggestion number two.

2. Improved methods of organizing concerts:

To hell with all this old rigmarole and concert mannerisms! We have more important things to do. Choose a good narrator. Let him explain the numbers which are to be sung, not in a dry academic manner, but in the fresh, witty and lively spirit of the working class. That will be one step forward.

But again not sufficient. More is required if a concert is to be organized effectively. You must try to cooperate with other artistic working-class groups, such as actors, dancers, bands and so on. Your composers and poets must write bigger cantatas, musical plays with action and music in which the role of the chorus is the most important. The whole responsibility for the political and social context in this new production lies on your shoulders. Rehearsals will give you ample opportunity to control and discuss things.

3. Humor, pep and satire should be an important part of all your performances. People like jazz and swing, they can be used in your productions, but not in the corrupt manner of Hollywood and Broadway. Good modern music has rhythm, humor and vitality, and you must exploit it. To conclude, what is the most vital thing?

A good modern conductor and a good relationship with (and a little money for) your modern composers — and only the best are good enough for you! You must have the most talented young poets. All this is possible. Try it! Remember that the death of art is cheap sentimentality, empty bombast and vulgar im-
itations of folk songs. The absence of social significance also makes a piece dreary, especially in these hard times. In our art there must be the finest unification of entertainment, a highly developed technique, awareness, humor, good propaganda and social feeling. Cheapness and a boring quality are the most dangerous enemies of workers’ art. May I make a practical proposal to you. With your strong union, you have special possibilities and special experiences. Try the following: with some actors, one good narrator and a young modern director, with a young modern poet and a composer you could easily produce a marvellous choral play. I will give you a tip-let us say the name of the choral play is Our Story, a play based on the history of your union. I know its history and it is wonderful, from an artistic point of view as well. For example, there could be a choral number about a Jewish immigrant, sitting on his trunks on Ellis Island, seeing New York across the bay. Another scene could show the semi-illegal work of the union in its beginnings; the fights with gangsters, the death of a militant brother — the choir could sing an explanation to this. A number of scenes could follow, and for each scene you could project onto the screen the date and some lines explaining the historical situation. The choir should not try to act! In general it would be too difficult and not good enough. They should be sitting and stand up to sing their numbers. You could have a couple of actors and one or two solo singers. With the same amount of energy that you used to prepare a concert of the kind I have analyzed, you could prepare a fine performance, important for you and your audience, with stimulating rehearsals and an active organization behind you.

Is all this difficult to do? Yes and no! The beginning will not be easy, but you must take this way, the way of a progressive workers’ choir. In these times of cultural barbarism and political danger we can observe a very interesting phenomenon. Capitalist culture is on the decline. It is your turn now to guard and re-create culture despite all those wealthy women.

Let me end on a personal note. I would like to express my gratitude to Messrs. Schaeffer and Liebmann for the opportunity of speaking to you. I hope that something of what I have said may be useful and I hope that soon I will be able to congratulate you on your first flop!

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Notes

1 With a quotation attributed to Bach, namely, that it is his duty to serve the Lord and the Church through his music, Eisler meant neither the acceptance of the church as an institution, nor the justification for turning one’s back on society. On the contrary Bach’s religiosity was on a par with his humanist thinking. “He always composed for life, he fulfilled his commissions by writing for purposes which were vital and for particular circles of people … In contrast to his predecessors, there is in Bach’s works a humanizing of the content undreamt of up to that time.” (Ernst Hermann Meyer, Aufsätze über Musik, Berlin 1957, pp. 16–17.)

2 Richard Wagner fought on the barricades during the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1848–49 in Germany, and at that time wrote discourses such as, “Man and Existing Society,” “Art and Revolution,” and “The Art of the Future.”

3 The “Volga Boatmen’s Song,” an old Russian work song, became well-known in Western Europe and America, especially through the dolled-up interpretation of the famous bass, Feodor Chaliapin.

4 Schumann, Chopin, Liszt and Brahms, indeed all endeavored to reach the lower classes with their music, but the proletariat was still in the process of being formed and lay outside their mental horizon. On the other hand, they profited from the middle and upper strata of the bourgeoisie.

5 Bach had 20 children: 7 children from his first marriage, 4 of whom lived; from his second marriage 13 children, 7 of whom reached maturity.

6 Eisler means World War I.

7 By “Stokowski” Eisler meant star conductors of the kind characterized by Leopold Stokowski in the U.S.A.

8 WPA is the abbreviation for Works Progress Administration.


The original English text was edited for this book. Eisler delivered this lecture to the choir of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union in New York, a choir with a rich tradition, on June 25, 1938.