

Three Violinists: A Look at Korngold's Violin Concerto

Troy O. Dixon, © 2019

Preface

I attended three different performances of Korngold's Violin Concerto between mid-February and mid-May 2018. At some point during those three months it occurred to me that I had not studied the Concerto beyond simply reading the Korngold biographies and several CD booklet and concert annotations. I wondered what I might learn if I did a more in-depth study.

My initial research effort yielded a rather impressive amount of material that included information I did not recall seeing printed previously in any Korngold literature. While trying to dissect and collate what I had collected, I discovered several different facets of the concerto's story which realistically could be small research projects just on their own. Unfortunately these "distractions" made the process of assembling a coherent, overarching story of the Korngold's work a bit challenging. So I decided to just focus on creating a base storyline for myself to act as backbone that would later allow other details to be inserted and added.

As the material came together, first as an outline then a rough narrative, the information finally became more coherently distilled, especially those details I did not recall ever seeing before. It led me to some well-founded speculation and seemed to better define the Concerto's previously printed histories that I had read. At that point it seemed worthwhile to refine what were originally intended only as personal notes, and to offer what appeared to be new information to other Korngold scholars and researchers for consideration.

The essay that follows is essentially a record of my personal path of discovery. It may also reveal the sequence of how and at what point certain details were found, revised and expanded as my research progressed. My original research attempted to generally follow the concerto's history chronologically – i.e., investigate the earliest details first, later details next – however, there are three major instances where this is not the case.

- 1. Korngold's personal correspondence was made available to me well after I started my research. However I have crafted this narrative as if that correspondence were available from the start.*
- 2. My speculation about Huberman visiting Korngold in 1937 came to mind very near the end of preparing this essay, prompting me to research his concerts in California that spring. Those details were inserted in appropriate historical sequence rather than my research chronology.*
- 3. Some information concerning the Concerto's European premiere was in hand nearly two decades ago. Other information was not found until November of 2018.*

The background of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 35*, is somewhat complicated. He composed the work in 1945, but had previously produced a complete sketch for the concerto in 1937 before doubt caused him to set the piece aside. A claim says the original suggestion for him to compose a violin concerto may date back as far as the 1910s, but this can be refuted. The *Concerto* was completed at the request of one violinist – who was also intended to have had the honor of the first performance – but was ultimately premiered by another. In between the two, a third violinist

expressed interest in the work as well. Initially the concerto was to have received its premiere in New York, despite the composer's expressed misgivings, but subsequent arrangements allowed St. Louis to host the world premiere instead, five weeks before the New York performances. The work was hailed in St. Louis, but decried by New York critics. The concerto shares themes with four of Korngold's film scores, but whether these themes came first can be debated. Korngold biographer Brendan G. Carroll observed, "...it is interesting to speculate whether Korngold originally composed [the themes] as the basis for the early version of the concerto in 1937 before using them in his film scores after putting the concerto away."¹ These many complexities can cause some confusion over the evolution of the *Violin Concerto*.

Across the timeline from inception to premiere there were three primary violinists, each of whom influenced Korngold at various times. Bronislaw Huberman was the first and to whom instigation for the work may possibly belong. Bronislav Gimpel² – a less well-known figure in the *Concerto's* story – could be viewed as a catalyst for propelling the work to its premiere. Finally, Jascha Heifetz gave the world premiere performance and cemented the final version of the work with which the world is now familiar. Focusing on each violinist in turn helps clarify the *Concerto's* narrative.

Bronislaw Huberman & Julius Korngold – 1937

Korngold and his family had returned to Hollywood in October 1936 at the request of Warner Bros. with an offer to compose film scores for two projects in development by Max Reinhardt. The intended projects never materialized, but the composer was eventually given two others instead. On 8 December 1936 the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that Korngold had been signed to prepare the music for the now-forgotten film *Another Dawn*.³ Later that same month the *Oakland Tribune* reported that "...Korngold is doing the musical score for 'The Prince and the Pauper'..."⁴ So by the start of 1937 he was either already composing two of the film scores which contained themes that would be associated with the final concerto, or he soon would be.

Filming for *Another Dawn* began the last week of September 1936, and reportedly wrapped up in mid-December. Additional scenes were filmed in mid-February 1937, and the final cut was completed sometime



Bronislaw Huberman, ca. 1908

¹ Carroll, Brendan G., liner notes to *Korngold: Sinfonietta and Violin Concerto*. Ulrike-Anima Mathé. Dorian Recordings DOR-90216, CD, 1995.

² Gimpel's first name is spelled almost exclusively "Bronislaw" in sourced newspapers and periodicals prior to 1946. Beginning around 1946 it appears to be more often spelled "Bronislav".

³ "Addenda." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Tue, 08 Dec 1936: I-12.

⁴ "Exits and Entrances." *Oakland Tribune*, Wed, 23 Dec 1936: C-11.

in March. *The Prince and the Pauper* began filming in mid-December and wrapped up in mid-February 1937.⁵ *Variety* magazine reported on 24 March that Korngold was writing "...a complete original score for Mervyn LeRoy's *The Prince and the Pauper*." Presumably he was already in the midst of composition and recording as both films were previewed in Hollywood for press audiences the first week of April 1937. Since a film's composer was typically brought in near the end of production, these dates may help identify or confirm Korngold's creation and completion of the scores for both films.

His work complete, Korngold sailed with his family from New York for Europe on 4 May 1937 aboard the French liner *Paris*. Shortly after returning home, he was interviewed by the Austrian newspaper *Das Echo*,⁶ in which he announced he was working on a violin concerto. This is the first mention that he was composing a violin concerto. Did his work on *Another Dawn* inspire Korngold to begin composing such a work? This film score ultimately provided the opening (and main) theme of the first movement of the piece. Did Huberman encourage Korngold to begin composing the concerto? The often repeated claim alleges he did, and circumstantial evidence may support the idea. Or did Korngold's father first suggest that the theme from *Another Dawn* would work well as a theme for a violin concerto? The Huberman claim may be apocryphal. The suggestion by Korngold's father is held by family tradition. One wonders if any or all of these might be reconciled.

In her memoir-biography of her husband, Luzi Korngold states, "For thirty years [prior to 1945], whenever he met Erich, Huberman's standing phrase was: 'What's up with my violin concerto?'"⁷ This would suggest Huberman had requested a concerto from Korngold as far back as far back as World War I. Korngold biographer Brendan Carroll believes this is a false recollection:

*"[T]he oft-quoted assertion [is] that the close friendship with Huberman extended back some 30 years. There is absolutely no evidence to support this, [and] in fact there is some evidence to the contrary. ... An extant letter from Julius Korngold to Huberman written in February 1937 [implies] that Huberman was not acquainted with his son or indeed his music."*⁸

In Carroll's opinion, the style of Julius' letter suggests Huberman was not: "I can hardly imagine Korngold, Sr writing in such a formal way as he does in this letter, if Huberman was such an old friend of his son, particularly from his prodigy years when Erich Wolfgang was still living with his parents."⁹ The present author is inclined to agree that the content and style of this letter support the notion Huberman was not an old acquaintance prior to 1937.¹⁰

⁵ Wood, Hall E. "Cinemaslines." *Harrisburg Telegraph* [Harrisburg, PA], Mon, 15 Feb 37: 7.

⁶ *Das Echo*, Vienna, 18 May 1937.

⁷ Korngold, Luzi. *Erich Wolfgang Korngold: A Biography*. Vienna, Verlag Elisabeth Lafite, 1967, p. 85. Hereafter as Luzi.

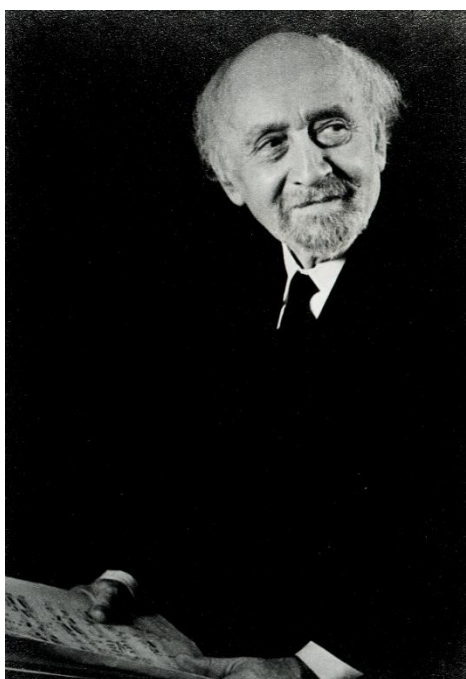
⁸ Personal correspondence with the author, 4 Apr 2019.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The lack of a reference to a violin concerto in an outline of planned compositions from the early 1920s [see *The Last Prodigy*, p. 163] further supports the opinion that Korngold had no plans for such a composition prior to at least at least the mid-1920s, if not later. (Personal correspondence from Brendan Carroll to the author, 22 Apr 2019.)

Huberman did visit California in April 1937, however. He performed with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra on 11 April and then with Otto Klemperer and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra on Thursday and Friday, 15-16 April. Isabel Morse Jones reported that Huberman stayed in L.A. a few days after his performances "...to enjoy his friends in Southern California..."¹¹ No mention is made of specifically who he visited. Luzi makes no mention of a meeting either, but the timing of his visit – over two months after receiving Julius’s letter – is worth considering. If Korngold was one of the “friends” whom the violinist visited, Huberman can easily be imagined as “commissioning” a concerto from the composer. Whether a meeting with Huberman happened or not, and whether it influenced Korngold or not, a new violin concerto was definitely in his mind in early May 1937. If Huberman had met with him in Los Angeles and suggested it, he may even have begun composing it on the ship back to Europe.

On the other hand, family tradition holds that Julius initiated the idea of a violin concerto. The story goes that Julius was so taken with the main theme of *Another Dawn* (not able to speak English and never able to say the title properly, he called it “Anuzzi”) he told his son it would make an excellent basis for a concerto. Presuming this anecdote to be accurate, we look for corresponding circumstances or information that might substantiate the tale.



Dr. Julius Korngold, 1942

Julius did not visit America in 1936-7, so he would not have heard the film score prior to at least Korngold’s return to Europe, or at most until the local premiere of the film. The Viennese premiere of “Flammende Nächte” (“Another Dawn”) was on 18 November 1937 at the Rotenturmkino.¹² For the concerto idea to have originated with Julius, he had to have heard the music before the film’s release and have made the suggestion with enough time for Erich to be interviewed by *Das Echo* in May (i.e., interview to occur, article to be written, and type to be set to make the print deadline). This is within the realm of possibility, but the timing is noticeably tight. The Atlantic crossing was about a week by ship. If Korngold’s departure from New York was on 4 May, he would have arrived back in Europe on or around 11 May. This would have allowed Julius a week at best. Carroll provides a plausible solution:

“[Korngold] invariably asked for specific acetate discs of his film music and I believe that he took some of these back to Vienna with him in '37 and played them for his father,

which is how [Julius] first heard [the music to] “Another Dawn”... Korngold responded to

¹¹ Jones, Isabel Morse. “Music Development in Palestine Told.” *Los Angeles Times*, Sun, 25 Apr 1937: III-5.

¹² Personal correspondence with the Korngold Archive Hamburg, 10 Nov 2018. Other European premieres so far all seem to have occurred during or after Sep 1937.

external stimuli often immediately. I am sure this happened with the concerto and his father's inspired suggestion.”¹³

Upon reflection, there is at least one other possible hypothesis that reconciles the stories cohesively, potentially allowing both Huberman and Julius to share motivation for the concerto's composition. Huberman may indeed have visited Korngold in California in 1937 and requested a concerto from the composer. With the idea planted, and since "...Korngold responded to external stimuli often immediately...", he would have been able to inform *Das Echo* immediately after setting foot in Europe again that he was working on a such concerto. This would allow Korngold's father to hear the film score either before or after the interview was published, and still be the source of the thematic suggestion.

A definitive resolution notwithstanding, once back in Austria Korngold appears to have forged ahead in creating his new concert work. Korngold's eldest son, Ernst, related the events that followed:

“He had finished the first two movements when he decided to invite a violinist friend, who shall remain nameless, to his home to sight read them with him. The result was devastating. The violinist had failed to grasp the rudiments of the concept entirely and produced a gruesome mishmash of false starts and screeching cacophony. Korngold put all work on the third movement, which was already firmly in his mind, aside, feeling his ideas too emotional, his demands for technique too difficult.”¹⁴

Realization of the concerto would have to wait.

Huberman – Early Spring 1945

Korngold and his family moved permanently to the US in 1938 at the time of the Anschluss. During the next seven years he composed ten original film scores for Warner Bros, including *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *The Sea Hawk*, and *Kings Row*. But during those same years he did not compose any concert music. With the War waning at the close of 1944, and having become disillusioned with his film work, he began to turn back to “serious” compositions. Sketches for his third string quartet appeared at Christmas 1944, and prospects for a violin concerto resurfaced in early 1945. Luzi related:

It must have been spring 1945 when Bronislaw Huberman, the great musician among violin virtuosos, gave a concert in Los Angeles.¹⁵ Being a good old acquaintance, he came to our house for supper. ...

¹³ Personal correspondence with the author, 4 Apr 2019.

¹⁴ Korngold, Ernst W., liner notes to *Korngold: Sinfonietta and Violin Concerto*. Ulrike-Anima Mathé. Dorian Recordings DOR-90216, CD, 1995. The un-named violinist was later revealed to Brendan Carroll by Ernst Korngold to have been Robert Pollak. (B. Carroll, personal correspondence with the author, 22 Apr 2019).

¹⁵ The concert was on 5 Feb 1945. He was assisted by pianist Boris Roubakine in a program of Handel, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Bruch, Bloch, Szymanowski, Chopin and Smetana. Huberman had not performed in Los Angeles since 1937.

*[That particular evening after Huberman posed his standing question again,] Erich got up immediately, went to the piano and played a theme that later became the first movement of his violin concerto. Huberman listened: "That's it – that will be my concerto!" he said vividly. "Promise me you will write it." Erich agreed and promised to keep Huberman, who was traveling to Switzerland, up to date. He plunged into the work with zeal, which proceeded incredibly fast.*¹⁶

Which spring night Huberman visited the Korngolds is not specified, but it can be narrowed to within a few weeks. Huberman was concertizing on the east coast of the United States in late December 1944 and early January 1945. His last advertised concert before heading west was on 6 January at Hunter College. He was back on the east coast at the beginning of March 1945, featured on Sunday, 4 March on WNYC radio, and then performing in recital with Bruno Walter on 11 March at the New York School for Social Research. Allowing for travel time between coasts, the evening with the Korngolds must have occurred sometime between about 9 January and 1 March. A further few days at a minimum can be similarly eliminated considering that Huberman also performed in Portland, Oregon on 12 February 1945. The exact date he visited the Korngolds may never be known.

After promising Huberman to compose the concerto, Erich “delves into the work,” composing it quickly during the spring and summer of 1945, and completing orchestration by October 1945.¹⁷ Yet despite the speed of its completion, Huberman would not commit to a premiere date. In the end, Korngold would be introduced to Jascha Heifetz in early 1946 at the home of a mutual friend, Rudi Polk,¹⁸ who was also Heifetz’s manager for a time. That meeting eventually led to an agreement for Heifetz to premiere the piece instead of Huberman. But before the arrangement was made with Heifetz, a third violinist expressed interest in the work.



Bronislaw Gimpel

Bronislaw Gimpel – Autumn 1945

Luzi continued the story:

One day we were visited by the young Bronislaw Gimpel, then concertmaster of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.¹⁹ Erich played the finished concerto for him, which Gimpel, who had brought his violin, played from the manuscript. The violinist, who, having returned from the war, aspired to pursue a career as a soloist, asked Erich to allow him to debut in Los Angeles with this new work. Erich wrote to Hubermann and told him Gimpel’s wish. In response he received a telegram: “Please do not show the concerto to another violinist.” But now Erich wanted to know when

¹⁶ Luzi, p. 85.

¹⁷ “Korngold Work To Have World Premiere Here.” *St. Louis Star-Times*, Fri, 14 Feb 1947: 25.

¹⁸ “Modernist Declares Music Is Too Modern.” *St. Louis Dispatch*, Fri, 14 Feb 1947: 25.

¹⁹ Luzi may be incorrect: Gimpel’s position as concertmaster of the LA Philharmonic appears to have ended in 1942 when his military service began.

[Huberman] thought of performing the work, and was told by him that he did not even know the piece and therefore could not fix the performance date. Erich was deeply upset: he, the spoiled one, naturally expected one to “buy a pig in a poke” [i.e., accept a blind bargain] from him – and withdrew grumbling.²⁰

The Polish violinist Bronislaw Gimpel had immigrated to the US in 1937 and became a naturalized US citizen. He entered the US Army in 1942. After his discharge in the summer of 1945 he wanted to start a concert career. That same year he performed in the Redlands Bowl on 17 July, and was reportedly heading to Europe that autumn. He met with the Korngolds at some point around this time, but the details regarding that meeting are somewhat unclear. For example, Guy Wagner gives this version of events:

After a concert by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, however, Korngold showed the now completed score to the concertmaster Bronislaw Gimpel, and Gimpel, who wanted to start a concert career, asked for the premiere rights.²¹

Wagner here asserts the concerto and its orchestration were complete. This would place Gimpel’s visit sometime near or immediately following the end of October. To date however, the present author has not found any evidence of Gimpel performing with the Philharmonic in 1945 or 1946, so Wagner’s reference to “...a concert by the Los Angeles Philharmonic...” does not help narrow the date. Luzi had written just “the finished concerto,” which could conceivably mean either a completed short score or a fully orchestrated one. If the former, Gimpel might have visited Korngold at almost any time during the latter half of 1945.

There is a letter from Korngold to Huberman, however, that was written before the concerto was completed, which is very informative on several levels. This letter gives clues not only to timeline but to concerns and situations as well. The exact date of the letter is unfortunately unclear: a note clearly in Korngold’s handwriting at the top of the typed letter reads “Sept. 1945” in part. The full notation has been interpreted as “2 Sept. 1945”,²² but might also appear to read “? Sept. 1945.”



Reproduction of the top of letter to Huberman

²⁰ Luzi, pp. 85-86.

²¹ Wagner, Guy. *Musik ist Musik*. Berlin, Matthes & Seitz, 2008, p. 378: “Nach einem Konzert der Los Angeles Philharmoniker aber zeigte Korngold dem Konzertmeister Bronislaw Gimpel die inzwischen abgeschlossene Partitur, und Gimpel, der eine Konzertlaufbahn beginnen wollte, bat um die Uraufführungsrechte.“

²² Hirsbrunner, Theo. “Das Violinkonzert von Erich Wolfgang Korngold” (*Wiener Musikgeschichte: Annäherungen – Analysen – Ausblicke*. Böhlau Verlag, Wien, 2009.)

Regardless of the exact day, in the letter Korngold informs Huberman that he is "...working on the conclusion of the finale of "our" concerto..."²³ and that he will send a piano-violin transcript to Huberman in November when the violinist returns to the US from Switzerland. Korngold also mentions that Gimpel had already visited.²⁴

In the letter he inquired if Huberman thought the premiere might possibly take place before mid-March 1946. He explained that Gimpel had scheduled concert appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for 14-15 March 1946, and had asked for Korngold's permission to replace the provisionally programmed Glazunov concerto with Korngold's as yet unperformed concerto. This is the point where friction between Korngold and Huberman appears to begin.

The tone of Korngold's September 1945 letter is one of simple inquiry. Korngold even explains that he is not intending to give the premiere rights to anyone other than Huberman, and that Huberman retains the rights if he promises to perform the work. Korngold further tells Huberman that he will willingly disappoint Gimpel if the concerto cannot be premiered prior to March 1946, unless Huberman allows Gimpel to play it beforehand. Throughout the letter it seems clear that Korngold is merely seeking to understand Huberman's schedule and intentions.

Other correspondence suggests that Huberman may have been somewhat possessive of the concerto now that it was completed. He appears to have felt slighted that Korngold would think of allowing another violinist to perform the work before he did. It is quite likely that Huberman's reluctance may have pushed Korngold toward seeking alternate plans for a premiere. Gimpel's visit could therefore be interpreted as an intervention of sorts, ultimately leading Korngold down a different path.

Jascha Heifetz – 1946

We turn back to Luzi's memoir:

It so happened that at this time an acquaintance, Rudi Polk, the manager of Jascha Heifetz, heard about Erich's concerto and told Heifetz about it. Erich was invited to show the work and one afternoon we went to Polk, where Erich played his piece for Heifetz who listened with an impenetrable face. Heifetz kept the music which he wanted to look over and not much later a renewed request arrived from Polk. This time Heifetz had his "fiddle" at hand and played to Erich's accompaniment – with his own, incomprehensible purity and virtuosity.

Shortly thereafter, Hubermann came to Los Angeles and visited us despite the existing tension. When we sat at dinner, Erich said: "Hubermann – I have not yet betrayed you, I am also not yet engaged; but I have flirted." Hubermann's reaction, after he discovered with whom Erich had flirted, was true to his noble and clever character. To him, he declared, it had mainly been a

²³ "...dass ich an der Beendigung des Finales "unseres" Violinkonzertes arbeite..."

²⁴ That Korngold states he is still working on the concerto and that Gimpel had already visited supports a date prior to October.

matter of clarification of the misunderstanding. Finally, he opined, Brahms had consulted Joachim and thus he too, Hubermann, had envisioned working together with Korngold.

Then he wanted to hear the concerto. After Erich had played it for him, Hubermann said: “Even if Heifetz performs it first – I will play it in any case.” Erich was glad and thankful that at this – the last – reunion with Hubermann no grudge remained.²⁵

Bronislaw Huberman ultimately did not play the concerto. He passed away on 16 June 1947 in Switzerland, never having played the work he had spent so much effort to have brought into the world. His was the last of three deaths that can be associated with the concerto. Korngold’s father, Julius, passed away on 25 September 1945, just weeks before the concerto was completed. The third was Franz Werfel, passing away one month before Julius on 26 August 1945. Werfel was the third husband of Alma Mahler, the woman married to Gustav Mahler when Korngold was a boy. Luzi, Erich, Alma and Franz had formed a close relationship as émigrés in Hollywood, so that after Franz Werfel died Korngold requested Alma to accept a dedication of the concerto to her.

Establishing the Premiere Performances

Clues regarding how the premiere of the *Violin Concerto* was established can be found throughout published sources. However, though a general timeline is presently discernible, these clues do not clearly describe a series of specific events or dates, as will be seen.

According to a report that appeared in multiple newspapers near the end of November 1946...

An original violin concerto by Erich Wolfgang Korngold... will be performed this season at Carnegie Hall by Jascha Heifetz. Arrangements for the performance were made with Heifetz during Korngold’s recent visit to New York [for the premiere of the film “Deception”].²⁶



Jascha Heifetz discussing the Violin Concerto with Korngold, ca. 1947

This late November announcement could be interpreted as implying that it was during this particular trip Korngold arranged to have Heifetz premiere the work. It might also be read as suggesting that during this visit Korngold and Heifetz together arranged the performance with the New York Philharmonic. What

²⁵ Luzi, p. 86.

²⁶ Sources include the *Detroit Times* [Detroit, MI] Tue, 26 Nov 1946; p. 24; and *Times-Picayune* [New Orleans, LA] Sun, 01 Dec 1946; p. 52; among others.

might have been decided during this trip is unknown however, as other sources indicate the New York “premiere” had been established well before this news brief appeared.

A full month earlier, in October 1946, the *New York Times* reported that Heifetz would be premiering Korngold’s concerto in St. Louis, Cincinnati, and New York,²⁷ and the Austrian paper *Wiener Kurier* even announced Heifetz’s New York performance two weeks before the *New York Times*. But the *Los Angeles Times* appears to have beaten them all. Their very brief report on 9 September 1946 simply stated that “[Korngold will] be present for the initial rendition of his violin concerto by Jascha Heifetz in New York.”²⁸ Presuming these various reports reflect arrangements as they were being made, the New York performance was arranged first, and the St. Louis premiere was established sometime between Sep 9th and Oct 27th. The *New York Times* also suggested a Cincinnati performance was perhaps to have occurred prior to New York but a performance in Ohio never materialized.²⁹ Lastly, no mention was yet made of the concerto’s performance scheduled for Chicago in early April 1947 – so presumably the Chicago performance was arranged after the *New York Times* report was published.

Based on accumulated information, it is possible to narrow the time frame when Korngold arranged for Heifetz to premiere the work to just a few months in 1946. Luzi had written, “...Shortly thereafter, Hubermann came to Los Angeles and visited us despite the existing tension...” Following a three-month tour of Europe, Huberman flew back to the US aboard Pan American Airways, leaving Hurn, England on 24 November and landing in New York on 25 November 1945. He performed in New York in December 1945 and had arranged a US tour from January through at least March 1946. Included on that tour were chamber concerts in Tucson, AZ (30 January) and Los Angeles (2 February). After Los Angeles his next concert was in Vancouver, BC on 12 February. It therefore seems quite likely that Korngold had met Heifetz at Rudi Polk’s home prior to February 1946, that sometime between 1 February and 11 February Korngold told Huberman “...I have flirted...”, and that the final arrangement for Heifetz to premiere the concerto occurred sometime between 12 February and before the *Los Angeles Times* printed its article on 9 September 1946.

Bronislav Gimpel – 1947, European Premiere

On 19 April 1947 Korngold received an international telegram informing him that his concerto would soon have its European premiere. The First International Music Festival had been arranged by the Vienna Konzerthaus-Gesellschaft (lit., “Concert House Society”) for 16-30 June 1947 as part of the “Vienna Theater and Music Weeks 1947”. A variety of contemporary orchestral, chamber, and vocal pieces were the focus of the programs – including both Austrian and world premieres – but with consideration given to fostering classics as well. Korngold’s *Concerto* was eventually scheduled for the final event of the Festival on 30 June 1947 at 7:30 PM in the Großer Saal of the Konzerthaus. It would also be broadcast live on Austrian radio.

²⁷ “He’s Fed Up With Music For Films.” *New York Times*. Sun, 27 Oct 1946: II-5.

²⁸ Schallert, Edwin. “Studios Bulging With New Story Acquisitions.” *Los Angeles Times*, Mon, 09 Sep 1946: II-2.

²⁹ Cincinnati is mid-way between St. Louis and New York – a concert stop “en route” would have made logistical sense. Cincinnati was also historically more favorable towards Korngold’s music than New York, and should therefore have appealed to the composer.

The premiere was entrusted to the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer, with none other than Bronislav Gimpel as soloist. When Klemperer arrived in Vienna on 27 June 1947, the pieces programmed were Schönberg's *Kammersymphonie* op. 9 in the version for large orchestra, Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*, and the Korngold concerto. Klemperer biographer, Peter Heyworth, noted that "At the first rehearsal with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, it was discovered that Stravinsky's publishers in London had sent the wrong symphony,"³⁰ and Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* was decided as the substitution. Heyworth also asserted that by this time, Klemperer had supposedly decided that Korngold's concerto was irrelevant: "Klemperer had turned against Korngold's glib attempt to resuscitate the rhetoric of the Romantic concerto and demanded that it be removed from the programme."³¹ No evidence or source is given for his assertion of what could have been a change in Klemperer's attitude about Korngold's music, which Klemperer at least on the surface seemed to support during the 1910s and 1920s.³²

Apocryphal or not, Heyworth states that the Festival director, Egon Seefehlner, maintained the original decision to include Korngold's concerto on the program. He offers as the reason that "...in an American-occupied city it would have been politically embarrassing to withdraw a work by a former Austrian who was both a Jew and an American citizen."³³ Denied the pleasure of performing in the US a work he was reportedly enthusiastic about, Bronislav Gimpel had the gratification in the end of being able to give the European premiere.

The April telegram also included a warm-hearted invitation for Korngold to be present at the concert. History shows he did not attend, actually not returning to Europe until two years later. His absence from the European premiere is probably attributable to two factors. The first is the (Eugene) Bryden-Korngold adaption of "Rosalinda" that opened on 29 April 1947 at the Curran Theater in San Francisco under the auspices of Edwin Lester's Civic Light Opera organization. Korngold conducted the production himself, "...with an exuberance bordering on voodoo," according to the review the following day in the *San Francisco Examiner*. The production moved to the Philharmonic Auditorium in Los Angeles beginning May 19 for a three-week engagement, again with Korngold conducting from the pit. The second factor was a growing heart condition which increasingly worried Luzi. The *Rosalinda* production was followed by a vacation to Canada, instead of Europe.

Reception

Nothing much had changed since the early 1910s with regard to regional reception of Korngold's music in North America, and Korngold apparently knew it. In his September 1945 letter to Huberman, Korngold wrote that the premiere should "...preferably not [be] in New York, to whose perhaps malicious

³⁰ Heyworth, Peter. *Otto Klemperer: His Life and Times, Vol. 2: 1933-1973*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996: 164.

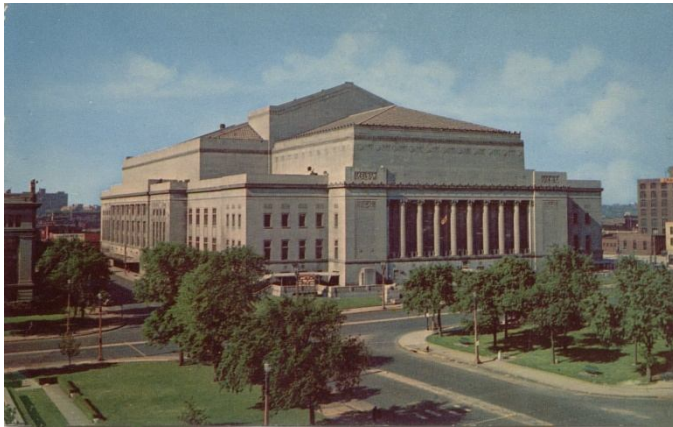
³¹ Ibid.

³² Personal correspondence with the Korngold Archive Hamburg, 5 Jan 2018.

³³ Heyworth, p. 164.

criticism I would not like to expose the richly singing piece.”³⁴ New York critics had rather consistently denigrated Korngold’s music over the years. In contrast, critics in other regions – the Midwest and the Pacific Coast, for example – were much more tolerant and often favorably inclined toward the same compositions compared to their East Coast peers. Korngold seemingly recognized this, evidenced from a letter he wrote to his father’s old colleague, Josef Reitler, on 20 February 1947. In the letter – quoted in Luzi’s biography and translated in *The Last Prodigy* – he discusses the concerto’s triumph in St. Louis, and acknowledges that he then had “...five weeks until the New York critics tear it apart...”. And the New York reviewers did not disappoint.

Olin Downes in the *New York Times* famously labeled the work a “Hollywood concerto,” claiming it contained ordinary and sentimental melodies, and only mediocre ideas. Irving Kolodin writing in *The Sun* saddled the concerto with the epithet “more corn than gold,” which has unfortunately followed the work through time, even continuing to be recited today despite the concerto’s current popularity. Critics outside the New York area looked more favorably on the new composition, however.



Kiel Auditorium, St. Louis, ca. 1950

A capacity audience had attended the Saturday world premiere in St. Louis, and over 3000 had attended the Sunday matinee repeat performance. The first night audience offered prolonged ovations for all the principals: the composer, the soloist and the conductor. The applause, as reported by Reed Hynds, was “...so hearty and spontaneous that Heifetz showed less than his usual scorn for his audience, actually smiling once.”³⁵ The same reviewer also stated “the performance was superior from every

point of view.” Thomas Sherman in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* wrote that the composer, “...had every reason for feeling that his opus had been set free in the world under propitious circumstances.”³⁶

Following the Chicago premiere Claudia Cassidy offered that, “...whatever you think of the content and style of the concerto, there is no denying its skill or its ability, at least when Heifetz plays it, to hold an audience enthralled.” Later in the review she claimed the accompaniment “...was one of the best the orchestra has played under Mr. Defauw’s direction.”³⁷

³⁴ “...am liebsten nicht in New York, dessen vielleicht uebelwollender Kritik ich das sehr gesangsreiche Werk nicht gerne aussetzen moechte...”

³⁵ Hynds, Reed. “Heifetz And New Concerto Please Audiences Here.” *St. Louis Star-Times*, Mon, 17 Feb 1947: 9.

³⁶ Sherman, Thomas B. “Capacity Audience Hears Heifetz, Symphony in Korngold Premiere.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sun, 16 Feb 1947: 4F.

³⁷ Cassidy, Claudia. “On The Aisle.” *Chicago Tribune*, Fri, 4 Apr 1947: 21.

In reviewing the European premiere, Viennese reviewers were not much more impressed than their New York peers had been. Heyworth noted:

*“The critic Helmut Fiechtner dismissed Korngold’s concerto as ‘inconceivably empty and styleless.’ The Wiener Tageszeitung mischievously commented that a score that had been ‘composed for the Caruso of the violin, had in Bronislaw Gimpel [the soloist] found its Jan Kiepura”*³⁸

A review appearing in the *Wiener Kurier* the day after the concert is slightly more positive. The reviewer rather neutrally acknowledges the reflections of film music in the concerto, but then admits the European audience was very far removed from the cinematic world, a world which Gimpel was able to describe in the three virtuosic movements.³⁹ Despite several good reviews, the poor opinions in New York and Europe may have contributed to concerto’s virtual disappearance for several decades.

Legacy

Heifetz performed the Violin Concerto a total of ten times. The last two were with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Alfred Wallenstein on 9-10 January 1953. Very shortly after, they created the famous premiere recording of the work, which has been in print ever since. However, following the January 1953 performances, two decades would pass before Korngold’s *Violin Concerto* would again be heard live.

Heifetz ceased concertizing in 1972. As if in response, a renewed interest in Korngold’s *Violin Concerto* by other violinists began with the 1972-73 concert season. That fall the BBC Symphony Orchestra gave what may have been the UK premiere on 4 November 1972 in London. The next performance followed on 24 January 1973 by Rafael Kubelík and the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks in Munich.

On 20 May 1973, under the baton of Leonard Slatkin, the St. Louis Symphony initiated the post-Heifetz life of Korngold’s *Violin Concerto* in North America. According to the reviewer the next day, “it was John Korman who had the unenviable task yesterday of following Heifetz, even at a distance of 27 years. ...He brought to Korngold’s romantic concerto, besides the requisite technical virtuosity, exactly the kind of warm, singing, soaring playing this kind of music requires to be effective.”⁴⁰ Ulf Hoelscher made the second recording of Korngold’s concerto in 1974, followed by Itzhak Perlman in 1980.

Since then, the concerto has gained in popularity, with performances now being given multiple times each year. It is becoming a competition favorite, and new recordings appear frequently.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Klemperer-Konzert beendete Musikfest.” *Wiener Kurier*, Tue, 1 Jul 1947, p. 3: this “...wir glauben aus dieser süßlichen Atmosphäre des Klages die dazugehörige Vollmondnacht mit allem Überschwang eines glitzernden Filmparadieses aufsteigen zu sehen. Sehr ferne sind wir dieser Welt des Scheines, von der uns Bronislaw Gimpel mit den begleitenden Symphonikern in drei virtuoson Sätzen zu erzählen wußte.“

⁴⁰ “John Korman Plays Korngold Concerto.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Mon, 21 May 1973: D-3.

Appendix A: Bronislaw Huberman, Select Concert Dates

18 Dec 1944	evening	Mosque Theatre, Newark, NJ
6 Jan 1945	(8:30 PM)	Hunter College assembly hall, New York, NY
27 Jan 1945	8:30 PM	Russ Auditorium, San Diego, CA (San Diego debut)
5 Feb 1945	8:30 PM	Philharmonic Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA (first appearance in LA since 1937)
12 Feb 1945	8:30 PM	Public Auditorium, Portland, OR (Portland debut)
4 Mar 1945	3:00 PM	WNYC radio
11 Mar 1945		N.Y. School for Social Research, New York, NY
2 Apr 1945	8:30 PM	White Temple Auditorium, Miami, FL

After the 2 Apr 1945 concert in Florida, Huberman went on a South American concert tour. [source: "Studio Scope." *The Miami Daily News (Miami, FL) Sun, 11 Mar 1945: D-6.*]

2 Dec 1945	---	New Friends of Music (New York)
16 Dec 1945	---	New York Philharmonic, Bruno Walter (cond.)
28 Jan 1946	---	Phoenix Union High School Auditorium, Phoenix, AZ
30 Jan 1946	8:30 PM	Temple of Music & Art, Tucson, AZ
2 Feb 1946	8:15 PM	Philharmonic Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA
12 Feb 1946	---	Lyric Theatre, Vancouver, BC
16 Mar 1946	---	New York Philharmonic, Bruno Walter (cond.)

Appendix B: Bronislav Gimpel, Select Concert Dates

Note: No concert dates in which Gimpel was listed as a performer have yet been sourced for the years encompassing the United States' involvement in World War II.

27 Oct 1945	8:15 PM	Town Hall, NYC (Victory Festival)
Nov 1945	---	New York
14-15 Mar 1946	---	LA Philharmonic
4 May 1946	3:00 PM	radio broadcast (from new York?), Gimpel as soloist
14 May 1946	---	radio broadcast, Gimpel conducting
18 May 1946	---	radio broadcast, Gimpel conducting

Appendix C: “Another Dawn” (1937)

The 1937 Warner Bros. film “Another Dawn” is always mentioned in both historical and thematic discussions of Korngold’s *Violin Concerto*, given that the film’s love theme forms the concerto’s prominent opening theme. Aside from this basic connection and perhaps a mention that the film was generally panned by critics at its opening and then disappeared from view, little to no discussion of the film itself is ever really offered. As a tangent to a larger discussion of the concerto, perhaps a brief background of the film is appropriate.



Briefs and short articles from *Variety* magazine with a few supplements from other periodicals provide an excellent summary of the timeline of the film, as well as several anecdotes and short stories about its production. First mention of this film appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on 10 March 1936, and the following day’s issue of *Variety*. At that time, writer Laird Doyle was working on an original screenplay for a new film which Warner Bros. had initially assigned to Errol Flynn and Bette Davis.⁴¹

For the next several months the production saw frequent cast additions and changes, production staff changes, and script rewrites and revisions. Ian Hunter had been added to the cast list at the end of May. By August Kay Francis had replaced Davis in the lead female role. This switch prompted Warners to order Doyle to rewrite the script with Francis now in mind instead of Davis. The film’s production was originally slated to start the week of 24 August 1936 with Sam Bischoff producing, but as of 26 August no director was yet assigned. Sometime between the 26 August and 16 September editions of *Variety*, Warners had switched producers and finally assigned a director. Now with Harry Joe Brown producing and William Dieterle directing, production was finally set to start on 24 September. The leading roles were Ian Hunter, Kay Francis, and Errol Flynn, the last of whom, it was reported, had to cut a vacation short in order to return to Hollywood for the start of filming. *Variety* reported on 23 September that the primary cast had been rounded out by Freida Inescort, Billy Bevan, Herbert Mundin and Paul Panzer.

Several supporting cast additions were made in mid-October during filming, Britons all. Kenneth Hunter was persuaded to play a role (“Sir Charles Benton”) alongside his brother, Ian. Major Sam Harris was signed to portray a British army officer (“Guest”, uncredited), and he reportedly had a still photo of one of the sets made into Christmas cards to send to friends in England. The comedic actor Charlie Austin, while on a vacation trip around the world, had stopped in Hollywood to visit friends of the London stage and was persuaded to play a part in the film as well (“Yeoman”, uncredited).

⁴¹ Bette Davis did not appear in the film. She may have tentatively been given a leading part based on her Academy Award win the preceding year for her performance in “Dangerous”, another film written by Laird Doyle.



Errol Flynn on the set of Another Dawn

Filming was in progress through November 1936 and wrapped in mid-December.⁴² Editing and cutting occurred during the remainder of December.⁴³ Kay Francis began filming some additional scenes beginning 13 February 1937 and ending shortly before 22 February 1937. Of note, this particular film was shot with two endings: one in which Flynn got the girl, and one in which he did not. By 23 February, the studio had still not settled on which ending to use: “*Another Dawn* still has two endings... [The] studio won’t make the final decision until fans have caught the preview.”⁴⁴

Typical of the studio system at the time, the composer was not brought on board until the film was shot and at least partially cut and edited. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on 8 December 1936 that Erich Wolfgang Korngold had been signed to score “*Another Dawn*”.⁴⁵ According to the *St. Louis Star and Times* one month later, the assignment was made because so much praise had come to Korngold for his original score to “*Anthony Adverse*”.⁴⁶ His work on “*Another Dawn*” was followed immediately by scoring the film “*The Prince and the Pauper*”.

By the first part of April 1937 “*Another Dawn*” was completed and previewed for a press audience in the studio projection room. Gus McCarthy, a reviewer for the *Motion Picture Herald*, wrote that “class patrons” will find interest in “...the way of story telling technique, commendable acting and thoughtful arrangement of situations,” but that it will not appeal much to the masses given its heavy reliance on dialogue, lack of thrilling action, and minimal comedic contrast. “[Capturing “ordinary” patrons] will have to be solved by capitalizing on [the stars’] name values and understanding local tastes.”⁴⁷ Another review appearing in the *Atlanta Constitution* the last week of April was not any more hopeful. The review in *Variety* on 23 June was derisive.

“*Another Dawn*” opened at Radio City in New York on Thursday, 17 June 1937. The review the following day in the *New York Times* essentially echoed the advance reviews from April. The film

**RADIO CITY
MUSIC HALL**
50th Street & 6th Avenue
Kay FRANCIS • Errol FLYNN
in “**ANOTHER DAWN**”

ON STAGE: “IN A MODERN MOOD,”
Russell Markert’s tuneful revue.
Symphony Orchestra.

DOORS OPEN 11:30 A. M.
Picture at 11:50, 2:15, 4:59, 7:43, 10:18
Stage Show at 1:03, 3:47, 6:31, 9:06
1st Mezz. Seats Reserved • COL. 5-6536

Advertisement from the New York Times, 18 Jun 1937.

⁴² Orry-Kelly. “Fashion Parade.” *Bristol Daily Courier*, Bristol, PA, Wed, 16 Dec 1936: 3.

⁴³ “Errol Flynn Cast As Miles Hendon.” *Portsmouth Daily Times*, Portsmouth, OH, Thu, 24 Dec 1936: 17.

⁴⁴ “At A Glance.” *Akron Beacon Journal*, Tue, 23 Feb 1937: 25; among others.

⁴⁵ “Addenda.” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. Tue, 08 Dec 1936: I-12.

⁴⁶ “*Another Dawn* to Have Music by Korngold.” *St. Louis Star-Times* [Final ed.], Sat, 2 Jan 1937: 11.

⁴⁷ “Showmen’s Reviews.” *Motion Picture Herald*. V.127, n.2, 10 April 1937: 66.

played in theaters – with less frequency as time went on – through at least November 1938, apparently in its initial release. Advertisements for what seem to be much more sporadic showings appear into mid-1942. There were frequent airings on television in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but opinion of the film – at least by critics – was unchanged. Criticism from one TV reviewer in 1967 went thusly: “Errol Flynn in *Another Dawn*: *Another yawn.*” Warner Bros. released the film for the first time on home media in June 2014.

Image credits:

Huberman: *Bronislaw Huberman, full-length portrait, seated, facing right, playing violin / photo by Bain News Service, New York.* [Between 1900 and 1916] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/90712461/>.

Julius Korngold. Courtesy of the Korngold Estate.

Gimpel: www.wieniawski.com/gimpel_bronislaw.html.

Heifetz: Courtesy of the Korngold Estate.

Kiel Auditorium: printed postcard, circa 1950.

Another Dawn lobby card: The Troy O. Dixon Collection.

Errol Flynn on the set of *Another Dawn*: The Troy O. Dixon Collection.

Another Dawn Advertisement: *New York Times*, 18 Jun 1937.

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