

Acknowledgments

This was my pandemic book. I wrote it during the scariest and most insecure time of my life, and it became somehow essential to me to wake up every morning in 2020 to Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss and their collaboration, more than a hundred years earlier, on *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. The creation of opera through a time of catastrophe—World War I—was for me a reminder that scholarship could also continue even under frightening and unprecedented circumstances.

Die Frau ohne Schatten is an opera about the trials, the complications, and ultimately the marvelous entwinement to be found in marriage, and Perri Klass, my wife, my beloved companion, my closest friend, the only person who knows me, has helped me through these difficult years and made it imaginable for me to write this book. We have been locked down together, in different degrees of rigor, over the course of these years, and, even losing so much of the normal world, I have loved the world that we have made together.

Die Frau ohne Schatten is also an opera that sings passionately of the importance of childbirth and children, and though the pandemic has sometimes kept me apart from my children—no longer children—in complicated and unexpected ways, I have thought about them every day and lamented the

ways that their lives have been touched by such unexpected circumstances. I have deeply admired the courage and spirit of Orlando, who has worked through this pandemic in the psychiatric emergency rooms of New York City; I have thoroughly appreciated the endeavor of Anatol as he took off for Taiwan to undertake strenuous quarantine, archival research, opera excursions, and the pursuit of dumplings in a global pandemic; and I have taken heart and found renewed resolve in watching Josephine complete her own pandemic book, which has already been published before mine. My book is dedicated to her, as she has always had an affinity for empresses.

I could not have written this book without the lifeline of my daily phone calls with my parents, even during the long months when we could not see each other during the pandemic. It was my father who told me the story of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, many years ago when I was a child, and instilled in me a love of opera that has marvelously enriched my life and my scholarship. From my mother, born in Vienna, I received my sense of connection to the Habsburg world, and her family odyssey, her departure from Vienna at the age of four with her parents in 1938, has been a point of reference for me as I wrote this book about Vienna in the twentieth century. I was lucky to be working on this project at a time when I was regularly in touch with my brother, David Wolff, on a long visit from Japan; he so very well appreciates what opera means in our family and at the same time the pleasures and challenges of historical research. All of our grandparents were born as subjects of Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph, and all lived as subjects of Emperor Karl and Empress Zita from 1916 to 1918. I have thought about my Habsburg grandparents constantly as I wrote this book.

My reflections on Hofmannsthal go back a very long way to a freshman seminar in the Harvard German Department with Professor Jack Stein in the fall of 1974, a seminar on the Strauss-Hofmannsthal collaboration and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. My junior tutorial in History and Literature at Harvard with Professor Dorrit Cohn focused on Viennese literature, with Hofmannsthal absolutely central, and my junior essay, written for her, was on the subject of Hofmannsthal and World War I, involving material that I have revisited in the writing of this book. It would be impossible for me to do justice to the ways that Dorrit Cohn shaped my scholarly interest in Vienna by helping

me begin to appreciate the subtleties of Viennese literature and thought. As a graduate student at Stanford, also cross-registering at Berkeley, it was my great privilege to work on and think about the Habsburg monarchy with my professors Wayne Vucinich, Gordon Craig, and William Slottman.

Good friends have shaped my approach to writing this book, starting with Maria Tatar, whose brilliant studies of fairy-tale culture have been important to me over many years, and Philipp Ther, my great longtime friend at the University of Vienna, who has led the way in thinking about opera in relation to politics and society. At the height of the pandemic I found great pleasure in piano-saxophone duets with Philipp on Zoom, including the “Zita-Walzer”. . . . I’m so lucky to have, as my inspirational friend and colleague, Mike Beckerman in the Music Department at New York University; his encouragement has helped me to take on the musical subjects that have become central to my work as a historian.

I’m immensely grateful to the readers for Stanford University Press, revealed as Pieter Judson and Alison Frank Johnson, who know so much more about so many aspects of this book than I do myself, who read the manuscript with such spectacular attention and generosity, and who have helped me immeasurably to make this a better book.

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I've written this book through a long pandemic in Manhattan, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in Wellfleet, Cape Cod, and at Villa La Pietra in Florence.

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