

## America's Introduction to Erich Wolfgang Korngold

*Troy O. Dixon, December 2017*

One of the most astonishing prodigies in the history of western music rose to world renown at the dawn of his teenage years in 1910. Born in 1897, Erich Wolfgang Korngold began displaying a musical precocity from his earliest years. He started composing well before his tenth birthday, producing from the outset works that showed little, if any, of the hallmarks of a child. The level of sophistication in his compositions, and his seemingly innate understanding of music theory amazed both his family and tutors.

His father was Dr. Julius Korngold, one of the most feared music critics in Vienna. Successor to Eduard Hanslick at the *Neue Freie Presse* ("New Free Press"), he became extremely influential with his writings, and was near-universally read. Julius had recognized quickly that for him to have a musically precocious son of the likes of Mozart or Mendelssohn, not only would his own position as music critic be complicated or potentially compromised, but his son's position and future as a composer might be jeopardized as well. He therefore attempted at first to keep Erich's gifts shielded from public view. By December 1909, however, Erich's increasing facility and aptitude overrode Julius's initial caution. The father decided he could no longer veil the son's talents from the world, so he privately published three of Erich's then most recent compositions. He sent them in numbered copies to musicians and musical experts outside Vienna to record his son's talents for posterity. His stated intent in doing so was only "...[to acknowledge] the fact that these compositions were written by a boy of ten, eleven, or twelve respectively."<sup>1</sup> Instead – perhaps unsurprisingly – these publications turned out to be the catalyst for a storm of attention that would catapult young Erich to world attention within months.

The reaction to the privately printed scores was one of astonishment at the precociousness of the music, and the originality and maturity of it was acclaimed by leading European musicians. Letters of praise and admiration for the youth's prodigious talent flowed back to his father. Among them were correspondences from Hermann Kretzschmar, Artur Nikisch, Englebert Humperdinck, Karóly Goldmark, and Richard Strauss. Excitement over the prodigy could hardly be contained. Predictably, knowledge of the new wunderkind would not remain private for very long.



Erich Wolfgang Korngold.

*Photo of Korngold published in "Der Merker – Österreichische Zeitschrift für Musik und Theater." 25 Feb 1910, Vol. I, No. 10*

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from Julius Korngold's preface printed in the scores. See the sidebar on page 8 for supplemental information.

Within a few weeks of the fateful printing in December 1909, news of the youth began being reported publicly. Three of the first reports to appear in print include an article by August Beer in the 16 February 1910 issue of *Pester Lloyd*, one by Richard Specht in the *Der Merker* of 25 February 1910, and another by Dr. Ernst Decsey in *Signale* of 2 March 1910.<sup>2</sup> Dissemination of the news in America regarding the new prodigy was not far behind.

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The population of North America was perhaps at a slight disadvantage with respect to Europeans. While a transatlantic telegraph system had been in use since the late 1800s, and intercontinental radio was established – though still in its infancy – in the first decade of the 1900s, news from Europe often could still take some time to reach North America. So although details of the prodigy may have traveled rapidly within Europe, few reports appear to have found their way to America very quickly. Research to date indicates that the *Boston Post* seems to hold the distinction of having the first American announcement of the new Viennese wunderkind.

Following on the heels of the initial articles in Europe by Beer, Specht, and Decsey, the *Boston Post* in America published the following extremely brief announcement on Sunday, 27 March 1910:

*“Vienna, March 26.—“Is he the reincarnation of the waltz king?” asked people as they listened to the compositions of little Erich Korngold, about to celebrate his 12th birthday. The boy has written a notable sonata with 20 variations, and an operetta called “Don Quixote,” full of animated dance music, of which Johann Strauss and Delibes might be proud. Erich is the son of a musical critic [ ].”*

Which specific event in March that the *Post* is referring to is presently unknown. Further, this unnamed reporter may have been confusing Erich’s birthday (May 29<sup>th</sup>) for March, although in 1910 Erich would have been celebrating his thirteenth birthday, not his twelfth.<sup>3</sup> Regardless, if this tiny article was noted significantly by anyone or caused any kind of stir in the States, no record of it has yet been found. An article appearing one month later, however, would lead to very different results.

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Shortly after the 14 April 1910 premiere of Korngold’s *Der Schneemann* at a soiree held by Baroness von Bierneth at the ministerial palace in Vienna, both the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* made their own announcement of the new wunderkind to America. On 24 April 1910 these two papers simultaneously printed a nearly identical article, which is reproduced below. This April article – and not the earlier one in the

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Specht’s article in *Der Merker* implies he was also one of the recipients of a copy of Julius Korngold’s private December printing.

<sup>3</sup> Many early American newspaper articles made small errors in their reporting. Three examples include: the *Boston Post* labeling *Don Quixote* as an operetta; several newspapers reporting Julius’s December birthday instead to be Erich’s; and *Der Schneemann* once being listed as an opera.

*Boston Post* – is arguably the beginning of Korngold’s celebrity in the New World, as this particular news report set off a continent-wide series of similar articles about the new Austrian musical prodigy that would circulate for months.

This same article appeared in the *Arkansas Gazette* on April 26<sup>th</sup> and in the *Oakland Tribune* on May 1<sup>st</sup>. In fact, within just one week of the simultaneous New York/Chicago article in April, the news had been printed in over a half-dozen different newspapers from Boston to San Francisco. By the end of May, over fifteen different newspapers alone had released news of the musical prodigy in a dozen different cities, and other non-newspaper periodicals had begun following suit. Within a couple of months, *derivatives*<sup>4</sup> of that first April article had appeared in nearly every corner of the United States. The majority of these derivative articles appeared between April 24 and June 19.

Though the original article was printed on April 24, it was not until mid-May when articles begin appearing that implied how the news originally seems to have gotten to North America. The *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* simply acknowledged the news was received by “special cable.” Several derivatives appearing on May 15<sup>th</sup> sourced their content to a “Special Cable from the International News Service.” Further, the *New York Evening Post* of May 14<sup>th</sup> began its article with a rather different opening:

*“To the prodigious number of prodigies another has been added. The Berlin correspondent of the London Daily Mail says...”*

We presume therefore that the content of the original April 24<sup>th</sup> article originated with the Berlin correspondent of the *London Daily Mail*, whose information was disseminated by the International News Service via telegraph to the United States, where it was picked up and first printed in New York and Chicago.

## STRAUSS FINDS PRODIGY; HAILS BOY AS NEW MOZART.

Erich Korngold, a 13 Year Old Viennese,  
Startles the Musical Critics by His  
Compositions.

[BY CABLE TO THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE.]

BERLIN, April 23.—Richard Strauss has discovered a prodigy. The composer has found a 13 year old Vienna boy, Erich Korngold, whom he hails as a new Mozart. The lad is a son of a celebrated Viennese music critic.

Three of the boy’s compositions, a sonata for the piano, a pantomime in two pictures, said to be well adapted for the stage, and a set of six character studies for which Don Quixote was the model, were submitted to Strauss. The latter addressed the following remarkable tribute to the juvenile composer’s talent to the lad’s father:

“I have received the compositions and read them through with the greatest astonishment. You are to be congratulated. The first feeling I had was one of awe and apprehension, succeeded by the fervent wish that so precocious a manifestation of genius may have opportunity for normal development.

“Such assurance of style, mastery of form, individuality of expression and harmonization is all genuinely astounding.”

Equally enthusiastic praise was given by Prof. Herman Kretschmar, successor to the late Josef Joachim as director of the Royal High School of Music at Berlin, who says “even when compared with the most exceptional instances of musical precocity the work of Korngold remains phenomenal for virility and modernity. I know of no analogous case but that of young Handel.”

Source: *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 Apr 1910: A2.

Note: The *New York Times* version of this article is available at [www.korngold-society.org](http://www.korngold-society.org)

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<sup>4</sup> “Derivative” is the author’s chosen designation for articles that generally employ the same content used by the two articles appearing on April 24<sup>th</sup>, but that usually contain slight changes to, or reordering of, words and phrases and sometimes have minor omissions. Most derivative articles do not generally add anything of substance to the content of the original, and might therefore be considered as less “complete” than the April 24<sup>th</sup> articles. The use of the word ‘derivative’ is a classification only, and is in no way meant as derogatory or as a denigration of the articles so labeled.

Most derivatives of the original April 24<sup>th</sup> article simply re-arranged or shortened the information presented in that first report, but a few of the articles added new observations or commentary beyond the original.

Apparently without knowing Korngold was already being tutored by Alexander von Zemlinsky, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on May 8<sup>th</sup> appended the following to their article:

*“...Precisely what will be done with this youthful musical genius has not yet been determined. It is probable, however, that arrangements will be made to place him under the instruction of the foremost musical authorities of Europe.”*

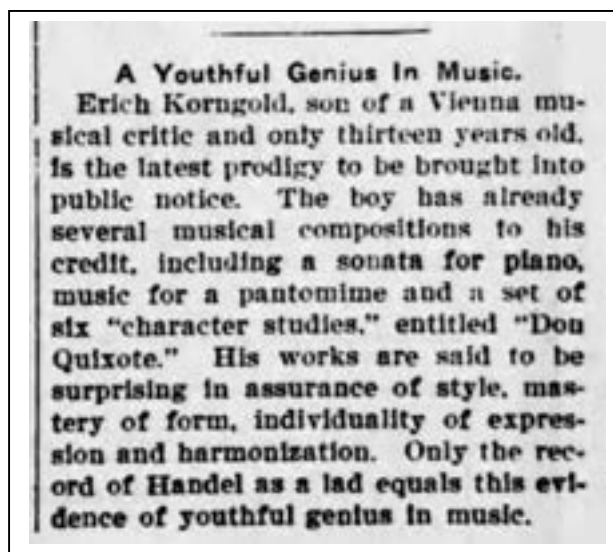
On May 15<sup>th</sup> in the *Pittsburg Post*, Jennie Irene Mix closed her version of the article with this commentary:

*“Such precocity as this general dwindles to mediocrity when the prodigy reaches maturity. This boy’s career will be watched by such men as Strauss with keen interest. That every musician, no matter how gifted, should go through the systematic and normal course of study is a doctrine continually preached by Strauss. He has often said that in a composer the best foundation for original work was through knowledge of the classics.”*

The *Charlotte Evening Chronicle* on May 30<sup>th</sup> uniquely finished with: “...but is this not overlooking Mendelssohn?”, and in the *New York Times*’s condensed reprint of their article on May 15<sup>th</sup>, “the future of this very youthful composer should be watched with interest,” was appended.

So by mid-June 1910, and courtesy of the Berlin correspondent of the *London Daily Mail* and the International News Service, the breadth of North America was aware of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, and Strauss’s appraisal of his precocity. But for that first half of 1910 the New World was only circulating the same basic information around the continent. The Library of Congress recorded that they received the first of Korngold’s music on 1 June 1910,<sup>5</sup> so his music was perhaps not readily available in the US for at least several months after the December 1909 private printing by Julius Korngold. With no music to examine and apparently no updates from Europe, there was little more to report.

Starting at the end of June 1910, a short news brief entitled “A Youthful Genius in Music” appeared in various papers. This article represents the epitome of the “derivative article”, presenting the most concise summary of salient details from the original April 24<sup>th</sup> article in the *New York Times*. This particular article was reprinted in many newspapers primarily over a three-to-four week period, although it resurfaced periodically for months. The last sourced reprint of it is dated December 10<sup>th</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> Music from *Der Schneemann*: 1) complete piano score; 2) Entr’act for piano; and 3) Serenade for violin and piano.

The American press did offer more information than simply repeating the initial reports about a new musical prodigy living in Vienna, however. A handful of other notable aspects of Korngold's early rise to fame circulated during the months between April 1910 and April 1911. As one might perhaps expect, the news reported most often surrounded the premiere and subsequent performances of *Der Schneemann*, one of the three original, privately published compositions. Also, the New York premiere of Korngold's *Piano Trio* garnered its expected coverage.<sup>6</sup> But two additional notable events that were made known to America include Korngold's performance for Archduke Eugen in Salzburg in August 1910, and his trip to Berlin with his father in March 1911 for a performance of his *Piano Trio in D Major*, op. 1.

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As early as May 1910 the North American continent began following news of the young composer's ballet-pantomime, *Der Schneemann*. The *San Francisco Call* asserted on 6 May 1910 that, "Erich Wolfgang Korngold...has shown his powers as dramatic author at the age of 12." This very short news brief continues by announcing – rather tardily – that Korngold's pantomime, *Der Schneemann*, was to be produced at the residence of Baron de Bienerth, president of the Austrian council.<sup>7</sup> Writing of it in the *Boston Post* on 11 Sep 1910, Olin Downes stated "...it is said that Korngold has handled [the dramatic] situations, not only with an acme of technical skill, but with striking imagination and the utmost intellectual and emotional maturity." A summary of the pantomime's storyline was supplied by Henry Lowell Mason in *Opera Stories*, though how far this book reached across the US is uncertain.<sup>8</sup>

*Der Schneemann's* Vienna premiere was, of course, big news and the American press appears to have followed its production with interest. The earliest announcement in America of the Vienna Hofoper production is from mid-September. The *Nebraska State Journal* informed its readership on 18 September 1910 that, according to the *New York Evening Post*, the pantomime was to be produced next month at the Imperial Opera in Vienna.<sup>9</sup> Of the reports published after the Hofoper premiere there were three noteworthy North American newspaper articles. The first was a lengthy review by William "Willy" von Sachs in the 23 October 1910 issue of *The New York Sun* that discussed both Wolf-Ferrari's and Korngold's Hofoper productions.<sup>10</sup> Of Korngold's *Schneemann*, von Sachs presented background to the work, how it came to be a novelty at the Hofoper, and gave glowing impressions of the precocity of the score and the overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception the production received.

The second article, "Sires and Sons", first appeared in mid-December and was reprinted in several papers over the next few weeks. This short article states simply that the ballet had been "...brought out in Vienna at the

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<sup>6</sup> This premiere is covered in much greater detail in the author's forthcoming "Opus 1: Korngold's Piano Trio in America."

<sup>7</sup> By the time of printing on 6 May 1910, that production was already nearly three weeks in the past.

<sup>8</sup> Mason, Henry Lowell. *Opera Stories*. Boston, MA: published by Mason himself, 1910. The exact month of publication is unknown. The book's entry on *Der Schneemann* is reproduced in its entirety at [www.korngold-society.org](http://www.korngold-society.org).

<sup>9</sup> The *Evening Post* article has not yet been sourced.

<sup>10</sup> The Vienna double bill production included Wolf-Ferrari's one-act opera *Susanna's Secret* and Korngold's two-act ballet-pantomime *Der Schneemann*.

Royal Opera House recently with great success,..." but significantly informed readers that it had been taken up by theaters in the cities of Breslau, Leipzig and Prague.<sup>11</sup>

By far the most important article appeared in the *New York Times* on New Year's Day 1911.<sup>12</sup> Taking up nearly half the page, this lengthy article gave a rather detailed background on *Der Schneemann*, including its composition, how it came to be performed at Baroness Bienerth's soiree, and details of that same production. It also included a plot summary and quotations from contemporary musical magazines.<sup>13</sup> The *New York Times* article concluded with commentary on Korngold's *Piano Sonata #1* and the *Don Quixote* character pieces.

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The second notable event American readers could follow was the trip to Salzburg that Korngold and his father made in late summer 1910 for the Salzburg Festival (then known as the Mozart Festival) that ran from July 29<sup>th</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup> that year. Archduke Eugen, a patron of the Festival, had heard about the charity performance of *Der Schneemann* and had asked to meet the young prodigy. The account is described by Brendan Carroll in *The Last Prodigy* (pp. 54-55), but it was also recounted in the US. The same 18 September 1910 issue of the *Nebraska State Journal* that had announced the forthcoming production of the pantomime in Vienna was also one of the newspapers that described Korngold's recital for the Archduke. This article – reproduced at right – appeared in other papers as well, usually verbatim.

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The Archduke Eugen, who attended Lilli Lehmann's Mozart festival in Salzburg, expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of the thirteen-year-old Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who is astonishing the Austrian musical experts, and who wrote, two years ago, when he was only eleven years old, the music and pantomime entitled "The Snowman," which is to be produced next month at the Imperial opera at Vienna, says the New York Evening Post. As there was no good piano in the hotel parlor, the party adjourned to the room of Professor Leschetitzky, in the third story, where there was an excellent concert grand. On it the boy played selections from that pantomime and other works of his. Among the musicians present was Paul Dukas, the composer of the opera "Ariane et Barbe Bleue," which is to be one of the novelties of the coming season at the Metropolitan. Dukas, who is, next to Debussy, the most prominent and promising among the composers of the latest French type, was astonished at the boy's achievements, lauding his melodic and rhythmic originality and pronouncing him a musician whose attainments are already perfect.

Source: *Nebraska State Journal*, 18 Sep 1910: B-4.

The last event in Korngold's first year of North American public celebrity was his trip to Berlin in March 1911. Just two weeks shy of a full year after that first news report in the *New York Times* and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, an article appeared in April 1911 that curiously led off with news of a political hoax, but the remainder of which concerned the young Korngold and his then recent debut in Berlin. The article briefly described the thirteen-year-old prodigy, his recent accomplishments, and his introduction to a select group of musicians and critics. A copy of this article as printed in the *Oakland Tribune* appears below. This news appeared in multiple papers across the continental US.

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<sup>11</sup> "Sires and Sons." *Daily Journal* [New Bern: NC] Wed, 14 Dec 1910 : 3.

<sup>12</sup> "Musical Vienna is Amazed by Pantomime Written by a Boy." *New York Times* [New York: NY] Sun, 1 Jan 1911 : V3.

<sup>13</sup> Curiously, no mention is made in any sourced US article that Korngold's mentor, Alexander von Zemlinsky, is credited with orchestrating *Der Schneemann* for the Hofoper premiere.

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Three last items conclude this survey of early news reports in America that concerned Erich Wolfgang Korngold.

Substantive discussions in North America of Korngold and his music seem to have begun mid-way through 1910. So far the earliest appears to be an article by "Mephisto" in *Musical America* in which he discussed Korngold's early compositions, using the first Piano Sonata as the primary example. This article was reprinted in the *Nebraska State Journal* on 19 June 1910, and is reproduced here on page 9.

Also reproduced on page 9 is an article from the *Boston Post* of 11 September 1910. This article is significant in that it uniquely discussed details of Erich's early years. Based on research to date, it is the sole article at the time that presented this particular biographical background to North American public. As with Mephisto in *Musical America*, Olin Downes here also offers some brief observations on Korngold's music itself for readers of the *Boston Post*.

Finally, of the North American news coverage of the young Korngold, an article that appeared on 5 December 1920 in the *Hutchinson News* presented a summary of the earliest news about the prodigy. The article is reproduced in its entirety on the following page.

**FAKE ABYSSINIAN  
PRINCE WORKS  
OFFICIALS**

BERLIN, April 8.—An exploit resembling the notorious Sultan of Zanzibar hoax at Cambridge University is reported from Abyssinia. A Prince who was sent on a trade mission to Paris by Menelik had an imperial seal made by means of which he obtained entry to all the European courts and to the White House as a special Abyssinian envoy. At the Berlin foreign office here the bogus envoy was bowed out by the officials. It is said he obtained an entree to the White House at Washington, D. C., by means of his fake credentials.

Among the visitors here is a thirteen-year-old musical wonder whose phenomenal musical gifts have created a sensation here since the publication of his compositions last spring.

This boy, whose name is Erich Wolfgang Korngold, is the youngest composer to have a work accepted and presented on the stage of a royal opera. His pantomime of "Der Schneemann," is on at the Vienna opera and his trio for piano, violin and cello is being played by the leading music organizations of this country and Austria.

He was introduced to a select audience composed of critics and musicians, all of whom were impressed by the genius of the youthful composer.

Source: *Oakland Tribune*, 9 Apr 1911: 1-7.

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The previous pages have presented the earliest North American publications concerning the prodigy composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold. The survey covers news articles and essays sourced to date that originally appeared in various periodicals between March 1910 and April 1911, which demonstrate the extent and sequence of information made available to the American public during that first year. The intent of this paper was to offer for reference the many early reports found by the author while researching other topics about Erich Wolfgang Korngold, and to present a summary of them for other researchers who may find interesting or useful information therein.

People Talked About.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, perhaps the most remarkable boy-musician in the world is thirteen years old today. Even though he is still wearing short trousers, he has gained a world-wide reputation and his record in the international edition of "Who's Who" occupies quite as much space as those of many men three and four times his age.

Erich is the talk of Europe just now because he is the author of an operatic pantomime, which has got the musicians of the Old World wild with enthusiasm. He composed the music and libretto when he was eleven years old, but spent a year in putting on the final touches. During the past few months continental papers have teemed with accounts of this

new musical genius, who bids fair to put all previous records of juvenile precocity in the shade.

Erich is the son of Herr Korngold, musical editor of the Vienna Neue Freie Presse, who succeeded the all-powerful Eduard Hanslick and has become an extremely influential and universally read critic. Young Erich has played before the Emperor and has been commanded by nearly all the crowned heads of Europe to appear before them. For this, however, a royal grant will have to be given, for Austria is jealous of her new genius. Nothing could be more lavish than the articles that have been written about young Korngold and his work. The greatest German musical authorities, such as Richard Strauss, Felix von Wegartner and Ernst von Schuch have all heard and praised him. The name of the pantomime composed by Korngold is "Schneemann," which translated means snow man. Herr Korngold says that he submitted his son's composition to the management of the Royal Opera House of Vienna, he sent it in anonymously, for he knew that under no other condition would it have been accepted, owing to the author's youth.

*The Hutchinson News* [Hutchinson, Kansas] Mon, 5 Dec 1910: 4.

**Sidebar: Julius Korngold's Private Printing**

Julius Korngold privately published three of Erich's early compositions in December 1909: the *Piano Sonata in D minor*, *Der Schneemann* (in its original piano version), and the *Don Quixote* piano suite. He claimed in his memoirs that these private printings were distributed to about 40 musicians and musical experts without disclosing the name of the composer – merely stating the composer's age – in order to obtain unbiased opinions. Brendan Carroll suggests Julius "...probably did this believing that these rare copies would never see the light of day in the future, and to prevent certain critics from claiming that the lavish praise bestowed on the pieces were a deliberate attempt to curry favour with a famous critic, flattering him that he had a genius for a son." (Personal correspondence with the author.) A copy did, in fact, surface several years ago that was included in the Korngold exhibition in Vienna in 2007 which named Korngold as the composer. At the Library of Congress in 2013 the author inspected a copy of *Der Schneemann* printed by Jos. Eberle & Co. that presumably came from this private printing.



### A Precocious Musical Genius.

I have just played over, writes "Mephisto" in Musical America, the compositions of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, the thirteen-year-old genius, who has filled Richard Strauss with "awe and apprehension." Well! I don't wonder. I am filled with awe and apprehension myself. There is no doubt about young Korngold being a genius of some sort, but I wish that the term were not falling into disrepute, as it seems to me that it is nowadays. A genius, it appears, can be, and often is, something less than a man, and only too often does the genius give up something of his character as a man in order to be a genius. It is too early to say about Erich Korngold's character in the future but at the age of thirteen he has arrived at a sophistication so diabolical as to shake the foundations of being, for me, as he did for the great Richard the second. It is a subtle sophistication, such as one should, perhaps, be permitted to arrive at late in his life, after he had witnessed and experienced all that life could provide; but in a child of thirteen—well! awe and apprehension overcome me too, for Mephisto must not be outdone on the score of sophistication. I can picture the composer of "Elektra" picking up this sonata of Erich Korngold's. He looks at it—an expression of dismay spreads over his features. "Horrors!" he exclaims, "I have founded a school!" In that moment he must have come to the awful realization of the sailor in the "Arabian Nights," who uncorked the bottle and let loose the terrible genie upon the world. Or, if he was in a classic, instead of a romantic mood, he might have thought of himself as the opener of Pandora's box, at the sight of all these ills which he had loosed upon suffering humanity. There is no mistaking the hallmark of this music: it is Strauss, Strauss, and again Strauss; Strauss for breakfast, Strauss for luncheon and Strauss for dinner—and then some. This sonata movement begins *allegro non troppo, ma con passione*—which is a pretty good starter for a thirteen-year-old. Oh! you kid! It plunges at once into a mass of motives and harmonies which one could incorporate in the wildest part of "Elektra," and no one would know the difference. The motives—I refrain advisedly from saying melodies—are Strauss' very own in character. Ditto the harmonies. The first period, which, by the way, is of thirteen bars, takes one through all the keys that there are, not to mention a few others, and tells you—but no, far be it from me to corrupt a comparatively innocent world by telling you what this music says. You are too young to know. Young Erich is no respecter of tonality, he simply plunges. Wagner laid it down as a law for absolute music, that the composer should not leave the key so long as he still had something to say in it; or at least, until he had some logical reason to quit it. Korngold makes a rule that he should not stay in one key for more than half a bar if he can possibly find a knothole to crawl out through. Such extravagance of tonality it has not been my lot to witness heretofore, except, perhaps, in something that I once saw of Max Reger.

### A "WONDERCHILD"

What will evolve from the wonder tales of Erich Korngold? He is now in his 13th year, the prize rose of this season's crop of "Wunderkinder." His father, Dr. Korngold, is the able critic of the Vienna "Neue Freie Press," a brilliant pianist, it is said, and a former pupil of Bruckner in composition. A few months ago three small volumes of music were issued privately, and forwarded to the foremost musicians and connoisseurs of Europe, with the provision that the music should not be made public. The result was a deluge of letters from the critical great, signed by such men as R. Strauss, K. Goldmark, A. Nikisch, asking for information regarding the origin of this amazingly precocious stuff.

Erich Korngold was born in Brunn, Austria, May 29, 1897. He became musically alert at 4 years of age. At 5 he took part in four-handed performances of music. He made extraordinary progress in musical theory, and composed a cantata at 9. Of late years he has studied with Alexander von Zemlinsky, conductor of the Volksoper at Vienna. The pieces which have made such excitement are a musical pantomime, "Der Scheenman," a piano sonata, and six "Don Quixote" pieces for piano. The pantomime of "The Snowman" is concerned with the amorous adventures of Pierrot and Colombine, opposed in the course of their love by Pantalón, the uncle of Colombine. The story contains several dramatic situations very susceptible to musical treatment, and it is said that Korngold has handled these situations, not only with an acme of technical skill, but with striking imagination and the utmost intellectual and emotional maturity. The piano sonata is written with an undimmed hand, and savors highly of Richard Strauss, who also seems to have influenced the boy in writing of the "Don Quixote" pieces, which were composed after reading a child's version of the celebrated tale. The titles of these pieces are "Don Quixote Over His Books of Chivalry and His Longing for Deeds of Arms," "Sancho Panza on His Donkey," "Departure of Don Quixote," "Dulcinea of Toboso," "Don Quixote's Conversion and Death." It will be seen that such ideas could come only after some hearsay of Strauss' magnificent tone-poem. The harmonic progressions are said to be as extreme as anything the Over-man ever penned. No doubt, much of this rumor is passionate press work. Yet, if the young Korngold can do but the quarter of what his commentators claim, and if the dictum of Strauss himself is at all to be relied upon, there is reason to believe that the biggest sensation in the infant prodigy line of late years is upon us.

## Appendix

A unique article was published in Baltimore within days of the April 24th *New York Times/Chicago Tribune* announcement. Though providing no new insights on its subject – the youthful composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold – its uniqueness lay in its language: German.

Beginning in the 1840s, Baltimore experienced an influx of German immigrants. One of these immigrants, Frederick Raine, established a German language newspaper in 1841, *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, which provided a valuable news service for German immigrants not fluent in English. Initially only a periodic publication, by 1848 the *Correspondent* had evolved into a daily newspaper that contained local, national, and international news, including reports from Germany, advertisements, announcements, market prices, and works of fiction and poetry. Raine's business acumen contributed to the *Correspondent* becoming the preeminent and longest lasting German newspaper in the State of Maryland. Anti-German sentiment resulting from America's entry into World War I triggered the *Correspondent's* decline. Its final issue appeared on 28 April 1918. But on 26 April 1910 the *Correspondent* printed its own version of the news of the new Austrian prodigy. Based on its content it is likely just a translation of the New York/Chicago article into German. This article is reproduced on the following page.

Note that this is not the only German-language newspaper to carry news of the prodigy. The *Erie Tageblatt* (Erie, PA) – originally founded as the *Erie Tageblatt und Zuschauer* (1899-1904) – was renamed in April 1904 and continued circulation until 1930. The following short article appeared on 5 July 1910.



### Transcription:

Hin und wieder tauchen am Horizonte der Musikwelt Wunderkinder auf, die oft Phänomenales leisten. Zu diesen scheint auch der kleine, jetzt 13 Jahre zählende Erich Wolfgang von Wien zu gehören. Er ist glänzend veranlagt und hat bereits mit dem 11. Lebensjahre eine Tanzpantomime „der Schneemann“ komponiert, die von der Wiener Hofoper erworben ist und bereits im kommenden Herbst zur Uraufführung gelangt. Man berichtet ferner, daß Erich Wolfgang außerdem noch eine Reihe künstlerische Kompositionen geschaffen hat, die eine bedeutende Zukunft weissagen.

### Translation (by the author):

*From time to time on the horizons of the music world appear child prodigies, who often perform phenomenal things. To these also seems to belong the young, now counting 13 years Erich Wolfgang of Vienna. He is brilliant and has already composed in his 11th year a dance-pantomime "The Snowman", which has been acquired by the Vienna Court Opera and already will be premiered this autumn. It is also reported, that Erich Wolfgang has created a number of additional artistic compositions that foretell of an important future.*

## Strauß entdeckt Wunder-

### Knaben.

Dr. Richard Strauß, der Schöpfer der „Salome“ und „Elektra.“ hat in Wien einen 13-jährigen musikalischen Wunderknaben entdeckt, der als ein zweiter Mozart begrüßt wird. Der Knabe heißt Erich Korngold. Sein Vater, ein bekannter Wiener Musikkritiker, sandte kürzlich drei seiner Compositionen, eine Sonate, eine Pantomime in zwei Bildern und 6 Charakterstudien, die Don Quixote zum Gegenstand haben, an Dr. Strauß und erhielt vor einigen Tagen die folgende Antwort von dem Meister:

„Ich habe die Compositionen Ihres Sohnes mit Erstaunen gelesen. Meine ersten Eindrücke waren etwas wie Schauer und Furcht vor dem Genie, das sich da offenbart. Jetzt hege ich jedoch den heißen Wunsch, daß dieses jugendliche Talent sich in normaler Weise entwickeln möge. Solche Sicherheit des Stils, Meisterschaft der Form, Individualität des Ausdrucks und Tonharmonie! Es ist wunderbar.“

Prof. Hermann Kretschmar, der Direktor der hiesigen Musik-Hochschule, dem die Compositionen des Knaben gleichfalls unterbreitet worden sind, äußerte sich gestern ebenso enthusiastisch über dieselben, wie Dr. Strauß.

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## Translation (by the author):

*Strauss Discovers Prodigy* [lit. “miracle boy”]

*Dr. Richard Strauss, the creator of “Salome” and “Elektra”, has discovered in Vienna a 13-year-old musical [boy] prodigy, who is being welcomed as a second Mozart. The boy’s name is Erich Korngold. His father, a famous Viennese music critic, recently sent three of his compositions, a sonata, a pantomime in two acts, and six character pieces based on Don Quixote, to Dr. Strauss and received a few days ago the following reply from the master:*

*I have read your son’s compositions with astonishment. My first impressions were of awe and apprehension for the genius that is revealed there. However, now I fervently wish that this youthful talent may develop in a normal fashion. Such surety of style, mastery of form, individuality of expression and harmony! It is wonderful.”*

*Professor Herman Kretschmar, the director of the local [i.e., Berlin] music academy, to whom the boy’s compositions were also submitted, yesterday expressed about the works and composer just as enthusiastically as Dr. Strauss.*

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