Ryan Hugh Ross

Gerold Gruber (Ed.)

JULIUS BÜRGER

Composer – Conductor – Vocal Coach



Exilarte
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Julius Burger (Bürger) in the early 1930s © A-Weaz

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the life and work of Julius Burger (Bürger), a Viennese born composer whose long and varied career intersected with many important European and American musical figures and institutions of the 20th Century. Despite his large œuvre and interesting life, little to no musicological research has been conducted on Julius Burger to date. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the composer's biography, as well as key aspects of his œuvre, utilising his estate as a basis. The paper is not intended as a comprehensive reconstruction of said works but rather as a starting point for future studies of Julius Burger's œuvre utilising documentation of composer's estate preserved in the Exilarte Archiv der mdw, Vienna.

Julius Burger's life and work would have been lost to history without the care and dedication of his friend, attorney Ronald S. Pohl, Esq. Through Pohl's efforts, a large portion of Burger's music was premiered through numerous concert performances in the early 1990s. Selections from the composer's orchestral works were also recorded for commercial release which aided in the composer's rediscovery. After Burger's death in 1995, Pohl continued to preserve and promote the unpublished compositions until installing the estate on permanent loan with the Exilarte centre at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts, in the same building where Burger began his studies. A noteworthy concert in promotion of Burger's works includes the 18 August 2023 Austrian premiere of selections from the composer's orchestral œuvre-marking his spiritual return to Vienna 85 years after his exile began in 1938. The estate includes Burger's compositions in autograph manuscript form as well as a large collection of personal documents and papers, recordings, newspaper articles and photographs.

While research has revealed numerous examples of Burger's works having been broadcast in the 1930s and 1940s (Berlin and London) as well as several recorded works, only one known work, *Launisches Glück*, was published in the composer's lifetime. Additionally, relatively few selections from his concert œuvre received performances until the 1990s. Thus, this paper has relied on documentation from Julius Burger's estate preserved at the Exilarte Zentrum Archiv der mdw, Vienna as well as other archival repositories including the Archiv der Universität Wien, the Universitätsarchiv – Universität der Künste Berlin, the BBC Written Archives Centre – Caversham, England, the BBC Sheet Music Library – Perivale, England and the New York Public Library Archives – New York, NY. Additional information has been procured from private collections, among others.

These materials provide a wealth of insight into Julius Burger's storied career as a composer, conductor, arranger and repetiteur which spanned over seven decades in respected institutions throughout Europe and the United States.

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2. JULIUS BURGER'S BIOGRAPHY

Julius Burger's biography can be roughly divided into four periods: the Vienna period (1897–1919), the Berlin period (1919–1933), the initial exile period deemed the London period (1933–1939) and the New York period (1939–1995).

2.1 Vienna period (1897–1919)

Julius Burger was born on 11 March 1897 in Vienna's 2nd District of Leopoldstadt, the fifth child of nine to Josef Bürger – a tailor – and Chaje (Clara) Bürger – a homemaker. Josef, born under the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1859, was born in the village of Olejów in the Kingdom of Galicia while Chaje originated from the town of Kamionka Strumiłowa in Galicia (now Kamianka-Buzka in modern Ukraine). While little is known about Julius Burger's early life, the main record of this period stems from an interview with his family friend, Dr. Trude Zörer. Early in the interview, Julius recollected his childhood as being "carefree." She notes father Josef's work provided adequate financial means for the large family. Equally, Burger's parents put a strong emphasis on education and each child was afforded the opportunity to study.[1]

According to Burger, his love affair with music began when, as a toddler, he encountered a Werkelmann (Leierkastenmann). He was fascinated by the tones emanating from the hand-cranked instrument and followed the performer through the city until he was eventually retrieved by a family member in the 19th district.[2] As an adolescent, Burger was admitted to the Kaiserlich-Königliches Erzherzog-Rainer-Gymnasium where he studied from 1908 until the summer of 1913. The Gymnasium (renamed in 1989 after former pupil Sigmund Freud) was located in the 2nd district.[3] Other noteworthy former pupils include anatomist Julius Tandler (1869–1936), and neurologist, psychiatrist and founder of Logotherapy Victor Emil Frankl (1905–1997).[4]

Burger continued his studies at the Kaiserlich-Königliches Maximilian-Gymnasium (Wasagymnasium) in Vienna's 9th district until completion in 1916.[5] The prestigious institution served as one of the prime educational centres for children of Vienna's cultivated Jewish bourgeoisie in the early twenti-

1 Julius Burger, "Julius Burger speaks to Trude Zörer on his friendship with Joseph Schmidt," interview by Dr. Trude Zörer, date of recording unknown, audio, 24:22, from the private collection of Dr. Trude Zörer.

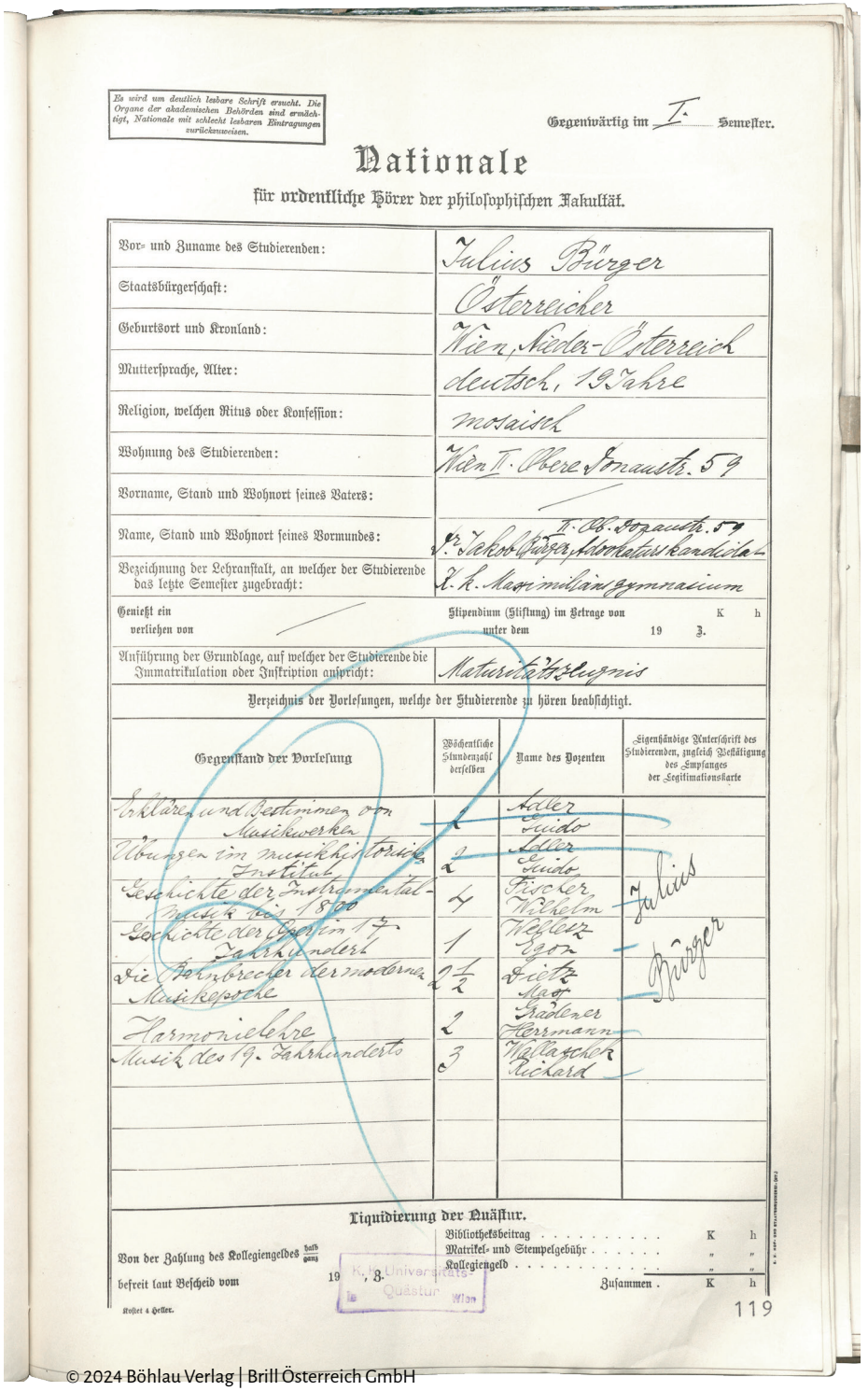
2 Dr. Trude Zörer, "Interview by Ryan Hugh Ross on the life of Julius Burger (Bürger)," Question No. 4, 30 October 2019.

3 Walter Jahn, "Geschichte des Sigmund Freud-Gymnasiums," Sigmund Freud Gymnasium website, URL: https://www.freudgymnasium.at/index.php/schulorganisation/geschichte , Accessed 19 November 2021.

4 Ibid.

5 Reifezeugnis, issued by Prüfungs-Kommission für K.K. Franz Joseph Real Gymnasium, 31 July 1916, Julius Burger Collection, Exilarte Zentrum Archiv der mdw, Vienna, Austria. Accessed 31 October 2018.

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Geburtsort und Kronland:	Wien, Nieder-Österreich
Muttersprache, Alter:	deutsch, 19 Jahre
Religion, welchen Ritus oder Konfession:	mosaisch
Wohnung des Studierenden:	Wien II. Obere Donaustr. 59
Vorname, Stand und Wohnort seines Vaters:	
Name, Stand und Wohnort seines Vormundes:	Dr. Jakob Bürger, Advokaturskandidat II. Obere Donaustr. 59
Bezeichnung der Lehranstalt, an welcher der Studierende das letzte Semester zugebracht:	k. k. Maximilian-Gymnasium
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Anführung der Grundlage, auf welcher der Studierende die Immatrikulation oder Inskription ansucht:	Maturitätszeugnis

Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen, welche der Studierende zu hören beabsichtigt.

Gegenstand der Vorlesung	Wöchentliche Stundenzahl derselben	Name des Dozenten	Eigenhändige Unterschrift des Studierenden, zugleich Bestätigung des Empfanges der Legitimationskarte
Erklären und Bestimmen von Musikwerken	1	Adler Guido	
Übungen im musikhistorischen Institute	2	Adler Guido	Julius
Geschichte der Instrumentalmusik bis 1800	4	Fischer Wilhelm	Bürger
Geschichte der Oper im 17. Jahrhundert	1	Kretzschmar Hugo	
Die Bahnbrecher der modernen Musikepoche	2½	Dietz Max	
Harmonielehre	2	Gradener Hermann	
Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts	3	Wallaschek Richard	

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Enrollment Document for Julius Bürger
Archiv der Universität Wien, Nationale von Julius Bürger, Philosophische Fakultät, Wintersemester 1916/17

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eth century.[6] Examples of the Gymnasium's illustrious alumni include writer Felix Braun (1885–1973) and composer Max Deutsch (1892–1982) as well as many influential émigrés including conductor Kurt Adler 1907–1977), composer Hans Gál (1890–1987), composer and musicologist Wilhelm Grosz (1894–1939), conductors Erich Kleiber (1890–1956) and Josef Krips (1902–1974) and writer Stefan Zweig (1881–1942). Zweig detailed his experiences at the Gymnasium in his posthumous autobiographical work Die *Welt von Gestern* (1942).[7] While still a student at the illustrious Gymnasium, Burger composed his first work in 1915, a lied setting of Heinrich Heine's *Dämmernd liegt der Sommerabend.*[8]

Although it was evident the young Burger had a fine singing voice (which he maintained throughout his life), he selected music composition as his career focus and commenced formal study at the Faculty of Arts, University of Vienna in autumn 1916. He continued at the University until summer 1917.[9] According to his registration documents, Burger attended lectures with one of the founders of the discipline of musicology, Dr Guido Adler (1855–1941), as well as Austrian (later British) composer and musicologist Egon Wellesz (1885–1974). Other lectures were proctored by renowned educators such as Richard Wallaschek (1860–1917), Hermann Grädener (1844–1929), Wilhelm Fischer (1886–1962) and Robert Reininger (1869–1955).[10]

In the autumn of 1917, he began studies at the Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Wien (now Universität) where he undertook practical study in harmony and piano and participated in the choral school. In his second academic year at the academy, Burger also added piano accompaniment and lessons on the cello to his workload. Most notably, he also began studies in composition and counterpoint with renowned Austrian composer Franz Schreker (1878–1934).[11] Schreker's influence on Burger's compositional style is readily apparent and was defined by this important relationship.

Aside from his formal studies, Burger was employed as a keyboard accompanist in some of Vienna's silent film theatres. The exposure to these accompaniment practices and their similarities to pastiche musical repertoire of early-twentieth-century operetta provide one possible inspiration for Burger's later Radio Potpourri creations. During this period he also found employment as an accompanist to Moravian tenor Leo Slezak (1873–1946) on concert tour.[12]

6 Marsha L. Rosenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), p.108-114.

7 Stefan Zweig, "Die Schule im vorigen Jahrhundert," from *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1942).

8 Heinrich Heine, 'Dämmernd liegt der Sommerabend (LXXXV)' in *Die Heimkehr* from *Buch der Lieder* (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1827).

9 Enrollment documents for Julius Bürger from the Archiv der Universität Wien, Winter 1916/1917, p.119-121 and Summer 1917, p.089.

10 Ibid.

11 Julius Bürger, Enrollment document from Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien, Matrikel Nr.(285), 1917/18; 1918/19.

12 Malcolm MacDonald, "Julius Burger (1897–1995): Orchestral Music," Liner Notes, Radio Symphonie Orchester, Berlin, cond. Simone Young, recorded 26–28,30 September 1994, Toccata Classics, TOCC 0001, 2007, CD, p.3.

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