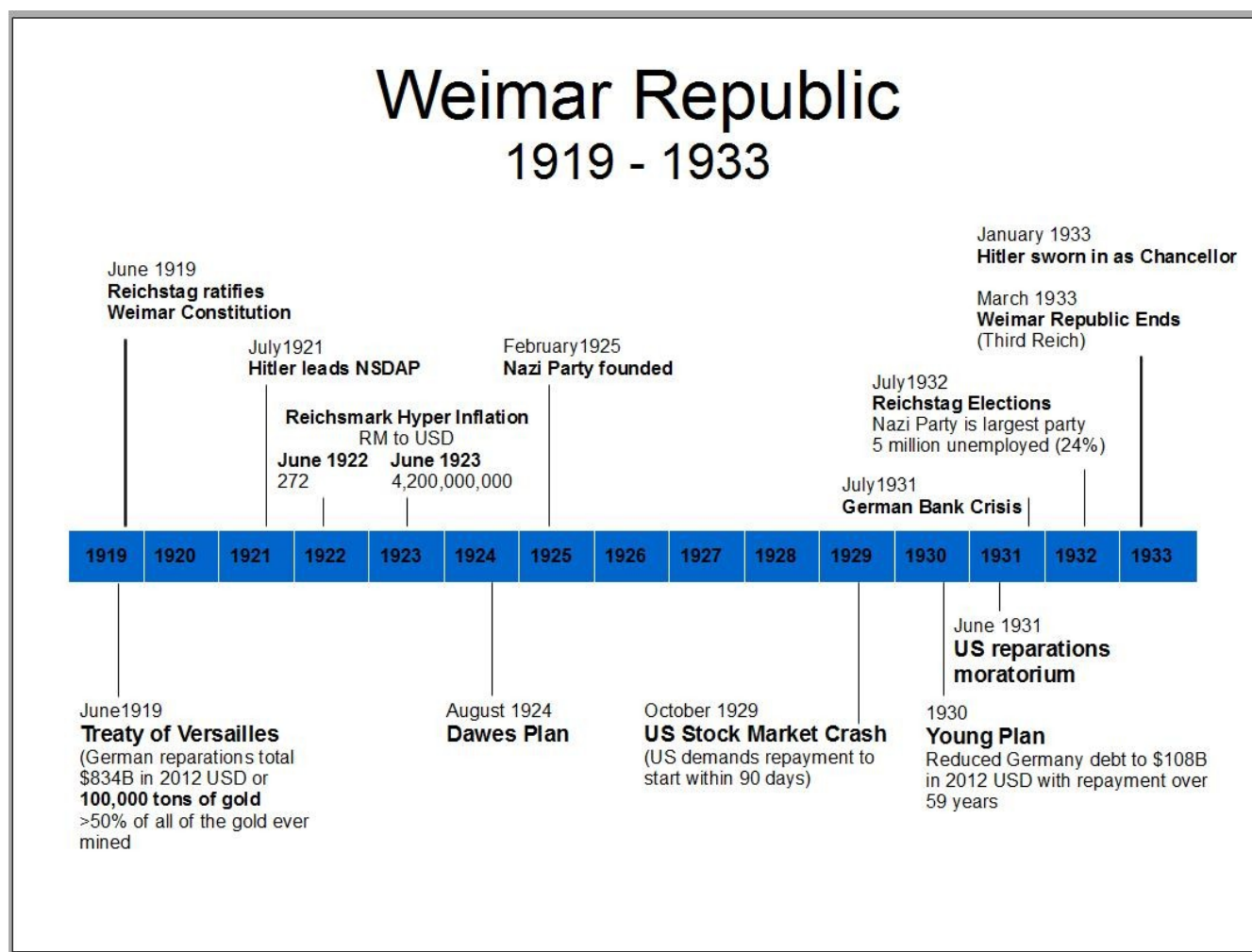


Dance Music of the Weimar Republic

When I saw Max Raabe and the Palast Orchester perform in Boston in March 2012, I knew little about the Weimar Era. Intrigued by the performance of these multi-talented musicians and the elegant and unfamiliar music they played, I began researching the Weimar period of Germany. The Weimar Republic was created in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles and ended in 1933 when Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor. Its fourteen year span from 1919 – 1933 awkwardly represents a musical interlude in German history that did not exist before or since. As the post World War I German economy was crippled by the reparations required by the Treaty of Versailles, a unpredicted revolution occurred in music and culture. Young composers deviated from the traditional folk songs of their time and began writing entertaining and often provocative lyrics to accompany more traditional melodies, including the waltz, fox trot and tango. Through many cultural influences, including those of the United States, music turned from traditional to topical. This music and the cultural it represented served as a remarkable juxtaposition to the events of this era.



It is an equally remarkable event that a young German, attending the Berlin University of the Arts in 1985, would discover the music of this period in rummage sales, picking up an odd recording here and a piece of sheet music there. Max Raabe was driven by the intrigue of this unfamiliar music to form the

Palast Orchester with twelve other students. After two years of working on arrangements, they gave their first public performance in 1987 in the lobby of the Berlin Theater Hall, as a secondary act. As the story is told, patrons left the ballroom to hear them perform and demanded that they replay their set. Despite this warm reception, Max apparently worried that he had disappointed his mother who had high hopes of him becoming a baritone opera singer. Fortunately for us, that change in plans led to the music composed during that period, and later banned by the Third Reich, to be heard in all of its wonderful compositional splendor.

While tunes such as *[Dream a Little Dream](#)*, *[Cheek to Cheek](#)* and *[Singing in the Rain](#)* are familiar to many audiences having been included in movies of the time, there are many other songs from this short period. *[Heute Nacht oder nie](#)*, composed by Mischa Splonski and Macellus Schiffer dramatically tells the story of a young man's need to know, tonight or never if the woman of his desire loves him.

Tonight or never,
You must tell me one thing:
whether you love me.

Tonight or never,
I will ask whether you will give your love to me

Tonight or never,
I will sing just for you until tomorrow morning

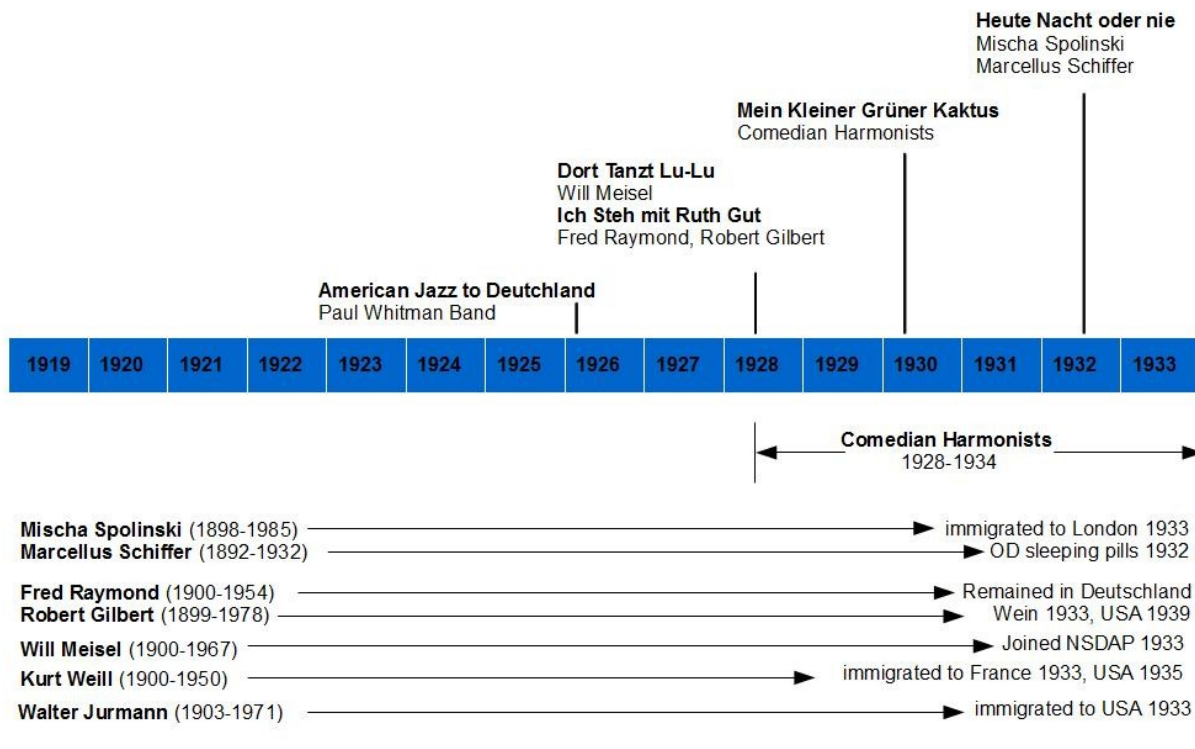
But it is the schlagers, the popular hits from this era, that you find yourself whistling as you walk down the street. The lyrics of *[Dort Tanzt Lu-Lu](#)* (There Dances Lu-Lu), composed by Will Meisel, are set against an elegant and fun waltz. It is not until you wonder what kind of woman is watched while she dances by men on a Saturday night that you finally get the clue. Similarly, *[Ich Steh mit Ruth Gut](#)* (I Stay Well with Ruth or, if you prefer, I Have a Sweet Tooth for Ruth) is lively tune composed by Fred Raymond and Robert Gilbert. Of course, still popular in Germany (because the situation is funny) is the Comedian Harmonists tune, *[Mein Kleiner Grüner Kaktus](#)*. This song tells the lyrical tale of a cactus that falls off of a balcony and lands on the face of Mr. Kraus from the neighbor house.

Tragically, all of these composers found their musical fate dictated by the end of the Weimar Era. For those that were Jewish, flight to another country for refuge often resulted in the same future as staying to face political uncertainty at home. Their musical career and their music both ended. Ironically, the end of the Weimar Republic and its signature music were both put in motion by the same force that created this era: the Treaty of Versailles. Had the authors of this peace treaty (England, France and the United States) been motivated by justice and understanding, as promised by Woodrow Wilson, instead of vengeance, the Weimar Republic might have had a chance to succeed. Instead, the Allies fed the resentment of the defeated Germans and crippled an already weak economy. As war reparations prevented economic recovery, multiple political factions made the hope of a stable government more remote. Just as the mistakes of the Allies and the Weimar National Assembly doomed the republic to failure before it had a chance to succeed, they doomed the fate of many popular German songs and composers to obscurity fueled by an over zealous sense of national pride.

"Music has always been closely tied to destiny...and personal tragedy.....

who cares?.....as long as you're not involved.

Weimar Republic Music & Composers



As you look at the time line it becomes apparent that the end of the Weimar Republic, the beginning of the Third Reich and the end of the music from this period is not coincidental.

<p>Dort Tanzt Lu-lu Will Meisel</p> <p>Dort tanzt Lu-Lu, a-ha-ha, u-hu-hu Und ich guck zu, a-ha-ha, u-hu-hu Kleine Lu-Lu, a-ha-ha, u-hu-hu Komm, sag mir du, a-ha-ha, u-hu-hu Wer gibt am Sonntag uns Fröhlichkeit? Wer gibt am Sonntag uns Seeligkeit? Wer gibt uns auch Mut für den Wochentag? Nur Lu-Lu</p>	<p>There dances Lulu</p> <p>There dances Lulu, ahaha, uhuhu And I watch her, ahaha, uhuhu. Little Lulu, ahaha, uhuhu. Come, you, tell me, ahaha, uhuhu, Who gives us cheerfulness on Sunday? Who gives us bliss on Sunday? Who also gives us courage for the weekday? Only Lulu</p>
<p>Dort tanzt Lu-Lu, a-ha-ha, u-hu-hu Und ich guck zu, a-ha-ha, u-hu-hu tausend Mädchen sind wunderschön, Für Lu-Lu lass ich alle stehen Wenn sie kommt, sagt jeder vor Leidenschaft "Fabelhaft!"</p> <p>Tausend Mädchen sehen reizend aus, Doch Lu-Lu sticht sie alle aus Wenn sie tanzt, sagt jeder geheimnisvoll "Einfach toll." Hört mal alle her, pfeifen ist nicht schwer Wisst ihr, was ich tu? Ich pfeif auf alle, bis auf Lu-Lu</p>	<p>There dances Lulu, ahaha, uhuhu And I watch her, ahaha, uhuhu. A thousand girls are beautiful I let them all stand there for Lulu. When she arrives, everyone says passionately: Fabulous</p> <p>A thousand girls look enticing, But Lulu beats them all When she dances, everyone one says mysteriously: Simply terrific Listen to me, whistling isn't difficult You know what I do? I whistle on all, except for Lulu</p> <p>(TN: to whistle on someone/something: couldn't care less about someone/something)</p>

<p>Ich steh' mit Ruth gut Fred Raymond & Robert Gilbert</p> <p>...sie wollte mich küssen ich sollte ihr Freund sein ich dankte dafür Liese, die stöhnte ich sei der Ersehnte da nahm ich gleich Abstand von ihr und kam gekämmt zu mir im Hemd die Lorelei ich sag ihr frei:</p>	<p>I do well with Ruth</p> <p>... she wanted to kiss me I was supposed to be her boyfriend I thanked her for that Liese, who groaned That I was the one I stepped away from her immediately Lorelei came to me, combed and in her shirty, I frankly told her:</p>
<p>ich steh' mit Ruth gut weil meine Ruth tut das was mir gut tut im Monat Mai sie küsst mich herzlich sie küsst mich scherzhaft ihr kleines Herz schafft das Glück herbei. sie macht die aller kleinste Wiese zum Paradiese im Augenblick ich steh' mit Ruth gut ich weiß was gut tut nur wer bei Ruth ruht nur der hat Glück.</p>	<p>I do well with Ruth Because my Ruth does That what is good for me In the month of May. She kisses me with feeling, She kisses me for fun Her little heart brings happiness. She turns the smallest meadow into paradise in the blink of an eye.</p> <p>I do well with Ruth I know what's good, Only he who rest with Ruth Only he is lucky.</p>
<p>sie macht die aller kleinste Wiese zum Paradiese im Augenblick ich steh' mit Ruth gut ich weiß was gut tut nur wer bei Ruth ruht nur der hat Glück.</p>	<p>She turns the smallest meadow into paradise in the blink of an eye. I do well with Ruth I know what's good, Only who lays with Ruth Only he has happiness</p>

Heute Nacht Oder Nie

Mischa Spolinski & Marcellus Schiffer

<p>Heute Nacht oder nie</p> <p>Heute Nacht oder nie sollst du mir sagen nur das Eine: Ob du mich liebst.</p> <p>Heute Nacht oder nie will ich dich fragen, ob du deine Liebe mir gibst.</p> <p>Heute Nacht oder nie will ich für dich allein nur singen bis morgen früh nur die Melodie:</p> <p>Heute Nacht oder nie. Seit ich dich einmal geseh'n, kann ich dir nicht widersteh'n.</p> <p>Immer denk ich nur an dich allein, an dich bei Tag und Nacht.</p>	<p>Tonight or never</p> <p>Tonight or never, You must tell me one thing: whether you love me.</p> <p>Tonight or never, I will ask you whether you will give your love to me</p> <p>onight or never, I will sing just for you until tomorrow morning,</p> <p>Just the song: Tonight or never. Since I saw you once, I cannot resist you</p> <p>I always think of you only, of you by night and day.</p>
<p>Seit ich dich einmal geseh'n, ist's um die Ruhe gescheh'n.</p> <p>Ich weiß es gewiß, daß diese Nacht uns beide glücklich macht.</p> <p>Heute Nacht oder nie will ich für dich allein nur singen bis morgen früh</p> <p>Heute Nacht oder nie</p>	<p>Since I saw you once, my peace of mind is gone.</p> <p>I know for sure that this night will make us both happy.</p> <p>Tonight or never, I will just sing for you until tomorrow morning.</p> <p>Tonight or never.</p>