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**Music in Exile:
Arthur Willner and Ary van Leeuwen**

The Virtuositic Flute

90 Years: Walfrid Kujala, Lois Schaefer, and Bernard Goldberg

Beijing International Flute Festival

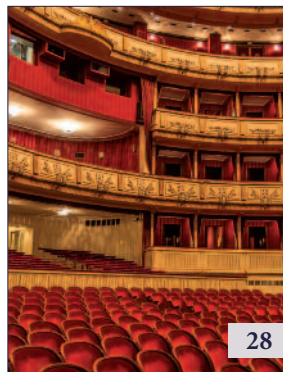
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Cover image courtesy Leo Baeck Institute.



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Music in Exile:

Arthur Willner and Ary van Leeuwen



How does flight from a home country affect the nature of the artist's work, and what influences those changes? In the instance of Jewish composer Arthur Willner, who left Germany in 1938, the pertinent question is not “what” but “who,” and the answer is Dutch virtuoso flutist Ary van Leeuwen.

by Francesca Arnone

Arthur Willner (1881–1959), who was born in Teplitz-Schönau (Teplice-Šanov, of the Czech Republic), is known largely for his arrangements and orchestral reductions, and might be familiar to today's audiences because of his string orchestra version of Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* and his orchestral reduction of Strauss's *Concerto for Oboe*. Nevertheless, Willner wrote more than 100 compositions, albeit only one specifically for flute. Few of his large body of works were published, but fortunately, his *Sonata for Solo Flute, Op. 34*, is an exception: It was published by Zimmerman shortly after its completion and reprinted in 2005.

Youth, Flourishing Career, and Exile

As a young musician, Willner studied piano and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory with Carl Piutti and Carl Reinecke and at the Munich Conservatory with Ludwig Thuille and Joseph Rheinberger. At the age of 23, Willner was appointed director, composition teacher, and music history and aesthetics lecturer at Berlin's Stern'schen Conservatory, posts he held for nearly 20 years.

He then relocated to Vienna from 1924 to 1938 to again hold multiple positions: professor at the Wiener Volkshochschule (1924–38), teacher at the New Vienna Conservatory (1924–1928), and copyeditor/arranger at Universal Edition. Undoubtedly serving him well at Universal, Willner's dedication to clarity and formatting of scores is apparent in his own composition notebooks.

In 1938, he escaped the *Anschluss* by emigrating to England and remained there until his death in 1959. His exile to Great Britain occurred very shortly after Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany, which launched a period of even greater violence against Jews.

As a new resident of England, Willner was an active chamber musician, pianist, and composer, creating a large body of work that includes chamber music (much with piano), orchestral and string orchestra works, choral pieces, cantatas, and songs. Although he worked for Universal Edition while in Austria, the company published just a few of his pieces, as did

Novello and Hinrichsin (now Peters)¹ later in London. There are records of his works being performed in Vienna and England, but the bulk of his 100-plus compositions are publicly unknown to this day, and many are believed to be lost.

Exilforschung

Although *Exilforschung* (exile research, and most often the study of the mass emigration from German-speaking countries brought about by the Nazi regime) has propagated wide interest since the 1960s, musicological *Exilforschung* and the impacts of enculturation, teaching, and the melding of compositional styles are more recent considerations. While composers often inherently reflect life experiences through art, many unanswered questions remain when attempting to clearly discern the cause for their compositional influences and modifications.

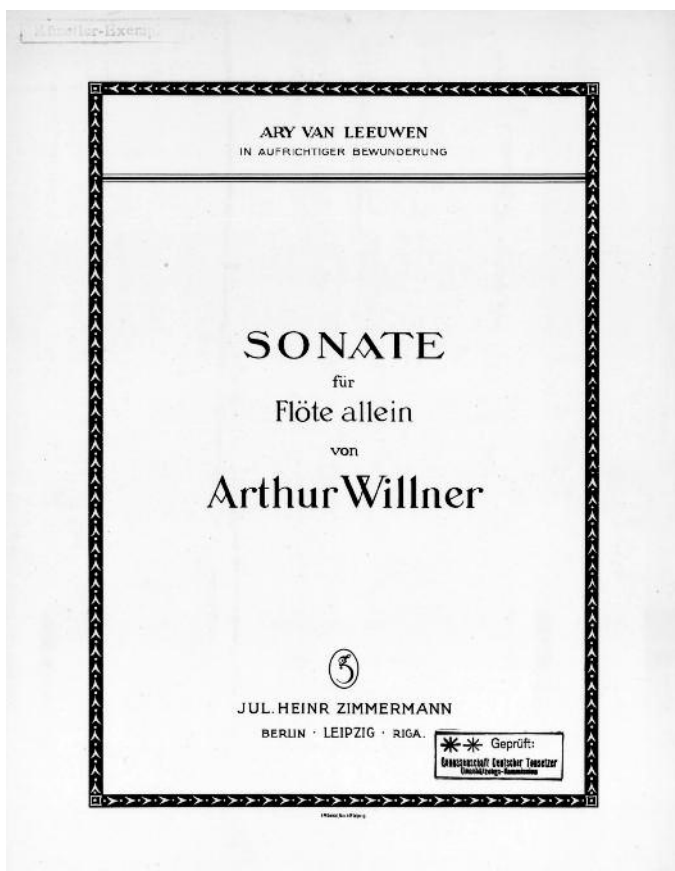
For example, did financial constraints of exile require composers to alter their style of writing in order to be successful in their new locations? If some composers were displaced due to exile, did they alter their style for fear of rejection—or had a previous method simply run its course?



Hitler announces the Anschluss on the Heldenplatz, Vienna, March 15, 1938.



Above: The Vienna State Opera House (Staatsooper) in Vienna, Austria. It was originally called the Vienna Court Opera (Wiener Hofoper).
 Below: The original edition cover of Willner's sonata, dedicated to Ary van Leeuwen.



The full ramifications of Willner's exile on his art are not readily apparent, yet the contributions of immigrant composers were seldom embraced by England during this volatile time in history. In direct contrast was the thriving arts scene of Vienna during Willner's 14-year tenure, which afforded him a vibrant community that nurtured his art. As a prominent teacher at the city's most prestigious schools, he was not only highly influential but also able to easily interact with Austria's most significant artists and teachers. Certainly Willner found a great source of inspiration in the playing of one flutist in particular from that circle.

Ary van Leeuwen



Dutch flute virtuoso Ary van Leeuwen (1875–1953) was among the city's celebrated flutists. In his own words, van Leeuwen was highly influenced by his father, one of Holland's most significant music directors, and began studying piano at age 5. At age 10, he had his very first flute lesson with Albert Fransella (1865–1935), principal flutist of his father's orchestra in Utrecht.

Upon Fransella's emigration to England, van Leeuwen then began flute lessons with Jacques de Jong, solo flutist to the King of Holland. In the summer, young van Leeuwen studied with Joachim Andersen (1847–1909), solo flutist of the then-touring Berlin Philharmonic, who persuaded the family to permit full music studies in Berlin.

Upon locating to Berlin, van Leeuwen began what he termed his “nomadic life” after breaking into the international freelance scene:

Season engagements were filled as solo flutist in Amsterdam, Warsaw, Vienna, Cochin (China), Germany, Russia, Finland, France, Belgium, Helsingfors, till [sic] after a successful competitive examination I was chosen as first and solo flutist with the Berlin Philharmonic. The orchestra usually played seven months in Berlin, four months in Scheveningen, and each year one-month trips through Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Russia.²

Gustav Mahler, who was Kapellmeister of the Vienna Court Opera at the time, served as a guest conductor and heard van Leeuwen play on three of his symphonies in Warsaw; after hearing him perform, Mahler appointed van Leeuwen in 1903 as his orchestra’s solo flutist and professor at the Music Academy in Vienna.

Van Leeuwen modeled his conservatory classes and established a wind society in the French style after Taffanel’s teaching. Highly regarded by his contemporaries, van Leeuwen enjoyed connecting with other flutists while traveling. Leonardo De Lorenzo (1875–1962) described him as “a great artist and an accomplished musician, second to none of the past and present,”³ and noted that “Besides being a great flute virtuoso van Leeuwen plays fine piano, sings well, and is an excellent composer.”⁴

Willner’s Sonata: Tour de Force

Considering not only van Leeuwen’s formidable performing schedule as a virtuoso but also contemporary Viennese tastes for exploiting an expansive instrumental range, Willner’s *Sonata for Solo Flute, Op. 34*, presented a challenging *tour de force*. Unique in his output as his only known significant work for flute (apart from his orchestral writing and one unidentified notebook sketch of a flute duet), there are also few significant, multi-movement solo flute works by other composers from this time.

Willner did create, however, slightly revised versions of two violin compositions to provide unpublished but idiomatic flute parts: his *Sonata in B-flat Major for Two Violins, Op. 23, No. 2* and the *First Sonatine, Op. 68*. Compared to the solo flute sonata, these two works are both written in a lighter style, especially the sonatine, while the duet indicates only the first violin part may be covered by a flute. His *Suite for Strings and Piano, Op. 93*, contains a flute and horn part (both noted *ad lib*). Here in the first movement, *Allegro giocoso*, he primarily uses the flute color to reinforce the first violin part an octave higher, apart from a half-dozen measures featuring a subtle but independent part.

Dedicated to this friend and colleague van Leeuwen “with heartfelt admiration,” the flute sonata’s extreme register range, from low B (B1) through high D (D4), reflects not only the compositional tastes of the period but also Vienna’s embracing of the Böhm silver flute. Written in a traditional fast-slow-fast



Theobald Böhm invented a key-ring system for the wooden flute and adapted it to a new silver flute that was manufactured in France by Louis Lot.

The Böhm Identity

Van Leeuwen’s early adoption of the Böhm flute probably made possible the performance of Willner’s flute sonata.

While in Vienna at Mahler’s behest, the Dutch flutist Ary van Leeuwen performed on one of Vienna’s first silver Böhm flutes. Although most Viennese flutists at this time were still playing wooden flutes in a variety of systems, Roman Kukula (1851–1908), Franz Doppler’s student, had introduced the Böhm system flute to Vienna back in 1883—predating Willner’s flute sonata by 40 years.

As Kukula’s successor in both playing and teaching posts, van Leeuwen’s use of the all-silver Böhm flute likely made playing Willner’s work possible. Richard Strauss was considered by contemporary flutists to be the era’s most demanding composer and noted as favoring the Böhm system flute. Mahler’s use of the extended flute register, although more conservative than that of Strauss, undoubtedly showcased van Leeuwen’s facility in negotiating the full range of the contemporary flute and with great dynamic variety.

By 1907, Mahler appointed a second flutist and Vienna Conservatory professor who also played a Böhm system flute, further solidifying the extinction of the sweet-sounding Viennese flute.

—F.A.

three-movement form (*Lebhaft, Sehr langsam, Schnell*), the work features highly chromatic writing, very specific articulation indications, and dramatic tempo and dynamic changes.

In short, this composition churns with the vital life force of Vienna in 1926, written shortly after Willner’s relocation from Berlin to Vienna.

Each of the three movements runs the emotional gamut akin to the physical range and dynamic of the instrument. Grounded in tonality, Willner’s use of chromaticism drives the lines forward in alternately playful but insistent ways. Although folk-like in gesture, the sonata’s first movement presents gently prodding motives ascending and descending chromatically with just enough rhythmic variety to maintain a sense of mercurial wit.

Achieving contrast in dynamics and articulations is key to successfully delivering this movement, which is a bit reminiscent of a light-hearted Karg-Elert. If Willner left Berlin due to political unrest, there is no glimmer of discontent present in this opening movement, which despite its chromatic playfulness clearly begins and ends in D major.

Highly contrasting and just 25 measures long, the second movement *Sehr langsam* requires a broad sense of scope to delve into the angst-ridden lines peppered with *appoggiaturas*. Although mostly in G minor, this movement constantly shifts harmonic center and confuses the ear, creating a great sense of restlessness. Here is a desolate and devastated compositional

The unmarked, undated flute duet in Willner's hand.

voice crying out, at times very softly but finally quite powerfully near the movement's end.

The final movement recalls a jovial ländler, a dance with three beats per bar, which Mahler often used in place of a scherzo for his symphonies' third movements. Bolder and more athletic than a graceful dance, this movement also delivers direction through chromatic sequences but brilliantly builds to a fantastic and very optimistic conclusion in sunny D major.

“The World War Catastrophe”

Mirroring the career of Arthur Willner, Ary van Leeuwen sought refuge from his established career and homeland due to political strife. “Deeply filled with the sorrows of the World War catastrophe,” he left his beloved teaching and playing positions to immigrate to the United States.

After serving for a time as solo flutist with the Cincinnati Symphony, van Leeuwen relocated to Los Angeles and took to music publishing. Like Willner, he began a career of editing, arranging, and composing music. Many of his contributions were previously little-known gems housed in

European libraries, including Wilhelm Friedman Bach's *Sonata in D Major* for two flutes and continuo. A vast array of van Leeuwen arrangements and editions is still available, including those among his collection of personal papers, arrangements, and publications as part of the National Flute Association's collection housed in the Library of Congress.

While both musicians were driven to exile, the careers of Willner and van Leeuwen were clearly and significantly impacted by world events. Without these atrocities, would Willner have written another flute sonata for van Leeuwen? Would he have remained in Berlin and consequently never met van Leeuwen? Since many of Willner's compositions were written in dedication, would his output have increased (and in what ways) or achieved publication if he had remained in a peaceful Vienna? Although van Leeuwen thrived after immigrating, he later reflected that his time in Vienna was “the most idealistic one of my life, alas! that [*sic*] belongs to the past and may never return again.”⁶

Unfortunately, Willner's displacement made it difficult for his works to be performed in his new homeland. Although he lived in London for the latter part of his life,



An advertisement for students in piano, composition, and harmony from Willner's pre-World War II days in Berlin.

he was unable to achieve a similar standing to that which he enjoyed in pre-*Anschluss* Vienna.

This dividing line caused Willner to artistically wither,⁷ which allowed him to be largely forgotten. However, the advent of musicological research of those in exile has yielded him some attention and performance opportunities.

Attention Paid

In 2002, the Orpheus Trust staged a month-long program “dedicated to the memory of musicians and composers who lived in Vienna’s 7th district and were persecuted, forced to flee, or deported and murdered by the Nazi regime.”⁸ The opening concert, conducted by Julius Rudel, featured the Symphonie-Orchester der Wiener Volksoper, performing works by Arthur Willner, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Elkan Bauer, and Emil Korolanyi. Moreover, his extensive collection of letters and journals, in addition to a number of manuscripts, reside in New York’s Leo Baeck Institute for the Center of Jewish History and are available online.

It is hoped that interest in Willner and other exiled composer-musician connections will continue. Flutists are the lucky recipients of one of this composer’s few surviving works to be currently in print. The atrocities experienced during their lifetimes should not overshadow the inspired connection between Arthur Willner and Ary van Leeuwen. ✱

“Music is a language, as for instance English. It makes words and phrases . . .”

—Arthur Willner in *Novel Instruction Book*, Op. 66

The author gives special thanks to Kate Guthrie for generously sharing her master’s thesis.

Francesca Arnone teaches flute at Baylor University. Her first solo CD, Games of Light, was released on MSR Classics in December 2013, and her second CD, Dedications: Paris Conservatoire Connections for Flute and Piano, was recently released. Visit francescaarnone.com.

End Notes

1. “Company History,” <http://www.editionpeters.com/history.php>.
2. Van Leeuwen quoted in De Lorenzo, *My Complete Story of the Flute*, 180.
3. De Lorenzo, 334.
4. *Ibid.*, 478.
5. Van Leeuwen quoted in De Lorenzo, 180.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Haas, *Forbidden Music*, 270.
8. *Newsletter of the JMI International Forum for Suppressed Music*.

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