



Title page of the *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain* in Hanns Eisler's hand. © SAdK, HEA 160 fol. 1r



Joris Ivens shooting *RAIN* from a rooftop, 1929 © Joris Ivens Archive, EFJI



Joris Ivens collaborated with composer Hanns Eisler for the first time in Magnitogorsk, 1931 © Joris Ivens Archive, EFJI



Hanns Eisler and Joris Ivens discussing *THE 400 MILLION* in Valley Cottage, NY, in 1938 © Joris Ivens Archive, EFJI

teristics of the *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain* themselves,

- the dodecaphonic construction,
- the arrangement for the instrumental ensemble of Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*,
- the references to the letters of Arnold Schönberg's monogram (in German nomenclature the notes A – eS) and his full name (A – D – eS – C – H – B – G) with the first two tones of the original twelve-tone row and the first seven measures of the score,

the rediscovered recording of Eisler's 'lyrical rain music'⁶ therefore is also in respect of its performance practice an exemplary and mo-

ving document of the Schönberg School in American exile.

However, the other musicians involved could well equal the two famous Schönberg interpreters. The flute and clarinet parts sound stunning and so does the cello part, probably played by Joseph Schuster, the former solo cellist of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra who had lived in New York in exile since 1936, and was then principal cellist with the New York Philharmonic. Particularly noteworthy is Tossy Spivakovsky's violin and viola playing. (Eisler's score requires one and the same musician to alternate his violin with a viola. Today this alternation is often done by two specialist musicians.) Spivakovsky is, without doubt, one of the great violin virtuosos of the 20th century, whom Eisler had the good fortune to involve in his Rockefeller Film Music Project, as well as the performance of some of his other works.

Whereas the two shellac records are a precious sound document as such, their particular value lies in their filmic nature: They were copied from the soundtrack to Eisler's new sound version of *Rain*. Because of their filmic relationship as conceived by Eisler, they offer the opportunity to reproduce this study by re-synchronising the respective film and music components after careful examination of the autograph score of the *Fourteen Ways*. Such a reproduction can replace all former attempts at reconstruction that, at best, may simply keep the character of sound-enhanced remakes.

One particular person has been known to have rendered outstanding services in the previously requisite reconstruction of the *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain* since Eisler's study attracted renewed attention from the late 1970s: film music specialist Berndt Heller. In the course of his reconstruction work, he noticed on the copy of *RAIN* that used to be lent out by the Amsterdam Film Museum a number of shots merely existing as single frames. Due to the brevity of this film copy, Heller could rule it out for synchronising it to Eisler's score. With much zest, he went in search of an uncut version of the silent film. It was a challenging undertaking given that Heller was working during the time before international co-operation of film archives became commonplace, in the midst of the Cold War, while based in the walled-in enclave of West Berlin with the indispensable Eisler archive hidden behind the Iron Curtain. Nonetheless, Heller contacted countless film collections, institutions and experts from all over the world and even sought the advice of Joris Ivens himself. Thus, from the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique in Brussels, he obtained a copy of the first sound version of *RAIN* with an impressionistic score for flute, string trio and harp, composed by Lou Lichtveld (mainly known as a writer under the pseudonym Albert Helman) in 1932. This copy contained all the shots that only existed as single frames on the Amsterdam version. There were also some additional shots in this version, while others were missing. Heller noticed different editing here and there, most conspicuously towards the end of the film, as it can also be seen from the corresponding remarks to the film in Lichtveld's handwritten score.

In the film archives of Moscow and the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Heller could at length locate a version in which he saw the original silent film of 1929. It again contained some additional shots, but

the general montage followed the same order as on the Amsterdam copy. This version Heller chose as a basis for his reconstruction. It was produced by the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek under license from Ivens. Since Heller reported on his reconstruction work in two captivating and persuasive essays in German and English,⁷ this production has received much attention and served as model for further attempts at reconstruction as well as synchronisations played live, that have recently become increasingly popular. However, there was also a lot of controversy over Heller's work from the start. Whereas the University of the Arts in Berlin awarded him the Karl Hofer Prize for the multimedia characteristics of his work and its exemplary combination of research and practice, people elsewhere expressed their discontent. Today it is scarcely different except that those who are relatively unbiased towards Eisler have meanwhile transferred their discontent to the film score itself. It is said even Ivens was disappointed with this piece of Eisler's work, although he generally held him in high esteem as a film composer. And when two years ago André Stufkens wrote here in the *Ivens Newsmagazine* 'Eisler's musical approach to film images is not an illuminating one, but he created a dialectic relation to image and sound'⁸, the obvious audiovisual discrepancies do not count as inconsistencies of Heller's reconstruction but as peculiar manifestations of Eisler's concept of dramatic counterpoint. In 1999, Kees Bakker argued even more resolutely that Eisler's 'beautiful music' and Ivens' 'beautiful film' were 'not the best match'. Bakker therefore suggested: "Instead of talking about music for the film *RAIN*, it is better to state that Eisler's music is 'inspired by the film'; only the fact that the music is two minutes longer than the film says enough."⁹ Although, it says more about Heller's reconstruction rather than about Eisler's music,¹⁰ which was in no way merely inspired by the film, but (especially during occasional effects of contrast) always meticulously synchronised to it. Time and metronome data in the autograph score as well as the 'Detailed Analysis of a Sequence'¹¹ in Eisler's and Theodor W. Adorno's jointly written book *Composing for the Films* testify to this. The synchronicity was ensured either by stop watch (nos. 2-3, 11-13 and 15 in the score) or by a metronomic click track (nos. 4-10 and 14).

Certainly, Bakker exaggerates in that the music in Heller's reconstruction is only about one minute longer than (excluding



First page of the autograph score of Hanns Eisler's *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain* © SAdK, HEA 160 fol. 2r