"WRITING TWO KINDS OF MUSIC": THE TWO MUSICAL VOICES OF VLADIMIR DUKELSKY ALIAS VERNON DUKE

Marianne Betz

There is no doubt for me -
he, who doesn't sing, is not a poet
(Vladimir Dukelsky, 1962)[1]

Vladimir Dukelsky (1903–1969) grew up in Kiev until his family emigrated to the United States in 1921. Trained at the Kiev conservatory with the idea of becoming a classical pianist and composer, his talent for popular music soon unfolded. He followed the advice of his mentor George Gershwin and adopted the name "Vernon Duke," from 1926 on signing his classical compositions as Dukelsky and his popular music as Duke.

In his autobiography from 1955, written as Duke, his official name since 1939, he explains his "dual musical existence": the "serious" Dukelsky, trying to find his way in the world of twentieth-century concert music, and the "unserious" Vernon Duke, nurturing his aptitude for popular tunes and show music, yet ultimately becoming the wage earner of the two.

The exploration of the composer's career in the twenties and thirties provides insight into the emergence of what could be called, in analogy to his bilingual command of Russian and English, bi-musicality, and into the growth of his two musical voices. While his classical music was influenced by his affiliation to the style of composers such as Prokofiev, his popular music, from early jazzy interpolations for London-produced operettas around 1926, over music for shows and movies up until to iconic songs such as *April in Paris* and *Autumn in New York*, displays a growing autonomy. The occasional fusion of the two musical idioms made listeners doubt Duke's pronounced self-conception: "Dukelsky in no way resembles Duke."

Keywords: Vladimir Dukelsky; Vernon Duke; George Gershwin; Sergey Prokofiev; operetta; popular music; Broadway songs; bi-musicality

1 "No dlâ menâ somnen'â net – KTO NE POËT – TOT NE POÈT," in: Vladimir Dukelsky, Poslanija. Munich 1962, 16; translation Marianne Betz/Dmitri Dragilew.

Introduction

The composer Vladimir Dukelsky (1903-1969) was born in Parafianovo, in the Minsk governorate. He grew up in various places throughout Russia, as his father, who was in the railroad business, had to move frequently. From 1912 on the family lived in Kiev until they fled from the Russian Civil War in December 1919, first by train to Odessa, then by ship to Constantinople. In the fall of 1921, the family emigrated to the United States on the SS King Alexander, finally settling in New York (Duke 1955, 80). Dukelsky, who had grown up with Russian as his native language, learned languages easily. English, his fourth language, after French and German, became second nature to him (Holden 2010, 301). Remarkably, and in spite of numerous writings in English, he maintained his passion for Russian poetry throughout his life, and even published four volumes of poems in the sixties. In 1969, he passed away from lung cancer.

Figure 1: Vernon Duke, New York 1945.
Reproduced with permission from Kay Duke Ingalls.

Dukelsky's musical language developed a "bilingualism" comparable to his command of Russian and English. He was musically trained at the Kiev conservatory by Reinhold Glière (1875–1 956), among others, which prepared him as a pianist and a classical composer. Dukelsky's immersive conservatory education led him throughout his life to compose concert music, including symphonies, concertos, chamber music, and an oratorio. However, the other side of his "dual musical existence," as he himself called it (Duke 1955, 88), was his foible and talent for popular music. Encouraged by George Gershwin (1898–1937), whom he met as early as 1922 and who became a highly influential person for him, he adopted the *nom de plume* "Vernon Duke," signing his music from 1926 on as either Dukelsky or Duke: Two signatures for two ways of musical expression. Dukelsky was the "serious" composer of concert music, Vernon Duke the other, the "unserious," nurturing his talent for popular song and show music: "The two idioms in which I write are as different as work and play. Serious music is hard work; jazz is easy for me – that is just recreation for which I happen to get paid" (Duke 1955, 303).

Dukelsky and Duke

A more detailed view on Dukelsky-Duke's unusual biography and the exploration of his early career help provide valuable insight into the emergence of his musical voice and the development of its two idioms. The investigation of Dukelsky-Duke's career inevitably leads back to his autobiography *Passport to Paris*, published in Boston 1955 under the name "Vernon Duke." As this was the name he carried officially after becoming an American citizen in 1939, the composer will be called "Vernon Duke" in the following.

The autobiography begins with retrospective notes about his childhood and adolescence, in part relying on a copybook of his mother's especially for his early years (Duke 1955, 6). In this context he recalls a holiday trip from Kiev to "Riga Strand" in 1914, right before the outbreak of the Great War (WW1), remembering this family vacation in the international ambience of Bulduri (then: *Bilderlingshof*) as a summer without a care in the world, full of playing, of music, of poetry and of delights such as smoked fish (ibid. 20f.). Another of his childhood recollections is that his mother, a "von Koestel" and in part Viennese, Spanish and Russian, who was quite apt as a piano player, began "studying the tango" around 1915. Both Duke and his brother Alexis, then 12 and 10 years old, imitated her by practicing the "Argentine *pas de deux*."[2]

Tangos, polkas, and "the increasingly popular American two-steps" were part of the repertoire with which Duke entertained his co-Russian refugees as a young adolescent in 1919 in Odessa, while waiting for a ship to get across the Black Sea (ibid. 62). He had fled from Kiev with his mother and brother, his father having passed in 1912. When finally arriving in Constantinople, the next leg of the journey, in January 1920, he was confronted with a dense mixture of influences. By then, he was 16, had just escaped the brutality of the October Revolution and the Civil War, but was also rid of school, and full of curiosity for music – and for life. Duke, who had the chance to access a grand piano, started organizing concerts using the enormous amount of "refugee talent" available. He continued practicing serious music - and at the same time tried to make money by playing popular music, "schlager" such as *O sole mio* and *Otchi tchornya.* One of these "gigs" introduced him as part of a trio to a restaurant, another to the barracks of British soldiers, a third to a cinema as a pianist for silent films. In hindsight, he noted that "he began to function as Dukelsky and Duke" during that winter (Duke 1955, 7 –77). The sojourn in Constantinople was also the time when he became acquainted with jazz, and, while he disliked other popular music, he became "an early-jazz fiend." At his various gigs he was asked to play the newest music, and thus bought himself sheet music to learn the new tunes, among them several songs by Irving Berlin and *Swanee*, "by a man improbably styled Geo. Gershwin." Gershwin's music sent Duke "into ecstasies," especially because of the "bold sweep of the tune, its rhythmic freshness,

2 The tango was not only "the latest dance craze" at that time, but "also the tag of flaming orange color" (Duke 1955, 23). The color orange is mentioned again, when Duke, recalling the same period, showed his new teacher Glière his piano sonata, clad in an orange book cover due to "the tango influence" (ibid. 31).

and, especially, it's syncopated gait" (ibid.). He also began studying New Orleans jazz, but Gershwin's "inventiveness" and "musicality" remained the strongest influence for him.[3]

Duke started composing tunes himself, which stylistically were a bit of everything, and which he signed with fantasy author names like "Ivan Ivin" or "Alan Lane" (ibid. 78). However, by the time the family finally settled in New York in 1921, Duke, or rather: Dukelsky, had already completed several compositions, among them a four-movement string sextet (1918), a one-movement piano sonata in G minor begun in November 1920 and finished in April 1921, and several songs, some classical, but a number of them also popular songs (ibid. 54 and 75).

Given the precarious financial situation of the family, he continued to play the piano at restaurants in New York. He also played for a magician's show, conducted an ensemble called *Jazz Babies*, and accompanied the students of singing teachers. By and by he got in touch with other musicians, among them many who were refugees from the Old World just like himself. He tried to find a job with a *Tin Pan Alley* publisher, but his songs were rejected. However, a few of his classical songs received a concert performance. A review of two of these songs, performed by the soprano Éva Gauthier (1885– 958) on 19 March 1922 at the International Composers' Guild (and also translated by her), called the music of the "young Russian composer practically unknown here, quite melodious, while Stravinskyesque" (*New York Tribune*, 20.03.1922, 8). One of the audience members at this concert was George Gershwin, who was impressed by the composer's young age and by his talent, but encouraged him: "There's no money in that kind of stuff, [..] no heart in it either. Try to write some real popular tunes - and don't be scared about going lowbrow. They will open you up!" (Duke 1955, 90) To quote Duke again: "The first clash between the embryo Duke, the wage earner, and Dukelsky, would-be composer, occurred there and then" (ibid. 92).

With his advice in mind, and admiringly watching the growing appreciation of Gershwin's music, Duke nonetheless accepted an invitation, which reached him as a follow-up of the Guild's concert, to write something for orchestra. He composed an overture on *Gondla*, a dramatic poem by Nikolai Gumilev (1886–1921), a Russian Acmeist poet. On 31 January 1923 this overture was performed at Carnegie Hall by the City Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dirk Foch (1886–1973), as part of a program which also included works by Mussorgsky, Schubert, Borodin, and Glazunov. The reception was cold, and Henry Krehbiel (1854–1923), a legend among New York's critics, but not necessarily a supporter of contemporary music, called the work "an incongruous thing" and a "farrago of atrocious noises" (*New York Tribune*, 03. 02.1923, 7).

However, another important contact evolved around 1922 from his encounter with the pianist Artur Rubinstein (1887-1982), who, having heard Duke play some of

3 Duke used the term "jazz" in a very individual way. In his autobiography he stated that "the 'real' New Orleans jazz and the true-blue blues" (ibid.) did not impress him very much, yet Gershwin's and Berlin's songs became models for "jazz" as part of his own musical voice. In his writings and interviews "jazz" is often used as a counterpart to what he called "serious music."

his piano pieces at a party of Zosia Kochanski's, and being receptive to new music, commissioned him to write a one-movement piano concerto.[4] "By Christmas 1923" Duke had completed a *Concerto in C for Piano and Orchestra* in a version for two pianos. Both Rubinstein and Gershwin liked the piece very much. Rubinstein, who complimented the young composer for his well-crafted composition and called it "full of tunes" (Duke 1955, 102), encouraged him to orchestrate it, travel to Paris and present it over there. George Gershwin, who was particularly fond of the lyrical second theme (Dunn/Duke Ingalls 2007, 3), helped to find the financial support needed for this trip to Europe. When Duke finally arrived in Paris in 1924, the piano concerto became a door opener. The famous impresario Sergei Diaghilev (1872–1929) invited Duke, after a performance of the concerto with George Auric (1899–1983) as second pianist, to score a ballet for *Les Ballets Russes*. The result was *Zéphire et Flore*, which, with Leonide Massine as choreographer, and Georges Braque as set and costume designer with Coco Chanel supervising the costumes, was premiered on 28 April 1925 at the *Théâtre de Monte Carlo*, where it was well received.[5] Through Diaghilev Duke met other Paris-based musicians, such as Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), and Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953), who became a close friend, but also Serge Koussevitzky (1874–1951), who at that time was the conductor of a concert series in Paris. In 1909, Koussevitzky had founded the *Éditions Russes de Musique*, in which he published new music by Russian composers. Thus he approached Duke as both editor and conductor, offering a publishing contract for the ballet and a check about 6,000 francs, and asked him to compose a symphony for him (Duke 1955, 153).[6] The piano concerto, which for some had "too much Prokofiev in this music" (ibid. 111),[7] remained a success. The publisher Heugel paid Duke 5,000 francs for it, yet the orchestration was never written and the concerto for a long time remained unperformed. A version for two pianos, edited by Georges Auric, was published in 1926.

4 The exact date for this party is not known. Duke met Rubinstein at the house of the violinist Paul Kochanski (1887–1934), to whom Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937) had introduced him (Duke 1955, 86 and 101). The Kochanskis and Szymanowski were good friends of Rubinstein, who had arrived in New York in the fall of 1921, after concerts with Kochanski in England. Rubinstein left New York after the 1922-23 season for Paris (Sachs 1997, 212).

5 On 15 June 1925 *Zéphire et Flore* was first performed in Paris; from 2nd November 1925 on it was shown at the London Coliseum. Its final performance was on 12 May 1927 at the *Teatro Liceo* in Barcelona (https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1404043/zephire-et-flore-photograph-detaille-georges/; accessed 30 July 2023).

6 Koussevitzky was one of Duke's most important supporters. He introduced the younger composer's music to the Boston audience on 29 April 1927, by putting an orchestral version of *Zéphire et Flore* on the program of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He also conducted the premieres of the symphonies no. 1 (1929) and 2 (1930), *Epitaph. On the Death of Diaghilev* (1932) and *Dédicaces* (1938), and the violin (1943) and the violoncello concerto (1946). It came to a falling-out of the two over Dukelsky's symphony no. 3, a setback for Duke's chances in the world of concert music. The symphony, premiered in Bruxelles in 1947, had its first American performance no sooner than 1955.

7 In 1916, Duke heard Prokofiev for the first time, when he performed his piano concerto no. 1 in Kiev in a concert conducted by Reinhold Glière, Prokofiev's former and Duke's current teacher. While Duke recalled his lack of enthusiasm for Prokofiev's style ("there wasn't a tune in it"), he also remembered his mother's advice : "melody first and last." However, years later, in the context of his own piano concerto, Prokofiev became a paragon: "I was most anxious to meet Prokofiev, whose third concerto was a model for my first – and so far only – one." (Duke 1955, 24-25, 120)

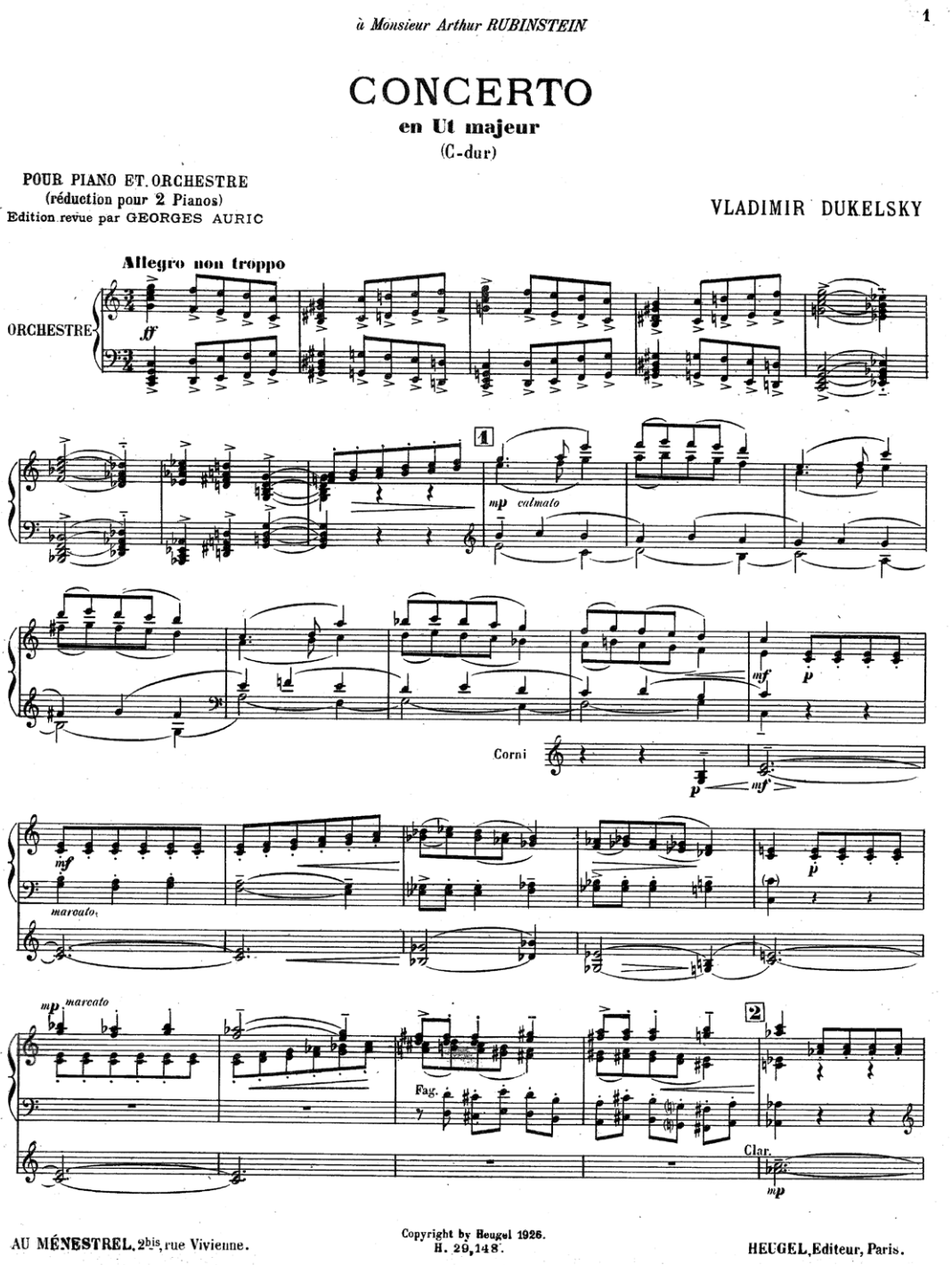


Figure 2: First page of the Piano Concerto.

The one-movement concerto resembles a sonata movement incorporating the characteristics of a four-movement form. The piece begins *Allegro non troppo* with a very square, rhythmically pronounced first theme in C major. The second section *Andante con moto* in F minor starts with a beautiful melodious theme that is treated like a theme and variations, a reminiscence of Prokofiev's choice of a variation form for the second movement of his Piano concerto no. 3. The third section, a *Quasi marcia* in A minor, plays with buoyant rhythmic figuration, enhanced by the grotesque shifting of accents. Its lively virtuosity ends in a mini-cadenza, preceding the recapitulation of the first and second part (*Tempo di comincio*), the latter now in F sharp minor. The music finally transitions to a full-fledged solo cadenza and closes after a voluminous coda followed by a short *stretta* in the tonic.

The fame of "Dukelsky – A New Russian Musician," as Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) called him in a Paris journal (Duke 1955, 142) spread. In London, to which Duke had accompanied Diaghilev and *Les Ballets Russes* in 1925, he was seen as a promising young composer, not too modern sounding and with a talent for tunes and for "lowbrow" music. After composing several numbers for cabaret shows and some songs, for which he now started using the name "Vernon Duke," he was invited to "pep up" some so-called Viennese operettas shown in London. This started with Jean Gilbert's successful *Katja the Dancer*, premiered in 1922 in Vienna and in 1926 in its second season at the Daly's Theatre in London.[8] Daly's was a theatre with a successful history of long-running musical comedies, which could reach up to 1,400 performances like the stage hit *The Maid of the Mountains* in 1917. As Duke noted, James "Jimmy" White (1877–1927), the owner-impresario of Daly's since 1922, whom he described as "a self-made croesus [..] czaring at Daly's," wanted him to bring up "young ideas for the old girl [operetta]" by using "bloody Yankee monkey music" (Duke 1955, 177). Consequently, Duke tried to, as he called it, doctor and jazz' up the music "to suit the changing tastes of the Daly's audience," and wrote two songs, "Try a little kiss" and "Back to my heart", which were interpolated into the piece (ibid. 177f.).

The production of a new Gilbert piece, *Yvonne*, was then to become Duke's first experience working on a musical comedy. *Yvonne* was a transformation of Gilbert's earlier operetta *Uschi*, first shown in Hamburg in 1925 with the German book and lyrics by Leo Kastner (1866–c1942) and Alfred Moeller (1876–1952). Now it was being produced by Daly's Theatre Company with English lyrics by Percy Greenbank. As a "try-out" it had first been shown at Prince's Theatre in Manchester on Christmas Eve 1925 (Forbes-Winslow 1944, 168), then it was premiered at Daly's Theatre in London on 22 May 1926. According to the (unknown) author of the only accessible review of the Manchester production, published in *The Guardian* on 28 December 1925, the performance had flaws, mostly due to the singers and the orchestra. Gilbert's music, however, is described as light and easeful, "captivating the humour of our European dances" and "free from the forced rhythmical zest of jazz," something the reviewer

8 Jean Gilbert (1879–1942) was the pseudonym used by the Hamburg-born composer Max Winterfeld, an exceptionally successful composer of the Berlin operetta style.

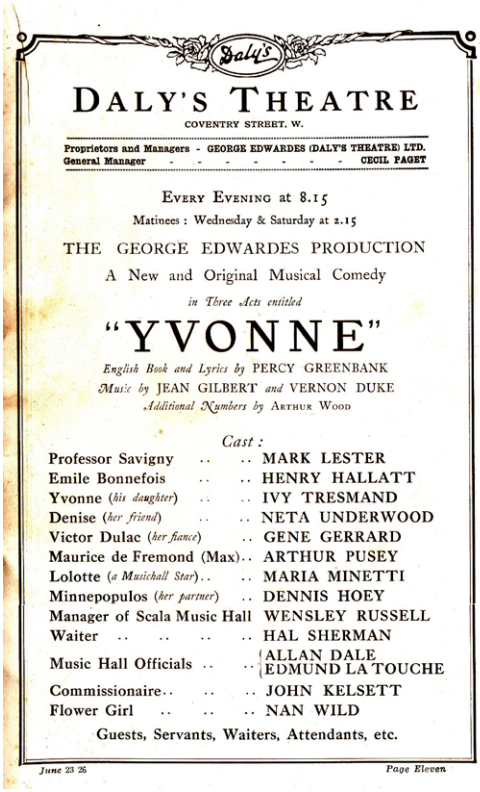
appreciated (*The Guardian*, 28.12.1925, 9). In how far the reviewer represented public opinion can only be guessed. Yet for the London production of *Yvonne*, Duke was engaged to write new music, mostly foxtrots and songs, which were to replace some of Gilbert's marches and waltzes.

The three-act story of the operetta is simple, in part set at a music-hall and therefore offering plausible reasons for numerous dance numbers. Yvonne, the daughter of a professor, is fond of gaiety and music-halls. Although engaged to Viktor, she starts falling in love with Max, alias Maurice de Fremond, who is working in disguise as a servant in the professor's house. She makes him take her to the music-hall, where she all of a sudden impersonates Lolotte, the star. After some further turbulences – Yvonne discovers that both Victor and her father are more than flirting with Lolotte - , Yvonne and Max finally come together.

The reviews published in *The Daily Telegraph* (*The Daily Telegraph,* 24.05.1926, 13), (*The Observer,* 23.05.1926, 17), and *The Evening Standard* (*The Evening Standard*, 24.05. 1926, 3) after the London premiere were consistent in openly criticizing the weakness of the plot; however, they also highlighted the dancing and the costumes. Yet according to a review titled "'Yvonne' and Jazz" in *The Daily Telegraph* the production apparently underwent a further "process of overhauling" after the first performance in May. The article mentions "several new songs and duets" and comments on the addition of "the element of jazz." It further emphasizes that the orchestra was supplemented by the *Midnight Follies Band*, a decision which helped improve the performance of the "'Charleston' and some of the other dances'" of the show, although "any musically sensitive ear" might find "relief in the deft and tasteful scoring [..] of Mr. Jean Gilbert's music." Finally, in the last sentence of the text, Vernon Duke is explicitly named and lauded for the "the dainty instrumental colours" used in "Daydreams," a slow-fox and one of the last numbers of the show, sung by Yvonne and the girls (*The Daily Telegraph*, 03.12.1926, 12).

This song, like others penned by Duke, shows the basic structure of Tin-Pan-Alley-songs, with a short prelude, an introductory verse, and an AABA refrain with a truncated B-section (8 + 8 + 4 +8). The frequent alternation of triplets and duplets in the melody creates the impression of a jazzy floating rhythm. Remarkable are the ukulele and banjo notation inserted into in the piano-vocal score. They refer to the so-called "ukulele craze" of the 1920s in the United States. The enormous enthusiasm for these instruments made publishers of sheet music include an adapted version in the vocal scores of new songs, probably especially of those that were expected to become popular. Of the, in total, 22 numbers of *Yvonne,* nine are marked for a performance on the ukulele or banjo, all of them songs or duets that seemingly had hit potential.[9]

9 The following songs have an indication for ukulele or banjo: *It's nicer to be naughty* (Duke), *We always disagree* (Duke), *The magic of the moon* (Duke), *Couleur de rose* (Gilbert), *Lucky* (Duke), *Teach me to dance* (Marc Anthony), *Billing and cooing* (Gilbert), and *Daydreams* (Duke); with the repetition of Duke's *We always disagree* in Act 3 that makes nine of 22.



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Maurice de Fremond (Max)	ARTHUR PUSEY
Lolotte (*a Musichall Star*)	MARIA MINETTI
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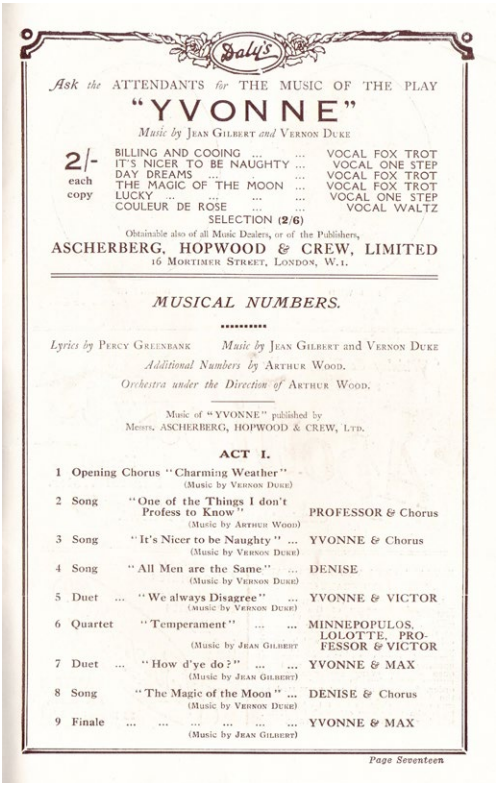

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ACT I.

1	Opening Chorus	"Charming Weather" (Music by VERNON DUKE)	
2	Song	"One of the Things I don't Profess to Know" (Music by ARTHUR WOOD)	PROFESSOR & Chorus
3	Song	"It's Nicer to be Naughty" (Music by VERNON DUKE)	YVONNE & Chorus
4	Song	"All Men are the Same" (Music by VERNON DUKE)	DENISE
5	Duet	"We always Disagree" (Music by VERNON DUKE)	YVONNE & VICTOR
6	Quartet	"Temperament" (Music by JEAN GILBERT)	MINNEPOPULOS, LOLOTTE, PROFESSOR & VICTOR
7	Duet	"How d'ye do?" (Music by JEAN GILBERT)	YVONNE & MAX
8	Song	"The Magic of the Moon" (Music by VERNON DUKE)	DENISE & Chorus
9	Finale	(Music by JEAN GILBERT)	YVONNE & MAX

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Figure 3: Program for a performance of *Yvonne* on June 23, 1926, at the Daly's Theatre London, page 11.
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Figure 4: Program for a performance of Yvonne on June 23, 1926, at the Daly's Theatre London, page 17.
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Uschi and *Yvonne* confront us with a lot of riddles; the documentation is more than complicated. A theatre program from Daly's, dated 13 June 1926, announces the "musical comedy" with music by Jean Gilbert and Vernon Duke, with "additional numbers by Arthur Wood."[10] A piano-vocal score held by the Bodleian Library, signed "19 Oct 1926,"[11] documents a different version of *Yvonne*, in which nine of the 22 numbers are still attributed to Gilbert, a tenth to both him and Duke. One of the other songs is by Arthur Wood (1875– 953), at that time, the orchestra conductor at the Daly's, and a composer who, having served in the Great War, signed some of his music as Captain Arthur Wood. Another is by Gene Gerrard (1892–1971), an English actor participating in the operetta as Victor, and a third by R. Marc Anthony (1891–1970), a composer of popular songs, called the *Night Club King*.[12] Given the explicit

10 http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/DalysTheatre.htm#history; accessed 30 July 2023.

11 Jean Gilbert/Vernon Duke, *Yvonne: a musical play in three acts*. English book and lyrics by Percy Greenbank. Vocal score, London: Ascherberg, Hopwood, and Crew, c1926 (GB-Ob: Bodleian Library Mus. 24 c.89).

12 https://robertmarcaranthony.com/marc-anthony-musician-by-colin-l-goddard/appendix/sheet-music-for-if-you-could-come-to-me/; accessed 2 Jan 2023.

reference to Vernon Duke in the review from December 1926, this score presumably documents the version of the operetta described in the article.[13]

Duke himself had no illusions about the "lukewarm" quality of the production, but called it "a moderate success" (Duke 1955, 184). He also remarked that the "only hit" of the piece was made by the dancer-comedian Hal Sherman (1897–1985), the "'eccentric' little American dancer," who "did a Chaplinesque routine" to his song "Don't forget the waiter" (ibid.), which in fact "had nothing whatever to do with the play" (Forbes-Winslow 1944, 168). Of his own songs Duke found "Magic of the moon" and "Daydreams" the most remarkable, the latter the tune that had caught the attention of the reviewer from *The Daily Telegraph*.

Yvonne reached 281 performances, the last on 29 January 1927 (Wearing 1984,786). That makes the "musical play" number 20 on Derek B. Scott's ranking list of German operettas in West End between 1900 and 1940 in his recent book. As a comparison: *The Merry Widow* had 778 performances, when shown at Daly's in 1907, Gilbert's *Katja, the Dancer* 514 in 1925 (Scott 2019, 317f.). Although *Yvonne* had only achieved "moderate success" Duke had earned a considerable amount of money, which he would not have gained as Dukelsky, in spite of the success of both the Piano Concerto and the ballet. However, his dual identity as a composer was now noticed and commented on. One of the not so favorable voices was that of Prokofiev. When mentioning Duke in his diary entry from 22 March 1926, he remarked on his "composing operettas and revues and earning tidy sums of money" and then reflected: "It defeats my understanding how he can combine composing foxtrots with real music, and good music at that." (Prokofiev 2013, 278) While appreciating Dukelsky's talent, Prokofiev openly criticized his alter ego Duke for wasting his time on popular "tra-la-la," instead of focusing on "*real* music" (Prokofiev 1998, 146, and 158).

However, Duke and Dukelsky were now officially established, both fostering their special talents: Dukelsky was working on his first symphony and Duke on a new "musical play" on Edgar Wallace's *The Yellow Mask*, which was premiered on 15 November 1927 at the Birmingham Theatre Royale, opening in London on 8 February 1928. The reviewers judged the piece a success, although the opinions on the composer varied: *The Daily Telegraph* labelled the music "indifferent" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 27.02.1928, 6), while *The Stage* remarked on the "rather jazzish pen of a young composer" (*The Stage*, 16.02.1928; quoted from Phillips 2019, 69), and *Diss Express* lauded the young composer for "writing such entrancing melodies" in (*The Stage*, 24.02.1928; ibid.).

13 An earlier selection of "vocal numbers" published in 1925 includes three songs by Gilbert, one by Marc Anthony, and two by Arthur Woods (*Yvonne*: *A New Musical Play.* Lyrics by Percy Greenbank. Vocal Numbers. London: Ascherberg, Hopwood, and Crew, c1925; GB-Ob: Bodleian Library (W) Harding Mus. B 244).

Of the Gilbert songs, *Couleur de rose* and *From nine o'clock till two* were maintained in the 1926 version, as documented in the piano-vocal score. Arthur Wood's "Tantalising Toto" was probably sung in the place of what is no. 14 in the piano-vocal score from 1926, then written by Duke. In both songs the professor reminisces about his amorous experiences recalling girls with "Come hither" eyes (a phrase used in both versions of the text), concluding that he still feels like a "fresh old egg."

There were several reasons that made Duke consider returning to the United States. One was meeting again his mother and his brother Alexis, who were now in Massachusetts. Another reason were the positive reviews of the premiere of his first symphony, which had taken place in the absence of the composer on 15 March 1929, with Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A third reason was that he felt in-between the worlds: "neither American, nor British, nor Russian" (Duke 1955, 215). This had in part to do with his immigrant status, but also with his suddenly increased financial struggling in England. Especially the Duke part of the composer felt drawn to the United States, where he hoped to succeed, because "America ruled the musical theater" (ibid.). Thus he boarded the ocean liner *Laconia* on 22 June 1929 and travelled back to New York, a few months before the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 (ibid. 218).

George Gershwin remained the most important influence and friend. In his biography of Vernon Duke, George H. Phillips documents that Duke, who after his return soon struggled to afford living in the city, had to ask Gershwin several times for a loan, that he also begged for contacts and recommendations, and that Gershwin as a very generous person helped, not caring whether he got the money back (Phillips 2019, 79ff.). A job at the film studios in Astoria, Long Island, of the Paramount Publix Corporation in 1930 deescalated the precarious situation. Duke was hired to produce songs and background music. While Dukelsky prepared the performance materials of his second symphony and other "serious" works, from which he could not make a living, Duke "was now much in demand" (Duke 1955, 241), and began to extend his activities to working on shows. It was Aaron Copland (1900–1990), whom he had met through Koussevitzky in Paris in 1928,[14] who recommended Duke to the playwright Theresa Helburn (1887– 1959), one of the founders of the Theatre Guild (ibid. 242). They met "at a Gershwin party" in 1930, where Duke played "I am only human after all" on lyrics by Ira Gershwin (1896–1983) and Edgar "Yip" Harburg (1896–1981). Through Helburn, Duke was invited to join the "assorted songwriters" hired by the Guild for the third edition of *Garrick Gaieties*, a revue produced at the Guild Theatre in New York in October 1930. The song, included into the show and soon recorded by the RCA Victor Company, became Duke's "passport to Broadway" (ibid.).

While "I am only human after all" was at first a song and then integrated into a show, the reverse happened to "April in Paris." The tune, composed by Duke with Harburg as lyricist, was presented in 1932 as part of the revue *Walk a Little Faster*. The show premiered at the Boston Majestic Theatre on 18 November 1932[15], and had its first Broadway performance at the St. James Theatre on 7 December 1932. However, *April in*

14 Copland mentioned Dukelsky's second symphony in his article *Contemporaries at Oxford, 1931*, highlighting the "making of a real style" and the lyrical qualities of the younger composer (*Modern Music* 1931, 18f.). Copland's remarks show that he was also familiar with piano music and songs by Dukelsky, however, he does not refer to the name Duke.

15 Following Duke, the "Boston opening [...] coincided with the Chicago première of [the] Second Symphony" (Duke 1955, 272), which took place on 17 November 1932 (see: Epstein, 1992, 39). However, he "couldn't break away from the revue's rehearsal" in Boston, where *Walk a Little Faster* was premiered one day later.

Paris soon gained a life of its own and advanced to become one of Duke's most popular tunes. The Boston reviewer H. T. Parker (1867–1934) wrote about it:

> "Being a modernist, Mr. Duke makes bold use of rhythms. They cut; they pound; they break; they cross. [..] Being a modernist again, Mr. Duke spares not with tingling or tangful dissonances. [..] Nor does Mr. Duke hesitate at dissonances that might grate on the innocent Berlin or Kern. Yet when need is, he can write a nostalgic quasi-sentimental melody that touches most that hear. 'April in Paris,' is worthy, in place and kind, of that city in spring. [..] Distinctly, Mr. Duke has gone several steps forward with our music for review [sic]." (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 25.11.1932, 13)

The song follows the 32-bar-model, with the alternation of triplets and duplets again as a characteristic, creating a floating effect and rhythmic tension simultaneously. In his entry von Duke, Alec Wilder emphasizes the trio-like chord progression underlying the triplets, "the suspension of F minor over the pedal C and G, followed by another suspension of B major, resolving on the last quarter to C major," labelling this as a "hair curler" for the audiences (Wilder 1990, 346). *April in Paris* became well-known through sheet music, but, more importantly, through recordings, an increasingly significant means to advance the dissemination of music. The interpretation of very different musicians over decades made the tune a standard. The list of performers, starting with Freddy Martin in 1933, includes many well-known names such as Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, and Charlie Parker. The most famous recording, though, became that by Count Basie and his Orchestra in 1955, which was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1985.[16] Yet the song's success was also enhanced by broadcasts, one of them as early as 1934, with Duke's own transformation of the tune into the "*April in Paris Fantasy* / a concert piece for clarinet & orchestra" that was performed on CBS radio as part of the program *Music in the Modern Manner* (Duke/Dunn 2018, 1).[17] According to George H. Phillips, the radio announcer introduced the music commenting on the Dukelsky-Duke duality, calling the song a "wedding of the two talents and personalities" (Phillips 2019, 132).

Although *Walk a Little Faster* itself did not make the emerging Broadway tunesmith Duke rich, future compositions, sheet music, and recordings made him a well-to-do musician (Holden 2010, 319, ann. 43). When Isaac Goldberg (1887–1938), by then author of several books, among them a study on Gershwin, referred to Duke's music for *Walk a Little Faster*, which had received several negative reviews in the New York press, he deliberately made a point of Duke's talent for the "lighter musical stage," emphasizing the "individual gift" that made him "stand out": "I do not hesitate to say that he is the most important new personality to come to our stage since Kern and Gershwin and Porter were followed by Rodgers, Youmans, and their fellows" (*New York Evening Post*, 21.01.1933, 4).

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16 In 1952, Doris Day sang "April in Paris" in a musical film with the same title produced by Warner Brothers, with music by Ray Heindorf (1908–1980) and Howard Jackson (1900–1966), as well as some songs by Duke with lyrics by Sammy Cahn (1913–1993). However, the film attained only moderate success.

17 https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/58935/April-in-Paris-Fantasy--Vernon-Duke/

The twenties and thirties were the key period for the establishment of the two parts of Duke's musical self. While some of Dukelsky's music, like the first and second symphony, remained unpublished and therefore rarely performed and unrecorded, the popular works displayed the development of Duke's voice more openly. That the latter's voice continuously carried further than that of Dukelsky, was due to the different modes of reception of concert and popular music, as the reception history of *April in Paris* documents. Other favorably received songs and shows followed, among them *Autumn in New York*, for which Duke for the first time in his career composed the English lyrics. The song, written in Westport (CT) in 1934, became the closing number of the musical revue *Thumbs Up!* and another signature song of Duke's. The tune, described by Duke as "a crazy song; moves from key to key and that makes it hard on the singer" (Duke 1955, 302), was performed with pictures of Manhattan displayed on moving screens in the background. In contrast to the moderate outcome of the show, the touching, though complex melancholy ode to Manhattan advanced to an often-performed classic. With his breakthrough as a stage composer with the musical *Cabin in the Sky* in 1940, Duke was at the height, but also at the turning point of his career. The musical, or rather: musical fantasy, with a libretto by Lynn Root (1905–1997), lyrics by John Latouche (1914–1956), and with Ethel Waters (1896–1977) as female star of the all-black cast, plays in the black south of the United States.[18] Duke's tunes, especially the famous title song and his "Taking a chance on love," were soon to become hits; however, according to Bordman, they were "his last Broadway melodies to have popular appeal" (Bordman 2011, 581).

With Prokofiev returning to the USSR in 1936 and Gershwin passing away in 1937, Duke lost his "two best friends in music: [Gershwin], Duke's creator and [Prokofiev], Dukelsky's protector" within one year (Duke 1955, 367). In 1939, he became an American citizen and from then officially "Vernon Duke." Yet, he remained a composer with two voices, defining himself through the distinction between them. In his autobiography, an entertaining narrative and a key document, he promotes and sometimes even flirts with his "dual musical existence," declaring: "Dukelsky in no way resembles Duke" (Duke 1955, 3).[19] An important reason for the emergence of this dichotomy can be found in the strict system of aesthetic values that he had absorbed during his conservatory training and which Prokofiev's recurring critic aimed at: a composer could and should not focus on lowbrow and highbrow music, or: "tra-la-la" and "real" music, at the same time. Prokofiev was not the only one to advise Duke, but the most important, when recommending that he had better focus on the Dukelsky part of his talent instead of wasting it as a tunesmith. Yet, while lauded in his early years as a new rising talent,

18 The musical received 156 performances at the Martin Beck Theatre on Broadway. In 1943, it was produced as a film musical, featuring Vincente Minnelli (1903–86) as a first-time film director, and Louis Armstrong (1901–71), and Duke Ellington (1899–1874) and his Orchestra as participants.

19 In two works from the thirties, Duke broke with the Dukelsky-Duke distinction. The music for Vincente Minnelli's revue *The Show is On* (1936) is signed by "Vladimir Dukelsky." The music for the Romeo and Juliet ballet sequence worked out by Balanchine for the film *Goldwyn Follies* (1937) had, according to Duke, "Duke music for Romeo, Dukelsky music for Juliet" in order to distinguish the two families, with the "longhaired" Capulets intended to dance classically, and the Montagues as "jazz addicts" tap dancing (Duke 1955, 358).

a modernist from Russia, the Duke part, which had been born out of practical reasons, gradually began to outrun Dukelsky; consequently, both names became as trademarks in their respective musical fields. A fusion of the two, with Duke all of a sudden used as the name of the author of symphonies and chamber music, or the name of Dukelsky as label for songs, dances, and show music, became unthinkable.

Reviewers, of course, discussed Duke's "Dual Personality in Music," as critic Daniel I. MacNamara titled his article in 1939 (*Edinburgh Daily Courier*, 15.03.1939, 2), in which he underscored the economic aspects of this duality. The commercial side of the Dukelsky-Duke dichotomy had already been addressed by the afore mentioned Isaac Goldberg. He consequently counterbalanced this by adding an astonishing quote of Duke's: "In a truly creative sense, and not merely a commercial way, without my symphonic writing I could not do the songs and dances for revues; and without the songs and dances, I could not do the symphonies" (*New York Evening Post*, 21.01.1933, 4). This appears to be inconsistent with other declarations by Duke, in which he declared that Duke does not resemble Dukelsky. When H. T. Parker (see above) labelled Duke "a modernist," a term more often applied to American composers of concert music, he tacitly connected Duke with Dukelsky when describing *April in Paris*. Other reviewers openly questioned the coexistence of two musically separate voices, as for example, Samuel Stratton, who, when writing about *April in Paris*, even emphasized the interchangeability of the two voices as a particular quality of musical inventiveness: "It is the ability of Duke to 'revert' to Dukelsky" (*Dallas Morning News*, 03.02.1935, 10). In a similar way Alec Wilder, in his description of "Autumn in New York," opined: "It begins simply enough, but halfway through it's almost as if the other musical half of the man couldn't be silent and the rest of the verse was finished by Dukelsky" (Wilder 1990, 350).

At the very end of his voluminous book, Duke finally declared himself "Duke, American, and Westerner," and proclaimed to drop the name of Dukelsky in the future: "henceforth [I] will sign all music [..] as Vernon Duke" (ibid. 484). By then, in the fifties, his musical output was petering out. The lack of support through influential musicians, especially Koussevitzky, who had fostered him as a conductor and as a publisher, made it more difficult to receive performances and publishing contracts for classical music (Holden 2010, 311ff.). But Duke was also stagnating in the world of popular music. However, his String Quartet, published in 1957, and his Sonata for violin and piano, published in 1960, both among his last compositions, bear the name "Vernon Duke." The only publications that were still attributed to "Dukelsky" were his Russian poems printed in 1962, 1965, and 1968, among them a selection of English poems translated into Russian.

Conclusion

When in 1960 Ki Mantle Hood introduced the idea of "bi-musicality," ethnomusicologists coined this term for "the learning of musical performance practices from traditions other than the scholar's native music," focusing on Westerners learning to perform Oriental music, in order to reach a deeper understanding of the other culture through its music (Feintuch 1995, 265). Since then, this concept has been widely discussed and broadened. More recently, the definition of bi-musicality has been expanded to "musical competence in disparate styles" (Cottrell 2007, 101), thus extending its applicability to local or urban contexts, but also to the "diversity of compositional styles" within a cultural frame. In this sense, Dukelsky-Duke as a composer of classical and popular music within the frame of Western musical tradition, can be discussed as bi-musical. However, his self-conception, obvious through the choice of his verbal analogies of music to language, such as having two voices, using two musical idioms or two musical languages, indicates the notion of a composer shifting gears between two different sets of musical codes that are closer to dialects than to languages. Therefore, another approach to his dichotomy could be to denominate these codes, in terms of sociolinguistics, as sociolects or ethnolects. Duke, often playing with the fancy of a split personality ("Can I help it if two people happen to be inside my body?" (Duke 1955, 303), was musically deeply imbedded into the Euro-American traditions of classical and popular music. Inspired by the American Gershwin and the Russian Prokofiev, he generated musical styles based on these traditions. He was bilingual in his command of Russian and English as languages, in which he could even compose poetical texts. He was equally gifted in music, developing distinctive and at the same time interrelated musical idioms.

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