

[Start Page](#)

Die tote Stadt by Erich Korngold

About this translation

When I discovered this remarkable opera I was disappointed to find that there was no satisfactory side-by-side German text with English translation available online. What I wanted was a translation that could conveniently be used while listening to a recording. So I have endeavoured to provide one here.

I have drawn on a number of sources as listed below. The intention is to stay close to a literal translation while avoiding obvious awkwardnesses and yet to bring out key words that someone with a modest knowledge of German would be likely to recognise.

Inevitably issues can arise about differences in editions and possible cuts in performance.

The principal point of difference that may be encountered arises from the occasional practice of presenting the opera in two acts rather than three, with the first two acts joined together. This gives rise to a cut of both words and music on either side of where the interval between Acts 1 and 2 would have been. The effects of this are clearly indicated at the appropriate points in the new translation.

In addition many slight cuts and/or differences in words are possible. Indeed the texts in the sources below show some such discrepancies. The version offered here is, I believe, close to complete. It corresponds almost exactly with that used in the Leinsdorf recording (Source 4 below), which as well as appearing to be complete also remains in my view the best available.

Tony Harpur,

March 2020

Sources:

1. German text from Kareol site.

<http://www.kareol.es/obras/dietotestaad/ciudad.htm>

The German libretto here has a facing Spanish translation. In places this has proved useful.

2. German text from Puschmann site

https://www.dr-puschmann.de/de/musika/e_w_korngold_die_tote_stadt/libretto_der_oper_die_tote_stadt/index.html

Good clear German text.

3. Vocal score from imslp site

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Die_tote_Stadt%2C_Op.12_\(Korngold%2C_Erich_Wolfgang\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Die_tote_Stadt%2C_Op.12_(Korngold%2C_Erich_Wolfgang))

The vocal score generally in quite good condition though it can be difficult to make out the words in places and one page is upside down.

A vocal score for each act may be downloaded as well as one which contains the entire work.

4. The Leinsdorf recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xjLDTTJZxI>

Recording made in 1975 with Rene Kollo as Paul and and Carol Neblett as Marie/Marietta and the Munich Radio Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf.

The YouTube version in the link above also offers a view of the full score, with German text, as it unfolds. It is not clear where this score comes from. It proved useful in places, although it is very difficult to read. It is interesting that there is a least one place where there appears to be a slight difference between the words in the visible score and what is actually sung.

5. Text and English translation from the Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/details/dietotestadtdea00schogoog/page/n5/mode/2up>

Among the documents on the Internet Archive about *Die tote Stadt* are three versions of essentially the same source consisting of German text and an English translation seeming to date from about 1920. The clearest of these is the one identified as coming from “American Libraries” and accessible in the link above.

By clicking on the document it can be read in a built-in viewer on the Internet Archives site. It is quite legible though the German font is forbiddingly old-fashioned and the translation is also very much of its time. Furthermore, the limitations of the viewer would make it cumbersome to use while listening to a recording. It is possible to download the document in various formats. I have tried just EPUB and PDF. The EPUB version makes a total mess of the German, and while the PDF one turns out well I have not found it possible to get the facing pages to line up correctly in a PDF viewer.

I have drawn extensively on this translation in making the new one.

[Start Page](#)