

Music as Oppression and Resistance:
Prisoners of WWII Concentration Camps
and Their Daily Encounters with Music

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore the role played by music in the Holocaust provides an important understanding of the Holocaust. This research consists of looking into how music was used as a form of oppression and resistance in concentration camps during World War II. The detailed accounts of survivors who both experienced music as torture and used it as resistance are the foundation for this research. Understanding the connection between human emotions and music is important to be able to further understand music itself and the history of music within the Holocaust. Prisoners in the concentration camps took music and used it to validate and give meaning to their existence against the oppressive forces of the Nazis through original compositions, performances, and underlying subliminal messages within the musical works. To build upon the foundation of survivor memoirs, I employ ideas from ethnomusicologists, archivists in music and Holocaust history, and lyrical analysis of the music.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Music in the Holocaust is an extremely broad categorization, music in the concentration camps still holds a very wide range of music. This area of study can aid in understanding the Holocaust from an emotional and individual perspective. While the music of the Holocaust can be an incredibly helpful tool in studying genocide, it is best understood as an emotional additive or perspective alongside the research that has already been conducted on the Holocaust and survivors. Thus, music as oppression and resistance in the concentration camps gives much needed perspective on the Holocaust in general, and also allows for another medium of teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

Looking at specific questions surrounding the music of the Holocaust can open information that cannot be found through traditional Holocaust research. For example, what place did music have in the concentration camps during the Holocaust? This question can be explored through employing ethnomusicological research of the music. This approach explains how music was at the same time a useful tool to unify prisoners during their daily traumatic experiences and a validator for the Nazis in their daily acts of committing mass murder. The importance of researching music lies in its ability to draw in a new generation of Holocaust scholars. Music is a universal medium of emotional expression that can be understood across languages and timelines. The research surrounding music amid genocide can be an advantage to Holocaust studies and to awareness that can potentially create new understanding in the public.

Through my research of music in the concentration camps, I focus on the rise of nationalistic music in Nazi Germany and then, the musical resistance of the prisoners in

the camps of Auschwitz and Terezin. The music of the perpetrators and how music was restricted heavily influenced the music that came out of the concentration camps.

Exploring and dismantling the Nazi perpetuated ideology, born out of longstanding antisemitism, of Jews being incapable of fighting back during the Holocaust is also another advantage in studying the ways in which Jews resisted through music. Of course, the full horror of the atrocities committed by the Nazis can never be fully understood and the only aspect of the Holocaust that can be understood is that it was extremely complex and intense. While there were many violent acts of resistance from Jews, there was also resistance in plays, operas, art, and many musical compositions. John Eckhard notes how some prisoners still managed to incorporate “[s]ymbols of resistance [that] appear in works commanded by the SS – but always disguised in the lower layers of the music.”¹

Exploring the cultural resistance of Jews and many other prisoners in the concentration camps can aid in understanding the Holocaust from a perspective of how humans engaged, perpetuated, and resisted systematic oppression. Exploration of this subject can also aid in understanding the connection between the emotional and physical oppression of the brutality of the camps and the expression of oppression through music in the camps. Music is a connection necessary to comprehending the important historical context of the Holocaust. A deeper understanding of music in the Holocaust can potentially identify the musical influences behind both mass murder by the Nazis and Jewish resistance to the torturous music during the Holocaust.

¹ John Eckhard, “Music and Concentration Camps: An Approximation,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 20, no. 4, (2001): 292, doi:10.1080/01411890108574791.

Methodology

When looking at how to study music from the Holocaust and how music can be born out of systematic oppression, acknowledging the relevance of music within Judaism in general cannot be overlooked. Before one can question the existence of music within horrific and torturous instances throughout history, there needs to be historical context to further understand the importance of music in oppressive events. Through this research, I have noticed how at times, it was quicker to study and understand why the Nazis used music as a mode of torture and a way to degrade their prisoners and how prisoners reacted to other pieces of music than music from the prisoners themselves. However, it is necessary to dive into more research about why music was being used as a form of resistance and torture. To examine why, an ethnomusicological perspective must be used to piece together the parts of history already known. It is already known that music was used in the camps, that the Nazis perpetuated their ideology through dead German composers, and that music was an enormous part of life. To understand the importance of this music and why it was used in the first place, there needs to be an ethnomusicological perspective. Timothy Rice describes how ethnomusicology is a large field of study and can be defined as the study of music and how it is made from different cultures and how it affects the people and social structures of the culture.² The study of music through ethnomusicology is so important to understand and employ to be able to see how music can be used as a form of torture and as a form of resistance. Exploring music within the

² Timothy Rice, *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Holocaust is also necessary when analyzing how the Nazi propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, defined what music was allowed. There is much to be explored in the perpetrator's music, however, it is also necessary to look at the music from secular and non-secular Jews through an ethno-perspective. This is what I am to do in this research. Alan Becker explores this topic in his article "Music of the Holocaust: The Record Connoisseur's Magazine" and explains how composers used musical expression as an outlet for a traumatic reality.³ Since music has been used all over the world in various fashions and for various reasons, there needs to be an understanding of the use of music within the Holocaust rather than just acknowledgment.

Why did music influence the atmosphere and conflicting social circles of the prisoners and Nazis? Why was there music in the camps. and what kind of music was born out of the murderous intent of the Nazis? In addition to ethnomusicology, psychological research surrounding the impact and influences music has on development and therapy are be explored as well. Understanding and exploring psychology journals that elaborate on how music connects to the emotions of humans is extremely important when exploring music within instances of systematic oppression and mass murder. The music from albums that recreate or have specific examples of the music will be used alongside the sheet music and memoirs of survivors who played music in the concentration camps to look at and understand as much as possible about the musical resistance, torture, and daily occurrences during the Holocaust. Exploration into what

³ Alan Becker, "Music of the Holocaust: The Record Connoisseur's Magazine," *American Record Guide* 69 (2006): 200-201, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/music-holocaust/docview/223363979/se-2?accountid=4886>.

kinds of instruments were issued and used within the concentration camps is also a necessary aspect of the study of the music of the Holocaust that showcases the musical talents of the prisoners forced to play and the orchestral expectations of the Nazis who organized the orchestras. Moshe Avital describes in his article, “The Role of Songs and Music During the Holocaust,” how music for many Jews represented a “fragile remembrance of their homes, *kehiloth* (communities), families and friends.”⁴ The scholarship that has been created in pursuit of preserving the music of the Holocaust will also be used in my research. Scholars like Joseph Moreno, who wrote “Morpheus in Hell: Music and Therapy in the Holocaust,” asks necessary questions like “[h]ow could genuine musical sentiment and mass murder comfortably coexist?”⁵ It’s is an important question that leads to more understanding about how these two sides of music existed. There are many other secondary and analytical sources that are crucial to this research. For example, Richard Newman and Karen Kirtley’s book titled *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz* details the life of Alma Rosé who died at Auschwitz, but she was a major musical influence on the camp orchestra she conducted.⁶ I also be draw on my experience of traveling to Germany and Israel to study this aspect of the Holocaust during the summer of 2022 that allowed me to engage with scholars in the field of music within the Holocaust and Judaism. I was able to visit the concentration camp memorial Bergen-

⁴ Moshe Avital, “The Role of Songs and Music During the Holocaust,” *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 31 (2011/2012): 51, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1220879246/fulltextPDF/44B2E2734CDA4A1BPQ/1?accountid=4886>.

⁵ Joseph Moreno, “Morpheus in Hell: Music and Therapy in the Holocaust,” *Arts in Psychotherapy* 26, no. 1 (1999): 3, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-4556\(98\)00040-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-4556(98)00040-9).

⁶ Richard Newman and Karen Kirtley, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz* (Pompton Plains, N.J.: Amadeus, 2003).

Belson, where I was introduced to archivist Klaus Tätzler, who studies the music within the concentration camps. His input and suggestions have been invaluable to my research. When I traveled to Israel with the MTSU signature trip, I was reminded at Yad Vashem (the world Holocaust remembrance center) and the Western Wall, of the importance of music within Judaism. This trip provided an opportunity to look at Jews and Jewish music outside of the Holocaust and allowed for much needed perspective on how it influenced the prisoners of the Holocaust. The website Music and the Holocaust has also been a great resource as it is dedicated to archiving the biographies and musical achievements of musicians in the Holocaust.

The main point of this musical research focuses on the music that was composed in the camps. These original compositions allow for a look into the emotional state of the composer that can possibly resonate with a wider range of people better than words do. The observation of these original pieces and covers of music from prisoners within the concentration camps is analyzed alongside the nationalistic music used by the Nazis. Camp orchestra players such as Henry Meyer, Alma Rosé, Szymon Laks, and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and their music is outlined and explored. In addition, the personal writings of Hitler's minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, is explored since it details the musical expectations of the world the Nazis were trying to create. This, of course, will influence the music allowed to be played by camp orchestras and the music that was played over loudspeakers when mass killings were carried out. Music was a saving grace, encourager, and morale booster for so many prisoners; however, it was also used as indicator for forced labor, added psychological torture, and mass murder. How these two sides of the same musical expression existed in opposition to each other in this murderous

and torturous atmosphere says so much about the importance of music to humans. Music can comfort those being oppressed and validate the oppressors. The nationalistic music that was used by the Nazis only reinforced their pursuit and efforts to eradicate those the Nazis deemed unclean people. Music was used by the prisoners to resist the horrendous social scrutiny, deportations, and eventual torture and death inflicted by the Nazis. This conflict of music is not just unique to the Holocaust. Jews have been under social scrutiny and subject to violent persecution since the beginning of their existence and have employed melodic worship as one of the many ways to combat these ongoing social circumstances. While the Nazis needed to use music to further validate their cause that ended with murdering six million Jews and the Nazi regime falling, some Jewish prisoners used music as a reminder of their faith, communities, and lives before that war to, once again, live through the powers that wanted to eradicate their culture and existence.

Musical Resources for the Music of the Holocaust

A great deal of this research was done through analyzing the music and lyrics of songs that were composed in the camps. This was done through listening to two main albums that were the resources for the music from Terezin. These albums allowed the exploration of the music from an auditory perspective rather than just from a visual one.

First, the album *The Songs of the Holocaust* consists of the works of camp musicians James Simon, Viktor Ullmann, Ilse Weber, Carl'o Taube, Adolf Strauss,

Gideon Klein, and Norbert Glanzberg.⁷ The album was created by singer Rachel Joselson, pianist Réne Lecuona, cellist Hannah Holman and violinist Scott Conklin in 2015 with the help of the University of Iowa through Albany Records. This album showcases the varying musical talents of the musicians of Terezin and allows for their music and name to be associated with each other in a clearer and more accessible way than through only historical biographies. Rachel Joselson's artistic liberties with the added musical accompaniments of many of the songs and poems allow for a deeper understanding of these pieces and draw in listeners for more understanding of the lyrics and background of the composers. Joselson also does a nice job of adding composer background and information into the album's physical liner notes. These notes contain translations, mini biographies, other works of the authors and more resources to study this subject.

Second is the album *King of Cabaret of Ghetto Terezin: Songs of Karel Švenk*.⁸ The Ghetto Terezin album is an incredibly unique album recorded over six years that includes the full repertoire of Karel Švenk's work from Terezin performed by survivors of the Holocaust who were imprisoned alongside Švenk at Terezin. This album has the unique advantage of preserving the actual sound of the songs from firsthand witnesses. This album was created by the Museum of Beit Terezin and Yad Vashem. It was researched and developed by Kobi Luria who also provided the translations and mini biographies in the liner notes. The music from this album are incredible pieces of history

⁷ Rachel Joselson, Réne Lecuona, Hannah Holman, and Scott Conklin, "The Songs of the Holocaust," Albany Records TROY1627, 2016, compact disc.

⁸ Kobi Luria, Moshe Zorman, and Gery Eckstein, "King of Cabaret of Ghetto Terezin," Museum of Beit Terezin, 2014, compact disc.

but as the album itself since it is sung completely by survivors from Terezin, it is historic preservation.

Relevance of Music within Judaism

Music can elicit an emotional, spiritual, and sometimes a physical reaction from people. It is simultaneously a strong and soft force that can be interpreted and heard in a million different ways depending on the individual. For many Jews, music is integral to their religious history. Music is found all through the religious texts, both figuratively and literally, and music is a large part of religious gatherings. Within Judaism, melodic worship is practiced both on a personal level and on a larger organized worship level. A very familiar venue of melodic worship within Judaism is the Wailing Wall or Western Wall in Israel. When I had the opportunity to visit the Western Wall on the MTSU trip summer 2022, I was amazed at the musical worship that filled the surrounding area of the wall. This is what drew me to understand how much of a part music plays within Judaism. The Western Wall is a sacred spot for a range of different religious groups but especially for Jews. For the groups, the western wall is believed to be the only remains of the wall that surrounded the Temple Mount. The mount was where the second and first temples were located. At the Western Wall, visitors hear cries, chants, prayers, praises, and melodic worship of all kinds. This sacred place allows people to express their feelings, praises, and engage in many other avenues of worship as well.

The way music has been such an integral part of Judaism is just as important to understand as the relevance of music among Jewish prisoners in the concentration camps. There are many ways of expressing worship through music; however, there will be two

key instances of melodic worship that both play a large part within Judaism. First is shuckling, which describes the act of swaying during prayer and comes from the Yiddish words “to shake.” When engaging in shuckling, worshipers are rocking back and forth to the same beat while saying their prayer or an excerpt of a religious text. This is one of reasons that this practice exists. However, shuckling, like many others, draws on several ancestral events and influences that cannot be categorized with just one explanation. Writer Yehuda Shurpin has many explanations of why music is so intertwined within Judaism; however, he most commonly references Psalms 23:10 that says, “All my bones shall say O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?”⁹ This verse in psalms is taken literally and is used to explain the act of shuckling: worshipers’ bones crying out to their God indicating that the whole physical body is also used in praise. Shurpin references this Psalms 23:10 specifically to draw attention to how the people would react to the presence of God. He explores how the movement conveys reverence and respect for the time of worship and prayer since it keeps the mind focused on the worship. This passage is a good example of the importance of physical expression within worship.

The same analysis can be applied when exploring the role of the cantor within Jewish worship. A cantor in a Jewish religious gathering that will melodically chant the sacred text being read. Singing sacred texts is also called Hebrew cantillations or Torah cantillations. Solomon Rosowsky explains in his article about how the Hebrew bible is

⁹ Yehuda Shurpin, “Shuckling: Why Do Jews Rock While Praying?,” Chabad.org, 2008, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/702209/jewish/Shuckling-Why-Do-Jews-Rock-While-Praying.htm.

not just religious thought and poetic expression but also full of musical heritage.¹⁰ The act of reciting Hebrew cantillations is a tradition that dates back just as far as Judaism itself. Daniel Biro explains how a cantor knows how to chant these passages by specific marks and notes written around the words of the Torah known as *trop* in Yiddish and *ta'amim* in Hebrew.¹¹ Figure 1 is an excerpt of the Torah that shows the *trop* that indicate melodic inflections. In this example from the website, <http://learntrope.com>, there are markings specifically dedicated to teaching *trop*: the red marks indicate how to pronounce each letter and the blue marks are the *trop* that indicate the melodic inflections.



Figure 1. Example of *trop* and the markings that indicate melodic inflections in the Torah (published in Neal Walters, "Learn to Lain - With Trope Trainer," *Hebrew Resources*, [2015]).

Rosowsky also details how in almost every part of the text, there are special and specific signs that indicate cantillations, which indicates just how ingrained music and

¹⁰ Solomon Rosowsky, "The Music of the Pentateuch: 'Analytical Theory of Biblical Cantillations,'" *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 60 (1933): 39-66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/765789>.

¹¹ Dániel Péter Biró, "Reading the Song: On the Development of Musical Syntax, Notation and Compositional Autonomy: A Comparative Study of Hungarian *Síratók*, Hebrew Bible Cantillation and Ninth Century Plainchant from St. Gall" (PhD diss, Princeton University, 2004), <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/reading-song-on-development-musical-syntax/docview/305150398/se-2>.

melodic worship are within Judaism. Shurpin describes the physical and vocally melodic worship when he says, "Just as when a person is drowning, no one would scoff at him if he were floundering about to save himself, so too, one should not scoff when observing a person making movements while praying, for he is trying to concentrate and stave off foreign thoughts."¹² Shurpin's comparison also shows how the physical and vocal show of worship is important those who practice Judaism. These actions convey some of the highest respect for God by showing their fear, love, and faith. Whether these melodic worship tactics are to keep the mind focused on the words being said or to pay homage to tradition, music within Judaism is incredibly important, an importance that was magnified when under the oppressive and tortuous motives of the Nazis during WWII.

There are many more instances of music within Judaism. Aside from initial melodic elements such as shuckling and Hebrew cantillations, there is also the basic human inclination toward music and how music can be a comforter and expression for one's feelings. With the historical and ongoing oppression that Jews encountered all over the world, music was something to cling to since it is built into their religion and religious practices. There is not an aspect of life for many that music cannot be made better or more bearable. Music being encouraging and validating is seen not only from the Jewish prisoners but also from the Nazis during WWII. Music can be used in many ways, however, during the Holocaust the Nazis produced hateful and damaging music, which, in turn, led Jewish prisoners to use music to combat and resist by employing faith and history. This created so many musical and artistic acts of resistance were be held

¹² Yehuda Shurpin, "Shuckling: Why Do Jews Rock While Praying?."

within the hearts and minds of the Jewish prisoners when stripped of all that they had and loved by the Nazis.

Chapter II

Oppression

The start of World War II is marked as 1939; however, restricting Jews access to basic rights and community engagement started much earlier. Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933 and he immediately started to dismantle the Weimar Republic's democratic institutions, which took away the general public's ability to question him. This would then develop into more antisemitic laws that would rapidly remove all rights for Jews. This was a rapid increase that gained greater traction with large events like Kristallnacht or the night of broken glass. According to James Deem, writer of *Kristallnacht: The Nazi Terror That Began the Holocaust*, this event lasted from November 9 to November 10, 1938, and during this time thousands of Jewish business, synagogues, and graveyards were burned, vandalized, and destroyed.¹³ This night was the result of the building antisemitism in Germany and state state-sanctioned violence against Jews. This would also be one of the larger starts and enforcements of the complete exile of Jewish culture and community in Germany. What began with Kristallnacht evolved into the fascist plan of the Nazis to attempt to eradicate Jews from Europe and eventually the world. There were so many contributing factors to this plan, however music played a very large part in uniting and validating Nazis and those who would be indoctrinated into their plan. The nationalistic pride that Hitler wanted to create after the devastating failure of WWI would not be complete without the musical accompaniment of many famous dead German composers who could be easily associated with the Nazis and their cause.

¹³ James Deem, *Kristallnacht: The Nazi Terror That Began the Holocaust*, (Berkley Heights, N.J.: Enslow Publishing, LLC, 2012).

Even though the Nazis were murderous and antisemitic, they were still ordinary people, and they found validation and encouragement from their music. The reference to Nazis as simply “Nazis” does not allow us to remember that they were also ordinary people and that the possibility for this to happen again lies in all of us. Books like *Ordinary Men* by Christopher Browning and *Hitler’s Furies* by Wendy Lower allow a reminder that humans just like we are humans were the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Browning explores how “ordinary men” can be coerced, enticed, or simply of their own free will become murderous Nazis that take away the lives of their neighbors, friends, and community members.¹⁴ Lower explores what role women played in the Third Reich and how, under the right circumstances, they also became Nazis who ruthlessly would run over and kill children with their own child’s baby carriage.¹⁵ This reminder can also be used to understand that they, like us today, would also use music to validate their feelings and encourage their actions. An important observation by survivor and musician Szymon Laks is when he recalls playing music for Nazi officers: in his book, *Music of Another World*, “[W]hen an SS-man listened to music, especially of the kind he really liked, he somehow became strangely similar to a human being...at such moments the hope stirred in us that maybe everything was not lost after all. Could people who love music to this extent, people who can cry when they hear it, be at the same time capable of committing

¹⁴ Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017).

¹⁵ Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2013).

so many atrocities on the rest of humanity? There are realities in which one cannot believe.”¹⁶

Joseph Goebbels’ Restraints on Music

The Reich Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, was charged with what David Welch describes, in his book *General Editor’s Introduction in Propaganda, and the German Cinema 1933–1945*, as Goebbels responsibilities to give spiritual guidance to the nation.¹⁷ With these vague responsibilities and a large title, Goebbels was able to attain the most influential position to “guide” the nation for his *führer*. The propagandic music Goebbels chose was meant to emphasize the superiority of the Nazi state. Goebbels used his new position to take as many creative liberties as he wanted to completely change the entertainment industry of Germany. There were so many powers in play to allow Goebbels the position that he acquired, and his friendship with Hitler, allowed him to control every aspect of the music industry in the interest of the Nazis. David Welch notes how “[b]y disguising the real nature of the transactions, Goebbels was able to claim that the government take-over had been motivated by purely artistic and not commercial reasons.”¹⁸ This quote from Welch highlights the manipulation used by Goebbels to draw in support for his massive changes in the entertainment industry. His vague appearance of his being interested in the people of the entertainment industry gave them a false sense of hope for their industry. Goebbels’ popularity among the Third Reich was also a contributing factor to Goebbels’ rise in rank

¹⁶ Szymon Laks, *Music of Another World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹⁸ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945*, 25.

and power. Creative constraints began to tighten on Jews in the entertainment industry and so did the restrictions around the entertainment industry in general. Quoting Goebbels, Welch talks about how “[a]rtistic criticism no longer exists for its own sake.”¹⁹ This escalation grew into the restricting laws of the Reich Chamber of Culture that had seven chambers that regulated all facets of public media. This included all publications of music, books, and films. As restrictions increased, Michael Kater writes, in his book *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, about how the musical restrictions put on Germany as a whole, but more specifically on Jewish musicians, debilitated the growth of new music and perpetuated the elitist music that was used to degrade Jews and validate Nazis.²⁰ Goebbels’s intentions were made possible through his rank and through his passion for the führer. It was not only the intention to get rid of Jewish musicians but also the music that they had and that was all over Germany for centuries. Saul Friedländer details in his book *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1933-1945* how

[f]rom August 1934 to June 1935 Goebbels’s diaries repeatedly record his determination to achieve the goal of complete Aryanization, mainly in regard to the cleansing of reich chamber music of its Jewish Musicians. The battle was waged on two fronts: against individuals and against melodies...[T]o the Nazis’ chagrin, it was more difficult to get rid of Jewish tunes—that is, mainly “light” music.²¹

¹⁹ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 17.

²⁰ Michael H. Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²¹ Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 41.

The music of the Third Reich was curated by Goebbels to be as antisemitic as were their heinous intentions and actions. First, Goebbels wanted to eradicate any musical influence that Jews had over the industry and erase their German-Jewish heritage. Second, the specially curated music was used a way to showcase the Nazi German culture and to rewrite German history to only include composers who aligned with their fascist ideals.

Nationalistic Music

The music that was used by the Nazis to define their new musical culture was intentionally nationalistic and harsh toward the oppressed Jews and other prisoners. There are were certain German classical musicians that had no stance on the war since they had been long dead at the time of the war that will be forever associated with the fascist ideals of the Nazis. The Nazis used several different attempts to prove the superiority of the German Aryan people, and music created by German composers was a large part of this. Composers like Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750, George Frideric Handel 1685-1759, Franz Joseph Haydn 1732-1809, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756-1791 would all be deemed “worthy” of exploitation through the Nazi agenda. These composers were rewritten in history to act as if they had also been pushing for the same fascist ideals propagated by Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi party. These statements are not in defense of these composers since many were well known antisemites, however, it is an exploration of the lengths that the ministry of propaganda was going to in order to build their foundation of German music superiority. David Dennis writes in his article “Honor Your German Masters: The Use and Abuse of ‘Classical’ Composers in Nazi

Propaganda,” that German newspapers in the Nazi era would write biographies and articles on these composers to paint them in a light that showcases their simultaneous German nationalism and antisemitism.²² Dennis notes how each composer was reviewed and assessed on their Germanness along with their music to determine its usefulness in the Nazi party. This was done through the newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, which ran from 1920-1945, publishing articles from Goebbels himself to propagate Nazi culture. This “serious music,” as referred to by the ministry of propaganda, was what would fuel a culture and belief of the superiority of German music and its use in justifying the acts of the Nazis. Dennis also talks about how Nazi propagandists wanted each person deemed worthy by the Nazi party to have a Nazi association to everything in their life, and that included music.²³ The tactic is used to build each Germans’ social life, artistic intake, and general atmosphere around the Nazi party.

Since the *Völkischer Beobachter* started before Hitler was appointed Chancellor in 1933, it was also aiming to help build a foundation and credibility for the Nazi party. Music was used to draw attention to the many fascists of the Nazi party and to help instill its ideals into the people who listened to this music. This use of music aided the Nazis in not only creating connections on paper to the classical musicians, but also emotional connections for everyone involved in and oppressed by the Nazi party. The emotional connections between these great composers and the Nazis were used to breakdown and

²² David Dennis, “‘Honor Your German Masters’: The use and Abuse of ‘Classical’ Composers in Nazi Propaganda,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 30, no. 2, (2002): 273-295, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/honor-your-german-masters-use-abuse-classical/docview/206653931/se-2>.

²³ Dennis, “Honor Your German Masters.”

torture those the Nazis deemed unworthy people who were subject to labor and death in the concentration camps. The role music played in aiding the dictatorship and tyrannical reign of Hitler was more powerful than it is given credit.

Uses of Music as Oppression

From the incredibly detailed records of the Holocaust, we know that the Nazis were proud of the mass imprisonment and murder they were carrying out. This detail also extended into the ways prisoners were tortured. Right down to the music played during daily marches and mass killings, Nazis tried to ensure that every aspect of the prisoners' lives was contributing to the torture the Nazis were inflicting. Music was used by the Nazis to give rhythm to the morning marches to work, to make the forced labor more efficient, and to remind the orchestra members that they were playing music to their community members' torture. The added psychological and for the orchestra players physical torture was demanding and incredibly stressful. Prisoners were uncertain as to what they would be subjected to next if music started playing. Music served as a medium that could conduct fear before horrific events or simply instill a conditioned fear in the prisoners subject to it.

According to Henry Meyer in his interview with the Fortunoff Archives, his orchestra at Auschwitz was mainly required to play waltz from the great German composers when they were not playing for the morning and evening marches.²⁴ Music facilitated and justified daily murders and mass executions for Nazis. An example of the Nazis' use of music comes from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and how

²⁴ Henry Meyer, "Henry M. Holocaust Testimony," interview, Fortunoff Video Archives, Yale University, 1987.

they categorize how, during the horrific winter of 1943 on November 3rd, over 42,000 Jews were killed just over the span of just over two days at the concentration camps Majdanek, Trawniki, and Poniatowa, called action Harvest Festival.²⁵ Figure 2, is a USHMM map of the area where this widespread planned mass execution took place.



Figure 2. Map of Poland under Nazi occupation depicting where action harvest festival took place (published in United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Operation 'Harvest Festival,'" *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, [2019]).

In historical accounts of prisoners who survived, survivors recalled music was played over loudspeakers so that the perpetrators of this mass murder would not have to

²⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Operation 'Harvest Festival,'" United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 13, 2023.

listen to the sounds of thousands of people dying at their hands. This was known as Aktion Erntefest or Operation Harvest Festival killing 42,000 people was carried out as a response to the uprisings of the Warsaw Ghetto and Bialystok Ghetto. This operation was also justified by the Nazis as a response to several prisoners rebelling at the extermination camps Treblinka and Sobibor. USHMM notes how the Nazi officials separated the Jewish prisoners from the non-Jewish prisoners and shot the Jewish prisoners over mass graves dug just outside the camps.²⁶ Harvest Festival was the largest single massacre carried out by the Germans during the Holocaust and music was used to help facilitate and justify it. Music was used very often as a way to cover up the sound of gun shots, however, this is the largest instance recorded. While music was not the main medium of anguish and torture, it was an added psychological factor of the torture in the way it was used to cover up screams and muffle the murders of 42,000 Jewish prisoners.²⁷

While music was used to cover up the screams of suffering prisoners, it was also used to break down the prisoners. It was also used to try to cover up the crimes so that locals wouldn't hear everything that was going on (even though they were often aware of what was taking place). The choice of music and timing was what so often contributed to the dark and horrific atmosphere. Scholars like Juliane Brauer write about how the Nazi's torturous music was intentionally employed to erode the prisoners' identities, nationalities, and sense of humanity which would help Nazis organize and push their prisoners to the furthest point humanly possible.²⁸ Brauer speaks to the lengths the Nazis

²⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Operation 'Harvest Festival.'"

²⁷ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Operation 'Harvest Festival.'"

²⁸ Juliane Brauer, "How can Music be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and

were trying to reach with how they could torture their prisoners. The Jewish prisoners were subject to physical torture on top of having to endure hearing the nationalistic music that promoted a world without them. The musical aspect of Nazi torture can so easily be overlooked but it is incredibly important to understand because of the added weight it put on prisoners. There was motivation to use music because it could both soothe the perpetrators and further torture the prisoners of the concentration camps. This horrific reality that included so much music left so many prisoners scared by the music used against them.

Music was also used to cover up the sounds of prisoners being tortured. The soothing, validating aspect of music encouraged the Nazis because that allowed them to treat their prisoners in whatever way they saw fit. Survivor Ruth Elias experienced this reality firsthand when she had to endure torture of the Nazis music. Elias recounts in her memoir, *Triumph of Hope: From Theresienstadt and Auschwitz to Israel*, how the Nazis at Auschwitz, on several occasions, go to the women's barracks and play loud music to cover up the anguishing sounds of the women being raped and tortured by the Nazis.²⁹ Elias was forced to witness her friends and community members, turned barrack mates, being tortured all while accompanied by music that was validating and encouraging the Nazi perpetrators. This is the horrific reality faced by Ruth Elias and many other women that was accompanied by specific music used to break them down psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. The ability to take a popular pastime and worldwide

Extermination Camps," *Music and Politics* 1, no. 1 (2016).
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/9460447.0010.103/--how-can-music-be-torturous-music-in-nazi-concentration?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.

²⁹ Ruth, *Triumph of Hope: From Theresienstadt and Auschwitz to Israel*, trans. by Margot Bettauer Denbo (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998).

expression of culture and make it accompany the inhumane acts of the Third Reich is something the Nazis did so frequently.

Nazis seized the musical instruments, along with every other belonging, that the soon to be deported people brought with them to the train station. These instruments were sold, destroyed, or issued to prisoners within the camps as part of the camp orchestra. The Nazis also took these instruments away because they knew how music could bring people together and inspire comradeship. However, the Nazis could not take away the music within the prisoners and it was that music that would not create the hope but unity among the prisoners that was needed for themselves and their fellow prisoners. The Nazis attempted to attack every aspect of the prisoners and tear them down and wear them out mentally, physically, and spiritually. By attacking every aspect of the prisoners, the Nazis did to permanently break down and decimate their prisoners. The horrific events the prisoners had to face were justified by the Nazis through music and at the same time these events were made into hope for the prisoners through music.

Camp Orchestras

While the Nazis played music in the presence of their victims as a form of torture, the their prisoners also forced to play music as an added form of torture. Several concentration camps had camp orchestras that were ordered to play music all day long for the other prisoners, for the Nazis' entertainment. These orchestras were built up of musically proficient prisoners and carried some people through the entire war. However, this did not mean that it was a stable or safe position. Camp orchestra positions often brought a lot of guilt to the players since they had to provide the musical score to the

death of their loved ones. On top of being tortured by lack of food, rampant diseases, and frequent beatings, musicians also had to worry about keeping up their musical skills. The position was only relatively stable until a more proficient player came along. Survivor Jacques Stroumsa, in his memoir *Violinist in Auschwitz: From Salonica to Jerusalem 1913-1967*, talks about his extensive experience with camp orchestras in which he and his sister were both allowed to live for a longer period of time because of their musical abilities in the camp orchestra. He also mentions how his sister (Julie Stroumsa) had to quickly learn to play the cello to keep her position in the women's orchestra at Birkenau once a more proficient violin player arrived at the camp. Although Julie Stroumsa was able to prolong her life a bit more with her quick learning, she passed away in Bergen Belson only a few weeks before the camp was liberated due to typhus.³⁰ Many of these prisoners felt guilt for not only playing music to the death of their loved ones and community members but also for being able to live. The survival of individuals was very complex and there were many contributing factors to their positions, especially in the orchestras. As mentioned in his memoir, Jacques Stroumsa was not in the orchestra for very long, but his time contributed greatly to his outlook on music.³¹ After the murder of six million Jews, many of the musicians who survived felt extreme guilt that they were able to survive.

³⁰ Jacques Stroumsa, *Violinist in Auschwitz: From Salonica to Jerusalem 1913-1967*, trans. James Stewart Brice (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 1996).

³¹ Stroumsa, *Violinist in Auschwitz*.



Figure 3. Drawing of the entrance gate of the concentration camp Auschwitz by artist and survivor Mieczysław Koscielniak, titled “Marching to Work,” 1950 (published in Guido Fackler, “Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945,” translated by Peter Logan, *Music and Politics* 1, no. 1 [Winter 2007]: 3, fig. 1).

Figure 3 is a 1950 ink and pen drawing of the infamous entrance gate of the concentration camp Auschwitz done by artist and survivor Mieczysław Koscielniak. Titled “Marching to Work,” the piece is important to musical history of the Holocaust because it is a piece that recognizes it as part of the daily routine as it was. In this picture, you can see a drawing of the entrance of the concentration camp, Auschwitz, with a camp orchestra conductor visible directly under the infamous words “Work Makes You Free.” This drawing is a good and haunting example of the daily occurrences of Nazi organized music that was used as another point of torture for the musicians and other prisoners.

The daily occurrence of music in the camps was not just specifically tortuous to the orchestra members. Music would be played during horrific and murderous moments by the Nazis to “lighten” the task of committing mass murder. The torture was extended to each individual who was a prisoner of the Nazis. The combination of emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual torture brings a new understanding of the severity and length of the Nazis oppression and torture of their prisoners. The question of why the Nazis had music in the camp is often asked and explored. Musician and survivor Henry Meyers, who also played in the Auschwitz camp orchestra, recalls in his survivor interview with the Fortunoff Archives at Yale University how he thinks “there’s one general answer, that Germans can’t do anything without music. That is true even today. Even the most gruesome things are better with some music for them.”³² This quote from Meyer gives a good perspective of the survivor point of view of why the Nazis and their motives. Meyer’s words show how he was more than aware that the Nazis were human and exploited their need of comfort through music and forcing the prisoners to play it., even though they refused to treat him as a human. Henry Meyer held his position as violinist in the Auschwitz orchestra for about two years towards the end of the war. He went on to become a highly accomplished musician for the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and taught there for many years. Meyer recalls how he did not speak about his time during the Holocaust until he heard of a teacher denying the Holocaust 38 years later.³³ Meyer decided to use his tortuous experience and his exposure to music within the confines of the Nazis stipulations to continue to make music. Even

³² Meyer, “Henry M. Holocaust Testimony.”

³³ Meyer, “Henry M. Holocaust Testimony.”

though he was forced to play music accompanying the forced labor, daily torture, and mass executions of his community members, he was still able to play music after the war. The physical and musical scars of the Holocaust did not stop Meyer from engaging in the kind of music that elaborated on his experiences from the Holocaust, encouraged and validated other survivors and their journeys, and that taught a new generation of musicians.

Chapter III

Resistance

Among the prisoners of concentration camps subject to horrific and torturous living conditions, a way to compose, perform, and hide music that was resistant to the Nazis heinous intentions was an option for some. This opportunity was a way for prisoners of the concentration camps to express their longings, hopes, sadness, or other emotions. It also helped many people who were subject to imprisonment by the Nazis find solace and encouragement in dark time where such feeling seemed to be lost forever. Prisoners like Karel Švenk, Viktor Ullmann, Gideon Klein, Ilse Weber, James Simon, and so many others, were able to write compose and, in some cases, perform music during this debilitating time. This musical expression was an act of resistance that saved some and encouraged others to keep fighting. While musical expression can be categorized as cultural expression alongside poems, drawings, paintings, and other forms of art, there was a very small percentage of people who had access to physical means of artistic expression. Music, however, could be used with or without instruments and with or without one's voice. The music of the concentration camps did not bring hope as much as it brought unity. It wasn't the activities that prisoners engaged in that kept up their spirits but the fellow community members who joined them. This important understanding reminds those looking back at the Holocaust to look at the individuals. Emotion expressed by survivors is not separate from their historical accounts music is a strong medium to analyze emotional expression. The emotions that are expressed in the pieces of music that were written during the Holocaust are incredibly important when understanding camp life, culture, and how Ilse Weber understood the world that she was thrown into. Resistance camp from so many different areas of cultural expression. The

remains of the music that can be analyzed provide another look into the physically and emotionally strenuous living conditions of the camps. It also gives the opportunity of a new medium to learn about the Holocaust. While reading about the Holocaust is extremely important, the addition of listening to the emotions, longings for home, and better memories of the prisoners of the Holocaust can provide an added perspective that draws in another generation of historians.

Terezin

Many of the original musical compositions of the Holocaust, came out of the Ghetto/Camp also referred to as Theresienstadt. Terezin is referred to as both a ghetto and concentration camp because of its specific use for the Nazis. This camp was used a site for frequent instances of propaganda and as a transit camp. It ran from 1941-1945 and it was located in Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). There were several deportations to and from Terezin that contributed to the constant intake of composers and musicians. The camp was simultaneously a place of cultural expression and a community alongside death, disease, and beatings by the Nazis. Many famous, widely well-known composers and musicians were sent here to “enrich” the cultural life of Terezin and contribute to the propaganda about the camp. It was a place of great compositions and great loss. Figure 4 is a map of the Czech Republic, from USHM, to show where the concentration camp/ghetto Terezin was located, north of Prague.



Figure 4. Map of the Czech Republic showing where the concentration camp/ghetto (published in '45 Aid Society. "[Theresienstadt](#)." '45 Aid Society. [n.d.]).

One of the most famous examples of how this camp was used for propaganda is the 1944 documentary titled *Theresienstadt*. The film was created by the Nazis to showcase the “comfortable” living situations of the prisoners and to show the world that the Nazis were not mistreating their prisoners. This, of course, was all fabricated. The documentary was also meant to represent the other many concentration camps and detention sites the Nazis had built over the time of their reign. John Eckhard describes how a piece of Nazi propaganda was their terms for Nazi sanctioned entertainment. This is called “... ‘Freizeitgestaltung’ [Leisure ‘Programs, a euphemistic term coined by the Nazis to describe various artistic, especially in Theresienstadt].”³⁴ The term was created

³⁴ Eckhard, “Music and Concentration Camps: An Approximation.”

to further detail the daily activities of the prisoners dictated by the Nazis and yet another way for the Nazis to attempt to control the prisoners and their creative expressions. The film showed the prisoners enjoying coffee shops and stores in the town square, which was just large painted pieces of wood to appear as buildings. It was for this film and for a visit from the Danish Red Cross that the camp was beautified and prisoners were allowed to engage in different means of cultural expression. Jackelyn Marcus extensively researched the cultural life in her thesis, and they describe the Nazis' intent well when they talked about how "The Nazis eventually permitted musical performances to take place inside the camp in order to establish Theresienstadt's reputation as a ghetto for the culturally elite."³⁵ Figure 5 is a map of the ghetto/camp, from USHMM, and Marcus notes that the Nazis estimated that between fifty to sixty thousand Jews could "comfortably" be moved there.

³⁵ Jackelyn Marcus, "Voices of Survival: Opera in Theresienstadt," master's thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 2012, 12.

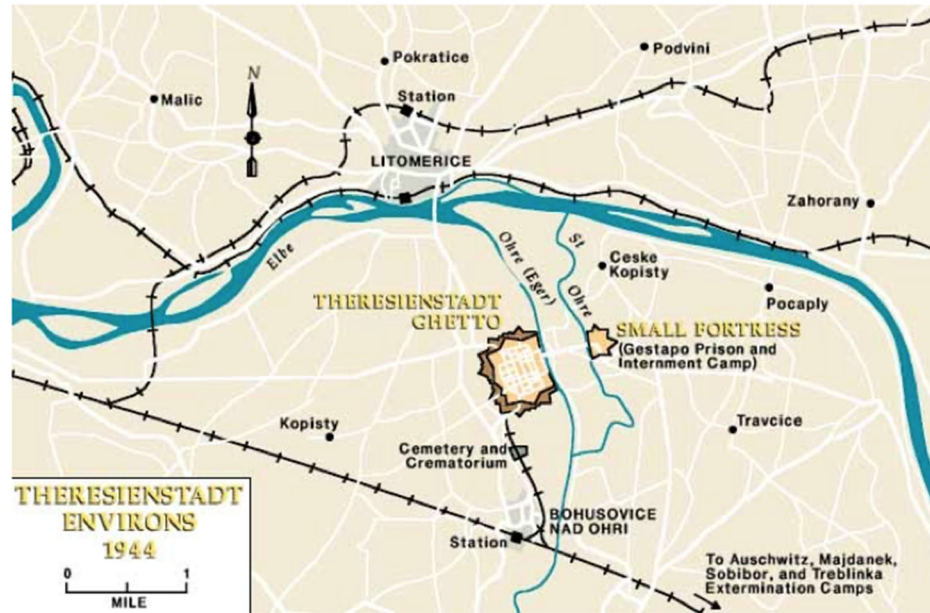


Figure 5. Map of the camp/ghetto Terezin (published in United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Theresienstadt: Concentration/Transit Camp for German and Austrian Jews-Animated Map/Map." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, [n.d.] fig. 3).

Since the camp, and its musical prisoners, were all being used as a point of propaganda, there needed to be a connection that brought the prisoners together. The camp intentionally held many Jewish poets and musicians who contributed to the cultural side of the camp when the Nazis allowed it. These composers, musicians, and poets wrote pieces that had underlying messages about their awful treatment that often went unnoticed by the Nazis. Others wrote compositions specifically for encouraging and maintaining the morale of their community members. Many composers wrote of loved ones or times before the war and these pieces are some that allow us to see the most emotional expression from the prisoners of Theresienstadt. While Theresienstadt did allow for more cultural expression, these events were not always accessible to all prisoners, and it must be kept in mind that the conditions and living situations were still

that of a concentration camp. As David Bloch describes in his in his article “Hidden Meanings: Musical Symbols in Terezín”:

Indeed, many people in the ghetto looked askance at the very idea of concerts and other presentations; others, wishing to attend performances, were forbidden to do so. Generally, and often, in the face of starvation, disease, lack of sanitation, abusive psychological and physical circumstances, and the constant daily deaths, resentment came frequently to the fore. An awareness of the causes of potential and actual social strife had an impact on the cultural activities, including music, and may not have necessarily served the interests of everyone.³⁶

The devastation that filled this and every concentration camp was not made better by music but for some survivors, it made it the least bit more bearable. It is said best by survivor Paul Kling when he describes Theresienstadt saying, “There was no happiness. It was survival, as you know. Culture is very often a survival mechanism for nations as it is for smaller groups... [b]ecause, after all, everybody felt that there is perhaps more chance in surviving if you are unified in spirit if not in anything else...”³⁷ The unification of spirit that Kling is referencing was partly cultivated by the music and musicians at Theresienstadt. The music did not just bring together the musicians but also those who endured forced labor and other aspects of the camp. Music was able to be played through different groups set up by the Nazis, and these groups would put on shows and concerts for the other prisoners. It is important to note and take Kling very seriously when he says that there was no happiness. Music did not bring false hope that made people forget about

³⁶ David Bloch, "Hidden Meanings: Musical Symbols in Terezín," *India International Centre Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2006): 112, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005899>.

³⁷ Aleeza Wadler, “Paul Kling,” *Music and the Holocaust*, (n.d.), <https://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/paul-kling/>.

their current misery. Music brought an important feeling of deeper community that encouraged prisoners to continue in their resistance. While there were many musical prisoners at Terezin camp and many compositions that came out of it, only a few of them will be extensively explored in this research. Songs, poems, and compositions from Adolf Strauss, Ilse Weber, Viktor Ullmann, Pavel Friedmann, Karel Švenk, Hans Krása, and other specific compositions were the main examples of music and its influence in Terezin and are discussed here.

Adolf Strauss

Adolf Strauss was a Czech and German multi-instrumentalist and composer who wrote many beautiful pieces while imprisoned at Theresienstadt until his deportation to Auschwitz in 1944. Strauss studied in Prague and then became a conductor in Leipzig, Germany, for many years. While imprisoned at Theresienstadt, like many other musicians, Strauss found community in the musicians and collaborated to make music for the concerts and various shows allowed at Theresienstadt. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of information not known about Strauss, since we lack the sources. Strauss only has one piece that was saved from his compositions at Theresienstadt. This piece was co-written by fellow prisoner Ludwig Hift. Like Strauss, there is not much information about Hift except that he is credited on Strauss's surviving piece of music.

Ich Weiss Bestimmt, Ich Werd Dich Widersehen

(1st Verse)

Als ich dich gesehn zum ersten Mal, war ich gebannt von deinem Blick
Und dein Lächeln schien mir wie ein Strahl von Sonne und von Glück.
Und ich suchte deine Nähe, gingst du auch an mir vorbei,
Fühlte mich so reich und ich ahnte gleich, bald lacht uns ein Liebesmai.

(Chorus)

Ich weiß bestimmt, ich werd dich wiedersehn und in die Arme schließen,
Und alles jauchzt in mir. Wie wird das schön, dich immerfort zu küssen!
Was früher war, das ist versunken und vergessen,
kein Schatten trübt der Sonne Schein; wer kann dann unser Glück ermessen?
Und immer will ich bei dir sein.

(2nd Verse)

Doch das Schicksal riss dich fort von mir weit über Länder und das Meer,
und nun liegen zwische mir und dir viel Jahre sorgenschwer.
Doch mich macht die tiefe Sehnsucht, die ich nach dir fühlt, nicht müd,
ich hab Tag und Nacht nur an dich gedacht, und es singt in mir das Lied.

(Chorus)

Ich weiß bestimmt, ich werd dich wiedersehn und in die Arme schließen,
und alles jauchzt in mir. Wie wird das schön, dich immerfort zu küssen!
Was früher war, das ist versunken und vergessen,
Kein Schatten trübt der Sonne Schein; wer kann dann unser Glück ermessen!
Und immer will ich bei dir sein.

I Know for sure I'll See You Again (English Translation)

(1st Verse)

When I saw you for the first time, I was fascinated from your glance
And your smile appeared to me like a ray of sunshine and happiness.
And I sought out your company, even if you walked passed me.
I felt so enriched and I sensed right away; soon a spring of love was smiling on us.

(Chorus)

I know for sure I'll see you again, and enclose you in my arms,
And everything rejoices in me. How beautiful it will be to kiss you endlessly!
Whatever happened before, that's lost and forgotten,
No shadows sadden the sunshine; who can measure our happiness!
And always will I be with you.

(2nd Verse)

Yet destiny tore you away from me far over lands and sea.
And now many troubled years lie between me and you.
Still the deep longing, that I felt towards you doesn't tire me.
I have thought of only you day and night, and the song sings in me.

(Chorus)

I know for sure I'll see you again, and enclose you in my arms,
And everything rejoices in me. How beautiful it will be to kiss you endlessly!
Whatever happened before, that's lost and forgotten,

No shadows sadden the sunshine, who can measure our happiness!
And always will I be with you.

(Translated by Rachel Joselson) ³⁸

At first glance, Adolf Strauss and Ludwig Hift's song seems to be about finding one's soulmate and knowing that, no matter what, they would be together. The song takes the listener through what is assumed to be the journey of a person who experiences love and loss. The love and perspective are only seen by one of the lovers, and the way loss is conveyed is not clear if it is deportation, death, or one of the lovers left behind. However, what is plain that it is because of the Holocaust. The inspiration for the song is unknown, but its emotional, sorrowful, yet hopeful lyrics were relatable to many couples who were tragically separated from their loved ones. The structure of the songs conveys inspirational encouragement through its lyrics. The first verse and the chorus that is repeated twice both convey a sense of happiness and newness. However, the second verse elaborates on the sadness of the situation and the intensity of the love that is developing. The third and fourth lines of the second verse also convey hope in the midst of this sorrowful separation. Even though this song can be seen as between two people, it can also be seen as a romanticization of life before the war. The interested singer never genders their love interest, and when the sorrowful separation is described it can be seen as a season of the narrator's life that is no longer with them, that season being a time where they were not imprisoned. When the smile like a ray of sunshine is mentioned, it can be interpreted literally as missing the sunshine in a time where they were free and

³⁸ Joselson, et al., "The Songs of the Holocaust."

unhindered by the Nazis stipulations. Except for the ability to kiss them, the singer never really gets a description that can only be applied to a person.

With this song, there are many ways it can be interpreted. It seems for Adolf Strauss and Ludwig Hift, they wanted the song to be open to interpretation, so that whoever listened to it could find some consolation, validation, or simply relatability in the lyrics. This not only applies to the other prisoners who would have heard it in Theresienstadt but also to the generation after. While the next generations would never be able to understand how horrific being in the concentration camps were, analyzing this song gives a very small understanding as to what Adolf Strauss and Ludwig Hift wanted to convey with their composition. They wanted to provide comfort and consolation to their peers and education and understanding to the next generation.

Hans Krása

Hans Krása was also an extremely influential composer both before and during WWII. Krása composed one of the most famous plays in Theresienstadt, “Brundibar.” Many of his other compositions gained attention and traction in the concentration camp; however, “Brundibar” was notable for its mockery of Hitler and its cast that was mostly made up of the children of Theresienstadt. Krása was born in Prague in 1899 and studied music all over Europe. According to an article about Krása from the website *Music and the Holocaust*, Krása described his music saying “I am sufficiently daring, as a modern composer, to write melodic music,”³⁹ which exemplifies his feeling about his own

³⁹ *Music and the Holocaust*, “Hans Krása,” *Music and the Holocaust*, (n.d.), <https://holocaustmusic.org/places/theresienstadt/krasa-hans/>.

instrumental, lyrical, and melodic abilities. His work was correct in the sense that it was daring and experimental with the content itself and its melodic aspects. When Krása stated that his music is daring, because it is melodic, he is referring to the lack of musical law that it follows and its lack of sharp rigid voice, since he tries to follow a more free and more unadulterated pattern.



Figure 6. A film frame of Hans Krása listening to an orchestral performance in Terezin in the propaganda film *Theresienstadt* (published in *Music and the Holocaust*, "Hans Krása," *Music and the Holocaust*, [n.d.]).

Figure 6 is a picture of Hans Krása in the 1944 documentary *Theresienstadt*. In this part of the film, he is being watched by the audience while attending and intently listening a concert, as instructed by the Nazis. The concert scene was one of the main parts of the film attempting to showcase how the camp was full of culture and elite composers. The play "Brundibar" was one of the most famous performances in the

concentration camp. Scholar Joseph Toltz details how Hans Krása composed the play in 1939, before his imprisonment in Theresienstadt, with the lyrics done by Adolf Hoffmeister.⁴⁰ The play consisted of children as the main characters, trying to save their dying mother by going on a long journey for medicine. On their journey, they faced conflict caused by an evil organ grinder and overcome it to eventually save their mother. In her article titled “Brundibar in Terezin: Music as Spiritual Resistance,” Jennifer Blackwell talks about how Brundibar was one of the bigger original compositions that aided the prisoners in their defiance against the Nazis through plays and other compositions.⁴¹ In turn, the play gave prisoners the opportunity to unite spiritually over the known messages hidden in the play. For example, the evil organ grinder is a parody of Hitler in his reign as the Führer. Below is a picture of one of the performances of Brundibár in Terezin.

⁴⁰ Joseph Toltz, "Music: An Active Tool of Deception? The Case of Brundibár in Terezín," *Context* (27) (2004): 43-50, 135, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/music-active-tool-deception-case-brundibár/docview/200100029/se-2>.

⁴¹ Jennifer Blackwell, “Brundibar in Terezin: Music as Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust,” *Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology* 4, no. 1 (2011): 17-27, <https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/notabene/article/view/6564/5288>.



Figure 7. A performance of the play *Brundibár* in Terezin (published in Joseph Toltz, "Brundibár," *Music and the Holocaust*, [n.d.]).

Blackwell also notes how this play was able to be performed 55 times in the camps until its underlying message was found out and the Nazis prohibited it.⁴²

"Brundibar" proved to be not only a very large part of the history of Theresienstadt, but also a large part of the musical resistance and unification among the prisoners. Since the antagonist of the story represents a satirical take on Hitler as *führer*, its message had to be relatively concealed within the community, which was done so well that the play was performed for most of the time the camp was in use. The play used the music and collaborative effort of putting on a production as a point of community connection.

⁴² Blackwell, "Brundibar in Terezin: Music as Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust."

However, this play also had the added obvious secret of being a mockery of the prisoners' greatest oppressor. While many pieces of music can be interpreted in many ways according to the listener, this interpretation was unmistakable and yet still unnoticed by the Nazis for so long.

The capability of this play to go so unnoticed by the Nazis lies partly in the creative composition by Krása and Hoffmeister, but also in part by the majority of characters being played by children. The Nazis already believed that the Jews and other prisoners were incapable of outsmarting them; this was doubled when applied to camp children. With the advantage of being able to perform this play and convey a spirit of unity through shared culture, the prisoners of Terezin had so much more to be understood about their experience through their music and cultural expression. The children of Terezin contributed greatly to the cultural life in the camp and many of them were cared for by Ilse Weber. She worked in the children's hospital and saved many lives.

Ilse Weber

Ilse Weber was a poet, multi-instrumentalist, and radio producer. Weber made several musical contributions before and during her imprisonment at Theresienstadt. During her time at the camp, she employed her knowledge of the outside world to stay close to her child and to work in the children's care area of the camp. She used her compassionate personality and musical abilities to teach and run a children's orchestra in Theresienstadt. Weber authored several children's books with her husband before the war and wrote many poems and songs during her imprisonment. She and her husband, Willi Weber, had two children. The incredible talents of Ilse Weber were cut short due to voluntary deportation to follow her husband to Auschwitz. During this deportation, she

took her youngest son with her to keep their family together. Both Ilse Weber and her son were sent to the gas chamber upon arrival at Auschwitz. Ilse Weber was survived by her husband and oldest son. Figure 8 is a picture of Weber showcasing her musical abilities on the lute.



Figure 8. Figure 8. Picture of Ilse Weber playing music with her lute (published in Dirk De Klein, "Ilse Weber - I Wander Through Theresienstadt," *History of Sorts*, [December 2016]).

Weber's poems, letters and personal interactions are archived in a book titled *Dancing on a Powder Keg*. In this book, Weber is so affectionately remembered by bunk mate and friend at Theresienstadt, Ruth Elias, who said,

“It may sound paradoxical, but we spent unforgettable hours...during which she sang songs with the lute. Ilse was not only a poet, but also an excellent musician...I found it incomprehensible how she managed during this terrible time to see so much ugliness, but sometimes also beauty, and describe it so expressively in her verses.... I became witness to her creation.”⁴³ Ruth Elias was able to find solace and validation in the music by Weber as did so many others. Elias’ feelings of being surrounded by music were encouraged and helped by late nights singing with Ilse Weber.

“I Wander Through Terezin” is one of Ilse Weber’s compositions when she was at the camp. This song provides an interesting perspective that offers a very honest and expressive take on the horrific situation Weber was being forced to experience.

Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt

Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt,
Das Herz so schwer wie Blei.
Bis jäh meine Weg ein Ende hat,
Dort knapp an der Bastei.

Dort bleib ich auf der Brücke stehn
Und schau ins Tal hinaus:
Ich möcht so gerne weiter gehn,
Ich möcht so gern nach Haus!

Nach Haus! -- du wunderbares Wort,
Du machst das Herz mir schwer.
Man nahm mir mein Zuhause fort,
Nun hab ich keines mehr.

⁴³ Ilse Weber, *Dancing on a Powder Keg: The Intimate Voice of a Young Mother and Author, Her Letters Composed in The Lengthening Shadow of Hitler's Third Reich, Her Poems from the Theresienstadt Ghetto*, trans. Michal Schwartz (Québec: Bunim & Bannigan Ltd, 2017).

Ich wende mich betrübt und matt,
So schwer wird mir dabei,
Theresienstadt, Theresienstadt,
Wann wohl das Leid ein Ende hat,
Wann sind wir wieder frei?

I Wander Through Terezin (English Translation)

I wander through Theresienstadt,
My heart as heavy as lead,
until my path comes to an end,
there just off the Bastei.

There I remain standing on the bridge
And look out into the valley,
I so want to go further,
I so want to go home!

Home! You wonderful word,
You make my heart heavy.
They took away my home.
I don't have one anymore.

I turn around sad and dull,
So difficult it is for me,
Terezin, Terezin, when will the suffering end?
When will we be free again?

(Translated by Rachel Joselson) ⁴⁴

This song is a short and seemingly simple expression of complex and heavy emotions felt by prisoner Ilse Weber. When read, it seems that the author is airing her grievances of having her home and everything she loved stripped away while also bringing in familiar imagery of a Germany before the war. In the song, Weber takes the listener to a famous bridge underneath a breathtaking rock formation called the Bastei

⁴⁴ Joselson, et al., "The Songs of the Holocaust."

bridge outside of Dresden, Germany. Figure 9 is a picture of the bridge from the online hiking guide, Northern Hikes, for reference.



Figure 9. Picture of the Bastei bridge in Germany (published in Michel Struhárová, "Bastei Bridge - Why to Visit and How (Complete Guide)," *Northern Hikes*, [March 2019]).

With continuous mention of this bridge, Weber indicates how she often brings herself back to the view from this bridge to escape the horrific views she is currently subjected to in Terezin. The last two lines of the first verse give the listener the impression that Weber was comparing her journey of being in Terezin to the walk across the beautiful bridge. The entire second verse is dedicated to remembering this bridge and how Weber remains there in her mind, wishing she could continue in that reality rather

than her current one. The memory of the view from the bridge is also compared to the view of wandering through Theresienstadt. The development of emotions within this song, that go from current reality to beautiful memories to dreadful memories and finally to questions of hope, are extremely important to understand in order to be able to hear what Weber is trying to say in this song. With the short verses and quick developments of each emotion, this could convey rapid feelings of how quickly the Nazis came into power and how they were able to do so much horrific damage. The song conveys feelings of anxiety at the quickness of the changes and feelings of loss and memory of better times that make clear how horrible the situation at hand was. Most of the life within concentration camps was rushed, and prisoners were under a lot of pressure to perform.

Karel Švenk

One of the prisoners who was a regular performer was Karel Švenk, an accomplished and well-known actor, composer, and director who was a part of the very first construction transports to Theresienstadt in 1941 to build and develop the camp. Švenk established his musical presence at Terezin very early on. He was best known in the camp as the king of cabaret. During his time at the concentration camp, Švenk wrote several songs, plays, and cabarets that allowed the prisoners an evening outside of the reality of their horrific circumstances and uncertain futures. Figure 10 is a picture of Švenk from the Terezin Music Foundation.



Figure 10. Picture of Karl Švenk (published in Terezin Music Foundation, "Track of the Month," *Terezin Music Foundation*, [February 2020]).

Linda and Michael Hutcheon's article, "Death, Where Is Thy Sting?" talks about the ability to view the horrific events of the Holocaust through music, saying, "But an opera written in the midst of the horror of Theresienstadt is arguably a mode of witnessing – a displaced one, of course, but witnessing nonetheless."⁴⁵ Being able to view the events of Theresienstadt through more of an emotional lens rather than a strictly historical one can be aided by the music from this time. Karel Švenk's repertoire of music and compositions is one of the best places to explore this emotionality for the purpose of education and understanding. One of Švenk's songs that was well-known around the camp was "Catching Time."

Catching Time

Verse 1:

Catching time, before it's gone

⁴⁵ Linda and Michael Hutcheon, "Death, Where Is Thy Sting?," *Opera Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (2000): 224-239, doi:10.1093/oq/16.2.224, 237.

Moments slipping, one by one
Chasing dreams, we're on the run
Catching time, before it's done,

Chorus:

We're running, we're flying
We're reaching for the sky
Our hearts are beating, never denying
We're catching time, before it passes by

Verse 2:

Days are fleeting, like the wind
Memories fade, but love begins
We'll hold on, until the end
Catching time, with our friends

Chorus:

We're running, we're flying
We're reaching for the sky
Our hearts are beating, never denying
We're catching time, before it passes by

Bridge:

Life's a journey, and we're on our way
We'll keep moving, day by day
Chasing dreams, never too late
Catching time, before it's too late

Chorus:

We're running, we're flying
We're reaching for the sky
Our hearts are beating, never denying
We're catching time, before it passes by

Outro:

Catching time, before it's gone
Moments slipping, one by one
Chasing dreams, we're on the run
Catching time, before it's done.

Translated by Kobi Luria

This song conveys the fast-paced and heart-racing atmosphere of Theresienstadt.

In its lyrics the listener can find the feelings of anxiety over fleeting time conveying the

terrifying uncertainty of life in the camp. In the chorus, there is the relation between flying and running. Flying conveys the ability to escape the reality within memories or thoughts of a better time. Running conveys the want and attempts to physically escape the awful conditions of the camp. The stress-filled and contradicting last two lines in the bridge explore the want to mentally escape the camps, in thinking about ways to chase dreams and how it would never be too late. However, in the horrific circumstances of the Holocaust, the reality of being too late needed to be addressed as well. In the second verse, there is a lot of hope that realizes the fading past but embraces the new opportunities in developing community. In the darker outro, the last line conveys the feeling of how this major historical event would be the one to end time all together. Švenk's works are preserved in the many memories of survivors but also in his music that has been recognized by Yad Vashem and Beit Terezin in an album of his works from the camp.

Auschwitz

The most famous and well-known extermination camp, Auschwitz, was located in Poland since the Nazis did not want it on German soil. The camp ran from 1940 to 1945 and had several sub-camps as well, which writer Katarzyna Naliwajek-Mazurek describes as: “[a]part from their function as death camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek also functioned as forced labor camps; Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka were constructed and functioned with one goal only: to efficiently kill and plunder European Jews.”⁴⁶ With the

⁴⁶ Katarzyna Naliwajek-Mazurek, “Music and Torture in Nazi Sites of Persecution and Genocide in Occupied Poland, 1939-1945,” *World of Music* 2, no. 1 (2013): 31-50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24318195>.

Nazis' goal of ethnic cleansing, the role of music seemed an interesting and unnecessary additive to their already heinous acts. However, in these concentration camps, music was the additive that simultaneously accompanied and reinforced Nazis motives and aided prisoners in resisting and uniting against them.

The concentration camp was filled with despair, constant fear, and degrading music from the Nazis. The added physiological torture of having to be a prisoner taking part in playing that music is what the many orchestra members had to endure as they performed multiple times a day. Kellie Brown examines the implications of being employed in the orchestras at Auschwitz-Birkenau in her book *The Sound of Hope: Music as Solace, Resistance, and Salvation*, and she notes how with each influx of prisoners, musicians would fear for their position at the possibility of another prisoner being deemed better at their instrument.⁴⁷ The musical atmosphere in Auschwitz has so many different contributing factors, intentions, and outcomes. However, music as a daily reminder of the Nazis' accomplishments could be combatted with music from a time before the war, which brought memories of a better time. Henry Meyer and Alma Rose were some of the prisoners who were forced to play and engage in music for the entertainment of the Nazis and the accompaniment to the death of their fellow prisoners. Auschwitz was an unexplainable and, for generations thereafter, still an incomprehensible and horrific experience, all accompanied by a varying range of music.

⁴⁷ Kellie Brown, *The Sound of Hope: Music as Solace, Resistance, and Salvation during the Holocaust and World War II* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2020).

Henry Meyer

Henry Meyer was an accomplished musician who won several scholarships to study at Juilliard and was a founding member of the LaSalle Quartet, the first quartet-in-residence at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. Meyer also was a violinist in the Auschwitz orchestra. He did not speak about his experiences because he wanted to make it in music on his own rather than out of pity because of where he came from. His mind was changed on speaking about his past 38 years after the Holocaust when he started to look more into the unapologetic Holocaust deniers. This invalidation of his past and what he had survived encouraged him to tell his story to the Fortunoff archives that has collected over 4,400 testimonies from survivors. Meyer was exposed to a very large range of music in his studies before and during the war. Since he was born in 1923, Meyer experienced most of the war in his teen years and early twenties. Even though he was forced to spend some of his most formative years in concentration camps, Meyer was already an incredibly skilled musician having played with the Dresden Philharmonic multiple times as a child. His skills were partly developed during his time with the Jüdischer Kulturbund. Author of *The Berlin 'Jüdischer Kulturbund' and the 'After-Life' of Franz Schubert*, Lily E. Hirsch, details how this band was created in 1939 by the Nazis to separate Jewish culture from what they deemed to be the superior German culture. Hirsch also explains how the Jüdischer Kulturbund was a Nazi-organized band that only consisted of Jewish musicians to get them out of mainstream music.⁴⁸ Even

⁴⁸ Lily Hirsch, "The Berlin 'Jüdischer Kulturbund' and the 'After-Life' of Franz Schubert: Musical Appropriation and Identity Politics in Nazi Germany," *Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (2007): 496-507. <https://eds-p-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=ada957c2-7e41-478c-93c8->

though this was created by the Nazis to further instill their ideals it did help to further connect Jews to other musicians in their community in a time of oppression and fear. Eventually, Meyer's musical abilities would aid in saving his life while he was imprisoned at Auschwitz. When describing his own life to the Fortunoff archives, Meyer explains how, "My life is full of coincidence. You will find that out. Close to miracles really."⁴⁹ This is in reference not only to his musical abilities being a lifeline but also his encounters and opportunities to learn with great musicians during a dark and terrifying time.

Meyer lost his entire immediate family, was scrutinized because of his relationship with a non-Jewish girl, and lost his health for much of the time during the war. Through all of this, he was able to find solace in music before, during, and after the Holocaust. Meyer recalled in his interview how he was able to talk about such a horrific time in his life, saying "And everybody said, how could you? Well, the only reason I have is, for me, this was a dead camp. There was nothing going on anymore. When I was there, it was terrible. But now it was just a monument, and I was the winner. I had survived. And it's the same reason why I am able to talk about it now."⁵⁰ Figure 11 is a picture of Meyer in 1995 at Yad Vashem performing at the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

f96842119460%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=edsjsr.25172881&db=edsjsr.

⁴⁹ Meyer, "Henry M. Holocaust Testimony."

⁵⁰ Meyer, "Henry M. Holocaust Testimony."



Figure 11. Henry Meyer playing violin at the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz at Yad Vashem (published in Saar Yaacov, “Henry Mayer,” *Music and the Holocaust*, [n.d.]).

Meyer was remembered by fellow camp orchestra member Szymon Laks. Laks was a conductor for the Auschwitz orchestra and, up until his death in 1983, he was one of the major pioneers in attempting to deromanticize remembering the music of the Holocaust. Being able to hold a position as a musician in the camp did increase the chances of one’s survival since the orchestra members were not required to take part in the manual labor. Laks talked about this in his book, *Music of Another World*, saying “music kept the ‘spirit’ (or rather the body) of only... the musicians, who did not have to go out to hard labour and could eat a little better.”⁵¹ Laks wanted to make sure that anyone studying music in the Holocaust would not think that music was the main reason prisoners decided to push through their horrific situations. This sentiment is seen all

⁵¹ Laks, *Music of Another World*.

though his book, and as a former conductor of a camp orchestra, he wanted to make sure that the actual testimonies of the survivors were being heard rather than romantic assumptions and interpretations of scholars.

In their testimonials, interviews, and books, Laks and Meyer both raise interesting points and questions on the topic of humanity's connection to music. Meyer saw how important music was to himself and the role it played in his life as a survivor of the Holocaust and as a professional musician. Laks explored the connections music had to humans in their worst moments and how music validated the horrific works of the Nazis while also validating their personal lives outside of committing mass murder. Laks observes the way in which music could be used in remembering the Holocaust, and the dangers of doing it wrong. Both Laks and Meyer experienced horrific trauma associated with music during their time as camp orchestra members at Auschwitz. However, they both were able to use that music and their experiences to educate people about music in general but also about their time in the Holocaust.

Alma Rosé

Like Meyer, Alma Rosé, the daughter of Arnold Rosenblum, Concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and niece to renowned composer, Gustave Mahler, was an incredible musician who contributed greatly as a violinist until her Jewish ancestry was used by the Nazis to deport her to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the women's camp. After her deportation to Auschwitz, Rosé spent her time conducting the women's orchestra in Birkenau and unfortunately, tragically died of unknown causes in 1944. Figure 12 is a picture of Rosé from the Mahler Foundation.



Figure 12. Picture of Alma Rosé (published in Mahler Foundation, "Alma Maria Rosé," *Mahler Foundation*, [n.d.]).

According to Richard Newman and Karen Kirtley's book, *Alma Rose: Vienna to Auschwitz*, Rosé founded a women's orchestra called the Viennese Waltzing Girls and was able to be financially successful with her musical group until she was imprisoned.⁵² Rosé's family was full of music, and she was able to turn that into a way to make a large impact in her situation in the concentration camp. The music in the camps and conditions for the orchestra members changed drastically when Rosé was conductor. There were so many contributing factors to the musical atmosphere of the women's camps and, according to Newman and Kirtley, Rosé's presence made a huge difference, and she was respected by the Nazi officials which gave her the advantage of gaining more music, better living conditions and working requirements for her orchestra. The influence of

⁵² Newman and Kirtley, *Alma Rosé*.

Rosé also extended into the musicians who were cut from the orchestra when she offered them alternative employment rather than leaving them to fend for themselves in the camp.⁵³ With the ever-changing and anxiety ridden environment of the concentration camp, Rosé was able to protect and keep her orchestra members employed and alive.

One of the orchestra members who survived the Holocaust as a very young woman and is still alive today is Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. She was from an assimilated Jewish family and was sent to Auschwitz for helping the French resistance. The talented cellist recalled in her 1996 memoir, *Inherit the Truth, 1939-1945*, how she first met Alma Rosé and how Lasker-Wallfisch was confused at the ranking and respect Rosé received from the Birkenau SS officers. Lasker-Wallfisch also recalled how structured the camp orchestra was with their practicing schedule and performances.⁵⁴ This orchestra proved to be one of the most respected orchestras in the concentration camps; however, Alma Rosé knew that and was still able to get more for her orchestra. This preferential treatment also came with the added psychological torture of having to perform and provide musical aid to the Nazis who imprisoned them. Even though Rosé was able to provide a bit more safety and security for her orchestra, the Nazis went further to outweigh the physical comforts with more emotional torture through the music that was forced to be played. The players in the women's orchestra at Birkenau experienced the horrific trauma of the Holocaust, but their conditions were better with Alma Rosé as their conductor. The music

⁵³ Newman and Kirtley, *Alma Rosé*.

⁵⁴ Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth 1939-1945: The Documented Experiences of a Survivor of Auschwitz and Belsen* (Providence, R.I.: Giles de la Mare, 1996).

that they played together would bring them closer to be able to endure the rest of the war after the tragic death of their conductor and to carry on her work and memory.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

I do believe that analyzing and listening to the music of the Holocaust contributes to the evolution of Holocaust study and awareness. Music not only allows for more interest to spark in Holocaust studies but also allow more focus on individuals from the Holocaust. The emotional expression of trauma will bring more understanding of the individuals and their experiences while also creating the understanding that sufferers of the Holocaust used music as a coping skill, just as people do today. Shirli Gilbert surveys the lack of recognition of the achievements of musical artists in concentration camps, in her book *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*, and she comments on how the recognition of this alongside the history of the Holocaust could build for better study and engagement.⁵⁵ It is important in remembering the Holocaust but also in remembering specific individuals who were subject to this horrific event. While the Holocaust ended 77 years ago, the generation of people who experienced it firsthand will not be around much longer. However, the potential for the Holocaust to happen again always will be. Henry Meyer expressed his concern about the loss of Holocaust memory in his interview with Fortunoff archives, explaining his fear for the future, which

[u]nleashed a fear in me as I belong to the last generation of eyewitnesses, the moment may come where we aren't here anymore, and it will be very easy to say this never happened. I even can understand that this can be said. Because what we went through is so way above human imagination that at times, I question myself if what I remember is really what I took part in, what I had to go through, what I survived, and so on.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ Meyer, "Henry M. Holocaust Testimony."

Studying the Holocaust will always be a necessity, along with the understanding how capable humans are of mass extermination. Kathryn Huether elaborates in her thesis “Hearing the Holocaust: Music, Film, Aesthetic,” about how the aesthetics of musical representation in Holocaust films can affect the perspective of the Holocaust and the horrific events.⁵⁷ This is just an example of how music can sway the view of historical events. When the music of the time was examined, it brought to light how the music could add another layer of understanding of the prisoners of the Holocaust and help us gain another way of viewing and understanding the Holocaust. Music could offer another view of the prisoners through more of an emotional lens rather than through a strictly historical one. The albums analyzed in this thesis allow the exploration of the music of the Holocaust from an auditory perspective rather than just from a visual one.⁵⁸ Atarah Fisher and Avi Gilboa write in their article, “The Roles of Music amongst Musician Holocaust Survivors Before, During, and After the Holocaust,” about how music was not only used as a means of unification among prisoners but also on the personal level of finding identity when their identity was stripped from them by the Nazis.⁵⁹ Remembering the music of the prisoners of the Holocaust also means remembering the individuals themselves and the identities they created for themselves in their music. The influence of music on the people who were subject to the events of the Holocaust and the perpetrators

⁵⁷ Kathryn Huether, “Hearing the Holocaust: Music, Film, Aesthetics,” PhD diss, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2016.

⁵⁸ The albums that are referenced in this research can be found on Apple Music, Spotify, and Yad Vashem’s website.

⁵⁹ Atarah Fisher and Avi Gilboa, “The Roles of Music amongst Musician Holocaust Survivors before, during, and after the Holocaust,” *Psychology of Music* 44, no. 6, (2016): 1221-1239.

of it is extremely strong and can be seen through so many historical accounts that are not centered around the music. Since the influence of music can be seen so clearly already, the study of music in the Holocaust can open even more conversations and opportunities for understanding, learning, and teaching about the history of the Holocaust.

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