



5-2011

## 'Music is Life, and like Life, Inextinguishable': Nazi Cultural Control and the Jewish Musical Refuge

Wynne E Channell  
wchannel@utk.edu

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Wynne E Channell entitled "'Music is Life, and like Life, Inextinguishable': Nazi Cultural Control and the Jewish Musical Refuge." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

A. Denise Phillips, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Vejas Liulevicius, Margaret Andersen

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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“Music is Life, and like Life, Inextinguishable”:  
Nazi Cultural Control and the Jewish Musical Refuge

A Thesis Presented for the  
Master of Arts Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Wynne E. Channell

May 2011

## *Abstract*

This thesis focuses on the concept of cultural national identity during the Third Reich and how the Nazis attempted to shape an image of Germany to their liking. By specifically examining musical culture and restrictions, this thesis investigates the methods the Nazis used to define Germany through music by determining what aspects of Germany's culture were not "traditionally" German—namely those of the Jewish minority in Germany. Therefore, this study follows the Nazi restrictions on the German population who participated in the creation and performance of music and is then contrasted with those imposed upon the corresponding Jewish population. The resulting conclusion is that the Nazis created a place for exclusion and oppression, but managed to, ironically, create a place of refuge for Jewish musicians in the Third Reich. Music was, in the end, an unstoppable force which the Nazis could not control or fully regulate.

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## *Introduction*

On February 8, 1941, one phrase into the Mussorgsky song “My Tears Give Birth to Flowers,” Wilhelm Guttman, a well respected opera singer, collapsed and died from a heart attack.<sup>1</sup> His death would perhaps seem simply a fantastical account of the risks of a man singing opera into his late 50s, if not for the fact that Guttman was no ordinary singer. Guttman was a member of the Berlin branch of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, one of its most prominent and reliable performers. The day before the performance, Guttman had been called to Gestapo headquarters and did not arrive back at the theater until three minutes before the beginning of the performance the next day. Nothing is known about his trip to the police station, but his death from a heart attack has been attributed to his time with the Gestapo. What does the death of this man have to tell us about the history of Germany? About the condition of music under the Nazi regime? It is, in fact, a perfect example of the condition of music under the restriction and control of the Nazi party.

In the early years of their regime, the Nazi party created organizations to control the cultural expression of Germans and Jews within the Third Reich. The *Reichskulturkammer* (RKK) was the head organ of this control and under its authority the *Reichsmusikkammer* (RMK) controlled the performance and production of music in Germany. Also, the RMK was responsible for overseeing the activities of its Jewish counterpart, the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*.<sup>2</sup> In effect, the Nazis were attempting to regulate every aspect of German culture in a manner benefiting the goals and ideology of the Nazi party. This ambitious plan was meant to be comprehensive regarding the lives of the Germans in the Third Reich. The Nazis failed at this

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony: A True Story of Music and Love in Nazi Germany*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), p. 262-263.

<sup>2</sup> Erik Levi. *Music in the Third Reich* (London: MacMillan Press, 1994).

particular task. Despite hard work and strict guidelines, it proved impossible to regulate entirely the thoughts and opinions of an entire nation. The Nazis created a template for what they believed constituted the best of German culture, as well as creating a definition for the German nation.

This template also resulted in the creation of a definition of what was not part of the German nation, specifically the Jews. By identifying the outsiders, the Nazis put in place methods of control in order to solidify the separation of culture they desired. Their control was in no way all-encompassing—there are many cases in which Jewish musicians were able to escape Nazi surveillance due to problems with the Nazi infrastructure.<sup>3</sup> The control the Nazis were able to exercise, however, was enough to choke the cultural lives of the Jews, and in some cases kill their methods of musical expression. The main organ of this was the Nazi policies that created a “civil death” for the Jews.<sup>4</sup> Nazi policies in the 1930s made such a civil death possible by limiting Jewish movements and careers based entirely on race—although early on this was carefully worded as “reliability” instead of clearly saying “Jew.”<sup>5</sup> The inability to express themselves through art was a method of oppression which struck at the daily lives of Jews in a way the Nazis well understood. Despite this civil death, the Jewish community quickly

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<sup>3</sup> Problems with the Nazi infrastructure in this case consisted of a shortage of workers needed to sift through all the information available about members of the population in order to determine their Germanness. Numerous musicians were able to slip through the Nazis’ nets due to the overwhelmingly massive task of identifying every person in the nation. Michael Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 80-82.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 298; Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2003), p. 209-210.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Steinweis, “The Nazi Purge of German Artistic and Cultural Life” in Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 103.

negotiated the creation of a cultural organization for the Jewish people, creating a space for themselves in Nazi Germany.

Cultural restrictions are, of course, not the worst thing the Nazis did to the Jews. In fact, when compared with the extermination of the Holocaust, it appears almost trifling to consider music. But before the camps opened, before the gas chambers were used, before the ghettos, before the mandatory Star of David, the Nazis struck at the daily lives of Jews by crippling their ability to express themselves through art. They were no longer considered Germans and were forced outside the larger German cultural community because of the racial opinion of a political party. The restrictions on cultural life for Jews were a subtler, less violent method the Nazis employed on their path to creating the Germany they imagined. At the same time the Jews were being constricted by Nazi policy, they used the *Kulturbund* to create for themselves a place entirely their own. Ironically, while the Nazis meant for the league to be restrictive, the Jews used the league as a place to combat those restrictions and succeeded in creating a place of refuge.

The death of Wilhelm Guttman is an example of this constriction of Jewish cultural life, for Guttman lived to perform, and as a musician in Nazi Germany, Guttman had only one chance to perform under the authority of the RMK. Guttman, a Jew, could only work for the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* since Jews were barred from professional careers in Germany. While the *Kulturbund* was founded in 1933, the number of members had dwindled considerably as the decade progressed. By 1941, membership was low because so many performers had either managed to flee the country or were already in camps. There were still enough performers in 1941 to hold small concerts, but the audiences were also steadily shrinking. The war had made life considerably harder for the *Kulturbund* Jews, as it did for all Germany's Jews. Guttman's

life centered around the activities of the league; he was a principal performer in many of their programs. Since his life had always been about music, the Nazi restrictions had slowly shrunk the space in which he could live. Restrictions on what could be performed, where performances could be held, had effectively reduced the area in which Guttman could go about his way of life. The Gestapo may not have killed Wilhelm Guttman, but the Nazis effectively destroyed the only way he knew how to live.

Cultural studies of the National Socialist period necessarily have to include some background on the people involved in shaping the cultural identity of the nation—drawing information about the men behind the music into an understanding of the music itself. The best-known cultural symbol of Nazi Germany was Richard Wagner due to Hitler's affinity for the musical dramas of this master composer. Culturally, Wagner's works were important to the German culture the Nazis fostered, but other thematic elements were also prevalent in Nazi culture. Specifically, the idea of German as heroes, as traditionally heroic figures, as well as the strength of the German people, aided the Nazi ideology and propaganda machine during the Third Reich.<sup>6</sup>

Members of the Nazi party involved in the dissemination of culture as well as performance of artistic expressions are also important in the discussion of Nazi cultural control. Hitler's personality, his likes and dislikes, were often the impetus for determining what was and was not included as Nazi culture. The other major players in the cultural debate were Joseph Goebbels and Hans Hinkel as the Nazis in charge of the chambers of culture and music, respectively. Members of the Jewish community also took part in the creation of the *Kulturbund*: Kurt Singer and Kurt Baumann were main agents of change for the Jewish side of

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<sup>6</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, specifically p. 76.

the cultural league. Membership of the Berlin branch of the league reached 20,000 at its peak, making it the largest organ of a Jewish community outside camps or ghettos during the Third Reich. Exploring the Jewish cultural community, therefore, presents a picture of Jewish society as whole in comparison to the non-Jewish German cultural community cultivated by the Nazis.

### *Historiography*

In the following chapters, I aim to show the manner in which the Nazis attempted to create a national cultural identity through music and how this identity was tied to the Nazis' new definition of Germanness. Also, I will be exploring the Jewish side of the issue, as the Jews were restricted in complex and sometimes ridiculous ways based on putative definitions of their race. Numerous historians before me have examined the cultural implications of Nazi control during the Third Reich, but they follow a different path. Erik Levi, Michael Kater, and others have discussed at length the involvement of Nazis in culture. Levi's many works center on the way in which the Nazis used music as a means of politics, as well as focusing on their misuse of certain German musical masters.<sup>7</sup> Kater's works involve an overview of German music, Nazi interference, and specific biographies of composers in the Third Reich.<sup>8</sup> Both these historians' works center on the Nazi side of the issue, without paying much attention to the Jewish reaction or experience. Other historians, such as Celia Applegate, Pamela Potter, and Karen Painter, have

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<sup>7</sup> Erik Levi, *Music and the Third Reich*; Erik Levi, *Mozart and the Nazis: How the Third Reich Abused a Cultural Icon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Kater, *The Twisted Muse*; Michael Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

all explored what being the “People of Music” meant to the German nation.<sup>9</sup> The background of this particular moniker has been linked to the German people for years, as the nation claimed Beethoven, Brahms, and Bach—to name only a few.

While all these historians have covered the Nazi period and the cultural restrictions of the Third Reich, a surprising gap in the scholarship appears in the years preceding the Holocaust. Jewish culture of the 1930s has been greatly understudied as work on the Holocaust has overshadowed the years leading up to the genocide. Cultural studies of the Third Reich almost exclusively follow the same historical path: they begin with the roots in traditional German culture, reaching back to the days of the Wilhelmine monarchy and the effects of the French Revolution; then the period of unification followed by World War I.<sup>10</sup> The climax, and usually the turning point of cultural historical studies is the Weimar Republic, and the economic hard times of the interwar period. Next is the Holocaust, after a brief description of the 1930s. The decade is one of great importance that should not be skimmed over as if the Nazi policies of the 1940s are more significant, displacing the cultural events of the 1930s. Such emphasis on the decade of the 1940s has led to studies such as Kater’s *The Twisted Muse* and Levi’s *Music and*

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<sup>9</sup> Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900-1945* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> For works on cultural history covering this earlier period, see David Gramit, *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770-1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Andrew Bonnell, *The People’s Stage in Imperial Germany: Social Democracy and Culture 1890-1914* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005); Bryan Gilliam, *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

*the Third Reich* which automatically cast a dark specter over their work due to the eventual inclusion of the Holocaust.

It is, of course, important to know the end of the story while explaining the beginning, but most cultural studies appear to have skipped the middle. Brian Currid's *A National Acoustics* is another example of the interest in Weimar leading to the Holocaust without exploring in detail the in-between.<sup>11</sup> Currid's study takes into account the Nazi side of the cultural issue without addressing the Jewish reaction or even action. Instead, works like Currid's as well as others, have focused so closely on the policies of the Nazis that the focus has not fallen on the people the policies effected. Recently, however, Lily Hirsch published her dissertation, which follows the story of a cultural league begun in 1933 and dissolved in 1941.<sup>12</sup> *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany* tells the story of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* as an example of the cultural restrictions the Nazis placed on the Jewish population in regards to music. Hirsch, like most historians of Jewish lives in the Third Reich, does include a section tracing the eventual fate of her historical actors—almost all of whom perished in the Holocaust—but Hirsch makes sure to focus on the musical events of the 1930s without pointing overtly toward the Holocaust.

Hirsch's focus is the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* and its place in German society. Her study represents the most thorough work on the Jewish side of the equation. *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany* focuses on an understanding of the music—the composers chosen by the *Kulturbund*—in order to shed light on the Jewish cultural scene the of 1930s. My study focuses on the people performing and the audience members viewing those composers and how the

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<sup>11</sup> Brian Currid, *A National Acoustics: Music and Mass Publicity in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Lily Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany: Musical Politics and the Berlin Cultural League* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Jewish cultural community used that experience to create a feeling of refuge. The Jewish Cultural League has been widely ignored in studies, most only giving it a short section discussing the Nazi role in the league. While the Nazis controlled the production of the league, they were not in the practice rooms or the recital hall every day. The *Kulturbund* experienced relative freedom in its day-to-day activities, which made it an unusual entity in Nazi Germany. My goal is to argue that *Kulturbund* was a refuge for Jewish musicians and their audiences outside of the Nazi control policies during the Third Reich.

There is nothing new about studying aspects of culture in order to understand the political and social atmosphere of a particular historical time, but I will be arguing for the unexpected result of creating a place of relative refuge for Jews inside the raging storm of the Third Reich, something other historians have not covered. There have been other studies of cultural expression in the Third Reich, such as Peter Jelavich's work on cabaret in Berlin during the Third Reich—which, according to Jelavich, weaved together “the themes of politics, sexuality, fashion, and race as treated in cabarets and related types of popular entertainment.”<sup>13</sup> This work is in effect the parallel to Hirsch's as it follows the rather closed sphere of cabaret within the Third Reich, tracing the effect of Aryanism on the ranks of the cabaret performers. Other cultural works about the Third Reich focus heavily on Richard Wagner and his relationship to the political party—a relationship completely one sided as Wagner had been dead before Hitler was born. Such works include Jeremy Tambling's *Opera and the Culture of Fascism*, a fascinating study of art and politics through an examination of the aspects of opera which were seen as beneficial for political support—specifically Wagnerian opera.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Opera and the Culture of Fascism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

## *Analysis*

My main argument follows the restrictions the Nazis placed on cultural expression in order to understand the national cultural identity they wanted to foster among the German people. An understanding of this identity could only be discovered by also looking at what the Nazis eliminated from their culture—mainly the Jewish element. As a secondary argument, the accidental creation of a place of refuge for the Jews of Germany due to this segregation of culture actually enabled the Jews involved in the cultural league to retain a sense of normalcy despite the Nazis' attempts to oppress them at every turn. By engaging primary sources from both the Nazi side of the story as well as the Jewish side, I intend to show the reality of the historical situation in opposition to the established historiography.

Numerous scholars who see the actual events of the Holocaust as overshadowing and teleologically determining any previous cultural oppression felt by the Jews have questioned the importance of this topic. While the events of the Holocaust, the deaths of millions and the wrongfully imprisonment of innocents, are most definitely worth studying, the Nazis did employ subtler, less violent means of cultural extermination before shipping Jews to camps. Several historians have referred to this cultural division as a method of “civil death” which made life as an intellectual or cultural professional no longer possible for the Jews of Germany.<sup>15</sup> Nazi policies in the 1930s progressively made such a civil death a reality for the Jewish population of Germany through more and more restrictive laws.<sup>16</sup> In order to understand better the events of the Holocaust, this civil death needs to be further studied, along with the ways in which the Jewish population of Germany managed to continue living in the face of this civil death.

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<sup>15</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 298; Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, p. 209-210.

<sup>16</sup>Steinweis, “The Nazi Purge of German Artistic and Cultural Life,” p. 103.

My argument will then follow the theme of Nazi restrictions on cultural expression by first exploring the ways the Nazis attempted to define “Germanness” in music. This exploration will follow the line of evidence starting with the effects of the Weimar Republic on Nazi cultural ideology; the Nazi affinity for Richard Wagner, the anti-Semitic tendencies of this musical genius and Hitler’s obsession with him; the search for a national identity through music, a la Benedict Anderson; the creation of the organizations responsible for the defense and improvement of German culture; and what the new definition of “German” looked like in practice. After reaching a conclusion on the Nazi part of the question of identity, my second chapter will focus on the Jewish cultural community; the new sense of separation between Jews and Germans which the Nazis imposed—a type of civil death; the Jewish search for “Jewish” music; the creation of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* and its place in Jewish society; and the reality of what the Nazis were actually accomplishing with their restrictions on the Jewish musical community. I hope in this study to reach a better understanding of what music meant in the Third Reich and how music was used to justify and carry out the alienation of an entire people.

# Chapter One

## *Redefining “German” Musically: Nazism and the Third Reich*

This chapter will explore the roots of German identity and the cultural patterns in musical expression beginning in the Weimar Republic. In order to understand the national identity the Nazis created during the Third Reich it is necessary to look at what limitations they placed on themselves and on other people. Sources which describe the aims of the Party make clear the definition the Nazis had for their enemies and also their understanding of what it meant to be German. These sources present the Party’s official stance on such topics as blaming the Jews for historical hardships, Jewish alienation, the characteristics of the “Jewish enemy,” and the importance of a culture free of “Jewification.” Such ideas did not spring forth from the Party without any roots in the past. Instead, the influence of Richard Wagner on the musical profession in Germany, and also his personal beliefs, affected the mindset of some of the leaders in the Party. Also, the experience of the Weimar Republic greatly influenced the German people and the Party members who wanted to return Germany to some level of its former glory.

The Nazi party’s desire to recreate a glorious Germany can be seen in every aspect of life in the Third Reich, but this thesis will focus on the influence of this desire on the realm of culture—specifically music. By examining the limits on cultural production, the Germanness the Nazis were looking for in their society becomes evident. In order to explore this Germanness, a base understanding of the criteria for being a German and a non-German according to the Nazis is necessary. Such an understanding must rely on how the Nazis saw themselves and their

enemies in order to come to a conclusion about the national identity they were attempting to create in the new Reich. It is by looking at the Nazi regulations of society that we will come to a better understanding of the identity they wanted for themselves. It is important to understand this aspect of the Nazis because of the impact their regulations caused on German cultural expression and its part in the lives of Jews.

### *National Identity: The Origins*

In February 1920, the German Workers' Party—later to become the National Socialist German Workers' Party—announced its twenty-five points against the current state of affairs in Germany.<sup>17</sup> Among these points, which clearly outlined the political, structural, and cultural leanings of the Party, was point number 4: “None but members of the nation may be citizens of the state. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew therefore may be a member of the nation.”<sup>18</sup> In this rather simple statement, the Party clearly defined what it meant to be German and what it meant to be a foreigner. According to this, Jews could not have German blood, despite the “whatever their creed” aspect of the point and Germanness was defined by bloodline. The implications of this seemingly simple point are monumental. For in this point is the foundation for a question which has plagued not only historians, but also the actors of German history: what does it mean to be German?

Questioning what makes a nation's people unique is not necessarily only a German phenomenon. In studies of German cultural nationalism, one of the most appropriate

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<sup>17</sup>Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, editors. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) p. 124-126.

<sup>18</sup> Kaes, *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p.125.

designations for the national identity of the German people lies in their music. Studies on the sound of the nation follows lines similar to Benedict Anderson's concept of unisonality which explains the feeling of connectedness people experience through music.<sup>19</sup> In his *Imagined Communities*. Anderson describes the connection through an imagined sound as represented by the singing of a national anthem:

[T]here is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests—above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in the singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. [...] How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing those songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea of who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound.<sup>20</sup>

National anthems are not necessarily the focus of this study, but the concept is similar. Instead, it is the ability of music to create a unified sense of community despite other differences that is most relevant here.

Anderson's quote is useful in various ways. Firstly, understanding a nation as an imagined community, such as Anderson describes in his work, adds a dimension to the study of a nation which allows for an understanding of the group of people which is dynamic instead of general and flat. Further, an imagined community seems to be what most nations create for themselves; they use imagined traditions and created ideals and claim those things were

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Brian Currid, *A National Acoustics*.

<sup>20</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 145.

universally and traditionally accepted. The Nazis went about this community creation in the same way—as evidenced by cleansing Germany’s cultural tradition of supposedly “foreign” influences. While the Nazis focused on bloodlines—which Anderson specifically argues against in the same chapter as the above quote—they have to eliminate any influence in society by people outside of the bloodline. This means that while the Nazis were focused on eliminating blood threats, they had to remove what they saw as societal threats as well.

Secondly, Anderson points out that people are able find a sense of community musically. In Germany, this stipulation is especially important as the German nation has been identified as the “people of music.” Being the people of music meant the Germans placed superior importance on their musical production and performance. Having numerous influential composers of German descent only added to the pride of this moniker, making Anderson’s point about people singing a song which others, “out of earshot,” are also participating in as a method of creating a sense of community extremely accurate for the German people.

Thirdly, the specificity of Anderson’s argument here relies on the singing of a national anthem. The German national anthem, the “*Deutschlandlied*”—better known as “*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*” or “Germany above all”—was written by Haydn in the eighteenth century in celebration of the emperor’s birthday. The song was officially made the national anthem of Germany in 1922, during the Weimar Republic.<sup>21</sup> The national anthem of Germany, written by Germans in celebration of Germany, represents an example of pride in German music. The singing of an anthem, according to Anderson, creates a contemporaneous community among people. Such an idea is applicable to the playing and performance of music in a much broader

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<sup>21</sup> “The German National Anthem,” German Bundestag, 2011.

[http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs\\_e/bundestag/symbols/anthem/index.html](http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/symbols/anthem/index.html).

context. The music of a favorite composer or symphony or musician or opera brings together people in a group appreciating and experiencing similar feelings and ideas. It stands to reason that the shared interest of one composer would perhaps imply shared opinions on other topics. The Nazis saw the importance of music as a means of unifying a population, making it important to strip German culture of the supposed “Jewish influence” which was seen as degrading it. Having set themselves the task of removing “non-German” elements from German culture in the Third Reich, the Nazis had to first determine what qualified as German.

Clearly as early as 1920 the Nazis were considering this question and believed they had come up with an answer in the demonizing of the Jewish other. Given the complex interweaving of Jewish identity with national German feelings, however, this was not an easy abstraction to put into place. In order to remove the Jewishness from the Germanness, the Nazis set out on a crusade to extract the Jewish element from their lives—in every possible way. Of course the actual extermination of Jews during the Holocaust represents the most radical method of this extraction, but prior to the commencement of extermination, the Nazis attempted other methods of exclusion. Restrictions placed on the lives of Jews in Germany depicted the areas in which the Jews had most successfully “infiltrated” German culture.

The German nation has long claimed the title “People of Music” as Germany lays claim to some of the most influential composers of all time.<sup>22</sup> The designation as the people of music created a sense of pride for the German people no matter the atmosphere of the times. This moniker, therefore, holds significance for the identity of the Germans as Germans—in their passion for music they found their Germanness. As with most aspects of culture during the Third Reich, according to the Nazis, this Germanness was threatened by the infiltration of Jews

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<sup>22</sup> Applegate and Potter, *Music and German National Identity*, p. 1-4.

who had quite shrewdly managed to take over every aspect of musical expression. This could not and would not be tolerated by the Nazis.

### *Changing the Tune: Redefining “German”*

Quentin Skinner argued in his “Language and Social Change” that historians need to focus on more than one aspect of words relevant to their field of study.<sup>23</sup> This argument is helpful because it calls for a more layered investigation into the terms which flood historical research. Instead of looking at a word and claiming to understand it as is, Skinner calls for an investigation which considers the meaning of the word to historical character, the area of reference of the word and the type of speech act the word is a part of. In the case of this study, the term “German” is used repeatedly with the understanding that the word means something because of the historical and geographical implications of what is technically “German.” What it meant to be “German” during the Third Reich was based on what the Nazis attempted to make it mean. The following study explores how the Nazis attempted to redefine the cultural meaning of “German” by controlling what Germans and “non-Germans” were able to create, perform, experience musically.

### *Wagner and the Jews*

Anti-Semitism did not begin with the Nazis and it was definitely not destroyed with the destruction of Third Reich. The history of anti-Semitism is long and complicated with twists and turns which span across the centuries of historical study. Anti-Semitism in Germany has traces

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<sup>23</sup> Quentin Skinner, “Language and Social Change,” in James Tully, editor, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*. (London: Polity, 1988) p. 119-132.

throughout history, but perhaps the most relevant anti-Semite for this study is the composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). While Wagner's influence on the Nazis is incalculable, the influence of Wagner on the musical tradition of Germany remains massive. As the people of music, the Germans can claim some of the greatest composers in history. Wagner is one of them. The operas of this musical genius are still a matter of discussion today as students attempt to work out the intricacies of his epic operas.

No exploration into the importance of music for the German people could be complete without the presence of Richard Wagner.<sup>24</sup> Wagner's life and music has been explored and analyzed before and his personal history will not be the focus here. Instead, the most relevant information about Wagner for the Nazis' campaign against Jewish influence appeared in a publication with the title "*Das Judenthum in der Musik*" or "Judaism in Music."<sup>25</sup> Originally, Wagner published the article in 1850 under a pseudonym, but because readers of the article were able to conclude, rather easily, that he was the author, he republished it again under his real name shortly after that. Another edition, in English, was published in 1910 and included Wagner's original work along with an essay Wagner wrote answering those who criticized the first publication.

In the original essay, Wagner's accusation against the Jews foreshadows the Nazis feelings toward the Jewish element in society. For example:

In the present state of things the Jew is more than free, for he dominates; and, as long as money continues the power before which all our doings and strivings are as naught, he will continue to do so. Nor can it be necessary in this place to go over the historical

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<sup>24</sup> Unless the study covered the time period before the life of Wagner, in which case it could be complete without Wagner.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music*. (London: William Reeves, 1910).

ground, and to show that it was the period of misery of the Jews and the plundering savagery of Christian-German despots which ultimately led this power into the hands of the sons of Israel.<sup>26</sup>

According to this quote, Jews had felt the power of Christians and their suffering had caused them to desire a domination which they succeeded in getting. Jews were free to do as they pleased because of economics—an argument for the success of Jews despite the failures of their compatriots. This argument for the monetary success of Jews is one which the Nazis would employ later when painting a picture of the evils of the Jewish population in postwar Germany. According to Wagner, then, the only way to bring about change in order to eliminate the Jewish influence and control over society is to change the system that allowed them to become powerful in the first place. Wagner does not outline his steps to creating this new system to eliminate Jewish authority in society, but he clearly states what he sees as the root of the problem: money.

Also mentioned in *Judaism in Music* is the so-called “Jewification” of art.<sup>27</sup> Wagner claims that this Jewish takeover of art is clearly visible to anyone and that the search to exclude the Jews from art must remain the goal of everyone devoted to bettering art in general. The work goes on to describe the necessity of this exclusion and the search for the means by which to remove Judaism from culture. Wagner’s syntax, as one would expect from a great composer, is musical and quite well chosen. The artful way he constructs his argument may almost be enough to hide the malicious nature of his claims, but only almost.

Wagner’s anti-Semitism starts on the most basic level of personal judgment by beginning with the appearance of Jews in general. Every Jew, in Wagner’s mind, appears as an outsider based on the features of their build—something Wagner attributes to the masterful design of

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<sup>26</sup>Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 7.

nature.<sup>28</sup> Wagner claimed that the appearance of Jews is so alien to the traditional concept of what is attractive that “[n]o character, whether antique or modern, hero or lover, can be even thought of as represented by a Jew without an instant consciousness on our part of the ludicrous inappropriateness of such a proceeding.”<sup>29</sup> Since no Jew could qualify as a symbol of hero or lover, then Wagner concludes no Jew could possibly create any such figure. In Wagner’s view the nature of the Jew as an impossible heroic figure somehow means Jews could not even imagine such a figure in order to create one in art.<sup>30</sup>

Wagner’s distaste for the appearance of the Jewish population, while interesting, does not represent the most important aspect of his anti-Semitism. As music is Wagner’s preoccupation, the effect of Judaism on musical creation is the focus of his article (as one would assume by the title). After his discussion of appearance, Wagner gets to the point: the Jews integrate themselves into a culture and speak the language of the nation. For Wagner, the voice of the Jew is the most important, since it can speak the words of any nation, but always remain as a foreigner. This supposedly presents itself as a limiting factor in the ability of Jews to express themselves in any language other than their own—Hebrew. Wagner’s conclusion to that effect is interesting, but not really viable. A value judgment of his argument, however, is not the point. Instead, understanding the anti-Semitism of this composer allows for an understanding of his influence on the Nazi party.

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<sup>28</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 11.

## *Wagner and the Nazis*

Richard Wagner died in the nineteenth century—he saw neither World War nor the rise of Nazism. Wagner also did not have foresight of any kind. His anti-Semitism and operas were important aspects of his life, but a direct line cannot be drawn from Wagner to the Nazis. Instead, line can be draw from the Nazis back. The evidence of Wagner’s influence on the Nazis appears in numerous ways but none were initiated by Wagner himself. Nazism and its very strict anti-Semitism were products of people, some of whom were influenced by Wagner. The supposition that Wagner is in some way directly responsible for Nazism is much too strong an assumption. Instead of seeing Nazism in Wagner, it is a much more beneficial exercise to look for Wagner in the Nazis.

While the amount of influence Wagner had on Adolf Hitler is unknown, evidence shows that Hitler did have a fondness for the works of Wagner. Where this taste for Wagner arose is unknown, but there are tales of a teenage Hitler roaming the streets of Vienna attempting to purchase a ticket to one of the opera performances.<sup>31</sup> A tale is woven which describes the impressionable Hitler being mesmerized by the majesty of the performance, by the great dramatic offering, by the set pieces and the grandeur of larger than life characters following epic paths of discovery and adventure. Parallels have been drawn between acts made by Hitler and the actions of Wagner’s protagonists. Perhaps the grandeur of Wagner’s work really did inspire Hitler’s method of speech giving. This remains unknown.

The arguments surrounding Wagner’s influence on Hitler vary from believable to fantastical. Some points made seem to have a basis in reality. For example, Hitler used quotes

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<sup>31</sup> Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007).

from Wagnerian opera in his speeches.<sup>32</sup> Since Hitler's speeches were recorded, comparing his words against Wagner's would elucidate any similarities. Something as simple as quoting Wagner does not necessarily mean that Hitler was a huge fan; instead, the stories told of Hitler's first exposure to Wagnerian opera as a young man suggest this devotion alleged in his later life.

The tale of Hitler's first encounter with a performance of Wagner places Hitler at the feet of the composer: a young Adolf Hitler, determined to become an artist, travels to Vienna where he is exposed to true culture for the first time. In a card sent to a friend, Hitler supposedly claimed that the performance of Wagner's *Tristan* had moved him deeply by the "powerful waves of sound" and the "murmur of the wind" depicted by Wagner's score.<sup>33</sup> On another occasion, Hitler allegedly claimed Wagner's *Rienzi* opera had been the reason he entered politics.<sup>34</sup> This account of Hitler in 1906 presupposes Hitler's devotion to Wagner before ever hearing any of his work. It is, however, a remotely possible account since Hitler did travel to Vienna and probably did go to the opera while there. Whether the music affected him so much as to make him abandon plans of becoming an artist seems too great an assumption.

Hitler definitely felt influenced by Wagner and evidence from the Third Reich proves some loyalty to the man and his work. Joachim Köhler's *Wagner's Hitler: The Prophet and his Disciple* takes this influence too far. Köhler claims that from the moment Hitler heard Wagner

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<sup>32</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 333. Ross cites Hitler's speech to the first Nuremberg Party Congress in 1933, in which Hitler said "*Wach' auf!*" ("Awake!") a quote from Wagner's *Meistersinger*. Ross's evidence is from an edition of Hitler's words collected by Max Domarus, from which Ross draws the anecdote that Hitler had tears in his eyes when attending the commemoration of Wagner in Leipzig in 1934—which was conducted by Max von Schillings, who appears later in this chapter as a favorite of Hitler after his wonderful execution of the celebratory commemoration of Wagner's birthday.

<sup>33</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 339.

<sup>34</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 340.

for the first time, he lost his ability to make any decisions as Wagner had taken over Hitler's mind and soul and was now in charge of the German.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, according to Köhler, every move Hitler made was in fact Wagner making it, connecting the composer to a time outside his own. This concept of Wagner's influence on Hitler completely eliminates any agency on Hitler's part and makes Wagner the evil mastermind behind World War 2, the Holocaust and Nazism. Such a fantastical argument places too much influence on Wagner and too little strength on Hitler. Hitler definitely enjoyed Wagner and wanted to keep his music alive throughout the Third Reich, but he was not the reincarnated embodiment of Richard Wagner.

There is evidence connecting Richard Wagner's works with Hitler. Stories, which may not be based in fact, have circulated which recount Hitler ordering soldiers to press people, sometimes passersby, into sitting in the audience for poorly attended performances of Wagner's operas.<sup>36</sup> Great performances honoring the genius of Wagner's work were staged to Hitler's delight. The renewal of the Bayreuth festival was one revival of Wagner's work which the Nazis initiated during the Third Reich. The performances put on in Bayreuth were based on the designs created by Wagner who constructed the theater and stage in order to best present his works. This dedication to excellence, not unique to Wagner, is one aspect of the German spirit which resonated with Hitler and the concept of a traditional German identity.

### *Defending German Culture: the KfdK and the RKK*

During the Weimar Republic, conservatives were appalled by the modernist tendencies of the culture. The German nation had been proud, but the defeat of the Great War and the

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<sup>35</sup> Joachim Köhler, *Wagner's Hitler: The Prophet and his Disciple*. (Cambridge, Polity Press: 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 344.

following failure of the Weimar Republic left many Germans with an injured sense of a national culture. Before the official establishment of the Third Reich, there were steps made to recreate and protect the sense of national pride the Germans had owned for so long. In regards to music, a cultural league created in 1929 supposedly protected German culture from influence which could harm it. As the Nazi Party grew in power, those influences become defined more in line with Nazi ideology than with quality of production in mind.

The *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*—or German Culture Combat League—was created in 1929 and rose to prominence in the early 1930s. Originally outside of Party control, the *Kampfbund* was headed by Alfred Rosenberg until 1933 when the state took over its duties. According to Rosenberg, the *Kampfbund* was meant to serve as a “rallying cry for artists that were violently hostile to [the] cultural atmosphere of the Weimar Republic.”<sup>37</sup> In the beginning years of the *Kampfbund*, the league had been joined by over 10,000 people and encompassed some of the nation’s leading artists. By 1933, 38,000 people claimed membership to the *Kampfbund* and the league was gaining in power as it took over *Die Musik*, one of Germany’s leading music journals.<sup>38</sup>

Despite Rosenberg’s initial leadership of the *Kampfbund*, Hitler decided to place the control of German culture under the authority of Goebbels and the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. At the beginning of 1933, Goebbels was appointed the Reichs Minister of this branch of the Party and by the end of the year, a new institution in charge of German culture was created, the *Reichskulturkammer* (RKK) which included the

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<sup>37</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 16.

*Reichsmusikkammer* (RMK) devoted to the creation and promotion of music.<sup>39</sup> The change in name, and leadership, did not greatly affect the guidelines of the Reich Chamber of Culture. The goal was still to combat any type of cultural influence which was seen as negatively affecting the greater “German” culture.

When Goebbels and the RKK took over the protection of German culture, the *Kampfbund* turned into an independent group of people who followed Rosenberg’s ideology. It never enjoyed prominence after 1933, but its lasting impact was the concept which was coopted by a few enterprising Jews and the Nazi Hans Hinkel who created the parallel league, the Jewish Cultural League. This league will be discussed to greater detail later, but it is important to understand its relationship with the *Kampfbund* and then the RKK.

As the RKK was in control of all German culture, a separate branch was created to cover music, the RMK. The RMK issued laws at the end of 1933 which were meant to “fight against unemployment and ensure that 50,000 orchestral musicians, teachers, and church musicians received a decent income.”<sup>40</sup> In practice, however, the RMK served to restrict musicians in Germany by requiring membership which allowed the member to retain a position. Their mission was stated thus:

The Reich Chamber of Music has been called upon to keep alive the fundamental thought to professional progress by organizing, with due consideration for the character and activities of the musician, the cultural, economical and legal conditions of the music

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<sup>39</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 16-22.

<sup>40</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 28.

profession or by protecting the existing conditions in such manner that music will be preserved for the German people as one of its most precious possessions.<sup>41</sup>

Effectively, however, the RMK represented the first cultural restrictions placed on German musicians by the Nazi party. As with most things during the Third Reich, membership was restricted based on racial guidelines, and could be revoked at any point. This made it possible for the RMK to keep musicians in line who wanted to question the party's line. Revoked membership meant unemployment and exclusion from any musical career inside Germany.

### *Defining the "Other"*

The Reich Chamber of Culture, however, could not combat something without first defining what it was protecting. Joseph Goebbels published an article, "*Warum sind wir Judengegner?*" or "Why are we Enemies of the Jews?" which listed in detail the grievances about what the Jews had supposedly committed against the German people.<sup>42</sup> Goebbels was not necessarily focused on pointing out every evil of the Jews, but instead, he pointed out the benefits and positive reasons to be a Nazi—first defending Nationalism and then Socialism. For Goebbels, the concept of nationalism is tied up in an understanding of the nation as a protector of a certain way of life: "The Nation is the organic bond of a people for the protection and defense of their lives."<sup>43</sup> Germany, the nation, had degenerated because of the Jewish influence in economy and society making "Germany [...] [a] monarchy."<sup>44</sup> The rotten industrial system,

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<sup>41</sup> "Extracts from the Manual of the Reich Chamber of Music (1937)." [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1576](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1576).

<sup>42</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 137.

<sup>43</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 137.

<sup>44</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 137.

which was supporting capitalism and producing the results of the Weimar Republic, was laying waste to the Germany Goebbels claimed to love. His call to become National Socialists revolved around ridding Germany of the degenerate by destroying this system which was “plundering the healthy power of the people.”<sup>45</sup>

Goebbels’ wording is remarkably similar to that of Wagner in his aforementioned article. In both instances, Jews were supposedly leeches whose monetary wealth came from their ability to succeed no matter the state of the community. Both men claimed the system in place was one which benefitted the Jews and injured the general population. Jews benefitted because they had taken power and were now keeping the native population down in order to benefit from the misery of others.<sup>46</sup>

The protection of life in Germany, according to Goebbels, was the main focus of his sense of Nationalism. What he means by “life” fits within the strict guidelines of the National Socialist ideals of right and wrong. Obviously, for the Nazis, life did not include Jews or foreigners. Life did also not include anything deemed destructive by the Nazi Party. Goebbels’ argument, therefore, would be to replace the current government system with one fitting his criteria—one which excluded Jews and foreigners. Protection of the Nazi concept of life is then what Goebbels meant when describing the nation as the protector and defender of the people’s way of life. It eliminates the evil and elevates the good.

Goebbels’ rhetoric is filled with this kind of talk—destroying one way and creating another method for the betterment of the people. An analysis of this kind of talk would possibly

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<sup>45</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 137.

<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, both men describe the Jews as benefitting during the misery of others. Their wording is the same in describing misery and the wealthy Jews sucking the population dry.

shed more light on Goebbels' particular beliefs, but that is not the focus here. Instead, Goebbels' rhetoric delineates the differences between the National Socialists and everyone else. Clearly, Jews are on the other side, but what defines the German who loves the nation? What it means to be German can be defined as the opposite of what it means to be a Jew. For Goebbels, the Jews are "the cause and the beneficiary of our misery" and have "no interest in the solution of Germany's fateful problems."<sup>47</sup> In fact, Goebbels claimed the Jews were profiting from the lack of solutions in Germany. This means that the aim of the good German must be to solve the problems facing Germany in order to stop the evil rise of the Jews in society, economy, and politics. Also, the Germans must desire to give the "people a unified community and give them freedom before the world."<sup>48</sup> This is only possible with the removal of Jews from this community.

Goebbels depicted Germans as people who desire freedom and long for unity. Allegedly, the Jews had fought the unification of Germany because they profited from its divisions. The German people supposedly live in a split community looking for wholeness. This presumption on Goebbels' part is not necessarily that great an imaginative leap. Life in the Weimar Republic was remarkably difficult and nothing like the glory the Germans expected would emerge from the result of the Great War—which they expected to win. The Jews, on the other hand, thrived because of this degeneration of Germany. Jews could not be counted among the German people because they wanted the division; they desired the downtrodden nature of Germany simply due to their success within that debilitating atmosphere. Goebbels' argument against the Jews presents them as menacing people who joy in the misery of others. This picture of the Jews

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<sup>47</sup>Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 138.

<sup>48</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 138.

presents an enemy any German could identify and understand as negative for the progression and recovery of the nation.

Goebbels does not stop with innuendoes and implied opinions of the Jews; he's much too straight forward for that. The beginning of this article describes why the Party is Nationalist and why it is Socialist. He concludes by answering the question of why the Party is the enemy of the Jews with very cut and dry descriptions of the Jews who have infiltrated the country. His accusations are as follows:

[The Jew] has corrupted our race, fouled our morals, undermined our customs, and broken our power. The Jew is the plastic demon of the decline of mankind. The Jew is uncreative. He produces nothing, he only handles products. As long as he struggles against the state, he is a revolutionary; as soon as he has power, he preaches quiet and order so that he can consume his plunder at his convenience.<sup>49</sup>

This picture of Jews is rather grim. Goebbels leaves nothing to the imagination in his description of the Jewish enemy. According to this description, Jews are the enemy of tradition and the concept of nation defined earlier in his article. There is no question in this description as to the guilt of the Jew and the evil punishment which anyone who fit such a description would deserve.

Goebbels' description claims that Jews are incapable of producing anything new and creative; such ability belongs to the true German people. Supposedly, these uncreative Jews had worked their way through the system by being subversive and revolutionary and succeeded in gaining power by taking over what the Germans created. Once at the top of the food chain, according to Goebbels, the Jews in Germany would urge others to take their authority as right and not question this new system in which the Jews profited the most. Goebbels is railing

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<sup>49</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 138.

against the Jews who somehow, despite being uncreative, managed to worm their way into German power structures and quietly take authority from Germans.

Wagner also used the word “plastic” to describe the Jews.<sup>50</sup> And the nature of Jews to inject themselves into a society but to remain aloof or foreign is also covered by Wagner. The foreignness of the Jews seems to be a popular accusation against a people who have been forced to move across Europe over the centuries. Being foreign in Germany could mean being a Jew—the aliens of Germany were therefore people who had attempted to fit in, but could still be pointed out as different based on stereotypes and traditional biases.

#### *The Five Points of Joseph Goebbels*

The *Deutsche Kultur-Wacht* was the publication which represented the interests of saving German culture from foreign influence. In 1932, Joseph Goebbels published his five points about the German Culture Combat League—or the *Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur*. According to Goebbels, the League was created to lead the “struggle in the greater Berlin district for German culture in all areas of art.”<sup>51</sup>

Berlin represented the most important center of cultural activity in Germany during this time period because of the artists, writers, musicians, and others who found their new home in Berlin. For some, Berlin was more of a home than their actual hometowns, since the creative spirit was flowing quite readily in Berlin during Weimar and leading into the Third Reich. The founding of the German Culture Combat League in Berlin was not by chance. Also, the publication which came out of this League—*Deutsche Kultur-Wacht*—was published in Berlin

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<sup>50</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 143.

and obviously leaned heavily toward Berlin's influence. Goebbels, who was the District Administration for Greater Berlin, was the major Nazi party member in charge of cultural restrictions for the nation of Germany. When the Jewish Cultural League was created, Goebbels was the head honcho in charge of the entire operation.

The second of Goebbels' five points published in the aforementioned article was that "all artists and cultural workers, aside from educators, who are members of the party are therefore obligated to join the *Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur*."<sup>52</sup> Since membership in the party was required in order to have a successful career in any field, all artists and cultural workers would have already held membership in the Party. This additional membership meant that artists were not only under the control of the Party because of political reasons, but also for cultural. This *Kampfbund* which supposedly fought for German culture, therefore, had now become the censor which would limit cultural production based on what the Party deemed fit for the German people. Interestingly, educators were limited from this list, possibly because they were limited under another "league." Also interesting about this distinction was that artists and cultural workers were fitted into the same category as educators, equating education with cultural production. This distinction meant that the Nazis saw culture as a type of education on the same level of influence as teachers.

Censorship under the *Kampfbund* was clearly outlined in the third point of Goebbels' article: "all party officials are required to seek the advice of the appropriate specialists from the *Kampfbund*."<sup>53</sup> This effectively gave the Nazis control not only over all cultural production but also over any presentations of culture; whether performance art or creative, the Nazis were

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<sup>52</sup>Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup>Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 143.

placing under their control all aspects of culture within the Third Reich. A discussion of this censorship in its relation to Jewish culture and cultural expressions will be covered in Chapter Two. For now, though, the focus is on the Nazi restrictions placed on Germans who fit inside the Aryan title. These specialists who were in charge of censorship were not necessarily leaders in their particular cultural field. Instead, loyal Party members, like Goebbels, were in charge of areas of cultural expressions which they could possibly have known nothing about. Fitting in as a specialist required membership in the party and loyalty to the cause which, outlined in the twenty-five points mentioned earlier, relied on the acknowledgement of the evils of “foreign” influence.

Goebbels’ point number five described the *Deutsche Kultur-Wacht*, the publication his article was appearing in and referred to the publication as the “militant cultural-political publication due the support of the membership”<sup>54</sup> of the Party and the League. The aggressive nature of the League was therefore stated not only in the title, but also in Goebbels’ point about the biweekly magazine which supports the restrictions of cultural expression. Also, for Goebbels to connect culture with politics is evidence of the Party’s belief in the importance of culture in the political sphere.<sup>55</sup> Culture does not stand alone in the Third Reich as it remains wholly connected to the political life of the Nazis. It is also interesting that Goebbels included the adjective describing the publication as covering “militant” cultural politics. This sets up the *Deutsche Kultur-Wacht* as a defense of German culture, aggressively attacking other cultures, instead of a passive organization simply commenting on topics in German culture.

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<sup>54</sup> Kaes, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, p. 143.

<sup>55</sup> The conclusion of point #5 comments on the special arrangement made with the publishers of *Deutsche Kultur-Wacht* to give members a discount on a subscription. This is interesting since no one who was not a member would want to purchase the publication anyway. This discount was probably just the actual price.

## *Nazism*

Words turned into actions when the National Socialists took power. In April of 1933, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was put in place that barred all Jews from civil service jobs—this included any kind of musical career.<sup>56</sup> The Nazis had begun their dissection of German high culture by eliminating the biggest assumed threat to the survival of German culture: Jewish artists. The wording of this law made it clear that people not fitting into the prescribed Nazi concept of German would be dismissed. The most relevant part of this particular law for this study was in Section 3 Point 1, reading: “Civil servants who are not of Aryan descent are to be retired; if they are honorary officials, they are to be dismissed from their official status.”<sup>57</sup> The law also defines the civil service as well as making an exception for members of the civil service who either fought in the Great War or whose father or son died in the fight. Defining Aryanness was also considered in the law, allowing for the possibility that a person’s Aryan heritage might be questionable, which required an expert from the Ministry of the Interior to determine.<sup>58</sup> The Nazis were setting up a structure which would define a person’s Aryanness—which translated into their Germanness—and either allow them to participate in society or exclude them from it. In their search for a renewed Germany, the Nazis had found at least one part of the population they could blame and punish.

The Civil Service Law officially limited the jobs Jews could retain. Musicians were especially hard hit by this law. Conductors were forced to step down from jobs they had had for

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<sup>56</sup> “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, April 7, 1933.”

[www1.yadvashem.org/about\\_holocaust/documents/part1/doc10.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc10.html).

<sup>57</sup> “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.”

<sup>58</sup> “First Regulation for the Implementation of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.”

[www1.yadvashem.org/about\\_holocaust/documents/part1/doc11.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc11.html).

years, music directors were forced out, and performers were let go to search for some other kind of employment in the new Third Reich community. One famous story of a conductor losing his job is that of Bruno Walter who showed up at the concert hall to find the doors chained.<sup>59</sup> When he asked why he was being locked out he was told that his presence in the concert hall would cause too great a stir among the audience. After requesting a police presence in order to calm any stirrings which may supposedly occur, the conductor was informed his services were no longer needed and that he had been replaced. For most musicians in this situation, their entire lives had been spent working on mastering their instrument or particular field of music—they had no experience in any other occupations.<sup>60</sup>

Stories such as this one were commonplace for Jews after the Nazi seizure of power. The Nazis, however, did not stop with this law. Measures were put into place which would make Jews excluded in the new German cultural identity they were attempting to create and maintain. The German Culture Combat League, which was defensive and aggressive when creating and defining what was German, also had the responsibility of defining what was not German. Clearly, anything Jewish was not German. But what was German? What fell into the category of German culture?

In 1938, in an effort to confront this rather troubling question, a museum exhibit was put together which juxtaposed German art with Degenerate Art.<sup>61</sup> Unsurprisingly, Degenerate art was represented by art with Jewish or Modernist elements. The German exhibit concentrated on works created by Germans—people who understood the traditional and did not concern

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<sup>59</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 353.

<sup>60</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*.

<sup>61</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, 28.

themselves with modern methods of creating art. The simplest way to define art in this case was whether it was created by a German or by an undesirable. Any discussion of art inevitably comes around to the question of what constitutes good art. In the case of this exhibit, anything which was made by Germans and represented the good aspects of German society—traditional gender roles, upright moral codes, hard work, strength of character—qualified as good art. Art created by Jews automatically qualified as degenerate and therefore could never cross the line to German art.

This division between what was German and what was not was not only a product of this exhibit. Five years before this, the Nazis saw fit to create a cultural society parallel to their own which would concern itself wholly with the question of Jewishness in art. The Jewish Cultural League was created in 1933 and was run entirely by Jews. The Nazis, of course, had party members and a branch of their own cultural ministry dedicated to being a watchdog for this league, but Jews were in control of all logistical as well as performance aspects of the league. Further discussion of this league will take place in the next chapter, but for now the focus is on what the Nazis who were involved with the League allowed and banned in respect to the performances of the Jews.

Goebbels was especially instrumental in the creation of the League and was also responsible for various aspects of the Jewish League's administrative structure. The role Goebbels played in both leagues gives him a unique perspective on how the Nazis were attempting to redefine what it meant to be German. Goebbels was able to see—and sometimes directly decide—what was classified as German and what fell under the category of “non-German.”

### *Nazi Melody: The New “German”*

So, who qualified as German? What did the Nazis decide it meant to be German? The obvious textbook answer revolves around the biological restrictions the Nazis placed on the population called the “Germans.” Biology, however, did not necessarily matter when it came to the restrictions the Nazis placed on the cultural definition of “German.” Composers who were ethnically German were not allowed to work in the Third Reich while some musicians with questionable backgrounds thrived under the Nazi regime.

As a first example one may consider the career of Richard Strauss. Strauss was appointed the president of the RMK in 1934. During his short tenure, he was able to make positive advances for musicians, specifically by extending copyright laws for German composers and reaching an agreement with radio stations to play unknown composers. Strauss’ appointment, however, came into jeopardy over his association with a Jew. The libretto for Strauss’ opera, *Die schweigsame Frau*, was written in partnership with Stefan Zweig, a Jewish writer. The opera was performed several times before it was banned by the authorities in the RKK who saw the partnership as harmful for the advancement of German music. Shortly after that, a friendly letter written by Strauss to Zweig was intercepted and Strauss was dismissed as president of the RMK.<sup>62</sup>

In this instance, being Jewish was again cited as being “non-German,” but it was not Strauss’ ethnicity that was the problem. Instead, the close relationship Strauss had with Zweig placed his job in jeopardy. The straw that broke the camel’s back in this example was the comments Strauss made in his letter to Zweig which negatively described his role as the

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<sup>62</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 29-30. Actually, Strauss was forced to resign on grounds of “old age and ill health” which were not necessarily hindrances to his abilities as a musician. They were also not true.

president of the RMK. Being “German,” in this example, was not questioning the role given to you by the Nazis—or complaining about the restrictions the Nazis placed on that role.

Another example of Nazi stipulations for cultural non-Germanness came in 1937 at the degenerate art exhibit. The exhibit opened in Munich in 1937 and traveled around to twelve other cities until 1941. Part of the guide to the exhibit clearly stated what the exhibit was meant to do:

It means to reveal the philosophical, political, racial, and moral goals and purposes pursued by those who promoted subversion. It means to show, too, how these symptoms of degeneracy spread from the deliberate troublemakers to infect those more or less unwitting acolytes who, in spite of previous – and in some cases also subsequent—evidence of artistic talent, were so lacking in scruple, character, or common sense as to join in the general Jewish and Bolshevik furor. It means to reveal in this way the true peril of a trend that, steered by a few Jewish and openly Bolshevik ringleaders, could succeed in enlisting such individuals to work toward Bolshevik anarchy in cultural politics when those same individuals might well have indignantly denied any affiliation with Bolshevism in party politics. It means to prove above all that none of the men who were in any way involved in the degeneracy of art can now turn around and talk about ‘harmless follies of youth.’<sup>63</sup>

Again, questioning the Nazis equaled being non-German, as Jews and Bolsheviks bore the brunt of the accusation of being creators of degenerate art. The first stipulation in this quote blames subversion for the creation of art outside the Nazi definition of “German.” Another part of this guide refers to the last few decades of German art history as “gruesome” and cites “cultural

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<sup>63</sup> “Guide to the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition (1937)” Stephanie Barron, *“Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991, pp. 360, 362. Found at [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1578](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1578).

decadence” as the impetus for the need for Nazism.<sup>64</sup> This decadence, according to the guide, showed that the degeneration of German art was a planned execution by people with an agenda against the German people: Jews and Bolsheviks.

Similar to Strauss’ corruption by a close relationship with a Jew, the “symptoms of degeneracy” were spread from the source to people unwittingly brought in by the alleged degenerates.<sup>65</sup> It is further insulting, as the accusation claims that those who were supposedly brought in by these so-called “degenerates” were not strong enough because of some flaw in their character to resist the persuasions of the Nazi-named “degenerates.” The inverse of this statement, then, concludes that those Germans who fit under the Nazi definition of German have a strength of character making them superior in identifying enemies even in art.

Another important aspect of this quote is the Nazis’ emphasis on “cultural politics” and the manner in which alleged enemies of the Nazis were supposedly using art in order to subvert the power of the Nazi party.<sup>66</sup> This reinforces my argument for the importance of investigating the cultural aspect of Nazism as a method of oppression preceding more aggressive actions by the Party. The Nazis saw culture as a tool by which they could persuade people to join their cause, as well as a weapon their enemies could employ against them. Therefore, the Nazis’ delineating the types of art and music acceptable in their regime was not just a matter of taste—if it even had anything to do with taste—but also a matter of political importance.

Another part of this guide outlines what the exhibition is not meant to do, claiming:

It does not mean to prevent those artists shown who are of German blood – and who have not followed their former Jewish friends abroad – from now honestly

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<sup>64</sup> “Guide to the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition (1937).”

<sup>65</sup> “Guide to the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition (1937).”

<sup>66</sup> “Guide to the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition (1937).”

striving and fighting for the basis of a new and healthy creativity. It does and must mean to prevent, however, the jabbering cliques from that murky part from foisting any such men on the new state and on its forward-looking people as ‘the natural standard-bearers of an art of the Third Reich.’<sup>67</sup>

The Nazis presented themselves as attempting to clean out the ranks of artists who had some sort of underlying message against the Party and to support the true Germans who were fighting for the strength of German artistic expression.

Among those “fighting and striving for the basis of a new and healthy creativity” was Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-1954), the leader of the Berlin Philharmonic. Hitler liked Furtwängler and named him “Germany’s supreme musician.”<sup>68</sup> Furtwängler was also named vice president under Strauss of the RMK. The two men served as the leaders of Germany’s music, but with the downfall of Strauss, Furtwängler’s devotion to Nazism seemed under fire. In the early 1930s, his correspondence with Goebbels, who was the ultimate head of the RKK, clearly showed his belief in restoring German music to prominence. His argument for serving German music, however, followed a line divergent from the Nazi one. Furtwängler wanted to continue distinguishing music by whether it was good or bad, not on whether it was Jewish or non-Jewish.<sup>69</sup> For Furtwängler, it was more important to focus on the quality of music than the race of the musician. Goebbels responded to Furtwängler by saying “art must be good: but beyond that it must be responsible, professional, popular and aggressive,” implying that Jews

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<sup>67</sup> “Guide to the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition (1937).”

<sup>68</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 344-345.

<sup>69</sup> “Correspondence between Wilhelm Furtwängler and Joseph Goebbels about Art and the State (April 1933)” found at [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1574](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1574).

cannot create music which would fulfill these criteria.<sup>70</sup> Not surprisingly, Furtwängler later resigned his position in protest over the Nazis' insistence on not allowing the music of Hindemith, a Jew.

It should be understood that Furtwängler was not pro-Jewish nor, on the other hand, a staunch supporter of the Nazis. Instead, Furtwängler was concerned with protecting the beauty of German music no matter who wrote it or played it. His priority was to keep the standards of German music high based on performance and quality. This, however, clashed with the Nazi policy since the Party was more concerned with purging music of "foreign" elements which they saw as deteriorating what they saw as "German" music. This is an interesting distinction, because it supposes the Nazis were willing to settle for slightly less quality in their music as long as they could claim it as wholly their own, and not influenced by any political or racial entity.<sup>71</sup>

The examples of Strauss and Furtwängler show that there were lines in the Nazi regime which people could not cross without losing their livelihood. One man who was safe was Max von Schillings (1868-1933). Schillings was the conductor responsible for a celebratory performance in honor of Wagner's birthday in Leipzig. After the success of this performance, he was given, by Hitler, the task of reorganizing the music life of Germany. Over the next few years, Schillings proved to be a willing servant to the Nazi regime as he purged the professional musical ranks of Jews--particularly Arnold Schoenberg, Max Liebermann, and Franz Schrecker.<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately for the Nazis' musical regime, Schillings died in 1933 just as his

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<sup>70</sup> "Wilhelm Furtwängler" on Music and the Holocaust, found at <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/reichskulturkammer/furtwngler-wilhelm/>.

<sup>71</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 17-18.

career was on a path to making him one of the most influential and useful tools for Nazi ideals within the musical sphere.

After the leadership loss of Strauss and Furtwängler, the RMK came under the leadership of Hans Hinkel, a very devoted Nazi.<sup>73</sup> Hinkel followed the Party line in regards to Jews and started churning out declarations against Jewish musicians in 1935. Hinkel was also responsible for controlling the Jewish Cultural League to be discussed further in the next chapter. For the Nazis and the RMK, Hinkel proved a much more devoted leader who was able to limit Jewish cultural activities while also controlling German cultural production.<sup>74</sup>

Not surprisingly, Richard Wagner served as the ultimate Nazi ideal for German music. Wagner represented a musical genius whose rabid anti-Semitism followed Nazi ideas about corruption in German music. Hitler used quotes from popular Wagnerian operas, especially *Parsifal*, in his speeches. It was also important to Hitler that the German people experienced the music deemed worthy by the RKK. Goebbels and Hinkel had the job of forcing the German people to listen to the music which fit into the Nazi version of “German”: music devoid of Jewish or Bolshevik influence; music expressing strength, German superiority, and patriotism; and music which celebrated the traditions of German greatness. A few examples of this forced cooperation with Nazi musical ideals are evidenced by the creation of more seats in opera houses in order to reach a mass audience. In at least two instances, though, these seats were not filled voluntarily and both times people either on the street or in a nearby business were pressed into sitting through a Wagnerian opera—not an easy task considering the length of Wagner’s works.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany*, p. 162n60.

<sup>74</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany*, p. 30-31.

<sup>75</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 344.

The appeal of Wagner lay not just in his anti-Semitic leanings. Wagner's work represented the tradition of excellence consistent with German music. The line of composers who the Nazis would allow to be performed included Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, Dvořák, Bruckner, and Strauss. Wagner joined their ranks as the ultimate musician, mostly because his musical genius was fantastical and monumental. Even those who disliked Wagner could not deny about the sheer magnitude of his operas which could only be performed properly with extravagant stage dressings and magnificent singing talents. Hitler and the RMK were drawn to the works of Wagner because of the grand scale of his works. For Hitler, the drama of Wagner paralleled the world the Nazis were creating where the saga could only be led by larger than life characters with god-like character. For the RMK, Wagner was acceptable not just because of his anti-Semitism and German roots, but also because of the leitmotifs of his works which furthered the feeling of superiority for Germans, and German music, over all others.

### *Conclusion*

The Nazis, through the *Reichsmusikkammer*, attempted to redefine what it meant to be culturally "German." The usual criteria for fitting the bill, being non-Jewish, does not encompass the entirety of the new definition. Any qualities seen as anti-Nazi were also perceived as non-German. Anyone uncreative, weak, plastic, easily swayed, modern, Bolshevik, foreign sounding, or connected to Jews would qualify as "non-German." While the Nazis did not take extreme measures against most of the musical people who fit these terms, most of them suffered in some indirect way. Richard Strauss lost family members from his wife's side who died in Auschwitz because of their Jewish background. His good friend, Stefan Zweig,

committed suicide in Brazil in 1942 because he could see no possible end to the tyranny of Nazism. For musicians and composers who questioned the RMK, losing their job was the worst punishment they received from the RMK.

The Nazis plundered musical history, eliminating works by composers who did not fit into the idea of what it meant to be “German.” Jewish publishing houses were shut down by 1942, and no new works were allowed to be performed from the Jewish population. German musicians who had grown up learning a mixture of musical genres, now were limited by race and nationality in a field where quality should have been the main criteria for publication. Instead, German music was chosen by men with no musical background, like Hans Hinkel, who had risen in the Nazi party ranks and managed to secure a position in the RMK. More interested in politics than music, the German tradition of excellence in music should have deteriorated, but instead was saved by the musicians in Nazi Germany who continued to play the works of the greatest German composers publically.

The importance of music to the Nazis should therefore be clear. They used it as a tool to weed out people who did not fit their definition of German while also using it to further the tradition of German excellence. Over time, the Nazis discovered just how difficult it was to make this distinction. The restrictions placed on the German cultural sphere were not able to create some new Nazi version of Germany’s grand musical tradition. Instead, the people they attempted to remove from German music at large found a way to remain musically active. There was even music in the concentration camps, as camp commanders allowed—and sometimes ordered—the creation of orchestras.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Mengele was known to whistle while he worked and even attempted to save the life of a Jewish woman because of her importance to the orchestra in

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<sup>76</sup> Fania Fenelon, *Playing for Time* (New York: Antheneum, 1977).

the camp.<sup>77</sup> While the Nazis committed much greater crimes against the Jews than just taking their music away, the importance of this early oppression lies in the fact that the Nazis saw the best way to bend the will of Jews as attacking them through culture. The difficulty of putting this attack in action shows how much Jewish musicians had become intertwined in the German musical tradition.

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<sup>77</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, p. 364.

## Chapter 2

### *Redefining “German” Musically: the Jewish Question*

“Jewry and German music are opposites, by their very nature they exist in gross contradistinction to each other.” Joseph Goebbels, 1938<sup>78</sup>

While the Nazis were attempting to create a sense of what was German culture, they also set about defining what was not German culture. The list of approved composers and musicians was an ever-changing entity which held contradictions of policy and ideology. Hitler’s personal feelings about some musicians either barred or opened the path to achievement within the musical sphere of the Third Reich. Just because the RMK claimed to have an all-encompassing list of allowable musicians does not mean they actually did. The reality of the RMK’s censorship came down to the details. Each case was a special one, each case held some sort of exception. There were overarching themes, such as the banning of Jewish composers and foreign musicians, but in some cases, the people slipped through the very strict measures the RMK put in place. The system, therefore, was not a balanced, perfect system; rather, it was a broken system with eccentricities similar to those of the Führer.

Goebbels’ words about the separate nature of German and Jewish musical cultures created the illusion that each was separate from each other. Instead, the opposite was true: the two cultures—which the Nazis insisted were different based on racial distinctions—were so

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<sup>78</sup> Joseph Goebbels as quoted in *Amtliche Mitteilungen der Reichsmusikkammer*, 1 June 1938, BA, RD33/2-1 as cited in Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 75-76.

intertwined with each other that the RKK and RMK had to go on the offensive to divide the two. The “gross contradistinction” of the two was not in fact clear enough to make this division simple. Although the RKK and RMK and other institutions—such as the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*—tried to delineate the two cultures, by the end of the Third Reich there was no clear cut method by which to decide who fell on the German side of the issue and who fell on the non-German side.<sup>79</sup> The following discussion will center on those composers, musicians, and people who, based on Nazi criterion, fell into the “non-German” category. The best example, indeed the one encompassing the largest number of people defined as “non-German,” is the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*.

Another aspect of this division was the effect on the daily lives of Jewish musicians. Being limited by Nazi policies created a type of “civil death” for the Jews.<sup>80</sup> The decrees limiting Jewish participation in German society—eventually eliminating participation in society—were established in the early 1930s. Firstly, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was put into effect in April 1933 and forced out people referred to as unreliable from most careers. This law basically dismissed hundreds of Jewish musicians and conductors from Germany orchestras and concert halls. More than any other law, this one forced Jewish musicians out of German culture at large. Other laws affected the daily lives of Jews—most notably the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 which stifled Jewish life in the Third Reich. As

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<sup>79</sup> The reason for this difficulty arose from the fact that Jewish Germans had long been apart of society without thinking themselves separate. For a more extensive history on the Jewish experience in Germany over the years leading up to the Third Reich, see Shulamit Volkov, “The ‘*Verbürgerlichung*’ of the Jews as a Paradigm” found in Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell, editors, *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p. 367-391; as well as a more detailed study of Jewish culture in Weimar, Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>80</sup> Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, p. 298; Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, p. 209-210.

the policies against the Jews became totalizing, the areas where Jews still lived their lives shrank. This civil death had to be combatted somehow, providing the impetus for the creation of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, which created a separate, unequal place for Jewish musicians, but also represented a place of refuge for Jews in Germany.

### *The Jüdischer Kulturbund*

The *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*, created in 1929, became the *Reichskulturkammer* (RKK) after the Nazi Party came to power. A separate branch created in the RKK controlled the music scene in the Third Reich, the *Reichsmusikkammer* (RMK).<sup>81</sup> With the creation of the RMK, the guidelines for membership limited the participation of Jewish musicians in the chamber, leaving large portions of the musical community unemployed. When the proposal to create a Jewish cultural league came before the head of the RMK, Hinkel jumped at the chance to regulate a larger portion of society. In 1933, the RMK created the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, mirrored after the original *Kampfbund*.

When the Nazis began their systematic reconstruction of German culture, they slowly but surely eliminated certain parts of the population from cultural production and opportunity. As previously mentioned, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service had successfully barred Jews from careers which would have given them opportunities to influence cultural production in Germany. Composers, musicians, music teachers, and other such artists no longer had a means of earning money or expressing themselves through music publicly. In an

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<sup>81</sup> The history of the *Kampfbund* was discussed in more detail in Chapter 1. Here it is important to understand that the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* was created as a parallel organization for the control of Jewish culture outside the greater apparatus of the control of German culture in general.

effort to counteract this, Kurt Baumann—a former director’s assistant at the Berlin *Staatsoper*, *Volksbühne*, and *Städtische Oper*, who lost his job because he was Jewish—came up with the early plan for the creation of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*.<sup>82</sup> In his “Memorien,” Baumann recounted his reason for wanting to create the *Kulturbund* in Berlin:

My idea to found a Jewish cultural circle was based on very simple numbers; at the time, 175,000 Jews alone lived in Berlin, many other big cities had, percentage wise, similar concentrations. I figured that a city of 175,000 inhabitants could have their own theatre, opera, symphony orchestra, museum, lectures, and even *Hochschule*, and this with the economic proportion of a mid-sized city.<sup>83</sup>

It is interesting to note that Baumann referred to the community of Jews in Berlin as “a city of 175,00 inhabitants,”<sup>84</sup> which implies that the Nazi attempt to limit Jewish interaction with the larger German community had infiltrated, at least, his mind.

Baumann took his plan for the *Kulturbund* to Kurt Singer, a prominent doctor who also had an interest, and experience, in music. Singer had also considered creating such an organization, and the two men rounded up help of other prominent Jews with musical careers to aid them in their submission of the concept to the RKK. At first, Baumann and Singer had trouble finding a home for their cultural league, but eventually they found the ear of Hans Hinkel.

Hans Hinkel, once described by Goebbels as a “born intriguer and liar,” joined the Nazi Party early in 1921, holding the membership number 287.<sup>85</sup> His ambition and organizational

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<sup>82</sup> Lily Hirsch. *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> Kurt Baumann, “Memorien,” Leo Baeck Institute, New York. As found on <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/the-berlin-jdischer/>.

<sup>84</sup> Baumann, “Memorien.”

skills allowed him to gain a position in the Berlin chapter of the *Kampfbund*. Hinkel shrewdly remained in the ranks of this organization until it lost favor with Goebbels, switching sides in order to remain in a position of power. His persistence bore fruit when he became the head of the Prussian Theater Commission in 1933, in charge of the dismissal of hundreds of Jews from theaters in Berlin.<sup>86</sup> When the RKK replaced the *Kampfbund*, Hinkel transitioned to the music chamber, where he continued his work as a censor and definer of German music. When Baumann and Singer came to Hinkel, they found a man who looked for whatever method he could to further entrench himself in the Party.<sup>87</sup>

Kurt Singer was a professional neurologist who also dabbled in music. He had a musicology degree and wrote extensively on German musical matters, including an impressive work on Richard Wagner. Singer created a doctor's choir for men who enjoyed music, but had not made it their career. When Baumann and Singer talked over the proposal for a Jewish cultural league, it seemed evident that Singer should be the man to run it. Hinkel listened to Singer and, after Goebbels signed off on it, agreed to create a *Jüdischer Kulturbund* in Berlin. Hinkel drew guidelines for the league, requiring limits on employment and membership—only allowing Jews. Further, Hinkel allowed the league to house one theater, no more.<sup>88</sup>

Hans Hinkel's relationship with the *Kulturbund* did not spring from some humanely inspired portion of his heart. Instead, Hinkel saw the opportunity to impress Party leadership as

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<sup>85</sup> Alan Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) p. 33, 62.

<sup>86</sup> Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics*, p. 34-35; Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> Eventually, Hinkel became the general secretary for the RKK in 1941, and remained in that position until Goebbels promoted him to vice-president of the RKK in 1944. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics*, 62.

<sup>88</sup> Steinweis, *Art Ideology, and Economics*, p. 120-121.

well as to bring under his control another portion of society. In fact, his two positions—head of the RMK and the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*—allowed him to dismiss Jews from the one and bring them under his control in the other.<sup>89</sup> Helping the Jews continue to live a semi-normal life was merely a side effect of Hinkel’s agreement to create the *Kulturbund*. For the RMK, and the Nazis, the *Kulturbund* appeared to have several beneficial effects on Nazi propaganda. Allowing the Jews to have their own, separate, cultural sphere made the Nazi program against them appear as one wishing to aid the Jews in finding a separate identity for themselves. Also, the ability to use the league as a propaganda tool, such as saying: “look, we gave them their own cultural league!” to allegations of mistreatment or oppression.<sup>90</sup>

The partnership between the Jews who proposed the *Kulturbund* and the RMK was not based on similar ideological goals. The Jews wanted to create a place for themselves in the new world they found themselves in, while the Nazis wanted to control the actions of the people they saw as inferior. By cooperating with the Nazis, Baumann, Singer, and the others were simply attempting to work within a system they assumed would not last long enough to become permanent.<sup>91</sup> Because all legal paths to musical careers in the Third Reich had been closed for

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<sup>89</sup> Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics*, p. 121.

<sup>90</sup> For more on the propaganda of the *Kulturbund* see Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics*, p. 120-126; as well as Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 51-52.

<sup>91</sup> According to Hirsch, and other historians of this period, in the early 1930s, it was still assumed that the Nazis could not possibly stay in power, and that their measures against the Jews were simply measures. The horrors of the Holocaust were not horrors anyone foresaw, so the cooperation between these two parties seemed logical simply in keeping with the desire to work within the current government to make life better until the current government came crashing down. Later in the 1930s these men became disillusioned and most left Germany while the others were placed in concentration camps. Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*.

Jews, the *Kulturbund* was created to present an opportunity for Jewish musicians to continue their craft as well as contribute to a society quickly becoming very oppressed.

More cynical historians, such as Michael Kater, claim the *Kulturbund* was in fact the brainchild of the Nazis, who found Jews willing to cooperate with them to oppress the Jewish community of Germany. Such an opinion does have a measure of veracity when one considers the pressure the RMK was able to place on the administration of the *Kulturbund*, and when one takes into account the amount of control the RMK had on who could or could not take part in the *Kulturbund*. The cooperation between the two groups, however, relied on the desire of leading Jewish musicians to create opportunities for Jews to experience cultural events. The Nazi apparatus for this, the *Kulturbund*, regulated and limited those cultural opportunities, but without them the oppression of Jewish musicians would have raised flags in the cosmopolitan world of music. For example, Arturo Toscanini led a group of conductors outside of Germany who protested against the firing of several prominent Jewish musicians. They sent a cable to Hitler in 1933, expressing their concern. When Hitler refused to rehire the musicians, Toscanini refused to fulfill his promise to conduct the 1933 Bayreuth Festival celebrating Richard Wagner. The international community attempted what they could in order pressure the Nazis into allowing the Jews to continue their careers.<sup>92</sup>

### *The Reality of the Jüdischer Kulturbund*

Berlin, the founding branch of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, was also the longest lasting. This was the main branch and held the largest membership in the Third Reich, reaching 20,000

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<sup>92</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 79-80.

members in 1934.<sup>93</sup> There were smaller branches in other cities, totaling forty-six—each having particular differences based on the available musicians in the area. Due to the limitations of available employees, the Berlin branch relied heavily on musical performances.

The *Kulturbund* worked by requiring members to pay an annual fee in order to reserve tickets to specific events. All programs were pre-approved by the RMK and there were soldiers as well as Gestapo in the audience to insure the performance would not stray from the approved material to anything that could be construed as rebellious. The Berlin branch had such a large membership that it was able to expand from musical performance to showing movies and holding lectures—all Nazi approved, of course.

Before getting into the details of what music was Nazi approved, it is important to address who was allowed membership in the *Kulturbund* and the people who managed to remain in the larger population. The RKK was supposed to weed out the people in the musical population who were considered Jewish. Starting in November 1933, it was stipulated that the chamber could dismiss anyone who “did not possess the required reliability and suitability” to remain in the music community.<sup>94</sup> In order to determine who these people were, a survey was sent out which asked personal questions including some about race and religion.

Surveying the musicians seemed like the best method to determine who could have membership in the RMK and who needed to join the *Kulturbund*, but the people responsible for checking the surveys were notoriously slow. Many people who filled out the survey would not find out for years whether they fit into the “reliability and suitability” criterion for RMK membership. The problem in the beginning was the indefinable quality of “Jewishness” which

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<sup>93</sup> Kater. *The Twisted Muse*, p. 97.

<sup>94</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 80.

was partially solved when the Nuremberg Race Laws were put in place in September 1935. Being able to identify people as Jews was supposed to make the process easier, but as the Nazis soon discovered, there were differing levels of what it meant to be a Jew. Quarter-Jews, Half-Jews, and Gentiles married to Jews had to be considered when trying to figure out who fit in the population and who was not worth keeping according to Nazi estimation. Goebbels was constantly plagued by these categories of Jews and the impossibility of rooting them all out of the population.<sup>95</sup>

There were multiple attempts at listing Jewish musicians, but each published listing had numerous flaws. The problem seemed to be the confusion between Jews and their Gentile spouses. Many of the flaws in these published lists caused trouble for the people who were misidentified as Jews. They caused such an outrage for one misidentified Jew that the ruckus he caused brought Goebbels to his defense.<sup>96</sup> The Nazis attempted to create a list of accurate Jews in the music community, but failed as horribly as all the others. Not only did they misidentify people as Jewish, they also confused nationalities and familial relationships. One of the Nazis involved in the identification of Jews in German musical culture said after the war that the Nazi directives were “totally woolly, really incomprehensible.”<sup>97</sup>

One example of such work was the *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik*, published in Berlin in 1941, and edited by members of the RMK.<sup>98</sup> In the introduction to the *Lexikon*, the editors claimed the work of the RMK had been accomplished: “Clear jurisdictional regulations prevent the Jew from the exercise of his art in Greater Germany. [...] [Jewish composers] are so

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<sup>95</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 83-84.

<sup>96</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 84-85.

<sup>97</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 85.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Meyer, *The Politics of Music in the Third Reich* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), p. 264.

thoroughly forgotten that the accidental appearance of such a name does not always ring familiar, especially to the young.”<sup>99</sup> The editors were quite optimistic in their work, considering their *Lexikon* was later shown to contain flaws about misidentified Jews.

The interesting aspect of this *Lexikon* is the information about Jewish musicians and composers that put them on the list in the first place. Some entries are short, like Joseph Achron, who was listed as a violinist who attempted to create Jewish national art, while others included information about the life and works of the musician, for example, the entry for Leo Kestenberg:

Rosenberg, Hungary 11.27. 1882, pianist, since 1918 in charge of music at the Prussian Education Ministry, also since 1921 Professor at the Berlin Music Academy and since 1922 head of the music division of the ‘Central Institute for Education and Instruction.’ Kestenberg is considered typical of the time of decay in Germany. After a piano career in Marxist organization, he established himself as specialist in musical affairs at the Prussian Education Ministry immediately after the November-revolution of 1918...He became the Marxist music director of Prussia. A most characteristic gesture was his appointment of Franz Schreker to the position of director of the State Music Academy in Berlin in 1925. [...] This man was friendly with the Communist Rosa Luxemburg, supporting her in the publication of a last work. [...] ‘When he was finally rejected by the people, primarily by German musicians, being forced to vacate the throne in 1932 which he himself had constructed, the musical Germany could breathe again. However, the cultural ground left behind resembled a harvest field devastated by voracious rodents.’<sup>100</sup>

In this entry, the Nazi editors actually got their basic biographic facts mostly correct. Kestenberg was a Jew, born to a cantor in Rosenberg, Hungary—now Slovakia—in 1882. His life and works have been praised for his brazenness and his shrewd choices for musical appointments in

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<sup>99</sup> Meyer, *The Politics of Music*, p. 264.

<sup>100</sup> Meyer, *The Politics of Music*, p. 267. Interestingly, the editors based their information on another lexicon of Jewish musicians, not on information they had found themselves.

Prussia. Predictably, the Nazi version of Kestenberg paints the party in good light, despite the fact that Kestenberg left Germany in 1932 after being repeatedly slandered by the party. His legacy, however, has since the end of the war been changed from the Nazi version—leaving a cultural ground devastated by rodents—to the more accurate version—praising his musical education reforms of the 1920s, and acknowledging the long lasting effect of the structures he created in the field of music education.<sup>101</sup>

### *The Music*

Hans Hinkel and the RMK had their work cut out for them as they attempted to determine what qualified as Jewish music. For the Nazis, the obvious choice was anything written by a Jewish composer. This, however, was not the only way to determine what was appropriate for the Jews to perform in their cultural events. The first performance at the Berlin branch of the *Kulturbund* included works by Mozart, Handel, and Tchaikovsky. In the beginning, it seemed that the best way to determine which music the Jews could perform—outside of the Jewishness of the composer—was whether it had Jewish themes, specifically Old Testament themes.

Michael Kater—one of the most prolific historians of music in this period—wrote perhaps the most succinct version of what made up the stereotype of German music:

German music was equated with traditional values of the perceived national culture: heroism and love of battle (as in the Reformation) in sixteenth-century chorales, Handel, or Beethoven; profundity in Brahms, as also found in Kant, Hegel, or Schopenhauer; after great tension a resolution and the Faustian drive to creation, apparent in composers such as Bach, Mozart, and Schumann; introspection of the kind found in Reger (or the late

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<sup>101</sup> “Brief Biography of Leo Kestenberg” on Leo-Kestenberg.com. Found at [http://www.leo-kestenberg.com/music-educator/index\\_ang.cfm](http://www.leo-kestenberg.com/music-educator/index_ang.cfm).

Biedermeier period); and rootedness in “blood and soil,” as evidenced by Schubert’s lieder, the works of Bruckner, and the humble but honest *Volkslied*, judged to be endemically German.<sup>102</sup>

As seen in this quote, Kater points out the traditional virtues which supposedly the German people manifested throughout the history of the nation. While the evidence of these virtues in the musical tradition of Germany is certainly debatable, the RMK agreed that such concepts were intrinsic in the music of true Germans. The claim of a heroic nature inherent in the German people, one advocated by Richard Wagner in his criticism of Jews, was one of the most desirable attributes for the RMK to advance.<sup>103</sup> The drive to create, the natural feeling of connection to the land, these were what made Germans Germans—and for the RMK, the Jews were not this, could not be this. The simplest way, then, to define what made Jewish music Jewish was to say it did not meet any of the criteria listed for German music.

Following this line of logic, the Nazis argued that the Jews were un-heroic, uncreative, alien people who felt no true connection to Germany, German tradition, or German ideals. Critics of Jewish music claimed that Jews were unable to write anything original because they lacked an indigenous culture. Such a lack of roots supposedly meant Jewish composers were incapable of writing anything new or innovative. This sentiment was clearly stated in a training guide for the SS published near the end of 1940: “The essence of a Volk is evident from its festivals and its customs. Judaism is incapable of developing the beautiful or of creating achievement. This is reflected in the Jewish festivals.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 76.

<sup>103</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, p. 10.

<sup>104</sup> Excerpt from a Training Guide by SS-Sturmbannführer Paul Zapp on the "Jewish Question" (end of 1940). As found in [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=2260](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=2260).

Jews were said, however, to have a talent for imitation, as they were able to take the work of others and create something similar but change it enough to claim it was their own original work. The worst criticism lobbed at Jewish composers was that they wrote simply for the chance to make some money; that their work would pander to the desired audience and include sex scenes—disguised as love—in order to sell their work.<sup>105</sup> These views of Jewish composers, as pernicious and disgusting, were blanket impressions used as excuses for eliminating Jewish music from the repertoires of the German national music culture.

Kater's description of German music helps to condense the Nazi understanding of what Jewish music was in contrast. There were, of course, rather glaring exceptions to this neatly defined line the Nazis had drawn. Internationally, composers of German heritage, who were also Jewish, had been celebrated as masters of the people of music, and it was almost impossible for the Nazis to completely eliminate them from their accepted musical culture. Mendelssohn, Mahler, and Schoenberg were the three most prominent German Jews whose supposed "racial impurity" made their work unfit to fit into the Nazi definition of German. In order to get around this problem, two stipulations were outlined which forgave the racial difference of the composers. Firstly, the Nazis demonstrated that all three men had striven in their early careers to be more German than Jewish, and secondly, that as Jews they had developed the rather nefarious ability to ingratiate themselves in an alien culture.<sup>106</sup> Supposedly, this argument allowed for these composers to retain their place in the German musical tradition, but performing their works was not overly supported by the RMK.

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<sup>105</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 76-77.

<sup>106</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 77.

What then did the RMK allow the Jews to perform and why? As mentioned earlier, the first musical performance of the Berlin branch of the *Kulturbund* included works by Mozart, Handel, and Tchaikovsky—three composers who were not Jewish. While it is all well and good to say Jews could only play music written by Jews, the actual practice was definitely to the contrary. Kurt Singer, mentioned earlier, was one of the most prominent conductors and leaders in the Berlin *Kulturbund*, a man of great musical tastes. Singer, and many others, lamented the limitation of only playing Jewish music because there was so much music available outside the racial boundary of Judaism. In fact, quite a few musicians in the *Kulturbund* had no desire to play Jewish music because of the stigma of it being somehow degenerate—and in some cases, actually quite bad.

Instead, the people involved in designing the musical programs looked for pieces that represented some of the best works of classical composers, Jewish and non-Jewish. For most of the members of the *Kulturbund*, the works of prominent composers were the works they knew best, having been taught in the finest music schools in Germany. Suddenly having to switch to music of Jewish origins was unfeasible for many musicians because they simply did not know the repertoire. Singer's daughter spoke of her father as a man "more German than the Germans," a man clearly proud of the German musical tradition and well versed in it.<sup>107</sup> Another official in the cultural league, Julius Bab, was quoted saying: "We want to remain in active connection with the great cultural goods of Germany and the world"—a definite desire to not be limited by race.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 37.

<sup>108</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 38.

This was all well and good, but the desires of leading Jews in the league were always hampered by the censors at the RMK. What was allowed in each program had to be preapproved and screened by the censors at the RMK who in theory at least knew something about music. In order to get to perform Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, it was stressed that the original text of the opera had been translated into German by a Jew and that the librettist was also Jewish.<sup>109</sup> Such quirks in the system allowed for works by master German composers to be acceptable fare for the Jewish audiences of the *Kulturbund*.

The issue of what the Jewish cultural league could perform caused such a stir among Jews, Nazis, and Zionists, that Singer held a conference in 1936 to determine what should and should not be included in the repertoire. "The Cultural Conference of the Association of Jewish Cultural Leagues in Germany"—*Die Kulturtagung des Reichsverbandes der Jüdischen Kulturbünde in Deutschland*—included speeches from leading musicologists of the concept of Jewish music, specifically in regard to Jewish religious music and folk songs. Singer opened and closed the meetings with remarks about the meeting, and in each speech managed to contradict himself. The musicologists were also quite contradictory. The conference came to no conclusions on what constituted Jewish music and ended without changing anything significantly in the overall program of the numerous cultural leagues. The Nazis, however, felt the conference was a great success and even Hinkel claimed that no part of the conference need be censored or restricted as the Jews had reached such agreeable conclusions.<sup>110</sup>

At the beginning of the next season, Singer set out trying to come up with a set of programs which would appeal to the largest audience possible as well as fit into the Nazi

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<sup>109</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 42.

<sup>110</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 47-54.

ensor's allowable list of composers. Predicting what the RMK would censor proved tricky, as Singer soon found out. Some censorship was predictable, such as banning the performance of Wagner's works, while others were based on personal opinions about the composers. Still others were banned due to negative relationships with the Nazi party. The American Ossip Dymov was banned due to comments he made about Hitler.<sup>111</sup> Lily Hirsch has written the pivotal monograph on the topic of the Jewish cultural league within the Third Reich, and in it she describes some of the quirkiest issues of Nazi censorship. Firstly, there was the conviction of one censor that Mahler could not possibly have been Jewish because that particular censor enjoyed Mahler's work so much. Another story told of one censor eliminating the entire "To be or not to be" monologue from a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* because it contained the phrase "the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely."<sup>112</sup> Hinkel himself censored a performance of Mendelssohn's *Psalm 22* because the themes contained in it were too close to the Nazi situation of oppression of the Jews.<sup>113</sup>

These last two examples display an interesting aspect to the censorship the Nazis applied in Jewish cultural expression. While composers of German heritage were allowed early on, some of their works had to be trimmed in order to eliminate any kind of troublemaking capability. But other, subtler pieces had to be censored due to wording or thematic issues which could possibly remind the Jewish population of Germany to their oppressed situation, even though the belief that removing the word "oppressor" from the performance of *Hamlet* and

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<sup>111</sup> Bruce H. Zortman, "Theatre in Isolation: The *Jüdischer Kulturbund* of Nazi Germany," *Educational Theater Journal*, vol. 24, no. 2 (May, 1972), p. 163.

<sup>112</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 69.

<sup>113</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 70.

disallowing the performance of *Psalm 22* because of the cries to God for help would keep the Jews from realizing their condition is quite preposterous.<sup>114</sup>

As the Third Reich grew in power, the RMK's censors began increasing the list of German pieces Jews could not perform. By 1934, the league could no longer use the word "German," while other Aryan-type words were stricken from plays and operas, such as "blonde."<sup>115</sup> In regards to non-musical performances, works by Schiller were always banned, as well as most of the German Romantics.<sup>116</sup> Works by people who were considered subversive were also always prohibited, as Hinkel especially banned anything considered "Bolshevistic, avant-garde and 'enemy-of-the-state' plays."<sup>117</sup> Musically, the works of German composers became restricted over time; Bach, Schubert, Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms were initially prohibited, while after the *Anschluss* Mozart was put on the list.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> The Jews were not in this case entirely clueless. They knew they were being oppressed, but since it was gradual the changes were not glaringly obvious everyday. Also, there was the belief that the Nazis had reached the limit of their restrictions—that it was not going to get any worse. Kurt Singer, who fought against the emigration of his musicians, did not realize how bad life in Germany had gotten until he went on a fundraising trip to America. At the end of his trip to the states, he returned to Europe, but never went back to Germany. Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 148.

<sup>115</sup> Zortman, "Theatre in Isolation," p. 163.

<sup>116</sup> Interestingly, according to Zortman, Goethe's works were allowable because he was found guilty of "Teutonic treason." Zortman does not explain exactly what this means, but that Goethe's humanism was to blame for the suspicion and later guilt of such treason. Zortman, "Theatre in Isolation," p. 163.

<sup>117</sup> Zortman, "Theatre in Isolation," p. 163.

<sup>118</sup> Zortman, "Theatre in Isolation," p. 163.

### *Jewish Musicians' Experiences in the Third Reich*

The actual experiences of Jews in the *Kulturbund* are difficult to track down since so many of the people involved in the performances and even the participants in the audience were killed during the Holocaust. Victor Klemperer's diaries, which cover an impressive span of time for a Jew living in the Third Reich, mention the *Kulturbund* once in the entry for September 17, 1941: "The Jewish Cultural League in Berlin has been shut down, its property has been confiscated."<sup>119</sup>

There is, however, a more extensive memoir of a married couple who were members of the orchestra of the Berlin *Judischer Kulturbund*, mediated by their son, Martin Goldsmith. This impressively detailed account of the experiences of musicians in the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, sheds light on the activities of the league outside the parameters set down by RMK policy. Through the lens of this account of the cultural league, it is possible to see the areas the Nazis did not have total control over, as well as to reach a different understanding of the *Kulturbund*. The memoir follows the lives of Günther Goldschmidt and Rosemarie Gumpert as they are first members of the Frankfurt branch of the *Kulturbund* before moving to Berlin to join the orchestra there. Their insights into the daily activities of the league depict an entirely different story than the current version of Jewish victims passively accepting their lot in Nazi Germany. Instead, Günther and Rosemarie were able to live rather full lives in the portion of society marked out for them.

Günther Goldschmidt was a young boy when he first heard a performance of *The Magic Flute*. The experience changed his life. Günther became a Jewish flautist in Germany, where he

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<sup>119</sup> Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933-1941*. (New York: Random House, 1998.) p. 433.

studied music with a passion overwhelming all his other life pursuits, except one. Rosemarie Gumpert, a violist, was raised by a music teacher who insisted on her practicing in an effort to reach musical perfection. The two met, fell in love, and married, all under the eyes of the Nazi Party. They shared music, but they also shared other experiences: the loss of their fathers to the Nazis, the fright of being a Jew on November 9-10, 1938, the ambition and work ethic it takes to become truly proficient at their respective instruments.

With the restrictions of Jewish careers in the Third Reich, Günther and Rosemarie joined the Frankfurt branch of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* before moving to Berlin in order to take principal roles in the orchestra established there. Their lives followed paths similar to other musicians in Germany, except they were restricted because they were Jewish. Their story, however, does not play like a melodrama full of fear and depression. While both were clearly aware of the danger of continuing to live in Germany, neither allowed their fear to overcome their great love of music. Instead, they worked within the system created for them, and found for themselves a niche in Nazi Germany where they could live meaningful lives.<sup>120</sup>

As musicians, their daily lives centered around rehearsals and practice as they perfected the parts they were to play in whatever piece had been chosen, and approved, for performance at the *Kulturbund* theater. Because both had devoted their lives to music, neither held jobs in any other profession during the Third Reich. When not in rehearsal, they took whatever chance they had to escape the city by taking a train to the country or merely going to a nearby park. The picture painted of their lives, then, is full of music and life. When the war began in September 1939, curfews were put in place for Jews—making going about their lives more inconvenient, but not entirely constricting them. Günther and Rosemarie would leave the *Kulturbund* theater

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<sup>120</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 204.

and meet up with friend where they would play music they were not allowed to perform for the public. Most of the people at their private performances were other musicians from the *Kulturbund*, while some others were amateur musicians and music lovers. At these meetings, the musicians would play the pieces which spoke to them as individuals, without the restraint placed on them by the Nazis. Of course, the intrusion of the Nazis into their routine—having to be home by 8:00, cutting short many of their meetings—was always present, but in music, Günther, Rosemarie, and their friends were able to live relatively ordinary lives.<sup>121</sup>

Just because Günther and Rosemarie lost themselves in their music does not mean they were unaware of the threat of the Nazis. As members of the orchestra, they watched as many of their friends and colleagues emigrated from Germany, while others were taken by the Nazis for some reason or other and never returned. When the war started, the Jews were forced to report to the *Arbeitsamt* for “periodic forced labor.”<sup>122</sup> Fear of this forced labor was very real, as many Jews reported and were sent to labor camps. Fortunately for the members of the *Kulturbund*, Hinkel and the RMK did not appreciate the labor department meddling with his successful Jewish cultural league, and Hinkel would send letters to any of his musicians called up for work in order to allow them to be exempt from service. In one such incident, an oboeist, Kurt Michaelis, received a letter calling him to work and then a few days later received one from the RMK excusing him from the work. In his telling of the incident, Michaelis described the scene:

I had that letter in my pocket when I went down to that office and there was one of those nasty people, gloating that he'd gotten another victim. So I took out the letter from Hinkel and he was very angry because the victim had slipped away, had escaped him.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 204.

<sup>122</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 241.

<sup>123</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 242.

The motivation for Hinkel to save his musicians from forced labor was not based on his relationship with the people themselves. It seems, instead, that Hinkel did not appreciate other organs of the Party meddling with his business. Also, if the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* were to lose too many musicians, the league would close, taking away some of Hinkel's power.

Günther and Rosemarie experienced the loss of both their fathers: Günther's father had tried to emigrate with Günther's brother to South America, but had ended up in a camp for displaced persons in France. The French government turned over the inmates of this camp in 1942, and those whose names began with the letters A through G were chosen to be transported to Drancy before being taken to Auschwitz. Günther's father, Alex, was gassed immediately at the age of sixty-three. His brother, Helmut, was chosen for work duty and died two months later from typhoid fever at twenty-one.<sup>124</sup> Rosemarie's father left one day and did not return—he had secured transport for himself and his mistress, but not for his wife or only child. Günther and Rosemarie essentially had only themselves to worry about during the years they were a part of the *Kulturbund*.

Günther and Rosemarie were able to immigrate to America after making contacts with Americans who agreed to sponsor them as musicians. They left Germany in the summer of 1941, months before the *Kulturbund* was officially dissolved by the Nazis. Their last day with the orchestra, the conductor had the musicians run through a piece which would open the next season, *Symphony No. 4* by Carl Neilson, a Dane. This symphony was the last music performed at the Berlin theater by the members of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* orchestra. Neilson wrote the symphony in response to the outbreak of World War I in order to demonstrate:

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<sup>124</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 322-323.

What music alone is capable of expressing to the full: the elemental will of life. In case all the world were to be devastated by fire, flood, and volcanoes, and all things were destroyed and dead, then nature would still begin to breed new life again. [...] This is music's own territory. Music is Life, and like Life, inextinguishable.<sup>125</sup>

After running through the music, the orchestra broke up and said goodbye to their colleagues, expecting to see everyone again when the season began again in the fall. Günther and Rosemarie left Germany soon after and escaped the fates many of their coworkers suffered.

These two musicians offer a glimpse into the lives of the people whose day-to-day lives were disrupted by Nazi policies, but were able to find a new place to thrive—within limits—inside the Nazi regime. The *Kulturbund* for Günther and Rosemarie was more than a chance for employment, it was also their home. Their new family was composed of musicians, their new lives consisting of sheets of music and hours of practice. The change of pace was only affected by their limitation as Jews, but they managed to continue doing what they loved. Always, on the periphery—and sometimes at the forefront—stood the Nazis, but for at least these two musicians, the *Kulturbund* was more than a Nazi means of surveillance and control. The *Kulturbund* was life.

Also interesting about Goldsmith's work is the character profile he was able to create of Kurt Singer based on reminiscences of his father and sources such as letters and speeches. Goldsmith's portrait of Singer describes a man who fearlessly took on Hans Hinkel and the RMK in order to perform the works he felt the Jewish audience wanted to hear. The program he negotiated with the Nazis for included few works by or about Jews. In the beginning of 1936, Singer directed Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, Camille Saint-Saens' *Samson and Delilah*, and

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<sup>125</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 281.

Strauss' *Vienna Blood*. Operas performed by the *Kulturbund* during this time period included Verdi's *A Masked Ball*, Otto Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.<sup>126</sup> The programs during the earlier years of the *Kulturbund* were therefore quite diverse, but as Hinkel and the Nazis grew stronger in their resolve to separate the Jews from the German community at large, the restrictions became much more stringent. Singer, despite his best efforts, was required to play more pieces by Jews or involving a Jewish theme. The conference, mentioned earlier, which was meant to determine what constituted Jewish culture, was held because of Hinkel's reservations about the lack of Jewish material in the *Kulturbund*'s offerings. After the conference, Singer added more Jewish music to the league's repertoire. The new Jewish offerings, however, were not popular among the audience. During the 1936-1937 season, the more thematic Jewish works were met with less enthusiasm by the audience than the aforementioned *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Verdi's *A Masked Ball*. In fact, the most popular Jewish piece was the incidental music to the Shakespeare plays staged by the *Kulturbund* which was written by Felix Mendelssohn.<sup>127</sup>

The infusion of thematically Jewish pieces actually hurt the league, as membership declined during this period. Despite the supposed connection the Jewish audience should feel with the Jewish pieces, the Jews of Germany were not receptive to forced cultural separation. The most successful Jewish theme piece the *Kulturbund* put on was Stefan Zweig's play *Jeremiah*, which was received well by audiences and the Jewish press. Following the success of this play, the league attempted to recreate this enthusiasm for Jewish theme works by injecting a large portion of Jewish plays into the repertoire. These included works translated from Hebrew

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<sup>126</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 121.

<sup>127</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 121-127.

and Yiddish into German. The success of *Jeremiah* was not repeated and the membership numbers of the league began to decrease. The Jewish audiences of Germany were not naturally inclined to enjoy works about Jewish subjects. Instead, as members of the German cultural community at large, most German Jews were actually displeased to be force-fed Jewish themed works. The decrease in membership here, while definitely due to the offerings of the *Kulturbund*, also had a lot to do with the increased emigration of German Jews who were leaving Germany in search of a less oppressive community.<sup>128</sup>

Goldsmith's conclusion for the popularity of non-Jewish music in the *Kulturbund* was the connection most German Jews felt with German culture on a broader scale. The majority of musicians employed by the league had experienced successful careers before the Third Reich which felt much less restrictive. Indeed, the Jewish audience had felt themselves to be Germans for so long that being force-fed so-called Jewish music did not satisfy their cultural needs. Singer and the other members of the conference held to determine acceptable Jewish cultural presentations were faced with the problem of having a Jewish community so ingrained in the German one they were unfamiliar with the aspects of Judaism for which they were being singled out. In fact, the members of the *Kulturbund* were more German than Jewish—the very problem the Nazis were attempting to rectify. Therefore, the Nazis were not merely creating “Germanness,” they were—oddly enough—creating “Jewishness.”

### *Finding Home: Inside the Walls of the Kulturbund*

Kurt Singer had a bigger problem than audiences not enjoying thematically Jewish programs: he was losing his musicians and his audience. The Jews of Germany were quickly

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<sup>128</sup> Zortman, “Theater in Isolation,” p. 164-165.

becoming the Jews of anywhere they could go. Singer took it as a personal affront when members of his orchestra emigrated, leaving him in need of people to replace the missing performers. For Singer, the threat of the Nazis, while real, seemed less important than the music. Singer fought the Nazis in the RMK for the right to perform particular works, he negotiated for more cultural events for the league, he furthered the goals and expanded the purview of the league. All this determination could not have been for nothing.

The Nazis attempted to control the everyday lives of their citizens, and to an extent they succeeded. The cultural events of the *Kulturbund* are an example of this control, but Kurt Singer made the *Kulturbund* something more than a Nazi-controlled cultural outlet. Singer fought for the right to perform beautiful, uplifting music to help counteract the oppressive atmosphere of the Third Reich. The Nazis had forced themselves into the everyday lives of the German Jews by separating them from the larger German community, making them conspicuous and alienated from the racially acceptable German people. Nazism attempted to redefine Germanness by controlling aspects of culture which they thought were most relevant. Therefore, by limiting Jewish cultural expression, the Nazis assumed they were limiting the Germanness of the German Jews, and to an extent, they were.

This control, however, only went so far. The actual activities in the practice rooms and recital hall were outside the realm of Nazi control, no matter how strict the censorship. In the example mentioned in the introduction, Wilhelm Guttmann, a prominent Jewish opera singer, died due to a heart attack—presumably induced by the Gestapo. Guttmann had served the *Kulturbund* for many years, performing in numerous programs to critical acclaim.<sup>129</sup> The death

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<sup>129</sup> One thing important to note about “critical acclaim” for the *Kulturbund*, is that only once was a international journalist allowed into a performance. The journalist, an American, was impressed by the talent of the performers

of Guttman has been attributed to the day and night he spent at Gestapo headquarters before the small chamber performance. His arrival three minutes before the performance, in a hurried and breathless manner, contributed to the assumption of his colleagues that his night with the Nazis had not gone well and was the main reason for his death. There is, of course, no way to really determine whether the night with the Gestapo was the reason for Guttman's heart attack on stage that day. His life, however, not only serves as an example of Nazi success at limiting Jewish cultural expression, but also the beneficial aspects of the Jewish cultural league. As a Jewish singer, Guttman had lost his job in 1933 and had only the choice to join the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* in order to earn a living.<sup>130</sup> His tenure with the league was quite successful, but not compared to his German counterparts. The Nazi restrictions on Jews not only limited what Guttman could perform, but also where he could perform. Guttman's life, which had been wholly encompassed by music, could now only be expressed within certain walls.

The *Kulturbund* in Berlin moved around quite a bit as the Nazis attempted to find them a permanent home. The actual physical space in which Jews could perform was shrinking, as synagogues, cafes and music schools became the only places outside the *Kulturbund* where Jews could musically express themselves. As restrictions grew, as well as Nazi antagonism against Jews, the willingness of Jews to perform publically decreased. With the pogroms of the night of November 9-10, 1938, being a Jew in Nazi Germany had become increasingly dangerous. This retracted space, the shrinkage of physical performing area, had brought many Jews to the league as a last resort—the last place they could be themselves without fear. Guttman had found in the

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and also the conduct of the audience. In his mind, the Jews of Germany were succeeding at developing and sustaining a separate, but strong cultural community. Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 63-65.

<sup>130</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 51-52.

*Kulturbund* a home where his talent could be put to great use. His death in February 1941 came months before the Gestapo permanently closed the Berlin *Kulturbund*—the last existing branch of the Jewish cultural league.

Guttman's life and death, then, had been the stage. For Guttman, and many other Jewish musicians, the *Kulturbund* was the only place left where they could perform; and this was under the control and guidance of the Nazis. There was never a time when the employees of the league were not visibly reminded of the political party's presence in the concert hall: Gestapo were seated in the audience to insure a calm and RMK-approved program, SS at the door who checked tickets and identity cards.

In Goldsmith's retelling of the days of the *Kulturbund*, he explores this concept of space only once. While describing the mood of the theatre as the audience quietly filed out, Goldsmith claimed the Jews of Berlin would hurry home through the dangerous streets after a night filled with music which made them forget, for a little while at least, the reality outside the theatre's walls.<sup>131</sup> In his description, Goldsmith says that the *Kulturbund* was an island, a descriptor denoting a place of refuge as well as a place of isolation. The members of the *Kulturbund* attended performances because they had no other options, but also because inside the walls of the theatre they could feel relatively safe. While the Nazi presence was a definite reality, the chance to sit and listen, for a little while at least, helped many members of the *Kulturbund* also escape the fear which permeated their lives.<sup>132</sup>

The first branch of the *Kulturbund* to open outside of Berlin was sponsored by Cologne. In their statement of purpose, the league claimed it desired to “bring to all people the joy and

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<sup>131</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 65.

<sup>132</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 298-301.

courage to face life by letting them participate” in cultural events. “We intend,” it continues, “to keep the connection with the German Homeland and to form at the same time a connecting link with our great Jewish past and with a future that is worth living for.”<sup>133</sup>

### *Views of the Accidental Refuge*

When the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* was founded in 1933, the RMK’s goal was to keep the Jews in a hygienically confined space, where they could go about creating their music without interfering with German culture at large. What the Nazis did not plan on was the spirit of camaraderie, the atmosphere of safety the *Kulturbund* fostered. In a country increasingly hostile toward Jews, the musicians of the league found a place of refuge inside the walls of the *Kulturbund*.

While Hinkel took pride in his successful venture controlling the league, he accidentally created a place the musicians could go to still experience a culturally stimulated life. Günther, Rosemarie, Wilhelm Guttman, Kurt Singer, and countless others, found a way to live a life doing what they loved despite the Nazi policies continuously restricting their activities. The legacy of the *Kulturbund* is colored by the speculation that the league was simply another tool of the Nazis to repress, oppress, and control Germany’s Jewish population. The theater where the league’s activities took place was destroyed, but a plaque was put up in 1990 which reads:

Here the Jewish *Kulturbund* was located from 1935 to 1941. Excluded from professional life, the Jews in Germany founded this self-help organization with its own orchestra and ensembles for opera, operetta, and theater. The Nazi authorities misused the *Kulturbund* for surveillance of Jewish artists and their audiences, which could consist of only Jews. In

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<sup>133</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 67.

1941 it was prohibited. Almost all of those who worked here were murdered in concentration camps.<sup>134</sup>

This very official sounding statement completely blurs the picture of life in the *Kulturbund* by viewing the lives of the Jewish musicians from the perspective of the present. It is most certainly true that many of the members of the league died in concentration camps, but the true story of the *Kulturbund* is not just one of Nazi surveillance and misuse. Life in the league was not constantly barraged by the policies of the Nazis; indeed, members did find a refuge within the walls of the theater. Instead of viewing the league as just another step to extermination, it should be remembered for the life it breathed into the Jewish community during its tenure. Of course the events of the Holocaust and the evil of the Nazi party are important, but either by mistake or on purpose, the Nazis allowed for the creation of something which saved, for a time, the cultural lives of many Jews. The league should not be continually placed in a negative light because of its association with the Nazis; instead, it is important to also remember the good done by the league in the lives of the Jewish community who found solace within the walls of the league.

The scholarship on this subject almost exclusively agrees with this plaque, implying the Nazis' evil intentions for allowing the league to exist. As stated earlier, Kater argues for the sinister view of the league as one serving the Nazis' purposes of controlling Germany's Jewish population by pacifying them with symphonies and plays.<sup>135</sup> Hirsch spends a good deal of time discussing the Zionist view of the league and its negative view of the *Kulturbund's* activities because it supposedly kept Jews from wanting to return to Israel.<sup>136</sup> Other arguments point to

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<sup>134</sup> Goldsmith, *An Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 303.

<sup>135</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p.98.

<sup>136</sup> Hirsch, *A Jewish Orchestra*, p. 39-47.

Hinkel and his desire for power within the Nazi party, claiming the league was merely a way for him to appear useful and necessary for the RKK to include.<sup>137</sup> Another view claims the league kept Jews from realizing the intentions of the Nazis, lulling them into some false sense of security because Jews were able to sit in a theater every once in a while and enjoy a performance.<sup>138</sup> The theme of these arguments follows the sinister version of events more than any other view. Such a one-sided opinion of the league makes it appear true, but based on the lives of Günther, Rosemarie, Singer, and others, the experience of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* was not one simply of oppression and restriction. It would be preposterous to say the Jews of Germany did not suffer during the Third Reich, but suffering was not always the predominant experience. It also supposes a level of stupidity on the part of the Jews as well as some sort of all-knowing, prescient ability which would have alerted them to the possibility of the Holocaust, a genocide completely unimaginable to those who lived before it. The Jewish Cultural League was a place to keep living, a place to survive despite the fear and depression of the Nazis. It was a refuge in a massive storm.

Günther, currently living in America going by the name George, refuses to count himself among the victims of the Nazis. To him, his experience of Nazi Germany did not include tenure in a camp or forced labor. Instead, he spent his days making music under the watchful eyes of the Nazis.<sup>139</sup> Behind the doors of the *Kulturbund*, he lived his life playing the flute, but suffered no violent or aggressive actions from the Nazis. Yes, he was oppressed. Yes, he was restricted. And, yes, he was forced to live like a foreigner in his native land, but he found a place to call

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<sup>137</sup> Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics*, p. 62; Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, p. 50-52.

<sup>138</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 98.

<sup>139</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*.

home. The *Jüdischer Kulturbund* was a home in a land becoming increasingly alienating. It was the only place Jews could culturally escape the civil death they felt in the Third Reich. Sinister or not, the league served as a place of refuge—albeit an imperfect refuge—where people were able to survive, where they preserved their sanity in an insane world—a world very quickly disintegrating.

### *Closing the Kulturbund*

The *Jüdischer Kulturbund* was doomed. The Nazis took away the most popular composers, so Jewish ones replaced them; Jewish musicians and audiences emigrated at alarming rates, so the league staged smaller and smaller productions; the Nazis began removing musicians, so the league got smaller. One of the organizers of the league, Werner Levie, said the problem for the *Kulturbund* was not lacking themes, but the lack of people.<sup>140</sup> After the events of *Kristallnacht* it became increasingly difficult to encourage Jews to come out at night for performances. The first production performed after November 9<sup>th</sup> was a play by a Scotsman called *Rain and Wind*. The performance was described as actors performing in “a world of illusion” a week after the incredible violence of the pogrom.<sup>141</sup> The league was shut down by the RMK directly after the pogrom, but Hinkel ordered the opening back up as well as resuming rehearsals for the next performance. *Rain and Wind* begins with the actors dancing and laughing, actions totally incongruous with the reality of life for Jews in Nazi Germany. In this one example, the Nazi restrictions on Jews made it impossible to react to the violence happening

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<sup>140</sup> Zortman, “Theater in Isolation,” p. 166.

<sup>141</sup> Herbert Freedman, *Jüdisches Theater in Nazideutschland* (Tübingen, 1964), p.149 as cited in Zortman, “Theater in Isolation,” p. 167.

around them, even in the space designated for cultural expression. The home the Jews had fostered under Nazi control was invaded by the strict measures forcing them to ignore the reality of their daily lives.

The *Kulturbund* was doomed from the beginning, but not only because hindsight tells us so. Zortman argues that the league was “constantly shackled by its inability to see beyond its own German identity.”<sup>142</sup> Since the Nazis wanted the Jews to belong to a separate cultural identity, they had placed them in a separate cultural community, but this was in vain. The *Kulturbund* was filled with people Joseph Goebbels claimed did not exist: German Jews. Members of the league had been German their entire lives, and while many still followed the lines of their faith, the majority of German Jews had become comfortable in their dual identity, while others felt no connection at all with their Jewishness.<sup>143</sup> It was the Nazis who insisted on the difference, but the Jews who participated in the cultural league helped perpetuate it. The difference, however, seemed impossible to distinguish, as Jews had become so intertwined with Germans. Perhaps those who said the Jews had ingrained themselves in German culture were right: they had become German Jews, not for nefarious purposes, but because they felt a connection to the German nation. Hinkel and Singer, men on either side of the issue, were incapable of accepting the fact that the Jews of Germany and German Jews were one in the same.

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<sup>142</sup> Zortman, “Theater in Isolation,” p. 167-168.

<sup>143</sup> The people referenced here are the German Jews who were ethnically Jewish but had never participated in Jewish religious ceremony. These people felt more of a connection with German culture than the religious community they were allegedly supposed to feel connected to. Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, p. 75-88; Goldsmith recounts a conversation he had with his father about his Jewishness. To date, his father does not consider himself a Jew. Instead, he claims Hitler thought he was a Jew and he had no chance to protest. Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 330-331.

The removal of Jews from German culture negatively affected the two created cultural communities in a cultural sense.

The *Jüdischer Kulturbund* was dissolved by the RKK on September 11, 1941. Instruments were confiscated and sent to German bands and concert halls in a method of re-appropriation. Most of the remaining members of the league were sent to camps, but the majority was sent to a town in German occupied Czechoslovakia called Theresienstadt. This garrison town was turned into a ghetto-camp for the Jews in late 1940 and used by the Nazis as a propaganda town. Touted as “Hitler’s Gift to the Jews,” Theresienstadt continued the cultural expression of the *Kulturbund*, but under new circumstances. In Theresienstadt, art, music, and literature were allowed to flourish as Jews expressed themselves in any method open to them. The legacy of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* continued in this place, as Jewish children performed in the children’s opera *Brundibar*, a story of the power of children to overcome the evil of a tyrant. Kurt Singer, who had left Germany for the assumed safety of Holland, ended up here and directed at least one production of this children’s opera before his death from malnourishment.<sup>144</sup>

Theresienstadt, just like the *Kulturbund*, served as a place the Nazis could point to as an example of how well the Jewish community lived in Germany. In order to quiet the international community which would protest the imprisonment of certain famous Jews, Theresienstadt was painted as a safe place for Jews, one where they had total control over their lives. The most famous incident with Theresienstadt involved the committee sent by the International Red Cross to investigate rumors of violence against Jews in the Third Reich. In a masterful plan, the façade of Theresienstadt stood up against these rumors—mostly because the

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<sup>144</sup> Goldsmith, *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, p. 292-293.

town was divested of 7,000 inmates leading up to the visit, as well as receiving face lifts to all the town buildings. The Red Cross was fooled, and the oppression continued.<sup>145</sup>

Despite the reality of life in a ghetto-camp, in Theresienstadt, much like in the *Kulturbund*, there was a sense of safety fostered by cultural activities and events. Musicians created groups performing with a freedom of choice unknown in Nazi Germany, while children were taught art, literature, music, science, and philosophy by some of Europe's finest minds. But always outside the practice room, the classroom, the cafe, out on the street, there was fear. The view of the *Kulturbund*, and in turn Theresienstadt, as merely a Nazi implement of propaganda tells only half the story. Life continued to exist in spite of the Nazi restrictions.

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<sup>145</sup> Nobert Troller, *Theresienstadt: Hitler's Gift to the Jews* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1991); František Ehrmann, *Terezin* (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech Lands, 1965).

## *Conclusion*

Despite strict Nazi policies, the control of national culture proved considerably difficult. Identifying a purely German musical culture worked against the Nazis as it focused more on the racial identity of the creator instead of the quality of the creation. Prominent musicians in the Third Reich, such as Straus and Furtwängler, were unable to use their positions of authority to focus on quality instead of racial purity. Hinkel and his team of censors worked toward the Nazi goal of music entirely focused on ideological concerns. This censorship resulted in a confused array of musical choices, some based entirely on the personal opinion of the censor. Instead of one criterion delineating acceptable music from unacceptable music, the RMK created a haphazard hodge-podge of criteria with seemingly no unifying theme—other than appealing to Nazi tastes.

Responsible for German as well as Jewish culture, the RMK's guidelines on both issues remained confusingly complex. The *Jüdischer Kulturbund* experienced the complexities of this system first hand, as they attempted performing material which, in their minds, had no connection to Nazi politics. The incomprehensibility of this system made it impossible for citizens of the Third Reich to get a clear picture of what was acceptable. Cultural expression resulting from this system was not the unified German culture the Nazis wanted. Instead, the Nazis were left with two separate cultures only separated by barriers they created.

Nazi policy created the civil death that separated Jew from German, but the RMK, Hinkel, and the creation of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* opened up a space for Jewish musicians in Nazi Germany. The relative safety the Jews felt at *Kulturbund* events relied on the separate space marked out for them. Despite the presence of soldiers and Gestapo at *Kulturbund* events, members of the audience and performers managed to experience something resembling

normalcy, at least briefly. The civil death forced on them by the Nazi Party remained at the door of the theater as Jews entered a place considered home. The arguments for the sinister nature of the *Kulturbund* are not entirely unfounded—there is, of course, evidence of the league being used for propaganda purposes and the supposition suggesting the league created a false sense of security is not without merit. What historians who argue for this underlying nature tend to ignore is the benefits of the league. Clearly, the creation of forty-six branches suggests the need for the league in a German nation proud of its cultural achievements.

Germans take pride in being the people of music; and despite being told they no longer qualified as Germans, the Jews of Germany still felt proud to be a part of such a great musical tradition. Evidence of this pride appears in the effort the musicians put forth in the numerous rehearsals for each performance—sometimes reaching twenty to twenty-five rehearsals for one show. The members of the orchestra, especially, took very seriously their part in the protection of the cultural well being of the Jewish community. Kurt Singer, Wilhelm Guttmann, and many others demonstrated their belief in the importance of music for a community to remain strong.

Civil death and Nazism were not strong enough to stop the Jews of Germany. They were separated from the larger cultural community, but managed to continue their own community amidst harsh restrictions. Becoming outsiders in their own country did not stop them from being proud of being German, or hinder their enthusiasm for music. The exclusion of Germany's Jews did not stifle their cultural output and in effect kept them on a parallel path to their German counterparts. The national identity the Nazis attempted to create for Germany by restricting musicians and composers while allowing others was an effort to eliminate the Jewish element from their culture. The Jews, however, would not be silenced. It proved impossible for the

Nazis to completely eliminate Jewish cultural expression from the greater cultural community, despite the distinction the RMK and RKK insisted existed between the two.

When Gunther and Rosemarie said goodbye to their friends at the Berlin *Kulturbund*, the director assumed the league would open again for the fall season. The first scheduled performance was to be of Neilson's *Symphony No. 4*, known since its first performance as the *Inextinguishable Symphony*. The final strains of music, the last played before the dissolution of the league, were from this symphony celebrating life. It is telling that the Jewish community, while exiled and isolated in their own country, found a place to call home where they continued life.

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*Vita*

Wynne Channell received her Master of Arts in Modern European History from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in May 2011. She plans to continue studying music in history whether or not she makes a career of it.