MAKING MUSIC IN HELL

How Self-Initiated, Clandestine Music Making by Jewish Prisoners in the Nazi Concentration and Death Camps Helped Them Survive

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

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New York, New York

2019
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Acknowledgements

There are several people who have been instrumental in helping this project come to fruition to whom I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude. Dr. Gordon Dale has encouraged and challenged me from the start when my topic was a mere kernel of an idea in our Jewish Music Research class. His patience and encouragement were instrumental in the flowering of that idea into a solid thesis topic, and his gentle insistence that I remain objective in my research proved to be an impetus for one of the main foci of this work. I am grateful to him as well for believing in me when I was certain that I was incapable of even beginning, let alone completing a project of this scope. I also must acknowledge my thesis advisor, Rabbi Kim Geringer, who has spent countless hours reading, editing and guiding me through this process. Without her careful analysis and attention to detail, I am not sure how I would have been able to complete my writing. Each time I felt stuck, especially near the beginning of this journey, Rabbi Geringer seemed to know exactly what was needed to spur me on. In those moments, she did not hesitate to act, at times much to my dismay, and I am sincerely grateful for her dedication, genuine honesty and enthusiasm for our work together.

I must also acknowledge my fellow 5th-year cantorial classmates. We began this thesis journey together in our 4th year of school, and I found the suggestions and feedback in our class discussions most helpful in shaping the direction my project ultimately took.

Finally, and most importantly, my deepest gratitude extends to my husband, John and our 11-year-old daughter, Rosella who have sat through endless mornings, nights, weekends and holidays, patiently supporting me and cheering me on, occasionally with tissues, to

the completion of my thesis. Their understanding, love and sacrifice allowed me the time and the space I needed to devote myself to my research and writing about a topic that began as a compelling interest and has become a dear passion to me over the course of this journey. I am profoundly grateful for all they have done to help make this possible. Thank you all!

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Introduction

> *"The music could save you: if not your life, then at least the day. The images that I saw every day were impossible to live with, and yet we held on. We played music to them, for our basic survival. We made music in hell."* – Coco Schumann, Auschwitz survivor[1]

Music was an integral part of daily life in almost all the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, and it took many forms. Despite its use by the Nazis as a tool of torture and terror against the prisoners, music became for those inmates who were able to engage in it willingly, a lifeline of hope, providing a means of comfort, self-expression, spiritual support and, ultimately, a coping mechanism that allowed them to survive in the broadest sense amid unimaginable conditions of starvation, disease and death. The power of music to calm, uplift, express and console provided prisoners in the camps a tool for survival which may have helped them to keep faith with the belief that life still held some meaning.[2] Self-initiated music in the Nazi concentration camps allowed inmates who engaged in it brief and crucial moments of distraction and perhaps, even hope. That is not to say that the self-initiated music in the camps was a panacea; rather, it was one way by

[1] Schumann, Coco. *GHETTO SWINGER*: *A Berlin Jazz-Legend Remembers*. DOPPELHOUSE PR, 2018.
[2] Kalisch, Shoshana, and Barbara Meister. *Yes, We Sang!: Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps*. Harper & Row, 1985, *see also*: Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, Jan. 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.000, Schumann, Coco. *GHETTO SWINGER: A Berlin Jazz-Legend Remembers*. DOPPELHOUSE PR, 2018, Pasternak, Velvel, and Lawrence Berson. *Songs Never Silenced: Based on "Lider Fun Di Ghettos Un Lagern"*. Tara Publications, 2003, and others.

which prisoners were able to maintain some bit of humanity and sense of agency as they struggled to hold onto even a small piece of their identities as cultural human beings.

Through musical compositions, prisoners were able, in part, to express their suffering, mourn their losses, find comfort, and at times, even engage in resistance which may have afforded them renewed hope and courage. For some, this music maintained the illusion that as prisoners they were still able to act independently, at least in some small way, an illusion which may have contributed to a renewed belief in their humanity, and, even more importantly, the resolve to go on. The music with which prisoners in the Nazi camps engaged on their own accord was also a significant tool in shaping for them new cultural avenues and strategies for survival under the horrific conditions of the camps.[3] Playing music independently served an important role as a method of coping practically and surviving culturally. According to Guido Fackler in his article, *Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945,* "The values and aesthetics inherent in music were a defense against the terror of the camp."[4]

This thesis explores the role of self-initiated music on prisoners in the Nazi concentration and death camps: how it supported them spiritually, provided them with a means of expressing their sadness, grief, defiance and hope, and uplifted their spirits such that they were able to hold onto the faith that life could still hold meaning.

[3] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, Jan. 2007: 22, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. *See also,* Schumann, Coco. *GHETTO SWINGER: A Berlin Jazz-Legend Remembers*. DOPPELHOUSE PR, 2018. *and,* Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps (1939-1945).* Clarendon Press University of Oxford, 2005.
[4] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, Jan. 2007: 22, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102.

The music created and played by Jewish inmates and the degree to which that music served as a tool for survival in the broadest sense is the subject of this thesis. I intend to illustrate using the vast array of extant scholarship available, the ways in which prisoners' own compositions transformed, sustained and provided a means of catharsis, a refuge for grief and self-expression, and in some cases, perhaps most importantly, a lifeline of survival in the Nazi concentration and death camps.

Overview and Structure

The thesis begins with a literature review of some of the most pertinent extant scholarship concerning music inside concentration camps and its functions in Nazi Germany during the Holocaust. Included are articles, books, sheet music collections and recordings each of which explores or highlights pertinent areas of interest to this study. Within the body of the literature review, the various sources are put into conversation with each other through the context of memory which serves as a multi-faceted lens through which we comprehend Holocaust narratives and their impact on how we understand, hear and respond to Holocaust music. These various lenses of memory are divided into categories which then form the basis for the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two examines the vital defining role music played in shaping the identity of interwar European Jews and the degree to which their musical culture both personally and, for some, professionally, informed their lives and sense of self. A section of the chapter is devoted to explaining the integral function of music as a fundamental part of Jewish cultural identity pre-World War II and the significance this strong association had in shaping both the emotional and the embodied physical memory of European Jewry individually and collectively. Understanding this cultural backdrop is important because

it sets the stage for the reader to comprehend the devastating effects the Nazis' perversion of this musical relationship had on their Jewish prisoners.

A basic understanding of the various types of music performed by the inmates at the direction of the SS in the camps and the ways the guards used music to torment and dehumanize their Jewish captives is crucial to grasping the main argument of this thesis – that self-initiated music making by Jewish prisoners in the camps contributed to their survival. All of this is explored in detail in Chapter Three. One must comprehend the degree to which this "music on command"[5] was used to humiliate, torture and demoralize the prisoners in order to fully grasp, in contrast, both the draw and the impact that musical activities initiated by the inmates themselves had on their ability to overcome loneliness, fear, depression and continual exposure to the unimaginably horrific conditions of the camps. This chapter explores in depth both music on command and voluntary music making, the conditions under which each took place, and the toll both forms of musical engagement took on the prisoners.

Some of the most remarkable surviving examples of self-initiated music making in the camps come from the Nazi model ghetto, Terezin. The unique musical culture of Terezin is explored in Chapter Four. Specifically, the musical activity in Terezin and how it has shaped our understanding of Holocaust history is examined with a focus on the effects that musical engagement had on those who participated and those who were present to listen. The second half of the chapter explores in greater detail the use of this music along with music composed by prisoners in other concentration and death camps as historical

[5] "Music on Command" is a term coined and used by Dr. Guido Fackler to describe forced music-making by prisoners in the Nazi camp system at the command of their Nazi guards.

artifacts. Music is a language that speaks at times far more deeply than words and is unparalleled in its ability to capture history through the eyes, ears and voices of those who are living it. The musical transmission of the history of prisoners' lives in the camps is a focus of this chapter.

Finally, in Chapter 5 we hear directly from survivors. Former inmates in their own words relate musical experiences they and fellow prisoners had during the Holocaust and the impact this musical engagement had on their ability to survive and reconnect to a sense of self and humanity post liberation.

Terms and Definitions

Throughout the thesis a variety of terms are used to describe various aspects of the Holocaust and the Nazi camp system. For the purpose of this study, specific definitions and clarifying explanations are listed below:

Holocaust – "The systematic, bureaucratic, state sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Holocaust is a word of Greek origin meaning, 'sacrifice by fire.' The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were 'racially superior' and that the Jews, deemed 'inferior,' were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community."[6]

Concentration Camp – "A camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that

[6] "Introduction to the Holocaust." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, http://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/.

are acceptable in a constitutional democracy."[7] Although there were over 42,000 camps, subcamps, ghettos and detention centers built and used by the Nazis, in this thesis, the term refers specifically to the many thousand concentration and death camps established in Germany and other Eastern European countries by the Nazi regime from 1933-1945.[8] The camps were used for, "…a range of purposes, including forced labor, detention of people thought to be enemies of the state, and mass murder."[9] Although World War II did not officially begin until September 1, 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland, the first Nazi concentration camp, Dachau, was established in March of 1933 to house political prisoners. The camp was located on the grounds of an old abandoned munitions factory about 10 miles northwest of Munich in the northeastern part of the town of Dachau.[10] During its first year, the camp held about 4,800 political prisoners. In 1937-1938, the camp was expanded to serve as a major labor camp, a model for all the Nazi camps and a training center for SS concentration camp guards. After *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) on November 10-11, 1938, more than 10,000 Jewish men were detained in Dachau.[11] Most of the men in this initial group were released after a few weeks or months of incarceration after proving they had made arrangements to leave Germany. This was the case too at Sachsenhausen, another concentration camp established in 1936, which housed countless political prisoners early on before the outbreak of war as well as thousands of Jewish men in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht.*[12]

[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid
[9] Ibid
[10] Ibid
[11] Ibid
[12] Ibid

Death Camp – Also called, "extermination camps" or "killing centers," death camps were similar to concentration camps. The Nazi death camps, however, were built for the express purpose of the systematic mass murder of millions of prisoners primarily through gassing, hanging, torture and firing squad, and the burning of their corpses in large crematoriums. Examples of Nazi death camps include the Auschwitz main camp, Sobibor, Majdanek, Belzec and Treblinka.[13]

Ghetto – Ghettos were areas set up by the Nazis to segregate the Jewish people from the rest of the population. The ghettos were walled off, confined, small areas within towns where Jews were forced to live under wretched conditions. They were designed to be temporary, and living quarters were known to be horribly substandard and overcrowded, clean water and food severely rationed and hard to find, and sanitation and medical services nearly non-existent. During World War II, over 1,000 ghettos were established in Germany, Poland and Hungary.[14]

Nazis – A Nazi was a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Also known as the Third Reich or Nazi Regime, for the purposes of this thesis, the Nazis were a group of German soldiers led by Adolph Hitler during his reign of power from January 30, 1933 – May 8, 1945. Nazi Germany is also the common English name for Germany between 1933-1945 when Hitler and his Nazi Party controlled the country through dictatorship.[15]

[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] Ibid

SS – SS stands for, *"Schutzstaffel,"* (Protection Squadron), a major paramilitary organization under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in Nazi Germany and later throughout German-occupied Europe during World War II. It began as a small guard unit known as the *"Saal-Schutz,"* made up of NSDAP volunteers to provide security for party meetings in Munich.[16]

Other terms used within the body of the thesis which may require translation are defined as needed on an individual basis within each chapter.

[16] Ibid

Chapter 1 – Literature Review

Sources discussing music making in the Nazi concentration and death camps are plentiful and varied. For this literature review, I have selected eight sources that vary in focus, scope and medium in an effort to find and present a reasonable sampling of extant scholarship and media that will serve as a solid jumping off point to support the research for my thesis: "Making Music in Hell – How Self-Initiated Music Making by Prisoners in the Nazi Concentration and Death Camps Served as a Means of Survival." Although the primary area of focus for my thesis is clandestine, self-initiated musical engagement by Jewish prisoners, to provide context, I have also chosen sources for this review that explore forced music making and the use of music as torture by the SS guards in the camps. One source also discusses in detail music making among non-Jewish (specifically German and Czech) prisoners and the extent to which they were privileged by the Nazi captors and able to engage with music voluntarily and openly[17]. The description of the camp prisoner hierarchy in this source, Shirli Gilbert's *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*, is extremely helpful in understanding the important role non-Jewish prisoners had in enabling illegal music making among Jewish inmates.

All my sources use memory to some degree as a broad background or lens through which the authors examine specific areas of music making during the Holocaust relevant to their research. Use of the lens of memory is unavoidable when researching or discussing the

[17] Gilbert, Shirli. Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps (1939-1945). Clarendon Press University of Oxford, 2005. (pg. 102)

Shoah, particularly regarding prisoner activity in the camps because memory is the most accessible means we have through which we can examine, study and create narratives that may somehow help us make sense of what took place. I use the phrase, “lens of memory” to illustrate how, just as when one looks through a camera lens, some of what is seen is slightly distorted, so it is with the Holocaust and memory. Each survivor, each writing or piece of artwork or musical composition created in the camps is subjective based on the memory of the person, the artist or the composer, and based on the way the listener or the observer interprets what is being seen or heard. Memory is but one lens through which these narratives might be examined and explored, and I argue the most versatile. Loss is another as are history, hate, the psychology of human adaptation, etc. I am by no means suggesting that this is the only window through which such activity should be viewed. It is but one way, and in my thinking, a crucial one, that we might understand and make sense of self-directed music making by Jewish prisoners in the Nazi camps. The lens of memory is unavoidable because it is only through the shared memories of those who experienced the horrors themselves that we can begin to learn and try to fathom what took place.

While it is impossible for Holocaust source material to be appreciated and used effectively without considering the memories that went into its creation, it is perhaps the purpose of the scholarly source in question and how its theses and findings are presented that determines the most relevant category within the larger context of memory in which to place it. In other words, along with memory comes interpretation and it is important to consider how the author or editor of any given source is interpreting the memories therein before categorizing the source within the vast array of extant Holocaust material and

scholarship. There are many ways of interpreting memory, experience and works produced, and we do a disservice to those who suffered and were senselessly murdered in the Shoah if we assume only one or two of those is definitive. There is an inherent danger for example in assuming that all who perished were victims who went foolishly to the slaughter without standing up for themselves and fighting, just as there is a danger in assuming that all music, artwork or poetry produced in the camps was done so as a form of resistance. This applies to both the breadth of relevant scholarship available in general and to those sources chosen specifically for this thesis. To that end, I have identified the following categories to organize the various lenses of memory through which we comprehend Holocaust narratives, and their impact on how we understand, hear and respond to Holocaust music:

"Music and Song – Agents of Cultural Identity through Memory," a look at the essential role music played in shaping the fundamental core identity and psyche of Jews personally, socially, professionally and culturally.

"Music as Weapon/Music as Refuge – The Psychology of Memory," an exploration of the intersection of music and emotion, its role in creating identity and how that intersection allowed for both the Nazis' use of music as a weapon of torture against the prisoners and for the prisoners' voluntary engagement with music as a refuge and a tool for survival.

"History in Song – Giving Voice to the Timeline of Memory," which focuses specifically on the use of music as a means of narrating historical events and facts as well as on music writ large as a vehicle for sharing and communicating memory.

These categories will be further explained and explored in subsequent chapters. I introduce them here as a means of emphasizing the extent to which memory shapes history and historiography, and to show that memory, and the lenses through which information is presented, are a focus throughout this study.

Music and Song – Agents of Cultural Identity through Memory

To establish a comprehensive base of source material, three articles will be examined, one of which is a translated chapter from Guido Fackler's *Des Lagers Stimme – Music im KZ,* along with Shirli Gilbert's book, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps,* specifically her chapter on Sachsenhausen. Musical examples included in this review comprise two collections of music along with detailed information about the songs and the circumstances surrounding their history, and the liner notes of two different CDs, one made up of music from the camps and the other of, "quartets of passion, hope and resilience whose beauty defies the horrors that surrounded their creation."[18] It is interesting to note the nouns Camden Shaw, author of the liner notes, chose to describe the musical selections in the second CD, "Voices of Defiance." Even the title points to an intention which may or may not have been meant by the composer. He also includes a quote by Viktor Ullman which may lead the reader to certain conclusions regarding Ullman's purpose or the effect on the composer of his musical engagement in Theresienstadt which may or may not be accurate. The point here is that the chosen quote leaves a certain impression which fits with the title and Mr. Shaw's overall interpretation of the music as compositions of spiritual resistance. While this may

[18] Dover Quartet. *Voices of Defiance*, Rolston Recital Hall, The Banff Centre, Banff Alberta, CA, 19 Mar. 2016. Liner Notes by Camden Shaw 2017, Cedille Records/Cedille Chicago. (pg. 1)

be the case, it is equally true that it may be otherwise. This is just one possible way of interpreting the music. In choosing the title and this following quote, Camden Shaw has left the listener little choice in the matter to decide for herself. He has provided us with only one lens through which to listen, that of resistance. “By no means did we sit weeping on the banks of the waters of Babylon. Our endeavor with respect to arts was commensurate with our will to live.”[19] Ullman composed his String Quartet No. 3 which is included in the collection, while he was imprisoned in Theresienstadt. Camden Shaw offers a brief history of Ullman’s early musical life and prowess before sharing the story of his imprisonment in Theresienstadt and eventual murder in Auschwitz. What follows this history is an impassioned analysis of the third quartet included on the CD. There is no way to know how much of what Shaw hears and describes is his interpretation alone and how much was intended by Ullman himself as he composed this work under unimaginable circumstances. That the composition is a window into Ullman’s experience and state of mind at that time is certainly possible, but for music and songs to function as “agents of memory,”[20] they must be recreated. In her article, “Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory,” Shirli Gilbert cautions against the blurring of distinctions between, “formal historiography and popular Jewish remembering.”[21] She looks specifically at how remembrance can be, and often is, colored by the interpreter at the intersection of history and memory. While she acknowledges that music provides a possible way of memorializing the victims honestly by acknowledging the diversity of

[19] Ibid (pg. 6)
[20] Gilbert, Shirli. “Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory.” *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 66, www.jstor.org/stable/25473010. (pg. 123)
[21] Ibid (pg. 107)

their "human-ness," she also looks at the preservation of music and songs from the camps and ghettos as historical sources; artifacts which could preserve the voices of the authors and in so doing, their memory and the memory of other victims of Nazi genocide.[22] Gilbert points out in this piece the importance of music in offering a richer alternative memorial space than other found artifacts such as eyeglasses, hats and piles of shoes. "Songs embody the process of negotiating between the remnants of the past and the needs of the present."[23] They provide a sense of last attempts at agency and voice by the prisoners in the camps; a glimpse into the lives and responses of the victims beyond how the murderers behaved towards them, how they were treated and tortured and what was done to them.

Music as Weapon/Music as Refuge – The Psychology of Memory

In contrast to Gilbert's article focusing on music as memory and a means of historical preservation and memorialization, Juliane Brauer in her article, "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps," analyzes the way prisoners in the camps remember differently and shows in detail how a memory of something that has always been a passion and a refuge can be transformed in the face of absolute power into unimaginable psychological destruction. Brauer categorizes ways in which music was used by the Nazis against the Jews as an effective form of torture, focusing particularly, as Gilbert does, on Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz. In order to show how biologically, socially and culturally the Nazis effectively used music to torture the Jewish prisoners, she identifies a "contact zone" in which a person's internal and external

[22] Ibid (pg. 106)
[23] Ibid (pg.124)

worlds intersect, and meaning is assigned to emotions and relationships related to experiences of music.[24] Through a systematic multi-pronged approach of forced music making which included forced singing as a means of violence, playing on command as a weapon of torture and unending music blaring through the night, depriving prisoners of much needed rest and taking full advantage of the inmates' severely vulnerable physical state, the Nazis were able in many cases, to rob their victims of their very sense of self.[25] As Brauer explains:

> "Given that listening to and performing music are bodily emotional practices, intricately connected to memory and meanings formed through experiences, and that the mindful body is a potential contact zone for creating and (re)coding emotions, the prisoners' bodies and identities were profoundly vulnerable in the camps. Combining music with complete control over the prisoners' bodies allowed for the potential rewriting of those aspects of a prisoner's identity that had been derived from music and musical experience. The body is revealed to be an embattled symbol of self-determination and heteronomy. In this struggle between the self and an external force for control over the body (the Nazi captors in this case), the mindful body is subject to violent deformation. The self, which otherwise serves as a resource for resistance and survival, is violated and, in the most extreme cases, destroyed."[26]

Through the use of archival material, interviews with survivors and the large number of available sources, she goes on to document examples of music as an instrument of violence and torture focusing on incidents of forced singing in Sachsenhausen and compulsory playing in the camp orchestras in Auschwitz. Examples of this activity will

[24] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous? Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103.
[25] Ibid (pg. 9-10)
[26] Ibid (pg. 10)

be discussed at length in a later chapter. Because one's perception of music is strongly linked to experiences and emotions that have already been experienced by the listener, hearing it can connect one's past with the present. This can be extremely beneficial in shoring up identity, feelings of self-confidence and a sense of belonging culturally and spiritually. Conversely, it can also be used, as Brauer shows in her article, to effectively and thoroughly deconstruct identity.

"Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945," by Guido Fackler further explores the distinctions between the psychologically beneficial effects of voluntary musical engagement by the prisoners in the camps and the equally debilitating results on Jewish victims of the Nazis' use of music as an instrument of torture. Fackler, like Gilbert and Brauer, also categorizes the music in his study, but unlike Gilbert who separates music making in the camps into groups based on prisoner ethnicity, or Brauer who makes distinctions based on the type of forced music making demanded by the Nazis, Fackler creates two distinct categories of musical engagement in the Nazi concentration and death camps. The first half of his essay describes the various forms of music performed by the prisoners on the orders of the SS guards, while the second part of the article analyzes the musical activities initiated by the prisoners themselves. He uses the terms, "Music on Command" and "Self-Initiated Music" to describe the two very different forms of music making he explores in his work.[27] But where Brauer focuses on the many ways in which the Nazis used music to humiliate, torture and rob their Jewish captors of any remaining sense of humanity, Fackler looks in more detail at the various ways prisoners managed to

[27] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg. 1, 11)

play music for themselves and examines the different forms these activities typically took. Like Gilbert, in her chapter on Sachsenhausen, Fackler makes mention of the important role non-Jewish prisoner functionaries had in facilitating music making among Jewish prisoners. He describes how the role and responsibilities of these camp leaders grew after the official outbreak of war resulted in a rapid increase in the number of prisoners being deported to the camps. With so many more new deportees arriving daily, the Nazis had to increase the number of prisoner functionaries, a secondary hierarchy of camp leadership made up of non-Jewish prisoners that supplemented the SS personnel who ran the camps. Without these prisoner functionaries who sometimes numbered as high as 10% of the inmates, the SS camp administration would not have been able to keep the day to day operations of the camp running smoothly.[28] These prisoners typically received extra food, cigarettes, lighter work detail, regular clothing and other privileges in return for their brutal supervision over their fellow prisoners.[29] Fackler concurs that it was usually the German political prisoners who used their position to the benefit of their fellow inmates, whereas other functionaries, including criminals who were often selected for these leadership roles, were far more brutal in their treatment of the prisoners under their watch, especially the Jewish inmates. According to survivor accounts, the criminal functionaries were more likely to assist the brutal SS camp leadership than political functionaries (usually German political prisoners) who tended to be more helpful to the

[28] Pindera, Jerzy. *Liebe Mutti: One Man's Struggle to Survive in KZ Sachsenhausen, 1939-1945*. Edited by Lynne Taylor, University Press of America, 2004. (pg. 113)
[29] Wolf, René. "Judgement in the Grey Zone: the Third Auschwitz (Kapo) Trial in Frankfurt 1968." *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2007, pp. 617–663., doi:10.1080/14623520701644432.

prisoners under their command.[30] The latter, less vengeful *"kapos"* as they were called and block elders or *"blockaltester,"* (barrack leaders) might allow for a sing-along in the evening or get the SS to sanction a musical performance.[31] That said, he makes little distinction in the discussion that follows between self-initiated music making and performance by Jews and that of non-Jews, something Gilbert indicated differed tremendously depending on where in the hierarchy prisoners fell, especially since Jews were always at the very bottom of the prisoner ranking structure, separated from other prisoners, easily identifiable by their yellow stars and often singled out for particular forms of torture, especially when it came to the use of music as a weapon of violence.

Importantly, Fackler also points out that it was only a small segment of the prisoner population that was able to voluntarily engage musically at all, and any who chose to do so, particularly Jewish prisoners, participated at their own peril. In his conclusion he addresses the concept of "the prisoner as a cultural being."[32] By this he means that though they may have been treated otherwise, those imprisoned in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps were far from an undifferentiated grey mass as they are sometimes portrayed. Rather, they were individual human beings with families, personal histories, cultural identities and values who shockingly found themselves in the unimaginable dehumanizing altered reality of the camps. He discusses how these prisoners were confronted with the necessity of "devising new cultural techniques and survival strategies,"[33] and how clandestine music making was one way in which some

[30] Gilbert, Shirli. Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps (1939-1945). Clarendon Press University of Oxford, 2005. (pg. 101)
[31] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg. 12)
[32] Ibid (pg. 22)
[33] Ibid (pg. 22)

prisoners were able to cling to a small piece of their sense of identity as cultural human beings even as those who imprisoned them treated them worse than animals. This echoes to a degree some of the points brought up by Brauer and touched upon earlier in this chapter regarding the intersection of music and memory and its effect on the human psyche. It is worth remembering that for many Jewish prisoners, music may have been associated with significant aspects of their personal identity prior to imprisonment in the camps.[34] As this identity was systematically destroyed by the Nazis in their concentration and death camps, voluntary music making may have been helpful in creating new cultural realities, a sense of belonging, and strategies for survival.[35]

History in Song – The Historical Context of Memory

Evidence to this effect is found in the two musical collections discussed here as well as in the liner notes of the two CDs. For example, in her collection, *"Yes we Sang! Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps,"* Shoshanah Kalisch remembers, "Yes, we sang in the ghettos and concentration camps. Songs were sung even in the death camps. They were the only means of expressing our sadness and grief, defiance and hope. When our spirits sank, the songs took over; they helped us to keep our faith that life held some meaning."[36] In her collection she attempts to convey a realistic picture of what it was like to sing in the concentration camps, ghettos and hideouts of WWII. To do this she focuses on events relating to each of the included songs and the people who first sang or wrote

[34] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103.
[35] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg. 22)
[36] Kalisch, Shoshana, and Barbara Meister. Yes, We Sang! Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps. Harper & Row, 1985. (pg. 1)

them. Interwoven into the text are some of her own experiences. The book is a collection of historical memory in music and song. As this collection, along with a program of performance based on its contents, is the culmination of Kalisch's effort to give meaning and purpose to her own survival,[37] it would be interesting to hear Shirli Gilbert's thoughts on it given the argument she makes in her "Buried Monuments" article concerning the possibilities for music and song as historical artifacts of meaning and memory. Clearly the historical artifacts contained in Kalisch's book are colored by the meaning she placed upon each musical selection and the notes she wrote to explain them, and all are presented to the reader and the musician through the lens of her own memories. The collection is laid out with informative historical and biographical text accompanying each piece of music and providing a glimpse into the events that gave birth to the music on the facing page. In Shoshana's narration one not only gets a history lesson, but also a sense of what may have been going through the minds of the composers and the poets who brought the words to life. Transliteration is provided in the original language along with an English translation, and the original Yiddish text in which most of the songs were composed is included in the back of the book along with a biography that is useful for further research. Each piece has a story to tell, and Kalisch endeavors to ensure that whoever is reading her volume hears that story in its appropriate historical context. The book was written and put together in memory of all who "created, sang or listened to poetry and songs in the camps and the ghettos under Nazi torture."[38]

[37] Ibid (pg. 2)
[38] Ibid (pg. 2)

One of the contributors to Shoshana Kalisch's collection is Peter Wortsman, the same author who interviewed, recorded and penned the liner notes to Alexander Kulisiewicz's haunting CD of remembrance, "Songs from the Gates of Hell." In contrast to Kalisch's first person accounts of the stories around the pieces in her collection, Wortsman's notes are all in third person except for his opening remarks which describe his initial meeting and recording session with Kulisiewicz in Warsaw in 1975. In this introduction, Wortsman characterizes the content of the collection as "songs of raw survival."[39] While this may be true for some or for all the songs presented, the description is potentially problematic as an over-generalization of how each song came about and/or what these songs were originally meant to convey. This is mitigated to a degree in the individual biographical remarks Wortsman provides for each of the CD's selections. With these concise descriptions he accomplishes what Shirli Gilbert calls for at the end of her "Buried Monuments" piece - an effective refocusing of the increasingly dehumanized discourse of uniqueness and spiritual resistance towards a focus on memorialization of the consequences suffered by the human victims of Nazi genocide.[40] In addition to biographical information on Kulisiewicz and his mission to collect and preserve these compositions along with the voices and memories of those who penned them, Wortsman includes descriptive illustrations by victims and survivors of the camps, transliteration of lyrics in the language of the recording and English translations for every song. This collection and Wortsman's thoughtful annotation provide an opening to acknowledge that

[39] Kulisiewicz, Alexander. *Songs from the Depths of Hell Sung in German, Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish*, Warsaw, Poland, 1975. Annotated and recorded by Peter Wortsman in Warsaw, Poland, 1975. Liner notes by Peter Wortsman after extensive interviews with Alexander Kulisiewicz.
[40] Gilbert, Shirli. "Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory." *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 66, www.jstor.org/stable/25473010. (pg. 124)

although these recordings are reconstructions of the original songs as they may have been sung to Kulisiewicz, or as he remembered hearing them in Sachsenhausen, they go a long way in, "reintroducing a diversity of voices and perspectives into the memorial framework."[41]

In contrast to much of the music on "Songs from the Depths of Hell," many of the pieces that make up Jerry Silverman's *Ballads and Songs of the Holocaust* are set to music and arranged by Silverman himself. Although the collection is full of historical notes and documented illustrations, Silverman's arrangements and guitar chording are subjective; that is, they are guided by his own ideas of how the pieces may have sounded or should sound, and therefore highlight a major difference between this collection and Shoshana Kalisch's, *Yes, we Sang,* which includes many originals and far fewer edited arrangements. Silverman's book is really an anthology of Holocaust poetry, music and song - 110 works in 16 languages with transliteration and English translation. Silverman categorizes the pieces according to time period: "The Gathering Storm, 1933-1939," "Shoah 1940-1945," and "Kaddish: A Post-War Retrospective." He also includes an introductory history along with interesting cultural facts regarding the music and its creation, performances, relationships, and writings from survivors and witnesses, making it, much like Kalisch's collection, a musical history of sorts – a description of how people catalogued musically what was happening in their realities. This is another example of the way in which music, memory and history intersect in these sources to tell particular stories.

[41] Ibid (pg. 124)

Conclusions from this Review

After a careful review of the sources under consideration in this chapter, it is apparent that of the several themes which figure prominently in the discourse around music making by Jewish prisoners in the Nazi concentration and death camps, memory is by far the broadest and most widely applicable. Memory and its intersection with music figures in some way in each of the sources I examined. In many cases, the idea of music as historical memory – that is, music as something tangible and lasting that was produced in an unimaginable time under unthinkable circumstances which captured both the composer's emotions and mental state as well as the historical context responsible for both – proved to be a common thread. Although I separated my sources into three categories with memory as the common denominator, it is clear after this reading that much overlap exists within these loosely defined boundaries. Each source uses a different means of categorizing either the music in question, the type of prisoners being examined, or the specific activity associated with voluntary music making in the camps. Regardless, in every instance, there is some reference made to the powerful effect of music, particularly as it intersects with memory and history.

This discovery is an important one as my thesis will explore specifically how self-initiated musical engagement affected the survival of Jewish prisoners in the Nazi concentration and death camps. For purposes of this project, the word "survival" is not limited to what we may consider a single long-term parameter, but rather encompasses far more incremental markers such as reclaiming a sense of self-worth, identifying as a cultural member of a group, staving off suicide even for a day, feeling a sense of

belonging, finding the will to go on, and a host of other small but essential ways that clandestine, self-initiated music making served a crucial role in the daily lives of Jewish prisoners in the camps.

Juliane Brauer's article for example, "How Can Music Be Torturous?" goes a long way in understanding how and why, given the degree to which music was used as an instrument of torture by the Nazis, prisoners who were able still turned to music voluntarily as a refuge, a vehicle for self-expression, a place to mourn or hope, to resist or console, and even as a distraction. Guido Fackler's chapter from *Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945* was also particularly helpful in understanding this phenomenon as he addresses the function, the effect, and the significance of music, both for the suffering inmates and the guards who inflicted the suffering under the horrific circumstances in the camps.[42]

One area that presents a challenge based on the sources included in this review is the limited scope of the material included in the cited research and musical examples provided. The two main camps of interest in most of the works I examined were Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz. Each represents one of the two most important types of camps in the Nazi system, the concentration camp, Sachsenhausen, being primarily a work camp, and the extermination camp, Auschwitz, whose primary purpose was mass extermination of the prisoners housed there. Even though each camp was also considered by the Nazis as a 'model camp'[43] and therefore potentially representative of the camp

[42]Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg.1)
[43] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 10)

contexts more generally, every other camp still had its own culture, history and particularities, and a broader sampling of examples from additional camps would be desirable to provide an accurate representation of the music that was produced in virtually all of the Nazi concentration and death camps. To that end, I will also explore examples of self-initiated music making by prisoners in other camps, including specifically, the model ghetto Terezin, later in this thesis.

A careful review of the sampling of the sources used for this chapter as well as other sources not yet cited has shown that voluntary musical engagement by prisoners in the camps did indeed serve as a means of survival for many of those who were able and chose to participate, even at great risk of torture and potential death if discovered. Exactly how and why prisoners were willing to take such risks will be further explored in future chapters.

Chapter 2 Music and Song – Agents of Cultural Identity

How was it possible that despite the complete psychological (and physical) destruction of the Jewish prisoners through the Nazis' use of music as a weapon of violence and torture against them, some nevertheless still chose to engage musically on their own, even at the threat of tremendous personal risk including increased physical beating, denial of precious food rations and even death? The choice to do so is a remarkable one especially given the interdependent nature of the meaning of music and human emotions and feelings. According to Juliane Brauer in her article, "How Can Music be Torturous? Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps," "Depending on one's cultural socialization, music can be an important resource and medium for processing one's experiences and mediating one's perception through emotions."[44] Music can also be a medium through which emotions are produced, referenced and acted out. In short, music is crucial in supporting emotional work and is part of, "the reflexive constitution of one's internal emotional state."[45] Emotions and mediums like the music through which they are produced, affect the outer physical body as well as its inner psychological landscape, and as such, they are a key factor in an individual's experience and perception of the world.[46] The body physically stores emotional information from past experiences which then influences one's current consciousness and how we react to new situations. This connection between the physical body and our emotional or social body is key to our

[44] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous? Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103 (pg. 7)
[45] DeNora, Tia. *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. (pg. 57)
[46] Scheer, Monique. "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History?) A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion." *History and Theory*, vol. 51, no. 2, Feb. 2012, pp. 193–220., doi:10.1111/hith.2012.51.issue-2.

understanding of how the Nazis were able not only to damage, but to destroy both the psychological and physical makeup of the prisoners through the use of music as a weapon of torture. Because emotions are stored in the body, they stem from its learned physical knowledge and can therefore be conceived of as a "learned bodily practice with the power to move and reshape the body."[47] In this way we can understand how the perception of music by the prisoners was greatly affected by the context in which it was experienced. As Brauer points out, "This zone between the inner and outer world, between the self (the mindful body) and society (the social body), is strongly influenced by the actual conditions in which the music is experienced."[48] As we will see, the initial and continued experiences by the prisoners of the violent use of music in the camps was diametrically opposed to every other physically and emotionally remembered experience of music from their pasts. Brauer elaborates saying, "Music was combined in Nazi concentration and extermination camps with other forms of physical and emotional torture in ways previously unimagined and to a completely new extent. In this combination, music had the potential to destroy prisoners' humanity in ways that would not be possible using physical forms of torture alone."[49]

Given what we now know about the intersection of music and emotion and the potential for that intersection to significantly impact individuals' physical and psychological bodies, before I address my opening question, it is crucial that one first understands the vital role that music played in forming the core identity of large sections of European

[47] Ibid
[48] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous? Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103 (pg. 8)
[49] Ibid (pg. 2)

Jewry prior to World War II and the Holocaust. It was precisely *because* music was such an integral part of Jewish cultural, religious and social identity that the Nazis were able to use it so effectively as a means of torture against the Jewish prisoners in the camps. The various forms of musical torture employed will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, however, contextually it is important the reader understand this torture consisted of a variety of practices, including forced music-making under the most horrific conditions. For example, inmates were commanded to play to drown out the screams of those being murdered in the gas chambers, to accompany public hangings and to play outside in sub-zero temperatures without gloves or coats to accompany their fellow prisoners' work details in the mornings as they left the camps.

Music was a natural, fundamental part of daily life in the interwar period in communities across the region as it had been for centuries in Jewish communities around the world. Musical engagement informed people's identities individually, collectively, and for some, professionally as well. Music was so deeply ingrained at the very root of the Jewish soul, that despite all the ways their captors found to torment them with music, it nevertheless remained for some what they turned to for solace, refuge, comfort and resistance – all means of survival in the broadest sense. It is also important to note that multiple sources utilized for this thesis including Brauer's article, reported that music for these Jews was almost exclusively associated with positive experiences such as celebrations, religious observance, cultural engagement and time together with family and friends. Music was used daily as a means of recreation and pleasure, and was therefore a natural vehicle for self-expression, joy, celebration and comfort.[50] According to Juliane Brauer, musical

[50] Ibid (pg. 13)

engagement was connected in the prisoners' memories to enjoyable, life-affirming experiences and existed as part of what they considered normal daily cultural practices.[51] Music was quite simply, part of who they knew and understood themselves to be.[52]

By way of providing some context, in his book, *Violins of Hope,* James A Grymes explores the Jewish musical culture of interwar Europe and examines in particular the crucial role one type of music, the violin, played in sparing, prolonging and sometimes saving the lives of Jewish Holocaust victims. He points out the ways in which the instrument has served for centuries as an important vehicle of Jewish culture, including the argument by some scholars who attribute the violin's invention to Jews who fled to Italy after their expulsion from Spain in 1492.[53] This is important because it establishes an early foundation in the history of the Jewish people of attachment to music and identification not only with the creation and performance of music, but also with the development of technology and instrumentation that became fundamental to the world of music and the lives of Jews over many centuries. Grymes discusses the importance of the violin in Jewish communal life, evidenced by the enduring centuries-old Klezmer tradition, and points also to the instrument's important professional status for classical Jewish musicians who made their living playing music. Grymes points out that despite Jews accounting for less than 1% of the total population in Germany, they represented 3% of the professionals in music and theatre in early 20th century Germany[54], a small number in relation to all of the musicians in Germany, but a relatively large percentage

[51] Ibid
[52] Ibid
[53] Grymes, James A. *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust, Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*. Harper Perennial, 2014.
[54] Ibid (pg. 20)

given the ratio of Jews to the general non-Jewish population in Germany at the time. And this number continued to grow until the time Jews in Germany and its territories were banned from holding professional music and other cultural positions by the 'Law for the Re-establishment of the Civil Service' which passed on April 7, 1933.[55] This led to the widespread dismissal of Jewish singers, conductors, administrators, teachers, musicians and music publishers. Jews had a propensity for stringed instruments, especially the violin, and made up a disproportionate number of the string sections of professional orchestras in Germany and elsewhere. Once they were banned from playing for the German public, entire violin sections of orchestras began to disappear,[56] as did the faculty at many of the finest music schools and colleges in Germany along with some of the most prominent music publishers across the region. It isn't surprising that so many of these violinists as well as most other Jewish musicians brought their treasured instruments with them when they were arrested and transported to various concentration and extermination camps across Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. All possessions including money and beloved instruments were immediately confiscated upon arrival at the camps. This is how in most cases instruments, sheet music and other musical equipment for the camp orchestras and musical groups were obtained by the Nazis. In the event additional supplies were needed, they were bought using the prisoners' surrendered money. Given the propensity of Jews to play string instruments, it is not surprising that most official camp ensembles were made up predominantly of violins, violas and a

[55] ORT, World. "Music and the Holocaust." *Music and the Holocaust*, holocaustmusic.ort.org/. Music in the Third Reich
[56] Ibid (pg. 20)

variety of other string instruments along with wind instruments and an occasional accordion or horn.[57]

Further evidence of the vital role music played in the cultural life and core identity of Jews during the period leading up to WWII is found in the formation and enduring presence of the Judischer Kulturbund, a Cultural Federation of German Jews established by the Jewish community in 1933 which hired over 1300 male and 700 female Jewish musicians, artists and actors who had been fired from German institutions. According to some authors, the Kulturbund eventually grew to about 70,000 members.[58] Founded in Berlin in 1933 as, "The Cultural League of German Jews," by Kurt Baumann, a 26-year-old production assistant in Berlin's opera world, along with his mentor, Kurt Singer, former deputy director of the Municipal Opera,[59] the Kulturbund was conceived to maintain a presence for Jewish culture in Germany while also providing modest incomes for out of work Jewish artists. The two men believed that a cultural outlet for music and the arts was desperately needed for both the out of work musicians and the Jewish public. There was a sense among the leadership in the Jewish cultural community at that time of a fervent need to maintain some sense of normalcy amidst the growing hostility towards Jews by the ruling Nazi Party and their sympathizers in the German public. Surprisingly, the Nazis allowed the formation of the Kulturbund as a way of hiding their oppression, discrimination and segregation of German Jews,[60] providing members and organizers

[57] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg. 7)
[58] Friedman, Jonathan C. *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*. Routledge, 2012. (pg. 92)
[59] Grymes, James A. *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust, Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*. Harper Perennial, 2014. (pg. 22)
[60] Kaplan, Marion A. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

adhered to a series of regulations. Only Jews could attend performances, and all who attended had to be subscribing members of the local Kulturbund since the printing and selling of tickets was strictly forbidden. Kulturbund organizations received no government subsidies and were not allowed to profit from performances in any way. All texts, music and exhibits were limited to non-German works that had to be approved by the Interior Ministry in advance, and all monthly subscribers had to have photo identification to gain admittance to any performance. This is how the Nazis ensured that only Jews were patronizing Kulturbund events. The organizations were run entirely by the Jewish community, and publicity for events was allowed only in Jewish publications.[61] Nevertheless, events, particularly musical concerts, operas, chamber music evenings and the like were extremely well attended as Jews were prohibited from patronizing public musical performances.

The Kulturbund is one of the most well-known examples of Jewish creativity in response to cultural exclusion, and a true testament to the fundamental importance of music and art in the Jewish community. People came to performances in droves to escape the increasing problems of daily life as Jews in Germany. Offshoot organizations were formed in Frankfurt, Cologne, Hamburg, Manheim and other cities, eventually encompassing forty-nine locales across the country where concerts, theatrical performances, operas, exhibitions and lectures were staged by Jewish entertainers, musicians, artists, singers and writers.[62] As its membership grew, The Kulturbund

[61] Grymes, James A. *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust, Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*. Harper Perennial, 2014. (pg. 23)
[62] Kaplan, Marion A. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. Oxford University Press, 1998. (pg. 46)

provided much more than a musical diversion for audiences and musicians alike. It allowed both groups to hang on to their identities as cultural beings.[63] "Nothing else was available," stated violinist Henry Meyer. "We were born to perform and when we did that we really lived."[64] The continued performances of the Berlin Culture League orchestra for example, under the auspices of the Kulturbund, brought an ongoing sense of normalcy to both audiences and performing musicians alike and allowed Jewish performers to once again earn at least some livelihood, however sparse.[65] Gunther Goldschmidt, an orchestra member, recalled, "This is why I still practice, this is why I perform. This is what I'm meant to do. And for as long as I can, I must continue to make beautiful music. In an ugly time, the best protest is beauty."[66]

In my interview with the renowned composer, arranger and teacher, Samuel Adler, he recalled his parents' and grandparents' involvement with the Kulturbund in Manheim, Germany and the effect of its musical performances on that community remarking,

> ''We consider the Holocaust starting in the camps, but from 1933-1938, the effect of music through the Kulturbund was astonishing. I know, my mother sang in the Kulturbund choir. Music was the cohesive thing in German Jewry in the first 7-8 years of the Nazi Regime. This is what the people had to hold them together. I mean it, you know, music really was the cohesive power of German Jewry and

[63] Ibid
[64] Grymes, James A. *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust, Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*. Harper Perennial, 2014. (pg. 24)
[65] Kaplan, Marion A. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
[66] Grymes, James A. *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust, Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*. Harper Perennial, 2014. (pg. 24)

> Austrian Jewry even after the Nazis came into power. They had resources. So much music was created, you know, a lot of people wrote large works for these organizations (referring to the Kulterbund), and they all had an orchestra and so on."[67]

Both Adler's mother and grandfather sang in the local Kulturbundt choir for which his father wrote music and served as Hazzan. Sam himself performed in a Kulturbund production of Handel's ''The Judgement of Solomon" at the age of 7 and sang in the boys' choir prior to the family fleeing Germany for Canada and eventually the United States just before the start of the war . Sam spent the first ten years of his life in Manheim, Germany where his father, Cantor Hugo Adler, was deeply involved in all of the musical activities of the community. He talked about how music was an integral part of daily synagogue liturgical life and how musical performances for the community took place in the synagogues, especially after 1934 when most Jews were banned from performing with orchestras and other secular musical ensembles and groups. He remembered and related in some detail how music was a part of everyone's daily routine, be it in the synagogue or out in the world. He spoke of the extreme importance the Jews of Manheim and other German communities attached to direct engagement in music-making in both their secular and religious musical endeavors saying, ''It was a psychological thing, not a material thing. Making music became not about earning a living but about staying alive, about keeping the soul alive."[68]

[67] Adler, Samuel. "Sam Adler Interview." 9 Feb. 2018.
[68] Ibid

The psychology around the therapeutic power of music to define identity and help individuals cope is well documented. Research repeatedly suggests that music can heal emotional suffering and is an effective treatment for reducing depression, anxiety and pain.[69] The positive physical effects of listening to and playing music include reducing heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol levels.[70] As important as these effects are on the human body, even more remarkable is the proven, profound impact that music which fosters connection between individuals has on the mental health and attitudes of those individuals and the communities on which we all rely for social connection and support.[71] This proved critical for the survival of the prisoners as will be explained in more detail in the next chapter. For now, understand that for some prisoners who were able to voluntarily engage musically, what was played was far less important than the communal environment in which the music making took place. These stolen moments may have been less about escaping the horrors of the camps than they were about bearing the suffering together within them.[72] There is growing scientific evidence today which shows that the brain responds to music in very specific positive ways.[73] Active musical engagement allows trauma sufferers and those who are hurting due to illness or other circumstances to reconnect with the healthy parts of themselves, to that with which they identify at the very core of their being, even in the face of debilitating conditions or

[69] Friedman, Michael. "Does Music Have Healing Powers?" *Psychology Today*, 4 Feb. 2014, www.psychologytoday.com. (pg. 1)
[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid (pg. 2)
[72] Fisher, Amanda Stuart. "Imagining Theatre in Auschwitz: Performance, Solidarity and Survival in the Works of Charlotte Delbo." *Performing (For) Survival: Theatre, Crisis, Extremity*, edited by Patrick Duggan and Lisa Peschel, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 78–96.
[73] Novotney, Amy. "Music as Medicine." *American Psychological Association*, American Psychological Association, Nov. 2013, Vol 44, No 10, www.apa.org/. (pg. 2)

disease-related suffering.[74] Music affords these individuals access back to the self they have lost through the course of their experience, much in the way that musical engagement may have afforded concentration camp prisoners brief moments of reconnection to who they remembered themselves to be before imprisonment.

The evidence for the psychological grounding of music as a means of identity is undeniable. As I have illustrated, Jewish identity in pre World War II Europe was undeniably intertwined with their musical culture and heritage. To suddenly have that music, all it meant and all it represented in their lives turned into something equated with evil, death and despair was for many utterly unbearable.[75] This explains how and why the Nazis were so effectively able to use music as a weapon of torture, turning it against their Jewish prisoners to destroy completely the inner landscape of their identities and sense of self. It also helps us understand how it was possible that some prisoners, as unthinkable as it may seem, still turned to music making on their own as a means of coping and survival. This was what they knew. Music had always been a vehicle for healing and comfort, a place to escape and a means of expressing joy. In an environment where everything else had been taken from them, music was the one thing that for some could still offer solace and a connection to what was, in their current reality, only a memory, but surely a welcome one.

The degree to which the Nazis were aware of the neuroscience around cognitive processeses regarding music and the brain is unclear. They certainly had strong ideals around music and national pride and a belief that pure German music was associated with

[74] Ibid (pg. 3)
[75] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous? Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103.

love of nation, heroism and rootedness in blood and soil. They believed what they called 'degenerate' music such as jazz and swing played by African-American and Jewish musicians was profit- and thrill-driven music and contributed to the perversion of appropriate German values.[76] I think it is safe to suggest that the Nazi leadership was well aware of the significant emotional and cultural importance of music in the Jewish community and the extent to which interwar Jews were defined by their musical heritage. The Nazi Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, himself saw music as the most effective way to seduce, sway and control the masses remarking, ''Music affects the heart and emotions more than the intellect. Where then could the heart of a nation beat stronger than in the huge masses, in which the heart of a nation has found its true home?"[77] Despite their fervent belief that Jews were a people undeserving of a nation and therefore unworthy of a home in Germany or elsewhere, I would argue it was the understanding by the leaders of the Nazi Party of the effect of music on the human condition coupled with their belief in the power of music to conquer the heart and emotional spirit of humankind that fueled their systematic use of it as a means of torture against the huge masses of Jewish prisoners under their control.

In the next chapter we will explore in detail the various types of music making in the Nazi concentration and death camps and learn more specifically how Hitler and his Nazi machine implemented Goebbels' strategy and that of his collaborators, turning what had once been a key definer of culture and identity for the Jewish prisoners into an effective

[76] ORT, World. "Music and the Holocaust." *Music and the Holocaust*, holocaustmusic.ort.org/. Music in the Third Reich
[77] Ibid

weapon of torture – one that purposefully attacked prisoners' identities, certainties, self-conceptions and sense of humanity.[78]

[78] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 1)

Chapter 3 – Music as Weapon / Music as Refuge

> *"The beating of the big drums and the cymbals reach us continuously and monotonously, but in this weft the musical phrases weave a pattern only intermittently, according to the caprices of the wind. The tunes are few, a dozen, and the same ones every day, morning and evening: marches and popular songs dear to every German. They lie engraved on our minds and will be the last thing in the Lager [concentration camp] that we shall forget: they are the voice of the Lager, the perceptible expression of its geometrical madness, of the resolution of others to annihilate us first as men in order to kill us more slowly afterwards. We all look at each other from our beds because we all feel that this music is infernal[79]"*

In remembering an experience during time spent in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp infirmary, this is how Primo Levi, in his book *Survival in Auschwitz* described the systematic torturous use of music by the Nazis against him and his fellow prisoners.[80] It is a chilling recounting of how the camp guards and commanders used music to "purposefully attack prisoners' identities, certainties, self-conceptions and sense of humanity."[81] Brauer points out in her article that Levi's use of the word 'infernal' is by no means accidental and calls to mind Dante's *Inferno*, attributing a specific, debilitating impact to the music and emphasizing the danger inherent in the forced music of the camps which was in this context, demonic and nightmarish.[82] She further argues that the Nazis were able to refine and enhance their use of music as torture thanks in part to their

[79] Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. Summit Books, 1986. Translated from Italian by Stuart Woolf Originally appeared in English under the title, *If This Is a Man* (pg. 41)
[80] Ibid
[81] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 1)
[82] Ibid

understanding of the intersection of music and emotion which allowed them to create a "universe of absolute power" inside the camps,[83] effectively rendering the Jewish inmates completely helpless, paralyzed by fear and subject to the sadistic tendencies of their captors. Compliance by the prisoners, critical to the Nazi mission, was virtually assured as they were given no other alternative – comply or die. This fostered an environment wherein the use of music as a weapon of torture was "developed to devastating effect, allowing the camps' guards and commanders to assault the deepest core of what it means to be human, depleting prisoners' final resource for survival when they have already been starved, beaten and overworked: their own sense of self."[84] Torture is a particularly serious attack on human dignity because severe pain is deliberately inflicted to a particular end where the victim is completely powerless. The Nazis were quite purposeful in their use of music at specific sites and in a variety of particular contexts to successfully achieve the desired torturous effect on the prisoners' minds and bodies.[85]

In *Music and Violence: Cultural Manifestations of Absolute Power in the Concentration Camps Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz,* Juliane Brauer distinguished between three distinct forms of musical violence typical of the camps:[86]

1. Playing music as violence – Musicians in the many camp orchestras knew the harsh and at times debilitating effect their music had on their fellow prisoners, and this awareness was a source of tremendous shame and pain for the musicians. Primo Levi recalled how marches played at the camp gate, the symbolic center of

[83] Ibid (pg. 2)
[84] Ibid
[85] Ibid (pg. 2-3)
[86] "Music Torture: Research Perspectives Summary Report on the Workshop Held on 29 April 2011 in Gottingen." *Free Floater Research Group "Music, Conflict and the State" at University of Gottingen* , University of Gottingen Faculty of Humanities Free Floater Research Group, 2011, www.uni-goettingen.de/en/207622.html. (pg. 2)

absolute power, at the order of the SS had the power to discipline the prisoners' destroyed bodies:

> "When this music plays, we know that our comrades, out in the fog, are marching like automatons; their souls are dead, and the music drives them, like the wind drives dead leaves, and takes the place of their wills. There is no longer will: every beat of the drum becomes a step, a reflected concentration of exhausted muscles."[87]

Along with all the prisoners in the camp, the musicians, too, were fully aware of the macabre nature of their musical masquerade. They were forced repeatedly to play at the concentration camp gates when new prisoners arrived as a way of distracting and calming them, knowing all the while that the new arrivals streaming out of the train cars were going straight to the gas chambers. The musicians who witnessed this daily scene felt the contradiction viscerally and suffered tremendously from this experience of their music, which was drawn from the widely known and loved classical orchestral and operetta repertoire of the time. "Their beloved music had been repurposed into a small cog in the larger wheel of the camp's machinery of death."[88] Additionally, poor playing could result in physical punishment and even death which made this type of music on command a form of forced labor and caused music to become a source of pain, fear and despair for the players. Suicide rates among camp orchestra musicians were extremely high.[89]

2. Hearing music as violence – The music of military marches demonstrated complete physical and social power of the Nazi guards and commanders over the prisoners. Marches that were played morning and night at the entrance gate as prisoners filed out and then returned from hard labor was used to "demonstrate

[87] Levi, Primo. *If This IS a Man/The Truce*. Abacus, 1987. (pg. 57)
[88] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 19)
[89] "Music Torture: Research Perspectives Summary Report on the Workshop Held on 29 April 2011 in Gottingen." *Free Floater Research Group "Music, Conflict and the State" at University of Gottingen* , University of Gottingen Faculty of Humanities Free Floater Research Group, 2011, www.uni-goettingen.de/en/207622.html. (pg. 2)

the absolute power held over inmates' bodies, the ability to cause them untold pain and humiliate them entirely."[90] Auschwitz survivor Mali Fritz relates the memory of the terribly destructive effects that this type of marching music had on the prisoners:

> "The SS guards like the music at the gate. The prisoners were tortured by it. They only want to demonstrate how strongly they have a handle on inmates. […] This cursed music, like a satisfied grunt hanging over these circumstances. During the march into the camp, this madhouse music. They really try to play the measure! Why, oh why? Our ghostlike column must look as though it were coming up from the bowels of the earth. And left, and left, and left two three… This cursed measure of fear."[91]

In this capacity, the music to which they were forced to march for hours in miserable conditions had previously been associated with past positive memories. Thus, in the circumstances of the camps the mindful body, a holistic concept which encompasses physical as well as emotional and psychological aspects[92] and the points in which they intersect, was attacked in the form of musical violence which generated an intense emotional conflict between positive musical memories and the current situation as evoked through music.

3. Forced music making as violence - Forcing people to sing or play was a form of no-touch torture. Almost all survivors of Sachsenhausen for example, recall being forced to sing, and many remember this specifically as a form of bodily distress. It was a demonstration of total power on the part of the guards and was used to collectively humiliate certain groups of prisoners, particularly Jews. The Nazis' willful engagement in the violation of their prisoners' bodily integrity, that is, their use of the bodies of the inmates to do the will of their captors had extremely

[90] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0. 0010.103. (pg. 19)
[91] Ibid (pg. 22)
[92] Scheer, Monique. "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History?) A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion." *History and Theory*, vol. 51, no. 2, Feb. 2012, pp. 193–220., doi:10.1111/hith.2012.51.issue-2.

> debilitating emotional and psychological consequences for the prisoners. The Nazi guards forcibly and violently took over the bodies of their victims, effectively rendering them non-persons. This violation also had a devastating physical impact. Forced singing during hard labor or while standing outside for hours in freezing cold temperatures accelerated the destruction of prisoners' physical and mental health. Non-Germans forced to sing in German were at particular risk of punishment if they got the words wrong or mispronounced even one syllable. Forced singing was also a targeted act of violence against German Jews who were traditionally seen to be musically talented. The musical skills particularly of Jewish musicians in the camps, their ability to express themselves through music as an extension of their humanity - the very core of emotional and psychological connection to who they were in the world - were deconstructed and turned against them, thus removing a potential source of resistance and psychological survival for many of them.[93]

It is important to remember that the music itself has no inherent meaning or emotion. Music's effect and the emotions attached to it are linked to experiences, both present and past, and exist not just at the individual level, but also as shared social factors and circumstances around perception and memory which can change over time. Listening to music and music making are emotional practices grounded in the physical body. The body reacts to music and then links that music with meaning, emotions and memory all of which play significant roles in constituting a person's identity and sense of self.[94] This distinction regarding the link between music, emotional practices and the physical body is important because it explains music's role in creating links between individuals' emotions and the greater outside world community. Music is a medium through which specific emotions are shaped, renewed and reinterpreted and is critical in supporting self-

[93] Ibid
[94] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 9)

assurance and connection to individual and communal identity. This then answers the question posed at the start of Chapter 2. It explains how music could, despite its use as a weapon of violence by the Nazis, function as a means of survival for some prisoners, particularly those for whom music had been a crucial aspect of their pre-camp lives and identities.[95]

Music on Command

With this broader understanding in mind of how music can be used as both a weapon of torture and a tool for survival (in the broadest sense), it will be helpful to examine some specific examples of the various forms of forced music making in the Nazi concentration and death camps as well as examples of prisoner-led voluntary, clandestine musical engagement. For purposes of clarity, I will distinguish between the two using Guido Fackler's terms, "music on command" and "self-initiated music," beginning first with a discussion of the former using examples taken primarily from Sachsenhausen, considered a flagship camp by the Nazis and one of the earliest concentration camps, and Auschwitz-Birkenau, considered by the Nazis to be a model extermination camp built for the purpose of systematically murdering hundreds of thousands of European Jews.[96] Though there is survivor testimony, documentation and records from many of the camps in the Nazi system, some of which will be included here, it is from Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz-Birkenau that we have the most material concerning the general use by the Nazis of music on command as a form of torture, and more specifically, records of forced

[95] Ibid
[96] Ibid (pg. 17)

singing as a form of violence in Sachsenhausen and forced playing as a form of violence in the camp orchestras of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Sachsenhausen, built in the summer of 1936 began housing prisoners immediately and after Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) on November 9, 1938 received more than six thousand Jews. From the outbreak of war in September of 1939, prisoners from all over Europe were deported to Sachsenhausen and the nearly one hundred subcamps that surrounded it. Once there, they were subjected to starvation, disease, death, murder and forced labor including music on command, primarily in the form of forced singing, which was always characterized by humiliation, punishment and torture. Whether the songs demanded were German marches, derogatory and humiliating songs about Jews, official camp songs composed by the prisoners at the behest of their Nazi captors or other popular songs of the day, it is useful to look at different types of forced singing based on each one's primary function. Different types of songs were chosen by the SS guards for singing based on their ability to inflict the most damage or because they were favorites for singing during roll calls, as accompaniment to the daily marches to and from the camp in work details and regularly as prisoner punishment or entertainment and distraction for the guards. Incidents of each are included in the following pages, for example, singing as a form of discipline during marching and roll calls. This was the instrument most frequently used by the Nazis for demonstrating their absolute power over the prisoners and for collectively humiliating the detainees in the central site of that power, the prison yard.[97] The practice was extraordinarily effective in turning a familiar and beloved activity engaged in by nearly all the prisoners pre-camp life into an experience of pain,

[97] Ibid (pg. 9)

despair and fear. It is widely accepted that this was a common event in camps throughout the Nazi system, and descriptions of the degrading and energy-sapping ritual can be found in nearly every survivor testimony or record of memory from the camps. Here is one such description from Wofgang Szepansky, a survivor of Sachsenhausen who illustrates the routine occurrence of such music on command in the camp.

> "Whenever it struck his fancy, the camp commander would demand a song. Then a step-ladder would promptly be found for the conductor. He would climb up, announce the title of the song, and then raise his baton. The most popular German songs were *"Haselnuss"* and *"Frohlich Sein."* In spite of the cheerful text and jaunty melody, it sounded more like a dirge when from the raw throats of tired men, the slow and torturous line would issue forth: "Then let us sing and be cheerful." The eerie sound would carry through the air all the way to Oranienburg. And if it was not found satisfactory, then the group would be interrupted, and the song would start again from the beginning."[98]

This happened daily, morning and night and often the prisoners would be forced to stand singing for hours in freezing conditions after a long and brutally hard day of forced physical labor. This type of forced singing was experienced by the inmates as a form of violence because it undermined their identities as human beings and sense of self in a myriad of ways.[99] If a prisoner was unable to sing, the evening roll call would be extended often for hours, draining the prisoners last bit of physical strength. The torture would end only at the sole discretion of the camp commander, often after the fatal collapse of already exhausted prisoners.[100] Regular occurrences of this type of torturous music on command represented for the prisoners a reversal of the normal reasons behind

[98] Ibid (pg. 12)
[99] Ibid
[100] Ibid

the practice of collective singing. All the prisoners, regardless of nationality, religion or political belief had been socialized with the common tradition of the collective singing of cheerful songs, an activity that was associated in their memories with enjoyable experiences of normal cultural practice.[101] As Brauer points out in her article, it is known that there were at least seven clandestine choirs founded by the prisoners in Sachsenhausen: three Polish, two Czech, one Norwegian and one Jewish.[102] The existence of these choirs demonstrates at least on some level, the vital importance for the prisoners of collective singing as a means of reconnecting with sense of self and community and sharing emotions and ideas. The clandestine choirs, unlike the forced group singing, were important tools of survival that served to connect prisoners to positive, shared communal experiences of singing, experiences that were in direct opposition to singing on command in situations marked by hunger, pain, fear, illness and total helplessness.[103]

Alexander Kulisiewicz, a survivor of more than five years in Sachsenhausen, a talented singer, songwriter and performer who collected and preserved a tremendous amount of music composed in the Nazi camps, shared an example from his time at Sachsenhausen of a second type of forced singing: singing accompanying situations of physical torture.[104]

> "The battalion was called the 'Singing Horses.' The unlucky victims were harnessed to a heavily loaded barrow, which they had to pull. As they pulled, they

[101] Ibid (pg 13)
[102] Ibid
[103] Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music." *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2011, pp. 349–390., doi:10.1525/jams.2011.64.2.349.
[104] Kulisiewicz, Alexander. *Songs from the Depths of Hell Sung in German, Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish*, Warsaw, Poland, 1975. Annotated and recorded by Peter Wortsman in Warsaw, Poland, 1975. Liner notes by Peter Wortsman after extensive interviews with Alexander Kulisiewicz.

> bent their bodies forward, their heads stooping low to the ground. Meanwhile they had to sing as loud as they could. The purpose was to simultaneously destroy muscles, lungs, chest, nervous system and vocal chords. They had to sing marching songs, rapid and lovely melodies, all of this, to enhance their despair."[105]

Kulisiewicz referred to this torture "musical sadism," because it was characterized, in his opinion, by songs that were in painful contrast to prisoners' current reality. In his writings and his songs, Kulisiewicz paints a faint image of the illusive double nature of singing as torture – its ability under the conditions of absolute power present in the camps to destroy prisoners' bodies, and at the same time, torment their minds.[106] Direct examples of this are found in some of the 54 songs he wrote documenting his life while imprisoned in Sachsenhausen along with the vast amount of artwork and music created and composed by prisoners in the camps which he collected and preserved after the war ended. *(See musical appendix)*

Eugene Kogon, a Buchenwald survivor, describes two similar incidents he witnessed during his time in Buchenwald. The first is like Kulisiewicz's accounting from Sachsenhausen describing a common situation in which the prisoners were forced to sing while enduring physical torture:

> "Fifteen to twenty men, harnessed like horses to a heavily loaded wagon, driven forward at a running pace. An SS lead man rides ahead on a motorcycle to set the running speed of the column of the men, who have to sing too! The camp leaders,

[105] Kulisiewicz, Aleksander. "Psychopathology of Music and Songs in Nazi Concentration Camps." *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry (Przeglad Lekarski)*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1974, pp. 39–45., doi:10.2307/j.ctv1rmh3j.53. Translated to English in part by Juliane Brauer
[106] Ibid

> Plaul and Kampe, when they were still in the KL[107] Sachsenburg at a lower rank, had already coined the term, 'singing horses' for such a carting detachment. The SS took over this term with enthusiasm."[108]

The second is an example of a third type of forced singing: the use of singing as targeted humiliation of Jewish prisoners in particular. In this instance, the Jewish prisoners were ordered to form special ranks and repeatedly sing to the whole camp the 'Judenlied' (Jews' Song) which Kogon describes as, "a self-insulting piece of the worst kind."[109] The translated text of song follows:

> For centuries we have defrauded the (German) nation,
> No deceit was ever too big or strong for us,
> We have always profiteered, lied and cheated,
> Whether with the Crown or the Mark.
>
> We are the Cohns, the Isaaks, and the Wolfensteins,
> Known everywhere by our disgusting faces.
> If there is a race that is even meaner,
> It is surely related to us.
>
> Now the German has wised up to us
> And taken us behind secure barbed wire.
> We cheaters of the nation have long been terrified by this possibility,
> Which suddenly has become reality overnight.

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[107] *KL* was the official Nazi abbreviation for *'Konezntrationslager'* which translates to, *'Concentration Camp'*

[108] John, Eckhard. "Music and Concentration Camps: An Approximation." *Journal of Musicological Research*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2001, pp. 269–323., doi:10.1080/01411890108574791. Translated by Ernest F. Livingstone

[109] Ibid

Now our hooked Jew-noses mourn,
We have spread hatred and discord in vain.
Now we can no longer steal nor gorge ourselves,
It is too late, forever too late.[110]

Numerous such accounts from survivors document endless compulsory singing of songs like this throughout daily morning and evening roll calls, unending marches to and from the camps for work and during the work itself creating in the prisoners a prolonged continual state of psychological humiliation and a devasting rupture in the Jewish prisoners' sense of self.

The use of musical violence as targeted humiliation of Jewish prisoners was by no means limited to forced singing. As mentioned earlier, music on command also included the instrumental playing of music and the hearing of that music as experiences of violence. We now have evidence that most of the officially designated "central camps" (Stammlager) in the extensive Nazi camp network had orchestras or musical ensembles of some kind.[111] The extent to which this is true of the peripheral camps as well is unclear. In any case, listening to or hearing music increasingly became associated with torture, pain and death as it came to serve as an accompaniment to the variety of sadistic, punitive actions the Nazi guards arbitrarily imposed on the prisoners. For example, when inmates were publicly beaten or whipped, a daily occurrence in virtually every camp, the orchestra was often ordered to play.[112] Buchenwald survivor Kogon describes how, *"Sturmbannfuhrer Rodl"* (Buchenwald camp commander) actually went so far as to have

[110] Ibid
[111] Ibid (pg. 281)
[112] Ibid (pg. 279)

an opera singer perform arias next to the *"Bock"* (Nazi term meaning whipping post) where the beatings took place."[113] And from a survivor of concentration camp Majdanek, a horrific account of mass executions accompanied by music:

> "The naked victims, sentenced to die, had to lie down in the pit with their faces touching the ground. A volley of machine-gun fire extinguished their lives. The next victims had to lie down on top of the corpses until the pit was full. In order to drown out the victims' screams, the SS had positioned special cars equipped with loudspeakers, which blasted music incessantly."[114]

In many camps, loudspeakers were also used this way to assault the exhausted detainees, blasting music through the night to deprive the prisoners of much needed rest.

In addition to the hearing of music as an experience of violence, there was a particular experience for the musicians in the orchestras - the playing of music as an experience of violence. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, both the men's and women's orchestras were forced to play music at the entrance gate, but it was the women who always played for the new arrivals as they, unlike the men, had no other work detail and were available regardless of the time of arrival.[115] Esther Bejarano, a survivor who was deported to Auschwitz in 1943 describes the "enormous psychic strain" and sense of despair this playing had on the musicians saying,

> "After some weeks we received the command to stand and play music at the camp gate as the trains were arriving. For us musicians this was particularly bad. We

[113] Ibid
[114] Ibid (pg. 280)
[115] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 18)

> knew that all the people who streamed out of the wagons were going to the gas chambers. And we had to play pleasant music for them."[116]

At the same time, the newly arrived prisoners for whom they were playing often felt strangely calmed by the music. After all, how bad could this place where they had just arrived be if they were 'greeted' by an orchestra? For the musicians, knowing of course that the newly arrived prisoners were on their way to death, the contradiction proved too much and was a source of intense visceral suffering with each note they were forced to play. They were left feeling somehow complicit in the camp's death machine.[117] Again, Esther Bejarano described the desperation and sadness she experienced while playing at the Auschwitz camp gate during the prisoner marches to and from the camp:

> "When they left for work, that was not so awful. But when they came back, and you saw these people, many of whom had to be propped up, held because they could hardly walk on their own. That was terrible for us. We stood there with tears in our eyes. We cried and told ourselves again and again: My God, if we were not doing this, we would be going to the gas. Yes, it was an order directly from the SS – we had to play."[118]

Such coercion in playing music broke many of the orchestra musicians. The conductor of the men's orchestra in Birkenau gave this accounting of the extreme fatigue, depression and incidents of suicide by his musicians:

> "Apart from a few privileged persons, everyone went out to work just as before and returned in a state of extreme physical and mental exhaustion. Some managed to endure this, while others broke down completely. Some threw themselves on

[116] Ibid (pg. 18-19)
[117] Ibid (pg. 19)
[118] Naliwajek-Mazurek, Katarzyna. "Music and Its Emotional Aspects during the Nazi Occupation of Poland." *Besatzungsmacht Musik*, 2012, pp. 207–226., doi:10.14361/transcript.9783839419120.207. Editors: Sven Oliver Muller and Sara Zalfen (esp pg. 222)

> the wires. The size of the orchestra changed almost from day to day and in time shrank dramatically."[119]

This form of musical torture attacked the musicians' identities, destroying previously held certainties and destabilizing memories from their pre-camp lives where music was associated with happiness, a sense of hope and prosperity, and compassion for humanity. It is easy to see from these examples how music was used by the Nazis to violently attack the prisoners' physical and mindful bodies, deconstructing the musicians' identities and causing extreme physical exhaustion, mental anguish, despair, illness and even suicide. Brauer suggests, "This is perhaps why, in contrast to what we find in recorded memories from other camps such as Sachsenhausen, there are hardly any recollections from Auschwitz-Birkenau of music giving comfort or aid."[120]

Self-Initiated Music

That said, music did provide comfort and aid inside the camps. Despite the extremely effective use of music on command as a weapon of torture, particularly against the Jewish prisoners, there were some who still turned to music for solace, comfort, community and survival. What made this possible has been explained earlier in this chapter. Though it is true that voluntary musical engagement sometimes triggered such painful memories that prisoners were left feeling depressed and resigned, the vast majority of the time self-initiated music, unlike music on command, elicited favorable responses from those who engaged in it, typically providing the prisoners with increased

[119] Laks, Szymon. *Music of Another World*. Northwestern University Press, 1989. (pg. 47)
[120] Brauer, Juliane. "How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps." *Music and Politics*, X, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.103. (pg. 21)

confidence, consolation, emotional support and a way to articulate their feelings which helped them to deal emotionally and intellectually with the existential threat of their situation.[121] Because of the extreme physical and psychological vulnerability of the prisoners, even the most inconspicuous ways of making music such as whistling, humming or singing to oneself became powerfully significant in the camps, serving not only as a means of relaxation, but also as a way to overcome, at least temporarily, emotions such as fear, despair and loneliness.

Self-initiated music making in the camps began early on before the outbreak of World War II. This activity generally involved amateur singing with very few instrumental groups because at this point, the camp populations were relatively small.[122] Once the war began, more and more prisoners from diverse social classes and countries were imprisoned in the camps including musicians, both amateur and professional, artists and intellectuals. With them came their varied musical traditions which significantly changed the clandestine musical life of the camps. Besides pieces of music that were composed in the camps, prisoners also brought with them songs and compositions which they knew from their pre-camp life, from family, friends and cultural associations with which they were involved before they were imprisoned. It was this music that was played most often as it was associated in their emotional memories with happier times of hope and prosperity and could therefore provide a sense of normalcy in the horrific new reality of the camps.[123] As the number and diversity of the prisoners grew, particularly during 1942-1943, so did the variety and makeup of clandestine musical groups. In Buchenwald

[121] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg. 11)
[122] Ibid
[123] Ibid (pg. 11-12)

for example a jazz big band was formed. In Sachsenhausen there was a mouth-organ group and, as mentioned earlier, at least seven different choirs. In Camp Falkensee there was a 'gypsy orchestra,' and a choir of Soviet prisoners of war gave regular secret performances in Flossenburg.[124] Guido Fackler describes how varied the voluntary musical life of a concentration camp could be when the prisoners took the initiative:

> "One prisoner, Herbert Zipper, was a conductor, a composer and a music teacher. As early as 1938 he formed an orchestra which secretly gave concerts for fellow-prisoners. In February 1941 the SS gave permission for a twenty-eight-member prisoners' orchestra; in 1942 there was a fifty-man orchestra performing a program of classical music, as well as a special Polish orchestra; in addition, there was a string quartet, a chamber music ensemble, a Czech light orchestra, together with various soloists, choirs and vocal groups. Furthermore, a theater group performed in 1943 accompanied by music."[125]

Clearly not all the camps had such a rich and extensive variety of prisoner-organized musical ensembles, but most camps had at least some kind of voluntary musical presence even if only for a short while, especially prior to the final phase of the concentration camp system when many prisoners were so weakened physically that participation in any organized musical activity, even listening, was beyond them.[126] Often it was necessary for the prisoners to organize rehearsals secretly and work together to obtain instruments and sheet music or, instead, play from memory. Language barriers between prisoners, regular deportations, extremely poor physical condition and the fear of being discovered all made rehearsing and playing together challenging which made it even more important for the musicians, regardless of skill level, to foster an example of solidarity and

[124] Ibid (pg. 14)
[125] Ibid
[126] Ibid (pg. 21)

humaneness amid the dehumanizing environment of the camps. Less emphasis was placed on the aesthetic quality of the music produced than on the fostering of community the music engendered. In this way, communal musical engagement served as a practical assistance in the daily struggle to stay alive.[127] The very act of choosing to make music together forged a way of being with the other that in somehow stood against the absurd, unimaginable environment of the camps which, through the use of prisoner functionaries and indiscriminate violence purposefully worked to pit inmates against each other and destroy any sense of solidarity or community.[128] Self-initiated communal musical making required the prisoners involved to depend on each other and work together. This sense of fidelity and friendship brought about through music allowed participants to bear their suffering together, to become a "collective subject"[129] in a sense which could more readily withstand the anguish and unimaginable reality of the concentration camp world. In this way the musicians who were able to somehow make music together, even clandestinely, demonstrated a kind of resistance to the model of the concentration camp which was designed to foster mistrust and shut down any possibility of communal support.[130] Voluntary music making among the prisoners fostered a "mode of togetherness and a being-with and being-for the other which countered the brutality of the camp environment and opened a space of resistance that was irreconcilably at odds with the bleak and brutal instrumentalizing inhumanity of the Nazi concentrationary world."[131] It allowed the musicians brief moments of authenticity and possible connection to who

[127] Ibid (pg. 14)
[128] Duggan, Patrick, and Lisa Peschel, editors. *Performing for Survival: Theatre, Crisis, Extremity*. 1st ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. eBook ISBN: 978-1-137-45427 DOI: 10.1057/9781137454270 (pg. 91)
[129] Ibid (pg. 93)
[130] Ibid (pg. 93-94)
[131] Ibid (pg. 96)

they may have remembered themselves to be. At the very least, for the space of time they created music together, be it fifteen minutes or two hours, surrounded by death and smokestacks continuously belching out their smoke of human flesh, for that time, the musicians could believe in what they were doing and the humanity of their being.

It will be helpful now to look more closely at some examples of this kind of music making and hear, when possible through survivor accounts, what specific effect(s) this voluntary musical engagement had on those who were able to participate, regardless of whether they lived to see liberation. It is important to remember that for purposes of this thesis, survival is measured in the broadest sense, in moments and days rather than years or lifetimes.

One of the most common forms of self-initiated music making in the camps was simple, spontaneous music that happened without much preparation, usually in the form of singing. Individuals or small groups of friends and acquaintances would join together in unaccompanied song. This kind of spontaneous singing attracted almost no attention and could be engaged in by anyone at almost any time as it required no sheet music, rehearsal time or performance space. A survivor recounted a time, in the extermination camp, Majdanek, for example, when a prisoner from the Operetta Theater in Vilna began singing operatic arias and songs from operettas, as well as Russian and Ukrainian songs.[132] His singing led to his fellow prisoners joining him softly with choral accompaniment.[133] In general, spontaneous singing involved familiar songs with which

[132] Fackler, Guido. "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945." *Music and Politics*, I, no. 1, 2007, doi:10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102. (pg. 17)
[133] Ibid

the prisoners, regardless of background, could easily identify, and folk songs from the various countries and regions the prisoners called home.[134] Both served to enhance the sense of community, solidarity and togetherness discussed earlier in this chapter. It follows, then, that it was not uncommon for groups of prisoners being marched to the gas chambers to sing together, perhaps in support of each other, perhaps to quiet internal fears, and perhaps in a last attempt to deny their captors the ultimate reward of a broken spirit. In Birkenau for example, this final musical act of solidarity or protest was often the Czech national anthem or the Jewish Zionist hymn, *"Hatikvah"*[135] which is now the national anthem of Israel. At the time however, *"Hatikvah,"* which means, "The Hope," was a popular Jewish anthem that had been chosen as the organizational hymn of the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Thus, the significance of its meaning to the prisoners who chose to sing it as they were marched into death's mouth is chilling. Other often sung songs associated with freedom, including political and partisan songs, were the song, "*Die Gedanken Sind Frei*" ("Thoughts are Free"), popular among the German-speaking prisoners, the Polish socialist revolutionary song, "*Warschawjanka*" ("Worlwinds of Danger"), sung by the Polish prisoners and for the Jewish inmates, Hirsh Glik's partisan song, "*Zog Nischt Keyn Mol*," ("Never Say"), which was composed in the Vilna Ghetto and became a symbol of defiance against the Nazi murderers, the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.[136] Many of these popular songs were secretly written down in the earlier days of the camps and collected into handmade song-books called *KZ-Liederbucher* (concentration camp song books) which were decorated and given as

[134] Ibid
[135] Ibid
[136] Ibid (pg. 17)

memoirs or gifts, especially to helpful prisoner functionaries in return for assistance in facilitating the music making by serving as lookouts while the music making took place. Often it was these prisoner functionaries who would steer the SS guards away by bribing them or convincing them of potential benefits of allowing musical performances.[137]

Many new songs called *KZ-Lieder* (concentration camp songs) were composed in the camps, including 350 which are known to have been written in Sachsenhausen alone.[138] In her book, *Music in the Holocaust Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*, Shirli Gilbert includes a chapter on the musical singing culture in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. She discusses how, for the non-Jewish prisoners, particularly German politicals and Czech artists, voluntary music-making was far more accessible than it was for their Jewish comrades and often served as a way of, "affirming connection, both to a pre-war national identity, and to a sense of community within the camp."[139]

Self-generated musical engagement for the non-Jewish Polish prisoners, like that of their Jewish counterparts, tended to be much more restricted and very often was only possible in clandestine, small group sessions. These groups were constantly on the lookout for SS guards and usually avoided the criminal functionary prisoners who typically did not tolerate Jews or Poles.[140] In general, the songs sung in these secret sessions by the Jewish and Polish prisoners, typically only in like groups, but occasionally in multi ethnic

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[137] Gilbert, Shirli. "Songs Confront the Past: Music in KZ Sachsenhausen, 1936–1945." *Contemporary European History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2004, pp. 281–304., doi:10.1017/s0960777304001730. (pg. 285-286)
[138] Ibid
[139] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps (1939-1945)*. Clarendon Press University of Oxford, 2005. (pg. 106)
[140] Ibid (pg. 122)

gatherings, were intended less for widespread morale raising or group singing and were meant instead to provide more of a framework within which their experiences of victimization could be confronted and where opposition and rage against their oppressors could be expressed.[141] Attendance at such secret song sessions was extremely dangerous; nevertheless, they remained popular in the Jewish and Polish barracks, suggesting that the prisoners who listened identified with the sentiments expressed in the music, perhaps allowing them to derive feelings of solace in their shared experience. One such experience is described by a former Sachsenhausen inmate, Andre Gouillard, as follows:

> "Two camp nurses lead a soloist to a so-called podium that had been improvised out of a straw sack. The man, called Alex, was blind. The sockets of his eyes were yellow, and the eyes were stuck together with pus. I did not know him. He had an old Polish camp number, but people said that he was supposedly a Hungarian Jew from Kecscemet. He was young and terribly emaciated. He sang. He raised his hands and a threatening fist. His voice was full of madness and hatred, then again pleading and often like the crying of a sick child. The audience gazed upon the soloist as if upon a statue of revenge. Several sick prisoners became powerless. I understood only two words: 'choral' and 'attention.' When the word 'attention' sounded for the second time… I lost consciousness."[142]

Clearly this highly charged performance had a deep effect on the prisoners present that day. It demonstrates also how the subject matter and intention behind these songs differed from those composed by other non-Jewish groups in the camps. It was not uncommon, especially in Polish and Jewish songs, for the horrors of camp life to be confronted head on, including descriptions of victims' gassing, individual torture, murders and

[141] Ibid (pg. 124)
[142] Ibid (pg. 123)

executions.[143] These songs, as evidenced in the description above often elicited powerful responses from those who heard them. For the composers and singers, they provided a vehicle through which their overwhelming feelings of desperation, powerlessness and frustration could be expressed. These compositions and the performance of them provided opportunities for Jewish prisoners and others at the bottom of the camp hierarchy to be heard and to have their suffering acknowledged.

Opportunities such as these for Jewish prisoners were the least common among all prisoner populations in Sachsenhausen as was the case in most of the larger camps. For the most part, any musical activities the Jewish prisoners were able to organize themselves were very restricted and covert and were always conducted under the threat of discovery. As Gilbert reports, "Jews were afforded more restricted opportunities than their counterparts in almost all the camps, and for the most part experienced only spontaneous, clandestine singing sessions. They were also subjected more frequently to musical torture."[144] We know this to be true from testimonial accounts and can also surmise it is so because of the relatively small amount of new musical material Jews produced in the camps in contrast to their creative musical output in the ghettos.[145] That said, musical opportunities were created by prisoners in the Sachsenhausen *Sonderlager* (special camp for Jewish prisoners), especially involving music related to Jewish occasions which prisoners of all degrees of religious observance found surprisingly meaningful. For example, Hans Reichmann, a Sachsenhausen survivor, recalled that on one of the nights of Chanukah, Adolf Burg, a fellow prisoner, sang the traditional song,

[143] Ibid (pg. 126)
[144] Ibid (pg. 132)
[145] Ibid

'*Ma'oz Tzur*.' In his writing, Reichmann described the strong emotional response to the song including one older inmate who spontaneously began reciting his Bar Mitzvah portion which he had learned forty-five years earlier.[146] Leon Szalet, another Jewish prisoner, recounted an emotional rendition of the Jewish hymn '*Hatikva'* being sung during the lighting of the Chanukah candles that same year. Szalet also described a particularly moving musical interlude that occurred on Yom Kippur in 1939 or 1940. Knowing the significance of the day for the Jewish prisoners, the SS guards had been particularly brutal in their treatment. Szalet recounted what happened in the barracks once the guards had left for the night:

> "All at once the oppressive silence was broken by a mournful tune. It was the plaintive tones of the ancient '*Kol Nidre*' prayer. I raised myself up to see whence it came. There, close to the wall, the moonlight caught the uplifted face of an old man, who, in self-forgetful pious absorption, was singing softly to himself the sorrowful melody with the familiar, deeply moving words… We sat up very quietly, so as not to disturb the old man, and he did not notice that we were listening. As if transported into another world, he chanted the prayer to the end, so softly that the words were scarcely distinguishable to those who did not know them by heart. His old, quavering voice held us in a spell. When at last he was silent, there was exaltation among us, an exaltation which men can experience only when they have fallen as low as we had fallen and then, through the mystic power of a deathless prayer, have awakened once more to the world of the spirit."[147]

[146] Ibid (pg. 134)
[147] Szalet, Leon. *Experiment "E": A Report from an Extermination Labaratory*. Didier, 1945 (original), www.pickle-partnerspublishing.com 2015. Translated by Catharine Bland Williams (pg. 70-71)

Szalet provides us with a clear visual image of how some Jewish prisoners reacted to their experiences of extreme victimization by, paradoxically, returning to their spiritual roots with renewed urgency and the need to reclaim their Jewish heritage.[148] Others reacted in the opposite extreme, rejecting God entirely. Regardless of level of belief or observance, secret impromptu musical sessions like these provided opportunities for Jewish prisoners to forge links with their past and situate their experiences within the larger timeline of Jewish history. Singing together, even in small groups, about the communal Jewish fate proved essential in forging bonds of support and group identification which may have helped the Jewish inmates better withstand the tremendous mental, physical and emotional violence perpetrated against them in the horrific conditions of the camps. In short, for those who were able to engage musically of their own volition, even in small, secret groups as was the case for most of the Jewish prisoners, the music-making encouraged feelings of belonging and worked to incorporate new experiences into the continuity of tradition.

One example of this is the only permanent musical group that existed among the Jewish prisoners in Sachsenhausen, the illegal four-part choir led by a Polish-born Jew named Rosebury d'Arguto (originally Martin Rosenburg) who had been a well-respected musical figure and political activist before the war.[149] The choir was established in April 1940 with twenty to thirty members. D'Arguto worked tirelessly with the singers using music to strengthen group morale and solidarity and refocus the prisoners' attention away from the horror that surrounded them. Through rewriting and repurposing existing songs

[148] Gilbert, Shirli. "Songs Confront the Past: Music in KZ Sachsenhausen, 1936–1945." *Contemporary European History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2004, pp. 281–304., doi:10.1017/s0960777304001730.

[149] Ibid

for his choir with new lyrics reflective of camp life, d'Arguto carried on an age-old Jewish tradition. One such Yiddish folk song 'Tsen Brider' that told the story of ten brothers who die one by one until only one is left was re-written by d'Arguto after he found out that a transport would soon take many of the Jewish prisoners to the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.[150] He modified the words to reflect camp life, shortened it from ten stanzas to two, reset it musically and translated it into German so more prisoners in the camp, both the *Sonderlager* and the main camp, would be able to understand it. The new song was called, 'Judischer Todessang' (Jewish Death Song).[151] He stayed true to the tragi-comic spirit of Yiddish song with the new lyrics translated here into English:

> We were ten brothers, we traded in wine
> One died – we were left nine.
>
> Oy-oy! Oy-oy!
> Yidl (little Jew) with the fiddle, Moysh with the bass,
> Sing a little song for me, we have to go into the gas!
>
> I am the only brother left; with whom shall I now cry?
> The others have been murdered! Think of all nine!
>
> Oy-oy! Oy-oy!
> Yidl with the fiddle, Moyshe with the bass,
> Listen to my last little song; I also have to go into the gas!
>
> We were ten brothers,
> We never hurt anyone.[152]

[150] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Clarendon Press, 2010. (pg. 139)
[151] Ibid (pg 137)
[152] Ibid (pg 139) *See music appendix for chart with d'Arguto's translation*

Gilbert points out in her analysis of the song that,

> "The 'Todessang' suggests that while reaffirming Jewish identity was one way in which d'Arguto felt Jewish inmates could construe what was happening to them, it was equally important to him that they gain the sympathy of non-Jewish prisoners. Musical activity was thus not only a way of consoling the group in the *Sonderlager*, it was also a way of communicating their experiences to those outside, and perhaps also of ensuring that what they had suffered would be witnessed and remembered.[153]

In October 1942 d'Arguto and his choir were discovered. According to Alexander Kulisiewicz who witnessed the event, SS guards stormed into the block interrupting rehearsal and took the entire choir outside where they were punished by being forced to perform sports while singing the refrain of the 'Todessang.' Many died right there. The others had to remain standing in the square through the night and were taken later that month on a transport with other Jews, including d'Arguto, to Auschwitz where they were all gassed.[154]

Self-initiated music making in Auschwitz was far rarer than in other camps. Much of this was due to the lack of factors required for such musical engagement to exist which included at least some free time, a somewhat stable physical condition of the prisoners and a degree of leniency from the SS guards and their prisoner functionaries.[155] In Auschwitz most prisoners and virtually all the Jewish inmates were met with constant brutality, hard labor and the unending fear of death which left many so depleted they were unable to engage in anything other than the struggle to survive. Because of this,

[153] Ibid (pg. 140)
[154] Ibid (pg 141)
[155] Ibid (pg 148)

what little voluntary music that occurred was always spontaneous, usually vocal and happened infrequently when prisoners were relatively safe, away from the SS guards and hostile functionaries. [156] Evidence of such activity is scarce and fragmented largely because a majority of prisoners who experienced them did not survive, and those who did could only speak of what they experienced directly either privately or in very small groups as trust among inmates was not widespread in Auschwitz.[157] The following examples are mostly taken from Shirli Gilbert's *Music in the Holocaust*, and offer a small picture of how moments of voluntary musical engagement in the death factory that was Auschwitz-Birkenau provided a temporary distraction which helped inmates focus their attention away from reality thus calming them.

A German-Jewish prisoner named Elisabeth Lichtenstein recalled what happened after the shaving and tattooing of her group when she arrived at Auschwitz I in November 1943:

"All the women were in a state of complete exhaustion and at the end of their nervous strength. Some were standing around apathetically, some were screaming and laughing hysterically, many squabbled and fought among themselves. There were also those that sang. A neighbor who had accompanied me from Szered and knew that I was a music lover and that I had a good voice, said that I should sing something, so that we would not all go mad. I naturally did not have the courage to sing, but as the time dragged on and we had already been standing there waiting for hours, I began to sing the Ave

[156] Ibid
[157] Ibid (pg. 149)

Maria. I did not know the text, I sang only the melody. While I sang, it became quiet in the hall, those who were screaming fell silent, those who were fighting stopped.[158]

In her book, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz,* Gisella Perl recounted how one of her typhus patients would sing for her fellow inmates in the Birkenau hospital barracks. Perl describes how the sick girl's gifts of arias and lieder were eagerly received by her audience as if they were in a concert hall far from the horror of the camps. The Jewish girl, Bracha Gilai, was regularly asked to sing by the women in the barracks and believed that her 'performances' made her fellow prisoners feel better and helped to create an atmosphere of gentle comfort. Because of this, she said, they took particular care for her safety and health.[159]

Another Jewish inmate who survived, Sam Goldberg, remembered how in Birkenau he would sneak from block to block singing songs from home and telling jokes in exchange for food or other rewards. He was certain that his fellow prisoners supported these visits because, "they helped to keep them going and allowed them to forget the horrors around them."[160]

One final example included here, former *Sonderkommando*[161] member Filip Muller's description of Czech Jews from the family camps about to be gassed, speaks to how, at moments of crisis, inmates in Auschwitz and other camps found value in affirming a sense of group identity and belonging:

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[158] Ibid *taken from Elisabeth Lichtenstein, WL, Eyewitness Testimony*
[159] Perl, Gisella. *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*. International Universities Press, 1948. (pg. 136-137)
[160] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Clarendon Press, 2010. (pg. 150)
[161] *Sonderkommandos* were work units made up of camp inmates, usually Jews, who were forced, on threat of their own deaths, to aid with the disposal of gas chamber victims.

> "At last they had been told straight to their faces what awaited them… Their voices grew subdued and tense, their movements forced, their eyes stared as though they had been hypnotized. The atmosphere in the room was one of immense gravity. Most of the people now began to undress, but some were still hesitating… Suddenly a voice began to sing. Others joined in, and the sound swelled into a mighty choir. They sang first the Czechoslovak national anthem and then the Hebrew song, 'Hatikvah'. And all this time the SS men never stopped their brutal beatings. It was as if they regarded the singing as a last kind of protest which they were determined to stifle if they could. To be allowed to die together was the only comfort left to these people. Singing their national anthem, they were saying a last farewell to their brief but flourishing past, a past which had enabled them to live for twenty years in a democratic state, a respected minority enjoying equal rights. And when they sang 'Hatikvah', now the national anthem of the state of Israel, they were glancing into the future, but it was a future which they would not be allowed to see. To me, the bearing of my countrymen seemed an exemplary gesture of national honor and national pride which stirred my soul.[162]

What I have presented in this chapter are two distinct forms of musical engagement that were both a regular part of daily life in the Nazi concentration and death camps: music on command and self-initiated music. In providing examples from each category and an explanation of how these opposing practices existed side by side while serving

[162] Muller, Filip. *Auschwitz Inferno: The Testimony of a Sonderkommando*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1979. (pg. 110-111)

completely different functions, I have attempted to contextualize and justify the extraordinary production of voluntary musical engagement by prisoners in the camps. While this chapter relied primarily on examples from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, both forms of music making discussed took place at some level in most of the camps in the Nazi system. That said, there were some exceptions or aberrations to the more widely experienced structure discussed in this chapter. One such exception, the Nazi model ghetto Terezin, is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4 History in Song – Giving Voice to the Timeline of Memory

> *"There were people who were composers and they took the opportunity and wanted to create new music to express their feeling of the place and the situation and whatever one can express in music. And the result was that the people who came to a concert or to a play in that place suddenly felt… human beings. So, all that was allowed. But of course, what we didn't know is what the Germans knew, that we were sentenced to death, sooner or later."*[163]
>
> - *Zdenka Fantlova on the music in the ghetto Terezin*

Music is unparalleled in its ability to capture history through the eyes, ears and voices of those who are living it. One of the best-known examples from the Holocaust of the musical transmission of history is the music created and performed in the model ghetto Terezin where self-initiated music making by the prisoners was, rather than a secret rarity, perhaps the most defining characteristic of camp life. The story of Terezin, originally built as a garrison town in Czechoslovakia just north of Prague in the late 1700s and renamed Theresienstadt by the Germans, is indeed unique among the broader landscape of the extensive Nazi concentration and extermination camp system. Terezin was known as a *model ghetto* because of the way in which the Nazi propaganda machine used it - with its wealth of music and cultural activities - to convince the outside world that life for the Jewish inmates was not so bad. In reality, the conditions in the ghetto were deplorable – chronic overcrowding, a completely inadequate food supply, extremely

[163] Vulliamy, Ed. "Terezin: 'The Music Connected Us to the Lives We Had Lost'." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 5 Apr. 2013, 12:41 EDT, www.theguardian.com/. (text from a video clip in this article)

limited medical attention, horrific hygienic conditions which led to common outbreaks of typhus, diphtheria, lice infestation and rampant disease, and regular family separation upon arrival into various barracks.[164] Living conditions in Terezin were not that different from those in most of the other Nazi camps, thus it is not surprising that people died there daily, sometimes as many as 150 in a single day.[165]

What was different however, was how the SS set up the ghetto to be self-administered by a 'Council of Jewish Elders' (Altestenrat) who were responsible directly to the Nazi commander. The SS used the self-administration model to sow national and class divisions within the various Jewish groups in the camp, thereby promoting distrust, corruption, internal struggle and disunity throughout the entire ghetto population.[166] Though their name makes it sound as though they had a say in the governance of the ghetto, in truth, members of this Council were merely puppets of the SS commander of Terezin, Dr. Siegfried Seidl.[167] Leaders of the Council of Elders, Jacob Edelstein, former secretary of the socialist Zionist party, *Paole Zion*, and Otto Zucker, another Zionist leader, were chosen by the SS commander, and though they were aware of concentration camps such as Dachau, Buchenwald and Auschwitz, they truly believed that the establishment of the Terezin ghetto would enable the Czech Jews to remain in Bohemia (as it was called after the German occupation) and therefore be spared transport to the extermination camps.[168] Nevertheless, they were forced to play a key role in those

[164] Karas, Joza. *Music in Terezin: 1941-1945*. Beaufort Books Publishers in Association with Pendragon Press, 1985. (pg. 10-11)
[165] Ibid (pg. 11)
[166] Ibid (pg. 10)
[167] Ibid
[168] Ibid (pg. 8)

transports, for when the SS commander would order one thousand inmates sent to Auschwitz, the Jewish administration had to select the victims who would board the train. Despite Edelstein's best intentions, the fate of the Czech Jews was sealed and there was little he or anyone else could do to alter it.[169] In the history of the Terezin ghetto, from November 1941 – May 1945, 139,654 people passed through its gates; 33,419 died there (16 of them by execution), and 86,934 were deported, primarily to the East for extermination or hard labor in Auschwitz.[170] When the camp was liberated in May of 1945, there were about 17,320 prisoners remaining. With 2000 people unaccounted for, the total number of survivors who at one time lived in Terezin was about 20,000. Included in these numbers were 15,000 children under the age of 15 years, only about 1,000 of whom survived.[171]

Yet despite the everyday regimen, rampant fatal disease, malnutrition, cramped conditions and the continual transports east to Auschwitz-Birkenau where forced labor or death in the gas chambers awaited, Terezin itself became a most remarkably macabre and unique center for what remained of the vibrant musical culture of interwar Czechoslovakian Jewry.

> "All Nazi camps were diabolical, but Terezin was singular in ways both redemptive, at first, and later grotesque. It was the place in which the Jews of Czechoslovakia were concentrated, especially the intelligentsia and prominent artistic figures, and, in time, members of the Jewish cultural elites from across Europe, prior to transportation to the gas chambers."[172]

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[169] Ibid
[170] Ibid (pg. 11)
[171] Ibid
[172] Vulliamy, Ed. "Terezin: Music from a Nazi Ghetto." *The Guardian*, 12 June 2010.

In this way it was truly an anomaly, and while an in-depth look at precisely how the musical culture of Terezin evolved and thrived is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important that the reader have a basic understanding of how music functioned in the ghetto, both uniquely and similarly to other Nazi concentration and extermination camps, if for no other reason than to realize the crucial role the culture of the camp played in extending the voices of some of the most prominent Jewish musicians, composers, singers, conductors, cabaret performers and artists of the time. It is impossible to consider the history of voluntary musical engagement by Jewish prisoners in the Holocaust and its effects on prisoner survival without giving voice to the timeline of memory expressed and preserved in the music created in Terezin.

Life in the ghetto camp Terezin was a complex story of dichotomies about which survivors have uncharacteristically fond as well as painful and horrific memories. It was a place of resilience and artistic expression as both a refuge from, and perhaps in some cases, defiance of death, and therefore lies outside the 'typical narrative' of the Jewish Holocaust experience.[173] According to Ed Vulliamy in his article, "Terezin: Music From a Nazi Ghetto," Terezin's rich musical life, which began with the establishment of the ghetto in 1941, initially came from the insuppressible talent of those imprisoned there, in protest of, and often in hiding from the SS. In time however, the concerts, cabarets, operas, and evenings of music and song evolved to be tolerated by the Nazis as a way of pacifying the prisoners.[174] By 1943, these performances along with other prisoner-initiated music-making were even encouraged by the Nazis to silence rumors of the

[173] Ibid
[174] Ibid

horrific conditions in the camp. In 1944, the camp administration went so far as to produce a propaganda film entitled, *The Fuhrer Gives a City to the Jews*, which featured a performance of the children's opera, *Brundibar*, the first of 55 given in Terezin, written by Hans Krasa, one of the camp's leading prisoner-composers. The Nazi camp administration forced an elaborate "beautification operation" on the prisoners to disguise the appalling conditions in the camp and invited the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the ghetto and watch the performance.[175] The underlying horror of this macabre spectacle which was applauded by the Red Cross was how successful the Germans were in their propaganda mission: all but two of the children in the cast that day were transported soon after the performance and accompanying photographs were finished to the gas ovens of Auschwitz. Out of nearly 15,000 children who passed through the gates of Terezin, only 130 survived.[176]

According to one of those survivors, Helga Weissova-Hoskova, there were four stages of the musical cultural life of Terezin. "First, that of great creative resistance; second, that of the Nazi toleration of the cultural life; third, the manipulation of our art by the Nazis; and finally, when it was all over, the mass killing of almost everyone involved."[177] This cultural output in Terezin was primarily organized by the Council of Jewish Elders under the auspices of the *Freizeitgestaltung* (free-time administration). The Jewish leadership was able to make use of the extraordinary number of camp inmates who were gifted professional musicians, among the most well-known of their day, composer/pianists Victor Ullman, Pavel Haas, Hans Kraza and Gideon Klein, and pianist/conductors Karel

[175] Ibid
[176] Ibid
[177] Ibid

Ancerl and Raphael Shacter, many of whom had managed to smuggle in banned musical instruments or at least parts of them, for reassembly in the camp.[178] Often their concerts and compositions would express suffering and resistance.[179] According to Simon Broughton, a leading expert in world music and the director/producer of two documentaries on the music of Terezin, the pieces composed there typically, "were written in codes – coded phrases, key codes, Czech folk and Jewish tunes with references to melodies like Smetana's *'Ma Vlast'* (My Homeland) with specific associations in the minds of the audiences that the Nazis were too stupid to spot."[180]

This was not the case however with the one-act opera composed in Terezin by Victor Ullman with a libretto by Peter Kien, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (The Emperor of Atlantis), one of the few pieces to be censored in the ghetto because of its satirization of Hitler as a power-crazed tyrant. It is an absolute reappropriation of Hitler and the Third Reich complete with a parody of *'Deutschland uber Alles,'* the national anthem of Germany. In the opera, the figure of Death refuses to lead a war of glorification for Emperor Uberall, and in the chaos that follows, Death only agrees to return to duty if the Kaiser himself is the first to die. The production in Terezin was forbidden after the SS viewed it in dress rehearsal and realized that the Kaiser represented Hitler who, in the opera is defeated and taken away by Death. Thankfully Ullman, who was murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz, thought to entrust this manuscript along with others he composed in Terezin, to a fellow prisoner, Dr. Emil Utitz, who served as the camp librarian. Utitz survived and brought with him out of the ghetto Ullman's work and that of many of his fellow

[178] Ibid
[179] Ibid
[180] Broughton, Simon, director. *The Music of Terezin*. BBC and Czech Television, 1993.

composers from Terezin who were not so fortunate.[181] *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* did not reach a stage until December 16, 1975, when it was finally premiered by the Netherlands Opera at the Bellevue Centre in Amsterdam. The production was conducted by Kerry Woodward using the first performing edition, the preparation of which he had been actively involved in.[182]

The myriad ways in which the music of Terezin provided a means of survival, comfort, hope and a brief escape for both the performers and their fellow prisoners are challenging to quantify and is therefore perhaps best expressed in the words of survivors who experienced it first-hand as evidenced in the following series of quotes:[183]

On the power of music during times of unparalleled suffering in Terezin:

> "People need hope when they are suffering, they *need* it. From the first note when somebody started with music, everybody felt, 'God is here'. Somebody, somebody makes us happy." – Mrs. Alice Herz Sommer concert pianist and Terezin survivor
>
> "I felt that this is the only thing which helps me to, to have hope. It is a sort of religion actually. Music is, is God. In difficult times you feel it especially. Whenever you are suffering." – Alice Herz Sommer.

On listening to Alice Herz Sommer playing Chopin in Terezin:

> "That was my first time actually I have heard all Chopin's Etudes, and I remember Alice sitting on the stage; I was in about the third row and saw her

[181] Karas, Joza. *Music in Terezin: 1941-1945*. Beaufort Books Publishers in Association with Pendragon Press, 1985.
[182] Broughton, Simon, director. *The Music of Terezin*. BBC and Czech Television, 1993.
[183] All quotes from the documentary: Reed, Nick, director. *The Lady in Number 6: Music Saved My Life*, Malcolm Clarke and Nicholas Reed, 2014, www.theladyinnumber6.com/. (Individual speakers as indicated).

> from the right profile, and I was quite captivated. It was magic to hear this music in that kind of surrounding. It was a moral support. It was not entertainment as most people think, that we were having fun. It had a much bigger value." – Zdenka Fantlova actress and Terezin survivor.

On performing in the many productions of the children's opera, Brundibar, in Terezin, Zdenka Fantlova commented,

> "So, the people who were sitting in the audience and we on stage, we were transported into a different time – the time before when we lived in a normal civilized life, civilized world - and hoping and being convinced that the war will soon finish, we'll go back home, and it will go on. But of course, what we knew later, the Germans knew full well – that we are sentenced to death – and thought, 'let them play, let them laugh, the laughter will soon vanish from their face.' And we were dancing under the gallows."

On Terezin's evening concerts, referred to by the SS guards as, 'Friendship Evenings,'[184] and the effects they had on the performers and audience alike:

> "When you are knowing that you will play in the evening a concert, and people – old, terribly ill – people came to this concert and became… young. It is a mystery that when the first tone of music starts, it goes straight away into our soul. Indescribably beauty that made us happy." – Alice Herz Sommer

On the importance of having music as a refuge because it was one thing that could not be taken away by the Germans:

> "This is where music comes in, the importance of music because you can actually have music in your head without anybody knowing it is happening. You can actually go into another world which was a lot nicer than the world we were

[184] Vulliamy, Ed. "Terezin: 'The Music Connected Us to the Lives We Had Lost'." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 5 Apr. 2013, 12:41 EDT, www.theguardian.com/. (text from a video clip in this article)

> actually living in." – Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, Cellist, Auschwitz survivor and author of *Inherit the Truth: A Memoir of Survival and the Holocaust*

Prisoner-initiated music, though the subject of this thesis and arguably the most common vehicle for escape, comfort and survival by Jewish prisoners in the Nazi camps, was not the only cultural tool used by inmates in Terezin and some of the other concentration and extermination camps. The artist and Terezin survivor, Mrs. Weissova-Hoskova, describes one of the many pictures she drew as a child in Terezin:

> "The picture encapsulates the wretched life in Terezin and the Nazis' terrible way with words. Here we have a hearse, the means of transport in Terezin, for reasons of psychological warfare against us: to demonstrate that we were already dead. They were used to transport everything apart from the dead, and instead of being pulled as they should, by horses, the animals were children. On the carriage was the word, *'jugendfursorge'* – 'welfare for young people'. The welfare of children who would, all of them, perish in Auschwitz."

And a final thought on the redemptive power of music for prisoners in the ghetto from Alice Herz Sommer:

> "When we can play it can't be so terrible. Music is the first place of art. It brings us on an island with peace, beauty and love." – Alice Herz Sommer

Nicholas Reed, a producer and the director of the documentary, *The Lady in Number 6: Music Saved my Life*, the story of Alice Herz Sommer's time in Terezin from which the majority of these quotes come, spoke about how other survivors he interviewed for the project described the experience of being in the audience during one or more of Alice Herz Sommers's one hundred plus concerts in Terezin:

> "It's about the power of music. When she was actually giving these performances in the concentration camp, everybody listening for that time could leave their body and go somewhere else. And everyone talked about how it kind of fortified their spirit and basically kind of re-energized them. What was even equally as interesting is that the German guards who were there following orders, they would listen to the music because it was an escape for them as well."[185]

We are most fortunate today to have recovered a significant amount of music which was composed in the ghetto Terezin or in one of the other 42,000 concentration camps, incarceration sites, death camps and ghettos the Nazis ran between the years 1933-1945. Many of these compositions provide us with a unique window not only into the emotional state of their composers and fellow prisoners, but also into the historical record of the time. As evidenced in the discussion above concerning prisoner-initiated music-making in Terezin, music provides us with a unique vehicle for the transmission of history. Certainly, one must consider a certain amount of subjectivity in the musical presentation of events and stories as told by the authors and the artists. Nonetheless, music is a powerful vehicle through which we can learn much about what was happening on the ground in the Nazi concentration camps from those who were there, even if they did not survive the war. The songs and musical compositions from the Holocaust offer a most compelling lens through which some of its victims were able to give an historical voice to the timeline of memory.

Those who began collecting and securing materials and historical documents in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust recognized the integral role of music, particularly

[185] Timoner, Ondi. "The Lady in Number 6 - Alice Herz-Sommer Documentary with Nick Reed."

songs composed and/or arranged by prisoners in the camps, both as artifacts that could perhaps preserve the voices and the memory of the victims, and also as historical sources that could assist future researchers in reconstructing what had happened.[186] One key consideration to keep in mind however, especially at the intersection of music and history, as Shirli Gilbert points out in her article, "Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory," is the need to distinguish between the notions of history and memory, particularly between, "formal historiography and popular Jewish remembering."[187] The intimate causal relationship among music, memory and emotion has already been discussed in some detail in an earlier chapter of this thesis, and from that exploration one can easily see the need to tread carefully around the notion of applying meaning to historical memory captured in song. In other words, it is easy to assume a particular emotion such as fear, rage, resistance, faith or heroism when looking at the emotional messages inherent in the music that was composed by prisoners in the Nazi camps. It is a disservice however to the historical memory of the composers and that of their fellow inmates to assume or insist on one certain intention when it cannot be known with certainty what was in the mind of the singer or the songwriter at the time of its origination. Historical interpretation is perhaps unavoidable, especially where music is concerned, but one can, and, I argue must, be aware of the meaning being imposed onto what is heard, especially when looking at prisoner-generated musical production in the Nazi concentration and death camps because the tendency in this genre overwhelmingly favors a narrative of heroics and resistance. While that may be true in some cases, such a

[186] Gilbert, Shirli. "Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory." *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 66, www.jstor.org/stable/25473010. (pg. 2)
[187] Ibid

one-dimensional interpretation severely limits the likelihood of historical accuracy and compromises the integrity of any memorialized representation of the music composed.

Gilbert speaks at length in her article about the delicate balance of music, meaning-making and memory, and the very crucial role that the prisoners' songs had and continue to have as historical artifacts in the broader scope of the multi-dimensional documentation of what happened. In the immediate aftermath of the war, there was an urgent need to record and preserve as much as possible from the camps and the ghettos, and songs were considered valuable heirlooms with much to contribute to the writing of history and the preservation of memory.[188] To this end, music was a main feature of three independent gathering initiatives carried out in the years right after the war ended: the collection work, primarily in Lithuania and Poland, of Shmerke Kaczerginski, a partisan survivor of the Vilna Ghetto and a songwriter himself, the work of the Central Historical Commission in Munich, and the interview project led by the psychologist David Boder in Italy, France, Germany and Switzerland.[189] Each effort saw music from the camps as an integral part of the larger mission of collection, documentation and preservation rather than a separate initiative, and they all revealed remarkably similar ideas of music's value and importance. In each of the three initiatives, songs were thought of as offering insight into a unique dimension of history, specifically, "not how the victims were acted upon as passive objects, but rather, the ways in which they, as historical subjects with agency, lived under the Nazi occupation and actively responded to what was happening."[190]

[188] Ibid (pg. 8)
[189] Ibid
[190] Ibid (pg. 12)

Separately, each independent effort found the need to defend its musical focus, and those justifications were also remarkably similar. For example, when the Central Historical Commission's musical mission was met with cynicism by those who thought that surely enough documents were being amassed by governments and other institutions, co-director Moses Josef Feigenbaum explained the motivation behind the Commission's establishment as follows:

> "All of those documents are just a fragment of our tragedy. They show only how the murderers behaved towards us, how they treated us and what they did with us. Do our lives in those nightmarish days consist only of such fragments? On what basis will the historian be able to create an image of what happened in the ghettos? How will one be able to depict our suffering and pain-filled lives? From where will one be able to know about our heroic deeds and how will one determine our attitudes towards our oppressors? We, the *she'erit hapletah*, the surviving witnesses, must create for the historian the foundation, represent to him the sources, from which he will be able to create a clear image of what happened to us and between us. Therefore, each testimony of a saved Jew, every song from the Nazi era, every proverb, every anecdote and joke, every photograph is for us of tremendous value…"[191]

Shmerke Kaczerginski similarly remarked, stressing that songs written by prisoners in the camps and ghettos could, "offer unique insight into the inner lives of Jewish communities under internment."[192] He emphasized the need to "preserve the *voices* of the departed, their simple, clear words that tell us about their lives until their deaths."[193] The stories told by these songs document so much more than what is found in official records. Not

[191] Ibid (pg. 13), translated from the original found in *Fun letstn khurbn* 1, 1946 (pg. 2)
[192] Ibid
[193] Kaczerginski, Szmerke, and H. Leivick, editors. *Lider Fun Di geṭos Un Lagern*. Cyco-Bicher Farlag, New York, 1948. Musical Arrangements - M. Gelbart (*in preface* pg. xix, xxiv)

only do they express feelings of hope, longing, defiance and helplessness, they also document Nazi crimes, internal community struggles, corrupt Jewish officials and other less savory aspects of daily life of Jewish prisoners in the Nazi system. As Kaczerginski explains in his monumental collection of Yiddish songs recovered from the ghettos and camps of the Holocaust, *Lider fun di getos un lagern* (Songs From the Ghettos and Camps, 1948):

> "Few documents were preserved that would allow even a partial picture of the practical, official existence and the way of life of Jews in the occupied territories. Therefore, I think that the songs that Jews from ghettos, death camps and partisans sang from their sad hearts will be a great contribution to the history of Jewish martyrdom and struggle… The daily Jewish life in the ghetto (and camps) with all its accompanying phenomena like arrests, death, work, Gestapo, Jewish power-mongers, internal way of life, etc. – are reflected in precisely this bloody folklore. It will help future history-writers and researchers as well as readers to fathom the soul of our people."[194]

In this narrative, Kaczerginski brings to light one of the main points in Gilbert's article - the importance of recognizing that the music made by Jewish prisoners in the Nazi camps is multi-faceted and carries within it a wide variety of nuanced portrayals of experiences of victimhood and human responses to unimaginably harsh realities. As Gilbert suggests, "A return to the complex, multifaceted, contradictory and stubbornly diverse perspectives reflected in these songs might help to reorient Holocaust awareness away from the realm of the mythicized and ahistorical, and towards contextualized multiplicity."[195] She further points out that prisoner-generated songs were important vehicles for producing and

[194] Ibid (*preface* pg. xv-xviii)
[195] Gilbert, Shirli. "Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory." *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 66, www.jstor.org/stable/25473010. (pg. 17)

communicating meaning between inmates about the camp world. Various aspects of camp life such as forced labor, prisoner functionaries, status of the war, food (or lack thereof), gas chambers, etc. captured in these songs and stories circulated throughout the camp. Besides spreading information, these songs also helped to connect prisoners to a wider framework where the meaning and impact of their experiences could be more communally negotiated and shared.[196] This is not to say that inmates' individual experiences and perceptions were uniform - certainly they were not - rather that ideas circulated and interacted beyond the individual level within the variety of communities inside single camps and also more broadly from camp to camp.

Often songs were based on well-known pre-existing melodies rather than newly composed pieces, and songwriter inmates often took care to portray camp life in great detail, both as a means of documenting for the future the atrocities they witnessed and experienced, and as a way to inform fellow prisoners of daily events.[197] Examples of such songs include, *'Zwilingi'* (Twins), which details some of Dr. Mengele's notorious medical experiments carried out on twins in the camps; Czech prisoner, Margit Bachner's *'Auschwitzlied'* (Auschwitz Song), which describes daily camp horrors ranging from disease, heavy labor and regular torture to the unending yearning for home and family; a piece entitled, *'Zug zum Krematorium'* (Train to the Crematorium) about the burning of victims in Birkenau in 1944; a chilling song by an inmate named, Zbigniew Adamczyk called, *'Znow smierc zaglada mi w oczy'* (Again death looks me in the eye), written in

[196] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Clarendon Press, 2010. (pg. 151)
[197] Ibid

1940 about the brutal torture of prisoners in Auschwitz; and *'Saloniki,'* a song by a Greek Jewish prisoner named Ya'akov Levi which also records some of the horrors of life in Auschwitz.[198]

In addition to creating an historical record of endured experiences, the legitimacy of which may have otherwise been questioned, the articulation of these terrors in song may have served as an act of self-preservation that helped to loosen or at least briefly relieve some of the daily anxiety and fear experienced by the inmates. It is shocking how quickly the horrors experienced by new arrivals to the camps turned to a kind of calm numbness as the constant violence and death surrounding them was quietly absorbed into their consciousness.[199] Evidence of this is also found in song lyrics from Auschwitz. For example, *'Gazownia'* (Gas chamber), written in 1942 by former inmate, Adolf Gawalewicz, and sung to the tune of the pre-war tango *'Jest Jedna Jedyna'* (There Is Only One), reflects the matter of fact-ness by which prisoners quickly learned to view their circumstances:

> "There is one gas chamber
> Where we will all get to know each other,
> Where we will all meet each other,
> Maybe tomorrow – who knows?"[200]

Similarly, a song written in 1944 by Birkenau inmate, Jadwiga Laszczynska, entitled, *'Frauenlager'* (Women's Camp), seems almost flippant in its characterization of life in

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[198] *See music appendices,* (original citations from USHMM research materials relating to Auschwitz and the Kulisiewicz Collection.)
[199] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Clarendon Press, 2010. (pg. 152)

[200] Ibid

the camps. Sung to a popular Russian melody of the time, *'Wolga, Wolga'* (Volga, Volga), the lyrics are a mash-up of common camp jargon and daily prisoner experiences, all in German, which effectively creates for the listener a vivid and disturbing impression of the sights and sounds of the Birkenau women's sub-camp:

> "'Get your coffee!' and 'Get up!' –
> 'Roll-call, roll-call!' – 'Everyone out!' –
> 'And in Fives!' – 'Attention!' – 'Quiet!'
> 'Head count!' – 'It's exactly right!'
>
> Sickbay, flu and typhus,
> Diarrhea, shit scabies, lice!
> 'The sick are finished!', corpses, chimney,
> Crematorium, injection, gas!"

The black humor in this composition is illustrative of how the sarcasm and cynicism used by the prisoners in their song-writing turned increasingly dark with the deterioration of their physical situation.[201] One inmate, a Polish woman, Janina Mielczarek, agreed, explaining how she and her fellow prisoners found "some personal relief in the act of recording what [they] had witnessed, often in crude and explicit ways.[202] Another example of this is a song documented and translated from its original Yiddish to Polish by Alexander Kulisiewicz. It was sung to him in Sachsenhausen by its author, Aaron Liebeskind, who wrote it after he witnessed the murder of his wife and young son in the extermination camp Treblinka in 1942. As he sat through the night with his 3-year-old

[201] Ibid (pg. 153)
[202] Ibid

son's body, he composed the poem in his head, using the melody of a well-known Polish threnody, a song of lamentation commonly used at funerals, by a famous Russian song writer. When he was transferred to Sachsenhausen, he sang it to Kulisiewicz who titled it, "Lullaby for my Little Son in the Crematorium:"[203]

"Crematorium black and silent
Gates of hell, corpses piled high
I drag stiff, slippery corpses
While the sun smiles in the sky
Here he lies, my only little boy
Tiny fists pressed in his mouth
How can I cast you into the flames?
With your shining golden hair

Lulay, lulay – little one
Lulay, lulay – only son
Lulay, lulay – my own boy…
Oy… oy… oy

Oh you sun, you watched in silence
While you smiled and shined above
Saw them smash my baby's skull
On the cold stone wall
Now little eyes look calmly at the sky
Cold tears, I hear them crying
Oh my boy, your blood is everywhere
Three years old – your golden hair

Lulay, lulay – little one

[203] Kulisiewicz, Aleksander. *Songs from the Depths of Hell Sung in German, Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish*, Warsaw, Poland, 1975. Annotated and recorded by Peter Wortsman in Warsaw, Poland, 1975. Liner notes by Peter Wortsman after extensive interviews with Alexander Kulisiewicz.

Lulay, lulay – only son
Lulay, lulay – my own boy…
Oy… oy… oy[204]

This heart wrenching lullaby is a perfect example of how music was used to capture an event in history in a way that would be impossible with documented records alone. In listening to this piece and hundreds of others like it, the historical facts, records and horrific testimony contained within the lyrics put a human face on what would otherwise be entirely unimaginable. The terrifying events of this darkest chapter of our history come alive through songs like this which document them.

Included in Schmerke Kaczerginski and H. Leivick's monumental musical collection of songs from the ghettos and camps are three other compositions by Jewish inmates that similarly capture the personal, very real human experience of their time in the camps. Yosef Wolf, a survivor, recalled a tune entitled, *'Kum Tsu Mir'* (Come to Me), author unknown, that describes a prisoner's longing for his beloved. According to Wolf, the song began circulating in the Monowitz camp in 1943.[205] *'Ikh vil zen mayn meydele'* (I want to see my little girl) is another of the three songs credited to an unknown female author from the Birkenau women's camp. She sings of her desire for the 'black locomotive' that brought her to the camp to take her back home to see her daughter.[206] And finally, the Yiddish translation of a Polish song written by a 12-year old Jewish girl who perished in Auschwitz, *'Der tango fun Oshvientshim'* (The Auschwitz tango).

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[204] Ibid
[205] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Clarendon Press, 2010. (pg. 155)
[206] Kaczerginski, Szmerke, and H. Leivick, editors. *Lider Fun Di geṭos Un Lagern*. Cyco-Bicher Farlag, New York, 1948. Musical Arrangements - M. Gelbart (pg. 219, 256)

Former inmate Irke Yanovski recalls it being sung to the melody of a popular pre-war tango. The song laments the lack of freedom to write, sing and dance to music in the camps while expressing hope that free music-making will soon return to Auschwitz to buoy the prisoners and give them hope:

> "We have tangos, foxtrots and melodies
> Sung and danced even before the war.
> The gentle songs, melodious, longed for
> With love lulled our minds.
> And now war, no one writes any songs
> About those other young years in the city.
> Sing out, Oh maiden, another song
> About days and nights in the camps behind wires.
>
> Our slave-tango under the knout[207] of the whipper
> Oh, the slave-tango of the Auschwitz camp.
> Steel spears from the sentry-beasts –
> Oh, freedom and the free times are calling.
> The black man reaches for his mandolin
> And will soon pluck out his song here,
> And the Englishman, Frenchman sing a tune, -
> And sorrow will become a trio.
> And the Pole, too, reaches for his flute
> And will let the world know how he feels, -
> And the singing will ignite the hearts,
> Which reaches out for the freedom which they lack.
> Our slave-tango…[208]

[207] Knout – a whip with a lash of leather thongs, formerly used in Russia for flogging criminals.
[208] Ibid (pg. 254, 410) English translation: Pasternak, Velvel, and Lawrence Berson. *Songs Never Silenced: Based on "Lider Fun Di Ghettos Un Lagern"*. Tara Publications, 2003.

Another item of note here is the use of the tango melody, a popular pre-war song genre which continued to be used widely by prisoners throughout the Nazi camp and ghetto system as a vehicle for new lyrics, thus giving voice to their memories through the continuation of their historical, cultural timeline. That said, in discussing this song in *Music in the Holocaust*, Gilbert points out that unlike many of the Yiddish songs from other camps, those from Auschwitz, including this tango, are generally inward focused. Most of the songs written by Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz do not mention the urge to record events for posterity, including only vague references to the future such as, 'free times,' as found in our example above. The lyrics merely suggest the immediate landscape – 'days and nights in the camp behind wire' – as opposed to confronting it graphically head-on as is the case in other examples included in this chapter.[209] Perhaps this is due to how quickly the physical condition of many of the Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz deteriorated and was reduced to basic bodily functions. So although they have served as historical memory markers, these songs were perhaps motivated less by a desire to document the daily atrocities of camp life than they were opportunities for temporary diversion, providing prisoners a chance to dream of freedom, harmonious music-making and a time when song brought their lives hope and joy.

Regardless of the motivation for the composition, the songs written by inmates of the Nazi concentration and death camps offered what may have been, in some cases, life-saving opportunities to feel, if even just briefly, less isolated and helpless. They were vehicles that allowed for individual expression of emotion as well as documentation of

[209] Gilbert, Shirli. *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. Clarendon Press, 2010. (pg. 157)

the unthinkable daily horrors and violence that characterized the prisoners' existence throughout the camp system. These historical records in song continue to provide a unique view of what took place, in all its bizarre and unexpected iterations, in the daily life of camp inmates. When we view the timeline of memory through music, it is possible to distinguish the humanity inside of the 'grey mass' that is often conjured up when one considers the sheer magnitude of the millions of individual souls that passed through the Nazi death factories, the majority of whom never again tasted freedom. Each song recovered is like a small window into another unimaginable world – a world where real human beings suffered terribly, perished daily, experienced continual torture, degradation, fear and humiliation, and where some were able to find momentary relief through various musical expressions of their current reality. This is the value of history in song – the human value that gives voice to the memory of those who were there.

In the following chapter, some of those voices will be heard directly through excerpts from a variety of in-person interviews. We will hear from survivors, in their own words about the relief they found through self-initiated music making and how it impacted their survival.

Chapter 5 Music as Survival – In Their Own Words

In each of the following interviews, individual stories are told by former Holocaust prisoners who discuss the significant and sometimes crucial role music played in their survival. Unless otherwise noted, the excerpts presented have been transcribed verbatim, either from notes or recordings made at the time of the interview. In their narratives, many of the arguments in this thesis regarding the reasons prisoners voluntarily turned to music-making are brought to life in specific detail. And although each survivor has a unique story with different circumstances, clearly for all of them music filled a need, offered comfort, provided escape, buoyed confidence and perhaps most importantly, helped them retain a shred of human dignity and a small sense of hope that was not otherwise accessible.

The first three interviews, used with permission, are taken from Sherrye Dobrin's Master's Thesis entitled, "Our Hope is Not Yet Lost," which explored the role of music in the coping and survival of the Jewish prisoners in the camps and ghettos during the Holocaust. To protect their anonymity and privacy, only the first names of the interviewees are used.

Excerpt from an interview with Friede, born in 1925 in Romania. She was hidden in homes during the war and was a member of the Belgium resistance where she worked to rescue children.[210] Although Friede's specific Holocaust experience took place outside the twisted world of the Nazi concentration and death camp system, there are parallels in her experience of survival and the impact music had on her

[210] Dobrin, Sherrye. "Our Hope Is Not Yet Lost." *Berklee College of Music*, 2018. (Appendix E: Participant Interviews) Original interviews were verbatim transcriptions and were not altered for grammar or sentence structure. The excerpts in this chapter have at times been condensed for relevancy.

ability to face the daily fear of discovery and capture by the Nazis, constant hunger, threat of disease, wretched living conditions and the continual specter of death that became a regular part of her existence. It is because of these similarities concerning the crucial role music played in her ability to cope and live day to day that her story is included.

Music as Relief – Music as Confidence Builder

Respondent: Do you want to hear about my music, how important music was to me?

Interviewer: Yeah. So, tell me about music during the time of the resistance.

Respondent: Yeah. I needed music so badly that I would find places that I knew would have music and stay outside to listen to music. Whatever they were playing.

Interviewer: What kind of places? Restaurants or -

Respondent: Restaurants, homes. One time I took a chance going to a performance where I knew the Germans were going to be there, but I needed - I had such a tremendous need for it.

Interviewer: What was it like if you didn't get that need fulfilled?

Respondent: I don't know. I never analyzed that, really.

Interviewer: Ok

Respondent: But I needed it.

Interviewer: How did you feel while you were listening to that music?

Respondent: It made me feel better. It made me get more courage. And I had some terrible times that - I would be all by myself, I would be stuck in bombed out houses. All by myself. All night. And I would see Germans go back and forth. I was just very lucky too.

Interviewer: Yeah. During those times, when you were by yourself, did you sing?

Respondent: No, but I thought of music. I always sing inside.

Interviewer: You're always singing inside?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did you think about music and what did you think about music during those times?

Respondent: If I didn't have music in my life, I don't think I'd be the same person. I just kept myself thinking about it.

Interviewer: What kind of music did you think about -

Respondent: The Jewish songs mostly. And my mother used to sing some Hungarian lullabies. I don't know any Hungarian, but I know one or two of the little songs that she sang to me.

Interviewer: Still to this day?

Respondent: Still to this day.

Interviewer: So those times you said when you're in a house or you're by yourself and you're thinking about music, what are your thoughts like at that time, as far as the music?

Respondent: Well, it kept me… I would sing a song.

Interviewer: Ok. So, we were talking about when you were in hiding, and you said you were in some of these houses by yourself and you were thinking about music, what were your thoughts like?

Respondent: Music was my relief of - I mean it's clearer to me now, but then it was like, if I want to escape from what's going on, I would sing a song.

Interviewer: Were you able to sing out loud or was there a fear of -

Respondent: No, I wasn't able to sing out loud. It was all internal.

Interviewer: What kind of songs did you sing internally?

Respondent: All kinds of songs. Music. And I do this to this day.

Interviewer: Still -

Respondent: (laughing) But if I want to escape, I sing an internal song. But I sing out loud now too!

Interviewer: Now you can.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Now you can. As loud as you'd like.

Respondent: (laughing)

Interviewer: (laughing) As far as hearing music or experiencing music during your time with the resistance, you said you went to places where you knew that there would be…

Respondent: I would sit under a window if I heard music, and then later on we got a little dilapidated radio in one of the houses that we put under the table and we would not listen too much to music, we always wanted to know about the -

Interviewer: The news?

Respondent: - what's going on.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But...

Interviewer: Was it risky to have that radio? Were you taking a risk?

Respondent: Of course. We were risking being there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: We were hiding, remember.

Interviewer: Umm hmm.

Respondent: And, yeah. Everything was risky. It's amazing when I think back - that we just went on and on.

Interviewer: Were you at that point - were you able to sing with your family?

Respondent: No. My father had been killed. My brother had been taken and killed. We didn't know until later on, but we assumed, you know. And we heard directly from a friend of his who was with him in Auschwitz and who survived.

Interviewer: I see.

Respondent: So. Yeah, so, the music. Well, music has been very important in my life.

Interviewer: So, these places where you sat by the window, what kind of music was being made there?

Respondent: In Belgium, at my time, you're talking about 70 years ago or more - (laughing)

Interviewer: (laughing) Right.

Respondent: I'm 90 something so it was classical music. They had folk songs, Belgian folk songs, and German folk songs - the classics, which I loved. I loved Wagner.

Interviewer: Your stories are wonderful to hear. So, any other experiences with music during the resistance?

Respondent: Oh music. Ok. I got to tell you. I had a voice teacher in Antwerp which I got when I started to sing, and they told me, "You have to have a voice teacher." So, it was this woman - lovely, lovely woman. And she says - and she was my teacher. I went to her from the time - actually, from a year before the Germans came in. Her husband was one of the foremost local singers. But he collaborated with the Germans.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Respondent: And she was very upset about it, but she couldn't say anything. And she actually helped my family - like, she took some furniture that my mother wanted to keep and hid it. But I went for a little while, during the occupation, and she says, "It's too dangerous, Freide. You can't come to my house."

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: I was illegal. I wasn't there as a legal. I wasn't there on my name and she didn't want -

Interviewer: How did that feel? When she told you that?

Respondent: You just keep going.

Interviewer: You just keep going. Absolutely. Besides listening to music under these windows, singing to yourself internally, any other experiences with music? Did you collaborate on music with anybody? Did you sing with anybody?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Would it have been a risk to have done so?

Respondent: Oh definitely.

Interviewer: To make music would have been a risky behavior?

Respondent: I wasn't legal. I was illegal. And whatever I did with music, I didn't think of it as that. It's just, the need - the little need for it. You were thinking of surviving every moment by moment. That's all you were thinking of.

Interviewer: So, going back to your experiences - whenever you had difficult times, what were some things you thought about? What were some things that came to mind that got you through?

Respondent: Jewish songs. Or any songs. I still do that to this day.

Interviewer: And how does that help you?

Respondent: It just makes me forget what the real problems are.

Interviewer: Did you find that that happened during the resistance? During the war?

Respondent: Oh definitely. I would walk around with one of the Schubert songs, The Serenade. You know the Schubert Serenade? Have you ever heard of it? It's very romantic. It's not the American thing now. But that's how I won first prize as a promising singer in Antwerp.

Interviewer: So that was the song that you sang?

Respondent: Yeah. Schubert's Serenade. In German.

Interviewer: Before we end this interview, is there anything else that you would like to share?

Respondent: I don't know! (laughing)

Interviewer: I don't want to take up any more of your time, but I want you to feel free to share any stories.

Respondent: All I can say is that I was very lucky. I, this group of families in Antwerp, who were rescuers - like the best man and his wife in Antwerp. They were incredible people. They risked their lives for us.

Excerpt from Interview with Judy, born in Czechoslovakia in 1924. Judy is an Auschwitz survivor who spent time in four different camps. She discusses a time in Auschwitz when a fellow inmate wrote a poem that she set to music which Judy smuggled out of the camp. She still remembers the tune.[211]

It is also interesting to read Judy's living testimony demonstrating what both Shirli Gilbert and Guido Fackler point out in their writings regarding the rapid deterioration of the physical state of most of the Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz – how quickly survival was reduced to basic bodily functions as their hunger became so severe that the only possible thought was of food.

Music as Historical Artifact – Music as Illusion

Respondent: Well, the life in Auschwitz - you're being woken up at five in the morning and you go out to be counted. And counted and counted again. If she died over night, you have to drag the body out. It was terrible.

Twice a day, you're being counted. Your food intake is very little.

But when we were in Auschwitz, there was a girl. And she - I forgot her name. Anyway – and she - you know, all day long you sit. From one role call to the other. So, she started - she made a poem. And she put music to it. And this is it. (Judy produced the poem from the camp).

[211] Ibid

Well, I spoke in the school. I spoke in a Hebrew school for a *Yom HaShoah* (Day of Remembrance) and I told them about it. And she said, "Why don't you tell me and hum it a little bit?" So, I did. And the words are "<< song lyrics >>"

I'm saying it in Yiddish because that's the way she did it.

Interviewer: Sure.

Respondent: This is 'Brezhinke Dort' - Brezhinke Dort was the gas chamber.

> "Brezhinke there - it is like a holy place. Whoever goes in there, never comes back."

And this is the music that they made (showing a piece of sheet music). I'll make you a copy.

Interviewer: Thank you. So now this was made from you humming?

Respondent: From my humming and my telling.

Interviewer: And who transcribed it?

Respondent: That was at a New York temple. I don't remember. Maybe it says so here. Does it?

Interviewer: It does. How did they find you or how did you find them?

Respondent: Well, they invited me to speak there.

Interviewer: I see. (reading from the sheet music) 'Based on a fragment of a melody by Sophie as recited by <<interviewee's full name' >>. That's so fascinating.

Respondent: Ok, so that you can - I'll make you a copy.

Interviewer: So now this was a young girl, who was (…)

Respondent: She was an inmate, like me.

Interviewer: Ok. And you heard her singing this?

Respondent: Yes. She made it up and I remembered it.

Interviewer: So that was one of my questions that were coming up next. Did you ever have (hear) music?

Respondent: Not there. Well, yes, sometimes when we went to take the shower, we heard the band. The band in the striped uniform. Men and women. But otherwise we had no music.

Interviewer: Ok. Did you ever watch a performance of the band?

Respondent: Just passing by.

Interviewer: And other music you did hear being made? Such as this young girl singing.

Respondent: That's all.

Interviewer: Did you hear anything else that was musical?

Respondent: None whatsoever.

Interviewer: Was there anyone else who was singing?

Respondent: Only tears. No.

Interviewer: Did you ever think about music in your mind while you were there?

Respondent: To be very honest, no. You thought about - to remain alive. At least I didn't. Maybe somebody who was musically more inclined, yes.

Interviewer: Did you ever recall any songs or any pieces of music?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: So, you didn't think about music…

Respondent: No

Interviewer: You were focused on survival. Is that correct?

Respondent: Exactly. Well, really there's no chance in the camps. In none of my camps. None of them. And I was in four.

Interviewer: Which other ones were you in?

Respondent: I beg your pardon.

Interviewer: Which other camps were you in?

Respondent: Well, subsequently 2,000 of us were taken to West Germany. And there we worked 24 hours. Two shifts - day shift and night shift. Just walking to work, working all twelve hours, and walking back to camp. Either day shift or night shift. Very hard work - either outside or in the ammunition factory. Music in my occasion was not present. It was not there.

Interviewer: Ok. So what other camps were you in?

Respondent: I was in Gelsenkirchen, Essen, and on the death march to Bergen-Belsen.

Interviewer: Did you have any thought or distractions, while you were there, while you were going through difficult time? Were there any thoughts that were comforting to you? About anything. It doesn't have to be about music.

Respondent: Food.

Interviewer: Food?

Respondent: If there was anything that comforted you, it was food. Because you were constantly very hungry. Because you lived only on one bowl of soup a day. That's all that was in the work camp. In Auschwitz, only a sip of food, or maybe two sips of food. Of soup.

Interviewer: What about distractions? Were you able to distract yourself to forget about where you were?

Respondent: Yes, by talking with your friends. You became like a family - I had my niece – but you held on like family. You became friends.

Interviewer: Did that help you get through difficult times?

Respondent: Not always. Not always. Many people went berserk. Many people were crazy, or they just couldn't cope. Or Mengele helped them. He came. He did selection more and more.

Interviewer: After the war, how did you develop a relationship with music once again?

Respondent: Because I went to Sweden. There was a Swedish count who invited many thousands of survivors to go to Sweden. There I lived first in Helsingborg, then in Gothenburg. And we went - wherever there was a concert, we went. And we didn't have to pay. It was classical music but in Swedish words, of course. And whenever I had a chance, I did.

Interviewer: That's wonderful. Were able to share music with your friends and family and community? Did you go with family and friends?

Respondent: Yes, we did. No family there. Only friends. My niece didn't. She went to Czechoslovakia, I went to Sweden.

Interviewer: Ok. And what meaning did music have for you?

Respondent: It was just like reborn. Like being reborn again – that there is such a thing as music. Because we thought it was all just death.

Interviewer: Are there any other stories you would like to tell me about music? You were telling me about your brother at home.

Respondent: Well, my brother - yeah, he used to play, and my parents loved it and they enjoyed it. He took lessons. And the older ones didn't, I don't think, because I'm, out of six, the youngest. I'm eleven years younger than my youngest… my older sister had children my age. But my father loved the music connecting with the temple.

Interviewer: So, it was a spiritual connection with the music?

Respondent: Right. We also had a gramophone, you know, and we played all kinds of – beautiful Yiddish music and classical music. But in school too, we had classical music played for us.

Interviewer: And you were able to reconnect with music after the liberation?

Respondent: After the liberation (..) As again, unfortunately you hit one that is not too - not a musical person. (laughing) Which is a shame, because there are so many - as I speak, I'm thinking who I could recommend to you that would be more helpful for you and would be more of interest.

Interviewer: No, this is wonderful. Your stories are fantastic. Very informative.

Respondent: No. Unfortunately, not enough for your topic.

Interviewer: It's perfect. It is. Because I'm learning how people had a relationship with music.

Respondent: Yes, I'm sure like this girl (referring to the girl, Sophie who wrote the song mentioned earlier)

Interviewer: Right

Respondent: I don't know what happened to her. Because when we left, she did not come in my group. She remained in Auschwitz. So, I don't know - maybe when she was liberated – maybe she did more of music because she loved to sing.

Interviewer: At the time that you heard the band playing in the background, did you have any thoughts about it?

Respondent: No. We had no idea. At the end they were telling us that this is to make the people, as they come in, not knowing what is awaiting them. You know when you come off that cattle car, and you see the SS man with the dog, and you see the men in the striped uniform telling you to line up, you are bewildered. You are utterly bewildered. You don't know where you are, what is going to happen. And when they see a band, they say it couldn't be so bad.

Interviewer: So that was part of the illusion? Is that the correct word?

Respondent: Yes, it was a part. You know, it was a false pretense.

Interviewer: A false pretense. Well, thank you so much.

Respondent: It was my pleasure.

Excerpt from interview with Julius born in Poland in 1920. Julius survived the Lodz Ghetto and Dachau concentration camp. At 98 years-old, Julius has some mild dementia which is reflected in some of the difficulty he had in understanding and at times, hearing the questions. Nevertheless, he speaks of singing a song as being able to do something he liked. Regardless of what song he was singing, it was "his song,"

that is, it belonged to him and was not something the Nazis could take away like they had taken away everything else. He is realistic too in his recounting of the limitations of musical engagement. It was not a panacea. For Julius, singing songs with his fellow prisoners which were unknown to the Nazi guards also seems to have provided an important emotional connection.[212]

Music as Personal Possession – Music as Distraction

Interviewer: When you were in these camps, did you ever hear anybody playing music? Did you ever hear a band, an orchestra, singing? Anything like that. Did you ever hear any music?

Respondent: No. We didn't hear any music.

Interviewer: No? Did anybody in your group - did anybody sing songs?

Respondent: Yes, somebody sang songs. But it wasn't important.

Interviewer: What kind of songs did they sing?

Respondent: All kind of songs.

Interviewer: Why did they sing songs?

Respondent: Pardon me?

Interviewer: Why did they sing songs?

Respondent: They liked it. If I liked a song, I sang it too.

Interviewer: While you were in the camp?

Respondent: Pardon me?

Interviewer: While you were in the camp?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of songs did you sing?

Respondent: All kinds.

Interviewer: How did singing make you feel while you were there?

Respondent: They didn't understand us anyway.

[212] Ibid

Interviewer: But how did it make you feel? How did you feel when you were singing songs?

Respondent: I felt very well.

Interviewer: Was it helpful?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: How was it helpful?

Respondent: I thought I could do something which I liked.

Interviewer: That you were able to do something that you liked while you were in a bad situation? Is that fair to say?

Respondent: Just having a song. Right. Whatever it is.

Interviewer: What kind of songs?

Respondent: And it was my song.

Interviewer: What was your song?

Respondent: Any. Any.

Interviewer: Did you ever make up any songs?

Respondent: No, I didn't make up. But I took songs which I liked. There were plenty of songs which I liked.

Interviewer: Popular music?

Respondent: Yes, popular music.

Interviewer: What language were they in?

Respondent: All kinds of.

Interviewer: Did you have a preferred - a favorite language to sing?

Respondent: Language, no.

Interviewer: When you were singing these songs, did you think about how you first heard these songs?

Interviewer: How did you choose the songs?

Respondent: I could sing in Polish, I could sing in German, I could speak in French. It doesn't matter.

Interviewer: It didn't matter?

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Did you ever sing with anybody else while you were in a camp?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Who did you sing with?

Respondent: Some friends.

Interviewer: And how did that feel?

Respondent: Very good.

Interviewer: How come?

Respondent: Because you have somebody to sing with.

Interviewer: Did it help you in any way? Did it help you forget some of the things that were going on at the time?

Respondent: No, no, no, no. You don't forget those things.

Interviewer: Did it ever give you some type of comfort? To sing something?

Respondent: It wouldn't help anyway.

Interviewer: Did it help the time go by faster?

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Did the time go by faster when you were singing?

Respondent: Yes, the time passed by when you're singing. Sure.

Interviewer: Were you able to be distracted?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: How so?

Respondent: We tried our best.

Interviewer: You tried to make the best of a bad situation?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Is that correct?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: What did you think about when you were singing? What kind of things did you think about?

Respondent: All kinds of songs. You have all kinds of songs.

Interviewer: What kind of thoughts were going through your mind?

Respondent: That I don't like those here. The Germans. And that's all.

Interviewer: Was it helping you? Did it help you -

Respondent: The Germans?

Interviewer: Did it help "you"? In your mind?

Respondent: Yes, it helped me.

Interviewer: How did it help you? In your own mind, how did music-?

Respondent: Because I could pass by.

Interviewer: Pass by... How do you mean?

Respondent: Ummhmm

Interviewer: What do you mean you could pass by?

Respondent: The time.

Interviewer: The time would pass by?

Respondent: The time.

Interviewer: And as time was passing by, what were you -

Respondent: That it was going to get better.

Interviewer: You felt like it was going to get better as the time passed by?

Respondent: Right. That it's not going to be bad all the time.

Interviewer: How did music, how did singing play a part in that?

Respondent: Music helps a lot.

Interviewer: How? Tell me how it helps.

Respondent: Because it makes you feel good.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And it helps a lot. That you're not isolated. ((He was mispronouncing this word and it was hard to understand at first.))

Interviewer: What's that?

Respondent: That you're not isolated?

Interviewer: That you're not insulated? Isolated?

Respondent: Isolated. Right.

Interviewer: [That you were] not isolated.

Interviewer: Right. And how was that when you were singing with your friends, or these people that you met while you were there?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did that help?

Respondent: Oh, because you got together with them.

Interviewer: And you -

Respondent: Best to get together with somebody, is to sing something good.

Interviewer: You said in the beginning that you always knew you were going to make it.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you know that?

Respondent: I expected it.

Interviewer: You expected it?

Respondent: Umhmm

Interviewer: What kind of things did you think about that gave you hope? What kept you going?

Respondent: It makes your body feel better.

Interviewer: What does?

Respondent: It makes your body feel better.

Interviewer: What makes your body feel better?

Respondent: When you think that you're going to survive.

Interviewer: And so, you always kept that -

Respondent: No matter what somebody tells you.

Interviewer: Were you always able to think that you were going to survive?

Respondent: Umm hmm

Interviewer: What were some memories and some thoughts that you had? Did you remember times from your childhood? What kind of things did you think about during the day?

Respondent: Everything

Interviewer: What kind of things were you looking forward to once it was over?

Respondent: To be free.

Interviewer: Looking forward to being free?

Respondent: Ummhmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: When that day came, when you were finally free, how did you feel? When that day - the day that you were liberated. How did you feel?

Respondent: In the beginning, I didn't feel excited because I did not expect what's going to happen. Because you didn't know what's going to be free. Do you understand?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And that it's different.

Interviewer: What was that day like? How were you freed on that day? Do you remember? What happened on that day?

Respondent: We got free.

Interviewer: Who freed you?

Respondent: Who let me go? Some of the people who lived there.

Interviewer: Was it Germans who set you free... or Americans…?

Respondent: Germans… not so much.

Interviewer: Were there any Americans?

Respondent: Some were Americans, some French, some Italian

Interviewer: Everybody? Were they all helping each other?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, when things got hard, what got you through? Was there anything else besides the thought of surviving?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you thinking of anything else that gave you hope? That gave you comfort?

Respondent: No. First was surviving.

Interviewer: What gave you comfort? What kind of thoughts gave you comfort?

Respondent: That I was surviving.

Interviewer: So, since I'm asking you about music, after you were liberated, after you got settled in, did you ever listen to music again?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So, tell me what that was like.
Respondent: Not bad.

The following three interview excerpts are taken, with permission, from the doctoral thesis of Dr. Tamara Reps Freeman. Each participant is a Holocaust survivor whose personal journey through the ghettos or camps was deeply connected to music. Fictitious names have been used to protect the anonymity of each interviewee. According to Dr. Freeman, the respondents were unanimous in their agreement that their music was a source of hope, even during the most desperate situations including constant starvation, sustained physical and mental abuse and forced death marches.[213] During the course of her dissertation work, Dr. Freeman interviewed twelve survivors, nine of whom focused primarily on the atrocities they endured and the accompanying physical and emotional pain and stress they suffered. All of them also talked about how singing Holocaust lullabies gave them hope. The remaining three survivors interviewed wanted to discuss only music.[214] Pieces of their stories are included below.

In a detailed written account provided to Dr. Freeman of his death march from Warsaw to Dachau, Beryl Bergerman recalled how he and his fellow inmates sang during the march:

Music as Spiritual Connection – Music as Connection to Community

[213] Freeman, Tamara Reps. "Using Holocaust Music to Encourage Racial Respect: an Interdisciplinary Curriculum for Grades K-12." *Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (Mason Gross School of the Arts)*, 2007. (pg. 70-75)
[214] Ibid (pg. 72)

> "Despite our miserable condition, we chanted the twelfth song of the Thirteen Principles of Faith which goes as follows: *Ani Mamin*: I believe in complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, nevertheless, I anticipate every day that he will come. This song is familiar to most survivors…"

No other information is provided in the dissertation as to the exact effect the singing of this particular piece of music had on Mr. Bergerman and his fellow inmates; however, he did survive. The song itself is relentless both in the driving musical setting and in the text, professing an unwavering and certain belief in the coming of the Messiah and the Divine aid that will bring. The choice of this specific song is not at all random.

A second survivor talked about how his Holocaust experiences, both musical and historical, were intertwined. This speaks to the discussion in the previous chapter concerning music and song as historical artifacts that give voice to the timeline of Holocaust history. In remembering evening meetings with his fellow prisoners to sing Yiddish songs, Yaakov Kaplan had this to say about the time he spent in the Skarzysko work camp in Poland:

Music as Comfort – Music as Hope

> "We sang, *"A Cholem"* (A Dream) that describes a *Zaide* (grandfather) coming in a dream carrying a *shanas* (lulav), and *"Wandering"* that speaks of "no friends, no tomorrow, no today, all your life you are harassed." Most of the singing happened when we were not too hungry. During the very hungry times, we only sang little love songs, which brought me some comfort and hope. Singing provided hope not just for myself, but the other victims as well. We felt we were not going to make it and that we surely all will die. Singing broke through those negative thoughts and helped people feel as though they would make it. Singing

provided a glimmer of temporary relief from the constant feelings of doom. After the war, I sang songs by Mordechai Gebertig."

Yaakov's testimony confirms other claims mentioned in previous chapters of this thesis that (folk) music was sung most often by the prisoners as a means of emotional renewal and comfort. For Yaakov and his fellow inmates, singing provided crucial support that helped them restore at least a small glimmer of hope and positivity amid absolute desperation.

Finally, Leon Lowenstein described what it was like to be a child imprisoned in Terezin. During World War II, Leon was an orphan and lived in the Jewish Boys Orphanage in Prague, Czechoslovakia until he was imprisoned in Terezin. Here in vivid detail, he recalls his childhood in the Nazi model ghetto:

Music as Resistance – Music as Personal Identity

"Jakob Edelstein was a Zionist who took care of us in Terezin. He supported the children by getting us more food. Also, Freddie Hirsch was a youth leader in Terezin. He was in charge of the Youth Movement. He formed clubs like football. I sang in the first production of *Brundibar*, a children's operetta by the Czech composer Hans Krasa. I sang in the chorus and did not win a leading role because I was not a good singer. I was friends with the top musicians in Terezin, like Rudi Frudenfeld, who directed *Brundibar*. The inmates in Terezin were Czech, Austrian, German and Hungarian. We did not sing any Yiddish songs, just songs in Czech, German and Hungarian. But I did hear Russian partisan songs in *Commando Buchenwald* (one of the barracks). My friends from the boys' orphanage and I wrote for *Vedem* (In the Lead), the underground newspaper of Terezin. Peter Gins was the editor. *Vedem* has been translated into Russian, Polish, German, English, French and Japanese. The original manuscript of *Vedem*

> was buried in crematorium ashes in a stable. A lot of music came out of Terezin – *The Emperor of Atlantis* by Viktor Ullmann, *Brundibar* by Hans Krasa, and the children's operetta, *Fireflies*.[215] The International Red Cross visited and listened to our music. At first, our concerts took place in attics, but when the Red Cross came, concerts took place out-of-doors in a village square. *Verdi's Requiem* was performed in Terezin. It was a song of defiance. For us living in Terezin, the arts equaled resistance. It lifted our spirits for a time. It gave us something to hope for."

Leon's detailed description of his life in Terezin echoes the stories and characterizations of other survivors of the ghetto included in the first half of Chapter Four of this thesis.

Each of these three survivor accounts describing the impact of self-initiated music-making on their ability to cling to life despite the horrific conditions in the camps and ghettos in which they were imprisoned supports the premise of this thesis that voluntary musical engagement did indeed contribute to prisoner survival throughout the Nazi camp system. It provided a vital means of expression, hope and comfort in addition to serving as a vehicle for expressing that which often could not be spoken about. Dr. Freeman observed in her interviews with survivors that most of them did turn to music as a means

[215] Terezin's *The Fireflies* is a children's play with music that was created and performed by Jewish prisoners in the Terezin ghetto. Based on the popular 19th century children's book, Broucci, by Jan Karafiat, Terezin's *The Fireflies* is about the adventures of Broucek, a little firefly boy, as he grows up. In the camp, the show was meant to give children a cheerful activity that also had educational value and entertained fellow inmates. Czechoslovakian folk songs were integrated into the play which made it a unique musical that was popular in the camp. It was performed there at least 35 times and was also used by the Nazis for propaganda when the Red Cross and other dignitaries visited to evaluate the conditions of the camp in 1945. After the war, the text to the play was lost. It has been recreated through archival documentation and witness testimony from survivors by playwright and theatre scholar Lauren B. McConnell and composer Jose-Luis Maurtua. (Source: McConnell, Lauren B. "Terezín's The Fireflies." *Terezin's The Fireflies*, www.terezinsthefireflies.com.)

of coping with the genocide of their families and friends during World War II and with their own immeasurable suffering. She elaborates:

> "Holocaust musical pieces are the soulful survivors, the living spiritual representatives of those who perished during the worst genocide in humankind's history. The music aesthetically speaks for, and represents, those who survived the war. Many survivors are still encumbered by such crippling emotional pain that they are unable to describe their genocide experiences in words. However, the same people are able to sing about their Holocaust experiences through the lyrics they composed and shared in the ghettos and concentration camps."[216]

Included in the appendices are additional historical artifacts - examples of musical pieces written and composed in the camps by these survivors, people they knew, and others, some of whom did not live beyond their captivity to once again see and taste the sweetness of the freedom for which they longed.

[216] Ibid (pg. 79)

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Conclusions

As has been demonstrated in this thesis, music is a language with the ability to speak far more deeply than words and is unparalleled in its ability to capture history through the eyes, ears and voices of those lived it. There are stories which can be told through music which are not accessible via the spoken word alone. Pain for example, which can be deeply expressed, perhaps released, through music, song, chant, wordless cry or lamentation, becomes somehow constricted by words which may limit its full expression. In the world of the World War II concentration and death camps, the deep human connection to music as physically embodied emotion was what both drew prisoners who chose to engage musically to do so *and* what connected them to a sense of who they once were at their core prior to imprisonment. It was this connection to their inner humanity facilitated through voluntary musical engagement that was of critical importance to the inmates' survival – a connection to personal identity, the memory of a different time, a brief escape, a distraction from hell, a balm of sorts which may have allowed individuals to survive through even another moment or another day.

What proved most remarkable in my findings was that despite the extent to which the Nazis were able to effectively use music as a weapon of torture against their Jewish prisoners, some of those prisoners still chose to voluntarily engage with music. This speaks to the power of music as an instrument of identity, expression, comfort and healing. One might take away from this thesis an increased understanding and appreciation of the multi-layered dimensions of music which can at once be a source of

life and joy *and* torture and death, depending on the circumstances. Music is value neutral until value is placed on it by those who are experiencing it. In one context, a song can be an instrument of torture, misery and mocking while in another it can be a vehicle for the expression of joy, happiness, comfort or survival. It comes down to context, and in the case of music and its role in the Nazi concentration and death camps, whether musical engagement by the prisoners was forced or voluntary made an enormous difference. For example, in the case of camp inmates, if at one time being a musician was part of someone's identity and suddenly that was stripped away or made a mockery of – used instead of for beauty for destruction and death – one's function as a vehicle for the expression of beauty and culture was torn away and turned against them. The beloved act of music making for the prisoners was distorted and perverted by the Nazis through violence coercion, exploitation and force.

Despite this, when the opportunity was available to engage musically in the context of their choosing, some prisoners did so and were able to reclaim the experience of music as their own. This voluntary musical engagement allowed them to regain for the moment some sense agency in their own life, a feeling of or connection to identity – who they at one time knew themselves to be. Fundamental to being human, this engagement enabled them to feel or even to embody their own humanity. This is the essence of what it means to be a human being at the most core, fundamental level – to have agency and ownership over one's very being. As has been shown in this thesis, some inmates tried to capture that when they could through music.

Voluntary musical engagement by prisoners also offered them a chance to express and lament. Living in the constant shadow of torture, disease and death, left little room for

mourning or expressions of grief. Expression through song provided prisoners with a vehicle for lamentation. A breath, a sigh, a musical tone, words sung out in anger, sadness or protest – the vocalization of pain through music – was for some a way to cope, a chance to grieve, a personal expression of defiance or rage, a connection to community, or an act of lament that allowed prisoners who engaged to bewail and grieve their losses, while also giving them renewed strength by opening their hearts and giving voice to their sorrow.

Limitations

It is of course impossible to know fully the degree to which voluntary musical engagement sustained Jewish prisoners in the Nazi concentration and death camps. This thesis has shown that concentration camp survivors believed self-initiated music making contributed to their survival, be it physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual. However, the study is limited by the absence of empirical data to confirm the hypothesis that this musical engagement helped concentration camp inmates survive. To be sure, the testimony of some of those who were there and lived the experience makes a compelling case about music's contribution to survival. That said, there are survivors who place less importance, if any, on the positive role of music during their time in the camps, and many who were not able to engage musically at all. Perhaps this disparity could be further explained through a more scientific study examining the degree to which voluntary music making helped prisoners survive versus those who were not able to engage musically on their own. Of course, such an inquiry becomes more difficult with each passing day as fewer and fewer living survivors remain. Further limitations of this study occur at the

intersection of "formal historiography and popular (Jewish) remembering."[217] As pointed out by Shirli Gilbert in her "Buried Monuments" article, because music has functioned as one of the fundamental bearers of Holocaust memory among survivors from the earliest commemorations until today, it is "arguably one of the most important media through which ideas and attitudes about the past are constructed and shared."[218] That said, it is also one of the most subjective when it comes to interpretation and assumption. This has led, understandably, to a disproportionate interpretation of music composed by prisoners in the camps to be examples of acts of spiritual resistance.[219] As demonstrated in this thesis, while that may be the case for some of the music created by inmates, it is certainly not the case for most of it. Associating this music overwhelmingly with affirmative frameworks such as faith, heroism and defiance does it, history and those who penned the works a huge disservice. Many of the sources used extensively for research on this project, especially the sheet music collections and recordings, fell into the trap of overly representing compositions from the camps as brave last stands – songs of heroism and resistance – a practice this thesis has attempted to illustrate and avoid. Additional research with a keen eye toward objectivity rather than subjectivity regarding the impetus for musical engagement by prisoners in the camps would prove extremely helpful in expanding the ways in which their music can be used as true historical artifacts and transmitters of stories that deserved to be told and heard. Researchers in this field would do well to remember that music is value neutral until they or their readers place value onto it, and while a particular lyric or tune may engender in one listener or reader a

[217] Gilbert, Shirli. "Buried Monuments: Yiddish Songs and Holocaust Memory." *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 66, www.jstor.org/stable/25473010. (pg. 109)
[218] Ibid
[219] Ibid (pg. 110)

certain emotion, that is not necessarily indicative of what was in the composer's mind at the time the piece was written. Unfortunately, in the field of Holocaust music research today, it is rare that we have the luxury of knowing exactly what the original intent, meaning or emotion was that led the author to compose. I am suggesting that researchers, program designers and learners alike keep that in mind when tempted to assign qualities of defiance or spiritual resistance to lyrics that may have been inspired by other motives.

Of course, it is impossible to definitively prove that music boosted the rate of prisoner survival or extended its duration since that would require control groups of those who survived through liberation as well as those who did not. Since neither is currently feasible, another possible area of future exploration could be a study of the impact of voluntary musical engagement on physical and mental health outcomes for those survivors still living today and those who have already left us but whose family members are in a position to provide medical records and experiential testimony to their loved ones' physical, emotional and psychological well-being vis-à-vis their Holocaust experience, especially in regard to the impact of music.

Finally, in the course of my research it was clear that for some of the Jewish prisoners, the experience in the camps caused them to reject God completely where others seemed to more fully embrace a relationship with God, returning to the traditions of their faith. While I can surmise a possible correlation, I was unable to find a source supporting any direct connection between the utilization of music (or lack thereof) and a rejection of God or belief in God. It would be interesting to know if either path had an impact on whether or how prisoner used music, and if so, the type of music, secular or religious, with which inmates chose to engage. This could be a compelling area for further research.

Applications for the Contemporary Reform Cantorate

Reform Jewish cantors today are in a unique position in their ability to use music not only to lift prayer, but also to effect individual and communal change, promote social action and teach. Because of cantors' unique role in the synagogue, they are able to reach and affect almost every age group in the community. To that end, cantors can use the music of the Holocaust as a tool much like educators might use art or literature. For example, what might an adult education class entitled, "Appreciation of Holocaust History through Music" look like? How could a post b'nai mitzvah class's study of the Holocaust be enhanced by incorporating music from the camps into the curriculum and showing the students the power of music to communicate emotion, personal stories and history? Using the songs composed by prisoners in the camps as a lens through which to explore this horrific time in our history can provide a unique perspective which may prove useful in reaching students of this age group on a deeper level than lecture or film. Since musical engagement is such a universal human experience, exploring the use of prisoner-generated music and song as historical artifacts can offer a new world of appreciation and understanding of the personal side of our Holocaust story for students of all ages.

Cantors are also keenly aware of the power of music to transcend boundaries, recall memory, affect mood, and inspire action and change. It is important that we consider all of this in the study and teaching of the Holocaust. In looking at how individuals were able to go on each day amid unimaginable conditions, the understanding that music provided an outlet and a vehicle for self-expression and hope is one that deserves exploration. Because many, if not most, individuals can attest to personal experiences in which music has served similar purposes in their own lives, the music composed in the

Nazi concentration and death camps offers a broad access point for engaging in Holocaust education that provides flexibility and a potentially different narrative context that could enhance current programming which may include guest speakers, readings and educational films followed by discussion. This lens offers an additional window particularly suited to cantors through which to engage both youth and adult learners in Holocaust study.

Moreover, when one considers the restorative and redemptive qualities inherent in musical engagement as discussed in this thesis, the power of music to impact and shape worship takes on new meaning. Thinking about the ways in which voluntary musical engagement by the prisoners allowed for a wide range of expression - providing them with vessels for their sorrow and pain, their rage and fear, and even moments of humor and defiance – a skilled cantor has the wonderful ability to apply the same principles to the needs of her community in times of both celebration and despair. Music is a powerful tool through which a cantor can facilitate the expression of joy or lament as is appropriate for the congregation given the circumstances and the calendar. With that in mind, the applications of the learnings from this thesis to cantors in congregational life are numerous and multi-faceted. May those who take the time to read it find much to bring to their communities and inspire their thinking, teaching, worship and leadership going forward.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Figure 1. This pen-and-ink drawing under the title “Wymarsz komand do praxy” (“Marching to work”), from the cycle “Day of the prisoner” (1950), was made by Mieczysław Koscielniak, a former prisoner, in 1950. It shows a work detail leaving Auschwitz: in the background a prisoner can be seen conducting the camp orchestra (published in *M. Koscielniak: Bilder von Auschwitz*, 2d ed. (Frankfurt a. M., 1986, n.p.)

Appendix B

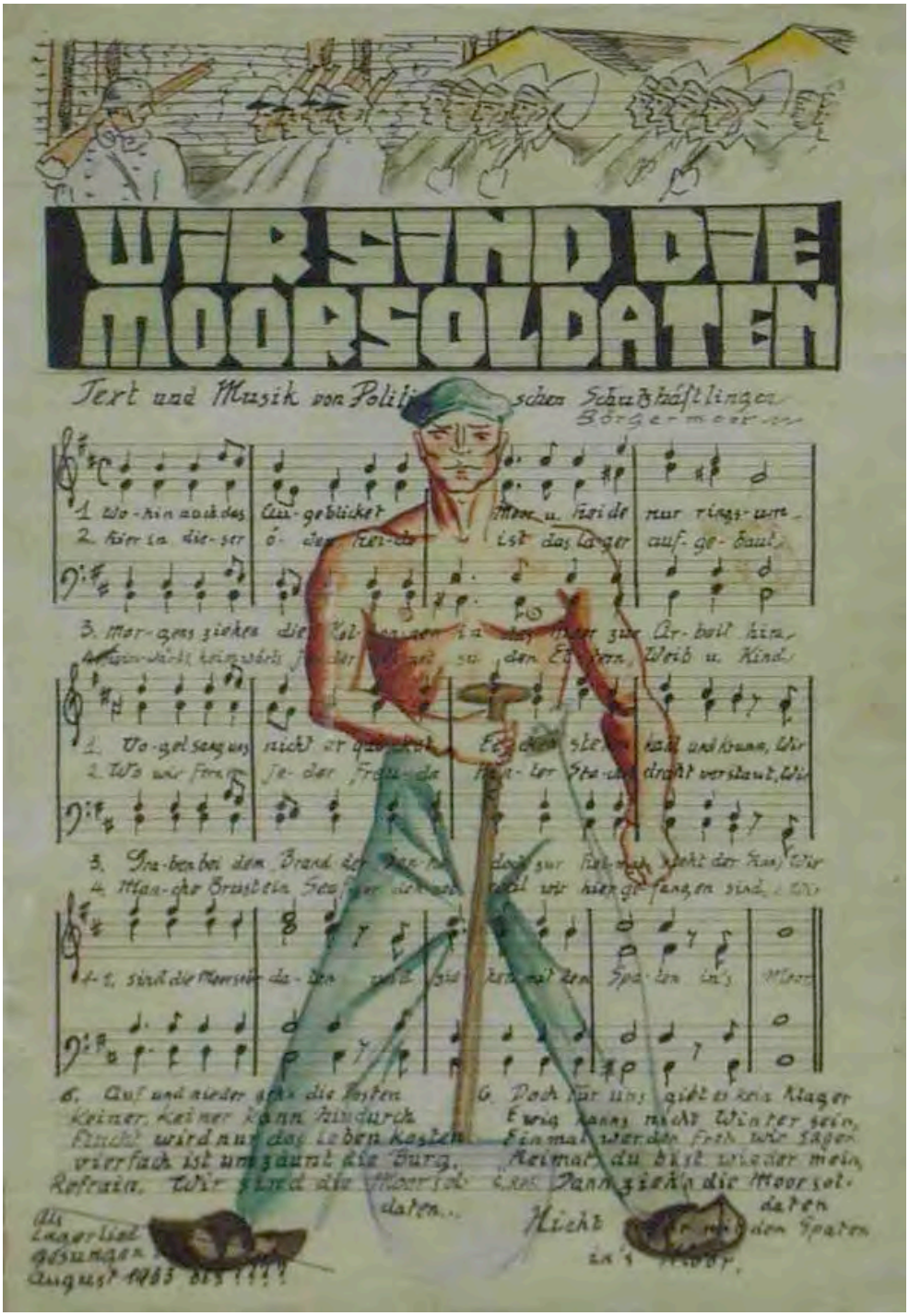
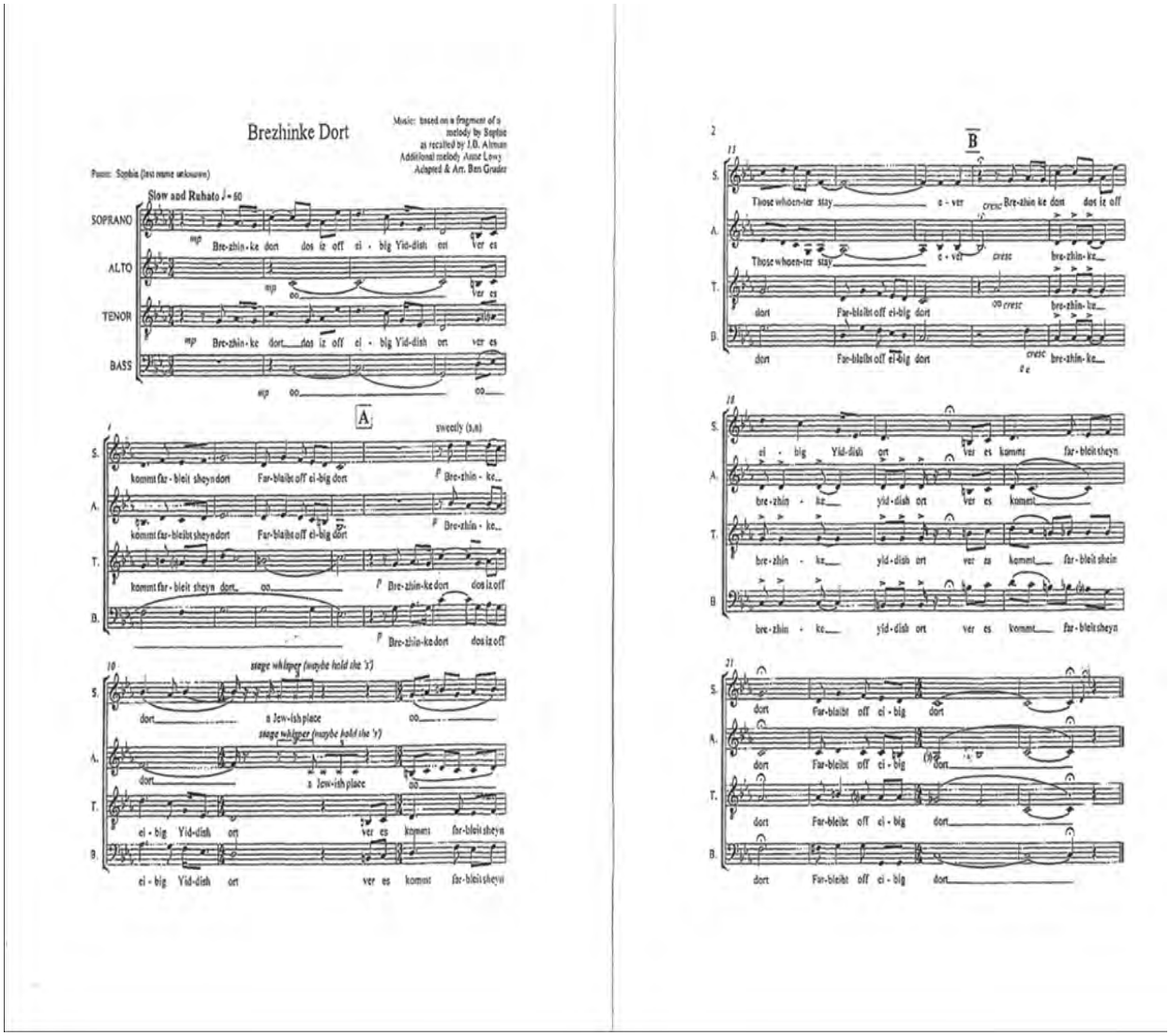


Figure 2. A copy of the “The Peat Bog Soldiers” made by Hanns Kralik in the KZ Börgermoor 1933. After his release Günter Daus brought this copy outside the camp. Archive of Dokumentations- und Informationszentrum Emslandlager (Documentation and Information Center Emslandlager) in Papenburg, Germany, estate Günter Daus.

Appendix C



A copy of Brezhinke Dort based on a melody written by a girl named Sophie (last name unknown), an Auschwitz prisoner, as recalled by "Judy" who was in the camp with her. Brezhinke Dort was the gas chamber. "Brezhinke there - it is like a holy place. Whoever goes in there, never comes back." This music is an arrangement based on Judy's remembered vocal utterances that was adapted and arranged by Ben Gruder of New York.

Appendix D

Figure 3. This SS-photograph shows a camp ensemble, probably in the Janowska concentration camp (published in Renzo Vespigniani, *Faschismus*, ed. Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst und Kunstamt Kreuzberg (Berlin, 1976), 123

Appendix E

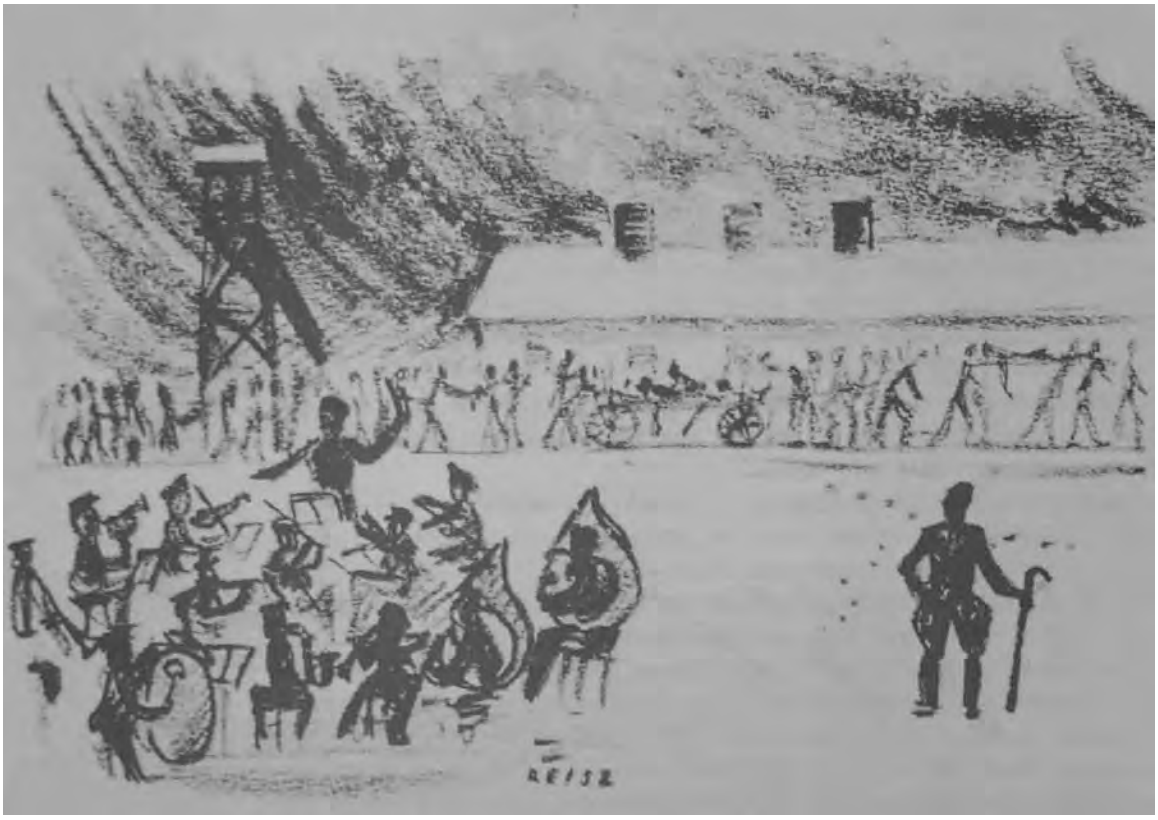


Figure 4. This drawing was made secretly in Birkenau by François Reisz. It shows the camp orchestra playing as work details returns to the camp; they carried out the dead using stretchers and handcarts (published in Projektgruppe Musik in Konzentrationslagern, ed., *Musik in Konzentrationslagern* (Freiburg i.Br., 1991), 58)

Appendix F

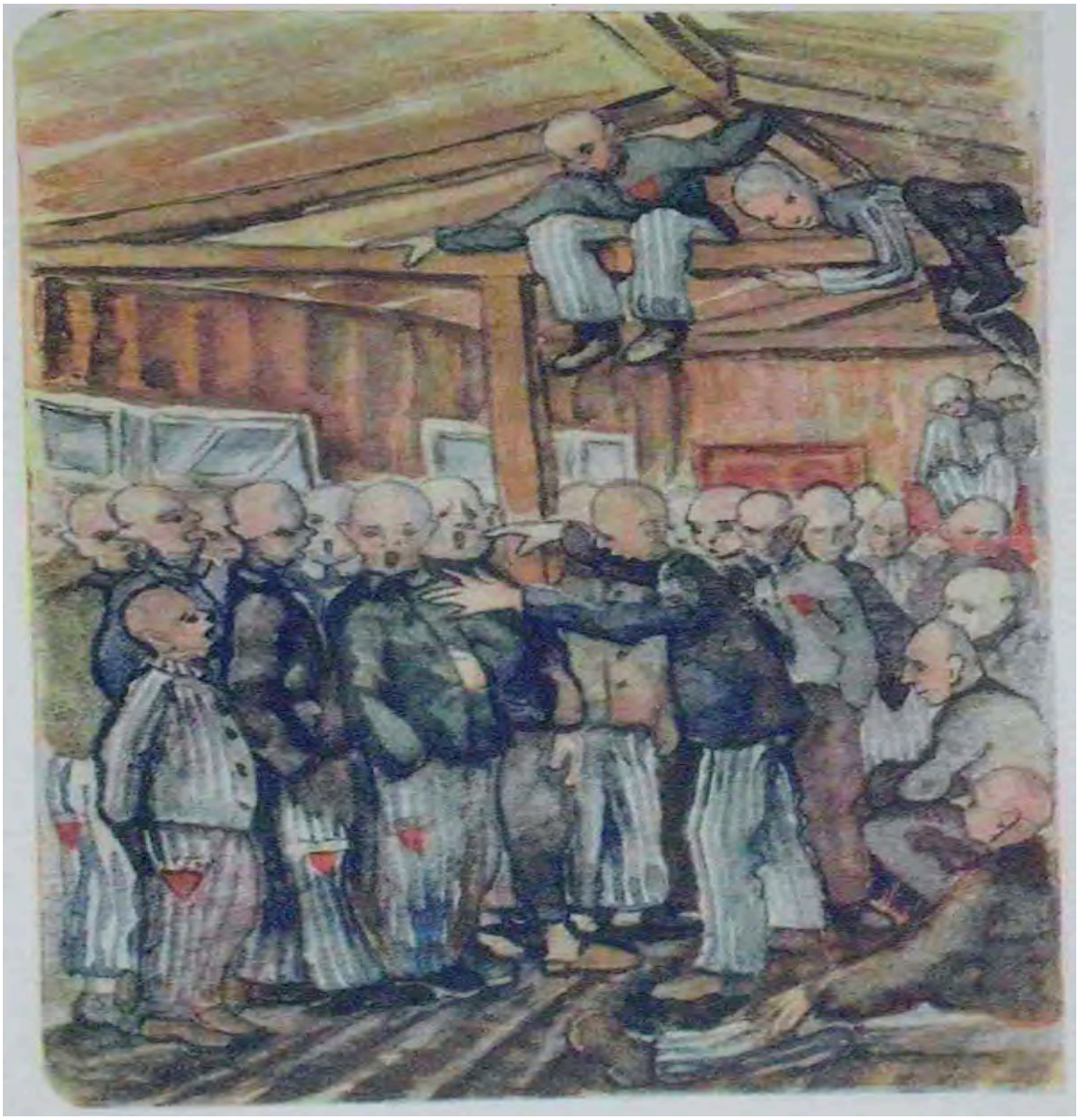


Figure 5. In 1942 in Dachau, an evening of song given by the Czechoslovakian camp choir was recorded in this drawing by Vladimir Matejka. The huge crowd enjoying this rare musical treat shows clearly how important it was for prisoners to be able to organize a musical performance like this (published in *Kopf hoch, Kamerad! Künstlerische Dokumente aus faschistischen Konzentrationslagern*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, 2d ed. (Berlin, 1966), ill. 21). Though this type of secret song session was much less common in the Jewish section of the camps, it was certainly no less important, and there were instances when Czechs and Jews joined together to engage in clandestine music making.

Appendix G

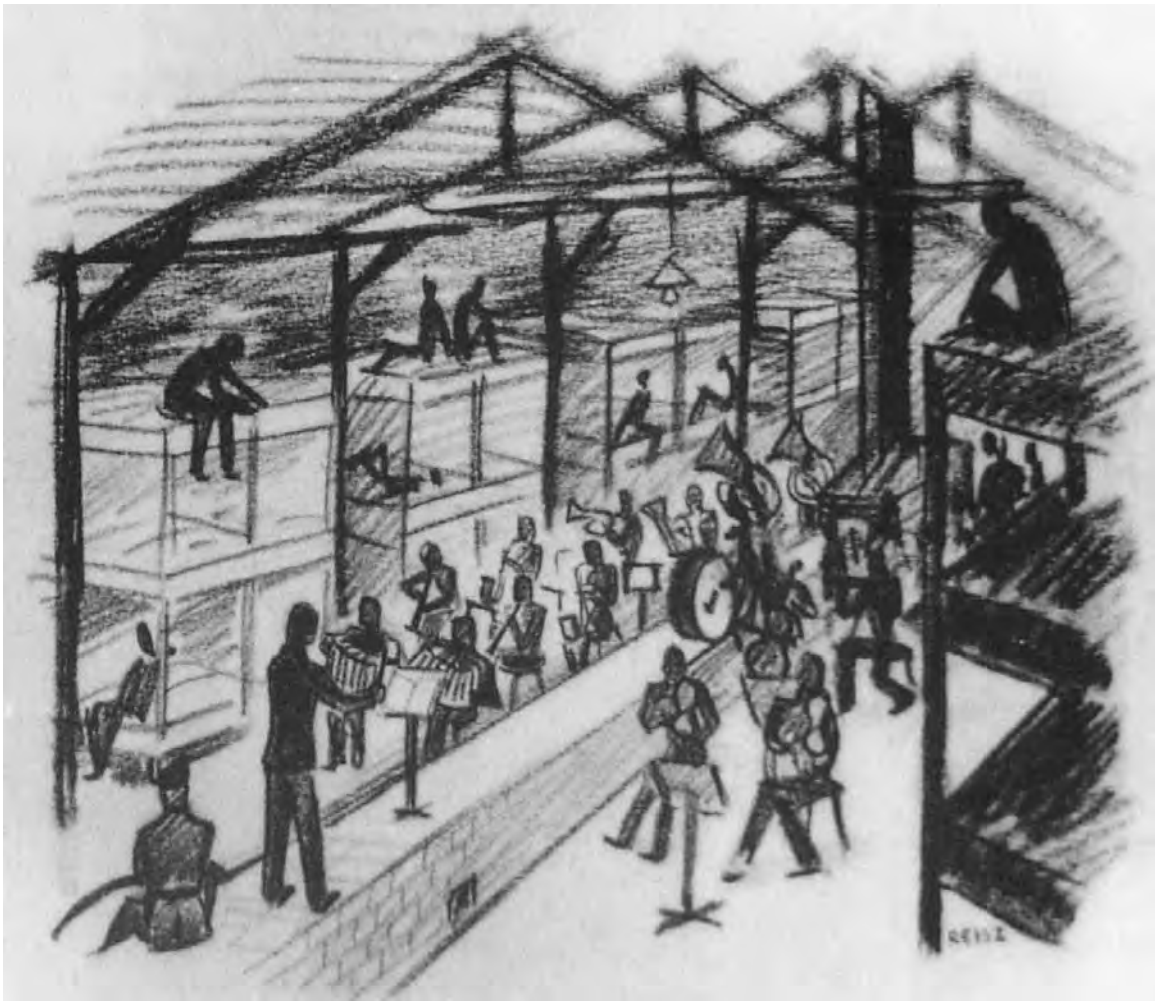
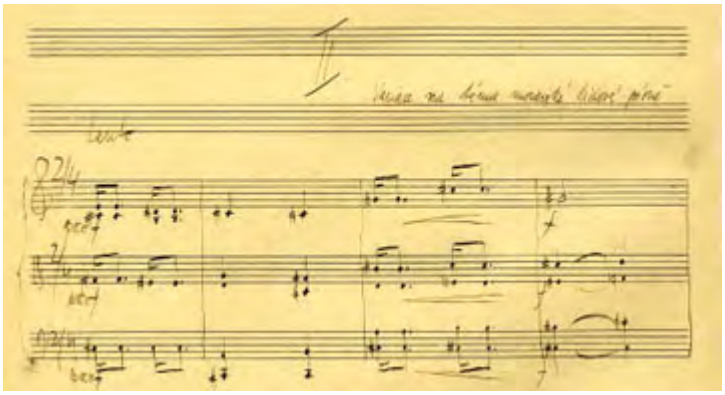
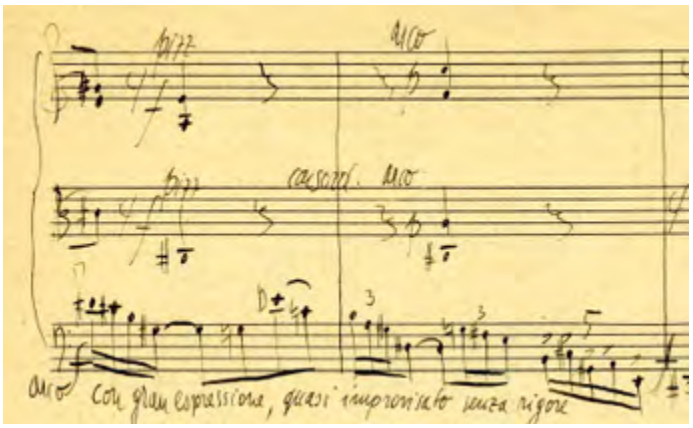


Figure 6. Concert of a camp orchestra in a prisoner-hut under presence of a SS-man (left). Drawing of François Reisz, originated in the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Published in Guido Fackler, *"Des Lagers Stimme" - Musik im KZ.*Alltag und Häftlingskultur in den Konzentrationslagern 1933 bis 1936. Mit einer Darstellung der weiteren Entwicklung bis 1945 und einer Biblio-/ Mediographie, vol. 11 of *DIZ-Schriften* (Bremen, 2000), ill. 28

Appendix H



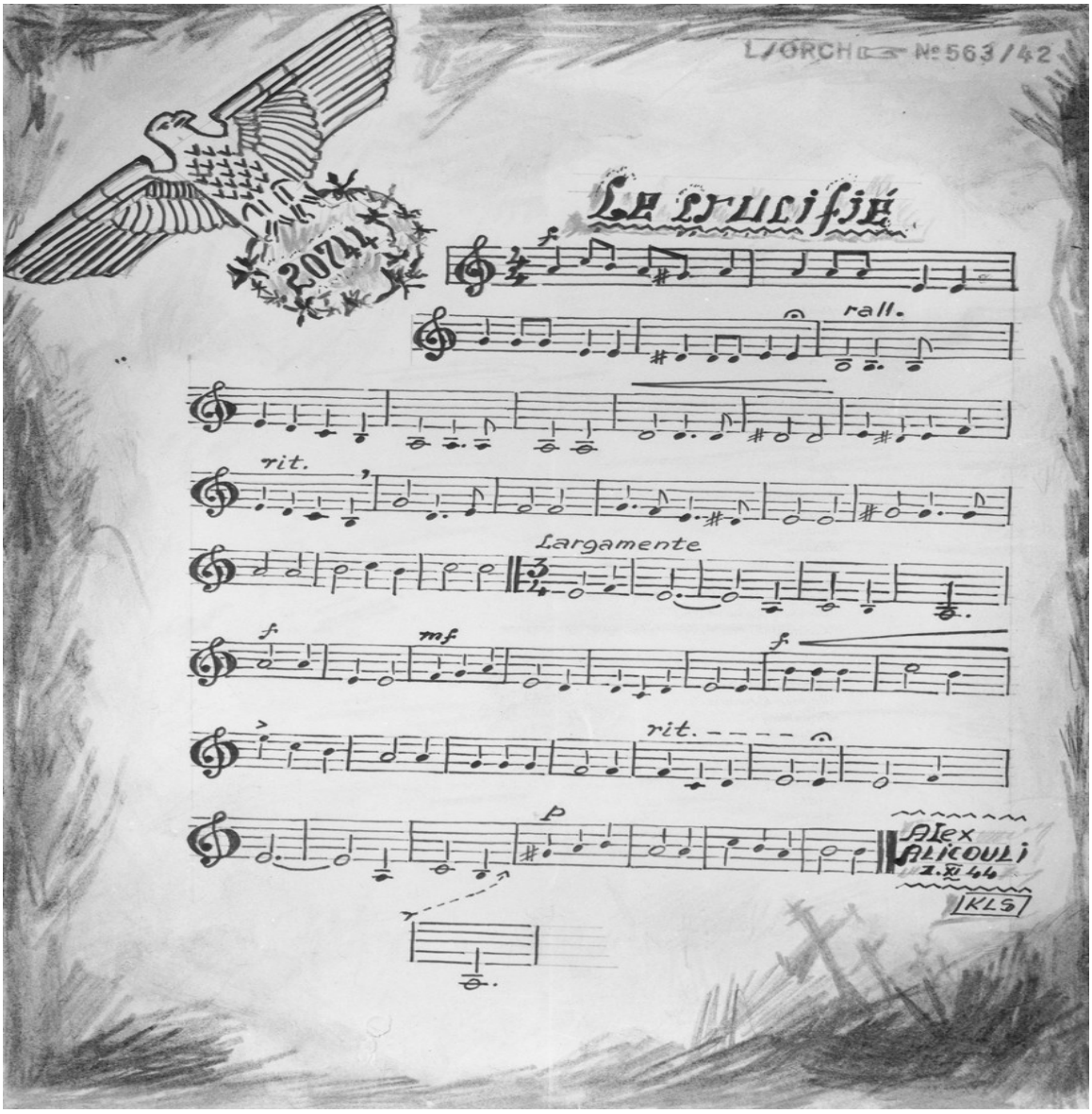
Opening of 2nd movement of Gideon Klein's "Trio for Strings" written in Terezin in the fall of 1944. Perhaps the last great work written in the model ghetto prior to the massive transports to Auschwitz which virtually emptied the camp. This movement titled, "Variations on a Moravian Folk Song" borrowed heavily from, "Tá kneždubská věž" (The Kneždub Tower), a popular folk song from the early 19th century.



This moment later in the movement is a kind of "cello-speech interruption" marked by subdued sighs in the violin and viola. It begins with a two-octave plunge "to the depths" and then rebounds, only to make a much shorter chromatic descent a few measures later. As an historical artifact, the composition begs the questions: Does this moment tell us anything that helps answer questions about Terezín and its transports – how much the prisoners knew about where they were going and what their fate would be? Could it be that the urgency of the interruption and the agony of the descent are a kind of personal interjection, a shift to a more "direct speech," as if the composer were grabbing you by the collar, shaking you and saying, "No, really, it *was this* way!"? Is the chromatic descent intended as a traditional emblem of lament? Does such a moment constitute "evidence" of anything, and does it help in any way clarify the question: Did Gideon Klein know where he was going, and what did he make of that knowledge?"[220]

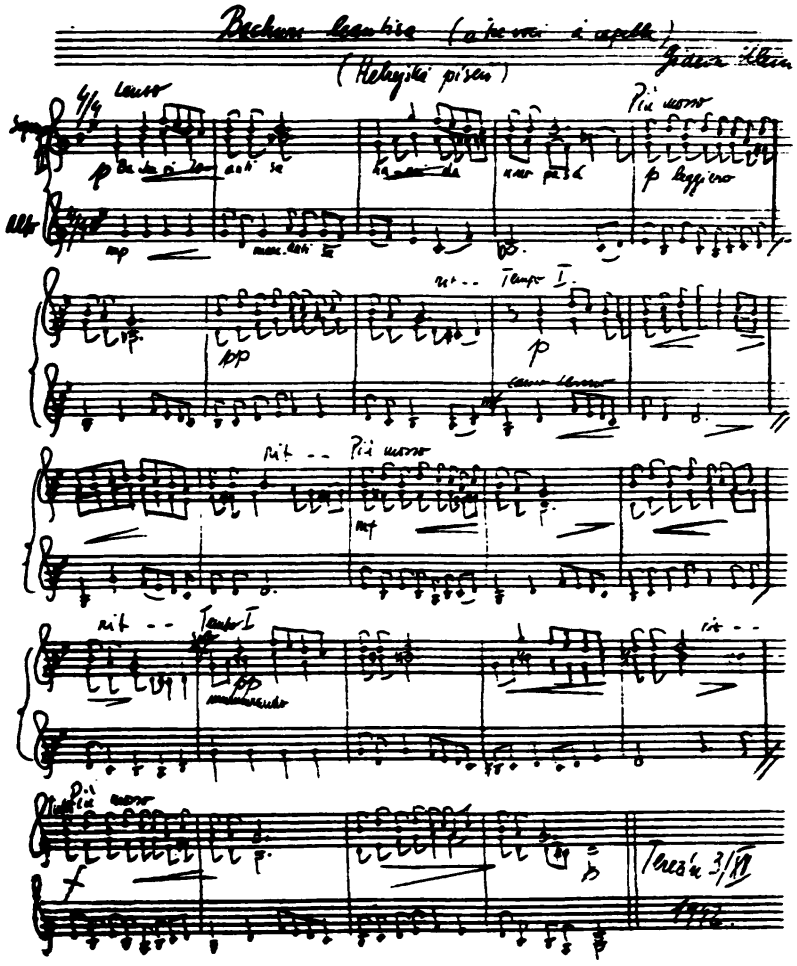
[220] Beckerman, Michael. "What Kind of Historical Document Is a Musical Score? A Meditation in Ten Parts on Klein's Trio." *The OREL Foundation*, 1 Apr. 2010, www.orelfoundation.org.

Appendix I



One page of sheet music of a piece entitled "Le crucifié" (The crucified) by Alex Alicouli, a pseudonym for Aleksander Kulisiewicz, and dated II.XI.44, KLS [Sachsenhausen].
The music and lyrics were written by Kulisiewicz during his imprisonment in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The lyrics were originally composed in Polish, and the piece was titled "Ukrzyzowany 1944." Subsequently, it was translated into French. The piece was inspired by a report Kulisiewicz received from members of the French resistance upon their arrival in Sachsenhausen, about an incident that took place in Presles, France (near Nice) in the summer of 1944. According to their account, Germans stormed a resistance safe house in the town, where they found and tortured to death a three-year-old boy.

Appendix J

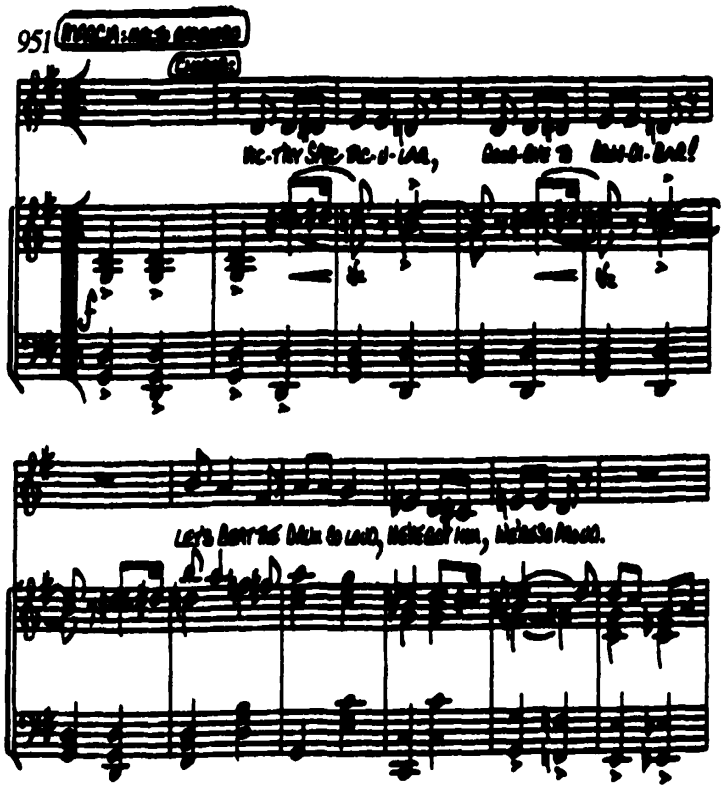


A choral setting manuscript by Gideon Klein of the Hebrew text *Bachuri Lean Tisa* for three-part women's chorus which he wrote for the girls in block L-410 in Terezin. Composed in 1942, it was also most likely written for one of Rafael Schacter's choirs. (Main choral director in Terezin) The text source is somewhat of a mystery, as only the first four bars of the manuscript have text underlay, reading *"Bachuri leantisa hanu da kvar pasd..."* "My boy, where will you go? My sweetheart, it's all over." The notation for the remainder of the piece suggests that there was text, but there is no certainty what it was.[221]

Gideon Klein's setting of Hebrew texts makes a significant point about the composer and many others like him. Like Jews all over Europe, Klein was fully assimilated into the culture of his country, and thought of himself only as Czech. When his Jewish heritage led to his imprisonment, for the first time he identified himself as a Jew; with that came a new identity.[222]

[221] Graham, Lisa. "Musik Macht Frei: Choral Music Composed and Performed in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 1938-44." *University of Southern California*, 2001. (pg. 42)
[222] Ibid

Appendix K



A sample from Hans Kraza's Brundibar Manuscript. The children's opera, written in Czech, was performed over 55 times in Terezin. The villain, Brundibar, was undoubtedly a representation of Hitler, and all the Terezin inmates, especially the children delighted in the finale when Brundibar met his demise.