

## ASPECTS OF MUSICAL LIFE DURING ADOLF HITLER'S DICTATORSHIP

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**SUMMARY.** Aspects of Musical Life during Adolf Hitler's Dictatorship – in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the world witnessed the rise of some of the most prominent dictators and the development of some of the most destructive wars in history. One of the most illustrative examples of totalitarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the reign of Adolf Hitler, which had a significant impact on the musical life in Germany. In this research we present some of the most important aspects of the musical contexts during the Nazi regime and the attitudes of some of the most important composers of the time. The Nazi regime systematically purged all influences of Jewish and modern music, promoting only music that was ideologically accepted. To implement these decisions, the Nazi leaders decided to take control of the institutions that included music, from society's core institution – the family – to music in churches and schools.

**Keywords:** music, censorship, Hitler, Nazi, composers, ideology, resistance, persecution

The 20<sup>th</sup> century started in an atmosphere of optimism and hope for a better life, characterized by progress and innovation in both technology and industry, but it was also the time when one of the most prominent dictators in human history rose to power and one of the most destructive wars in the history of civilization was fought.

The new borders ensured a future conflict. "The aftermath of World War I created the conditions that made it possible for modern dictators to thrive. The ruined economies of Europe fostered the rise of some; the haphazardly drawn borders guaranteed that old hatreds and rivalries would continue – and that dictators would be able to exploit them for their own gain."<sup>2</sup>

An ideological movement that emerged following the war was Fascism. The model for this movement was Germany, where Hitler tried to

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Green, *Dictators*, Ed. Lucent Books, San Diego 2000, 14.

resurrect the glory of German past. In this context, the political factor exerted control over music, and the musicians confronted with this totalitarian regime had to choose between allowing themselves be politically controlled or suffer the consequences of resisting it.

John Rosselli presents the way in which culture and specifically music was politically controlled. Once the Nazi regime came to power in 1933, they eliminated Jews, communists and musicians that weren't German from the musical stage and they controlled art through the organization called *Reichkulturkammer*, whose president was Josef Goebbels. The Nazi leaders promoted mass music and folk oriented music, while denouncing modernist and avant-garde music. In this period, the world witnessed the attacks against values such as Mahler, Meyerbeer, Schreker and Schoenberg, the officials going as far as changing works such as Händel's *Judas Maccabaeus*.<sup>3</sup> Certain works of Webern, Berg, Krenek, Hindemith and Stravinsky were prohibited due to being labelled as degenerate. In this context, some German composers gained momentum by taking on jobs that had formerly belonged to Jews, while others promoted the Nazi ideology through musical activities or creations. Other composers, such as Schoenberg, were forced to flee the country.

Thomas Mann said that during Hitler's reign as Germany's dictator, great art was allied with great malice.<sup>4</sup> The German National Socialist Party of workers imposed its nationalism and racism ideology in all domains of social and cultural life. Musical life was also subjected to an ideal that consisted in the reform of musical organizations and the jobs related to it and purifying music of all its Jewish and modern influences. The culture was rebuilt in the name of the Nazi ideology and it's leaders fought to build a new order in which art and politics would work together.<sup>5</sup>

In order to strengthen their power, Nazis looked to only promote music that emphasized German musical heritage. For this purpose, the Ministry of propaganda chose Hans Joachim Moser to check every repertoire and to eliminate works that deviated from the norms of Nazi ideology. The officials denounced all modern music as being decadent and subsequently banned it from public life<sup>6</sup>

Goebbels presented these Nazi ideologies regarding music during the largest musical meeting of the twelve years of Nazi dictatorship.

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<sup>3</sup> *Judas Maccabaeus* portrays a hero Jew and during the Nazi regime the text and title were changed to comply with the official requirements.

<sup>4</sup> Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*, Ed. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, NY 2007, 305.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Meyer, *The Politics of Music in the Third Reich*, Ed. Peter Lang, New York NY, 1993, 20.

<sup>6</sup> J. Peter Burkholder et al., *A History of Western Music*, 7th edition, Ed. W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2006, 870.

Besides reiterating the norms of accepted music, Goebbels also went on to attack atonal music, his speech being a clear criticism of Schoenberg and the Viennese school.<sup>7</sup>

Although the direction and Nazi goals regarding music were well articulated, their implementation faced numerous practical problems. This was in part due to the conflicting opinions from inside the party. The musical censure was limited to a list transmitted by Reichsmusikkammer, naming the works of composers that were not of Arian lineage and had to be banned. Still, the implementation was hard to be monitored. The control proved to be more efficient through financial measures, which ensured the loyalty of musicians and composers.

Germany's precarious economic state affected the musical life due to the fact that during a financial crisis, the cultural aspects tend to have a secondary role. For instance, in 1933 the members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the most prominent orchestras of Germany, had a 40% pay check cut, while a large part of musicians held voluntary concerts with the sole purpose of maintaining their artistic level.<sup>8</sup> Joseph Goebbels, a votary of music, saw this downfall in musical life and decided to impose a standardized pay check according to the competency level.

In this context, musicians started to fight over positions in cultural organizations and, in order to obtain them, they resorted to denouncing their colleagues. The ones that were ousted were sent in one of the fifty concentration camps built in Germany, where they were required to sing for the cultural edification of the guards, or to receive the new comers in the camps. The waves of racial purifications removed values such as Arnold Schoenberg, the father of dodecaphonic style and Franz Schreker, the leader of contemporary music thinking, and both receiving notices of dismissal. Schoenberg was accused of destroying tonality, therefore presenting a danger for the real German music.

The Nazi regime discovered that music is an important form of manipulation, a bridge between the leaders of the party and the German people. Music can be used to influence the emotional status of the people, in order to transmit certain propagandistic messages and to attract crowds at political events. Therefore, the leaders of the Nazi regime were directly involved in controlling music in institutions, beginning with society's core institutions – the family – and continuing with the education and the church.

In transitioning towards controlling music and propaganda, the educational system was reformed. Due to the fact that Germany is a federation, each region had a different level of educational development,

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<sup>7</sup> Pamela M. Potter, "Nazism", *Grove Music Online*, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2010, 11:11.

<sup>8</sup> Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, New York: Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, 9.

thus the change towards a centralized system took time. Among the first tries of reforming the education was the introduction in the curriculum of the Nazi ideology. The next step was eliminating all Jewish teachers from middle school, high school or university. The students had to be instructed by teachers loyal to the Nazi regime that would exert their influence over colleagues and students. These measures were also applied in musical education, and the city most affected by the purifications was Berlin, an important musical centre with numerous music schools and a significant number of valuable musicians. Among them, Leonid Kreutzer – renowned piano professor –, although he tried to demonstrate that he is a German citizen and has brought numerous benefits to the German musical studies, was fired. Besides him, the cellist Emanuel Feuermann, Hugo Leichtentritt and other famous musicians were also fired.<sup>9</sup>

Another institution that entered the Nazi reform program was the church. Although the Nazi party was in its essence against religion, it was involved in the leadership of churches, mostly out of the necessity to rule out any competition, the church being a powerful institution and a potential rival for the party's ideology. Almost 60% of Germany's population was part of the German Protestant Church, and a branch of it was called *The German Christians*. This movement borrowed a series of ideas from the philosopher of the Nazi party, Alfred Rosenberg, who claimed that Jesus Christ presented in the Bible is not the real one, thus replacing him with a Christ of Arian lineage and traits. Therefore, *the German Christians* were absorbed by the racist Nazi ideology and became a tool in party's hand. In 1933, there was an important decision made, in which the political role of Catholicism was eliminated through an understanding between Hitler and Vatican. The result of this decision was the creation of a German evangelical church that would become a centralized organization. As a consequence, religious music was politicized and German Christians became interested only in music of German heritage.

Another facet of the music approached during the Nazi regime was music in the family. This concept of *Hausmusik* has its origin in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the bourgeoisie hired professional musicians to play chamber music. During that time, it was fashionable to hire instrument tutors, especially piano, and any well-off families wanted to have at least one family member musically proficient. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Hausmusik* witnessed a decline due to the fact that the young generation of Germany stood against the bourgeois culture and rejected classical music. This decline was accentuated during World War I, when the interest for music and culture was lost.

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<sup>9</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 152.

Starting with 1933, the Nazi regime reintroduced the *Hausmusik* culture, especially in order to promote certain music genres and political propaganda.<sup>10</sup> Another reason for the Nazis inclination towards music was the precarious financial situation of artists. Most families could not afford to hire music teachers for their children and did not have the possibility of buying an instrument. Therefore, the number of instrument teachers that had no jobs was really high, and numerous instruments or music sheets suppliers went bankrupt. These attempts to restore the importance of music in the family had the purpose of saving both the jobs of music teachers and the music industry. For this purpose, annual *Hausmusik* festivals were organized, with their central theme a musical portrait of a certain composer. It was obvious that through these festivals, the organizers propagated the Nazi ideology against Jewish and modern music.

In this social, political and musical context, numerous valuable musicians lived and continued to compose in order to survive and save their careers. The reactions of musicians towards the regime and Hitler were diverse and, as we will later on see, these people lived through Nazism “with their professional ethos violated and their professional ethos often compromised: grey people against a landscape of gray.”<sup>11</sup>

Further on, we will describe the influence that Nazism had on some important composers that lived during the Nazi regime. Paul Hindemith became known for his compositional abilities through avant-garde works such as *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, *Sancta Susana* and *Nusch-Nuschi*. The music in the stated works is an experimental one, with lyrics lacking reverence. In 1929, Hindemith composed the *Badener Lehtück vom Einverständnis* and *Neues vom Tage* cantatas, these creations marking the end of a compositional period impregnated with avant-gardist tendencies.<sup>12</sup> After 1930, Hindemith's creation was limited to works that mainly stayed within the traditional harmony, such as *Concert for Piano, Brass and Harps*, op. 49 and *Concert for Brass and String Orchestra*, op. 50.

Hindemith decided to write another opera, which was supposed to be called *Mathis der Maler*, but the composer decided to use parts from his unfinished opera in order to present them as a symphony – *Mathis-Symphonie*.<sup>13</sup> The symphony was received with much enthusiasm, even by

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<sup>10</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era, Eight Portraits*, Ed. Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2000, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations, German Music and Politics, 1900-1945*, Ed. Harvard University Press, Boston, MA, 2007, 232.

Nazi critics that were suspicious of him due to his avant-gardist tendencies.<sup>14</sup> Hindemith realized that he had to be cautious in the new political situation, especially since he had a history of publicly expressing his anti-fascist stand, as for example, a speech at the Hochschule für Music in Berlin. Also, the Nazis disapproved of his ties to Jewish musicians, such as the cellist Emanuel Feuermann and the violinist Simon Goldberg.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these aspects Hindemith had enemies that were envious of his success and were plotting to eliminate him from the German music scene. The favourable time for these enemies came when Hindemith made a grave political mistake during one stay in Switzerland, when he denounced Hitler. As a consequence, his opera creation was withdrawn from the music scene and he became *persona non grata* in musical circles.<sup>16</sup>

In 1934, when a new wave of attacks was launched against Hindemith, William Furtwängler defended the composer and, in an attempt to exonerate him, published an article called *The Hindemith Case*. In the article, Furtwängler argues that Hindemith's avant-garde tendencies were sins of the youth and The Third Reich would suffer if it lost such a valuable musician.<sup>17</sup> The article had the opposite effect, Hindemith being treated with even more antipathy by the political officials, and Furtwängler having to give up almost all his official positions.<sup>18</sup>

During the following years, Hindemith showed a surprising determination in his attempt to remain in Germany, even though the situation was getting more and more difficult. As a result, Michael Kater named Paul Hindemith the hesitant emigrant.<sup>19</sup> In 1945, Hindemith's music was almost completely eliminated from the Nazi state and his wife Gertrude, half Jewish, was declared an unwanted presence in Germany. Therefore, the Hindemith family immigrated to Switzerland, moving to Bluche, a town in the Alps.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Hindemith's tenacity and perseverance, composer Kurt Weill is the example of a musician that chose exile. Besides the fact that Weill was a Jew, he was also attacked for his musical works, such as *Die Bürgschaft* and *Der Silbersee*. Friends of the Weill family hinted that they were on the black list of the authorities and that an arrest was imminent.

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<sup>14</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 36-37.

<sup>17</sup> William Furtwängler, "Der Fall Hindemith", *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Berlin, Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1934.

<sup>18</sup> In February, Furtwängler published a letter of reconciliation addressed to Goebbels by which he tried to receive again Nazis approval.

<sup>19</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 42.

Therefore, the composer, helped by Caspar and Erika Neher, managed to escape in France on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1933.<sup>21</sup>

Another composer of the Nazi era was Werner Egk. Due to his collaboration with Goebbels and the Nazi officials, the composer was named an enigmatic opportunist.<sup>22</sup> The work that propelled his career was the opera *Die Zauberflöte*<sup>23</sup>, which presents the story of a farmer named Kaspar that falls in love with a young lady of the aristocracy, Ninabella, but ends up marrying a country girl, Gretl. The opera contains folkloric songs and was received with much enthusiasm by Nazi leaders. On the other hand, numerous composers, such as Heinrich Sutermeister, considered Egk an opportunist, naming his opera an "opportunist construction".<sup>24</sup> This accusation had its merits, considering the fact that before the nationalist-socialist party took power, Egk's work used to resemble the one of Stravinsky (e.g. the opera *Columbus*). Moreover, after presenting the *Die Zauberflöte* opera, Werner Egk obtained numerous benefits, among them being the position of conductor at the Berlin Opera and the job of writing ballet music for Mary Wigman and Harald Kreutzberg.<sup>25</sup> In 1938, his opera *Peer Gynt*, inspired by Henrik Ibsen's play, premiered. Werner Egk had financial benefits that surpassed those of his colleagues and he was also spared military service.<sup>26</sup>

According to this information, one might think about Werner Egk as an acceding loyalist of the Nazi regime, but "even the most incriminating evidence we have so far does not point to the conclusion that Egk was a believing Nazi."<sup>27</sup> His closest friends were the only ones with whom he shared his aversion towards Nazis, especially Carl Orff and his own son, Titus Egk. Probably the most painful experience for the composer was losing his own son that was enrolled, in spite of the composers' efforts of sparing him of military obligations. This proves Egk's lack of influence on his Nazi superiors and also the fact that the composer's affinities with the Nazi regime were lost with the death of his son.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Curjel, "Erinnerungen um Kurt Weill", *Melos* 37 (1970), 83-84, Kowalke, *Weill in Europe*, 84, Taylor, *Weill*, 195-197, acc. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> The magical violin.

<sup>24</sup> Sustermeister to Orff, 23 Dec. [1936], CM, Allg., Korr., cf. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Egk, *Zeit*, 257-58 cf. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> "Military Government of Germany; Fragenbogen", sign. Werner Egk, 16 Oct. 1945; Beisler to Kläger, 23. Sept. 1946, AM, Egk, Rathkolb, *Führetreu*, 176; *TGII* 13:333, cf. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 19.

A different attitude was displayed by Karl Amadeus Hartmann. This German composer opposed the Nazi regime from the very beginning and therefore withdrew from the German musical scene, preferring to promote his creation abroad.<sup>28</sup>

Another important composer of the Nazi era was Carl Orff, whose relationship with the Third Reich is still clouded in mystery. There are two theories regarding Carl Orff: one that argues the victimization of the composer that was only tolerated by Nazis; the other opinion demonstrates that Orff was a collaborator that profited from the Nazis.<sup>29</sup> Both conceptions are based on proof. The composer himself declared that his music was censored by the Nazi regime and that he was monitored with a lot of suspicion and disfavour. His wife, Gertrud, strengthened Orff's testimony, stating that her husband was a convinced anti-Nazi.<sup>30</sup> Another proof of writer's resistance towards the regime was his post-bellum declaration that he was part of the anti-fascist movement *The White Rose*.<sup>31</sup>

Among the proof against Orff, the most serious was composer's agreement to write music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to replace the one composed by Felix Mendelssohn that was now prohibited. About this gesture, Alex Ross stated that "the completely unscrupulous Orff accepted a commission to write a replacement score for Mendelssohn's verboten «A Midsummer Night's Dream», one of the shabbiest acts in music history."<sup>32</sup> Another argument is his well-known work, *Carmina Burana*, which became a prototype of the national socialist culture,<sup>33</sup> and which brought him numerous financial benefits. The fact is that the information received regarding Carl Orff are often times unclear and opposed to one another, thus leaving an aura of mystery and doubt regarding the composer's collaboration with a most vicious regime.

Among the composers during Hitler's time, the one whose ideology aligned most with the new regime was that of Hans Pfitzner. He adopted a nationalist policy in which he considered that his country's enemies were

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<sup>28</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 88.

<sup>29</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 111.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Gertrud Orff, Munich, August 5<sup>th</sup> 1992, APA, cf. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 112

<sup>31</sup> This theory was infirmed afterwards due to the fact that there wasn't enough written proof to attest Orff's affiliation to this resistance movement. It looks like this story was made up by the composer in order to exonerate his honor after the war, see Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 135-138.

<sup>32</sup> Alex Ross, "In Music, Though, There Were No Victories", *New York Times*, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> Donald W. Ellis, *Music in the Third Reich: National Socialist Aesthetic Theory as Government Policy*, PhD Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1970, 133. cf. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 116.



the social democrats, strangers, Americans, Bolsheviks, and especially Jews. "Pfitzner's prefascist polemics against what German conservatives regarded as the gutter culture of the Weimar Republic culminated in his protracted invective against Jews."<sup>34</sup> Although he had this kind of opinion of Jews, he had close friends that were Jewish, such as Paul Nikolaus Cossmann, a well-off Jew from Frankfurt and Bruno Walter.<sup>35</sup>

Ironically, Pfitzner did not receive the approval of Hitler and the Nazi officials, but on the contrary, he was attacked and marginalized. It seems like Hitler's hostility is due to a meeting with the composer where the anti-Semitism issue was addressed and where Pfitzner was opposed to the dictator's opinion. Hitler got upset and declared that he wants nothing to do with that Jewish rabbi.<sup>36</sup> Since that meeting, the composer's path took an unhappy turn that would lead him to a tragic ending.<sup>37</sup> Among the troubles that faced him, during the Salzburg festival, where his Violin Concert was playing, the composer was prohibited from attending; moreover, he was forced to retire and accept a very low pension that was not enough for a decent living. Suspected that he was Jewish, Pfitzner had to demonstrate his German heritage, an endeavour that greatly humiliated him. The war left him without a home and without money; therefore he eventually suffered a mental breakdown.<sup>38</sup>

One of the most prominent composers of this period was Richard Strauss, named "Richard the second" because he was considered the only German composer that rose up to Richard Wagner's level. The music Strauss presented to the world was original and bold and it influenced the musical creation of the 20th century.<sup>39</sup>

Richard Strauss was also affected by the socio-political situation in Germany. The investments the composer had in London were seized, the Meiningen orchestra was closed and famine and shortages were rampant. During those difficult times, Strauss' patriotism was transformed in disillusionment and the composer found comfort in his own music. During this time he worked on *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Intermezzo* and revised *Ariadne*, declaring that the only way of surviving those circumstances was intense work.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 148.

<sup>35</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> The most authentic telling of this incident is written by Pfitzner himself in his notebook [1946-1947], OW, 331, cf. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi era*, 154.

<sup>38</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi era*, 155-177.

<sup>39</sup> Jeremy Nicholas, *The Great Composers*, Ed. Quercus, London, 2007, 154.

<sup>40</sup> E. Krause, trans. J. Coombs, *Richard Strauss*, Ed. Collet's, London, 1964, 61.

In order to ensure financial stability, Strauss continued to direct, even though his desire was to compose. He worked on the opera *Arabella*, which he finalized in 1920. The premiere, which was supposed to take place in Dresden, was cancelled due to political reasons.<sup>41</sup>

Before Hitler took power in Germany, it appears that Richard Strauss had no political convictions. The fact is that Strauss had always tried to lead a comfortable life, with few worries. Once the Nazi Party stepped into the picture, Strauss' role was changed. In November 1933, Joseph Goebbels named him president of *Reichsmusikkammer*.

The choice was determined by the fact that numerous prominent people left Germany, and the Nazi Party needed support in its campaign. Strauss accepted that position, stirring numerous critics from his colleagues, whom he betrayed on other occasions for the sake of benefits. Therefore, during a concert in Leipzig, Strauss replaced director Bruno Walter that had fled the country.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the composer also replaced Arturo Toscanini, who later on said that "to Straus, the composer, I take off my hat; to Strauss the man I put it back on."<sup>43</sup> Another deed that further harmed his reputation was the signing of a protest against the writer Thomas Mann, who criticized Wagner, the Nazi favourite.

In 1933, when he was named president of the *Reichsmusikkammer* and leader of the professional composers, Strauss tried to extend the period of the copyright from thirty years to seventy years. But Goebbels only approved the extension to fifty years. Another endeavor of Strauss was that of keeping in contact with composers abroad, from countries favorable to Germany or at least neutral. Ties had to be based on traditional music. Among the international composers promoted by Strauss were Paul Dukas, Adriano Lualdi and Edward Elgar. The accent during this time was on the quality of the music the German people were listening to and on elevating the level of musical education. The reforms Strauss wanted to impose were unsuccessful, especially because of the fact that, although he had adhered to the Nazi ideology, he was still too rooted in the traditions of the German bourgeoisie to implement the reforms the party had asked for. "Whatever the extent of Strauss' failure as a politician within Goebbels' cultural empire, there is no question that his role there was political, and that the failure – apart from his absenteeism and tactical mistakes – was based, to a large extent, on a policy not dictatorial enough."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Michael Steen, *The Lives and Times of the Great Composers*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004, 778-779.

<sup>42</sup> Steen, *The Lives and Times*, 781.

<sup>43</sup> Arturo Toscanini: <http://www.goodreads.com>, accessed on 24.01.12.

<sup>44</sup> Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 234.

Richard Strauss also faced hardships due to the Nazi party. In November 1935 the premiere of *Die Schweigsame Frau* took place in Dresden, despite the fact that the Nazis had not accepted the fact that the libretto belonged to a Jew. At the premiere, the name of the Jew Zwieg was erased from the poster, and reposted at Strauss' insinuations. Neither Hitler nor Goebbels participated at the show and after four days the opera was withdrawn. In February 1934, Strauss was denounced because during a public event, he failed to greet in a fascist manner and also, was still collaborating with Jews.<sup>45</sup>

The biggest issue arose when the Gestapo intercepted a letter addressed to Zwieg, where Strauss declared that he must endure a charade in order to be president of the Music Chamber of the Reich.<sup>46</sup> As a consequence, Strauss was fired from the position of president of the *Reichsmusikkammer*. His survival was due to the fact that the Nazi party still needed him, and thus spared him the fate of a concentration camp.

In 1936, Strauss participated at the opening of the Olympics, where he directed a play named *Olympic Hymn*. By doing this, he tried to fix the relationship with Hitler and to protect his family. His daughter-in-law, Alice, came from a family of Jews, and his nephews were half Jews, a factor that was enough to have them deported.

On November 9, 1938, 200 synagogues and 7,500 stores were burned and 91 Jews were killed. The Nazis had planned to arrest Alice, but she escaped. Her sons were obligated to spit on Jews gathered in the centre of the town.<sup>47</sup> What is tragic is the fact that twenty-six members of Alice's family were killed in concentration camps.

After World War II broke, Strauss moved to Vienna, and the governor von Schirach took advantage of his presence to restore Vienna as a European cultural center. Here, Strauss wrote the second *Concert for Horn* and his opera *Capriccio*. The war left the München National Theatre, the Dresden Opera and the Vienna State Opera in ruins, institutions that had a special meaning for Strauss. His musical works are in general lacking allusions of political messages, the exception being the opera *Friedenstag* that, through denotations, allusions, condemns Hitler and Nazism.

In German, *Friedenstag* means peace day and is an allusion at the day of October 24<sup>th</sup> 1648, the year where the Thirty Years War ended. *Friedenstag* is Strauss' twelfth opera and his first collaboration with librettist Joseph Gregor. Up until that moment, Strauss had worked with librettist Stefan Zweig, but because he was a Jew, the Nazis boycotted him. Still,

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<sup>45</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, 324-325.

<sup>46</sup> Steen, *The Lives and Times*, 784.

<sup>47</sup> Steen, *The Lives and Times*, 784.

the collaboration between the composer and the Jewish librettist continued in secret and the idea for the opera *Friedenstag* belonged to Zweig. The opera conveys a message of peace and unity, condemning war and the suffering caused by it. It is a profound, austere and thoroughly penetrant work.<sup>48</sup> “The pacifist theme in *Friedenstag*’s lyrics is transmitted through a predominance of symbolism, strengthened by music through a quasi-leitmotif approach. This symbolism extends to characters, who are, for the most part, representations of conflicting ideals.”<sup>49</sup>

The idea of peace is stressed in the opera through Maria’s character, that represents frailty and hope and through the Piedmontese’s character that delivers a wish for a better life. The citizens of the town also request capitulation and wish for the hunger, violence and pain to stop, the mayor also claiming that the only way to survive is by ending the conflict. The final hymn mirrors the climax of the hope and peace message. *Friedenstag* may have been an attempt for Strauss to avenge the unrighteousness that happened to the German musical life and to him personally, but for sure the opera is assigned a political message.<sup>50</sup>

In the beginning, the Nazis considered the opera *Friedenstag* an embodiment of the nationalist spirit and it was interpreted for two years in Germany and Italy. The attraction of the opera consisted in the commander’s character that embodied the ideal German citizen, with a spirit of sacrifice for the country and military passion. With this façade, Strauss’s opera was applauded and appreciated until, having the war in the background, the Nazis looked beyond appearances and discovered the message against violence and conflict. Therefore, after two years, *Friedenstag* was prohibited.

Considering the fact that *Friedenstag* was composed in the context where the Nazis wanted to transmit the idea of a necessary and inevitable war, the opera *Friedenstag* appears like an irony or a hidden manifestation against the authorities.

The last composer of the Nazi period we’ll be presenting is Arnold Schoenberg, who was persecuted by Nazis not only because of his Jewish origin but also because he promoted modern music. As a consequence, Schoenberg was fired from his position as a professor at the Academy. The composer “was whole-heartedly Viennese and intensely felt the repeated insults his hometown brought him.”<sup>51</sup> He moved for a while in Paris, but did

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<sup>48</sup> Anthony Arblaster, *Viva La Libertá!*, *Politics in Opera*, Ed. Verso, London, 1992, 257.

<sup>49</sup> Pamela M. Potter, *Strauss’s “Friedenstag”*: A Pacifist Attempt at Political Resistance, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 1983, 414.

<sup>50</sup> Potter, *Strauss’s “Friedenstag”*, 423.

<sup>51</sup> Antoine Golea, *Muzica din noaptea timpurilor până în zorile noi*, (*Music from the Night of Time to the New Dawn*), Vol. II Ed. Muzicală, Bucuresti 1987, 105.

not find professional fulfilment, therefore, when he was given a professorial position at a university from Boston, Schoenberg emigrated, along with his family, to the United States of America.

The unleash of the political and racial theory in Europe stirred the protesting spirit of the composer and determined him to adopt an energetic attitude either by the resurrection of the biblical images from the life of the Jewish people such as in *Prelude to Genesis*, either by using direct political themes, such as in *Ode to Napoleon* or *A Survivor from Warsaw*. "When faced with the ravages of politicking among artists, works such as the latter ones remain in the history of music as supreme models of what artistic commitment in the high sense of the word means."<sup>52</sup>

A work that describes the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust is *A Survivor from Warsaw, op. 46*. It is a symphonic poem composed in 1946 that depicts a musical picture of the events during World War II.

The work *A survivor in Warsaw* presents the cruelty with which the Jews in the ghetto were treated, and the ones that did not make it were sent to *The Gas Chamber*. The narrator describes the way in which the Jews were beaten and brutalized, regardless of age or health, the vast majority of them fainting. The counting of the fallen bodies is more and more cruel and in *accelerando* until the remaining Jews cannot stand it anymore and bring their voices together to sing the *Schema Israel* prayer. It is a moment that reaches the sublime and the picture ends with this *cantus firmus* that affirms their hope in God, even against any hope. The storyteller is a survivor of this massacre; therefore the work gains a personal character that wrapped in Schoenberg's music receives a disturbing resonance.

The coming to power of the Nazi regime produced a significant change in Germany's musical life. By eliminating the influences of modern music and Jewish music, by persecuting the ones that did not subject to the regime, the Nazi contributed to the spread of fear and dread. In this context, the Nazi authorities took control of the political and social life, exerting its authority even in the musical domain. The three principal institutions that were targeted were the family, the church and the school, the ultimate goal being to propel national music of Arian heritage. We followed the reactions of some significant composers of the Nazi era, observing different attitudes towards the same socio-political reality. Some composers chose to collaborate with the authorities, either to protect their family, or to ensure their living, or some because they actually identified themselves with the Nazi ideology. For other composers, the socio-political events constituted not only an inspiration for musical creations, but also the opportunity to express their beliefs and political ideals. For these musicians, the musical creation did not

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<sup>52</sup>George Bălan, *Cazul Schönberg (The Schönberg Case)*, Ed. Muzicală, București, 1974, 93.

only represent a mere artistic exercise, but also the specific way of being involved in the life of the society. For the musicians and the composers that lived during the Nazi era, the socio-political reality became a decisive factor, both in regards to their personal life, but also in their artistic conscience.

*Translated in English by: Damaris Decean*

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