

The Reichsorchester

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A Comparison of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics during the Third Reich

By

Sebastian Huebel

B.A., Thompson Rivers University, 2007

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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During the time of Nazism, arts and music were severely curtailed by the Nazi machinery. Two of the Reich's foremost orchestras, the Berlin and the Vienna Philharmonics, were both part of the cultural *Gleichschaltung* that occurred within the German Reich. Dealing differently with their new patrons, the orchestras developed a mixture of political cooperation, opportunism and opposition. While at times the orchestras attempted to bypass Nazi ideology and policies, such as in the case of the forced layoff of their Jewish members, the high party membership in Vienna in particular underlines how ambivalent reactions and attitudes towards the Hitler regime could be. While both orchestras underwent significant internal structural changes, the history of both philharmonic orchestras resembles one of privileged status and preferential treatment during the Third Reich.

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I

Introduction

In the famous Hollywood movie *The Pianist*, the audience is captivated by the vision of a Nazi officer playing the piano. Juxtaposing Chopin's piano sonata to the horrors of the Holocaust, Roman Polanski demonstrates in a clandestine way how contradictorily, if not perversely, the human world can function. While millions of European Jews are being killed in concentration camps in Eastern Europe, a Nazi officer has the time and muse to play one of the greatest musical achievements in human culture, ironically, on a piano belonging to a victim of the Holocaust. The scene suggests that aesthetics apparently has no monopoly on morals.¹ While the Nazi officer played the sonata in a captivating way, it is worth mentioning that he also could have played it miserably. The presumption that Nazis were incapable of valuing and producing sophisticated art is as faulty as arguing that only in sophisticated and developed countries can serious art be created. Pamela Potter quotes in her *Most German of the Arts* the musicologist Albrecht Riethmuller's phrase "Music is German isn't it?"² This quote brings attention to the fact that without Germany, and its flamboyant composers Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, to name a few, the history of Western music would be missing its crown jewels. At the same time, *Most German of the Arts* suggests that throughout

¹Michael Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1997), 15.

² Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology And Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New York: Yale University Press, 1998), ix.

modern history, music has played a predominant role in Germany, including the darker years of the Third Reich.

It is a discrepancy that historians have dedicated great attention to the other arts, such as theatre, film, architecture, and literature during the Third Reich, while “the most German of the arts,” that undoubtedly occupied a central position in the ideology and propaganda of National Socialism, seems to be underrepresented. Potter argues that this can be explained in part by the uninterrupted success that prominent musical figures enjoyed while working within the musical milieu before and after 1945, and by their efforts to suppress investigations into their roles under the Nationalist Socialist regime.³ When we look at some prominent figures, such as Wilhelm Furtwaengler or Herbert von Karajan, it is evident that, in spite of their prominence and involvement in Nazi politics, successful musical careers in Germany and the world could be continued after the war. Yet, it would be a misconception to say that historians have completely ignored music in the Third Reich. Instead, the sheer volume of books on World War Two and Nazi Germany indicate that this period has attracted more attention than any other chapter in world history. For while the period in question is rightly considered to be one of the most closely examined in German history, it nonetheless remains one of the most contentious periods of historical research.⁴

Michael Kater’s *The Twisted Muse* (1997) marks one of the latest and best works of a historian who deals with music in the Third Reich. Fred Prieberg’s *Musik im NS-Staat* (1968), Erik Levi’s *Music in the Third Reich* (1994), Joseph Wulff’s *Musik im*

³ Pamela Potter, “The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic,” in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, Glenn Cuomo, ed. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1995), 23.

⁴ Walther Hofer, “Fifty Years On: Historians and the Third Reich” *Journal of Contemporary History* (21) 1986: 225.

Dritten Reich (1963) and Michael Meyer's *The Politics of Music in the Third Reich* (1991) all encompass a discussion on how music in Nazi Germany functioned. Even though Potter's argument – that there is insufficient literature dedicated to this subject – is valid, we cannot presume that the literature *that* exists is insignificant simply because it is rare.

Michael Kater commences his analysis in *The Twisted Muse* with a historiographical critique. Criticizing his colleagues, Kater complains that Wulff's commentaries are unreliable, that Prieberg's and Levi's investigations lack primary sources and archival material, and that Meyer's analysis consists mainly of paraphrases of the previous three works and thus has nothing new to offer. Kater concludes that the existing historical literature is of questionable quality.⁵ While the author may succeed in bringing new light into this historical chapter, however, he also continues the tradition of approaching this subject from a political viewpoint. Whereas Prieberg and Wulff have connected the Reich's musical policies to National Socialist ideology and to its doctrine of Aryan superiority in Western music, Kater does not deny this important aspect, but uses the examples of prominent German musical figures such as Richard Strauss, Wilhelm Furtwaengler, or Clemens Kraus as well as groups of musicians, such as German-Jewish artists or contemporary composers who worked in Germany, to metamorphose this subject into a more lively discussion in which people are at the centre of debate.

Although Kater deserves praise for his elaborate research, he follows the footsteps his predecessors have laid, scrutinizing the subject through a political lens. A musical *Gleichschaltung* in form of the creation of the *Reichsmusikkammer*, the exclusion

⁵ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 11.

of Jewish musicians from their profession, the role of (musical) education in schools and the Hitler Youth, individual opposition to the state and its musical policies by prominent musicians like Schoenberg and Hindemith or the continuous quarrels with the Nazis by prominent figures like Furtwaengler, constitute the framework that Kater and his colleagues use to structure their arguments. The individual, the unknown musician, however, member of an orchestra or ensemble or other entity, who was not of such fame as the conductor who stood in front of him or the politician who placed decisions on him, has little place in the existing literature. It is either the collective experience of groups of musicians, or the exceptional stories of the celebrities, that are referred to in the literature.

The Twisted Muse, Musik im Dritten Reich, and Musik im NS-Staat have in common that they do not embrace a grassroots, ‘bottom up’ perspective, meaning that an over-focus on the decision-makers – Nazi functionaries, politicians, artists and musicians of fame – is evident, while vice versa, commentary on the ones that were impacted by these decisions is underrepresented. Their common denominator is finding an answer to how Hitler’s regime changed the musical landscape and the profession of musicians in general. Examples of prominent musical figures are utilized to illustrate what social and political pressures and conflicts emerged as a result of this cultural revolution. The opposition of Furtwaengler, director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, for example, or of Richard Strauss, the Reich’s most celebrated composer, and his role within the Nazi apparatus, or the examples of the forceful exclusion of prominent composers such as Schoenberg and Hindemith, all exemplify how interconnected music and politics were in the Third Reich. While historiographically, first of interest were prominent musical figures who had left Germany between 1933 and 1945 - we only have to look at the list of

(auto) biographies of artists such as Arnold Schoenberg, Kurt Weill, Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, even Marlene Dietrich, over the last few decades, recent interest has shifted to the more prominent musical figures that stayed *in* Germany. Erik Levi argues that while historians and musicologists alike have tended to focus on forced emigration from Germany of a number of significant and influential musical figures, it is equally a valid point to examine the majority of musicians, some of incontestable importance, who chose to remain and actually prospered under the Nazis.⁶

Again, Furtwaengler and Karajan – justifiably regarded as two of the greatest conductors of the 20th century - serve as prime examples of artists who remained in Germany and prospered. It is astounding, however, that even though academics have attempted to investigate how politicized music and its implementation altered culture in Nazi Germany, they have overlooked the individuals that made music possible. References to memoirs of ordinary musicians are a rarity in most historical works, and are generally included only to supplement and support arguments regarding politics or musical figures that were in the public foreground in Germany. Thus, the investigation of this third group of musicians, one that does not focus on the famous, in Germany or abroad, but on the solitary, unknown, musician, has not reached its zenith yet, and the fruits of social history and its interconnection to cultural history seem to be, within this context, still waiting to be harvested.

One can explain the few references to ordinary musicians by the lack of available sources. Historians instinctively seek archives in search of sources, and it is not astounding that the diaries and personal letters of a contrabassist who played in the Berlin Philharmonics in 1939, for example, cannot be found within the plethora of archival

⁶ Erik Levi, *Music in The Third Reich* (London: MacMillan, 1994), xii.

sources; if still existing, sources such as these would most likely be in private ownership. It cannot be a surprise that the history of music in the Third Reich is so political and simultaneously based on the most prominent figures, if most available sources on this topic are conserved in archives.

Although academic studies that concentrate on music policies in the Third Reich are significant to understand cultural history, the social realities and forces that accompanied the coordination of music at this time cannot be ignored. The stories of the musicians and their experience of changes in their profession cannot be uncared for or only tangentially embraced in the historians' analyses. Considering that social history, that is the history of the people, the ordinary folks, has entered the historian's arena more than four decades ago, it is indeed paradoxical that many bibliographies have been published on the most prominent figures in music during the time of National Socialism, while the ordinary musicians who were not in the public foreground, and their personal experiences of that time, apparently were of little interest to academics so far.

Ensembles of such unknown, yet professional musicians were the numerous symphonic orchestras in Germany and Austria. If we look at two of the most prominent orchestras, the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, one might be surprised to learn that the Berlin Philharmonic only has one book dedicated to its role within the Third Reich – published only recently in commemoration of its 125 year anniversary in 2007 – and the Vienna Orchestra still to this day has no comprehensive work examining its involvement in the Third Reich. In contrast, there are a dozen available biographies on the conductor Wilhelm Furtwaengler. Misha Aster, author of *The Reich's Orchestra*, explains the lack of studies of music in the Third Reich, and of the Berlin Philharmonic

in particular, with the fact that during the war numerous sources were lost. In the case of the Berlin Philharmonic, the offices and internal archives were destroyed in November 1943 as a result of the Allied bombing campaigns on Berlin.⁷ Personal correspondence and other material for the historian today were lost and sources are either in private collections or the *Bundesarchiv*. Moreover, as Potter has argued, the reluctance by some prominent figures, such as Herbert von Karajan, who was the main conductor at the Berlin Philharmonic from 1953 up until 1989, and who had joined the *NSDAP* twice (!), have successfully prevented historical investigations on the orchestra.

On a closer look, however, a few published biographies of musicians of both orchestras who lived through the tumultuous years in the Third Reich come to attention. Although ostensibly insignificant in number, these published memoirs of musicians can help the historian better understand the situation of the musician during these years; however, it is another challenge to obtain access to such publications. While several former musicians, including Hugo Burghauser, Avgerino Gerassimos, and Otto Strasser have made their recollections available through books, generally such publications did not turn out to be bestsellers when they were published. Printed relatively shortly after the war, the lack of interest in German society has prevented their wide dissemination. Overall, most Germans had experienced the same – total war under a totalitarian regime – and the interest in wartime stories and other tragic events was not as developed in post-war German and Austrian society as it is today.⁸

⁷ Misha Aster, *Das Reichsorchester* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2007), 33-34.

⁸ While used bookstores are of little help to find books written by musicians from that time, the *Nationalbibliothek* in Leipzig, which collects published works in German, can re-produce books that are out of print.

In 2007, however, the year the Berlin Philharmonic celebrated its anniversary, the Canadian Misha Aster decided that enough time had passed and that a closer look at the Berlin Philharmonic and its role in Nazi Germany was necessary to understand and celebrate one of the greatest orchestras in the world. Although the Berlin Philharmonic had been of interest prior to Aster's publication – Herbert Haffner's *Die Berliner Philharmoniker* (2006) marks another recent publication – these narratives are generally coffeehouse material that lack academic standards, and are based on the already existing literature on music in the Third Reich and biographies of Wilhelm Furtwaengler.⁹ While Aster, on the other side, conducted archival research, similar to that of Kater, his study also focuses on the political aspects of music in Nazi Germany. *The Reich's Orchestra* is structured chronologically, illustrating how the Berlin Philharmonic struggled through the Weimar Years, its 'fortunate' takeover in 1933 after Hitler had come to power, the internal disruptions with Furtwaengler, and the structural changes in administration, finances and organization. Aster clarifies that he does not intend to write a history of the famous and powerful, since he is aware of the danger of overrepresentation of single individuals and their limited roles and responsibilities within the Nazi apparatus. Yet, while the author argues that the stories of the musicians themselves should not be overlooked, *The Reich's Orchestra* is not a social history that puts the musician in the foreground. The lived experiences of the members of the Berlin

⁹ One portrayal of the Berlin Philharmonics even goes as far as describing the sudden end of cooperation with the concert agency Wolff as a positive development because it restored control of affairs to the orchestra. The author ignores the important fact that the Jewish agency had worked with the orchestra since its creation in 1882. Instead, the author argues that in economic hindsight, the orchestra gained its final economic independence! See Werner Oehlmann, *Das Berliner Philharmonische Orchester*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1974), 12.

Philharmonic are again an abstract conundrum that historians have been unable to break through and put into a livelier, real context.¹⁰

The most important work on the Vienna Philharmonic is Clemens Hellsberg's *Demokratie der Koenige*. This voluminous work covers the entire history of the Vienna Philharmonic since 1842, and is the only study that links the orchestra to its involvement in the Third Reich. Hellsberg, a member of the Vienna orchestra since 1980, and a historian by profession, has a privileged status as he was the official archivist of the orchestra for many years and had access to important material within its internal archives. While without doubt more detailed research on the Vienna Philharmonic in the Third Reich is required – and my study does not accomplish this goal at all – first, historians need to be granted access to archives. Hellsberg's monopoly on the history of the Vienna Philharmonic has lately been subject to criticism by younger academics. It seems that a new zeitgeist in Europe no longer accepts the reluctance of some individuals, like Hellsberg, to open the gates for investigations on justifiably emotional topics that might hit some nerves and embarrass others. The Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* wrote on March 23, 2008 that scholars have had difficulties investigating the Vienna Philharmonic as they were not allowed access to the archives, or sources were delivered reluctantly and with timely delays.¹¹ While this study is not affected by this issue – I was advised that no personal correspondence of the musicians who experienced the *Anschluss* and the Third

¹⁰ Already in 1972, Gerassimos Averginos complained about the lack of the musician's perspective in historical works and the fact that most studies on the Berlin Philharmonic concentrate only on the founding years of the orchestra or on the famous conductors the orchestra worked with. See Gerassimos Avgerinos, *Künstler-Biographien. Die Mitglieder im Berliner Philharmonischem Orchester von 1882 –1972* (Berlin: Privately Published, 1972), 1.

¹¹ *Die Presse*, March 23, 2008. For more information visit <<http://diepresse.com/home/kultur/klassik/367690/index.do>>

Reich is available in the orchestra's archive¹² – future historians will have to pressure harder to crumble one of the last bastions of conservative *Duckmäuserei*: music in Austria during the Third Reich.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is twofold: First, I intend to analyze and compare two of the most renowned orchestras in the world during a time that is remembered as a period of world war and Holocaust. While these keywords certainly have justification, the example of these world-class orchestras demonstrates that musical excellence, aesthetic beauty and performance were a reality, even during a period in which darker forces were propelling Europe and the world into a terrible chaos. Aster explains that *The Reich's Orchestra* is not a critical analysis of the Berlin Philharmonic at the time of National Socialism, but proves with his empirical data that much remains to be said.¹³ The Berlin Philharmonic is often regarded as an exceptional orchestra, because of its musical excellence, but also for its tenacity to survive National Socialism unshattered. The problem with such a hypothesis of exceptionalism is that context is avoided and the layman cannot understand why, if at all, the Berlin orchestra is exceptional. My comparative analysis will demonstrate that only by bringing a historical story into context and comparative relation – in this case the Vienna Philharmonic – can we see how either the Berlin or the Vienna Philharmonic uniquely or differentially dealt with Nazi pressure.

Second, by incorporating some of the personal stories the musicians of both orchestras have told, written down or published, I will depart from the more traditional approach that has so often focused on music and politics in the Third Reich and their

¹² According to the archivist of the Vienna Philharmonics, Dr. Silvia Kargl, there is no personal correspondence and other information on the musicians in the orchestra's archive.

¹³ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 28.

effects on administration, organization and structure. The stories of the musicians who worked behind the scenes are essential ingredients to consider if we wish to understand the history of both orchestras. While the vicissitudes of the orchestras' organizational structure, or legislation that, for instance, forbid Jews to play in the orchestras, or political events, such the outbreak of World War II, are all significant aspects that need to be included in the narrative, as historians have previously done, one cannot ignore the impact of such changes and forces on the musicians. What feeling of satisfaction and happiness on the one hand, and what moments of anxiety, on the other, did musicians experience when some of their beloved friends and colleagues were suddenly forced to retire because of their political or religious beliefs? How did the musicians, including the Nazis, the Jewish members and the ordinary, non-political members deal with the new situation in Germany and Austria? To bring such personal stories into context is essential in understanding that music in the Third Reich was not as monolithic and *gleichgeschaltet* as history surveys often portray culture in the Reich. While the philharmonic in Germany's capital welcomed government influence and the eventual takeover by the state, and simultaneously enjoyed astounding artistic autonomy and other privileges, the experience of the Vienna Philharmonic reveals that a combination of reluctance towards Berlin and political opportunism was utilized to maintain the highest possible degree of political and artistic independence. In both cases, the reaction of both orchestras to Nazi pressure demonstrates that self-interest, and not ideology, shaped the orchestras' collaboration with the Nazis.

II

A Prelude

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Music Before Hitler: The Weimar Years

Interestingly, neither Wulf, Prieberg, nor Kater discuss the role of music in Germany prior to Hitler's rise to power. How one should understand how the musical scene altered in 1933 and after, if no pre-context is provided, is not explained by these historians who commence their analyses with Hitler's inauguration as chancellor. Even a brief look at the months prior to Hitler's rise to power provides little substance to comprehend the situation of professional musicians at that time. Researching the musical scene during the Third Reich, without including the preceding years of the Weimar Republic, is a flawed undertaking because historians create the impression that the musical policies undertaken by the Nazis were innovative and discontinuous from the Weimar years, and therefore, can be investigated in isolation from the time before Hitler.

In his work on the Reich Chambers of Music, Theatre and Visual Arts, Alan Steinweiss criticizes that historians have explicitly characterized the relationship between the Nazi regime and the art world as one in which a powerful state-party apparatus manipulated malleable and sometimes enthusiastic artists to exercise absolute power; hence, the regime is typically understood as having steered the activities of

German artists into ideologically acceptable channels.¹⁴ The problem with such generalization is, however, that it devotes insufficient attention to continuities in the professional and economic agenda of the German cultural establishment from the Weimar Republic through the Nazi period. Steinweis argues that by isolating these two historical epochs from each other, key areas of consensus between official Nazi policy and prevailing sentiment in the art world are overlooked. Consequently, separating the history of music in the Weimar Republic from music in the Third Reich results in an overemphasis on the Nazi regime's reliance on coercion and not enough on factors accounting for artists' passive compliance and active collaboration with the regime's cultural policies.¹⁵

Pamela Potter supports Steinweis in her analysis of the Nazi seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic. She argues that the image of "brown shirted Nazi thugs beating down doors of concert halls and opera houses, invading management offices and taking control of personal and programming decisions," loses credibility on closer investigation.¹⁶ A more nuanced investigation of 1920s and early 1930s music in Germany is necessary to provide a better understanding of the socio-economic dilemma that most artists and musicians experienced in 1933. We cannot assume that Hitler's rise to power was unwelcome by all artists simply because we let the negative images of Hitler, the Holocaust and Second World War cloud our judgement. Understanding the fate of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics in Nazi Germany requires – as do other aspects of cultural life in the Reich – establishing a chronological context. Only by

¹⁴ Alan Steinweis. *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ Pamela Potter, "The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic," 41.

comprehending the general developments in music and arts during the Weimar Years, can one understand the conditions of both orchestras and their musicians in the Third Reich.

1. Music and Arts in the 1920s

After the Great War (1914-1918), the former German Reich and Austrian Empire were in political turmoil; the war was lost, several former imperial territories were stripped away, their economies were shattered and psychologically, both countries experienced national traumas. No wonder that the art world was highly affected by this. It makes sense arguing that arts, be it visual arts, theater or music, are reflections of sentiments and attitudes within a given society at a specific time. Artists can be regarded as reacting to their environment, either by adapting to the interests, emotions, and anxieties of mainstream society, or by disapproving such collective feelings and hence creating – frequently in forms of protest – avant-garde art, or counter-movements that intend to provoke the establishment and affect changes in a country's society, culture or political framework. The shattered post-war societies in Austria and Germany became an excellent seedbed for such avant-garde artists to plant their novel, provocative artistic ideas and concepts into society. Germany and Austria had not only lost a costly war, but also endured the disintegration of their political systems and traditional sense of society within the *Kaiserreich*. The following disillusionment that numerous German-speaking artists underwent resulted in a departure from traditional Wilhelmine and Habsburgian art that had co-existed for several decades vis-à-vis more modernistic trends. With the fall of

the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, the artistic epoch of the *Spätromantik*, the era of Richard Wagner, Johann Strauss and Giuseppe Verdi, instantly lost its basis to the grace of several avant-garde artists and musicians who had already prior to the war indicated their animosity towards traditional nationalistic art; following the outcome of the war and its subsequent horror and chaos, traditional music and art allegedly represented an older world, a time that stood for inequality, regression and monarchic nepotism.

The early 1920s, therefore, when political authorities were weak enough or too disinclined to regulate social and cultural life in Germany and Austria, seemed to “throw off the shackles of national romanticism” and to open its doors to an unceasing stream of artistic experiments, including New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), 12-tone composition, and novel conceptions of music-theater.¹⁷ Atonal compositions by Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, the Dadaist School associated with George Grosz, Expressionism pioneered by Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and other artists, modern operas by Ernst Křenek, Kurt Weill and Berthold Brecht, or modern, cubist architecture by Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, are probably the most prominent examples of avant-garde art of the 1920s that was produced in Europe, Germany and Berlin in particular. Yet, portraying the ‘Golden Twenties’ in Germany (and Austria) as a time when both societies demonstrated a consensus in favour of free experimentation in the arts and simultaneously forgot about their paladins Beethoven and Bach all of a sudden, is anachronistic and deludes reality.

Due to an over-emphasis on revolutionary avant-garde artists, painters, and musicians in history surveys and cultural studies, one might conclude that early 20th

¹⁷ Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 1.

century art had indeed great support in society. However, the opposite was, more often than not, the case; avant-garde art generally enjoyed minor popularity. While modern artists of that time deserve credit and mention within the historical narrative today, their short-term impact on society should not be over-estimated. In fact, the Weimar paradigm for music that assumes that musical experimentation was encouraged and enjoyed by the public is, according to Potter, wrong. In contrast, the proliferation of simple music-making in amateur groups, at home or in paramilitary and political groups was part of a widespread movement that intended to bring music back to the *Volk*. As well, the simple tunes of American-imported entertainment music filled the cabarets and nightclubs and German cities in the 1920s, thus also proving its popularity in society.¹⁸ Therefore, the virtuosity and complexity of Schoenberg and other intellectual avant-garde composers attracted attention largely within academic and upper-class circles and could not compete on the open market with popular trends.¹⁹ While Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Hindemith – like their counterparts in the visual arts and theater – are considered artists of distinction today, in the past, their works were often ridiculed.

Understanding the popularity of entertainment music in juxtaposition to the unpopularity of avant-garde music during the Weimar Years is crucial to understanding music in the Third Reich. When the Nazis began to persecute and ban some of Germany's avant-garde artists, they did not have to fear popular resentments. Instead, the general unpopularity of atonal music – synonymous with avant-garde music at this time – was welcomed by the National Socialists Alfred Rosenberg and Joseph

¹⁸ Potter, "The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic," 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

Goebbels who could go ahead and outlaw ostensibly unworthy, non-Aryan music, causing little opposition from ordinary Germans.

Even before the implementation of such drastic measures by the Nazis, avant-garde artists understood that their music was increasingly met with disinterest.²⁰ Whereas artistic experimentations in theatres and music created some curiosity in society in the early 1920s, this interest rapidly evaporated. Alain Poirer argues that Weimar's cultural and artistic pluralism was increasingly challenged by conservative forces that aggressively demanded a continuation of German national romanticism.²¹ Quintessentially, this dualistic nature between modern art and conservative forces during the 1920s is vital to an understanding of Hitler's later cultural policies.

Historian's over-emphasis on avant-garde art results in a lack of attention towards the artistic continuities from the *Kaiserreich* into the Weimar Republic. In fact, conservative forces, that were alarmed by artistic renovation and experimentation and that aggressively demanded the cultivation of traditional German arts were quite visible. Although Hitler was able to consolidate and partially realize his beliefs in National Socialism and anti-Semitism within the cultural sector later on, both ideologies were neither originated by him, nor were they unheard of in the 1920s. Nationalism had grown into a visible political movement in the 18th century and experienced increasing popularity when the formation of state-building was underway in 19th-century Europe. Linked to this idea of distinct nationhood was cultural nationalism, the idea that each nation had a distinct culture. Figures such as Richard Wagner, Arthur de Gobineau, Julius

²⁰ Gerald Koehler, „Moderne und Tradition,“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik*. (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 80.

²¹ Alain Poirer, „Die Avantgarde zwischen den Weltkriegen,“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik*. (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 63.

Langbehn or Houston Stewart Chamberlain had all dealt extensively with issues of politics of the arts (*Kunstpolitik*).²² Wagner in particular intermingled political ideas and musical culture, arguing for a cultural purification of the arts within Germany. Attacking Jewish musicians and composers in particular, Wagner argued in *Das Judentum und die Musik* that Germany was *the* country of music (*das Land der Musik*).²³ Demonstrating his belief in Germany's superiority in music and arts, the famous composer questioned Jews of their abilities to produce estimable art and music, and ridiculed their accomplishments in the past. Such racist, conservative, yet influential, attitudes by prominent individuals were not uncommon in Germany and Austria in the late 19th century, and were purveyed in the 1920s by neo-conservative nationalists who demanded a restoration of the monarchy. The 19th century Wagnerian ideal, hence, one of *volkisch* unity through art was still a magnet for national conservatives in the German-speaking world of the 1920s and early 1930s.²⁴

Cultural nationalism was, however, not a sphere of discussion exclusive to artists. Numerous intellectuals and scientists alike supported the idea of one idiosyncratic German culture (*Kulturgut*) that had to be protected. The musicologist Paul Bekker argued in *Das deutsche Musikleben* (1916) that music was a reflection of society, but that vice versa, music too could change society profoundly.²⁵ In other words, German music reflected a distinct German character, while the latter could be influenced by distinct German music. Looking at the traditional folksongs (*Volkslieder*) of the 18th and 19th

²² Steinweiss, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 21.

²³ Pascal Huyn, „Dunkler die Geigen...“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik*. (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 11.

²⁴ Eric Michaud, „Der Triumph des Richard Wagners und die Destruktion der Politik,“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik*. (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 59.

²⁵ Oliver Rathkolb, „Die Wunderwaffe Musik im NS-Regime. in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik*. (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 137.

centuries, for example, reveals how politically infested and nationalistic German songs were. Considering the political context of the 19th century, however, it cannot be a surprise that a great number of folksongs were clearly patriotic. Throughout the process of European state-formation in the 19th century, songs were useful instruments that could help shape national identities. Overcoming a history of regional division, music helped to consolidate the idea of one, unified German nationhood. The existing amalgam of 19th century nationalistic songs can be looked at as a reflection of German and Austrian culture,²⁶ and was a welcome vehicle for the Nazis later on to continue a tradition of nationalistic folk music. Portraying themselves as protectors and defenders of German culture, the Nazis put significant emphasis on traditional folksongs and military music in school and the Hitler Youth.

Historically related to cultural nationalism was anti-Semitism, a visible minority movement in both Germany and Austria during the 1920s. The political chaos, the economic tumults, but also the 1920s innovative culture were commonly linked by radical right-wing groups to a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy that intended to damage and eventually overthrow the German nation from within. Steinweiss explains that according to many right-wing nationalists, an infestation of alien races had adulterated German culture, which had entered an advanced stage of decay; the major task, therefore, was to expurgate alien tendencies from German art and culture in order to restore Germany's past glory.²⁷ It was not Hitler, thus, who created the idea of Aryan superiority and the need for a purification in the arts; instead, it was Hitler who could rely on the support of ultra-conservative, often anti-Semitic, forces with political weight and financial power.

²⁶ Ibid., 138.

²⁷ Steinweiss, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 21.

A closer look at the 'anti-avant-garde' forces in 1920s Germany and Austria allows us to paint a more nuanced picture of arts and culture during these years. Whereas modernistic movements justifiably revolutionized music, theatre and the visual arts in the 1920s, it must be remembered that such trends were not only met by general disinterest but also by fierce opposition by conservatives. Insisting on a continuation of traditional German art, in essence romanticism and classicism, right-wing and nationalist groups continued their efforts to prove the inferiority of non-Western art. The musicologist Heinrich Berl wrote in *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1926) that Jews were responsible for the invasion of oriental music from the East. According to the author, the Jewish incursion was an intentional attempt that led to the destruction of classical and romantic Western music.²⁸ Pseudo-scientific studies like Berl's that combined racial prejudice (anti-Semitism) and radical right-wing politics (anti-Communism) under one umbrella and portrayed both, Jews and communists, as existential threats to the German nation gained increasing momentum in German and Austrian academia that was predominately conservative and politically right-wing during the interwar years. The politicization of music in the 1920s, quintessentially, helped Hitler carry out his political and racist plans within the musical sector later on, ones that would banish Jews from the scene and establish some bizarre criteria defining German art. The history of music in the Third Reich, and the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics in particular, can therefore only be understood in correlation to Weimar's cultural bipolarity and the increasing politicization of music in the 1920s.

²⁸ Heinrich Behrl, *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1926), 23.

2. The Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics in the 1920s

The Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras are both relatively modern ensembles of professional musicians. Whereas private ensembles for chamber music, on the one hand, and professional opera orchestras, on the other hand, had existed for centuries, both the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics were formed in the 19th century. With the emergence of Europe's new middle class and its taste for philanthropic innovation, a seemingly unstoppable demand for more cultural entertainment resulted in the creation of numerous opera houses, symphonic orchestras, theatres and museums in Europe. This plethora of new cultural institutions in 19th century Europe meant that artists found an increasingly consolidated foundation for their work. For professional musicians, this cultural impetus connoted a shift in their work experience; whereas musicians had worked for private, wealthy patrons in the 18th century and prior, having little self-determination in their professions, the arrival of symphonic orchestras, like the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, meant a metamorphosis of their profession into more autonomous, self-governing bodies that acquired increasing artistic and financial independence.

In Vienna, the foundation of the city's philharmonic orchestra dates back to the year 1842.²⁹ Up to that point, the idea of independent philharmonic orchestras that would concentrate on symphonic compositions was still an abstract concept as symphonic concerts themselves were unusual: public musical entertainment was either limited to private house music, operas and theatres, or to popular folk festivals that did not orbit around music, but that were social gatherings with beer, bratwurst and polkas.

²⁹ Clemens Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker* (Vienna: Kremayr Verlag, 1992), 1.

Classical music, in essence symphonic concerts performed by *orchestra grossi*, was for mainstream society yet a seldom luxury. Symphonies by Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn were, of course, performed prior to the formation of the Vienna Philharmonics; yet, for each musical production, a new mosaic of musicians had to be arranged, generally drawn from local opera houses and theatres. Such impromptu arrangements resulted in little consistency and continuity in the field of serious music – musicians hardly knew each other, had generally very little time to rehearse, and the logistical and financial problems made such ventures often chaotic undertakings.³⁰ Thanks to the initiative of Otto Nicolai, the director of Vienna's imperial opera (*Hofoper*), a number of musicians from his orchestra received permission to perform, in addition to their busy opera schedules, a short number of philharmonic concerts in 1842. The resonance among the public was enthusiastic; yet, these concerts were unique at that time, and it took Nicolai another two decades until regular seasons of subscription concerts (*Abonnementkonzerte*) were introduced that enabled a separate orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, consisting of musicians from the *Hofoper*, to organize itself administratively and financially.³¹

Although the foundation of the Berlin Philharmonic followed more than 40 years later, similar motives led to its establishment. According to Herbert Haffner, musicians in Wilhelmine Berlin not employed in one of the theatres or opera houses were constantly dependent on entertainment concerts for the general public, low-paid salaries, insecure short-term job guarantees, and hectic concert schedules. When in 1882,

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

³¹ Kurt Blaukopf, *Die Wiener Philharmoniker. Wesen Wirken und Werden eines Grossen Orchesters* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1986), 62-63.

musicians of the Bilsse Orchestra,³² one of Berlin's entertainment orchestras, decided to end their careers as amateur musicians, a number of these artists agreed to a voluntary meeting to discuss the formation of a new orchestra. With the goal of performing high-class music and ensuring a more secure and structured future, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1882.³³

Both the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics share the interesting paradigm of being democratically organized by the musicians themselves, who, at a time of imperial monarchism, had the exceptional liberty of self-governance. While both Austria-Hungary and the German Reich experienced numerous internal political struggles within the 19th century, the impact of the liberal ideas of free enterprise and self-government are undeniable in both cases. Whereas the 1848 revolutions failed in both countries and both monarchies quintessentially could exist for a few more decades, the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics are rare examples of successful implementation of democratic principles in the cultural landscape of Germany and Austria. To this day, both orchestras share pride in their independence from government authorities and entrepreneurial, profit-seeking businessmen. At the annual meetings, both orchestras elect their representatives and internal administration, determine the contours of each concert season, debate general guidelines, such as how to become a member, and decide on their artistic leader, the conductor.

After the First World War, these democratic procedures continued within both orchestras, and the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, unlike the German and

³² The Bilsse Orchestra had existed since 1868, giving more than 6000 concerts in its short period of existence, too many according to several musicians. For more information see W. Stresemann. *The Berlin Philharmonic from Bulow to Karajan* & H. Haffner *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*.

³³ Haffner, *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*, 12-13.

Austrian republics, did not have to start from the ground up. While both former empires were in political chaos and had to await the terms of their peace treaties, artistic life in both capitals was surprisingly little affected. Both orchestras were able to maintain their cultural autonomies in the new political landscapes of their countries. The Vienna State Opera was nationalized in 1918 by the new republican government, which ensured financial security for the opera, and subsequently for the philharmonic, as its members were also members of the state opera. Due to this government intervention, a private commercialization of the orchestra was avoided, which could have had a negative outcome, particularly during the economic crisis of 1923.³⁴ In Berlin, too, little changed; the philharmonic continued its cooperation with concert agencies – preferably the Wolff & Sachs agency – that had been organizing concerts for the orchestra since 1882.

Although one could presume that during and particularly after the lost war, the national mood did not favour cultural pursuits – due to the nation’s traumatic experiences – the concert sector fared surprisingly well at that time. In fact, during the war, the subscription concerts of the Vienna Philharmonic were so popular that the general rehearsals (*Generalproben*) had to be opened to the public.³⁵ By 1918, both orchestras had achieved a world-class reputation, thanks to the support by eminent musicians and composers such as Johannes Brahms, Sergey Rachmaninov, Gustav Mahler and Anton Bruckner and the lasting impact of disciplined, yet magnificent conducting by Felix von Weingartner in Vienna and Arthur Nikkisch in Berlin. These cultural merits that the orchestras had earned over years could neither be destroyed by the political instabilities in both new republics, nor by the street fighting among paramilitary

³⁴ Kurt Blaukopf. *Die Wiener Philharmoniker. Wesen Wirken und Werden eines Grossen Orchesters*. (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1986), 45.

³⁵ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 390.

groupings in both capitals that could have kept people from going to concerts. Instead, the attendance reflects a popular perception of both the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics having become integral elements of the German and Austrian lifestyle.³⁶ Demonstrating a sense of cultural continuity, the Vienna Philharmonic's first subscription concert after the war took place on 17 November 1918, less than a week after the war had ended. It was sold out.³⁷

While national politics had little effect on both orchestras at first, however, the economic conundrums both Germany and Austria faced in the post-war period had significant impact on the orchestras. Steinweiss explains that by the early 1920s the omnipresent inflation resulted in diminished professional opportunities for artists.³⁸ While prices for consumer products rose dramatically in 1923 due to inflationary monetary policies, arts in Germany and Austria were severely hit since numerous amateur and semi-professional artists had no job securities and financial resources to follow the pace of inflation. Negatively affected by monetary inflation was also the German *Bürgertum*, the middle class that could no longer patronize the arts as it had in the days of the empire. And at last, the federal states and regional communities could no longer maintain traditional levels of support for the arts. The federal government and communities alike had to cut back drastically on subsidies for theatres, orchestras and museums.³⁹

³⁶ The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra toured neutral Europe during the war to revert the anti-German/anti-Austrian sentiments into more friendly tones. However, guest concerts in Switzerland were cancelled by several city councils due to the furious opposition by the Swiss public. For more information see Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 392.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 394.

³⁸ Steinweiss, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

The economic problems of 1923 had direct impact on both orchestras. The Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics were hit by the inflation in two ways: first, their privately-founded pension funds, in to which the musicians had paid to finance their retirements, were affected because more and more newly printed money was introduced into circulation, thus making the actual value of the savings worthless.⁴⁰ Second, state subsidies were either cut of, or did not keep pace with inflation. The orchestras, therefore, had to address the acute financial crisis and find immediate solutions. Steinweiss argues that musicians employed either by state-run orchestras or music academies formed a kind of aristocracy within the German-speaking arts world, for they enjoyed enviable pay scales, benefit packages and job security. However, the professional musician benefited little from such privileges: old age pension funds at financial institutions were suddenly worthless and job securities offered little remedy if the orchestras were unable to pay their musicians. Governmental subsidies were also of limited help for the inflation made monetary assistance insignificant overnight. In November 1922, the city council of Berlin decided to help the city's philharmonics with 700 000 *Reichsmark*.⁴¹ A few months later, however, one could buy a bus ticket with that amount.

The Philharmonics in Berlin and Vienna had to accept lower pay and even become used to not getting paid at all sometimes.⁴² Remedy came in 1923/24 when according to the Dawes Plan, new currencies, the *Rentenmark* and *Schilling*, were introduced in Germany and Austria. Although both currencies promised some monetary stability, and new fixed wages within both orchestras alleviated the predicament of the

⁴⁰ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 398.

⁴¹ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 105.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 84.

musicians, the new currencies again required sharp cuts in public expenditure.⁴³ Thus, while economic problems eventually declined in Germany and Austria, cultural institutions such as the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics still could not rely on significant financial support from their governments.

Addressing the financial hardships, the Vienna and Berlin orchestras organized some fundraising to support the musicians, their families, widows of former members of the orchestras and the children of musicians.⁴⁴ Additionally, both orchestras benefited from their prestigious reputations and were grateful to receive significant contributions from private philanthropists who were anxious that the orchestras might dissolve due to insolvency. Furthermore, the management of both orchestras decided to sell tickets for the general rehearsal (*Generalproben*), and to perform each subscription concert (*Abonnementkonzert*) an additional two times.⁴⁵

To organize a more profitable orchestra, Wilhelm Furtwaengler, conductor in Berlin since 1922, suggested making use of the Philharmonic's reputation and go on tour, performing in several European cities.⁴⁶ The idea of orchestras travelling and giving concerts in different cities was at that time still a novelty. The potential profits in the entertainment industries were not fully realized yet, and touring through different countries was for large-scale, professional symphony orchestras a logistical challenge. Yet, Furtwaengler's plan was accepted and during the second half of the decade, the Berlin Philharmonic performed all over Europe, making significant revenues and

⁴³ Mark Allinson. *Germany and Austria, 1814-2000*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 76.

⁴⁴ The *Weingartnerfond* and the *Lechnerstiftung* addressed the financial hardships of the Vienna Philharmonic in 1923. See Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 398.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁴⁶ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 104.

improving the orchestra's reputation.⁴⁷ The Vienna Philharmonic even exceeded its German counterpart and went on trans-continental tours. Consolidating its reputation on the American continent, besides making significant profits, the Vienna Philharmonic travelled through South America in 1922, giving more than 38 concerts within three weeks in Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo and Montevideo. A year later, the orchestra travelled again to South America.⁴⁸

The fact that both orchestras suddenly commenced touring through Europe and South America, however, must be related to the political context of the time. Haffner argues that while the Berlin Philharmonic travelled through European cities in the 1920s primarily to make money, the orchestra was also an ambassador of the new German Republic. Exporting German culture to its European neighbours, the Berlin Philharmonic was part of a mosaic that intended to postulate reconciliation on the continent and bring Germany back onto the international stage.⁴⁹ The Vienna Philharmonic, in contrast, was representative of a geo-political mini-state (*Rumpfstaat*) and did not have to struggle with political contexts, such as anti-Austrian sentiments as did their German counterparts. Austria was commonly regarded in the West as a neutral country of no threat to its European neighbours, and that was only brought into the First World War because of Germany's aggressive foreign policies.

⁴⁷ In addition to numerous German cities, the Berlin Philharmonics performed in Rome, Milan, Turin, Stockholm, London, Paris, Brussels, Strasbourg, Antwerp, Lyon, Nice, Copenhagen, Budapest, Zurich, Marseilles and others. See Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 113.

⁴⁸ Helmut Boesse, *Botschafter der Musik - Die Wiener Philharmoniker* (Vienna: Oesterreichischer Bundesverlag, 1967), 5.

⁴⁹ Haffner, *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*, 87.

Besides financial success,⁵⁰ the Austrians also surpassed the philharmonic in Berlin with technological innovation. Sensing that a new time had arrived, the administration recognized that larger audiences meant increasing revenues that were needed to overcome financial hardships. Glimpsing the potential monetary profits and increase in prestige, the media and its new, innovative technologies caught the interest of the orchestra. Broadcasting musical performances and label recording were only in their early stages in the 1920s and did not have an impact on the majority of households in Germany and Austria yet. Under the Nazis, the significance of modern technologies would change dramatically when Joseph Goebbels ensured that every German (and Austrian) household would receive a radio. Yet, the Vienna Philharmonic again seemed to be ahead of its competitors, when in 1925 it signed a contract with the RAVAG company (Österreichische Radio-Verkehrs AG), which then recorded and broadcasted concerts of the orchestra.⁵¹ Even prior, the orchestra had signed contracts with the record label Polyphonia and the first radio station in Vienna, which also indicated interest in cooperating with the city's finest orchestral ensemble.⁵² The significance of this correlation between the arrival of new technologies and a classical, well-established orchestra cannot be overestimated for it ensured the orchestra perfect advertising in the growing media industry, great publicity in Austria and abroad, larger audiences and hence greater popularity, and most importantly, yet another significant source of income.

⁵⁰ Hellsberg argues that besides the South America Tour, few financial remedies were available or of significance. Performing during the early 1920s, according to the author, was for the orchestra primarily a pecuniary matter; the artistic emphasis was only peripheral. Playing for money only and regardless where, for whom and when, however, should not be seen in a too negative light, according to Hellsberg, for the ultimate existence of the orchestra was threatened by the galloping inflation of 1923. For more information see Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 408.

⁵¹ Otto Biba, *Die Unvergleichlichen: Die Wiener Philharmoniker und Salzburg*. (Vienna: Herder, 1977), 47 & Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 414.

⁵² Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 414.

Together, these factors ensured a high degree of financial security for the orchestra by 1938, a security that would be vital to the orchestra's struggle for independence from the Nazis.

The Berlin Philharmonic also experimented with modern technologies. Its conductor Wilhelm Furtwaengler, however, was reluctant to record his music for he thought that records could not reproduce the purity and brilliance of live music at will.⁵³ His conservative attitude was also reflected in his belief in Germany's superiority in music. Often stigmatized as a romantic, Furtwaengler eulogized Beethoven and the other German classical composers. Achieving the highest degree of musical excellence, Furtwaengler was a maestro of monumental symphonic works, and he argued that to understand and feel his music, a talent for sensitivity and intuition was required. Listening to distorted music on records, according to him, would eliminate the listener's experience and learning objective.

In Vienna, the philharmonic followed a more practical and economic path, compared to Furtwaengler's rather philosophical understanding of music, to form a more secure financial basis. The orchestra seemed to achieve its objective when cooperation with the administration of the renowned Salzburg Festival commenced. The festival had established a reputation of distinction over the years and turned into a serious competitor to the Bayreuth Festival in Germany. In the summer of 1925, after the Vienna Philharmonic had toured South America during the previous two summers, the festival organization and the orchestra agreed on a lucrative contract that ensured the orchestra's participation. With the philharmonic on board, the Salzburg Festival developed into an

⁵³ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 237. & Fred Prieberg, *Trail of Strength – Wilhelm Furtwaengler and the Third Reich* (London: Quartet Books, 1991), 279.

international festival that over the years would attract professional conductors, such as Arturo Toscanini, Bruno Walter, and Richard Strauss. Since 1925, the Vienna Philharmonic had participated at the festival every year, ensuring a great boost in its reputation and an important source of income. Due to the success of the festival, a chain reaction followed and the RAVAG started broadcasting the event annually, resulting in yet another increase in audience and revenue for the Vienna Philharmonic.

Berlin, however, remained the cultural centre for aesthetic innovation in the 1920s and, while avant-garde artists revolutionized and innovated music and arts in Germany's capital, Vienna remained, due to the absenteeism of renowned avant-garde artists, provincial. Even though the orchestra was active in finding measures to address its financial problems, the repertoires of the concerts show a predominant conservative tendency towards modern music. While only few modern compositions by contemporary composers were performed during the 1920s and early 1930s, the popularity of the German and Italian classics and romantics (Beethoven, Wagner, Bruckner, Verdi, Puccini) was considered sufficient.

The artistic style and repertoires were of course responsibilities of the artistic director, the conductor. It is therefore symptomatic that Vienna's conductors in the 1920s, Richard Strauss, Felix von Weingartner and Wilhelm Furtwaengler, are often portrayed as the last representatives of the Romantic era. When in 1930 Clemens Krauss became director of the Vienna Philharmonic, a new period in the history of the orchestra began. The 35 year-old Krauss represented a different time and understanding of music, rehearsing more modern compositions than throughout the entire past decade.⁵⁴ The

⁵⁴Otto Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern* (Vienna: Neff Verlag, 1974), 87.

innovative impetus by Kraus, however, was not enthusiastically welcomed by most members of the orchestra, and caused increasing opposition to the conductor. Vienna itself seemed to remain within a cultural periphery since the public also disliked Krauss' programmes of contemporary music and punished the orchestra with its absence or with furious letters to the media and the orchestra itself.⁵⁵ Krauss' artistic interregnum, therefore, lasted only for a few years. In the end, the contract was dissolved due to Krauss' refusal to cooperate with guest conductors who were meant to attract larger audiences. The president of the orchestra, Hugo Burghauser, suggested inviting celebrities from abroad to stop the fall in ticket sales.⁵⁶ Krauss, offended by this plan, ended his engagement in early 1933, ironically at the same time when contemporary arts in Germany also came under more restrictive, critical inspection.

In contrast to Vienna's conservative attitudes towards music, Wilhelm Furtwaengler and the Berlin Philharmonic did not ignore the modern trends contemporary composers had paved, but premiered an enormous number of modern compositions. While Furtwaengler is often regarded as a follower of the romantic tradition, the conductor was aware that modern art could not be ignored. He argued that if contemporary music is revolutionary and has because of its atonality a shocking impact, there must be a good reason for it.⁵⁷ Furtwaengler did not distinguish, as did other artists and the public, contemporary from traditional music, but understood the history of composition as a process. Thus, during the 1920s, Furtwaengler not only directed new compositions by contemporary composers; he also invited them and other artists to come

⁵⁵ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁶ Hugo Burghauser, *Philharmonische Begegnungen. Erinnerungen eines Wiener Philharmonikers* (Zurich: Atlantis-Musikverlag, 1979), 38-40 & Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 438-440.

⁵⁷ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 107.

to Berlin and perform with the philharmonic. Being unsurprisingly subject to severe criticism by the media and the public, similar to the experience by the Vienna Philharmonic, Furtwaengler was stubborn enough to continue his path of directing modern compositions alongside his love for the classical and romantic composers. Although his insistence on giving contemporary artists a chance to be heard would bring him into conflict with the Nazis later on, Furtwaengler was able to perform works by composers such as Stravinsky in 1938, five years after the Nazis had come to power.⁵⁸

Furthermore, it was Germany's orchestra that sought more governmental influence in the form of subsidies. Furtwaengler even warned the city government several times that he would leave the orchestra if it did not receive substantial securities from government authorities.⁵⁹ The financial hardships of the Berlin Philharmonic worsened after 1929, when the Great Depression triggered unemployment, social poverty and closures of cultural institutions in Germany. Again relying on governmental subsidies, the call for active intervention from the German government, the city council of Berlin, and the state of Prussia found increasing support within the orchestra, and it cannot be estimated that the eventual takeover of the orchestra in 1933 was unwelcome when it finally ensured the orchestra's survival and financial stability. The takeover in 1933 by the Nazis would be, according to Potter, a fortuitous development for the survival of the orchestra.⁶⁰ It is therefore paradoxical that while the Vienna Philharmonic was economically self-reliant in 1933, the aesthetically so innovative and artistically

⁵⁸ Potter, "The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic," 54.

⁵⁹ In 1930, the government had cut a 120 000 *Mark* subsidy. Due to Furtwaengler's intervention and personal visit to Chancellor Brüning, the conductor was able to convince the government of the potential damage abroad that could occur if the orchestra had to declare bankruptcy. After the visit, the financial grant was restored. See Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 111.

⁶⁰ Potter, "The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic," 46.

independent Berlin Philharmonic actively pushed for such state intervention, and quid pro quo, loss of autonomy.

In conclusion, the Philharmonics in Vienna and Berlin could not escape the socio-economic and political problems of the 1920s, and flee into an artificial world of music that did not want to be bothered by the imminent problems of the day. While both orchestras were prestigious objects for their governments to send abroad, at home the monetary inflation of 1923 and the Great Depression threatened their future, evaporated their pension funds, reduced and imperilled state subsidies, and made people reluctant to spend their savings on cultural entertainment. This symmetry of experiences both orchestras shared would, however, increasingly change, bringing both ensembles to different, dichotomous paths. While the Berlin ensemble had to rely more and more on governmental support in the early 1930s, but was artistically an independent and innovative bastion, the Vienna Philharmonic concentrated on its Austrian heritage and identity, successfully distinguishing itself from its German neighbour. As Germany's foremost orchestra would welcome state intervention by the Nazis to avoid insolvency, the Vienna Philharmonic were more than reluctant to follow the path its German counterpart had chosen, trying to limit government influence on the orchestra with its hard-won financial independence during the 1920s.

3. The Vienna Philharmonic, 1933-1938

After the Nazi takeover in Germany, Hitler tried to isolate the Austrian Republic by introducing a law that prohibited German artists from performing in the Alpine state. As the German government pursued an aggressive policy towards its southern neighbour, trying to increase the influence of the local National Socialist Party and eventually trying to overthrow the Austrian government, relations between both states perpetually aggravated in the mid-1930s. The political animosities between both countries meant that musicians and artists had increasing difficulties working in both states. Either the German government made it clear that Germany's artists should keep away from cultural events in Austria, such as the Salzburg Festival, or it went so far as to refuse the necessary travel permits.⁶¹ Furthermore, by 1935, some of Germany's artists no longer needed directives from the government, but voluntarily declined to visit Austria due their own ideological convictions.

Realizing the cultural importance of cities such as Vienna and Salzburg, Hitler himself placed great emphasis on the issue: "Since these artists are themselves a great draw they can only make the festival [in Salzburg] more attractive and for that reason must be prevented from appearing there."⁶² As German artists were not permitted to work abroad without special permission, Austria had to accept the loss of a number of German artists and musicians who had regularly performed and exhibited within the country. The political hostilities between both states were, however, not limited to cultural issues. While German artists had to face challenges working in Austria, the Nazis

⁶¹ Gisela Prossnitz, "The Salzburg Festival in the Thirties," in *Austria in the Thirties* John Warren & Kenneth Segar, eds. (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1991), 241.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 241.

placed some burden on the general public, requiring all German citizens to pay a travel tariff of 1000 *Reichsmark* if they intended to leave Germany. Trying to discourage German citizens from visiting other countries (and thus stimulating their economies), the Nazis successfully prevented German citizens from entering the Alpine Republic and attending its cultural festivities. While more than 15 000 German visitors had come to the Vienna Philharmonic's Festival in Salzburg in 1932, a year later, only 850 visitors accepted the financial burden to attend the festival.⁶³

Despite the forced isolation by Germany, Austria managed to attract international attention and to maintain its status as an influential ambassador of Austrian culture. Such attention increased with the arrival of numerous German Jewish artists, after being driven from their homeland. Conductors such as Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, and composer Arnold Schoenberg all migrated from Germany to Austria, and, although their stay might have been temporary, Austria experienced a momentary cultural boost with the arrival of such international, talented artists. It is, therefore, somewhat ironic that while the Nazis discriminated against and persecuted Germany's Jewish artists and simultaneously attempted to politically isolate the Austrian Republic, both the Alpine state and the exiled artists formed an informal and temporary alliance that helped overcome some of the hostility the German Reich exhibited toward them. While numerous Jewish artists fled to Vienna where they were able to augment the city's cultural scene, the Berlin Philharmonic and other established orchestras and opera houses had to accept the forced layoffs of some of their members.

The Salzburg Festival was for the Vienna Philharmonic an incredible ordeal. In addition to the opera and concert season, the philharmonic committed itself to

⁶³ Ibid., 240 & Allinson, *Germany and Austria, 1814-2000*, 107.

participating annually at the festival, performing a large number of symphonic concerts and operas.⁶⁴ Due to the quality of performances and the international success that the Salzburg Festival was able to attract, Austria's reputation as a cultural centre could not simply be demolished, as the Nazis had hoped. Even Goebbels' press boycott, prohibiting German journalists from attending the festival, did not inhibit the success of the festival and the accomplishments of the Vienna Philharmonic. International celebrities, such as the Crown Prince of Italy, Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt's mother, the Duke of Windsor, and even the German celebrities Marlene Dietrich and Thomas Mann, came to Salzburg in the mid-1930s; the number of visitors increased annually and the names of prominent people showed a greater exclusivity from year to year. The author Carl Zuckmayer claimed that "the Salzburg fairy tale lasted for another half decade after 1933, and its fame and glory were expected to take people's minds off the appalling economic conditions, the uncertain political situation and most of all, the constant threat of *Anschluss*."⁶⁵ In fact, the philharmonic's summer festival was anything but a sanctuary from the political world. Those who came between 1933 and 1938 came to demonstrate the faith in Austria and their belief that the republic had to remain independent.⁶⁶

The intrigue-like interventions by the Nazis into Austrian politics and cultural affairs were increasingly viewed with antipathy. While numerous artists and musicians were not opposed to the Nazi takeover in Germany itself in 1933, the situation in Austria was dramatically different. The intervention into Austria's cultural affairs resulted in resentments within Austrian society, at least prior to 1938, and although a number of Austrians would welcome the forceful annexation, the *Anschluss*, of their

⁶⁴ Biba, *Die Unvergleichlichen: Die Wiener Philharmoniker und Salzburg*, 50.

⁶⁵ Prossnitz, "The Salzburg Festival in the Thirties," 246.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 246.

country in 1938, a closer look reveals that most Austrians were anxious not to cede their traditional lifestyles and cultural customs to a German dictatorship. As the example of the Vienna Philharmonic under Nazi control would demonstrate after 1938, preserving socio-cultural independence from Berlin was a major priority for many Austrians.

Apart from the political hostilities that Germany and Austria fought on a cultural platform, the pre-*Anschluss* years marked some of the greatest years the Vienna Philharmonic experienced. Between 1933 and 1938 the Vienna orchestra was able to attract Oscar Toscanini to perform regularly with the philharmonic. Giving an additional boost to the idea of Austrian independence and cultural importance (Toscanini was a known anti-fascist), the arrival of the maestro – arguably the greatest conductor at the time – epitomizes the acclaimed status that the Vienna Philharmonic had achieved over the previous decades and suggests that such reputation could not be undermined by Germany’s political intrigues, including the boycott of the Salzburg Festival. Abandoning the traditional system of engaging one main conductor, the philharmonic decided to switch to a system of inviting guest conductors (*Gastdirigentensystem*), after the contract with Krauss was not renewed. Toscanini and other international artists – ironically also German conductors such as Furtwaengler, Strauss, Walter and Klemperer – bestowed the city of Vienna with one of its most artistically prosperous eras in history. In addition to the financially rewarding Salzburg Festival, the seasonal philharmonic concerts were regularly sold out, and due to the success in attracting international artists and celebrities, the growing entertainment industry could not close its eyes to the philharmonic’s achievements. In 1934 the National Broadcasting Company in New York, the *NBC*, commenced broadcasting the Salzburg Festival under Toscanini and thus further

enhanced Austria's reputation for being a global cultural ambassador of classical music.⁶⁷ The orchestra's success subsequently allowed a high degree of financial security and – unlike the case in Berlin – negated the need for state-intervention, both before and after 1938.

Economically, the orchestra was so well-off that it could invest in real estate, managing to acquire a number of properties that the *Verein* could use for recreational activities, meetings and festivities, and that were considered as assets for any upcoming inflation or economic crisis in the future.⁶⁸ The Vienna Philharmonic also continued its practise of touring through Europe to enhance its reputation and increase its revenues. During the mid-1930s, the orchestra performed more than 43 times in eight European countries.⁶⁹

To sum up, the change of direction the Vienna Philharmonic undertook in the early 1930s ensured a high degree of financial security. Able to cope with the Great Depression, the orchestra was never in such a financially catastrophic situation as the Berlin Philharmonic. Quintessentially, the Viennese orchestra was to a considerable degree autonomous and not reliant on government support. Even though the relations between the Austrian government and the orchestra were friendly in nature, the orchestra itself never metamorphosed into an orchestral puppet that required or asked for governmental supervision. While the Berlin orchestra was threatened by bankruptcy several times in the late 1920s and early 1930s and government authorities subsequently had to step in, the Vienna orchestra managed to distance itself from political alignments

⁶⁷ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 448.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 452.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 445.

and was naturally suspicious to relinquish control over its own affairs once the Nazis had come to power.

Both the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics prior to the Third Reich serve as prime examples of how diverse the musical scene in democratic Austria and Germany was at the time. While both orchestras pursued their self-interests in performing music of high *niveau*, in order to be economically self-reliant, the different approaches towards government involvement illustrate that a certain interdependence between politics and culture was evident, even prior to Hitler's takeover. While both governments greatly appreciated their symphonic orchestras as cultural ambassadors, it was only the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, in contrast to its Viennese counterpart, that actively pushed for increasing state intervention, thus proving how incompatible and contradictory attitudes among cultural institutions towards their governments during the 1920s could be – a tendency that would continue into the 1930s.

III

The Berlin Philharmonic in the Third Reich

1. Introduction - Music in the Third Reich

Music was of importance *extraordinaire* to the Nazis. Never before in Germany's past was music so praised as a vital segment of the country's history and culture as in the Third Reich. Simultaneously, music was never so centralized and regulated as under the Nazis.⁷⁰ Georges Goldschmidt argues that music in the Third Reich can only be understood in relation to National Socialist doctrines. According to these doctrines, the German people had to be re-united under the umbrella of one *völkisch*, racially-structured system in which Hitler was the undisputed central authority. This system instituted the subordination of the individual to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the German people; following this idea of collective unity, the resulting coordination of Germany's social, economic, religious and cultural landscape had a profound impact on the German musical sector. Bearing resemblance to the pyramidal-structured state hierarchy, cultural life in Germany was accordingly reorganized and centralized.

⁷⁰ Pascal, Huyn, „Dunkler die Geigen...“, in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik* (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 10.

The reorganization of Germany's cultural life was, like most aspects of German society, subordinated to Hitler's predominant goal: the elimination of Germany's alleged enemies and the expansion of the German Reich.⁷¹ Once in power, the Nazis' fight against the Jewish-Bolshevik 'menace' was introduced into official state legislation. The oppression of Germany's Jewish minority (and political opposition) resulted in a politicization of the arts that had commenced during the Weimar Years. Since Germany's Jews were now defined as official state-enemies, their producing, exercising, broadcasting and even publishing of music were increasingly curtailed. Music in the Third Reich, therefore, was in general terms, a reflection of Nazi ideology, and the subsequent praise and emphasis on Germany's classical and romantic tradition, with Beethoven, Wagner and Bruckner as its pivotal Aryan paladins, meant that all other forms of music, in essence, non-German or modernist in character, were due to their "suspect, dangerous and racially inferior qualities" severely restricted and oppressed.⁷² Praising the German classical composers, the Nazis understood how to effectively erect a propaganda machinery that aimed at constructing the image of a mythical resurrection of the German empire.⁷³ Thus, Wagner and Bruckner were no longer simply representatives of a past era, but were introduced to the German public as vital heroes whose mythological music was an essential component of a larger framework of National Socialist culture. Aimed at realizing such ideological culture, two phenomena went hand in hand: first, ideologically using music to construct an effective propaganda apparatus

⁷¹ Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt, „Nazikultur – Todeskultur,“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik* (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhausen, 2006), 24.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷³ According to Stephan Eisel, the Nazis excluded religious and church music from being part of this image of Germany's mythical resurrection. Instead, the anti-religious stances the Nazis exhibited towards the church meant that all forms of religious music were prohibited and banned from public schools and other institutions that the government controlled. See Stephan Eisel, *Musik und Politik* (Munich: Aktuell Verlag, 1990), 41.

that would encourage the German people embrace to the spirit of National Socialism; and second, the reorganization and bureaucratization of the cultural sector.

With the creation of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in March of 1933 Minister Goebbels successfully gained control over German culture. With the creation of the *Reichskulturkammer*, the Reich's Chamber of Culture, also headed by Goebbels, in September of 1933 music, and subsequently the Berlin Philharmonics and the Vienna Philharmonics later on, fell victim to Germany's reorganization, as did other cultural sectors like theatre and visual arts. Since all professional artists and musicians were compulsorily integrated, the chamber itself rapidly turned into a major collective umbrella-organization that was not governed by artists but by National Socialists. For the musical sector, the sudden influx of Nazi control and influence over the musical profession meant that a separate chamber for music was created, the *Reichsmusikkammer* (RMK), which in turn was subcategorized into five different branches, each headed by its own director.⁷⁴ This hierarchical structure was meant to establish monitoring control over Germany's musical elite. It was characterized by an increasing bureaucratization, with numerous chambers and sub-chambers that would cooperate, but more often than not, rival each other and struggle over spheres of influence.⁷⁵ As a result, both the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics would experience conflicting orders and directives from the numerous government branches.

Germany's cultural *Gleichschaltung*, or coordination into collective administrative bodies under Nazi auspices, was in fact not as unprecedented and unwelcomed by German artists as it is often portrayed in historiographical surveys. While

⁷⁴ The sub-chambers were for composition, publishing of music, professional orchestras, and entertainment music. See Fred Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Cologne: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Politik, 1968).

⁷⁵ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 47.

it is legitimate to argue that the removal of some of Germany's most talented artists, writers and musicians, and the banning and destruction of their works, marks a black spot in Germany's cultural history, there is sufficient evidence that a great number of German intellectuals and artists, political and apolitical, were not opposed to most of the cultural policies enforced by the Nazis, but endorsed the nationalization of their professions into state-run bodies.⁷⁶ Steinweiss explains that during the aftermath of the Great Depression, in the early 1930s, unemployment and underemployment were in no other sector more visible than in the cultural one. Thus, prior to the Nazi-takeover numerous union-like organizations were formed with the intention of collectively improving the situation of Germany's artists.⁷⁷ The *Deutscher Musikerverband* and the German Theater Association were two major organizations that were formed prior to the Third Reich, that exemplify the fact that artists in Germany were by no means principally opposed to the idea of collectivization. Germany is known as a country of clubs, associations, and *Vereine*, so the creation of the chamber of culture in 1933 does not mark a single, isolated event that caused no major opposition, but was actually welcomed by most German artists. The promised 'care and love'⁷⁸ that the government would show to its beloved artists – wage improvements and old age pensions – convinced most artists at a time when unemployment was high and government spending within the cultural sector negligible. For the Berlin Philharmonic the financial situation of the orchestra was depressing enough that even Germany's foremost symphonic orchestra proved no exception in this

⁷⁶ Steinweiss, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 47.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁸ Quotation by Heinz Ihler, functionary in the Propaganda Ministry. See Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (London: MacMillan, 1994), 28.

regard, but welcomed the Nazis' promise of more government support and financial security.

Despite their seemingly philanthropic support for arts and culture, the Nazis intensified their oppression of Germany's Jews drastically once they were in power. Beginning in 1933, Jewish citizens who had worked for governmental institutions such as schools, universities, or state-run theatres and orchestras, were forced to resign from their positions. This process of forcing Jews out of office was restricted to state-employed Jews at first, and was by no means well-coordinated or rapid in implementation. Kater explains that with the creation of the chamber of music, every professional musician in Germany became a mandatory member of the chamber, which was necessary to continue work; this collectivization, however, was at first not restricted to German Aryans only. All musicians in 1933 joined this club, including Jewish artists.⁷⁹ The law of suitability of 1933 (*Gesetz zur Eignung*) that would be used to exclude Jewish musicians later on was originally meant to exclude amateur musicians in order to maintain a high degree of artistic quality within the chamber. The Nazis were in fact quite reluctant to denounce some of the country's best Jewish artists. The potential damage to Germany's reputation, the risk of domestic opposition within the Reich, and the successful intervention by some well-known artists and patrons who had a protective hand over some of their Jewish colleagues all played a significant part in Goebbels' considerations. Subsequently, a number of Jewish musicians of fame and talent were not subject to arbitrary discrimination by the Nazis and could enjoy privileges, such as delayed layoffs and temporary allowances to continue within their professions. The privileged status that a minority of state-employed Jewish musicians and other artists

⁷⁹ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 42.

enjoyed is somewhat of a paradox considering the high unemployment rate and social poverty among German musicians and artists during the post-depression years.⁸⁰ However, since Jews consisted only of a tiny minority of the German population, and because some of the most famous Jewish artists were at first allowed to pursue their professions, artistic life in Nazi-Germany seemed to continue relatively undisturbed and with surprising artistic freedoms, despite the removal of numerous, lesser known, Jewish artists all over the country.

For Jewish musicians, the eventual exclusion from the chamber of culture meant a loss of the privilege to perform publicly within the Reich. This process of exclusion, however, required collecting information on Germany's artists. Beginning in late 1933, lengthy questionnaires were given to all professional musicians who had to indicate their religious beliefs. This bureaucratic and ineffective approach to constant surveillance of Germany's musicians was eventually abandoned in 1938.⁸¹ The state bureaucracy was simply not prepared to investigate and examine close to 100,000 members of the music chamber. Jewish musicians could therefore, as long as they were loyal to the government (and not hired by state-owned institutions), continue their work until they were officially excluded from the chamber - a process that could take years.⁸²

The state apparatus was furthermore unsure how to treat German citizens that were half or quarter Jewish or Germans who had Jewish spouses. Not even the

⁸⁰ Ibid, 155.

⁸¹ The president of the *RMK* had to confirm each musician's exclusion from the chamber. From 1933 to 1935, the composer Richard Strauss was president and not a convinced National Socialist. He reluctantly and only with timely delays signed the relevant documents that excluded musicians from the chamber. Strauss was an important factor contributing to the inefficiency of the bureaucratic state apparatus. Strauss had to resign in 1935. See Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 155.

⁸² Steinweiss, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 5 & Fred Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Cologne: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Politik, 1968), 179.

Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 resolved these legal obscurities, and it was up to Goebbels to determine that citizens with quarter-Jewish blood (*Versippte*) were accepted in the chamber. In the case of the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics half-Jews were only tolerated with special permission by the president of the chamber.⁸³ Thus, while Jewish musicians in state-run orchestras like the Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic had to leave, new opportunities for German musicians arose. Kater explains that while political opportunism was a reality in the Third Reich and numerous artists joined the Nazi Party or used connections to high-ranking Nazi functionaries in hopes of moving up on their career ladders, musicians with minor talent were generally unsuccessful despite their National Socialist convictions; apolitical artists of talent, on the other hand, who neither indicated interest nor disdain for Nazi policies, could continue and even prosper in their careers.⁸⁴ The Nazi emphasis on quality, despite the removal of talented Jewish artists, meant that only skilled musicians had a prospect of filling the positions that were open in orchestras, such as the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics. Austria and Germany were, after all, countries with longstanding musical traditions, and as there was no lack of high-quality musicians, the replacement in most orchestras was a smooth, and to the public unnoticeable, process.

The third group of artists in the Third Reich was comprised of ones who had extraordinary talent and that were politically engaged. Without doubt, such artists prospered in the Third Reich. Frequently enjoying official support and backing by high-ranking Nazi officials, a number of talented artists utilized their connections to improve their careers by profiting from the misery their Jewish rivals had to endure. One of the

⁸³ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 161.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

most prominent examples of such artists was the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic beginning in 1951, Herbert von Karajan, who as a young conductor in the Third Reich enjoyed rapid success due to his membership in the Nazi Party. Karajan's first guest performances with the Berlin Philharmonic in the late 1930s were certainly politically backed – in this case by minister Göring – albeit the bitter opposition by the orchestra's main conductor, Wilhelm Furtwaengler.⁸⁵ It seemed that the amalgam of musical talent and political opportunism Karajan represented was the ideal mixture for a musician's career to flourish in Nazi Germany.

On the other side of the musicians' spectrum were Jewish artists who were famous, but that could not continue their work in the Third Reich. While Karajan and others certainly profited from their political opportunism, some of the world's most famous conductors and composers, such as Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer and Arnold Schoenberg, all working in Berlin in 1933, were, despite their popularity, released from their positions and hounded out of the country. Germany was thus deprived of some of its best artists, who had worked in Germany for years. At the Berlin *Staatstheater*, a performance with Klemperer as conductor on March 30, 1933 was cancelled due to the local authority's 'inability to provide sufficient security for the general public; paralleling the case of Walter a few days before in Leipzig, riots (unofficially planned by militant NS-groups) were expected in Berlin during one of Klemperer's concerts.⁸⁶ The departure of such high-ranking artists as Walter and Klemperer was a serious blow for the Berlin Philharmonic that had worked with both conductors numerous times in the past. But

⁸⁵ The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote on April 9, 1938 that Karajan 'dropped a bomb' with his excellent performance in Berlin. See Robert Oboussier, *Berliner Musikchronik* (Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1969), 148.

⁸⁶ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 44.

while German culture was deprived of some of its major cultural exponents, Austria remained a de-facto sovereign state until 1938 and experienced the arrival of numerous German artists and intellectuals who were forced or voluntarily chose to leave the Reich. While Berlin and the Philharmonic, hence, were faced with the departure of Jewish artists, Vienna and the city's philharmonic was the momentary profiteer that welcomed some of the best artists that the 20th century had seen.

In Berlin, the creation of the chamber of music had a profound impact on the local philharmonic. While the orchestra had developed a tradition of artistic independence in its short existence – the orchestra had just celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1932 – the members of the orchestra could not avoid the collectivization and restructuring of Germany's musical landscape. All members of the orchestra had to become members of the chamber, including, at least at first, its Jewish musicians. This meant that from one day to the next, the musicians suddenly were faced with the situation of being supervised by a Nazi machine. Even though the orchestra might not have experienced the immediate impact of this structural change – the concert season continued in 1933 unaffectedly – the Berlin Philharmonic would soon enough realize that its artistic freedom was increasingly curtailed. By contrast, the Vienna Philharmonic was until 1938 not directly bothered by the German government. The Viennese orchestra was in the somewhat privileged situation of being a passive spectator that could observe how the musical profession in Germany was altered after the Nazi takeover, and thus await the inevitable: Austria's annexation and the orchestra's takeover by the Nazis.

2. The Berlin Philharmonic, 1933-1945

Erik Levi labels the Berlin Philharmonic under Nazi auspices in the Third Reich a ‘special case’: the orchestra was an independent co-operative, with policy decisions placed in the hands of the musicians themselves, who all owned shares in the orchestra. The Nazis had at first no legal basis upon which to impose the law of 7 April, 1933 – the reinstatement of tenure for civil servants (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*).⁸⁷ The law intended to re-introduce tenure for civil servants, and thus allowed the Nazis to dispose of any unwanted bureaucrats or state-employed workers. Evidently, the law was meant to rationalize the release of all civil servants who were of Jewish confession or who were politically not tolerable. Since the Berlin Philharmonic, however, was not a state-owned body, unlike most other musical ensembles, theatres, opera houses or museums in Germany, the orchestra was in the unique situation to resist at least temporarily Nazi pressure. The Jewish members of the orchestra could continue work for a while, while state-employed artists, musicians, conductors, (music) teachers, intendants and curators of Jewish origin or confession were released from their positions after April 7.⁸⁸

Little changed for the Berlin Philharmonic during the first few months of the Hitler regime. Besides the cancellation of a Bruno Walter concert (Richard Strauss

⁸⁷ Ibid., 198

⁸⁸ There were, however, numerous exceptions. Civil servants, who had worked since 1914 and prior were granted permission to continue work. As well, veterans and civil servants, who had veterans from WWI within their families were at first not released from their positions. For more information see Christian Zehntner, *Drittes Reich und II. Weltkrieg* (Rastatt: Pabel-Moewig Verlag, 2000).

agreed to fill in for Walter), the events of January 30 had at first little impact on the orchestra. Its main conductor, Wilhelm Furtwaengler, was confident in his ability to contain Nazi pressure from his orchestra in order to maintain its autonomous status. According to Levi, it was the persona of Furtwaengler that allowed the orchestra to preserve a degree of artistic liberty. As Furtwaengler was next to Toscanini probably the most respected conductor in the world at the time, the Nazis were eager to court the famous conductor from Germany and avoid potential conflicts with both him and the orchestra.⁸⁹ In addition, Furtwaengler personified an ‘ideal exemplar of an Aryan artist.’ He was tall, with blue eyes, and was known as an advocate of the German Romantic tradition, favouring symphonic works by Beethoven, Wagner and Bruckner.⁹⁰ Realizing Furtwaengler’s potential of being a shining ambassador for Germany’s alleged superiority in Western art and music, the Nazis, including Hitler himself, allowed the conductor a range of privileges and artistic freedoms. As a result, there was minor intervention into the orchestra’s daily affairs at first; Goebbels himself gave his assurance to Furtwaengler in 1933 that all musicians, including the Jewish members, could continue their work – a privilege that very few other Jewish artists were granted.⁹¹ Had the orchestra not been represented by such an engaged character as the flamboyant Furtwaengler, it is likely that the Berlin Philharmonic would not have been able to resist the avalanche of Nazi pressure and *actively* protect its Jewish members.

Although the orchestra was in the privileged situation of being conducted by such a famous celebrity as Wilhelm Furtwaengler, who had attracted ardent audiences over years, the orchestra’s financial hardships, which had originated in the 1920s,

⁸⁹ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 198.

⁹⁰ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 151.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

exacerbated during the early 1930s. For the fiscal year 1931/1932, the city of Berlin was forced to cut its subsidies for the orchestra by 30%. The threat of insolvency was imminent, and only the city's plan to merge the Berlin Symphony Orchestra (that had existed since 1907) and the Berlin Philharmonic, secured the philharmonic's temporary survival.⁹² Even though the city government was able to cut its subsidies for two separate orchestras down to one, the financial stringencies did not improve significantly. In early 1933, the orchestra still had a deficit of 74 000 *Reichsmark*, and bankruptcy continued to be a threat.

a) The Takeover

The orchestra's financial problems were not new in 1933; the orchestra had had sufficient time to address its problems. In 1929, plans were put in place to change ownership of the philharmonic to the City of Berlin, the *Land* (state) Prussia and the federal government. All three were supposed to become shareholders of the co-operative, owning 51% of the shares.⁹³ Losing the majority of shares, and thus theoretically the right of self-determination, the orchestra was willing to exchange its independence for financial security. In case of future financial deficits, the government would step in and help out the orchestra. In return, state authorities would own the majority of the orchestra's shares, and thus would have a voice in making major decisions. Due to the 1929 financial crash and global economic crisis, however, and the federal government's

⁹² In 1932, the Berlin Symphony Orchestra was dissolved, and a number of musicians were absorbed into the Berlin Philharmonic, while the majority of musicians were either unemployed or transferred to some other ensembles. See Haffner, *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*, 98.

⁹³ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 57.

subsequent reluctance to invest in the orchestra, the plans for changing ownership were abandoned.

The existence of the orchestra, therefore, continued to be endangered and again in 1933 the plan for a take-over by government authorities was considered as the only reasonable solution. In the spring of 1933, Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda indicated interest in taking the orchestra under its auspices, but when Hitler himself guaranteed financial securities to Furtwaengler in August 1933, it was decided that the German government itself was to become the sole owner of the orchestra. After weeks of working out the legal formalities, the members of the Berlin Philharmonic sold their shares of 600 *RM* each to the German government, which in turn became the sole shareholder of the orchestra on November 1, 1933.⁹⁴ With the orchestra's relinquishing of self-government, including its economic affairs, a tradition of independence from state intervention and artistic autonomy abruptly ended.

The anticipation that a *Goetterdaemmerung*-like atmosphere would materialize within the orchestra, in a sense that after its loss of independence, the orchestra would be apprehensive of increasing political pressure and ideological infiltration by the Nazi party, however, was not fulfilled. The orchestra's reorganization was, according to Potter, not considered as invasive; vice versa, the change was welcomed by most musicians and long overdue.⁹⁵ In exchange for becoming a

⁹⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁹⁵ Potter argues that "the failure to nationalize the Berlin Philharmonics prior to Hitler's rise to power was due to the lack of cooperation from all government branches concerned. Particularly the left, members of the communist party had been against lavishing support on the philharmonics for some years, initially because they considered the orchestra to carry a high snob factor, and that money could be better used for social services." In addition, "the refusal to cooperate was due in part to the absence of a responsible office in the Reich government, a problem that caused the philharmonics endless frustration. Unlike the Berlin city government, the Reich had no administrative body for cultural affairs at the time. The philharmonics usually approached the ministry of the interior and the ministry of finance, shuttling back and forth between

Reichsorchester, the Berlin Philharmonic with its maestro Furtwaengler, was ensured an astoundingly high degree of artistic freedom. Within the orchestra, the illusive perception developed that Furtwaengler, with his firm, protective hand, would safely steer the orchestra through these tumultuous years. Having developed a deep trust for their conductor over the years, the philharmonic was not opposed to the idea of turning into a political instrument that the Nazis could use for their own, ideological purposes. As Furtwaengler reached a compromise with Goebbels – that the philharmonic (under Furtwaengler) would be relatively untouched as long as the conductor declared himself willing to stay in Berlin – the philharmonic ostensibly won the lottery of its orchestra’s future: financial security and Furtwaengler’s stay in Berlin.⁹⁶ Having developed a close relationship with the philharmonic, turning it into a world-class orchestra, Furtwaengler agreed to stay in Berlin and by that allowed the Nazis to keep one of Germany’s best artists within its borders. The price for this alleged win-win situation was, however, high: by not only abandoning its right of being a self-governing body to the Nazis, which in turn guaranteed financial protection, the Berlin Philharmonic submitted itself to Furtwaengler, who despite his extraordinary talent, selfishly and undemocratically demanded total obedience from his musicians: a de facto control over the orchestra’s affairs.⁹⁷

the two with requests for financial aid.” As none of the Reich ministries (and Prussian ministries) saw themselves entirely responsible, the orchestra received insufficient, piece-meal funds. See Potter, “The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic,” 41&45.

⁹⁶ Furtwaengler was also awarded the position of director of the *Berliner Staatsoper*. See Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 50.

⁹⁷ Opinions about Furtwaengler’s nature differ greatly. It can be argued that Furtwaengler was an egocentric character who enjoyed being in the centre of attention and who liked publicity, acknowledgment and power. During the Hitler regime, Furtwaengler was announced *Reichskultursenator*, *Preussischer Staatsrat*, Vice-President of the Chamber of Musik, and acquired numerous presidencies in clubs and associations, such as the *Deutsche Automobil Club* or the *Deutsche-Italienische Gesellschaft*. See Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 160-161.

The reaction of the philharmonic to these changes was, unsurprisingly, enthusiastic. Its conductor had just prolonged his stay in Berlin, and the orchestra's financial predicament was solved overnight. But although the orchestra had never indicated sympathy for or against Hitler and his regime prior to its takeover, it is evident that the Berlin Philharmonic did not metamorphose into a bastion of Nazi sympathizers; only a handful of musicians decided to join the Nazi Party, which overall, would attract more than 8 million members by 1945.⁹⁸ Instead, the orchestra rather resembled the socio-political and cultural landscape of 1920s Berlin – a city that was known for its innovative character. The Berlin Philharmonic, although it welcomed the Nazi takeover of the orchestra and thus had all reason to be subservient to its new patron, never turned into a politically active instrument that would advertise the ideological concepts and racist ideas that the Nazis wanted to circulate. In fact, from 1933 until the end of the Third Reich, only 7.2% of its members (8 musicians out of 110) decided to join the Nazi Party.⁹⁹ Juxtaposed to other symphony orchestras in other regions of the Reich (such as Vienna), the history of the Berlin Philharmonics constitutes a unique paradox: it freely agreed to relinquish its independence to the Nazis, while it simultaneously remained remarkably apolitical and resistant to Nazi pressure.

b) Restructuring the Philharmonic

The restructuring of the orchestra in November 1933 meant that a separate body, a board of directors (*Aufsichtsrat*), was established that was meant to oversee the

⁹⁸ Zehntner, *Drittes Reich und II. Weltkrieg*, 424.

⁹⁹ Tony Judt, *Postwar – A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 52.

orchestra's affairs. In practice, Furtwaengler was the de facto ruler of the orchestra; de jure, however, the board of directors that consisted of eight members (officials from the Ministries of Propaganda, Finances and the Interior) was the legislative instrument of the ensemble. The orchestra itself had only one representative on the board – a rather cosmetic concession.¹⁰⁰ In addition to having a passive board of directors that worked in the background, Furtwaengler was assigned two assistants to help out with the daily correspondence and secretarial work. For the first time in its history, the orchestra was assigned an external commissioner (*Kommissar*), Dr. Rudolf von Schmidtseck, who was responsible for the orchestra's financial affairs and human resources. Schmidtseck was also a member of the *NSDAP*, and was thus meant to externally represent the Reich's government and internally ensure a degree of National Socialist spirit within the orchestra.¹⁰¹ Although one could assume that von Schmidtseck was not particularly welcomed by the orchestra – since he was an outsider – there is no empirical evidence that suggests that there was any opposition to the orchestra's new *Kommissar*. In fact, Furtwaengler's correspondence suggests that the conductor accepted von Schmidtseck, who in practice, served as his right hand.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the orchestra was then officially represented by a member of the National Socialist party.

In addition to the commissioner, the formerly elected president of the orchestra, Lorenz Höber, continued de facto with his work. Furtwaengler could rely on his well-organized *Vorstand* that had worked in his position for more than ten years and that had the support of the orchestra. Being responsible for scheduling rehearsals and concerts, Höber ensured that some of the executive tasks remained within the orchestra. It is clear,

¹⁰⁰ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 59.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 57.

however, that even though his work was appreciated by the orchestra and the management, Höber was by no means irreplaceable. As long as he worked according to the general guidelines that the party, and Goebbels in particular, expected, the musician Höber was allowed to preside over some of the orchestra's affairs.

In addition to the board of directors, the commissioner and the *Orchestervorstand*, Furtwaengler's private secretary, Berta Geissmar, also played an important part within the orchestra's organizational structure. Although Geissmar was Furtwaengler's private secretary, the maestro was able to integrate Geissmar into the orchestra's mosaic of different responsibilities, and she thus became an informal employee paid by the orchestra. Geissmar, however, was Jewish. The Ministry of Propaganda was aware of her status and remained highly resistant to accepting Geissmar as the philharmonic's official secretary. During the Third Reich, Geissmar was never officially employed by the orchestra, although Furtwaengler was able to ensure a regular paycheque for his secretary.¹⁰³

From a financial standpoint, therefore, the necessary loss of self-determination resulted in a process of re-structuring, which established an in-practice unimportant board of directors, a self-centred conductor, an official representative of the Nazi Party, a commissioner, and an *Orchestervorstand* that was responsible for the daily affairs. In practice, however, little had changed. The Jewish members of the orchestra were, thanks to Furtwaengler's vehement intervention,¹⁰⁴ permitted to continue in their

¹⁰³ In her memoirs, Geissmar gratefully recalls that she always could rely on Furtwaengler's support, and that he declared her irreplaceable. Geissmar explains in her autobiography that at first, she considered the Nazi threats - mostly discriminatory phone calls - against her to be jokes. See Berta Geissmar, *Musik im Schatten der Politik* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1945), 84-86.

¹⁰⁴ Furtwaengler vehemently supported the case of his Jewish musicians and artists. In a letter to Goebbels, publicized in the *Vossische Zeitung* 11 April, 1933, Furtwaengler claimed that the foremost principle of the arts had to be quality. Removing Jewish artists of talent, who could not arbitrarily be replaced, could not be

profession; the conductor himself had declared he would continue working with the philharmonic, orchestrating its affairs more than ever; the board of directors worked, if at all, only in the background; and for a while there was no intervention whatsoever in the orchestra's artistic affairs. The programmes of the Berlin Philharmonic were in fact remarkably modern. Potter argues that despite the common notion of *Gleichschaltung*, the propaganda ministry stayed clear of aesthetic issues in the case of the Berlin Philharmonic. If the repertoires from 1934 to 1945, according to Potter, can serve as a reflection of the ministry's involvement in artistic matters, it is safe to say that such involvement was very limited.¹⁰⁵ The repertoires of the orchestra were only slightly more conservative. As late as 1938, Furtwaengler still promoted the Russian composer Stravinsky by recording the composition *Card Game* under the supervision of the composer, who was known for his experimental, atonal, modern symphonic works – usually a thorn in the eyes of most Nazis. In addition, the Berlin Philharmonic occasionally played works by Bela Bartok – although his name was often linked to the East European, Jewish circles – at events that were even sponsored by the *RMK*.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, works by Mendelsohn-Bartoldy, in particular his infamous *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, continued to be a popularly performed masterpiece, despite the composer having been labelled 'degenerate' by the Nazis. Kater indicates that music by non-Aryan composers was in fact regularly performed, particularly during the first

in Germany's interest. Goebbels used this incident to promptly release a response to Furtwaengler's critique, arguing that the *real* German artists now had a chance to show their talents. See Joseph Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich – Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1983), 86-87.

¹⁰⁵ Potter, "The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic," 53.

¹⁰⁶ When Bartok found out that he was not featured in the "Degenerate Music Exhibition" in 1938, he promptly demanded that he too be on the list of undesirables. Potter, „The Nazi Seizure of the Berlin Philharmonic," 53.

few years of the Third Reich.¹⁰⁷ Later on, works by modern composers such as Stravinsky were restricted only in correlation to the political events of the time. As the Soviet Union and France became official enemies of the Reich, the performing of symphonic works by composers from such countries was not tolerated any longer (although even then, exceptions proved common). It is evident that, at first, Goebbels and his ministry interfered very little, trying not to provoke a conflict with Furtwaengler who was, after all, responsible for the orchestra's repertoires. As Kater argues, the Nazis were smart enough to slacken the reins over the country's musical sector and to allow a certain degree of artistic freedom and tolerance, while simultaneously constructing a monitoring apparatus over Germany's musical landscape.¹⁰⁸

c) The Mannheim Incident

Furtwaengler's ostensibly unlimited powers were first contested in the city of Mannheim. The Berlin Philharmonic under Furtwaengler performed in the South German city together with the orchestra of the Mannheim *Staatstheater* on April 26, 1933. Furtwaengler had been a concertmaster in Mannheim earlier in his career and since the philharmonic was touring the region in any event, it agreed to return to Furtwaengler's old domain and play a concert consisting of both orchestras, including a plethora of more than 170 musicians.¹⁰⁹ A dispute, however, arose when members of the Mannheim orchestra were appalled by Furtwaengler's decision to place some of the solo

¹⁰⁷ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 167.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 155.

artists of the Mannheim orchestra in the second row (who thus would play the less challenging second or third part), while musicians of the Berlin Philharmonic were granted the privilege of playing the first part.¹¹⁰ In reality, the Berlin Philharmonic qualitatively surpassed the musicians of the Mannheim orchestra by far, and normally there would have been no reason for a heated discussion; after all, the city of Mannheim was grateful to Furtwaengler's visit along with such a renowned orchestra as the Berlin Philharmonic.

By 1933, however, times had changed. State-legitimated forms of anti-Semitism increasingly found a way into German society and as some of the solo-artists of the Mannheim orchestra bitterly complained about their symbolic degradation by Furtwaengler to play in the second row, the issue quickly turned into a political one. While Mannheim was known as a stronghold for Nazi support (*Hochburg*) and had numerous Nazi members in the orchestra of the *Staatstheater*, the Berlin Philharmonic was blessed with having some of the most renowned solo artists of the time – who simultaneously were Jewish – within its ensemble, including concertmaster Simon Goldberg and the solo-cellists Nicolai Graudan and Joseph Schuster. Consequently, some opposition arose when Furtwaengler declined the request of Mannheim's president of the orchestra to allow the hosts to pre-arrange the seating of both orchestras' musicians for the particular concert. Naturally, an artist with the stature of Furtwaengler had to decline such a request; he was the star and, conscious of his powers, he could not leave such a task to someone else. Besides, Furtwaengler very well predicted the political background of the request; had he left the task of seating the musicians from both orchestras to

¹¹⁰ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 99.

someone in Mannheim, none of his international, Jewish stars would have been seated in the first row.¹¹¹

In the interim a protest arose in Mannheim, after Furtwaengler had declared that only he would be responsible for the exact seating of the musicians. Some members of the Mannheim orchestra argued that German artists of talent were downgraded to the second row, while dozens of Jewish musicians were preferred by Furtwaengler.¹¹² In addition, a letter by Furtwaengler to Minister Goebbels, which had been previously publicized and in which the conductor vehemently argued for an end to the political intervention in Germany's musical sector, had not fallen into desuetude yet; apparently Furtwaengler's alleged support for talented Jewish artists was known in Mannheim. All this stood in juxtaposition to the new National Socialist era under Hitler, an era in which the German Reich was supposed to re-strengthen itself and fight its internal enemies. Furtwaengler, however, remained uncompromising and threatened to cancel the concert, should his standing be questioned and his privileges as artistic director be curtailed.

When during the last rehearsal (*Generalprobe*), the day before the concert, Mannheim's president of the orchestra, August Sander, once again approached the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic to leave the seating to the hosts, Furtwaengler renewed his refusal. Unsurprisingly, the mood prior to the *concerto grossi* was not the best, and although the programme – which was dedicated to Wagner's 50th obit – was a great success, the Mannheim incident underlined, on the one hand, how palpably arts in Germany had become intermingled with politics, and how increasingly challenging it had

¹¹¹ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 155.

¹¹² Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 99.

become to be remain neutral on the other hand. After the concert, the president of the Mannheim orchestra paid a visit to Furtwaengler in his dressing room, renewing allegations regarding the conductor's lack of national pride and integrity. Furtwaengler, outraged about these numerous confrontations in his old hometown, threw the scores at Sander's feet and predictably failed to attend the following party – an obvious and symbolic gesture of protest.¹¹³

The Mannheim incident, however, did not end with the after-party that the Mannheim orchestra had organized for its guests from Berlin. On April 29 an article in the *Mannheimer Hakenkreuzbanner*, a right-wing magazine, lauded the twin concert, but explicitly criticized the fact that

All string musicians in the first row were without exception Jews. Who dares to present such impertinence in a city like Mannheim? We will find ways to eradicate such contaminants [*Fremdkörper*] in this state-subsidized orchestra. We will in the future not tolerate again that a few dozen Jews will play before us. Herr Furtwaengler should bear this in mind.¹¹⁴

Furtwaengler's response followed promptly. Irritated, the conductor complained to Sander that the participation of Jews within the Berlin Philharmonic was, at best, a matter for the federal government that legally owned the orchestra and not the

¹¹³ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 155.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

NSDAP branch in Mannheim. In addition, Furtwaengler declared that he would lay down his honorary membership in the Mannheim orchestra and would never again visit the city (a principle which he followed for more than 20 years). Besides, the article drew, according to Furtwaengler, an inapplicable picture of the orchestra; the Berlin Philharmonic constituted of not more than six Jewish members.¹¹⁵

Although there was a surprisingly small percentage of Jewish musicians in the orchestra, the Mannheim incident illuminates that Jewish citizens in Germany, regardless of their talent, position or class, were increasingly subject to severe discrimination. The Mannheim incident was a small scale political struggle between a regional representation of Nazism, on the one side, and the Berlin Philharmonic, and Furtwaengler that stood for the freedom of culture and arts on the other. The maestro could claim victory in this case; yet, even Furtwaengler noticed that a different time was approaching and, even though he was able to protect all of his musicians in 1933, it became evident for all involved that it was just a matter of time until the wolf would tear his sheep apart. In the interim, however, the Berlin Philharmonic, resembled a unique, temporary oasis for its Jewish musicians who were, despite increasing discrimination, as the Mannheim incident demonstrated, for a while at least, untouchable.

d) The Hindemith Affair

The Berlin Philharmonic consisted of only six members who were either Jewish or had Jewish ancestry. According to Aster, however, there is no evidence that the Berlin Philharmonic was exceptionally Anti-Semitic before or ultimately after the Nazi

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 156.

take-over. Instead, the percentage of Jewish musicians in the Berlin orchestra was proportionally higher compared to the representation of Jews within German society.¹¹⁶

Despite Furtwaengler's impromptu agreement with Goebbels that allowed the Jewish members of the orchestra to stay in 1933, it would be naïve to assume that the musicians concerned felt comfortable with their situation. In fact, by the end of the 1935/36 season, all Jewish members had left the orchestra; ironically, not one was forced to resign by the Nazis. According to Kater, a few Jewish musicians in Germany possessed the wisdom to voluntarily leave the Reich before it was too late.¹¹⁷ Naturally, most Jewish musicians saw themselves as ordinary German citizens who had lived all their lives in Germany, had accumulated some wealth that they simply did not want to leave behind and were also emotionally attached to their *Heimat*. In the case of the Berlin Philharmonic, however, the situation was different. While Jewish artists in state-owned institutions were released relatively rapidly after Hitler's inauguration as chancellor, the Jewish members of the Berlin Philharmonic who had enjoyed Goebbels' informal, de facto toleration chose voluntarily to resign their positions in the orchestra. At the end of the 1933/34 season, concertmaster Simon Goldberg and solo-cellist Joseph Schuster decided to emigrate from Germany and start new careers abroad.¹¹⁸ There is no empirical evidence that would suggest that both Schuster and Goldberg were directly forced to resign their positions. Instead, thanks to their extraordinary talent faced no serious challenge to find new engagements in professional orchestras abroad. Goldberg in

¹¹⁶ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 106.

¹¹⁷ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 171.

¹¹⁸ Ironically, Furtwaengler replaced Goldberg with a new concertmaster, Hugo Kolberg, who was married to a Jew. The Nazis in Berlin were aware of this and thus, another wave of protests was aimed at Furtwaengler. See Fred Prieberg, *Trail of Strength – Wilhelm Furtwaengler and the Third Reich* (London: Quartet Books, 1991), 190.

particular managed to continue his astonishing career in the United States, where he became a naturalized citizen in 1951.¹¹⁹

The Jewish cellist Nicolai Graudan stayed in the orchestra for another season; his contract with the Berlin Philharmonic was even renewed in 1934, despite his Jewish confession and the fact that he was Latvian. However, Graudan's new contract did not include a wage increase, which would have put him on equal footing with his German colleagues. Instead, Graudan's new contract demanded more work and common services for the orchestra. Such depreciative treatment was unacceptable for a star such as Graudan, who had performed throughout Europe as a solo-cellist for numerous years. When in 1935 Graudan found a new position in an orchestra in England, the cellist asked for the immediate termination of his contract, a request that the responsible ministry instantly approved.¹²⁰ Gilbert Back, the fourth Jewish member, was a violinist who had been in the orchestra since 1925. Historical data on Back suggest that the musician did not necessarily intend to leave the orchestra initially. Instead of terminating his contact, the Nazis bought Back out of his contract. For 16 000 *Reichsmark*, the violinist agreed to leave the orchestra he had worked in for ten years.¹²¹ For the upcoming 1935/36 season, the Berlin Philharmonic had no more Jewish musicians within its rows.

Although Furtwaengler was not able to keep his promise to protect all of his musicians, one should still acknowledge the conductor's success in postponing the government's process of removing a number of Jewish musicians from Germany's musical sector. Furtwaengler had been able to keep some of his most talented musicians for another two years, although his continued attempts to convince some of the Jewish

¹¹⁹ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 101.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

international celebrities to return to Germany fell on deaf ears.¹²² The departure of the Jewish members of the Berlin Philharmonic was a serious setback; from the perspective of the musicians involved, however, it appears that all four were prudent enough to leave Germany in time and start new careers abroad. Musicians with minor talent who were engaged in less professional orchestras certainly did not have such opportunities to find new employment elsewhere in Europe or North America.

In addition to the four Jewish members who left the orchestra, there were a couple of half-Jews, or *Versippte*. According to Aster, both musicians, Hans Bottermund and Bruno Stenzel, could continue their work in the orchestra without interruption throughout the Third Reich. Although Goebbels noted in his diary on August 2, 1937 that there were still two half-Jews in the orchestra, the minister also foresaw that the subsequent forceful lay-off would be challenged by Furtwaengler.¹²³ It seems that Goebbels did not prioritize this issue and, simultaneously, did not want another argument with Furtwaengler.¹²⁴ Although all musicians in Germany had to prove their Aryan ancestry, it seems once again that an exception was made for the Berlin Philharmonics; an exception that made Nazi ideology appear to be a matter of secondary importance since both Bottermund and Stenzel legally should have been excluded from the chamber

¹²² In a written letter, Furtwaengler invited renowned artists to return to Germany and perform with him and the Berlin Philharmonic. In his letter, the conductor desperately tried to convince these artists to understand that Germany was still a country that was not culturally isolated from the rest of the world. Furtwaengler explained that “we as artists have to refrain from politics, even though politics makes it hard for us.” See Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 179.

¹²³ Goebbels expected that Furtwaengler would use all his available powers to prevent a forced layoff of both musicians. Goebbels’ Dairies, August 2, 1937 in Misha Aster *Das Reichsorchester*.

¹²⁴ In a letter to Goebbels, Furtwaengler outlines that both Stenzel and Bottermund were indispensable and could qualitatively not be replaced. Furthermore, Furtwaengler explains that both musicians had not been apprenticed by Jewish teachers or maintained relations to Jewish circles. Therefore, the special permit both musicians were granted by Goebbels previously should be extended, and the musicians should allowed to join the Chamber of Music. BArch, R55 23919.

of music.¹²⁵ Instead, they were silently tolerated throughout the entire period of the Third Reich.

Besides the Jewish and half-Jewish members, a number of musicians had Jewish spouses. Similar to the *Versippte*, all members with Jewish spouses remained in the orchestra, although there was some debate about the spouses' right to attend concerts of their husbands. Until 1937/38, Jewish spouses could still visit the philharmonic. Aster explains that the toleration of the spouses – and the musicians who were legally married to Jewish wives – has again involved Furtwaengler's successful intervention, as the authorities turned a blind eye on this issue.¹²⁶ Although the Jewish spouses eventually discontinued their visits, it is remarkable that, despite protests, such visits were still a reality during a time when Jews were legally discriminated against in all branches of German society.

The Berlin Philharmonic, despite its enthusiastic support of the orchestra's takeover by the government, remained anti-ideological, even anti-Nazi in a sense that its conductor, with the support of his musicians, actively tried to protect all members (and even spouses) of the orchestra and that it did not necessarily accommodate the demands of the Nazis, as the Mannheim Incident demonstrated. Yet, there was a limit to opposition. After all, the Nazis were masters at establishing a coordinating and monitoring apparatus over German society. Goebbels' toleration for Furtwaengler's (and the orchestra's) demands had obvious limits. As long as the conductor remained cooperative for the most part, the minister was willing to negotiate some concessions. In late 1934, however, the opera *Mathis der Maler*, by the renowned German composer Paul

¹²⁵ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 104.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

Hindemith, was supposed to have its debut. In March of the same year, Hindemith's homonymous symphony had its premiere at the Berlin Philharmonic, which had been celebrated by the audience and most critics. In the summer, however, the chamber of music forbade the performance of the opera for the upcoming winter season due to some allegedly controversial content. The theme of the opera was how artists had to deal with political authorities during times of oppression. Unsurprisingly, the government saw the opera as an indirect attempt to criticize the Hitler regime. However, the composer Hindemith had never been a political commentator, and his music, although somewhat modern in character, was not classified as degenerate or atonal. The composer's problem, however, was that Hitler himself greatly disliked the composer. The approval for the opera *Mathis der Maler*, which needed permission by either Hitler or a high-ranking minister, therefore, never came.

After the official disapproval, the focus immediately shifted to Furtwaengler who was supposed to conduct the opera at the *Berliner Staatsoper*. The conductor had cultivated a friendship with Hindemith for years and had performed the composer's works numerous times. As Hindemith's opera was dismissed and increasingly criticized in the press by some Nazi commentators, Furtwaengler felt he had to take a stand for his friend. In a letter to the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* – which was printed on the front page on November 25, 1934 – the conductor passionately defended the composer. Furtwaengler criticized the inhumane treatment in the media and exclaimed that Hindemith had always proved to be a loyal German citizen. Furthermore,

the conductor questioned the legality of government intervention into artistic matters, arguing that political denunciations should have no role to play within the arts.¹²⁷

In other words, Furtwaengler questioned Nazi authority on arts and by that emphasized that to some degree, the freedom of opinion in Nazi-Germany was still a reality. His letter rapidly turned into a media sensation, particularly after Furtwaengler had received widespread support from the public. Over the following days, the conductor was welcomed with standing ovations, and the foreign press even asked for permission to reprint Furtwaengler's letter.¹²⁸ While Goebbels and his ministry at first remained silent, it soon became unavoidable for the Nazi clique to act, if a loss of face was not to be risked. After a meeting with Hitler and Goebbels, Göring (who was Furtwaengler's official employer at the Berlin *Staatsoper*) informed Furtwaengler on December 4, 1934 that his resignation was expected within the next few days; otherwise he would be formally dismissed from his positions as conductor at the Berlin Philharmonic, his vice-presidency of the chamber of music and his engagement at the *Staatsoper*. Having no alternative, Furtwaengler declared his resignation the following day, which Goebbels and Göring ultimately accepted. The Hindemith Affair had cost the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonics his job.

The Hindemith incident demonstrates, similar to the Mannheim case, the continuing preference of the Berlin Philharmonic to be apolitical or outside politics, even though the symphony was formally now a *Reichsorchester* that, unlike other symphony orchestras in Germany, was directly owned by the government. Performing works by Hindemith for years – sometimes even under the composer's supervision – the musicians

¹²⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹²⁸ Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich – Eine Dokumentation*, 175-76.

of the orchestra had never questioned the sincerity or quality of one of Germany's most talented composers of the 20th century. Supporting their conductor during this power struggle in late 1934, members of the philharmonic were shocked when they were informed about Furtwaengler's sudden departure. After all, he was the maestro who had safely guided the orchestra since the Nazi takeover, had protected, as long as possible, its suddenly unwanted Jewish musicians, and had in Mannheim (and in several other instances) successfully resisted Nazi influence and intervention into the orchestra's affairs.¹²⁹ Until the Hindemith Affair, the Berlin Philharmonic was an orchestra in the Reich, without being a *Reichsorchester*. Apart from the fact that the orchestra had been legally owned by the Reich's government, there were only a few tangible signs that pointed to the handwriting of the orchestra's new patriarch.

Once Furtwaengler, however, had to resign from his positions, Goebbels used this chance to change the structure of the orchestra. With Furtwaengler's dismissal, von Schmidtseck, the orchestra's *Kommissar*, was also released from his position. Goebbels probably saw Schmidtseck serving as Furtwaengler's right hand rather than as an official representative of the Nazi Party, who was supposed to cultivate a National Socialist spirit within the orchestra. In exchange, the philharmonic was assigned another Nazi functionary, Hermann Stange, who became the orchestra's new conductor and manager (*Geschaefsfuehrer*).

¹²⁹ Another example of how the orchestra actively resisted Nazi pressure occurred in April 1933 when the major of Berlin, Wilhelm Hafemann, single-handedly demanded a list of all Jewish members of the orchestra. Lorenz Hoerber promised cooperation, but in reality did not compose the promised list. Höber was aware of the fact that the orchestra was not a public institution and was subsequently not legally obliged to respond to Hafemann. When, ten days later, Hafemann threatened Höber that he would find other ways to the musicians' contracts if Höber would not meet his obligations, he responded that it would take time to compose the list. Since the orchestra was 'unfortunately' on tour at that time, Höber had good reason to again postpone the process; he told Hafemann that the issue could be dealt with only when the orchestra returned in a few weeks. See Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 96.

Stange, who had worked in Bulgaria prior to his arrival in Berlin, was of minor musical talent and his appointment to one of the highest posts within Germany's musical sector can only be explained by Stange's excellent connections to high-ranking Nazi functionaries such as Goebbels and Hans Hinkel, *Reichskommissar* for artistic issues in the Propaganda Ministry. According to Aster, however, Stange had very little support within the orchestra, which saw him as a political opportunist.¹³⁰ Berlin's press was also not particularly impressed by the new, autocratic conductor; critiques against his persona became a regularity. In addition, Furtwaengler, who only reluctantly had declared his resignation, worked silently in the background against Stange, whom he called an "uncontrollable dreamer."¹³¹ And at last, Hitler himself recognized that Berlin and the German Reich could not spare an artist of Furtwaengler's magnitude. All these factors together resulted in Furtwaengler's return after only a few months. On April 1, 1935, Stange's contract was ad hoc dissolved and his short career with the philharmonic ended.

The Hindemith Affair and its immediate repercussions underline that, on the one hand, Furtwaengler and his philharmonic had to acknowledge some limits that the Nazi apparatus had set. On the other hand, however, Goebbels, and even Hitler, had to recognize that there was a price to be paid for Germany's artistic quality that could be exhibited at home and abroad. Installing a Nazi functionary who admittedly had cultivated excellent lines of contact to high-ranking Nazis proved to be cataclysmic misconduct. It was a serious miscalculation on behalf of the Propaganda Ministry to think

¹³⁰ After his appointment, the Propaganda Ministry found out that Stange had been a member of the Social Democratic Party. Earlier on, Stange had denied any political participation or membership prior to Hitler's takeover. Subsequently, Stange's reputation within the orchestra suffered severely and doubts about his political integrity within the Nazi leadership developed. See Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 76.

¹³¹ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 75.

that it could use the Berlin Philharmonic as its toy. Aster argues that it was not sufficient to create some ideological formula and replace Furtwaengler with an unknown, yet loyal Nazi sympathizer.¹³² The incident also illustrates that the Nazi leadership could not ignore popular discontent. When Furtwaengler resigned, more than 30% of the regular visitors cancelled their season's tickets (*abonnements*) as a sign of protest; in several universities in Germany, music students collected signatures calling for Furtwaengler's immediate return.¹³³ The experiment with Stange, therefore, demonstrates the limits Nazi bureaucracy and intrigue had. As the incarnation of National Socialist nepotism, Stange could not prosper within the Berlin Philharmonic. Its tradition of producing world-class music was not interrupted by a dictatorial regime that had intended to metamorphose the orchestra into a political instrument. With the return of Furtwaengler, Goebbels and his ministry understood that in terms of ideological infiltration, they could have only a limited impact on the orchestra.¹³⁴ Instead, the minister comprehended that the orchestra could better be used for external propaganda purposes that would concentrate on advertising Germany's artistic greatness.

e) The Reichsorchester

Although the Berlin Philharmonic did not attain a reputation for being a clique of Nazi sympathizers, for the rest of Europe, the orchestra epitomized an official

¹³² Ibid., 77.

¹³³ Ibid., 14.

¹³⁴ The financial report of 1938/39 mentions that with the return of Wilhelm Furtwaengler to the Berlin Philharmonic the orchestra's finances perpetually improved. All subscription concerts with Furtwaengler were sold out and even had to be repeated. Furtwaengler's engagement with the philharmonic was a "popular and financial success." BArch R55 197 Microfiche 10.

propaganda instrument of Hitler's Germany when it toured abroad. The foreign press was aware of the fact that the famous orchestra had been taken over by the Nazis in 1933 and, if not, it was a well-established truism by the end of the decade that the freedom of arts in Germany had been curtailed. Thus, it was no surprise that a German orchestra visiting foreign countries was not always welcomed by its hosts. When the Berlin Philharmonic travelled through numerous European cities, its reception was occasionally reserved, particularly after Hitler started reaping chaos and misery all over Europe. Even as early as 1933, some protesters disturbed a concert of the Berlin Philharmonic in Paris, distributing fliers that called for an intensified boycott against Germany where, according to the flier, innocent people were imprisoned and inhumanely treated. In 1935, in London, another group of protesters warned explicitly against the dangers of German fascism.¹³⁵ Similar protests occurred in Antwerp and Brussels, where the local police had to protect Furtwaengler's personal safety.¹³⁶ While these protests certainly succeeded in gaining publicity, they were, however, minor in scale. Until 1939 protests against Germany were usually limited to a tiny minority of people, usually intellectuals and politically active individuals. Such protests against the Berlin Philharmonic were admittedly annoying disturbances for the orchestra and sometimes the hosting parties, but the success and positive critiques of the orchestra's guest concerts were generally not affected. Only with the start of the war did widespread resentment against the orchestra intensify in some countries. Particularly in Vichy France and Switzerland the orchestra faced popular protests prior to, during and after their concerts. While on tour in 1940,

¹³⁵ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 309.

¹³⁶ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 182.

concerts in Belgrade and Zagreb even had to be cancelled due to the insecure situation German citizens could have potentially faced.¹³⁷

The increase in protests with the beginning of the war suggests that the Berlin Philharmonic increasingly lost its status of being neutral entertainers, at least in the eyes of the audience. According to Esteban Buch, the performance of the German classics – in essence works by Beethoven, Bach, Brahms – remained unproblematic, both at home and abroad, because the German composers were not associated with Nazism. These composers, despite being German, were listened to by Nazis and Jews, but not hated or rejected by either group. The German classical tradition, therefore, epitomizes a mosaic of artistic geniuses, who were widely adored in the world, but who were not considered as icons of Nazi propaganda.¹³⁸ Performing abroad and playing Beethoven's symphonies, therefore, was by most foreigners not perceived as exhibiting Nazi propaganda, but as performing brilliant art. The German classical tradition had too long been an integral and important part of Western culture and contemporary political events in Europe could not undermine Germany's cultural accomplishments of the past. Yet, people realized that the Berlin Philharmonic (and other German orchestras) playing German classics effectively helped the Nazis to erect a cultural propaganda system that intended to illuminate the German Reich in a more positive light. The philharmonic, therefore, was not increasingly subject to criticism due to its inclination to focus on German music, but because it was considered as an informal ambassador of Hitler's new Germany.

¹³⁷ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 312-13.

¹³⁸ Esteban Buch, „Beethoven und das Dritte Reich,“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik* (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 43.

The philharmonic had a tradition of touring through numerous European cities. The financial profits of guest concerts had been of major importance in the past and, although the German government had been the sole owner and financial backup of the orchestra since 1933, the monetary aspect did not decrease in significance.¹³⁹ Particularly during the war years, the government had to save money; sending the orchestra abroad to collect revenues was subsequently not only an ideologically inspired incentive, but had also an economic imperative.¹⁴⁰ Aster explains that from 1943 subsidies for the orchestra and bonus payments for the musicians were cut and the orchestra was asked to use its financial resources responsibly. While touring Portugal in 1942, members of the orchestra were even accommodated in private households in order to reduce the costs for lodging.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, Goebbels' ministry had clear propaganda purposes when it sent the orchestra on tour. Although the musicians themselves might have been overly apolitical or indifferent towards their employer, the ministry knew that sending one of Germany's best orchestras abroad would have a propaganda effect. Drawing the European continent into a cultural battlefield, the Nazis were eager to demonstrate Germany's racial superiority in music and arts. Manuela Schwartz explains that German

¹³⁹ The number of guest concerts in foreign countries is remarkable. The Berlin Philharmonic visited England annually from 1933 to 1938, the Netherlands in 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1940 and 1941, France annually from 1933 to 1944, Italy in 1937, 1938 and 1941, Spain annually from 1941 to 1944, Portugal annually from 1941 to 1944, Switzerland in 1933, 1934, 1938, 1941, and 1942, the countries of the Balkans in 1936, 1940, and 1943, Hungary in 1940, 1942, and 1943, Romania in 1940, 1942, and 1943, the Scandinavian countries in 1937, 1940, 1941 and 1942, as well as Poland annually from 1941 to 1944. See Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 281.

¹⁴⁰ Performing abroad was also permitted to solo-artists who could earn revenues in foreign countries and bring capital back to Germany, as well advertising and improving Germany's reputation abroad. Hugo Kolberg, concertmaster at the Berlin Philharmonic, for instance, was permitted to visit the United States of America in August 1938 for a number of guests concerts, although the authorities knew that artists potentially could use such opportunities to emigrate from Germany and not return. Kolberg, however, signed a written guarantee that he would return. BArch R55 197 Microfiche 1.

¹⁴¹ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 297 & 306.

orchestras, such as the Berlin Philharmonic, were turned into political instruments by the Nazis, who intended to mediate and improve the Reich's reputation abroad by demonstrating Germany's cultural supremacy. To achieve this aim performing symphonic works by foreign composers was occasionally even agreed to and guest conductors from abroad were invited to perform with the philharmonic.¹⁴² The repertoires for these guest concerts, however, were generally pre-determined by the authorities. As well, an appropriate behaviour of the musicians, one that would portray the German Aryan in a positive, disciplined light, was expected while on tour. The Berlin Philharmonic, thus represented a type of collective ambassador of the German Reich, which actually had only few directives to follow: to concentrate on playing the brilliant music for which it was famous.

The political motives that the Propaganda Ministry pursued were, however, not necessarily shared by the musicians of the orchestra, who were grateful to momentarily escape the harsh realities of the home front. While the orchestra was obviously considered as a *Reichsorchester* internationally, the Berlin Philharmonic's appearances abroad were as neutral as they could be. Erich Hartmann recollects that while on tour, the concerts of the Berlin Philharmonic were always a sensation. He remembers that "We only did our jobs. We had great pleasure to play music and entertain the people. None of us thought about politics."¹⁴³ Hans Bastiaan, concertmaster in the orchestra explains that only today does he understand that performing in countries such as Portugal and Spain was meant to cultivate the friendly relations the Reich had with

¹⁴² Manuela Schwartz, "Musikleben in den von Nazi-Deutschland besetzten Gebieten," in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik* (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006.), 119 & 123.

¹⁴³ Interview of Erich Hartmann in *The Reichsorchester – The Berlin Philharmonics and the Third Reich*. A film by Enrique Sanchez Lansch. DVD, 2007.

these fascist countries.¹⁴⁴ Bastiaan claims that “we were harmless, apolitical musicians.”¹⁴⁵ The existing evidence of recollections and interviews of the musicians of the orchestra from that time suggest that members of the Berlin Philharmonic were not politically motivated agents who with or without coercion from authorities advertised the ideological concepts of National Socialism through the European continent. Instead, the musicians were career-oriented artists; playing for one of Europe’s best orchestras and performing with it abroad was a dream for many artists. Klaus Weiler, biographer of Gerhard Taschner, who became first concertmaster of the philharmonic with only 19 years of age, argues that (young) artists had little interest in politics back then and rather focused on their work, trying to improve and excel in their careers. It is understandable that artists (like Taschner) thankfully accepted positions to play in orchestras, regardless of whether they were funded or owned by the Nazi government.¹⁴⁶ After all, artists, as is the case today, were dependent on opportunities and philanthropic patrons and only the most talented and famous artists – a tiny minority – had a choice to select the type and location of their employment. Furthermore, the low percentage of Nazi members in the orchestra helps to create the opposite image of an ideologically inspired orchestra.¹⁴⁷ As well, only Furtwaengler – who was evidently not an advocate of Nazism but who, as demonstrated, occasionally dared to question the authorities – and a few other talented

¹⁴⁴ Interview of Hans Bastiaan in *The Reichsorchester – The Berlin Philharmonics and the Third Reich*. A film by Enrique Sanchez Lansch. DVD, 2007.

¹⁴⁵ Haffner, *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*, 121.

¹⁴⁶ Klaus Weiler, *Gerhard Taschner – Das Vergessene Genie* (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2004), 24.

¹⁴⁷ During the Third Reich, a number of orchestras that followed purely political prerogatives were either founded or sponsored by Nazi organizations. The *Reichssinfonieorchester*, in particular, stands out in this regard. Entertaining soldiers at the front, it consisted of only members of the Nazi Party and was meant to promote the National Socialist idea.

conductors were permitted to tour with the philharmonic.¹⁴⁸ Without a politically inspired conductor at the top, it is hard to imagine how the philharmonic was a political agent that intended to export the spirit of National Socialism. While as a collective unity, the orchestra resembled a political-ideological symbol of Nazism, in reality the orchestra strictly focused on performing excellent music, at home or abroad.

For the musicians themselves, it was not the ideological objective that Goebbels and his ministry might have had in mind that was of primary importance. On the one hand, the orchestra was grateful to have sponsorship to tour Europe and consolidate its reputation of being a world-class orchestra, even in times of war. On the other hand, the possibility of leaving the Reich, particularly during the last years of the war, was a privilege that ordinary Germans were not granted. Touring through European cities, the philharmonic resembled an anachronistic cohort of tourists. The philharmonic understandably appreciated any chance to leave chaos, war and increasing poverty behind. Yet, it was rather material interest that motivated the musicians to approve their scheduled guest concerts abroad, not the chance to visit ancient temples or museums of modern art. While in neutral Southern Europe in particular, the members of the Berlin Philharmonic were eager to make use of the local markets and luxuries. Buying coffee, chocolate, butter and other goods, the artists not only felt that they were in a temporary heaven far away from Berlin, which was increasingly bombed by the Allies. The thought of their relatives, families and friends, and their survival at home, was a constant factor that motivated the musicians' behaviour. Supplying themselves with goods that were unavailable or restricted at home, members of the philharmonic made explicit use of their

¹⁴⁸ Other conductors with whom the Berlin Philharmonic went on tour were Clemens Krauss, Erich Jochum, Karl Boehm and Robert Heger. None of them were members of the Nazi Party.

privileged situation to visit the parts of Europe that were still in peace and that economically resembled a welcome oasis compared to home, where food supplies were rationed. The daughter of Carl Hofer, first violinist in 1943, remembers that the supplies her dad brought home from Spain enabled the family's survival. By bartering with coffee beans in Berlin, essential food supplies like milk and butter could be bought on the black market. Hans Bastiaan also recollects that the coffee they could buy in Southern Europe was worth diamonds in Berlin.¹⁴⁹ Hartmann recollects that sardines, chocolate, ham and particularly textiles were in great demand at home and that to alleviate each family's struggle in Berlin, each musician took as many goods as possible with him.¹⁵⁰ Evidently, it was rather material self-interest that determined some of the musicians' actions while on tour, and not political motives.

f) War, Chaos and New Beginnings

As the war dragged on, the Berlin Philharmonic had to increasingly adapt to the war at home. The orchestra, however, was again in a privileged situation.¹⁵¹ Although the musicians voluntarily agreed to night-patrol (*Luftschutzdienst*) the building of the

¹⁴⁹ *The Reichsorchester – The Berlin Philharmonics and the Third Reich*. A film by Enrique Sanchez Lansch. DVD, 2007. Hartmann also recollects that the goods they brought were so envied after a guest concert in Paris in 1944 that all the food stuffs that were temporarily stored in Berlin were stolen, while the expensive instruments of the orchestra were left untouched. See Erich Hartmann, *Die Philharmoniker in der Stunde Null. Erinnerungen an die Zeit der Philharmonie vor 50 Jahren* (Berlin: Feja Verlag, 1996), 24.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 19-21.

¹⁵¹ The musicians were privileged in regards to housing during the war. When Erich Hartmann's residence was bombed out in 1944, the Nazi Party found some adequate housing for the contrabassist. Even during peacetime, the orchestra did not hesitate to consult political authorities to ask for housing. When the orchestra engaged the hornist Handke in June, 1939, the orchestral administration requested some accommodation for the musician at the Propaganda Ministry. See Hartmann, *Die Philharmoniker in der Stunde Null. Erinnerungen an die Zeit der Philharmonie vor 50 Jahren*, 9 & BArch R 55 197 Microfiche 1.

Philharmonie, the patrolling musicians and the local fire department were unable to prevent the home of the philharmonic from destruction in a raid by the British Air Force in February 1944. Only some of the inventory in the building could be saved, but the *Philharmonie* could no longer be used. Fortunately, most of the instruments and other equipment had already been stored in a remote location in Bavaria in order to avoid destruction by the war.¹⁵² Evidently the orchestra did enjoy the privilege of receiving preferential treatment and protection by government authorities, who had helped transfer most of the valuable equipment to a more secure location. As well, the attack on the buildings of the orchestra illustrates that besides some voluntary support – in essence night-patrolling – the orchestra was, unlike the great majority of German citizens, not involved or obliged to participate directly in the war. Whereas young and middle-aged German males were sooner or later drafted and sent to war, all musicians of the Berlin Philharmonic were granted special exemptions by Goebbels himself, who excluded the musicians from military service.¹⁵³ This generous gesture is remarkable, considering that during the last days of the Third Reich, even 15 year old boys were sent to fight for their *Vaterland*, yet, the Berlin Philharmonic, with its reservoir of excellent musicians, was deemed indispensable.¹⁵⁴ Their death in the war, it appears, would have been too costly; instead, while it was clear that the war would be lost, sooner or later, members of the

¹⁵² Gerassimos Avgerinos, *Das Berliner Philharmonische Orchester als eigenständige Organisation. 70 Jahre Schicksal einer GmbH, 1882-1952* (Berlin: Privately Published, 1972), 70.

¹⁵³ Haffner, *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*, 116.

¹⁵⁴ The musicians still had to register at their nearest military office (*Wehrmeldeamt*) and undergo some basic training. Yet, even for such military *Übungen*, the orchestra did not shy away from occasionally asking for special permission to exclude its musicians from such training. Furtwaengler himself required a deferment at the Propaganda Ministry for the hornist Martin Ziller, who was, according to the conductor, indispensable, even for the short period required for basic training. BArch, RR 55 197 Microfiche 1. Additionally, the orchestra even inquired about exempting some of its foreign members from military service abroad. For instance, the management of the orchestra requested at the Propaganda Ministry exempting the solo cellist de Machula, who was a Hungarian citizen, from military service in his home country. He also was considered indispensable. BArch RR 55 21258-4.

Berlin Philharmonic were actively protected by government authorities. The Berlin Philharmonic and its musicians were too valuable to be lost – an incredible privilege.

When the raids on Berlin increased in frequency and magnitude, the Propaganda Ministry decided to move the entire orchestra, for its protection, to a different, more remote location. In the summer of 1944, the Berlin Philharmonic was temporarily accommodated in the city of Baden-Baden, near the Black Forest, where the orchestra was distant from the horrors that took place in Berlin at the time.¹⁵⁵ It is unprecedented that a cultural institution, such as the Berlin Philharmonic, obtained such an exceptional treatment. While the *Volkssturm* – young boys and elderly men – were preparing for Germany's last fight, the philharmonic entertained the locals in the spa-town of Baden-Baden. In September 1944, however, the orchestra returned to Berlin. Besides the musicians' wish to return to their families and friends, the Propaganda Ministry understood how vital the orchestra could be for the people of Berlin. Sensing that the philharmonic could boost the morale of the locals, Goebbels ordered the orchestra back to Berlin. Until the very last days of the war, concerts of the philharmonic continued to be popular in Berlin. Music, it seemed, served as a remedy for the people, in juxtaposition to the daily destruction and horror they had to live with. Steinweis argues that privileged orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic benefited – financially and in terms of deferment statuses – from the value the German people and the Nazi regime put on culture and entertainment as a reprieve from the anxieties and daily hardships of war.¹⁵⁶ Concerts were rescheduled, therefore, to earlier hours, to avoid being interrupted

¹⁵⁵ Haffner, *Die Berliner Philharmoniker*, 129.

¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, according to Steinweis, German citizens turned to cultural entertainment not just for psychological reasons, but also because of a lack of consumer alternatives. See Steinweis, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 172.

by the nightly bombing campaigns on Berlin and to provide the citizens of Berlin sufficient time for travel; after all, the infrastructure in Berlin had broken down completely by early 1945.

The orchestra already had experience in entertaining various groups of people during the war. The illusion that the regime could spread ‘good cheer’ by playing entertainment music was considered as a ware to be sold (*Kriegsartikel*).¹⁵⁷ Guest concerts either for German soldiers or matinee performances in manufacturing plants in order to enhance the morale of factory workers were not unknown, even to one of the most privileged, elite orchestras of the Reich. Goebbels’ propaganda apparatus seemed to function well. While the philharmonic did not oppose to the idea of alleviating the lives of the increasingly worn-out soldiers or the exhausted workforce at home, Goebbels slyly predicated that there would be no demand for epic symphonies; instead, the minister favoured entertainment music that was regarded as more suitable for diverting the peoples’ minds from their harsh lives and circumstances.¹⁵⁸ And in ideological terms, the cultural programmes for soldiers and workers were considered an essential part of modern war. Hans Hinkel, secretary at the Propaganda Ministry, claimed in 1940 that “in their common allegiance to the Fuehrer, soldiers and artists would form an indivisible unity, a community of sword and lyre.”¹⁵⁹

Entertaining troops at the front or workers at the home front, however, is not a strong indicator of the orchestra’s support of Hitler, his regime or his underlying ideology. The orchestra cannot be accused of actively supporting the war due to its

¹⁵⁷ Gilbert Merlio, „Politisierung der Ästhetik - Ästhetisierung der Politik,“ in *Das Dritte Reich und die Musik* (Berlin: Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg, 2006), 166.

¹⁵⁸ Kater, *Die missbrauchte Muse*, 56 & Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 285.

¹⁵⁹ Steinweis, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and Visual Arts*, 150.

musical performances to groups that were directly involved in the war. Every German citizen was by 1945 in some way involved in or affected by the war. Second, the orchestra had lost its self-determination in 1933; it was not a self-governing body that could determine when, where and for what patrons it would perform. Concerts at the *AEG Farbenfabrik* in Berlin in 1942, for instance, or the performances for the *Wehrmacht*, were undertaken on direct orders from the Propaganda Ministry that the orchestra could not, even if it was apolitical, resist.

As the war entered its final phase, all but a tiny handful of indispensable deferments (*UK-Stellungen*) that privileged musicians in Germany had received and that were intended to spare artists from military service were terminated; the majority of previously protected artists in Germany was transferred over to the arms industry.¹⁶⁰ The Berlin Philharmonic, in juxtaposition, remained one of last remnants responsible for artistic activity in the Reich – the last concert of the philharmonic took place April 16, 1945, only days before the arrival of the Red Army. But, even for the philharmonic, there was a limit to the privileged treatment that they could accept. When during the very last days of the Reich, Albert Speer, Minister for Armament and Production, single-handedly protected the orchestra and offered to fly the members of the philharmonic out before the Russians would enter Berlin, the musicians overtly refused and preferred to stay with their families. Only one artist, Gerhard Taschner, the young concertmaster, accepted Speer's offer and left Berlin with his family, guided by a military officer on April 11, 1945.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 170.

¹⁶¹ Weiler, *Gerhard Taschner – Das vergessene Talent*, 88.

After February 23, 1945 the orchestra was officially attached to the *Volkssturm*, a civilian army that was supposed to halt the Russian offensive. Goebbels himself refused Speer's attempt to defer the members of the philharmonic from participating in the Battle of Berlin. The Propaganda Minister apparently had changed his mind, arguing that the orchestra only had reached its greatness due to his initiatives and the financial support of his ministry. Thus, "the ones that come after us have no right for it [the Berlin Philharmonic. It can go down with us."¹⁶² To counteract Goebbels' apocalyptic revelation, Speer – who had previously promised Furtwaengler that he would take care of the orchestra¹⁶³ -- secretly ordered the burning of the musicians' files that the Berlin military offices contained. Speer's intervention and disregard for Goebbels' orders rescued the Berlin Philharmonic from participating in a senseless street-fight during the last weeks of the Third Reich. To symbolically inaugurate the end of Nazi Germany, the philharmonic ironically played Richard Strauss's "Death and Transfiguration" (*Tod und Verklarung*) during its last concert. After, the musicians were on their own.

On May 26, 1945 the Berlin Philharmonic was already performing again, this time for the American military that was stationed in Berlin. Playing for a new patron, the orchestra underwent a seemingly ad hoc transformation from a *Reichsorchester* to one that was now patronized by the United States of America. The past quarrels with the Nazis, including the issue of the laid off Jewish musicians, the power struggle in Mannheim or the Hindemith Affair, all were apparently forgotten; the privileges and the

¹⁶² Albert Speer, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1999), 466.

¹⁶³ Speer recalls in his memoirs that after a concert in December 1944, Furtwaengler had asked him whether the war still could be won. When Speer said no, Furtwaengler was not surprised. Speer then advised Furtwaengler to leave Germany as soon as possible for the conductor could be in possible danger; some top-ranking Nazis, including Heinrich Himmler and Martin Bohrmann, had indicated a desire for vengeance against anyone who had protected Jews in the past. When Furtwaengler reciprocated that he could not leave his orchestra, Speer promised that he would take care of the orchestra during the following months. Speer, *Erinnerungen*, 466-467.

special treatment, however, continued. While a number of musicians were not permitted to remain within the orchestra, due to their membership in the Nazi Party, the majority was left untouched and received preferential treatment - in terms of additional food supplies - by their occupiers.¹⁶⁴

In retrospect, therefore, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra resembles a double-edged sword. While trying to stay away from politics, it was clear that as a cultural institution that was owned by the government it necessarily had to deal with its political patron and thus politics itself. Trying to be apolitical or stand distant from the political decision-makers, however, the orchestra egoistically accepted material benefits and preferential treatments from the Nazi government, without considering itself a puppet that could be manoeuvred at will. Representing the orchestra, Furtwaengler in particular stood for a separation of politics and arts and his vehement interferences with official Nazi policy, ones that opposed the predetermined exclusion of Jewish artists from the cultural scene in Germany, indicate that the coordination of the cultural landscape in the Third Reich was not always as monolithic and linear as the Nazis preferred to claim. Instead, the case of the Berlin Philharmonic with its preferential treatment and privileges, illustrates how flexible, cooperative, and therefore contradictory at times the Nazi apparatus could be.

¹⁶⁴ Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 332.

IV

The Vienna Philharmonic in the Third Reich

The lack of sources on the history of the Vienna Philharmonic during the time of Nazism explains the existing predicament in constructing a cohesive analysis of the orchestra. As indicated in the introductory chapter, it is a paradox that historians have tended to ignore the history of one of the most well-known orchestras during a time in history that has since experienced interest by academics and the general public. Besides Clemens Hellsberg's monumental history *longue duree* of the orchestra, there is no other scholarly account that somewhat thoroughly deals with the philharmonic from 1938 to 1945. Besides a tiny number of other secondary sources on the philharmonic, one can only concentrate on the few memoirs by some members of the philharmonic who have published their recollections in the post-war period. It is without question a necessity for future historians to throw more light onto one of the darker chapters in the orchestra's history.

Through clandestine interference by the German Nazis in Austrian politics throughout the mid-1930s, the Vienna Philharmonic had experienced how problematic cooperation with Germany's government could be, particularly when due to Germany's cultural embargo, the number of visitors dramatically declined at the annual Salzburg Festival. These pre-*Anschluss* antagonisms, however, rapidly fell into desuetude when in 1938 the Alpine state was incorporated into Germany. Instead, there was widespread – although not entire – support for Hitler in Austria at this time, and the Vienna Philharmonic also could not escape being captivated by the Fuehrer's popularity.

a) Anschlusseuphorie

Large parts of Austrian society welcomed Hitler's triumphant return to his native country in 1938. Over the next several months the former republic experienced an *Anschlusseuphorie*, an euphoria celebrating the country's 'return' to the German Reich. This excitement swept over to the Vienna Philharmonic where one day *prior* to the official incorporation into the Reich, the executive of the orchestra, Hugo Burghauser, was released from his position.¹⁶⁵ It seemed that Austria's cultural *Gleichschaltung* could not wait and was even more rapidly executed than in Germany in 1933. This idiosyncratic willingness by significant parts of Austrian society to collaborate with Germany's Nazi¹⁶⁶ also indicates that five years after Hitler's takeover in Germany, this time, the Nazis were better prepared and more efficient in consolidating power.

¹⁶⁵ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 460.

¹⁶⁶ Tony Judt argues that Austrian society was saturated with Nazi sympathizers in 1938 and after. See Tony Judt, *Postwar – A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) 52.

Prior to Austria's official *Anschluss*, Arturo Toscanini had already declared his unwillingness to perform further with the orchestra.¹⁶⁷ As a strong anti-fascist who had experienced the right-wing turn in his own country, Italy, the maestro left for the United States in 1938. Being deprived of one of the most renowned conductors of the time, the fate of the philharmonic worsened when Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, both Jews who had performed with the philharmonics numerous times before, also became unavailable. Overnight the orchestra was faced with the predicament of having no artistic conductor of fame, a laid-off president, Hugo Burghauser, who was no longer politically acceptable, and an uncertain future regarding how and in what form the orchestra would continue to exist. Compared to the Berlin Philharmonic, the developments the orchestra underwent in 1938 seemed to be more drastic and radical. While it took months to draw the contour lines of the Berlin orchestra, in essence its takeover by the Reich government, five years later the authorities seemed to be more determined to decide on the famous Viennese orchestra.

The widespread euphoria after the *Anschluss* motivated the philharmonic to invite its countryman Hitler for an impromptu guest concert in Vienna. Over the next several months, the Vienna Philharmonic would travel to Germany alone three times for guest concerts and also gratefully accepted the offer to play at the annual Nazi Party Convention in Nuremberg in 1938. In Berlin, the Nazi clique was thrilled after a concert; Hitler himself congratulated the orchestra and said that it should perform at the party

¹⁶⁷ Otto Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt – Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*. (Vienna: Neff Verlag, 1974), 143.

convention in Nuremberg annually.¹⁶⁸ The authorities were content with the philharmonic, and the philharmonic was content with the new rulers, it seemed.

The orchestra's organizational orientation towards Berlin reflects the euphoria that a lot of Austrians experienced after the *Anschluss*. Echoing a similar excitement that the Berlin Philharmonic demonstrated when it was taken over by the Nazis in 1933, a considerable number of members of the philharmonic enthusiastically supported the new regime and, like its counterpart in Berlin five years earlier, did not embody in any form a bulwark against the Nazi apparatus that increasingly took over the cultural landscape in Austria. Instead – and in stark contrast to the Berlin Philharmonic – the musicians became politically active. Within the weeks following the incorporation into the Reich, more than a third of the musicians of the orchestra had joined the Nazi Party, if they had not done so (illegally) even before. This astoundingly high percentage would continue to increase to 42 % by 1945.¹⁶⁹

To explain why large segments of the Austrian population were so indifferent to the loss of their political independence and welcomed their country's incorporation into the German Reich is a complex issue. Numerous factors contributed to a momentum that allowed Hitler to appear as the saviour of the Austrian people: the political instability and the unpopularity of the existing autocratic government under Chancellor Schuschnigg; economic problems that had originated during the Great Depression and that were aggravated due to Germany's economic embargo; hostile relations with its southern neighbour Italy; and psychologically probably the dream of returning to imperial greatness, to political strength that Hitler allegedly promised. This

¹⁶⁸ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 462.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 464.

mosaic of factors partially helps explain why many Austrians were looking forward to better times, and suggests that Hitler, as a single initiator, was considered, at least in 1938, as being capable of realizing this *vision grande*.

In retrospect, it is hard to speculate why such a significant number of musicians of the Vienna Philharmonic joined the Nazi Party. The lack of sources, of course, does not help us to get to the truth of this historical query. Besides Hellsberg's (often vague) narrative of the orchestra and a few autobiographies, there is simply very little historical evidence left that could help explain this fundamental question. Even worse, there are no files or documents of the orchestra that illustrate the exact events during the months of the *Anschluss*.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the number of party members alone serves as a strong indicator that the Vienna Philharmonic was not apolitical *per se*. While in Berlin only a handful of philharmonic members joined the *NSDAP*, the Berlin orchestra, ironically was (and still is) more frequently subject to criticism and investigation for its role during the time of Nazism. Fact is, a significant proportion of the musicians of the Vienna Philharmonic, regardless of whether they were convinced National Socialists and anti-Semites or not, had sufficient reason to join a political party that was by then known for utilizing terror, erecting concentration camps and persecuting against Jewish citizens and other minority groups.

b) Reorganization and De-Jewification

An essential part of the *NSDAP*'s strategy in Austria after the *Anschluss* was the coordination of the cultural landscape. As a cultural, self-governing body, the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 460.

Vienna Philharmonic fell under the canopy of the party's *Gleichschaltung* process. Whereas in Berlin, the philharmonic was legally governed by a board of directors and an appointed commissioner, in Vienna the philharmonic's restructuring process required no external functionaries. Wilhelm Jerger, a member of the Nazi Party and contrabassist within the orchestra since 1922, was assigned to the position of acting director, or *kommissarischer Leiter*; he remained in office until the end of the Third Reich. The commissioner was to be appointed by Vienna's *Gauleiter*, who thus was able to maintain some legislative power in the former capital. Interestingly, the Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin had minor influence within this decision-making process. Since Vienna's *Gauleiter* from 1939-1945, Baldur von Schirach, considered himself a connoisseur and avowed admirer of the orchestra, Jerger always had a patron upon whom he could rely on.

Although there was a directive stipulating that the Vienna Philharmonic would be dissolved due to the orchestra's status as an old-age insurance-providing institution (retired members received an old-age pension through the orchestra's pension fund) the philharmonic's right to existence was affirmed on December 12, 1938; all possessions and properties of the orchestra were left untouched, but some alterations of its constitution were required.¹⁷¹ This guarantee of existence and allowance to continue administering itself was remarkable; during Austria's *Gleichschaltung*, numerous associations and clubs were either dissolved or forcefully integrated into state-controlled umbrella associations that were, of course, directed by the Nazis.¹⁷² Comparable with its

¹⁷¹ Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*, 158-159.

¹⁷² According to Hellsberg, 474 associations alone either faced disbandment or compilation into state associations at this time. Only 48 associations were allowed to continue existing as before. See Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 470.

counterpart in Berlin, however, the Vienna Philharmonic was regarded as an indispensable component of German culture.¹⁷³ In return for its relatively high degree of political autonomy, the orchestra was expected to re-draft its constitution according to National Socialist principles. These principles included the requirement for musicians to be of Aryan descent, the loss of the general assembly that annually decided its own affairs, and the appointment of a new executive by the *Gauleiter* of Vienna. Legally, and analogous to the philharmonic in Berlin, the Vienna Philharmonic lost its independence. Practically, however, the *Vereinsleiter* Jerger, who was solely responsible for the orchestra, was not considered by his fellow musicians as an autocratically ruling dictator, but as an approachable colleague.¹⁷⁴ Besides, under Jerger's function as acting director, a council (*Vorstandsrat*), consisting of ten members of the orchestra, was established to discuss internal matters of the orchestra.¹⁷⁵ Although Jerger was free to appoint the members of the council, who did not possess any legislative powers but only the right to be heard (*Anhörungsrecht*), the establishment of this body demonstrates that the Nazi coordination within the cultural sector was not necessarily always as undemocratic and authoritarian as one might expect. As it turned out, Jerger was accepted by the musicians, who were content with getting assigned a leader that came from their own rows. Equivalent to Berlin, therefore, the Vienna Philharmonic was able to maintain a considerable degree of artistic and organizational independence.

¹⁷³ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 468.

¹⁷⁴ This characterization is based on the autobiographies of several, although not all, members of the orchestra. Due to the lack of sources, it is impossible to better portray Jerger's standing within the orchestra. The available sources, however, seem trustworthy and there are no indicators that would point towards any opposition against Jerger.

¹⁷⁵ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 470.

In stark contrast to its northern equivalent in Berlin, however, the Vienna orchestra not only had a much higher percentage of party members, but also of Jewish or Jewish-related musicians. Besides the departure of famous conductors who had temporarily resided in Vienna, such as Otto Klemperer and Bruno Walter¹⁷⁶, the orchestra was faced with the potential forced lay-off of 20 Jewish members, including nine *Versippte*. After Burghauser's dismissal, the new acting commissioner Jerger appointed Otto Strasser, a violinist, to the position of executive director, *Geschaefstsfuehrer*.¹⁷⁷ In this function, Strasser was concerned about the ramifications of the possible lay-off of such a significant number of musicians, as well as the sudden loss of some conductors. Therefore, Strasser approached Furtwaengler, who since the end of his engagement in 1930 had regularly performed with the orchestra on at least one occasion per year. Explaining the predicament the philharmonic was in, Strasser told the conductor that the anticipated loss of talented musicians and the unavailability of prominent conductors would ultimately mean an overall loss of quality of the composition and the performance of the orchestra. Convinced of such repercussions, Furtwaengler, besides promising to take the position as main conductor again and thus save the orchestra from a decline into 'artistic insignificance', agreed to intervene and encourage Goebbels to grant at least the nine *Versippte* (who either had some Jewish ancestry or were married to a Jew) special permission to continue their work, similar to the special status the *Versippte* within the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra had obtained. Goebbels again agreed; the nine musicians

¹⁷⁶ Klemperer later would admit that he misjudged Hitler's ambitions in Austria. "I thought Hitler would leave Austria alone. That was a misjudgement on my behalf." Similarly, Walter, who had moved with all of his furniture from Berlin to Vienna, foresaw that another earthquake would banish him from the "hell that Austria now is." See Peter Heyworth, ed. *Klemperer – Gespräche* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1974), 139 & Lotte Lindt, ed. *Bruno Walter - Briefe 1894-1962* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1969), 235-242.

¹⁷⁷ Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*, 145.

were allowed to stay.¹⁷⁸ It is, thus, in retrospect a historical irony that a single individual, the famous conductor Furtwaengler, twice managed to save world-class artists of two of the most renowned orchestras from their forced suspensions.

Other musicians, however, could not even be spared by Furtwaengler, and it is a tragedy that two musicians, Viktor Robitsek (Violin) and Max Starkmann (violin) who were released from their positions on September 1, 1938, decided not to leave the country in time. Both would die in concentration camps. Additionally, four musicians, who had retired shortly prior to the *Anschluss* also died in *KZs* in Eastern Europe: Moriz Glattauer (violin, retired January 1, 1938), Julius Stwertka¹⁷⁹ (concertmaster and music professor, retired September 1, 1936), Armin Tyroler (oboe, retired January 1, 1937) and Anton Weiss (violin, music professor and former manager of the orchestra, retired September 1, 1936).¹⁸⁰ On the other side, eleven members of the orchestra fortunately could escape the Holocaust in time. The renowned violinist and concertmaster Arnold Rosé, who had been in the orchestra since 1881, immigrated with his family to England in 1938.¹⁸¹ Solo-cellist Friedrich Buxbaum followed him shortly. Daniel Falk (violin),

¹⁷⁸ Kurt Blaukopf, *Die Wiener Philharmoniker. Wesen, Wirken und Werden eines Grossen Orchesters* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1986), 191-192.

¹⁷⁹ Otto Strasser recalls that his old teacher Julius Stwertka asked him in his function as manager for help several times. Stwertka was, according to Strasser, too old to start a new life in a different country. Instead, he was living in poor conditions after the Nazis had forced him out of his residence in Vienna. As his deportation approached, he contacted Strasser, who then contacted Furtwaengler, to intervene. Two times, Stwertka evaded deportation due to Furtwaengler's intervention. But when the responsible office ordered him a third time to appear at a gathering place for Jews, this time in the middle of the summer when the concert season was over and Furtwaengler and Strasser were on vacation, no help was in reach. Stwertka died at the *KZ Theresienstadt* in 1945. See Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*, 190.

¹⁸⁰ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 504-505.

¹⁸¹ Arnold Rosé's emigration to England was itself an interesting chapter as well as a tragic loss for the orchestra and the city of Vienna. Rosé, who had married the sister of the famous composer Gustav Mahler, had been a music professor, honorary member of the Vienna Philharmonic and active member of the orchestra for almost 60 years (since 1881). His Rosé Quartet was known world-wide and, although the family had enjoyed an affluent lifestyle for years, as a Jew Arnold Rosé was suddenly faced with financial problems and was at first unable to afford the ticket for his daughter, Alma Rosé. Although his daughter eventually followed him to England, Alma, who was also a famous musician, made the fatal mistake of

Leopold Föderl (violin), Josef Geringer (violin), Berthold Salander (violin), and Ludwig Wittels (violin), all left Europe to find new employment at the New York Metropolitan Opera. Concertmaster Riccardo Odnoposoff left for South America.¹⁸²

Evidently, the Vienna philharmonic had to deal with a much higher loss of top artists, when compared to the Berlin Philharmonic, which, had not experienced any forceful layoffs of its members. While in Berlin, the four Jewish musicians left at different times and thus allowed the philharmonic to better compensate for the forced losses, in Vienna the philharmonic was overwhelmed with the sudden exodus of a substantial number of musicians. As the German Reich increasingly isolated itself politically in Europe, it was also harder to find replacements. The director of the *Staatsoper*, Kleiber, thus had to deny an application by the Estonian artist Karrisoo “due to the latest political changes” (although he had performed in Vienna before).¹⁸³ A number of scheduled concerts were also cancelled due to Austria’s sudden unification with the German Reich. The *musique comitee* in Strasbourg, for instance, informed Kleiber that a *Fidelio* performance on March 5, 1938 – only days after the incorporation into the Reich – was with regards to the “latest developments unfeasible.”¹⁸⁴ Evidently, the Vienna Philharmonic, as well the *Staatsoper*, both representatives now of the enlarged German Reich, metamorphosed into political icons, ones that equivalently to the Berlin Philharmonic faced negative repercussions abroad, being stigmatized as political instruments of the Nazis.

returning to the European mainland. She was arrested in France and deported in July 1943 to Auschwitz, where she died one year later. See Gabriele Knapp, „Alma Rosé,“ in *Lebenswege von Musikerinnen im Dritten Reich und im Exil*, Arbeitsgruppe Exilmusik am Musikwissenschaftlichen Institut der Uni Hamburg (Hamburg: von Bockel Verlag, 2000), 207-208.

¹⁸² Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 504-505.

¹⁸³ AdR 506, 23/1938 – 140.

¹⁸⁴ AdR 506, 44/1938 – 213.

c) The Burghauser Case

One of the musicians who fell victim to the Nazi's exclusionary process within the orchestra was Hugo Burghauser. He had been a member of the Vienna Philharmonic since 1919. As a renowned bassoonist, he was a respected music professor in Vienna. As elected president, it was Burghauser's achievement to introduce the *Gastdirigensystem*, the system of having no main conductor, the means through which the philharmonic was able to regularly engage the most famous conductors of the time, including Arturo Toscanini, Wilhelm Furtwaengler, Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer, Felix von Weingartner, and Hans Knappertsbusch. Under his presidency the philharmonic experienced one of its most artistic and economically prosperous times, besides consolidating a reputation of global fame. From this viewpoint it is hard to understand why Burghauser was so unexpectedly released from his position, particularly since Burghauser was neither politically active nor related to any Jews.

Shortly before Austria's *Anschluss*, however, Burghauser was forced to intervene in a comical satire. When during a rehearsal, a corpulent cellist had opened the buttons of his pants (because he probably had an excessive lunch), Furtwaengler, who was conducting the rehearsal, was appalled by this profanity and left the stage *stante pede*. As president, Burghauser tried to calm the maestro and promised to find an appropriate solution. When the cellist was informed that he was suspended from the concert, the elderly musician protested and questioned Burghauser's authority in front of the entire orchestra. The situation then allegedly escalated when the latter called the

cellist an anarchist. In return, Burghauser faced a lawsuit for defamation (*Ehrenbeleidigungsklage*).

This ridiculous incident should have ended in court when the judge indicated sympathy to both sides and appealed to them to come to a mutual agreement; the court would then re-adjourn. Yet both sides did not further attempt to find an agreement and Burghauser was surprised when he was ordered to appear in court again in early 1938. By then Austria had ceased to exist. Faced with a new judge, who was a member of the *NSDAP*, and his accuser, who appeared in court with a party emblem on his shirt, Burghauser was found guilty. Ironically, though, Hitler declared an amnesty in the spring of 1938, by which Burghauser escaped prison. Nevertheless, due to intrigues by some Nazi sympathizers, Burghauser's fate was sealed. In addition to his degradation as president, Burghauser, now considered a politically suspicious person whose reliability was in question, was released from his position as music professor. In the orchestra his status also dramatically declined. Appearing for a rehearsal, he would find a copy of the National Socialist newspaper *Der Stürmer* on his desk. Apparently his merits as president to invite deserved conductors such as the Jew Bruno Walter had generated criticism by some Nazis within the orchestra. From then on the *Gestapo* was breathing down his neck. When some financial irregularities with his wife came up, Burghauser escaped a potential police interrogation when he and the orchestra travelled to Germany for a number of guest concerts. In Munich the local police tried to arrest him for some bizarre reasons; Burghauser, however, was able to leave the town unnoticed. Back in Austria, Burghauser could rely on Kleiber's protective hand for a while, but when the *Gestapo* instructed him

again to appear at their office, Burghauser decided to escape. With the help of Toscanini's wife, the fagottist fled via Budapest, Milan, Paris and Marseilles to Toronto.

The historical significance of the Burghauser Case lies in its resemblance to the Hindemith Affair. Like Furtwaengler, Burghauser was a well-known artist in Vienna. As president of the orchestra for years and as a music professor, Burghauser had enjoyed respect and fame. Trying to keep away from political issues, however, the fagottist became, like Furtwaengler, involved in a 'trial of strength' that made him the subject to a Nazi witch-hunt. Burghauser, however, did stand his ground and did not leave the Reich until it was absolutely necessary. Trying to get along with the Nazis, as Furtwaengler did in regards to the composer Hindemith or his Jewish musicians he tried to protect, Burghauser was unable to reason with the authorities. The Burghauser Case, therefore, was an equivalent example to the Hindemith Affair in Berlin, although less dramatic in nature, and it epitomizes the limits culture and aesthetics had in the Third Reich. Although the Vienna Philharmonic, similar to its counterpart in Berlin, could enjoy a number of privileges other musical ensembles did not, the authorities reserved sufficient power to arbitrarily and unpredictably demonstrate authority in case it was thought to be necessary. Even though Burghauser was by no means a threat to the orchestra or the 'public enlightenment,' the conflict with the cellist – which was not even art-related per se – had developed into a power struggle that involved party politics and that therefore could have only one winner. When Burghauser realized that it was best to leave the country before it was too late (similar to Furtwaengler's eventual escape to Switzerland in 1945), the musician decided to bypass further confrontations and join

Toscanini and his *NBC*-orchestra in the United States, where he played until 1965.¹⁸⁵ It seems that Burghauser, like Furtwaengler in 1935, was cornered and could not expect the support of any influential or political powerful figures. It is bizarre that the members of the orchestra did not lobby for their deserved former president who had attracted most of the famous conductors of the time to come to Vienna. Instead, the political opportunism within the orchestra was evident. Burghauser remembers that when he had escaped the authorities in Munich and joined the orchestra in Friedrichshafen again he was confronted with many unfriendly looks by some of his colleagues, who suddenly turned their backs on him.¹⁸⁶

In retrospect, therefore, the Burghauser case serves as a strong indicator of how politically opportunistic parts of the philharmonic orchestra had become. While there was euphoria and popular support for Hitler in 1938, in the Reich but also within the orchestra, it seems that no one dared to question the inhumane treatment that Burghauser received. A letter by a few of his colleagues, a phone call to Furtwaengler, or an approach to Schirach might have helped Burghauser at least stay within the orchestra and ultimately in his home country. After all, Burghauser was not politically engaged nor had he expressed any opposition to Nazi policies. As it turned out, however, no one dared to question Berlin and its regionally represented authority. The best way to deal with Berlin, it seemed, was to appease it and cooperate with the authorities, if required, in order to maintain as much autonomy as possible.

¹⁸⁵ Otto Burghauser describes in more detail the troublesome time he had to endure. Although his published memoirs are the only detailed source on this incident and therefore cannot be confirmed in detail by other sources, there is no reason to doubt the general facts in his book. For more information see Hugo Burghauser, *Philharmonische Begegnungen. Erinnerungen eines Wiener Philharmonikers*, 59-133.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

d) David vs. Goliath: The Berlin -Vienna Rivalry

After Burghauser and the Jewish members of the orchestra had left, the *Anschlusseuphorie* that had existed within the orchestra steadily declined. In hindsight, it is even ironic that although such a high number of musicians of the orchestra had joined the Nazi Party, an idiosyncratic dislike or abhorrence towards Berlin and the German government developed. After all, the old Austrian-Prussian rivalry was not a novelty. Over the next seven years, the history of the Vienna Philharmonic resembles a double-edged sword; while the orchestra had become a political symbol of Nazism with its high party membership, an increasing resentment towards the Nazi government in Berlin was apparent.

The change from euphoria to resentment in Austria between 1938 and 1945 had many faces. Symptomatically a flier in 1940 read: “People of Vienna! From a global metropolis to a Prussian province? Do you agree with this degradation?”¹⁸⁷ Vienna in particular had a low status in Hitler’s personal ranking – not seldom was Austria derogatively referred to as the *Ostmark*, the eastern part of the Reich. When in 1938 the international Salzburg Festival was approaching, the Nazis understood its importance and thus used it as a podium to promote the arrival of National Socialism in Austria. Toscanini had already cancelled, Jews were no longer allowed to participate or visit, and the programme had to be re-thought. According to Gisela Prossnitz, the festival had been created as something Austrian; but once Salzburg had become simply a town in the

¹⁸⁷ Guido Knopp, *Hitler’s Helfer – Vollstrecker der Macht* (Munich: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1996), 136.

Ostmark, it was no longer a match for Bayreuth, where Hitler played host to the world.¹⁸⁸ In 1941 the festival was discontinued. It was a serious blow for the Vienna Philharmonic that had used the annual festival as a platform to perform world-class music and to increase its reputation as one of the world's finest musical ensembles. In addition, the musicians were suddenly faced with free time during the summer, a vacuum due to the minor interest abroad for guest concerts. To avoid possible conscription into the army during the summer of 1940, the orchestra came up with an alternative festival: the *Salzburger Konzert-Zyklus*. Prominent conductors were invited and, to the surprise of the philharmonics, artists such as Hans Knappertsbusch, Karl Boehm, Franz Lehár and even Wilhelm Furtwaengler agreed to come.¹⁸⁹ Although the festival was not a great financial success, the event itself is proof of how independently and even patriotically the Austrian orchestra acted. Hellsberg argues that Goebbels was not enthused about this new cultural offensive in the South. The high quality of the orchestra, the high number of party members, and commissioner Jerger's excellent connections to other party functionaries sufficed in the end. Jerger stated that the circumstances required political talent in addition to the ability to produce brilliant art, if one did not want to fall into insignificance. He, at least, would do everything possible to prevent the orchestra from relinquishing the position that it deserved.¹⁹⁰ The impromptu organization of *Salzburger Konzert-Zyklus* certainly helped Jerger's conservative ambitions.

However, the rivalry between Berlin and Vienna – that had a significant impact on the artistic and cultural activities in the former Alpine Republic – had a more

¹⁸⁸ Gisela Prossnitz, "The Salzburg Festival in the Thirties," in *Austria in the Thirties* John Warren & Kenneth Segar, eds. (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1991), 248-249.

¹⁸⁹ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 283.

¹⁹⁰ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 484.

general nature and was not ideological in nature. It was not the Bayreuth Festival that was to replace Salzburg with its equivalent, but Hitler's general prerogative to promote Berlin's status as the capital of a new global empire. Vienna and Austria were considered as integral parts of this empire; more than a rank of secondary importance, however, was not anticipated for a city that Hitler had always disliked since his childhood.¹⁹¹ What we see, therefore, was not necessarily a struggle of the Vienna Philharmonic to protect its central role in Austrian music and culture, but rather a more general dispute over the importance of the city of Vienna (and arguably the *Ostmark* as a whole) that had been a centre of Western culture and music for centuries. Vienna's oligarch, Baldur von Schirach, made it explicitly clear that he would not tolerate any overstepping into his legislative microcosm. Since Schirach was a self-proclaimed expert on arts, the *Gauleiter's* attempts to limit Berlin's influence on the city were especially directed towards Goebbels and his almighty Ministry of Propaganda. In May 1942, Schirach stated that it was the people of Vienna's right to reject or approve music, including major works by contemporary composers.¹⁹²

Such a remarkably liberal stance by a high-ranking Nazi official mirrors the inconsistencies that existed with regard to cultural policies in the Third Reich. While von Schirach perceived his musical sensibilities as being superior to those of the Nazi leadership, and thus pursued a musical policy that sometimes contravened the wishes of the Propaganda Ministry, Goebbels, according to Erik Levi, became increasingly impatient with the lack of cooperation and von Schirach's open tolerance of contemporary music. Obviously, the *Gauleiter* and the Goebbels' ministry were at

¹⁹¹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936* (Stuttgart: DVA Verlag, 2000), 65.

¹⁹² Friedrich Heller, „Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Tradition“, in *Musikgeschichte Österreichs Vol. II* (Graz: Styria Verlag, 1979), 414.

loggerheads over Schirach's organization of a festival of contemporary music that included works by composers, who had lost Berlin's approval. As well, when Richard Strauss was dismissed as president of the *Reichsmusikkammer*, Schirach offered the famous composer his personal protection.¹⁹³ Clearly, the top Nazi representative of former Austria was not intimidated by Berlin's power monopoly. Hence, the rivalry between both cities was not based on ideological differences (as were the Mannheim Incident or the Hindemith Affair), and the Viennese half of the rivalry, was, therefore, not a reaction to the nazification of Austrian culture *per se*. Unlike in Berlin, where Furtwaengler questioned the validity and logic of National Socialism when he argued that Germany could not spare excellent artists, including ones who were Jewish, or when he sided with the composer Hindemith, also on ideological grounds, in Vienna there is no historical evidence that the philharmonic disagreed with the Nazis and protested due to ideological differences, which could have led to some major disputes. Instead, it was power politics between the new, far-away patriarch in Berlin and the former Austrian capital.

The antagonism Vienna's *Gauleiter* displayed towards Berlin fit into the larger paradigm that political and cultural institutions in the former republic had no interest in allowing a German avalanche of power and influence roll over Austria. When in May 1940 Jerger appointed Aurel Wolfram to the council (*Vorstandsrat*), for the first time ever a member, who was not a musician joined the orchestra's executive. Wolfram, allegedly an expert in cultural affairs and open admirer of the Vienna Philharmonic, made no secret of his antipathy towards the rulers in Berlin. In May 1940 he stated that after 500 years as a *Reichs*-capital, Vienna had to avert its decline into secondary standing and focus all its strength in the preservation and enhancement of the city's *high* culture, one

¹⁹³ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 37.

with which no other German city could compete. In Wolfram's eyes, it was the Vienna Philharmonic, with its tradition and high artistic quality, that possessed the necessary status to take part in Vienna's resurrection as *the* cultural centre of the entire German Reich. Unsurprisingly, Wolfram's statement could not stand without a reaction from Berlin. A few months later, Wolfram had to resign from his position.¹⁹⁴

Within the orchestra, the musicians were aware that culture and music had been greatly appreciated and cultivated in the *Altreich* since 1933; the collectivization of the music profession into a unified body, the organization of numerous music festivals, the seemingly endless financial support, the increase in employment opportunities, and not at least Hitler's personal support for a culturally-active scene all had been witnessed in Austria. Yet as Otto Strasser remembers, Berlin always was a step ahead. While the Vienna Philharmonic had to switch to a *Gastdirigentensystem* to survive the previous economic crisis, in Berlin the Philharmonic never needed such a system. Instead, the Berlin Philharmonic always received more attention by the media, at home or abroad; in addition, the Nazis upgraded the orchestra into the highest category for musical orchestras, the *Sonderklasse*. As well, it enjoyed greater financial support in the Reich's capital and was able to go on tour more often. Strasser argues that, although Berlin had always been able to attract more and better artists and also was capable of paying higher salaries, the Vienna Philharmonic was proud of its past achievement to become such a well-known and respected orchestra. This underlying pride and self-demarcation from Berlin increased when war and chaos, that, at least in the eyes of many Austrians were caused by Germany, started to afflict the people in the *Ostmark*. It is, therefore, symptomatic that when the orchestra celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 1942, the

¹⁹⁴ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 482.

Vienna Philharmonic gratefully accepted some financial support from the Viennese authorities who co-sponsored the festivities, but simultaneously rejected a substantial grant from Berlin.¹⁹⁵ Clearly, this gesture had a symbolic character, but was also meant to undermine Berlin's role during the jubilee. Already in late 1938, the Berlin Philharmonic, which had been invited in exchange for the Vienna Philharmonic's guest concert in Berlin a few months prior, had to experience how unwelcome guests from Berlin were at this time. After a guest concert with Furtwaengler, the Berlin orchestra received a very cold reception. Strasser remembers how outraged Furtwaengler was about an audience that apparently could not separate culture from politics.¹⁹⁶

e) Home Front and War

Throughout the war years Austrians maintained a great interest in the Vienna Philharmonic. The *Abonnementkonzerte* continued uninterrupted, similar to the situation in Berlin, until the very end of the war. In addition to the high demand for concerts by the public, Schirach assigned the orchestra to perform a number of concerts for war-related groups, including workers in arms factories, soldiers on vacation or in hospital, or for the local broadcasting company.¹⁹⁷ Furtwaengler had left for Switzerland by the beginning of 1945, and it is ironic that due to the absence of famous conductors, the orchestra performed its last concert in April 1945 with Clemens Krauss, who was the only conductor of rank that had stayed in town. The past quarrels between him and the orchestra that had led to his dismissal in 1935 were forgotten by then.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 488.

¹⁹⁶ Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*, 179.

¹⁹⁷ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 497.

On March 12, 1945, the *Staatsoper* was destroyed during an air raid on Vienna. For the musicians, the loss of their traditional venue meant a direct participation in the war. For the next several days the musicians were occupied with clearing operations. Although the musicians, similar to their counterparts in Berlin, were exempted from military service, the situation on the home front increasingly had an impact on the musicians.¹⁹⁸ On March 19, 1945, the council discussed a possible evacuation of the orchestra and the families of the musicians – the Soviet army was close to the city’s gates. Schirach, however, whose approval was necessary, delayed a final decision until it was too late. Thus, the philharmonic remained in Vienna and performed its last concert on April 2, 1945, while the Soviets were already occupying the city. In the meantime, commissioner Jerger had resigned from his position (he left for Salzburg) and assigned Fritz Sedlak to be the interim manager. Sedlak had been an officer during the First World War and had been imprisoned in Russia for five years. His wife was Russian and his Russian language skills were proficient.¹⁹⁹ Sedlak, according to Strasser, was then able to convince a Major Marek to create a *Volkssturm* unit consisting of all members of the orchestra.²⁰⁰ This civilian army was meant to ensure that the members of the orchestra and their families could stay together and were not individually ordered to join other military units that were supposed to stop the Russian final offensive. When Marek approved the formation of the *Volkssturmeinheit* ‘*Wiener Philharmoniker*’, he assigned

¹⁹⁸ The military exemption stands in stark contrast to the orchestra’s local counterpart, the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra, which was dissolved in 1944, when all available males were drafted for military service. See Manfred Permoser, *Die Wiener Symphoniker im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 2000), 81 & Rainer Bischof, *Ein Jahrhundert Wiener Symphoniker* (Vienna: Holzhausen Verlag, 2000), 34-36.

¹⁹⁹ Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*, 218.

²⁰⁰ The idea of a *Volkssturmeinheit* had been suggested already in February by SA-officer Kuebler. This plan, which foresaw the musicians doing sanitary work was, however, not realized. See Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 500.

Sedlak to be in command and ordered the unarmed unit to only protect the orchestra's building (*Musikvereinsgebäude*). From there the musicians and their family members were chased away by withdrawing German soldiers to settle, again temporarily, within the cellars of the *Burgtheater*. Thus, the musicians were forced twice within days to carry all their possessions, including instruments, the orchestra's archival documents and scripts, plus personal belongings, by hand or on small trolleys. When the orchestra again had to move, a final destination was found at the fire department's offices.²⁰¹ There, the orchestra awaited the fall of Vienna.

Two days before the fighting ended, however, the orchestra had to endure another ordeal. On April 11, 1945, a Russian officer entered the fire department and assigned all males for a deadly assignment. The withdrawing German troops had blown up all bridges over the Danube River; on the other side, German troops were awaiting the Soviets. The Russian officer thus needed 'volunteers' who would help construct a temporary bridge to help Soviet troops cross the river. Obviously, this would have meant certain death for the musicians. It was again Sedlak's extraordinary negotiating talent and Russian language skills that persuaded the Soviet commanders to spare the members of the famous Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. After a few hours, all recruited musicians were allowed to leave, the *Volkssturmeinheit* was dissolved, and the musicians and their families returned to their homes. One week later, on April 19, 1945, the orchestra met again to rehearse.²⁰²

In comparison to the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic embodied a strong, cohesive entity of musicians who were able to survive the war

²⁰¹ Heinrich Kralik, *Das Grosse Orchester – Die Wiener Philharmoniker* (Vienna: Frick Verlag, 1952), 218.

²⁰² Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 501.

relatively intact. While in Berlin Furtwaengler and Minister Speer had a protective hand over the orchestra to the very end, in Vienna the philharmonic could not rely on the authorities and their efforts to rescue the ensemble. Instead, it was the self-initiative to form a 'military' unit (although members of the philharmonic was never armed) that glued the musicians and their relatives together and created a collective shield for its protection. While in Berlin, members of the philharmonic stayed at home with their families and waited for the unavoidable, musicians of the Vienna Philharmonic distinguished themselves from their northern counterpart by voluntarily participating in the war. Although both approaches were different in nature, both the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics had aside from the departure of a number of Jewish artists, no significant losses. With some few exceptions, the musicians survived the war, the bombings and the street fighting in their cities, although many lost their residences.²⁰³ As almost intact cultural institutions, both ensembles did not lose time in continuing their profession once combat had ended. Their calling for artistic excellency was little affected by twelve, or respectively seven, years of authoritarian dictatorship. In retrospect, it remains a truism, therefore, that both orchestras did manage to bridge the Nazi years relatively unaffected and were able to premiere with orchestral performances - as if nothing had happened - only days after the fall of the Third Reich.

²⁰³ Both orchestras were faced with the loss of one member that had participated in the war. In Berlin, Hans Christkautz was accidentally assigned to a *Volkssturmeinheit*. He went missing in January 1945. It is thought that he drowned in the Oder River while withdrawing from Soviet troops. In Vienna, Hans Charwat was also mistakenly drafted and died later on the Eastern front. See Averginos, *Künstler-Biographien. Die Mitglieder im Berliner Philharmonischem Orchester von 1882 –1972*, 38 & Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 505.

V

Conclusion

The Berlin Philharmonic Werner Thärichen remembers that after the war, when asked for his profession, the conductor Furtwaengler always wrote ‘musician.’ Thärichen presumes that the conductor did not want to pride with titles and decorations, since the National Socialists had already done that sufficiently.²⁰⁴ After the war, not only Furtwaengler was cautious when he was asked about his time during Nazism. Members of both the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras who had joined the Nazi Party were subject to investigations by the Allies. A number of musicians in both orchestras were prohibited from further working, including Lorenz Höber, who had managed the Berlin orchestra’s affairs for many years. Ironically, a member of the Vienna orchestra who had joined the communist party participated in the denazification hearings.²⁰⁵ This reversion of realities is ironic considering, that a few months prior, it was the Nazis who were the persecutors.

²⁰⁴ Werner Thärichen, *Paukenschläge, Furtwaengler oder Karajan* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1987), 24.

²⁰⁵ Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, 508.

Due to the lack of appropriate replacements, however, several musicians who at first were prohibited from playing in their orchestras were allowed to return.²⁰⁶ Similarly, Furtwaengler, who also had to undergo a de-nazification procedure, was eventually allowed to return on stage in 1947. All in all, the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics were again in the fortunate position of arguing that their members were indispensable.

The history of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics in the Third Reich is one of ambivalence. While both orchestras exemplified numerous times how unified their ensembles were in seeking to preserve their cultural and organizational autonomies, there is also sufficient evidence that points towards collaboration with the Nazis. The performances at the monumental party conventions in Nuremberg or the numbers of party members in both orchestras demonstrate, that at least from a moral perspective, the history of both orchestras during the time of Nazism is not entirely flawless. Although both ensembles had very little capacity to outmanoeuvre the directives of the Nazis, the question of guilt still remains. As members of orchestras that the Reich obviously used for propaganda purposes, the accusation that these musicians were part of a larger, totalitarian and racist system is valid. Theoretically, at least, each member had the chance to retire or leave, and thus be not part of Hitler's new Germany.

²⁰⁶ Only weeks after the capitulation of the German Reich, the musicians Alfred Graupner, Arno Burkhardt, Werner Buchholz, Wolfram Kleber and Hans Woyworth were suspended from the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Shortly thereafter, Graupner and Burkhardt were rehabilitated since musicians had the right to appeal to their suspensions. See Aster, *Das Reichsorchester*, 333-336.

According to Albrecht Duemmling, the Nazis postulated

that music expresses most profoundly the soul of the German people. And because it was believed that music, a reflection of the soul, could itself control the character of a person and therefore a nation, the Nazis thus felt justified in conducting that the musician had the incredible power at hand, which could only be used properly in conjunction with a profound sense of responsibility.²⁰⁷

Indoctrinating this sense of responsibility according to National Socialist principles was planned by the Nazis over time. To become active agents who were to transmit the idea of Nazism through music, musicians in the Third Reich were assigned important tasks. Whether the members of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics saw themselves as such agents with a pedagogical mission is questionable. The fact is that, although the cultural policies provide evidence that the Nazi regime was anything but monolithic, and was even chaotic at times, according to Erhard Bahr, the direction of Hitler's intentions emerges very clearly: "The evidence shows that the functionalist interpretation fails in its application to long-term developments."²⁰⁸ Although this case study demonstrated that music in the Third was anything but linear, Bahr deserves some credit with regard to the successful, long-term implementation of music policies in the

²⁰⁷ Albrecht Duemmling, „The target of racial purity: The Degenerate Music Exhibition in Duesseldorf 1938,“ in *Art, Culture and Media under the Third Reich* Richard Etlin, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 53.

²⁰⁸ Erhard Bahr, „Nazi Cultural Politics: Intentionalism vs. Functionalism,“ in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, Glenn Cuomo, ed. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1995), 15.

Third Reich. The experience of the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics in the Third Reich helps elucidating larger patterns of cultural policies in the Third Reich and demonstrates how *gleichgeschaltet* or coordinated cultural institutions were in the Reich overall – the exclusion of their Jewish members, although delayed, is best proof. Even if there was a limit to this coordination from above, it was the acceptance by the ones in power to leave the reins of control somewhat loose. Haffner rightly argues that Prieberg's conclusion, that Furtwaengler, and with him his philharmonics in Berlin and Vienna, exemplify a 'trial of strength' during the time of Nazism, is faulty, for the Nazi apparatus, at any time, was able to crush the conductor if it had intended so.²⁰⁹ Even though the Hindemith Affair and its immediate repercussions demonstrated that there were limits the Nazis had to obey, this by no means leaves open the question of who was in power and who was not.

From this standpoint it is understandable that the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics did not generate more opposition towards their patrons. Instead, the history of both orchestras illuminates how privileged life for 'ordinary' artists in the Reich could be. Being classified in the highest category of musical orchestras (*Sonderklasse*), the Vienna and Berlin orchestras were aware of their status and the appreciation the Nazis showed towards them.²¹⁰ In retrospect, it was subsequently understandable that both orchestras focused on their economic and artistic self-interests to outlive the Hitler regime. Prieberg argues that totalitarian regimes like to make world champions boxers, ballet ensembles and national football teams because they feel it in their interest to chalk up their victories as if they were victories for the nation. He

²⁰⁹ Haffner, *Furtwaengler*, 33

²¹⁰ Hans von Benda, von Schmidtseck's successor and manager of the Berlin Philharmonic, portrayed the philharmonic in a letter to Goebbels in 1938 as one that with its merits could not be compared to any other orchestra within the Reich. BArch R 55 951 Michrofiche 1.

explains that the fact that a concert is not the same as a sports match because there are no teams competing with one another does not bother these regimes. Instead, they see the possibilities for using music – like sports – as a weapon in the competition for international prestige. “If artists make a lot of good music, then the state whose passport they happen to carry in their pockets considers itself an artistic and intellectual world power. However, the quality of music-making manifestly does not depend on the morality of the government which happens to be in power, nor even on the subsidies it gives.”²¹¹

The Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, which both reached to an audience of millions of listeners through radio, live-performances and recordings, were undoubtedly such prestigious world-champions. As demonstrated in *The Pianist*, brilliant art is possible in democratic, allegedly free countries, but also under suppressive authoritarian regimes. The debate, therefore, whether it was good or bad that Furtwaengler and with him the musicians of both world-class orchestras remained in Germany is useless, according to Stresemann.²¹² It certainly would have helped the image of the ‘other’ Germany if they had left like many other artists. But the musicians’ stay and decision to continue with their profession was moral support for their colleagues within the orchestra, and the families, relatives and friends who could not afford to leave. Disapproving with Goldhagen’s controversial thesis that all Germans at that time were Nazi perpetrators (and thus guilty), the baker, the schoolteacher but also the musician, I firmly believe that in reality, it was practically not feasible for the members of both

²¹¹ Prieberg, *Trail of Strength – Wilhelm Furtwaengler and the Third Reich*, 178.

²¹² Wolfgang Stresemann, *The Berlin Philharmonic from Bulow to Karajan* (Berlin: Stapp Verlag, 1979), 84.

orchestras, the 'ordinary musicians', to leave their homes and by that exhibit their moral opposition, if they had some, towards the Hitler regime.

In addition to demonstrating the idiosyncratic un-linearity of cultural policies in the Third Reich, ones that granted considerable freedoms to both the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras, this study also intended to bring more light into the motives and realities ordinary musicians underwent during this time. Experiencing privileges and other forms of preferential treatments, the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics were responsible for producing brilliant art, one that was nationalized by the German government. It seems though that culture and art are, regardless in what political environment they are fashioned, always the product of human ingenuity, creativity and intuition. And since these traits are not restricted to any nation or race, art does not know any boundaries and limits, and the stigma 'most German of the arts,' therefore, seems to be an anachronistic illusion.

*Everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the
individual who can labor in freedom.*

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

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