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STIFLING THE SUBVERSIVE SWING: AN AUSTRIAN PERSPECTIVE
ON THE NAZI JAZZ BAN

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ON THE NAZI JAZZ BAN

Colin J. Rensch, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2018

This research investigates the rationale behind the Nazis' suppression of jazz music during the Second World War. Existing scholarship explains the circumstances surrounding this suppression, but it does not explore why the Nazis did not completely eradicate jazz. The goal of this research is to reveal which aspects of jazz the Nazis particularly disdained and why they allowed this music to continue while they so vehemently suppressed other forms of art that they deemed undesirable.

In order for the arguments to be viewed in their proper context, the thesis first discusses the rise of jazz in Austria and the Austrian jazz scene of the late 1920s and early 1930s. In particular, it examines the impact of Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* and Josephine Baker's controversial appearance in Vienna. Next, it explores the clandestine, war-time jazz scene and how jazz represented an ideological opposition to Nazism. Finally, specific Nazi regulations concerning jazz are analyzed along with two essays, written by two men who shared a similar disdain for jazz, on the "destructive" influence of jazz.

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INTRODUCTION

The Andrews Sisters, Glenn Miller, and Vera Lynn are just three of the many musical legends from the WWII era. It is well known that their music brought joy and consolation to Allied soldiers and civilians through jazz standards such as “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” “In the Mood,” and “I’ll be Seeing You”; however, I—like many American-born jazz scholars—had not considered the important question of how jazz was perceived by soldiers and civilians under Axis control until I took part in a three-week, college course in Vienna, Austria in June 2015. The class had the opportunity to hear from a variety of speakers, all of whom had some connection to the summer program. One of the speakers, Herbert Czermak, was a native Austrian who had grown up amidst the chaos of the war years. Czermak, an avid jazz aficionado and a history professor, recalled that the first English word he learned as a child was “swing.” I had an extended conversation with him following class, after which I decided to make it my scholarly quest to understand the role jazz music played in Nazi-controlled Europe.

Although war-era jazz is commonly associated with the American war experience, jazz music played an important, yet very different, role in Nazi Germany. Whereas American leaders viewed jazz favorably, Nazi leaders believed jazz to be culturally subversive: it was labeled *entartete* or degenerate, and it was suppressed.¹ Many of jazz music’s important elements, such as its African American cultural roots, its growing cross-racial/international popularity, and its celebration of individualism fueled the Nazis’ continued distaste for the style, as Guido Fackler concisely summarizes in his commentary on “Jazz Under the Nazis”:

¹ American bandleaders like Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw led jazz service bands that performed for troops stationed in the states and overseas, and jazz performances were featured prominently in government-sponsored war-bond drives in the U.S.

During the Weimar Republic, jazz conquered Germany and in the process became a symbol of the Roaring Twenties. Yet bitter protest was already stirring from nationalist conservatives and right-wing circles. After Hitler took power in 1933, the conflict over jazz intensified. So-called *fremdländisch* (alien) music had to be eradicated. After some early prohibitions in this regard and the creation of the *Reichsmusikkammer*, which would mean exclusion for Jewish musicians and impede artistic exchange with foreign musicians, there followed a liberal phase owing to the 1936 Olympic games being held in Berlin. With the success of the new jazz-style swing and the strengthening of the so-called *Swingjugend* (Swing Youth), however, further repression came in 1937 and 1938. District Nazi party leaders, police directors and local businesspeople began to issue numerous decrees prohibiting swing, jazz, and swing dancing for their respective region, city or local establishment. Despite these restrictions, jazz's presence continued, because of the ease with which ignorant inspectors were outsmarted, and the sympathies for the agreeable swing style harboured even by some Nazi functionaries.

After the beginning of World War II, the boycott of cultural products from so-called enemy nations, and bans on dancing, also came to affect jazz. Nevertheless, jazz experienced an upturn in the years of the German *Blitzkrieg*, so much so that after the initial war successes, the prohibition on swing dancing, for example, was once again lifted. On the other hand, jazz bands were brought from countries occupied by or allied with Germany as a substitute for the German musicians called into the armed services. These bands satisfied the demand for syncopated popular music by the civilian

population as well as by soldiers on leave from the front. For economic reasons, the Nazi regime for a long time even tolerated the production and distribution of German as well as foreign records and films with jazz content. On various occasions, moreover, swing music was actually used in foreign propaganda. . . . Only on 17 January 1942 were public and private dance events finally prohibited. The defeat at Stalingrad (31 January – 2 February 1943) and Goebbels' proclamation of 'total war' (18 February 1943) signalled the end for most of the venues used by swing bands, which in the end led to the downfall of jazz as well.

Despite all the campaigns of defamation and prohibition, as well as the incarceration of some jazz musicians and jazz fans, it cannot be said that there was no German jazz scene in the Third Reich. Sustained by professional and amateur musicians, jazz bands, and also by enthusiastic swing fans and record collectors, it is more accurate to say that the development of jazz was severely encumbered by political conditions.²

As a result, jazz was pushed underground in Nazi-dominated regions, with clandestine communities of jazz aficionados existing in major cities and towns from Berlin to Vienna.

Most existing research has focused on how this secret performance of jazz helped people endure the grim reality of Nazi rule and how the proliferation of jazz in the post-war years increased support for the U.S. in Austria and East and West Germany.³ No one, however, has

² Guido Fackler, "Jazz Under the Nazis," Music and the Holocaust, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/jazz-under-the-nazis/> (accessed March 18, 2018).

³ See Bibliography at the end of this thesis for full bibliographic details.

explained the exact reasoning and purpose behind the Nazis' prohibition of jazz or why the prohibition was so inconsistently applied within the Third Reich. Therefore, the goal of my thesis is to unravel the perverse logic of the unofficial ban in order to reveal its true purpose.

In Chapter 1, I will provide an overview of the Viennese jazz scene of the 1920s and 1930s and discuss how certain events during this period impacted the city's reception of jazz. These events will include the performance of Ernst Krenek's opera *Jonny spielt auf* and Josephine Baker's visit to Vienna.

In Chapter 2, I will examine the daily reality of the jazz ban from 1938 through 1945—the period of Nazi rule in Austria. I will discuss how Nazi officials implemented the ban and how performers and fans avoided trouble while continuing to make and listen to jazz music. To construct the narrative of both the enforcers and violators of the ban, I will discuss the timeline of ban-related events, analyze police reports, and share the stories of secret jazz performances.

Chapter 3 will showcase the bulk of my new research on the rationale behind the Nazi efforts to suppress the dissemination of jazz music. This research focuses on the possible reasons for the ban and what I believe actually led to the ban. In terms of primary source evidence, I will rely on sources I collected at the Institute for Musicology and Interpretation in Vienna.⁴ While there, I analyzed the primary source collection of the late Klaus Schulz, an Austrian historian who wrote extensively on the jazz scene in Vienna. Schulz's books include *Steffl Swing: Jazz in Wien zwischen 1938 und 1945* and *Jazz in Österreich 1920-1960*. The collection included

⁴ While applying for a Fulbright grant in Summer 2016, I contacted a staff member at the Institute for Musicology and Interpretation, Dr. Christian Glanz, who invited me to conduct my research at the Institute when he learned that I would be coming to Vienna to gather sources for this thesis.

photographs, newspaper articles, concert programs, and other materials that Schulz used to write his books. I made copies of Nazi literature concerning jazz as well as documents related to *Jonny spielt auf* and jazz in the war period.

One source that will be of particular importance in my thesis is an official police report sent from Berlin to Vienna. The report warns of the subversive effects of songs like Frank Filip's "Then You Smile" and William Hänsel's "Aufgeschnappt." Another source of consequence is the article "Vienna, City of Dreams—and Nightmares," written by English bandleader Teddy White and published in *Musical News & Dance Band in May 1938*. Beginning in 1937, White's band was contracted to play for nearly a year in Vienna's Eden Bar, but this contract was prematurely concluded when Germany annexed Austria in March 1938. White writes about the band's experience in the context of this political climate.

In my conclusion, I will connect the points made throughout the paper to the central arguments. I will also summarize the historical significance of the jazz ban and discuss the contemporary relevance of my research. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of my research and make suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY AUSTRIAN JAZZ SCENE

Few periods in history have tested the endurance of the human spirit to the same degree as World War II. The war presented a daily struggle for survival, even for those who were not on the battlefield. While many people maintained their morale by thinking of better days after the war, still others endured this horrific period in history by looking forward to the little joys of each day. One of these joys, and one that is often overlooked by World War II scholars, is jazz music. At the time, jazz—particularly the style of jazz known as swing—was not simply a popular genre of music, but a representation of democratic values; thus, the Austrian jazz scene is a fascinating case study that shows why the political side of jazz was so important during the Second World War. For many Austrian citizens, jazz was not only loved for its exciting new sound, but because it also represented freedom and human harmony through its improvisatory nature, celebration of the individual, and collaborative performance process.

As will be shown in this thesis, the Nazis lacked an accurate understanding of jazz, but this was not the case for German and Austrian jazz musicians. Dating back to the 1920s, these two countries boasted an array of famous jazz venues like the Weihburg Bar in Vienna and the Delphi in Berlin.⁵ Before and during the war, Germany and Austria had a vibrant jazz scene with extremely talented musicians. Jazz even influenced German and Austrian art music. The jazz standard “Mack the Knife,” for example, was originally composed by German composer Kurt Weill for the musical *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera). The works of Wilhelm

⁵ Barry Kernfeld, ed., “Nightclubs and Other Venues,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Grosz, Fritz Kramer, Edmund Nick, Kurt Pahlen, Erich Zeisl, and Alexander Zemlinsky reveal the influence of other American popular music styles. In 1929, these composers created seventeen musical settings of poems from *Afrika singt*, a collection of Harlem Renaissance poetry that had been translated into German. Malcolm Cole writes that these settings incorporate “techniques drawn from American jazz and from the spiritual with melodic, tonal, harmonic, and sonoral properties of the late Romantic tradition.”⁶ The incorporation of American popular music styles into German and Austrian art music greatly influenced the Nazi perception of jazz because it represented the ideological modernism to which they were opposed.

Jazz inspired an optimistic outlook all over the world—even in the traditional music haven of Nazi-controlled Austria. Jazz musicians and fans championed personal freedoms over the totalitarian ideals of Nazism, and they lived life with a certain cheerfulness and hope despite the chaos of the world around them. During the war, the Nazis suppressed the performance of jazz, but this only succeeded in pushing the Austrian jazz scene underground. Eager fans, both civilians and soldiers, continued to seek out their favorite music in back rooms and clandestine night clubs.

Before jazz music could play such an important role in Austria during the war, it first had to gain a following there—in a country that placed extreme importance on its rich and long-standing musical tradition. Jazz was a boisterous newcomer in an Austrian culture of refined musical tastes; thus, the young people who represented a majority of the early Austrian

⁶ Malcolm S. Cole, “‘Afrika Singt’: Austro-German Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 73.

jazz audience were referred to as *Swings* or *Schlurfs*.⁷ In general, Americans assumed that the rising European interest in jazz was a given, but international audiences, including the Austrians, needed time to adjust their ears and minds to the music.

The need for this adjustment is evidenced in musical works from the Weimar period that address the differences between classical music and jazz. In Ernst Krenek's 1927 opera *Jonny spielt auf* (Jonny Strikes Up), the Old World order of Western art music clashes with the spontaneity of jazz in 1920s Europe. This clash is manifested in the internal and external conflicts of the main characters. The first characters to take the stage are Max, an anxiety-prone composer, and Anita, an opera singer who falls in love with him. When Anita travels to perform in Paris, she meets Daniello, Yvonne, and Jonny in her hotel. Daniello is a famous violinist who stays at the hotel and successfully seduces Anita (whose affections for Max are momentarily abandoned) with his womanizing charm. Yvonne and Jonny are lovers who work as a maid and jazz musician, respectively, at the hotel. Jonny, who is African American, steals Daniello's violin while the latter is conducting his dalliance with Anita. He discovers the violin while snooping around in Daniello's hotel room, but instead of selling it, he realizes that it would make an excellent addition to his jazz band. Jonny is the embodiment of jazz, and the violin theft symbolizes jazz music's reappropriation of traditional musical sophistication.

One can best understand Jonny, and in turn jazz, through his interactions with the other protagonists. Compared to the ways in which the other characters interact with each other throughout the opera, Jonny's exchanges with his fellow characters are more spontaneous—a

⁷ Klaus Schulz, *Steffl-Swing: Jazz in Wien Zwischen 1938 Und 1945* (Vienna: Verlag der Apfel, 2008), 41; Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own; *Schlurf* is derived from the verb *schlurfen*, which means "to shuffle."

nod to his identity as a jazz musician. When Max and Anita sing their duet at the beginning of the opera, their vocal lines are mostly consonant and complement each other. Anita sings each line and Max responds with a different yet harmonically similar line. This musical interplay enhances the audience's understanding of Max and Anita's relationship. Their duet logically combines their incomplete vocal lines in the same way that their relationship has stabilized their previously unbalanced lives. By contrast, Anita and Jonny sing a decidedly unbalanced duet when they meet for the first time. Anita is singing an aria-like serenade when Jonny (whose presence is at first unknown to Anita) approaches and bluntly expresses his physical attraction to her. Unlike Max's response to Anita's vocal lines, Jonny's response is loud and musically angular. Jonny's music sounds more aggressive than it does romantic—the total opposite of Max's sweet subtlety.

Jonny's musical outburst startled Anita, but her words indicate that she is still entranced by him. The difference between Max and Anita's sweet interaction and Jonny and Anita's more aggressive display is quite socially revealing given the time period. The events of the First World War indicated that society was changing, and, yet, Europe attempted to reinstate its traditional social order after the war. Jonny represents the changing times with his startling frankness and spontaneity. For reasons she cannot understand, Anita is somehow drawn to this spontaneity, but despite this inexplicable impulse, she is afraid to submit to Jonny's advances. Anita, like European society, is intrigued by the unknown but cannot bring herself to welcome it with open arms. In both cases, the hesitancy to accept the unknown is set within the context of racial prejudices. Given the time period, Anita is hesitant to openly accept Jonny because he is a black man (reinforced by Krenek's portrayal of Jonny as the womanizing black man) Although not the

only reason, European society was hesitant to accept jazz because of the style's African American influences.

Jonny's behavior in the drama reveals that jazz musicians are highly observant of the world around them. The upper-class hotel guests for whom Jonny performs mostly ignore him because of his skin color and social nonconformance. Although the guests pay him little attention, Jonny is extremely curious and definitely observes them. Indeed, it is his curiosity that ultimately leads him to steal Daniello's prized violin. A jazz musician like Jonny values experimentation and the cutting edge, but he also embraces sophisticated things—like valuable violins. This is evidenced through Jonny's words "everything of value in the world is mine. / The old world created it / but no longer knows what to do with it."⁸ In terms of Daniello's violin, Jonny believes that he can make better use of the instrument than Daniello. The act is a metaphor for the conflict between traditional and modern values that was actually occurring at this time. Furthermore, Claire Taylor-Jay suggests that Jonny's whole persona is "a representation of, and a metaphor for, the society with which Max is in conflict" as well.⁹

Josephine Baker's appearance in Vienna in the late 1920s provides a historical example of this conflict of values. Protesters shouted insults at her in the streets, and "the Austrian Parliament held a debate to decide whether Baker threatened public morals."¹⁰ Even if Baker had been white, her routine would have startled Viennese audiences in the early twentieth century because of its provocative nature. For one thing, Baker wore a variety of physically revealing

⁸ Lothar Zagrosek, *Jonny Spielt Auf*, audio CD (London, 1993).

⁹ Claire Taylor-Jay, *The Artist-Operas of Pfitzner, Krenek and Hindemith: Politics and the Ideology of the Artist* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 92.

¹⁰ Mike Zwerin, *Swing under the Nazis: Jazz as a Metaphor for Freedom*, 1st Cooper Square Press ed. (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 41.

costumes as part of her act (like her famous banana skirt). Baker's choreography also required significant gyrations of her hips and abdomen. Unlike Paris, where Baker was a sensation, Vienna still maintained a modest decorum. This decorum was upset when Baker wriggled onto the stage in her erotic outfits, effectively linking jazz to sexuality.

The episode with Baker illuminates many important issues related to the early Austrian jazz scene. Despite the racial prejudices of 1920s Europe, Baker enjoyed high esteem in other European cities. Baker's skin color alone did not elicit the negative response from the Viennese. Another likely cause of this turmoil was Baker's legitimization of a relatively new musical genre. While Baker came to this important European musical center to perform a new genre, she commanded the same level of respect as any accomplished practitioner of Western art music. Baker's success as a black, female performer may have irritated the Viennese somewhat, but her legitimization of jazz caused the most controversy.

This episode also reveals that Austrian audiences were hesitant to accept the celebration of the individual in music performance. Baker's sensual and physically revealing performances showcased her personal style, and the Austrian people were not accustomed to seeing such personality. Schulz writes that Baker's 1928 revue *Schwarz und Weiss* was not performed at the Vienna State Opera but rather in the lesser Johann Strauss Theater. This was "because of a certain free movement of the protagonist Josephine Baker."¹¹ Up until the early twentieth century, Austrian audiences were accustomed to hearing and seeing dispassionate performances. An individual composer or choreographer might express himself through the music or dance he

¹¹ Schulz, *Steffl-Swing: Jazz in Wien Zwischen 1938 Und 1945*, 17.

or she writes, but the performer was expected to provide a strictly impersonal rendering of the music or routine.

The Austrian public reacted as strongly to Baker's performance as it did to Krenek's opera one year earlier. Susan Cook writes that a riot broke out in response to a performance of the opera in Munich in 1928.¹² This is notable because Krenek was an Austrian-born composer who understood the rich musical traditions of his birthplace. Additionally, despite the jazz-themed subject matter of Krenek's opera, the music is characteristic of any late-Romantic opera. The score calls for occasional 20-second snippets of jazz music, but these interjections are used to establish the ambience of particular scenes. Put bluntly, the Austrian public ridiculed a jazz-flavored opera composed by a fellow countryman as much as it ridiculed the jazz performance of a scantily-clad American woman. When one considers the omnipresence of racism at this time (racism that influenced the atrocities of the Holocaust), it seems impossible to believe that a white man's opera was hated as much as a black woman's dancing. Again, one must consider what else is causing such a musical conflict.

The mere suggestion of jazz music caused tremendous agitation in 1920s and 30s Austria, not because of its sound, but because of the music's social implications. By this time, Vienna had survived its share of strange musical surprises. Just consider the sonic onslaughts of Mahler's symphonies or the harsh dissonances of Schoenberg's pieces. Austria could handle new and unusual music, but the country struggled to accept music that its people did not create. As Hoffman writes, "further aspects of this anti-jazz reception are the negative reactions of the

¹² Susan C. Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitopern of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith*, *Studies in Musicology* 96 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 105. The rioters believed that the role of Jonny was played by a black man and not, as was actually the case, by a white man in black face.

bourgeois population and their cultural loss and identity fears.”¹³ Though Hoffman is writing about the acceptance of jazz in post-war Germany, the fear of the loss of cultural identity was equally strong in pre-war Austria. This explains why the slightest suggestions of jazz in Krenek’s opera caused as much controversy as Baker’s total jazz performance.

¹³ Bernd Hoffmann, “‘Spiegel Unserer Unruhigen Zeit’: Der Jazz-Almanach. Anmerkungen Zur Rundfunk-Sendereihe Des NWDR Köln (1948-1952),” *Jazzforschung = Jazz Research* 40 (2008): 184.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICS OF JAZZ

Most negative reactions toward jazz in Austria stemmed from the political implications of the music. As one timely reflection of this, the Viennese periodical *Das Kino-Journal* (The Cinema Journal) featured an article in 1926 comparing the rise of jazz to the emergence of film. Discussing the two art forms' political properties, the article states that "jazz and film belong together as typical products of a time that has made democracy from a slogan to a basic fact of intellectual life."¹⁴ In 1938, one finds this commentary even more relevant. This was the year of the *Anschluss*, or the integration of Austria into the Third Reich. Austria would not again have a democratic form of government until the reinstatement of its sovereignty in 1955.

To understand why jazz had become an effective musical weapon in the political fight against Nazism, it is first necessary to determine which aspects of the music are political. In other words, what was it about jazz that made the Nazis so eager to prohibit it? It is difficult to describe jazz, let alone understand its politics; however, there are a few very distinctive aspects of jazz that can be interpreted as politically democratic. The first of these qualities is that of improvisation: the act of extemporaneously creating one's own melody to fit within a specific harmony. When jazz musicians improvise, they provide their own interpretations of particular chord progressions, melodies, or rhythmic ideas. Similarly, in a democracy, citizens have various interpretations of the same political issues, and, in this way, they exhibit a kind of improvisation. Other political qualities of jazz include the celebration of individual performance style and the

¹⁴ Frank Warschauer, "Der Jazz Im Film," *Das Kino-Journal*, n.d., ANNO: Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, August 21, 1926.

collaborative music-making process. Individual musicians might play their instruments a little bit differently (i.e. the saxophone sounds of Coleman Hawkins compared to Lester Young), but a group of musicians is expected to play well as a unit. Similarly, a diverse citizenry is expected to peacefully coexist in a democracy. These three democratic qualities of jazz will be examined in further detail as we now transition to the war period.

Before and during the war, the Nazis took steps to banish jazz from their lands, along with many other forms of music, art, and literature that they deemed undesirable. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels created a government body, the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Culture Chamber), to monitor the cultural activity in the Third Reich. The organization even had a department devoted exclusively to music: the Reich Music Chamber, which “oversaw the observance of the prohibition of the performance of Jewish composers.”¹⁵ The work of many American composers was also prohibited, and jazz became a major target of the organization, especially since many jazz composers at this time were Jewish Americans.

The Nazis believed that they could thwart the advance of jazz by enacting rules and regulations. Like the Nazis’ other prohibitions and laws, the ban on jazz aimed to restrict the individual through carefully calculated logic. Through the combination of these laws and Goebbels’s constant stream of propaganda, the Nazis sought to control society at the personal level. The error they made was to assume that jazz existed only as a music. Jazz manifests itself as a tangible entity, but in reality it transcends the musical realm and informs a listener or performer’s philosophy of life. Despite their intentional targeting of jazz, the Nazis were

¹⁵ Michael H. Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 34; Klaus Schulz, *Jazz in Österreich 1920-1960* (Vienna: Album Verlag für Photographie, 2003), 41.

unsuccessful in their attempts to eliminate it and its influence. This was due in large part to their inability to accurately define the parameters of jazz. To help the populace understand what type of music was prohibited, the Nazis came up with a list of musical elements to avoid. Here is a sampling:

- pieces in foxtrot rhythm (so-called swing) are not to exceed 20 percent of the repertoires of light orchestras and dance bands;
- in this so-called jazz type repertoire, preference is to be given to compositions in a major key and to lyrics expressing joy in life rather than Jewishly gloomy lyrics;
- . . . On no account will Negroid excesses in tempo (the so-called hot jazz) or in solo performances (so-called breaks) be tolerated.¹⁶

Though the Nazis definitely despised jazz, the above passage shows that they did not completely understand what they were banning. For instance, the regulations equate “foxtrot rhythm” with swing. It is unclear here if the officials who created these rules were referring to a type of dancing or a type of music. The term “foxtrot rhythm” clearly refers to the rhythm associated with a foxtrot, but people do not dance a foxtrot to the swing style of jazz. Even European composers had a poor understanding of the various species of American jazz and popular music. In Paul Hindemith’s Piano Suite “1922,” for instance, he misinterprets American popular styles to the point of offering completely different styles altogether. The reference to “hot jazz” in the third rule above also reveals a misunderstanding of jazz. Hot jazz was a commonly used term for a particular classification of jazz at the time, but a jazz tune is not “hot” simply because it has a fast tempo.

¹⁶ Josef Škvorecký, “Red Music,” preface to *The Bass Saxophone* (New York: Pocket Books, 1977).

Austrian pianist Peter Igelhoff's 1939 recording of the song "Love at First Sight" provides an interesting example of Austro-Germanic jazz.¹⁷ The song starts with what was considered at the time to be a relatively traditional sounding piano solo—except for the penultimate chord performed before the entrance of the melody. The chord is a tritone substitution, meaning that the dominant-seventh chord is replaced with another major minor-seventh chord whose root note is a tritone above the original chord's root note. After the beginning piano solo, Igelhoff performs the melody on the piano with accompaniment provided by double bass and acoustic guitar (many European jazz songs from this era feature guitar accompaniment and often omit the drum set). This setting relied on the guitarist to provide both rhythmic pulse and harmony and was made especially famous by guitarist Django Reinhardt. Above the background of the guitar, Igelhoff performs a four-part harmonization of the melody. Because Igelhoff plays the melody in a four-part setting, his piano performance has a much fuller sound than a single-voiced melody. By doing this, Igelhoff made his performance more accessible to European listeners who were more accustomed to a fuller-sounding, classical piano style.

The beginning of the solo section is marked by a well-timed textural change. Having remained silent during the piano melody section, a violinist joins the ensemble to perform the solo. Again, Reinhardt played many of his songs with a violinist, and Igelhoff incorporates the instrument to great effect. The last important element of the song to notice is the rhythmic pulse. Instead of a typical swing beat in 4/4 time, the eighth-note swing pattern is more similar to a shuffle beat in 12/8 time. One hears the eighth-notes more like a group of two eighth-note triplets

¹⁷ Peter Igelhoff, *Love at First Sight*, MP3 audio file, Howdy! Günther Schifter (Electrola, 1939).

followed by one triplet instead of as a long eighth-note followed by a short eighth-note. This rhythmic interpretation of the eighth-notes, which would be ridiculed by today's jazz musicians for sounding a bit "square," is symbolically important. In jazz, all musical elements are subject to the performer's preferences—even the interpretation of the swing beat. Other jazz musicians might not enjoy Igelhoff's take on the swing beat, but it was his prerogative to choose this interpretation. Since jazz is an ever-evolving genre, one must be careful not to standardize a specific performance practice.

The people who sought out jazz in the midst of the Nazi-occupation were not just interested in listening to their favorite music—they were actively opposing the Nazi regime. For most Austrian jazz-loving *Schlurfs*, the ideological resistance to the Nazi regime was one of jazz music's most attractive features. Zwerin interviews a German jazz aficionado who recalls the political symbolism of war-era jazz:

In America, the acceptance of jazz was a social problem, black or white But here it was a political problem because everybody knew the Nazis did not like jazz and wanted to suppress it. That made us love it even more. We always felt that only people who were opposed to the Nazi regime could like this music.¹⁸

Many people in the Third Reich listened to jazz and danced to the music, but those who truly understood the music were taking a political stance by listening to it. Zwerin suggests that a supposed love of jazz allows people like his interviewee to claim innocence in the face of war-related guilt, but there were many people who truly understood the music and were taking a political stance by fully embracing it.¹⁹

¹⁸ Zwerin, *Swing under the Nazis: Jazz as a Metaphor for Freedom*, 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

Despite their seemingly obvious outward support for the Nazi regime, soldiers also continued listening to jazz during the war. A great example is Austrian saxophonist Hans Koller—a German soldier during the war who would later become a relatively well-known performer. Having finished his studies at the Vienna Music Academy in 1939, Koller continued to perform during the remaining years of Nazi power.²⁰ Although membership in the Nazi Party was not a prerequisite for service in the German Army, it is hard to fathom how Koller—who clearly understood jazz as a performer worthy of a biographical entry in an English-language jazz encyclopedia—could both don a German uniform and perform a music that celebrates diversity. In the post-war world, it is easy to question the morality of people like Koller; however, it is important to limit one's assumptions of the man. Although he wore a German uniform, his army service may have been motivated by nothing more than the necessity of survival.

The existence of jazz appreciation among German soldiers has led some scholars to argue that war-era jazz had no political message at all. For example, Schulz writes that “the Schlurfs were definitely very much in contrast to the Nazi[s]...but it was not an ideological opposition.”²¹ His conclusion ignores the fact that one can still submit to an establishment while voicing his or her opposition to it. Various advocates of civil rights draw attention to abuses of power while continuing to obey the laws they seek to abolish. When a teenager or young adult who listened to jazz put on his pin-striped suit and broad-brimmed hat and lazily balanced a cigarette in his mouth, he took a stand against the regime in his own small way.²² His outward appearance was a

²⁰ Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, eds., “Hans Koller,” *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²¹ Schulz, *Steffl-Swing: Jazz in Wien Zwischen 1938 Und 1945*, 44.

²² Schulz, *Jazz in Österreich 1920-1960*, 43.

visible sign of his opposition. Upon seeing him, his khaki-clad peers in the Hitler Youth knew that he was opposed to the Nazi regime. It took definite courage to face the brainwashed masses with a cool and collected jazz vibe. The *Schlurf* was, as a nonconformist might say today, sticking it to the man. The appearance of the *Schlurf* paid homage to the style of the African American jazz musician—who wore a sophisticated suit as a way of showing the world that he, too, deserved respect.²³

Jewish jazz musicians and aficionados risked the harshest punishments to perform and seek out jazz during the reign of the Nazis. Before entire city populations of Jewish people were sent to concentration camps, the strict rules of ghettos (such as curfews and travel restrictions) made it extremely difficult for jazz lovers to hear and play their music. In a 1961 issue of *Down Beat*, Eric Vogel describes his experiences playing jazz in his city's ghetto and later in the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia.²⁴ A trumpet player, Vogel was forced to practice as quietly as possible in closets with his mute. He was also caught outside after curfew one night because his jam session lasted too long. Once in the concentration camp, Vogel and a band of fellow inmates were actually forced to perform in a German propaganda film. Several scenes featuring Vogel's band appear in the film, which was a subterfuge intended to portray the positive treatment of inmates.²⁵ Though formed as a result of Nazi schemes, the band offered Vogel and his bandmates a kind of escape. As Zwerin writes, "perhaps the swinging, intense music had something to do with it. The carefully orchestrated Nazi illusion of freedom and

²³ The young Mexican-American wore the Zoot Suit in a similar display of peaceful protest.

²⁴ Eric Vogel as cited in Zwerin, *Swing under the Nazis: Jazz as a Metaphor for Freedom*, 24–29.

²⁵ The camera crew consisted of foreigners who knew nothing of the real situation in the camps.

security in Theresienstadt took the form of reality in their minds.”²⁶ They were persecuted and wrongly imprisoned men, but they achieved a momentary sense of liberation through the performance of jazz. Vogel and his band achieved the three democratic components of jazz:

1. He and his bandmates improvised and expressed personal interpretations of the music.
2. The ensemble celebrated the individual skills and strengths of each member.
3. The band members were working together in harmony.

It was not the sound of the music, but rather the process of creating the music that provided Vogel and his bandmates with a sense of freedom.

Though the Austrian jazz scene was originally slow to develop, the work of home grown music personalities like Ernst Krenek, foreign performers like Josephine Baker, and emerging Austrian jazz musicians like Peter Igelhoff laid a firm foundation for generations to come. Much is owed to these forbearers, for without their initial efforts jazz music would not have performed such a profound service during the dark days of the Nazi regime. The *Schlurfs* fought their own ideological battle against fascism by promoting the democratic ideals of jazz.

This chapter has shown that by celebrating improvisation, diversity, and performance collaboration, jazz stood in clear opposition to Nazism and embodied a direct threat to Nazi political ideology. The next chapter will show that it was not the musical characteristics of jazz but rather this political threat that motivated the Nazis to suppress jazz.

²⁶ Vogel as cited in Zwerin, *Swing under the Nazis*, 27.

CHAPTER III

ENFORCING AN UNOFFICIAL BAN ON A MISUNDERSTOOD MUSIC

On March 12, 1938, the *Anschluss* or German annexation of Austria occurred, and Austria became known as the *Ostmark*. The country was now an official part of the Third Reich. Although Austria constituted only a small portion of the Third Reich's eventual territorial possessions, the *Anschluss* increased the German-speaking population of the Reich and brought Vienna under Nazi control—a huge cultural win. While the Nazis surely appreciated the city's conservative cultural elements, its worldly artistic community was now subject to the Nazis' many cultural policies and regulations. Art, literature, and music that contained non-German influences would have to survive in the shadows. As jazz was an American musical style of multicultural origin whose practitioners were of diverse ethnic backgrounds, Nazi control represented an existential crisis. The city's jazz scene, having only recently established itself in the musical capital of the world, would now have to cut its teeth while avoiding the fangs of Nazism. This would prove to be all the more difficult since the Nazis' war on jazz was a continuation of a cultural conflict that preceded them.

In the 1938 article “Vienna, City of Dreams—and Nightmares,” British bandleader Teddy White provides a jazz musician's eye-witness commentary on the transition from Austrian to Nazi rule. White and his band had been performing at the Eden Bar in Vienna since August 1937.²⁷ The band had been contracted to perform there for a ten-month period, which was cut short by the *Anschluss*. White discussed the city's musical tastes, comparing the preferences of

²⁷ Teddy White, “Vienna, City of Dreams—and Nightmares,” *Musical News & Dance Band* (May 1938), 14-15.

the bar's local patrons to those of its English and American visitors. The latter group enjoyed the band's versions of the latest "hot" tunes, appreciating the fact that they were still hearing these songs while abroad. The Viennese audience did not enjoy the band's "hot" jazz songs, preferring the tangos, waltzes, and Austro-Hungarian folk tunes of the local band that relieved White's ensemble during its set breaks. In White's view, many of the local dance bands were talented, but most were not interested in performing "modern music."²⁸ He concludes his analysis of these bands by saying: "they have for the most part good technical ability, but unfortunately lack much in style."²⁹

In addition to musical matters, White also comments on Vienna's political climate both before and immediately following the *Anschluss*. Of the political situation in the summer of his arrival, he writes: "it did not seem possible in those days that anything could disturb the serenity of that old, dignified town."³⁰ His remarks suggest that he had not the faintest idea of the fate that would eventually befall the country when he first arrived in Vienna. As the date of the *Anschluss* approached, however, clear signs of the coming crisis manifested themselves: business at the Eden Bar abruptly declined and groups of Nazi-sympathizers began marching through the streets.³¹ When German soldiers arrived in Vienna, White and his band asked the bar owners to conclude their contract. These negotiations proceeded as planned even though the band's lawyer, a Jewish man, had already left the country. A few days later, White managed to book a seat on a flight to Prague, but, upon his arrival at the Vienna airport, he discovered that he could not take

²⁸ White does not provide specific examples of modern music, but he is most likely referring to American and English jazz songs.

²⁹ White, "Vienna, City of Dreams—and Nightmares."

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

all of the band's earnings out of the country, so he left most of them behind with his bassist. Amidst this political chaos, White remarks: "the crisis will make very little difference regarding dance bandmen of Austrian nationality, except perhaps for Jewish players, who will no doubt find many difficulties."³²

White's vivid commentary reveals that he had not assessed the situation for musicians seriously enough. Any slight logistical difficulties that he and his band encountered in the beginning days of Nazi rule would be no match for the issues Austrian jazz musicians would face in the coming years. In addition, White's conclusion that "Jewish players . . . will . . . find many difficulties" was an understatement of major proportions.

In 1931—seven years before the *Anschluss* and two years before Hitler became the German Chancellor—Franz Hiller attempted to discredit jazz by depicting it as an unsophisticated genre. In his article, he provides a particularly interesting description of the origins of jazz music: "what we call jazz music is a more cultivated form of negro music."³³ He then continues by explaining what he considers to be the differences between the instruments of a salon band and those of a jazz band. He mentions "the saxophones of French origin" (which, although not new, were certainly not widely used in European ensembles) and "the trumpets and trombones of American design, which are also different tonally from those [found] here."³⁴ These opening remarks give one a fairly clear a sense of the direction the article will take. To meet his ends, Hiller uses a unique style of rhetoric that is subtle but reliant on insensitive cultural stereotypes. It is not outrightly hate-filled, but it is certainly intended to deepen cultural

³² White, "Vienna, City of Dreams—and Nightmares."

³³ Franz Hiller, "Jazz," (July/August 1931).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

divides. His claim that jazz is a more sophisticated version of “negro music,” for example, is an indirect way of saying that African Americans are unsophisticated. His comment about the saxophones and his remark about trumpets and trombones imply that the French and Americans are also less cultivated people.

Hiller proceeds by dividing jazz into three categories. The first two categories are “the original Negro music” and “‘hot’ jazz music,” while the third category “consists of orchestras playing in the manner of Paul Whiteman (Columbia) and Jack Hylton (His Master’s Voice).”³⁵ Hiller appears to have no qualms about this last category, and he even states its similarity to European music of the time. Although there are enormous gaps in Hiller’s knowledge of jazz, his description of this third category includes two important musicians and recording labels from the 1930s era. In a further explanation of the second category, he also mentions the Dorsey Brothers and Red Nichols as well as the Okeh and Brunswick labels. Since Hiller is attempting to discredit jazz, it is strange that he bothered to include these details. He wants readers to know he is a musical expert even though he is more than willing to disparage jazz music.

Hiller’s concluding paragraph is the most devious of all. He begins by distancing jazz from its African American musical heritage, saying that “much of today’s jazz music is influenced to a very small extent by the original Negro music, and is actually a wholly ‘white’ affair.”³⁶ This comment is both insulting and, considering many of Hiller’s earlier statements on the origins of jazz, confusing. He disapproves of jazz for its African American musical lineage yet claims that this influence has no real bearing on the music anymore. The final blow is struck in the following sentence, when Hiller claims that musicians “would never bring out the right

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

jungle coloring of a Negro band, just as . . . it is impossible to imitate real gypsy music.”³⁷ He abandons any feigned sense of civility and reveals the true target of his words: not jazz but African Americans.

An analysis of Hiller’s article also prompts a series of related questions. What caused the Nazis to eventually disapprove of jazz? Did they actually dislike the music? Did they despise the music’s multicultural nature? Or, did they dislike both of these things? If the Nazis’ disdain for the music was based only on racial issues—not musical preferences—were there any aspects of jazz that appealed to them? If not, this leads to the most important question of all: if the Nazis truly disliked jazz for both political and musical reasons, why did they suppress the music but fail to completely eradicate it from Nazi-controlled regions?

In a twenty-two page essay entitled “Der volkstumzersetzende Einfluß des Jazz” (loosely translated as *The Morally-Corrosive Influence of Jazz on National Character*), German music critic Max Merz revealed that even music scholars put their skills towards the promotion of the cultural purity of the Nazi regime.³⁸ Merz’s level of understanding of jazz, particularly within the context of American culture, was surprising given his disdain for the style. The conclusions he draws about jazz and its destructive influence are imbued with racist and xenophobic beliefs, but his assessment of the musical characteristics of the style is fairly accurate. For example, he argued that syncopation destroys the rhythmic process in music, but he understood that syncopation serves an essential function in jazz music. Merz’s understanding (or at least

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Max Merz, “Der volkstumzersetzende Einfluß des Jazz” (München: Schriftenreihe des Amtes Politische Erziehung der Reichsstudentenführung, 1941). This essay is the tenth installment in the series “The Student Comradship,” and was published by the Office of Political Education of the Reich Student Administration.

non-negative) position regarding African Americans is one of the essay's most striking features. Like many Nazi writings, Merz's piece eventually devolves into an explanation of the intricate web of conspiracies being implemented to the detriment of *volkstum* or national character; however, the beginning of the essay surprisingly reveals with the following statement that Merz is sympathetic to the plight of the African American: "it has been proven that within the colored masses of America it [jazz] was born with its innate talent for musical and physical-representational grotesques . . . considered as its humus rich topsoil."³⁹ The preceding quote is still culturally insensitive, but Merz's words are not nearly as offensive as they are when he speaks of Jewish people. Although Merz detests jazz, he at least acknowledges the music's growth from African American cultural traditions.

When Merz begins to address the particularly destructive characteristics of jazz, his rhetoric transitions from the insensitive to the offensive. Whereas he somewhat indelicately avoids casting judgment on African Americans in discussing the origins of jazz, he eventually presents completely racist arguments. About the spread of jazz, he writes: "it is also perfectly proven that the jazz company passed into the hands of the Jews in a relatively short time and is today their domain, also the domain of all those who are industriously walking in their tracks."⁴⁰ In other words, he does not condemn African Americans for creating jazz, but he does condemn Jewish people for disseminating the music. The statement is doubly offensive because it suggests that African Americans are not capable of spreading jazz themselves. While Merz's claim is subjective, the close relationship between Jewish Americans and African Americans in the heyday of jazz is an area of perennial scholarship. In *Jazz Age Jews*, Michael Alexander argues

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

that, despite their relative success in American society, the progeny of Jewish immigrants to the U.S. resisted cultural assimilation and identified with oppressed minority groups like African Americans.⁴¹ The manifestation of this close relationship prompted bitterness in the American musical mainstream. American composer and music critic Daniel Gregory Mason famously voiced this bitterness when he cited “the insidiousness of the Jewish menace to our [American] artistic integrity.”⁴²

Merz’s analysis of what he considers to be the ruinous aspects of jazz is instructive as we uncover the truth behind the ban on jazz. Besides the issue with rhythm discussed earlier, he specifically criticized what he deemed the incorrect use of the instruments in a jazz ensemble. As an example, he cites the opening clarinet glissando in Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue”: “one of the most famous examples of such unnatural treatment of the clarinet.”⁴³ Merz does not specify what is so “unnatural” about this particular example, but, in the next sentence, he also states his frustration with “technische Kniffe” (technical gimmicks). The bluesy clarinet glissando was highly unusual for that period, hence, it could be construed as a “gimmick.” Merz also considers the style of jazz vocalists with distaste, describing their tone as a kind of “twang.”

Merz’s rhetoric is a puzzling mix of both intellectualism and anti-intellectualism. At the beginning of the essay, he reveals fairly accurate or at least shrewd insights into the origins and characteristics of jazz. He then utilizes these intellectual means to accomplish anti-intellectual ends. The following quote is a good example: “the universal and enduring use of syncopation,

⁴¹ Michael Alexander, *Jazz Age Jews* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁴² Quoted in Carol J. Oja and Judith Tick, eds., “From Orient to Occident: Aaron Copland and the Sagas of the Prairie,” in *Aaron Copland and His World*, 1st edition, The Bard Music Festival (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴³ Merz, “Der volkstumzersetzende Einfluß des Jazz,” 14.

which does not vivify the jazz rhythm, but turns it into intoxicating poison, proves to be just as trivial and ordinary.”⁴⁴ The first part of the sentence (“the universal . . . rhythm”) seems relatively scholarly until one considers the rest of the sentence. It is as if a seasoned musicologist worked with a playground bully to create an argument. What can this strange rhetorical style reveal about Merz’s purpose or the purpose of Nazi leaders?

For one, this mixture of scholarly and aggressive rhetoric is another example of an attempt to elicit an emotional response from the masses. Merz uses enough scholarly language to make readers understand his credibility but then uses inflammatory language to engender indignation. This technique would have been particularly successful with Merz’s target audience: students. With increased access to information, today’s students and young people are typically among the first to cry foul at the onset of political oppression. In Nazi Germany and Austria, however, the Reich’s appeals achieved great success among the youth (think of the propaganda success of the Hitler Youth or the attendance of young people at the Nuremberg rallies). With statements like “the youth is at [the music’s] mercy, and his age, maturity and insight have not been able to stop him,” Merz was clearly hoping to boil the blood of his young audience.⁴⁵

Unlike Merz, who at least understood some of the important characteristics of jazz, many Nazi officials struggled to correctly identify the music and its accompanying dance styles. A particularly ridiculous description of jazz dancing was printed in an issue of *Deutsche Volkszeitung* (*German People’s Daily*) on January 12, 1939. The description was included as part of a summary of an official prohibition against swing music and dancing decreed by the Nazi district leader of the Austrian region of Tyrol-Vorarlberg. It reads: “swing is understood to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

mean all those dances in which the dance partners usually take hold of the arms and move in flexible oscillations of the knee and hip joints back and forth.”⁴⁶ The description of the dance is extremely vague and would have been impossible to enforce. It is hard to think of a dance in which the partners do not embrace each other or oscillate their bodies: even the conservative waltz features subtle oscillations. As if the ambiguous definition did not make the prohibition difficult enough to enforce, bandleaders and venue owners were held responsible for its enforcement; thus, it is extremely unlikely that this decree was actually enforced at all. In addition, the decree directly prohibits swing dancing, but it was obviously intended to prevent the performance of swing music since the latter is necessary for the former.

Albeit ridiculous, the above prohibition reveals some important characteristics of Nazi regulations regarding music and dancing. The first important thing to note is that many of the regulations were regional. The decree was issued by the district leader of Tyrol-Vorarlberg and only pertains to that district. Although state propaganda labeled jazz *entartete* (degenerate), the state relied on local leaders to carry out directives. A second characteristic that this prohibition reveals about Nazi music regulations is that many of them have both explicit and implicit goals. This decree prohibits swing music even though its stated goal is to prohibit swing dancing.

Why did the Nazi regulations against jazz not state their true aim? The following statement from the Tyrol-Vorarlberg decree does much to explain this: “In addition to the refined forms that modern dances have long since found and in which they have proven to be viable in contrast to short-term aberrations, this failed “creation” of a deranged spirit of invention has no

⁴⁶ *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, January 12, 1939, included in *Documentation zur Österreichische Zeitgeschichte, 1938-1945*.

reason to exist.”⁴⁷ If one peels away the layer of inflammatory language, the explanation is fairly plain: jazz dancing and, by connection, jazz music represents a break from tradition. To the Nazis, jazz did not represent a logical forward movement in the progression of music history but an anomalous style of undefined characteristics.

In the coming years, both central and local Nazi authorities continued to place restrictions on music and dance related activities. On September 15, 1939 (two weeks after the start of the Second World War), the *Alpenpost* (Alpine Post) printed a decree from the Reich Minister of the Interior which forbade public dance events.⁴⁸ In contrast to the previous year’s prohibition against dancing in Tyrol-Vorarlberg, this decree announced that both organizers and participants would be punished if they violated it. On August 15, 1940, the Salzburg newspaper *Salzburger Landeszeitung* printed an extremely vague “general ban on dancing . . . as communicated by the competent authority.”⁴⁹ As the war entered its final years, the Nazis restricted cultural activities even further. The *Volkischer Beobachter* (People’s Observer) of August 25, 1944 announced that “all theaters, variety theaters, cabarets and drama schools must be closed by September 1.”⁵⁰ All of these prohibitions would have definitely restricted the performance of jazz music, but none of them directly refer to jazz. They just mention dancing and venues—things associated with jazz, but they never ban jazz outright.

An official police notice from November 17, 1939 reveals the Nazis’ position regarding certain jazz songs. While this notice does not actually ban any songs, it does cite certain pieces

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Alpenpost*, September 15, 1939..

⁴⁹ *Salzburger Landeszeitung*, August 15, 1940.

⁵⁰ *Volkischer Beobachter*, August 25, 1944.

of music as being particularly harmful to State interests.⁵¹ The notice is even more specific in that it prohibits police officials from performing or listening to the pieces. It is unclear why policemen were singled out, but perhaps they were trying to remove any taste for jazz from the ranks before policing the masses. On the list is the Frank Filip song “Then You Smile,” arranged by Ernst Landl, which was outlawed because of its “imitation of American hot music.” The logic behind the banning of “If I Was a Snake Charmer” reveals the subjectivity of the musical laws. It states that “the form of the rendition of the refraining does not correspond to the feeling of the German people.” The reason cited for the piece “Aufgeschnappt” is baser: “tasteless text.” The ludicrous reasons why these pieces were labeled as undesirable make it difficult to understand why exactly the Nazis opposed jazz, but the formal nature of the notice shows that banning the music was an important objective.

Let us examine Ernst Landl’s arrangement of “Dann lächelst Du,” to see if we can better understand why it was included in the preceding source. The arrangement, copyrighted in 1939 by Edition Bristol in Vienna, contains parts for the following instruments: Piano, Violin 1, 2, and 3; Trumpet 1 in B, Trumpet 2 in B; Saxophone 1 in Eb (alto), Saxophone 2 in B (tenor), Saxophone 3 in Eb (alto); Trombone, Guitar, Bass, and Drums.⁵² The word *Slowfox*, written immediately below the title in all of the parts, indicates that the piece is indeed a foxtrot, and the tempo marking is *Moderato*. The song begins with a brief introduction and is then divided into four sections. One interesting feature of these sections is that they are labeled in fairly anglicized German: *Spezial-Chorus* (Special Chorus), *Verse*, *Gesangs-Chorus* (Singing Chorus), and

⁵¹ The Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police in the Reich Ministry of the Interior to the Police Chief in Vienna, Berlin, November 17, 1939.

⁵² Frank Filip, “Dann lächelst Du,” arr. Ernst Landl (Vienna: Edition Bristol, 1939).

Ensemble-Chorus. The only word that non-German speakers might not understand is *Gesangs*, and even that is well-known in the music world. By itself, this observation has little significance, but it gains importance when one considers the other non-German linguistic references: *Slowfox* and *Moderato*. Given the pride that German-speaking artists had in their language at this time, one would expect the terms “Langsam fox” and “Mäßig” instead of slow and moderato.

Although this version of “Dann lächelst Du” was copyrighted in 1939, the arrangement shares similarities with the early jazz songs of the late 1910s and 1920s. The first musical characteristic that reveals its early jazz style is the song’s rhythmic feeling. Instead of including the written instruction to play eighth-notes in a swing pattern (one long and one short eighth-note), Landl notated a combination of dotted eighth-notes and sixteenth-notes to simulate a swing pattern.⁵³ This technique would have prevented performers from having to agree upon an interpretation of the beat—a perennial challenge even to this day. As we saw with Igelhoff’s piece in chapter 2, however, this kind of interpretation of the beat is a bit square.

The song’s harmony is very simple with few distinctly jazzy elements. The chords mainly consist of triads (occasionally colored with the sixth scale degree) and seventh chords of only dominant or diminished quality. Apart from occasional chromatically-inflected walking lines, the bassline is also simple. Low register piano and bass mostly play the roots, thirds, and fifths of chords on beats one and three. These kinds of bass passages evoke the low brass bass lines of the New Orleans second-line marching bands. Despite these early jazz characteristics, the score is not completely devoid of musical elements contemporary to the late 1930s. The notations for the guitar part, for instance, include chord symbols and slashes (to indicate comping) in addition to

⁵³ *Ibid.*

notated chords. The drum part also incorporates whole-measure repeat symbols. Although there is no open solo section, many American bands continued to play songs without solos at this time as well.

What can we make of this song's juxtaposition of outdated musical elements and subtle contemporary stylings? There are numerous possible explanations for Landl's incorporation of older and newer elements of jazz style. He may have chosen to incorporate outdated musical elements in order to accommodate a wide spectrum of jazz performance experience. As White's article revealed to us, the local dance band that relieved his band at the Eden Bar mostly played traditional dance numbers like tangos and waltzes. Most of the musicians in this group had probably heard jazz before, but it is likely that some of them had never played jazz before. Good musicians would have had little difficulty performing Landl's arrangement even if they had no prior experience with jazz. The preferences of Viennese audiences may also help to explain Landl's stylistic choices. Viennese audiences came to appreciate jazz later than audiences in the U.S. or even Great Britain. Perhaps Landl arranged the piece to accommodate his audiences' outdated taste in popular music. The explanation that I would like to examine in more detail, however, is that Landl arranged the song in an older style to avoid censorship.

As the police report from November 17 reveals, Landl's arrangement, although not especially jazzy, managed to attract the Nazis' attention. Again, the police report did not prohibit the performance of the song, but the Nazis definitely viewed the song with suspicion. If Landl's relatively tame arrangement was met with some suspicion, imagine the kind of response that a piece with more modern stylings would have elicited. It should be noted here that Landl was a skilled pianist and drummer who, according to Wagnleiter, was one of the "most important

Austrian jazz musicians” of the time.⁵⁴ In other words, Landl could have created an arrangement that crossed the line, but he appears to have stopped himself before crossing this line and to have used the Nazis’ ambiguous position on jazz to his advantage: his arrangement met with some disdain, but it wasn’t forbidden. One could even argue that Landl gained further notoriety because the police admitted that his arrangement was an “imitation of American hot music.”⁵⁵

By far one of the most well-known examples of Nazi-sponsored cultural re-education took the form of an exhibition of *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art). The exhibition, held in Munich in 1937, displayed hundreds of modern art pieces in an effort to increase the public’s awareness of inferior art.⁵⁶ During its five-month run, at least two million visitors came to view the exhibit. When one considers that the exhibition featured the works of many German and Austrian artists like Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Max Beckmann, one questions the success of this particular re-education scheme. Were visitors doing their part to educate themselves on the horrors of modern art, or were they using this opportunity to see great works of art?

Evidently, the Nazis believed the art exhibition to be a tremendous success because they had a similar exhibition of degenerate music the following year. The exhibition was part of the *Reichsmusiktage* (Reich music days), a festival held from May 22-29 in Düsseldorf.⁵⁷ Like the exhibition of art, its musical equivalent featured works by composers like Paul Hindemith, Igor

⁵⁴ Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 207.

⁵⁵ The Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police in the Reich Ministry of the Interior to the Police Chief in Vienna, Berlin, November 17, 1939.

⁵⁶ “Degenerate Art,” MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3868#slideshow> (accessed February 25, 2018).

⁵⁷ ““Degenerate Music’: Title Page of the Exhibition Guide (1938),” GHDI, http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2082 (accessed February 25, 2018).

Stravinsky, and Ernst Krenek (*Jonny spielt auf* had already been banned in 1933). The exhibition also defamed whole genres, and jazz was one of its prime targets.

Although the Nazi exhibition of degenerate music complemented the previous year's art exhibition, the regime's response to the threat of modern music was far less severe. Even before the exhibition of degenerate art, the Nazis had been removing unwanted artwork from museums. The regime would eventually remove at least 20,000 pieces from public museums. As discussed earlier, the regime never enacted an official policy regarding jazz, leaving the enforcement of a partially formed policy to local party leaders. Why would this be, when they were so committed to eliminating what they truly despised?

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapter reveals that the Nazis attempted to enforce a ban on jazz without actually having a policy to support its enforcement. Existing scholarship reiterates the Nazis' disdain for jazz, but it skims over the fact that the regime's central authorities issued no explicit policy against jazz.⁵⁸ The regime relied on local leaders and police officials to enforce their own decrees against jazz. The summaries of local prohibitions against jazz music and dancing printed in newspapers like the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* and *Alpenpost* reveal the often ambiguous nature of such ordinances. Many of them do not directly refer to jazz itself, but restricted the performance of jazz by regulating activities like dancing and venues like variety theaters.⁵⁹

There are two possible reasons for the lack of direct references to jazz in local ordinances. The first is that the Nazis were afraid to acknowledge what they considered to be a subversive style of music. Had the Nazis identified jazz as the target of their prohibitory measures, the police may have led more successful operations against the underground jazz scene; however, this approach would have required the Nazis to acknowledge the presence of yet another subversive entity working to undermine the regime. The second, more realistic explanation, is that the Nazis omitted references to jazz in their prohibitions because they lacked the understanding to accurately characterize the style. In his 1931 description of jazz, Hiller managed to communicate some of the musical characteristics of jazz, such as its incorporation of elements from African American musical culture.⁶⁰ By 1938, however, Nazi prohibitions against

⁵⁸ Michael H. Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Mike Zwerin, *Swing under the Nazis: Jazz as a Metaphor for Freedom*, 1st Cooper Square Press ed. (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000).

⁵⁹ *Salzburger Landeszeitung*, August 15, 1940; *Volkischer Beobachter*, August 25, 1944.

⁶⁰ Article describing jazz from July/August 1931.

jazz do not mention what specific musical characteristics made jazz destructive to state interests. This inconsistency leads us to an even more important discovery.

When one looks past these isolated events and considers the historical relevance of this episode as a whole, a deeper truth emerges about the relationship between music and society that goes far beyond stories of secret jazz performances and ambiguous cultural regulations: music has the well-known ability to provide commentary on important societal issues in a specific time and place; however, in this instance, what is clearly evident is music's power to actively shape society. The Nazis absolutely understood this power, and they took their strong position against jazz in fear of its subversive force, even if they poorly understood its mechanism.

The Nazis' treatment of jazz also bears significant relevance to our own time. The populist governments that have risen to power in recent years have either encouraged or done little to quell racist, xenophobic, and nationalistic feelings among their citizens. Although none of these governments are fascist, their hostility toward the media and views on cultural activities have definite fascist qualities. These views have not yet targeted music, but several comparisons can be drawn between the Nazis' position against jazz and some of the actions of current leaders. The tendency to discredit news stories that portray political leaders unfavorably, for example, resembles the Nazis' degradation of jazz. Recently, there has also been an increase in the use of anti-intellectual arguments to support both conservative and progressive positions on political issues. Hiller and Merz relied heavily on these kinds of arguments, which further inflamed racist and nationalistic prejudices.

This thesis has shown that the Nazis recognized the political power of jazz even though they did not comprehend its musical details. While many issues have been clarified, others merit further investigation.

The most peculiar issue to further address is how German soldiers were able to appreciate jazz. Although the Nazis despised jazz, they needed certain recreational activities to appease the masses. The German soldier visibly represented the regime, but he, too, required certain leisurely pursuits in order to maintain his morale.

Returning to the connection between jazz and art music, another issue that needs further research is how Nazi attempts to suppress jazz related to the direct banning of other musical styles such as progressive opera and modern art music. While the Nazis lacked a firm understanding of the musical characteristics of jazz, they had a much better understanding of opera and art music and more successfully banned certain works in these styles.

A more distant but still important issue to investigate is the economic effect of the suppression of jazz. The war effort restricted the use of shellac and other record-producing material, but records were still created using material of lesser quality. It would be worthwhile to examine how, during the war, the German and Austrian record industry might have benefitted from the unrestricted sale of jazz records.

The times of the *Schlurf* have passed, and jazz is no longer a spry, newcomer to the world of music; nevertheless, lessons from the history of jazz can still provide important insights to the people of today's tormented world. Musicians and audiences need to continue to believe in their music, and, in so doing, support the free expression of ideas. The musician's role as peaceful protester is also needed like never before in history. As newscasts reveal political fragmentation

around the world, the musical community can do so much by letting global citizens hear the sound of peaceful discourse. As a jazz cat might say, “I can dig that.”

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