

CHAPTER ONE

Why the League?

ANNELIESE LANDAU WAS A MUSICOLOGIST BY TRAINING. SHE studied at the University of Halle with Arnold Schering and followed him to Berlin when he succeeded Hermann Abert at the Berlin University (now Humboldt-Universität). After she received her PhD in 1930, she indexed recently published articles for the *Zeitschriftenschau* of the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* and created annotated indexes of articles about Bach and Handel for the *Bach-Jahrbuch* and *Händel-Jahrbuch*, respectively. She also gave musicological lectures on Berlin radio, on the Leipzig-Dresden network, and on radio in southern Germany. Then, in early 1933, the Nazis forced the cancellation of contracts with all Jews in broadcasting. Landau had an appointment at the radio station on the day of her contract's termination and recalls her gradual comprehension of the new Nazi decree: "Do you mean, I cannot broadcast any longer because I am Jewish?"¹ After considering immigration to Paris, Anneliese found work as a lecturer with the League during a chance meeting with its leader Kurt Singer.

Looking into a window of a store on "Tauentzienstrasse," I suddenly see a familiar face appearing next to mine in the reflection of the window: Dr. Kurt Singer. . . . That afternoon he spoke to me about his idea of a [Culture League]: he would call together all Jewish musicians, actors, lecturers and ask them to become part of an organization which would offer drama, opera, and lectures to a Jewish membership.²

Singer had originally intended to offer Landau's position to Alfred Einstein, the music critic of the *Berliner Tageblatt* and editor of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, but he had already left Germany. With Landau's musicological accomplishments and success on the radio, Singer saw her as a worthy sub-

stitute. She accepted the appointment and, one afternoon that July, attended a meeting in Singer's home—evidently without the young League originator Kurt Baumann—as the only woman involved in the founding of the League.

When I entered the room I found myself surrounded by a serene, older generation, all men with long beards . . . they all looked friendly at me, assuming I was the secretary who had come to take minutes. Then Dr. Singer took a deep breath and said: "Please meet Dr. Anneliese Landau," they all jumped up like one man and remained standing til I was seated. . . . This meeting was the beginning of the [Jewish Culture League].³

At the beginning of September 1933, the League had eight separate sections. Landau (see fig. 2) gave regular speeches on music, which were illustrated by League performers. She was part of the League's lecture department, which included Julius Bab, Arthur Eloesser, Max Osborn, Julius Guttmann, and Ernst Landsberger. Bab also directed the drama department, which was associated with the dramaturgy department. Heinz Condell, Hans Sondheimer, and Werner Levie supervised the décor and costume division, the technical department, and the management division, respectively. Levie, who worked as economic editor of the *Vossische Zeitung* (a liberal Berlin newspaper) until 1933, also acted as League secretary. He would assume a more prominent role later, as Singer's replacement in 1938.⁴

Along with Singer, Joseph Rosenstock led the opera department, in which Baumann also worked. Rosenstock's participation in the League points to the high caliber of the League as a musical organization. A child prodigy as a pianist, Rosenstock attended the Krakow Conservatory and, from 1912, the University and Academy of Music in Vienna. In 1919, he became the deputy conductor of the choir of the Vienna Philharmonic and, in 1920, taught at the College of Music in Berlin. In 1927, he succeeded Otto Klemperer at the Staatstheater in Wiesbaden and, in 1929, he served as guest conductor at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. From 1930 until his dismissal in 1933, he worked at the Mannheim National Theater.⁵

The concert department, linked with the opera division, similarly benefited from talented leadership. The department was headed again by Rosenstock and Singer but also by the concert director Michael Taube, who had been Bruno Walter's assistant at the Municipal Opera in Berlin.⁶ Taube acted as conductor of the League's small orchestra until he immigrated to Palestine at the end of 1934. After his departure, Rosenstock as its conductor worked to expand the



Fig. 2. Anneliese Landau. Courtesy of Sam Paechter and the Landau Family.

group.⁷ When he too left, for Tokyo, in 1936, Hans Wilhelm Steinberg replaced him. After only three months, Steinberg traveled to Moscow and then Tel Aviv to conduct the newly founded Palestine Symphony Orchestra, established by the violinist Bronislaw Huberman and later known as the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Though he was scheduled to return to the Berlin League in February 1937, he continued to work in Palestine and eventually emigrated to the United States in 1938. There, as William Steinberg, he conducted in San Francisco, Pittsburg, Boston, and New York, at the Metropolitan Opera. In Berlin, he was succeeded by Rudolf Schwarz, who had served as the main conductor under chief music director Josef Krips at the Badisches Landestheater in Karlsruhe from 1925 to 1933.⁸

The League's management leased as its performance hall the Berliner Theater on Charlottenstrasse, in the northwest corner of Berlin, from the Berlin city hall (see fig. 3). The building, badly in need of renovation, had been built in 1850 for the Renz circus. From 1908 through 1923, Carl Meinhard and Rudolf Bernauer used it as a music theater.⁹ After two years as the League's home, in 1935, the League lost the theater, unable to renew its lease. League operations were then transferred to a slightly smaller space, the Herrnfeld-Theater on the Kommandantenstrasse (see fig. 4). Beginning in 1906, this theater had served as the first Yiddish theater in Berlin under the direction of its founders, the brothers Anton and David "Donat" Herrnfeld. When David passed away in 1916, Anton gave up the theater business. From 1921 through 1922, the site housed the Yiddish-speaking Jüdisches Künstlertheater. At the end of the 1920s, the theater closed in economic crisis. The theater, now hosting the League, reopened on 2 October 1935. League management also had a hall built next to the theater for chamber concerts, which opened on 28 November 1937 and began showing films on 24 September 1939.¹⁰

With its mounting expenses, the League struggled economically. The League was not entitled to the government subsidy enjoyed by accepted Aryan musical institutions. Instead, membership dues were to fund these performance spaces as well as the salaries of its staff of artists. By October 1933, the League had about 12,500 members. This number increased to around 20,000 during the winter, approximately 10 percent of the Jewish population in Berlin. From 1934 through 1937, membership remained at about 18,500 with new members replacing those that left.¹¹ This League audience included Jews of varied religious and national convictions, though they generally shared a belief in their Germanness. Economically, they represented for the most part the lower echelon of the middle class.¹² This necessitated a modest monthly fee of 2.50 RM (Reichsmark) per person, though it would soon rise to 2.85 RM. Since every member paid the same dues, seating rotated to give everyone a turn in the front rows. Kurt Treitler, who was a member as a youth of the Berlin League, remembers the system as "very egalitarian."¹³ The average monthly wage for members of the opera and theater ensemble was set at 200 RM, and for members of the orchestra, 180 RM.

League leaders advertised for these positions throughout Berlin: at synagogues, cafés, and music schools that still allowed Jews. From a total of 2,000 submissions, management hired for its first season 35 actors and singers, 35 orchestral musicians, 22 chorus members, 10 female dancers, 25 technical staff, 26 box and cloakroom attendants, 10 administrative staff, and several manual workers. Approximately 200 or



Fig. 3. The Berliner Theater. Photograph from akg-images.



Fig. 4. Kulturbund Theater on the Kommandantenstrasse. Photograph from Bildarchiv Pisarek / akg-images.

10 percent of applicants found employment that first year, in addition to guest conductors, concert soloists, and lecturers.¹⁴ One of the newly employed musicians was Wilhelm (Hans-Roland) Guttmann, a baritone, born in Berlin in 1886. From 1925 until his dismissal, he had been a member of the Municipal Opera in Berlin.¹⁵ He then sang with the League and, as we will discuss in chapter 6, died on the League stage in 1941. Another prominent German singer was Paula Lindberg, a leading concert contralto. Her father had forbidden her to have a career in music. But, after his death, she began studying singing and drama at the Mannheim College of Music. She was discovered there by Paul Hindemith, who wrote for her the song cycle *Die junge Magd* (1922). After 1933, despite steps she had taken to avoid anti-Semitism—her name change from Levi to Lindberg—she could appear only with the League.¹⁶ These performers rehearsed diligently during the day and spent most evenings either performing or attending other League events as audience members.

League members were admitted to League performances only after presenting their ticket and identification badge proving their Jewish descent at the door. This regulation also applied to performances of private choirs within Jewish communities in Berlin, led by Alexander Weinbaum, Leo Kopf, and Ludwig Misch, for example, as well as events supported, often in conjunction with the League, by the Jüdische Winterhilfe (Jewish Winter Help), an organization founded in 1935 to provide aid to German Jews in need during the winter.¹⁷ After passing inspection, League members were then eligible to attend two cultural events per month—an opera and their choice of a lecture in the fields of philosophy, art, religion, or music in one month and, the next month, a drama and a concert. The League's first unofficial musical offering took place on 22 May 1933 at the synagogue on Prinzregentenstrasse in Berlin's Wilmersdorf district. Conducted by Singer and Taube, the concert featured selections unusual for the venue. Rather than synagogue music, League performers displayed their ties to Jewish and German culture in a presentation of the aria "Vater des Alles," the funeral chorus from Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, the Schubert choral song "Gebet," and Haydn's choral "Dankgebet."¹⁸

The season, however, did not officially open until the first of October. The League's premiere presentation was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan the Wise, 1779), a parable of religious tolerance inspired in part by Moses Mendelssohn. Before the performance, Singer addressed the audience.

When the curtain rises tonight for the first time in the theatre of the German Jewish [Culture League], you can all be certain that you are to see more than just another play. . . . When the curtain falls on the final scene, you should take

home with you the image of the isolated, God-loving Jew [Nathan]. We find ourselves isolated and as such a community have become a more thankful, a more hopeful, and a more unified God-loving people—we Jews in Germany, we German Jews.¹⁹

The ambiguity of Singer's final phrase, "we Jews in Germany, we German Jews," is quite telling and points to what would become a significant source of contention. The Nazis in charge would later insist that there are only Germans and Jews, not German Jews. Still, League leaders continued to value Moses Mendelssohn and his example of Jewish assimilation. By performing Lessing's play, League leaders, at this early stage, made their position clear: despite Nazi restriction, the lessons of Lessing's play would have meaning for their work.

The curtain opened hesitantly that first night—"a bad omen."²⁰ But the performance was a great success. The former League dancer and actress Ruth Anselm-Herzog, who sat shaking with anticipation before the premiere, recalls the excitement surrounding the event. For her, it symbolized a continuation of German Jewish life in Germany; it would take more than Hitler to end life as she knew it.²¹ As a statement of defiance, in her mind, Anselm-Herzog was not surprised to hear a man whisper to his wife during intermission, "Now I know why Lessing was killed."²²

Anneliese Landau, also in attendance, was struck by the sudden change of context rather than the play itself: "Looking around while waiting [for] the curtain to go up, I found the same audience I had seen at plays and concerts throughout the years[.] [T]hey all had been Jews? It had been of no interest before[,] now it suddenly was!"²³

For these early League witnesses, the League's first official event was without precedent. It was also the last time Lessing's play would appear during the Third Reich. With such a start, the League was sure to attract attention. And indeed it did. League events were generally popular, recalls Kurt Michaelis, an oboist in the Berlin Culture League's orchestra.²⁴ Though the violinist Henry Meyer joined the Berlin League Orchestra later, he likewise remembers League performances as festive and exciting.²⁵ This special mood pervaded the premiere of the League's opera division, six weeks after the presentation of Lessing's play. The performance of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* took place on November 14 at the Berliner Theater on Charlottenstrasse. Singer directed the stage action while Rosenstock conducted the sold-out event. In attendance was a reporter from the *New York Times*, Herbert F. Peyser. Peyser described the event in an article of 10 December. To pass the mandatory inspection at the

door, he explained he was with a New York newspaper and pointed to his American flag pin in lieu of a member's identification badge. Once in the theater, he settled into his seat and waited for the opera to begin. In his report, he recorded his impressions of the performance: "Not only was the team-work excellent throughout, but the musical standards of the performance were high and some of the singing compared favorably with the best I have heard in German opera houses. For one thing, I cannot recall how long it is since I last listened to so much faultless intonation in the course of a single evening." But he was also impressed with the circumstances of the performance and general atmosphere.

The spirit of the performance found its counterpart in the demeanor of the audience. There was true cordiality, and scarcely an aria went unrewarded with applause. Yet something in the manner and in the tranquil dignity with which that gathering listened to the unfoldment of Mozart's divine comedy presently became inexplicably but incredibly affecting—something of a spirit that somehow called to mind a congregation of early Christians at worship in the catacombs. And when the opera ended and one emerged on the street, the sight of the crooked cross and the thud of the Storm Troopers' boots seemed more than ever odious.²⁶

As Peyser clearly saw, the League was an eye in a growing storm. Silvia Tenenbaum, Hans Wilhelm Steinberg's stepdaughter, explains that "the Nazis were present in the lives of the Jews no matter how well situated they were . . . like this dark cloud."²⁷ Even at League events there were always a few members of the Gestapo in attendance, making sure rules were followed. But generally this was forgotten during performances. Meyer recalls, "perhaps once in a while, your mind would go back to what just happened there and what will happen tomorrow, but it really didn't . . . disturb very much."²⁸ League events represented one of the few opportunities for audience members and performers to shut out the growing hostility surrounding them and "flee . . . into the light of the stage and into the illusion of music."²⁹

Singer was careful to protect the League from the dangers outside by banning his artists and staff from engaging in political discussions while at work.³⁰ In the first monthly newsletter, he also urged audiences to avoid such talk. While members could hardly ignore politics and the escalating effects of Nazi rule, Singer in some ways hoped that by maintaining in the League at least the appearance of political passivity and obedience, the League could remain in fa-

vor and even expand. Indeed, the creation of the Jewish Culture League in Berlin was soon followed by the formation of two additional active League chapters in Cologne and Frankfurt. While the original Berlin League maintained a theater ensemble, opera, and philharmonic orchestra, the branch in Cologne operated only an independent theater ensemble. The Frankfurt League, with no opera or theater ensemble, focused on orchestral music and maintained its own philharmonic orchestra, under the direction of Steinberg until he took over in Berlin in 1936.

These additional League branches were based on independent Jewish cultural activity inspired by the example of Kurt Singer and the Berlin League. Steinberg had been the general music director at Frankfurt's opera house, where he had made his name conducting new works by Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Kurt Weill. After Hitler's ascent, Steinberg's past success did not protect him from dismissal. He had heard of Singer's founding of the Berlin League and, with this model in mind, worked to organize concerts with Jewish musicians in conjunction with Frankfurt's local synagogues and other Jewish community leaders. This activity provided the basis for the official establishment of the Culture League of German Jews Rhine-Main (Kulturbund Deutscher Juden, Bezirk Rhein-Main) on 17 April 1934, a League offshoot that included the whole Rhine-Main district but was centered in Frankfurt under the artistic leadership of Julius Prüwer.³¹

The League branch in Cologne, encompassing the Rhine-Ruhr area, began much like the League in Frankfurt. Originally called the Friends of Theater and Music, Inc. (Freunde des Theaters und der Musik, e.V.), the Jewish Culture League Rhine-Ruhr (Jüdischer Kulturbund Rhein-Ruhr) was founded in autumn 1933, with Berlin again as the model. Paul Moses was the first chairman of this League in Cologne, which, along with its focus on theater, organized chamber music concerts, such as piano and vocal recitals.³² Smaller offshoots of the Berlin League also formed in Hamburg, Munich, Mannheim, Breslau, Kassel, Stuttgart, and other locations. The most active League branches were in Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, and Hamburg, which maintained a third independent Jewish theater ensemble.³³ The Berlin chapter, supervised by Kurt Singer, was the largest. By 1935, the Jewish Culture League had forty-six local chapters in other towns and cities, which the Nazi regime put under the umbrella union, Reich Association of Jewish Culture Leagues (Reichsverband der jüdischen Kulturbünde), also in Berlin.

Singer had already envisioned such an organization by the end of 1933 to coordinate Jewish musical activity in all of Germany.³⁴ From 1935 until the sus-

pension of independent League performances outside Berlin in 1939, the central agency in Berlin bore the main responsibility for the repertoire and clearance of programs for all League branches.³⁵ Much of this responsibility fell on Singer, who was in charge of setting musical programs after discussion with individual department directors and concert approval in committee.³⁶ There was of course variance among League branches, especially in the case of the organization in Munich. This branch, unlike other offshoots, supported its own marionette theater from 1935 through 1937.³⁷ But the centralized control of repertoire did give Jewish musical performances across the Reich a certain degree of consistency. Repertoire regularity was also the result of inevitable music exchange. Before and after 1935, many of the smaller League offshoots, as well as the Leagues in Hamburg and Cologne, relied on performances by the League orchestras in Berlin and Frankfurt to supplement their repertoire. In 1934, for example, the Hamburg League celebrated its opening with Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*, Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E minor*, and Schubert's *Seventh Symphony*, performed by the Berlin League orchestra, under the direction of Rosenstock.³⁸ As the first League chapter, the largest and most long-lasting site of League activity, as well as the center of musical debates and negotiations with Nazi leaders, the Berlin association is the most logical site for an exploration of the League and its creation: Why did the League exist? Why did Nazi officials and distinguished Jews support the founding of this Jewish organization?

The Jewish Culture League represents a peculiar instance of cooperation between the Nazi regime and Germany's Jews. It also served a socially and economically diverse Jewish population. Consequently, there were many reasons for its existence—reasons that evolved over time. For its German Jewish founders, the creation of the League initially grew from the exclusion of Jews from Germany's culture after the April Civil Service Laws. Former League members describe the shock they experienced when they were dismissed from their former posts. After the initial hurt and disappointment, emigration, in hindsight, seems to us the most logical next step. But it was not so simple. Martin Gumpert recalls, "[Emigration] was a very difficult decision. I felt like I was tearing out my own heart. I loved Berlin, I loved Germany, I loved Europe."³⁹ Jews who wanted to leave Germany for the unknown also had to have enough money, often a sponsor in the country of destination (an affidavit of support in the case of the United States), and even a clean bill of health. A former performer with the Frankfurt League, Martha Sommer Hirsch, recalls, "You had to be examined by a physician at the consulate. And this physician was a Nazi I swear. And he made it so hard for my mother[,] claimed she had a lung prob-

lem and she can't come to the United States and this kind of nonsense . . . [soon] it was just too late."⁴⁰ But even with the right contacts and physical constitution, former members needed to visit various Nazi offices—a combination of bureaucracy and harassment—in order to gather the proper travel papers (the tax clearance certificate and exit permit). Then they waited for their “number” to come up. There were quotas, for instance, on immigration into the United States that delayed travel and even prevented emigration. One infamous example is the sailing of the *St. Louis* with 936 Jewish refugees. They were denied entrance to Cuba and then the United States. The ship eventually returned to Europe.⁴¹

League leaders in Berlin hoped to offer artists in this state of limbo a means of income and a chance to continue practicing their artistic craft, at least until Nazism was suppressed. That aim was emphasized in the League's statement of purpose and invitation to Jewish communities—the primary document in the League's founding. It was also highlighted in the first paragraph of the fledgling organization's statutes: “The aim of the Culture League is to look after the artistic and scientific interests of the Jewish population and to encourage the creation of jobs for Jewish artists and scientists.”⁴² But there was also a symbolic function.

We were later accused of only founding the Culture League to give bread and work to a few Jewish artists; that is only half right. Naturally we were anxious to enable the hundreds of Jewish artists who had been dismissed without notice to have a modest income until their emigration. However it was much more important to us at that time to offer a home as long as it was still possible to the Jewish public in Germany, which had stood at the forefront of German cultural life.⁴³

Soon after the founding of the League, the organization would also take on the goal of group integration and Jewish renewal.⁴⁴ This goal would grow more pronounced during the early years of the League's tenure, as we will see in chapter 2. However, at the very start, League founders simply set out to make life more bearable with the goals of refuge and work. Hinkel and his Nazi associates, however, had their own agenda in agreeing to form the organization. This agenda at first appears contradictory in light of the April Civil Service Laws, a measure in part designed to eliminate the Jewish presence in Germany's cultural life. Why would regime leaders pass this law and, shortly thereafter, support the creation of the Culture League and thus the continuation of what they sought to suppress? The establishment of a Jewish League—notably the

regime's first organizational act in the area of music (even preceding the establishment of the Reich Chamber of Culture)—challenges scholars today as much as it did observers in 1933.⁴⁵ Herbert Peyser, the *New York Times* reporter, found the privileging of Jews within the League “a paradoxical reversal of the usual Nazi process.” In his League report, Peyser wrote, “For once, racial ‘impurity’ becomes a sort of asset.”⁴⁶ Others found the government's support of the Jewish organization so implausible, they insisted Singer had tricked Hinkel. Baumann recalls an anecdote that circulated at the time.

We have already mentioned that Dr. Singer was a well known neurologist, who naturally mastered the art of hypnosis. The story was that in critical moments, Dr. Singer probably hypnotized Mr. Hinkel in order to enforce our side's claims. That [is] of course nonsense; however, the later seemingly smooth cooperation of both men did not allow this rumor to die down.⁴⁷

Is there a less fantastical explanation for the regime's support of the League or the bizarre cooperation between Hinkel and Singer?

The ethnic nationalism of the Nazis was clear-cut and deadly enough in one way. Yet, there was also plenty of incoherence within Nazi policy, and it often seems impossible to make sense of the “ragbag” of ideas that, in the place of a clear political program, drove the regime and its supporters.⁴⁸ Though this limits some examinations of the period, it does not limit this one. There are several explanations consistent with the regime's contested cultural ideology that account for the Nazi government's sponsorship of the Berlin Jewish Culture League and its subsequent branches.

First, the League was useful for the regime's campaign of international propaganda. By pointing to their support of the League, Nazi leaders could claim that Jews were not oppressed but encouraged to find their own forum for cultural expression.⁴⁹ We can see this exploitation in newspaper articles and broadcasts from the period that point to the League as “showcase.” Through it, the world was to see how much freedom Jews had in Nazi Germany.⁵⁰ As Hinkel bragged in a broadcast speech of 1935, the League had 25,000 members in Berlin, and probably 100,000 in the whole of Germany. These facts were to counter negative press abroad, and, as Hinkel himself explained, “refute the slanderous rumours circulating abroad and alleging barbarous treatment of the Jews in Germany.”⁵¹

This exploitation was unique within programs of musical propaganda from 1933 through 1941. For one, it was not denunciatory. While the performance of

Schoenberg's music in the League served to send a positive message abroad, the same presentation in the 1938 Exhibition of *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate Music) was meant to demean and denounce the composer at home. This display, part of the first Reich's Music Days in Düsseldorf, was organized by Hans Severus Ziegler, one of the most active early members of the Combat League for German Culture. It presented a diverse group of composers, including Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, Ernst Kenek, and Igor Stravinsky, as "diseased, unhealthy, and highly dangerous" in an attempt to reinforce and spread conservative musical tastes present at least since the Weimar era.⁵² As with the earlier exhibition of *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) of 1937, the German population and its musical leaders were encouraged to attend (though some, protesting the discriminatory censure of art, boycotted the event).⁵³

The League, in contrast, was closed to the general public. In this way, it did have a corollary after 1941 in the concentration camp Terezín. Terezín was originally a garrison town in northern Czechoslovakia, 60 kilometers north of Prague. The Nazis renamed Terezín *Theresienstadt* in October 1941, when they reconfigured the town into a way station for distinguished Jews—artists, musicians, World War I veterans, and the elderly—before deportation to Auschwitz or Buchenwald. Though 33,430 died in Terezín from maltreatment, starvation, and disease, its initial use earned the camp such names as Spa Terezín, the Model Jewish Ghetto, and the Reich's Old Age Home.⁵⁴ The positive images of the camp, cultivated by the regime, were further cemented by musical performances at *Kameradschaftsabende* (evenings of fellowships), officially sanctioned by the Nazis in charge on 28 December 1941. These evenings, which included theater, cabaret, chamber music, opera, instrumental performances, and lectures, eventually expanded into a highly organized *Freizeitgestaltung* or Administration of Free Time Activities.⁵⁵ The regime exploited such events, like League activity, for propaganda purposes. In May 1943, Nazi leaders invited members of the German press to the camp and encouraged them to attend a concert and witness a prescreened trial as evidence of the autonomous Jewish government and the Jews' healthy cultural life.⁵⁶ Toward the end of 1943, they even launched a *Stadtsverschönerung*, or city beautification, for the purpose of continuing to mislead future visitors. The pace of these efforts doubled in the wake of June 1944, when representatives from the International Red Cross were expected to visit.⁵⁷ When the camp passed the Red Cross's inspection, regime representatives constructed a documentary film about the camp, "a film that would prove to the world that the Jews were being treated far better than they deserved."⁵⁸

This manipulation of foreign politics was hardly the regime's only use for the League. The creation of the League functioned as a mechanism of local social control by facilitating tighter policing of cultural activity and later Jewish activity in general. It also represented a means to quell any potential resistance by providing the many recently displaced Jews with a new source of income.⁵⁹ Although the League could not employ all unemployed Jews, the jobs it did provide offered others hope for future economic stability. This ploy could also appease Jews unemployed in other sectors, in particular those in medicine, law, and business, which regime functionaries targeted with special zeal. Even before the boycott of Jewish stores on 1 April 1933, in Prussia and Bavaria, Nazi leaders prohibited Jewish lawyers from entering court buildings. In Munich on 24 April 1933 the public insurance system no longer included Jewish doctors. The city's slogan was: "Jews may treat only Jews."⁶⁰

Still, the goals of propaganda and social control do not explain the regime's attention to the League's repertoire. From the very start, Hinkel and his staff censored League programs. Such musical censorship has been a major means of manipulation wielded in various historical periods by religion and the state. The goals of censorship are cultural protection and, like propaganda, mass behavioral control.⁶¹ In Nazi Germany, it was associations with music that inspired its regulation—though somewhat haphazardly. Music associated with Jews, America, and modernity, for example, were targets of censorship within Aryan cultural institutions. But this general policy of censorship was reversed inside the League. This music often banned outside the League was in most cases allowed within it, and vice versa. This is not to say League bans were straightforward: they were ordered by both Hinkel's office, which reviewed each program before performance, as well as an internal League "reader" or self-censor in Berlin, who read programs with "National Socialist eyes."⁶² In 1935, Baumann assumed this post, which he took very seriously. After all, "mistakes" could result in detention or even internment and possible death at a concentration camp, the first of which was already opened in 1933, in Dachau.⁶³ Compounding the confusion, neither a list of banned composers nor an explanation of the bans has survived. Nevertheless, pronouncements by Nazis and League officials, preserved programs with certain pieces crossed out, as well as the League's repertoire clearly reflect the regime's desire to prevent performances of German music and the progressive elimination of that repertoire on the League stage. Figure 5, based mainly on the repertoire, maps this gradual constriction. In a speech of 1936, Singer credited the early proscription of works by Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss to "reasons of tact and moderation in

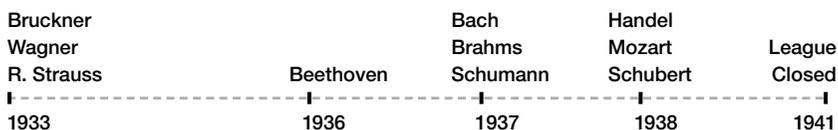


Fig. 5. Composers banned from the League’s programs.

one’s need.”⁶⁴ In this light, the ban on Wagner’s and Strauss’s music may well have been the work of the internal reader, who recognized the regime’s special valuation of these composers. By 1937, the works of all composers of German origin were officially banned except those by Handel. Chapter 5 will explore Handel’s comparatively late exclusion—in 1938, the year of the annexation of Austria (Anschluss) and, along with it, the music of Austrian composers like Mozart and Schubert. For now, it is important to note the regime’s censorship of music considered German as well as its *encouragement* of so-called Jewish music.

Works by all foreign authors and composers were still generally allowed, but Nazis in charge preferred (and at times required) that the League focus specifically on Jewish music. Discussing Germany’s Jewish life, in 1935, the *Manchester Guardian* reported, “It is a thorn in the flesh of the German authorities that the Jews have created among themselves such an atmosphere of purely German culture; they had not expected this result.”⁶⁵ In this way dismayed by a League performance he had attended as Hinkel’s guest, the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg complained, “These are performances by Jews for Jews but they perform nothing Jewish.”⁶⁶ To rectify this wrong, in 1936, Hinkel announced that only “authentic Jewish art” was appropriate in the League.⁶⁷ During a three-day League conference in September 1936 (discussed in the following chapter), regime leaders also insisted that Singer have his artists educated in “Jewishness” and his audiences prepared for the more Jewish repertoire through lectures and brochures.⁶⁸ Why?

Nazi leaders agreed to form the League in order to further their aim of purifying German culture through a clear separation of German and Jewish art, as Hinkel explained in a statement about the League of 1935.

We know that time and again Jews work in disguise; we know that some deception is still unsolved. We view changing this situation wherever it still exists, as our most important task. We will hold the guilty accountable, not just the Jews,

but all those who want to smuggle their way through the back door. This will come to an end. What we want is pure separation. Just as anonymity is undesirable, so too is Goyonymity (“Goi=nonyme”).⁶⁹

The League was to have a separate identity, one distinct from that of the Goy or non-Jew. This goal of division was behind a wide range of Nazi legislation: the ban on changes of “Jewish names” to “non-Jewish names” of 13 May 1933; a prescription on public displays and sales of Jewish newspapers on 1 October 1935; the removal of street signs with Jewish associations; prohibition of Jewish access to public swimming pools; and order of 17 August 1938 that all Jews add Israel or Sarah to their name by 1 January 1939 if they did not already have an approved Jewish name.⁷⁰ Such a program of separation helps explain other aspects of the League’s creation and operation as well. The Gestapo accepted the society’s existence only when the “misleading” words *Deutscher Juden* (German Jews) were eliminated from the League’s original name, making it clear that Jews, whom Hinkel called “persons alien to our kind,”⁷¹ could never be German. The main organization representing Jewish interests in Germany, formed on 17 September 1933, succumbed to similar pressure. Originally the National Representation of German Jews (Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden), this association became the National Representation of Jews in Germany (Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland) in 1935. The League’s name was also stripped of the year “1933,” as requested by the founders: the year of the foundation of the “Thousand Year Reich” was not to be confused with the year of the foundation of a Jewish association.⁷² To perpetuate this verbal demarcation on the stage, in plays performed by the League, Hinkel’s office censored the word *deutsch* as well as words considered especially German, such as *blond*. In one case, Hinkel’s censors replaced the word *blonde* (blond) with *schöne* (beautiful), altering a Molnar comedy and the seemingly inoffensive line: “Lebe wohl, du untreue blonde Artenmappe” (Live well, you untrue blond folder).⁷³

However, Nazi officials did not envision simply a concrete physical or symbolic divide between Jews and all that was considered German. In fact, Jews were still able to visit the accepted German population’s cultural organizations. Former Berlin League member Margot Weintraub Sisman, for one, remembers attending the Berlin Staatsoper after 1933. (However, since Nazis regularly attended performances there, she preferred events at the Municipal Opera.) Jews were not forbidden this limited freedom until after Kristallnacht at the end of 1938.⁷⁴ This proves that for the Nazis in charge, the real crime was not that Jewish audiences heard German music but rather that Jewish musicians played

German music. This reasoning is consistent with condemnations of conductors, such as Bruno Walter, who Nazi sympathizers believed performed German music in “un-German” ways. It also brings to mind attacks against the legacy of Felix Mendelssohn, who the writer Karl Blessinger, a Nazi Party member by 1932, believed revived Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* so that “Judaism could claim the management of German’s greatest creations.”⁷⁵ In this way, Hinkel’s repertoire regulation was ordered, above all, to curb the perceived Jewish control of German music. This goal was ideological, based on the very worst the term *authenticity* can imply.

Peter Kivy defines *authenticity* as authoritative, original, genuine, belonging to himself, self-originated—so many ways, in fact, it is almost rendered meaningless.⁷⁶ Though authenticity is generally regarded as a positive, even moral, ideal,⁷⁷ the multivalency of the word allows it to be manipulated in such a way that it can provide the justification for a variety of sins. In creating the League, Nazi leaders unconsciously seized on the idea of the authoritative within authenticity to do just that. This idea implicates issues of power: someone has the authority to validate a particular representation in a historically specific moment, thus privileging one voice as more legitimate than another.⁷⁸ For Hinkel and his associates, the “German” voice as opposed to the “Jewish” voice was the authentic representation of German art.

This thinking had solid roots in Germany’s past, especially the writing of Richard Wagner. Though there was hardly a direct line of thinking from Wagner to Nazism in the application of race to music, Hitler did recognize the composer as his only predecessor.⁷⁹ In his notorious “Judaism in Music” (1850), which was published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* under the pseudonym K. Freigedank (free thought), Wagner discussed Jewish composers and their music as inauthentic. The article was meant merely as a commentary on the debate of the time about whether the character of Jewish synagogue music was present in secular Jewish music, such as Meyerbeer’s *Le Prophète*. It was also to address the question of Jewish music as a genre: did it even exist? But Wagner seized the opportunity to map old anti-Semitic arguments onto the new idea of Jewish music.

One offense, he explained, was that the Jews, who have no art of their own, are only capable of imitation, comparing the Jews to parrots who “reel off human words and phrases.”⁸⁰ To add insult to injury, part of the Jews’ inability to create, according to Wagner, derived from their concept of art as a form of commerce.⁸¹ Relying on the long-standing prejudice that the Jews are a nation of usurers, Wagner specifically criticized the work of Meyerbeer, who, he said,

treated music as a business by catering to his Parisian audiences with thrilling situations and orchestral effect. Here we see an ironic accord between the Frankfurt School and Wagner, whose objection anticipated Adorno and Horkheimer's requirement that authentic art be "autonomous" or created outside the culture industry.⁸² Wagner's condemnation of Jewish musicians in this vein appears over and over again in works from the Third Reich. This reinforces the declaration "In order to understand what National Socialism is, one must read Wagner"—a sentiment Hitler himself had supported.⁸³ In fact, in his 1939 monograph, Blessinger listed Meyerbeer as "the unscrupulous business Jew" ("skrupellose Geschäftsjude"), echoing Wagner's own attack on the composer.⁸⁴

Wagner's position on this matter was perpetuated by later anti-Semitic authors, such as Julius Langbehn, an important although lesser-known Nazi predecessor. He continued to condemn Jewish involvement in German musical affairs in the aftermath of Germany's unification in 1871, when Germany's nationalistic fervor was at its highest. Many at the time looked at Jews from eastern Europe, with a distinct language, dress, and custom, as an example of the outsider and continued to view with distrust those Jews who moved further and further away from Jewish traditions. Langbehn captured this spirit in his 1890s sensation *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, which regained its initial popularity in the mid to late 1920s.⁸⁵ In this publication, Langbehn celebrated Rembrandt's peasant roots, insisting, as Herder had, that great art could only spring from the unpolluted indigenous soil of the *Volk*. This foundation was the *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil)⁸⁶ that the Jews, as a nationless people, could never have. To that end, Langbehn insisted that the *Volk* must conquer modern culture, which he denounced as the product of Jewish decadence, and in a way "go primitive."⁸⁷ Only by doing so could Germany prevent the Jew from "gnawing at German culture, corroding and corrupting the character of the true German."⁸⁸ Writers sympathetic to the Nazi cause displayed a similar logic in their condemnation of modern composers, such as Arnold Schoenberg, who they believed was too abstract to represent a national voice.

With these arguments of Jewish inauthenticity already in place, Nazi ideologues could further claim that German music, as the pinnacle of European art, could only be corrupted in Jewish hands. Such a position gave these "guardians of culture" the ideological rationale to remove this harmful element from the realm of European high culture. This point is significant to our understanding of the formation of the League. Nazi leaders justified the creation of the League, in part, by arguing that when Jews performed German masterworks they degraded and polluted them. In short, Jews could and should only create Jewish music.

Such twisted logic corresponds in striking detail to the thinking behind the contemporary idea of cultural appropriation. This practice, in one example, is the incorporation of musical traits from a minority culture in the composition by a member of the majority culture. In another example, it is the performance by a member of the majority culture of a musical piece from a minority culture. The results of such borrowings are said to be the degradation of the minority's cultural good or tradition.⁸⁹ With this mind-set, there are those misguided few who rail against a white person's performance of the blues in part to protect the art form from contamination. In "Race, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing the Blues" (1994), Joel Rudinow confronts this issue, citing a statement by the late jazz critic Ralph J. Gleason as his starting point: "The blues is black man's music, and whites diminish it at best or steal it at worst. In any case they have no moral right to use it."⁹⁰ Though the Jews were neither a majority culture nor a clearly defined cultural group, Nazi officials treated them as such and similarly denounced the effects of their appropriation of so-called German music.

To illustrate, Hans Hinkel viewed Jews as a controlling force in Germany's cultural realm. He appealed to his racial comrades to remember "to what an unbelievable degree contemporary German theater was infiltrated by Jews" in order to understand why the Nazis were forced to eliminate them from their posts.⁹¹ Hinkel, like Wagner before him, treated the Jews in this case as the majority, a dominating presence in Germany. In "Judaism in Music," Wagner wrote, "According to the present constitution of this world, the Jew in truth is already more than emancipate: he rules and will rule, so long as money remains the power before which all our doings and our dealings lose their force."⁹²

This thinking was dependent on the idea that culture, an intangible enterprise, is a property that can be possessed by a nation. Nazi ideologues claimed German music in this way: "Those holding responsibility in this Jewish organization [the Kulturbund] may now show what they can do for their racial comrades. We shall not disturb them if they do not meddle in our German cultural life. . . . Germany and its great cultural possessions belong to the Germans."⁹³

Reclaiming Germany's cultural goods was necessary in order to avoid the consequences of this imagined Jewish appropriation. During the Reichsmusikfestwoche of 1938, Goebbels, whose Ministry of Propaganda took over the running of the League when Hinkel was hired, described these effects as follows.

We can hardly even imagine that it was once reality that in Germany, the classic land of music, it was possible that our own great masters were deformed and

derided through distorted performances, that the area of German folk music was ruled almost exclusively by Jewish elements, that the German folk song experienced a shocking trivialization, that the most tedious atonality celebrated wild and provocative orgies, that our German classics were kitschified and jazzified.⁹⁴

For staunch Nazis, the regime's ideology, which underlay anti-Jewish measures such as the April Laws and the regulation of League repertoire, therefore signified a positive turn. These measures would protect "German music" as a precious national resource and ensure its authenticity by returning it to the *Volk*, its rightful owners.

Hans Hinkel summarized this ideological outlook when he confronted the question "Why the League?"

If asked why we carried out all these deJewification measures and sent the Jews, who had been segregated from German cultural life, into their own Jewish organization, we can answer in a few words—leaving aside the basic foundations of National Socialism in the question of race: We wanted to give the German people back their native rights to such a decisive area of cultural life and not allow those of foreign essence to determine their spiritual and artistic life. Today, the National Socialist State, as the organized will of our people, is in possession of all sovereign rights in the cultural life.⁹⁵

The importance of this goal within Nazi policy should not be underestimated. Even within certain ghettos and concentration camps, regime leaders continued to regulate musical activity along these ideological lines, outlawing works by Aryan composers.⁹⁶ In the Warsaw Ghetto, the orchestra could perform music only by Jewish composers after April 1942.⁹⁷ Though censorship was hardly rigorous, in Terezín, Nazi authorities similarly censored musical events and encouraged Jewish music.⁹⁸ In 1944, a Nazi commandant ordered the prisoner Hanus Thein, a former stage director, to produce *The Tales of Hoffmann*, by the Jewish composer Offenbach.⁹⁹ The musical score of the documentary film of Terezín, completed on 28 March 1945, also incorporated music solely by Jewish composers, including Mendelssohn, Max Bruch, Jacques Offenbach, as well as the inmates Hans Krasa and Pavel Haas. Highlights included a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at the beginning of the documentary by a choir directed by Karel Fischer and, for scene seventeen, a presentation of the finale of the children's opera *Brundibar*, by Krasa, a work performed over fifty

times in the prison.¹⁰⁰ The value of this film for the regime was in this way not just in its positive portrayal of the camp for the outside world but also in its successful separation of Jews from German music.

This separation, in the League and certain concentration camps, was the fulfillment of a perceived ethical obligation—even a moral imperative. This conclusion might seem surprising. However, as Claudia Koonz argues, “‘The Nazi Conscience’ is not an oxymoron”; Nazis consistently listened to “that inner voice that admonishes ‘Thou shalt’ and ‘Thou shalt not.’”¹⁰¹ Indeed, Nazi leaders believed they had a moral duty to protect German culture by ending Jewish musicians’ appropriation of German music. With this rationale, the regime was able to justify the removal of Jews from Germany’s cultural life as a preliminary step toward their removal from Germany as a whole. As Koonz rightly concludes, not all moral objectives preclude evil.¹⁰²

But could the League live up to expectations? Here was a heterogeneous community without a clear sense of Jewish identity forced, for the most part, to relinquish ties to German culture and confront the idea of Jewish music and the problems therein. How did they respond? What music would League leaders program, and how would members react? And finally, how would all of this change over time, during the League’s tenure from 1933 through 1941?