TEREZIN VARIATIONS:

CODES, MESSAGES, AND THE SUMMER OF 1944

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the final musical compositions of Pavel Haas, Hans Krása, Gideon Klein, and Viktor Ullmann through the lens of variations form. These four instrumental works were written in the Terezín concentration camp in the summer of 1944, when the Nazi propaganda campaign promoting Terezín as a haven for the Jews of the *Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia* was at its height. Somewhat unexpectedly all of these pieces make use of some kind of variation technique, employing it in different ways to comment on their situation and experience.

Each chapter connects a variations composition with a historical moment, offering an analysis of the piece within the historical context. What emerges is a portrait of four artistic individuals who engaged deeply with their situation and environment and expressed it through their music. Pavel Haas used symbolic quotations and paraphrases to express themes of nationalism, death, home, and façade, while Hans Krása employed musical topics, unusual juxtapositions, and the reconfiguring of the Baroque passacaglia form for his evocations of façade, incongruity, fear, and death. Gideon Klein adapted a Classical Theme and Variations model to embed quotations revealing the dark aspects of the camp that the Nazis were trying to conceal, and Viktor Ullmann, the most philosophically-oriented composer of the group, used variations as a way of searching for truth in the spiritual as well as the mental and physical realms.

Through these analyses, I offer new insight into the historical situation of Terezín and the expressive capacity of the music as the composers of Terezín used one of the most simple and flexible musical forms for their most profound artistic expression.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the final musical compositions of four Czech composers through the lens of variations form. Pavel Haas, Hans Krása, Gideon Klein, and Viktor Ullmann were interned in the Terezín concentration camp between 1941 and 1944. All four composers played a significant role in the music scene during their internment and wrote several compositions, the majority of which have survived. During the summer of 1944, they all composed what would be their final instrumental works; their fate was sealed by the October transports to Auschwitz. None survived the war. Remarkably, in these last compositions at least one movement is written in variations form. Although this seemingly coordinated compositional choice is likely coincidental, it is a curious situation. Why, after several years of internment and at the height of the Nazis' propaganda campaign, would they turn to variations as a mode of artistic expression? Certainly there are no concrete answers possible to this question, but it does offer a vantage point, a Krameresque "hermeneutic window" from which to approach an analytical interpretation and work toward a better understanding of these works.[1] As we will see, each composer imbued his music with meaning that was particular to his own experience and to the general cultural life of Terezín, allowing the musical scores to serve as a type of testimony, documents with historical significance as well as artistic merit.

[1] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 9–10.

Music in Terezín

During the Second World War, the garrison town of Terezín was commandeered by the Nazis and turned into *Ghetto Theresienstadt,* a camp that served sometimes as a transit camp to Auschwitz and other times as a holding place for Jews primarily of Czech heritage, although it eventually included German, Danish and Dutch populations as well. The highly educated and artistically-oriented population found ways to pursue their creative endeavours and by 1944, Terezín had become a centre for cultural activity. At some point fairly early on in the camp's existence, it became apparent to the Nazi authorities that the talents of their prisoners could be used to their own advantage, and so they set up a bizarre, constantly shifting propaganda agenda that allowed, and even encouraged artistic activities to flourish. Stage productions such as the children's opera *Brundibár* took place, chamber groups rehearsed, a vibrant series of recitals were performed, jazz bands formed, and cabarets were put on with some frequency. New music was composed and the Classical cannon reworked. A large number of prisoners spent their evenings learning and rehearsing Verdi's choral work *Requiem* at the end of very long days that for many involved heavy labour duties. The breadth and scope of the musical activities that occurred amidst the circumstances and conditions of the camp is astounding. Over the past several decades, the music and musicians of Terezín have received increasing attention. Source materials and music scores have been collected, edited, and published, resulting in the gradual restoration of the composers' reputations and their music to the historical record. In the performance community, many high profile musicians have performed these works and numerous organisations are dedicated to researching, publishing, and preserving the music. Even with all this groundwork in

place however, there is no consensus on what exactly this music means or how it should be understood or approached.

All in all, the various restoration activities have produced tangible results and these composers and their music are gradually being restored to the historical record. Concerts are regularly performed of the works written in the camp, several recordings are available, and the recovered scores have all been edited and published. Many projects are underway to bring the music and the story of its composers and performers to a wider audience, and much of the archival material from Terezín, including the substantial collection from the Jewish Museum in Prague, is available digitally, providing broad access to the source materials.[2] Liner notes, concert programmes, newspapers, and documentary films seem to forge a consensus that this music is important and worthwhile to perform, listen to, and study. However, it is ambiguous as to *why* exactly this music is important and *what* exactly it might mean.

For many years, the arguments regarding the significance of the Terezín works were focused on empirical value. Is it good music or is it just deemed important because of its provenance? Orel Foundation co-founder and conductor James Conlon has been instrumental in performing and recording many works by the Terezín composers and others suppressed by Nazi policies. He claims that the compositions he champions are great works of art: "The music of these composers was born out of the same tradition as Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms. They belong on programs with those composers."[3] Elsewhere he writes,

> The suppression of these composers and musicians caused the greatest single rupture in what had been a continuous seamless transmittal of German

[2] "Terezín Collection," *Jewish Museum Collections*, accessed February 29, 2016, http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/simpleGallery/Show/displaySet/set_id/24.

[3] "James Conlon Again Spotlights Music Silenced by Third Reich," *Chicago*, accessed January 8, 2016, http://chicago.suntimes.com/uncategorized/7/71/181611/james-conlon-again-spotlights-music-silenced-by-third-reich/.

> classical music. This centuries-old tradition, dating from before Johann Sebastian Bach, was passed on from one generation to the next. It was nourished by the free expression of an often contentious creative exchange between conservative traditional artistic expression and competing currents of innovation and iconoclasm. The policies of the Third Reich destroyed the environment in which this exchange could flourish, murdering and scattering an entire generation of its greatest talents, with its creative polemics and dialectics, forcing those who survived to settle all over the world, where there were no comparable artistic milieus in which to live and create. This immense self-destructive act seriously damaged one of Germany's most cherished traditions, killed its caretakers, and buried a "lost generation" along with its spirit.[4]

Conlon's sentiment is echoed by many musicians and in addition to numerous recordings focusing on themes of "suppressed" or "forbidden" music, there are now several recordings available that include works by the Terezín musicians alongside more canonical composers such as Schoenberg, Janáček, Bartók, and even Beethoven and Mozart, separating them from Holocaust contexts.[5] However, despite the fact that this music has received acclaim for its artistic merit (whatever that may mean), it is nearly impossible to separate the artistic output of the composers from their circumstances and political environment. The general view is that the repertoire somehow belongs to a genre that is increasingly known as "holocaust music". Journalists, publishers, concert venues, festivals, symposia, and even many scholars have contributed to a general understanding of this music as being emblematic of Nazi resistance, generally of the spiritual sort.[6]

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[4] James Conlon, "Recovering a Musical Heritage: The Music Suppressed by the Third Reich," *The Orel Foundation*, accessed January 8, 2016, http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/journal/journalArticle/recovering_a_musical_heritage_the_music_suppressed_by_the_third_reich/.

[5] As a small sampling: Torsten Meyer, *Orgelwerk*, CD (ARS Produktion, 2013); *Cornet Schönberg-Variationen: op. 31* (Berlin: Edition Abseits, 1995); Pavel Haas Quartet, *Haas And Janacek: String Quartets*, CD (Supraphon, 2006); Stamic Quartet, *Czech String Quartet Discoveries*, CD (IQA, 2009); Schulhoff Quartett, *Music for String Quartet*, CD, 2011; Herbert Schuch, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, and Olari Elts, *Ullmann/ Beethoven: Piano Concertos*, CD (Oehms Classics, 2013); Kammerorchester Basel, *Divertimento*, CD (Sony Classical, 2012).

[6] Again, a small sampling of resources: David Engel, ed., *Daring to Resist: Jewish Defiance in the Holocaust* (New York: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 2007); Artur Schnabel, *Music and the Line of*

In addition to the perspective that musical activities in Terezín served as a form of resistance, there is also a sense that it offers philosophical value, particularly for younger generations. In an interview with the *New York Times* regarding a modern production of Hans Krása's short opera *Brundibár*, Ela Weissberger, an octogenarian who spent several of her childhood years in Terezín, offered her reason for supporting the new production: "You can starve people, but you can't take away their dignity or the invisible God that you have within you. That's why it's so important in schools to teach children to be friends. … Today there are more Hitlers in the world, and it's the job of all schoolchildren to fight against them."[7] For her, it seems that that the lessons put forth in the work provide important answers for dealing with the larger ills of the world. Krása's children's opera was a very popular musical production that was performed many times in Terezín and its impact on the performers and audiences, both in the camp and in subsequent productions, is generally considered significant and meaningful.

Strangely, despite the common source and seemingly overlapping interests for all the projects relating to the music from Terezín, the results have not generally been complementary or integrated. The outcome of much of the research, at least in the written sphere, has been primarily superficial, often with a tacit suggestion that the music alone speaks for itself. Somehow, as it became apparent that the music was meaningful because of its compositional context, people stopped investigating it

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Most Resistance (Da Capo Press, 1942); John A. Coleman, "Spiritual Resistance in Eastern Europe," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 1991): 113–28; Wolfgang Holzmair and Russell Ryan, *Spiritual Resistance, Music from Theresienstadt*, CD (New Rochelle, NY: Bridge, 2009); Sonia Pauline Beker, *Symphony of Fire: A Story of Music and Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust* (New Milford, NJ: Wordsmithy, 2006); Eliyana R. Adler, "No Raisins, No Almonds: Singing as Spiritual Resistance to the Holocaust," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, no. 4 (2006); Doug Shultz and Murry Sidlin, *Defiant Requiem*, DVD (Partisan Pictures, 2012).

[7] Joan Swirsky, "Opera Written in a Czech Camp Recalls Voices of Lost Children," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2002.

further, suggesting a desire to allow it to stand on its own as a testimony to its time and place. A few scholars have begun challenging this assumption and working toward developing a more complex portrait of the experience of those interned in the camp and of their musical output, however, the main study of music from Terezín remains the seminal work by Jože Karas from 1985, which is an invaluable resource, but which is neither especially scholarly nor recent.[8]

The aim of this thesis is not to cast doubt on the validity of existing arguments regarding the role this music played and continues to play in people's lives, but instead to increase our understanding of the complexities relating to the creative process, musical expression and personal experience as it relates to the composers who spent their final years in Terezín. Most certainly rehearsing, composing, performing, and listening to music offered an important counter to the soul-crushing environment of the overcrowded camp with its maltreated and suffering population, as we see in the extant writings of the composers and musicians. In Ullmann's essay "Goethe and Ghetto" he writes, "But it must be emphasized that Theresienstadt has served to *enhance*, not impede, my musical activities…and that our endeavour with

[8] For examples of works challenging or expanding the standard narrative, see: Michael Beckerman, "Haas's Charlatan and the Play of Premonitions," *The Opera Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 31–40; Michael Beckerman, "Klein the Janáčkian," *Musicologica Brunensia* 58 (2009): 23–31; Michael Beckerman, "Slow Dissolves, Full Stops and Interruptions: Terezín, Censorship and the Summer of 1944," in *Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship*, ed. Patricia Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming); Michael Beckerman, "Terezín as Reverse Potemkin Ruin, in Five Movements and an Epilogue," in *The Inhabited Ruins of Central Europe: Re-Imagining Space, History, and Memory*, ed. Dariusz Gafijczuk and Derek Sayer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 194–204; Michael Beckerman, "The Strange Landscapes of Middles," in *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, ed. Jane F. Fulcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 163–81; Anna Catherine Greer, "Brundibár: Confronting the Misrepresentation of Resistance in Theresienstadt" (Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2013), http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/2417; Amy Lynn Wlodarski, "Musical Memories of Terezín in Transnational Perspective," in *Dislocated Memories: Jews, Music, and Postwar German Culture*, 2014, 57–74; The main study of musical activities in print: Jože Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945* (New York: Beaufort Press, 1985).

respect to Art was commensurate with our will to live."[9] Karel Ančerl, the conductor for whom Haas wrote the piece *Study for Strings*, which is at the core of Chapter Three, claimed afterward in a recollection of his string orchestra, "one thing was revealed to me, that the power of music is so great that it draws every human being possessing a heart and an open mind into its realm, enabling him to bear the hardest hours of his life."[10] Karel Berman, the baritone who sang Haas' *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry* (Chapter Three) also echoed this position in his statement, "How often did we sing out resistance and give people strength to endure!"[11] Ela Weissberger, the survivor mentioned earlier, and one of the original participants in Krása's *Brundibár* felt that for her and her friends, music was a powerful form of resistance against the Nazis: "I always say that first of all, music was part of our lives there, it was part of the resistance against the Germans. We couldn't fight differently, but we wanted to show them that we would one day win this war against them."[12]

These assertions are powerful and offer a sense of how important a role music held for many people in the camp. However, in virtually all the writings and studies about the music from Terezín, these themes form the basis of the inquiries and the result tends toward a singular understanding of the music as a positive force and there is a ubiquitous promotion of these creative activities as evidence of spiritual resistance in the face of adversity, thereby offering proof of the immense power of the human spirit. This trope is definitely powerful and inspirational; nevertheless, it has become somewhat clichéd, imbuing the music and the personal experiences of the victims

[9] Max Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 3, no. 2 (October 1, 1979): 162.

[10] Karel Ančerl, "Music in Terezín," in *Terezín*, ed. František Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 240.

[11] Karel Berman, "Memories," in *Terezín*, ed. František Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 236.

[12] USC Shoah Foundation, *Ela Weissberger*, vol. 39662, Visual History Archive, 1997, http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage.aspx?testimonyID=39662&returnIndex=0.

with a reductive, two-dimensional character. I have no particular disagreement with any of these sentiments, nor do I wish to deny the truth in them, however, they do have a tendency toward being overly singular and conclusive, and have a tone that conveys a sense that these views were shared by all. My objective is to accept these perceptions as true, but to also acknowledge that they comprise only part of the overall experience, and on that basis, explore the music with the aim of augmenting our understanding of the larger picture.

Music as History

With the aspiration of expanding our understanding of the musical life of Terezín and the expressive voices of the composers, my approach in this thesis is to consider the musical compositions I have selected as archaeological or historical artefacts that illuminate the personal experiences and situations of this creative group. Lawrence Kramer has made clear in his own work that despite music's position as a historically mediated practice and as a repository, i.e. as an "archive, legacy, ruin, simulacrum" of historical experience, this approach is still uncommon in the humanities, although there is some evidence this mode of scholarship is beginning to emerge.[13] Kramer's explanation for this situation illuminates the idealism with which the humanities tend to imbue music, and highlights the importance of challenging this notion:

> Why, then, should music receive historical understanding but not give it? ... The readiest explanation is that music's passivity answers to a desire and its agency to an anxiety. To keep music passive is to protect it from

[13] Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 96; Michael Beckerman, "What Kind of Historical Document Is a Musical Score? A Meditation in Ten Parts on Klein's Trio," *The Orel Foundation*, April 1, 2010, http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/journal/journalArticle/what_kind_of_historical_document_is_a_musical_score/.

> disillusionment. (Classical music is very receptive to this because so much of it claims to be nontopical.) Music is the last bastion of the ideal in a thoroughly de-idealized world. Its pleasure can shrug off worldly burdens even if we acknowledge that its sound is inflected by them. (Forget for a moment that the pleasures are, too.) But if we ask music to instruct us about those burdens, and it does, there is no shrugging them off. We fear as much, in any case, and so we don't ask. It feels good not to.[14]

This idealisation of music is embedded within the narratives surrounding Terezín and there is almost a tacit sense of taboo to ask questions about this music. What if music can instruct us about the darker side of the camp and the burdens experienced there instead of only speaking to the highest ideals?

Historiography in general is fraught with issues of perception, objectivity, and ontological importance. In addition to commonly disregarding music as a historical source, the debate within musicology still rages about the opposition between reading music as an aesthetic entity in and of itself and reading it as a socio-cultural document that has its meaning embedded within its contextual associations (both historical and in contemporary re-readings), a debate summarized by Lydia Goehr as the "aesthetic versus the historical or the musical versus the extramusical".[15] How then, is it possible to use musical output as offering a meaningful vantage point for historical interpretation? As Goehr notes, this fundamental problem has plagued scholars for more than two centuries now, if not longer. Although scholars such as Leo Treitler, Carl Dahlhaus, and Leonard Meyer, who were instrumental in articulating these issues, and their successors have not managed to solve the major philosophical issues at stake, conventional wisdom and practice suggests that the answer lies somewhere in the connection between the two. Lawrence Kramer has attempted to redress these issues by constructing analyses, such as his examination of Beethoven's overture to

[14] Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 97.

[15] Lydia Goehr, "Writing Music History," *History and Theory* 31, no. 2 (May 1, 1992): 185.

The Ruins of Athens, providing solutions to the problems he has identified.[16] It is in this vein that I am approaching the final compositions of the four composers I have selected for this study. I share Kramer's aims in my analytical process:

> The idea is to learn something about a moment in history by thinking about a sample of its music. Parts of the discussion will execute the now-familiar moves from context to musical text; there is virtually no way to avoid that and not just with music. But the moves will be made under the assumption of their insufficiency. The music will not count as understood until and unless it appears a source of historical knowledge that alters the understanding of its context – or rather of what can no longer be subsumed under the concept of a context.[17]

Theme and Variations

The two works that feature the most prominently in Terezín scholarship are short, one-act operas – Hans Krása's *Brundibár* and Viktor Ullmann's *Kaiser of Atlantis*. For this study I chose not to focus on these works, not because I think there is nothing more to say about them, but because I felt that an exploration of the instrumental music might reveal something different owing to the absence of textual analysis as a primary method, and I think that turned out to be the case. The analyses that follow show that these pieces tend to share characteristics with the vocal and stage works, especially in their tone and expressive aims, however, there are significant differences that highlight how highly individual the composers' responses were to their expression of the collective experience.

In my initial research into the music of the four main Terezín composers, it became apparent that their final instrumental compositions all contained at least one movement written in variations form. Hans Krása wrote a passacaglia; Pavel Haas'

[16] Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 98–112.

[17] Ibid., 98.

final work was *Variations for Piano and String Orchestra*, a work that has unfortunately been lost, most likely destroyed in Auschwitz; Gideon Klein wrote a theme and variations as the second movement of his work *String Trio*; and Viktor Ullmann composed *Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folk Song* as the final movement of his *Piano Sonata No. 7*. In the nineteenth- and twentieth-century musical discourses, variation form was considered somewhat inconsequential, despite some notable examples. With the exception of only a few major works (Primarily Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*), the Western Art Tradition eschews variations for the high drama and expressive capacity of the venerated *Sonata Form*. Why then, would four of the most important Czech composers from the generation following Schoenberg and Janáček then choose forms involving variations for what would become their final musical works, all after prolonged internment in a Nazi concentration camp? The close succession of the creation of these works by composers living in such intimate proximity suggests some kind of connection between the expressive character of the variations form and the nature of this particular group's expressive needs. The question of "why did they choose variations form?" frames the thesis and this study is as much a meditation on the potentialities inherent in the formal structure of variations as it is a historical inquiry.

I have chosen the final instrumental compositions not because of a desire to uncover a "late style" in any of the works, although a case could certainly be made (and has been) for an inquiry of this nature.[18] Instead, these works seem to form a discrete subgroup of Terezín compositions that reflect their compositional context and seem to be particularly expressive of the effects of the propaganda campaign.

[18] Martin Modlinger, "Approaching Death: 'Last Writing' from the Terezín Ghetto," *Oxford German Studies* 44, no. 1 (April 1, 2015): 57–70.

Although more work may be required to fully substantiate this claim, it appears as if the music written in the summer of 1944 differs from the earlier compositions in that there seems to be more at stake. While the earlier works from 1943 such as the highly dissonant, expressionistic *Piano Sonata* by Gideon Klein or *String Quartet No. 3* by Viktor Ullmann, suggest continuity with the composers' pre-war oeuvre, the compositions from 1944 suggest a heightened response to the immediate situation and many more incidents of quotation, hidden messages, and similar expressive devices appear at this time. As Michael Beckerman has written, the music from this period suggests a reverse Potemkin ruin, where instead of elaborate façades hiding nothing, they look like nothing but hide everything. He notes,

> But as it became clearer that cultural activity in Terezín was to be advertised as part of a deception, the already traumatized musicians faced the impossible choice between being defeated by keeping silent or writing and risking helping the Nazis. What I am calling the 'reverse Potemkin ruin' suggests that the composers involved were fully aware of the ethical questions involved in their continued composing and, in effect, tried to find some kind of redemption by creating a series of false fronts for their compositions.[19]

As we will see, the heightened propaganda activity within the camp had a considerable impact on the individual artistic output of this group.

Overview

Part One of this study is intended to provide background and context to the two major topics of the thesis: Terezín and Theme and Variations. Both subjects have their own body of literature and could comprise their own discrete study, however, for the purposes of this thesis, I have endeavoured to not to give a comprehensive overview, but instead to summarise the key elements necessary for the reader to gain

[19] Beckerman, "Reverse Potemkin," 201.

a clear picture of the relevant events and theories upon which I am basing my assumptions and arguments.

The first context chapter is a brief history of Terezín, with a particular focus on the summer of 1944, when the Nazi propaganda campaign was at its height. After an extensive renovation and redecorating of the public areas of the camp, the International Red Cross paid a visit to Terezín, an event which many prisoners participated in, resulting in an outcome that affected everyone. The subsequent events of the summer, including punishment of some prominent artists and the shooting of a propaganda film were similarly central to the lives of the musicians and general population of the camp. This chapter outlines the general governance of the camp but with concentration particularly on the musical activities that took place.

The second context chapter outlines the development of Theme and Variations form, defining some of the normative features with which the Terezín composers would have been in dialogue. This is not intended to be a primer on variations, but rather to serve as a general context that highlights the key aspects on which I base my analyses. In addition to offering a brief history of the form, this chapter examines which aspects of the form may have made it more attractive to the Terezín group in a way that more common and popular forms, such as Sonata Form, would not have been able to offer. I then broaden the discussion of variations beyond the technical features of variations procedures to allow for readings that incorporate the intangible, expansive, and contemplative aspects of the form.

Part Two of this thesis is where the main inquiry and analysis occurs. There are four main chapters, each focusing on one of the most well-known composers interned in Terezín – Pavel Haas, Hans Krása, Gideon Klein, and Viktor Ullmann. For each composer, I connect a musical work that uses variations procedures with a

historical moment, and then I analyse the piece within the historical context. In each case I have also compiled a short biography of the composer, since their names and circumstances are not yet considered general knowledge. Musical examples are included to help clarify several main points – score excerpts are incorporated alongside the text and audio examples are included on the accompanying CD (the track listing is in the Appendix).

Chapter Three looks at Pavel Haas, a composer from Brno, Moravia, who was connected to Leoš Janáček. His works frame the summer of 1944 – his song cycle was performed in June, just as the camp was preparing for a visit from the International Red Cross, and his piece for string orchestra was performed at the end of the summer, featuring in the propaganda film that was shot before the transports to Auschwitz resumed at the end of September. In Haas' music I explore the symbolism in his choice of musical material, both in his direct quotations as well as in paraphrases of his own style. Using ruminations on compositional process offered by the Czech novelist Milan Kundera, as well as Lawrence Kramer's notion of "speaking melody", I explore how Haas transforms concepts such as nationalism, death, home, and façade into categories of existence within his work.

In the fourth chapter, the Prague composer Hans Krása is featured, along with his work *Passacaglia and Fugue* for String Trio. In Krása's work, we are faced with a piece that has no external program whatsoever: there are no specific quotations, no commentary from the composer and no non-musical cues regarding the piece. Through the use of musical topics, unusual juxtapositions, and the reconfiguring of the Baroque passacaglia form, Krása poignantly expresses themes similar to what we found in Haas' works, especially through evocations of façade and death.

In chapter five, the second movement of Gideon Klein's *String Trio*, the *Theme and Variations on a Moravian Folk Song* provides the foundation for the analytical inquiry. Klein's variations set engages with the conventions of Classical era Theme and Variations form, manipulating it in unusual ways that express his personal situation. In addition to his adaptations of the form, he also incorporates quotations that reflect the environment in Terezín, again most especially façade and death. Following the musical analysis, I consider the effects of censorship on creative output using the music of Shostakovich as a parallel example as well as Leo Strauss' considerations of how persecuted writers by necessity have to "write between the lines". I then explore how Klein moved to a more accessible, representative and communicative language in his final work, comparing his earlier works with his variations and then consider this trend within the context of Jean Améry's writings on the role of intellectualism in the extreme environment of a concentration camp, concluding that in some real way, Klein responded to his environment by developing a more accessible, communicative musical style in his last work.

The final chapter focuses on the composer Viktor Ullmann, the most philosophically-oriented composer of the group, and the only one who contributed written prose regarding musical life in Terezín, in addition to several musical compositions. For Ullmann, variations served as a way of searching for truth in the spiritual as well as the mental and physical realms. In this chapter, the variations movement from his seventh piano sonata is at the centre of the inquiry. I explore the intertextual elements of his compositional choices, considering how they reflect the cultural and existential elements of his personal experience in the camp. Additionally, I analyse the work in light of his belief and commitment to the *Anthroposophic* movement of Rudolf Steiner, with which he was heavily involved in his early thirties.

Not much is known about how Anthroposophy influenced his music, although many scholars believe that it must have had an important impact since his commitment to the movement was so strong. For this reason, I offer a highly-condensed, yet considerable background on Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy and then, through this lens, I consider how the symbolic potential of this esoteric belief system played a role in Ullmann's compositional process. Ullmann was a composer who sought to transcend the limits of life through artistic endeavours and in his final composition we can gain a glimpse of how he achieved this.

As I noted earlier, the aims of this thesis are not to provide a new, definitive study of the music of Terezín, but rather to expand the range of perspectives and ways of approaching it in order to get a clearer sense of the historical situation and the expressive capacity of the music. As Milan Kundera so poetically wrote of his own compositional process, "To bring together the extreme gravity of the question and the extreme lightness of the form – that has always been my ambition".[20] It appears that the composers of Terezín shared this ambition, imbuing one of the most simple and flexible musical forms with the weightiest types of expression.

[20] Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 95.

PART I.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Chapter One

A Brief History of Terezín

Everyday Terezín

"What message does the tin sign with "Theresienstadt Water" on it tell us? And what of the meanings in the miniature hurdy-gurdy?"[1] Philip Bohlman's creative paraphrase of a passage from Sebald's *Austerlitz* poetically captures the historian's dilemma when faced with the artefacts that remain from the Nazi camp *Terezín*.[2] What are the messages and meanings inherent in these concentration camp remnants? In Sebald's expanded section from which the quote was taken, the protagonist considers the possible messages embedded in a collection of strange and contradictory items he finds an antique shop in the town after the war. He describes his inability to tear himself away from the window where he found himself staring at hundreds of ordinary objects that were absolutely incongruous with their context, "[it was] as if one of them or their relationship with each other must provide an unequivocal answer to the many questions I found it impossible to ask in my mind."[3] Indeed, what meaning could possibly underlie the existence of an advertisement indicative of a seaside resort or a relic instrument in a place that was once under Nazi rule? A place where Jews were sent as part of the larger plan of the "Final Solution", and where death, torture, and loss framed the daily lives of the 140,000+ people who inhabited

[1] Philip V. Bohlman, "In Search of Music's Intimate Moments," in *This Thing Called Music: Essays in Honor of Bruno Nettl*, ed. Victoria Lindsay Levine and Philip V. Bohlman (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 241.

[2] W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2011), 274–275.

[3] Ibid., 275.

the Czech garrison town during its three and a half year existence as a Nazi concentration camp.

Terezín, or *Ghetto Theresienstadt* as the Germans called it, was a place of paradoxes. The transport numbers and fatality statistics show that people lived in massively overcrowded quarters, rampant with disease and vermin, with the limited resources for food and sanitation typical of most Nazi camps, and yet, its legacy lies in its status as a creative hotbed where some of Europe's most talented actors, artists, and musicians gave concerts, composed music and put on plays and operas, all under the sanctioned approval of the SS leaders. Life at the "showcase" camp of Terezín was absurdly inconsistent, bringing out the lowest and the highest forms of existence, traversing, as Michael Beckerman suggests, "the unthinkable world of the death camps and that thing known as everyday life."[4]

The history of Terezín is well documented, especially in the recollections of Zdenek Lederer and H.G. Adler, both survivors of Terezín who each wrote a comprehensive volume describing the camp.[5] But questions of meaning and hidden secrets underlying the relics and artefacts that remain are plentiful and it is this aspect of Terezín's historical importance that is at the centre of this thesis. However, in order to contextualise the chapters that follow, I will provide here a background of the salient features of the camp and the particular events that frame my larger discussion. This cursory outline will offer an overview of the origins of Terezín and the events and activities that led up to the summer of 1944, which is the time period most pertinent to this study. The summer of 1944 was the peak of the propaganda campaign that imprinted Terezín in history as a haven for privileged Jews. In particular three

[4] Beckerman, "Reverse Potemkin," 203–204.

[5] Zdenek Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt* (New York: Fertig, 1983); H. G Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft. Geschichte, Soziologie, Psychologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955).

events of the summer overshadowed all other activities in the camp: a visit from the International Red Cross, arrests and punishment of a group of visual artists, and the filming of a propaganda documentary-style film showcasing the beautiful façade the Nazis created at Terezín. The implications and impact of these events will be the focus of the remaining chapters, however the following discussion is chiefly intended to provide background and context.

The Town

Ghetto Theresienstadt was launched by the Nazis in late November 1941 and existed as an internment camp until Soviet liberation on May 8, 1945. In the three and a half years of its existence, nearly 141,000 people were sent there, 90,000 of whom were eventually transported elsewhere, primarily to the death camps Auschwitz and Treblinka.[6] The camp was originally set up specifically to house the Jews of the *Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia* but by June of 1942, large transports began arriving from Vienna and various cities in Germany. In 1943 and through 1944, small groups arrived from the Netherlands and Denmark, however the majority of the population remained of Czech, German, or Austrian heritage.

The choice to set up an internment camp in the garrison town of Theresienstadt (*Terezín* in Czech) was determined largely because of its logistic advantages. The town was built as a military fortress in 1780 by Emperor Joseph II as a strategic barrier against the Prussians. The town comprises two separate areas, the Small Fortress, which had long served as a prison and detention centre, and the Large

[6] Numbers rounded to the nearest 1,000 based on data from Terezin Initiative, "Transports To/from Terezín," accessed May 24, 2013, http://www.porges.net/Terezin/TransportsToFromTerezin.html.

Fortress, a town consisting of several barracks originally designed to house soldiers. Because of the convenience and utilitarian potential of the space, the Germans converted the larger area into a closed ghetto for their prisoners with the smaller fortress serving as a prison for dissidents and uncooperative prisoners. Located only 48 km northwest of Prague, Terezín was much closer to civilization than many other internment camps and consequently the potential for scrutiny by outside authorities was much greater. The Nazis were undeterred, however, and turned this feature into an asset rather than a liability. In an effort to hide the extermination activities that were taking place throughout occupied Europe, Terezín was exploited for purposes of propaganda and was marketed at various times as a privileged resettlement place for high-profile figures as well as for the elderly, war veterans, and other protected populations, such as those from Denmark or the Netherlands.

The Population

From the earliest days, a Jewish administration, the *Council of Elders* was established to oversee the organisational and administrative responsibilities. In the first several months, they were primarily concerned with constructing the living spaces and arranging for the basic necessities of life – food, sanitation, housing, etc. The council was responsible for carrying out the various edicts handed down by the SS officers, including making selections for the transports to the East. Livia Rothkirchen described the challenge for the administration in the first year as being exceptionally difficult since they had to organise a ghettoised community of disparate

individuals while they, themselves were held at gunpoint.[7] She notes that the leadership maintained a clear vision for the camp, despite the challenges: "One becomes aware of the leadership's two-pronged policy for survival, exercised simultaneously on both the physical and spiritual planes: exploitation of the capacity of those able to work, and care for the spiritual needs of the population in order to sustain life."[8] The existence of this administrative body allowed the Elders to mitigate some of the suffering caused by the German directives, but which also created internal conflict when the Jewish overseers became the target of the inevitable dissatisfaction of the interned population. Despite the challenges, however, this model of governance and the strong vision of its leaders made possible the emergence of a cultural life that was impossible in other camps without Jewish self-governance. Although they were powerless to stop the transports to the East and the horrific executions the Nazis performed for minor transgressions, in many cases the Elders were able to negotiate terms that nominally adhered to the Nazi agenda while aiming for relative freedom and minimal interference in the day to day operations of the camp.

In the first six months of the camp's existence, the population consisted almost entirely of Jews from the cities of Prague and Brno. As would be expected, the cultural environment that emerged within the walls of the Large Fortress reflected the educated and cosmopolitan social norms and values of those two cities. Education of young people was considered essential, as were forms of intellectual and artistic expression such as lectures, literature, theatre, music, and the visual arts. Several people had included books, art supplies, and musical instruments or scores as part of their luggage allowance. In many cases, the Council of Elders was able to exempt

[7] Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia : Facing the Holocaust*, The Comprehensive History of the Holocaust (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; Jerusalem, 2005), 237.

[8] Ibid.

high-profile musicians and artists from manual labour, placing them instead in administrative or kitchen roles. In 1942 the *Freizeitgestaltung* (Free Time Administration) was established, officially sanctioned by the SS, allowing for even more latitude in this area. The Freizeitgestaltung had at least forty departments that included general administration, theatre, sports, lectures, library, and music, which notably had five divisions – General Music, Opera and Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Coffee House Music, and Instrument Management.[9] With the establishment of the Free Time Administration, artists and scientists could be assigned work detail that allowed them, at least to some degree, to pursue their career interests.

The history of Terezín is full of paradoxes, not the least of which is that despite the grimness of the political situation, the living conditions, and the ultimate fate of most of the internees, in many ways, existence in the camp offered a release from the restrictions that had limited the cultural life in occupied Czechoslovakia. From the time the Protectorate was established in March of 1939, the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia had been subjected to countless humiliations and severe restrictions of freedom, including: segregation; confiscation of property; exclusion from universities and cultural institutions; further restrictions on rations of food and clothing; exclusion from parks, cinemas, performance spaces, libraries, museums, and eventually all public establishments; limited access to transportation; and an 8 pm curfew, amongst the numerous other constraints that were continually being imposed on the Jewish population under the Nazi regime.[10] For musicians, the various prohibitions on modern musical styles, Jewish compositions and arrangements, as well as the strict ban on the use of patriotic music had been well

[9] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 16.

[10] This information is widely available, however my particular reference points in this section are taken from Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 110.

established, severely limiting their creative activities. Within the ghetto, however, these rules were either lifted or not enforced, allowing for physical and artistic freedom that was unparalleled anywhere in Europe at the time.

Propaganda and the Summer of 1944

The strength of the cultural programs in Terezín was predicated to some degree by the ongoing function of the town as a propaganda tool. The nature of the propaganda campaign developed over the years, evolving as circumstances and leaders changed. In the early years it was promoted as a haven for elderly Jews, especially those who came from the upper echelons of society or who were WWI veterans. Later, it became a ruse to convince the outside world, especially the governments of the neutral countries of Denmark and Sweden, that the Jews were being treated humanely. The propaganda campaign reached its pinnacle in summer of 1944 when the model camp was showcased for a delegate of Red Cross inspectors and then subsequently filmed for a propaganda documentary film.

The International Red Cross Inspection

As early as 1942, Terezín was advertised in the Reich as a "spa" town or a ghetto for the elderly, referred to as *Theresienbad* and many German and Austrian people signed fraudulent contracts and paid great sums of money for accommodation in Terezín that offered them board and lodging as well as medical and laundry

services.[11] In the autumn of 1943, however, the first group of Danish Jews were sent to Terezin and the Nazis advertisements of the camp as a resort were becoming less and less believable. In late 1943, the Nazis began to experience pressure from the international community, especially from Denmark and Sweden, to allow for an outside delegation to inspect the camp and ensure that their citizens were being well treated. In response, the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) leaders invited an international commission consisting of delegates from the Danish and International Red Cross to tour Terezín in June of 1944.

The propaganda campaign that came to fruition in the summer of 1944 began in December of 1943 when the camp *Commandant* Anton Burger was ordered to begin a program of *Verschönerungsaktion* "beautification" or "embellishment" of the camp that would prepare it for the foreign visitors, ensuring that the image of Terezín as a safe haven for Jews was clearly presented. In February 1944, Burger was promoted out of Terezín, and a new camp *Commandant,* SS Captain Karl Rahm was appointed. Rahm intensified the efforts to create an illusion of affluence and sanctuary and under his leadership, the camp underwent an intensive remodelling that included painting of the main community buildings, distribution of new linens and uniforms to the hospital, and the refinishing of the children's quarters, including the construction of a new playground replete with swings and a small pool. A music pavilion, sports grounds, social centre, library and stage for theatre productions were also included as part of the project. In addition to moving people out of visible spaces that would normally be seen as unfit for living (such as the cubbyholes in the Kavalirka

[11] Josef Polák, "History and Data: The Camp," in *Terezín*, ed. František Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 27.

barracks), three transports in mid-May transported 7,500 people to Auschwitz to improve the overcrowding situation.[12]

Despite shortages of timber and other materials throughout Europe, ample stocks became available for the project as Terezín became a war priority. Signs were put up throughout with artistically carved arrows and directions such as "to the baths" or "to the post office", etc.[13] In short, all aspects of life that the commission would encounter, the buildings, the public spaces and the population were subjected to the beautifying campaign and all other activities were subordinated to this cause. Survivor Josef Polák identified the project as "the most grandiose fraud, in comparison to which Potemkin's villages were mere child's play".[14]

On June 23, 1944, the commission of Red Cross delegates were given a superficial and carefully orchestrated tour of the camp. Polák offers a typically cynical recollection of the event:

> Stage management is perfect: in the early morning the women have scrubbed the pavements over which the commission will pass. Scouts run ahead of the commission and at their command, the 'beautifying show' starts working. In one street the commission – 'by chance' – meets a group of girls, marking with rakes shouldered, in another white-gloved bakers are unloading bread, at the communal centre the orchestra is playing a Requiem and at the exact moment when the commission reaches the sports ground the ordered goal is shot before an audience that has been ordered to attend. In front of the 'grocer's' – by chance – fresh vegetables are unloaded and waitresses serve an excellent lunch in the spotlessly clean house that has the dining room. Children are riding on the round-about, the 'bank manager' is smoking a cigar and offers the visitors cigarettes. Nobody knows that this very same 'bank manager' has recently been locked up in prison for three months because he was found smoking. Judenältester Eppstein – Mayor Eppstein for the day – in a black suit rides in a private car driven by one of the most cruel SS-men there is in the camp, who politely opens the door and bows to him.[15]

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[12] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 116; "Terezín -Theresienstadt Transport List http://www.HolocaustResearchProject.org," accessed May 28, 2013, http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/terezintransport.html.

[13] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 116.

[14] Polák, "History and Data: The Camp," 36.

[15] Ibid., 37.

The Red Cross commission witnessed several staged events along their route, including a performance of Verdi's *Requiem*, children watching and participating in a production of Krása's *Brundibár*, vegetables being unloaded at a grocery store, a mock trial of a person who had been charged with theft, and a well-attended football match, amongst other equally idyllic yet duplicitous scenes. Lederer captures the rehearsed, saccharine quality of the charade in his account of Rahm's interaction with the children: "In the children's homes Rahm distributed sardines to the little darlings. But little thanks did he get from the spoiled brats, who cried: 'What, sardines again, Uncle Rahm?'"[16] The overcrowded attics, the sick bays, the prison, and any other aspects of the camp that did not represent the fictitious image being presented to the commission were kept well out of sight.

By all accounts, the charade was a success and after the visit, the delegates lauded the efforts of everyone involved. They wrote reports confirming that Terezín was as the Nazis had advertised and that they did not see any outward signs of mistreatment or poor conditions. Also, any signs indicating that Terezín was only a temporary residence, a way station en route to a worse fate, such as most of the population experienced in Auschwitz, were suppressed. Dr Franz Hvass of the Danish delegation reported "I cannot but express my admiration, which one must have for the Jewish people, who through their unique dedication have managed within the frame of the self-administration to create such relatively good living conditions for their fellow Jews."[17] The International Red Cross delegate Maurice Rossel wrote, "We are saying that our astonishment was huge to find in the ghetto a lively city with an almost normal life. We had expected much worse. We had said to the police officer of

[16] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 118.

[17] Quoted in Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt: Hitler's Gift to the Jews*, ed. Joel Shatzky, trans. Susan E. Chernyak-Spatz (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), xxiv.

the SS who was in charge of accompanying us, that the most surprising thing was the difficulty we had encountered to receive authorization to visit Theresienstadt".[18] Not surprisingly, as the facts relating to the larger experience of the camp have come to light, controversy has arisen regarding the intent and purpose of the reports. The Danish inspector Hvass, for example, later stated that he made his claims in order to ensure that the Germans maintained their relationship with the Danish Red Cross and therefore would continue to allow packages through.[19] Rossel has even more controversially argued that the people in Terezín were complicit in the stage production he was exposed to and suggested that their desire to hold onto their privileged status prevented them from making their situation known.[20] In the introduction to the documents compiled in relation to Terezín released by the International Red Cross in 1990, the organisation highlights the fact that the ICRC did not believe the visits to Terezín offered conclusive information and that they avoided passing on their findings to German authorities or Jewish organisations at that time.[21] Regardless of the intentions of the inspectors, however, the outcome of that particular visit was that the harsh realities of life in Terezín for the majority of the prisoners were not revealed, a result that often elicits sentiments of disbelief, anger, and a sense of betrayal by survivors and those attempting to grapple with the strange facts and paradoxes of the camp.

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[18] "Documents sur l'activité du Comité International de la Croix Rouge concernant le Ghetto de Theresienstadt" (Geneva: International Red Cross, June 26, 1990), Annex 18; translated in Maurice Rossel, Shoah Interview, interview by Claude Lanzmann, trans. Lotti Eichorn, 1979, 46, http://resources.ushmm.org/intermedia/film_video/spielberg_archive/transcript/RG60_5019/A67D46B8-2B61-41F6-877D-6FF0E04279F4.pdf.

[19] Harold Flender, *Rescue in Denmark* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p.222. Quoted in Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt: Hitler's Gift to the Jews*, ed. Joel Shatzky (The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. xxiv.

[20] Rossel, Shoah Interview, 44–45.

[21] "International Red Cross Documents," 5.

The Affair of the Painters

Shortly after the Red Cross visit, another demoralising event occurred. Known generally as the *Painter's Affair*, the public arrest and subsequent torture and "disappearance" of four major artists and their families offered a clear example of the punishment deemed suitable for those attempting to undermine the propaganda activities.[22] In July, the Gestapo discovered that a group of artists who had been officially employed to prepare graphic illustrations of statistics, posters, and other official business, had also been drawing realistic pictures of Terezín, a number of which featured hearses, skeletal figures living in overcrowded attics and similar accounts of the grotesque living conditions. Somehow it had been discovered that some of these works had been smuggled out of the camp to Prague and Switzerland, where some of them are rumoured to have been published in the newspapers.[23]

In addition to simply being an act of duplicitous disobedience, the artists' realistic representations of the environment and the timing of the smuggling had potential to undermine the propaganda efforts. One of the artists, Leo Haas, suggested that the arrest of the artists was connected with insecurities remaining with regards to the Red Cross visit. He recalled, "Among the initiate it was rumoured that the SS leaders were dissatisfied with it – dissatisfied and suspicious. Evidently the representatives of the Red Cross were not content with the streets that had been polished clean with Jewish persons' toothbrushes, and wanted to have a look behind the scenes of the Potemkin village."[24] In addition to flagrantly disobeying the regulations of the camp, and especially on the heels of the Red Cross visit, this

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[22] Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt: Hitler's Gift to the Jews* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 131.

[23] Troller, *Theresienstadt*, 1991, 135.

[24] Leo Haas, "The Affair of the Painters of Terezín," in *Terezín*, ed. František Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 158.

incident created a real risk that the reality of the camp would be disclosed to outsiders and the SS response was swift and severe.

On July 17, the five artists involved, Otto Ungar, Leo Haas, Fritz Taussig, Norbert Troller, and Ferdinand Bloch, along with František Strass, the purchaser and smuggler of these artworks, were summoned to the SS Office, interrogated, and subsequently imprisoned in the Small Fortress – the Gestapo prison where solitary confinement, torture and executions were regularly undertaken. Eventually they were charged with creating or distributing *Gruelpropaganda* (horror propaganda). The men and their families were not seen again in Terezín; they all suffered major abuses, injuries, and illnesses during their summer in the prison. Bloch was beaten to death on October 31, 1944, while the others were sent to Auschwitz on the October transports after being subjected to months of torture and solitary confinement.[25] Leo Haas and Norbert Troller were the only two of the group to survive the war. Although it is unclear exactly what effect this situation had on the wider artistic community and on the music composed at this time, the punishment of the artists in this way confirms that the Nazis were highly invested in managing depictions of the camp. Although the specific regulations regarding artistic censorship were continually fluctuating, the Painter's Affair would have served as a strong reminder to the artists and musicians that explicit depictions of the unsavoury aspects of Terezín and criticisms of their situation were not going to be tolerated.

[25] Troller, *Theresienstadt*, 1991, 131–142; Pavel Weiner, *A Boy in Terezín: The Private Diary of Pavel Weiner, April 1944 - April 1945*, ed. Karen Weiner (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 94.

Theresienstadt: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area

In the months following the Red Cross visit and the Painter's Affair, the SS Commander Rahm's efforts became focused on overseeing the scripting and filming of a documentary film about Terezín that had been commissioned by the *SS Sturmbahnführer* Hans Günther, head of the Jewish Central Office in Prague (*Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung in Prag*). Although many scholars have connected the creation of the film with the success of the Red Cross visit in June, Karel Margry has shown that Günther had conceived of it as a part of the overall beautification project that was sketched out in December of 1943.[26] Early attempts at scripts and filming took place in January of 1944, but were put on hold once Rahm and Günther realised summer conditions would provide a better backdrop for the film, especially after the beautification efforts had been completed.[27] In July, Rahm ordered the former actor and UFA film director Kurt Gerron, who was interned in Terezín, to lend his talents to the development of a film that would record the benevolent treatment of the Jews and serve as testimony to the world. Under close SS supervision, Gerron wrote the script, planned the structure and procedural aspects, oversaw all administrative activities relating to its production, and served as film director, at least for the first half of the eleven days of filming, after which point the Czech manager of the film company *Aktualita* took over, relegating Gerron to the role of assistant director.[28] (*Aktualita* was a Prague-based film company that had been hired by Günther and funded by the *Zentralstelle* to film and produce the

[26] Karel Margry, "'Theresienstadt' (1944-1945): The Nazi Propaganda Film Depicting the Camp as Paradise," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 12, no. 2 (June 1992): 149.

[27] Ibid., 152.

[28] Ibid., 152–153.

documentary.) The actual filming commenced on August 16 and wrapped up sometime in early-mid September.

As with the other projects, there was a mixed reaction to the filming amongst the Terezín population. Zdenek Lederer recalled that the prisoners were generally pleased on learning of the film's production. He notes, "While the film was being shot they could not be dispensed with. Hence until its completion they would be able to live in comparative peace."[29] Gerald Green, however, claims that it was difficult for Gerron to find willing participants and had to create incentives to acquire a cooperative cast.[30] In some cases these incentives involved increased food rations. According to Gerron's assistant Hans Hofer, the first ten people filmed were rewarded with a feast.[31] For the most part, the film replicated the scenes and activities that had been presented to the Red Cross delegation: well-maintained buildings and groomed public spaces rife with flowers and other foliage provided a backdrop for fabricated scenes of healthy Jews participating in crafts, music making, sports, gardening, swimming, and other leisure activities. The children were shown at the playground and at lunch and snack time, as well as on the stage and in the audience for another production of Krása's *Brundibár*. Several of the "*Prominenten*", the high-profile figures who the international community maintained interest in were featured, most notably as audience members at the lecture being given by Viennese professor Emil Utitz or at the concert of Pavel Haas music being conducted by Karel Ančerl.[32] Once the filming was complete, however, the positive effects of the propaganda program deteriorated. In Hofer's

[29] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 120.

[30] Gerald Green, *The Artists of Terezín* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969).

[31] Frantisek Ehrmann and Rada zidovských nábozenských obcí (Czechoslovakia), *Terezin* (Prague: Published by the Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 183.

[32] For a complete list of the "Prominenten" in the film, see Margry, "`Theresienstadt' (1944-1945)," 157–158.

testimony, “One day the apparition disappeared as fast as it had come. The band was not allowed to play any more, no one was allowed to sit on the benches, dancing was forbidden on pain of heavy punishment and the general well-being that had been shown by the film changed back again into the gray daily life of Terezín, with its filth, hunger and disease.”[33] As it turned out, the film was not fully produced until the spring of the following year and it was screened only four times, all in April of 1945, generally in Terezín to select audiences consisting of representatives of foreign organisations attempting to negotiate for release of concentration camp victims.[34]

As noted in Hofer’s recollection above, the end of the filming was also the end of the beautification project. On September 23, 1944 the first transport orders since the liquidation of the ghetto in May were announced. Between September 28 and October 28, eleven transports went from Terezín to Auschwitz, carrying 18,402 passengers.[35] At first, the exemptions for those with privileged status, such as war veterans and those identified as “Prominent personages” were honoured, but by the end of the month, even most of the Council of Elders were rounded up and sent eastward. The transport of October 16 was especially fateful for the musicians of Terezín; previously they had been afforded some protection by Otto Zucker, the deputy head of the Jewish Council of Elders, however his name was on the transport list, along with most of the musicians who had contributed to the rich musical life in the camp.[36] The October 16th convoy transported so many artistic figures that it is commonly referred to in German-language literature as the *künstlertransport* (artists

[33] Hans Hofer, “The Film About Terezín,” in *Terezín*, ed. Frantisek Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 184.

[34] Margry, “`Theresienstadt’ (1944-1945),” 154.

[35] Terezin Initiative, “Transports To/from Terezín.”

[36] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 164.

transport); certainly all of the figures discussed in this study left Terezín with this group.[37]

Legacy

The propaganda activities of the summer of 1944 affected everyone, although certainly to varying degrees. As it became apparent that the Red Cross had not uncovered the truth of Terezín's actual conditions, and that the efforts of the artists to communicate their situation to the outside world had failed, and that through Gerron's film that this deceitful presentation of the camp would be more widespread, hope that there would be some benevolent intervention became less and less possible. Every day that the "embellishment" program was underway, the population was relatively secure, however, once it reached its conclusion, many feared (quite rightly) that the uncertainty and terror of the eastward bound transports would resume. Despite the occasional news arriving that suggested the Germans were losing the war, it was becoming apparent that there was a real possibility that the Nazis might get away with their heinous treatment and destruction of the Jewish people.

For the four composers from Terezín featured in this thesis, Haas, Krása, Klein, and Ullmann, the creation and sustained portrayal of the camp's façade was of central relevance to them since they were all almost certainly participating in it through their work duties. In many ways composing under such circumstances meant presenting a false face to the world and contributing to the Nazis' deceptive narrative. The use of Haas' *Study for String Orchestra* in the propaganda film, for example, contributed to the proliferation of the deceit since his work being played in the film

[37] Many examples of usage of this term exist, including Cornelis Witthoefft, *Komponisten in Theresienstadt* (Hamburg: Initiative H. Krása, 1999), 71.

implicitly projected a sense that the composers in Terezín were unaffected by the war. Instead, they were free to pursue an uninterrupted trajectory of their careers, as if a concentrated space with no other work or family obligations was a boon for them; yet another example of Hitler's benevolence to this privileged group of Jews. We may remember the cruel choice that faced them: on the one hand, their compositional output was working against them, propping up the regime that was seeking to destroy them. On the other hand, if they refused to compose, they were at risk not only of harsh punishment and of losing the protection from transports their privileged positions garnered them, but also of having no voice and being subsumed into the greater milieu of silent victims. As I will show in the upcoming chapters, they each navigated this territory in different ways; however they all seem to have chosen to use their artistic medium to comment on or document their situation. Some expressed the façade literally in the music and some embedded meaningful references within the musical fabric. Some references are more obvious than others in their intent, and collectively there are several layers of interpretational possibilities. As we will see, however, regardless of the approach, most certainly these references represent attempts at communicating the reality of Terezín through hidden messages, metaphors and codes.

Chapter Two

History of Variations

As I have noted before and will be clarifying further in each forthcoming chapter, aspects of variations form were at the core of the final instrumental compositions for the four composers in this study: Krása, Haas, Klein and Ullmann. In a general sense, it would appear that variations form requires minimal discussion or elaboration since the concept of variation on a theme seems fairly straightforward, and certainly the available musicological literature reflects this preconception. Only one monograph on variations form has been written in English and it was published nearly seventy years ago.[1] Two further studies on the variations of Haydn and Brahms have been published more recently, and while they are important additions to the literature, the fact that their focus on variations is exceptional actually highlights the paucity of literature on the topic.[2] Some of this scarcity can be attributed to the seeming simplicity of the form and its related compositional techniques; however, it may also be attributed to the history of aesthetics and the longstanding nineteenth/twentieth-century predilection for the metaphor of organicism in the arts, which did not readily apply to variations.[3] Despite the fact that numerous variations works have been written in every musical era since music notation was invented, as a genre, variations has been overlooked or subjugated to the more ostensibly complex

[1] Robert U. Nelson, *The Technique of Variation: A Study of the Instrumental Variation from Antonio de Cabezón to Max Reger* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948).

[2] Elaine R. Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Julian Littlewood, *The Variations of Johannes Brahms* (Plumbago Books and Arts, 2004).

[3] Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 15.

forms. As Elaine Sisman highlights, "Variation is the victim of a curious paradox; while variation technique is extolled as one of the most basic, natural and essential principles underlying all music, variation form is routinely denigrated from nearly every perspective, whether historical, social, aesthetic, structural, or technical."[4]

Throughout this thesis, I will suggest that in Terezín each composer manipulated the form in such a way to create an expressive work that reflected his own particular situation. In some cases, the variations form created a perception of simplicity and an expectation of a formulaic compositional process, thereby allowing the composers to deviate from the norm, incorporating themes and expressive devices hidden below the surface, allowing for a veiled manifestation of messages, feelings, or information that was otherwise prohibited. In other instances, the form served as a means of a philosophical inquiry, a way of considering questions of meaning or exploring notions of nationalism, home, façade, or other relevant topics. In another situation, the form served as a mode of inquiry through which to undertake an internal journey, striving for conceptual meaning, or working through layers of memory. Without going into detail on these specifics, which will be covered in the forthcoming chapters, this section is intended simply to introduce the general characteristics of variation form and to provide a contextual framework from which the forthcoming mediations on the use of the form in Terezín will arise. First I will sketch the historical trajectory of variations as a formal practice and then summarise the salient characteristics of the form and the ways in which individual composers adapted it for their own purposes. I will then contextualise variations procedures, offering a comparison with the much revered sonata form, which is often deemed to be a more powerful Classical form. This comparison is cursory and descriptive, but is intended

[4] Ibid., 1.

to establish a ground for consideration of why composers would choose variations form when there were other potent tools at their disposal.

Variations Form

Since the very beginnings of notated instrumental music, variations form has existed in one guise or another. In the Renaissance and Baroque eras the genre allowed performers to explore, develop, and improvise on thematic material with a great deal of flexibility. As a formalised structure, variations have provided a compositional framework for music at least since the sixteenth century when bass variations such as the Passacaglia and Chaconne became codified forms that were incorporated into dance suites. Variations techniques have deep associations with improvised music from the Baroque period onwards, and are still fundamental to improvisational music, most conspicuously in (but not limited to) jazz solos, however, the musical form that was officially codified into *Theme and Variations* emerged in the Classical era.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, alongside formally composed music, amateur music making was becoming more popular and a large number of variations pieces were composed, often on popular themes and intended for amateur players. The sheer abundance of these types of works led to a tendency to regard variations as a lightweight or populist form that was less interesting that the complex forms that were featured in more "serious" concert music.[5] Although there are certainly highly regarded variations pieces, the simple melodies often chosen and the ornamental and decorative techniques that were often employed by composers and

[5] Ibid., 2.

virtuosos served to characterize the form as a superficial framework that was inferior to the transcendent developmental features of other forms, in particular sonata form, which I will discuss further in the next section.

The ubiquity of some type of variation in most music, from antiquity to modern popular music, gives way to the impression that the form is not especially tangible or structured, when in fact, in the Western Classical Tradition, composers generally followed specific conventions in their works. For the most part, *Theme and Variations* as a musical form refers to the variations procedures that were prominent in the Classical Era. The label "Theme and Variations" was first used in H.C. Koch's 1793 work *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition, iii* and the term remained in common use until new subdivisions and hierarchical designations began to emerge later in the nineteenth century.[6] Variations in the Classical tradition tended to rely on alterations of the melodic line. In these works, a given melody is presented at the outset and then subjected to alteration and decoration in various ways throughout the set, which can have any number of variants according to the composer's preference. In most cases, an outline of the melody is present and somewhat recognisable at least at cadential points. The harmonic structure may or may not be constant, but generally the melody is the aspect of the music that is subject to variation. Because of this primary feature, variations form was particularly suited to virtuosic improvisation, particularly on popular tunes, which resulted in an overabundance of variations within mainstream culture, igniting a backlash against what was considered an "empty display" of showmanship.[7] Despite the proliferation of variations pieces by accomplished composers such as CPE Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, for

[6] Unless otherwise noted, material from this section is based on information from Elaine R. Sisman, "Variations," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 24, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29050.

[7] Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 1.

much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, scholarly writing tended to either disregard or disparage Classical variations pieces, subordinating them to the more dynamic, goal-directed sonata form. Generally only Bach's and Beethoven's grand variations have been considered worthy of in-depth analysis; as Sisman notes, "the later eighteenth century is viewed as a valley between the peaks of the Goldberg Variations and the Eroica".[8] Both the *Goldberg Variations* and the variations in the final movement of the *Eroica*, however, are exceptional works and not particularly representative of the Classical variation idiom.

Elaine Sisman divides formal variations into eight types, which effectively establishes a reasonable sense of the main categories, and which I will summarise here. Prior to the Classical era, most variations were of three types, all of which were fairly similar. The most common type was built on a repeating ostinato bass line, such as the passacaglia (discussed in detail in chapter four with regards to Krása's *Passacaglia and Fuga*), the second type was based on a repeated melody or *cantus firmus*, in which the theme was repeated similar to the passacaglia, but was not restricted to the bass and could move between voices. In this case the melody, harmony, and rhythm generally remained intact. The third type, exemplified in many dance suites and especially in Bach's *Goldberg Variations* was based on a constant harmonic progression that repeated throughout each variation. The Classical era brought in the "melodic-outline" variation, in which the theme's melodic outline was evident to some degree in each variation. Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* introduced an expanded version of this, "formal-outline" variations in which only the general outline of the theme and its basic phrase structure needed to be constant. After Beethoven, variations tended to become more freestyle, and "characteristic

[8] Ibid.

variations" and "fantasy variations" entered the mix. Characteristic variations tend to evoke dance styles, nationalistic or programmatic associations, while the fantasy styles allow for development of aspects of the theme without requiring fidelity to structural elements. Finally in the twentieth century, the serial composers developed their own variations form, treating a twelve-tone row rather than a melodic tune to strict variations procedures, which had a clearly defined methodology specific to serial techniques.

As mentioned above, the form most readily identified as *Theme and Variations* is from the Classical era. Although the neo-classical and neo-baroque composers of the twentieth century tended to combine or fuse variations techniques that would have previously been separate or disparate, it is important to have a clear sense of the Classical tradition with which later composers were able to engage. This next section briefly outlines the main contributions of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, who were all instrumental in keeping variations in the realm of serious music and for developing and expanding the form in ways that prevented it from becoming meaningless or stagnant.

Haydn was a key figure in innovatively expanding the theme and variations model. He was one of the first to use hybrids of variation types, incorporating them into his rondo and sonata forms, and imbuing them with symbolic weight by infusing variations into slow movements in his symphonies. Elaine Sisman has written extensively about Haydn's contribution to the genre, highlighting its centrality to his creative process and how later composers such as Mozart and Beethoven built on his contributions.[9] Of the Classical composers, Haydn used variations the *most widely* in

[9] Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*; Elaine R. Sisman, "Tradition and Transformation in the Alternating Variations of Haydn and Beethoven," *Acta Musicologica* 62, no. 2/3 (May 1, 1990): 152–82.

his works, incorporating them into chamber music, solo, and orchestral works, but Mozart seems to have written the *greatest number* of variation sets, primarily for solo piano, and his treatment of the form is demonstrative of the most conventional approach to variation technique.

Mozart wrote fifty-five variation sets, most of which would be considered the most typical or conventional type of theme and variations. In a very general sense, his variations are based on simple themes which are elaborated in various ways, primarily with regards to the melodic line. He improvised variations sets regularly in his concerts, to great acclaim, some of which were published, although most of his variations sets are skilfully constructed, not especially suggesting extemporisation. The extemporised formal model, however, does provide the basis for the form as a whole: strophic recurrence, with each variation comprising a clear unit, generally with a stable phrase and cadential structure. Variations of this type are generally in a single key, although movement to the parallel minor or major is common. In contrast with the other prevalent form of the time, sonata form, in theme and variations, the musical interest is created not by tension between tonic and dominant key relationships, but through localised contrasts in dynamics, orchestration, melodic segments, rhythms, and textures. Typically, the intensity and difficulty would build throughout the work with the most complex, contrapuntal textures and technical challenges occurring in the later variations, culminating in a grandiose, virtuosic final iteration.

As with most Classical forms, Beethoven is generally seen as the major transformer of the variation. His earlier variations works are indebted to the examples of Haydn and Mozart and with his later works, the *Eroica* and *Diabelli Variations*, he transcends the limits of the form, applying variation techniques in oblique ways, allowing more flexibility within phrase structure, harmonic progression and melodic

content. Despite the complexity and artistry Beethoven brought to variations form, the nineteenth century saw a rise in flashy variation sets for piano based on popular tunes liberally showered with superficial, yet virtuosic introductions, finales and other flourishes, which only contributed to the disparaging attitude toward theme and variations. Most nineteenth-century critics of the genre, including Schumann, considered variations works to be vapid, trite and meaningless.

Stemming from the innovations put forth by Haydn and Beethoven, variations form became less structured in the nineteenth century, and composers used variations form to explore dance styles, nationalist or programmatic themes, or simply to set a known theme or idea for a improvised-style fantasia. Composers such as Liszt and Chopin wrote variations works, but it was really the music of Brahms that brought variations back to the fore, returning to the more strict formal structures of the Baroque and early Classical periods. Brahms was particularly important in reviving the Baroque passacaglia (*Symphony No. 4)* but also for incorporating variations sets into many of his sonatas and rondo movements. The twentieth century brought a resurgence of the Baroque forms, especially passacaglia, as will be shown in Chapter Four, alongside the serial variation techniques of the twelve-tone composers, which have their own set of conventions. Max Reger was instrumental in bringing significance to variations form in his compositions, incorporating chromatic harmonies and polyphony into his works. Reger looks back especially to Brahms and the Baroque for his models, incorporating fugues and complex counterpoint into his works, although for the most part, his variations are of a melodic-outline or formal-outline type, connecting the variations procedure specifically to the Classical era.

As with many neo-classical forms, the modern iterations of variations pieces owe as much to the composer's contemporary circumstances as to the historical

characteristics of the formal structure. Brahms' revival of the passacaglia, for example was successful because he found a way to speak through the form in a way that had contemporary relevance and that did not simply evoke a sense of antiquity or ancient practice. As Kofi Agawu notes,

> Brahms' musical language consists of: a triple heritage: the already mentioned Viennese classical school; a contemporary 'romantic' sensibility; and an archaising or perhaps 'archaeological' manner. ... There is nothing mechanical about Brahms' appropriation of these channels of expression for each appropriation is marked by elements from another heritage, allowing the composer to speak in a fundamentally mixed or syncretic language.[10]

In the variations compositions written in Terezín, as I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, the appropriation of the formal aspects of the past are not straightforward or isolated features, but are part of a broad continuum of the unique and syncretic language that composers developed for their most important musical expressions.

Variations Form vs Sonata Form

Although this thesis is concerned with formal structures based on variations techniques, it is necessary to briefly engage with the much more highly esteemed and prevalent Classical structure typically known as *Sonata Form* in order to highlight how consequential it was for the Terezín composers to choose to write variations considering the power of the other possible compositional choices. The perceived inferiority of variations form that I mentioned in the previous section came about partially due to the vacuous nature of the popular-themed variations that were common in the nineteenth century, but also due to the complexity and high drama potentiality offered by Sonata Form. Sonata Form came to prominence in the

[10] V. Kofi Agawu, "Formal Perspectives on the Symphonies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 135.

eighteenth century and its musical embodiment of qualities such as linear, forward drive amidst a structure of tension, climax, and resolution fit well with the narratives of progress that were becoming more and more ubiquitous. The veneration of Sonata Form that continued well into the twentieth century had a maligning influence on variations compositions relegating it to the realm of trifling entertainment practice with only a few exceptions such as those mentioned Brahms and possibly some by Liszt. In this section, I will provide a cursory overview of Sonata Form and its function as it relates to and/or opposes variations form, which is simply intended to provide a context for the upcoming chapters.

In his chapter on "Theories of Form" in *The Classical Style*, Charles Rosen outlines the chief elements of Classical era form in relation to a singular structure – sonata form.[11] The disregarding of Theme and Variations as an important Classical form illuminates a crucial bias in musical analysis that was (and to some degree still is) pervasive in analytical approaches. This bias privileges Sonata Form, relegating all other musical structures to the realm of the trivial and inconsequential. A quote from Schoenberg aptly notes his contempt for variations, seemingly disregarding its value as a form with capacity for serious musical expression. In a letter to his friend Fritz Reiner in response to criticism of his *Theme and Variations, Op. 43B*, Schoenberg wrote, "Well, this is not one of my major works, as everybody can see, because it is not a composition with twelve tones. It is one of those compositions which one writes in order to enjoy one's own virtuosity, and, on the other hand, to give music lovers … something better to play."[12] The elevation of sonata form above all others seems to have developed after the Classical era, becoming a Romantic era construct intricately

[11] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 30–42.

[12] Arnold Schoenberg, *Arnold Schoenberg: Letters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 222.

connected to the various attitudes toward aesthetic and intrinsic value that characterised that period. I note both Schoenberg's apologetic stance and Rosen's ellipsis of variations form in his book, not because I wish to engage with the various arguments for or against this viewpoint, but rather to highlight the very common and long standing prejudice against Theme and Variations as a serious mode of writing.

In his discussion of Classical style, Charles Rosen writes that "the 'sonata' is not a definite form like a minuet, a da capo aria or a French overture: it is, like the fugue, a way of writing, a feeling for proportion, direction, and texture rather than a pattern."[13] By defining the form in this way, he is able to account for the many exceptions and transformations that occurred as different composers experimented with the technique and worked out their own creative expressions within a set of conventions. He offers this as a common explanation or working definition of sonata form:

> …the exposition starts with a theme or group of themes in the tonic, followed by a modulation to the dominant and a second group of themes; after a repetition of the exposition comes the development, in which the themes are fragmented and combined in various keys ending with a return to the tonic and a recapitulation of the exposition, this time with the second group of themes in the tonic, and an optional coda.[14]

Rosen laments that the problem with this description of sonata form lies "not in its inaccuracy but its being couched in the form of a recipe (and for a dish that could no longer be prepared)."[15] Although Rosen does not acknowledge the connection, his comments are equally applicable to Theme and Variations form. Despite the unfortunate reality that the popular, ornamented, virtuosic style of variation so commonly disparaged also tended to be "served up as a dish carefully prepared

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[13] Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 30.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 31.

according to a recipe", there are certainly many examples of creative, thoughtful, and expansive variations that reflect Rosen's assertion that a form can be less a definite structure and more of a mode of thinking about and writing music.

Whatever arguments can be made for the superiority of Sonata Form over variations form, the reality is they serve two very different functions, which are remote from each other. Michael Broyles defines the dichotomy quite perceptively, defining Sonata Form as a closed, forward moving form, while classifying Theme and Variations as an open, retrospective form that "is essentially oriented toward the past".[16] What he calls "orientation toward the past" is not simply a reference to the Baroque origins of variations form, but is an acknowledgement that engagement with the variations is predicated on a memory of the theme. "The principal interest of a variation structure grows as the composer's memory and imagination begin to exceed that of the listener's, as the obvious is exhausted and the composer begins to reveal facets of the theme that the listener had not until then realized."[17] He assesses the form as "open" in that it moves within a circumscribed world, but has uncertain and undefined boundaries. He notes that a listener may be able to anticipate points of repetitive harmonic or rhythmic configurations, but that "he has no way of projecting how many times it will be repeated."[18] The nature of Sonata Form, however, requires that the outer boundaries are suggested very early on in the piece, rendering it a closed form that relies on internal tensions as well as a sense of direction and resolution for its expressive capacity. He defines Sonata Form as precisely the converse of variations, "In High Classicism, sonata form and variation form stand at opposite

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[16] Michael Broyles, *Beethoven: The Emergence and Evolution of Beethoven's Heroic Style* (Taylor & Francis, 1987), 89.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

poles of the structural spectrum. Variation is open and elaborative, dependent upon remembrance of things past more than the anticipation of the uncertain. The overall sense of the build-up of tension and the drive to a specific point of climax and denouement, at the heart of the sonata principle, is foreign to the variation procedure."[19] As we will see in the following chapters, the open flexibility of variations practice with its uncertain and undefined boundaries becomes meaningful and essential in the context of Terezín in ways that may not be addressed through a more closed and rigid structure such as Sonata Form.

Beyond Formal Structure

If we consider the above description of forms based on variation procedures as being open, elaborative, and dependent on remembrance of the past, a window appears that allows for consideration of variations procedures in an expansive and contemplative way rather than as a structural or proscriptive methodology. At the risk of opening the concept of variation to encompass every possible (and mundane) nuance associated with the term, broadening the hermeneutic possibilities of variations usage in musical compositions allows for richer interpretations that encompass a wider range of experience, moving from the realm of the purely musical into the realm of the intangible. The composer Alexander Goehr wrote in an essay on modern music that "the real interest in the content – the philosophical content – of modern music has disappeared."[20] He also expounds on the role of the composer in society, "It seems to me that the attitudes of a composer are expressed in his choice of

[19] Ibid., 90.

[20] Alexander Goehr, *Finding the Key: Selected Writings of Alexander Goehr*, ed. Derrick Puffett (London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1998), 97.

forms, artistic images and material, and I believe that in order to speak to and for his time, which must be his aim, his attitudes must take into account the characteristic attitudes present in the world around him."[21] As Goehr asserts, the compositional choices of a composer reflect much more than simply preferences of tools or techniques, and form must be considered an important aspect when considering the cultural or philosophical "meaning" of a piece. Although there is no particular philosophy that specifically addresses musical variations or encompasses the full range of hermeneutic possibilities, the approaches to variations I use in the upcoming chapters attempt to address the philosophical, intangible aspects of the works in addition to those that can strictly be derived from formal structural analysis. Because the analytic requirements of each piece are individual and specific to the work, these are outlined and contextualised in the appropriate chapter and are therefore not further elucidated at this point.

[21] Ibid.

PART II.

THE TEREZÍN VARIATIONS

Chapter Three

Pavel Haas

On June 22, 1944, the baritone Karel Berman and pianist Rafael Schächter performed a recital of *Lieder*, featuring the premiere of Pavel Haas' *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry* to an audience in Terezín. The songs were based on ancient Chinese poems that were reinterpreted in 1940 by the Czech poet and translator Bohumíl Mathesius. Haas' choice of text and arrangements of the poems resonated with the audience, causing Viktor Ullmann to remark in his review of the recital, "Haas's songs are full of life and quite relevant to our contemporary existence. We who have heard them want never to give them up; we want to continue living intimately with them."[1] Coincidentally, the recital took place the evening before the International Red Cross visited Terezín and was given the infamous orchestrated tour of the camp in which many prisoners were forced to contribute directly and in which everyone participated indirectly.

The summer of 1944 not only opened with new music from Pavel Haas, but it also closed it: in late August or early September, his *Study for String Orchestra* was conducted by Karel Ančerl and, like the song cycle, performed again within the shadows of the Nazi propaganda program, this time in front of movie cameras working on the "documentary" film about the vibrant existence experienced by the Jews of Terezín. Ančerl later recalled the event:

[1] Viktor Ullmann, translated in John Healey, "The Solo Piano Music of Viktor Ullmann: From Prague to the Holocaust--a Performer's Guide to the Complete Piano Sonatas and Variations" (Doctor of Musical Arts, University of Cincinnati, 2001), 303–4.

> When we finished rehearsing this program, orders came to hold the concert in the hall of the so-called café [instead of the usual venue in the town hall]. Surprised, knowing that no good could come of it, we were let into the flower-decorated hall. We were all issued black suits, my conductor's stand was lined with flowers to hide my clogs. Soon a high official visitor in SS-uniform appeared to inspect if everything was going all right. Czech Quislings with film cameras appeared. I was told to introduce the composer Paul Haas after the first performance of his music to the invisible, cheering audience.[2]

Pavel Haas' final composition was not, in fact, the set of Chinese songs, nor was it the work for string orchestra, but rather a set of variations, *Variations for Piano and String Orchestra*, which are presumed lost and for which we have no record of a performance or any knowledge of what they were like. In the absence of this work, I have decided to focus on some of the more oblique aspects of variation that we find in the two works performed that summer. In the *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry* and the *Study for String Orchestra*, there are two important aspects of variation worth exploring; the first is structural, founded in Haas' use of ostinato, and the other is more thematic, where it seems that his Terezín expression forms an intertext with his own past works, creating variations on his own themes and tropes. There is no reason in particular why Haas' music framed the two major propaganda initiatives that punctuated the summer of 1944, however, these two premieres offer an entry point in which to access this historical moment and attempt to get a sense of how the music reflected the *Zeitgeist* or how it allows us to gain insight of experience of the musicians most closely connected to it. This chapter introduces Pavel Haas, and then explores these compositions in light of the variations techniques he uses while considering the lens of the historical moment in which they appear.

[2] Ančerl, "Music in Terezín," 240.

Life and Musical Influence

In a clip the reconstructed propaganda film from Terezín, the broad-shouldered figure of Pavel Haas is shown slouching at a table as his piece *Study for String Orchestra* is being conducted on stage by Karel Ančerl (Figure 1). Haas is of imposing stature, and his gaunt face intimates either a mood of intense concentration or one of powerless misery; according to the recollections of those who knew him, either one would be appropriate and characteristic of the Czech composer. His student T.H. Mandl described his impression of an encounter at the Jewish Grammar School in 1940, "Here was an extremely introverted artist who, melancholically but with great concentration, tried to teach his pupils as much as he could."[3] The image of a melancholic, yet intense, talented artist recurs regularly in recollections of Haas. Seemingly more so than any of the other composers in Terezín, Haas struggled with the physical and psychological stresses from his internment in the camp, resulting in poor health and severe depression, reportedly alleviated somewhat by the support and urging of his fellow musicians in Terezín. As Eliška Kleinová recalled, Haas returned to composing after a long hiatus only after Gideon Klein confronted him with some manuscript paper and insisted that he return to composing and "stop wasting time".[4] Whether or not Kleinová's anecdote is grounded entirely in fact (her primary interest was in valorising her brother Gideon), we do know that Haas' first months in the camp were dedicated to hard labour duties and that he was forced to share a room with seventy other inmates, which would have left little time or energy for artistic

[3] T.H. Mandl in liner notes to Petersen Quartet, *Janáček, L.: String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters" / Haas, P.: String Quartet No. 2*, CD (EDA Records, 1999).

[4] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 76.

pursuits.[5] It seems that his health and living conditions improved gradually once he was given lighter duties in a convalescent home, and then in the final year of his internment when he was able to share a space with his close friend Bernard Kaff.[6] According to Karas, his music from then on "shows the determination of the composer not to succumb to the tyranny of the spirit."[7] Certainly at some point he overcame some of his debilitating health issues, and was able to complete at least seven compositions in the camp, three of which have survived: *Al S'fod*, *Study for String Orchestra*, and *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry*.

Figure 1. Pavel Haas (Front, right); Still taken from the reconstructed propaganda film[8]

Pavel Haas was born in the city of Brno on June 6, 1899. His father was a Jewish Czech who owned a shoe store in Brno, and his mother was a Russian émigré. He spent most of his life in the Moravian capital, studying at a German-speaking

[5] Lubomír Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas: život a dílo skladatele* (Brno: Muzejní a vlastivědná společnost v Brně, 1993), 162–3.

[6] T.H. Mandl in liner notes to Petersen Quartet, *Janáček and Haas*.

[7] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 81.

[8] Kurt Gerron, *The Fuehrer Gives the Jews a City/Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem dischen Siedlungsgebiet*, DVD (Los Angeles, CA: Seventh Art Releasing, 2010).

primary school, followed by four years of studies in the Czech technical secondary school. After determining his intention to be a composer around age 13, he left his general studies and instead attended the music school of the Philharmonic Society in Brno (Beseda brněnská), studying piano with Anna Holubová and music theory with Jan Kunc and Vilém Petřelka. He was drafted into the Austrian Army in 1917 but was never sent to combat and so remained in Brno during the war. He resumed his studies at the State Conservatory in Brno in 1919, again under Kunc and Petřelka, and subsequently, from 1920 to 1922, he studied composition with Janáček at the Brno Conservatory.[9] Although his early works, including his 1918, *Six Songs in Folk Tone,* Op. 1, incorporated aspects of Czech folk music, according to Karas, Janáček's influence, along with the Czechoslovak patriotism of the post WWI era, "caused a complete turnaround in Haas' musical thinking."[10] Under Janáček, it appears that folk songs, particularly those of Moravian provenance, became central to his compositional style. Following his studies at the Conservatory, Haas worked at his father's shop, taking on commissions for incidental music to theatre and film projects, (including productions of Čapek's *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* and Buchner's *Wozzeck*)[11], as well as continuing to compose on the side. Haas married a physician, Soňa Jakobson, in 1935, and her employment enabled him to leave his work at his father's shop and engage in music full time, both composing and teaching private students.[12]

[9] Biographical details in this section synthesized from material in Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*; Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*.

[10] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 77.

[11] Pavel Eckstein, (trans. Paula Kennedy) in liner notes to Israel Yinon, Prague Philharmonic Choir, and Prague State Opera Orchestra, *Šarlatán*, CD (Decca, 1998), 19.

[12] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*, 160.

By all accounts, Haas was considered a distinguished composer in the ranks of Czech music. Many of his works were performed in Brno and, with the exception of the jazz percussion element in his second String Quartet, his music was well received by critics. The premiere of his opera *Šarlatán* in Brno in 1938 made the pages of the *New York Times*, where the (unnamed) music writer focused on the folk element of Haas' style and reported that the critic for the *Prager Presse* hailed the debut as "the creation of a serious musician of much talent."[13] The opera was performed six times in the spring of 1938.

After the German occupation, Haas tried in vain to emigrate. When the Nuremburg laws took effect, making it impossible for his (non-Jewish) wife to work, they divorced, allowing Dr. Haas to continue supporting the family, and eventually, along with their daughter and nephew, to be spared from the Jewish transports.[14] Haas arrived without his family in Terezín on one of the first transports in 1941 and was assigned to hard labour duties for a few months. When his health improved after his work duties were lightened and he was able to return to music, his first composition was *Al S'fod,* a vocal work for male chorus, dated November 30, 1942, which is based on a Hebrew text that states, "Do not lament, do not cry, when things are bad, do not lose heart, but work, work!" His other surviving Terezín compositions are the *Study for Strings* and *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry*. Four additional works, *Fantasy on a Jewish Folk Song* for string quartet, *Partita in the Old Style for Piano,* a song cycle called *The Advent*, and *Variations for Piano and String Orchestra* have not been recovered and it is presumed they perished with him in Auschwitz. Haas was sent to

[13] "Westchester Festival; Pavel Haas Opera; String Quartet Survey," *The New York Times,* May 8, 1938, 161.

[14] Although some evidence has come to light suggesting that Dr. Haas may have had Jewish ancestry, her documents at the time supported her claim of Aryan status. (Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas,* 162.)

Auschwitz on the same transport as the other musicians on October 16, 1944 and it is believed that he was gassed on arrival.

Musical Legacy

Pavel Haas' musical legacy from both before and during his time in Terezín is well-situated within the musical world of Janáček, in which he was trained. His works are in a modernist vein, utilising chromaticism as well as full tone rows to incorporate dissonance into his harmonies, however, his work remains generally melodic. Although he did not specifically set music to Hebrew texts prior to Terezín, he seemingly incorporated elements of Hebrew melody, notably the "melismas typical for synagogue songs" alongside polyrhythmic elements influenced by the multitude of modern styles from the early twentieth century, most notably the rhythmic and orchestration elements associated with both Stravinsky and early jazz.[15]

Beginning in 1939 with the *Suite for Oboe and Piano*, a type of political consciousness arises in Haas' work that recurs in his subsequent compositions, involving motifs from two important Czech songs, used earlier in nationalist contexts: the St. Wenceslas chorale (*Svatý Václave*) and the Hussite battle hymn (*Ktož jsú boží bojovníci*). Although there is no written evidence of Pavel Haas' political convictions, it is very likely that his coming of age at the time of the birth of Czechoslovakia and his studies with Janáček in which Czech folk songs and language influenced his loyalty to the Czech lands. Additionally, the fascist occupation of Czechoslovakia had a personal and traumatic impact on Haas' life, so it is very difficult to read the incorporation of politically-charged quotations in his music as anything other than an

[15] Ibid., 165.

anti-Nazi leaning. The Wenceslas chorale dates back to at least the twelfth century and is a prayer to the Czech patron saint, Wenceslas I, to return as a saviour to his people. The text reads "*Svatý Václave, vévodo české země. Pros za nás Boha, svatého ducha! Kriste elejson!*" (Saint Wenceslas, duke of the Czech lands. Pray for us to God and the Holy Spirit! Christ have mercy!). The evocation of Wenceslas in the chorale is part of a long standing mythology that includes a Czech legend in which the knights sleeping under Blaník Hill will revive and come to the aid of the Czech people under the leadership of Saint Wenceslas at the hour of dire need.[16]

The text of the Hussite battle hymn is less direct in terms of calling on a patron saint, (Ye who are God's warriors and of his law, Pray to God for help and have faith in Him; That always with Him you will be victorious) however, like the Wenceslas Chorale, it is evocative of an important historical feature of Czech national memory. The Hussite battle hymn seems to have emerged from the fifteenth-century Hussite wars, when the Hussite peasants fought the much stronger forces of the Holy Roman Empire. Reportedly, the Hussite armies sang the battle hymn *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* with such strength that, at least on two occasions, the Catholic armies fled and the Hussites were victorious.[17] In the nineteenth-century Czech rebirth, the Hussite victories became a source of national pride and the history was reinterpreted to match the patriotic sentiments of the era. Derek Katz has claimed that the Hussite Chorale "is a potent aural symbol for Hussite glory and has been included or alluded to in a

[16] This legend has a long past, however it was revived in the writings of Alois Jirásek in his book Staré povésti ceske (Legends of old Bohemia) and in the symphonic poems of Smetana. Alois Jirásek, *Staré povsti české* (Nabu Press, 2011); Bedřich Smetana, *Má vlast (My Country)*, ed. Vilém Zemánek (London; New York: Edition Eulenburg, 1914).

[17] Richard C. Frucht, *Eastern Europe: An Introduction to the People, Lands, and Culture*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 214.

long series of patriotic or nationalistic works."[18] He notes that this symbolism was not lost on the Nazis, who banned Smetana's tone poems based on the melody.[19]

Both the Wenceslas chorale and the Hussite hymn are powerful musical symbols of Czech power and have been used repeatedly for nationalist evocations by many Czech composers, including Smetana, Dvořák, Suk, Janáček, Novák, Martinů, and many others.[20] As Derek Sayer notes in his discussion of the Hussite tune, the Czech composer Vítěslava Kaprálová beautifully captures the broader sense of the importance of these tunes to the Czech nation:

> There are some melodies which adapt themselves to the nation, as if it was its own voice. … Czech music lives in the signature, so to speak, of two principal motifs which, and it is not by coincidence, are also an expression of the whole two-sided spiritual life of the nation. On the one side is the Hussite Chorale, on the other Saint Wenceslas. … The Hussite chorale is the credo of everything valiant in the Czech nation…the expression of the Czech soul, just as its words are the call-up papers for Czech arms.[21]

That Pavel Haas should choose to put these two themes at the centre of his piece at such an inauspicious time is significant. The *Oboe Suite* was written in 1939, the year that German occupation became a reality for Czechoslovakia. At this time, Haas was well aware of the dangers of the political situation and attempted, like his brother, to emigrate. Although his brother Hugo was successful in escaping to France, and eventually the United States, Pavel was not, and instead he was forced to remain in the *Protectorate* and be subjected to the increasingly oppressive restrictions forced

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[18] Derek Katz, *Janáček Beyond the Borders* (University Rochester Press, 2009), 58.

[19] Ibid., 59.

[20] Much has been written on these themes. For a thorough account of Svatý Václave in modern music, see Viktor Velek, "Die St. Wenzelsche Musiktradition von ihrem Anfang bis 1848" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 2008); and for a brief but informative discussion on the history of the Hussite hymn, see Derek Katz, "A Turk and Moravian in Prague: Janáček's Brouček and the Perils of Musical Patriotism," in *Janáček and His World*, ed. Michael Brim Beckerman (Princeton University Press, 2003), 147–148.

[21] Vítěslava Kaprálová, "Husitsky choral (Hussite Chorale)," *Československý boj*, February 9, 1940; quoted in, Derek Sayer, *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 349.

upon the Jews in the occupied state. Only a year later he formally divorced his wife, further demonstrating how personal the political sphere became for him during this time. It is generally believed that he had intended the *Oboe Suite* as a cantata for tenor and orchestra; however in an act of self-censorship, Haas replaced the vocal line with the oboe in order to conceal potentially controversial or prohibited content. [22] Unfortunately, the text has been lost so it is impossible to recover the full range of semantic content considered by the composer. What is significant, however, is that there can be little doubt that at this point, Haas turned to his music to express politically-charged sentiments, and that he was clearly artistically engaged with the events around him.

This trend toward using political motifs continued after the completion of the oboe suite, and with the exception of the *Study for String Orchestra*, all of his extant works have some connection to the Wenceslas Chorale. In his work following the *Suite for Oboe and Piano*, his *Unfinished Symphony*, the intensity of the motifs introduced in the oboe suite is significantly increased. The Wenceslas chorale and the Hussite melody are incorporated as major foundations of the work, as are two statements of the *Horst Wessel Lied*, the anthem of the Nazi party, one statement of which is combined with a quote from Chopin's funeral march. It wouldn't be a large interpretive leap to suggest that the layering of Chopin's dismal theme with the Nazi anthem projects a rather pessimistic outlook, and further analysis may yield more evidence along these lines. Unfortunately, we have no commentary from the composer regarding these works and since they weren't performed in public due to the restrictions placed on Jewish musicians, we also have no information as to how these works would have been received. However, if we consider the history of the

[22] David Bloch, "Hidden Meanings: Musical Symbols in Terezín," *India International Centre Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2006): 115; Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*, 161.

quoted works, along with the sentiments outlined by Kaprálová, we can reasonably postulate that Haas chose this material to present a powerful pro-Czech sentiment and that through his music, he is commenting on the political situation facing his homeland.

Four Songs on Chinese Poetry

Pavel Haas' *Four Songs* were written for the baritone Karel Berman who was preparing a *Lieder* recital consisting of works by Wolf, Haas, Beethoven and Dvořák. It was in the review of this recital that Ullmann proclaimed Berman a master artist, claiming "The eloquent, courageous, all-around talented artist, singer, composer, conductor, Karel Berman, was until today a journeyman – now he has delivered his masterpiece."[23] The highlight of this master performance was, at least in Ullmann's estimation, the *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry* of Pavel Haas.

The songs are based on four poems from a book of poetry called *New Songs of Ancient China*, the third anthology of Tang-Dynasty poetry published by Bohumíl Mathesius in 1940. Mathesius' Czech translations are of an artistic nature, freely capturing the spirit of the poems, often translated from German, Russian or other secondary sources. He commented about his perspective on these translations, claiming that "We should translate what the receiving cultural organism needs to be translated."[24] In this case, the receiving cultural organism was the Czechoslovak nation first on the eve of war with his 1938 collection and then in the midst of it with this 1940 anthology. According to Lomova and Zadrapovo, Mathesius "regarded the

[23] Viktor Ullmann, translated in Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 83.

[24] Bohumíl Mathesius, *Básníci a buřiči (Poets and rebels)* (Praha: Lid. nakl., 1975), 206; quoted in Olga Lomová and Anna Zádrapová, "'Songs of Ancient China' – A Myth of 'The Other' Appropriated by an Emerging Sinology," *Mongolian Journal of International Affairs* 19 (2014): 136.

Chinese poems he was rewriting in Czech as a truthful expression of alien culture bringing to the Europeans an important lesson in humanity."[25] This "truthful" expression presented "ancient Chinese poetry as a mirror for Europe to recognise its failure and offer a new viable alternative to war."[26] He believed these poems reflected an alternative to the existing situation in Europe, offering instead a vision of unity and harmony. In his words, "unity of heart and mind in the sense Confucius had already spoken about – permanence, stability, non-violence, an absence of the wish to conquer, as well as the art of discovering happiness in the smallest things of this world."[27] He maintained that rather than capturing the structure and the style of the original poems, he "transferred them into primordial language of emotions, into a human mother-tongue of lyricism."[28] Whether or not Haas knew of Mathesius' views on these poems, the passionate approach and topical messages make it understandable why these translations would appeal to both the composer and the audience.

The poems chosen by Haas for his musical setting are titled as follows, "I Heard the Cry of the Wild Geese", "In the Bamboo Grove", "Far is my Home, O Moon", and "A Sleepless Night". The first three songs focus on themes of isolation, with special emphasis on the words "far away", "alone", and "home". The final song presents a vision of a dream of a joyful reunion with loved ones. Obviously, the textual setting and content are important features of the work and deserve the

[25] Lomová and Zádrapová, "'Songs of Ancient China,'" 137.

[26] Ibid., 139.

[27] Bohumíl Mathesius, *Zpěvy staré Číny* (Praha: Melantrich, 1939), 83; quoted in Lomová and Zádrapová, "'Songs of Ancient China,'" 139.

[28] Lomová and Zádrapová, "'Songs of Ancient China,'" 138.

highlighting they have received in various analyses, however, it is the aspect of the ostinato that I would like to focus on here.[29]

Ostinato is the most rudimentary of variations techniques, the term meaning "obstinate" in Italian and referring to a repeated musical pattern. The most common type of ostinato is a repeated bass line, however especially in modern music, any aspect of the music, including melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic motifs, can function as an ostinato. The effect of the repetition is variable depending on the type of music. For example, in a Baroque ground bass the repetition may simply create a cyclical harmonic progression that allows for a more intricate melody line to unfold, whereas a repeated rhythmic pattern can capture the characteristic rhythm of a specific dance type. Although it is a fairly simple musical device, it can be highly powerful and effective, expressing a wide range of topics, including evocations of a cuckoo's song, emulations of trumpets or carillon bells, the ringing of a death knell, the rocking of a swing, a lullaby, or the waves of the sea, amongst many other possibilities.[30] Haas incorporated ostinato frequently in his works, and as we will see in the next section, his chosen ostinato plays a central role in his Chinese poetry song cycle.

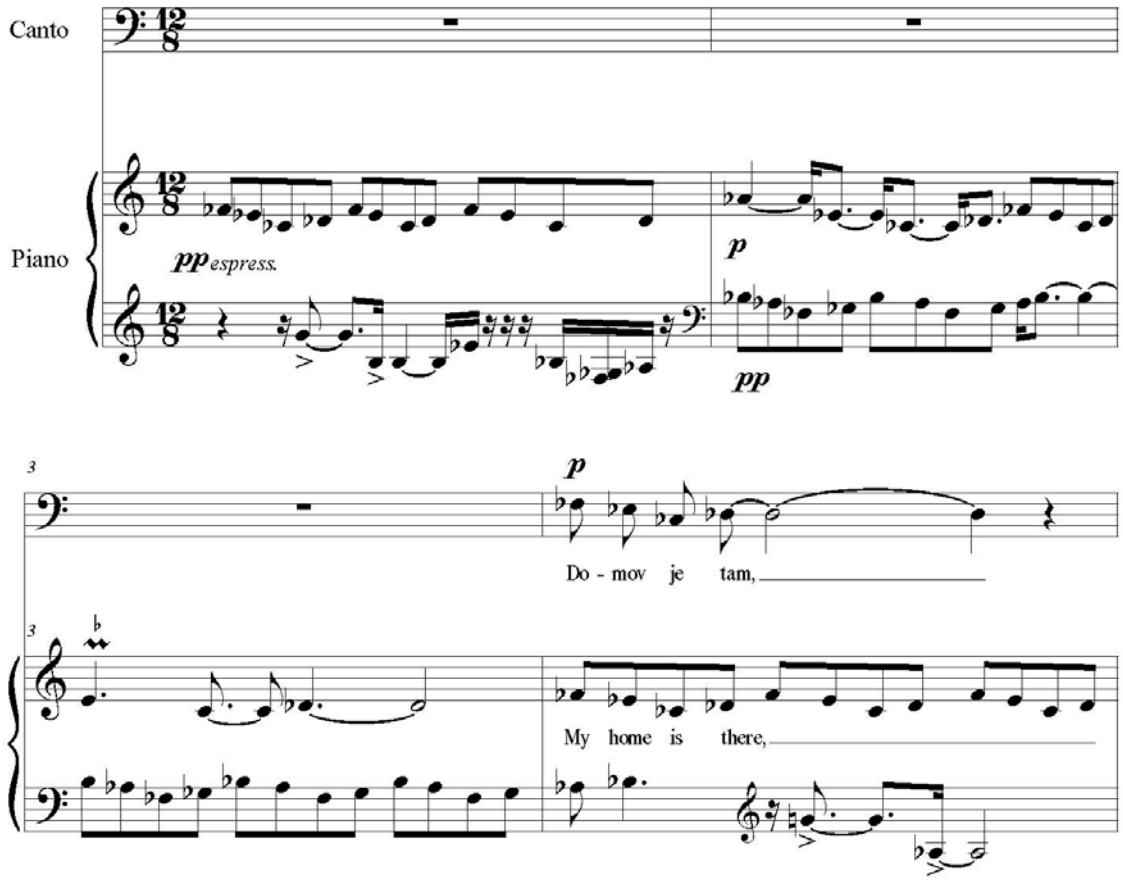
In *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry*, Haas introduces the ostinato motif immediately in the first measure of the first song. His ostinato is melodic, consisting of the notes F-flat, E-flat, C-Flat and D-Flat. It is first introduced in the right-hand part of the piano, followed by a register shift to the bass voice and then repeated again in the vocal line on the first four syllables *Do-mov je tam* (My home is there) (See Figure 2). Notably, the counter melody is accented, privileging it over the *pp* ostinato

[29] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*; Klaus Doge, "Pavel Haas: Čtyri písně na slova činske poezije—Lieder aus dem Konzentrationslager Theresienstadt," in *Ljubljana, Slovenske Konjice, 12.-15.V.1998 (Music and society in the 20th century : concerts, symposium)*, ed. Slovenski glasbeni dnevi and Kuret (Ljubljana: Festival Ljubljana, 1999), 149–62.

[30] Laure Schnapper, "Ostinato," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 9, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20547.

in the same register, requiring the left hand of the piano to play overtop the right hand, aurally and gesturally rendering the image of a façade. (In the manuscript score, the second iteration of the counter melody is marked *mfp*, highlighting it further). Throughout the song, the four-note motif is ever present, often varied in rhythm or register and occasionally modulated to fit with the melody or for various expressive effects.

Figure 2. Pavel Haas, "I Heard the Cry of the Wild Geese" from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 1-4.[31]



This motif is powerfully asserted in the opening measures, with its incessant repetition clearly established before the entrance of the vocal line. In Viktor

[31] Pavel Haas, *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry*, ed. Lubomír Peduzzi (Praha; Berlin: Tempo; Bote & Bock, 2001), 5.

Ullmann's review of the songs, he writes, "The more serious songs, which evince a feeling of homesickness – from which the first and third are connected through an *idée fixe* of four notes, and which also comes back as an ostinato or cantus firmus in manifold metamorphoses – these also impress one as expressively, naturally, and progressively inspired."[32] It appears that in this review Ullmann differentiates between the terms *ostinato*, *cantus firmus* and *idée fixe* to refer to the placement of recurring four-note motif, i.e. *ostinato* for the bass, *cantus firmus* for when it appears in the middle register and *idée fixe* for the melody. While there are nuances associated with all three terms in musical literature, the notion of an *idée fixe* in this context is of particular interest.

The term *idée fixe*, which translates as "obsession" from the French, was used by Berlioz to mean "a musical idea used obsessively".[33] Berlioz applied the term, which had only recently been added to the French language, to the main theme of his 1830 work *Symphony Fantastique*. As Hugh Macdonald notes, Berlioz coined the term for music around "the same time Balzac used it in *Gobseck* to describe an obsessive idea, and it came into use as a clinical term for unreasonable or even criminal obsession. Berlioz used the theme to describe the artist's obsession with his beloved."[34] In Haas' setting, the relentless repetition, narrow range, and circular contour of the short motif offer the impression of an obsessive compulsion. In the first song, it appears mostly in eighth notes, moving to sixteenth notes at climactic moments, heightening the intensity. When it returns in the third song, "Far is my home, O Moon", it is in a very low register, transposed at the fifth and presented in

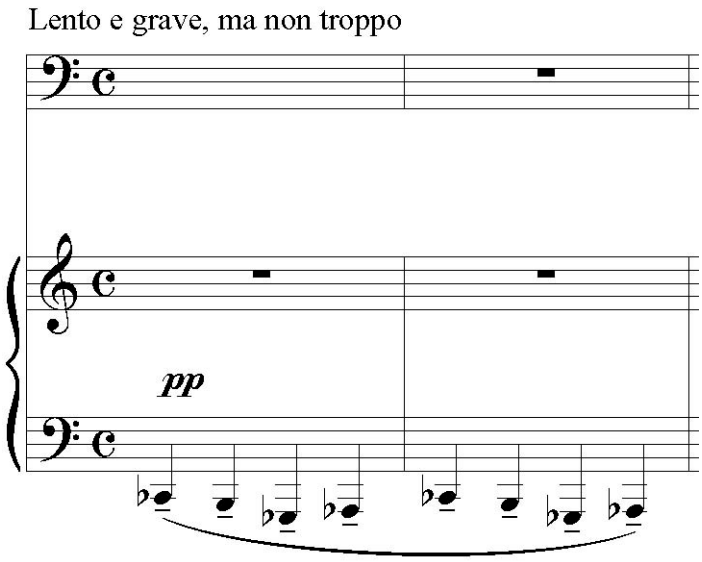
[32] Viktor Ullmann, translated in Healey, "The Solo Piano Music of Viktor Ullmann," 304.

[33] Hugh Macdonald, "Idée Fixe," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 22, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13701.

[34] Ibid.

slow, plodding quarter notes. The intensity of the opening is lessened, but somehow it still retains the obsessive quality, presenting it in a much more ominous way, with the lower register creating a more fatalistic sensibility (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Pavel Haas, "Far is my Home, O Moon", from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 1-2.[35]



Although it seems that most writers are comfortable with the application of the term *idée fixe* for this ostinato figure, the connection between ostinato and obsessive torment has a tradition going back well before Berlioz's time. As Schnapper notes in *Grove Music*, the tradition of seventeenth-century composers Lully, Purcell and Cavalli using ostinato in their operatic laments serve as strong symbols of suffering, and of course the anguish of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* has a well-established connection to the repetitive spinning figure in the piano line.[36]

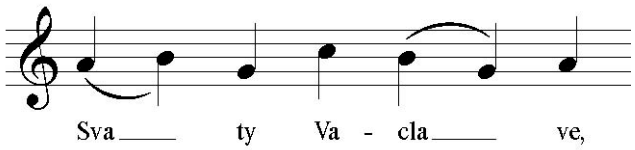
The four notes upon which the ostinato is constructed are generally considered to be a reference to the earliest version of the St. Wenceslas chorale. Haas' selection of notes corresponds to the section of the chorale where the word *Václave* or "Wenceslas" occurs (Figure 4). In addition to the Czech nationalist associations with

[35] Haas, *Four Songs*, 14.

[36] Schnapper, "Ostinato."

this hymn, as discussed in the previous section, the *Václave* motif in the first instance falls on the cycle's opening words "*Domov je tam*" (My home is there), which Peduzzi, amongst others, surmises is a symbol of Haas' mother country, Czechoslovakia.[37] Additionally, this opening text offers an answer to the opening of the Czech National Anthem, which asks the question "*Kde domov můj*?" (Where is my home?), further situating it within the realm of Czech nationalist symbolism.

Figure 4. Wenceslas Chorale.[38]



In his discussion of *speaking melody* (melodies that are present in instrumental works but that are not verbally uttered or sung), Lawrence Kramer posits that the expressive capacity of these instances in music is immense and fundamental to the question of how to understand what music means: "…speaking melody embodies the independent claim of expression as such to an immediate truth that can be grasped reflectively only through descriptions that follow (on) the expressive instance. In no other phenomenon is the relationship of expression and truth closer or more perceptible."[39]

In the case of the Haas ostinato, there may be some doubt as to how explicit the speaking melody is. All the writings that connect it to the St. Wenceslas hymn are retrospective; in the few writings we have from the camp, such as the reviews from

[37] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*, 164.

[38] Jaroslav Pohanka, *Dějiny české hudby v příkladech* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1958).

[39] Lawrence Kramer, *Expression and Truth: On the Music of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 33.

Ullmann, and the scant recollections of survivors, there is no association with the hymn. Ullmann's reference to the *idée fixe* contains no evidence that he recognised it as having a connection to a known melody, although at the time of his writing, he may have only heard the songs once, so he cannot be expected to have captured the intricacies and nuances of any new work in that instance. Or perhaps he was self-censoring, not making anything explicit that would implicate his colleague with subversive behaviour. However, regardless of whether or not it was recognised during its premiere, the connection of the ostinato to the hymn has been established by Peduzzi and Beckerman (amongst others), allowing us at least the postulation that it served as a "speaking melody" for the composer and that the weight of such a powerful Czech symbol imbues the music with the inflection and nuance associated with such an intertextual reference.[40]

So, if we accept that the ostinato functions as a speaking melody that is connected to the Wenceslas Hymn, what descriptions of expression and truth can be understood from the repeated *Václave* theme? We may consider that there are nationalist associations induced by the invocation of the Czech patron saint through the repeated sounding of his name, calling upon him to help the Czech nation as per the national legend. Peduzzi advances this angle further in his reading of the motivic choice, believing it to represent Haas' yearning for his homeland:

> To make this motif [the Wenceslas chorale] comprehensible even to those who might not understand the symbol used, the composer linked it with the words "My home is there" … Where the text speaks of a return home (3rd song) and of meeting again (4th song) the piano resounds with the syncopic rhythm of Moravian folk songs, showing what home the composer has in mind."[41]

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[40] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*, 164; Michael Beckerman, "Pavel Haas," *The Orel Foundation*, accessed March 18, 2015, http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/composers/article/pavel_haas.

[41] Lubomir Peduzzi, introduction to Pavel Haas, *Four songs for bass (baritone) and piano : to the words of Chinese poetry : Ghetto Terezín 1944* (Praha: Tempo ; Boosey & Hawkes/Bote & Bock, 2001), 4.

Certainly in a time of war and incarceration, the musical evocation of home and the incantation to resurrection of a powerful political saviour are powerful desires and fantasies that have broad appeal both to those directly affected in the camp as well as those of us aiming for understanding from a historical vantage point, but I think there may be even more at play here.

In Kramer's presentation of the speaking melody, it is not only the descriptions that come from a mental sounding-out of the words that imbue a work with meaning, but rather the multivalent possibilities that arise with the *absence* of the text. He writes, "The descriptions that report on this relationship [the relationship of expression and truth mentioned above] come about not because we supply the absent words when we hear the melody but because the absence of the words invites us to detach them from their original meanings, both explicit and implicit, extended, supplemented, transformed, even negated."[42] It is in this sense then that we can open up Haas' melody to encompass a much wider field of interpretation and avoid the reductionist tendencies that encourage readings that insist on a singular interpretation.

In one sense, the concept of speaking melody seems highly logical in a place like Terezín – the lack of explicit text allows the composers a means for attempting to communicate something about a situation that may otherwise be impossible (see more on this in Chapter Five). However, music speaks on many levels, some of which are less tangible. Another angle offered by Kramer's understanding of the relationship between melody and its absent text, is that such a compositional gesture is connected to the emotional states of pathos, nostalgia and melancholy, and the like. He writes,

> But speaking melody is not a neutral form. Whether because it involves the absence of word and voice, or because its historical development connects that absence with the imagery of disembodiment and the uncanny, of distance in time and remoteness in space, speaking melody above all exists in a modality

[42] Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 33.

> of pathos. It is nostalgic; it suggests mourning and memory; it hangs on to bits of the past that need to let go. In so doing, it acts like a material-aesthetic form of "melancholia" in the classic psychoanalytic sense of clinging to the past by internalizing lost objects and reproaching them inwardly for the loss they represent.[43]

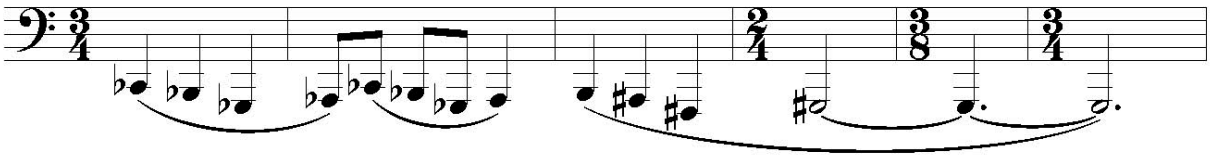
From this perspective then, the ostinato theme may also project a more ethereal essence of the qualities attached to the Wenceslas theme. Rather than simply evoking an impression of longing for home, either as a physical home or in a nationalist sense of a homeland, the motif can also encapsulate the broader feelings of loss associated with exile and displacement and open a space for both remembrance and mourning, as well as the obsession and torment associated with the melancholic state.

That death is a common theme in the music of Terezín in general has been examined and substantiated in the available literature, and I explore aspects of this in more detail in Chapter Four in relation to Krása's *Passacaglia*, however, explicit connections have not been made with Haas' music. Although the association with death is either latent or absent in writings about Haas' songs, it is my contention that the notion of death looms within the space offered by the ostinato, and thus pervades the whole cycle. As shown earlier in Figure 2. Haas chose to write the four-note motif entirely in flats, which is unnecessary given the ambiguous tonality of the song and the fact that the F-Flat and C-Flat would be more simply written as E and B. The abundance of flats has connections to the funeral marches of Chopin and Beethoven, amongst others, and even without that association, the downward direction indicated by the flats can easily be connected to a sense of hopelessness, depression, moral failing, and other similar tropes of dejection and despondency. That his choice of notation was deliberate becomes more evident in the third song where the ostinato is presented in an enharmonic respelling as the piece experiences an upward register

[43] Ibid., 37.

shift and a conspicuous move to notation using only sharps just before the text refers to the more uplifting words of “love” and “dream” (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. Pavel Haas, “Far is my Home, O Moon”, from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 9-14.[44]



In addition to the notation in flats, the span and contour of the four note melody evokes not just the name of St. Wenceslas, but also the melody of the *Dies Irae*, an iconic musical symbol of death discussed in detail in Chapter Four (See Figure 6). This association becomes even more perceptible when the ostinato appears in quarter notes in the lowest register of the piano at measure 14 after a climactic moment that completes the first stanza (Figure 7). The low range, the slow note values, the octave doubling and the forte dynamic all imbue it with a heightened resonance that highlights the ominous sound associated with the death theme. When the theme returns in the third song, “Far is my Home, O Moon”, the ostinato is set in the very low register once again, in tenuto quarter notes and marked *Lento e grave*, and *pianissimo*, situating it even more strongly within the realm of a dark, fatefulness. The end of the song concludes with this figure sinking, first in doubled octaves and then in single notes marked *pp* followed by a *ppp* chord consisting of every note, spelled in flats, for a very final resonance to the ostinato that has played such a central role.

[44] Haas, *Four Songs,* 14.

Figure 6. Haas' Wenceslas ostinato compared with *Dies Irae*

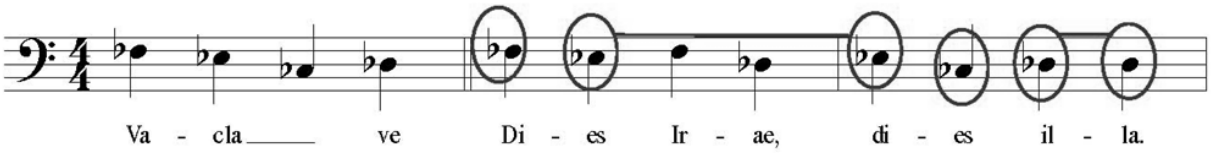
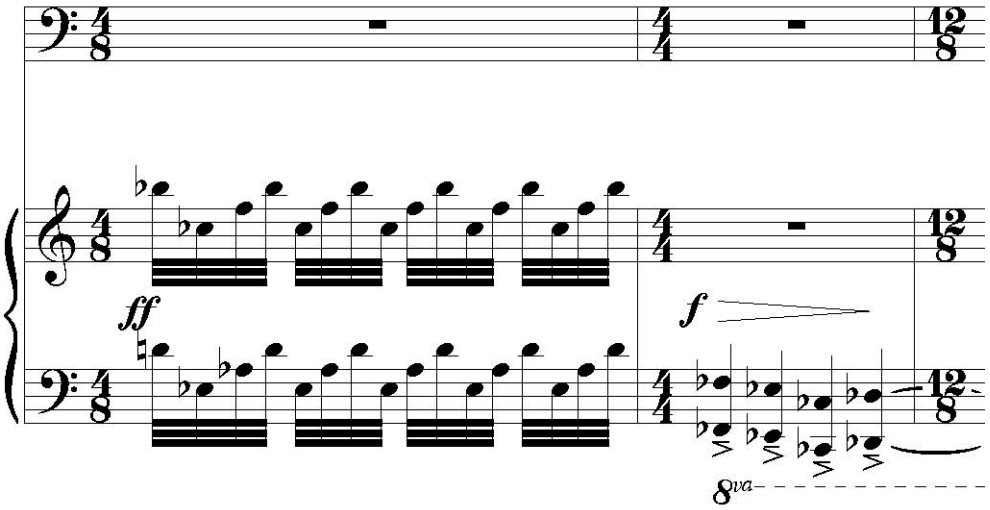


Figure 7. Pavel Haas, "I Heard the Cry of the Wild Geese", from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 13-14.[45]



A common, if not ubiquitous, interpretation of the songs makes little note of the disappearance of the ostinato at the end of the third movement, and describes what follows, the fourth song, which culminates in a coda consisting of a nonsensical utterance of "la la la la la …", as a jubilant ode to joy and hope. Peduzzi writes that in the last half of the song, a bright motive from the second song appears, "and over it, the singer's voice salutes the coming new day by a joyful and excited tune – the day which is a symbol of a hopeful future." Ullmann's reference to the final section of the cycle is in a similar vein, if less particular to the text, "An especially lucky hit is the graceful, bright, and rhythmically pulsating second song of the cycle, which turns up

[45] Ibid., 6.

later once more in the fourth song as the Coda of the whole work."[46] Certainly, a strong case can be made for an interpretation that allows an optimistic, bright and hopeful finale to this cycle, either real or illusory. However, I think the disappearance of the ostinato is powerful, particularly because of its dramatic final iterations, and a reading that prioritises it as a significant moment opens an interpretation that is even more evocative of Haas' exploration of the theme of death.

As Schnapper notes in her discussion of ostinato as a means of expression in *Grove Music*, the disappearance of the ostinato in a work often has symbolic significance:

> While repetition in itself is expressive, contrast is also important, the simplest and most effective contrast being to stop the repetition dead. Monteverdi interrupted the ostinato in *Zefiro torna* in this way in order to emphasize the lover's complaint 'sol io per selve abbandonate et sole'. In Berlioz's *La mort de Cléopâtre* the ostinato slows and stops completely at the image of the heart ceasing to beat, following Schubert who, at the end of *Erlkönig*, slows the rhythm of the horses and stops it completely to symbolize the end of life at the words 'in seinen Armen das Kind war tot'.[47]

If we consider the stopping of an ostinato as a key moment in the work, as Schnapper suggests, the end of the third song may be inherently much more expressive and dramatic than most readings present.

The last iterations of the ostinato occur in the final measures of the third song, "Far is My Home, O Moon". Overall, the song is quite sombre, marked *Lento e grave*, and the text focuses on returning home and lamenting a lost love. The last line of the poem reads, "Sleep, you can give me no dream, my yearning keeps me awake". Several measures of a dramatic instrumental interlude then occurs before the ostinato returns for two final statements. The penultimate iteration of the ostinato enters in a

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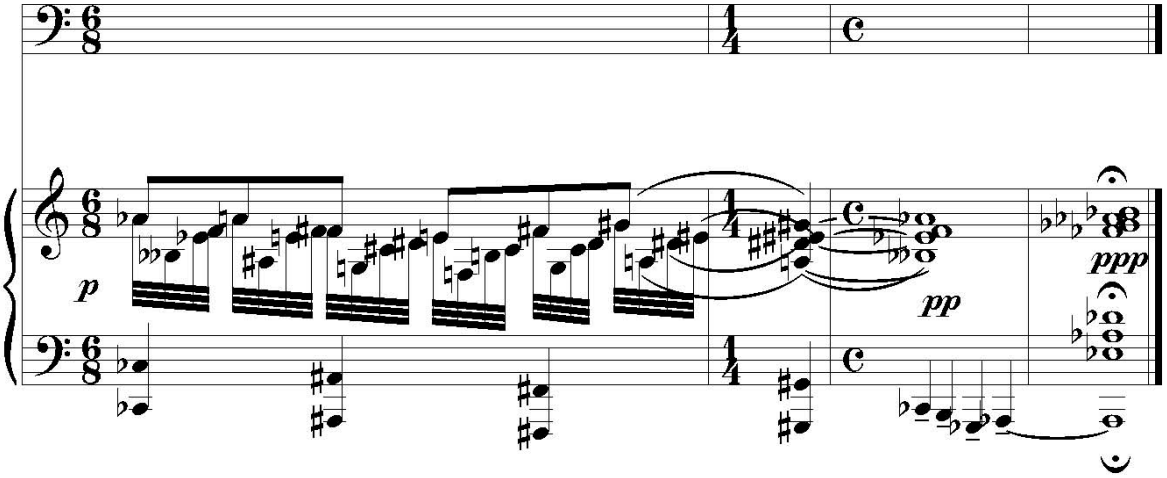
[46] Viktor Ullmann, *26 Kritiken über musikalische Veranstaltungen in Theresienstadt (26 Reviews of Musical Activities in Theresienstadt)*, ed. Ingo Schultz (Hamburg: Bockel, 1993), 67; Trans. in Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 83.

[47] Schnapper, "Ostinato."

mixture of flats and sharps, doubled at the octave, and then the final iteration occurs *pianissimo* in single notes in flats only at the lowest register. The chord that sounds above the ostinato is tied and is enharmonically respelled into flats and double-flats, making the downward motion extremely apparent. The piece ends with a chord marked *ppp* that contains every note name spelled in flats (C-flat through B-flat), given as a quartal chord in the bass staff and as a tone cluster in the treble staff (See Figure 8). Not only is just the ostinato coming to an end, but every note is affected as well; no one is exempted from the ultimate fate. This reading has many possible implications; Haas may be encoding a message of the camp's reality, countering the propaganda message of the benevolent treatment of Terezín's inhabitants, similar to Beckerman's suggestion that Klein's reference to *Kindertotenlieder* may be read literally, suggesting that "this place is not what it seems: there are dead children here."[48] Or, it could be a momentary expression of fear; the saviour Václav is not returning and hope for the Czech nation is lost. Another powerful but generally excluded perspective however, is the consideration that the arrival of death may offers a welcome reprieve from the suffering of life.

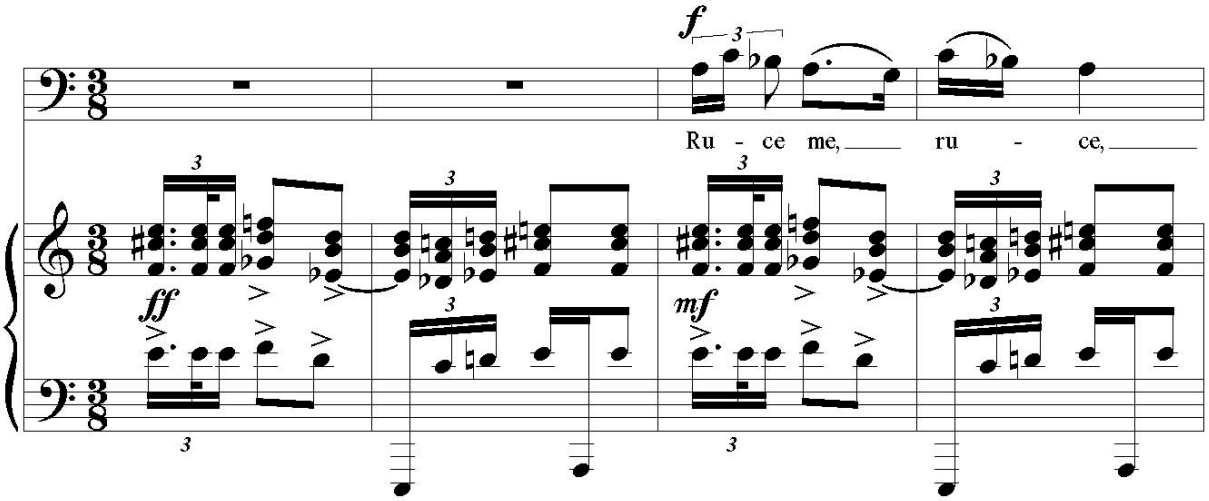
[48] Beckerman, "Meditation."

Figure 8. Pavel Haas, "Far is my Home, O Moon", from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 91-92.[49]



That this is an allusion to death is also supported by another important motif in the third song. The climax of the song arrives suddenly after a short *accel* and *crescendo* from a soft dynamic range. The arrival is marked *Piu mosso* and *fortissimo* with additional accents. The motif that enters is a fanfare and is completely contrasting to the previous material (See Figure 9).

Figure 9. Pavel Haas, "Far is my Home, O Moon", from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 49-52.[50]



The text is tricky and doesn't translate reasonably into English. "Hands of mine, my hands that are so empty to say everything" is the published translation,

[49] Haas, *Four Songs*, 19.

[50] Ibid., 17.

although alternatives such as “My hands, you are too empty to say it all”, or loosely, something like, “You are too empty to say what needs to be said” equally capture the emotional sentiment of the powerful utterance.[51] There is a sense of existential overwhelm, in the sense of a pained “Why?” of a man who cannot fathom or who can no longer bear the situation he’s in. The fanfare motif is significant. It appeared in the opening of second movement in the oboe suite, heralding the arrival of *Svatý Václave* and also even more significantly in the final scene of his opera Šarlatan, appearing just before the quack Dr. Pustrpalk’s final words, “Ah, ah! Ah my God, have mercy on me. Ah! Pray for my wretched soul.”[52] The appearance of this motif and its subsequent juxtaposition with the Wenceslas ostinato that eventually tapers off into the deepest register and faintest dynamic range suggests a more dramatic finality than just a drifting off to sleep.

The song that follows “Far is My Home, O Moon”, “A Sleepless Night” is bright and lilting, culminating in a lively expression of hopefulness and joy. A straightforward (and common, yet debatable) reading of this, as I presented earlier, suggests that the closing song offers the hope of a new day and a return to the life and loved ones who have been so far away. The coda of the song consists of a return to the bass line from the second song with the singer nonsensically, but joyfully uttering “la la la la” for the remaining fourteen bars of the piece. Instead of being a straightforward statement of hope and joy for a new day, however, it could instead be an example of mockery – the idea of hope and joy as pure nonsense, pure folderol. Or, in the opposite vein, it could be an intimation of transfiguration – an evocation of Heaven or an afterlife where loved ones meet and the pain of the harshness of life is

[51] Translations provided by Michael Beckerman in personal consultation.

[52] Paula Kennedy trans., liner notes to Yinon, Prague Philharmonic Choir, and Prague State Opera Orchestra, *Šarlatán*, 189.

alleviated. This reading ties in well with the vision of death as liberation offered by Viktor Ullmann in his opera the *Kaiser of Atlantis*, which was in rehearsals in Terezín that summer. In *Kaiser*, Death responds to the gruesome and senseless violence perpetrated by a narcissistic emperor by going on strike. The story ultimately resolves with the rightful order restored – the emperor sacrifices himself and Death returns to work, clearly establishing his role as a positive force. "I'm not the Plague that brings you pain; I bring relief. I'm not the one who tortures men, but he who soothes their grief. I am the comfortable, warm nest to which an anguished life at last can fly. I'm freedom's festival, the last and best. I am the final lullaby."[53] Death as a reprieve from the wretchedness of life on earth is certainly a classical theme that is well established in the musical canon, especially in works such as Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*; however, outside of Ullmann's *Kaiser*, it is a theme that has not been considered in the Terezín repertoire. Instead, narratives of resistance and survival prevail, thus minimising the intricacies and complexities experienced by those grappling with a life behind the closed walls of the camp.

Study for String Orchestra

In his review of the premiere of Pavel Haas' *Study for String Orchestra*, Viktor Ullman summed up its overall effect: "This piece is perfectly suited to the medium of a string orchestra and quite effective; it is less revolutionary than Haas's earlier works, heard here in Theresienstadt. All in all, it is the work of an artist who

[53] Viktor Ullmann and Peter Kien, "Emperor of Atlantis," in *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs*, ed. Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 263.

knows what he wants and what he is capable of."[54] Although it is clear that the work was well received, it remains ambiguous as to what exactly Ullmann means by "revolutionary" (*revolutionär)*, On the one hand, the work is less revolutionary in scope than Haas' other works, consisting of only one movement and requiring a performance time of less than nine minutes. On the other hand, Ullmann could be referring to the "revolutionary" aspects of many of Haas' previous works, in which he employs themes which have associations with historical wars involving religious and nationalist revolutionary forces, including the Wenceslas Chorale (*Sváty Vaclave*), the Hussite hymn, "Ye who are Warriors of God" (*Ktož jsú boží bojovníci)*, and the *Horst Wessel Lied*, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Although there is no evidence suggesting that the *Study for String Orchestra* was anything other than an etude, possibly intended to showcase the talents of Ančerl's string orchestra, Haas' compositional output since 1938 makes it clear that for him, music was an outlet for expressions of political and personal relevance, so it seems important to at least consider that there may be more to this piece than is immediately apparent.

Through most of this thesis, I examine pieces that are explicitly in variations form, however, in the *Study for String Orchestra*, I would like to expand the notion of variations out of the realm of a formal structural principle and instead consider how Haas incorporates variations on his own themes for expressive purposes. In a description of his own compositional process, the Czech novelist Milan Kundera defines a theme to be an existential inquiry and characterises thematic variation as a means of transforming concepts into categories of existence. He writes,

> I make a distinction between theme and *motif*. Motif is an element of the theme or of the story that appears several times over the course of the novel, always in a different context. … A theme is an existential inquiry. And increasingly I realize that such an inquiry is, finally, the examination of certain

[54] Viktor Ullmann, translated in Healey, "The Solo Piano Music of Viktor Ullmann," 301.

> words, theme-words. … Over the course of the novel those … principal words are analyzed, studied, defined, redefined, and thus transformed into categories of existence."[55]

As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, much has been made of Haas' incorporation of motifs from songs with nationalist significance and, there is a tendency to consider these quotations as the most significant features of the work. From that stance, music that does not contain explicit quotation of or reference to these melodies then seems more limited in its expressive capacity, as Ullmann's tone suggests in his review. If, however, we expand the concepts outward, and explore them as themes with existential potential as Kundera imagines, it may be possible to view the music from a different vantage point.

The themes most readily associated with Haas' music, as I've explored in relation to his *Four Songs* are Czech nationalism (in a political sense), home (in a personal sense), deception or façade, and death. The ways in which the themes are announced are often initially by way of motif, but through examination of the more collective body of Haas' works, it is possible to trace the composer's transformation of these small ideas into larger themes or "categories of existence".

Study for String Orchestra is a single movement work consisting of three main themes that all originate from the first, which, like the ostinato in the *Four Songs* discussed earlier, has been identified as an *idée fixe*,[56] although in this case, instead of a short motif, the musical material consists of two longer phrases covering fourteen measures. The opening theme is a melody of Haas' own and is an upbeat, danceable folk tune that evinces a sense of pastoral simplicity. As the theme develops and evolves through the A section, the generic folk character takes on a more

[55] Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, 84–85.

[56] Lubomír Peduzzi in the introduction to Pavel Haas, *Study for String Orchestra* (Berlin; Praha: Bote & Bock ; Tempo, 1991).

characteristic Moravian sensibility through the use of a Lydian fourth, starting in m. 125. As Michael Beckerman has described, in the Czech imagination, "Moravia" is a nostalgic concept that consists of "a forgotten land of small villages, intact traditions, and ancient musical modalities. [Moravian literature, poetry and music share a] tendency to view Moravia as a realm of the timeless idyllic, a pastoral world of latter day shepherds and shepherdesses singing in archaic modes and intricate expressive rhythms of their *sohaji and frajarecky,* their village swains and lasses. "[57] In Haas' usage, the evocation of Moravia incorporates these elements, and may also specifically relate to his personal home in the Moravian capital.

The opening of the phrase is very similar to another motif of Haas', one from his opera *Šarlatan* (See Figure 10 and Figure 11 below). In *Šarlatan*, this figure appears in the orchestra just following a crucial moment in the drama: the point when the charlatan doctor, Pustrpalk, is accused of being a quack. The monk Joachimus witnesses Pustrpalk treating a lovely young woman, Amarante, for neurasthenia by inviting her to sit in a basket of nettles, which quickly rouses her, to the delight of the large crowd in attendance. Pustrpalk becomes smitten with Amarante and attempts to convince her to join his troupe and become his lover. Joachimus, who has been employed to keep an eye on Amarante by her husband, is not amused by the antics and emerges from the crowd, accusing Pustrpalk of being a fraud. To the disdain of the large crowd, he declares, "You trickster, I intend to denounce you this very day!"

[57] Michael Beckerman, "Moravia, The Wild Goose, and Terezín Summer 1944" (Paper presented at "From Democracy to Dictatorship and Genocide: Czechoslovak Jews in Literature, Music and Film," Bohemian National Hall, NY, April 23, 2014), 6.

Figure 10. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 17-23.[58]

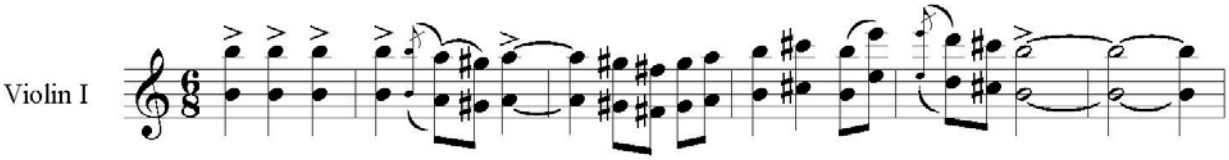
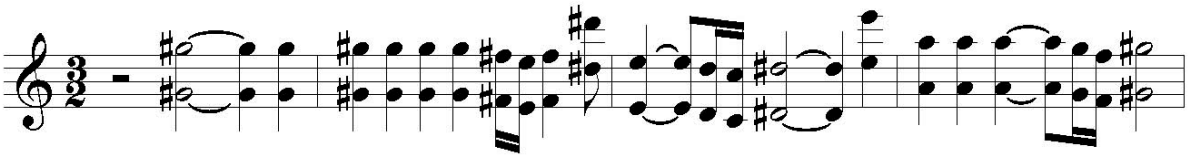


Figure 11. Pavel Haas, Orchestral interlude from Šarlatan.[59]



The final motif of the main theme is also connected to *Šarlatan,* where it occurs in the beginning of the second act just following the orchestral interlude mentioned above, where the chorus begins to sing about endlessly travelling: "Travelling through dawn and dusk, twilight to morning, through rain and snow, through fields lit with the morning glow, tirelessly without end, the journey is long, past castles, palaces, gates and towns from winter to summer." (See Figure 12 and Figure 13). This "Wanderer's Song", as it is referred to in the libretto, replaces the ostinato that opened the work and repeats as a new ostinato-type figure through the remainder of the A section. While the first half of the theme is connected to the theme of deception, the tail end seems to refer obliquely to the never-ending, difficult journey away from home.

[58] Haas, *Study for Strings,* 6.

[59] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas,* 71.

Figure 12. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 28-30.[60]

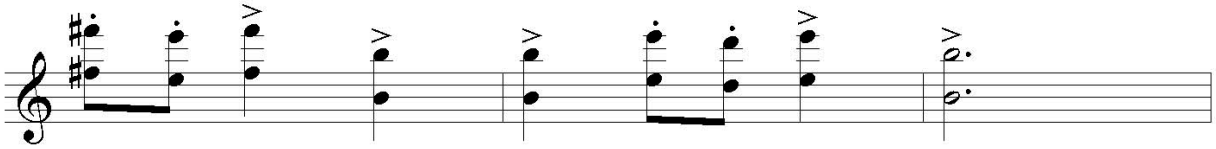
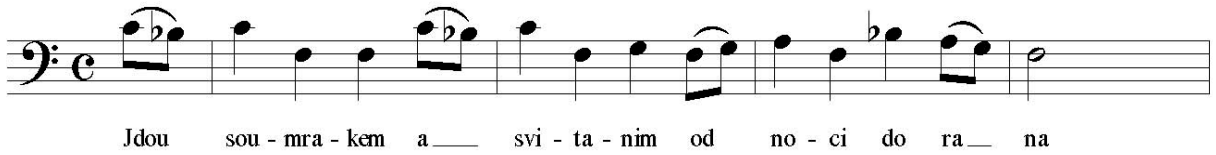


Figure 13 - Pavel Haas, "Wanderer's Song" from Šarlatan.[61]

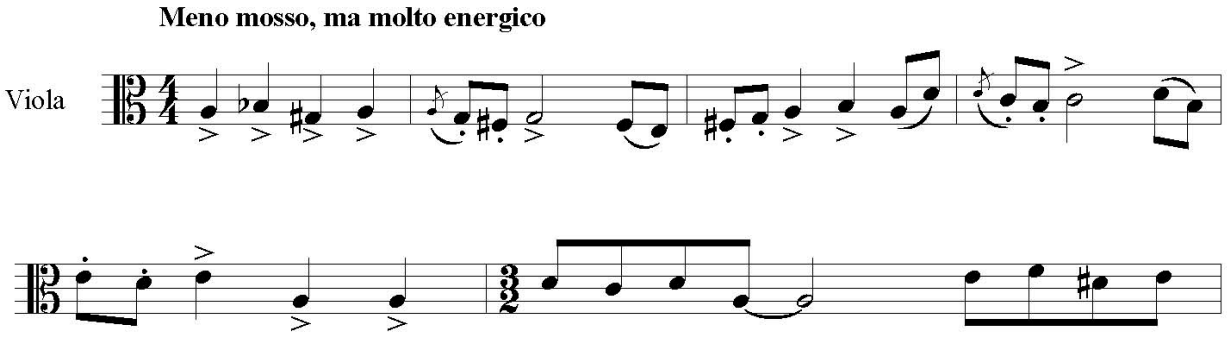


As I noted earlier, there are no apparent direct references or quotations that situate *Study for String Orchestra* within the political realm, such as the Nazi theme or the Wenceslas/Hussite chorales did in his other works, however, the character of the fugue section has many of the rhythmic elements and expressive qualities that are associated with the militarism of political anthems such as the Hussite chorale. The four-voiced fugue occurs at measure 60, marking a major transformation in the character of the work. The notes are based on the Moravian dance theme, the *idée fixe*, but with a slight chromatic alteration the opening repeated notes. Instead of offering the light and playful energy of the opening dance theme, the music here takes on a much more powerful, anthem-style quality (Figure 14).

[60] Haas, *Study for Strings*, 6–7.

[61] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*, 72.

Figure 14. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 60-65.[62]



At this point the alterations and extensions of the theme distance it from the *Šarlatan* denunciation theme, however, the determined and forceful character of the music suggests that there may still be an echo of the sentiment behind "You trickster, I denounce you!" appearing in this section, in addition to the martial qualities mentioned above. As T.H. Mandl noted in his memories of Pavel Haas,

> I learned something about the kind of person Pavel Haas was when I played violin in Karel Ančerl's Symphonic String Orchestra at the performance of Haas' "Study for Streicher". It suddenly became clear to me that not only was Haas a gifted master of melody and rhythm, that that his personality was informed by a will to conquer and overcome (especially apparent in the theme of the fugue) and that it was this that helped him to triumph over the degrading conditions of his internment."[63]

Although on the one hand, this is another example of the reductionist trope that the purpose of music in Terezín was to facilitate the overcoming adversity, Mandl's identification of the strength and forcefulness imbued in the fugue theme suggests that this musical moment in particular has a gravity that resonated with the musicians who played it as revolutionary, despite Ullmann's more tame assessment of it.

There is one short section, an intermezzo that occurs in middle of the piece that is not related to the opening theme and is somewhat curious and difficult to ascertain its structural and expressive purpose. It contrasts with the previous material

[62] Haas, *Study for Strings*, 9.

[63] T.H. Mandl in liner notes to Petersen Quartet, *Janáček and Haas*.

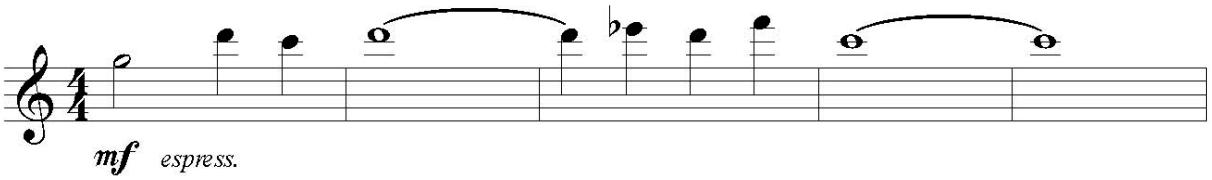
in every way. The section is marked *Adagio* and is separated from the previous section with a double bar line and a new time signature. The mood changes completely and the violin theme is marked as *espressivo* and the whole section is marked *piano* or *pianissimo* and several times the directive *con sordino* (with mute) appears. It comes across as somewhat declamatory and the overall mood is quite tense and the texture sparse. The soft dynamic range and the inflections and range that mimic speech do suggest type of communication being offered but only in inaudible whispers, and the message within, while indecipherable, is of a serious and solemn nature. Michael Beckerman has suggested this section constitutes a depiction or premonition of Haas' ultimate fate, observing its similarity to a scene in *Šarlatan.* He writes, "But there is a chilling similarity between a moment in the slow middle section of this work … and the scene depicting a vanished village in The Charlatan, suggesting that Haas knew exactly where he was and what was likely to happen to him."[64] Although we can't be clear about exactly what this section is articulating, I would propose that it ties in with Haas' larger exploration and development of the theme of façade, countering the bright energy and optimism of the folk dance and the determined character of the fugue with a glimpse of gloom, fear and uncertainty that underpins the Terezín experience. As Beckerman has often articulated, the middle sections of works are important and often contain mysteries, hidden messages or confessions, and especially in the music of Terezín, the contrasting and often subversive nature of these sections is reflective of the actual façade created by the Nazis and the camp administration.[65]

[64] Beckerman, "Premonitions," 35.

[65] Beckerman, "Middles."

The remainder of the *Adagio* intermezzo is complex, involving several overlapping motives and complex rhythmic figures, creating a real sense of conflict and dissonance. The climax of the section occurs at measure 185 adding more rhythmic complexity to the already thick texture. At measure 201, a new motif marked *espressivo* enters in the first violin (See Figure 15). Peduzzi has connected this theme to the Jewish prayers *Haskiveinu* and *Yehi Ratzon*, although he does not identify an appearance of a direct quotation of or identifiable reference to either prayer.[66] The remainder of the section is fragmented with several motifs and rhythms competing, as well as doubling in the violin line in the uppermost register, creating an even more sense of the extreme, fearful atmosphere of the whole middle section.

Figure 15. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 201-205.[67]



Suddenly, at measure 214, there is a complete shift and the rhythms synchronise, creating a harmonious and exciting final section, derived from the opening motifs. The energetic dance returns and there is a real sense of joy and triumph generated through the *fortissimo* dynamic range, the bright eighth notes and the long trills that occur throughout the section. Of course it is possible to read too much into the jubilant nature of the final section, but there is a strong sense of resolution here and an energetic return to the Moravian home where the piece began.

[66] Peduzzi, *Pavel Haas*, 112.

[67] Haas, *Study for Strings*, 23.

That Haas' *Study for String Orchestra* was included as a feature in the Nazi propaganda film is very likely due to a simple coincidence; the orchestra was rehearsing it at the time of the filming. And certainly, as Michael Beckerman notes, it would not be apparent to any listener unfamiliar with the circumstances of the piece's provenance to connect it to Terezín.[68] However, its thematic content and expressive exploration of the themes Haas was already clearly drawn to suggest that regarding it as an anomaly in Haas' oeuvre, a mere compositional trifle seems overly dismissive and discounts the expressive language he has clearly cultivated in his compositions to this point. If we return to Milan Kundera's thoughtful rumination on his own thematic explorations, while specific motifs can help with a narrative, a theme has a more profound role in an artistic work: one that is concerned with the enigma of existence. He describes it an "abstract thing" that allows him to consider aspects inherent in the theme, as if it is being reflected in a three-way mirror, and these themes then combine, creating pillars of a work, in the way pillars support a house.[69] Similarly, although Haas' piece is fairly diminutive, comprising only one movement and written explicitly for an amateur orchestra, his thematic pillars of nationalism, façade, death, and home, are all in evidence. Perhaps we can then agree with Ullmann after all; this piece may be somewhat less revolutionary than some of his other works, but it is clearly the work of an artist who knows what he wants and is capable of delivering a thoughtful and expressive composition exploring his own existential contemplations.

[68] Beckerman, "Premonitions," 35.

[69] Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, 83–85.

Conclusion

Performances of these two works by Pavel Haas, *Four Songs* and *Study*, coincided with the two major propaganda events in Terezín that summer, and, although there is no explicit "Terezín" program associated with these works, there are many features and gestures that are expressive of the camp environment and the themes most relevant to the composer's experience. In the music written before his internment, Haas proved himself as a creative and expressive composer who often incorporated literary elements and imagery to supplement his musical expressions. In particular, his opera *Šarlatan, Suite for Oboe and Piano,* and his second *String Quartet: From the Monkey Mountains* highlight his nationalist sentiments and show how his creative process incorporated responses to his environment and to the metaphors offered by his textual sources. As the Nazi influence became more prevalent in his environment, however, it appears he became conscious of the political implications of his work and began incorporating themes with political significance such as the Nazi anthem and the Czech hymns that appeared in his works from the late 1930s. In his Terezín works, on the surface at least, his expressive aims and choices of material are much more subtle. We don't have specific information about the reasons for his deportation to Terezín in late 1941; perhaps he was simply chosen for the early transports because of his marital status or perhaps he simply happened to fulfil the criteria laid out at that point, or perhaps he was partially targeted because of his political convictions. We don't know and it is unlikely this information or Haas' personal feelings about the situation will come to light. However, it does appear that in the music he composed within the camp, he took a much more subtle approach and his expressions are much less explicit than in his previous works. Even so, it is apparent that he drew on the multivalent possibilities for expression available in his

compositional practices, including form, quotation, notation and use of topics or tropes, presenting a musical picture that incorporates political and nationalist aspects of his situation, the heartache and longing for home and a homeland, as well as the perpetual presence of death in its various incarnations.

Pavel Haas' name is typically associated with Janáček and Czech music, as well as with the Terezín circle, but to date he has received little scholarly attention as an expressive composer in his own right. Hopefully this is changing; as we have seen in the two pieces in this chapter, his compositional language is complex and his music is passionate and intense, intricately connected to his own life and experience.

Chapter Four

Hans Krása

Krása's last instrumental work, *Passacaglia and Fugue for String Trio* is dated August 7, 1944.[1] Although not explicitly connected to a momentous event, the work is dated five weeks after the Red Cross visit and only a few weeks after the artists had been discovered and tortured. The piece provides a snapshot from the middle of the summer of 1944, offering a glimpse of both the camp's façade and what lay behind it. Beginning with a melodic theme in the lowest register of the cello, the piece unfolds as a series of quasi *Theme and Variations* over the ostinato melody. Krása's *Passacaglia* has eighteen iterations of the ostinato theme with two other melodic motifs playing a central role – a folk dance and a Viennese waltz. Although at first the piece appears to be rooted in a Classical tradition far removed from the twentieth century and the Nazi camps, as it unfolds, it becomes more and more representative of, and connected to, Krása's own time and place.

Like other modern compositions that have looked backward to the Baroque form, Krása's *Passacaglia* owes its basic structure to the model offered by Bach in his powerful C minor *Passacaglia and Fugue*. Through dialogue with the historical and weighty contribution of Bach, as well as with the flexibility and changing conventions of the twentieth century, Krása offers a deceivingly simple theme that matches the face of the camp and yet opens space to incorporate juxtapositions that mirror and express the complexities of life as an artist in Terezín.

[1] Hans Krasa, "Passacaglia and Fugue" (Musical Score MS, Terezín, Czech Republic, August 7, 1944), PT 11178, Památník Terezín.

Like J.S. Bach's great BWV 582, Krása's passacaglia is followed by a fugue, another complex, intellectual Baroque form that has yet another set of rules and conventions that can be drawn upon and manipulated for a powerful artistic expression. Based on the passacaglia theme, Krása's fugue is a powerful and evocative composition, and while one could argue that the fugue has elements of variation, this chapter will focus solely on the passacaglia, situating it within a context of an evolving music history and exploring how its various components unfold to reveal a work that is specific to its time and place. Before moving to the work in question, I will first provide general background on the composer Hans Krása and contextualise the passacaglia form in detail in order to situate Krása's composition within the larger historical picture.

Life and Musical Influence

Hans Krása's musical legacy lies not in his instrumental music, but rather in his stage works, most notably the very popular children's opera *Brundibár*, a work that received more than fifty-five performances in Terezín and which has since been produced countless times in myriad translations and contexts, even including an adaptation as a children's picture book illustrated by the celebrated children's author Maurice Sendak.[2] *Brundibár* is a story about three children who, with the help of some animal friends and some resourceful schoolchildren, work together to defeat the nasty bully Brundibár and triumphantly return home to help their sick mother. The trope of good triumphing over resonated strongly with the children who performed it

[2] Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak, *Brundibar* (New York: Michael Di Capua Books / Hyperion Books for Children, 2003).

and the audience who ardently received it in Terezín. Although this, Krása's most famous and enduring composition, was written for children, it would be inaccurate to consider him foremost as a composer for children. He wrote of the opera as being an extension of his usual work, but one that provided a particular compositional challenge: "The special charm for me as a composer lay in writing music that is absolutely singable for children, but that sounds modern to audience members of all ages and does not resort to the clichés of children's songs. Despite the fact that music for children should not have a range greater than a fifth, I did not want to do violence to my natural temperament as a composer."[3] Before *Brundibár,* one of his important musical works was his opera *Verlobung im Traum* in 1933, and at that point he described his musical philosophy:

> If I state that I was influenced by Schönberg, by that I wish to emphasise the fact that I am trying all the more to avoid the emptiness which is so favoured. I try to write in such a way that every bar, every recitative and every note is necessarily a solid part of the whole. This logic, without which every composition has no spirit, can, however, degenerate into mathematic-scientific music if the iron law of opera is not heeded, namely that the sense and aim of opera is the singing. I am sufficiently daring, as a modern composer, to write melodic music. This reflects my whole attitude to music, whether it is called modern or anything else. My music is strictly founded on the concept of accessible melodic character.[4]

Most of the musical scholarship and performances relating to Krása's work have centred on *Brundibár*, highlighting its widespread influence and importance within the camp. Krása's instrumental works, however, although few in number, are also remarkable, demonstrating a beautiful synthesis of the modernist imagination and compositional practices, and highlighting his commitment to maintaining a melodic

[3] Anita Franková, "Theresienstädter Erziehung. Berichte Zum Ersten Jahrestag Der Theresienstädter Heime in L 417," *Theresienstädter Studien Und Dokumente*, 1998, 178–80; Quoted in: Hannelore Brenner, *Girls of Room 28* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 137.

[4] David Bloch, "Music and the Holocaust: Krása, Hans," accessed December 4, 2014, http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/krasa-hans/.

and lyrical sensibility, including, as we will see, in his final work, *Passacaglia and Fugue for String Trio*.

Hans Krása was a German-speaking Czech born in Prague on November 30, 1899. His father was a successful Czech attorney and his mother was of German-Jewish heritage. Krása received a German-based education that included both violin and piano lessons and postsecondary schooling at the *Deutsche Akademie für Musik und Bildende Kunst* (German Academy of Music and Fine Arts) where he studied composition with Alexander Zemlinsky. Zemlinsky premiered Krása's graduation project *Four Orchestral Songs* in Prague in 1921 and supported the young artist for many years. Krása worked under Zemlinsky as a *répétiteur* at the *Deutsches Landestheatre* in the mid 1920's and then followed him to Berlin in 1927 where Krása undertook studies at the Berlin Conservatoire. After completing only two semesters in Berlin, he went to Paris to pursue further studies under Albert Russel before returning to Prague, where he remained until his deportation to Terezín in April 1942.[5]

Krása's music is modern, yet lyrical, incorporating many influences, but representing an individual style. Early critics connected Krása to the Second Viennese School of Schoenberg and Webern, however, influences from French composers such as Claude Debussy and *Les Six* also became associated with him.[6] Jože Karas describes his style: "The musical language of [the modern composers] was meaningful to the impressionable developing talent of Hans Krása. Debussy offered new orchestral sound, Stravinsky neoclassical limpidity, Webern brevity, and '*Les Six'* humor, grotesquerie, and irony through use of jazz in serious music, elements closest to Krása's character."[7] While these influences are certainly evident in his

[5] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 106–109.

[6] Ibid., 106.

[7] Ibid.

works, there also seems to be a general consensus that he was a composer of originality, with one reviewer remarking, "Krása's music is written in an unforced yet original and personal modern idiom. It is curious that so young a man should think and feel so utterly for himself."[8] Another claimed that "Krása [is] not indebted to Schoenberg, nor to the French school; if he seems not so far from Stravinsky, it is a matter of poetic imagination rather than style."[9] In general, it would appear as if Krása's compositions were publicly recognised from very early on in his career and he was situated to become a composer of some renown.

For the most part, Krása's works were publicly performed in major cultural centres and were well received. Editions of his compositions were published in Prague and Vienna.[10] In addition to the premiere of his *Orchestral Songs* in Prague under Zemlinsky, movements from his *Symphony for Small Orchestra* were performed in Paris in April 1923, followed by his *String Quartet, Op. 2* later that year.[11] His music reached an American audience as well, with the premiere of his "March" from the *Symphony* premiered in the United States by the Philadelphia Orchestra on April 4, 1924.[12] His *Symphony* was featured at the Fourth Festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music held at Zurich, Switzerland in June 1926, bringing his music to a wider audience and bringing him to the attention of Serge Koussevitzky, the renowned conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.[13]

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[8] Bloch, "Music and the Holocaust: Krása, Hans" Attributed in this article to Paul Rosenfeld reviewing for the Boston Globe, however Rosenfeld worked for the paper *The Dial*.

[9] Alexis Roland-Manuel quoted in Philip Hale, "Program Notes to Hans Krasa 'Pastorale et Marche' (First and Second Movements of a Symphony for Small Orchestra)," in *Boston Symphony Orchestra Season 46 1926-1927*, vol. 6, 1926, 441.

[10] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 107.

[11] Ibid., 106.

[12] Hale, "Program Notes to Hans Krasa 'Pastorale et Marche' (First and Second Movements of a Symphony for Small Orchestra)."

[13] Ibid., 436.

Two movements from the *Symphony* were performed in Boston by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on November 19 and 20, 1926, followed by a performance on November 27 in New York at a *League of Composers* concert, also under the baton of Koussevitzky.[14] After somewhat of a hiatus, in 1932 Krása completed a cantata *Die Erde ist des Herrn* (The Earth is the Lord's) performed in Prague that year, and an opera *Verlobung im Traum* (Betrothal in a Dream) based on Dostoyevsky's novel *Uncle's Dream.* His opera was premiered in 1933 on Prague radio and in the *Neues deutsches Theatre* under conductor George Szell and for which Krása was honoured later that year with the Czechoslovak State Prize for Composition.[15] He returned to instrumental composition in 1935 and 1936, completing a *Theme and Variations for String Quartet*, based on a hit song he had written for a stage play *Mladí ve hře* (Youth in the Game) and another chamber piece *Chamber Music for Cembalo and Seven Instruments*. Thomas Svatos has noted that Krása's works from the 1930's were less favourably received by the press than his earlier works, but that he was still considered to have a "stylistically progressive orientation", at least by the German-speaking reviewers.[16]

Hans Krása was sent to Terezín on April 10, 1942. Once the *Freizeitgestaltung* (Free-time Administration) was established, he was put in charge of musical activities. In addition to his administration and performing duties, he reworked *Brundibár*, wrote a set of songs on poems by Rimbaud and composed three instrumental works – *Overture for Small Orchestra, Dance,* and *Passacaglia and Fugue.* Krása's instrumental music has appeal and importance, as we will explore

[14] Olin Downes, "Music," *The New York Times*, November 27, 1926.

[15] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 106.

[16] Thomas Svatos, "Hans Krasa," *The Orel Foundation*, accessed December 11, 2014, http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/composers/article/hans_krasa/.

further in this chapter, despite its overshadowing by the popularity of *Brundibár*. Like the other composers discussed in this study, Krása was placed on the October 16 transport to Auschwitz, where he was reportedly gassed on arrival.

Passacaglia

By the time Krása composed his *Passacaglia* in 1944, the passacaglia form, typically associated with the Baroque era, had become re-established in the musical literature as an important modern form. As noted by Leon Stein in the mid 1950's, a considerable number of twentieth-century composers had written passacaglias, a list "representative enough to show that [use of passacaglia form] is an important trend, not merely a historical curiosity which involves a few isolated and sporadic examples".[17] He remarks that, "even despite the inevitable lag in the performance of new music, there are more twentieth-century passacaglias in active repertory of performers than baroque works in this form".[18] While the specific reasons for this trend remain unclear, the fact that it experienced a resurgence after almost a century and a half of dormancy suggests that certain characteristics of the form had become relevant to the creative process of modern composers.

In modern iterations of the form, the passacaglia tends to stray quite far from its sixteenth-century origins as an improvised instrumental interlude and instead is somewhat codified, generally consisting of an ostinato bass theme, often eight measures, over which a series of variations unfolds. Most modern composers, including Hans Krása, based their passacaglias on the model of Bach's organ work

[17] Leon Stein, "The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century," *Music and Letters* XL, no. 4 (1959): 151.

[18] Ibid., 150.

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582, which is characterised especially by the opening with the theme being presented solo in a low register before the variations process is set underway. Some, but not all twentieth-century versions, follow Bach's example and conclude with a fugue based on the passacaglia theme. In nineteenth-century analyses, Bach's fugal treatment of the theme was considered as only one of the many variations techniques employed by the composer and therefore included it as one of the variations in the work.[19] Modern scholars, however, tend to consider the fugue as a separate section that requires its own analysis. As Silbiger notes in his discussion of Bach's BWV 582, "The c minor passacaglia's weight prevents it from being felt as a mere introduction; but neither could the fugue, which is almost twice as long as the passacaglia be subsumed as a final variation; this particular marriage clearly is an equal partnership".[20] Although Krása chose to include a fugue based on his passacaglia theme, there are certainly many examples of passacaglias as stand-alone works or as individual movements not accompanied by a fugue and for the purposes of this study, I will examine the passacaglia as a separate entity, leaving the fugue for future examination.

Although the passacaglia is a well-established form that is based on variations procedures, its history and usage differ substantially from the background of *Theme and Variations* provided in Chapter Two, so before exploring the specifics of Krása's Terezín passacaglia, it seems prudent to offer some background and context for the form in order to clarify the conventions and language with which Krása was engaging. The following section offers a general history of the form, an overview of Bach's great *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*, a work which, as I mentioned, modern

[19] William A. Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 189.

[20] Alexander Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," *The Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 3 (July 1, 1999): 373.

passacaglia composers are unavoidably in dialogue with, and finally, a brief discussion of the twentieth-century revival of the passacaglia form, of which Krása's work is a part. From there I will move to a detailed analysis of Krása's passacaglia and its relation to the composer's life in Terezín.

History of the Form

Passacaglia form is generally associated with music from the Baroque era, however its origins lie in the late Renaissance, first as a loosely improvisatory section of a larger work, and then later as a formally structured compositional model. The label *passacaglia* first appeared in Spain as a way of describing the brief instrumental improvisatory passages between strophes of a song, similar to a ritornello (short instrumental passages that occur between repeating sections of a larger work, generally strophes of a song or repetition of a dance movement). In the early sixteenth century, at least in Italy, the terms "ritornello", "ripase", and "passacaille" tended to be used interchangeably.[21] The term derives from the Spanish words *pasar* (to walk) and *calle* (street), suggesting a reference to outdoor performance practice, or possibly, according to Silbiger, "from a practice of popular musicians to take a few steps during these interludes".[22] In France and Italy, passacaglias became more regimented, often consisting of a cadential formula outlining a I-IV-V-I progression. These passages often had a pedagogical focus or intent, providing a basis for an improvisation practice, particularly for guitarists and lutenists where the patterns could be presented in a variety of keys, rhythms and strumming patterns, similar to modern day jazz exercises.

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[21] Richard Hudson, "The Ripresa, the Ritornello, and the Passacaglia," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 24, no. 3 (October 1, 1971): 364.

[22] Alexander Silbiger, "Passacaglia," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 9, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21024.

The first notated example of a passacaglia was written by Frescobaldi in 1627, *Partie sopra passacagli.* Frescobaldi wrote several passacaglias throughout his career, and in many ways his work signals the beginning of the codification of the form as a series of continuous variations.[23] Other composers followed suit and began including passacaglia variations in their dance suites.

In Italy, France, and Spain, the form remained rooted in the improvisational tradition, incorporating florid, flowing movement, often highlighting the virtuosic capabilities of the performer. Written examples appear regularly in the music of Italian and French composers through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the music of composers such as Louis and François Couperin, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Bernardo Storace, amongst others. In Spain, however, references to passacaglia in written music disappeared completely in the eighteenth century, although its popularity in folk and popular styles remained constant.[24]

Passacaglia form developed concurrently with the similar, yet separate formal type *chaconne*, and over time, in instrumental music, the terms *passacaglia* and *chaconne* have become interchangeable. Although they have different origins (chaconne was a dance while passacaglia was an instrumental interlude in vocal works), in formal composition there is at best only ambiguous differentiation between the two forms. The form currently identified as passacaglia (or chaconne) was developed in the late seventeenth century in Germany, demonstrated especially in the organ works of Kerll, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, and J.S. Bach. This style drew on the cantus firmus or ground-bass improvisatory tradition that allowed for virtuosic exploration of the instrument such as was common in the French, Spanish, and Italian

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

version, but the German style also expanded the compositional possibilities using chorale improvisation techniques. These works were much more contrapuntal and dense in comparison with the earlier florid and fluid dance and song interludes. German organists tended to use newly composed or melodic bass patterns that became compositional themes. The theme was presented prominently in the bass register, usually presented on the organ pedals, imprinting itself clearly on the listener before being subjected to variation procedures.[25] As the compositions became more complex, the connection to the ancestral form became more and more remote. Silbiger surmises that it was this German tradition that distanced the form significantly from its roots: "Mutations [in formal procedures, specifically related to passacaglia] often involve loss of features that may have been quite basic to the nature of the ancestral species; if with the French operatic progeny the loss had been the spirit of improvisation, with the German organ variety it probably was the spirit of the dance, which had pervaded all Spanish and Italian chaconnes".[26] He remarks elsewhere specifically regarding the passacaglia that, "The busy passage-work and contrapuntal density largely obliterated any dance feeling, and relationships to the genre's origin became increasingly tenuous".[27] In Germany in particular, the compositions with the title of *Passacaglia* became more and more complex and grandiose through the Baroque era, with Bach's work *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582* standing as the most iconic example of this development.

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the passacaglia all but disappeared as *Theme and Variations* became systematised and popularised as a compositional form. Although there are no notable examples of works called

[25] Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," 365.

[26] Ibid., 365.

[27] Silbiger, "Passacaglia."

"passacaglia" from this time, Liszt's *Prelude after a theme from Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen by J. S. Bach,* S. 179, and the fourth movement of Brahms' *Fourth Symphony* (based on Bach's cantata BWV 150 *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich*) are generally considered in music literature to be examples of nineteenth-century passacaglias.[28] Both these works are based on themes by Bach, connecting both the content and the form explicitly to the Baroque master.

J.S Bach, Passacaglia and Fugue BWV 582

Bach's organ composition *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor,* BWV 582 came to exemplify the pinnacle of the compositional attributes inherent in the form, and according to Bach's biographer Christoph Wolff, this work demonstrates "absolute control over compositional principles, musical form, figurative material, fugal devices, and harmonic strategies".[29] It this work, much more than any other passacaglia tradition that would serve as the model for later iterations of the form. In this section I will outline and summarise the salient features of Bach's work in order for to provide a basis upon which to build the analysis of the Krása piece.

Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue* is a culmination of the techniques used by seventeenth-century German organists such as Pachelbel and Buxtehude, but ended up as a work that reaches far beyond its compositional models.[30] The date of composition is unclear, since the manuscript score is considered lost, however extant copies of the work have it dated as early as 1708, which, according to Peter Williams,

[28] Ibid.

[29] Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*, New Ed edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97.

[30] Ibid.

would make it one of Bach's "earliest advanced masterpieces in sustained form".[31] It is possible that it was composed sometime later, however most sources have it estimated as being composed sometime before 1713.[32] It is unclear exactly what influenced Bach to write the work, especially because at that point, passacaglia was an unusual form in his general environment. Interestingly, the copyists who compiled the *Andreas-Bach-Buch* manuscript, one of the main primary sources available for the Bach's passacaglia (generally considered to be created sometime between 1707 and 1713), included it alongside chaconnes and passacaglias of Buxtehude, Pachelbel and Bohm, suggesting that there was, at least on the part of the scribes or owner of the manuscript, an interest in ostinato forms, which were uncommon in Northern Germany at that time.[33]

The most unusual and prominent feature of Bach's passacaglia is the theme, both in its construction and presentation. In the majority of Baroque ostinato works, the ostinato bass figure is only four measures, and is not melodic, occurring instead as a harmonic device situated beneath the melodic material (See Figure 16 and Figure 17).

[31] Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, vol. 1 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 254.

[32] Christoph Wolff et al., "Bach, §III: (7) Johann Sebastian Bach," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 24, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40023pg10#S40023.3.7.

[33] Williams, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, 1:254.

Figure 16. Dietrich Buxtehude, Passacaglia in D minor, BUX WV 161 mm. 1-4.[34]

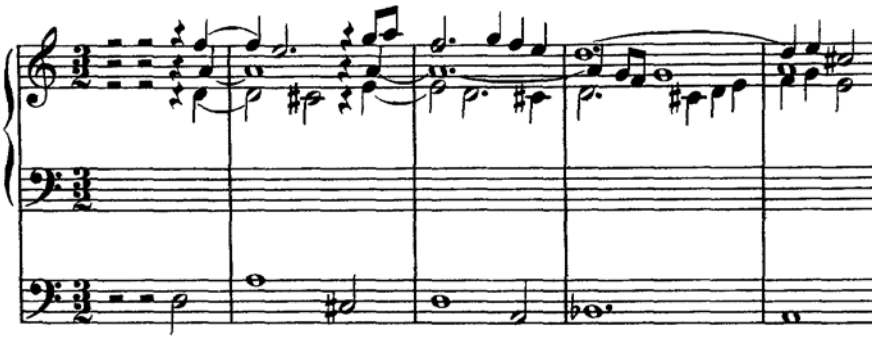
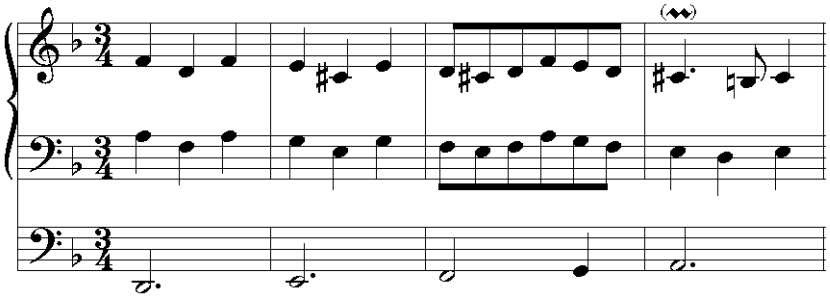


Figure 17. Johann Pachelbel, Ciacona in D minor, T. 204 mm. 1-4.[35]



In Bach's work, however, the ostinato works both harmonically and melodically, clearly defining the C minor tonality while imprinting a clear melody on the listener (See Figure 18). This particular feature would come to define the kinds of themes composers used for passacaglias in more modern times, including Hans Krása. The first four measures of the theme are generally considered to be a quotation of Andre Raison's organ work *Trio en Passacaille* from the Christe movement of his second mass in the book *Livre d'orgue*.[36] The melodic origin of this theme has been attributed to the beginning of the Gregorian *Communio* for the tenth Sunday after

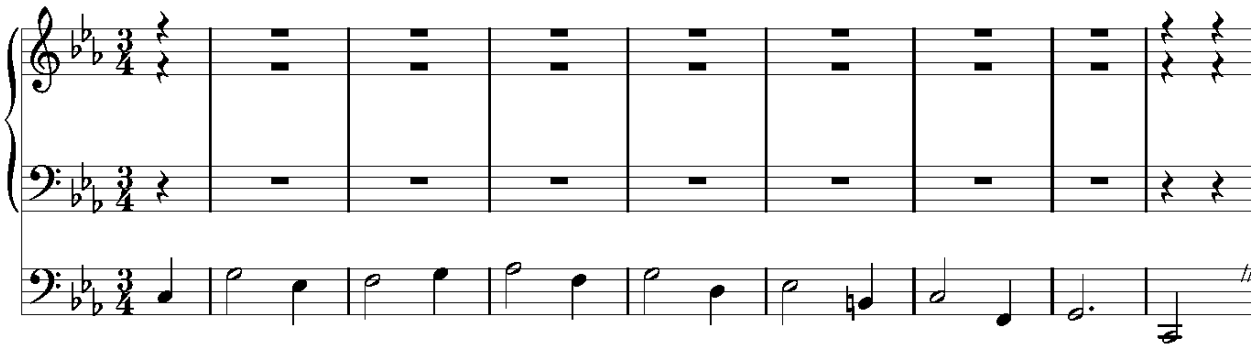
[34] Dietrich Buxtehude, *Orgelkompositionen*, ed. Carl Johann Philipp Spitta and Max Seiffert (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1903), 35.

[35] Johann Pachelbel, *Ciacona in D minor*, ed. John E West (London; New York: Novello; H.W. Gray, 1900).

[36] Williams, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, 1:255.

Pentecost, however it is unknown if the Gregorian provenance was known to Bach or if so, if it carried any significance in his choice of theme.[37] Unusual for a passacaglia, Bach's theme is eight measures long (rather than the usual four bars) and is performed on its own in a low register at the outset of the work. Additionally, the theme is unusual in that it ends with a perfect cadence, distinguishing it as a closed period with a clear harmonic structure. The low register of the theme, its self-contained harmonic configuration, the slow tempo and rhythmic motion, and its minor mode remove it completely from the French dance suite tradition, and lend it a solemnity that when added to the gravity of the organ timbre combine to produce a serious, sombre character that would become integral to later passacaglias.

Figure 18. J.S. Bach, Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BVW 582, mm. 1-8.[38]



In addition to the thematic characteristics of the ostinato theme, the key element of Bach's work that differentiates it from other passacaglias is its variations treatment. Unlike in the works of Bach's contemporaries and predecessors, where the passacaglia theme serves a harmonic function, generally resulting in a homophonic work, in the C minor *Passacaglia* the theme is subjected to variation that supports the

[37] Michael Radulescu, "On the Form of Johann Sebastian Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor," *The Organ Yearbook* 11 (1980): 96.

[38] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Passacaglia in C Minor, BWV 582*, ed. Wilhelm Rust, Bach-Gesellschaft, vol. 15, 46 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1899).

counterpoint. For the most part, the variation treatment is minimal, affecting less than half of the entries, however any type of variation to the ostinato was not at all characteristic of previous passacaglias. The variations mainly consisting of some type of arpeggiation or rhythmic alteration on beat three, or in the case of Variations 14 and 15, a full arpeggiation of the harmonic progression over a two octave span. Most notable is the shift of the ostinato theme to the soprano line in Variations 12 and 13. Because of the typical harmonic function the ostinato held in most passacaglias, Bach's shift in register is rather unusual. Although the alterations to the theme are minimal, the consequence of its variations treatment is significant, because it opens up new compositional options and allows for climactic moments not previously achieved in passacaglia works.[39] As we will see in Krása's passacaglia, register shifts and movement of the theme between voices allows for a much wider range of expression than would be possible in the early passacaglia form.

Another significant feature of Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue* is that the fugue is based on the first half of the ostinato theme. Bach was the first composer to follow a passacaglia (or chaconne) with a fugue.[40] The contrapuntal complexity and textural density heightens the intensity and overall gravity of the work, linking the passacaglia evermore to the elaborate sophistication and intellectualism generally associated with fugal works.

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, often considered one of Bach's masterpieces, is not only impressive because of its dramatic character and thematic qualities, but also because of its radical transformation of the passacaglia into a

[39] Williams, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, 1:262.

[40] Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," 373.

variations form that would serve later composers seeking an outlet for their more formidable musical expressions.

Twentieth-Century Revival

Differing significantly from the traditional passacaglias of the French, Italian, and Spanish composers, Bach's passacaglia is an excellent example of how a composer of great stature can completely transform a common, even mundane, practice into something transcendental that then becomes the dominant form of the work, despite its divergence from the norm. Andrew Silbiger comments on this aspect of Bach's passacaglia (and the similarly iconic chaconne from BWV 1004), noting that, "when the message is especially powerful, the mutated features may be emulated in other works and eventually become dominant characteristics of the genre or give rise to a new genre tradition in which they no longer function as markings, but become the norm".[41] He also points out that the authority of the composer plays a major role in this transformation: "This may also happen when its composer is a figure of exceptional authority; sometimes both the force of the work and the authority of its creator play a part."[42] There are many examples of this type of transformation in music, most notably, Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. As noted by philosopher Bernard Williams, writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who incorporated the idea of Don Juan into their writings were no longer writing independently of *Don Giovanni*. "Later writers", he writes, "have not simply gone back to some archetype of Don Juan, or taken Mozart's opera merely as one previous

[41] Ibid., 358.

[42] Silbiger, "Passacaglia," 358.

embodiment of that character, but have in many cases been specially influenced by the opera. Indeed, nineteenth- and twentieth-century thoughts about Don Juan have been dominated by Mozart's embodiment of him."[43] Although Bach's formal transformation of the passacaglia form has not been written about as explicitly as Mozart's *Giovanni*, its effect is similar: Bach's *Passacaglia* replaced all older models and became the standard upon which all later composers of the form based their work. Hans Krása evidently used Bach's model and perhaps in a sense, composition of a passacaglia in a Terezín context became a way of channelling the greatness of Bach and offering a nostalgic glimpse of a past Germanic culture that was in stark contrast to the Hitler regime.

After Bach's death, the elegant aesthetic style of the Rococo period emerged and many of Bach's compositional techniques, including passacaglia and fugal writing fell out of use. The harmonic stasis of the repeated bass line as well as the contrapuntal complexity of Bach's passacaglia were antithetical to the Classical style that emerged in the late eighteenth century and so for several generations, the form was preserved as a pedagogical compositional model in textbooks, but was rarely, if ever, used by working composers until its "rediscovery" by Liszt and Brahms in the late Romantic era.[44]

The modern use of passacaglia form is nearly universally based on Bach's model, comprising a set of variations, usually of a serious character, based on a melodic eight bar theme that is presented first on its own in a low register. It is often, but not always, succeeded by a fugue based on at least part of the theme. There is

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[43] Bernard Williams, "Don Giovanni as an Idea," in *W.A. Mozart, Don Giovanni*, ed. Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 81; Lydia Goehr and Daniel Alan Herwitz, *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[44] Stein, "The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century," 150.

generally no reference at all to the florid, improvisational, rondeau/ritornello style of the early French and Italian models.[45] In addition to its gravitational association with Bach and the formidability of the organ timbre, in a twentieth-century context, the passacaglia is often associated with an affect of lament, which as Andrew Silbiger notes, is a twentieth-century connection, and that "the present-day tendency to regard any lament with a descending tetrachord bass as a passacaglia does not appear to have historical precedence unless the piece also shows other genre markings".[46] Despite this historical disconnect, the modern passacaglia is regarded as a form for serious music and tends to carry associations with antiquity and intellectualism, and is often considered a vehicle through which to express emotionally heavy material, a topic which I will look more closely at later in this chapter.

Krása's Passacaglia

Hans Krása's work *Passacaglia and Fugue* was completed August 7, 1944. Very little is known about the provenance of the work or the composer's thoughts or comments about his composition. It is written for a string trio arrangement of violin, viola and cello, and has a thematic connection to his shorter trio work *Tanec* which was composed sometime earlier.[47] *Tanec* was reportedly performed in Terezín by three members of the *Theresienstadt Streichquartett,* violinist Karel Fröhlich, violist Romauld Süssmann, and cellist Friedrich Mark. The passacaglia, on the other hand,

[45] Silbiger, "Passacaglia."

[46] Ibid.

[47] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945,* 109. The composition date of Tanec is unclear. Karas dates the composition as 1943, however the score bears no date and reported performance dates are not necessarily substantiated. In Červinková's biography, she suggests that both the Dance and the Passacaglia were written in summer of 1944. Blanka Červinková, *Hans Krása: Leben und Werk* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2005), 182.

was never performed in Terezín, although Jože Karas suggested that the difficult score was composed for the same group of musicians.[48] The passacaglia and fugue is generally listed as one of Krása's instrumental compositions written in Terezín, but outside of CD liner notes and performance programmes, it is rarely written about. There is one précis analysis of the work published in Krása's biography by Červinková[49], however it has received minimal scholarly attention and its importance has been substantiated primarily in the realm of concert performances and recordings. Despite its having been overlooked in much of the Terezín literature, Krása's *Passacaglia* is a key work from the summer of 1944 and, as my analysis below will show, reflects the themes and experiences central to the Terezín experience in a significant and meaningful way.

Façade

Unlike some of the other instrumental works from Terezín, Krása's passacaglia is completely without a programme or indications of external references. The theme is original, not based on a folk tune like in the Ullmann or Klein examples we will encounter in later chapters, and there are no clear examples of quotations or citations of other musical works or of texts that would contain semantic content. It is very possible, and perhaps even normal, to listen to the piece as a well-crafted example of a twentieth-century approach to counterpoint by an inventive composer who was skilled at creating and combining appealing and memorable themes. In the context of Terezín, however, as I have argued throughout this study, things are rarely

[48] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 109.

[49] Červinková, *Hans Krása*, 182–187.

as they initially appear, and if we scratch the surface even slightly, there is more to be found.

As I have mentioned numerous times already, the concept of façade was an essential part of the Terezín experience. From the early campaigns marketing Terezín as a safe haven or spa retreat for elderly or privileged Jews to the later, more involved Nazi projects intended to conceal both the harsh realities of Terezín and the extermination activities of the death camps further away, the duplicitous nature of the camp was a fundamental aspect of life and features universally in recollections of survivors and in studies of Terezín. One of the most literal representations of the façade by from Bedřich Fritta, the pseudonym of the artist Fritz Taussig, who was one of the artists implicated in the Painter's Affair. Fritta's drawing "Façades for the International Commission" (Figure 19) depicts a row of building facades that are propped up with sticks, showing the flimsiness of the false fronts. The store fronts are labelled with signs *Lebensmittel* (Food or groceries) and *Parfumerie* (Perfume shop), luxury shops that quite obviously are not for the service of the skeletons struggling behind the barbed wire and in and around the other buildings. The carriage in front of the *Parfumerie* lends even more of a *grotesque* aspect; an ornate, well kept carriage, that could represent either an aristocratic past or a carnival troupe (or possibly both). The background contains elements used by Fritta in many of his other works, elements generally associated with themes of death such as, a dead tree near a brick wall that contains a tunnel leading to darkness, while black birds, either vultures or ravens circle above, further connecting the barren terrain with macabre associations.[50] Fritta's drawing is particularly revealing of both the incongruent elements of the façade created for the Red Cross and the flimsiness of the whole charade. The

[50] "Jewish Museum Berlin: B. Fritta - Metaphors of Death," accessed December 21, 2014, http://www.jmberlin.de/fritta/en/todesmetaphern.php.

experience of the Red Cross visit and its apparent success, was demoralising for many of the prisoners, and the representation of the façade made its way into the writings, performances, and artworks of the prisoners. Of course in music, expression of these kinds of themes and sentiments are much less explicit, however, given the ubiquity of the experience, it is almost certain that the composers incorporated it into their artistic works from this time.

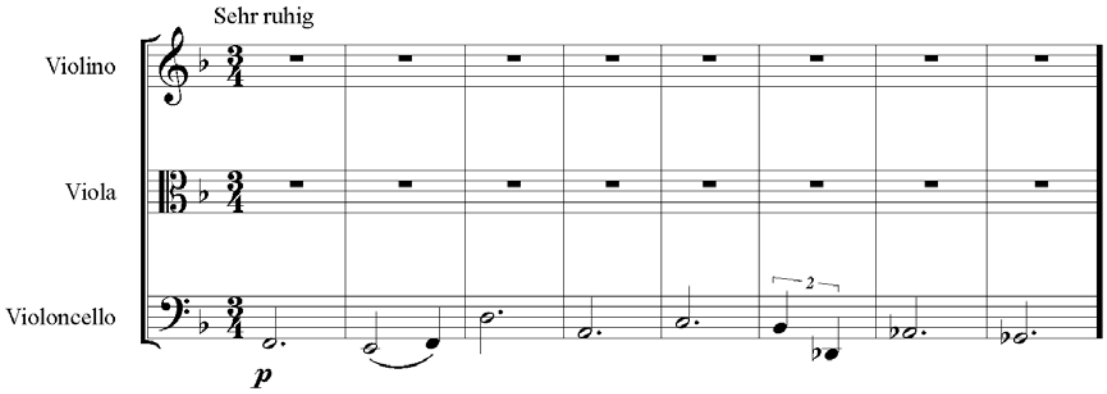
Figure 19 - Bedřich Fritta, *Façades for the International Commission* Terezin 1943/44, ink, pen and brush, 57 x 84,5 cm © Thomas Fritta-Haas, long-term loan to the Jewish Museum Berlin, photo: Jens Ziehe. Permission to reproduce granted by the Jewish Museum Berlin.

Hans Krása's use of the passacaglia form provides a perfect ruse for hiding or subverting material that may have questionable or alternative connotations at least in part because it is usually considered a non-representational form. Like a sonata or a rondo, the title refers to the compositional techniques used to create the work, rather than to any recognisable external association such as a text, an image, or a mood. The

term *passacaglia* in this case refers specifically to the centrality of a repeated bass theme to the work and therefore avoids suggestion of a semantic interpretation that could be problematic or incriminating.

The opening theme of the *Passacaglia* is, as far as we know, an original melody composed by Krása. It is elegant, somewhat elegiac in character, and projects a sense of nostalgic, old-world beauty, a mood that fits well with the common association of passacaglia form with antiquity. Marked *sehr ruhig* (very calm), written in triple metre, and spanning a traditional eight-measures, the low cello theme situates the piece directly within the passacaglia tradition of Bach. The theme enters on its own in a *piano* dynamic range, creating an impression of intimate simplicity. The simplicity and classicism of the opening is somewhat deceptive, however. The harmonic progression starts out traditionally, moving through a fairly conventional sequence of I, V^6, vi, I^6, V in F major before abruptly incorporating an unrelated D-Flat and ending with a cadence in the Flat-II key of G-Flat Major. Harmonically, there is an indication that something is off kilter and that things are not as serene or straightforward as they first appear (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 1-8.[51]

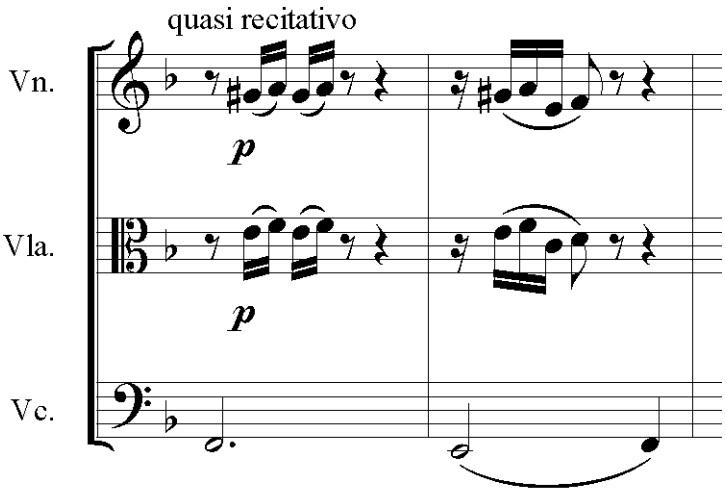


The next three statements of the ostinato theme are straightforward with little variation. The other voices enter in second, then third species counterpoint, and then the counterpoint gives way to a homophonic texture with the upper voices harmonised primarily in thirds and sixths. At the fifth statement, however, the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic textures all change. From measure 33 onward, the ostinato theme is present, generally in a recognisable form, but as the piece unfolds, a more diverse and complex picture is presented.

The fifth entry of the ostinato theme is marked *quasi recitativo* and signals an interruption of the smooth counterpoint set up in the opening statements (Figure 21). Although interruptions are not well theorised in musical literature, they are generally recognised as structurally and symbolically significant moments that deserve attention. Up to this point, the piece has unfolded as a variations style of passacaglia, where each statement of the ostinato theme serves as a basis for some kind of variation. At measure 33, however, the variations model ceases and new material is introduced over the repeating bass. The recitativo statement is different from the previous phrases. It seems to suggest a secretive nod or wink, alerting the listener that something else is going on and to pay closer attention.

[51] Hans Krása, *Passacaglia and Fugue* (Praha; Berlin: Tempo; Bote & Bock, 1993), 5.

Figure 21. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 33-34.[52]



In a post-war interview, Maurice Rossell, one of the key Red Cross delegates who visited Terezín noted that it was common in camps for prisoners to signal to him via a wink or a nod to attract attention to matters that were hidden from view. He claimed that this didn't happen during his visit to Terezín, interpreting it negatively, believing that the inmates he encountered were "privileged people who had no desire to risk to be deported because they had permitted themselves an illusion or a remark, or passing a piece of paper or a report"[53]Although the prisoners of Terezín may have found it difficult to convey such messages under the watchful and threatening circumstances of that June 23 visit, it would seem prudent to keep an eye open for such things in the communications of the prisoners, musical or otherwise. The way in which the next section of Krása's passacaglia unfolds would appear to confirm that the recitativo fifth statement is functioning as such a communication.

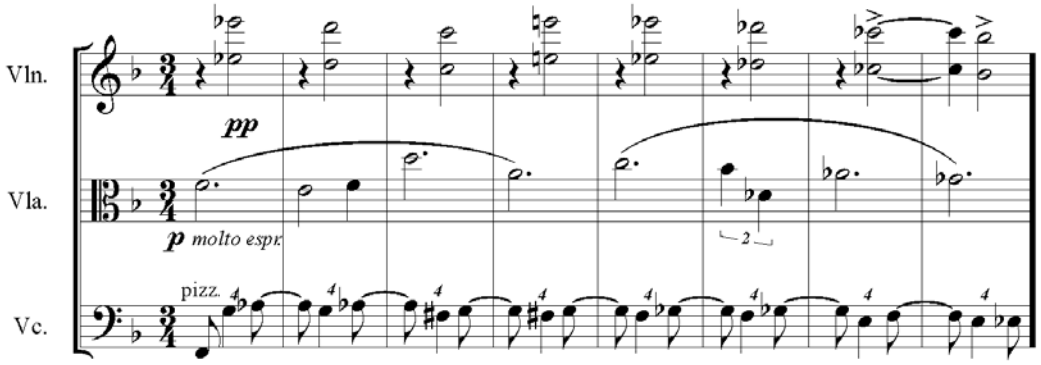
The sixth statement of the theme is unmistakably different in character from the opening. The ostinato theme appears in the viola, one octave higher than it had

[52] Ibid., 6.

[53] Rossel, Shoah Interview, 30.

been in the cello. The cello plays *pizzicato*, presenting a chromatic line, mostly descending, in a duple metre, juxtaposed against the triple metre of the other voices. The violin line is also unusually juxtaposed with the theme, entering as in a *pp* range in of a descending three note octave sequence that covers the span of a minor third for each of the three statements. The octaves appear on beat two of each measure, further creating a sense of discord or tension between the voices (Figure 22).

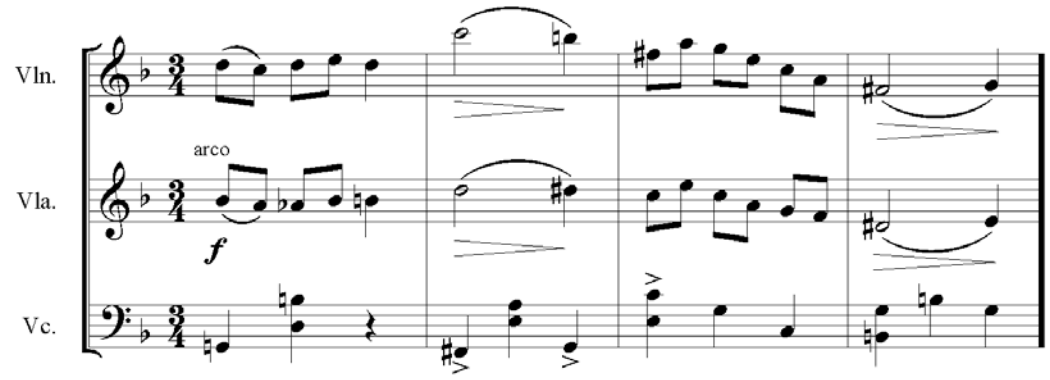
Figure 22. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 41-48.[54]



After this strange, unsettling passage transitions into the next iteration of the ostinato, new material arrives. The ostinato theme returns to its original register in the cello and the viola introduces a fragment of a folk theme that will become a focal point in later statements. In the eighth ostinato statement, a third theme is introduced in the violin – a schmaltzy Viennese waltz based on the opening theme that unfolds over the next three statements of the ostinato (See the final iteration of the waltz theme outlined in Figure 23).

[54] Krása, *Passacaglia*, 6.

Figure 23. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 73-76.[55]



It is not customary for new, contrasting thematic material to be introduced into a passacaglia; usually the countersubjects play a supporting role that does not compete with the main theme. In Krása's work, however, two new themes are introduced, the waltz and a folk dance. This break in compositional tradition is notable, since, as in the case of interruptions mentioned above, offering something different from what would be expected is a common way for a composer to make a statement without offering a textual reference. In Krása's case, it is quite likely that the simplicity and repetition inherent in the form make it possible for him to incorporate themes or messages that might otherwise be risky or problematic to show on the surface. The practice of expressing important or psychologically difficult themes and ideas in psycho-acoustically weak sections of music has a long tradition in the history of Western Art Music. Michael Beckerman has written about the phenomenon of the middle sections of pieces often contain interesting or subversive elements in works of Beethoven, Chopin, Dvořák, Bartók and many others whose work forms the musical canon.[56] Beckerman suggests that places of psychoacoustic weakness offer an ideal

[55] Ibid., 7.

[56] Beckerman, "Middles," 175.

position to hide those elements that may be subversive such as secrets, confessions, or, in the environment of an oppressive regime, political messages.[57]

In the Krása passacaglia, the two new themes introduced in the middle are not explicitly political, however, they are not without connotation or reference. The waltz theme that appears in the eighth statement of the ostinato, which was identified earlier in Figure 23, occurs above three successive statements of the ostinato (Statements VIII, IX & X) becoming more elaborate and ornate with each presentation. The effect of this waltz figure is ambiguous. At first it appears so incongruous with the previous material that it comes across as almost farcical, the saccharine quality suggesting a sham or mockery. However, as it repeats and the other voices take on the waltz pattern, the lightness and pleasantry of the theme seems more nostalgic, evoking a memory of the romance and beauty of the high Viennese culture of a past era.

In contrast, the folk theme introduced at m. 49 and again at mm. 81 and 89 is syncopated and presented in a duple metre that contrasts starkly with the triple metre of the other voices. Where the waltz is smooth and saccharine, the folk dance is bright and forceful. Like many of the folk references in Terezín, musical and otherwise, the tune is Moravian in quality.[58] The melody is Krása's own, from his string trio *Tanec*, also written in Terezín. Although the mode implied in this folk theme is somewhat obscured, the original melody has a Lydian shading and a rhythmic pulse that situate it conspicuously as Moravian, tinged with a quality of a Klezmer dance.[59] Of course it is impossible to know what Krása intended to express by juxtaposing this theme against the passacaglia ostinato, especially considering its lack of explicit external textual reference or historical significance. It could be a reminiscence of his Czech

[57] Ibid.

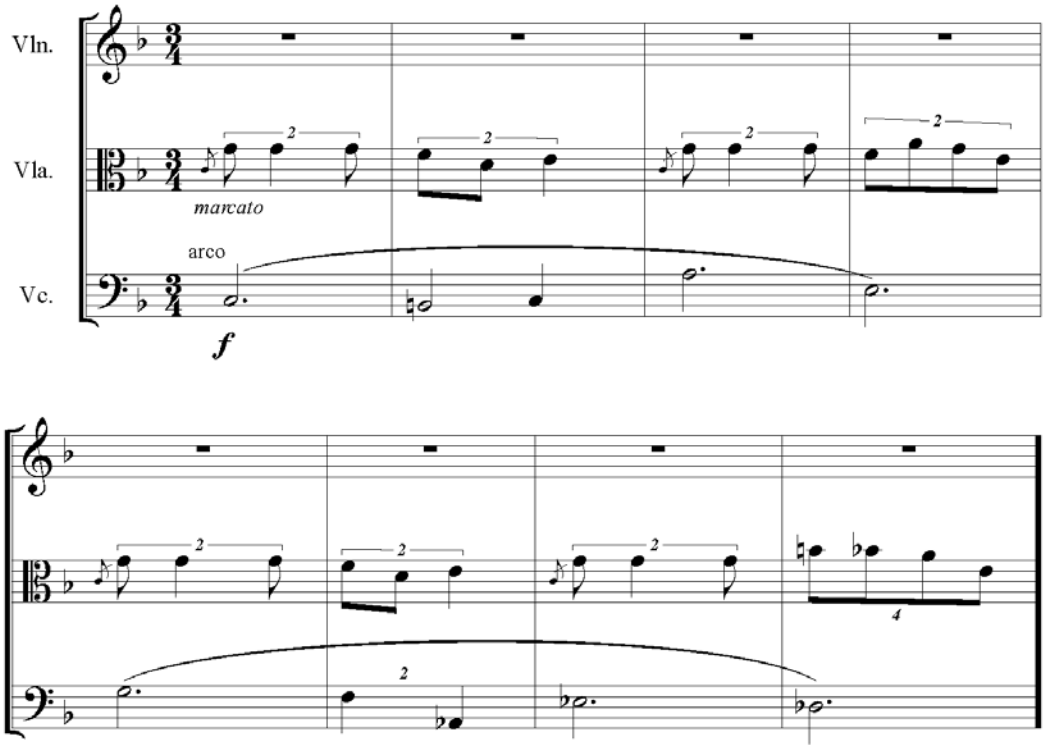
[58] Beckerman, "Moravia, The Wild Goose, and Terezín Summer 1944."

[59] Ibid., 13.

homeland and his own past, it could be a reference to the Jewish identity within the camp, or it could be something more fantastical like a type of *Totentanz* (Dance of Death) in the tradition of Goethe and Saint Saëns, where death is represented by a gruesome fiddler of dance tunes.[60] Regardless of whether it is a reference to a past cultural tradition or a conjuring of popular death imagery, the intermingling of the lively dance with the melodic themes strongly suggests that despite the calm surface of the ostinato theme, some unexpected spectre is playing an active role. We can't actually know the specific connotations, but the effect of the appearance of the dance is certainly significant within the context of the passacaglia, at the very least signalling incongruence and contrast. Its placement in the middle register in the middle of the work, between statements of the waltz theme and "covered up" by *forte* statements of the ostinato theme all suggest that it is an important feature that is being "hidden" at least in a nominal way (Figure 24).

[60] Malcolm Boyd, "Dance of Death," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 22, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07153.

Figure 24. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 81-88.[61]



Despite the ambiguities involved in deciphering the invocations of the waltz and folk dance themes, their appearance and function within the work as contrasting, interruptive elements suggest that they are significant elements that deserve to be given attention. Along with other works written in Terezín at this time, the dramatic elements of the music are kept well below the surface. The ways in which Krása employs passacaglia form fit well within this tradition and offer him a means of literally representing the façade of the camp. As Michael Beckerman writes of the Terezín works, "In the Potemkin village of Terezín, compositional middles became reverse Potemkin villages, pretending to be nothing and containing everything. No works demonstrate the power and paradox of middles more than this group of compositions."[62]

[61] Krása, *Passacaglia*, 8.

[62] Beckerman, "Middles," 180.

Evocations of Death

In the musical world of Terezín, images of and allusions to death are common. From Ullmann's *Kaiser of Atlantis* where Death appears personified as a central character to Klein's *String Trio* where, as we will see in the next chapter, references to Verdi's *Requiem*, Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder,* Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade", and the Angel of Death in Josef Suk's *Asrael Symphony,* have been suggested, the connections between the theme of death and the musical expressions within the camp are well established.[63] Krása's passacaglia is no exception to this, although the lack of text or commentary from the composer makes these references more oblique and subjective than in some of the other works. In addition to the postulation above that Krása's dance theme has connotations of a Faustian *Totentanz,* there are three other associations with death employed by Krása in this passacaglia. The first is a quote of the *Dies Irae* theme, the second an evocation of the train transports, and a third that relates specifically to twentieth-century conventional use of the passacaglia form.

As I briefly noted in Chapter Three, the most iconic musical symbol of death is the melody from the *Dies Irae*. Krása offers this tune in the first phrase of his passacaglia theme, concealing it only by a simple octave displacement of the last note.[64] The four note opening to this archetypal melody (F-E-F-D) opens the piece, although the rhythmic setting and the octave displacement of the D renders it audibly disguised, especially due to the inversion of the interval creating the opposite modality, changing the expected fall of a minor third in the original (Figure 25) into a major sixth in Krása's version (Figure 26).

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[63] Michael Beckerman, "Postcard from New York - Trio from Terezín," *Music and Politics* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 17; Beckerman, "Reverse Potemkin," 201; Beckerman, "Middles," 179.

[64] Many thanks to Susanna Pasticci for assistance in identifying and clarifying this reference.

Figure 25. Dies Irae plainchant melody.

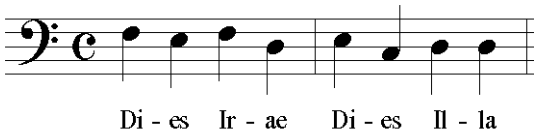
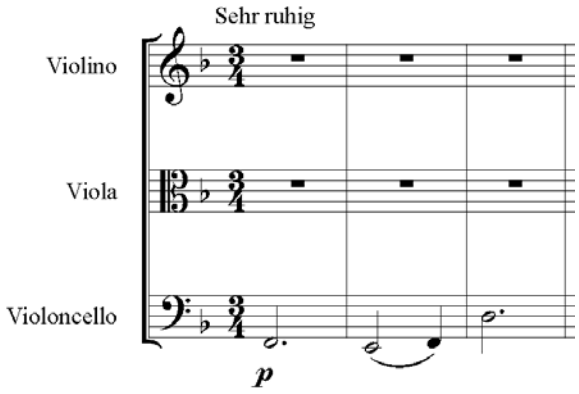


Figure 26. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 1-3. [65]



The *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) is a Gregorian chant that has been set as part of the Requiem Mass since the fourteenth century. The original poem is attributed to Thomas of Celano from around the mid-thirteenth century and the text presents a dramatic depiction of the Day of Judgement. Both the melody and the textual content have served as a dramatic basis for writers including Faust and Wilde, as well as many composers from Ockeghem through Mozart, Haydn, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, and even contemporary film composers such as Danny Elfman, John Williams and Hans Zimmer.[66] Two of the most significant iterations of the *Dies Irae* come from the Romantic Era in Berlioz's vivid "Dream of a Witches' Sabbath" from *Symphonie Fantastique*, and as the basis of Liszt's *Totentanz (Dance Macabre)*

[65] Krása, *Passacaglia*, 6.

[66] Malcolm Boyd, "'Dies Irae': Some Recent Manifestations," *Music and Letters* XLIX, no. 4 (1968): 347–56; Janet K. Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's Batman: A Film Score Guide* (Scarecrow Press, 2004); Tom Schneller, "Sweet Fulfillment: Allusion and Teleological Genesis in John Williams's Close Encounters of the Third Kind," *The Musical Quarterly*, April 28, 2014, 1–34.

variations. The *Dies Irae* is a powerful, well recognised symbol of the macabre that has functioned musically as the basis for allusions to death, witches, snakes, the Devil, tyranny and oppression.[67] Malcolm Boyd points out in his exploration of the melody that ambiguity does arise when composers choose to only use the first four notes of the phrase, such as in Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead,* however Linda Schubert points out that at least in relation to its appearance in film, the theme is so well recognised that only the opening four notes are needed to refer to it.[68] Krása's employment of the *Dies Irae* opening is ambiguous because of its brevity and its rhythmic and intervallic alteration, however, considering the historical importance and powerful symbolic weight of this musical theme in the Western Musical Tradition, its appearance in this context would be a very incredible coincidence if indeed it was not intended by the composer, especially in the context of representations of death lurking behind false fronts, as discussed in the previous section.

The *Passacaglia* closes with chaotic and climactic force, having moved as far away as possible from the opening *sehr ruhig* directive. Almost all attempts to discuss the work exist only in liner notes for recordings of the *Passacaglia* and in most cases, the writings refer to the final variations as being suggestive of violence. Descriptions include, "an awesome accumulation of force", "a last reiterated minor third in the violin hints at portentous meaning", "the music becomes violent and primitive…the work drives headlong into a terrifying conclusion".[69] Certainly these are only

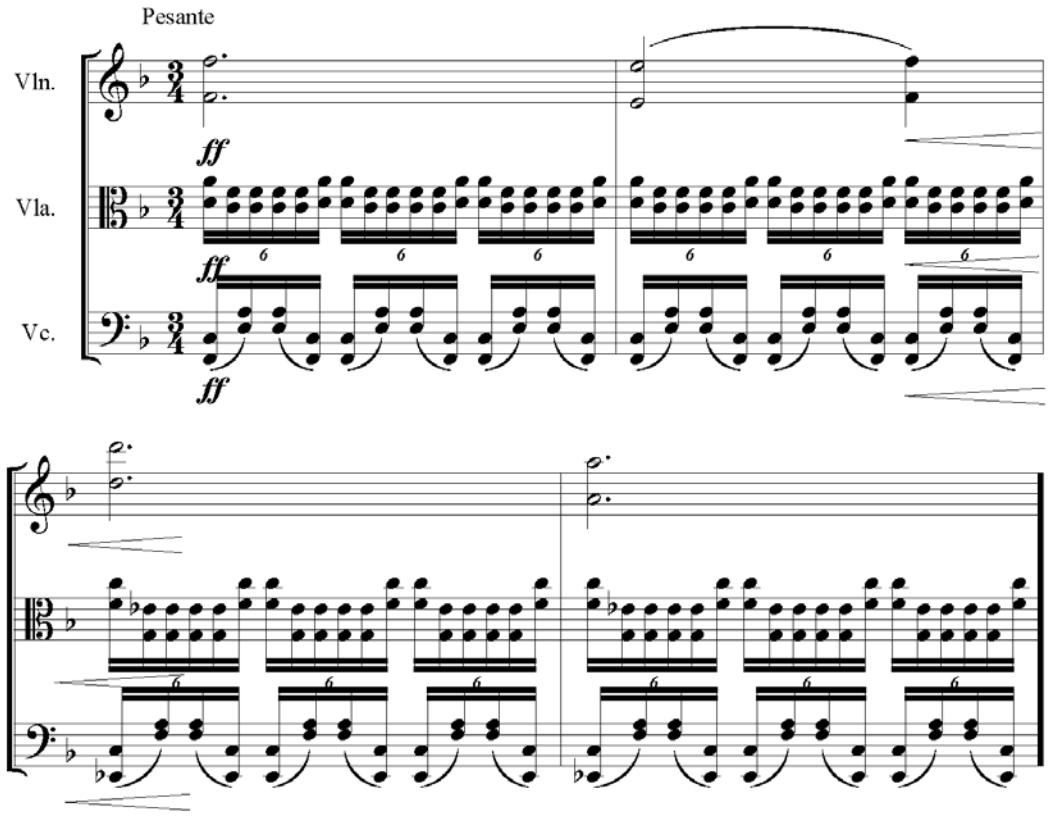
[67] Boyd, "Dance of Death," 351.

[68] John Caldwell and Malcolm Boyd, "Dies Irae," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, 353, accessed April 22, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40040; Linda Schubert, "Plainchant in Motion Pictures: The 'Dies Irae' in Film Scores," *Florilegium* 15 (January 1, 1998): 208.

[69] Kenneth Woods, Liner notes to Ensemble Epomeo, *Complete String Trios: Hans Gál & Hans Krása*, CD (Morden, Surrey, UK: Avie, 2012).

individual impressions that may be coloured by various biases and agendas, however, there is support for such claims in the score. At m. 111, the rhythmic texture changes significantly and a motoric momentum is achieved, evoking a sense of a chugging motion. At m. 119, a dramatic climax is reached (Figure 27). All voices enter *fortissimo* and are doubled, the lower ones at the fourth and the upper at the octave. The beautiful ostinato theme is in the violin, with both the high register and doubling attempting, at least superficially to draw attention to the melody line. The driving rhythm and the open fourths and fifths of the viola and cello lines, however, make the upheaval impossible to ignore. The interval between the bass and the upper melody often coincides at the interval of a major seventh or at a tritone, highlighting even further the harshness of the section. Notably, after the chaos of the motoric rhythmic figures disappears, so does the ostinato melody. From measures 135-145, there is no ostinato theme – the only time in the piece this occurs. From measures 135 – 159, the end of the passacaglia, all voices are marked *piano* then *pianissimo*, contrasting the chaos of the climax with a stark, austere trepidation. The effect is dramatic and there can be no doubt this is a traumatic, climactic moment.

Figure 27. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 119-122.[70]



The chugging sextuplets, the harsh intervals that correspond to the shrill auditory world of the train whistle, and the sense of fear and disruption this section brings, all suggest the arrival of a train. Outside of Holocaust studies, trains are symbolic of many things: modernity, progress, journeys, transience, liaisons, etc. Within the realm of the Holocaust, however, trains have a particularly sinister association, representing the means by which people were transported away from their homes to the camps where many expected, quite rightly, separation from their loved ones, suffering, and quite possibly, death. In Terezín, the train transports were the most dreaded and feared aspect of the camp. There are varying accounts by survivors describing the degree to which they knew where the transports were headed, however in nearly all survivor accounts of the Terezín experience, declarations of fear

[70] Krása, *Passacaglia*, 11.

regarding the eastbound transports are a salient feature. Jiří Diamant recalls that this fear was central to the daily experience:

> The whole life of Terezín was constantly haunted by the spectre of transports to the East, to the unknown, which meant the immediate danger of death. No one knew when his turn would come, where he would go, when, why, and with whom. The transports were the ominous culmination of the provisional life in Terezín, they were the harbingers of the next stage on the way to the 'final solution to the Jewish question.[71]

It is possible that Krása's climax is simply an abstract evocation of general fear and violence, and maybe, like Bloch suggests in his liner notes, a portentous end is only hinted at, and it is instead "a kind of cold fear which prevails in this his last musical essay."[72] However, considering the auditory choices Krása makes and the immense gravity of this section, it seems to be much more specific than a generalised evocation of fear. The sound world of the train appears to be yet another musical evocation of death, especially of transport *to* death – a monstrous, modern version of the *Ship of Fools*, thus adding another layer to the musical world beneath the nostalgic façade of the opening theme.

The third element that evokes connotations of death lies in the composer's choice of passacaglia form itself. As discussed earlier in this chapter, passacaglia form experienced an unexpected resurgence in the twentieth century.[73] Although undoubtedly there are myriad reasons why composers chose it for their works, a convention seems to have developed that connect the form to dark and macabre contexts. Prior to the turn of the century, Liszt used the *Dies Irae* ostinato as the basis for his *Totentanz* variations and perhaps that set at least a subconscious standard for

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[71] Jiří Diamant, "Some Comments on the Psychology of Life in the Ghetto Terezín," in *Terezín*, ed. František Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 136.

[72] David Bloch, Liner notes to Various Artists, *Hans Krasa*, CD, vol. III, IV vols., The Terezin Music Anthology (Koch International Classics, 1996).

[73] Stein, "The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century."

future composers. Schoenberg wrote the "Nacht" movement as a passacaglia in *Pierrot Lunaire*, and Berg famously used the form in his 1920's opera *Wozzeck* to represent the Doctor and his macabre scientific experiments. Lyn Henderson corroborates this trend in her exploration of Shostakovich's employment of the passacaglia, finding that he utilised it to highlight points of dramatic climax, particularly death scenes, such as in the murder scene of his 1932 opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.[74] She also points out that death was a theme commonly connected to Shostakovich's passacaglias throughout his career, culminating in the his setting of the song "Death" in *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti* in the later years of his life.Benjamin Britten was also well known for his use of passacaglia form in tragedies. Darrell Handel connects Britten's choice of the passacaglia form at climactic moments, stating, "[Britten] often elevates the passacaglia to some crucial dramatic high point of an opera or song-cycle to reflect on a tragedy or intensify a dialogue".[75] Handel points out the explicit association with death in Britten's works including *Peter Grimes*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Billy Budd*, and "Death not be proud" from the *John Donne Sonnets*, in addition to many other purely instrumental works.[76] Neither of these authors is able to clearly identify the reasons why the passacaglia is so closely connected to scenes and themes of death, although they allude to its connection to the tradition of the tragedy from the high Baroque operatic drama, postulating some inherent "dramatic potential".[77]

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[74] Lyn Henderson, "Shostakovich, the Passacaglia, and Serialism," in *A Shostakovich Companion*, ed. Michael Mishra (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008), 411.

[75] Darrell Handel, "Britten's Use of the Passacaglia," *Tempo (New Series)* -3, no. 94 (1970): 2.

[76] Ibid., 2–3.

[77] Henderson, "Shostakovich, the Passacaglia, and Serialism," 410.

Handel proposes that the Britten's expressive and effective use of the passacaglia must "almost certainly arise from [an] intuitive sense of drama"[78]. Later authors tend to presume the connection between passacaglia and lament as a given, referring explicitly to the form as "the dramatic form known as lament passacaglia or lament-ostinato".[79] Although there is no direct explanation of the origins of this "dramatic form", it is very likely to have been derived from the common association between form and the descending chromatic "lament" bass figure used in passacaglias such as Bach's *Crucifixus* and Purcell's "When I am Laid" from *Dido and Aeneas.* While further investigation is necessary to substantiate that connection, it is clear that there is a clear precedent in the early twentieth century of composers using passacaglia form to frame their death-ridden tragedies, and it appears as though Krása drew on that tradition in Terezín for his own tragic expression.

Conclusion

Hans Krása's name is engraved in the historical record for his contribution to the Terezín music scene, particularly for the allegorical capacity of his very popular children's opera *Brundibár*, which he wrote after Hitler's rise to power, but before his incarceration in Terezín. In the minds of many of the people who either saw the play or performed it in the camp, the triumph of the innocent children over the evil forces was a clear portrayal of their situation and a wonderful source of hope and inspiration. Ela Weissberger, a survivor who as a child played the role of the cat in Terezín, is unequivocal about this aspect in her experience of Krása's work. "In our eyes,

[78] Handel, "Britten's Use of the Passacaglia," 6.

[79] Amy Marie Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments: Nostalgia, Exoticism and the Absolute* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011), 3.

Brundibár was Hitler. When we sang the Victory Song, we wanted victory over a terrible man, and to be free."[80] Surprisingly, despite this well acknowledged contribution and the poignancy of the messages contained within the music, Krása's instrumental works, including the *Passacaglia and Fugue*, have been either overlooked or performed as cursory musical outputs of a composer who met a tragic end.

As I have argued, Krása's *Passacaglia and Fugue* is not a cursory output, but instead is an important contribution to the Terezín oeuvre in which Krása fully engages with the questions and possibilities of artistic expression within the walls of a concentration camp fraught with uncertainty, paradoxes, and juxtapositions. Drawing on a powerful musical tradition that harkens back to J.S. Bach but that is fully contemporary in its language and convention, Krása creatively and skilfully provides a musical incarnation of the Terezín environment, from the irony of the flimsy façade, to evocations of death and the fear-inspiring chaos of the climactic moments. As Viktor Ullmann wrote of his friend and colleague in 1928, "[Krása's] creative process seems effortless, somewhere between check and checkmate, but the result always displays uncanny sureness."[81] It would appear that Krása was able to uphold his strengths through the adversity of his experience in Terezín to speak surely of his situation.

[80] Swirsky, "Opera Written in a Czech Camp Recalls Voices of Lost Children."

[81] Brenner, *Girls of Room 28*, 106.

Chapter Five

Gideon Klein

As the summer of 1944 came to a close, so did the Terezín propaganda campaign. The shooting of the Theresienstadt "Documentary" was completed and rumours of resumed transports to the East began to circulate. It had become clear by this time that the Red Cross was not going to intervene, having believed the embellishment or beautification project to be more or less realistic, and hope for improvement on or continuation of their current situation was beginning to wane. Tensions and fears were more rampant than usual as inmates felt the spectres of the transports descending. It is within this context that Gideon Klein's *String Trio* with its powerful "Variations on a Moravian Folk Song" emerged. This piece is striking in its melancholic, yet dynamic presentation of variations on a simple theme. Unlike in his earlier instrumental works, Klein did not choose to engage the sound world of Berg and Hába with their dark, dense textures and atonal or microtonal sonorities. Instead, he chose to express himself through Classical variations form with a lyrical yet sorrowful melody, and, like his colleagues, by utilising quotation and allusion to denote aspects of the shadowy truth that had been concealed from the outside world.

In this chapter I consider how Klein's choice of Theme and Variations form and the way he manipulates it is unique and expressive of his environment, both in his formal techniques and through his use of hidden quotation, which parallels the types of allusions that I have discussed in the works of the other Terezín composers. Additionally, I explore questions of how censorship and persecution affects musical process, considering the quotations in Shostakovich's *Ghost Trio* as a parallel to

Klein's work. Finally, I highlight the ways that Klein's musical language changes in this last work and consider how these changes connect to wider considerations of musical expression during war time and the difficulties facing the intellectual in circumstances where social connection becomes necessary for survival.

Life and Musical Influence

Arriving in Terezín in 1942 at the age of only nineteen, Gideon Klein was the youngest figure within the group of core composers in the camp. He was a charismatic and attractive man who was thoroughly admired by those who knew him. This description, presented in Robin Freeman's essay on Klein, captures a sense of the incredible impression he left on others, "Fantastic, a man of dreamlike beauty. The darkest of hair and great dark eyes and in spite of the dreadful circumstances of his life a healthy looking complexion. Gideon seemed in every way, his appearance, his personality and his musical talent, to have stepped out from the pages of romantic literature."[1] In many ways Klein is the darling of the Terezín composers, which has contributed to somewhat of a mythologizing of his innate talents. Arguments as to the extent of his impact on others and whether or not he was a product of the various potential influences he encountered are common and tend to evoke strong feelings one way or another.[2] Jože Karas credits him with being a "moving spirit behind the

[1] Robin Freeman, "Gideon Klein, Moravian Composer," *Tempo* 59, no. 234 (2005): 2.

[2] Although the foundation for the disagreements seem to have arisen in writings of Peduzzi and Slavicky, these two essays reflect the general nature and style of the claims toward influences on and by Klein: Beckerman, "Klein the Janáčkian"; Freeman, "Gideon Klein, Moravian Composer."

musical activities in Terezín"[3] and in a moving homage to Klein, a fellow musician, pianist Truda Reisová-Solarová recalled,

> His outstanding intelligence, his great interest for many different branches of art, for literature, and especially for music, so impressed all who knew him that it seemed as if some strange magic emanated from his personality. All of us, without reserve, admitted the superiority of Gideon Klein, maybe just because he did not try to be better than we were: he was.[4]

There is no doubt that Klein was a remarkable person and highly accomplished in many endeavours, and had a powerful impact on those he encountered.

Klein was born on December 6, 1919 in Přerov, in the Olomouc region of central Moravia. He grew up in a Jewish, Czech-speaking family as the youngest of four children. His musical talents were apparent at a young age, through his first studies with Karel Mařík, the headmaster and most highly rated piano teacher of the Přerov music school. By the time he was eleven, his musical training was being supplemented with monthly lessons in Prague with Professor Růžena Kurzová. Later that year, at the beginning of the academic calendar for 1931-2, he moved with his older sister to Prague where he attended the Jirásek Grammar School and continued his piano lessons with professor Kurzová and eventually at the Prague Conservatory with Vilém Kurz. His compositions were often performed in the Conservatory term-end concerts and his piano performances were well received in various venues in Prague. He finished his practical musical training very quickly, completing all the requirements for graduation in only one year. Beginning in 1939, he then pursued musicology at Charles University and composition with Alois Hába at the Prague Conservatory. Unfortunately, his further studies were short lived. Only a few weeks into his musicology program, in November 1939 the Nazis closed all Czech

[3] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 76.

[4] Truda Solarová, "Gideon Klein," in *Terezín*, ed. František Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Iltis (Prague: Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech lands, 1965), 243; quoted in Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*, 76.

universities, and a few months later, in April 1940, all Jews were banned from cultural organisations and so Klein was forced to leave the Conservatory as well. For the next twenty-one months, he focused on composing and continued performing under the pseudonym Karel Vránek, mainly at private house concerts or in various theatre productions. From 1939 to 1941, he composed at least six works including short pieces for various string instrument configurations, a wind octet, and a set of three songs. The last piece he completed in Prague was his *String Quartet, Op. 2,* dated August 1941. He was sent on the second transport to Terezín (*Aufbaukommando II*) and therefore was subjected to the harsh manual labour associated with renovating the dilapidated barrack town to accommodate the thousands of people expected to be transported to the new ghetto.[5]

From the earliest days, before the *Freizeitgestaltung* came into existence, Klein was involved in organising and performing in the various musical and theatre activities in Terezín. He was heavily involved with educating children, incorporating literature, Czech history and politics into his various lectures and activities he developed for them. For the general Terezín audience, he gave numerous piano recitals, arranged folk songs for the various choral groups led by Raphael Schächter, and participated in several chamber music groups. He accompanied the choirs, worked as répetiteur for the rehearsals of Verdi's *Requiem* and Krása's *Brundibár*, and seems to have been in the forefront of many of the cultural endeavours taking place. During his internment, he composed seven original works, including two madrigals, a work for men's choir and tenor solo, a song cycle, a piano sonata, and two chamber pieces. Additionally, he composed incidental music to a play and arranged several folk songs, including *Ukolébavka*, a lullaby on a Hebrew text. The

[5] Material from this section largely synthesized from: Milan Slavický, *Gideon Klein: A Fragment of Life and Work* (Prague: Helvetica-Tempora, 1996).

music for the song cycle *Die Pest* (The Plague) and for the play *The Great Shadow* has been lost, as are various sketches and arrangements that have only been confirmed through survivor testimony.

Gideon Klein's musical style is generally in a modernist vein, highly chromatic and incorporating expressionist techniques, including free atonality as well as techniques of the Czech school, such as the employment of quarter tones and incorporation of the Moravian modal and rhythmic figures more typically associated with Janáček. Like the other composers in the camp, his instrumental works tend to lean toward the intellectual, absolute forms associated with the neo-classical practices of the inter-war period including Fantasy and Fugue, Sonata, Duo, Trio, Prelude, and String Quartet. It is somewhat difficult to get a clear picture of Klein's individual style, partially because most of his pre-war works were composed within a context of his studies or shortly thereafter. As mature and professional as they may be, it is likely these works were written for or influenced by particular assignments or specific mentors and may have been experimental in nature rather than fully representative of his personal style. Additionally, his musical legacy is highly interwoven with identity issues as identified by his biographers. That his music is at times Czech, Moravian, Jewish, Janáčkian, Novákian, Schoenbergian, or particularly individualistic, has all been claimed, creating various biases and, in some cases, myopic and/or mythologised readings of his output.[6] However, since it is impossible to ascertain what his style would have been like if he had survived and engaged in a long-term career, it is necessary to accept that his main body of works represents his mode of personal expression. What becomes especially apparent when his entire output is considered, is

[6] Variations of claims of specific influence on Klein's style appear in many writings and papers, including: Ibid.; Freeman, "Gideon Klein, Moravian Composer"; Beckerman, "Klein the Janáčkian"; Lubomír Peduzzi, *Musik im Ghetto Theresienstadt: kritische Studien* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2005).

that for Gideon Klein, more so than all the other composers, his final work is stylistically quite different from his earlier works. It is still complex, written in a neo-classical form, however, as we will see, it is much more communicative and emotionally expressive than his other works, and, like with the other Terezín composers, comments specifically on his personal situation.

String Trio

The final movement of Gideon Klein's *String Trio* is dated October 7, 1944 making it his last work and, as far as we can tell, the last written composition completed in Terezín before the October 16th transport on which Klein, Ullmann, Krása and Haas were sent. The trio is in three movements and is scored for violin, viola and cello, the same configuration as Krása's string works *Tanec* and *Passacaglia*. We don't know if it was written with a specific group of performers in mind, although his biographer Slavický asserts that it was for an ensemble pieced together from players remaining in the camp after the transports began in September and he suggests that Klein had to limit the technical complexity in the work.[7] This is a doubtful claim, possibly an attempt to elevate Klein above his peers. It is likely that if Klein had a particular group in mind, it would have been players from the Terezín Quartet, with whom he performed on a regular basis and who were on the same transport as Klein in October: Karel Fröhlich on violin, Romuald Süssmann on viola, and Freddy Mark on cello.[8] At any rate, there is no record of the trio ever being

[7] Slavický, *Gideon Klein*, 50.

[8] That Klein wrote the trio for this group is recollected in Solarová, "Gideon Klein," 244; and the transport date of the Terezín Quartet members' departure from Terezín is mentioned in Philip Rosen and Nina Apfelbaum, *Bearing Witness: A Resource Guide to Literature, Poetry, Art, Music, and Videos by Holocaust Victims and Survivors* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 169.

performed in Terezín and although it is not generally considered his most virtuosic showcase, it has considerable depth and substance, situating it for many scholars as a significant, if not his most important, work.[9]

The historical moment at which Klein's *String Trio* appears is a particularly traumatic and fateful one for nearly all the musicians and artists in Terezín, and most of the population of the camp. Since the May transports that solved the "overcrowding" problem prior to the Red Cross visit, no major transports had left Terezín. Lederer recalls that prisoners expected transports to begin again once the filming and the "embellishment" project were completed, and on September 23, 1944 an official announcement confirming their fears arrived from headquarters. A total of 5,000 able-bodied men under the age of fifty were to be sent out on September 26 and 27. At this point many exemptions were still in effect: those who were Danish or Dutch nationals, war veterans, and "prominent" figures were still protected.[10] As it happened, the transports did not begin until September 27 and the first major one of 2,499 people left on September 28, headed to Auschwitz.[11] From that time through to the end of October, transports were announced regularly and by mid-October, exemptions had been abolished and no one was protected from the deportations, including much of the Jewish Administration. Between September 28 and October 28, 1944, 18,402 people were transported from Terezín to Auschwitz, a full two-thirds of the population that had been recorded at the end of August.[12] Between September 5, when Klein dated the completion of the *Allegro* movement of his *String Trio* and

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[9] Beckerman, "Klein the Janáčkian," 24; Freeman, "Gideon Klein, Moravian Composer," 17; Nir Cohen, "Gideon Klein: Life and Music, Working Paper 126/2014," *European Forum at the Hebrew University*, 2014, 32, http://www.ef.huji.ac.il/publications/Nir%20Cohen%20Working%20Paper%202014.pdf.

[10] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt,* 148–9.

[11] Terezin Initiative, "Transports To/from Terezín."

[12] Ibid.; Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt,* 248.

when the third movement was finished on October 7, the camp had experienced major upheaval and was generally shrouded in a mood of gloom and distress.[13] There are varying accounts of what people knew about where the transports were headed, but as the transports increased in frequency, it was apparent that no one would be spared the devastating effects of being separated from loved ones or being sent themselves to an unknown destination. It is unclear what effect such distressing circumstances had on Klein, however, his final piece shows a real sense of transformation in terms of musical language, and it contains many references to death and captivity, amongst others, elements that were not associated with his previous works.

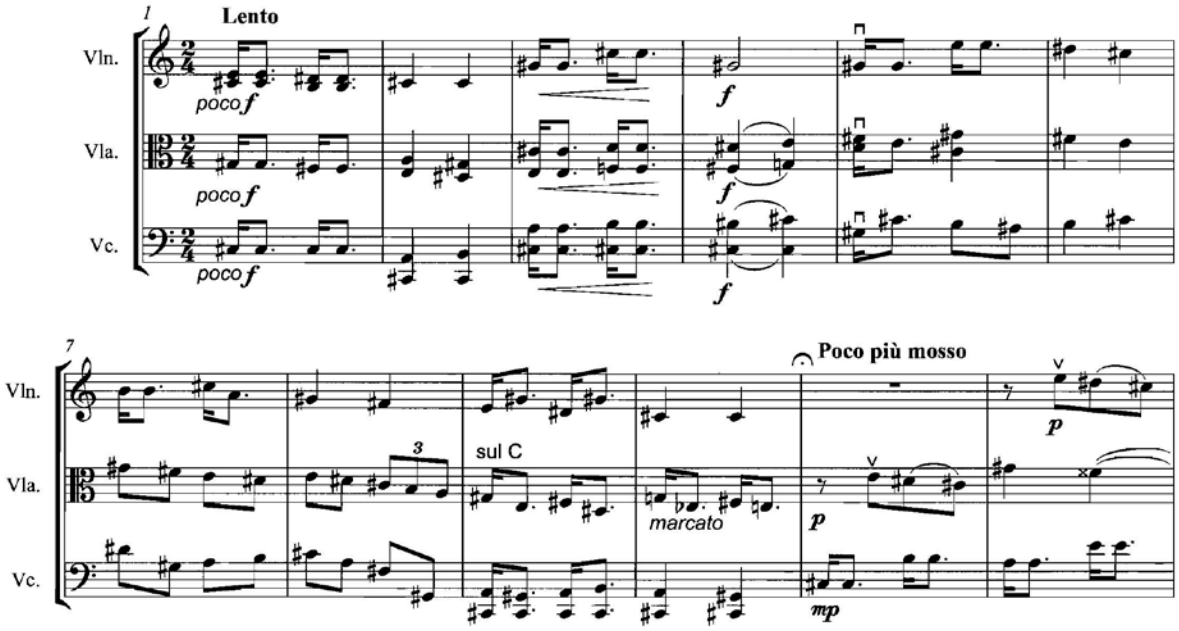
Variations on a Moravian Folk Song

The second movement of the quartet is a theme with eight variations, simply titled *Variace na moravskou lidovou píseň* (Variations on a Moravian Folk Song). It has a general tonality of C-sharp minor, is marked *Lento* and, at nearly double the performance length of both the other movements combined, carries the most emotional weight of the three movements. The main theme is a nearly exact transcription of "Tá kněždubská věž" (The Kněždub Tower), a song contained in collections and recordings of Eastern European folk songs in the first decades of the twentieth century.[14] The key feature of the theme is its dotted rhythm – a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth. The entire melody spans an octave and the anapest rhythm and contour provide the foundation for the variations (Figure 28).

[13] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 149.

[14] The song appears in *Slovácké jednohlasné písně* (Mor. Ostrava: Vydal A. Perout, 1918); A copy of the song score and recording are available in Beckerman, "Postcard from NY."

Figure 28. Gideon Klein, "Variations on a Moravian Folk Song", from String Trio, mm. 1-12.[15]



As noted, the variations open in a very traditional manner, presenting the melody in its entirety (not including repeats), however, Klein quickly digresses from the Classical model, abandoning the melody almost immediately and subsequently moving away from the connective elements of rhythm and phrase shape, as the following summary outlines. The first variation brings the dotted figure in the cello line in an altered version of the melody, where the second note is displaced by an octave. The upper parts are presented in canon, presenting the theme in straight eighth notes, maintaining the intervallic relationships between the opening notes. In the second variation, the dotted figure is again presented in the cello and the first bars of the melody appear, although in augmentation, against a pizzicato accompaniment in the upper voices. By the third variation, however, the melody and its associated rhythmic figure have disappeared. In its place is an *Allegro feroce* dance-like section that alternates between 5/8 and 4/8 time, first based on triadic structures and then to

[15] Gideon Klein, *String Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello* (Berlin; Praha: Bote & Bock; Ceský hudební fond, 1993), 5.

more dissonant relationships, including tritones, diminished thirds, and other discordant intervals. The variation begins in B-flat major, quite far removed from the opening C-sharp minor, moving eventually to an F-sharp tonal centre, again, setting up highly dissonant tonal relationships. The dotted rhythm appears briefly at measure 54 in the violin, marked "Sul G", which puts the theme a major seventh above first position, making it challenging for the violinist but creates a more intense timbre because of the string's natural resonance, a quality often associated with darkness in pedagogical and orchestration literature, making it a reasonably conspicuous directive in this context.[16] The theme disappears after only three measures and the variation ends with a fortissimo phrase, with each note heavily accented. The cello supports the upper voices with long trills, alternating on F-sharp and B before settling on an F-sharp, C-sharp double stop with the viola offering an F-natural an octave higher. The theme does not return again until the final *Grave* variation where the rhythm is momentarily reversed into a dotted eighth-sixteenth figure, ending the movement with a funeral march. That Klein chose to title this movement "Variations on a Moravian Folk Song" and then proceeded to depart so quickly and drastically from a Classical Theme and Variations model, where some aspect of the melodic line would remain present in each variation, is of interest.

Similar to Krása's *Passacaglia*, the form itself plays a key role in creating a rich interpretive environment. The morose, yet unspecified Moravian melody creates an outward impression of simplicity and transparency. Outside of a governing body who censured a melancholic musical mood, or one of anti-Czech inclinations (which, of course the Nazis were, but this was one of many restrictions that were periodically lifted in Terezín), there is seemingly little in the theme to cause offence. The idea of

[16] Dave Black and Tom Gerou, *Essential Dictionary of Orchestration* (Alfred Music, 1998), 37.

Moravia evokes imagery of peasants and idyllic, pastoral scenery; hardly a threatening picture. However, this simple theme and variations seems to have a lot to communicate, most expressly messages of death and suffering; indications of the dark underworld of Terezín concealed behind a façade. Although I have addressed this in previous chapters in other Terezín music, this movement is particularly demonstrative of Beckerman's writings on the poignant significance of the inner sections or "middles" in music.

In Beckerman's discussion of the importance of the interior themes in music, he theorises that despite traditional analytic models that privilege opening or "main" themes, it is often the middle sections of works in which the rare, expressive, and often difficult emotional passages occur.[17] Themes of death, hyper-nationalism, unconscious or "shadowy recollections", other types of secrets or confessions, and political or dissenting statements, often arise in middle sections of works where their presence can be overlooked by the less vigilant listener. One aspect of his theory suggests that the middle serves as a protected space for difficult yet hyper-expressive themes, "Since the middle is a place of psychoacoustic weakness, it is an ideal position to hide those things that are again too troubling, too sexy, or too weird to touch the rest of the world. Maybe no one will notice (of course they do)."[18] Beckerman offers Klein's *String Trio* as a particularly apt example of a work in which political or subversive messages are contained beneath the veneer of a conventional form. "The bloated middle of the Klein Trio speaks of hyperexpressivity, where every aspect of the thing is distended by the attempt to state the unutterable."[19]

[17] Beckerman, "Middles."

[18] Ibid., 175.

[19] Beckerman, "Reverse Potemkin."

So what is it exactly that the variations movement contains? As with the variations works of Krása and Haas, as I have demonstrated in previous chapters, Klein incorporated references to his Terezín experience through quotations and allusions to themes of captivity/freedom, death, and to his native home of Moravia. Beckerman has written extensively on these aspects of Klein's trio, so I will only briefly summarise these quotations and allusions before moving to broader questions of Klein's musical language.[20] Klein did not specifically name the Moravian folk song that forms the basis of the variations and unfortunately, there is no available information about why Klein chose the song. It is possible he knew it from his childhood; it is equally possible he came across it in a songbook in Terezín and chose it for its dramatic potential, either musically or textually. The song opens with a Moravian scene:

> The Knezdub tower is high,
> A wild goose flew up to it
>
> Go Janicek, get the rifle
> Aim it at the tower
> He shot the goose

According to Beckerman, the wild goose is a common symbol of freedom in Moravian folklore and that this representation, connected to imagery of towers [and rifles], may have resonated "somehow with either Klein's personal condition or with his desire to make a broader statement about the collective [situation in Terezín]"[21] Additionally, later verses of the song portray a heartfelt farewell and refer to themes of violence and betrayal. As Beckerman notes, there is no way to "prove" Klein was aware of these connotations or chose the song for its textual implications, however the

[20] Beckerman, "Klein the Janáčkian"; Beckerman, "Postcard from NY"; Beckerman, "Slow Dissolves"; Beckerman, "Middles"; Beckerman, "Meditation."

[21] Beckerman, "Meditation."

imagery is strong and suggestive, and cannot be ignored when "trying to imagine what Klein might have wanted to communicate".[22]

Whether or not the text is sufficient to provide a definitive interpretation is not entirely significant, since the score moves beyond the textual associations, suggesting even further that Klein was using his music to explore themes relevant to the grim difficulties he was experiencing. The *Lento* directive, the dotted anapest rhythm of the main theme and the melancholic C-sharp minor mode, present the movement as a type of funeral march, with the genre further substantiated by the *Grave* marking of the final variation. The final cadence of the first variation corresponds to a passage from Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder,* and later variations reveal links to the appearance of the Angel of Death from Suk's *Asrael Symphony* and to the *Libera Me* from Verdi's *Requiem*.[23] The outer movements support these utterances of death themes, incorporating a quote from the opening of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade,* "Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer." (My peace is gone, my heart is heavy), as well as Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin*.[24] The centrepiece of the work, according to Beckerman, is an interruption by the cello at m. 87 that is highly expressive, marked *con gran espressione quasi improvisato senza rigore.* Additionally, it is also simultaneously marked *con sordino* (with mute) and *forte,* producing a "strangled" sound, another expressively targeted effect that adds to the layers of incongruence and interpretive possibilities. This moment, which is introduced by a descending third sequence that Beckerman connects to Klein's 1943 Hölderlein Madrigal, referring to a passage containing the declamation "I am no more" is accompanied by a sequence

[22] Ibid.

[23] These references are noted in many of Beckerman's works, but especially in ibid.

[24] Ibid.

from Janáček's *Intimate Letters* Quartet.[25] All of this, Beckerman concludes, situates this passage as a key moment; a grand declaration of personal anguish, the cello serving as a "human proxy", a grand "*nápěvek mluvy"*(speech melody, in a Janáčkian sense) in which Klein ultimately reaches outside of the music, uttering a "kind of ultimate personal protest".[26] Although there may be disparity in interpretations of these references, there are substantial indications in this work that Klein is exploring themes that have special significance when the context of their provenance is concerned. This is a work that is connected to its author's experience, and is particular to the situation experienced by those in Terezín.

Returning to the questions of Klein's choice of formal structure, in some ways, it is possible to consider the variations as free form, as Slavický suggests, if we think of it a Romantic era styled fantasy on a theme. However, it seems more likely that this variations work does not comprise an outgrowth of the melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic qualities of the theme, or even its general character or mood, which would be a reasonable expectation of a fantasy-variations. Instead, it seems that he chose the Classical variations style, a form with lucidity, classicism, and heritage at its core, and used that as a framing device for his deep and consequential expressions. He set up the theme and the first couple of variations in a traditional manner, superficially; simply as a ruse, indicating to a casual listener or censor that the piece is simply an innocuous set of variations. Once the ruse had been established, he then suddenly, and somewhat frenetically, moved to extremes of dynamic ranges, tempo changes, and registers. Variation III, for example, is marked *forte* and *Allegro feroce* – quite a divergence from the opening *Lento* and *piano* dynamic. In the remainder of the

[25] Beckerman, "Klein the Janáčkian," 26–28.

[26] Ibid., 29; Beckerman, "Middles," 179.

variation set, he proceeded to introduce new material, insert references and quotations, and somewhat chaotically cram the movement with a maximum of expressive markings and assorted rhythmic and melodic figures that are seemingly unrelated, a technique not characteristic of variations form and one that conspicuously draws attention to itself. It is doubtful that Klein's appropriation of the Classical variations form for his most expressive work was coincidence, but rather that the form itself enabled him to be communicative and dramatic in ways that may otherwise have been prohibited or prevented.

The Composer as Wild Goose

Although there is no real doubt that Terezín counts as a severe, authoritarian environment, it is ambiguous how large a role censorship played within the camp. Certainly, the artists received harsh, tortuous punishments for painting and smuggling realistic portrayals of the camp. However, on the other hand, for certain groups some sense of cultural normalcy existed. For those who were employed as musicians through the *Freizeitgestaltung* (Leisure time committee), basic survival was less of a daily concern than it was for those with hard labour duties. The officially sanctioned permissions of musical performances and theatre productions, including cabaret, jazz, and even atonal works in Viktor Ullmann's "Studio for New Music", suggests that for the most part, those interned in Terezín were not subjected to the artistic limitations and censorship experienced elsewhere. Survivors such as actress Zdenka Fantlová regularly recall the sense of freedom experienced within the camp, no longer being subjected to the strict regulations, curfews, and limitations on the content of music

and theatrical performances.[27] She describes the situation cynically, "The Germans knew that we were sentenced to death and they thought, 'In the meantime, let them play, let them laugh, let them sing, because soon the smile will be wiped off their faces'."[28] Zdenek Lederer echoes this sentiment, asserting "[The Nazis] only cared for the success of their propaganda stunt and the smooth progress of deportations: cultural freedom would lull the prisoners into a false sense of security and would also provide a harmless outlet for any will to resistance. Thus, up to a point, cultural freedom was a drug administered to the prisoners which would keep them contented."[29] Karel Berman, however, recalled that their activities were not entirely exempt from censure or risk. He claimed, "We were indeed risking our necks when we sang in the concentration camp with my chorus 'The hour has struck-the gates are opening' from Smetana's 'Brandenburgs in Bohemia', or when we sang in Czech, the opera 'In the Well', though it was officially forbidden to speak Czech in public."[30] The degree to which any artistic works were overtly censored is uncertain, but is part of the underlying mysteries of the camp narratives.

One commonly recounted story demonstrating this ambiguity relates to Viktor Ullmann's opera *The Kaiser of Atlantis*, which was a thinly veiled satire of Hitler and the Nazi regime. After the dress rehearsal in October 1944, the performance was cancelled and a transport shortly thereafter deported many of those involved in the production to Auschwitz where most perished on arrival. Many versions of this story suggest or claim outright that the Nazis had found out about the performance and

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[27] Simon Broughton, *The Music of Terezín*, DVD (AVRO, 1993).

[28] Daniel Rubin, "Art in the Midst of Hell," *Philly.com*, accessed September 6, 2013, http://articles.philly.com/2004-09-26/news/25378076_1_terezin-concentration-camp-theresienstadt.

[29] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 126.

[30] Berman, "Memories," 236.

intervened.[31] Other versions suggest that it was the Jewish Council of Elders who censored it because of fear of detection by the Nazis.[32] While it's highly unlikely that the choice of who was on the transports was a punitive gesture relating to the opera, this example suggests that there was a grey area surrounding this issue and that while there may not have been an official policy detailing what and was not allowed, there was definitely some code in place. Lederer wrote of the overall camp environment, "To define the character of the community in Theresienstadt is an extremely difficult task. Some of its features were reminiscent of ancient slavery, and others of modern totalitarianism, while certain features cannot clearly be defined."[33] He ends his summary of the camp structure claiming that Theresienstadt was not "the mere realisation of a torturer's dream, but as a typical product of the Nazi system: a helpless and powerless community beset with fears and oppressed by ruthless and maddened tyrants."[34]

That fear and oppression were constant underlying features of life in the camp is evident in more survivor accounts than not, and it is likely that had an impact on the compositional choices. Michael Beckerman explores this issue of censorship in Terezín, pointing out that the term "censorship" encompasses a range of possibilities from self-censorship to complete totalitarian censorship that is well-defined by a regime, and the various issues that span the gamut of the range. He suggests that it is the less-clearly defined forms of censorship, the "secondary" i.e. non-official forms that raise the fundamental questions that relate to the Terezín composers:

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[31] Mark Ludwig, "Tales of Terezín," *Index on Censorship* 27, no. 6 (1998): 165.

[32] Anne D Dutlinger, *Art, Music, and Education as Strategies for Survival: Theresienstadt, 1941-45* (New York: Herodias, 2001), 132.

[33] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt,* 85–86.

[34] Ibid., 87.

> Regimes of terror do not really need to do much in the way of censoring. A few garrotings, a hanging here and there and the population quickly gets the idea of what is permissible and takes it upon themselves to create standards accordingly. … It is understood that there is no precise definition of what [a censoring environment] is and how it works and yet we may agree that Terezín is an environment where censorship of various kinds, from black-lined postcards to self-censorship is part of the fabric of life.[35]

It is evident that Terezín was a censored environment and that as such, it certainly limited the ways in which communication occurred in all aspects of life, making it even more crucial that the codes and messages are examined since it was one of the few ways they could communicate.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how communicative composers in Terezín considered their music since we don't have any documentation outside of the musical scores to offer testimony. Perhaps, however, by looking at the works and writings of Dmitri Shostakovich, whose compositional technique involved a large degree of quotations, allusions, and otherwise seemingly hidden communications we can come closer to confirming the traces and suggestions we are able to determine in the Terezín works. Shostakovich worked within the confines of the Soviet Communist regime and experienced the oppression of Stalin's regime directly. His struggles against the political regimes have been well documented and written about in great detail, particularly regarding his use of quotations and representational references to his personal situation and views. His Eighth String Quartet *In memoriam to the Victims of War and Fascism* in many ways offers a corollary to the 1944 works of Gideon Klein and his colleagues. The quartet was written in 1960, well after the death of Stalin, but still under a totalitarian regime, and it seems to be attempting to address emotional wounds and issues relating to victims of WWII. Like Klein in his *String Trio,* Shostakovich embedded several quotations into his Opus 110 *String Quartet*. He

[35] Beckerman, "Slow Dissolves," 4.

used his musical moniker D-S-C-H throughout (in musical notation D, E-flat, C, B), often using the figure to introduce extra-musical references, drawing even more attention to their appearance. Among these are such things as a well-known revolutionary Russian folk song "Exhausted by the Hardships of Prison" and also a reference to Shostakovich's own opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District* that specifically alludes to a period of incarceration before dying. He reuses the Jewish dance theme from his earlier Piano Trio, Op.67 and incorporates the "Fate" motif from Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. There are also other quotations from his previous compositions, including his *Fifth Symphony* and *First Cello Concerto*, thus adding an autobiographical dimension. His use of semantically-laden references and his experience working under the auspices of the totalitarian Soviet regime has been given much attention by scholars and may provide an analogous way to approach the Terezín intertextual references.

One of the most recent, detailed discussions of Shostakovich's quartet and the rhetoric of his quotations has been offered by Peter Rabinowitz. In his examination, which is characteristic of many inquiries into the subject, he categorises possible types of references, linking the musical analysis with narrative and literary theories. His designations specify references that provide information and ones that serve as invitations, indoctrinations or as acts of instruction.[36] Although these designations seem to function more clearly in the literary realm, he ascribes these traits to musical references as well. As a way of dealing with the particularly ethereal aspects of many musical allusions, Rabinowitz introduces the concept of *Ghost References*. These are musical references that exist within, or "haunt" a work, but that are not concretely

[36] Peter J. Rabinowitz, "The Rhetoric of Reference; Or, Shostakovich's Ghost Quartet," *Narrative* 15, no. 2 (May 2007): 244–5.

decipherable or easily interpreted.[37] He points out that these references are problematic and troubling:

> because they lead us to believe that there may be rules at play – especially rules of coherence – other than the ones we're employing. … We're never sure of whether or not they're actually there. (In this sense, confirming a ghost reference is like confirming a fingerprint: it's never clear how many points are sufficient to declare a match.) And beyond that, we're never sure of their interpretive consequences.[38]

Rabinowitz's classification attributes Shostakovich's quotations to an intellectual tradition of literary and musical referencing that enhances and nuances a listener's experience. These references then, are a way of connecting with an audience, inviting savvy listeners into the composer's inner circle, experiencing nuances that are subtly out of reach to an average listener. Rabinowitz notes that the subtlety and ambiguity of these types of ghost references, "increases the pleasure of reading (or listening) by deepening the level of intellectual collaboration with the implied author, by forcing us to slow down and read more carefully and think more expansively."[39] He sums up his assessment of the Shostakovich quartet with this: "I don't have any answers to these questions – but they certainly do haunt my experience of the Eighth Quartet. Haunt it – and enrich it, as well. This sense of enrichment may well offer a way of escaping from the interpretive doubt I expressed earlier."[40] Unfortunately, his conclusion ends up reinforcing the interpretive doubt and is somewhat evasive of the larger questions of meaning and significance.

That quotation and allusion, and the broader category of *borrowing* are common in Western Art Music is not in question here, nor is that they have elusive

[37] Ibid., 249.

[38] Ibid., 247.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 250–1.

interpretive properties.[41] There is a strong tradition stemming largely from the Romantic Era of composers using quotation as a way of relating to the elite intellectuals in the audience, offering an "inside joke" to listeners who know the works cited. Keppler wrote about this phenomenon in the 1950's, asserting, "One thing is certain. Incidental quotation has a flavor of intellectual appeal. … Whatever the composer's private rationale, a high incidence of such quotations in his work indicates a favoring of the upper strata of his audience." Ives' quotations have been treated to similar assessments, including the evaluation that his references are more or less "secrets" that can be decoded by an intelligent and reflective listener, who "opens himself to the richest and fullest meaning of the work, [thus hearing] the piece 'musico-philosophically'".[42] Fortunately the disciplines of semiotics and topic theory have advanced the discipline beyond these overly simplified analyses, however, Rabinowitz's conclusion that Shostakovich's quotations remain in the realm of entertainment for educated listeners, suggests that there is more work to be done in this area.

Although many writers about musical quotation and allusion touch on the idea of coded or secret messages, there is very little written about it as a means of communicating or expressing information that may be dangerous or otherwise censored; this may be a reflection of the fact that music is not directly communicative in the way language or pictures are. However, music is an expressive medium, so this must at least be considered. David Fanning suggests that this is at play in Shostakovich's music, but he also concludes that interpretations of these intertextual

[41] Controversies relating to allusion often surround Brahms' work which is outlined nicely in Raymond Knapp, "Brahms and the Anxiety of Allusion," *Journal of Musicological Research* 18, no. 1 (November 1998): 1–30.

[42] Christopher Ballantine, "Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (April 1, 1979): 180.

elements are futile. “By definition,” he states, “the subtext is partly left to the imagination of the listener; it is never so blatantly spelled out as to endanger the composer’s safety or to make his intention verifiable except on a balance of probabilities which may always remain contentious.”[43] I would argue that is contentious and somewhat nihilistic to disregard music’s communicative capacity and considering the extreme circumstances under which Klein and his colleagues were writing, it makes sense to approach their references with a sense of seriousness and gravity, recognising that subversive communication is a normal response to censorship and that these types of references were ideally suited to pass unnoticed by the camp censors.

In his work, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Leo Strauss specifically addresses this issue, considering the ways persecuted writers throughout history have, by necessity, developed techniques of “writing between the lines” so as to express what may otherwise be dangerous or detrimental if it were presented directly. He writes, “The influence of persecution on literature is precisely that it compels all writers who hold heterodox views to develop a particular technique of writing, the technique which we have in mind when speaking of writing between the lines.”[44] He suggests, like the writers above, that the references are part of an intellectual tradition, however, from a slightly different perspective. “Persecution, then, gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and therewith to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers

[43] David Fanning and Laurel Fay, “Shostakovich, Dmitry,” ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52560pg3#S52560.3.

[44] Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), 24.

only."[45] Strauss stresses the need to consider this important aspect when looking to interpret or analyse past texts, particularly those written by persecuted individuals.

Although there are many unanswerable interpretive questions and unsolvable problems that will underscore attempts to decode musical expression, considering the high stakes and extreme environment of Terezín, it seems intellectually and morally irresponsible to ignore or deny the more oblique intertextual aspects of Klein's trio, especially considering that this was not a typical mode of composition for him. Unlike in the pre-Terezín works of Pavel Haas, prior to the summer of 1944 Klein's compositions did not incorporate quotation or veiled references. With the exception of his inclusion of a song from Janáček's as the basis of his *Divertimento* from 1939-40, before he wrote the trio, Klein's instrumental music was typically non-referential, suggesting that it is even more crucial in this context to pay attention and consider that Klein's composition may be, as Beckerman suggests, an example of political action, functioning as a "message in a bottle".[46] Unlike Shostakovich, who was able to at least give some hints about his intentions through conversations, letters, and diaries (which, incidentally did little to clarify his intent), Klein was in the position of needing to communicate a situation that was not only grim, but extremely urgent as well. Perhaps then, we can agree with Kofi Agawu from *Playing with Signs*. "If a central task of the composer is to reach his audience, then a central problem for the analyst is to uncover the various dimensions of this communicative process."[47] Returning to Strauss' suggestion, despite the ambiguities inherent in I think there is a great deal of truth about crucial things presented exclusively between the lines in his

[45] Ibid., 25.

[46] Beckerman, "Middles," 179.

[47] V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4.

music that is difficult to approach but that is fundamental to creating a full and rich understanding of this work.

Questions of Language

As I suggested in the previous section, Klein's musical language changed significantly in the last months of his life. His other major Terezín instrumental work, the *Piano Sonata* of 1943 exists in the sound world of Berg and Schoenberg, and is well in the tradition of his previous works such as *Divertimento* and *Duo for Violin and Viola (in quarter tone system),* which are both highly expressive of the systems within which he was educated. The piano sonata is atonal and highly chromatic with dense textures and twelve-tone developmental properties. Slavický highlights the marked change of language, noting that the trio reveals a defined stylistic movement away from the strong expressionism of the sonata to a more Janáčkian idiom whose language is of a contrasting polarity.[48] Freeman also notes this difference, albeit from a perspective that favours the trio, commenting that the sonata "is the most extrovert[ed], even aggressive, of Klein's works, and the only one in which he appears to succumb to the stark rhythms and bald motivic shapes hammered home with mindless truculence by the proponents of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*."[49] He conjectures that in the trio, "It is almost as if he set out to eliminate those Bergianisms [of the piano sonata] that were already fading from his work, because they had become literally foreign to him."[50] It seems worth asking why this composer who had been known and acclaimed for his music that was expressly situated the intellectual tradition of the early twentieth century, suddenly turn to a Classical form typically

[48] Slavický, *Gideon Klein*, 48.

[49] Freeman, "Gideon Klein, Moravian Composer," 15.

[50] Ibid., 18.

disparaged for its vapidness and superficiality, and begin using referential, accessible and programmatic elements in his final work?

Klein's Previous Works

Before continuing the discussion of Klein's communicative shift, I will take a moment to pause and give some brief examples of what elements I believe demonstrate his conscious move to an altered form of compositional expression. This is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion or even a comprehensive analysis, however by briefly examining the key characteristics of two of his previous works, I hope the disparity between his styles becomes more apparent. For comparative purposes, I will look at the aforementioned *Piano Sonata*, written in Terezín in 1943 and a variations movement from his *Divertimento* of 1939-40 which, like his Terezín variations, are based on a Czech song, in this case, one by Janáček.

In the literature discussing Klein's works, assertions that a sense of "Czechness" or of Janáček's influence are evident in his music are common, by which the writer is generally referring to rhythmic elements that suggest folk dances, or narrow-ranged melodies set to rhythmic patterns that reflect Czech speech. Equally common are commentaries on Klein's instrumental music that often include descriptors terms such as, *dense*, *Bergian*, *harsh*, *atonal*, *free-form*, *difficult*, and other indicators situating his music in the modernist tradition of the *Second Viennese School*. Even a cursory glance at his scores or a quick listen to a section of his *Duo* or *Piano Sonata* would confirm that his instrumental music exists in a sound world removed from the more accessible canon of Western Classical Music. Although these descriptors predominantly ring true, they may also suggest homogeneity within his works or an unstructured approach to composition, which would be misleading.

Sonáta pro klavír

Klein's *Piano Sonata* of 1943 is often compared with the *String Trio* since it was his most recently composed instrumental piece and was also written in Terezín. The 1943 work was dedicated to the composer's sister and is his only work for solo piano. It is not my intention to provide a thorough analysis, but I would like to highlight a few salient features of the piece that demonstrate some of the common compositional traits that are in stark contrast to his approach in the Moravian variations.

First of all, in the sonata, the main theme is not melodic and with only brief exceptions (such as the second theme at m. 31 – Figure 30), melodies are not a defining feature of the music. In all three movements, he favours vertical construction over horizontal, and uses the widest range possible on the instrument. In the first movement, his motifs primarily move in a disjunct configuration, containing wide leaps which have tertial relationships but also include minor 2nds and 9ths, tritones, and other dissonant intervals (Figure 29). Even in his gentler sections, such as at measure 31, a phrase marked *cantabile e espressivo*, a melody is not evident. The upper voice opens with an interval of a diminished fifth that moves to the seventh of the chord before proceeding primarily in quartal intervallic relationships. The inner voice is more conjunct, but still, hardly lyrical since it consists of a straightforward chromatic scale. The bass enters at a diminished octave below the tenor and accompanies the upper voices with rocking eighth notes that outline a diminished fifth before moving to a more chromatic configuration (Figure 30). The second and third movements are no different; his themes are based on short, highly chromatic motifs that repeatedly move between the upper and lower registers.

Figure 29. Gideon Klein, Piano Sonata, mm. 1-2.[51]

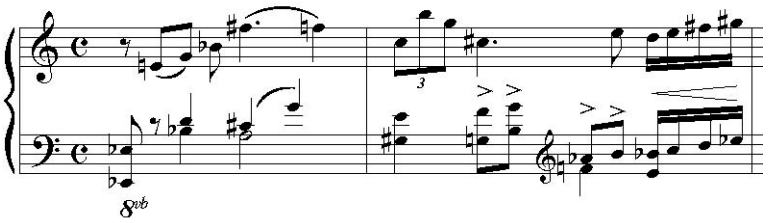
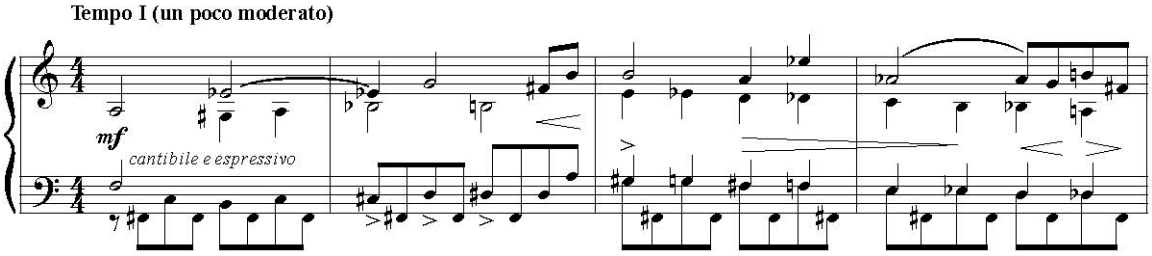


Figure 30. Gideon Klein, Piano Sonata, mm. 31-34.[52]

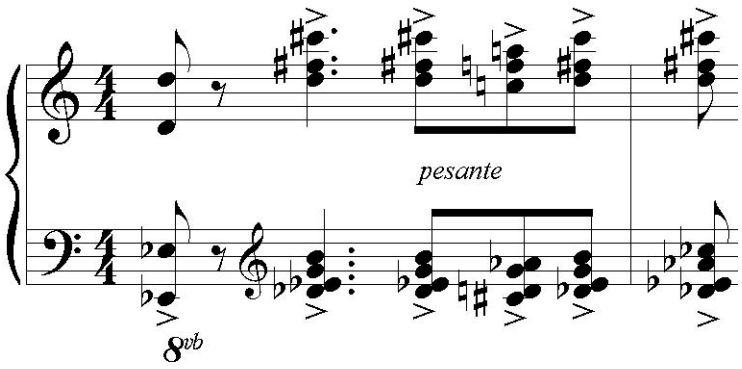


The second important feature of the sonata is that it is atonal. There are no key signatures, nor do any of the movements contain even a rough semblance of a tonal centre. Flats and sharps are used almost interchangeably; bar 3 for example, has a progression in the left hand that moves from F-sharp to G and then back, but the downward return is spelled as G-flat In m. 13, this practice is even more evident through his chord spellings; the bottom note is D-flat while the top note is C-sharp two notes that on the piano, at least, are identical. The bottom D-flat is even respelled as C-sharp to mirror the movement of the upper chord in the middle of the progression. This passage also highlights his approach to harmony. His chord choices are not intended to be harmonic, instead he sets up dissonant clusters of chromatic tones that are combined to create a heavy, *pesante* quality (Figure 31).

[51] Gideon Klein, *Sonata for Piano*, ed. Eliška Kleinová (Praha: Panton, 1991), 3.

[52] Ibid., 5.

Figure 31. Gideon Klein, Piano Sonata, m.13.[53]



Despite the lack of melodic and harmonic elements in the work, the sonata is carefully crafted. One common technique Klein relies heavily on is repetition of short motifs and rhythmic patterns that create cohesion. The first movement incorporates various versions of a figure consisting of an upward moving triplet followed by a descending three-note pattern that is either in eighths or dotted-eighths. The third movement is based on a pattern that opens the movement. First the gesture is written as a trill, and later it is written out in sixteenth notes. The rhythmic pulse is the key driver of the movement and it is consistently highlighted with trills, grace notes, and heavy gestures on the downbeats. On the whole in this piece, his compositional technique relies on short, disjunct, atonal but highly rhythmic motifs that are repeated on different starting notes and that cover a wide register. He favours loud dynamics (*sempre f* in the opening section and many examples of *fortissimo* directives), thick textures, and accented notes that often emphasise the rhythmic aspects. In comparison with the lush harmonic accompaniment of the lyrical C-sharp minor melody in the variations movement of the trio, Klein's sonata exists on a different plane altogether.

[53] Ibid., 3.

Variations on a Theme of Janáček

Between 1939 and 1940, Klein wrote another set of variations on a theme of Moravian origin, this time by Leoš Janáček. The variations appear as the third movement of Klein's *Divertimento for Wind Octet* and are based on the fourteenth song from Janáček's song cycle, *Diary of One Who Disappeared*. The song is a miniature, marked *Adagio* and set to the text "Sunlight on the meadow. Dawn has come then. Oh what I have lost now, oh what I have lost now, who can give back again? Who can give back again?". These variations are dated November, 24, 1939, situating them well before he was sent to Terezín; however they offer some indications of his approach toward the form in general and to his variations techniques.

The theme of the *Adagio* is a presentation of Janáček's song in its entirety. Janáček's piano accompaniment is reproduced as a near-exact copy, with only occasional register shifts to allow for the limits of the instruments. From there, Klein generates five variations on the theme, all clearly demarcated by a fermata over a double bar line. Like in the string trio, Klein does not preserve the phrase structure or periodicity of the main theme and each variation is a different length, the shortest one comprising just seven measures, and the longest one consisting of thirty-one. Each variation is quite different in rhythmic structure, character, and register; however it is apparent that Klein's variation process falls loosely in line with a melodic-outline style of variations, although in a much different way from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century versions.

In this piece, Klein's variation technique in each case is founded on some form of melodic variation, which is not always obvious. In the first variation, the opening theme is presented in the first bassoon, but is altered with octave displacement,

creating a jarring effect and rendering the previously lyrical theme virtually unrecognisable. A second theme, taken from the clarinet line of measures 7-8, is treated similarly in the French horn and figures heavily throughout the variations as well. The second variation presents the opening melody in diminution with altered rhythmic configuration that fits the dance character of the variation as a whole. The clarinet melody is also featured in diminution and is presented in layers, creating an ascending figure that covers the entire available register of the instruments and completes the variation. The remaining variations all incorporate some direct quotation of these two themes but with rhythmic alteration. Like with his *Piano Sonata*, Klein's language is not lyrical or tonal. Despite Janáček's F-minor harmonisation, which Klein opens with, the variations to not have a clear sense of tonality, even within themselves. Again, the distinguishing features of his style are repetition of short motifs, disjunct lines, strong rhythmic figurations, quartal intervallic relationships, dissonant interval clashes, and a general lack of tonal centre.

When we compare these features to the "Variations on a Moravian Folk Song", the most obvious change is the conjunct motion of the melody lines. Even when Klein departs from the actual folk song, the lines typically lie within a vocal range and move in lines that avoid wide and dissonant leaps, with the exception of the sixth variation, which is primarily rhythmic and is unusual within the set. The other feature that is a major shift for Klein in the last variations set is that each variation has a tonal centre. Even though there are highly chromatic passages, the piece opens and closes in C-sharp minor and each variation has an identifiable key area. Another conspicuous change is his move away from quartal relationships, to tertial ones, basing his harmonic and melodic lines primarily on thirds and sixths, situating the musical language within the Western Classical Music Tradition rather than the post-

tonal twentieth-century language he had favoured previously. These factors, in addition to the previously discussed representational and communicative elements, demonstrate quite a radical shift in idiom and overall approach to composition.

Musical Language, War, and the Intellectual

Returning now to the question at hand: why would Klein suddenly turn to a classical form and a referential, accessible programmatic style in his final work? This is, of course, another unanswerable question, however it would appear that Klein, and Ullmann, as we will see in the next chapter, were not alone in their move to a more representative compositional style during this time. It seems that other composers were susceptible to this as well, in particular Béla Bartók. Bartók's music also reflects this aesthetic transformation in his 1943 work *Concerto for Orchestra,* which was considered by critics at the time to be a somewhat radical break in style for the composer. The *New York Times* reviewer Olin Downes commented after its debut in that city:

> It is a wide departure from its author's harsher and more cerebral style. There might even be the suspicion, with an artist of less sincerity than this one, that he had adopted a simpler and more melodic manner with the intention of an appeal to a wider public. … In sum, as he himself has stated, it is an emergence from the pessimism which may have pardonably engulfed him.[54]

Music critics seem to have taken a positive tone toward Bartók's altered musical language; however, in academic circles, the response was much more negative. As David Cooper outlines in detail, writers such as René Leibowitz and Theodor Adorno were highly critical of this move, suggesting it represented artistic and musical

[54] Olin Downes, "Bartók Concerto Introduced Here," *The New York Times*, January 11, 1945.

compromise.[55] Despite the various opinions regarding whether or not the move toward a more "accessible" aesthetic was appropriate, there is a consensus that this move occurred, and like with the Klein variations, it is significant and notable feature of the work. There are several parallels between the Klein and the entire Concerto, however, it is the quotations in the fourth movement in particular that highlights the similarities between Bartók and Klein in this context.

The fourth movement of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, is lyrical and has narrative qualities. Entitled "Intermezzo Interroto", the movement is a literal interruption of the more formal overall composition, and is uncharacteristically programmatic. The main theme is based on a quote from the first movement, a light-hearted folk dance. For the second theme, a well-loved Hungarian folk melody appears in the strings, but is truncated, interrupted by a brass band playing a kitschy waltz tune, which was either from Lehár's light operetta *The Merry Widow* or Shostakovich's popular theme from the *Leningrad Symphony.* The appearance of this popular theme is polemic and highlights some of the interpretive issues inherent in musical quotations, even when we have commentary from the author. There are two common readings of the interruption in this movement. The first is based on an alleged statement by Bartók that he had grown very tired of hearing Shostakovich's theme everywhere, feeling that it was getting much more acclaim than it deserved and so he used the music to "give vent to my anger".[56] The other interpretation, passed down by Bartók's dear friend György Sándor suggests that it was more of a commentary on the debasement of music and decline of high culture in general. In his recollection of Bartók's discussion, the beautiful, lyrical themes represent an idealistic

[55] David Cooper, *Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27–28.

[56] Ibid., 54.

young man serenading his lover. Sándor's descriptions of Bartók's metaphors are recounted:

> The serenade personifies a nation, and the ideal to which he sings is his fatherland. … At this moment a drunken mob comes by – with fifes, trumpets and drums – interrupting the idealist just as he's singing his most beautiful song. The brutal destroyer of this scene reveals himself to be a boot-boy, a rough possessor of power, who leaves ruin and waste behind him wherever he goes; he whistles a trivial melody, a gutter-song which has considerable similarity to a Lehár melody.
>
> Bartók subsequently told Sándor that the boot symbolizes the garrison's power, which, while one is engaged in more idealistic matters, leaves terrible trails of domination and violence in its wake. Indeed, one can hear the drunk throwing up depicted by the tuba. Three merciless punches from the cymbals and a blow with a rifle-butt – all is quiet.[57]

Cooper relates this movement to the intersection of art and politics, claiming that at least in Sándor's view, the piece "seems to reveal an awareness of the impotence of the artist when faced with the mindless violence of an authoritarian regime. In this reading … culture and civilization itself [is being ridiculed] by a drunken mob who sing and play a debased music".[58] Clearly there are many interpretations available for this piece, with its artistic merit estimated at somewhere between inane and completely profound. Also, despite indications, albeit anecdotal and minimal, from the composer, the "truth" of this passage must remain in the sphere of possibility.

There is another caveat necessary here; although Bartók was in exile and was writing during war time, he was in a position where he could play around, inserting a humourous episode which was of little consequence if it were interpreted incorrectly or disregarded. The stakes were much higher for Ullmann, Klein, Krása and Haas, so although they were using similar expressive techniques to Bartók, the effect is

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[57] Ferenc Fricsay, *Über Mozart und Bartok* (Kopenhagen: Edition W. Hansen, 1962), 59–61; translated and quoted in: Cooper, *Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra*, 55.

[58] Cooper, *Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra*, 54.

significantly different. It is unlikely, for example, that Ullmann's incorporation of a quotation from the waltz from *Der Opernbal,* the light operetta he conducted in his youth (a clear parallel to the Bartók waltz quote), was meant to be a slight or a commentary on the demise of music. Rather, it would seem to have a connotation of a memory of a distant place and time as part of a larger discourse about his present situation. However, like in the Klein piece, in Bartók's concerto, there is a clear stylistic move on the part of the composer to an uncharacteristically accessible language, one that incorporates elements of an idealised East-European nationalism, nostalgia, and violence, and that stands out as a work in which the composer is attempting to communicate some kind of message through his compositional choices.

One reason for this shift in language may lie in the ways intellectuals grapple with their changed role and status within the concentration camps. In his account of his experience in Auschwitz, Jean Améry considers, in great depth, the function of intellectualism in such an extreme environment. In addition to the obvious problem of the general unsuitability of many intellectuals for the gruelling physical labour they were expected to perform, Améry deliberates intensely over what it means to be an intellectual in Auschwitz and concludes that "in the camp the intellect in its totality declared itself to be incompetent".[59] For Améry, aesthetics and ontology were particularly useless for the camp inmate living in the same quarters with the world of Auschwitz:

> All those problems that one designates according to a linguistic convention as "metaphysical" became meaningless. … Well now, Being. But in the camp it was more convincingly apparent than on the outside that beings and the light of Being get you nowhere. You could *be* hungry, *be* tired, *be* sick. To say that one purely and simply *is*, made no sense. And existence *as such*, to top it off, became definitively a totally abstract and thus empty concept. To reach out

[59] Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 19; Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Summit Books, 1988).

> beyond concrete reality with words became before our very eyes a game that was not only worthless and an impermissible luxury, but also mocking and evil. Hourly, the physical world delivered proof that its insufferableness could be coped with only through means inherent in that world. In other words: nowhere else in the world did reality have as much effective power as in the camp, nowhere else was reality so real.[60]

As Améry asserts elsewhere, finding a common denominator between Auschwitz and other camps is an exercise in futility, and so in some ways it may be inappropriate to connect his experience to the composers in this study, however, his assertion of the irrelevancy of intellectual abstraction may offer a clue to the reason for the change of language to a more accessible mode at this key historical point in Terezín.

The modernist aesthetic of Klein's earlier works was generally aligned with the interests of the Viennese and Prague intelligentsia in the early part of the twentieth century. From the discovery of cells and microbes in medicine to the exploration of the unconscious in psychology, seeking information that exists beyond the visible realm became an important way of looking at the world. Artists such as Klimt and composers, including Schoenberg, utilised these new discoveries in their works; Klimt incorporated images of cells (particularly reproductive cells) in his paintings, and Schoenberg developed his twelve-tone system, basing compositions on cells, or blocks of material that are manipulated in various ways.[61] In the years leading to the First World War, artists and musicians grappled with finding a language that adequately reflected the contemporary historical moment and revealed a conception of modernity dominated by the progress of science, technology and industry, and by positivism, mechanisation, urbanisation, mass culture and nationalism.[62] Portrayal and

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[60] Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, 19.

[61] Eric R Kandel, *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain : From Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2012), 4.

[62] Leon Botstein, "Modernism," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 21, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40625.

expression of the isolation and alienation of the modern individual and a general spirit of anxiety pervaded the works, reflecting the discontinuity and technological novelty of the early twentieth century. Schoenberg's *Second Viennese School* came to be the musical arm of the artistic movement of *Expressionism* that arose primarily in Vienna artistic circles, exemplifying this move most extremely.

Although the Second Viennese School is seen as being the most influential of the modernist musical movements, there were, by 1933, many possible strands of musical modernism. Leon Botstein outlines five of them, divided along these lines:

> (i) the Second Viennese School, made up of Schoenberg and his followers, particularly Berg and Webern; (ii) the French-Russian axis, dominated by Stravinsky; (iii) German Expressionism, which included Busoni and the young Paul Hindemith; (iv) indigenous Modernisms, characterized by Ives in America, Bartók in Hungary, Szymanowski in Poland, Janáček and Martinů in postwar Czechoslovakia and Carlos Chavez in Mexico; and (v) experimentalism, characteristic of Hába, Varèse and Cowell, that led to the exploration of microtonality, the embrace of ambient sound and the machine and a fascination with non-Western musics and technology.[63]

The move away from the Classical and Romantic ideals of the foundations of melody, rhythm, and harmony to disjunct lines, highly dissonant, chromatic or atonal sonorities, and irregularities in form and rhythm made the music difficult for many to engage with and was seen as particularly intellectual or elitist. The National Socialists identified this music as "anti-nationalist, unnatural, élitist, degenerate, semitic, foreign and subversive" and prohibited its performance and composition in occupied territories beginning in 1938.[64] For many people, this music was, and still is, difficult music to associate with. A humorous reviewer's meditation on Bartók's unpopularity in the United States from 1944 encapsulates a common sentiment toward modernist music:

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

> All the larger works convey the impression unmistakably that they are without the milk of human kindness. They are, most people think, arid, formidable, harsh, gloomy, uncompromising, intellectual in the iciest sense, and just plain tedious. …it is plain to be seen that it is not Bartók's primary purpose to entertain, divert, or even move his audiences. He might as well, so far as most of us listeners are concerned, hang a large placard behind the musicians which reads "If You Don't Like This Music You Can Go Home". … The combination of a dissonant idiom, an unfamiliar (if piquant) melody; a savage, primitive and irregular rhythm, and the composer's own austerity and severity in presenting these materials, results in the almost universal coolness with which Mr. Bartók's music is accepted in this country.[65]

So, on the one hand, modernist music was considered a form of "high art", music that offered a revolutionary approach that both parted ways the hegemonic tonal tradition and came to represent progressive left-wing political views, and on the other hand, it was perceived by the public a form of elitism which is antithetical to the aesthetic interests of audiences.

Before the summer of 1944, it seems apparent that Gideon Klein was still composing within the tradition in which he was trained. Although it is not microtonal or athematic in the way his pre-war compositions were, as I described above, his piano sonata is often described as "Bergian" and consists of non-linear harmonic progressions, atonal passages, disjunct melodic figures and the overall discordant sensibility associated with the modernist schools. This piece, written after his first year in Terezín, suggests that he was, like many others at that time, attempting to maintain sense normalcy and work to maintain the skills that would allow him to pursue a professional music career after the war was over. However, once the autumn transports were altering the environment significantly, and the overall situation was becoming more desperate, it may be that this "uncompromising" model no longer served his artistic needs. Perhaps, as Améry described in his experience, the intellectual required a "social function for his thought" in order for it to have

[65] Rudolph Elie Jr., "The Public vs Bartók: Is There Really a Case?," *Boston Herald*, December 3, 1944; reprinted in Cooper, *Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra*, 86.

importance or meaning.[66] Gideon Klein was not generally perceived as reclusive or introverted, and perhaps at this juncture, ne felt a particular need to connect to a broader audience, either within the camp as a gesture of commiseration, or perhaps with the hope of reaching the outside world as a cry for help. Or possibly the motivation was to leave something for posterity – to counter the ever-pervasive threat of the success of the Nazis' plan to obliterate the Jewish enemy, along with the records of their existence.

Conclusion

The historical moment that intersected with the composition of Klein's "Variations on a Moravian Folk Song", was, more than in the previous Terezín variations works, particularly fraught. Not only had the embellishment program or "beautification" campaign come to an end with the completion of the propaganda film shooting in early September, but the wave of transports had actually started, proving true the inmates' fears that the end of the campaign signalled the end of their usefulness to the Nazis and thus the end of their relative security.[67] Two days after his completion of the variations movement the transports began to be announced, and between September 27th when the transports first left, and the time Klein completed his *String Trio* on October 7, more than 8,500 people had actually been shipped out of the camp and a list with the names of another 1,600 people to be on the October 9 transport had very likely already been published.[68] The exceptions and categorical exemptions were being abolished daily and even the senior officials of the Jewish

[66] Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, 6–7.

[67] Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 146.

[68] Terezin Initiative, "Transports To/from Terezín."

Administration were among those listed and deported. No one was exempt from the crisis created by the disruption.

Klein's trio as a whole, and in particular his variations, show the hallmarks of a person writing under difficult circumstances. His hidden allusions to and quotations of death-related themes presents a dark and complex picture that the simple yet melancholic façade of the folk tune can only superficially cover. For a composer who typically used dissonance and atonality as his mode of expression, this seems an unusual move; if he were simply trying to represent the horror of his environment, his usual musical language might have been sufficient. However, it appears that it was not, in fact, sufficient and that he was deliberately using more accessible and representative compositional techniques that highlight the nuances of the Terezín experience, including captivity, façade, betrayal, death of children, death of loved ones, and personal anguish. These elements are all presented an emotionally moving and engaging manner under the guise of a Classical form that would easily fall under the radar of most censors, making the analyst's task difficult, but all the more crucial, given the high stakes of the situation.

There will never be clear answers to the interpretive doubt Klein's work presents, since there is no singular version of the truth of human experience that will suffice. In Jean Améry's experience in Auschwitz, for example, he found that death was not an abstraction; it was omnipresent, and he felt that poetic expression of death was intolerable; an antisocial act:

> Since in the social sense the death of a human being was an occurrence that one merely registered in the so-called Political Section of the camp with the set phrase "subtraction due to death," it finally lost so much of its specific content that for the one expecting it, its esthetic embellishment in a way became a brazen demand and, in regard to his comrades, an indecent one.[69]

[69] Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, 17.

Améry's contemporary, Primo Levi who also wrote about his experience in the camps, refuted many of Amery's conclusions about the plight of the intellectual in the camp and claimed instead that death was simply a backdrop to the more important things. He claimed,

> On this point, my experience and my recollections diverge from Améry's …I almost never had the time to devote to death; I had many other things to keep me busy – find a bit of bread, avoid exhausting work, patch my shoes, steal a broom, or interpret the signs and faces around me. The aims of life are the best defence against death; and not only in the Lager."[70]

One way or another, we do know that the harsh realities of life (and death) in the Nazi camps affected everyone differently. In Klein's final work we get at least a glimpse of a profound artistic response to an extreme situation.

[70] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 167.

Chapter Six

Viktor Ullmann

In his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Milan Kundera recounts a scene in which his musicologist father calls him into the room, points to the score of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 111* and exclaims "Now I know!" to a question that had been plaguing him for years. The question, we learn, is "Why variations form?" Kundera provides the backdrop:

> Variation form was Beethoven's favourite toward the end of his life. At first glance it seems the most superficial of forms, a simple showcase of musical technique, work better suited to a lacemaker than to a Beethoven. But Beethoven made it a sovereign form (for the first time in the history of music), inscribing in it his most beautiful meditations. Yes, all that is well known. But Papa wanted to know how it should be understood. Why exactly did he choose variations? What meaning is hidden behind it?[1]

Why would Beethoven choose variations in his later years? Why did all the composers in Terezín choose variations for what became their final works? What meaning is implicit in this choice? Kundera describes the irony and frustration of the clarity coming to his father just at the time his illness rendered his aged body and mind powerless to communicate, and so his epiphany remained unarticulated. After his father's death, Kundera grappled with the question himself, postulating that he had come to comprehend the essence of his father's revelation and that variations form functions as a portal to the infinite world of the inner core of being, in the way physicist accesses the depths of the atom. He suggests that variations are a journey to the core essence of understanding, an inverse to the epic genre:

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[1] Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1980), 220–1.

> A symphony is a musical epic. We might say that it is like a voyage leading from one thing to another, farther and farther away through the infinitude of the exterior world. Variations are also like a voyage. But that voyage does not lead through the infinitude of the exterior world. … The voyage of variations leads into that *other* infinitude, into the infinite diversity of the interior world lying hidden in all things.[2]

Seeking the interior world that is hidden beneath the surface has been at the core of my inquiry into the variations forms composed in Terezín and as we have seen, each composer has managed this, each in his individual way. As I will show in this chapter, Viktor Ullmann's approach to variations seems to exemplify the larger philosophical viewpoint offered by Kundera's appraisal of variations form as a mode of inquiry into the interior world. Ullmann, like Kundera in his novel, uses variations form as a way of searching for truth in the hidden interior world while struggling with the issues of power and memory that are unavoidable in the external world.

Viktor Ullmann was the philosopher of the Terezín musicians circle. Of all the composers, he left the most information about his approach to music and composition. Through his extant diaries, essays, and reviews of various concerts held in Terezín, Ullmann has provided a self-portrait of a thoughtful composer who continually grappled with the big questions of life, art, and existence in general. His final sonata is a major work, imbued with many intertextual references, comprising a collage of compositional and expressive techniques, and ending with a powerful variations and fugue that suggests a grappling with the cultural and existential elements of his experience in the camp. In this chapter, I offer a portrait of Ullmann, followed by an exploration of his overall philosophical approach to issues of content and form, considering how *Theme and Variations* form may fit into the larger picture. From this context I then examine the variations from his final piano sonata, the "Theme and Variations on a Hebrew Folk Song", considering the interpretive possibilities latent

[2] Ibid., 225–6.

within the theme as well as in the quotations of culturally significant material that he employs in the fugue. I then explore how Ullmann's belief in Anthroposophy, an esoteric, Christian-based philosophical system, may have played a role in his compositional process and show how the symbolic potential of this belief system can both expand and support traditional musical analysis. Ultimately we gain a picture of Ullmann as an artist who sought to transcend the limitations of life through art, while embodying the attributes of both the past and present that he once ascribed to Berg – preservation of the warmth of soul and passion offered by the Romantics, combined with the self-discipline and structure offered by the Modernists – a truly balanced synthesis of musical feeling and thought.[3]

Life and Musical Influence

Viktor Ullmann was the last of the core composers to be deported to Terezín. Arriving on September 8, 1942, he encountered a community that was not yet free to engage in cultural activities – those freedoms would come later in the year with the establishment of the Free-time administration – but one in which it was clear that music and the arts were highly valued, as evidenced by the abundance of clandestine performances taking place. Not much is known about his early days in Terezín, but by the time he was sent to Auschwitz in October of 1944, he was well established as a major intellectual and musical figure in the camp who left behind a significant musical legacy.

The extant photographs we have of Ullmann show him as a well-dressed, elegant and poised figure. In 1993, pianist and fellow Terezín internee, Alice Herz-

[3] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*, 90.

Sommer remembered him as an introvert with old-fashioned mannerisms. "Viktor Ullmann was a very quiet man, extremely knowledgeable and was a pleasure to speak with. He was very polite. I remember when he came and was introduced to lady, he kissed her hand. It was so old-fashioned, a little bit. And shy. He was, I would say, a little bit similar to Franz Kafka, whom I knew. Very shy and excusing himself for his existence."[4] In Ullmann's writings and in his compositions, tension between remembering and holding onto the past and the necessities of engaging with modernity plays an important role. On the one hand, he is a composer connected to the *Second Viennese School*, an important pupil of Schoenberg who received international acclaim for his mastery of Schoenberg's atonal language, yet on the other hand, his music appears in modern collections of late-Romantic Czech music.[5]

This dualism is also highlighted in critical reception of his works, with existing reviews hailing him as a master of the Schoenberg school of atonality and others finding his work clichéd and outdated. At the 1929 International Music Festival in Geneva, for example, W. Tappolett, a reviewer for the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* praised his work as the highlight of the music festival and professed his admiration. "Schoenberg's pupil [Ullmann]," he wrote, "wishes to demonstrate that even a musical aphorism can be developed. … Despite the self-contained, clearly structured series of variations … atonal music becomes effervescent and bubbles over with life."[6] The *New York Times* reviewer Olin Downes, however, found Ullmann's music to be old-fashioned and outdated. He wrote of Ullmann's second piano sonata:

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[4] Broughton, *The Music of Terezín* excerpted in; *Pianist Alice Herz-Sommer on Composer Viktor Ullmann*, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPD5PWzaUZg&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

[5] David Yeomans, *Piano Music of the Czech Romantics: A Performer's Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[6] Christian Hoesch, preface to Viktor Ullmann, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Arnold Schoenberg, Opus 3a* (Mainz; New York; Schott, 2004).

> This piece is as conventional at the base as the music of Sieber was artificial and forced into an unconvincing pattern. This composer cannot get away from the Schumann-Brahms romanticism, although he glosses over that now old-fashioned and outdated expression with ornaments of alleged modernity, overworking rather conventional rhythms and piano figures in the process, and this without achieving a genuine organic development.[7]

Tensions arising from the juxtaposition of old and new, reconciling antiquity with modernity exist in many areas of Ullmann's life, and this particular problem was central to his compositional process. In a note from 1938, he wrote about this dualism: "It seems that I was always striving for a twelve-tone system on a tonal basis, (similar to the merging of major and minor keys). What may be involved is the exploration of the limitless areas of total-functional harmony, or the bridging of the gap between romantic and 'atonal' harmony."[8] His musical output shows that he never fully abandoned tonality and romanticism, nor did he fully embrace atonality and modernism. Instead, he continually explored techniques that incorporated both tonal and atonal practices, working toward a synthesis that would embrace the full potential of both systems.

Viktor Ullmann was unusual in the circle of Terezín composers in that he had grown up in Vienna, rather than in Czechoslovakia. He was born January 1, 1898 in the Silesian town of Teschen, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but was later divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1920. His father was an officer in the Austrian army and little is known about his mother. His father had officially renounced his Jewish heritage and converted to Catholicism prior to Ullmann's birth, likely in relation to career advancement. Ullmann was baptised in the Catholic Church on January 27, 1898. In 1909, Ullmann and his mother moved to Vienna, where he attended the gymnasium until 1916. During these years, he studied

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[7] Olin Downes, "Chamber Program Heard at Library," *The New York Times*, May 22, 1941.

[8] Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation," 165.

piano with Eduard Steuermann (formerly a pupil of Vílem Kurz and Arnold Schoenberg) and theory with Josef Polnauer (another former pupil of Schoenberg). Very little is known about his early years, however, it is apparent that he received a quality education and was connected to the upper echelon of the Viennese music circle.[9]

After graduating from the gymnasium in 1916, Ullmann enlisted in the military and was sent to the Isonzo Front. He was decorated for bravery for his service in the war and promoted to lieutenant in 1918. In the autumn of 1918, he returned to Vienna and began a degree in law at the University. At this time, he resumed his piano lessons with Steuermann and joined Arnold Schoenberg's composition seminar. He also became one of the founding committee members of Schoenberg's *Verein für Musikalische Privataufführungen* (Society for Private Musical Performances), a society dedicated to rehearsing and performing newly composed music, especially by contemporary composers such as Bartók, Debussy, Ravel, Webern, Stravinsky, Reger, and Berg. In 1919, after only one year of study, he left the university and accepted a position in Prague as chorus master and répitéteur at the *Deutsche Landestheater*, under the direction of Schoenberg's brother-in-law Alexander Zemlinsky. In 1922, Ullmann was promoted to *Kappelmeister* and remained heavily involved with organizing and promoting performances of contemporary compositions. From 1922-1924, Ullmann was active in the Prague-based division of the *Verein für Musikalische Privataufführungen*, founded by Zemlinsky, and in those same years, he held membership and served on the board of the *Literarisch-künstlerischer Verein*

[9] This section has been synthesised from the following sources: Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation"; Gwyneth Bravo, "Viktor Ullmann," *The Orel Foundation*, accessed August 10, 2015, http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/composers/article/viktor_ullmann/; Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945*; Ingo Schultz, *Viktor Ullmann: Leben und Werk* (Kassel; Stuttgart: Bärenreiter; Metzler, 2008); Ingo Schultz, "Ullmann, Viktor," ed. Deane Root, *Grove Music Online*, accessed August 10, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28733.

(Literature and Art Society), an organisation dedicated to supporting German-Bohemian musicians (a similar society existed in support of Czech-speaking Bohemian artists). His involvement with these organisations, along with his position at the *Landestheater*, were instrumental in providing Ullmann with access to the latest musical trends and for opportunities for his own music to be presented.

During the 1920's, Ullmann's compositional output was reasonably significant. 1925 turned out to be a landmark year for him when his work *Variations and Double Fugue Theme of Arnold Schoenberg* was awarded a large grant from the German Society of Science and Art for the Czechoslovakian Republic. In 1929, a reworked form of those variations was performed at the International Music Festival in Geneva to great acclaim as mentioned above, and Ullmann was awarded the prestigious Emil Hertzka composition prize for the reworked version. In 1936, he received a second Hertzka prize for his stage work *Der Sturz des Antichrist* (The Fall of the Antichrist), an opera that may have formed the basis for his later Terezín opera *The Emperor of Atlantis*.

In 1927, Ullmann left Prague for a post as *Kappelmeister* at the opera in the northern Bohemian town of Aussig, where he seems to have achieved some modicum of success; however he left after only one year and returned to Prague where he advertised for private music students. Max Bloch suggests that the success of his attempts at setting up a private music studio "remains in doubt", and it appears this time was the beginning of a period of travel and spiritual seeking, a stage in his life that Ullmann himself termed his "Odyssey".[10]

Details of this "Odyssey" period are somewhat sketchy, but we do know that in 1930-1931, Ullmann lived in Switzerland, holding a post at the *Zürich*

[10] Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation," 155.

Schauspielhaus as conductor and composer of incidental music. As Gwyneth Bravo notes, the period of 1929-1931 was in many ways a high point of Ullmann's career since his music was being performed throughout Europe and he held a music-related post in Zurich. However, it was also a time of personal, intellectual and spiritual crisis.[11] At some point around this time, his marriage to his first wife, Martha Koref, had dissolved and he married Anna Winternitz, with whom he had his first child, Maximillian, born in 1932. During this period, he searched for answers to his inner turmoil through sessions of psychoanalysis as well as through explorations of more esoteric philosophies such as the I-Ching, Freemasonry, and the Anthroposophic teachings of Rudolph Steiner. Beginning in 1929, he immersed himself in Steiner's writings on music and began spending time with leading figures of the spiritual movement. In 1931 he became an official member of the Anthroposophical Society, and subsequently he moved to Stuttgart to manage the Anthroposophic bookstore *Novalis*. The endeavour was a failure; the shop was already experiencing financial difficulties and Ullmann had neither the experience nor the luck required to turn its fortunes around. *Novalis* went bankrupt in 1933 and Ullmann returned to Prague, where he established himself as a freelance composer, conductor, journalist, and educator.

His next high point was the completion of his opera *Der Sturz des Antichrist,* an Anthroposophy-influenced work based on a text by Albert Steffen. Despite having won the *Hertzka* prize in 1936, the work was never staged, likely because of its anti-totalitarian sentiments. From 1935-1937, Ullmann studied quarter-tone composition with Alois Hába at the Prague Conservatory and continued to compose, perform, and write. After the *Protectorate* became established in Prague, his personal situation

[11] Bravo, "Viktor Ullmann."

became more and more dire. He attempted to secure visas for himself and his family to emigrate, however, this endeavour was also unsuccessful. In an effort to ensure the safety of their children, the Ullmanns sent their two oldest children on the *Kindertransport* to England. Shortly thereafter, they separated, finalising their divorce in 1941. Ullmann subsequently remarried Elisabeth Frank-Messl, which spared him from a mid-October 1941 deportation from Prague that was directed at stateless, single men.[12] The protection offered by his marriage was temporary, however, and he and his new wife were transported to Terezín on September 8, 1942.

In Terezín, Ullmann held an official role within the *Freizeitgestaltung*, which enabled him to continue composing and engage in music-related activities. During his internment in Terezín, he composed twenty-three works, including three piano sonatas, a string quartet, arrangements of Jewish songs for chorus, incidental music for dramatic productions, the opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, and a melodrama for piano and voice based on Rainer Maria Rilke's *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke*. In addition to his compositional activities, he assumed the role of music critic and provided reviews of concerts, twenty-six of which have been published.[13] He lectured on various musical and Anthroposophic topics. He also founded a *Studio für neue Musik,* maintaining his interests from his earlier life in Prague, promoting works of contemporary composers including a concert of works by *Junge Autoren in Theresienstadt* (Young Authors in Terezín), which featured new compositions by Gideon Klein, Heinz Alt, Sigmund Schul, and Karel Berman. His writings show that he gave considerable thought to his surroundings and their effect on his own output. In his final essay, he optimistically suggests that the environment

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*.

of Terezín supported his artistic work, although there is a sense of weariness evident in the tone. In this oft-quoted passage, he reminds the readers that in Terezín, "anything connected with the muses is in utter contrast to the surroundings" and remarks that his own compositions are a product of his experience in the camp:

> I have written in Theresienstadt a fair amount of new music, mainly to meet the needs and wishes of conductors, stage directors, pianists and singers, and thereby of the Recreation Administration of the Ghetto. To compile a list would seem as superfluous as to point out that piano playing was impossible in Theresienstadt as long as there were no instruments. Likewise uninteresting for future generations should be the painful scarcity of music manuscript paper. But it must be emphasized that Theresienstadt has served to *enhance,* not impede, my musical activities, that by no means did we sit weeping on the banks of the waters of Babylon, and that our endeavor with respect to Art was commensurate with our will to live.

It is evident that he remained dedicated to his artistic vision during his time in Terezín and, at least in his writing, that he maintained an outlook of perseverance and optimism. A 1944 portrait by Petr Kien, however, depicts Ullmann as a mature figure whose physical appearance shows signs of weariness and premature aging. His forehead is presented with pronounced wrinkles and a receding hairline, and he is profiled with a hunchback, stooping in an oversized suit. He looks thoughtful, however, and the portrait captures the essence of a philosopher, keenly observing and processing the world around him. In this sketch he barely resembles the younger man of his earlier photographs, a fact his former pupil Max Bloch commented on this in his recollections of Ullmann. He recalled, "I had to be told that this was to represent Viktor Ullmann – I would not have recognized him. The long hair was gone, the forehead and nose all the more prominent, the head, in profile, bent forward. Given Kien's known proficiency as a graphic artist, I have little doubt that even this portrait, made in Theresienstadt, is faithful."[14] Apparently, despite Ullmann's assertions that the environment at Terezín enhanced his creative output, the severity of his everyday

[14] Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation," 170.

experience was not entirely surmountable and it took its toll on his physical being. As with many of his musical colleagues, Ullmann's name appeared on the transport list for the October 16, 1944 departure from Terezín. Just six weeks before his forty-fifth birthday, he boarded the train to Auschwitz, where, like with Haas and Krása, it is presumed he was gassed on arrival.

Ullmann, Form, and Variations

As I have been arguing throughout this thesis, the choice of formal structure for the composers in Terezín was far from experimental or random. Of all the composers in Terezín, however, Ullmann was the most forthcoming in his statements about his approach to composition. It is clear he took his role as musician very seriously and was working hard to create musical works that expressed some kind of higher truth and meaning through his music. For him, the larger philosophical concept of Form seems to lie at the core of his approach. His essay *Goethe and Ghetto*, which I quoted earlier, is a powerful statement that outlines his struggle to create meaning in his art and life during his imprisonment. In this short piece, Ullmann describes Terezín as the "School of Form", evoking the philosophical sentiments of Goethe and Schiller, situating music as the transcendent art:

> Goethe's maxim: "Live within the moment, live in eternity" has always revealed to me the enigmatic meaning of Art. ... Theresienstadt was and is for me the school of Form. Earlier, when one did not feel the impact and burden of material life because they were erased by comfort, this magic accomplishment of civilization, it was easy to create beautiful forms. Here, where even in daily life one must overcome matter by the power of Form, where anything connected with the muses is in utter contrast to the surroundings, here is the true school for masters if one, following Schiller, perceives the secret of every work of art in the endeavor to annihilate matter by the means of form which, presumably is the overall mission of Man, not

> only of the esthetical man, but of the ethical man as well. … And I am convinced that all those who, in life and in art, were fighting to force form upon resisting matter, will agree with me.[15]

A powerful and emotional passage, this is another example of Ullmann's footing in both the Romantic and Modernist musical worlds. Schiller and Goethe belong specifically to the world of early German Romanticism, and their aesthetics present a highly idealised version of music, which, for better or worse, has persisted in many philosophies of creativity and consciousness, including in Anthroposophy, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Despite the limitations inherent in this philosophical viewpoint, it is clear from Ullmann's statement that he is sympathetic with Schiller's view on artistic beauty articulated in the 1794 work "On the Aesthetic Education of Man", where Schiller describes how material is something the artist should overcome through form. In Schiller's view, the form is central to the artistic value of a work and a true master achieves aesthetic freedom through this process:

> In a truly beautiful work, content should do nothing, the form everything. For it is through form alone that the whole of the human being is affected; content affects only discrete capacities. Thus the content of a work, no matter how sublime or expansive, always affects the *Geist* in a delimiting manner; only through form can we expect true aesthetic freedom. Herein, then, resides the real artistic secret of the master, *that he eradicates the material through form.* And the more imposing, assertive, and seductive the material is in its own right, the more autonomously it promotes its effect, or the more the beholder is inclined to engage with it directly, then all the more triumphant is that art which repels its material and asserts dominion over it.[16]

Arguments regarding the connection between content and form in music go back to Pythagoras, and discussion of the various points of view and implications are

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[15] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*, 93 translated in ; Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation," 162.

[16] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. Leonard Ashley Willoughby, trans. Elizabeth Mary Wilkinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 154,156 translated in; Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea*, 2014, 99.

outside the scope of this study.[17] However, Ullmann's assertion that he saw his purpose in life to "overcome matter by the power of Form", clearly demonstrates his engagement with the worlds of Schiller and Goethe. His preoccupation with form as a philosophical and artistic ideal and its connection to spirit and content is reiterated regularly in his writings about music and composition that appear in his critical reviews and in his diaries, and are intricately connected with his compositional approach.

Throughout his compositional career, variations form was well represented in Ullmann's instrumental compositions. As mentioned earlier, his first major successes as a composer came from the *Variations and Double Fugue on a Theme of Schoenberg*. In addition to setting the finale of his last piano sonata as a variations and fugue, Ullmann also created variations movements in his second, third, and fifth piano sonatas. In his earlier works, Ullmann's use of the form was typical of Schoenberg's style of variations – a strict approach that sought to manipulate the technical possibilities inherent in a theme, rather than the expressive possibilities. As Schoenberg said of his *Litanei* variations, "Here, in my slow movement, I decided to expose my brain, through variations, rather than my heart."[18] In his 1938 letter to Berg, Ullmann referred to the influence of this aspect Schoenberg's approach, "I am indebted to the Schoenberg school for strict, i.e., logical structures, and to the Hába school for a refinement of melodic sensitivity, the vision of new formal values and the liberation from the canons of Beethoven and Brahms."[19] Certainly the variations in Ullmann's earlier piano sonatas are of a very formal, strict nature, following the

[17] For a thorough investigation of this history, see Bonds, *Absolute Music*.

[18] Robert U. Nelson, "Schoenberg's Variation Seminar," *The Musical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (April 1, 1964): 143.

[19] Ullmann, quoted in Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann. A Brief Biography and Appreciation," 165.

Classical model of what Elaine Sisman has categorised as "melodic outline variations", where the "theme's melody, or at least the 'outline' of its main notes, is recognisable despite figuration, simplification (unfigured variation) or rhythmic recasting."[20] For Ullmann, counterpoint and variations technique are connected, evidenced by his nearly ubiquitous concluding of his variations sets with a fugue or fugato, suggesting that he considered fugal writing as an extension of or type of variations technique.

In addition to the more typical associations with variations form – the logical structure, the various possibilities for motivic and melodic development, as well as contrapuntal potential, at least at some point, Ullmann considered the form to be imbued with a somewhat mystical purpose. In his *Diary in Prose*, he included two relevant aphorisms: "'Music is the destiny of themes' (A. Schoenberg). In particular the musical form represents the individuality."; and one we will return to shortly, "Theme and Variations -- the metamorphoses of the individuality in different earthly lives.)"[21] In both these cases, Ullmann uses the term "individuality" (*Individualität)* to correspond to the part of the spirit or individual aspect of the self that survives death and is constant through reincarnation. This particular nuance stems from Ullmann's Anthroposophic beliefs, which will be discussed in greater detail later. However, it could even be considered as in the sense of the uniqueness or individuality of a personality, or a musical theme, that variations procedure is a way of working out of a "musical destiny" and the transformation and development stemming from this process reflects not just the musical potential of the theme, but also non-musical parallels found in the general realm of living – transformation through life stages,

[20] Sisman, "Variations."

[21] Hans-Günter Klein, *Viktor Ullmann : Materialien* (Hamburg: von Bockel, 1992), 122–123.

personal and spiritual development, and transcendence of one's limitations. It is the interconnectivity of all these elements that preoccupied Ullmann both before and during his Terezín internment, and which I will explore in relation to his final variations composition in further detail in the upcoming sections.

Variationen und Fuge über ein hebräisches Volkslied

Ullmann's *Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folk Song* serve as a grand, heroic finale to his final piano work, *Piano Sonata Number Seven*. Dated August 22, 1944, the sonata is dedicated to his children Max, Jean, and Felice, and is his longest and most complicated piano sonata. The sonata in its entirety is a detailed, intricate work that is rich with allusion, quotations, autobiographical references and a wide range of compositional techniques – he contrasts lush, Romantic harmony and chromaticism with counterpoint, as well as strict serial procedures. Although the piece was eventually given the simple title of *7. Klaviersonate*, the title page of earlier drafts has it identified as *Theresienstädter Skizzenbuch* (Theresienstadt Sketchbook), suggesting that Ullmann had, at least originally, conceived of the work as a musical reflection of his time and experience in the camp, perhaps even as complement to Erika Taube's book of poetry produced in Terezín the previous year called *Theresienstädter Skizzenbuch: Gedanken im Ghetto.*[22] There is a general sense in the literature that the five-movement work closes with a triumphant finale suggesting an optimistic outlook and a hope for a brighter future, a sentiment that is also reflected in his essay "Goethe and Ghetto", which is believed to have also originated from that

[22] Erika Taube, "Theresienstädter Skizzenbuch: Gedanken im Ghetto" (Theresienstadt, July 13, 1943), Jewish Museum in Prague, http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/2266.

time.[23] Survivor Thomas Mandl corroborates the centrality of this outlook, suggesting that Ullmann's optimism was widely shared in Terezín for a short period in August of 1944, as news of Nazi losses in France and assassination attempts on Hitler reached the camp and offered a sense of hope that "the nightmare of Nazism was to end".[24] There is equally a case that can be made for the possibility that the triumph is derailed – the final chord of the piece, which feels like it should be left to resonate, perhaps even with a fermata, is instead notated as an eighth note followed by an eighth rest and then redundantly marked *fine* alongside the double-bar line. This then suggests not triumph, but instead that the valiant struggle is truncated and punctuated by a conclusive silence. Like many of the other final variations pieces composed in Terezín, Ullmann's sonata was never performed while he was alive and there is nothing written by the composer about the work beyond the manuscript score.

Theme

Similarly to Klein, Ullmann titled his Terezín variations generically, identifying the theme only as a "Hebrew Folk Song". The reasons for his choice are uncertain, however, the generality of the name suggests an evocation of a universal sense of a nation united by the Hebrew language. Additionally, the popular Zionist composer Ben-Haim had composed a work for a piano trio in 1939 called *Variations on a Hebrew Theme* based on a folksong *Moldadeti* (My Homeland). In his discussion of Ben-Haim's piece, Shellig highlights the nationalist significance of such a generic title. "The work's title, *Variations on a Hebrew Melody*, discloses the Yishuv's

[23] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*, 93.

[24] Ibid., 93–94.

predominant political-teleological view, which underscored the 'Hebrew' adjective to anchor territorial nationalism in biblical and post-biblical Hebrew sovereignty (while reducing eighteen centuries of exile, from the destruction of the Second Temple to the emergence of political Zionism, to a nocturnal existence.)[25] Whether or not Ullmann was familiar with Ben-Haim's composition, the choice of title has a similar effect, highlighting the implicit undertones of homeland, exile and nationalism associated with the "Hebrew" adjective, and deliberately leaving the interpretive possibilities indeterminate and open-ended. In Ullmann's case, the vagueness both accommodates plural readings of the song's connotations and suppresses any particular association that could be seen as subversive.

Ullmann's choice of title may also function as an homage to the composer Sigmund Schul, a young composer whom Ullmann admired greatly, who was also interned in Terezín. Schul died of tuberculosis in June of 1944, a loss which Ullmann felt deeply and which he memorialised in a heartfelt obituary and poem written shortly after Schul's passing.[26] In the obituary, he declares Schul's compositional mastery, specifically referring to the young composer's Terezín work *Divertimento ebraico* not by its actual title, but instead as "Variationen über ein hebräisches Volkslied". It is even possible that the melody chosen by Ullmann was the same as the one on which Schul based his work. Schul's piece has not been recovered so this connection can only remain as an imaginative possibility; however, given Ullmann's particular interest in this piece, it is quite possible that his choice of title was, at least in some small way, a tribute to his late friend.

[25] Assaf Shelleg, *Jewish Contiguities and the Soundtrack of Israeli History* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 85.

[26] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*, 89–91.

Although the reason for choosing the theme of the variations is left undefined, the original tune is particular and identifiable. The source is a song called "Rachel" which appeared in the *Makkabi* collection of Jewish Folksongs, a book that also contained melodies Ullmann chose for his other Hebrew and Jewish song arrangements.[27] The "Hebrew Folksong" Ullmann employed is based on a poem by the Zionist poet Rachel Bluwstein, set to music and popularised by Yehudah Sharett in the 1920's. In his discussion of Sharett's song, Assaf Shelleg asserts that "The poem, the poetess, and Sharett's setting have become Hebrewist landmarks."[28] As with most of the pieces that survived Terezín, we have no real information about why Ullmann chose this particular song, however the melody seems to have been selected for a variations piece by Klein some time earlier, so it may have originally held significance for Klein rather than Ullmann, or perhaps it had broad appeal that held equal significance for Ullmann. Nir Cohen has identified the "Rachel" theme (he calls it "Her Blood Flows in My Veins") as the subject of a variations set that survives only as an erased pencil sketch under another of Klein's compositions, the *Hölderlin Madrigal.* Underneath the ink manuscript, it is possible to decipher not only the opening melody, but also "the erased title on the first page, where the words 'Variace na hebrejskou…' (Variations on a Hebrew . . .) are somewhat visible, and from the

[27] Makkabi, *Jüdisches Liederbuch* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930); There is no concrete evidence that this book was in Terezin, however Nemtsov writes that Ullmann arranged thirteen tunes from the songbook, suggesting it as a probable source. Jascha Nemtsov and Beate Schröder-Nauenburg, "Music in the Inferno of the Nazi Terror: Jewish Composers in the 'Third Reich,'" trans. Dean Bell, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 18, no. 4 (2000): 88; Bloch also identifies this as the source, noting that all the songs Ullmann set are in this collection, and that Ullmann's choice of keys and Latin-letter transliterations of the Hebrew match the versions in the Liederbuch. David Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann's Yiddish and Hebrew Vocal Arrangements in the Context of Jewish Music Activity in Terezín," in *Viktor Ullmann: Die Referate Des Symposions Anlässlich Des 50. Todestags 14.-16. Oktober 1994 in Dornach Und Ergänzende Studien*, ed. Hans Günter Klein, Verdrängte Musik 12 (Hamburg: von Bockel, 1996), 82.

[28] Shelleg, *Jewish Contiguities and the Soundtrack of Israeli History*, 103.

cover page which still bears the instrumentation 'Violine, viola, violoncello.'"[29] Presumably this was Klein's sketch not only because it was paper he later used, but also since the title is written in Czech rather than in Ullmann's German.

Rachel's poem is a melancholy lament of longing and loss, both of unfulfilled aspirations and for a homeland from which she was exiled, and there is specific reference to the Biblical Rachel, with whom she identifies:

> Rachel, Mother of mothers,
> who shepherded Laban's sheep –
> it is her blood that flows in my blood,
> her voice that sings in me.
>
> Therefore is my house narrow
> and the city strange,
> because her scarf once fluttered
> in the desert wind.
>
> Therefore do I make my way
> unswervingly
> because my feet remember
> her path of then, of then.[30]

The text is fertile for interpretive possibilities. Certainly exile and homeland are common themes in the music of Terezín. In Shelleg's interpretation of the poem, the many intertextual references that filter the biblical through the national, particularly in reference to the word "blood", which he relates to *Ezekiel 16*, revealing "a latent level in which the poetess assumes and feminizes a masculine voice".[31] Rachel as the voice of the universal feminine may have resonated with Ullmann, adding to the multitude of collective voices that appear throughout the fugue (Czech, German, Bach, etc., which will be discussed later), or maybe the maternal aspect

[29] Cohen, "Gideon Klein: Life and Music, Working Paper 126/2014," 28.

[30] Rachel, *Flowers of Perhaps: Selected Poems of Ra'hel*, trans. Robert Friend (London; Berkeley, CA: Menard Press, 1994), 26.

[31] Shelleg, *Jewish Contiguities and the Soundtrack of Israeli History*, 105.

appealed; Rachel as the "mother of mothers", making her way "unswervingly" is a poetic sentiment Ullmann may have intended for his wife Elisabeth, who was caring for their son Max in the difficult environment of the camp. Perhaps it was meant to have a more generalised connotation, referencing the Jewish population at large, possibly even referring to the laws that identified them by their bloodlines. It is also entirely possible that he chose the theme for musical reasons, maybe for its melancholic simplicity and its inherent possibilities for variation, or perhaps for its similarity to the banned Slovak national anthem, as Robert Kolben has suggested.[32] In Ullmann's obituary for Sigmund Schul, he postulates that it was likely because of the melody's tonal qualities that Schul chose a Hebrew Folksong for the basis of his *Divertimento ebraico,* a trait that could equally apply to his own choice of theme.[33] Whatever Ullmann considered the significance of the original folk song to be has not been articulated in his writings, however, his philosophical leanings relied heavily on symbolism, making it unlikely it was a random choice.

Cultural Memory in Quotation

Ullmann's final variations and fugue are generally recognised as a triumphant finale that evokes strength and optimism for a united cultural front. Like Pavel Haas, Ullmann used quotations in his final work to give shape and depth to the music. The outcome is powerful; there is a palpable sense of communication that speaks on many levels. The pianist Jeanne Golan remarked of his quotations that they resonate with

[32] Robert Kolben, "Viktor Ullmann Und Die Anthroposophie," in *Viktor Ullmann: Die Referate Des Symposions Anlässlich Des 50. Todestags 14.-16. Oktober 1994 in Dornach Und Ergänzende Studien*, ed. Hans Günter Klein, Verdrängte Musik 12 (Hamburg: von Bockel, 1996), 43; Robert Kolben, "Viktor Ullmanns 7. Klaviersonate," *Mr-Mitteilungen* 52/53 (December 2004): 29.

[33] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*, 91.

audiences as remnants of a cultural memory. Regarding his frequent quotes of well-known melodies, she writes, "Whether he is commenting on familiar strains, or he's creating a musical argument or story that will be strengthened by the association, the gesture is personally revealing. It's also an immediate way to connect with an audience. As a performer, I've often felt a surge of energy from the audience in these moments, as each specific phrase resonates by drawing on a shared or collective memory."[34] Certainly memory, collective or otherwise, is central to many aspects of Holocaust testimony and is inherent in the quotations Ullmann uses.

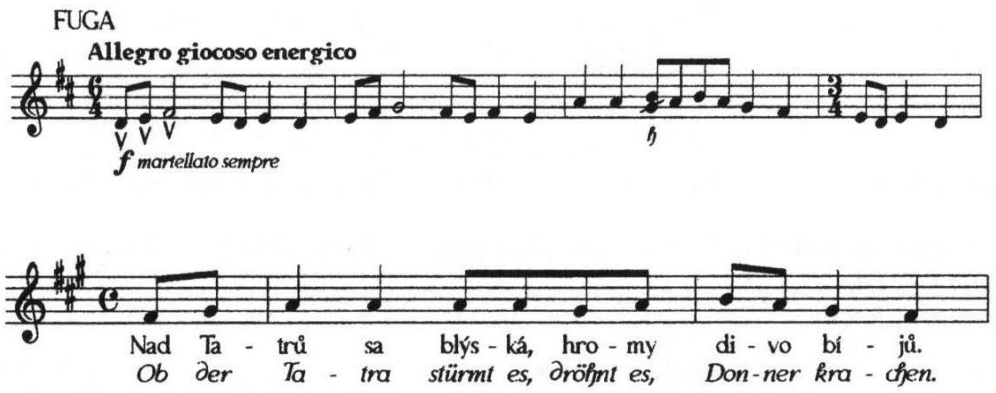
Without a doubt, the most salient feature of Ullmann's fugue is his incorporation and integration of four motives that are all imbued with personal, political, and nationalist significance. These motives are quotations, fragments of the Hebrew "Rachel" song the movement is based on, the Lutheral Chorale "Nun Danket Alle Gott", the Hussite Hymn "Ktož jsú boží bojovníci" (Ye Who are Warriors of God), and Bach's signature cipher B-A-C-H (B-flat-A-C-B in musical notation). In this next section, I will give a brief summary and background of each before continuing the larger discussion of the work.

The first quotation, the melody of the Hebrew Folk Song, has the connections with the Biblical Rachel and the Zionist nation, as discussed previously. In the fugue, however, it takes on a new quality. Instead of remaining in the minor key, retaining its lament quality, the theme is set in the major mode, taking on the character of an anthem. Robert Kolben has noted the "obvious" similarity between the original melody and the general outline of the Nazi-banned Slovak national anthem, a slightly

[34] Jeanne Golan, liner notes to Jeanne Golan, *Viktor Ullmann: Complete Piano Sonatas*, CD (ArkivMusic, 2012).

tenuous connection that has nevertheless entrenched itself into the general folklore of associations that has come to surround this work (See Figure 32).[35]

Figure 32. Viktor Ullmann fugue opening compared with Slovak national anthem[36]



At measure 109, after the fugue subject has been thoroughly established, the first episode occurs and three new themes are introduced. The bass voice is the most audible and familiar, announcing the Hussite battle hymn *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci*, the history and symbolism of which was discussed more detail in Chapter Three in relation to Pavel Haas. This early fifteenth-century song served as a powerful battle hymn under the forces of the warrior Žižka and subsequently became central to the cultural identity of the Czech nation.[37] As a musical symbol of nationalism, it became especially entrenched after Smetana's invocation of it in his opera *Libuše* as well as in the movements *Tabor* and *Blaník* from *Ma Vlast*, where it serves as a strong symbolic

[35] Kolben, "Viktor Ullmanns 7. Klaviersonate," 29; Kolben, "Viktor Ullmann Und Die Anthroposophie," 43; N.B. Rothkirchen incorrectly referred to this connection as the Czech national anthem "Kde domov můj" rather than the Slovak "Nad Tatrou sa blýska"; Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 274.

[36] Kolben, "Viktor Ullmann Und Die Anthroposophie," 23.

[37] Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (Penn State Press, 2009), 115.

statement of the Czech nation's will to immortality – a declaration of intent to forever fight oppression, to stay alive and to rise once again to greatness.[38]

Above the booming Hussite hymn, Ullmann reproduces the octave D of the bass line but this time as a half note in contrast to the quarter notes of the main theme. Out of this, a new melody emerges, presented entirely in half notes. This melody is generally identified as the Lutheran hymn "Nun Danket alle Gott" (Now Thank we all our God), although Ullmann's version opens with a fifth rather than the original interval of a unison. This hymn is musically significant, occupying an important place in German culture, where it is sung on public occasions of Thanksgiving. Mendelssohn's version of the hymn is the most common reference point for the song, where it forms the basis of the eighth movement in the Second Symphony (*Lobegesang* or "Hymn of Praise"), however, it was also used often in Bach's works, including the Cantatas BWV 79 and 192, and in the chorale preludes BWV 252, 386 and 657. Liszt also wrote a set of variations for organ on the chorale, and other more recent, yet lesser known versions of the chorale have been published. The original melody of the chorale is attributed to J. Crüger, who wrote it in 1647 to accompany the text of the author of the hymn Martin Rinckart. In 1757, it became known as the "Leuthen Chorale', named after the Battle of Leuthen during the Seven Years War, where the Prussian army was victorious against the much larger Austrian army. According to popular legend, the exhausted troops joined together after the battle and began to sing the hymn, forever imbuing it with connotations of battle, resistance, and victory over Imperial forces.[39] Like the Hussite chorale, the Leuthan/Lutheran chorale

[38] Michael Beckerman, "In Search of Czechness in Music," *19th-Century Music* 10, no. 1 (July 1986): 67–8; Benjamin W. Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation : Nationalist Composers and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe / Benjamin Curtis.* (Cambria Press, 2008), 68.

[39] Richard Overy, *A History of War in 100 Battles* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 115.

serves as a powerful emblem of nationalist identity and is imbued with many layers of cultural memories and iconography.

The third quotation Ullmann introduces at this point is also laden with significance and myriad connotations; the cipher of the great German musical figure, Bach. For the first half of the fugue, it appears incorrectly as B-flat-A-C-sharp-C-natural, rather than the correct spelling of B-flat-A-C-B (in German notation). Whether or not this is intended to be a simple variation of the Bach cipher is unknown, however the correct version appears later on at a climactic point. It is impossible to decipher Ullmann's intent in choosing this musical citation, however, its potential for interpretation seems quite limitless – more than four hundred other composers have used Bach's signature in fugues, variations and other musical compositions.[40] Bach's signature could be a fairly straightforward evocation or summoning of the great father of the Western Musical Tradition, or perhaps its usage is a way of situating his own music within that great tradition. Or perhaps, it is a reference to his teacher Schoenberg who featured the Bach cipher prominently in his *Variations for Orchestra Op. 31.* Or it could even be the great force of death asserting its presence: CPE Bach imbued the motif with grave associations when he annotated the manuscript of the *Art of the Fugue,* his father's final work, stating that, "While working on this fugue, where the name B-A-C-H enters in the countersubject, the composer died."[41] Alternatively, it may be an oblique reference to Mendelssohn, the banned composer who revived the great Baroque master for the Germans in the nineteenth century. Ullmann's use of it in this piece has immense interpretive potential and cultural significance on many levels. German pianist Cornelius

[40] Malcolm Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach*, Oxford Composer Companions (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 50–55.

[41] Hans T David and Arthur Mendel, *The Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 247.

Witthoeft claimed that Ullmann's inclusion of the B-A-C-H motif is a symbol of all the great forces in the world:

> [The B-A-C-H motif] should not only be interpreted as an expression of reverence for Johann Sebastian Bach (to quote Max Reger: "B-A-C-H is the beginning and end of all music"). Rather, it evokes Bach, in particular, as the master of the fugue and in substantive terms calls up such positive connotations as unshakable belief, hope that the powers of good shall prevail, a relinking to tradition, and the ethical effects of music. Seen in more general terms, this symbol points to the medium of music in and of itself, which, in the final movement of the Piano Sonata No. 7, serves to manifest spiritual resistance.[42]

Although it is impossible to precisely define which interpretive possibilities inherent in the motif that Ullmann had in mind, it is clear in the score that he intended for it to be a signifier, and the multitude of possibilities invites the listener to choose the signified. In m. 137, the motif enters conspicuously, with the letters B-A-C-H marked by the composer in the score. Also, unlike the chorale and the Hussite hymn, the Bach motif endures to the end, with its final appearance occurring in the final phrase as part of a triumphant finish.

After these motifs are introduced simultaneously, they are woven together in various incarnations, sometimes against the main theme and sometimes not, and treated with fugal techniques including transposition, inversion, setting in various canonic sequences, all while loosely retaining a three-part fugue structure. At measure 138, after a vigorous stretto of the main theme, where the original melody is in doubled octaves in the lowest register and its inverted form enters displaced by one beat in the upper register, also doubled in octaves, the piece comes to a formidable climax. At this point, in the tenor voice, the B-A-C-H theme enters over a rumbling trill in the bass, with Bach's signature clearly noted in the score. Immediately

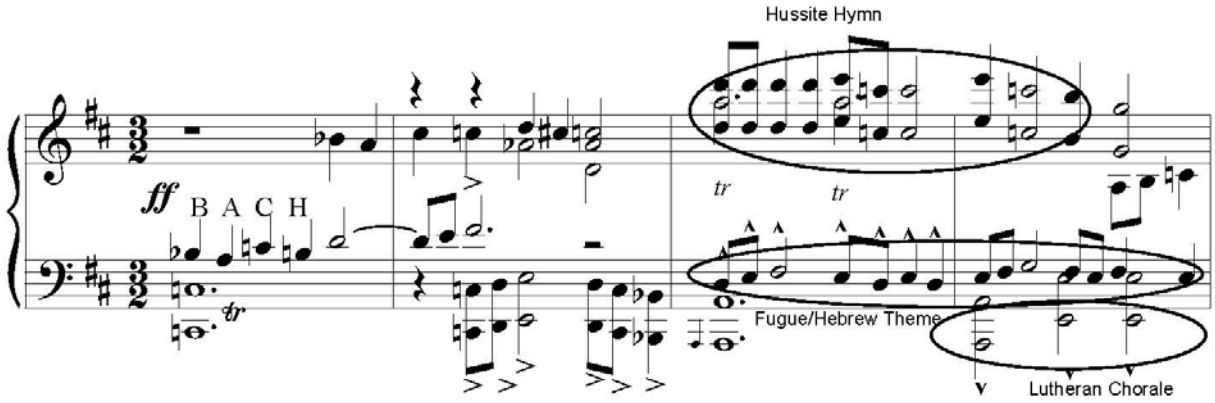
[42] Cornelis Witthoefft, "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folk Song," in *A Legacy from Theresienstadt: Paintings Inspired by Viktor Ullmann's Piano Sonata No. 7*, by Dessa (Pully, Switzerland: Published by Deborah Petroz-Abeles, 1997), 67.

following the Bach statement, the other three themes appear, the Hussite chorale, the Hebrew folk song, and the Lutheran hymn, all layered in a quodlibet (See Figure 33).[43] As all these elements unite, we are presented with a very powerful musical iconography of the converging of religious and national identities that were all part of Ullmann's individual experience and of the larger population of Terezín. As Michael Beckerman wrote of this passage, "What this means in terms of identity is impossible to say (one can read it as patriotic, anarchistic, or surreal), but it is a moment unstable and tormented."[44] For a moment, this excerpt presents not just a figurative reference to the various groups, but also offers a literal representation of the life in Theresienstadt, with the layering and intertwining of these themes generating a portrait of the cramped, close physical quarters in the camp. It is unclear why they culminate in a climactic moment of crisis but the clashing of these groups in general has grounding in the historical and contemporary reality for the Terezín population. The complexity and multivalent nature of Ullmann's choices for material make it impossible to discern his specific vantage point or intentions, however the richness and gravity of all that is contained within these melodies imbues the work with a substantive power that cannot be denied.

[43] See also Beckerman, "Slow Dissolves."

[44] Beckerman, "Reverse Potemkin," 202.

Figure 33. Viktor Ullmann, "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong" from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 138-141.[45]



As in all aspects of his work, the "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folk Song" highlight Ullmann's commitment to connecting the past with the present, the old with the new. A variations set followed by a fugue has obvious connection to the great German Western Art Tradition of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, all of whom have one grand example of the form – Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue*, Beethoven's *Eroica Variations* and Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*. His modern language – the augmented second in the opening counter-melody as well as the various deviations from the harmonic language of his forebears situates him in his own time – connected to the past but not of it. Memory is intimately associated with this relationship – the connection to the grandness of these past works elevates the work, placing it within a meaningful tradition and culture. Variations form itself is reliant on memory in order to exist as a structure; without memory of the theme, the variations lose their context and become instead eccentric ramblings devoid of connection and purpose. Additionally, cultural memory is required to recognise the musical allusions. His choice of both the thematic material and the musical quotations has historic and cultural significance that rely on memory in some way for their

[45] Viktor Ullmann, *Piano Sonatas: Volume II (no. 5-7)*, ed. Konrad Richter (Mainz: Schott, 1997), 87.

substance. In addition to these evocations of personal, physical, collective and/or cultural memory, Anthroposophic notions of Cosmic Memory are also evident in this final work, expanding the analytical field into a highly unusual territory, but one that seems to yield further insight into Ullmann's expressive approach.

Anthroposophic Influence

In the previous section I highlighted the most prominent interpretive features that shape Ullmann's fugue and suggest a reading of the movement that incorporates aspects of cultural memory, identity politics and Ullmann's personal environment. However, there are a number of salient features of the variations section of the movement, most notably interval choices and unusual modulations or disconnected passages that seem separate from this reading and that are not sufficiently explained through traditional analysis. Although it cannot be equivocally proven, it seems plausible that the spiritual movement of Anthroposophy, to which Ullmann subscribed, had an influence and provided a philosophical or spiritual framework for Ullmann's artistic vision for this piece. Before offering an analysis of the variations and fugue through this lens, it is necessary to provide a detailed background on Anthroposophy, which is quite complex and is relatively unknown in the English-speaking world.

In a letter to Alban Berg dated October 11, 1931, Ullmann explained to his friend that he was working at an Anthroposophic bookstore, *Die Novalis,* in Stuttgart, "in fulfillment of a long-standing desire to be of direct help to the Anthroposophic

movement."[46] It is unclear how long-standing this desire had been; likely Ullmann had encountered Anthroposophy in Vienna when he was engaged with the Schoenberg circle, but it wasn't until his "crisis" period, a decade later, that his commitment to the movement was formally declared. As Gwyneth Bravo notes, it was a visit to the *Goetheaneum*, the international centre of Anthroposophy in Dornach, Switzerland, 1929 that "became the basis for a radical reorientation of his worldview".[47] Presumably at this point, he attended lectures at the centre and found a community of like-minded people who inspired him to get further involved with the organisation. On July 31, 1931, Ullmann became a member of the Anthroposophic Society with Alois Hába, the Czech composer, as his guarantor.[48]

Anthroposophy is an esoteric spiritual movement developed by the Austrian thinker Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) that is at least partially an outgrowth of German Idealism and Romanticism and was developed in reaction to the materialist philosophies that were dominating academic thought at the time. Steiner's philosophy attempts to reconcile the spiritual elements of human existence with the empiricism of scientific inquiry, a model that appealed to many artists and musicians, notably Wassily Kandinsky and Bruno Walter. In order to open a space to more fully engage with Ullmann's musical approach to Anthroposophy, I will first outline a cursory overview of Steiner's general teachings, before moving to the specific musical aspects that seem to arise in Ullmann's Variations and Fugue.

Rudolf Steiner was a polymath who rose to popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century. He developed a philosophy that he called *Anthroposophy*, a

[46] Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann's Yiddish and Hebrew Vocal Arrangements in the Context of Jewish Music Activity in Terezín," 156.

[47] Bravo, "Viktor Ullmann."

[48] Kolben, "Viktor Ullmann Und Die Anthroposophie," 39.

world view that he promoted as a "spiritual science", defined as "a path of knowledge aiming to guide the spiritual element in the human being to the spiritual in the universe".[49] The term stems from the Greek words *anthropos* (man) and *sophia* (wisdom), identifying its focus on accessing the "wisdom of the human being".[50] Steiner wrote and lectured extensively in the German-speaking world thorough the first quarter of the twentieth century and his influence was wide-reaching. Although most of his books and lectures have been translated into English, in the UK and North America, he is generally only associated with the worlds of *Waldorf* and special-needs education, biodynamic farming, and holistic health. His writings are rooted in the tradition of Western philosophy (Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche are all subjects of his writings), but he was also a major figure in the occult revival that was pervasive in Europe during his life (he was even, for a time, head of The German Section of the Theosophical Society in Berlin). Many of his esoteric writings are bizarre and largely unpalatable for a modern audience. Even for Steiner followers, his lectures on topics such as "The Mission of Gautama Buddha on Mars", or on the need to read to the dead, which he suggests in "The Dead are with Us" or on his detailed descriptions of life after death, outlined in several places, including "Between Death and Rebirth" are tough to digest and there are many aspects of Anthroposophy that suggest the essence of a cult. However, many of his more philosophical insights into consciousness and reality have been considered inspired and revolutionary by artists, educators and political figures since the early part of the century, and they certainly captured the imagination and attention of the 30-year old Viktor Ullmann.

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[49] Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Co., 1927).

[50] Gary Lachman, *Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2007), 172.

The fundamental philosophy of Rudolf Steiner is that through the act of thinking, humans have the faculties available to gain knowledge of the spiritual realm and he believed it was essential to reconcile the spiritual and physical aspects of life in order to find true fulfilment. Unlike the materialists who posit that consciousness is a product of the material world, Steiner believed it was the other way around, that "what we take to be a simple, immediate perception of the external world, is already infused with the content of our inner, spiritual world, our consciousness."[51] It became his goal to create an intellectually-based spiritual science that was systematic, rigorous and objective that could still encompass questions of a metaphysical nature.[52] Eastern mysticism plays an important role in his teachings, with concepts such as karma and reincarnation occupying a central role. His first book *The Philosophy of Freedom* outlines his theories and contains all the elements of Anthroposophy, without specific reference to a spiritual world, but rather it is a rigorously detailed book about thinking. Gary Lachman suggests that Steiner's basic insight is that he designated the individual and the mind at the centre of spiritual inquiry. For Steiner,

> the autonomy of the mind, the recognition that consciousness and the I [ego] are irreducible realities, spiritual realities, and that our inner world has the power to grasp experience, as he says in one lecture, 'in the same way that we can grasp tables and chairs.' Steiner calls this 'active thinking' and if there is one thing that he wanted to convey it's the importance of making our thoughts and our thinking come alive."[53]

Lachman notes that Steiner's foundational writings contain nothing of the later occult preoccupations, but instead, readers "will see in him a passionate Idealist, trying to throw a monkey wrench into the machinery of materialism".[54] While it may

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[51] Ibid., 94.

[52] Robert Galbreath, "Traditional and Modern Elements in the Occultism of Rudolf Steiner," *Journal of Popular Culture* 3, no. 3 (1969): 453.

[53] Lachman, *Rudolf Steiner*, xxi.

[54] Ibid., 93.

be difficult to reconcile the esoteric aspects of Steiner's writings with his more credible ideas, his holistic, human-centred approach to considering the bigger philosophical questions (everything from ethics to the purpose of life), certainly has appeal and his influence has been wide-ranging and enduring.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what elements of Steiner's philosophies were of interest to Ullmann. He did not speak explicitly about Anthroposophy in his writings, outside of his letters regarding his involvement with the *Novalis* bookstore, so there are minimal details available regarding which aspects of Steiner's philosophy appealed to him and even less regarding how it influenced his compositional practice. Jan Dostal has postulated that despite the lack of concrete proof of Anthroposophic influence in Ullmann's writings, there are many indications that suggest that there are passages which can only be deciphered through an Anthroposophic lens (for which he provides detailed annotations) and that there is a sense of Steiner imprinted or embedded within much of the text, creating an overall, generalised holistic Anthroposophic setting. He cites in particular Ullmann's constant struggle for inner transformation and his strong sense of responsibility for others around him, as well as his need to find a positive element in all the performances he reviews as proof of Steiner's influence.[55] Dostal also suggests that Ullmann's quoting of Goethe's claim that "art brings about the revelation of secret laws of nature" is a reference to the Anthroposophic viewpoint.[56] Robert Kolben, on the other hand, believes that despite Ullmann's use of Anthroposophic texts, it is impossible to discern a personal

[55] Jan Dostal, "Ullmann als Anthroposoph," in *Viktor Ullmann, Materialien*, ed. Hans-Günter Klein (Hamburg: Von Bockel, 1992), 126.

[56] Ibid., 127.

expression of Anthroposophy in his works and that Anthroposophic theories of music play only a marginal role, if at all.[57]

In actuality, it is very difficult to determine how Steiner's theories could impact composition in a meaningful way. In the 1931 letter to Berg, Ullmann excitedly wrote that he was reading everything Steiner said about music, however, it is unclear what materials captured his interest.[58] Steiner wrote and lectured very little on music; he gave a few lectures on Wagner's relation to Goethe, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Mysticism, as well as specifically on Wagner's *Parsifal*, and his seven lectures on *The Inner Nature of Music* comprise a single published volume that can easily be read in one sitting.[59] Aside from his development of *Eurhythmy*, a system of expressive or communicative way of moving that reflects musical performance, Steiner's writings on music are of an impractical nature, designating music as holding the supreme position amongst the arts, yet not engaging with composition directly. His main musical legacy lies in the realm of Waldorf pedagogy and in Anthroposophy-based music therapy systems where Eurhythmy plays a central role. In his general discussion about the cosmic history and the future of the world, which I will discuss shortly, he uses certain tones and intervals to support his overall theories of cosmic order, which becomes overly complex very quickly. On a very basic level, Steiner considers music primarily as a form of "spiritual hearing", situating it in terms of the Pythagorean "music of the spheres".[60]

In his lectures on "The Inner Nature of Music", Steiner posits, using the concept of "will" offered by Schopenhauer, that music holds primacy among the arts.

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[57] Kolben, "Viktor Ullmann Und Die Anthroposophie," 46.

[58] Bravo, "Viktor Ullmann."

[59] Rudolf Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone*, ed. Alice Wulsin, trans. Maria St Goar (Spring Valley, N.Y: Anthroposophic Press, 1983).

[60] Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 60.

He claims that music does not originate from a mental image, but rather from a direct relationship to the cosmos and to the soul. He concludes that visual artists move beyond the simple mental images to a reproduction of archetypes, and attain creative deliverance through this process, however musicians are exempt from requiring this procedure and instead have direct communion with the creative source:

> Schopenhauer says that the true artist reproduces the archetypes — not the mental images that man normally has, which are like copies, but the archetypes. By proceeding to the depths of creative nature, as it were, man attains deliverance. This is the case with all the arts except music. The other arts must pass through the mental image, and they therefore render up pictures of the will. Tone, however, is a direct expression of the will itself, without interpolation of the mental image. When man is artistically engaged with tone, he puts his ear to the very heart of nature itself; he perceives the will of nature and reproduces it in series of tones. In this way, according to Schopenhauer, man stands in an intimate relationship to the Thing-in-Itself and penetrates to the innermost essence of things. Because man feels himself near to this essence in music, he feels a deep contentment in music. Out of an instinctive knowledge, Schopenhauer attributed to music the role of directly portraying the very essence of the cosmos.[61]

Although these ideas fit well within the traditions of German Idealism and Romanticism, there is very little on which to base a compositional process. However as I have shown earlier, Ullmann's thoughts on creativity and form reflect this mode of thinking and most likely had some kind of underlying effect on his approach.

Despite the elements of vagueness and idealism in Steiner's writings about music, there is evidence that Ullmann was, at least at some point, influenced by Steiner's teachings and attempted to reconcile them with his own approaches to music. One of the primary sources for Ullmann's thoughts are in the form of two collections he titled as *Tagebuch*, the first called "*Der fremde Passagier. Ein Tagebuch in Versen*" (The Strange Passenger: Diary in Verse) and the second one "*Aphoristischer Anhang: Tagebuch in Prosa*" (Aphoristic Notes/Addendum: Diary in

[61] Rudolf Steiner, "The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone; Lecture 1" (Cologne, December 3, 1906), http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA283/English/AP1983/19061203p02.html.

Prose).[62] In these two diaries, Ullmann grapples with his views on art and life through poetry and aphorism, presumably emulating Goethe's *Aphorisms in Prose*, about which Steiner wrote extensively in his work on Goethe's scientific views.[63] Steiner also used aphorisms as a way of expressing his own views, such as in his lecture called "Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts" from August 1924. In Ullmann's two short books, topics such as the meaning of life (Life is an equation with two unknowns: $X = 0$, $X = \infty$), Christianity, Wagner, the arts in general, and musical form in particular, appear. Specific Anthroposophic characters such as the *Doppelgänger* and *Ahriman* make an appearance alongside topics that were favourites of Steiner, including Wagner, the seasons, and Christ, in addition to specific references to Steiner and Albert Steffen, Steiner's successor as president of the Anthroposophic Society. (N.B.: Ahriman is Steiner's personification of materialism that is a central figure in man's Earthly struggle. In Steiner's lecture on "Ahrimanic Deception", he defines Ahriman as "the power that makes man dry, prosaic, philistine — that ossifies him and brings him to the superstition of materialism" – more on this in forthcoming section on Cosmic Memory.[64]) In these two diaries, we can be relatively certain that Ullmann was in dialogue with Steiner's teachings. Neither the context for these books nor their date of provenance has been determined, although many writers seem to attribute them to his Terezín years, which has not been clearly proven or disproven. The manuscripts were part of a collection owned by Alexander Waulin, which

[62] Klein, *Materialien*, 100–125.

[63] Goethe's maxims or aphorisms are published in several places under various titles. Steiner refers to them explicitly as "Aphorisms in Prose", however the term "Sprüche" rather than "Aphorismus" is often used. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Gedichte und Sprüche in Prosa*, ed. Friedrich Bruns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932); Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Maxims and Reflections of Goethe*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (New York; London: Macmillan and Co., 1893); Rudolf Steiner, *Goethean Science* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Mercury Press, 1988).

[64] Rudolf Steiner, "Lecture: The Ahrimanic Deception," *Rudolf Steiner Archive*, October 27, 1919, http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19191027p01.html.

included Ullmann's earlier manuscripts (1929-1942), but Ullmann's Terezín documents were held by Emil Utitz and then H.G. Adler. The dating of the *Tagebuchen* was added afterward, likely by Waulin, and despite an analysis of the typescript and paper used, there has been no conclusive timeline determined. Vlasta Benetková's opinion that the content of the diaries suggests that these writings reflect the struggles he would have encountered during his internment and the ongoing "creative evolution" of the composer that we know from his Terezín years, seems to provide the basis for most attributions of these works to that period.[65] Ingo Schultz also has a plausible theory, suggesting the diaries date from the period of 1937-8 when Ullmann was undergoing psychiatric treatment, suggesting that it was a way of working through his personal issues at that time.[66] In all actuality, they may have been written over several years or may have been a way for Ullmann to work through Steiner's teachings during his time at the bookstore. We don't know if it reflected an ongoing attempt to document experience or thoughts or if it was related to a particular time and place. At any rate, we do know with some certainty that he wrote these in an attempt to develop his thoughts on various themes, and regardless of the time frame, they do reflect that Ullmann had strong philosophical leanings, rooted in the Romanticism of Goethe and Schiller as well as in the holistic sense of Steiner's path to cultivating the self in all areas of being, including the physical and spiritual aspects. This sense of depth and philosophical interest remained with him through his time in Terezín and was referred to by H.G. Adler referred to as his "metaphysical brooding".[67] Regardless of the timeframe, these diaries serve as important source

[65] Klein, *Materialien*, 96.

[66] Schultz, *Viktor Ullmann*, 170.

[67] Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft. Geschichte, Soziologie, Psychologie*, 622.

material, allowing at least a glimpse into the workings of Ullmann's creative mind and some of the ways he connected with Steiner's theories.

Cosmic Memory and the Evolving Spirit

As discussed earlier in this chapter, in Ullmann's variations and fugue, he employs thematic material that contains several layers of semantic content and referential possibilities. In addition to the appeal and weight of these quotations, one of the most salient features of the fugue is that the left hand voice is built *entirely* in octaves. From the time the bass is introduced in the form of a real answer to the fugue subject, it is unwaveringly presented in octaves for the duration of the movement. This creates a grandiose effect, but is quite unusual as a technique, especially given the variety of material and expressive effects used throughout the movement. Nevertheless, there is something powerful about the compositional choice, and considering Ullmann's penchant for symbolic associations, it seems likely that there is a reason for the atypical gesture.

One possibility for Ullmann's choice of relentless octaves is rooted in Anthroposophy. According to Steiner's occult theory of the cosmos, the interval of the octave represents the ultimate actualization of humanity; the final reincarnation where man – intellectual, material man – will reconnect with its spiritual side, encompassing the knowledge gained from his less evolved self into his full, divine self. The octave represents man's physical self paralleled on a higher plane by his spiritual self. Steiner claimed that when the octave "comes into being", "the musical experience will become for man proof of the existence of god, because he will experience the 'I' twice: once as physical, inner 'I', the second time as spiritual, outer

'I'".[68] Steiner believed that once this is cultivated, humanity can reconnect with its divine-spiritual nature, which will restore balance to our existence, which he felt that in the current age is far too reliant on intellectual, materialist knowledge. He argued that humanity's ability to experience the octave is necessary for its survival: "What was once the loss of the divine must transform itself for human evolution if humanity on earth is not to perish but to continue its development. The loss must transform itself for earthly humanity into a rediscovery of the divine."[69] Ullmann's use of octaves to ground the entire fugue encapsulates the essence of this teaching, especially when connected with his choice of quotations that embody the nationalist and religious factions central to the war that was destroying both his life and humanity on a grand scale.

Steiner's theories of intervals are intricately connected to his theories of Cosmic Memory, which form the basis of his occult understanding of the world. Steiner's version of Cosmic Memory is based on a highly detailed history of human existence or consciousness that Steiner he derived at least in part from Theosophical notions of an Akashic Record – an astral recording of the history of the cosmos and of the experience of death and rebirth.[70] At its core, it outlines a process of reincarnation that is found not only in our human existence, but also in the history of the earth and the cosmos. It is a complex system that resembles a science fiction story, and, although it forms the backbone of Steiner's work, it is difficult material to grapple with and even more difficult to take seriously. At its base however, it falls within a

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[68] Rudolf Steiner, "The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone; Lecture V" (Stuttgart, March 7, 1923), http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA283/English/AP1983/19230307p01.html.

[69] Rudolf Steiner, "The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone; Lecture VII" (Dornach, March 16, 1923), http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA283/English/AP1983/19230308p01.html.

[70] Lachman, *Rudolf Steiner*, 31.

tradition of ancient wisdom literature and creation mythology, outlining how concepts of good and evil came into being, explaining how legal and ethical systems developed as well, and defining how the various artistic, intellectual and spiritual powers of humans have evolved. Out of this system, Steiner developed a theory of music, which is as esoteric as his creation myth, but which has powerful metaphorical capacities that can help explain some of Ullmann's compositional choices.

At the heart of Steiner's theory is that man is part of an ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and that the reincarnations are part of a larger process of transmutation and ongoing spiritual development. This process is part of a vast cosmic evolution that is also occurring in the Earth and presumably the cosmos at large. In general, the process begins with the origin of the Earth, before matter existed, when the rudimentary blocks of consciousness were beginning to form. According to Steiner, the world will move through seven reincarnations, the final one being an advanced stage of complete spiritualisation of which he was unable to characterise, stating only that no expression could be found for it because of its dissimilarity to anything that can be experienced on Earth. Despite the absence of specifics relating to this state, it comes through in his lectures and writings as a utopian vision in which human consciousness is fully actualised.

Steiner's theories of music reflect these cycles of evolution and reincarnation, with intervals signifying the various stages of consciousness. All variations of the reincarnation or evolutionary cycle are based on a sevenfold process that moves through three stages of pre-consciousness before reaching a physical stage in which a waking-state consciousness, a consciousness that is aware of self, what Steiner calls the "I". After the physical stage (also considered the Intellectual phase), which is the nadir of the cycle, we move once again through the previous stages of consciousness

but with the "I" intact, which gives rise to stages he characterises as Imagination (picture consciousness), followed by Inspiration and finally, Intuition, which is basically a return to "nothingness" but with a fully developed consciousness.

That Ullmann engaged with Steiner's theories of reincarnation and their existence within the musical world is evidenced in his two extant diaries, *Der fremde Passagier. Ein Tagebuch in Versen* (The Foreign Passenger. A Diary in Verse) and *Aphoristischer Anhang: Tagebuch in Prosa* (Aphoristic notes/appendix: A Diary in Prose), mentioned earlier, where he commonly refers to Anthroposophic topics. His sixteenth aphorism identifies Theme and Variations form as the musical reflection of reincarnation, stating simply, "*Thema mit Variationen -- die Metamorphosen der Individualität in verschiedenen Erdenleben*". (Theme and Variations – the metamorphoses of the individual (personality) in different earthly lives.)"[71] Jan Dostal has annotated this statement, remarking that in Anthroposophy, the reincarnation process reveals the various possibilities that are normally hidden, or latent, within the "eternal individuality" or the "true self".[72] It is unclear how deeply or literally Ullmann believed in Steiner's version of the reincarnation process, however, at least on a figurative level, he seems to have harnessed some of the imaginative potential within the system and worked through the ideas of spiritual development on a musical level, in this case through variations form.

Although very little has been written about Ullmann's variations, the Anthroposophic connection has been noted by Jascha Nemtsov in relation to the sixth variation, where the theme is presented in inversion, the mirror image denoting the *Doppelgänger*, an important symbol in Steiner's philosophy.[73] Nemtsov points out

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[71] Klein, *Materialien*, 122–123.

[72] Dostal, "Ullmann als Anthroposoph," 139.

[73] Nemtsov and Schröder-Nauenburg, "Music in the Inferno of the Nazi Terror," 90.

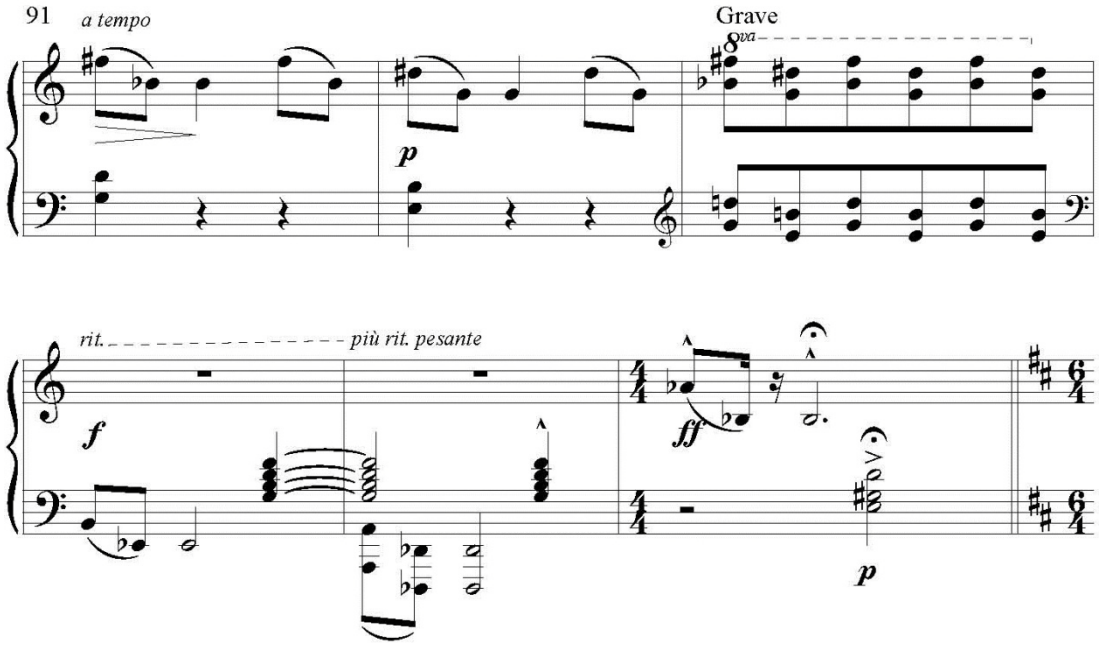
that the first variations are rooted in melancholy and then once the Doppelgänger appears, the variations transform into an "intellectual reply to the penetrating evil – with its active marching rhythms the apotheosis in the final fugue is already announced here."[74] Unfortunately, Nemtsov's connection with Anthroposophy is tenuous – placing a theme in inversion is a common compositional technique and is not generally considered a semiotic code for Doppelgänger. I do, however, agree with Nemtsov that the mirror image represents a significant moment in the variations set. Up until this point, with only minor exceptions, the dynamic level has been marked in the range of *p* through *ppp*. At m. 64, the "doppelganger" motif enters marked *forte*, and the remainder of the variations stay in this loud dynamic range, *mf* to *ff*, (with one two-measure exception). It's not clear that this section is any more "intellectual" than the previous section, however, the increased volume and thickening texture creates an intensification of momentum and instability that signals the transformation to come.

While Ullmann's variation set cannot be completely explained through Steiner's world view or interval theory, the last variation in particular has many incongruous and bizarre features that suggest some of Steiner's imagery is at play. The final variation (VIII) is marked *Piu Agitato* and, like in the fugue, the bass line opens with a variation on the opening melody presented in octaves. The overall character is violent and is highly dissonant, with tritone harmonies especially prevalent in the outer voices. At measure 91, after a *ritardando*, the action comes to a halt (See Figure 34). It resumes again with a codetta, beginning with an outline of two augmented fifths supported by perfect fifths in the bass. Measure 93 is a condensed reflection of the previous two measures, set in a higher register. This measure is a quotation from Ullmann's fifth piano sonata, an incongruous element that is only

[74] Ibid., 91.

connected numerically – a passage entirely built on fifths, derived from the fifth sonata. Following this sequence, the bass plays two figures of an augmented fifth followed by a G dominant seventh chord, culminating in a minor seventh figure in the RH supported by an E dominant seventh in the LH. Although rhythmically, measures 94-96 may foreshadow the Hussite theme that enters in the fugue, melodically and harmonically they are frenetic and create a highly unstable ending to the variations. However, the tension is completely dissolved with the solo entry of the D major fugue subject.

Figure 34. Viktor Ullmann, "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong" from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 91-96.



This violent and bizarre conclusion to the variations is weirdly supported by Steiner's discussion of the reincarnation process, most notably as we move to the final stages toward the ultimate stage of complete consciousness. It should be noted that Steiner's models replicate themselves on many levels and the seven stages he identifies happen on many planes from the micro to the macro levels, from the personal to the universal. The significance of various numbers is fundamental to the

organisation, however it is very difficult to get an absolutely clear picture of each number since there are many features ascribed to each. However, in a very general sense, the evil spirit humanity is currently battling with is called Ahriman, a figure that for Steiner is equivalent to the biblical Satan. Ahriman represents the evils of a materialist economic system, a scientific and mechanical conception of the universe, nationalism, partisan politics, religious fundamentalism and an intellectually-based cultural life. In the introduction to Steiner's lectures on the "Incarnation of Ahriman", Sevak Gulbekian writes that it would be accurate "to perceive this being [Ahriman] as, literally, the *anti*-Christ".[75] That Ullmann was enticed by this notion is evidenced in the title of his 1936 opera *The Fall of the Antichrist*, a work that has unfortunately been lost. In the most clear form, Ahriman is represented by the interval of the diminished fifth, although all intervals that have the quality of excessive contraction (i.e. diminished intervals in general) can be considered to have "Ahrimanic colouring".[76] Steiner is unclear about the specifics of how Ahriman will be overcome and humanity will progress to its highest spiritual form, but he is clear that our current epoch will end with a "War of All Against All" before we can move forward to the more enlightened epochs.

In his 1923 Stuttgart lectures on "The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone", Steiner outlines his ideas of Cosmic Memory in musical terms. For him, each age and epoch has an associative interval that represents the consciousness of the time. According to Steiner, human musical experience originates in the ancient era of Atlantis, a time characterised by the "feeling" of a seventh. We then moved through the era of the fifth, then the third, which is where we currently

[75] Rudolf Steiner, *The Incarnation of Ahriman: The Embodiment of Evil on Earth: Seven Lectures Given Between October and December 1919* (Rudolf Steiner Press, 2006), viii.

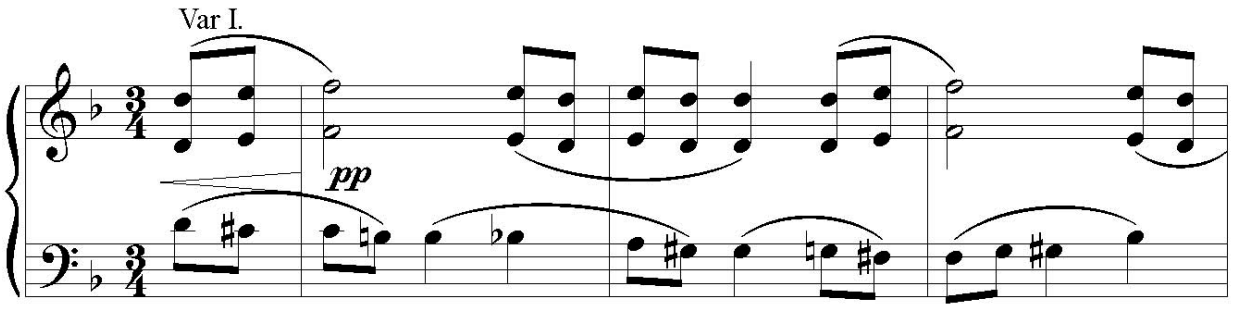
[76] Maria Renold, *Intervals, Scales, Tones* (Temple Lodge Publishing, 2015), 43, 189.

are. Steiner claimed that once man further develops consciousness, he will once again experience the full imagination of the fifth, and ultimately will return to the seventh, this time with a full consciousness, a state which he calls intuition. The seventh in this case embodies all that man can experience in the cosmos through feeling. If he can achieve this, he then rises to the experience of ego itself and is reborn to a higher level, the unknowable, utopian state which is encompassed in the octave. In Ullmann's eighth variation, the culmination of development from the melancholic opening theme through the various characters and emotional states offered in the variations, in the prominent expression of the fifths in measures 91-95 (Imagination) then sevenths in measures 94-96 (Intuition), that are then followed by the bass octaves (achievement of highest spiritual state) throughout the fugue, suggests an evocation of Steiner's Cosmic Memory. This reading is supported by the previously noted aphorism offered by Ullmann that Theme and Variations serve as a way of musically representing the metamorphosis of the *Indiviualität* in its various "earthly lives", moving toward an enlightened state.

It should also be noted that within this overall framework of the cosmic history, there is a sense that individuals are not necessarily all at the same stage in their spiritual development. While Steiner claims that our current age is characterised as physical or intellectual, there are individuals who may be behind or ahead of the general population in their evolutionary process. Some can access the distant past through clairvoyance, and some have achieved more advanced stages in the cycle, allowing them to access the truth of the unmediated states of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition. The case is the same with his ideas on the experience of tone. All the intervals exist in each age, but the "experience" of them is not necessarily available to everyone. So, for example, it is possible to consider the first variation as having a

quality of "secondness" even though the theme is presented in octaves. The lush chromatic seconds of the bass line have faster rhythmic movement and more dissonant harmonic structure, thereby loosely concealing the theme, allowing the octaves to remain in the sphere of shadow rather than standing in the forefront (See Figure 35).

Figure 35. Viktor Ullmann, "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong" from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 9-11.[77]



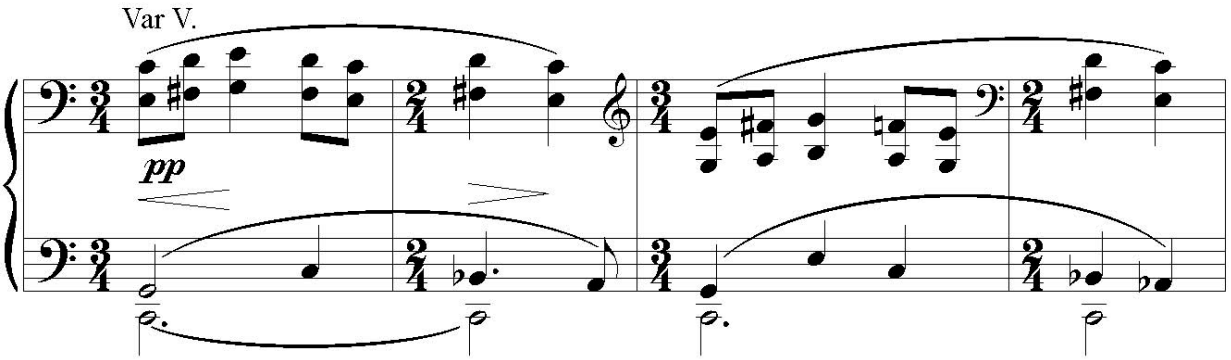
There are two other passages in the variations and fugue that are notable and may also be explained by Steiner's influence and cosmic world view. In the fifth variation, Ullmann moves away from the home key of D minor and creates a variation in the highly unexpected key of C major. Although the mode mixture was introduced in previous variations, in Variation V, the C major melody is harmonised in sixths over a low C pedal tone, creating a very conspicuous change in texture, key and overall mood (See Figure 36). In addition to being another example of a seventh relationship, the move to C major is consequential from an Anthroposophic view, since the scale is directly related to the figure of Christ and what Steiner called the "Mystery of Golgotha" (Christ's resurrection).[78] Maria Renold has detailed Steiner's very complex system of tones, scale structures, the overtone series (in Steiner's specific tuning), and their various connections to Steiner's characters and epochs. In

[77] Ullmann, *Piano Sonatas: Volume II (no. 5-7)*, 80.

[78] Renold, *Intervals, Scales, Tones*, 161.

describing the symbolism and relationships inherent in C major, she connects it both to Christ and to the interval of a sixth: "…when music making humans gain an inner certainty of God, i.e. the reality of the spiritual world, in the experience of the interval degrees of the c-c1 major scale, which is connected to the Christ spirit, then Michael [Archangel Michael associated with the note A] opens our eyes again to the spiritual worlds … and the experience of the sixth that belongs to it."[79] Again, it is unclear how much Ullmann believed in Steiner's complex system of tones and their symbolism, however, this passage is very unusual and the Anthroposophic connection offers a viable interpretive possibility, which may also be connected to the other C major passage that appears in the fugue just before the final section.

Figure 36. Viktor Ullmann, "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong" from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 47-50.[80]



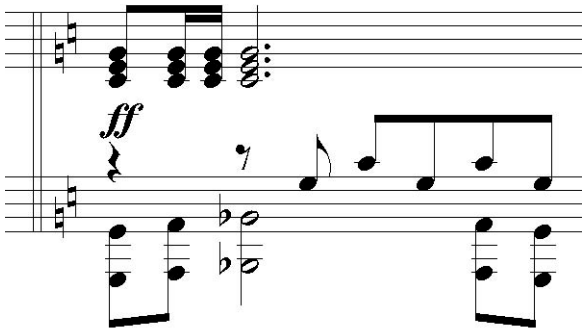
At measure 145, the key signature unexpectedly moves from D major to C major. The theme is presented in G minor in the bass, but the right hand enters with a *ff* trumpet fanfare motif on a C major triad (See Figure 37). Like in the fifth variation, this is incongruous with the surrounding material, having a conspicuous effect. Again,

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ullmann, *Piano Sonatas: Volume II (no. 5-7)*, 82.

in Steiner's mythology, this is significant. In his lectures on the Apocalypse of St. John, he notes that the end of the seventh epoch will coincide with the sound of the last of the seventh trumpets, as described in the Book of Revelations. This fanfare is the signal that man is moving to the final incarnation, the fully actualized spiritual state. Again, the Christ connection of the C major key combined with the heralding of a new world order has powerful associations that support the sacred and the political aspects of various themes described in the previous sections as well as of Jascha Nemtsov's previously quoted assertion of the fugue as an apotheosis.[81]

Figure 37. Viktor Ullmann, "Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong" from Piano Sonata No. 7, m. 145.[82]



Although there is no way to actually prove that in this particular piece Ullmann was engaging with any of Steiner's philosophy, either his overarching discussion of Cosmic Memory and evolution through reincarnation, or the associated tone and interval theories, as I have posited above, there are many traces of Anthroposophic thought in Ullmann's writings and choices of textual source material in his vocal and stage works. His choices of Anthroposophic texts by Steiner's successor Albert Steffen and his unusual choices of harmonies and idiosyncratic use

[81] Jascha Nemtsov, "'The Scandal Was Perfect' Jewish Music in the Works of European Composers," in *Impulses for Europe: Tradition and Modernity in East European Jewry*, ed. Manfred Sapper, Osteuropa (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008), 139.

[82] Ullmann, *Piano Sonatas: Volume II (no. 5-7)*, 87.

of accidentals that involve complex enharmonic spellings of intervals and chords have led to speculation that his compositional process was highly informed by his Anthroposophic beliefs. To date, only cursory attempts have been made to identify and understand how such beliefs or influence might be understood in the context of an instrumental score. Although much more analysis is needed to truly gauge the depth of Ullmann's engagement with these concepts musically, as I have shown in this analysis, there are passages that seem inexplicable through traditional analytical models, that may be illuminated through an Anthroposophic lens. In a place like Terezín, where hidden and coded messages became a necessary and familiar mode of expressing truths, Steiner's intricate system of Cosmic Memory and spiritual development through reincarnation and the corresponding relationships between tones, keys and intervals, have ample relevance and offer an additional layer to the imaginative potential in the approach to "wrestling content into form" with which Ullmann was so engaged.

Conclusion

In a review of a performance of Beethoven's Op. 111 that took place in Terezín, Ullmann quotes Beethoven's sentiment that "music is a higher wisdom than all philosophy and religion". He then connects Beethoven's words to Goethe and to his own outlook on the potential of music to be enigmatic, secret, and meaningful.

> In his statement, Beethoven comes close to Goethe's sentiment that art brings about 'the revelation of secret laws of nature, that otherwise would necessarily remain secret.' Music is an enigmatic art, its secrets reveal themselves in the coursing of blood through our veins and the beating of our hearts, not in the logical workings of our brains. Nevertheless, one senses in the late works of many great composers - Bach, Bruckner, and Mahler - the striving for conceptual meaning. In many of these late works, the spirit shatters the form, much in the way that entelechy is realized by transcending mere bodily

> constraints. From out of the cracks and fissures of musical structures and forms, the awesome biographical presence of the masters shines through; their work stands out in high relief. 'Human accomplishments are transitory;' says Gustav Mahler, 'it is mankind itself that is eternal.'[83]

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, through the "cracks and fissures" of the variations form, we can get a glimpse of a composer grappling with issues of transcendence, form, the secrets of art, and the striving for conceptual meaning. As I posited at the beginning of this chapter, Ullmann's approach to composition in his final variations reflects Kundera's vision of variations as way of voyaging toward the infinitude of interior truth. In Ullmann's variations and fugue, this interior encompasses the full range of possibility – from the personal aspects of his own identity to the larger culture surrounding him, to the entire past and future destiny of the cosmos.

Ullmann's final sonata is a collage of memories: memories of his children, as outlined in his dedication; memories of Terezín, designated by his original title of "Theresienstadt Sketchbook"; memories of a world where laws and rights applied, shown in his unusual (and ironically bitter) declaration on the title page that "Performance rights are reserved by the composer for the duration of his life". The many autobiographical references and self-quotations that emerge throughout the work contribute to this collage, as do his quotations of works by his friends Berg and Klein that arise in the first movement. His variations finale embodies the concept of memory in myriad ways – from the foundational aspect of the form, which inherently requires memory of the theme in order for the variations to have structural relevance, to his quotations of themes that have cultural and historical significance, to incorporating tones, intervals and choice of keys that have indications of Steiner's

[83] Ullmann, *26 Kritiken*, 76; Translated in Healey, "The Solo Piano Music of Viktor Ullmann," 314–5.

theories of Cosmic Memory and spiritual evolution – ultimately layering and weaving together the multitudes of possible “conceptual meanings” and enigmas inherent within his material choices.

Conclusion

In the epilogue of Karas' *Music in Terezín,* the author grandly summarises the meaning of the Terezín musical experience:

> In vain would one search for the names of Krása, Haas, Klein, or Ledeč in Vyšehrad. Their ashes and those of their colleagues from Terezín are scattered around Auschwitz and Kauffering or were carried away on the waves of Ohre and Labe perhaps all the way to the Atlantic. However, they are speaking to us. They are pointing out to us with accusing fingers the terrible consequences of moral decay. They are speaking to us about human dignity and the sacredness of life even in the midst of unimaginable misery; they are speaking about the courage of the unbending, unyielding human spirit. And above all through the tones of the Terezín composers, spurted out of their sorrow and anguish, they speak to us about the eternal hope for a better tomorrow.[84]

Karas' passion and sentiments have been echoed numerous times since the musical life of Terezín came to light shortly after the war, however, there is something unsettling and unsatisfying about this pithy summation of their experience and legacy. Lawrence Langer acknowledges an element of human nature in this kind of response, claiming that is it natural to want to create meaning out of the senseless situation:

> It is easy to misinterpret the cultural life that occurred at Terezín and difficult to assess what it signifies, for us and for the victims whose talents were so betrayed. Much ink has been spilled on the subject of cultural resistance to genocide, though I sometimes feel that the phrase says more about our need to find some solace in the unredeemable atrocity of the Holocaust than to describe accurately the true nature of what happened. Although the ordeal of European Jewry is finished for the murdered victims, it will never be over for us. The impulse to set meaningless death into some form of meaningful context is both natural and understandable, since the alternative is almost too painful to bear.[85]

The composers Haas, Krása, Klein and Ullmann were all subjected to similar traumas, circumstances, and fates in the final years of their lives, and their musical

[84] Karas, *Music in Terezín, 1941-1945,* 199–200.

[85] Lawrence L. Langer, "The Art of Atrocity," *Tikkun* 17, no. 4 (August 2002): 67.

output reflects this, particularly in the final months of their internment. However, as their music indicates, each one responded individually, revealing the complexities and many layers of possible meaning inherent in their situation. From sketches that outline the physical aspects of the camp – the façade, the national and religious tensions, and the rampant suffering and death – to expressions of philosophical ruminations and explorations of spiritual significance, the music composed by these men very definitely is a product of their experience and situation, but in a variety of ways. Rather than aiming to create a definitive understanding or analysis of these works, I have endeavoured throughout this thesis to uncover various possibilities and latent interpretive cues that enrich and expand how we consider and engage with this music.

As I noted in my introduction, my aims for this project were threefold:

1. To determine the ways in which *Variations*, as a compositional practice and formal structure can be interpreted as a mode of communication or meaning; the underpinning questions here are *why* did the Terezín composers choose variations form for their compositions at this time and *what* does the form allow them to express?

2. To use the musical scores as primary sources from which to gain historical knowledge; a means of learning something about a particular historical moment that alters our understanding of the context.

3. To increase our understanding of the music through analysis that utilises a wide variety of the available tools, working to uncover the specific information offered in the pieces, widening the lens through which we view them, thereby expanding the commonly simplistic and/or reductionist readings that categorise music composed and performed in Terezín only as symbols of spiritual resistance.

These aims were primarily methodological and allowed me to address some key areas and gaps within the literature. The intention was never for this to be a conclusive study of what this music means, but rather to examine and explore it from a fresh perspective in the hopes of unlocking some new avenues in research and to broaden our overall thinking about what music composed in a Nazi camp might be

able to express. In all these areas, I think there have been positive results and varying degrees of success.

Although the questions of *why* composers would choose variations form or *what* exactly it allowed them to do cannot be answered unequivocally, this study has highlighted some of the ways in which form is an integral part of the creative process of musical composition and how it is anything but a benign choice on the part of the composer. More than any other musical structure, variations form has a universal quality, one which is easily understood as a concept and that has numerous simple applications; however, this same simplicity makes it easy to disregard and take its significance for granted. As I have shown, the Terezín composers used variations in a multitude of ways and situations, none of which conformed to a particular formula. At a bare minimum, Krása's *Passacaglia* incorporated Baroque techniques to present a lyrical and elegant melody that both covered and clashed with the contrasting thematic material for a modern and personal expression of an antiquated form; Klein used the expectations of a melodic-variations style to encode messages; Haas worked with many subtleties inherent in the ostinato pattern and also created variations on his own past works; and Ullmann used his variations to experiment with expressions of a more philosophical nature. Perhaps there are even more ways to think about variations as well. In an essay on Terezín, Gideon Klein lamented the complete isolation from musical life and being cut off from new incentives and sources.[86] The Terezín variations may be a reflection of this closed system where in all aspects of life, one was required to do the same thing over and over again, attempting to create a stimulus from a tedious or static routine. All of these are really only starting points for the

[86] Gideon Klein, "A Few Words About Musical Culture in Terezin," in *Gideon Klein: A Fragment of Life and Work*, by Milan Slavický (Prague: Helvetica-Tempora, 1996), 85–87.

possibilities of how the form can be considered as more than a simple container or formula for approaching musical expression.

In terms of thinking of a musical score as a historical document, I would not argue that my work here has revolutionised or solved this difficult musicological problem, however, the results of my analyses show that the various expressive devices, musical language, thematic and motivic choices, and all the other parts I've examined all offer pieces of information that sometimes confirm what we already know, and sometimes offer alternatives or challenges. Without this documentation, we have little or no information about the complexities of the lives, emotions, creative output, experience, or outlook of these composers. But through the notated music, we can discover a world of hidden messages, confirmation that the horrific realities the Nazis were working hard to cover up actually happened, amongst all the other expressions of anguish, loss, collective and personal memories and relationships, and so on, that all contribute to the fabric of human experience. Although the other available source materials have offered historical data, including dates, circumstances, and other particulars, the musical score offers evidence not only of the physical space, but also the creative and intellectual space these figures occupied. As Michael Beckerman has argued regarding the Klein trio, it is possible to hold strong to a view that negates the score from adding anything substantial to our understanding of events and conditions, but the opposite argument is equally powerful:

> But we could just as well argue that no other extant document delineates what was happening in Terezín as clearly, powerfully and variously as does this score, especially considering the kinds of problems it poses for those who seek to reconstruct the past. Because like the work itself, the "full historical record" of Terezín consists of what is known, what could be known and is not known, and what cannot be known at all. Like Terezín itself, the manuscript of the Trio is a landscape open to endless interpretations, but it is also a work that could have been wrought in no other time or place.[87]

[87] Beckerman, "Meditation."

Returning momentarily to Kramer's consideration of music as history, and his offerings on why, perhaps, music is not regularly considered as a historical source, I will re-quote a passage from my introduction, "Its [musical] pleasure can shrug off worldly burdens even if we acknowledge that its sound is inflected by them. (Forget for a moment that the pleasures are, too.) But if we ask music to instruct us about those burdens, and it does, there is no shrugging them off. We fear as much, in any case, and so we don't ask."[88] The worldly burdens of the life experienced in Terezín are tough to deal with on any level. The musical activities and performances in Terezín certainly allowed for moments where people could immerse themselves in the beauty and idealised world of music. However, as a form of art, music does instruct us about those burdens and, especially in this context, where there are so many gaps and unknown facts, it is crucial that we use music to inform our historical understanding as much as we would use any other text. As the analyses of these final compositions have revealed, these are works that directly express specific elements of their historical context.

None of my analyses have negated the possibility that this music stands as a testament to potential of the human spirit in the face of adversity, however, they have shown that the music is expressive of much more than that and that these composers were using their music to engage with and express details of their environment. In some cases these articulations can be taken literally as hidden messages that convey details of their physical situation – various nationalities and religions crowded together in Ullmann's sonata, references to dead children in Klein's trio, the arrival of a train, or the façade created by beautiful, elegant melodies over subversive or dark thematic material in Krása's passacaglia. In other cases, the musical utterances could

[88] Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 97.

be construed as emotional responses to the complexities of their environment; musical explorations of the themes they faced daily such as monotony, confinement, death, loss, longing for home, hopes and dreams for a better future, in addition to national, religious and political identities. Finally, these musical compositions engage with the philosophical questions about the meaning and purpose of life and how to use art to contain and express the most difficult aspects of existence. I would argue that in the compositions discussed in this thesis, it would be difficult to make a case to consider these pieces as examples of escapist activity, which happens for other cultural activities, such as theatre or cabaret. Rather, these examples suggest and even confirm that the artists were working through their existential anxieties in their music and finding ways to express the potential questions and answers they found.

In addition to the methodological innovations I outlined above, my original contribution to scholarship in this study is primarily in the realm of individual analysis. Neither the Krása *Passacaglia and Fugue* nor the Haas *Study for String Orchestra* have received more than cursory analytical attention, and the other pieces have generally received attention focusing chiefly on aspects of quotation and textual association. The analyses I have provided highlight the individual aspects of the music and the communicative elements they contain, expanding our knowledge and understandings of these works into new areas.

The first of these areas is in the area of musical analysis. It is evident from my research that all of these composers, with the possible exception of Gideon Klein who was quite young when he was sent to Terezín, were in dialogue with their own previous works in their Terezín compositions. Ullmann used autobiographical quotes in his last sonata and is thought to have reworked material from his pre-Terezín work *Death of the Anti-Christ* in his Terezín opera *Kaiser of Atlantis*; Krása used his *Tanec*

theme in his *Passacaglia*; Haas reused themes from his opera *Šarlatan*, and often used the *Wenceslas Chorale* in his instrumental works, among other examples. Because these works have not been studied or analysed in depth, it seems likely that there are more themes or motifs that have yet to be identified. Perhaps the fugue in Haas' study has a connection to a theme in his third string quartet. Perhaps the waltz figure in Krása's passacaglia is not a generic paraphrase of a Viennese waltz but is something more specific. For the most part, the vocal music of Ullmann and Klein in particular, has been analysed separately from the instrumental compositions; it is likely there will be more to uncover once the Lieder and their accompaniments become better known and analysed. It is highly evident that Haas, Krása, Klein, and Ullmann drew on a wide range of sources for their material, including themselves and possibly even each other, and it seems to me that this is still an area where there is potential for a lot more to be discovered.

A second avenue that I think can be pursued is the examination of musical language in war time. As I showed in Chapter Five, Klein found himself moving to a more representational style for his variations and then in Chapter Six how Ullmann's use of a Hebrew melody also suggests a change in musical language. If this is a common trend, there are various possible implications for how we think about music as a communicative device and the role of the intellectual composer in society. This could relate to disciplines outside of the field of music, such as sociology or psychology, for example. If indeed, it was necessary to change to a more accessible language in order to connect artistically with the community, then many more questions could be raised about why, what, and how this happens, and what it means.

The third avenue of potential future research stems from my final chapter on Viktor Ullmann. Nearly everyone who writes about Ullmann notes his interest in

Anthroposophy and suggests that his music contains Anthroposophic references, but as I found in my research, it is very unclear what kind of influence that may have had on his music. Some of this, I think, stems from a lack of understanding of Anthroposophy, and perhaps even a lack of understanding of spirituality in the early part of the twentieth century. A great deal of literature has focused on Jewish or Christian symbolism and identity politics in the wake of the Second World War, however, the alternatives have not been explored in a lot of detail. The influence of figures such as Steiner and the other leaders of occult and esoteric spiritual groups remain well at the margins of scholarship, despite the large number of followers and range of influence they are reported to have had. It is unclear exactly what kinds of findings this type of research would uncover, but as I have shown, there may be very real symbolic meaning that will reveal new interpretive possibilities.

Further to these three main avenues of further research, there are myriad other possibilities for inquiry. Additional exploration of collective or cultural memory is possible, as is an examination of musical memorialisation practices. There may also be implications for performance practice and how musicians approach and perform this repertoire. I have also not addressed audience reception of the Terezín music, but these analyses and questions of meaning may open new avenues of potential research in this area. Additionally, there are other, lesser known composers from Terezín, such as James Simon, Carlo Taube, or Karel Reiner (amongst others) whose work has yet to be restored or considered as seriously as the four composers in this study.

As I have described and shown throughout this thesis, our understanding of the history of Terezín is very incomplete and is laden with significant questions – most of which are unanswerable with any sort of definitive response. However, the music composed in Terezín by these four composers offers some very rich material

from which to work toward broadening our knowledge and relationship with the cultural history of the camp. Certainly the more time I spend with these pieces, the more I get out of them and the more they have to offer. As historical evidence and artistic expression of various truths, the music of Terezín may be part of what the Nobel Poet Laureate Wisława Szymborska wrote about as "wartime loot" in an untitled poem in the late 1940's:

> Once we had the world backwards and forwards:
> – it was so small it fit in two clasped hands,
> So simple that a smile did to describe it,
> So common, like old truths echoing in prayers.
>
> History didn't greet us with triumphal fanfares:
> – It flung dirty sand into our eyes.
> Ahead of us lay long roads leading nowhere,
> Poisoned wells and bitter bread.
>
> Our wartime loot is knowledge of the world,
> – it is so large it fits in two clasped hands,
> so hard that a smile does to describe it,
> so strange, like old truths echoing in prayers.[89]

[89] Wisława Szymborska, *Map: Collected and Last Poems*, trans. Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2015), 3.

Appendix

CD Track Listing for Musical Examples

Track 1. Figure 2. Pavel Haas, “I Heard the Cry of the Wild Geese” from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 1-4.

Track 2. Figure 3. Pavel Haas, “Far is my Home, O Moon”, from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 1-2.

Track 3. Figure 4. Wenceslas Chorale

Track 4. Figure 5. Pavel Haas, “Far is my Home, O Moon”, from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 9-14.

Track 5. Figure 6. Haas’ Wenceslas ostinato compared with *Dies Irae*

Track 6. Figure 7. Pavel Haas, “I Heard the Cry of the Wild Geese”, from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 13-14.

Track 7. Figure 8. Pavel Haas, “Far is my Home, O Moon”, from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 91-92.

Track 8. Figure 9. Pavel Haas, “Far is my Home, O Moon”, from Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, mm. 49-52.

Track 9. Figure 10. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 17-23.

Track 10. Figure 11. Pavel Haas, Orchestral interlude from Šarlatan.

Track 11. Figure 12. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 28-30.

Track 12. Figure 13 - Pavel Haas, “Wanderer’s Song” from Šarlatan.

Track 13. Figure 14. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 60-65.

Track 14. Figure 15. Pavel Haas, Study for String Orchestra, mm. 201-205.

Track 15. Figure 16. Dietrich Buxtehude, Passacaglia in D minor, BUX WV 161 mm. 1-4.

Track 16. Figure 17. Johann Pachelbel, Ciacona in D minor, T. 204 mm. 1-4.

Track 17. Figure 18. J.S. Bach, Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BVW 582, mm. 1-8.

Track 18. Figure 20. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 1-8.

Track 19. Figure 21. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 33-34.

Track 20. Figure 22. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 41-48.

Track 21. Figure 23. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 73-76.

Track 22. Figure 24. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 81-88.

Track 23. Figure 25. Dies Irae plainchant melody.

Track 24. Figure 26. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 1-3.

Track 25. Figure 27. Hans Krása, Passacaglia, mm. 119-122.

Track 26. Figure 28. Gideon Klein, “Variations on a Moravian Folk Song”, from String Trio, mm. 1-12.

Track 27. Figure 29. Gideon Klein, Piano Sonata, mm. 1-2.

Track 28. Figure 30. Gideon Klein, Piano Sonata, mm. 31-34.

Track 29. Figure 31. Gideon Klein, Piano Sonata, m.13.

Track 30. Figure 32. Viktor Ullmann fugue opening compared with Slovak national anthem

Track 31. Figure 33. Viktor Ullmann, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong” from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 138-141.

Track 32. Figure 34. Viktor Ullmann, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong” from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 91-96.

Track 33. Figure 35. Viktor Ullmann, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong” from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 9-11.

Track 34. Figure 36. Viktor Ullmann, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong” from Piano Sonata No. 7, mm. 47-50.

Track 35. Figure 37. Viktor Ullmann, “Variations and Fugue on a Hebrew Folksong” from Piano Sonata No. 7, m. 145.

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