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Lessons in Musical Geography: Imagining Eastern Europe in the United States during World War II*

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In the United States during World War II, the cultural geography of Eastern Europe was both a local and a transatlantic phenomenon. When, for example, the Chicago Opera put on Stanisław Moniuszko's *Halka* (1848) in November 1942, the event served just as much as a reflection of local identity as it was a cultural referent to the current war. Not only did the production honor the city's newly organized Polish Opera Guild, but its cast was drawn also largely from—as journalist Claudia Cassidy put it—“the huge and gifted Polish population of Chicago,” with Jan Kiepura in the role of Jontek, the mountaineer. The ramifications of choosing *Halka* went further, however, than simply pleasing a local ethnic group. As we read in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

To the patriotic Pole, of course, it is . . . practically a national opera, passionate in its rage against injustice, fervent in its declaration of the right to freedom. The Poles on the stage and in the audience understood that, and enjoyed doubly the warmth of a favorite score.¹

* This essay has benefited tremendously from the generous comments by Kevin Bartig, Michael Beckerman, Christopher Campo-Bowen, Tim Carter, and James Loeffler. I am very grateful for their insight and contribution. In this article, there is discrepancy between the spelling of names in the text itself and in quotations and footnote citations—Jan Löwenbach becomes Lowenbach, for example—because American spelling in the 1940s generally omits diacriticals.

¹ Claudia Cassidy, “*Halka* Is Sung and It Proves Polish Holiday,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26

Indeed, the dual reference both to the historic Poland and to the current war was a familiar form in which U.S. cultural events during World War II tied local ethnic groups—whether Polish, Czech, or Russian—to the broader concerns of a nation at war.²

Yet imagining Eastern Europe in the United States during World War II was a complex enterprise. Not only did it map local immigrant geographies onto transatlantic battlefields (and vice versa); it also needed to contend with complex geopolitical situations as they unfolded between 1939 and 1945. Not all Eastern European countries were Allies in the war: Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, and Slovakia were fighting on the side of the Axis. The largest nation in the East, the Soviet Union, had first joined with Nazi Germany as a result of the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. With the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, the Soviet Union then became one of the Allied countries, but American suspicions about its trustworthiness were never entirely alleviated. Yet through such works as Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony no. 7 ("Leningrad"), music became a major player in American and other Western efforts to promote the Soviet Union in particular as a freedom-loving partner in the fight against Fascism.³

A third dimension to this multifaceted cultural matrix was the strong presence in American concert life since the nineteenth century of performers and repertoire from Eastern Europe. Composers such as Fryderyk Chopin, Franz Liszt, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky were as familiar to American audiences as were such performers as Jan Kiepura, Artur Rubinstein, and Serge Koussevitzky. Sergei Rachmaninoff was among the most successful Russian composers and performers living in the United States in the 1930s and early 1940s, and during the interwar years, Eastern European musicians such as George Enescu were celebrated when they crossed the Atlantic to give concerts in America. Last but not least in the constellation of musicians with Eastern European ties were such second-generation Americans as Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, and Yehudi Menuhin, whose Jewish families

November 1942. *Halka* was performed in Chicago already through the 1930s, often in productions arranged by the Polish community but after 1937 also by the Chicago City Opera. See, for example, Cecil Smith, "Polish Opera *Halka* Pleases Big Audience," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 November 1937.

² Ethnicity and race are contentious concepts in the United States and have formed the center of significant research in the past decades. For an overview of the issues, see *Race and Ethnicity in America*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

³ Christopher H. Gibbs, "'The Phenomenon of the Seventh': A Documentary Essay on Shostakovich's 'War' Symphony," in *Shostakovich and His World*, edited by Laurel E. Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 59–113.

originated in Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus, and whose national identities and family roots became an issue of consideration during the war.

The cultural parameters that shaped the sonic construction of Eastern Europe in the United States played themselves out in concert halls, recording studios, and radio programs. By the time of World War II, these factors were well established through a process of cultural transfer that had its roots in the nineteenth century and developed its modern face during the interwar years.⁴ World War II crystalized and sharpened the musical geography of Eastern Europe in the United States by emphasizing national specificity through folk music, by solidifying sonic symbols for a handful of allied nations, and by mapping American ethnic and other identities onto the global conflict. While none of these strategies is uniquely American—folk music as a signifier of nationhood counts among the most familiar tropes of musical nationalism—their intersections during World War II produced a distinct construction of identities at the convergence of American ethnicities and their points of origin abroad. This essay first addresses the imaginary geographies of Eastern-European folksong in American concert halls before exploring the symbolic representation of Allied nations—in particular with respect to Polish, Czech, and Russian music—during the war. A brief epilogue discusses the construction of national identity on the part of such second-generation Americans as Aaron Copland and his contemporaries.

IMAGINARY GEOGRAPHIES, FOLK SONGS, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY POLITICS

Perhaps the most familiar and pervasive way in which to emphasize national identity musically in Western culture was through folk idioms. In the case of an immigrant nation such as the United States, however, this approach proved to be somewhat problematic, not only because immigrants had brought a wide range of different musics that remained associated with the old homeland rather than the new one, but also because idioms considered autochthonous—such as spirituals and jazz—were deemed unsuitable for the concert hall save under very special circumstances given the racist rejection of African Americans and their culture, not only in the

⁴ For a thoughtful discussion of ethnic identity politics as it pertains to one particular group through World War II, see June Granatir Alexander, *Ethnic Pride, American Patriotism: Slovaks and Other New Immigrants in the Interwar Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). For an ethnography-based study that includes historical discussion, see Paula Savaglio, *Negotiating Ethnic Boundaries: Polish American Music in Detroit* (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2004).

nineteenth century but well into the 1930s. Notions of folk music were also problematic in a country still struggling with the competing demands of state- and (federal) nationhood. Indeed, by World War II, American classical musicians had more or less abandoned the use of their own folk idioms as markers of a unified national identity.⁵ Instead, these idioms often served to characterize the particularity of one ethnicity within its American context, such as, for instance, when Henry Cowell tried to represent the nation (not its regions) in his neoclassical work for chamber orchestra, *American Melting Pot* (1940), with dances standing for seven different American-immigrant identities: Teutonic, African, French, Oriental, Slavic, Latin, and Celtic.⁶ Each of the movements plays on reductive stereotypes, such as a rumba for Latin America, or the “Slavic Dance” referencing folk dances from Russia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in a kaleidoscopic whirl. For Cowell, such musical hybridity (as he called his compositional approach during World War II) served as a claim for the capacity of American culture to absorb and manage diversity in a manner that European music did not. It also laid the groundwork, however, for other such works in Cowell’s output—for example *Philippine Return: Rondo on a Philippine Folk Song* (1943)—that extended the use of internal folk music into an imperialist appropriation of global cultures in the service of the American war effort.⁷

The association of ethnicity and folk music in the United States played itself out also in the reception of music from abroad. While the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms had long been emptied of specific national associations, music other than German was prized for its national character, whether in terms of identifiable style—“impressionism,” for example, in the case of Claude Debussy—or picturesque folklore.⁸ Indeed, ethnic specificity

⁵ Annegret Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 151–60. American folk-music research and its politics is the subject of Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁶ *American Melting Pot* was premiered on 3 May 1943, by the Orchestrette of New York, conducted by Frederique Petrides. It remains in manuscript but was recorded and released by the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra in 1993 (3-7220-2 H1 Koch International Classics). See William Lichtenwanger, *The Music of Henry Cowell: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1986), 213–14.

⁷ On Cowell’s notion of hybridity, see Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 86.

⁸ On the trajectory of American reception of German music and how the concept of musical universalism played out over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); for World War II, see also Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 138–41.

became an increasingly marked aspect of music as, for example, in the case of the composer Anton Rubinstein whose American reception shifted from that of a symphonist associated with German repertoire to that of a composer more fully identified both as a Russian and as a Jew through, among others, Catherine D. Bowen's widely read biography from 1939.⁹

The World's Fair that took place in New York in 1939, on the eve of World War II, offers a particularly clear window on this phenomenon because the concerts and stage performances were framed from the outset in national terms. The new Polish Ballet, for instance, offered a wide range of productions, whether abstract dances choreographed to classical music or such folkloric ballets as *Song of Our Land*. Whereas the company's non-nationally-specific ballets received a rather cool reception in New York, dance critics found the Polish character of *Song of Our Land* far more enjoyable.¹⁰ The score and choreography evoked all the usual tropes from peasant wedding to village festivals, with Roman Palester's music relying heavily on folk idioms. The critics were elated: Irving Kolodin praised the "native understanding" summoned by the dancers that lead to a "rich and stimulating experience," whereas John Martin enjoyed the "flavorsome" choreography of what he described as "a work based on national and racial material" and "by far the best ballet built on folk-dance themes in the company's repertoire."¹¹

This American emphasis on European national character by way of folkloric exoticism was even stronger in the reception of a series of "national programs" presented by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. The fifth concert on 5 May 1939, for example, featured music from Rumania and was conducted by George Enescu. The program included, among others, Sabin Drăgoi's *Rustic Suite*, Enescu's own Second Rumanian Rhapsody in D major, and Stan Golestan's First Rumanian Rhapsody. The notes that accompanied the concert emphasize the Rumanian character of each piece. For instance, the program described Mihail G. Andricu's music as "said to embody the spirit and traditions of Roumanian [*sic*] folk-music, expressed in classical form"; called Drăgoi's *Rustic Suite* "a synthesis of Romanian folk music"; and presented Enescu's Second Rumanian Rhapsody as a work in which Enescu

⁹ Catherine Drinker Bowen, *Free Artist: The Story of Anton and Nicholas Rubinstein* (New York: Random House, 1939). I am grateful to James Loeffler for sharing this information with me. On Rubinstein's Germanic association in the United States during the nineteenth century, see Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy*, 85, 98–99.

¹⁰ George Dorris, "The Polish Ballet at the New York World's Fair, June 1939," *Dance Chronicle* 27 (2004): 217–34.

¹¹ Extracts given in Dorris, "The Polish Ballet," 226–28.

“has remembered the folk-music of his own country.”¹² The *New York Times* music critic, Olin Downes, was excited about this all-Rumanian program which clearly emphasized the folkloric. Each work, he noted enthusiastically, “had unmistakable racial color, musical imagery and characteristic instrumentation,” and it allowed the audience to take aurally “a trip to Rumania”—where most, of course, had never been.¹³ Audiences and critics responded excitedly both to the Rumanian program and to its embodiment in the person of Enescu who was fêted with standing ovations as one of the great musicians of his time.

These performances at the 1939 World’s Fair took place only a few months before the war began in Europe. At that time, more so-called national concerts were planned for the following year—the World’s Fair lasted until October 1940—yet after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, American engagement with European music changed in subtle but fascinating ways. Many artists who had visited the American concert circuit were no longer present. Enescu, who had been so celebrated in 1939, for example, could not travel across the Atlantic in 1940, and in December that year, a notice appeared in the *Musical Courier* that informed his admirers that the eminent musician was “safe in his native land.”¹⁴ Other composers’ fates were either unknown or willfully ignored: one tragic example was Victor Ullmann, whose Piano Sonata was roundly criticized by Olin Downes in May 1941 as being derivative of German Romanticism without a word about the fact that he was trapped in Prague and clearly in danger.¹⁵

Of course, a number of artists from Eastern Europe remained in the United States after the outbreak of hostilities. They included “Roumania’s nightingale,” Pia Igy, a soprano who fashioned herself “not only as the ambassadress of the folk music of her own country, but of the folksong of all of Europe as well.”¹⁶ Igy’s case is particularly intriguing, because she cast the performance of folk music as war work when, after Pearl Harbor, she moved to Detroit. There, “starting with the Rumanian colony as a nucleus, the singer organized a patriotic cosmopolitan group comprised of persons of 46 nationalities,” a local United

¹² The program can be found in the New York Philharmonic Digital Archive at <http://archives.nyphil.org> (accessed 10 March 2015).

¹³ Olin Downes, “Music of Rumania Presented at the Fair,” *New York Times*, 6 May 1939.

¹⁴ “Enesco Safe in Roumania,” *Musical Courier* 123 (15 December 1940): 4.

¹⁵ Olin Downes, “Chamber Program Heard at Library,” *New York Times*, 22 May 1941; the occasion was a chamber-music concert organized in the context of the New York festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

¹⁶ “Folksong of All Europe Included in Repertoire of Pia Igy, Soprano,” *Musical Courier* 123 (1 March 1940): 11.

Nations dedicated to musical and social activities in the service of the country.¹⁷ Indeed, despite her original role as musical ambassador of what had become an enemy nation, Igy's use of folk music as transnational rallying point served as a way to envoice musically the American melting pot in performance.¹⁸

Other musicians in American exile, too, linked folk music with their wartime personas. The Polish tenor, Jan Kiepura, had fled the Nazis in Austria together with his wife, Marta Eggerth, and he began his American career at the Met in New York.¹⁹ In a puff piece in the *Musical Courier*, he was presented as an advocate of Polish folk song, one of "the first singers to include such numbers in his concert programs."²⁰ After announcing that his 1942 American concert tour would not only contain Polish folk music but also a *Prayer for Poland's Freedom*, based on Chopin's Prelude op. 28, no. 15, that the singer had arranged himself, Kiepura's concertizing was then framed as the political mission of a war hero:

Caught on an opera tour in France during the outbreak of the present war, Kiepura enlisted as one of the first volunteers in the Polish Legion. Demobilized after the fall of Warsaw, the exiled Polish Government ordered him to continue serving his country by appearing in benefit concerts in the United States, Canada, Central America, Cuba and Brazil. The tenor has appeared on forty such programs, which have grossed more than \$100,000. Kiepura also has assisted Polish and Jewish refugees and conferred about them with President Vargas and Foreign Minister Aranha of Brazil, President Battista of Cuba and recently with officials of the Mexican government.

Kiepura had been known as a champion for the Polish cause from the moment he arrived in the United States, performing with Rubinstein in a benefit concert

¹⁷ Mary Craig, "Silhouettes: Pia Igy," *Musical Courier* 128 (1 November 1945): 12.

¹⁸ On the difference of fashioning musical identity for an American audience between musicians in exile from Allied and Axis countries respectively, see Annegret Fauser, "Music for the Allies: Representations of Nationhood during World War II," in *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900–2000*, edited by Felix Meyer, Carol J. Oja, Wolfgang Rathert, and Anne C. Schreffler (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), 247–58.

¹⁹ In 1941, Kiepura (and his brother) were listed in Theophil Stengel and Herbert Gerigk, *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik, mit einem Titelverzeichnis jüdischer Werke* (Berlin: B. Hahnefeld Verlag, 1941), 135.

²⁰ G.N., "Kiepura Combines Patriotic Work for Poland with Musical Tour" *Musical Courier* 125 (20 January 1942): 23.

for Polish Relief at Carnegie Hall, and his Polish persona remained associated throughout the war with both Polish and Jewish relief.²¹ An evening at Carnegie Hall in May 1942, sponsored by the American Polish Czechoslovak Joint Committee and where both Kiepura and the Czech soprano, Jarmila Novotná, performed “songs of their respective countries,” was proclaimed more a war rally than a concert.²²

If concert artists of Allied countries started to push folk song more directly because of the war, other groups in the United States had already successfully used folk music as markers of authenticity, and none more so than the Don Cossacks.²³ Clad in uniforms and trading on their past as white-Russian soldiers, the chorus presented a mixture of Orthodox music, folk tunes, and military songs in their concerts.

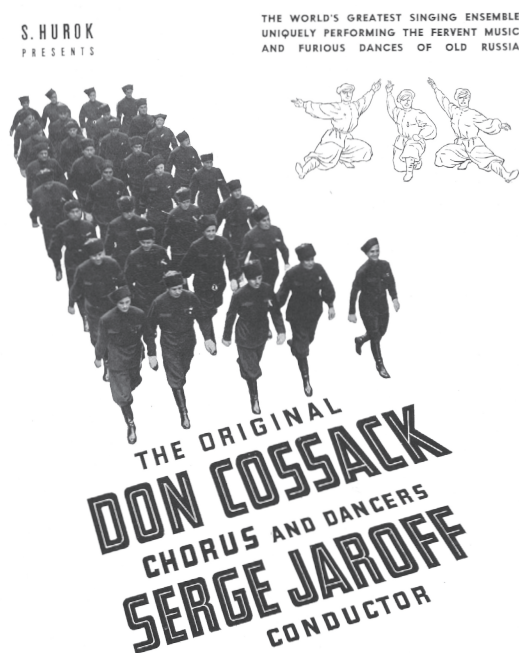


Fig. 1. Advertisement for “The Original Don Cossack Chorus and Dancers,” *Musical Courier* 124 (1 February 1941): 15. (UNC Chapel Hill, Music Library)

In the days before the Soviet Union joined the Allies, the performances of the Don Cossacks served as the living embodiment of a Russia of old, an alternative country kept alive on this side of the Atlantic. The deliberate

²¹ “Concert Opens National Series for Polish Aid,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 November 1939.

²² “Concert Is War Rally,” *New York Times*, 10 May 1942.

²³ By 1939, two ensembles vied for American audiences, the “original” Don Cossacks, as they were billed, conducted by Sergei Jarov, and General Platoff’s Don Cossack Chorus which moved to the U.S. after the outbreak of hostilities.

inclusion of Orthodox liturgy, often in settings by composers such as Tchaikovsky or Alexander Grechaninov, together with wistful folk-song arrangements played both on American nostalgia for Tsarist Russia—not least fueled by the Anastasia craze of the 1930s—and on the local custom of identifying immigrants through cultural references to the old home country.²⁴ Furthermore, performing a military masculinity not only in their attire but also in the musical drill that translated, for the audiences, into “split-second precision” of polyphonic attack, the male chorus offered a vision of “old Russia” different from American associations with the majority of immigrants from Eastern Europe who were either Jews fleeing pogroms, or starving and often illiterate peasants heading for the booming industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest.²⁵ Theirs was “music from old Russia, representing customs and ideals of the people in the days before the Soviet regime came into power,” an article claimed just two weeks before Pearl Harbor.²⁶ In the complicated story of U.S.–Soviet relations, the Don Cossacks played a fascinating role, for once the Americans joined the Allies, the ensemble included pre-Soviet Russian church music in their concerts to commemorate Soviet soldiers killed in battle.²⁷ As the war went on, the greatest musical rival of the Don Cossacks on radio and record became the Red Army Chorus, an ensemble that the Soviet propaganda machine used judiciously by incorporating sonic tropes—including the all-time favorite “Song of the Volga Boatmen”—that the white-Russian Don Cossacks had popularized in the West. With this slippage between the two male choruses, the actual geography of war merged with the imaginary geography of Russia in the United States that had already been fashioned in the American concert hall during the 1930s.

²⁴ Critics routinely remarked on the religious music in particular. See, for example, Ray C. B. Brown’s detailed review of the musical selection in “Don Cossack Chorus Scores Triumph,” *Washington Post*, 8 December 1941. This concert was announced two weeks earlier in a puff piece that speaks of the “fervor of their voices in Russian religious music” and “the nostalgia expressed in their singing of folk-songs”; see “Don Cossack Chorus Comes Here Dec. 8,” *Washington Post*, 24 November 1941.

²⁵ Charles David Harrick, “Don Cossack Chorus,” *Baltimore Sun*, 10 December 1939.

²⁶ “Two Troupes Offer Music of Old Russia,” *Baltimore Sun*, 23 November 1941. “Old Russia” was a familiar trope in immigrant communities and served as a rallying point, for example in February 1941, in a fundraiser (with balalaika orchestra and folk dances) that purported to revive “ancient traditions of nobility and peasant” life. See “Old Russia Viewed at Students’ Ball,” *New York Times*, 7 February 1941.

²⁷ “The program, which was enthusiastically received by a large gathering, opened with a funeral service, composed of traditional chants of the Russian Church, which was sung on this occasion in memory of the Soviet soldiers killed during the present war.” See “Don Cossack Chorus Directed by Jaroff,” *New York Times*, 7 November 1942.

How strongly, yet problematically, U.S. notions about immigration and Allied national identity were linked in folk-music performance shines through in a newspaper column that framed the Ninth Annual Folk Music Festival at Washington's Constitution Hall in April 1942 in those terms. As Helen Harrison Mills, one of the event's organizers, explained, the festival "happily integrates people of many races and regions that make up the huge 'melting pot'—the U.S.A." From her perspective, each nationality had its singularity, for "nowhere else in the world are so many completely different nationalities housed under the roof of a single government." But also, and inevitably, from her perspective, the distinction between those nationalities was one of decreasing American status. In her hierarchy of folk music in the United States, regional idioms, for example from Appalachia, were cast as more authentically American, whereas the idiom of ethnically denoted immigrant groups remained more exotic.²⁸ The early settlers, Mills pointed out, were the forebears of what "we think of as really 'American.'" Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century immigrants from Eastern Europe, by contrast, were less clearly integrated, even though the miracles of democracy enabled peaceful coexistence between old and new immigrants of all ethnicities—a stunning rewriting of history by silencing anti-immigrant and racist violence:

More recently "new" Americans came from Europe—Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Lithuania, Russia, Rumania, and other countries—to become fused amicably and lastingly into the fabric of the republic that is the last stronghold of democracy. If this democracy is to survive, what more effective means to achieve this than a festival to which these various groups bring their traditions and folklore and sing and dance for each other!²⁹

Despite the rhetoric of the melting pot and the entreaty to national unity through folk-music performance, the discourse surrounding this and other such events makes it clear that music was to mark each ethnicity's singularity

²⁸ Four weeks after the end of the Washington Festival, there was a follow-up event in New York at Madison Square Garden on 11 May 1942. It was, among others, attended by Theresa Helburn and provided one of the inspirations for the Theatre Guild's musical play, *Oklahoma!* (1943) by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein. On the folk festival, see Tim Carter, *Oklahoma!: the Making of an American Musical* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 31.

²⁹ All citations in this paragraph from Helen Harrison Mills, "Music Clubs and Festival Idea," *Washington Post*, 12 April 1942.

as it tied that group to its relative status within U.S. immigration hierarchies. Wartime and other prejudices were starting to intervene: this is not at all what Cowell conceived in his own version of the *American Melting Pot* two years before.

PATRON SAINTS OF ALLIED MUSIC: CHOPIN, DVOŘÁK, AND SMETANA

Cowell's piece was composed during the interstitial period of the "phony war" when Americans themselves were torn between noninterventionists who tried to keep the war in Europe at a distance and insisted on neutrality, and an increasingly vocal group, headed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who felt that it was the sacred duty of American exceptionalism to stand up for universal freedom.³⁰ In one of his radio Fireside Chats of 29 December 1940, Roosevelt made it clear that "the Axis not merely admits but proclaims that there can be no ultimate peace between their philosophy of government and our philosophy of government."³¹ The concepts of democracy and freedom as the foundations of American exceptionalism became entwined with the national musical representations of the countries attacked and occupied by Nazi Germany which, however, needed to remain subordinate within broader notions of U.S. identity. This discursive strategy was crucial at a time when American mobilization for the nation's increasingly likely involvement in the war remained in question.³²

The issues played out in the concert hall as well as on the political stage. As the first nation attacked by Nazi Germany, Poland was particularly present in the American imaginary (the Munich Agreement in 1938 had given the German and Hungarian subjugation of Czechoslovakia a thin veneer of international accord). Poland's fate as a democratic nation torn apart between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany was marked in reports of such events as a 1939 fundraiser in Carnegie Hall. "It is remembered by many," an article in the *New York Times* pointed out, "that it was in that very hall that the independence of Poland was celebrated in 1918, Paderewski himself making

³⁰ The term "phony war" refers to the years between 1 September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland and 8 December 1941, when the United States declared war on Germany and Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor the previous day.

³¹ See *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15917> (accessed 25 October 2014).

³² In 1940, the United States instituted its first peacetime draft and increased exponentially its defense budget. The draft was extended in 1941, with a one-vote majority. See David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: the American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 459, 495–96.

the address.”³³ Indeed, both as the founder of the Polish Relief Fund and as the musician called into politics, Ignacy Paderewski became the leading figure of the Polish cause in the United States, especially after he crossed the Atlantic in 1940 and then died in New York in 1941. The close association of Paderewski and the Polish Relief efforts played out both in his own concerts supporting the fund and then in a number of high-profile events in 1941 honoring his memory as the first president of democratic Poland. His funeral created a particularly symbolic link with Poland by connecting the state funeral in Arlington National Cemetery with the burial of the most iconic Polish musician: Fryderyk Chopin.

A special mausoleum in the National Cemetery was reserved for him at the instruction of the President until such time as his remains may be taken to “free Poland” for burial. According to a custom followed at the death of Chopin, Paderewski’s heart was reserved for separate burial in the Warsaw Cathedral. The Polish Government voted to have his body interred at Wawel in Cracow after the war.³⁴

The emblematic power of Chopin as a symbol for Poland was reinforced when the American press conveyed in 1939 that “Warsaw Went Down Playing Chopin,” followed by reports that the Nazis subsequently banned the performance of Chopin’s works in Poland and destroyed his monument in Warsaw.³⁵ Indeed, although other composers such as Moniuszko and Karol Szymanowski appeared on pro-Polish concert programs as well, Chopin started to dominate the American sonic imaginary where Poland and its freedom was concerned. He also became entwined with another icon of Polish music, the pianist, Artur Rubinstein. The connection was made by the performance of one work in particular that came to symbolize their patriotic fervor, shared across time: the Polonaise in A flat major, op. 53. Rubinstein left Paris in 1940 and settled in California. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* upon his arrival, the pianist declared that “Hitler and Stalin will fail” and that “my native country, Poland, will rise again.”³⁶ A month later, he performed at

³³ “Polish Refugee Relief,” *New York Times*, 16 November 1939.

³⁴ “Paderewski Buried with Regal Honors,” *Musical Courier* 124 (July 1941): 1, 6, at p. 6.

³⁵ Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., “War’s Tone Pictures,” *New York Times*, 8 October 1939; “Nazis Ban Chopin Music at Polish Concerts, Report,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 October 1940; “Nazis Reported Degrading Poles,” *New York Times*, 11 February 1941.

³⁶ “Artur Rubinstein Predicts Hitler and Stalin Will Fail,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3 February 1940.

Carnegie Hall with a program that ranged from Bach to Shostakovich. It ended, however, with a set of Chopin pieces, culminating in the A flat Polonaise. Olin Downes was prompted to establish a direct link between the heroic struggle for freedom of the Polish people and Rubinstein's performance of the Polonaise that was

long to be remembered for the lordliness and chivalric fire of the first part, and the passage, like unto a vision sweeping across the skies, of marching hosts, distant trumpet calls, and the thundering tread of heroes. And perhaps some in the audience recalled how this music was born of a previous catastrophe in Poland's history, and, hearing Mr. Rubinstein's proclamation of its genius, were reassured in the belief that the nation which produced such strains will inevitably rise again from oppression and disaster—like the music, proud and free.³⁷

A year later, on Deems Taylor's new radio show, *America Preferred*, the link between Rubinstein's and Chopin's musical patriotism became cemented on public airwaves, again through a performance of the A flat Polonaise, followed by Rubinstein's praise of America as "this wonderful country that is standing so firmly for a humane way of life."³⁸ For Rubinstein, the task was to present Chopin "as a passionate Pole, who was forever writing about his native land from which he was exiled." As he declared: "Chopin, in spite of his physical weakness, possessed a soul of a titanic stature."³⁹ Just like Polish fighters joining the Allied forces (and displayed on newsreels and in such wartime movies as the 1943 *Stage Door Canteen*), Chopin might be a David against the Fascist Goliath, but he was a powerfully patriotic one.

The American slippage between Rubinstein and Chopin points also to a new kind of identity configuration that enabled Jewish refugee musicians to reinvent themselves as full-fledged cultural Poles. The Polish nationalism mediated through Chopin's Polonaise in the United States had rather striking consequences by achieving, in effect, an inclusiveness under the umbrella of American exceptionalism—and in a spirit of harmonious Polish-American relations—that occurred precisely at the point in time when it would be

³⁷ Olin Downes, "Artur Rubinstein Heard in Recital," *New York Times*, 12 March 1940.

³⁸ Deems Taylor, Radio Script for *America Preferred*, 27 September 1941, Deems Taylor Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University, Series V, "Scripts."

³⁹ "The World of Music: Rubinstein to Give Chopin Program as a Patriotic Gesture to His Native Land," *New York Times*, 29 October 1944.

unthinkable in Poland itself. Indeed, in the American Polonia, Chopin, Rubinstein, Paderewski, and Kiepura all were equal citizens, whether dead or alive, Christian or Jewish.⁴⁰

CHOPIN COMES TO THE MUSIC FILMS

By DR. HENRY W. LEVINGER

Hollywood has a reputation for having an unfavorable effect on actors. It is said to make them superficial, thinking only about how to be effective in pictures. A talk with Conrad Wilde, the handsome young leading actor in Columbia's technicolor picture, *A Song to Remember*, which screens the life of Chopin, proves that this insinuation is wrong.

Wilde, who went through college and university planning to become a doctor, discovered that his real love belonged to the theater. A native New Yorker, he was early privileged to appear in important productions. In *Bonnie and Juliet* he played Tybalt with Vivian Leigh and Laurence Olivier, and was in *Love Is Not So Simple* with Ina Claire. He appeared in the Guild production of *Jeremiah*, by Stefan Zweig, and his first appearance in a commercial success was in *Mom Over Mulberry Street*, which ran 40 weeks. There were also other shows in which he acted, not to mention his work with several stock companies.

In between he travelled widely, living for half a year in Paris and later in other parts of Europe. Wilde, who is half Hungarian by descent, spent six months in his father's native Budapest. When he used his time in Paris to get acquainted with the French spirit and literature, being a frequent visitor to the museums there, he devoted his time in Budapest to the study of art and of fencing. He knows the tradition and technique of the European theater very well, and has been the famous performance of Reinhardt and Stanislavsky.

In 1940 Hollywood signed him up. His first real assignment was to play the part of Chopin in *A Song to Remember*, which was based on a novel by Henry James. This time of enforced idleness lasted six months, until he changed to Twentieth Century-Fox and got there to play the part of Chopin in *A Song to Remember*.

Wilde was given his great opportunity when he was cast by Columbia Pictures as Chopin.

Learned to Play Piano for Interest

The task startled the young actor at first. Although very much interested in music, and the owner of a big record library, he did not then play the piano. Since in the picture he was to indicate in this activity most of the time, he was confronted with an enormous technical problem. Wilde decided to learn to be a pianist. With Victor Allen, he practiced on the piano or at a dummy keyboard for 40 hours within a four-month period.

"By the way, the dummy's name," says the young actor, "was Horowitz for his spirit would come over me when I saw the picture of the pianist. I did, for the shots in which you see

CHOPIN PLAYS FOR A DISTINGUISHED COMPANY. A scene from *A Song to Remember*, Columbia's Technicolor production, in which Conrad Wilde, in the role of the composer, is co-starred with Paul Meier and Merle Oberon. The score for the film uses music by Chopin.



HOW THE SCORE WAS PREPARED FROM WORKS OF THE MASTER

By MORRIS STOLOFF
Director of Music, Columbia Pictures

When you find yourself trustee for the works and memory of a great composer, as we have at Columbia in the preparation of a photograph, based in considerable part upon the life of Frédéric Chopin, you feel a heavy responsibility.

A Song to Remember, devoted somewhat extensively upon the life of the young Chopin and his equally well-known daughter, Mrs. George Sand, and how this infatuation inspired the composer to pen some of his best works. The role of Chopin is played by Conrad Wilde, with Paul Meier and Merle Oberon co-starred respectively as the composer's devoted mentor, and as the object of his affections.

The story was well and carefully taken care of by Sidney Buchman, whose production the picture is, with expert direction by Charles Vidor. But our part in the music department required just as exhaustive research, the exercise of considerable tact and judgment, and some highly technical accomplishments.

Problem of Selection

Consider, please, that there are enough of the compositions of Chopin to provide material for at least eight five-hour recitals, and that nearly all of it was written for the piano alone. In the picture, running almost two hours, students and lovers of Chopin will hear excellent performances of most of their favorites. Others, not so familiar with Chopin as a classicist, will discover the origin of several popular songs that were based on Chopin's melodies; for example, *For Ever Charming*, which is the popularized version of *Fantaisie Impromptu*.

Our problem was to select and discard from perhaps the most extensive repertoire of piano music ever written by a composer. We had also—and this was undoubtedly the most trying part—in fit the sequence of musical works to the story. This necessitated several chronological compromises which I feel will be excused on grounds of justifiable dramatic license.

We have tried to spot the actual piano performances in such a manner that they would conform to the story mood. The picture deals, in great part, with the love story of Chopin and Mrs. Sand,

during which period you hear him at work in some of his lighter, less serious music—nocturnes and waltzes, for example. Work on the noble Polish music is left until a time by the romantic mood, but creep back repeatedly into the darker moods of the young composer, and serves as the theme for his great love of country as contrasted with the romantic music associated with his love.

Concert Tour Portrayed

The stirring Polish music, however, serves as the pivot for the story's dramatic climax, motivating the break-up between Chopin and Mrs. Sand, leading into his great farewell concert tour of the European capitals, and concluding with his fatal illness. The story of the tour is told in montage, and is, I believe, the most exciting single musical sequence I have ever seen on the screen. Excerpts from Chopin's most important and dramatic piano works are presented here—such greatly loved works as his *Etude in A minor*, the *Ballade in A flat*, *Revolutionary Etude*, *Value Brilliant* and the *Polskise Militaire*.

The background music is not so much a dramatic scene in the usual sense as an adaptation of Chopin music to the varying moods of the story. It is tastefully and safely handled by Miklos Rozsa, one of Hollywood's most accomplished composers. The adaptation is pure, and tricks. And, though the music is completely free of modern musical world-famous love story, in music, would be the delight of any serious composer, the original scene. With such a wealth of material from the composer himself, and in every mood, it would have been surprising to use as much of it as possible. And so we did.

The picture presents some 30-odd Chopin numbers, in full or in part. Even if there were no visual philosophy, the score itself would be a treat. But the strength of the performance and the musicians alike—the already magnificent music that has come to us from Chopin.

In doing so, the picture will have accomplished a great deal for music, musicians and for motion pictures.

MUSICAL COURIER

Fig. 2. One-page spread dedicated to the motion picture, *A Song to Remember*, with a photograph from the film, *Musical Courier* 127 (15 October 1944): 6. (UNC Chapel Hill, Music Library)

It was only a question of time before the wartime Chopin entered Hollywood, Broadway, and other spheres of popular music, although it is notable that he did so only after the outcome of the war was fairly well assured following

⁴⁰ I am grateful to James Loeffler for pointing this out.

the success of the Normandy Landings in June 1944 and the liberation of Paris two months later. In January 1945, Columbia Pictures released *A Song to Remember*, a Chopin biopic that framed the artist's biography through the prism of the A flat Polonaise.⁴¹

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Fig. 3. Playbill for the first performance at the Adelphi Theater, 6 October 1945, of *Polonaise*, book by Gottfried Reinhardt and Anthony Veiller, lyrics by John La Touche, and music by Bronislaw Kaper. (Original in the possession of the author)

⁴¹ *A Song to Remember*, directed by Charles Vidor, score based on Chopin and created by Miklós Rózsa, with the piano part recorded by José Iturbi. The movie was shot in the fall of 1944 and released by Columbia Pictures on 18 January 1945.

In a key moment of the story, the Polonaise is played in an impromptu duo of Chopin and Liszt in the Paris piano saleroom of Camille Pleyel. This performance is presented not only as the momentous encounter of two musical titans (and in a major European capital newly freed by the Allies) but also as the ensouling of Polish patriotism when Liszt recognizes Chopin's work as a magnificent rendering of "the spirit of Poland."

Broadway took the theme of Polish patriotism even further and related it directly to American exceptionalism in a 1945 musical titled—unsurprisingly—*Polonaise* that opened on 6 October.

Starring Marta Eggerth and Jan Kiepura, the musical follows Tadeusz Kościuszko's transatlantic feats.⁴² The plot starts with the Polish general's participation in the American Revolutionary War, with George Washington making a cameo appearance in Act I; moved to the Kościuszko Uprising in Poland; and then finishes after Kościuszko's return to the United States. It was a work steeped in the final year of World War II, conceived in late 1944 and written in the first half of 1945. The book, a press announcement explained in January 1945, was to be a collaboration of Max Reinhardt's son Gottfried "with Maj. Anthony Veiller of the Army Signal Corps." While it was not clear at this point who would write the lyrics, the music was already in the planning: "Bronislaw Kaper has been commissioned to compose the score, part of which will be derived from the melodies of Chopin." Thus before even the plot was decided, Kościuszko—described as "the Polish patriot of American Revolutionary fame"—and his military feats were linked to Chopin's music.⁴³ Though other favorites from Chopin's oeuvre were integrated into the score and its songs, the A flat Polonaise stood alone and was rendered on the stage by a pianist (Sidney Forster) at the moment of the revolutionary Uprising.

As the theater critic, Lewis Nichols, pointed out, any production that combined the iconic Polish fighter and that nation's foremost musician should have been a success.⁴⁴ Yet despite the all-star line-up, the production remained lackluster and closed after 113 nights (a respectable but not particularly exciting run). It is possible that the weight both of its topic and of its music contributed to the uninspired nature of a show that—so Sonia Stein wrote in the

⁴² The link between Kiepura and the role he was to create on Broadway was established also biographically just months before the singer was signed up, in May 1944, when Eggerth's and Kiepura's son "was named Jan Tadeusz, in honor of Tadeusz Kosciuszko, Polish general of American Revolutionary War fame." See "Son Born to Jan Kiepura," *New York Times*, 29 May 1944.

⁴³ Citations from "Schmidlapp Plans New Show in Fall," *New York Times*, 29 January 1945.

⁴⁴ Lewis Nichols, "Of *Polonaise*," *New York Times*, 14 October 1945.

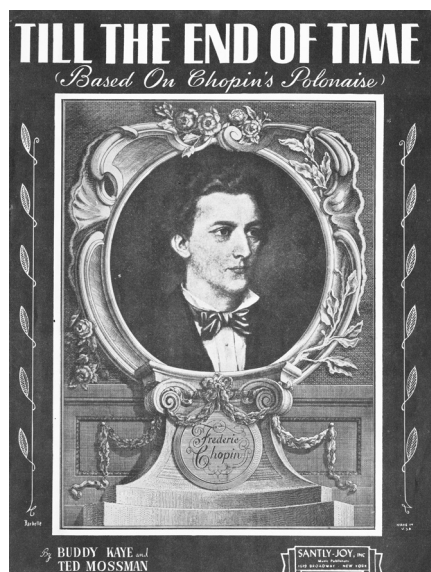


Fig. 4. “Till the End of Time (Based on Chopin’s Polonaise),” arranged by Ted Mossman and Buddy Kaye (New York: Santly-Joy Inc., 1945). (UNC Chapel Hill, Music Library)

Washington Post—resembled a pageant rather than a musical play.⁴⁵ Her terms were loaded: pageants were by now old hat, whereas more modern “musical plays” were all the rage following the example of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* (1943). But in addition, the political situation had changed by the time the work received its premiere; now Poland was under Soviet occupation, and the United States was as yet unclear on its relations with the U.S.S.R. Nevertheless, the Chicago critic John Chapman started foreshadowing Cold War rhetoric when he noted that much of the musical “tells of Kosciusko’s wars for liberty of Poland and against Russia and Prussia. This makes for a legitimate tie-in with recent and current war problems; for Kosciusko fought for liberty and democracy as we know it.”⁴⁶ Critic Claudia Cassidy probably got closer to the mark of the problems with the show, however, when she warned her readers that this Chopin-based work of Polish patriotism had “nothing to do with that distinguished Pole, admirers of ‘Song to Remember’ take warning.”⁴⁷

Perhaps inevitably, the A flat Polonaise entered popular music as well. First there was Ted Mossman and Buddy Kaye’s hit song “Till the End of

⁴⁵ Sonia Stein, “*Polonaise* Lavish Spectacle, But More Pageant than Play,” *Washington Post*, 26 September 1945.

⁴⁶ John Chapman, “Operetta, *Polonaise*, Makes Its Broadway Bow,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 October 1945.

⁴⁷ Claudia Cassidy, “*Polonaise* and *Windy Hill* Next Stage Offerings,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 March 1946.

Time,” which reached no. 3 in the Billboard charts in May 1945 and then figured prominently in the 1946 movie with the same title, concerning three U.S. marines struggling to adjust to civilian life.⁴⁸

Also from 1945 was a foxtrot version entitled *Chopin’s Polonaise* by the pianist and band leader, Carmen Cavallaro. By now, the urgency of rallying for the defense of Poland had given way to the familiarity of a piece repeated incessantly in the concert hall and on the radio. However, the proposed partitioning of Europe following the Yalta and Potsdam conferences and the defeat of Germany meant that political considerations remained high on the agenda. Not for nothing did the Polish and American cause become blended in the U.S. imaginary, with Chopin providing the soundtrack to a song that professed love, devotion, and protection “Till the end of time”.



Ex. 1. “Till the End of Time (Based on Chopin’s Polonaise),” arranged by Ted Mossman and Buddy Kaye (New York: Santly-Joy Inc., 1945), chorus, mm. 1–4.

What is striking about the presence of Polish music in the United States during World War II is the way in which, especially after Pearl Harbor, Chopin became the sonic emblem of Polish patriotism and fight for freedom, almost to the exclusion of other voices whether from Poland or from other nations under Axis occupation but with strong resistance movements. Here music contributed in fascinating ways both to the blending of ethnic and American identities and to their distinction. In one sense, Chopin stood for a distant but fierce nation that fought the good fight and participated in such major

⁴⁸ Adaptations of popular instrumental works by such composers as Chopin and Tchaikovsky as songs had a long tradition reaching back well into the nineteenth century, both in the United States and in Europe. One particularly fascinating moment in American wartime engagement with such adaptations is a scene from MGM’s 1945 film musical, *Anchors Aweigh*, where Frank Sinatra argues with José Iturbi over the composer of the popular hit “Tonight We Love”; Iturbi’s virtuosic rendering of Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto displaces, of course, Freddy Martin as the song’s true author, though Sinatra’s character does not believe it.

initiatives as the D-Day landings. While this Chopinesque patriotism was fiercely Polish, it was also transnationally recognizable in what had become an international concert repertoire. The more the war went on, however, this Polish patriotism became blended with American values of freedom and democracy in ways that erased at least some national differences both during the war and in its geopolitical aftermath.

Things were different when it came to other nations. Often, Eastern European countries were merged under the larger umbrella of Pan-Slavicism that could meld Russian, Polish, Hungarian, and Rumanian music into a sound world of Eastern friends—at times not even distinguishing on which side the various nations stood in the global conflict. This trend became especially prevalent after the Soviet Union became part of the Allied nations in 1941 and went on a propagandistic charm offensive to win over the Western world, one helped by the large number of Russian musicians active in the United States, from Andre Kostelanetz to Sergei Rachmaninoff. Numerous concert programs celebrated the newly minted alliance, including a concert in November 1943 commemorating the tenth anniversary of American-Soviet relations, mounted under the aegis of the Musicians Committee of the National Council of Soviet-American Friendship chaired by Serge Koussevitzky.⁴⁹ Besides introductory remarks by Goddard Lieberman, the program included string quartets by Prokofieff and Shostakovich (performed by the Budapest String Quartet) as well as works by Borodin, Rachmaninoff, and Victor Babin. This concert portrayed a modern ally through compositions by both Soviet composers and, ironically, Russian exiles. Just as the folkloric Don Cossacks had done in their concerts, modernist musicians, too, reconciled the two Russias through their musical programs. Borodin, rather than Tchaikovsky, represented their shared nineteenth-century roots.

This might seem surprising: as the most performed and recorded Russian composer in the United States, it would be tempting to name Tchaikovsky as a Russian equivalent to Chopin into the line-up of Eastern-European patron saints of Allied music. But his reception in the United States as a great symphony composer, and the popularity of his Piano Concerto no. 1 in B flat minor, op. 23, had loosened the sonic immediacy of the link between national identity and compositional output that remained, and was even strengthened, through World War II in the case of Chopin. Indeed, despite Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, his music never served as a revolutionary symbol in the way

⁴⁹ "A Concert of Russian Music," 7 November 1943, Hotel New Yorker, New York City; program in the Victor Babin Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, ML94.B2.

Chopin's had since the mid-nineteenth century. Certainly, Tchaikovsky was normally programmed whenever a concert needed to honor America's Soviet allies and their cause, but contemporary critics played down the Russian character of his music and focused more on his symphonic credentials.⁵⁰ If Russia needed to be evoked in American concert life, the Don Cossacks and their performance of Old Russia fit the bill far better, as did Alexander Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances* and a few other works by the Mighty Five and even Igor Stravinsky.

Even at the height of World War II, the cultural geography of Eastern Europe—especially that forged by American immigrants from that part of the world—remained disassociated from the Soviet Union as a political entity. To what lengths musicians could go in this process of disassociation can be gleaned from a concert deemed “a Salute to the U.S.S.R.” that the Boston Symphony Orchestra dedicated in 1943 to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Soviet Armed Forces.⁵¹ The evening's performance included Edward Burlingame Hill's Symphony no. 1, the première of Roy Harris's Symphony no. 5, and a performance of Sergei Prokofieff's Piano Concerto no. 3, which the composer had premiered, in 1921, in Chicago.⁵² Reviews reveal that the evening opened furthermore with an arrangement (possibly by Aaron Copland) of “The Internationale.”⁵³ Though the orchestra's conductor, Serge Koussevitzky, presented it as “the Russian anthem” (which it was until March 1944) in a set of remarks at the outset of the concert, listeners in the audience insisted that it was still only “the Communist song.”⁵⁴

But the internationalism of this and similar concerts had the advantage of in effect moving the Soviet Union off the Eastern European map and into a universalist space of musical modernism that also sought to open a reciprocal appreciation of new music in the service of the Allied cause. The performance

⁵⁰ An article published in the *Musical Courier* on the fiftieth anniversary of Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 6 (“Pathétique”) does not engage with the composer's national identity but rather dissects the work in terms of symphonic style. See Maurice Aronson, “Pathétique Symphony (1893-1943) Aged Fifty,” *Musical Courier* 126 (20 October 1943): 5.

⁵¹ Leslie A. Sloper, “A Salute to the U.S.S.R.,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 February 1943.

⁵² Program for the concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, 26 February 1943, Collection of Concert Programs, Music Division, Library of Congress.

⁵³ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 260.

⁵⁴ Sloper, “A Salute to the U.S.S.R.” In the program, Koussevitzky reproduced a message he had sent “to the Red Army and the Red Fleet of Soviet Russia on the Occasion of their 25th Anniversary”; its pathos was closely in tune with the wartime rhetoric of 1943, the height of Allied harmony.

of Roy Harris's Fifth Symphony in Moscow in 1944 may seem a rather extreme example—the audience anyway gave a warmer welcome to Jerome Kern's "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes"—but a far more potent one was the remarkable reception given to Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony ("Leningrad") on its U.S. premiere (by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Toscanini) in July 1942.⁵⁵ Composers and critics thought it overblown and crude, but the story of how the microfilmed score reached the West, and the work's overt programmatic intent, proved irresistible, offering proof that musical modernism could indeed capture the fighting spirit.

A different kind of transatlantic relationship in the concert hall was established in the crucible of World War II in so far as another Eastern European nation was concerned: Czechoslovakia. With the Sudetenland annexed by Germany in 1938, Bohemia and Moravia occupied the following year, and Slovakia a republic allied with Nazi Germany, Czech- and Slovak-American musicians in particular worked on distinguishing themselves and their cultural role in the United States by emphasizing a symbiotic relationship that posited American music as a direct result of Czech musical nationalism through the pivotal persona of Antonín Dvořák.⁵⁶

Just as Chopin's music was silenced in Poland, so was Dvořák's subject to Nazi censorship in his homeland. In 1941, American newspapers and music journals were filled with reports that the Czechs were forbidden to celebrate the centenary of the composer's birth. His music—so American journalists claimed—was considered too dangerous because it stirred Czech national sentiment in Bohemia. Not even "clandestine festivities in honor of Antonin Dvorak will be possible this year in his own Czechoslovakia," another article on the centenary revealed.⁵⁷ The "Nazi effort to suppress Dvorak" spoke differently to U.S. music lovers, however, than did the German ban on Chopin because of the Czech composer's role in American musical history.⁵⁸ Indeed, at the heart of the newspaper stories and events in the United States stood one work in particular, Dvořák's Symphony no. 9, "Z nového světa" (From the New World). Especially Czech musicians in exile—Jan

⁵⁵ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 105 (Harris), 257–58 (Shostakovich).

⁵⁶ On Slovak-American attempts to prove their allegiance to the United States, especially after Slovakia's declaration of war, see Alexander, *Ethnic Pride*, 204–19.

⁵⁷ Jan Lowenbach, "Dvorak Centenary," *New York Times*, 7 September 1941. As Kateřina Nová shows, however, the years of the Nazi occupation resulted in "an unusual wealth of cultural manifestations in spite of (or precisely because of) the severely limited possibilities for political statements." See Kateřina Nová, "The Dvořák Jubilee of 1941," *Musicalia* 1–2 (2014): 39–52, 39.

⁵⁸ "Dvorak's Birthday," *Washington Post*, 9 September 1941.

Löwenbach, Paul Nettl, and Miloš Šafránek—were keen to establish Dvořák as the catalyst for modern American concert music. Paul Nettl, for example, dedicated his article celebrating the Dvořák centenary to the composer's American years.⁵⁹

This link was re-emphasized in December of that year when a memorial plaque by Agop Agopoff was placed at the composer's New York residence.⁶⁰



Fig. 5. Commemorative plaque placed on the facade of Dvořák House in 1941 by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, now in the Bohemian National Hall. (Photo courtesy of Dvořák American Heritage Association)

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had occurred less than a week before it was unveiled, and the Czech composer now stood as a symbol for a shared cause. New York's mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, offered a variation on this theme in his dedicatory remarks when he conjured up "a new world into existence: a new world that will protect people against a fanatical dictator. This new world is coming, and when God Almighty planned it he had Dvorak in mind."⁶¹ The ensounded fusion of Czech and American national identities in Dvořák's New

⁵⁹ Paul Nettl, "When Dvorak Came to the New World," *Musical Courier* 124 (September 1941): 5, 26.

⁶⁰ The house was destroyed in 1992 during urban development; some of the artifacts, including the plaque, were preserved by the Dvořák American Heritage Association. See www.dvoraknyc.org (accessed 13 March 2015).

⁶¹ "Memorial to Dvorak Unveiled by Masaryk in House Composer Occupied While Here," *New York Times*, 13 December 1941.

World Symphony as it was understood in the early 1940s was the perfect musical symbol of Allied unity at the outset of the American involvement in the war, all the more so given that it could also be used to emphasize not only ethnic but also racial integration in the United States because of its use of African American and American Indian materials.⁶²

Yet as the war progressed, Dvořák was increasingly overshadowed by “Bohemia’s national bard,” Bedřich Smetana.⁶³ While both composers continued to figure prominently on concert programs dedicated to the Czech cause, Smetana’s musical evocation of Bohemia in *Má vlast* in particular contributed to the sense of geographically specific Czechness that American audiences sought in hearing his music. Dvořák, the transatlantic symphonist, was not folkloric enough for an audience that—as the 1942 Washington Folk Music Festival had shown so viscerally—considered Eastern European music authentic only when it was explicitly marked as ethnic. While “a bit of Czecho-Slovakia” could be “transplanted” into the United States through performances of *The Bartered Bride*, American listeners preferred to feel themselves transported through the sonic magic of Smetana’s music into the landscape across the Atlantic evoked in his symphonic poems, just as they had taken their Rumanian tour during the 1939 World’s Fair.⁶⁴ Indeed, when *Má vlast* joined the list of works banned by the Nazis in 1942, the whole cycle was played in a concert at Carnegie Hall commemorating the twenty-fourth anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁵ Not only was the all-time favorite *Vltava* (Die Moldau) a staple on concert programs throughout the remainder of the war, but also three of the lesser known symphonic poems of the cycle—*Vyšehrad*, *Z českých luhů a hájů* (From Bohemian Fields and Groves), and *Tábor*—were deployed as sonic symbols of occupied Bohemia.

1944 brought the 120th anniversary of Smetana’s birth, celebrated with concerts, opera performances (including *Dalibor* in New York), and articles galore. Czech exiles and Czech-Americans were at the forefront of organizing

⁶² The African American press, in particular, stressed the role of Harry T. Burleigh in the creation of Dvořák’s New World Symphony. The African American composer was among the invited speakers at the 1941 unveiling of the plaque; see “Burleigh Inspired Dvorak to Compose *New World Symphony*,” *Afro-American*, 11 October 1941, and “Burleigh Speaks at Dvorak’s Memorial,” *Afro-American*, 20 December 1941. Actual racism and segregation in the United States during the war years stood in sharp contrast to a rhetoric of integration that was adopted by American wartime propaganda, especially the Office of War Information. See Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 232.

⁶³ Olin Downes, “Speaking for the Czechs,” *New York Times*, 21 January 1940.

⁶⁴ George F. Gerling, “*Bartered Bride* in Central City,” *New York Times*, 14 July 1940.

⁶⁵ Olin Downes, “Smetana Played at Carnegie Hall,” *New York Times*, 27 October 1942.

these performances, and Czech writers such as Jan Löwenbach deployed similar strategies to those Poles who claimed Chopin both as their own and as the musical spokesperson for humanitarianism and liberty. This approach was all the more necessary given that—contrary to Chopin—Smetana had no actual revolutionary credentials and needed therefore be bestowed with them through his music. The opening of Löwenbach’s celebratory article, “Smetana’s Music Fights,” sums up all the tropes evoked in Czech-American discourse in a tight package:

March 2 marked the 120th anniversary of the birth of Bedrich Smetana, whose music voices the spirit of the Czech race with the most triumphant clarity, though its author departed this earth sixty years ago. In days of greatest trials for his people, that voice sounds more clearly than ever as a spokesman for ideals that remain vital despite the heel of the oppressor. Colorful and indigenous of the soil as it is, with its lusty peasant dances and genial warmth of sentiment, and at times its heroic note, Smetana’s music is more than just interesting sound. It is the incarnation of the expression of a humanitarian, national idea even in such works of his as have not a national idea.⁶⁶

If Dvořák’s Czechness was American by virtue of his inspiration “by the freedom of the American life” as the commemorative plaque had made clear, Smetana’s national identity maintained its solely Czech focus to legitimize a broader message about such Allied virtues as the fight for freedom and democracy. Indeed, just as with Chopin, it is precisely the first and foremost national character of his music that made him, in American eyes, so fitting for the musical politics of World War II, for it suited not only the stereotyping inherent in wartime propaganda but also enabled the divorce of universal greatness of the German (but no longer “German”) canon, especially the music of Beethoven and Brahms, from the picturesque nature of such nationally pigeonholed musics.⁶⁷ Not for nothing was the music Americans associated with local specificity steeped in the rhetoric of folk idioms—even when it came to their own. Chopin’s identification with Polish dances—most prominently, of course, his A flat Polonaise—and Smetana’s with Hussite

⁶⁶ Jan Löwenbach, “Smetana’s Music Fights,” *Musical Courier* 127 (5 March 1944): 7.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the wartime configuration of the German canon, see Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 138–41.

hymns and Czech folk tunes played into this trope. Here, too, Dvořák's music complicated the issue, for his most performed and discussed work was a symphony, a musical genre that dominated the U.S. concert hall since the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ Yet contrary to Tchaikovsky, whose cosmopolitan appeal had made him—like Brahms—a nationally unmarked symphonist, Dvořák was at least Czech enough to be marshalled for the national cause. In contrast to Smetana, however, his musical identity reflected a biographical constellation shared by Czechs and Czech-Americans alike as they lived through World War II in the United States. His modern brethren, too, straddled the Atlantic through intriguing forms of identity politics, whether writing their own New World symphony—as Jaromír Weinberger would do in 1940 with his *Lincoln Symphony*—or, in the case of both Weinberger and Bohuslav Martinů, emphasizing their national heritage in folkloric Czech Rhapsodies. Yet the composition wherein Martinů most poignantly evoked his homeland as ravaged by its Nazi occupiers—the 1943 orchestral piece, *Memorial to Lidice*—turned to Smetana's strategy of evoking Hussite hymns with his quotation of *Svatý Václav* as a marker of historical and geographical authenticity.⁶⁹

EPILOGUE: HYPHENATED IDENTITIES

U.S. composers active during World War II reveal just how complicated American identity politics could become when musical geography was involved. In World War II, the hyphen in American identities—a trope from the early twentieth century sharply rejected already in the famous “Hyphenated American” speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1916—found renewed discussion especially where Eastern Europeans were concerned.⁷⁰ The hyphen could be a marker of pride—as when Mieczysław Haiman could claim at the end of World War II “that Polish-Americans who constituted only

⁶⁸ Discussions of the symphony in American musical life and the genre's aesthetic position as embodying universal greatness mediated through German repertoire, see, for example, Michael Broyles, *Beethoven in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); Douglas Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 255–71.

⁶⁹ On *Memorial to Lidice* and Martinů's wartime identity in the United States as a Czech composer, see Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 196–202. See also Klaus Döge, “Das entsetzliche Grauen zum Ausdruck gebracht: Anmerkungen zu Martinů's *Memorial to Lidice*,” in *Bohuslav Martinů*, edited by Ulrich Tadday. *Musik-Konzepte Sonderband 2009* (Munich: Edition Text+Kritik, 2009), 78–91.

⁷⁰ How complex and fraught these shifts in identity politics were in the United States is shown in Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

four percent of the country's total population made up over eight percent of the U.S. armed forces."⁷¹ It could also create havoc, as when a letter sent by a certain Carel Smetana to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* complaining about the erasure of immigrant culture in the American melting pot resulted in a fierce response by other Czech-Americans who considered such a call to cultural multiplicity unpatriotic and argued for dropping the hyphen and its prefix altogether.⁷²

In a nation at war that was almost obsessively concerned with its cultural identity, how musicians presented themselves could easily become a point of contention. Foreign-born ones had to decide whether to reveal or obscure their roots. The cachet of a European pedigree might, in effect, be an asset in the concert hall and on the opera stage. In other contexts, however, it might become a liability, especially when composing for Tin Pan Alley and Broadway. This was all the more the issue—as Andrea Most has shown—in the case of first- and even second-generation Jewish musicians from Eastern Europe whose shift towards an American mainstream was precipitated by the exclusionary and anti-Semitic character of the 1924 Immigration Act.⁷³ Indeed, the fact that Irving Berlin, the composer of “God Bless America,” was born in the Tsarist Russian Empire as Israel Beilin was as little publicized as the birth names of such second-generation Russians as Ira and George Gershwin (Israel and Jacob Gershowitz) or the famous band leader, Artie Shaw (Arthur Jacob Arshawsky).

Whereas Berlin, the Gershwins, and Shaw erased the hyphenated portion of their identity in their public personas, another immigrant from Imperial Russia tried to capitalize on the hyphen in a fascinating form of artistic multiplicity. Vernon Duke—famous on Broadway for his song “April in Paris” and the hit musical, *Cabin in the Sky* (1940)—continued his concert career in the United States under the name he was born with in Belarus: Vladimir Dukelsky. Reviews both of his concert music and of his popular scores alike played on this duality, unveiling to their respective readers the other side of Duke's or Dukelsky's persona: the Broadway tunesmith to those who heard his modernist concert works; the art-music composer to those who knew *Cabin in the Sky*. Few reviews relied so blatantly on the use of stereotypes,

⁷¹ Savaglio, *Negotiating Ethnic Boundaries*, 48–49.

⁷² James Drake, “Making the Melting Pot Melt,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 23 April 1943. One particularly sarcastic response was titled “Let Hyphenated Freedom Ring” (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 April 1943).

⁷³ Andrea Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

however, as the writer of a feature story on the composer, published during the “phony war,” in December 1940:

Vernon Duke has often been called the “caviar composer.” Duke’s sleek dark hair and expressive Russian eyes, his continental urbanity and American love of mischief and his theatrical addiction to brilliant color in his clothes have served to stamp him as a cocktail-party character—but this, in essence, he is not. Vernon Duke is the suave front for a hard-working and highly accomplished musical creature born thirty-seven years ago and christened Vladimir Dukelsky. Duke and Dukelsky are one and the same man, and, although some theatre folk cavil at this use of the nom de pianoforte for Broadway consumption and the use of his given name for his serious composition, he consoles himself by remembering that “Vernon Duke” was suggested by George Gershwin many years ago. This in itself is a heritage of weight among musicians.⁷⁴

If Duke/Dukelsky could point to George Gershwin as the godfather for the pseudonym, his credentials in American music had become impeccable, though—as this story and others make clear, too—he still needed to emphasize his pedigree as that of a Russian aristocrat who “forsook the Imperial Naval Academy for the Kiev Conservatory of Music.”⁷⁵ This sleight of hand served to distance Duke/Dukelsky from the Jewish-immigrant background of many fellow composers on Broadway, mainstreaming him even more in the context of a nation whose relationship to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe remained strained well beyond World War II.

Hyphenated identities also had a way of creeping back into a musical career through the necessities of wartime, as when Aaron Copland—the embodiment of musical Americanism through such works as *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942)—wrote the music for *The North Star*, a 1943 Hollywood movie about the Soviet resistance to Nazi occupation in the early days of the invasion.⁷⁶ As Copland explained in letter to Nadia Boulanger,

⁷⁴ Benjamin Welles, “Singing of Vladimir Vernon Duke Dukelsky,” *New York Times*, 29 December 1940.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Copland’s contribution to *The North Star* is discussed most extensively in Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: Univer-

the score called “for a great variety of music—songs, choruses, orchestral interludes, etc.”⁷⁷ Together with the lyricist Ira Gershwin, another second-generation Russian Jew, Copland created a soundscape at once Russian and American, folkloric and modernist. This was the point the press made when it commented about “the all-American composer in our midst” who despite the fact that his “parents were born in Russia . . . writes music characterized by the one word ‘Yankee.’” But not only did Copland conduct “research into the folk music of his ancestors,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported: “He finds himself at home in it.”⁷⁸ This approach was a quite different way of creating a wartime musical soundscape, one that kept Eastern Europe in the frame not by way of harking back to a nineteenth-century musical hero like Chopin or Smetana but, rather, by invoking a modernist amalgamation that could easily be defined by a rediscovered, hyphenated identity. Indeed, Copland emphasized the hybrid quality of the score in retrospect when he answered the rhetorical question as to how Russian the music of *The North Star* needed to be with a quip: “Shostakovich might have faced the same problem had he been asked to supply the score for a movie set in the United States.”⁷⁹ Despite his caginess about the Russian character of the production, however, Copland’s score integrated a number of Soviet tunes and traditional folk songs that he had found in the collections he had consulted when preparing the score—just as he did with cowboy songs in the case of *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*.⁸⁰ Yet it may be no coincidence that Copland started his perhaps best-known piece of Americana, *Appalachian Spring* (1944), while he was still in Hollywood working on his “Russian” score.⁸¹

The Duke/Dukelsky dualism and Copland’s deliberate musical play on hyphenated identities serve here to break any temptation of fitting the cultural geography of Eastern Europe in America during this time into a smooth and coherent narrative. There were too many problematic intersections and ideological ruptures not only in terms of the current global war but also because of a complicated and often acrimonious history of

sity of Illinois Press, 1999), 378–83.

⁷⁷ Aaron Copland, letter to Nadia Boulanger, 23 April 1943, extract given in Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Since 1943* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 15.

⁷⁸ I.M.J. [Isabel Morse Jones], “Aaron Copland Scores with Music of Russia,” *Los Angeles Times*, 30 May 1943.

⁷⁹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland Since 1943*, 15.

⁸⁰ Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 381.

⁸¹ In a letter to Carlos Chávez from 3 March 1943, Copland emphasized the film’s “Russian” character. See *The Selected Correspondence of Aaron Copland*, edited by Elizabeth B. Crist and Wayne Shirley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 150.

Eastern European immigration into the United States. This prevents a too simplistic construction of rapprochement and homogenization, and raises questions about what lessons the musical imagining of Eastern Europe during World War II teaches in a period of global conflict. If the evocations of folk idioms followed the traditional pathways of national representation in music that were well established in Western music since the nineteenth century, their fraught role in American music led to deflecting such identity politics all the more into stereotyping alterity sonically. Indeed, while the performance of Enescu's Rumanian Rhapsodies evoked an exotic elsewhere, Dvořák's New World Symphony ensounded an intersection of American and Czech identities, both historical and contemporary, that even in the 1940s stood crosswise rather uneasily to the neatly tied symbolism of a Smetana or Chopin. And yet, before Eastern Europe became locked into the American Cold War imaginary of a Soviet Bloc best described by the medieval "Hic sunt dracones" (Here be dragons), the musical representations of the complex, contradictory, and varied musical cultures and their intersections with American immigration politics created a strangely unregulated but hugely fertile place of cultural transfer.

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