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PREFACE

The Lachmann Problem tells an unknown story about a well known musicologist. The name Robert Lachmann (1892–1939) is best known among musicologists whose interest centers on Arabic music, but the name is familiar, too, among all who take interest in the history of the discipline and, in particular, in the history of the Berlin School of Comparative Musicology established in the early decades of the last century. Among German musicologists, even those uninterested in the history of the discipline or in the subjects that interested Lachmann, he remains a well entrenched figure to this very day.

Together with his former teachers – Johannes Wolf, Curt Sachs, Georg Schünemann and Erich M. von Hornbostel – Lachmann established the *Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der Musik des Orients* (The Society for the Study of Oriental Music), a society that was deemed a worthy counterpart to Oriental studies in other domains. As one of the founding fathers of Comparative Musicology, and as the first and only editor of the *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* (The Journal of Comparative Musicology), Lachmann took part in the overall shaping of the scientific study of non-European music and was one of the key figures in charting its course.

Like most of his colleagues, Lachmann was a well rounded musicologist, privy to the major developments and scientific achievements of the discipline up to his time. The discipline was still relatively young in those days and encompassed a much smaller number of scholars than nowadays. The most prominent among these were in close contact and followed each other's work. Moreover, since musicology had not yet been guaranteed a place in institutions of higher learning, alongside other humanistic studies, they were imbued with a joint sense of mission. This relationship, however, was badly hurt with the rise of the Nazis to power. Musicology, like many other scientific endeavors in the early decades of the century, was disproportionately populated by German scholars, and a significant number of its outstanding members were of Jewish origin.

In a recent book with the suggestive title, *Most German of the Arts*, Pamela Potter examines musicology and society in Germany from the Weimar Republic to the end of Hitler's Reich. The author persuasively demonstrates how particular social, economic, and intellectual factors caused some German musicologists to support the ideological aims of the Nazis. In fact, many of the ideas that served the aims of the regime, the author claims, not only predated Hitler's rise to power, but survived the Nazi period to influence the conception of music history. Potter's well researched and exciting book unveils disturbing factors about a goodly number of musicologists who collaborated with the regime in one form or another and to various degrees. The list, unfortunately, also includes some of the key figures who are otherwise known for their outstanding scholarship and for the influence they exerted on the discipline and its development. Indeed, after reading Potter it is difficult to look unperturbed at the shelves in one's library.

Just as German scholarship, no doubt, influenced our conception of music history, the same sort of influence surely affected other scholarly fields as well. Having engaged in scientific study as diligently as the Germans, one can hardly expect them not to have had an influence both on the nature of subsequent investigations and on the scientific agenda, i.e., on what deserves to be investigated and in what order. That some of this influence should be undergoing careful scrutiny nowadays is hardly surprising. The atrocities committed alongside cultural and scientific achievements invites a reassessment not only of the personal behavior of people, but of their achievements as well. Indeed, the German case revealed, unambiguously, an *inverse* relationship between what was generally believed to be positively correlated, i.e., Culture (with a capital C) and culture, i.e., civilized human behavior. Much has already been written, and more will be forthcoming, in the attempt to unravel this paradox.

This incomprehensible phenomenon, no doubt, also contributed a significant share to the growing fear of the unchallenged supremacy of Western culture. Much of what is referred to as "Western ways of thinking" (including that of the Germans) continues, however, to pass unchallenged in the natural sciences, while in the social sciences and the humanities it

has raised eyebrows in the past few decades. The natural scientists, in all likelihood, are better able to resist all kinds of corrective trends because the laws of nature are believed to be “there,” independent of their descriptions, which in and of themselves *are* subject to change. But now that greater attention is being paid to cultures, populations and groups that have too long been overlooked, much of what was deemed to have universal standing no longer strikes us as such, resulting in all kinds of revisionist writings. The re-examination of German thought and its contribution to culture, while also part of this general trend, remains nonetheless quite unique. Ironically, it is the undeniable events associated with the Germans that reaffirm the limits of historical representation.

Like many other intellectuals of Jewish origin, Robert Lachmann lost his position with the rise of the Nazis to power. He had been employed in the music department of the Prussian State Library, and had no reason to expect “retirement,” in the language of the letter of his dismissal. His new predicament, like that of many of his colleagues, entailed more than the loss of a source of livelihood, for it aimed to usurp the individual of his identity and status as a member of the society to which he belonged and with which he felt identified. Being ostracized from a society which one appreciated, trusted in, and believed oneself to have been an integral part, requires not only a reorientation to one’s own life, but to all that made it worthwhile. Different people reacted in different ways to this new situation, yet all those who had fully imbibed German culture, all who had embraced its enlightened features, felt betrayed. Lachmann was one of them.

As is well known, a goodly number of German scholars of Jewish descent found their way to America. Compared to most European countries, America seemed like heaven. Moreover, America had by then developed an impressive infrastructure in many research fields, harboring great promise for future developments. Even if musicology was still in its infancy across the ocean, considering the trying times, hope emanated from the New World for all of the disillusioned, regardless of occupation and fields of interest. As we now know, the uprooted musicologists who landed in America contributed greatly to the development of the field in their newly-adopted country, yet the historical unfolding that accompanied this development is rarely discussed, nor has it been thoroughly investigated.

Lachmann's interest in non-European music made the promise of Palestine more alluring than a sheer place of refuge. Given its varied population, Palestine seemed like an ideal laboratory in which he could both continue his inquiries into Arabic music and add the study of other ancient Eastern traditions, some of which might even throw new light on the historical development of Western music. He had a very sound basis for expecting an appointment as a full member of the faculty at the newly-established University in Palestine. Had this materialized, he could have established the music department of his dreams, one that would have met his accustomed high standards, while taking full advantage of the special character of its locale and its unique research potential. The research Lachmann had in mind dictated, among other things, the establishment of a well-documented Sound Archive that would not only serve students and researchers, but would constitute a repository of disappearing musical traditions. Were this the case, he could transfer to Jerusalem the activities of *The Journal of Comparative Musicology*, of which he was still the editor, and possibly obtain some desired copies of the recordings of the Berlin *Phonogrammarchiv* – an archive to which he himself had contributed a sizable amount. “Jerusalem,” Lachmann consoled himself, “was after all a more suitable place for the study of Eastern musical traditions!” Taking into account his scholarly standing and his wide-spread professional connections, Lachmann even entertained the thought that diligence and prudence, based on a proper infrastructure and assiduous research training, might draw attention to Jerusalem to the point of turning the historic city into *the* center for the study of non-European music.

These were no idle dreams; it all seemed quite feasible at the time. Despite all the signs given by the new regime in Germany, nobody, but nobody, could clearly and assuredly decode what has become self-evident in retrospect, not even the Nazis, not knowing themselves how far they would go in order to achieve their objectives. But there was plenty of push, even then. On the side of the pull, there was a University, with high academic aspirations, that came into being in no small measure as an answer to the needs of those students and scholars who were rejected by other institutions of higher learning, because of their Jewish origin. Moreover, “The University of the Jewish People” *had* to excel, not only

Document 3

Der Generaldirektor
der
Preussischen Staatsbibliothek

Berlin NW7, den 25. September 1933
Unter den Linden 38

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für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung vom 19. September 19
- A IV Lachmann 3a - werden Sie gemäß § 3 des Gesetzes zur
Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums vom 7. April 1933 zum
1. Januar 1934 in den Ruhestand versetzt.

In der Angelegenheit Ihrer Bezüge erhalten Sie demnächst
weitere Nachricht.



Herrn Bibliotheksrat
Dr. L a c h m a n n

Document 4

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Zageb. II Nr. *2219/33*

Auf Ihre Eingabe vom 21.d.Mts teile ich Ihnen ergebenst mit, daß die Pr.Bau- und Finanzdirektion in Berlin veranlaßt worden ist, Ihnen vom 1. Januar 1934 an ein Ruhegehalt von jährlich 3230,08 RM, in Worten: Dreitausendzweihundertdreißig RM 08 Rpf, durch ihre Hauptkasse zu zahlen.

Der Berechnung des Ruhegehalts sind bei einer ruhegehaltsfähigen Dienstzeit von 17 Jahren 215 Tagen 49/100 des Grundgehalts von 5800 RM und des Wohnungsgeldzuschusses mit dem Durchschnittssatz von 792 RM zugrunde gelegt worden.

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