Music Evoking the Emotional Relationships Between Jewish Prisoners and SS Guards

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Music is part of every culture and background; however, it can also explain situations in history. Music affected the emotional relationships in prisoner camps determined by researching Holocaust survivor interviews and scholarly articles. Music was a tool for Nazi guards to feel in control of Jewish prisoners in the camp, while music also tells how the Jewish people felt about their lives there. For this reason, whether the music was used for torture, pleasure, or other significant uses in places around the camp, the emotional relationships are disclosed between the Jewish prisoners and the SS guards that describe the operations happening in Auschwitz.

The SS guards and the Nazi Party would oppress the Jewish people through antisemitic laws and attacks, but another injustice inflicted against the Jews was the banning of their own culture like music. The reasoning behind this ban of Jewish music was to destroy their culture and to create socially acceptable music for everyone who were not Jewish in the new Nazi Regime. This perfect and acceptable music for the Third Reich was called "pure music," while Jewish music was considered "impure music (Neuschwander, 96)." In *Music of the Third Reich,* Delora J. Neuschwander says that he "criteria by which the Reich determined their 'pure' music was based largely on the race of the composer and on the personal ideology of the listener (Neuschwander, 96)." This quote explains that race and personal ideology were the criteria used to choose what was and was not "pure music (Neuschwander, 96)." Given that in the Nazi Regime, Jewish people are considered a race, and because the Nazis persecuted the Jews, Jewish composers and music would be banned (Neuschwander, 96). However, with many totalitarian regimes that control music and have certain styles and characteristics that define their "pure music," music by Jewish composers was forbidden.

The Nazi regime's reformed music was to form a "pure music" movement. Nazis believed that composers like Ludwig Beethoven and Richard Wagner were acceptable in forming ideas to start the "pure music" movement, because they were not Jewish and displayed conservative music styles. Thus, all these composers' music was acceptable because it cultivated the German national musical identity (Neuschwander, 94-96). The music style traits of these composers, which the Nazi party prized in their "pure music" movement, consisted of providing lyrical melodic movement with some short and suggestive parts to create a dramatic effect on the melody. This movement would create a leading motif to direct the attention of the audience (Borroff, 454-459). Their musical dynamics would create music tension would add further dimension to the music (Borroff, 531-533). Harmony, melody, and rhythm in the music would be considered consistent and normal for the orchestra, but if there was a vocal part, it would be a specific melody to fit the poetry or lyrics in the piece (Borroff, 531-533) In some of the romantic music, there were some incorporation of highly chromatic style, no clear key or no resolution in some places. However, most romantic style played in "pure music" was conservative in terms of the earlier music style traits discussed (Potter, 623-630 The "pure music" movement, with those composers and music style traits as its standard, would bring censorship to other music in Germany and would be the type of music played at Auschwitz by the SS guards. The purification of German music would take away the Jewish musical culture and describe what made their music impure or degenerate.

As previously noted, the most obvious reason Jewish music was impure to the Nazis was that it was composed by a Jewish man or women. Jewish music would be banned, which included Yiddish songs and music by Jewish composers from the past to the present like Aaron Schoenberg and Kurt Weill. The music of Jewish composers was inspired by using the style traits of modes like Phrygian and Lydian, which is related to Yiddish and Jewish Religious music and ornamentation. Their added notes decorated the music in the vocal and instrument's melody and rhythm, so people could continue to grow interested in the piece (Nemtsov, 83-85). In addition, Jewish music would utilize the minors and keys unrelated to the original key, which created unique music unlike the use of related keys and circle of fifths structure of Beethoven and early Wagner music. The pieces would create irregular rhythm and misstructured music throughout it. In the 1900 many Jewish music style traits have mixed with the contemporary music seen in Americanized music, plus with a little bit of Jazz like syncopation, improvisation, and Jazz motifs (Nemtsov, 78-89),. These music style traits would include an extreme use of chromaticism and atonal music scale, which would make the tone sound incomplete to the ear. Adding dissonance does not naturally release tension in the music (Nemtsov, 78-89). This music would be freely composed, meaning

no clear structure in the music, and was not conservative in style, which Hitler and his Nazi Party disapproved (Nemtsov, 80-100). Complex chords and syncopation were music style traits that irritated the Nazi Party, because they did not follow conservative music structure. For example, complex chords are not meant to always be resolved by a dominant fifth chord and will have odd notes that create minor thirds or seventh intervals. This works against resolution of a chord, which is supposed to happen in conservative music, so that music sounds completed (Borroff, 659- 663). These two movements would cultivate the music culture in the camp of Auschwitz.

Auschwitz, one of the most infamous camps for the Jewish deaths and forced labor. Auschwitz was fully in operation with forced labor placed on the prisoners who were mostly Jewish prisoners. Eventually, after the success of the first camp built for prisoners, Himmler would order construction of a second camp called Auschwitz-Birkenau, which was also called Auschwitz II in 1941 (Auschwitz, 1). This camp was used to exterminate Jews with two huge main gas chambers, different from the first and separate camp made to house Jews for forced labor. Auschwitz II was located four miles from the original camp. This camp was not the last time the Nazis would build more extensions to the camps to exterminate and oppress the Jewish people. By the end of Auschwitz's operation, there were three main camps and about a dozen subcamps. The experiences of the Jewish oppression seemed endless because their people would suffer daily beatings, forced labor medical experimentation, exhaustion, and death (Auschwitz, 1). However, there were other ways to abuse the Jewish people in the camps. For musicians, it was to play music in numerous ways to benefit their Nazi perpetrators, to play their Nazi "pure music" and disregard their own Jewish compositions.

These emotional relationships evoked by music in the camp would begin with the Jewish prisoners going to the working fields and having a guard demand one of them sing. After the guard would give an order to sing music, the prisoner would begin in a way that would irritate the SS guards. This annoyance was because the Jew singing would not follow the command of the SS guard regarding their need for the music. Feeling irritation, the SS guards would then beat the Jews wildly, after which the Jews began to form feelings of fear. Many survivors have described their experiences from the music used in the working fields and that evoking their beatings as concluding with torture for them from the guards (Brauer, 10-13). In addition the Jewish prisoners would then see the emotion of enthusiasm created from music stimulated guards to beat the Jewish prisoners, a response causing more feelings of fear in the Jewish prisoners.
Thus, the relationship between the Jews and SS guards become even more tense. With music playing an essential part in forming this relationship, it explains the emotions between the guards and prisoners in the working fields (Brauer, 11-13). The prisoners were full of displeasure and fear from the sound of the music that first wakes and then forces them to sing to and be beaten. This conditions them to respond with an emotional relationship full of fear and displeasure between the SS Guards, creating an abusive relationship (Brauer, 13). This musical experience would also explain the emotional relationship shared between all Jewish prisoners. Due to the need for music, they experienced the same emotions of fear and displeasure, whether in the working fields, forced singing or beatings from the SS guards. Thus, this emotional relationship would create a wretched relationship between the prisoners against the guards. This would not be the last time that negative emotions would be felt in prisoners' relationships with the guards. Music was the key to evoking again in these feelings, but the setting and circumstances would be different.

The next setting of music was in the gas chambers and crematoria, where the SS guards would have a mixture of feelings of apathy and curiosity, while the Jewish prisoner's fear, security, and grief created an odd emotionally dependent relationship with these groups of individuals (Fackler, 67). In the gas chambers, the SS guards would show apathy and curiosity because they would be doing their daily duties to kill and punish prisoners they did not like or care about. However, the Jewish prisoners would feel a mix of fear and security because they were scared, they were going to be gassed, but secure because the SS guards were in the chamber with them. In the testimony of Henry Meyer, a Holocaust Auschwitz Survivor, he explains this odd emotional relationship in the gas chambers. He describes that this brutal SS Guard, who loved music, would wake the band on Sunday to play in the crematoria and the gas chambers. He goes on, after the interviewer asks him to elaborate on playing music in the gas chambers and how he felt about the experience. He pauses and explains that one of the soldiers would ask him and the band as they were about to play, if they were afraid they were going to be gassed in the chamber, and he says "yes." However, he and the band would feel secure when going into the crematoria and the gas chambers because the SS guards were there too. With the guards also being in the chamber, it meant that the chamber would not be gassed because the SS would not gas their own guards (Meyer, 1995). This testimony about music-related labor with the band confirms that the Jewish people would feel the emotions of fear, but also some feelings of security when playing music in the gas chambers. The testimony also showed that SS guards displayed curiosity about the reactions of the Jewish players and the apathy of the music played there. With

these emotions the guards would add a layer of apathy and curiosity feelings to the emotional relationships with the Jewish prisoners, showing that the guards have no feelings for the Jewish prisoners. Because they did not care about the prisoners on a personal level, but was still curious about the Jewish musicians' feelings, they did not need to act against them. With these feelings among the guards, the Jewish people would respond to this emotional relationship with fear and a sense of security. This emotional relationship would force the Jewish inmates to be very dependent on emotional security in their relationship with the SS guards. Would they be punished for their use of music? After playing the music, however, there was another emotion the Jewish prisoners experienced that added yet another layer to this emotional relationship with the SS guards in the gas chambers.

In *Music in Concentration Camps 1933–1945*, it says, "Finally, in the extermination camps, particularly Birkenau, the prisoner orchestras performed their most inhuman activity – an activity that caused some surviving musicians to experience feelings of guilt and depression for the rest of their lives (Fackler, 68)." The quote explains that in the extermination camps at Auschwitz, the Jewish prisoner musicians would have feelings of guilt and depression playing there (Fackler, 68). Music played in the gas chambers and crematoria as the gassing was happening was meant to mock and emotionally damage Jewish prisoners. The mixture of guilt and depression occurred because they were playing "pure music," and were therefore forced to be a bystander to the deaths of their fellow Jewish prisoners (Fackler, 68). Their responses from the "pure music" would create emotional relationships based on sadness. With the sadness, the Jewish people would learn that the emotional relationship with the guards is based on the SS guards using music as a tool to "destroy" their friends and family members, and in the end still be able to kill them. This circumstance created an odd relationship where the Jews might feel secure, but also sad and fearful, because the guards could both protect and destroy them. These feelings would continue in other settings like the private camp performances, furthering the conditioned emotional relationships between prisoners and guards.

Because of the official performance orchestras, Jewish prisoners would play to entertain the guards in a more controlled environment for the most part. The music is chosen beforehand, the high-ranking SS officials wishing for more classical "pure music," while lower SS officials would choose light music for activities like drinking sessions, orgies, and other feasts (Brauer, 17-18).There were numerous parts in entertaining the guards that used the music to bring forth the Jewish prisoners and the SS guards' different forms of emotional relationships. The first part was choosing the musicians in the band. In the testimony of Louis Bannet, he describes how SS guards would demand the Jewish prisoners to play an instrument. In Bannet's case he would play the trombone, after the SS guard demanded him to play it for his life. Bannet did not know what this meant, so the guard repeated "you play for your life." Bannet had issues with playing the trombone because his lips were cold from the weather, and it affected his breathing to play popular Nazi tunes on his instrument. The guard grew frustrated by Bannet's ineffective playing, so they would demand that he and his fellow prisoners in the band leave the room. Bannet would explain his frustration with the experience because he complained that the Nazi guards wanted them to play the music faster. This would insult the guards with them saying that he had no sense of music and had about as much music sense as a styrofoam cup (Bannet, 1989). Through this testimony, the activity of entertaining guards became a mutual emotional relationship for both the Jewish prisoners and the guards. Through music, both groups shared the similar emotional feeling of anger. The guard was angry with his lack of enjoyment in listening to favorite popular German song where he felt prideful of his nation. The Jewish prisoner was also frustrated by the guard's command to play music that he disliked, because it was playing a German "pure music" tune. This experience highlights that despite the other emotional relationships that are full of fear and sadness, there is one emotion that the bonds the relationship between the SS Guards and the Jewish inmates: the fervor of anger.

However, there was another experience when the Jewish prisoners would play for the SS Guards with a different emotional relationship full of security, grief, frustration, and happiness. In the testimony of Henry Meyer, he describes where he would play the violin in the orchestra to entertain for the SS Guards. He begins with context that the musicians would know the favorites of certain SS "Characters." They would ask the orchestra to play these tunes anytime and would enter the room to hear the Jewish prisoners play. One guy from Berlin loved the popular tune Berliner Luft (Air of Berlin), the song describing the Berlin Air with a bouncy, march-like, joyful sound. So, anytime this guy came into the barrack or tent, the conductor would stop the band, and they would begin playing Berliner Luft. One time, however, they played the song as the guy came in, and the conductor and band did not realize that the special commander, who was in charge of the crematoria, was leaving the tent. In response to Berliner Luft playing, the guy became furious and forced Henry and the band to put their instruments away. Afterwards, the Berlin SS guy and other SS guards pushed some of musicians into the mud because it was raining. This killed two of the musicians, which was not completely unusual because after they play a least one of the musicians would typi-

cally not survive the performance. Meyer ends his story by saying that the conductor asked the SS guy why he got mad, and he responded that playing the song was not appropriate to the special commander leaving (Meyer, 1995). This testimony explains that the emotional relationship between the guards and prisoners by playing popular music was not always anger, but feelings of safety. If the musicians knew the favorite songs of the SS Guards, then they might not get hurt or killed if they played that song. However, these feelings of security would shatter into grief and frustration in the emotional relationship between these two groups. The guards would be frustrated by the music and kill the musicians, which would make the surviving musicians feel grief. Even though the frustration of the SS guards was evoked by music, the beginning of the testimony would show signs of a happiness and pleasure relationship because the Jews were playing music. These signs created a new emotional relationship between the guards and the prisoners, one of pleasure not by causing them harm, but by listening to their favorite tunes. Many SS guards probably felt a pleasure relationship with the Jews at seeing them being humiliated by having to play German music, not their own (Brauer, 17-20). These testimonies, with music the crucial factor, help us understand how these private sessions with the SS guards created emotional relationships. Both the Jews and the Nazi guards were full of feelings of false security, grief, anger, and happiness. Emotional relationships between the guards and Jews explain how the Jewish prisoners were dependent on the SS guards' emotions. Music played by the Jews shifted the emotions of guards, therefore creating a dependent, pliant relationship. Around the SS guards, the Jewish prisoners would play the German music and have their emotional responses to it, but they also had moments of playing their own music in their block-performances.

Jewish prisoners would be able to play without any demand from the SS guards in their own barracks. When SS guards had withdrawn from the camp, prisoners might play music together. These block performances were cultural performances that related to the Jewish prisoner's cultural group (Fackler, 75). For example, if a Jewish prisoner was from Czechoslovakia or Austria, the cultural performance would be reciting or singing songs from that nation. These block performances would be short, but they would bring joyful emotional relationships for the Jewish prisoners. However, as previously discussed, emotionally driven relationships would return once the guards became annoyed with the Jews by playing their own music in the barracks. Thus any joyful relationship was definitely in the testimony of Yehudah Baḳon, a Czech Jewish Holocaust Survivor, he describes these block performances. He begins by saying that he and a couple of musicians will perform at the children's block, camp 31. He and others would be divided into little groups, where they would recite all kinds of Czech songs. The children, he, and the band enjoyed that time together, because as Bakon was telling the story, he had a joyful look on his face. He describes one song they would sing called "Dona Nobis Pacem," which he sings happily with a smile on his face. The interviewer would ask if the Germans allowed it, and he responded that they did not care because they believed that they would die anyway, so why waste time worrying about them. However, at the end of his testimony, he explains that he and the children would sometimes perform this song for the SS soldiers, and they would enjoy it. However, if they did not like it, they would blow a whistle to stop the performance (Bakon, 1996). This testimony supports that music evoked joyful relationships for the Jews between their fellow inmates and the guards, because they could at times play their music in front of the guards. This performance created a shared emotional relationship with a feeling of relative joy and content between the guards and prisoners. However, the second half of the testimony would also discuss apathetic and angry relationships between the guards and Jews. The guards felt apathetic relationships towards the Jews because no matter what music they sang, the Jews were going to eventually die in the camp, and it did not bother them at the moment.

However, as previously discussed, anger from emotionally driven relationships would return once the guards became annoyed with the Jews by playing their own music in the barrack. Thus, any joyful relationship was definitely conditional. Although these block performances were planned music sessions for the Jews only, prisoners would also be forced to play elsewhere around the camp, but each place tells the story of music contributing to disclosing the emotional relationships between SS guards and Jews in the camp.

Whether the music was used for torture, pleasure, or other uses in numerous settings, the emotional responses disclose tell the relationships between the individual prisoners and the SS guards, and how these relationships helped describe the operation of the camp of Auschwitz. These emotional relationships disclosed by music will help people understand the emotions that the Jewish and the SS Guards faced in the camp, which might lead people to have more empathy for the Jews in the Holocaust. But leading scholars look at other places like music history to find historical knowledge to understand parts or people in history.

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