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Swing Reich:
A Cultural Analysis of Jazz during World War II

ABSTRACT: *This article explores the culture of jazz and its various functions during World War II. Considering the music's roots in the folk and blues songs of American slaves and sharecroppers, it argues that jazz's oppressed, racially-charged heritage allowed for its unique presence in wartime, highlighting its role as entertainment, its use as propaganda, and its function as a tool of resistance.*

KEYWORDS: *modern history; World War II; Nazi Germany; France; England; U.S.; jazz; Nazi propaganda; Theresienstadt (Terezín); cultural history*

Introduction

In May 1940, the Nazis began their invasion of France as the inhabitants of Paris were listening in on the radio. While there was disbelief, there was also still confidence that the capital would not fall to the German army. Among the civilians glued to the radio was Django Reinhardt (1910-1953), a Romani jazz musician who was well aware that his ethnicity and lifestyle placed him in immediate danger should Paris surrender. Fearing for his life, he fled with fellow musicians to the south of France, where he felt he could survive in hiding.[1] Meanwhile, as the Nazi army occupied Paris and the nightclubs boarded up their windows and doors, Josef Goebbels, Nazi Germany's Minister of Propaganda, set out to make the now-depressed capital "its old self again." The city would become the "Wehrmacht's brothel," a reward for the German soldiers who were doing their part in defending the Reich. Paris would become a haven of entertainment for the Germans—complete with "wine, women, and even jazz"—as its restaurants and cabarets reopened their doors to civilians and soldiers alike. After hearing about this, and despite his heritage, Django returned to the capital where he soon found a new audience. Night after night, during the Nazi occupation of France, he looked out onto a sea of German soldiers and quickly became a main attraction on the stage, while fearing for his life offstage. "[F]or Django, it was a coup," his method of resistance.[2] Django's story, while unique, presents a fascinating example of the complex nature of jazz as a wartime phenomenon.

Historians have written a great deal about wartime jazz, and while there is plenty of insight into this curiosity, the music's heritage in connection to its cultural significance tends to be overlooked. While jazz's history is rooted in the struggles of African Americans in the United States, its rise in popularity in the first half of the twentieth century was a testament to its value as a genuine and treasured art form. Therefore, it is no coincidence that by the time the Nazi Party

[1] Michael Dregni, *Django: The Life and Music of a Gypsy Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 156.

[2] Dregni, *Django*, 158-159.

rose to power in the 1930s, what had been an "ethnic" music had evolved into a cornerstone of entertainment in both civil society as well as the military. With a specific focus on Germany, England, France, and the United States, this article sets out to examine how jazz infiltrated the war. The story of how and why this supposedly—in the language of the Nazis—"degenerate" music became so significant deserves more attention.[3] Jazz arguably has an inherent quality that ensured its survival—especially under the Third Reich, leading to its cultural appropriation as both entertainment and propaganda. While jazz was considered a nuisance by conservatives in both Germany and Britain, it managed to establish itself as a vital component of the war effort and proved that it was more than just a novelty.[4] This article looks behind jazz's façade and zooms in on its cultural trajectory that brought it into the mainstream and, eventually, into World War II; it examines jazz's unique culture and history in connection to its presence in wartime through its role as entertainment, its use as propaganda, and its function as a tool of resistance.

I. Entertainment

By the mid-twentieth century, jazz had made it into the Western world's mainstream entertainment industry. Its adoption into popular culture was based on the turbulence of racial oppression in the United States and the challenges it faced as it honed and perfected its craft. Jazz was born on the streets of Louisiana, in New Orleans' red-light district, in the late nineteenth century and quickly became a staple of this vibrant city.[5] It reverberated with the emotion of its African American creators who would eventually ride this wave of musical fervor into the homes of White America. In this environment, swing became the standard for entertainment, as White musicians like Benny Goodman (1909-1986) and Bix Beiderbecke (1903-1931) presented the music with a more "acceptable" appearance, precipitating its growing popularity.[6] The United States' racially oppressive culture of the early and mid-twentieth century facilitated the White appropriation of jazz, easing the reception and embrace of what had initially been considered a "substandard" style of music. There were, of course, White musicians who had a genuine appreciation for the music's heritage and significance. Prior to jazz's surge in popularity, pioneering Black artists like Duke Ellington (1899-1974) and Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) were victimized by the climate of racism and

[3] "Degenerate" was a term used by the Nazis to describe modern, non-traditional, non-classical, un-German, threatening, or subversive art that did not support the ideals of Nazism. See Horst J. P. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, *Hitler's Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), chapter 5.

[4] Will Studdert, *The Jazz War: Radio, Nazism, and the Struggle for the Airwaves in World War II* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 41-42.

[5] Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 31.

[6] Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 137. Swing is a form of jazz that was most popular throughout the 1920s and 30s. See Gioia, *History of Jazz*, chapter 5.

segregation that hindered their initial trajectory. New York's Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s awakened White audiences to jazz, solidifying its desirability in the world of music and nightlife entertainment.[7] Eventually, this new form of popular music made its way across the Atlantic Ocean and found a new audience and home in Europe.

The end of the Great War (1918) brought a fresh wave of arts and alternative culture to Germany's newly established Weimar Republic. This environment consisted of an exciting nightlife, filling Berlin's cabarets with music and entertainment that jazz would organically infiltrate as its reputation and fame expanded.[8] Jazz made its way to Germany at the end of World War I, after German prisoners of war had been exposed to it in French camps.[9] Prior to the war, few Germans would have had any consistent or significant interaction with people of African heritage, which added to ethnic music's polarized reception during the Weimar era.[10] Even with the acceptance of jazz, it was common for Black musicians to be relegated to the periphery.[11] This segregation of Black performers reflected the racial sentiment of the times, but jazz's popularity could not be denied. While jazz was a hit in nightclubs and cabarets, German conservatives still considered the music below their "moral standards."[12] This distaste became more apparent as nationalist sentiments hardened and the uneasiness with jazz came to a head.

By 1932, German Chancellor Franz von Papen's cabinet had outlawed the hiring of "colored" musicians.[13] Even though jazz itself was not banned, such policies and attitudes reflected the palpable nature of jazz's ambiguity. As astonishing as this must have been, the demand for jazz could not be ignored, and even Papen's autocratic government had to make concessions in its attempt to control the music. The restrictive approach toward jazz continued when Germany shifted from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich. Yet, as the Nazi Party implemented its totalitarian control, it, too, had to appease the public's continued demand for the music. Considering its immense popularity, jazz would serve a variety of purposes as the Reich had no choice but to accommodate it.

Although Goebbels detested the music, he never officially banned it. Jazz was "the rage in German homes as well as nightclubs, as popular among the nation's housewives as with German soldiers and the Military High Command, who threw

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[7] Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 123. The Harlem Renaissance was a 1920s artistic, cultural, and intellectual movement in New York's Harlem neighborhood. See Gioia, *History of Jazz*, chapter 4.

[8] Michael H. Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3, 4.

[9] Kater, *Different Drummers*, 5.

[10] Bergmeier and Lotz, *Hitler's Airwaves*, 137.

[11] Kater, *Different Drummers*, 18-19.

[12] Bergmeier and Lotz, *Hitler's Airwaves*, 137.

[13] Kater, *Different Drummers*, 19.

their *Reichsmarks* like confetti to buy champagne in Berlin's cabarets."[14] Goebbels understood the futility of any effort to move against this current, so jazz, in the entertainment culture of the Nazi regime, played multiple roles. One such role was the leisure of civilians, soldiers, and the High Command. Following the establishment of the Reich Chamber of Culture (RKK) in 1933, foreign and ethnic musicians were the first to be targeted by restrictions.[15] Jews in particular were a focal point for Goebbels, as the Nazis saw a link between "racially inferior Blacks and Jews," and the notion that the latter were exceptionally gifted jazz musicians gave credence to the theory of a "Jewish-Negro" plot to corrupt German "Aryan" culture.[16] With such radical views in place, one would think that jazz would have been suppressed on all levels to thwart any risk of "contaminating" society. However, this was not to be. Instead of ridding "Aryan" culture of this "substandard" music, it was permitted to exist under a certain level of Nazi censorship. Unsurprisingly, the desire for jazz was experienced not only in Germany, but especially in Paris, where music and entertainment would flourish in the Parisian nightlife for the German army.

The Reich's acceptance of Django Reinhardt as a wartime entertainer during the Nazi occupation of France speaks volumes. According to Nazi ideology, Django presumably posed two threats to the "Aryan" race. Firstly, his Romani people were considered "elusive" and deceptive, perceived as "Hungarians or Jews or both, or they could be Romanian or Slavic, or they might deny their racial origins all together and pose as decent Germans."[17] Secondly, he was a jazz musician. Not only did he perform "decadent" music, but he was relatively famous and thus, one would assume, doubly dangerous. Instead, Django was so well admired that his growing celebrity brought him a new level of wealth and fame, allowing him to live freely in Paris to flourish as a beloved musician. Sadly, while Django was thriving under Nazi occupation, most of his Romani people were being rounded up for extermination. Of the 20,000 French Romani sent to death camps, an estimated 18,000 were murdered.[18] This is part of the paradox that consumed jazz under the Third Reich. Regardless of Django's heritage, his musical prowess trumped any concern over his "threatening" presence and further proved the power of jazz's significance within society. It is remarkable that even the brutality of the Nazi machine had its rare limits, and when it came to entertainment, jazz was hard to beat. With Paris booming and its nightlife uninhibited, jazz's reach would even be felt in an unlikely place like the "model" concentration camp of Theresienstadt (Terezín) in Czechoslovakia, which would provide a bizarre environment of entertainment for German soldiers.

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[14] Dregni, *Django*, 157.

[15] Kater, *Different Drummers*, 36.

[16] Kater, *Different Drummers*, 20, 24; Bergmeier and Lotz, *Hitler's Airwaves*, 136.

[17] Dregni, *Django*, 38.

[18] Dregni, *Django*, 167-169.

The Theresienstadt camp was a peculiar place during the war. Located in the fortress town of Terezín, in the Nazi-occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (present-day Czech Republic), the camp initially comprised Jewish volunteers working as an *Aufbaukommando*, or building detail, to prepare for incoming prisoner transports.[19] The camp was set up in November 1941 to demonstrate to the International Red Cross that the rumors of Nazi death camps, consisting of gas chambers, slave labor, and inhumane living conditions, were a lie (which, of course, they were not). A German propaganda film, "The Führer Gives the Jews a City," pushes the narrative that Terezín was a relatively free prisoner experience, complete with sports, gardening, and cultural activities that included orchestral and jazz music.[20] Within limits, this depiction was accurate: what had begun as inmates singing folk songs in their barracks in the evenings eventually turned into a vigorous music scene that even the SS came to enjoy.[21]

The growing number of transports to Terezín meant a growing number of musicians, which, in turn, led to organized musical programs, first operating in secret. The Nazis eventually caught on and decided to permit these performances as *Kameradschaftabende*, or evenings of fellowship, and, in early 1942, officially endorsed *Freizeitgestaltung*, or Free Time Activities. These accommodations resulted in the formation of the Terezín prisoner jazz band, the "Ghetto Swingers." Their members, since they participated in musical activities, were considered "employees" and thus exempt from manual work.[22] While life in Terezín may have appeared as relatively easy-going to outsiders, the prisoners' reality was still grim and overshadowed by the prospect of eventual transport to Auschwitz. In 1944, the "Ghetto Swingers" met this fate when many of the band members were deported to Auschwitz and murdered in the gas chambers.[23] Thus, the inmates of Theresienstadt were no exception on the path toward the Nazi's "Final Solution." While Terezín further highlights the multifaceted use of jazz as entertainment, it also reveals the music's ambiguity as an example of propaganda, a topic to which we now turn.

II. Propaganda

Jazz's use as propaganda during the war was not a natural move on either side of the conflict. It was especially counterintuitive for Nazi Germany to incorporate ethnic music not just for entertainment but also as a weapon against the Allies. Jazz's adoption mainly served two functions: to boost morale and invigorate the troops and the home front, and to serve as a subversive element in an attempt to

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[19] Joža Karas, *Music in Terezín: 1941-1945*, 2nd ed. (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2008), 9.

[20] Amanda Petrusich, "The Jewish Trumpeter Who Entertained the Nazis to Survive the Holocaust," *The New Yorker*, April 22, 2019; "The Führer Gives the Jews a City: World War II German Propaganda Film 19064" [www.PeriscopeFilm.com], *YouTube* video, 21:47, May 24, 2019.

[21] Karas, *Music in Terezín*, 11.

[22] Karas, *Music in Terezín*, 11-16.

[23] Petrusich, "Jewish Trumpeter."

undermine enemy listeners. However, before either of these tactics could be implemented, the Axis and Allied powers had to come to terms with their own opinions on jazz which they commonly perceived as inferior or substandard. While this sentiment was mostly shared by the German and British High Command, soldiers and civilians soon highlighted the music's significance, eventually bringing it into the war. Before long, jazz was heavily incorporated into radio broadcasts as a vessel for both morale-boosting and subversion.

The process of embracing jazz in Nazi Germany unfolded in several stages. As we have seen, jazz was permitted to function under a certain level of censorship, but there was a great deal of philosophical debate that led to its eventual acceptance, focusing on four areas of concern. Firstly, there was the question whether the "African continent or the United States should be deplored as the historic home of jazz." The purpose of this question was to accurately understand the origins of the genre before properly discriminating against it. Secondly, the music's rhythm, characterized by syncopation, was considered "unsuitable for marching" and therefore "un-German." This argument faltered once "musicologists remembered that even J[ohann]. S[ebastian]. Bach [the most famous German composer of the Baroque era] had utilized the syncope." Thus, in the case of jazz, the issue would not be the rhythm itself but the way in which it was used. Thirdly, the saxophone, often a prominent instrument in jazz music, was a "natural culprit" that appeared relatively foreign to German musicians. This argument, too, hit several roadblocks once it was realized that classical compositions had commonly incorporated the saxophone into arrangements. Moreover, it was initially believed that the instrument had been invented by a German-born Belgian, Adolphe Sax (1814-1894), who, as it later turned out, was actually not German-born but simply Belgian. Fourthly, and most compellingly, there were the "insidious sexual powers of jazz:" the music was deemed to have a corrupting influence on national morality through its alluring, promiscuous sensuality. This argument carried the most weight with the Nazis as there appeared to be no real counterargument to this (strange) line of reasoning.[24]

Clearly, there was plenty for the German High Command to consider. The fact that there was so much investigation into the possible threats of jazz only illustrates the music's (in reality) harmless nature. Arguments in favor of suppressing jazz were nothing more than racial bias, and the claim pertaining to jazz's "sexual powers" was a mere matter of moral opinion. Regardless of all these deliberations, jazz was eventually embraced in Germany, as there was no realistic way to suppress it. The British process of "understanding" jazz would be different, but it did have a few surprising parallels to the Nazis' approach.

The racial environment in Great Britain during the war years was somewhat hazy. While the Allies were fighting a war in the name of liberty and democracy, a distinct level of ethnic prejudice surfaced in their response to jazz music. Even

[24] See Kater, *Different Drummers*, 31-32, for all direct quotes in this paragraph.

the British music magazine *Melody Maker,* with its progressive stance toward race, had controversial opinions on jazz. With regard to music playing a role in soldiers' morale, the magazine's technical editor, Dan S. Ingman, wrote that, "music has been used as an incentive to fighting men from time immemorial. If we are to believe that the savages of the jungle are merely a reflection of our earlier selves, then we can say with confidence that from the earliest dawn of time mankind has used music to stir himself up."[25] *DownBeat* magazine, one of the main proponents of jazz on the radio, nonetheless "generally refrained from featuring African American musicians on its covers."[26] Then there were, of course, conservative political opinions about jazz, as evidenced by British Labour MP Andrew MacLaren's statement in favor of so-called British music on the radio versus "degenerate" American-style music: "[T]hey come here from the backwoods of America and have the rhythm of the nigger running through them, with all that it implies. They do not belong to our people."[27] These ideas and opinions would not prove significant enough, however, as jazz eventually became a prominent feature on the airwaves.

It was also realized that the BBC's meager broadcasting of jazz had a more profound effect on the troops than the High Command had anticipated. Emerging from the "cultural blackout," as part of British air-raid precautions in 1939, radio broadcasts were strictly limited, and criticism arose immediately in favor of more consistent entertainment, deemed essential for the "spirits of the populace." Furthermore, there was a mounting concern over listeners tuning into "the violent anti-British propaganda" of German broadcasts. After a brief ban against dance music, the BBC gave in to demands and criticism, allowing jazz to be broadcast on Sundays.[28] In January 1940, BBC Director General Frederick W. Ogilvie paid a visit to the British Expeditionary Force in France and noticed a curious scene. He observed young soldiers listening to BBC broadcasts and realized it was a different audience than those on the home front. As a result of Ogilvie's visit, the BBC affirmed the desirability of "light entertainment" and established its "Forces Programme," which included sports, dance music, and jazz every evening.[29]

The use of radio entertainment during the war became increasingly important as the conflict persisted. For the Germans and the British, radio broadcasts provided a useful distraction for soldiers as well as civilians who were in need of such diversions.[30] The appeal of music on the radio was a first step toward realizing the powerful capabilities of jazz as both entertainment and propaganda. In this context, entertainment and propaganda were interwoven as both sides used

[25] Quoted in Studdert, *Jazz War*, 8.

[26] Quoted in Studdert, *Jazz War*, 25.

[27] Quoted in Studdert, *Jazz War*, 41.

[28] Studdert, *Jazz War*, 9-14.

[29] Studdert, *Jazz War*, 14-15.

[30] Studdert, *Jazz War*, 14; Kater, *Different Drummers*, 47.

the desire for music to draw in potential dissidents. With regard to jazz, "radio warfare" was a reciprocal process between the two belligerents in the form of "call and response:" first the British understood its significance, then the Nazis followed with their inevitable counterreaction.[31]

This counterreaction emerged as Goebbels became increasingly concerned with German listeners tuning into Allied radio broadcasts to quench their thirst for jazz music. Even though he had banned the listening of such stations, he was aware that civilians and military personnel were still listening in. Goebbels's concern was justified, as the BBC "estimated [in 1943] that between one and three million Germans were tuning into its special programs." The RKK had already been reorganized between 1941 and 1942 to allow for a regulated amount of German-sponsored jazz.[32] Soon, with similar goals in mind, both sides offered broadcasts intended for enemy listeners. One of these German broadcasts was that of radio personality "Axis Sally," an American by the name of Mildred Gillars (1900-1988), based out of Berlin and broadcasting for the Nazis during the war. Her programs consisted of jazz music to lure in Allied listeners, followed by pro-Axis propaganda to sway their allegiance. Most Allied listeners, however, found the Nazi rhetoric to be nothing more than ridiculous and amusing.[33] "Axis Sally" is just one example of the various strategies used to undermine the opposing side.

Another strategy employed by the Nazis was to take familiar jazz songs and rewrite their lyrics with anti-Allied messages. In 1928, Gus Kahn (1886-1941) and Walter Donaldson (1893-1947) had written the jazz song, "Makin Whoopee," for the Broadway show *Whoopee!,* performed by Eddie Cantor.[34] While this song had been recorded by various artists over time, Goebbels had a different goal in mind when he developed the idea for "Charlie and His Orchestra," a propaganda jazz band intended for radio broadcasts.[35] Charlie's songs took aim at the Allied leadership, such as British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, but mostly centered around anti-Semitism. Their cover of "Makin' Whoopee" includes such modified lyrics as, "Another war, another profit, another Jewish business trick, another season, another reason for makin' whoopee." Additional lyrics contain racial epithets and messages, blaming the Jews and the Allies for starting the war. The recording even opens with an announcement that Eddie Cantor had been asked to rewrite the music with new lyrics, at which point the propaganda version of "Makin' Whoopee" follows.[36] These examples illustrate the "call and response" system that affected the Allies

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[31] Studdert, *Jazz War*, 2.

[32] Kater, *Different Drummers*, 122-124.

[33] Edward van Dyne, "No Other Gal Like Axis Sal," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 15, 1944.

[34] Sandra Burlingame, "Makin' Whoopee (1928)," JazzStandards.com.

[35] Studdert, *Jazz War*, 55.

[36] "German Propaganda Swing: Charlie & His Orchestra: Makin' Whoopee," *YouTube* video, 3:09, June 8, 2008.

and the Axis. Yet, while jazz proved to be an important form of propaganda for the warring nations, it also served as a form of resistance, allowing ordinary civilians to contribute to the war effort.

III. Resistance

Music's expressive nature is embedded deeply in its fibers. The notion that it can be manipulated to serve various functions for an individual or a target audience only underscores its significance. Two of these functions—entertainment and propaganda—have already been discussed, but one of the most crucial functions of music during the war was resistance. The thought of a beautiful melody as a dangerous weapon may seem somewhat absurd. However, it is not always the song itself but, rather, its message or even the people associated with it. Jazz was such a weapon. Its free-spirited nature made it a formidable tool that people sought to embrace, even if they had been ordered otherwise. This rebellious quality was rooted in jazz's origins of African Americans struggling within the oppressive and segregated confines of their country. The music was a natural weapon for anyone looking to adopt it. While jazz could be utilized as a means of resistance in various ways, one specific way was the cover that it provided for musicians who were able to operate without drawing suspicion.

Josephine Baker (1906-1975), for example, was able to provide valuable services due to her celebrity as a jazz entertainer. An American expatriate living in Paris, Baker had joined the French Resistance after the German invasion of Poland in 1939. She was recruited by the *Deuxième Bureau* (French Military Intelligence), and she showed no hesitation when asked to aid the Allies in defeating Hitler, even with the possibility of capture, torture, and death. In fact, she was already wearing a crucifix around her neck, filled with poison, in case she would be arrested.[37] Her role as a celebrity agent mostly consisted of mingling with Axis political figures at parties where she would gather information, either through eavesdropping or seduction. One of her more notable contributions was a brief affair with an Italian diplomat which afforded her the opportunity to steal a German-Italian codebook from a drawer in his office.[38] She soon began to move around Europe and northern Africa and was able to work in Spain, Portugal, and Morocco under her cover as an entertainer "on tour."[39] She stayed out of harm's way and, as the war was coming to an end, returned to Paris where she was awarded the *Croix de Guerre*, a French military medal bestowed for heroism.[40] Baker's contribution was unique, and while she played an active part in the French Resistance, other groups in France were also able to contribute to the war effort.

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[37] Sherry Jones, *Josephine Baker's Last Dance* (New York: Gallery Books, 2018), 262-266.

[38] Jones, *Josephine Baker's Last Dance*, 272.

[39] Jones, *Josephine Baker's Last Dance*, 313.

[40] Tim Murari, "From the Archive, August 26, 1974: An Interview with Josephine Baker," *The Guardian,* August 26, 2015.

The *Hot Club de France* was created in the early 1930s to spread the awareness of jazz in France by developing magazines, organizing radio programs, and setting up performances.[41] When the Nazis occupied Paris, Charles Delaunay (1911-1988), co-founder of the *Hot Club*, used his cover in the music industry to travel around France. He organized lectures and set up concerts while secretly making contacts with the French Resistance and then carrying intelligence information back to Paris. From there, he would hand the details off to a British Special Operations executive who went by the code name of "Pauline." Another co-founder of the *Hot Club*, Jacques Bureau (1912-2008), used his radio expertise to work with the "British in Lebanon, spending long hours scanning airwaves for German transmissions, then tracing their locations to plot bombing runs or commando raids."[42] These may seem like minor contributions, but all these civilian jazz aficionados were risking their lives in the most effective way they could to combat the Nazi machine. The evidence of resistance in the French jazz scene is underscored by the actions of these individuals, but further exploration reveals other, more subtle groups who were defiantly embracing jazz's magnetic allure.

One such group was the "Swing Youth" in Hamburg, Germany. This largely teenage contingent was known by several idioms, including "Swing-Heinis," "Swing-Boys," "Swing-Babies," and "Swing-Kids." As jazz music became more popular throughout Germany in the 1930s, a style of dance began to evolve with the music. The introduction of new dances, such as the foxtrot, was a growing concern for social-dance functionaries working within the RKK. This led to the search for a "German alternative to the foreign, allegedly 'Nigger' and 'Jewish'" style that was developing among the youth. Although there were attempts to incorporate a more rigid, traditional German folk style, nothing could substitute the craze of the swing dance. As prohibitions against such dancing were implemented around 1937-1938, the youth reacted with a new level of vigor. Soon, there were tight cliques whose embrace of the scene hardened with every attempt by the authorities to suppress it. Under close surveillance by the Hitler Youth, this young crowd of jazz fans mostly came from upper-class families and had been raised in an environment that "emphasized cultural entertainment, sophisticated enlightenment, relaxed living supported by expensive tastes, and liberal politics." When Hitler Youth membership became mandatory in 1939, it was instinctual for the "Swing Youth" to reject such a demand and continue their rebellious movement in the shadowy confines of underground taverns and cafes.[43] While seemingly insignificant, these resistance movements provided a crucial service for the populace. They found their own ways to oppose the Nazi regime, standing up for their freedom and liberty in the face of tyranny.

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[41] Dregni, *Django*, 78.

[42] Dregni, *Django*, 180-181.

[43] See Kater, *Different Drummers*, 102, 104, 105-106, 109, for all direct quotes in this paragraph.

Conclusion

Jazz could not have taken any other path during the war. Deeply rooted in the folk and blues songs of American slaves and sharecroppers, the genre's history illustrates its cultural impact. Prior to the development of jazz, their own traditional work songs had in many cases provided slaves and sharecroppers with an escape from the hardships of oppression, poverty, and violence.[44] Jazz music was and is resilience music. Thus, it was only natural that, when the Nazis sought to enforce political, social, and cultural conformity, the continued suppression of this expressive art form would be met with resistance. It is no coincidence that the plight of African and African American people transcended their own socio-political realm and connected, via their music, to the plight of others. Perhaps people are subconsciously moved by jazz, or maybe it is the sense of liberation that jazz provides to the individual—whatever the case may be, there is something undeniably special about this intoxicating music.

So, why jazz? Was it just the right place and the right time? It is conceivable that jazz was elevated in popular culture just in time to accompany the war. Or, it could be argued, there is something organic in this music's makeup that facilitates its ability to take on this kind of role. Even if there had been no war, no crisis, jazz would have been ready. Classical music, the only other competitor to jazz during this time of war, stood no chance of meeting the needs of such large and diverse groups of listeners on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It was there, yet it received no such call. There was something in the spirit of jazz that spoke to individuals and invigorated their souls during this time of crisis.

By the 1930s, its rise in popularity had earned jazz a place in the mainstream, proving that it had more to offer than any other genre to date. Jazz—as entertainment—evolved to play an increasingly meaningful role in the lives of the younger generation who embraced it. During the war, jazz instilled strength and vitality on both the home front as well as the front lines. Appropriated as propaganda, jazz was used in ways unforeseeable by its creators, even in ways that debased the music and turned it into a racialized weapon: this ethnic music was turned into a subversive device and mutilated by the Nazis to spread their message of "Aryan" supremacy. However, it was also consumed by the very same people who were trying to destroy everything it stood for. It may be this ambiguity that separates jazz from other genres. But it was its most natural role—resistance—that allowed jazz to truly be itself. Representing what the Allies were fighting for, jazz became a true symbol of liberty.

American jazz pianist Earl Hines (1903-1983) once declared, "Jazz expresses the hope of a free people who hunger for a better life. It is based on individuality, which is contrary to the very fundamentals of Nazism."[45] Another American jazz

[44] Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 8.

[45] Quoted in *Jazz*, directed by Ken Burns, Episode 7 (" Dedicated to Chaos") (PBS, 2000), 00:48:00 to 00:48:30.

pianist, Dave Brubeck (1920-2012), said that, "when you get a group of musicians really playing, and in the days of the swing bands, it was this feeling of freedom. And then a guy would get a solo, and this was his expression of freedom … and then they were completely free, away from the constriction of the written music, but improvising on top of it. And this is the thing I love most about jazz … it expresses freedom."[46] The correlation between the freedom that jazz embodies and the soul of democracy cannot be ignored. It is in this spirit that, in this time in history, jazz's paradox can also not be ignored. It is easy to believe in liberty when all of its benefits are within one's reach, but for the African Americans, ethnic minorities, and oppressed people around the world who were fighting in World War II this belief did not come so easy. It is certainly tragic that, much like jazz was culturally appropriated by the White entertainment industry, it was also appropriated by White governments as a tool during the war. While beautifully representing hope, freedom, and democracy overseas, the people responsible for jazz's conception would have to continue fighting for their own victory at home long after the war.

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[46] Quoted in *Jazz*, directed by Burns, Episode 7, 01:40:47 to 01:41:41.