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Jewish Musical Heritage in Post-War Germany: Negotiating Jewish Self-Understanding through Synagogue Chant

In 1972, German-Jewish sociologist Alphons Silbermann (1909–2000) stated that in recent years (meaning between 1945 and the 1960s), there had been few sociological studies on Jews and Judaism in German-speaking countries. According to Silbermann, scholars chose instead to work on descriptive historical works based on diverse (archive) materials on single issues, mostly subjects concerning World War II and the Holocaust.[1] In light of the recent historical circumstances at that time, the lack of sociological – of empirical and ethnographic – studies on Jews and Jewish life in Germany was not surprising. Four decades later, however, Silbermann's observation is still true, despite the fact that Jewish communities in Germany have grown again, due to the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union between 1990 and 2005. There is a particular lack of scholarship involving ethnomusicological studies on Jewish communities in Germany today. Ethnographic fieldwork in disciplines such as Sociology, Ethnology, Cultural Anthropology and also Ethnomusicology require face-to-face encounters involving researchers and research partners in the here and now. The face-to-face interaction required for effective fieldwork poses a dilemma for many (non-Jewish) researchers in Germany owing to fears of contact and misunderstanding, little knowledge about Judaism as lived and living religion and culture, Jewishness as an ethnic identity and – most importantly – societal, social, political, and academic structures that contribute to the lack of research on Jewish contemporary issues.[2] As anthropologist Dani Kranz points out, it is relevant "[if] they [the anthropologists] are Jews or non-Jews [...], in particular in a charged context as in post-Shoah Germany, and in regard to the issues, and questions they raise."[3] Against this backdrop, it is relevant that the data on synagogue chant (*nusach*) in German Jewish communities today, in this chapter, is based on talking with Jewish community members and cantors in Germany, and not about them. This approach is

1 Alphons Silbermann, "Soziologie des Judentums," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 24 (1972): 417–419; 417.

2 Dani Kranz, and Sarah M. Ross, "Tektonische Verschiebungen in der Judaistik und Jüdische Studien nach 1990 durch die Integration der Jüdische Theologie und eine jüdische Selbstermächtigung in Deutschland," in *Die Shoah in Bildung und Erziehung heute – Weitergaben und Wirkungen in Gegenwartsverhältnissen*, ed. Marina Chernivsky, and Friederike Lorenz (forthcoming).

3 Dani Kranz, "Intersecting Allopolitics, or the Quest for Jewish Anthropology in Germany," *Modern Jewish Studies* (forthcoming).

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therefore participant-centered. Quoted statements of my interview partners are anonymized at the request of my research partners.

The respective data was mainly collected through music-oriented ethnographic fieldwork in Jewish communities in Mannheim and Frankfurt am Main within the context of a larger, interdisciplinary research initiative on traditions and transformations of Judaism and Jewish practices in Germany after the Shoah.[4] In addition, qualitative interviews with cantors of other synagogue communities in Germany, such as in Berlin and Stuttgart, were conducted and their musical practices have been recorded. The data collection was primarily guided by the questions of how Jewish self-understanding in post-war Germany is expressed in Jewish liturgical music today, and thus, how the latter is interrelated with diverging ideas about Jewish cultural heritage in Germany.

"German-Jewish" cultural heritage

In the immediate aftermath of the Shoah, Jewish cultural heritage in Germany became 'contested heritage.'[5] The restituted remains of German-Jewish heritage, such as library collections, ritual and art objects as well as other 'ownerless' Jewish assets,[6] were transformed by international Jewish organizations[7] into a collective property belonging to Jewish people globally; they were distributed to Jewish communities abroad. This endeavor was spearheaded by the idea that future Jewish life in Germany was impossible. As such, German-Jewish heritage became, in the words of Dan Diner, "a holy sign of Jewish collective affiliation after the catastrophe."[8] This act of collecting led to disagreements between international Jewry and representatives of the reestablished Jewish communities in Germany.[9] One could say that the Jews residing in Germany felt as if they faced a double expropriation. In the decades following the Shoah, Jewish communities in Germany had to deal not only with social, cultural and economic hardship, but with the consequences of the *cherem*,[10] the ban imposed by the international

4 The project was entitled "Objects and spaces reflecting religious practice: traditions and transformations in Jewish communities in Germany after the Shoa," and funded from September 2018 until August 2021 by the German Ministry of Education and Science.

5 See Elisabeth Gallas, et al., ed. *Contested Heritage. Jewish Cultural Property after 1945* (Berlin, 2020), 10–12.

6 An exemption are the few rare library collections and ritual objects located, for example, in the former British zone. These cultural assets stayed in Germany.

7 Like Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc. (1945–1952).

8 Dan Diner, "Im Zeichen des Banns," in *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Michael Brenner (München, 2012), 15–66; 29.

9 Diner, "Im Zeichen des Banns," see note 8, 26–31.

10 Diner, "Im Zeichen des Banns," see note 8, 20. See also Anthony Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat. Eine deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (München, 2007).

Jewish collective on those Jews who decided to stay in the country. The latter group quite often developed a distorted self-understanding as "absent attendees."[11]

Small Jewish communities were re-established shortly after World War II, a 'Jewish void' was left that had to be filled with new cultural-political significance. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, this vacuum was to be filled with a new concept of 'Jewish cultural heritage.' This heritage was intended to serve the idea of a 'New Germany' as well as of a 'New Europe,' and it did not necessarily include Jews as agents. Since the late 1960s, German – not Jewish – society has been increasingly involved in the discovery and preservation of 'Jewish cultural heritage,' not only with the intention of distancing itself from its history, from the former Nazi dictatorship, but also to lay the foundation for the revival of Jewish life. The problematic aspects of the 'Jewish revival' in Germany have been discussed in detail elsewhere.[12] It was, however, precisely in this context that a new German concept of Jewish cultural heritage took shape. 'Jewish heritage' in this sense no longer referred to the totality of all forms of expressions of Jewish life, of being Jewish and doing Jewish things; rather, the German term for Jewish cultural heritage, *Jüdisches Kulturerbe*, became a symbolic construction of Jews and Judaism reconfigured as a political tool for fighting anti-Semitism, promoting cultural diversity and Christian/German-Jewish dialogue, and for preserving fundamental new European values such as democracy and tolerance.[13] Moreover, Jewish cultural heritage sites have since been exploited as items of general public interest, and thus, became an important economic resource for Jewish heritage tourism in Europe. The German idea of *Jüdisches Kulturerbe* thus refers primarily to a specific modus operandi adopted by experts in the fields of monument preservation, tourism, museums and politics etc. These experts limit their definition of 'doing heritage'[14] almost exclusively to tangible forms of Jewish cultural heritage of the past, ascribing contemporary and political values and meanings to it, and selectively reintroducing it as a resource for (non-Jewish) society, global heritage markets as well as the academic community.[15] The 'objects' of interest included under the umbrella of the German

11 Diner, "Im Zeichen des Banns," see note 8, 44 on.

12 See for example the book by Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish – Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2002); see also Miranda Crowdus, and Sarah M. Ross, "Applied Ethnomusicology and Jewish Music Studies: Negotiating 'Third Mission' Requests in Germany Today," in *Diggin' up Music: Musikethnologie als Baustelle*, ed. Michael Fuhr, Kerstin Klenke, and Julio Mendivil (Hildesheim, 2021), 120–144; 109.

13 For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see Sarah M. Ross, "'Jüdisches Kulturerbe' vis-à-vis 'Jewish Heritage': Einleitende Überlegungen zur Idee einer kulturellen Nachhaltigkeit in den Jüdischen Musikstudien," in *Jüdisches Kulturerbe MUSIK – Divergenzen und Zeitlichkeit. Überlegungen zu einer kulturellen Nachhaltigkeit aus Sicht der Jüdischen Musikstudien*, ed. Sarah M. Ross (Bern, 2021), 19–39; 20, 22–23.

14 See Keith Emerick, *Conserving and Managing Ancient Monuments. Heritage, Democracy, and Inclusion* (Woodbridge, 2014), 5.

15 Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London/New York, 2006), 44.

term *Jüdisches Kulturerbe* are abandoned and converted synagogues, municipal buildings of former Jewish communities, as well as ritual objects from the time before the Shoah etc. Intangible forms of Jewish heritage, such as music, ritual and knowledge, are mostly excluded from this discourse. Even within academic scholarship, new and relevant discourses in Critical Heritage Studies such as the integrative turn that understands tangible and intangible values of cultural property as interrelated, are hardly applied to studies on *Jüdisches Kulturerbe*.[16] In Critical Heritage Studies, there is no common concept of 'Jewish cultural heritage' (only an 'authorized heritage discourse'),[17] and as such as there is – owing to the historical situation in Germany and Europe since 1945 – not only one heir and stakeholder of Jewish heritage, but many different ones. These stakeholders include the Jewish communities themselves – on a national and international level – as well as the non-Jewish societies and their scholars, (Jewish) museums, non-academic history societies, monument conservationists and other actors in the field of heritage management, and last but not least, those involved in the German culture of Holocaust commemoration.

The constructed German product *Jüdisches Kulturerbe* is thus, for the most part, disconnected from actual Jewish life. In order to understand, how Jewishness is lived and negotiated in Germany today, it is, however, necessary to take a closer look at intangible, lived forms of Jewish heritage, such as Jewish liturgical music. Intangible cultural heritage refers to cultural expressions that are directly supported by human knowledge and skills. It is a cultural phenomenon of the present that is passed down from generation to generation, usually by oral transmission, and is constantly recreated and changed in the process.[18] A sustainable heritage process requires a sufficiently large group of stakeholders who are willing and able to accept and negotiate the heritage and pass it on to future generations – also in a modified form. Furthermore, this process requires a growing Jewish cultural and religious community that ensures the persistence of intangible Jewish heritage: thus, it is directly dependent on a stable Jewish self-understanding.[19] The latter is, however, one of the most contested and unstable aspects of contemporary Jewish life in Germany.

16 Fiorella Dallari, "The Heritage from Cultural Turn to Inclusive Turn. The Cultural and Sacred Landscape of the UNESCO List: A Sustainable Track to overcome the Dichotomy between Tangible and Intangible Heritage," *Proceedings of TCL 2016 Conference* (2016): 129–141; 129, 131.

17 Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, see note 15, 11.

18 UNESCO, "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?" https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003. Accessed October 13, 2021.

19 See Huib Schippers, "Sound Futures: Exploring the Ecology of Music Sustainability," in *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures. An Ecological Perspective*, ed. Huib Schippers, and Catherine Grant (New York, 2016), 1–17; 3, 12–13.

Being Jewish in Germany

Being Jewish and expressing one's individual Jewishness in Germany in the twenty-first century is still fraught with challenges. The "Biller-Czollek debate" is the most current example for an interpretation *ex cathedra* of how Jewish one has to be in order to be counted as a legitimate Jew in Germany, and most importantly, in order to carry the "moral message" of Jews in the country.[20] Essayist and lyricist Max Czollek (born in East Berlin in 1987) is one of the most popular publicists in Germany today. Some would say that he gained his popularity because of his "brilliant analyses of the Jewish condition in Germany" that were "reviewed far beyond the German-speaking world, even in the *New York Times*."[21] Others argue that his bold Jewish identity marketing made him famous: "[T]here is hardly a tweet, hardly a text, in which the publicist, [...] does not mention his alleged Jewishness."[22] In a column in the weekly magazine *Die Zeit*,[23] Jewish writer and columnist Maxim Biller spoke out on what many suspected but only few knew for sure: according to the *halacha* (Jewish law) of many denominations of contemporary Judaism, Czollek is not Jewish as he has only one Jewish grandfather. So what? As sociologist Y. Michal Bodemann states in his response to the debate, outside Germany, in any other country that is home to a Jewish diaspora, a public debate of this kind would be inconceivable, because Germany is the only country in the Western hemisphere where Judaism holds such a politically charged position.[24] Particularly in Germany, but also in other countries such as Poland, Jews are required to conduct "ideological labor" as Bodemann calls it elsewhere. By this, he refers to Jews in (West) Germany as an ethnic group that performs a specific ideological function within larger society, namely the reclamation of Jewish identity and culture in post-Shoah Germany:[25] Already "in 1949, US High Commissioner John McCloy addressed the reestablished Jewish communities in

20 For the debate, see Jacques Schuster, "Von der deutschen Sehnsucht, Jude zu sein," *Die Welt* (September 6, 2021), https://www.welt.de/kultur/article233489632/Falsche-Identitaeten-Von-der-deutschen-Sehnsucht-Jude-zu-sein.html#Comments. Accessed August 7, 2021. With regard to the dimensions of the dynamic interplay between being and doing Jewish in Germany, and individually lived out ideas about being Jewish outside of a formal Jewish community, see Dani Kranz, "Shades of Jewishness. The Creation and Maintenance of a Liberal Jewish Community in Post-Shoah Germany," PhD dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 2009.

21 Y. Michal Bodemann, "Die Causa Max Czollek: Wer ist hier eigentlich Jude? Und wer nicht?," *Berliner Zeitung Online* (September 2, 2021), https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/wochenende/die-causa-max-czollek-wer-ist-hier-eigentlich-jude-und-wer-nicht-li.179949?pid=true. Accessed October 13, 2021.

22 Schuster, "Von der deutschen Sehnsucht, Jude zu sein," see note 20.

23 Maxime Biller, "Der linke Intellektuelle Max Czollek und seine komplizierte Biografie," *Die Zeit* 33 (August 11, 2021).

24 Bodemann, "Die Causa Max Czollek: Wer ist hier eigentlich Jude? Und wer nicht?," see note 21.

25 Y. Michal Bodemann, "The State in the Construction of Ethnicity and Ideological Labor: The Case of German Jewry," *Critical Sociology* 17.3 (1990): 35–46.

Germany. He stressed that Germany's relation to the Jews would be a 'real touchstone' of the new democracy."[26]

Thus, for critics such as Biller, the problem is that Czollek does not fit with the local interpretation of the *halacha*. The problem is that Czollek – who was socialized in a Jewish environment and thus feels close to Judaism – legitimizes his public activities by means of his affiliation with the Jewish community that upholds the *halacha* as the decisive boundary of a Jewish status, even though he is obviously not *halachically* Jewish. The problem is that there is more value attached to the performance of Jewishness in Germany than to being and doing Jewish, that one Jew denies the other the speaker position, and that "this debate is also fed by non-Jewish Germans, who obviously feel qualified to interpret the genealogies of Jews."[27] To put it differently: Actual lived traditional *halachic* observance is widely understood as the epitome of "doing Jewish" – orthopraxis – in contrast with prevalent (often non-Jewish) definitions of "legit" Jewishness. This debate gives the impression that Biller and others are using *halachic* stipulations as an excuse for discrediting the currency that Czollek gains through his affiliation with Judaism. For what purpose exactly is unclear: Perhaps to bolster their own currency as Jews, for the sake of policing legit Jewish identity, or to bring people forward who perform Jewish identity to boost their careers. Notwithstanding, the question of who is a Jew, or what is Jewish heritage, is of central importance in Germany. It is subject to a constant competition of self-attribution and attribution by others, as is the case in the broad field of Jewish musical heritage discussed in the following.

This debate, which expresses to some degree also Jewish "in-group" biases, is not new. Again, it was Alphons Silbermann who already addressed in his article "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," published in 1960, that those Jews who survived the Holocaust in Germany or re-settled in Germany for different reasons were confronted by Jews from abroad with a range of antipathies. Overall, the Jews from abroad expressed a complete lack of understanding of the motivations of those who chose to re-settle in Europe, as they doubted that Jewish life could exist in Germany again.[28] The Jewish communities that have been reestablished shortly after the Shoah, consisted of a very diverse group of people. These groups ranged from native German Jews of a formerly assimilated, educated middle class to

26 Marion Kaplan, "Antisemitism in Postwar Germany," *New German Critique* 58 (Winter 1993): 97–108; 104.

27 Bodemann, "Die Causa Max Czollek: Wer ist hier eigentlich Jude? Und wer nicht?," see note 21.

28 In his day, Silbermann recognized quite concretely different resentments: Among others, a resentment against Germany and his Nazi-past in general, as well as a resentment against the Jews living in this country (while living in mental identification and social interaction with the major non-Jewish German society): See Alphons Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland: Bemerkungen zu Fragen der geistigen Wiedergutmachung," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 12 (1960): 204–223; 206 and 209.

Yiddish speaking Jews originating from rural parts of Eastern Europe. Silbermann continues and states that those who stayed in or (re-)migrated to Germany "as they are," could no longer refer to a long-established 'Jewish habitus,' such as English, American or Swiss Jews still do today. They must, for lack of a 'traditional habitus,' bear the brand of resentment of apostasy, when the doors of Israel had been opened in 1948. Thus, the culturally diverse group of Jews remaining in Germany presents "an accumulation of people of the same faith, randomly, aimlessly and in a state of bewilderment, thrown together from diverse individual groups."[29] According to Silbermann, the fate and future of those Jews who remained in Germany can be considered as unessential by the wider Jewish community itself: Meaning that any kind of investment in the well-being and future of their communities is understood as a wasted effort. Alternatively, it can be recognized that this community that was thrown together by destiny will dissolve its own inner conflicts and, most importantly, will overcome its cultural differences despite the diverse resentments and prejudices coming from outside. Otherwise, "in a not too far future, this community will find itself at best in the state of a permanent vegetation."[30] Looking on Jewish (communal) life in Germany today, in 2021, it is as if Silbermann is speaking to us at this very moment, as if he had just made his observations. His realization that negotiating cultural and religious practices and identities – Jewish heritages respectively – is the key to a sustainable Jewish community in Germany holds to date.[31]

Synagogue chant as intangible cultural heritage

Worldwide, Jewish communities are held together – ideally – by their shared sociocultural heritage such as language, customs or liturgical practice and its music.[32] Today, Jewish congregations in Germany are still a conglomeration of community members and leaders drawn from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds: Rabbis and cantors come from Israel, the UK, the USA, Switzerland or France, and the board is composed of members of the "old community," that is, of members with differing cultural backgrounds born and raised in Germany after 1945, while the majority of the

29 Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 208.

30 Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 218.

31 Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 210–215.

32 Here, we are basically talking about the basic definition of ethnicity: see Fredrik Barth, "Introduction" and "Pathan Identity and Its Maintenance," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Bergen, 1969), 9–38.

community itself consists largely of immigrants from the former Soviet Union arriving after 1989. The central question here is how group cohesion can come about under these conditions? The most obvious answer to this question is that the common bond of Judaism should hold a community together. In German Jewish synagogue communities today, this unifying bond, this stereotypical "after all, we are all Jews" as Silbermann calls it,[33] does not consist of a common social and cultural heritage, milieu, environment and upbringing, etc. This bond is to large extent made up of a "mythologizing falsification of history."[34] The latter suggests – among others – an internal and constant cultural and religious dynamic within Jewries that follows the laws of a centuries-old tradition.

The most prominent example for how the cultural dynamics of Jewish musical heritage are often coated with political interests that are informed by mythologizing notions of Jewish history is the contemporary performance practices of nineteenth-century Reform synagogue music. More precisely, this discourse is embedded in the performance practice of the synagogue compositions of Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894) or Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890), which are characterized by a combination of mixed choir, cantorial solo and the use of the organ. The contemporary idealization of nineteenth-century German Reform Judaism today, and thus the cultural promotion of its synagogue music inside and outside Jewish communities, is to a large extent driven by the German state despite the fact that the majority of Jews in Germany neither understand themselves as 'German Jews' nor do they align with Reform synagogues and the Liberal rite. The few that identify as 'native German Jews' have their "strongholds" in Orthodox-oriented Jewish communities, such as in Mannheim and Frankfurt am Main, or are not affiliated with any community at all.[35] According to historian and political scientist Julius Schoeps, "[the] German government is fond of the Reformers, because according to them, these are people one can talk to. The behavior of Orthodox rabbis serving in the state is perceived by the German public as problematic, because it contradicts the expectation that Jews behave as an integral part of Germany's Liberal society."[36]

33 Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 210.

34 Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 210–211.

35 Hannah Tzuberi, "Jewish Studies in Berlin: Two Different Schools and Their Missing Jews," *Mandolinaforpresident* (11 May, 2016): 1–7; 3, https://mandolinaforpresident.wordpress.com/2016/05/11/jewish-st. Accessed July 1, 2020.

36 Schoeps, quoted in Tzuberi, "Jewish Studies in Berlin," see note 35, 4.

Outside Jewish communities

This fondness for German Reform Judaism and its music is reflected in the way non-Jewish German society understands and uses Jewish intangible cultural heritage. Outside Jewish congregations, the preference for German Reform music can be explained by a widely held perception that *Jüdisches Kulturerbe* in Germany is 'something from the past,' and thus something fixed and unchanging, as well as by its aesthetic proximity to Christian church music and the art music of Romanticism. Thus, it is no coincidence, that this type of 'Jewish music' was just added to the German UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.[37] The entry in the UNESCO register was initiated, in 2019, by the Leipzig Synagogue Choir, which is a semi-professional concert choir with predominantly non-Jewish members and choir directors. It was the choir's belief that this music should be preserved "as it once existed" and as it is practiced today. The choir itself is not an integral part of a Jewish community and therefore does not share any original Jewish choir traditions. The choir's claim evidences the lopsided structure of German/Jewish relations, with Jews and manifestations of "legitimate" Jewish identity being constructed by non-Jewish Germans. In fact, the musical activities of the Leipzig choir can be interpreted as Holocaust commemoration. Rather than reflecting the musical practices of a living Jewish community, the choir's activities allow people to come to terms with the past, and bring non-Jews closer to Judaism. Since its foundation in 1962, the choir has been committed to the 'preservation' of European synagogue choral music, more precisely to the music of nineteenth-century Reform movement, such as the music of Louis Lewandowski. Accordingly, the common understanding of musical heritage as a dynamic and living tradition that is transmitted – *l'dor va'dor* ('from generation to generation') – by its own rules,[38] is obviously not relevant here.

Thus, the listing of Reform synagogue music in UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices demonstrates a rather un-reflected and romanticized understanding of Jewish heritage, of cultural continuity and discontinuity respectively. The argument used in this context is that the Shoah, the great break in the history and culture of European Jewry, led not only to the decline of Reform synagogue choral music in Germany but also to the destruction of the corresponding musical literature, which is why this music is hardly "performed" in synagogue services today. Another problem aligned with the decision to include this music in the register is the ignorance of the original and primary function of this music as ritual music of Jewish worship. Furthermore, the UNESCO application and decision for registration not only clearly comes from an outsider's perspective of Jewish liturgical music, it also ignores

37 See www.unesco.de/kultur-und-natur/immaterielles-kulturerbe/immaterielles-kulturerbe-deutschland/synagogale-chormusik. Accessed October 9, 2021.

38 Huib Schippers, and Catherine Grant, ed. *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures. An Ecological Perspective* (New York, 2016).

the fact that the synagogue music of Reform Judaism experienced many ruptures and turning points both before and after World War II.[39]

In contrast with the above-mentioned argument of "discontinuity" due to the Shoah, one could say that a certain continuity lies precisely in the continuation and further development of this music in Jewish communities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel and elsewhere. Here, cultural continuity emerges from the integration of the music into a living Judaism and its liturgical practice. The assumption that the performance of Jewish music of the past in musealized, mythologized and unchanging forms can be considered as successfully sustaining culture (as part of UNESCO'S mandate) is therefore an erroneous one. In addition, the ruptures and turning points in the history of the music of Reform Judaism were not only externally determined, but were as much a result of inner-Jewish debates and religious and cultural transformations. Thus, the choice not to resume the rite of Reform Judaism in the re-established Jewish communities in Germany right after 1945 was based on cultural and theological decisions, since a significant part of the post-war communities defined themselves as traditional or Orthodox.[40]

A counterexample to the efforts of the Leipzig choir and UNESCO to safeguard Reform Jewish synagogue music is the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in Berlin. The synagogue was inaugurated in 1912 as a place of worship for Orthodox Jews. At that time, the melodies of Louis Lewandowski were known as "Gemeindemelodien" (community melodies), and were widely used in Jewish communities throughout Germany, even beyond the realm of Reform services. In the early period of Pestalozzistrasse, when the community still identified itself as Orthodox, Lewandowski's liturgical melodies were thus sung by male choir only, and without the use of the organ. It was not until the 1930s that arrangements for mixed choir, cantor and organ entered the liturgy at Pestalozzistrasse: back than introduced by musicologist and choirmaster Arno Nadel. Despite the wide-ranging destruction of the Berlin Jewish community, after 1945, every effort was made to keep the city's tradition as one of the important centers of Ashkenazi culture alive. Thus, Sephardic cantor Estrongo Nachama, who served the community in Pestalozzistraße from 1947 until his death in 2000, familiarized himself with the German Reform tradition, in order to sustain this intangible heritage. Today, Pestalozzistraße is the only synagogue in the world whose rite still consists entirely of compositions by the important synagogue composer Lewandowski.[41] It is nowadays

39 A late draft of the application is in the possession of the author.

40 Sarah M. Ross, "Jüdisches musikalisches Kulturerbe im Kontext sozialer Zeitkonstitutionen," in *Jüdisches Kulturerbe MUSIK – Divergenzen und Zeitlichkeit. Überlegungen zu einer kulturellen Nachhaltigkeit aus Sicht der Jüdischen Musikstudien*, ed. Sarah M. Ross (Bern, 2021), 43–72; 58–62.

41 Nachama was born in Greece and raised in the Sephardic Jewish tradition. For him, preserving the Reform musical legacy of Berlin meant a considerable challenge, since he had to familiarize himself and empathize with the aesthetics of Jewish liturgical music that was a foreign sound to him. Personal interview with A.I. in Berlin, June 2021.

served by cantor and musical director Isodoro Abramowicz,[42] and is a well-known place of worship for Liberal Berlin Jews. On a regular basis, the weekly minyan consists of long-standing community members as well as of Jewish and non-Jewish visitors from all over the world, who are attracted by the performance of Lewandowski's music.[43]

In contrast to the example discussed above, in Pestalozzistrasse, it was and is the stakeholders (cantors and congregants) themselves who have taken on the musical heritage of the pre-war period, who preserve it and pass it on to future generations. Here, the music is an integral part of a living and dynamic Jewish life in Berlin, in other words of living Jewish heritage. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that they also benefit from the general interest of the broader (non-Jewish) public in the music of Reform Judaism and its public promotion. The opening of services to external visitors as well as the Lewandowski Festival held annually in the synagogue are examples of the extent to which the liturgical heritage of German Jews is marketed as European Jewish cultural heritage today.

Inside Jewish communities

In the communities of Mannheim and Frankfurt am Main, the tradition of Reform synagogue music was and still is a significant subject of negotiation regarding the communities' musical heritage, too. The communities of Mannheim and Frankfurt have shared similar demographic developments since 1945, which have a direct impact on the communities' synagogue rite and Jewish-liturgical music practices. Both the main synagogue in Mannheim as well as the Westend Synagogue in Frankfurt used to be known as places of German Reform Jewry, and thus for their local *minhag*. According to musicologist Philip Bohlman, the members of the Jewish community of Mannheim "had enjoyed a considerable degree of emancipation during the nineteenth century," and were thus open towards religious reforms occurring in the mid-nineteenth century: "The results of the reforms, quickly set in motion in 1854 by a new rabbi, Moses Präger (1817–1861), brought about pronounced changes in the musical activities of the

42 Isidoro Abramowicz was born in Buenos Aires, where his family attended a German synagogue. There, he was raised in the tradition of the Jewish Reform music of Salomon Sulzer and Louis Lewandowski. After his music studies in Buenos Aires, and later on in Germany, he took up his cantorial training at the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin. His first engagement as cantor was at the Great Synagogue of Stockholm. In 2017, he became the director of the cantorial training program at Abraham Geiger College, two years later, he was hired as the main cantor and musical director of the synagogue at Pestalozzistrasse in Berlin. Personal interview with I.A. in Berlin, June 2021.

43 Personal interview with I.A. in Berlin, June 2021.

Mannheim Jewish community,"[44] which were later on also spurred by famous reform composer Hugo Chaim Adler (1894–1955). Adler served the main synagogue in Mannheim as cantor from 1922 until his emigration to the United States in 1939. He was the primary force behind the religious musical activities generating a new, Reform-oriented Mannheimer *minhag* during a period of cultural renaissance.[45] Also the Jewish community of Frankfurt am Main used to be an important site of liturgical music: Frankfurt was known for its *hazzanut*, "which represented the archetype of the Western Ashkenazi tradition with roots in the 15th century"; it became an important center of the Reform movement in the nineteenth century and employed well-known cantors such as Fabian Ogutsch (1845–1922) or Selig Scheuermann (1873/74–1935).[46]

Between 1945 and 1989

In the post-war period, German-style Liberal Judaism neither found followers in Mannheim nor in Frankfurt. The newly-founded Jewish communities had a different membership composition, translating into a different religious character compared to the pre-Shoah communities. Between 1945 and 1952, throughout the phase of the *Sherit Hapletah* ("the remaining rest"),[47] the communities consisted of a minority of native German Jews and a majority of Eastern European survivors of the Shoah.[48] The latter had largely grown up in an Orthodox environment and wanted to hold on to this form of Judaism as a reminder of their families and the context of their lives before the destruction, even if they did not strictly observe the commandments of Orthodox Judaism beyond the confines of the synagogue.[49] The minority of the

44 Philip V. Bohlman, "The Resurgence of Jewish Musical life in an Urban German Community: Mannheim on the Eve of World War II," *Musica Judaica* 14 (1999): 107–126; 108, 121.

45 Bohlman, "The Resurgence of Jewish Musical life in an Urban German Community," see note 44, 121.

46 See Tina Frühauf, *Transcending Dystopia. Music, Mobility, and the Jewish Community in Germany, 1945–1989*, (New York, 2021), 51.

47 Bodemann, "The State in the Construction of Ethnicity and Ideological Labor," see note 25, 39–45.

48 The description 'native Germany Jews' refers to those who survived the Holocaust in the country, or returned from exile in the postwar period (mostly during the 1950s and 1960s) after a failed attempt to emigrate. The majority of Orthodox-oriented Eastern European Jews were mostly dropouts from the Displaced Persons camps located in the former American occupation zone (1945–1949). Personal interview with A.S. in Mannheim, December 2018 and June 2021; with R.A. in Mannheim, July 2019; with Y.R. in Frankfurt, November 2019 and June 2021, with F.A. in Frankfurt, November 2019; see also Jan Mühlstein, "The Return of Liberal Judaism to Germany," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 49.1 (Spring 2016): 44–48; 44.

49 Interview with F.A. and Y.R. in Frankfurt, November 2019, with R.A. in Mannheim, July 2019; see also Frühauf, *Transcending Dystopia*, see note 46, 52.

surviving German Jews found themselves in difficult negotiation position vis-a-vis the Eastern European majority concerning issues such as resuming the German Reform tradition of synagogue music of the pre-war period or turning towards an Orthodox, Eastern European rite. At that time, Eastern European *nusach* was deemed incompatible with German Jewish practices by the native German Jews. In Frankfurt, in the late 1940s, it was almost impossible to find a cantor, who was familiar with the Liberal order of worship, the repertoire of local *hazzanut*, willing to come to Germany.[50] In order to be able to function as a Jewish community, the 'Liberal group' had to rely on amateurs and visiting cantors. Eventually, they had to hire an Eastern European cantor. In this regard, musicologist Tina Frühauf states: "The wish for continuity, in spite of the absence of suitable synagogue musicians, reflects the need to preserve and to maintain prewar expressions of identity establishing a 'normality' in the midst of chaos by holding on to what seemed familiar."[51] Even though the 'Liberal group' later adjusted to Orthodox Eastern European rite, the hope for a cantor who would reconnect the community to its musical heritage, to the former *Frankfurter Minhag*, was pronounced, as evidenced by archival material including job advertisements, applications of cantors and internal community correspondences of the 1960s as well as later evidence.[52]

Both German-Jewish sociologists, Alphons Silbermann and Harry Maor, stated in the 1960s that one could not expect a group of miscellaneous Jews to return, almost overnight, to a "newly created" Jewish religious life. They had just laid the foundation for their new institutions, in which, whatever latent Judaism still existed, should be given the chance to survive and perhaps to develop. The lack of almost any common Jewish tradition, of rabbis and cantors, of books and spiritual sources, of teachers and mentors, eventually spurred ignorance in Jewish matters. This lack of educational and sustainability-related resources caused synagogue services and their music to turn into a syncretic mix of Jewish religious elements.[53] Thus, it was not before the phase of consolidation, between 1952 and 1989,[54] that the Eastern European Orthodox rite, including the Sephardic/modern Hebrew pronunciation of the Hebrew language, prevailed. As Silbermann further explains, at that time it was not a question of taste or of desirable or undesirable Orthodoxy,

50 There have been cantors who survived the Shoah in exile, and who knew the *Frankfurt Minhag*, but did not plan to live and work there. Such as cantor Kaufmann, who later served the Jewish community in Bern, Switzerland.

51 Frühauf, *Transcending Dystopia*, see note 46, 58.

52 See archival material at the Zentralarchiv zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland, B1/13 series, A 748 and 803.

53 See Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 214; Harry Maor, "Über den Wiederaufbau der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland seit 1945," PhD dissertation, University of Mainz, 1961, 11, 14.

54 Bodemann, "The State in the Construction of Ethnicity and Ideological Labor," see note 25, 39–45.

but of the adaptation of the rite and synagogue chant to social changes:[55] This adaptation did not reinforce a sense of religiosity among the community members, but led to a reinforcement of participation in synagogue services. The decision to turn away from pre-war German-Jewish tradition of synagogue music served to prevent an increasing distance from Judaism: People who needed the support of a faith seek it primarily in the social-spiritual milieu in which they live, as Silbermann concludes. By no means do they seek it in the "excesses of an inappropriate historicism; for historicism and tradition are neither the same thing nor do they have the same inner quality."[56] The latter becomes increasingly important the more we progress in time towards the present day, and take a look at how cantors serving Jewish communities in Germany today deal with the musical legacy of German Jewry in contemporary synagogue music practices.

Between 1990 and today

The years from 1989/1990 until today are called the phase of representation.[57] It is characterized by "reform efforts" and the return of Liberal Judaism to Germany, but also by a revival of *Minhag Ashkenaz*, the liturgical rite of Southwest and South Germany,[58]

55 In Mannheim, Italian-Israeli cantor Raffaele Polani served the congregation from 1985 to 2014. Throughout this period, the community faced some major demographic challenges, and had to deal with the lack of a common local Jewish history, a common Jewish self-understanding and of shared cultural values and musical practices. Polani contended with these challenges musically with the re-invention of the *Mannheimer Nusach*, which, in his view, is a musical tradition that emphasizes the cantor's voice and "the power of music," with less emphasis on the Hebrew liturgical text as is the case in the Orthodox rite. This change responded to the needs of the Russian-speaking Jews, the majority of whom came to Mannheim with little knowledge of Judaism and Jewish liturgy, and were not able to read and understand the Hebrew prayer texts. He thus replaced most of the Eastern European *nusach* the community used to sing between the 1950s and early 1980s, with a mixture of aesthetically pleasing synagogue songs and melodies that attracted people to come to the services and motivated them to sing along. From then on, the melodies of the Jewish Reform composer Louis Lewandowski dominated the services in Mannheim; however, these were sung without the use of choir and organ, since the congregation still considered itself Orthodox. For a more detailed discussion on the *Mannheim Nusach*, see Ross, "Jüdisches musikalisches Kulturerbe im Kontext sozialer Zeitkonstitutionen," see note 40, 54 on.

56 Silbermann, "Zur Sozial-Kulturellen Situation der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland," see note 28, 214–215.

57 Bodemann, "The State in the Construction of Ethnicity and Ideological Labor," note 25, 35–46; 45–46.

58 For a detailed discussion on *Minhag Ashkenaz* see, for example, Goeffry Goldberg, "Hazzan and Qahal: Responsive Chant in Minhag Ashkenaz," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 61 (1990): 203–217.

which is hardly practiced in synagogue services in Germany today.[59] In 1995, in some places earlier,[60] independent Liberal Jewish initiatives started in some German cities (such as Hanover, Munich, and Cologne, etc.) aiming the establishment of own egalitarian Jewish communities. They were, among others, supported by the World Union for Progressive Judaism.[61] According to Jan Mühlstein,

> [an] important contributing factor was most certainly the fall of the Iron Curtain, followed by the German reunification, which brought about significant changes in the public and personal life of Germans including its Jews. Many people were looking for a more open, egalitarian Jewish identity and community, which they were able to find in the newly founded Liberal communities.[62]

Further important factors spurring these efforts were, at least within communities located in the former American occupation zone (1945–1949), the withdrawal of the US Army, whose military rabbis used to lead non-Orthodox services that welcomed Jews from off-base,[63] but also increasing "intervention into Jewish affairs" by German politicians that were motivated by an "unattached concern for Jewish 'diversity,'" and by "their need for a particular *kind* of Jewish leadership," as Jewish Studies scholar Hannah Tzuberi states.[64]

With regard to synagogue music, and thus the promotion of the musical legacy of nineteenth-century German Reform Judaism, the founding of the Abraham Geiger College (AGC) as rabbinic seminary at the University of Potsdam,[65] which was extended by a cantorial program in 2008, plays an important role. The latter is the first cantorial school in Germany since the Shoah and aims to train male and female cantors for Jewish communities in Europe, mostly within the confines of the *Einheitsgemeinden*,

59 Particularly after the Shoah, German Jews established communities throughout the world, where they continued to practice their traditions, Minhag Ashkenaz respectively. Most of these communities were, however, not able to sustainably maintain neither their liturgical customs nor their particular German-Jewish identity. It is against this background that Machon Moreshes Ashkenaz, the Institute for German Jewish Heritage, was founded. The institute is dedicated to the research, preservation and transmission of *Minhag Ashkenaz*, its religious values, and customs, as well as the folklore of German Jewry as it once existed. For further information on the institute, see https://moreshesashkenaz.org/en/. Accessed October 11, 2021.

60 See, for example, the Liberal Jewish community of Cologne that was founded in 1982. See Kranz, Shades of *Jewishness*, see note 20.

61 In 1997, the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany was founded in Munich. At the same time, the later founder of the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin/Potsdam, Dr. Walter Homolka, was installed into the rabbinate. See Mühlstein, "The Return of Liberal Judaism to Germany," see note 48, 46.

62 Mühlstein, "The Return of Liberal Judaism to Germany," see note 48, 44–45.

63 Mühlstein, "The Return of Liberal Judaism to Germany," see note 48, 45.

64 Tzuberi, "Jewish Studies in Berlin," see note 35, 4.

65 In 2001, the Abraham-Geiger College joined the World Union for Progressive Judaism. See www.abraham-geiger-kolleg.de/personal-journey/practical-vocational-training/cantorial-track/. Accessed October 10, 2021.

which were founded in Germany after 1945.[66] The strong connection of the rabbinic seminary and cantorial school of the Abraham Geiger College to the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany resulted in increased political recognition of Liberal Judaism in Germany at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This affiliation also arguably privileges the College in relation to other (independent) Jewish organizations in terms of its "access to generous state funding available for Jewish communities" in the country.[67]

In personal interviews, several graduates of the cantorial program stated that the liturgical and thus musical training at AGC is meant to prepare the students to serve any Jewish community in Europe: that is also beyond the confines of Liberal/Reform communities. The focus of the training is, however, on German *nusach*, on *Minhag Ashkenaz* respectively, and on the German Reform rite and musical repertoire.[68] The AGC's decision to focus on this particular tradition of synagogue music is underpinned by the wish to salvage at least some of the displaced and nearly extinguished culture and tradition of German Jewry in Germany itself. On the other hand, this decision is supported by – supposedly an un-reflected – 'liturgical acculturation' of its board members, who have been raised or trained in that tradition abroad. Yet, after graduation most cantors experience a different reality in the Jewish communities they serve, in comparison to what they were taught at school, as cantor B.M. explains:

> Most of us [cantors] are trying to re-establish that [German] musical tradition in our congregations, at least partially. [...] [Partially,] because times have changed. So first, this tradition has been forgotten. And now, when we enter a congregation, we face a tradition that's been [practiced for] 70 years or so now, where everybody who officiated here at one time after 1945 also left his mark, musically speaking. I suppose it was either [...] cantors from America or people who were trained in America or by American mentors. There you recognize a lot of melodies that don't come from Germany and don't have roots here; and that's what the community knows. That's the *minhag* by now, that's the custom, that's what people like to hear. And nobody can come into a community like an elephant in a china store. Now, as of today, it's all different. You have to do it very carefully.[69]

66 *Einheitsgemeinde* is a term for Jewish communities in German-speaking countries. The designation goes back to the German legislation of the nineteenth century, which granted Jews only one Jewish community per locality and obliged Jews to belong to it. The *Einheitsgemeinde* was retained voluntarily, which led to the formation of so-called *Austrittsgemeinden* in localities with numerically significant Jewish populations and to the strengthening of the Liberal direction under the umbrella of the local *Einheitsgemeinde*. After the end of World War II, Jewish unified congregations in Germany were rebuilt, with many breaking away from the influence of Reform Judaism and instead looking to Eastern European models. See Eva-Maria Schrage, "Die Pluralität jüdischer Gemeinden in Deutschland heute," *Jüdische Religion in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden, 2021), 45–53.

67 Mühlstein, "The Return of Liberal Judaism to Germany," see note 48, 47.

68 Personal interview with B.M., November 2018; with B.T., December 2018, with B.J., June 2021.

69 Personal interview with B.M., November 2018.

As this cantor's personal experience shows, the political ideology of the Abraham Geiger College to recreate, revive and thus safeguard the musical heritage of prewar German Jewry is guided by the same ignorance towards and misunderstanding of Jewish heritage and its transmission processes, as the heritage initiative of the Leipzig synagogue choir discussed above. Also in this context, the performance of German Jewish musical heritage carries a higher value than actually being Jewish in Germany, and how it is expressed in Jewish liturgical music. Thus, another cantorial graduate of the Abraham Geiger College reported in our personal interview:

> At the AGC one does not see and get to know 'the natural Jewish life in Germany,' because one is always surrounded by 'professional Jews' only: like the professors, the cantors (mostly from abroad) but also some politicians. It is all not authentic, rather artificial. I never understood what the real goal of the AGC is, what it is all about. There were often public services, attended by influential non-Jews from the German political scene, which were organized by several students. The AGC wanted to present the students to the public. On such an occasion, I had once, very quickly, sung a prayer in the weekday *nusach*. It was more mumbled than sung. As a result, I was strongly criticized that for what I was doing was not a spiritual experience. [One of the rabbis] jumped to my side and defended me. He said that the way I recited the prayer was as in a normal *shaharit* [morning service], as one can experience in Israel on every corner. So, against this background, experiencing and learning to understand Jewish life in Germany is very difficult for AGC students, because it is mostly about good PR, public attention and the experience, not about the reality in the communities.[70]

Regarding a sustainable transmission and maintenance of Jewish intangible heritage, of synagogue chant, it is not only relevant that the congregants have a say with regard to decisions concerning the rite and choice of *nusach*, but that they also get the chance to take agency in transmission processes of their own Jewish heritage. The biographical background of the cantorial students at AGC plays an important role. According to my interview partners,[71] a large part of the AGC cantorial students come from abroad, mostly from Eastern European countries or from Israel. Their primary educational background is grounded in musical performance, usually vocal performance. Often, having been raised in secular, non-observant Jewish homes, they choose to enroll in the cantorial program as a fallback plan, if they find that they cannot survive economically as freelance artists: "My mother had no idea about Judaism [...], my family never attended synagogue services. [...] First, I had to learn that I am not allowed to operate the light switch in the synagogue on Shabbat."[72] Consequently, most of the cantors trained at AGC have not been embedded in any traditional religious Jewish community, but knew their familial traditions or non-traditions as corner stones of being Jews. Yet, they lack – "unlike their

70 Personal interview with B.T., December 2018.

71 Personal interview with B.M., November 2018; with H.M., December 2018; with B.T., December 2018, with I.A., June 2021.

72 Personal interview with B.T., December 2018.

assimilated predecessors in pre-war Germany" – "memories, knowledge and experience" of traditional liturgical Jewish musical practices.[73] What Michael Friedman writes about the young rabbis trained at and graduating from the AGC is equally true with regard to the cantors:

> They are rabbis [and cantors] without a rabbinic [or cantorial] tradition, they are not the sons or grandsons of other rabbis [or cantors], they are not carriers of knowledge accumulated over hundreds of years. They are smart, but they lack the wisdom of generations and the bitter taste of destruction. They are rabbis [and cantors] without an own experience of the Holocaust.[74]

In 2021, a personal experience of the Holocaust cannot be the *sine qua non* of any discourse about Jewish musical heritage, about the perception of the same in the present and its transmission to future generations. What is relevant, however, is the degree of first-hand experience of and knowledge about this intangible heritage tied in with a strong interrelatedness of Jewish heritage and Jewish self-understanding. Without this knowledge, it would not be the stakeholders themselves (neither cantor, rabbi nor congregants) but third parties, who decide what kind of synagogue chant (of intangible Jewish heritage) meets the socio-cultural needs of a community the best. It will be Jewish officials and outsiders who decide what kind of Jewish identity will be expressed through Jewish musical heritage, which brings us back to the beginning of this article. Some graduates of the cantorial program, due to this lack of knowledge and experience, easily jump on the bandwagon of AGC's mission to return Liberal Judaism and its musical heritage to Germany. These individuals eagerly study German *nusach* and the Reform repertoire by means of printed resources and archival materials. Other foreign-born and trained cantors, who serve communities in Germany today, have a different agenda with regard to the preservation of German-Jewish musical heritage.

In another Jewish community in South Western Germany, British cantor M.H. has served the community since 2017. He was born and raised in Liverpool and Manchester, UK. His grandfather and uncle were *hazzanim* in Liverpool. As a young child, M.H. sung in the synagogue choir of the Princes Road synagogue in Liverpool, where he was introduced to the Reform repertoire of Louis Lewandowski, Salomon Sulzer, German-born synagogue composer Julius Mombach (1813–1880) and to other "classical cantorial pieces."[75] In addition to his cantorial training within the communities and the synagogue services that he regularly attended as a child and young man, M.H. entered, at the age of 16, the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute, where he studied for six years. He came to Germany to continue his music studies at the local university of music. He had the aim of becoming the city's new cantor.[76] The history of this Jewish community is complex,

73 Tzuberi, "Jewish Studies in Berlin," see note 35, 4.

74 Friedman quoted by Tzuberi, "Jewish Studies in Berlin," see note 35, 4.

75 Personal interview with M.H., July 2021.

76 Personal interview with M.H., July 2021.

and is, until World War II, characterized by numerous discussions and negations about synagogue rite between Orthodox- and Reform-oriented Jews. In any case, the greater Jewish community in Southwest Germany was familiar with both the German Reform tradition as well as with traditional *nusach* practiced according to *Minhag Ashkenaz*. Both liturgical practices have been largely displaced with the Shoah, and replaced with post-Shoah praxes. They did survive abroad as living traditions in Liverpool and Manchester, where M.H. was raised and educated. M.H. identifies with the Germany tradition of synagogue prayer and chant due to his liturgical biography. This is different to the congregants in the community he serves today, who – for the most part – immigrated from the former Soviet Union. M.H. recognizes the difficulties most of his community members encounter on a daily basis, such as acquiring sufficient liturgical knowledge, recognizing the melodies of the different prayers and different praxes of holidays and, above all, identifying with a particular *minhag*, that is, in his mind, the German *minhag*. He describes the culture in his community as "a very non-Jewish culture," which is different to his own: "Mainly I get on with people, it is difficult. It's not easy, it's not easy because it's not my culture, you know, it is a different culture."[77]

Despite the cultural differences between cantor and congregation, and despite the fact that hardly any of the community members (cantor and rabbi included) have any German cultural background, M.H. is willing to reintroduce the German *nusach*, which he relates to as his *nusach*, and as the *nusach* belonging to Germany. He takes this approach regardless of the fact that the community had been cultivating its own – albeit, in his opinion, idiosyncratic – post-war tradition for quite some time: "I wanted to sing it [the German *nusach*], and I sang it for about six months and people, they complained about it. They said it sounded like a church."[78] According to M.H., a cantor has the responsibility to continue the tradition of his predecessors, however far back that lineage may go, even if there are tensions between preserving a specific *nusach*, a specific Jewish heritage, and the task of leading a congregation in prayer that does identify with this *nusach*. In his opinion, synagogue chant in this particular community has been greatly simplified since the 1990s, since the immigration of the Russian-speaking Jews. Much of the tradition has been lost in that time: "[M]uch of the *nusach*, the strict *nusach*, especially the German *nusach* has been lost in that time."[79] With regard to sustaining and transmitting liturgical musical heritage in Jewish communities in Germany today, the main problem is – as this example shows – that foreign acculturated and trained cantors, such as M.H., often feel obliged to come to Germany, in order to rescue, revive and transmit German Jewish intangible heritage in the name of the local stakeholders. Due to his liturgical biography, M.H. is more committed to reviving and safeguarding this tradition in his German community than to being more responsive to

77 Personal interview with M.H., July 2021.
78 Personal interview with M.H., July 2021.
79 Personal interview with M.H., July 2021.

the needs of his congregation. The question of whether the community wants to or is able to hold on to this heritage is rarely asked. The impact of the reconstruction and preservation of this Jewish musical heritage on present and future local Jewish life in Germany is so far not considered either.[80]

In the above-mentioned context of the return of Liberal Judaism to Germany, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, smaller *minyanim* were also founded, often within the structures of a *Einheitsgemeinde*. In contrast to bigger congregations, which either operate under the roof of the Central Council of Jews in Germany or the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, these small, independent egalitarian *minyanim* went through a self-determined process of Jewish self-discovery, which enabled them to decide for themselves what heritage they wanted to affirm, accept and combine with new elements of synagogue song. Since the rededication of Westend Synagogue in Frankfurt am Main in 1950, which was initially inaugurated (in 1910) as a Reform temple, the synagogue has functioned as a mainly Orthodox institution until the *Frankfurt Model* was installed in the late 1990s/early 2000s, meaning that different streams of Judaism are united under one roof. Today, the main sanctuary of Westend Synagogue is the home of an Orthodox community that follows *Minhag Polin*, and its services are led by the American cantor Yoni Rose, who adds some "American style of *hazzanut*" to the services.[81] The *Stibl*, the *Beit Ha-Midrash*, became the synagogue of the Chassidic *minyan*, while the former weekday synagogue is now home to the egalitarian *minyan*. The egalitarian *minyan* has its predecessors in a small circle of German Jews who returned from Israel and other countries to Germany throughout the 1960s, and who started to perform Liberal services in private rooms. However, this endeavor was soon discontinued, since Liberal Judaism in Frankfurt remained limited to a small number of people and did not gain any further followers among the community members of Westend Synagogue or beyond.

After the withdrawal of the US Army in the mid-1990s, a new group of younger Jews who had regularly attended Jewish services at the US Central Chapel re-established Jewish Liberal services in Frankfurt am Main. At first, these were held at different locations, too, until the former chairman of the Jewish community, Ignatz Bubis, invited them at the end of the 1990s to take their place in the community center, and later in the renovated weekday synagogue at Westend.[82] As "Egalitarian Minyan," this group has become an integral part of the Jewish community of Frankfurt, and is led today by Rabbi Elisa Klapheck and Cantor Daniel Kempin. Although one could say that the Liberal Jewish community in Frankfurt has returned to its roots, in terms of rite and musical *minhag* it has completely

80 Ross, "'Jüdisches Kulturerbe' vis-à-vis 'Jewish Heritage,'" see note 13, 20–21.

81 Personal interview with Y.R., November 2019.

82 Personal online group interview with D.K., J.K and L. F.-R., November 2020.

broken with the musical heritage of the prewar *Frankfurter Minhag*.[83] Both Rabbi Klapheck and Cantor Kempin were formally trained in the American Jewish Renewal Movement (ALEPH). With regard to liturgical music, the Egalitarian Minyan practices Eastern European *nusach* (as Kempin learned from the leading *hazzan* Jack Kessler of ALEPH), Western Ashkenazi *ta'amei ha-mikra* (introduced by rabbi Klapheck) alongside with American style and newly composed melodies for psalms, *zmirot* and *piyyutim*. One reason behind this discontinuity with regard to German Reform rite and music is that the members of the egalitarian *minyan* do not understand themselves as the second or third generation of Holocaust survivors, but as the first generation of German post-war Jews. According to Kempin, this self-understanding – along with many more social, cultural and political aspects of the *minyan* – has to be expressed in synagogue music.[84]

Conclusion

The examples discussed in this chapter illustrate the contemporary societal use of Jewish Heritage, of *Jüdisches Kulturerbe*, in Germany today that largely follows the idea of "past presencing"[85] that is the re-production of the past in the present. Thus, with regard to the musical tradition of nineteenth-century Reform Judaism that dominates discourses on Jewish intangible heritage within and outside Jewish communities, it becomes obvious that the main motivation behind these heritage efforts are not really a matter of continuing that specific German-Jewish musical heritage in its original context and function as ritual music. Rather, it reveals a process of "defrosting" an imagined essence of a Jewish cultural phenomenon of the past, in order to construct a virtual sense of cultural continuity for a moment, and in doing so, to serve socio-political aspirations in Germany. If the synagogue music of German-Jewish Reform Judaism (that has been widely published and distributed) had really been destroyed, as it is widely suggested and believed, it could not be reconstructed today and preserved for the future. Rather, the Leipzig Synagogue Choir and its heritage initiative, the agenda of the Abraham Geiger College cantorial program as well as the strategy of foreign cantors serving in Germany today, reveal the manifestation of a relatively new cultural phenomenon: a secular concert-life as well as a platform of Jewish professionals that elevate the liturgical music of German Reform Judaism, as well as *Minhag Ashkenaz*, as a new trade mark through

83 Participant observation of author at a Shabbat service of the egalitarian *minyan* in Frankfurt am Main in March 2019.

84 Personal online group interview with D.K., J.K and L. F.-R., November 2020.

85 Sharon Macdonald, *Sharon, Memorylands. Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London/New York, 2013), 12–13, 189, 214.

which people seek to increase public and political attention – hence also the desire to be supported by the UNESCO label. The decision by the German UNESCO committee to put this music on the list is perhaps a symbolic one that easily transmits the idea of successful German-Jewish cultural synthesis.

The ways in which Jews and non-Jews deal with the musical heritage of German Jewry points to ways how Jewish cultural heritage is interconnected with varying visions of the future: The AGC's and the Leipzig choir's view on their present future is full of expectations that are shaped by their idea of the future of synagogue music in Germany. This perspective on Jewish heritage inevitably obscures the view of the future present of Jewish communities in Germany: their actually occurring future reality, in which Jewish liturgical music will continue to play an essential role. As long as initiatives for the preservation of Jewish musical heritage in Germany do not take into account the difference between the conceptualizations of Jewish cultural heritage and the different forms of agency associated therewith, they will remain largely unsuccessful and backward-looking in their attempts to preserve cultural heritage in its lived sense. All along, this begs the uneasy question what living cultural heritage means in the German context. Does it need to be the pre-Shoah German Jewish *nusach*, and if so, in which form? Or can it be an Eastern European, or a Persian, or a post-Soviet *nusach*, or another variant of intangible heritages brought by post-Shoah Jewish immigrant groups to their new German home following the destruction of Jewish life in Germany?