

Zofia Lissa, Wartime Trauma, and the Evolution of the Polish “Mass Song”

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In March 1945, a few short months after Warsaw had been liberated from German rule, the Polish musicologist Zofia Lissa (1908–80) peered out the window of a Soviet transfer plane that was ferrying her to the Polish capital. At the time, she was stationed at the Polish Embassy in Moscow, a position that connected her to the upper echelons of Poland’s communist rulers. Her trip back to Poland was to advance this diplomatic work through meetings with Polish officials, composers, and performers. She had not been in Warsaw for at least five years, and as she looked down on the city from above, it was unrecognizable. The remnants of its gutted buildings—destroyed in the Warsaw Uprising the previous fall—looked to her like “empty, burnt-out boxes grouped together into some kind of gigantic honeycomb.”¹ Yet the immense destruction of World War II that greeted Lissa that March afternoon also presented her with the opportunity to help reconstruct her decimated country. “After the Second World War,

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¹ Zofia Lissa, “Trzy rozmowy z Woytowiczem,” *Kuźnica*, no. 3 (1949): 6–7.

I knew that my country needed my work,” Lissa later wrote to the American musicologist Donald J. Grout, and “that gave me wings.”²

For a few years following her 1945 visit, Lissa held a level of power within the Polish musical milieu largely unmatched by musicologists before or since. This article considers how the rupture of World War II, and the rebalancing of geopolitical power in its aftermath, gave Lissa such unprecedented agency to shape Poland’s musical culture. In turn, it asks how Lissa’s experiences during the war defined her understanding of what music could accomplish, both politically and socially. Long before she rose to power, Lissa had established herself as an ambitious thinker and activist. After completing her doctorate in musicology in 1929 at the age of twenty-one, she sought to widen the scope of the discipline, writing about topics as varied as music psychology, dodecaphony, and film sound. Meanwhile, her repulsion at racism—heightened by the discrimination she faced as a Polish Jew—led her toward nuanced studies of national identity. Across her life she returned several times to the study of modernism, especially to the music of Alban Berg and Alexander Scriabin, as well as to Marxism and political communism. These far-reaching interests, amplified by Lissa’s leadership of the Warsaw Musicology Institute after the war, built her international reputation and gave her a network of contacts stretching from Moscow and Berlin to Ithaca, New York (fig. 1).

Despite her wide-ranging accomplishments, Lissa has primarily been viewed by scholars an agent in the tightening of state control over Poland’s musical life during the height of the Stalinist period from 1948 into the early 1950s.³ For some, she was the Communist Party’s inside woman in the Union of Polish Composers; for others, she was a chief architect of socialist realist aesthetics and a faithful interpreter of state doctrines for the Polish musical press.⁴ “Hers was an uncomfortable presence,” wrote the composer Andrzej Panufnik in 1987, “and the Union [of

² Cornell University Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Donald Grout Papers, Box 7, Folder 3, Lissa to Grout, January 8, 1970. “Nach dem II. Weltkriege wusste ich, dass meine Arbeit dem Land nötig sei. Das gab mir die Flügel.”

³ An exception is Zbigniew Skowron, “On Zofia Lissa’s (1908–1980) Musical and Aesthetic Explorations,” *Musiology Today* 9 (2012): 132–53, which examines connections between her interwar and postwar thought, although it largely overlooks her wartime and early postwar experiences.

⁴ Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music since Szymanowski* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 47–48; David G. Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2013), 21–23; Cindy Bylander, “Clichés Revisited: Poland’s 1949 Łagów Composers’ Conference,” *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny* 13 (2015): 15–34; and Sławomir Wiczorek, *Na froncie muzyki: Socrealistyczny dyskurs o muzyce w Polsce w latach 1948–1955* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2014), 39–77.

FIGURE 1. Zofia Lissa in a rare picture from the World War II period (late 1942). Used by permission of the Archive of Polish Composers, University of Warsaw Library



Polish Composers] members could never drop their guard” around her.⁵ Other recollections reveal deeper ambivalence about her intellect, influence, and convictions. The composer Witold Lutosławski, for example, recalled that “she certainly was a real scholar” and that “no doubt it would be wrong to give her role in our culture a one-sided interpretation.” But, he insisted, “there’s no doubt, either, about her having played a really destructive role in Polish music in the middle of the century.”⁶

Counterbalancing this emphasis on the Stalinist years in isolation, this article examines Lissa’s politics and aesthetics within the longer context of her intellectual biography. The primary focus is the relation between Lissa’s life and her evolving views about popular song. Prior to World War II, Lissa had little scholarly interest in song and was drawn instead to more recondite aesthetic terrain. After she fled to Moscow to avoid anti-Jewish persecution during the war, however, she began devoting considerable energy to collecting, editing, and discussing songs. This

⁵ Andrzej Panufnik, *Composing Myself* (London: Methuen, 1987), 176. On Panufnik’s participation in Stalinist-era musical culture, see David Tompkins, “Composing for and with the Party: Andrzej Panufnik and Stalinist Poland,” *Polish Review* 54 (2009): 271–85.

⁶ Irina Nikolska, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski, 1987–92*, trans. Valeri Yerokbin (Stockholm: Melos, 1994), 43.

work intensified following the war's conclusion, when she became a—if not *the*—chief Polish exponent of the mass song, a mainstay of the socialist popular song repertoire. She advocated for the genre within the Polish Workers' Party, organized a press campaign to promote the mass song, led summits for librettists and composers to hash out the mass song's generic conventions, and oversaw the competitions that attempted to make the genre ubiquitous in the early years of the Polish People's Republic.⁷

Lissa's growing advocacy for song culture during her wartime displacement in the USSR provides a fresh perspective from which to examine the introduction of the mass song into Poland. This genre of accessible, ideologically attuned music did not make its way to Poland until after Lissa began promoting it in 1947, although the mass song had been commonplace in the USSR throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Prior scholarship on the Polish mass song has seen the genre as an early example of the socialist realist aesthetics that would become central to Polish musical discussions in 1949 and has focused on its role in disseminating communist ideology.⁸ Lissa's interest in the genre, however, predated the advent of Polish socialist realism, and she began promoting the mass song during a period of relative ideological flexibility in Poland, when left-wing intellectuals had wide latitude to act as "willing interpreters" of communism for a skeptical Polish population.⁹

Hearing the mass song not as the first blow of socialist realism to strike Polish music but rather as one stage in Lissa's own biographical and intellectual journey reveals the central, and hitherto unacknowledged, role that she believed the genre could play in mitigating wartime trauma. In the USSR, Lissa's firsthand experiences working with displaced Polish and Polish-Jewish populations led her to believe that singing could create social cohesion against experiences of rupture. She used these same ideas to promote the mass song among Polish audiences after the war, arguing that if the genre could acknowledge listeners' traumatic experiences, it would find genuine popularity.

⁷ For overviews of Lissa's work on the mass song, see Zygmunt Mycielski, "O drugim zjeździe poetów i kompozytorów," *Odrodzenie*, nos. 13–14 (1948): 10; and Witold Rudziński, "Zofia Lissa: Laureat Nagrody Związku Kompozytorów Polskich," *Muzyka*, nos. 1–2 (1952): 57–59.

⁸ David Tompkins, "Linked by Work and Song": Popular Music for the Masses in Early Cold War Poland," in *Das politische Lied in Ost- und Südosteuropa*, ed. Stefan Michael Newerkla, Fedor B. Poljakov, and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Vienna: LIT, 2011), 129–39; and Adrian Thomas, "Mobilising Our Man: Politics and Music in Poland during the Decade after the Second World War," in *Composition, Performance, Reception: Studies in the Creative Process in Music*, ed. Wyndham Thomas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 145–68.

⁹ Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 17.

To be clear, Lissa did not believe that the mass song should embrace the aesthetics of fragmentation and discontinuity that would become a tenet of musical responses to mass violence among modernist composers in subsequent years.¹⁰ Instead, she believed that straightforward settings of texts reflective of her audience's most recent experiences of loss would engage a wide, "mass" audience and eventually lead them to support communist rule. The Polish mass song was thus, I argue, one vehicle through which wartime trauma was integrated into the project of postwar communist state-building. Put another way, such songs helped to construct what Jeffrey C. Alexander terms "cultural trauma," or a shared identity created from the basis of collective grievance.¹¹ Although Lissa's ambitions did not survive the subsequent Stalinist era fully intact, a similar fascination with song's ability to mediate past traumas continues to exert a durable grip on the Polish cultural imagination to this day.

Race and Racism in Lwów, 1929–41

The roots of Lissa's wartime and postwar work may be found in the conditions of the city of Lwów—an intellectually vibrant, multiethnic center of cultural life in interwar Poland where she was born and educated.¹² The mix of language and culture that characterized Lwów in this period led to vivacious theorizing about the nature of language and art, as Galin Tihanov has explored.¹³ Although Lissa received a positivist musicological education under the guidance of Adolf Chybiński, her scholarship parted from his focus on the music of the Renaissance and early Baroque to pursue topics of a contemporary bent. She described her "deepest" musical experiences as hearing Berg's *Wozzeck* and Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, compositions in which, she explained, "one's whole self resonates with that which flows toward us from the work."¹⁴ Such sympathies are also evinced through the painstaking musical

¹⁰ Amy Lynn Wlodarski, *Musical Witness and Holocaust Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹² During Lissa's lifetime, the city of Lwów (today L'viv, Ukraine) would be known by four names as its rulers changed: Lemberg (prior to 1918), Lwów (1918–39), L'vov (1939–41), Lemberg (1941–44), and finally L'viv. For clarity, I refer to the city by its Polish name, Lwów, throughout.

¹³ Galin Tihanov, "Why Did Modern Literary Theory Originate in Central and Eastern Europe? (And Why Is It Now Dead?)," *Common Knowledge* 10 (2004): 61–81.

¹⁴ Zofia Lissa, "Moje najgłębsze wzruszenie muzyczne," *Muzyka*, nos. 3–4 (1935): 76–77.

analyses in her 1929 dissertation, which argued that premonitions of twelve-tone technique could be discerned in Scriabin's harmonic language.¹⁵

During the 1930s Lissa's attention shifted toward sociological and philosophical topics.¹⁶ As she wove ideas from philosophy, psychology, and sociology into a theory of musical culture, she turned to unconventional topics such as the role of radio in contemporary life and the function of music in film.¹⁷ As the decade wore on, she worked as a courier and copyist for the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, beginning her turn toward political communism.¹⁸ Developing Marxist positions in her scholarship, she believed that the lower classes had to be educated to grasp the contemporary art music of their day, and she rejected intentionally simplistic Soviet works as a misguided condescension toward the people. Although she did not label this music as "socialist realist" nor mention the mass song directly, it is likely that she had socialist realism in mind, even if she was unfamiliar with the Soviet nomenclature.¹⁹

Lissa's views were, however, rarely debated by other musicians. This was in large part because she had been shut out of Poland's main musical journals by the mid-1930s for no other reason than that she was a Polish Jew. Although Chybiński had advised her dissertation and acknowledged her talent, he also pressured journal editors to reject her work.²⁰ No mere personal gripe, he explained the broader motivations behind his actions: "I would be very happy if *Muzyka Polska* (*Polish Music*) united all the ethnically Polish writers on music, in the same way as under my strong pressure it expelled all jews²¹ and crypto-jews. Otherwise, we

¹⁵ Her findings were published as Zofia Lissa, "O harmonice Aleksandra Skrjabinina," *Kwartalnik Muzyczny* 8 (1930): 320–55; and Lissa, "Geschichtliche Vorform der Zwölfktontechnik," *Acta Musicologica* 7 (1935): 15–21.

¹⁶ Skowron, "On Zofia Lissa's (1908–1980) Musical and Aesthetic Explorations," 133–39.

¹⁷ Zofia Lissa, "Radjo we współczesnej kulturze muzycznej (Psychologiczne, artystyczne, społeczne i pedagogiczne problemy radja)," *Kwartalnik Muzyczny* 16 (1932): 643–59; and Lissa, *Muzyka i film: Studium z pogranicza ontologii, estetyki i psychologii muzyki filmowej* (Lwów: Księgarnia Lwowska, 1937).

¹⁸ Zofia Lissa, "Muzyka dla Karola," in *Książka dla Karola*, ed. Kazimierz Koźniewski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1984), 75–80; and Lissa, "Muzika v sovetkom L'vove," *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, no. 9 (1941): 91. See also the Russian-language certificate signed by Julia Bristiger on August 3, 1944, that is held in Lissa's papers in the Archiwum Kompozytorów Polskich, University of Warsaw Library (hereafter AKP), which explains that Lissa helped the leadership of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine.

¹⁹ Zofia Lissa, "Muzyka dla mas," *Sygnaty*, no. 17 (1936): 2; and Lissa, "U podstaw kultury muzycznej," *Przegląd Społeczny*, no. 9 (1937): 200–209.

²⁰ Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Music Division, PWM Deposit (hereafter BJ), S-10, Kazimierz Sikorski to Chybiński, January 17, 1936, and February 8, 1936.

²¹ Polish nouns for ethnic groups and nationalities are by rule capitalized whereas those of religious groups are not. In some nineteenth-century writing, the capitalization of *Żyd* (Jew) was used to reflect a distinction between Jewishness as a national identity (*Żyd*)

won't win in musical matters here."²² Chybiński's remarks reflect an exclusionary form of Polish ethnic nationalism that had gained steam during the first decades of the twentieth century and, by the mid-1930s, was increasingly condoned by the government. Pioneered by the radical right, ethnic nationalism held that the state (*państwo*) should serve the nation (*naród*), which was viewed as a culturally cohesive, homogenous community defined by Roman Catholicism and the Polish language. Jews, who constituted around a tenth of Poland's population at the time (and approximately a third of Lwów's), were seen as "parasites" who threatened the national community, even if they had assimilated to Polish culture and converted to Catholicism.²³

The threat of Jewish infiltration into the academic musicological press seemed more severe to those journal editors who viewed their work as a national enterprise. The journal *Muzyka Polska* had decided to include "Polish" in its name to differentiate itself from *Muzyka* (*Music*), a journal that was more popular in flavor and run by Mateusz Gliński, an assimilated Jew. The editors of *Muzyka Polska* believed that *Muzyka* had a "cosmopolitan character," and they distrusted Gliński, who, albeit "skillfully leading his 'business'," was not "selflessly devoted to matters of Polish music."²⁴ As *Muzyka Polska* began "slowly cleansing itself of foreign and unnecessary elements," even the straightforward chronicle of musical events excluded "names that are to us foreign and hostile," an allusion to the removal of Jewish names.²⁵ Chybiński likewise worried that "jews and jew-like people [*żydoidy*] are beginning to lounge around the *Kwartalnik Muzyczny* (*Musical Quarterly*) and are pushing through the doors and windows."²⁶ *Rocznik Muzykologiczny* (*Musicological Yearbook*), the successor to *Kwartalnik Muzyczny*, had its funding tied to its being racially pure, or "Rassenrein," as one of its contributors described.²⁷ With the

and a religious one (*żyd*). By the mid-twentieth century, however, the lowercase use of *żyd* is best understood as an antisemitic practice.

²² Biblioteka Uniwersytecka Adam Mickiewicza, Music Division (Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań; hereafter BUAM), 805 III, 154, Chybiński to Ludwik Bronarski, January 14, 1937. "Ucieszyłbym się bardzo, gdyby MP. zjednoczyła wszystkich rdzennie polskich pisarzy muzycznych, tak jak wykluczyła pod moim silnym naciskiem wszystkich żydów i kryptożydów. Inaczej nie wygramy sprawy muzycznej u nas."

²³ Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 51–56; and Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 98–103.

²⁴ Teodor Zalewski, *Pół wieku wśród muzyków* (Cracow: PWM, 1977), 149, 183.

²⁵ BJ, R-19/1-65, Bronisław Rutkowski to Chybiński, December 15, 1936. "'MP' powoli oczyszcza się z obcych i niepotrzebnych nam elementów. . . . nawet Kronika 'MP' nie notuje nazwisk nam obcych i wrogich."

²⁶ Cited in Małgorzata Sieradz, "*Kwartalnik Muzyczny*" (1928–1950) a początki muzykologii polskiej (Warsaw: PAN, 2015), 377.

²⁷ BJ, P-28/1-210, Julian Pulikowski to Chybiński, September 5, 1935.

country's main musicological publications thus closed to Lissa by the mid-1930s, she increasingly turned to journals outside the discipline.²⁸

Lissa's encounter with antisemitism in Poland's musicological establishment was one of many incidents in which Jewishness influenced her opportunities and outlooks. She described herself as from a family that was "Polish of the faith of Moses," a label that was often used by assimilated Jews to highlight their membership in the Polish state.²⁹ She also took part in Lwów's Jewish-identified cultural life, publishing on the long history of contributions by Jewish musicians to Western music in a Zionist paper and serving in the administration of Lwów's Jewish Literary-Artistic Society.³⁰ The precarious status of Jews within discussions of Polish nationhood was, more trenchantly, her point of departure for theorizing nationalism in music in 1937:

The homogeneity of a national style has its source therefore not so much in anthropological homogeneity as in the uniformity of the cultural environment. The pressure of this environment is able to assimilate—to bend to its fundamental axis—artists who are biologically and thus mentally foreign to this culture. The best proof of this phenomenon is the compositions of Jewish musicians who live in varied national environments yet mostly compose in the spirit of the nation in which they live. When listening to the music of Ravel, will anyone today doubt his "Frenchness"? [*sic*] Or will anyone see in Mendelssohn—whose monument in Leipzig was recently destroyed—anything other than the clean blood of a romantic? In Darius Milhaud's compositions, so full of fire and heat, can anyone discern the traces of his Talmudic forbears? Jews compose everywhere today in the style of the environment in which they grew up and live, and this phenomenon is one more striking piece of evidence that precisely environment has more significance than race.³¹

Lissa's argument flips the ethnic nationalist view of the Jew as "parasite" on its head. Not only does Jewish assimilation pose no threat to the coherence of the national culture, she argues, but it proves that the dominant national culture is strong and vital. Such views became a hallmark of her thinking about national identity in the late 1930s; she

²⁸ See the (relatively complete) bibliography of Lissa's publications in Elżbieta Dziębowska, ed., *Studia musicologica, aesthetica, theoretica, historica* (Cracow: PWM, 1979), 11–36.

²⁹ AKP, Lissa Papers, "Życiorys": "polskie wyznanie—mojżeszowe."

³⁰ Zofia Lissa, "Rola Żydów w rozwoju muzyki europejskiej," *Chwila*, December 15, 1929, 10–11; Lissa, *Sprawozdanie jubileuszowe* (Lwów: Żydowskie Towarzystwo Artystyczno-Literackie we Lwowie, 1937), 3, 7, 15; and Lissa, "O koncertach szkolnych (z działalności Żyd. Tow. Art. Lit)," *Nasza Opinja*, December 25, 1938, 12.

³¹ Zofia Lissa, "Zagadnienie rasowe w muzyce," *Wiedza i Życie*, no. 10 (1937): 657–65, at 665.

repeatedly evoked the formative power of environment not only when discussing Jewish composers but also to elucidate Chopin's musical affinities for Polish culture over his "racial" ties to France.³²

These prewar conditions provided Lissa with a lens through which to view the Red Army's invasion of Lwów in September 1939. Communism now served as the ideology that justified seizing private property, dismantling civil society, and deporting hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens, who had been deemed potentially disloyal, into the Soviet steppe.³³ But in uprooting the city's staid institutions and overturning its ethnic hierarchies, the occupation also created opportunities for those like Lissa who had earlier been marginalized.

Lissa saw how Soviet rule encouraged a robust public musical life with Lwów's performance venues and orchestras placed under state control. The frequency and scope of orchestral concerts, featuring repertoire mainstays from Beethoven to Debussy alongside works of Soviet composers, was portrayed by cultural critics writing for the official press as evidence that Soviet rule was an improvement over "capitalist" Poland.³⁴ In addition, the Soviet occupation allowed musicians to continue working, albeit toward Soviet directives. Lwów's new state conservatory, for example, employed the faculties from the city's private musical schools after these had been shut down, but it explicitly aimed "to restructure the mental state of students and teachers . . . into the Soviet way of thinking."³⁵ Rather than dynamiting the pillars of the city's pre-1939 musical life, Soviet rule rearranged them to support the weight of a hastily imposed political order.

In addition, Soviet rule upset the hierarchies that had long prioritized ethnic Poles in fields from civil service to university education. The state conservatory, for example, now mixed local Ukrainian administrators and Soviet officials who had been brought in from the east, part of a policy of

³² Zofia Lissa, "O stylach narodowych w muzyce," *Sygnaty*, no. 20 (1936): 6; Lissa, "Jakiej 'rasy' był Fryderyk Chopin?," *Chwila*, February 26, 1938, 10; and Lissa, "W sprawie 'rasy' Fryderyka Chopina," *Wiadomości Literackie*, no. 39 (1938): 7.

³³ Estimates place the number of deportees between 315,000 and well over one million. For a discussion of these discrepancies, see Katherine R. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 9–11; and Tarik Cyril Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 50, 66–67.

³⁴ J. Burski, "Z sali koncertowej i przed mikrofonem," *Czerwony Sztandar*, January 16, 1941; J. Burski, "Z sali koncertowej," *Czerwony Sztandar*, February 12, 1941; St[efania] Ł[obaczewska], "Z Filharmonii," *Czerwony Sztandar*, May 29, 1941; E. Eisner, "Koncerty radzieckich artystów," *Czerwony Sztandar*, December 8, 1939; and "Ognisko nowej kultury," *Czerwony Sztandar*, December 29, 1939.

³⁵ Quoted in Ulyana Hrab, *Muzykolohiia yak universytet'ka dystsyplyna: L'viv's'ka muzykolohichna shkola Adolfa Khybins'koho (1912–1941)* (L'viv: Ukrainian Catholic University, 2009), 80.

promoting ethnic Ukrainians as the region's titular minority.³⁶ Jews did not receive the same official recognition as Ukrainians in the city, but antisemitic barriers were nonetheless diminished, including those that had limited their access to higher education.³⁷ In the state conservatory, Jewish enrollment far outpaced the Jewish population of the city, with 53 percent of all conservatory students identifying as Jewish. Jews were the largest ethnic group in all but one of the conservatory's subdivisions, and in every division ethnic Poles were in the minority.³⁸ The conservatory's faculty, meanwhile, consisted of twenty-two Poles, twenty-three Jews, and thirty-two Ukrainians.³⁹

The Soviet overturning of anti-Jewish and anti-Ukrainian policies contributed to Lissa's enthusiasm for Soviet rule. In an article from 1940 that cheerfully reports on how state support had improved the city's artistic life, she added,

The chauvinist policies of the [prewar] Polish radio led to Ukrainian broadcasts for only an hour on Sunday (!). Of Jewish broadcasts, there can be no discussion. Numerous "Aryan paragraphs" and antisemitic policies shut access to the radio to both Ukrainian and Jewish composers and performers. Today, all of this has fortunately left forever.⁴⁰

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In this portrayal of interwar broadcasting policies, Lissa repeated complaints published by Jewish citizens of interwar Poland decrying institutional discrimination at the radio and the lack of airtime devoted to Jewish culture.⁴¹ But her comment also surely reflects the substantial improvement in her own position: Soviet rule had allowed her to leave behind her job in a minor private music school to join the city's conservatory. She was soon appointed dean of the history-theory-composition division, a position that promised her a greater level of power thanks to its role in reporting to the central conservatory council on the division's

³⁶ Hrab, *Muzykolohiya yak universytet'ska dysyplina*, 75–76; and Leshek Mazepa and Teresa Mazepa, *Shlyakh do muzychnoi akademii u L'vovi* (L'viv: Spolom, 2003), 1:10.

³⁷ Christoph Mick, *Lemberg, Lwów, L'viv, 1914–1947: Violence and Ethnicity in a Contested City* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2016), 267. In the 1930s, access for Jewish and Ukrainian students to university seats had been artificially limited. Prior to the Soviet occupation, nearly 77.8 percent of university students were Polish, 12.9 percent Jewish, and 6.7 percent Ukrainian. By April 1941, enrollments stood at 22.4 percent Polish, 44.2 percent Jewish, and 33.4 percent Ukrainian. It is impossible to provide a similar before-and-after evaluation for the conservatory, since it was created by combining a multitude of music schools, each with its own ethnic makeup.

³⁸ Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of Modern Records, Warsaw; hereafter AAN), State Higher Technical Courses and Schools in Lwów (Z.541, J.107, S.4), "Staats-konservatorium im Lemberg (Studentenstatistik)." These data are from 1941.

³⁹ Mazepa and Mazepa, *Shlyakh do muzychnoi akademii*, 2:37–39.

⁴⁰ Lissa, "Muzika v sovetskoi L'vove," 92–93.

⁴¹ See, for example, Juer Weiler, "Polityka Polskiego Radia wobec Żydów," *Nasza Opinia*, no. 75 (1937): 8.

activities.⁴² Her faith in the promise of equality for Jews and Ukrainians doubtless reflected the fact that she owed her professional upward mobility to Soviet rule. Ultimately, Lissa had little impetus to consider the negative aspects of Soviet occupation when the threat of German attack loomed large. “Weighed down by the news” of the persecution of Jews under the German occupation in central Poland, she asked an acquaintance: “When will the Soviets finally cross the Vistula” to liberate Warsaw?⁴³

Displacement to Central Asia and Holocaust Survival, 1941–42

Lissa’s anxieties about German encroachment soon became a reality: on June 22, 1941, Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, an invasion of the Soviet Union that would have immense consequences for the course of World War II and for the millions who lived in the path of the German advance. When German forces arrived in Lwów on June 30, 1941, they helped to unleash a pogrom in which thousands of Jews were killed by the city’s local population. By November the city’s surviving Jewish population was ordered into a ghetto located in the Zamarstynów neighborhood. By the end of 1942 around 80 percent of the Jews who had been in the city before the German invasion had been murdered, and by the end of 1943 nearly all of them were dead. The exact number of survivors from the city remains unknown. What is clear, however, is that this number was very small.⁴⁴

Lissa and her Jewish colleagues at the state conservatory were forced to hide or to flee. Józef Koffler, a noted dodecaphonic composer, fled to Wieliczka near Cracow and survived the liquidation of the ghetto there only to be murdered along with his family near Krosno.⁴⁵ Seweryn Barbag, a musicologist, was smuggled to Warsaw and hidden under a false name in a hospital for tuberculosis patients, where he died.⁴⁶ The piano professor Leopold Münzer was interned in the Janowska concentration camp, where he played in the camp orchestra before being murdered.⁴⁷

⁴² Derzhavnyy Arkhiv L'vivs'koï Oblasti (State Archive of the L'viv Oblast) R-2056, op. 1, s. 4, a. 1, “Protokol n.1” (January 23, 1941).

⁴³ Tadeusz Tomaszewski, *Lwów 1940–1944: Pejzaż psychologiczny* (Warsaw: WIP, 1996), 49.

⁴⁴ Amar, *Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 94–115.

⁴⁵ Maciej Gołab, *Józef Koffler: Compositional Style and Source Documents*, trans. Maksymilian Kapelański, Marek Żebrowski, and Linda Schubert (Los Angeles: Polish Music Center, 2004), 234–38.

⁴⁶ Zofia Lissa, “O Sewerynie Barbagu,” *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 20 (1964): 10–11.

⁴⁷ Philip Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich: w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, 2nd ed. (Munich: s.n., 1947), 37.

All told, of the twenty-three Jews who had been employed by the state conservatory as of April 1941, only three, including Lissa, survived the Holocaust.⁴⁸

Lissa survived by fleeing deeper into the Soviet Union. During the eight-day interval between the onset of the invasion and the arrival of German forces in Lwów, she joined an exodus of Soviet officials and their families who were heading east to stay ahead of the front. She left the city quickly, leaving behind a half-dozen manuscripts that she had been working on for years.⁴⁹ Her subsequent journey is documented by a handful of well-worn certificates and official requests, which show that her position as a dean in the conservatory and her membership within the Ukrainian Composers Union enabled her to secure passage, housing, and employment.⁵⁰ In all likelihood, Lissa owed her survival of the Holocaust to her official positions gained during the occupation and ultimately to the communist convictions that had helped her secure them. But what intellectual consequences did this course of survival, and her subsequent contact with the heart of the Soviet Union, have for her views concerning music's political uses?

Lissa traveled some three thousand miles east, leaving Kiev for Kharkiv, and then unsuccessfully searched for work in Baku before arriving in Uzbekistan.⁵¹ She spent the next seventeen months in a small village outside of Namangan on the Great Fergana Canal, where she taught the basics of Western music to Uzbek children.⁵² It was not uncommon for Poles to have been cast into central Asia during World War II; thousands had been deported there as alleged enemies of the Soviet state between 1939 and 1941. Typically, these exiles believed that they had left civilization behind when they were in central Asia, and they often portrayed local residents as part of a monolithic culture that had no commonalities with their own.⁵³ Lissa, by comparison, saw her displacement as an opportunity to refine her ideas about the sociology of music. "Wars cause the contact of different cultures," she wrote, alluding to her own displacement; they are like volcanoes that "erupt lava, destroying everything

⁴⁸ The other two were the pianist Jan Gorbaty, who immigrated to the United States in 1950, and Piotr Łoboz, who remained in Poland after WWII. I arrive at this conclusion on the basis of the faculty list supplied by Mazepa and Mazepa, *Shlyakh do muzychnoi akademii*, 2:37–39. Their count of twenty-three Jewish faculty members does not include several who had converted to Christianity but were Jewish according to Nazi racial categories.

⁴⁹ BUAM 803 III/3, 137, Lissa to Chybiński, December 11, 1946.

⁵⁰ AKP, Lissa Papers, Certificates of Employment.

⁵¹ AKP, Lissa Papers, Certificates of Employment.

⁵² Zofia Lissa, "Eroika naszych dni [1947]," in *Muzykologia na przelomie* (Cracow: PWM, 1952), 276.

⁵³ Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, 220–25, 243.

in their path and at the same time bringing fertilizer into the soil on which lush vegetation later grows.”⁵⁴

Lissa’s most thorough observations on her time in Uzbekistan are found in a thirty-one-page Russian-language typescript titled “Some Questions of Contemporary Uzbek Musical Culture.” In the essay Lissa first addresses how Uzbek composers can best synthesize folk materials with Western art music, suggesting that Bela Bartók and Karol Szymanowski are powerful models for this practice—a position at odds with the antimodernist climate of the Soviet musical establishment.⁵⁵ But the main thrust of the essay concerns the interaction between the Soviet westernization projects and the musicality of Uzbek children reared on native folk music. She believed that a project of sustained musical education from youth could exploit the flexibility of the developing mind to bring children to appreciate both Western and their native musical traditions.⁵⁶ Such observations show Lissa applying her older concern for cultural gaps to a new context: in Europe, musical differences were class-based due to a long history of capitalist inequality. In Uzbekistan, by comparison, cultural distance was instead an outcome of long-standing differences in tradition between local and imported Western music. Looking at cultural policy from the ground up, Lissa’s position in exile brought into focus a tantalizing prospect that Soviet power could remake even the more distant musical cultures it contacted.

The Politics of Song in Soviet Exile, 1943–45

Lissa’s rise as a musical-political figure was propelled by a drastic transformation in her wartime conditions: in late 1942 she was summoned from Uzbekistan to Moscow by Wanda Wasilewska, a Polish communist and former acquaintance from Lwów, who asked Lissa to oversee the musical activities of the Union of Polish Patriots (Związek Patriotów Polskich; hereafter the Union).⁵⁷ The Union was a seed organization whose aim was to build postwar Poland into a pro-Soviet state with the

⁵⁴ AKP, Lissa Papers, “Nekotorie voprosi sovremennoy uzbekskoy muzikalnoy kul’turi,” l. “voyni vživayut soprikosnovenie razlichnikh kul’tur... izvergaya lavu, unichtozhayet vse na svoem puti i v to zhe vremya vnosit udobrenie v pochvu, na kotoroy pozdneye virastayet pishnaya rastitel’nost’.”

⁵⁵ AKP, Lissa Papers, “Nekotorie voprosi sovremennoy uzbekskoy muzikalnoy kul’turi,” 11.

⁵⁶ AKP, Lissa Papers, “Nekotorie voprosi sovremennoy uzbekskoy muzikalnoy kul’turi,” 31.

⁵⁷ Zofia Lissa, “Muzyka polska w ZSRR w latach 1941–1945,” in *Polsko-rosyjskie miscellanea muzyczne* (Cracow: PWM, 1967), 443–53, at 446; AAN (Z. 130, J. 197, S. 138).

FIGURE 2. A musical ensemble under the auspices of the Union of Polish Patriots at a factory in Kutaisi, Georgia. Used by permission of Archiwum Akt Nowych



help of Polish communists in the USSR. It sought to consolidate an unruly and understandably distrustful Polish diaspora that numbered in the hundreds of thousands, creating in this manner the appearance that the Union, and by extension Soviet leadership, spoke on behalf of a genuine Polish population.⁵⁸ To do so, it deployed, among other techniques, a wide slate of cultural programs involving hundreds of different artistic groups comprising around six thousand performers.⁵⁹ The musical groups organized by the Union likewise spanned the wide geographic scope of the diaspora with operations across the Soviet republics (fig. 2).⁶⁰ By heading the Union's musical activities, Lissa left a position of minor political significance in Uzbekistan for one that aimed to shape Poland's political future.

Lissa faced numerous barriers in her new role as the Union's head of musical activities. Few Polish citizens in the USSR harbored any illusions about Soviet rule, since most of them had been deported from their

⁵⁸ Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power*, 18–20.

⁵⁹ L. L., "Praca kulturalno-oświatowa Związku Patriotów Polskich," *Wolna Polska*, nos. 21–22 (1946): 6.

⁶⁰ AAN, Union of Polish Patriots (Z.130, J.707, S.2), "Wykaz polskich placówek kult-oświatowych w ZSSR," and (Z.130, J.747) (collection of concert programs).

homes in Soviet-occupied eastern Poland in 1940 and 1941.⁶¹ An even more contentious issue for the leadership of the Union was how to define “Polishness,” the national ploy that bolstered the Union’s legitimacy: of its 233,806 members in exile from Polish territory, some 44 percent were ethnically Jewish.⁶²

Against this charged background, Lissa developed several strategies that enabled her musical-political work to take root. Some of her activities involved the “promotion of Polish music in the USSR” through events cloaked in nationalist rhetoric.⁶³ The concerts she organized displayed the Polish flag and began with the national anthem, and she gave countless lectures on Polish topics, including ones that tapped into the widespread equation of Chopin with the Polish national cause.⁶⁴ By joining the Union, Lissa gained a position from which she could both describe herself as Jewish and act as Poland’s musical spokeswoman, a reversal of her prewar exclusion from Poland’s musical institutions on nationalist grounds.⁶⁵ But her new role also revealed that Polish citizens, both Jewish and non-Jewish, wanted to hear about their own country and its accomplishments.

While concert organizing was one aspect of Lissa’s newfound position, a more far-reaching shift in her activities was prompted by her growing awareness of how popular song could function as a political tool. This change reflected, in part, her exposure to a broad-based wartime song culture in the USSR.⁶⁶ As Kiril Tomoff has shown, Soviet composers’ wartime mobilization, and especially their rush to compose new songs on wartime themes, helped further their professional status.⁶⁷ Lissa likely witnessed this process from a close vantage point when she was living in the Moscow house of the Union of Soviet Composers; here she spent long evenings with Soviet composers poring over Polish folk songs from the published collections of Oskar Kolberg,

⁶¹ Even after the Sikorski-Maiskii pact of July 30, 1941, granted freedom to Polish deportees, many were unable to leave the USSR. Jewish backgrounds prevented many from joining the Anders Army, the main vehicle by which Polish citizens exited the USSR. Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939–48* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 58.

⁶² Sword, *Deportation and Exile*, 132–39. Fifty-one percent were ethnically Polish and 5 percent were Ukrainian or Byelorussian.

⁶³ AAN, Ministry of Culture (Z.366/12, J.201, S.36–37), “Protokół, z posiedzeń I Konferencji w sprawie propagandy Sztuki i Nauki polskiej w ZSRR, 13–15 września 1945 r”: “propagowania polskiej muzyki w ZSRR.”

⁶⁴ “Koncert muzyki polskiej w Moskwie,” *Wolna Polska*, September 16, 1943, 4. Paweł Ettinger, “Wieczór szopenowski w Muzeum Kultury Muzycznej,” *Nowe Widnokreśli*, no. 22 (1944): 13.

⁶⁵ AAN, Union of Polish Patriots (Z.130, J.197, S.138), “Kwestjonariusz.”

⁶⁶ AKP, Lissa Papers, Scripts of broadcasts on Soviet music, December 4, 1952.

⁶⁷ Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 63–94.

a nineteenth-century folklorist.⁶⁸ But she also saw that song could play an important role for the large populations of Polish refugees in the USSR. One of her first assignments for the Union of Polish Patriots was to visit the Polish Army in the USSR to collect the songs sung by the soldiers and edit these into a publication titled *Songbook of the Polish Soldier*.⁶⁹ The Polish Army in the USSR (also known as the Kościuszko Division and, later, the First Division) encountered issues of ethnic and national identity similar to those encountered by the Union. Around 20 percent of the army's members and around 50 percent of its Polish-citizen officers were Jewish, as were the majority of the staff on the division's newspaper, the actors in its theatrical troupe, and its newsreel team; tensions between ethnically Polish and Jewish recruits were a constant worry for the army's leaders.⁷⁰

Singing was a staple of daily life in the Polish Army, but it was also one way to bridge the gap between communist officers and skeptical soldiers. The officer Marian Naszkowski encountered nothing but silence and a "wall of distrust" when he attempted to explain the army's mission to the new recruits. But after one verse of a military song led by a soldier, the "faces cheered up and the atmosphere of distrust and reserve broke," and "that night we sang through perhaps the entire repertoire of prewar soldier songs. From that day forward, the units marched to the mess hall singing."⁷¹ In addition to smoothing over political differences, the army's songs helped assuage the unease of a long exile. Song was a frequent and emotionally charged component of events by the army's theater company, which often culminated in collective singing. As the war correspondent Janina Broniewska described the company's debut,

few audience members at the premiere performance [of the Soldier's Theater] could keep their eyes dry. Bouquets of folk and soldiers' songs. This is something that may seem completely ordinary. But not for us. Not for us—for us people from Poland who have not heard these songs for a full four years.⁷²

⁶⁸ Zofia Lissa, "Polskie pieśni ludowe w sowieckim opracowaniu," *Nowe Widnokreghi*, nos. 11–12 (1944): 20. These encounters led to several settings of Polish songs by Soviet composers, including Michail Jordański and Zofia Lissa, *Dwie polskie ludowe pieśni dziecięce* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1945); and Włodzimierz Iwannikow and Zofia Lissa, *Pięć polskich pieśni ludowych* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1946).

⁶⁹ AKP, Lissa Papers, Certificates of Employment; and Zofia Lissa, *Śpiewnik żołnierza polskiego* (Moscow: Związek Patriotów Polskich w ZSRR, 1944).

⁷⁰ Klemens Nussbaum, "Jews in the Kościuszko Division and First Polish Army," in *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, ed. Antony Polonsky and Norman Davies (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), 183–212, at 192–96; and Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power*, 19–29.

⁷¹ Marian Naszkowski, *Lata próby* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1967), 291–92.

⁷² Janina Broniewska, "W dywizji," *Nowe Widnokreghi*, no. 14 (1943): 8–9.

Another critic described the apotheosis of a theatrical performance in which “all the actors sing. The entire audience sings. . . . In the first row, the commanding officer of the Polish military division, Colonel Berling, sings. And all of these people have tears in their eyes.”⁷³

Lissa’s *Songbook of the Polish Soldier* both preserved and capitalized on this robust and politically effective musical culture. Many of the songs that resurfaced in the collection date from the period of Polish statelessness following the partitions (1795–1918), when songs decrying tyranny and injustice helped preserve a sense of Polish nationhood. Anti-German songs from the Prussian partition zone proved particularly popular, since they aligned neatly with the army’s goal of dispelling the World War II-era German occupation of Poland. The song “Pieśń z nad Odry” (“Song from the Oder”), for example, is based on a poem by Maria Konopnicka that commemorated the school strike in Września against Germanization between 1901 and 1904. By comparison, however, Lissa treated partition-era songs with an anti-Russian bent more carefully. Problematic verses were removed from songs such as “Warszawianka 1831” (“Song of Warsaw, 1831”) and “Bartoszu, Bartoszu” (“O Bartosz, o Bartosz”). In addition, the book includes a dozen contrafacta in which a new text is given to a well-known tune. One of the most well-loved of these songs was “My, Pierwsza Dywizja” (“We, the First Division”), written for the army by the poet Leon Pasternak to the tune of “My, Pierwsza Brygada” (“We, the First Brigade”), a calling card of Józef Piłsudski’s Legions from the time of World War I (ex. 1 and ex. 2).⁷⁴ By portraying this panoply of patriotic songs as the oral culture of the army, the *Songbook of the Polish Soldier* suggested that the communist-led and Soviet-created army was continuing Poland’s earlier battles. For a diaspora that was shot through with political and interethnic conflict, the songbook provided an emblem of unification toward a communist future, underwritten by a century-old tradition of national struggle.

For Lissa, song-collecting was a major departure from her earlier, more theoretical work. In transcribing the army’s songs, she was in extended contact with its members and thus observed firsthand what the songs could accomplish. Indeed, the publication called attention to its “live” collection methods by asking in the preface for readers to send corrections or updates. She was attentive to the army’s performance practice and documented in footnotes instances where the soldiers combined verses from different songs into a new whole.⁷⁵ In her recollections she mentioned her direct contact with the soldiers, describing the *Songbook of*

⁷³ U., “Teatrzyk Żołnierza,” *Nowe Widnokreghi*, no. 13 (1943): 5.

⁷⁴ Leon Pasternak, *W marszu i na biwaku* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1958), 184–85.

⁷⁵ Lissa, *Śpiewnik żołnierza polskiego*, 45.

EXAMPLE 1. “We, the First Division” (“My, Pierwsza Dywizja”)
 Although Lissa documented both texts and tunes, only texts were published in the *Songbook of the Polish Soldier*. For contrafacta, she indicated the tune to which the new text was to be sung. Her later songbooks included printed music.

“My, Pierwsza Dywizja”	“We, the First Division”
Nad nami płynie Orzeł Biały, Biało-czerwony sztandar nasz. Na pole walki, pole chwały, Dywizjo nasza, naprzód marsz!	Above us flows the White Eagle, That red-and-white flag of ours. To the fields of glory and battle, Our division marches forward!
<i>Ref.:</i> My, Pierwsza Dywizja, Wolność i Ojczyzna. Baczność! Komendo dzwoń! Pobudka gra! Na ramię broń!	<i>Refrain:</i> We, the First Division, Freedom and Fatherland. Attention! The command rings! Reveille sounds! Shoulder arms!
Nad Polską wciąż się Niemiec znęca. Już dosyć przelał polskie krwi Do kraju pójdziem wygnać Niemca I pomstę na nim weźmiem—my!	The German still torments Poland. Enough Polish blood has already spilled. We’ll go back to defeat the German, And take vengeance on him too—we will!
<i>Refr.</i> My, Pierwsza Dywizja, itd.	<i>Refrain:</i> We, the First Division, etc.
Najkrótszą drogą do Warszawy, Dywizjo Pierwsza, prowadź nas! Narodzie wstań do walki krwawej, Rozprawy z wrogiem wybił czas.	Lead us, First Division, On the shortest route to Warsaw! Rise up, nation, for bloody struggle, It’s time to confront the enemy.
<i>Refr.</i> My, Pierwsza Dywizja, itd.	<i>Refrain:</i> We, the First Division, etc.
4. Nad krajem słońce znów zaświeci, Na szwabskie karki spadnie miecz. Już idą kościuszkowskie dzieci, By wygnać Niemców z Polski precz!	Over our country the sun will shine again, On the Krauts’ necks the sword will fall. Kościuszko’s children are on the march To drive away the Germans from Poland once and for all.
<i>Refr.</i> My, Pierwsza Dywizja, itd.	<i>Refrain:</i> We, the First Division, etc.

the Polish Soldier as “the flesh and bones of the soldiers from the Kościuszko Division!”⁷⁶ This carnal metaphor likely reflects the on-the-ground view she had of the army’s song culture, an intimate perspective from which to observe how song functioned as a lifeblood in trying circumstances.

⁷⁶ Lissa, “Muzyka polska w ZSRR,” 452.

EXAMPLE 2. "We, the First Brigade" ("My, Pierwsza Brygada"), the tune from Piłsudski's Legions to which Pasternak set "We, the First Division" ("My, Pierwsza Dywizja")

1. Le - gjo - ny to ża - ło - bna nu - ta, Le - gjo - ny to ska - zań - ców
 2. Nie trze - ba nam od was u - zna - nia, Ni wa - szych skarg ni wa - szych
 3. Krzy - cze - li że - śmy stu - ma - nie - ni, Nie wie - rząc nam że chceć to

głos Le - gjo - ny to żoł - nier - ska bu - ta Le - gjo - ny
 łez Prze - mi - nął już czas ko - ła - ta - nia Do wa - szych
 móżd Le - li - śmy krew o - sa - mo - tnie ni A z na - mi

to o - fiar - ny stos!
 serc prósb nad - szedł kres! 1.2.3. My pier - wsza bry - ga - da,
 był nasz dro - gi Wódz!

Strze - le - cka gro - ma - da Na stos rzu - ci - liś - my nasz ży - cia

los na stos na stos!
 1. Los na stos na stos!
 2. Los na stos na stos!

That Lissa had found a successful formula for musically eliding the tensions in the diaspora is further confirmed by the fact that over the next two years she returned again and again to similar song-collecting projects outside of the army. She collected hundreds of songs from Polish teachers and at orphanages for Polish children around Moscow.⁷⁷ Of the several resulting publications, her most wide-reaching project was her *Polish Songbook*, a volume of children's songs that had a print run of ten thousand copies. The scale spoke to the need for supplying thousands of Polish teachers and students with instructional materials.⁷⁸ Given the wide range of songs in the book, as well as the absence of any allusion on the volume's cover to its intended young audience, it is probable that its reach spanned beyond educational settings to the wider Polish diaspora.

Lissa received ample confirmation that song could connect displaced populations and give them a sense of a distant homeland in the correspondence that the Union of Polish Patriots' Moscow headquarters received from Polish communities across the USSR.⁷⁹ For example, a report from members of the Union who lived in Pavlodar described a performance of five Polish song and dance groups: "an oasis of Polish colors and sounds flowered in front of the audience's eyes on the boundless steppe of Kazakhstan. Audience members could . . . fill themselves with the melody of the Polish fields, woods, and rivers through songs. For a few hours, the listeners were transported to their native country."⁸⁰ Lissa's own accounts echoed the nostalgia common to such reports. "Everything that earlier seemed ordinary and well-known," she observed, "resounds today with a new freshness. How deeply do those well-known melodies—melodies that are intrinsically tied to memories of one's country, of one's family home, of those close to us—move us today."⁸¹

That Lissa recreated songs from the collective memories of Poles in the USSR suggests her awareness of song's staying power in group memory and her acknowledgment of its role as an educational tool. These

⁷⁷ Zofia Lissa in "1945: Wspomnienia muzyków," *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 10 (1975): 6.

⁷⁸ Zofia Lissa, *Śpiewnik polski*, a.k.a. *Śpiewnik dzieci polskich w ZSRR* (Moscow: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1944); Lissa, *Piosenki i gry dla polskich przedszkoli w ZSRR* (Moscow: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1945); and Roman Polny and Stanisław Skrzyszewski, *Szkolnictwo polskie w ZSRR, 1943–1947* (Warsaw: Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictwo Szkolnych, 1961), 17–25.

⁷⁹ AAN, Union of Polish Patriots (Z.130, J.751) (invitations to Union events and performances).

⁸⁰ AAN, Union of Polish Patriots (Z.130, J.715, S.120), "Zjazd Kulturalno Oświatowy Delegatów ZPP w Pawłodarze." "przed oczyma widzów wśród bezkresnych stępów Kazachstanu rozkwitała oaza polskich barw i dźwięków. Każdy miał możliwość . . . napawać się melodją polskich pól, borów i rzek w pieśniach. Na kilka godzin widzowie przenieśli się do kraju ojczystego."

⁸¹ Zofia Lissa, "Muzyka polska w sowieckim radjo," *Nowe Widnokregi*, April 1, 1944, 16.

were neither new nor original ideas; they stemmed from at least the time of Herder in western Europe and had been a subject of discussion in the Soviet Union since the late 1920s.⁸² But what Lissa does seem to have gained by working with the exile population is a concrete understanding of how such ideas worked in practice: song could smooth over interethnic strife and help advance her ideological cause among those who were otherwise skeptical.

The Mass Song and the Transfer of Wartime Music to Poland, 1945–50

When Lissa permanently returned to Poland from the USSR in spring 1947, just two years after her first postwar visit in 1945, she encountered both ruined cities and the specter of millions of lost lives. The vast majority of Polish Jews had been murdered in the Holocaust, and survivors often encountered disdain, if not outright violence, from their neighbors.⁸³ For all people living in Polish territories, the trauma of war was a fact of everyday life; they mourned lost loved ones and, in Warsaw, hung onto the ruins of the city. Although Lissa initially pursued several projects—including developing a Marxist methodology for musicology, securing her habilitation degree, and gaining greater influence for musicologists in the Union of Polish Composers—her most public and ambitious project focused on song. A few months after her return, while speaking at a June meeting of the Polish Workers' Party (as the Communist Party was named), she called for composers, poets, and cultural officials to create and promote the mass song, a genre with deep roots in the Soviet Union but that was new to Poland at this time.⁸⁴ The arrival of the mass song has often been seen by scholars as the first salvo in a socialist realist program to dictate musical aesthetics in Poland and thus connected with the 1948 antiformalism polemics.⁸⁵ The date of Lissa's mass-song campaign, beginning on June 12, 1947, however, troubles this interpretation.⁸⁶ Although communists began to consolidate political control in Poland with falsified legislative elections in January 1947, the tightening of cultural policy did not begin until November

⁸² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism*, trans. and ed. Philip Bohlman (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); and Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 95–124.

⁸³ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Upiorna dekada: Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów, 1939–1948* (Cracow: Universitas, 1998), 91–113.

⁸⁴ AAN, Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (295/XVII-19, 7), "Protokół" (June 12, 1947).

⁸⁵ See, for example, Tompkins, "Linked by Work and Song"; and Thomas, "Mobilising Our Man."

⁸⁶ AAN, Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (295/XVII-19, 7).

1947, and discussions of formalism in the musical press only began in August 1948, reaching their height in the early 1950s.⁸⁷ Lissa's introduction of the genre in the intellectual press preceded this turn to socialist realism by more than a year. The two conferences she helped organize for composers and lyricists (in 1947 [date unclear] and March 6–7, 1948) and the contest for mass songs held by the Polish Radio and Ministry of Culture in spring 1948 also predate the accepted chronology.⁸⁸

With this in mind, we should decouple Lissa's early views of the mass song from the advent of the antiformalist, socialist realist polemics of late 1948 and 1949. Indeed, Lissa did not pitch the mass song as a realist genre but rather in terms extrapolated from her older, dual-track theory of musical culture. "There stands before us," she wrote in 1948, "two types of listeners who strongly differ in their abilities: those prepared for contemporary music and those who are not." But Lissa now had a tentative solution for narrowing this gap: a "simple but artistic" music that would "not limit the listener to commune only with the music of past generations" but would eventually teach them to grasp contemporary compositions.⁸⁹ The mass song was one genre that could carry out this task; it was "a bridge between primitive and artistic music" that, thanks to an "up-to-date text, reaches the hearts of millions," as she explained at the meeting of the Polish Workers' Party Subcommittee on Music.⁹⁰ When the subcommittee launched a campaign to commission mass songs, it thus implemented a solution to a problem with which Lissa had grappled for more than a decade.⁹¹

Her primary early example of the mass-song genre pointed more strongly back toward the recent experiences of WWII than it did to socialist realist doctrines. In her first article on the genre, published in July 1947, she discussed at length Albert Harris's "Song of My Warsaw" (recorded with Eddie Rosner and the State Jazz Orchestra of

⁸⁷ Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line*, 25–26; and Barbara Fijałkowska, *Polityka i twórcy (1948–1959)* (Warsaw: PWN, 1985), 58–63.

⁸⁸ AAN, Z.366/1, J.754; Zofia Lissa, "Raz jeszcze o polską pieśń masową [1950]," *Muzykologia na przelomie* (Cracow: PWM, 1952), 204–22, at 205.

⁸⁹ Zofia Lissa, "Aspekt socjologiczny w polskiej muzyce współczesnej," *Kwartalnik Muzyczny* 6 (1948): 104–43, at 142.

⁹⁰ AAN, Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (295/XVII-19, 7). "Pieśni te stanowią pomost między prymitywem, a muzyką artystyczną. Tekst aktualny trafia do serc milionów."

⁹¹ AAN, Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (295/XVII-19, 47). The campaign included placing articles in popular and intellectual periodicals, contests for suitable texts, conferences on the topic, negotiations with the Polish Radio, and disbursing to composers a million złoty from the Presidium of the Council of Ministers to commission music for the masses, including songs. (For reference, this sum was greater than the entire fiscal-year 1946 budget for the Union of Polish Composers; see *Związek Kompozytorów Polskich*, 12/28, "Sprawozdanie finansowe, l.IX.45r do 30.VIII.46r.")

EXAMPLE 3. Albert Harris, "Song of My Warsaw," a.k.a. "Sången om Warszawa," a.k.a. "Piosenka o mojej Warszawie." Music and lyrics: Albert Harris © Gehrman's Musikförlag AB. Printed with permission

Tempo di Valse

1. Jak u - śmiech dzie - czy - ny ko - cha - nej, _____ Jak
 2. sza - wo, ko - cha - na War - sza - wo! _____ Tyś
 3. pra - gnął - bym kro - kiem bez - tro - skim _____ Prze -
 4. wiem, żeś ty dzi - siaj nie ta - ka, _____ Że

wio - sny bu - dzą - cej się wiew, _____ Jak świer - got jas - kó - tek nad
 tre - ścią mych ma - rzeń, mych snów, _____ Ra - do - snych prze - cho - dniów twych
 mie - rzyć prze - strze - ni twjej szmat: _____ Bez ce - lu się przejść Mar - szal -
 krwa - we prze - ży - wasz dziś dni, _____ Że roz - pacz, że ból cię przy -

ra - mem, _____ Mło - dzień - cze u - czu - cia nie - zna - ne, _____ Jak
 la - wą, _____ U - licz - nym roz - gwa - rem i wrza - wą _____ Ty
 kow - ska, _____ Na Wi - sę na - pa - trzeć się z mo - stu, _____ Dzie -
 gnia - ta, _____ Że mu - szę nad to - bą za - pta - kać, _____ Lecz

EXAMPLE 3. (Continued)

ro - sa bły - szczą - ca na tra - wie, Mi - ło - ści ro - dzą - cej się
 wo - łasz mnie, wo - łasz stęś - knio - na U - poj - nych pio - se - nek i
 wia - tka po - je - chać w A - le - je, Kra - kow - skim się wpleść w No - wy
 ta - ką, jak ży - jesz w pa - mię - ci Przy - wró - cę o - fia - rą swej

zew _____ Tak ser - ce ra - du - je pio - sen - ki tej śpiew, Pio -
 słów _____ Jak bar - dzo dziś pra - gnę zo - ba czyć cię znów, O
 Świat _____ I uj - rzec, jak daw - niej, za mło - dych mych lat, Jak
 krwi _____ I wierz mi, War - sza - wo, prócz piosn - ki i ły Jam

sen - ki o mo - jej War - sza - wie.
 mo - ja War - sza - wo, wy - śnio - na.
 do mnie, War - sza - wo, się śmie - jesz. *mormoranda*
 go - tów - ci ży - cie po - świę - ci!

the Byelorussian Republic), a sentimental waltz that seems closer to “commercial” music (which Lissa had long derided) than to a bridge between high and low art (see ex. 3 and ex. 4).⁹² But this example

⁹² Zofia Lissa, “O polską pieśń masową,” *Odrodzenie*, no. 29 (1947): 3. Rosner’s wartime biography resembles those of Harris and Lissa, all of whom were exiled to the USSR.

EXAMPLE 3. (Continued)

1. Pio - sen - ki o mo - jej War - sza - wie. 2. War -

3. O mo - ja War - sza - wo, wy - śnio - na. 3. Jak

3. Jak do mnie, War - sza - wo, się śmie - jesz. 4. Ja

4. Jam go - tów ci ży - cie po - świę - cić!

suggests how Lissa was seeking to transfer her wartime work with the Union of Polish Patriots to postwar foundations in Poland. In 1944 she had helped oversee the recording of the song with the Union, work that grew out of the success of her earlier songbooks for Polish exiles.⁹³

Harris was a Polish Jew who had enjoyed a prominent performance and recording career in interwar Poland. At the outset of World War II, he found himself in the USSR, much like Lissa, and later became something of a star among Poles in Moscow. For the Polish exile community in the USSR, “Song of My Warsaw” evoked nostalgic recollections of a now-lost homeland, qualities that quickly turned it into a hit even before its recording in 1944. Recalling the “din and racket” of prewar Warsaw, Harris implied that the exiled observer can conjure the true, if now lost city. At the end of the song the singer’s sentimentality is abruptly transformed into a pledge of action to fight on Warsaw’s behalf, all strophically set to the same lilting waltz. In its suggestion that nostalgic allusion to the homeland can unify the Polish diaspora and mobilize it for the fight to come, the song resonates with the firsthand accounts of song culture in the Union and Polish Army discussed above. “Song of My Warsaw” soon attained the “status of an anthem,” according to the critic Jakub Rozenblum (who wrote under the pen name Jan Rojewski), and turned Harris into a spiritual leader, or *wieszcz*, among Poles in the USSR. Indicative of the respect the song commanded, “disoriented foreigners had become accustomed to not dancing during its performances,”

See S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 194–203.

⁹³ Zofia Lissa, “Nagrywamy płyty polskie,” *Nowe Widnokregi*, no. 16 (1944): 16.

EXAMPLE 4. Albert Harris, "Song of my Warsaw," a/k/a SÅNGEN OM
 WARSZAWA a/k/a PIOSENKA O MOJEJ WARSZAWIE.
 Music and lyrics: Albert Harris © Gehrmans Musikförlag
 AB. Printed with permission.

Jak uśmiech dziewczyny kochanej,
 Jak wiosny budzącej się wiew,
 Jak świergot jaskółek nad ranem,
 Młodzieńcze uczucia nieznanne,
 Jak rosa błyszcząca na trawie,
 Miłości rodzącej się zew
 Tak serce raduje piosenki tej śpiew,
 Piosenki o mojej Warszawie.

Warszawo kochana, Warszawo!
 Tyś treścią mych marzeń, mych snów,
 Radosnych przechodniów twych lawą,
 Ulicznym rozgwarem i wrzawą
 Ty wołasz mnie, wołasz tęskniona
 Upojnych piosenek i słów
 Jak bardzo dziś pragnę zobaczyć cię znów,
 O moja Warszawo wyśniona.

Ja pragnąłbym krokiem beztroskim
 Przemierzyć przestrzeni twej szmat:
 Bez celu się przejść Marszałkowską,
 Na Wisłę napatrzeć się z mostu,
 Dziewiątką pojechać w Aleje,
 Krakowskim się wpleść w Nowy Świat
 I ujrzeć, jak dawniej, za młodych mych lat,
 Jak do mnie, Warszawo, się śmiejesz.

Ja wiem, żeś ty dzisiaj nie taka,
 Że krwawe przeżywasz dziś dni,
 Że rozpacz, że ból cię przygniata,
 Że muszę nad tobą zapłakać,
 Lecz taką, jak żyjesz w pamięci
 Przywróć ofiarą swej krwi
 I wierz mi, Warszawo, prócz piosenki i łzy
 Jam gotów ci życie poświęcić!

Like the smile of a darling girl,
 Like a gust of the awakening spring,
 Like the chirping of swallows at dawn,
 And unknown youthful emotions,
 Like shining dew on the grass,
 Or the call of love being born,
 So the heart rejoices at the singing of this song,
 This song of my Warsaw.

O Warsaw beloved, o Warsaw!
 You're the essence of my wishes and dreams,
 With happy pedestrians flowing like lava,
 And the din and racket of your streets,
 You call for me, you longingly call,
 With intoxicating songs and words,
 Oh how today I wish to see you again,
 Oh Warsaw of my dreams.

I wish with a carefree step,
 To measure the space of your expanse:
 To walk aimlessly along Marszałkowska Street,
 To gaze at the Vistula from a bridge,
 To take the number nine to Jerozolimskie Avenue,
 Then merge from Krakowskie Street to Nowy Świat,
 And to see, as before in my younger years,
 How, o Warsaw, you laughed to me.

I know that today you are not as you once were,
 That today you endure bloody days,
 That despair and pain are crushing you,
 That I must weep over you,
 But the way that you live in memory,
 I will restore by giving up my own blood,
 And believe me, o Warsaw, beyond songs and tears,
 For you I am ready to sacrifice my life!

Rozenblum reported, and "representatives of smaller states would rise and stand at attention in deep concentration"⁹⁴ (see fig. 3).

It is unclear whether Harris's and Rosner's Jewish background influenced Lissa's enthusiasm for "Song of My Warsaw." She never commented that a Polish Jew (Harris) had now been made a cultural leader of the

⁹⁴ Jan Rojewski, "Albert Harris: Bohater naszych czasów," *Kuźnica*, no. 40 (1946): 9.

FIGURE 3. A performance of “Song of My Warsaw” transfiguring a crowd in Moscow. Note the sheet music for the song in the lower right-hand corner and the “representative of a minor state”—shown here as Patagonia—standing in respect. Detail from Jan Rojewski [Jakub Rozenblum], “Albert Harris: Bohater naszych czasów,” *Kuźnica*, no. 40 (1946): 9



Polish nation, but the point was not lost on Rozenblum, who described Harris’s prewar songs as “so strong that they even knocked down racial barriers.”⁹⁵ Perhaps Harris’s national support among exiled Poles reinforced Lissa’s faith in the Soviet Union’s dubious promises of ethnic equality, a belief she held so deeply that a friend of hers later observed that she was “blind, deaf, and unable to smell” antisemitism during her

⁹⁵ Rojewski, “Albert Harris.”

years in Russia.⁹⁶ In any case, Lissa's main focus in her 1947 analysis was on the song's near-universal appeal to Poles scattered from Moscow to Warsaw—where “even today it is heard, modified and simplified by street performers, stubbornly resounding from all the cracks of Warsaw's ruins.”⁹⁷ Lissa's language calls to mind the aestheticization of ruins that was common during this period in Germany, yet she drew longer-term implications from the song's popularity.⁹⁸ “Song of My Warsaw” crystallized a historical moment and thereby provided a model that future mass songs could follow:

The history of [“Song of My Warsaw”] is a symbol of a fundamental issue—it brings to light . . . the need for good mass song, song that would move the hearts and minds of many and become an emotional and artistic expression of the widespread concerns and current matters of our life. Song, which would fulfill important educational functions for raw, musically ignorant listeners; song that would tie life to music and music to life.⁹⁹

By defining the mass song as a musical witness to current issues, Lissa sought common ground between her own views on song as a political-educational tool and the widespread desire within Poland to document wartime culture. Such an impulse was apparent in Poland's first postwar feature film, *Zakazane piosenki* (*Forbidden Songs*), which was based on authentic occupation-era songs and whose main protagonist was a song-collector.¹⁰⁰ Wartime songs also offered a symbolic vocabulary to composers. Bolesław Woytowicz, for example, included several of his own partisan songs in his Symphony No. 2 of 1945 (later referred to as the “Warsaw Symphony”). The Ministry of Culture supported efforts to preserve wartime songs, compiling lists of more than fifty underground songs and allowing their publication, despite the fact that many of them were tied to the anticommunist Home Army, the main armed resistance movement in occupied Poland.¹⁰¹ Through these efforts, song became a means of performing and preserving the war, and thereby of defining present-day identity through the pain of recent trauma.

⁹⁶ Zygmunt Mycielski, *Dziennik 1950–1959* (Warsaw: Iskry, 1999), 205 (entry of May 27, 1956).

⁹⁷ Lissa, “O polską pieśń masową.”

⁹⁸ Martha Sprigge, “Dresden's Musical Ruins,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144 (2019): 83–121.

⁹⁹ Lissa, “O polską pieśń masową.”

¹⁰⁰ Barbara Milewski, “Hidden in Plain View: The Music of Holocaust Survival in Poland's First Post-war Feature Film,” in *Music, Collective Memory, Trauma, and Nostalgia in European Cinema after the Second World War*, ed. Michael Baumgartner and Ewelina Boczkowska (New York: Routledge, 2020), 111–37.

¹⁰¹ AAN, Ministry of Culture and Art: Department of Music (Z.366/1, J.309, S.94–101), “Spis pieśni walki podziemnej” and correspondence concerning their publication.

In addition to linking the mass song to her work with exiles in the USSR, Lissa identified the wartime songs composed in German-occupied Poland as predecessors to the Polish mass song. "During the German occupation, our poets and composers," she wrote, "remembered that songs were weapons. . . . Today, songs of struggle are no longer needed, but rather we need songs about constructive work and about building."¹⁰² She likely had in mind the three-volume publication *Songs of the Underground Struggle*, composed by Lutosławski, Panufnik, and Jan Ekier. Although the publication did not explicitly identify them as mass songs, the unsigned preface to each volume described the songs as "the result of an interesting attempt, an attempt more or less successful, of eminent poets and composers to resolve in their work the complicated problem of so-called popular, functional song literature."¹⁰³ At least one critic, Roman Haubenstock, agreed with Lissa's equation of wartime resistance song with the mass song, writing of these volumes that *Songs of the Underground Struggle* are "the foundation for a new type of composition that has recently been widely discussed, compositions that are straightforward yet have unquestionable artistic value, compositions for the masses, songs for the masses."¹⁰⁴

These examples highlight the amorphous nature of the mass-song genre before the arrival of socialist realist aesthetics in Poland. In this period the genre encompassed a range of musical styles and political messages from the popular-style jazz of Harris to the resistance songs of the Home Army. The evidently broad definition that Lissa applied in her first writings on the mass song was a keen one, since it both gave native roots to her own views of a mass musical culture and downplayed the genre's less savory associations with the USSR. Not only was she drawing directly on her earlier wartime work, as suggested by her role in promoting and interpreting "Song of My Warsaw"; she was also replicating the strategy of conveying communist politics through the guise of national resistance, as her *Songbook of the Polish Soldier* had done earlier.

Lissa's decision to focus on song should be placed within the longer history of her mediation of Polish and Soviet political aims. This work began with the Union of Polish Patriots and continued in earnest after her position with the Union was officially transferred to the Polish Embassy in Moscow in 1945, where she was appointed a cultural

¹⁰² Lissa, "O polską pieśń masową."

¹⁰³ *Pieśni walki podziemnej*, vols. 1–3 (Cracow: PWM, 1948). The prefaces, identical in each volume, are dated 1947.

¹⁰⁴ Roman Haubenstock, "Pieśni: Walki Podziemnej," *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 3 (1948): 20.

attaché.¹⁰⁵ At the embassy, she organized exchanges of publications, visits from performers, and celebratory concerts with the aim of persuading Poles in Poland of Soviet goodwill.¹⁰⁶ She quickly saw how these standard tools of cultural diplomacy faltered when addressing Poles who lacked her leftist views and her experience of the USSR as a sanctuary from wartime persecution. Her attempts to organize a tour of concerts by musicians from Poland to the USSR in May and June 1946, for example, ran into trouble when the renowned soprano Ewa Bandrowska-Turska failed to show “tact,” according to a Soviet official who brought up her behavior at a meeting in the embassy: she did not want to attend Soviet operas, had not sung enough Russian repertoire, and had engaged in excessive, capitalistic consumption.¹⁰⁷ When confronted by Lissa about her behavior, Bandrowska-Turska rejected the idea that she was obliged to carry any cultural-political mantle, explaining that she “does not waste time on politics and, as an artist, sings what pleases her.”¹⁰⁸ All of the visiting musicians insisted to Lissa that they were “apolitical,” and after returning to Poland they were reluctant to write about their time in the USSR, thereby undermining the concerts’ intended message of Polish-Soviet friendship.¹⁰⁹

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Such barely cloaked disdain for the Soviet Union doubtless contributed to Lissa’s frustrated letter to the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party in Warsaw several months before she departed for Poland: “In my opinion—and of course I could be mistaken—the cause for the, let us call it, weakening interest of the Soviet Union in its cultural connections with Poland is the lack of a corresponding build-up of interest in *Soviet culture in Poland*.”¹¹⁰ Although Lissa saw few solutions to this problem at the time, she had come to understand that Poles would view any unmediated introduction of Soviet art and music to Poland as the latest episode in a centuries-old history of Russian domination.

In comparison to the embassy’s overt musical diplomacy, the creation of a pro-communist song culture offered a subtler way for Lissa to achieve her political goals, which she masked behind unimpeachable appeals to

¹⁰⁵ Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (Archive of the [Polish] Ministry of Foreign Affairs; hereafter AMSZ), Z.27, W.14, T.228, 15, “Protokół z posiedzeń I Konferencji w sprawie propagandy Sztuki i Nauki polskiej w ZSRR.”

¹⁰⁶ AMSZ, Z.6, W.31, T.487, 68, Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Moskwie, At-tachat Prasowy, Komunikat nr. I/23 (January 2, 1946).

¹⁰⁷ AMSZ, Z.27, W.15, T.253, 16, “Raport o rozmowie z naczelnikiem IV Wydziału Europejskiego Min. Spraw Zagranicznych ZSRR p. Pawłowem” (June 21, 1946).

¹⁰⁸ AMSZ, Z.21, W.112, T.1481, 45, Lissa to unknown addressee, July 1, 1946. “Nie bawi się w politykę, a jako artystka śpiewa to, co jej się podoba.”

¹⁰⁹ AMSZ, Z.21, W.112, T.1481, 43, 74, Lissa to unknown addressee, June 13, 1946, and “Sprawozdanie” (September 1946).

¹¹⁰ AMSZ, Z.27, W.13, T.212, 31, Lissa to Centralny Komitet PPR, Wydział Zagraniczny, December 23, 1946.

national unity. This was, as we saw above, the main conclusion from her work with song culture among the exiled Polish-Jewish population in the USSR. Tellingly, even after her direct diplomatic work was complete and she had returned to Poland, Lissa continued to shape the song repertoire published in Poland, as evinced by the dozens of prepublication reviews of songbooks that are in her personal papers. Applying her own political sensitivities, she asked authors to reduce the number of religious songs in their collections, especially in cases where these were far more numerous than workers' songs, or to exclude anti-Russian songs that had "unnecessary associations with current politics."¹¹¹

Lissa thereby demonstrated a reciprocity between experience and ideas, one that structured her views on song culture as she drew upon one of the few successful strategies that she knew for convincing Polish citizens of the merits of a communist-aligned musical culture. This practical dimension of Lissa's work on the mass song has been missing from accounts of the early postwar period, a sense of how these postwar projects recapitulated ideas whose success had been proven through on-the-ground trials. The building of a mass musical culture, Lissa's work suggests, had to speak to the experiences that the masses in fact held in common. By acknowledging individual trauma and subsuming it within a new political identity, Lissa aimed to build a communist musical culture on a foundation of collective loss.

The Ends of Wartime Song

On the evening of August 1, 2019, nearly twenty thousand people swarmed into Piłsudski Square in central Warsaw for a collective performance of songs from World War II.¹¹² In attendance were elderly survivors of the war at the front, children hoisted onto their parents' shoulders, and the president of the Polish Republic (fig. 4). Piłsudski Square—the largest open-air space in central Warsaw—could barely hold the crowd, which spilled onto the surrounding streets. By the time I arrived, around thirty minutes before the sing-along concert was to begin, all ten thousand songbooks that the organizers had printed had long been distributed, leaving me and thousands of others to follow along with the words projected on massive screens near the stage.

"Honor and glory, to the heroes! Honor and glory, to the heroes!" yelled the crowd as they waited for the orchestra and choir to arrive on stage. The "heroes" being feted were the men and women of the Home

¹¹¹ AKP, Lissa Papers, "Recenzja z śpiewnika Bronisława Rutkowskiego," July 28, 1947.

¹¹² Prior-year estimates place attendance at around 18,000; <https://www.1944.pl/artykul/warszawiacy-spiewaja-nie-zakazane-piosenki.4685.html> (accessed August 10, 2018).

FIGURE 4. The crowd in Piłsudski Square for the “Varsovians Sing (Non-)Forbidden Songs” concert, August 1, 2019. Photo by the author



Army who had taken part in the Warsaw Uprising (hereafter, the Uprising) that had begun exactly seventy-five years prior, on August 1, 1944. This failed rebellion in the closing days of World War II was an attempt to wrest the Polish capital free from German rule and establish Polish autonomy in advance of the anticipated arrival of the Soviet Army. After sixty-three days of battle, and more than a hundred thousand civilian deaths, the Home Army surrendered. In retaliation for the failed uprising, the city was emptied and destroyed by the German forces—block by block, building by building—as the Soviet Army remained stationed just across the river.¹¹³

¹¹³ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *The Warsaw Uprising of 1944*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

The concert on August 1, 2019 demonstrates the enduring popularity in Poland of the song repertoire discussed in this article, even for an audience that is mostly too young to remember the war. Harris's "Song of My Warsaw" was second on the program. Also included were Panufnik's "Warszawskie dzieci" ("Warsaw's Children") and Ekier's "Szturmówka" ("The Banner"), both published in *Songs of the Underground Struggle*, which, as we saw above, was one of the first efforts to document wartime musical culture.¹¹⁴ Other songs, such as "Warszawo ma" ("Warsaw Mine"), were taken from *Forbidden Songs* (1947), a film that wove occupation-era songs into a narrative of the war. Even the event's name—"Warszawiacy śpiewają (nie)zakazane piosenki" ("Varsovians Sing (Non-)Forbidden Songs")—is an allusion to this film and to the early postwar song-collecting it represented.

Yet the concert also revealed how music of the World War II era continues to be wrapped up in issues of political and national identity. The sing-along concerts, which take place every year, are a relatively recent event, having begun only in 2007. They are organized by the Warsaw Rising Museum, which since its opening in 2004 has helped to make the Warsaw Uprising a plank of contemporary Polish memory politics. Since the Warsaw Uprising simultaneously aimed to overthrow German rule in Warsaw and to establish Polish political autonomy in the city before the arrival of the Soviet Army, it offers a shorthand of Polish resistance to Nazism and communism alike. Most broadly, then, the popularity of these concerts echoes a shift within Polish cultural politics during the last decade. Whereas in the early 1990s and early 2000s, politicians wished to portray Poland as an economically stable, Western-style democracy, in recent years they have instead defined "Polishness" through older tropes of the Poles' victimhood at the hands of foreign repression and their resistance to such oppression.¹¹⁵

The event's production and pageantry underscored a message of Polish martyrdom during the Warsaw Uprising. Songs were interspersed with video testimony from survivors of the Uprising, who discussed the importance that singing had played in the events. The narration of the concert, led by television anchor Tomasz Wolny, made emotional appeals to the power of song. Audience members were singing to honor the survivors of the Uprising as well as those who had perished, he prompted. While helping the audience identify with the heroic and comradeship-filled aspects of the Uprising, the narration downplayed its tragic elements and long-lingering questions about its military

¹¹⁴ *Pieśni walki podziemnej*, vols. 1–3.

¹¹⁵ Irena Grudzińska-Gross, "Polishness in Practice," in *Poland and Polin: New Interpretations in Polish-Jewish Studies*, ed. Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Iwa Nawrocki (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 37–46.

necessity.¹¹⁶ In emotionalizing and sanitizing the Warsaw Uprising, the “Varsovians Sing (Non-)Forbidden Songs” concerts closely resemble the ideology of their organizing institution, the Warsaw Rising Museum, and fit neatly into a contemporary Polish national identity that focuses on trauma and collective victimhood.¹¹⁷

For all their contemporaneity, however, these concerts are also the latest stage in a longer history of contesting the meaning of wartime song, one that began before World War II was over. The present-day sing-along concerts aim, as Lissa had also once aimed, to tap into an undercurrent of trauma and to rely on music to play a didactic political role. “Together we must try to build the future of which the Warsaw Uprisers dreamed,” summarized Wolny near the end of the 2019 concert. But here the similarities end: Lissa never advocated for an identity politics focused on victimhood, and the war-inspired mass song, in her eyes, would always eventually serve communism and rebuilding. The “Varsovians Sing (Non-)Forbidden Songs” concerts do not aim to educate audiences toward an appreciation of high art nor do they aim to unlock the latest new-music compositions for a lower-class audience. And they certainly do not aim to bolster a communist musical culture.

But perhaps the greatest difference is that the present-day concerts are a wild success, while Lissa’s vision for a mass musical culture reflective of the war never was fully implemented. In the early postwar years, when many ethnic Poles painted communism as a betrayal of the nation by Polish Jews, Lissa’s ethnicity and politics likely cast doubt on her evocations of national wartime populism.¹¹⁸ More explicitly documented is the collapse of her openness toward wartime mass culture as Poland’s ideological climate shifted. At an October 1948 meeting in Warsaw of the Polish Workers’ Party, she was attacked for, among other things, “supporting elitism in music everywhere.”¹¹⁹ By late 1948 her two-track theory of musical culture had been labeled “reactionary” in *Sovetskaya Muzyka* (*Soviet Music*) and her colleagues had been painted as “formalists.”¹²⁰ The implications of this attack, namely that Polish musicology must pay lip

¹¹⁶ For representations of the senselessness of the Warsaw Uprising, see Andrzej Wajda’s *Kanał* (Sewer, 1956) and Miron Białoszewski, *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*, trans. Madeline G. Levine (New York: NYRB Classics, 2015) (originally published in 1970).

¹¹⁷ Monika Żychlińska and Erica Fontana, “Museal Games and Emotional Truths: Creating Polish National Identity at the Warsaw Rising Museum,” *East European Politics & Societies* 30 (2016): 235–69.

¹¹⁸ Michlic, *Poland’s Threatening Other*, 206.

¹¹⁹ AKP, Lissa Dokumenty, “Protokół nr 5 z posiedzenia Komitetu Partyjnego P. P. R. m. stol. Warszawy,” October 13, 1948.

¹²⁰ L. Kulakovskiy, “Pol’skiy muzikal’niy zhurnal ‘Ruch Muzyczny’ (1947–1948 gg.),” *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, no. 9 (1948): 96–100.

service to Soviet standards, was becoming evident by January 1949.¹²¹ As pressure mounted in the lead-up to the major summit on socialist realist aesthetics in music held in Łagów Lubuski in August 1949, Lissa found herself with a “very difficult role,” as she wrote to Chybiński: “I must show everyone that I am not a ‘formalist,’” while also defending socialist aesthetics.¹²² By 1950 she had recanted her earlier devotion to modernism, embraced an orthodox socialist realist position, and explicitly rejected “Song of My Warsaw.”¹²³ Only later in life would she return to her modernist interests.

The wartime prototypes for the Polish mass song soon faded, and the genre coalesced around topics that gave a positive spin to everyday life under socialism.¹²⁴ Mass songs that did preserve a thematic connection to the war, such as Alfred Gradstein’s “Na prawo most, na lewo most” (“On the Right a Bridge, On the Left a Bridge”) and Władysław Szpilman’s “Walczyk murarski” (“Bricklayer’s Waltz”), achieved some measure of popularity, but they notably focused on reconstruction rather than the war itself. Recast as a document of the socialist present, the mass song thus became divorced from the pragmatic need to address wartime suffering that Lissa had tried to establish as the genre’s foundation. Today, by comparison, the “Varsovians Sing (Non-)Forbidden Songs” concerts brim with appeals to the singularity of wartime experience, enlisting the unique traumas visited on the city during the Uprising as a foundation for local and national identity, even as firsthand memory of the war fades. To listen in 2019 to the songs of war resounding from Warsaw’s meticulously rebuilt city center is to hear an unwitting echo of early discussions of postwar culture, albeit updated for an era of testimony, witness, and televised spectacle.

ABSTRACT

Scholars have primarily seen the musicologist Zofia Lissa (1908–80) as a communist ideologue and key instigator of the Sovietization of Polish musical culture after World War II. An examination of materials

¹²¹ See, for example, the exchange of letters between Chybiński and his student Józef Chomiński. Adolf Chybiński and Józef M. Chomiński, *Korespondencja 1945–1952*, ed. Małgorzata Sieradz (Warsaw: PAN, 2016), 122–26.

¹²² BUAM, 803 III/3, 172, Lissa to Chybiński, July 21, 1949. “Mam bardzo trudną rolę: Muszę im wykazać, że ja nie jestem ‘formalistą.’”

¹²³ Zofia Lissa, “O metodzie marksistowskiej [1950],” *Muzykologia na przełomie* (Cracow: PWM, 1952), 25–94, at 78; and Lissa, “Raz jeszcze o polską pieśń masową [1950],” 214.

¹²⁴ For an overview of common topics of mass songs during this period, see Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line*, 36–39.

from seven archives in three countries related to her life reveals a more complex picture of her views and of how she deployed her power. Before World War II she was a fierce advocate for both modernist aesthetics and communist politics, as well as a cutting-edge thinker about issues of social identity. World War II, which forced her to flee deep into the Soviet Union to avoid the Holocaust, transformed her thinking about these topics. Working in Moscow with a Polish and Polish-Jewish diaspora, she saw how popular song could mobilize war-wearied exiles despite seemingly unbridgeable political and social fissures. These ideas became the core of Lissa's postwar advocacy for the mass song, a genre of accessible socialist music that had deep roots in the USSR. Viewing the Polish mass song from Lissa's perspective reveals how she believed that the genre could reflect the experiences of widespread loss among Poles and harness these reactions in service of a communist musical culture. In showing how musical performance can enunciate collective identities founded in the experience of trauma, Lissa's views shed light on a cultural logic that continues to inform commemorations of World War II in Poland to this day.