



Music, Power, and Politics, post-1945

INTRODUCTION / THE CATAclysms OF WORLD WAR II / REMEMBERING WAR AND TRAUMA?
WEEK 1, DAY 1, JUNE 28 / MUCH 695 / SUMMER 2021 / BROOKS

POLITICS AND POWER

What is power? ability or potential to bring about change through action or influence (either your own, your group or institution). Imbedded in all human relationships—friendship, family, institutions, entire societal structures. Structures of power often have to do with economics, class, race, gender, sexuality, kinship, religion, etc...How do you negotiate relationships between people? Within your group? Within your community? Within the nation? On a global level?

What is political? how we live with other people in communities in which we try to achieve “the good life” (what that means differs from person to person!)

What is a state? typically today we talk about a central administration with military, economic, political aspects. States coerce us to do things (through laws, enforcing of discipline, taxation, the courts). We might also note hegemony, the way a dominant group creates agreement without the use or threat of physical force.

How is power established? Cultural institutions help shape norms. People within certain groups develop ways of seeing the world that cause them to make certain choices.

How do we challenge power? Power is never absolute....even when a dominant group is very powerful, they do not completely control people’s thoughts and actions. How can groups and individuals with less or no power challenge established power relationships?

Agency. Think about different methods: force, protest (non-violent, violent), education, etc.

Adapted from Chapter 14 of Kenneth J. Guest, Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014.



MUSIC, POLITICS, AND POWER

How is MUSIC AND SOUND involved in power?

- How might music help enforce the rules, ideals, institutions of those in power? Can music help perpetuate a dominant culture?
- How might music help people challenge an existing power structure? Can music act as a form of resistance or social commentary? How?

One way of thinking about music and power:

- **public transcripts:** open musical displays of power. [can affirm or perpetuate power, or openly oppose)
- **hidden transcripts:** musical performances and repertoires that embed messages through metaphorical or coded terms. Can represent political aspects that can not be openly acknowledged, or might oppose dominant political establishment
- Public transcripts and hidden transcripts can both be used by those in power and those in opposition

Some special aspects of music:

- **public/private:** music can be used in both spheres
- **participatory:** singing, dancing, enacting music yourself
- **collective**—doing things together
- music = multiple layers of meaning
- subtle, can convey what cannot be spoken
- deniability
- sensual: sounds can elicit memories, emotions
- compelling: does music have a special power to persuade or coerce?

LIGHTENING CASE STUDY

musical sound/genre

- is the musical sound itself somehow understood as connected with politics, power, or even a specific political movement?

Lyrics:

- might be political, might not

Artist persona:

- what do we understand of their politics?

Site/Date/Event:

- was this a specific performance?
- If so, what are the political ramifications of this place, date, etc?

Audience/Listeners:

- What are the audience/listeners doing? how do they understand/ make meaning from this work?

LIGHTENING CASE STUDY: “ZIMBABWE” (1979)

musical sound/genre

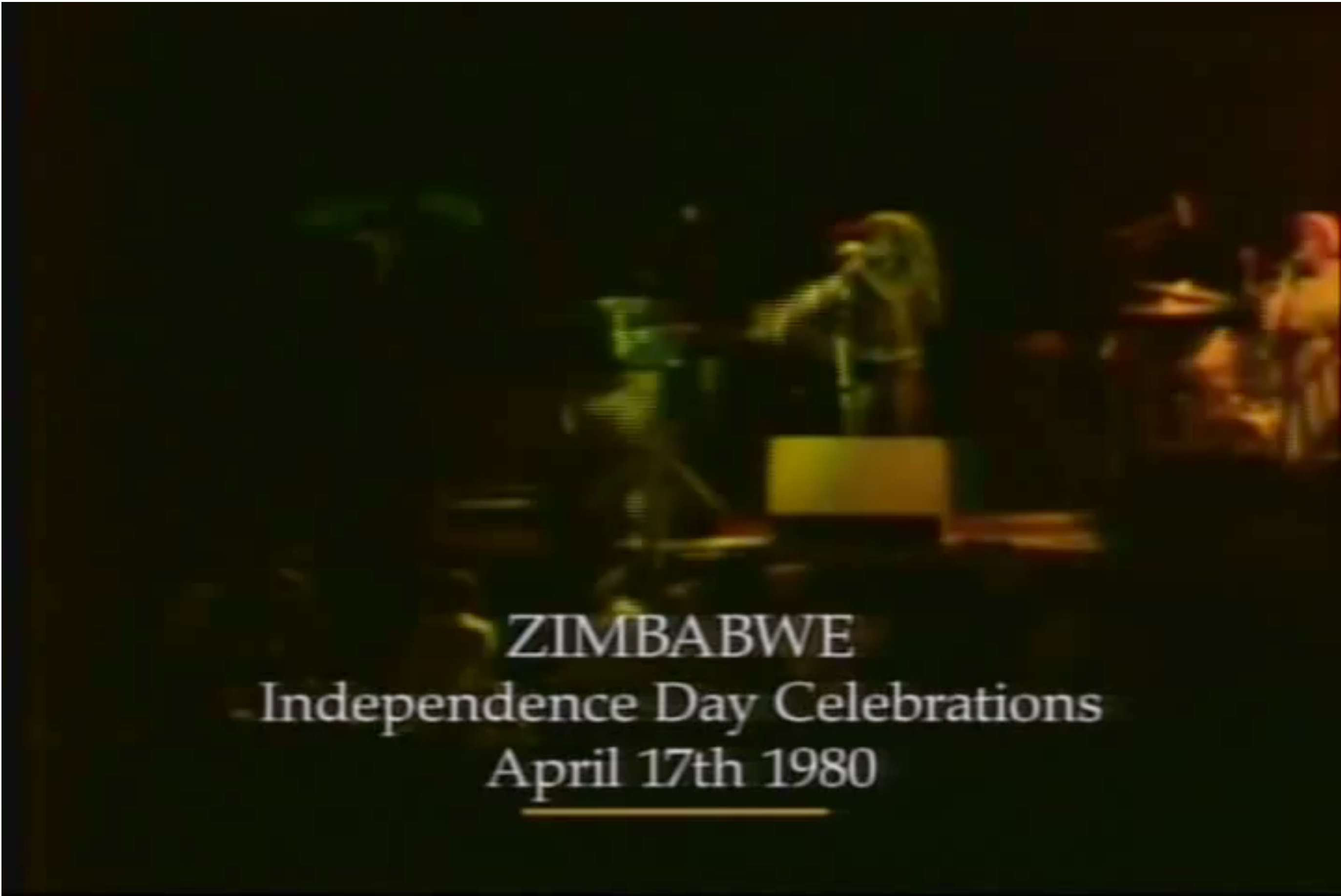
- musical genre **ska** becomes closely associated with Jamaica’s independence movement (1962)
- **reggae** starts to replace ska in early 1970s—one of the leading political parties, the People’s National Party, embraces reggae along with its political platform (socialism)

Artist persona:

- Bob Marley—complicated. Often associated with certain politics because of musical genre, because of lyrics. He WAS political, but also in different ways than other reggae artists such as Peter Tosh.
- by the late 1970s, Marley’s music inspired many revolutionary forces in African independence struggles as motivational anthems

Lyrics:

- the entire album *Survival* is overly about independence movements in African nations and pan-African solidarity.
Lyrics:
Every man gotta right
To decide his own destiny
And in this judgement
There is no partiality
So arm in arm, with arms
We will fight this little struggle
‘Cause that’s the only way
We can overcome our little trouble....



Site/Date/Event:

- April 18-19, 1980: Bob Marley and the Wailers invited to celebrate Rhodesia’s independence from Great Britain and the renaming of the country as Zimbabwe.
- This song “Zimbabwe” had inspired the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army during the struggle for independence.
- Performance becomes an occasion of protest: start of the concert is delayed, unrest breaks out, some attempt to force Marley to leave.

Audience/Listeners:

- Participatory
- Emotional, fraught with meaning
- Unrest
- Mythologizing in later memory—what happened, who was there, was did this mean?

3 threads:

Music during the War

I. Wartime Circumstances: Olivier Messiaen and the *Quartet for the End of Time*

II. Wartime Circumstances: Music and the Camps

Memorializing war and trauma?

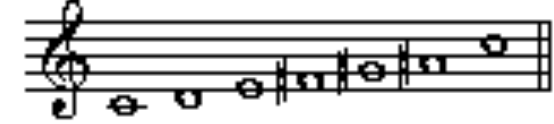
III. Style and Memory: Benjamin Britten and the *War Requiem*

Music in Wartime: Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

The Modes of Limited Transposition

Olivier Messiaen

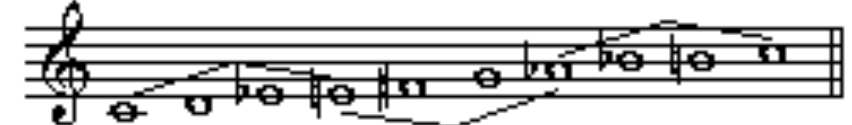
Mode 1 (The whole-tone scale)



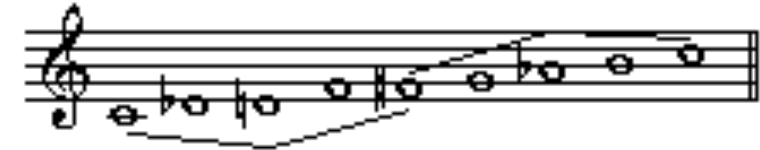
Mode 2 (The octatonic scale)



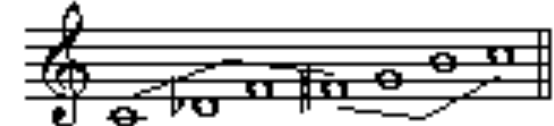
Mode 3



Mode 4



Mode 5



Mode 6



b) Les rythmes augmentés ou diminués. Un rythme peut être immédiatement suivi de son augmentation ou diminution, suivant diverses formes ; en voici quelques exemples (dans chacun d'eux, la 1^{re} mesure contient le rythme normal, la 2^e mesure son augmentation ou diminution) :

Ajout du tiers des valeurs :

Retrait du quart des valeurs :

Ajout du point :

Retrait du point :

Augmentation classique :

Diminution classique :

Ajout du double des valeurs :

Retrait des 2/3 des valeurs :

Ajout du triple des valeurs :

Retrait des 3/4 des valeurs :

On peut user aussi d'augmentations et diminutions inexactes.

Exemple :

c) Les rythmes non rétrogradables. Qu'on les lise de droite à gauche ou de gauche à droite, l'ordre de leurs valeurs reste le même. Cette particularité existe dans tous les rythmes divisibles en 2 groupes rétrogradés l'un par rapport à l'autre, avec valeur centrale "commune".

Exemple :

Succession de rythmes non rétrogradables (chaque mesure contenant un de ces rythmes) :



(a) Fragments from violin part

(comme un oiseau)



ppp (son flûté, vers la point)



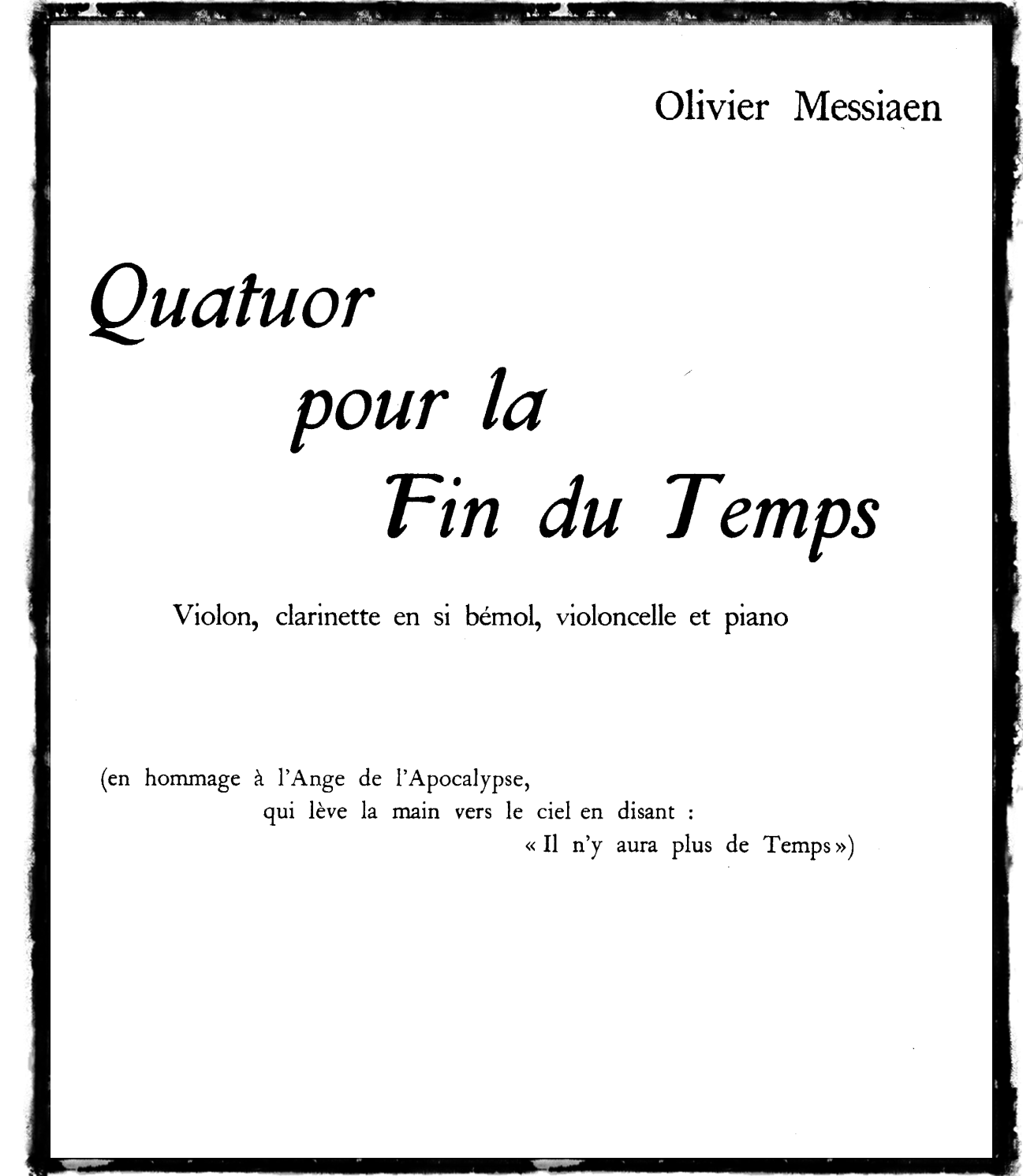
Music in Wartime: Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

- called up for military service after outbreak of World War II, and in May 1940 was captured and taken to the prisoner-of-war camp Stalag VIII-A in Silesia (present-day Poland)
- Winter 1940–41: Messiaen writes the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* for himself to play with a violinist, a cellist and a clarinetist (fellow prisoner-of-war inmates).

“I immediately wrote for them an unpretentious little trio, which they played to me in the lavatories, for the clarinetist had kept his instrument with him and someone had given the cellist a cello with three strings. Emboldened by these first sounds, I retained this little piece under the name of ‘Intermède’ and gradually added to it the seven pieces which surround it, thus taking to eight the total number of movements in the *Quatuor*.”

This *Quatuor* comprises eight movements. Why? Seven is the perfect number, the six days of Creation, sanctified by the Divine Sabbath; the seven of this rest is prolonged into eternity and becomes the eight of everlasting light, of eternal peace.

Its musical language is essentially immaterial, spiritual, and Catholic. Modes which achieve a kind of tonal ambiguity, melodically and harmonically, here draw the listener towards eternity in space or the infinite. Special rhythms, beyond metre, contribute powerfully in dismissing the temporal.”



- I. “Liturgie de cristal” (violin, clarinet, cello, piano)
- II. “Vocalise, pour l’Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps” (violin, clarinet, cello, piano)
- III. “Abîme des oiseaux” (clarinet)
- IV. “Intermède” (violin, cello, piano)
- V. “Louange à l’Eternité de Jésus” (cello, piano)
- VI. “Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes” (violin, clarinet, cello, piano)
- VII. “Fouillis d’arcs-en-ciel, pour l’Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps” (violin, clarinet, cello, piano)
- VIII. “Louange à l’Immortalité de Jésus” (violin, piano)

Music in Wartime: Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

I. Liturgie de Cristal

Violin & Clarinet imitate “Bird Song”

Cello (Isorhythmic):

C = color = repeated pitch series (5 pitches) [0 4 2 6 A]

T = talea = repeated rhythmic pattern (15 durations)

Violon: Bien modéré, en poudrolement harmonieux a) (comme un oiseau) *ppp* (son flûté, *ppp*)

Clarinettes en SI b: (comme un oiseau) b) *p expressif*

Violoncelle: *ppp* (vibrato) C¹ T¹

Piano: Bien modéré, en poudrolement harmonieux (♩=54 environ) *pp legato (très enveloppé de pédale) c)*

Piano (Isorhythmic): T¹

C = color = repeated chord series (29 chords)

T = talea = repeated rhythmic pattern (17 durations)

VI. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes

Violon: Décidé, vigoureux, granitique, un peu vif *ff*

Clarinettes en SI b: *ff*

Violoncelle: *ff*

Piano: [A] Décidé, vigoureux, granitique, un peu vif (♩=176 env.) *ff* (non legato, martelé)

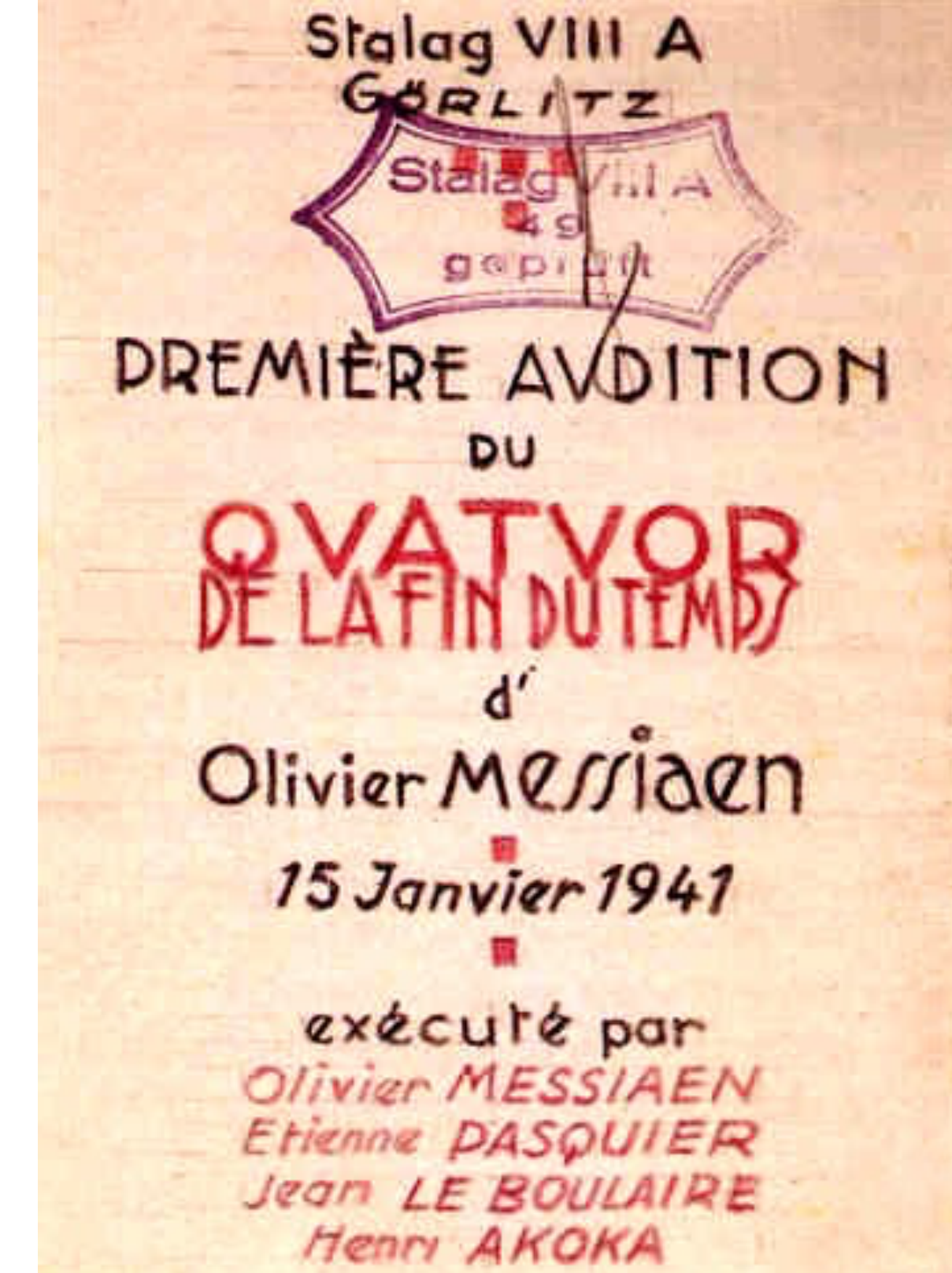
von:

Clar.:

vclle:

Music in Wartime: Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

- Winter 1940–41: first performance of the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* takes place at the prisoner of war camp, before a huge audience (maybe 5000+ peasants, intellectuals, laborers, soldiers, medics, priests) in the depth of winter. Very unusual “concert”
- Messiaen gives a short lecture before the performance on the Book of Revelation: “I told them first of all that this quartet was written for the end of time, not as a play on words about the time of captivity, but for the ending of concepts of past and future: that is, for the beginning of eternity, and that in this I relied on the magnificent text of the Revelation.”
- Meaning for Messiaen? He noted: “If I composed this quartet, it was to escape from the snow, from the war, from captivity, and from myself. The greatest benefit that I drew from it was that in the midst of thirty thousand prisoners, I was the only man who was not one.”
- Meaning for other POWS? Did his fellow prisoners, listening to a work about the day of judgement, think about their future deliverance and on their captors being brought to justice? (before the law or before God?)
- Aleksander Łyczewski...was in a very emotional state while recalling these events. There were tears in his eyes and it took him some time to regain his composure....he remembers his fellow-prisoners remaining in complete silence for the hour or so that it took to perform the piece. He himself had been deeply moved by the experience.

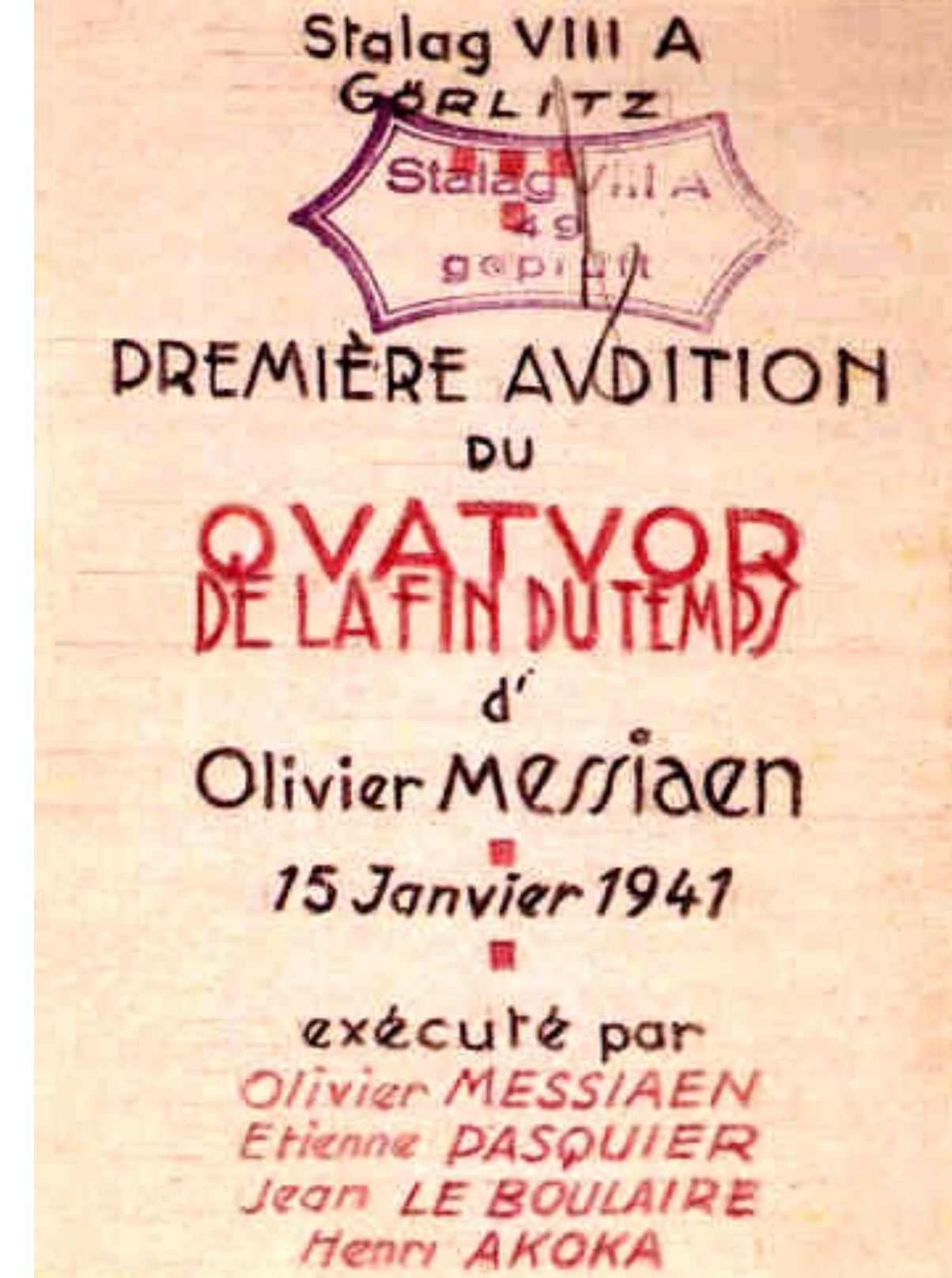


A prisoner orchestra at Stalag VIII-A in Silesia, with Ferdinand Carrion, a Belgian musician and prisoner-of-war, conducting.
Photo: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Sonia Beker

Music in Wartime: Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Questions:

- Intent—do we need to know what the composer intends to understand a piece as political? Is this essential or unimportant? Who else creates meaning in pieces besides the composer?
- Commerce—How does music commerce play a special role here? Are political pieces somehow expected to be more or less commercial?
- Reconciliation?—Does music bring people together? How so? How might it NOT do this or what might be the limitations of music to do this?
- Understanding faith in WWII—What role does the spiritual or religion play in a world where the Holocaust is possible? How does religion exhibit itself in music of this era versus earlier periods? How do people of period find or lose meaning in religion?



A prisoner orchestra at Stalag VIII-A in Silesia, with Ferdinand Carrion, a Belgian musician and prisoner-of-war, conducting.
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3 threads:

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II. Wartime Circumstances: Music and the Camps

Memorializing war and trauma?

III. Style and Memory: Benjamin Britten and the *War Requiem*

Music in Wartime: Music and the Camps, 1933-1945

Scholar Guido Fackler’s research—based on archival work, the study of memoirs and literature, and interviews with witnesses of concentration camps—has shown the breadth of musical activities in concentration camps of the Nazi regime.

I. Musics on Command—music required by the SS in the camps

- Singing on Command
- Music Relayed from Radio or Gramophone: often propaganda, or “national” German music
- Official Camp Orchestras: sometimes used as propaganda to falsely claim the camps were humane, sometimes to provide background music for punishments or even executions
- Music to entertain the Guards

II. Music Initiated by the Prisoners

- Spontaneous Music: often unaccompanied unison singing in groups
- Block Performances: short performances, sometimes with instruments, often ‘after hours’ when the SS-men had withdrawn from the camp for the evening; often secret/ clandestine
- Camp or Cultural Performances: organized, usually took place with knowledge of SS, therefore often subject to censorship

Excerpted from:

- Guido Fackler, “Music in Concentration Camps, 1933-1945,” *Music & Politics* I, no. 1 (Winter 2007).

Can music be torture?

Primo Levi:

“The beating of the big drums and the cymbals reach us continuously and monotonously, but in this weft the musical phrases weave a pattern only intermittently, according to the caprices of the wind. The tunes are few, a dozen, and the same ones every day, morning and evening: marches and popular songs dear to every German. They lie engraven on our minds and will be the last thing in the Lager that we shall forget: they are the voice of the Lager, the perceptible expression of its geometrical madness, of the resolution of others to annihilate us first as men in order to kill us more slowly afterwards.”

Levi forcefully describes how music purposefully attacked prisoners’ identities, certainties, self- conceptions, and sense of humanity. Levi completes his description of the incident in the infirmary: “We all look at each other from our beds, because we all feel that this music is infernal.” By emphasizing the danger inherent in music that was—in this context—demonic and nightmarish, Levi attributes to music a rather specific impact.

1941: In Auschwitz-Birkenau each of the separate camp areas for women, men, Romani, and prisoners from Theresienstadt had its own prisoners’ orchestra (founded on orders of SS camp commander).

Musicians were made to structure daily life by accompanying daily camp activities—the musicians spoke of their desperation, physical illness, exhaustion.

Musicians spoke of:

- the playing of music as an experience of violence
- The hearing of music as an experience of violence
- The command to play music as a form of violence

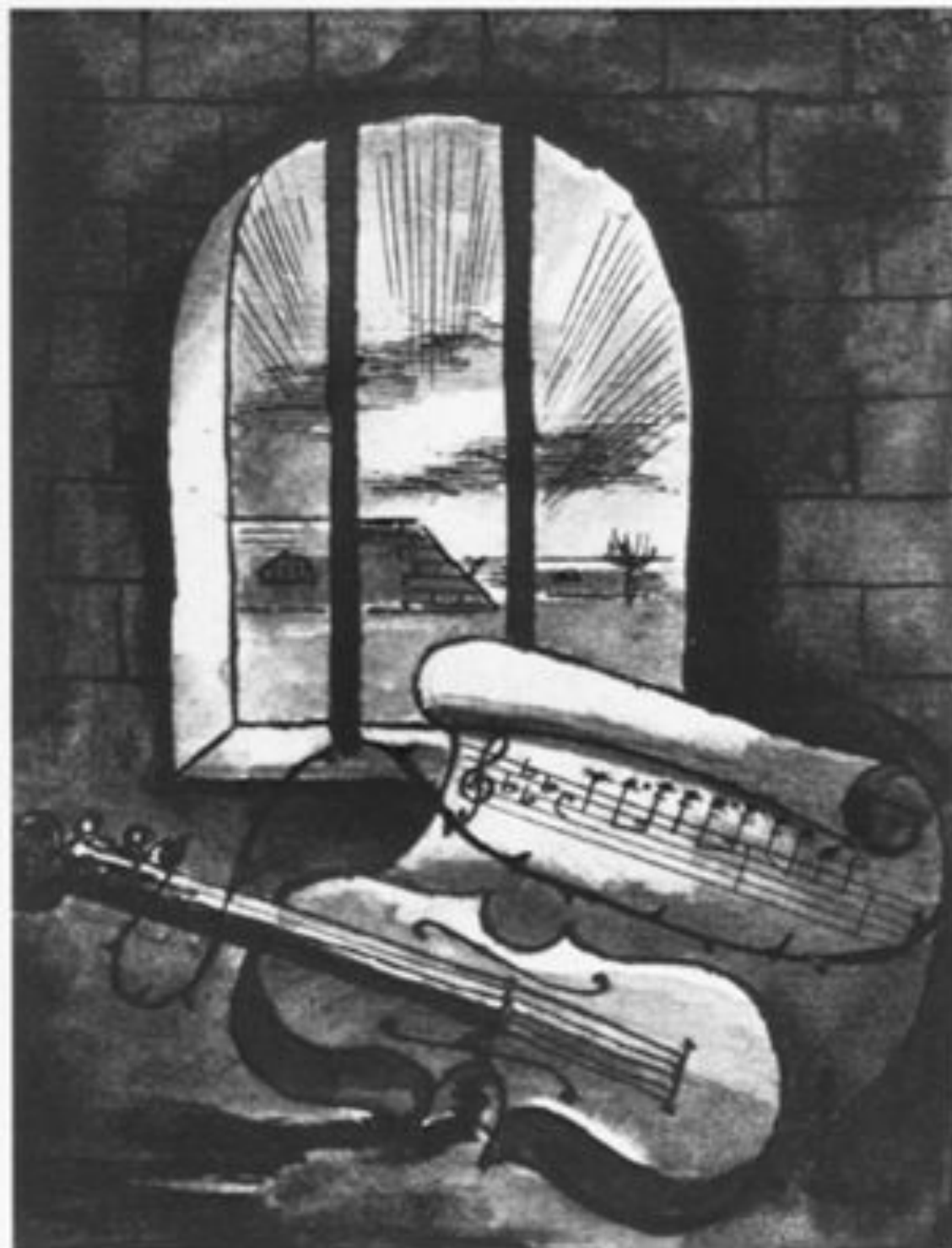
Excerpted from:

- Juliane Brauer, “How can Music be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps,” *Music & Politics* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2016).

Music in Wartime: Music and the Camps, 1933-1945

Important Positive Role of Music:

- Fackler: discussion of music played in camps—"These difficulties made it all the more important for professional and amateur musicians to set an example of solidarity and humane behavior in their dehumanized surroundings. This meant, of course, that there was less emphasis on aesthetic criteria: through fostering a sense of community, music served instead as a form of cultural resistance, as practical assistance in the struggle to survive.
- music as a triumph in the face of atrocity—victory through art of humanity over inhumanity



The Bad, or Music's Role in Atrocity:

- too much focus on spiritual resistance? what about the multiple meanings of music?
- Listening to music and performing music are—under normal circumstances—voluntary activities. It is because of this normal state of affairs that we tend to treat music as something positive. But there is a growing awareness of music's 'darker potential' in situations marked by an imbalance of power.
- music and violence in contexts marked by uneven power dynamics
- (torture as cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment)



Prisoners of the Terezin concentration camp outside Prague rehearse Verdi's Requiem for an upcoming performance for the Red Cross inspection in 1944

Music in Wartime: Music and the Camps, 1933-1945



Viktor Ullmann.
(d. 1944)



Pavel Haas
(d. 1944)



Hans Krása
(d. 1944)



Gideon Klein
(d. 1945)



Karel Ančerl
(d. 1973)

If you'd like to read more about recent scholarship and projects to recover some of the musics eradicated by the Nazis, you can click here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/13/terezin-ghetto-jews-holocaust-vulliamy>

<http://ptja.leeds.ac.uk>

3 threads:

Music during the War

- I. Wartime Circumstances: Olivier Messiaen and the *Quartet for the End of Time*
- II. Wartime Circumstances: Music, Torture, and the Camps

Memorializing war and trauma?

- III. Style and Memory: Benjamin Britten and the *War Requiem*

Style and Memory: Benjamin Britten and the *War Requiem*

- Britten—a composer with a clear political and social engagement
- political awakening in 1935-1936
- leaves for America in 1939
- Returns to England in 1942: registers as a conscientious objector to the war and he and his partner Peter Pears are required to go to a tribunal to test their loyalties to England and the war effort.
- In a statement before the tribunal, Britten said: "Since I believe that there is in every man the spirit of God, I cannot destroy, and feel it my duty to not to help to destroy as far as I am able, human life, however strongly I may disapprove of the individual's actions or thoughts."
- 1945: Britten in a despairing and angry mood after visiting the Belsen concentration camp—he and violinist Yehudi Menuhin play for camp survivors
- committed pacifist:
 - personal relations above institutions
 - the individual above collective society
 - often found the law, military, and the church as hypocritical, unjust, or evil
 - love and eroticism rather than marriage as an institution
 - English ideas of patriarchal family as oppressive



Style and Memory: Benjamin Britten and the *War Requiem*

- During Battle of Britain, Coventry Cathedral targeted by Luftwaffe for concentrated mass bombing and nearly destroyed
- Commission: after the war, decision made to rebuild the Cathedral to a new design.
- Basil Spence wins the commission: he conceives an imaginative design using modern materials that would be sited adjacent to the shell of the former cathedral (reconciliation after conflict, but allowing the ruins to remain as a reminder)
- 1962: to celebrate the Cathedral's consecration, a showcase arts festival was planned.
- Festival Arts Committee approached Benjamin Britten to compose a substantial choral & orchestral work.
- Some back and forth about the payment—the commission originally thought Britten might do this for no fee (?!)
- Britten sets them straight: "My feeling is that to commission a work of this size is a serious matter, and they must be prepared to pay for it just as they have to pay the workmen to build the Cathedral, etc etc..."





Benjamin Britten and the War Requiem

- Musical language: setting the traditional Latin Mass for the Dead interwoven with nine poems about war by the English poet Wilfred Owen.
- Owen, born in 1893, was killed in action on 4 November 1918 in France, just one week before the Armistice. Although he was virtually unknown at the time of his death, he has subsequently come to be revered as one of the great World War I poets.
- work is scored for soprano, tenor and baritone soloists, chorus, boys' choir, organ, and two orchestras (a full orchestra and a chamber orchestra).
- Britten explicitly borrows references from Verdi's dramatic 1874 *Requiem*. Britten noted, "I think that I would be a fool if I didn't take notice of how Mozart, Verdi, Dvořák—whoever you like to name—had written their Masses. I mean, many people have pointed out the similarities between the Verdi *Requiem* and bits of my own *War Requiem*, and they may be there. If I have not absorbed that, that's too bad. But that's because I'm not a good enough composer, it's not because I'm wrong."
- Dedication: In loving memory of Roger Burney, Piers Dunkerly, David Gill, Michael Halliday (four young men, all friends, three killed in action during the war and one committed suicide in 1959)
- An earlier draft had included: "In Commemoration of all the Fellow-Sufferers of the Second World War"
- Juxtaposition of Latin liturgical texts and Wilfred Owen poems about a bleak portrayal of man's inhumanity —does this undermine the stylized religious phrases of condolence and consolation?

- I. Requiem aeternam (10 minutes)**
 - Requiem aeternam (chorus and boys' choir)
 - "What passing bells" (tenor solo) – Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth"
 - Kyrie eleison (chorus)
- II. Dies irae (27 minutes)**
 - Dies irae (chorus)
 - "Bugles sang" (baritone solo) – Owen's "But I was Looking at the Permanent Stars"
 - Liber scriptus (soprano solo and semi-chorus)
 - "Out there, we walked quite friendly up to death" (tenor and baritone soli) – Owen's "The Next War"
 - Recordare (women's chorus)
 - Confutatis (men's chorus)
 - "Be slowly lifted up" (baritone solo) – Owen's "Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action"
 - Reprise of Dies irae (chorus)
 - Lacrimosa (soprano and chorus) interspersed with "Move him, move him" (tenor solo) - Owen's "Futility"
- III. Offertorium (10 minutes)**
 - Domine Jesu Christe (boys' choir)
 - Sed signifer sanctus (chorus)
 - Quam olim Abrahae (chorus)
 - Isaac and Abram (tenor and baritone soli) – Owen's "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young"
 - Hostias et preces tibi (boys' choir)
 - Reprise of Quam olim Abrahae (chorus)
- IV. Sanctus (10 minutes)**
 - Sanctus and Benedictus (soprano solo and chorus)
 - "After the blast of lightning" (baritone solo) – Owen's "The End"
- V. Agnus Dei (4 minutes)**
 - Agnus Dei (chorus) interspersed with "One ever hangs" (chorus; tenor solo) – Owen's "At a Calvary near the Ancre"
 - Libera me (23 minutes)
- VI. Libera me (soprano solo and chorus)**
 - Strange Meeting ("It seemed that out of battle I escaped") (tenor and baritone soli) – Owen's "Strange Meeting"
 - In paradisum (All)
 - Conclusion – Requiem Aeternam and Requiescant in Pace (organ, boys' choir and mixed chorus)

II. Dies irae

Chorus

Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in favilla:

Teste David cum Sibylla.

*Quantus tremor est futurus, quando Iudex est venturus,
cuncta stricte discussurus!*

*Tuba mirum spargens sonum per sepulchra regionum
coget omnes ante thronum.*

*Mors stupebit et natura, cum resurget creatura,
Judicanti responsura.*

Chorus

That day, that day of wrath shall consume the world in
ashes, as foretold by David and Sibyl.

What trembling there shall be when the judge shall come
to weigh everything strictly.

The trumpet, scattering its awful sound across the graves
of all lands, summons all before the throne.

Death and nature shall be stunned when mankind arises
To render account before the judge.

Tenor and Baritone

Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death;

Sat down and eaten with him, cool and bland, –

Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.

We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath, –

Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.

He's spat at us with bullets and he's coughed

Shrapnel. We chorused when he sang aloft;

We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.

Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!

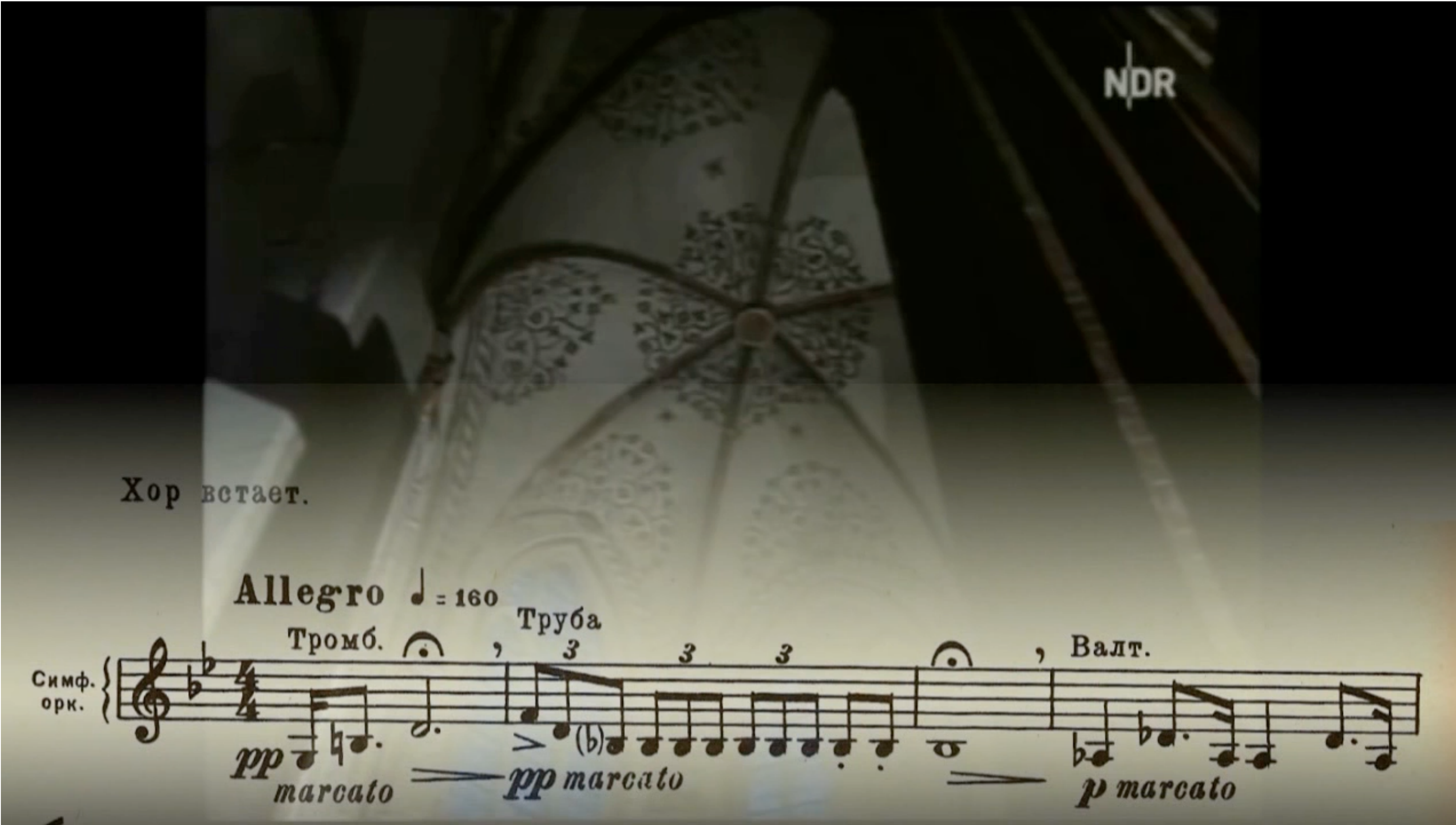
We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.

No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.

We laughed, knowing that better men would come,

And greater wars; when each proud fighter brags

He wars on Death – for lives; not men – for flags.



Style and Memory: Benjamin Britten and the War Requiem

- 30 May 1962: first performance, broadcast live on BBC.
- Premiere: original choice of vocal soloists Peter Pears, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Galina Vishnevskaya—each of the three representing a different combatant from the two world wars.
- Britten wrote to Soviet minister of culture requesting permission for Vishnevskaya to perform in England—describing his international cast of soloists was to “emphasize the universal desire for peace.” His request was refused, without explanation. Thus soprano Heather Harper had to sing in the premiere instead.
- rehearsal for Coventry premiere, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau moved to tears—the first performance created an atmosphere of such intensity that by the end I was completely undone; I did not know where to hide my face. Dead friends and past suffering arose in my mind.
- Reception: meets with instantaneous and unanimously high praise from almost all critics & media, lots of notes of a “masterpiece.”
- One critic wrote “one of the most superb anti-war monuments of our century.” Another wrote, “It is not a *Requiem* to console the living; sometimes it does not even help the dead to sleep soundly. It can only disturb every living soul, for it denounces the barbarism more or less awake in mankind with the authority that a great composer can muster.”
- Massive success at the London premiere in December 1962; Britten conducts recording in January 1963 and the Decca release sold 250,000 copies in 4 months, headed the classical charts in a dozen countries. Live performances continue to attract attention as well, such as the 1964 British Prom concerts, which give the piece to mark the exact 50th anniversary of the declaration of war in 1914. The piece was particularly well-received in Germany (East and West) and Japan as well.

