

“We Take Care of the Artist”: The German Composers’ Meeting in Berlin, 1934

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Introduction

In April 2006, the Swedish Scientific Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*) presented the results of various research projects examining Sweden’s relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany, and the Holocaust (*Sveriges förhållande till Nazism, Nazityskland och Förintelsen*).¹ Several researchers and journalists were surprised at how much Sweden had accommodated Nazi Germany and how much Sweden complied with Nazi Germany’s demands. The project report seemed to adopt the perspective that Nazism was something that came to Sweden from Germany. But earlier research has established that Sweden also took part in developing Nazism, for example through the inspiration of Swedish racial biologists. My study, *Music and Politics in the Shadow of Nazism: Kurt Atterberg and Swedish-German Musical Relations*,² shows how both countries stimulated each other in Swedish-German musical relations during the Nazi period in Germany (1933–1945) and how music was used as a political tool. In my study I also wanted to answer the following questions: Which ideas about “good” and “bad” music were brought to the fore? What kinds of national tales were created and what did they imply for Swedish-German musical relations at the time in the shadow of Nazism? I argued that music can only acquire a political meaning when it is placed in a verbal or symbolic context. In my study I analyzed conversation and debates about music to find out what meaning becomes attached to music in different verbal contexts.

The book focuses on material from Swedish, German, and Austrian archives by and about the Swedish composer Kurt Atterberg (1887–1974). I studied correspondence, memoirs, minutes, newspaper articles, and radio programmes, and talked to contemporary Swedish composers. Kurt Atterberg was a central figure in Swedish music during the first half of the twentieth century, and his life gives a glimpse of the spirit of the time. Atterberg composed nine symphonies, five operas, and several orchestral works, concertos, and pieces of chamber music. Many of his compositions have a national romantic character and a popular style. Atterberg also worked as music critic for the newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* (1919–1957). He stood up for composers’ rights and was one of the founders of the Swedish Composers’ Society (Föreningen Svenska Tonsättare, FST) and the Swedish Performing Rights Society (STIM). He was also a Swedish representative in several international composers’ rights organizations. Between 1940 and 1953 he was the secretary of the Royal Academy of Music (Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien, KMA) in Stockholm. During the first half of the twentieth century Atterberg had a strong influence not only on Swedish musical life, but also on international musical relations. Atterberg left a huge amount of material behind. Among other material, he collected about ten thousand letters and wrote about fifteen hundred pages of

¹ See their report at <http://www.vr.se/download/18.65bf9bc10cd31363a180001073/nazism.pdf> (Accessed 11 June 2009).

² Petra Garberding, *Musik och politik i skuggan av nazismen: Kurt Atterberg och de svensk-tyska musikrelationerna* (Lund: Sekel Bokförlag, 2007).

memoirs, which have never been published. Atterberg's archives are today kept by the Music Museum in Stockholm.

The theoretical platform for the study is a critical discourse analysis, inspired by the model proposed by the Austrian professor in linguistics, Ruth Wodak, and her research team at the Research Centre for Discourse, Politics, and Identity at the University of Vienna (Wodak et al. 2003). Critical discourse analysis implies a political commitment to social change (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2000: 67–70). One purpose of this kind of analysis is to uncover unequal power relations and oppression (Fairclough 1992, Wodak 1996, van Dijk 1997, Chouliaraki and Fairclough 2001, Wodak and Reisigl 2001). I define discourse as a form of social practice which entails the use of language in speech and writing. Discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation, institution, and social structure that frame it. The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. Discourses constitute situations, objects of knowledge and social relations between people. They are constitutive in the sense that they can sustain and reproduce the social status quo and in the sense that they can transform it (Wodak 1996:15). Within this theoretical framework, the subject is seen principally as decentred; the subject comes into existence through discursive events. The discursive struggle produces objects of knowledge and power. I understand power as something that is practised and functions as a productive force (Foucault 2003: 195). Inspired by Wodak's analytical model, my analyses consist of three parts: 1. The text's content, 2. Argumentative strategies, 3. Realization of these strategies through language (Wodak et al. 1998: 71ff.). Wodak insists on the importance of studying each text in its historical and political context.

An English-language summary of the topics covered may be found in my book (pp. 267–78). These include the reception of Atterberg's person and music in Nazi Germany, the struggle in Swedish music life for "good" national music and its consequence for Swedish-German musical relations, and the discussion in Sweden after World War II about Atterberg's involvement with Nazi Germany.

My study shows how Sweden and Germany inspired each other in their musical relationship. Both countries encountered similar problems in the first half of the twentieth century, as modernization accelerated in Europe, occasioning dramatic changes in musical life. Different ideas were circulating on how to deal with these problems. Composers' rights organizations were founded and musical life became more bureaucratized. Many composers endeavoured to strengthen national identity; others looked at music as something supranational and cosmopolitan. I argue that the struggle for the best expressions for national identity and their musical representation was important for the development of relations between Sweden and Nazi Germany. For many European composers and musicians, an engagement with Nazi Germany was interpreted as a contribution to the establishment of a strong national identity and the improvement of their own national musical life. But the struggle for a strong national identity in the different European countries could be used by the Nazi government to spread its political propaganda, especially with the support of "apolitical" artists such as Atterberg, with his central position in Swedish musical life and large international network.

Swedish-German musical relations were also influenced by different views on music and politics in Sweden and Germany. For Nazi politicians, music and politics ran together and music was to give expression to Nazi ideology. In Sweden, music and politics were to be kept apart. Most Swedish composers and musicians defined their engagement with Nazi Germany as purely musical work. The Nazi government, for its part, used Nordic composers and music to confirm Nazi ideas on race biology and to spread Nazi propaganda.

The extract translated below is the first part of chapter 3 of my book. This chapter deals with the efforts to establish copyright organisations and international music exchange and their implications for music and politics in the shadow of Nazism. The extract is a detailed analysis of Kurt Atterberg’s article in the Swedish newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* on the first meeting of a new music organization in Nazi Germany, the Federation of German Composers (*Berufsstand deutscher Komponisten*), in Berlin in February 1934. This meeting was the starting point for a more centralized organization of Nazi German musical life. Here the Nazi government presented its political programme for music. I compare Atterberg’s report of the meeting in the Swedish newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* with accounts in three different German newspapers, *Völkischer Beobachter*, *Der Berliner Westen* and *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. These newspapers were chosen because they had a nation-wide coverage and reported in great detail about the meeting. The aim with the analysis was not to find out the “true” story of this meeting, but to show the different interpretations of the meeting in the German and the Swedish contexts. This kind of analysis can give an insight into how National Socialist linguistic usage could be reproduced or transformed in a Swedish context. Newspaper articles also give information about the frame of reference, that is, which kinds of stories were seen as normal and acceptable in a society and which were not.

“Vi tar hand om konstnären”: Det tyska Tonsättarmötet i Berlin 1934

(“We take care of the artist”: The German Composers’ Meeting in Berlin, 1934)

Kurt Atterberg worked as a music critic for *Stockholms-Tidningen*, one of the largest dailies in Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its political affiliation was liberal³ until 1956 and Social Democrat thereafter.⁴ My investigation of the paper’s reporting on Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, as part of which I sampled and read some hundred articles, showed that the writers of *Stockholms-Tidningen* usually avoided criticism of, or reported positively about, the events in Germany. There were, however, also a few critical articles (see also Blomberg 2003: 25). National Socialist language—words or concepts that were frequently used in National Socialist contexts—was used in all Swedish dailies, including *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, and *Göteborgs Handels-och Sjöfartstidning*. This was partly due to the fact that direct references were being made to German-language texts, or that attempts to translate German material as accurately as possible often involved some transfer of the text to Swedish (Brylla 2005: 117). Linguist Charlotta Brylla has argued that, in dealing with the use of National Socialist language in Swedish newspapers, one can detect three main strategies:

1. The direct quote [*Det okommenterade citatet*]. National Socialist speeches were retold as accurately as possible without commentary. Examples of this strategy are found, for example, in *Dagsposten*.
2. The direct quote with journalistic commentary [*Citatet med referatmarkering*]. This was used in many dailies, among them *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, and *Stockholms-Tidningen*. Here the quotes are embedded in reporting, contextualized through a journalist’s simple annotation, for example, “Hitler strongly criticized” or “Hitler emphasized.”

³ “Liberal” is used here in the European sense, i.e., non-Socialist and free market, but also non-conservative (Transl.).

⁴ *Stockholms-Tidningen* was published from 1889 to 1966. *Stockholms-Tidningen*, Register. Riksarkivet Stockholm; *Nationalencyklopedin* 1995:278.

3. An editorial/journalistic commentary on an event/speech [*Det kommenterade referatet*]. Here the original was not quoted but described in an analytical and often critical context. This sort of commentary was most common in papers that were critical of Nazi Germany, as for example *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Eskilstuna-Kuriren*, and *Social-Demokraten* (Brylla 2005a: 207, cf. also Almgren 2005: 62–63).

Clearly, the types of quotes and reports published can provide insight into an author's and the paper's approach to National Socialist messages.

This essay incorporates this kind of analysis, departing from an examination of Atterberg's published article about the Composers' Meeting that took place on February 18, 1934, in the University Assembly Hall and Philharmonic Hall in Berlin, and then comparing his account with those from three German papers. My purpose is not to demonstrate whether or not Atterberg had a naïve or incorrect perception of the Composers' Meeting, or whether or not he saw through the plans of National Socialism; rather, my intention is to investigate different narratives of the Composers' Meeting in Swedish and German contexts.

Stockholms-Tidningen published Atterberg's article "Droit moral och internationellt utbyte av folklig musik. Tyska tonsättares strävan" (*Droit moral* and international exchange of *folklig* music) on March 10 of the same year. Atterberg had been invited to the meeting by Richard Strauss.⁵ The trip was financed by the Swedish government's support of Atterberg's attendance of the premiere of his opera *Flammendes Land* in Braunschweig on February 17, the day before the Composers' Meeting.⁶ That the Swedish government was interested in the events at the meeting in Berlin is clear from a confidential report that Atterberg sent to the State Department on February 28, 1934. The report is very similar in style to the article I am analyzing here.⁷

In the article, written after his return, Atterberg described in detail who had attended the meeting, what speeches were given, and the content of the music-political program. Atterberg described a rise of music in Germany and the beginning of a new era. According to his report, the Composers' Meeting was characterized by enthusiasm and progress. German composers' and politicians' aim to support "music for the people" and oppose "ultramodern music" was apparent at the meeting and welcomed by Atterberg:

För första gången ha Tysklands alla tonsättare samlats i ett enda förbund. För första gången har man gemensamt anordnat en "demonstration" med flygande fanor och klingande spel. Det klingande spelet var en realitet: Philharmonikerkonsert med Furtwängler, Pfitzner, Hausegger, Reznicek, Hindemith, Georg Schumann, Graener som dirigenter och Richard Strauss åhörande sin egen odödliga tondikt "Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche" under Furtwänglers trollstav. De flygande fanorna syntes väl ej, men deviserna på standaren vid denna demonstration voro "Internationellt utbyte av folklig musik", och, i brist på lämplig översättning, den franska juridiska termen "Droit moral". Den som förde dessa standar var tonsättaren juris doctor Julius Kopsch, sedan många och långa år Richard Strauss' högra hand i kampen för ett enat komponisternas Tyskland. [. . .]

Jag kom för sent till den inledande Mozartkvartetten, men fick i stället fågna mig åt anblicken av den av en ganska unik publik fyllda aulan.

⁵ Kurt Atterberg, *Minnesanteckningar*, vol. V, s. 176. Kurt Atterberg's Archive, Musikmuseet Stockholm (hereafter KA, MM).

⁶ "Kurt Atterberg begär ett statsbidrag på 400 kr," [unknown newspaper], 2 February 1934. "Tonsättaren Kurt Atterberg fick i fredagskonseljen ett reseunderstöd på 400 kr för att i Braunschweig övervara den tyska urpremiären på hans opera *Fanal*," [unknown newspaper], 17 February 1934.

⁷ Kurt Atterberg, "Konfidentiell rapport [till UD] över besök i Berlin den 18 och 19 februari 1934" (Confidential report [probably written to the foreign office] of visit to Berlin, 18 and 19 February 1934), KA, MM.

Framför talarstolen och bänkade i långa led å ömse sidor därom satt nästan allt, vad Tyskland hade att uppvisa i fråga om tonsättare och tonkonstnärer i konstnärligt eller administrativt ledande ställning: Strauss, Pfitzner, Hausegger, Graener, Reznicek, Furtwängler, den nya ledaren för Musikhochschule prof. Fritz Stein för att nu nämna några. Av de utländska representanter märktes den österrikiske tonsättaren Kienzl, ”Evangelie-mannens” skapare, och konservatoriedirektören Marx från Wien, vice ordföranden i den franska tonsättarsammanslutningen Carol-Bérard, en av dirigenterna vid Stora operan i Paris [...] Medlemmar av diplomatiska kåren, riksjustitieminister dr Gürtner och som representant för propagandaminister Goebbels statssekreterare Funk.⁸

For the first time, all of Germany’s composers have gathered in one society. For the first time one has jointly organized a “manifestation” with flying banners and sounding performance. The sounding performance was a reality: a concert with the Philharmonic conducted by Furtwängler, Pfitzner, Hausegger, Reznicek, Hindemith, Georg Schumann, Graener, and with Richard Strauss attending the performance of his own immortal music poem “Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche” under Furtwängler’s magic baton. The flying banners were invisible, but the slogans on the standards during this manifestation were “International exchange of *folklig* music” [“folkish” music, popular music, music based on folk or national music], and, lacking a proper translation, the French juridical term “*Droit moral*.” Carrying these standards was composer jurist Doctor Julius Kopsch, for many long years Richard Strauss’s right hand in the struggle for a united composers’ Germany. . . .

I arrived too late for the opening Mozart quartet, but could instead take pleasure in [*fåga*] the sight of the hall, filled with a fairly unique audience.

In front of the pulpit and seated in long rows on each side was almost everybody whom Germany could parade in terms of composers and musicians in leading artistic or administrative positions: Strauss, Pfitzner, Hausegger, Graener, Reznicek, Furtwängler, the new head of Musikhochschule Prof. Fritz Stein, to mention a few. Among the foreign representatives were the Austrian composer Kienzl, the creator of “The Man of the Gospels” [*Der Evangelie-mann*] and director Marx of the conservatory from Vienna, the deputy chair of the French society of composers Carol-Bérard, one of the conductors at the Grand Opera in Paris . . . members of the diplomatic corps, national secretary of justice Dr. Gürtner, and [Walther] Funk, State Secretary at the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, who appeared as a representative for Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda Goebbels.

The enthusiasm for the supposed upswing of musical life is clear in these quotes and throughout the entire article. Atterberg’s fascination comes into view: he enjoys “the sight of the hall, filled with a fairly unique audience,” and describes the event lightly with the metaphor of “flying banners.” He describes the opening as the beginning of a new epoch in music life, staged by the ones in charge as a “manifestation.” Using such words of concord as “united,” “only one,” and “unity,” and the parallel construction, “For the first time. . . . For the first time,” he emphasizes harmony and a new unity through unification, a rhetorical strategy displaying coherence, solidarity, and common interests. It is also an example of discontinuity. A positive change is stressed: music has at last received a prominent role, and earlier divisions have been overcome. Music’s new role in society is also shown through the prominent people who were invited, namely “almost everybody who Germany could parade.” Music has, according to Atterberg, gained value through the joint engagement of prominent composers and politicians. The naming of famous people is a strategy of authority, and legitimizes the new musical culture: since “important” figures are present at the Composers’ Meeting, musical life is in good hands and finally receiving the prominence that many composers and musicians had long craved. The choice of wording also illustrates an extensive confidence that the authorities will manage their task in a professional way.

⁸ Kurt Atterberg, “*Droit moral* och internationellt utbyte av folklig musik. Tyska tonsättares strävan,” *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 10 March 1934.

Atterberg also explains the concept of *droit moral* in the article, a concept that would become important during the following years. According to Atterberg, *droit moral* implied the artist's ideal exclusive conceptual rights.⁹ It would prevent the "destruction" of musical works. As an example of the latter he mentions Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*. This opera, "the Czech nation's pride and jewel," was to become a film. "With the knowledge of these film makers' psyche" the filming was, according to Atterberg, seen as an attempt at "vandalization" in Czechoslovakia, and the production was banned. The production was then moved to Germany, where there were no laws assigning the artist's "conceptual rights." Atterberg received this information from Julius Kopsch, who was also present in Berlin. According to Kopsch—and Atterberg agreed—strong measures were necessary to prevent the "vandalization" of music. As an example, Atterberg mentioned an American publisher that specialized in "the jazzification of classical masterworks and distributed its publications across the entire world." He had "heard and seen how the Pilgrim Chorus had been jazzed to at the Royal."¹⁰ From this example it follows that *droit moral* signified a protection against the making of modern arrangements without the permission of the creator. By using the concept of *vandalizing* as a topos of catastrophe, a threatening picture is painted, namely that modernism's more powerful, "destructive" impact on musical life must be effectively limited.

Atterberg expressed enthusiasm that German composers were finally unified and collectively wanted to fight this threat. But, according to Atterberg, not only German but also global common laws were necessary in order for the fight to be effective: "But a conceptual protection for the artist becomes empty if identical rules are not adopted in all countries. The collective and unified generation of German composers is now aiming for the adoption of such rules."¹¹ Again, Atterberg emphasizes *unity* as connected not only to a defined nationality, but to a specific generation. From the earlier mentioned names, it becomes clear that he refers to men born towards the end of the nineteenth century, who had achieved important positions in musical life and in politics. These were also the agents during the Composers' Meeting and it was their works that were performed.

The speech described in the greatest depth in both German papers and Atterberg's report was that of secretary Funk, who appeared as a representative of the Nazi government. Atterberg begins his account of Funk's speech as follows:

Han började sedan med att påpeka, hur all äkta konst är framsprungen ur folket och att det vore den nya regeringens mål att åter göra konsten till folkets sak. Utan att nämna den ultramoderna konsten och musiken gav han ultramodernismen en kraftig snärt genom att påpeka, hur tyska konstnärer och musiker i en tid av 'tygellös' liberalism med dess nedrivande tendenser och med sitt 'dissekerande' själsliga arbete hade blivit främmande för folket och hur de måste förlora folklighetens fasta mark av det enkla skäl, att sådan mark ej hade funnits. Han sammanfattade de nya strävandena ungefär med orden 'Folket skall leva i konsten och konsten i folket.'

He then began pointing out how all real art sprang from the people and that it is the new government's goal to make art once again a matter of the people. Without mentioning ultramodern art and music, he gave ultramodernism a powerful hit by describing how, during a time of "uncontrolled" liberalism with its downward-pulling tendencies and its "desecrating" mental [*själsliga*] work, German artists and

⁹ Atterberg uses "ideella rättigheter," which today has the connotation of "non-profit" in Swedish, rather than what I believe he intended. Betsy Rosenblatt writes, "The term 'moral rights' as a translation of the French term 'droit moral,' refers to the ability of authors to control the eventual fate of their works." See <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/property/library/moralprimer.html> (Accessed March 2009) (Transl.).

¹⁰ Kurt Atterberg, "Droit moral och internationellt utbyte av folklig musik."

¹¹ "Men ett ideellt skydd för konstnärernas och tonsättarens blir en tom bokstav, om ej ensartade bestämmelser antagas i alla länder. Den samlade och enade tyska tonsättargenerationen ämnar nu gå in för sådana bestämmelsers antagande."

musicians had alienated themselves from the people, and how they had lost their firm grip on the ground of popular consciousness for the simple reason that there never was such a ground. He characterized the new tendencies approximately by the words, “the people should live in art and art in the people.”

Atterberg begins his summary of Funk’s speech with a direct quote with journalistic commentary: “He then began pointing out...,” which I understand to be aiming at a style of neutral reporting. He then recounts the speech with a few added comments—for example, about the ultramodern. “The people should live in art and art in the people” is a direct quote. Through the entire article, Atterberg’s reporting oscillates between direct quotes and the direct quote with journalistic commentary. Atterberg tries to contextualize Funk’s speech for his Swedish readers by explaining what is not explicitly stated. There are no critical comments in the article.

“Real art” is defined as having “sprung from the people”—“art” and “the people” are connected—by contrast with “ultramodern” art, which has “lost the firm ground of the people.” “Ultramodern” art is connected to “uncontrolled liberalism” with “its downward pulling tendencies” and “desecrating mental work.” Liberalism was a word with negative connotations within the National Socialist movement and was used to describe a lack of order and discipline that, according to the National Socialists, was due to an increased level of individualism and egoism. Liberalism was often connected with the Weimar period and the failure of democracy. Art not originating from the people is described as rootless and destructive. The negative attributes of “unregulated,” “downward pulling,” and “desecrating”—as opposed to the positive *folklighet*—emphasize polarization in order to contrast the situation of art before and after the National Socialists’ assumption of power: while art’s situation before 1933 seemed dark, now everything would improve. The new government would save “real art.”

In Atterberg’s narrative, non-genuine art is connected to the “ultramodern,” a link not explicitly stated in the German reports, in which the negative development of the musical life is attributed to the chaos that had existed under the previous government. Moreover, in the German reports, the connection of art to Germanness is significantly more emphasized than in Atterberg’s description. Those reports talk about *German* art and *German* music, and the musicians are labeled as the most *German* of artists. Music and Germanness are joined, something that is not done to the same extent in Atterberg’s report.

Specifically, it becomes clear that Atterberg has translated the German word *Volkstum* with *folklighet*: *folklighetens mark* [the soil of *folklighet*] is the translation of *der Boden des Volkstums*.¹² In National Socialist vocabulary during the Third Reich the German word *Volkstum* took on a racial element: “race” and the folk were connected. The concept *folk* experienced a semantic shift during this period. *Folk* was a positively-charged concept and implied among other things a group of people who shared a culture and a language. To a large extent, there were no biological components until the beginning of the nineteenth century. But towards the end of the nineteenth century, a notion spread of *folk* as a “race community” [*rasgemenskap*]. National Socialism was highly influenced by ideas of *folk* as an expression of “blood” and “race,” a concept that became part of the official language in Nazi Germany.

Atterberg’s translation of *Volkstum* as *folklighet* conceals the National Socialistic content from his Swedish readers. It is not apparent how Atterberg himself understood the folk concept, whether he considered “folk” primarily as a unity of culture and language or as a unity of race. Here he remains vague. But because the importance of Germanness in the speech is not made visible, Nazi Germany’s aim of

¹² Fritz Stege, “Der Deutsche Komponistentag,” *Der Berliner Westen*, 19 February 1934; [Robert] Oboussier, “Der schaffende Musiker im neuen Deutschland. Erster deutscher Komponistentag,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 February 1934; Peter W., “Erster deutscher Komponistentag in Berlin eröffnet,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 20 February 1934.

retaining the privilege of interpretation on musical matters is also not made visible. But perhaps Atterberg wanted to emphasize the international aspect for his Swedish readers.

Atterberg continues his report from the speech:

Han [Funk] gick vidare in på medlen för realiserandet av detta mål och som första tes av vikt förkunnade han: 'I vår tid finns inga mecenater mer. Staten måste därför vara mecenat för konsten och konstnärerna'.

He [Funk] went on to describe the means for realizing this goal, and as his first thesis of importance he declared: "In our time there are no longer any benefactors. The government therefore has to become the benefactor for art and the artists."

This paragraph begins with a direct quote with journalistic commentary: ". . . as his first thesis of importance he declared. . . ." A certain degree of irony is possibly apparent here: it is not until now that Funk states anything important. Atterberg does not ascribe the same importance to Funk's earlier and more theoretical elaborations on music and art; he is interested in the practical music-political issues. The direct quote emphasizes the importance of the message: now "the government" should "become the benefactor for art and the artists"; it wants to take everybody under its wings.

This section of the speech is recounted in a different way in the German articles. Something that is mentioned in several German accounts and not in Atterberg's article is the following section of Fritz Stege's report:

Es geht nicht um die Richtung der Kunst, sondern um die Art der Kunst. Das Volk soll wieder in der Kunst und der Künstler im Volke leben! Das ist die erste Aufgabe der nationalsozialistischen Kunstpolitik.¹³

It is not about the direction of art, but the essence of art. The folk shall live again in art and the artist shall live in the folk. This is the first task for National Socialist art policy.

Here the symbiosis between art and folk is explicitly connected with National Socialism. In a different German account these thoughts are further extended:

Es ginge nicht um die R i c h t u n g der Kunst, sondern um ihre A r t. Ihre Aufgabe sei, die deutsche Wesensart zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Nur wenn die Kunst im Volkshafte wurzele, könne auch das Volk in der Kunst und mit ihr leben; unter diesen Voraussetzungen sei der Staat bereit, das Amt eines Mäzens dem Künstler gegenüber zu übernehmen.¹⁴

It was not about the d i r e c t i o n of art, but about its e s s e n c e. The task of art is to express the German spirit [*Wesensart*]. Only if art is anchored in the people's steadfast roots [*im Volkshafte*], could the people live in and with the arts; under these conditions the state is willing to take over and perform the duties of a patron to the artist.

Not only are art and folk connected in these statements, but also folk and Germanness. The idea of art as having a mandate for expressing the "German spirit," of being anchored in the people's steadfast roots (*im Volkshafte wurzele*) implies a notion of a national "soul," common to all Germans, that should be expressed in art. Only "under these conditions" should the German state support the artists. All artists are excluded who could not be considered as expressing "the German spirit." What "German spirit" referred to is not made explicit.

In Atterberg's report of the speech the reader gets the impression that the German state will take care of *all* artists with no exceptions and no demands: "In our time there are no benefactors any longer. The

¹³ Stege, "Der Deutsche Komponistentag."

¹⁴ Oboussier, "Der schaffende Musiker im neuen Deutschland. Erster deutscher Komponistentag."

government must therefore become the benefactor for art and the artists.” Phrased that way, the demand for art’s expression of Germanness becomes invisible. Instead the statement is coupled with ultramodernism’s threat against the artists. In this context, the message might well be that the German state takes good care of all artists in order to combat the ultramodern and its consequences. Atterberg continues his report of the speech:

Han relaterade, hur genom regeringsingripande splittringen bland de tyska tonsättarna bragts ur världen och hur de nu enats under den man, som i årtionden kämpat för detta mål: Richard Strauss.[. . .] Han slutade sitt tal med utpekande av Richard Strauss som den verkliga ledaren av Tysklands musikliv och som förbindelselänken mellan detta och regeringen.¹⁵

He related how through governmental intervention the split among the German composers has been made to disappear and how they now have been united behind the man who for decades fought for this goal: Richard Strauss. . . . Funk concluded his speech by declaring Richard Strauss to be the true leader of Germany’s musical life and as its link to the government.

According to Atterberg’s account, the German government intervened in and repaired the composers’ earlier conflicts. However, Atterberg does not refer to any concrete examples of “governmental intervention”—note how the passive sentence constructions “been made to disappear” and “been united” lack agency—which means that a Swedish reader did not receive any concrete information about *how* the governmental intervention had been put in place.

From the German articles it becomes clear that the organization referred to was the National Organization for German Composers (Berufsstand der deutschen Komponisten), as part of the RMK and STAGMA (Reichsmusikkammer and Staatlich genehmigte Gesellschaft zur Verwertung musikalischer Urheberrechte). These were National Socialist organizations with obligatory membership; in order to practice one’s profession, each artist had to be a member. Jewish artists were excluded by an “Aryan clause.” These exclusions disappear in Atterberg’s article, along with the idea of compulsory membership. Instead the split among composers is contrasted with their unification under Richard Strauss, who thus acquires the status of a hero (cf. Kargl 1997: 43). Strauss is the one who worked for many years for artists’ rights and the one who unified the artists. Again, unity is emphasized. I would like to label this mode of speech as a discourse of unity, since the speech of a new unity and unification was central in National Socialist texts, contrasting these with earlier conflicts (divisions)—among others, in the Weimar Republic. The politics of unity was also referred to as *Gleichschaltung* (making the same), which implied that the Nazi regime banned all organizations that did not adapt to the politics of National Socialism—as, for example, when they refused to implement the “Aryan clause.” On the contrary, conforming organizations, including the National Organization of German Composers, could expect governmental support.

Strauss is described as the link between Germany’s musical life and the government. Again, Funk’s speech receives a comment, as Atterberg writes: “It is a fact that Strauss is an unselfish leader of German musical practitioners: from the composers to the unemployed music engravers, from choral societies to the piano manufacturer, in short, of everything.”¹⁶ Strauss is also described as an ideal agent for German musical life. The narrative about Strauss as a benefactor for others is a rhetorical strategy emphasizing unselfishness, a description of a man who is always available and who acts without any thought of personal gain. The critique of individualism was central in the national discourses of the 1930s: the individual

¹⁵ Atterberg, “*Droit moral* och internationellt utbyte av folklig musik.”

¹⁶ “Faktum är att Strauss på det mest oegennyttiga sättet går i bräsch för det tyska musiklivets intressen från tonsättarna till de arbetslösa notstickarna, från körföreningar till pianofabrikanten, kort sagt för allt.” Ibid.

should by free will subordinate him- or herself to the needs of the nation and the people. Such notions also existed during the same period in the Swedish Social Democrat concept *folkhemmet* (literally, “the people’s home”; or, the nation for the people), according to which one should behave in “solidarity with society” and subordinate one’s needs to the common good (Frykman and Löfgren 1985:137). Exactly the same idea occurs in Atterberg’s comments: Strauss first appears as an individual, and is described later as one who subordinates himself to the collective. But other accounts do not support this picture of the artist providing unconditional help to his colleagues. Although Strauss nurtured those who shared his musical taste, he opposed colleagues who had adapted a more modern style than the one he advocated (Splitt 1987).

German articles about the Composers’ Meeting also portray Strauss as a hero: he is labeled the *Reichführer* (State Leader) of the composers, nominated by the government, which has “fought for decades” against division among composers.¹⁷ The statement can also be interpreted as meaning that Strauss is the personification of the ideal national realization of the musical life. Atterberg’s and the German reporting are similar on this point; however, some of the racist attributions in the German texts disappear when transferred to a Swedish audience.



Figure 1. Richard Strauss speaking at the German Composers’ Meeting in Berlin on 18 February 1934.
(Photo from Richard Strauss Institute, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, used with permission.)

¹⁷ Stege, “Der Deutsche Komponistentag”; Oboussier, “Der schaffende Musiker im neuen Deutschland”; Peter W., “Erster deutscher Komponistentag in Berlin eröffnet.”

Several of the foreign guests gave speeches at the Composers’ Meeting. Atterberg spoke on behalf of Sweden, Carol Bérard for France, Adriano Lualdi for Italy, and Wilhelm Kienzl for Austria. In Atterberg’s article, and in the German articles, the speakers are mentioned by name but the speeches by Funk and Strauss are given most attention. Atterberg describes himself in his article as a representative for the Nordic countries rather than for Sweden. One reason for this was that he had been asked to represent Norway and Denmark as well, since their representatives (Sverre Hagerup Bull and Peder Gram) were unable to attend. The Finnish representative was Yrjö Kilpinen.¹⁸ Atterberg is likewise mentioned by the German writers as a representative for Sweden and for “den skandinavischen Norden.”¹⁹ “Norden” (The Nordic Countries) was a commonly used term for the modern Scandinavian countries during the 1930s in Germany (Leiska 2005: 69–80), and its use emphasized the relationship between the Nordic countries and Germany.

According to the German reports, the foreign guests spoke as representatives for their respective composers’ organizations, and distributed greetings from those who were positive to the idea of cooperation with the new regime.²⁰ These foreign appearances are represented in the German articles as examples of the German composers’ successful international collaborations.

The German accounts of the ordering of the speeches give a view of how conscientiously the organizers had staged the Composers’ Meeting. Funk spoke first, as the representative of the government, and he concluded his speech with the celebration of Strauss, who then took over, to large applause. The last speaker was Wilhelm Kienzl from Austria, who was received “enthusiastically.” According to Fritz Stege’s and Peter W.’s reports, at the same moment that Kienzl appealed to the “German brotherhood,” a string quartet performed the German national anthem.²¹ Here the National Socialist message of Austria’s forthcoming *Anschluss* to Germany was staged musically, and Kienzl symbolized Austria’s apparent longing to come home to the German *Reich*. By using a representative of the Nazi regime to open the Composers’ Meeting, and an Austrian to conclude the speeches, climaxes were created at the beginning and the end. Atterberg does not mention the musical staging of Austria’s “homesickness” in his article. Likewise, while the German commentators mention “*Sieg-Heil*”-calls and Hitler salutes during the celebration, Atterberg does not. Here, again, the impact of National Socialism on the event is not evident to Swedish readers.

After the opening ceremony, a conference was held at the Hotel Kaiserhof where attempts were made to consolidate the international musical exchange. Atterberg describes it thus:

Man beslöt därvid att igångsätta ett stort anlagt internationellt utbyte av musik av sådan art, som kunde fattas av den stora publiken. Själv tillät jag mig föreslå att betydelsen av musikaliskt framåtskridande måste erkännas i ett eventuellt programuttalande, men detta vann icke gehör. Synbarligen är man i alla länder grundligt led vid allt, som kan tangera modernism. De närvarande utlänningarna rapporterade, var och en i sin stad, vilka organisationer, som existerade i deras länder och som kunde tänkas vara lämpliga organ för det internationella utbytet. Tyskarna hade sin ”Allgemeiner deutscher Tonkünstlerverein”, vilken man nu erbjöd som operationsbas.²²

One decided to begin a large-scale international exchange of music such as could be understood by the general audience. I allowed myself to propose that the importance of musical progress must be

¹⁸ Atterberg, “Konfidentiell rapport.”

¹⁹ Stege, “Der Deutsche Komponistentag”; Oboussier: “Der schaffende Musiker im neuen Deutschland”; Peter W., “Erster deutscher Komponistentag in Berlin eröffnet”; Peter W.: “Lebendige Kunst Inhalt und Zweck der Staatsführung,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 20 February 1934.

²⁰ Stege, “Der Deutsche Komponistentag”; Peter W., “Lebendige Kunst Inhalt und Zweck der Staatsführung.”

²¹ Stege, “Der Deutsche Komponistentag.”

²² Atterberg, “*Droit moral* och internationellt utbyte av folklig musik.”

recognized in a possible program statement, but that idea was rejected. Obviously there is fatigue in all countries about everything that touches upon modernism. The foreigners present reported, each for their city, which organizations existed in their countries that could be suitable venues for the international exchange. The Germans had their “Allgemeiner deutscher Tonkünstlerverein,” which was offered as an operational base.

Atterberg does not elaborate further on “the general audience,” and in the first sentence the subject “one” is an example of vagueness and anonymity. The reader does not find out concretely which music should be exchanged and who should make the choice. Atterberg’s suggestion to acknowledge musical progress was not welcomed, which Atterberg interprets as the result of fatigue with modernism.

The musical exchange was to be organized with the aid of the foreign guests present and, according to Atterberg’s description, there was agreement as to how this exchange should be structured. The guests were considered to be national representatives for their home states and were assigned authority to direct the musical selections in their respective countries, so that the “right music” was the target for the exchange.

The German authors do not mention this conference at all, or only very briefly. In the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* Robert Oboussier wrote that the Public German Music Society (Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein, ADMV) should contact the other European countries to promote “foreign folk-connected music” (*die ausländische volksverbundene Musik*).²³ The ADMV obviously assumed a main role in the music exchange. In Atterberg’s article this is portrayed as an offer from the German side: “The Germans had their ‘Allgemeiner deutscher Tonkünstlerverein,’ which was offered as an operational base.”²⁴ Generally Atterberg provides a more egalitarian description of the collaboration between the countries that would organize the musical exchange, although it is made clear in the German articles that the music exchange should be organized by Germany.

The opening ceremony of the Composers’ Meeting concluded with a large concert in Philharmonic Hall, with Goebbels as one of the honorary guests. Wilhelm Furtwängler conducted performances of works by Richard Strauss, Max von Schillings, Georg Schumann, Siegmund von Hausegger, Paul Hindemith, Paul Graener, and Hans Pfitzner.²⁵ These musicians were to have a great impact during the beginning of the Third Reich, and several of them became members of the new National Organization for German Composers.

The Composers’ Meeting was used extensively in Nazi propaganda. Sections of the opening ceremony were filmed and broadcast on radio. The National Socialist paper *Völkischer Beobachter* described it as an advancement of National Socialist cultural policies, and there was a great enthusiasm for the “The New Germany” (*im neuen Deutschland*).²⁶ “The New Germany” was a central National Socialist concept for the positive changes—in the eyes of the National Socialists—in German society after 1933 (cf. Brylla 2005: 127).

Atterberg chose the headline “*Droit moral* and international exchange of *folklig* music” for his article. In the German articles this music was described as *völkische Musik*, *volksverbundene Musik* (music close to the people), and *Musik des Volkes* (the music of the people): a music that would “emerge naturally” from

²³ Oboussier, “Der schaffende Musiker im neuen Deutschland.”

²⁴ “Tyskarna hade sin ‘Allgemeiner deutscher Tonkünstlerverein,’ vilken man nu erbjöd som operationsbas.” Atterberg, “*Droit moral* och internationellt utbyte av folklig musik.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Peter W., “Erster deutscher Komponistentag in Berlin eröffnet”; Peter W., “Lebendige Kunst Inhalt und Zweck der Staatsführung.”

the “individuality of a people.”²⁷ “*Folklig* music” was described in different ways by the German writers. *Völkische Musik* was a concept with clear race-biological connotations, while *volksverbundene Musik* and *Musik des Volkes* did not necessarily imply race. Here again appears the semantic shift in the concept of “folk” that was discussed earlier. *Völkisch* was a central National Socialist concept that defined different peoples by their biological racial characteristics. It also included a clear hierarchy of the different peoples in which the “German” and “Nordic races” were at the top (Geisler 2006:64, Almgren 2005:39ff.). *Volksverbundene Musik* or *Musik des Volkes* did not imply this component, per se, although the concepts could be charged with a race-biological content in the National Socialist context.

The different labels for “folk-inspired music” constitute one example of how the National Socialists used “innocent, harmless words” on the one hand and charged words on the other. Charged concepts such as *völkische Musik* were used side by side with more neutral terms, such as *volksverbundene Musik* and *Musik des Volkes*, which in turn through this use assumed a charged, racial-biological content. The parallel use of concepts that at the same time were used in non-National Socialist and National Socialist contexts, the semantic shift between non-National Socialist and National Socialist concepts, characterized linguistic usage in the Nazi German totalitarian state. Language thus became an effective tool of dissemination, in that the use of “harmless” and yet “charged” expressions led people without any National Socialist connection to spread National Socialist concepts. For an observer like Atterberg, whose mother tongue was not German, the difference between the various concepts was probably even harder to perceive.

Atterberg translated all three terms, *völkische Musik*, *volksverbundene Musik*, and *Musik des Volkes*, as *folklig musik* (Almgren and Brylla 2005: 108, Geisler 2006: 64). The Swedish word *folklig* is still a word with mainly positive connotations—for example, meaning “natural,” “original,” and “simple.” At the beginning of the twentieth century, the concept was often used to describe an authentic national culture that was threatened with extinction and had to be saved by collecting “folk culture,” among other things (Frykman 1993: 140, Lilja 1996: 31). Many people in Sweden during the first half of the twentieth century considered a concern for *folklig musik* as a remedy against “foreign mass culture,” and an effective protection for “the preservation of Swedishness” (Ling 1979: 22, Bohman 1979: 56–57). When Atterberg translated *völkisch* as *folklig*, the National Socialist content of the term disappeared for his readers and it became a positively charged Swedish word.

This transformation shows that people like Atterberg, who were eager to preserve a national music and wanted to protect it against the impact of modernism, could perceive the exchange of *folklig musik* as a positive act for saving their own national “folk culture.” Germany’s wish for an exchange of music of “folkish character” with other countries also meant that other countries’ music would be protected against “the modernist threat.” From this perspective Nazi Germany performed a good deed in saving the domestic national—here being the Swedish—“cultural heritage.”

It is not clear from Atterberg’s texts how much he had adopted the race discourse of the time. He is vague regarding the relationship between race and national identity. He seldom writes about race, though much about Swedishness. He used the term “race” exclusively when describing the Jews. One possible explanation could be that the relationship between race and nation was so obvious in the contemporary conception that the terms were used interchangeably.

Both Atterberg and the German writers portray Germany as a model for opposition to modernist tendencies in musical life, and actively promoting better copyright legislation. According to their

²⁷ Ibid.

descriptions, Germany actively demoted modernist currents by prioritizing a “folk-based” national music, among others. At the same time Germany appeared as a state eager to improve the life situation of its artists, for example, by modernizing copyright law, by intervening in and preventing conflicts between copyright organizations, while at the same time creating new centralized organizations. From Atterberg’s account it is clear that he considered the centralization of musical life in Nazi Germany as a positive phenomenon since it remedied earlier conflicts and permitted decisions to be made much more quickly. An effective, modern bureaucracy had been established that promoted the “right” music. There is a clear ambivalence towards modernity (Bauman 1998): on the one hand, an aspiration to preserve the traditional “folk culture,” and on the other an aspiration towards renewal, through new legislation and new institutions.

The Composers’ Meeting was described both by Atterberg and in the German articles as a heroic departure. A new period in musical life was initiated and set in contrast to a past in which the authentic national had been under threat and the artist was a toy in the hands of the publisher and the entertainment industry. The descriptions of the Composers’ Meeting show the expectations that Atterberg and many other composers and conductors had of the Nazi regime’s music politics: the anticipation that an effective Germany could deal with rapid changes in musical life, and help other nations along the way. Germany’s apparent “success” in dealing with these changes led to a continuous collaboration between German politicians, composers, conductors, and musicians, along with many colleagues in other countries.

Postscript

In my book I wanted to show the reader why so many composers and musicians were fascinated by Nazi music politics, but I also wanted to show the consequences of these politics and, of course, I am very critical of them. In chapter 3 I am trying to give some examples of this fascination. Because the translated excerpt is taken out of its context, the end may sound too positive. To avoid misunderstandings, I would like to add the following paragraphs from the English summary of my thesis:

Many composers and musicians in Sweden and Germany experienced the dramatic changes in musical life during the first half of the twentieth century as a threat to established music styles and techniques. In their opinion, a clear national identity could provide security and stability in a changing world. For many of these Swedish composers and musicians, a commitment to Nazi Germany was interpreted as a beneficial contribution to the establishment of a strong national identity, to improvement of their own national musical life and, of course, to the making of a musical career. Their engagement with Germany was totally voluntary and there were no demands from Germany for cooperation. The Nazi government could for its part use Nordic composers and music to confirm Nazi ideas on racial biology and to spread Nazi propaganda.

In the 1990s, the effectiveness of Sweden’s neutrality during World War II was questioned by Swedish scholars. Several universities started research projects in different disciplines concerning Sweden’s relationship to Nazi Germany.²⁸ Today, scholars are convinced that Sweden cooperated with Nazi Germany to a much larger extent than was earlier assumed, not only for the purpose of staying out of

²⁸ See among others the report from the Swedish Scientific Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*) at <http://www.vr.se/download/18.65bf9bc10cd31363a180001073/nazism.pdf> (Accessed 11 June 2009).

the war, but also to serve its own economic and cultural interests. In the sphere of music, many Swedish composers and musicians continued their cooperation with German colleagues during the Nazi period, but there were others who resisted and criticized Nazi politics.²⁹ Kurt Atterberg is an example of the group that continued its cooperation with German institutions after 1933 and defined its work as purely musical and unpolitical. A composer such as Atterberg, who had a central position in Swedish musical life and a large network of international contacts, helped to legitimize Nazism and to strengthen Nazi politics by spreading positive impressions about Nazi Germany and cooperating with the Nazi regime in music-political work. This kind of cooperation became a very effective tool in Nazi propaganda.

In my study I also discuss the assessment of Atterberg that occurred as an expression of the need for new national stories after the war. To secure democracy and create a new, modern, and peaceful Europe, it was necessary to mark a distance from Nazism. Nazism now meant the Holocaust, evil, and a threat to democracy. Strategies for dissociation included the denazifications in Germany and the countries which had been occupied by Germany, and it became necessary to exclude people who had been active in Nazi Germany, to brand them as Nazis or Nazi sympathisers. I argue that Atterberg was a suitable scapegoat for Swedish involvement in Nazism, partly because of his reputation as a powerful and sometimes intolerant person, and partly because his music was not looked on in Sweden as very successful. I compare Atterberg’s case with the treatment of Richard Strauss and Wilhelm Furtwängler after the war. Both were accused of having been Nazis because of their involvement in Nazi musical politics, but at the same time their successful musical careers were emphasized. In such cases a difference is expressed between the (apolitical and strong) artist and the (political and weak) human being.

²⁹ See among others Karlsson 2005, Andersson and Geisler 2006.

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