

Jan Meyerowitz and Musical Italy

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The presence in the musical archives of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia) of numerous letters from Jan Meyerowitz (1913–1998) to Italian composers offers a perspective from which to regard the career and artistic production of a fascinating if overlooked figure. These letters, the most significant of which are preserved in the Fondo Giovanni Salviucci, the Fondo Alfredo Casella, the Fondo Gian Francesco Malipiero, not only illuminate Meyerowitz's life and early career, but also deepen our awareness of contemporaneous developments in the experience of the Italian musicians of his acquaintance.

Meyerowitz poses singular challenges to the biographer. A number of different nations could put forth a valid claim on him, as reflected even in the successive forms of his name. Born as Hans-Hermann Meyerowitz in what was then the German city of Breslau, he occasionally called himself 'Gianni' when he transferred to Italy following the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933. Toward the latter part of his extended period in France (1940–1946) he gave recitals under the name Jean Meyerowitz. But despite the many years he passed in the United States, he never adopted the name of 'John', instead preferring 'Jan' – probably as a nod to the fact that his German home town had now become the Polish city of Wrocław.

Adding to the complexity of his sense of national identity are questions of religion and ethnicity. Although Meyerowitz was of Jewish family background, his parents had converted to Protestantism around the time of his birth, and the Jewish faith played no part in his upbringing; it was rather his exposure to racial persecution which had the effect of forcing him to confront his Jewish identity. The latter assumed an importance to him at once personal and artistic, as manifested in certain of his professional associations, many of his critical and literary writings (including a study of Jewish humour),¹ and above all, a number of musical compositions, both vocal and instrumental, on Jewish subject matter. These stand alongside a quantity of Christian-inspired works, incongruously or not, depending on how one squints at them. Unlike Arnold Schoenberg, another Protestant of Jewish family background, Meyerowitz never formally reaffirmed the Jewish faith of his remoter ancestors, and in fact, his only religious conversion was to Roman Catholicism. References to ecclesiastical contacts in several of Meyerowitz's writings (including a letter to Casella of 1938 at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini) suggest that his interest in Catholicism was already present by that year. His formal conversion took place in Belgium in 1939, well before his marriage to a Frenchwoman (the Alsatian-born singer Marguerite Fricker in Marseille) in 1946.

Two documents by the composer, both preserved in The Jan Meyerowitz Papers at Northwestern University, provide useful if anomalous overviews of the earlier part of his career. These are a two-page typescript titled 'Biographical Notes – Jan Meyerowitz', undated but probably created in 1956, and a five-page notarised legal document from 1962, titled 'Schilderung des Verfolgungsvorganges und eidesstattliche Versicherung [Description of persecution-events and insurance deposition in lieu of oath]', a description of his career with special attention to the persecutions suffered under the Nazi regime, submitted as part of an insurance claim such as brought by many Germans forced into exile during the Nazi years. Although these documents are somewhat tendentious, have significant lacunae, and, perhaps owing to their having been prepared for very different purposes, are not always in agreement with one another or with other documentary sources, in tandem they provide a useful summary of the chief events of Meyerowitz's life in music up through the time that they were generated.

Most of Meyerowitz's career unfolded in the United States, where he produced a steady stream of operatic, orchestral, chamber, and solo works while holding teaching positions at a series of institutions, including the Hebrew Educational Society in Brooklyn, the Tanglewood Center in Lenox, Massachusetts, and two colleges of the City University of New York (Brooklyn College and City College). He composed prolifically during his years in the United States, but with limited success. As astutely observed by the music publisher, Felix Greissle, Schoenberg's

son-in-law and director of the Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, Meyerowitz's musical language, still immersed in the chromatically extended tonality of Schoenberg's first *Kammersymphonie*, was destined to unfold in relative obscurity.² While rejecting the 12-tone method of Schoenberg (to whom he nevertheless devoted an admiring monograph), Meyerowitz also stayed clear of the popularising jazz-influenced style gaining currency in mid-20th century America, of which Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein were the most celebrated protagonists, as well as the hyper-accessible approach of Gian Carlo Menotti. As a result of these factors, Meyerowitz never entered the front ranks of American composers.

During the same period he maintained a number of professional ties in Europe: supervising performances of his works, contributing to radio broadcasts in Germany, and serving for some years on the faculty of the summer programs of the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Several years before his death Meyerowitz and his wife returned to France, settling into the home in which they had lived intermittently in Labaroche, located in the hills west of Colmar. He sent his last dated letters from that address, but the final two years of his life were passed, under sad conditions, in a rest home for senior citizens in Colmar, where he died nine months following the death of his wife.

Upon his retirement from City College, but before leaving the United States, Meyerowitz had sold his large collection of scores, notebooks, correspondence, clippings, contracts, and other documents to the Music Library of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, with the understanding that all of his future papers would likewise become part of the same collection at Northwestern.³ Unfortunately, his legal heirs were either unaware of this agreement or simply disregarded it. Whatever scores and other papers had been generated during Meyerowitz's final years of activity were partly if not entirely dispersed after his death, and are in all likelihood unrecoverable.

What is not apparent from this brief summary, however, is the foundational importance to Meyerowitz of the five years he spent living mostly in Italy (1933–1938) as one of thousands of German Jews who found refuge there.⁴ He had previously studied in Berlin with Bruno Eisner (piano) and Walter Gmeindl (harmony, counterpoint, and composition), both teachers at the *Musikhochschule* of the city. More importantly, he had also received instruction from the well-known composer Alexander von Zemlinsky, brother-in-law to Arnold Schoenberg. When the advent of the Nazi regime made it impossible for Meyerowitz to pursue his musical studies in Germany, Gmeindl and Zemlinsky were both instrumental in arranging his relocation to Italy. Zemlinsky wrote a letter on Meyerowitz's behalf to Alfredo Casella, whom he had come to know through their shared involvement in the International Society for Contemporary Music, describing the young musician

as ‘a very talented and well-trained musician [ein sehr begabter, gut fundierter Musiker]’ who, as a Jew, was no longer able to pursue his career in Germany, and expressing the hope that Casella could assist Meyerowitz ‘with his recommendations and far-reaching connections [durch Empfehlungen und Ihre weitreichenden Beziehungen]’.⁵ Gmeindl, for his part, prevailed on his acquaintance with the playwright Gerhard Hauptmann to write a letter to Ottorino Respighi, whom Hauptmann knew in connection with the opera *La campana sommersa*, adapted from Hauptmann’s play *Die versunkene Glocke*.⁶ Through these varied channels Meyerowitz was able to secure introductions in 1933 to two of the outstanding composers of the ‘Generazione dell’Ottanta’, enjoying cordial working relations with both in addition to studies in conducting with Bernardino Molinari, and his relocation to Italy was effected without any need for assistance on the part of the Jewish Refugee Committee [Comitato assistenza profughi ebrei], formed in the immediate aftermath of the Nazi seizure of power to facilitate the emigration of German Jews to Italy.⁷ Later on in his five-year Italian sojourn, Meyerowitz also made the acquaintance of Malipiero, but with rather more awkward results as reflected in his few surviving letters to the Venetian composer, all long post-dating the period of his studies in Italy.

It will be well for a brief survey of Meyerowitz’s letters in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini to begin with the Fondo Giovanni Salviucci, which contains the earliest surviving letters by Meyerowitz.

FONDO GIOVANNI SALVIUCCI

The composer Giovanni Salviucci (1907–1937), a student, like Meyerowitz, of both Respighi and Casella, died less than two months before his thirtieth birthday. Whether or not one is prepared to accept the recent assessment that Salviucci’s early death prevented him ‘from becoming the most important composer of his generation [dal diventare il compositore più importante della sua generazione]’,⁸ there is little doubt that a promising talent was cut tragically short.⁹ The Fondo Giovanni Salviucci contains fifteen letters from Meyerowitz to Giovanni Salviucci spanning the years 1934–1937, plus three further letters to other recipients close to him;¹⁰ no other repository of Meyerowitz correspondence provides such an extensive collection of documents from this early period. In addition to the correspondence proper, the Fondo Giovanni Salviucci also contains a different sort of document of the friendship between Meyerowitz and Salviucci: Meyerowitz’s Italian translation of the detailed instructions for the Emil Hertzka Gedächtnis

Preis, an annual competition instituted in 1932 to commemorate the long-term director of Universal Edition in Vienna. In 1936 Meyerowitz was awarded this prize by a distinguished jury including Ernst Krenek, Karl Rankl, Lothar Wallerstein, Egon Wellesz and Alexander Zemlinsky, for his opera *Der 24. Februar* (mostly likely after Zacharias Werner's 1808 play titled *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar*), sharing the honor with Max Ettinger's opera *Dolores* and Gabriele Bianchi's ballet *Sogni e stagioni*. Meyerowitz's *Der 24. Februar* was never published or performed, and is now lost. In communicating the regulations of the contest and sending the translation to Salviucci, Meyerowitz may have been trying to encourage his slightly older *confrère* to enter the same competition. Meyerowitz's translation is undated, but one of the elencated regulations indicates a deadline of 9 June 1934 for all entries; the document thus predates by two years the Hertzka Gedächtnis Preis won by Meyerowitz.

Like other of Meyerowitz's letters to his friends in Italy, those to Giovanni Salviucci are written for the most part in an exuberant, highly idiosyncratic Italian in which word-play and numerous 'mistakes' deliberately inserted for comic effect ('Oddoryno' or even 'Oddorigo' for Ottorino Respighi; see footnote 11) jostle against humorously made-up words and evidently genuine errors of Italian grammar, spelling, and usage, all of which constitute a singular challenge to the modern transcriber (FIGURE 1).¹¹ They lie therefore at the opposite stylistic pole from the calmer and more restrained letters he sent to the established Italian musicians of his acquaintance.¹²

In subject matter, the letters to Salviucci amply demonstrate Meyerowitz's interest in remaining in touch with a member of his intimate Roman circle while visiting with his family in Berlin over the summer or for the Christmas holidays, as well as during various forays into other Italian locations such as Milan, Siena, and Asolo. He takes a lively interest in the works of his Italian acquaintances, asking in particular about plans for the performance of Salviucci's *Introduzione, passacaglia e finale*, expressing admiration for works by Dallapiccola and Petrassi, while also relaying news about his own voluminous creative activities. Since none of Meyerowitz's Italian-era works have survived, the documentary evidence of them in his letters to Salviucci are all the more precious. The works he mentions as having been completed are a sonata for violoncello and pianoforte, *Dixit Ecclesiastes* (a cycle of five Latin poems for soprano and piano), an otherwise unspecified *Adagio and Rondo*, jocularly spelled 'Adaccio' (perhaps by way of parody of his own German accent) and 'Rombo' which Meyerowitz played privately for Hindemith in Berlin, and a work for voice and orchestra titled *La morte di Mosè*, which was broadcast by the Rome EIAR [Ente Italiano per le Audizioni Radiofoniche – Italian State Broadcasting Company]. It is significant that the latter work reflects an interest in Jewish subject matter, since this touches directly on his reason for leaving Germany.

FIGURE 1. Letter from Jan Meyerowitz to Giovanni Salviucci, 2 July 1934 (extract). Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Giovanni Salviucci

Berlin - Dahlem
 Im Dol 53
 2-7-34

Mio carissimo Giovanni!

Grazie mille per la Tua cartolina tanto gentile. Mia madre ti manda altrettanto cordialissimi saluti — — mi ha insultato perché non ho portato il ritratto di Dierlingi! Nel caso che puoi mandarlo subito (uno insieme coi postventi) dei fatti! (Prossimo anno porterò con ~~me~~ me la macchina mia che fa nascere dei quadri 9x12!) — Di che genere è il nuovo lavoro Tuo? Perché non hai

2/ scritto delle descrizioni distinte, delle
 analisi precise? — Il Klüber era già par-
 tito al mare — ma sono in corrispondenza e
 in buoni rapporti con lui — per un'altra volta
 più tardi, abbiamo ancora con 79 anni da
 vivere! — La situazione etnica è enigma-
 tica — non si può sapere nulla e non si può
 fare il profeta. — ~~Da~~ Da qui partirò
 il 20. luglio!! — o in Svizzera o a
 Siena da dove giunse una lettera carissi-
 ma di Alfredus. — Ad Odoloryuo
 ho scritto! e gli comunicato gli
 avvenimenti molinari —! Specialmente
^{Elsa} avrà un interesse caldissimo. — Hai ricevuto
 una fotografia di GFM? Me l'aveva

Nor is it unique in this respect: his letter to Salviucci of 30 September 1934 refers to the progress he is slowly making on a work titled *Elia*, which he describes as two-thirds complete. Other works in progress he mentions to Salviucci are a string quartet, a symphony of which he has completed one movement, and an original

libretto for an opera on Shakespeare's *King Lear* for which he had also begun to make musical sketches. He also shares the news of his provisional selection of two further promising opera subjects, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Undine* and Gerhard Hauptmann's verse drama *Winterballade*, derived from Swedish writer Selma Lagerlöf's novella *Herr Arnes penningar*. Meyerowitz's opera *Winterballade* was premiered in Hannover many years later (1967), while all of the other early works mentioned have been lost.¹³

In addition to documenting musical activities, Meyerowitz's letters in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini naturally reflect the worsening political situation in Europe in the 1930s. Like many other German citizens, Meyerowitz and his family were concerned by the steady consolidation of Nazi control over all areas of German society after 1933, but underestimated the danger they were in, and appear to have assumed that the problems would soon blow over. Jan's father Hermann Hosias Meyerowitz died in 1936, and the following year his sister Julie settled in London with her husband, the architectural historian Wolfgang Herrmann. But his mother Liesbeth Meyerowitz (née Müller) and his sister Elly Meyerowitz remained in Germany, and during his years in Italy Jan made frequent visits to the spacious family home in the Dahlem district of Berlin. While on one of his summer visits to his family, he writes to Salviucci (2 July 1934) that 'the Jewish situation is quite enigmatic [and] it isn't possible to know anything, and it isn't possible to predict the future [La situazione ebraica è enigmatissima [e] non si può sapere nulla e non si può fare il profeta]'. To be sure, in the two years between Hitler's rise to power and the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws (15 September 1935), the legal situation of the Jews in Germany was anything but clear. Shortly before the Nuremberg Laws were passed, Meyerowitz sent a postcard to Salviucci (10 September 1935) with a mordant joke: he was looking forward to receiving 'the good news from Germany, which calms all nerves [delle belle notizie dalla Germania, che calmano tanto i nervi]'. By Christmas Day of 1935, when the Nuremberg Laws are in effect, Meyerowitz is back once more in Berlin, but his letter that day to Salviucci, aside from a laconic reference to the 'desolate general chaos [desolato sottosopra generale]', is filled with the usual musical chit-chat. On his next trip to Berlin, his only obliquely political remark in a letter to Salviucci of 6 June 1936 concerns the impossibility of obtaining French publications – but this is merely with regard to his curiosity about the competition sponsored by *La Revue Musicale*. His final letter to Salviucci (9 June 1936) recounts a simple event during the visit of Elsa Respighi to Berlin, two months following the death of her husband, to attend a performance of *La Fiamma* – an episode which, on the surface, at least, has nothing political about it. 'Elsa Respighi had dinner at our home on Friday evening, and was very lovely and affectionate. She got on very

well with my women (mother and sister), who were enchanted by the illustrious widow's charme [Elsa Respighi è stata venerdì da noi a cena, è stata tanto tanto carina e affettuosa. Ha fatto molta amicizia colle mie donne (madre – sorella), che sono rimaste incantate dello charme della illustre vedova]'. The full significance of this homely detail is revealed in Meyerowitz's commemoration of Respighi delivered at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in 1986: Elsa Respighi had declined an invitation to lunch by Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, in order to have lunch with her husband's former pupil and his family, an act which, in its simple humanity, made a powerfully supportive statement to the beleaguered family that Meyerowitz, fifty years later, recalled with gratitude.

On a lighter note, fully reflective of his boisterous sense of humor, are Meyerowitz's enigmatic references to 'EP' in two letters to Salviucci. In his letter of 30 September 1934 he asks at one point: 'Have you seen the disgusting one? (EP) [Hai visto il [*sic*] schifofacente? (EP)]', while in his letter of 12 November 1934 he drily notes that he is composing 'a scherzo for the funeral of EP [uno scherzo per il funerale di EP]'. Thanks to Meyerowitz's published recollections of Respighi, we know that another of the latter's students, Ennio Porrino, though starting out on friendly terms with Meyerowitz, later became his committed enemy;¹⁴ this makes it relatively easy for us to guess the identity of the butt of these caustic epistolary remarks. These briefly-cited examples are enough to demonstrate that it was the correspondence with Salviucci which elicited Meyerowitz's most spontaneous, unbuttoned communications.

FONDO OTTORINO RESPIGHI

During his travels away from Rome in the years 1933 to 1936, Meyerowitz evidently kept up a lively correspondence with Ottorino Respighi; unfortunately, neither side of this correspondence has survived, and the two letters from Meyerowitz in the Fondo Ottorino Respighi, dated 1 April 1955 and 7 March 1958, are both addressed to the composer's widow Elsa. From the first we learn of her sending to Meyerowitz a copy of the book she had published about her husband the previous year.¹⁵ The second is likewise an acknowledgement of receipt of a gift, unspecified, followed by the proposal of a visit to Rome that the Meyerowitzes were planning. The Fondo Ottorino Respighi also contains carbon copies of three letters (1957–1961) from Elsa Respighi to Meyerowitz, documenting a friendship which only seemed to grow more cordial with time; her last letter to him (26 January 1961) is the first in which she uses the 'tu' form (his letters adhered rigorously to the 'Lei' form); in the letter

she requests his assistance in receiving news about performances and broadcasts of Respighi's music, as well as new critical appreciations of his work. Her well-known devotion to the memory of her late husband is perfectly evident here, and it is clear that she thinks of Meyerowitz primarily as an extension of her husband.

FONDO ALFREDO CASELLA

In contrast to the Fondo Ottorino Respighi, the Fondo Alfredo Casella contains numerous items sent by Meyerowitz, including a telegram, a postcard, and seventeen letters. The letters attest to a relationship of considerable warmth, with frequent affectionate regards to Casella's young daughter Fulvia, but Meyerowitz's tone, though leavened with humor, is never less than respectful. A telegram sent from Berlin on 8 May 1937 is the earliest of these items; in it, Meyerowitz greets Casella on the occasion of the first performance of the opera *Il deserto tentato* in Florence. A vague allusion to the deteriorating political situation comes in a letter of 26 August of the same year, explaining that he has been detained in Berlin because of the difficulty in obtaining foreign currency, and references to politics naturally become more frequent in the war years, though never to the exclusion of musical matters. From the same letter of 26 August 1937 we learn later that Casella had visited the Meyerowitz family in Berlin as Elsa Respighi had done, and that Meyerowitz wondered whether Casella and his wife Yvonne had heard about the health crisis of Giovanni Salviucci. Another visit by Casella to Meyerowitz, his mother, and his sister Elly, is attested by a letter of 5 June 1938 (FIGURE 2),¹⁶ and a subsequent letter documents that Casella saw Meyerowitz's sister Julie in London.

Remarkably, Meyerowitz chose not to mention either the horrific events of 10 November 1938 ('Crystal Night') nor his own arrest and confinement in the prison camp of Sachsenhausen from 10 November 1938 to 7 December 1938¹⁷ in the first letter to Casella following his release (11 December 1938), which instead is filled as usual with musical matters such as sending a score to the composer Emil von Reznicek in Stuttgart and Meyerowitz's regret over not being able to receive a broadcast of a Casella performance with the Concertgebouw Orchestra. In the immediate aftermath of the Italian Racial Laws of November 1938, which rendered his return to Italy far less likely, we finally find Meyerowitz making plans to leave Europe for the United States, beginning with an initial stay in Belgium (letter of 23 December 1938), where he hopes that he can find work with the help of Casella's recommendation. A letter of 13 February 1939, however, finds him still in Berlin, worried about his mother's deteriorating health and spirits, but retaining the hope

– ultimately vain, as we know – of seeing Casella in Rome before too long. The same hope is evident in a letter of 28 February 1939, establishing without a doubt that Meyerowitz never saw his 1938 departure from Italy as definitive. The Spring of 1939 finds Meyerowitz writing from Belgium to thank Casella for helping him to obtain commissions from the Institut National de Radiodiffusion (the Belgian State Broadcasting Company), but expressing uncertainty as to whether he will need to await an American visa in Belgium or in Haiti; in the meantime, he also hopes to obtain a Belgian visa for his mother. In the end, this was not possible, and Meyerowitz never saw his mother again.¹⁸

The various dislocations that Meyerowitz was forced to undergo following the Nazi invasion resulted in a lengthy gap in his letters to Casella (between the letter from Brussels on 2 March 1940 and the letter from Montfavet on 18 July 1942), a period about which he only partially brought his former teacher up to date (he mentions his confinement, as a German citizen, in the internment camp at Les Milles, but not his periods of internment in the camps at St. Cyprien, Gurs, and Mées). He does not discuss the appalling conditions he endured at these internment camps, and seems unaware that had his internment at Les Milles lasted a year longer he would almost certainly have been among the hundreds of Jews deported from there to Auschwitz by the Vichy government beginning in August of 1942.¹⁹ This letter to Casella is the first that Meyerowitz wrote in France, and it is probably for that reason that he switches to French, which he now spoke on a daily basis; by this time he may have been too exhausted to juggle the various languages at his command. When Germany invaded southern France in early 1943, Meyerowitz was able to flee to the Provençal town of Manosque, and thence to Marseille, where he lived under a false name. He resumed his letters to Casella, first from Manosque where, as he explained, the writer Jean Gionot, a native of the town, had helped him to settle,²⁰ and then from Marseille. Despite his exhaustion and suffering – his letter to Casella from Montfavet of 18 July 1942 includes the cryptic comment ‘j’ai vu et vécu des horreurs indicibles [I have seen and experienced unspeakable horrors]’ – he maintains an upbeat tone, with frequent references to music. His final letters to Casella touch on more encouraging matters, such as the composing he had resumed, his marriage to Marguerite Fricker, and his renewed plans to emigrate to the United States.

One can only imagine how Casella, naturally concerned for his Jewish wife and daughter in this period, received these troubling bulletins. Cesare De Marchi, in his introduction to a new edition of Casella’s autobiography,²¹ has suggested – plausibly, though without evidence – that Casella had reached out to Giuseppe Bottai in late 1938 precisely to seek advice on how to protect his wife and daughter in the wake of the Racial Laws, and that Bottai’s suggestion to write an autobiography, in

which the composer could prove his good faith and preserve his standing in Italian musical life, was in effect the answer to Casella's request for help. It is not unlikely that Meyerowitz's enforced absence from Italy that year, underscored by the letters he wrote to Casella (even if these made no mention of Sachsenhausen), played a role in raising Casella's awareness of the growing danger.

Yet references to music appear in all of Meyerowitz's letters to Casella. An interesting observation to be made in this regard is the mention of Verdi in the letter of 18 July 1942. After mentioning his having begun to compose the score of a ballet titled *Adelaide* (another lost work), he adds: 'And I play Verdi. It is he who saved me! [E suono Verdi. È lui che mi ha salvato]'. In his published remarks on Respighi, which include interesting recollections of Casella as well, Meyerowitz described himself, even at the age of twenty, as a 'Verdi fanatic [fanatico di Verdi]', which led him into conflict with both Respighi and Casella, as both of them were less than enthusiastic.²² Not one to keep his opinions to himself, the young student conscientiously set about changing his teachers' minds about Verdi. Meyerowitz's early exposure to the 'Verdi Renaissance' in Germany had made him familiar not only with the Italian composer's best-known works, but also with a number of his supposedly lesser ones, including *I Masnadieri*, *Luisa Miller*, *Les vêpres siciliennes*, and *Aroldo*, and these works figured in his attempts to win Respighi and Casella over to a warmer appreciation of Verdi. According to his recollections, when Meyerowitz played through the score of *I Masnadieri* at the piano for Respighi, the latter expressed his amazement over the extreme concision of the concluding conflagration, saying that 'it was truly extraordinary that the burning of a large city like Prague could last a mere two and a half minutes', which Meyerowitz found to be a valid observation regarding Verdi's 'telegrammatic' approach.²³ Meyerowitz's recollections in this were confirmed by those of his close friend Fedele d'Amico, who is frequently mentioned in his letters at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini.²⁴ Indeed, Meyerowitz's reputation as an exceedingly well-informed Verdian predated his move to Italy, if we can believe his somewhat improbable-sounding testimony to the effect that his advice on the Italian repertoire was sought by Julius Kapp, the dramaturg for the Staatstheater Unter den Linden (and later a committed member of the Nazi party).²⁵ A more difficult challenge to Meyerowitz's efforts was the attempt to persuade Casella of the value of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. In these attempts to uphold the worth of popular Italian composers of the nineteenth century in the face of Casella and Respighi's diffidence, Meyerowitz failed to recognise the deeper cause of his teachers' impatience with romantic melodrama and its continued hold on Italian musical life. The statement in his letter to Casella of 1942 that he plays Verdi may be seen as a measured act of defiance towards his teacher's lingering prejudice, a proud affirmation of the validity of his own tastes and musical impulses.

FIGURE 2. Letter from Jan Meyerowitz to Alfredo Casella, 5 June 1938. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Alfredo Casella

Bologna
5/6/38

Carissimo Maestro —

Un ricordo veramente carissimo
ci è rimasto della Vostra visita, una quale
speriamo ricadrà presto e in versione
più lunga! Anche mia madre brama di
esprimersi dall'altra parte di questo foglio
nel modo identico.

Anche io mi sono affrettato
di fare le Commissioni lasciatemi: Schire-
mann e Max Hesse. (A Lei GRAZIE!)

Come Lei m'autorizzò, mi
permetto di ricordarle, che mi voleva portare
un po' d'Omnibus, la partitura del CONCERTO
^{in sol maggiore di Beethoven}
e il libro di Debussy che ~~porta~~ doveva contenere
cermi sulla "Caduta della casa Usher". Faccio
come Lei mi ha chiesto, se non si vuol
disturbare con queste cose, per carità!! nel faccia!

Sono ben felice di rivederLa qui
ben tosto! Spero di sentir presto del
Suò arrivo!!

Infiniti affettuosi e devoti
Plu filii

— ossequi a Madame Yvonne

— saluti vibrantissimi a Mlle Felicia

dal Suo Discipolo Meyerowitz

Carissima Signora Yvonne!

Ho avuto con grandissimo piacere la Sua rara
lettera, sono fiera che Lei mi scriver di aver passato
le Sue giornate a Berlino piacevolmente.
Parliamo ancora spesso della Loro visita e
saremmo felici se Loro potessero ritornare
presto! Spero che Lei avrà buon viaggio
e che passerà belle vacanze a Siend. —

La prego di salutare tanto il Maestro
e la piovola. A Lei un abbraccio di

Sua Lisa Meyerowitz

FONDO GIAN FRANCESCO MALIPIERO

It is evident from three of his letters to Salviucci in 1934 that Meyerowitz, within a year of his arrival in Italy, had become acquainted with Gian Francesco Malipiero. In two of the letters Meyerowitz is mentioned with regard to a photograph that Malipiero had promised him, but which Meyerowitz still awaited. The other, however, is somewhat negative: on 12 August 1934, Meyerowitz tells Salviucci that he had written to Malipiero ‘in indignation [ho esposto la mia indignazione]’ following Salviucci’s failure to win the competition of the Accademia Filarmonica Romana; the prize had gone instead to Riccardo Nielsen. It is not known whether or not this was the incident that he had in mind when he sent to Malipiero on 24 January 1963 the earliest of the eight written communications (six letters and two postcards) from Meyerowitz preserved in the Fondo Gian Francesco Malipiero. In this letter he describes how his long-held desire to visit or write to Malipiero after the war was impeded by deep apprehensions owing to something he had done or said years before, when he lacked the necessary tact and finesse to be admitted to the elder musician’s circle. He wished nevertheless to express his sincerest admiration for Malipiero, and hoped that they could reestablish a friendship on a firmer basis. Subsequent letters from Meyerowitz in the Fondo Gian Francesco Malipiero show that this request was cordially received, and their correspondence continued until 1971. In the summer of 1965, on one of Meyerowitz’s regular visits to Italy during this period, the two musicians and their wives were able to spend some time together in the Veneto. These few letters suggest an admiration for the music of Malipiero, with whom Meyerowitz never studied, even greater than what he felt for Respighi or Casella.

It is idle to speculate how Meyerowitz’s musical career could have developed if he had remained in Italy, that is, if his ethnic Jewishness, along with the calamitous events of the mid-twentieth century, had not intervened. It is not difficult to imagine a trajectory for him similar to that of Daniele Amfitheatrof or, somewhat later, Roman Vlad, foreign-born musicians who virtually became Italian ones. For all his broad erudition regarding many fields of European art music, one feels that the Italian muse was closer to Meyerowitz than any other, and his letters in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini variously illuminate his formidable presence in the lives of Italian musicians.

Notes

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- 1 Jan Meyerowitz, *Die echte Jüdische Witz*, Berlin: Colloquium Verlag Otto H. Hess, 1971.
- 2 Felix Greissle, Lester Trimble, and Reginald Smith Brindle, 'Current Chronicle', *The Musical Quarterly*, 43, 1957, pp. 233–245: 234–236.
- 3 A partial inventory of The Jan Meyerowitz Papers at Northwestern University may be found at <https://findingaids.library.northwestern.edu/repositories/3/resources/47>. At present this finding aid provides information on the musical scores in the collection, while the extensive correspondence, including original letters from Gian Francesco Malipiero, Goffredo Petrassi, Boris Blacher, Gerhard Hauptmann, Langston Hughes, and other noteworthy figures, has yet to be processed.
- 4 In the most notable study of German exiles in Italy during the years of the Third Reich, the number of German Jews who settled in Italy is estimated at 25,000 within the first months of the Nazi seizure of power, and reached 37,000 by the end of 1933; another musician who found refuge in Italy was the pianist Artur Schnabel, who founded his summer course in Tremezzo in the same period as Meyerowitz's emigration. See Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf: Exil in Italien 1933–1945*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1989–1993, 2 Bde., I, p. 21, published in Italian as *Il rifugio precario: gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1993–1996, 2 vols., I, pp. 6–7.
- 5 Zemlinsky's letter, undated but certainly written in 1933, is in Evanston, Northwestern University Music Library, The Jan Meyerowitz Papers. This may be the original, or a copy of a letter sent to Casella which is not, however, to be found among Casella's papers at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini.
- 6 Typed copies of Gmeindl's letter to Hauptmann and Hauptmann's letter to Respighi are likewise preserved in Evanston, Northwestern University Music Library, The Jan Meyerowitz Papers.
- 7 Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, terza edizione riveduta e ampliata, Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1972, p. 136.
- 8 Alessandro Zignani, *La storia negata, musica e musicisti nell'era fascista*, Varese: Zecchini Editore, 2016, p. 110.
- 9 Zignani's opinion is not without precedent, as shown by Alfredo Casella's article 'Per Giovanni Salviucci', *Il Gazzettino di Venezia*, 8 settembre 1937, in which Casella notes that the young composer was considered one of the strongest representatives of modern musical tendencies in Italy.
- 10 Two of these were letters of condolence written in the immediate aftermath of Salviucci's death, sent respectively to Salviucci's widow Iditta Parpagliolo and to an otherwise unspecified 'Maria Teresa', most likely Maria Teresa Pediconi, a voice teacher at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia (her later pupils included Ruggero Raimondi) and a close friend of Salviucci.
- 11 'Mio carissimo Giovanni! / Grazie mille per la tua cartolina tanto gentile. Mia madre vi manda altrettanti cordialissimi saluti – mi ha insultato perché non ho portato il ritratto di Pierluigi! Nel caso che puoi mandarlo subito (uno insieme coi procedimenti) devi farlo! (Prossimo anno porterò con me la macchina mia che fa nascere dei quadri 9x12!). — Di che genere è il nuovo lavoro tuo? Perché non hai [p. 2] scritto delle descrizioni distinte, delle analisi precise? – Il Kleiber era già partito al mare – ma sono in corrispondenza e in buoni rapporti con lui – per un'altra volta [*sic*] più tardi, abbiamo ancora così 79 anni da vivere! – La situazione ebraica è enigmatissima – non si può sapere nulla e non si può fare il profeta. – [illustrazione di una mano che indica verso la destra] Da qui parlerò [*sic*] il 20. Luglio!! – o in Svizzera o a Siena da dove giunse

una lettera rarissima di Alfredino. — Ad Oddoryno ho scritto! egli ha comunicato [*sic*] gli avvenimenti molinari! — Specialmente Elsa avrà un interesse caldissimo. — Hai ricevuto una fotografia di GFM? [Malipiero] Me l’aveva [p. 3] promesso 31 (contate) volte! — I giorni con lui sono stati molto impressionanti — ti racconterò tutto a bocca. A Venezia starò forse l’ottobre — durante l’assenza [*sic*] americana d’Alfredino. Ma taci — non lo raccontare a nessuno — neppure a Pierluigi. — Io ho terminato una nuova sonata per Violoncello e Pfte che è riuscito abbastanza orgogliosamente. (Uniti in un tempo: Introduzione (Grave) del Pfte — Cadenza (drammatico) del violoncello — Molto adagio, dolente — Allegro violente [*sic*]). Però niente di “più luce, più sole”, come lo [p. 4] desiderava “Alberto” Gasco, è una cosa quasi cimenterica! Ho cominciato un “breve” (12 min) ciclo di 5 liriche latine: “DIXIT ECCLESIASTES” [illustrazione di una mano che indica verso sinistra] per Soprano e Pfte. (Ancora più cimenteriche) — Domani vado da Hindemith per fargli sentire “Adaccio e Rombo” (Non lo [il pezzo] posso più 1.) vedere 2.) sentire 3.) onorare 4.) pensare 5.) immaginarmi — mi sta facendo schifo) — Mio Giovanni — con chi sei a Bellinamonte? Colla Signora [p. 5] Iditta e col maestro nascente Pierluigi, o solamente colla Signora Iditta?? O con qualun’altro [*sic*] pregiato personaggio parpagliano? A tutte le presenti persone [*sic*] fai i ottimi — i più affettuosi saluti ed auguri della mia madre ed i miei più rispettosi / a te ed alla tua progenie / specialmente affettuosi / Tuo / H H Meyerowitz / Scrivimi — se vuoi farlo — prima del 20 [My very dear Giovanni! / A thousand thanks for your very gracious postcard. My mother returns to you her heartiest greetings — she insulted me because I did not bring a picture of [Salviucci’s son] Pierluigi! If you can send it right away (together with the preceding ones), you must do it! (Next year I’ll bring with me the camera that produces photographs 9 x 12 [centimetres]!). — In what genre is your new composition? Why didn’t you write specific descriptions, precise analyses? — [Erich] Kleiber has already departed for the sea — but I am in correspondence and in good relations with him — for another time later on, thus we still have 79 years to live! — The Jewish situation is most puzzling — it’s impossible to know anything, and one cannot make predictions. — I will leave here on July 20!! — either from Switzerland or from Siena, from which a very rare letter from Alfredino [Alfredo Casella] has arrived. — I wrote to Oddoryno [Ottorino Respighi]! he communicated the events relating to [Bernardino Molinari]! — Elsa in particular will take a very warm interest. — Did you receive a photograph of GFM [Malipiero]? He promised it to me 31 times (I counted)! — The days I spent with him were most astounding — I’ll tell you everything in person. Perhaps I will be in Venice in October — during the American absence of Alfredino. But quiet — don’t tell anyone — not even Pierluigi. — I have finished a new sonata for violoncello and pianoforte which turned out rather proudly. (Combined into a single movement: Introduction (Grave) for the piano — Cadenza (dramatic) for the violoncello — Molto adagio, dolente — Allegro violente). However, no hint of “more light, more sun”, as “Alberto” Gasco desired, it’s something almost cemetery-like! I have begun a “heavy” (12 minute) cycle of 5 Latin poems: “DIXIT ECCLESIASTES” for soprano and pianoforte. (Even more cemetery-like) — Tomorrow I’ll visit Hindemith to play him “Adaccio e Rombo” (I can no longer bear to 1) see it 2) hear it 3) honour it 4) think about it 5) imagine it — it disgusts me) — My Giovanni — whom are you with in Bellinamonte [Bellamonte]? With Madame Iditta [Parpagliolo] and with the growing musician Pierluigi, or just with Madame Iditta?? Or with some other esteemed Parpaglian personage? To everyone there I send my best — most affectionate greetings and wishes from my mother, / and to you and your progeny / my most respectful especially affectionate greetings / Your / H H Meyerowitz / Write to me — if you wish — before the 20th’. Letter from Jan Meyerowitz to Giovanni Salviucci, 2 July 1934.

- 12 According to Meyerowitz’s recollections, Casella spoke to him from the beginning as a friend, welcoming him into his intimate circle and family household; they used the ‘tu’ form with one

- another. See Jan Meyerowitz, ‘Con Respighi’, in: *Il Novecento musicale italiano tra neoclassicismo e neogoticismo. Atti del Convegno di studi (Venezia, 10–12 ottobre 1986)*, a cura di David Bryant, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki (Fondazione Giorgio Cini – Studi di musica veneta, XIII), 1988, pp. 23–31: 25. This receives qualified confirmation in the photocopy of Casella’s letter in French to Meyerowitz of 28 November 1945, preserved in the Fondo Alfredo Casella together with the letters sent to him by Meyerowitz, a letter which uses the ‘tu’ form throughout. Evidently Meyerowitz did not feel sufficiently comfortable with Casella’s informality to respond in kind, at least in writing, although his uproarious humor nevertheless finds expression in a number of his letters to the older musician.
- 13 A brief biographical notice included in the programme of a piano recital which Meyerowitz gave in Marseille in 1944 or 1945 (Evanston, Northwestern University Music Library, The Jan Meyerowitz Papers) states that when he left Italy in 1938, his musical manuscripts were deposited in the Vatican. The information is undoubtedly authoritative, but the materials in question have not yet come to light.
 - 14 Meyerowitz, ‘Con Respighi’, pp. 27–28.
 - 15 Elsa Olivieri Sangiacomo, *Ottorino Respighi*, Milano: Ricordi, 1954.
 - 16 ‘Carissimo Maestro – / Un ricordo veramente carissimo ci è rimasto della Loro visita, una quale [*sic*] speriamo riaccaderà presto e in versione più lunga! Anche mia madre brama di esprimersi dall’altra parte di questo foglio nel modo identico. / Anche io mi sono aspettato di fare le commissioni [*sic*] lasciatemi: Schönemann e Max Hesse. (A Lei GRAZIE!) / Come Lei m’autorizzò, mi permetto di ricordarla [*sic*], che mi voleva portare un po’ d’Omnibus, la partiturina del CONCERTO, un romanzo di Moravia e il libro di Debussy che doveva contenere cenni sulla “Caduta della casa Usher”. Faccio come Lei mi ha chiesto, se non si vuol disturbare con queste cose, per carità!! nol faccia! – [p. 2] Sono ben felice di rivederLa qui ben tosto! Spero di sentire presto del suo arrivo!! / Infiniti affettuosi e devoti pensieri / – Ossequi a Madame Yvonne / – Saluti vibrantissimi a Mlle Fulvia / dal Suo Discepolo Meyerowitz [Dearest Maestro – / I have extremely fond memories of your visit, one which we hope will be repeated soon and in a longer version! My mother would also like to express herself in the same way on the other side of this sheet. / I too expected to fulfil the commissions I was given: Schönemann and Max Hesse. (THANK YOU!) / As you have authorized me to do, I take the liberty of reminding you that you wished me to bring a little bit of everything, the pocket score of the CONCERTO, a novel by [Alberto] Moravia, and the book on Debussy which I think contains some remarks on “The Fall of the House of Usher”. I am doing as you asked, if you don’t wish to be bothered with such things, please!! Don’t worry! – [p. 2] I’ll be really happy to see you again soon! I hope to have news of your arrival soon!! / My fondest affection and devotion / – Respects to Madame Yvonne / – Heartfelt greetings to Mlle Fulvia / from your Disciple Meyerowitz]’. Letter from Jan Meyerowitz to Alfredo Casella, 5 June 1938.
 - 17 The dates are those indicated in Meyerowitz, ‘Schilderung des Verfolgungsvorganges’, Evanston, Northwestern University, The Jan Meyerowitz Papers.
 - 18 According to the website of the district office of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf (the district of Berlin where she relocated after having been forced out of her home in Dahlem), the ‘Stolperstein Liesbeth Meyerowitz’ (stone placed in the ground by her residence on Hektorstrasse) indicates that she was arrested at her residence on 12 January 1943 and placed aboard a train bound for Auschwitz, where she was murdered. Meyerowitz’s letter to Casella of 1 October 1945 makes it clear that he was unaware of her death in Auschwitz nearly two years earlier; he did not learn of her fate until well after the war. See <https://www.berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/ueber-den-bezirk/geschichte/stolpersteine/artikel.179778.php>.

- 19 *Camps and Ghettos under European Regimes Aligned with Nazi Germany*, ed. by Geoffrey P. Megargee, Joseph R. White, and Mel Hecker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (*The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933–1945*, vol. 3), 2018, p. 169.
- 20 An extended consideration of Giono's actions in defence of interred Jews during the war can be found in Vera Mark, 'Negotiating Jean Giono: Texts, History, and Ethics', *H-France Salon*, II/1, n. 4, 2010, pp. 22–32. Giono's wartime diary provides the most extensive account of Meyerowitz's desperate attempts to find safety in the last months of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, when he began the clandestine existence in Marseille which lasted until the end of the war; see Jean Giono, *Journal, poèmes, essais*, [Paris]: Gallimard, 1995, pp. 332–474.
- 21 Cesare De Marchi, 'Introduzione', in: *Alfredo Casella. I segreti della giara*, a cura di Cesare De Marchi, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2016, pp. VII–XXVI: XXII–XXIII.
- 22 Meyerowitz, 'Con Respighi', pp. 28–30.
- 23 'Nei *Masnadieri* trovò bellissimo il finale e l'incendio, perché, diceva, e questo non l'ho mai dimenticato, è davvero straordinario che l'incendio di una grande città come Praga duri soltanto due minuti e mezzo'. Meyerowitz, 'Con Respighi', p. 29.
- 24 Fedele d'Amico, 'Cinque interventi', in: *Il Novecento musicale italiano tra neoclassicismo e neogoticismo. Atti del Convegno di studi (Venezia, 10–12 ottobre 1986)*, a cura di David Bryant, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki (Fondazione Giorgio Cini – Studi di musica veneta, XIII), 1988, pp. 451–459: 453.
- 25 Meyerowitz, 'Con Respighi', p. 28.