

COMPETING GERMANIES: THE FREIE DEUTSCHE BÜHNE AND THE
DEUTSCHES THEATER IN BUENOS AIRES,

ARGENTINA, 1938-1965

By

Robert Vincent Kelz

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Approved:

Professor Meike G. Werner

Professor Vera M. Kutzinski

Professor John A. McCarthy

Professor Christoph Zeller

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ARGENTINA'S COMPETING GERMAN THEATERS

The cultural landscape of the Argentine capital during World War II was unique. No other major metropolitan city witnessed immediate, local, and fully open competition between Nazi and antifascist German-language theaters throughout the Second World War. Based on German, Yiddish, Spanish, and English language sources from public archives and private collections in Argentina and Germany, this dissertation is the first thorough investigation of two of the most important German language theaters abroad during the twentieth century—the Deutsches Theater, also called the Ney-Bühne, and the Freie Deutsche Bühne (FDB), both based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Both the FDB and the Deutsches Theater were founded by German emigrants in Buenos Aires during the Third Reich, yet they represented very different demographic groups within this city's large German population.¹ The Deutsches Theater, was created in 1938 by the older, nationalistic German colony which had arrived in Argentina in the early 20th century. It performed the dramas of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller in German to sold-out audiences at the grand Teatro Nacional, which had a seating capacity of 1,155. The Freie Deutsche Bühne, by contrast, was founded in 1940 by German and Austrian antifascists, many of whom were Jewish. It was the only *Exiltheater* worldwide to stage regular performances throughout World War

¹ Period sources, including the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* and *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, refer to the Ney-Bühne alternatively as the Deutsches Theater and the Deutsches Theater in Argentinien.

II. Intense competition between Argentina's German communities and their theaters endured for decades after 1945.

1. Contextualizing Argentina's German Theaters in German Exile Studies

The Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Deutsches Theater represent an intriguing but scarcely explored topic in the field of German exilic theater. Except for brief references in *Auslandsdeutschtum und Drittes Reich: der Fall Argentinien* by Heinrich Volberg, himself a German emigrant in Argentina and a member of the so-called *alte Kolonie*, I have not located any extant scholarship on the Deutsches Theater.² This is most likely because research on *Exiltheater* has traditionally emphasized antifascist and Jewish actors, directors, and dramatists. Yet, the cultural production of nationalist Germans abroad is vital to studies on German emigrant literature. During WWII and for decades beyond, Argentina's German populations supported not one theater, but two. No investigation of the subject can be complete without focusing on both.

Scholarship on the Freie Deutsche Bühne is somewhat more plentiful, but limited in scope and depth. A conference held in 2001 at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores en Lenguas Vivas, a college in Buenos Aires devoted to foreign languages and literatures, included two fruitful additions to research on the FDB, both of which were printed in the volume *Teatro y teoría teatral*, edited by Regula Langbehn and Miguel Vedda of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. Nicolás Dornheim, of the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo in Mendoza, offers an excellent

² Heinrich Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum und drittes Reich: der Fall Argentinien* (Köln, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1981), 65. Like many members of the *alte Kolonie*, Volberg was a nationalist in his social and political outlook.

review of extant scholarship on Jacob in his article, “Teatro y exilio. Paul Walter Jacob visto desde la Argentina.”³ Dornheim’s contribution, just ten pages of text, is more a survey than a detailed analysis. Nonetheless Dornheim’s work bears valuable, thought-provoking impulses to a discourse dominated by European Germanists. Dornheim highlights Jacob’s “interculturalidad” and “Vielseitigkeit,” both of which are key concepts for my own work. Also of note is a round table, “Recordando a Hedy Crilla,” an actress who performed at the Freie Deutsche Bühne under the name of Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla for many years. Schlichter-Crilla also had great success in the Argentine theater scene.⁴ The discussion featured Schlichter-Crilla’s biographer and former student, Cora Roca, and Jacques Arndt, a longtime colleague of Crilla’s at the FDB. Noteworthy for its focus on actors (Schlichter-Crilla and Arndt) at the FDB other than Paul Walter Jacob, the panel also stands out for Arndt’s attacks against Roca’s portrayal of the FDB in her biography of Crilla, *Días de Teatro* (2000).⁵ Arndt acknowledges the challenges inherent to researching the FDB—a transatlantic undertaking—but also articulates his conviction that scholars must surmount these difficulties before publication.

Of the German studies on the Freie Deutsche Bühne, Anne Lemmer’s 1999 Master’s thesis at the University of Hamburg, *Die "Freie Deutsche Bühne"*

³ Nicolás Jorge Dornheim, “Teatro y exilio. Paul Walter Jacob visto desde Argentina,” in *Teatro y teoría teatral*, ed. Regula Langbehn and Miguel Vedda (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2001), 22-36: 31.

⁴ Reviews on the FDB refer to her as Hedwig Schlichter, or Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla.

⁵ Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, “Recordando a Hedy Crilla,” in *Teatro y teoría teatral*, 9-23. In general, Cora Roca’s *Días de Teatro* is a well-informed account of Crilla’s accomplishments and influence in the Argentine theater scene. However, as evidence from my archival research suggests, the story of the FDB is more complicated than Roca indicates.

in Buenos Aires: 1940-1965 is exceptional for its detailed coverage of the stage during the postwar period.⁶ Lemmer provides a useful narrative history on the FDB based on thorough investigation of the holdings of the Paul-Walter-Jacob-Archiv in Hamburg and the Political Archive of the West German Foreign Office in Berlin, Germany. Lea Kalinna's 2009 Bachelor's thesis at the University of Frankfurt on the Oder, "Exil und Identität. Die deutsche Emigration in Argentinien während des Nationalsozialismus am Beispiel der Freien Deutschen Bühne," draws from extant scholarship on the FDB and Paul Walter Jacob (Wolfgang, Naumann, Trapp, Pohle, Lemmer) as well as material from the Paul Walter Jacob-Archiv. Kalinna emphasizes the role of language in emigration and integration to a greater degree than previous research.⁷ Other German scholarship focuses on the FDB's founder, P. Walter Jacob (Wolfgang, Naumann, Pohle, Trapp).⁸ While valuable and informative for my project, these sources discuss the FDB indirectly and conclude their treatment with Jacob's return to Germany in 1949, fifteen years before the theater closed.

⁶ Anne Lemmer, *Die "Freie Deutsche Bühne" in Buenos Aires 1940-1965* (Hamburg: Hamburger Arbeitsstelle für deutsche Exilliteratur, 1999).

⁷ Lea Kalinna, "Exil und Identität. Die deutsche Emigration in Argentinien während des Nationalsozialismus am Beispiel der Freien Deutschen Bühne" (B.A. thesis, University of Frankfurt an der Oder, 2009).

⁸ Vivian Wolfgang, *Paul Walter Jacob und die Freie Deutsche in Argentinien* (PhD diss, University of Vienna, 1979); Uwe Naumann, *Ein Theatermann im Exil, P. Walter Jacob* (Hamburg: Kabel, 1985); Fritz Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements," *Exil* 7 (1987): 34-52; Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung" *Exil* 7 (2: 1987): 34-58; Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Exilprominenz und Zwang zur Politik," *Exil* 8 (1988): 79-96; Frithjof Trapp, "Zwischen Unterhaltungsfunktion und der Erwartung politischer Stellungnahme. Spielplan und künstlerische Konzeption der ‚Freien Deutschen Bühne‘ Buenos Aires," in *Exiltheater und Exildramatik 1933-1945*, ed. Edita Koch (Maintal, Koch: 1991), 118-137.

Although the Ney-Bühne figures prominently in Jacob's correspondence, none of the aforementioned scholars discuss this theater. A further shortcoming in all German scholarship on the Freie Deutsche Bühne is that it leans very heavily on German language sources from archives in Germany. However, abundant primary sources on the FDB and the Ney-Bühne exist in many languages, especially in Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Yiddish. Additionally, actors of both stages reside in Argentina, and archival materials on these stages exist in Buenos Aires and Córdoba. Extant scholarship on the Freie Deutsche Bühne also tends to narrow its focus on Paul Walter Jacob. Other actors in the stage's twenty-plus person ensemble are scarcely mentioned.

In the ensuing pages, I emphasize what Jacques Arndt referred to at *Lenguas Vivas* as "la otra campana."⁹ First of all, I attempt to portray the full diversity of German theater in Argentina by thoroughly investigating not only the antifascist Freie Deutsche Bühne, but also its nationalist adversary, Ludwig Ney's Deutsches Theater. Secondly, while Paul Walter Jacob is crucial to any study on the FDB, I have done my best to draw from as many different perspectives as possible, including those of Jacques Arndt (with whom I conducted several interviews), Alexander Berger (whose archive I perused at the Idische Wissenschaftsorganisation [IWO], Buenos Aires), Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla (about whom I gathered testimony from Cora Roca, Alfredo Bauer, and Frank Nelson), and other thespians who are prominent in Argentine media and European archives, especially Liselott Reger-Jacob, Max Wächter, and Ernst Wurmser. In my work on the Deutsches Theater I also include input from multiple sources,

⁹ Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, "Recordando a Hedy Crilla," 23.

such as Regine Lamm, Werner Loewe, Cornelia Ney, Sonia Scheuerle, Ursula Siegerist, and Egon Straube.

Another rather surprising blind spot in all extant scholarship on the FDB is the utter absence of close analyses of the stage's performances. None of the studies mentioned above discuss any of the theater's performances in depth, nor the written texts of the dramas chosen for production. Instead they all tend toward narrative history, biography and, in the case of Fritz Pohle, reception. While these dimensions are relevant, the Freie Deutsche Bühne was first and foremost a theater. Its performances were the bedrock of its existence. Moreover, at least from 1940 to 1950, scholars are blessed with an array of resources to inform explorations of the FDB's productions. Not only did numerous publications print reviews of nearly every performance, but all the original playscripts used for the FDB's productions—some of which diverge profoundly from published versions—are accessible at the Paul-Walter-Jacob-Archiv in Hamburg. Another invaluable source are the hundreds of photographs of rehearsals and official productions in the Alexander Berger Collection at the IWO in Buenos Aires, allowing researchers to visualize performances as well. I have pooled these resources to analyze extensively several key performances at the FDB during WWII period.

2. Recent Developments in Research on German Exilic Literature

In the 1996 yearbook for *Exilforschung* Bernard Spies diagnosed a concern about the relevance of studies on German exilic literature: "Wer sich in

den neunziger Jahren mit Exilforschung befasst, dem wird nicht selten bedeutet, dass er sich mit einem obsoleten Gegenstand abgebe.”¹⁰ A few years later Claudia Albert claimed that research on German exilic literature was stagnant, because for decades it had tended toward projects of meticulous data collecting that often neglected issues of aesthetics, cultural theory, and migration.¹¹ The foreboding title to Albert’s article, “Ende der Exilforschung?,” underscores her uncertainty about the discipline’s future.¹²

Fields such as migration studies and cultural transfer, however, represent promising new approaches studies on *Exilliteratur*, and recent publications indicate a move in this direction. In *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben* Ottmar Ette incorporates German exiles, including Emma Kann and Erich Auerbach, into a broader international study of what he refers to as “Literaturen ohne festen Wohnsitz.”¹³ Ette’s vast panorama of writers without a fixed abode spans the aforementioned German exiles, as well as exiles from other countries, such as the Frenchman Albert Cohen and the Colombian Gabriel García-Márquez. He also includes writers who are on the move as travelers, emigrants, and global citizens

¹⁰ Bernhard Spies, “Exilliteratur – ein abgeschlossenes Kapitel? Überlegungen zu Stand und Perspektiven der Literaturwissenschaftlichen Exilforschung,” *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch* 14 (1996): 11-30, 11.

¹¹ Claudia Albert, “Ende der Exilforschung?: Eine Überlegung anlässlich neuerer Veröffentlichungen zum Thema Exilliteratur,” *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 24:2 (1999): 180-187, 182.

¹² Claudia Albert, “Ende der Exilforschung?,” 182.

¹³ Ottmar Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben: Literatur ohne festen Wohnsitz* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2005); Ottmar Ette, “Literaturwissenschaft als Lebenswissenschaft: Eine Programmschrift im Jahr der Geisteswissenschaften,” *Lendemains* 125: 32 (2007): 7-32; Ottmar Ette, “Literature as Knowledge for Living, Literary Studies as Science for Living,” ed. and trans. Vera M. Kutzinski *PMLA* 2010 (forthcoming in Fall 2010): 1-32.

of the 21st century, including the Turkish Emine Sevgi Özdamar and the Japanese Yōko Tawada, both of whom currently live in Berlin and whose writing Ette identifies as characteristic of “transkulturelle, verschiedene Kulturen und Sprachen ständig querende Bewegungen.”¹⁴ Argentina’s German theaters resonate strongly with Ette’s model of “Literaturen ohne festen Wohnsitz,” because in the creative act of theatrical performance, written dramas become truly “transmedial,” “transareal,” “transtemporal” and in the case of both of Argentina’s German theaters during the postwar period, “transkulturell,” and “translingual” as well.¹⁵ As performance art, theater can never be static or fixed—it is always dynamic and, if not on the move, then at least in motion. Many of the writers Ette discusses either remain in motion, such as Özdamar and Tawada or, in the case of Auerbach and Kann, never do find a new home after being forced into exile, reflecting Horkheimer and Adorno’s provocative statement: “Heimat ist das Entronnensein.”¹⁶ Taking my cue from Ette, I investigate whether actors at the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Deutsches Theater remained adrift after leaving Europe, or if they eventually transitioned from emigrants to immigrants and established a fixed abode in Argentina. A crucial dimension of this endeavor will be evaluating the capability of theater to fulfill Ette’s concept of literature as “knowledge for living together.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben*, 185.

¹⁵ Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben*, 27.

¹⁶ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1986), 86, quoted in Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben*, 33.

¹⁷ Ette, “Literature as Knowledge for Living, Literary Studies as a Science for Living,” 24.

Although Ette's work is fruitful for studies on German exilic literature, his expansive agenda exceeds this field. Recent scholarship demonstrates, however, that publications with a more traditional focus are also diversifying their discourse. According to its official website, the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung was founded in 1984 to research "die kulturellen, wissenschaftlichen, künstlerischen und politischen Leistungen der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945."¹⁸ Its yearbook, *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch*, can be regarded as a bellwether for the discipline. The yearbooks from the 1980s, 90s, and even the early 2000s show a conventional research agenda, featuring editions on common destinations of exiles, aspects of inner emigration from 1933-45, and journalism in exile.¹⁹ More recently, however, the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung has turned its attention to present-day migratory movements and asylum-seekers, as well as cultural transfer. Its most recent yearbook, entitled *Exil, Entwurzelung, Hybridität*, evinces this development.²⁰ The volume features numerous contributions which emphasize themes connected to migration studies, including the acculturation of German exiles in Canada, exile and post-colonialism, cultural transfer, identity, integration, and hybridity.²¹ Its contents are no longer confined

¹⁸ <http://www.exilforschung.de/index.php?p=2>

¹⁹ *Metropole des Exils*, *Exilforschung: ein Internationales Jahrbuch* 20 (Munich: Text und Kritik, 2002); *Aspekte der künstlerischen inneren Emigration 1933-1945*, *Exilforschung: ein Internationales Jahrbuch* 12 (Munich: Text und Kritik, 1994); *Publizistik im Exil und andere Themen*, *Exilforschung: ein Internationales Jahrbuch* 7 (Munich: Text und Kritik, 1989).

²⁰ *Exil, Entwurzelung, Hybridität*, *Exilforschung: ein Internationales Jahrbuch* 27 (Munich: Text und Kritik, 2009).

²¹ Patrick Farges, "'I'm a hybrid' (W. Glaser). Hybridität und Akkulturation am Beispiel deutschsprachiger Exilanten in Kanada," *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch* 27 (2009): 40-58; Stephan Braese, "Exil und Postkolonialismus," *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch* 27 (2009): 1-19; Ingrid Belke, "Kulturtransfer und Identitätszuwachs. Der

to exiles who left Germany between 1933-45. Instead the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung now covers Turkish emigrant organizations in Germany, asylum-seekers in West and East Germany during the 1970s, and questions of identity for expatriates who participated in demonstrations in Europe and the United States in 1968.²²

Other publications in the field display similar tendencies. In 2008 the German Emigration Center (Deutsches Auswandererhaus) published a volume, *Nach Buenos Aires!*, which synthesized exilic literature with migration studies, including chapters on the writers Paul Zech, Günther Ballin, and Robert Schopflochler along with other contributions about immigrant policy in Argentina and various waves of German migration to Argentina in the twentieth century.²³ The Österreichische Gesellschaft für Exilforschung has also widened its scope to place recent studies on topics within the traditional focus of exilic literature, such as exile in Shanghai and Elias Canetti's experiences in England, alongside more innovative topics, including cultural transfer and hybridity in India.²⁴ A recent

Literatursoziologie Leo Löwenthal im amerikanischen Exil, " *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch 27* (2009): 86-101.

²² Valentin Rauer, "Identität, Integration und Hybridität. Migrationspolitische Diskurse türkischer Dachverbände in Deutschland," *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch 27* (2009): 206-220; Patrick Poutrus, "Zuflucht Nachkriegsdeutschland. Flüchtlingsaufnahme in der Bundesrepublik und DDR von den späten 1940er bis zu den 1970er Jahren," *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch 27* (2009): 182-205; Wilfried Mausbach, "Das europäische Exil und die kollektive Identität der 68er-Bewegung in den USA," *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch 27* (2009): 115-132.

²³ *Nach Buenos Aires!* ed. Simone Eick (Bremerhaven: Deutsches Auswandererhaus Bremerhaven, 2008).

²⁴ Elisabeth Buxbaum, *Transit Shanghai: ein Leben im Exil* (Vienna: Steinbauer, 2008); Margit Franz, "Kunst-Exil in Indien: Kulturtransfer und kulturelle Hybridität" (lecture, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna, June 17, 2008).

conference, "La emigración alemana en la Argentina, 1933-1945. El impacto de su presencia," held at the Argentine national library and organized by the German Academic Exchange Service, featured presentations on German writers, photographers, and musicians in exile as well as research on Jewish community institutions and leftist political groups.²⁵ The title of the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung's massive, 1356 page *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945* indicates a broad range of studies on German emigrants, which ranges across five continents and includes contributions on emigrant scientists, historians, philosophers, pedagogues, and architects, as well as writers, actors, musicians, and painters.²⁶ Studies on German exilic theater, by definition narrower in scope, have also broadened their focus to include not only more famous exiles to North America, such as Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Toller, Albert Bassermann, and Ernst Deutsch, but also a wealth of information about lesser known emigrants to Palestine, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, China, and many more nations. There are multiple scholars who have published thorough research on nationalist German emigration to Argentina during the 20th century, including monographs by Ronald Newton, Holger Meding, Carlota Jackisch, and Georg Ismar, as well as master's theses by Joshua Goltz and Lennart Laberenz, to name

²⁵ Fedor Pellmann, "Paul Zech en Buenos Aires;" Johanna Hopfengärtner, "Emigrante, pionera, individualista: Grete Stern y su obra fotográfica en Argentina;" Glocer, Silvia, "Guillermo Graetzer: música, exilio y creación;" Franka Bindernagel, "Debatiendo la historia: La visión de los alemanes republicanos a fines de los años veinte;" Ana Weinstein, "Panorama de la comunidad judía en la Argentina y sus instituciones a comienzos de los años treinta;" Jessica Zeller, "De un pionero socialista a un club de entretenimiento? – El Verein Vorwärts [Asociación Adelante] en Buenos Aires, 1882-1962;" Papers presented at the symposium, "La emigración alemana en la Argentina, 1933-1945: El impacto de su presencia" (Buenos Aires, April 19-20, 2010).

²⁶ Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).

only a few.²⁷ Meding and Ismar also offer extensive information and analysis of coverage of current events and politics in nationalist German media, such as *Der Weg* and the *Deutsche la Plata Zeitung*, respectively.²⁸ Meding implicitly links the neo-fascist *Weg* to the field of German emigrant literature by referring to it as an emigrant magazine.

Despite such large-scale expansion of German exile studies to include many professions, geographical regions, time periods, and even academic disciplines beyond its original purview, scholarship on the cultural production of German nationalists abroad is scarce. In publications by scholars of literature and those closely linked with organizations dedicated to *Exilforschung*, such as the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung, the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Exilforschung, and the *Hamburger Arbeitsstelle für Deutsche Exilliteratur*, German nationalist artists are not considered. Scholars and institutions focusing on the political and anthropological aspects of emigrant populations, such as Ismar, Meding, and Jackisch, do include nationalist Germans in their studies, but appear to operate on the premise that the cultural production of these emigrants is not within their sphere of interest. Hybrid groups and publications, i.e. those whose focus on cultural, political, and anthropological dimensions of German emigration, such as

²⁷ Ronald Newton, *The 'Nazi Menace' in Argentina, 1931-1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Holger Meding, *Flucht vor Nürnberg? Deutsche und österreichische Einwanderung in Argentinien 1945-1955* (Köln: Böhlau, 1992); Carlota Jackisch, *El nazismo y los refugiados alemanes en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1997); Georg Ismar, *Der Pressekrieg: Argentinisches Tageblatt und Deutsche La Plata Zeitung, 1933-1945* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin, 2006); Joshua Goltz, "Memories of Heimat: National Socialist Propaganda and the Homelands of German Emigrés in Argentina" (M.A. thesis, University of Oxford, 1998); Lennart Laberenz, "Vom Kaiser zum Führer- deutschsprachige Nationalismuskurse in Buenos Aires, 1918-1933" (M.A. thesis, Humboldt University of Berlin, 2006).

²⁸ Holger Meding, *"Der Weg". Eine deutsche Emigrantenzeitschrift in Buenos Aires 1947-1957* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin, 1997); Ismar, *Der Pressekrieg*.

the German Emigration Center or the *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration*, have published works which include sections on antifascist, Zionist, and nationalist emigrants in a single volume. Yet these studies do not discuss the cultural production of German nationalists.

This omission is difficult to understand. One possible explanation, as Joshua Goltz notes in his master's thesis, "Memories of Heimat," is the fact that research groups such as the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung first defined themselves as dedicated to victims of Nazi persecution, and nationalist Germans do not fit within this agenda.²⁹ However the society's program has since expanded to such an extent that its initial parameters are obsolete. If the field is broad enough to include Turkish emigrant organizations and asylum-seekers in Germany, it is hard to justify the exclusion of at least postwar nationalist German emigrants, the vast majority of whom were refugees.³⁰ Furthermore, neutrally entitled publications which emphasize the cultural production of German emigrants, such as the *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, also are devoid of references to nationalist German theater, music, and creative writing. To be sure, in German Studies "Emigration" is a term often associated with victims of Nazism, especially from 1933-45. Yet it is problematic to reserve such a broad term for a selective group. If the ensemble of the Deutsches Theater, some of whom left Germany in the 1930s, cannot be referred to as emigrants, then it becomes challenging to find a suitable term for them. For their part,

²⁹ Goltz, "Memories of Heimat," 5.

³⁰ Holger Meding, "Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Einwanderung an den Rio de la Plata," in *Nach Buenos Aires!*, 31-36.

anthropological and political studies (Newton, Meding, Ismar, Jackisch) generally consider cultural production to be outside their focus, yet cultural activities form a crucial part of emigrant identity.

During and after WWII, the pages of nationalist publications such as the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien*, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, as well as the *Freie Presse* and *Der Weg*, devote a remarkable amount of space to nationalist poetry, short fiction, and serialized novels, as well as reviews of concerts, theatrical performances, and cinema. The 1941 *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* features nine poems, four short stories, an eight-page review of German cultural events in Buenos Aires (including Ludwig Ney's Deutsches Theater), and a multi-page obituary of Josef Ponte, a German poet who had visited Argentina a few years previously.³¹ The April 1948 issue of the *Weg*, for example, was 80 pages in length and included essays on Nordic music and reviews of Wilhelm Furtwängler in the Teatro Colón and Ludwig Ney in the Teatro Smart.³² It also featured a selection of poems by German prisoners of war, and short stories by the

³¹ Margit Hillebrandt, "September 1940," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941): 43; Hermann Löns, "Wir fahren gegen England," 68; Heinrich Lersch "Grabschrift," 70; Vesper, "Mahnung," 100; n.a. "Wir kehren Heim ins Vaterland," 101; n.a. "Nun geht die deutsche Reise an," 101; n.a. "Aus Wohlheim sind gezogen," 102; n.a. "Wir haben gesiegt," 158; Maria Kahle, "Das Gebet der Toten," 167; Margit Hillebrandt, "Wolken, Wellen und Wind," 177; Karl Herrmann, "Erntedankfest," 180; Werner Hoffmann, "Der verlorene Sohn: Ein Legendenspiel," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941): 132-4; Margit Hillebrandt, "Tito, der Seehund," 175-177; Karl Schade, "Para éste no hay perdón," 177-181; Brunswig, "Der Totenkranz: Eine Geschichte aus Patagonien," 197-201; Johannes Franze, "Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941): 134-141; Wilhelm Lütge, "Zum Gedächtnis von Josef Ponte," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941): 145-147.

³² Ernst Aufrecht, "Nordische Musik," *Der Weg* (April 1948): 220-223; n.a. "Wilhelm Furtwängler: Zu seinen Konzerten im Teatro Colón," *Der Weg* (April 1948): 260; n.a. "Zum Spielplan der Neuen Bühne Ludwig Ney im Teatro Smart," *Der Weg* (April 1948): 271-271.

conservative Christian August Winnig and a recent emigrant to Chile, Susanne Torwandt.³³ Fiction, poetry, and reviews on cultural events dominated the *Weg* during the late 1940s, and continued to feature prominently in its pages through the 1950s. The fiction and reviews in nationalist German media in Buenos Aires demonstrate that cultural production was fundamental to the identity of the German *alte Kolonie* in Buenos Aires. From 1933-45, writers and critics were staunchly loyal to [Nazi] Germany, and literature and drama by Germans in Europe and South America strengthened the bonds between the *alte Kolonie* and its *Vaterland* while simultaneously inundating Argentina's nationalist German population with Nazi propaganda, such as the *Führerkult* and *Blut und Boden*, as well as justifying key tenets of Nazi domestic and foreign policy, including virulent anti-Semitism and militaristic expansionism. After the war, many stories, poems and dramatic performances denounced the Allied occupation and the expulsion of German inhabitants from Eastern Europe. At the same time, however, the artistic production of members of the *alte Kolonie* also reveals areas of divergence between themselves and Germans in Europe, thus undermining to an extent the transatlantic National Socialist community advocated by Nazi officials. Furthermore, local fiction also displays strong affinities for Argentina among nationalist Germans. In written fictional and performance art, the *alte Kolonie* portrayed Argentina as a second *Heimat*, thereby illustrating a crucial difference between themselves and German citizens across the Atlantic.

³³ n.a. "Zwei Gedichte eines deutschen Kriegsgefangenen," *Der Weg* (April 1948): 248-249; Christian August Winnig, "Im Kreis verbunden," *Der Weg* (April 1948): 228-233; Susanne Torwandt, "Menschen und Tiere am Rio Negro," *Der Weg* (April 1948): 234-239.

3. Navigating an Underexplored Topic in German Studies

Central to my work on the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Deutsches Theater is Max Herrmann's notion of theater as a community-building institution, as Erika Fischer-Lichte recounts in her book, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*. According to Herrmann, a pioneer in the nascent field of German theater studies in the early 20th-century, theatrical performances depend on the mutual participation and collaboration of actors and audiences. As such, Herrmann asserts, theatrical performances must always be community-building events.³⁴ In the following, I posit both the antifascist Freie Deutsche Bühne and the nationalist Deutsches Theater as community-building institutions which contributed to the shaping and stabilization of two distinct, antagonistic, competing antifascist and nationalist German populations in Buenos Aires. I also explore the possibility that these theaters may have exposed divisions among their supporters. In the effort to construct cohesive communities of antifascist and pro-Nazi supporters, the FDB and the Deutsches Theater also risked revealing diverse allegiances and identities which threatened to destabilize each group.

Drawing from playscripts, contemporary coverage in local media, interviews, lectures, essays, and correspondence from the members of their ensembles, I investigate how performances at the FDB and the Ney-Bühne expressed, reinforced, and sought to legitimize the conflicting cultural identities of antifascist and nationalist German populations. In order to determine whether nationalist German drama in Buenos Aires was synchronized to drama theory in the Third

³⁴ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 22-29.

Reich, I compare the Deutsches Theater's repertoire, performances, and reception to Nazi German dramatists, theorists, and officials, such as Hanns Johst, writer and president of the Reich Chamber of Literature (*Reichsschrifttumskammer*); Julius Petersen, chair (*Direktor*) of the German department (*Germanisches Seminar*) at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin from 1933 until his death in 1941; and Rainer Schlösser, head of the Nazi theater administration (*Reichstheaterkammer*) and the Reich's chief theater censor from 1935-1938. Although they appear to be sharply divergent at first glance, I look for common ground between the Deutsches Theater and the Freie Deutsche Bühne. I raise the question of whether their shared condition as cultural institutions of emigrant populations led the FDB and the Deutsches Theater to adopt parallel community-building strategies. I also investigate how their contact to the Argentine host society conditioned these theaters' performances and influenced their relationships to each other.

As a study on emigrant theaters during the WWII period, my research also focuses on Nazi oppression against Jewish and antifascist thespians in Europe. The members of the FDB's ensemble were professional actors in Europe, but they were not stars. As "blue-collar" thespians, were they particularly exposed and vulnerable to Nazi aggression? And further: how did their vocation impact the actors' efforts to escape Nazi persecution in Europe? In the case of both ensembles, I explore how their work in the theater conditioned these emigrants' ability to integrate into their new surroundings in Argentina. Faced with the obstacle of language, were emigrant thespians able to find work in the Argentine

theater scene? And if so, what effect did collaboration with local actors and audiences have on nationalist and antifascist German emigrants own political and social views?

4. Chapter Overview

In the second chapter, “German Buenos Aires Asunder,” I explain how the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Deutsches Theater came to exist and thrive in Buenos Aires. I contextualize Argentina’s competing German communities and their theaters in: 1) German emigration patterns to Argentina; 2) the interplay between German emigrants and Argentina politics and society; and 3) local German cultural, educational, and media institutions. There were two major periods of emigration. The *alte Kolonie* was constituted by a wave of emigrants which arrived in the late 19th-century and in the 1920’s. Politically this group generally was characterized by nostalgia for the Wilhelmine Monarchy, aversion to the Weimar Republic and, later, support for Nazism. The *neue Kolonie* refers to earlier emigrants who supported the Weimar Republic—a minority—and to German-speaking refugees, most of whom were Jewish, who fled to Argentina from 1933-45. The divergent political positions that emigrant groups held toward Wilhelmine Germany, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany led to the emergence of two antagonistic German communities in Argentina. Neutral in WWII until March 27, 1945, Argentina allowed German nationalist and antifascist partisan newspapers, schools, cultural centers, and theaters to flourish. These divisive, interconnected institutions exacerbated hostilities among the

German emigrants. Conflict also existed within the *neue Kolonie*, particularly between Zionists and less religious political antifascists, on the issues of collective German guilt for the crimes of Nazism, the possibility of Jewish acculturation into European society, and the future of Germany in the postwar period.

In the third chapter, “Theater on the Move,” I focus on the origins of the Deutsches Theater and the Freie Deutsche Bühne. I trace the career of the Deutsches Theater’s founder, Ludwig Ney, on stages in Germany. I discuss his experiences as director of the Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne, an itinerant stage funded by the Nazi Strength through Joy organization, and then investigate his journey from Germany through Paraguay to Argentina. I also explore Ludwig Ney’s position vis-à-vis Nazism and consider his motivations for emigrating from Germany to South America. Shifting to Jewish antifascist thespians, I argue that Paul Walter Jacob, the founder of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, developed his strategy on managing theaters in periods of economic and political crisis as early as 1932, in Wuppertal, Germany. In Wuppertal, Jacob 1) built a close rapport between the theater and its audience; 2) developed an aggressive, modernized advertising campaign; and 3) reformed the theater’s repertoire to suit his public’s tastes in turbulent times. This successful strategy laid the groundwork for his program at the Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires. In this chapter I also reconstruct three Jewish thespian refugees’ flights from Nazi persecution in Europe to an unlikely reunion in Argentina. Positing acting as a survival science, I show how these refugees’ work on stage both exposed them to Nazi persecution

and facilitated their escapes from Europe. Having traced the actors' journeys to Buenos Aires, I then discuss the foundation of the FDB and explore how it garnered funding and contracted actors for its ensemble.

The fourth chapter, "Theater of Inclusion: Comedy, Continuity, Memory, and Integration at the Freie Deutsche Bühne, 1940-1945," focuses on the role of pedagogical theater and comedies at the FDB. I convey the psychological uplift comedies gave to thespians and audiences alike, and explore the ways in which dramas such as Brandon Thomas' *Charley's Aunt*, Pedro E. Pico and Samuel Eichelbaum's *Die Nussschale*, and Carl Rössler's *Die fünf Frankfurter* contributed to antifascist community building in the *neue Kolonie*. By performing works by authors of many nationalities and sometimes revising playscripts, the FDB attempted to deploy the lighter muse to disseminate its message of interculturalism, integration, and antifascism among diverse emigrants and Argentines in Buenos Aires. Comedies represented the majority of the FDB's repertoire and attracted large audiences, but they also caused tension within the *neue Kolonie*. While politically engaged antifascists and Zionists wished to see more serious dramas in the FDB's repertoire, much of the theater's audience preferred lighter comedies. It was a major challenge for the Freie Deutsche Bühne to negotiate the often divergent wishes of different groups in the *neue Kolonie*.

In "Confrontation and Conflict: Political and Religious Drama at the FDB, 1940-45," I begin with a discussion of the multiple pressures facing the Freie Deutsche Bühne in 1940. While Zionist and political antifascist groups requested

political and religious dramas, the FDB was worried about exacerbating conflicts within the *neue Kolonie* as well as running afoul of the Argentine censor, the German embassy and the *alte Kolonie*. As a business enterprise, it also needed to attract sufficient theatergoers to its productions. In 1942, when many American nations entered WWII and the Nazi genocide intensified, the FDB began to play a greater number of serious dramas, including Robert Ardrey's *Thunder Rock*, Stefan Zweig's *Das Lamm der Armen*, Nathan Bistrizky's *In jener Nacht*, and Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*. I argue that while theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie* were not averse to serious dramas, they also wished to be entertained. The successful *Watch on the Rhine* made concessions to a broader public, but the grim plots and solemn tenor of the other dramas alienated spectators. I also explore the divergent reactions these dramas drew from Zionist organizations and nonreligious antifascist political groups in the *neue Kolonie*. Additionally, I investigate the possible repercussions that political drama at the FDB may have had in the *alte Kolonie*, Nazi Germany, and the Argentine host society. I conclude by discussing the FDB's 1945 performance of Franz Werfel's *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*. I emphasize how this drama of a Jewish refugee's escape from Europe during the Nazi invasion of France was received by the *neue Kolonie* and had a lasting impact on several of the actors involved in the production.

In the final chapter, "Heritage, Volk, and Nazism at the Deutsches Theater," I focus on the foundation and development of the Deutsches Theater in Buenos Aires. I explore how *völkisch* productions of comedies in the early 1940's, particularly August Hinrichs' *Bauernstücke*, brought together nationalist

Germans throughout Argentina by evoking patriotism and nostalgia for the German *Heimat*. Later, as the war turned against Germany, I explore how the Deutsches Theater's performances of Richard Presber's *Liselott von der Pflaz*, Emil Rosenow's *Kater Lampe*, and Otto Ernst's *Flachsmann als Erzieher* sowed mirth among German nationalists, encouraged loyalty to National Socialist ideals, and sustained solidarity within the *alte Kolonie*. Drawing from studies on the reception of the German Classics in Germany from 1933-45, I contextualize productions of the Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing at the Deutsches Theater in the theoretical framework of dramatists and theater scholars who were influential in Nazi Germany, including Hanns Johst, Julius Petersen, and Rainer Schlösser. Performances of Goethe's *Faust* and *Götz von Berlichingen*, Schiller's *Die Räuber* and *Wallenstein*, and Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* evinced a transatlantic nationalist German cultural identity based on exclusion and reinforced key tenets of Nazi propaganda, such as anti-Semitism, Blood and Soil, the *Führerkult*, and bellicose military expansionism. The Deutsches Theater also performed dramas written by members of the *alte Kolonie*. Though loyal to Nazism, these works reveal a strong affinity toward Argentina, thus destabilizing the transatlantic National Socialist community to an extent.

In my conclusion I focus on the continuing rivalry between Argentina's German populations and their theaters during the postwar period. I analyze how productions at both stages revealed divergent views on postwar Germany and perpetuated hostilities in Buenos Aires. Paul Walter Jacob attempted to deploy the Freie Deutsche Bühne as a means of reconciliation, but the *alte Kolonie* remained

loyal to Ludwig Ney's stage. Furthermore, Jacob's attempts at reconciliation threatened to polarize the antifascist community, the so-called *neue Kolonie*. I also explore how the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Deutsches Theater facilitated both German populations' integration into Argentine society during the postwar period. Finally, I discuss the results of my study on Argentina's competing German theaters within the context of scholarship on German exilic literature and migration studies.

CHAPTER II

GERMAN BUENOS AIRES ASUNDER

1. German-speaking Emigration to Argentina

German emigration to the River Plate has a history as old as the city of Buenos Aires itself. According to popular legend one of the original four founders of the city in 1536 was the German adventurer, Utz Schmidl, who is celebrated for this feat in a drama named after him by another German emigrant, Werner Hoffmann.³⁵ Larger waves of German emigrants to the River Plate began in the latter third of the 19th century and grew when hyperinflation ravaged Germany after World War I. Argentina had remained neutral in World War I, which can be attributed in large part to the profitable business of exporting agricultural goods to both sides during the conflict, but was also motivated by resistance among the nation's huge Italian population against going to war with Italy as well as the strong ties which existed between the Argentine and Prussian militaries. Argentina's neutrality was of great importance to German industrialists and policy planners. German capital holdings in the country increased during the war years, and they were augmented again in the early 1920's by major investments, especially in dependencies of German chemical, pharmaceutical, metallurgical, electrical, and heavy-construction combines. German investment in Argentina increased from \$265 million in 1920 to over \$375 million six later. Between 1919

³⁵ "Utz Schmidl," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* June 21, 1940.

and 1928 approximately ninety German subsidiaries were established in Argentina, including Siemens-Schuckert, Krupp, Bayer, IG Farben, Merck, and Thyssen Lametal.³⁶ In 1927 16.5% of Argentina's gross exports were purchased by Germany.³⁷ Due in part to heavy German investment,³⁸ in the 1920's Argentina emerged as an incomparably more prosperous, developed, and "civilized" country than its neighbors.³⁹ Indeed, many people believed Argentina would come to dominate South America in the same way that the United States had gained hegemony in the northern regions of the Americas.⁴⁰

The country was an appealing destination for tens of thousands of Germans seeking to escape hyperinflation as well as social and political turmoil in Germany during the 1920's. During the brunt of Germany's economic crisis in the early 1920s, over 25,000 Germans emigrated to Argentina each year.⁴¹ From the end of World War I to the beginning of the Great Depression approximately

³⁶ Ronald Newton, *The 'Nazi Menace' in Argentina, 1931-1947* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 27.

³⁷ Newton, *'Nazi Menace,'* 26.

³⁸ While German investment in Argentina was significant, British and U.S. American firms had a stronger presence in the country. German investment declined in the early 1930's.

³⁹ Ronald Newton, "Das andere Deutschland," *The Muses Flee Hitler: Cultural Transfer and Adaptation, 1930-1945*, ed. Jarrell C. Jackman and Carla M. Borden (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 307.

⁴⁰ Julia Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 32.

Not least among the people who believed this were Argentine and U.S. American politicians, who often regarded each other as rivals vying for influence in South America. In part, Argentina's sympathy to Germany in both World Wars can be attributed to this rivalry.

⁴¹ Anne Saint Sauveur-Henn, "Die deutsche Einwanderung in Argentinien," *Nationalsozialismus und Argentinien: Beziehungen, Einflüsse und Nachwirkungen*, ed. Holger Meding (Frankfurt, New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 12.

135,000 German-speakers entered the country.⁴² Frustrated by financial and social instability in Germany, it is likely that many of these emigrants contributed to the dissemination of a negative view of the Weimar Republic and reinforced nostalgia for the monarchy among Argentina's German community.

For many of these emigrants success in the southern cone was elusive, and large numbers eventually returned to their native countries. Nonetheless, by 1937 the German-speaking population in Argentina had reached approximately 255,000.⁴³ Of the one-quarter million German descendents living in Argentina in 1937, approximately 47,000 were German nationals.⁴⁴ Immediately following World War I, 25,000 to 30,000 German speakers were residing in Buenos Aires alone, among them 11,000 who had been born in Germany.⁴⁵ By the mid-1930's, due to arrivals of Jewish refugees and political dissidents, there were 60,000 people of German descent in the city, 20,000 of whom were born in Germany.⁴⁶ In 1936, 49 percent of the capital's population had been born outside of Argentina.⁴⁷ Due to large numbers of emigrants from Germany, Spain, and Italy in particular, Argentina's population grew markedly from 13 to 16 million from 1931 to 1947.

⁴² Ronald Newton, *German Buenos Aires, 1900 – 1933: Social Change and Cultural Crisis* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 81.

⁴³ Heinrich Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum und Drittes Reich: Der Fall Argentinien* (Köln and Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1981), 16.

⁴⁴ Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 16.

⁴⁵ Arnold Ebel, *Das Dritte Reich und Argentinien. Die diplomatischen Beziehungen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Handelspolitik, 1933-1939* (Cologne and Vienna: 1971), 23.

⁴⁶ Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 9.

⁴⁷ Newton, *German Buenos Aires*, xi.

From 1933-1945 the percentage of Germans among total emigrants to Argentina rose dramatically, from 6 percent between 1920-1930 to 28 percent from 1933 to 1945.⁴⁸ The increased proportion of Germans among the total number of emigrants to Argentina during these years can be attributed to German Jews and political dissidents fleeing Hitler's regime. Official statistics compiled by Argentine emigration authorities place the number of Jewish emigrants from Nazi Germany at 31,000.⁴⁹ However this figure fails to account for illegal and unrecorded Jewish refugees, which were numerous.⁵⁰ Argentina's poorer neighbors, particularly Paraguay and Bolivia, conducted a lucrative business selling visas to Jews desperate to escape the impending catastrophe during the final years of the 1930's.⁵¹ Borders between Argentina and its neighbors were porous, and Argentina was wealthier and more urbanized than the nations along its limits. There were also 200,000-300,000 Jews already residing in Argentina by the mid-1930's, which drew Jewish refugees in South America to the country.⁵² It thus reasonable to assume—and at least partially can be grounded in fact—that many Jews who initially disembarked elsewhere in South America proceeded to

⁴⁸ Anne Saint Sauveur-Henn, "Die deutsche Einwanderung," 11-13.

⁴⁹ Carlota Jackisch, *El nazismo y los refugiados alemanes en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1997) 158.

⁵⁰ Ronald Newton estimates that the number of illegal Jewish emigrants exceeded the number of Jews who entered the country legally. Newton, "Das andere Deutschland," 304.

⁵¹ José Alfredo Schwarcz, *Trotz Allem: Die deutschsprachigen Juden in Argentinien* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 43.
The Asociación Filantrópica Israelita estimates the total number of Jewish refugees in Latin America to be 101,500. The countries along Argentina's borders—Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay—received a total of 50,300 refugees (12,000; 5,000; 800; 25,500; and 7,000, respectively). Schwarcz, *Trotz Allem: Die deutschsprachigen Juden in Argentinien*, 60.

⁵² Newton, "Das andere Deutschland," 304.

take clandestine mountain, jungle, and river routes to ultimately arrive in Buenos Aires.⁵³ Most estimates place the total number of legal and illegal German-speaking Jewish emigrants to Argentina from Nazi Germany at 45,000.⁵⁴ Per capita, only Palestine received more refugees from 1933-45 than Argentina.

These statistics reflect not only a numerical, but also a cultural and religious shift in German and Jewish emigration to Argentina. Until Hitler came to power most German emigrants to Argentina were gentiles, but after 1933 the vast majority of German emigrants were Jews. Unlike emigration patterns of the late 19th and earlier 20th centuries, during the Nazi period most Jewish emigration originated from Western Europe.⁵⁵ Most of these refugees had been assimilated into Western European society and had belonged to cosmopolitan, professional social classes before fascist governments came to power in their native countries. The vast majority of earlier Jewish emigrants to Argentina, by contrast, hailed from the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe. The religious, social, economic, and cultural gaps between eastern and the western European Jews were enormous.⁵⁶ Most German Jewish refugees, for example, were reluctant or unable to attend theatrical performances or read newspapers in Yiddish, preferring the German language. Many of them likely could not speak Yiddish. Eastern Jews already in

⁵³ Schwarcz, 61.

⁵⁴ Anne Saint Sauveur-Henn, *Un Siecle d'Emigration Allemande vers l'Argentine 1853-1945* (Cologne, Weimer, Wien: 1995), 249; Alfredo José Schwarcz, "Die deutschsprachigen Juden in Argentinien," *Nationalsozialismus und Argentinien: Beziehungen, Einflüsse und Nachwirkungen*, 204; Jackisch, *El nazismo*, 158.

⁵⁵ Schwarcz, "Die deutschsprachigen Juden in Argentinien," 204.

⁵⁶ Schwarcz, *Trotz Allem: Die deutschsprachigen Juden in Argentinien*, 58.

Argentina, rejected the German language, which they associated with Nazism.⁵⁷ Profound differences between these groups persisted in the late 1930s and 1940s which, despite their common religion, impeded efforts to form a cohesive community of Jewish Argentines and more recent emigrants.

During the World War II period German-speaking emigration to Argentina morphed from a rural to an urban phenomenon. Unlike many previous waves of emigration, a great majority of these newcomers hailed from European cities, not the countryside, and settled almost exclusively in Buenos Aires to practice urban trades instead of pursuing agriculture in the arable regions of the Pampas.⁵⁸ German urban emigration patterns in Argentina are distinct from other countries of the Southern Cone, such as Brazil and Chile, where most German emigrants headed for thinly populated rural states, such as Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, respectively.

In the context of German theater in Argentina during this time period it is noteworthy that both Paul Walter Jacob, founder of the antifascist Freie Deutsche Bühne, and Ludwig Ney, founder of the pro-Nazi Deutsches Theater, were Germans who emigrated during the late 1930s. Both can also be defined as immigrants. Himself a refugee from Nazi persecution in Austria, Egon Schwarz describes:

[...] los lentos cambios que convierten a un emigrante en inmigrante. Esta etapa implica la búsqueda de una entrada económica estable; la lucha, a menudo, con un nuevo idioma; el proceso de adaptación a un medio

⁵⁷ Forum Sionista to Keren Kayameth Leisreal directive, November 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁵⁸ Schwarz, *Trotz Allem: Die deutschsprachigen Juden in Argentinien*, 287.

ambiente nuevo, frecuentemente exótico y raramente acogedor; y la necesidad de integrarse a una nueva población, con nuevas costumbres y pautas morales. En pocas palabras, se trata de adaptarse a una nueva cultura.⁵⁹

The slow changes which convert an emigrant into an immigrant. This stage includes the search for a stable economic position; the struggle, frequently, with a new language; the process of adapting to a new, often exotic and rarely welcoming environment; and the obligation to integrate into a new population, with new customs and moral norms. In brief, it is a matter of adapting to a new culture.

Despite their opposing political ideologies, Jacob and Ney also shared many of the challenges, frustrations, lessons, and rewards inherent to the immigrant condition. In an article he penned for the Asociación Filantrópica Israelita in 1943, Paul Walter Jacob poses a row of questions to illuminate the vastness of this experience:

Wird man jemals die Geschichte dieser Immigration schreiben? Wird davon ein Roman, ein Drama, ein Lied, ein riesiges Gemälde in großer künstlerischer Form erzählen? Wird irgendeine Chronik ihre Klagen und Leiden berichten können... und ihre positive Seite?⁶⁰

Jacob questions whether it is possible to present the history of immigration adequately. His suggestion of artistic forms suitable for representing this phenomenon underscore the difficulty of reducing it to a short list of specific qualities. Without losing sight of their many differences it is necessary, contrary to previous scholarship, to view both the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Deutsches Theater within the contexts of emigration and immigration.⁶¹ Each theater was

⁵⁹ Egon Schwarz, "La emigración de la Alemania nazi," *Paul Zech y las condiciones del exilio en la Argentina*, ed. Regula Langbehn (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1999), 18 (unless otherwise noted all translations are my own).

⁶⁰ Paul Walter Jacob, "Wissenschaft-Kunst-Theater," ed. Asociación Filantrópica Israelita, *Zehn Jahre Aufbauarbeit in Südamerika* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Filantrópica Israelita, 1943), 140.

⁶¹ Anne Lemmer, *Die "Freie Deutsche Bühne" in Buenos Aires 1940-1965*

fundamental to the lives of German-speakers, all of whom, despite their differences, had emigrated from Germany and with few exceptions transitioned from emigrants to immigrants in Buenos Aires. The role of both theaters as agents for their audiences and ensembles in this transition is a primary the focus of this study. What at first glance appears to be a confounding level of similarity between antifascist and pro-Nazi stages becomes comprehensible when analyzed through the lens of emigration and, eventually, immigration.

1.1 Argentine Immigration Policy

Since gaining independence from Spain in 1820, Argentina maintained a liberal immigration policy which favored Europeans in general and northern Europeans especially.⁶² Paragraph 25 of the Argentine constitution obliges the Argentine government to encourage European immigration to the country:

El Gobierno Federal fomentará la inmigración europea; y no podrá restringir, limitar ni gravar con impuesto alguno la entrada en el territorio argentino de los extranjeros que traigan por objeto labrar la tierra, mejorar las industrias, e introducir y enseñar las ciencias y las artes.⁶³

The federal government will promote European immigration; and will not be able to restrict, limit, or tax the entrance to Argentina territory of foreigners who have the objective of working the earth, improving the industries and introduce and teach the arts and sciences.

(Hamburg: Hamburger Arbeitsstelle für deutsche Exilliteratur, 1999), 17; Hermann Schnorbach, *Por "la otra Alemania": El Colegio Pestalozzi en Buenos Aires, 1934-2004* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Cultural Pestalozzi, 2004), 130.

⁶² "The idea of race in Argentina, however, encompassed [...] a European cultural hierarchy in which southern cultures were viewed as intellectually and culturally inferior." Further: "Most Argentine scientists [...] tended to assume that northern had natural, inborn traits superior to those of southern Europeans." Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina*, 33-34.

⁶³ www.argentina.gov.ar/argentina/portal/documentos/constitucion_nacional.pdf, 4.

This guiding principle is encapsulated in Juan Bautista Alberdi's oft-cited maxim "Gobernar es poblar."⁶⁴ Although the primary objective of this policy was to populate Argentina's rural interior with immigrant farmers, the nation welcomed immigrants to cities as well until workers' protests and strikes caused restrictions on immigration in 1902 and again in 1910. Regulations were loosened during the prosperous 1920's, then tightened from 1930 to 1934 as a result of the global financial crisis. During the first five years of National Socialist rule in Germany, Argentina was reluctant to admit refugees from Germany and Austria, particularly those hailing from cities. Nonetheless, the total number of immigrants entering the country rose steadily from 21,000 in 1935, to 27,000 in 1936, 44,000 in 1937 and 40,000 in 1938. It is probable that immigration in 1938 would have surpassed the total for 1937 if not for tight restrictions passed that year by the Argentine government.

The growing numbers of refugees entering the country created concern among conservatives in Argentine society, who believed the country had been robbed of the emigrant, "der uns am nützlichsten war und uns am nächsten stand." Even worse, they fretted, was the risk: "als Auffanggefäß für diejenigen zu dienen, die Europa ausstösst."⁶⁵ In August of 1938 the otherwise liberal Ortiz administration issued a decree to drastically restrict immigration as of October 1st. The decree limited immigration to persons with immediate family already settled in Argentina and those with start-up capital who had the explicit intention of

⁶⁴ Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Jackson, 1938), 66. "to govern is to populate—Trans."

⁶⁵ Ebel, *Dritte Reich und Argentinien*, 138.

pursuing agriculture in the interior (propósitos definidos de colonización).⁶⁶ The measures were justified as necessary to prevent increased unemployment, an argument which the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* rejected:

Wie uns auf unsere Erkundigungen in der Einwanderungsdirektion mitgeteilt wurde, sei die gestrige Resolution, die einem Verbot gleichkommt, aus der Befürchtung entstanden, dass durch die Zulassung von Einwanderern die Arbeitslosigkeit vermehrt werden könnte. Das ist mehr als absurd, denn kaum je in der Geschichte der Argentinischen Republik haben die Einwanderer mehr Arbeitsplätze geschaffen, als gerade in den vergangenen fünf Jahren, in denen der Initiative und dem Fleiss der vor dem Wüten der braunen Vandalen Geflüchteten das Entstehen zahlloser industrieller- und Kleingewerbe-Betriebe zu verdanken war.⁶⁷

In the same article the *Tageblatt* cited a translation of paragraph 25 of the Argentine constitution to justify its vigorous campaign against the new legislation. Finally, aware that its own arguments could be countered as coming from a partial source, the *Tageblatt* claimed that the reformed immigration laws were not only unfair to emigrants, but also opposed the will of the Argentine population:

Wenn es wahr ist, dass die Presse eines Landes die öffentliche Meinung vertritt, also die Stimme des Volkes ist, dann steht in der Frage der Einwanderung das ganze Land geschlossen gegen die von der Regierung verfügbaren Einwanderungsbeschränkungen, denn alle massgebenden Blätter des Landes veröffentlichen fortgesetzt Artikel, in denen die Einwanderungspolitik der Regierung als schädlich für Argentinien bezeichnet wird.⁶⁸

The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, mouthpiece for the pro-Nazi *alte Kolonie*, entered the immigration debate as well. Initially it remained aloof, preferring not

⁶⁶ Arnold Spitta, *Paul Zech im südamerikanischen Exil, 1933-1946* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1978), 34.

⁶⁷ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 28, 1938.

⁶⁸ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 23, 1938.

to enter an argument unnecessarily, especially with the antifascist President Roberto Ortiz in power. Instead it localized its perspective in Germany with anti-Semitic articles such as, “Zur Auswanderung der Juden aus dem Reich.”⁶⁹ Once the conservative nationalist Ramón Castillo had assumed office in 1940, however, the *La Plata Zeitung* became more aggressive. Without directly referencing Argentina, the newspaper intimated its approval of the country’s restrictive immigration legislation by citing the troubles that neighboring Uruguay, which had a more tolerant immigration policy, was supposedly experiencing on account of Jewish refugees. In an article in its section “Página Castellano” entitled “En el Uruguay comienzan a alarmarse de la silenciosa infiltración judía,” the newspaper first denounced Jewish immigration in general: “Sobre esta clase de inmigraciones ya se ha dicho en cuanto es necesario, destacando su indeseabilidad.”⁷⁰ The *La Plata Zeitung* then elaborated on the negative consequences of Jewish immigration, quoting the Uruguayan daily, *La Tribuna Popular*: “La consecuencia de dicha infiltración regular y clandestina, ha sido la subalternización comercial que ha hundido nuestra capital, reflejada en ambulante, que representa un grave perjuicio para el país.”⁷¹ Finally, the *La Plata Zeitung* concluded its article with thinly veiled praise for Argentina’s own stricter immigration laws:

⁶⁹ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, December 13, 1938.

⁷⁰ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, February 8, 1941. “Enough has already been said to stress undesirability of this class of immigrants—Trans.”

⁷¹ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, February 8, 1941. “The consequences of the aforementioned regular and clandestine infiltration has been the commercial subalternation which has sunk our capital, which is if reflected in peddling, a grave detriment to the country--Trans.”

Todos los países de la América Latina han reaccionado contra esa penetración, haciendo efectivas medidas represivas de eficacia inmediata. Ahora, por la ruta española, las agencias de inmigración, que realizan un buen negocio, vuelvan a traer contingentes de judíos a los países del Plata. Llamamos la atención a las autoridades sobre este importante detalle, que debe provocar la mayor vigilancia y la estricta aplicación de las leyes y reglamentaciones vigentes en la materia.⁷²

All Latin American countries have reacted against this penetration, having taking immediate and effective measures. Now, via the Spanish route, the immigration agencies, which are turning a good profit, are again bringing Jewish contingents to countries on the River Plate. We call the authorities attention to this important detail, which should provoke the greatest vigilance and the strict application of the laws and regulations pertinent to this affair.

The debate on Argentina's immigration policy evolved into a bitter feud about integration and loyalty to the host society between the antifascist and pro-Nazi German communities in Argentina. In its monthly magazine, the antifascist *Das Andere Deutschland* accused the *alte Kolonie* of creating a "quinta Columna" to support Nazism and threatened retaliation: "Mit aller Deutlichkeit müsse demgegenüber erklärt werden, dass Argentinien keine fremden 'Minoritäten' dulde, die sich hinter den Schutz ausländischer Mächte stellen."⁷³ For its part the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* expressed outrage at "Nazibarbarei" in Argentina and quoted the local cultural organization, Ateneo Liberal Prometeo, in its exhortation to the government: "zu verhindern, dass das Gift des Rassenkampfes auch unsere Atmosphäre vergifte." The paper made its position clear, declaring: "wir sprechen den demokratischen Juden in aller Welt unsere aufrichtigste Sympathie und

⁷² *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, February 8, 1941.

⁷³ *Das Andere Deutschland*, October, 1938, 34.

Solidarität aus.”⁷⁴ In an article for *Das Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien*, Wilhelm Lütge voiced similar arguments to defame the antifascist German community, claiming:

daß jene Kreise ihren Kampf gegen Deutschland, gegen alles Deutsche, den sie in Europa verloren haben, unter Mißbrauch der argentinischen Großzügigkeit und Liberalität auf argentinischen Boden gegen in Argentinien lebende Deutsche und Deutschstämmige weiterführen.⁷⁵

The media from each circle of German emigrants employed parallel methods—attacking the ‘other’ German colony for actions hostile to the Argentine host society—in the attempt to protect and praise members of its own community. Moreover, throughout the conflict neither side acknowledged the other as German, reserving this designation for itself.

The *Jahrbuch* defended the *alte Kolonie* by citing Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, president of Argentina from 1868-1874, in his native Spanish: “Los inmigrantes alemanes son muy particularmente deseados por los nacionales, por su honradez proverbial, sus costumbres laboriosas y su carácter pacífico y tranquilo.”⁷⁶ Quoting Sarmiento in Spanish and claiming the title “inmigrantes,” the *Jahrbuch* aimed to refute attacks by *Das Andere Deutschland* and the *Tageblatt* by demonstrating the older colony’s integration into the host society and emphasizing its long history of contributions to Argentina. In an article for the Asociación Filantrópica Israelita, Paul Walter Jacob makes an analogous

⁷⁴ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 15, 1938.

⁷⁵ “Ein Nachwort zum Jahre 1938,” *Das Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1939).

⁷⁶ “Sarmiento,” *Das Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1939). “German immigrants are particularly desired by nations for their proverbial honesty, work ethic, and pacific and calm character—Trans.”

contention: “Auch die Immigration von 1933-43, jene Menschen, die sich aus dem europäischen Chaos [...] nach Argentinien retteten [...] auch sie brachten ihrer neuen Heimat neue Ideen, Anregungen, neue Schaffenskraft!”⁷⁷ Mirroring the methods of the pro-Nazi Germans, yet supporting the opposite community, Jacob argues that the refugees from the Third Reich are not merely transitory emigrants, but immigrants who are in Argentina, their “neues Vaterland,” to stay. Furthermore, again making the same argument as the *Jahrbuch*, Jacob maintains that through industriousness and innovation the refugees contribute to Argentina’s development. Both competing German communities and their theaters adopted the tactic of accusing the other side of treason against Argentina while simultaneously claiming to be the true representatives of the better, contributing, immigrant German culture.

2. Argentine Politics, 1930-1945

In 1929 Argentina appeared to be a country whose future promise was becoming reality, following a trajectory of unprecedented growth and progress which began in the 1870’s. The country’s liberal constitution and democratic government had enabled the construction of one of the most ethnically diverse, politically open, and prosperous societies in the Americas. Financially, the nation’s predominantly agricultural economy was regarded as the world’s breadbasket, and industrialization was also underway. In 1913 Argentina had the sixth highest per capita income in the world, and at the outset of 1930 Argentina

⁷⁷ Jacob, “Wissenschaft-Kunst-Theater,” 140-42.

was among the world's ten wealthiest nations.⁷⁸ The tragedy of Argentina is that the country has never been as close to realizing its economic and social potential as it was then, nearly eighty years ago.

Despite the apparent progress in Argentina from the 1880's to 1930, some scholars argue that the nation's so-called 'golden era' actually caused the social decay and political authoritarianism which have troubled it since 1930.⁷⁹ For all its economic growth and democratic reforms, Argentina did not witness a more even distribution of wealth and power in this period. Its development was corralled by an oligarchy which aimed to maintain the status quo of class hierarchy and its hold on the country's wealth. Freedom and equality were limited by the state as it attempted to purge the nation of undesirables by suppressing political demonstrations and searching out and incarcerating dissenters. Many Argentine criminologists, psychopathologists, and government officials shared the pseudo-scientific theories of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon superiority to other races, including Africans, Indians, and Jews.⁸⁰ Drawing from the work of European theorists, such as the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso and the French neurologist Jean-Marie Charcot, Argentine studies attempted to link race to criminality and psychological disorders, concluding that Nordic and

⁷⁸ *A New Economic History of Argentina*, ed. Gerardo della Paolera and Alan M. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

⁷⁹ Julia Rodriguez' entire book, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the modern State*, defends this view of Argentine history. See pages 1-40; 63-71; 84-94; 186-195 for a thorough analysis of how Argentina's policy makers used racial theory to form its legal code, oppress its citizens, and regulate immigration. Other works with an analogous approach are: Natalio Botana, *El orden conservador. La política argentina entre 1880 y 1916* (Buenos Aires: Sudamerica, 1994). See also: Eduardo Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas. La cuestión social en la Argentina, 1890-1916* (Buenos Aires: Sudamerica, 1994).

⁸⁰ Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina*, 68-69.

Anglo-Saxon individuals were far less “vulnerable” to such “disturbances.”⁸¹ State scientists tried to engineer a ‘superior citizenry,’ and the government developed repressive control through racially discriminatory practices, such as immigration policy and even state violence against ‘inferior’ racial groups. This narrative of Argentine history suggests that Argentina’s problematic positions vis-à-vis fascism in later decades have origins in its ‘golden era.’

The ‘golden era’ ended with the world financial crisis of 1930. The crisis had grave repercussions in Argentina, whose export market was highly vulnerable to the global downturn and whose democratic institutions were not as stable as those in England or the United States. Argentine historian Felipe Pigna⁸² sees the economic crisis of 1930 as a turning point in his nation’s history: “‘crisis’ [...] significa literalmente ‘juicio’, en tanto decisión final sobre un proceso, y, en general, finalización de un proceso [...] se la ha usado en nuestra historia para calificar a momentos trágicos, de grandes padecimientos de la mayoría de la población.”⁸³ The Great Depression plunged Argentina into social and political turmoil. Journalist Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz described the plight of the unemployed in

⁸¹ Rodríguez, *Civilizing Argentina*, 69.

⁸² In addition to Pigna, other works which place the reversal in Argentina’s development in the 1930’s and 40’s include: Jorge Schvarzer, “The Argentine Riddle in Historical Perspective,” *Latin American Research Review* (27: 1, 1992), 169-181; Carlos Waisman, *The Reversal of development in Argentina: Postwar Counterrevolutionary Policies and their Structural Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Mark Falcoff and Ronald H. Dolkart, *Prologue to Perón: Argentina in Depression and War, 1930-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁸³ Felipe Pigna, *Los mitos de la historia argentina 3: De la Ley Sáenz Peña a los albores del peronismo*, (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2006), 162. “crisis [...] literally signifies judgement, in the sense of a final decision about a process and, in general, the end of a process [...] it has been used in our history to describe tragic moments in which the majority of the population has suffered greatly—Trans.”

1932: “Hay en Argentina más de tres millones de hombres inactivos, que vegetan perseguidos por la policía, la crítica de los diarios y la más indigna miseria.”⁸⁴

The crisis led to widespread criticism of President Hipólito Yrigoyen and his liberal Radical Party, opening the way for regime change at the hands of fascist and conservative elements in military and agricultural sectors.

On September 6, 1930 Yrigoyen was deposed in a military coup that proclaimed the fascist sympathizer José Félix Uriburu as president. Uriburu abolished the nation’s liberal constitution in favor of a conservative, nationalist state under elite control. Future president Juan Perón believed the military coup was a decisive event in Argentine politics:

El 6 de septiembre, terminó bruscamente la experiencia radical que había sido promovida por la ley del sufragio universal y por la intención participativa. Ese día histórico es el comienzo de una nueva etapa en la cual el gobierno será dirigido por la huestes de la oligarquía conservadora [...]. La proclamación de la ley marcial desde el 8 de septiembre de 1930 hasta junio del 31 puso en evidencia que había triunfado la línea del nacionalismo oligárquico.”⁸⁵

The 6th of September brusquely terminated the Radical experience which had been supported by the law of universal suffrage and voter participation. This historic day is the beginning of a new period in which the government would be controlled by members of the conservative oligarchy [...]. The proclamation of martial law from September 8, 1930 to June of 1931 proved that the nationalist oligarchy had triumphed.

Fourteen months after assuming office Uriburu was ousted by Augustin P.

Justo who was elected president by a coalition of conservative and *antipersonalist*

⁸⁴ Scalabrini Ortiz, *Política británica en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Reconquista, 1940), in Pigna, *Los mitos de la historia argentina* 3, 167. “In Argentina there are more than three million unemployed men, who are persecuted by the police, criticized by the press, and suffer the most despicable misery—Trans.”

⁸⁵ Enrique Pavón Pereyra. *Yo Perón* (Buenos Aires: MILSA, 1993), in Pigna, *Los mitos de la historia argentina* 3, 180.

factions called *la Concordancia*.⁸⁶ Justo exploited the democratic reforms of earlier decades and organized a democratic façade to legitimize his government. Elections were held and a parliament with majority and oppositional parties also existed. However the Radical Party, which according to a report by the German consulate was supported by 65 to 70 percent of the population, was suppressed and impeded from presenting candidates in national and provincial elections. Votes were fixed by the government under the euphemism “fraude patriótico.”⁸⁷ This political system of electoral fraud, intimidation, and cronyism held sway throughout the 1930’s, known in Argentina as the *década infame*.

Justo looked to fascist movements in Italy and Germany for political models. Since most members of military oligarchy, including Uriburu himself, had been trained in Germany, maintaining friendly relations with Hitler’s regime seemed a natural foreign policy.⁸⁸ Domestically, the military regime supported the foundation of various fascist groups in Argentina including the extremist Legión Cívica, which attacked Jews and German antifascists.⁸⁹ The government cultivated nationalism by demonizing the Anglo-Saxon presence in Argentina and its neighbors and proscribing communism. The newly created “Sección Especial de Represión al Comunismo” banned the Communist Party of Argentina and incarcerated hundreds of militant workers under the anti-communist “Social

⁸⁶ *Personalistas* was a derogatory term for Yrigoyen’s party, the Unión Cívica Radical. It implied that supporters of the UCR were sycophants of Yrigoyen. Thus opponents of the former president often referred to themselves as *antipersonalistas*. See: Spitta, 15.

⁸⁷ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 17.

⁸⁸ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 29.

⁸⁹ Jackisch, *El nazismo*, 191 – 192.

Defense Law.”⁹⁰ Argentina’s shift to military rule allowed German National Socialists to organize themselves and spread their ideology among the *alte Kolonie* freely. This enabled grassroots organizations, such as the national division of the Nazi party, to collaborate with the German embassy in order to synchronize German language schools, cultural institutions, and social clubs almost immediately after Hitler came to power. Antifascists, contrarily, were subject to continual harassment, even violence. The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* was temporarily banned twice in the 1930’s and its offices were fire-bombed in 1934.⁹¹ A meeting of the Pestalozzi Society, an antifascist organization which organized concerts, lectures, and theater performances, was disrupted by storm troopers in 1934, and numerous attacks on leftist newspaper and synagogues followed in the same year.⁹²

One of the most divisive events among Argentine citizens and German immigrants before the war was the German annexation of Austria in 1938. In celebration the *alte Kolonie* held a mass rally on April 10, 1938 at Luna Park, a large amusement park on the Buenos Aires waterfront. Sources put the attendance for the “unification” festivities between 18, 000 and 20, 000.⁹³ The gathering had all the features of the Berlin Sportpalast rallies, complete with mass chorus

⁹⁰ Olga Elaine Rojer, *Exile in Argentina, 1933 – 1945: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, (New York, Bern, Frankfurt, Paris: Peter Lang, 1989), 14.

⁹¹ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 26.

⁹² Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 49. Sources are divided about who was responsible for these and other attacks against German antifascists. Newton puts the blame on the *alte Kolonie*, but Volberg contends Argentine fascists were to blame. Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 38-50; Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschum*, 124-125.

⁹³ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 186.

sings of “Deutschland über Alles” and the “Horst-Wessel Lied.” A broad spectrum of Nazi organizations and their Argentine fascist counterparts were present. Dance and musical performances were presented against the backdrop of a massive red curtain with the words “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer” written in huge black gothic letters. In the vicinity of the venue, at Plaza San Martín, the Federación Universitaria Argentina and other social youth groups protested the event. The counter demonstration turned violent, and German flags were burned, German banks were stoned, and the Instituto Cultural Germano-Argentino was also damaged. A few days after the rioting the Argentine interim chancellor of the Foreign Ministry, Manuel Alvarado, apologized publicly to the Nazi Chargé d’Affaires, Erich Otto Meynen, deploring certain members of the media and special interest groups which were offensive to German nationality and failed to consider the “cordial relations between the two peoples.”⁹⁴ The Foreign Ministry’s thinly disguised criticism of the antifascist community and its sycophancy to representatives of Nazi Germany exacerbated the already stark divisions among the local population and between the German communities.

In the 1937 presidential elections, *la Concordancia* oversaw the election of the civilian, corporate lawyer Roberto M. Ortiz. Though himself elected on the basis of electoral fraud, Ortiz allied himself with the Radicals and worked to restore legitimate democratic elections to the country. At the outbreak of World War II, Ortiz sympathized with the Allied powers, contributed to a shift in public opinion against fascism, and passed an official ban on the Nazi party in Argentina

⁹⁴ Newton, *Nazi Menace*, 187.

on May 15, 1939.⁹⁵ He openly declared his sympathy with the victims of Hitler's tyranny in a message to Congress in May of 1940: "Argentine neutrality [in WWII] is not, nor can it signify, absolute indifference and insensitivity."⁹⁶ Provoked by public outrage against synchronized German schools, Ortiz passed legislation forbidding the instruction of racial prejudice in private schools in Argentina. It was fortunate, in many cases life-saving timing, that the first two years of Ortiz' presidency coincided with the greatest waves of emigration to the River Plate during the Third Reich. Nearly all of the founding members of the Freie Deutsche Bühne arrived in Buenos Aires in 1938 and early 1939. In October of 1939, however, Ortiz bowed to pressure within his government and passed prohibitive restrictions on immigration, nearly eliminating legal emigration to Argentina.

Advancing blindness forced Ortiz to cede power to his vice-president and bitter enemy, Ramón Castillo, in mid-1940. He died in July of 1942 without reassuming the presidency. Castillo was the political antithesis of Ortiz, and once in office he returned to the platform of Justo's regime. The new government was conservative, nationalistic, tolerant of fascist agitators, and unaccommodating to U.S. calls for "hemispheric solidarity."⁹⁷ Correspondence from 1942 between German Chargé d'Affaires Erich Otto Meynen, and the German embassy betrays Castillo's sympathy with the Axis powers, arguing that: "Präsident und

⁹⁵ Ismar, Georg Ismar, *Der Pressekrieg: Argentinisches Tageblatt und Deutsche La Plata Zeitung, 1933-1945* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin, 2006), 31.

⁹⁶ Rojer, *Exile in Argentina*, 15.

⁹⁷ Newton, "Das andere Deutschland," 308.

Außenminister [...] an einen Endsieg Dreierpaktmächte glauben und ihn wünschen.”⁹⁸ Even if Meynen had been exaggerating Argentina’s goodwill toward the Axis countries, many other events confirm the tenor of his comments. When Ernesto Alemann, editor-in-chief of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, expressed his sympathy with the U.S. after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in a telegram to the U.S. ambassador to Argentina, the postal service refused to deliver it, ostensibly out of concern for the preservation of Argentine neutrality.⁹⁹ On the other hand, military airplanes delivered National Socialist newspapers to the Misiones province in the Argentine interior for free. The government intervened against the screening of antifascist films such as Charlie Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator* and Hungarian dramatist Éva H. Haraszti’s *The Invaders*, but the Nazi propaganda film *Sieg im Westen* was repeatedly shown in *bonarense* officer’s clubs.¹⁰⁰

On December 9, 1942, during a broadcast for *La voz del día*, a German-language radio station broadcast from Montevideo, Uruguay, which sided early with the Allies, Paul Walter Jacob expressed his frustration with the Argentine regime and consternation regarding the *alte Kolonie*, sentiments common to many antifascists on the River Plate:

Die Tatsache zeigt, dass es heute, ein Jahr nach dem Kriegseintritt der grössten und bedeutendsten amerikanischen Republik und 10 Monate nach der Botschaftskonferenz in Rio noch zwei südamerikanische Staaten gibt, in denen Naziumtriebe in aller Offenheit, in dem Spionagetätigkeit

⁹⁸ Akten Büro Staatssekretär, Argentinien, Bd. 4, Meynen an Auswärtiges Amt, July 20, 1942, PAAA, in Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 22.

⁹⁹ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 22.

¹⁰⁰ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 7; *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 14, 1939.

gefährlichster Art für die Achsenländer möglich ist, dass es auch hier im demokratischen Amerika Interessengegensätze gibt, die stärker sind als das Bekenntnis zu den Forderungen der Menschen- und Völkerrechte, Forderungen, die in ihrer ganzen Wucht und ihrer ganzen Wahrheit das, was wir heute unter „Amerika“ verstehen, erst möglich gemacht haben erst kämpferisch geschaffen haben. Wie stark muss andererseits die Naziinfiltration auch in diesem Erdteil gewesen sein, wie viele freiwillige und unfreiwillige Helfer muss sie gehabt, wie viele Millionen muss sie gekostet haben, dass heute noch um die klare Entscheidung großer amerikanischer Republiken in Fragen von welt- und zukunfts wichtiger Bedeutung gekämpft werden muss!¹⁰¹

The tenuous situation of antifascists in Argentina did not improve when Castillo was deposed by a military conspiracy under General Pedro Pablo Ramírez in June of 1943. The Ramírez administration was even more authoritarian than its predecessors. It forbade political parties, dissolved student organizations, and greatly restricted freedom of the press. In response to student protests, the government shut down all universities in October of 1943.¹⁰² For opponents of Hitler's regime the situation became increasingly precarious. Provoked by a temporary ban on all Yiddish media in 1943, anti-Semitism in Argentina was the subject of a special report, "Die antijüdische Front," in the New York exile magazine *Aufbau*.¹⁰³ The *Volksblatt*, mouthpiece for exiled German communists, was shut down in June of 1943, and one of its editors, Erich Sieloff, was briefly imprisoned. *Das Andere Deutschland* also felt overly exposed in Buenos Aires and relocated to Montevideo in early 1944. The tenuous situation for German antifascists and Jews also had repercussions for the Freie Deutsche Bühne, which was compelled to abandon its weekend productions at the centrally

¹⁰¹ PWJA VII c) 408.

¹⁰² Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 25.

¹⁰³ *Aufbau*, 11 (43: 1943): 3.

located Casa del Teatro and perform instead on week nights at the Casal de Catalunya, located in the poorer San Telmo neighborhood on the opposite end of the city from the Belgrano district, where most of the FDB's public resided. Its relocation to the Casal de Catalunya was a major setback and very nearly forced the ensemble to disband. The stage furthermore had to take great care to avoid unwanted attention from the Argentine censor. During the same period the Ney-Bühne experienced its heyday on the River Plate. In 1943 it began playing at the Teatro Nacional, a theater with seating capacity for 1,155 persons. Unlike the Casal de Catalunya, the Teatro Nacional boasted an unsurpassable location on the Avenida Corrientes, just a few buildings off the Avenida 9 de Julio. This location, in the heart of Buenos Aires' theater district, is just steps away from the Obelisco, one of the most famous landmarks in all of Argentina.

Despite the nucleus of Nazi sympathizers in its government, Argentina broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in January of 1944.¹⁰⁴ Allied intelligence enabled them to force the government's hand. The Allies had intercepted Argentine plans to purchase arms from Germany, and U.S. officials also threatened to publish documents allegedly proving Argentine participation in a coup which had overthrown the pro-Allied Bolivian government in 1943.¹⁰⁵ Neighboring Uruguay was alarmed and allowed a fleet of U.S. warships to anchor in the River Plate. Furthermore, the Allies informed Ramírez that they would break off diplomatic relations with Argentina if he did not do so with Germany.

¹⁰⁴ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Newton, '*Nazi Menace*,' 285-314.

When Ramírez complied—almost certainly against his will—he enraged the many fascist sympathizers in the Argentine military. Three weeks later he was compelled to resign, and on February 24, 1944, the Axis supporters General Edelmiro Farrell and Juan Domingo Perón assumed the offices of president, and vice-president respectively.¹⁰⁶ According to Ronald Newton, the new Farrell-Perón regime initially planned to try Ramírez and several of his top aides for treason and reopen diplomatic relations with Germany.¹⁰⁷ In May of 1944 the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* also reported that the new government had provoked attacks against Jewish property in various regions of Argentina.¹⁰⁸

Although its policies carried political and economic disadvantages for most of the country, Argentina continued to support the Axis powers long after it was clear that fascism had lost the war. The oligarchy of military leaders and the conservative elite did not govern according to the will or welfare of the populace. Instead it did everything to perpetuate the authoritarian system which ensured its monopoly on wealth and power in the country. Rising nationalism and its pretensions of hegemony in South America also provoked Argentina to side against the U.S. and Great Britain, whom it saw as its principle competitors on the continent.¹⁰⁹ The U.S. government responded to the Farrell-Perón regime by refusing to recognize the new government and exerted tremendous pressure on its

¹⁰⁶ Perón, who would become one of the most influential figures of Argentine politics in the twentieth-century, also held the office of war minister in the new administration. Under Ramírez, Perón had gained national prominence as secretary of labor.

¹⁰⁷ Newton, *'Nazi Menace,'* 309.

¹⁰⁸ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 28.

allies to follow suit. Facing Allied sanctions and growing malcontent among its own population, Argentina became the penultimate country in the world to declare war on Germany on March 27, 1945. Argentina sent no troops to fight in the conflict; its declaration of war represented a purely cosmetic gesture of “hemispheric solidarity.” In 1969, Juan Perón, who was elected as president of Argentina in 1946, described the measure in the following terms: “Ohne Zweifel war der Krieg Ende Februar 1945 bereits entschieden. Wir hätten Neutralität bewahrt. Doch konnten wir sie nicht weiter aufrecht erhalten. [...] Und in der Übereinstimmung mit ihnen (den Deutschen in Argentinien) und ihrer Billigung haben wir Deutschland den Krieg erklärt. Natürlich war das eine rein formale Sache.”¹¹⁰ Argentina remained reluctant to join the Allied war effort throughout the entire conflict. Even in the postwar period, the nation’s president continued to bear sympathy toward Nazi Germany and nationalist Germans in Argentina.

2.1 Trouble at the Theater: Ferdinand Bruckner’s *Die Rassen* at the Teatro Cómico

The Nazi seizure of power in January of 1933 led to a rapid and thorough synchronization of domestic newspaper, radio, film, and publishing houses in Germany. Opposition media, such as Wieland Herzfelde’s Malik-Verlag, the Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, Samuel and Gottfried Bermann’s S. Fischer Verlag as well as magazines and newspapers including *Die Weltbühne* and the *Vossische Zeitung*—to name only very few—were quickly pushed into exile, usually in countries where Nazi publishers and press organs, including the Franz-Eher-

¹¹⁰ Meding, Holger Meding, *Flucht vor Nürnberg? Deutsch und österreichische Einwanderung in Argentinien 1945-1955* (Köln: Bohlau, 1992), 50.

Verlag, the *Völkische Beobachter*, and *Der Angriff*, often faced limited freedom of expression if they were not banned altogether. One of the very few locations where a large German population, composed of both supporters and opponents of National Socialism, could openly dispute ideological, cultural, and political differences in German language media was Buenos Aires.

The first major, local, public clash between the two Germanies in Buenos Aires took place at the theater, from the start a source of unification and polarization for the German colonies on the River Plate. In her book *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, Erika Fischer-Lichte remarks: “The performance [...] brings forth a social community that unites actors and spectators. Theatre, thus, appears to be an important community-building institution.”¹¹¹ Theater was indeed a community-building institution in Buenos Aires, but it united certain groups by excluding others and thereby intensified the animosity between antifascist and pro-Nazi communities. The Spanish language production of the German emigrant playwright Ferdinand Bruckner’s antifascist farce, *Die Rassen* represents a first example of this double-edged phenomenon.

When *Die Rassen* premiered in December of 1934 at the 500-seat Teatro Cómico, German Ambassador Edmund von Thermann immediately complained to the Argentine foreign ministry that caricatures of Hitler and other Nazi leaders in the drama were injurious to relations between Argentina and Germany.¹¹² The Foreign Ministry obsequiously appealed to the municipal censor to strike

¹¹¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 23.

¹¹² Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 49.

numerous offensive passages from the script. The censor dutifully complied, the Teatro Cómico adhered to its demands, and play was staged as scheduled. The *alte Kolonie* was irate at the play's success, which it interpreted to signify that audiences approved its depiction of Nazism. The play's acerbic depiction of Nazism cut across the boundaries of nation and language. A farcical version of the Horst-Wessel-Lied, for example, was sung in both German and Spanish. In a report to Ministry of Propaganda, the German Embassy fretted that the play could seriously damage the Reich's reputation in Argentina.¹¹³ The *La Plata Zeitung* described the performance as an "unerhörte Provokation," claiming that "in neun ebenso gehässigen wie geschmacklosen [...] Bildern der Führer und Reichskanzler, Deutschland und das deutsche Volk in unerhörter Weise beleidigt und beschimpft [würden]."¹¹⁴ Angered by the continuing performances, the *alte Kolonie* organized resistance to the drama, which on December 16, 1934 came to violent rioting in the theater. Heinrich Volberg was a German nationalist who attended the performance. He reports the build-up to the event and the ensuing tumult as follows:

Eine Flüsterpropaganda sorgte dafür, daß an einem bestimmten Tage ganze Reihen des Theaters von Parteigenossen und Sympathisanten besetzt waren. Irgendwie war vereinbart worden, das Stück in Ruhe anzusehen, bis zu einer Szene, in der ein betrunkenener SA Mann eine Schallplatte mit dem Horst-Wessel-Lied auflegte. Bei den ersten Takt brach ein Höllenlärm aus, Trillerpfeifen und sonstige Lärminstrumente, laute Buhrufe und andere Mißmutsäußerungen übertonten jedes andere Wort. Gleichzeitig sprangen einige Männer auf die Bühne, zerschlugen die Schallplatte, rissen die Hakenkreuzfahne herunter und haben vermutlich den Schauspieler, der den SA-Mann darstellte nicht gerade

¹¹³ Band R55, Akte 20553, Köhn to Promi Berlin, December 18, 1934, Bundesarchiv Berlin.

¹¹⁴ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, December 17, 1934.

glimpflich behandelt. Das Durcheinander im Zuschauerraum wurde noch ärger, als argentinische Soldaten, die zufällig unter den Zuschauern waren, und die nicht ahnten, worum es ging, ihre Seitengewehre zogen und sich damit den Ausweg erzwangen.¹¹⁵

The Argentine police then appeared at the premises and arrested 68 members of the audience, who spent the night in jail. According to Volberg, all prisoners were released the next day when the German Consulate paid municipal fines in full.

The riot caused *La Plata Zeitung* to appeal for clemency and a halt to performances of the piece on the basis of the “mehr als hundertjährige ungetrübte Freundschaftsbande” between Argentina and Germany.¹¹⁶ The Teatro Cómico did not yield to pressure, however, and the play continued to run amidst protests, disruptions, and threats of violence from German and Argentine Nazi sympathizers. On February 13, 1935 the police captured an Argentine with bombs in his possession, who confessed to plotting to firebomb the Teatro Cómico. He also named other members of his group who had acted to sabotage the performance. Of the fourteen implicated, thirteen were Spaniards or Argentines, and several of them belonged to the national fascist organization, the Legión Cívica Argentina.¹¹⁷ The lone German, Hans Hermann Wilke, an emigrant who worked at the Banco Germánico de la América del Sur, was identified as the paymaster and sentenced to four years and six months in prison in May of 1938.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 124.

¹¹⁶ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, December 19, 1934.

¹¹⁷ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 49.

¹¹⁸ Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 101.

In the aftermath of the Teatro Cómico affair, the *La Plata Zeitung* pressured the Argentine government to take measures against what it believed to be the true culprit for the hostilities—the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*:

Die maßgeblichen Stellen sind [...] nicht auf eine gewisse Presse angewiesen, die allzu eng liiert ist mit jenen schürenden und hetzenden Elementen, von denen hier die Rede ist, eine Presse, der nichts an der Wahrheit, alles aber an für sie brauchbaren Sensationen übelster Art liegt.¹¹⁹

For its part, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* expressed incomprehension regarding the censorship of Bruckner's drama and the Teatro Cómico. This affair was the first public conflict between members of the two German colonies on the River Plate to draw the attention of the wider Argentine public. Hitherto the disagreements between antifascist and pro-Nazi communities in Buenos Aires had been confined to the media and isolated incidents, but with Bruckner's drama the conflict escalated into a public feud which provoked participation by both colonies. With authoritarian, pro-fascist governments in power, a sharply divided local population, large communities of German antifascists, Jews, and supporters of National Socialism, and increasing numbers of refugees arriving from Europe, Buenos Aires was polarized by political and cultural tension.

2.2 Detainment of the Crew from the *Admiral Graf Spee*

Another polarizing event was the internment of sailors from the German battleship, *Admiral Graf Spee*. On December 14, 1939 the *Graf Spee* was engaged in a battle with three English destroyers about 600 kilometers off the coast of Montevideo. When the heavily damaged German ship reached Montevideo, it was

¹¹⁹ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, December 19, 1934.

granted only 72 hours safe harbor by Uruguayan authorities. Since repairs would have taken at least two weeks, Captain Hans Langsdorff sunk the *Spee* in the River Plate before the Montevidean public.¹²⁰ As he remarked on *La voz del día* on December 17, 1942, for Paul Walter Jacob this event demonstrated the truly global nature of World War II as well as its potential to catalyze conflict in Argentina:

Es war das erste Kriegsereignis, das auch dem Unbeteiligten und seelisch Trägen zeigte, dass ein neuer Krieg begonnen hatte, dass dieser Krieg auch auf diesen Kontinent übergreifen könne und werde, dass dieser Krieg gegen Zivilisation und Kultur aufgestanden war, bereit war, die Kriegsfackel und sein Eroberungsgelüste bis in die entferntesten Teile der Welt zu tragen.¹²¹

After sinking the *Spee*, the ship's 1046 sailors and their captain were permitted entry to Buenos Aires and were warmly greeted by the *alte Kolonie*, which organized fundraisers and festivities for the sailors.¹²² Through the *La Plata Zeitung* Langsdorff extended handwritten greetings and thanks to the German community. After President Ortiz decreed that the crew of the *Spee* would remain interned in Buenos Aires until the end of the war, Langsdorff committed suicide. The antifascist *Argentinisches Tageblatt* celebrated the Nazi's defeat: "Die Nazi-Flagge verschwindet von den Meeren," and in Berlin Hitler reportedly was enraged about the sinking of the ship.¹²³ The *alte Kolonie*, on the other hand,

¹²⁰ Andrea Brüstle, *Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut und die Deutschen in Argentinien, 1933-1945* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin, 2007), 65.

¹²¹ PWJA VII c) 408.

¹²² Brüstle, *Deutsche Ausland-Institut*, 66.

¹²³ Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 146.

glorified the *Spee* captain in a poem written by a member of the community and dedicated to Langsdorff, “Dem Sieger von Punta del Este”:

Wie gern wär mit seinem Schiff er gestorben.
Doch er hat zuerst seine Mannschaft geborgen!
Doch als im Osten die Sonne glühte rot,
Unser Kommandant — er war tot!

Das Schicksal seines Schiffes hat er geteilt,
Er nicht mehr unter uns weilt.
Der Ueberlieferung treu aus alter Zeit,
Ging freiwillig er in die Ewigkeit.

Für's Vaterland starb er unbesiegt als Held,
Er mehrte Deutschlands Ruhm in der Welt.
Weit von der Heimat ruht er in fremder Erde:
Er kämpfte für Deutschland, auf daß es Sieger werde.¹²⁴

The *Spee* crew remained interned in Argentina for over six years. While more than 800 remained in Argentina until the war's end, 140 were able to escape from internment early in the war and return to the battlefield. Their flight was facilitated by the arrival of fascist sympathizer Ramón Castillo to the presidency and the lax supervision of Naval Minister Admiral Scasso and Eduardo Aumann, the German-speaking commander of a detention center on the island of Martín García. Nonetheless, such large scale flight—by 1942 only 6 officers remained in captivity-- would have been impossible without the cooperation of many members of the German old colony.¹²⁵ Members of the *Spee* crew, for example, were housed in the “Veronica Landheim,” which officially served as lodging for German students on extended nature excursions.¹²⁶ The *Argentinisches Tageblatt*

¹²⁴ “Dem Sieger von Punta del Este,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, December 31, 1939.

¹²⁵ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 273.

¹²⁶ Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 185.

accused the *Spee* crew and the nationalist German community of espionage and plotting to establish a *Fünfte Kolonne*, or fifth column, in Argentina.¹²⁷ It mocked the warm welcome the *alte Kolonie* had given the sailors and urged the Argentine government, “das Wohlleben, das die uniformierten Nazis bisher in Argentinien geführt haben, etwas einzuschränken.”¹²⁸

The *Spee* incident encapsulates contrasting attitudes toward immigration and assimilation among Nazi officials and the Argentine host society. Officials in the Argentine government informed Ambassador Edmund von Thermann and Naval Attaché Dietrich Niebuhr that they hoped many of these “hermosísimos pedazos de jóvenes” would marry Argentines and remain in the country for good.¹²⁹ Infusion of their young, vigorous Nordic blood would upgrade the country’s “racially inferior” interior.¹³⁰ Considering the circumstances of the *Spee* sailors arrival, this was quite a generous welcome from Argentine authorities. Niebuhr and Thermann, however, were incensed and complained bitterly to Berlin about Argentine efforts at “biological hijacking.”¹³¹ In order to encourage such marriages, the Argentine government permitted escapees who married Argentine women to live in freedom with their new families. Despite intrusive tactics by Nazi authorities, Argentina’s so-called biological hijacking was successful. 285

¹²⁷ Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 146.

¹²⁸ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 10, 1942.

¹²⁹ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 268. “beautiful hunks of young men—Trans.”

¹³⁰ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 268.

¹³¹ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 268.

members of the *Spee* crew had married by 1945.¹³² Though forced to repatriate to Germany at war's end, all of the *Spee* crew were permitted to return to Argentina within two years' time. Many members of the *Spee* settled in villages in the mountains near Córdoba, such as Villa General Belgrano, La Falda, and La Cumbrecita, an area where Ludwig Ney's theater staged several guest performances during the postwar period. The Ney family eventually relocated to this region permanently and his daughter, Cornelia Ney-Martini, still resides there today.

3. Nationalist German Media, Schools, and Cultural Institutions in Argentina, 1933-1945

3.1 Synchronized German Schools in Buenos Aires

In 1933 German-language schools in Argentina could look back on a long and prolific history. The first German school in Argentina opened with seven students on November 7, 1843.¹³³ Ninety years later 203 German language schools existed in Argentina.¹³⁴ In Buenos Aires alone there were 20 schools with approximately 4,800 students and 120 teachers,¹³⁵ the largest concentration of German language schools outside of Germany and Switzerland.¹³⁶ The Humboldt-

¹³² Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 148.

¹³³ Ferdinand Giffler, "Hundert Jahre deutsches Schulwesen in Argentinien," *Das Jahrbuch deutscher Volksbund für Argentinien* (1944), 157.

¹³⁴ Wilhelm Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* (Berlin, Leipzig: Julius Beltz Verlag, 1938), 53.

¹³⁵ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 53.

¹³⁶ Keiper's work was published after Nazi Germany's annexation of Austria.

Schule, described by the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* as a “naziotische Drillanstalt,”¹³⁷ boasted an enrollment of over 1,000 students for 1938.¹³⁸

The German school system was the focus of bitter, divisive conflict between the antifascist and pro-Nazi German communities. Since all schools in the capital had been brought together under the *Deutscher Schulverband* in 1932, the *Gleichschaltung* of German schools in Buenos Aires was particularly efficient. By 1934 nearly all German schools were squarely under the influence of the Nazi propaganda machine: “Hakenkreuzfahne, Hitlerbild und Horst-Wessel-Lied waren in den ersten Jahren eine Selbstverständlichkeit in den deutschen Schulen.”¹³⁹ A program imitating the Hitler youth, the Deutsch-Argentinische Pfadfinderkorps, held regular exercises on school grounds, and schools copied other youth programs in Nazi Germany as well.¹⁴⁰ Correspondence among school officials, including the chairman of the German schoolsystem, Richard Preschel, bore the closing of “Heil Hitler,”¹⁴¹ and teachers taught from “Deutschkundlichen Arbeitsbücher” by Garz and Hartmann, standard textbooks in schools in Nazi Germany according to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*.¹⁴² The Humboldt School’s yearly report for 1938 thanks the German Embassy, the Nazi party, Instituto

¹³⁷ “Die Humboldt-Schule eine naziotische Drillanstalt,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 4, 1938.

¹³⁸ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 54.

¹³⁹ Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 187.

¹⁴⁰ German schools imitated the *Schullandheim* initiative in Germany by organizing extended stays in the countryside for *bonarense* schoolchildren to the recently purchased Verónica Landheim in the Pampas. See: Walter Müller, “Der Erziehungswert der landschaftsgebundenen und handwerksgerechten Gestaltung des Schullandheimes”, *Das Schullandheim*, (Hamburg: 11: 2, 1939), 1.

¹⁴¹ Anita Schroer to Richard Preschel, November 13, 1940, Goethe-Schule Archive.

¹⁴² “Die Humboldt-Schule eine naziotische Drillanstalt,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 4, 1938.

Cultural Argentino-Germano, and German banks, which were often centers for clandestine Nazi activities, for financial support.

The schools in Buenos Aires were the subject of fierce debate between the German colonies because they were both education centers and community building institutions. Theater played a key role in both of these functions. The Humboldt yearly report from 1939 emphasizes the “Bühnenspiele der prächtigen Ney-Gruppe” as “Höhepunkte” in the school’s winter cultural program, which sponsored events for school students and community members alike.¹⁴³ The Ney-Bühne was involved in cultural activities for many schools in Buenos Aires. In 1939 it performed Jochen Huth’s *Die vier Gesellen* in the Humboldt-, Germania-, Hermann Löns-, Siegfried-, Bismarck-, and Müller-Guttembrunn-Schulen in the capital and surrounding province.¹⁴⁴ Ludwig Ney also directed a performance of Goethe’s *Urfaust* with a separate group of student actors at the Goethe-Schule during the 1940 school year.¹⁴⁵ Performances for deeply embattled German schools, such as the Humboldt-Schule and the Pestalozzi-Schule, also reveal overlaps between the Ney-Bühne and the Freie Deutsche Bühne, both of which staged the fairy tale, “Das tapfere Scheiderlein,” under the auspices of these institutions.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Humboldt-Schule Jahresbericht 1939, 23, Goethe-Schule Archive.

¹⁴⁴ *Nachrichten der Unión Alemana de Gremios*, November, 1939.

¹⁴⁵ Photos of rehearsals for *Urfaust* in the Goethe-Schule auditorium, Goethe-Schule Archive.

¹⁴⁶ Humboldt-Schule Jahresbericht 1939, 23, Goethe-Schule Archive; “Das tapfere Scheiderlein,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 11, 1943.

Theater was a pedagogical tool in instruction at German schools in Argentina. An excerpt on German instruction from *Kritik der wahren Vernunft*, the school magazine of the Goethe-Schule, the most prestigious German school in Buenos Aires, indicates the use of theater in language instruction:

In der deutschen Sprache sollen sie sich immer präzise und deutsch ausdrücken, ohne Fremdwörter zu gebrauchen. Schon Goethe, der ja auch sonst ein vollsaftiger und vollkräftiger Mensch war, interessierte sich [...] stark für die deutsche Sprache, wie sie ja auch wissen, da sie wohl alle *Götz von Berlichingen* gelesen haben.¹⁴⁷

The Ney-Bühne performed classic German drama, such as *Götz von Berlichingen*, with great success in Buenos Aires. In 1943 the stage also opened a voice school, in which bilingual students trained their speaking skills by acting and reciting German drama and poetry.

While the Ney-Bühne's performances at German schools generally were not overtly propagandistic, other school events were more directly associated with Nazism and the war in Europe. On November 18, 1943, the *alte Kolonie* celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the Germania-Schule, the oldest German school in Argentina. In its newsletter, the school anticipated this event as a demonstration of unity among members of the *alte Kolonie*: "Das Jubiläum der Germania-Schule möge im Zeichen eines Bekenntnisses zur deutschen Einigkeit gefeiert werden, im Zeichen einer nationalen Haltung, die durch den Krieg noch besonders zur Pflicht geworden ist."¹⁴⁸ These events brought the German community together with its Argentine hosts. The head of Argentina's Consejo

¹⁴⁷ *Kritik der wahren Vernunft*, September 10, 1936, Goethe-Schule Archives.

¹⁴⁸ "An die deutsche Kolonie!" *Schulnachrichten* (Buenos Aires: November 1943), 2.

Nacional de Educación, Dr. Loharte, and the director of the Biblioteca Nacional, Raul Quintana attended celebrations for the Germania-Schule's anniversary.¹⁴⁹

The synchronized German school system facilitated the constitution of a cohesive community of National Socialist supporters in Buenos Aires, and they also functioned as bridges between the *alte Kolonie* and mainstream Argentine society. Antifascists on the River Plate recognized this, and waged a vigorous propaganda war to vilify German schools as Nazi drill camps, which taught their students scorn and animosity for Argentina: “die Kinder in diesen Schulen [werden] mit fremden Ideengut verseucht [...] sodass diese Kinder also für immer verdorben werden und nicht zu loyalen Staatsbürgern ihres Heimatlandes Argentinien heranwachsen können.”¹⁵⁰ The *alte Kolonie* defended itself by citing Sarmiento's praise for German accomplishments in education,¹⁵¹ and repeating that German schools in Argentina strove to contribute “zum wirklichen Sich-Verstehen zweier großer Völker auf den beiden bedeutenden Kontinenten.”¹⁵² When Argentine authorities restricted the amount of instruction which could be conducted in foreign languages, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* supported the measure and denounced German schools for indoctrinating their students with Nazi ideology:

¹⁴⁹ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 21, 1943.

¹⁵⁰ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 1, 1941.

¹⁵¹ “La Humanidad agradece a Alemania una noble iniciativa en lo que se refiere a la educación general del pueblo, así como la ciencia está en deuda para con el espíritu investigador de los pensadores alemanes” In: *Das Jahrbuch deutscher Volksbund für Argentinien*, 1939, 34.

¹⁵² Giffler, “Hundert Jahre deutsches Schulwesen in Argentinien,” 157.

Oft genug haben wir darauf hingewiesen, wie das Treiben dieser Zeloten, die nach den Gesten ihrer Befehlshaber in Deutschland schielen, dem deutschen Ansehen abträglich ist. Wir haben berichtet, wie in den deutschen Schulen in Argentinien allen Vorschriften zum Trotz die Kinder, die in der überwiegenden Mehrzahl Argentinier sind, dazu erzogen werden, ihr eigenes Vaterland zu verachten, sich über ihre Nachbarn erhaben zu dünken. Man war langmütig, man wollte nichts sehen, die Behörden wollten nicht eingreifen, um die allgemeine Erziehungsfreiheit nicht zu stören und sie ließen es zu, dass argentinische Kindern zum römisch-deutschen Sklavengruß gezwungen, zu Hassgesängen abgerichtet wurden. Bis es zu bunt wurde.¹⁵³

Despite the clear presence of Nazism, it is problematic to argue that the German school system attempted to indoctrinate its students with disdain for Argentine culture. In 1938 the *Umwelt Verlag* published a series of books authored by Max Tepp, who was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1891 and was a Goethe-Schule faculty member from 1931 until 1948.¹⁵⁴ Entitled *Die Umwelt des Auslandsdeutschen in Südamerika*, these volumes were written for classroom use and do not encourage allegiance to Germany above Argentina. They advocate balancing integration into the Argentine host culture with continued awareness and cultivation of German heritage:

Der Auslandsdeutsche soll das Land, in dem er zu Gaste ist, kennen, achten und lieben lernen. Nur dann wird er zu glückhaftem Schaffen und Leben gelangen. Nur dann wird er seinen Kinder eine neue Heimat geben. Deshalb werden die Bücher dieser Reihe auf Schönheit und Eigenheit der Landschaft hinweisen, auf kulturgeschichtlich Gewordenes eingehen. [...] In der zweiten Reihe [...] wird die innere Besinnung zu deutscher Volksverbundenheit gepflegt. Zu solcher Besinnung verhelfen uns Bilder deutscher Heimat und Zeugnisse deutscher Kultur in der Kunst des Dichtens, Denkens, Gestaltens und Singens. Durch Pflege dieser beiden Richtungen wird der Auslandsdeutsche in seinem inneren und äußeren Leben sicherer und glücklicher.

¹⁵³ “Es ist erreicht!” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 31, 1938.

¹⁵⁴ After the war, Tepp became director of the Pestalozzi-Schule from 1948-55.

So dient die Bücher der deutschen Schule und dem deutschen Hause im Ausland.¹⁵⁵

Although they do not advocate a hostility to Argentina, passages of the books were later published in Germany in Heinz Kindermann's thousand-page volume, *Rufe über Grenzen*. Kindermann, a strong supporter of Nazism and a professor of German at the University of Münster, praised Germans living abroad as models for "Binnendeutsche" by virtue of their "grenzdeutschen Lebenskampf" and their "völkische Selbstbehauptung."¹⁵⁶ However the texts were also praised by the Argentine Geographical Society (Sociedad Argentina de Estudios Geográficos) for cultivating "en las jóvenes inteligencias el interés por el conocimiento del país y mantener en su alma el afecto a esta tierra."¹⁵⁷ Even members of the Pfadfinderkorps, an organization modeled after the Hitler Youth, wore uniforms adorned with Argentine and German flags and collars that were black, white, and red on one half, and blue, yellow, and white on the other.¹⁵⁸ When the Argentine government conducted an official inspection of anti-Argentine activities in German schools in 1938,¹⁵⁹ it concluded, among other points: "La obra cultural

¹⁵⁵ Max Tepp, *Die Umwelt des Auslandsdeutschen in Südamerika* (Buenos Aires: Umwelt Verlag, 1938), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Heinz Kindermann, *Rufe über Grenzen* (Münster: Neue Generation, 1939), in Dieter Laming, *Über Grenzen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2001), 69.

¹⁵⁷ Tepp, *Umwelt des Auslandsdeutschen*, ix. "in intelligent children an interest in getting to know the country and maintaining in their souls an affinity for this land—Trans."

¹⁵⁸ Ingeborg Reike-Beyer to Heinrich Volberg, October 25, 1979, in Vollberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 198.

¹⁵⁹ The nine point conclusion to the inspection report was translated into German and printed in the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* on May 19, 1938:

1) Die Schulen des Deutschen Schulverbandes in der Provinz Buenos Aires erfüllen die grundlegenden technischen Anforderungen der in Kraft befindlichen Reglements.

realizada por estos colegios es intensa, bien inspirada y de apreciables beneficios para el país.¹⁶⁰ Scholar and pedagogue Wilhelm Keiper, “a stern German nationalist” in the words of Ronald Newton,¹⁶¹ argued in 1938 that German pupils’ acculturation into Argentine society is certain:

Es neigt die Waagschale zur argentinischen Seite hin, und selbst, wenn es möglich wäre—ein aussichtsloses Beginnen—das deutsche Erbgut in den Abkömmlingen deutschen Blutes durch reinblütige Ehen über ganze Geschlechterreihen hinaus zu erhalten, das Deutschtum in Argentinien würde doch andere Züge ausweisen als das Heimatdeutschtum, es würde ein argentinisches Deutschtum oder ein Deutschartigentiniertum sein.¹⁶²

Keiper was director of the Belgrano-Schule (predecessor to the Goethe-Schule) from 1921 to 1931 and served as the German Embassy’s advisor on education from 1931 to 1938.¹⁶³ Argentina, according Keiper, is still a young nation forming its own “Volkstum.” The end result of this process will be determined by the interplay of the many disparate cultures present in the country: “Was wir als

2) In ihnen wird mit gutem Erfolg der spanische, im Artikel 42 des Studienplans vorgeschriebene Unterricht erteilt.

3) Sie erfüllen die Forderungen auf die Einigung der Lehranstalt und die Pflege der argentinischen Souveränitätsideale.

4) Diejenigen, welche die für ihr Bestehen notwendige Genehmigung des Nationalrats für Erziehung noch nicht besitzen, haben darum sofort zu ersuchen.

5) An den Fassaden der Schulgebäude sind in spanischer Sprache die Namen der Anstalten zu verzeichnen, ebenso in ihren offiziellen Dokumenten und an ihren Fahrzeugen und Transportmitteln.

6) In der Aufteilung der Schulzeit und des Unterrichts sind in allen Klassen die vom Unterrichtsplan für Elementarschulen vorgesehene Fächer vorzuziehen.

7) Ich habe nirgendwo Uniformen oder Embleme festgestellt.

8) Die genannten Schulen erfüllen die Artikel 10 und 43 über die Nationalfeiern und die Nationalfahne.

9) Das kulturelle Werk dieser Schulen ist weitreichend, von aufrichtigem guten Willen geleitet und von hochzuschätzendem Wert für das Land.

¹⁶⁰ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 30, 1941. “The cultural work realized by these schools is intense, well inspired and of appreciable benefit to the country—Trans.”

¹⁶¹ Newton, *Nazi Menace*, 190.

¹⁶² Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 56.

¹⁶³ Schnorbach, *Por “la otra Alemania,”* 189.

Deutsche wollen und wofür wir unsere Kraft einzusetzen haben, ist also nichts anderes, als daß in dem vielstimmigen Konzert auch die deutsche Stimme voll und kräftig mitschwingt.”¹⁶⁴ Keiper places particular emphasis on the German element in this blend of cultures, but he what he advocates is a melting-pot, not in an isolationist, “antiargentinischer Geist,”¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, there is no reason to suspect that Keiper was being disingenuous and trying to write what Argentine authorities would have wanted to read, because his book, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* was written for German readers and published in Leipzig.

German schools cooperated with Nazi organizations in Argentina, many of which had direct contact with official Nazi organizations in Argentina. The school system was strongly loyal to Nazi Germany, taught pupils to revere Adolf Hitler, and expelled Jewish pupils. The *bonarense* antifascist community, however, repeatedly attacked the schools by accusing them of denigrating Argentine culture. The *Tageblatt*, referencing the Humboldt-Schule’s high percentage of Argentine-born pupils, claimed that instruction in German schools “keinen anderen Sinn hat, als die hier geborenen Argentinier deutscher Abstammung, ihrem wirklichen Vaterland zu entfremden und ihnen die Zustände eines ausländischen Diktaturstaates als paradiesisch erscheinen zu lassen.”¹⁶⁶ Such a one-sided view of German schools in Argentina is problematic. The *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes* rejected these accusations with a clear reference to the

¹⁶⁴ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 57.

¹⁶⁵ “Nachwort zum Jahre 1938,” *Das Jahrbuch deutscher Volksbund für Argentinien* (1939).

¹⁶⁶ “Die Humboldt-Schule eine naziotische Drillanstalt,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 4, 1938.

Argentinisches Tageblatt, criticizing: “die Unwahrhaftigkeit jener Argumente, mit den eine gewisse Presse in leichtfertigster Weise auf die deutschen Schulen losschlug,” and accusing the paper of committing “groben Mißbrauch” against the: “Patriotismus und der nationalen Empfindsamkeit des argentinischen Volkes.”¹⁶⁷ Even some exiles, such as Balder Olden, asserted that the *alte Kolonie*, “nicht halb so nazistisch ist, wie man ihm vorschreibt.”¹⁶⁸ Ultimately, however, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* was successful in its campaign. By the end of the war the Argentine government bowed to domestic and international pressure and closed most German schools, including the Humboldt-Schule, the Germania-Schule and the Goethe-Schule. Yet, several years after they had been synchronized to Nazi education guidelines, numerous Argentine government and educational organizations investigated German schools and texts and found nothing wrong. It is possible that these schools, with which Ludwig Ney was closely linked for three decades, were not as hostile to the host nation as antifascist media reported.

3.2 Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano

Wilhelm Keiper describes the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano, which founded in 1922, as a “Vereinigung von Deutschen und Argentinern, die sich die Pflege der kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen den geistig gerichteten Kreisen beider Länder zur Aufgabe macht.”¹⁶⁹ Joseph Goebbels’ Propaganda

¹⁶⁷ “Nachwort zum Jahre 1938,” *Das Jahrbuch deutscher Volksbund für Argentinien* (1939).

¹⁶⁸ Wolfgang Kießling, *Exil in Lateinamerika* (Leipzig: Philip Reclam, 1980), 73.

Ministry exploited the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano to organize lavishly funded cultural exchanges. Hundreds of Argentine and Argentine-German artists, academics, and journalists made subsidized trips to Hitler's Reich through the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano.¹⁷⁰ Scholars argue that the Nazis thereby created a nucleus of fascist sympathizers in precisely the academic and professional circles that might otherwise have been of great assistance to refugees fleeing Nazi terror in Europe.¹⁷¹ This is likely not incorrect, but participants at the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano appear to have played a more nuanced role in emigration to Argentina than Newton suggests. Many professionals and academics associated with the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano also supported emigrant artists, albeit privately. Johannes Franze, who gave many lectures at the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano intervened on behalf of the emigrant conductor Fritz Busch.¹⁷² Busch, an exile in Buenos Aires, was a close friend of Paul Walter Jacob and a fervent supporter of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, helping the stage raise funds when it was on the verge of collapse in 1946. Additionally, Enrique Susini, Paul Walter Jacob's first contact for establishing an exile theater in Argentina, traveled to Germany to visit theaters

¹⁶⁹ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Mühlerberg to Herrn Referent für Theaterwesen, November 15, 1933, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Band: R55, Akte: 20553; Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, January 5, 1934; October 30, 1934, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Band: R55, Akte: 20553.

¹⁷¹ Newton, "Das andere Deutschland," 308.

¹⁷² Franze to Embassy, 1933, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Band R55, Akte 20553.

in 1934 under the auspices of the German embassy and the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano.¹⁷³

Although it was influenced profoundly by the German Embassy, the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano also played a legitimate role in cultivating cultural awareness and exchange between the *alte Kolonie* and its Argentine hosts. German language courses at the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano boasted an enrollment of 1,300 students in 1942.¹⁷⁴ Lectures were held about German authors including Hauptmann, Kleist, Storm, and Hans Johst as well as other topics including “Kunst und Rasse,” “griechische Bildhauerkunst,” and “moderne Bühnenkunst und Technik.”¹⁷⁵ Many presentations were held in Spanish, such as professor Juan Probst’s (Universidad de Buenos Aires), talk on “La tragedia de Heinrich von Kleist” in 1938.¹⁷⁶ The political tone of presentations was mixed—some lectures bore the mark of Nazi ideology—but others focused on building harmonious relations between Argentines, nationalist German emigrants, and Germans born in Argentina.

Just days after the November Pogroms in Nazi Germany in 1938, Johannes Franze, editor of *Das Jahrbuch Deutscher Volksbund für Argentinien*,

¹⁷³ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Band R55, Akte 20553, October 30, 1934.

¹⁷⁴ “20 Jahre Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 13, 1942.

¹⁷⁵ “Kunst und Künstler,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 13, 1938.; *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 5, 1940; “Moderne Bühnenkunst und Technik,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 30, 1940.

¹⁷⁶ “Heinrich von Kleist,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 11, 1938.

echoed Nazi racial theory in his lecture on art and race at the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano:

Der schaffende Künstler aber ist selbst das Ergebnis rassistischer Entwicklung und Veranlagung. Wenn er also sein Sehnen nach Schönheit und Überwindung des Häßlichen in seinen Gestalten zum Ausdruck bringt, so kann er niemals nur das wirklichen, was in ihm allein lebt. Denn er ist kein völlig isoliertes Wesen. Er entstammt einer Familie, einem Volke. Die großen Gesetze der Blutgemeinschaft, der er rassistisch angehört, bestimmen auch sein Fühlen. Damit wird seine Individualität beengt, aber sie erhält durch diese Zusammenhänge ihre bestimmten Ziele und Richtungen. Er stellt also letzten Endes mit seiner eigenen Sehnsucht die Sehnsucht seines Volkes dar, wenn er seinem Volke überhaupt etwas bedeutet. Eine ganz eigene Beobachtung ergibt sich, wenn man Menschendarstellungen verschiedener Völker in der bildenden Kunst untereinander vergleicht: Stets kehrte das eigene, rassistisch bedingte, also unbewußt im Menschen lebende Körper-Ideal des eigenen Volkes wieder.¹⁷⁷

In this passage Franze supports the Nazi theory that racial heritage has an inexorable presence in all artistic production. He stresses that every individual artist is subject to the influence of his “Blutgemeinschaft”—regardless of whether he is conscious of it or not. However, Franze makes no mention of Aryan superiority, thus departing from conventional Nazi ideology. He emphasizes racial influence, not hierarchy.

Four years later, at the height of World War II, the president of the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano, Gregorio Araoz Alfaro, spoke on the occasion of the Institute’s 20th anniversary. The *La Plata Zeitung* reported Alfaro’s words as follows:

Wenn eine bessere Welt, ein wirklich gerechter Friede, wie zu hoffen stehe, einmal gekommen sei, dann schlage auch die Stunde für die Krönung all der vielseitigen Bemühungen um das Eindringen in die Kräfte und innersten Ziele beider Völker. Der Wunsch nach einer vollkommenen Verständigung der Völker nach dem Chaos der Gegenwart [...] werde

¹⁷⁷ “Kunst und Künstler,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 13, 1938.

getragen von der Erkenntnis, dass gerade die Verschiedenheit der Rassen und Sprachen, die zwischen Argentinien und Deutschland bestehen, bisher noch niemals ein Hindernis, sondern ein eminentes Vorteil für die Anbahnung gegenseitiger Kulturbeziehungen gewesen sei. Deutsche und lateinische Art und Kultur, sie ergänzen sich hervorragend und die kommenden Zeiten werden diese Tatsache in wunderbarer Weise stützen und vertiefen. Mögen die beiden Völker Deutschlands und Argentinien [...] in inniger Freundschaft, stets verbunden durch das Band des gegenseitigen Verständnisses, in Wohlstand, Größe und materieller wie geistiger Blüte leben!¹⁷⁸

In a speech celebrating an institute heavily subsidized by the German Embassy, whose foyer featured a huge swastika adorned by a portrait of Hitler,¹⁷⁹ Alfaro stresses that racial difference is a source of richness, not conflict, decay, or *Blutvergiftung*. Furthermore, he intimates that German culture can reach new heights through exposure to a Latin American nation. At several points in the above excerpt, Alfaro opens the door to a broader message of tolerance between peoples, speaking of a “Verständigung der Völker” and “Deutsche und lateinische Kultur.” Given its mission to cultivate German – Argentine relations, Alfaro’s message of tolerance is not rebellious to the *Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano*. However, his support of intercultural understanding and cooperation, particularly between Argentina and Germany, appears to contradict to representations of the *alte Kolonie* in antifascist circles on the River Plate.

3.3 The Deutsche Arbeitsfront and the Unión Alemana de Gremios

Like many other synchronized institutions, the *Unión Alemana de Gremios* predates Nazism. The original *Asociación Alemana de Empleados* was

¹⁷⁸ “20 Jahre *Institución Cultural Argentino-Germano*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 13, 1942.

¹⁷⁹ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 60.

established in 1912 as a local division of the conservative nationalist Deutschnationale Handlungsgehilfen Verband, which had been founded in Germany in 1893. In 1933 the Deutschnationale Handlungsgehilfen Verband synchronized itself voluntarily and changed its name to the Deutsche Arbeitsfront. The Asociación Alemana de Empleados quickly followed suit and was renamed the Unión Alemana de Gremios in April of 1934.

Under the direction of Alfred Müller, who later took charge of the Nazi party in Argentina, the Unión Alemana de Gremios opened itself to professions beyond commerce and thus vastly increased its representation among members of the German community. After Müller left, Erwin Schriefer became the head of the organization. Following the decree of May 15, 1939, which obliged all Argentine organizations to cut their ties with foreign countries, the Arbeitsfront changed the German version of its name to the Bund der schaffenden Deutschen and instituted democratic reforms in conjunction with the new decree.¹⁸⁰

The Unión Alemana de Gremios published a monthly magazine, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, which featured articles about current events in Germany and Argentina and reported a circulation of 10,000 for 1939.¹⁸¹ Opinions regarding the tone of this organ are spilt. For Heinrich Volberg the magazine emphasized loyalty to Argentina and advocated a “weltanschaulich-politisch

¹⁸⁰ The Spanish version, Unión Alemana de Gremios, was not altered.

¹⁸¹ The figures on the circulation of *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* vary. In his *Exil in Lateinamerika*, Wolfgang Kießling estimates a circulation of 700 for the magazine in 1934. Of the two Volberg appears most reliable, since he cites the publication’s own statistics. Kießling provides no source for the figure of 700. Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 67; Kießling, *Exil in Lateinamerika*, 64.

einwandfreie Grundhaltung,”¹⁸² but Ronald Newton claims that *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* waged a “virulent anti-Semitic campaign.”¹⁸³ I have found the *Deutsche in Argentinien* to be vigorously committed to Nazism, which included racial anti-Semitism but, contrary to antifascist claims about pro-Nazi media, the magazine was not overtly hostile to Argentina. The Unión Alemana de Gremios also offered its members and their families vacation and recreational opportunities, including trips to Germany.¹⁸⁴ Until the decree of 1939, these programs were operated in conjunction with the German Kraft durch Freude organization (Strength through Joy). In a letter from April 7, 1937, Schriefer describes the propagandistic element inherent to Strength through Joy in Argentina: “[...] die NS-Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude ist deshalb nicht allein die Organisation für Freizeit und Feierabendgestaltung, sondern sie will eine neue Lebensauffassung bringen. Sie ist der stärkste Ausdruck der Lebensbejahenden nationalsozialistischen Idee.”¹⁸⁵ Strength through Joy was fundamental to Nazi propaganda and community-building efforts in Argentina.

The Argentine branch of Strength through Joy profoundly influenced the German theater scene in Buenos Aires. Among the recreational activities that Strength through Joy and the Unión Alemana de Gremios sponsored with the aim of cultivating the “Lebensbejahenden nationalsozialistischen Idee“ were theater performances. The events were the beginnings of Ludwig Ney’s *Deutsches*

¹⁸² Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 61.

¹⁸³ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 71.

¹⁸⁴ Newton, ‘*Nazi Menace*,’ 71.

¹⁸⁵ Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 62.

Theater, the first regularly performing German language theater on the River Plate. As late as 1937 Wilhelm Keiper had deemed this to be impossible: “Ein ständiges deutsches Theater hat sich Buenos Aires nicht halten können, dafür ist die deutsche Kolonie zu klein.”¹⁸⁶ Without the support of the Unión Alemana de Gremios and Strength through Joy, Keiper may well have been proven correct. Ludwig Ney might never have relocated from Paraguay to Argentina if not for Strength through Joy, and even if he had, his stage would likely have struggled to remain financially viable without backing from the organization. Furthermore, the enthusiastic support for the Freie Deutsche Bühne among antifascists and Jews stemmed in part from the presence and success of the Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater in the *alte Kolonie*.¹⁸⁷

Although it was shut down in 1945, the Unión Alemana de Gremios left a deep footprint in Argentine society. According to Schriefer, Juan Perón modeled the social programs he initiated for Argentina’s working class after the multipurpose Unión Alemana de Gremios.¹⁸⁸ With reference to the Ney-Bühne, its longevity is a testament to its the resonance among the nationalist German community. Decades after the Unión Alemana de Gremios, many German schools, and the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* had ceased to exist, curtains continued to rise on Ney’s theater productions in cities and towns throughout Argentina.

¹⁸⁶ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 29.

¹⁸⁷ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

¹⁸⁸ Schriefer to Volberg, August 2, 1978, in Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum*, 67.

3.4 A War of Words: The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* and the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*

In *Der Pressekrieg*, Georg Ismar argues convincingly that the chasm between the two largest German language newspapers in Buenos Aires—the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* and the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*—reflected and exacerbated the animosity between the antifascist and nationalist German communities.¹⁸⁹ The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* was founded by Hermann Tjarks, who was born on April 17, 1855 in Carolinensiel, Germany. A successful entrepreneur, Tjarks actively encouraged German emigration to Argentina and founded the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* on May 10, 1874. It appeared without interruption until October 18, 1944, when it was banned due to international pressure on Argentina to terminate diplomatic relations with Germany. By the end of World War I, under the ownership of the Tjarks family, the *La Plata Zeitung* was the oldest and most widely read German language newspaper in Argentina. On March 2, 1878, the Swiss emigrant Johann Allemann, a journalist and expert on immigration policy, published the first edition of the *Argentinisches Wochenblatt*. The paper appeared daily as the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* beginning

¹⁸⁹ Ismar, *Pressekrieg*. Other scholarship on German media in Argentina during this period is often tendentious, siding with the antifascists. Karl Arndt and May Olson, *Die deutschsprachige Presse der Amerikas / The German Language Press of the Americas, 1732-1968* (Pullach: Verlag Dokumentation, 1973); Bussemeyer, *50 Jahre Argentinisches Tageblatt. Werden und Aufstieg einer auslandsdeutschen Zeitung* (Buenos Aires: 1939); Olaf Gaudig and Peter Veit, *Der Widerschein des Nazismus. Das Bild des Nationalsozialismus in der deutschsprachigen Presse Argentiniens, Brasiliens und Chiles 1932-1945* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1997); Manfred Pantförder. “Das andere Deutschland”, *Buenos Aires 1938-1949: ein Beitrag zur deutschsprachigen Pulizistik im Exil*, (Berlin: Free Univeristy of Berlin, 1986; Sebastian Schopp. *Das Argentinische Tageblatt, 1933-45. Eine “bürgerliche Kampfzeitung” als Forum der antinationalsozialistischen Emigration*, (Berlin, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1996).

on April 29, 1889 and quickly became the *La Plata Zeitung*'s strongest competition for the German media market on the River Plate.¹⁹⁰

From the 19th century to the end of World War II, the two newspapers attracted distinct readerships. The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* placed great value on preserving its German identity, whereas the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* advocated greater assimilation into the host society and considered itself to be an Argentine newspaper printed in the German language. These differences are reflected in translations of papers' names—the “German newspaper for the River Plate” versus the “Argentine daily paper.” Tensions between the Monarchist *Schwarz-Weiss-Rot* and Republican *Schwarz-Rot-Gold* German factions provoked feuding between the papers and their readers in the early twentieth-century, and the conflict intensified upon the outbreak of World War I. As anti-German sentiment in Argentina grew during the conflict, the newspapers took contrasting positions. The *La Plata Zeitung* unwaveringly supported the German war effort and emphasized its German heritage. The *Tageblatt*, by contrast, was critical of Germany's role in the war and continued to view itself and its readers as Argentines.

In the years after the war the *La Plata Zeitung* was skeptical of the Weimar Republic and the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* supported the Republicans. The gap between their positions grew into a widening abyss during the 1920's and degenerated into open hostility with the rise of Nazism. From January of 1933 until the end of World War II the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* took an uncompromising antifascist position against Nazism. The *Argentinisches*

¹⁹⁰ Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 46.

Tageblatt welcomed European refugees to Argentina and gained both readers and writers through this policy. In the late 1930's the *Tageblatt*'s circulation reached 28,000. A few of the better-known emigrants on its staff included Paul Walter Jacob, Balder Olden, Fred Heller, Karl Meffert, and Paul Zech.¹⁹¹ The *La Plata Zeitung* denounced Jewish refugees as “indeseables” (undesirables) and remained loyal to Nazism until it was banned. As early as June of 1931 the *Völkischer Beobachter* referred to the paper as “Hitler’s banner in Buenos Aires.”¹⁹² The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* had a circulation of 45,000 in 1938¹⁹³ and received large subventions from Berlin—34,000 *Reichsmark* in 1938 alone.¹⁹⁴ Their reactions to the Munich Agreement on September 29, 1938, which demanded that Czechoslovakia cede the Sudeten region to Germany, represent one example of the contrasts between the two papers. Whereas the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* ran the headline: “Einigung auf Kosten Prags: Eine Nation vergewaltigt,” the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* celebrated the event as a “Sieg der Wahrheit” under an enormous headline “Frieden!” flanked by portraits of Hitler and Mussolini.¹⁹⁵

Readers of the *La Plata Zeitung* were offended by the *Tageblatt*'s reporting, which occasionally compromised journalistic integrity in order to defame the *alte Kolonie* and incited the Argentine public and government to act

¹⁹¹ Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 14.

¹⁹² Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 80.

¹⁹³ Ismar, *Pressekrieg* 78.

¹⁹⁴ Ismar, *Pressekrieg* 113.

¹⁹⁵ “Einigung auf Kosten Prags: Eine Nation vergewaltigt,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 25, 1938; “Frieden!” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 30, 1938.

against the nationalist German presence. In many cases, such as the ‘exposés’ it published about Nazi plots to annex Patagonia and the provinces of Misiones and Corrientes, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* printed insidious reports and cited documents it knew were false¹⁹⁶ with the express purpose of damaging relations between the *alte Kolonie* and its Argentine hosts.¹⁹⁷ The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* consistently fought Nazism and supported refugees, often under very adverse circumstances. However its willingness to level wrongful accusations against the *alte Kolonie* exacerbated tensions between the two German communities in Buenos Aires.¹⁹⁸ A letter from a reader in Misiones shows how some readers reacted to the *Tageblatt*’s reporting:

Ihre Zeitung hat sich in der letzten Zeit zu einem derartigen Schund- und Lügenblatt entwickelt, daß sich der alte ehrwürdige Gründer ihrer Zeitung im Grab herumdrehen würde, wenn er eines von ihren letzten Exemplaren lesen würde. [...] Wir sind absolut keine Freunde der Hitler-Regierung, aber dulden nicht, daß das ganze Volk in den ganzen Kot gezogen wird.¹⁹⁹

It is likely that many Germans who read the *La Plata Zeitung* were not strong supporters of National Socialism, but read the paper out of protest against the *Tageblatt*:

Na, ja, das Tageblatt, kein feines Organ. Zu frei im Ton, zu grob im Ausdruck. Nun ja, ich gebe zu, die Gesinnung und so. Aber glauben Sie mir, das schadet oft mehr als es nützt. Wir haben noch ein deutsches Blatt

¹⁹⁶ Ismar, *Pressekrieg* 128.

¹⁹⁷ “Nazi Umtriebe in Misiones,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 10, 1940; “Die Tätigkeiten der Nazioten in Misiones,” July 17, 1940; “Die Geschichte Nazi-Verschörung in Misiones,” July 21, 1940; “Bericht über Tätigkeit der Nazis in Misiones,” December 11, 1940; Die Naziverschwörungen in Südamerika,” August 14, 1941.

¹⁹⁸ For more details on the *Tageblatt*’s reporting on the myth of a fifth column in Argentina, see: Ismar, *Pressekrieg*, 125-143.

¹⁹⁹ Sebastian Schoepp, “Das Argentinische Tageblatt als Forum der Emigration 1933-1945,” *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* 43 (1995): 92.

in Buenos Aires. Mein Gott, es ist zwar nazifreundlich, aber immerhin. Der Ton ist seriöser.²⁰⁰

As a result of its tendentious journalism many Germans trusted nothing printed in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, even legitimate accounts of Nazi atrocities in Europe, which were absent from the *La Plata Zeitung*'s pages. The resulting hostilities were also among the factors which inhibited reconciliation after the war's end. Paul Walter Jacob made great efforts to bring the nationalist German community to the Freie Deutsche Bühne immediately following the conclusion in World War II, but the deep, persistent resentment between the German communities thwarted his attempts.

The German novelist and journalist Balder Olden, an exile in Buenos Aires and later in Montevideo, described the split between the nationalists and antifascists in the following manner:

Eigentlich sind des zwei Dörfer, das republikanische und das nationalistische, das nicht halb so nazistisch ist, wie man ihm vorschreibt... die beiden Dörfer sind unübersteiglich getrennt. Eine junge Frau, bei einer deutschen Firma angestellt, die mit mir ins Theater ging, wurde am andern Tag fristlos entlassen—, vertrauensunwürdig in ihrem Privatleben.'

Wir haben nämlich ein Theater, die andern haben auch eins, wir haben jeder eine Zeitung, jeder eine Schule, Vereine, Vorträge—in einer Umwelt deutsche Welt und deutsche Umwelt... Aber die Trennung ist so absolut, daß man in einem Dorf vergessen kann, daß das andere existiert. Ich wenigstens konnte es bisher.²⁰¹

His assessment of the situation is somewhat contradictory—the dismissal of his female friend from her job after visiting the Freie Deutsche Bühne proves that contact between the two “Dörfer” took place. Additionally, attacks and

²⁰⁰ “Leserbriefe,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 29, 1939.

²⁰¹ Kießling, *Exil in Lateinamerika*, 73-74.

counterattacks between the two Germanies occurred on a regular basis, making it hard for many people in both colonies to be as successful as Olden in forgetting that the “andere” community existed.

Coverage of the German theater scene in Buenos Aires in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* and the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* was one area, however, in which the split was nearly absolute. The *La Plata Zeitung*, though not directly involved with the founding of the Deutsches Theater, covered the stage extensively from 1938 until 1944. The paper reported frequently on theater in Germany and often discussed productions on Argentine stages, but it never mentioned the Freie Deutsche Bühne. For its part, the *Tageblatt* was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of FDB. The initial idea for the FDB grew out of a conversation between Paul Walter Jacob and the owner of the *Tageblatt*, Ernesto Alemann. Alemann placed his paper at the disposal of the stage during its early years. He offered it free advertising, and reported regularly—nearly daily—on its productions. Members of the stage, including Paul Walter Jacob, Liselott Reger, and Max Wächter, also wrote for the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. Alemann’s paper never mentioned Ludwig Ney by name throughout the 1930’s and 1940’s. In this regard the *Tageblatt* surpassed the nationalistic German press. The successor to the *La Plata Zeitung*, the *Freie Presse*, began running advertising and coverage of the FDB as early as December of 1945,²⁰² but the *Tageblatt* did not report on Ludwig Ney until over a decade after the war had ended, in 1956.²⁰³

²⁰² “Marilou,” *Freie Presse*, December 3, 1945.

²⁰³ “Zuviel für eine kleine Frau in der Komödie,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 5, 1956.

Although the separation of the two communities and their theaters was not as complete as Olden suggests, the war of words between the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* and the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* encompassed not only news and politics, but cultural life as well, including both German theaters in Buenos Aires.

4. Antifascist German Media, Schools, and Cultural Institutions, 1933-45

4.1 The Pestalozzi-Schule

In 1934, a group of Jews, socialists, and antifascist Republicans, spearheaded by Ernesto Alemann, created the Pestalozzi-Schule to resist the synchronization of German schools in Buenos Aires. The new school was located in the Belgrano neighborhood of the capital, not far from the Goethe-Schule. Controversy over the school's name reflected the conflicting claims to German culture in the city. Its founders had originally planned to name the school, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing Schule, "como símbolo de tolerancia y humanismo."²⁰⁴ However Lessing had already been exploited by Nazi propagandists in Europe and on the River Plate, especially during a grand guest theater performance of *Minna von Barnhelm* featuring Käthe Dorsch and Eugen Klöpfer. The founders ultimately decided on the Swiss educator Heinrich Pestalozzi, whose name: "en tanto suizo, simbolizaba la neutralidad y en tanto pedagogo la educación social, humana y moderna, que debía ser la idea conductora de la escuela alemana nueva y libre."²⁰⁵ The Pestalozzi-Schule's mission was to create: "un colegio de estricta

²⁰⁴ Schnorbach, "Por la otra Alemania," 43. "as a symbol of tolerance and humanism—Trans."

²⁰⁵ Schnorbach, "Por la otra Alemania," 43. "as a Swiss, symbolized neutrality, and with regard to pedagogy, stood for social, humane, and modern education, which should be the guiding principle of this new and free German school—Trans."

neutralidad política y religiosa, en el que todos los alumnos reciben una enseñanza libre de toda ‘lucha’ y de toda ‘propaganda,’ de alta calidad pedagógica y una educación de amor a la paz y al entendimiento entre los pueblos.”²⁰⁶ Officially, the school claimed to promote a humanistic education free from all political influences.

In truth, however, the Pestalozzi-Schule was not “strictly neutral” but emphatically antifascist. The directors summoned Alfred Dang, a socialist journalist exiled in Switzerland, to be the school’s first rector. As a school teacher he had contributed to the establishment of the innovative *Volkshochschule*, or adult education center, in the state of Hessen in the 1920’s. As a journalist, he attended Nazi meetings undercover in order to expose Nazi machinations in Hessen, an activity which forced him to emigrate in early 1933. In Switzerland, he worked for a relief organization which assisted German political refugees to emigrate beyond Switzerland. Dang was an energetic member of the antifascist community on the River Plate. He was a founding member of the political and social network and journal, *Das Andere Deutschland*. Through his journalistic activities for the newspapers *La Nación*, *Critica*, and *La Prensa*, Dang publicized the German antifascist movement in the Argentine press.²⁰⁷ In *Critica*, he praised the founding of the Pestalozzi-Schule as a “historische Tat in der Geschichte der Abwehr des Nationalsozialismus in Buenos Aires.” He lamented that in Germany

²⁰⁶ Schnorbach, “*Por la otra Alemania*,” 52-3. “a school of strict political and religious neutrality, in which pupils receive instruction free of conflict and propaganda, of high pedagogical quality, and which teaches a love of peace and understanding among nations—Trans.”

²⁰⁷ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, September 5, 1934, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

that “der Geist erschlagen und eingekerkert und der militärische Drill an seine Stelle gesetzt sei,” and asserted that the Pestalozzi-Schule’s objective was “diesem Ungeist, dieser Berausung zum Mord wahres Menschentum entgegenzustellen.”²⁰⁸ According to its director, the Pestalozzi-Schule was conceived of as an explicitly antifascist institution established to compete with Nazi influences on German schools in Argentina.

Under Dang’s direction, the Pestalozzi-Schule became a nexus of antifascist exiles. He summoned other teacher-activists from European exile to work at the school, including August Siemsen, a Socialist representative in the Reichstag in 1932, Heinrich Grönwald, who had worked for the League of Human Rights as an exile in France, Carl Meffert, a political cartoonist whose lampoons in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* earned him international fame as well as the wrath of the German embassy, and Walter Damus, an instructor of English and history at the innovative Karl-Marx-Schule in Neukölln, Berlin, before he was forced out in 1933. Founded by Fritz Karsen, the Karl-Marx-Schule was the first German comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) and enabled pupils to gain the *Abitur* in programs for continued education, (*zweiter Bildungsweg*). Damus also taught at the American Lincoln School in Buenos Aires and was a prominent representative of the German antifascist community in Allied circles in the capital.

Nazi authorities in Argentina were incensed by the Pestalozzi-Schule’s posture. In a report to Berlin, Ambassador von Thermann denounced the Pestalozzi School as “eine ausgesprochene Kampfschule gegen das Gedankengut

²⁰⁸ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, May 10, 1934, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

des neuen Deutschland.”²⁰⁹ In 1934, Dang and Heinrich Grönewald earned the distinction of being the first two Germans in South America to be denaturalized by the Nazi government. In all, the Nazi government stripped six Pestalozzi faculty members of German citizenship. According to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* Dang’s expatriation elicited celebration from the rector and his colleagues: “en la cual solamente cupo lamentar la ausencia del compañero von Thermann [the German ambassador to Argentina]. Él podría haber descrito bellamente para sus superiores el clima reinante gracias al efecto del decreto.”²¹⁰ The Pestalozzi-Schule provided a source of learning and self-esteem to refugee children in desperate need of both. Its faculty members energetically supported an active, often confrontational antifascist agenda. The *Tageblatt* continually emphasized the school’s neutrality and objectivity: “Jeder Deutschsprechende in Buenos Aires weiss ganz genau, dass die Pestalozzi-Schule nicht gegründet wurde, ‚um das neue Deutschland zu bekämpfen‘ oder gegen es ‚Propaganda zu machen.’²¹¹ Such claims of neutrality are untenable. The school was neither, as the *Tageblatt* and its directors claimed, “eine ganz normale Schule,” nor “eine Schule strengster politischer und religiöser Neutralität.”²¹² Its faculty, composed of dissident journalists, artists, and politicians, was passionately engaged in the fight against Hitler’s regime.

²⁰⁹ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, April 18, 1934, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²¹⁰ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 6, 1934. “in which all the only lament was the absence of companion Thermann. He could have beautifully described to his superiors the climate which reined thanks to the decree—Trans.”

²¹¹ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 8, 1934.

²¹² *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 8, 1934.

The Pestalozzi-Schule inspired antifascists across South America. German communities in Uruguay, Chile, and Ecuador followed its example and founded free and tolerant schools to oppose Nazi influences on local educational institutions.²¹³ Instructors at the Pestalozzi-Schule in Buenos Aires advocated a sense of German identity which was oppositional to nationalistic visions of the country. In a letter written from France to Ernesto Alemann, the German historian and journalist Konrad Heiden contended that Germanness was a question neither of location nor nationality, but rather of moral and political convictions: “Wo um Deutschlands Freiheit gerungen wird, dort ist das wahre Deutschland.”²¹⁴ For these antifascists, the most essential component of German identity was resistance to Hitler. Konrad Heiden voiced this solidarity: “Den Deutschen, die jenseits des Meeres für die Freiheit kämpfen, fühlen wir im alten Erdteil uns unlöslich verbunden.”²¹⁵ From England Sigmund Freud declared: “meine ganze Sympathie ist mit Ihnen und Ihrem Kampf.”²¹⁶ Heinrich Mann also congratulated the school upon its opening: “Die gesunden sittlichen Kräfte der Deutschen haben einen Sieg errungen. Wer an deutsche Redlichkeit, Tapferkeit und Menschenliebe glaubt, ist heute von Dank und Bewunderung erfüllt.”²¹⁷ Prominent exiles across the globe hailed the school as a victory in the fight against Nazism.

²¹³ Schnorbach, “*Por la otra Alemania*,” 134-137.

²¹⁴ Heiden to Ernesto Alemann, June 20, 1938, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²¹⁵ Heiden to Ernesto Alemann, June 20, 1938, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²¹⁶ Sigmund Freud to Ernesto Alemann, July 19, 1936, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²¹⁷ Greeting from Heinrich Mann to Pestalozzi pupils, 1934, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

The Pestalozzi-Schule received visits from famous German emigrants, such as Stefan Zweig and Emil Ludwig, who visited the school during the international PEN Clubs convention held in Buenos Aires in September, 1936. Both writers later made audio recordings addressed to its pupils, many of whom, like Zweig and Ludwig, were also exiles from the Third Reich. In their messages the writers offer survival strategies to the pupils. Zweig's talk, especially considering his suicide in Brazil in 1942, is striking for its message of hope in humanity:

Liebe Kinder, Ihr erlebt jetzt ein kleines Wunder. Passt auf! Ihr hört jetzt meine Stimme, und ich selbst bin nicht da. Ich bin sogar furchtbar weit von Euch, weit über dem Meer und müsste viele, viele Tage reisen, um Eure Hände wirklich fassen zu können. [...] und doch—Ihr hört es ja—meine Stimme ist da bei Euch im Zimmer [...] Ist das nicht ein Wunder? Und Ihr fragt Euch natürlich, wer hat dieses Wunder vollbracht? Darauf kann ich Euch nur sagen: der Mensch hat es vollbracht. Und wenn Ihr mich weiter fragt: wieso hat der Mensch das vollbracht, so kann ich Euch antworten: indem er viel gelernt hat. [...] Jeder Einzelne, der gut lernt und gut nachdenkt und irgendetwas Neues mit seinem Nachdenken findet, hilft also mit, unsere Welt schöner, vielfältiger und bequemer zu machen. [...] Seht jetzt habt Ihr ein kleines Wunder erlebt, das Wunder [...] dass Ihr mich hört und doch nicht seht. Und Ihr, die Ihr jung seid, wie viel solche Wunder werdet Ihr noch erleben! Freut Euch darum, dass Ihr so jung seid, und liebt die Schule, die Euch ins Leben führt, liebt das Leben selbst und liebt Euch, einer den anderen!²¹⁸

Zweig does not acknowledge man's capacity for destruction nor consider Nazi persecution, although it was this very threat which had forced him into exile, catalyzed the creation of the Pestalozzi-Schule, and brought him together with its pupils. In his recording, Zweig advocates faith in the goodness of humanity and encourages the Pestalozzi pupils to focus on man's ability to improve the world.

²¹⁸ Zweig Recording, September 18, 1936, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

He encourages hope and optimism as a means of perseverance amidst the trauma of persecution, conflict, and exile. Zweig conveys a beautiful message of good will and faith in human virtue to the Pestalozzi pupils, however its content represses the threatening atmosphere of the 1930's. His survival strategy is noble for its hope yet, at least for himself, it was futile because it repressed the continued disappointment, despair, and depression Zweig experienced in the years leading to his suicide in Petropolis, Brazil, in 1942.

Emil Ludwig's recording displays a staunch will to defend Zweig's belief in the Kantian goodness of man. Emil Ludwig suggests a multifaceted strategy for coping with the challenges of exile and the fight against Nazism. First, Ludwig posits diversity as a source of unity among different cultures: "Deshalb sollt Ihr, meine jungen Freunde, beizeiten lernen, dass nicht das Wenige, was die Völker trennt, wichtig ist, sondern alle die tausend Güter und Wege, die sie verbinden und zum Verkehr auffordern."²¹⁹ Ludwig also admonishes the pupils to reject racism, which amounts to treason against their families' accomplishments and German intellectual traditions: "wenn Ihr aber glaubt, Euer Volk und Eure Rasse seien die einzige und beste auf der Welt und Ihr müsset Eure Herrschaft anderen Völkern durch Kriege aufzwingen, so zerstört Ihr alles, was Eure Vorfahren mit Geist und Geduld aufgebaut haben."²²⁰ His discourse firmly grounded in antifascist values, Ludwig also puts forth a method for coping internally with the

²¹⁹ Emil Ludwig, "An die ‚Pestalozzi‘-Schüler," *Schülerzeitung der Pestalozzi Schule*, September 1936, 4, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²²⁰ Emil Ludwig, "An die ‚Pestalozzi‘-Schüler," *Schülerzeitung der Pestalozzi Schule*, September 1936, 4, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

perniciously oppressive environment he and his listeners have often experienced.

In addition to geographical exile, Ludwig explains that pupils can also find an inner exile in their own hearts and spirits:

Es gibt aber noch etwas Grösseres als die Nation und das Jahrhundert: das ist das menschliche Herz, das in vollkommener Freiheit atmet. Von ihm gehen alle grossen und guten Dinge des Lebens aus. [...] Da sind Alle frei, und während der Körper gebunden ist an sein Land, seine Stadt, seine Strasse und Schule, fliegen der Geist und das Herz fort, wohin sie wollen. So wie sich alle 24 Stunden Licht und Dunkel, Tag und Schlaf abwechseln, bleibt Jedem für seine leisen und geheimen Wünsche ein Teil des Lebens offen.²²¹

Ludwig offers a spiritual escape from one's physical environment, but overall he emphasizes engagement, even confrontation. Without mentioning the Nazi threat explicitly, he makes clear to his youthful audience that they are growing up in times when the virtues of tolerance and freedom are in peril. Just blocks away from the synchronized Goethe-Schule, Ludwig reclaims the great German poet for the antifascist agenda. Invoking Goethe's poem, "Ein Anderes," he warns the Pestalozzi pupils that they must defend their values or risk their perdition:

Am Tage müsst Ihr lernen und handeln, etwas tun und vollbringen, auch kämpfen und Euch wehren, denn die Anderen wollen alle auch fordern. Deshalb wappnet Euch, seid stark und mutig und lernt die Verse auswendig, die Goethe, der grösste Geist des Abendlandes, Euch zugerufen hat, und die ich Euch heute wiederhole:

Geh, gehorche meinen Winken,
Nutze deine jungen Tage,
Lerne zeitig klüger sein.
Auf des Glückes grosser Wage
Steht die Zunge selten ein.
Du musst steigen oder sinken,
Du musst herrschen und gewinnen
Oder dienen und verlieren,
Leiden oder triumphieren,

²²¹ Emil Ludwig, "An die ‚Pestalozzi‘-Schüler," *Schülerzeitung der Pestalozzi Schule*, September 1936, 4, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

Ambos oder Hammer sein.²²²

Ludwig's words resonated with the *bonarenses* emigrant community. The Pestalozzi-Schule acted globally to defend the beliefs it represented. Its pupils initiated relief efforts for the widows and orphans of fallen Republican fighters in Spain: "En forma inadvertida nuestros niños y niñas habían hecho una colecta entre ellos, y espontáneamente habían dado seguramente sus últimos centavos para las viudas y los huérfanos de los combatientes por la libertad en España."²²³ In 1941 the pupils organized a school festival in order to raise donations for children who had been displaced by the war and were incarcerated in internment camps in Vichy France. Many of the pupils had been refugees themselves, and felt compelled to action when their teachers told them about children suffering in Vichy France: "El destino de sus camaradas detrás de las alambradas de púa [...] les llegó al corazón. Por propia iniciativa resolvieron ayudarles."²²⁴ As Siemen notes, many of the Pestalozzi children had suffered similar hardships in Europe, but now they were empowered to an extent, and could convert their suffering into artistic forms which aided their peers in France, who had not escaped Nazi terror. Some of the Pestalozzi pupils wrote, edited, and published chronicles of their own flights from Europe to Argentina, which they then sold in local bookshops to raise

²²² Emil Ludwig, "An die 'Pestalozzi'-Schüler," *Schülerzeitung der Pestalozzi Schule*, September 1936, 4, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²²³ *Jahresbericht der Pestalozzi Schule 1941*, "Bericht des Vorstandes," 2, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive. "Unbeknownst to us, our boys and girls had carried out a collection among themselves, and spontaneously had given what were surely their last pennies to the widows and orphans of combatants for the liberty of Spain—Trans."

²²⁴ August Siemen, "Kinder hinter Gittern," *Das Andere Deutschland*, April, 1937. "The fate of their comrades behind barbed wire fences [...] touched their hearts. On their own initiative they resolved to help them—Trans."

money for children in France. Under the pseudonym of Clement Moreau, art instructor Karl Meffert collaborated with his students to depict graphically the plight of the “Kinder hinter Gittern.”²²⁵ Others prefigured performances at the Freie Deutsche Bühne by composing and performing a play in which they imagined themselves to be prisoners in the Gurs concentration camps. Closer to biographical than fictional drama, many of the children on stage were not presenting imagination, but memory. They had experienced these hardships firsthand. Alfredo Bauer, a former pupil of the Pestalozzi-Schule, noted that pupils underwent a psychological healing by recalling and expressing personal trauma through the embodied memory of dramatic representation.²²⁶ Bauer and Siemsen attest that through such performances the youthful performers and their audience of children and adults reshaped their experiences as refugees into engaged antifascism.²²⁷

Their antifascist community did not remain confined to Buenos Aires. Instead the Pestalozzi pupils efforts brought life to Emil Ludwig’s message of emotional and intellectual freedom. The pupils sent packages of food across the Atlantic to Hitler’s younger victims, creating transatlantic bonds of “Geist und Herz“: “Ich hoffe, Ihr werdet nicht böse sein, wenn ich Euch ‚liebe Freunde‘ nenne. Aber schließlich habt Ihr mir, d.h. uns allen, den Kindern des Camp Rivesaltes, Lot B eine so große Freude mit Eurem schönen Geschenk erwiesen,

²²⁵ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 20, 1941.

²²⁶ Alfredo Bauer, interview with Robert Kelz, August 9, 2007.

²²⁷ August Siemsen, “Kinder hinter Gittern.”

dass wir uns Euch sehr verbunden fühlen.“²²⁸ The Pestalozzi pupils also learned about camp conditions, including meager food rations, spartan barracks, insufficient clothing, sickness, malnourishment, and high mortality rates. Many letters included descriptions of the young internees’ dreams of finding refuge in the Americas, and the strength they gained from the Pestalozzi pupils’ own perseverance.²²⁹ Upon the opening of the Pestalozzi-Schule in 1934, Heinrich Mann had addressed its adult founders: “Die Menschen verdienen Liebe, je mehr sie von bösen Gewalten gedemütigt werden sollen. Aber dringlicher als Alles ist in diesen schweren Tagen, die Kinder [...] für die gute Zukunft zu retten.“²³⁰ Just a few years later the Pestalozzi pupils themselves were responding to his entreaty.

4.2 Verein Vorwärts

Another organization which became involved in the antifascist movement on the River Plate was the traditional left-wing social club, Verein Vorwärts. From its foundation in 1886, the Vorwärts club was very integrated with Argentine society. The first proletariat political journal, *El Obrero*, was founded by a Vorwärts member in 1890, and in 1896 the first political organization of the Argentine working class, the Partido Socialista Argentino, was founded at the club’s headquarters in Buenos Aires.²³¹ Alfredo Bauer, a longtime member of

²²⁸ Letter from Ernst Einstein, November 5, 1941, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²²⁹ Letters from Jacques Gniwesch, Ingrid Billigheimer, Erich Schwamm, November 5, 1941, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

²³⁰ Heinrich Mann to Pestalozzi-Schule, 1934, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

Vorwärts and pupil at the Pestalozzi-Schule, declared that during the mid-1930's, despite immense pressure from nationalist circles and diminishing membership, the club firmly positioned itself as “no solo no nazi, sino definitivamente antinazi.”²³² Many European refugees in Buenos Aires, including Paul Walter Jacob, became members of Verein Vorwärts. Bauer claims that the club's leftist politics did not hinder, but rather assisted emigrants in their efforts to assimilate into Argentine society: “Al darle cultura, ideología, e instrucción política en su propio idioma, los acercaron conscientemente a la lucha antifascista del pueblo argentino.”²³³ The Vorwärts club also collaborated in the first Argentine Conference against Racism and Anti-Semitism in August of 1938, in which participants included the famous Argentine statesmen Alfredo Palacios and Lisandro de la Torre; two future presidents of Argentina, Arturo Illia and Arturo Frondizi; Alfred Dang, director of the Pestalozzi-Schule, and “un poco conocido médico y diputado chileno llamado Salvador Allende.”²³⁴ The Verein Vorwärts attempted to couple political engagement with cultural fluency and integration.

One of the many exiles who sought out Verein Vorwärts while trying to gain a foothold in Buenos Aires was Paul Walter Jacob. Jacob directed a musical ensemble of vocalists at Verein Vorwärts in 1939. Labeled as a “Jude und

²³¹ Alfredo Bauer, “El Club Vorwärts y la escena de izquierda en Buenos Aires, 1933-1950,” ed. Regula Langbehn, *Paul Zech y las condiciones del exilio en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1999), 41.

²³² Bauer, interview. “not only not Nazi, but definitely anti-Nazi—Trans.”

²³³ Bauer, interview. “by giving them culture, ideology, and political instruction in their own language, they consciously brought them closer to the antifascist movement of the Argentine people—Trans.”

²³⁴ Bauer, “El Club Vorwärts,” 44. “a little known doctor and member of the Chilean parliament named Salvador Allende—Trans.”

Sozialdemokrat” by Nazi media as early as March of 1933,²³⁵ as a “Hitlergegner” by the *Pariser Tageszeitung* in 1936,²³⁶ and ultimately denounced and denaturalized²³⁷ for his “staatsfeindliche Einstellung” by the Gestapo in 1938, Jacob had much in common with Vorwärts members.²³⁸ Correspondence immediately after the war between Jacob and his wife, Liselott Reger-Jacob, sheds insight on his political beliefs: “Eine große Chance für den Sozialismus in der ganzen Welt,—glaubst Du nicht? Hoffentlich wird sie richtig ausgenützt!”²³⁹ In 1938, shortly after his arrival in Buenos Aires, the Gestapo reported that Jacob was continuing to work against Nazism abroad: “dass Jacob sich auf die deutschfeindliche Seite im Ausland gestellt hatte und mit allen Mitteln versuchte, die aus Deutschland geflüchteten Emigranten zusammenzufassen.”²⁴⁰ The club’s politically engaged, largely emigrant membership was well-suited for Jacob to engage in community building among exiled antifascists.

In July of 1939, shortly before founding the Freie Deutsche Bühne, Jacob gave a talk at the Vorwärts club on the leftist author Ernst Toller, who had committed suicide in exile in New York just two months earlier. Throughout his lecture Jacob links Toller’s expressionist dramas from the 1920’s to the social and political turmoil of the late 1930’s, trying to access insight for the struggles of

²³⁵ “Randbemerkungen,” *Essener National Zeitung*, March 26, 1933.

²³⁶ “Die Namen der 29 vom Dritten Reich widerrechtlich ausgebürgerten Hitlergegner,” *Pariser Tageszeitung*, July 29, 1936.

²³⁷ “Bekanntmachung,” *Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preußischer Staatsanzeiger*, July 25, 1936.

²³⁸ Internal Gestapo report, Darmstadt, January 14, 1938, PWJA II f) 210.

²³⁹ Reger to Jacob, July 27, 1945, PWJA VI h) 299.

²⁴⁰ Internal Gestapo report, Darmstadt, January 14, 1938, PWJA II f) 210.

emigration by focusing on the life and work of a dramatist who did not withstand its challenges. Jacob's lecture about Toller can be read as a programmatic statement, revealing much about Jacob as an individual as well as his goals as future director of the FDB. Jacob begins by linking the Toller with the Vorwärts public and, by consequence, with himself: "[...]kein Sozialist, kein Revolutionär wird je diesen glühenden Menschen, der alles, sein Leben, seine Existenz im Freiheitskampf einsetzte, etwa nicht als seinen Genossen, als wertvollster Mitstreiter anerkennen."²⁴¹ Toller's socialist convictions are present in his concept of art, which Jacob quotes from a speech the playwright held in 1928: "das Volk ist nicht Anfang, sondern Ziel. Wir haben noch kein Volk. Volk wird da sein, wenn es keine Klassen mehr gibt. Indem die Kunst den Weg des Sozialismus begleitet, wird sie ein Mittel, um Volk zu schaffen."²⁴² By quoting and praising Toller, Jacob also affirms his vision of drama as a means of political engagement.

Jacob then conveys the relevance of Toller's oeuvre to the current struggle against Hitler. First, he identifies what he perceives to be a premonition of Nazi ideology in Toller's drama, *Maschinenstürmern*: "Damit die Stärkeren leben können, müssen die Schwächeren zu Grunde gehen."²⁴³ Jacob believes the antifascist movement in the bleak year of 1939, following the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938, is comparable to Toller's Eugen Hinkemann in 1923: "Trauer über den verlorenen Kampf breitet sich aus. [...]Nutzt der

²⁴¹ Jacob, "Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller," July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

²⁴² Jacob, "Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller," July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

²⁴³ Jacob, "Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller," July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

Aufschrei noch?“²⁴⁴ The dehumanization of victims of Nazism provokes a parallel to *Hoppla, wir leben!*: ”Selbstmord, Tod, das ist der einzige Ausweg aus dieser entmenschten Welt.“²⁴⁵ Jacob, like Toller and his audience, had sought to escape by emigrating, but it was impossible to leave Nazism behind. A few months after he had arrived in Argentina, Jacob received a letter from his Aunt Rosa in Amsterdam,

Du erinnerst Dich des Falles Betty... mit Mann und 2 Töchtern, die am 20.12. aus Dtschl. ausgewiesen sind. Diese Ärmsten wußten nicht wohin und sind von Aachen aus 8 Stunden durch den Schnee über die Ardennen nach Belgien – Antwerpen gelaufen [...] Die 4 Menschen sitzen nun in einer ungeheizten Kammer und erhalten [...] einer Mahlzeit täglich vom Comité. Da sie illegal dort sind, steht ihrer Ausweisung zu erwarten. Ein furchtbarer Zustand. Julius Paperles Vater, der alte Onkel, ist plötzlich irrsinning geworden und ins Jüd. Krankenhaus gebracht, wo man ihn jedoch nicht halten konnte, da er Tobsuchtanfälle bekommt, er mußte nun in ein Nazi Irrenhaus nach Hildesheim überführt werden.²⁴⁶

Jacob received many such letters. Eight months later his mother wrote him begging him for money and fearing for his father’s mental health. Her introduction to the letter, “Von uns selbst zu schreiben wozu?“²⁴⁷ echoes Jacob’s lecture in *Vorwärts*: “Nutzt der Aufschrei noch?“²⁴⁸ This hopelessness may have led Jacob to forgive Toller his suicide:

Die Emigration ist wie der ganzen deutschen Literatur, des ganzen deutschen Geistes Schicksal. Er, der Kämpfer der bayrischen Räterepublik, eines der wenigen wahrhaft revolutionären Versuche der deutschen Geschichte, der Schöpfer der expressionistischen, der neuen

²⁴⁴ Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

²⁴⁵ Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

²⁴⁶ Tante Rose to Paul Walter Jacob, January 16, 1939, PWJA VI h) 299.

²⁴⁷ Fanny Jacob to Paul Walter Jacob, September 28, 1939, PWJA VI h) 299.

²⁴⁸ Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

proletarischen Zeit-Dramatik darf, so glaube ich, auch dieses letzte Recht für sich in Anspruch nehmen, ohne Rechenschaft zu geben, sein Leben, das ein Kampf, ein blutiger, schmerzreicher Kampf mit uns und für uns alle war, zu enden.²⁴⁹

Like students and teachers at the Pestalozzi-Schule, Jacob tried to convert despair into motivation: “Die Bedrücktheit jemandes kann ein Sporn für Überlebende sein: entscheidender zu handeln; endlich zu erwachen; zu sehen, wie viel verfahren ist; zu spüren, was droht; zu retten, was allenfalls zu retten bleibt; entschlossen zu lachen und verstürmen.”²⁵⁰ Through drama and music, Jacob hoped to motivate emigrants to become politically engaged:

Wir wollen keine himmlische Erlösung. Wir wissen, dass es zweierlei Not gibt: die Not, die gegeben ist durch das kosmische Leben, die Not des Todes, die Not des Opfers, zu der wir heroisch JA sagen müssen, die wir nicht beweinen dürfen, und die Not, die gegeben ist durch die Ungerechtigkeit der gegenwärtigen Zeit, zu der wir NEIN sagen! Ihrer Überwindung dient auch unsere Kunst! [...] Es sind also stärkere Mittel nötig. Eins davon ist das Theater.²⁵¹

Theater was a mode life support for Jacob in exile. Even before he had founded the Freie Deutsche Bühne, Jacob believed theater could act as an agent for protest and progress. Furthermore, he seems to have needed work in the theater to help sustain his own morale:

Der Künstler, der sich isoliert, der sich abschließt von den lebendigen Kräften der Zeit, wird auch mit seinem Werke isoliert bleiben. Der Künstler aber der die Ströme der Gefühle auffängt, die in den Konflikten und Wünschen, der Not der Zeit, der Massen lebendig sind, der wird künstlerische Formen schaffen, in denen kollektive Atmosphäre lebt. In der künstlerischen Tat wird das Kollektive Ausdruck und Entfaltung finden.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

²⁵⁰ Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

²⁵¹ Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJ XIV.

²⁵² Jacob, “Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller,” July 23, 1939, PWJ XIV.

The bond between performers and their public was interdependent, fulfilling a mutual need for solidarity. Recasting Toller's dreary play of post-World War I resignation into an appeal for antifascist activism, Jacob concluded his lecture in Verein Vorwärts with Alfred Kerr's review of *Hoppla, wir leben!*: "Du hast schließlich, Toller-Ernst, immerhin den Griff getan. Deine armen Helden sitzen als Schluss zwar in Gefängnis; doch sie sagen, wenn es auch nicht im Buch steht, wenigstens bei dieser Aufführung: dass man nicht erlahmen soll!"²⁵³ Kerr's review and Toller's dramas were an inspiration, as well as a great challenge, for the ensemble of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, which staged its inaugural performance nine months after Jacob's presentation in Verein Vorwärts.

4.3 *Das Andere Deutschland*

In 1937 the Pestalozzi-Schule faculty member, social democrat, and former member of the German parliament August Siemsen lead efforts to found *Das Andere Deutschland*, a multipurpose organization central to exiles in Argentina and the Southern Cone until it folded in 1948. Many teachers at the Pestalozzi-Schule were members of *Das Andere Deutschland's* executive committee including Walter Damus, Heinrich Groenewald, and Hans Lehmann. Other active members in the committee were the socialist politicians Rolf Ladendorff, Ernst Lakenbacher, and Rudolf Levy. Since the Argentine authorities refused to permit the establishment of a political organization, *Das Andere*

²⁵³ Jacob, "Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller," July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

Deutschland consisted in effect of several thousand subscribers to a journal bearing its name, which also existed until 1948.

Das Andere Deutschland served as a liaison with Spanish and Italian antifascists and helped to buttress the spirits of exiles unable to extricate themselves from remote primitive towns in the Argentine interior, Bolivia, and Paraguay. Its links to refugees in the far flung corners of the Southern Cone were of great strategic importance to the *Das Andere Deutschland*—the former gathered political intelligence, which the organization passed along to the Allied missions; they also distributed summaries of war news and other world events prepared by *Das Andere Deutschland* in Spanish or Portuguese to smaller provincial newspapers, who often had little financial resources and were thus vulnerable to the offers of German and Italian news agencies to send them fascist propaganda for free.²⁵⁴ Like Pestalozzi rector Alfred Dang, August Siemsen's activities for *Das Andere Deutschland* also drew the attention of Nazi authorities in Germany and swiftly resulted in his denaturalization in 1938.²⁵⁵ The group was also harassed periodically by the Argentine authorities, often at the behest of the German embassy, and had to relocate its operations to Montevideo, Uruguay, for a time in 1943 and 1944.

Despite threats from abroad and within Argentina, *Das Andere Deutschland* admonished German emigrants to participate in the fight against fascism. An advertisement printed by the organization in the *Argentinisches*

²⁵⁴ Newton, "Das andere Deutschland," 309.

²⁵⁵ Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt Referat II B 3, September 7, 1938, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

Tageblatt on August 28, 1938 confronted readers with the headline: “Willst Du dich mitschuldig machen?” The article concludes with an indictment of apolitical emigrants, accusing them—“ihr seid nicht besser”—of being no better than the Nazis themselves.²⁵⁶ Some of its readership were even more confrontational. Readers complained against the “beschämend große Teile der deutschen Emigration, die sich in sträflicher Weise passiv hielten.” A “Gesinnungsfreund” from Sao Paulo added: “Legitimation ist auch in der Emigration nur und ausschließlich die Arbeit im Kampf gegen die Hitler Diktatur.”²⁵⁷ *Das Andere Deutschland* was a nucleus for the most engaged antifascists in the region, and its aggressive posture agitated some members of the *neue Kolonie*, who were less zealous.

In its function as a charity organization for destitute refugees and antifascists, *Das Andere Deutschland* provoked its readers, exhorting them to help:

Ein Mann, der mit 68 Jahren zu stolz ist, um sich vor jenen gewissenlosen Burschen zu beugen, die auch in Argentinien den Deutschen ihr brutales Gesetz aufzwingen wollen,—verdient nicht unsere Hilfe? Sollen wir diesen charakterstarke Mann im Stiche lassen? [...] Wer hilft?²⁵⁸

The group also played an important role in aiding emigrants to cope with psychological trauma, positioning itself as a source of moral guidance and encouragement for shell-shocked refugees. *Das Andere Deutschland* refuted Nazi claims that based on increased individual wealth, economic growth, and claims to

²⁵⁶ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 28, 1938.

²⁵⁷ *Das Andere Deutschland*, April 15, 1940, in Fritz Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 49.

²⁵⁸ “Wer hilft?” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 15, 1938.

spiritual superiority it was serving Germany and the German people well: “was dem Volke nütze, sei Recht.” *Das Andere Deutschland* inverted this mantra: “nur das, was Recht ist, dem Volke wahrhaft nützt.”²⁵⁹ The organization rejected the Nazi claims to patriotism, arguing that Hitler’s regime endangered all that was truly German in the realms of culture, economy, justice, education, and politics. True German patriots cannot support Nazism, rather: “um seiner Liebe zu Deutschland willen, muss jeder wahre, jeder echte, jeder ehrliche deutsche Patriot alles unternehmen, um diesem Ziele näher zu kommen; er muss alles daran setzen, um das Programm der Befreiung Deutschlands von der Tyrannei zu verwirklichen.”²⁶⁰ Siemsen and other writers for *Das Andere Deutschland* instructed readers not to extend their animosity for Nazism to the German people, whom it regarded more as sufferers than as aggressors: “Mehr als Hass und Verachtung gegenüber den Verderbern Deutschlands ist es die Liebe zu dem deutschen Volke und der Glaube an Deutschland, die ein solches Verhalten gebieten.”²⁶¹ *Das Andere Deutschland* also issued flyers in Spanish to make its case in local circles that the antifascist community, not Nazi authorities in Germany and Argentina, were the legitimate representatives of Germany:

Esta otra verdadera Alemania declara—también aquí en la Argentina—por medio de nosotros:

Que no tenemos nada que ver con Hitler y la dictadura nacionalsocialista. Ellos son nuestros enemigos mortales [...] los enemigos mortales de Alemania y del pueblo alemán. [...] Nosotros os rogamos hoy:

²⁵⁹ *Das Andere Deutschland*, February, 1938, in Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 50.

²⁶⁰ *Das Andere Deutschland*, February, 1938, in Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 50.

²⁶¹ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 3, 1938.

¡No confundáis la dictadura de Hitler con Alemania!
¡No confundáis a los nacionalsocialistas con los buenos alemanes!”²⁶²

Often in conflict with Zionist organizations which indicted Germans collectively, such as the Forum Sionista and the Jüdischer Kulturbund, *Das Andere Deutschland* never wavered from its faith in the basic integrity of German culture and folk. Even after the November Pogroms of 1938, *Das Andere Deutschland* asserted that the German people were also victims, not perpetrators: “Nicht das deutsche Volk begeht die sadistischen Gemeintaten gegen die Juden. Nicht nur die Juden werden verfolgt, auch die Sozialisten, die Demokraten, die gläubigen Christen. Das deutsche Volk ist geknechtet und gefesselt.”²⁶³ In contradiction to several other emigrant organizations on the River Plate, particularly Zionist groups, *Das Andere Deutschland* emphasized the existence of another, better Germany which they argued was also “das wahre Deutschland.”²⁶⁴

Paul Walter Jacob was a frequent contributor to *Das Andere Deutschland*. Like Siemsen and other collaborators with the group, Jacob believed in a free, progressive, and cosmopolitan postwar Germany, and he saw theater in exile as a first step toward achieving this goal.²⁶⁵ When the Freie Deutsche Bühne opened its doors in 1940, *Das Andere Deutschland* hailed the event as “Ein Sieg auf der

²⁶² Proclamación de la otra Alemania, PWJA VI h) 414. “This other, true Germany declares—here in Argentina as well—through us: That we have nothing to do with Hitler and the National Socialist dictatorship. They are our mortal enemies [...] the mortal enemies of Germany [...] today we beg you: Do not confuse Hitler’s dictatorship with Germany! Do not confuse the National Socialist with the good Germans!—Trans.”

²⁶³ “Nacht über Deutschland,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 20, 1938.

²⁶⁴ *Das Andere Deutschland*, June, 1938, in Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 50.

²⁶⁵ *Das Andere Deutschland*, January 16, 1943, PWJA XVIII.

Kulturfront” and posited the stage as cultural representation for the ‘other’ Germany.²⁶⁶ *Das Andere Deutschland* viewed the Freie Deutsche Bühne as its cultural analogue and correspondingly lauded the stage as “das einzige deutsche Theater ausserhalb Europas.”²⁶⁷ The organization was well aware that another theater, Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater, had already claimed this distinction for itself, yet in the competition between Argentina’s two Germanies, *Das Andere Deutschland* refused to recognize the Ney-Bühne.

4.4 *La Voz del Día*

Another influential emigrant enterprise on the River Plate was Dr. Hermann P. Gebhardt’s German language radio program, *La voz del día* (*Die Stimme des Tages*). Born in Frankfurt on the Oder, the Jewish Gebhardt was a lawyer and entrepreneur in Germany who emigrated to Uruguay in 1937 and founded *La voz del día* in 1938. This program was based in Montevideo and reached an audience of approximately 15, 000 listeners.²⁶⁸ The immediate task of the station was to provide its public, most of whom had only rudimentary Spanish language skills, information about legal, economic, social, and political events of the region. Although *La voz del día* relied on commercial advertising to fund its broadcasts, Gebhardt was able to maintain the program’s antifascist profile and preserve independence in determining its content: “Hemos clamado por

²⁶⁶ “Ein Sieg auf der Kulturfront,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, August 15, 1940, 14.

²⁶⁷ “Ein Sieg auf der Kulturfront,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, August 15, 1940, 14.

²⁶⁸ Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 41.

humanidad en el idioma en el que hora tras hora se predicaba el odio, hemos protestado contra los campos de concentración y las persecuciones raciales en una época en la que las embajadas nazi aún ejercían influencia sobre los países de Sud América.²⁶⁹ Like August Siemsen, Gebhardt was a dedicated antifascist who consistently distinguished between nationality and political ideology, maintaining that: “fascismo y antifascismo no están sujetos a una lengua o nacionalidad determinada.”²⁷⁰ As a Jew, Gebhardt contributed to a tenuous cooperation between German and Jewish antifascists, often drawing the ire of Zionist groups who denounced all German Gentiles.

Paul Walter Jacob was an active participant in broadcasts for *La voz del día*. From late to 1940 until 1944, he composed and read over 60 essays of predominantly cultural content at the radio station. In December of 1942, during the off-season for theater in South America, Jacob also filled-in for Gebhardt during the program’s daily international news show, “Die Welt von heute,” which Gebhardt referred to as “el centro y momento culminante de la audición diaria.”²⁷¹ Jacob’s reports during this pivotal period of World War II reveal much about his personal weltanschauung. Similar to Siemsen and Gebhardt, Jacob’s broadcasts from *La voz del día* demonstrate his continuing belief that, despite the catastrophe of the Third Reich, Germans and German culture were fundamentally good.

²⁶⁹ Hermann P. Gebhardt, *7 Jahre voz del día* (1945), PWJA VII c) 408. “We cried out for humanity in the language in which hour after hour others were preaching hate. We protested against the concentration camps and racial persecution during a time in which the Nazi embassies still exercised influence on the countries of South America—Trans.”

²⁷⁰ Gebhardt, *7 Jahre voz del día*. “Fascism and antifascism are not subject to a determined language or nationality—Trans.”

²⁷¹ Gebhardt, *7 Jahre voz del día*. “the center and culmination of the daily broadcast—Trans.”

Invoking Immanuel Kant's, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?"

Jacob, who was Jewish, traced the development of European humanism from the birth of "jenen Gekreuzigten":

der der Welt das Evangelium gab: „Liebe Deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst.“ Altertum, Mittelaltertum, Neuzeit hat die Menschheit durchschritten, Schönheit hat sie gesehen, das Wiedererwachen des Geistes, die Wiedergeburt des freien, weltlichen Gedankens, die Entdeckung des Individuums, seine Befreiung aus mittelalterlicher Bevormundung, sein Fortschreiten zur eigenen moralischen Verantwortlichkeit, Technik, Bezwingung und Ausnützung der Naturkräfte, Werke ihrer Forscher und Wissenschaftler hat sie staunend und nutznießend mitgesehen, Musik, gestaltetes Dichtwort, Symphonie der Farben, Verständigung über Länder und Meere hat sie erlebt [...]²⁷²

His lengthy list of humanity's accomplishments recalls Stefan Zweig's recording to the Pestalozzi pupils however, unlike Zweig, Jacob also addresses the crisis mankind was experiencing in 1942. He mentions Hitler by name, and pins the downfall of European culture, and particularly German moral values, on a single "Teufel in Menschengestalt, ein Verneiner alles Menschlichen, alles Würdigen, alles Fortschrittlichen." In this broadcast Jacob inveighs against Hitler, who he regards as Germany's perdition:

versklavt sein eigenes Volk, macht aus dem Land im Herzen Europas, aus jenem Land, das man stolz einst das Land der Dichter und Denker nannte, ein Schlachthof, eine Folterhöhle, erniedrigt den aufgeklärten freien Menschen dieses Jahrhunderts zum dumpfen Zuchtkarnickel [...] und setzt an Stelle von Denken und Gesittung die Schlachthofmoral des nationalen Rasseviehs.²⁷³

Throughout this series of broadcasts Jacob portrays ordinary Germans and inhabitants of other defeated European nations as victims. He never indicts any

²⁷² Paul Walter Jacob, "Die Welt von heute," *La voz del día*, December 13, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

²⁷³ Jacob, "Die Welt von heute," *La voz del día*, December 13, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

nation with a fascist government, instead he describes the citizens of these countries as oppressed people who have only been brought to do the Nazis' bidding through: "Gestapobewachung und Kanonen, die ebenso auf den Feind wie auf das eigene Volk gerichtet werden."²⁷⁴ Jacob's position reflects a steadfast, almost desperate belief that Nazism was an ephemeral aberration against Germany's fundamental goodness: "auf die Dauer kann nur das reine Ziel, können nur die sauberen Hände, die moralischen Prinzipien siegen!"²⁷⁵ Despite restrictive immigrant policies and tactics of appeasement which cost many lives, Jacob also praised the Allies, in whom he sees humanity's salvation, perseverance of morality, and harbingers of nascent virtue:

Ein Aufatmen geht durch die Welt, ein Zeichen, ein Wunder haben wir gesehen: Macht, Kriegsmacht, gepanzerte Heeresmacht hat sich verbündet mit jener stärksten, nie besiegbaren, nie untergehenden Macht, für die Propheten den Martyrertod gestorben, für die Revolutionäre ihr Blut dahingegeben, hat sich verbündet mit menschlicher Gesittung, mit menschlichem Rechts-Freiheitsglauben, mit dem, was den Menschen erst zum Menschen macht: mit der Moral, dem Einstehen für Recht und Gerechtigkeit. Merkt euch den Tag, ein neuer Richter ist aufgestanden, fürchte Dich nicht Menschheit von 1942. Inmitten des Grauens der Welt von heute, scheint heute, in diesen Stunden endlich das Morgenrot einer neuen, besseren Welt von morgen ausgebrochen zu sein!²⁷⁶

Jacob not only believed in a postwar Europe and rehabilitated Germany, but also hoped that humanity could learn from Nazism to improve itself and create a morally virtuous society strong enough to avoid repeating such a catastrophe:

Möge aus diesem Schrei eine neue Moral, eine neue Verantwortung, ein neues Weltgefühl aufsteigen, mögen die Heere, die Massen, die heute

²⁷⁴ Jacob, "Die Welt von heute," *La voz del día*, December 12, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

²⁷⁵ Jacob, "Die Welt von heute," *La voz del día*, December 12, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

²⁷⁶ Jacob, "Die Welt von heute," *La voz del día*, December 17, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

gegen Hitler und seine Trabanten kämpfen diesen Schrei hören und wissen, dass sie für die Reinigung der Welt von Wahnsinn, von Mord, von Niedrigkeit kämpfen, möge das Lied der Völker, das Leid der Juden zum welthistorischen Sinn aufsteigen, dass alle Menschen dieses Erdenrundes eins werden in dem Bekenntnis: nie wieder Rückschritt, nie wieder Isolation des einen vom anderen, für alle Zukunft Verantwortung des Einen für den Anderen und nie wieder Hitler, nie wieder irgendein Hitler!²⁷⁷

These broadcasts from December of 1942 represent the most extensive public political statements Jacob made during the war years. They flush out in detail his view on Nazi Germany, German culture and people, and his posture toward a postwar German nation. Jacob's comments about Nazi Germany and World War II sympathize with the victims of Nazi persecution, yet the catastrophic events of the period repudiate neither his belief in the innate goodness of man and Germans, nor his admiration for the accomplishments of German culture and society until 1933. Furthermore, he is convinced that the postwar period can be a time of reconciliation, reconstruction, and renewal. His activities as director of the Freie Deutsche Bühne were governed by these convictions. However, as in other regions, this belief system also provoked great controversy. Jacob's willingness to exculpate ordinary Germans met with a divided reception among gentile antifascists and Jews in Argentina and Uruguay. There were many exiles in the region, especially but not only Zionists, which did not share Jacob's views. Jacob made the broadcasts for *La voz del día* in the last weeks of 1942, nearly a full year after the Wannsee Conference, at which extant plans for the Final Solution were disseminated and representatives from numerous Nazi government agencies met

²⁷⁷ Jacob, "Die Welt von heute," *La voz del día*, December 13, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

to discuss the organization and cooperation needed for its execution. By December of 1942, reports of concentration camps and worsening Nazi atrocities also had begun to reach the Southern Cone with regularity. Readers of German-language antifascist and Jewish media, such as the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, *Das Andere Deutschland*, and the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, had information about these events.²⁷⁸ Zionism, often in a very aggressive form of Jewish nationalism, gained much momentum among Jewish emigrants over the course of WWII. Many Jewish groups held positions toward Germany which were irreconcilable with the views taken by political antifascist entities like the Pestalozzi-Schule, *Das Andere Deutschland*, and *La voz del día*. Unlike Paul Walter Jacob and Hermann Gebhardt, both of whom were Jews who defended German values and culture, many other Jews denounced all Germans and refused to hope for a reformed postwar Germany. Tensions within the *neue Kolonie* resembled debates on issues of collective German guilt in other centers of exile, such as North America.

4.5 Relations among German Political Antifascist and Jewish Organizations on the River Plate

In addition to the numerous antifascist organizations on the River Plate, there also existed many exclusively Jewish organizations. At 300,000, the Jewish population in Argentina was the largest in South America and had created an internationally prominent center for eastern Jewish cultural traditions in Buenos Aires. There existed Yiddish daily newspapers (*Di Presse*), publishing houses,

²⁷⁸ Such reports were, of course, not present in the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*. Since most nationalist Germans did not trust anything they read in the exile press, it is doubtful that they believed reports on Nazi atrocities were accurate.

and a widely acclaimed Yiddish language theater, the Iddische Folkstheater. There was also a wide spectrum of Jewish political, cultural, and social organizations. Some, such as the Hilfsverein Deutschsprechender Juden, were moderate in their religious and political positions. The Hilfsverein Deutschsprechender Juden, which was founded in 1933 and later renamed Asociación Filantrópica Israelita, was the first organization in Argentina for refugee Jews. Its principle function was to assist newly arrived refugees in their efforts at social and economic integration. Its services included Spanish language courses, legal advice for illegal immigrants, assistance in finding lodgings and employment. The Asociación Filantrópica Israelita also published a monthly magazine about events and services in the community. Within ten years its membership had ballooned from 175 to over 2,000 heads of Jewish families. According to the Asociación Filantrópica Israelita, this amount signified that a total of 10,000 emigrants who were linked to the organization, roughly 20-25% of the total Jewish migration to Argentina.²⁷⁹

Other Jewish organizations, such as the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, affirmed Zionist religious and political beliefs. According to its president Juan Zweig, the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft conceived of itself as an institution dedicated to “die Sammlung des zerstreuten Israels in Argentinien.”²⁸⁰ It issued a monthly news bulletin, organized a youth group, rented sporting facilities in the

²⁷⁹ Schwarcz, *Trotz allem*, 114.

²⁸⁰ Fritz Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 43.

suburb of Olivos, and had attained a membership of 1,500 by 1942.²⁸¹ The Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft hoped to function as a substitute for the cultural and social milieu Jewish refugees had left behind in Europe and save them from spiritual isolation and psychological depression by serving as a Jewish religious and cultural center in Buenos Aires.²⁸² Considering that conservative estimates place Jewish emigration to Argentina at 40,000, the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft actually had relatively low membership figures. This indicates that the majority of German-speaking Jewish emigrants to Argentina, most of whom had been integrated into mainstream society in Europe before 1933, were more moderate in their religious and political beliefs.

Two other smaller Zionist organizations in Buenos Aires were the Gruppe deutschsprechender Zionisten, founded in 1936 or 1937, and renamed the Theodor Herzl Gesellschaft in 1940; and the Forum Sionista, which was originally named the Zionistisches Forum Bar Kochba and was founded in 1937.²⁸³ The Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, the Theodor Herzl Gesellschaft, and the Forum Sionista all collaborated on several occasions with the Freie Deutsche Bühne, which they pressured to perform a greater number of dramas with Jewish religious content. When the FDB presented Nathan Bistrizky's *In jener Nacht* at the Forum Sionista in 1942, the organization made use of the playbill to proclaim its Zionist mission:

²⁸¹ Schwarcz, *Trotz allem*, 145.

²⁸² Schwarcz, *Trotz allem*, 145.

²⁸³ Schwarcz, *Trotz allem*, 154.

Das *Forum Sionista* wird alle Kräfte einsetzen, um seinen Beitrag zur Vertiefung des zionistischen Ideals, zur Verbreitung der zionistischen Gedanken und zur Erfüllung der zionistischen Forderungen zu liefern. Das *Forum Sionista* erstrebt die engste Zusammenarbeit aller Organisationen der aus Europa eingewanderten Juden. [...] Das Forum Sionista ist Dienst an unserem Volk—eine Arbeitsgemeinschaft der jüdischen Tat.²⁸⁴

The mounting desire for a Jewish national state among Buenos Aires' German-speaking Jews reflects this population's skepticism about returning to postwar Germany. The rise of Zionism was accompanied by increasingly bitter and generalized indictments of Germans and German culture, which put Zionist institutions at odds with organizations such as *La voz del día*, *Das Andere Deutschland*, and to an extent, the Freie Deutsche Bühne.²⁸⁵ In chapter four I discuss the challenging relationships between Zionist groups and the Freie Deutsche Bühne in greater depth, and also focus on several collaborative productions between the two groups.

Local Jewish media were also involved in debates between Zionist and less religious organizations. In April of 1940 the weekly *Jüdische Wochenschau* newspaper began to appear at *bonarense* kiosks.²⁸⁶ Founders of the *Jüdische Wochenschau* were Rabbi Günter Friedländer, who until 1938 had been a functionary for the *Centralvereins deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* and a curate for the Jewish congregation in Berlin, and Hardi Swarensky, who had been the president of the Zionist youth organization, "Makkabi-Hazair" in

²⁸⁴ Program for *In jener Nacht*, November 9, 1942, PWJA VI b) 281.

²⁸⁵ In his article, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements," Fritz Pohle offers an account of tensions among political antifascists and Zionist groups on the River Plate (36-52).

²⁸⁶ Another Jewish publication written in German was *Porvenir*, which was co-published by Swarensky from 1943 until 1945.

Germany and was president of the Theodor Herzl Gesellschaft in Buenos Aires.²⁸⁷ As late as 1957 the West German Embassy in Buenos Aires stated that Swarensky, “gehört fraglos zu dem Kreis der deutsch-jüdischen Emigranten, die am stärksten mit Ressentiments gegenüber der BRD behaftet sind.”²⁸⁸ In contrast to representatives of the *Das Andere Deutschland*, the Pestalozzi-Schule, and *La voz de día*, Swarensky did not believe in the possibility of a reformed, tolerant, postwar German state.

The *Jüdische Wochenschau* was the only newspaper written by German-Jewish emigrants in South America which gained a wide supra-regional influence and was able to withstand competition from the New York periodical, *Aufbau*, which circulated throughout the Americas. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* was a Zionist publication which saw itself obliged to report on all cultural and political issues which were of particular interest to the Jewish community and, importantly, to encourage Jewish emigrants to return to their Jewish roots and rely on the principles of Judaism as a guide for life. The paper was also an emphatic public supporter of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, although behind the scenes it exerted considerable pressure on the stage to commit itself more strongly to Zionist political and religious positions.

Similar to German-speaking emigrant populations in other regions, the *neue Kolonie* in Argentina unanimously rejected Nazism, but it was rife with rancor on other issues. Many German Jews cooperated with German antifascist

²⁸⁷ Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 44.

²⁸⁸ West German Embassy in Argentina to Auswärtiges Amt, November 27, 1957, PAAA, Bestand B33; Band 10.

groups such as the *Das Andere Deutschland* and pondered returning to Europe at the end of the war. Such activities were viewed with hostility by some Zionist organizations, who regarded these members of the Jewish population as impediments to their objectives.²⁸⁹ There were various clashes, for example, between *Das Andere Deutschland* and the Zionist *Jüdische Wochenschau*. Friedländer and Swarensky took issue with the aggressive tone that *Das Andere Deutschland* used when addressing politically passive Jews. Above all, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* rejected *Das Andere Deutschland*'s assertions that all antifascists, whether Jews or Gentiles, should cooperate in the battle against Hitler:

Wir wollen heute nicht mit den Wenigen rechten, die im Ausland den Kampf gegen die Nazis aufgenommen haben. Aber sie müssen begreifen, daß unsere Lage eine andere ist als ihre. Jeder von uns hat geistig sich neu zu orientieren, seelisch sich neu einzuordnen. Denn im Gegensatz zu den Menschen des ‚Anderen Deutschland‘ sind nicht die Deutschen, sondern die Juden in uns getroffen. Wir alle haben seit Generationen willig viel, zumeist allzu viel, von unserem Judentum hergegeben, um Deutsche zu sein. Wir haben viel zurückzugewinnen, um Juden sein zu können. Jeden von uns geht es gleich: Der Deutsche in uns wird es Deutschland nie verzeihen können, was es uns angetan hat. Nur unsere Rückkehr zu jüdischen Geist und jüdischer Haltung kann den Bruch überwinden, der unserem Lebens zugefügt wurde.²⁹⁰

For the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, the break with Germany was irrevocable. It renounced German identity and severed all ties with Germany, advocating instead a return to Jewish religious heritage.

In autumn of 1942, as reports of Jewish victims in Nazi concentration camps reached the River Plate, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* published series of

²⁸⁹ Schwarcz, *Trotz allem*, 155.

²⁹⁰ *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 13, 1940.

articles condemning Jews who collaborated with “sogenannten antifaschistischen Organisationen.”²⁹¹ The Zionist Dr. Karl Berets berated Hermann Gebhardt, founder and director of *La voz del día*, for stating “Alemania no es Hitler”²⁹² at a demonstration by the Comité Alemán Antifascista in Montevideo. Berets attacked Gebhardt in an open letter published in the *Boletín Informativo*, the newsletter for the Nueva Congregación Israelita in Montevideo:

Die Juden [...], die um Deutschlands Nachkriegszukunft besorgt sind, denken und handeln unverantwortlich und egoistisch. Denn im Mittelpunkt ihres Denkens steht die Genugtuung, jedenfalls sich selbst gerettet zu haben, und andererseits die Sehnsucht nach baldiger Rückkehr in das Land der Mörder ihrer Glaubensbrüder, Angehörigen und Freunde [...]. Während das deutsche Volk seinen grausigen Amoklauf gegen uns Juden fortsetzt, spekulieren diese Zeitgenossen auf eine Rückkehr in ein Viertes Reich, das ja von den selben Mördern bevölkert ist. Man kann leider nicht ein ganzes Volk wegen Mordes vor Gericht stellen, aber wir müssen von jedem Juden verlangen, dass er dieses Volk verabscheut und meidet. Unsere Stellung zu den Deutschen ist keine politische Frage, nein—sie ist nicht mehr und nicht weniger als eine Charakterfrage.²⁹³

The letter, which was later reprinted by the *Jüdische Wochenschau* in Buenos Aires, lays bare the sharp conflicts within the German-speaking Jewish community on the River Plate. Berets’ letter was printed less than two weeks after Paul Walter Jacob’s reports for *La voz del día*, in which the actor praises German culture, describes ordinary Germans as victims of Nazi barbarism, and reiterates his conviction that the culprit for Nazism was not the German nation, but a single “Teufel in Menschengestalt”—Hitler.²⁹⁴ During the same month, Zionist circles,

²⁹¹ *Volksblatt*, December 1, 1942, 2.

²⁹² “Germany is not Hitler—Trans.”

²⁹³ Karl Berets, “Charakter,” *Boletín Informativo. organo oficial de la Nueva Congregación Israelita de Montevideo*, December 26, 1942, PWJA VIII h) 414.

²⁹⁴ *La voz del día*, December 13, 1942, PWJA VII c) 408.

which had close if sometimes tense relations with the Freie Deutsche Bühne, were collectively indicting Germans for genocide and pressing Jews to scorn and avoid all Germans without exception. In a private letter to Gebhardt, Berets went so far as to write: “Alemania es Hitler.”²⁹⁵ Gebhardt responded to Berets with a vigorous defense of himself and his radio show:

Ich hätte Deutschland je gestützt, dieses Nazideutschland, das ich früher und schärfer bekämpft habe, als irgend einer von Ihnen jetzt oder früher? [...] Wir haben früher gehasst und besser gehasst, als alle die Menschen, die uns heute Mangel an antifaschistischen Gefühl nachsagen. [...] Wirklich: die Neigung zu Unwahrheit hat von den Faschisten in grotesker Weise auf ihre Feinde abgefärbt.²⁹⁶

Gebhardt, however strong he denounces of Nazism and refutes Berets’ charges, does not address the basic difference of opinion between himself and his accusers. With his statement, “Alemania no es Hitler,” Gebhardt refused to extend his calumny of Nazi Germany to all Germans. By collaborating with German antifascists, such as Siemsen and the *Das Andere Deutschland*, he transgressed against Swarensky, Berets, and others who claimed that all Jews must reject Germany and embrace more devout forms of Judaism. This was the fundamental conflict that initially had provoked Berets, and divisions on the issue of collective German guilt continued to fracture the antifascist community afterward as well.

At a later meeting of the Nueva Congregación, Rabbi Dr. Jacoby was applauded for declaring that “jeder anständige Jude müßte den Brief des Dr. Berets unterschreiben.”²⁹⁷ Jacoby then continued to utter what many antifascists

²⁹⁵ Berets to Gebhardt, November 29, 1942, PWJA VI h) 299.

²⁹⁶ Gebhardt to Berets, December 14, 1942, PWJA VI h) 299.

²⁹⁷ Gebhardt to Nueva Congregación Israelita, December 15, 1942, PWJA VI h) 299.

interpreted as a veiled threat: “Wer Deutschland den Bügelsteig halte, sei ein Verbrecher.”²⁹⁸ A memo written to the *Das Andere Deutschland* furthermore reported that “Die Versammlung [Nueva Congregación] beschließt einstimmig, den von Dr. Jacoby vorgeschlagenen publizistischen Feldzug durchzuführen.”²⁹⁹ Uruguay, unlike Argentina, firmly supported the Allied war effort. Innuendos to conduct a propaganda campaign against all Germans caused great concern among German antifascists that Uruguayan authorities might be convinced to take measures against them. Indeed, all German language media and theater had already been banned for a period in Uruguay in early 1942.³⁰⁰ *Das Andere Deutschland* thus resolved to respond publicly, albeit cautiously, to Berets. In an open letter to Berets published in *Freies Wort*, a communist magazine published by the antifascist “Freien Deutschen Klubs” based in Montevideo, a Jewish member denounces Berets’:

Ihre Anschauung, daß die Juden um der Wiedergutmachung der ihnen persönlich angetanen materiellen Schäden willen oder, um wieder nach Deutschland zurückkehren zu können, Das Andere Deutschland verteidigen entbehrt jeder Logik.

Ich verstehe sehr gut die Haßgefühle, denn meine alte Mutter wurde aus Köln nach Polen verschleppt und ich konnte sie trotz Einwanderungsvisen nicht befreien. Aber keinesfalls dürfen Sie sich durch Ihren Haß dazu bringen lassen, Recht in Unrecht zu verdrehen oder die Vernichtung Unschuldiger zu verlangen.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Gebhardt to Nueva Congregación Israelita, December 15, 1942, PWJA VI h) 299.

²⁹⁹ Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 47.

³⁰⁰ Gebhardt to Jacob, February 25, 1942, PWJA VI h) 299.

³⁰¹ Herbert Berndt, “Offener Brief an Herrn Dr. Karl Berets,” *Freies Wort*, January 1943, 12, in Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 47.

The clashes between the political exiles and assimilated Jews on the one hand, and the Nueva Congregación on the other, was somewhat alleviated through personal talks between members of both groups. When *Das Andere Deutschland* held a convention for antifascist groups of Latin America in Montevideo a few weeks later, the Nueva Congregación bid the antifascists welcome and expressed reserved support for their cause.³⁰² Dr. Swarensky's *Jüdische Wochenschau*, however, took a different view of the event:

In Montevideo tagt ein Kongreß, der sich ‚Kongreß der antifaschistischen Deutschen‘ nennt. [...] Grüppchen mit dreißig jüdischen und zwei nichtjüdischen Mitgliedern gebärden sich da plötzlich als Vertreter des wahren Deutschland, jüdische Frauen schämen sich nicht, eine Zeitung aufzusuchen und dort eine Erklärung abzugeben, die mit den Worten ‚Wir deutschen Frauen‘ beginnt. Wer könnte einem Deutschen in die Augen sehen ohne den Verdacht, daß auch er einer der Mörder ist? Daß er, wie alle anderen, jüdische Frauen im Angesicht ihrer Kinder und ihrer Männer schändete? Daß er jüdische Säuglinge tötete? [...] Wir raten ihnen (den jüdischen Kongressteilnehmern) [...] : Bleibt in Montevideo und haltet dort so lange Reden, wie es euch Spaß macht. Laßt es euch aber nicht einfallen, etwa nach Europa zurückzukehren. Euer Gedächtnis würde dort in einer recht schmerzlichen Kur aufgefrischt werden. Und vergeßt nicht: Auch wir deutsche Juden werden noch so weit kommen, unsere Verräter so zu behandeln, wie sie es verdienen.³⁰³

In its issue from May of 1943, in an article entitled “Gefahren der Infektion,” *Das Andere Deutschland* quoted this passage, labeled it a “gegnerische Stimme,” and published as a counterstatement an article written by the Jewish writer Josef Maler for the New York exile magazine *Aufbau*. Maler discusses the “paradoxe Situation”:

daß es auch unter uns Vertreter einer faschistischen Denkart gibt. Ihr Schrei nach Rache ist menschlich, ihr Rassedünkel verständlich. [...] Aus

³⁰² *Das Andere Deutschland*, March 1943, in Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 47.

³⁰³ *Jüdische Wochenschau*, February 5, 1943.

dem Gesetz der Humanität lehne ich die ausnahmslose Gruppendiffamierung gegen andere Völker ab. Etwas anderes tun, hieße Goebbels' und Rosenbergs Spiel treiben. Das einseitige System des Anti-Germanismus entspricht fast bis auf die Details dem Anti-Judaismus.³⁰⁴

The Freie Deutsche Bühne, which had an ensemble composed of moderate Jews, Zionists, and German Gentiles, was caught squarely in the crossfire of these hostilities. The FDB performed under the auspices of numerous German antifascist organizations as well as many Zionist institutions. Additionally, *La voz del día*, the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, and *Das Andere Deutschland* all ran advertisements for the Freie Deutsche Bühne and regularly reviewed its performances. This publicity was essential for the stage to maintain a visible profile. Another large group, likely the majority of German-speaking emigrants based on membership levels for *Das Andere Deutschland* and Zionist organizations, was composed of Jews who were neither politically engaged nor particularly religious. These emigrants saw the Freie Deutsche Bühne neither as an antifascist nor a Zionist institution, but rather as a source of entertainment and a welcome respite from their struggles as refugees. As a professional stage whose actors' primary source of income was their work in the theater, the FDB needed to attract engaged antifascists and Zionists, as well as moderate Jews to its performances, because otherwise it could not fill enough seats to remain solvent. Sometimes portrayed as a unified front against Nazism, both the German emigrant community on the River Plate and the ensemble of the FDB were constituted by

³⁰⁴ *Aufbau*, January 15, 1943, in Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements," 48.

distinct groups with profoundly divergent perspective.³⁰⁵The challenge for Paul Walter Jacob and the ensemble of the Freie Deutsche Bühne was to negotiate these fissures without alienating any specific segment of the *neue Kolonie*, nor betraying their own moral principles.

³⁰⁵ Newton, 'Nazi Menace;' Schnorbach, *Por "la otra Alemania;"* Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschtum;* Roger, *German-speaking Exile*.

CHAPTER III

THEATER ON THE MOVE

1. Tracing Itinerancy: Tracking Ludwig Ney from Germany to Argentina 1.1 From the Military to Mannheim: Ludwig Ney's Path to the Theater

Ludwig Ney was born into a German military family in the village of Landau on May 29, 1901. As the son of an officer, Ney recalls that he “hatte gar keine andern Gedanken, als Offizier zu werden. Als ich als Kadett den Waffenrock anzog, glaubte ich, ihn erst als alter Mann wieder auszuziehen.”³⁰⁶ I have no firm dates about exactly when Ney was in the army, however it appears that he was inspired to become an actor during his days as a cadet. While stationed near the Baltic Sea, Ney had the opportunity to participate in a local theater project. He realized immediately, “dass es für mich nur noch einen Beruf gab: Schauspieler.”³⁰⁷ Like Paul Walter Jacob, Ney had to make great sacrifices for his career in theater. His father was vehemently against his son's decision to pursue a career on stage and “beschloss, ihm jeden Zuschuss zu stoppen und ihn auszuhungern.”³⁰⁸ At the age of 18 he fled from home against his parents' will and lived for two years with a befriended family in Mannheim:

Geld hatte ich so gut wie keines. Na, da habe ich denn in der berühmten Dachkammer gehaust und gehungert. D.h. es war nicht einmal eine Dachkammer, sondern lediglich ein Speichergang, ohne Bett und Schrank. Aber einen Schrank brauchte ich glücklicherweise nicht, weil ich nichts

³⁰⁶ “Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney,” *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³⁰⁷ “Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney,” *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³⁰⁸ Cornelia Ney, interview with Robert Kelz, February 3, 2009.

hinein zu tun hatte. Meine Garderobe bestand aus meinem feldgrauen Entlassungsrock. Das mangelnde Bett brachte mich auch nicht in Verlegenheit. Als Soldat war man ja nicht gerade verwöhnt, und so habe ich ebenso gut auf einem Tisch geschlafen.³⁰⁹

His sufferings were rewarded when the Mannheim's *Musikhochschule* offered him a free place in its theater department. Shortly thereafter the Mannheim National Theater engaged him to perform bit pieces and minor roles in 1921.³¹⁰ Although he was fortunate to have found work at such a storied theater, Ney felt his development was frustrated by the limited selection of roles available to a young, inexperienced actor such as himself.³¹¹ He soon left Mannheim for a provincial stage in Sonneberg, Thüringen, "auf einer richtigen kleinen Schmiere," where he had the opportunity to play leading roles.³¹² It was a humble beginning amidst wearisome conditions. Ney remembers having to study his lines during intermissions because, with thrice weekly premieres, it was impossible to arrive to each performance fully prepared.³¹³ Nonetheless he always downplayed the adversity of acting in such circumstances, claiming that these experiences were invaluable preparation for his work in Paraguay and Argentina: "Damals habe ich viel, viel gelernt. Gelernt, wie man mit den geringsten Hilfsmittel noch etwas

³⁰⁹ "Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney," *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³¹⁰ "Ludwig Ney: 70. Geburtstag – 50. Bühnenjubiläum," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 3, 1971.

³¹¹ "Ludwig Ney: 70. Geburtstag – 50. Bühnenjubiläum," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 3, 1971.

³¹² "Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney," *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³¹³ Cornelia Ney, interview.

erreichen kann.³¹⁴ In an interview in the magazine *Teutonia*, he recalls this humble but carefree period with cheerful nostalgia:

Wir spielten „Minna von Barnhelm“. Ich hatte die Rolle des Riccaut. Am morgen vor der ersten Aufführung gab mir der Direktor mein Kostüm. Es war alles da, bis auf das Jabot, wissen Sie dieser Spitzenüberwurf, der beim Rokokokostüm aus dem Westenauschnitt herausfällt. Der Direktor erklärte mir: Ich habe keines, also bitte besorgen Sie sich bis heute Abend ein Jabot. Sie können sich vorstellen wie ich am Nachmittag dumpf brütend in meinem Zimmer sass. Wo sollte ich in dem kleinen thüringischen Nest ein Rokoko Jabot herbekommen? Da fiel mein Hilfesuchender Blick auf die schön gestärkten Spitzen an den Vorhängen meiner Wirtin. Eine Schere hatte ich. Also hatte ich am Abend auch ein Jabot!³¹⁵

When asked if he was troubled by the thought of his host's outrage the following day, Ney gives a revealing answer: “Am andern Tag! Aber das ist einem Schauspieler vor der Vorstellung doch ganz egal, was am andern Tag passieren kann oder wird.”³¹⁶ The formative days of Ludwig Ney's acting career betray both a great appetite for adventure and a passion for theater which trumped other concerns.

Like many actors in the Freie Deutsche Bühne, the early years of Ludwig Ney's acting career mark a meandering course through the German provinces, passing through Konstanz, Detmold, and Bielefeld en route to his first major engagement as actor, director, and choreographer in Recklinghausen.³¹⁷ Ney then was contracted by the director Hanns Niedecken-Gebhard to collaborate on his elaborate productions of Händel's scenic oratorios with Kurt Joos in Münster and

³¹⁴ “Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney,” *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³¹⁵ “Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney,” *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³¹⁶ “Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney,” *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³¹⁷ “Ludwig Ney: 70. Geburtstag – 50. Bühnenjubiläum,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 3, 1971.

later at the renowned cultural festivals held annually at the Heidelberger Castle. Highly esteemed by Joseph Goebbels, Niedecken-Gebhard was entrusted with artistic oversight for such prominent productions as the Olympia Festival in Berlin in 1934, the dramatic festivities honoring the German capital's 700th anniversary in 1937, and the first major *Thingspiel* performance at the Heidelberg Reich Cultural Festival in 1934. Niedecken-Gebhard later reported to the Reich Theater Chamber that Ney's "wertvollen neuen Ideen machen ihn berufen, eine fühlbare Lücke im deutschen Theaterleben auszufüllen."³¹⁸ His activities with these luminous figures helped earn Ney a position as director of the theater department at the Folkwangschule in Essen in 1931, where Joos directed the department of dance.³¹⁹

Ironically, several prominent figures of German cultural life in Buenos Aires coincided in Essen. Ney and Joos were reunited in Buenos Aires when the latter's ballet company performed at the Teatro Colón in the South American summer of 1940. One of Ney's students at the Folkwangschule was Irene Winkler, a talented young actress who became his wife in 1936 and shared European and South American stages with him for over five decades.³²⁰ In autumn of 1932, while teaching at the Folkwangschule, Ney attended concerts and dramatic productions at the municipal theater and opera house, where a frequent director and conductor was none other than Paul Walter Jacob.

³¹⁸ "Zusammenarbeit mit einem Künstler," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 5, 1941.

³¹⁹ "Zusammenarbeit mit einem Künstler," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 5, 1941.

³²⁰ Cornelia Ney, interview.

In 1934, together with Irene Winkler, Ludwig Ney left the Folkwangschule in Essen to resume work as a full-time actor and director, founding a group called the Romantische Kleinkunstbühne, which was initially based out of Berlin. Evidence corroborating an engagement with the renowned Berliner Theater des Westens during the 1930's, as the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* reported on Ney's 70th birthday, is lacking. However, contemporary newspaper reports do confirm that during this period Ney's Romantische Kleinkunstbühne gained funding from the National Socialist Kulturgemeinde and the Strength through Joy organization (Kraft durch Freude), and toured throughout Germany from 1934 to 1936. Its lifespan thus coincided with National Socialists' efforts to consolidate their domination of cultural life in Germany.³²¹

1.2 Nazi Controls on Dramatic Performance

Before focusing on the Kleinkunstbühne's performances and reception, I will discuss briefly theater controls and criticism in the first years after the Nazis seized power in Germany. Technically, all theaters nationwide were bound by the same ideological guidelines and subject to the same censorship authorities, the Theater Section of Joseph Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry and the Reich Theater Chamber (Reichstheaterkammer), which was headed by Rainer Schlösser from 1935-38. All actors had to become members of the Reich Theater Chamber in order to continue performing on German stages. In *The Swastika and the Stage*, Gerwin Strobl asserts that although in theory authorities and regulations were uniform and clearly delineated, in reality they overlapped and often conflicted. At

³²¹ "Das war Kleinkunst," *Fränkischer Kurier*, 1935.

the regional level, national policy was subject to the whims of local *Gauleiters*, who within their jurisdiction were subordinate only to Hitler, and thus in a sense equal to Goebbels and superior to Schlösser.³²² Since the *Gauleiters* and their administrations changed from state to state, traveling theaters were particularly difficult to monitor and control.³²³

In Germany and Buenos Aires Ludwig Ney worked closely with the Strength through Joy organization, a branch of the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront). The organization had the self-declared goal of creating a National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* while facilitating the perfection and refinement of the German people.³²⁴ Perhaps best known for its activities in the tourism sector, Strength through Joy provided a wide range of leisure activities to the German working-class, including affordable access to cultural events normally frequented by the bourgeoisie, such as concerts and theater. The primary goal of such performances, as articulated in the journal *Die Bühne*, was to cultivate *völkisch* unity through shared experiences of German cultural heritage.³²⁵ The overarching mission of strength through Joy corresponded to official Nazi theater policy, yet Strength through Joy theaters were under the immediate supervision of Robert Ley's German Labor Front, not the Propaganda Ministry nor the Theater

³²² Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 154.

³²³ Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage*, 158-9.

³²⁴ Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 40-42.

³²⁵ Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage*, 52.

Chamber. Due to frequent quarreling between Goebbels and Ley, itinerant Strength through Joy stages often disregarded ministerial guidelines.³²⁶

Theater critics were also subject to rigorous censorship. The foundation of the Reich Media Chamber on September 22nd and the ratification of the Schriftleitergesetz on October 4th 1933 tightly restricted freedom of the press. By purchasing publishers who either had gone bankrupt or run afoul of Nazi censors, Franz Eher, the Nazi Party central publisher, created an enormous media trust which effectively suffocated journalistic opposition in the political sphere. Georg Ruppelt argues that with few exceptions government doctrine permeated theater coverage as well.³²⁷ Not only national newspapers, but also regional newspapers were tightly controlled.³²⁸

While the political and economic sections of newspapers were responsible for supporting the regime's political actions, cultural reports contributed to the political and ideological education of the readership. Theater critics had the task of assisting—or in some situations, pressuring—theaters to inculcate citizens with Nazi values. In his 1936 dissertation from Leipzig University, Werner Gerth reflects on guidelines for theater criticism which were put forth by Nazi officials:

1. Die Theaterkritik muß aus der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung geschrieben werden. Ihre Kritiker müssen ehrlichen Willens sein.
2. Die Theaterkritik ist Dienst am Künstler und am Volk.
3. Die kritische Beurteilung erstreckt sich auf Gesinnung und Leistung.
4. Die Theaterkritik fördert den Neubau des deutschen Theaters.

³²⁶ Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage*, 154.

³²⁷ Though largely synchronized, theater criticism did not support National Socialist ideology was not uniform across the country. Some of the *bürgerlichen* press organs, such as the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, were particularly resistant. Georg Ruppelt, *Schiller im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 118.

³²⁸ Ruppelt, *Schiller im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, 121-122).

5. Sie ist Erzieher des Publikums und führt es zum Verständnis des politischen Theaters.³²⁹

Theater critics also were obliged to influence theaters' repertoires, should they stray from Nazi ideology: "Leider gibt es noch manche Theater, die in der Auswahl ihrer Aufführungen nicht immer vom nationalsozialistischen Standpunkt aus vorgehen. Hier muß die Theaterkritik einsetzen."³³⁰ Together with government authorities, Nazi policies provoked a mass exodus of actors, directors, and dramatists which were now considered "undesirable" in Nazi Germany. Just weeks after the Propaganda Ministry was established on March 11, 1933, theater critics derided Paul Walter Jacob as a "Jude und Sozialdemokrat," and forced him out of Essen's municipal theater.³³¹ Ludwig Ney likely read about Jacob's dismissal and certainly was aware of the consequences of resisting Nazi doctrine.

1.3 The Romantische Kleinkunstbühne: A National Socialist Stage?

Nazi regulations thus would have been enforced on the Romantische Kleinkunstbühne from various angles. As members of the Reich Theater Chamber, Ney and his ensemble were beholden to Schlösser and his administration. Since they were sponsored by Strength through Joy, the stage was also under the authority of Robert Ley. Local authorities and press organs, which varied as the stage traveled, also oversaw and perhaps influenced Ney's group.

³²⁹ Werner Gerth, *Die Erziehungsfunktion der Theaterkritik*, 74, in Ruppelt, *Schiller im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, 116.

³³⁰ Gerth, *Die Erziehungsfunktion der Theaterkritik*, 71, in Ruppelt, *Schiller im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, 116.

³³¹ "Randbemerkungen," *Essener National Zeitung*, March 26, 1933.

Each of these organizations conditioned the Romantische Kleinkunstabühne's performances, but because they intersected and often infringed upon each other, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how each one exerted its jurisdiction. Ney would have been cognizant of all authorities, but it is possible that he himself was unsure how to obey each individual body without transgressing against any of the others. From the evidence I have gathered, it appears that his approach to this conundrum was characterized by ambivalence.

In the Romantische Kleinkunstabühne's theater programs, Ney implies a link between the stage's repertoire and the National Socialist goal of exploiting the nation's cultural heritage to unify the German Volk: "Unser Stoffkreis ist alles das, was die ewigen Werte unseres Volkes gestaltet [...] sei es nun altes oder neues Gut, altes Volkslied oder neues Schaffen unserer Zeit und für dieses Ziel hat sich jeder einzelne von uns als Soldat der Kunst voll einzusetzen."³³² Ney places his ensemble in the framework of government ideology, but stops short of committing to an explicitly Nazi platform. He employs vague propagandistic jargon to associate his ensemble with Nazism, yet shields his artistic freedom. He places no concrete restrictions on his repertoire and refrains from precisely defining the "ewigen Werte unseres Volkes" to which he refers. Later in Argentina, from 1938-1945, Ney repeatedly posited himself as a "Soldat der Kunst," explaining that in art and war "das wesentliche des Soldaten ist der Dienst." Yet here again Ney's ambiguity persists. The object of his service

³³² Romantische Kleinkunstabühne Program, July 1, 1935, Cornelia Ney Collection.

remains indistinct. Furthermore, though he often couches it in militaristic terminology, Ney never directly links theater to German military activities.³³³

The Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne debuted at the Tingel-Tangel club in Berlin on September 8, 1934. The event was covered by the *Berliner Zeitung*, whose reviewer was impressed by the courage of Ney, "Held und Heldenvater der Gruppe," and his ensemble: "eine Spielschar [...], von der man in Berlin noch kein Mitglied sah. Mutige Leute! Mutig auch mit dem, was sie wollen."³³⁴ The paper was favorably impressed with the newcomers, lauding Ney's program as "originell und wirkungsvoll" while praising the "teilweise ausgezeichnete Leistungen" of his troupe.³³⁵ Above all, its reviewer greeted approvingly the stage's intentions to move away from "üblichen Kabarett" by incorporating traditional German song, dance, theater, and poetry into its performances: "Vergangenheit, deutsche Vergangenheit, ist das Reservoir, aus dem geschöpft wird."³³⁶ The Kleinkunsthöhne's repertoire spanned from canonical figures such as Hans Sachs and Matthias Claudius to lesser known regional folk songs from Mecklenburg and Franconia, such as "Bur-la-la" and "Es, es, es." Ney had unearthed many of the pieces himself during his extensive travels throughout Germany:

Ganz durch Zufall fand ich dies herrliche Stück Humor in einem
Kramladen zwischen verstaubten Heftchen: ein Theaterstück – die

³³³ "Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney," *Teutonia*, September 1938; Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne Program, July 1, 1935, Cornelia Ney Collection; "Das war Kleinkunst," *Fränkischer Kurier*, 1936; "Zusammenarbeit mit einem Künstler," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 5, 1941.

³³⁴ "Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne," *Berliner Zeitung*, September 8, 1934.

³³⁵ "Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne," *Berliner Zeitung*, September 9, 1934.

³³⁶ "Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne," *Berliner Zeitung*, September 8, 1934.

„Schöpfung“ – 1740 etwa von einem schwäbischen Pfarrer geschrieben, und zwar in einem so unverfälschten Schwäbisch, daß wir es vor der Bearbeitung erst einmal ins Deutsche übersetzen mußten.³³⁷

Such selections resonated with reviewers across Germany in the mid 1930's. Provincial newspaper also commended the Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne for revitalizing scarcely known pieces from the rich tradition of Germanic artistry: "Für die Auswahl der dargebotenen Stücke muß man dankbar sein. Sie brachten zum Bewusstsein was für goldene Schätze in der Urwüchsigkeit und Lebenslust des deutschen Volkstums schlummern."³³⁸ Asserting that the performance represented, "die Seele unverfälschten deutschen Volkstums," the *Würzburg General Anzeiger* glimpsed in the theater's program a potential vehicle for fomenting *völkisch* nationalism.³³⁹

Reviewers repeatedly emphasized that the stage's performances had an intellectual and spiritual depth that many other cabaret programs lacked. In a carefully phrased report of the ensemble's sojourn at the *Residenztheater* in Wiesbaden, the *Landeszeitung für Rhein-Main* praised Ney's group for presenting "eine Kleinkunst, die uns nicht problematisch vorkommt, die aber doch nicht so anmaßend ist, ganz auf den Geist zu verzichten."³⁴⁰ Wary of Nazi censors, the *Landeszeitung* attempted to justify its perspective, distancing itself from the cultural life in the Weimar Republic: "Wenn man den Anspruch erhebt, bei Unterhaltungen auch dem Geist ein wenig Nahrung anzubieten, so kommt man

³³⁷ "Neues Kabarett der Jugend" Nachtausgabe.

³³⁸ "Ein heiter-besinnlicher Abend," *Würzburg General Anzeiger*, February 7, 1935.

³³⁹ "Ein heiter-besinnlicher Abend," *Würzburg General Anzeiger*, February 7, 1935.

³⁴⁰ "Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne," *Landeszeitung für Rhein-Main*, December 13, 1935.

leicht in den Verdacht, für eine besondere Klasse von Menschen zu plädieren, die man gemeinhin mit der Bezeichnung ‚Literaten‘ oder ‚Intellektuelle‘ zu belegen für angebracht hält.“³⁴¹ The stage’s notable accomplishment was to have created “kabarettistische Unterhaltungen, die das Volk oder vielleicht konkreter: das Publikum ansprechen, weil die Darbietungen den Umweg über das Gehirn zum Herzen finden.“³⁴² The *Landeszeitung* argued that this cabaret was conducive to Hitler’s project of creating a national *völkisch* community, because it used Germanic cultural history as a means to establish an emotional and intellectual rapport between spectators and performers: “Das Sympathischste an dieser Darbietung ist die Bemühung der „Himmelstochter“ Phantasie, die auch bei den Zuschauern zu Höhenflügen angeregt wird. Und darin sehen wir ein gesundes Zeichen dieser jungen Truppe, dass sie im Menschen ruhende seelische Kräfte wachzurufen sich bemüht.“³⁴³ Such reviews place performances by the Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne squarely in the rhetoric of Nazi Blood and Soil ideology.

A cursory glance confirms that the Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne’s focus on autochthonal German culture as a basis for cohesive national identity neatly dovetailed with the Propaganda Ministry’s vision for a new, *völkisch* German theater. Schlösser regarded historical dramas as the best means of promoting Nazi ideals without overusing the party’s contemporary jargon and gesture, which were

³⁴¹ “Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne,” *Landeszeitung für Rhein-Main*, December 13, 1935.

³⁴² “Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne,” *Landeszeitung für Rhein-Main*, December 13, 1935.

³⁴³ “Romantische Kleinkunsthöhne,” *Landeszeitung für Rhein-Main*, December 13, 1935.

reserved for official rallies, speeches, and parades.³⁴⁴ However, a more rigorous analysis also reveals important distinctions. Ney abstained from the aggressive, nationalistic depictions of German history which many of the nation's theater were producing at the time. Just a few of many contemporaneous examples include Kurt Eggers' *Annaberg* (1933), Paul Ernst's *Preußengeist* (1934), Hans Christian Kaergel's *Volk ohne Heimat* (1932) and *Andreas Hollmann* (1933), Hans Kyser's *Lebenskampf der Ostmark* (1934). Reviewers did not always see sufficient affirmation of Nazi ideology in the Kleinkunstabühne's productions. The *Berliner Zeitung*, for example, chastised the stage for its multicultural accents. Its reviewer was vexed when Ney introduced a Hans Sachs poem with—of all things—a tango: “Schließlich kann man Hans Sachs nicht mit einem Tango einleiten.”³⁴⁵ Several newspapers asserted that the Romantische Kleinkunstabühne's exclusive focus on German history alienated its productions from current events. Reviewers from Berlin to Nürnberg concurred that the performances were not sufficiently “zeitnah.”³⁴⁶ His apparent reluctance to voice unequivocal support of the NS-regime also distanced Ney from Nazism to an extent. Perhaps these instances of dissociation shed insight on Ney's fateful and enigmatic decision in early 1937 to abandon the Third Reich and seek his fortune in the South American republic of Paraguay. Ironically, Ludwig Ney's point of arrival in South America was Paraguay, the same nation to which Paul Walter

³⁴⁴ Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage*, 81-82.

³⁴⁵ “Romantische Kleinkunstabühne,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 8, 1934.

³⁴⁶ “Romantische Kleinkunstabühne,” *Landeszeitung für Rhein-Main*, December 13, 1935; “Aus Kunst und Leben,” *Wiesbadener Tageblatt*, December 19, 1936; “Das war Kleinkunst,” *Fränkischer Kurier*, 1936.

Jacob had procured a residence visa that enabled him to enter Argentina on a transit visa approximately one year later.

1.4 From Nazi Germany to Paraguay

From the 1930's to the present day, emigration from Nazi Germany has been the subject of many publications, including scholarly investigations, fictional narratives, and first-hand memoirs. The overwhelming majority of these works imply the premise that emigrants from the so-called Third Reich were victims of Hitler's tyranny. In this context, Ludwig Ney's emigration represents an anomaly. Gentile Germans from military families, neither Ludwig Ney nor his wife had any apparent reason to fear Nazi oppression. It is possible that Ney had reservations about National Socialism, but it is not tenable to posit him as a dissident. Especially his future collaboration with the German Labor Front and the German Embassy in Buenos Aires represent compelling evidence that Ludwig Ney was not an opponent of Nazism.

Ludwig Ney had many reasons not to emigrate. He and wife's personal lives were firmly anchored in Germany. Moreover, as a gentile, politically unobjectionable man of the theater, Ney actually stood to gain from Hitler's rise to power. The mass exodus of persecuted artists opened professional opportunities for actors such as Ludwig Ney. Schlösser's Reich Theater Chamber recruited and funded conformist artists for the stages of the new Nazi Germany and, as an experienced thespian and successful pedagogue, Ney was in fine position to profit from these programs. By the end of 1936, he had already embarked upon a

promising acting career in the Third Reich. He had collaborated with major figures in the Nazi German theater world, such as Niedecken-Gebhard and Kurt Joos, and also had founded his own ensemble which, though modest, existed for over three years and showed potential for future growth. Additionally, he had secured funding from one of the Nazi party's strongest institutions for culture and entertainment, Strength through Joy. So why, with seemingly everything in his favor, did Ludwig Ney join hundreds and thousands of persecuted refugees in fleeing Germany?

To farm tangerines. Cornelia Ney, Ludwig and Irene's only child, claims that her father's "Lebenslust und Sehnsucht nach Abenteuer"—specifically a friend's invitation to visit his tangerine plantation in San Bernadino, Paraguay—inspired his journey to Latin America.³⁴⁷ Fanciful though it seems, this is an explanation which I have yet to debunk. Both Ludwig and Irene Ney are deceased, so the closest living source to Ludwig Ney's personal life is his daughter Cornelia. Cornelia Ney, who currently resides in La Cumbre, Argentina, generously granted me an interview and access to her father's personal archive in February of 2009. Although she is not an impartial source, Cornelia Ney's account of her father's path to Germany merits consideration. One plausible, competing explanation for Ney's emigration urges consideration. Perhaps the Nazi government contracted Ney to establish a German theater in South America? Indeed, when Ney launched the Deutsches Theater in Argentinien in 1938, it was initially sponsored by the Argentine branch of Strength through Joy. However, evidence of such an arrangement is lacking. Moreover, Ney's arrival and sojourn

³⁴⁷ Cornelia Ney, interview.

in Paraguay are problematic in this scenario. No official branch of Strength through Joy existed in Paraguay, and reports of Ney's theatrical activities in Paraguay do not mention any collaboration with German institutions.³⁴⁸ Over a year passed between Ney's arrival in Paraguay and his first performance in Buenos Aires, so it is implausible that he was simply passing through San Bernardino en route to a previously planned engagement in Buenos Aires. It seems likelier that Ney's cooperation with Strength through Joy and the German embassy in Buenos Aires originated *after* he had arrived in South America.

Other than the possibility of a contract prior to his departure, alternative narratives for Ney's emigration are scant. None of the five former colleagues of Ney's whom I interviewed in Argentina could explain why he left Germany. Several of them, who were children during WWII, knew of his collaboration with the German embassy in Buenos Aires and candidly speculated about his position vis-à-vis Nazism during WWII. Ursula Siegerist and Regine Lamm knew that Ney had spent time in Paraguay before arriving in Argentina. Yet nobody, other than his daughter, had any idea why Ludwig Ney had emigrated in the first place. Various reports in contemporary newspapers and magazines briefly mention Ney's work in Germany,³⁴⁹ but only the *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay* and the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* note the year he spent in San Bernadino, Paraguay.

³⁴⁸ "Die Pfingstkutsche," *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay*, May, 20, 1937; "Deutsche Review in San Bernardino, Paraguay," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 30, 1937.

³⁴⁹ "Ludwig Ney: 70. Geburtstag – 50. Bühnenjubiläum," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 3, 1971; Juan Marian Dafcik, "Ludwig Ney und das deutschsprachige Theater in Argentinien," *Maske und Kothurn* (1964: 10), 640-643; "Cuando empiezan a ser argentinos," *La Nación*, April 2, 1961; "Ausländisches Theaterwesen," *Freie Presse*, January 12, 1953; "Aus dem deutschen Theaterleben in Buenos Aires," *Der Weg*, June 1949; "Zusammenarbeit mit einem Künstler," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 5, 1941.

Both of these reports predate Ney's arrival in Buenos Aires, and neither discusses his motivations for traveling to this obscure, land-locked country.

And so, we are left with the tangerines. And indeed, the more one delves into Ney's biography, the more feasible Cornelia Ney's tangerines appear. Today there exists a general tendency to view life under Hitler as utterly anomalous. For example, abundant reports of frantic refugees á la Jacobowsky seem to negate the possibility of other traditional motivations for emigration from Nazi Germany, such as (perceived) professional opportunity and personal curiosity. Initially, it may strike us as preposterous that anyone who was not a victim of Nazi persecution would have left the so-called Third Reich. And yet, the devil's advocate is compelled to ask, why not? Society in Nazi Germany was not confined to the extremes of prisoners at concentration camps and mesmerized nationalists at party rallies. There was a more nuanced middle ground, and all extant sources indicate that this is where Ludwig Ney stood.

At the conclusion of the 1940 theater season in Buenos Aires, the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* undertook to satisfy the "Bedürfnis" of its readers to become better acquainted "mit dem Leiter unserer Bühne Ludwig Ney."³⁵⁰ Without going into further detail, the article offers the following explanation for his decision to emigrate: "Dieser Trieb nach der Sonderaufgabe, dieses scheinbar angeborene Pioniertum Neys mag es auch gewesen sein, daß ihn zu uns nach Südamerika brachte."³⁵¹ From the day he left his home to attend acting school in

³⁵⁰ "Die Pfingstkutsche," *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay*, May, 20, 1937; "Deutsche Review in San Bernardino, Paraguay," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 30, 1937.

³⁵¹ "Zusammenarbeit mit einem Künstler," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 5, 1941.

Mannheim until his arrival in the Argentine capital, Ney was constantly and voluntarily on the move. He gave up a stable position at the Folkwangschule in order to work under primitive conditions as the leader of an itinerant *Kleinkunstabühne*. As he passed through dozens of cities and assumed a wide range of professional responsibilities, the only constant in Ney's adventurous life was theater. Intentionally or inadvertently, his experiences in Germany were excellent preparation for his career in South America. Perhaps his use of a tango to introduce Hans Sachs in Berlin betrays a particular fondness for Argentina? Certainly, his abilities as a pedagogue and director were of immense value in South America, where some members of his ensemble had not been trained as thespians. Furthermore, as he reiterated in an interview with the magazine *Teutonia*,³⁵² during his travels with Romantische Kleinkunstabühne, Ney learned to achieve a maximum artistic effect with minimal resources, "welch starke Wirkung mit einfachsten Mitteln bei entsprechender Einfühlungskraft erreicht werden kann."³⁵³ Ney's passion for the stage surmounted the challenges awaiting him in Southern America: "Sehen Sie, es ist für einen Menschen doch das grösste Glück einen Beruf zu haben, der ihn ausfüllt, der ihm durch die Arbeit selbst zum Glücke wird. Da spielen Schwierigkeiten im Wesentlichen keine Rolle."³⁵⁴ All in all, Ludwig Ney's upbeat outlook and professional experience cause him to appear well-suited for success as a pioneer of German theater in South America.

³⁵² "Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney," *Teutonia*, September 1938.

³⁵³ "Ein heiter-besinnlicher Abend," *Würzburg General Anzeiger*, February 7, 1935.

³⁵⁴ "Gespräch mit Ludwig Ney," *Teutonia*, September 1938.

1.5 Arrival in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ludwig Ney began performing on South American stages extraordinarily soon after his arrival to the continent. Less than five months after his final engagement in Wiesbaden, the first reports of Ney's theatrical activities in Paraguay surface. Extant photographs from Ney's first project in Paraguay, "Die Pfingstkutsche," performed on May 15, 1937, reveal very primitive conditions. For lack of a proper facility in San Bernardino, performances were held outdoors on a raised patch of grass. The Neys were the only educated, professional thespians in the small ensemble, which otherwise consisted of a hastily gathered group of amateurs. The group's costumes were simple, homemade improvisations. Rather than frustrating him, this adversity provoked Ludwig Ney to greater creativity. To compensate for shortcomings in infrastructure and technology, Ney took advantage of his rural surroundings and open-air performance space and used a working carriage with live horses as an innovative stage prop and a physical inspiration for the narrative frame of his performance—the "Pfingstkutsche." Due to the dearth of German-speaking actors in San Bernardino, Ney incorporated local Paraguayan and German musicians into his productions, thus adding a new, multicultural dimension to pieces he had performed with Romantische Kleinkunstbühne in Europe. These rural, outdoor performances in Paraguay correspond to developments on stages in Nazi Germany at the time, in which many productions were held outdoors, such as the *Thingspiel* movement, and reflected anti-urban, anti-psychological, and anti-Semitic tendencies.

According to reviews in the *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay*, Ney's "Pfungstkutsche" was a success. The Franconian folksong "Es, es, es," now accompanied by live musicians instead of a phonograph "entzückte jetzt die zahlreichen Zuschauer. Lachsalven tobten durch das Publikum."³⁵⁵ Reviewers were likewise impressed by the Neys' performance: "Schauspielerisch ein Bombenerfolg." A rare entertainment spectacle for inhabitants of this far flung town, "Die Pfungstkutsche" drew a large audience, many members of which had traveled a full day by horse-drawn carriages to attend the event: "Den Zuschauern hat es so gut gefallen, dass Viele nicht mal mehr den Heimweg fanden. Diesen Erfolg koennen sich Herr und Frau Ney verbuchen. Hoffen wir auch, dass die Pfungstkutsche mal nach Asunción rollt und ihre reizende Last auslaedt."³⁵⁶

While I have been unable to uncover reports of further performances in Asunción or elsewhere in Paraguay, Ney's "Pfungstkutsche" in San Bernardino likely carried him all the way to Buenos Aires. Ten days after it was reviewed in the *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay*, an article entitled "Aus Paraguay: Deutsche Revue in San Bernardino," appeared in the *bonarense Deutsche la Plata Zeitung*. The paper featured a full page spread including a brief review and several large photos of the Pfungstkutsche performance. With a daily circulation of 45,000, the *La Plata Zeitung*'s report almost assuredly brought Ney to the attention of branches of the German Labor Front and Strength through Joy group as well as the German consulate in the Argentine capital. Due to his association with Strength through Joy in Germany, Ludwig Ney would have been an especially

³⁵⁵ "Die Pfungstkutsche," *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay*, May, 20, 1937.

³⁵⁶ "Die Pfungstkutsche," *Deutsche Zeitung für Paraguay*, May, 20, 1937.

appealing figure to the German Labor Front in Argentina, which was well-funded and rapidly expanding at the time.³⁵⁷

1.6 German Theater in the *alte Kolonie*, 1934-1938

As in Germany, the German Labor Front and Strength through Joy in Argentina formed the labor and diversion wings of an organization devoted to building a close-knit community of working Germans in support of National Socialism. Events of previous years had demonstrated that theater could play an important role in this endeavor. Galvanized by the successful 1934 guest performance featuring Käthe Dorsch and Eugen Klöpfer, Consul von Thermann and the Argentine branch of Strength through Joy organized numerous theatrical productions for the *alte Kolonie*. In June 1935 an ad-hoc ensemble of local actors sponsored by the Labor Front and the embassy staged Hans Lorenz and Alfred Möller's comedy *Christa, ich erwarte dich*. Later that August the two organizations funded a guest performance of Ridi Walfried's *Der Schuster im Himmel* by the Riesch-Bühne, a touring company based out of Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Held at the cavernous Teatro Odeon on the Avenida Corrientes, the *bonarense* Broadway, these events had the purpose of assembling, consolidating, and expanding the *alte Kolonie* as a cohesive community under the swastika. Prices were extremely low—admission for the June performance was free—in order to foster sentiments of horizontal comradeship within the *alte Kolonie*.

³⁵⁷ “Kraft durch Freude Veranstaltung im Teatro Odeon,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Jul/Aug. 1935.

Emphasizing solidarity and equality, regardless of the disparities of wealth and privilege which actually existed among its members, the Labor Front's media organ, the *Deutsche in Argentinien*, reminded the nationalist German population that "Entsprechend nationalsozialistischer Gemeinschaftsauffassung gab es keine Vorzugsplätze, noch waren die Karten nummeriert."³⁵⁸ The *alte Kolonie* reacted to this opportunity with great enthusiasm—within two days its members had snatched up all tickets for the thousand-seat venue.

The German Labor Front also exploited these occasions to advance and deepen allegiance to Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler in nationalist German circles. The monthly magazine, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, prefaced its review of *Christa, ich erwarte dich* by expressing its gratitude to Consul von Thermann for subsidizing the performance: "In dankenswerterweise hatte der Deutsche Gesandte, Freiherr von Thermann, die Deutsche Kolonie zu diesem Abend eingeladen, um es jedem Volksgenossen zu ermöglichen, einmal einer Vorstellung des Deutschen Schauspiels beizuwohnen."³⁵⁹ A speech preceding the Riesch-Bühne's performance by Richard Schröder, regional leader of the German Labor Front, offers a more detailed glimpse into this strategy. Highlighting the achievements of National Socialism, especially its concern for the welfare of working Germans, Schröder encouraged fidelity to the Labor Front by contrasting the current regime with its predecessors:

³⁵⁸ "Kraft durch Freude Veranstaltung im Teatro Odeon," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Jul/Aug. 1935.

³⁵⁹ "Kraft durch Freude Veranstaltung im Teatro Odeon," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Jul/Aug. 1935.

Kraft durch Freude“. Ein Begriff, der dem Schaffenden bis zur Machtübernahme unseres Führers etwas Unbekanntes war. Die Kraft wurde von dem Arbeiter, gleichgültig, ob der Stirn oder der Faust, verlangt. Die Freude und die Erholung gönnte man ihm bis dahin nicht, oder machte sie ihm zumindest unmöglich.

[...] Wir wissen heute, daß es nicht mehr das Vorrecht einzelner Bevorzugter ist, sich den Feierabend und die Freizeit angenehm zu gestalten, und daß dies einer der größten Erfolge ist, die der Zusammenschluß aller Schaffenden in der Deutschen Arbeitsfront mit sich gebracht hat.³⁶⁰

Playing to immigrants' emotional bond to the *Vaterland*, Schröder urged his audience not only to form a transatlantic kinship with their compatriots in the German Labor Front “in der Heimat,”³⁶¹ but also to actively recruit other members of Argentina's German population to join the new community forming under Hitler's banner in South America:

Wenn hier im Auslande ein Teil der deutschen Volksgenossen noch nicht in unseren Reihen steht, so bin ich dennoch überzeugt, daß auch diese den Weg zu uns noch finden werden.

Und ich richte daher an Sie alle den dringenden Appell, werben Sie für unsere Sache, überzeugen Sie den letzten Zweifler, daß sein Platz bei uns ist, damit ich eines Tages dem Führer melden kann: Es gibt in Argentinien eine Volksgemeinschaft, die sich geeint hat in der Deutschen Arbeitsfront.³⁶²

Although the speakers at these productions always took care to praise the host country of Argentina, the events served to elicit support first and foremost for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi government, metonymically represented by Consul Thermann in the audience: “Abschließend gedachte der Herr Minister in ehrenden Worten des Gastlandes Argentinien und ließ seine Ansprache in ein dreifaches

³⁶⁰ “2. Grosse ‚Kraft durch Freude‘-Veranstaltung: Besuch bei der Riesch-Bühne,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Oct. 1935.

³⁶¹ “2. Grosse ‚Kraft durch Freude‘-Veranstaltung: Besuch bei der Riesch-Bühne,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Oct. 1935.

³⁶² “2. Grosse ‚Kraft durch Freude‘-Veranstaltung: Besuch bei der Riesch-Bühne,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, October 1935.

Sieg-heil auf den Führer und Reichskanzler ausklingen, das vielhundertstimmig aufgenommen wurde.³⁶³ This sequence demonstrates that, although speeches at such assemblies were not antagonistic to the host country, Argentina stood in a subordinated role to Nazi Germany. Audience members were pushed to affirm that their first allegiance was to the German *Vaterland*.

Dating back several years before Ludwig Ney's arrival, Nazi organizations employed theatrical performances as a vehicle to strengthen a nascent community of supporters of National Socialism in Argentina. Thermann, Schröder, and other influential individuals in the *alte Kolonie* likely realized that a regularly performing theater, composed at least in part of local professional thespians, would be far more effective in achieving these goals than sporadic performances by touring ensembles and ad-hoc collections of amateur actors. It seems probable that after reading reports of Ludwig and Irene Ney's "Pfingstkutsche" in Paraguay, and especially upon learning that he had collaborated with Strength through Joy in Germany, Nazi officials in Buenos Aires glimpsed an opportunity to establish such an enterprise. For his part, Ney likely recognized that in Buenos Aires he had professional possibilities which did not exist in Paraguay. As Cornelia Ney explained to me, if Ludwig Ney wanted to continue his career on stage in South America, his future lay on the River Plate.³⁶⁴

Although I have not been able to date Ludwig Ney's arrival in Buenos Aires precisely, sources pinpoint his first theatrical performance in the Argentine

³⁶³ "Kraft durch Freude Veranstaltung im Teatro Odeon," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, July/Aug. 1935.

³⁶⁴ Cornelia Ney, interview.

capital to May 19, 1938.³⁶⁵ Success was instantaneous. Within months, Ludwig and Irene Ney's small, still quite unseasoned ensemble was selling out 400-seat auditoriums—larger than the 350-seat Casa del Teatro, where the FDB played—in German neighborhoods throughout Buenos Aires. Ney reckoned with many advantages over the Freie Deutsche Bühne. First of all, his stage targeted a much larger and wealthier population than the *neue Kolonie*. Furthermore, at least superficially, the nationalist German population was far more homogenous and harmonious than the fractured *neue Kolonie*, whose religious and political diversity often provoked internal conflict. Perhaps most importantly, thanks to the German Labor Front and Strength through Joy, Ney enjoyed financial support and networking capabilities that Paul Walter Jacob could only dream of. All of Ney's productions from 1938 were sponsored by Strength through Joy. The German Labor Front promoted Ney's ensemble regularly in the *Deutsche in Argentinien*, it coordinated events and booked venues for him in various districts, and subsidized performances so that prices remained “volkstümlich” and accessible to all members of the *alte Kolonie*, regardless of their incomes. For the unemployed admission was often free.³⁶⁶ The organization sponsored performances by the Ney-Bühne for German audiences in cities as far away as Rosario, over one hundred miles up the Río Paraná,³⁶⁷ and also contracted Ludwig and Irene Ney to appear at a variety of well-attended community events. The Ney-Bühne performed a series of skits at the Labor Front's Oktoberfest festival at its

³⁶⁵ “Deutsche Kleinkunstbühne Ludwig Ney,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Juni 1938.

³⁶⁶ “Der Sprung in den Alltag,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, October 14, 1938.

³⁶⁷ “Heute in Rosario,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, October 22, 1938.

riverfront grounds in Quilmes³⁶⁸ and staged August Hinrich's *Wenn der Hahn kräht* (1933) to commemorate the opening of the Strength through Joy amusement and leisure park in Punta Chica.³⁶⁹ A verdant ludic space for the nationalist German community, the park in Punta Chica was designed with special consideration for the Ney-Bühne. Passages of the Labor Front's preview of the new park read as if they were an advertisement for the stage:

Geht man ein Stück am See vorbei, so erreicht man ein Gelände, das der Ney-Bühne für ihre Festspiele im Sommer vorbehalten ist. Die natürliche Landschaft wird es sein, die Raum und Umraum für die Spiele der Ney-Bühne sein werden. Hier wird August Hinrich's köstliches Spiel „Wenn der Hahn kräht“ uns für Stunden in die nordische Heimat führen, hier werden wir von Schillers „Räubern“ gepackt und erschüttert werden. Die Tribüne für die Zuschauer ist so angelegt, daß jeder Besucher freien Blick auf das szenische Geschehen und den ganzen Hintergrund hat.³⁷⁰

Community events such as the Oktoberfest celebration in Quilmes and the opening of the Punta Chica park provided the nascent stage with opportunities to perform for members of the *alte Kolonie* who might not otherwise have been drawn to its productions. Ludwig and Irene Ney convinced these audiences and forged a theater-going public large enough to support them and their ensemble as they matured from a cabaret and variety stage into a serious theater company.

Forty years later German Labor Front president Erwin Schriefer reflected:

Im Jahre 1938 hatte das Ehepaar Ney mit einer Kleinstkunstbühne der DAF [Deutsche Arbeitsfront] angefangen. Daraus entwickelte sich nach und nach ein auf hohem Niveau stehendes Theaterensemble. Für den Zusammenhalt der deutschen Gemeinschaft hatte die Ney-Bühne große Bedeutung gewonnen.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ “Muenchener Oktoberfest,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, October 18, 1938.

³⁶⁹ “Unser ‚Kraft durch Freude‘ Park,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December 1940.

³⁷⁰ “Unser ‚Kraft durch Freude‘ Park,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December 1940.

³⁷¹ Schriefer to Vollberg, April 21, 1978, in Volberg, *Auslandsdeutschum*, 65.

As Schriefer indicates above, it is necessary to view the Ney-Bühne as developmental. The stage did not begin by filling Argentina's Teatro Nacional for polished performances of canonical German drama. Like Paul Walter Jacob after him, Ludwig Ney did not arrive in Buenos Aires with a well-rehearsed ensemble, but rather built a group of actors with varying levels of experience and ability into a cohesive and capable theater company over time. When, in 1938 Ney, attempted to produce Hanns Johst's *Schlageter* (1933), which the dramatist had dedicated to Adolf Hitler, the performance received only mixed reviews.³⁷² For both the Ney-Bühne and the Freie Deutsche Bühne simple, light-hearted comedies were the path to gaining a faithful public and securing a sound financial basis. Serious drama at both stages would have to wait.

2. Paul Walter Jacob: Theater in Times of Crisis

Paul Walter Jacob was born to a middle class orthodox Jewish family in Duisburg on January 26, 1905. In 1908 his family relocated to Mainz, where Jacob attended the Hessisches Realgymnasium zu Mainz and the Mainz conservatory. There he studied a variety of instruments as well as music theory, history, and composition. Jacob had a turbulent relationship with his parents, and spent much time in Blau-Weiß, a Zionist youth club. As he neared the end of his studies, tension grew between Jacob and his family, who insisted he become a merchant like his father. Jacob, however, had long since decided to pursue a career as an actor or musician, which enraged his family:

³⁷² "Schlageter," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 13, 1938.

Seit dem 8. November 1921 drohte mir mein Vater ständig mit einer Hundepeitsche und schlug mich in der Zeit vom 8. bis 15. November wiederholt damit. Am 10. November drohte mir mein Vater, mich mit einer Kristallvase zu töten. [...] Unzählbar oft warfen mir meine Eltern in den letzten Jahren das Essen, die Kleidung und den Unterhalt, den sie mir gaben, vor. Als ich am 8. November meiner Mutter erklärte, ich könne infolge meiner ganzen Veranlagung kein Kaufmann werden, gab sie mir die Antwort: ‚Du wirst Kaufmann werden, wir werden Dich dazu bezwingen!‘³⁷³

This excerpt from a letter that Jacob wrote to a childhood friend in the summer of 1923 reveals his determination to be an artist, a reserve of willpower which was essential to his success as a thespian in European and South American exile. The letter also indicates that his parents urged him to become a businessman, and likely did all they could to prepare him for this profession. Although Jacob protests that he could never be a businessman, conditions in exile forced him to be both artist and entrepreneur at once. His achievements at the Freie Deutsche Bühne can be attributed in large part to his ability to marry artistic skill with business acumen, especially in budgeting and marketing. Both dimensions of his personality were indispensable for his success as founder, manager, and leading actor at the FDB. In what follows I show how Jacob’s knack for combining performance art and business sense stems from his experiences at provincial German theaters.

In 1923, upon graduating from the Hessisches Realgymnasium zu Mainz, Jacob left his family to continue his studies in music and theater in Berlin. He received instruction from the Austrian composer Franz Schreker and the musicologist Georg Schünemann at a public music academy in Charlottenburg

³⁷³ Uwe Naumann, *Ein Theatermann im Exil: P. Walter Jacob* (Hamburg: Ernst Kabel Verlag, 1985), 23.

and was accepted into Max Reinhardt's acting school at the Deutsches Theater, where he learned from the actor Ferdinand Gregori, who also worked with Otto Brahm. Jacob studied music and art history, philosophy, and journalism at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin. From 1926 to 1929 he was employed as a assistant conductor at the Berliner Staatsoper Unter den Linden.

For the next three years, Jacob worked as a conductor, director, actor, and journalist in various smaller German cities, including Koblenz (1929-30), Lübeck (1930-31), Wuppertal (1931-32), and Essen (1932-33). At these provincial stages he developed competencies as an artist, organizer, and businessman which were excellent preparation for the challenges he later faced in Buenos Aires. Scholars have argued that Jacob learned these skills during his European exile, particularly at the Komödie under Walter Eberhard in Luxemburg.³⁷⁴ However, the Komödie was a traveling stage and thus a fundamentally different enterprise than the Freie Deutsche Bühne, a theater with a regular public in Buenos Aires. Jacob's memoirs from his time in provincial Germany, particularly at the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal, show that he began to develop his talents as a theater director and entrepreneur before 1933. Moreover, Jacob cultivated the germinal thought for his strategy on managing theaters in times of economic and political crisis largely on his own. Indeed, his ideas for the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal often conflicted with the policies of the Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnenangehörigen, for which he served as representative in Wuppertal.

The comparison may seem unlikely, however conditions at German provincial theaters in the early 1930's were in many ways analogous to the

³⁷⁴ Anne Lemmer, Die "Freie Deutsche Bühne," 18; Naumann, Ein Theatermann, 61.

environment in Buenos Aires a decade later. In both Wuppertal and Buenos Aires, Jacob was confronted with the challenge of managing a theater in politically volatile environments with unstable and limited finances, incomplete and traumatized ensembles, and small, beleaguered publics. In late 1931, his first season at the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal, municipal authorities resolved to shut the theater down the following July. The theater's management was forced to analyze its dilemma and design a new concept to make the stage both a solvent business enterprise and a culturally valuable institution. As the representative for the Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnenangehörigen in Wuppertal, Jacob took a leading role in these efforts.

At the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal and many other theaters throughout Germany, the core of the predicament was dwindling audiences. According to Jacob, Wuppertal's theater was failing because it had neglected its obligations as a community institution. Consequently, it had become estranged from its public, a problem it needed to rectify in order to survive. Jacob believed the theater could reconnect with its audience and increase attendance at productions, but only after comprehensive reform. First, the theater had to reestablish itself as an institution fundamental to the collective identity of Wuppertal. It had to recover the historical, emotional, and moral appeal that it had lost in recent years. Secondly, it needed to develop pragmatic business tactics in order to persevere in the harsh economic climate of 1932. Jacob believed three crucial steps were required in order to accomplish these goals: 1) establish a close and direct rapport between the theater and the residents of Wuppertal; 2) increase the theater's pull and

profile as an entertainment option through an aggressive, modernized advertising campaign; and 3) reform the theater's repertoire to better suit the tastes of the Wuppertal public in the turbulent times of the early 1930's. To its details, Jacob's successful strategy for rescuing the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal laid the groundwork for the program he followed to found and sustain the Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires.

2.1 Communicating Community

Jacob believed the multifold crises of 1932 could strengthen the bond between theater and local community. Upon learning of plans to close Wuppertal's theater, he addressed the city's residents directly in the local news bulletin, *Bergische Heimat*. It was an apt choice of media, because local newsprint creates a perception of interconnectedness among individual readers constructing—"that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity," as Benedict Anderson put it.³⁷⁵ The sense of community among residents and actors was initiated through newsprint, and it subsequently would be intensified through the shared spectacle of theatrical performance.

The crisis of 1932 furnished Jacob with an external means to foment comradeship between members of the theater and residents of Wuppertal.³⁷⁶ For stage and community alike 1932 represented, as Jacob presciently described, a "schwere Stunde an der Schwelle eines schicksalsdunklen Jahres."³⁷⁷ Against this

³⁷⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 36.

³⁷⁶ Anderson, 33.

backdrop of shared struggle, he outlined his vision of a close, interdependent relationship between Wuppertal and its theater. In his article, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” he depicts theater as a historical source of collective identity and cultural heritage, a “jahrhundert-alte Kultur, an der die Bürger Eures Landes und Eures Gemeinwesens Generationen hindurch opferwillig gearbeitet haben.”³⁷⁸ Theater provides a sense of communal historical identity forged through sacrifice.³⁷⁹ Jacob then evokes his readers’ empathy by conveying the desperation of actors at Wuppertal’s theater. Shutting down the theater, he explains, “bedeutet den sicheren Ruin für die Künstler, die in dieser Notzeit nirgends mehr eine Existenzmöglichkeit finden.”³⁸⁰ Jacob urged a renewed sense of sacrifice, compassion, and community among residents of Wuppertal. He exhorts them to come together to preserve their cultural traditions and shield local artists from disaster: “Helft Kunst und Künstler zu retten! Helft die Kultur vor dem Untergange schützen!”³⁸¹ Jacob empowers the citizens of Wuppertal. By explaining that only they can save their theater, he demonstrates that they, too, are essential to every performance. He also appeals to his public’s conscience, making clear that the ensemble’s livelihood depends on them.

Yet Jacob’s dialogue with Wuppertal’s citizenry was not limited to begging their charity. The relationship between theater and city, he asserts in

³⁷⁷ Jacob, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” *Bergische Heimat* (January, 1932.): 22.

³⁷⁸ Jacob, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” 22.

³⁷⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 185.

³⁸⁰ Jacob, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” 22.

³⁸¹ Jacob, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” 22.

Bergische Heimat, is interdependent. In deep economic and social crisis, months before the Reichstag elections in July of 1932, which saw the National Socialists become the largest party in the Reichstag by a wide margin, Jacob encourages community and theater to offer each other mutual support in order to confront the looming menace: “Ein unheilvolles Jahr scheint anzubrechen. *Laßt uns den drohenden Gefahren gemeinsam begegnen.*”³⁸² Jacob acknowledges that no theater can survive without loyal supporters and recognizes that preserving the *Städtische Bühne Wuppertal* will demand sacrifices from community and ensemble alike. However, he also stresses that Wuppertal needs its theater, too:

Je schwerer die Zeit, je größer die materielle Not, das beweist die Geschichte unseres Volkes, um so größer und stärker war auch stets die geistige Bereitschaft, das Verlangen nach Erhebung, Weihe und künstlerischem Erleben, und *das deutsche Theater war gerade in Zeiten der Bedrängnis stets die Stätte, die Euch Sammlung und Erbauung gab!*³⁸³

Jacob reminds the community that literature, in this case performed on stage, historically has been an essential source of edification for the German people—“unseres Volk”—in times of crisis. In a programmatically entitled article, “Literaturwissenschaft als Lebenswissenschaft,” published in the Franco-German academic journal, *Lendemains*, Ottmar Ette notes that, “Literatur impliziert [...] neues Wissen vom Leben und im Leben. Literatur vermittelt stets ein spezifisches Wissen davon, wie man lebt oder leben könnte—und eben darum auch ein Wissen davon, wie man nicht (über-) leben kann.”³⁸⁴ In 1932 Wuppertal was beset by

³⁸² Jacob, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” 22 (emphasis in original).

³⁸³ Jacob, “An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals,” 22 (emphasis in original).

³⁸⁴ Ottmar Ette, “Literaturwissenschaft als Lebenswissenschaft: Eine Programmschrift im Jahr der Geisteswissenschaften,” *Lendemains* 125: 32 (2007): 20-21.

threats of financial collapse and mounting social unrest. Literature, a “dynamischer und hochrückgekoppelter Speicher von Lebenswissen,” has a crucial role to play in such conditions because it provides audiences with a vast store of accumulated wisdom and experiences.³⁸⁵ Readers, or theatergoers, can draw from this knowledge and test it in a fictional laboratory in order to develop possible survival strategies for precarious external environments. In his article Jacob indicates that, as such, literature represented a valuable resource for Wuppertal’s citizens as they struggled to negotiate the volatile year of 1932.

As a man of the theater Jacob wrote about literature not only as a textual experience, but as a performative one as well. Jacob emphasized that in addition to “Erbauung” theater also spurs “Sammlung” among community members. The writings of Max Herrmann, one of the founding fathers of German theater studies as an academic discipline, help to clarify Jacob’s assertion. According to Herrmann, theater and literature can be linked, but stem from separate origins: “A drama is the word-based artistic creation of an individual; theatre is the product of an audience as those who serve it.”³⁸⁶ Indeed, a requisite for theatrical performance is the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators. For artists and audiences alike, reading is generally an individual experience, while theater is rooted in community. In the theatrical performance literature gains a vital social dimension. The performance calls for a social community, since it is rooted in one and, on the other hand, since in its course it generates a community of actors and

³⁸⁵ Ette, “Literaturwissenschaft als Lebenswissenschaft,” 5.

³⁸⁶ Max Herrmann, ‘Bühne und Drama, Antwort an Prof. Dr. Klaar,’ *Vösische Zeitung*, July 30, 1918, in Erika Fischer-Lichte. *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (London and New York, Routledge, 2005), 19.

spectators. Furthermore, the collective sacrifices of time, effort, and money required to preserve the theater in times of crisis fortify the social union that the performance brings forth.

Jacob concludes his article in *Bergische Heimat* with a message that anticipates his journalism on the River Plate in the 1940's. In both settings, Jacob repeatedly emphasized his belief that German culture could withstand the present adversity and enjoy a prosperous future. In *Bergische Heimat* he claims that German theater is a fundamental element in the transition from current crisis to future success. Therefore it must be rescued, even at great sacrifice: "Daß Ihr Bannerträger einer großen deutschen Zukunftskultur werden möget! Erhaltet die deutschen Bühnen!"³⁸⁷ For Jacob, the struggles of the present day should motivate the public to preserve their theater. In turn, he hopes that the theatrical experience will both strengthen the social community as well as inform and inspire its efforts to withstand times of crisis.

2.2 Theater as Business

In order to realize these goals, Jacob elaborated a pragmatic business model for maintaining the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal. Early in 1932 he authored two essays on the topics of financing and advertising modern theaters. Both can be considered programmatic papers which present a business concept for theater that Jacob followed closely in Germany and again eight years later in Argentina. In Wuppertal, as in Buenos Aires, the theater could not depend on state subventions. Jacob recognized that, for all its noble aspirations, the theater would

³⁸⁷ Jacob, "An die Bevölkerung Wuppertals," 22.

only survive if it became a solvent business enterprise in the free market economy. Rather than limiting expenses and thus reducing the quality of productions, Jacob's strategy focused on maximizing income: "Die Wuppertaler Bühnen kränken weniger an zu hohen Ausgaben als vielmehr an den viel zu geringen Einnahmen."³⁸⁸ The most logical way to increase income was to increase attendance. To accomplish this, the theater needed to draw a greater percentage of the general population to its productions: "Soll die Zahl der Theaterbesucher grösser werden wie bisher, muss der Bevölkerung ein Anreiz gegeben werden, das Theater zu besuchen."³⁸⁹ Productions had to grab the public's attention in order to raise the appeal of the theater as an entertainment option.

In his essay, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," Jacob asserts that an aggressive, modernized advertising campaign is crucial in reestablishing theater as the first choice of entertainment for the residents of Wuppertal. The foundation of this strategy is a challenge to contemporary notions that the *Kulturtheater*, as a sacrosanct German cultural institution, was above competing with more popular forms of amusement, such as variety shows and the cinema. Regardless of its elevated cultural status, Jacob claims that in the free market economic system the theater is subject to the same competition as any other business enterprise and must develop marketing strategies which correspond to this situation: "Wie jedes moderne Unternehmen ständig neue Werbemethoden ausarbeitet, so muss auch ein kaufmännisch geleitetes Theater dasselbe tun."³⁹⁰ Jacob was convinced that

³⁸⁸ Paul Walter Jacob, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁸⁹ Jacob, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," PWJA IV c) 253.

the “gänzlich überholte Standpunkt, öffentlich werbende Anpreisung der Leistungen sei ‚eines Kulturtheaters unwürdig’“ amounted to a “selbstmörderische Vornehmtuerei“ in the highly competitive entertainment industry of the 1930’s.³⁹¹ It is his “Herzenswunsch,” Jacob emphasizes, that the theater remain a “vornehmes Kulturinstitut,” but in order to assert itself against competition from modern forms of entertainment it must implement a “ganz modernen und grosszügigen Ausgestaltung seiner Werbemethoden.”³⁹² Jacob’s aim was to add an innovative marketing concept to the *Kulturtheater*, an institution which in his view, “neben dem künstlerischen ja auch den wirtschaftlichen und organisatorischen Geist seiner ganzen Stadt widerspiegeln sollte.”³⁹³ By adopting the advertising strategies of a modern business Jacob also saw an opportunity for the theater to approximate its community.

In an ideal situation, Jacob notes, the theater’s advertising reaches potential audiences directly. In addition to maintaining close contact to regular theatergoers through special events, mailings, and audience surveys, the theater should enhance its profile among the general public. Flyers, posters, programs, and especially members of the ensemble should be sent to promote upcoming productions at cultural organizations throughout the city in order to achieve “eine feste Verwurzelung des Theaters in der Bevölkerung der Stadt.”³⁹⁴ Presaging his

³⁹⁰ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹¹ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹² Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹³ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹⁴ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

engagement with the Pestalozzi-Schule and other youth organizations, Jacob writes in his *Denkschrift* from Wuppertal: “In die Schule muss die Theaterpropaganda dringen. Nur wenn die Jugend dem Theater gewonnen wird, gehört dem Theater die Zukunft.”³⁹⁵ This effort can be made at intellectual and economic levels. Pupils, students, and teachers alike can be drawn to theater by guest lectures from ensemble members previewing upcoming productions, but the theater also must make attendance affordable to them by offering special ticket packages with discounts for group purchases by educational institutions.

Apart from the ideal but exceptional situation of direct contact with the public, Jacob argues that advertising must be diversified beyond traditional theater programs and posters to include a wide variety of media. Most importantly, the theater must make far better use of newspapers. Maximum exposure in the most omnipresent print media in modern western society is fundamental to integrating the theater with its community: “keinem Betrieb stehen in solchen Ausmaß die Zeitungen zur Verfügung wie gerade dem Theater, nur wurde das bisher nicht genügend ausgenützt.”³⁹⁶ The theater should follow the tactics of cinemas, which “tagtäglich wieder den Erfolg geschickter und grosszügiger Annoncierung beweist.”³⁹⁷ However, Jacob continues, the theater’s heavy presence in local newspapers is not exhausted with ordinary advertisements. Anticipating the Freie Deutsche Bühne’s cooperation with the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, Jacob envisions close collaboration with the press on

³⁹⁵ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹⁶ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹⁷ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

many levels, including “ausführliche Vorbesprechungen, Betriebsreportagen, Interviews, Persönliches, Sozial- und Wirtschaftsfragen des Theaters, Berichte über das ganze deutsche Theaterleben, Aufsätze zu den in Vorbereitung befindlichen Werken, Photos, Beiträge der [Theater-]Mitglieder [...] Theater – Presse – Publikum zu einer grossen Einheit im Dienst an der Kunst zusammenzuschmelzen, muss die letzte grosse Aufgabe aller Theaterwerbung sein.”³⁹⁸ The final objective of this collaboration was to build a community identity centered around the theater, deploying newsprint as the central form of off-stage communication between the audience and ensemble.

2.3 Rethinking the Repertoire

The third and most polemical tenet of Jacob’s program for a modernized theater was to reform the repertoire itself. To best exploit the theater’s promotional activities, Jacob favored synchronizing performances with advertising and newspaper coverage. This meant faster rotation in the theater’s program, allowing for a greater number of pieces to be played. In “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” Jacob reasons that through quicker rotation his advertising and media strategies will be most effective:

Die auf ein besonderes Werk eingestellte Reklame muss unterstützt werden durch ein schnelles Abspielen des Stückes. Es ist unrationell, ein Stück wochen- oder monatelang durch den Spielplan hindurchzuziehen. Die Kritik und die Vornotizen sind längst vergessen wenn die letzten Aufführungen kommen.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

³⁹⁹ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

In his article, “Zwischen Unterhaltung und Erwartung politischer Stellungnahme,” Frithjof Trapp claims that Jacob was forced by circumstances in Buenos Aires to stage dramas in rapid succession at the Freie Deutsche Bühne.⁴⁰⁰ Its limited public in Buenos Aires did influence the speed at which the FDB rotated dramas, however Jacob’s notes from Wuppertal in 1932 demonstrate that this strategy originated earlier and did not stem solely from conditions unique to the Argentine capital: “Immer mehr wird das deutsche Theater zu einem schnelleren turnusmässigen Abspielen der einzelnen Neueinstudierungen übergehen müssen, damit der technische Apparat und das Abonnementssystem für die jeweils nächstfolgende Novität frei werden.”⁴⁰¹ Jacob’s rationale was that limiting the number of performances for any single work would permit a more diverse repertoire, including more comedies and operettas, while simultaneously allowing theaters to attract larger audiences with lower prices: “Die leichtere Muse kann dann eine stärkere Berücksichtigung finden, und durch günstigere Preisgestaltung ein besonderer Anreiz ausgeübt werden.”⁴⁰² Jacob drew spectators to the theater in times of financial constraint by offering, as he put it in both Wuppertal and Buenos Aires, “Theater zu Kinopreisen.”⁴⁰³

Numerous scholars have speculated that this agenda was detrimental to the quality of productions.⁴⁰⁴ To be sure, the rotation of dramas at the Freie Deutsche

⁴⁰⁰ Trapp, “Zwischen Unterhaltung und Erwartung politischer Stellungnahme,” 119.

⁴⁰¹ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴⁰² Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴⁰³ Jacob, “Theater in Not!,” PWJA IV c) 253. See also: Naumann, 120.

Bühne was extremely fast and limited time for rehearsals, which might have caused the quality of the acting to suffer on occasion. On the other hand, Jacob reasoned that quicker rotation and a diversified repertoire could also be energizing for actors, whose performances can become stale after an excessive number of productions of the same drama: “Daher nochmals schnelles Abspielen, das auch im Interesse der Darsteller liegt.”⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, Jacob is very clear that his suggestions for the theater’s repertoire must not under any circumstances have a detrimental effect on performances: “Grundlage aller Werbemöglichkeit ist und bleibt jedoch die Qualität des Theaterspiels selbst. Die qualitativ hochstehende Aufführung ist die Grundstütze aller wie auch gearteten Werbung.”⁴⁰⁶ The dramatic performance is the backbone of any theater’s existence.

For this reason Jacob believes his plans can only be carried out by an ensemble whose members are familiar with each other and their director:

Zur Durchführung eines guten Spielplans ist ein Ensemble notwendig, dass in langer Zusammenarbeit aufeinander eingespielt ist. Auch der Theaterleiter ist nur dann in der Lage, einen durchführbaren Spielplan aufzustellen, wenn er seine Kräfte genau kennt und weiß, für welche Rolle sie geeignet sind. Hinzu kommt noch, dass auch der Besucher lieber den schon bekannten Künstler auf der Bühne sieht als immer wieder neue Gesichter.⁴⁰⁷

Jacob recognizes that a theater’s audiences are often composed of habitual theatergoers. He therefore intends to stage a greater number of premieres so

⁴⁰⁴ Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 110; Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, “Recordando a Hedy Crilla,” in *Teatro y teoría teatral*, ed. Regula Langbehn and Miguel Vedda (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2001): 9-23, 21; Trapp, “Zwischen Unterhaltung und Erwartung politischer Stellungnahme,” 121.

⁴⁰⁵ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴⁰⁶ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴⁰⁷ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

regular spectators will be encouraged to visit the theater more frequently, enabling a closer relationship between audiences and performers, “die schon bekannten Künstler,” to evolve.⁴⁰⁸

In conjunction with his plans for a more rapid rotation of its productions, Jacob proposed that the *Kulturtheater* develop a repertoire of greater “Werbende und abonnementsbildende Kraft.”⁴⁰⁹ Jacob strongly believed that poor attendance at German theaters in the early 1930’s could be attributed in great measure to the content of their repertoires. First of all, Jacob argues that the theater “darf nicht zum Museum werden, da es dann auch nur den Besuch eines Museums aufweisen wird.”⁴¹⁰ Jacob advocates balancing the German classics with a greater number of contemporary selections, arguing that in small and large cities alike theaters had an obligation to expose audiences to “den wertvollen Werken der zeitgenössischen Dramatik.”⁴¹¹ More controversially, Jacob also favored the inclusion of simple, lighthearted comedies in the repertoire of the *Kulturtheater*. The main German theater union, the Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnenangehörigen, strongly supported “die Erhaltung des Deutschen Kulturtheaters,” i. e. performing the German classics and a select serious modern dramas at the exclusion of lighter, simpler fare.⁴¹² Jacob, by contrast, was convinced that a rigid position on this issue was neither necessary nor tenable: “In

⁴⁰⁸ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴⁰⁹ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴¹⁰ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴¹¹ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴¹² Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

der heutigen Weltwirtschaftskrise aber kann getrost und es muss sogar, ohne dem Begriff ‚Kulturtheater‘ Gewalt anzutun, in verstärktem Ausmasse gangbare Publikumsware in den Spielplan aufgenommen werden.“⁴¹³ Throughout his career he defended this conviction: “Kern des Deutschen Theaters [...] wird immer der kulturell bestimmte Spielplan höchsten Niveaus sein müssen, aber er kann getragen sein von einer dauernden volkstümlichen, einnahmebringenden Erfolgsausnutzung im leichteren Genre der Operette, des Schwanks etc.“⁴¹⁴ This strategy, which he developed in Wuppertal, is representative for Jacob’s innovative and controversial vision of the modern theater as a business enterprise. It became firm policy at the Freie Deutsche Bühne, and has been the subject of vigorous debate in reviews and scholarship on the FDB ever since the stage selected Ladislaus Bus-Fekete’s *Jean* for its inaugural performance in 1940.⁴¹⁵ Strong attendance at productions of simple comedies funded performances of more complex and demanding, but less profitable literary dramas by playwrights such as Ibsen, Pirandello, Gorki, Schiller, and Zweig. Although as an artist he clearly favored staging serious dramas, Jacob refrained from criticizing audiences’ preferences, acknowledging that “jeder Mensch hat einmal das Bedürfnis, auszuspannen, einmal recht herzlich und ungetrübt sich zu erfreuen.”⁴¹⁶ As early as 1932 he observed that, “In Zeiten wirtschaftlicher und

⁴¹³ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴¹⁴ Jacob, “Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴¹⁵ Julius Bab, “Deutsches Theater in Argentinien,” *Sonntagsblatt: Staats-Zeitung und Herold* (New York), May 16, 1948; Fritz Pohl, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung,” 34-58; Trapp, ““Zwischen Unterhaltung und Erwartung politischer Stellungnahme,” 118-137.

seelischer Depression wird vom Publikum das leichte Genre bevorzugt.⁴¹⁷ In times of crisis, he reasoned, the theater has an obligation to assuage audiences' hardships by offering them an escape from a turbulent reality.

To summarize, Jacob's work at the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal was in many aspects foundational to his later activities with the Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires. In his address to residents of Wuppertal Jacob communicates his belief that theater represents a source of moral and intellectual edification for communities under duress. Theater, as an artistic endeavor rooted in collective participation and dependent on group sacrifice, can tackle the task of community building in times of crisis. On this basis, Jacob argues that theater can also catalyze German cultural renewal in the future. In order to accomplish these three goals, Jacob sets forth an agenda of reform in theater management and organization. He proposed that the *Kulturtheater* recast itself as an independently solvent business enterprise. This required a radically modernized advertising strategy and a reformed repertoire which included faster rotation of dramas and democratized the *Kulturtheater* by increasing the representation of lighter genres, such as comedies and operettas, and lowering prices. Though controversial, Jacob held fast to this strategy both as representative for the Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnenangehörigen in Wuppertal and as founder of the FDB in Buenos Aires. Although his strategy drew criticism from friends and foes alike, that lighter comedies diminished theater's importance in the social and political spheres, the success of both stages under immensely challenging circumstances lends credence

⁴¹⁶ Jacob, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴¹⁷ Jacob, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," PWJA IV c) 253.

to his tactics from a business perspective. It moreover reveals parallels in Jacob's tactics to garner audiences in Wuppertal during the Weimar Republic, where the public was mixed, and in Buenos Aires during World War II, where most spectators were Jewish refugees. In contrast to the thrust of previous scholarship, Jacob's strategies for community building, advertising, and designing repertoires at struggling German theaters in Wuppertal in 1932 and Buenos Aires during the early 1940s were remarkably similar.

3. Expulsion, Exile and Arrival: Routes to the Freie Deutsche Bühne 3.1 Paul Walter Jacob (1905-1977)

At the outset of the 1932-33 theater season, Paul Walter Jacob had every reason to believe that he could look forward to a prosperous future on German stages. In Wuppertal Jacob had proven his talents as a theater manager by re-establishing the bond between the Städtische Bühne Wuppertal and its local community, shoring up the theater's finances, and ultimately saving the stage from closure. His accomplishments earned him strong praise from the theater's general-intendant, Manfred Maurenbrecher:

Ihr künstlerische Eifer und Ihre hervorragende Regiebegabung haben meine vollste Anerkennung gefunden. Da Sie dramaturgisch sehr begabt sind und eine geschickte Feder führen, glaube ich Sie als einen Vertreter einer neuen, jungen, fortschrittlichen Spielleitergeneration, die berufen ist, auf unseren Bühnen bestimmend [...] zu wirken. In diesem Sinne wünsche ich Ihrer großen Begabung den fördernden Boden und die geeignete Umgebung, in der Sie reifen und groß werden können. Das Zeug haben Sie!⁴¹⁸

For the 1932-33 season Jacob gained a position at the larger and more prestigious city of Essen as a director for theater, opera, and operetta. Just as his

⁴¹⁸ Maurenbrecher to Jacob, Wuppertal, May 19, 1932, PWJA II b) 203.

career was advancing, the Nazi party ascended to power. For Jacob, Germany abruptly ceased to represent a “fördernden Boden und die geeignete Umgebung,” as Maurenbrecher phrased it. While theater often creates a social community between an ensemble and its audience, this relationship need not be symbiotic. The expulsion of Jewish actors from Germany during the so-called Third Reich reveals the risk of rift and revolt within the theatrical community. In the German theater world of 1933, the exclusive national community Hitler envisioned could only be constructed through a purge. Renowned directors such as Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator were transformed from celebrities to pariahs and forced to flee. As a theater and opera director Jacob was also a visible and therefore vulnerable figure, abandoned by a public which had turned against him. On March 26, 1933 the *Essener National Zeitung* previewed Jacob’s upcoming production of Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*:

Wie wir erfahren, soll demnächst an der Essener Städtischen Oper Wagners „Fliegender Holländer“ aufgeführt werden. Regie führt ausgerechnet der Jude und Sozialdemokrat Walter Jacob.

Eine Frage, Herr Operndirektor Lengsdorff: Geht es Ihnen eigentlich so gut, daß Sie es wagen können, jetzt noch das deutsche Volk mit einem jüdischen Regisseur vor dem Kopf zu stoßen — nachdem der jüdische Geist auf den deutschen Bühnen endlich Gott sei Dank beseitigt ist?⁴¹⁹

The “Jude und Sozialdemokrat“ Paul Walter Jacob was dismissed from the Städtische Bühne Essen almost immediately. On March 29, 1933, Lengsdorff sent Jacob a cursory note: “Die zur Zeit vorhandene Stimmung weiter Volkskreise veranlasst mich, Sie bis auf weiteres von Ihren Dienstfunktionen zu

⁴¹⁹ “Randbemerkungen,” *Essener National Zeitung*, March 26, 1933.

beurlauben.”⁴²⁰ A day later the *Essener National Zeitung* rejoiced that Jacob would no longer have the “Möglichkeit, sich fernerhin an der deutschen Kunst versündigen zu können.” In the same issue the paper reinforced the Nazi menace to Jewish thespians: “Sogar unsere Theaterverwaltung hat inzwischen begriffen, woher der Wind in Deutschland weht und wohin er nötigenfalls weht, wenn sie falsche Segel setzen würde!”⁴²¹ Paul Walter Jacob purchased a one-way ticket for a night train to Amsterdam the following evening.

Jacob’s European exile corresponds to Brecht’s description of rejected artists from Nazi Germany, who were forced into a itinerant existence, “öfter als die Schuhe die Länder wechselnd.”⁴²² Theater was a precarious, liminal space for Jacob in the 1930’s. The public nature of his work on the stage thrust Nazi anti-Semitism on Jacob very quickly, forcing him into an early exile. On the other hand, this timing may have spared him his parents’ fate, who only felt compelled to flee when it was too late. In exile, theater was both a source of survival and peril for Jacob—it created opportunities and earned him a living, but it was a visible profession which put him at risk as well.

After a year of mixed results trying to find work as a journalist in Amsterdam and Paris, Jacob was engaged as an actor and director in late 1935 by a newly founded Luxemburg touring theater, the Komödie, under Walter Eberhard. Although Eberhard promised good pay and an ambitious repertoire, his enterprise was faced with almost insurmountable difficulties from the outset and

⁴²⁰ Mayor’s Office of Essen to Paul Walter Jacob, Essen, March 29, 1933, PWJA II f) 210.

⁴²¹ “Jüdische Mimen nicht mehr gefragt,” *Essener National Zeitung*, March 30, 1933.

⁴²² Bertolt Brecht, “An die Nachgeborenen.”

did not last more than two years before going bankrupt. The Komödie's quick demise casts doubt on scholars' claims that Jacob learned to run the FDB by cooperating with Eberhard.⁴²³ Correspondence between Jacob and Eberhard indicates the contrary. Rather than having learned from Eberhard, it was Jacob who attempted to advise his colleague on repertoire, advertising, public relations, and budgeting. However, as he claims in an angry letter to the director: "keiner meiner wohlgemeinten und geschäftlich wie künstlerische [...] Ratschläge wurden von Ihnen befolgt. Im Gegenteil erklärten Sie mir in brüskester Weise, Sie führten Ihr Theater allein und benötigten keine Ratschläge."⁴²⁴ Jacob and Eberhard had diverging opinions about how to manage an *Exiltheater*. In Jacob's view a strict budget was essential for a viable *Exiltheater*: "Es wäre Ihre Pflicht gewesen, und das, Herr Direktor, habe ich Ihnen hundertmal gesagt, durch sparsamste Wirtschaft [...] den Kredit der Komödie neu zu begründen und alte Schulden abzutragen."⁴²⁵ Despite the theater's strained finances Eberhard contracted new cast members against Jacob's "dauernde mündliche und schriftliche Warnungen." Then, a few months later, the director realized he could not afford to carry such a large ensemble and decided to terminate the new actors' contracts. Jacob protested: "Ich hätte sie niemals engagiert, aber sie heute zu kündigen, scheint mir eine geradezu unmenschliche Härte."⁴²⁶ At an *Exiltheater*, Jacob argues, sound budgeting is a moral obligation, because the theater's refugee ensemble will be in

⁴²³ Lemmer, *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 18; Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 61.

⁴²⁴ Jacob to Eberhard, December 17, 1935, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

⁴²⁵ Jacob to Eberhard, December 17, 1935, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

⁴²⁶ Jacob to Eberhard, December 17, 1935, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

desperate circumstances if the stage fails. When the Komödie failed, its ensemble was left with neither work nor money. They even had to sue Eberhard for unpaid wages.⁴²⁷

In Wuppertal Jacob had witnessed the ability of a cohesive ensemble and supportive public to support each other and persevere in times of crisis. Now, in Essen and Luxemburg he experienced the opposite. Jacob's decision-making as manager and director of the Freie Deutsche Bühne drew from all three experiences. He understood that the theater was a tenuous enterprise. In Buenos Aires Jacob took every precaution, even against the will of his ensemble, donors, and reviewers, to ensure that the FDB did not repeat the fiascos of Essen and Luxemburg.

After the Komödie collapsed, Jacob arrived at the final station of his European exile—the Stadttheater in Teplitz-Schönau, a provincial resort town in then Czechoslovakia with a population of approximately 50,000. The situation was similar to Buenos Aires, in as much as the town's small population required an extremely fast rotation of pieces. Each drama could usually be played a maximum of six times before its potential public had been exhausted. In order to draw the largest possible audience, the ensemble staged a wide variety of pieces, including many pieces that would form a part of the FDB's repertoire.⁴²⁸ The

⁴²⁷ Jacob to Eberhard, January 26, 1936, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

⁴²⁸ Comedies and operettas such as *Alt-Heidelberg*, *Im weißen Röß'l*, *Runder Tisch*, *Banditen im Frack*, *Krach im Hinterhaus*, *Axel an der Himmelstür*, *Jean*, *Das Ministerium ist beleidigt*, and *Die Blume von Hawaii* as well as serious dramas including *Johannisfeuer*, *Maria Stuart*, *Ein Volksfeind*, and *Wasser für Canitoga* were all performed either in Luxemburg or Teplitz-Schönau and later again in Buenos Aires.

theater's position was unstable throughout, yet it survived the 1936 and 1937 theater seasons.

In spite of having to make artistic compromises to accommodate a small, provincial stage, all indications are that Jacob enjoyed his time in Teplitz-Schönau.⁴²⁹ Yet this respite could only be temporary. As a Jewish antifascist actor and journalist, Jacob's work was public, and he could not hide from Nazi authorities. In March of 1938 he was stripped of German citizenship due to his "staatsfeindliche Einstellung."⁴³⁰ The German annexation of Austria followed later that month. In July Jacob wrote to a former colleague, concerned about Nazi expansion: "Der Lebensraum für mich und meinesgleichen ist erschreckend und aussichtslos klein geworden."⁴³¹ Searching for a way out of central Europe, by August 1938 Jacob had written to contacts, often of the vaguest kind, in England, Sweden, Switzerland, Greece, Palestine, the United States, South Africa, and Australia—all to no avail. His acquaintances either warned him that conditions were intolerable or that acquiring the necessary entrance visas was impossible.

Jacob's chance to flee Europe arrived through his work in the Teplitz-Schönau theater, where he met Liselott Reger, an actress with the stage. Six years Jacob's senior, Reger was Jewish, an Argentine citizen, and the daughter of a wealthy banker from Buenos Aires. The two became romantically involved, and as the situation in Europe worsened, they decided to escape to Argentina together. Jacob had renewed his German passport in May of 1937, and through friends in

⁴²⁹ Jacob, "In Prag vor fünf Jahren," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 14, 1942.

⁴³⁰ *Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preußischer Staatsanzeiger*, April 20, 1938.

⁴³¹ Jacob to Ebert, June 7, 1938, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

Prague he was able to purchase a visa to Paraguay. With his documents for this landlocked country he procured a transit visa for Argentina, which he converted to a residence permit once he had arrived in Buenos Aires and become engaged to Reger.

The circumstances surrounding the marriage indicate a union of opportunity. For Jacob, Reger's Argentine citizenship represented an escape from Europe. It is likely that Reger saw the marriage as a chance to continue playing theater in Argentina, because Jacob had already elaborated plans to establish an *Exiltheater* in South America.⁴³² Reger may have been able to find work as a member of an Argentine ensemble, but her education and professional experience had been in Germany.⁴³³ In Argentina on her own, Reger would have had to start from scratch. If she and Jacob founded a theater together, she would have greater artistic freedom and influence and, perhaps, better economic opportunities. Reger and Jacob rushed to marry upon arrival in South America. Reger wrote to a friend that legal matters played a decisive role in their haste: "ein äußerer Anlass zu unserem raschen Entschluss war die Tatsache, dass sich auf diese Art am raschesten und einfachsten die Frage der endgültigen Niederlassungserlaubnis bei den hiesigen Behörden regeln ließ, die sonst doch für Walter recht erhebliche Schwierigkeiten ergeben hätte."⁴³⁴ Shortly after they were married, Reger and Jacob, together with Heinz Halban and Werner Zweigenthal, performed selected scenes from Curt Goetz's comedy *Hund im Hirn* in the Pestalozzi-Schule for an

⁴³² Jacob to Susini, December 5, 1936, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

⁴³³ Lemmer, *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 109.

⁴³⁴ Reger to friend, June 6, 1939, in Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 92.

invited audience of potential donors. Six months later, with Reger and Jacob as founding members and business partners, the Freie Deutsche Bühne staged its inaugural performance. However, just four years later, in 1944, Reger and Jacob separated. They were divorced within a year after Germany's capitulation in WWII.

In addition to Reger, Jacob met many other future colleagues during his European exile. A number of actors who had played together with Jacob at the Komödie and the Stadttheater Teplitz-Schönau also performed at the Freie Deutsche Bühne. This shared experience contributed to cohesion in the FDB's ensemble. It was also beneficial for the stage's productions, because Jacob's knowledge of his cast facilitated his plans for a diverse repertoire and quick rotation of dramas.⁴³⁵ In Luxemburg Paul Walter Jacob acted together with Georg Braun⁴³⁶ and Jacques Arndt,⁴³⁷ and in Czechoslovakia he shared the stage with the experienced comic, Ernst Wurmser,⁴³⁸ as well as Liselott Reger.⁴³⁹ All of these actors were Jewish. Six years after they had performed together in Luxemburg, for example, Arndt contacted Jacob from Uruguay "von Kollege zu Kollege, von Mensch zu Mensch, zusammenführt durch ,Eberhardsche Tage.'" ⁴⁴⁰ Separated for several years and thousands of miles at a time when hundreds of thousands of

⁴³⁵ Jacob, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," PWJA IV c) 253.

⁴³⁶ "Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb," *Luxemburger Zeitung*, October 7, 1935.

⁴³⁷ "Kabale und Liebe," *Luxemburger Volksblatt*, December 27, 1935.

⁴³⁸ "Es ist serviert!," *Wegweiser*, June 21, 1937.

⁴³⁹ "Kabale und Liebe," *Der Abend*, March 4, 1937.

⁴⁴⁰ Arndt to Jacob, September 8, 1939, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

Jews were fleeing Europe, they were reunited, often through sheer coincidence, in South America.

3.2 Jacques Arndt (1914-2009)

By marrying a well-connected Argentine citizen, Paul Walter Jacob's path from his last performance in Europe to his debut at the Freie Deutsche Bühne had been relatively smooth. For Jacques Arndt, an actor and director at the Freie Deutsche Bühne for over twenty years, the journey was far more complicated. Like Jacob, Arndt's work in the theater catalyzed his exile. Not a local celebrity as Jacob had been in Essen, even after the annexation of Austria the Jewish Arndt could find, at least temporarily, safety in anonymity off stage. Arndt was only a public figure when he was on stage, and even there he was not well-known and enjoyed the cover of a fictional role. The theater only presented danger for Arndt if he was to express his real, nonfiction opposition to Nazism on stage.

In this section, I discuss Arndt's adventurous route from Vienna's Burgtheater to the Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires. Although much of this account of his escape is based on several interviews I conducted with Jacques Arndt in Buenos Aires from 2006 to 2008, I have consulted secondary sources to verify his version of the events. Arndt is an enthusiastic interviewee, and I have tried to convey his vivacity in the ensuing pages.

From his earliest childhood Arndt's parents took him to the theater, and as a young boy he began acting at the prestigious Burgtheater, where he played

smaller supporting roles for children.⁴⁴¹ After he finished middle school, Arndt enrolled in the Wiener Staatsakademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst, where many of his professors were actors in the Burgtheater's first ensemble. In addition to studying at the Akademie, Arndt also acted in the Theater der Jugend at the Volksoper. This theater, produced for a youthful audience, gave less experienced actors opportunities to play major roles in canonical dramas.

In July of 1938, shortly after the German annexation of Austria, the *Theater der Jugend* staged *Wallenstein*. Enthusiasm for the Nazi regime rose to a pitched level during performances of such classical dramas: "Schon bevor wir anfangen, stand jemand vor dem Vorhang und hielt eine Ansprache mit den Parolen ‚Heil dem neuen Tag! Heil dem neuen Führer!‘"⁴⁴² Behind the curtain Arndt was appalled, knowing that Nazi expansionism bode him no good. In the production, however, his role of a young soldier during the Thirty Years War resonated well with the new order. The contradiction proved untenable. In one scene the soldier, flush with admiration for the great Wallenstein, rallies a skeptical cuirassier to join his troops: "Wohlauf Kameraden, aufs Pferd, aufs Pferd, hinaus in die Freiheit gezogen!" The fateful moment occurred when Arndt continued: "Freiheit ist bei der Macht allein, ich leb' und sterb für den Wallenstein!" Arndt spoke his character's lines with conviction, but as a real person he was horrified at the way the audience interpreted them:

Da geschah es. Die aufgeputzten jungen Leute im Theater verstanden die Verse auf ihre Weise: „Freiheit ist bei der Macht allein" – Macht bedeutete für sie den Anschluss an Deutschland, „ich leb' und sterb' für

⁴⁴¹ Jacques Arndt, interview with Robert Kelz, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁴² Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

den Wallenstein" – Wallenstein war Hitler. Im Saal brach eine Pro-Hitler-Demonstration aus. Die Leute sprangen auf die Stühle und brüllten „Heil Hitler“, vielleicht zwei Minuten lang.⁴⁴³

Arndt was aghast, and in the emotion of the moment he committed an actor's worst sin—he fell out of character on stage and addressed the audience as his true self: “Nein, nein, so habe ich das nicht gemeint.”⁴⁴⁴ His inability to adhere to his fictional role imperiled Arndt's real life. His performative identity gave way to his phenomenal one, and he was held accountable for his utterances as a real person expressing his true opinions. When a member of the audience threatened to turn him in, Arndt exited his role again, but this time he remained in the realm of the German classics and retorted with a quote from Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*.

A few days after the *Wallenstein* performance two strangers entered Arndt's apartment, where he lived with his mother. Arndt's deceased father had been an officer in the k.u.k. army, and his mother had served as nurse in World War I. Their history, thus, was that of a patriotic Austrian family. Nearly seventy years later Arndt was still uncertain who these men were, but when he reflects on their words during this brief encounter—“Der Bub muß fort, wir haben ihn bereits auf der Liste!”—his conclusion, which I have not been able to verify, is that they were actors—double agents.⁴⁴⁵

His error on stage had left him in a dangerous predicament yet, ironically, from this moment forward Jacques Arndt's survival depended on his acting ability. His excellent education as an actor also prepared him well for his escape

⁴⁴³ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁴⁴ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁴⁵ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

from Nazism. The two men described an intricate route out of Nazi territory, but Arndt was not permitted to write any of it down. Instead, he had to memorize all the information,” was ja für einen jungen Schauspieler kein Problem ist.”⁴⁴⁶ The problem was the route itself, which seemed even riskier than remaining in Vienna:

Der Plan war das genaue Gegenteil von dem, was man normalerweise tun würde, wenn man von der Gestapo gesucht wurde. Die Leute, die 1938/39 aus Österreich weg mussten, versuchten es in der Regel mit Italien oder der Tschechoslowakei. Ich sollte dagegen zunächst nach Deutschland fahren.

The escape route followed a zigzag course on commuter trains and local busses across Germany, from the Austrian border at Salzburg north almost until Berlin and then southwest to Trier. Seventy-five years later, Arndt still shook his head as he recalled the men’s advice: “Das war einfach der reine Wahnsinn, da wo die Hölle her kommt, da musst du hin.”⁴⁴⁷ Arndt had to remember the proper trains, imitate local customs, and speak with regional accents in order to avoid arousing suspicion, all the while behaving as if each situation was nothing out of the ordinary.

The influential French actor and director Jean-Louis Barrault described a good actor as: “jener besondere Mensch, der durch eine besondere Willensschulung, eine besondere Körpergeschmeidigkeit, eine höchste Flexibilität seines Atems und seiner Stimme prädestiniert und spezialisiert ist.”⁴⁴⁸ Memory

⁴⁴⁶ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁴⁷ Jacques Arndt, interview with Robert Kelz, December 25, 2008.

⁴⁴⁸ Jean-Louis Barrault, “Der Schauspieler – Instrument des Theaters,” in *Zehn Jahre FDB*, ed. Paul Walter Jacob (Buenos Aires: Editorial Cosmopolitan, 1950), 154.

and poise, as well as gesture, posture, and intonation according to different roles—these were all skills Arndt had been honing since his childhood. Convincing the people around him that he was an ordinary German was a matter of performance. In 1935 the *Luxemburger Volksblatt* had praised Arndt for his role in Romain Rolland’s pacifist drama, *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb*: ”Jacques Arndt, der die Rolle des Neffen Eitel trug, hat das Zeug zum Hitlerjungen.“⁴⁴⁹ By coincidence, the *Volksblatt*’s review also conveys how well Arndt’s work as an actor had prepared him for his escape across Germany

Later, when he narrated his tale, people often interrupted him with the question: “Hast du keine Angst gehabt?” His response seems simplistic, almost childish: “Meine Schauspielerfantasie hat mir geholfen.”⁴⁵⁰ According to Georg Simmel, however, the actor’s own profound sense of creativity is the essence of every convincing performance: ”Der Schauspieler agiert für den Zuschauer rein aus sich heraus, der Inhalt, den er darbietet, stammt für die Erscheinung nicht aus einem Buch oder aus dem Bewusstsein und der Produktivität eines anderen sondern unmittelbar aus seiner Seele.”⁴⁵¹ During his flight from Nazi Germany, Arndt was convinced of his own drama and accomplished what he had failed to do in Vienna—remain in character and adhere to his role, this time effectively shielding himself against hostile environs. As Arndt crossed Nazi Germany, acting skills became survival skills:

⁴⁴⁹ “Theater im Volkshaus,” *Luxemburger Volksblatt*, October 7, 1935.

⁴⁵⁰ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁵¹ Georg Simmel, “Zu der Philosophie eines Schauspielers,” in *Die Komödie: Programmheft der Gastspielbühne für das Großherzogtum Luxemburg*, ed. Paul Walter Jacob, (Luxemburg: 1934), 6.

Ich habe mir eingebildet, ich spiele die Hauptrolle von einem Schauspiel, und ginge quer durch Deutschland wie es im Stück geschrieben war. Zehn Meter von mir entfernt gingen die Truppen von Militär und SS Truppen und die alle und ich sah mir das alles so an, als wenn ich auf der Bühne stehen würde. Ich war jung, blond, und war einfach überzeugt von meiner Rolle in diesem verrückten Schauspiel.⁴⁵²

Arndt believed strongly enough in his character and his self-created drama that no one around him realized he was playing a fictional role. Georg Simmel claims that when spectators observe a successful actor, they should have the impression that: “Er bietet *sich* dar, das Tun und Leiden, das man an ihm sieht, ist das seiner Person, die sich scheinbar wie in der Realität des Lebens entfaltet.”⁴⁵³ Arndt convinced his audience: “Ich spielte meine Rolle, und keiner von diesen Menschen fragte mich, was ich da machte. Es hat keiner sich um mich gekümmert. Keiner fragte: ‚Ja, wer sind Sie eigentlich?‘“⁴⁵⁴ Nobody saw the persecuted Jew through the ordinary German he portrayed.

In Trier, Arndt had been instructed act as if he were a tourist in the old Roman city and stroll among the ruins, slowly making his way down to the Mosel river. He then had to cross the Mosel and follow its left bank past its intersection with another river, the Sauer. This spot was, according to the men from his mother’s apartment, the least guarded border out of Germany. Here he had to verify that there was no major border patrol in the area, and if the situation seemed opportune, dive into the Sauer, and swim across to Luxemburg. If all went well, he would quickly be in safety. If the border patrol saw him, however, they

⁴⁵² Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁵³ Simmel, “Philosophie eines Schauspielers,” 7.

⁴⁵⁴ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

would shoot. Everything went according to plan, Arndt recounted, until he reached the middle of the river, at which point he heard gunshots. He dove underwater and continued swimming hard, holding his breath until he reached the far bank: “Man fragte mich später wie ich das machte, ob ich so ein Sportler war. War ich gar nicht, aber in dieser Situation ist jeder Maradona. Es geht um das Leben.”⁴⁵⁵ In such moments, Arndt explained, one’s phenomenal body becomes similar to an actor’s performative body, which in a fictional work is capable of acts it could never accomplish in ordinary situations.

After he had dried himself in the sun, Arndt headed for the address of a charity organization in Luxemburg City, which also functioned as an underground refugee assistance network. Wary of infiltration, the group made Arndt repeat his story dozens of times: “Immer wieder dasselbe, ob ich eventuell irgendein Wort... Da es aber die Wahrheit war, brauchte ich aber kein Wort zu wechseln.”⁴⁵⁶ Reassured, the organization found him shelter in an attic and told him to keep a low profile, although they occasionally sent him out on small errands, so neighbors would grow accustomed to seeing him about. On one of these errands Arndt brought a letter to an office. When he delivered it, the recipients told him to go straight to the train station. Several other refugees were already waiting there, none of whom Arndt had ever seen before. A representative of the relief organization ordered them to board the next train to Marseille without asking questions. At Marseille a member of the same organization would greet them by reciting the first line of a French poem to which Arndt, the only member of the

⁴⁵⁵ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁵⁶ Jacques Arndt, telephone conversation with Robert Kelz, April, 2007.

group who spoke French, would respond with the second line. Each was told to sit in an exact seat in separate compartments. They had neither tickets nor passports. When they reached the French border an official from the border control entered Arndt's compartment and checked all the passengers' documents, except for his: "Sie taten so, als sei ich nicht vorhanden. Genauso ging es den anderen Mitgliedern der Gruppe. Wie das organisiert war, weiß ich nicht, aber es war meisterhaft."⁴⁵⁷

When they reached the station in Marseille a man came up to the group and mumbled something as he walked past. Arndt was unsure, remained silent, and the man disappeared. The group then stood on the platform for several hours, with no documents, no money, and no contacts in a foreign city: "Eine Wahnsinnsituation. Dann kam der Mann noch einmal und sagte wieder etwas. Ich war unsicher, dachte aber, daß es die Gedichtzeile gewesen sein könnte, riskierte es und antwortete ihm mit dem vereinbarten Satz. Er sagte daraufhin: 'Vite, vite, suivez-moi.'⁴⁵⁸ As Arndt tells it, the group then hurried through the streets of Marseille, following the stranger who lead the way. Finally, they came to a small door which opened to a flight of stairs leading under an adjacent building. The man quickly shoved them inside and shut the door: "Kennen Sie die *Dreigroschenoper*? Dort waren wir angekommen. Wir waren im Keller des Bettlerkönigs Jeremiah Peachum aus dem *Dreigroschenoper*. Da waren Bettler, falsche Bettler, falsche Blinde, und wir plötzlich mittendrin, eine unglaubliche

⁴⁵⁷ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁵⁸ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

Atmosphäre.”⁴⁵⁹ The situation must have been hard to fathom but by comparing it to Brecht’s play, which concludes with an unlikely happy-ending to a story which seems sure to finish badly, Arndt was able to create a sense of familiarity and, to extent, optimism.

Early the following morning, Arndt was brought to the port. Completely given up to the hands of others, with little recourse to act independently, Arndt had no choice but to adhere to the script that his guardians had handed to him: “Plötzlich piff jemand durch die Finger. In einem Frachtschiff öffnete sich eine Luke, jemand schob ein Brett heraus und bedeutete uns, schnell rein zu kommen. Wir kletterten ins Zwischendeck, zu den Ladekisten mit dem Frachtgut.”⁴⁶⁰ The same sailor who had whistled returned that evening with some blankets and appeared once a day with food. The journey was long, and the conditions were primitive: “Irgendwo gab es ein Loch, das war die sanitäre Einrichtung.”⁴⁶¹ For weeks, Arndt and several other refugees huddled on the ship, cold, hungry, and with absolutely no idea of what awaited them “im nächsten Akt.”⁴⁶² Gradually, they noticed that the weather was turning warmer, and as the days were growing longer. Eventually, the ship began to dock at various harbors. After one of these stops, the sailor informed them that they had just departed from the Brazilian city of Santos. The next stop was Montevideo, in democratic Uruguay. Here the refugees would leave the ship:

⁴⁵⁹ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁶⁰ Jacques Arndt, telephone conversation, April, 2007.

⁴⁶¹ Jacques Arndt, telephone conversation, April, 2007.

⁴⁶² Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

Weder ich noch die anderen Mitglieder der Gruppe hatten jemals etwas von Uruguay gehört. Kurz bevor wir an Land gingen, gab uns der Matrose Pässe, falsche Pässe mit unseren richtigen Namen. Es war wieder perfekt organisiert, wir erhielten neben den Pässen sogar gefälschte Impfzeugnisse. In jedem Pass lag eine Zehn-Dollar-Note. In Montevideo verließen wir das Schiff wieder über eine Holzplanke, der Matrose verabschiedete sich mit *Bonnes chances!* Das war's.⁴⁶³

And there he stood. The twenty-four year-old Jacques Arndt spoke no Spanish, could not even place Uruguay on a map, and with ten dollars and fake papers had to begin his life anew. He began by trying to speak with passers-by in German, French, and bits of broken English. To no avail. Arndt attempted again and again until finally a person stopped and responded in a foreign language, which he somehow understood—Yiddish: “Ich muss Ihnen ehrlich gestehen, es war das erste Mal, dass ich diese Sprache hörte. In meiner Burgtheateratmosphäre in Wien hatte ich keinen Kontakt zu dieser Sprache, obwohl in Wien damals viele osteuropäische Juden lebten. Aber ich konnte mich mit diesem jiddischsprechenden Mann in Montevideo verständigen.”⁴⁶⁴ The man brought Arndt and his fellow refugees to a pension.

In the pension, where there were many international guests, he began to ask around for a job. Although his acting ability had played a significant role in his escape to Uruguay, guests told him, held little promise for Austrian thespians: “Und da fragte mich einer: ‘Was bist Du denn? Was kannst Du denn?’ Und ich sagte sehr stolz, ‘Ich bin Schauspieler.’ ‘Ah, sehr interessant. In welcher

⁴⁶³ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁶⁴ Jacques Arndt, telephone conversation, April, 2007.

Sprache?’ ‘Deutsch.’ ‘Mmm, taugt nicht. Kann man nicht verwenden.’”⁴⁶⁵ But dozens of German-speaking emigrants were arriving in Montevideo every week. Stores, services, and media run by refugees for refugees were springing up on both sides of the River Plate. One of these new businesses was Hermann Gebhardt’s antifascist radio program, *La voz del día*. As Arndt learned, Gebhardt was a talented and industrious man capable of performing just about every task his program required. He designed programs, found advertisers, did the accounting, even wrote manuscripts, but he stuttered:

Für ihn war es natürlich ein Geschenk des Himmels, einen Schauspieler, einen geschulten Sprecher für sein Programm zu bekommen. Und für mich war es ein Wunder, in Uruguay Arbeit als Sprecher deutscher Texte zu finden. So fing ich schon am folgenden Tag bei ihm an. Ich erhielt zwar nur ein ganz kleines Honorar, aber es war ein Anfang.⁴⁶⁶

Arndt learned customs, mannerisms, and Spanish quickly: “Ich nahm es einfach auf der Straße und bei Gesprächen auf und plapperte es nach, um mir ein kleines Repertoire zu schaffen von Worten.”⁴⁶⁷ As a young, blonde, Austrian actor, he was something of a curiosity for most Uruguayans. The radio station which Gebhardt rented for his program was owned by two Uruguayan businessmen, who enjoyed talking with Arndt. Skilled in the arts of communication and entertainment, Arndt understood how to hold these men’s attention with his “spärlichen Wortrepertoire, Hände und Füße, Gesten. Ich versuchte darzustellen, was die Nazis drüben trieben und dann kamen sie bald darauf mit einer

⁴⁶⁵ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁶⁶ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁶⁷ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

Schallplatte an.⁴⁶⁸ To his astonishment, the men requested that he announce the record, a Viennese waltz, on the airwaves. When he came out of the studio, the men told him he should do this with a few waltzes everyday and perhaps also give an introduction or narrate an anecdote before playing the record. It was, he recalls, a very effective form of language instruction: “Man zwang mich, die Sprache zu erlernen, indem ich sie über Rundfunk sprach.”⁴⁶⁹ Arndt’s background in the theater helped him find work and, because as an actor he had developed skills in language acquisition and communication, his experiences on stage also facilitated his acculturation into Uruguayan society.

Arndt understood how to entertain an audience, and his comical efforts at Spanish pleased listeners, so the gimmick became a full scale program, “Estampas Vienesas.”⁴⁷⁰ A radio magazine even visited the studios to do a report on him. A few weeks later two men were waiting for Arndt when he arrived at the station. They showed him the magazine and asked him to confirm that he was the Jacques Arndt described in the article. Arndt affirmed, and they told him to expect them at the studio again later that evening. Flattered by his success, Arndt had forgotten that he was in Uruguay illegally. Now, he was afraid that he would be deported. He was thus perplexed when, as they drove off, one of the men shouted to him to put on a tie before they returned.

When the men arrived later that evening they whisked Arndt into the car without saying anything. After they reached their destination, the men escorted

⁴⁶⁸ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁶⁹ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁷⁰ “Evocaciones de un joven de 92,” *La Nación*, July 9, 2006. “Viennese stamps—Trans.”

him up a wide flight of marble stairs through the grand entrance of an elegant building. They led Arndt, who was very confused, to a place at a table where several well-dressed civilians, a few decorated military officers, and a bishop were seated. Clearly, Arndt remembers thinking at the time, “das hier ist kein Gefängnis.”⁴⁷¹ He knew nobody, but all the others seemed to know him.

Eventually, one of the men sitting close to him asked who wrote the texts he read on the radio. Arndt explained that he wrote them himself; some just occurred to him, others he had experienced personally. This led to more questions, and Arndt told them about his childhood in Vienna, about life after the German annexation, and what he thought might happen in the future. All the while, Arndt was struggling to understand the situation, trying to grasp who these people were and why he was sitting with them at this banquet, where he was so completely out of place: “Irgendwie Schauspieler können mitunter im Doppelgeschichten denken. Ich hatte das Gefühl, während ich sprach, diesen Moment muss ich ausnützen.”⁴⁷² He confessed: “Meine Herren, ich habe kein Recht mit Ihnen an diesem Tisch zu sitzen, Sie sind sicher sehr bedeutende Leute.”⁴⁷³ His company was surprised he did not know who they were, so they introduced themselves as the chief of police, Minister of the Interior, army general, and so on. Arndt responded that in this case he had even less right, because he was in Uruguay illegally as a refugee: “Wenn es nur das sei, war die Antwort, könne mir geholfen werden. 48 Stunden später hatte ich uruguayische Dokumente, Aufenthaltsbewilligung und alle sonstigen

⁴⁷¹ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁷² Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁷³ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

Zettel. Und da war ich, auf einmal, wieder ein freier Mann.⁴⁷⁴ I have not been able to confirm this final anecdote in Arndt's story, but even if he has embellished some of the details, the anecdote's basic narrative about knowledge for survival is valid. In addition to all the talents Arndt had needed in order to reach the table, so much of his and many other escapes also comes down an ability to get along with others and an intuitive understanding of how to make the most of fortunate occurrences.

Arndt had already been in contact with Paul Walter Jacob, and knew of the Freie Deutsche Bühne. Unfortunately he had been in Uruguay illegally, and could not risk deportation by crossing the border with Argentina. Shortly after Arndt had acquired his papers, he received a letter from Jacob, who was looking for a younger male actor. A few weeks earlier the trip would have been very difficult, but now it was no problem. At first he was somewhat reluctant to leave the life he had begun to make for himself in Montevideo, but he was also seduced by the opportunity to play regularly in a professional theater. He traveled to Buenos Aires to evaluate the situation: "Aber dann bekam ich meine erste Rolle, und meine Monatsgagen, wurde in einer Pension untergebracht und war wieder Schauspieler. Eigentlich war ich es die ganze Zeit seit meinem Flucht aus Wien gewesen—aber nun stand ich endlich wieder auf der Bühne."⁴⁷⁵ Jacob engaged Jacques Arndt as stage designer and for youthful masculine roles during the 1941 season at the FDB. Arndt remained affiliated with the stage for over twenty years.

⁴⁷⁴ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁴⁷⁵ Arndt, interview, December 25, 2008.

Arndt's tale is a fantastic one, and it likely bears some of the imprecision inherent to personal memory. Nonetheless, all extant scholarship and demonstrable facts from this period in Arndt's life support his account. In biographical sketches which appeared in *La Nación* in July of 2006, the book *Wie weit ist Wien*, and in two other interviews he repeats several of the details chronicled above and without contradicting himself.⁴⁷⁶ Several studies confirm Arndt's education and theater background in Vienna.⁴⁷⁷ Various newspaper reviews and playbills from Luxemburg prove he was a member of the Komödie in 1935.⁴⁷⁸ His correspondence with Paul Walter Jacob shows that he arrived in Montevideo in late December, 1938, which squares chronologically with his story about escaping from the Nazi Germany.⁴⁷⁹ Arndt's description of the transition to warmer weather and longer days during the voyage represents the shift from winter in the Northern hemisphere to the South American summer, also chronologically accurate. In correspondence from January 1939, Arndt tells Jacob about his work at radio stations in Uruguay.⁴⁸⁰ Finally, in a letter from January 23, 1941, Paul Walter Jacob makes Arndt an offer to act for a two month trial period with the Freie Deutsche Bühne. The details of this offer—its dates and duration,

⁴⁷⁶ "Evocaciones," *La Nación*, July 9, 2006; Gert Eisenbürger und Gaby Küppers, Interview with Jacques Arndt, January, 1998; Jacques Arndt, interview with Fedor Pellmann, October, 2008.

⁴⁷⁷ Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 116; Lemmer, *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 104-105; "Der verhinderte Burgschauspieler," *Radio Österreich 1* (August 14, 2006); Alisa Doeur and Ursula Seeber, *Wie weit ist Wien. Lateinamerika als Exil für österreichische Schriftsteller und Künstler* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1995), 20.

⁴⁷⁸ "Vorschau auf Winterspielzeit," *Luxemburger Zeitung*, September 27, 1935; "Bunbury," *Luxemburger Wort*, November 11, 1935; "Prinz Übermuts Fahrt ins Märchenland," *Der Landwirt*, December 7, 1935.

⁴⁷⁹ Arndt to Jacob, January 7, 1939, PWJA Korrespondenz 1939.

⁴⁸⁰ Arndt to Jacob, January 7, 1939, PWJA Korrespondenz 1939.

bureaucratic procedures, roles anticipated for Arndt at the FDB and his hesitation to leave Montevideo, even the cost of a room at a local pension—all match Arndt’s description from the interviews and telephone conversations I conducted with him from 2006 to 2008.⁴⁸¹

3.3 Ernst Wurmser (1882-1949)

Thanks to his marriage with Liselott Reger, Paul Walter Jacob was able to begin a new, fully legal existence in Buenos Aires—far and away the wealthiest and most cosmopolitan city in South America in 1938—very soon after he arrived on the continent. Despite his dangerous escape from Europe, Jacques Arndt was also very fortunate to arrive and quickly become a legal immigrant in Uruguay, one of the most stable democracies and tolerant countries in Latin America. The story of the Viennese comic Ernst Wurmser is more typical for many other refugees who, fortunate to escape Nazi persecution in Europe, were not as lucky as Arndt and Jacob.

Born in Vienna on March 20, 1882, Ernst Wurmser was a comic actor who had worked in German-speaking theaters in major European cities such as Prague (1917-1920), Vienna (1921-1925), and Berlin (1930-1934).⁴⁸² In Berlin, Wurmser also launched a successful career in film. Between 1931 and 1933 he enjoyed minor roles in ten feature productions, including *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick* (1931) and *Arm wie eine Kirchenmaus* (1931).⁴⁸³ Shortly after the Nazis

⁴⁸¹ Jacob to Arndt, January 23, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁴⁸² Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 118.

took power the Jewish Wurmser was forced into exile, where he coincided with Paul Walter Jacob and Liselott Reger at the Stadttheater Teplitz-Schönau.⁴⁸⁴

Wurmser was lucky to escape Europe in 1939, but he did not enter an auspicious situation in the Americas. Like many Jews trapped in Czechoslovakia, Wurmser had purchased visas for himself and his wife to Bolivia.⁴⁸⁵ Many last minute refugees emigrated to Bolivia, because it was one of very few countries which accepted emigrants after 1938. Additionally Bolivian officials in Paris and Prague were often corrupt, and issued papers indiscriminately for the right price.⁴⁸⁶ It was certainly better than remaining in Europe, but Bolivia offered very little opportunity for emigrants to begin new lives for themselves. Bolivia in the 1930's was in a semi-colonial state of development. It was the poorest and least developed nation in South America. 95% of its population were indigenous Aymares and Quechuas, the vast majority of whom were illiterate and spoke little or no Spanish. In 1939 Bolivia was in crisis—it was in political turmoil, and its economy had been obliterated after its loss in the Chaco War with Paraguay in 1935. As Egon Schwarz recalls in *Keine Zeit für Eichendorff: Chronik unfreiwilliger Wanderjahre*, life in Bolivia was often reduced to a daily regimen

⁴⁸³ [www.filmportal.de \(http://www.filmportal.de/df/99/Uebersicht,,,,,,,,,9B396F4A1C8D40298D1ACDC30EA3BB51,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,html\)](http://www.filmportal.de/df/99/Uebersicht,,,,,,,,,9B396F4A1C8D40298D1ACDC30EA3BB51,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,html).

⁴⁸⁴ Te-The-Re Cabaret Program, February 28, 1938, PWJA V c) 262.

⁴⁸⁵ Georg und Lotte Braun, Olga Keller, Erna Terrell, and Ernst Wurmser were all associates of Jacob's who received visas for Bolivia through the country's embassy in Prague. Approximately 7,000 German-speaking refugees emigrated to Bolivia, nearly all of them after October, 1938.

⁴⁸⁶ Doeur and Seeber, *Wie weit ist Wien*, 38.

of manual labor for starvation wages.⁴⁸⁷ Many refugees in Bolivia were bitterly poor, indeed one actor who had worked with Jacob in Luxemburg, Georg Braun, wrote that he was “nah am Hungertod.”⁴⁸⁸ As a friend of Jacob’s wrote from Oruro, a mining town, those who did eek out a living still suffered, because they were deprived of cultural activities and stimulation: “Hier in Bolivien sitzen wir alle geistig sehr auf dem Trockenen [...] ich würde mich freuen wenn ich einmal mit Menschen wie Sie wieder sprechen könnte, die keine Würstel kaufen oder Minenschuhe handeln.”⁴⁸⁹ In Bolivia it was very difficult for refugees to find employment in the professions they had practiced in Europe, and the dearth of cultural life made it nearly impossible for actors to earn a living in the theater, especially in the German language.

Ernst Wurmser lived in material and cultural poverty in Bolivia. When he learned in October of 1940 that his former colleague had founded a German theater in Buenos Aires, he wrote him “mit der herzlichen Bitte, mich für die FDB zu verpflichten.”⁴⁹⁰ The Freie Deutsche Bühne played a vital role for refugees, because it was not merely an “Existenzmöglichkeit” but, as the only regularly performing *Exiltheater* worldwide, it represented a truly unique opportunity for thespian refugees to earn a living “im angestammten Berufe.”⁴⁹¹ The

⁴⁸⁷ Egon Schwarz, *Keine Zeit für Eichendorff: Chronik unfreiwilliger Wanderjahre* (Frankfurt: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1992).

⁴⁸⁸ Braun to Arndt, February 13, 1946, Jacques Arndt Collection. Braun was engaged by the FDB in 1946.

⁴⁸⁹ Olga Keller to Jacob, October 9, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁴⁹⁰ Wurmser to Jacob, October 21, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁴⁹¹ Jacob to Arndt, January 23, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

psychological importance of this prospect can hardly be overstated. Jacob had endured whippings from his father rather than relinquish his ambition to become an actor. The *Freie Deutsche Bühne*'s first theater almanac in 1943, which functioned as a mouthpiece for the stage's ensemble, gives expression to many members' passion for theater through a letter from the renowned 19th-century actor at the Viennese Burgtheater, Adolf Sonnenthal, to his parents:

Gott hat jeden Menschen ein gewisses Etwas in sein Innerstes gepflanzt, welches man Hang nennt, und welcher den Menschen veranlasst, etwas zu tun oder zu lassen. [...] Mir hat der liebe Himmel schon in meiner zartesten Kindheit den Hang zur Schauspielkunst eingegeben, und [...] ich weihte mich dem Tempel Thalias von ganzer Seele, denn eine innere Stimme sagte mir, ich würde glücklich werden, da Gott diesen Hang in mein Innerstes gepflanzt!
O wie brach mir das Herz bei dem Gedanken, alle meine Hoffnungen auf einmal gescheitert zu sehen, diesem unwillkürlichen Hange, den ich so lange mit so vieler Sorgfalt in meinem Geiste genährt, plötzlich weichen zu müssen.⁴⁹²

Sonnenthal's description of his joy for theater, his inner drive to act, and the devastation he felt when this need could not be fulfilled, corresponds to the void many thespians sensed when they were unable to practice their profession in exile.

Ernst Wurmser, isolated from his lifelong vocation, voices its absence in his correspondence with Jacob from Cochabamba: "Für mich ist das Theater— wie für jeden von uns—Lebensnotwendigkeit und ich sehne mich darnach, wieder in meinem Beruf tätig zu sein."⁴⁹³ His goal in exile is to recreate some humble

⁴⁹² Adolf Sonnenthal, "Aus einem Brief des 17-jährigen Adolf Sonnenthal an seine Eltern," in *Theater. Drei Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires*, ed. Paul Walter Jacob (Buenos Aires: Editorial Cosmopolita, 1943), 15.

⁴⁹³ Wurmser to Jacob, October 21, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

semblance of the existence he left behind in Europe: “Die Bedingungen überlasse ich ganz Ihnen zu bestimmen, und sage Ihnen jetzt schon, dass ich mit jeder Art von künstlerischer Beschäftigung einverstanden bin. Es handelt sich ja nicht um Ehrgeizfragen, sondern lediglich aus einem unbekanntem Milieu wieder in das gewohnte hinein zu kommen.”⁴⁹⁴ Wurmser voices a psychological and emotional need for life in the theater. As his letters express, without collaborating in a theater ensemble and performing for an audience, Wurmser is lost. In Bolivia, as he wrote in 1940, his existence had been reduced to a struggle for “sein nacktes Leben.”⁴⁹⁵ Wurmser saw hope neither in assimilating to Bolivian society, nor in working toward a more prosperous future, the *raison d'être* of immigration: “Zudem wird hier die Situation vom Tag zu Tag für Emigranten schlechter und die Lebensmöglichkeiten immer geringer!” Wurmser is desperate, and by the end of his letter he pleads with Jacob: “Wir haben uns ja immer gut verstanden, und so werden Sie mich auch in diesem Falle verstehen. Deshalb wäre es sehr lieb, wenn Sie mir *sofort* antworten würden aus wie ich hoffe im günstigen Sinne [...] ich warte mit Sehnsucht auf Ihre Antwort.” His situation in Bolivia shows the importance of the Freie Deutsche Bühne to emigrant thespians across South America. Needs both psychological and economical caused many exiled actors to yearn to continue acting in South America, and in the early 1940s the Freie Deutsche Bühne was their only option for doing so.

Despite Wurmser’s entreaties, Jacob was in the midst of the FDB’s inaugural season when the letters from Bolivia arrived. He was, he later

⁴⁹⁴ Wurmser to Jacob, October 21, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁹⁵ Wurmser to Jacob, October 21, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

explained, “derart beschäftigt, dass ich an Korrespondenz, auch die wichtigste, einfach nicht denken konnte.”⁴⁹⁶ Wurmser, in the meantime, was so distraught by conditions in Bolivia that he was incapable of waiting. Three weeks later, Wurmser wrote to Jacob again. His second entreaty is that of a frantic man. He begs Jacob “mir wenn irgendwie möglich, Gelegenheit zu geben, bei Ihnen am Theater unterzukommen.”⁴⁹⁷ Wurmser sees no future in Bolivia, and he is counting on the Freie Deutsche Bühne as a way to get out: “Ich bitte Sie dringlich, mir einen festen Vertrag an der FDB zu schicken auf Grund dessen ich sofort das Visum bekomme. Ich wiederhole nochmals, dass ich mit den bescheidensten Bedingungen zufrieden bin (auch wenn es nur ein Scheinvertrag ist, bin ich zufrieden).“ Attempting to convey his predicament, Wurmser appears to be despondent, perhaps even suicidal: “das Leben hierzulande wird auf die Dauer unerträglich (und voraussichtlich in kurzer Zeit für uns ganz unmöglich!) [...] Nochmals bitte ich Sie vom ganzen Herzen, mir wieder zu meinem Theatertätigkeiten zu helfen, ohne die ich völlig zugrunde gehe. Bitte geben Sie mir sofort Bescheid!”⁴⁹⁸ In the final lines of his letter, Wurmser pins his hopes for survival in exile to the Freie Deutsche Bühne.

Jacob’s response to Wurmser in early January 1941 is insightful not only for this specific case, but also because it gives detailed information about the general procedure of engaging actors for the FDB’s ensemble. His tone is positive, but realistic. He is pleased to contract an experienced and familiar actor,

⁴⁹⁶ Jacob to Wurmser, January, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁴⁹⁷ Wurmser to Jacob, November 11, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁴⁹⁸ Wurmser to Jacob, November 11, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

and offers Wurmser “Mitarbeit in Ihrem Fach (wie ich Sie von Teplitz kenne: von seriösen Väter- und Charakterrollen bis zum schweren drastischen Komiker).”⁴⁹⁹ Nonetheless, Jacob warns, all members of the FDB had to be willing make concessions for the good of the group: “Es wird also notwendig sein [...] auch kleine und kleinste Rollen zu übernehmen.”⁵⁰⁰ The work would be varied and strenuous, because the stage is required by its limited public to produce a premiere nearly every week: “Das bedeutet an den spielfreien Tagen zweimaliges Probieren pro Tag und höchste Konzentration der Arbeit.”⁵⁰¹ Although he promises to help as much as possible by organizing guest performances and benefit events, Jacob cannot guarantee wages for the six-month off-season.⁵⁰² The salary, 120 Argentine Pesos monthly, was sufficient as an “Existenzgrundlage.”

When communicating with prospective actors for the FDB, Jacob always took care, (consistently using the exact same phrase): “die Dinge ganz genau so zu schildern wie sie sind.”⁵⁰³ Unlike Wurmser in Bolivia, Jacques Arndt considered the possibilities of acting with FDB from a relatively comfortable situation in Uruguay. He was initially unsatisfied with the salary Jacob offered and requested higher wages. Jacob, however, was determined not repeat the fiasco of Luxemburg, and refused to pay him more. In his explanation, Jacob stresses the

⁴⁹⁹ Jacob to Wurmser, January, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰⁰ Jacob to Wurmser, January, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰¹ Jacob to Wurmser, January, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰² The FDB did not provide year-round employment, but guest performances in Montevideo generally extended their wages for another 4-6 weeks. Additional fundraising events helped to tide actors over most of the summer months.

⁵⁰³ Jacob to Wurmser, January, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941; Jacob to Marc Lerner, February 8, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

two principles which guide his management of the FDB. First, he assures Arndt that he is a reliable, honest director:

Lieber Jacques Arndt, wäre ich ein Typ wie Herr “Direktor” Eberhard, ich würde Ihnen wahrscheinlich Ihre Forderung auf dem Papier erfüllen, Ihnen 200 Pesos zusagen, Ihnen die ersten 50 am Teilzahltag und die zweiten am Ultimo schuldig bleiben, sodass Sie schließlich weniger hätten, als das ursprüngliche direktoriale Angebot war. Ich möchte aber nie auch nur in der Nähe dieser Art von Theaterführung kommen, wie wir beide sie ja als Kollegen erlebt oder besser erduldet haben.⁵⁰⁴

Secondly, he emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a tight budget in order to ensure the FDB’s financial viability. In his correspondence to members and donors alike, Jacob repeatedly stresses that: “wegen der zwanzig Menschen, die dann wieder ihren Beruf und eine—wenn auch sehr schmale—Existenzbasis aufs neue verlieren würden, scheint mir die Aufrechterhaltung und Weiterführung dieser Bühne heute eine Aufgabe und eine Pflicht zu sein.”⁵⁰⁵ Jacob was cognizant that the livelihood of many refugees depended entirely on the Freie Deutsche Bühne, and he took utmost caution to ensure its solvency.

Ernst Wurmser was one of these twenty people. In his response to Jacob he is overjoyed to escape from Bolivia and perform theater again. After several lines of effusive gratitude, he displays, like many of members of the FDB, the strong commitment to the stage which was essential to its success. Wurmser accepts all of Jacob’s conditions and declares that he is ready to take on any role: “wo es die künstlerische Notwendigkeit erfordert!”⁵⁰⁶ Having assured Jacob of his

⁵⁰⁴ Jacob to Arndt, January 23, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰⁵ Jacob to Felix Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰⁶ Wurmser to Jacob, January 23, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

agreement, Wurmser's next concern is to procure an entrance visa as well as work and residence permits for Argentina. He worries that it will be "äusserst schwer!" to acquire these documents in Bolivia.⁵⁰⁷ This was another practical but very important function which the FDB fulfilled for thespian refugees in South America. Jacob made certain that every actor he employed gained legal entry and residence to Argentina, intervening personally at the Ministry of Immigration for difficult cases, such as Wurmser's.⁵⁰⁸

Ernst Wurmser debuted at the Freie Deutsche Bühne on April 27, 1941 and remained with the stage until his death in 1949.⁵⁰⁹ The *Jüdische Wochenschau* described his debut as the Schankbursch (bar tender) in Franz Molnar's *Delila* as "unendlich überlegen, unendlich gerührt."⁵¹⁰ For Wurmser and many others the opportunity to act with the FDB was, in his own words, a "Schicksalswendung."⁵¹¹ This created an atmosphere of solidarity and self-sacrifice within the ensemble, whose members valued their fortune to participate in the only regularly performing *Exiltheater* worldwide. Jacob attested to this spirit in a letter to Felix Weil:

Die Arbeit, die Nervenarbeit aller war, das darf ich aus meiner langjährigen Kenntnis europäischer Theaterbetriebe ohne Übertreibung sagen, vorbildlich und aufopfernd. Sie hatte ihre Stütze in dem Bewusstsein aller, mit kleiner, in vielen Fällen unzureichender Entschädigung, doch endlich wieder im erlernten Beruf, für den man auch

⁵⁰⁷ Wurmser to Jacob, January 23, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰⁸ Jacob to Castro (Director General de Inmigración), February 20, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵⁰⁹ "Ernst Wurmser gestorben," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, December 13, 1949.

⁵¹⁰ "Delila," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 2, 1941.

⁵¹¹ Wurmser to Jacob, January 23, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

in Europa schon grosses Opfer gebracht hatte, arbeiten und leben zu können.⁵¹²

It was vital for the morale of thespian refugees to recover the creativity and comradeship inherent to their work at the theater. On another level, the Freie Deutsche Bühne provided Wurmser and dozens of other members with a means of material subsistence. With labor and residence visas for Argentina and very modest but steady incomes in their chosen vocation, actors at the FDB could establish new lives with future perspectives in exile. The Freie Deutsche Bühne enabled victims of Nazi tyranny, such as Ernst Wurmser, to transition from refugees to immigrants in Argentina.

4. Raising the Curtain: The Foundation of the Freie Deutsche Bühne

When planning his flight from Europe, Paul Walter Jacob had every intention of continuing his career in theater. In 1936 he wrote to Enrique Susini, an Argentine entertainment entrepreneur, with detailed plans for founding a theater in Buenos Aires. Susini, however had traveled to Germany to visit theaters in 1934 under the auspices of the German embassy and the Instituto Cultural Argentino-Germano.⁵¹³ He also engaged in business activities with Georg Urban, a Nazi supporter who had organized guest performances by German thespians Eugen Klöpfer and Kathe Dorsch in Argentina in 1929 and 1934.⁵¹⁴ Susini and Urban made grandiose plans to establish a Teatro Argentino-Alemán in 1941 and

⁵¹² Jacob to Felix Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵¹³ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, October 30, 1934, Band: R55, Akte: 20553, Bundesarchiv Berlin.

⁵¹⁴ “Teatro Argentino-Aleman,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, February 1, 1941.

1949, and in 1948 they attempted to put on a guest performance by Emil Jannings, notorious for his collaboration with Nazi authorities in propaganda films such as *Ohm Krüger*.⁵¹⁵ Susini's ambitions, which were not fulfilled, reveal a surprising fluidity beneath the bitter divisions of Argentina's German colonies. Contact between the two groups did exist, and often took place through their theaters. For his part, Jacob's correspondence with Susini demonstrates that in 1936 he had little grasp of the challenges of running an *Exiltheater* in Argentina. He did not understand the complexity of relations among German emigrants, and his plans for the stage, especially concerning the size of its staff and wages for its ensemble, were unrealistic. Jacob envisioned monthly wages ranging from 200 Pesos for minor supporting characters to 800 Pesos for leading roles.⁵¹⁶ When he founded the FDB four years later, the maximum salary was 200 Pesos. Nonetheless, Jacob's letters to Susini show that he began to plan for the *Freie Deutsche Bühne* years before he set sail for Buenos Aires.

When he arrived in Argentina Jacob moved quickly to realize this goal. He made contacts with *Verein Vorwärts*, *Das Andere Deutschland* and, most importantly, with Ernesto Alemann, owner and editor of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. On January 19, 1939 the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* printed an article, "Zum 130. Geburtstag von Felix Mendelssohn—Bartholdy" by "Paul Walter." This was the first of hundreds of contributions Jacob made to the paper, and initiated a close professional and personal relationship between himself and Alemann. When Jacob suggested forming an *Exiltheater* to Alemann, the owner

⁵¹⁵ "Georg Urban an alle Deutschsprechenden," *Freie Presse*, November 13, 1949.

⁵¹⁶ Jacob to Susini, December 5, 1936, PWJA Korrespondenz 1933-39.

of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* glimpsed a possibility to deploy theater as a cohesive force among antifascist Germans on the River Plate, who at the time were scattered in a wide spectrum of political, religious and social groups. Ernesto Alemann's support for the Freie Deutsche Bühne was decisive. Jacob expressed his gratitude to Alemann at the conclusion of the FDB's inaugural season:

Ich möchte nicht versäumen, lieber Dr. Alemann, Ihnen bei dieser Gelegenheit zu versichern, dass wir alle [...] uns bewusst sind, wie sehr Sie und Ihre ganze Familie uns in diesem ersten Jahr der Bühne geholfen haben, und obwohl Sie das immer, wenn ich es mündlich getan habe, bis jetzt abgelehnt haben, so möchte ich jetzt [...] auf schriftlichem Wege Ihnen einmal allerherzlichst für all das danken!!⁵¹⁷

Alemann's connections to the antifascist German population and to Argentines were an invaluable source of networking for Jacob as he worked to gather enthusiasm and start-up capital for the stage. Additionally, the *Tageblatt* printed the stage's advertisements for free and ran nearly daily coverage on the FDB. As the most widely circulating newspaper in the *neue Kolonie* the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* was a crucial media outlet for the Freie Deutsche Bühne.

4.1 Funding

After Alemann assured them of his support, Jacob and Liselott Reger began to raise start-up capital to rent a theater, engage an ensemble, and cover costs for preliminary publicity and advertising. In addition to financing these expenses, Jacob aimed to accumulate sufficient start-up capital to set aside emergency reserve funds to protect the stage from premature failure and later to ensure against unexpected downturns in revenue. The task of collecting the start-

⁵¹⁷ Jacob to Alemann, January 4, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

up capital was protracted and arduous. For six months Jacob and Reger met daily with bankers, industrialists, merchants, and wealthy individuals:

Jeden Tag aufs neue müssen alle Argumente gegen das geplante Unternehmen wieder entkräftet, müssen alle persönlichen und gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen mobil gemacht werden, um aus vielen kleinen und einer geringen Zahl größerer Spenden das unbedingt notwendige Betriebskapital zu sammeln.⁵¹⁸

Jacob encountered skepticism everywhere, and was in a constant bind to overcome potential donors' persistent doubts: "Wie also soll eine deutsche Bühne, die sich an einen ganz bestimmten, noch dazu in schwerem Existenzkampf befindlichen Kreis wendet, von Dauer sein?"⁵¹⁹ These doubts reference an enduring challenge for the FDB, which had to draw as broad a public as possible from an antifascist population split into many distinct, sometimes conflicting groups.

From its inception, Jacob tried to overcome this challenge by loading the FDB's repertoire with dramas that had wide appeal. This strategy was sometimes polemical, but in the early years it convinced donors of the stage's potential to function as a gathering spot for disparate antifascist groups and individuals. According to Jacob, an annual benefit for local charities at the Pestalozzi-Schule on June 17, 1939 marked a turning point in the fundraising effort. At the event he and Reger, along with Heinz Halban and Werner Zweigenthal, presented Curt Goetz' one act comedy, *Hund im Hirn*. It was a simple production, but according to Jacob: "die Stimmung im Saal ist glänzend; bei Tanzmusik mit Sekt und

⁵¹⁸ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires*, ed. Paul Walter Jacob (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jupiter, 1946), 22.

⁵¹⁹ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 22.

Whisky beurteilt man die Möglichkeiten der geplanten neuen Bühne viel besser als in nüchternen Büro- und Empfangsräumen.”⁵²⁰ Having witnessed an actual performance, spectators saw the potential of the theater both as an entertainment option and as a means to build community. The collection activities gained fresh momentum after this event, and by August Jacob and Reger had achieved the target sum of 5,000 Pesos, the equivalent to one season’s wages for the entire ensemble.

The wealthier members of the *bonarense* German Jewish bourgeoisie were the largest contributors to the new enterprise. Although information about donors remains incomplete, it is possible to make cautious inferences about the identities, motivations, and influence of supporters by piecing together the correspondence of various members of the stage. Anne Lemmer’s remark that the textile industrialist Heinrich Fränkel was a generous supporters to the theater⁵²¹ is accurate for 1945 and 1946, and it is likely that he contributed to the stage’s start-up capital as well.⁵²² The rough draft of a letter from March of 1943 indicates that a “Herr Lewin” was an important contributor to the Freie Deutsche Bühne in 1939. Lewin and Felix Haase of the banking firm, Shaw, Strupp, and Co., appear to have headed a group of major supporters which collaborated closely with Jacob and Reger. Jacob delivered regular reports to Haase about the FDB’s expenses, income, and overall financial situation. Regrettably, too few of these accounts

⁵²⁰ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 22.

⁵²¹ Lemmer, *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 21.

⁵²² Vacano to Berger, December 12, 1943, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

have been preserved to make general inferences, however it is clear that Shaw, Strupp, and Co. had considerable influence at the FDB: “Der ursprünglich Ihnen und Ihren Freunden auseinandergesetzte Plan darf so als für die ersten drei Jahre des Unternehmens als durchgeführt gelten: jedes Jahr sechs Monate hindurch mit allwöchentlichen Premieren deutschsprachiges Theater zu spielen.”⁵²³ While Jacob and Reger organized the FDB and were in charge of artistic matters, donors may also have helped shape the original concept for the theater.

Another significant contributor was Felix J. Weil, professor of sociology at Columbia University and co-founder of the Institut for Social Research in Frankfurt, whose family ran a large grain export firm out of Buenos Aires. Weil was responsible for the final donation which brought the start-up funds to the target sum of 5,000 Pesos.⁵²⁴ Weil demonstrated a close interest in the finances of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, and toward the close of the 1940 theater season he inquired about costs for its ensemble, technical and administrative staff, renting a theater, as well as costumes and stage props.⁵²⁵ Jacob’s responses to Weil offer detailed information on the finances of the FDB during WWII. According to Jacob, the FDB employed a staff and ensemble of fifteen people. The average monthly wages were 120 Pesos, two actors, the leading man and lady, received 200 Pesos, and four others, who were engaged for only two of the four monthly premieres, earned 80 Pesos with an option of another 40 Pesos in the case of extra

⁵²³ Jacob to Lewin, March, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁵²⁴ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵²⁵ Weil to Jacob, October 18, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

productions.⁵²⁶ Jacob and Reger earned three average wages, or 360 Pesos monthly, which Jacob justified based on the extra workload Reger and he shouldered: “außer einer Rekordbeschäftigung als Darsteller (jeder spielte in den 26 Premieren 20 Hauptrollen), [...] die Regie der Werke teilten, außerdem sämtliche Büro-Arbeiten (Buchführung, gesamte Kassenabrechnung, Korrespondenz, gesamte Propaganda und alle Erledigungen mit Behörden etc.) allein, ohne jede Hilfskraft...”⁵²⁷ In addition to the ensemble, two technicians were paid day wages for performances, which generally were held three days per week, and make-up artists, and other support were hired irregularly as need arose.⁵²⁸ By October of the first season, Jacob had realized that the minimum wage of 80 Pesos was not tenable. It had to be increased to 120 Pesos, so a greater number of actors could participate in all productions. In consequence, the highest wage was reduced to 150 Pesos.

Total monthly expenses, covering four premieres and 12 to 15 performances in total, fluctuated between 5,500 and 6,000 Pesos. These costs covered wages for staff and ensemble, rent for the 350-seat Casa del Teatro, performance rights from authors, acquisition of scripts, advertising and printing, and stage props, costumes and cosmetic styling.⁵²⁹ Despite the theater’s tight budget, lists of stage props for each act of each production are detailed and

⁵²⁶ Jacob to Weil, November 22, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁵²⁷ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵²⁸ Jacob to Weil, November 22, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁵²⁹ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

specific,⁵³⁰ and records of stage designs show close attention to authenticity, placement, and proportion.⁵³¹ The FDB faced a challenging task—to stage quality productions for audiences accustomed to first-rate theater from major European cities with little time for rehearsals and without exceeding its limited financial resources. It was not entirely successful in the attempt, and posted a 1,500 Peso deficit for the 1940 season. This shortfall was reduced by 700 Pesos through a season-ending “Bühnenball,” and donors, most likely Weil, covered the difference.⁵³²

Throughout the WWII period Jacob successfully urged donors such as Lewin, Haase, and Weil to continue their support. In his letters soliciting contributions, Jacob stressed to donors that the theater’s survival and its ensemble’s livelihood depended on their contributions: “Durch Ihre und Ihrer Freunde grossmütige Stiftungen ist es möglich geworden, etwas 20 Menschen eine—wenn auch beschiedene—Existenz in ihrem alten erlernten Beruf zu schaffen.”⁵³³ He connected charity to politics as well, repeatedly emphasizing that all members of the ensemble and other staff were refugees from European countries occupied by the Nazis: “Aus diesem Grunde [...] scheint mir die Aufrechterhaltung und Weiterführung dieser Bühne heute eine Aufgabe und eine

⁵³⁰ Stage Props for Bus-Feket’s *Jean*, Goetz’ *Hokuspokus*, Werner’s *Menschen auf der Eisscholle*, PWJA IV a) 280.

⁵³¹ Fotos from Gorki’s *Nachtsyl*, Bayard Veiller’s *Der Prozess Mary Dugan*, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

⁵³² Jacob to Weil, November 22, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁵³³ Jacob to Lewin, March, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

Pflicht zu sein.”⁵³⁴ There were also local political motivations for contributing to the FDB. From the beginning, the stage was envisioned as a social space for antifascists, and Jacob emphasized his stage’s success in this role to donors: “Wie die Bühne sich entwickelt hat, ist sie ja hier schon zu einem kleinen Zentrum für die antihitlerischen deutschsprechenden Kreise geworden, und nach dem Erfolg des ersten Montevideo-Gastspiels verspricht die nächste Saison dasselbe auch am anderen Ufer des La Plata zu werden.”⁵³⁵ Since the Freie Deutsche Bühne was not an explicitly political nor a religious organization, Jacob and his donors hoped that the stage could overcome divisions among German-speaking antifascists on the River Plate, who were not a homogenous group. Their aim was to attract a broad audience and contribute to the creation of a diverse community of antifascists.

Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater represented another political motivation for supporting the FDB. As Jacob gathered funds, the Ney-Bühne was already entering its third year of regular performances. In his correspondence with donors and ensemble alike, Jacob repeatedly cited the imperative of competing against the Ney-Bühne, which at that time was supported by the Nazi Strength through Joy organization: “Infolgedessen wäre ein Zugrundegehen der Sache heute schon auch eine Schlappe gegenüber den Nazis, die mit ihrer „Kraft durch Freude“ Bühne hier sehr im Verborgenen blühen, uns bis jetzt ignoriert haben, dann sicher aber ein Siegesgeheul anstimmen würden.”⁵³⁶ This argument resonated with many

⁵³⁴ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵³⁵ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

contributors. In a letter congratulating Jacob on the stage's success in 1943, Ernesto Alemann remembers that his motivations for supporting the Freie Deutsche Bühne were founded on the conviction of:

die Notwendigkeit einer solchen kulturellen Tat gerade innerhalb der nazifreien deutschsprechenden Kolonie [...] Wo die anderen sich willig barbarisieren und auf das schauerliche Niveau der Nazioten erniedrigen lassen, haben wir die Pflicht, mit den edelsten Waffen zu kämpfen, mit denen des Geistes. Das haben Sie und Ihre Mitarbeiter während der vergangenen drei Jahren in ernstem Bemühen getan. Der Erfolg, den Ihre Leistungen erzwangen, ist Ihnen treu geblieben, obzwar der künstlerische den materiellen bei weitem überwog. Mit Ihren Darbietungen ernster und heiterer Kunst haben Sie der argentinischen Öffentlichkeit gezeigt, dass hier Vertreter eines anderen Deutschland leben, die sich nicht mit staatsfeindlichen Wühlereien abgeben. So wurde die F.D.B. gewissermaßen zum Alibi für Sie, Ihre Künstler und das Publikum vor der Bühne, aber auch zu einem Aktivposten für ein kommendes, regeneriertes, freies, humanes und zivilisiertes Deutschland.⁵³⁷

Funding for the stage did not stem only from cultural or artistic interests. Jacob and Reger's plans for the FDB won the support of antifascist individuals and organizations, in part because they recognized the potential of an *Exiltheater* to publicly manifest German antifascism on the River Plate. From the outset, the Freie Deutsche Bühne was guided by the politically inspired principles of charity and community-building among antifascist refugees, integration with the Argentine host society, and competition against the nationalist German presence in Argentina.

⁵³⁶ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁵³⁷ Alemann to Jacob, May 8, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

4.2 Ensemble

As it tried to bring diverse groups of antifascists together, the Freie Deutsche Bühne also revealed tensions within the *neue Kolonie*. The stage received support from Zionist institutions, such as Hardi Swarensky's *Jüdische Wochenschau*, but had to reconcile this with its public, which was dominated by apolitical Jews, some of whom resisted their Jewish identity. Out of this awkward fit stem many bizarre pieces of correspondence from 1940. During the search for qualified thespians Hermann Geiger-Torel, an early and influential member of the FDB, wrote to Kurt Hellmer, journalist for the exile publication *Aufbau* in New York. Geiger-Torel, himself a Jew, sought a young leading man for the FDB. The actor had to be Jewish, Geiger-Torel stated, but also had to appear "möglichst nicht jüdisch." Then, by way of explanation, he elaborated, "Sie kennen ja den Antisemitismus des jüdischen Publikums... siehe Selbstzerfleischungskomplex...!"⁵³⁸ Geiger-Torel's letter provides an early glimpse into the challenges facing the FDB. The stage had to attract as broad a swath of the antifascist population as possible in order to stay afloat. This obliged it to try to accommodate everybody while offending nobody, an impossible task, given the variance within its target audience. Furthermore, this balancing act was not only external between the stage and its public, but also existed internally among members of its own ensemble, which included Zionists, communists, social democrats, Germans, Austrians, gentile antifascists, as well as other refugees who were neither politically nor religiously engaged. The FDB ensemble could be conceived of as a microcosm for the *neue Kolonie*.

⁵³⁸ Geiger-Torel to Hellmer, December 25, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

Paul Walter Jacob was not the only emigrant with the aim of establishing a German theater in Buenos Aires.⁵³⁹ Both the Truppe 38, comprised of young, amateur actors which occasionally staged political cabaret in the *Verein Vorwärts*, and Josef Szekely's Kabarett der Komiker, an artist's collective which played only sporadically, could co-exist with the FDB. However the Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien under Max Wächter, who had performed with the Jüdischer Kulturbund in Hamburg, represented a more challenging case. Wächter's ensemble targeted exactly the same public as the FDB and had a correspondingly similar repertoire. Wächter and Jacob both knew the antifascist population was not large enough to support two theaters, but neither would relinquish his own enterprise. Wächter flatly declined Jacob's offer to join the FDB for monthly wages of 120 Pesos. Instead he countered: "Es besteht also für Sie die Entscheidung, entweder einem in voller Arbeit befindlichem Theater Konkurrenz zu machen, oder Ihre Persönlichkeit, Ihre Beziehungen und Ihre Mittel in den Dienst derselben Aufgabe zu stellen."⁵⁴⁰ Jacob found this proposition unacceptable, and he and Wächter found themselves in conflict.

Jacob was ambitious, and he wanted to establish his own theater, not join another stage under somebody else's direction. However, he also had concrete arguments against working for Wächter's Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien. Jacob did not believe that Wächter's stage was capable of becoming

⁵³⁹ Anne Lemmer here erroneously includes the Bunte Bühne among the German exile stages in Buenos Aires in 1940. She seems to be quoting a report from the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, which states that, in an effort to avoid splitting the theatergoing public, the Bunte Bühne and FDB have arrived at an agreement to perform together. The *Tageblatt* report dates from March 2, 1947, however, and refers to postwar tensions within the antifascist community. Lemmer, *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 23.

⁵⁴⁰ Wächter to Jacob, February 28, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

a regular professional *Exiltheater* such as he envisioned the Freie Deutsche Bühne. His principle argument against the Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien was that it did not provide refugee actors with the opportunity to earn their principle source of income in the theater. As Jacob explained to Geiger-Torel, Wächter's stage did not perform frequently enough—fourteen times in ten months—to generate sufficient income for its ensemble to live from their work in the theater.⁵⁴¹ The FDB, by contrast, planned an average of twelve to fifteen performances monthly. Jacob also argued that the Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien was not a well-managed theater. Its ensemble, he claimed, had too much turnover to achieve the harmony and familiarity necessary for quality performances. This criticism was substantiated by the *Argentinisches Tageblatt's* critical review of Arnold and Bach's farce, *Der wahre Jakob*.⁵⁴² Its reviewer wrote that the Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien performed the comedy “nach ihren Möglichkeiten,” and asserted that Wächter's “Regie liess zu viel ‘spielen’ und zu wenig ‘knallen.’” The *Tageblatt* further lambasted the “nicht gekonnter Übermut der Darsteller” and, though it praised Joseph Halpern in the title role, the reviewer lamented he was unable carry “das Zuviel an Amateuren”

⁵⁴¹ Jacob to Geiger-Torel, March 27, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁵⁴² Anne Lemmer states that the *Argentinisches Tageblatt's* criticism of *Der wahre Jakob* was part of a “regelrechte Pressekampagne gegen die Deutschsprachige Bühne,” which had its origins in Wächter's refusal to cooperate with Jacob. This claim is hard to prove. Jacob first made his offer to Wächter to join the FDB on January 2, 1940, but their correspondence explicitly states that as of February 23, 1940, Wächter had not replied. The *Tageblatt's* review of *Der wahre Jakob*, printed on January 3rd, could not have been motivated by Wächter's refusal, because according to Jacob himself, Wächter had not yet refused. The *Tageblatt's* reviews of the Deutschsprachige Bühne, as Wächter stated, were not always negative. It printed positive articles on the Deutschsprachige Bühne on February 15 and March 11, 1940. This second review was published well after Wächter had refused to join the FDB, making the idea of a “Pressekampagne” appear unlikely. Alemann did ally himself with Jacob and his Freie Deutsche Bühne, but I have not found evidence that he systemically deployed his paper to defame Wächter's stage. See: Lemmer, *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 24.

laden cast. Finally, in a crushing conclusion, the reviewer remarked: “Diesmal brauchte das Publikum den guten Sylversterwillen zum reichlichen Applaus.”⁵⁴³ According to Jacob, Wächter selected his repertoire without ensuring that he had the proper personnel to fill all the roles. The following advertisement in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, lends credence to his reproach: “Junge Schauspieler, evtl. begabter Anfänger sofort gesucht.”⁵⁴⁴ The announcement reads as if Wächter might have been scrambling to fill roles and also reveals another of Jacob’s criticisms against the Deutschsprachige Bühne—there were too many amateurs in its ensemble. Wächter’s stage included many amateurs in its productions, often for leading roles, which Wächter advertised as “Heranbildung schauspielerischen Nachwuchses.”⁵⁴⁵ One example of this occurred in the Deutschsprachige Bühne’s production of Schnitzler’s *Liebelei*, in which the amateur Mara Markow played Christine.⁵⁴⁶ This, Jacob vented to Geiger-Torel, was “ein Verbrechen” against unemployed professional thespian refugees:

Wenn ein deutsches Theater hier ein Sinn haben kann, so ist es doch einzig und allein der, den Menschen, die durch die Emigration ihren Beruf verloren haben, diesen zurückzugeben und ihnen – vielleicht, wenn dieser schwierige Versuch gelingt! – eine neue Existenzbasis im alten Beruf zu schaffen; nie und nimmer aber, Menschen, die hier zum ersten Male an Theaterspielen denken, die sich – ausgerechnet hier in Südamerika! – zu Schauspielern in deutscher Sprache heranbilden wollen, auftreten und so den wirklichen Berufsschauspielern[...] unter den Emigranten noch Konkurrenz machen zu lassen.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴³ “Der wahre Jakob,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, January 3, 1940.

⁵⁴⁴ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 24, 1940.

⁵⁴⁵ Flyer for *Liebelei*, Max Wächter Collection, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, Universität Hamburg.

⁵⁴⁶ “Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 22, 1940.

⁵⁴⁷ Jacob to Geiger-Torel, March 27, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

Most, although not all, of the German-speaking professional actors in Buenos Aires agreed with him. Wächter had not matched Jacob's fundraising and could not offer the relative, if short term, stability that Jacob could. Nearly half of the FDB's ensemble were transfers from the Deutschsprachige Bühne including: Alexander Berger, Hanna Dansky, Josef Halpern, Heinz Halban, Walter Lenk, and eventually, Wächter himself.⁵⁴⁸ After Jacob had convinced the bulk of his ensemble to act with the Freie Deutsche Bühne and had secured the Casa del Teatro from the Deutschsprachige Bühne, Wächter had no option but to join the competing stage.

The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* depicted this arrangement as a "freundschaftliches Einvernehmen,"⁵⁴⁹ but Wächter had only acquiesced to this arrangement under pressure from the Jewish community, especially the editor of the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, Hardi Swarensky, who personally negotiated an agreement between Wächter and Jacob in late March of 1940.⁵⁵⁰ Years later Wächter reflected upon the circumstances leading up to his decision to join the FDB: "Und so schloss ich gegen meinen Willen diesen Kompromiß, den ich noch heute bereue."⁵⁵¹ Tensions between Wächter and Jacob persisted as well. Wächter was not satisfied with his subordinate role at the *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, where he played almost exclusively minor supporting roles. In one of several exchanges

⁵⁴⁸ "Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, January 1, 1940; March 5, 1940.

⁵⁴⁹ "Deutschsprachige Bühne in Argentinien," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 2, 1940.

⁵⁵⁰ Wächter to Jacob, October 11, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁵⁵¹ Max Wächter Collection, in Lemmer, *Die Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 25.

with Jacob, Wächter complains “dass ich mich durch die Art meiner Beschäftigung bei Ihrer Bühne auf das Schwerste künstlerisch geschädigt fühle.”⁵⁵² In his strongly worded five-page response Jacob questions Wächter’s claims about his work at European theaters and asserts that his roles are appropriate for his abilities: “Wir haben in allen Fächern stärkere Individualitäten, stärkere schauspielerische Persönlichkeiten als Sie es sind [...] Ich muss Ihnen auch einmal ganz offen sagen, dass ich eine ganze Reihe von Werken nicht gegeben hätte, wenn mir nicht stärkere schauspielerische Persönlichkeiten als Sie für die ersten Komiker-Rollen zur Verfügung gestanden hätten.”⁵⁵³ The polemic around Wächter also sowed strife within the ensemble. Some, particularly Zionists like Alexander Berger, consistently sided with Wächter. Most members of the cast aligned themselves with Jacob. It is not clear that the actors took sides along political or religious lines, but agitation within the ensemble was chronic, and very nearly split the stage following a tribute to the recently deceased Max Reinhardt in 1943. The animosity appears to have been strong enough to leave an indelible mark on participants. Jacques Arndt, a supporter of Jacob’s, sixty-five years later still referred to Wächter as “ein armer Wurm.”⁵⁵⁴

The Freie Deutsche Bühne was not only comprised of actors from the Deutschsprachige Bühne. Some, such as Jacques Arndt and Ernst Wurmser, joined the stage from other stations in exile. Others responded to advertisements, and a few talented actors were contacted directly by Ernesto Alemann, including

⁵⁵² Wächter to Jacob, October 11, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁵⁵³ Jacob to Wächter, October 14, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁵⁵⁴ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

Hermann Geiger-Torel and Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla. Geiger-Torel had been a conductor and director in Bern, Frankfurt, and Paris, an instructor at the Dr. Hochs Conservatory in Frankfurt, and had conducted at the renowned Teatro Colón during the German seasons in 1934, 1938, and 1939. From 1940-42 Geiger-Torel directed over thirty productions at the FDB. Another important addition was Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla, who Julius Bab later praised as “eine ungewöhnlich begabte Person.”⁵⁵⁵ Schlichter-Crilla had performed under Leopold Jessner in Berlin and starred in the successful films *Mädchen in Uniform* and *Gefängnis ohne Gitter*.⁵⁵⁶ Schlichter-Crilla, who also acted with French theaters in Buenos Aires, was one of the most popular figures at the FDB during the 1940’s. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* previewed her debut for the 1942 season: “Von besonderem Interesse dürfte es sein, dass Hedwig Schlichter, deren ausgezeichnete darstellerischen Leistungen aus dem Vorjahr noch in aller Gedächtnis sind, in *Johannisfeuer* erstmalig wieder in dieser Spielzeit im Rahmen der FDB auftritt.”⁵⁵⁷ The task of composing an ensemble was time consuming, challenging, and sometimes caused conflicts. Nonetheless, when the FDB staged its inaugural performance on April, 20 1940, it had assembled a full cast of experienced, professional actors.

⁵⁵⁵ Julius Bab, “Zehn Jahre deutsches Theater in Argentinien’s Hauptstadt,” *Staatszeitung New York*, September 10, 1950.

⁵⁵⁶ Julius Bab, “Zehn Jahre deutsches Theater in Argentinien’s Hauptstadt.”

⁵⁵⁷ “Wiederauftreten Hedwig Schlichters in Sudermanns *Johannisfeuer* in der Freien Deutschen Bühne,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 17, 1942.

CHAPTER IV

THEATER OF INCLUSION: COMEDY, COMMUNITY, MEMRY, AND INTEGRATION AT THE FREIE DEUTSCHE BÜHNE, 1940-1945

1. Presenting the Freie Deutsche Bühne

In this chapter I focus on comedies and pedagogical theater at the Freie Deutsche Bühne during the World War II period, from 1940 to 1945. Addressing children's theater and comedies, I explore the role of the FDB's performances in forging a tenuous international community of antifascists to compete against the nationalist German *alte Kolonie* in Buenos Aires. At the same time, I expose the challenges and risks inherent to the FDB's twin endeavors of building an antifascist "Einheitsfront" while simultaneously operating as a solvent business enterprise.⁵⁵⁸ In order to meet these challenges the FDB attempted to develop an inclusive repertoire and community-building strategy in order to attract theatergoers and negotiate areas of conflict within the *neue Kolonie* as well as among the antifascist population, the *alte Kolonie*, and the authoritarian Argentine government. Crucial to my investigation of competition and community at the FDB are 1) the function of theatrical performances, in the words of the linguist Marie Louise Pratt, as a "contact zone"⁵⁵⁹ for host and emigrant populations; and

⁵⁵⁸ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

⁵⁵⁹ Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

2) their role, as theater scholar Marvin Carlson puts it, as a “memory machine”⁵⁶⁰ for emigrants to confront, covet, and/or repudiate their past lives in Europe.

From the outset Paul Walter Jacob understood that in order to survive as a business the FDB had to cast the widest net possible among all potential theatergoers—its target audience was too small for it to alienate anyone. This was a challenging task, because the *neue Kolonie* was comprised of multiple groups, whose demands of theater were often divergent. Some of the theater’s ensemble, financial supporters, and members of its audience were politically engaged antifascists, both communists and social democrats; others were Zionists; but the majority of its public were refugees who were neither active in politics nor religiously devout. The FDB sought to marry its antifascist agenda with an inclusive repertoire and community-building strategy, which aimed to include all of the above groups.

An article Jacob wrote for the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* on July 7, 1941, reveals the stage’s very name—Freie Deutsche Bühne—to be emblematic of the commercial and political challenges confronting it:

frei in ihrer Arbeit und Publikumsbildung [...] *deutsch* d.h. Arbeit mit der deutschen Sprache, um mit ihr die Literaturen aller Völker und Kontinente wiederzugeben und dadurch völkerverbindend und völkerversöhnend, also deutsch im Sinne des Europa von gestern und – wie wir hoffen – von morgen, im Sinne der besten humanen Traditionen deutscher Dichter und Denker und [...] als *Bühne* die eine Tradition deutschen Ensemblespiels und echte deutsche Ensemblekultur erhalten und fortsetzen will hat die F.D.B. (Freie Deutsche Bühne – Teatro Alemán Independiente) im April 1940 in Buenos Aires ihre Arbeit begonnen.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁵⁶¹ “Deutsches Theater in Argentinien,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 7, 1941.

This presentation of the FDB, which has its origins in a radio address on *La voz del día* before its first performance in Montevideo in December of 1940, demonstrates careful consideration of the stage's diverse target audience.⁵⁶² With evident deliberation, Jacob explicates the stage's name with restrained suggestions of resistance to Nazism and stronger references to memory, especially the *neue Kolonie's* European heritage. "Frei" is characterized by a multiplicity of interpretations. On the one hand it implies a fundamental contrast to Nazism, a distinction offensive to nobody in the *neue Kolonie*, even those who were politically passive. The term "frei" also elicits cultural connotations associated with the *Bildungsbürgertum* cultural traditions shared by many emigrants, specifically the turn-of-the-century Freie Bühne theater group and magazine under the direction of the Jewish German Otto Brahm. Jacob's description of the adjective "deutsch" strives for discretion and nuance. In the foreground stands a reference to the formal aspect of the stage's work with dramatic material in the German language, but with an emphasis on international authors. Furthermore "deutsch" is associated neither with a particular current nationality nor a political movement, but instead with a cultural diversity, tolerance, and cosmopolitanism which references yesteryear and, Jacob hopes, the future. Emigrants are

⁵⁶² In his article, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," Fritz Pohle discusses this radio broadcast on *La voz del día*, and briefly mentions the article in the *Tageblatt* from July 7, 1941. Pohle also notes the restrained tone of Jacob's discourse. He discusses "deutsch" as a term signifying "völkerverbindend," notes the references to Otto Brahm and *Bildungsbürgertum*, and also perceives the use of "frei" as a distancing mechanism. In other aspects, such as memory as well as future and local politics, our analyses are divergent. Pohle continues to discuss other aspects of the radio address, such as the FDB's repertoire for the coming performances in Montevideo. My focus, on the other hand, is on the July 7th article in the *Tageblatt*, which moves in a completely different direction. The article makes no mention of the Montevideo performance, taking instead a turn toward politics. See: Fritz Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 35-6.

encouraged to remember their past lives in the Europe “von gestern,” lives which many emigrants recalled with wistful nostalgia, especially in 1941 when many had yet to adapt to life in Argentina. By referring to its objectives of solidarity and reconciliation among different cultures—“ völkerverbindend und völkerversöhnend”—the term “deutsch” also functions implicitly as a vehicle to distance the FDB from Nazi interpretations of Germanness. Finally, in the clearest indication of his own political views, Jacob briefly expresses hope for a reformed postwar Germany “von morgen.” His description of the third term, “Bühne,” displays similar tendencies. It emphasizes the traditions of a better, perhaps idealized past, and suggests that emigrants, many of whom had enjoyed theater in Europe, can rekindle some of their former cultural pursuits and fulfillment at performances of the FDB. Here again there is only the slightest of hints at competition against the *alte Kolonie*. “Echte deutsche Ensemblekultur“ implies veiled criticism of what Jacob describes in his correspondence as the illegitimate German theater under Nazism, particularly Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater in Argentinien, which was sponsored by the Strength through Joy organization and the Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin.⁵⁶³

Later in the article Jacob embellishes on the FDB’s political posture. He voices the existence of another Germany, and claims its comradeship with freedom-loving citizens the world over:

[...] eine neue Kolonie der deutschen, österreichischen, tschechoslowakischen Emigranten etwas wieder nahezubringen, was zu ihrem Leben, zu ihrem kulturpolitischen Glaubensbekenntnis gehörte und damit gleichzeitig den südamerikanischen Menschen, in deren Staaten wir jetzt leben, und deren Freiheit und demokratische Gesinnung wir

⁵⁶³ Jacob to Weil, January 29, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

bewundern, zu zeigen, dass tatsächlich ein ‚anderes Deutschland‘ existiert, dessen kulturelle Werte Besitz aller jener Menschen in der ganzen Welt sind, die heute und immer den Kampf aller Kulturmenschen kämpfen: gegen Krieg, Terror und Gewalt, für Völkerversöhnung, Freiheit und humane, wahrhaft demokratische Gesinnung.“⁵⁶⁴

This section is the boldest in the article, but it still shows restraint. Instead of defining the stage as antifascist and citing the enemy by name, Jacob implies the theater’s opposition to Nazism by avowing its commitment to tolerance, integration, and inclusion. Jacob claims this ‘other Germany,’ to be the true Germany. He advocates inclusion and integration by naming emigrant groups from several nations and directly praising the emigrants’ South American hosts’ “demokratische Gesinnung,” omitting any mention of Argentina’s authoritarian regime and its problematic position vis-à-vis Nazi Germany. Once again Jacob posits the FDB as a memory machine, a means for emigrants to recover a vague, lost “etwas” of their former lives in Europe. His dreamy description of a previous, perhaps chimerical “kulturpolitischen Glaubensbekenntnis“ reveals that Jacob, too, might be guilty of idealizing the life he left behind in Europe.

Throughout this programmatic essay Jacob reiterates the careful blend of values which defined the stage throughout the Second World War. Resistance is tempered by restraint, present and future plans betray nostalgia for the past and, with the exception of Nazism and Fascism, all national, cultural, and political allegiances are subsumed under a commitment to inclusion of universal enlightened humanistic values. Yet Jacob’s will to assert a competitive, antifascist German culture in Buenos Aires is inexorable. In the body of the article Jacob never explicitly refers to Nazism or the nationalist German presence in Argentina,

⁵⁶⁴ “Deutsches Theater in Argentinien,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 7, 1941.

yet his intense competition with the *alte Kolonie*, particularly with Ludwig Ney's theater is plain for all to see. The title of the article, printed in boldface capital letters, reads "Deutsches Theater in Argentinien."

1.1 Debut: Ladislaus Bus-Fekete's *Jean*, April 20, 1940

One need look no further than the Freie Deutsche Bühne's premiere to observe how it attempted to reconcile political goals with practical imperatives in its performances. On April 20, 1940, the FDB premiered Ladislaus Bus-Fekete's *Jean* at the Casa del Teatro. The date of the performance, Adolf Hitler's birthday, was not coincidental but rather represented a conscious act of reclaiming German culture from the Nazi regime.⁵⁶⁵ While the date was a bold political statement, the play chosen for performance can hardly be regarded as such. *Jean* is a light and easy comedy suited for escaping the psychological and economic hardships which weighed on so many members of the *neue Kolonie*. As Jacob asserted in Wuppertal: "jeder Mensch hat einmal das Bedürfnis, auszuspannen, einmal recht herzlich und ungetrübt sich zu erfreuen."⁵⁶⁶ The FDB's reviewers, all of whom were favorably disposed toward the new enterprise—at least initially—concurred that *Jean* was something less than an antifascist manifesto. The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* described Bus-Fekete's comedy as a "harmlos-nette[s] Konversationsstück."⁵⁶⁷ *La Nación* was less generous, condescendingly characterizing the play as simple and predictable: "de fácil acceso [...] cuyo

⁵⁶⁵ Kelz, Arndt interview, December 25, 2008.

⁵⁶⁶ Jacob, "Bemerkungen zu Theateretat," PWJA IV c) 253.

⁵⁶⁷ "Jean von Bus-Fekete," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 21, 1940.

argumento permite entrever muy pronto el final.” Though it praised the FDB’s ensemble, the paper went so far as to criticize *Jean* as “burdo” and “inverosímile.”⁵⁶⁸

Despite these reviews, in a subtle fashion the whimsical comedy did correspond to the FDB’s more profound messages of inclusion and antifascism. Its author, Ladislaus Bus-Fekete was not German, but rather a Hungarian Jew whose works were banned in Nazi Germany. Like so much of the FDB’s repertoire, *Jean* can be understood as a calculated effort at compromise—its author’s background satisfied interest groups such as political antifascists and Zionists, while the work itself was accessible to the stage’s public, most of whom went to the theater in search of entertainment, not politics.

Finally, though easily overlooked, the setting of the performance was also significant. The Casa del Teatro, where the Freie Deutsche Bühne played for its first four seasons was, as *Tageblatt* critic Werner Katzenstein remarked in the FDB’s almanac from 1946 “wie für die F.D.B. gemacht.”⁵⁶⁹ The theater itself was modern and comfortable, with capacity for 350 people. Crucially, it was available for Saturday night and Sunday matinee performances, the most desirable time slots. It was also located on the Avenida Santa Fe, a main thoroughfare in the wealthy, central neighborhood of Barrio Norte, just a fifteen-minute walk from the famous Teatro Colón and easily accessible from all parts of the city.

Importantly, the Casa del Teatro was not only a theater, it was also a residence for

⁵⁶⁸ “Iniciose una temporada breve de teatro alemán en la Casa del Teatro,” *La Nación*, April 21, 1940. “easily accessible [...] whose plot allows one to infer the ending very quickly—Trans.” “course [...] unlikely—Trans.”

⁵⁶⁹ Werner Katzenstein, “Beim Cafecito,” in *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 18.

retired Argentine thespians. It had been completed just two years earlier, and the inauguration ceremony was attended by, among others, the current and future presidents of the nation, Agustín P. Justo and Roberto M. Ortiz. Argentina's Minister of Public Education, Jorge de la Torre, described the institution as an "hermosa realidad, una obra social que está pronta a unir en fraterno abrazo a toda la familia teatral argentina."⁵⁷⁰ In this spirit the FDB was able to foster close contacts with prominent members of the Argentine theater world at the Casa del Teatro, including Pedro E. Pico, president of both the Casa del Teatro and Argentores, the Argentine General Society of Authors. Pico was an invaluable contact for the FDB, facilitating bureaucratic procedures for the procurement of visas, licensing for performances, and other municipal permits. The Casa del Teatro was not only appropriate for the FDB's public, but also pertinent to the stage's objective of integration.

2. "Das echte Theater ist Leben zur Potenz!"—Pedagogical Theater at the FDB

Jacob believed that in order for the Freie Deutsche Bühne to be successful it had to establish itself as an institution fundamental to all German-speaking emigrant groups on the River Plate, excluding only the *alte Kolonie*. This was a complicated endeavor, because the German population was comprised of multiple, sometimes conflicting groups. A logical starting place to begin constituting a community and building an audience was the Pestalozzi-Schule, which was flourishing in its sixth year when the FDB opened in 1940. The

⁵⁷⁰ "Inaugurado Ayer el Edificio de la Casa del Teatro," *La Prensa*, January 5, 1938. "a beautiful reality, a social work which is ready to unite in a fraternal embrace the entire Argentine theater family—Trans."

Pestalozzi-Schule was an inclusive institution and publicly claimed to be politically and religiously neutral. Furthermore, as one of only two German-language schools in the Argentine capital independent of the Nazi embassy, nearly all German-speaking parents who were not nationalists, but wished their children to receive an education in German (which was common because many did not speak Spanish), sent them to the Pestalozzi-Schule.⁵⁷¹ Its student body was very diverse and provided access to a wide slice of the German-speaking population.⁵⁷²

Not coincidentally, the FBD's very first performance, while the stage was still in its nascent phase, had been at a fundraising event at the Pestalozzi-Schule. Once a date had been set for the theater's inaugural performance, Jacob followed through on his essay from Wuppertal, "Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung," in which he advocated that theaters advertise in schools and actively encourage pupils, teachers, and parents to attend their productions.⁵⁷³ In the program to its production of *Jean*, the FDB reiterated this goal: "Darum ist unsere Aufgabe [...] vor allem auch die Begeisterung der Jugend für die Kunst der Bühne zu wecken."⁵⁷⁴ The stage sent hundreds of flyers to the Pestalozzi-Schule in the hope, as Jacob expressed in a letter to the school's headmaster, Alfred

⁵⁷¹ The smaller Cangallo-Schule also resisted synchronization.

⁵⁷² In 1935 Pestalozzi School pupils hailed from eighteen different countries: 44% from Argentina, 30% from Germany, and another 26% from Austria, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Holland, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, England, United States, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, and Paraguay. See: Hermann Schnorbach, *Por 'la otra Alemania': el Colegio Pestalozzi en Buenos Aires, 1934-2004* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Pestalozzi, 2005), 83.

⁵⁷³ Jacob, "Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung," PWJA IV c) 253.

⁵⁷⁴ Program for *Jean*, April 20, 1940, PWJA VI b) 281.

Dang, “Sie und Ihre Familie, die Lehrer, Schüler und Ex-Schüler der Pestalozzi-Schule in großer Zahl als Publikum der F.D.B. begrüßen zu dürfen.”⁵⁷⁵ This effort was made at both pedagogical and economic levels. In 1939, Freie Deutsche Bühne artists Hedwig Schlichter, Victor Parlaghy, Liselott Reger-Jacob, and Paul Walter Jacob collaborated in fundraisers for the school.⁵⁷⁶ On New Year’s Eve in 1940, the FDB put on a “Gran Velada Artística y Baile” in the school’s gardens and auditorium.⁵⁷⁷ The theater also tried to make attendance affordable for the Pestalozzi community by offering special ticket packages with discounts for group purchases by members of the school community. Given the economic challenges facing emigrants, it is probable that many members of the antifascist community took advantage of this discount.

Members of the Freie Deutsche Bühne also contributed to the school’s pedagogical goals. Jacob believed there were many overlaps between schools and theaters which facilitated their cooperation as educational institutions. In “Schule und Theater,” an article he wrote for the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* in 1941 and later published in Montevideo and Dortmund, Jacob emphasizes the parallels between:

das äußere Bild der Schule als einer Lehr- und Lerngemeinschaft, innerhalb deren ein einzelner Lehrer oder ein ganzer “Lehrkörper“ vorspricht, vorspielt, vordemonstriert, gedanklich erarbeitet, und eine Gefolgschaft von Lernenden das Vorgeführte nachspricht, nachdemonstriert, das äußere Bild des Theaters, in dem die

⁵⁷⁵ Jacob to Dang (Buenos Aires: April 16, 1940), PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁵⁷⁶ *Jahresbericht 1940*, 6, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

⁵⁷⁷ PWJ IV c) 288.

Spielgemeinschaft der “Akteure” vorspielt, einen dramatischen Inhalt vordemonstriert, ein Publikum “zuschaut,” hört und miterlebt.⁵⁷⁸

Beyond the similar interplay between presenters and their audiences, Jacob believed in the pedagogical capacity of theater to function as a laboratory for life. As early as 1934, during his exile in Luxemburg, Jacob suggested to the Secretary of State that theater, “eine Quelle reinen Menschentums und ungebrochener Lebenskraft,” could instill Luxemburg’s youth with moral clarity and fortitude in times of crisis.⁵⁷⁹ In this view Jacob was grounded in the tradition of German dramatists from the Weimar Classics, such as Friedrich Schiller, who claimed: “Die Schaubühne ist mehr als jede andere öffentliche Anstalt des Staates eine Schule der praktischen Weisheit, ein Wegweiser durch das Leben, ein unfehlbarer Schlüssel zu den geheimsten Zugängen der menschlichen Seele.”⁵⁸⁰ The FDB ensemble attempted to put these theories into practice at the Pestalozzi-Schule, but Jacob and perhaps others at the stage had begun to consider these ideas much earlier.

Jacob began testing his theories about pedagogical theater during his European exile. In 1937 in Teplitz-Schönau, he used theater programs as a forum to address the question: “Was will die Jugend vom Theater?” In one response, a young theatergoer, Friedl Weigend, explains that young people are open to diverse dramatic genres, including comedies, classics, and fairy tales: “Man muß die jungen Leute nur zu packen verstehen. Und die Seite, die sie alle interessiert,

⁵⁷⁸ Theater Program for *Die Komödie*, September 10, 1944, PWJA IVX.

⁵⁷⁹ Draft of letter to “Herr Staatsminister,” 1934, PWJA V b) 261.

⁵⁸⁰ Program for Luxemburg Jugendbühne, November, 1934, PWJA V b) 261.

ist das allgemein Menschliche, Seelische.”⁵⁸¹ An audience of young adults is repulsed by “einschachtelnden Karikaturistenmanier,” but open to serious drama of all cultures including not only Goethe and Schiller, but also Ibsen, Gorki, and Vilem Werner. Weigend continues to explain that the task of teachers and thespians is to illuminate the relevance of these authors through lectures in the classroom, dialogue on stage, and perhaps even collaborative performances with youthful theater enthusiasts. According to Weigend a theater which follows this formula fulfills a vital pedagogical role and will be rewarded by a grateful audience: “Der Dank bleibt nicht aus. [...] Gebt ihr Leben und Menschenschicksal auf der Bühne, dann erfüllt ihr die Pflicht des Theaters, die da heißt: Die Wirklichkeit konzentriert einfangen und in Farbenpracht widerspiegeln. Das echte Theater ist Leben zur Potenz!”⁵⁸² The ensemble of the FDB and the pupils of the Pestalozzi-Schule, both groups refugees, had much in common and much to impart to each other by creating theater together.

Weigend’s ideas resonated with Jacob, and many of her suggestions about creating theater for young people resurfaced at the FDB in Buenos Aires. In “Schule und Theater,” Jacob echoes Weigend when he argues that theater’s pedagogical value is greatest when pupils actively participate in the dramatic process. This European tradition, which Jacob traces back to the Middle Ages, deepens pedagogical impact because as students morph from spectators to thespians, they learn to internalize and project an array of personalities actively and in a wide range of constellations. First as spectators and then as actors,

⁵⁸¹ Program for Neues Stadttheater Teplitz-Schönau, 1938, PWJA V c) 262.

⁵⁸² Program for Neues Stadttheater Teplitz-Schönau, 1938, PWJA V c) 262.

students gain insight to disparate cultures, religions, and nationalities, and develop a broad capacity for empathy. Jacob cites empathy as crucial in order to surmount the “Welt zerteilende und vektinernde hypernationalistische Welle,” which many Pestalozzi pupils experienced under Nazism.⁵⁸³ Together, school and theater can form an “Internationale des Geistes” and create “eine zukünftige Welt [...] ein neues menschliches, universales Gesicht.”⁵⁸⁴ During and after World War II, in the polarized environment of German Buenos Aires, Jacob tried to implement theater as a link between cultures and a vehicle for reconciliation, putting into practice his conviction that, “Schule, Theater, alle verschiedenartigen Kombinationen dieser beiden Welten [...] sie harren mit tausend anderen Dingen der neuen Entwicklung, die nach diesen Jahren des Niedergangs und der Wandlung einsetzen muss und wird.”⁵⁸⁵ School and theater, Jacob believed, would have a decisive role to play in the formation of a reformed postwar society, especially in Germany.

Members of the FDB believed this effort ought to commence as early as possible, beginning with close contact between the ensemble and youthful theatergoers. The FDB attempted to create a special bond with even its youngest audiences. For its performances of fairy tales, for example, the ensemble distributed free chocolate to the audience, a rare treat for many refugee children.⁵⁸⁶ Beyond such gimmicks, however, the FDB took its performances of

⁵⁸³ Program for *Die Komödie*, September 10, 1944, PWJA V b) 261.

⁵⁸⁴ Program for *Die Komödie*, September 10, 1944, PWJA V b) 261.

⁵⁸⁵ Program for *Die Komödie*, September 10, 1944, PWJA V b) 261.

⁵⁸⁶ Program for *Schneewittchen*, July 5, 1942, PWJA IV b) 281.

children's theater seriously. Fairy tales in particular formed a highly-esteemed, lasting genre in the theater's varied repertoire. The genre represented a singular opportunity to win future generations over to the dramatic form: "Mädchen-Theater, wir alle verdanken ihm die ersten und häufig die entscheidenden Bühnen-Eindrücke."⁵⁸⁷ In Wuppertal Jacob had recognized that these early, often undervalued theater experiences could be fundamental to theaters' future success: "Nur wenn die Jugend dem Theater gewonnen wird, gehört dem Theater die Zukunft."⁵⁸⁸ In order to link children's theater with adult drama, Jacob identified the fairy tale as a particularly apt genre. He argued that many of the most successful dramatic genres, such as operettas, farces, and boulevard comedies, are born of out a germinal "Geist des Märchens."⁵⁸⁹ The essence of all genres characterized by sometimes less than plausible plots that invariably conclude with "dem gut dosierten ,happy-end,“ stems from a common core— "Märchengedanken." Countless popular plays from the theater houses of Vienna and Budapest are fundamentally children's "Wünschträume," superficially modified for "erwachsene, ganz und gar vernünftige und moderne Menschen."⁵⁹⁰ In this sense, many adults and children visited the theater in search of what were fundamentally the same whimsical, uplifting fantasies.

In fairy tales many FDB actors such as Jacob, Max Wächter, and Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla saw an opportunity to have a lasting psychological influence on

⁵⁸⁷ "Märchen-Theater," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 15, 1942.

⁵⁸⁸ Jacob, "Denkschrift zur Frage Theaterbewerbung," PWJA IV c) 253.

⁵⁸⁹ "Märchen-Theater," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 15, 1942.

⁵⁹⁰ "Märchen-Theater," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 15, 1942.

their youngest spectators: “Was kann das Kindergemüt stärker und entscheidender beeinflussen, was sein Interesse stärker erregen, als die Verkörperung, die Inszenierung der Gestalten seiner Phantasie?!“ There was a therapeutic function to the consistent happy-endings of the fairy tales that the Freie Deutsche Bühne produced for younger pupils at the Pestalozzi-Schule. At least on stage, in the world of theater, Nazism’s youngest victims could see the fulfillment of “im Leben niemals zugestandene ,Träume”” and the confirmation of a pure and honest “Gerechtigkeitssinn, [der] im Alltag so oft und schmerzlich enttäuscht [wird].”⁵⁹¹ The letters of gratitude many pupils from the Pestalozzi-Schule wrote to the FDB are testimony to the success of its fairy-tale productions among youthful audiences. If much time passed between performances, Jacob’s postbox quickly filled with pleas for another “Märchennachmittag.” A letter from Marianna Louise Plant, signed by dozens of her classmates at the Pestalozzi-Schule is representative of this correspondence:

Lieber Herr Jacob,
wir haben schon so lange kein Märchen gesehen und vor zwei Monaten haben wir den schönsten Märchennachmittag in Ihrem Theater erlebt. Wir wünschen uns vom ganzen Herzen, dass sie auch einmal an uns denken und nicht immer an die Erwachsenen, die viele andere schöne Sachen erleben und nicht stets lernen und in der Schule sitzen müssen. Uns gefällt am besten Frau Vacano als Prinzessin und Herr Wächter als komischen Mann. Meine ganze Freundinnen aus der Schule werden unterschreiben, weil sie es sich so sehr wünschen.⁵⁹²

Mariana and her friends’ requests demonstrate the close rapport the FDB engendered through children’s theater. Such exchanges were foundational to the enduring educational relationship the FDB strove to initiate with its youngest

⁵⁹¹ “Märchen-Theater,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 15, 1942.

⁵⁹² Mariana Plant to Jacob, July 23, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

audiences, and their letters did not go unanswered. Two weeks later Jacob wrote Mariana the following reply:

Liebe Mariana Elisa,
ich habe Deinen lieben Brief vom 23. Juli erhalten, für den ich Dir und all Deinen Freundinnen, die mitunterschieden haben, herzlichst danke. Ich bin froh, Deinen und Deiner Mitschülerinnen Wunsch erfüllen zu können, denn gerade als Ihr mir den Brief geschrieben habt, wurde in der Freien Deutschen Bühne beschlossen, wieder einmal eine Märchenaufführung zu veranstalten. Sie wird am Montag, den 26. August, nachmittags um 5 Uhr stattfinden, und Eurem Wunsch entsprechend wird Frau Vacano wieder als Prinzesschen und Max Wächter als "komischer Mann" auftreten. Ich hoffe Ihr kommt wieder alle vollzählig zu uns ins Theater und werdet auch all Eure Freundinnen mitbringen. Mitsingen und klatschen ist selbstverständlich wieder Ehrensache, zur Belohnung gibt es wieder Bilderbücher und Schokolade!⁵⁹³

It is noteworthy that Jacob found time to respond to this letter at the height of the FDB's season, at a time when he had recently learned that of his entire family only a single aunt and uncle had survived the Holocaust. He was also in the midst of arranging guest performances with Ernst Deutsch and Ellen Schwannecke. Despite these circumstances he answers Mariana respectfully as a peer, addresses all her concerns, thanks her for her interest, and even capitalizes all second-person pronouns. Most importantly, he tells her that the FDB will honor her request promptly and to its details. Finally, Jacob uses this opportunity to encourage Mariana and her friends to interact with the FDB cast during the production by singing and clapping. This first step toward participating in theatrical performances could eventually lead them to experiment with acting more intensively.

⁵⁹³ Jacob to Mariana Elisa Plant, August 7, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

The August 26th performance of Hans Christian Andersen's "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse" sold-out the 450-seat Casal de Catalunya theater.⁵⁹⁴ The *Tageblatt* reported that the children were "gläubig hingegeben dem Zauber des Märchenspiels, beglückt und verwirrt zugleich; voll von jener Naivität, die auf jede Feinheit des Spiels reagiert und darum reinen Kunstgenuss ermöglicht."⁵⁹⁵ The performance was not only entertainment, but also a carefully composed pedagogical experience. As Maria Tatar and others have noted, 19th century fairy tales are often laden with a sinister underside of violence, death, and fatalism which undercuts or effaces entirely the "gut dosierte[n] ,happy-end,"⁵⁹⁶ prized by the FDB. Cognizant of the powerful impact theatrical performances can have on children's emotions, the FDB's Max Wächter considered the background of their young refugee audience, many of whom had suffered more in real life than most characters in fictional dramas, and opted to shield the children from the darker elements of fairy tales. The stage either performed less violent tales, including Andersen's "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse," or adapted stories by removing the bloodier scenes. The playscript for its 1942 performance of "Snow White," for example, lacks the tale's gruesome conclusion. The *Jüdische Wochenschau*, praised the director, Max Wächter, for his numerous light-hearted adaptations of 19th century fairy tales, particularly his emphasis on humor and the self-authored ditties he sprinkled into the tales.⁵⁹⁶ Wächter's adaptations also reflected the children's situation as emigrants in Argentina. In "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse,"

⁵⁹⁴ FDB Theater Program, 1945, PWJA VI b) 281.

⁵⁹⁵ "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 27, 1945.

⁵⁹⁶ "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, August 31, 1945.

Wächter inserted new lyrics in Spanish to several songs, and even added a Gaucho from the Argentine Pampa to the tale's original cast of characters: "Mit recht hübschen Einfällen, mit selbstverfassten spanischsprachigen Liederinlagen—im ‚Gaucho‘ fehlte selbst das Lokalkolorit nicht!"⁵⁹⁷ By infusing European fairy tales with local cultural markers, such as the quintessentially Argentine Gaucho figure, Wächter's version of "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse" likely facilitated the children's transition from emigrants to immigrants in South America.

The FDB's message of inclusion and integration seems to have resonated among children. One of the letters Jacob received thanking the FDB cast "für die hervorragende Vorstellung, die sie uns Kinder gegeben hat" was signed by Monika Czerski, "10 Jahre." The signature is a significant one. Monika Czerski was the daughter of Otto Czerski, himself a playwright and teacher at the Goethe-Schule. One of Czerski's dramas, *Der Bauerngeneral*, had been performed by the Ney-Bühne several years earlier as a celebration for Hitler's birthday. The letter, dated from June 24, 1946, bears testimony to the efficacy—at least in the case of Monika Czerski—of the FDB's self-proclaimed mission to use theater as a possible means of reconciliation for Argentina's bitterly divided German populations.

Pestalozzi pupils were not limited to the roles of spectators, but were also engaged to play children's roles in fairy tale performances and as extras for larger scale productions. The FDB's Hedwig Schilchter-Crilla was especially active in cultivating young talent for German and Spanish language theater in Argentina. A successful actress on stage and in film in Germany, Schilchter-Crilla was an

⁵⁹⁷ "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, August 31, 1945.

enormous influence for many of the most famous actors in Argentine cinema and theater, including Norma Aleandro, Zulema Katz, Agustín Alezzo, Cecilio Madanes, Augusto Fernández, and others. During WWII Schlichter-Crilla directed various pieces for children's theater in the Pestalozzi-Schule and the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, often holding rehearsals in her small two-room apartment, even for pieces with a cast of fifteen or more characters. One of her students, Jorge Luz, remembers how these rehearsals were often most effective because the close space fostered an intimacy which intensified the impression Schlichter-Crilla's talents made on her pupils: "Me acuerdo que me impactaba vivamente la habilidad que tenía para transformarse, cuando interpretaba una bruja, entre cajas, se sacaba las hebillas del pelo, se despeinaba y en un segundo se convertía en un ser horroroso que nos impresionaba."⁵⁹⁸ Her ability to transform herself into the most unlikely characters encouraged Schlichter-Crilla's students to lose their inhibitions and experiment with their own abilities to metamorphose. Frank Nelson, who began acting with the FDB as a small child, remembered his first encounter with Schlichter-Crilla during a rehearsal in 1945 for Erich Kästner's *Pünktchen und Anton*:

Un amigo mío tenía a su cargo el papel principal, y me llevó a un ensayo: quedé tan impresionado que fui directamente hacia la directora y le dije: '¡Yo quiero trabajar en esta obra!' Me sonrió y me contestó que todos los papeles ya estaban dados, menos el de la cocinera gorda y, sin dudar un minuto, le dije: 'Entonces voy a hacer el de la cocinera gorda.' Y así fue.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Cora Roca, *Días del Teatro: Hedy Crilla*, (Buenos Aires: CELCIT, 2001), file:///Users/robertkelz/Desktop/D°as%20de%20Teatro.%20Hedy%20Crilla/D°as%20de%20Teatro.%20Hedy%20Crilla.%20TyP%20Nß5.htm, n.p. "I remember being especially impressed by her ability to transform herself. When she played a witch, she would remove her barettes, mess up her hair, and in a second she converted herself into a horror that thrilled us—Trans."

⁵⁹⁹ Frank Nelson, telephone conversation with Robert Kelz, January 18, 2009.

One of my friends had the main part, and he took me to a rehearsal. I was so impressed that I went straight to the director and said, “I want to work in this piece!” She smiled and answered that all the roles had already been assigned except for the fat lady cook. Without doubting a minute I said, “Well then I am going to be the fat lady cook.” And that’s how it was.

Her transformative ability, according to her pupils, was also a communicative tool, and was key to her success as a pedagogue. In a comment which echoes Paul Walter Jacob’s thesis that acting cultivates the capacity of an individual to empathize with other people very distinct from himself, Bergara Leumann⁶⁰⁰ recalls: “La facilidad de Hedy para comprender a niños, adolescentes – y a los mayores – era fantástica: se adaptaba a cada uno y buceaba dentro de ellos para encontrar los mejores matices.”⁶⁰¹ For Schlichter-Crilla, and likely for her students as well, acting honed a range of versatile communicative skills, enhancing expressive and receptive faculties on and off stage.

Schlichter-Crilla concurred with Paul Walter Jacob that the pedagogical value of the acting experience is most powerful when initiated at an early age. Jorge Luz recalls that there were very young children at rehearsals often “de cuatro, seis y hasta doce años. Tenían roles de niños o se transformaban en olla, flores, campanillas, honguitos, grillos, hormigas.”⁶⁰² The presence of such young children might raise doubts as to whether these productions represented serious

⁶⁰⁰ Leumann, a pupil of Schlichter-Crilla, was a celebrity in Argentine television and cinema, most famously for his long-running television show *La botica del tango* about the bohemian cultural scene surrounding Buenos Aires milonguera gatherings.

⁶⁰¹ Roca, *Días del Teatro*, n.p. “Hedy’s facility to comprehend children, adolescents – and adults – was fantastic: she adapted to each one and submerged into them to find their best qualities—Trans.”

⁶⁰² Roca, *Días de teatro*, n.p. “from four, six, up to twelve years-old. She had children’s roles, or they transformed themselves into pots, flowers, bells, mushrooms, crickets, or ants—Trans.”

theater or were simply playtime, but Luz clarifies that no piece had only child-actors: “los personajes adultos eran siempre interpretados por actores profesionales.”⁶⁰³ Schlichter-Crilla brought her pupils into close contact with professional actors from Argentine, French, Yiddish, and German theaters, so they would gain exposure to a broad range of acting styles and become familiar with adults from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Her teaching style was also designed to provoke her students to individualize the characters assigned to them. Schlichter-Crilla would perform for them, but never dictate how they should interpret their roles, instead she told her pupils: “Yo no te voy a marcar lo que debés hacer, porque vos tenés mucha gracia y sos muy creativo.”⁶⁰⁴

As Frank Nelson remembered, Schlichter-Crilla’s method was an innovation for children’s acting in Argentina. Her willingness to allow children to interpret their own roles gave them a formative role in shaping the works for presentation. This creative freedom, augmented by the close working relationships her pupils developed with professional adult actors, enabled them to reach levels of self-respect and artistic accomplishment which were unprecedented for child actors in Argentina: “Cuando estrenamos la obra para niños, fue una revelación en el medio artístico, y tuvo un gran éxito porque se apartaba totalmente de lo hecho hasta entonces en el teatro infantil, que era

⁶⁰³ Roca, *Días de teatro*, n.p. “the adult characters were always played by professional actors—Trans.”

⁶⁰⁴ Roca, *Días de teatro*, n.p. “I am not going to tell you what you should do, because you have a lot of charm and you are very creative—Trans.”

bastante anticuado.”⁶⁰⁵ Osvaldo Berenguer, theater critic and professor at the Universidad Nacional del Sur in Bahia Blanca, succinctly sums up Schlichter-Crilla’s impact on pedagogical theater in Argentina: “del mismo modo en que Piazzola, modificando el tango argentino, produjo un cambio en la cultura musical que hace que se diga: ‘antes y después de Piazzola’, igualmente podemos decir con justicia: ‘antes y después de la Crilla’.”⁶⁰⁶ Schlichter-Crilla’s work had a transformative impact on children’s theater in Argentina, which is still evident today.

Her ensembles’ performances evinced the cooperative atmosphere Schlichter-Crilla fostered in her projects. Two months after the Freie Deutsche Bühne’s performance of “The Princess and the Pea,” Schlichter-Crilla directed a group of pupils from the Pestalozzi-Schule and professional actors from the FDB, Idisches Folkstheater, and a French theater company in a performance of Hans Christian Andersen’s “Die Prinzessin und der Schweinehirt.”⁶⁰⁷ The performance, the proceeds from which were donated to the charity Unión Internacional de Socorro a los Niños, represented a “völlig freie Bearbeitung” of the classic fairy tale.⁶⁰⁸ Similar to Max Wächter’s revised version of Andersen’s “Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse,” Schlichter-Crilla adapted “Die Prinzessin und der Schweinehirt”

⁶⁰⁵ Roca, *Días de teatro*, n.p. “When we premiered the children’s play, it was a revelation in the art scene, and it was very successful because it totally departed from what had been done up to then in children’s theater, which was quite out of date—Trans.”

⁶⁰⁶ Roca, *Días de teatro*, n.p. “The same way in which Piazzola, modifying the Argentine tango, produced a change in musical culture which makes us say ‘before and after Piazzola,’ in the same way we can rightly say: ‘before and after Crilla—Trans.”

⁶⁰⁷ The French ensemble was comprised of thespians from the Comédie Française, whose members had remained stranded in Buenos Aires when WWII broke out during their tour of South America.

⁶⁰⁸ “Kindertheater,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 23, 1945.

to fit the context of the *neue Kolonie*. She added a prologue that represented a fundamental departure from the original text. Instead of medieval Europe, the prologue to the play is set in present day Buenos Aires. It features a framing device in which the main characters are two young emigrant children—a dreamy newspaper boy, Juancito, and his realist friend, a chocolate vendor named Cachito, a double entendre which references an Argentine colloquialism for hesitation. The two boys, who are new additions to the fairy tale, have humble lives similar to many of the children sitting in the audience. The characters' names and the prologue's setting correspond to the audience's condition as European emigrants, who like Juancito and Cachito, grapple with economic challenges, a new language, and adaptation to Argentine society.

One afternoon, as he hawks the day's news—most of it bad—to passersby, Juancito notices an old, tattered book in a pile of rubbish. Intrigued, he retrieves the book and as he leafs through its frayed pages, realizes it is a collection of marvelous short stories from a place and time far away from 20th century Buenos Aires. Later that afternoon, as Juancito and Cachito are examining their newfound curiosity, they come across a tale which perplexes their reasoning and spurs their imaginations—"La princesa y el porquerizo." After consulting their dictionaries, the two are even more bewildered, and ask themselves what could possibly be the connection between a princess and a swineherd. Unfortunately, they cannot satisfy their interest because the rest of the tale is badly damaged and illegible. Juancito becomes fascinated by the mystery, and spends his free time inventing plots, characters, and settings to contrive possible encounters for the princess and

the swineherd. Cachito, after an initial hesitation appropriate to his name, is also enraptured. The two, mired in the adversities confronting young emigrants, find escape through their self-invented worlds of fiction. Their fairy tale eventually follows them into their dreams, where they are transported to “el país de los sueños” and take part in the action personally.

At the conclusion of the prologue Juancito draws a silver spoon from under his shirt and opens a golden gate which leads to “el país de los sueños” and initiates the three-act drama. At the end of each act, Juancito and Cachito meet in front of the curtain and discuss the action with members of the audience leading them, as the *Argentinsches Tageblatt* put it, into their “bunte Traumwelt.”⁶⁰⁹ Schlichter-Crilla’s script follows the advice Emil Ludwig had given to pupils at the Pestalozzi-Schule a years earlier. Despite the difficulties they face as refugees in a foreign country, Ludwig advises the pupils that they all have an inextinguishable spiritual freedom: “So wie sich alle 24 Stunden Licht und Dunkel, Tag und Schlaf abwechseln, bleibt Jedem für seine leisen und geheimen Wünsche ein Teil des Lebens offen.”⁶¹⁰ Through their friendship and colorful imaginations, Juancito and Cachito use the battered fairy tale book, perhaps symbolic of the freedom Ludwig describes, to create “un país de los sueños.” Their creativity affirms, even as child refugees, the inexorable presence Ludwig’s “menschliche Herz, das in vollkommener Freiheit atmet.” By conversing with the audience between acts, Juancito and Cachito share the secrets and treasures of

⁶⁰⁹ “Die Prinzessin und der Schweinehirt,” *Argentinsches Tageblatt*, October 25, 1945.

⁶¹⁰ Emil Ludwig, “An die ‚Pestalozzi‘-Schüler,” *Schülerzeitung der Pestalozzi Schule*, September 1936, 4, Pestalozzi-Schule Archive.

Ludwig's incorruptible freedom with the spectators who, encouraged to comment on the drama, actively contribute to its performance and cultivate their own creative faculties.

According to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, the presentation was a pleasure for spectators young and old alike: "es war eine der beglückendsten Märchen-Aufführungen, die wir seit Jahren gesehen haben."⁶¹¹ In its review the *Tageblatt* hinted at the link the performance created between reality and "den undefinierbaren Reiz einer Märchenstimmung"⁶¹² and, likely unwittingly, also referenced Ludwig's comments on the creative genius of the human heart. It described Peter Lucas, who played Juancito, as "der echteste Schauspieler. In seinem kleinen, spielfreudigen Herzen stand keine Schranke zwischen Spiel und Wirklichkeit."⁶¹³ Schlichter-Crilla also brought together professional actors of several nationalities from different cultural, religious backgrounds with their youthful counterparts. With "sorgsame Detailarbeit" and "Fleiß, Geduld und voller Hingabe ans Werk," the freshly concocted ensemble collaborated on the performance, and thereby had "eine große und schöne Aufgabe vorbildlich gelöst."⁶¹⁴ The task and model was not only the production, it was the intercultural effort which brought it to fruition.

The FDB also invited older pupils at the Pestalozzi-Schule and other youth groups to participate in its productions. Alfredo Bauer, a pupil at the Pestalozzi-

⁶¹¹ "Die Prinzessin und der Schweinehirt," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 25, 1945.

⁶¹² "Die Prinzessin und der Schweinehirt," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 25, 1945.

⁶¹³ "Kindermärchen-Vorstellung in der FDB," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 27, 1945.

⁶¹⁴ "Die Prinzessin und der Schweinehirt," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 25, 1945.

Schule during WWII, remembers that children from the Jewish youth club, *Blau Weiß*, participated in Valentin Katajew's *Die Quadratur des Kreises*: "ein köstliches Stück, da ist eine Masse von jungen Leuten aus dem Jugendklub in den zwanziger Jahren in kommunistischen Russland, die Mitglieder des Jugendklubs haben Mitglieder des Jugendklubs gespielt."⁶¹⁵ Echoing the Pestalozzi-Schule's theater performances to raise fund for internees in Gurs, *Die Quadratur des Kreises* again featured child-actors playing the same roles on stage as they did in real life.⁶¹⁶ This experience inspired the Blau-Weiss youth club to put on their own performances. Six weeks later the club presented an open-air production of another drama with autobiographical undertones, *Der Weg zur Freiheit*, which was also written a member of the Blau-Weiss club.⁶¹⁷ The drama, which contrasts underground child freedom fighters in Paris and Vienna with their delusional Nazi peers, recalls Jacob's commentary about contemporary youth movements in Teplitz-Schönau. Performed in Belgrano, just blocks away from the Goethe-Schule, *Der Weg zur Freiheit* also contained many parallels to the situation in Buenos Aires.

Alfredo Bauer remembers that the Freie Deutsche Bühne ensemble and teachers at the Pestalozzi-Schule invoked humanist values in German literature to help children overcome the denigration of Nazi persecution:

wer rassistisch verfolgt ist und noch dazu als Kind, der verinnerlicht das, und glaubt selber er ist was Schlechteres oder was Anderes. Und sie haben uns

⁶¹⁵ Bauer, interview.

⁶¹⁶ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 11, 1942.

⁶¹⁷ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 23, 1942.

beigebracht dass wir Menschen sind, dass das ein Unrecht ist, das man sich wehren kann. Es ist schwer nachzuvollziehen, was das für uns eine Bedeutung hatte. [...] Mein Leben wäre was Anderes gewesen ohne diese Menschen. Der Paul Walter Jacob war eben solch ein Mensch, der mit Kultur, mit Theater, die Humanität propagierte.⁶¹⁸

As Bauer explains, theater helped refugee children learn to cope with their traumatic pasts and gather strength and confidence to confront a challenging present. Their experiences with literature and theater, Bauer emphasizes, transformed the refugees' senses of self-evaluation.

As the *Tageblatt* remarked in its review of "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse," members of the FDB also benefited from their work with refugee children: "Theater für Kinder: eine schöne, eine dankbare Aufgabe für Schauspieler, deren beflügelte Seele noch heimwärts finden kann ins versunkene Kinderland, in das blühende Paradies der kindlichen Fantasie, die düftige Märchenschleier um die prosaische Wirklichkeit zu spinnen weiss."⁶¹⁹ Indeed, working with the Pestalozzi children often invigorated the morale of the FDB's ensemble. Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla had been a successful actress in Berlin before losing her career, home, and husband to Nazi persecution. Her work with the Pestalozzi-Schule helped her regain her sense of self-worth and happiness: "Adoro a los niños. ¡Son lo mejor de la vida! Cuando vine a este país escapando de los horrores de la guerra, comencé a hacer teatro para niños y logré imponerlo, aquí no se conocía. Hice obras muy hermosas y tengo recuerdos preciosos."⁶²⁰ Her work as theater

⁶¹⁸ Bauer, interview.

⁶¹⁹ "Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 27, 1945.

⁶²⁰ Cora Roca, *Días del Teatro*. n.p. "I adore children. They are the best life has to offer! When I came to this country, having escaped the horrors of war, I started to do theater for children and

pedagogue not only aided the children Schlichter-Crilla instructed; these activities were also a self-therapy from which Schlichter-Crilla herself benefited.

As Schlichter-Crilla notes, through their work with the Pestalozzi-Schule, members of the FDB, including Schlichter-Crilla, Jacob, and Wächter, also fulfilled the mandate of Argentina's constitution to encourage the immigration of Europeans "que traigan por objeto labrar la tierra, mejorar las industrias, e introducir y enseñar las ciencias y las artes."⁶²¹ By cultivating the German tradition of pedagogical theater as immigrants in South America, the FDB ensemble gave new and lasting impulses to the host country's national theater scene.

3. Comedies at the Freie Deutsche Bühne

3.1 Behind the Curtain: Working Conditions and Questions of Authority at the FDB

Two features dominate the Freie Deutsche Bühne's repertoire and schedule during World War II. The first is the number of productions, a dizzying 150 premieres and 500 total performances from April 20, 1940 through May 25, 1946.⁶²² In part this figure explains the second noteworthy aspect of the list—the vast majority of the pieces played were comedies.

Per year the FDB premiered an average of twenty-five works, about one per week during a theater season which ran from mid-April until mid-October.

was able to establish it here, because it was unknown. I created beautiful plays and have precious memories—Trans.”

⁶²¹ www.argentina.gov.ar/argentina/portal/documentos/constitucion_nacional.pdf, n.p. “who have the objective of working the earth, improving the industries and introduce and teach the arts and sciences—Trans.”

⁶²² “Wasser für Canitoga,” *Freie Presse*, May 26, 1946.

The total number of performances per season amounts to eighty-five, an exceptionally high figure. This averages out to only three to four performances per piece, a very low ratio. With so many overall performances, the ensemble had hardly any time off between the final performance of one piece and the premiere of the next. By comparison, a German-language theater company based in New York City, the Players from Abroad, produced three to four premieres per year for a total of fifteen to twenty performances. Expressed another way, the Freie Deutsche Bühne premiered eight times as many works as its northern counterpart, but “only” 4.5 times as many performances. This comparison demonstrates that the rotation of pieces at the FDB was very fast and the number of overall performances was inordinately high. As a consequence, the levels of stress and fatigue among the ensemble—all of whom were refugees—must have been severe.

The FDB established a ticket subscription system which ran in six week cycles, and promised its audience a new premiere every week. Over time a regular work schedule took shape. Sunday mornings were free, and on Sunday afternoons the premiere from Saturday had its third performance. Monday afternoons and evenings were devoted to initial preparations for the next piece—directors assigned roles, the ensemble composed lists for props, and Jacques Arndt and Hans Schön, previously the stage manager for the Deutsches Theater in Prague, collaborated on the stage design. At this time the cast began memorizing lines and envisioning stage directions. Tuesday and Thursday mornings and evenings were devoted to stage rehearsals. On Wednesday mornings rehearsals were held again

and, depending on demand, later that evening the fourth and final performance of Saturday's premiere was staged. Late night on Thursday and Friday in the early morning, Jacques Arndt and Hans Schön assembled the stage props and scenery for the upcoming premiere. Fridays were devoted to two dress rehearsals (Haupt- und Generalprobe). One began at midday, while the other commenced in the early evening and often ran until early Saturday morning. On Saturday evenings, normally less than 18 hours after the final dress rehearsal, the FDB staged the premiere and first repetition of the week's new play at 6.30 and 9.30pm, respectively. The above schedule represents an ideal scenario, rehearsals often occurred closer together because of difficulties in acquiring materials for the stage design and preparing scripts, which members of the ensemble often had to translate themselves into German.

The demanding regimen caused high levels of stress and tension within the ensemble. Decades later, Jacques Arndt's comments evoke the toll of these conditions on the Freie Deutsche Bühne cast. He recalls Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla as a "cascarrabias y de un temperamento muy depresiva, critica, pesimista."⁶²³ The challenges of working in such circumstances caused the ensemble, many of whom had enjoyed considerable success on European stages, to grow very discontented. Arndt and actress Cora Roca recall Schlichter-Crilla's frustrations:

la sala donde trabajábamos era, como decía ella, medio afrancesada, una 'sala *de merde*' [...] el teatro era 'un teatro *de merde*,' En aquella época había que hacer traducciones de obras que no existían acá en alemán. Entonces se traducían de todos los idiomas, se copiaba con una maquina de oficina grande, sobre papel avión para hacer con carbónico ocho, nueve o

⁶²³ Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, "Recordando a Hedy Crilla," 19-20. "grouchy and of a depressive, critical and pessimistic temperament—Trans."

diez juegos. Obviamente, las últimas eran bastante flojas. Ella decía: ‘esos papeles de mierda, *de merde*.’ No era así, era lo que se podía. Todos nosotros queríamos otro forma.⁶²⁴

All of the actors at the FDB, like most of its public, were accustomed to conditions at European theaters. The duress of working more hours, under worse conditions, and for a fraction of the pay made members of the ensemble irritable and provoked much infighting and squabbling.

Further exacerbating relations within the ensemble were issues of authority. Jacob regarded the Freie Deutsche Bühne as his enterprise, and reserved the final say on all artistic decisions for himself. This caused disagreements within the ensemble, which Jacob’s headstrong personality aggravated, creating many quarrels which might have been avoided. At the conclusion of the 1943 season, for example, Jacob selected Hermann Bahr’s successful comedy, *Das Konzert*, for the FDB’s annual guest performance in Montevideo. Alexander Berger objected, claiming the play was dated. Jacob countered—without any discernable motive—that Berger’s objections were insincere; his real motivation for resisting *Das Konzert* was his plan to collaborate on an upcoming production of the piece with Die Komödie, a new German-language theater in Montevideo. Jacob’s question: “Für wie dumm hältst Du Deine Freunde eigentlich?”⁶²⁵ indicates the tone of his letter to Berger. Berger

⁶²⁴ Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, “Recordando a Hedy Crilla,” 19-20. “the room where we worked was, as she said with French influences, a ‘room *de merde*’ [...] the theater was ‘a theater *de merde*.’ Back then we had to do our own translations of works that did not exist here in German. We translated from all languages and made copies with a machine from a large office, on airmail letter so we could make eight, nine, or ten copies with carbon paper. Obviously, the last copies were very weak. She said: “these shitty papers *de merde*.’ That was not how it was, it was just what we could do. We wanted to do it a different way—Trans.”

⁶²⁵ Jacob to Berger, October 1943, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

was outraged at Jacob's accusations: "Für wie gemein hältst Du Deine Freunde eigentlich?"⁶²⁶ The FDB finally performed *Das Konzert* in Montevideo in November of 1943, but the atmosphere behind the curtain must have been rather frosty.

Such exchanges laid the groundwork for future conflicts, which grew increasingly hostile as physical and psychological fatigue mounted. In business matters as well Jacob considered his authority to be absolute, whereas other members regarded the Freie Deutsche Bühne as a collective. At the core of this tension was the stage's finances. As Jacob wrote in his offer to Ernst Wurmser in Bolivia, wages at the FDB covered living expenses during the theater season, but no longer. Its members, thus, were not only overworked and overstressed during theater season but also had to worry about how they would make ends meet in the off-season. Together, Jacob and Reger earned three salaries plus royalties from Jacob's journalistic activities, so they appeared to be much better off from the perspective of the rest of the ensemble. However, Jacob and Reger had their own concerns—the stage ran a deficit which was their legal responsibility. The ensuing anxiety and misunderstandings often led to feuding between Jacob and Reger and other actors, particularly Alexander Berger, Max Wächter, and Annie Ernst.

The tension escalated into a full-blown crisis when Jacob and Reger organized a grand tribute to the legendary director, Max Reinhardt, upon his death in 1943. The event, which took place on November 17, 1943 and featured a lecture by Jacob, recitations by Reger, and a screening of Reinhardt's *A*

⁶²⁶ Berger to Jacob, October 1943, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

Midsummer Night's Dream, was a resounding artistic and financial success. It was held at the Teatro Gran Splendid for a sold-out audience of over 1,000 people, including some of the most famous celebrities of Argentine stage and screen, such as Delia Garcés, Juanita Sujo, Manuel Pena Rodriguez, and Alberto Zabalía.⁶²⁷ Jacob and Reger organized and produced the event in the name of the Freie Deutsche Bühne and disposed of the proceeds as they saw fit, which technically they had every right to do. Many members of the ensemble, however, challenged them on these points.⁶²⁸ They vehemently argued that Jacob and Reger could not use the Freie Deutsche Bühne name for an event without including them in the performance and in decisions about the allocation of proceeds. To express their disapproval, they voiced their misgivings to FDB donors and even purchased tickets for the Reinhardt tribute with their own money.⁶²⁹ Jacob was enraged and accused Berger, who acted as the ensemble's representative, of infringing upon his authority as director and manager of the FDB:

Im übrigen scheinen Sie und die Kollegen in dem Wahn befangen zu sein, dass unsere Bühne ein "Kollektiv" oder etwas ähnliches sei. Sollen Sie etwas derartiges gedacht haben, so sind ihre Gedanken weit von den Tatsachen entfernt. [...] Niemals hat die Form, die Art und Weise, in der das Theater geführt wurde, dem Kriterium des Ensembles unterstanden.⁶³⁰

From a detached perspective, Jacob's argumentation is the more convincing of the two. He claims for himself and his wife the right to act in the name of Freie Deutsche Bühne unilaterally, because they had founded the stage and raised its

⁶²⁷ "En Memoria de Max Reinhardt," *Noticias Graficas*, November 19, 1943.

⁶²⁸ FDB Ensemble to Jacob, November 19, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁶²⁹ Vacano to Berger, December 12, 1943, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

⁶³⁰ Jacob to Berger, November 22, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

start-up capital on their own initiative, and they alone were accountable to the theater's financial supporters. Jacob and Reger were legally responsible for the stage's financial commitments, such as renting the Casa del Teatro, and punctually paying its ensemble's wages, "völlig unabhängig von gutem oder miserabel schlechtem Geschäftsgang."⁶³¹ Furthermore, Jacob argued, he had not claimed any of the profits from the Reinhardt tribute for himself, but rather had used them to shore up the FDB's precarious finances, including paying off its deficit and refurbishing the funds set aside to help support the ensemble during the off-season.⁶³² These funds served to cover actors from end of the season until they had found work for the summer months.

Based on correspondence and business records, Jacob's actions appear to have been taken for the good of the entire theater. Indeed, had Jacob confined himself to a controlled, factual explanation, the altercation might have been resolved quickly. However the affair gives the impression that Jacob and the entire ensemble were utterly exhausted from the demanding theater season and, additionally, likely were suffering under the stress of world events and emigration. Perhaps for these reasons, the affair grew very ugly. It degenerated into a three-month-long, vitriolic letter exchange among Jacob, Berger, Reger, and Vacano. On December 27th, for example, Berger wrote to Jacob: "Ihre Mitglieder haben Ihre Verdienste und die Verdienste Ihrer stets voll und ganz

⁶³¹ Jacob to Berger, November 22, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁶³² Jacob to Vacano, November 23, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

anerkannt und gewürdigt.“⁶³³ Given the ensemble’s recent actions, this statement might have provoked Jacob. His response was inflammatory: “Dieser Satz kann doch wohl nichts anderes als das Hohngelächter der Hölle hervorrufen.”⁶³⁴ Jacob may have acted properly, but his correspondence with Berger exacerbated the conflict. In their exchange, Jacob refers to Berger as “blutig unwissend,” repeatedly accuses him of “völlige Ahnungslosigkeit,” and puts numerous sardonic insults to paper, for example: ”es scheint das Schicksal Ihrer Briefe zu sein, dass sie durch meine vorhergehenden Briefe bereits beantwortet sind.“⁶³⁵ Considering the tone of Jacob’s letters, Berger’s protestations were relatively restrained,⁶³⁶ but Jacob refused to make any apology, insisting: ”ich schreibe sachliche Briefe... Brüskierungen gehen nicht von meiner sondern von der anderen Seite aus.“⁶³⁷ The fighting grew so bitter that the Freie Deutsche Bühne nearly disbanded in January of 1944.⁶³⁸

The belligerence eventually gave way to an uneasy peace, because nobody truly wanted the theater to fail. Nonetheless, resentment persisted and contributed to future problems at the FDB during the postwar period. The conflict also had immediate consequences, as Erni Wunsch, Wolfgang Vacano, and Liselott Reger all left the stage after the 1943 season. Liselott Reger’s departure was a direct

⁶³³ Berger to Jacob, December 27, 1943, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

⁶³⁴ Jacob to Berger, December 28, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁶³⁵ Jacob to Berger, December 28, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁶³⁶ Berger to Jacob, January 10, 1944, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

⁶³⁷ Jacob to Berger, January 12, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

⁶³⁸ Jacob to Vacano, November 23, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

result of the hostilities.⁶³⁹ Of all those involved, Reger appears to have suffered most from the controversy, and she probably was among those least to blame for the debacle. Since Reger handled much of the FDB's business administration and correspondence, she was in the middle of the in-fighting among the ensemble as well as the quarrels between the ensemble and Jacob. Her letters have a tone of frustration which one could understand as a sign of reluctance to be involved in the disputes. Writing to Berger, Reger lamented that the affair "hat mir mit unmissverständlicher Deutlichkeit gezeigt, an welchem falschem Platz ich stehe, welche lächerliche Rolle ich bisher gespielt habe."⁶⁴⁰ Her letter to Berger allows for several interpretations. It is unclear whether she is upset with Jacob or the ensemble, or with just about everybody. It is certain, however, that she was very frustrated by the whole affair. Later that month she left the stage for good and relocated to Montevideo, where she found work on the radio program *La voz del día* and at the theater, *Die Komödie*. In 1946 she and Jacob finalized their separation through a formal divorce. Reger was co-founder of the FDB and directed over forty of its performances, including its internationally acclaimed 1942 production of Lillian Hellman's *Die Unbesiegtten (Watch on the Rhine)*, which Reger had translated into German.⁶⁴¹ With her departure the stage lost one of its most energetic and influential members.

⁶³⁹ Jacob to Ensemble, January 7, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

⁶⁴⁰ Reger to Berger, January 7, 1944, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

⁶⁴¹ "Die Unbesiegtten," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 31, 1942.

3.2 Laughing instead of Crying

Of the 150 different dramas the FDB performed during the WWII period, the vast majority were comedies. The disproportionately large number of comedies did not escape the attention of critics reviewing the stage from near and far, such as Julius Bab, who in 1948 observed with mild censure: “Die Hauptmasse der 185 Vorstellungen gehört aber dem Unterhaltungstheater, das von qualitätvollen Produkten [...] bis in die Niederungen reicht.”⁶⁴² While it is true that the FDB’s repertoire features a disproportionate number of comedies, the theater did not neglect serious drama. In its first five years, it produced authors such as Ibsen, Schiller, Gorki, Maugham, Sudermann, Katajew, Zweig, Herzl, Ardrey, Holz and Jerschke, Hellman, Capek, Rolland, Pirandello, Kaiser, and Schnitzler, as well as several religious dramas. At a stage such as the New Yorker Players from Abroad this would have been equal to the sum total number of plays performed over such a time span. In numerical terms, the FDB played a far greater number of serious dramas than other attempts at *Exiltheater* in New York, Shanghai, Mexico City,⁶⁴³ or Montevideo.⁶⁴⁴

There were also a great many reasons, ranging from the pragmatic to the psychological, why the FDB played far more comedies than tragedies or political dramas. In part the great number of pieces played explains why so many of them were comedies. Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla recalls the obvious problem of

⁶⁴² Julius Bab. “Deutsches Theater in Argentinien,” *Staatszeitung und Herold*, May 16, 1948).

⁶⁴³ Ingird Maaß, *Repertoire der deutschsprachigen Exilbühnen, 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Hamburger Arbeitsstelle für deutsche Exilliteratur, 1989), 114-155, 69-73, 40-41.

⁶⁴⁴ Fritz Pohle, *Emigrationstheater in Südamerika abseits der “Freien Deutschen Bühne”*, *Buenos Aires* (Hamburg: Hamburger Arbeitsstelle für deutsche Exilliteratur, 1989), 28-29.

performing so many pieces in such a short time: “¿Cómo pensás, vos, que una obra hecha en una semana puede ser buena?”⁶⁴⁵ Jacques Arndt concurs: “Si uno tiene que hacer una obra en una semana, tiene poco tiempo para profundaciones psicológicas. Generalmente se trataba, entonces, de aprender el texto, y que los directores le diéramos una forma teatral.”⁶⁴⁶ It was difficult to prepare any piece for performance in a single week, sometimes less, especially for spectators who were accustomed to seeing theater in European cultural centers, such as Vienna, Berlin, and Prague: “El público era un público europeo inteligente: médicos, abogados, profesores.”⁶⁴⁷ Given their working conditions and the expectations of their public, it was very difficult for the FDB to prepare more than a few complex five-act dramas, especially those written in verse, per season. Jacob and Reger began preparing for the production of Lillian Hellman’s *Die Unbesiegten* in December of 1941, eight months before the premiere.⁶⁴⁸ It would not have been possible to do this for many dramas. They simply did not have enough time or members to prepare such works adequately for an urban, educated public who held them to a high standard.

A related issue is whether, considering that the ensemble and its audience were refugees struggling under the weight of a horrific past, troubled present, and uncertain future, they would have wanted to perform or view tragedies even if

⁶⁴⁵ Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, “Recordando a Hedy Crilla,” 21. “How do you think that a work prepared in one week can be good?—Trans.”

⁶⁴⁶ Arndt, interview, December 25, 2008.

⁶⁴⁷ Cora Roca and Jacques Arndt, “Recordando a Hedy Crilla,” 21. “The public was an intelligent European public: doctors, lawyers, professors—Trans.”

⁶⁴⁸ Jacob to Hellman, December 26, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

they had had the option. In Wuppertal Jacob had already suggested that in “Zeiten wirtschaftlicher und seelischer Depression“ audiences prefer lighter dramatic genres, seeking in the theater respite from an anxious present.⁶⁴⁹ In this sense the situation in Buenos Aires during World War II was similar to Wuppertal in 1932. Additionally, most emigrants in the *neue Kolonie* were neither politically nor religiously engaged. In Europe this demographic group generally had visited the theater in search of entertainment, and in Buenos Aires, too, comedies and operettas at the FDB consistently drew larger audiences than other genres. As I will show in what follows, particularly in the early years emigrants found more enjoyment in looking backward with nostalgia to an idealized, if irrevocable, past than in facing a foreboding future.

The psychology and physiology of humor sheds much insight on the prevalence of comedies at the Freie Deutsche Bühne. On stage and in the audience, comedies had a vital role to play in the lives of these traumatized refugees. Holocaust survivor, neurologist, and clinical psychiatrist Viktor Frankl argues that humor is essential to maintaining a healthy outlook on life, even in the grimmest possible contexts. He claims that humor is especially beneficial for individuals suffering from conditions common to the refugee experience, including depression, self-doubting, jealousy, insomnia, chronic complaining, and fear.⁶⁵⁰ Humor and laughter are salutary on physiological and psychological levels. In his essay, “On the Physiology of Laughter,” Herbert Spencer states that there is an intimate connection between nervous energy and our motor nervous

⁶⁴⁹ Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

⁶⁵⁰ Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1960), 204.

system. Nervous energy tends to beget muscular motion. When anger, for example, reaches a certain intensity it often leads to physical aggression. The muscular movements of laughter, however, do not issue any practical action. Laughter is an innocuous form of releasing suppressed emotions and likely functioned as a healthy release for tension in the FDB's ensemble and its public.

In *Poetics* Aristotle posits laughter as a benign, cathartic form of discharging excess emotion, a theory also supported by centuries of medical studies.⁶⁵¹ In 1893, for example, psychologist John Dewey described laughter as “the sudden relaxation of strain,” occurring “through the medium of breathing and the vocal apparatus.”⁶⁵² More recently Dr. William Fry of Stanford University Medical School has linked Dewey's theory to concrete physiological phenomena. According to Fry, laughter involves a rapid, prolonged acceleration of the heartbeat, which is invigorating during laughter and facilitates relaxation afterward. Laughing benefits the respiratory system as well. During normal breathing, much “tidal air”—a residuum of carbon-dioxide laden vapors—remains in the lungs. Guffaws catalyze heavy breathing, evacuating tidal air and increasing “air exchange.” The new intake is oxygen-rich and interfaces with lung tissue at the site where the carbon-dioxide residuum had been. The improved air exchange replaces sluggishness with renewed mental verve. Laughter also produces catecholamines, a group of three chemicals which stimulate the nervous system and mental alertness, the best known of which is adrenaline. Together with

⁶⁵¹ Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. John Baxter and Patrick Atherton (Montreal, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 6.

⁶⁵² John Dewey, “The Theory of Emotion,” *Psychological Review* 1 (1894): 559.

improved air-exchange, catecholamines trigger an increase in rapid/ brain-/ wave behavior which indicates greater alertness and enhanced cerebral functioning. Finally, Fry also asserts that laughing stimulates the secretion of endorphins, the body's natural anesthetics. If external problems—and members of the *neue Kolonie* had many—are starting to provoke internal effects, such as a headache, a funny comedy at the theater is an effective remedy.⁶⁵³

In addition to its physical benefits, humor is a boon to the psychological health of oppressed individuals and communities. Whereas Freud believed laughter released repressed hostilities and sexual desires, for Schopenhauer laughter was an escape from the inexorable congruity of “Dame Reason.”⁶⁵⁴ Paul Walter Jacob's theory that modern, popular comedies are essentially fairy tales for adults follows Schopenhauer's thinking:

Und was ist Molnars „1-2-3“ – Bankdirektor, seine Kinoplätze anweisende „Fee“, was ist das Mädels aus dem Volk“ unzähliger Wiener und Budapester Erfolgsstücke, was ist der „forsche Bonvivant“ der Pariser Ehekomödie, was sind sie alle anders als Zaubergestalten, Märchen Figuren, unerfüllte Sehnsüchte abgehetzter, überanstrengter, nur allzu vernünftiger Grosstädter des 20. Jahrhunderts?!⁶⁵⁵

In his book, *Taking Laughter Seriously*, John Morreall argues that any form of prohibition can cause frustration to mount among individuals who are vexed by infringements upon their range of expressions. Perhaps the gravest form of this stifled energy, Morreall continues, exists in people forced to live under the

⁶⁵³ William Fry and Waleed Salameh, *Humor and Wellness in Clinical Intervention* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 125-133.

⁶⁵⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (London: Routledge, 1964), 1: 76.

⁶⁵⁵ “Märchen-Theater,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 15, 1942.

heavy restrictions of a dictatorship.⁶⁵⁶ To combat such intense psychological distress, Viktor Frankl emphasizes the liberating, empowering effects of humor. The person with a sense of humor can never be fully dominated, even by a government which imprisons him, for his ability to laugh at what is incongruous will put him above it to some extent, and will preserve a measure of personal freedom, if not in movement, then at least in thought and spirit. This humor need not be manifested as resistance; it is a vitalizing force by virtue of its presence in one's psychological make-up.

In some cases, such as wartime, imprisonment, or under torture, humor is an imperative survival skill. Without it, the anguish of such conditions is unbearable. Frankl, who survived Auschwitz and Dachau, said of the concentration camps: "Unexpectedly most of us were overcome by a grim sense of humor. [...] Humor was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation. [...] Humor more than anything else in the human make-up can afford an ability to rise above any situation."⁶⁵⁷ Even the silliest plays had a very serious purpose in the nascent *neue Kolonie*.

Beneficial to individuals, humor has been considered a fundamentally social phenomenon for centuries. Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* is written as a long speech by the goddess Folly on her own behalf. In it she argues that it is folly, and the humor it generates, that allows humans to live together and even to

⁶⁵⁶ John Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1983), 21.

⁶⁵⁷ Viktor Frankl, *Viktor Frankl Recollections: An Autobiography* (New York: Insight Books, 1997), 97.

love each other: “In sum, no society, no union in life, could be either pleasant or lasting without me [Folly].”⁶⁵⁸ John Morreall remarks that laughter is contagious, and notes that the social character of laughter can be witnessed in theaters everywhere—the fuller the house, the easier it is to bring the audience to laughter. In spreading from person to person, laughter also has a cohesive effect. Laughing together, Morreall writes, unites people: “to laugh with another person, for whatever reason, even if only at a piece of absurdity, is to get closer to that person.”⁶⁵⁹ Whether as members of a theater audience or two people sharing a joke in the street, sharing humor is a friendly social gesture. Comedy, thus, was a genre especially conducive to community-building at the Freie Deutsche Bühne, and helped the stage to achieve a cohesion among its audience that prepared them for more serious dramas.

In addition to practical exigencies, there were also many psychological reasons why among European emigrant refugees in Buenos Aires during WWII comedy, not tragedy, was the genre of the day.

3.3 *Charley's Aunt* Travels to the River Plate

On October 11, 1941 the Freie Deutsche Bühne staged Brandon Thomas' farce, *Charley's Aunt*. One motive for staging this play was to ensure strong ticket sales at the end of season with an eye toward the lean summer months ahead. In its heyday *Charley's Aunt* was a wildly successful play. It was first performed in London on February 29, 1892 and was an instant hit, compiling a record-breaking

⁶⁵⁸ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 24.

⁶⁵⁹ Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously*, 115.

original run of 1,466 performances. Across the Atlantic, *Charley's Aunt* opened on Broadway at the Standard Theatre on October 2, 1893, where it ran for another historically long run of four years. Its success reveals Thomas' play to be apt for the Freie Deutsche Bühne's goals of inclusion and internationalism. Separate cinematic adaptations of *Charley's Aunt* were box-office hits in England, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Spain, and Russia. At the time of the FDB's premiere in 1941, Thomas' farce had established itself as the second-most performed English drama in the world, surpassed only by *Hamlet*.⁶⁶⁰ The FDB's production was also well-timed, staged shortly after the 1941 release of a Hollywood cinematic adaptation of Thomas' play, directed by Archie Mayo and starring Jack Benny.

Based on the play's history of commercial success and its simple, apolitical plot it is tempting, as some scholars have done, to dismiss the FDB's production of *Charley's Aunt* as a simple maneuver to fill seats.⁶⁶¹ However, the performance merits a closer look. As I have shown, humor of even the silliest, most benign variety had a very serious purpose in the *neue Kolonie*. Perhaps no other play demonstrated the importance of humor for the *neue Kolonie*'s morale. Moreover, close investigation of the performance shows that the even this most irrelevant farce could be modified to include a political element.

Let me begin with this second point. The FDB staged its own adaptation of the play, which departed significantly from the original script without altering

⁶⁶⁰ "Charleys Tante in der FDB," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 9, 1941.

⁶⁶¹ Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 183.

its basic plot. The original version of *Charley's Aunt* features musical interludes on several occasions, and it was in these spaces that the Freie Deutsche Bühne grafted its own perspective onto the drama. The FDB's Wolfgang Vacano expanded on the original musical content, and composed an elaborate "musikalische Untermalung," transforming "den Schwank halb in den Vaudeville."⁶⁶² These ditties, praised as "höchst lokal-aktuell," were sung by the FDB ensemble and included lyrics based on their experiences as German emigrants in South America.⁶⁶³ The couplets altered the basic tenor of the play, adding a strong undercurrent of social and political commentary to its farcical comedy.

Before the curtain rose, the Freie Deutsche Bühne had already contextualized *Charley's Aunt* in the framework of the refugee experience. The stage directions for the play indicate that the first scene opens with a few bars from "The Eton Boating Song."⁶⁶⁴ At the FDB, a portly Jewish man dressed in tights, a woolen skirt, and a frumpy blouse rushed in front of the curtain from stage right and, accompanied by a merry piano, addressed the audience directly.⁶⁶⁵ The action was a curious innovation, but the text was an even greater surprise:

Ja, rauchen Sie meine Herren, rauchen Sie meine Herren, rauchen Sie.
Rauchen, das tut ja so wohl
es rauchen ja alle Menschen
von einem zum anderen Pol.
Die Menschen, die rennen und sterben,

⁶⁶² "Charleys Tante," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 10, 1941.

⁶⁶³ "Charleys Tante," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 10, 1941.

⁶⁶⁴ Brandon Thomas, *Charley's Aunt* (London: Samuel French Inc., 1935), 9.

⁶⁶⁵ Photograph of performance of *Charley's Aunt*, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

die lügen und lieben wohl auch,
doch pflegt sich das alles zu geben
und übrig bleibt einzig der Rauch!⁶⁶⁶

The protagonist Lord Francourt Babberly, disguised as Charley's aunt, begins on a light note. He references his character's international success by displaying her knowledge of customs across the globe. Then, the tone quickly shifts. The Aunt's tune betrays a soft yet perceptible cognizance of the present day, tinged with a hint of nostalgia for the past. The merry piano imposes a jovial mood, but the melody belies a serious subject-matter. Stage and spectators alike have indeed been on the run, and many have witnessed death personally. They have somehow struggled through to South America, but brood over past lives of which only the smoke of death camps and warfare remains. The music and image are comical, yet serious undertones persist even in the lighter verses of her song:

In aller Herren Länder
fröhnt ich dem Rumgeschlender
die Sprachen lernte ich im hui,
ja ja, yes yes, sí sí, oui oui.
Doch mehr als die Familien
liebt ich mein Land Brasilien,
dort unter meinen Affen
kann ich in Ruhe paffen.⁶⁶⁷

Her song grows more specific, moving steadily closer to the spectators' own lives. She cloaks it in the jargon of luxury—"fröhnte ich dem Rumgeschlender"—but it is clear that Charley's aunt, too, has been in a great rush recently. The ambiguity remains—perhaps she has become so cosmopolitan through celebrity? Nonetheless, the audience can discern striking parallels between the aunt and

⁶⁶⁶ PWJA VI a) 280.

⁶⁶⁷ PWJA VI a) 280.

themselves. Curiously she has learned languages—English, Spanish, and French—which are the most common languages of the FDB’s emigrant audience. Furthermore she, like so many refugees, has left family behind and has traveled all the way to South America in search of tranquility. The succeeding verses carry further parallels:

Das Reisen ist heut’ mächtig schwer
denn wo nimmt man ein Visum her?
auch geht kein Schiff
du hast kein Geld
Verschlossen ist die ganze Welt.⁶⁶⁸

Charley’s aunt reveals herself to be familiar with the struggles of a refugee’s life on the run and the rejection with which they are often confronted. Her travels resemble their travels. She references the difficulties of finding safe passage, the frustrated attempts to acquire a visa, and the exorbitant prices of procuring entry to foreign countries. She communicates a familiar desperation—all routes of escape are barred and the world has turned its back on her plight. In spite of it all the piano continues its merry melody, and Charley’s aunt shows that amidst the adversity her sense of humor perseveres:

Doch ich weiss eine List
gib einfach vor du bist
Gepäck von Diplomaten
dann kommst Du in alle Staaten.⁶⁶⁹

On the one hand, hers is a cynical joke. The Aunt makes light of a global double-standard in which freedom and safety are determined by connections, rather than justice. On the other hand, she also invokes humor as a distancing mechanism. By

⁶⁶⁸ PWJA VI a) 280.

⁶⁶⁹ PWJA VI a) 280.

provoking his audience to see humor in the travails of exile, Jacob enables refugees, at least to some extent, to put themselves above their troubles. Through humor he initiates confrontation with the past, a small first step toward building the psychological fortitude necessary to surmount the challenges of the present.

The musical introduction concludes with a foray into the illustrious but irrevocable past of *Charley's Aunt*:

Als Charleys Tante schön benannt
bin ich Euch allen wohl bekannt
seit heut vor 50 Jahren
hab ich die Welt umfahren.
In London kam ich auf die Welt
verdiente dort ein Heidengeld,
mit Guido Thielscher in Berlin,
Millionen Menschen riss ich hin.

Nichtwahr meine Damen, nichtwahr meine Herren, wissen Sie noch
wie war mir noch damals so wohl
es liebten mich alle Menschen
von einem zum anderen Pol.
Doch sonst hat sich manches gegeben
und übrig blieb leider nur Rauch.⁶⁷⁰

He summarizes the play's brilliant success, noting particularly its multiple runs in Berlin featuring the popular Jewish actor Guido Thielscher. In a sense, as Jacob narrates his character's past he is also telling an idealized version of the emigrants' memories of their own lives in Europe before 1933. Like *Charley's Aunt*, members of the crowd and ensemble had been born in Europe and still regarded themselves as Europeans. In Europe they had been wealthier, had enjoyed greater professional success and more fulfilling social lives. In exile most were poor, lonely, and had to work outside their former professions.

Unfortunately, as the Aunt euphemistically notes, between then and now "hat sich

⁶⁷⁰ PWJA VI a) 280.

manches gegeben,” and nothing remains of their affluent pasts, only smoke. In Argentina in 1941, most if the spectators were probably unaware of how close Charley’s Aunt was to the truth.

Read as a written text, these final verses appear strikingly somber for a song which introduces a riotous comedy. The context of the performance, however, belies Jacob’s text. The message is delivered by a heavysset, balding, well-known, respected artist and intellectual—only now he is dressed in a long skirt, ruffled blouse, pink tights, and curly wig. Moreover, he is not reciting the text as in one of his scholarly lectures, but instead is singing along to a jolly, upbeat piano. Jacob’s humor follows Schopenhauer’s theory of incongruity. According to Schopenhauer laughter is caused by a mismatch between conceptual understanding and perception of the same object. Through his ditty Jacob also teaches his audience how—at least occasionally—to view their struggles and sufferings through the rosy lens of humor. Moreover, he reveals that their sadness and sufferings need not be solitary experiences. Their experiences as refugees are common to the FDB ensemble, to most members of the audience and, as Jacob tells it, even to the famed Doña Lucia d’Alvadorez. For all their individual sorrows, the crowd can laugh together at their misfortunes and gain solidarity through humor. Like clowns and jesters, Jacob’s comical figure communicated serious insights which belied her silly appearance.

The FDB altered neither the original plot nor dialogue of *Charley’s Aunt*. Thomas’ farce ran its usual course of innocuous situational comedy, but Vacano’s musical couplets were more complex than the play’s light and easy narrative.

When Lord Francourt Babberly enters the action disguised as Charley's aunt, for example, she introduces herself with a song. Like Jacob's introduction, her ditty can be understood from a variety of perspectives:

Leidenschaften schäumen,
in sinnlich heißen Träumen,
ach wie würdet ihr erschrecken,
könnt mein Inneres ich entdecken
doch besser tu ich's nicht, nein, nein, nein, nein.⁶⁷¹

In the context of the play, the couplet makes perfect sense. Lord Francourt Babberly and his companions, Jack Chesney and Charlie Wykeham, are smitten with several of the female characters in the play. The plot is instigated by Jack's dreamily misconceived maneuverings to win Kitty Verdun's hand. Babberly is reluctantly drawn into the ruse, and now stands before the audience disguised as Charley's rich aunt, Doña Lucia d'Alvadorez. For the many characters unaware of his disguise it would indeed be a shock were he to reveal his true self and affections. Yet we can also interpret Jacob's song as non-fiction. Many members of the audience are also in volatile emotional states, likely vexed by dreams, memories, and sentiments which they feel compelled to hide. For characters and theatergoers the fictitious situation is comic, but beneath its veneer lies a troubling condition which was very real for actors and spectators alike. The distressed content of Jacob's song represents a form of surrogation for theatergoers.⁶⁷² The ditties that the FDB carved into *Charleys Aunt* served as reflective interludes in which Jacob performed not *for* but *instead* of his public. As he sung these verses

⁶⁷¹ PWJA VI a) 280.

⁶⁷² Joseph Roach. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 113.

audiences likely projected an array of their anxieties onto the body of the performer, in his or her voice they may have imagined personal traumas that they themselves did not dare name.

In the third and final act of *Charleys Aunt* the problems created in the first two acts are resolved, multiple pairs of lovers come together, and the play concludes with its happy ending, "ganz wie es sich für eine zünftige Komödie ziemt."⁶⁷³ Before the curtain rises on Act Three the original script calls again for the Eton Boating Song, but at the FDB's performance Jacob performs another ditty in its stead. Like the first songs, its melody is very simple: "Ich sing Ihnen jetzt ein Couplet bitte vor, / ich denke, es geht wirklich leicht in das Ohr."⁶⁷⁴ The text, however, is far more direct than the previous two: "die Hauptsache ist, das ihn ein jeder versteht!" In his tune, Jacob sings a quixotic vision of how the emigrant experience might be, were its dilemmas so easily unraveled as in a comedy like *Charley's Aunt*:

Jüngst kam mit dem Dampfer an ein Emigrant,
der hat sich hier noch nicht sehr gut ausgekannt.
Die anderen aber, die lang schon hier sind,
die hegten und pflegten ihn fast wie ein Kind.
Die hab'n ihn mit Rat und Tat unterstützt,
sodass heut er ein Auto und Haus schon besitzt.
Dazu kriegt vom Hilfsverein täglich er Geld,
Gott ich weiss nicht, ob's wahr ist, man hat mir's erzählt!⁶⁷⁵

The good fortune of this fictitious recent emigrant contrasts starkly with the realities of the FDB ensemble and its public. Ideally they too would have been

⁶⁷³ "Charleys Tante," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 17, 1941.

⁶⁷⁴ Einlage Jacob II, Dritter Akt, PWJA VI a) 280.

⁶⁷⁵ Einlage Jacob II, Dritter Akt, PWJA VI a) 280.

welcomed and supported by “Die anderen,” i.e. German emigrants of the *alte Kolonie*, “die lang schon hier sind.“ Instead of assisting their compatriots, however, the nationalist German colony shunned refugees from Nazi Germany and made their lives exceedingly difficult. Possessing houses and cars in Argentina was sheer fantasy for most members of the *neue Kolonie*. They were lucky to rent a room and ride the public bus system. Although the “Hilfsverein” deutschprechender Juden attempted to assist new arrivals, it was overwhelmed by their numbers. It certainly could not offer them a daily allowance to fund a comfortable lifestyle. Instead, one is reminded of Jacques Arndt’s arrival in Uruguay in which, outfitted with nothing but ten dollars and false documents, he had to begin life anew, completely from scratch—“bon chances!” Jacob’s ditty is an ironic parody, contrasting real life outside the theater with the fictional narrative within it. The tune wins humor by virtue of its incongruity—the emigrants’ experiences in Argentina are so very different from the idealized version in Jacob’s song. The stanza ends with a self-reflexive cognizance of this disaccord: “ich weiss nicht, ob’s wahr ist.“ This lyrical wink betrays an awareness of emigrants’ struggles without relinquishing hope for better circumstances.

In the second and third stanzas, Jacob continues to contrast fantasy and reality, first covering world events and then narrowing his focus to a more local level:

Die Welt ist doch voll nur von Liebe und Glück,
es gibt nur noch Eintracht jetzt im Augenblick.
Die Menschen verehren und schätzen sich sehr,
das Wort Hass findet sich nicht mal im Lexikon mehr.
Es gibt keine Zwietracht und gibt keinen Zank,
es herrscht überall Einigkeit nur Gott sei Dank.

Drum ist's auch so friedlich auf der ganzen Welt,
wie schön wär's, wenn's wahr wär', und nicht nur erzählt!!!

Das Hornberger Schießen gemeinhin bekannt ist
doch apropos Schießen, dass die Afilantis
sich neulich versöhnt hat mit der N.C.I.
begrüßten ja alle mit viel Sympathie.
Es haben die Zionisten, es hat sich der Joint
am Busen Jacobys so gut ausgewoint,
sodass dieser Frieden jahrzehntelang hält,
Gott ich weiss nicht, ob's wahr ist, man hat mir's erzählt!⁶⁷⁶

This performance occurred at the height of WWII, as SS paramilitary death squads systematically were systematically murdering approximately 1.3 million Jews, gypsies, communists, intellectuals, and other civilians in Eastern Europe.⁶⁷⁷ Just a few months later senior officials of the Nazi regime met at the Wannsee Conference to disseminate plans for the Final Solution. The audience at the Casa de Teatro could also attest to Nazi crimes against humanity. Meanwhile, Jacob imagines a world characterized by a peace and harmony so perfect that the word hate disappears from dictionaries. This is so unthinkable that he does not even pretend it could be true: “wie schön wär's, wenn's wahr wär', und nicht nur erzählt!!!“ And yet, Jacob's ability to imagine and communicate such a world to his audience indicates that he, at least, has not lost hope altogether. The content of this stanza is broad enough to be understood by all German-speakers, and if translated it would be intelligible to an even wider public.

The following verses reduce the target audience to a very narrow group. Jacob introduces the next stanza with a reference to the “Hornberger Schießen,” an event said to have taken place in Hornberg, Germany, in 1564. Informed that

⁶⁷⁶ Einlage Jacob II, Dritter Akt, PWJA VI a) 280.

⁶⁷⁷ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (London : Yale University Press 2003).

Duke Christoph of Württemberg would be visiting, residents of Hornberg prepared a salute with cannons and gunfire. As they waited at the town gates, the citizens successively mistook a post chaise, a herd of cattle, and a peddler for the duke, so that when the duke finally did arrive, they had exhausted their ammunition and could only yell and cheer his welcome. The event, the veracity of which historians dispute, is the basis of the German expression, “das geht aus wie das Hornberger Schießen,” which indicates great anticipation for an event which turns out to be anticlimactic. Jacob makes use of the “Hornberger Schießen” to cheer another, localized mirage. The phrase lays the groundwork for his celebration of an imagined, but very unlikely ten-year peace between various bickering Jewish organizations in Argentina and Uruguay. The terms which signify these groups are familiar to the German-Jewish milieu in these countries, but are probably indecipherable for anyone else. Afilantis, for example, is an acronym for the Spanish translation of the Hilfsverein deutschprechender Juden, *Asociación Filantrópica Israelita*, which is also mentioned in the opening stanza. The Hilfsverein, a charity group open to all Jews, was constantly at bitter odds with the NCI, an outspoken and uncompromising Zionist organization with branches in Buenos Aires (Nueva Comunidad Israelita) and Montevideo (Nueva Congregación Israelita). Jacob builds on the anticipation of conflict that these organizations generate with references to other international groups with which they cooperate—Zionists and the American Joint Distribution Committee. He then moves in a surprising direction, bringing the whole collage together in a hilarious scene not of strife, but of reconciliation, with all groups crying on the

bosom of Dr. Werner Jacoby, Rabbi and chairman of the NCI in Montevideo. The end rhyme “ausgewoint” accentuates the humor by giving a Yiddish pronunciation to the German word. It is a bold parody of the frequent and acrimonious bickering among local Jews, and encourages spectators to chuckle at themselves, their milieu, and the notion of a ten-year peace within their community which, like the “Hornberger Schießen,” can only be a mirage. As fate would have it, within a year members of Afilantis and the NCI were involved in a bitter feud over declarations by Hermann Gebhardt, the Jewish director of the radio program *La voz del día*, at an antifascist demonstration in Montevideo.

When the play was performed in Montevideo in March of 1942, some of the lyrics had taken on a new meaning. Now, after the Wannsee Conference, the aunt’s line, “übrig blieb leider nur Rauch“ indicated new, sinister current events about which a large percentage of the audience had likely read in local newspapers. The FDB also added another, somewhat lighter non-fictional frame to the piece, linking laughter and attendance at the FDB with commitment to antifascism. Before the production, Jacob added another stanza to the Aunt’s introductory song, updating the famous Aunt’s whereabouts and focusing her attention on emigrants in Uruguay:

Aus Buenos Aires, Calle Santa Fe
komm ich heute her mit der FDB
doch frei gesagt, ich fürchte mich
vorn Publikum ganz fürchterlich.
Denn klassisch bin ich leider nicht,
und lacht ihr nicht mal heute
dann glaub’ ich machen wir ploite.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁸ Montevideo Gastspiel 1942, PWJA VI b) 281.

Jacob links the FDB's commercial viability directly to its ability to make theatergoers laugh. To the minutest details, such as forming end rhymes with the Yiddish pronunciation of the words "ausgewoint" and "ploite," all these songs deploy common cultural markers, such as language, to establish a close relationship between the theater and its audience. As he reiterates in another ditty, Jacob understands that without a truly dedicated public the FDB would go bankrupt very quickly: "Ich denke Sie wissen doch alle / wie gern ich Sie immer hier seh, / Wir Künstler, wir brauchen Sie nötig / damit unsere Bühne besteh."⁶⁷⁹ The FDB did perform political plays and advocate antifascism, however it also recognized that community-building among emigrants, most of whom were not politically active, had to occur through less direct means as well. Frequently its productions had no other aim than to bring its audiences to laughter:

Na sieh mal an wer hätt's gedacht
Ihr habt ja heute brav gelacht
und habt Ihr Euch recht wohl gefühlt,
dann haben wir nicht umsonst gespielt.⁶⁸⁰

Comedies such as *Charley's Aunt* also had a positive psychological impact on the ensemble. Its unconventional roles created a space for actors such as Jacques Arndt und Walter Lenk to enjoy the carefree days of a student life which, as Jewish teenagers threatened by Nazism, they had been denied: "Wie gern spielten sie diese Halb-Knaben, wie freut sich das Kind im Manne, wenn es spielen darf."⁶⁸¹ In the clothes of a middle-aged woman Paul Walter Jacob also

⁶⁷⁹ FDB Schlager, PWJA VI a) 280.

⁶⁸⁰ Montevideo Gastspiel 1942, PWJA VI b) 281.

⁶⁸¹ "Charleys Tante," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 10, 1941.

found a release from daily worries and pressure: “Herr Jacob ... fand da seine Rolle. Er lebte sich aus.”⁶⁸² Relations between Jacob and many members of the ensemble were strained, and the cast—probably from a variety of motives—found great humor in seeing their sometimes headstrong boss in this role: ”manchmal die Leute auf der Szene [konnten] selber nicht das Lachen verkneifen.”⁶⁸³

The laughter on stage was contagious and spread,”quicklustig und springlebendig wie zur Zeit vor nahezu 50 Jahren, “throughout the audience.”⁶⁸⁴ The *Tageblatt* continued the narrative Jacob had begun in his introductory ditty, and compared the guffaws to previous performances of *Charleys Aunt* in Europe: “Wir selbst haben Guido Thielscher in dieser Rolle gesehen und können uns nicht erinnern damals stürmischer gelacht zu haben als heute Abend.”⁶⁸⁵ The *Jüdische Wochenschau* joined in the fun with its review of *Charleys Aunt*: ”Doña Lucia de Alfajores, pardon, Alvadores, Charleys Tante, haben die Jahre nichts von ihrer Jugendfrische rauben können.”⁶⁸⁶ Like Jacob’s couplets, this joke targets a very specific public. Only emigrants to Buenos Aires would understand the play on words, which confuses the protagonist’s name, Alvadores, with a local Argentine delicacy, pastries of cookie and *dulce de leche* called alfajores. Such localized humor was a cohesive force among emigrants, because it demonstrated that they

⁶⁸² “*Charleys Tante*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 10, 1941.

⁶⁸³ “Montevideo Gastspiel,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 19, 1942.

⁶⁸⁴ “*Charleys Tante*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 17, 1941.

⁶⁸⁵ “*Charleys Tante*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 10, 1941.

⁶⁸⁶ “*Charleys Tante*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 17, 1941.

were a community bound by common experiences, customs, and cultural markers which were unique to themselves.

The FDB received numerous grateful letters from the audience for its performance of *Charleys Aunt*. One letter indicates that the play had a psychological impact far more profound than its farcical plot suggests. Its writer Peter Bussemeyer, also a journalist for the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, encourages the FDB to read his letter aloud at one of its productions. He writes in the second person plural in order to communicate with the *neue Kolonie* directly.

Bussemeyer begins with a simple reflection on the pleasure of laughing—“Wo habt Ihr denn in der ganzen letzten Zeit so lachen können?”—and then uses laughter as a transition to discuss of the past.⁶⁸⁷ He notes that the laughter was, in a sense, a relic of spectators’ former lives in Europe: ”wahrscheinlich haben viele von Euch diese olle Tante [...] schon einmal kennen gelernt [...] und das muss ein phantastischer Genuss gewesen sein. Na ja, Ihr habt also...”⁶⁸⁸ His tone emits a whiff of whimsical nostalgia for the “phantastischer Genuss” of yesteryear. The final words, “Na ja, Ihr habt also,” seem to anticipate a bemused anticlimax, in which the troubled years between 1933 and 1941 are involuntarily recalled, only to be skipped over and repressed. In truth, however, Bussemeyer only feints nostalgia in order to move to a direct confrontation with more recent trauma: “Aber, Herrschaften, das war ja alles damals – und seitdem haben wir viel

⁶⁸⁷ Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

⁶⁸⁸ Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

geweint [...] Ihr wisst ja alle.⁶⁸⁹ Bussemeyer acknowledges that these better and safer times have gone up in the smoke of Jacob's songs: "wenn überhaupt noch etwas übrig ist, bittere Erinnerung blieb – an eine Zeit, da man es leicht hatte, schwebte, ohne Pässe über Grenzen kommen konnte, auch morgen seines Lebens sicher war."⁶⁹⁰ For many emigrants the past, when recalled at all, serves only to emphasize the misery of the present. In Buenos Aires, the protagonist of Brandon's farce can never be more than an "Ersatz-Tante." She can never restore the carefree days of Guido Thielscher in Berlin, "vor dem Kriege." And yet, he insists, emigrants must not succumb to grief and nostalgia. The present, as represented by Jacob's Aunt, is not futile: "wenn sie auch eine Ersatz-Tante ist, so wollen wir doch nicht vergessen, dass sie in dieser Rolle einiges Gute stiftet, drei junge Paare und außerdem noch ein älteres Paar zusammenbringt, dass sie also eine sehr trostreiche Ersatz-Tante ist."⁶⁹¹ Though a farcical figure on stage, Bussemeyer attributes a very serious function to Charley's Aunt off it. By means of comedies, audience and ensemble, which Bussemeyer links using a single pronoun, "wir," can recover the most buoyant of human sentiments: "dieses über alle Zeiten erhabene Lachen, dieses wirklich ganz große Gefühl."⁶⁹² The most valuable accomplishment of the FDB's performance, Bussemeyer concludes, is to

⁶⁸⁹ Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

⁶⁹⁰ Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

⁶⁹¹ Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

⁶⁹² Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

have conveyed one decisive, edifying truth to the *neue Kolonie*: “Lachen, Herrschaften, ist also stärker gewesen als Tod und Tränen.”⁶⁹³

The example of *Charley’s Aunt* is an instructive one. All dramas become pliant when subjected to the dynamics of theatrical performance. Even the most unlikely of genres, the farce, could be made relevant and purposeful—and even somewhat political—for refugees in Buenos Aires in Montevideo. In its revised version of *Charley’s Aunt*, the Freie Deutsche Bühne employed the farcical genre to compel spectators to grapple with their traumatic pasts, learn to view them from a sounder perspective, and rekindle a capacity for humor and hope which strengthens them for the future.

3.4 Who are ‘we’? Defining community in Carl Rössler’s *Die fünf Frankfurter*

Of the many comedies the Freie Deutsche Bühne performed, the most successful by far was Carl Rössler’s idyll of Frankfurt’s Rothschild family, *Die fünf Frankfurter*. From 1941 to 1944, it was performed ten times to sold-out audiences in Buenos Aires and Montevideo.⁶⁹⁴ In 1941 Balder Olden wrote in the *Tageblatt* that *Die fünf Frankfurter* “ist ein Lustspiel, das von Jahr zu Jahr süffiger wird wie Burgunderwein.”⁶⁹⁵ Had he possessed a crystal ball, Olden might have chosen a different adjective, but it is certain that the drama lost none of its popularity or relevance as the years of exile passed. Even in 1949, nearly a decade after its debut, an actor’s collective under the direction of the FDB’s Max

⁶⁹³ Bussemeyer to Jacob, October 18, 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

⁶⁹⁴ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 68.

⁶⁹⁵ “Brief nach Montevideo,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 6, 1941.

Wächter performed the comedy to full houses at the Consejo de Mujeres theater. In *Die fünf Frankfurter* Rössler addresses questions of Jewish identity and acculturation, playing various generations, traditions, and ambitions against each other over the course of a three-act drama. By virtue of its subject-matter and longevity, *Die fünf Frankfurter* represents a unique opportunity to evaluate changing sentiments within the *neue Kolonie* against the backdrop of a single play.

Unlike Thomas' *Charley's Aunt*, the FDB added nothing to Rössler's comedy. While both plays can be classified broadly as comedies, there are significant differences between them. As pure farce, *Charley's Aunt* is essentially a continuum of jokes and laughable situations loosely strung together along a simple, superficial storyline. *Die fünf Frankfurter*, by contrast, is a *Lustspiel*, distinguishable from mere farce. The main characters in *Die fünf Frankfurter* have greater depth than the caricatures in *Charley's Aunt*. Between laughs Rössler's drama addresses serious moral and political issues. It has a many layered tragic background and thus is not a farce but a true comedy, "ein Lustspiel im besten Sinne des Wortes, bei dem das helle Lachen mitunter von der leise zerrinnenden Träne abgelöst wird."⁶⁹⁶ Rössler's play has a complex and serious plot, whose outcome titters on the cusp of tragedy until its very last scene.

Although Rössler wrote *Die fünf Frankfurter* in 1911, his play focuses on the same issues of Jewish acculturation, religion, and identity which were at the center of discussions within the refugee community on the River Plate. At the

⁶⁹⁶ "Die fünf Frankfurter," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 24, 1949.

same time, it presents a detailed portrait of Jewish life in Frankfurt's famous *Judengasse*. According to the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, the FDB's production was tinged with an anticipation of intimate reunion: "In dem bis auf den letzten Platz gefüllten Theater [...] lag vom ersten Anblick an etwas Besonderes in der Luft: etwas Erwartungsvolles, etwas Familiäres, etwas von der Vorfreude eines großen Familienfestes, zu dem sich die Gäste bereits versammelt haben und das nun seinen Anfang nehmen soll."⁶⁹⁷ The *Jüdische Wochenschau*'s invocation of familial closeness expresses an imagined memory of Jewish community in Europe and Buenos Aires. In neither place were Jews as close as the paper imagined, yet this theatrical performance of Jewish traditions, carefully constructed in exilic disruption, enabled the invention of such an intimacy. In 1941, when *Die fünf Frankfurter* premiered, the Nazis were exterminating the Jews of Europe. An exodus of hundreds of thousands occurred, and millions more were forcibly deported, imprisoned and, eventually, murdered. Yet, as Joseph Roach remarks in *Cities of the Dead*, such loss, even by Holocaust, can actually contribute to cultural definition and preservation among survivors.⁶⁹⁸ Nothing highlighted European Jewish culture—and nothing inspired its cultivation in exile—more than its destruction.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁷ "Die fünf Frankfurter," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 27, 1941.

⁶⁹⁸ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 6.

⁶⁹⁹ As Toni Morrison has observed, "The concept of freedom did not emerge in a vacuum. Nothing highlighted freedom—if it did not in fact create it—like slavery." Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

The catastrophe of the Shoah catalyzed a vigorous campaign for Jewish community and religious and cultural preservation in Buenos Aires. The FDB contributed to this effort by reenacting European Jewish memory and community through theatrical performances, such as Rössler's *Die fünf Frankfurter*. The FDB spatially anchored its depiction of Jewish religious and cultural continuity in Frankfurt's *Judengasse*, ever present through the windows of the Rothschild family residence. Jacques Arndt's *mise-en-scene*, in which individual space is made impossible through overlapping stacks of porous dwellings, bolsters architecturally the intimate relations within this religious family.⁷⁰⁰ The image and importance of family is reinforced by the cast and trajectory of Rössler's play, whose core characters are the "alte Juddefrau," Gudula Rothschild, and her five sons. Their reunion in Frankfurt's *Judengasse* from Vienna, London, Paris, and Naples represents a suspended diaspora, and the plot confirms the Rothschild family's tenacious unity while stressing its vulnerability. Jewish identity and community in *Die fünf Frankfurter* are depicted as precious, precarious, and corruptible, manifested by resilient affection among mother Gudula and her distant sons, Anshelm, Salomon, Nathan, Carl, and Jacob. Throughout much of the play the endurance of Jewish values appears at risk as cultural and religious gaps between different generations widen. Nonetheless, these traditional values, embodied by the Rothschild family matriarch and her deceased spouse, guide the family through times of crisis and decisively conduce to the drama's harmonious conclusion.

⁷⁰⁰ Sketch for *Die fünf Frankfurter*, Jacques Arndt Collection.

Spatially, the plot moves along two axes: the (imagined) autochthonous, which is personified by the aging *Juddefrau* Gudula and represented physically by the *Judengasse*, and the diasporic, which features the migration and acculturation of the five brothers into Christian society outside the *Gas*.⁷ The action begins in the Rothschild family home, where Jacob, the youngest of the five brothers returning home from Paris, encounters Rosa, an elderly servant who has never strayed from the *Judengasse*. The stage directions demonstrate at once the fundamental tension of the comedy—the threat of Christian society outside the *Judengasse* to efface the brothers’ Jewishness. The script first calls attention to the superficial traits of this dissipation: “Er [Jacob] hat in London und Paris die besten äußeren und inneren Manieren gelernt, [...] und ist bestrebt, ebenso wie seine Brüder, das wenig Jüdische in seinem Äußeren zu kaschieren.”⁷⁰¹ His impression contrasts markedly with his mother, Gudula, who enters the action with prayer book in hand and dressed in an ankle-length, long-sleeved, black dress appropriate for an orthodox Jewess. As she and Jacob converse, Gudula’s strong bond with family and religion emerge in greater fullness. She has come from the temple, she explains, where she was commemorating the death of her father. In the temple, a place of memory, the family’s genealogy is palpable: “Es ist Jahrzeit von meinem Vater selig. Jaköble, ich geh so gern im Tempel [...] In der Eck is mei Vater g’sesse. Das ist der Stuhl von meim selige Mann. Von dort herab habe sie ihm das Totegebet g’sproche. Da werde se auch mal für mich murmeln.”⁷⁰² Gudula’s worship in the synagogue represents a performative

⁷⁰¹ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 3, PWJA VI j) 350.

practice which maintains religious and familial continuity. The French historian Jacques Le Goff has asserted that living memory, conveyed by mnemonic materials, such as speech, image, and gesture, is a form of historical documentation equally as valid as scripted records, such as archives. These materials transmit culture from one generation to the next by means of restored behavior in which mnemonic materials principally give expression to: 1) genealogies, particularly of leading families, and; 2) practical formulas of daily living and special observances, particularly those “deeply imbued with religious magic.”⁷⁰³ While Le Gogh’s interest is in oral cultures, “those without writing,” performance studies has posited that as “orature” such mnemonic tools continue to have relevance in constructing memory among societies with writing. Gudula’s ritualized commemoration of her father’s death, her visions of her own Kaddish, and her distinctive Frankfurter dialect evince a social continuity and religious and cultural preservation which she fears is in peril among her sons. It is somewhat surprising that Gudula does not speak in Yiddish. On the other hand, the Jewish Rössler wrote in German, and it is probable that many spectators in the Casa del Teatro, most of whom were Jewish, did not speak Yiddish. Gudula’s Frankfurter dialect might also evince the progressive alienation from Jewish culture that the *Juddefrau* worries about in her sons. She intimates this concern to Jacob at the play’s outset: “Lebste auch richtig in Paris? Mir is eigentlich gar net recht, dass meine Bube so in der Welt verstreut sin.”⁷⁰⁴ Gudula realizes that outside of

⁷⁰² Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 3, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷⁰³ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 58.

Judengasse many of her sons' links to the mnemonic materials which help conserve the Jewish community's cultural and religious identity are being severed.

Her fears are confirmed in the ensuing scenes. The Rothschild brothers fail to display the mnemonic materials of living memory which their mother exhibits. When her son Salomon arrives from Vienna, he heads straight to the stock exchange in Frankfurt's center. Only later does he visit his mother in the *Judengasse* outside the city walls. Amschel, who lives within Frankfurt's city walls, betrays disdain for the religion of his ancestors when, chided for his failure to have children, he responds: "A neie Synagog tät ich baue, wenn ich wüsst, dass's was nützen tät."⁷⁰⁵ Gudula tries to maintain practical daily traditions by cooking matzah ball soup for the family, but her efforts are countered by her sons' insistence that she leave the family home and move to another location outside the *Judengasse*. Carl, who has returned to the *Judengasse* from Naples, is especially forceful: "Alle Pietät in Ehren—ich könnt net hier leben! [...] Unsere Mutter gehört in ein schönes, gesundes Haus in einer guten Gegend."⁷⁰⁶ Far from honoring his ancestor's religion, Carl invokes religious piety for the purpose of undercutting his family's links to Frankfurt's Jewish community. When he says "in einer guten Gegend," Carl is advocating that his mother leave the *Judengasse*. Realizing her mild protests are to no avail, Gudula becomes adamant: "Hier habe

⁷⁰⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 3, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷⁰⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 5, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷⁰⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 9, PWJA VI j) 350.

ich mit Eurem Vatter all die glücklichen Jahren meiner Ehe verlebt, hier habe ich meine Kinder geboren, hier haben sie meinen guten Amschel hinausgetragen---- hier geh ich net raus!⁷⁰⁷ Gudula cites an entire life cycle of the Rothschild family—marriage, birth, and death—as bonds of memory which hold her fast to the family home within the traditional *Judengasse*.

Outside its confines, Gudula’s sons have shifted their priorities away from the mores of Jewish cultural heritage and toward acculturation in Christian society. Just after Gudula’s refusal to leave the *Judengasse*, Salomon divulges to his family his motives for calling them all together. The Austrian ruling family has bestowed the noble title of Baron on the Rothschild family. Salomon has accepted, and his brothers are thrilled. Only Gudula and Jacob demur. Jacob doubts that the title has anything more than superficial significance: “Es ist noch gar nicht so lange her, wie ich ein kleiner Bub war, da haben sie da draußen ‘hepp hepp’ gerufen.”⁷⁰⁸ He references pogroms which occurred across Europe in 1819, just three years before the play’s setting, as a protest to legislation granting Jews equal legal rights. A proclamation from the pogroms in Danzig reinforces his allusion: “Unser Kampfgeschrei sey Hepp! Hepp! Hepp! Aller Juden Tod und Verderben, Ihr müßt fliehen oder sterben!”⁷⁰⁹ While audiences at the FDB shuddered at this clairvoyant vision of European Jews’ catastrophic future, his brother Nathan casts his lot with acculturation: “Eben deshalb! Jetzt werden sie es

⁷⁰⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 9, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷⁰⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 10, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷⁰⁹ Stefan Rohrbacher and Michael Schmidt, *Judenbilder* (Reinbek: Rowohlt TB, 1990), 263.

nicht mehr wagen.”⁷¹⁰ Gudula also contributes a story of how the same royal family which now uses the Rothschilds’ financial services used to force her father to jump into a ditch as their coach drove past him. Here there is a deeper reference to institutionalized anti-Semitism. Frankfurt urban laws prohibited Jews from public sidewalks in her father’s day, they had to walk in the street instead.⁷¹¹ Jacob and Gudula draw from recent history to call the brothers’ hopes for acculturation into question. Given such a long and lurid history of European anti-Semitism, are aspirations to join gentile society feasible?

Their misgivings are countered by the other brothers’ unyielding will to acculturate. Salomon, in particular, is committed to joining the landed ranks of German aristocracy. He is even willing to exploit the Duke of Taunus’ need for a loan to pressure him into marrying his daughter, Löttchen. Salomon argues that marriage is the best means of consolidating the Rothschilds ascension into the upper echelons of Christian society: “Ich will, dass unsere Familie endlich einmal für voll genommen wird.”⁷¹² When Jacob voices concerns, Salomon responds with a phrase encapsulating his willful alienation from his Jewish roots: “Wenn ich nicht vor einer Viertelstunde Baron geworden wäre, würde ich Dir sagen: Du bist meschugge!!”⁷¹³ Salomon invokes the etymologically Yiddish term “meschugge” for the purpose of insulting his brother and justifying a move to

⁷¹⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 10, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷¹¹ James Fuchs, “Concerning the Jews of Frankfurt,” in *The Five Frankforters* (New York: The H.K. Fly Company, 1913), 20.

⁷¹² Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 12, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷¹³ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 12, PWJA VI j) 350.

distance himself from his family's religious heritage. Whereas his mother's uses mnemonic tools, such as her Frankfurter dialect, for the purposes of cultural preservation and social continuity, Salomon inverts this usage and invokes the Yiddish derivative as a means of social and cultural alienation from Judaism. Furthermore, his high German speech linguistically manifests Salomon's approximation to Christian nobility and his willful neglect of his Jewish roots.

The brothers' visit to Gustav, the Duke of Taunus, confirms the cultural gap between the Rothschilds and gentile aristocracy, demonstrating the threat that acculturation into Christian society poses to their cultural and religious heritage. The nobles' childish lifestyle of leisure—hunting, playing about on a swing set, drinking fine wine before noon—contrasts with the Rothschilds' industriousness. No character epitomizes this more than the Duke of Taunus who, rolling about on the grass, amuses himself by observing the world “aus der Armeisenperspektive.”⁷¹⁴ The nobles display varying degrees of anti-Semitism, revealing the Rothschild's hopes for acculturation as illusory. Fehrenberg, who the duke had sent to secure a loan from the Rothschilds, describes the *Judengasse*, “in der es so fremd roch,” as “amüsant [...] wo man Leute trifft, die Menschen, wie wir, sonst nicht zu sehen bekommen.”⁷¹⁵ As he continues, Fehrenberg opines that the Jews are not only a distinct, but also a competing society: “Du wirst gut daran tun, so vorsichtig als möglich zu sein [...] diese Leute sind rascher und schneller als wir [...] es ist ihr Ehrgeiz, uns zu

⁷¹⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 13, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷¹⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 15, PWJA VI j) 350.

übertölpeln.”⁷¹⁶ Fehrenberg, though he makes no pejorative remarks, views Jews as a different race altogether.⁷¹⁷ When his uncle, Pfalzgraf Moritz, hears the Rothschilds are invited to Taunus, he expresses an anti-Semitism so uncouth that Liselott Reger struck his comments from the text: “Ich hab gehört, dass sich einer Komödianten einladet und Seiltänzer und Feuerfresser. Aber so e Kuriosität ist mir noch nicht vorgekommen.” In remarks which presage Veit Harlan’s Nazi propaganda film, *Jüid Süs*s, Moritz insinuates that Jews are sexual predators, forbidding his daughter to leave her room while the Rothschilds are present: “Nein, solche Leute soll man sich nicht zu nahe kommen lassen. Da muss Distanz gewahrt werden!”⁷¹⁸ Moritz barricades his daughter from the Rothschilds as if they were a virus.

Scenes three and four, which feature Moritz, were omitted entirely from the Freie Deutsche Bühne’s production. One could speculate that Reger and Jacob likely made such omissions in order to shield their audience from his insults, but in so doing they also muted Rössler’s efforts to differentiate between Moritz’ virulent anti-Semitism, and the duke’s more moderate attitude. The duke resists his uncle’s harangue, and forcefully suggests that he reserve judgment until he has become acquainted with the family. After Moritz leaves the room, but before the scene has ended, the Duke of Taunus sighs that his uncle “ist um 100 Jahre zu spät auf die Welt gekommen [...] und ich hätte 100 Jahre später kommen

⁷¹⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 15, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷¹⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 15, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷¹⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 16, PWJA VI j) 350.

sollen.”⁷¹⁹ These are crucial scenes, because the distinction they illustrate between these two perspectives conveys the drama’s clearest hope for progress and greater future tolerance.

The FDB’s audience did witness Gustav receive another, unexpected visit before the Rothschilds appear. The Prince of Clausthal-Agorde, the duke’s uncle, is also surprised to hear that his nephew expects a visit from the Jewish bankers, however he expresses a more nuanced view than Moritz. He had planned to meet with the Rothschilds, who are his bankers, for business matters in Frankfurt. He tells the duke that although his relationship with the Rothschilds has been strictly professional, he is curious to see “die Herren, die ja ihre Mériten haben, einmal außerhalb ihres Kontors zu haben.”⁷²⁰ Nonetheless the Prince of Clausthal-Agorde finds it inappropriate that the Emperor has anointed the Rothschild family as barons. The prince here draws an important distinction. He respects the Rothschilds for their financial prowess and sees no problem in doing business with them, but wishes to keep separate in the private sphere.

When the Rothschilds do arrive, the brothers are impressed but alienated by the Taunus palace. The prince offers his “aufrichtigsten Glückwunsch” to the brothers for their ennoblement, although he has expressed his chagrin about their new title just minutes earlier. He commits a further offense when Anshelm says he is honored that the prince was invited together with the Rothschild family. It is coincidence that the two parties are there together, so the prince’s smiling response can only be understood as one of arrogant sarcasm: “Verehrter Herr

⁷¹⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 16, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 18, PWJA VI j) 350.

Baron, ich bin nur gekommen, um Sie zu sehen.”⁷²¹ The Rothschilds sense the insincerity and grow uneasy: “Die Leute sind sehr korrekt, aber ihre Höflichkeit klingt gespielt.” Nathan feels “unsicher,” and Karl mentions “mich beengt hier etwas.”⁷²² The tension quickly degenerates into a quarrel among the brothers. When Salomon remarks he could feel quite comfortable in the palace as the duke’s father-in-law, Nathan reprimands him: “Bedenke, dass wir auf feindlichem Boden stehen.”⁷²³ Anshelm is more subtle, but demonstrates an awareness of the breach such a relationship would signify for the religious heritage of both families: “Blos im Ritus wär ä kleiner Unterschied.”⁷²⁴ The unity of the family is strained after only a few minutes in Taunus. Theatergoers at the FDB probably perceived signs of irreconcilable conflict between the Christian nobles and their Jewish guests.

Tensions reach a climax when Salomon offers the duke his daughter’s hand in marriage in exchange for a loan to shore up his finances. Here again the line is drawn between business and private affairs, this time by Carl: “unser Bruder Salomon verlässt mit seinen Ausführungen das geschäftliche Gebiet, ich halte es für richtig [...] mich zu entfernen.”⁷²⁵ Two other brothers follow suit, illustrating the dissention that Salomon’s ambitions are likely to cause in the

⁷²¹ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 19, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²² Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 20, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²³ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 20, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 20, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 22, PWJA VI j) 350.

family. For his part, the duke is taken aback by Salomon's offer, but he does not refuse it:

Wissen Sie, wie Sie mir vorkommen? [...] Wie ein Mensch, der lange krumm gelegen ist und sich plötzlich aufreckt und von unten herauf nach einer Krone langt, wie ein—ich kann es nicht anders ausdrücken—wie der Seeräuber nach der Flagge des Admiralschiffs und sie mit festen Griff an sich reißt. Aber die Geste, mit der es geschieht hat etwas Heroisches—und das reißt mich fort! Und deshalb ziehe ich Ihren Vorschlag ernstlich in Erwägung.⁷²⁶

The duke's reply, which is absent from James Fuchs' popular English translation of the play, can be read as an aristocrat's narrative of European Jewish history since the Middle Ages.⁷²⁷ For centuries anti-Semitic legislation forced Jews out of city centers, isolated them in squalid ghettos, and zealously impeded them from improving their socioeconomic status. However, the duke's words "krumm gelegen" are ambiguous, avoiding an explicit reference to anti-Semitism. By contrast, Jewish efforts to join the European aristocracy, metonymically represented by the "Krone," are depicted as sudden and aggressive, even violent. The pirate seizing a naval ship portrays an outcast, with neither a fixed abode nor nationality, recalling the ostracized, nationless, propertyless Jewish people. Unless through trickery, pirates do not sail under a national flag. From the perspective of anti-Semites, Jews and pirates alike are nationless, parasitic migrants, preying on the wealth of others. Jewish efforts to become equal, even governing, citizens of European nations were akin to pirates seizing the national flag of a naval ship. The image is a strong one, provoked by Salomon's bold

⁷²⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 23, (PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²⁷ Carl Roessler, *The Five Frankforters*, trans. James Fuchs (New York: The H.K. Fly Company, 1913), 20.

proposal to join the Taunus ruling classes through marriage. His attempt to arrange a union between his family and the sovereigns of Taunus, is a brazen violation of social norms. Salomon is forcing his way into a forbidden sphere.

The Duke of Taunus is childish and egotistical, but he is also open-minded. He accepts Salomon's proposal. He would never consider marrying Löttchen were it not for her fortune, but the reader also has the impression that he would not marry her for her wealth alone. Before he was offered her hand, the duke had already chatted amiably with Löttchen and paid her genuine compliments. Furthermore, his decision to accept Salomon's offer is contingent on the condition that Charlotte consents of her own free will to be his wife. Similar to his willingness to invite the Rothschilds to his palace, the duke's acceptance of Löttchen as a bride indicates both self-interest and progressive attitude toward relations between Jews and gentiles.

His acceptance generates great strife in both families. The very next day in Frankfurt the Rothschilds receive a visit from the prince, who politely but resolutely terminates all his business affairs with them. Upon entrance he reinforces the divisions between professional and private spheres: "Mein Besuch ist ein rein geschäftlicher."⁷²⁸ Pressed for his opinion about the marriage, he compares the Rothschilds with French revolutionaries, saying the former wields the coupon scissors in the same way the latter used the guillotine: "Ich bekenne, dass ich von Gleichheitsbestrebungen ein Gegner bin."⁷²⁹ Furthermore, the prince

⁷²⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 29, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷²⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 29, PWJA VI j) 350.

also argues that banking and nobility are mutually exclusive: “Der Kaiser hat die Gnade gehabt, Sie zu seinen Baronen zu erheben, der deutsche Adel hat nach meiner Meinung andere Verpflichtungen, als Wechselgeschäfte zu machen.” The prince depicts the status quo—the gentile nobility and Jewish businessman can cooperate professionally, but full acceptance and equality at all levels is unacceptable.

Salomon’s ambitions also cause great dissent within the House of Rothschild. Charlotte’s marriage to the Duke of Taunus threatens to rupture the bonds of family, community, and religion, again exposing the risks acculturation poses to religious and cultural traditions. Löttchen’s marriage to the duke would require her to renounce formally the Jewish religion and convert to Christianity. Such a step would break with the image of Gudula in the opening scene. Baptized, Löttchen would formally renounce the Kaddish and discontinue the family’s generational presence at the temple—she would profoundly disrupt the living memory Gudula preserves. By converting to Christianity Löttchen would irrevocably alter the Rothschild family’s identity. Since the brothers cannot imagine that the duke will convert, they discuss the possibility of baptism for Löttchen. Salomon dismisses the move as a mere formality: “Ich finde überhaupt nicht viel dabei. Man kann es aus verschiedenen Gründen tun.”⁷³⁰ He mentions various motives for baptism but, betraying his own alienation from Judaism, neglects to include faith. Carl agrees, baptism is a superficial maneuver whose social gains justify any religious concessions: “Im Herzen kann sie immer gut jüdisch bleiben. Bedenkt, dass unsere ganze gesellschaftliche Stellung dadurch

⁷³⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 28, PWJA VI j) 350.

gehoben wird.”⁷³¹ Amschel is incensed: “ich kann das net vertrage, dass m’r über so was leichtfertig red’t.”⁷³² He posits the wedding itself as a divisive, not harmonious event. He will not attend the ceremony, because he refuses to be sit share a table with guests who do not adhere to a kosher diet. Gudula also regards a attending a Christian wedding as incompatible with her Jewishness: “Auf die Hochzeit geh ich auch net. Die wird in der Kirch sei, und ich gehör in kei Kirch.” The family’s conversation depicts the vulnerability of Jewish identity within a larger ensemble of intercultural relations. The transmission of Jewish culture across generations is enshrined in traditional rituals, including celebratory events such as marriages. In Löttchen’s marriage the synagogue, a mnemonic space intrinsic to Judaism, will be replaced by the church. Christian traditions will supplant the sacred Jewish rituals of this celebratory performance. Gudula believes the marriage will cost the family their Jewish blessings: “Mit unserm Segen is vorbei.”⁷³³ Therefore she describes her grandchild’s wedding—a Christian ceremony in a Christian mnemonic space where she is out of place—as an act of abandonment.

The Rothschilds’ religion is inextricably linked to their unity as a family. Its cohesion is family’s greatest strength but it too, Jacob argues, is tenuous: “Ebe diese Zusammengehörigkeit, mein ich, wird durch die Heirat zerissen.” Jacob posits the marriage as an invasion into the family home, which threatens its identity: “”Nur wenn wir unter uns bleiben, bleiben wir auch die, die wir sind.

⁷³¹ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 28, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷³² Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 28, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷³³ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 28, PWJA VI j) 350.

Jetzt willst Du einen Fremden zu uns ins Haus bringen.”⁷³⁴ The introduction of a “Fremde” in the Rothschild house represents an irrevocable rupture with its genealogy, one which Gudula is sure her deceased husband would never have permitted: “Jetzt weiß ich, was mei seliger Amschel g’sagt hätt [...] mit unserm Segen is vorbei, wenn a Fremder bei uns ist.“ With the word “Segen,” or blessing, Gudula’s reproach interlinks family and religion. She implies that a violation to one will also harm the other.

Despite the divisive impact of the marriage, Salomon is determined to push it through. This sets up the decisive final scenes of the drama, in which the Duke of Taunus arrives at the *Judengasse* and proposes to Löttchen. When he refers to the *Judengasse* as a tradition, Carl thanks him in a self-deprecating gesture: “Es ist sehr kompläsant von Hoheit, unsere schmutzige Gas seine Tradition zu nennen.” In response the duke observes that in the *Judengasse* past and present come together as a representation of cultural continuity and modernity: “in dieser altertümlichen Gasse, in der man am Anfange den Eindruck hat, als ob die Zeit stillgestanden wäre, leben die modernsten Menschen, die es heute gibt.”⁷³⁵ In his marriage to Löttchen, the duke continues, he rejoices for the fusion of two traditions and religions as a sign of progress. This is a misleading comment, because in reality the marriage would force Löttchen to give up her religion in favor of his. The motivations for duke’s behavior are also enigmatic. The timing of his comments, just before he receives a loan of one million Florins in cash, casts doubt on his sincerity but does not prove him a liar.

⁷³⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 29, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷³⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 30, PWJA VI j) 350.

His conversation with Gudula is also equivocal. When she questions him if the marriage might not be “e bissche gar abenteuerlich,” his answers make a childish impression. His entire life, he says, has been an adventure, and it is precisely “das Abenteuerliche, das mir die Verbindung mit Ihrem schönen Enkelkinde so reizvoll macht.”⁷³⁶ However, he also reiterates his hope that his union with Charlotte will contribute to the creation of a more open, tolerant society: “So eine Ehe, nach der Tradition zwischen Hochgeborenen, das ist vieux jeu. Die Welt ist der alten Spiele müde, ich bin es auch, und will es mit neuen Spielregeln versuchen.”⁷³⁷ Gudula rejects his views as too “spielreich,” marriage, she retorts, “ist doch was Ernstes.” Her concerns are legitimate, and Gudula is also very consistent. She rejects the new title of Baroness, saying she is an elderly “Juddefrau,” not nobility. When the duke responds with a flattery that may be sincere: “Vielleicht ist Ihr Adel [...] doch vom aller ältesten,”—Gudula curtly tells him to save his compliments for her grandchild. Their disaccord is profound, but its source is ambiguous. Is the gap between them generational or religious, or both? Is Gudula shielding her faith and family from a reckless outsider? Or is she, like Moritz, born a bit too late, an intolerant reactionary standing in the way of social progress?

In the end Gudula triumphs. Charlotte refuses the Duke of Taunus and marries her young uncle, Jacob. She believes a marriage to the duke will alienate her from her family, religion, and culture, rendering her homeless: “Ich will bei meinem Mann einmal eine Heimat haben und die find ich in seinem Schloß

⁷³⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 33, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷³⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 33, PWJA VI j) 350.

bestimmt nicht.”⁷³⁸ She rejects the notion that Jews are homeless, like the duke’s pirate. Instead Charlotte argues that her only true home is in her native religion and culture, Judaism. Löttchen neither confirms nor dismisses the possibility of acculturation in the long term. She feels no ill will toward the Duke of Taunus, but explains that such a marriage is still a century away: “Sie kommen zu früh, warten Sie noch ein Jahrhundert.”⁷³⁹ Instead of going her father’s “neue Wege” Löttchen is committed to preserving her family’s Jewish heritage, taking her grandparents’ marriage as a model: “Ich will [...] leben wie Großmutter mit Großvater gehaut hat.” Gudula, addressing Salomon, praises the choice as a return home to community, tradition, and thus, happiness: “Das ist unser Haus, da sitzt Du, da sitzt ich, da steht Dein Kind und Dein Bruder und sind glücklich. Sei doch endlich zufrieden!” Salomon, “behaglich lächelnd, weich,” capitulates. He affirms his mother’s triumph as proper and right: “Ich bin’s, Mutter, ich bin’s.”⁷⁴⁰

Rössler’s *Die fünf Frankfurter* permits two, mutually exclusive readings. It is possible to read the drama as an appeal for patient acculturation. The Kaiser’s decree to ennoble the Rothschilds and the family’s many successful business relationships demonstrate that Jews and gentile Germans have already established a respectful interaction between themselves in the professional sphere. It may be premature to extend these relationships into the private domain, but several of Rössler’s younger figures are already beginning to open their minds to more intimate forms of interaction as well. The divergent views between several of the

⁷³⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 34, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷³⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 34, PWJA VI j) 350.

⁷⁴⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die fünf Frankfurter*, 35, PWJA VI j) 350.

older characters (Moritz, Gudula, the Prince of Clausthal-Agorde) and their younger counterparts (Carl, Salomon, the Duke of Taunus) on acculturation mark movement toward greater tolerance in the future. Even as Löttchen refuses Gustav's proposal, she leaves the door open to mixed betrothals in the future. Rössler does not claim that acculturation, even at the highest levels, is impossible. Neither does he argue that it is imminent. Instead he advocates that hope and ambition be tempered with patience and also warns that Jewish acculturation risks cultural and religious alienation.

A second reading, or viewing, interprets the play as testimony to the futility of acculturation. In the context of the FDB's performance, in which subtle changes to the figure of the Duke of Taunus are pivotal, a stronger argument can be made for this understanding. In the FDB's version, the duke does not reproach his uncle's anti-Semitism. Also omitted is the crucial distinction he draws between his uncle and himself: "er ist um 100 Jahre zu spät auf die Welt gekommen [...] und ich hätte 100 Jahre später kommen sollen." The Duke of Taunus is enigmatic, but in these scenes he appears to be at his most candid. There is no reason for him to criticize Moritz to his face unless he means it, and when he differentiates between his uncle's views and his own, he is speaking with Eveline, a minor, neutral character. Without these moments, the tolerance he displays in the company of the Rothschilds can be discounted as shallow, motivated from self-interest. Furthermore, if the spectator is unaware of the duke's remarks in act two, Löttchen's explanation, "Sie kommen zu früh, warten Sie noch ein Jahrhundert," loses its force. In an unabridged performance her

words would recall the duke's own thoughts, independently corroborate them, and—poignantly positioned in the drama's final scene—affirm hope for future acculturation. Without the corresponding scenes from the second act, however, her words strike the viewer as incongruent, even brusque and sarcastic. Furthermore, the drama's plot urges caution against accelerated acculturation. In the last analysis, it fulfills its obligations as a comedy by culminating in a harmonious marriage between two Jews inside the *Judengasse*, entirely in accordance with the wishes of Gudula, the most consistently strong voice against acculturation. Salomon, the most enthusiastic supporter of acculturation, is forced to accede, "lächelnd, weich," to his mother's conservative convictions. The status quo triumphs.

External conditions influenced reception of the performance of *Die fünf Frankfurter* in Buenos Aires. Emigrants at the Casa del Teatro, most of whom were Jewish refugees, had seen efforts at acculturation fail disastrously. European Jews' hopes for entrance into gentile society had indeed, as Gudula prophesized, led many of them to stray from their cultural heritage and religion. Current events proved that this sacrifice had met with calamitous results. Zionists had in the catastrophe of Nazism a powerful argument not only against acculturation, but also in favor of a resolute return to Jewish values. Jewish media reviews of *Die fünf Frankfurter* emphasized a corresponding interpretation of the play. The *Jüdische Wochenschau*, in particular, praised Gudula as "die alte „Juddefrau, Hüterin des Althergebrachten, Mittlerin der Tradition."⁷⁴¹ Her house and the

⁷⁴¹ "Die fünf Frankfurter," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 27, 1941.

Jewish community anchored in the *Judengasse*, isolated from Christian German society was a model for future generations of Jews. The paper lauded Gudula's steadfast adherence to tradition as the values which held the Rothschild family together in Rössler's drama, and which would forge a new, devout Jewish community in exile. Balder Olden, a Jewish German journalist and novelist also exiled in Argentina, wrote an open letter to Rössler which was published in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. Olden, like many refugees, had experienced failed acculturation first hand. He had dueling scars after challenging an anti-Semite, but had also volunteered for military service in World War I and spent four years as a British prisoner of war in southern Africa. In 1933, Olden fled Germany immediately after the Nazis took power, never to return. Though he was not a Zionist, Olden shared with them an irrevocable disillusionment with German society. Olden interpreted Rössler's drama as the beginning of Jewish emancipation, not acculturation. In his review he criticizes Salomon as a naïve "Assimilant" and he praises Gudula for refusing to leave the "Juddegässche." Olden argues that Rössler's Jewish values, his "– so glaube ich – ganz jüdische Philosophie" had lost none of its relevance for Jewish audiences in the 1940's.⁷⁴² In the context of Jewish Buenos Aires *Die fünf Frankfurter* become an appeal for religious and cultural identity. In its review of *Die fünf Frankfurter*, the *Diario Israelita* referred to the FDB as a "Schauspielervereinigung der deutschsprechenden Juden in Buenos Aires," neglecting the fact that they were several gentiles in its ensemble.⁷⁴³ The reception of *Die fünf Frankfurter*

⁷⁴² "Brief an Carl Rössler," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 21, 1941.

catalyzed a efforts at Jewish community-building that tended to exclude other emigrant groups.

Die fünf Frankfurter, performed ten times in Buenos Aires and Montevideo from 1941 to 1944, represents a unique opportunity to evaluate changing sentiments within the *neue Kolonie* in the context of a single play. At the time of its first performance, the drama's reception indicated areas of divergence, but not yet conflict, in the *neue Kolonie*. By the time of its tenth performance in 1944, profound disaccord between Zionists and antifascist gentiles as well as moderate Jews had come to surface. This process, in which various visions of community coalesced and grappled around performances of *Die fünf Frankfurter*, unfolded in a form that I will call epistolary community building. The letters Jacob received from his financial backers, grateful and disgruntled spectators, and even angry actors all represent epistolary community building on an individualized, private, microcosmic level. After the premiere of *Die fünf Frankfurter*, epistolary community-building began to occur at the macrocosmic level, in which letters were published in public forums on behalf of much larger groups. The choice of the letter is significant, because it is a genre of personal relationships and, often, intimacy. Identity formation among German-speaking emigrants on the River Plate is depicted through public and private forums of an epistolary exchange provoked by theatrical performances.

Initially, in 1941, there was also a strong will for community which brought emigrants together in spite of their differences. These sentiments extended to both shores of the River Plate. To preview the FDB's guest

⁷⁴³ "Die fünf Frankfurter," *El Diario Israelita*, June 27, 1941.

performance in Montevideo for the 1941 theater season the *Tageblatt* published an exchange of letters between Balder Olden and its correspondent in Uruguay, Pablo Lesser. Balder Olden previewed the guest performance with a “Brief nach Montevideo.” He posits the stage—“unsere Freie Deutsche Bühne”—as a community institution that *bonarense* antifascists gladly share with their “liebe Freunde” on the northern shore of the River Plate.⁷⁴⁴ In his response Lesser thanks Olden for his preview, “dessen Prophezeihungen—ach, wie ist das so selten im menschlichen Leben!—so voll in Erfüllung gegangen sind.”⁷⁴⁵ Both Lesser and Olden write as representatives for larger publics. The attempt at such representation confirms a will to construct tightly-knit communities of antifascist refugees in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Olden and Lesser’s correspondence also reveals sense of trust between both groups, affirming their unity. Shared by theatergoers in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, performances by the Freie Deutsche Bühne catalyzed an epistolary exchange linking antifascist refugees on both sides of the River Plate.

Not all efforts at epistolary community building involved a true exchange. On some occasions interaction was imagined in intimate letters written on behalf of larger groups. After the FDB’s premiere of *Die fünf Frankfurter* Balder Olden wrote such a letter to Rössler in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. In his letter Olden, who had been close friends with Rössler in Europe, blends the roles of old friend, theater critic, and intermediary between Rössler and emigrants on the River Plate. He brings the *neue Kolonie* closer to Rössler with reflections on the times he and

⁷⁴⁴ “Brief nach Montevideo,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 6, 1941.

⁷⁴⁵ “Brief nach Buenos Aires,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 18, 1941.

Rössler spent in Europe: “Mein teurer, lieber Rössler-Carl, es muss lange her sein, seit wir in meinem Bauernhäuschen am Grundlsee Deinen Sechzigsten gefeiert haben – in Sonnenflauten, unsere lustigen Frauen und Mädchen im bunten Dirndlgewand.”⁷⁴⁶ Transitioning to the period when “das Grässliche über Deutschland hereinbrach,” Olden sympathizes with Rössler who, “verarmt und vereinsamt,” had to flee Nazi Germany. Here Olden offers the audience an opportunity to identify with Rössler through common memories of flight and exile. Then Olden introduces Rössler to the FDB, its public, and invokes the performance of *Die fünf Frankfurter* as an emotional, cohesive experience: “Ich glaube, heute Abend wurde leise geweint. Aber es wurde laut und von Herzen gelacht. Es wurde leise nach Innen gejubelt und schallend applaudiert. Wärs Du doch da gewesen, es hätte Dir das Herz gewärmt.”⁷⁴⁷ Olden then imagines Rössler as member of the audience at the Casa del Teatro: “Du hättest Annie Ernst, der waschechten, gedämpft-resoluten, hundertprozentig frankfurterischen Frau Gudula einen Kuss gegeben!” Like other theatergoers, Olden has been emotionally affected by the performance and the memories it carries. He grows nostalgic and inquires after the Rodas: “Grüß alle Freunde da oben, grüß mir die Rodas, Du siehst sie doch oft?” Olden repeats a gesture that is present in many letters between emigrants who sent personal greetings to friends and family who, once close, now were thousands of miles away. Olden takes leave of his readers and Rössler with a confession. Though he is a well-known, relatively fortunate emigrant, he also despairs in exile: “Mir ist sehr nach Heulen zumute. Jetzt geh’

⁷⁴⁶ “Brief an Carl Rössler,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 21, 1941.

⁷⁴⁷ “Brief an Carl Rössler,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 21, 1941.

ich saufen.⁷⁴⁸ His sadness emphasizes common emotional ground among emigrants, voicing a distress that many likely felt when they ended such letters.

Olden's letter to Rössler is apt for community building because it is a private letter with historical, cultural, and emotional reference points accessible to most readers. Its openness and intimate, emotional content encouraged an imaginary sense of amity and mutual support in the *neue Kolonie*, even though most of its members were not personally acquainted. Through newsprint, Olden's letter reached the *Tageblatt's* wide readership almost simultaneously and in an identical format. Every member of the *neue Kolonie* reading the paper knew that thousands of others were sharing the same epistolary experience, which was private and public at once, and cemented by a range of interlinked memories and emotions, creating, as Benedict Anderson has phrased it, that remarkable sense of community in anonymity.⁷⁴⁹

The size of the antifascist community meant that a degree of anonymity was inevitable. This allowed its various members to define it according to distinct criteria, which entered into increasing conflict as WWII progressed. In 1943 and 1944, amidst reports of Nazi atrocities, Allied escalation, and Argentina's continuing neutrality, Jewish emigrants increasingly defined the boundaries of their community by excluding gentile Germans categorically and, in some cases, Argentines as well. As I have noted earlier, Paul Walter Jacob firmly believed in the possibility of a reformed, multicultural postwar Germany. When the Freie Deutsche Bühne staged *Die fünf Frankfurter* in 1944 to celebrate Rössler's 80th

⁷⁴⁸ "Brief an Carl Rössler," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 21, 1941.

⁷⁴⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36.

birthday and its own 100th premiere Jacob deployed the performance as a platform to convey a message of tolerance and inclusion to the *neue Kolonie*. On bilingual programs for *Los cinco hermanos de Francfort*,⁷⁵⁰ Jacob his wrote his own letter to “Papa Rössler” on behalf of the entire FDB community, “wir—Publikum, Darsteller und Leiter.”⁷⁵¹ In his letter Jacob offers a distinct interpretation of *Die fünf Frankfurter*. In contradiction to some other media organizations, which stressed Jewish values, Jacob expressed to Rössler his hope for a new Germany which “von jener liberalen, toleranten und weltaufgeschlossenen Gesinnung geleitet sein wird, die aus jedem Ihrer Worte, aus jedem Ihrer Stücke spricht.”⁷⁵² During this festive event Jacob also expressed his gratitude to numerous institutions which had supported the FDB over the past four years, but the Zionist *Jüdische Wochenschau* was conspicuously absent from his list. Jacob’s comments, written shortly after the controversy between the Nueva Congregación Israelita and the *Voz del Día*, likely reflect of increasing tensions between moderate Jewish and gentile antifascists, on the one hand, and Zionists on the other.

The FDB’s final performance of *Die fünf Frankfurter*, and Jacob’s letter in particular, engendered considerable dissention within the Jewish community. There was no public remonstrance, but privately many emigrants expressed misgivings. One spectator exclaimed to Jacob that he was “sehr geärgert” about the letter published on the occasion of the “Festabend der Freien Deutschen

⁷⁵⁰ Program for *Los Cinco Hermanos de Francfort*, PWJA VI b) 281.

⁷⁵¹ Jacob to Rössler, May 24, 1944, PWJA b) 281.

⁷⁵² Program for *Los Cinco Hermanos de Francfort*, May 24, 1944, PWJA b) 281.

Bühne.”⁷⁵³ Another, Rodolfo Rauscher was especially offended that Jacob had claimed to write on behalf of the entire *neue Kolonie*. He sent a copy of the *Tageblatt*’s review of the performance, which included paraphrases and excerpts from the letter. Rauscher had underlined the “besonders krasse Stellen,” including a reference to Jacob’s hope for a “frohe Zukunft.” Rauscher does not explain his reaction specifically, confining himself instead to the conclusion: “Sie sind bestimmt ein guter Stilist und werden auch ohne näheren Kommentar verstehen, was mit diesen Strichen gemeint ist.”⁷⁵⁴ Finally, Günter Friedlander, co-founder of the *Jüdische Wochenschau* also communicated its displeasure in a letter to Jacob:

Ich bin immer bereit, von einem Partner das Beste anzunehmen, und so auch in diesem Falle, wo es allerdings ein bisschen schwer fällt, dass keine Absicht Ihrem Verhalten zu Grunde lag. Ich möchte aber doch Gelegenheit nehmen, auf die Dinge so aufmerksam zu machen, wie sie sich mir darstellen, weil ich glaube, dass aus es vielen Gründen besser wäre, wenn bei künftig sich bietenden Gelegenheiten die Haltung der F.D.B. revidiert würde.⁷⁵⁵

Friedlander does not directly mention Jacob’s letter to Rössler, but his letter demonstrates frustration with Jacob’s posture vis-à-vis Zionist organizations in Buenos Aires, especially the *Jüdische Wochenschau*. He complains that Jacob publicly allies himself with the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, which was not Zionist, and neglects the *Wochenschau*.⁷⁵⁶ Friedlander specifically cites the FDB’s festive production of Rössler’s drama as an immediate impetus for his complaints.

⁷⁵³ Unknown spectator (signature illegible) to Jacob, May 26, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

⁷⁵⁴ Rauscher to Jacob, May 26, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

⁷⁵⁵ Friedländer to Jacob, June 2, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

⁷⁵⁶ Friedländer to Jacob, June 2, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

The reception of *Die fünf Frankfurter* from 1941-1944, particularly in the epistolary form, reveals deterioration in relations between Zionist organizations which renounced Germany, and other antifascist groups which believed in the possibility of a reformed postwar Germany. Although precursors of disintegration can be traced back to the 1941 debut, initial letters by Pablo Lesser and Balder Olden are characterized by solidarity and good will. By the time of the final performance of *Die fünf Frankfurter* in 1944, signs of strain and even instances of hostility have emerged. Public and private letters written on the occasion of the 1944 production reflect tension among public pillars of the *neue Kolonie*, including the FDB, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, and the *Jüdische Wochenschau*.

4. Disputing the Repertoire: “Jedes Publikum hat das Theater, das es verdient”⁷⁵⁷

From its inception, the FDB stated its intent to use the German language as a medium for representing dramatically the literatures and cultures of all continents. The stage was founded with the explicit objective of achieving intercultural inclusion and integration through theatrical performances.⁷⁵⁸ The FDB advocated internationalism through its repertoire—within its first four months of performances, the theater had presented dramatists of half a dozen different nationalities and had been reviewed by German, Spanish, English, Yiddish, Hungarian, and Czech language local media.⁷⁵⁹ Many luminaries of the Argentine

⁷⁵⁷ “Kulturträgerinnen unter uns: die Frau mit den drei Berufen,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 4, 1940.

⁷⁵⁸ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 10.

⁷⁵⁹ “Jean, Lustspiel von Ladislaus Bus-Fekete,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, April 26, 1940; “Dos Funciones de Teatro Alemán Ofrecerán Hoy,” *Noticias Gráficas*, April 27, 1940; Free German

theater world, including playwright/director Chas de Cruz attended productions at the Freie Deutsche Bühne. De Cruz spoke for many: “Como argentino, me enorgullece la circunstancia de que sea en mi tierra en la que se lleva al cabo la magnífica labor de esa empresa.”⁷⁶⁰

At the same time as they enable intercultural communication, performances also make visible the play of difference and identity within the larger ensemble of relations between immigrant and host cultures. Productions at the FDB often displayed and blended Argentine and German cultural markers. For example, the stage played the Argentine national anthem before its performance of Carl Rössler’s *Die fünf Frankfurter* on July 9, 1941, Argentina’s national holiday: midway through the Argentine national anthem the curtain rose to reveal the set for the first scene of the drama—the Rothschild family home in Frankfurt’s *Judengasse*.⁷⁶¹ In the words of the linguist Marie Louise Pratt, the Freie Deutsche Bühne’s performances functioned as a “contact zone” for host and immigrant populations.⁷⁶² By definition contact zones are not only harmonious spaces, they are sites of interaction and conflict, of willingness and resistance to contact. The Freie Deutsche Bühne was such a space. It showcased occasions of successful interculturalism, but it also revealed the gaps, rough spots, and even defiance,

Stage,” *Buenos Aires Herald* April 9, 1940; *Di Presse* August 13, 1940; “Független Német Színház,” *Délamerikai Magyarország*, July 20, 1940; “Lidé Na Kre,” *Czechoslovakia Libre*, July 22, 1940.

⁷⁶⁰ Chas de Cruz to Paul Walter Jacob, August 16, 1948, PWJA VI h) 299. “As an Argentine, I am proud that it is in my country that this enterprise undertakes its magnificent labor—Trans.”

⁷⁶¹ “Die zweite Spielzeit der Freien Deutschen Bühne,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 9, 1941

⁷⁶² Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

which characterized relations among different groups within the *neue Kolonie* as well as between it and its South American hosts.

A landmark in the FDB's efforts at integrating German and Argentine cultures through theater was its production of *Die Nussschale (La cáscara de nuez)* by Dr. Pedro E. Pico and Samuel Eichelbaum on June 28, 1941. Its performance of *Die Nussschale* was the first time ever that an Argentine drama had been staged in the German language. The drama's authors were widely respected figures in the Argentine theater world. Pedro E. Pico was a prolific playwright, whose oeuvre is dominated by comedies which, though humorous, also discuss serious sociopolitical themes. Pico's career as a dramatist consists of two principal trajectories. While practicing law in Santa Rosa, a town in the province of La Pampa, he wrote plays about provincial life, such as *Pueblerina*, *Trigo gaucho*, and *La novia de los forasteros*. Pico founded the Centro Socialista in La Pampa province, and his work from this period features a progressive political component. Later, in Buenos Aires, Pico wrote urban comedies about interaction among the capital's polarized social classes, including *La historia se repite*, *Novelera*, *Agua en las manos*, and *Las rayas de una cruz*. Pico also served as president of the Casa del Teatro and Argentores, the Argentine Authors' Association.

Samuel Eichelbaum, the son of Jewish immigrants from Russia, was a journalist and literary critic for many influential and prestigious publications in Argentina, including *Caras y Caretas*, *La Vanguardia*, and *La Nación*. He also contributed occasionally to the *Jüdische Wochenschau*. In the 1920's Eichelbaum

authored several naturalist dramas tinged with socialist ideology, including *En la quietud del pueblo* (1919), *La mala sed* (1920), and *El ruedo de almas* (1923). Later, influenced by Anton Chekhov, Eugene O'Neill, and Henri Lenormand, Eichelbaum's dramas turned inward toward psychological themes. He defined himself as "un maniático de la introspección," and, correspondingly, plays such as *Señorita* (1930), *Soledad es tu nombre* (1932), and *El gato y su selva* (1936) feature tormented, introverted protagonists.⁷⁶³ In Argentina Eichelbaum is considered one of the most accomplished dramatists of his generation, and he won the nation's most exalted award for dramatists, the Premio Nacional de Drama, in 1957.

Die Nussschale is not a famous play, so it is useful here to give a brief summary of its plot and genesis. The play was written as a collaborative effort by Eichelbaum and Pico in the early 1920's. The two authors withdrew to the countryside one summer in order to gain distance and clarity for a play they planned to write about infidelity in Buenos Aires. Argentine men commonly had mistresses at this time. It was a frequent practice for them to remain married to a woman of high social standing while simultaneously carrying on affairs with one or several other women of a lower class. Eichelbaum and Pico reflected that, ordinary as this custom was, it need not always unfold predictably and easily. Eichelbaum and Pico imagined that amidst a given constellation of characters under particular circumstances, this practice could hold a moral dilemma whose outcome could be tragic and comic at once.

⁷⁶³ Jorge Cruz, *Samuel Eichelbaum* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1962), 34. "a maniac of introspection—Trans."

The play begins with a wedding. The protagonist, a writer named Ricardo, marries Maria Victoria, a wealthy heiress, without ending an ongoing romantic relationship with a poor schoolteacher, Alicia. Like most single Argentine women of the time, Alicia lives with her mother. Although her affair with Ricardo is not an uncommon situation, it deeply shames Alicia's mother, who views it as bigamy. As she says repeatedly, she "kann nicht," and her constant distress makes life in her household, the "Nusschale," intolerable.⁷⁶⁴ This causes Ricardo no small aggravation, especially because in his view his relationship with Alicia is perfectly acceptable. Comfortably married with Maria Victoria, Ricardo is at the point of terminating the affair when Alicia reveals herself to be pregnant. When the child is born—and Maria Victoria remains infertile—Ricardo realizes that the pull of the nutshell is infinitely stronger than his legitimate, luxurious, but childless home. He passes his days in the "Nuss," and although he returns to Maria Victoria in the evening, he spends the night at his desk in the arms of his poetic muse—not his wife. Maria Victoria is aware of the situation and, as Balder Olden wrote in his review in the *Tageblatt*, "leidet wie eine liebende Frau ohne Tadel nur lieben kann, deren Ehe Zölibat ist."⁷⁶⁵ She fights for Ricardo with tenderness for him but without scorn for her rival. For a moment, Ricardo hesitates, but in this instant his son falls gravely ill. As the child lies in its bed, Ricardo realizes that his affections as a father surpass all other impulses. Alicia recognizes the situation, and struggles to save her son, realizing that if he dies she will lose her lover as well. For her part, Maria Victoria has good reasons to wish

⁷⁶⁴ "the nutshell—Trans."

⁷⁶⁵ "Die Nusschale," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

the worst for her husband's child, knowing that its death signifies her triumph, but she never utters such a malevolent desire. Instead she resolutely awaits her fate. The baby's rescue is her perdition, and when she learns her husband's child will survive, a wounded and afflicted Maria Victoria exits the scene with tragic grace.

The FDB's decision to perform *Die Nusschale* reflects a thoughtful effort to bring Argentine customs and moral values to a public still largely uneasy with its new environs. *La Nación* admired the choice as daring, because it considered that in subtle but profound way, the play's plot and especially its conclusion presented the Freie Deutsche Bühne with a challenging task: "llevar a la comprensión del espectador un mundo particularmente nuestro."⁷⁶⁶ According to *La Nación*, more than its *bonarense* setting, it is Ricardo's choice to abandon his wife although she does him no wrong that renders the play foreign for European spectators. Moreover, Ricardo's decision carries no negative consequences. Neither Ricardo's actions nor the fates of the principal characters need coincide with moral imperatives or social norms. Instead the plot is governed by one man on a simple search for happiness, and no character opposes him in his quest. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* viewed *Die Nusschale* as a fundamental departure from European values because, as its reviewer put it, the drama's guiding principal is not any philosophical vision of morality, but rather an instinctive, emotional happiness:

es geht hier nicht um Moral, sondern um Glück, denn die Handlung spielt ja nicht in Europa, sondern in Argentinien. Und deshalb siegt auch nicht eine Moral, es siegt das argentinische Lebensgefühl, es siegt das Kind, das

⁷⁶⁶ "El elenco del Teatro Alemán Independiente ofreció un espectáculo," *La Nación*, June 19, 1941. "make comprehensible to the spectator a world particularly our own —Trans."

das Familienglück gestiftet, über die Ordnung des Gesetzes, und jeder fügt sich ihr.⁷⁶⁷

According to the *Wochenschau* happiness need not be moral or even legal in Argentina, not even in the work of a canonical dramatist, such as Eichelbaum. and an institutional authority, such as Pico.

In the *Tageblatt* Balder Olden concurred: “So ganz argentinisch ist dieses Stück, dass es in Europa nicht geglaubt würde.”⁷⁶⁸ His reasoning for this was not the perceived absence of a moral message, but rather a basic discrepancy in values. Olden argued that *Die Nusschale* depicted a fork in the road of modernity, marking the point where the European version diverges from its American counterpart: “In unserer modernen Literatur wüsste ich kein Werk, in dem Vaterliebe ein gewaltiges Motiv ist.”⁷⁶⁹ In modern European literature, especially in a struggling writer’s Bohemian milieu, Ricardo’s actions are nonconformist precisely because he finds happiness by founding a family: “Wie werden in unserem Leben, auf unseren Theatern, die Mütter verlassen, als wäre es nichts, wenn ein lockendes Mädchen auf dem Plan erschiene!”⁷⁷⁰ Olden sees an explanation for this conflict in contrasting American and European visions of nationhood. He evokes Alberdi’s *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina*, in which the statesman emphasizes population growth as crucial for the young nation’s development. Olden reaffirms this principle in his reading of *Die Nusschale*, in which he places the good of the

⁷⁶⁷ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 4, 1941.

⁷⁶⁸ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

⁷⁶⁹ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

⁷⁷⁰ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

nuclear family, represented by the fertility symbol of the ‘nut’ over all other concerns: “Gerade hier aber steckt der große Wert dieses Schauspiels, es zeigt in der Nuss, wie eine junge Nation empfinden muss, die groß werden und zu Ehren kommen will.”⁷⁷¹ Like Alberdi, Olden argues that a nation’s path to growth and greatness passes through the health and proliferation of its families.

The Freie Deutsche Bühne received enthusiastic praise for its production of *Die Nussschale*, especially for the efforts at integration which it signified. In a further demonstration of epistolary community building, Pedro E. Pico wrote an open letter to the FDB’s audience which was printed on theater programs for the performance. He hoped the production signified the initiation of an “aproximación artística de tan amplios horizontes como puede ser la germano-argentina.”⁷⁷² Pico described the current production as particularly fruitful because it was an immediate exchange between German and Argentine artists who lived together in the same city. This could indicate an element of self-interest on the parts of the authors and the ensemble, both of whom might have benefited commercially from collaboration between the *neue Kolonie* and the Argentine host society. At the same time, Pico indirectly distinguished this interaction from other artistic and intellectual exchanges conducted by organizations sponsored by Argentine and Nazi German governments. It is also possible that the Freie Deutsche Bühne conceived of antifascist intercultural activities as a way to

⁷⁷¹ “*Die Nussschale*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

⁷⁷² Program for *Die Nussschale*, June 28, 1941, PWJA VI b) 281. “artistic approximation of such vast horizons as that between Germans and Argentines could be—Trans.”

compete with intercultural programs and exchanges sponsored by the Nazi German embassy in Buenos Aires.

Both Pico and Eichelbaum attended the performance in person and received ovations from the audience after the second and third acts.⁷⁷³ Pico posited theatrical performance as an effective means of intercultural communication, strong enough in his opinion to overcome the many barriers between Argentines and Germans, such as language: “seré todo ojos y pondré en mis manos todo el calor que hay en mi corazón para los hermanos en arte, vínculo éste vez sin duda superior, al del idioma.”⁷⁷⁴ Samuel Eichelbaum, who addressed the audience directly at the event, reiterated the function of theatrical performance as a contact zone between host and immigrant cultures: “zwei argentinische Autoren finden Kontakt mit europäischen Schauspielern, die zum ersten Male ein argentinisches Stück in deutscher Sprache darstellen.”⁷⁷⁵ The performance was in German, but the event was a bilingual affair. The program featured Pico’s note, written in Spanish, and summarized the plot and reception of the play in both languages. In addition to Samuel Eichelbaum, Liselott Reger also addressed the audience in Spanish and repeated a message she had articulated in a review for the performance in the Argentine daily, *Critica*: “Queremos demostrar que por encima de la Alemania oficial y guerrera existe otra Alemania espiritual y culta, la de Goethe y Heine, ligada a las otras naciones por ideales de fe y esperanza que

⁷⁷³ “El elenco del Teatro Alemán Independiente ofreció un espectáculo,” *La Nación*, June 19, 1941.

⁷⁷⁴ Program for *Die Nusschale*, June 28, 1941, PWJA VI b) 281. “I will be all eyes and will put in my hands all the warmth I have in my heart for my brothers in art, in this case a bond undoubtedly superior to that of language—Trans.”

⁷⁷⁵ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

ningún cambio accidental podrá apagar.”⁷⁷⁶ At the performance, Paul Walter Jacob also referenced the Germany of poets and thinkers when he repeated a similar message, this time in the German language: “Möge in dieser Zeit der Zerrissenheit die Kunst das Bindemittel sein, durch das sich Menschen aller Sprachen und aller Nationen in neuem Geiste zusammenfinden können.”⁷⁷⁷

Artists and media from host and immigrant cultures expressed hope that the Freie Deutsche Bühne could help to foster an intercultural society in Argentina, characterized by the values of tolerance, awareness, and cooperation. The stage’s performance of *Die Nusschale* was the first step toward communicating these values to a larger public.

However in 1941 many members of the *neue Kolonie*, still somewhat uneasy in their new environs, resisted the FDB’s efforts at integration. One could argue that they sought in theater a refuge from the challenges of emigration, preferring escapism and nostalgia to integration and engagement. Although the *Tageblatt*, *La Nación*, or *Critica* do not report disappointments in ticket sales, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* took its readership to task for lackluster attendance at the performance. It praised the FDB for its “Versuch [...] argentinische Stücke in deutscher Sprache zur Aufführung zu bringen.”⁷⁷⁸ The *Wochenschau* strongly advocated that for Jewish emigrants the future consisted either in integration with

⁷⁷⁶ “EL Teatro Alemán Independiente Ofrecerá Este Año Traducción de *Nuestros Hijos y La Cáscara de Nuez*,” *Critica*, April 13, 1941. “We want to demonstrate that over and above the official bellicose Germany a spiritual and cultured Germany, that of Heine and Goethe, exists. This Germany is untied with other nations for reasons of faith and hope that no accidental change can extinguish-Trans.”

⁷⁷⁷ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 30, 1941.

⁷⁷⁸ “*Die Nusschale*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 4, 1941.

Jewish Argentine society or perhaps in continued emigration to North America or Palestine. It was firmly convinced that Jews had nothing to gain through nostalgia for their past lives in Europe and scorned any possibility of rapprochement with European nations. Therefore, the paper reprimanded its audience, “Man hätte erwarten dürfen,” that the FDB’s production of *Die Nussschale*, “weitestes Verständnis, größte Sympathie, volle Zustimmung finden würde.”⁷⁷⁹ In unusually forceful language for this period, the paper criticized the Jewish community for its failure to support the FDB in this endeavor: “Dass diese Erwartung trotz [...] war Schuld eines Publikums, das aus nicht bekannten Gründen ausgetretene Pfade gehen will, das offenbar Aufführungen, die zugleich Erinnerungen an ‚die gute alte Zeit‘ sind, neuen Versuchen vorzieht.”⁷⁸⁰ As the *Wochenschau* turned its focus to the performance itself, for which it had nothing but praise, the reviewer aimed a final barb at its readers: “Aber nicht mit dem Publikum hat sich die Besprechung zu beschäftigen, und gewiss nicht mit dem Publikum, das **nicht** da war...”⁷⁸¹ The *Wochenschau*’s criticism is corroborated by voting records for the top performances at the FDB during the 1941 season, in which *Die Nussschale* received only 3.2% of the votes cast.⁷⁸²

To the chagrin of Zionist and politically engaged antifascist organizations on the River Plate—as well the FDB itself—theatergoers consistently chose light-hearted European comedies over more serious fare, such as contemporary

⁷⁷⁹ “*Die Nussschale*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 4, 1941.

⁷⁸⁰ “*Die Nussschale*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 4, 1941.

⁷⁸¹ “*Die Nussschale*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 4, 1941 (emphasis and ellipsis in original).

⁷⁸² Audience Poll 1941, PWJA VI f) 293.

political plays and religious dramas. As I discussed earlier, these comedies may have played an important psychological and social role in improving the morale among refugees. However, the FDB was obliged to favor lighter genres to such an extent that political and religious activists in the *neue Kolonie* became disgruntled. On May 4, 1940, just two weeks after its inaugural performance, Liselott Reger gave an interview to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, apparently designed to preempt a negative reaction to the stage's repertoire. Reger reiterates the theater's commitment to serious drama: "wir möchten neben der bisher befolgten Linie des leichten Unterhaltungsstückes auch ernstere Werke, klassische und moderne Problemstücke bringen."⁷⁸³ However, she continues to explain that the FDB is a professional theater beholden to mandates of the ticket office. Reger stresses that although the ensemble performs serious drama "schrecklich gerne," it does not have the luxury of forming a repertoire based on its own preferences. The FDB must perform plays that fill seats. Reger concludes her statements with an advisory for theatergoers and media in *neue Kolonie*: "Jedes Publikum hat das Theater, das es verdient."⁷⁸⁴ Audiences determine which dramatic genres had the greatest representation at the FDB. If certain groups wished to see plays with a specific content, they had to ensure that such dramas were well-attended.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸³ "Kulturträgerinnen unter uns: die Frau mit den drei Berufen," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 4, 1940.

⁷⁸⁴ "Kulturträgerinnen unter uns: die Frau mit den drei Berufen," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 4, 1940.

⁷⁸⁵ For another, contrasting analysis of the tension between the FDB and political and religious groups in Buenos Aires, see: Fritz Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 34-58.

Media organizations of the *neue Kolonie* did not dispute the influence of the FDB's public on the stage's repertoire, however they were not willing to absolve the theater from all responsibility. Two of the most forceful critics of the FDB's repertoire and public were the political group and journal, *Das Andere Deutschland*, and the Zionist *Jüdische Wochenschau*, which otherwise were at bitter loggerheads. All media of the *neue Kolonie* supported the FDB initially, but in August of 1940 *Das Andere Deutschland* was among the first to express reservations about the large amount of "leichte, sehr leichte Unterhaltungsware" in the stage's repertoire. Its criticism was mild, recognizing that the FDB would not survive if it did not fill seats and only indirectly reprimanding theatergoers for their inclination to the light comedies: "wir vom Anderen Deutschland empfinden es oft schmerzlich, dass das Theater so wenig Problem- und Gesinnungstheater ist; leider sind es mehr die Kassen als die moralischen Erfolge, die den Unterhalt des Theaters sichern."⁷⁸⁶ As time passed, however, the magazine's patience waned. At the conclusion of the 1941 season it stated outright that "die Auswahl der Stücke uns nicht befriedigt. Wir wünschen mehr Zeitstücke [...] und wertvolle Kunst." *Das Andere Deutschland* furthermore insinuated that, despite the challenging economic circumstances, the FDB could not neglect its responsibilities as an anti-Nazi cultural institute: "keine freie deutsche Bühne dürfte nach unserer Meinung an dieser Aufgabe vorbeigehen." The antifascist mouthpiece also demonstrated mounting frustration with theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie*: "Wir müssen uns belehren lassen, dass [...] das Publikum leichte Kost

⁷⁸⁶ "Ein Sieg auf der Kulturfront," *Das Andere Deutschland*, August 1940.

bevorzugt und vor dem Guten streikt.”⁷⁸⁷ Finally, *Das Andere Deutschland* concluded with its strong wish that the following season would feature more dramas representing antifascist politics.

The *Jüdische Wochenschau* initially refrained from criticizing the FDB, likely believing it imperative to assist Jewish refugee artists in their efforts to earn a livelihood in their chosen profession. It also supported the theater for the psychological uplift and community-building potential it offered the Jewish emigrant population. Eventually, however, it too grew exasperated with the FDB’s repertoire. A series of reviews the *Wochenschau* published in the winter of 1943 are representative for the newspaper’s position vis-à-vis the FDB’s repertoire and public. In late April, just a few weeks into the theater season, the FDB performed Bus-Fekete’s *Die Tochter Ihrer Excellenz* to a series of full houses at the Casa de Teatro. The *Wochenschau*’s review was rather less than inspired, but still concluded on a positive note that the FDB had furnished “den zahlreichen Zuschauern einige heitere, unbeschwerte Stunden ausgelassener Lustigkeit.”⁷⁸⁸ A few weeks later, on May 7th, the stage produced A.A. Milnes’ comedy *Mr. Pimm kommt vorbei* to celebrate ensemble member Josef Halpern’s anniversary as an actor (*Bühnenjubiläum*). The *Wochenschau* had nothing but praise for Halpern, one of the “eindringlichsten Charakterdarsteller der F.D.B.,” but questioned why the theater had not chosen a work “das dem festlichen Anlass würdiger gewesen wäre.”⁷⁸⁹ A month later, after a series of selections of greater

⁷⁸⁷ “Die Freie Deutsche Bühne,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, December 1941.

⁷⁸⁸ “*Die Tochter Ihrer Excellenz*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*. April 30, 1943.

and lesser literary merit, the *Wochenschau*'s position grew increasingly critical.⁷⁹⁰ In April and May of 1943, Nazi forces were crushing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, death camps in Eastern Europe were murdering Jews, gypsies, and other civilians on an unprecedented, industrial scale and, amidst very heavy fighting, WWII had begun to turn toward the Allies. Meanwhile in Argentina, the Castillo government was about to be deposed by a military conspiracy under General Pedro Pablo Ramírez (in June), who instituted a hardline authoritarian, pro-fascist regime which banned political parties and student organizations, tightly censored the press, and supported anti-Semitism.⁷⁹¹ In this context, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* urged the FDB to perform more political and religious dramas. When the FDB played Ludwig Hirschfeld's comedy *Das schwedische Zündholz*, the paper confronted the stage. It castigated the FDB for stagnating in productions that were neither innovative nor inspirational: "weder Komik noch Handlung werden von Konzessionen an ein ernsteres Publikum gestört. Jedenfalls wurde nicht der geringste Versuch unternommen, den Weg des Naheliegenden und Gewohnten zu verlassen."⁷⁹² The *Wochenschau* demonstrated its censure with caustic comments: "Der Ort der Handlung ist wieder einmal Wien gewesen. Jedenfalls gehört Hochdeutsch schon zu den seltensten Idiomen die die F.D.B.

⁷⁸⁹ "Mr. Pimm kommt vorbei," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 7, 1943.

⁷⁹⁰ During this month the FDB staged two comedies, *Pygmalion* by Bernhard Shaw, *Saison im Kurhotel* by Paul Frank; a detective play, *Zweiter Stock, Tür 19* by Ludwig Zilahy; and a fairy tale, Grimms' *Der Froschkönig*, which found warm praise among all reviewers.

⁷⁹¹ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 25; "Die antijüdische Front," *Aufbau*, 11 (43: 1943): 3.

⁷⁹² "Das schwedische Zündholz," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 11, 1943.

ihren Zuhörern bietet.“⁷⁹³ It pinned the blame for the lackluster repertoire on theatergoers who preferred shallow comedies to serious dramas: “Dass das Publikum sich trotzdem (oder deshalb?) amüsierte, gibt vielleicht dem Regisseur und den Schauspielern recht.“⁷⁹⁴ Reviews in the *Das Andere Deutschland* and the *Jüdische Wochenschau* convey growing tension in the *neue Kolonie* between engaged political and religious organizations on the one hand, and apolitical, less religious emigrants on the other. The Freie Deutsche Bühne was in the challenging position of trying to appeal to both sides.

As the 1943 theater season progressed, reviews of the FDB increasingly depicted contrasting perspectives between the uncompromising *Jüdische Wochenschau* and the more indulgent *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. In their reviews of *Charley's Aunt* two years earlier the *Tageblatt* and the *Wochenschau*, cognizant of emigrants' sufferings, had both accepted laughter as an end unto itself. Two years later, the *Tageblatt's* posture had changed only slightly. It recognized Hirschfeld's drama for what it was: “ein Lustspiel nach bewährtem Rezept, in dem es sich ebensowenig um Zündhölzer handelt, wie um ernste Probleme. Der Autor [...] will nur unterhalten, nichts weiter.”⁷⁹⁵ Although one might glean an implied dissatisfaction with this simple drama, the *Tageblatt's* review is mostly positive. It praised the ensemble—“blendend gespielt”—and made no reproach to an audience looking for nothing but laughs. Published several days later, the *Wochenschau's* review can be read as a rejection of the *Tageblatt's* commentary.

⁷⁹³ “Das schwedische Zündholz,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 11, 1943.

⁷⁹⁴ “Das schwedische Zündholz,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 11, 1943.

⁷⁹⁵ “Das schwedische Zündholz,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 6, 1943.

It caustically invoked the *neue Kolonie*'s traumatic past in the form of a reprimand: "Für manchen mag die Frage interessant sein, ob dieses Publikum nervlich so in Anspruch genommen ist, dass es für jeden Ulk dankbar ist, bei dem es lachen darf."⁷⁹⁶ The *Wochenschau* was no longer willing to accept the past as an excuse for avoiding responsibilities in the present.

In the context of WWII and the Shoah, as well as turbulent domestic politics in Argentina, the *Wochenschau* did not believe staging or attending theater alone sufficed. It demanded political engagement on the part of the FDB and its public. Two weeks later, when the FDB played Elmer Rice's *Flug nach dem Westen*, the *Wochenschau*'s praise was couched in displeasure with past selections: "Endlich bekamen wir [...] ein ‚Zeitstück‘ zu sehen, d.h. ein Stück das sich mit den Problemen der Gegenwart beschäftigt und somit angenehm aus dem Rahmen der ewigen zeit- und belanglosen Lustspielchen herausragte, die wir sonst vorgesetzt bekommen."⁷⁹⁷ The performance, the *Wochenschau* warned, should initiate a run of provocative period plays. Only in this way could the FDB fulfill the obligations which its name carried in times such as 1943.⁷⁹⁸ Unlike the *Wochenschau*, the *Tageblatt* praised the performance unreservedly. It reiterated its view that both contemporary political dramas and easy, nostalgic comedies belonged in the FDB's repertoire and indicated no misgivings about a disproportionate number of comedies.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ "Das schwedische Zündholz," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 11, 1943.

⁷⁹⁷ "Flug nach dem Westen," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 25, 1943.

⁷⁹⁸ "Flug nach dem Westen," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 25, 1943.

⁷⁹⁹ "Flug nach dem Westen," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 20, 1943.

Both papers had critical words for the audience as well, but their contrasting approaches show deviating positions. The *Tageblatt*, which hitherto had avoided criticizing theatergoers, gave them a gentle slap on the wrist for its “müßig” applause, and distaste for anything that was not a comedy, “vor allem, wenn es nicht von Gestern ist.”⁸⁰⁰ The *Tageblatt* encourages theatergoers to take a greater interest in serious drama and to focus more on the present and less on the past. Evoking Brecht’s approach that the theater could influence and educate public opinion, however, the paper also remained patient and speculated that with time the FDB would convince its audience to engage in the antifascist movement. The paper cited Rice’s North American compatriots as an example of isolationists who had been reeducated to join the fight against Nazi Germany.⁸⁰¹ The *Jüdische Wochenschau*, by contrast, was exasperated with Jewish emigrants, who it claimed were content with having saved themselves from Nazi persecution. The *Wochenschau* accused these emigrants of egoism and apathy in exile, denouncing them as: “jene Klasse von Zuschauern, die nichts anderes wollen, als mit geschlossenen Augen durch unsere an Grauen reiche Zeit zu gehen, und darin Genüge finden, ihr eigenes kostbares Leben gerettet zu haben.”⁸⁰² The reviewer sternly advised apolitical Jews to change their behavior or risk exclusion from the *neue Kolonie*: “aber diese sind nicht die Menschen, die irgend welchen Wert für den Aufbau einer glücklicheren und freien Zukunft der Welt haben und wir dürfen uns nicht dazu hergeben, von ihnen unser Handeln oder unsere Lebensweise, ja

⁸⁰⁰ “*Flug nach dem Westen*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 20, 1943.

⁸⁰¹ “*Flug nach dem Westen*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 20, 1943.

⁸⁰² “*Flug nach dem Westen*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 25, 1943.

nicht einmal unsere Theaterprogramme bestimmen zu lassen.⁸⁰³ In spite of the *Wochenschau*'s strident tone, most theatergoers continued to favor "zeit- und belanglosen Lustspielchen," and their predilections did indeed shape the FDB's repertoire. After *Flug nach dem Westen*, which was more successful in the media than at the ticket office, the FDB performed Ladislaus Fodor's comedy, *Dr. Juci Szabo*. The *Tageblatt*'s review, though less enthusiastic than after Rice's drama, found no fault with the performance. It praised the clean, seamless presentation and stressed the audience's enthusiasm: "Das Publikum amüsierte sich köstlich [...] dankte allen Bühnen-mitwirkenden durch reichlichen Beifall und rief sie nach jeden Aktschluss oftmals heraus."⁸⁰⁴ The *Wochenschau*, by contrast, saw the play as a regression and immediately denounced its culprit: "Diese Besprechung sollte überschrieben sein: Kritik gegen Publikum. Das ist überhaupt die Formel auf die so viele Rezensionen gebracht werden können."⁸⁰⁵ The *Wochenschau* disparaged Fodor's piece: "überflüssig, verstaubt, plump, läppisch," but saved its most trenchant words for the "Komödienpublikum": "Es wünscht solche Komödien, es wünscht überhaupt nur Komödien, die F.D.B. dient ihm dazu, sich leichter zu amüsieren als in einem Film, wo man immer erst die Untertiteln lesen muss oder doch die Sprache verstehen."⁸⁰⁶ Finally, the *Wochenschau* suggested the FDB conduct an audience survey, "denn der Weg, auf den sie von dem Komödienpublikum gedrängt wird, ist gefährlich für das ganze Unternehmen."

⁸⁰³ "Flug nach dem Westen," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 25, 1943.

⁸⁰⁴ "Dr. Juci Szabo," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 26, 1943.

⁸⁰⁵ "Dr. Juci Szabo," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 2, 1943.

⁸⁰⁶ "Dr. Juci Szabo," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 2, 1943.

Yet the FDB had already conducted several surveys, and in them comedies had consistently outperformed most serious dramas.⁸⁰⁷ Furthermore, as the paper noted itself, the ultimate barometer was the box office, and here comedy was king.⁸⁰⁸

According to the *Wochenschau* plays such as *Dr. Juci Szabo* or *Das schwedische Zündholz*, though profitable, were actually harmful to the FDB both as an antifascist cultural institution as well as a business enterprise. This analysis appears to be partly correct. Contrary to the *Wochenschau*'s assertions, comedies were successful at the ticket office. They were not, however, always inclusive. Simple comedies drew large audiences, but divergent reviews from the *Tageblatt*, *Das Andere Deutschland*, and the *Jüdische Wochenschau* reveal that their effect was also divisive. Such productions isolated theatergoers from pressing global problems and from the Argentine press and public, which was contradictory to the FDB's self-avowed political goals. Even at the cinema, the *Wochenschau* noted, audiences often interacted with the host society or, at the very least, had to engage with the Spanish language. The great risk of staging so many comedies was that the FDB would succeed as a business, but fail elsewhere. Without the presence of political dramas in its repertoire, it would not meet its objectives of community-building among antifascist refugees, integration with the Argentine host society, and competition against the nationalist German presence in Argentina. My opinion is that the FDB was aware of these risks, and attempted to strike a balance.

⁸⁰⁷ Audience Polls 1940-1942, PWJA VI f) 293.

⁸⁰⁸ "Dr. Juci Szabo," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, July 2, 1943.

Das Andere Deutschland, the Jüdische Wochenschau, and other individuals and media groups correctly asserted that the disproportionate number of comedies in the FDB's repertoire likely compromised the stage's political agenda to an extent. However, as I have argued earlier, humor did offer an imperative and empowering psychological release and uplift for refugees—audience and ensemble alike. Comedies boosted morale and contributed to community-building at least among the “Komödienpublikum,” which was the majority of the FDB's public. Furthermore, the stage also edited comedies, such as *Charley's Aunt* and some others, adding to them a political dimension. Finally, there was no viable alternative. The FDB could not have survived without staging popular, profitable comedies. Otherwise it almost certainly would have gone the way of other emigrant ensembles in the United States, Mexico, Palestine, and China, all of which either quickly failed or only staged a handful of performances per year.⁸⁰⁹ From the very start, in May of 1940, Liselott Reger-Jacob had made clear that the FDB's ability to perform political plays and literary dramas would ultimately depend on its audience's appetite for them: “Viele sind gegen ernste Werke, leider. [...] da wir uns selbst aus eigenen Kräften aufrechterhalten müssen, ist vorderhand das ‚Geschäft‘ sehr wichtig. Die ernstere Literatur ist der Luxus, von dem wir vorderhand noch nicht wissen, ob wir ihn uns erlauben werden dürfen...”⁸¹⁰ Jacob's polemical strategy from Wuppertal, to fund serious drama

⁸⁰⁹ Ingrid Maaß, *Repertoire der deutschsprachigen Exilbühnen, 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Wagner Verlag, 2000), 40; Maaß, *Repertoire der deutschsprachigen Exilbühnen*, 60-64; Maaß, *Repertoire der deutschsprachigen Exilbühnen*, 69-73; *Repertoire der deutschsprachigen Exilbühnen*, 95-116.

⁸¹⁰ “Kulturträgerinnen unter uns: die Frau mit den drei Berufen,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 4, 1940.

through profits earned by comedies, became the modus operandi for the Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires. Though a comparatively small proportion of its repertoire, the FDB performed many literary dramas as well as political and religious plays, far more than any other *Exiltheater* the world over. Without comedies, dozens of refugee actors would have been forced out off the stage. Furthermore, Ludwig Ney's Deutsches Theater, supported by the Nazi government, would have been the only representative of German theater in the region. When I asked for his opinion on Christmas Day in 2008, Jacques Arndt subordinated all the FDB's compromises and shortcomings to a single, transcendent accomplishment: "Aber wir spielten doch!"⁸¹¹

⁸¹¹ Arndt, interview, December 25, 2008.

CHAPTER V

CONFRONTATION AND CONFLICT: POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DRAMA AT THE FREIE DEUTSCHE BÜHNE, 1940-45

1. A Tenuous Start: Contextualizing the FDB's Inaugural Season, 1940

As an individual, Paul Walter Jacob was a convinced Social Democrat who put forth his views in a wide variety of forums on the River Plate, including the Verein Vorwärts, *Voz del Día*, Pestalozzi-Gesellschaft, and the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. As director and manager of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, Jacob's posture toward all things political was characterized by great caution, especially during the stage's first two years. Fritz Pohle notes in his series of three articles, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata," that Jacob was compelled to balance his political convictions with the varied agendas of distinct, often conflicting groups among its audience, including financial backers, antifascist activists, and Zionists.⁸¹² Pohle documents these challenges in depth, however the theater's balancing act was further complicated by other factors which his articles, which focus on Jacob as an individual, do not consider. First, the Freie Deutsche Bühne was not only Paul Walter Jacob—it was comprised of many actors whose political and religious views were not uniform. Additionally, Pohle's investigation stresses relations within the *neue Kolonie*, only one aspect in a complex ensemble of relations. As an emigrant theater, the Freie Deutsche Bühne was subject to the

⁸¹² Fritz Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements," 34-52; Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 34-58; Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Exilprominenz und Zwang zur Politik," 79-96.

politics, laws, and whims of Argentine authorities, which generally were not favorable to antifascist organizations. Furthermore, the larger, wealthier, nationalist *alte Kolonie* and official representatives of the Nazi government in Buenos Aires were a significant factor for the FDB. The German embassy, for example, not only was capable of harming the FDB in Argentina but also caused members of the FDB ensemble to worry about their families in Europe.⁸¹³ In this section I discuss how the *neue Kolonie*, Argentine host society, and the nationalist German presence in Argentina all influenced the FDB's inaugural season.

The Freie Deutsche Bühne began its balancing act before the curtain had risen on its debut performance. By August of 1939, Jacob and Reger had raised the necessary start-up capital to fund the theater's first season. They had gathered and contracted an ensemble, leased the Casa del Teatro, and made arrangements for publicity in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. Plans were made to stage an initial eight-week cycle of productions in September and October of 1939 in anticipation of the first full season beginning the following May. As Jacob recalled in 1946, all preparations had been made when:

plötzlich greift das große Weltgeschehen in die Entwicklung der kleinen Kunstplänen ein: Der Kriegsausbruch in Europa lässt die Eröffnung eines deutschen Theaters in Buenos Aires gerade in diesem Moment inopportun erscheinen; auch die bisher eifrigsten Förderer und Fürsprecher des Unternehmens raten zu Geduld und Verschiebung des Beginns.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹³ Jacob to Pauly, August 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁸¹⁴ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 23.

Fritz Pohle quotes a passage about the delayed opening of the FDB from an unpublished essay written by Jacob in 1973, not the more contemporary, published account above [PWJA VIII c) 454]. In the 1973 version, Jacob states that the delay was advocated “von rechts bis links, von den Schauspielern bis zu dem Publikum, von Geldgebern bis zu Dr. Alemann vom ‚Argentinischen Tageblatt.’“ Pohle speculates that opinions about the delay were not as unanimous as Jacob claims and wonders whether the deciding voices on the issue were not the donors alone.

There were probably several different considerations leading to the postponement of the FDB's inauguration. First of all, there may well have been members in its ensemble as and in the *neue Kolonie* who felt that, given the gravity of world events, it was inappropriate to open an entertainment venue at that time. Secondly, as Jacob recalls, in this particularly sensitive moment, donors, ensemble, and administration alike were concerned about potential repercussions from Argentine authorities. Fritz Pohle has noted that of the four presidents that held power Argentina during WWII, Roberto Ortiz (1938-42) was the only pro-Ally head of state, which he argues should have caused the FDB to feel relatively secure with regard to domestic politics.⁸¹⁵ It is true that Ortiz was pro-Ally, however, Argentine politics were very volatile. It was possible that a pro-fascist regime could come to power at any moment, which indeed was the case when Ramón Castillo officially assumed power in 1942. Secondly, Roberto Ortiz was a very sick man in 1939. He had severe diabetes which eventually blinded him and forced him to cede the daily execution of his office to his vice-president, Ramón Castillo in July of 1940. Castillo was a hardline conservative, and under his authority Argentine politics shifted drastically to the right.

In addition to concerns about the Argentine government, fears of disruption or even violence by the nationalist German *alte Kolonie* were substantiated by precedents. A performance of Ferdinand Bruckner's *Las Razas* at the Teatro Cómico a few years earlier, had outraged the *alte Kolonie*. Amidst great uproar, the Nazi German embassy had convinced local authorities to

⁸¹⁵ Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 40.

intervene at the Teatro Cómico, and a similar affair at the Casa del Teatro would have carried disastrous consequences for the nascent FDB.

Once the Freie Deutsche Bühne did open, eight months later, it still had to be cautious about politics. Among the theater's strongest supporters in its first years, in March of 1940 *Das Andere Deutschland* announced the stage's imminent debut and described its efforts to reach varied groups within the *neue Kolonie* through a diverse repertoire. Jacob attempted to fulfill the expectations of politically engaged emigrants who, for their part, showed an understanding for the financial and demographic complexities confronting the FDB: "Der Spielplan wird den verschiedensten Publikumswünschen und dem verschiedenen Geschmack gerecht zu werden suchen [...] Nach einem überall erfolgreich aufgeführten Lustspiel, mit dem die Spielzeit beginnt, folgt das erschütternde Menschlichkeits- und Antikriegsdrama, ‚Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb‘."⁸¹⁶ *Das Andere Deutschland* was most enthusiastic about political theater, and one month later it embellished on its preview for Rostand's drama: "Dieses Schauspiel [...] tritt in sehr feiner, dabei überzeugender und spannender Weise für eine deutsch-französische Verständigung und Verbrüderung ein, also für ein Ziel, das wir alle sehnlichst erwünschen und dessen Frage gerade heute, im Rahmen der Diskussion über die Gestaltung des zukünftigen Europas, besonders aktuell ist."⁸¹⁷ *Das Andere Deutschland* accepted Bus-Fekete's *Jean* as a necessary concession to a large segment of the FDB's audience, but it did not preview the comedy with the same enthusiasm. Its disappointment was thus all the greater

⁸¹⁶ "Die Freie Deutsche Bühne," *Das Andere Deutschland*, March 15, 1940.

⁸¹⁷ "Die Freie Deutsche Bühne," *Das Andere Deutschland*, April 15, 1940.

when the FDB canceled its performance of Rostand's play. Under the bold printed title "Abgesetzt!" the magazine printed the following explanation:

Auf Anfrage wurde seitens der FDB mitgeteilt, daß sie von einer Aufführung des besagten Schauspiels absehen müsse, weil ein großer Teil des Publikums gegen seine Aufführung protestiert und bei Nichtbeachtung dieses Protestes mit Skandal gedroht habe. Darum, weil dieses Stück – in Verfolg der großen Tradition des besten Deutschland und des besten Frankreich – warm und begeistert für eine endliche Verbrüderung des deutschen mit dem französischen Volk eintritt.

Daß das Rostandische Stück nicht aufgeführt wird, ist gewiss nicht Schuld der FDB, sondern vielmehr des Publikums, von dem, wie die Dinge liegen, die FDB abhängig ist. Indessen ist eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem erwähnten Teil des Publikums unbedingt erforderlich, denn es handelt sich hier um eine entscheidende, grundsätzliche Frage.⁸¹⁸

During the very first month of performances at the FDB conflicts regarding the theater had already arisen between different emigrant interest groups.⁸¹⁹

According to *Das Andere Deutschland*, the pressures that forced Jacob to cancel the play were politically motivated. The conflict surrounding *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb* pitted those who believed in the fundamental goodness of Germany and Europe, such as *Das Andere Deutschland*, against others who had permanently renounced Europe and especially Germany, such as Zionists. This clash was an early alarm for future confrontations between these groups and perspectives. Without putting it directly into words, *Das Andere Deutschland's* report, which is cautious but urges immediate dialogue, identifies this divergence as an "entscheidende, grundsätzliche Frage." The threat that conflicting judgments on issues of collective German guilt could polarize the *neue Kolonie*

⁸¹⁸ "Abgesetzt!" *Das Andere Deutschland*, May 15, 1940.

⁸¹⁹ Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 41-2.

was evident as early as 1940. Moreover the FDB's 1946 theater almanac reveals that the issue remained divisive seven years later:

Nach diesen drei Lustspielen folgt am Sonnabend, 11. Mai 1940, das erste ernste und voll-literarische Werk des Spielplans. Ursprünglich sollte es das Kriegsstück „Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb“ von Maurice Rostand jr. sein, aber die aufwühlenden Zeitereignisse (Ende März kündigt sich die französische Tragödie durch den Regierungswechsel Daladier-Reynaud an, Anfang April ist Dänemark besetzt, hat der Krieg nach Norwegen übergegriffen) lassen es im Augenblick ratsam erscheinen, das pazifistische Nachkriegsstück des Franzosen auf eine hierfür günstigere Zeit zu verschieben [...]. Die Kriegsereignisse geben dieser Programmänderung in geradezu beängstigender Weise Recht. In der Nacht vom 9. zum 10. Mai 1940 vollzieht sich der Angriff des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland auf Holland, Luxemburg und Belgien; ein pazifistisches Schauspiel, das das Problem der deutsch-französischen Verständigung aus der Nachkriegsperspektive behandelt, wäre in diesem Augenblick lächerlich erschienen.⁸²⁰

Somewhat confusing here⁸²¹ are the original date for which *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb* was scheduled and the chronology of the decision to cancel the drama altogether. Originally, on the first calendars for the 1940 season, the performance had been set for April 27, scheduling it to be the second play the stage produced. It is not clear how many changes were made, nor when. It is possible that Rostand's drama initially was not cancelled, but merely moved to the later date of May 11. The decision not to perform Rostand's play at all, instead replacing it with Ibsen's *Master Builder*, must have been taken before the

⁸²⁰ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 29.

⁸²¹ Pohle insinuates that Jacob published a false date for the Rostand premiere, but Jacob's statement that the first literary drama performed by the FDB was Ibsen's *Master Builder* on May 11 is consistent with all sources. Jacob notes that Ibsen's play replaced Rostand's drama, which is also true. Nowhere does Jacob explicitly state that the premiere for *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb* was originally scheduled for May 11. Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 41-42.

production of *Jean* on April 20, 1940 because programs for *Jean* have Ibsen's play slated for May 11.⁸²²

The decision thus had nothing to do with Germany's assault on France, but as Jacob notes, it was very much linked to the rapidly escalating war in general. Nonetheless, his statement that Rostand's pacifist drama would have been out of place at this historical moment is debatable. One could argue just the opposite: that it is precisely in times of war when pacifist voices must be loudest. Yet, and this likely gets closer to the core the matter, it is also in times of war when pacifist voices are most divisive. Jacob's choice to omit the internal disputes surrounding *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb* suggests that tensions between different groups in the *neue Kolonie* continued to exist in 1946. In 1973, without fundamentally altering his account, Jacob introduced the affair with the following revealing sentence: "An vierter Stelle kam wieder eine Riesenauseinandersetzung mit meinen Schauspielern, mit meinem Publikum, mit allen politischen Freunden."⁸²³ The FDB had become a site for contesting identity within the *neue Kolonie* even before its debut.

In the context of Jacob's later writings, the motivations and details of *Das Andere Deutschland*'s articles in March and April also become clearer. *Das Andere Deutschland*'s reference to "große Teile des Publikums" indicates that individuals had threatened to organize a boycott of the FDB when the stage released its program in mid-April. Consequently, *Das Andere Deutschland*'s enthusiastic preview of the *Der Mann, den sein Geiwssen trieb*—"das wir alle

⁸²² PWJA VI b) 281.

⁸²³ PWJA VIII c) 454.

sehnlichst erwünschen“—in March can be read as an effort to counteract pressure from individuals protesting against the play.⁸²⁴ Jacob’s reflections on the controversy from 1973 reveal that the divisions, though yet to fully erupt, were already widespread. Furthermore his description of Ibsen’s *Master Builder* in 1946, at which time tensions in the *neue Kolonie* had not abated, is testimony to his continued efforts at mollifying hostilities within his public: “ein Werk allgemeiner Problemstellung [...], dessen Thema und dessen Autor zu jeder Zeit und in jedem Lande zu dem an ernsten Problemen interessierten Theaterpublikum spricht.”⁸²⁵ The specific decision to replace Rostand’s *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb* with Ibsen’s *Master Builder* represents a calculated, general move away from the discord provoked by political plays toward the more neutral ground of timeless moral questions.

In its first season the FDB sought to avoid politically sensitive themes, because they were fraught risks for the stage. A split in the theater’s already small public would have led it into bankruptcy very quickly. Moreover, tensions in its ensemble could, as the disputes following the FDB’s tribute to Max Reinhardt in November of 1943 attest, cause the ensemble to implode.⁸²⁶ Finally, controversial political theater could incite Argentine authorities, the *alte Kolonie*, or both. For these reasons the FDB adopted was very cautious during its first season, even line-editing play scripts to remove any potentially polemical material. For its

⁸²⁴ “Die Freie Deutsche Bühne,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, March 15, 1940 (my emphasis).

⁸²⁵ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 29.

⁸²⁶ See: chapter four, part 3.1, “Behind the Curtain: Working Conditions and Questions of Authority at the FDB.”

second ever performance, the FDB produced Bruno Frank's comedy *Sturm im Wasserglass*. Paul Walter Jacob felt it necessary to strike passages from the text in order to avoid running afoul of municipal authorities:

Und in diesem Stück, und ich weiß noch, wie ich dafür kämpfen musste, und wie ich zunächst nicht zurechtkam damit, in diesem Stück, wo von einem verräbten Hund vor Gericht gesagt wird, es ist der größte Lacher des Stückes, ‚Na, für Hitler wärs nichts gewesen‘, in diesem Stück musste ich diesen Satz streichen. Das hätte fast zum Bruch der ganzen Bühne geführt. Denn mein Publikum verstand es nicht, und unsere politischen Freunde verstanden es nicht, und unsere jüdischen Freunde verstanden es nicht, aber ich wusste, dass, wenn Hitler in diesem Zusammenhang auf einer fremdsprachigen Bühne in Buenos Aires genannt worden wäre, ich am nächsten Tag das Verbot der Polizei für diese ‚Freie Deutsche Bühne‘ gehabt hätte.⁸²⁷

As Jacob tells it, this act of self-censorship was unlike the decision to cancel *Der Mann, den sein Gewissen trieb*—it had nothing to do with divisions within the *neue Kolonie*. In a rare moment of agreement, the *neue Kolonie* was unanimously against the omissions. On the other hand, Fritz Pohle and Frithjof Trapp are skeptical of Jacob's argumentation, and argue convincingly that this single line would probably not have resulted in a police order closing the stage. Pohl and Trapp concur that fallout from the Rostand affair and consideration for his donors and the sensibilities of diverse groups in the *neue Kolonie*, probably influenced Jacob's decision, "eine Politisierung der Bühne unbedingt zu vermeiden."⁸²⁸

The arguments of Pohle, Trapp, and Jacob need not conflict. In the volatile context of 1940 Buenos Aires Jacob's fears, though perhaps somewhat exaggerated, were also legitimate to an extent. At the same time, as Pohle and

⁸²⁷ PWJA VIII c) 454.

⁸²⁸ Pohle, "Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung," 41-42.

Trapp contend, Jacob was very concerned about tension among the FDB's supporters. I believe that for both of these reasons Jacob strove to avoid politicizing the stage, especially in 1940. During its inaugural season, Jacob needed to establish the FDB as a cultural institution essential to the emigrant community, because only in this way could he ensure its continuity. He was responsible for the stage's legal and economic viability and had to take every precaution against premature censorship and insolvency. For the debut 1940 season this meant avoiding political controversy, the surest strategy of preventing trouble with Argentine authorities *and* ideological conflicts within the *neue Kolonie*. Passages naming Hitler directly, even in a comedy like Frank's *Sturm im Wasserglass*, were more risk than Jacob was willing to run in the early days. Jacob chose to play it very safe in 1940. With the lone exception of Vilém Werner's *Menschen auf der Eisscholle* which, though published in 1936, is more concerned with generational conflict and moral decay than contemporary politics, the FDB did not produce a single period play during the entire 1940 season.

Despite its efforts at discretion, the Freie Deutsche Bühne could not remain entirely free from politics. Not only German media, but also Spanish and English language publications previewed the theater as an antifascist cultural institution. Even before its debut, *La Nación* had already couched its introduction of the FDB in terms oppositional to Nazism: "Constituyen la compañía elementos que, ya sea por divergencia ideológica, ya por otras circunstancias, han debido suspender su labor artística en las tablas del Reich; de ahí que se domine Teatro

Alemán Independiente.”⁸²⁹ With an ensemble comprised entirely of European refugees, most of whom were Jewish, it was a fait accompli that the stage at least initially would be viewed as a political entity.

Moreover, from its inception the stage had claimed an antifascist platform for itself, reflected in its self-chosen name—Freie Deutsche Bühne. It neither could nor wanted to renege on this commitment. Jacob’s lecture on Ernst Toller in Verein Vorwärts from 1939 indicates his support of political theater.⁸³⁰ An article from April of 1940 in *The Buenos Aires Herald* also makes clear that, even had they wished to remain neutral, members of the FDB were compelled to choose sides. Having heard of the new German-language theater group, the *Herald*, a staunchly pro-Britain newspaper, launched an investigation, “in order to examine the aims of this movement, and to ascertain its authenticity as a progressive organization as opposed to the official German point of view.”⁸³¹ During an interview with the *Herald*’s reporter Jacob, Reger, and Hermann Geiger stated their antifascist positions in strong, direct language. Hermann Geiger declared the FDB’s solidarity with the Allied war effort, stating: “We are just as much enemies of present-day Germany as are the British.”⁸³² Later in the interview the three took firm positions on some of the most controversial topics in international politics, such as the German annexation of Czechoslovakia two years earlier. In direct contradiction to Nazi claims, Jacob asserted that during his sojourn in

⁸²⁹ “Ofrecerá su primera función hoy el Teatro Alemán Independiente,” *La Nación*, April 20, 1940.

⁸³⁰ See: chapter two, part 5.2.

⁸³¹ “Free German Stage,” *The Buenos Aires Herald*, April 9, 1940.

⁸³² “Free German Stage,” *The Buenos Aires Herald*, April 9, 1940.

Czechoslovakia he had not encountered any citizens in favor of joining Nazi Germany: “There was definitely no feeling for German rule among the Czechs. It was solely German money and propaganda which gave the impression that Czechoslovakia wanted to become a part of the country.”⁸³³ Liselott Reger-Jacob then debunked another tenet of the German propaganda effort which had led to the Munich Agreement in 1938: “There was no repression of German national culture as some reports have led people to believe. Masaryk and Benes were very kind and tolerant in allowing all German expression there. To have said the Czechoslovakia ill-treated her German minority was a lie.”⁸³⁴ In these declarations, the FDB avowed its antifascist principles and indicted Nazi German diplomacy to a source outside the *neue Kolonie* and in a language far more widely spoken in Argentina than German. Word spread quickly.⁸³⁵

Once the *Herald's* interview reached the desk of Nazi ambassador Baron Edmund von Thermann, the FDB became a subject of correspondence between Buenos Aires and Berlin.⁸³⁶ Thermann included a copy of the interview in a report

⁸³³ “Free German Stage,” *The Buenos Aires Herald*, April 9, 1940.

⁸³⁴ “Free German Stage,” *The Buenos Aires Herald*, April 9, 1940.

⁸³⁵ Fritz Pohle, who has thoroughly researched the Paul Walter Jacob-Archiv and whose analysis of the influence of tensions within the *neue Kolonie* on the FDB is quite insightful, does not discuss contact between the *neue Kolonie* and its nationalist counterpart. He also downplays the influence that Nazi Germany may have had on the FDB. I believe the proximity of the two German colonies was such that it made contact inevitable. The probability that reports of German antifascist activities in Argentina would reach Nazi Germany was high, because Germany maintained an embassy in Buenos Aires until October of 1944. The fact that it denaturalized teachers at Pestalozzi-Schule, such as Alfred Dang and August Siemsen, shows that Berlin had actionable intelligence about antifascists in Buenos Aires. Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Rahmenbedingungen und Bestimmungsfaktoren eines exilpolitischen Engagements,” 34-52; Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung,” 34-58.

⁸³⁶ Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda to Präsident der Reichstheaterkammer, November 21, 1940, R55 20553 Bundesarchiv Berlin.

to Berlin, describing Geiger, Jacob, and Reger's comments as uttered "in giftig deutschfeindlichem Sinne."⁸³⁷ The ambassador's reports also included information on the FDB's repertoire, in which it took special note of the Jewish authors performed, as well as the theater's advertising and ticket sales. The letters describe the attendance and composition of audiences at the Casa del Teatro and speculate about the stage's potential to have an effect "auf ein breiteres argentinisches Publikum oder auf das argentinische Theaterwesen."⁸³⁸ From the perspective of the German embassy, the greatest danger the FDB posed to Nazi interests was its ability to integrate itself and the emigrant community with the host Argentine culture. In an intriguing comment, Thermann discards concerns of the FDB's ability to influence the few Argentine German-speakers, claiming: "Diejenigen argentinischen Kreise aber, die ernstlich Deutsch lernen, scharen sich heute enger denn je um die Institución Cultural Argentino-Germana und wissen genau, dass es sich bei der "Freien deutschen Bühne" um eine versteckte Propaganda jüdischer Emigrantenkreise gegen Deutschland handelt."⁸³⁹ The German ambassador implies here that cultural institutions, such as the Instituto Cultural Germano-Argentino and the Freie Deutsche Bühne, have a vital role to play in the two Germanies' competition for the allegiance of their Argentine hosts. His admission of cultural representation as a pivotal force in this contest illuminates Nazi authorities' support of Ludwig Ney's Deutsches Theater.

⁸³⁷ Thermann, "Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires," October 4, 1940, R55 20553 Bundesarchiv Berlin.

⁸³⁸ Thermann, "Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires," October 4, 1940, R55 20553 Bundesarchiv Berlin.

⁸³⁹ Thermann, "Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires," October 4, 1940, R55 20553 Bundesarchiv Berlin.

Thermann evaluates the capability of the FDB to influence local theater and mainstream Argentine opinion as low, yet the Nazi officials who read his reports might well have believed otherwise. In several instances the ambassador's own report undercuts his conclusion. He argues, for example, that any propaganda the stage might attempt against Nazi Germany would be ineffective because very few Argentines speak German. Just a few sentences later, however, Thermann notes that the FDB is regularly reviewed in *La Prensa* and *La Nación*, which were two of the most widely read newspapers in the country and had a combined daily circulation of 450,000.⁸⁴⁰ Together with the *Herald* interview, Thermann's report demonstrated that in its first season the FDB had already found an echo in Spanish and English language media. Additionally, Thermann mentions that Argentines are scarce but present in audiences at the FDB and notes that one guest actor, Walter Szurovy, is married to an opera singer at the Teatro Colón. Though not included in Thermann's report, the Propaganda Ministry could have learned easily that Herman Geiger and Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla's brother, Viktor Schlichter, were also well-known figures in the *bonarense* music scene. Finally, through cursory research authorities in Berlin could have learned that the Casa del Teatro, as a public institution and residence for local actors, was conducive to the interaction with the Argentine theater world that they feared. Thus, although Thermann himself is dismissive, it is possible that his report raised genuine concerns at the Nazi foreign offices.

⁸⁴⁰ In 1936 *La Prensa* boasted a circulation of 230,000; *La Nación*: 220,000 weekdays and 340,000 weekends. *Critica* had the largest daily circulation of all at 280,000. Liselott Reger gave this newspaper an extensive interview to preview the 1941 theater season.

There is data to support the thesis that as early as 1940 Nazi authorities took the FDB seriously and might have attempted to impede it from performing. Just six weeks after Thermann issued his report, the Ministry for Propaganda wrote a letter to the Reichstheaterkammer identifying the FDB as, “ein reines Emigranten-und Judenunternehmen,” and ordering it to hinder cooperation between the theater and any German publishers, probably for the procurement of plays.⁸⁴¹ Acquiring texts was a real problem for the FDB—Jacob bemoans the difficulties of obtaining play scripts in countless letters and publications during WWII. Nazi authorities’ warning to German publishers likely aggravated an extant problem for the stage.

In other cases there is insufficient documentation to prove that attacks against the FDB can be attributed to Nazi authorities, yet their agency is cannot be ruled out. In a letter from 1943 to Alexander Berger, Jacob recalls a particularly precarious affair with Argentine financial regulators: “Vor drei Jahren, zu Beginn der Spielzeit 1941, ist die FDB und ihr Leiter P.W. Jacob beim Finanzamt denunziert worden wegen Rieseneinnahmen und Riesengewinnen, die die Bühne gehabt habe, und die der Versteuerung hinterzogen worden seien.”⁸⁴² Only after a “höchst prekäre Situation,” in which finance officials personally scrutinized the FDB’s record books, receipts, and contracts was the stage granted permission to perform for a second season, in 1941.⁸⁴³ I have not located any direct proof that

⁸⁴¹ Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda to Präsident der Reichstheaterkammer, November 21, 1940, R55 20553 Bundesarchiv Berlin.

⁸⁴² Jacob to Berger, November 22, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁸⁴³ Jacob to Berger, November 22, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

the Nazi embassy, Propaganda Ministry, or the *alte Kolonie* was behind this tactic, but circumstances urge suspicion of this group. First of all, it hard to imagine why anyone else would have wanted the stage to fail badly enough to resort to such underhanded actions. Tensions existed in the *neue Kolonie*, to be sure, but to have the entire stage indicted on tax evasion would have served nobody and risked collateral damage. The same rationale applies to the FDB's ensemble who, though not always content with Jacob's management, had nothing to gain and much to lose by such tactics. Some thirty years later, in his unpublished memoirs, Jacob indicates that he too believes the Nazi presence in Buenos Aires was capable of such chicanery, specifically in the realm of finance:

alle jüdischen Auswanderungskomitees [...] hatten eine berechtigte Angst vor den Nazistellen, auch vor der Nazibotschaft in Buenos Aires. Jedes dieser Komitees, jeder jüdische Kulturbund, jede jüdische Kultusgemeinde warnte, um Gottes willen vorsichtiges Vorgehen gegenüber der Nazibotschaft, die beste Beziehungen zur argentinischen Polizei und zur argentinischen Beamtenschaft hatte. Es musste also möglichst ohne Aufsehen, ohne die Aufmerksamkeit der Behörden zu erregen, ein Fond geschaffen werden, der finanziell eine kleine Basis für die neue Bühne geben sollte.⁸⁴⁴

Although he does not directly refer to this incident, Jacob does emphasize the threat of the Nazi embassy and its connections to Argentine authorities, and moreover he does so in the context of financial affairs, i.e. fundraising for the 1940 season, which square chronologically with the accusations.

In sum, German officials were aware of the Freie Deutsche Bühne, and the stage was a topic in correspondence between the Nazi embassy in Buenos Aires and Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin. In the FDB's very first year, Nazi officials took actions against it in at least one instance, perhaps more. First

⁸⁴⁴ PWJA VIII c) 454.

his part, Paul Walter Jacob manifested concerns about retaliation by Nazi authorities on several occasions. It is therefore presumable that considerations of the *alte Kolonie* influenced on his management of the theater. Thermann's report on the FDB in 1940 indicates that the Nazi officials and/or the *alte Kolonie* might have acted against the FDB in future seasons. As the stage gained greater recognition in the Argentine press and increased its efforts to integrate with the Argentine society and theater scene, it may have caused the embassy to intensify its campaign against the FDB.

There was one further reason why some members of the FDB wanted to avoid an overly confrontational course with the *alte Kolonie*. In his presentation on Ernst Toller in the Verein Vorwärts in 1939, Jacob discusses the necessity and risks of political, or "tendentious" theater:

Wenn wir die Tendenz von der Bühne verjagen wollten, müssten wir die Bühne in Trümmer legen. Es gibt kein im Sozialen wurzelndes Werk ohne Tendenz. Es gibt allerdings eine Tendenz, die auch wir nicht wollen, die Tendenz der Schwarz-Weiß-Zeichnung, die Tendenz, den Menschen der einen Seite als reinen Engel und den anderen Seite als Teufel zu malen.⁸⁴⁵

Like emigrant literati, such as Balder Olden, Jacob distinguished between the *alte Kolonie* and the German embassy, a representative of the Nazi government in Germany. He viewed the former as victims of intense propaganda and intimidation, not as cognizant perpetrators. Jacob believed in the possibility to reform and reeducate German nationalists in Buenos Aires, and he felt quite strongly that theater could play a leading role in this effort. Furthermore, as a businessman Jacob understood that if the FDB established itself as the theater of both German colonies, it would more than double its public. Long before the end

⁸⁴⁵ Jacob, "Der Dramatiker Ernst Toller," July 23, 1939, PWJA XIV.

of WWII, Jacob began preparing his stage and ensemble for this effort. In a letter to Alexander Berger, Jacob looks forward to an opportunity: “die Bühne finanziell völlig unabhängig zu machen (eine Angelegenheit, die sehr schnell eintreten kann, wenn z.B. nach Schluss des Krieges weitere Publikumsschichten dem Theater zugeführt werden können und der Betrieb vielleicht zu erweitern sein wird).”⁸⁴⁶ Jacob knew he was treading on sensitive territory here, particularly with Berger, a committed Zionist. He steered clear of political pronouncements, and instead explained how such developments would fundamentally change the financial outlook of the enterprise:

Dann käme der Zeitpunkt, an dem die Gagen auf ein anderes Niveau zu bringen wären, und wenn dieser Status erricht sei, dann bestünde bei weiter steigender Einnahme vielleicht einmal die Möglichkeit, dass dieses Theater [...] als Geschäftstheater mit persönlichen Gewinnen zu führen sei. Bis dahin ist eine sehr harte Zeit zu überdauern...⁸⁴⁷

Like the decision to postpone the theater’s debut, Jacob demonstrates in this letter that he takes a long view of the FDB’s risks and ambitions. He believed that the long term future of the FDB was hitched to both German colonies in Buenos Aires and hoped that the theater could facilitate rapprochement between the two groups while simultaneously expanding its own artistic and financial capabilities. At the same time, he also realized that convincing the *neue Kolonie* to accept its theater’s new goals would be a precarious task, and he began to prepare his ensemble for this endeavor years in advance.

In order to withstand the war years and attempt to prepare for a more prosperous future, the Freie Deutsche Bühne had to execute a nuanced strategy

⁸⁴⁶ Jacob to Berger, November 22, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

⁸⁴⁷ Jacob to Berger, November 22, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

for negotiating its volatile surroundings. It was incumbent on the stage to cultivate as broad a base of support within the *neue Kolonie* as possible, which required that it also try minimize infighting among different groups in this population. Outside the *neue Kolonie* the FDB worked to achieve tenable relationships—or at least avoid confrontation—among itself, local authorities and the nationalist *alte Kolonie*, as well as withstand aggressions from the official Nazi presence in Argentina.

2. A Changing Theater for Turbulent Times: The FDB in 1942

It was not until 1942, when the Americas became directly involved in WWII, that the FDB began to perform contemporary political drama. Between the stage's final performance in 1941 and its first premiere in 1942 nineteen countries in the Americas had either broken off diplomatic relations with the Axis powers or, in most cases, had declared war upon them outright.⁸⁴⁸ Although comedies continued to dominate the FDB's program, in 1942 the stage increased performances of current dramas with political and religious themes. The season opener, Robert Ardrey's, *Thunder Rock (Leuchtfeuer)*, signaled multiple shifts in the stage's repertoire. In its first performance since the United States' formal entry into WWII, Ardrey became the first US-American playwright performed at the FDB. His *Thunder Rock*, written in 1939, was its first production of a serious contemporary drama. *Thunder Rock* is not an explicitly propagandistic play, and its plot is only loosely connected to current events, yet the drama later became

⁸⁴⁸ In chronological order, these countries are: Panama, The United States of America, Costa Rica, The Dominican Republic, Canada, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, and Ecuador.

inseparable from WWII. At its premiere in November of 1939 at the Mansfield theater in New York, Ardrey's play had flopped. A year later, however, the drama was revived in London during the Nazi *blitz* where it "immediately became the sensation of the season ... an inspiration [for audiences] to gird themselves for the most heroic effort in their long history."⁸⁴⁹ By the time it was staged in Buenos Aires, Ardrey's *Thunder Rock* was closely linked with the British war effort and Londoners' resistance against Nazi aggression against civilians.

In this historical context *Thunder Rock* appeared to be an apt choice for the opening of the FDB's third season. The play has little action; its plot is internal and psychological. Its focus is the existential dilemma of David Charleston, a world-weary journalist whose faith in humanity has come into crisis after reporting on the Spanish Civil War. Disillusioned and apathetic, Charleston renounces his profession as a journalist and takes a job as a lighthouse keeper on a desolate island in Lake Michigan, intending to live out his life in complete isolation. His only contact with humans is a memorial at the lighthouse for a group of immigrant refugees who drowned in a shipwreck on the lake 90 years ago. In his isolation, Charleston imagines the victims with increasing clarity and begins conversing with the immigrants, who offer new perspectives on the existential dilemmas which have brought him to Thunder Rock.

His conversations with these refugees, who have fled from authoritarian European regimes after the failed revolutions of 1848, reveal to Charleston the great advances democracy and equality have made in the United States since then. The more Charleston reflects on their plight and his country's progress, the

⁸⁴⁹ "British Play on Free German Stage," *Buenos Aires Herald*, April 20, 1942.

clearer it becomes to him that his reclusion is a cowardly error: “Feige, weil er der Zeit nicht ins Auge sieht, dumm, weil er nicht erkennt, dass er damit nur die Mächte des Bösen, die ihn in die Isolierung trieben, stärkt, ihnen siegen hilft.”⁸⁵⁰ Finally, Charleston realizes that only through action can he contribute toward “eine neue, bessere und schönere Welt.”⁸⁵¹ Ardrey goes no further than affirming a vague blend of courage, fortitude, and stoic resolve, but diverse media in the *neue Kolonie* received his play as a call to political and social engagement: “Und allen will der Verfasser dieses Stückes zurufen: Seid nicht feige, bleibt nicht ferne! Ihr lebt in der Welt des Kampfes! Kämpft!”⁸⁵² Given the frustrations of the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, *Das Andere Deutschland*, and other media with the FDB’s “Komödienpublikum,” Ardrey’s message was very welcome.

Though *Thunder Rock* is set on Lake Michigan with clear references to US-American history, it strives for broad relevance. In his own words, Ardrey writes for all audiences who are “desperate people.”⁸⁵³ His cast of European refugees, fleeing from political persecution and religious intolerance, bears parallels to the FDB’s audience in Buenos Aires. *Thunder Rock*’s message is that it is worthwhile to work, participate, and persevere in a turbulent environment even when the results are not immediately visible.⁸⁵⁴ Though one could argue that

⁸⁵⁰ “*Leuchtfeuer* von Robert Ardrey in der F.D.B.,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, April 24, 1942.

⁸⁵¹ “*Leuchtfeuer* von Robert Ardrey in der F.D.B.,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, April 24, 1942.

⁸⁵² “*Leuchtfeuer* von Robert Ardrey,” *Volksblatt*, May 7, 1942.

⁸⁵³ Ralph Willet, *The Americanization of Germany* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 68.

⁸⁵⁴ *Leuchtfeuer* was not only a success in London and Buenos Aires during World War II, but in November of 1945 it also became the first American work to be performed in post-war Germany.

this purport is so broad and vague that it borders on banality, the general nature of *Thunder Rock*'s moral message appears to have suitable for Buenos Aires' splintered population of German emigrants. Zionists and antifascists of diverse nations interpreted the play according to common imperatives—engagement in the fight against Nazism and resolve to work for the future. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* reinforced this message when it wrote:

in der Tat gibt Robert Ardrey damit die wohl einzig mögliche Antwort auf eine drängende Frage unserer Zeit. Der moderne Mensch kann den Glauben, dessen Quellen durch die Aufklärung verschüttet und der von den Gegnern der Aufklärung dann vernichtet wurde, nur wiedergewinnen durch das Bewusstsein, dass die Welt nicht untergeht, die Menschengeschichte nicht einfach aufhört.⁸⁵⁵

The *Buenos Aires Herald* concurred, arguing that *Thunder Rock* “simply shows how the benefits of progress, how civilization can be saved, if no man stands aside, if everyone recognizes his duty of the moment.”⁸⁵⁶ *Thunder Rock* evoked Friedrich Schiller's notion of the stage as a moral institution which contributes to the education and improvement of the nation's citizenry.

The play heralded an important addition to the FDB's repertoire—the *Zeitstück*, dramas admonishing the *neue Kolonie* to action. Media organizations in the *neue Kolonie* greeted this change in tactics enthusiastically. The communist *Volksblatt* praised the FDB for a “verheissungsvoller Auftakt“ and pressured the stage to continue producing contemporary tendentious dramas, asserting that it “sollte nie vergessen, **welche** Zeit es ist, in der wir leben.”⁸⁵⁷ The *Volksblatt*

⁸⁵⁵ “*Leuchfeuer*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, April 24, 1942.

⁸⁵⁶ “British Play on Free German Stage,” *Buenos Aires Herald*, April 20, 1942.

⁸⁵⁷ “*Leuchfeuer* von Robert Ardrey,” *Volksblatt*, May 7, 1942. (emphasis in original)

recognized that Jacob had to balance his political convictions with business exigencies, but it did not exonerate him from the moral responsibilities that it felt to be incumbent on him as a leading figure in German Buenos Aires during WWII: “Seine grosse Aufgabe müsste es sein, die Verpflichtungen, die aus ihr entspringen, mit den Wünschen des Publikums in Uebereinstimmung zu bringen.“ By meeting this challenge, the paper continued, Jacob could achieve greater loyalty among his public: “Dann wird die Kolonie der freien Deutschen die F.D.B. noch mehr als **ihr** Theater betrachten, als sie es bisher getan hat.”⁸⁵⁸ Echoing the other antifascist media, the *Volksblatt* argued that political dramas could increase loyalty to the theater and improve tickets sales.

The *Volksblatt*'s prediction was very optimistic. The *Wochenschau*'s enthusiastic review of *Thunder Rock* also hinted that attendance had been disappointing. The paper dedicated its entire review to a discussion of the moral relevance of Ardrey's drama. It did not, as was habitual, split its commentary evenly between a discussion of the play's literary merits and a critique of the FDB's performance. Its explanation for this unconventional approach indicates lackluster ticket sales:

Das Ensemble der F.D.B. möge entschuldigen, wenn auf die guten Leistungen der Darsteller nicht eingegangen wird. Es geschieht, weil hier die Bretter einmal in anderem Sinne die Welt bedeuteten, unsere Welt, in der wir leben, und weil das denen nicht vorenthalten sein sollte, die diese Vorstellung nicht besucht haben.⁸⁵⁹

Even the *Volksblatt* acknowledged unsatisfactory attendance. In its arts section the paper printed an exuberant review of the performance, linking future

⁸⁵⁸ “*Leuchtfeuer* von Robert Ardrey,” *Volksblatt*, May 7, 1942. (emphasis in original)

⁸⁵⁹ “*Leuchtfeuer*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, April 24, 1942.

presentations of such plays to an increase in the FDB's audience. Its

“Jugendseite,” however, told a different story:

Gestern, in der Freien Deutschen Bühne, habe ich mich furchtbar geärgert: es waren fast keine Jugendlichen zu sehen, nur ältere Leute. Und das bei einem so wichtigen und feinen Stück wie *Leuchtf Feuer* von Robert Ardrey! Die F.D.B. ist doch *unser* Theater! Wir müssen den Peso aufbringen und den Zuschauerraum mit junger Begeisterung füllen. Dann werden wir die Leitung der F.D.B. ‚zwingen‘ immer mehr Stücke wie *Leuchtf Feuer* auf die Bühne zu bringen!⁸⁶⁰

Thunder Rock was well-received by diverse segments of the *neue Kolonie*, which otherwise often stood in conflict. The play was praised in all major Jewish and antifascist media sources, but the emigrant media did not always reflect the preferences of its readership. Media organizations also worked to mobilize readers to vote for political dramas in audience polls for the 1942 season.⁸⁶¹ It is likely that politically and religiously engaged members of the *neue Kolonie* participated disproportionately in these polls, thus skewing results in favor of political plays. Furthermore, the large number of comedies in the stage's repertoire split the vote among them. Despite having these factors in its favor, *Thunder Rock* received just 6.6% of total votes.⁸⁶² Despite the positive media echo, statistics show that the theater continued to experience difficulties in attracting audiences to attend productions of this genre.

Nonetheless, by the time of its third season, the FDB was not as precarious an enterprise as it had been in 1940. The risk of failure after just a few

⁸⁶⁰ “Jugendseite,” *Volksblatt*, May 7, 1942 (emphasis in original).

⁸⁶¹ “Fragebogen der F.D.B.,” *Volksblatt*, November 1, 1942.

⁸⁶² “Publikumsabstimmungen über den FDB Spielplan 1942,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 22, 1942.

performances no longer existed. Threats from the *alte Kolonie* and the now openly pro-fascist Argentine governments remained grave concerns, but within the *neue Kolonie* the stage had established itself as a popular and esteemed cultural institution. Moreover, as American nations became militarily involved in WWII, the stage felt a stronger moral obligation to perform theater which corresponded to these developments. Despite chronically weak attendance, by 1942 the FDB understood “dass wir auch dieser Art von Dramatik verpflichtet sind, dass sie zu unseren Pflichtaufgaben gehört.”⁸⁶³

Pressure from political and religious organizations on the FDB to perform more period plays, regardless of attendance also grew. In September of 1942, Paul Walter Jacob and Hans Jahn, editor of the *Das Andere Deutschland*'s culture and arts section, used *Das Andere Deutschland* as a forum to exchange opinions on the purpose and duties of *Exiltheater* in this crucial year.⁸⁶⁴ Although neither named the Freie Deutsche Bühne directly, it was clearly the object of their discussion. In an article entitled “Freies Deutsches Theater – heute” Jacob indirectly but unambiguously stated his position about the FDB's repertoire. He reiterates the case for lighter fare, emphasizing that comedies have an uplifting psychological influence on refugees. Jacob affirms the necessity of a:

Repertoire, das dem durch Schicksalsgemeinschaft dem freien deutschsprachigen Theater verbundenem Publikum neuen Optimismus, neue Kraft und neuen Mut nicht nur im materiellen Existenzkampf, sondern auch für die täglich neu geforderten weltanschaulichen Entscheidungen geben kann.

⁸⁶³ PWJA VIII c) 455.

⁸⁶⁴ See: Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung,” 34-58; Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung,” 47-9.

Jacob then moves on to a discussion of serious dramas. Departing from earlier, somewhat equivocal statements, he argues strongly that contemporary political dramas also form an indispensable part of *Exiltheater*. An emigrant theater is responsible for the:

Aufspürung jene Werke (sie erscheinen heute leider kaum mehr in deutscher Sprache, sind nur mit Mühe zu beschaffen und zu übersetzen), die im eigentlichsten Sinne ‚Zeittheater‘ sind, d.h. in diesen Jahren der großen Wandlung geschrieben wurden von Menschen, denen diese Zeit ‚begegnet‘ ist, die sich und uns allen Rechenschaft geben, und die sich als Überlegung, als Anklage und als Aufruf an das Publikum und an unsere Künstler im besonderen wenden...⁸⁶⁵

Jacob emphasizes the daunting challenges of obtaining and preparing contemporary dramas for performance but, unlike in 1940, he now recognizes an obligation to produce “Zeittheater,” provoke theatergoers into grappling with current events, and perhaps motivate them to take on an active role politics.

In his corresponding piece, Jahn acknowledges the difficulties that emigrant theaters face: “Wenn ein Emigrantentheater überhaupt lebensfähig ist, wenn es mit seinen beschränkten Mitteln die große Tradition fortführen, das kostbare Gut der Sprache wahren und immer neu gestalten kann, so ist das schon sehr viel.”⁸⁶⁶ Like Jacob, though in more forceful language, Jahn affirms the theater’s obligation to current moral exigencies: “darüber hinaus hat gerade das Emigrantentheater eine politische Verpflichtung zu erfüllen: es muss seinen Platz im großen Ringen der Zeit einnehmen, es muss und kann vieles aussprechen, was

⁸⁶⁵ “Freies Deutsches Theater – heute,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, September 1942.

⁸⁶⁶ “Das Emigrantentheater und sein Publikum,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, September 1942.

an anderer Stelle nicht ausgesprochen werden darf.⁸⁶⁷ In 1940 or 1941 this sentence would have implied a reproach, but now it was more a confirmation. *Das Andere Deutschland* still was not satisfied with the ratio of comedies to tendentious plays, but by September of 1942 it acknowledged the FDB's efforts to play the role of political provocateurs as well. In addition to *Thunder Rock*, the FDB had staged Stefan Zweig's *Lamm der Armen* to celebrate the Austrian poet who, exiled in Petropolis, Brazil, had visited the *neue Kolonie* in Buenos Aires on several occasions.⁸⁶⁸ This production, unlike its diluted rendition of Bruno Frank's *Sturm im Wasserglas*, included the drama's most controversial passages, including Lieutenant Fauré's cry: "Nieder mit der Diktatur! Es lebe die Republik!"⁸⁶⁹ In Argentina, under General Ramón Castillo's pro-fascist military dictatorship, these lines were a bold provocation. Furthermore, as Jacob recalls in his memoirs, the FDB had deceived the Argentine censor in order to perform Zweig intact. It deleted Fauré's lines from the Spanish summary of the play that it was required to submit to the Argentine police.⁸⁷⁰

In substance Jahn and Jacob are in general agreement, but whereas Jacob largely refrains from mentioning audiences, Jahn's article bears the telling title, "Das Emigrantentheater und sein Publikum." Jahn adopts a confrontational tone towards theatergoers. He makes no specific references, but there can be little doubt he is addressing the FDB's audience. He repeats the opprobrium other

⁸⁶⁷ "Das Emigrantentheater," *Das Andere Deutschland*, September 1942.

⁸⁶⁸ See chapter two, part 5.1, "The Pestalozzi-Schule."

⁸⁶⁹ PWJA VI j) 36.

⁸⁷⁰ PWJA VIII c) 455.

newspapers directed toward theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie* for eschewing political dramas in favor of benign comedies. In his conclusion, however, Jahn goes a step further, forecasting the harsh judgment history may pass upon them, the “Emigrantenpublikum”:

Wenn bei ernsten, kritischen, bei ‚Tendenzstücken‘ das Haus halb leer bleibt, bei banalen Komödien jedoch bis zum letzten Platz gefüllt ist, wird damit den Schauspielern, die ja letzten Endes von ihrer Kunst leben müssen, ein Weg gewiesen, den sie vielleicht nicht selbst zu gehen wünschen. Das Emigrantentheater wird seinen Platz in der Geschichte behaupten, und wenn später einmal sein Wirken beurteilt wird, dann wird damit gleichzeitig ein Werturteil über denjenigen Teil der Emigration abgegeben werden, der sein Publikum [sic] darstellte.⁸⁷¹

In his own essay Jacob also exceeded the topic of theater and stated, with clarity and thoroughness, his own political beliefs. He denounces Fascism as “letzter, gewaltätigster Form des Wirtschafts imperialismus” before setting forth his own views on the objectives and principles of antifascist activism in WWII:

Noch immer nicht ist die Tatsache in das allgemein Bewusstsein jener Menschheitshälfte, die in diesem Weltkrieg für die Erhaltung von Kultur und Zivilisation kämpfen will, eingedrungen, dass heute die wahrhaft revolutionären Elemente auch gleichzeitig die wirklich konservativen Kräfte sind, d.h. dass überall die Menschen, die für eine Erneuerung der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Formen als für das einzig wirkliche Fundament eines neuen Weltfriedens und einer neuen Weltentwicklung kämpfen, auch die Menschen sind, die um die Erhaltung, die Rettung und Weiterentwicklung der kulturellen, wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Werte sich bemühen.⁸⁷²

Particularly in the socialist framework of August Siemsen’s *Das Andere Deutschland*, Jacob’s words are unequivocal. By defining antifascists as the “wirklich konservativen Kräfte” in WWII, Jacob implicitly rejects the Zionist position that German culture is inherently flawed. If antifascism is a conservative

⁸⁷¹ “Freies Deutsches Theater – heute,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, September 1942.

⁸⁷² “Freies Deutsches Theater – heute,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, September 1942.

movement, then Fascism represents a recent corruption of values and culture that are historically and fundamentally good. In other words, Nazism represents aberration, not essence. In theater Jacob sees a vehicle to restore and renew—not renounce—true German values:

Denn heute in New York, in Mexiko, in London, in Kapstadt oder in Buenos Aires in deutscher Sprache schreiben, sich zu deutschsprachigem Theaterspiel zusammenfinden, heißt ja, eingestandener oder unbewußtermaßen, an eine deutsche Renaissance, an ein neues anderes Deutschland der Zukunft glauben.⁸⁷³

Although Jacob is careful to avoid explicit criticism, his declarations contradict the Zionist platform on the River Plate. An antifascist Social Democrat and a Jew, Jacob had sympathy for both groups, and he tried to balance his personal convictions with comprehension and accommodation for divergent viewpoints. The crucial difference between his tactics as manager of the Freie Deutsche Bühne in 1942 versus 1940-41 is that instead of circumventing religious and political themes, Jacob now addressed these topics directly. Instead of avoiding controversy at all costs, the FDB engaged both Zionists and antifascists. In the following, I analyze political and religious dramas at the FDB, showing how the stage functioned as a forum for sometimes competitive, other times cooperative politics among host and emigrant populations on the River Plate.

3. Commitment, Acclaim, Consequences: Lillian Hellman's *Die Unbesiegten* (*Watch on the Rhine*)

Decades later Paul Walter Jacob would refer the Freie Deutsche Bühne's performance of Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, which the FDB renamed

⁸⁷³ "Freies Deutsches Theater – heute," *Das Andere Deutschland*, September 1942.

Die Unbesiegten, as “ein ganz großer Durchbruch, der uns eigentlich auch in der argentinischen Theaterwelt zu Gleichrangigen machte.”⁸⁷⁴ Simultaneously, Jacob remembers, the drama provoked “die größte Diskussion, die es wohl je um ein Stück innerhalb und außerhalb der deutschen Emigration gab.”⁸⁷⁵ In a sense, *Die Unbesiegten* was at once the FDB’s climax and nadir. It demonstrated the stage’s unique capability as a vehicle for cohesion within the *neue Kolonie* and as an effective agent for integration with the Argentine society and other foreign nationalities in Buenos Aires. At the same time, the drama laid bare the profound conflicts which existed within the *neue Kolonie*. Following the play incidents occurred which indicated the FDB’s vulnerability to hostile elements in Argentina and abroad. It brought the stage unprecedented acclaim and recognition, but also generated discord and, perhaps, retribution.

The timing of performances of *Die Unbesiegten*, on multiple occasions, corresponded uncannily with major dates in the timeline of Jewish and antifascist exile. The United States’ entry into World War II appears to have been a transformative event for the Freie Deutsche Bühne. Less than three weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Jacob wrote to Lillian Hellman requesting her permission to perform *Watch on the Rhine* in German. From its inception, as he wrote to Hellman, Jacob envisioned its production of *Watch on the Rhine* as a watershed performance for the Freie Deutsche Bühne:

I am at the present planning the programme for the next season, which is scheduled to open at the end of March 1942. For the opening show I am in search of a play which should be significant both from an artistic and a

⁸⁷⁴ PWJA VIII c) 455.

⁸⁷⁵ PWJA VIII c) 455.

timely point of view, and, at the same time, should clearly indicate the position of our group. From all I have heard, there is no other play better qualified for this purpose than your *Watch on the Rhine*.⁸⁷⁶

Preparing the drama for production proved complex. Originally planned as the FDB's opening performance for the 1942 theater season, *Die Unbesiegten* did not premiere until August 29th, four months later. The stage required Hellman's personal permission to perform her drama in German, then the script had to be sent to Buenos Aires by Hellman's agent Herman Schumlin from New York, and finally it was translated by Liselott Reger.⁸⁷⁷ Between its selection and the premiere, the FDB's decision to stage *Watch on the Rhine* grew increasingly bold and risky. Involvement in WWII expanded greatly during this period, and several countries bordering Argentina, such as Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, officially entered the conflict. The United States was exerting heavy pressure on Argentina to follow suit. The play itself had also gained increased fame and influence, becoming arguably the best-known antifascist drama in the United States. Since Jacob's letter to Hellman, it had won the New York Drama Critics Award for best play of the 1941 season, had been selected for a command performance before President Roosevelt in the White House, and had been chosen by Warner Brothers for production as a major Hollywood film starring Bette Davis and Paul Lukas. Having read and edited the script for performance, Jacob grasped the volatility of the drama and decided that the preparations had to be secretive. In the past he might have opted to cancel the performance altogether, but this time he followed

⁸⁷⁶ Jacob to Hellman, December 26, 1941, PWJA Korrespondenz 1941.

⁸⁷⁷ Herman Schumlin to Jacob, January 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁸⁷⁹ PWJA VI h) 300.

through with the production. To mitigate the risk of preemptive actions from the *alte Kolonie* and the Argentine authorities, the stage obscured the drama by changing its title from *Watch on the Rhine* to *Die Unbesiegten*. All flyers, playbills, and other advertisements for the performance referred to the drama either as “*Die Unbesiegten*”⁸⁷⁹ or its Spanish translation, “*Los Invictos*,”⁸⁸⁰ and most also omitted the name of its author.⁸⁸¹ On August 27th, Jacob wrote to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*’s theater critic “mit einer grossen Bitte.”⁸⁸² He divulges that the piece is “identisch mit *Watch on the Rhine*, dem berühmt geworden antifaschistischen Schauspiel von Lillian Hellman.”⁸⁸³ Given the tense situation in Buenos Aires, he explains, the FDB has camouflaged the title: “Wir haben – wie die Dinge hier heute liegen – den neuen Titel gewählt und mit dem Inhalt des Stückes in keiner Weise Reklame gemacht, da uns daran liegt, dass die Aufführungen nicht gestört oder gar verboten werden.”⁸⁸⁴ According to his records, this was the first and only time Jacob attempted to preemptively influence theater critics at any publication. Even in this instance he only intervened after discussing the matter with *Tageblatt*’s owner, Ernesto Alemann. Jacob requested that the *Tageblatt*’s preview for Hellman’s play adhere to a few specific guidelines:

⁸⁸⁰ PWJA VI c) 289.

⁸⁸¹ PWJA VI b) 281.

⁸⁸² Jacob to Pauly, August 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁸⁸³ Jacob to Pauly, August 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁸⁸⁴ Jacob to Pauly, August 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

Ich wollte Sie [...] nun bitten, in der Sonntagsausgabe des „Argentinischen Tageblatts“ lediglich eine ausführliche Vornotiz über dem von uns gewählten, dem Sinn des Stückes absolut entsprechenden deutschen Titel „Die Unbesiegten“ zu bringen, in der Sie lediglich über die Aufführung sprechen ohne auf Tendenz und Inhalt des Werkes einzugehen...⁸⁸⁵

Finally, Jacob concluded his letter by reiterating his concerns about the consequences unmasking the performance could carry: “Ich muss leider annehmen, dass, falls das andere Lager durch die Kritik auf Inhalt und Tendenz aufmerksam gemacht wird, wir mit Störungen und evtl. behördlichen Unannehmlichkeiten rechnen müssten.”⁸⁸⁶ The next day the *Tageblatt* printed the following preview for the *Unbesiegten*:

Morgen und Sonntag finden in der Freien Deutschen Bühne die drei ersten Aufführungen von Lillian Hellmans Zeitstück „Die Unbesiegten“ statt. Lillian Hellman hat für dieses Werk den New Yorker Theaterkritiker-Preis für 1941 erhalten. Das Stück war einer der stärksten und anhaltendsten Erfolge des nordamerikanischen Theaters während der letzten Jahre.⁸⁸⁷

The *Tageblatt* maintained the disguise. One might have guessed that the play was *Watch on the Rhine*, but the preview did not mention the drama’s original title, content, or political message.

⁸⁸⁵ Jacob to Pauly, August 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁸⁸⁶ Jacob to Pauly, August 27, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942. Fritz Pohle, who does not refer to Jacob’s letter to Pauly, argues that the title was changed primarily to prevent scaring (“abzuschrecken”) Jewish theatergoers away from the performance. Jacob’s letter to Pauly appears to contradict this claim. It also is difficult to see why, in August of 1942, Paul Walter Jacob would have taken such extreme, unprecedented measures to disguise the play from Jewish emigrants. Jewish audiences had not resisted antifascist plays in specific (of which there of yet had not been any), but rather serious drama in general. Furthermore the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, mouthpiece of the German Jewish population, had responded to plays such as *Thunder Rock* and *Lamm der Armen* with enthusiastic support. Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung,” 49.

⁸⁸⁷ “Südamerikanische und deutschsprachige Erstaufführung von *Die Unbesiegten* in der FDB,“ *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 28, 1942.

As the aftermath of the performance would demonstrate, Jacob's fears were probably justified. Given the historical moment and political mood in Buenos Aires, the content of *Die Unbesiegten* was a provocation. The play attempted to rally the American public who, Hellman believed, were too complacent about Fascism. Hellman herself had twice been confronted with Fascism, in Bonn, Germany, in 1929 and later in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. In 1929 Hellman, who was planning to study for a year in Bonn, was living at a students' boardinghouse when she befriended a group of students who were committed to Nazism, which was described to her as the new German National Socialism. It was only when she was asked to join the group, which entailed declaring that she was not a Jew, that she became aware of her mistake and became a committed antifascist: "Then for the first time in my life I thought about being a Jew. But I was not only listening to anti-Semitism. I was hearing from people my own age the boasts of hopeful conquerors, the sounds of war."⁸⁸⁸ Hellman's purpose in *Watch on the Rhine*, as the Farrelly family matriarch Fanny says in the final scene, was to see to it that the average American—impassive, naïve, noninterventionist—was "shaken out of the magnolias" and made aware of the threats Fascism posed for their country and the world.⁸⁸⁹ In Buenos Aires this message dovetailed with the aims of antifascist and Zionist organizations alike, which were frustrated by emigrants' listlessness in political and religious affairs. However, in a country under a pro-fascist authoritarian regime with a large

⁸⁸⁸ Lillian Hellman, *Scoundrel Time* (New York: Little Brown, 1976), 41-42, in Robert Brinkmeyer, *The Fourth Ghost* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 282.

⁸⁸⁹ Lillian Hellman, *Four Plays* (New York: Random House, 1942), 330.

population of German nationalists in close cooperation with the German embassy, this directive also risked retribution.

For her approach, Hellman draws from Henry James' contrast in *The American* and *The Europeans* between worldly wise Europeans and naïve, well-meaning Americans. The play is family-oriented, centering upon the Farrelly family and set entirely in their comfortable home in the suburbs of Washington D.C. in 1940. Matriarch Fanny presides over the household, and her son David, an attorney, and servants Anise and Joseph, a Frenchwoman and an African-American, live with her. Though deceased, Fanny's late husband Joshua, whose portrait hangs on the living room wall, is also an influential presence in many conversations and decisions. The action begins on the morning when her daughter, Sara, returns home with her three children and husband Kurt Müller, a German engineer, with whom she has been living in Europe for the past twenty years. Another couple is formed by American Marthe and her husband Teck de Brancovis, a Romanian count, who have been houseguests at the Farrelly's for six weeks when Sara and her family arrive. Years ago Marthe was forced into a loveless marriage with Teck, and her budding romance with David brightens the drama's grim trajectory with a lighter subplot. Upon the Müller family's arrival, Teck and Kurt are immediately suspicious of each other. Teck is familiar with Nazi officials at the German embassy. Down on his luck and nearly bankrupt, he grows suspicious of a man with broken hands and bullet scars on his face. Through a blend of inquiries and snooping, Teck learns that Kurt is carrying \$23,000 in cash and is a member of an underground antifascist resistance force in

Germany with a sizeable bounty on his head. The conflict reaches its climax when Kurt receives a phone call from Mexico and learns his friend and immediate superior in the antifascist movement, Max Freidank, has been captured by Nazi police in Berlin. Teck anticipates Kurt's intentions and blackmails him for \$10,000, threatening to betray him to the German embassy. As the tension crests, it becomes clear that Kurt can only resolve the dilemma through a violent action which will involve all of the principle characters. When he murders Teck, the Farrellys are compelled to take sides. They can either turn Kurt into the police, thereby thwarting Freidank's rescue and, in consequence, assisting Nazi oppression or they can commit themselves to antifascism by helping Kurt hide his body and facilitating his escape from the country by keeping quiet, thereby becoming liable as accomplices in Teck's murder. In Hellman's play the Farrellys' decision to aid Kurt shows that their confrontation with the Nazi menace has indeed shaken them "out of the magnolias." They are now aware of the pernicious, immediate threat that Nazism poses to their home and country. No longer complacent, they are resolved to confront Nazism as engaged antifascists.

The cast of the Freie Deutsche Bühne could hardly have found a play more suitable for the *bonarense* environment in 1942. Demographically, the constellation of characters in the Farrelly household mirrors the Argentine capital. The Farrelly household is a diasporic space in which the natives Fanny and David share ground with foreigners, including Germans, Romanians, and the Frenchwoman, Anise. There are also corresponding ranges of age, affluence, and political platforms. Furthermore, the Farrelly household, like Buenos Aires, is

neutral ground. It is territory that is in play, wedged among opposing groups who grapple for influence.

More specifically, Hellman's plot and characters have much in common with the FDB's cast and audience. Kurt Müller's common name reflects Hellman's moral message, that ordinary citizens, including ordinary Germans, can participate in the fight against Hitler. Müller, an engineer by trade, has given up his profession, home, as well as his personal safety and that of his family in order to dedicate himself to the antifascist resistance. He is exactly the image organizations such as *Das Andere Deutschland* wished to project of themselves—modest individuals bound by a moral commitment. The Müllers, impoverished refugees, also share many other, less exalted qualities with typical German emigrants in Buenos Aires. Jacob remembers: “es war eigentlich unsere Selbstdarstellung [...] und es war das größte Erlebnis für uns selbst, was wir nicht geglaubt hätten, denn man spielt sich ja selbst nicht eigentlich am besten, aber in diesem Fall erlebten wir die Ausnahme.”⁸⁹⁰ When Kurt and Sara enter the Farrelly's home, they are a marked material contrast with the luxurious appointments of their new environment. The Müllers' youngest child, Bodo, marvels at the house's modern, indoor plumbing and their daughter Babette, surprised when offered breakfast, shocks the Farrellys' French maid when she asks if she might have an egg “wenn Eier nicht zu selten und zu teuer sind.”⁸⁹¹ Fanny, who had known Kurt to be an engineer, questions him about his

⁸⁹⁰ PWJA VIII c) 455.

⁸⁹¹ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 9, PWJA VI j) 329.

occupation and the family's evident poverty. Their exchange reveals a narrative which overlapped with the lives of many theatergoers at the Casa del Teatro:

Kurt: Ich habe schon seit vielen Jahren nicht mehr als Ingenieur gearbeitet.

Fanny: Nicht? Ich dachte—Haben Sie nicht fuer Dornier gearbeitet?

Kurt: Ja. Vor 33.

Fanny: Aber Sie haben doch an anderen Orten gearbeitet, Ans ehr vielen anderen Orten, kann ich wohl sagen. Ungefuehr jeder Brief von Judith kam ja mit einer neuen Briefmarke an.

Kurt: (laechelt) Wir haben den Wohnort oft gewechselt.

David: Haben Sie den Ingenieurberuf aufgegeben?

Kurt: Aufgegeben? (laechelt) Man kann auch so sagen.⁸⁹²

Kurt's post-1933 story, in which he had to begin a line of work outside of his trained profession, was plunged into poverty and forced to flee from one country to the next before finally escaping overseas to uncertainty and anonymity—is a tale that many members of the FDB's audience had lived themselves. The great difference between him and the *neue Kolonie*, most of whom were not politically engaged, emerges as Fanny presses Kurt further. Kurt offers a somewhat awkward, but candid description of his work as an antifascist:

Sie möchten wissen, wie ich, wenn ich nicht mehr als Ingenieur tätig bin, genügendes Frühstück und all dergleichen für meine Familie beschaffen kann. Es reicht auch nicht dazu [...] Es klingt so grossartig,- und es ist so wenig. Ich bin Anti-Faschist. Und das macht sich schlecht bezahlt.”⁸⁹³

Fanny's response, “Wir sind alle Anti-Faschisten,” reveals her naïveté. When Judith explains to her that words are not enough to defeat Fascism, Fanny resists—she cannot understand why Kurt's family must suffer so much for him to pursue his convictions, “Was fuer ein Unsinn---.” Finally, in an effort to make the gravity of the situation comprehensible to her, Kurt explains how he became an

⁸⁹² Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 13, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁸⁹³ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 14, PWJA VI j) 329.

antifascist. He tells her about his favorite holiday, the Kirchweih festival in his hometown of Fürth. He describes how the day changed in the 1920s and, especially, after the Great Depression began in 1929:

Die Weisswuerste sind aus schlechtem Fleisch gemacht, die Landleute kommen ohne Schuhe herein, die Kinder sind kraenklich. (betont) Sie sind schlimm für mein Volk, diese Jahre. Am Kirchweihstag 1931, mehr als ein Jahr bevor der Sturm losbricht, gebe ich die Hoffnung auf. An diesem Tag sehe ich, wie 27 Menschen in einem Nazi-Strassenkampf umgebracht werden. Jetzt kann ich nicht mehr dabei stehen und zu sehen,- jetzt ist fuer mich die Zeit zum Handeln gekommen.⁸⁹⁴

Hellman's account of the Kirchweih festival fulfilled several functions for theater audiences in the United States and Buenos Aires. First of all, Kurt's personal experiences make Nazi violence palpable to Fanny and begin to convince her that Kurt's cause is worthwhile. Her response, "Ich bin alt. Und aus derbem Holz geschnitzt. Und habe rauhe Umgangsformen. Bitte verzeiht," demonstrates the sympathy she feels for Kurt now, having heard his story.⁸⁹⁵ Hellman refrains from demonizing Germany collectively. Her description of the sufferings of ordinary Germans evokes compassion. A convinced communist, Hellman undertakes a criticism of a large, global economic system which leaves peasants shoeless and their children weak and malnourished while others, such as the Farrelly family, live luxuriously.⁸⁹⁶ For emigrant socialist movements, such as the *Volksblatt* group, these were words of their own creed. For less socially engaged German refugees in Buenos Aires, Kurt's explanation must have been at once soothing

⁸⁹⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 14, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁸⁹⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 14, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁸⁹⁶ Thomas Austenfeld, *American Women Writers and the Nazis* (Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 86.

and disquieting. Hellman shows a nuanced view of their struggles, abstaining from blame in favor of an effort at understanding. Nonetheless, she shows by Kurt's example that she believes the Nazi menace impels political engagement and active resistance, which may have discomfited politically passive theatergoers in Argentina.

By the second act, Nazism is no longer confined to anecdotes from far away Europe, but has arrived with full force in the private sphere, the Farrelly living room. These developments have unfolded inexorably from the play's opening scene, portended by David's ominous comment that the servants' bell sounds like an air raid siren. Fanny and David's careless decision to host the unscrupulous Teck de Brancovis, a person whom they hardly know, has brought the Nazi menace home to roost. When Kurt receives a phone call from Mexico with the news that his friend and superior, Max Freidank, has been arrested in Germany, the implications of his work as an antifascist assume greater gravity. Kurt is determined to return to Germany to rescue Freidank, despite the fact that he risks his life in so doing. Teck, who was already aware of Freidank's capture and knows Kurt is carrying \$23,000, has guessed Kurt's intentions and threatens to inform the embassy unless Kurt pays him \$10,000 blackmail, the same price the Nazi government has put on his head. Fanny bears much responsibility for this predicament because it is due to her cursory, superficial assessment of Teck's character that he is a guest in the Farrelly house: "Teck fand ich ganz unterhaltend. Er spielt gut Karten und erzählt gute Witze."⁸⁹⁷ Addressing Teck,

⁸⁹⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 4, PWJA VI j) 329.

Sara reveals that she is a better judge of character: “Wir wissen wie Viele es von Ihrer Art gibt. Für uns, -nun, wir haben Sie schon in so manchem Hause gesehen.”⁸⁹⁸ When Fanny rebukes Kurt that it was “unvorsichtig [...] 23.000 Dollars sichtbar herumliegen zu lassen,” he is quick to remind her of her own carelessness: “Nein, es war nicht unvorsichtig von mir. Sie sind in einer verschlossenen Kassetten. [...] Es war unvorsichtig von Ihnen, in Ihrem Haus einen Menschen zu Gast zu haben, der Gepäck öffnet und Erpressungen verübt.”⁸⁹⁹ Fanny’s naïveté has endangered Kurt, and Hellman implies that the situation in the Farrelly household parallels Americans’ own jejune attitude toward Nazi aggression. Her message is equally relevant to political conditions in Argentina, where Nazi officials were welcome guests of the military regime.

Despite mounting evidence, David and Fanny are slow to grasp the sacrifice and commitment incumbent on dedicated members of antifascist resistance. In response to Teck’s blackmail, they reassure Kurt that as a political refugee in the United States he has nothing to fear. When Kurt explains that his passport is “nicht ganz” legal, Fanny snaps at him, “Warum nicht? Warum ist er nicht in Ordnung?” and forces another explanation, this time uttered with growing impatience:

Weil man Männern wie mir nicht mit solcher Selbstverständlichkeit Visa gibt. Und ich hatte Eile, meine Frau und meine Kinder in Sicherheit zu bringen. (entschieden) Madame Fanny, Sie müssen endlich zu begreifen anfangen, dass wir nicht mehr in der Welt leben, die Sie früher einmal gekannt haben.⁹⁰⁰

⁸⁹⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 35, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁸⁹⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 29, PWJA VI j) 329.

Through Kurt, Hellman voices her belief that in the Farrelly household and the world at large there is no more time to be lost. Without immediate resistance the invasive Fascism will continue to proliferate unabated. The threat of Nazism demands risks that would have been unthinkable in the past. Kurt will return to Berlin to try to rescue Freidank. It may cost him his life, but the moral imperatives of the situation trump other concerns. Fanny has come to understand action must be taken, yet she still prefers to push the risks onto other people's shoulders: "Aber muss es denn unbedingt durch Ihre Hände geschehen?"⁹⁰¹ David suggests that Kurt, as a husband and father, could leave the most dangerous operations to others: "Aber – aber Sie haben doch Familie. Ist denn nicht ein Anderer da, der nicht Frau und Kinder hat ---" Their protestations recall the *Jüdische Wochenschau*'s criticism of the many politically passive refugees in the *neue Kolonie* who, "darin Genüge finden, ihr eigenes kostbares Leben gerettet zu haben."⁹⁰² Kurt admits he is afraid, and he acknowledges the sacrifices thrust upon his family. Everyone, he continues, has reasons for avoiding the risks of antifascism, and precisely for this reason there can be no excuses for anybody:

Irgendeine Ausflucht hat Jeder [sic] für sich. Der Eine liebt zum ersten mal,- Einer hat alte Schusswunden,-einer fürchtet sich vorm Konzentrationslager. Die einen sind krank, die anderen zu alt. (zuckt die Achseln) Jeder kann einen Grund finden. Und Viele finden ihn. Meine Kinder sind nicht die einzigen Kinder auf der Welt, nicht einmal für mich.⁹⁰³

⁹⁰⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 29, PWJA VI j) 329. Compare to Hellman's original, in which Kurt's retort is expressed "sharply" instead of the milder "entschieden." Hellman, *Four Plays*, 307.

⁹⁰¹ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 31, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁰² "Flug nach dem Westen," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, June 25, 1943.

Kurt repeatedly reduces the issue to a matter of personal responsibility. The current situation obliges all individuals resist Nazism, whatever it may cost.

With this final argument, Kurt convinces Fanny and David to commit themselves to antifascism. When Kurt refuses to pay Teck, Fanny is willing to pay him herself. The final proof arrives after Kurt has murdered Teck. the Farrellys give him their car to hide the body and are willing to remain silent so Kurt has enough time to flee the country even though they know this renders them accomplices to the murder. Fanny then takes the money she would have paid to Teck and gives it to Kurt: “Ich möchte auch zu Ihrem Werk beitragen.”⁹⁰⁴ The Farrellys no longer try to talk him out of returning to Germany, but instead support him in his efforts to do so.

Kurt’s work is dangerous and often thankless, as Teck remarks, “Die undankbare Welt scheint Ihre Art noch weniger zu mögen als meine.”⁹⁰⁵ His comments likely had a shrill ring to antifascist ears in Buenos Aires, where the Argentine government curried favor with the German embassy, but looked with suspicion, even hostility, on the actions of antifascist organizations such *Das Andere Deutschland* or the *Volksblatt*. The aptly renamed *Unbesiegten*, by contrast, justifies their fight. Fanny Farrelly legitimizes men like Kurt Müller through her actions and words. For Fanny, her late husband is the most exalted of all human beings. Present in a large portrait in the living room, Joshua Farrelly

⁹⁰³ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 31, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁰⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 39, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁰⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 33, PWJA VI j) 329.

presides in death as in life as judge over all actions in the Farrelly household and, by implied extension, in Washington D.C. When Fanny is convinced of Kurt's actions to the point that she is willing to back them with deeds of her own, she expresses her approval with the highest of accolades, a quotation from Joshua Farrelly:

‘Ein Renaissance-Mensch,’ sagte er, ‘ist ein Mensch, der wissen will. er will wissen, wie weit ein Vogel fliegt, wie dick die Kruste der Erde ist, was Jago zum Schurken gemacht hat, wie man ein Feld pflügt. Er weiss, dass die wahre Würde der Welt im Menschen selber liegen muss. Da kannst das in keinen Mensch hineinbringen; aber wenn Einer das wirklich in sich hat und dafür zu kämpfen bereit ist, dann setz Dein Vertrauen in ihn.’⁹⁰⁶

This is the message that Zionist and political antifascist organizations wished to convey to the *neue Kolonie* and, hopefully, to the Argentine public. The ungrateful response with which they often met, Hellman argues, does not diminish the righteousness of their deeds nor should it dissuade them from persisting with their message.

Fundamental to the platform of German antifascists in Argentina and Uruguay, represented by Verein Vorwärts, *Das Andere Deutschland*, the *Pestalozzi-Gesellschaft*, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, and *La voz del Día*, was the conviction that despite the crimes and dangers of Nazism, German culture and character were not inherently bellicose or nationalist. They were adamant about the existence of, as one organization's name attests, “das andere Deutschland.” Teck's comment that Germans are a fundamentally flawed people, “Es liegt etwas tief krankhaftes im deutschen Wesen,” is contradicted by Kurt's participation in

⁹⁰⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 39, PWJA VI j) 329.

the underground resistance.⁹⁰⁷ Despite his bitter opposition to the Nazi government Kurt retains a sense of patriotism, “Wo er am Platz ist.”⁹⁰⁸ In making Kurt Müller a German, Hellman recognizes that not all Germans supported National Socialism. Kurt is a very inclusive character. The hallmarks of his heroism—honesty, integrity, and courage—are potentially universal qualities. Kurt’s language is leftist at times, but he is not explicitly associated with any particular party, thereby preventing theatergoers from disassociating from him on the basis of discrepant political views.

The Freie Deutsche Bühne’s performance was also void of religious references. This could only be achieved through changes to Hellman’s original script. For example, the FDB switched Kurt’s wife’s name from Sara to Judith. The name ‘Sara’ might have seemed neutral for American theatergoers, but it would have been carried strong anti-Semitic connotations and stinging recent memories for German refugees. The *neue Kolonie* would have known about or personally experienced the Nazi Decree, *Zweite Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes über die Änderung von Familiennamen und Vornamen*⁹⁰⁹ of August 17, 1938, all Jews would be required to carry "Israel" or "Sara" to mark them as Jews in Nazi Germany. Many female Jewish refugees in Buenos Aires would have had the name “Sara” written in the passports they had shown upon entering Argentina. The FDB also edited Kurt’s anecdote from the Kirchweih, in which he

⁹⁰⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 33, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁰⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 34, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁰⁹ “Realization of the Law on Change of Family Names and Given Names —Trans.” The law became effective on January 1, 1939.

tells Fanny the origins of his commitment to antifascism. In the original version of the drama, Kurt brings this pivotal monologue to its climax when he quotes Martin Luther: “I cannot stay by now and watch. My time has come to move. I say with Luther, ‘Here I stand. I can do nothing else. God help me. Amen.’”⁹¹⁰ In the script for performance in Buenos Aires the quote from Luther, although translated by Liselott Reger and present in the *Soufflierbuch*, is crossed out in heavy blank ink. Instead, Kurt’s monologue cuts off directly before the quote: “Jetzt kann ich nicht mehr dabeistehen und zusehen, -jetzt ist fuer mich die Zeit zum Handeln gekommen.”⁹¹¹ In another instance, the Freie Deutsche Bühne moved away from Hellman’s political intimations toward an even broader message by slightly altering its translation from Marthe’s description of Kurt from “little German” to “irgendein Deutscher.”⁹¹² Its close editing of Hellman’s script reflects the FDB’s emphasis on inclusion. It depicted Kurt and his family as Every(wo)men representing the potential in each person, regardless of nationality, religion, or political affiliation, to respond to the call of conscience and engage in the fight against Nazism.

Watch on the Rhine and *Die Unbesiegten* also diverge on issues of Nazi culpability. During a conversation with Teck, Hellman has Kurt admit that for certain elements among Nazi supporters, “we may well some day have pity.”⁹¹³

⁹¹⁰ Hellman, *Four Plays*, 277.

⁹¹¹ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 14, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹¹² Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 16, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹¹³ Hellman, *Four Plays*, 316.

Reger's translation of this conversation is such an irreconcilable departure from *Watch on the Rhine* that it is expedient to reproduce both versions here:

Kurt: [...] We may well have some day have pity. They are lost men, their spoils are small, their day is gone. (*To Teck*) Yes?

Teck: (*slowly*) Yes. You have the understanding heart. It will get in your way some day.

Kurt: (*smiles*) I will watch it.⁹¹⁴

Kurt: Es sind verlorene Menschen,-ihre Ausbeute ist nur klein,-ihr Tag geht zu Ende. (zu Teck) Stimmt es?

Teck: (*langsam*) Ja. Sie besitzen ein verständnisvolles Herz, Herr Müller. Es wird eines Tages so kommen, wie Sie es meinen.

Kurt: Wir werden dafür sorgen.⁹¹⁵

The slippage here may well be a case of mistranslation rather than willful deviation. In either case, *Die Unbesiegten* is a fundamental departure from *Watch on the Rhine*. First of all, Teck and Kurt's comments on the latter's "understanding heart" are not only divergent, but conflictive. Hellman's treatment is more coherent. The overall impression is that Kurt's "heart" shows a capacity for empathy, a virtue but also a potential vulnerability for an antifascist. Reger's translation runs counter to semantic expectations. Normally, "verständnisvoll" would evoke expectations of empathy, or pity. Here, however, Kurt's "verständnisvolles Herz" signifies a keen perception of the struggle between Nazism and its opponents, characterized by rigor and confidence. Kurt's line about possible "pity" for Nazis is emphatically struck from the FDB *Soufflierbuch*. Unlike Hellman's original, on questions of Nazi culpability the FDB's performance was unyielding. Moreover, in the original *Watch on the Rhine*, Kurt describes the position of antifascists as tenuous at best. Teck believes

⁹¹⁴ Hellman, *Four Plays*, 316.

⁹¹⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 33, PWJA VI j) 329.

an antifascist victory is doubtful. In *Die Unbesiegten*, by contrast, both of them regard an antifascist victory as certain, almost a *fait accompli*. Kurt may be at risk personally, but in the end antifascism will triumph over Nazism. These lines are a clear attack on National Socialists and their collaborators in the *alte Kolonie*. At the same time this signal of confidence is a morale boost for the risky enterprise of antifascism in 1940's Argentina. Read a different way, however, this message of certain victory also could have discouraged emigrants from engaging in activism. It is very unlikely that the FDB wished to convey this meaning, but one could ask: if victory is already assured, why risk one's life to achieve it?

Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* offers a nuanced depiction of Germany and Nazism, but does not downplay the danger German Nazis represent. The nucleus of this group, the truly malevolent force in the play, is the German embassy, particularly an official named Von Seitz. The viewer is never confronted with Von Seitz or any of the Nazis at the embassy—they remain shadowy, ominous figures lurking off stage, much in the way that most refugees experienced the German embassy in Buenos Aires.⁹¹⁶ The embassy is the substance of any real peril to Kurt. Embassy officials, who “kennen immer ihre Landesleute,” supply Teck with the information he needs to ascertain Kurt's identity.⁹¹⁷ Without the threat of von Seitz, Teck would have no leverage for his efforts to blackmail Kurt. Hellman also depicts the larger scale machinations the German embassy can

⁹¹⁶ “Nazidiplomaten in Südamerika,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 23, 1941; “Naziverschwörungen in Südamerika,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 12, 1941; “Aufdeckung Nazitätigkeiten in Argentinien,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 28, 1941; “Nazispionagenzentren in Argentinien,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 25, 1944.

⁹¹⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 16, PWJA VI j) 329.

undertake in the host country through its illicit activities with the contraband munitions dealer, Chandler. Its function as the Nazi government's parasitic arm in the United States bears uncanny parallels to the official Nazi presence in Argentina. Chandler's activities as a weapons dealer are driven by a material greed which is unscrupulous, but not unique. In the figure of Chandler Hellman presages the German embassy's activities in Buenos Aires. At the end of October 1943 a 35 year-old German-Argentine named Oscar Alberto Hellmuth, carrying an Argentine diplomatic passport, was intercepted at Trinidad by British forces while on a secret mission to Germany. The Argentine junta under Pedro Pablo Ramirez and German officials in Buenos Aires had sent Hellmuth to Berlin on a mission to purchase German weapons and smuggle them to Argentina. The event, which rendered Argentina a pariah in the pro-Ally international community,⁹¹⁸ is a nonfiction manifestation the insidious influence that Hellman claims Nazi diplomats exert on host countries.⁹¹⁹

Hellman also debunks the mythical aura of power and supremacy which engulfed many Americans' and Argentines' perceptions of Nazism at the time. Fanny is incredulous when Kurt divulges his plan to return to Berlin and bribe Nazi guards to release his friends: "Das kommt mir alles so sonderbar vor. Ich dachte dort sei alles jetzt so fabelhaft organisiert, dass weder Bestechung, noch---"
"Smiling at her impressions of Nazi invincibility, Kurt marvels, "Wunderbar

⁹¹⁸ "Erklärungen des nordamerikanischen Staatsdepartements," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 28, 1944; "Ausländische Pressestimmen über Argentiniens Politik," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 10, 1944; "Wirtschaftskrieg gegen Argentinien," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 19, 1944.

⁹¹⁹ The event also galvanized pro-fascist nationalists in Argentina, who saw the incident as a contemptible embarrassment to the Allies and redoubled their efforts to unseat Ramirez. In March of 1944 General Edelmiro Farrell replaced him in the presidency.

haben die Faschisten es fertig gebracht, die ganze Welt glauben zu machen, dass es bei ihnen nichts als Heroen gibt!“ When David counters, “Sie haben ihre eigene Sache sehr geschickt geführt,-unglücklicherweise,“ Kurt responds with a litany of antifascist successes, including illegal border crossings, the disruption of Hitler’s radio speech from Hamburg in 1938, and raids on the Gestapo chief’s home in Lake Constance. When Fanny admires, “Sie sind tapfere Männer,“ Kurt explains to her that she has drawn the false conclusion: “Ich erzähle Ihnen die Geschichte nicht, um zu beweisen, dass wir was Besonderes sind,-sondern um zu beweisen, dass sie es nicht sind.“⁹²⁰ Despite their intimidating reputations, Hellman communicates the encouraging message that Nazis have weaknesses and can be defeated.

It is also noteworthy that Count Teck de Brancovis, the principle villain in the play, is not German. The count hails from Romania, which could be one of very few references in *Die Unbesiegten* to Nazi persecution of Jews.⁹²¹ In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt states that in terms of anti-Semitism, “Hitler himself was aware that Germany was in danger of being outdone by Romania.”⁹²² Teck’s nationality also shows that Fascism need not hail from Germany, nor even from ideological conviction, but opportunism. Teck is not a committed fascist—he is an opportunist. As Kurt notes, in 1931 Teck was actually an opponent of National Socialism in negotiations with the German industrialist

⁹²⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 30, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹²¹ Brinkmeyer, *Fourth Ghost*, 292.

⁹²² Hannah Arendt. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 191.

and supporter of Nazism, Fritz Thyssen.⁹²³ Teck himself remarks to Marthe, his business could be anything that works to his own advantage. He is equally as willing to blackmail Kurt as he is to fleece officials from the German Embassy at cards.⁹²⁴ He knows that his threat to turn Kurt into the embassy is morally deplorable or, as he himself puts it, “sehr haesslich,” and yet he is perfectly willing to contribute to his capture and likely murder if the price is right.⁹²⁵ Teck exemplifies extreme opportunism and the utility such unprincipled individuals can represent for Nazi interests.

Politically, *Die Unbesiegten* was a wide-ranging, influential, and serious play. However, the action occurs entirely in the Farrelly living room, a private sphere. This is also a family drama, featuring lighter moments of domestic life. Despite all the adversity they have endured, Judith and Kurt’s farewell shows they are still very much in love:

Kurt: (dreht sie zu sich) Wieviele Jahre lang habe ich dies Gesicht geliebt?

Judith: (mit ganz gluecklichem Gesicht) Ja?

Kurt: Ja. (er beugt sich herunter und küsst sie, als ob es von grosser Bedeutung waere)

Judith: (sehr einverstanden und ohne jede Verlegenheit) Es sind aber andere Leute da.

Marthe: (langsam) Und es ist schoen das mit anzusehen.⁹²⁶

Their bond, as Marthe confirms, is an inspiration for other characters in the play.

The drama’s primary subplot is the development of her own romance with David

⁹²³ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 35, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹²⁴ Here Reger’s translation is slightly off, missing the mercenary connotations. Compare the original and translation:

“Anything might be my business now.” Hellman, *Six Plays*, 281.

“Alles kann jetzt meine Angelegenheit sein.” PWJA VI j) 329, 16.

⁹²⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 34, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹²⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 24, PWJA VI j) 329.

Farrelly. When the curtain rises on the first act Marthe is caught in a loveless, forced marriage to Teck, but with a blend of disarming comedy and campy melodrama, she and David have morphed from flirts to lovers by the final curtain. The attraction between Marthe and David is clear from the outset. Fanny sees this: “So alt bin ich noch nicht, dass ich nicht merke, wenn man direkt vor meinen Augen flirtet,” and does not like it.⁹²⁷ Her resistance gives rise to many comic moments in this political drama. When she teases Marthe by relaying an invitation for dinner with another woman, “C-A-R-T-E-R” from Lansing, Michigan, David turns to Marthe with a feigned, revealing befuddlement:

David: Verstehen Sie meine Mutter?

Marthe: Manchmal.

David: Miss Carter galt Ihnen.

Marthe: (laechelt) Das heisst, sie hat vermutet, dass es mich eifersuechtig machen wuerde. Und sie hat richtig vermutet.

David: (sieht sie an) Eifersuechtig?⁹²⁸

The melodramatic poignancy of their romance increases as the audience learns the details of Marthe’s misery in her marriage to Teck, which was forced upon her by her mother: “Ich erinnere mich noch an Mamas Gesicht bei der Hochzeit – es war in Wahrheit *i h r e* Hochzeit, nicht meine.”⁹²⁹ Then, defying both Teck and Fanny, Marthe and David declare that they are in love:

Hoeren Sie. Ich bin an Unruhe und Kummer gewoehnt. Versuchen Sie also nicht, sich zwischen uns zu stellen,-Sie wuerden kein Glück damit haben. (sie geht zu David) Wir wollen eine Weile miteinander glücklich sein. (er beugt sich ueber ihre Haende, küsst sie. Sie wendet sich langsam zu gehen).⁹³⁰

⁹²⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 4, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹²⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 4-5, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹²⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 26, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹³⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 27, PWJA VI j) 329.

These scenes were criticized in reviews from the *New Republic* to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, yet they were also essential to the play's success among broad audiences. Hellman's explicit purpose was to galvanize ordinary citizens to take up the fight against Nazism, and she wrote her drama with this target public in mind. Other dramas with same intent, such as Ardrey's *Leuchtfeuer*, made fewer concessions to mainstream theatergoers. This won Ardrey praise from drama critics but, at least in the *neue Kolonie*, limited his reach to a narrower public. The FDB performed *Leuchtfeuer* three times to half-full houses at the Casa del Teatro, totally approximately 550-600 spectators. Most of the spectators were already engaged antifascists for whom Ardrey's message was welcome, but not new. When the FDB played *Die Unbesiegten* they had to schedule extra performances, and audiences numbered in the thousands.⁹³¹

Although their parts are minor, Kurt and Judith's children also contribute significantly to the drama. The youngest members of the Farrelly family, Babette, Bodo, and Joshua synthesize moments of comic relief with perhaps the most profound, convincing motive of all for engaging in the antifascist cause—the future of world's children. They have suffered the loss of their own childhoods as a result of Kurt's participation in the underground resistance, “Ich wollte, ihr wäret Kinder. Ihr seid keine Kinder. Das alles habe ich Euch fortgenommen.”⁹³² Yet the Müller children are all less than twelve years-old, and through their youth and innocence they communicate a unfiltered picture of their family's struggles.

⁹³¹ “Theater und Literatur,” *Das Andere Deutschland*, October 1942.

⁹³² Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 39, PWJA VI j) 329.

Joshua and Bodo, for example, are stunned when Judith explains to him that the Farrelly's front door is never locked:

Bodo: (leise, verwirrt) Die Haustuer ist nie abgeschlossen. So.
Kurt: Du kannst es nicht recht glauben, dass irgendwo Menschen leben, die es nicht nötig haben, immer auf der Hut zu sein,-wie, Bodo? [...]
Joshua: Es ist merkwürdig. Aber ich denke, das muss fein sein.⁹³³

The nine year-old Bodo is a key character in Hellman's drama. He acts as a mouthpiece for Kurt's weltanschauung, conveying his father's beliefs with a childish vocabulary and endearing delivery. His father is his greatest hero, and as a nine year-old Bodo can sing his praises in a way that an older character could not. When he boasts of Kurt's actions in the Spanish Civil War, Bodo functions as a narrator and introduces Kurt's character to theatergoers: "Er war tapfer, er war immer ruhig,-er hatte Erfahrung, er wusste immer Rat..."⁹³⁴ Bodo's praise is a flattering foil for Kurt's own modesty. Kurt compares himself with many other antifascists and refugees in Buenos Aires, many of them anonymous heroes themselves, when he refers to himself as "ein durchaus *nicht* berühmter Verbannter."⁹³⁵ By adding italics not in Hellman's original the FDB's script emphasizes the similarities between Kurt and members of its audience.

The profound biographical overlaps among *Die Unbesiegten*'s characters, the FDB's cast, and *rioplatense* theatergoers add a new, local dimension to Hellman's drama. On November 14, 1942, the Freie Deutsche Bühne performed *Die Unbesiegten* at the SODRE (Servicio Oficial de Difusión Radio Eléctrica),

⁹³³Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 8, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹³⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 10, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹³⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 15, PWJA VI j) 329.

Uruguay's national opera house. Preceded by its success in Buenos Aires, the performance attracted an audience of over 1,000 people in Montevideo.⁹³⁶ The boy who had played Bodo in Argentina had fallen sick and could not travel to Uruguay. The FDB offered the role to Frank Nelson, who had performed in Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla's theater for children. Nelson was playing the role for the first time at the SODRE. In the drama's final scene, Kurt bids farewell to his children before he returns to Germany. According to the script all of them put brave faces on the occasion, but when the FDB played the scene in Montevideo the situation provoked emotional memories which overwhelmed Nelson: "en el momento de la escena en que el padre se despide para siempre, me emocioné de tal manera que lloré a torrentes."⁹³⁷ Before fleeing to Buenos Aires a few years earlier, Nelson had exchanged similar painful goodbyes in real life with family members who remained behind in Europe.

It was not the first time an actor at the FDB had transgressed against the boundaries separating the semiotic from the phenomenal. In Vienna five years earlier, Jacques Arndt had violated the same taboo. In the final scene of *Die Unbesiegtten* Nelson's semiotic body, rooted in dramatic text and representing the character of Bodo Müller, disappeared amidst the true tears of his phenomenal person, his "bodily being-in-the-world."⁹³⁸ Johann Jakob Engel, philosopher and director of the Berliner Nationaltheater from 1786-94, has stated that actors must

⁹³⁶ "Die Publikums-Abstimmung über den FDB-Spielplan 1942," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 22, 1942.

⁹³⁷ Roca, *Días del teatro*, n.p.

⁹³⁸ Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 4-5.

always respect the boundary differentiating the character being played and the actor's own body. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, this margin is contextualized in violence—transgression against the phenomenal/semiotic boundary would cause concern among theatergoers for the physical integrity of the actor, thus violating the rules of theatrical performance. The audience should sympathize with the character within the framework of a fictional work, but should not feel compassion for the actor himself. In case of the contrary, the relationship between audience and actor changes profoundly, growing less professional and distanced, but more intimate and personal.⁹³⁹

Nelson was so appalled by his outburst of real emotion in Montevideo that he was afraid to face the spectators after the final curtain: “me avergonzó tanto que me escondí en el momento en que había que salir para el saludo final.”⁹⁴⁰ The public was moved by Nelson's outburst not as theatergoers, but as refugees. Many of them remembered departing from loved ones without knowing if a reunion would ever take place. For this reason, after Schlichter-Crilla had dragged Nelson back onto the stage, he was greeted with an ovation: “cuando por fin me arrastró la directora con los colegas al escenario y sentí el primer aplauso, fue una impresión inolvidable.”⁹⁴¹ The theatrical spectacle was transformed to community solidarity. The warm applause in the SODRE was directed toward Frank Nelson, not Bodo. The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* noted in Montevideo the especially

⁹³⁹ Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 6.

⁹⁴⁰ Roca, *Días del teatro*, n.p. “I was so embarrassed that I hid at the moment in which we had to make our final bows—Trans.”

⁹⁴¹ Nelson, telephone conversation. “When the director and colleagues finally dragged me to the stage and I sensed the first applause, it was an unforgettable impression—Trans.”

“starke nachhaltige Wirkung, die dieses Stück auf das Publikum ausübte.”⁹⁴² Paul Walter Jacob also remembers in the 1947 FDB almanac that the evening: “wohl zu den stärksten Abenden der Freien Deutschen Bühne seit ihrer Gründung gerechnet werden darf.”⁹⁴³ The reception Frank Nelson received contrasts strikingly with Jacques Arndt’s experience in Vienna. In both instances, similar errors on stage transgressed against the rules of theatrical performance and converted audiences into fellow citizens. However, the results were very different. As a Jewish dissident Arndt’s career as a Viennese thespian was abruptly and permanently annulled. An actor at the FDB through the 1960’s, Nelson remembers that his mistake did not end his career, but launched it: “A partir de entonces, el Teatro Alemán Independiente me llamaba cuando había algún papel de niño.”⁹⁴⁴ Whereas an exclusive community rejected Arndt’s phenomenal identity, the audience-cum-community at the SODRE embraced Frank Nelson on the basis of mutual experiences and emotions inherent to the emigrant condition.

Between its first performance in September of 1942 and the guest performance in Montevideo that November, the FDB played *Die Unbesiegten* six times. In less than three months the drama attracted approximately 3,000 spectators, an enormous number considering the size of non-nationalist German populations on the River Plate. Part of its popularity may be traced to the drama’s timing. As the *Tageblatt* pointed out, Hellman’s drama was directly on the heels of world events: “Unsere Zeit wird immer schnellebiger, und der Abstand immer

⁹⁴² “*Die Unbesiegten*,” *Argentinischen Tageblatt*, November 21, 1942.

⁹⁴³ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 48.

⁹⁴⁴ Roca, *Días del teatro*, n.p.

geringer, der uns bisher zwischen einem weltbewegenden Ereignis und seinem über den Dingen stehenden literarischen Niederschlag unentbehrlich schien.⁹⁴⁵

On the other hand, none of the other political plays that FDB staged before *Die Unbesiegten* approached its popularity.⁹⁴⁶ In audience polls *Die Unbesiegten* garnered over 23% of the vote for favorite drama of 1942, a huge proportion given that 25 dramas were in the running.⁹⁴⁷

In addition to its political relevance, Hellman's drama achieved such unparalleled success thanks to its own dramatic merits, which were the subject of much dispute in emigrant media. The *Unbesiegten*'s success is instructive for understanding the political tendencies and dramatic predilections of the *neue Kolonie*. It demonstrates that media and cultural organizations in the *neue Kolonie*—including the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, *Jüdische Wochenschau*, *Das Andere Deutschland*, *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, and others—did not correspond to the general disposition of the emigrant population. The family and romantic subplots of *Die Unbesiegten* were criticized in emigrant press organs, such as the *Tageblatt*: “Das Stück ist nicht frei von Längen und Schwächen. So ist Einführung von einer Liebesgeschichte [...] eine entbehrliche Konzession an ein gewisses Publikum.”⁹⁴⁸ However, I believe that in order to reach such a wide slice of the *neue Kolonie* the subplot was an indispensable improvement to the drama's

⁹⁴⁵“*Die Unbesiegten*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 31, 1942.

⁹⁴⁶ Such as Gorki's *Nachtsyl* (1941), Ardrey's *Leuchtfener* (1942), J. Aialti's *Vater und Sohn* (1943), and Elmer Rice's *Flug nach dem Westen* (1943).

⁹⁴⁷ “Die Publikums-Abstimmung über den FDB-Spielplan 1942,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 22, 1942.

⁹⁴⁸ “*Die Unbesiegten* von Lillian Hellman,” *ArgentinischesTageblatt*, August 31, 1942.

appeal as entertainment. Hellman's self-proclaimed intent was to shake as many apolitical citizens "out of the magnolias" as possible. In my view, it was Hellman's genius—not her weakness—to weave comedy and romance into a play with a serious political agenda. In the case of German and Austrian refugees on the River Plate, *Die Unbesiegten* brought far more spectators into the theater than other political dramas, including Stefan Zweig's *Das Lamm des Armens* and Robert Ardrey's *Thunder Rock*, which did not make such concessions to a broader public.

A more somber disconnect occurred in the religious sphere, demonstrating that uncompromising Zionists did not represent the majority of theatergoers to FDB, most of whom were Jewish refugees. Paul Walter Jacob described the drama as the "leider nur allzu oft vergessene – Geschichte des politischen, des nicht-jüdischen antifaschistischen deutschen Emigranten."⁹⁴⁹ Its lack of Jewish content did not deter spectators from applauding *Die Unbesiegten*. Nor did audiences reject the gentile German Kurt Müller and his family. Instead Jewish refugees identified with them as fellow emigrants who had suffered fates similar to their own.

Media reactions to the premiere of *Die Unbesiegten* were less harmonious. Hostilities arose among Zionist and antifascist publications regarding Hellman's portrayal of Germany, especially Kurt Müller. The *Tageblatt* initiated the controversy with a programmatically worded review in favor of Hellman's portrayal of German antifascists: "Alle Emigranten der Welt müssen dieser klugen Autorin dankbar dafür sein, dass sie vielen Tausenden von Menschen klar

⁹⁴⁹ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 48.

gemacht hat, wie sehr die Fronten dieses Krieges auch quer durch Deutschland laufen.⁹⁵⁰ The review, which implies that Zionists are among those who should be thankful to Hellman, met with a vehement retort from the *Jüdische Wochenschau*. Fiercely phrased even for this often bold publication, the *Wochenschau* launched a withering indictment of ordinary Germans for their support of the Nazi government. The reviewer, -r-, began with somewhat ambiguous praise for the performance, referring to it as a “zweifelloes starkes Erlebnis.”⁹⁵¹ He agreed with Jacob’s that the play’s content was at times autobiographical, agreeing that for spectators as well: “es immer etwas Ergreifendes an sich hat, etwas aus dem eigenen Erleben auf der Bühne ... dargestellt zu sehen.”⁹⁵² With the word “etwas” the review’s tone turns from approving to skeptical. Whereas Jacob and Nelson felt they were performing a drama which corresponded very closely to their own experiences, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* demurred: “Das eigene Erleben aber ... ist hier nur bedingt zu sehen.”⁹⁵³ The *Wochenschau* then marked the course for its discussion, asserting that “hier Theater und nicht die Wirklichkeit spricht [...] Die Diskrepanz zwischen Wahrheit und Schauspiel ... ist nur in wenigen Augenblicken ... überbrückt.”⁹⁵⁴ - R- claims that the figure of Kurt Müller is pure fiction, “weil es ihm das Glück,

⁹⁵⁰ “Die Unbesiegten,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 31, 1942.

⁹⁵¹ “Die Unbesiegten,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁵² “Die Unbesiegten,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁵³ “Die Unbesiegten,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁵⁴ “Die Unbesiegten,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

diesen Typ des Deutschen im Leben zu sehen, nie vergönnt war.⁹⁵⁵ The reviewer then rejects the existence of a strong German antifascist movement and indicts Germans the world over for siding with the Nazis:

In Wirklichkeit bedarf es nicht eines rumänischen Hochstapler-Grafen, um die wenigen aufrechten Kämpfer eines wahrhaft anderen Deutschlands ans Messer zu liefern – es finden sich Millionen Deutscher (auch vielleicht gerade im Ausland und in Amerika), die gleiche Arbeit, allerdings billiger, besorgen.⁹⁵⁶

The *Wochenschau*'s review provoked antifascists in Argentina. Its caustic criticism contradicted the position of organizations such as *Das Andere Deutschland* and *La voz del día*, who viewed ordinary Germans as victims, not perpetrators, of Nazism. Mockingly, the *Wochenschau* appropriates and exceeds the *Tageblatt*'s own language in this condemnation. Acerbic and explicit, -r-'s use of the adjective "wahrhaft" in his reference to *Das Andere Deutschland* betrays sarcasm. The *Tageblatt*'s "tausende" of foreigners who might be convinced of another Germany by Hellman's play are outnumbered by the *Wochenschau*'s millions of Germans who are capable of Teck's treachery, and willing to commit it for a cheaper price. German authors, -r- implies, are aware that Hellman's antifascist underground does not exist: "Es ist wohl kein Zufall, dass eine Amerikanerin und nicht eine Deutsche das Schauspiel schrieb."⁹⁵⁷ The reviewer expresses such brief and inadequate reservations, "vielleicht ist dieses Urteil ungerecht," that they do not soften but instead emphasize his calumny. Finally, -r- indicts the overwhelming majority of Germans for the atrocities of WWII:

⁹⁵⁵ "Die Unbesiegten," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁵⁶ "Die Unbesiegten," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁵⁷ "Die Unbesiegten," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

da sich an den widerlichen Exzessen in Europa das deutsche Volk – von rumänischen wohl abgesehen – als einziges in seiner überwältigenden Mehrheit beteiligt, während die anderen Nationen, bei denen eine Demoralisierung nach ihrer Niederlage leichter verständlich wäre, der Aufforderung, zu brennen und zu morden, nicht nachkommen.⁹⁵⁸

With damning scope and force, the *Wochenschau* singles out Germany among all European nations for murderous violence. -R- makes no reference to Nazism, Fascism, Hitler or any other individuals in his review. The *Wochenschau* denounces “das deutsche Volk“ collectively and without qualification.

The review did not go unanswered. The *Tageblatt* attempted to validate Hellman’s drama, noting that the “eingehenden Vorstudien, die die Autorin für dieses Stück machte – ihre Aufzeichnungen und Notizen betragen über 100.000 Worte – sprechen für die Gründlichkeit, mit der sie arbeitet.“⁹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, *Das Andere Deutschland*, incensed by what it felt to be a direct attack on its legitimacy, was more confrontational. It rejected the *Wochenschau*’s doubts about the factual accuracy of *Die Unbesiegten*: “Herr -r- weiss nichts von den zehntausend ermordeter, von den hundertsausenden [sic] eingekerkelter und gefolterter politischer Gegner der Hitlerdiktatur.“⁹⁶⁰ *Das Andere Deutschland* then mounted a counterattack, arguing that the only explanation for -r-’s ignorance is that “er selbst nicht am Kampf gegen das Naziregime teilgenommen, und [...] nie Fühlung zur deutschen Arbeiterschaft und ihrem Kampf gegen den Nazismus gehabt hat.”⁹⁶¹ *Das Andere Deutschland* accuses -r- of the same apathy

⁹⁵⁸ “*Die Unbesiegten*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁵⁹ “Lillian Hellman,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 16, 1942.

⁹⁶⁰ “Ein Unglücklicher,” *Das andere Deutschland*, October 1942.

that Hellman rebukes in her drama. If -r- did not actively fight against the Nazism then, in effect, he enabled the Nazis to take control of the German state, consolidate their power, and ultimately, commit genocide.

As the animosity mounted, the Freie Deutsche Bühne deployed theater as an attempt to reconcile the deepening divisions in the *neue Kolonie*. The FDB paid heed to Zionists and in collaboration with Jewish cultural organizations it performed several dramas with specifically Jewish content, such as Nathan Bistritky's *In jener Nacht* and J. Aialti's *Vater und Sohn*.,. Simultaneously, it strategically positioned future performances of *Die Unbesiegten* in contexts that served to dampen hostilities, using the drama itself as a vehicle for rapprochement. The content remained unchanged, but these events were emblematic of the FDB's goals of inclusive, international community building. Subtely, they also defended Paul Walter Jacob's belief that, in addition to Kurt Müller, there were many other German antifascist "Unbesiegten." Performances were staged in honor of the great German actor Albert Bassermann's 75th birthday, in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the death of Thomas Masaryk, the founder and first president of the Czech Republic, and to raise funds for prisoners at the Gurs concentration camp in France.

On September 7, 1942 Albert Bassermann celebrated his 75th birthday. A renowned actor in German theater and film, Bassermann had collaborated with Otto Brahm, Leopold Jessner, and Max Reinhardt before emigrating from Germany to Switzerland in 1933 out of solidarity with his Jewish wife, Else

⁹⁶¹ "Ein Unglücklicher," *Das andere Deutschland*, October 1942.

Schiff. In 1938 he emigrated to the United States and, although he spoke limited English with a strong Mannheim accent, he became a successful character actor in Hollywood and on Broadway. In a biographical sketch for the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, Paul Walter Jacob portrayed Bassermann as the thespian representative of antifascist Germans, the “Unbesiegten.” Although he did not address the *Wochenschau*’s review of *Die Unbesiegten* directly, one can interpret Jacob’s article, which appeared in the *Tageblatt* two days after the *Wochenschau* piece, as a response to the reviewer, -r-.

Many Jews and gentiles in the *neue Kolonie* had served in WWI but Bassermann, Jacob wrote, had never been tempted by German military might. Even in 1914, when many prominent artists joined in the “Hurra-Patriotismus“ of WWI, Bassermann remained uncompromising, commenting, “Die einzige militärische Rolle, in der ich in nächster Zeit aufzutreten gedenke, ist der Wallenstein in Schillers Tragödie.”⁹⁶² Like Jacques Arndt but with the authority of celebrity, Bassermann protested against the spread of militant nationalism from the stage. When a performance of *Wilhelm Tell* was disrupted by nationalist youths, as Jacob narrates, Bassermann broke off his monologue and shouted: “,Werft doch diese bezahlten Lümmel endlich raus!’ – Aus dem Theater wurden sie damals entfernt aber nicht aus dem Staat.”⁹⁶³ Jacob concludes with a forward-looking dedication to Bassermann: “möge er leben und wirken bis in sein hundertstes Jahr, auf dass noch eine neue Welt, eine neue Jugend ihn werde

⁹⁶² “Bassermann zum 75. Geburtstag,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 6, 1942.

⁹⁶³ “Bassermann zum 75. Geburtstag,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 6, 1942.

grüssen und verehren können!“⁹⁶⁴ By hoping for a “neue Welt” and a “neue Jugend” Jacob voices his belief in the possibility of a reformed postwar Germany and distances himself from Zionists for whom reconciliation was not an option.

The FDB integrated politics and community-building into its commemorative production of *Die Unbesiegten*. Between acts the cast came before the curtain and read a letter extending best wishes to Bassermann for his 75th birthday. They then included theatergoers in the gesture by passing the letter around the sold-out crowd at the Casa del Teatro so they could add their own signatures to those of the ensemble.⁹⁶⁵ By signing on to the letter, theatergoers congratulated Bassermann and implied their approval of *Die Unbesiegten*. The letter made no gestures of any kind toward any particular group in the *neue Kolonie*, instead by inviting everybody to sign the letter the FDB committed its audience to demonstrating unity through an act of epistolary community building. A few weeks later Bassermann responded with deep gratitude and a “kräftigen ‚Pereat Hitler.‘”⁹⁶⁶ In his letter Bassermann ratifies an intercontinental solidarity based on opposition to Hitler, implying that antifascism could serve as the basis for a cohesive emigrant community. The *Tageblatt* reinforced these commitments to solidarity by printing both letters together on October 18, 1942.⁹⁶⁷

On the 16th of September the FDB staged *Die Unbesiegten* in honor of Thomas Masaryk. The performance—an American author performed by German

⁹⁶⁴ “Bassermann zum 75. Geburtstag,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 6, 1942.

⁹⁶⁵ “Bassermann-Ehrung der F.D.B.,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 7, 1942.

⁹⁶⁶ Bassermann to Jacob, September 30, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁹⁶⁷ “Bassermann dankt der F.D.B.,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 18, 1942.

and Austrian emigrants in Argentina to honor a Czechoslovakian citizen married to an American (Charlotte Garrigue)—epitomized community-building under the rubric of inclusive internationalism.⁹⁶⁸ The “enthusiastic cosmopolitan audience” included well-known members of the local Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Austrian, German, Dutch, French, English and American communities.⁹⁶⁹ In its review of the event, the *Buenos Aires Herald* noted that many members of the FDB ensemble had special memories of Masaryk and Czechoslovakia: “this group of refugee artistes were particularly eager to honour the anniversary of the great liberator’s death, as they all had found in Czechoslovakia a haven and the last European country where they could play theatre freely.”⁹⁷⁰ Jacob wrote about his experiences in Czechoslovakia in an article entitled “In Prag vor fünf Jahren,” printed in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* two days before the performance. For several members of the FDB the Czech town of Teplitz-Schönau was akin to a second homeland. It offered German theater, schools, and libraries, “und doch in einem freien Land, in einer demokratischen Republik lag.”⁹⁷¹ Jacob remembers Masaryk as a representative of the highest moral integrity in European politics at a time riddled with demagoguery, deceit, and despair: “dieser Altpräsident, der Zeit seines Lebens dem Wahlspruch ‚Die Wahrheit siegt‘ gefolgt war, der gegen die Ritualmordlüge, gegen Geschichtsfälschung [...] gekämpft hatte, der sich ruhig als ‚Juden- und Deutschen-Knecht‘ beschimpfen liess und mutig seinen

⁹⁶⁸ Kaderabek to Jacob, September 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

⁹⁶⁹ “Tribute to late Czech President,” *Buenos Aires Herald*, September 18, 1942.

⁹⁷⁰ “Tribute to late Czech President,” *Buenos Aires Herald*, September 18, 1942.

⁹⁷¹ “In Prag vor fünf Jahren,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 14, 1942.

geraden Weg gegangen war.⁹⁷² In Masaryk Jacob saw the model for leadership in all countries, guided by truth, tolerance, and quiet but courageous dignity. In a gesture of friendship toward the Czech community in Buenos Aires, Jacob finished his article with “die Hoffnung, dass mit der allgemeinen europäischen Renaissance, an die zu glauben wir nie müde werden, auch dieses aktive tschechische Volk seine Wiederauferstehung erleben wird!”⁹⁷³ Its performance of *Die Unbesiegten* honored Tomas Masaryk, who could be seen as another “Unbesiegter,” with goal of bringing together Buenos Aires’ diverse population to support antifascism in his memory.

Hellman’s play suited the occasion. The *Tageblatt* noted that its plot was characterized by “ganz besonderer Aktualität,”⁹⁷⁴ and indeed the timing of the play, three months after Czech freedom fighters had assassinated Reinhard Heydrich, the draconian acting governor of Bohemia and Moravia who also ran the Chief Security Office of the Reich (Reichssicherheitshauptamt), had a special poignancy.⁹⁷⁵ Heydrich’s recent assassination influenced the performance in honor of Masaryk profoundly. The cast and stage hands produced the performance, which was sold-out, without payment.⁹⁷⁶ Proceeds from ticket sales were donated to the Czech envoy in Buenos Aires as a contribution to the reconstruction of Lidice, a small town near Prague. Though no firm evidence was

⁹⁷² “In Prag vor fünf Jahren,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 14, 1942.

⁹⁷³ “In Prag vor fünf Jahren,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 14, 1942.

⁹⁷⁴ “Lillian Hellman,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 16, 1942.

⁹⁷⁵ Peter Demetz, *Prague in Danger* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008), 140.

⁹⁷⁶ Kaderabek (Czech Envoy to Argentina) to Jacob, September 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

uncovered, a letter roused the suspicions of the Gestapo that there was some connection between Heydrich's assassination and a family in Lidice whose son was serving in the Czechoslovak army in Britain. On June 10, 1942, Gestapo troops blocked all exits from Lidice, entered the village, and murdered all 173 male adult inhabitants. The women were then separated from their children and sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp. Of the children some were selected for Germanization in SS families, and the rest were gassed at the Chelm concentration camp in eastern Poland. Finally, the entire village was razed. The village of Ležáky was also razed and thirty-two residents of Pardubice were also murdered. In all, 1,331 people, including 201 women were executed in the wave of terror after Heydrich's assassination. Additionally, 3,000 Jews were deported from Terezín to Auschwitz during that time, from May 27 to June 18, 1942.⁹⁷⁷

The FDB's contribution toward the rebuilding of Lidice signaled its hope, as Jacob had expressed in his article, in the resurgence of Czechoslovakia following the horrors of Nazi occupation.

On October 17, 1942, the Freie Deutsche Bühne put on *Die Unbesiegten* for its fifth performance in as many weeks. On this occasion it staged the drama in the Teatro Unione e Benevolenza, a significantly larger venue than the Casa del Teatro.⁹⁷⁸ Once again, the cast performed without receiving any payment “in order that the net box office receipts can be conveyed to its purpose: to help the

⁹⁷⁷ Peter Demetz, *Prague in Danger*, 170.

⁹⁷⁸ “Benefit Performance *Watch on the Rhine* for Comite de Gurs,” *Buenos Aires Herald*, October 14, 1942.

children and those interned in French concentration camps.⁹⁷⁹ Specifically, the FDB sent the proceeds to the local branch of the charity, *Comite de Socorro para Gurs*, which was dedicated to alleviating the sufferings of internees in the Gurs concentration camp in Vichy France. The event demonstrated international solidarity with victims of Nazi persecution. The FDB's efforts at solidarity took place on the local level as well. In his letter of thanks to the FDB Carlos Hirsch, secretary for the *Comite de Socorro para Gurs*, included a list of the members of the charity's advisory board.⁹⁸⁰ Among the five names is Hardi Swarensky, co-founder and editor-in-chief of the *Jüdische Wochenschau*.

It as a testament to Jacob's commitment and need to include all groups in the *neue Kolonie* at the FDB that he cooperated with Swarenksy soon after his newspaper's controversial review of *Die Unbesiegten*. Furthermore, by performing the same drama to raise money for prisoners in Gurs, Jacob persuaded Zionists to moderate their tone. In his letter to Jacob, Carlos Hirsch strongly praises the FDB's performance: "Der ausgezeichneten Darstellung und dem guten Zusammenspiel Ihres Ensembles ist der tiefe Eindruck zu danken, den das Stück bei den Zuschauern hinterliess."⁹⁸¹ The letter is not free from reservations about Hellman's drama, but its approach is measured: "Das Stück selbst stellt ein Problem dar, mit dem sich unsere Zeit auseinandersetzen muss."⁹⁸² Zionist leaders

⁹⁷⁹ "Benefit Performance *Watch on the Rhine* for *Comite de Gurs*," *Buenos Aires Herald*, October 14, 1942.

⁹⁸⁰ Carlos Hirsch to Jacob, October 17, 1942, PWJAVI h) 300.

⁹⁸¹ Carlos Hirsch to Jacob, October 17, 1942, PWJAVI h) 300.

⁹⁸² Carlos Hirsch to Jacob, October 17, 1942, PWJAVI h) 300.

remained skeptical about the existence of a large-scale German antifascist resistance, but instead of inciting hostilities they now encouraged dialogue.

In pro-fascist authoritarian Argentina there was risk of backlash, including censorship, against too much open discussion of many of the topics *Die Unbesiegten* addresses, such as antifascist activism, political violence, and the German embassy. Across the River Plate in democratic Uruguay, however, there were fewer restrictions on free speech and public assembly. Media organizations from all groups in the *neue Kolonie* advertised the performance of the FDB's production of Hellman's play during its next guest performance in Montevideo. The *Jüdische Wochenschau's* preview was one of the most positive:

Dieses Stück war nicht nur einer der stärksten Spielplan-Erfolge der FDB, die unabhängige deutschsprachige Bühne hat dieses Werk in Buenos Aires auch als Gedenkaufführung zum fünften Todestag des Präsidenten T.G. Masaryk und als Wohltätigkeitsvorstellung für die in Frankreich internierten Emigranten und Emigrantenkinder mit größter Wirkung und vor immer wieder begeistertem Auditorium gespielt.⁹⁸³

In years past, the *Wochenschau* had encouraged its readers to boycott productions of dramas it opposed, provoking what Jacob later described as "Publikumsrevolte."⁹⁸⁴ Now, it enticed readers to attend a drama whose message it earlier had disputed. Other publications also promoted the drama, drawing over 1,000 spectators to the performance. The FDB saw in this situation an opportunity for dialogue and seized upon the chance. Following its production of *Die Unbesiegten* at the SODRE auditorium, the ensemble invited theatergoers to

⁹⁸³ "Theater in Montevideo," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 1942.

⁹⁸⁴ PWJA VIII c) 455.

remain for an open discussion of the play.⁹⁸⁵ The multiple productions of *Die Unbesiegten* catalyzed a direct dialogue among multiple political and religious groups in the *neue Kolonie*. Conflicts within the *neue Kolonie* persisted, of course. Yet at least the Freie Deutsche Bühne provided a space and impetus for a diverse public to meet, converse, and dispute in person.

During the 1943 off-season in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* Jacob undertook a subtle, public defense of the content of *Die Unbesiegten* and object to Zionists' indictments of the German people. In article from February 10, 1943, Jacob reflected on the 10th anniversary of a National Socialist state funeral for fallen SA commando, Hans Maikowski, allegedly killed by communists in a street fight. Jacob revisited the event in order to expose SA members like Maikowski:

Dieser Maikowski war durchaus kein "alter Kämpfer" der Bewegung. Das war ein Proletarier, ein Arbeiterkind und ein Junge, dem die deutsche Wirtschaftskrise wie Millionen anderer böse mitgespielt hatte. Maikowski, das war kein einzelner, das war der typischer fall des unsicheren, schwankenden, durch die jahrelange Arbeitslosigkeit ins Lumpenproletariat abgeglittenen, politisch leicht verführbaren Jugendlichen. Was wussten er und seinesgleichen...?⁹⁸⁶

Jacob's analysis of the Maikowski funeral parallels Kurt Müller's anecdotes about the Kirchweih festival. Kurt also traces the causes of Nazism to vulnerable, impoverished stricken German lower classes, and a deadly street fight triggers his commitment to antifascism. The following week, in a programmatically titled article, "Ich erneuere das Bekenntnis," Jacob seizes upon the 10th anniversary of Thomas Mann's speech at the Berliner Volksbühne to distribute blame and praise across social groups and political movements in Germany. Similar to Hellman,

⁹⁸⁵ "Die Unbesiegten," *Argentinischen Tageblatt*, November 21, 1942.

⁹⁸⁶ "Der kleine Reichstagsbrand," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 10, 1943.

who like Jacob was Jewish, Jacob omits religion from his analysis. He traces the roots of the antifascist resistance to workers' parties and laments that their steadfast opposition to Nazism "wird heute gar zu leicht vergessen." These are the same social classes which contribute their "Nickel und Pennies" to combat Fascism in *Die Unbesiegten*.⁹⁸⁷ Jacob and Hellman both place the blame for Nazism's rise squarely on the bourgeoisie. According to Jacob, although the Nazis gained power on the shoulders of German industrial giants,⁹⁸⁸ it was the "kleinlichste Interessen und völliges Versagen jeder vernünftigen Urteilskräfte" of the "politische uninteressierten" bourgeoisie which brought Hitler to power and legitimized his claims of having gained power through democratic means.⁹⁸⁹ Jacob's indictment of the German bourgeoisie echoes Hellman's criticism of affluent Americans like the Farrellys, whose complacency enables Nazism to advance. Again following Hellman's lead, Jacob also debunks the Nazi hero myth. In "Die Helden," his third article on the rise of fascism in as many weeks, Jacob analyzes an antifascist painting which satirizes the fascist March on Rome. He summarizes the painting, which depicts grim-faced fascist legions marching on foot to Rome while Hitler and Mussolini relax in the comfort of a modern train, in a single sentence: "Die berühmten ,entscheidenden' Märsche, das ganze ,gefährliche Leben, die Revolutionäre' Entschlossenheit zum Letzen... Bluff, Schwindel, Humbug!"⁹⁹⁰ The legends of Nazi heroism are "ein verlogener

⁹⁸⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 28, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁸⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Die Unbesiegten*, 30, PWJA VI j) 329.

⁹⁸⁹ "Ich erneuere das Bekenntnis," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 19, 1943.

⁹⁹⁰ "Die Helden," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 26, 1943.

Mythos [...] die Sage von der Tapferkeit, dem persönlichen Mut, der Forscherheit der faschistischen Landsknechts-Naturen, eine moderne Heldensage.⁹⁹¹ In several passages Jacob's article reads like a validation of *Die Unbesiegten's* portrayal of underground antifascist resistance fighters:

Wann und wo ist er (der Nazi) mit dem Bewusstsein schlafen gegangen (wie es seit 10 Jahren jeder illegale Kämpfer in Deutschland und allen faschistischen Ländern tun muss), dass in der Nacht vielleicht oder sogar wahrscheinlich die „Spezialkommandos“ kommen, um ihn zu grauenvollsten Folterung zu schleppen?⁹⁹²

Disproving the Nazi “Heldenmythos,” Jacob also affirms the existence of numerous German antifascists. Repeating various details of Kurt's biography in the non-fictional genre of political journalism—“Wahrheit” as opposed to “Schauspiel,” in the words of the *Jüdische Wochenschau*—Jacob attempts to legitimize the figure of Kurt Müller.⁹⁹³ One should add, however, that Jacob also does not address the core of Nazi ideology, which is racist anti-Semitism.

The final essay of these four interlinked pieces, “Die überwältigende Mehrheit,” concerns itself with the controversy of collective German guilt. Jacob invokes the moral “Pflicht des Chronisten” to remind the forgetful “Mehrheit der Menschen fast aller Länder” that many Germans have a record of opposition toward Nazism.⁹⁹⁴ As evidence Jacob cites the election of March 5, 1933 less than a week after the *Reichstagsbrand*:

Am 5. März 1933 wählten 7,1 Millionen, d.h. 18,3 Prozent der deutschen Wähler sozialdemokratisch, 4,7 Millionen, d.h. 12,1 Prozent (!)

⁹⁹¹ “Die Helden,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 26, 1943.

⁹⁹² “Die Helden,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, February 26, 1943.

⁹⁹³ “*Die Unbesiegten*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942.

⁹⁹⁴ “Die überwältigende Mehrheit,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 6, 1943.

kommunistisch und 4,2 Millionen, d.h. 10,9 Prozent Zentrum, Trotz des Terrors, trotz partiellen Wahlbetrugs, trotz der unbegrenzten Möglichkeit der Propaganda erhielt Hitler samt seinen deutschnationalen Helfer nur eine Mehrheit von 52 Prozent. – Blickt man heute zurück, so muss man sagen, dass dieser 5. März vor 10 Jahren Hitlers denkbar grösste Wahlschlappe gewesen ist. Sie konnte nur durch den schärfsten, blutigsten Terror wettgemacht werden.⁹⁹⁵

In none of his articles does Jacob directly confront the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, but he does confront many of the newspaper's objections to *Die Unbesiegten*. The connection is especially suggestive in this impassioned defense of German citizens, which rejects the strongest, most polemical accusation from the *Wochenschau*'s review. Jacob's title "Die überwältigende Mehrheit," quotes verbatim from the *Wochenschau*'s charge that the German nation "als einziges in seiner *überwältigenden Mehrheit*" enthusiastically perpetrated the violence and murder which characterized WWII and the Holocaust.⁹⁹⁶ On the other hand, Jacob does not discuss the majority of participants in the elections of March 5, 1933, who voted in favor of the National Socialists or their his "deutschnationalen Helfer." In the 1943 off-season Paul Walter Jacob sided with German antifascists who shared the platform of *La voz del día* and *Das Andere Deutschland*. His arguments are polemical, however, because they do not address the Nazis' racial anti-Semitism nor the fact that most German voters did cast their ballots for Hitler and the parties aligned with them on March 5, 1933.

The Freie Deutsche Bühne was able to diminish some of the controversy surrounding the *Unbesiegten* in the *neue Kolonie*, but it could do nothing to muffle Nazi reactions. By masking the drama with a new title, the FDB was able

⁹⁹⁵ "Die überwältigende Mehrheit," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 6, 1943.

⁹⁹⁶ "Die Unbesiegten," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, September 4, 1942 (my emphasis).

to prevent altercations with the *alte Kolonie*, German embassy, and Argentine authorities before the premiere. After the first performance, of course, further camouflage was impossible. There is no record of correspondence from any of these groups, however subsequent events suggest that the embassy and Argentine government might have retaliated against the FDB's message and success. In his letter about the FDB to the Office of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, Ambassador von Thermann placed special emphasis on the theater's capability to spread its anti-Nazi message beyond the *neue Kolonie*.⁹⁹⁷ Thermann evaluated this potential as low, but after three seasons and especially the performance of *Die Unbesiegtten*, he had been proven incorrect. The FDB had demonstrated that, despite the language barrier, its ability to transmit an anti-Nazi message beyond the *neue Kolonie* was high. Shortly following the *Unbesiegtten*, several actions were taken by German and Argentine authorities which appear to have the objective of retaliating against the Freie Deutsche Bühne.

Through his activities as a journalist and political commentator for German and Spanish language publications, Paul Walter Jacob was the FDB's most visible and vocal representative off stage. The Nazi government had already stripped Jacob of his citizenship for his journalistic activities in 1938.⁹⁹⁸ On October 3, 1942, Jacob learned in a short communiqué from the Dutch Red Cross that he and his family had incurred another, far greater loss under Nazism:

“Familie teilt mit dass Eltern am 18 Sept. 1942 freiwillig aus Leben geschieden

⁹⁹⁷ Thermann, “Freie Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires,” October 4, 1940, PWJA Korrespondenz 1940.

⁹⁹⁸ “Bekanntmachung,” *Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preußischer Staatsanzeiger*, April 20, 1938.

sind. ⁹⁹⁹ A copy of his parents' suicide note, written to other family members also living at that time in Amsterdam, reads: "ich habe genug vom Leben, sehe auch für uns keinen Lichtblick mehr in diesem Leben. [...] Unsere Korrektheit bringt traurige Früchte [...] wir gehen unschuldig in den Tod."¹⁰⁰⁰ I have not yet been able to piece together a complete picture of the events leading up to his parents' deaths, but some sort of accusation was made against them, for which they feared prosecution by Nazi authorities. An official, "Herr Beamter" had visited Jacob's parents, Fanny and Max, and informed them that Fanny had been accused by a woman of some wrongdoing and could now face arrest. Fanny protests, "das ist alles nicht wahr [...] Unsere Korrektheit bringt traurige Früchte [...] wir gehen unschuldig in den Tod."¹⁰⁰¹ Worse still, the documentation the Dutch Red Cross sent to Jacob Buenos Aires included a wire stating that his parents "warteten vergeblich auf Bericht von dort."¹⁰⁰² Jacob did send letters, but they never arrived. He never could know if they might have effected his parents' decision. Three weeks after the debut of *Die Unbesiegten*, Jacob lost his both of his parents. The timing and circumstances of their deaths are suspicious. One could speculate that the accusations brought against his parents may have some connection to the FDB's performance of *Die Unbesiegten*.

The German government focused not only on punishing antifascists but also on competing against them. As the FDB sharpened its antifascist message

⁹⁹⁹ Nederlandsche Roode Kruis to Jacob, October 3, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Placed chronologically between letters from September 30 and October 3 in the Paul Walter Jacob-Archiv, Fanny's letter is undated. Fanny Jacob to Geschwister, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

¹⁰⁰¹ Fanny Jacob to Geschwister, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

¹⁰⁰² Het Nederlandsche Roode Kruis to Jacob, October 3, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

and increased its profile outside the *neue Kolonie*, Nazi officials increased support for Ludwig Ney's Deutsches Theater, perhaps as a counterbalance. On December 4, 1942, the embassy wrote to the German foreign office requesting subventions for the Ney-Bühne: "Die deutsche Gesandtschaft in Buenos Aires bittet telegrafisch für Zwecke des deutschen Theaters in Buenos Aires um einen Zuschußbeitrag von 4.000 RM für das Jahr 1943."¹⁰⁰³ The request, which was ratified by the Ministry of Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda), was phrased in terms oppositional to the Freie Deutsche Bühne. Ludwig Ney deserves funding from the Nazi government, Thermann argues, because it offers Argentina's German colony "bestes deutsches Kulturgut," implying a contrast to the FDB's international program featuring many dramatists banned in the Third Reich. Secondly, in a comment which could stem from the FDB's growing audiences outside the *neue Kolonie*, the embassy claims that ever larger numbers of Argentines attend performances at the *Ney-Bühne*, "Dieses Theater ist deshalb als kulturpolitisch werbend anzusehen."¹⁰⁰⁴ By emphasizing the Deutsches Theater's German program and propagandistic potential, the embassy posits Ney's stage as a foil against the FDB, underscoring the competition between the two German theaters in Buenos Aires.

¹⁰⁰³ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, December 4, 1942, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Band: R55, Akte: 20553.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Thermann to Auswärtiges Amt, December 4, 1942, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Band: R55, Akte: 20553.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Jacob to Ensemble, January 15, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

4. Testing Community: Losing the Casa del Teatro

The FDB incurred a major setback at end of the 1943 season, well after the *Die Unbesiegten* performance. In January of 1944, Argentine authorities informed Jacob that the FDB would no longer be permitted to stage regular performances at the Casa del Teatro.¹⁰⁰⁶ Ostensibly, the motive was a reform in municipal regulations for theater houses. After a spate of fires at *bonarense* theaters, municipal authorities had begun enforcing a stricter fire code. Although the FDB had played four full seasons at the Casa del Teatro, the auditorium had never been officially licensed as a theater house and the costs of reforming the building to meet regulations were prohibitive. There also were other factors which played against the stage in the matter. In 1943 there were significant changes to the Casa del Teatro administration. Pedro E. Pico, co-author of *Die Nusschale* and ardent supporter of the FDB, had resigned from his position as president of the Casa del Teatro earlier that year. Additionally, Arturo Mario, manager of the Casa del Teatro and renowned character actor on stages throughout South America, had died in August of 1943. Mario had been an indispensable contact for the FDB as it negotiated the twisty paths of a foreign theater world, and upon his death Paul Walter Jacob wrote an emotional obituary in the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*:

Als im Jahre 1940 die F.D.B. gegründet wurde, war es Don Arturo, der durch sein Verständnis für die Aufgaben und Ziele einer derartigen kleinen Spielgemeinschaft, durch seine ständige Hilfsbereitschaft das Zustandekommen der ersten Spielzeit in der Casa del Teatro ermöglicht hat. Und dass sie so in einem Hause, dessen Theatersaal zum Kammerspieltheater praedestiniert ist, spielen und ihr Publikum vereinigen konnte, ist der tätigen Hilfe dieses jetzt dahingegangenen Mannes, dieses wahrhaft guten Kollegen und prächtigen Menschen mit zu

danken. Er gehörte zu den seltenen Charakteren, die viel, viel mehr halten, als sie versprechen. Sein Andenken zu ehren, seiner immer wieder als eines wirklichen Helfers und Förders [sic] zu gedenken, wird eine Ehrenpflicht der FDB-Schauspieler bleiben!¹⁰⁰⁷

Arutro Mario's loss would be felt above all at the personal level, but Jacob also notes that Mario was in large part responsible for securing the Casa del Teatro for the FDB. Both emotionally and practically, the absence of Pico and Mario were acute. On programs for performances following Mario's death, the FDB featured a bilingual notice mourning his loss.¹⁰⁰⁸ They were also among the last performances the ensemble would stage at the Casa del Teatro.

Several ensemble members, including Paul Walter Jacob and Jacques Arndt, wondered if "andere, unbekannt gebliebene Gründe" may have been behind the Casa del Teatro's decision to close its doors to the FDB.¹⁰⁰⁹ As Argentina's series of military regimes became increasingly pro-fascist and anti-Semitic, Jacob worried about the constant threat of, "Irgendwelche behördliche Verfügungen, die eine Weiterarbeit der Bühne unmöglich machen sollten."¹⁰¹⁰ There is no incontrovertible evidence that Argentine authorities or the German embassy acted against the FDB, but there are reasons for suspicion. First, Jacob received numerous threatening letters during this period. Representative for such hate mail is the following letter, written in bizarre German, addressed to the "teatro aleman indepediente [sic]: was man spricjt [sic] in 25 de mayo ist

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Arturo Mario gestorben," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 10, 1943.

¹⁰⁰⁸ "Programmheft zu *Der Mann, der zum Essen kam*," PWJA VI b) 281.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 65.

¹⁰¹⁰ Jacob to Ensemble, February 19, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944; Jacob to Ensemble, March 17, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

unerhoert. die deutschen reichszugehoerigen wollen arbeiten gegen ihr teatro [...]»¹⁰¹¹ These letters came on the heels of a strange encounter between Jacques Arndt the vice-president of the Casa del Teatro, a Mr. Carcavallo.¹⁰¹² The FDB very much wanted to continue playing the Casa del Teatro, because the chances of finding a suitable substitute were slim. In January of 1944 Jacob proposed in writing that the FDB pay the rent for the nights it would perform during the coming season in advance, thus providing capital for the renovations needed to pass municipal regulations. Jacob entrusted Arndt, whose Spanish was better than his own, to present the proposal to the Casa del Teatro administration. When Arndt was ushered in to see the vice-president, Carcavallo preempted him: “Alles was Sie versuchen ist zwecklos. Die Freie Deutsche Bühne bekommt den Saal nicht mehr. Wir sind kein Theater, sondern eine kulturelle Institution und haben bisher schon oft und oft mit den Behörden Schwierigkeiten gehabt.”¹⁰¹³ When Arndt pressed him, explaining that the necessary renovations would overcome problems with the authorities, Carcavallo vaguely intimated that the problems were of a different nature:

‘Wir werden Konzerte und Teatros experimentales spielen lassen und [...] auf jeden Fall keine ausländische Truppe hier in diesem Haus mehr behergen koennen. *Wir sind eine halbstaatliche Angelegenheit, wir bekommen staatliche Subvention und es ist,*’ sagte er, *‘unter den obwaltenden Umstaenden vollkommen unmöglich, den status quo beizubehalten.’*¹⁰¹⁴

¹⁰¹¹ Anonymous to Jacob, May 26, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰¹² Jacob to Arndt, January 22, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944. In our interview on August 2, 2006, Jacques Arndt confirmed this encounter and gave an account of the events which corresponds to the letter quoted here.

¹⁰¹³ Arndt to Jacob, January 20, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰¹⁴ Arndt to Jacob, January 20, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944 (emphasis in original).

The institution was so determined to evict the Freie Deutsche Bühne that the vice-president insisted that Arndt remove all its props and decorations from the premises at once, otherwise he feared further problems with the authorities.¹⁰¹⁵ Carcavallo's comments indicate that the principal motivation for evicting the FDB were not the municipal regulations, especially now that the FDB itself had offered to help finance the necessary renovations. Instead, the vice-president reveals the cause to be government pressure against using the venue for a foreign-language theater. Since it was partly a state-sponsored institution, the government could apply greater pressure on the Casa del Teatro than it could on other privately owned theater houses. The Freie Deutsche Bühne was able to play frequently in non state-sponsored venues which also were not licensed for theatrical performances, but it would never again play at the Casa del Teatro.

This was a serious blow to the FDB, because replacing the Casa del Teatro was impossible. The theater is located in the very heart of Buenos Aires and has convenient connections to public transportation lines from all over the city. Its availability for weekend performances and midweek rehearsals, its inexpensive daily—not seasonal—rent, and its size and staff were a one-of-a-kind combination in a city like Buenos Aires where suitable theater houses were in very short supply in the 1940s. The FDB could not afford to rent even “das kleinste und entlegenste” theater for the full season, and weekend prices for ballrooms and auditoriums approved by regulatory authorities were also far too

¹⁰¹⁵ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

expensive.¹⁰¹⁶ A further complication was that the Freie Deutsche Bühne, as a foreign language theater company, now required a special police permit for every production.¹⁰¹⁷ The volatile environment may have impacted its repertoire as well. After it lost the Casa del Teatro the FDB ceased performing political dramas. This could be coincidence, but it also is possible that it made these changes because it felt the risks were too great. In the immediate aftermath of the loss of the Casa del Teatro Jacob doubted that the FDB would be able to continue performing regularly. Hence, Jacob wrote to the FDB ensemble in January of 1944: “Ich bin daher nach Durchdenken aller Möglichkeiten leider zu dem Schluss gekommen, dass bei Aufhören des Spielens in der Casa del Teatro unserer ständiger Betrieb beendet sein wird, wir höchsten noch sporadische Veranstaltungen machen können.”¹⁰¹⁸ In a subsequent letter, Jacob explains that the stage can only begin its fifth season by reverting to the same terms of its first—an initial eight-week cycle of performances, beyond which there were no guarantees.¹⁰¹⁹

The FDB finally made arrangements to perform for eight weeks at the Unione e Benevolencia, which was a ballroom, not a theater. This was a solution beset with problems, including fewer performances per piece, less desirable time slots (Saturday afternoons and Tuesday evenings), little space to store props and costumes, no on-site rehearsals, higher rent, and an inconvenient location.¹⁰²⁰

¹⁰¹⁶ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 65.

¹⁰¹⁷ Jacob to Ensemble, January 15, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰¹⁸ Jacob to Ensemble, January 15, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰¹⁹ Jacob to Ensemble, February 19, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰²⁰ Jacob to Ensemble, March 17, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

Jacob was so desperate to find a better option that on March 26 he placed a half-page advertisement in the *Tageblatt* offering a hundred-peso reward for any reader who could find the ensemble a suitable venue.¹⁰²¹ Nonetheless he saw the *Unione e Benevolencia* as “der einzige Weg, der sich im Augenblick überhaupt bietet, den Betrieb über den Verlust der Casa del Teatro vielleicht zu retten.”¹⁰²² Days before the first performance of the 1944 theater season, Jacob took the extraordinary step of issuing a pronunciamiento to theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie*. He was proud, Jacob began, to announce that the theater was ready to begin its fifth year with its 100th premiere. Unfortunately, he continued: “dieser Neubeginn [steht] im Zeichen einer ernsten Gefährdung der Bühne.”¹⁰²³ In language recalling his proclamation to the citizens of Wuppertal in 1932, Jacob calls on theatergoers to consider the value the FDB has had for the emigrant community during WWII. He makes clear that the future of the theater rides on the first eight weeks of the 1944 season: “Der erste Abonnements-Zyklus dieses Jahres [...] wird erweisen müssen, ob die Freie Deutsche Bühne auch unter den neuen Verhältnissen lebensfähig ist, oder ob nach diesen acht Wochen die mehr als vierjährige Theaterarbeit der F.D.B. ihr Ende finden wird.”¹⁰²⁴ Jacob posits this period as a test of the FDB’s viability as a cultural institution intrinsic to the *neue Kolonie*:

Wird der Besuch zurückgehen, wird unser Publikum beweisen, dass es seinem Theater nicht so verbunden ist, dass es nicht den festen Willen hat,

¹⁰²¹ “Hundert Pesos-Prämie der F.D.B.,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 26, 1944.

¹⁰²² Jacob to Ensemble, March 17, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰²³ Aufruf an das Publikum der Freien Deutschen Bühne, PWJA VI b) 281.

¹⁰²⁴ Aufruf an das Publikum der Freien Deutschen Bühne, PWJA VI b) 281.

auch Schwierigkeiten und Krisen mit ihm zu überdauern, so sind die Spielwochen der F.D.B. gezählt. [...] Nur die dauernde aktive Hilfe des Publikums durch den Besuch, den ständigen, regelmässigen Besuch unserer Vorstellungen im neuen Raum und zu den neuen Zeiten kann die Freie Deutsche Bühne erhalten.¹⁰²⁵

The FDB did play regular functions at the *Unione e Benevolencia*, and later the *Casal de Catalunya*, for the full 1944 season. The *Casal de Catalunya* was also an imperfect solution. The building itself, “entzückend intim,” as one theatergoer described, was a true theater and, in this regard, a vast improvement over the vacuous, *Benevolencia*.¹⁰²⁶ The *Casal*, however, is located in the poorer San Telmo neighborhood, clear across town from Belgrano, where most of the FDB’s public lived. In 1944, there were no subway lines linking Belgrano to San Telmo, Thus bus transportation, which required changing lines several times, was the only option.¹⁰²⁷ Furthermore, the *Casal de Catalunya* was also not licensed for regular theatrical productions, so the FDB could not play more than twice weekly there. With one third fewer performances and higher operating costs, the FDB finished the 1944 season in October with a “Riesendefizit,” but it did manage to keep performing.¹⁰²⁸

In the worst financial crisis of the stage’s four-year lifespan theatergoers responded to Jacob’s appeal. Enough people attended performances at the *Unione e Benvolencia* and the *Casal de Catalunya* to keep the theater afloat. Additionally, Argentine theatrical organizations began to recognize the FDB’s contributions to

¹⁰²⁵ Aufruf an das Publikum der Freien Deutschen Bühne, PWJA VI b) 281.

¹⁰²⁶ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰²⁷ http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar/areas/planeamiento_obras/subtes/index.php?menu_id=20997.

¹⁰²⁸ Jacob to Maurer, November 10, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

the local theater scene and sought its participation in national events, such as the Homenaje a Teatros Independientes (Commemoration of Independent Theaters) in August of 1944. In a letter to Paul Walter Jacob, the president of the Agrupación Arística Cultural, Miguel Valera, invited the FDB cast to the Homenaje, with the explicit motive of integrating its members with the local theater community: “buscando el acercamiento que debe existir entre todas las entidades similares a la nuestra.”¹⁰²⁹ Later that October Jacob received another invitation from the Asociación Argentina de Actores expressing an “especial interés” that the FDB attend an event at the Teatro Politeama, “dedicada en honor de la gente de teatro.”¹⁰³⁰

Its efforts at inclusion and integration reaped dividends for the FDB. Since 1941 the FDB had staged commemorative events for leading figures of German stage and screen, most notably a year earlier upon Max Reinhardt’s death. In November 1944 the FDB organized an event in honor of the celebrated German actor, Conrad Veidt, who died on April 3, 1943, in Hollywood. Veidt played in dozens of films, including *The Man Who Laughs* (1928) and *Casablanca* (1942) as well as with Max Reinhardt’s Deutsches Theater in Berlin. He is probably best known for his portrayal of Cesare, the unwillingly murderous medium in Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). Like Albert Basserman, Veidt was a vocal antifascist who emigrated in 1933 out of loyalty to his Jewish wife, Ilona Preger. The commemoration, held in the Grand Cine Splendid, was a crucial one

¹⁰²⁹ Valera to Jacob, August 1, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944. “seeking the proximity which should exist among all enterprises similar to our own—Trans.”

¹⁰³⁰ Asociación Argentina de Actores to Jacob, October 14, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944. “dedicated in honor of theater people—Trans.”

for the FDB, which needed a strong showing at the box office to help salvage its balance sheets.¹⁰³¹ Thanks to collective efforts by the *bonarense* theater and film world the event was a huge success. It was an intercultural production, featuring a performance by the famous French opera star Jane Bathori; a reading by Ulises Petit de Murat, colleague of Veidt, renowned author, dramatist, and poet whose many films included the acclaimed *La Guerra Gaucho* (1942), a milestone film in Argentine cinema which featured a cast of over 1,000 people¹⁰³²; a speech by influential film and theater critic Chas de Cruz¹⁰³³; and a poetry reading by the legendary actress Berta Singerman, of whose recitations Spanish classical music composer Manuel de Falla said: "While we, composers, look for music for our words, Berta extracts music from words."¹⁰³⁴ Many other well-known personalities from Argentine stages attended the event, which also featured a speech on Veidt's life and work by Paul Walter Jacob and a screening of the Lothar Mendes' film *Jew Süß* (1934), produced in England, in which Veidt played the leading role. This film adaptation of Lion Feuchtwanger's 1925 novel, *Jud Süß*, is faithful to Feuchtwanger's literary work, in which the Duke of Württemberg attempts to rape Süß' daughter and causes her death. The roles are

¹⁰³¹ Jacob to Maurer, November 30, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰³² Domingo Di Núbila, *La época de oro. Historia del cine argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Jilguero, 1998), 392.

¹⁰³³ As Jason Borge writes in *Latin American Writers and the Rise of Hollywood Cinema*, "Chas de Cruz played perhaps the most significant role in bringing Hollywood to Buenos Aires through magazines, newspapers, and film itself." Chas de Cruz was founder and long-time editor of one of the country's most successful and longest running film journals, *El Heraldo del Cinematografista*, and wrote regularly some of the most widely read *bonarense* Journals and newspapers, such as *Sintonía*, *La Nación*, and *Clarín*.

Jason Borge, *Latin American Writers and the Rise of Hollywood Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 120.

¹⁰³⁴ <http://www.altfg.com/blog/actors/berta-singerman-nothing-more-than-a-woman-ucla/>

reversed in Veit Harlan's infamous 1940 anti-Semitic propaganda film of the same title, in which Süß is the villain who rapes a nobleman's daughter, provoking her suicide. Celebrations of Conrad Veidt, held in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, found a strong echo in German and Argentina media.¹⁰³⁵ The film magazine, *Cine*, reprinted Paul Walter Jacob's entire speech, which concluded: "Muy rara vez habló en público, muy rara vez publicó un artículo en los diarios, pero todo, absolutamente todo lo que hacía durante los últimos diez años de su vida estaba destinado a demostrar al mundo sus ideas contrarias al odio entre razas y la persecución de los pueblos."¹⁰³⁶ Conrad Veidt, as Jacob put it, could be viewed as another "Unbesiegten." His actions corresponded to the FDB's own antifascist platform, and the illustrious and numerous public at the commemoration represented the *porteño* public's approval.

Meanwhile, the antifascist, predominantly Jewish, German-language Freie Deutsche Bühne experienced multiple adversities during the pro-fascist regime of General Edelmiro Farrell, who took power in February, 1944. Like his predecessors Castillo and Ramirez, Farrell supported fascism, strongly opposed communism, and was an anti-Semite.¹⁰³⁷ At the same time, due to heavy pressure from the United States and the increasing likelihood of Allied victory, Argentina had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany in January of 1944 and

¹⁰³⁵ "Sentido Homenaje se tributo a Conrad Veidt en el primer aniversario de su muerte," *Antena*, November 30, 1944; "Homenaje a Conrad Veidt," *El Plata*, May 14, 1944; "Acto en Momoria de Conrad Veidt," *Revista Israelita Familiar*, May 15, 1944.

¹⁰³⁶ "Conrad Veidt," *Cine*, December 14 and 29, 1944. "[Veidt] very rarely spoke in public, very rarely published an article in newspapers, but everything, absolutely everything that he did during the final ten years of his life was done to demonstrate to the world his ideas against racial hatred and the persecution of ethnicities—Trans"

¹⁰³⁷ Spitta, *Paul Zech*, 26-29.

declared war in March of 1945. These developments caused increased restrictions on German language media and entertainment, including theaters. Jacob notes in the 1947 theater almanac that German language events had particular difficulties in gaining municipal permits, which rendered it very difficult to secure a venue for weekly performances. Further attempts to regain use of the Casa del Teatro were unsuccessful.¹⁰³⁸ The Casa del Teatro's final rejection corresponded to the conversation Arndt had reported earlier that year. Its refusal was founded on concern for consequences from regulatory authorities, not opposition to the Freie Deutsche Bühne: "No hay animosidad contra usted ni contra su campaña [sic], sino el deseo de encuadrarse en el respectivo decreto Municipal, a fin de no sufrir consecuencias que podrían entorpecer la marcha de nuestra sala."¹⁰³⁹ The new measures also exacerbated scheduling difficulties with the Casal de Catalunya. The FDB could stage only fourteen premieres, each with a single encore performance, during the 1945 season. Under such conditions substantial deficits were inevitable. However, by late 1944 an Allied victory in the war was a certainty, and Jacob was able to convince cast, audience, and financial supporters to come together support the stage through this period of financial crisis:

"Tatsächlich ist es nur dem einmütigen Wunsch aller Beteiligten zuzuschreiben, die Freie Deutsche Bühne auf keinen Fall jetzt aufzugeben, sie vielmehr—wie man hofft—in eine günstigere und bessere Zeit weiterzuführen, dass der Betrieb

¹⁰³⁸ Jacob to Asociación Argentina de Actores, August 20, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944; Jacob to Asociación Argentina de Actores, December 1, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

¹⁰³⁹ Treasurer of the Casa del Teatro (signature illegible) to Jacob, September 1, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945. "There is no animosity against yourself or your [theater] company. Rather we wish to adhere to the municipal decree in order to avoid suffering consequences which could hinder the business of our venue—Trans."

auch in diesem sechsten Jahre [1945] wieder beginnen kann.¹⁰⁴⁰ The FDB had established itself as a cultural institution fundamental to the identity of the *neue Kolonie* during WWII, and its public rallied to support their theater now that the conflict had finally ended.

Years later, Paul Walter Jacob still was suspicious about what had provoked Argentine authorities to prohibit the FDB from the Casa del Teatro: “Sei es nun, dass die behördlichen Vorschriften den Ausschlag gaben, sei es, dass andere, unbekannt gebliebene Gründe für die neuen Vorstände der Casa del Teatro massgebend waren [...]”.¹⁰⁴¹ The loss of the Casa del Teatro left the FDB in its most vulnerable state since its debut in 1940. Yet in this crisis, the stage’s many accomplishments came to the fore. Support from Argentine and foreign actors assisted the FDB’s efforts to network and raise funds. Invitations to local events, such as the Homenaje a los teatros independientes, demonstrated the stage’s integration into the local theater scenes. Despite tensions among Zionists, political antifascists, and apolitical, moderate emigrants, the *neue Kolonie* also came together in support of its theater. Though attendance fell, audiences did attend productions at less comfortable, distant venues in sufficient numbers to keep the stage afloat during the tenuous 1944 season. Furthermore, when it became clear that the stage could not support itself in 1945, the emigrant population gathered the necessary funds to save the theater. The *neue Kolonie*’s response to the crisis demonstrated the FDB’s significance as a cultural institution fundamental to the emigrant community.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 76.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Sieben Jahre Freie Deutsche Bühne*, ed. Jacob, 65.

5. The Freie Deutsche Bühne: An “anti-jüdisches” Theater? 5.1 Defining a Jewish Theater and its Obligations

In a letter to the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft from 1943 Paul Walter Jacob notes that the Freie Deutsche Bühne’s public was overwhelmingly Jewish, its ensemble was “90%” Jewish, and “80%” of the authors in its repertoire were also Jewish.¹⁰⁴² According to these statistics, the FDB can be viewed as a fundamentally Jewish theater. However, this description indicates a deceptive unity; within the *neue Kolonie* great divergences existed on the definition and obligations of Jewish identity. Indeed, one of the FDB’s greatest challenges was to reconcile the tastes of its moderate Jewish public with the uncompromising positions of Zionist organizations.¹⁰⁴³ Zionist institutions, such as the Forum Sionista, the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, and the *Jüdische Wochenschau*, encouraged the FDB to perform dramas with specifically Jewish content, focusing on Jewish history, Jewish religious customs, and current political and religious issues of particular interest to Jews, including Zionism, emigration, Nazi persecution, and a rejection of acculturation in favor a return to orthodox Jewish identity.

At the close of the 1941 season, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* printed several articles congratulating the Freie Deutsche Bühne on its successful first two years.

¹⁰⁴² FDB Ensemble to Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, August 12, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁴³ See: Pohle, “Paul Walter Jacob am Rio de la Plata: Der Kurs der FDB – eine exilpolitische Gratwanderung,” 51-54. Pohle’s article also touches on the tension between the FDB and Zionist groups in the *neue Kolonie*. While overlapping on a few points, our analyses are to a greater extent divergent. The most salient difference is that Pohle does not discuss in depth the FDB’s productions of dramas of explicitly Jewish dramas, such as Bistricky’s *In jener Nacht*, Aialti’s *Vater und Sohn*, or Werfel’s *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, whereas in my view the content and tenor of these performances is a crucial factor in their reception in the *neue Kolonie*.

The paper then pointed out that the FDB's triumph was not attributable to broad support among Buenos Aires' diverse German population: "Man soll sich allerdings keiner Täuschung hingeben: Der überwältigende Teil der Zuschauer der F.D.B. waren Juden."¹⁰⁴⁴ By contrast, very few members of the "deutsche Kolonie, sei es aus Überzeugung, sei es aus Angst," had attended its performances. Paying no heed to the gentile German antifascists in the *neue Kolonie*, the *Wochenschau* argued, probably correctly, that without Jewish support the FDB would fail. Therefore, "Man hätte meinen können, dass die F.D.B. diesem Umstand Rechnung tragen würde, aber dem war nicht so."¹⁰⁴⁵ As a Jewish theater, the paper continued, certain responsibilities were incumbent on the FDB: "Die grosse Anteilnahme des jüdischen Publikums berechtigt zu der Forderung, dass auch jüdische Stoffe das Programm bereichern."¹⁰⁴⁶ Such changes to its repertoire were in the stage's own interests, the *Wochenschau* asserted, because "der Publikumserfolg der F.D.B. hat bewiesen, dass Tendenz-Theater mehr Anklang findet als Oscar Wilde oder Arthur Schnitzler."¹⁰⁴⁷ Praising the FDB for providing employment for Jewish refugees, the *Wochenschau* asserts that in the off-season Jewish cultural groups had an obligation to support these artists, "soweit es sich um jüdische Künstler handelt." Finally, in a subtle but clear warning, the paper advises the FDB to ally itself with Zionist organizations in Buenos Aires: "Grundsätzlich ist von jedem Juden zu

¹⁰⁴⁴ "Kleine Chronik," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 1, 1941.

¹⁰⁴⁵ "Kleine Chronik," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 1, 1941.

¹⁰⁴⁶ "Kleine Chronik," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 1, 1941.

¹⁰⁴⁷ "Kleine Chronik," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 1, 1941.

fordern, dass er sich dem jüdischen Leben einordnet, besonders aber von denjenigen, die ja ihrerseits selbst auf die Solidarität der Juden angewiesen sind.¹⁰⁴⁸ The FDB was dependent on a public that consisted mostly of Jews, therefore it should integrate and cooperate with Jewish organizations in order to retain their support.

The *Wochenschau* article is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it designates the *neue Kolonie* as Jewish. Gentile Germans, regardless of their political affiliations, are placed in a separate “deutsche Kolonie,” which the paper describes as reluctant to attend the productions at the FDB, whether due to conviction or fear of reprisal. This description indicates that all non-Jewish Germans are excluded from the *Wochenschau*’s considerations. Furthermore the paper defines Jewish refugees collectively according to a Zionist view which, for example, does not include the Jewish Arthur Schnitzler among the ranks of Jewish playwrights. As the leading German-language Jewish newspaper in Buenos Aires, the *Wochenschau* was influential. During the 1942 and 1943 seasons, the FDB attempted to accommodate the *Wochenschau*’s suggestions. It staged political and religious plays with Jewish themes, including Nathan Bistritzky’s *In jener Nacht*, *Die Affäre Dreyfuss* by Hans Rehfisch and Wilhelm Herzog, and J. Aialti’s *Vater und Sohn*. Its members participated in cultural events sponsored by the Zionist Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, Forum Sionista, and Theodor-Herzl-Gesellschaft. Several actors became members of these groups as a gesture of their solidarity.

¹⁰⁴⁸ “Kleine Chronik,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 1, 1941.

5.2 Forcing the Issue: Zionist Dramas at the FDB

In what follows I analyze performances of Nathan Bistrizky's *In jener Nacht* and J. Aialti's *Vater und Sohn* to show how productions of Jewish dramas at the Freie Deutsche Bühne in many ways contradicted the Zionist organizations' assessments of Jewish refugees. First of all, these performances proved claims that theatergoers preferred serious, Jewish dramas over comedies to be incorrect. Secondly, and quite unintentionally, the FDB exposed fissures in the Jewish population and even within the Zionist organizations themselves. The FDB's efforts to please its Jewish public and supporters demonstrated that an overriding, religious solidarity in Jewish Buenos Aires did not exist.

On November 9, 1942, the FDB staged the American premiere of *In jener Nacht* by Nathan Bistrizky, a Jewish author living in Palestine. The event was organized by the Forum Sionista under the auspices of Keren Kayameth Leisreal (Jewish National Fund) to raise funds for Kfar Argentina,¹⁰⁴⁹ a group working to establish an Argentine moshav in Palestine.¹⁰⁵⁰ Set during the eve of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, Bistrizky's drama was also staged as a memorial of the November pogroms four years earlier. The program, featuring an illustration of a sapling growing inside the skeleton of a razed synagogue, visually associated the November pogroms with the Zionist mission and included essays on this topic by Judaism's leading figures in its pages. In his essay "Eretz Israel," Nathan Bistrizky, who was present at the performance, urged Jews to resettle in what he

¹⁰⁴⁹ Forum Sionista Pamphlet, PWJA VI b) 281.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Eventually the village Nir Tzvi was founded in 1954 by immigrants from Argentina. It was initially called Kfar Argentina (lit. Argentina Village), before being renamed after Maurice "Zvi" de Hirsch, a strong supporter of Argentine Jews efforts to found the community.

asserted to be their natural and spiritual home. Palestine, he claims, “hat in allen Zeiten den Geist des Volkes wiedergespiegelt, das dort sich schuf und entwickelte: **Das Volk Israel.**“¹⁰⁵¹ Essays by Isaak Alcalay (previously Chief Rabbi of Yugoslavia, and later Spiritual Head of Central Sephardic Jewish Community of America), Bernard Fischbein (President of the Forum Sionista), and Frederico Lachmann (Professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem) appealed for solidarity among world Jewry to aid European Jews escape to Eretz Israel. Other contributors, such as Hugo Benedikt of the *bonarense* Bar Kochba organization, took a more aggressive tone and chastised Jewish refugees for neglecting their spiritual roots, failing to learn from the past, and risking further persecution in the future:

Für sie war ihr Unglück bloss eine Aenderung des Wohnsitzes, der finanziellen und Familien-Verhältnisse. Aber sie fanden nicht die einzige richtige und stolze Antwort: Wir sind von nun an nichts als Juden und unser Sinn und Trachten wird darauf gerichtet sein, staatliche Selbständigkeit und Unabhängigkeit zu erringen [...] Wenn die Juden so ähnlich weiter sich verhalten werden [...] werden sie vor der Geschichte zu einem Stäubchen Asche werden!¹⁰⁵²

In “Die Unbelehrbaren und wir“ Hugo Lifezis buttresses Benedikt’s argument with the historical example of Dr. Ticho and Dr. Oppenheim, leaders of UNION, “der assimilatorischen Opposition“ to Zionists in Vienna who were rescued and resettled in Palestine after the German annexation of Austria. In Benedikt’s catastrophic vision of Jewish annihilation Lifezis sees a moral imperative for Zionists—if Jews have not learned from history’s lessons that assimilation is impossible, then “es uns Zionisten obliegt, die Unbelehrbaren **gegen ihren Willen**

¹⁰⁵¹ Program for *In jener Nacht*, PWJA VI b) 28 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁵² “Schuld und Sühne,“ Program for *In jener Nacht*, PWJA VI b) 28.

zu retten und glücklich zu machen.“¹⁰⁵³ Lifezis indicates a fundamental divergence between Zionists and the Freie Deutsche Bühne. According Lifezis the Zionist mission of convincing Jews’ to return to their forefathers’ “Sinn und Trachten,“ which included organizing events such as the performance of *In jener Nacht*, need not correspond to the predilections of the emigrant Jewish public. As an independent business enterprise, the Freie Deutsche Bühne could not share this perspective. If it did not cater to the preferences of its public, it would not draw sufficient theatergoers to its productions and would fail as a business.

The selection of Bistrizky’s *In jener Nacht* for the event reflected Lifezis’ point of view. Although theatergoers had demonstrated a clear preference for comedies, Bistrizky’s drama follows the model of Greek tragedy. *In jener Nacht* dramatizes the final night before Jerusalem falls to the Romans, initiating the Jewish diaspora from Isreal. Bistrizky places much of the blame for this disaster on the Jews themselves. In-fighting, egoism, and spiritual decay splintered the Jewish people and their leaders in an hour which demanded unity and self-sacrifice. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* provocatively described these shortcomings: “Sie wollen nicht sehen, sie wollen nicht verstehen, und sie wollen vor allem nicht aufhören, ‘Führer’ zu sein.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Bistrizky eternalizes the figure of Jochanan ben Sakai, the Rabbi of Israel, who prophetically sees that the future of his people lies in centuries of exile. He feigns death and encloses himself in a coffin to elude the Romans’ attack, rescuing “jener zähe, stolze, unbeugsame

¹⁰⁵³ Program for *In jener Nacht*, PWJA VI b) 28 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁵⁴ “*In jener Nacht*,“ *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 13, 1942.

jüdische Geist, ohne den es kein zweites Jerusalem mehr geben kann.“¹⁰⁵⁵ The play, though hopeful with Ben Sakai's escape, ends with a double tragedy—the grievance of Sakai's daughter at her father's feigned death and the Romans' final assault on Jerusalem.

Bistrizky's play was harsh medicine for an involuntary patient, and its performance revealed how far the illustrious figures of local and international Zionism were from achieving their goal of convincing the majority of Jews to espouse Zionism. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* lamented the lack of progress since Bistrizky's drama:

wir müssen uns bei ehrlicher Selbstbefragung eingestehen, dass es ebenso gut „unsere“ Nacht sein könnte: denn wir sind nicht einen einzigen Schritt vorangekommen in den zweitausend Jahren, die seit „jener Nacht“ verflossen sind. Noch immer schwärt das Gift des Bruderkrieges im jüdischen Volke, noch immer hadern die Parteien, noch immer will jeder „sein Jerusalem“ verwirklicht sehen, und noch immer können die Führer der verschiedenen Richtungen keinen wahren Frieden schliessen obgleich die Stimme der Zeit sie nicht weniger eindringlich und nicht weniger gebieterisch aufrütteln sollte, als in jener Nacht...¹⁰⁵⁶

The event exposed the fragmented state of *bonarense* Zionists and the lack of interest for Zionism among most Jewish refugees. In a letter to the organization Keren Kayameth Leisreal, the Forum Sionista expressed its disappointment: “Die Bilanz, die wir nach dieser Veranstaltung ziehen koennen, ist in jeder Richtung beschämend – moralisch wie finanziell.“¹⁰⁵⁷ The Forum Sionista had launched an intensive publicity campaign for the performance including week long

¹⁰⁵⁵ “In jener Nacht,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 9, 1942.

¹⁰⁵⁶ “In jener Nacht,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 13, 1942.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Forum Sionista to Keren Kayameth Leisreal, November 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

advertisements in the *Jiddische Zeitung*, *Mundo Israelita*, *Jüdische Wochenschau*, and *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. It distributed 10,000 flyers, sent 120 formal invitations to Jewish organizations, funded radio announcements for 3 days, and peppered street corners in neighborhoods with large Jewish populations, such as Belgrano and Once, with 30 posters. The results were catastrophic attendances—40% of the tickets were unsold. According to the Forum’s calculations only seventy Argentine Jews attended *In jener Nacht*, which was performed three times. The Forum Sionista was at a loss to explain this lack of solidarity. It reasoned that most Argentine Jews from eastern Europe spoke Yiddish and thus, according to the Forum Sionista, would not have had problems understanding the German language performance: “Wer jiddisch spricht, konnte dieses deutsch, das durch Handlung und Gebaerde unterstuetzt wurde, wohl verstehen.”¹⁰⁵⁸ Nor could it comprehend an aversion to the German language. Though some Jews may have regarded German as, “die Sprache der Nazis,” the Forum Sionista countered that German was the language of Herzl, Max Nordau (co-founder of the World Zionist Organization), and Albert Einstein, among others. Finally, the Forum noted that the moral message of Bistritzky’s drama—commitment to Jewish ideas and solidarity among all Jews—must appeal to all Zionists in Buenos Aires. Unfortunately, attendance at the performance had proven the opposite: “Hier war Gelegenheit, die Verbundenheit zu zeigen -- -- was geschah? NICHTS!!”¹⁰⁵⁹ The

¹⁰⁵⁸ Forum Sionista to Keren Kayameth Leisreal, November 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Forum Sionista to Keren Kayameth Leisreal, November 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942.

performance revealed that German-speaking emigrant Zionists and Argentine Zionists had yet to achieve integration and collaboration.

Attendance figures among German Jewish refugees were also abysmal. Only 580 Jews from the *neue Kolonie* purchased tickets, numbers which, had they endured for an entire month, would have bankrupted the Freie Deutsche Bühne. Bistritzky's drama was also a flop among German-speaking Jews, which caused plans for a guest performance in Montevideo to be scrapped.¹⁰⁶⁰ Unlike the case of Argentine Jews, the Forum Sionista did find explanations for the absence of Jews from the *neue Kolonie*, especially refugees, "moegen hier im Lande des Friedens und der Sicherheit nicht gerne an das Unglück des 9. November, das in Europa nie aufgehoert hat, erinnert werden."¹⁰⁶¹ The Forum Sionista itself was also partly to blame for the fiasco. Its sharp tone in flyers and programs for the performance alienated many Jewish refugees who were not committed to Zionism and also represented the overwhelming majority of the FDB's public. The failure of *In jener Nacht* demonstrates that major religious and political differences existed among Jewish refugees in Buenos Aires. It also indicates that, in addition to content, genre played a significant role in attracting theatergoers to performances.

During the year following the performance of *In jener Nacht*, German authorities had installed new crematoria and gas chambers with a daily body capacity of 4,756 at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Dr. Josef Mengele became camp

¹⁰⁶⁰ Jacob to Friedländer, August 20, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁶¹ Forum Sionista to Keren Kayameth Leisreal, November 18, 1942, PWJA Korrespondenz 1942 (emphasis in original).

physician in the same year. In this time period Danish religious, political, social, and education institutions published strong protests against Nazi crimes against Jews, and the U.S. Congress held hearings concerning mounting reports of mass extermination of European Jews, thus heightening awareness of the atrocities in Argentina and the world over. American nations had also grown increasingly involved in the war. In this historical context, the Zionist Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft redoubled its efforts to win over more Jewish refugees to Zionism. In August of 1943 the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft sponsored the FDB's production of the world premiere of J. Aialti's drama, *Vater und Sohn*. Aialti was a member of the Jewish community in Montevideo, and his *Vater und Sohn* had originally appeared a year earlier as a novel published in serial form by Yiddish newspaper, *Di Presse*, in Buenos Aires. The play is set in occupied Paris, and its protagonist is a young man, Sokolowski, who commits acts of sabotage against the Nazis. After a bomb he detonates in a German auto repair facility kills several Nazis, the Gestapo gives notice that 50 Jewish and gentile Frenchmen will be executed unless information about the perpetrators is delivered to police. When his name is divulged, Sokolowski's father is arrested and sentenced to death at dawn if the son does not surrender beforehand. When the younger Sokolowski moves to turn himself in, his mother tells him that his father wishes for him to continue fighting. The play closes with the surety of the father's execution and the son's determination to avenge his death.

From the communist *Volksblatt* to *El Diario Israelita* reviews of the FDB's ensemble in *Vater und Sohn*, like those of *In jener Nacht*, were positive. In

a review which echoes reactions to *Die Unbesiegten*, the *Diario Israelita* observed, “man fühlt, dass die Schauspieler der Freien Deutsche Bühne hier ein Stück ihres eigenen Dramas darstellten.“ *Di Presse* concurred that the performance, a drama about European Jews written and performed by Jewish refugees, “hinterlässt einen unvergesslichen Eindruck.”¹⁰⁶² In an otherwise affirmative review, the *Wochenschau* expressed reservations about the play’s legitimacy as a Jewish drama: “Das der Vater das Buch ‘Hiob’ liest und die Mutter ab und zu ein Gebet spricht, dass auf der Konsole ein Chanukkaleuchtfeuer steht, das alles kann nicht jüdischen Inhalt schaffen.”¹⁰⁶³ Even a performance organized by the Zionist Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft and praised by the Yiddish media was not unanimously accepted as sufficiently Jewish. The *Volksblatt*, on the other hand, joined Yiddish organs in praising the Freie Deutsche Bühne for selecting Aialti’s drama for performance: “Wir können der F.D.B. nur recht zahlreichen Besuch ihrer Aufführungen wünschen – sie verdient es!”¹⁰⁶⁴ Though not uniform, reactions to Aialti’s *Vater und Sohn* from multiple religious and political media across Jewish Buenos Aires and in the *neue Kolonie* were overwhelmingly positive.

Theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie* responded differently. Attendance at Aialti’s play was abysmal.¹⁰⁶⁵ This came as no surprise to the FDB, which had only staged the play under pressure from Zionist organizations, with whom it

¹⁰⁶² “*Vater und Sohn*,” *Di Presse*, August 24, 1943.

¹⁰⁶³ “*Vater und Sohn*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, August 27, 1943.

¹⁰⁶⁴ “Ein Zeitstück von J. Aialti in der FDB,” *Volksblatt*, September 1943.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Jacob to Friedländer, August 20, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

desired amiable relations. The stage could not, however, afford to continue producing dramas which it knew would flop. In a private letter to Günter Friedländer, editor of the *Wochenschau*, Jacob pointed out that time and again dramas favored by Zionist groups repulsed the FDB's public:

Die Uraufführung von „Vater und Sohn“ hat die schlechteste Einnahme dieser Spielzeit gebracht. Unser Stammpublikum hat in der auffälligsten Weise wieder einmal ‚gestreikt‘. Leider ist das kein Zufall [...] die traurigsten Erfahrungen aber haben wir tatsächlich jedes Mal gemacht, wenn wir auf das speziell jüdische Interesse hingewiesen haben, das irgendein Stück beanspruchen durfte. Ob das „Affäre Dreyfuss“ war oder Bistritzkys „In jener Nacht“, ob es jetzt Aialtis „Vater und Sohn“ war [...] jedes Mal blieb der Besuch weit hinter unseren Erwartungen zurück, bei den Premieren Bistritzkys und Aialtis wurde er kassenmässig zur Katastrophe.¹⁰⁶⁶

The Freie Deutsche Bühne concluded that, despite their claims to the contrary, Zionists were not representative of theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie*. Furthermore, Jacob continues, the wishes of Zionists conflicted outright with the preferences of his own Jewish audiences:

immer wieder bekommen wir von verschiedenen jüdischen Seiten gesagt, dass unser Publikum zum grössten Teil aus Juden besteht, auf die stärker auch bei der Spielplanbildung Rücksicht genommen werden müsse. [...] wie soll eigentlich die ‚grössere Rücksicht‘ auf das überwiegend jüdische Publikum aussehen, wenn dieses Publikum augenscheinlich – wie nämlich die Kassenrapporte es eindeutig beweisen – von Stücken, die gerade sein Interesse beanspruchen müssten, nichts wissen will?¹⁰⁶⁷

In his letter to Friedländer Jacob indicates that plays such as *In jener Nacht* and *Vater und Sohn* were flops because of their Jewish content. Jacob makes a strong case to support this conclusion, and likely stumped Friedländer. His letter, as Jacob notes on a copy in underlined capital letters, went without reply. Yet there

¹⁰⁶⁶ Jacob to Friedländer, August 20, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Jacob to Friedländer, August 20, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

is a counterargument against Jacob's claims. A longer, comparative view of the FDB's repertoire supports the thesis that *In jener Nacht* and *Vater und Sohn* likely failed more because of their serious tone and somber plots, than due to their Jewish content.

5.3 "Ich will nicht mehr weinen!"¹⁰⁶⁸

It was not impossible for plays with Jewish and antifascist themes to succeed at the Freie Deutsch Bühne. Although theatergoers preferred entertainment over politics and religion, two of the most successful dramas at the FDB—the *Die fünf Frankfurter* and *Die Unbesiegten*—were works which combined elements of both. Rössler and Hellman weaved humor and romance into dramas which addressed serious issues of Jewish identity and antifascist engagement. Of the 100+ premieres at the FDB during WWII, ticket sales for these dramas far outstripped all others. The unmatched success of *Die Unbesiegten* and *Die fünf Frankfurter* indicates that, provided their messages were properly packaged, theatergoers actually favored dramas which discussed serious issues over benign, irrelevant farces.

Bistritzky's *In jener Nacht*, however, makes "keine Konzessionen an den Publikumsgeschmack."¹⁰⁶⁹ It is a somber, brooding drama which offers scant hope for resolution to the myriad of pressing problems it presents. It culminates with the loss of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Jews from Israel, a climax of,

¹⁰⁶⁸ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰⁶⁹ "In jener Nacht," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, "November 9, 1942.

as the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* put it, “aufwühlendster, realistischer Tragik.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Aialti’s *Vater und Sohn*, too, is unremittingly hard and bitter. According to the *Diario Israelita*, Ernst Wurmser delivered a powerful performance in the role of father Sokolowski, whose Jewish piety and altruism are mercilessly punished: “mit erhobenem Haupt geht er wie die Vorfahren in den Tod.”¹⁰⁷¹ The *Diario Israelita*’s formulation indicates a dark, almost fatalistic cynicism. Sokolowski’s murder, the cruel lot of many generations, is portrayed as more than an individual’s fate. Phrased in this way, Sokolowski’s father’s demise appears to represent the destiny of many Jews. A year earlier in *Die Unbesiegten*, the FDB had optimistically depicted triumph over the Nazis as a certainty, but Aialti and Bistrizky give the opposite impression. Kurt Müller, who is not a Jewish figure but is a committed antifascist, had been an affirming figure in the performance of *Die Unbesiegten*. Despite his sacrifices for the antifascist cause, Müller plays the piano with joy, appreciates good food and drink and, above all, loves his family with warmth and sincerity. Müller faces an uncertain future at the end of *Die Unbesiegten*, but his family is safe in the Farrelly household. Bistrizky and Aialti’s protagonists lack this balance. Sokolowski’s son, for example, is a hardened fighter who expresses at best a “kalten Gleichgültigkeit dem Leben gegenüber.” He loves his father, but leaves him facing execution. Bistrizky’s protagonist deliberately feigns death before his own daughter.¹⁰⁷² Whereas Hellman blends her depiction of the Nazi menace with moments of comedy,

¹⁰⁷⁰ “In jener Nacht,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*,“ November 9, 1942.

¹⁰⁷¹ “Vater und Sohn,” *El Diario Israelita*, August 22, 1943.

¹⁰⁷² “Vater und Sohn,” *El Diario Israelita*, August 22, 1943.

family warmth, and romance, Aialti makes no such concessions. As the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* noted, the fleeting moments of tenderness in *Vater und Sohn* are consumed completely by the pall of suffering and death. Aialti employs “sehr starke Mittel, eine erbarmungslose, fast grausame Ausdrucksform,” to deliver “ein erschütterndes Gemälde der Schrecken dieser Zeit.”¹⁰⁷³ Bistritzky’s conclusion is similarly dismal: God’s chosen people will spend thousands of years in the anguish and dispersion of exile, “bis sich dieses Volk seines Herrn und Jerusalems würdig erwiesen hat.”¹⁰⁷⁴ In the final lines of Rössler’s *Die fünf Frankfurter*, by contrast, Salomon kneels at his mother’s side and confesses his happiness about his daughter’s Jewish marriage with tears of joy. Bistritzky’s Rabbi Jochanan ben Sakai, enclosed in a coffin and scuttled away as Jerusalem burns, cuts a depressing figure in comparison.

In a revealing letter, a theatergoer named Mr. Talpa explains to Jacob that for beleaguered refugees the days when they can go to the theater are like holidays: “Selbstverständlich isst man am Feiertag lieber Kuchen als Hartbrot.”¹⁰⁷⁵ After Nazi persecution, flight from Europe, and the anguish of exile, Talpa has a single wish: “Ich will nicht mehr weinen!”¹⁰⁷⁶ Warning against Aialti’s *Vater und Sohn*, which features “Menschen, die im Denken, Fühlen und Reagieren weit über dem Alltagsdurchschnitt stehen,”¹⁰⁷⁷ Talpa identifies himself

¹⁰⁷³ “*Vater und Sohn*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 22, 1943.

¹⁰⁷⁴ “*In jener Nacht*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, November 13, 1942.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰⁷⁷ “*Vater und Sohn*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 22, 1943.

as an ordinary refugee who, regardless of the morality of his position, can stand war and misery no more: “Das ist Betrug – wo bleibt da mein Heldenmut? Vorsicht – Herr Direktor – Vorsicht mit dem Mann aus dem Volke!”¹⁰⁷⁸ Claiming his tastes to be representative for the *neue Kolonie*, Talpa explicitly states that that simple comedies and serious dramas alike can win over an audience: “Beide füllen die Kasse durch gleiches Publikum. Es liegt am Küchenzettel.”¹⁰⁷⁹ The recipe for success is to perceive the audience’s needs and meet them in surprising ways: “Wunschkeime entdecken und pflegen – bringt Ernte.” The connection between the actors and their audience is most important of all. An intimate “menschliche Geste” engenders empathy and makes “Freunde” out of “Verehrern.” Intimacy, empathy, affection—“Sowas bindet!”¹⁰⁸⁰

Vater und Sohn and *In jener Nacht* were not failures because they featured Jewish content, but rather because they were not balanced recipes. As Talpa observes, most refugees were tired of conflict. They were repulsed by the inflammatory rhetoric of the Forum Sionista. They had little appetite for the elder Sokolowski’s somber march to death and his son’s cold and aloof attitude toward life. They perceived few if any warm or intimate gestures from Bistritzky and Aialti’s characters, and could not empathize with them. The essential “Bindung” between actors and spectators was absent. *Vater und Sohn* and *In jener Nacht* were too sad, solemn, and despondent for a public whose prevailing wish, as Talpa writes, was to cease crying. The Forum Sionista, Jüdische Kultur-

¹⁰⁷⁸ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

Gesellschaft, and *Jüdische Wochenschau* made no concessions to theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie*, giving them “Hartbrot” instead of “Kuchen.” As a result, the theaters were empty.

The debacle of *Vater und Sohn* was the culmination of a full year of tension and disputes among the FDB and multiple Zionist organizations. That February the FDB ensemble collectively expressed their frustration to the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft that Zionists had not duly recognized the stage’s efforts at cooperation. Since the FDB’s inception its members had participated in events at Jewish organizations, put on performances for Jewish charities without compensation, and observed all Jewish holidays even though this often ran contrary to the theater’s commercial interests.¹⁰⁸¹ Nonetheless, the stage reproached several leaders of the Zionist movement for being antagonistic to the Freie Deutsche Bühne. Jacob accused Bar Kochba and the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft of scheduling activities to compete with his theater. He also claimed that they hired other artists, such as the Colón Orchestra, which had links to fascist groups, in lieu of supporting fellow refugees.¹⁰⁸² The conflict between the FDB and Zionist institutions escalated over time. In early August of 1943 the head of cultural events at the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, one Mr. Sklarz, went so far as to assert to Alexander Berger that the FDB was an “anti-jüdisches Theater.”¹⁰⁸³ Sklarz criticized the ensemble’s links to *Das Andere Deutschland*

¹⁰⁸¹FDB Ensemble to Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, August 12, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943; Jacob to Zweig, February 19, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁸² Jacob to Curt Zacharias, September 14, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁸³ Jacob to Curt Zacharias, September 14, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

and objected to the presence of gentile Germans in the ensemble, especially Liselott Reger-Jacob, who he incorrectly criticized as a “getaufte Jüdin.”¹⁰⁸⁴ Although the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft board of directors later denounced his comments,¹⁰⁸⁵ Jacob and other Jewish members of the FDB believed that Sklarz’ insults reflected sentiments that were widespread in the organization.¹⁰⁸⁶ The affair caused a permanent rupture between the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft and the FDB. As Jacob phrased it, Sklarz’ remarks were unforgivable—they represented no less than “jüdischer Nazismus.”¹⁰⁸⁷ The positions of Zionist institutions such as the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft and the Forum Sionista, which placed Jewish identity above all other concerns, can be interpreted as Jewish nationalism. The ensemble declared that these views were incompatible with the FDB’s commitment to interculturalism and inclusion. After several failed productions and numerous quarrels the Freie Deutsche Bühne concluded that its differences with the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft and the Forum Sionista were irreconcilable. In 1944 Jacob cancelled his membership in the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft.¹⁰⁸⁸ The FDB did not stage another drama in cooperation with any Zionist institution for the remainder of the WWII period. The stage realized

¹⁰⁸⁴ FDB Ensemble to Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, August 12, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Nussbaum and Frohmann to Jacob, August 20, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Jacob to Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, September 14, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Jacob to Curt Zacharias, September 14, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁸⁸ There is evidence, albeit in the form of hearsay, that the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft wished to revise its confrontational stance. In a letter from January 11, 1944, Rudolfo Baer informs Jacob that a member of the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft had expressed to him, “dass wenn der *Nathan* käme, sie für dieses Stück das grösste Interesse hätte.” Baer to Jacob, January 11, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

that its function as an inclusive, community-building organization was not, as Hugo Lifezis had argued, “die Unbelehrbaren **gegen ihren Willen** zu retten.”¹⁰⁸⁹ The FDB believed it had to refrain from excessive confrontation, because neither its moral message of inclusive antifascism nor its business enterprise would succeed if audiences stayed home.

5.4 The Overlapping “Überlebenswissen” of S.L. Jacobowsky and the *neue Kolonie*¹⁰⁹⁰

The Freie Deutsche Bühne did not desist from performing dramas with “speziell jüdische Interesse.”¹⁰⁹¹ *Die fünf Frankfurter* had proven that spectators wanted to see Jewish dramas as well, provided the “Hartbrot” was sweetened with “Kuchen.”¹⁰⁹² On September 22, 1945, the Freie Deutsche Bühne staged the American German language premiere of Franz Werfel’s *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*.¹⁰⁹³ Werfel’s self-described “Komödie einer Tragödie” brought the FDB both glowing reviews and full houses. Multiple scenes from this play about two refugees’ harrowing escapes from Nazi persecution in occupied France could have been inspired by the lives of the FDB’s ensemble and audience. Werfel’s

¹⁰⁸⁹ Hugo Lifezis, “Die Unbelehrbaren und wir,” Program for *In jener Nacht*, PWJA VI b) 281 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ette, *Zwischenweltenschreiben*, 42.

¹⁰⁹¹ Jacob to Friedländer, August 20, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹⁰⁹² Talpa to Jacob, February 25, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁰⁹³ Accounts conflict about whether the FDB’s performance was the world or the American premiere of the German original. Uwe Naumann argues the former, but contemporary reports from the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* state that *Jacobowsky* had already been performed in Göteborg, Zürich, and Basel. See: Naumann, *Ein Theatermann im Exil*, 134; “Werfels *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* in der F.D.B.,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 5, 1945.

blend of the comedy and tragedy inherent to the refugee experience elicited a strong sense of community among thespians and theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie*.

Set during the Nazi invasion of France in June of 1940, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* begins in the small Parisian hotel, Mon Repos et de la Rose. The Nazi invasion of the French capital is imminent, and hundreds of thousands of Parisians are fleeing the city. Among the hotel guests are a Jewish businessman and a Polish colonel and his orderly—Jacobowsky, Stjerbinsky, and Szabuniewicz, respectively. Jacobowsky has been on the run from Nazi persecution for nearly a decade while Stjerbinsky must deliver secret papers to the Polish resistance in London. Both men must leave France immediately. The Colonel and Jacobowsky are complete opposites, but when Jacobowsky, who cannot drive, purchases a car to head south, he is forced to cast his lot with Stjerbinsky, who can. At the colonel's insistence the unlikely pair, plus Szabuniewicz, first drive northwest straight into the German attack so Stjerbinsky can rescue his beloved Marianne. The four then embark upon a perilous, hilarious series of misadventures in a race against time and the Nazis. Time and again Jacobowsky's savvy survival skills save them from disaster. He procures provisions such as food, candy, cognac, and gasoline for the group. Jacobowsky also evades arrest on multiple occasions, courts Marianne, and nearly fights a gun duel with the envious Stjerbinsky. Jacobowsky leaves his companions near Bayonne, but is reunited with them in the coastal town of St. Jean de Luz, where the Dice Player, an undercover commander in the British navy, is waiting to take Stjerbinsky to England. All appears for naught when he insists that only two

places are free in the boat, but then Marianne decides to remain in France. When the Dice Player remains reluctant to take Jacobowsky along, Stjerbinsky refuses to abandon his antagonist-cum-comrade. The comedy's happy end is complete when the Dice Player, impressed by Jacobowsky's courage, finally agrees to take him along.

It is as if Werfel, conscious of the FDB and its audience, teases them with the opening lines of his drama:

Beim Aufgehen des Vorhangs lässt sich im ersten Augenblick die Befürchtung nicht ganz abweisen, man werde einem pathetischen, unangenehmen und schwer verständlichen Drama beiwohnen müssen, denn die Bühne ist in ein magisch blaues Licht getaucht, aus dem sich in gespenstischer Erstarrung einige menschliche Gestalten losringen, die regungslos entlang der Wände auf Holzbänken sitzen. Nicht genug damit, er erschallt zu Häupten der blau beleuchteten Gespenster die überlebensgroße Grabesstimme eines unheilverkündenden griechischen Gottes.¹⁰⁹⁴

Theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie* probably would have been very susceptible to Werfel's joking. After other exilic dramas by Bistrizky and Aialti, they likely reacted in exactly the manner that Werfel imagines above, groaning in dismay at the melancholic, esoteric mise-en-scène the opening curtain reveals. Yet Werfel only toys with spectators for an instant. He quickly defuses the ominous, abstract images, and replaces them with others that are tangible, comprehensible, and less intimidating. Peering closer, the public sees, "zum Glück," that the peculiar blue glow emanates from everyday light bulbs and the motionless shapes have "keine symbolische Bedeutung." The human shapes are ordinary hotel guests gathered around a small radio. Listening closer, theatergoers also realize that the voice belongs not to a supernatural being, but to French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud,

¹⁰⁹⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 1, PWJA VI, j) 358.

seeking to calm citizens during a German bomb raid. The scene in the laundry room is serious, but fathomable. For many spectators in the Casal de Catalunya that spring evening, it would even have been familiar. Speaking the drama's very first lines, Reynaud succinctly describes the essence of Jacobowsky's unshakable "Überlebenswissen": "la situation est grave mais pas désespérée."¹⁰⁹⁵ Even in desperate circumstances, one never should despair.

Jacobowsky's improbable escape, and the many individual miracles sitting in the theater that evening in Buenos Aires, reflect a special talent which Ottmar Ette succinctly terms, "Überlebenswissen."¹⁰⁹⁶ Jacobowsky's escape is fortunate, but it is also earned. He demonstrates that character—in his case a blend of wit, optimism, and altruism—is the basis of survival skills. Some critics have accused Werfel of insolently poking fun at a somber moment in history, but humor has a serious role in this drama.¹⁰⁹⁷ As I noted earlier, the Holocaust survivor, neurologist, and clinical psychiatrist Viktor Frankl has argued that, "Humor more than anything else in the human make-up can afford an ability to rise above any situation."¹⁰⁹⁸ Speaking to the Old Lady from Arras, Jacobowsky deploys humor to reduce potentially overwhelming situations to more manageable proportions: "Merken Sie sich, Madame, kein Unglück ist in der Wirklichkeit so groß wie in unserer Angst: ausgenommen vielleicht Zahnschmerzen."¹⁰⁹⁹ Jacobowsky not

¹⁰⁹⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 1, PWJA VI, j) 358.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ette, *Zwischenweltensreiben*, 42.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hans Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 112.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Viktor Frankl, *Viktor Frankl Recollections*, 97.

only reminds himself and the Old Lady from Arras of an important survival strategy here but also puts it into practice, implicitly ridiculing the Nazi bombardment by comparing it to a toothache. Jacobowsky's humor is a vitalizing force to himself and those around him.

Madame Boufflier describes Jacobowsky as "Sonnig, unerschütterlich sonnig," adding "Ich ziehe sonnige Naturen allen Schwarzsehern vor."¹¹⁰⁰ Confronted by a French gendarme in St. Cybrill, Jacobowsky never wavers from his courteous bearing, even when the brigadier preposterously suggests he return to Paris to complete his paperwork for travel to the south: "Sagen Sie, Herr Sergeant, ist es Ihnen im Drange der Geschäfte etwa entgangen, dass sich Paris in den Händen der Deutschen befindet?" Even when the gendarme prepares to arrest him, Jacobowsky resists, but also remains polite and patient. His attitude is rewarded when the brigadier realizes he is no longer on duty and not only allows Jacobowsky to go free but also advises him on how to reach Bayonne safely, and then even provides him with a receipt for gasoline—a priceless commodity—at the local police station. When Jacobowsky, incredulous, asks him why he has been so helpful, the brigadier answers: "Weil Sie meine Bosheit nicht gereizt haben! Ihr Verdienst!"¹¹⁰¹ Jacobowsky's good-natured disposition charms many people and gets him out of more than a few very tight spots, often in better shape than he was beforehand.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 5, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁰⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 3, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁰¹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 26, PWJA VI j) 358.

It can be countered that nobody could remain this upbeat in such dire straits. I will show further below that Jacobowsky is not immune to the hardships of the refugee experience. However, evidence suggests that theatergoers in the *neue Kolonie*, like Jacobowsky, attempted to bear the burden of exile with a smile. At its 1943 theater ball, FDB members performed a ditty written by a member of the *neue Kolonie*, F. Pernetz, entitled “Optimismo.” In “tempo de swing” Pernetz’ tune describes the struggles of an emigrant who, like Jacobowsky, does his best to keep up his spirits:

Fern vom eignen Land verzweifelt geht der arme Emigrant und sucht das grosse Glück. / Üb’rall hört er „Nein“ kein Mensch reicht ihm die Hand. Er ist allein, die Suche dauert fort. / Doch ein Funken Mut / rät ihm sicher gut. / Geht es schlecht, ist es schlimm. Wollt ihr wissen ich’s nimm’? Ich bin glücklich, bin zufrieden ich bin froh. / Ohne Arbeit ohne Geld, ganz verlassen auf der Welt. Ich bin glücklich, bin zufrieden, ich bin froh. / Bin verzweifelt und recht traurig, nichts sich ändert, es ist schaurig. Darum besser ist’s im Leiden froh zu sein und froh zu bleiben. / Und so hoff’ ich unbeirrt, daß bald alles besser wird.¹¹⁰²

It is likely that few refugees were as resilient as the fictional S.L. Jacobowsky. Nonetheless, “Optimismo” indicates that survival strategies in the *neue Kolonie* and *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* were overlapping. Emigrants in both contexts strove to stay upbeat under duress, likely aware that if they succumbed to misery their chances of triumph were slim.

“Ich bin Optimist,” Jacobowsky declares to a dubious Stjerbinsky in the first scene of the drama.¹¹⁰³ Jacobowsky claims to believe in “Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung,” but his stubborn optimism is more fundamental to his escape from France. A true believer in the laws of probability would

¹¹⁰² PWJA VI a) 280.

¹¹⁰³ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 8, PWJA VI j) 358.

quickly be demoralized, realizing how slim the chances of escape are. An optimist like Jacobowsky, however, stubbornly hopes that he will be one of the lucky ones who make it out. Jacobowsky sees two possible outcomes for every dilemma, one of them always “gut”: “Was im Leben auch geschieht, immer gibt es zwei Möglichkeiten [...] Entweder kommen die Boches nach Paris oder sie stürzen sich zuerst auf England und kommen nicht nach Paris. Kommen sie nicht nach Paris, das ist doch gut!”¹¹⁰⁴ Jacobowsky holds fast to his belief in free will. Stranded on an isolated pier as the Gestapo closes in from behind, with no reason to hope for rescue, cyanide capsules in one hand and pills against seasickness in the other, he has two final possibilities. He throws the poison to the ocean and swallows pills against seasickness. Only after this final act of optimism does Commander Wright, convinced of his “Lebensmut,” offer Jacobowsky a place on board his ship. Szabuniewicz shakes his head, muttering: “Ein Optimist.”¹¹⁰⁵

Yet Werfel’s protagonist is not only a good-natured optimist. The most vital quality of Jacobowsky’s “Überlebenswissen” is his ability to get along with others, often in the form of altruism. Whether distributing marrons glacés in the hotel laundry room or procuring cognac for Stjerbinsky and chocolate for Marianne’s dog, Jacobowsky is exceedingly thoughtful of other people’s welfare. En route from St. Cyrill to St. Jean de Luz, Jacobowsky ceaselessly works for the benefit of the group. He saves Stjerbinsky’s life, although the colonel had challenged him to a duel just minutes before. Stjerbinsky is dumbfounded by his companion’s gesture: “Sie hätten schweigen können und ruhig zusehn, wie die

¹¹⁰⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 9, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁰⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 52, PWJA VI j) 358,.

Nazis mich verhaften oder töten... Warum haben Sie nicht geschwiegen?“¹¹⁰⁶
Jacobowsky does not know why he rescues Stjerbinsky, ”Ich weiß nicht...
Inspiration ist alles,“ but his altruistic instincts gain him the respect and loyalty of
others, which eventually rescues him in St. Jean de Luz. First, out of gratitude to
Jacobowsky Marianne gives up her place on Wright’s ship in order that “ein
wertvoller Mensch gerettet wird.”¹¹⁰⁷ Next, Stjerbinsky insists that Jacobowsky
accompany him to England: “Herr Jacobowsky hat während dieser Flucht niemals
versagt. Er hat mir sogar durch seine findige Art das Leben gerettet. Urteilen Sie
selbst, Sir! [...] Ich betrachte Herrn Jacobowsky genau wie einen Kameraden, der
neben mir im Kampf stand.“¹¹⁰⁸ Finally, Jacobowsky himself convinces Wright to
bring him along by throwing his poison to sea and taking seasickness tablets
instead. This pivotal gesture, too, is a product of his altruism: “Also darum hab
ich gestern diese Pillen gegen Seekrankheit einem Réfugié abgekauft, damit er
eine Kleinigkeit verdient [...] Inspiration ist alles.“¹¹⁰⁹

Werfel’s *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* is for the most part an upbeat drama.
It includes the moments of romance and humor that pleased the *neue Kolonie* in
Lillian Hellman’s *Die Ubesiegten* and Carl Rössler’s *Die fünf Frankfurter*. Such
lighter elements were fundamental to these dramas’ success in Buenos Aires.
However, also similar to *Die Ubesiegten* and *Die fünf Frankfurter*, Werfel’s
Jacobowsky und der Oberst focuses on a serious topic, and it balances humor with

¹¹⁰⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 38, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁰⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 49, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁰⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 50, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁰⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 52, PWJA VI j) 358.

sincerity, even solemnity. As Szabuniewicz, Stjerbinsky, and Jacobowsky arrive in St. Cyrill, the colonel accuses Jacobowsky, who is metonymically representative for Jews, of not having stood up against Hitler: “Und was tun Sie gegen Hitler, Herr Jacobowsky, als davonlaufen, davonlaufen, davonlaufen?”¹¹¹⁰ Jacobowsky, who speaks as an individual, explains that as a pacifist he has the advantage of never being the persecutor. He then puts forth his analysis of the Nazis’ rise to power. Hitler is not an individual, Jacobowsky believes, but a symptom. Jacobowsky argues that the current crisis of June, 1940, is the result of widespread apathy. When the Nazis took power and began persecuting Jews, Jacobowsky asserts that Germans, Poles, English, French, Americans, and Russians rubbed their hands together and said “Recht geschieht dem Jacobowsky!”¹¹¹¹ Or, at best, they all shrugged their shoulders and said, “Was gehts uns an?”¹¹¹² The lack of compassion on the part of all parties who might have had the ability to stop Hitler incriminates everybody—Germans, Poles, English, French, Americans, and Russians alike—for the ascent and crimes of Nazism:

Hättet ihr aber, ihr und allen andern, am Anfang gesagt [...] ,Der Jacobowsky ist ein Mensch und wir können nicht dulden, daß ein Mensch so behandelt wird’, dann [...] binnen sechs Wochen wäre die Pest ausgerottet worden und Hitler wäre geblieben was er ist ein Stammtischnarr in einem stinkigen Münchner Bierhaus. Somit seid ihr selbst, ihr allein und alle andern, die Größe Hitlers, seine Genialität, sein Blitzkrieg, sein Sieg und seine Weltherrschaft.¹¹¹³

¹¹¹⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 21, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹¹¹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 21, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹¹² Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 21, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹¹³ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 21, PWJA VI j) 358.

The Nazis' crimes against humanity, Jacobowsky argues, are the fault of humanity itself. Instead of viewing Jews as fellow human beings who deserve their compassion and help, other nations left them to suffer. Jacobowsky does not single out the Germans for Nazism, but rather distributes blame across a wider range of people and nations which includes but is not limited to Germany.

Jacobowsky does not directly confront the core issue of Nazi racial anti-Semitism, but in numerous passages he does betray skepticism about Jews acculturation into European society. When he was very young, he explains to the Old Lady of Arras, his family was forced out of Poland by a pogrom in which his father was murdered. Then, thinking his family were fully acculturated Jews in Germany, Jacobowsky had grown up “von der festen Überzeugung gewiegt, ein kleiner strammer Deutscher zu sein.”¹¹¹⁴ This was, he admits, an “Irrtum” which has since been “aufgeklärt” by Nazi persecution.¹¹¹⁵ Jacobowsky does not seem to believe that Jews can ever acculturate into European society. He flatters and gives presents to Marianne, who Werfel refers to as “Madame la France,” but he always keeps his distance from her and is adamant that she remain with the European gentile, Stjerbinsky. Like many members of the *neue Kolonie* who supported the FDB, Jacobowsky is still very fond of German culture, but he never voices any hope of returning to live in Germany or Europe after the war. Finally, even after he and Stjerbinsky have escaped together across France and found passage out of France in Commander Wright's boat, Jacobowsky rejects any possibility of a lasting friendship between himself and the European colonel: “Unser Duell ist

¹¹¹⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 5, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹¹⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 5, PWJA VI j) 358.

ewig, Stjerbinsky.”¹¹¹⁶ The Jewish businessman and Polish colonel can cooperate and respect each other, but their differences will persist. Werfel’s protagonist may not denounce acculturation and Nazi racial anti-Semitism with the same force as the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft or the Forum Sionista, but as his boat departs from the French coast Jacobowksy appears to have turned his back on Europe for good.

Werfel’s Jacobowsky can be interpreted as an idealized version of many members of the FDB and its public. Egon Schwarz and Lionel Steiman perceive anti-Semitic “stereotypes” of the calculating, ingratiating Jewish businessman in Werfel’s protagonist.¹¹¹⁷ While it is impossible to know how all individuals in the *neue Kolonie* reacted to the drama, I have found no trace of Schwarz and Steinman’s misgivings among the many reactions of actors, theatergoers and media which I have consulted. Letters from spectators held in the Paul Walter Jacob Archive praise the performance without exception, and neither the Zionist weekly *Jüdische Wochenschau*, nor the communist periodicals *Freies Wort* and *MMM*, nor the daily papers *Argentinisches Tageblatt* and the Argentine *La Nación* make any mention of anti-Semitism in connection with Werfel’s portrayal of S.L. Jacobowsky. Jacobowsky is not demonstrative or forceful in his religious beliefs. He is no prophet in the vein of Bistritzky’s Rabbi Jochanan ben Sakai, nor does he read from the Torah like Aialti’s Father Sokolowski. He does not even fulfill Rössler’s image of the Rothschilds, who sprinkle their German with

¹¹¹⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 53, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹¹⁷ Lionel Steiman, *Franz Werfel: The Faith of an Exile* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1985), 174; Egon Schwarz, “Franz Werfel und das Judentum” (lecture, Wiener Werfel-Symposium, Vienna, 1990).

Yiddish and eat Matzah. Yet Jacobowsky affirms his Jewish identity by purchasing a car from the Rothschilds, by showing great solidarity with the Jewish composer Kamnitzer in Bayonne, and by pointedly donating to the “Ewige Jude,” not the “Heiliger Franziskus,” as the two peddle by on their tandem bicycle. Stjerbinsky’s Catholic prayers are strange to him and, when he spots the “Ewige Jude” and the “Heiliger Franziskus,” Jacobowsky is quick to recognize that they are “Gegensätze.”¹¹¹⁸ When he tells the Old Lady from Arras about his father’s murder in Poland and his flight from Nazi persecution in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, Jacobowsky narrates a biography which many members in the FDB’s refugee ensemble and public had at least partly experienced firsthand. The Zionist *Jüdische Wochenschau* described his ability to reflect with humor at these dark experiences as, a “wunderbare spezifisch jüdische Gabe.”¹¹¹⁹ The *neue Kolonie* appears to have identified with Jacobowsky as a Jew and a refugee. Jacques Arndt, who played Stjerbinsky in the 1945 production, asserted that when the Freie Deutsche Bühne performed *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, actors and public shared a theatrical performance that evoked common perspectives and memories of mutual, real life experiences. In Buenos Aires, Arndt stated, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* was performed by Jacobowskies for Jacobowskies.¹¹²⁰

Paul Walter Jacob remarked that its performance of *Die Unbesiegten* had been the ensemble’s “Selbstdarstellung,” however this was more the case with

¹¹¹⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 33, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹¹⁹ “*Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 2, 1945.

¹¹²⁰ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006.

Jacobowsky.¹¹²¹ Jacob, whose family name links him with Werfel’s protagonist, played the leading role in the FDB’s production. In Act One, when Jacobowsky narrates his biography to the Old Lady from Arras, Jacob essentially is telling his own life story. Seemingly acculturated Jews in pre-1933 Germany, Jacob and Jacobowsky grew up proud and patriotic, convinced that they were Germans. This “Irrtum” was the downfall of both men, whose great enthusiasm for German culture provoked the Nazis’ ire: “Mein großes Verbrechen war die deutsche Kultur. Ich verehere sie glühend: Goethe, Mozart, Beethoven! [...] Das verzeihen mir die Nazis nicht. Darauf steht nicht Dachau. Darauf steht der Tod...”¹¹²² At the time of the performance, both Jacobowsky and Jacob are on “Vaterland Nummer fünf.” The two have several stations of exile in common, including Paris and Prague, and share similar reactions to these cities. Jacob wrote several articles about the Czech capital’s “wundervolle historische Schönheit,”¹¹²³ and Jacobowsky also reminisces, “träumerisch, Prag ist eine wunderschöne Stadt.”¹¹²⁴ Likewise, Jacob admitted to a “krankhafte Vorliebe für alles Französische”¹¹²⁵ and congratulated an exiled French ensemble after Paris fell to the Allies,¹¹²⁶

¹¹²¹ PWJA VIII c) 455.

¹¹²² Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 6, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹²³ “In Prag vor fünf Jahren,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 14, 1942.

¹¹²⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 5, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹²⁵ “Ich kaufe zwei Dutzend Tanks,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, January 21, 1941.

¹¹²⁶ Jacob to Comodie Française, August 26, 1944, PWJA Korrespondenz 1944.

thereby presaging Jacobowsky's avowal of his "große Eignung zum französischen Patrioten."¹¹²⁷

The expanding Nazi threat forced both men to flee France, and eventually, mainland Europe. The first step in this process was to obtain the necessary legal documents for migration. As the "Unsterbliche" philosophizes into his magazine, "Der Mensch kommt ohne Lächeln auf die Welt. Er verläßt sie ohne Lächeln. Und dazwischen..." he is interrupted by Jacobowsky's forlorn sigh, "Und dazwischen braucht er einen Paß."¹¹²⁸ Here again Jacob was a step ahead of his role. His audience may have recalled earlier performances at the FDB, especially Jacob's song from *Charley's Aunt*: "Das Reisen ist heut' mächtig schwer / denn wo nimmt man ein Visum her? Du hast kein Geld / Verschlossen ist die ganze Welt."¹¹²⁹ In real life and in *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, money was often the only way to obtain legal visas and passports. Jacob and Ernst Wurmser paid exorbitant prices for passports to Paraguay and Bolivia, respectively. Werfel might have had Bolivia in mind when, after standing in line for days, he has Jacobowsky purchase "zwei kostbare Pässe eines exotischen Ländchens."¹¹³⁰ Yet the passports alone were not enough. As Jacobowsky explains, his new home, like Bolivia and Paraguay, is landlocked. Therefore his passport had to be supplemented with transit visas for neighboring countries:

Einige Staaten liegen zwischen mir und meinem vermutlich reizenden neuen Vaterland. Um sie zu durchqueren, bedürfen wir ihrer Visa, der

¹¹²⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 5, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹²⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 42, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹²⁹ PWJA VI a) 280.

¹¹³⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 42, PWJA VI j) 358.

Visa von Transitanía Numero eins, Numero zwei, Numero drei... [...] Transitanía eins gibt die Erlaubnis zur Durchreise nur dann, wenn Transitanía drei und zwei sie vorher erteilt haben. Ich schlug mich wie ein Löwe für mich und Kamnitzer. Doch immer, wenn ich das Visum eines Transitanías erkämpft hatte, wurden die anderen drei für ungültig erklärt. Ein Karussell der Vergeblichkeit!¹¹³¹

In his memoirs Jacob remembers the arduous process of migrating to Argentina.

His tale of negotiating the labyrinth of bureaucracy en route to Argentina bears

several parallels to Jacobowsky's story:

Es gelang mir, ein Visum nach Paraguay zu bekommen—das einzige, was ich in Prag mit Hilfe vieler Freunde organisieren konnte. Der Argentinische Konsul, der mir sehr wohlwollend gesinnt war, riet mir: ‚Da haben Sie doch das große Los gezogen; jetzt kriegen Sie von mir das Durchreisevisum durch Argentinien, das lassen Sie später in ein endgültiges Visum umändern, dann sind Sie in Argentinien, was Sie ja wollen.¹¹³²

Jacob's struggles with Argentine migration officials did not end in Prague, of course. Once in Argentina he had to marry and pay a hefty bribe in order to convert his transit visa into a residence visa. The story of Jacobowsky's encounter with bureaucrats from “exotic” countries has far worse ending:

Schon sah ich mich über der Grenze, da [...] wurde der Konsul Nummer eins wahnsinnig. Er fand den Sommer 1940 zu kalt und die Arbeit zu übertrieben. So zündete er ein behagliches Feuer in seinem Kamin an und warf all unsere Pässe und Dokumente hinein. Und er rief: ‚Heil Hitler! Ich heize mit Menschen!‘ Und er hat mit Menschen geheizt. Denn was ist ein Mensch ohne Papiere? Nackter als ein Neugeborener, nein, nackter als ein Skelett unter der Erde!¹¹³³

This was another situation with which members of the FDB ensemble and its audience could empathize. Jacques Arndt, too, had started over in South

¹¹³¹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 42, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹³² PWJA VIII c) 453.

¹¹³³ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 42, PWJA VI j) 358.

America without any documentation, “Nackter als ein Neugeborener.“ In 1945 Fred Heller, an Austrian playwright and novelist exiled in Montevideo, published a collection of stories based on the lives of emigrants who had had to begin from scratch—*Das Leben beginnt noch einmal*.¹¹³⁴ Heller, Balder Olden, Paul Zech, and other exiled writers in the *neue Kolonie* must have been amused when Werfel’s Gestapo agent confronts Jacobowsky: “Ehemals deutscher Reichsangehöriger! Ausgebürgert... *Scharf* Sagen Sie, sind Sie vielleicht Schriftsteller?” Charley’s Aunt also voices the experience of starting over again when she recalls that of her heyday in Berlin, “übrig blieb leider nur Rauch.”¹¹³⁵ The parallels between Werfel’s drama and the FDB’s cast and audience were many. Not all of them were comical.

Eventually Jacobowsky—like Paul Walter Jacob, Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla, Jacques Arndt, Ernst Wurmser, and the rest of the FDB’s ensemble and public—did manage to escape Europe, however many of them traversed desperate moments along the way. Werfel does not omit these moments from his drama. Jacobowsky despairs when he sits with Kamnitzer at the Café Mole in St. Jean de Luz. When he orders a strong coffee for his “Morale,” the Tragic Man, a former guest at Madame Boufflier’s Mon Repos et de la Rose in Paris who now is also in the same café, notes “sehr sonnig sehen Sie nicht aus.”¹¹³⁶ Jacobowsky is losing hope, and when Kamnitzer commits suicide Jacobowsky fears for his own sanity. Seconds later, Gestapo agents enter the café and arrest all the guests

¹¹³⁴ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 40, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹³⁵ PWJA VI a) 280.

¹¹³⁶ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 41, PWJA VI j) 358.

indiscriminately. When one guest calls their attention to Kamnitzer, the lead Gestapo agent observes that he is the seventeenth case of suicide they have encountered that afternoon and remarks, “Wir haben tote Juden liebend gern.”¹¹³⁷ Having successfully hidden from the Gestapo raid, Jacobowsky remains dejected when Marianne and Stjerbinsky enter the café a few minutes later. Marianne attempts to cheer him up and tells him can still escape, but Jacobowsky dismisses her optimism as “naïve Träume” and tells her, gesturing toward Kamnitzer “Für mich gibt es nurmehr [sic] eine Demarkationslinie, die ich zu überschreiten habe.”¹¹³⁸ Stjerbinsky then presses him to regain his courage and optimism by reminding him of his philosophy of two possibilities, one of them always good.

Jacobowsky replies:

Dies sind die zwei Möglichkeiten des umherirrenden Jacobowskys [...]. Entweder stecken die Nazis besagten Jacobowsky in das Schreckenslager von Gurs oder sie verschleppen ihn mit hunderttausend andern [sic] nach Polen. Verschleppen Sie ihn nach Polen, da gibt es zwei Möglichkeiten. Entweder bringen die Nazis besagten Jacobowsky schnell um oder sie quälen ihn langsam zu Tode. Bringen sie ihn schnell um, das ist doch gut. Quälen sie ihn langsam zu Tode, da gibt es 2 Möglichkeiten. Entweder sie scharren ihn lebendig ein bis zum Kopf.....¹¹³⁹

The FDB’s performance of Werfel’s *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* was humorous and often optimistic, but it did not present theatergoers with a carefree, trivialized version of refugees’ flights from Nazism. Only two of the refugees in the drama make it out of France, and the Nazis are depicted as merciless and capable murderers, not incompetent buffoons. By the time he reaches St. Jean de Luz,

¹¹³⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 43, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹³⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 47, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹³⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 47, PWJA VI j) 358.

Jacobowsky's optimism has turned to fatalism. His exploits during the flight through France convince Stjerbinsky and Marianne to help him, and he recuperates his hopefulness on the dock of St. Jean de Luz when he needs it most, which demonstrates that generosity, courage and a sense of humor are characteristics essential to survival. Jacobowsky's escape, however, is a very narrow one and, as Werfel shows, it is an unlikely one as well.

5.5 *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*: Immediate and Lasting Impressions

From the moment he began preparing to play Oberst Tadeusz Boleslaw Stjerbinsky, Jacques Arndt had the sensation of reading a dramatized version of his own biography.¹¹⁴⁰ At first glance Arndt, an Austrian Jew, and the Polish Catholic colonel, a "geborener Antisemit," appear to be opposites.¹¹⁴¹ Under the pressures of persecution, however, differences may give way to novel, often improvised similarities. Once a proud and fearless soldier, Stjerbinsky laments to Marianne that he has been reduced to one "Flüchtling unter Millionen."¹¹⁴² Both Stjerbinsky and Arndt were on Nazi wanted lists and had to avoid exposing themselves to Gestapo officials at all costs. They adopt analogous tactics to remain hidden in plain sight, such as engaging in role playing. Werfel introduces elements of metatheater when Stjerbinsky, accompanied by Szabuniewicz on harmonica, serenades Marianne on his violin outside her cottage in St. Cybrill. Jacobowsky, played by Jacob, who also directed the production, looks on

¹¹⁴⁰ Arndt, interview, August 2, 2006

¹¹⁴¹ "Jacobowsky und der Oberst," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 2, 1945.

¹¹⁴² Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 29, PWJA VI j) 358.

incredulously: “Ich war immer ein Theaternarr. Ich liebe diese Balkonszenen [...] Freilich, die große Schlachtszene dahinten ist zu nahe der Balkonszene hier! Ein Regiefehler...”¹¹⁴³ Later, when the group is confronted by a German patrol near Bayonne, metatheater assumes a vital role. Stjerbinsky, who has a 5,000 RM bounty on his head, must act as if he were a madman to avoid arrest. He as a ward from an insane asylum, Szabuniewicz as his caretaker, and Marianne as his worried wife all must convincingly play their parts as participants in a metatheatrical spectacle. The three refugees perform for an audience of German soldiers, all of whom are on stage before an audience of refugees. Later, in St. Jean de Luz, the colonel must disguise himself as a blind man to avoid the Nazis’ suspicions and reveal himself to the Dice Player, an undercover British agent looking for a Polish colonel disguised as a blind man. The situation evinces parallels with Arndt’s flight across Germany, in which he was constantly acting the part of a German citizen and supporter of National Socialism in order to conceal his true identity as an Austrian Jewish refugee. In reality and in Werfel’s play, Arndt’s abilities as an actor enabled him to escape from Nazi persecution. Arndt and Stjerbinsky had distinct, conflicting identities and moral convictions, yet when forced into the role of refugees their survival tactics overlapped to a remarkable degree.

In its review of the performance, the *Jüdische Wochenschau* remarked on the unlikely pair formed by Jacobowsky and Colonel Stjerbinsky: “zwei Extreme, wie man sie verschiedener auf der Welt nicht finden kann, sind an ein

¹¹⁴³ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 22, PWJA VI j) 358.

gemeinsames Schicksal gekettet!“¹¹⁴⁴ Stjerbinsky and Jacobowsky will always be distinct, perhaps even conflicting figures, but their “gemeinsames Schicksal“ causes them to approximate each other to an extent. For a time, they are able to overcome their differences and work together against the Nazi menace. Stjerbinsky and Jacobowsky exemplify both the moral message of Werfel’s drama as well as the FDB’s purpose as an ensemble.¹¹⁴⁵

The communist *Freies Wort*, successor to the *Volksblatt*, judged Stjerbinsky more harshly, putting him on the same level as the Nazis themselves: “die Stjerbinskys waren nur schlecht: sechs Millionen toter, gemordeter, vergaster, vertriebener Jacobowskys beweisen es.“¹¹⁴⁶ In contradiction to the *Freies Wort*’s review, Stjerbinsky is no Nazi. Werfel clearly distinguishes between the Polish colonel and the real Nazis in the drama, who arrest innocent people, separate families, open fire indiscriminately on civilians, and purposefully lay the groundwork for genocide. Stjerbinsky, on the other hand, has fought for Poland, France, and soon will fight for England as well. He begins the drama as a potentially violent anti-Semite, but undergoes a profound transformation as a refugee and is instrumental in Jacobowsky’s escape. So different when they first meet, their flight from the Nazis forces Jacobowsky and Stjerbinsky to work together. Stjerbinsky drives the getaway car, which is fundamental because Jacobowsky cannot drive, and by introducing him to Marianne, indirectly lifts Jacobowsky’s spirits and inspires him to bravery: “Frauensönheit macht leicht

¹¹⁴⁴ “*Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 2, 1945.

¹¹⁴⁵ “Franz Werfels *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Freies Wort*, November 1945.

¹¹⁴⁶ “Franz Werfels *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Freies Wort*, November 1945.

einen Zivilisten zum Helden.”¹¹⁴⁷ Finally, Stjerbinsky demonstrates his gratitude and respect for Jacobowsky when he saves the life of his “Kamerad im Kampf” in St. Jean de Luz.¹¹⁴⁸

As its title implies, both Jacobowsky and Colonel Stjerbinsky are essential to Werfel’s drama. Although Jacobowsky’s identity as a Jew stands in the foreground, Werfel also calls attention to Stjerbinsky’s Catholicism. Throughout the drama, the colonel’s great luck is associated with his rosary.¹¹⁴⁹ Jacobowsky’s cooperation with Stjerbinsky represents the fruition of Werfel’s wish for a partnership between Christianity and Judaism, symbolized by the Ewige Jude and the Heiliger Franziskus peddling their tandem bicycle. As the Holy Franziskus and Eternal Jew put it themselves: “Gott hat uns geschaffen in seiner herrlichen Natur zu Brüdern und Schwestern und zu Leib und Wonne und nicht zum herzlosen Nationalstolz. [...] Oh wir sind ein Herz und eine Seele!”¹¹⁵⁰ The Holy Franziskus and Eternal Jew convey the FDB’s rejection of nationalism in favor of inclusion and integration. In his article “Dichter Sterben,” published on Werfel’s death in 1945, Jacob notes that like Bistritzky and Aialti, “Je mehr die Zeit in Untat und Blut zu versinken droht, umso stärker wird das religiöse Element in Werfels Dichtung.”¹¹⁵¹ Werfel’s emphasis on religion does not erase differences but, unlike Bistritzky and Aialti, he does advocate reconciliation: “Jüdisches und

¹¹⁴⁷ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 28, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁴⁸ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 50, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁴⁹ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 17, PWJA VI j) 358; Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 8, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁵⁰ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 33, PWJA VI j) 358.

¹¹⁵¹ “Dichter sterben,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 29, 1945.

Katholisches reicht sich dabei merkwürdig – oder auch gar nicht merkwürdig! – die Hand.¹¹⁵² Werfel's appeal for religious tolerance was a model for the FDB, which offered emigrants an institution founded neither on German nationalism nor Zionism, which can be viewed as Jewish nationalism. In a collective letter to the Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, the entire FDB ensemble declared that:

jüdische und nichtjüdische Kollegen in unserem kleinen Ensemble sich bis zum letzten die Treue wahren und halten. Wir sind stolz, auf diesem kleinen Fleckchen Erde einen ganz kleinen künstlerischen Betrieb zu besitzen, in dem „rassische“ und religiöse Vorurteile keine Rollen spielen, sondern in dem gleich gesonnene deutschsprachige Schauspieler als Schauspieler zusammenarbeiten.¹¹⁵³

The crisis of June, 1940, Jacobowsky argues, was partly caused by the world's indifference to Nazi crimes against human rights. Instead of showing apathy and acting opportunistically, the Allies should have been indignant. Less than six months after WWII had ended, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* perceived in Jacobowsky's monologue a set of moral guideposts for the postwar period. According to the *Tageblatt*, Werfel's "Weltfreundschaft und Weltwissen, dessen Menschenliebe und Menschenverstehen" is a model for the world to follow as it seeks to regain its way and prevent such crimes against humanity from recurring.¹¹⁵⁴ The *Tageblatt* claims that in the conclusion to *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* Werfel shows spectators the "einzig mögliche Brücke des Zusammenkommens [...], die alle Menschen guten Willens beschreiten müssen, soll die Welt nicht zerstört werden: Achtung vor dem Leben und der Würde aller

¹¹⁵² "Dichter sterben," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 29, 1945.

¹¹⁵³ FDB Ensemble to Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft, August 12, 1943, PWJA Korrespondenz 1943.

¹¹⁵⁴ "Dichter sterben," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 29, 1945.

Menschen!“¹¹⁵⁵ In the spirit of the FDB’s own political convictions, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* is an appeal for human rights and respect for diversity. On other hand, less than year after the end of WWII and in the immediate aftermath of the Shoah, Werfel’s message might be overly optimistic.

The *Jüdische Wochenschau* and the *Freies Wort* qualified Werfel’s message of universal respect to favor or exclude certain groups. The *Wochenschau* had nothing but praise for the drama, commending Werfel especially for infusing the tragedy of WWII with “eine schmerzlicherere Note, einen den schweren Alldruck fast lösenden Humor.”¹¹⁵⁶ It describes Werfel’s talents in terms neither universal nor individual, but exclusive, insisting that the drama’s remarkable sense of humor and shifts in tone reflect a “wunderbare spezifisch jüdische Gabe.”¹¹⁵⁷ The *Wochenschau* also describes Werfel’s depiction of human sufferings under Nazi aggression in exclusively Jewish terms: “dessen wichtige Anklage gegen die Teilnahmslosigkeit der Welt gegenüber der jüdischen Not aber das Herz erbeben machte!”¹¹⁵⁸ Werfel’s protagonist is a Jew, but there are many gentile civilians in the drama—including the Tragic Man, the Intellectual, Ginette, and the Holy Franziskus—who are on the run from the Nazis. By giving several of these characters descriptive, as opposed to proper names, Werfel signals their broad representation of the civilian population.

¹¹⁵⁵ “Franz Werfel und sein letztes Werk,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 21, 1945.

¹¹⁵⁶ “*Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 2, 1945.

¹¹⁵⁷ “*Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 2, 1945.

¹¹⁵⁸ “*Jacobowsky und der Oberst*,” *Jüdische Wochenschau*, October 2, 1945.

Additionally, when the Nazis arrest patrons at the Café Mole, they make no distinctions among Jews, French citizens, and foreigners.

The *Freies Wort* printed a critical review. The beginning of the review partially explains the paper's tone: "Die Geschehnisse, die uns der Autor vor Augen führt, sind noch allzu gegenwärtig."¹¹⁵⁹ The *Freies Wort* anticipates future critics by protesting against the improbability of Jacobowsky's flight: "So ,clever' waren die sechs Millionen gemordeter Jacobowskys leider – nicht."¹¹⁶⁰ Both of the main characters do escape from France, so it may initially appear to be possible to interpret the drama as contradictory to historical events. Yet a closer reading of the drama reveals that the plot is more realistic. In *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* the Nazis arrest far more characters than they overlook, such as the many guests at Marianne's hotel and dozens of people in the Café Mole. Furthermore, the seventeen suicides represent the many refugees who died trying to escape, compared to only two—Jacobowsky and Stjerbinsky—who are able to flee to safety. It is also historical fact that while many refugees did not make it out of France, others did, including Werfel himself and hundreds of spectators in the Casal de Catalunya.

5.6 Jacobowsky's Ghost

The FDB's performance of *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* had a broad echo, and bore lasting effects on professional and personal levels. The performance of September 22, 1945, which was later discussed in newspapers in Basel, New

¹¹⁵⁹ "Franz Werfels *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*," *Freies Wort*, November 1945.

¹¹⁶⁰ "Franz Werfels *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*," *Freies Wort*, November 1945.

York, and Frankfurt, brought international recognition to the Freie Deutsche Bühne, which featured guest performances by Ernst Deutsch, Ellen Schwanneke, Hans Moser, and Viktor de Kowa in the 1940s.¹¹⁶¹ Encouraged by the stage's growing fame, Jacob made an effort to draw theatergoers from both German colonies to the FDB, however hostilities between the *neue* and *alte Kolonien* proved unrelenting. Jacob also encountered resistance among members of the *neue Kolonie*, many of whom did not approve of his new strategy. Frustrated by these setbacks, Jacob decided to return to Germany. His accomplishments in Buenos Aires had made him a well known figure in the German theater world, and he gained a position as general director (Generalintendant) at the Städtische Bühnen Dortmund in 1950. Yet he remained linked to the role of Jacobowsky, partly because one of Dortmund's reasons for hiring him was his experiences as an emigrant.

The "Seelenverwandtschaft" between Paul Walter Jacob and S.L. Jacobowsky endured for decades after the 1945 production.¹¹⁶² In 1947, two years after the FDB's premiere of Werfel's drama, the emigrant magazine *MMM*, ran an article on Jacob entitled, "Paul Walter Jacob-owsky."¹¹⁶³ Marvin Carlson's neologism, "ghosting," describes how actors can become trapped in certain roles by their audiences' memories.¹¹⁶⁴ Since his role as Jacobowsky so closely overlapped his real life, Jacob was associated with this role both on and off stage.

¹¹⁶¹ "Theaterrundschau," *Basler Nationalzeitung*, March 6, 1948; "185 Premieren in 8 Jahren," *Aufbau*, April 16, 1948; "Deutsches Theater in Argentinien," *Main Post*, June 1, 1948.

¹¹⁶² "Jacobowsky und der Oberst," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, September 21, 1945.

¹¹⁶³ "Paul Walter Jacob-owsky," *MMM*, March, 1947.

¹¹⁶⁴ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 7.

Many of his closest friends henceforth addressed their letters to “Lieber Jacobowsky.”¹¹⁶⁵ Others included references to the play when talking about their personal lives: “Lieber Jacobowsky, das ist doch gut – dachte ich mehrfach, als ich dieser Tage erwog: Kriege ich nun die landesübliche Lungenentzündung oder kriege ich sie nicht? (kriege ich sie, dann gibt es zwei Möglichkeiten...).”¹¹⁶⁶ When the Dortmund theater performed *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* in 1960, a review in the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* described Jacob’s performance in biographical terms: “Es gibt eine Kurve des Kummers, die so hoch getrieben worden ist, daß später nichts Schlimmeres mehr kommen kann. Davon hat Jacob, der sich im Rampenlicht gleichsam privat gibt, das Entscheidende eingefangen, und deshalb wirkt er – und mit ihm der ganze Abend – so sehr liebenswert.”¹¹⁶⁷ In *Performing History* Freddie Rokem observes that in historical plays ghostly figures from the historical past can reappear on the stage in theatrical performances.¹¹⁶⁸ The actors performing such historical figures are in a sense repeating history, prolonging and deepening its resonance in the present. Playing Jacobowsky for decades, Jacob repeated a history that was his own life’s story. Jacob performed the historical event of a refugee’s flight from France on stage yet, ghosted by his role inside and outside of theater, he was also accentuating his past experiences as an emigrant in his real life to a high, perhaps inappropriate degree.

¹¹⁶⁵ Fritz Busch to Jacobowsky, January 28, 1946, PWJA Korrespondenz 1946.

¹¹⁶⁶ Jacob to Fränkel, December 28, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹¹⁶⁷ Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 197.

¹¹⁶⁸ Freddie Rokem, *Performing History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 6.

Jacob returned to Germany for good in 1951, after playing in both Buenos Aires and Dortmund during the 1950 season. In addition to his duties as general director in Dortmund, he also founded the city's children's theater program (which had 6,000 season-ticket holders by its second year), launched a successful career on German television, participated in various international artist exchanges, and performed on stages across Europe, including Barcelona, Lisbon, Nice, Antwerp, and Vienna. In Europe Jacob enjoyed more artistic freedom and disposed of greater resources than in Buenos Aires, and he also earned more money. Yet numerous letters in his archive indicate that he never felt truly at home in postwar Germany. Jacob, like so many exiles, returned to Germany to find that the home he had known before 1933 no longer existed. His experiences reflect Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's provocative statement: "Heimat ist das Entronnensein."¹¹⁶⁹ As the Frankfurt director Imo Wilimzig puts it: "Die daraus resultierende nie ganz zu überwindende menschliche Nicht-Nähe blieb – auch bei mancher Vertrautheit - stets spürbar."¹¹⁷⁰ Neither in Dortmund nor anywhere else could Jacob recreate community of exiled thespians and theatergoers that the FDB had forged in Buenos Aires during the 1940's. It is worth embellishing on Jacques Arndt's statement about the sense of community evoked by the FDB's 1945 performance in Buenos Aires. In Buenos Aires, Arndt said, *Jacobowsky* was played by Jacobowskies for Jacobowskies, "ein einmaliges,

¹¹⁶⁹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1986), 86, in Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben*, 33.

¹¹⁷⁰ Naumann, *Ein Theatermann*, 227.

ganz besonderes Gefühl von Solidarität, ja Zusammengehörigkeit.”¹¹⁷¹ As he grew older Jacob consistently requested the role of Jacobowsky for guest performances, and also tried on numerous occasions to return to the renamed Deutsche Bühne in Buenos Aires. He seems to have sought a way to recapture this sense of community which, like his youthful home, he had lost.¹¹⁷² In a draft for a lecture, Jacob gives voice to this sense of nostalgia: “für mich persönlich waren das Jahre, von denen ich erst viel, viel später erkannt habe, daß es auch die Hochjahre meines Berufs waren. So, Direktoren und Kollegen, bin ich nie wieder gewesen wie damals mit diesen Leuten, mit denen mich gesinnungsmäßig, ja, ich möchte fast sagen, existenzmäßig, nahrungsmäßig, wir waren zusammen auf Gedeih und Verderb.”¹¹⁷³ Turning his attention to specific performances, Jacob recalls, “*Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, was ich ja kaum hier besetzen konnte, entschuldigen Sie, das soll kein Werturteil sein, aber [...] daß wir das zusammengebracht haben, das war doch ein Wunder, aber wochenlang hat nicht nur die deutsche Kolonie, sondern Buenos Aires von dieser Aufführung gesprochen.”¹¹⁷⁴ Reading Jacob’s memoirs, one is reminded once more of his most famous role: “Es ist mein dürftiger Dank an das Schicksal, das die schrecklichsten Tage meines Lebens zu den schönsten Tagen meines Lebens macht.”¹¹⁷⁵ Jacob’s comments are likely tinged by nostalgia. His ten years of exile

¹¹⁷¹ Arndt, interview, December 25, 2008.

¹¹⁷² Jacob to Bodenstein, August 8, 1963, PWJA Korrespondenz 1963.

¹¹⁷³ PWJA VIII c) 455.

¹¹⁷⁴ PWJA VIII c) 455.

¹¹⁷⁵ Soufflierbuch, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, 31, PWJA VI j) 358.

in Buenos Aires were very turbulent, characterized by tension, feuding, and family tragedy, as well as success. Nonetheless, as time passed Jacob appears to have grown increasingly certain that, at least for him, the Freie Deutsche Bühne represented a community and an achievement which he could not repeat.

CHAPTER VI

HERITAGE, VOLK AND NAZISM AT THE DEUTSCHES THEATER

1. Constituting a Community of German Nationalists: Comedies at the Ney-Bühne, 1938-1942

Having been a professor at the Folkwangschule in Essen and director of an traveling stage under the auspices of the Strength through Joy Organization in Germany, Ludwig Ney's Deutsche Kleinkunstbühne gave its first performance in Buenos Aires on May 19, 1938.¹¹⁷⁶ Ney would continue to be a prominent presence on the stages of German Buenos Aires for the next thirty-four years. Within months after their first performance, the Deutsche Kleinkunstbühne was playing to crowds at 400-seat auditoriums in German neighborhoods throughout Buenos Aires and also began staging numerous guest performances further up the Rio Paraná and throughout Buenos Aires province.¹¹⁷⁷ Ney's ensemble was a blend of professional and amateur actors, which began by playing variety shows of skits, music, and dance in the late 1930s. Within three years the group, which newspapers began referring to either as the Deutsches Theater or the Deutsches Theater in Argentinien, had developed into a serious theater ensemble capable of staging polished productions of the German Classics.

¹¹⁷⁶ "Deutsche Kleinkunstbühne Ludwig Ney," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, Juni 1938.

¹¹⁷⁷ "Theaterabend der O.-G.V Ballester," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, November 1938. Buenos Aires is the name of both the capital city and largest province of Argentina in terms of size and population. The province of Buenos Aires has an area of 307,571 km².

Unlike the Freie Deutsche Bühne, Ney's group did not have to rush from one performance to the next in a constant hurry to prepare productions. Ney's stage produced approximately seven plays per season, each of them performed two to four times in the capital, and then several more times in the province and sometimes further a field.¹¹⁷⁸ This gave Ney's ensemble far more time to prepare pieces for performance, which was important because some of his ensemble were not professional actors. As a former professor in the theater department at the Folkwangschule in Essen, Ney was well-prepared to train younger actors. He also had the luxury of holding six rehearsals per week, normally beginning three to four weeks in advance of the premiere, which allowed actors to practice their roles in detail.¹¹⁷⁹ With ample time for rehearsals, and much experience teaching young actors, it is likely that the Deutsches Theater's performances achieved a high quality. While prices were very reasonable in the first seasons, by 1943 tickets cost from 10 to 22.50 pesos. This was not cheap, considering that wages at the FDB were 120 pesos monthly.¹¹⁸⁰

In this section I discuss comedies at the Deutsches Theater, also called the Ney-Bühne, from 1938-1944. For German nationalists in Argentina, theater was inextricably linked to National Socialist visions of German identity, and comedies were no exception. In its Spanish supplement, the *La Plata Zeitung* claimed that for all Germans—including those living abroad—artistic expression was intrinsic

¹¹⁷⁸ Deutsches Theater, "Deutsche La Plata Zeitung," February 28, 1943.

¹¹⁷⁹ "Große Vorbereitungen im Freilichttheater der Ney-Bühne," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 28, 1941; Egon Straube, "Ein Schauspieler spricht," *Die Brücke* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Mercur, 1942); "Schauspielproben," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1943.

¹¹⁸⁰ "Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 2, 1943

to nationhood.¹¹⁸¹ Though the German nationalist population was many thousands of miles removed from its *Vaterland*, its theater conveyed an unflinching loyalty to Nazi Germany. Comedies aimed to provide the *alte Kolonie* with hours of cheerful entertainment, which became increasingly urgent as the war turned against Germany. Performances of comedies never failed to buttress nationalist Germans' identification and enthusiasm for National Socialist ideology. Ney's productions and writings evince his support of Nazism, including the *Führerkult*, military expansionism, and the Blood and Soil ideology. While his exaltation of Nazi visions of German culture and heritage is quite clear, Ney is less blatant about anti-Semitism. He denounces theater of the Weimer Republic and inveighs against intellectuals and theater entrepreneurs without explicitly naming Jews, although it appears very likely that he has Jews in mind. Ludwig Ney's position regarding anti-Semitism is an area which I need to investigate further. I am not certain that I have sufficient evidence to make a firm judgment on this issue at this time.

In an article published in *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* in June of 1941, Ney deploys anecdotal evidence to advocate his conviction that the Nazi government was ideally suited to support and cultivate the arts. Ney begins by expressing frustration with the "irrigende Ansicht, der totalitäre Staat lähme oder behindere die freie Entfaltung der Persönlichkeit in künstlerischer, kultureller Beziehung."¹¹⁸² Grand accomplishments by artists loyal to the Nazi regime should already have rendered this unnecessary, Ney argues, but he would like to share

¹¹⁸¹ "Edición Castellano," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 28, 1940.

¹¹⁸² "Geschichte einer jungen Schauspielschule," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1941.

the story of a smaller, modest thespian which irrefutably demonstrates how, especially in a totalitarian government, state authorities can foster the development of young artists. Ney tells the story of an actor who, determined to teach his profession to younger aspiring thespians, opened an acting school in the backroom of a friend's restaurant. The studio was humble and poor, but "unverfälscht und von Schaden rein," and eventually its students began to land roles in local city theaters, pass state exams, and attract the attention of some members of the Berlin theater world. Then, just as it had begun to show promise, the restaurant owner decided to move to the distant East Prussian town of Memel. The new owner was not interested in art, so the fledgling studio was left in the lurch. Normally the school would have been lost, Neys claims, but in this case it was saved because in Nazi Germany there existed a Reich Theater Chamber, which "das gesamte künstlerische Leben auf dem Gebiete des Theaters überwacht und leitet, die auch auf die scheinbar unwesentlichsten Dinge ihr wachsames Auge gerichtet hält."¹¹⁸³ Thus the president of the Reich Theater Chamber placed one of his organization's smaller stages at the disposal of the studio. The school grew, staging modest but regular productions of lesser-known authors. Its youthful actors have since launched careers that have taken them to prestigious theaters in Vienna, Munich, and Königsberg.

The moral of the story, Ney explains, is that "gerade im neuen Reich künstlerischer Wille und Persönlichkeit weites Arbeitsfeld und Entfaltung finden. Sie zeigt, wie der rechte Mann an den rechten Platz kommt und wie die führenden Stellen bis ins Kleinste von der ihnen verliehenen Macht einen fördernden

¹¹⁸³ "Geschichte einer jungen Schauspielschule," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1941.

Gebrauch machen.“¹¹⁸⁴ It is quite likely that Ney himself believed he himself was the right person at the right time when he gained the backing of the Strength through Joy organization in Buenos Aires. It is even possible that his story is loosely autobiographical. What is certain, however, is that Ludwig Ney believed very strongly that Nazism was a boon to artists at all levels. He felt it incumbent upon himself to ensure that all performances by the Deutsches Theater, including simple comedies in the most remote corners of rural German Argentina, should support the Nazi government’s efforts to create a loyal community of German nationalists in Argentina. Throughout its existence, from 1938-1945, even the lightest dramatic fare at the Ney-Bühne was deliberately crafted to serve this aim.

Ludwig Ney selected comedies exclusively by German playwrights, nearly all of which were frequently performed in Germany after 1933.¹¹⁸⁵ The Deutsches Theater shaped its repertoire with special consideration for the *alte Kolonie*’s condition as Germans living abroad. A major objective during the stage’s first years of performances was to renew nationalist Germans’ urge to achieve a sense of identity and community through cultural events, such as theatrical performances. As Albert Haigis stated in *Die Brücke* in 1942, it is not possible for a theater to exist without the creation of a community: “Die Kunst des Theaters ist von allen Künsten diejenige, welche völlig auf den Begriff der Gemeinschaft angewiesen ist.“¹¹⁸⁶ Ney believed that the impulse to participate, as

¹¹⁸⁴ “Geschichte einer jungen Schauspielschule,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1941.

¹¹⁸⁵ Many of these plays are quite obscure and are present in just one or two libraries worldwide. I have not been able to access the plays I discuss in these pages.

¹¹⁸⁶ Albert Haigis, “Unser deutsches Theater,” *Die Brücke* (1942).

audience or actors, in theatrical productions was intrinsic to the German people, but was concerned that the many years Germans in Argentina had spent outside of Germany had alienated them from this urge. In an essay in the *Deutsche in Argentinien* he put it this way:

Verpflichtend und gemeint ist, hier einzig und allein ein weit höheres, das ideale Bedürfnis, das sich aus dem unbewussten, dem Einzelnen vielleicht unbekanntem Erlebnis und Kulturbedürfnis der Gesamtheit herleitet. Dieses ideale, über dem Verlangen des Einzelnen liegende Bedürfnis ist durch das jahrelange Leben in fremder Umwelt oft derart verschüttet, dass viele sein Vorhandensein nicht mehr empfinden und mit ihm in einer scheinbaren Gegnerschaft leben. Man könnte diesen Zustand ein wegräumbares Unverständnis nennen. ¹¹⁸⁷

Germans' risk of losing their cultural appetite in Buenos Aires was acute, Ney argued, because there had never been a local German language theater in Buenos Aires. Sporadic guest performances—the most recent in 1934—could not fill the void of a permanent local theater. Writing for the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* in 1943, Wilhelm Lütge, who had just a few years earlier argued that it would be impossible for a permanent theater to exist in German Buenos Aires, ¹¹⁸⁸ reflected on the challenges Ney's group had overcome:

Es fehlt manchem an den rechten Maßstäben dafür, was im Rahmen der deutschen Gemeinschaft in Buenos Aires und mit den vorhandenen Mitteln geleistet werden kann; das Gefühl der Verbundenheit mit der deutschen Bühne am Ort muss sich erst allmählich entwickeln. Wenn man an diese Schwierigkeiten denkt, ist es erstaunlich, was geleistet worden ist: Immer mehr kulturbewusste Menschen unter uns empfinden das Deutsche Theater als „unsre“ Bühne und besuchen seine Veranstaltungen mit innerer Bereitschaft zu gemeinsamem Erlebnis. ¹¹⁸⁹

¹¹⁸⁷ “Das Programm unserer Ney-Bühne,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, January, 1941.

¹¹⁸⁸ Keiper, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, 29.

¹¹⁸⁹ “Das deutsche Theater in der Spielzeit 1942,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1943).

As Lütge states above, the Deutsches Theater had to establish itself gradually. Ney believed comedies with especially strong links to the German homeland could rekindle *bonarense* Germans' collective proclivity for cultural events. He thus chose comedies based on both their humor as well as their capacity reinforce the *alte Kolonie's* collective identity by emphasizing its common heritage and links to the German *Vaterland*. Plays about rural life in German, or *Bauernstücke*, were particularly suited to this purpose. Nationalist German media regarded these plays as so evocative of German landscapes and customs that they referred to them as *Heimatspiele*. Ney argued that, in addition to being very funny, the genuine German "Bauernblut" which courses through the work of dramatists such as August Hinrichs "vertretet das urwüchsige Element im Ganzen."¹¹⁹⁰

Fundamental to this common denominator of cultural and racial heritage was the strong connection between German farmers and their land, recalling the National Socialist propagandistic mantra of Blood und Soil. Ney made clear that he shared the Nazi ideology of Blood and Soil, but how far he goes with respect to blood is not certain. One more time I would like to point out that Ney's anti-Semitism is somewhat less open than his support of Nazism in general.

The Ney-Bühne often traveled far beyond the capital city to perform for German farming communities in the Argentine interior. In such settings, German *Bauernstücke* were remarkably congruous with the local environs and public. Even within the city limits of Buenos Aires, however, the vast natural setting at the Strength through Joy park at Punta Chica, with its open fields, glades, creeks, large pond, and direct access to the River Plate offered the Ney-Bühne a plethora

¹¹⁹⁰ "Die Ney-Bühne spielt *Alles für Katz*" *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, April, 1940.

of possibilities to recreate pastoral German environments. It is also worth noting that, with the exception of the occasional palm tree, the vegetation of the River Plate region resembles German landscapes more closely than other regions in South America. It was far more tenable to suggest a rural German setting for a theatrical performance at Punta Chica than it would have been in other areas with large German populations, such as in Santa Catarina, Brazil. Ney and his ensemble capitalized on these fortuitous conditions to stage several plays, such as August Hinrichs' *Alles für die Katz* and *Wenn der Hahn kräht*, which were set in farming communities in northern Germany.

Reviewers in Buenos Aires saw in Hinrichs' *Wenn der Hahn kräht* a portrayal of the timeless virtues of the German *Volk*. In contrast to corrupted modern city dwellers—including many members of the *alte Kolonie*—who have been alienated from their true *völkisch* identity, Hinrichs' villagers are “Menschen, die aus deutscher Erde stammen, die gerade und ehrlich zu leben wissen, die gesund und klarblickend handeln und im jeden Zuge treue Abbilder deutschen Volkstums sind.”¹¹⁹¹ Shielded from the corrosive effects of modernity and multiculturalism, the German farmers in this drama have not lost touch with their ancestry. For this reason they live and act like “echte deutsche Menschen [...]so wie es seit tausenden von Jahren war: lebensfroh, stark und unbändig, ohne einen Zug von Schwäche oder krauthafter Überfeinerung.”¹¹⁹² Hinrichs' figures represented a “Spiegel” of cultural purity for Germans in Buenos Aires to emulate in their urban, foreign, and thus potentially contaminating environment.

¹¹⁹¹ “*Wenn der Hahn kräht*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 8, 1940.

¹¹⁹² “*Wenn der Hahn kräht*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 8, 1940.

Open-air productions in Argentina corresponded to popular outdoor theater performances in Nazi Germany, which often also emphasized the benefit of returning to a rural environment, even if only temporarily. According to nationalist press organs, performances of the play, staged outdoors at the Punta Chica park, offered Germans in Buenos Aires a means of escaping both city and foreign country alike. The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* noted that the scenic setting enabled German nationalists in Buenos Aires to approximate their model countrymen: “Unter den großen Bäumen des Parkes wird man sich dem Wesen dieser Menschen und ihrer Naturnähe besonders vertraut fühlen.”¹¹⁹³ The open-air performance physically removed the audience from the crowded city, where they existed immersed among Argentines, and brought them to an exclusive, shielded place where, behind the gates which sealed the park off from the Argentine public, they were isolated from foreign influences. Furthermore, inspired by the spectacle of a performance of authentically German culture, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* went so far as to argue that during the performance members of the *alte Kolonie* could even return to the Vaterland. Playing on the work’s title, the magazine’s preview stated: “Wenn der Hahn kräht“ werden wir über den Ozean getragen in eine heimatliche Gegend, wo ebensolche große Weiden stehen, wo ebensolche strohgedeckte Bauernhäuser, ein Wasserarm im Stillen träumt, und deutsche Menschen ihr bäuerliches Dasein leben.”¹¹⁹⁴ By removing the *alte Kolonie* from the urban Argentine capital and transporting it to an idyllic agricultural community in the *Heimat*, productions of *Bauernstücke* resonated

¹¹⁹³ “Unser ‚Kraft durch Freude‘ Park,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December 1940.

¹¹⁹⁴ “Wenn der Hahn kräht,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, September, 1940.

with Nazi Blood and Soil ideology. These performances fostered German cultural renewal and temporarily isolated German nationalists from corrupting foreign influences.

This agenda pertained to audience, performers, and even theater itself. Implying a contrast with the elaborate props and stage designs of theater productions characteristic of theater during the Weimar Republic, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* posited open-air performances as a proving ground, or “Prüfstein,” for Ney and his ensemble. Their success in this natural setting demonstrated that the ensemble of the Deutsches Theater was composed of true artists capable of creating theater self-sufficiently, i.e. they were not pseudoespians, who “nur in der künstlichen, gemachten Umwelt des Kulissenzaubers ein Scheinleben vortäuschen können.”¹¹⁹⁵ Performances at the Punta Chica venue served to break with the avant-garde style of theater in the Weimar Republic and to keep the *alte Kolonie* current with cultural developments in distant Germany. As Ludwig Ney put it, the Deutsches Theater presented contemporary German drama to supporters of National Socialism in Argentina “damit die Gemeinschaft des Publikums sich ihrerseits das neue geistige Gut der Heimat erschließe.”¹¹⁹⁶ The *La Plata Zeitung* enthusiastically reported that the “Freilichtspiel,” which had gained great popularity in Nazi Germany, would now finally gain representation on the River Plate, where “die langen Sommerabende eine solche Entfaltung eigentlich als etwas Selbstverständliches erscheinen lassen.”¹¹⁹⁷ With reference to

¹¹⁹⁵ “Wenn der Hahn kräht,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December, 1940.

¹¹⁹⁶ Ludwig Ney, “Wachsen und Werden des Deutschen Theaters,” *Die Brücke* (1942).

climate, one could argue that Buenos Aires was particularly suitable for outdoor theater performances.

It was not only the long and warm summer nights in Buenos Aires which rendered *Bauernstücke* and open-air theater opportune for the Southern Cone. Of the estimated 240, 000 German-speakers living in Argentina in the 1930s, less than half resided in the nation's capital. A great many of them were farmers who cultivated plots of land the Argentine government had granted them in far flung corners of the country. These settlers lived in small villages in near complete isolation from the Argentine capital, not to mention the German and European culture. Nazi authorities prioritized cohesion among geographically disparate German communities in Argentina, so the Stength through Joy organization funded expeditions by the Deutsches Theater to play to German colonies in rural regions of the country.

It was difficult, however, to select dramas appropriate for this very particular audience. The German embassy and the Labor Front emphasized the utility of cultural productions to keep even the most isolated Germans in Argentina in sync with sociopolitical changes in the "neues Deutschland." There was, thus, a need to perform contemporary, post-1933 dramas in Argentina. In agricultural settlements this presented numerous challenges. Some of the most successful artists of the day, such as Curt Goetz, would be inaccessible to German farmers in Entre Rios, because Goetz' society comedies (*Gesellschaftskomödien*) relied on a basic familiarity with contemporary urban life which was utterly lacking in these areas. Other popular works in Nazi Germany, such as Hanns

¹¹⁹⁷ "Wenn der Hahn kräht," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 10, 1940.

Johst's *Schlageter*, demanded an infrastructure and technological sophistication which rendered their production impossible in rural Argentina.

Hinrichs' *Bauernstücke*, on the other hand, were an ideal genre for such communities. The Ney-Bühne's productions of these plays manifested the Nazis' paradoxical fusion of an anti-urban message with a highly modern propaganda machine. The characters, settings, and themes portrayed in Hinrichs' recently published plays, *Alles für die Katz* and *Wenn der Hahn kräht*, were drawn from the same milieu as German immigrant farmers in Entre Rios, and presented issues with which they were familiar, despite their isolation. Another important consideration was the relatively modest requirements for performing these plays. Ney and his ensemble could bring most of the props they needed with them on boats so that, once arrived, they could improvise according to whatever conditions awaited them. In March of 1940 the Deutsches Theater traveled to Brazo Largo, a German farming settlement located in the state of Entre Rios over 100 kilometers up the Rio Paraná from Buenos Aires. Brazo Largo was populated by farmers who lived in primitive conditions with very basic infrastructure. When the group arrived at the settlement, they found that recent flooding in the area had washed away much of the facility where Ney had planned to stage the next evening's performance. Since there was no other suitable structure for miles around, the production ensemble had to be held outdoors. Local residents and ensemble pooled their efforts to construct a raised platform for the performance and then hastily built simple benches for the audience. The following evening, as the *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, reported:

...die Vorstellung begann. Von Petroleumlampen und Vollmond freundlich beleuchtet entstand hier auf den Islas Ipicui ein Stück nordischer Heimat. August Hinrichs, der aus der Tiefe der Volkseele humorvoll zu schöpfen weiß, sprach durch diese wundervolle Aufführung der Ney-Bühne in einer argentinischen Mondnacht zu deutschen Volksgenossen, die abgeschnitten und einsam hier draußen leben, und von denen viele eine ganze Tagesreise weit zu dieser Aufführung gekommen waren. Dieser Abend gab Zuschauern und Darstellern ein wunderschönes Erlebnis tätiger Volksgemeinschaft.¹¹⁹⁸

The improvised production of *Alles für die Katz* in Brazo Largo demonstrates how Nazi organizations used theatrical performances as community-building events.

The production brought together German settlers from across Entre Rios province—many of whom otherwise probably never would have met—for a function contrived to sow and spread National Socialist ideology among them.

The promise of German theater drew farmers from far and wide and, because nearly all of them actively collaborated on the project, the endeavor to inculcate settlers with National Socialist propaganda and consolidate their allegiance to Hitler's nationalist community was likely quite effective. In fact, as an event at once collaborative and entertaining, theater may well have been a more compelling form of propaganda than traditional speeches or party rallies.

Antifascist organizations in Argentina appear to have drawn similar conclusions. The open-air performances by the Ney-Bühne did not go unnoticed by antifascists, who were concerned that the German embassy might establish a so-called “fünfte Kolonne” in the states of Entre Rios or Misiones.¹¹⁹⁹ These groups regarded the Ney-Bühne's *Freilichtspiele*, which attracted approximately

¹¹⁹⁸ “*Alles für die Katz* von August Hinrichs in Brazo Largo,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, April, 1940.

¹¹⁹⁹ See chapter one, parts 2 and 4.

2,000 spectators, with suspicion. Many Argentine and German antifascists perceived the large gatherings of nationalist Germans to be a threat. During the Ney-Bühne's performance of *Wenn der Hahn kräht* at the Punta Chica park, Strength through Joy officials were surprised when municipal police and civil authorities appeared, insisted upon viewing the performance, and then interrogated the event organizers and members of the ensemble about the purpose of their production. Just a few days later, the municipality ordered Strength through Joy to shut down its facilities at Punta Chica. Only after many weeks of interviews with local police and government officials was Strength through Joy granted permission to reopen the park. The incident was discussed at length in the *La Plata Zeitung* and the *Deutsche in Argentinien*, which complained bitterly and at length about their enemies, who set "Himmel und Hölle in Bewegung [...], um uns Auslandsdeutsche als 5. Kolonne zu defamieren."¹²⁰⁰ As the war continued and expanded, the nationalist German population in Argentina felt itself to be increasingly besieged by the "feigen Haß" of its adversaries, who the *alte Kolonie* believed used their influence in the media and among government officials to attempt to orchestrate government action against nationalist Germans. At the same time as it threatened that its enemies' actions would not go unpunished, the German nationalist press in Argentina also exhorted its readers "dem argentinischen Volke und seinen Behörden unverdrossen und immer wieder zu zeigen, dass wir nichts, aber auch gar nichts zu verbergen haben und uns den argentinischen Gesetzen rückhaltlos als disziplinierte und selbstbewusste

¹²⁰⁰ "Unser KdF-Park in Punta Chica: Gewollte oder ungewollte Missverständnisse," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December, 1940.

Deutsche unterordnen.“¹²⁰¹ Ironically, members of the *alte Kolonie* pledged their obedience to Argentine law in the act of declaring themselves to be, first and foremost, Germans. Furthermore, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* cited that the most imperative reason to adhere to Argentine law was because: “es die Gesetze seines Gastlandes sind, die unter allen Umständen zu beachten sein Führer befiehlt.“¹²⁰² The *alte Kolonie* would submit to Argentine law and order, but nationalist German media organizations stated that it was their German identity and obedience to Adolf Hitler—not loyalty to Argentina—which was determinant in this commitment.

The criticism of antifascists in Argentina also had the result of bringing German nationalists closer together. As the *Deutsche in Argentinien* reflected shortly after the incident at Punta Chica: ”Der Deutsche in Argentinien ist—gerade weil man ihn in seinem Deutschtum schmählt und verletzt—desto mehr Deutscher.“¹²⁰³ Strength through Joy resolutely announced that it would not be intimidated, and that performances by the Ney-Bühne at Punta Chica would continue to play a key role in their competition against the antifascist German colony in Argentina: “Auf nach Punta Chica! In freier Luft am Wasser und in schöner Natur finden wir die heute zum Kampfe und Durchhalten so notwendige Kraft.“¹²⁰⁴ Confronted with antifascist pressure, the nationalist German

¹²⁰¹ “Unser KdF-Park in Punta Chica: Gewollte oder ungewollte Missverständnisse,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December, 1940.

¹²⁰² “Zum neuen Jahr,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, January, 1941.

¹²⁰³ “Zum neuen Jahr,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, January, 1941.

¹²⁰⁴ “Unser KdF-Park in Punta Chica: Gewollte oder ungewollte Missverständnisse,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, December, 1940.

population responded with defiance and closed ranks around its theater, exacerbating tensions between German antifascists and supporters of Nazism in Argentina.

Ney's ensemble played many other comedies in addition to the *Bauernstücke*, and here too it consistently chose pieces which promoted the National Socialist agenda in Argentina. The Deutsches Theater attempted to fulfill its audience's desire for lighthearted entertainment without entirely giving his repertoire over to farces and superficial "Lachnummern."¹²⁰⁵ The *Schwank*, for example, was anathema to Ludwig Ney, who lambasted the genre and its authors as "nichts weiter als eine mehr oder weniger geglückte Spekulation in komischen Situationen auf die Lachmuskulatur des Publikums. Inhalt, Handlung oder tieferer Sinn schien ihnen eine unnötige Belastung, die sich in Kassenrapport, in der Einnahmeziffer nicht bemerkbar machte."¹²⁰⁶ This indictment directed against the popular Jewish playwrights Oscar Blumenthal and Gustav Kadelburg bears its anti-Semitic intonations. Ludwig Ney and his supporters were uncompromising on this issue—the Deutsches Theater never once staged a piece written by a Jew.

The ensemble did, however, produce several very simple comedies, such as Maximilian Böttcher's *Krach im Hinterhaus*, but reviewers and performers alike grafted National Socialist messages onto these pieces. Böttcher's play is a light, lowbrow situation comedy set in the rear building of a Berlin tenement house. It features a middle-aged Berlin widow who, when her own daughter unintentionally incriminates her in the theft of a cockle stove, successfully takes

¹²⁰⁵ "An das Publikum," *Die Brücke* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Mercur, 1944).

¹²⁰⁶ "Krach im Hinterhaus," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1942.

matters into her own hands and uncovers the true culprit of the crime. Although Böttcher's play is a comedy of the simplest variety, the nationalist press hailed its author as an "Anwalt im Namen des Volkes."¹²⁰⁷ In addition to its raucous humor, reviewers argued that Böttcher's drama also advocated National Socialist values and justified the Nazi government's political agenda.

The *La Plata Zeitung* identified the matriarch of the play, Widow Bock, as a "Kriegswitwe."¹²⁰⁸ Despite the misleading utterances of her daughter, the previewer claimed that nationalist German theatergoers would instantly comprehend "dass dieser echten deutschen Frau ihre Ehre höher steht als ein alter Kachelofen."¹²⁰⁹ Böttcher portrays Nazi police, lawyers, and judges as just and capable, which they prove by granting Bock probation while simultaneously laying a successful trap for the actual thief, the miserly caretaker. The play ends with a marriage between the mailman's daughter and the young prosecuting attorney, which the *La Plata Zeitung* identified as representative of the "soziale Ausgleich" that National Socialist policy had achieved among different economic classes in the Germany. Their coarse Berliner accents—"das Volk redet so, wie es gewohnt ist"—authenticate the inhabitants of this crowded Berlin tenement, who represent emblematic members of the German proletariat in the National Socialist image: "Typen, die von Blut und Leben strotzen [...] Sinnbild der wahren deutschen Menschen, derb und kratzbürstig nach außen, aber im Innern

¹²⁰⁷ "Krach im Hinterhaus," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 30, 1942.

¹²⁰⁸ "Krach im Hinterhaus," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 30, 1942.

¹²⁰⁹ "Krach im Hinterhaus," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 30, 1942.

grundgütig, ehrenhaft und entschlossen.“¹²¹⁰ The determination and vitality of Böttcher’s figures was also incarnated by the actress Tilde Jahn, who played the leading role despite having broken her foot just days before the premiere.¹²¹¹ With the exception of the caretaker, as the *Deutsche in Argentinien* noted, there really are no villains in the piece, instead all conflict stems from the intolerably close confines of the characters’ living space: ”Alle die Reibereien, all der Hinterhausklatsch ist ja nicht Ausdruck schlechter Charaktere, sondern Folge zu engen Zusammenlebens und mangelnden Lebensspielraumes.“¹²¹² Reviews therefore also invoked the plot to validate Nazi expansionist politics in Europe.

Its production of Böttcher’s *Krach im Hinterhaus* reflects the Deutsches Theater’s strategic deployment of the comic genre. The “funkelnden Witzraketen“¹²¹³ of this light and easy play amused audiences, but reviewers also interpreted the comedy in such a way that 1) emphasized the accomplishments of National Socialist principles, such as imagined social equality and egalitarian social and justice systems; 2) reinforced Nazi visions of the principle virtues and behaviors of German Volk, exemplified both performatively and phenomenally by Tilde Jahn in the role of Widow Bock; and 3) validated Germany’s bellicose, expansionist foreign policy by identifying insufficient *Lebensraum* as the underlying cause of conflict and strife in the dramatic action.

¹²¹⁰ “*Krach im Hinterhaus*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 13, 1942.

¹²¹¹ “*Krach im Hinterhaus*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 13, 1942.

¹²¹² “*Krach im Hinterhaus*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1942.

¹²¹³ “*Krach im Hinterhaus*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 13, 1942.

In the early years of the war, the Ney-Bühne's performances of *Bauernstücke* and other comedies played a key role in establishing his theater as a conduit for Nazi propaganda and a nexus for German nationalists throughout Argentina. The stage's popular productions drew the ire of antifascists in the region, but instead of buckling under this pressure, nationalists rallied around their Deutsches Theater. In March of 1943 the *La Plata Zeitung* remarked with pride that ticket sales for the coming season were even stronger than expected.¹²¹⁴ As its public grew, the German chargé d'affaires in Buenos Aires, Erich Otto Meynen, identified the Deutsches Theater the "Rückgrat der Kulturarbeit innerhalb der deutschen Kolonie." This was a function, Meynen continued, which "gerade unter den heutigen Umständen für unser Zusammenleben und Zusammenhalt von allergrößter Bedeutung ist."¹²¹⁵ For the 1943 winter season the Deutsches Theater found itself obliged to move from the 750-seat Teatro Politeama into an even larger venue, the Teatro Nacional, which had capacity for 1150 spectators and was located just meters from Buenos Aires' trademark Obelisco, ground zero of the republic of Argentina.

1.2 Laughter and Loyalty: 1943-1944

In his introduction to the 1940 *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien*, Wilhelm Lütge voiced his hope that the war would come to a quick end and expressed concern about the potential ramifications of a prolonged

¹²¹⁴ "Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 4, 1943.

¹²¹⁵ "Geleitwort," *Die Brücke* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Mercur, 1943).

conflict on nationalist Germans in Argentina.¹²¹⁶ His hopes, of course, were in vain. As the war turned against Germany, members of the *alte Kolonie* were subject to growing hostility in Argentina. In late 1943 the *La Plata Zeitung* published an article entitled “Der Reichsdeutsche im nicht kriegsführenden Lande.“ It had been “kein Kunststück in den 8 Jahren einer immer erfolgreichen deutschen Offensive auch auf fremden Boden sich zur deutschen Sache zu bekennen,“ but now, the article continued, it was far more difficult for the German community in Buenos Aires, “allein und ganz auf sich gestellt, dem Ansturm einer Agitation standzuhalten, die von den feindlichen Ländern her auf ihn einstürmt, oder mindestens auf dem gleitenden Boden des mangelnden Verständnisses einer fremden Umwelt aufrecht zu stehen.“¹²¹⁷ Whether for reasons of ideological conviction or pragmatism, the anti-Nazi tone of local media organs in Buenos Aires grew stronger and more aggressive during the final years of the war, attacking German nationalist ideology and institutions on a daily basis. Motions to take legislative action against pro-fascist organizations in the capital also gained traction in the municipal and national governments.¹²¹⁸ Furthermore, as the chances for a Nazi victory in the war grew ever slimmer, the likelihood that Argentina’s government would eventually yield to Allied demands for “hemispheric solidarity” increased.¹²¹⁹ As events in neighboring Brazil and

¹²¹⁶ “Zum Geleit,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

¹²¹⁷ “Der Reichsdeutsche im nicht kriegsführenden Lande,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, October 14, 1943.

¹²¹⁸ The rising power of the lower congressional chamber's special Committee to Investigate Anti-Argentine Activities (Comisión Investigadora de Actividades Antiargentinas) is emblematic of these developments.

Paraguay had demonstrated, this would hold grave consequences for the nationalist German population. Indeed, when Argentina did break off diplomatic relations in October of 1944, its government banned the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, closed dozens of German businesses, cultural centers, and schools, and seized many properties. Many institutions were not able to reopen until years later and some properties never were returned.¹²²⁰

Members of the *alte Kolonie* were thus concerned for their livelihoods and, even worse, suffered from mounting fears about the welfare of friends and family in Europe. A “Brief aus der Heimat,” reprinted in the *Deutsche in Argentinien* in May of 1943, described the Allied bombings of Hamburg in detail to the *alte Kolonie*:

Wir saßen alle im Luftschutzkeller, als die Bomben einschlugen. [...] Gewaltiges Krachen, Holz-, Glas- und Steinsplitter flogen uns um die Ohren, der Luftdruck preßte uns zusammen und Kalk- und Mörtelstaub in’s Gesicht und dann war es vorbei. Nach überstandem Schreck eilten wir ins Freie. Ein grauenhaftes Bild der Zerstörung bot sich uns. Drei Nachbarvillen völlig vernichtet, unter den Trümmern die Bewohner begraben [...] Trümmer, Schutt und weiter nichts als Trümmer und Schutt. Sofort begann natürlich von allen Überlebenden das Rettungswerk. Hier barg man aus den Trümmern einen alten Großvater mit seinem kleinen Enkelkind, die Oma war tot, die Mutti schwer verwundet; dort wiederum wurde der Vati verletzt geborgen, seine beiden kleinen Mädchen waren tot... es war grauenhaft...¹²²¹

It is not surprising that, under such extreme duress, the nationalist German colony sought refuge in the theater. Moreover, the number of lighter comedies at the

¹²¹⁹ Ronald Newton, *Nazi Menace*, 217.

¹²²⁰ Banned in 1944, the Instituto Cultural Argentino-Germano did not reopen until late 1951, and the Goethe Schule remained closed until 1961. The building and property of the German Club are still held by the Argentine government. All these measures were taken before Argentina declared war on March 27, 1945.

¹²²¹ “Brief aus der Heimat,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, May 1943.

Ney-Bühne increased as the war news grew bleaker. The Ney-Bühne performed just two German Classic tragedies, *Die Räuber* and *Wallenstein*, in 1943 and 1944. Unlike in earlier years when performances of lighter and more serious dramas were evenly balanced, in 1943 and 1944 comedies came to comprise a disproportionately large share of the repertoire. In an article he published in the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* in 1944, Ludwig Ney reflected upon the changing tastes of theatergoers in the *alte Kolonie*. Ney explains that it is the responsibility of a theater director to select works which will fill seats in the theater without giving in to a “sklavische Unterwürfigkeit unter den Willen des Publikums.”¹²²² This skill requires above all a “denkende Liebe” for theatergoers. The director must intuit theatergoers’ wishes and understand what genres and themes are best suited for fulfilling their psychological and emotional needs. Ney believed that the *alte Kolonie* “sieht bei uns den anderen Pol des Lebens. Unser Publikum sucht die Befreiung, die Lösung von den Dingen des zersplitternden Tagtäglichen.”¹²²³ As the war news grew grimmer, the *alte Kolonie* sought in its theater reassurance and respite from an everyday increasingly plagued with worry, fear, and doubt. Ney sought to fulfill this role without diminishing his loyalty to National Socialism.

During its final two years of performances, comedies at the Deutsches Theater served a three-pronged agenda: 1) to provide members of the *alte Kolonie* with mirth and cheer in order to strengthen their spirits for the demands “einer

¹²²² “Was will das deutsche Publikum vom Deutschen Theater?“ *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1944).

¹²²³ “Was will das deutsche Publikum vom Deutschen Theater?“ *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1944).

schicksalhaften Zeit wie der unseren, deren seelischen Spannungen sich keiner von uns entziehen kann“; 2) to reassure the *alte Kolonie*, which was inundated with antifascist propaganda and threatened with government reprisals, that its allegiance to National Socialist ideology was valid and worthwhile; 3) to maintain and even strengthen the bonds of a nationalist German community, which was under an escalating duress that threatened to sow dissension among its constituents.¹²²⁴

There was no lack of dramas to serve these aims in Nazi Germany, but as the war escalated into a truly global conflict, it became very difficult to obtain current German dramas in Argentina.¹²²⁵ Local media repeatedly lamented the difficulty in acquiring any printed material from Germany, including play scripts. It proved a challenge to compensate for this shortage and simultaneously meet growing demand for lighthearted fare without compromising National Socialist ideology. The dearth of new material meant that some older works had to be refashioned to meet the exigencies of a time and public very different from those for which they had originally been intended. In numerous instances, Ludwig Ney and the nationalist press were compelled to transform such dramas altogether in order to render them acceptable for performance.

Otto Ernst's *Flachsmann als Erzieher* (1906), which the Deutsches Theater performed in late 1943, is an apt example. When it premiered decades earlier, Ernst's contemporaries understood the drama as a harsh indictment of the

¹²²⁴ “Deutsches kulturelles Leben in Argentinien im Jahre 1942,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1943).

¹²²⁵ “Zum Geleit,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1943).

German school system. In *Flachsmann*, Ernst criticizes the authoritarian atmosphere at a school in a small German town, particularly through his scornful depiction of its despotic schoolmaster, Johann Hinrich Flachsmann. Described as a “magerer Herr,” Flachsmann’s demeanor is characterized by “gleisnerischer Freundlichkeit” in his best moods, and when angry he speaks with a “bürokratisch-hochmütige Härte.”¹²²⁶ Flachsmann enforces absolute discipline at the institution, visually represented by an enormous poster of school rules which spans 123 paragraphs and hangs above his desk. He is given to dictatorial sayings such as “Ordnung regiert die Welt,”¹²²⁷ and commands a militaristic conformity among students. As one member of his faculty remarks, the schoolmaster is determined to convert “die deutsche Schule zur Drill- und Dressieranstalt.”¹²²⁸ In 1943 allies and foes alike could easily construe such lines as critical of National Socialist educational institutions; indeed just a few years earlier the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* had employed nearly identical language “naziotische Drillanstalt”—to describe the ‘synchronized’ Humboldt School in Buenos Aires.¹²²⁹

Perhaps even more problematic for the *alte Kolonie* were Ernst’s repeated acclamatory references to the Swiss pedagogue, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. The protagonist of the drama, Jan Flemming, upholds Pestalozzi as: “der Große, Heilige! [...] aus dem Dunkel seiner Gedanken schlägt die Nachtigall der Liebe

¹²²⁶ Otto Ernst, *Flachsmann als Erzieher*, http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=550&kapitel=1#gb_found.

¹²²⁷ Ernst, *Flachsmann als Erzieher*.

¹²²⁸ Ernst, *Flachsmann als Erzieher*.

¹²²⁹ “Die Humboldtschule eine naziotische Drillanstalt,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 4, 1938.

süß und voll und unermüdlich!”¹²³⁰ The conflict of Ernst’s drama is encapsulated in a pair of stage props: the *Schulordnung* poster in the schoolmaster’s office clashes with the portrait of Pestalozzi in Flemming’s classroom. In Buenos Aires, where the Pestalozzi School stood as a vehemently antifascist bulwark against dozens of ‘synchronized’ institutions, such glorification of the Swiss pedagogue was anathema to Nazi authorities. Indeed, Ernst’s play was perfectly harmonious with the repertoire and political position of the anti-Nazi Freie Deutsche Bühne—*not* the nationalist Deutsches Theater.

It was impossible for Ludwig Ney to stage Ernst’s *Flachsmann* without major revisions. The drama’s content was especially sensitive on the eve of the hundredth anniversary of German schools in Argentina, which antifascist media exploited to attack synchronized Nazi educational institutions.¹²³¹ The Deutsches Theater and the nationalist press organs anticipated this risk and went to great lengths to prevent viewers from making such an interpretation. A few days before the premiere, the *La Plata Zeitung* admonished its readers that the drama’s call for school reform bore relevance only to the time in which the piece was set, some forty years ago. Its preview argued that today, in the “neues Deutschland” under Adolf Hitler, “die Reformen [...] an deutschen Schulen längst durchgeführt sind und die deutsche Schule heute ein Vorbild der Menschenerziehung von Weltgeltung geworden ist.”¹²³² Instead, the paper anticipated the play to be a masterful depiction of the struggle of the “vorwärtsstrebenden Könnens gegen den

¹²³⁰ Ernst, *Flachsmann als Erzieher*.

¹²³¹ “Hundert Jahre deutsches Schulwesen,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 21, 1943.

¹²³² “Deutsches Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 11, 1943.

Unverstand des Alten, des Kampfes des Echten gegen das Falsche, des Wahren gegen den Schein.“¹²³³ According to the *La Plata Zeitung*'s reading, *Flachsmann* takes issue with an older generation which is perceived to impede the legitimate consolidation of Nazi ideology in the education system. The *La Plata Zeitung*'s preview altered the public's expectations of this play, which an earlier generation had understood as a protest against authoritarian tendencies in the German school system. By contrast, the paper reinterpreted it as testimony to the successful reforms, innovations, and continued development of the German school system under the National Socialist regime. The newspaper thus recast the premiere of *Flachsmann der Erzieher*, provocatively timed to coincide with the centenary of German schools in Buenos Aires, as a celebration of the *Gleichschaltung* of Argentina's German schools with Nazism.

The performance confirmed the *La Plata Zeitung*'s interpretation. Ney's ensemble and members of the *alte Kolonie* designed period costumes and stage props “um dadurch deutlich zu machen, dass es sich hier nicht um eine unangebrachte und vor allem längst überholte Kritik an unseren Schulen handelt.”¹²³⁴ For added emphasis, the *La Plata Zeitung* repeated Ney's explanations: “Das Kostüm von vor rund 40 Jahren wurde gewählt, um das Stück aus der Zufälligkeit seiner äußeren Tendenz zu lösen.“ In addition to the use of period props and costumes to preclude potential polemics, Ney rid the drama of Pestalozzi's portrait and even rewrote sections of the script in order to achieve a

¹²³³ “Deutsches Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 11, 1943.

¹²³⁴ Albert Haigis, “Das Deutsche Theater – und wir,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

“Herausarbeitung des herzerfrischenden Humors.”¹²³⁵ With the help of the nationalist German media, Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater refashioned and interpreted *Flachsmann der Erzieher* anew, acclaiming National Socialist influence on the German education system in Argentina, and achieving a reassuring, light-hearted ‘moral’ message suitable for the Nazi propagandistic agenda. Furthermore, at the end of a disastrous year of fighting in WWII, the play’s new morale—“Die menschliche Schwäche wurde am besten zu allen Zeiten durch ein befreiendes Lachen überwunden“—seemed to be well suited to assuage rising anxieties among the nationalist German population.¹²³⁶

Another play Ney was compelled to revise thoroughly was Emil Rosenow’s *Kater Lampe* (1906). Rosenow wrote *Kater Lampe*, a satire about incompetent officialdom and the hardships of peasant life in rural Germany, as a counterpart to Gerhart Hauptmann’s *Biberpelz*. Like *Flachsmann*, the play is an unlikely choice for a theater funded by Goebbels’ Ministry of Propaganda. Rosenow was a Social Democrat member of the Reichstag when he wrote *Kater Lampe*, which has clear socio-critical implications. The play turns on the confiscation of a cat belonging to a poor woodcarving apprentice, Neumark, after it damages some furs belonging to a wealthy factory owner. Neumark eventually raises the money necessary to regain possession of his “Kater” and attempts to regain his pet from Seifert, the village constable. But the impoverished and hungry Seifert, who is not compensated for taking care of the cat, has already slaughtered the animal and eaten it together with his superior officer. Seifert is

¹²³⁵ “Deutsches Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 12, 1943.

¹²³⁶ “Deutsches Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 12, 1943.

forced to confess everything when Neumark arrives with money, but he escapes all punishment because the gendarme, who had partaken in the meal, is assigned to lead the investigation. Therefore the play ends on a low note. Nothing changes in this poverty-stricken village—corrupt local politicians remain in power, civil servants continue to earn miserable wages, and the village laborers are doomed to further exploitation by the wealthy factory owner.

The choice of *Kater Lampe* is doubly surprising because the piece is emblematic of naturalist drama, which Ludwig Ney felt to be an abomination to National Socialist aesthetics. In an article in *Die Brücke* Ney disparaged naturalism as “das Graue, das Quälende, [...] der Versuch, das Theater einer beruhigten snobistischen Gesellschaft als psychologische Stierkampfarena dienstbar zu machen.”¹²³⁷ In a common tinged with anti-Semitic connotations, Ney even went so far as to claim that naturalism, “mit seinen Abarten,” had threatened to destroy theater altogether.

Since neither the genre, tone, nor content of *Kater Lampe* were suitable for the *alte Kolonie*, one may well ask why Ney chose this piece for performance at all. It is worth noting that in 1936 Veit Harlan had reworked the play into a feature film, in which the villagers suffer a poverty and malnourishment similar to that of Rosenow’s play. The key difference is that in Harlan’s propagandistic version, the factory owner is Jewish and the struggles of the villagers are portrayed as the *Volk*’s defiance of their oppressor.¹²³⁸ However, none of the nationalist media mention Harlan’s version, probably because the Ney Stage

¹²³⁷ Ludwig Ney, “Theater,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹²³⁸ Alan Marshall, “Naturalism and Nationalism,” *German Life and Letters* 37 (1984): 91-104.

sought to achieve a very different effect. Ney did not want to bring a grim piece of Nazi propaganda onto the stage. Instead, his goal was to provide his public a with few hours of carefree humor enhanced by pleasant, patriotic visions of their German Fatherland.

In all likelihood, the reason why Ney chose *Kater Lampe* for performance is that he had few alternatives. Current dramas from Nazi Germany were lacking in Argentina, and he had to improvise as a result. Nonetheless, Ney clearly believed that he could transform the play from a despondent depiction of poverty and administrative incompetence into a quaint and light *Heimatspiel* in the vein of the *Bauernstücke* the stage had played three years earlier. Although Rosenow's drama calls for an austere setting, Ney created a stage scenery designed to evoke idealized memories of a German winter wonderland, which was particularly appropriate in June, the midst of the South American winter. Instead of anticipating a stage design of squalid huts, the *La Plata Zeitung* instructed theatergoers to expect a "Märchenlandschaft": "Wie wir hören, wird auf der Bühne eine richtige dörfliche Landschaft aufgebaut, mit verschneiten Häuschen, Schneemännern und dem ganzen Zauber, den wir daheim alle auch so lieben."¹²³⁹ To be certain that the revamped scenery would have the desired effect, Ney even added a live brass band to the merry mis-en-scène. Rosenow's original stage design might well have reminded many members of the *alte Kolonie* why they had emigrated from Germany in the first place. Ney's version, ironically, sought to transport them back to the Europe they had left behind: "Das Publikum soll vergessen, dass es in Buenos Aires in einem Theater sitzt und sich über die

¹²³⁹ "Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 4, 1943.

Entfernung hinweg zu Hause fühlen.¹²⁴⁰ Supplanting Rosenow's grim depiction of rural poverty, the Deutsches Theater aimed to evoke a nostalgia which was neither sentimental nor melancholy, but mirthful: "Zwei Stunden der Sehnsucht gewidmet, wollen wir doch wieder so viel heiteres Spiel in diese zwei Stunden hineingeben, dass diese Sehnsucht nicht schwer werde und sich in Heiterkeit verkläre."¹²⁴¹

Such a fundamental departure from Rosenow's original purport required nothing less than a transformation of the drama. Both the *Deutsche in Argentinien* and the *Deutsche la Plata Zeitung* praised Ney not only for his inventive stage design, but also for thoroughly reworking the drama's text: "Das Schwerlastende und die übertriebene Belastung mit sozialen Problemen, das frühere Elend der Heimarbeiter im Erzgebirge trat in den Hintergrund [...]. Damit gewann der Spielleiter breiteren Raum für das heitere Spiel und die humorvolle Gestaltung."¹²⁴² This was valid, reviewers argued, because the social problems of Rosenow's day had long since been overcome under Nazi rule. The dreary, frigid German hinterland, impoverished and exploited inhabitants, underpaid and desperate officials, and the bleak outlook of Rosenow's original play were all recast to metamorphose a "Tendenzstück" into a "hübsches und gemütliches Heimatspiel."¹²⁴³

¹²⁴⁰ "Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 4, 1943.

¹²⁴¹ "Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 4, 1943.

¹²⁴² "Kater Lampe," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, July, 1943.

¹²⁴³ "Kater Lampe," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, July, 1943.

As external pressures mounted, nationalist Germans had an increasingly limited appetite for somber dramas. In order to achieve a more cheerful, buoyant nationalism among his public, Ney not only favored comedies but, through purposeful editing and carefully contrived stage designs, even transformed more serious works into lighter fare. These comedies helped to sustain solidarity among theatergoers in the *alte Kolonie* by reinforcing nationalist ideals, such as *Heimat*, as well as local National Socialist institutions such as the German school system.

Not all the comedies required such extreme makeovers. There were some older comedies which, despite the intervening years, were exceptionally well-suited to fulfill the exigencies of the public at the Deutsches Theater. One of these works was Leo Walther Stein and Richard Presber's *Liselotte von der Pfalz* (1921).¹²⁴⁴ The play, which the Deutsches Theater performed to sold-out audiences at the cavernous Teatro Nacional in April of 1944, draws from Liselotte's correspondence to depict her life in France at the court of Louis XIV.¹²⁴⁵ As the wife of the Sun King's brother, the Duke of Orleans, Liselotte was for many decades second in rank only to the Queen of France. Thanks in part to the Deutsches Theater's frequently revisionist depiction of her biography, Liselotte von der Pfalz—or Elisabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate—became an archetypal, even inspirational figure for the *alte Kolonie* in 1944.

¹²⁴⁴ Carl Froelich remade the drama into a feature film in 1935. The *La Plata Zeitung* did not report on the film in the weeks leading up to the premiere at the Deutsches Theater.

¹²⁴⁵ Regrettably, I do not have a copy of this drama. My analysis draws from various editions of Liselotte's letters and compares them to reviews of the performance in German media in Argentina.

Liselotte's was a political marriage, and she lived with her husband in France out of duty, not because she had chosen France over Germany. On the contrary, despite spending nearly her entire adult life in France—she had left the Palatinate forever at the age of nineteen—Liselotte remained staunchly loyal to her native country, whose traditions and values she placed above those of the host country, France. Even after fifty years of living at the French court, Liselotte wrote with disdain of courtiers who “tried to treat me like a Frenchwoman.”¹²⁴⁶ Such sentiments resonated with many members of the *alte Kolonie*, who identified themselves as Germans and held fast to German customs even after many years abroad. Liselotte also persisted in writing German; over two thirds of her correspondence is in her native tongue.¹²⁴⁷ The nationalist population often referred to the German language as “heilig“ and asserted that its upkeep amounted to the “Pflege der inneren Kultur des Menschen.”¹²⁴⁸ Even this cursory glance reveals several parallels between Liselotte and the *alte Kolonie*. Both lived for an extended time period in a foreign country, neither fully embraced the host society, nor did they relinquish key cultural traits of their country of origin, such as language.

For Liselotte, French society functioned as a foil which accentuated her Germanness. Her letters demonstrate that her relations with the French aristocracy were often difficult. She did not care for many of the members of this elite, ruling

¹²⁴⁶ Maria Kroll, ed., *Letters from Liselotte: Princess Palatine and Duchess of Orléans, 'Madame,' 1652-1722* (New York: McCall, 1971), 243.

¹²⁴⁷ Dirk Van der Cruysse, “*Madame seyn ist ein ellendes Handwerk*”: *Liselotte von der Pfalz—eine Deutsche am Hof des Sonnenkönigs* (Munich: Piper, 1990), 15.

¹²⁴⁸ Irene Ney, “Sprachbildungsarbeit“ *Die Brücke* (1943).

class, whom she regarded as decadent and insincere. Whereas her husband, Phillip of Orleans, was a timid, sickly, and effeminate spendthrift, as well as a gambler who loathed the outdoors, Liselotte was healthy, robust, and economical. She enjoyed hunting, and did so without wearing a mask, as was customary among women of the court to protect their skin. Her correspondence accentuates her strong physical health; Liselotte argued that, because of her physical superiority, she had no need for French physicians and remedies. In the course of her letters, health not only became a strategy of resistance and survival, but a strategy of identity formation: illness came to signify the decadent and corrupt French court, health the morally pure Germany. Precisely by depicting herself as a healthy and robust German, who had no need for French medical treatment, Liselotte managed to uphold a sense of national identity and individuality in an environment that was based on self-renunciation for the sake of the crown.¹²⁴⁹ In this respect she resembled the image that nationalist Germans in Argentina had fashioned for themselves. German organizations in Buenos Aires, including Strength through Joy, the Deutsche Turnverein, and the Pfadfinderkorps, among others, advocated exercise and outdoor activities as a means to health and vivacity, qualities it viewed as fundamentally German. Group bicycle journeys to the Strength through Joy park at Punta Chica, community hiking excursions, expeditions in the Andes, and the great popularity of Hinrichs' *Bauernstücke* all demonstrate the *alte Kolonie*'s emphasis on physical exertion and its fondness for nature. The Deutsches Theater, with its frequent guest performances in isolated

¹²⁴⁹ Karin Baumgartner, "Illness and Health as Strategies of Resistance and Identity Formation in the Letters of Liselotte von der Pfalz," *Women in German Yearbook* 17 (2001): 57-76.

German settlements in rural Argentina, also represented the same vigorous, pioneering spirit that the German press found in the “Blutvolles Leben and unbesiegbare Naturkraft“ of Liselotte von der Pfalz.¹²⁵⁰

There are further, more profound similarities between Liselotte and the nationalist German population in Buenos Aires. Though centuries and oceans apart, Liselotte and the *alte Kolonie* shared a position that Joseph Strelka defines as constitutive of exile: caught between isolation from and assimilation to the new, host society.¹²⁵¹ Liselotte believed that in the Palatinate she had had a cheerful temperament, and that her extended stay in France was turning her into a melancholic. She placed the blame for her melancholia squarely on the homesickness she had been experiencing since coming to France, which was exacerbated by the atmosphere at the court of Louis XIV, especially after the king launched an invasion of her home, the Palatinate, in 1688. Her ailments forced her to withdraw from some of the functions of the French court to the private, intimate, and German counter-world of her letters.¹²⁵² This was a strategy shared by nationalist Germans in Buenos Aires, many of whom also conducted their closest, most meaningful contact with their German *Vaterland* in the epistolary form. The *Deutsche in Argentinien* regularly featured “Briefe aus der Heimat” which, as the war wore on, echoed the desperation Liselotte expressed in her letters about the French invasion and devastation of her native Palatinate in 1689.

¹²⁵⁰ “Liselotte von der Pfalz,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 13, 1944.

¹²⁵¹ Joseph Strelka, *Exilliteratur: Grundprobleme der Theorie, Aspekte der Geschichte und Kritik* (Bern: Lang, 1983).

¹²⁵² Baumgartner, “Illness and Health,” 58.

The parallels did not go unnoticed by the Deutsches Theater's public: "Von der Bühne drang eine so geballte deutsche Empfindung im Zuschauerraum, dass das Publikum wie im Fluge in jenem seit jeher von tausend Dämonen bedrohten Deutschland zu sein glaubte, welches alle diese Brandschatzungen, Zerstörungen, Prüfungen und Bedrohungen überstand."¹²⁵³ In the figure of Liselotte von der Pfalz, nationalist Germans perceived deep historical roots of German patriotism in a hostile foreign environment. During the performance theatergoers reacted to a bond they discovered between themselves and Presber's protagonist—a mutual unflinching loyalty to a common embattled homeland.

The above passage from the *La Plata Zeitung*, however, also marks the point at which the Ney-Bühne's performance diverges from Liselotte's letters. Estranged from Louis XIV and unpopular at the court Liselotte, in her nonfictional letters, is distraught about her inability to champion the Palatinate cause successfully: "It also grieves me deeply that the King waited to inflict the ultimate devastation precisely until I had begged him to spare Mannheim and Heidelberg."¹²⁵⁴ As Karin Baumgartner writes, Liselotte's constant battles with the court and its different levels of power show that her refusal to cooperate with French royalty marginalized and ostracized her, nullifying her influence and rendering an improvement of her situation impossible.¹²⁵⁵ Ney's production, however, advocated a contrary conclusion. In its production the Deutsches

¹²⁵³ "Liselotte von der Pfalz," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 14, 1944.

¹²⁵⁴ Elborg Forster, *A Woman's Life in the Court of the Sun King* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins UP, 1984), 61.

¹²⁵⁵ Baumgartner, "Illness and Health," 71.

Theater rewarded Liselotte's German patriotism and her rejection of French customs by plotting her power and influence at Louis XIV's court on an upward curve: "ein Frauenschicksal, das mit bitterer Entsagung beginnt und mit dem menschlich warmen Herzen eines echten Weibes bis zu hoher politischer Wirklichkeit gesteigert wird, findet hier seine Verherrlichung."¹²⁵⁶ In truth, Liselotte was unable to prevent the Sun King from subjecting the Palatinate to over a decade of bloodshed in the War of the Grand Alliance from 1688-1697. Although the *La Plata Zeitung* credits Liselotte for arranging for her son's ascension to power upon the death of Louis XIV, most studies deemphasize her role, citing instead the Parlement of Paris as the decisive voice in the decision. Furthermore, Liselotte's son, Philippe of Chartres, did not become regent until 1715, nearly two decades after the fighting in the Palatinate had ceased. Even after Philippe had gained power, Liselotte still did not desist from daily complaints to her correspondents about the antics of what she regarded as an increasingly decadent court.

The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* concludes with admiration for the "pfälzische Prinzessin, die auch am Hof von Versailles der Heimat treu bleibt [...] vor welcher sich gallischer Herrscherstolz wie vor einer unbesiegbaren Naturkraft beugt."¹²⁵⁷ The paper's review explicitly emphasizes the relevance of this drama for the nationalist population. First it connects past with present: "Vieles an dem Stück klingt so, als bezöge es sich auf die unmittelbare

¹²⁵⁶ "Liselotte von der Pfalz," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 14, 1944.

¹²⁵⁷ "Liselotte von der Pfalz," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 14, 1944.

Gegenwart.”¹²⁵⁸ Secondly, by referring to her as “eine typische und vorbildliche Gestalt unseres Volkes,” it posits Liselotte von der Pfalz as model for members of the *alte Kolonie* to follow. Ney’s production served as evidence to an audience under great duress that its loyalty to German ideals and culture, even in the context of a hostile environment abroad, was meritorious and expedient. Liselotte’s success is the fruit of her perseverance, which implies that the *alte Kolonie*’s allegiance to Nazi Germany is also commendable and worthwhile—they, like Liselotte, will prove triumphant.

From the late 1930s until Argentina broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in October of 1944, comedies played an integral role in the success of Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater. *Völkische* performances of the early 1940’s, particularly Hinrichs’ *Bauernstücke*, brought together nationalist Germans throughout Argentina by evoking patriotism and nostalgia for the German *Heimat*. Later, as the war effort grew increasingly hopeless, comedies assumed greater representation in the Deutsches Theater’s repertoire. These performances served to provide mirth, affirm and encourage loyalty to National Socialist ideals, and sustain solidarity within the *alte Kolonie* amidst extreme adversity. On several occasions nationalist German media deployed propagandistic interpretive strategies, and the Deutsches Theater altered dramatic content and depicted a revisionist account of historical events in order to achieve these affects.

¹²⁵⁸ “Liselotte von der Pfalz,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 13, 1944.

2. Theatrical Nationhood: The German Classics at the Deutsches Theater¹²⁵⁹

2.1 Goethe's *Faust* and *Götz von Berlichingen* as Popular Entertainment in the Service of Nazi Ideology

From 1940-1943 the German Classics and serious dramas authored by members of the *alte Kolonie* comprised the core of the Deutsches Theater's repertoire. The stage's program corresponded to the assertions of the Reichsdramaturg Rainer Schlösser, the head of the Nazi theater administration and the Reich's chief theater censor, who in 1935 declared: "Im wesentlichen gilt es sich an die eigentliche Substanz unserer Dramatik, die Klassiker, zu halten."¹²⁶⁰ The Deutsches Theater adhered to this policy, performing multiple dramas by Goethe and Schiller as well as works by Hebbel, Lessing, and Eichendorff. As Ludwig Ney noted in 1943, "Das einheitliche Bild des Erfolges und der Anteilnahme haben jedoch immer die Klassikeraufführungen gezeigt. [...] Auch wird von diesen Aufführungen am längsten und eingehendsten gesprochen."¹²⁶¹ Placing emphasis on the Ney-Bühne's unique condition as a nationalist German theater overseas during World War II, I explore the German Classics' resonance among nationalist Germans, their utility a source of National Socialist propaganda in the region, and their efficacy as a source of cultural identity and community building among nationalist Germans in Argentina.

Whereas enthusiasm for serious dramas at the antifascist Freie Deutsche Bühne was limited, theatergoers at the Deutsches Theater strongly supported this

¹²⁵⁹ Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 86.

¹²⁶⁰ Rainer Schlösser, *Das Volk und seine Bühne: Bemerkungen zum Aufbau des deutschen Theaters* (Berlin: Langen und Müller, 1935), 27.

¹²⁶¹ "Was will das deutsche Publikum vom Deutschen Theater," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1944).

genre, especially the German Classics. One reason why the Ney-Bühne had such success with demanding, often somber fare, was that it made a concerted effort to render these works accessible to the *alte Kolonie*. In an essay entitled, “Angst vor Kunst,” Ludwig Ney addressed the aversion many citizens had against high art. Ney begins by renaming this posture, arguing that it is not aversion but fear. In renaming this sentiment, Ney changes the tone of his argument from confrontational to encouraging. He reassures the working classes of the *alte Kolonie* that no elite, erudite class can lay claim to the universal beauty and merit of high art. There are no “Ausgeschlossene aus dem Reiche ,der Bildung.”¹²⁶² Artists do not exist in isolation from other sectors of the workforce, but are thoroughly integrated with them: “Der Künstler ist der geistige Bruder des Ingenieurs, wie des produktiven Kaufmanns und Politikers.”¹²⁶³ The only group Ney prohibits from his audience are “Spießerreiche,” because they do not share the same work ethic inherent to the rest of the labor force, including artists. The German Classics, Ney claimed, are not an impenetrable mass of antiquated language and esoteric allusions: instead, they convey timeless values that are of practical utility for all productive members of society: “Hochwerte, die allem Leben, Würde und Ordnung geben, nämlich Wahrheit und Echtheit, Hingabe und Ausdauer und schöpferischer Wille.”¹²⁶⁴ There is only one prerequisite to engaging with the works of Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing: “Es bedarf nur

¹²⁶² Ludwig Ney, “Angst vor der Kunst,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹²⁶³ Ney, “Angst vor der Kunst,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹²⁶⁴ Ney, “Angst vor der Kunst,” *Die Brücke*, (1944).

Bereitschaft.”¹²⁶⁵ Among nationalist Germans the Deutsches Theater strove for inclusion across classes. Ney posited the German Classics as harmonious agents of community-building, arguing that all members of the *alte Kolonie*, regardless of socioeconomic class and level of education, could enjoy performances of the German Classics and benefit from them.

The Deutsches Theater’s previews for its performance of Goethe’s *Faust* in March of 1942 are representative of its efforts to soothe its public’s “Angst vor der Kunst.” Ney recognized that this drama, the object of countless scholarly studies since its creation, risked intimidating some theatergoers. The Deutsches Theater staged only the first part of Goethe’s drama, perhaps heeding sentiments such as those voiced by the protagonistin Joseph Goebbels’ novel *Michael. Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebüchern*: “Ich trage nur ein Buch in der Tasche: den *Faust*. Den ersten Teil lese ich. Für den zweiten bin ich zu dumm.”¹²⁶⁶ In a series of articles in the *La Plata Zeitung* leading up to the premiere, Ney reassured his public that the entire *alte Koloni* could enjoy *Faust*. Ney employs the tactic of exclusion in order to argue for inclusion. He contends that all Germans can appreciate the stage’s production by dwelling on the inability of others, who are prohibited from their ranks, to grasp Goethe’s “Urdeutsch” drama. He condemns the plethora of scholarship on *Faust* for sapping the work of its vivacity, thereby repulsing theatergoers. Writing in a populist, anti-intellectual tone, Ney invokes Franz Moor from Schiller’s *Die Räuber* to reject the literary criticism of the

¹²⁶⁵ Ney, “Angst vor der Kunst,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹²⁶⁶ Joseph Goebbels, *Michael. Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebüchern* (Munich: Eher Verlag, 1934), 10.

Weimar Republic: “Mir ekelt vor diesem Tinten klecksenden Säkulum.”¹²⁶⁷ Ney and other critics for nationalist media argued that studies on *Faust* during the Weimar Republic, which they referred to as the “Systemzeit,” resulted in the counterproductive falsehood that “*Faust* kaum zu verstehen wäre, sodaß er eigentlich eine Angelegenheit ganz weniger “Gebildeter“ sei.”¹²⁶⁸ In the weeks leading up to the Deutsches Theater’s performance, Ney asserted that actually the opposite was true. The intelligentsia of the Weimar Republic—Ney refrains from naming Jews and communists explicitly, although one intuitively these are the groups he has in mind—are the others, who are excluded from attaining profound insights into Goethe’s *Faust*.

The literary historian Karl Mandelkov has remarked that conservative approaches to literary criticism from 1900 -33 were in some aspects continuous with studies on literature in Nazi Germany.¹²⁶⁹ The conservative actress Louise Dumont-Lindemann, for example, claimed in 1932 that the “Ausdrucksmittel des Künstlers wird immer und überall der Wesenheit seines eigenen Volkes entsprechen, also direkten Anschluß an die Seele seiner Volksgenossen haben und Verständnis vom Herzen her erzwingen.”¹²⁷⁰ Deploying a racist discourse, in 1942 Ludwig Ney echoed Dumont-Lindemann by claiming that *Faust* should resonate profoundly with all “urdeutsche” theatergoers, because access to the

¹²⁶⁷ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁶⁸ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1943.

¹²⁶⁹ Karl Robert Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, vol. 2 (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1989), 89-90.

¹²⁷⁰ Louise Dumont-Lindemann, *Vermächtnisse* (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1932), 111.

inner core of *Faust* is not a matter of intellect but of nationhood.¹²⁷¹ With such statements Ney was in step with reception of *Faust* in Nazi Germany, including the Nazi ‘scholar’ Franz Koch, author of the infamous *Goethe und die Juden* (1937), who claimed in his *Geschichte deutscher Dichtung* that “*Faust* und das Faustische sind zum Symbol des germanischen Menschen schlechthin geworden.”¹²⁷² In the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* Ney echoed both Dumont-Lindemann and Koch, arguing that Goethe’s work is firmly rooted “im Kerne unseres Volkstums.” Germans have intrinsic bonds of blood with the poet which enable them to understand him intuitively: “wir können schon allein aus dem Ahnen des gleichen Blutes diese Dichtung in uns aufnehmen.”¹²⁷³ Ney’s references to the Nazi Blood and Soil ideology can be placed within the framework of National Socialist interpretations of *Faust*. Hans Severus Ziegler, general director (*Generalintendant*) of the German National Theater in Weimar and Hitler’s confidant noted that Mephisto’s verse—“Blut ist ein ganz besonderer Saft”—represented an “elementare Wahrheit auf der sich heute neue Erkenntnisse auftürmen.”¹²⁷⁴ In his article, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: ‚Faust‘-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” Thomas Zabka asserts that “das unterste Niveau völkischer *Faust*-Vereinnahmung ist die ebene

¹²⁷¹ “Zur *Faust*-Aufführung des Deutschen Theaters,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 17, 1942.

¹²⁷² Franz Koch, *Geschichte deutscher Dichtung*, in Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” in *Faust: Annäherung an einen Mythos*, ed. Frank Möbus, Friederike Schmidt-Möbus, and Gerd Unverfehrt (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1996), 315.

¹²⁷³ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁷⁴ In Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” 316.

des bloßen Schlagworts.¹²⁷⁵ The *La Plata Zeitung* engaged in precisely this practice, referencing well-known key words and phrases of *Faust* in order to posit it as an especially German nationalist drama. All Germans, it claimed, can quote at least a few lines from *Faust*, an instance of cultural fluency common to native speakers. The paper appropriated the words of Hans Carossa,¹²⁷⁶ whom Karl Mandelkov identifies as belonging to the “innere Emigration,”¹²⁷⁷ to assert that this familiarity with *Faust* represents “ein Besitz, und kein geringer“ of the drama.¹²⁷⁸ Cultural fluency and common German traits, such as rigor, courage, sacrifice, and the “ureigenen deutschen Trieb [...] zu erkennen ,was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält,“ permit the Nordic race to follow Faust not intellectually but rather ”nachempfindend“ and “nachtuend.“¹²⁷⁹ It is in this spirit, Ney argues, that Goethe wanted to be understood. To prove his point, Ney cites from Goethe’s conversations with Eckermann about his *Farbenlehre*: “sie will, wie Sie wissen, nicht bloß gelesen und studiert, sondern sie will getan sein.“¹²⁸⁰

Ney activates his audience by establishing an opposition between the individualism and materialism of rational analysis and the collective cooperation

¹²⁷⁵ Thomas Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” 315.

¹²⁷⁶ Carossa distanced himself from the Nazi regime by refusing to admission to the Deutsche Akademie der Dichtung, however he accepted the Frankfurt Goethe Prize in 1938 as well as the presidency of the National Socialist Europäischen Schriftsteller-Vereinigung.

¹²⁷⁷ Karl Robert Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 86

¹²⁷⁸ “Warum spielt das Deutsche Theater Buenos Aires *Faust*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 12, 1942.

¹²⁷⁹ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁸⁰ “Warum spielt das Deutsche Theater Buenos Aires *Faust*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 12, 1942.

of an audience willing to participate emotionally, even physically, in theatrical performances. Only the latter have access to key scenes in the drama, such as Gretchen's perdition at the conclusion of *Faust I*. The erudite but emotionless literati of the Weimar Republic attempted to understand the final scene

“individualistisch, materialistisch [...] herausgegriffen aus ihrem tiefen geistigen Zusammenhang und ohne Hintergrund.”¹²⁸¹ As members of a new German nation under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, today's audiences have a different approach: “für uns heutige gilt es, gerade den tieferen Sinn zu sehen und ihn zu empfinden, aus unserer neuen Lebenseinstellung heraus.”¹²⁸² Through the prism of National Socialism, the audience is encouraged to identify with Faust, whose character represents many of the Aryan traits listed above. Paralleling the interpretation of Goerg Schott, who in 1940 identified Hitler as the “Gestalt des faustischen Führers,”¹²⁸³ Ney posits Faust as a *Führer* figure and exculpates Faust from any misdeeds he may commit in the effort to fulfill his “große überpersönliche Idee.”¹²⁸⁴ Here, too, there are striking similarities between Ney and the *Faust* reception of Nazi Germany. In his article “Schuld und Tragik in Goethes *Faust*,” which appeared in the literary journal *Euphorion* in 1944, Paul Husfeld writes: “Denn die soziale Gemeinschaft und ihre Begründung als Sinn Ganzheit forderte

¹²⁸¹ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁸² “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁸³ Georg Schott, *Goethes Faust in heutiger Schau* (Stuttgart: Der Tazzelwurm Verlag, 1940), 319.

¹²⁸⁴ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

Opfer [...] Der Typ des großen Menschen, des Herrenmenschen ist durch den Charakter des Dienstes bestimmt, des Dienstes am Leben.¹²⁸⁵ If there is a guilty party for her death, according to Ney, then it must be Mephisto, an outsider: “nicht durch Faust ins Elend gestoßen, sondern durch die mephistofelische Verwicklung ihres Lebens hineingerissen.”¹²⁸⁶ Ludwig Ney depicts Gretchen as a heroine compelled to sacrifice herself in order that Faust can achieve greater goals, such as the foundation of a new advanced “Reich.”¹²⁸⁷ In his reading Faust is not guilty for Gretchen’s perdition, rather she sacrifices herself for the common good. Gretchen’s figure exposes the provocative connection between Nazi vision of community and its dependency on sacrifice.¹²⁸⁸ Ney exploits this connection to elaborate a strategic interpretation of *Faust* founded on an exclusionary approach which positions his entire audience as privileged viewers capable of grasping the fundamental truths of Goethe’s drama by virtue of nation and race. By establishing clear sets of oppositional perspectives on the drama, Ney can define an audience which includes the entire *alte Kolonie*, favored by virtue of its race, nationality, and allegiance to National Socialist values.

Next, Ney synthesizes Goethe’s conversations with Eckermann with the concept of a single, eternal *Volk* in order to activate theatergoers. Their enthusiasm and active participation are fundamental in order for the performance

¹²⁸⁵ In Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” 321.

¹²⁸⁶ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁸⁷ “Gedanken zur *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutsche Theater, Buenos Aires,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 8, 1942.

¹²⁸⁸ Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 121.

to reach the underlying will of the Faustian, and thus German spirit—“den Sieg.”¹²⁸⁹ The will to victory represents for Ludwig Ney the lowest common denominator for dramatist, protagonist, actors, and audience alike. This impulse links the *alte Kolonie* to its German heritage as well as to fellow members of Hitler’s national community in Europe. The thousands of German soldiers who have attended performances of *Faust* while on furlough attest to a mutual German will to the *Sieg* and offer the “beste Beweis dafür, dass der Faust kein Privileg irgendwelche Einzelner, sondern allgemeines Gut unseres Volkes ist.”¹²⁹⁰ Similar to much reception of the drama in Nazi Germany, Ney enlists Goethe’s *Faust* for the task of “Kriegshilfdienst.”¹²⁹¹

According to Ludwig Ney and the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, mouthpiece for Nazism in Buenos Aires, all members of the *alte Kolonie* can enjoy and understand Goethe’s famously complex drama, because their common Germanic heritage and allegiance to National Socialism exceeds other qualifications and tools of interpretation and appreciation, such as education, wealth, and social class. Reviews of the performances, which sold out the Teatro Nacional, confirm the efficacy of Ney’s tactics.¹²⁹² In addition to praising the Deutsches Theater for its “hervorragende künstlerische Arbeit,” the *La Plata Zeitung* noted that the production resonated with the entire audience, all of whom “seelisch an diesem

¹²⁸⁹ “Publikum, aktiv!“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1942.

¹²⁹⁰ “Zur *Faust*-Aufführung des Deutschen Theaters,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 17, 1942.

¹²⁹¹ Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” 325.

¹²⁹² “Goethes *Faust* im Deutschen Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 29, 1942.

Reich des deutschen Geistes teil haben.¹²⁹³ Unlike his more general essay, “Angst vor der Kunst,” Ney’s treatment of *Faust* is attuned National Socialist ideology and espouses numerous tenets of Nazi propagandistic interpretation of Goethe’s drama. This is noteworthy because, as Karl Mandelkov has noted, reception of Goethe and *Faust* in Nazi Germany was diverse. Mandelkov names over a dozen critics, including Max Kommerell, Wilhelm Emrich, Kurt May, Erich Weniger, and Freidrich Meinicke, who “auch unter den Bedingungen eines verbrecherischen Regimes scheinbar unangefochten vom neuen Geist der Zeit dem Humanismus der Goethezeit verpflichtet geblieben sind und diesen Maßstab ihres öffentlichen und publizistischen Wirkens gemacht haben.”¹²⁹⁴ Mandelkov states that the Kurt May’s *Faust II. Teil. In der Sprachform gedeutet* (1936) and Wilhelm Emrich’s *Die Symbolik von Faust II* (1943) continued to be influential representatives of the text-based (*Werkimmanenz*) literary analysis in the postwar period and are paradigmatic for this approach even today.¹²⁹⁵ Finally, in his “Faust zweiter Teil. Zum Verständnis der Form“ (1937), Max Kommerell’s remark that Goethe’s work is of “unendliche[r] Deutbarkeit” references the many interpretive possibilities of *Faust*, even in Nazi Germany.¹²⁹⁶ Ludwig Ney and the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* were beholden to the Nazi authorities that funded them, which in part explains their advocacy of Nazi readings of Goethe’s *Faust*.

¹²⁹³ “Die zweite *Faust*-Aufführung durch das Deutschen Theater unter Spielleitung von Ludwig Ney,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 24, 1942.

¹²⁹⁴ Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 88-89.

¹²⁹⁵ Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 102.

¹²⁹⁶ In Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” 323.

Even in the case of work about which literary criticism in Nazi Germany evinces a range of perspectives, Ney and the *La Plata Zeitung* did not show nuance. Instead they consistently sided with critics such as Franz Koch and Kurt Hildebrandt, who were strongly aligned with Nazi ideology.¹²⁹⁷

The Deutsches Theater also enhanced the appeal of the German Classics by integrating them with the daily lives of the nationalist German *alte Kolonie*. Although most of its members would never become personally acquainted, the Deutsches Theater attempted to inculcate the image of a cohesive national community into the mind of each individual in the *alte Kolonie*. In anticipation of the Deutsches Theater's performance of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* ran an article in which its journalist, claiming to have run into Ney on the street by chance, accompanies the director on his errands in the German barrio of Belgrano, passing through German-owned cafes, booksellers, clothing shops, and a beauty salon. Their stroll through Belgrano involves various encounters with German emigrants which juxtapose the medieval world of Goethe's Knight of the Iron hand with everyday scenes from 1940's Buenos Aires. His journalist companion signals that it is incredible to what extent the ensemble has immersed itself in the preparations for the upcoming production: "Man kann schon sagen, dass sie alle überhaupt nur noch in den Vorbereitungen für das erste Festspiel, in der Welt des Götz von Berlichingen leben."¹²⁹⁸ Their first stop is Pedro Wörns' general store, where Wörns is practicing for a battle scene. Dressed in a full suit of armor and wielding a heavy sword, he challenges

¹²⁹⁷ Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 88.

¹²⁹⁸ "Rund um das Götz-Festspiel," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June 1940.

Ney, who is wearing modern street clothes, to a duel among the boxes and crates in the backroom of his store. His companion is surprised, but Ney is nonplussed, explaining that Wörns has to spend extra time outside of rehearsals to practice the movements of a knight because, as Ney puts it, “Es ist nicht so einfach, aus der Untergrundbahn in eine Ritterrüstung zu steigen.”¹²⁹⁹ In a passage which is sure to have drawn chuckles from his readers, the journalist then elaborates on Ney’s joke: “Ich werde mich wirklich nicht wundern, wenn ich demnächst ein Mitglied der Ney-Bühne in einem Cafe sagen hören: ‚Bei meinem Eid, Mozo, einen Expresß’. Wobei wir hoffen wollen, dass er das bekannteste Zitat aus dem ‚Götz’ anstandshalber unterdrücken wird.”¹³⁰⁰ Integrating upcoming performances with average citizens, previews facilitated efforts toward community building, provided comic relief, and brought the time periods of *Götz* and the present day closer together. As Ney passes through various local businesses, nationalist Germans see that the Deutsches Theater truly is *their* local stage. Ney is as on a first-name basis with everyone the pair meets, and the involvement of so many small businesses in preparations for *Götz* evokes the sensation that the entire *alte Kolonie* has a hand in the upcoming production.¹³⁰¹

By positioning the Classics as the cornerstone of German drama and emphasizing their value to all German nationalists in Buenos Aires, Ney and the nationalist press conformed to the platform delineated by conservative nationalist theater scholars, such as Julius Petersen. Among the most influential scholars of

¹²⁹⁹ “Rund um das *Götz*-Festspiel,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June 1940.

¹³⁰⁰ “Rund um das *Götz*-Festspiel,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June 1940.

¹³⁰¹ “Rund um das *Götz*-Festspiel,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June 1940.

literature and theater in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, Petersen was president of the German Goethe-Society (1926-38) and chair (*Direktor*) of the German department (*Germanisches Seminar*) at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin from 1933 until his death in 1941. Although he never became a member of the Nazi Party, Petersen participated in the synchronization of his discipline to Nazi ideology by writing works such as his 1934 essay, “Die Sehnsucht nach dem Dritten Reich in deutscher Sage und Dichtung.”¹³⁰² Published in *Euphorion*, of which he was editor, in this article Petersen affirms Nazism: “Der Glaube an die gottgewollte Sendung eines Heilsbringers und Führers zum Guten wird religiöse Gewißheit.”¹³⁰³ Years earlier, Petersen had envisioned a “wahres Nationalschauspiel,” which would arise from the “weihevollte Erhebung” of the German Classics to the “heilige Gemeingut” of all Germans. In order to achieve this lofty goal, Petersen exhorted directors to overcome the “Gegensatz zwischen Volk und Gebildeten” and bridge the gap between “Unterhaltung und Bildung.”¹³⁰⁴ Ludwig Ney’s Deutsches Theater worked to achieve this goal. By humorously immersing Goethe’s *Götz* with everyday life, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* heightened the *alte Kolonie*’s anticipation of the premiere while simultaneously encouraging them to regard this Sturm and Drang drama as familiar, approachable, and even funny. Indeed, the *La Plata Zeitung* even

¹³⁰² Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 84.

¹³⁰³ In Ernst Klee, *Das Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2007), 454.

¹³⁰⁴ Julius Petersen, *Das deutsche Nationaltheater: fünf Vorträge, gehalten im Februar und März 1917 im Freien Deutschen Hochstift zu Frankfurt a.M.* (Leipzig und Berlin: Teubner, 1917) in Gaetano Biccari, *"Zuflucht des Geistes": konservativ-revolutionäre, faschistische und nationalsozialistische Theaterdiskurse in Deutschland und Italien 1900-1944* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2001), 87.

devoted an entire article to postulating the German Classics as popular entertainment.¹³⁰⁵ Previews in *bonarense* German nationalist media for *Götz von Berlichingen* evince efforts to draw a broad swath of the nationalist German population to performances of the German Classics, thus maximizing their potential to foster solidarity within the *alte Kolonie*. The *La Plata Zeitung* explicitly voiced this goal in its review of the production: “Die Ney-Bühne hat den Zweck erfüllt, den man ihr setzte, das Deutschtum in Buenos Aires in erhabener Stunde zu sammeln [...]. Dieser treue Einsatz für *Götz* wird noch lange als ideales Zeichen deutschen Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühls in Buenos Aires leuchten.”¹³⁰⁶ The premiere of *Götz von Berlichingen*, attended by 1,450 spectators, thus became a community-building event for the nationalist German population.¹³⁰⁷

2.2 Performing Propaganda: German Nationalist Theater in Argentina

Numerous articles in nationalist media indicate the increasing fascination of the *alte Kolonie* for the Ney-Bühne over time.¹³⁰⁸ Reacting to this interest, the Deutsches Theater made an effort to familiarize its audience with its work as a theater ensemble. These pieces stressed an unchanging formula for rehearsals:

¹³⁰⁵ “Klassiker als Unterhaltungsliteratur,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 14, 1941.

¹³⁰⁶ “Deutsches Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 19, 1940.

¹³⁰⁷ “Zum Spielplan der Ney-Bühne“ von Ludwig Ney,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, September, 1940.

¹³⁰⁸ “Aus der Welt des Schauspielers,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, November 1943; “Schauspielproben,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August 1943; “Die Vision eines Schauspielers,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, October 1943.

“Hart, ernst und schwer arbeiten!”¹³⁰⁹ Rehearsals were very intense, the *La Plata Zeitung* reported, as any visitor to the Punta Chica park could see “wenn er zum Beispiel abends nach 11 Uhr nach Hause fährt und das Scheinwerferlicht vom Freilichttheater noch immer durch die Bäume scheint.”¹³¹⁰ Whereas the antifascist Freie Deutsche Bühne never performed outdoors, the Deutsches Theater’s productions of open-air theater represent another instance in which the Ney-Bühne approximated styles of theatrical performance which were popular in Nazi Germany. Whether rehearsing for indoor or outdoor events, the ensemble’s members, a blend of amateur and professional thespians, affirmed that the long hours were welcome, because they saw their work in the theater as the focal point of their personal and, often, professional interests.¹³¹¹ Writing in the 1943 edition of the *Die Brücke*, actor Werner Loewer remembers how, in the first years of the theater’s existence, its members had to create many of their own decorations, stage props, and costumes, and then “mit Bündeln und Koffern beladen in die Vororte hinausführen, um auf unmöglichen ‚Bühnen‘ [...] Theater zu spielen.”¹³¹² While nationalist media expressed gratitude and astonishment about the sacrifices the ensemble made to bring German *Kulturgut* to theatergoers, Loewer regards this earlier period as a “Prüfzeit“ which had been essential because it created comradeship among the actors. Steeped in the rhetoric of National Socialism,

¹³⁰⁹ Ludwig Ney, “Angst vor der Kunst,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹³¹⁰ “Große Vorbereitungen im Freilichttheater der Ney-Bühne,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 28, 1941.

¹³¹¹ Egon Straube, “Ein Schauspieler spricht,” *Die Brücke* (1942).

¹³¹² Werner Loewer, “Das Deutsche Theater vom Schauspieler aus gesehen,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

Loewer describes how during these journeys up rivers, across pampa, and through rain forest, the Deutsches Theater became their spiritual home.

During its first years, the ensemble developed a sense of cooperation and sacrifice: “Dieser Geist ist der Geist der Gemeinschaft und der Begriff, unter dem der Einzelne diese Gemeinschaft erlebt, ist Kameradschaft.”¹³¹³ Loewer states that this sense of fellowship is fundamental to the Deutsches Theater’s success, and actors who do not understand the necessity of community are quickly removed by Ludwig Ney, “unser Kameradschaftsführer.”¹³¹⁴ Ludwig Ney was by all accounts an authoritative, yet patient, calm, and encouraging director. Ney is most demanding on the actors with the most experience: “Dass ich von Dir so viel verlange und verlangen kann, muss Dich ehren. Von einem, an dem nicht viel dran ist, kann man auch nicht viel verlangen.”¹³¹⁵ Their mutual sense of devotion to a greater common goal has created an egalitarian spirit among the thespians: “Es gibt bei uns keinen Unterschied zwischen großen und kleinen Rollen, es gibt nur die gemeinsame Aufgabe.”¹³¹⁶ All actors demonstrate complete obedience to the instructions of Ludwig Ney, the “Kameradschaftsführer,” confident that he will assign them the place, “wo wir notwendig sind, dass wir uns darum gegenseitig Achtung und Rücksichtnahme entgegenbringen.” In a preview for the Deutsches Theater’s production of Schiller’s *Die Räuber* the *La Plata Zeitung* described preparations which can be read as a small scale blueprint for the grand

¹³¹³ Loewer, “Das Deutsche Theater vom Schauspieler aus gesehen,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹³¹⁴ Loewer, “Das Deutsche Theater vom Schauspieler aus gesehen,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹³¹⁵ Loewer, “Das Deutsche Theater vom Schauspieler aus gesehen,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹³¹⁶ Loewer, “Das Deutsche Theater vom Schauspieler aus gesehen,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

ambitions of National Socialist Germany. The paper emphasized Ludwig Ney's role as an authoritative and inspirational leader, who demands long hours of rehearsals and utmost dedication from his entire ensemble. All actors are "aufs tiefste beeindruckt von der restlosen Hingabe" of their director, who has consummated "ein wirkliches Gemeinschaftswerk mit allen seinen Werten und Vorzügen, als da sind: ungeheure Intensivierung der Einzelpersönlichkeit im Rahmen des großen Ganzen und unglaubliche Leistungssteigerung."¹³¹⁷ Under Ney's direction, the Deutsches Theater had grown from a modest *Kleinkunsthöhne* to a theater ensemble capable of staging Schiller's *Räuber* to thousands of theatergoers at the Argentine Teatro Nacional. This strong attendance manifests the Deutsches Theater's success in fulfilling Hitler's project, "die großen Geister dem Volke näherzubringen."¹³¹⁸ The nationalist press exalted the theater's evolution, and showcased its accomplishments and hierarchical values as models for the nationalist German population.

The Ney-Bühne's rehearsals affirmed traditional, classical methods of acting. Goethe's "Rules for Actors," stress training, repetition, and consistency. There are 47 paragraphs on gesture, posture, and movements alone. In this text, Goethe emphasizes disciplined rehearsals in which nothing should be allowed, "was im Stücke nicht vorkommen darf."¹³¹⁹ As Egon Straube explains in his

¹³¹⁷ "Deutsches Theater" *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 1, 1943.

¹³¹⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen : Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, in Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 110.

¹³¹⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Regeln für Schauspieler," in *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Werke, Kommentare und Register. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden*, ed. Herbert von Einem, Hans Joachim Schrimpf, and Erich Trunz (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999), 12: 259.

essay, "Ein Schauspieler spricht," the rigorous rehearsals at the Ney-Bühne corresponded to Goethe's rules for actors:

Kein Gang, kein Griff, keine Kopfbewegung bleibt dem Zufall überlassen. Wenn der Darsteller eine bestimmte Distanz auf der Bühne durchzuschreiten hat, und die Probe hat ergeben, dass diese am besten mit vier Schritten auf linkem Fuß anfangend, zurückgelegt wird, dann liegt das ein für allemal fest und niemals würde der Schauspieler sich einfallen lassen, beim nächsten Mal nur dreieinhalb Schritte zu machen oder mit dem rechten Fuß anzufangen und, die Aufmerksamkeit des Zuschauers vom Spiel abzulenken und durch eine unharmonische Bewegung zu stören.¹³²⁰

Ney's meticulous attention to detail departs from 'transgressive' forms of modern theater, in which actors' performances evaded conventional, standardized, formalized movements, gestures, postures or attitudes.¹³²¹ In contrast to many directors of the Weimar Republic, including Max Reinhardt and Leopold Jessner, any sort of improvisation was anathema to the Deutsches Theater. Following traditional theater authorities, such as Goethe, Ney believed that careful planning was the key to successful performances.

The Deutsches Theater was firmly in step with the aesthetics and ideology governing Nazi dramatic theory. In his insightful book, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, Gaetano Biccari asserts that a transitional marker from theater of the Weimar Republic to National Socialist drama is the primacy of the dramatic text over the "Stehgreifspiel."¹³²² Both Julius Petersen and Hanns Johst, Nazi poet laureate and president of the German writer's union and poetry academy, perceived the dramatic text to be a gateway toward establishing a *völkisch* theater in the service

¹³²⁰ Egon Straube, "Ein Schauspieler spricht," *Die Brücke* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Mercur, 1942).

¹³²¹ Erika Fischer Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 1.

¹³²² Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 84.

of “der nationalen Idee.”¹³²³ Its performances of *Bauernstücke* and the German Classics demonstrate that the Deutsches Theater also ascribed to the National Socialist project of creating theater which championed the German *Volk*. Its emphasis on *völkisch* unity also contributed to the consolidation of a community of German nationalists in Buenos Aires.

As early as 1917, Julius Petersen identified the link between textual primacy and nationalist theater to be the spoken word: “Und sobald das Wort die Oberhand gewinnt, ist der nationale Charakter des Dramas betont. Denn die Nationalsprache ist das stärkste Bindemittel und der unmittelbarste Ausdruck völkischer Eigenart.”¹³²⁴ Later, in 1933, Hanns Johst glorified the “Heiligkeit des Wortes”¹³²⁵ and declared: “Das Theater ist geradezu die Kultstätte des Wortes als Bestimmungsort der Stimme, der gepflegten. In der Wortkunst ruht das Geheimnis wahrhaft schöpferischer Dramen.”¹³²⁶ Language, for Johst had utmost significance in dramatic composition and performance: the “Wurzelgrund der Sprache trägt die Sendung des Theaters und das Leben der Nation.”¹³²⁷ Instead of the elaborate stage designs and audacious physicality of Jewish and experimental, avant-garde artists, Nazi theater dramatists and scholars emphasized language as the hallmark of their conservative, nationalist approach to German theater.

¹³²³ Helmut Pfanner, *Hanns Johst. Vom Expressionismus zum Nationalsozialismus* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1970), 128.

¹³²⁴ Julius Petersen, *Das deutsche Nationaltheater* in Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 85.

¹³²⁵ Hanns Johst, *Standpunkt und Fortschritt* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling, 1933), in Pfanner, *Hanns Johst*, 259.

¹³²⁶ Johst, “Theater und Nation,” *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* (1931) in Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 136.

¹³²⁷ Johst, “Theater und Nation,” 97, in Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 136.

The Deutsches Theater closely conformed to these guidelines. Immediately after Ney assigned roles and distributed scripts to his ensemble, he would discuss with individual actors the specific traits he envisioned for each roles and the affects he felt the character should arouse. Then the actors had to focus on reciting their lines, which involved meticulous preparation and refinement under constant instruction from Ney and his wife, Irene:

Da kommt es manchmal auf die Nuance der Tonstärke, der Klangfarbe in der Stimme oder den Sekundenbruchteil der Verzögerung [...] Unermüdlich und mit Engelsgeduld verwendet Ludwig Ney oft Stunden darauf, um aus einer kleinen Szene von vielleicht drei Minuten Spieldauer das Letztmögliche herauszukitzeln.¹³²⁸

The emphasis that the Ney-Bühne placed on the verbal element of dramatic performances resonated with the *alte Kolonie*. The theater was so successful that in January 1943, Irene Ney opened her own “Schule des Deutschen Theaters,” specializing in elocution, recitation, and vocal formation. The school expanded several times and existed until March of 1945. Likely modeled after the pedagogy of Gerda von Bremen-Hirschheydt, instructor for “Sprecherziehung und Ausdruckskunst,” Irene Ney’s school advertised “eine Möglichkeit zu bieten in die Wunder unserer Muttersprache einzudringen, ihre herrliche Ausdrucksform sprechend und gestaltend erleben zu können.”¹³²⁹ Its self-avowed purpose was to cultivate the “Gewalt der Sprache” among the *alte Kolonie* enhancing its members’ appreciation for their “heilige Muttersprache” in the realms of business, politics and, especially, art.¹³³⁰ Evoking Hermann Otto Hoyer’s iconic portrait of

¹³²⁸ Egon Straube, “Ein Schauspieler spricht,” *Die Brücke* (1942).

¹³²⁹ “Schule des Deutschen Theaters,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, January 1, 1943.

Hitler and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in a single turn of phrase, Irene Ney extolled the potency of the German language: “Was Sprache ist, wird uns klar, wenn wir daran denken, dass eines der größten und bedeutendsten Werke unseres Schrifttums, Goethes Faust, den Satz enthält: ’Am Anfang war das Wort.’”¹³³¹

The school organized recitation evenings in the *bonarense* German Club, which frequently sold-out. The *La Plata Zeitung*’s detailed review of Irene Ney’s performance on an evening devoted to Rainer Maria Rilke conveys the nationalist population’s affirmation of the primacy of the text and its enthrallment with the German language: “Die Sprechkunst Irene Neys besteht wesentlich darin, dass sie mit natürlichen Mitteln arbeitet, im Tonfall, im Rhythmus genau dem Original folgt und die Akzente leise, melodische Kurven den schroffen Erschütterungen vorziehend, wie malerischen Helldunkelwirkungen dem Wortgeflecht Rilkes entnimmt.”¹³³² In his *Zuflucht des Geistes*, Biccari refers to concepts such as the “Macht des Wortes” and “Theatrer der Dichtung” as fundamental tenets of a “Nationalästhetizismus,” which emphasized the *völkisch* qualities of German drama, especially the Classics.¹³³³ The primacy of the word in *Nationalästhetizismus* resonated strongly in the *alte Kolonie*, because language was a crucial element their identity as Germans abroad. A reprint in the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* of an apothegm engraved on the Eger city hall is representative of dozens of paeans to the German language in

¹³³⁰ Irene Ney, “Sprachbildungsarbeit“ *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹³³¹ Ney, “Sprachbildungsarbeit“ *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹³³² “Sprechabend des Deutschen Theaters Rainer Maria Rilke gewidmet,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 20, 1943.

¹³³³ Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 101.

nationalist media in Argentina: “Des Volkes Seele lebt in seiner Sprache.”¹³³⁴

Supported by its own language school, the Deutsches Theater stressed language as a vital component of its endeavor to faithfully represent the German Classics and fortify solidarity among German nationalists in Argentina.

In the effort to create a national, *völkisches* theater, the Ney-Bühne’s “Dienst am Kunstwerk” exalted the eternal German values which media of the *alte Kolonie* perceived to be inherent to the German Classics. According to nationalist theater critics in Buenos Aires, the Ney-Bühne’s focus on language paid dividends in its performances of Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing. The *La Plata Zeitung* gushed over the ensemble’s mastery of Goethe’s verse in *Faust*, claiming that thanks to the “vorbildliches Dienen aller am Werk“ the performance delivered “die sprachlichen Schönheiten des genialen Werkes aus Goethes Frankfurter und Weimarer Zeit“¹³³⁵ with a polish and confidence worthy of the poet’s masterpiece, the “tiefstem Ebenbild deutscher Seele, das die deutsche Kunst kennt.“¹³³⁶ The paper reserved special mention for Werner Loewer and Ludwig Ney, who played Faust and Mephisto, respectively. In both cases, the reviewer traced their success to oral expression. Loewer conveyed his Faust with “großer sprachlicher Vollendung“ achieving “einprägsame, vergeistigte Wirkung“ in the pivotal monologues in “Nacht” and “Wald und Höhle.”¹³³⁷ Ney’s portrayal

¹³³⁴ “Denkspruche am Rathaus zu Eger,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1940).

¹³³⁵ “Die *Faust*-Aufführung des Deutschen Theaters unter Spielleitung von Ludwig Ney,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 22, 1942.

¹³³⁶ “Zur *Faust*-Aufführung des Deutschen Theaters,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 17, 1942.

of Mephisto was that of a genuine “Volksschauspieler,” who treated spectators to “prachtvoller Bühnenwirkung.“ He conveyed “berühmte Worte [...] pointiert und sarkastisch oder ironisch, mit volkstümlich-tilleulenspiegelhafter Geste oder beißender Satire.“¹³³⁸ The commentary in the *La Plata Zeitung* echoes the *Hamburger Abendblatt*’s review of Karl Wüstenhagen’s 1940 production of *Faust* in April of 1940, which stresses Matthias Weimann’s “Sprachkunstwerk” in the role of Faust.¹³³⁹ Such parallels emphasize the Ney-Bühne’s conformity to theatrical styles at stages in Nazi Germany.

Reviews of Lessing’s *Minna von Barnhelm* stressed language to such an extent that it overshadows all other aspects of the performance, including plot. Previews leading up to the performance focused on Lessing’s biography, his contributions to the German comedy, the relevance of his work for contemporary Germans, and his depiction of quintessentially German figures, such as the charming German femininity of Minna and the soldierly bearing of Tellheim, Just, and Werner. On the night of the premiere, however, Lessing’s dialogue trumped all other considerations:

Der große Verdienst des Abends bestand darin, den Dialog Lessings beschwingt und rhythmisch gegliedert vorzutragen, ihm alle Leichtigkeit und Eleganz abzugewinnen und dadurch das unsterbliche Werk mit dem intensiven Empfinden unserer Zeit zu erfüllen [...] noch niemals war eine so sorgfältig ausgearbeitete und so fließenden Beherrschung des gesprochenen Wortes zu bemerken.¹³⁴⁰

¹³³⁷ “Die *Faust*-Aufführung des Deutschen Theaters unter Spielleitung von Ludwig Ney,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 22, 1942.

¹³³⁸ “Die *Faust*-Aufführung des Deutschen Theaters unter Spielleitung von Ludwig Ney,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 22, 1942.

¹³³⁹ In Zabka, “Vom ‚deutschen Mythos‘ zum ‚Kriegshilfsdienst‘: *Faust*-Aneignungen im national-sozialistischen Deutschland,” 323.

The reviewer continued to focus on language as he shifted attention to individual performances, praising Irene Ney's portrayal of Minna: "in der sprachlichen Prägung meisterlich, in jedem Akzent und jeder Färbung der bewundernswert durchgeführten Wortpflege restlos überzeugend."¹³⁴⁰ Language conveyed the virtues of the German protagonists, and it served as the vehicle to expose the drama's single non-German figure and, not coincidentally, its only villain—Riccaut de la Marlinière. As a citizen of France, the country which nationalist Germans perceived to be their arch-enemy, the German nationalist press identified Riccaut as a transgressor against German cultural values, especially honor and language. More than his actions, Riccaut offended the *alte Kolonie* by ridiculing its notion of a German "heilige Muttersprache." As he tries to convince Minna to lend him money for his gambling habit, Riccaut's atrocious German contrasts with her eloquence. Her refusal to speak French upon his request reveals both Minna's patriotism and Riccaut's impertinence. As Minna explains, in Germany she feels compelled to communicate in her native tongue. Riccaut, on the other hand, insists on speaking in French, occasionally interjecting with dreadful German. Finally, Riccaut explains that he is certain to return Minna her money because he will win at gambling by cheating. Minna, somewhat taken aback, clarifies Riccaut's evasive description—"une dextérité ... corriger la fortune"—by speaking plainly: "Falsch spielen? Betrügen?" Her description is accurate, but Riccaut is indignant and scorns the poverty of the German

¹³⁴⁰ "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 7, 1943.

¹³⁴¹ "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 7, 1943.

language: “O, was ist die deutsch Sprak für ein arm Sprak, für ein plump Sprak.”¹³⁴² Riccault’s insults to the German language were unpardonable for the *alte Kolonie*. Vilified as the “schäbige” antithesis of the other noble, German characters, the *La Plata Zeitung* distinguishes the reprehensible Frenchman from the virtuous German figures by dint of his “verdorbene[n] Deutsch.”¹³⁴³ The paper’s review is remarkable because its analysis hinges almost exclusively on dialogue. The Deutsches Theater’s performance of *Minna von Barnhelm* fulfilled the Nazi dramatic concept of “Dienst am Wort,” to such an extent that reviewers excluded other elements of the performance entirely.

The Deutsches Theater and the nationalist media’s embrace of *Nationalästhetizismus* contained strong political undertones. Reichsdramaturg Rainer Schlösser perceived the nationalist movement for literary theater to be a fusion of governance and art. By virtue of the “Gewalt ihrer Rede, durch die Formung des Wortes,” Schlösser identified Goebbels and Hitler to be both statesman and artists. He asserted that only artists, particularly poets and thespians, “verfügen über die herzbezwingende Kraft des gesprochenen [...] Wortes.” Like all great artistic accomplishments, Schlösser continues, Goebbels and Hitler’s eloquence is inspiring for all Germans because it is the fruit of intensive labor. Nobody should believe that the “gewaltige Eroberungsarbeit im Bereich unserer Sprache, die durch den Nationalsozialismus geleistet wurde, unseren Wortgewaltigen ohne Mühe in den Schoß gefallen sei! Die Entwicklung

¹³⁴² Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Minna von Barnhelm*, in *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Werke in 8 Bänden*, ed. Herbert G. Göpfert (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 1: 670.

¹³⁴³ “Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 7, 1943.

von den ersten Ansprachen bis zu den überwältigendsten Reden setzen vielmehr ein unablässiges seelisch-geistiges Ringen mit sich.¹³⁴⁴ Deploying expansionist militaristic jargon, the Reichsdramaturg contextualizes Hanns Johst's "Dienst am Wort," in the framework of Nazi political power. Defining Nazi oratory as an performative art form, Schlösser suggests a link between Nazi ideology and dramatic production.

The rigor with which Ney's ensemble trained the deployment of the dramatic text reflects Johst's "Theater des Wortes," in which actors acknowledge and defend the primacy of the spoken word.¹³⁴⁵ By intensively engaging with the dramatic text, actors at the Ney-Bühne sought to internalize their roles and achieve a fusion between their phenomenological and performative selves:

Einem spricht er einen Satz zehnmal und mehr immer wieder mit der gleichen Überzeugungskraft vor, der Darsteller versucht ihn nachzusprechen, im gleichen Ton, in derselben Haltung, bis die Worte in ihm selbst nach innen zu wirken beginnen und von dort zurückkommen, nicht mehr in mechanischer Nachahmung, sondern von der eigenen Persönlichkeit unbewusst verarbeitet und gefärbt als eigenes Gut wirken und nun auch überzeugend dastehen.¹³⁴⁶

The process Straube describes corresponds to Ney's own account of rehearsals, which strove for "eine immer tieferes Eindringen in die schauspielerische Figur, durch das fortwährende Erzeugen der Gefühlshaltung, in der die Rolle gespielt werden muß, entsteht aus der bewussten Arbeit das vom Bewusstsein abgelöste freie künstlerische Gestalten des Schauspielers."¹³⁴⁷ The final objective of this

¹³⁴⁴ Rainer Schlösser, *Das Volk und seine Bühne*, 83.

¹³⁴⁵ Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 133.

¹³⁴⁶ Egon Straube, "Ein Schauspieler spricht," *Die Brücke* (1942).

¹³⁴⁷ "Schauspielproben," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien* August, 1943.

process was to attain an ecstatic sense of community (“Gemeinschaftsgefühl”), in which the ensemble and audience become one (“Einswerden”) with the dramatic work: “Das wahre Kunstwerk muß sich immer restlos auflösen in die Menschen, denen es gehört.”¹³⁴⁸ By offering the audience glimpses into its work ethic, solidarity, and commitment, the Deutsches Theater sought to build a connection between itself and theatergoers: “die trennende Rampe zwischen Bühne und Zuschauerraum zu überbrücken.”¹³⁴⁹ Its focus on language and rigorous preparation is consistent with the rightist novelist and literary critic Otto Paust’s concept of the theatrical performance as the ensemble’s service to audience and dramatist: “Saubere Aufführungen, Pflege des Wortes und Achtung vor dem Autor sind nicht nur Dienst am Dichter, sondern auch am Besucher”¹³⁵⁰ Hitler himself expounded upon the efficacy of the works of the German Classics, such as Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing, to evoke a sense of community among individual citizens:

Das ist das *Verbindende*, jenes *Geheimnisvolle*, das die Menschen zueinanderführt, wie zwei Liebende, die, weit voneinander entfernt, aufsehen zu den Sternen in dem Gefühl: In dieser Minute treffen sich unsere Gedanken. Die großen Geister eines Volkes sind das einigende Element, das die Menschen zusammenschließt, sie blicken auf sie gemeinsam, und das ist ein Genuß, der die auseinanderstrebendsten Menschen zusammenführen kann.¹³⁵¹

¹³⁴⁸ “Vorwort,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹³⁴⁹ “Vorwort,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹³⁵⁰ Otto Paust, *Deutsche Verse*, in Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 122.

¹³⁵¹ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen: Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933 2*, In Biccari, *Zuflucht des Geistes*, 110.

The Deutsches Theater conceived itself as a cohesive element in the *alte Kolonie*, and imagined theatergoers to be a “seelisches Kollektivindividuum,”¹³⁵² which acted as “Mitgestalter jeder Vorstellung.”¹³⁵³ As participants in theatrical performances, the audience is transformed into the sum of its individual members. It becomes a new entity, feeds off the creative energy of the dramatic production, and morphs into “ein schwarzes vieläugiges und vielohriges Ungetüm,” which exerts a decisive force on the performing ensemble.¹³⁵⁴ Actors and audience are bound by links of tension and emotion, an interaction which is the source of thespians’ creativity and inspiration. Without spectator’s strength, however, “kann die schönste und sauberste Inszenierung zu einem Misserfolg [werden].”¹³⁵⁵ Thespians sense this bond and recognize instantly whether a silent public expresses confusion or emotion (“Unverständnis“ or “Ergriffenheit“). Actors at the Deutsches Theater can predict which lines will resonate, and which will not; which jokes will draw laughter, and which ones will fall flat. The actor will interpret his role according to the tastes of his public, to achieve the greatest affect.¹³⁵⁶ Actors are not, however, slaves to their audiences, instead theatergoers and ensemble collaborate as a “gestaltende Kraft in den Dienst der seelischen

¹³⁵² Carl Ludwig Schleich, “Psychologie des Publikums,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹³⁵³ “Publikum, aktiv!“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1942.

¹³⁵⁴ Schleich “Psychologie des Publikums,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹³⁵⁵ “Publikum, aktiv!“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1942.

¹³⁵⁶ “Publikum, aktiv!“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1942.

Kräfte des Volkes.“¹³⁵⁷ The true bond between audience and ensemble is one of service to a nationalist, racial ideal of *Volk*.

Its ethnocentric charity performance for the benefit of the Deutsche Hilfswerk, reflected this principle. The event, entitled “Das kleine Theater des täglichen Lebens,” blended the imagery of the German Classics, including Auerbach’s cellar, with skits about daily life in the *alte Kolonie*. The motivation, actor Egon Straube explained, was community: “weil wir mit Ihnen zusammen über unsere Mitmenschen lachen wollen.”¹³⁵⁸ The charity performance was intended to function as a buoyant pledge on the part of audience and public alike to support the German homeland: “Das macht das Ganze besonders schön, weil sich der Gedanke der Freude mit dem Gedanke der Hilfe für andere paart und so aus Freude wieder Freude entsteht.“¹³⁵⁹ Audience and ensemble were united by their cultivation of German culture and allegiance to nationalist German identity. The actor Werner Loewer concluded his essay in *Die Brücke* with a commitment to the theater’s public, “dem unsere Liebe und Treue gehört und das wir nicht mehr missen könnten.”¹³⁶⁰ The nationalist population reciprocated this sentiment by attending the stage’s performances, a gesture which affirmed German culture and demonstrated solidarity with each other and fellow Germans in Europe:

Herausgerissen aus dem ungeheueren, einmaligen Geschehen unserer Geschichte, da unsere Brüder und Schwestern in unvergleichlichem

¹³⁵⁷ “Zum Spielplan der Ney-Bühne,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, September, 1940.

¹³⁵⁸ “Zum Fest des Deutschen Theaters am 5. September zu Gunsten des Deutschen Hilfswerks,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 23, 1942.

¹³⁵⁹ “Zum Fest des Deutschen Theaters am 5. September zu Gunsten des Deutschen Hilfswerks,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 23, 1942.

¹³⁶⁰ Loewer, “Das Deutsche Theater vom Schauspieler aus gesehen,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

Heldentum das größte Opfer für unser Volk und unsere Kultur bringen, bleibt uns nichts anderes übrig, als dieser Kultur treu zu bleiben, indem wir sie in würdiger Weise pflegen. Unser Deutsches Theater ist wohl das wichtigste Kulturinstrument, das wir besitzen – ihm die Treue zu halten und unsere volle Unterstützung zu leihen, soll uns daher eine ehrenvolle Pflicht sein.¹³⁶¹

For German nationalists in Argentina, theater was inextricably linked to national identity. As I have noted earlier, the *La Plata Zeitung* claimed that for Germans artistic expression was intrinsic to nationhood. For the *alte Kolonie*, this was a fundamentally transatlantic concept.¹³⁶² Ludwig Ney explained in the first edition of *Die Brücke* that one aspect of the Deutsche Theater’s cultural mission was to create bridges between Germans living abroad and their fellow Germans and cultural heritage in Europe.¹³⁶³ Joseph Goebbels’ speech at the Reich Theater Week in 1938, quoted in the centrist Argentine paper, *La Razón*, must have resonated strongly with the *alte Kolonie*: “hay un solo pueblo alemán, que no se encuentra sujeto a ciertas fronteras” but instead can be found anywhere, “donde vive gente germana, que habla alemán, piensa en alemán y se sientan como alemanes.”¹³⁶⁴ In fulfillment of Goebbels’ statement, performances at the Deutsches Theater functioned “als Bekenntnis des Auslandsdeutschen zur Heimat, als Darstellung des ewigen Dranges deutscher Seele nach nationaler Einigung.”¹³⁶⁵

¹³⁶¹ Haigis, “Das Deutsche Theater – und wir,” *Die Brücke* (1944).

¹³⁶² “Edición Castellano,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 28, 1940.

¹³⁶³ “Vorwort,” *Die Brücke* (1943).

¹³⁶⁴ “Festival de Teatro alemán en Viena,” *La Razón*, June 14, 1938. “who speak German, think in German, and feel themselves to be Germans—Trans.”

¹³⁶⁵ “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 29, 1940.

2.3 The Deployment of the German Classics to Define and Preserve a Nationalist German Community in Buenos Aires

At the core of the German colony's emphasis on the dramatic genre is a concept which Loren Kruger has termed "theatrical nationhood," a project in which inchoate, tenuous sentiments of national identity are articulated, developed, and reinforced through dramatic representation.¹³⁶⁶ Immersed in a foreign culture and isolated from their *Vaterland*, German emigrants in Buenos Aires worked to nurture a cohesive, transatlantic sense of German national identity through theatrical performances. The Ney-Bühne's productions of the German Classics had the explicit purpose of cultivating National Socialist cultural values among German immigrants in Argentina. The *La Plata Zeitung*'s programmatic preview of *Götz von Berlichingen*, the first German Classic performed by the Ney-Bühne, explained that the production aimed to maintain nationalist Germans' awareness of German literary traditions: "Es handelt sich um den Versuch, das Jugenddrama Goethes [...] dem in Buenos Aires lebenden deutschen Publikum zu erschließen, das von der Heimat abgeschlossen ist."¹³⁶⁷ According to media from the *alte Kolonie*, Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* modeled masculine values after the Prussian military code. Although Tellheim's exaggerated pride very nearly costs him the woman he loves, nationalist critics praised his soldierly bearing as exemplary for all German men: "Tellheim [...] ist die künstlerische Synthese preußischer Ehrbegriffe und deutscher Mannestugenden."¹³⁶⁸ The *Deutsche in*

¹³⁶⁶ Kruger, *The National Stage*, 3. Kruger finds theatrical nationhood is first articulated in Schiller's "idealist hope of summoning the nation into being by representing it dramatically," (86).

¹³⁶⁷ "Zur Aufführung des *Götz von Berlichingen*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 10, 1940.

Argentinien likewise applauded Lessing for placing the German soldier's sense of honor above all material concerns, directly linking his depiction to the Nazi military: "Lessing brachte zum Ausdruck, was jeder deutsche Soldat des friedericianischen Zeitalters empfand und was seitdem ehrenvolle Überlieferung in der ganzen deutschen Armee geworden ist."¹³⁶⁹ Lessing's play was particularly well suited for the nationalist German public in Buenos Aires because it featured characters from many social classes, including peasants and servants, as well as nobility. Lessing presents all German characters in a positive light, demonstrating values which resonated strongly with nationalist Germans in Argentina, especially: "ihr höchstes Ideal, das Ideal von Vaterland."¹³⁷⁰ In Buenos Aires, the provocative spectacle of theatrical performance summoned the idea of transatlantic German nationhood in the poignancy of the audience's absence from its *Vaterland*. During the Ney-Bühne's productions, the Teatro Nacional became a surrogate for national theaters in distant Germany and Austria.

Nationalist German media sought to validate Nazism as a nucleus for German cultural identity by claiming the movement had deep historical roots, thus touching on what Benedict Anderson has identified as one of the problematic paradoxes of nationalism—the nations' objective modernity vs. their subjective antiquity.¹³⁷¹ Nationalist German media in Argentina attempted to surmount this paradox by linking canonical dramas of the 18th-century to the recent rise of the

¹³⁶⁸ "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 1, 1943.

¹³⁶⁹ "Minna von Barnhelm," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, May 1943.

¹³⁷⁰ "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 5, 1943.

¹³⁷¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5.

so-called Third Reich. The 1943 edition of *Die Brücke* contained an article entitled "Das neue Reich" by Hans Freyer, a Nazi sympathizer who founded the University of Leipzig's sociology department and was head of the German Institute for Culture in Budapest from 1938 to 1944. Referencing Hitler, Freyer asserts that in calling his nation to confront its future, the statesman also urges citizens to draw from their past, thereby uniting past and future in an eternal present. By breaking with the confining democracy of the Weimar Republic, Hitler purposefully opened the "Zustrom der Geschichte. Und nicht aus den abgegriffenen Formeln und Menschen des Zeitalters, sondern aus der Tiefe der Jahrtausende gestaltet er das neue Reich."¹³⁷² Though Freyer had acted some in high school, his article in the theater almanac is noteworthy because it makes no reference to theater. Its inclusion in *Die Brücke* reveals the Ney-Bühne's intention to legitimize the National Socialist state by utilizing theatrical performances to trace the regime's origins to a common past.

The nationalist German media in Buenos Aires grafted their own interpretations of German national memory onto the German Classics, which they believed directly addressed contemporary events. Nazi scholars were convinced, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* asserted, that literary works were not a product of their authors' intellect, but instead were inspired by the "schöpferische Kraft seines Volkes." The author is a conduit for the will of the *Volk*: "Nicht er schreibt und dichtet, sondern Es schreibt und dichtet durch ihn." The *Deutsche in Argentinien* evinces parallels to propagandistic literary interpretations of Goethe's work in Nazi Germany. In his book, *Weltschau der Dichter. Goethe, Schiller,*

¹³⁷² Hans Freyer, "Das neue Reich," *Die Brücke* (1943).

Hölderlin, Kleist (1943), Rudolf Ibel praises “den Quellkräften völkischer Wirklichkeit, denen er [...] bei der Niederschrift seines *Götz* schöpferisch unmittelbar verbunden war.”¹³⁷³ The eternal *Volk*, whose inspiration stems from past, present, and future, ensures that “die noch unausgesprochenen Werte der geistigen Formung eines Volkes um viele Generationen vor ihrer sichtbaren Verwirklichung zu Worte kommen.”¹³⁷⁴ In a lecture to his ensemble, Ludwig Ney postulated that Goethe’s *Götz von Berlichingen* was derived directly from the German *Volk*, specifically, “Das Bauerntum, diese gewalttätige Kraftquelle völkischen Seins.” Ney implied a connection between the Knight of the Iron Hand and National Socialist ideology when he described the drama as the first expression of German peasants’ “instinktivem Wissen ihrer Verbundenheit mit Blut und Boden.” *Götz*’s scorn for the regional princes and reverence for the Kaiser reflects the people’s intuitive will for an authoritarian state: “gefühlsmäßiger Sehnsucht nach klarer Einfachheit des staatlichen Gebildes und Rechts.”¹³⁷⁵ The *La Plata Zeitung* directly linked Goethe’s *Jugendwerk* to Hitler’s ascent, positing its depiction of the German *Bauernkrieg* of 1525 as “der erste Vorläufer der nationalsozialistischen Revolution.”¹³⁷⁶ Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933 proved “wie prophetisch Goethe in die Zukunft sah und wie genau er die kommenden Zeiten vorausgeahnt hatte.”¹³⁷⁷ In a lecture at the University of

¹³⁷³ In Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 93.

¹³⁷⁴ “Zur Aufführung des Schauspiels *Die Räuber*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1943.

¹³⁷⁵ “*Götz von Berlichingen* und der Bauernkrieg,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1940.

¹³⁷⁶ “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 26, 1940.

¹³⁷⁷ “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 26, 1940.

Strasburg on January 23, 1944, the eve of Germany's collapse, the political scientist Ernst Rudolf Huber declared that *Götz von Berlichingen* represented "das Höchste an politischer Dichtung, was unser Volk besitzt."¹³⁷⁸ Writing for the *Deutsche in Argentinien*, Johannes Franze, who in 1959 won the Federal Cross of Merit (*Bundesverdienstkreuz*) for his scholarly activities in Argentina,¹³⁷⁹ listed several examples of just how precisely—in his view—*Götz von Berlichingen* corresponded to contemporary world events:

Die Gefolgschaftstreue Lerses und Georgens, wirken sie nicht wie ein Stück Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung selbst? Sind sie nicht nur mit andern Namen bedachte, mit andern Waffen kämpfende Vorläufer der jüngsten Geschichte Deutschlands? Ist Sickings Hilfsbereitschaft als „Verbündeter“ nicht auch ein Stück Modernität von aktuellster Deutungsmöglichkeit: der Verbündete, der zunächst neutral bleibt, um im rechten Augenblick einzugreifen?¹³⁸⁰

Franze's article buttresses nationalist interpretations of *Götz von Berlichingen* as a harbinger of Nazism by drawing parallels between characters from Goethe's 18th-century drama and the Nazi military as well as Russia's military alliance with Germany in 1940. In order to secure the links between *Götz von Berlichingen* and a National Socialist world view, German nationalists excluded all other interpretations of Goethe's work. Karl Mandelkov has noted that reception of Goethe's work in Nazi Germany was remarkably diverse.¹³⁸¹ Additionally, numerous political and ideological movements—Catholicism, Protestantism, Marxism—have exploited the story of Götz and the Bauernkrieg to serve their

¹³⁷⁸ In Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 100.

¹³⁷⁹ Despite his very tainted past, Franze won the award with no resistance from the West German embassy. Bestand B8, Band 372, PAAA.

¹³⁸⁰ "Götz von Berlichingen und der Bauernkrieg," *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1940.

¹³⁸¹ Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 88-117.

own purposes. Yet to nationalist German media in Buenos Aires any interpretation not attuned to Nazism only masked the drama from true “Erkenntnis.”¹³⁸² Nazi perception of German history permitted no interpretation other than that the *Bauernkrieg* manifested “die Äußerung des gesunden Lebenswillens einer Nation,” which fortunately “nicht ungehört im Laufe der Jahrhunderte verhallte“ but instead reached its just culmination in the rise of Nazism.¹³⁸³ Goethe’s drama represented a visionary expression of the will of the eternal German *Volk* which granted historical legitimacy to the authoritarian National Socialist state.

Reviews of other performances, such as the Deutsches Theater’s 1943 production of Schiller’s *Die Räuber*, convey a similar message. This 18th-century drama represented “ein seherischer Blick in die Zukunft, eine Gewissheit des Kommenden, eine erste Vorahnung unseres Denken.”¹³⁸⁴ Schiller’s drama may be set in a distant past, but “dessen geistige, tiefere Problemstellung [...] heute ebenso aktuell ist, wie im Jahre 1777.”¹³⁸⁵ The *Deutsche in Argentinien* saw in Karl Moor an archetype of the great hero figure. Were it not for his brother, Franz, Karl’s path could have led to “Gemeinschaftsgründung, der Eroberung zum allgemeinen Guten.”¹³⁸⁶ Though brothers, the magazine describes the Moors in terms evocative of anti-Semitism—while Karl is “urwüchsig” and “fest

¹³⁸² “Götz von Berlichingen und der Bauernkrieg,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1940.

¹³⁸³ “Götz von Berlichingen und der Bauernkrieg,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1940.

¹³⁸⁴ “Schillers *Räuber*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 3, 1943.

¹³⁸⁵ “Zur Aufführung des Schauspiels *Die Räuber*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1943.

¹³⁸⁶ “Zur Aufführung des Schauspiels *Die Räuber*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, August, 1943.

verwurzelt” Franz is “das völlige Gegenteil von “Urwüchsig.“ Whereas Karl naturally inspires comradeship, Franz cannot develop feelings of solidarity, because he is of a purely calculating, materialistic nature. For this reason Franz is broken by the drama’s end, driven by his materialism to suicide. The lesson is particularly relevant to World War II, a conflict of ideals: “Im Taumel und Rausch des technischen, wissenschaftliches Fortschrittes sind ihr ganze Völker erlegen und werden den Preis der Verirrung zahlen in der gleichen Selbstvernichtung wie ihn Franz von Moor in Schillers Räubern bezahlen muß.”¹³⁸⁷ Written over 150 years earlier, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* cited Schiller’s *Räuber* as evidence that the Nazi world view would triumph over its foes.

Lessing’s *Minna von Barnhelm*, set in Berlin shortly after the Seven Year War (1754-1763), was also celebrated for its relevance to current events: “eine große, soldatische Zeit braust durch die Szenen des Werkes, das so neu auf uns wirkt, als wäre es in diesem Kriege, und nicht vor 170 Jahren, geschrieben.”¹³⁸⁸ Who, the *Deutsche in Argentinien* queried, “empfindet nicht in jeder Szene die innigste Ähnlichkeit dieser Charaktere, Menschen und Situationen mit unserer eigenen Zeit?”¹³⁸⁹ Most importantly, as German chargé d'affaires Erich Otto Meynen put it, four years into World War II Lessing’s characters continued to provide “in ihrem funkelnden Lebensgehalt“ both mirth and inspiration for all

¹³⁸⁷ “Zur Aufführung des Schauspiels *Die Räuber*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*. August, 1943.

¹³⁸⁸ “*Minna von Barnhelm*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 5, 1943.

¹³⁸⁹ “*Minna von Barnhelm*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, April 1943, 145.

Germans.¹³⁹⁰ Always written in the first person plural form, articles about the German Classics instilled the *alte Kolonie* with confidence in National Socialism and created a bond among its members that represented a nationality in the modern sense, an insular ethnicity organized by historic fiction into an imagined community.¹³⁹¹

Drawing from historical precedents they traced to the German Classics, theater critics imposed Nazi hierarchical structures on the *alte Kolonie*. The protagonist of *Götz von Berlichingen*, the Knight of the Iron Hand, prophesied the rise of the Third Reich under the personality cult of Adolf Hitler: “Die Sehnsucht nach starker Reichsgewalt, nach einer Führergestalt ist in der deutschen Dichtung niemals so stark betont worden.”¹³⁹² Similar to Ernst Rudolf Huber, who praised *Götz* for its emphasis on “staatlicher herrschaft, Hierarchie und Ordnung,”¹³⁹³ Ney reminded the *Deutsche in Argentinien*’s readership that the tragic conclusion to *Götz* should cause Germans to be grateful, “da wir unter klarer Führung die bauende, schöpferische Kraft erleben dürfen.”¹³⁹⁴ In its review of *Die Räuber*, the *La Plata Zeitung* glorified Schiller’s “großen Tatmenschen.”¹³⁹⁵ The reviewer attempted to legitimize absolute obedience to Hitler’s regime by referring to Immanuel Kant: “Das Individuum muss so handeln, als ob es die Gesetze der

¹³⁹⁰ “Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April, 1943.

¹³⁹¹ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 103.

¹³⁹² “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 16, 1940.

¹³⁹³ Mandelkov, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 100-101.

¹³⁹⁴ Cornelia Ney Collection.

¹³⁹⁵ “Schillers *Räuber*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 8, 1943.

Allgemeinheit vertrete. Mit den *Räubern* wies Schiller noch mitten im Blutsrausch der Stürmerzeit auf die Gedankenwelt Kants hin.¹³⁹⁶ In its efforts to indoctrinate the German community with Nazism, the newspaper misinterpreted Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, thereby revealing another paradox which Benedict Anderson argues is inherent to nationalisms: their political power vs. their philosophical poverty, even incoherence.¹³⁹⁷ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt states that compliance with the singular will of society becomes uniform in a perfect totalitarian government.¹³⁹⁸ In Nazi Germany this meant obedience to Hitler, because the Führer's words had the weight of law.¹³⁹⁹ Thus the *La Plata Zeitung*'s claim, "die Staatsraison besteht zu Recht," did not affirm Kant's rule that the principle of one's will must always be such that it can become the principle of general laws.¹⁴⁰⁰ Instead it demanded that, as Germans loyal to Nazism, members of the *alte Kolonie* submit collectively to the absolute authority of Adolf Hitler. The *La Plata Zeitung* asserted that the service and devotion of subordinates to their superiors—Just to Tellheim in *Minna*, Lerse and Georg to Götz, and many members of the robber band to Karl in *Die Räuber*—furnished the *alte Kolonie* with models for loyalty to Adolf Hitler.

¹³⁹⁶ "Schillers *Räuber*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 8, 1943.

¹³⁹⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5.

¹³⁹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), 136.

¹³⁹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 148.

¹⁴⁰⁰ "Schillers *Räuber*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, September 8, 1943.

As I have noted earlier, it became increasingly risky for the *alte Kolonie* to remain loyal to Nazi Germany as the war turned against the Axis powers. The *La Plata Zeitung* addressed this tension, exhorting German nationalists to maintain their allegiance to Nazism. The Deutsches Theater also played a role in this effort. Not only did it perform many dramas which reinforced Nazi ideology, but it also staged productions which confronted the growing concern of treason, such as the theater's performance of *Wallenstein* in March of 1944. Ney reworked the drama to emphasize its relevance to the present day, striking all of the astrology scenes and limiting the "sentimentalen" moments between Max Piccolomini and Thekla to "das Unerlässliche." Instead he focused exclusively on the "Grundelement des Werkes"—the topic of treason and its consequences in the *Piccolomini and Wallensteins Tod*. The moral of Schiller's drama, according to the *La Plata Zeitung*, was not only the immediate, fatal consequences of Wallenstein's treachery against the Emperor Ferdinand II, of the House of Hapsburg. The reviewer diagnosed egoism to be Wallenstein's fundamental character flaw: "Er handelt in Wahrheit nicht für sein Vaterland, sondern für egoistischen Machthunger." The newspaper argued that Wallenstein's arrogance amounted to "verbrecherischen Leichtsinns," making him a "Kriegsverbrecher" even before he had taken action against the Emperor:

Verrat aber, das ist die Grundlehre von Schillers Drama, vernichtet den Verräter [...] Schon der Gedanke an Verrat zeugt Böses, auch wenn er noch nicht ins Stadium des Handels getreten ist. Der verräterische Tat geschieht dann von selbst, sie wird von geheimnisvollen Kräften getrieben. Sie vernichtet ihre Urheber. Die Sühne schreitet ihren Weg erbarmungslos.¹⁴⁰¹

¹⁴⁰¹ "Schillers *Wallenstein*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March, 22, 1944.

Given the tenuous state of Argentina's neutrality in the war, the concluding paragraph of the review can be read as a thinly veiled warning to the nationalist German population. The German Classics, legitimized by their canonical status and sanctified as the pure expression of an eternal German *Volk*, both underscored the relations of power in the Nazi regime and issued grave warnings against even thinking about transgressing against this hierarchy. Hitler's leading representative in Argentina, German ambassador Dr. Edmund Freiherr von Thermann, frequently attended performances at the Deutsches Theater and thereby reinforced Nazi authoritarianism at the stage's productions.

Reviewers also manipulated the German classics to substantiate the Nazi myth of an eternal, unified, and exclusive German *Volk*. Major von Tellheim and Minna von Barnhelm represented "zeitlose, ewige Gestalten, Ideale, geradezu Symbole von Völkern und Rassen."¹⁴⁰² The paper cited as Lessing's greatest National Socialist accomplishment his inclusion of lower ranking military men and civilians, such as Werner and Just, respectively, in his portrayal of *völkisch* virtue.¹⁴⁰³ Johannes Franze also perceived harbingers of *völkisch* equality in *Götz von Berlichingen*, perceiving in Goethe an advocate of National Socialist values of community, self-sacrifice, and social equality. During the siege of Burg Jagsthausen Götz functions as a mouthpiece for the "aufbauenden gefühlsmäßig deutschen Kräfte unseres Volkes." Götz, who eats from the same plate as his serfs, advocates a national community of deep horizontal comradeship, irrespective of economic or social inequality when he exclaims: "Das wäre ein

¹⁴⁰² "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 1, 1943.

¹⁴⁰³ "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 7, 1943.

Leben, Georg, wenn man seine Haut für die allgemeine Glückseligkeit dransetzte.“¹⁴⁰⁴ According to the nationalist press in Argentina, Lessing and Goethe foreshadowed a National Socialist community, which as racially exclusive, but admitted all pro-Nazi Germans into its folds.

Yet the nationalist German community in Buenos Aires could only be fully imagined through the exclusion of “Others.”¹⁴⁰⁵ The *La Plata Zeitung* celebrated German dramatists as much for not being French as for being German. Herder, for example, is lauded for steering the young Goethe away from “französischen Verstandesmenschentum.”¹⁴⁰⁶ Lessing, too, is praised for liberating the comic genre from French influences.⁵⁵ In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybass and Allon White assert that exclusion is the effect of a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear, and desire in the construction of subjectivity. Exclusion results in a psychological dependency upon precisely those “others” which are being rigorously opposed and excluded from the community being built.¹⁴⁰⁷ In its description of Götz von Berlichingen as an exemplary German, the *La Plata Zeitung* deploys the principle of exclusion. It emphasizes the knight’s “Hass gegen Überfremdung (römisches Recht), gegen Schiebertum und ungerechten Gewinn” and vilifies the figures of Metzler and Link as: “geradezu Bildnisse demokratisch-jüdischer Agitatoren, die nur

¹⁴⁰⁴ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Götz von Berlichingen* in *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Werke, Kommentare und Register. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden*, ed. Herbert von Einem, Hans Joachim Schrimpf, and Erich Trunz (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999), 4: 143.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Peter Stallybass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 5.

¹⁴⁰⁶ “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 16, 1940.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Stallybass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 5.

sadistische Triebe, nur materieller Machthunger und Raubgier vorwärts treiben.”¹⁴⁰⁸ Franze’s catalogue of parallels between Goethe’s drama and contemporary events brings all the clichés of pernicious Nazi racial anti-Semitism to the fore. His depiction of Götz’ Germaness is dependent not only on a racist hatred of Jews, but also inveighs against other non-German groups:

Denken wir nicht, wenn wir die feigen Lumpen der Reichsarmee vor uns sehen, an die Söldnerheere eines bestimmten Staates in unserer Zeit, an ihre Großspürigkeit, ihr Lügennetz, ihre Hinterlist und Tücke? [...]Wirken nicht Szenen, wie die spitzen, intellektuellen, spöttischen und gezierten Gespräche am Hofe des überheblichen Bischofs von Bamberg wie eine Satire auf Salonaesthetentum und Literatengeschwätz der Systemzeit? [...] Und die Erzählung von den bestechlichen Richtern, die ihre Klienten auspressen und bestehlen, stimmt sie nicht ganz zu gewissen Skandalprozessen aus der Systemzeit, die noch in frischester Erinnerung sind?¹⁴⁰⁹

Franze implies German traits by naming the defects he sees in the enemies of Nazism, such as the British army, (mostly Jewish) intellectuals, and the judicial and political system of the Weimar Republic. The reader relies on Franze’s description of others—“feige,” “Lügennetz,” “überheblich,” and “bestechlich”—in order to glean German traits, such as bravery, honesty, modesty, and integrity. Franze’s review is remarkable for its focus on institutions, individuals, and attributes which do *not* correspond to Nazi definitions of Germanness.

In the creative process of imagining nationhood through tactics of exclusion, periphery and center can trade places. In *Minna von Barnhelm*, the Frenchman Riccault is socially peripheral, but symbolically central. Although Riccault figures only in a few scenes of Lessing’s drama, his role was played by

¹⁴⁰⁸ “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 26, 1940.

¹⁴⁰⁹ “Goethes *Götz von Berlichingen*,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1940.

Ludwig Ney, the Deutsches Theater's leading actor. The *La Plata Zeitung* condemned Riccault's "gallischen Adelstolz" and his "Spieler-und Betrügerleidenschaft,"¹⁴¹⁰ but simultaneously praised Ney's portrayal of this figure as the "abgerundetste und wirkungsvollste Gestalt unter den männlichen Darsteller."¹⁴¹¹ Riccault is rejected as un-German, but his figure is as central to definitions of the *Volk* as Minna, Tellheim, Werner, and Just—all model Germans. The *La Plata Zeitung* confirmed the primacy of the "other"—all who don't fit into the *alte Kolonie*—by remarking that Ney's depiction of the outcast Frenchman represented "ein Verdienst, das seinen Platz in der Geschichte des Deutschtums am La Plata finden wird."¹⁴¹² By performing a figure excluded from the German nationalist community, Ney paradoxically garnered his own legacy within it. In order to enact the strength and the stability of the colony's center, the Deutsches Theater had to depict its boundaries and inveigh against its enemies as well. By means of encountering difference through theatrical excursions beyond the *alte Kolonie*'s fringes, the Deutsches Theater imagined a community of illusory fullness by performing what nationalist Germans believed they were not.

3. Dedicated but Distinct: Dramas Written by Members of the *alte Kolonie*

In addition to the German classics, the Deutsches Theater also staged dramas written by members of the old colony, such as Werner Hoffmann's *Utz*

¹⁴¹⁰ "Minna von Barnhelm" *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 5, 1943.

¹⁴¹¹ "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 7, 1943.

¹⁴¹² "Lessings *Minna von Barnhelm*," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 7, 1943.

Schmidl and Otto Cziarski's *Der Bauerngeneral*.¹⁴¹³ Hoffmann's play about Schmidl, one of the four founders of Buenos Aires and a German immigrant, was such a success in Argentina that it was later reprinted and performed in Germany.¹⁴¹⁴ An ad-hoc theater group first performed Cziarski's *Der Bauerngeneral* in 1940 before the Deutsches Theater staged it again in celebration of Hitler's 52nd birthday on April 20, 1941. By performing classic German drama alongside works by local community members, the Deutsches Theater aimed to instill a deep sense of common cultural heritage and culture among the nationalist German colony in Buenos Aires. It is noteworthy that *Utz Schmidl* and *Der Bauerngeneral* were the only dramas performed in the *alte Kolonie* which were not set in Germany. While Cziarski's plays affirmed the *alte Kolonie*'s close ties to their European Fatherland, Hoffmann's work was ambivalent. Nationalist in tone, *Utz Schmidl* also underscored the vast distance separating Argentina's nationalist German community from Germany.

Neither of these dramas are well known outside of Argentina, so it is necessary to give a brief summary of both. Like many German dramas and films from this period, *Der Bauerngeneral* is based on a historical event, refashioned to glorify Nazi visions of the German *Volk*. The drama is set in 1788 in the town of Werschetz (Vršac), located at what today is the eastern border of Serbia. Werschetz was subject to invasions by the Ottoman Empire, which controlled the

¹⁴¹³ A separate grouping of thespians, many of whom also performed with Ney-Bühne, collaborated on the production of Hoffmann's *Utz Schmidl*, which the author insisted on directing himself.

¹⁴¹⁴ Johannes Franze, "Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires 1941," *Das Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

town for much of the 16th, 17, and 18th centuries. After a second major Turkish War in 1684, just seventy houses remained in Werschetz. At this time German farmers began settling in the area, establishing a steadily growing community over the next century. Czierski's *Der Bauerngeneral* is a dramatized version of the historical events of September 1788, when another Turkish invasion threatened the town. *Der Bauerngeneral* begins in the grim days before the Turkish siege. Over 40,000 Turks have surrounded Werschetz, which has been abandoned by both the Hapsburg troops and most of its terrified residents. Just 75 inhabitants—70 Germans and 5 Serbs—remain. They are led by the courageous farmer general, Johann Jakob Hennemann. Through deception, including drumming, changing of guards, church bells, and smoking chimneys, Hennemann and his followers succeed in convincing the Turks that Hapsburg forces still occupy Werschetz. The Turkish forces eventually withdraw, and Werschetz is saved. Later, on August 20, 1791 the Werschetz municipal council ennobled Hennemann for rescuing the town.¹⁴¹⁵

Werner Hoffmann, a teacher at the Goethe-Schule and a contributor to the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* and the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien*, wrote his drama *Utz Schmidl* in 1941. Like *Der Bauerngeneral*, Hoffmann's play is loosely based on historical events, namely the life of the German adventurer Utz Schmidl, who fought with Spanish forces on numerous exploratory expeditions in Paraguay and Argentina. Hoffmann wrote his drama as a retrospective in which Schmidl, having returned to his hometown of Straubing

¹⁴¹⁵ Anton Tafferner, *Quellenbuch zur donauschwäbischen Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Kepplerhaus, 1995), 88.

in Bavaria, converses about South America with old acquaintances in a local tavern. Their reunion functions as a framing device, which fades into the main body of the work—Schmidl’s experiences in the Spanish colonial army under the command of General Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and his rival, Capitan Domingo de Irala. Caught in a web of intrigue between Cabeza de Vaca and Irala, Schmidl attempts to uphold his belief in military hierarchy because he is certain that this is the only way to maintain order in the colonizing army. Yet his convictions do not enable him to stay clear of the power struggles in the Spanish military. When Cabeza de Vaca forces Irala’s hand, Schmidl sides with the captain, although he fears that Irala’s rebellion will sow anarchy and disorder among the troops. Subsequent events prove him correct, and during the final scene in Asunción, Paraguay, the audience witnesses how Irala’s subordinates are already plotting to overthrow him. When Schmidl attempts to defend Irala, the Spanish troops ridicule him for being a mercenary. Their insults deeply offend Schmidl who, for all his exploits and devotion to the Spanish mission, remains a lowly sergeant due to his German nationality. Bitter and impoverished but with ambitions for a strong military under a united Germany, Schmidl returns to Straubing, only to find that his visions of German power literally lull his tavern companions to sleep.

Czierski’s *Bauerngeneral* and Hoffmann’s *Utz Schmidl* reiterated many of the themes in performances of the German Classics yet, as we will see, they also reveal a diversity of identity which belies the uniform veneer of German nationalism in Argentina. Czierski’s drama was conformist. It upheld the central

tenet of what Gaetano Biccari refers to as “Nationalästhetizismus,” i.e. the primacy and power of the word. Czierski incorporated stanzas of verse into his drama which were spoken by a choir in the Greek tradition and inspired the German residents of Werschetz to take up arms in defense of their community. Czierski’s stanzas also evoked contemporary dramas in Nazi Germany, such as Richard Euringer’s *Deutsche Passion* (1933) and Wolfgang Eberhard Möller’s *Das frankenburger Würfelspiel* (1936), which also includes stanzas of verse spoken by a choir. Overlapping dramatic techniques and aesthetics evinced transatlantic links in dramatic composition and performance between the *alte Kolonie* and Germany, likely heightening German nationalism in Argentina:

Ein Eisen hat er [Gott] uns gegeben,
scharf, schwer und gut,
Wir pflügen jetzt mit unserem Leben,
mit unserm Blut.

Wir selber sind jetzt Sturm geworden
und sagen rein:
bin über alle Feindeshorden
hört unser Schrein:

Der Bauer lebt, er kann auch sterben
fürs liebe Land.
Wer seinen Acker lässt verderben,
dem dorr die Hand!¹⁴¹⁶

For the *La Plata Zeitung* these verses deployed the spoken dramatic word to activate the *Volk*: “ganze Strophen [werden] chorisches gesprochen, als löse das Wort des Vorsprechers Gefühle und Stimmungen aus, die schon längst stumpf und unbewusst in der Seele des Volkes geschlummert haben, um jetzt [...] die

¹⁴¹⁶ Otto Czierski, *Der Bauerngeneral* (Buenos Aires: Verlag Junges Volk), 22.

Mitkämpfer zur Tat hinzureißen.“¹⁴¹⁷ In the performance, a choir composed of German immigrants from the Siebenbürgen area near Werschetz spoke these verses, endowing them with a poignant, biographical force. Czierski’s stanzas, enhanced by the living, physical memory of Siebenbürgen immigrants, reinforced German nationalists’ perception of their European Vaterland as an embattled homeland, which demanded loyalty and defense.

Czierski’s *Bauerngeneral* called for solidarity among the *alte Kolonie* by emphasizing that the greatest strength of the Werschetzer Germans was their unity and comradeship: “das Wichtigste: zusammenhalten! Sich nie auseinander sprengen lassen.“¹⁴¹⁸ Affirming interpretations of the German Classics, reviews of the *Bauerngeneral* claimed that Czierski’s drama demonstrates that German solidarity stems from unified, eternal *völkisch* identity: Ein Volksspiel ist dieser ‚Bauerngeneral‘ weil er alles Volkes Tugenden kündigt und wachruft: Kameradschaft, Gefolgschaftstreue, Mut und Kraft zum Einsatz: weil er das Schicksal des Einzelnen mit dem seines Volkes verbindet, weil er das Volk mit der Ewigkeit verknüpft.“¹⁴¹⁹ The nationalist press also exploited the notion of an eternal German Volk to posit the *Bauerngeneral* as an indication of Germany’s Nazi destiny, asserting that the Werschetzers’ “urwüchsiges völkisches Bewusstsein, ihre instinktiven Triebe” manifested a “Vorklang von Großdeutschlands angeborenen völkischen Tugenden.“¹⁴²⁰ By choosing the

¹⁴¹⁷ “*Der Bauerngeneral*: Festspiel anlässlich der Feier des 52. Geburtstages Adolf Hitler,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 21, 1941.

¹⁴¹⁸ Czierski, *Der Bauerngeneral*, 25.

¹⁴¹⁹ “*Der Bauerngeneral*,“ *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, September, 1940.

Werschetzer resistance, Cierzski had dramatized a historical event “die mit deutlicher Beziehung auf die Ereignisse des Balkankrieges aus der politischen Augenblicksstimmung unserer Zeit geboren schien.” As German troops invaded Yugoslavia, nationalists found justification for Nazi aggression in Czierzski’s “Sinnbilder für den ewigen Sinn deutschen Strebens.”¹⁴²¹ Perhaps the most striking of the “zahlreichen Parallelen [...] zur unmittelbaren Gegenwart“ was Werschetzer leader Johannes Hennemann’s resemblance to the current statesman issuing orders to the German *Volk*.¹⁴²² Invoking a timeless spirit of “volkhafte Ordnung,“ the *La Plata Zeitung* perceived Werschetzers’ obedience to Hennemann to foreshadow the leadership of Adolf Hitler, which it held to be a manifestation of *völkisch* destiny: “Die Anerkennung der führenden Persönlichkeit, die nicht das Volk durch Wahl, sondern das Schicksal selbst dahingestellt hat, [...] das ist der eigentliche Sinn dieses schlichten und volkstümlichen Stückes, das gerade an diesem Tage seine eigene Bedeutung gewinnt.”¹⁴²³ The *Deutsche in Argentinien* emphasized the celebratory nature of the performance on April 20, 1941, by concluding its preview of *Der Bauerngeneral* with a declaration of blind faith in the Nazi State: “Wir überschauen Vergangenheit, die Gegenwart und Zukunft und wissen: Das

¹⁴²⁰ “*Der Bauerngeneral*,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, December 5, 1940.

¹⁴²¹ “*Der Bauerngeneral*: Festspiel anlässlich der Feier des 52. Geburtstages Adolf Hitler,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 21, 1941.

¹⁴²² “*Der Bauerngeneral*: Aufführung durch die Ney-Bühne,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 3, 1941.

¹⁴²³ “*Der Bauerngeneral*,“ *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, April 18, 1941.

Deutsche Volk ist unter Adolf Hitlers Führung unbesiegbar.“¹⁴²⁴ Otto Czierski’s *Bauerngeneral* dramatically represented an oath of loyalty to Hitler by the *alte Kolonie* as a gift for his 52nd birthday.

While it is also possible to read Werner Hoffmann’s *Utz Schmidl* as a propagandistic drama, closer analysis reveals his drama to be far more ambivalent than Czierski’s piece. To be sure, *Utz Schmidl* is not an antifascist play.

Hoffmann’s Schmidl conforms to proclaimed National Socialism virtues by dint of his diligence and discipline, sense of self-sacrifice and comradeship, as well as his bravery in battle and conviction in the racially motivated Spanish mission, the “Erschließung eines neuen Erdteils für die weiße Rasse.“¹⁴²⁵ Hoffmann

emphasizes Schmidl’s loyalty, contrasting him from the capricious Spaniards.

Schmidl refuses a promotion when he learns it would also require him to spy on the Spanish general, and his warning to Irala not to rebel against Cabeza de Vaca reads as a justification of the Nazi regime’s rigid hierarchy: “Sündigt Ihr wider das Gesetz des Gehorsams, so zerstört Ihr die Ordnung, ohne die Euer Werk nicht bestehen kann.“¹⁴²⁶ This principle is so sacred to Schmidl that he later assures

Irala that respect for authority even trumps morality: “ich will Euch, meinem Führer, getreu sein—mag es recht sein, was Ihr tut, oder nicht.“¹⁴²⁷ Hoffmann is unequivocal that his protagonist’s loyalty should serve his contemporaries as an

¹⁴²⁴ “Zur Aufführung des Festspiels *Der Bauerngeneral* von Otto Czierski am 20. April im Teatro Politeama Argentino,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, April, 1941.

¹⁴²⁵ Franze “Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

¹⁴²⁶ Werner Hoffmann, *Das Spiel vom deutschen Landsknecht Utz Schmidl* (Buenos Aires: Verlag Junges Volk, 1940), 33.

¹⁴²⁷ Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 82.

example to follow in their commitment to National Socialism. Disillusioned by the Spaniards' refusal to justly reward his service, Schmidl returns to his hometown of Straubing. However he is not content in Straubing, either. As Hoffmann explained in the *La Plata Zeitung*, "Am liebsten zöge er noch einmal hinaus—nicht für Spanien, sondern für Deutschland. Aber die Zeit ist noch nicht reif dafür, so wird er in Straubing bleiben und träumen von einem einigen deutschen Reich...."¹⁴²⁸ Hoffmann's own analysis explicitly encourages theatergoers to draw parallels between *Utz Schmidl* and Nazi Germany. His dramatization of the adventures of Utz Schmidl is intended to inform his fellow citizens' perception of their own condition as Germans abroad in 1940.

Schmidl's German traits distinguish him from both the Spaniards and indigenous characters of the play. Where they are fickle, unreliable, even dishonest and lazy, Schmidl is loyal, dependable, forthright, and industrious. The differences are so profound that the Spanish figures in the play commonly refer to Schmidl as "Deutscher" instead of calling him by name or rank. They refuse to accept him as one of their own and scorn his German idealism and integrity: "O du deutscher Schwätzer—Gott erhalte dich so dumm und so fromm!"¹⁴²⁹ Surrounded by foreigners, Schmidl is ostracized and returns to Germany poor and bitter. Writing for the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes*, Johannes Franze lamented Schmidl's fate to be one shared by many Germans abroad: "so bleibt der Auslandsdeutsche in Überseeländern Amerikas Zeit seines Lebens nur ein

¹⁴²⁸ "Das Spiel vom deutschen Landsknecht Utz Schmidl," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, June 26, 1940.

¹⁴²⁹ Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 87.

Geduldeter, dem man zwar Pflichten aufbürdet, aber Rechte ungern gewährt.“¹⁴³⁰

By equating the undervalued, underappreciated Schmidl with other German emigrants to the Americas, Franze appears to advocate the National Socialist protocol for the *alte Kolonie*—obey and respect the host society, but never forget that Germany is the true *Vaterland*. Or, as the *Deutsche in Argentinien* put it: “Deutsches Volk, Bedenke, dass Du ein Deutscher bist!”¹⁴³¹ Franze and the *Deutsche in Argentinien* oppose full acculturation to Argentine society, preferring to retain their German identity rather than become Argentines.

Nonetheless, there exists crucial slippage between Hoffmann’s *Utz Schmidl* and the official Nazi platform in Argentina. Utz Schmidl, having lived in South America for decades, is not really a German either. He has become a hybrid. This is clear in the drama’s frame when Schmidl, upon his return in Straubing, is distinctly *not* at home in his *Heimat*. Although he sits and converses with them for some time in a small, local tavern, his former friends do not recognize him, and insist on calling him “Fremder.”¹⁴³² Their conversation makes clear that the citizens of Straubing have a fundamentally different world view from Schmidl. When Krautmacher, Dippel, and Becker speak of South America they betray ignorance of life and customs in the region. They are certain that Paraguay is a land inhabited by cannibalistic women and that giants roam Patagonia. They also believe Buenos Aires is a prosperous metropolis, completely

¹⁴³⁰ Franze, “Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

¹⁴³¹ “Verpflichtung,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, June, 1940.

¹⁴³² Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 8.

unaware that a fire destroyed the city years earlier. Schmidl can hardly contain himself as he listens, muttering “Lüge! Lüge über Lüge! [...] Eine Wüste ist deine Stadt, verbrannt sind die Häuser.”¹⁴³³ Although they are overjoyed to see him when he identifies himself and are eager to hear about his experiences, Schmidl’s compatriots fall asleep when he speaks of life abroad. They do not understand why he left Straubing nor, really, why he has returned. Schmidl’s experiences abroad distinguish him from the residents of Straubing. Responding to questions about whether he has gained wealth abroad, Schmidl states: “Wenig und viel, wenn ich an das denke, was ich hier oben (*deutet auf seine Stirn*) gesammelt.”¹⁴³⁴ His tavern companions do not have this knowledge, and neither party can overcome the gulf it opens between them. The Wirt sums the resultant alienation up neatly when, after they have sat together for hours, he tells Schmidl: “Ihr seid ein wenig fremd geworden.”¹⁴³⁵

Utz Schmidl undercuts the notion of a seamless unity between Germans in Buenos Aires and their compatriots in Europe. Even staunch German supporters of Nazism in Argentina, like Johannes Franze, agreed with Hoffmann. Franze recognizes that many Germans in Europe in 1940, like residents of Schmidl’s “Heimatstadt Straubing, ein ganz falsches Bild von dem Leben und den Gewinnmöglichkeiten in Südamerika machen.“ Franze is also cognizant that these passages convey a weighty problem for the *alte Kolonie*:

¹⁴³³ Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 7.

¹⁴³⁴ Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 9.

¹⁴³⁵ Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 93.

Die Rahmenfassung des Stückes [...] enthüllt die Tragik des Auslandsdeutschen am tiefsten. Die Stammtischler lauschen, schlafen ein und verstehen den tiefen Gefühlskern auslanddeutscher Sehnsucht nicht: teilzunehmen am Weltgeschehen, die Engigkeit der Heimat zu überwinden, deutsche Tugenden in der ganzen Welt bekannt zu machen. Das Fernweh brennt Utz Schmidl in der Seele; jene Kleinbürger haben es niemals gespürt, ja es erscheint ihnen als eine Art besonderer Verrücktheit.

Despite their mutual nationalistic sentiments, there exist fundamental, widespread, enduring differences which separate German emigrants from their countrymen in Europe. Franze recognizes that neither party can ever truly comprehend the other, and he identifies this dilemma as the “Grundproblem des Auslandsdeutschtum.”¹⁴³⁶

Hoffmann’s *Utz Schmidl* furnishes theatergoers with a “Spiegel des eigenen Lebens.“ This consists partly in Schmidl’s alienation from his *Heimat*, but also in his fondness for South America. Born as a German in Straubing on the Danube, Schmidl acknowledges that his initial motivation for traveling to South America had been a simple lust for adventure. Gradually, however his feelings evolved into something different: “Doch mit den Jahren, und schier ohne daß ich es selber bemerkte, ward etwas anderes wach in mir: Ich fing an, es zu lieben—dies Land; seine Wälder und Flüsse behexten mich, also daß ich des grünen Heimatstromes vergaß.”¹⁴³⁷ The word “behext” distances Hoffmann from what, in the eyes of Nazi authorities, would be a very problematic admission of genuine love for South America. The passage can be understood as a warning to the *alte Kolonie* against succumbing to the charms of Argentina. Yet even the need to

¹⁴³⁶ Franze, “Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

¹⁴³⁷ Hoffmann, *Utz Schmidl*, 64.

issue such a warning questions whether the *alte Kolonie*'s German nationalism was single-hearted. Furthermore, Hoffmann's drama belies the implication that Schmidl was merely bewitched by his newer environs. Throughout the drama Schmidl's actions demonstrate that his affection for South America is real. As Franze notes, Schmidl's affinity for South America is inexorable, which is one reason why at the end of the drama, he "beschließt, seine Vaterstadt erneut zu verlassen."¹⁴³⁸ Historical evidence urges one to infer that many members of the *alte Kolonie* felt a strong pull toward both Germany and Argentina. Max Tepp, another teacher at the Goethe-Schule, wrote a book, *Die Umwelt des Auslandsdeutschen in Südamerika*, which explicitly encouraged Germans to learn to love Argentina.¹⁴³⁹ Hoffmann himself wrote volumes of poetry about South American flora and fauna,¹⁴⁴⁰ and the Deutscher Volksbund even referred to Argentina as a new "Vaterland."¹⁴⁴¹ By all accounts, many Germans in Buenos Aires shared Schmidl's affinity for South America. The *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, whose staunch support of Nazism made it an unlikely advocate of ethnic Germans' fondness for Argentina, also referenced the broad resonance of

¹⁴³⁸ Franze, "Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

¹⁴³⁹ See chapter one, part 4.1

¹⁴⁴⁰ "Das Spiel vom deutschen Landknecht Utz Schmidl," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 7, 1940.

¹⁴⁴¹ "Aufgaben des Deutschen Volksbundes," *Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für die La Plata Staaten*. Ed. Pastor Dufft, 23: 317.

Hoffmann's drama among members of the *alte Kolonie*: "Wer unter den Millionen von Auslandsdeutschen ist kein Ulrich Schmidl?"¹⁴⁴²

Czierski's *Bauerngeneral* and Hoffmann's *Utz Schmidl* both upheld the style of literary theater advocated by Johst, Petersen. Czierski's aggressive call to arms, Hoffmann's verse epilogue is a thoughtful reflection on the many meanings of *Heimat* for Germans abroad:

Wir sagen alle Heimat. Einem ist sie
so selbstverständlich wie die Luft zum Atmen.
Er kann nicht leben ohne sie, doch spricht er
nur dann von ihr, wenn sie ihm fehlt. Er lebt sie
und freut sich ihrer, ohne das er's weiß.
Ja, rühmst du sie – er schämt sich deiner Worte.

Dem andern ist sie ewig fern und fremd.
Er denkt an sie, er träumt von ihr, er redet
mit andern und für sich davon. Sie ist ihm
ein Wunder wie das Land, das Sinbad sah.
Viel Schiffe fahren heimwärts ohne ihn,
sein Sehnsuchtschiff wird nie die Segel spreiten [sic].

Dem andern wieder ist sie fern und nah.
Er weiß: Sein Blut gibt ihm ein Recht auf sie.
Doch wird's ihm nicht geschenkt, er muß es sich
erringen, und er träumt nicht nur davon:
Er will es, ja, er macht sich endlich auf,
das Erbe, das ihm zusteht, anzutreten.¹⁴⁴³

Hoffmann's epilogue conveys the conflicted identity of Germans living in Buenos Aires. "Heimat," a concept familiar to all Germans abroad, elicits very distinct emotional reactions. The first stanza describes the German immigrant, likely acculturated, who is profoundly connected to his *Vaterland* yet scarcely aware that these ties exist. Only occasionally nostalgic, this emigrant is noncommittal,

¹⁴⁴² "Das Spiel vom deutschen Landknecht Utz Schmidl," *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, July 7, 1940.

¹⁴⁴³ "Epilog zu *Utz Schmidl*," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

and feels uncomfortable by others' patriotism. The second stanza depicts the diremption felt by many members of the *alte Kolonie*. For these Germans *Heimat* has become a fairy tale. Hoffmann's figure speaks and dreams of a *Heimat* to which he will never return. His fondness for his native country will never translate into action, and a steady estrangement is the inevitable result. The final six lines also convey a strong emotional bond to Germany, but these individuals act on their sentiments and return to Europe. Hoffmann indicates that only deeds sustain a vital connection to one's *Heimat*. In the context of World War II, it is possible to understand these lines as an implicit call to arms. It is more likely, however, that Hoffmann advises the *alte Kolonie* to participate actively in the preservation and cultivation of German culture in Argentina. His epilogue to *Utz Schmidl* is striking for its nuance. Hoffmann conveys a complex psychology of Germans living abroad vis-à-vis their *Vaterland* that heavy-handed propagandistic sources were reluctant to admit. By expressing this diversity, Hoffmann reveals that in spite of their allegiance to Nazi Germany, the *alte Kolonie* was a distinct community, one whose identity did overlap with that of Germans in Europe, but was also in many ways divergent.

Many German nationalists in Buenos Aires had a fundamentally different sense of national identity from Germans in Germany, because they also had an affinity for a second country. Some of them readily identified Argentina as a second patria. To an extent this divergence destabilizes the transatlantic National Socialist community which Nazi authorities wished to construct. Johannes Franze noted that Schmidl's alienation from his homeland precludes his reintegration into

German society. Unable to feel at home his Fatherland, Schmidl is incapable of rejoining a protective national community. He is “*allein, schutzlos, nur auf sich selbst gestellt.*”¹⁴⁴⁴ *Utz Schmidl* does not reject the notion of a transatlantic German National Socialist community, but it create ambivalence.

Werner Hoffmann’s *Utz Schmidl* was the only German nationalist drama set in South America. It was removed somewhat from the official Nazi propaganda machine because, although members of Ney’s ensemble participated in its performance, the drama was not officially produced by the Deutsches Theater. Perhaps this allowed for a more a complex, nuanced portrayal of nationalists’ feelings toward their German *Heimat* and their present Argentine residence. The *alte Kolonie* did feel a strong allegiance toward Nazi Germany, which continues to impact Argentina’s German population even today. A divide between members of Argentina’s conflicting German populations persists in the present.¹⁴⁴⁵ Descendents of nationalist Germans still struggle to confront older generations’ support of Nazism. At the same time, however, Werner Hoffmann’s *Utz Schmidl* demonstrates that a tension existed between Germans who lived in Argentina and those who remained in Germany. Many German nationalists in Argentina were to an extent alienated from Germany. Their allegiance to Nazism was distinct from Germans in Germany because, as an emigrant population, they lived abroad and harbored genuine fondness for their new environs.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Franze, “Das künstlerische Leben in Buenos Aires,” *Jahrbuch des deutschen Volksbundes in Argentinien* (1941).

¹⁴⁴⁵ Regine Lamm, interview with Robert Kelz, December 1, 2008.

CHAPTER VII

EPILOG

1. Enduring Competition in Postwar Argentina 1.1 Peronist Argentina

Juan Domingo Perón was elected President of Argentina in 1946, after rising to power as a military officer and Secretary of Labor. Perón held power until late 1955 by advocating for the nation's lower classes, *los descamisados*. Catalyzed by Eva Perón, the government granted women's suffrage and funded an array of social welfare programs, subsidizing workers' access to housing, health care, education, and leisure activities. At the same time, Perón's regime purged dissidents from the government, media, and education sectors. Controversially, Perón actively encouraged postwar European immigration to Argentina, particularly from Germany. Approximately 40,000 German emigrants, some of them supporters of Nazism, entered Argentina during the postwar period, roughly equal to statistics for 1933-1945.¹⁴⁴⁶ Antifascists and nationalists alike referred to migrations of both periods as diasporas.¹⁴⁴⁷

Numerous nationalist German media and cultural institutions also flourished in postwar Argentina, and intense competition between Argentina's German theaters also persisted. Ludwig Ney's Deutsches Theater was briefly

¹⁴⁴⁶ Holger Meding, "Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Einwanderung an den Rio de la Plata," *Nach Buenos Aires!*, 36.

¹⁴⁴⁷ "Malerei am Webstuhl," *Freie Presse*, April 1948; "Geistige Lage des Nazismus heute," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 31, 1949.

banned when Argentina declared war on Germany in 1945, but he renamed it the Neue Bühne (New Stage) and reopened it the following year. It performed under several different names during the postwar period but, essentially, the ensemble was continuous and staged productions regularly under Ney's direction until 1972. Admired for its accomplishments as an *Exiltheater*, during the late 1940's the FDB featured guest performances by some of the most famous names in German theater, including Ernst Deutsch, Hans Moser, and Viktor de Kowa. In the late 1950's the FDB grew increasingly dependent on subventions from Bonn, which financed the stage until 1965.¹⁴⁴⁸

1.2 The Freie Deutsche Bühne: Stymied Reconciliation, Continued Conflict

Paul Walter Jacob saw the war's end as an opportunity to fulfill both moral convictions and professional ambitions. Jacob hoped that the FDB could help to heal animosity between Argentina's German populations and, as a businessman, he also understood that the FDB would more than double its public if it could establish itself as the theater of both German colonies. Yet Jacob's ambitions also threatened to destabilize the antifascist community, many of whom had no wish for reconciliation with the *alte Kolonie* and opposed his new strategy.

In the hope that the broad appeal of international celebrities could surmount lingering hostilities in German Buenos Aires, Jacob arranged for the exiled Jewish actor Ernst Deutsch, a theater and film star in Europe and

¹⁴⁴⁸ For the sake of coherency, I consistently refer to this stage as the Freie Deutsche Bühne or FDB. It should be noted, however, that the stage changed its name to the Deutsche Bühne Buenos Aires from 1953-59; Deutsches Theater in Buenos Aires from 1960-63; and the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Buenos Aires in 1964.

Hollywood, to perform as a guest at the FDB in 1946. Theater reviewers for German, Spanish, Hungarian, Polish, and Italian media gushed over Deutsch's sold-out performances at the Teatro Nacional. Yet his success belied the deeper tensions simmering in the antifascist *neue Kolonie*. When Jacob contracted the Viennese comic Hans Moser to perform in 1948, an editorial in the *Revista Familiar Israelita del Uruguay* noted that Moser, though married to a Jew, had continued acting during "aquella época vergonzosa [...] lo que ciertamente no habría podido pasar si sus antecedentes políticos y morales no hubieran coincidido con los de los dirigentes nazis."¹⁴⁴⁹ That October, Jacob's publicist in Montevideo remarked that Moser's visit had alienated "einen großen Teil alter Freunde und Gönner," explaining that, "Die Leute fühlen sich quasi betrogen."¹⁴⁵⁰ The situation deteriorated when Jacob engaged Egon Straube and Ina Maria Müller, both of whom had been leading figures with Ludwig Ney's competing Deutsches Theater. Max Wächter, a founding member of the FDB, went so far as to accuse Jacob, a Jew like Wächter, of "Liebeläugelei mit den Nazis."¹⁴⁵¹ After Müller was contracted the *Jüdische Wochenschau* ceased covering the FDB altogether. Jewish support, which had been vital for this refugee theater, was strained after the war. Marvin Carlson's neologism, "ghosting," describes how actors can become trapped in certain roles by their audiences' memories. When Jacob engaged Moser, Straube, and Müller, the German-speaking Jewish

¹⁴⁴⁹ "Carta a la Redacción," *Revista Familiar Israelita del Uruguay*, August 27, 1948." that shameful period [...] which certainly could not have happened if his moral and political views had not coincided with those of the Nazis in power —Trans."

¹⁴⁵⁰ Widetzky to Jacob, October 1, 1948, PWJA Korrespondenz 1948.

¹⁴⁵¹ Wächter to Arndt, January 15, 1946, Jacques Arndt Collection.

community was “haunted” and enraged by their roles on Nazi stages during WWII.

The fallout might have been worthwhile if Jacob had succeeded in establishing a contact zone for antifascists and nationalists at the FDB, however hostilities between the two groups proved intransigent. Most German nationalists adamantly refused to attend a “jüdisches Theater,”¹⁴⁵² and many members of the antifascist colony, including several actors at the FDB, persisted in denouncing the *alte Kolonie* collectively as “Nazis.”¹⁴⁵³ In a sense, one can argue that actors at both stages were ghosted by the parts they had played on and off stage in the recent past. These phantoms combined with new tensions stemming from postwar German emigration to entrench and perpetuate conflicts between Argentina’s German colonies. Deeply frustrated, in 1950, Paul Walter Jacob accepted an offer to become *Generalintendant* in Dortmund and left Argentina for good.

1.3 The Ney-Bühne: Further Fascism and the Nazi Diaspora¹⁴⁵⁴

Unlike their antifascist adversaries, German nationalists in Argentina remained tightly united around Ludwig Ney’s stage after WWII. The stage’s program was consistent with its repertoire during the war, ranging from the German Classics to lighter comedies and excluding all authors who had been prohibited in Nazi Germany. The Ney-Bühne encouraged solidarity among all

¹⁴⁵² Hosenlöcher to Jacob, July 28, 1947, PWJA Korrespondenz 1947.

¹⁴⁵³ Berger to Jacob, January 3, 1946, Colección Alexander Berger, IWO.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Ney’s stage changed its name several times from 1945 to 1972, performing as the Neue Bühne in the late 1940s and 1950s and the Zimmertheater in the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout this period his ensembles were referred to as the Ney-Bühne, which is the name I will adhere to when discussing the postwar period.

nationalist Germans by staging dramas written by recent emigrants and pre-war members of the *alte Kolonie*, such as Julius Demuth's *Didi* and Otto Czierski's *Ulrich von Hutten*, respectively.¹⁴⁵⁵ Ney's theater received abundant coverage in the *Freie Presse*, the successor to the *La Plata Zeitung*, which boasted a circulation of 30,000 in the 1950s. Wilfred von Oven, formerly Joseph Goebbels' press secretary, became its editor-in-chief in 1952.¹⁴⁵⁶ The Ney-Bühne also was often reviewed in the Fascist monthly, *Der Weg*, which was banned in Germany and whose contributors included Mathilde Ludendorff, Johann von Leers, and Hans Grimm. Numerous European emigrant thespians acted with the group. Angelika Hauff, who later earned the honorary title of *Kammerschauspielerin* for her work at Vienna's *Burgtheater*, visited this theater in 1948 and 1950,¹⁴⁵⁷ and Zeta Szeleczyk, Hungarian actress and prize-winner at the 1941 Venice Film Festival, performed with Ney from 1948 to 1953.¹⁴⁵⁸ Arpad Bubik, theater director in Budapest and Berlin, directed several productions at the Ney-Bühne in 1949.¹⁴⁵⁹ Rexist journalist Pierre Daye was a frequent reviewer,¹⁴⁶⁰ and in 1948 the stage premiered *Hundert Millionen* by German playwright Heinz Coubier, whose brother had emigrated to Argentina.¹⁴⁶¹ Evoking antifascist exile

¹⁴⁵⁵ "Ulrich von Hutten," *Freie Presse*, March 7, 1949.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Ismar, *Der Pressekrieg*, 197.

¹⁴⁵⁷ "Gastspiel Angelika Hauff," *Freie Presse*, June 22, 1948; "Angelika Hauff, Star in Argentinien," *Freie Presse*, August 31, 1950.

¹⁴⁵⁸ "Interview mit Fräulein Ypsilon," *Freie Presse*, October 4, 1948.

¹⁴⁵⁹ "Der bedeutende Berliner Theaterfachmann und Spielleiter Arpad Bubik als Gastregisseur in Buenos Aires," *Freie Presse*, May 4, 1949.

¹⁴⁶⁰ "Das deutsche Theater in Buenos Aires," *Der Weg*, March 1950.

publications from a decade earlier, *Weg* editor Eberhard Fritsch emphasized the Ney-Bühne's edifying role in times of "geistige Not" and posited it as a guardian of German cultural heritage, "das einzig bleibende in der Flucht, das wesentliche Erbe unserer Väter und der Halt in der Zukunft unserer Kinder."¹⁴⁶² Ney's Neue Bühne played a key part in creating a "kulturverbundene Einheit," in which recent emigrants found solidarity with "alteingesessenen" to reconstitute a cohesive community of German nationalists in Argentina.¹⁴⁶³

1.4 Germany on Stage

Performances at the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Ney-Bühne reveal that the sharp conflict about German identity, which stemmed from divergent views of the German monarchy, was unrelenting in the post-WWII period. The FDB's 1947 production of Carl Zuckmayer's *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*, in which a shoemaker exploits Prussians' obedience to authority figures by masquerading as a military officer, provoked great discord. The *Jüdische Wochenschau* linked Zuckmayer's portrayal of early twentieth-century Prussia to Nazism, claiming his *Hauptmann* "rührt an alle Mängel und Schwächen einer sturen Staatsmaschinerie, die noch vor kurzem zur Weltordnung auszuarten drohte."¹⁴⁶⁴ The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* saw the piece as a dire, sadly unheeded warning: "Ein Meer von Blut und Tränen wäre der Welt und dem deutschen Volk die größte Katastrophe seiner

¹⁴⁶¹ "Neue Bühne Ludwig Ney," *Freie Presse*, June 3, 1948.

¹⁴⁶² "Die Spielzeit 1949 der Neuen Bühne Ludwig Ney," *Der Weg*, December 1949, 1091 – 1093.

¹⁴⁶³ "Zufällige Zuschauermenge oder Theatergemeinschaft?" *Der Weg*, April 1949, 213- 214.

¹⁴⁶⁴ "*Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*," *Jüdische Wochenschau*, May 4, 1947.

Geschichte erspart geblieben, wenn es auf solche Männer [Zuckmayer] gehört ... hätte.”¹⁴⁶⁵ The *Freie Presse* demurred. Describing the *Hauptmann* as “ein heiteres Idyll aus der Serenissimuszeit,” it declared that “kaum eine irgendwie aktuelle Analogie, ein kausaler Zusammenhang zwischen damals und später gefunden werden kann.”¹⁴⁶⁶ Whereas nationalists regarded Wilhelmine Germany with fond nostalgia and posited Nazism as an anomaly (at worst), antifascists believed National Socialism had its origins in the monarchy, and vigorously denounced the authoritarianism and militarism of both eras.

The Allied occupation of Germany was also a thorny subject. Paul Walter Jacob wrote glowing articles from Berlin about the “überall gleich höfliche alliierte Beamten mit perfektem Deutsch“ for the *Tageblatt*.¹⁴⁶⁷ However, the *Freie Presse* exploited another Zuckmayer piece, *Des Teufels General*, to denounce the “jedem Rechtsempfinden ins Gesicht schlagende alliierte Politik,” and asserted that the “giftige Blüten” of the Allied occupation “ebenso wenig entschuldigt werden können, wie [...] die Bestialitäten der Gestapo.”¹⁴⁶⁸ And when the Ney-Bühne staged *Maria Stuart* in 1948, *Der Weg* evoked reviews in the *La Plata Zeitung* several years earlier by linking the 19th-century drama to contemporary events in Germany. *Der Weg* construed Schiller’s “sehr zeitnahes” drama as much-deserved opprobrium on the concurrent Nürnberg Trials, praising Ney for defending “Menschenrecht und Menschenwürde“ against the “teuflische

¹⁴⁶⁵ “*Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, May 4, 1947.

¹⁴⁶⁶ “*Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*,” *Freie Presse*, May 4, 1947.

¹⁴⁶⁷ “Mit Viktor de Kowa im blockierten Berlin,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 8, 1949.

¹⁴⁶⁸ “*Des Teufels General*,” *Freie Fresse*, June 23, 1948.

Rechtsverfälschung, die so krasse Spuren auch in der heutigen, größten aller Weltkrisen hinterlässt.“¹⁴⁶⁹ The *Freie Presse* depicted Maria Stuart and Burleigh as falsely accused defendants and vengeful Allied politicians: “Maria war schon vor Beginn des Prozesses rettungslos verloren, denn nicht auf Beweise, sondern einzig und allein auf Burleighs Ansicht hin [...] sprach das Gericht das Todesurteil aus [...] Die Macht und nicht das Recht ist es, die sie zur Richtstätte schleppt.“¹⁴⁷⁰ The site of bitter disputes about postwar identity and Allied politics, theatrical performances hardened hostilities in German Buenos Aires. Antifascist concerns about insufficient *Entnazifizierung* were countered by nationalist theater critics who defended Nazi officials and accused the Allies of war crimes against an embattled German *Heimat*.¹⁴⁷¹

2. Contrasting Strategies for Constituting Competing Immigrant Communities

One of the most intriguing aspects of Argentina’s competing German theaters is their proximity. During the war the Freie Deutsche Bühne played at the Casa del Teatro, a twenty-minute walk from the Teatro Nacional, where the Deutsches Theater performed in 1943 and 1944. After 1945, the FDB began playing at the Teatro Nacional, thus occupying the same space where an ensemble funded by the Nazi government had acted just a few years ago. Ludwig Ney’s Neue Bühne played at the Teatro Consejo de Mujeres during the late 1940s, just

¹⁴⁶⁹ “*Maria Stuart*,” *Der Weg*, July, 1948.

¹⁴⁷⁰ “*Maria Stuart*,” *Freie Presse*, June 26, 1948.

¹⁴⁷¹ “Zur Entnazifizierung von Auslandsdeutschen,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 7, 1946; “Renazifizierung,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, January 13, 1948.

four blocks from the Teatro Nacional. To the best of my knowledge, this was a unique situation. No other city worldwide featured immediate, fully open competition between German-language antifascist and nationalist stages both during and following WWII.

The theaters' proximity was not only physical. Contact between the stages occurred at many levels. Public contact between German nationalists and their antifascist adversaries was invariably antagonistic. The Austrian emigrant writer and frequent contributor to the FDB Alfredo Bauer emphasized that the immediate proximity of a competing theater supported by Nazis intensified the ideological component of the FDB.¹⁴⁷² The intensification appears to have been reciprocal. The Nazi embassy denounced the FDB to officials in Germany on multiple occasions, and there is evidence indicating that nationalist Germans charged Jacob of tax violations after the FDB's inaugural season and pressured Argentine authorities to force the ensemble out of the Casa del Teatro. Furthermore, it is possible that the Nazis took reprisal against Jacob's parents, who, threatened with arrest by Nazi authorities in occupied Amsterdam, committed suicide just weeks after the FDB's production of *Die Unbesiegten*. For his part, Paul Walter Jacob frequently cited the moral imperative of competing against the Deutsches Theater in his correspondence and fund raising activities. The *Argentinisches Tageblatt*'s review of the Freie Deutsche Bühne's first season attests to the tense relations which existed between the newly formed FDB and the *alte Kolonie*: "Nazioten hatten gegen die 'Freie Deutsche Bühne' sogar

¹⁴⁷² Bauer, interview.

allerlei einzuwenden und warnten dringend vor dem Besuch dieses Theaters.”¹⁴⁷³ However, the anti-totalitarian *Tageblatt* itself aggravated hostilities by repeatedly insulting the *alte Kolonie* and the Deutsches Theater. In one article it snidely remarked that even a few “Nazis” may have enjoyed quality theater at the FDB, “was sie ja in ihren eigenen Kreisen nicht haben könnten.”¹⁴⁷⁴ Even after the war, Ludwig Ney deployed the jargon of Nazi anti-Semitism to inveigh against the “wurzellooses Sensationspublikum” drawn to celebrity guest performances at the predominantly Jewish FDB, while extolling the emigrants at his stage, who formed a true theater community, “eine geistige Einheit zwischen Zuschauerraum und Bühne.”¹⁴⁷⁵ Even after the war ended, hostilities between antifascist and nationalist German communities in Buenos Aires continued unabated.

Despite such unrelenting antagonism, these competing theaters were connected on many levels, and beneath the surface relations were not always hostile. Nationalist and antifascist German immigrants had in common the challenge of creating cohesive communities on foreign soil, and there existed significant similarities in their strategies to accomplish this goal. For both groups theater played a vital role in community-building. According to Max Herrmann, one of the founding fathers of German theater studies as an academic discipline, theatrical performances are rooted in community for artists and audiences alike. Indeed, a requisite for theatrical performance is the bodily co-presence of actors

¹⁴⁷³ “Die erste Spielzeit der Freien Deutschen Bühne,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 17, 1940.

¹⁴⁷⁴ “Die erste Spielzeit der Freien Deutschen Bühne,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, November 17, 1940.

¹⁴⁷⁵ “Zufällige Zuschauermenge oder Theatergemeinschaft?” *Der Weg*, April 1949, 213 – 214.

and spectators. Herrmann emphasizes that this is true for all theaters, regardless of ideology: “So many participants are involved in creating the theater event that the basic social nature of its character cannot be lost. Theater always involves a social community.”¹⁴⁷⁶ The performance calls for a social community, since it is rooted in one and, on the other hand, since in its course it generates a community of actors and spectators. Herrmann’s insights are valid for both the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the Ney-Bühne. As I have shown throughout this study, theater was an important community-building institution for emigrant German antifascists and nationalists alike. As such, the two institutions resist purely antithetical ideological definitions. Contextualized as cultural institutions of emigrant populations, Argentina’s antagonistic German theaters approximate each other in many ways.

Close parallels between the antifascist Freie Deutsche Bühne and its nationalist counterpart existed in marketing, public relations, and even performances. There is strong evidence that Ludwig Ney copied many events the FDB put on to attract and maintain audiences for his own productions, such as dances, cabaret variety evenings, audience participation gimmicks, and ticket subscriptions.¹⁴⁷⁷ On November 12, 1941, just five weeks after the Freie Deutsche Bühne’s second *Bühnenball*, the Deutsches Theater held its first annual

¹⁴⁷⁶ Herrmann, “Über die Aufgaben eines theaterwissenschaftlichen Instituts,” (lecture, June 27, 1920), in Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 23.

¹⁴⁷⁷ “Kabarett Abend der FDB,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, March 15, 1942; “Deutsches Theater,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 5, 1943; “Publikumsabstimmung und *Charlys Tante* in der Freien Deutschen Bühne,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 10, 1941; “Ein Titel wird gesucht,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, October 16, 1941; “Heute Beginn des Vorverkaufs für den neuen Abonnements-Zyklus der F.D.B.,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, August 6, 1941; “Das Theater Abonnement,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, March 1, 1942.

“Ehrenabend,” an evening of song and dance at the conclusion of the year’s theater season. Ticket sales, advertising, and the evening’s activities for the *Ehrenabend* almost exactly replicate the *Bühnenball*.¹⁴⁷⁸ Between 1940 and 1945 both theaters staged Hermann Bahr’s *Das Konzert* as well as *Hokuspokus*, and several one-act sketches by Curt Goetz.¹⁴⁷⁹ These society comedies drew large audiences at each stage, reflecting Paul Walter Jacob’s statement: “jeder Mensch hat das Bedürfnis, auszuspannen und einmal recht herzlich und ungetrübt sich zu erfreuen.”¹⁴⁸⁰ Jacob’s belief coincides with the *Deutsche in Argentinien*’s preview of the 1941 season: “Ein Theater soll neben allem anderen [...] auch die Stunde der leichten, der völlig unbelasteten Freude zu Wort kommen lassen.”¹⁴⁸¹ Both stages also put on productions to raise funds for German charities, played at various German cultural festivals and schools in Buenos Aires, and invited theatergoers to participate in surveys evaluating recent productions. Thus, the Freie Deutsche Bühne and Deutsches Theater used similar methods to constitute such ideologically distinct, bitterly hostile communities.

There were also personal connections between the *alte* and *neue Kolonie* and their theaters. Otto Czierski, whose play *Der Bauerngeneral* was performed by the Deutsches Theater in celebration of Hitler’s birthday on April 20, 1941,

¹⁴⁷⁸ “F.D.B. Bühnenball,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 4, 1941; “Ehrenabend der Schauspieler des Deutschen Theaters,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 9, 1941.

¹⁴⁷⁹ “Hermann Bahr-Premiere in der F.D.B.,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, June 20, 1940; “Erstaufführung! *Das Konzert*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, November 2, 1941; “*Hokuspokus*,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 30, 1940; “*Hokuspokus*,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, May 12, 1943; “Curt Goetz-Einakter in der Freien Deutschen Bühne,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 5, 1940; “Drei Einakter der L.Ney-Bühne,” *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, August 1, 1942.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Paul Walter Jacob, “Bemerkungen zu Theateretat,” PWJA IV c) 253.

¹⁴⁸¹ “Das Programm unserer Ney-Bühne,” *Der Deutsche in Argentinien*, April 1941, 75.

described himself as a longtime admirer of Paul Walter Jacob's work as an actor and journalist.¹⁴⁸² Czerski's ten year-old daughter, Monika, attended children's theater at the Freie Deutsche Bühne and wrote personally to Jacob thanking him for "für die hervorragende Vorstellung, die sie uns Kinder gegeben hat."¹⁴⁸³ Egon Straube, a leading actor at the Ney-Bühne, maintained a correspondence with Ernesto Alemann, owner of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. Straube and another actress at the Deutsches Theater, Ina-Maria Müller, also performed with the Freie Deutsche Bühne after the war. Straube's role in the FDB's performance of Ibsen's *Ghosts* in June of 1946, placed him—a featured actor at a stage funded by Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda—alongside the famous exiled German actor, Ernst Deutsch.¹⁴⁸⁴ With reference to productions, marketing, community-building strategies and some personal and professional relationships, the competing Freie Deutsche Bühne and Deutsches Theater demonstrate that, for all their bitter hostility, antifascist and nationalist German populations in Argentina were also convergent to an extent.

3. Argentina's German Theaters as German Emigrant Literature

As I have outlined in my introduction, studies on German exilic literature have greatly expanded the scope of their research in recent years. Even as the field has incorporated impulses from related disciplines, such as migration studies, cultural production of German nationalists abroad has remained absent

¹⁴⁸² Otto Czerski to Jacob, November 11, 1945, PWJA Korrespondenz 1945.

¹⁴⁸³ Monika Czerski to Jacob, June 24, 1946, PWJA Korrespondenz 1946.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Programmheft *Espectros*, PWJA c) 282.

from this amplified discourse. Yet, comparative analyses of antifascist and nationalist literatures and cultural institutions—both in their multifold similarities and profound differences—add valuable insights to research on German emigrant literature.

In the theoretical framework of migration studies, the convergences between Argentina's German theaters are not surprising. Many members of the *alte* and *neue Kolonie* hailed from a common country and shared vital features of nationhood, including language and cultural fluency. The Ney-Bühne, the FDB, and their audiences were comprised of emigrants, all of whom lived as guests in a foreign environment. The anthropologist Avtar Brah has referred to contemporary London as a diasporic space—the same can be said of Buenos Aires during the WWII period and the years thereafter.¹⁴⁸⁵ A nexus of disparate religions, ideologies, and nationalities, Buenos Aires was an intercultural space shared by diverse immigrant communities. During WWII, the stages deployed divergent strategies for negotiating external relationships with other immigrant groups and the Argentine host society. Two pairs of oppositional terms which describe these external relationships are “multicultural” and “intercultural,” as well as “nationalism,” and “internationalism.” Otmar Ette defines “multicultural” as the presence of different cultures in a single space (salad bowl), whereas “intercultural” signifies not only the co-presence of distinct cultures, but also their interaction (melting pot).¹⁴⁸⁶ According to Raymond Williams' *Keywords*,

¹⁴⁸⁵ Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 209.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Ottmar Ette, *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben* 20.

“nationalism” indicates the selfish pursuit of a nation’s interest as against others, whereas “internationalism” refers to cooperation between nations.¹⁴⁸⁷

Although it existed in an intercultural space, from 1938-45 the Deutsches Theater rejected interaction with other immigrant groups and its Argentine hosts. Its repertoire, ensemble, and fund-raising activities reflect a nationalist identity based on exclusion. The Deutsches Theater’s ensemble prohibited all German-speakers who did not fulfill National Socialist definitions of Germanness. The stage performed only German and Austrian dramatists, promoted a strictly National Socialist interpretation of German culture, and, for all its success among the *alte Kolonie*, it never integrated with the Argentine media or public. Its charity work, which was strictly limited to the nationalist German community, represents what James Clifford refers to as “ethnocentric survival tactics.”¹⁴⁸⁸ During WWII the Ney-Bühne conceived *deutsch* to be exclusive, signifying an insular ethnicity prohibiting the entry of other cultures, which it generally viewed as undesirable and inferior. For the years in which it was funded by the Nazi government, the Deutsches Theater can be described as a nationalist stage which existed in a multicultural relationship to the ethnically and culturally diverse environment of Buenos Aires. As Werner Hoffmann’s drama *Utz Schmidl* conveys, however, there were many members of *alte Kolonie* who felt a close bond to Argentina. Although the Deutsches Theater rejected all forms of acculturation and assimilation in its official productions, nationalist German emigrants had more

¹⁴⁸⁷ Raymond Williams, *New Keywords: a Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, ed. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, Meaghan Morris (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 214.

¹⁴⁸⁸ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10.

complex relationships to their *Vaterland* in Europe and their Argentine hosts than might initially appear to be the case.

The Freie Deutsche Bühne, by contrast, clearly understood external relationships under the rubric of internationalism and interculturalism. The FDB advocated internationalism through its repertoire—within its first four months of performances, the theater had presented dramatists of half a dozen different nationalities and had been reviewed by local media in eight languages. It cultivated intercultural relationships with Argentine thespians and media organizations, staged benefits for international charities, and attracted a diverse public to its performances. The Freie Deutsche Bühne represents a model for internationalism and interculturalism. Despite the volatile nature of Argentine society during World War II and the strong German nationalist presence in Buenos Aires at the time, the Freie Deutsche Bühne's policies of interculturalism and internationalism triumphed over the exclusionary nationalism of the Deutsches Theater. The FDB withstood great adversity and even grew and prospered during World War II and beyond.

Salient ideological differences notwithstanding, German nationalist and antifascist communities and their theaters shared a common identity as emigrant groups in Argentina. Especially after the war, representative mouthpieces of each community claimed a diasporic identity. In *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, James Clifford points out the similarities between diasporas and nationalisms: “They stitch together languages, traditions, and places in coercive and creative ways, articulating embattled homelands, powers of

memory, styles of transgression, in ambiguous relation to national and transnational structures.”¹⁴⁸⁹ Both the antifascist community supporting the Freie Deutsche Bühne and the German nationalists loyal to the Deutsches Theater shared the diasporic qualities Clifford described. These similarities were amplified after the war turned against Germany, and many of them were also reflected in the theaters’ performances. The Talmudic scholar Daniel Boyarin explains that immigrant groups should recognize the strength that comes from a diversity of communal arrangements and concentrations, both among themselves and with other cultural groups. In order to assure their own survival, emigrant communities should recognize that the co-presence of others is not a threat, but rather the condition of their existences as residents in foreign countries. Furthermore, Boyarin argues, diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from mixing but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing.¹⁴⁹⁰ The Freie Deutsche Bühne’s success during World War II demonstrates, at least in this instance, the efficacy of interculturalism and internationalism as survival tactics for emigrant cultural institutions. In addition to its singular triumph as a German *Exilltheater*, the stage also represents an enduring model for emigrant communities struggling to surmount the multifold challenges of diaspora.

One need not look far to find other emigrant institutions which successfully adopted the FDB’s strategy. Ludwig Ney’s activities as an actor and director in Argentina during the postwar period are emblematic of Boyarin’s

¹⁴⁸⁹ Clifford, *Routes*, 10.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 243.

position. During the 1950s, Ney and the conservative *Freie Presse* coordinated journalism and drama in the spirit of integration. As the Ney-Bühne toured throughout Argentina, from the jungles of Misiones¹⁴⁹¹ to mountainous Patagonia, the *Freie Presse* accompanied its reviews of these performances with reports on each region's geography, industry, and local customs.¹⁴⁹² Thus, as the Ney-Bühne brought the German Classics to far-flung corners of the *Cono Sur*, the *Freie Presse* enhanced emigrants' knowledge of Argentina. In larger cities German and Spanish performances were held on consecutive nights. These productions caught the attention of Argentina's Minister of Education, who contracted Ney and Steven Weil, a postwar German emigrant, to produce open-air Spanish-language performances of Shakespeare, Molière, and Schiller in Córdoba, Argentina's second most populous city, from 1952-54.¹⁴⁹³ Ney's self-authored drama, *Gloria a Dios y Paz a los Hombres*, was staged twice at the Plaza San Martín in front of Córdoba's 16th-century cathedral. Police reports estimated total attendance at 50,000,¹⁴⁹⁴ including the city mayor and archbishop, as well as the provincial governor.¹⁴⁹⁵ Local media praised Ney for bringing high art to the *descamisados*, a pillar of Peronism,¹⁴⁹⁶ and lauded his contributions to the development of Argentine theater as "un significado en la historia del teatro en nuestro país, como

¹⁴⁹¹ "Gastspiel im Urwald," *Freie Presse*, December 13, 1950.

¹⁴⁹² "Hokuspokus in Bariloche," *Freie Presse*, August 29, 1954.

¹⁴⁹³ Director General de Enseñanza Secundaria de la Nación to Ney, March 11, 1953, Cornelia Ney Collection.

¹⁴⁹⁴ "La escenificación de navidad en el atrio de la catedral," *Los Principios*, December 27, 1953.

¹⁴⁹⁵ "Pueblo e Iglesia en la Navidad," *Córdoba*, January 11, 1954.

¹⁴⁹⁶ "Pueblo e Iglesia en la Navidad," *Córdoba*, January 11, 1954.

lo fue de un Copeau en Francia, o un Reinhardt en Alemania.”¹⁴⁹⁷ His memoirs show that Ludwig Ney is quite flattered by comparisons to the Jewish Reinhardt, indicating he may be more accurately labeled an opportunist than a Nazi. Ney’s changing posture need not reflect a true shift in his moral convictions; his evolving strategy shows confidence in the efficacy of integration and interculturalism to achieve professional success in postwar Argentina.

After the war, the Ney-Bühne and the FDB both practiced and advocated interculturalism and internationalism as a means of preserving their cultural heritage abroad. The Ney’s postwar tours of Argentina contributed to a democratization of the German Classics. His ensemble’s translingual productions undercut its own efforts to nationalize these works during the war. Furthermore, as Claus-Dieter Krohn notes in *Übersetzung als transkultureller Prozess*, the act of translation frequently represents a crucial step in emigrants’ progress toward integration in the host society.¹⁴⁹⁸ For his part, Paul Walter Jacob made contacts with German actors in Europe, many of whom later performed with the FDB, and both he and Jacques Arndt sent reports to the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* and the *Freie Presse*, respectively, about theater and politics in Europe.¹⁴⁹⁹ To borrow from Ottmar Ette, Jacob and Arndt were not only “intercultural” and

¹⁴⁹⁷ “Nuevamente Será Representada Hoy en el Lago del Paseo Sobremonte la Obra ‘El Mercader de Venecia,” *Córdoba*, February 22, 1954. “significant in the history of theater in our country like Copeau in France or Reinhardt in Germany —Trans.”

¹⁴⁹⁸ Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Übersetzung als transkultureller Prozess* (München: Text und Kritik, 2007); Alfrun Kliems, “Transkulturalität des Exils und Translation im Exil. Versuch einer Zusammenbundung,” *Internationales Jahrbuch der Exilforschung* (25: 2007): 30-49.

¹⁴⁹⁹ “Mit Viktor de Kowa im blockierten Berlin,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, July 8, 1949; “Begegnung in Bern,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, January 6, 1950; “Wiener Theaterbrief,” *Freie Presse*, January 8, 1950.

“transareal”—between war-scarred Europe and Argentina—but also “transmedial,”—shifting from theater to journalism.¹⁵⁰⁰ In both regions and genres, Jacob and Arndt contributed to cultural circulation, disseminating South American experiences and contacts among Europeans and bringing current events, people, and dramas to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. By facilitating contact among Germans, Argentines, and emigrants from other countries, as well as circulating German culture throughout Argentina and the Southern Cone, the FDB and the Ney-Bühne put Ottmar Ette’s concept of literature as “knowledge for living together” into action.¹⁵⁰¹

In the words of the Lebanese author, Amin Maalouf, the FDB’s performances of dramatists from diverse nationalities and the Ney ensemble’s productions of the German Classics exploited literature’s capability “to create passage ways between vastly different cultures.”¹⁵⁰² Both Regine Lamm and Ursula Siegerist, actresses in Ney’s ensemble during the 1950s and 60s, emphasize that the Ney-Bühne’s tours brought them to areas of Argentina that they otherwise never would have visited, thus catalyzing connections between cultures which increased these actresses’ knowledge of the host society and enhanced their cultural fluency. Siegerist notes that before these journeys she had tended to subordinate Argentina to Germany. During her tours with Ludwig Ney, however, she became aware of the “Zauber und Wunder Argentinien” and learned “auch meine argentinische

¹⁵⁰⁰ Ette, *ZwischenWelten.Schreiben*, 20-26.

¹⁵⁰¹ Ette, “Literature as Knowledge for Living, Literary Studies as a Science for Living,” 24.

¹⁵⁰² Amin Maalouf, “Je parle du voyage comme d’autres parlent du leur maison,” (interview with David Babouin), *Magazine littéraire* 394 (2001): 98-103, 101, in Ette, “Literature as Knowledge for Living, Literary Studies as a Science for Living,” 24.

Heimat zu lieben.”¹⁵⁰³ The survival strategies of both theaters eventually involved fruitful engagement with the host Argentine culture and populace, thus corresponding to recent trends in research on emigrant literature, which emphasize integration, acculturation and cultural transfer in foreign societies.¹⁵⁰⁴

Members of both ensembles also had success on Argentine stages, demonstrating in South America the hybridity and acculturation that Patrick Farges finds in his study on antifascist German emigrants in Canada.¹⁵⁰⁵ Regine Lamm performed a leading role in Leonel Giacometto’s prize-winning play, *¡Todos los judíos fuera de Europa!*, which confronts Argentina’s role as a refuge for Nazi war criminals and builds disquieting parallels between Nazism and Argentina’s own military dictatorship. Hedwig Schlichter-Crilla of the FDB founded the influential leftist ensemble, *La Máscara* and, as a pedagogue, she introduced Stanislavsky’s ‘system’ to local actors, which theater critic and professor Osvaldo Berenguer credits with transforming acting in Argentina.¹⁵⁰⁶ Jacques Arndt’s prolific career in Argentine film and radio earned him a Silver Condor, Argentina’s equivalent of an Oscar, for lifetime achievement. Through their work in German theaters, members of the Ney-Bühne and the FDB accumulated essential skills to successfully transition from emigrants to

¹⁵⁰³ Ursula Siegerist, interview with Robert Kelz, November 15, 2008.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Helmut Schmitz, *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur: Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 7-15.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Patrick Farges, “‘I’m a hybrid’ (W. Glaser). Hybridität und Akkulturation am Beispiel deutschsprachiger Exilanten in Kanada,” *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch 27* (2009): 40-58.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Cora Roca, *Dias del Teatro*, n.p.

immigrants in Argentina. Ney and Jacob, as well as Lamm, Schlichter-Crilla, and Arndt, all are representative examples of Inge Hansen-Schaburg's hopeful formulation, "Exil als Chance."¹⁵⁰⁷

The convergent survival strategies of Ney's theater and the FDB did not, however, catalyze an improvement in their relationships to each other. The *neue Kolonie* and the entire FDB ensemble vehemently protested to West German officials when rumors surfaced that Ludwig Ney might gain a position with the FDB in 1962.¹⁵⁰⁸ The embassy doubted that the FDB could ever overcome the divisions in German Buenos Aires, stating in 1963 that "die kapitale Tatsache, dass sie noch immer als Emigrantentheater gilt" caused many members of the *alte Kolonie* to reject the stage.¹⁵⁰⁹ Lingering hostilities motivated the West German Federal Foreign Office to cease subventions for the FDB after the 1964 season, which effectively terminated the stage. The office attempted to circumvent this tension by establishing a new theater company in Buenos Aires, Reinhard Olszewski's Deutsche Kammerspiele, formerly based out of Santiago, Chile. Both of Argentina's German theaters learned to integrate with the Argentine host society, but they remained in bitter conflict with each other. In this instance, conflicts from the immigrants' host country proved more difficult to surmount than the challenges of integration and immigration into a new society.

The enduring conflict between Argentina's German communities and their

¹⁵⁰⁷ Inge Hansen-Schaburg, "'Exil als Chance: Voraussetzungen und Bedingungen der Integration und Akkulturation,'" *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch* 24 (2006): 183-197.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Weichert to Jacob, March 17, 1962, PWJA Korrespondenz 1962.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Embassy to Federal Foreign Office, October 10, 1963, Bestand B95, Band 907, PAAA.

theaters also has a place in the expanded agenda of *Exilforschung*. The 2009 *Jahrbuch für Exilforschung* evinces efforts to draw from the field of exilic literature to inform the current discourse on the integration of Turkish emigrants in Germany.¹⁵¹⁰ Patterns of migration today often include emigrants from countries marked by internal conflict among different ethnic or religious groups, such as Turks and Kurds in Germany. These groups may work toward integration even as they carry rancor from their country of origin into the host society. The persistent animosity of Argentina's German populations, even as both integrated into Argentina, may be insightful for studies on hostilities between contemporary emigrant groups from common countries of origin.

¹⁵¹⁰ Valentin Rauer, "Identität, Integration und Hybridität. Migrationspolitische Diskurse türkischer Dachverbände in Deutschland," *Exilforschung: ein internationales Jahrbuch* 27 (2009), 206-220.

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