

JEWISHNESS AND THE VIENNESE *VOLKSSÄNGER*



The interpretation of Jewish history remains open and up for debate. The fact that for several decades after World War II historians viewed and thus narrowly interpreted Jewish history from the point of view of anti-Jewish persecution and antisemitism can be linked to the post-Holocaust context.¹ Such a perspective on Jewish history is not fundamentally wrong. Nevertheless, it presents the Jewish past as one-sided and incomplete. It overlooks aspects of Jewish experience by largely ignoring the coexistence and interactions between Jews and non-Jews that did in fact take place. The encounters between Jews and non-Jews and their cultural interdependencies were significant events, because they shaped Judaism and Jewish (and non-Jewish) self-understanding and had a lasting influence on social developments. This is why we would be remiss if we ignored the evidence of interconnectedness between Jews and non-Jews. An examination of Jewish and non-Jewish interactions helps fill in the incomplete narrative that results from an analysis limited to antisemitic structures and processes or an exclusive analysis of Jewish life that fails to take into account relationships to non-Jews. Taking a look at the larger picture provided by an investigation of the overlap between Jewish and non-Jewish life thus offers a more complete understanding of Jewish history.

A conflict that took place among *Volkssänger* in fin-de-siècle Vienna illustrates to what extent we can interpret Jewish history in a wide variety of ways and how a specific interpretation of this history is invariably rooted in the respective views of the historians who treat the subject. The immediate trigger for this conflict was the rumor that the well-known and successful Budapest troupe Folies Caprice was planning to move to Vienna. A large part of the city's professional

singers feared that this influx of Budapest performers would dramatically exacerbate competition among them. The ensuing dispute among Viennese performing musicians reached its climax in the spring of 1903 and was conducted with such bitterness that the print media even referred to it as a “*Volkssänger* war.”

In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the “*Volkssänger* war” for three principal reasons. First, I employ the conflict as an example that demonstrates just how diffuse and blurred the dividing lines between Jews and non-Jews were in Vienna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.² Second, this dispute underscores how the acculturation narrative that chroniclers of Jewish history sometimes employ fails to accommodate the complexities of Jewish and non-Jewish relationships. Furthermore, an analysis of the *Volkssänger* war brings to light Jewish *Volkssänger* Albert Hirsch’s efforts to be recognized as a peer by his non-Jewish colleagues without having to submit to any specific process of adaptation. Instead of understanding the connections between Hirsch and his colleagues as the result of acculturation, I demonstrate the performative character of these relationships. And third, comprehensive outline of the lives and work of Viennese *Volkssänger* around 1900 allows us to understand better the conflicts that shaped their experience as Jews in Vienna.

The “*Volkssänger* War” in the Early Twentieth Century

On 24 December 1901, the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt (IWE)* reported that there would be a meeting of Viennese performing musicians and artists immediately after Christmas to discuss a ban that the Hungarian authorities had issued, which forbade a troupe of Viennese *Volkssänger* from giving a guest performance.³ Three days after the announcement, the meeting took place at the Goldener Luchs (Golden Lynx), a tavern in the Viennese district Ottakring. The choice of meeting place was to a certain extent symbolic: Ottakring was located on the outskirts of Vienna and was first incorporated as a district only when the city annexed its outlying areas during the late nineteenth century. During the process of annexation, the originally independent town of Ottakring merged with Neulerchenfeld but retained its original name.⁴ The new Viennese district was partly composed of a village structure with taverns and inns where *Volkssänger* gave performances and idealized the city’s past, the so-called Old Vienna, and praised Viennese “hospitality” in their songs.⁵ At the same time, Ottakring was home to the workforce employed at the various industries located in the area. These workers made up a significant portion of the audiences who attended *Volkssänger* performances. The decision to hold their meeting at the Goldener Luchs situated the *Volkssänger* in the primarily proletarian and lower-middle-class suburb, simultaneously positioning them in juxtaposition to “high” culture, whose institutions were located overwhelmingly in Vienna’s city center.⁶

The motto of the meeting at the Goldener Luchs was “Protect Vienna’s *Volksänger!*” Approximately one hundred people attended the meeting. There were, however, far more than a hundred *Volksänger* in the city. At this time, Vienna had approximately sixty performing groups, each of which employed several members.⁷ But what gave this meeting special significance was the fact that the most important and most influential performing musicians attended. Karl Spacek, one of the most respected artists in the *Volkssänger* scene, organized the assembly.⁸ In this sense, the gathering was an important event, which is why it would also have a far-reaching impact on all of Vienna’s *Volkssänger*.

The topic of the meeting, namely the Hungarian authorities and their condemnation of Viennese performers, had been clearly stated, and no one seemed to anticipate any disagreement. Nevertheless, the participants at the gathering broke out into fights. Over the course of the meeting, a particular source of conflict came to light, one that would, in the months following, continue to intensify and result in anti-Jewish statements. For this reason, the debate that took place at the Goldener Luchs and in particular the dispute’s development up until the spring of 1903 provide insight into the complex relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger*. In this context, we must ask whether this event provides a mere snapshot or whether it articulates a larger statement about the quality of the interactions that occurred between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* and, by extension, between Vienna’s Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants.

Conflicts among Viennese Volkssänger

Disputes that often ended up in court were not uncommon among *Volkssänger*. In addition to the disputes that were described as a “war” at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were a number of other conflicts. The pronounced competitive atmosphere that characterized the folk singers’ work environment served as an ideal breeding ground for all kinds of friction. One of numerous examples that I could mention in this context concerns the lawsuit that artist Karl Schöpf brought against Adolph Slusche, the owner of a coffeehouse in the Viennese district Josefstadt. Slusche’s café was a popular meeting place for many performing musicians and was therefore commonly known as the *Volkssängerbörse* (*Volkssänger* stock exchange). Schöpf had gained a bad reputation among his colleagues, because he brokered opportunities for the artists to perform. He profited from the city’s oversupply of *Volkssänger* by taking a portion of their already scanty salary when they used his services to book a gig. When he became abusive against individual *Volkssänger* and insulted them, they told Slusche that they would find another meeting place if he didn’t kick Schöpf out of his coffeehouse. When Slusche complied with the performers’ request and forbade Schöpf from entering the café, Schöpf felt that his honor had been injured and in turn tried to sue Slusche. Schöpf did not win the case.⁹

Another court case concerns a complaint that Josef Armin, in his capacity as playwright, brought against the director of the Budapest Orpheum Society, Karl Lechner.¹⁰ Armin was under contract to write six comedies for the Budapest Orpheum over the course of 1905. In exchange for these six pieces, he was to receive 300 crowns and be listed on the group's playbills as "in-house dramaturg" (*Hausdramaturg*). Although Armin delivered the set number of plays, Lechner withheld paying him the total sum of the fee that they had agreed upon. Lechner stated that his reason for refusing payment in full was that two of the six farces that Armin wrote were so obscene that the group was unable to perform them. This might sound surprising coming from Lechner. The Budapest Orpheum had a reputation for putting on indecent plays. Armin could not believe that the director of this particular ensemble was suddenly keen on preserving decency. Therefore, Armin sued Lechner in court for the entire amount that they had contractually agreed upon. Ultimately, the judge was able to persuade both sides to reach an agreement.¹¹

The two court cases that I just mentioned were the result of ordinary conflicts that can happen anytime or anywhere business interests are involved. Such disputes were common among *Volkssänger*. We might also even describe the *Volkssänger* war as a trivial dispute for much of its duration. However, what clearly distinguishes the "war" from the "Schöpf affair" and the lawsuit between Armin and Lechner was the fact that the *Volkssänger* war provoked anti-Jewish sentiments. The reason for this distinction may well be rooted in the particular constellations that made up these individual conflicts. In these two instances, antisemitism, as a potential strategy for defaming the Jewish party in a dispute, was a factor neither in the Schöpf case, which happened to involve no Jews, nor in the second case, in which the plaintiff Armin was Jewish and Lechner managed at least one predominantly Jewish ensemble.

The situation among the Viennese *Volkssänger* was usually no different, even when Jews and non-Jews faced each other as opponents in a trial. In this context, I refer back to the director of the Apollo, Ben Tieber, whom I discussed in chapter 2. He seems to have been a confrontational person. He often pursued lawsuits against the managers of other singspiel venues. These lawsuits usually entailed Tieber and his rivals attempting to lure performers away from one another. Although the parties involved in these conflicts did not hesitate to make fierce accusations and sometimes even offensive allegations, Tieber's Jewishness never played a role. We see a lack of antisemitic sentiment, for example, in a conflict between Tieber and Arthur Brill, manager of the Colosseum.¹² The dispute revolved around the parodist Lene Land and the performances she promised to give. She was under contract to perform at the Apollo in January and February 1906. At the same time, she had a commitment to perform at the Colosseum. She took the stage at the Colosseum rather than at the Apollo. Tieber obtained a court-issued stage ban against Land, but it didn't prevent her from performing.

In fact, she was so popular among audiences that Brill refused to remove her from his program, choosing instead to pay the fines that he incurred.¹³ Throughout the conflict, no mention was made of the fact that Tieber was Jewish—not even the slightest allusion. Even if *Volkssänger* and singspiel venue directors personally entertained anti-Jewish sentiment, expressing such attitudes seems to have remained largely taboo.

Therefore, the clash of disputing parties cannot serve as the sole explanation for the antisemitic statements made in the context of the *Volkssänger* war. In the following, I discuss the cause of the antisemitic imputations made over the course of this conflict. My analysis also illustrates how antisemitism managed to take hold in a milieu that seems for the most part to have been far less receptive to it than other spheres of society.

The *Volkssänger* Meeting at the Goldener Luchs on 27 December 1901

The first person who spoke at the meeting held on 27 December 1901 was Karl Recher, a “conductor and master pianist” by profession.¹⁴ In his remarks, he specifically addressed the principal item on the meeting’s agenda, that is, the prohibition of German-language performances in Hungary. But the next speaker, Karl Rötzer (1862–1908), deviated from the program. He focused instead on the general difficulties that Viennese *Volkssänger* faced. Rötzer was one of the most prominent members of his profession. He distinguished himself not least on account of his prolific output. By the turn of the century, he had already written about a thousand songs, farces, and short scenes.¹⁵ He was also well connected and held a number of honorary offices. He served as secretary of the League of Viennese *Volkssänger* and Performers (Zwölferbund der Wiener Volkssänger und Artisten), which organized fund-raisers to support disabled members.¹⁶ At any rate, Rötzer enjoyed the respect of his colleagues, and perhaps that was why no one wanted to interrupt his remarks and steer the meeting back to its original purpose. In retrospect, this may have been a sensible decision. Rötzer’s remarks were the starting point for many subsequent discussions about the social and professional conditions of Viennese *Volkssänger*—a larger conversation that took place over the course of the following months. These debates initiated a reform in the law concerning popular singers, which in turn introduced a series of service to benefit and support their members.

Rötzer was probably able to digress from the agenda so easily because the social situation of the *Volkssänger* was in fact very much in need of improvement. Even the most successful among them did not lead carefree lives. They, too, were often seized by the subliminal fear of one day losing the favor of the public and falling victim to poverty. Karl Spacek, who had organized the meeting at the

Goldener Luchs, was said to have been massively overcome by such a fear a year and a half before. This fear allegedly plagued him to such an extent that it drove him “insane.” Initially, Spacek experienced this anxiety only in the form of “nervous headaches.” But after a time, he fell into despair and believed that the only way to escape the distress and misery that he felt was to end his own life. While in this mental state, he wanted to jump from a window to his death, but he was saved at the last moment before this could happen.¹⁷ It took a while for him to recover from depression and be able to resume his job.

The fact that the city did not recognize the *Volkssänger* as craftsmen or trade professionals further exacerbated the already difficult social conditions that the *Volkssänger* experienced. Although they paid taxes and dues like trade professionals did, health insurance did not cover them. So that they would at least have a rudimentary social network, the performers established their own organizations, which they could join by paying a small fee. In addition to the League (Zwölferbund), we should also mention in this context the Jolly Knights and the General Viennese *Volkssänger* Health Fund (Allgemeine Wiener *Volkssänger*-Krankenverein). The Jolly Knights were first and foremost known for running a home that they provided as a shelter for their impoverished members.¹⁸ Without these kinds of privately run benefits that would have otherwise normally been offered by public insurance, unemployed *Volkssänger* could hardly lead a life of dignity. There were *Volkssänger*, such as Josefine Schmer, who had been extremely popular during their days of actively performing (see chapter 2). But despite her successful career, Schmer was not able to save enough to provide for her retirement. For this reason, she was forced to spend her golden years in a nursing home where she shared a room with sixteen other women. Since she could not afford even the bare essentials for everyday life, she was also dependent on donations.¹⁹ Not a few of Schmer’s colleagues shared a similar fate.²⁰

In his speech at the Goldener Luchs, Rötzer proposed to improve the social situation of the Viennese *Volkssänger* by prohibiting foreign folk singers from performing. In this context, he told his audience the story of two innkeepers who had recently applied to the Viennese authorities for licenses for Czech ensembles. Rötzer encouraged his fellow *Volkssänger* to prevent this from happening. For this purpose, Rötzer proposed that they form a deputation that would bring their objections to the attention of the governor. The deputation would also request that licenses be awarded for life, without the need for annual renewal. In addition, they wanted to no longer allow the leasing of these licenses to third parties, requiring instead that all individual licensees perform using the license they had been awarded.²¹ The intention behind this plan was to guarantee a certain degree of occupational security for licensed, and in some sense already established, *Volkssänger*.

Recher once again took the floor after Rötzer. This time, he too ignored the meeting’s agenda and joined Rötzer in discussing the urgent problems that

Volkssänger faced. He also addressed the subject of pay. He was less interested in the specific amount that they earned and more in their social status. The *Volkssänger* had a dubious reputation. On the one hand, the general population of Vienna tended to equate them with beggars. This view was reinforced by the fact that anyone who applied for a *Volkssänger* license had to prove infirmity or another similar reason that made it impossible for the applicant to pursue another profession.²² As a result, *Volkssänger*, like beggars, were considered incapacitated or unwilling to work. And like them, the *Volkssänger* defrayed the cost of living through charitable donations. They did not receive a fixed salary for their services. Rather, a member of the ensemble usually walked around during or after the performance and asked the audience to donate money to compensate the actors.

Recher wanted to mitigate this dependence on donations by charging a fixed entry fee (*Entrée*).²³ While the meeting's participants generally seemed interested in Recher's proposal, some criticized it as impracticable. For example, Albert Hirsch said that the innkeepers and owners of the performance venues would never agree to such a plan. They earned a living by packing their establishments with as many people as possible. As Hirsch explained it, their customers came both to enjoy the performances and to order food and drink; being forced to pay a fixed entry fee would only discourage their attendance.²⁴

The second factor that contributed to the dubious reputation of the *Volkssänger* had to do with the (sometimes) vague boundaries between their female members and the prostitution industry. There had been overlap between the two occupations since the beginning of folk singing in the early nineteenth century. Some of the best-known *Volkssänger* had first been prostitutes before beginning their new profession as singing performers.²⁵ And even as *Volkssänger*, some women continued to engage in prostitution on the side. For example, we see this kind of attitude in a remark that Rötzer made about musical directors who played with their *Damenkapellen* (all-female dance bands, as such groups were called) during *Volkssänger* performances. According to Rötzer, these directors frequently hired girls with no talent. He said that although the girls received only a small fee, they managed to get by surprisingly well.²⁶ It is difficult to determine whether Rötzer merely wanted to express a general sense of grievance or intended to criticize specific people. For example, Adolphi Hirsch, under the direction of his father Albert, operated a *Damenkapelle*.²⁷

When it was Amon Berg's turn to address the audience, there was no doubt that he was specifically criticizing Albert Hirsch.²⁸ Berg demanded that "licensees"—that is, the *Volkssänger* with a license—be better protected. Berg stated that it had become a habit for singspiel directors, and here he specifically referred to Hirsch, to hire four or five licensed *Volkssänger*, but to allow "guest" performers to take the stage, especially during weekend performances. This kind of hiring practice meant that directors like Hirsch eliminated opportunities for licensed *Volkssänger* to perform, which in turn meant that they lost a portion of their fee.²⁹ At that

time, Hirsch managed a variety show in Koller's Concert Hall (Koller's Concertsaal) located on Mariahilferstrasse and had "guests" perform there.³⁰ When Hirsch attempted to respond to Berg during the meeting, the mood escalated. The tense atmosphere was further fueled by Karl Spacek's claim that Hirsch was a liar.

When Hirsch finally regained the group's attention, he steered the discussion back to the original agenda. He noted that there was really little that they could do to counteract the decision of the Hungarian authorities. As Hirsch saw it, the only measure that could motivate them to rethink their decision was a ban on Hungarian *Volkssänger* performing in Vienna. He formulated his suggestion with rather heartfelt words: "If the German colleagues are expelled from Hungary, then it is time to take a stand and not rest until the last 'gypsy' [Hirsch's pejorative term for the Hungarians] has been driven from Vienna."³¹

The excitement over the Hungarian authorities seemed ultimately to have been unnecessary. After Hirsch spoke, Karl Hauser (1851–1927) took the floor and delivered good news.³² He announced that he had received a telegram from Budapest, sent by Josef Modl. In the telegram, Modl announced that a delegation of popular singers from Vienna had auditioned before the Hungarian authorities, the result being that German-language performances were once again allowed to take place.

With the telegram, the assembly's principal matter to discuss—but not the meeting itself—became irrelevant. As the various remarks from the meeting that I have mentioned here demonstrate, Viennese *Volkssänger* faced a number of problems. The meeting's participants agreed to a petition that summarized the social and professional problems under discussion and called for improvements. The petition requested that Viennese authorities award all future *Volkssänger* licenses for life. These licenses, furthermore, should only be awarded to persons who had previously worked in Vienna for ten years. The petition also asked for a stipulation that each licensee must use the license for their own performances (rather than leasing the license to a third party). The performing singers' petition also asked that foreign actors and musicians be prevented from performing in Vienna for more than one month. Each *Volkssänger* troupe would be required to hire at least six licensed *Volkssänger* and no more than four unlicensed colleagues.³³

On 2 January 1902, a deputation representing the *Volkssänger* submitted their petition to Governor Erich von Kielmannsegg (1847–1923). He listened to additional complaints that they brought to his attention and then promised to press for their proposed changes.³⁴

Conclusion: The Meeting at the Goldener Luchs

The meeting held on 27 December 1901 provides us a rare but very illuminating look into the social situation of Viennese *Volkssänger*. It underscores the bureau-

cratic hurdles that made it difficult for them to do their jobs and make a living. At the same time, we should also take note of the xenophobic atmosphere present at the meeting. This sense of xenophobia may have been rooted in the discrepancy between the performers' popularity among segments of the population and their actual social position: as performers, the (at least successful) *Volkssänger* enjoyed the attention of the public eye on a daily basis. They provided entertainment on the numerous suburban stages and enjoyed the attention and recognition they received. Their popularity sometimes had flattering consequences that extended into their everyday lives. For example, when Josef Modl was performing at the Drexler Singspielhalle located in the Prater, a group of boys habitually followed him whenever he left his house, boisterously chanting "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."³⁵ The most well-known representatives of the entertainment scene even received public honors. Karl Blasel (1831–1922), who was briefly director of the Viennese vaudeville Colosseum, had an audience with Emperor Franz Joseph on the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary, and the mayor Karl Lueger presented him with the Golden Salvator Medal for special services to the city of Vienna.³⁶ In September 1900, the Persian shah invited a group of artists and *Volkssänger* to travel to the health resort Marianske Lazne to provide entertainment during his stay there.³⁷

Even though the *Volkssänger* sometimes received acclaim and public honors, they must have been aware that they belonged to the lowest social class. The contrast between everyday subjective experiences and their actual social status may have lingered, gnawing at their self-esteem. In such a situation, people often tend to use every available opportunity to maintain or improve their social position, even if they do this at the expense of their colleagues. The sense of xenophobia among the *Volkssänger*, which my discussion of the meeting at the Goldener Luchs has brought to light, may have been rooted in this impulse toward self-preservation.³⁸ Foreign ensembles reduced the performance opportunities of local *Volkssänger* on the hotly contested Viennese market and diminished their opportunities to step into the spotlight.

In addition to certain aspects of a xenophobic mood that may have been triggered by social envy, we also see evidence of slight hostility directed toward Albert Hirsch during the assembly at the Goldener Luchs. The archival evidence that I have examined, however, shows no indication of explicit antisemitism, neither in general nor specifically related to Hirsch. On the contrary, Recher emphasized in his remarks that the "Polish"—that is, Galician Jewish troupes that performed in Vienna—were not foreign groups that should be prohibited from taking the stage. As Recher saw it, the "Polish" troupes were "no competition for the Viennese *Volkssänger*."³⁹

During the meeting, Albert Hirsch emerged as spokesman for the *Volkssänger* who favored banning Hungarian groups from performing in Vienna. This attitude would prove to be an integral part of Hirsch's profile over the next fifteen

months, until the conflict climaxed in the *Volkssänger* war. Whether Hirsch articulated this position because of xenophobic sentiment or as a strategy for protecting his own interests was not clear at the time.

The “Polish” in Vienna

The fact that Recher even brought up the “Polish” ensembles probably had something to do with the fact that a few days before the meeting at the Goldener Luchs there had been a highly publicized police intervention in two establishments in Leopoldstadt where groups performed using Jewish jargon. The police raided Marietta Kriebaum and Paula Baumann’s ensembles (see chapter 2). The police crackdown brought an abrupt end to the short-lived hype about Jewish ensembles from the eastern part of the Habsburg monarchy. Performances were completely prohibited. The reason that the police gave was that “Jewish jargon cannot be permitted because no one understands here.”⁴⁰ The real reason, however, was censorship. Groups had to receive approval in advance for each piece that they wished to perform. The two ensembles that the police shut down were accused of performing their farces in “Jewish jargon” after previously submitting their manuscripts to the authorities in German. Several anonymous letters claiming that the two groups were deviating significantly from the German texts that they had submitted and were performing their plays in jargon triggered police action. The ban remained in place, even after Albert Hirsch, whom the police consulted as a language expert, testified that the plays in question not only were in compliance but also demonstrated markedly patriotic content.⁴¹

The only individual in the Viennese entertainment industry who had reason to fear Marietta Kriebaum and Paula Baumann’s groups as potential competition for a numerically limited audience was Fritz Lung, the owner of the singspiel license for the aforementioned Edelhofer’s Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum. He was clearly the party responsible for denouncing them to the police. The slander against Kriebaum and Baumann’s groups was thus more the result of competition among Jewish groups than Judeophobia.

The First Austrian “*Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists’ Day” (27 October 1902)

Despite the enthusiasm with which the *Volkssänger* attending the meeting at the end of 1901 greeted the news that Hungarian authorities had overturned the prohibition against German-language performances in Budapest, their excitement was to remain brief. Because the authorities followed up the announcement with no course of action, Viennese ensembles continued to be harassed in Hungary. It was nearly a year before the Viennese *Volkssänger* could once again formulate

an initiative in response to the Hungarian authorities. This time, the agenda included additional problems that the *Volkssänger* faced.

The Professional Association of Viennese *Volkssänger* and Artists (Fachverein der Wiener Volkssänger und Artisten) took initial steps. The organization's chairman, Albert Hirsch, accompanied by two colleagues, visited the police advisor for *Volkssänger* affairs in early October. The deputation submitted a request to allow *Volkssänger* to perform in coffeehouses, as musicians and "nature" singers were permitted to do. In addition, Hirsch addressed the problems that German-speaking *Volkssänger* encountered in Hungary. In order not to appear as xenophobic, he stressed that in principle he had nothing against "foreigners" such as the French, the Germans, or the Polish. However, he did take a stand "against the Hungarian musicians, because German speakers also face difficulties performing in Hungary."⁴² And finally, he mentioned the "questionable services" that some female ensemble members provided. According to Hirsch, there were innkeepers "who directed female singers to motivate guests to further consumption after the performance in a small 'parlor' [*Stüberl*]. These 'stimulation waitresses' [*Animirmamsellen*] bring the moral standard of the *Volkssänger* down even more than it already is."⁴³

In terms of content, the deputation's demands, with Hirsch at the helm, differed in two essential respects from the items discussed at the meeting held at the end of 1901. For one, Hirsch and his colleagues pursued the goal of expanding the performance opportunities of the *Volkssänger*. This topic had not come up at all ten months earlier and was not slated to be addressed until February 1904, nine months after the *Volkssänger* dispute would end.⁴⁴ Second, Hirsch and his party did not mention the question of licensing. Hirsch may not have been interested in lobbying for a special protection for license holders. Hirsch's decision to ignore this issue would have considerable ramifications for the further course of the *Volkssänger* conflict.

It appears that Hirsch went to the police advisor for *Volkssänger* affairs without first consulting the organizers of the meeting on 27 December 1901. Hirsch presumably pursued a double strategy: On the one hand, he may have surrounded himself with a group of colleagues who could, if necessary, assist him in protecting and enforcing separate interests. This angle may have included ignoring the petition for stricter guidelines for issuing *Volkssänger* licenses. On the other hand, Hirsch also wanted to become involved in the meetings that Recher and Rötzer organized, thereby influencing their outcome. We see this in particular in the fact that Hirsch, together with Recher, took over as co-chairman of the first Austrian "*Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists' Day," which took place on 27 October 1902, a few weeks after Hirsch's visit to the police advisor. We can interpret this event as a continuation of the meeting that had taken place at the Goldener Luchs in December of the previous year.

In contrast to the meeting ten months earlier, almost all the performing musicians active in Vienna were present at the *Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists' Day. The

assembly even had a semi-official character, since it was held in the presence of a member of the Imperial Assembly (Reichsrat) as well as the district head of Vienna-Meidling. This meeting's agenda included the question of whether *Volkssänger* should strive to be recognized as a licensed trade. The idea was that this new status would allow them increased access to social security and insurance benefits. The alternative, however, was not for them to maintain their present status, according to which they were little more than beggars. Rather, the alternative was whether the *Volkssänger* should declare themselves as artists. This decision would have two ramifications.

First of all, each *Volkssänger* would have to prove that they had received a special musical education to receive permission to perform. Indeed, the law applying to *Volkssänger* already maintained similar stipulations. But the proposed change in status would also mean further tightening of these prerequisites. Some performers may have seen the proposal as a hindrance to obtaining a license. Others may have considered stricter rules as a reasonable way for *Volkssänger* to escape their crisis, which was tied to dwindling public interest. They thought that the crisis was due to what they deemed to be poor vocal skills of many performing musicians. One of the *Volkssänger* present at the meeting on 27 October 1902 made the connection: "The public no longer desires [to hear] the eternal 'This Is My Vienna,' 'O, You, My St. Stephen's Tower,' and all the other songs; . . . if these songs are not performed well, then they lose value."⁴⁵

The second consequence of the proposal to consider *Volkssänger* as artists would have entailed the elimination of *Volkssänger* licenses. The abolishment of licenses would have not only dissolved an internal distinction between licensed and unlicensed *Volkssänger* (those with a license were allowed to manage their own ensembles), but it also would have made restricting the access of foreign groups to the Viennese market impossible. The discussion about drawing up measures to retaliate against Hungarian groups who wanted to perform in Vienna would have been rendered pointless by such a decision.

The decision for or against artist status basically came down to the question of whether the *Volkssänger* wished to modernize. Should the *Volkssänger*, who increasingly lost audiences to variety shows, respond to their declining popularity by blocking innovative fellow performers who were unlicensed or of foreign extraction? Or should they expand their profession to include intensified competition, in the hope that those most capable of responding to the public's expectations would in the end prevail, thus garnering greater respect for all *Volkssänger*?

The Volkssänger Crisis

The *Volkssänger* did not gain their popularity in Vienna solely by being entertainers. Their ability to convey a bygone—and therefore glorified—attitude toward life in their Viennese songs (*Wienerlieder*) and singspiels was equally important.

The *Volkssänger* represented an idealized Vienna that was increasingly disappearing as a result of urban planning measures, industrialization, and other changes to the surrounding environment.⁴⁶ They sang about life in the city's outlying suburbs districts with their village ambience, the Vienna of narrow streets and small houses, many of which were being demolished in order to give way to magnificent new buildings. They evoked an idyllic Vienna that never existed but nevertheless served as a mental refuge from the upheavals of the present.⁴⁷ This conception of the city, which was located in the past and idealized a more easily comprehensible, cozier image of life, culminated in the topos of Old Vienna (see chapter 4).⁴⁸

The inhabitants of Vienna, or at least a portion of them, admittedly let their gaze wander into the past and constructed Old Vienna as a positive contrast to the hardships of contemporary everyday life, to the experience of alienation in a rapidly changing urban environment. A growing segment of the city's population, however, considered the entertainment options associated with Old Vienna, the performances of farces and the swaying back and forth to the rhythm of Viennese songs, to be boring. They found that many other aspects of the entertainment industry promised greater excitement. These included breathtaking acrobatics, performances by artists with extraordinary abilities, individuals with "strange" peculiarities, and even people from "exotic" cultures. Variety shows, which popped up everywhere, offered Vienna's pleasure-seeking population all this and more. Danzer's Orpheum, the Ronacher, the Apollo Theater, the Colosseum, the Gartenbau variety, and the like showed the entertainment industry how to inspire people. These establishments were structurally designed to accommodate the masses. Their seating capacity was enormous; the Apollo, for example, offered 24 loges (boxes) and 1,600 numbered seats. They also featured a restaurant, a coffeehouse, a beer tunnel, as well as other facilities.⁴⁹ The Ronacher was even more bombastic. It housed a "production hall" with enough tables and chairs to seat more than 1,500 people, not including its 62 loges. The "production hall" also had a stage where performances could be held. In addition, the Ronacher had a ballroom that could hold another 1,200 guests.⁵⁰

The audiences who attended the variety shows wanted to be astounded by artists who either had outrageous abilities or could create the illusion of having such abilities. This included, for example, the American-Jewish "escape act king" Harry Houdini, who appeared on stage at the Ronacher in the spring of 1902.⁵¹ During his performances, he was bound in chains and then freed himself in a very short amount of time. Houdini's audience members not only passively admired his skills but were also allowed to approach the stage and confirm that his shackles were indeed securely locked in place. They were even sometimes permitted to lock Houdini's chains themselves. The audience actively participated in the spectacle. "Every evening, when Houdini arrives on the scene, many visitors come on stage, bringing their own shackles and handcuffs, hoping to embarrass

Houdini. But no one can outwit the ‘King of the Escape Artists’; no matter how strong and secure his bonds are, Houdini frees himself within seconds.”⁵²

We also see Houdini’s enormous popularity in the number of artists who sought to imitate him and his profits. After Houdini concluded his guest performances in Vienna, copycat artists performed under a similar name and with almost the same routine. At the Wiedener Variété, one could admire the “escape artist king Alfred Mourdini,” who announced in newspapers that he bet a handsome sum of 500 crowns that he could free himself from any and all shackles.⁵³ In 1904, audiences could marvel at the “escape artist king Esco Nordini” at the Ronacher. However, Nordini attracted attention mainly through a lawsuit that he brought against Josef Modl. Modl slapped Nordini in the face because he had insulted his wife.⁵⁴

The Volkssänger in the Context of Modernity

The variety shows offered a more modern form of entertainment than the *Volkssänger* and contributed significantly to their crisis. In a sense, they began their succession without completely ousting the *Volkssänger*. On the one hand, we can see the connection between the two in the fact that variety shows often engaged renowned *Volkssänger* as part of their programs. A prime example of a famous *Volkssänger* who made vaudeville appearances was Josef Modl, the co-founder of the Budapest Orpheum Society. In 1889, Modl moved to the Ronacher and remained a celebrated star there until 1900. At the same time, the *Volkssänger* ensembles expanded their programs and thus increasingly resembled cheap variety theaters or even included the term in their ensemble names.⁵⁵ But in addition to overlap between these two aspects of the Viennese entertainment industry, I have identified three main differences between *Volkssänger* groups and vaudeville shows. Although not all groups and institutions display evidence of these three differences, they nonetheless allow us to distinguish in broad brushstrokes between the vaudeville variety acts and *Volkssänger* troupes.

First and foremost, the vaudeville varieties were keen on presenting the latest international developments in the entertainment sector, even if their performances made overt connections to *Volkssänger* culture and thus also to local Viennese ambience. The vaudeville variety shows endeavored to bring everything that caused a sensation abroad to the Habsburg capital and offer it to local audiences for consumption. In contrast, the *Volkssänger* had little interest in international trends. Rather, they demonstrated xenophobic tendencies and lobbied for political measures to prohibit the appearance of foreign performing troupes in Vienna. The *Volkssänger* were intent on communicating down-to-earth folksiness and local tradition in the pieces that they performed. Because people perceived this local culture to be vanishing as a result of the modernization of everyday life, it was first and foremost associated with the past.

The differing senses of temporality and the different ways of dealing with foreign artists were decisive but did not constitute the only distinction between the *Volkssänger* and vaudeville. They also had different approaches to everyday life. If the *Volkssänger* enjoyed a leisurely tempo, the variety shows embodied an accelerated pace of life. We see this in particular in their performance program. In order to be able to afford world-famous stars like Sarah Bernhard, vaudeville managers had to fill the grandiose performance halls to capacity.⁵⁶ It was important to shield their audiences from any hint of boredom, lest their customers disperse in search of something more exciting. In order to keep the public's interest, variety shows frequently changed their lineup. Individual performances were often discontinued after a short time and replaced by new attractions. More than a few performance hall managers bit off more than they could chew and found themselves forced to file for bankruptcy.⁵⁷

In contrast to the vaudeville variety shows, the *Volkssänger* troupes, committed to the tried and true, distinguished themselves in their overall lack of innovative spirit. This shortage of innovation was sometimes so apparent that even those who sympathized with the *Volkssänger* complained. A 1902 article from *Das Variété* identifies this shortage as a major reason for the declining popularity of *Volkssänger* performances among the Viennese: "In the nervous rush that has today seized even the lowest classes of the population, it has become a natural necessity to stimulate the audience and this certainly does not happen by [merely] repeating the very oldest performances."⁵⁸

This quotation points to the gap between what the *Volkssänger* offered in the form of entertainment and what audiences demanded and expected. The shift in public interest was not only the result of the *Volkssänger* performers failing to introduce change and renewal, but it was also connected to a larger widespread cultural phenomenon. Frequent repetitions of the same performance program contradicted the zeitgeist in fin-de-siècle Vienna. People wanted something new, something spectacular; they no longer wished to be entertained by the established and the familiar. The prevailing mood went beyond variety shows and increasingly determined people's everyday lives. A vivid example of this development was the rapidly increasing circulation of the tabloids, which endeavored to disseminate important events as promptly as possible through their morning and evening editions and to satisfy readers' thirst for information as quickly as possible.⁵⁹ Even the writing style employed in the tabloid papers adapted to the new way of managing time. The articles became easier to peruse, the sentences became shorter, and the information was kept to the essentials so that reading would not cost an unnecessary amount of time.⁶⁰ New experiences of increased acceleration and velocity characterized daily life in the late nineteenth century.⁶¹ We see this new understanding of time not least in the steep increase in the production and sales of pocket watches. Large swathes of the population became accustomed to experiencing shorter intervals of time. They increasingly measured activities in

minutes and seconds and learned punctuality. Better organization meant that more could be achieved in a given time than ever before.⁶²

The accelerated speed of life was also reflected in the means of locomotion. Leisurely strolls seemed to be a thing of the past. More and more people seemed to be constantly in a rush. In his seminal work *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*), Robert Musil noted that in the years leading up to World War I, people could be seen hurrying through the streets faster than in previous decades.⁶³ And if that was still too slow, you could always hop on a bicycle. However, this form of locomotion was not without various dangers. For example, if cyclists rode too fast, they could get “bicycle face.”⁶⁴ And traveling by train was even faster than riding a bike. While the *Volkssänger*, clinging to the past, glorified the horse and cart, people became increasingly enthusiastic about the new means of transport.⁶⁵ Here, too, we see a discrepancy and growing sense of alienation between the *Volkssänger* and their audience.

The acceleration of life was not only perceived as positive. It also seemed to be connected to all sorts of illnesses.⁶⁶ Medical professionals at the time warned that the enormous increase in economic transactions due to the expansion of the railroad, the use of steam power, and the invention of the telegraph would lead to increased tooth decay and promote hair loss. But even more threatening was the rise in cases of nerve weakness (neurasthenia). The American physician Georg M. Beard is attributed with first describing this condition. He saw the cause in the “American way of life.”⁶⁷ In Vienna, the Jewish physician Martin Engländer researched this ailment (among other things). In a lecture that he gave to a Zionist association, which appeared in print in 1902, during the turmoil among the Viennese *Volkssänger*, Engländer argued that the “struggle, hustle and bustle, hunt for happiness . . . did not slip past man without a trace. . . . Broad layers of contemporary society in all European countries and particularly in America have become nervous and neurasthenic.”⁶⁸ It was no accident that Engländer posted advertisements for potential patients who wanted to be treated for nerve problems in the entertainment section where newspapers advertised new entertainment options.⁶⁹

At times, doctors believed that people could adapt to the new circumstances. Beard, for example, agreed with this supposition. Others, such as the writer and Zionist Max Nordau (1849–1923), feared that the inhabitants of the modern world were experiencing a form of decay and described this process as degeneration. He saw in modernity and its concomitant phenomena the source for the increase in mental illness, crime, and other types of suffering.⁷⁰ In this sense, the acceleration of everyday life was at best an ambivalent development and, from a medical point of view, perhaps even very problematic. The leisureliness of the lifestyle that the *Volkssänger* embodied, on the other hand, seemed to impede illness, especially the neurasthenia associated with America and other so-called nervous diseases that were connected with the new hectic pace of everyday life.

In addition, another source of concern was the “cultural vulgarization” (*Verpöbelung*) that was often associated with the foreignness of America. The Jewish writer Richard Guttman (1884–1920) saw a connection between this cultural degeneration and vaudeville. The variety, he writes,

bristles with splendor. Everything is gorgeous, great, phenomenal, overwhelming. . . . Provincials with their prurient women and overripe daughters, . . . peasants dressed up in city clothes, . . . habitual poverty alongside sudden prosperity. . . . The idea of an inner vulgarity connects them all. . . . This audacity belongs to the biology of the mob. A lack of culture, all impossibility at development is transformed into the act of watching. . . . Boredom is expelled chiefly by satisfied curiosity. . . . There, one performer eats nails and shards of glass, another one pierces his cheek. There, a Chinese acrobat dangles by his own braid, a fakir lets his eye hang out, a Negro bites through a snake, and a white man walks across a horizontal ladder with his head turned down. In anxious anticipation, the audience awaits the moment when he shatters his own skull. . . . Animals and humans are no longer enough to satisfy the mob. Voluntary suffering, as a sacrifice and a feast of curiosity, becomes an end in itself.⁷¹

But despite the concerns about the new forms of entertainment, people showed increasing enthusiasm for the variety shows and, of course, the cinema. The *Volkssänger* had to fight harder than they ever had before for their audience and found themselves in a veritable crisis. We must understand their wavering popularity as another important factor that fueled their hostility toward the Hungarian ensembles and ultimately also a reason contributing to the *Volkssänger* war.

Conflict Becomes “War”

At the end of the meeting on 27 October 1902, the *Volkssänger* decided to submit a petition for their profession to be recognized as a licensed trade. They decided that they did not want to fundamentally modernize their profession and allow greater competition from unlicensed performers. The submission of the petition was entrusted to a committee that included, among others, Recher, Rötzer, and Hirsch.⁷² They also had the task of formulating any additional reforms. To discuss them, another meeting took place on 13 December 1902 at Café Polzhofer, a coffeehouse that *Volkssänger* frequented.

Reichsrat delegate Alois Heilinger (1851–1921) chaired this meeting. Heilinger’s participation shows that the *Volkssänger* situation was increasingly becoming a political agenda. Rötzer and Hirsch held the primary speeches at the meeting. Both reaffirmed the need to grant *Volkssänger* licenses for life. However, the authorities were to continue to have the ability to revoke the licenses of ensemble managers who failed to employ their members for the entire year. In addition, they discussed founding a cooperative for *Volkssänger*. The idea was that when someone applied for a license, the authorities would contact the cooperative prior

to granting the license and ask it to weigh in on the applicant. Rötzer, Recher, and Hirsch would carry out any necessary preparations in advance.

At first glance, the willingness of the *Volkssänger* to allow the authorities to retain the power to revoke licenses seems like a concession to unlicensed performers. This would at least increase the likelihood that unlicensed *Volkssänger* could be granted a license and therefore be able to enjoy its benefits. The real reason that the *Volkssänger* relented, however, may have been the fear that a lack of official control could lead to abuses that would in turn be deleterious for the entire profession. The recent past provided an instructive example. In March 1896, the Vienna police revoked ten licenses because the ensemble managers in question were too old (or otherwise impaired) to run their own company. For example, it was an open secret that the troupe of Johann Kwapil, who was seventy-nine at the time, was de facto led by cast member Lina Ott.⁷³ Nonetheless, Kwapil was still the licensee and had full decision-making power over his ensemble.⁷⁴ Another *Volkssänger* director was said to have worked another job during the week and therefore allowed his troupe to perform only on Sundays. His employees were thus barely able to earn enough money to survive.

With the police confiscating licenses, many families fell into financial hardship. In reaction to this situation, the *Volkssänger* organized a meeting on 14 March 1896 in the Viennese district of Hernals. During the meeting, Hirsch proposed that they take up a collection for the families of colleagues who had lost their jobs. He also declared himself ready to lead a deputation that would submit a memorandum to Minister-President Count Kasimir Felix Badeni (1846–1909) regarding their recently unemployed colleagues.⁷⁵ The meeting with Badeni took place two days later. Shortly thereafter, the police informed Hirsch that nine of the ten *Volkssänger* in question would be allowed to apply for a renewal of their license.⁷⁶

Due to his successful handling of the affair, Hirsch earned great respect in the *Volkssänger* milieu. A daily newspaper remarked, “In a very affectionate way, our good Viennese *Volkssänger* Hirsch takes on the cause of his impoverished(!) colleagues. The man is on his feet all day. He runs from one government office to another, asking for mercy for the reprimanded *Volkssänger*.”⁷⁷

The meeting on 13 December 1902 was the last meeting in which Hirsch expressed his support for the reform ideas of Recher, Rötzer, and their followers. In the weeks that followed, he displayed behavior that, retrospectively, could be interpreted as evidence of a change of heart. The first indication of this change was a meeting of the deputation committee on 9 January 1903, to which Hirsch had belonged since its foundation at the end of October of the previous year. The committee issued the slogan “Protect the native Viennese,” and the members voted to maintain the licensing obligation. At the time, Hirsch claimed he could not attend this meeting due to health reasons. A few months later, it would become known that he attended another meeting of fellow *Volkssänger* who were in favor of lifting the licensing requirement.⁷⁸

Another salient moment on Hirsch's path to revealing his true intentions was 19 January 1903. Surprised by the deep-seated and widespread dissatisfaction that the *Volkssänger* demonstrated with the legal requirements for their professional practice, the Vienna police conducted on this day an enquiry regarding their desire for a new set of regulations.⁷⁹ They invited experts to represent the profession, including Hirsch, Recher, Rötzer, Karl Walenta, and Spacek. The compromise between the *Volkssänger* and the police was that the licenses would be awarded for a three-year period and could subsequently be extended if the licensee did not commit any infractions. They also agreed that licenses could not be leased to third parties. When the question arose as to whether *Volkssänger* ensembles would be required to hire licensed members or be permitted to employ cheaper, unlicensed colleagues, the debate became so heated that the enquiry had to be adjourned and postponed for a week. On behalf of forty-one fellow *Volkssänger*, Walenta submitted the request to abolish any and all licensing requirements. Recher and Rötzer in particular were against this proposal. They argued that this "would mean the complete ruin of the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The unlicensed performers would then completely oust the licensed ones."⁸⁰ Hirsch remained in the background during the argument. At the time, Recher and Rötzer did not know that he was also one of the *Volkssänger* whom Walenta represented. Hirsch first spoke up when it came to the so-called harassment of Austrian *Volkssänger* in Hungary. He again demanded that the Hungarian performers be shut out. In this matter, he seemed to be faithful to the positions that he had previously held. He was still considered one of the most relentless opponents of performances by Hungarian groups in Vienna.

In February and March 1903 events unfolded in rapid succession. The trigger for this acceleration was the rumor that the Hungarian group Folies Caprice planned to move to Vienna in the near future. As rumor had it, the performance facilities at the Hotel Central on Taborstrasse were already being updated to accommodate the group. In response to the news, three singspiel ensemble managers, whose establishments were located in the immediate vicinity of the Hotel Central, submitted a protest to the local authorities. The three protestors were Karl Lechner, who led the Budapest Orpheum Society; Fritz Lung, the director of the Folies Comiques; and Albert Hirsch, the manager of the Lemberg Singspiel Society at Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum.⁸¹ It is worth noting that all three groups in the broader sense were considered "Jewish" ensembles. This designation was also applicable to the Hungarian group Folies Caprice. Given this context, we may view a large part of the commotion that took place in the world of the *Volkssänger* in Vienna of 1902–3 as "intra-Jewish competition."

A few days after this protest was issued, a delegation of Viennese *Volkssänger* and singspiel ensemble managers, consisting of Recher, Rötzer, and Lechner, paid a visit to the Reichsrat. The delegation presented a memorandum to Reichsrat member Alois Heilingner. In it, they criticized the treatment of Austrian *Volkssänger*

and singspiel managers in Hungary and demanded that performances by Hungarian colleagues in Vienna no longer be permitted. They explicitly addressed the case of the *Folies Caprice*. Heilinger promised to pass on their concerns to the minister-president in the form of an interpellation.

The *Folies Caprice* is the first example of a specific Hungarian group being considered the enemy of the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The representatives of the *Volkssänger* found themselves once again in a new, difficult situation: From now on, they could no longer advocate a general ban on Hungarian troupes performing in Vienna. Rather, they had to demonstrate their influence on local politics by advocating a specific issue on behalf of their colleagues. The blocking of the planned move of the *Folies Caprice* to Vienna served, as it were, as a litmus test for the delegation committee's ability to assert itself in the interest of the performers it represented.

The performing musicians' initial reaction to the *Folies Caprice*'s plan to move to Vienna manifested itself in a radicalization of language. Discussions no longer focused on Hungarian performers in Vienna, but rather on the "invasion of Hungarian *Volkssänger*." The heightened use of language in turn increased the imagined threat. Furthermore, the Viennese *Volkssänger* did not want the ban on Hungarian ensembles in Vienna to seem only like a strategic tactic in a professional rivalry. For this purpose, the Viennese *Volkssänger* emphasized the connection between their artistic occupation and the historical and cultural "heritage" of the Habsburg capital. They said that the "total ruin of a professional branch that was intertwined with Vienna and closely linked with local history" would occur in just a short time.⁸² According to this view, the planned move of the *Folies Caprice* to Leopoldstadt was interpreted as an attack on the entire "Viennese spirit" and the widespread sentiments attached to the idea of Old Vienna.

Albert Hirsch Betrays His Fellow Volkssänger

Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that Hirsch was not a part of the deputation that brought the matter to the Reichsrat. As a member of the delegation committee, which was launched on the occasion of the first Austrian *Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists' Day on 27 October 1902, and as one of the three singspiel hall operators who had submitted a protest to the authorities against the *Folies Caprice* moving to Taborstrasse, he himself might have even been in a position to lead the delegation. But despite Hirsch's absence, there was no indication at the time that the *Volkssänger* were split with respect to the question of how to deal with the issue of the Hungarian performers.

Only with this context in mind can we understand the commotion and indignation that a kind of letter to the editor in the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* triggered among the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The letter had been written by Hirsch and Franz Pischkittl (the leaseholder at the Hotel Central, where the Hungar-

ian group *Folies Caprice* intended to give their performances) and was printed six days after the *Volkssänger* appeared before the Reichsrat. With this letter, the subliminal conflicts boiling under the surface among the *Volkssänger* degenerated into a “war” that cast a spell not only over the Viennese tabloids.

We can divide Hirsch and Pischkittl’s letter into five main thematic points. This letter was the first time that Hirsch publicly expressed his opinion regarding the situation within the *Volkssänger* community and did not try to satisfy any expectations. In this sense, those who read his letter in the newspaper also learned something of his interpretation of the events that had recently taken place.

First, Hirsch begins the letter by questioning Rötzer’s legitimacy in representing the *Volkssänger*. By bringing this topic up, Hirsch makes reference to the *Volkssänger* enquiry that took place on 19 January 1903, during which Walenta submitted a petition in the name of forty-one fellow performing musicians requesting that the performing licensing system be entirely abolished. In his letter, Hirsch now asserts that these *Volkssänger* had voted against being represented by Rötzer. As Hirsch sees it, Rötzer was therefore not authorized to speak on their behalf.⁸³

The second point that Hirsch makes in the letter concerns Recher and Lechner’s motives for opposing the Hungarian *Volkssänger*. Hirsch calls attention to what he sees as the two protestors’ contradictory behavior. On the one hand, they agitated against the performance of Hungarian ensembles in Vienna. On the other, the two, according to Hirsch, had recently enjoyed in a fruitful cooperation with female Hungarian singers (*Artistinnen*). Hirsch states that there were only two female Hungarian singers in all of Vienna at the time. The first was Clara Aranyossi, who was under contract with Karl Recher, the musical director at Café Riedl. And the other was Sophie Ferenczi, who until recently had been a member of the Budapest Orpheum Society, which Lechner ran.⁸⁴ By bringing up the topic, Hirsch sought to question publicly Lechner and Recher’s anti-Hungarian stance.

As Hirsch saw it, Rötzer, Recher, and Lechner had no right to speak out against the proposed move of the *Folies Caprice* to Vienna. All three were, as he indicates, discredited in one way or another. Hirsch then brings up his third point. For the first time, he takes a public stand against the issuing of performance licenses. He describes the expected consequences of abolishing licenses, such as an increase in competition among the performers, as developments that were more or less part of everyday life. According to the opinion that Hirsch formulates, the Viennese *Volkssänger* should not understand the resettlement of the *Folies Caprice* in Vienna as an intrusion of strangers from the outside. Rather, the potential presence of the *Folies Caprice* was merely a consequence of the occupational mobility inherent in being a *Volkssänger*. Hirsch continues to say that even he had suffered in the past under the influx of Hungarian artists to Vienna. He explains that about a decade ago, when the Budapest Orpheum Society moved

to the Hotel Schwarzer Adler, “we children of Vienna: Kutzle, Mirzl, Seidl-Wiesberg, Gutschelbauer(!), and my humble self [were] crowded out from the venue [where we played], and business was booming.” The people whom Hirsch names represent the cream of the crop of the older Viennese *Volkssänger* community. By including his name in this list, Hirsch situates himself as an “original Viennese,” and thus as a *Volkssänger* belonging to Old Vienna. In this way, he may have been attempting to anticipate any challenge to his representing an “authentic” *Volkssänger* on account of his Jewishness.

Although the Budapest Orpheum Society, as Hirsch describes it, initially caused irritation among the local Viennese *Volkssänger*, the new group succeeded very quickly in becoming a universally respected and integral part of Viennese entertainment culture. The Budapest Orpheum, according to Hirsch, thus serves as an excellent example of a foreign troupe’s ability to enrich the local entertainment industry. In the letter, he rhetorically establishes the Budapest Orpheum’s move to Vienna as a precedent for the Folies Caprice. Hirsch thus attempts to dispel concerns about the group’s announced move to the Habsburg capital.

Furthermore, Hirsch emphasizes in his letter to the editor that the Folies Caprice would be established as a “family variety,” meaning that the pieces they would stage would be devoid of any piquancy, so that even children could be a part of the audience. Hirsch’s announcement makes sense when we consider that the Folies Caprice had a reputation for their salacious performances. By making this point, Hirsch wanted to forestall critics who might make an argument against the Folies Caprice based on moral grounds.

After mollifying readers somewhat by making these points, Hirsch gets to the heart of matter and makes his explosive point. He signs the letter, “A. Hirsch, Viennese and future sole director of the new family variety show at the Hotel Central, located at 8 Taborstrasse.”⁸⁵ Hirsch introduces himself, in an offhand kind of way, as the leader of the Folies Caprice, as the one responsible for bringing the group to Vienna.

The appearance of this letter to the editor put all of Vienna’s *Volkssänger* in a brief state of shock. For a year and a half, the *Volkssänger* had been holding meetings, drafting resolutions, and contacting politicians, all for the purpose of preventing Hungarian groups from performing in Vienna. It now almost seemed like it had all been in vain. However, the perception that one of their own had betrayed and compromised them weighed even heavier than their futile efforts. And they felt particularly betrayed by someone who had always clearly spoken out against Hungarian groups.

Hirsch must have been aware this declaration would trigger an uproar in the *Volkssänger* community. With his tactic of presenting the licensing issue as the central point of his letter, he sought to mitigate the anticipated outrage at least to some degree. Revoking the licensing requirement that many of his colleagues demanded implied that foreign ensembles would be able to perform in Vienna

without any restrictions. Hirsch assumed that the *Volkssänger* who had spoken out against the licenses and thus accepted the possibility of increased competition would not oppose him. This assumption would prove to be incorrect.

From the Polish Performers to Polish Jews

After the publication of his letter, Hirsch experienced massive hostility from his fellow *Volkssänger*. Only a very few took his side. A few days later, he was given the opportunity to comment on his actions in a broader context. To this end, Recher and Rötzer organized a public forum at Seifert's Saal in the Viennese district of Hernals. The meeting's slogan was the "critical illumination of the *Volkssänger* Hirsch." The meeting resulted in a fierce battle of words and screaming matches. The commotion attracted the attention of many people on the street, who besieged Seifert's Saal out of curiosity. The police had great difficulty in keeping the crowd in check. By that point at the very latest, the meeting had turned into a spectacle for the masses.

The hall where the meeting took place was already packed before it began. Albert Hirsch arrived with a group of about twenty supporters who were intent on supporting him against his critics. Not all seemed to be *Volkssänger*. Even at the beginning of the meeting it was clear that the warring camps would find no reconciliation. The tensions between the two sides seemed to be too great, and no one was willing to rein in personal accusations. For example, Albert Hirsch and his son Adolfi attempted to compromise Recher by pointing out grammatical and syntactical errors that he had made in the invitation to the meeting. Hirsch and his son stated that these mistakes were proof of "what an inferior education the convener enjoys."⁸⁶ The first upset occurred when Recher was elected chairman and Spacek was elected his deputy. Hirsch and his supporters protested at the top of their voices.

Because the participants at this meeting discussed not only Hirsch's behavior regarding the *Folies Caprice* but also his other activities, the various statements and speeches that they made once again provide us informative insight into the Viennese *Volkssänger* milieu. Recher functioned as the main speaker during the meeting. His remarks, for example, make it clear why the December 1901 meeting's mood had been so hostile toward Hirsch. Recher reminded the Viennese *Volkssänger* that Hirsch had been duping them for years. As an example, he names the *Extrablatt* (special edition) boycott. The *Volkssänger* had agreed to sever all contact with the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*. According to Recher, Hirsch had undermined this agreement by continuing to send the newspaper information regarding the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene. As a result, this paper portrayed him in a positive light. Recher argued that by doing this Hirsch had employed unfair tactics to gain a competitive advantage over his fellow *Volkssänger*. In his harangue of Hirsch, Recher also spoke of the relationship between the *Volkssänger*

and the authors' society. In January 1897, Hirsch had encouraged his colleagues to boycott the authors' society because their royalties were unreasonably high.⁸⁷ He had proposed that the *Volkssänger* perform their own plays that they themselves penned. A year later, Hirsch announced in an advertisement in one of the daily newspapers that he was accepting farces and musical pieces by authors and composers. Recher argued that Hirsch had arbitrarily renounced solidarity with the *Volkssänger*.⁸⁸

In Recher's opinion, Hirsch was doing the same thing again, this time with the *Folies Caprice*. He had previously been an ardent opponent of the Hungarian troupes and had even encouraged fellow performing musicians to follow his lead. And now he was bringing an ensemble from Budapest to Vienna. According to him, the *Folies Caprice*, which did not have a license to perform in Vienna, approached Hirsch through a middleman and offered him twelve gulden a day if he as a licensed *Volkssänger* agreed to serve as their director. Because the Polish singspiel society from Lemberg had offered him only eight gulden, Hirsch did not hesitate to agree to the plan that the *Folies Caprice* proposed. Recher accused Hirsch of being ruthless and greedy. Recher also accused him of being the kind of person who changed his character as often as other people change their underwear, flocking to anyone who brings him the greatest profit.⁸⁹

The extent to which these accusations against Hirsch were true remains open to debate. But in the context of Hirsch's Jewishness, the similarity between the tone of these accusations and anti-Jewish stereotypes prevalent at the time may not have been entirely accidental. We see that Recher was not averse to making antisemitic allusions in other remarks that he made. When he mentioned Hirsch being director of the Lemberg Singspiel Society, he referred to the ensemble members as "Polish Jews."⁹⁰ Although some people immediately interrupted and asked him to call them "Polish artists" rather than Jews, Recher nonetheless repeated the designation "Polish Jews."⁹¹ For the first time in the dispute among the *Volkssänger*, someone stigmatized Jewishness. It was used as a category replacing the term "artist." Recher thus introduced a twofold dichotomy: being Viennese versus being Polish and being a *Volkssänger* versus being Jewish. According to Recher, a member of the Lemberg ensemble was neither truly Viennese nor a true *Volkssänger*.

Following Recher, Modl took the floor. He criticized Hirsch's comment that with the Budapest Orpheum Society a Hungarian troupe had already come to Vienna and that he had suffered as a result of their appearance in the city. Modl emphasized that the vast majority of the ensemble's members at the time it was founded were not Hungarian but Viennese, although they did perform in Budapest. In saying this, Modl drew a clear distinction between the Budapest Orpheum Society and the *Folies Caprice*. He had explicitly spoken against the *Folies Caprice* moving to Vienna, declaring, "But we don't need any all-Hungarian groups. We don't want to let ourselves be devoured by an influx of foreigners."⁹²

At the same time, Modl emphasized that the community of artists was international. He thus supported Hirsch's line of argument and positioned himself in opposition to Recher's attempts to nationalize the *Volkssänger* and pit them against Jews.⁹³

Identity as Performance

While Modl was very careful to distance himself from Recher, Hirsch reacted much more directly to Recher's anti-Jewish jibes. He explicitly addressed the topic of his Jewishness and contrasted it with common anti-Jewish stereotypes. As he had done a few days before in the letter to the editor he had written, he now attempted during the meeting to style himself as an authentic *Wiener* (Viennese person) who was different from the members of "foreign ensembles." He again criticized the Budapest Orpheum Society, in particular their absence from important activities involving the Viennese *Volkssänger*. In this context, he referenced the inauguration of a *Volkssänger* flag that had taken place two years previously.⁹⁴ He emphasized that the "Budapester" had not been present at this ceremonial event. But he highlighted his own participation in the event, explaining, "In the church, I, Hirsch the Jew, stood next to the mayor. Gentlemen, you couldn't very well expect me to say, 'All hail Lueger,' [because] I'm Jewish, but it was still nice of him to show up. Do you know who didn't show up? The Budapester."⁹⁵

For Hirsch, being Jewish was no reason to be absent from a Christian ritual held in a church. It also does not seem to have bothered him that he had to stand in close proximity to Vienna's antisemitic mayor. Rather, Hirsch used this coincidence as an opportunity to show that he was very much a part of the Viennese *Volkssänger* community. For Hirsch, the crucial criterion that determines belonging to a particular group, in this case the *Volkssänger*, is neither ethnicity nor religious affiliation, but rather participation in common activities. As he sees it, group solidarity is the result of a performative act. During the flag ceremony, this included, however temporarily, both the antisemite Lueger and the Jewish performer Hirsch.

If ethnicity and race are considered prerequisites for belonging to the *Volkssänger* community (echoing national myths of origin), Jews can easily be excluded from belonging to the larger social group. Recher did just this, explicitly excluding the Lemberg Singspiel Society and implicitly shutting out Hirsch. With so-called primordial codes, the constructed body is the decisive criterion for inclusion in a group, which does not allow freedom of choice.⁹⁶ Although participation in a primordial community is established from birth, those who belong assure themselves of their belonging and difference from outsiders by way of various rules of conduct. I argue that Hirsch sought to replace the primordial

with a performative community, which presupposes the active engagement of its members in solidarity-building actions and knows no exclusion rituals. In this context, we can now make sense of Hirsch's reference during the Seifert's Saal meeting to the fact that Rötzer had dined in his home in the recent past.⁹⁷ Inviting his opponent into his home is indicative of close social relationships that do not recognize primordial distinctions and related taboos regarding food.

Hirsch's argument during the meeting at Seifert's Saal that group belonging is performatively constituted does not seem to have merely been the result of his efforts to justify his behavior toward his peers. Rather, his argument seems to have corresponded to his true understanding of community. He also expresses his commitment to a conception of coexistence that is not based on essentialist features in several of his performances. As an example, let us consider his farce *Ein riskirtes Geschäft* (A risky business).⁹⁸ The plot of the piece seems quite simple: Gottfried Säufer (literally "drunkard") finds himself in a precarious situation due to his extraordinary alcohol consumption. In order to master it, he borrows 8,000 gulden from Salomon Teitelbaum. The two parties agree that Gottfried will repay 2,000 gulden annually over the next five years. They decide on a high interest rate because in the event of Gottfried's demise, Salomon would lose out on the outstanding sum of money before the end of the repayment period. To prevent this from happening, Salomon cares for the health of his debtor with great zeal. He follows him at every turn and tries to prevent him from engaging in unadvised activities and protect him from unpredictable situations. Gottfried, in turn, is interested in Salomon's well-being because he might need him again as a lender in the future. The non-Jew Gottfried and the Jew Salomon are thereby bound up in a kind of symbiotic community. They are to some degree dependent on each other and appear in public almost only together.

At one point, the two go to a tavern, where they run into the butcher Eulalie Schinkenbein, a former lover of Gottfried's. She is deeply upset over his broken promise to marry her. Over the course of their verbal exchange, she goes so far as to threaten to kill him with a knife. When Salomon tries to intervene to settle the dispute, she warns him to butt out, otherwise she will "stab [him] like a pig."⁹⁹ Salomon now faces a considerable dilemma: If he tries to help Gottfried, he puts himself in mortal danger. If he does not intervene, he could possibly lose Gottfried as well as the money he has lent him. Thus, the harmony gained through their mutual interest in caring for one another is lost.

Despite its simple plot, the play treats a controversial topic by portraying possibilities of coexistence between Jews and non-Jews. The Jewish Salomon and the non-Jewish Gottfried both mutually profit from one another as long as they take care of each other and coordinate their activities. Salomon's Jewishness does not interfere with their interactions. Their two-person Jewish–non-Jewish community is not based on noble ideals but is created by practical action.

The Volkssänger War Goes to Court

Although it was not intended to result in conflict, the meeting held on 21 March 1903 contributed to an intensification of the *Volkssänger* dispute. Because Hirsch believed that Rötzer and Recher had confronted him with unjustified accusations during the heated exchange at Seifert's Saal, he accused them both of slander. The case appeared before the district court in Hernals on 11 May 1903. The authorities, aware of the hostile mood among the *Volkssänger*, were intent on preventing any fights or other clashes from occurring by asking everyone present to relinquish their umbrellas or any other objects that could be used in an altercation.

The case was complicated by the fact that the court hearing involved not only the complaint that Hirsch brought against the defendants, but also the grievances that they brought against him. Rötzer for one felt that Hirsch had damaged his reputation by saying that "Rötzer should really be named *Hetzer* [instigator]" and took legal action against him for the statement. From the beginning, the judge's strategy was to mediate a settlement between the two parties. But both sides emphatically resisted the judge's efforts. The first day of the hearing thus consisted of little more than banter, each side blaming the other, and self-righteous statements made by both plaintiffs. Two incidents stand out from the unspectacular normality of the court proceedings and provide us particular insight into the poisoned atmosphere that plagued the *Volkssänger*. The first is an unexpected jeremiad that Hirsch delivered concerning the way in which the other *Volkssänger* had treated him. He complained to the judge that his fellow performing musicians had ostracized him. He stated bitterly, "Ever since the meeting when they viciously reproached me, a blameless person, my health has been jeopardized and I have been having thoughts of resorting to a murder weapon."¹⁰⁰ It is not clear from his remarks whether he was threatening suicide or contemplating murdering Recher and Rötzer. But his words nonetheless suggest the extent to which the "*Volkssänger* war" had demoralized and oppressed him.

The second incident worth noting took place in front of the courthouse after the trial. Around a hundred *Volkssänger* gathered there and engaged in a vigorous debate about what had taken place in the courtroom. One of those present was Adolf Hirsch, the plaintiff's son. When he caught sight of the lawyer representing his father's opponents, he began to abuse the man verbally. Other *Volkssänger* became involved in the ensuing war of words, further fueling the aggressive mood outside the court building. Albert Hirsch, who had already lost his temper several times during the trial, now completely lost his composure. He believed that he could only assert himself against his opponents with brute force and wanted to assault the lawyer. Passersby attracted by the commotion prevented him from doing so. The "*Volkssänger* war," which had up to this point consisted only of accusations and the occasional undercut, now threatened to deteriorate into violence.¹⁰¹

The court hearing that was suspended on 11 May continued two weeks later. The judge called a number of witnesses to take the stand. Most relieved Hirsch of the accusation of having damaged the reputation of the *Volkssänger*. Among others, Heinrich Leitner, the director of the Folies Caprice, who had not yet moved to Vienna from Budapest, spoke in Hirsch's favor. He denied the accusation that he had concluded a sham contract with Hirsch only to obtain a performance license for Vienna. Contrary to popular assumptions, Hirsch would, together with him, lead the ensemble and occasionally appear on stage as an actor.¹⁰² Leitner also emphasized that a large part of the group was made up of native Viennese rather than Hungarians. He argued in defense of the Folies Caprice much like Modl had done with respect to the Budapest Orpheum Society during the meeting on 21 March. Many of the *Volkssänger* who were present in the courtroom, however, did not believe Leitner's statements and loudly expressed their dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, the lawsuit against Hirsch collapsed with Leitner's statements in his defense. After this, nothing stood in the way of the respective plaintiffs reaching a compromise, and the judge was able to persuade them all to come to an agreement. The *Volkssänger* war thus came to an end.

The Aftermath of the Volkssänger War

The *Volkssänger* dispute deeply clouded the relationship between some of them. The conflict seems to have done the most damage to Albert Hirsch. At the end of May 1903, he resigned his position as singspiel hall director of Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum. Despite the plan that he had announced, Hirsch probably did not end up working with the Folies Caprice, as his name did not appear in the group's performance announcements. Instead, he performed for a while with his own group. However, he was unable to achieve the success he had had in the past. In the fall of 1903, he joined his son-in-law Karl Kassina's burlesque theater troupe.¹⁰³ Hirsch had lost his professional independence for the time being.

In June 1904, Hirsch set off on a tour of Bohemia and Moravia with an ensemble.¹⁰⁴ In doing so, he followed the lead of numerous *Volkssänger* groups that annually trailed behind the Viennese who left the city during the heat of summer in search of relief. In a sense, they escorted their audiences, performing in well-known vacation destinations and on smaller stages outside Vienna. These groups left the Habsburg capital to try to compensate for what was generally sluggish business in July and August. Hirsch's guest appearances, however, differed from those of other groups. His tour lasted well beyond the summer months. He did not return to Vienna until the middle of November.¹⁰⁵ This longer absence suggests that Hirsch had difficulties finding work in his home city.

We also reach this conclusion when we take into consideration the press releases detailing Hirsch's guest spots. Normally, the media did not report on Vien-

nese ensemble performances that took place outside of the metropolis, but they covered Hirsch's performances in great detail. But this detailed coverage, however, was not part of typical reporting but instead appeared in the form of special announcements and brief notices that Hirsch himself was likely responsible for launching.¹⁰⁶ Since these notices were probably not intended to lure the Viennese away from the city, we can reasonably assume that they were intended to serve as advertisements meant to increase Hirsch's chances of finding work in Vienna. On 2 August 1904, a notice appeared advertising Hirsch's guest performance in Prague. It states, "Restaurateurs reflecting on this burlesque ensemble may reach A. Hirsch at the above address."¹⁰⁷ This notice thus demonstrates that Hirsch sought engagement in Vienna by using these kinds of advertisements. He may have been in a desperate situation. Despite these efforts, he was still unable to find work when he returned to the city in the late autumn of the same year. This is why he turned to Viennese locale owners with a "request for an offer from the gentlemen restaurateurs and café owners."¹⁰⁸

The degree to which Hirsch's multi-month tour might have also been a reason for his inability to find work in Vienna can be seen in an advertisement published at the beginning of 1904 offering his entertainment services at family celebrations.¹⁰⁹ When we consider that only a few months earlier he had delighted a larger theater audience every evening and had been one of the best-known representatives of the Viennese *Volkssänger*, we must likely interpret his willingness to offer private performances as a considerable career decline. I argue that the *Volkssänger* conflict had sweeping, long-term consequences for Hirsch. He was unable to regain a foothold in the *Volkssänger* scene. Although he briefly performed in the spring of 1905 with a group called the Leopoldstadt Burlesque Ensemble, we may nonetheless conclude the longer pauses between his performances signaled the end of his career as a leading *Volkssänger*, a status he had been able to maintain until the turn of the century.

The Folies Caprice ensemble may have also had difficulty establishing itself in Vienna. In any case, the performances that were supposed to take place in the Hotel Central never came to be. The first indications that the ensemble was giving performances in Vienna were in August 1903 when newspapers advertised their engagement in the Bijou Theater on the grounds of Venice in Vienna.¹¹⁰ The director was not Albert Hirsch, but rather Heinrich Leitner. In addition, the Folies Caprice had to compete with a newly founded group called the Viennese Folies Caprice. The establishment of the Viennese Folies Caprice ensemble seemed to be a direct response to the Hungarian group and began to take the stage in the Hotel Stefanie in the Taborstrasse in the middle of December 1903.¹¹¹ The group's manager merely added the epithet "Viennese" to the ensemble's name in an attempt to underscore the foreignness of the original Folies Caprice. A group of Viennese *Volkssänger* had thus become active as a way of luring business away from the troupe from Budapest. As a result, the Hun-

garians renamed their ensemble the Original Folies Caprice in order to highlight their “authenticity.”

Interpreting the *Volkssänger* Conflict

I began this chapter by asserting that there are often multiple ways to interpret past events—in this case events from the Jewish past. I argued that we can view the disputes among the *Volkssänger* as evidence of this multiplicity of interpretive possibilities. The question that arises from my discussion of this conflict is whether I can substantiate my original thesis. Can we in fact interpret the *Volkssänger* war both in terms of antisemitism and its opposite, that is, as an example of prosperous Jewish and non-Jewish cooperation?

Three points seem undisputed when considering the tensions among the performing musicians, and we must take them into account in an effort to answer this question. First, there were no measurable differences between Jews and non-Jews. To be sure, some Jews supported their fellow Jew, Albert Hirsch. This was especially noticeable in the case of Karl Kassina.¹¹² Salomon Fischer, who was admittedly not particularly active in the entire affair, at least advocated for a revocation of the license requirement and took Hirsch’s side in this point. Other Jews, however, such as Josef Modl, criticized Hirsch. Hirsch himself complained about the behavior of the Budapest Orpheum Society. The trenches that opened up between the *Volkssänger* also existed between their Jewish members. There was no dividing line according to religious or ethnic affiliation, but rather according to specific professional interests.

Second, we cannot deny that Hirsch was guilty of disappointing many of his fellow performers. He deceived them out of self-interest while simultaneously declaring solidarity with them. His behavior had provoked the outrage over this apparent betrayal as well as the hostility with which a number of the Viennese *Volkssänger* reacted to him. The court proceedings that represented the culmination of the conflict put a strain first and foremost on Hirsch. Nevertheless, he was not personally subjected to antisemitism.

At first glance, these two points seem to indicate that Jews enjoyed a solid position in the local *Volkssänger* scene. They seem to have been widely accepted by their non-Jewish colleagues. The Jewishness of Hirsch, Fischer, Armin, Heinrich Eisenbach, Modl, and many others was not a reason for their fellow non-Jewish *Volkssänger* either to be suspicious of or to reject them. However, this assertion—and now I address the third point—runs contrary to Recher’s allusion to the Lemberg Singspiel Society as somehow different, as not belonging to the group. He evoked their Jewishness as a feature of their difference. Despite the fact that many of his colleagues explicitly requested that he not refer to the “Polish” as Jewish, Recher refused to relent. The real target of his attack was not likely to be

the Lemberg Singspiel Society, but rather Hirsch. This is also apparent in that at the end of December 1901 Recher emphasized that the “Polish” should not be disadvantaged as compared to the Viennese *Volkssänger*. I have identified no subsequent event that might have served to contradict this finding. The Lemberg Singspiel Society probably only served Recher as a means to threaten Hirsch, suggesting the possibility that his Jewishness could be used against him.

The reason why Recher did not make an antisemitic attack on Hirsch may have been rooted in his popularity. He was an integral member of the Viennese *Volkssänger*, and as one of their most important representatives he enjoyed great prestige among the population. The Viennese probably would not have favored anti-Jewish attacks directed against him. The Lemberg Singspiel Society, however, was a different matter. As Galician Jews, the members of the Lemberg ensemble were categorized as immigrants, whom the Viennese population already treated with deep-seated hostility.¹¹³ In addition, they avoided participating in the social activities of the *Volkssänger*, and their performances in (Jewish) jargon did little to help establish the “Polish” as an integral part of the Viennese *Volkssänger* milieu. Recher therefore assumed that discriminating the group by calling them “Jewish” would be greeted with little objection. However, he was wrong in this assumption.

Let us return to my initial question concerning the historical evaluation of the *Volkssänger* war. Whether the conflict serves as evidence of an ineradicable antisemitism or whether we observe the relative lack of antisemitic sentiment undoubtedly depends on the interpretive lens we bring to the topic. On the one hand, the “war” revealed anti-Jewish sentiments, but on the other hand, it allows us to see that the Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* also prospered together. If historians focus on antisemitism, however, they should not only look for explicit antisemitic formulations, which were altogether scarce. Historians must also consider that the *Volkssänger* war took place in a city with a pronounced antisemitic climate.¹¹⁴ Antisemitic clichés and stereotypes were part of its cultural texture. In this context, all one had to do was portray a person as having attributes that, according to widespread understanding, characterized Jews in order to brand that person as “Jewish.” The accusation that Hirsch was characterless and sacrificed solidarity for the sake of profit may well have been one of these codes used to characterize someone implicitly as Jewish.

Despite Lueger’s antisemitism, however, Jews were better off than ever during his time as mayor of Vienna.¹¹⁵ This was partly due to favorable economic developments. On the other hand, the impression that conditions for Jews in fin-de-siècle Vienna were altogether favorable was also probably connected to the sheer number of Jewish and non-Jewish interactions that made the existing hostility toward Jews to a certain extent tolerable, sometimes even ignorable. The mayor himself embodied this paradox in that he was a rabid antisemite but also had Jewish friends.¹¹⁶ He acted according to the motto he had formulated: “I decide who is Jewish.”¹¹⁷

In addition to the close professional connections that Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* shared (which I discussed in chapter 2), they also had numerous private groups or in-crowds, a phenomenon that even involved Hirsch and his later opponents in the *Volkssänger* war. An individual's Jewishness did not matter. Jews and non-Jews not only ate together and celebrated their festivals together, but also maintained intimate relationships and sometimes married each other. Salomon Fischer, who married Gisela Josefine Pichler in a civil ceremony in 1905 after he had separated from his second wife, Mitzi Jäger, was one of the Jewish *Volkssänger* who had an interdenominational marriage. In this context, we can also mention Josef Armin. He met his wife Kathi Rieder, a singer, during a stay in Lemberg (Lvov). They then moved to Vienna, where they initially worked together for the Hirsch ensemble.¹¹⁸

The world of Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* was closely intertwined and sometimes marked by entirely contradictory developments. Antisemitism and Jewish–non-Jewish intimacy coexisted alongside Jewish difference and mental similarities between Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues. On the one hand, Jewish *Volkssänger* ensembles, as I will demonstrate in the following, belonged to an *Aufführungsgemeinschaft* (community of performers), meaning that they had their own cultural milieu and perhaps even demonstrated their own separate “Jewish” humor. On the other hand, these groups performed the same farces and burlesques as the non-Jewish ensembles, suggesting that they all shared a common understanding of humor and roguishness, in particular the specific contexts that comedians poked fun at for the audience's amusement. It is interesting to note that the plays that Jewish groups performed were often written by Karl Rötzer. The *Volkssänger* war apparently had no detrimental effects on this relationship. Only a few days after its completion, the S. Fischer Society introduced Rötzer's *Alt- und Jung-Heidelberg* (Old and young Heidelberg). Members of the ensemble included, among others, one of Albert Hirsch's daughters and her husband Karl Kassina, who had actively supported his father-in-law during the disputes with Recher and Rötzer.¹¹⁹ Before the conflict arose over the *Folies Caprice*, Hirsch also benefited from Rötzer's ingenuity. In 1896, he produced the play *Ein Wiener in Constantinopel oder im Harem!* (A Viennese in Constantinople or in the harem!).¹²⁰ But non-Jewish ensembles also staged pieces containing Jewish themes, such as when the Ludwig Kirnbauer Singspiel Hall performed *Der Herr Hekler* (The lord Hekler) by Louis Taufstein (1870–1942).¹²¹ The play portrays hidden and accepted forms of Jewishness, the characters use a variety of common Yiddish terms, and only a cooperative Bohemian servant named Ladislaus suggests that there is also a non-Jewish world beyond the depicted milieu.

Both antisemitism and close private relationships with Jews existed in Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century and were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The two may have even been inseparable.¹²² I argue that we can explain this antisemitism by taking as a point of departure Shulamit Volkov's concept of the “cul-

tural code.” According to this concept, antisemitic thinking was part of the basic attitude of a large part of the Viennese population, irrespective of whether an individual who entertained antisemitic ideas exhibited animosities against Jews. A person’s antisemitic views indicated that they were familiar with (Viennese) non-Jewish society. “Thus, the position on the Jewish question, even if not in itself of paramount importance,” Volkov argues, “came to indicate a belonging to a larger camp, a political stand and an overall cultural choice.”¹²³ Individuals could therefore bring Judeophobic sentiment into alignment with their specific personal relations with Jews. An observation that Arthur Schnitzler made in his 1908 novel *The Road into the Open (Der Weg ins Freie)* is illuminating in this context. In the novel, Schnitzler described the Habsburg metropolis immediately before the turn of the twentieth century as a city in which antisemitism was noticeably on the rise, but the relationships between Jews and non-Jews remained unaffected.¹²⁴

The *Volkssänger* were a part of this ambiguous situation too. We see this ambiguity exemplified in the antisemitic body of songs that also belonged to the performing musicians’ repertoire. As part of Viennese society, above all through the anchoring of the *Volkssänger* in Viennese culture, it should come as no surprise that these songs expressed the attitudes of the petty-bourgeois Viennese milieu, including antisemitic ideas, in one form or another.

One of the notorious authors of antisemitic texts was Carl Lorens (1851–1901), who was also one of the most important composers of *Wienerlieder*. He owed his breakthrough not least to Julius Löwy, a Jewish editor of the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, who reprinted the song “D’Mutterliab” by Lorens in the newspaper and helped him gain prominence.¹²⁵ But that did not stop Lorens from incorporating anti-Jewish stereotypes into his songs. His satirical song “Jeiteles, Mauscheles, Isak Silberstein,” for example, focuses on the ostentatious wealth of the Jews, which even the stock market crash failed to diminish. According to Lorens’s song, “Jewish” wealth was evident in the Jewish-owned Palais am Wiener Ring, in the guests of the Hotel Sacher, where primarily Jews dined, as well as in the opera, whose ticket holders were predominantly Jewish. Wealthy Jews thus frequented expensive locales that *Volkssänger* audiences tended to avoid because they could not afford them. Due to the presence of Jewish wealth, no matter how much this group represented a minute fraction of the overall population, Jews were seen as the polar opposite of popular “folk” culture.¹²⁶ The song “Der Jüd” (The Jew) demonstrates, albeit in a more vulgar fashion, this popular image of Jews. The explicit nature of the song’s antisemitic lyrics might well seem jarring: “Who goes in and out of the stock exchange all year round? The Jew. Who drinks champagne at the Hotel Sacher? The Jew . . . who eats everything but nothing from the pig? The Jew, the Jew, the Jew. Who takes 20 percent even on a gulden? The Jew.”¹²⁷ Lorenz even composed some of his songs in jargon to emphasize the foreignness of Jews using linguistic codes. For example, in his song “Der kosher

Jeinkef” (The kosher Jeinkef), Lorens holds Jews responsible not only for the stock market crash but also for the antisemitism of the press.¹²⁸

The antisemitic texts that Carl Lorens penned do not seem to have deleteriously affected the friendships he had with many Jews.¹²⁹ This apparent paradox illustrates the complex and difficult relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger*. Volkov’s concept of the “cultural code” helps explain this phenomenon. That is why some historians doubt that the inhabitants of Vienna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in fact interpreted Lorens’s songs, which Josef Modl also sang, as viciously antisemitic.¹³⁰

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues that a community can only exist if its formation is not undermined by linguistic articulations. In particular, he emphasizes participation in ritual acts.¹³¹ It is possible that there were these or similar forms of socialization at work in fin-de-siècle Vienna that contributed to neutralizing antisemitic stereotypes in the plays, as we saw in Lorens’s songs. If this was the case, then Albert Hirsch’s concept of a special performative community involving both Jews and non-Jews was not a utopian ideal. In this sense, Hirsch’s concept merely served to highlight preexisting social processes and attribute greater significance to them.

Approaches to Albert Hirsch’s Jewishness

Up until the meeting held on 21 March 1903, Jewishness did not play a role in the *Volkssänger* war. In any event, it was not explicitly mentioned. But during the meeting at Seifert’s Saal, Recher brought up Jewishness in a discriminatory fashion, and Hirsch also mentioned it in referring to himself. Hirsch consciously presented himself as a Jew, who, despite perceiving a degree of similarity between himself and antisemites, specifically Karl Lueger, understood the limits in interacting with them and did not wish to exceed these limits. As he described it, his Jewishness prevented him from joining his colleagues in exclaiming “All hail Lueger!”

In the following, I search for additional evidence of Hirsch’s Jewishness. Can we identify additional clues that point to his Jewish self-understanding, apart from the explicit reference he made during the *Volkssänger* meeting? To answer this question, I analyze Hirsch’s actions and statements. Rather than arguing for an additional obvious avowal of religious affiliation, I present evidence of Hirsch’s performative articulations that underscore a particular kind of relationship to Judaism.

The first indication of Hirsch’s Jewish self-understanding, I assert, lies in his sense of solidarity with Jews who were in distress. This does not mean that he was hard-hearted toward non-Jews. On the contrary, he was often involved with assisting impoverished colleagues and thus garnered great sympathy, which went beyond the *Volkssänger* milieu. However, there is no evidence that Hirsch also

organized relief efforts for people in need who were not Jewish and were not *Volks-sänger*. Nevertheless, he did come to the aid of Jews such as Anna Katz, who wanted to commit suicide by plunging into the Danube Canal along with her children (see the introduction to this book). In order to alleviate the family's misery and give them a new lease on life, Hirsch organized a collection for Katz at his New Year's performance on 1 January 1901.¹³² It is interesting to note that other Jews, such as the Zionist Reichsrat member Heinrich Spitzer, also tried to help Anna Katz by collecting donations.¹³³ Hirsch and Spitzer may have been motivated by their sense of Jewishness to intervene on behalf of the suicidal woman and her children. Their actions may have been based on a particular feeling of empathy for other Jews and can be understood as a commitment to "Jewish solidarity."

We can deduce another indication regarding Hirsch's Jewish self-conception from his performance repertoire. In this sense, I refer not only to his farces, which were usually set in a Jewish milieu or at least included Jewish protagonists, but also to the remarkable similarities between the performances that Hirsch's ensemble offered and other Jewish *Volks-sänger* groups. It is probably no accident that certain plays that they all staged (albeit in different versions) have markedly Jewish content. The *Volks-sänger* thus formed a "Jewish performance community." One of the plays that illustrates this connection among Jewish performing musicians was *Die Klabriaspattie* (see chapter 2). Georg Wacks argues that this work brought Jewish expressions to the stage for the first time.¹³⁴ Although Wacks's assertion seems doubtful, the version of the play that was performed in Vienna was closely linked to the everyday culture of the Jews in the Habsburg capital.¹³⁵ We identify this overlap between the play and everyday Jewish life first and foremost in the location where the card game takes place. Vienna's Café Abeles located in Salzgies, a meeting place for mainly Jewish immigrants from the East, likely served as a model for the play's setting.¹³⁶ Furthermore, *Klabrias* was an actual card game that was very popular among Jews. We see the game's popularity not least in the numerous court cases that were the result of card-playing disputes.¹³⁷ This prompted a judge in March 1900 to proclaim that it was strange that many *Klabrias* games held in Leopoldstadt were properly concluded only in court.¹³⁸

In addition to the Budapest Orpheum Society's performance of *Klabriaspattie*, the S. Fischer Society performed the play in April 1904 at the Prater Orpheum, announcing it as *Soirée bei Dalles*.¹³⁹ In August of the same year, Fischer staged the *Original Budapester Klabrias-Partie*.¹⁴⁰ Around the same time, the Kassina Singspiel Hall offered a production of *Die Klabriaspattie im Olymp* (The *Klabrias* game on Olympus).¹⁴¹ The Halls of Nestroy performed *Die Klabriaspattie auf der Reise nach Chicago* (The *Klabrias* game on a trip to Chicago).¹⁴² And the Hirsch Society in turn produced *Die Klabriaspattie vor Gericht* (The *Klabrias* game goes to court).¹⁴³

A final clue that speaks to Hirsch's identification with Judaism relates to his interactions with Jewish celebrations and festival culture. To be sure, it appears

that he did not participate much in the way of a religious lifestyle. At any rate, I have not found any evidence that would suggest otherwise. Even in his farces he does not portray the Jewishness of his protagonists by way of religious plotlines. However, Hirsch organized Purim celebrations with his ensemble.¹⁴⁴ These celebrations, I argue, indicate a connection to Jewish tradition. We may therefore make the logical conclusion that Hirsch was a part of not only a “community of Jewish solidarity” and a “Jewish performance community,” but also a “Jewish cultural community.” In this context, it is worth noting that Hirsch produced the play *Wrestlers at the Kosher Restaurant* in the autumn of 1900 on the occasion of a Simchat Torah celebration that took place in the fifteenth district of Vienna.¹⁴⁵

Hirsch’s Jewish self-understanding was fragmented. This sense of Jewishness manifested itself in his participation in various Jewish communities. It is therefore not possible to speak of Hirsch’s Jewish self-understanding in general terms, as he does not seem to have personally possessed a unified or holistic concept of Jewishness. Instead, he displayed various facets of it. And he expressed these facets performatively, as they manifested themselves in his actions.

Conclusion

In recent years, some scholars have begun to recognize the topic “Jews in popular culture” as a lacuna in historical research and have as a result been determined to engage with the theme more intensively and thoroughly. Although they have often employed a vague definition of popular culture and have reflected in part only on the Jewish rather than on the general aspects of popular culture, they have nonetheless acknowledged its importance for Jewish–non-Jewish interactions.¹⁴⁶ Hirsch was already aware in the late nineteenth century of what some historians have just now begun to discern, namely the advantageous role of popular culture in the formation of community between Jews and non-Jews. Within the framework of popular culture, he provides a keen example of the subject we analyze today.

In many respects, the *Volkssänger* war, which I have described in detail in this chapter, provides an eye-opening look into the history of Viennese Jews. The conflict not only supports the claim that close ties existed between Jewish and non-Jewish performing artists and that there was no binary categorization separating them, but it also demonstrates that the terms of Jewish adaptation or integration frequently employed in historiography represent problematic analytical instruments that cannot adequately describe the close social ties between Jews and non-Jews and their joint formation of cultural processes. My analysis of the *Volkssänger* dispute thus substantiates my thesis, formulated in the first chapter, that the prominence of the acculturation narrative in historiographical accounts of Jews makes a scholarly treatment of popular culture difficult. Albert

Hirsch never made any attempt to adapt to non-Jewish majority culture. Rather, he pursued his own interests. And he did not have to integrate himself into the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene. There was no reason for this, because he was already an important member of it. Nevertheless, he also wanted his fellow performers to accept him as an equal and treat him first and foremost as a *Volkssänger* rather than a Jew, despite any factual differences between him and the majority of them. Quarreling parties should conduct a disagreement with sound arguments, not by attacking the opposition with disparaging remarks related to religious or ethnic affiliation. We may reasonably conclude that Hirsch was convinced that unprejudiced coexistence was possible in a community whose members commit to creating it on a performative basis. Individual participation in processes of group formulation, rather than primordial codes, should be the decisive factor for structuring belonging.

These community-building processes include church visits. At times, Hirsch demonstratively ignored the divisiveness of religion. This was not only the case with the flag consecration ceremony, but also, as another example, his attendance at the funerals of colleagues.¹⁴⁷ In his farces, he repeatedly touched on the topic of Jews attending church. Hirsch's personal church visits, as well as those of the Jewish characters in his pieces, are always associated with a certain occasion, especially with concrete liminal events. The purpose of this attendance is either to mourn the death of a colleague, to celebrate an individual's acceptance into a religious community, or, as was the case with the consecration of the *Volkssänger* flag, to strengthen ritually the performing singers' collective identity. Those present at such events pursue a common goal that binds them together, at least for the duration of the event. Distinctions and differences that separate them in everyday life seem to be largely eliminated during these kinds of ceremonial occasions. They take place in a kind of "interstitial space" that is neither part of nor completely removed from everyday life, therefore allowing for the formation of a particular kind of community. The French ethnologist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) theorized such a "liminal space" in 1909.¹⁴⁸ His colleague, the Scottish anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983), further developed his concept, introducing the notion of *communitas*, a space in which the participants merge together.¹⁴⁹ Hirsch's particular sense of connection with those present at the church during the consecration of the *Volkssänger* flag, which also allowed him to find common ground with the antisemite Lueger, may have been the result of a "threshold" experience.

Hirsch's localization of community in a liminal space is not rooted in a long-established notion of history that typically serves as the origin of national myths and conceptions of ethnic authenticity.¹⁵⁰ Rather, he sought to evoke the recent past when he described examples of Jewish and non-Jewish coexistence.

There was a direct connection between Hirsch's understanding of time and his concept of space, in which community was constituted performatively. Other

Jewish artists, as I illustrate in the following chapter, articulated a similar framework for community. The triad of time, space, and performance represented a prism of identity for a segment of Viennese Jewry, which distinguished them from many non-Jews. We can interpret this triad as a way of characterizing Jewishness based on secular, rather than religious, differences.

Notes

1. See Evyatar Friesel, “The German-Jewish Encounter as a Historical Problem: A Reconsideration,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 41, no. 1 (1996): 263–64.
2. For general information on this, see Scott Spector, “Forget Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German-Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20, no. 3/4 (2006): 349–61.
3. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* [*IWE* in subsequent citations] 353 (24 December 1901): 9. Hungary generally pursued a nationalist policy with respect to *Volkssänger*, making it difficult not only for Austrian artists to perform but also for those residing in the country that wanted to hold performances in German. See *IWE* 160 (12 June 1902): 8.
4. Carola Leitner and Kurt Hamtil, *Ottakring: Wiens 16. Bezirk in alten Fotografien* (Vienna: Carl Ueberreuter, 2006), 7.
5. One of the most well-known spots in Ottakring was the “Stalehner,” which was turned from a tavern into a vaudeville venue over the course of the nineteenth century. See “Abschied vom alten Haus Stalehner,” *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 53 (23 Februar 1907): 7. See also chapter 4.
6. Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner, *Die Anarchie der Vorstadt: Das andere Wien um 1900* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 35, 118.
7. *IWE* 295 (26 January 1902): 33.
8. Karl Spacek (1850–1904) was already performing in the Prater in the 1860s and worked for various ensembles. In the 1880s, he founded his own company and became famous for his role as the “Bohemian.” In the last twenty years of his career, he took the stage at the Etablissement Mandl in the district of Hernals for performances on Sundays and holidays. His prominence is evident in his honorary membership in various *Volkssänger* associations (see *IWE* 161 [11 June 1904]: 5f.).
9. *IWE* 139 (22 May 1900): 9.
10. Karl Lechner (1870–1927) took over as director of the Budapest Orpheum Society in 1901, replacing his uncle Lautzky.
11. *IWE* (20 January 1906): 9.
12. Before the turn of the twentieth century, Ben Tieber presided for a time over the Colosseum. Following his time there, he repeatedly brought lawsuits against the establishment’s owners. For example, see *IWE* 164 (17 June 1900): 24.
13. *IWE* 7 (8 January 1906): 5. Contractual agreements were generally not taken very seriously, and court proceedings were therefore relatively frequent. For example, see “Was ist ein Vertragsbruch?,” *Das Variété* 32 (14 June 1903): n.p.
14. *IWE* 130 (12 May 1903): 12.
15. *IWE* 38 (8 February 1903): 4.
16. Josef Koller, *Das Wiener Volkssängertum in alter und neuer Zeit. Nacherzähltes und Selbsterlebtes* (Vienna: Gerlach and Wiedling, 1931), 145.

17. *IWE* 232 (24 August 1903): 7.
18. *IWE* 314 (15 November 1903): 18.
19. See *IWE* 359 (31 December 1903): 5.
20. See *IWE* 359 (31 December 1903): 5.
21. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
22. In fact, only a very few *Volkssänger* suffered from a physical handicap. The others surreptitiously obtained permission to be a *Volkssänger* by pretending to have poor eyesight. See Elisabeth Brauner-Berger, “Volkssängertum im Wandel” (PhD diss., Vienna, 1993), 52.
23. A few *Volkssänger* had attempted to do this some years before: see Iris Fink, “‘Wien, Wien, nur Du allein . . .’ Das Wiener Lied im österreichischen Kabarett als Ort der Identitätsfindung,” ed. Joanne McNally and Peter Sprengel, *Hundert Jahre Kabarett: Zur Inszenierung gesellschaftlicher Identität zwischen Protest und Propaganda* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), 51–63, here 53.
24. Despite the objections, it was not long before the *Volkssänger* began to charge a fixed entry fee (*fixes Entrée*). Indeed, one of the first was Salomon Fischer. After he received a license to manage a singspiel hall in 1904, he abandoned the practice of collecting donations from the audience at the Prater Orpheum, where he was a guest performer at the time (see *IWE* 103 [13 April 1904]: 6; *IWE* 131 [11 May 1904]: 11).
25. Brauner-Berger, “Volkssängertum,” 53.
26. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
27. *IWE* 183 (6 July 1900): 15.
28. Amon Berg was the author of numerous well-known one-act pieces, solo scenes, and satirical songs, such as “The Old Drahrer” and “Dear Augustin.” He began his career in 1875 and rendered great services as co-founder of the *Allgemeine Wiener Volkssängerverein*. In the 1890s, he suffered a stroke on stage and was unable to practice his profession for a long time. After a period of impoverishment, he was finally able to make a comeback (see *IWE* 62 [3 March 1899]: 5.)
29. Strict laws governed *Volkssänger* performances in Vienna. Performing musicians were required to have a permit, issued under specific prerequisites. For example, one of the requirements for obtaining a permit was that applicants had to reside in Vienna for a certain period of time (usually multiple years). But in reality, the leaders or managers of *Volkssänger* groups, who were “licensed” (*lizenzirt*), often hired performers who did not have a permit. Amon Berg criticized the fact that ensembles not only had a mixture of licensed and unlicensed members, but they also sometimes provided guest spots to foreign *Volkssänger*.
30. See *IWE* 350 (21 December 1901): 15.
31. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
32. Hauser was the first and longtime chairman of the “League” of Viennese *Volkssänger*.
33. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
34. *IWE* 3 (3 January 1902): 6.
35. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 166f.
36. *IWE* 321 (21 November 1899): 4; *IWE* 329 (29 November 1899): 2.
37. *IWE* 261 (23 September 1900): 9.
38. For more general information on the topic of xenophobia and social envy, see Herfried Münkler, *Populismus in Deutschland. Eine Geschichte seiner Mentalitäten, Mythen und Symbole* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2012), 15–16.
39. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.

40. *IWE* 356 (26 January 1901): 6.
41. *IWE* 356 (26 December 1901): 6.
42. *IWE* 272 (3 October 1902): 5.
43. *IWE* 272 (3 October 1902): 5.
44. *IWE* 37 (6 February 1904): 37. On 1 September 1904, the Viennese *Volkssänger* were finally permitted to perform in coffeehouses. See *IWE* 240 (30 August 1904): 2.
45. *IWE* 297 (28 October 1902): 5.
46. Marion Linhardt, *Residenzstadt und Metropole: Zu einer kulturellen Topographie des Wiener Unterhaltungstheaters (1885–1918)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), 4–7.
47. Fink, “Wien,” 54.
48. We see the explicit connection between the *Volkssänger* and this nostalgic take on Vienna’s past in a remark made in 1903 about Edmund Guschelbauer (1839–1912), one of the most famous Viennese *Volkssänger*, on the occasion of his fortieth year as a performing musician. Guschelbauer was called “one of the last representatives of the singing ‘Old Vienna’” (*Das Variété* 16 [15 February 1903]: n.p.).
49. *IWE* 225 (14 August 1904): 9.
50. Gerhard Eberstaller, *Ronacher: Ein Theater seiner Zeit* (Vienna: Edition Wien, 1993), 29–30.
51. *IWE* 59 (1 March 1902): 8.
52. *IWE* 64 (6 March 1902): 8.
53. *IWE* 43 (13 February): 7.
54. *IWE* 121 (11 May 1904): 11.
55. See *IWE* 243 (5 September 1903): 14.
56. See *IWE* 249 (9 September 1905): 10.
57. See *IWE* 66 (8 March 1901): 5.
58. J. Kurz, “Zur Lage des Wiener Volkssängertums,” *Das Variété* 2 (26 October 1902): n.p. On the topic of repetition in *Volkssänger* performances, see *Das Variété* 1 (15 October 1902): n.p.
59. On the wide circulations of newspapers of the time, see Gabriele Melischek and Josef Seethaler, “Auflagenzahlen der Wiener Tageszeitungen 1895–1930 in quellenkritischer Bearbeitung,” *Arbeitsberichte der Kommission für historische Pressedokumentation* 1 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001).
60. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 115.
61. Hartmut Rosa, *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).
62. Kern, *Culture*, 110–11.
63. Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Hamburg: Reinbek, 1995), 31–32.
64. Kern, *Culture*, 111.
65. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise: Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2000). For example, we see the cultural association between the *Volkssänger* milieu and horse-drawn carriages in one of the most well-known *Wienerlieder* (Viennese songs), the “Coachman’s Song,” composed in 1885 by Gustav Pick (1832–1921), the son of a Jewish merchant. The song gained popularity in particular through the rendition performed by actor and singer Alexander Girardi (1850–1918). The history of the “Coachman’s Song” also serves as a superlative example of Jewish–non-Jewish cooperation in the *Volkssänger*

- realm (see Klaus Hödl, “The Quest for Amusement: Jewish Leisure Activities in Vienna circa 1900,” *Jewish Culture and History* 15 (2012): 1–17, <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/yzPgEjuSfb2QZZS7tgWq/full> [accessed 12 January 2019]). An additional example of the horse-and-buggy theme appears in the song “Leb’ wohl, Du altes Tramwayferd, Du hast für d’neue Zeit kein Werth” (Farewell, you old tramway horse, you are worthless in this new day and age), which helped Adolphi, Albert Hirsch’s son, attain initial success.
66. Joachim Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität: Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1998), 173–259.
 67. Beard is said to have outlined “neurasthenia” in 1869 (Charles E. Rosenberg, “The Place of Georg M. Beard in Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 36 [1962]: 248.) But another American had used the term in a lecture already a year prior (Philip P. Wiener, “G. M. Beard and Freud on American Nervousness,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2 [1956]: 271).
 68. Martin Engländer, “Die auffallend häufigen Krankheitserscheinungen der jüdischen Rasse” (Vienna, 1902), 16.
 69. *IWE* 4 (4 January 1903): 27.
 70. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
 71. Richard Guttman, *Variété: Beiträge zur Psychologie des Pöbels* (Vienna: Deutsch-Österreichischer Verlag, 1919).
 72. *IWE* 297 (28 October 1902): 5.
 73. Johann Kwopil (1818–1910) was by profession a tailor. After a stay in England, he took over as manager of the Universum in the Viennese district Brittengau in 1853 and stayed there nine years. Later, he directed various *Volkssänger* ensembles and singspiel halls (see Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 16).
 74. *IWE* 73 (14 March 1896): 3.
 75. *IWE* 74 (15 March 1896): 3.
 76. *IWE* 77 (18 March 1896): 4.
 77. *IWE* 76 (17 March 1896): 3.
 78. *IWE* 144 (26 May 1903): 9.
 79. *Das Variété* 13 (25 January 1903): n.p.
 80. *IWE* 20 (20 January 1903): 6.
 81. *Das Variété* 20 (18 March 1903): n.p.
 82. *IWE* 69 (11 March 1903): 3.
 83. *IWE* 74 (16 March 1903): 3.
 84. *Das Variété* 20 (18 March 1903): n.p.
 85. *IWE* 74 (16 March 1903): 3.
 86. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p.
 87. On this point, see also *IWE* 198 (22 July 1901): 3.
 88. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
 89. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p.
 90. Because Hirsch was born in Vienna, Recher did not explicitly include him in this designation, but it may well have been implicitly directed at him.
 91. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
 92. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
 93. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
 94. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p. This ceremony allowed the Viennese *Volkssänger*

- and performing musicians to create their own flag. For this purpose, they organized a festive procession accompanied by riders on horseback wearing traditional old German costume as well as a fanfare of brass music. A band, numerous girls dressed in white, and finally the *Volkssänger* followed. The mayor Karl Lueger and other officials were already waiting in the church where the flag consecration ceremony took place. Thousands of people attended the celebration concluding the church ceremony (see *IWE* 283 [15 October 1900]: 3).
95. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p.
 96. Bernhard Giesen, *Kollektive Identität: Die Intellektuellen und die Nation 2* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 32.
 97. *IWE* 128 (10 May 1903): 27.
 98. Albert Hirsch, *Ein riskirtes Geschäft*, Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv [NÖLA in subsequent citations] (Theaterzensur), Box 21/12 (1897).
 99. Hirsch, *Geschäft*, 11.
 100. *IWE* 130 (12 May 1903): 12.
 101. *IWE* 130 (12 May 1903): 11–12.
 102. *IWE* 144 (26 May 1903): 9.
 103. *IWE* 269 (1 October 1903): 8; *IWE* 6 (6 January 1904): 9.
 104. *IWE* 181 (1 July 1904): 15; *IWE* 200 (20 July 1904): 9.
 105. *IWE* 318 (16 November 1904): 13.
 106. *IWE* 181 (1 July 1904): 15; *IWE* (20 July 1904): 9.
 107. *IWE* 213 (2 August 1904): 15.
 108. *IWE* 318 (16 November 1904): 13.
 109. *IWE* 44 (13 February 1904): 18.
 110. *IWE* 227 (20 August 1903): 7.
 111. *IWE* 340 (11 December 1903): 14.
 112. *IWE* 80 (22 March 1903): 4.
 113. Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1990), 65.
 114. Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
 115. Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 45.
 116. Hannah Arendt, *Die verborgene Tradition: Essays* (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000), 86.
 117. George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success, 1880s–1980s* (Boston: Madison Books, 1988), 106.
 118. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 114.
 119. *IWE* 150 (2 June 1903): 8.
 120. Karl Rötzer, *Wiener in Constantinopel oder im Harem!*, NÖLA 21/10 (1896).
 121. Louis Taufstein, *Der Herr Hekler: Posse* (1909; 42 pp.), NÖLA (Zensurakten), Box 29/2. Taufstein composed numerous farces, in particular for the Budapest Orpheum Society. In later years, he also wrote operettas and film scripts. He was murdered by the National Socialists in 1942.
 122. An example of the cultivation of relationships that mask existing antisemitism is the professional cooperation between the councilman Rudolf Spannagel, a member of the antisemitic Christian Social Party, and his accountant, Goldstein. They opened a meat stall in a Viennese market hall, despite the fact that neither of them possessed the neces-

- sary permit. Spannagel's political influence made this possible. Goldstein, in turn, made contact with a Galician butcher who supplied their meat. Spannagel's antisemitic beliefs did not deleteriously affect their mutually profitable enterprise (*IWE* 241 [1 September 1904]: 8; *IWE* 258 [17 September 1904]: 4).
123. Shulamit Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 51.
 124. Arthur Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1922).
 125. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 115–17.
 126. Sammlung der Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, n. 6.
 127. Sammlung der Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, n. 6.
 128. Sammlung der Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, n. 110.
 129. Gertraud Pressler, "Jüdisches und Antisemitisches in der Wiener Volksunterhaltung," *Musicologica Austriaca* 17 (1998): 73.
 130. Pressler, "Jüdisches," 71–72.
 131. For more on Jürgen Habermas and community, see Thomas Assheuer, "Akademische Affenliebe," *Die Zeit* 26 (18 June 2014): 46.
 132. *IWE* 2 (2 February 1901): 2.
 133. *IWE* 2 (2 February 1901): 2.
 134. Georg Wacks, *Die Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft: Ein Varieté in Wien 1889–1919* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2002), 62.
 135. *Eine Klabriaspertie* had already been performed in Budapest in 1889. The Viennese version differs somewhat from the original. Mary Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 168–74.
 136. *IWE* 33 (3 February 1906): 9.
 137. For example, see *IWE* (7 May 1899): 23.
 138. *IWE* 65 (11 March 1900): 29.
 139. *IWE* 115 (25 April 1904): 13. Incidentally, Dalles is also the name of a card player.
 140. *IWE* 233 (23 August 1904): 15.
 141. *IWE* 145 (26 May 1904): 19.
 142. See NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 50/17 (1897).
 143. See *IWE* 243 (5 September 1903): 14.
 144. *IWE* 73 (16 March 1900): 14. Hirsch was not alone in this. Salomon Fischer also arranged a Purim celebration with a ball (see *IWE* 56 [25 February 1899]: 14.)
 145. *IWE* 282 (14 October 1900): 27.
 146. In this context, the work of John Efron has been pathbreaking. In a 2009 article, he emphatically advocates research in the realm of popular culture, particularly Jewish popular culture. He writes, "One area of German Jewish historiography that cries out for more attention . . . is to study popular culture. Intellectual history has been a dominant trend in German Jewish history . . . little attention has been paid to the quotidian character of German Jewish life and especially in the recreational habits of the community" (John M. Efron, "New Directions in Future Research," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 54 [2009]: 4).
 147. *IWE* 291 (23 October 1901): 8.
 148. Arnold van Gennep, *Übergangsriten (Les rites de passage)* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 27–28.
 149. Victor Turner, *Das Ritual: Struktur und Anti-Struktur* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000).
 150. Giesen, *Kollektive Identität*, 253.