

“To Realize in America What Has Become Impossible in Europe”: Excavating Erich Simon’s Life for Music (1907–1994)

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Abstract | Erich Simon (1907–1994) was a Viennese-born performer, conductor, editor, concert manager, teacher, and composer. Being Jewish and socialist, he escaped from Austria in 1938 and emigrated to New York, where he rebuilt his career. He contributed to the musical cultures in Europe and the United States in many ways. His network contained prominent names from intellectual, cultural, and musical life on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Benny Goodman, Darius Milhaud, Fritz Stiedry, Erika Wagner, and Hans Weigel. However, as Simon himself was no famous composer, conductor, or virtuoso on which musicological research on exile and migration in the 1930s/1940s has focused in the past, he has been largely overlooked by historians and musicologists. This article presents, for the first time, major source findings related to Simon in the form of personal documents, letters, and musical manuscripts from archives in the United States. Each group of documents provides a different perspective on Simon’s life and career. Through a close reading of these sources, this article reconstructs his social background and life in Vienna, his involvement with left-wing intellectual circles, his family’s dramatic escape, his personal and professional network, which helped him settle in the United States, as well as his musical engagement with American history and culture. Bringing Simon’s story out of the margins contributes to broadening our understanding of the diversity of refugee and migration experiences in the 1930s/1940s and the various ways in which individuals confronted a new social, cultural, and political environment.

Keywords | music, politics, World War II, exile and émigré research



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The entry on Erich/Eric Simon' in *LexM—Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit*, an online database providing information about musicians expelled from Europe during the Nazi era, is quite short: "Born Oct. 2, 1907, in Vienna, Austria-Hungary/present-day: Austria, died Oct. 7, 1994, in New Milford, Litchfield (CT), USA, conductor, clarinetist, pedagogue."² Additionally, the website refers to sources at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, to an anonymous obituary in *The New York Times*, to the 1995 book *Orpheus im Exil*, and the second volume of *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker* (2005).³ However, Simon's life had considerably more to offer than this brief line in *LexM* suggests; he participated, for example, in a performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* in Vienna in 1937, taught Benny Goodman how to play Mozart in New York in 1940, toured the United States with *Porgy and Bess* in 1945, and composed a *Te Deum* in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1979. Simon was a facilitator of music on various levels and contributed to musical cultures in

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1. I use the German version of "Erich" with regard to Simon's time in Europe and the English "Eric" from the moment when he mostly signed with this variant after his arrival in the United States.

2. "Eric Simon," *Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit*, accessed February 24, 2023, https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00003681 (orig. German). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

3. Only one document related to Simon could be located at the YIVO Institute: an application for financial support for a project, dated October 29, 1940: "Has a plan in mind to establish a music center and eventually a school of musicians, particularly for refugees. . . . Asks for financial help for the project." The application was rejected (Oberlander Trust Fund: RG 447: series 1: MKM 15.154, folder 20, Carl Schurz Foundation, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York City). The two books referred to are Walter Pass, Gerhard Scheit, and Wilhelm Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil: Die Vertreibung der österreichischen Musik von 1938 bis 1945* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1995) and Horst Weber and Stefan Drees, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker / Sources relating to the History of Emigré Musicians 1933–1950*, vol. 2: *New York* (Munich: Saur, 2005). The volume by Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda features Simon quite prominently. The authors based their study mainly on oral history, that is, conversations with the persons featured in the book or their descendants. I verified many of the events and aspects reported by Simon in these interviews via archival documents and classified them in more detail.

Europe and the United States. Yet he has thus far been largely overlooked by historians and musicologists. When Simon left Europe in 1938, he was in his early thirties. He was no famous conductor, composer, or virtuoso—the type on which musicological research on exile and migration in the 1930s/1940s focused for a long time. Simon represents the large number of orchestra musicians, arrangers, teachers, and others, both men and women, whose fates have thus far been noted only in footnotes, if at all. In many cases, this neglect has been justified by a lack of sources. Regarding Simon, this excuse does not hold. He left numerous traces in concert programs, newspapers, editions of sheet music, recordings, and in the biographies of other artists.

I came across *LexM*'s entry on Simon while researching my instrument, the clarinet. I was drawn to the fate of a fellow clarinetist and started following the scarce tracks initially available to me. Eventually, I located three major collections, all in the United States, that document Simon's story:

1. The Herbert and Trudl Zipper Archive at the Colburn School, Los Angeles. The Austrian composer, conductor, and pedagogue Herbert Zipper (1904–1997), known for having survived the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald, for composing the *Dachau Song*, and for his legacy in the field of music education, had originally bequeathed his estate to the Crossroads School in California.⁴ In 2019, the collection was donated to the Colburn School, the history of which is closely linked to Zipper.⁵ Zipper and Simon were close friends since their youth, and their correspondence as well as an astonishing number of Simon's personal documents ended up in Zipper's estate, perhaps after Simon's death, three years before Zipper's.
2. The Eric Simon Correspondence (Collection PASC-M 128) at the Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA. In 1995, the year after Simon's death, UCLA purchased more than 300 letters from and to him, to extend its collection of documents related to *exilé* and *émigré* musicians. UCLA's interest, however, was less in Simon himself than in his numerous prominent correspondents (including famous composers, conductors, performers, and writers).

4. On Zipper see Paul Cummins, *Dachau Song: The Twentieth Century Odyssey of Herbert Zipper*, 5th ed. (New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2014).

5. The Colburn School provides a summary of the collection and its history on its website: "The Herbert and Trudl Zipper Archives Collection," Colburn School, accessed February 24, 2023, <https://www.colburnschool.edu/on-campus/library/special-collections/zipper-archives/>.

3. The Eric Simon Papers (MSS 84) at the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University. Yale holds two boxes of sheet music—mostly manuscripts—of arrangements and compositions by Simon. Yale originally planned to establish a comprehensive Eric Simon Collection, presumably because Simon had lived in Connecticut since 1949 and was well known in the local music community. After his death, Yale received Simon's music library and collection of sheet music. However, the university's actual interest had also been in the correspondence that was sold to UCLA.

The fact that such comprehensive evidence on Simon's life has survived is a stroke of luck that owes to the fact that major research institutions were interested in the canonical figures to whom Simon was connected. Neither UCLA nor Yale expected Simon himself to be in the limelight one day.⁶ Bringing him out of the margins into the center of attention contributes to broadening our understanding of the diversity of experiences refugee and migrant musicians lived through in the 1930s/1940s and the various ways in which they confronted a new social, cultural, and political environment. Each section of this article starts from one of the three abovementioned archives, as each of them provides a different perspective in this regard. Supplemented by other scattered sources (newspapers, concert programs, etc.), these collections build the structure for this article, which follows Simon from Vienna to New York and along the East Coast of the United States, uncovering an eventful life dedicated to music.

A Good Life in Vienna, a Skiing Trip in 1938, and a Worldview Informed by the Political Left

The Zipper Archive at Colburn documents not only Simon and Zipper's life-long friendship but also provides the earliest information on Simon's biography: a birth certificate, several reports from his university studies, a driver's license, and a passport, which together provide basic information on his social and family background.⁷ The birth certificate gives his full name as Erich

6. When Yale offered Simon's music library to UCLA, the latter declined since "they had no more interest in [it] than [Yale] did." See Kendall L. Crilly, "Some explanation about the fate of Eric Simon's Papers," donor files, The Eric Simon Papers, MSS 84, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University, New Haven. I outline further details on this document below. The Eric Simon Papers will in the following be referred to as Simon Papers, Yale.

7. Box "Eric Simon," Herbert and Trudl Zipper Archive, Colburn School Special Collections, Colburn School, Los Angeles; in the following referred to as Zipper Archive, Colburn School.

Jacob Simon and was issued by the Jewish Community of Vienna (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde). His parents are recorded as Ernst Simon and Elise née Berg.⁸ The father's profession is presented as "Fabrikant," which one could translate as "manufacturer" or even "factory owner."⁹ The address of Erich's birthplace (Margaretenstraße, in Vienna's fifth district) as well as the address that appears in his 1937 passport (Brucknerstraße, in Vienna's fourth district) hint at a solid middle-class background.¹⁰ The family may have been wealthy even, as Zipper recalls that the foundation of his and Simon's Vienna Concert Orchestra was financed partly by Simon's father.¹¹

The passport indicates Simon's profession as "music writer," probably referring to his involvement with the music journal *Anbruch* and other writing activities.¹² Furthermore, his name is preceded by the academic title "Dr." Several class reports and a doctoral certificate from 1930 document that he gained this from studying law at the University of Vienna.¹³ The framework provided by the documents in the Zipper Archive can be completed, on the one hand, by local newspaper

8. A newspaper article from 1979 refers to Simon's "German mother" (Frank Merklings, "Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr.," *The News-Times*, December 12, 1979). I return to this article and Simon's connection to King below.

9. In Merklings's article, Simon's father is referred to as producing pipes and cigarette holders (*ibid.*).

10. In the nineteenth century, the area around Margaretenstraße was a working-class neighborhood. Then, upper-middle-class tenements were built there (Peter Diem, Michael Göbl, and Eva Saibl, *Die Wiener Bezirke: Ihre Geschichte, ihre Persönlichkeiten, ihre Wappen*, 2nd ed. [Vienna: Perlen-Reihe, 2003], 47). In addition, the Social Democratic Party had its headquarters in this area until the party was banned in 1934; the publishing house of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* was also located there (*ibid.*, 48). The Brucknerstraße constituted a traditionally bourgeois area, just around the corner from the baroque Karlskirche, the French embassy, and the Musikverein concert hall. The streetscape was dominated by upper-class town residences (*ibid.*, 40).

11. Cummins, *Dachau Song*, 64.

12. I could only track some evidence in this context. Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda refer to Simon as being editor of *Anbruch* (Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 39). However, his name could be found neither as an author nor among the editors of the eligible volumes. When contacted by Webern biographer Hans Moldenhauer in 1967, Simon reported himself about his association with *Anbruch*: "My first contact with the group [Schoenberg/Berg/Webern] dates back to my first job with Universal-Edition in Vienna, 1931–32, when I was the assistant of Erwin Stein in the orchestra rental department, and of Heinsheimer as editor of the *Anbruch*." (Simon to Moldenhauer, January 24, 1967, MF 110.1, 2641, Webern Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel). We find Simon featured as an author in one issue of the short-lived Schenkarian periodical *Der Dreiklang*: "Der Wert des Photogramm-Archivs für den ausübenden Musiker," *Der Dreiklang* 4/5 (July/August 1937): 110–12; see also: "Der Dreiklang," Schenker Documents Online, accessed February 24, 2023, <https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/profiles/journal/entity-006065.html>.

13. Zipper Archive, Colburn School.

reports and, on the other, by Simon's interviews for *Orpheus im Exil*. In the latter, it appears as if most of Simon's musical education was informal. He remembered having studied piano privately with one of his cousins and later with Franz Mittler, a popular Austrian musician, as well as clarinet with Victor Polatschek, the principal clarinetist of the Vienna Philharmonic, who emigrated to the United States in 1930 to join the Boston Symphony Orchestra.¹⁴ As a conductor, Simon called himself a student of Hermann Scherchen and remembered participating in a summer course with Clemens Krauss in Salzburg.¹⁵ Simon collaborated frequently and closely with Scherchen, a central figure in the new music circles. When Scherchen came to Vienna in 1932, Simon and Zipper founded the Vienna Concert Orchestra (Wiener Konzertorchester) to provide an ensemble for Scherchen's artistic ambitions, as Simon recalled: "Scherchen said, 'I want to conduct Ernst Krenek's 1st Symphony the day after tomorrow. Get me an orchestra.'"¹⁶ However, there soon was disagreement over finances, and Simon and Zipper extricated themselves from Scherchen and established a sort of concert agency on their own:

Later, we organized another concert in the great hall—with the Stravinsky Piano Concerto . . . —and suddenly Scherchen demanded a large sum of money. And then we said to ourselves, we don't need Scherchen, we'll do something with the concert orchestra on our own. . . . We founded a concert agency, and for people who paid for it, we gave concerts. Solo concerts—Peter Stadlen. With Zemlinsky, we did some wonderful concerts. Paul Wittgenstein, for example, played the Ravel Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, and after that came *Lied von der Erde*. That was after 1933. Another truly beautiful concert was the *Pierrot lunaire* with Erika Wagner and Fritz Stiedry as the conductor. I was his assistant, too.¹⁷

14. Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 39.

15. Ibid., 40. On September 17, 1931, the *Wiener Zeitung* reported on the final concert of this course, organized by the International Mozarteum Foundation, at which the participants—including Simon—conducted opera scenes ("Ein Opernabend des internationalen Dirigentenkurses," *Wiener Zeitung*, September 17, 1931, 5).

16. Cited in Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 40, interview with Simon, October 15, 1992, in Sherman/Connecticut (orig. German). Simon made a similar report to Moldenhauer: "In 1932 I assisted Hermann Scherchen in the formation and organization of the Wiener Konzertorchester whose manager I became. In his first 'Studio Concert' (the orchestra sat on the floor of the Kleine Musikvereinssaal, with room left only for a small audience), Scherchen conducted the 1st Symphony of Křenek. In the second concert (but that time we played on stage), we did Webern's Five Pieces, Op. 10, and, if I remember right the Stravinsky Octet, and two movements of Mozart's Serenade for 13 Winds" (Simon to Moldenhauer, January 24, 1967, MF 110.1, 2641, Webern Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel).

17. Cited in Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 40: interview with Simon, October 15, 1992, in Sherman/Connecticut (orig. German).

The orchestra's foundation was announced in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* on June 15, 1933, with the headline "Vienna Remains the Leading City of Music."¹⁸ The following year, the press reported the founding of an association with the same name, "Wiener Konzertorchester," which was headed by Simon and Zipper and had as honorary patrons Alban Berg, Franz Schmidt, and Prince Ulrich Ferdinand Kinsky, among others.¹⁹

A search for Simon in the ANNO periodicals database of the Austrian National Library yields an overview of his other activities as part of Vienna's music scene in the early 1930s: he participated, for example, in an evening of chamber music at the Association for the Promotion of Jewish Artists (Verein zur Förderung jüdischer Künstler) in the hall of the B'nai B'rith.²⁰ In 1932, he performed *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* with Lotte Leonard and was part of a concert of music by "modern American composers."²¹ Furthermore, Simon was featured on several radio broadcasts of orchestra concerts.²² In 1935, he participated in a concert for Berg's fiftieth birthday and frequently collaborated with the Kolisch Quartet.²³

In 1935/1936, Zipper and Simon left Vienna and pursued their fortune in the Soviet Union, like many musicians from the Austro-German region. Zipper was appointed guest conductor of the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra,²⁴

18. "Wien bleibt führende Musikstadt: Das interessante Programm des 'Wiener Konzertorchesters,'" *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 25, 1933, 5–6.

19. "Die Pläne des Wiener Konzertorchesters," *Neues Wiener Tag-Blatt*, April 12, 1934.

20. *Neue Freie Presse*, January 30, 1932, 8.

21. On the concert with Leonard, see *Der Wiener Tag*, February 18, 1932, 8. On the concert with American music, see "Moderne amerikanische Komponisten," *Wiener Zeitung*, February 23, 1932, 6. The program lists, for example, compositions by Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, Alejandro García Caturla, Wallingford Riegger, Carlos Chávez Ramírez, and Henry Cowell.

22. See, for example, *Radio Wien*, February 10, 1933, 55: announcement for a radio program on Friday, February 17, featuring an orchestra concert at the Musikverein, conducted by Scherchen and featuring Simon at the piano. *Die Stunde* (February 19, 1933) published a praising critique of this concert: "The heavy obstacles [of Stravinsky's] *Peasant Wedding* (*Les noces*) were addressed with somnambulistic confidence. Ancient customs and folk traditions are portrayed in four Russian-wild, out-and-over rhythmic scenes. Chorus, soloists, four pianos, and percussion form an unprecedented ensemble. Admirable the opera choir and the four young pianists Jakob Gimpl, Paul Ulanowsky, Dr. Erich Simon, Erich Landauer" (orig. German).

23. On Berg's birthday, see *Der Tag*, January 27, 1935, 12. On collaborations with the Kolisch Quartet see, for example, a concert report in *Die Stunde*, March 5, 1935: "Enthusiastic mood prevailed at the penultimate evening of the Kolisch Quartet. The program included Haydn, Reger (the magnificent Clarinet Quintet with Dr. Erich Simon, an excellent, musically congenial wind player), and a Rasumoffsky-Beethoven, but encores were still demanded, and they were Berg and Webern" (orig. German).

24. An arrangement instigated by Zipper's friend Paul Breisach, former general music director in Mainz and then in the Soviet Union (see Cummins, *Dachau Song*, 65).

and Simon became a clarinetist with the Moscow Philharmonic, as he recalled for *Orpheus im Exil*:

Musicians were as needed as engineers back then. The word at that time was: specialists. Many new orchestras were founded in the Soviet Union, in Sverdlovsky, in Tbilisi, and in Vladivostok. Musicians who went there were paid a lot more. As a result, positions became vacant, and I went to Moscow, just as to the United States—as a tourist. At that time, the conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic was Eugen Szenkar, who had previously been general music director (*Generalmusikdirektor*) in Cologne. He was also hired because there were no other decent conductors. I obtained a contract as a second clarinetist with the Moscow Philharmonic, but then played the first clarinet for a while. . . . I actually wanted to stay there just one more season—that was the summer of 1936, but I didn't get the visa. A year later it was: leave—or stay here as a naturalized citizen.²⁵

Intellectual and cultural life in the 1920s/1930s Soviet Union, especially in the two urban centers of Leningrad and Moscow, was marked by a certain internationalism.²⁶ Numerous European conductors such as Otto Klemperer, Pierre Monteux, Scherchen, and Bruno Walter gave guest performances, as did composers such as Alfredo Casella, Darius Milhaud, and Paul Hindemith. Franz Schreker conducted his opera *Der ferne Klang* in 1925 in Leningrad, and in 1927 Alban Berg attended the Leningrad premiere of *Wozzeck*.²⁷ The founding of new orchestras Simon mentioned was part of a political endeavor to position the Soviet Union as the "inheritor supreme of Enlightenment values" and Western culture.²⁸ Katerina Clark describes a parallel process in the field of literature as the "Great Appropriation."²⁹ In the field of music, this process became manifest in the adoption of Western institutional structures (orchestras or opera houses) and a Western-oriented canon, while a certain openness toward modernism

25. Cited in Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 40: interview with Simon, October 15, 1992, in Sherman/Connecticut (orig. German).

26. Regarding music, see Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); and "From Enlightened to Sublime: Musical Life under Stalin, 1930–1948," in *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery*, ed. Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 148–63.

27. Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917–1970* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 44–45.

28. Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses*, 102.

29. See Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

and new music prevailed.³⁰ Furthermore, an exodus of Russian artists from the late 1910s through the 1920s left a gap that was then filled by foreign professionals.³¹ Thus, the Soviet Union provided opportunities for (especially Jewish) artists in the mid-1930s who were subject to restrictions in Germany, as was true for Zipper and Simon, as well as, for example, conductor Fritz Stiedry, another of Simon's companions in Vienna, Russia, and eventually the United States.

Upon reexamination of Simon's passport, one gets a first hint of the dramatic turn his life would take in the wake of the deteriorating political situation in German-speaking Europe: indeed, his passport documents his escape in 1938.

In 1936, Simon returned from Moscow to Vienna and quickly resumed his activities as a performer, arranger, and concert organizer. He continued to focus on new music and music by the Second Viennese School. In April 1937, for example, he was involved in a remarkable event, which the newspaper *Neues Wiener Abendblatt* referred to as a "concert of modern music" that was characterized not only by "variety" and "famous composers' names" but also "strong pedagogical inclinations."³² In this sense, a lecture introduced the compositions that included a sonatina for clarinet and piano by Artur



Figure 1 | Excerpts from Erich Simon's passport, issued in Vienna on July 3, 1937. The page on the right shows several stamps, including one at the bottom right corner documenting Simon boarding a ship to the United States on May 10, 1938 (Zipper Archive, Colburn School); courtesy of the archive.

30. Fairclough outlines this aspect using several examples, such as the reception of Bach and the implementation of a sacred music repertoire; see: *Classics for the Masses*, 108–12 and 123–27, as well as "Don't Sing It on a Feast Day: The Reception and Performance of Western Sacred Music in Soviet Russia, 1917–53," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 1 (2012): 71–116.

31. Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses*, 103.

32. *Neues Wiener Abendblatt*, April 30, 1937, 4.

Honegger, Kurt Weill's *Frauentanz*, Anton Webern's Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, op. 7, and the suite from Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* for violin, clarinet, and piano.³³ Of further interest is Simon's participation as a clarinetist in a performance of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* at the Vienna Konzerthaus in June 1937, under the baton of conductor Fritz Stiedry and featuring Schoenberg specialist Erika (Stiedry-)Wagner performing the part of the reciter (*Sprechstimme*).³⁴ Simon himself repeatedly referred to this event, which, as I will show below, also links his activities in Europe and the United States.

A concert by the Austrian Composers' Association (Österreichischer Komponistenbund), described in the *Neues Wiener Abendblatt* in late February 1938, was probably one of Simon's last appearances in Vienna before his departure on February 22, 1938, just a few weeks before the Anschluss.³⁵ One year later, Simon gave Zipper a detailed report of his escape: disguised as if going on a skiing trip, "with slightly more luggage than one usually takes for skiing," Simon left for Switzerland with his wife, Susanne, and his parents, and, indeed, spent a few days skiing in Aargau.³⁶ After the events in Austria in early March, the family decided to proceed to Zurich. Simon's father was a council member of the B'nai B'rith, which made the family's situation even more precarious, as the Nazis were already looking for him.³⁷ The Simons applied for a visa to the United States on March 18.³⁸ After leaving Zurich for Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, on May 8, they boarded the SS Nieuw Amsterdam, which had departed Rotterdam on its maiden voyage on May 10 and ultimately brought the family to New York City.³⁹ Simon later recalled those days:

I should have played in Mahler's Second Symphony—but I was suddenly no longer there. . . . We got the April quota for the USA, and on May 16,

33. Ibid.

34. A program of that evening is preserved at the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna (Stiedry-Wagner, Erika: concert program June 16, 1937, Konzerthaus, Satellite Collection S28). The *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* published a report of the concert on June 18, 1937.

35. He had performed *Drei Bagatellen für Klarinette und Klavier* by Hans Ewald Heller (*Neues Wiener Abendblatt*, February 26, 1938, 5).

36. Simon to Zipper, April 28, 1939, Zipper Archive, Colburn School. A transcription of this letter is published in: Horst Weber and Manuela Schwartz, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker / Sources relating to the History of Emigré Musicians 1933–1950*, vol. 1: *Kalifornien/California* (Munich: Saur, 2003), 258–60.

37. Ibid.

38. Simon to Zipper, April 28, 1939, Zipper Archive, Colburn School.

39. Ibid.

1938, we immigrated. We wanted to go to the USA, and immediately after the Anschluss we applied through Zurich. And so, I was here and soon got a job. I became Stiedry's assistant.⁴⁰

Assisting Stiedry was not Simon's only occupation in the United States. As in Vienna, he was active as a conductor, performer, and arranger. Additionally, he explored new territories as a teacher. Seemingly undaunted by the dramatic circumstances, he pursued his artistic goals with unbroken zeal and wrote to Zipper in 1939: "America is a country where no one is a stranger, since all are 'emigrants'—perhaps no one feels at home—and everyone can contribute to shaping this 'country.'"⁴¹ On February 24, 1944, Eric Simon became a citizen of the United States of America.⁴²

From Simon's post-1938 correspondence with Zipper, we learn that it was not only his Jewish origin but also his political views as a socialist that caused him to leave Vienna.⁴³ An illustrative example of his leftist orientation is a letter from early October 1939, in which Simon reacted to the nonaggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which had been signed a couple of months earlier, the "German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty" from September of that year, and the eventual joint invasion of Poland. Simon expressed himself in favor of the expansionary efforts of the Soviet armed forces and an alliance between Hitler and Stalin, believing that this would lead Germany toward socialism:

When the newspaper reported that the Red Army had invaded Polish Belarus and Polish Ukraine, I knew that things were finally getting rolling for us poor Europeans, and Stalin would not miss an opportunity that he would not have again for a long time. Neither of us is so naive as to believe that the seizure of power in Germany, and even a consolidation of socialism, will be achieved overnight. . . . The Red Army is near, the ground is rather well prepared—so let's hope for the best. But what then? I am afraid that the war, which Ford today has not entirely unjustly called a phony war, then will truly begin, that the German-Russian alliance will have taken on substance, that it will be very embarrassing for me to sit in America and at least have to watch from the wrong side. I believe that in

40. Cited in Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 110: interview with Simon, October 15, 1992, in Sherman/Connecticut (orig. German).

41. Simon to Zipper, July 2, 1939, Zipper Archive, Colburn School (orig. German).

42. Simon's Certificate of Naturalization is preserved at the Colburn School (ibid.), as is his father's (dated February 7, 1944).

43. The ban on the Social Democratic Labor Party in 1934 certainly was one reason for Zipper's and Simon's intermezzo in the USSR.

a war against a socialist Germany and Russia, the United States will have to join.⁴⁴

Considering Simon's social background and circle of friends, his political orientation is not surprising. In interwar "Red Vienna," the left-wing elites were dominated by the upper bourgeoisie (or *Bildungsbürgertum*), a large part of which were Jewish families such as Simon's.⁴⁵ He spent his school days at the Vienna Akademisches Gymnasium with friends from a similar background, such as Georg Knepler, a pianist, conductor, musicologist, and well-known communist, and writer Hans Weigel, who had positioned himself as a socialist, at least before the war.⁴⁶ As a musician, Simon was involved with circles that were left-leaning, at least culturally, such as the group gravitating around Schoenberg. In 1933, Simon participated in a celebration of Karl Marx by the Viennese Social Democrats, which featured a festive speech by Otto Bauer, one of the main figures of the leftist movement in Austria.⁴⁷ Education played a central role in this "Austro-Marxism," where Marxist thought was closely linked to the intellectual discourse on scientific evidence, especially emanating from the social sciences.⁴⁸ This intellectual-pedagogical dedication formed Simon and Zipper's worldviews, in which culture and education were defined as common goods that were to create "a system that gives equal work and growth opportunities to all people without distinction" and ensure "spiritual well-being" for all mankind.⁴⁹ Music was part of this endeavor and, in the eyes of Simon and Zipper, should therefore be made accessible to all social classes. This maxim

44. Simon to Zipper, October 3, 1939, Zipper Archive, Colburn School (orig. German). In the same letter, Simon also praises a volume of poems by Bertolt Brecht and reports that he had recently met the communist composer Hanns Eisler.

45. The Social Democrats in Vienna had a large Jewish voter base, as this was the only party that did not adopt antisemitism as its central political program. The stronger and more extreme right-wing antisemitism became, the more the Social Democrats attracted Jewish sympathizers, and "individuals of Jewish origin played an extremely important role within its leadership elite" (Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918–1938* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991], 84; generally on this topic, see Freidenreich's chapter, "The Socialists," 84–114).

46. Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 51.

47. Bauer's speech and a description of the celebration were published in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, March 15, 1933, 5. The music, performed by the *Arbeitersängerbund* and several other musicians (among them Simon), included pieces such as Brecht's *Solidaritätslied*, *Kleine Musik um Karl Marx* (lyrics: Josef Luitpold; music: Franz Leo Human, who conducted the *Sängerbund*) but also "chamber music of the most modern kind, performed with perfection."

48. See, for example, Wolfgang Maderthaner, "Austro-Marxism: Mass Culture and Anticipatory Socialism," *Austrian Studies* 14 (2006): 21–36.

49. Simon to Zipper, April 18, 1940, Zipper Archive, Colburn School.

would remain with Simon his entire life and be decisive in his artistic activities in the United States.

Settling in America, a Professional Network, and the Question of “Heimkehr”

Upon his arrival in New York in the late spring of 1938, Simon was already part of an efficient network in the United States, as many of his Viennese colleagues and friends had preceded him. He then drew on these contacts and established new ones among composers, performers, and conductors, as well as critics and writers across the continent as documented by more than 300 letters preserved at UCLA. This collection was included in the first volume of Horst Weber and Manuela Schwartz’s *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker*. However, Weber and Schwartz only present a limited selection of correspondents: music sociologist Kurt Blaukopf, with whom Simon discussed questions of aesthetics and new music, musicologists Alfred Einstein and Kurt von Fischer, composer and conductor Lukas Foss, composers Hans Gál and Paul Hindemith, conductors Wilhelm Furtwängler and Otto Klemperer, and the abovementioned Georg Knepler, with whom Simon shared his thoughts on several writings as well as music and culture in general.⁵⁰ There are more than 60 further contacts in the correspondence that are not mentioned by Weber and Schwartz.⁵¹ The UCLA collection reveals a wide network, spanning many nodes in Europe and the United States, and illustrates the impact of artists emigrating from Europe on American musical life in the 1930s/1940s and beyond. In the following, I examine Simon’s business correspondence with composer Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) and personal correspondence with Hans Weigel (1909–1991), a companion from Simon’s school days in Vienna, as those are representative examples providing further insights into his professional and personal life in the United States.

The 33 letters between Simon and Milhaud date from 1938 to 1961. The first sheet in the folder is a handwritten letter from Milhaud dated February 17, 1938, addressing Simon in his capacity at the International Concert Bureau in Vienna. At Stiedry’s request, Milhaud had completed *Cantate de l’enfant et de la mère* and intended to negotiate the conditions for the work’s performance.⁵²

50. Weber and Schwartz, *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker*, vol. 1, 71–78.

51. The complete list of names can be accessed through UCLA’s online finding aid: “Eric Simon Correspondence,” Online Archive of California, accessed February 24, 2023, <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/ft409n99pn/>. The list contains only three female names: clarinetist Esther Lamneck and singers Suzanne Sten and Gladys Swarthout.

52. Milhaud to Simon, February 17, [1938], folder “Milhaud, Darius,” box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. French).

The composer had sent this message to Vienna, but Simon had already left the city by the time it arrived, so it was forwarded to him in Zurich, from where he replied in early May:

I have at hand the letter you wrote to the "International Concert Bureau" in Vienna on February 17. . . . Now, many things have happened in the world since that time. The consequence for us is that Stiedry is in America and [plans to] stay there and that, of course, *Pierrot lunaire* is not being performed here. I—the clarinetist of the *Pierrot* Ensemble and a member of the staff at the International Concert Bureau—am leaving Boulogne for New York on the 10th. I will see Stiedry, of course, and hope to realize in America what has become impossible in Europe.⁵³

Simon had previously worked with Stiedry in Vienna on multiple occasions, for example for the performance of *Pierrot lunaire* in 1937 mentioned above. A reprise was planned but did not take place since Stiedry fled to America. According to Simon's account, Stiedry was the first person he went to see on the very day he left the ship in New York.⁵⁴ Not only was he hired as a performer (piano, harpsichord, clarinet) by Stiedry's New Friends for Music, but Stiedry also involved him in organizing the orchestra based on Simon's rich experience in this regard—"experience that none of the New Friends staff had."⁵⁵ Additionally, *Pierrot lunaire* was performed once more on November 17, 1940, with Schoenberg himself conducting a New Friends for Music concert in New York and featuring Erika Stiedry-Wagner, Rudolf Kolisch, Eduard Steuermann, and Simon at the (bass-)clarinet.⁵⁶

Just a few weeks before this concert, Simon revived his contact with Milhaud, approaching the composer with a commission for a new clarinet concerto for one of his students.⁵⁷ Their correspondence now traversed the United States, as Milhaud had left Europe with his family in 1940 and settled in California,

53. Simon to Milhaud, May 3, 1938, *ibid.* (orig. German).

54. Simon to Zipper, April 28, 1939, Zipper Archive, Colburn School (orig. German). A transcription of this letter is published in Weber and Schwartz, *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker*, vol. 1, 258–60.

55. *Ibid.*

56. See, for example, two reports in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on November 17 ("Schoenberg to Conduct New Friends Concert") and 18, 1940 ("Schoenberg Conducts 'Pierrot Lunaire'"). The first US performance of *Pierrot lunaire* in 1927 in New York was a significant event regarding Schoenberg's music in the United States, see Sabine Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World: The American Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27.

57. Simon to Milhaud, October 21, 1941, folder "Milhaud, Darius," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. French).

where he was appointed to the faculty at Mills College. In contrast to previous assumptions, musicologist Erin K. Maher proved that Milhaud was involved in diverse networks on both the West and East Coasts and was extremely productive in composing.⁵⁸ Although their letters imply that Simon and Milhaud had met each other for the last time in Europe, Simon may have learned about Milhaud's arrival and situation in various ways. In California, Milhaud was privately and professionally involved with Schoenberg's circle.⁵⁹ In New York, he established contacts that would lead to numerous commissions and performances.⁶⁰ Thus, Simon was likely well aware that Milhaud would appreciate the lucrative commission he was offering him: the student on whose behalf he contacted Milhaud was, in fact, swing icon Benny Goodman (1909–1986).

In New York, Simon established himself as a teacher at the New School for Social Research, among other institutions.⁶¹ He was also in demand as a private tutor, attracting prominent musicians, including Goodman, who took lessons in the classical clarinet repertoire (Mozart, Weber, Brahms, etc.) with Simon between 1940 and 1942.⁶² Goodman incorporated classical music into his artistic portfolio in the late 1930s and commissioned new solo pieces for the clarinet as well.⁶³ In this regard, he sought advice from his teacher Simon, who had good contacts in the classical sphere. Simon initially suggested Paul Hindemith, with whom he had worked in Vienna and to whom he offered Goodman's commission in early 1941. At that time, Hindemith and his wife

58. See Erin K. Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971: Transatlantic Constructions of Musical Identity" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016).

59. Ibid., 94–95.

60. Ibid., 101.

61. The earliest course catalog mentioning Simon dates from 1941 ("The David Mannes Music School 1941–1942," The New School Archives and Collections, Digital Archive, accessed February 24, 2023, https://digital.archives.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/MM050101_mm1941ye).

62. For more details about the relationship between Simon and Goodman and Simon's role in Goodman's commissions from Hindemith and Milhaud, see Elisabeth Reisinger, "More Than One 'Double Life': Artistic Conceptions, Networks, and Negotiations in Benny Goodman's Commissions to Paul Hindemith and Darius Milhaud," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 17, no. 2 (2023): forthcoming.

63. Béla Bartók, Henry Brant, and Aaron Copland, for example, wrote new pieces for Goodman. See on this topic Maureen Hurd, "Benny Goodman—The Classical Clarinetist, Part I," *The Clarinet* 34, no. 4 (September 2007): 32–38; Maureen Hurd, "Benny Goodman: Part 2—The Classical Clarinetist," *The Clarinet* 35, no. 4 (September 2008): 46–48 and 60; John Snavery, "Benny Goodman's Commissioning of New Works and Their Significance for Twentieth-Century Clarinetists" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1992); as well as Reisinger, "More Than One 'Double Life.'"

had settled in Connecticut after leaving Europe in 1940.⁶⁴ At first, Hindemith accepted Goodman's commission and negotiated further terms with Simon.⁶⁵ However, the collaboration stopped for unclear reasons in September 1941 and did not materialize for the time being.⁶⁶

Simon's next suggestion was to contact Milhaud, from whom Goodman requested not only a new clarinet concerto but also a clarinet arrangement of *Scaramouche*. In October 1941, Simon and Milhaud started negotiating, and Milhaud delivered both pieces only one month later.⁶⁷ As Simon reported to the composer, he and Goodman started studying the music immediately after the scores had arrived.⁶⁸ In later letters to Simon, Milhaud inquired about his payment (which eventually came in March 1942) and repeatedly asked about when the first performance would occur.⁶⁹

Simon drew on his network of European émigré musicians when asked by Goodman whom to commission. On the one hand, Simon took on the role of an agent or manager for Goodman, who lacked sufficient contact in the classical music scene. On the other hand, Simon provided fellow expatriates, who faced various challenges in their new environment, with good opportunities. Both Hindemith and Milhaud gladly accepted the offer. They understood that Goodman could expose their music to new audiences in the United States. Milhaud, who hoped for "admirable performances" and "great publicity,"⁷⁰ would be able to not only introduce a new composition but also to further

64. Hindemith held a professorship at Yale's music department. On Hindemith's time in the United States see: Luther Noss, *Paul Hindemith in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

65. Simon to Hindemith, January 25, 1941, call number 3.319.1, Foundation Hindemith, Blonay, Hindemith Institute, Frankfurt (orig. German). No correspondence with Hindemith is preserved at UCLA. The Hindemith Institute in Frankfurt holds photocopies of seven letters, which appear to be the only traces left.

66. The last letter (Hindemith to Simon, call number 3.319.7, Foundation Hindemith, Blonay, Hindemith Institute, Frankfurt) is dated September 24, 1941. After that date, the project was paused. Goodman revived it on his own, without Simon's involvement, some years later, and Hindemith eventually delivered a clarinet concerto in 1947 (Reisinger, "More Than One 'Double Life'").

67. Eventually, Simon and Milhaud agreed on an honorarium of \$750 and exclusive performance rights for Goodman until January 1944 (Milhaud to Simon, November 8, 1941, box 3, folder "Milhaud, Darius," Simon Correspondence, UCLA [orig. French]).

68. Simon to Milhaud, November 6, 1941, *ibid.* (orig. French).

69. Milhaud to Simon, March 17, 1942, *ibid.* (orig. French). Accounting for the time after that date, the collection contains one last set of letters by Simon and Milhaud, who corresponded in the spring of 1961 about Milhaud's *Le pauvre matelot* and *Education manquée*, op. 82, both of which Simon would conduct in a concert in New York.

70. Milhaud (Oakland) to Simon (New York), November 2, 1941, folder "Milhaud, Darius," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. French).

market *Scaramouche*, which had already been quite popular in the United States (that was probably one reason for Goodman requesting a clarinet arrangement of the piece).⁷¹ Hence, Simon again facilitated new music, although, in the course of history, his name would vanish behind those of the canonical composers and the prominent performer.

A more personal relationship is documented in 77 letters between Simon and Weigel from 1938 to 1980. In the 1930s, Weigel was active in Vienna's theater, cabaret, and new music scene.⁷² He was engaged, for instance, as a production assistant in a 1932 production of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in Vienna.⁷³ Wolfgang Straub refers to Simon as the central figure in Weigel's activities in the field of music and cites a work certificate signed by Simon that attests to Weigel's employment with Simon and Zipper's Vienna Concert Orchestra.⁷⁴

After they departed for America, Erich and Susanne Simon remained in contact with Weigel and his partner, actress Gertrud Ramlo. The correspondence between the two couples is filled with puns, wit, and irony, often with a surprising lightness considering the dramatic circumstances. Simon kept Weigel, who remained in Switzerland until 1945, updated on his family's arrival in the United States and their experiences there.

So we're here," Simon wrote in his first letter on May 20, 1938, continuing: "A ship is a strange thing. You do nothing for six days, and then it is America. With a train you know, now is St. Pölten, and so on, but a ship? Strange.

Also mir san da. So ein Schiff ist etwas Komisches. Man tut 6 Tage nichts und dann ist Amerika. Bei einem Zug weiss man doch, jetzt ist St. Pölten und so, aber ein Schiff? Komisch.⁷⁵

71. Maher, *Darius Milhaud*, 105.

72. See on Weigel: Wolfgang Straub, *Die Netzwerke des Hans Weigel* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 2016).

73. Ibid., 37. Furthermore, Weigel and Simon together wrote a Brecht/Weill parody, entitled "Das Lehrspiel von Tristan und Isolde: Oper von Kurt Weill, Text von Richard Wagner, Bertold Brecht, Caspar Neher, Erich Simon und Hans Weigel," dated 1932, which is preserved as a typescript by Simon from 1967 (five sheets) at the Weill-Lenya Research Center in New York (box 1, folder 8, series 30, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York; see Straub, *Die Netzwerke*, 49–50). After the war, however, Weigel became known as a prominent anticommunist and actively prevented Brecht's plays from being performed in Vienna.

74. Straub, *Die Netzwerke*, 41.

75. Simon to Weigel, May 20, 1938, folder "Weigel, Hans," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA.

From then on, Simon mostly used the anglicized form of his first name, Eric, in letters and documents. In her study on Schoenberg's emigration to the United States, Sabine Feisst elaborated on the role of language in that context, as she read the adaptation of the spelling of names (in Schoenberg's case, the "oe" instead of "ö") as one sign of acculturation.⁷⁶ Simon also embraced this practice, as in November 1938, he told Weigel: "My name is Eric."⁷⁷

The Simons had a good start in their new environment. Susanne got "a pretty good job as a gymnastics instructor," and Eric played "chamber music and other things, and the students [were] also beginning to accumulate."⁷⁸ Quickly, Simon's agenda filled up: in spring 1942, for example, he held a permanent position at a radio station, taught and orchestrated on the side, played in various orchestras and ensembles, and performed with Béla Bartók, Kolisch, and Paul Wittgenstein, among others.⁷⁹ In May 1945, Simon told Weigel that he had given up his position at the radio station because he went on tour with *Porgy and Bess* in 1944, performing the opera "265 times from Boston to Texas and Baltimore to Oklahoma."⁸⁰ Like Feisst convincingly illustrated about Schoenberg, Simon can by no means be ascribed the cliché of the exiled musician as an isolated outsider, unwilling or unable to adapt to his new environment. Indeed, Simon already had friends and family members in North America, and he knew beforehand whom to turn to after his arrival. In addition to having an already existing support network, job prospects did not look particularly grim for artists such as him, as classical concert programming in the United States was still strongly in favor of European repertoires and musicians.⁸¹

In May 1945, Simon had some private news to share: he and Susanne divorced.⁸² Both of them remarried in the same year. Simon's new wife, Ruth Bluestone, was a yoga instructor, a columnist for *The New York Times*, and a former dancer on Broadway.⁸³ The couple lived in New York City during the

76. Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World*, 113.

77. Simon to Weigel, November 7, 1938, folder "Weigel, Hans," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. German).

78. Simon to Weigel, February 18, 1940, *ibid.* (orig. German).

79. Simon to Weigel, May 1, 1942, *ibid.* (orig. German).

80. Simon to Weigel, May 13, 1945, *ibid.* (orig. German).

81. Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World*, 15.

82. Simon to Weigel, May 13, 1945, folder "Weigel, Hans," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. German).

83. Merkling, "Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr." The *News-Times* dedicated a long article to Bluestone's yoga classes in New York in 1970 (featuring several photos showing her and her husband exercising; see Jean Buoy, "Yoga: A New Life through an Ancient Art," *The News-Times*, December 17, 1970). She also published a 239-page book on yoga: *Relax & Stretch: The East-West Approach to Health & Beauty* (New York: Walker, 1973).

week but spent weekends at their house in Sherman, Connecticut, where they also hosted concerts. One such concert, in support of a local hospital, was announced in 1970 in the *New Milford Times*.⁸⁴ As described in another article, it took place in the Simon-Bluestones' living room, which could hold up to 100 people but was still too small given the great interest in the concert.⁸⁵ Overall, the house, which the couple maintained in addition to their residence in New York City (according to Eric's letterheads, an address in Manhattan), appears to have been quite impressive and indicates their thoroughly stable economic situation.

A significant portion of the letters between Simon and Weigel is devoted to political developments, especially after the invasion of Poland. As a reaction to the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Weigel increasingly distanced himself from communism, with which he had sympathized previously. In December 1939, Weigel explained that he saw France and the United Kingdom as allies of Austria, rather than Russia, and that he would certainly enter military service in one of these countries if foreign regiments accessible to Austrians were formed there.⁸⁶ In the same letter, he complained about "the bankruptcy of communism, which has inevitably become a bankruptcy of all leftist movements," adding:

I am well aware of the weaknesses and flaws of the capitalist system, and I will always fight passionately within such a system to remedy these weaknesses and flaws. However, since the end of August of this year, I no longer see any other system that can claim any sympathies and so [I] must inevitably stand—and fight—on this side of the barricade. Since Molotov and Stalin have made it impossible for me to fight for them, that means: since they have abandoned the idea of democracy, resistance to aggressors and the independence of small states, and have betrayed the antifascism invented by them and championed at the sacrifice of the blood of innocent idealists, I have to fight for those who not only pretend but have proved to be the real democrats. . . . In this sense I have decided for Austria, that is: for France and England.⁸⁷

84. "Hospital Benefit—Eric Simon Plans Twilight Concert," *New Milford Times*, December 3, 1970.

85. Jean Buoy, "Sherman Recital Draws Full House," *The News-Times*, December 22, 1970.

86. Weigel to Simon, December 1, 1939, folder "Weigel, Hans," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. German).

87. Ibid.

Simon's perspective on these events was different. In his reply, he harshly criticized Weigel and took a clear stand in favor of communism. Reforms would not be enough to eliminate the flaws and weaknesses of capitalism, but an entirely new system would be needed along the lines of that in the USSR, which he saw as the only country where "communal ownership of the means of production has been completely implemented."⁸⁸ Making victims would be inevitable, as the "revolution will not take place without bloodshed in any major country" and "there can be no socialism in any country without the guilty being struck together with the innocent, it makes no difference whether so and so many Finns are killed by a revolution breaking out from within or by the Red Army trying to storm fortifications paid for by English money."⁸⁹ Simon continues ardently, arguing against allyship with France or England:

I would never voluntarily stick my neck out for a country that let a Hitler gain power to make him a "bulwark against Bolshevism" and that dropped him only after it turned out that he was just too stupid for that. I would never voluntarily stick my neck out for a country that wants an "independent" reactionary Austria, so that the whole mess can start all over again. In the USSR, common ownership of the means of production prevails—today more than ever; in the USSR, preference or discrimination for national or racial reasons is punished by law, today as well as in 1917—and it will not offend me at all when the Swedish king arrives in Moscow, and the Danish one in Berchtesgaden, as long as it helps spread the two aforementioned principles more quickly across a greater part of the world.⁹⁰

After this heated and emotional exchange, Simon and Weigel no longer broached political topics in their letters.⁹¹ However, they also disagreed on another issue. After the end of the war, Weigel returned to Vienna, although that was not easy for Jewish exiles. He worked as an author and critic for various newspapers, was active in broadcasting, and became a central figure in Austria's postwar literary scene.⁹² Apparently, he also expected the same commitment from his friends. On

88. Simon to Weigel, December 29, 1939, *ibid.* (orig. German).

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

91. Straub, *Die Netzwerke*, 85.

92. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

this subject, Straub cites a 1947 letter from Weigel to Simon and a certain Franz Breuer:

More than ten years ago, in the spring of '37, we made a vow . . . that we would rush to the next Austria–Italy international [soccer] game, wherever we might come from. Yesterday this match took place. I was present, sector C, standing area. Unfortunately, I did not see any of you.⁹³

In this letter, Straub sees a claim for a promise to return (and rebuild), which only Weigel fulfilled. Simon and Weigel discussed this question during the last days of the war, which led Simon to reflect on the concept of home (*Heimat*) and his relationship to Vienna:

What does homecoming mean? Do you mean the return to a geographical point where I spent many years of my life? Or return to a city that was a home for me? You probably mean the second one. And then I have to tell you that I would go to Austria—in the long run—only if it were not a “return.” The Austria I would go to would have to be as new as America seemed to me after the old Austria. I knew Vienna only between the two wars, and at that time it was no home to me. It was a beautiful city. That was not on its own merits; it did not give me a job—that was on its own merits. It was the city of Mozart and Beethoven—that was not on its own merits; it persecuted me because of my race—that was on its own merits. Returning home to Vienna is a contradiction in terms for me. Journey to Vienna—that is open.

Was heisst Heimkehr? Meinst Du die Rückkehr an einen geographischen Punkt, an dem ich viele Jahre meines Lebens verbrachte? Oder Rückkehr in eine Stadt, die mir ein Heim war? Du meinst wohl das zweite. Und da muss ich Dir sagen, dass ich nach Österreich—auf die Dauer—nur ginge, wenn es keine ‘Rückkehr’ ist. Das Österreich, in das ich führe, müsste so neu sein, wie Amerika mir nach dem alten Österreich vorkam. Ich kannte Wien nur zwischen den zwei Kriegen, und da war es mir kein Heim. Es war eine schöne Stadt. Dafür konnte es nicht; es gab mir keine Arbeit—dafür konnte es. Es war die Stadt von Mozart und Beethoven—dafür konnte es nicht; es verfolgte mich wegen meiner Rasse—dafür

93. Weigel to Simon, November 10, 1947, folder “Weigel, Hans,” box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. German); see also Straub, *Die Netzwerke*, 151.

konnte es. Heimkehr nach Wien ist für mich eine *contradictio in adjecto*.
Fahrt nach Wien—das steht offen.⁹⁴

Simon indeed visited Vienna several times after 1945, for example, in his function as secretary of the Gustav Mahler Society.⁹⁵ However, he would not "return." This reflection on return and home raises the question of how Simon perceived himself—as a refugee, an expatriate in exile, or an immigrant. While Brecht, for example, claimed the status of political refugee and spoke out against trivializing the flight movement from Europe as "emigration," many also embraced their new home and no longer understood it as a place of exile.⁹⁶ Simon distanced himself from the image of a refugee:

I find this word [refugees] out of place here in the U.S.A. because people are immigrating there based on laws that were enacted during normal times. Take my case for example: I wanted to go to the U.S.A., Hitler or not, in January 1939, as you know. Now, as a result of the events, I went 8 months earlier, based on the same laws, under the same quotas, so should I feel different, should I feel a special "gratitude"?⁹⁷

If we apply the term "exile" to his case, then perhaps in a multivalent and processual sense, encompassing the entire "act of expulsion, the process both of leave-taking and of arrival in the new land, and the status of the immigrant," as Reinhold Brinkmann suggests.⁹⁸ Additionally, the fact that Simon had already prepared for a trip to America for quite some time distinguishes him from many who had to pull up stakes at short notice and without much time to think about it. Contacts and resources were perhaps already established, and other preparations were underway, such as engaging with the language. English, however, probably did not pose much of a challenge for Simon. His occupations in Vienna had already been characterized by international contacts. Depending on the addressee, he corresponded in German, English, and

94. Simon to Weigel, August 23, 1945, folder "Weigel, Hans," box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA.

95. Merklings, "Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr."

96. Weber and Schwartz, *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker*, vol. 1, xvi–xvii. Brecht articulates this idea in his poem "Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten" (1937).

97. Simon to Zipper, April 28, 1939, Zipper Archive, Colburn School (orig. German); a transcription of this letter is published in: Weber and Schwartz, *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker*, vol. 1, 258–60.

98. Reinhold Brinkmann, "Introductory Remarks: Reading a Letter," in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 5.

fluent French (with Milhaud). He probably also spoke Russian. We might understand Simon as someone for whom the concept of home was linked less to geographical coordinates than to the freedom of realizing his own social and cultural ideals.

Preparations for a New Career, Reflections on America, and Christian Church Music

Both in Europe and the United States, Simon followed these ideals in his activities as a performing artist, organizer, teacher, and also as a creator of music. A major testimony to this latter aspect of Simon's life is preserved at Yale in the form of 27 folders of sheet music.⁹⁹ This stock can be roughly divided into two sections: first, arrangements of preexisting works created by Simon for performance or publication, and second, original compositions by him. Both categories represent Simon's engagement with his environment, especially in America, and thus complement the material presented thus far.

The story of how this collection ended up at Yale is also noteworthy. The related donor files contain a memo, entitled "Some Explanation about the Fate of Eric Simon's Papers," written in 2002 by music librarian Kendall L. Crilly, who recalled that for "many years, Simon had indicated that he would bequeath his music collection to the Yale Music Library," while Yale "indicated several times that the real interest in the Simon's [*sic*] materials was his collection of personal correspondence with major musical figures and that his actual music library was of only secondary interest."¹⁰⁰ The memo further reveals that after Simon's death, the letters were initially withheld from Yale. The following year, the entire correspondence was put on the market for \$8,500. Yale could not raise the requested funds at that time, so the collection went to UCLA, as mentioned above. Yale was left with Simon's books and sheet music, of which they kept only those that did not duplicate existing library materials, and the manuscripts, which today are preserved in the two boxes gathering the Eric Simon Papers.

The greatest part of the collection consists of orchestral parts of Simon's arrangements of preexisting music works. Inscriptions prove their usage in performances. Simon had created such arrangements already in Vienna. An orchestration of Franz Schubert's Eight Variations in A-flat Major (D. 813) bears

99. Simon Papers, Yale.

100. Kendall L. Crilly, "Some Explanation about the Fate of Eric Simon's Papers," donor files, Simon Papers, Yale. I have to emphasize at this point that as much as there has been haggling and fighting over Simon's collection of letters, research has thus far made almost surprisingly little use of it.

the imprint "1937 Ringbuchhandlung," referring to the year 1937 and a Viennese publisher.¹⁰¹ Indeed, this version was performed by Zipper and Simon's Concert Orchestra in Vienna in the spring of 1937, as the newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* reported:

Noteworthy was an orchestration of Schubert's Variations op. 35, originally written for four hands by Dr. Erich Simon, an orchestration in which Schubert's proximity to Beethoven is strongly emphasized. As questionable as it may seem, in general, to tamper with a master's established plan—this experiment at any rate had much that was convincing in its execution.¹⁰²

Simon brought his copy of this piece to the United States, probably with the intention of using it in future performances. Thus, these materials not only reveal another occupation in which Simon was engaged in Vienna but also illustrate his transition to the United States. Another adaptation of Schubert's music, an orchestration of *Divertissement à la hongroise* (D. 818), serves as an even more manifest testimony in this context: Simon entered two dates on the manuscript, "SS Nieuw Amsterdam May 14, 1938" and "N.Y. August 2/1938."¹⁰³ The first date hints to the ship that brought the Simons to America. While crossing the ocean, Simon devoted himself to Schubert's music. After arrival in New York, he completed this work. The manuscript's original German instrument names were changed in pencil to English forms. Although it cannot be specified whether Simon made these alterations before arriving in America, this example shows that he was preparing to follow up directly on what he left behind; indeed with success: the performance markings on the other sheet music are mostly in English, proving their actual usage in America.

Performances were not the only card on which Simon was betting. As an "assistant of Erwin Stein in the orchestra rental department"¹⁰⁴ at Universal Edition in the early 1930s, he had already gained experience with a major publishing house. This contact likely served him well in the United States. An orchestration of Ludwig van Beethoven's Three Marches, op. 45, was apparently prepared for publishing, and the paper used for the fair copy (with an attached errata list) bears the stamp of the Associated Music Publishers in New York, which had originally been founded in 1927 as the American agency for

101. Box 2, folder 15, Simon Papers, Yale.

102. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, March 9, 1937 (orig. German).

103. Box 1, folder 11, Simon Papers, Yale.

104. Simon to Moldenhauer, January 24, 1967, MF 110.1, 2641, Webern Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel. See also: Pass, Scheit, and Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil*, 39.

several European publishing houses, among them Universal Edition.¹⁰⁵ Today, various American library catalogs indeed reveal numerous editions of sheet music bearing Simon's name. Most of them show a major devotion to composers from the German-speaking region, such as *Bach for the Clarinet*, a selection of transcriptions (New York: Schirmer, 1947); piano reductions of Carl Maria von Weber's clarinet concertos (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1962 and 1963); an edition of two pieces for clarinet and piano (*Albumblatt* and *Tarantella*) by Max Reger (New York: International Music Co., 1973); and several facsimile editions with the New York publisher Dover, such as Wolfgang Amadé Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (K. 525) and Johann Sebastian Bach's two- and three-part inventions (both published in 1968). In the United States, Simon encountered a classical-music market in which the nimbus of the "Old World" still sold well (it was probably no coincidence that Goodman turned to Simon for studying Mozart). However, Simon's woodwind quartet arrangement of *Moravian Folk Songs*, op. 18, by Robert Kurka, an American composer, who was foremost based in New York, shows that Simon also interacted with his closer surroundings.¹⁰⁶

Simon's engagement with America is even more evident in his own compositions. Folders 16–22 contain nine pieces that identify Simon as the composer. Although they are few in number, these pieces reveal great stylistic diversity and somewhat surprising facets of Simon's personality. In a newspaper interview in 1979, Simon recalls that he had been composing for only ten years.¹⁰⁷ If this is true, his adaptation of John Donne's seventeenth-century poem "For Whom the Bell Tolls" for an a cappella choir of four voices, published in New York in 1969, would be one of Simon's earliest works.¹⁰⁸ Donne was, of course, of British origin. However, his poem received particular exposure in the twentieth century when Ernest Hemingway in 1940 used the poem's title for one of his novels. Certainly, neither the book nor its successful 1943 film adaptation had passed Simon unnoticed. Donne's central message, "No man is an island, entire of itself," which appeals to the common good and the responsibility of the individual to the community, as well as Hemingway's book about the conflict between the left-wing Popular Front and right-wing Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War, appear to be fitting topics for Simon to engage with musically, given his own biography.

105. Alan Page, "Associated Music Publishers," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed February 24, 2023, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000001435>.

106. The arrangement was published by Weintraub Music Co., New York, in 1958, the year after Kurka's death.

107. Merckling, "Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr."

108. Box 2, folder 18, Simon Papers, Yale.

Simon set another noteworthy poem to music. The Yale collection contains an undated manuscript of a score for voice and piano based on “Disillusion” by Langston Hughes, one of the most influential African American writers and a central voice of the Harlem Renaissance.¹⁰⁹ A letter from Hughes to Simon, written in late May 1952, indicates their acquaintance.¹¹⁰ Simon was likely aware of Hughes’s work and perhaps even of the specific poem before coming to the United States. “Disillusion” was first published as part of Hughes’s 1926 collection *The Weary Blues*. In 1929, a German translation of a selection of African American poetry was published in Vienna, including several poems by Hughes, such as “Disillusion” (translated as “Erkenntnis”).¹¹¹ This volume served as the basis for Alexander Zemlinsky, who set several of these translations, including

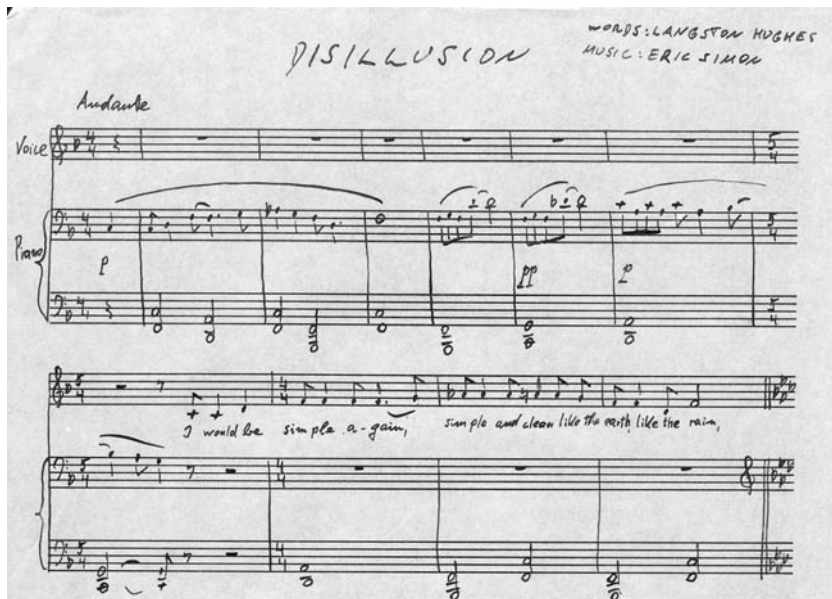


Figure 2 | Excerpt from the first page of the autograph manuscript of Simon’s “Disillusion” (box 2, folder 16, Simon Papers Yale).

109. Box 2, folder 16, Simon Papers, Yale.

110. Hughes to Simon, May 29, 1952 (Hughes hopes to meet Simon soon in New York and agrees with the musical programming at St. Martin’s). The letter was auctioned off by Swann Auction Galleries for \$ 438 in May 2019 and is accessible via their online catalog, accessed February 24, 2023, <https://catalogue.swanngalleries.com/Lots/auction-lot/HUGHES-LANGSTON-Typed-Letter-Signed-Langston-to-Eric-Simon?saleno=2502&lotNo=219&refNo=755656>.

111. Anna Nussbaum, ed., *Afrika singt: Eine Auslese neuer afro-amerikanischer Lyrik* (Vienna: Speidel, 1929).

“Erkenntnis,” to music in his *Symphonische Gesänge*, op. 20, for baritone (or alto) voice and orchestra. This work premiered in Brno in 1935 and was published in 1936 by Universal Edition.¹¹² Simon certainly was familiar with this composition. While Zemlinsky’s adaptation is rooted in European art music and stylistically adherent to the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, that of Simon, based on Hughes’s original English text, shows idioms reminiscent of African American music traditions, such as blues and gospel. Apparently, Simon’s version was never printed and published.¹¹³

More than twenty years later (and barely ten years after witnessing the height of the Civil Rights Movement), we find another testimony of Simon’s engagement with US and, in particular, African American history. In December 1979, the *News-Times* article by Frank Merkling quoted above announced the premiere of a *Te Deum* by Simon at New Milford’s First Congregational Church.¹¹⁴ A photocopy of the score, the instrumental parts (in Simon’s writing), and a fair copy of a piano reduction are preserved at Yale.¹¹⁵ The title on the score reads “Te Deum for the fiftieth birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who liberated his people peacefully and thereby helping to liberate his enemies.” The piece is set for a chorus, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, double bass, and percussion—a combination that Merkling refers to as a “five-piece jazz combo.”¹¹⁶ As Simon recalled, when interviewed by Merkling, his idea, which he “had on Jan. 15 (King’s birthday), was for a piece combining plainsong, spirituals and Dixieland” to “express the ecumenical message of Dr. King.”¹¹⁷ Similar to what he had done regarding Hughes’s text, Simon referred to various styles based on African American music traditions to set the connection to the overall topic of the composition.

Apart from an interest in American culture and history, another aspect of Simon’s compositions comes into the light with this piece: an engagement with Christian church music. In addition to the *Te Deum* composed in 1979, he wrote several organ pieces for church service, which bear the date of 1977.¹¹⁸ In

112. Information according to the most current and comprehensive work list, provided by the Alexander Zemlinsky Fonds at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna: “Werkverzeichnis,” Alexander Zemlinsky: Sein Leben—sein Werk, accessed February 24, 2023, <http://www.zemlinsky.at/de/werkverzeichnis>.

113. I located a photocopy of the manuscript at the University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Manuscripts Ms. Coll. 199, Marian Anderson Collection of Music Manuscripts, Folder 1655, which indicates that the famous singer Marian Anderson may have contemplated a performance, or at least one was suggested to her.

114. Merkling, “Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr.”

115. Box 2, folder 21, Simon Papers, Yale.

116. Merkling, “Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr.”

117. Ibid.

118. Box 2, folders 19 and 20, Simon Papers, Yale.

the same year, a *Missa Brevis* by Simon could be heard during a regular Sunday service at Sherman Congregational Church on the day of Simon's seventieth birthday in October. Neither the score nor parts of this mass have been preserved at Yale. To obtain an idea of the composition, we must turn to newspaper reports, such as those published in the *News-Times*, from which we learn that the piece was titled "Goessler Messe" after a village in Salzburg, Austria, where Simon had spent several summers and which he referenced musically by implementing regional folk songs.¹¹⁹ The article also provides a musical description of the piece, highlighting the "dissonances, tempo diversions and quick key changes," the "polyphonic charm" of the "Kyrie," the "variation of shading and interesting rhythms" in the "Credo," the "yodel" in the "Sanctus"—"a wonderful novelty preceded by an extremely moving opening by the organ"—and the "stunning" "Hosanna."¹²⁰ This description is coherent with a general eclectic impression given by the combination of diverse musical styles in Simon's compositions.

Simon's turn to Christian church music raises the question of his preoccupation with religion. As far as can be said at present, he did not convert. The question of whether his second wife belonged to a religious community and if so, which implications this might have had on the couple's life, cannot be answered at the moment. In his abovementioned *News-Times* report about the *Tē Deum*, Merkling emphasizes the fact of a "Jew writing in an ancient Christian form."¹²¹ Simon furthermore created his own translation from Latin into English, "to get around such traditional distortions as 'WE praise thee, God,' which he renders (as in the original Latin) 'THEE, God, we praise.'¹²² Thus, he intensively studied the liturgical text and its meaning. However, there is currently too little evidence that Simon actually and profoundly reflected on religion, as others did. Schoenberg and Milhaud, for example, actively confronted Judaism and their identities as Jewish composers after arriving in the United States.¹²³ Simon's approach was perhaps slightly more pragmatic. Richard Donohoe, director of the choir performing the "Goessler Messe," provides some insight into the emergence of that piece: after his choir had performed a choral anthem by Simon (perhaps "For Whom the Bell Tolls"?), he "suggested to Eric that it would be nice if he wrote some service music" for them.¹²⁴ As I have shown, Simon was a thoroughly social individual,

119. D. Max Garrison, "Simon's Missa Brevis Uplifting," *The News-Times*, October 3, 1977.

120. Ibid.

121. Merkling, "Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr.," Robert Sherman, "An Ecumenical Premiere," *The New York Times*, October 2, 1977.

122. Merkling, "Simon: In Praise of Martin Luther King Jr."

123. See Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World*, 7; and Maher, *Darius Milhaud*, 136–99.

124. Sherman, "An Ecumenical Premiere."

and his interest in Christian church music might have resulted from connections with local musicians and his involvement in musical life in his close surroundings.

For Simon, music was not only a means of personal expression but also a medium for social and political agency. He developed this maxim in Vienna and also adhered to it in America. In 1946, Simon wrote the following to Weigel:

However, it is essential that our great classics of music and literature become the common property of all (common property of all). They were not so until 1938, and they can become so only through model performances. Through performances not only in the Imperial-Republican Burgtheater, but in performances that bring the works to the people in the suburbs.¹²⁵

Simon put these words into action, not only through his manifold occupations as a performer and teacher but also through his efforts to create institutional structures to increase the accessibility to music. In 1940, he attempted to start a music center and school for refugees in New York, which failed due to lack of funding.¹²⁶ In 1963, he founded the Association of Friends of Live Music in New York, an orchestra association through which he not only organized concerts but also pursued the higher goal of giving “family groups and new audiences the opportunity to enjoy good music, old and new, symphonic, chamber, instrumental and vocal, in a congenial atmosphere” and making “the enjoyment of music economically possible for those who otherwise could not attend.”¹²⁷ Lowering the social and economic barrier to music, therefore, constitutes one of Simon’s legacies. His contributions as a creator of music complete this picture and moreover show him interacting with two cultural spheres. As an arranger and editor, he was entrenched in the Austro-German canon and devoted to disseminating his bourgeois ideals of education and culture. This becomes evident in the fact that many of the editions he published are intended for teaching, especially at earlier stages of instrumental training, and thus not for future professionals but rather for musically interested children. On the other hand, after several decades of living in America, Simon eventually considered himself a composer; furthermore, using composition as a means

125. Simon to Weigel, June 30, 1946, folder “Weigel, Hans,” box 3, Simon Correspondence, UCLA (orig. German). Underlining in original.

126. See above, n. 3, regarding an application for funding in the collections of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

127. Aims of the Association of Friends of Live Music as articulated in a concert program of the concert season 1964, which Simon sent to Moldenhauer in 1967 (MF 110.1, 2649–2653, Webern Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel).

of expressing his reflections on history, politics, and culture of his new home. Thus, he realized in America in various ways what he perhaps had not yet even thought of in Europe.

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